‘Sur le patron de plusieurs bons autheurs italiens’: Poetics, Performance and Politics in French Comic Theatre (1540–1580)



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Abstract: ‘Sur le patron de plusieurs bons autheurs italiens’: Poetics, Performance and Politics in French Comic Theatre (1540–1580)

Lucy Rayfield, Balliol College, Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Trinity Term 2018

This thesis is the first study of the reinvention of French comic theatre from 1540–1580 and of the productive and at times antagonistic relationship of French playwrights with Italian paradigms. Using close textual and historical analysis, my study documents the move from classical comedy regarded as a scholarly exercise to drama revived in print and performance, which was anything but a smooth transition. I employ as a framework for this exploration the three material conditions of poetics, performance, and politics, which connect and overlap to create an intertextual and cross-cultural survey of the changing status of French comedy and of the key role played in its reinvention by Italian sources. In terms of poetics, I trace the difficulties faced by France’s earliest playwrights and theoreticians in their bid to prove comedy to be a viable mode of humanist literary production, examining the apathetic and sometimes contentious discussions of their contemporaries regarding comic theatre and its Italian exemplars. Moving to performance, I consider the effects of Italian comic performances in France throughout the mid-century, demonstrating how these productions acted as persuasive evidence to French writers that comedy was worthy of a place within their national literature. My enquiry into politics evaluates how the reverence of French playwrights towards their Italian sources turned into resentment across the course of the century. I argue that as French writers grew increasingly skilled at composing Italianate comedy, they began to use the genre against the Italians themselves, employing theatre not only as a means of resisting the influx of Italian culture and politics into France but also as a canny means of replacing the Italians as arbiters of European literature. Ultimately I challenge the conveniently linear narrative of early modern comic theatre created by previous scholars, contending that the development of comedy in France — along with its reliance on the Italian model — was fraught with complexities and tensions which have long been overlooked.

Extended Abstract: 'Sur le patron de plusieurs bons autheurs italiens': Poetics, Performance and Politics in French Comic Theatre (1540–1580)

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This thesis is the first study of the reinvention of French comic theatre from 1540–1580 and of the productive and at times antagonistic relationship of French playwrights with Italian paradigms. It documents the move from classical comedy regarded as a scholarly exercise to drama revived in print and performance, which was anything but a smooth transition. Such a study is long overdue, the field of sixteenth-century French comedy having so far commanded little scholarly interest. As a research area it has been overshadowed by studies of later comedians such as Corneille and Molière, also suffering from the critical commonplace that early modern French plays are simply poor. This thesis contends that such value judgements are outdated, and that these comedies offer far more than laughter: I show how these plays can instead act as a lens for rereading literary, cultural and political context, providing new perspectives not only on the reinvention of comic theatre itself but also on early modern France. In addition, with its particular focus on the reliance of French playwrights on Italian sources, this thesis does not only fill a long-standing research gap in early modern theatre; it also contributes to our comprehension of the relationship between France and Italy in the sixteenth century, comic theatre having never been employed as a tool for considering the unstable rapport between these broadly significant cultures.

I employ as my methodology for this study a dual approach combining close textual analysis with interrogation of historical context, showing how text and context mutually support one another, close readings allowing us a new insight into history and, in turn, history shedding light on the text. In addition, my corpus of close readings is not principally

focused on the comedies, as may have been expected: whilst I do provide analyses of the more original comedies written later in the century, in the first parts of my thesis I focus more on the paratexts surrounding the earlier and highly derivative plays, which reveal more about the writing of comedy than the comedies themselves. Though each of my texts has been largely overlooked within theatrical scholarship, I also consider several early printed books and manuscripts — including the first French sketches of a theatre — which have never before come to light. My thesis is additionally underpinned by a tripartite structural framework, evaluating comedy and its reinvention through three material conditions: poetics, performance, and politics. Each of these conditions interacts with the others, together supporting an intertextual and cross-cultural survey of the changing status of French comedy, the key role played in its reinvention by Italian models, and the broader contextual implications of comic theatre.

In my Introduction I outline and justify this methodology and framework, also providing context essential to understanding the claims I make throughout my thesis, offering a brief overview of the status of comic theatre throughout the years in question and documenting the shifting relationship between France and Italy. My chapters are structured according to my three material conditions: the thesis thus has three Parts, one for each condition, and each Part contains two chapters exploring different aspects of that condition. Part I focuses on the first condition of poetics and centres on the period 1540–1552. Examining the first discussions of comic theatre in France, it documents the ways in which playwrights and theoreticians use their literary treatises and paratextual materials to promote — or at times to prevent — the reinvention of comic theatre in France. A key element of these earliest French writings about comedy is the relationship of playwrights and theoreticians with classical and Italian comic literature. Part I thus also seeks to determine if and how French writers in this earliest period consider Italian playwrights to

be mediators between ancient and modern, and their comedy able to elevate the French literary heritage.

Chapter 1, 'Charles Estienne: The French Precursor of Comedy', has as its focus Charles Estienne, the first French writer to make the case for comic theatre. Though he has been largely neglected within dramatic scholarship, with far more interest taken in his anatomical writings, he promotes the reinvention of comic theatre both in print and in performance, setting out its worth as an autonomous literary genre. I analyse how, after completing the first ever translation of an Italian comedy, he uses his paratextual writings also to push for the imitation of Italian theatre in France, claiming that the Italians have successfully reinvented — and in some cases even improved upon — classical comedy. I additionally examine the ways in which Estienne navigates the reader through each of the most important features of comic theatre, providing advice for the budding playwright; as his unpublished writings indicate, he even planned to produce a pictorial guide to theatre, inciting his readership to move away from medieval drama and using the Italians as intermediaries to bring French writers ever closer to their classical ancestors. Focusing on the period directly following the publication of Estienne's translations, Chapter 2, 'Comedy in the Mid-Sixteenth Century: Other Early Approaches', traces further attempts to reinvent comic theatre or indeed to prevent its revival, evaluating the discussions of comedy put forward by Thomas Sébillet in his *Art poétique françoyse*, Joachim Du Bellay in his *Deffence, et illustration de la langue francoyse*, and Jean-Pierre de Mesmes in his French translation of Ariosto's *I Suppositi*. Bearing in mind the relationship of these early writers about comedy to their Italian counterparts, I argue that whilst Estienne's immediate successors do not all reject the notion of reinventing comic theatre, neither do they fully support it. The already lively French tradition of medieval comic theatre was not easy to suppress and, still unfamiliar with or disdainful of the classical comedy reinvented by the

Italians, writers were unconvinced — if not entirely disbelieving — that comedy deserved a place within French humanist literature. We can as a result identify no neat or linear narrative in the development of comic theatre in this early period; rather, we witness a proliferation of viewpoints, some pushing for the reinvention of comic theatre, others ambivalent towards it, and others entirely against the notion of its revival.

Part II turns from the condition of poetics to performance, focusing on the period 1548–1558. It examines the impact of Italian patrons and performers of comedy in France, asking how the productions which took place inspired French authors in turn to write and stage their own comic plays. Since this shift was in large part instigated by the nobility — mainly Catherine de' Medici and her Italian supporters — both chapters in Part II centre on performance at royal Courts and residences. Again, my findings are informed by paratexts and not by the comedies themselves; however, I use a different repository of materials to Part I, employing sources such as diplomatic correspondences, prefaces, and commemorative booklets as evidence of the performances in question and the discussions which emerged. Whilst examining the ways in which these Italian comic performances inspired French writers to themselves compose comedies, I evaluate how the status of comedy shifted across the mid-century, finally starting to be more widely regarded as a genre worthy of humanist attention. Harking back to Part I, I also identify the ways in which these productions complemented the exhortations of earlier French humanists, and looking forward to Part III, I consider how the initial French efforts to write original comedy can, to some degree, be read as politically motivated and contentious towards their Italian models.

Chapter 3, 'From Page to Stage: The Italian Influence', consists of one case study: Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena's *La Calandra*, performed in Lyon to celebrate the royal entry of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici in 1548. This was one of the earliest performances of

Italian comedy in France and is the first to be amply recorded. Putting into practice a number of features of comic theatre outlined by Estienne several years previously, it was a resounding success amongst its royal spectators. I assess the network of Italians in Lyon who united to put this seminal performance together, drawing close parallels between each figure and the role they played in ensuring the smooth running of the comedy, also evaluating the influence of its noble Italian attendees — particularly Catherine de' Medici and Ippolito d'Este — in putting a comedy on the French stage. I argue that it is due to the work of the Italians that comedy first started to be reinvented in France, this performance inspiring a series of later Italian productions which in turn incited French writers to turn their minds to comic theatre. Chapter 4, 'Later Italianate Performance at the Court: Imitation and Emulation', moves from the single case study of Bibbiena to a broader overview of the comic performance tradition at the French Court during the 1550s. I firstly provide surveys of the little-known performances of Agnolo Firenzuola's *I Lucidi* and Luigi Alamanni's *La Flora*, both of which provide a new insight into Italianate comic culture at the French Court. I subsequently examine the performance of Estienne Jodelle's *L'Eugène*, the first original French comedy to be written or performed, and also Jodelle's *masquarades*, which are again heavily based on Italian performance styles. As well as evaluating Jodelle's fundamental aims for his drama and identifying initial anti-Italianist tensions in comedy, this chapter sheds further light on the complex reinvention of comic theatre in France, offering a new perspective on the influence of Italian models on French theatre and on comedy's changing status within humanist literature.

The final Part III turns to the condition of politics, focusing on the years 1561–1580. This was one of the most tumultuous periods in early modern France, characterised by violent religious and political upheavals. Concomitantly, French humanists were still determined to establish France as the forerunner of European literary culture which, at a

time when the Italian presence in France was steadily increasing, contributed to a resentment of the Italian literary and cultural achievements and of the political and financial sway held by the Italians in France. This resentment began to manifest itself in a number of literary categories such as poetry and the dialogue, with Henri Estienne, Charles Estienne's nephew, at the forefront of the anti-Italianist movement. Resistance to the Italians and rivalry against them, however, can also be identified within comic theatre. Part III uses both paratexts and the comedies themselves to evaluate the anti-Italianism inherent in the drama written in the latter part of the century, asking how French playwrights eventually managed to turn Italian comedy into a weapon for use against the Italians themselves.

Chapter 5, 'Resistance and Rivalry: Early Manifestations of Anti-Italianism in French Comic Theatre', begins with a cursory study of Jacques Grévin's comedy *La Trésorière*, which manifests some early anti-Italianist sentiments, concealing his Italian models and making a concerted effort to avoid using the Italian language in his play. I subsequently provide a close analysis of Grévin's later comedy *Les Esbahis*, which is overt anti-Italian propaganda. Seeking to resist the Italian cultural and political dominance in France, it also endeavours to show French language and literature to be superior to its Italian counterparts. Using a number of techniques to achieve this aim — most notably a ridiculous representation of the Italian braggart soldier — Grévin transforms his comedy, which was largely inspired by the Italian model, into anti-Italian rhetoric. I explore Grévin's reasons for adopting this polemical approach in his play, also evaluating the methods he employs to create his wholly unflattering picture of Italy and his ultimate aims in doing so. The final Chapter 6, 'From Admiration to Antagonism: Anti-Italianism in Later French Comic Theatre', interrogates the use of comedy as anti-Italian propaganda at the end of the period in question. Exploring the ways in which playwrights shifted or developed their methods for using their plays against the Italians, this chapter reveals in turn further anti-Italianist

attitudes prevalent in France during these later years. It begins with a short case study of Pierre de Larivey's *Les six comedies facecieuses*. Though each of the plays contained in Larivey's volume are translated directly from Italian sources, the author employs a series of dissimulating techniques in order to convince the reader of the originality of these comedies, thereby bypassing Italian comedy and establishing French theatre as a forerunner. The final close reading of this thesis, Odet de Turnèbe's Italianate play *Les Contens*, provides further evidence of how comedy continued to be employed as anti-Italianist propaganda. Presenting a foolish character of a would-be Italian, Turnèbe mocks the French vogue for Italian literature and culture, endeavouring to show that France outshines Italy in a wide range of aspects. I demonstrate that as French playwrights became increasingly skilled at writing Italianate comedy, they were able to employ increasingly inventive methods to ensure that their theatre both resisted and rivalled the achievements of their Italian models.

This thesis challenges the conveniently linear narrative of early modern comic theatre which has previously been proposed, contending that the reinvention of comedy in France — along with its reliance on the Italian model — was fraught with a series of difficulties and tensions which have been largely overlooked. It also shows to be false the outdated and simplistic viewpoint that because these comedies are not today considered to be funny, they are unworthy of academic attention. The conclusions I reach in this thesis — broadly, that the development of comic theatre in early modern France was a wholly convoluted and cross-cultural process; that the role of Italian theatre in the reinvention of French comic drama was far more significant than has been presumed; and that French playwrights rapidly discovered and exploited the utility of Italian comedy as a propagandist weapon against their own sources — are themselves a testament to the utmost relevance of French Renaissance comedy in modern scholarship.

For my parents, Sue and Bill;
my grandfather, Jim;
and in memory of my grandmother, Kit

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Introduction

There is nothing funny about comedy. Not in this study, at least. When I explain that I work on comic theatre, I am often asked to tell an early modern joke, and whilst comic plays certainly did entertain and amuse their sixteenth-century readers and audiences, this was not their only function. These comedies also served as literary experiments, political tools, and pieces of nationalistic propaganda, struggling to assert their position within French culture whilst at the same time attempting to influence it. It is these associated uses of comic theatre — as significant as, and not always disconnected from, its ability to provoke laughter — which are at the forefront of my thesis. By focusing on the employment of comic theatre to ends which were not solely humorous, we are able to create a fuller picture of the changing status and eventual reinvention of comedy in France. What also emerges is a more nuanced insight into the position of Italian comic models within Renaissance theatre, which in turn allows us a fresh perspective on France's relationship with Italy, its long-standing cultural ally and rival.

Concentrating on the period 1540–1580, I explore various writings which intended to prove — or at times to disprove — the worthiness of comedy as an autonomous genre. Such a study brings to light the arguments put forward for comedy's revival in print, the significance of performance at the Court, and the various uses foisted on this new literary category by its innovators. Each facet of this complex process of reinvention was affected in no small part by the Italians, and as a further line of enquiry I trace the shifting approaches of French humanists and playwrights towards comic theatre as the rapport between France and Italy deteriorated. Across the forty-year period covered in this thesis I therefore examine the early French admiration for Italian theatrical achievements, with writers producing close translations and imitations of Italian comedy, subsequently assessing how later authors attempted to move away from their Italian models, and finally exploring how French

playwrights became so adept at writing their own Italianate comedies that they were able to turn these plays against the Italians themselves.

It is apt, before going further, to define how I utilise the term 'comedy' in this thesis. I refer not to medieval comic theatre — the farce, *sottie*, or *sermon joyeux*, to take but a few examples — but to the comedy imitated from the classics, adhering to a set of literary precepts which will be considered throughout this study. It is this comedy which was successfully reinvented by the Italians towards the end of the fifteenth century, and which has, retrospectively, come to be styled as *commedia erudita*. Though previous scholars sometimes use the anglicised terms 'erudite' or 'literary' comedy, both seem almost patronising, too loaded with questions as to why previous comedy had not been erudite or literary.[1] Similarly, the term 'neoclassical comedy' is too often associated with seventeenth-century theatre to describe its sixteenth-century counterpart appropriately. In addition, nowhere in my thesis does the unprefixed term 'comedy' refer to the *commedia dell'arte*. An up-to-date and wide-ranging study of the influence of the *commedia dell'arte* on early modern French comedy would no doubt be valuable; however, since the *commedia dell'arte* is largely distinct from the comedy examined in this thesis, such a study would instead be suited to a separate project.[2] For the reasons described above, and to avoid cumbersome repetition, the genre referred to interchangeably within scholarship as erudite, literary, humanist, or even regular comedy — and the genre with which this thesis will be concerned — will be described simply as 'comedy'.

I employ 1540 as my start date since, although the first French literary treatise devoted to comic theatre was conceived during this year, scholars have been insufficiently

[1] Scholars who employ these terms include Andrew Calder, Corinne Noirot, and Catherine Campbell.

[2] The most detailed study of the *commedia dell'arte* on early modern French comedy is still Armand Baschet's *Les comédiens italiens à la cour de France sous Charles IX, Henri III, Henri IV et Louis XIII: d'après les lettres royales, la correspondance originale des comédiens, les registres de la trésorerie de l'épargne et autres documents* (Paris: E. Plon et cie, 1882).

aware of the presence of comedy in France so early in the century. Most studies of early modern French drama begin in 1552, the year that Estienne Jodelle wrote the first original comedy,[3] and many scholars claim that comedy was entirely absent before this date: Lucien Pinvert, for example, states that 'avant Jodelle et avant Grévin, le théâtre français n'existait pas'.[4] It is an injustice to the field to neglect not only the rich discussions about comic theatre which took place before this date, but also one of the key comic performances in France, staged in 1548. My start date thus allows this project to shed light on theatrical writings and experimentations which have never before been considered, helping us create a more detailed picture of the origins of comedy in early modern France. More simply, my end date of 1580 coincides with the writing of Odet de Turnèbe's Italianate play *Les Contens*, the last overtly anti-Italianist comedy written before the long hiatus in the production of comic theatre, which was resumed only in the 1620s.

Methodology

Throughout this research I employ a dual framework, examining France's relationship with comedy and with Italy through both historical and textual lenses. In terms of my historical approach, I interrogate the political and cultural conditions of early modern France, asking how historical context can shed light on comic theatre and Franco-Italian relations and help us reformulate our understandings of both. The political conditions include, for example, the rule of various monarchs, the Wars of Religion, and the increasing financial and commercial dominance of the Italians in France; the cultural conditions refer for instance to debates surrounding the practice of *imitatio*, the rising interest in performance for celebrations at the

[3] For example Brian Jeffery's *French Renaissance Comedy*, the standard work on the subject. Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy, 1552–1630* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
[4] Lucien Pinvert, *Jacques Grévin (1538–1570): sa vie, ses écrits, ses amis, étude biographique et littéraire* (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1899), p. 132.

Court, and the rivalry inherent in a vast number of humanist writings. I thus interrogate the influence of this history on comic theatre, asking how it shaped not only the reinvention of comedy but also how it influenced playwrights, patrons, and polemicists alike.

Whilst I investigate how historical context informs the texts, I also show the reverse: that texts can shed new light on historical context. My textual approach relies on close readings and analyses of a number of comedies and their surrounding paratexts, exploring how such texts constitute historical sources in themselves, providing a new perspective on the political and cultural conditions which gave rise to comic theatre. Much of my exegesis is comparative, taking into consideration various Italian positions on comic theatre in order to situate the literary output of French imitators within a wider canon of criticism. Some of my readings are also cross-temporal, placing in opposition the earliest approaches to comedy in France with the writings of more experienced playwrights towards the end of the century, allowing us a richer insight into the shift from medieval farce to humanist drama. Additionally, these cross-temporal readings offer a fresh perspective on the role of the Italians in bringing comedy across the border and on their changing influence throughout the century, whilst at the same time establishing an innovative approach to understanding the anti-Italianist attitudes prevalent amongst many French literati towards the end of the *Cinquecento*. Thus, in the same way as political and cultural conditions actively affected comic theatre, I also show how the opposite is true: used in turn as a literary experiment and political weapon, comedy was also engaged in history itself. I thus draw on this reciprocal relationship between text and context throughout my thesis, using historical context to shed light on the writing of comic texts, and comic texts to offer insights into history.

As for the source texts themselves, each of my close readings has been largely neglected within theatrical scholarship, and special attention is paid to a number of never

before seen manuscripts and early printed books.[5] As mentioned above, my thesis also strikes a balance between text and paratext. In terms of text, I engage directly with the comedies themselves, exploring features such as their scripts, stage directions, and characterisation. Given the focus of this thesis on the classical comedy reinvented in France throughout the sixteenth century, I concentrate mainly on more original French adaptations of comedy as opposed to word-for-word translations of Italian models or melting pots of farce and morality, both of which have unique codes and conventions and which deserve more specialised studies of their own. Focusing also on the paratext — long overlooked within studies of sixteenth-century French theatre — I analyse a series of materials such as letters, prefaces, treatises, and commemorative booklets, assembling contemporary arguments and observations about the writing or performance of comic theatre in order to reconstruct a more accurate picture of the status of early modern comedy. Paratexts are, as Gérard Genette has posited, a mode of entry into the text itself, employed by writers and playwrights in order to guide the reader — or indeed the spectator — into their desired comprehension or reception of the text.[6] Whilst paratexts offer us a different angle on authorial intention, they are also, as Helen Smith and Louise Wilson have shown, inseparable from the historical context which informs them.[7] Given my historical and textual approach, a focus on the paratext — a mode of writing which offers us a new insight into

[5] Together with Richard Cooper I have identified the manuscript of Charles Estienne's unpublished *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*, held at the Vatican Apostolic Library, containing a series of sketches depicting theatres with accompanying notes. We are currently editing a facsimile of this manuscript. I have also used in this thesis the 1561 *editio princeps* of Jacques Grévin's comedies, held at the Musée Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp, which contains previously unseen annotations in the author's own hand.

[6] Cf. Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), esp. pp. 7–21.

[7] Cf. *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. by Helen Smith, Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. pp. 1–14.

both history and text — complements my wider framework, allowing me to engage from a different perspective with valuable writings which have long been forgotten.[8]

Overview of Literature

Whilst the poetry and prose of Renaissance France have never lacked scholarly interest, studies into sixteenth-century French theatre have been strikingly few. Donald Stone is correct in his assertion that 'it is hard to conceive of an aspect of the French Renaissance that has been more systematically neglected than the drama'; Enea Balmas, too, has long stated that a 'retour de la comédie de la Renaissance' is overdue.[9] Far more attention has been paid to the aforementioned 'neoclassical' comedy of the seventeenth century, with Molière at the forefront of a wide range of studies. Early modern comedy is thus usually mentioned in relation to its far more celebrated successor and almost customarily referred to as 'la comédie avant Molière'. For instance Geoffrey Brereton, in his study of comedy from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, laments the 'relative poverty of comic theatre before 1630'; Harold Lawton, too, markets his handbook of French Renaissance dramatic theory by explaining that 'in drama more than in any other genre [...] the preparation for the great age of the seventeenth century can be seen in the grandiose experiments of the Renaissance'.[10] Early modern French comedy has also suffered from long-standing criticism that it is — quite simply — poor theatre, resulting in a lack of scholars willing to dedicate

[8] Given the focus of my thesis on the paratext, seldom engaging with plots of the plays, I have decided not to burden my argument throughout the chapters with synopses of the comedies and have instead provided such summaries as an Appendix, along with a timeline which shows more clearly their chronology.

[9] Donald Stone, 'An Approach to French Renaissance Drama', *Renaissance Drama*, 9 (1966), 279–89 (p. 279); Enea Balmas, *Comédies du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Nizet, 1967), p. 12.

[10] Geoffrey Brereton, *French Comic Drama: from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 7; Harold Lawton, *French Renaissance Dramatic Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949), p. 27.

time to it.[11] Such a value judgement on the works produced during these years is outdated, and for the purposes of this thesis it is entirely irrelevant.

Of course, though a substantial gap in scholarship on early modern comedy exists, it is not a chasm, and there is a vast array of work from which my research has greatly benefited, including — and even especially — studies that are not specifically focused on theatre. Emile Chasles' *La comédie en France au XVIe siècle* was the first comprehensive study dedicated to comedy and, though it constructs the neat and linear narrative of the progression of comic theatre throughout the century which this thesis seeks to unwrite, it remains an important biographical and bibliographical source.[12] Brian Jeffery's *French Renaissance Comedy: 1552—1630* and Balmas's *Comédies du XVIe siècle* are the only other volumes devoted solely to an analysis of early modern French comic theatre, and whilst a great deal of new information and resources have emerged since these publications, they are both wide-ranging and thought-provoking studies which have helped to clarify the aims of this thesis.[13] In addition, Harold Lawton's *Térence en France au XVIe siècle* has been invaluable in allowing me to document the classical influence in France at the beginning of my dates in question and to gain a clearer understanding of the interventions of Charles Estienne and others.[14] A great number of shorter articles have enabled me to enrich my work on comic theatre: the most noteworthy are Raymond Lebègue's 'La comédie italienne en

[11] Elliott Forsyth's comment that 'in France the sixteenth century, the great age of lyric poetry, was not the age of great drama' is just one example of the many objections to the genre which have been damaging to a rich selection of overlooked plays. Elliott Forsyth, 'Discussion: French Renaissance Tragedy and its Critics: A Reply to Donald Stone, Jr', *Renaissance Drama*, 2 (1969), 207–22 (p. 211). As a more general trend, John Parkin has correctly observed that in the wake of Jules Michelet, who sought to show that the farce was not funny, comic literature in the medieval and early modern periods has not been paid due scholarly attention. Cf. John Parkin, ed, *French Humour: Papers based on a Colloquium held in the French Department of the University of Bristol, November 30th 1996* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999) pp. 1–19 (esp. p. 6).

[12] Émile Chasles, *La comédie en France au seizième siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969).

[13] Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy*; Balmas, *Comédies du XVIe siècle*.

[14] Harold Lawton, *Contribution à l'histoire de l'humanisme en France: Térence en France au XVIe siècle, éditions et traductions* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970).

France au XVIe siècle', one of the only comparative studies of early modern French and Italian comedies, and his 'Tableau de la comédie française de la Renaissance', still the most exhaustive index to date of comic plays written, performed, and printed in France.[15]

Several studies of individual comedies have also benefited my later chapters, chiefly Élisabeth Lapeyre's edition of Jacques Grévin's comedies and Norman Spector's edition of Turnèbe's *Les Contens*.[16] The series *Théâtre français de la Renaissance*, founded by Balmas and Michel Dassonville, has also been invaluable in making available some extremely rare plays, placing myself and other scholars in an excellent position to gain a more comprehensive view of early modern comedy; the explanatory notes accompanying the plays, too, offer new perspectives on some of the comedies in question in my thesis.[17] In addition, a select few readings of early modern tragic theatre — most notably Raymond Lebègue's *La tragédie française de la Renaissance* and Gustave Lanson's 'Études sur les origines de la tragédie classique en France' — have further contextualised the status of drama in France during the years covered in this thesis.[18]

As Jean Balsamo has observed, we are still 'mal renseignés' on the influence of Italian theatre in France during this period.[19] Nonetheless, several extensive studies have been completed on the relationship between France and Italy in the sixteenth century, all of

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[15] Raymond Lebègue, 'La comédie italienne en France au XVIe siècle', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 24 (1950), 5–24; Lebègue, 'Tableau de la Comédie française de la Renaissance', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 8 (1946), 278–344.

[16] Jacques Grévin, *Jacques Grévin: La Trésorière, Les Esbahis*, ed. by Élisabeth Lapeyre (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1980); Odet de Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, ed. by Norman Spector (Paris: Marcel Didier, 1961).

[17] *Théâtre français de la Renaissance*, founded by Enea Balmas and Michel Dassonville, ed. by Nerina Clerici Balmas and others, 3 series, 21 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1986–2018). In this thesis I employ both series *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX* and *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri III*, and reference each individual volume accordingly.

[18] Raymond Lebègue, *La tragédie française de la Renaissance* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1954); Gustave Lanson, 'Études sur les origines de la tragédie classique en France: comment s'est opérée la substitution de la tragédie aux mystères et moralités', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France,* 2 (1903), 177–231.

[19] Jean Balsamo, *Les rencontres des muses: italianisme et anti-italianisme dans les lettres françaises de la fin du XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1992), p. 267.

which provide valuable contextual and historical foundations for the claims I make. By far the most useful have been Balsamo's *Les rencontres des muses* and Lionello Sozzi's *Rome n'est plus Rome*: both extensive historical and literary enquiries into early modern France and Italy, they have contributed greatly to my understanding of the relationship between the two cultures across the years examined in my research.[20] Émile Picot's *Des Français qui ont écrit en italien au XVIe siècle* and his *Les Français italianisants au XVIe siècle* provide thorough investigations into the positive reception of Italian literature in France in the sixteenth century; conversely, Pauline Smith's *The Anti-Courtier Trend in Sixteenth-Century French Literature* and Henry Heller's *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France* remain key guides to the anti-Italianist attitudes which gradually emerged at the French Court, and both have enhanced my tracing of France's increased hostility towards Italy later in the period in question.[21] As for modern editions of the anti-Italianist works circulating in France at this time, Pauline Smith's edition of Henri Estienne's *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé* has allowed me a fresh insight into Estienne's seminal text, providing new explanations of its terminology and cross-references to other contemporary nationalist literature.[22] Michèle Clément's excellent edition of Grévin's *La Gélodacrye*, which outlines the significance of his anti-Italianist poetry, has also enabled me to read his theatre from a new perspective.[23]

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[20] Balsamo, *Rencontres des muses*; Lionello Sozzi, *Rome n'est plus Rome: la polémique anti-italienne et autres essais sur la Renaissance; suivis de 'La dignité de l'homme'* (Paris: Champion, 2002).

[21] Émile Picot, *Des Français qui ont écrit en italien au XVIe siècle* (Paris: E. Bouillon, 1902); Picot, *Les Français italianisants au XVIe siècle*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1906); Pauline Smith, *The Anti-Courtier Trend in Sixteenth-Century French Literature* (Geneva: Droz, 1966); Henry Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

[22] Henri Estienne, *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps*, ed. by Pauline Smith (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980).

[23] Jacques Grévin, *La Gélodacrye et les vingt-quatre sonnets romains*, ed. by Michèle Clément (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université Saint-Étienne, 2001).

Although not specifically focused on early modern theatre or Franco-Italian relations, several other works have been highly relevant to my research. Richard Cooper's *The Entry of Henri II into Lyon* has provided access to a number of illuminating documents regarding the first properly recorded performance of a comedy in France.[24] Similarly, the transcription of Estienne Jodelle's *Recueil des inscriptions* provided by Victor Graham and William McAllister-Johnson has greatly facilitated my close reading of France's first *masquarades*, which took place in 1558.[25] Several collected volumes, such as *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance* and *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe* also highlight the importance of comedy at the Court, providing explanations of the wider context which have benefited my study.[26] Finally, Edmond Huguet's *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle* has shed light on the first uses of a range of theatrical terminology, helping me to document the origins of language describing classical comedy, a genre new to sixteenth-century France.[27]

Essential Context: Comic Theatre in France

Before 1540 France enjoyed the largest farce tradition in Europe, with hundreds of performances by itinerant troupes such as the Basochiens and the Confrérie de la Passion taking place across the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Several were so successful that they were printed and performed until well into the 1600s: *La Farce de Maistre Pierre Pathelin* (c. 1457), which we will revisit in Chapter 1, swiftly made its way to Lyon, Paris,

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[24] Maurice Scève, *The Entry of Henri II into Lyon: September 1548*, ed. by Richard Cooper (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997).
[25] Estienne Jodelle, *Le Recueil des Inscriptions, 1558: A Literary and Iconographical Exegesis,* ed. by Victor Graham, William McAllister-Johnson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).
[26] *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics and Performance*, ed. by Elizabeth Goldring, Ronnie Mulryne (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002); *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, ed. by Maria Ines Aliverti, Ronnie Mulryne, and Anna Maria Testaverde (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).
[27] Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, 7 vols (Paris: Didier, 1925–1967).

and Rouen, even commanding two spin-off farces: *Le Nouveau Pathelin* and *Le Testament de Pathelin*.[28] These performances were not only enjoyed by the wider public but also by the nobles: François I, for example, was a famous patron of the farce, generously remunerating players such as Jean de L'Espine Du Pont-Allais — also known as Songecreux — and even commissioning a specially-written farce to be performed in 1523, partly a satire on his mother, Louise de Savoie.[29] The *sottie* was another comic genre which thrived throughout the fifteenth century, differing from the farce in its portrayal of allegorical characters: Pierre Gringore, admired by Louis XII, is one figure who made a living out of writing *sotties*, mainly for the troupe the *Enfans Sans Souci*.[30] The dramatic monologue boasted a lively tradition, the most famous example being the anonymous *Le Franc-Archer de Bagnolet* (c. 1468), which influenced a number of sixteenth-century writers (cf. Chapter 5 of this thesis).[31] The monologue also existed in various forms, such as the *sermon joyeux*, which often parodied the sermon of a Catholic mass.[32] A great number of these early playlets were in fact anti-clerical, others critiquing the State.[33]

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[28] Anon., *La Farce de Maistre Pierre Pathelin* (Lyon: Guillaume le Roy, 1485); Anon., *Le Nouveau Pathelin* (Paris: Jean Saint-Denis, 1530); Anon., *Le Testament de Pathelin* (Paris: Denys Janot, s. d.). For more information on the farce and a vast collection of the most popular French farces, cf. *Nouveau recueil des farces françaises des XVe et XVIe siècles*, ed. by Kristoffer Nyrop, Émile Picot (Paris: Damascène Morgand et Charles Fatout, 1880); see also André Tissier, *Recueil des farces (1450–1550)*, 13 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1986–2000).

[29] Arthur Tilley, *The Literature of the French Renaissance*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), II, p. 56; Cf. Sara Beam, *Laughing Matters: Farce and the Making of Absolutism in France* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 46.

[30] More information on the *sottie* can be found throughout *Le comique verbal en France au XVIe siècle: actes du colloque organisé par l'Institut d'Études Romanes et le Centre de Civilisation Française de l'Université de Varsovie*, ed. by Halina Lewicka (Warsaw: Éditions de l'Université de Varsovie, 1981); Picot has also edited a collection of France's best-known *sotties*: Picot, *Recueil général des sotties*, 3 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1902–1912).

[31] Charles Lenient, *La Satire en France au Moyen âge* (Paris: Hachette et cie, 1893), p. 351.

[32] More information on the *sermon joyeux* can also be found in Armand Strubel, *Le Théâtre au Moyen Âge: Naissance d'une littérature dramatique* (Rosny-sous-bois: Bréal, 2003), p. 127. For a collection of these *sermons joyeux*, see Jelle Koopmans, *Recueil des sermons joyeux* (Geneva: Droz, 1988).

[33] For a concise though informative exploration of this early drama, cf. Salvatore Attardo, *Encyclopedia of Humour Studies*, 2 vols (London/New York: SAGE Publications, 2014), I, 'Farce', entry by Jessica Milner-Davies, pp. 233–36.

Although many of these early styles of theatre took place in Paris and in the provinces, Lyon was also renowned for comic performance. Lyon printer Barnabé Chaussard (c. 1460–1527) produced the greatest number of editions of the farce of any printer in France, and Barthélemy Aneau's *Lyon Marchant* (1541), a satirical comparison of the major cities in France and a melting pot of the farce, *sottie*, and mystery play, is one of the first examples in France of a college-led performance. Chronicler Claude de Rubys also recounts how merchant Jean Neiron built France's first purpose-built theatre in Lyon in 1539, where he invited the townsfolk to perform 'les histoires du viel et nouveau Testament, avec la farce au bout'. [34] The Florentine presence in Lyon also innovated comic performances: for the 1541 and 1542 carnivals they organised two productions of Italian comedies reinvented from the ancients, one which took place before Cardinal Gaddi in the Abbey of Ainay, and the other which was acted at the palace of Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este (1509–1572).[35] Clearly the most influential Italian figures in France were supporting the revival of comedy, and these performances paved the way for the major Lyon performance of the Italian comedy *La Calandra* in 1548 — requested by Henri II, greatly anticipated by Catherine de' Medici, and organised largely by Ippolito d'Este — which will be closely studied in Chapter 3. We shall see in Chapters 1 and 2 that before this performance the new, reinvented comedy was largely synonymous with Terence, whose comedies, deemed models of pure Latin worthy of imitation, had been used only as part of grammar-teaching at

[34] Claude de Rubys, *Histoire veritable de la ville de Lyon, contenant ce, qui a esté obmis par maistres Symphorien Champier & autres, auec vn sommaire recueil de l'administration politicque de ladicte ville. Ensemble vn petit discours de la maison illustre des Medicis de Florence* (Lyon: Bonaventure Nugo, 1604), p. 371. Samuel Pogue has reproduced a list of the plays which may have been performed in this theatre, which he discusses throughout *Jacques Moderne, Music Printer of the Sixteenth Century* (Geneva: Droz, 1969).

[35] Cf. Richard Cooper, 'Scève, Serlio et la Fête', in *Maurice Scève: Le poète en quête d'un langage* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, forthcoming 2019). Henceforth I shall omit the 'II'; however, references throughout my thesis will be to Ippolito II d'Este and not to his uncle of the same name.

schools: the most famous editions were produced by the King's printer Robert Estienne, who was the brother of Charles Estienne, our subject of study in Chapter 1.[36]

At the Court, however, interest in the comedy reinvented by the Italians had been rising for some time. As early as 1518, possibly during his visit to Milan, François I acquired a copy of Lelio Manfredi's *La Philadelphia*, an undated Italian comedy closely based on the classical writers which only existed in manuscript form.[37] François' sister Marguerite de Navarre, who also enjoyed medieval comedy,[38] wrote a series of biblical plays which, though they can more accurately be described as a melting pot of medieval farce, morality and mystery plays, she termed 'comédies' in clear imitation of the up-and-coming Italian drama.[39] Marguerite also commissioned France's first sixteenth-century translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a work which, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, played a pivotal role in the reinvention of comedy.[40] Henri II, crowned King in 1547, continued to expand his father's collection of comedies, acquiring for example a compilation of Ariosto's

[36] See for example Terence, *Comoediae sex, tum ex Donati commentariis*, ed. by Robert Estienne (Paris: Robert Estienne, 1529). More information on the use of classical comedy as a language-learning tool can be found in Kristian Jensen, 'The humanist reform of Latin and Latin teaching', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 63–81 (p. 67).

[37] Leonardo Terrusi, '*La Philadelphia* di Lelio Manfredi: una commedia italiana del primo Cinquecento nella biblioteca del re di Francia', in *Letteratura italiana, letterature europee: Atti del Congresso Nazionale dell'Associazione degli Italianisti Italiani*, ed. by Guido Baldassari, Silvana Tamiozzo (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 2002), pp. 333–39 (pp. 334–35).

[38] She notes, for example, in a 1542 letter to Guillaume Féau, *sieur* D'Izernay, that during her time at the Château de Nérac 'nous y passons nostre temps à faire mommeries et farces'. Marguerite de Navarre, *Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême, sœur de François I, reine de Navarre*, ed. by Jules Renouard, 2 vols (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1841), I, p. 381.

[39] Navarre, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Nicole Cazauran, Geneviève Hasenohr, and Olivier Millet, 4 vols (Paris: Champion, 2002), IV, pp. 12–13.

[40] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Le Decameron de Messire Jehan Bocace Florentin, nouvellement traduict d'Italien en Francoys par Maistre Anthoine le Macon conseiller du Roy et tresorier de l'extraordinaire des guerres*, trans. by Antoine Le Maçon (Paris: Estienne Roffet, 1545). The only previous French translation of this work was by Laurent de Premierfait, which is undated, though certainly completed well over a century previously. For more information on the reception of the *Decameron* in France, see Lionello Sozzi, *Boccaccio in Francia nel cinquecento* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1999), especially pp. 9–22. Marguerite herself subsequently produced the first French imitation of the *Decameron*: the *Heptaméron*, composed during the late 1540s.

theatre;[41] he also supported the 1548 *arrêt* of the mystery play, abolished because of its increased criticism of the Catholic Church and potential to cause religious discord.[42] As we shall see again in Chapter 2, this was the first official move away from medieval drama. Writers at the Court had already started to experiment with alternative classical and Italian theatrical forms: in 1537 international diplomat and writer Lazare de Baïf (1496–1547) translated into French a classical tragedy, Sophocles' *Electra*, which was not performed but possibly read aloud before the nobles;[43] the humanist Jean Martin (c. 1498–1553), perhaps at the request of Ippolito d'Este, a great friend of Martin's patron Cardinal Robert de Lenoncourt, also translated Jacopo Sannazaro's Italian pastoral drama *Arcadia* into French in 1544.[44] Post-1548 the influences of the aforementioned production of *La Calandra* began to manifest themselves and, as we shall see in Chapter 4, a series of performances of Italianate comedies at the Court took place throughout the 1550s, including Estienne Jodelle's *L'Eugène*, the first original comedy to be written in the French language. This was composed at the request of Catherine de' Medici, one of France's great patrons of Italian theatre.

Outside of the Court Charles Estienne was, during these years, translating both classical and Italian comedy, prefacing his work with the first treatise regarding comic theatre to be written in French, as we shall see in Chapter 1. Soon after, Jacques Bourgeois

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[41] Henri Omont, *Anciens inventaires et catalogues de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1908).

[42] For more information on the ban of the mystery play, cf. John Spencer Street, *French Sacred Drama from Bèze to Corneille: Dramatic Forms and their Purposes in Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 7; Alain Viala, *Le théâtre en France des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), p. 102.

[43] Sophocles, *Tragedie de Sophocles, intitulée Electra*, trans. by Lazare de Baïf (Paris: Estienne Rosset, 1537). Further information on this tragedy can be found in Bernard Weinberg, *Critical Prefaces of the French Renaissance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1950), p. 73 and pp. 105–9.

[44] Jacopo Sannazaro, *L'Arcadie de Messire Jaques Sannazar*, trans. by Jean Martin (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1544). For more information on this play, cf. Jules Marsan, *La pastorale dramatique en France à la fin du XVIe et au commencement du XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1939), p. 146.

translated into French Ariosto's *I Suppositi*: however, given the excellent exegesis of Bourgeois' translation already provided by Mariangela Miotti — not to mention the fact that most of Bourgeois' prefatory material only provides, in the Plautine style, a somewhat pedestrian description of the comedy's plot — this text will not be included as a case study.[45] Still, Bourgeois' very decision to translate *I Suppositi* demonstrates that Italian comedy was a subject of interest in France during these years, and not only at the Court: clearly Bourgeois aimed to make comedy available also to the wider public. His translation is additionally evidence of a major Italian playwright being added to the repository of comic texts available, at a time when only the comic work of the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati, translated by Estienne, was circulating in France. The popularisation of comedy was, as we shall see in Chapter 2, reinforced by Joachim Du Bellay (1522–1560) and Jean-Pierre de Mesmes (1516–1578) during the mid-century. There were, however, other humanists simultaneously fighting against the revival of classical comedy in France: Guillaume des Autelz's *Replique aux Furieuses Defenses de Louis Meigret*, for example, deeming the views of Du Bellay to be snobbish, promotes the continuation of the medieval morality play in place of the newly reinvented comedy,[46] and Thomas Sébillet's *Art poétique* (1548), which will be considered in detail in Chapter 2, sets out the supposed superiority of the medieval farce over its classical counterpart.

Though the farce tradition did not by any means die out, interest in classical and Italian comedy continued to rise and, as Jacques Peletier du Mans commented in 1555, the comedies of Terence were 'antre les meins de chacun'.[47] Though the Court was also

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[45] Lodovico Ariosto, *Comedie tres elegante en laquelle sont contenues les amours recreatives d'Erostrate fils de Philogone de Catania en Sicile et de la belle Polymneste fille de Damon bourgeois d'Avignon*, trans. by Jacques Bourgeois (Paris: Guillaume de Marnef, 1545). Miotti's analysis, along with a transcription of the play, can be found in *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*, ed. by Mariangela Miotti, 1.6, pp. 247–340.

[46] Guillaume des Autelz, *Replique de Guillaume des Autelz, aux Furieuses Defenses de Louis Meigret* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1551).

[47] Jacques Peletier du Mans, *L'art poétique* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1555), p. 70.

interested in tragic drama — Catherine de' Medici commissioned a French translation of the Italian Gian Giorgio Trissino's *La Sofonisba* (c. 1515), performed at Blois in 1556 and 1559 — comedy was greatly preferred, largely on account of Catherine's superstition that her presence at the 1559 performance of *Sophonisbe* had caused her husband's death.[48] As Brantôme recounts:

> [Catherine] aimoit fort à veoir jouer des comedies et tragedies; mais depuis *Sophonisbe* [...] elle eut opinion qu'elle avoit porté Malheur aux affaires du royaume, ainsy qu'il succeda; elle n'en fit plus jouer, mais ouy bien des comedies et tragi-comedies, et mesmes celles de Zani et Pantalons, y prenant grand plaisir et y riait son saoul.[49]

The 'Zani et Pantalons' clearly refer to the *commedia dell'arte* actors, not only supported by Catherine but also by her sons: Charles IX, who became King in 1560 after the short reign of his brother Francis II, enjoyed an especially close friendship with the Italian players.[50] The royal appreciation of the *commedia dell'arte* was indeed highly public: the earliest painting of a *commedia dell'arte* scene, apparently completed in 1572, depicts each member of the nobility playing different roles at the Court alongside the Gelosi troupe, led by Zan Ganassa: Catherine as



Figure 1. Frans Pourbus I: Untitled, c. 1572. Now held in the Municipal Museum, Bayeux.

[48] Salvatore Di Maria, *The Italian Tragedy in the Renaissance: Cultural Realities and Theatrical Innovations* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), p. 211; Raymond Lebègue, *La tragédie française de la Renaissance* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1954), p. 72.
[49] Pierre de Bourdeille, Seigneur de Brantôme, *Vies des dames illustres françoises et etrangères*, ed. by Louis Moland (Paris: Garnier, 1868), p. 44.
[50] Cf. Thomas Lawrenson, *The French Stage in the XVIIth Century: A Study in the Advent of the Italian Order* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), p. 85. Excerpts of the letters detailing generous payments given by the King to various Italian troupes in the 1570s are provided in William Howarth's comprehensive edited volume *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era, 1550–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 82–3.

Columbine, Henri III as Arlecchino, the King as Brighella, the Duc de Guise as Scaramuccia, and the Cardinal de Lorraine as Pantalone (cf. fig. 1). This performance may well have taken place in celebration of the 1572 marriage of Henri de Navarre to Marguerite de Valois.[51] Certainly, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, by the 1570s comic performances formed — in the Italian style — an important part of French courtly ceremonies and festivities. Classically-inspired comedy also continued to thrive: as we can see from a 1571 poem by the Court poet Jean-Antoine de Baïf (1532–1589) written to apprise Charles IX of the activities of his literary academy in his absence, the focus on the writing of such comedy was at the request of Catherine de' Medici:

> Je di que j'essayoy […] la basse Comedie
> D'un parler simple et nét […]
> Terence, auteur Romain, que j'imite aujourd'huy
> Et, comme il suit Menandre, en ma langue j'ensuy;
> Ce que j'ay fait m'étant commandé de le faire
> Afin de contenter la Royne vostre mere.[52]

Hybrid genres were also growing increasingly popular. *La Belle Genièvre*, a dramatisation of the story of Ginevra from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, was the first tragi-comedy to be staged in France, commissioned by Catherine de' Medici and performed before the French Court at the 1564 carnival.[53] By this time, however, religious and political turmoil had engulfed France, with the first War of Religion having just ended, and drama began to be employed with newly persuasive or polemical ends in mind. Catherine judged theatre to be

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[51] For more information on Ganassa's wedding performance, cf. Artemis Preschl, *Shakespeare and Commedia dell'Arte: Play by Play* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 8.

[52] Jean-Antoine de Baïf, *Poésies choisies de J.-A de Baïf*, ed. by Louis Becq de Fouquières (Paris: Charpentier et Cie, 1874), p. 52. This poem was most likely written in 1571, since it also refers to the story of the King quelling the sound of growling dogs, an analogy of the issues faced by the Academy during that year. Cf. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (Paris: Kraus, 1973), p. 61, n. 1.

[53] Both Brantôme and Pierre Dan describe this play as a 'comédie': Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Ludovic Lalanne, 12 vols (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1864–82), III, p. 370; Pierre Dan, *Le Trésor des Merveilles de la Maison Royale de Fontainebleau* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1642), p. 242. However, it can far more accurately be described as a tragi-comedy, a notion which Paul Laumonier has convincingly discussed in his *Ronsard, poète lyrique: étude historique et littéraire* (Paris: Hachette, 1932), esp. p. 220.

a useful distraction from the chaos and unrest and also a means of encouraging the pacification of rival factions.[54] Not only does *La Belle Genièvre* tell the tale of two parties happily allied after a series of obstacles, but Pierre de Ronsard's pastoral dialogues acted at the same carnival — entitled simply *Bergeries* — also represent a bid to bring the Catholics and Protestants together: their shepherds living in harmony were given names such as 'Navarin' and 'Guisin', reflecting the names of the major opposing factions.[55] Whilst, as we shall see throughout this thesis, comedy had initially been employed as a mode of enriching humanist literature, showcasing Italian talent, or pleasing powerful patrons, it also began to be used as propaganda.[56]

Comedy outside the Court also began to be used to achieve the same end. Conrad Badius' *Comedie du pape malade et tirant à la fin* (1561) and the *Comédie du monde malade et mal pensé* (1568) by the obscure writer Jacques Bienvenu were used to demonstrate the sins of the Catholics and to recruit members of the Protestant faction;[57] Rémy Belleau's *La Reconnue* (1562) also argues for the virtuous nature of the Protestants, showing the devastating effects of civil war.[58] These are hybrid plays which fuse classically-inspired comedy with medieval forms such as the *sermon joyeux* and the farce: they are thus outside

[54] Catherine was highly aware of the importance of distracting her subjects in civil war, writing in a letter to Charles IX in 1563 that 'Il [faut] deux choses pour vivre en repos avec les François et qu'ils aimassent leur Roy: les tenir joyeux, et occuper à quelque exercice'. *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis,* ed. by Hector Ferrière-Percy, 11 vols (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1880–97), II, p. 92.
[55] Yates, *The French Academies*, p. 252. This performance, and its political resonances, are discussed throughout Virginia Scott, Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Performance, Poetry and Politics on the Queen's Day: Catherine de Médicis and Pierre de Ronsard at Fontainebleau* (London: Routledge, 2007).
[56] Other comic forms, such as the *sermon joyeux* and the farce, had long been used to make various political statements. Cf. John Parkin, 'Comic Modality in Rabelais: Baisecul, Humevesne, Thaumaste', *Études rabelaisiennes*, 56 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1985), XVIII, pp. 57–82 (p. 63).
[57] Conrad Badius, *Comedie du pape malade et tirant à la fin* (s. l: s. p., 1561); Jacques Bienvenu, *Comedie du monde malade et mal pensé* (s. l: s. p., 1568). Though these plays are described as 'comedies', they can more accurately be described as belonging to the farce or *sermon joyeux* tradition, comprising a series of monologues and little structure. Cf. *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*, ed. by Rosalba Guerini, 1.7, p. 283.
[58] Rémy Belleau, *Les œuvres poétiques de Remy Belleau, redigees en deux Tomes* (Paris: Mamert Patisson, 1578), II, pp. 110–53. Cf. Belleau, *La Reconnue*, ed. by Jean Braybrook (Geneva: Droz, 1989); Braybrook, *Rémy Belleau et l'art de guérir* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

the trajectory of this thesis, which centres on the Italian comedy recently imported into France. In addition, the major focus of each of their plots is the Wars of Religion, and so a study of these plays would be better suited to research specific to the increasingly violent religious turmoils of the 1560s. In this thesis I therefore turn to an Italianate comedy which is employed as a highly different form of propaganda: Jacques Grévin's *Les Esbahis* (1561). This play was requested by Henri II, performed at the French Court, and subsequently disseminated amongst the wider public in the first edition of original French comedy to be printed.[59] As we shall see throughout Chapter 5, though *Les Esbahis* was commissioned by the King and performed at the Court for an audience presumably including Catherine de' Medici, this comedy is a piece of anti-Italian rhetoric, resisting and rivalling the Italian mores and customs which were gradually being imported into sixteenth-century France.

Turning back to the literary shifts in comic theatre, Jean de la Taille's *Les Corrivaus* (1560) is an example of how comedy had changed throughout the century, implementing classical precepts and thoroughly rejecting medieval sources.[60] Given the direction of this thesis, however, with its focus on comedies with a rich and revealing relationship with the Italian model, *Les Corrivaus* is not used as a case study, and neither is Baïf's *Le Brave* (1567), a close translation into French of Plautus' *Miles gloriosus*.[61] Both, however, are evidence that interest in comedy thrived throughout the 1560s, and that not every comic play was employed for political purposes: both *Les Corrivaus* and *Le Brave* were written to display the mastery of French literature and language, rather than to directly rival any other culture or to denigrate it. During the 1570s, however, there was a hiatus in comic production,

[59] Jacques Grévin, *Théâtre de Jacques Grévin* (Paris: Vincent Sertenas and Guillaume Barbé, 1561), pp. 113–219.
[60] Jean de la Taille, *La Famine, ou les gabeonites, tragedie prise de la Bible et suivant celle de Saül, ensemble plusieurs autres oeuvres poëtiques de Jehan de La Taille de Bondaroy* (Paris: Frédéric Morel, 1573), pp. 65v–99v.
[61] Jean-Antoine de Baïf, *Le Brave*, ed. by Malcolm Quainton, in *Jean-Antoine de Baïf: Œuvres Complètes*, ed. by Malcolm Quainton, Elizabeth Vinestock, 3 vols (Paris: Champion, 2017), III.

and Charles Mazouer is correct in his assertion that 'la production comique ne reprend qu'à la fin des années 1570'.[62] Tensions in France were running high, with the deadly 1572 St Bartholomew's Day Massacre carried out during a truce, and stricter laws began to be put in place regarding religious and political propaganda. Clearly aware of the usefulness of comedy as such a weapon, the 1579 Édit de Blois, for example, banned any controversial performances of comedies 'sous peine de prison et punition corporelle'.[63] In this same year, however, Pierre de Larivey printed his collection of six Italian comedies translated into French: though his plays do not constitute overt political propaganda, we shall see in Chapter 6 that they are highly nationalistic, seeking to rival surreptitiously their Italian counterparts. We shall also explore in Chapter 6 how Odet de Turnèbe's *Les Contens* (1580), the final comedy written during the period under discussion, makes little reference to the Wars of Religion but again seeks to undermine and vilify the Italian people and culture wherever possible, functioning as anti-Italian discourse aimed, like Grévin's *Les Esbahis*, both at rivalling and resisting the Italian culture prevalent in France.

When speaking of comic theatre in the sixteenth century it is worth quoting Michel de Montaigne: 'Quand tout ce qui est venu par rapport du passé jusques a nous seroit vray et sceu par quelqu'un, ce seroit moins que rien au pris de ce qui est ignoré'.[64] Many comedies are surely lost to us: both Jacques de la Taille and François d'Amboise, for example, mention that they wrote a number of comedies, all of which have proved irretrievable.[65] We must also recall that, unlike medieval comic forms, the comedies examined in this thesis were not enjoyed by the public at large: rather, only those at the Court or Collèges would have been able to read or witness them. As we have seen, much of the comedy in the earlier part of the

[62] *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri III*, ed. by Charles Mazouer, 2.8, p. 238.
[63] Cf. Lanson, 'Études sur les origines', p. 205.
[64] Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. by Alexandre Micha, 3 vols (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1979), III, p. 122.
[65] Cf. Lebègue, 'Tableau', p. 294.

period under discussion was composed or performed at the Court, and later comedies were, unlike the farce, not the work of laymen but of affluent and well-connected lawyers and doctors with a Collège education.[66] Indeed, no writers of comedy during these years can truly be termed playwrights, in that the drama they produced was a sideline or pastime outside of their highly lucrative professions, and many did not even favour comedy over tragedy: Jodelle and Grévin, for example, turned their minds to both.[67] Though largely unfamiliar to the wider public — especially compared to the widespread enjoyment of the more accessible farce tradition, which continued to be popular throughout the century — the study of comedy nevertheless allows us a greater understanding of the period's cultural context, also shedding new light on the literary and political history of early modern France.

Essential Context: France and Italy

Turning to the relationship between France and Italy in the period in question, it is worth noting that interactions between the two cultures had been rich throughout the centuries prior to the *Cinquecento*. Though scholars such as Jules Michelet and Alfred Forbes Johnson have described a sudden enamourment of French soldiers with Italian women, literature, art, and landscape during the Italian wars under Charles VIII and Louis XII, cultural connections between France and Italy were extensive throughout the Middle Ages.[68] These connections were greatly strengthened, however, by the repeated French invasions of Italy by François I during the early sixteenth century. Though François had been raised speaking Italian and

[66] Similarly, there were no professional French actors: performance was open to anyone who stepped up to the task, from lawyers to doctors to courtly figures.
[67] To avoid repetition, writers of comedy are throughout this thesis sometimes referred to as playwrights. The possible exception to the absence of true playwrights is Robert Garnier who, despite making a living out of writing theatre, showed no interest in comedy, writing only tragedy and one tragi-comedy.
[68] Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 17 vols (Paris: Chamerot, 1855), VII, pp. 1–40; Alfred Forbes Johnson, *Sixteenth-Century French Printing* (London: E. Benn, 1928), p. 5.

also learning about his Italian heritage thanks to his mother Louise de Savoie, he was impressed by Italy's humanist endeavours to rediscover classical art and literature and resolved to filter the movement into France, luring artists such as Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio to the Court, introducing the *lecteurs royaux*, and collecting Italian writings such as Boccaccio's *Decameron* for the royal library.[69] The French courtiers swiftly began to appreciate and replicate the humanist efforts of Italian authors. Guillaume de Postel commented in 1542 that the Italian descendants of Pliny and Lucretius were regarded by French courtiers almost as demi-gods; Joachim Du Bellay, himself a foremost imitator of Italian forms such as the Petrarchan sonnet, wrote in 1549 that Ariosto, for example, was comparable to 'un Homere et Virgile'.[70] French translations of works by writers such as Boccaccio and Petrarch began to appear in abundance:[71] Émile Picot is correct in his claim that 'il n'a pour ainsi dire paru en Italie pendant le cours du seizième siècle aucun ouvrage de quelque importance sans qu'il obtînt les honneurs d'une traduction française'.[72] Indeed, by the 1540s Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), Italian humanist and anti-courtier propagandist, was even attempting to dissuade French poet Claude Chappuys from returning to the French Court on the basis that it had become indistinguishable from its Italian counterpart;[73]

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[69] Robert Knecht, *Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 264–66. Even Baldassare Castiglione's 1528 *Il libro del Cortegiano* recognises François's endeavour to recreate humanism in France: 'Se la buona sorte vuole, che Monsignore d'Angolen (come si spera), succede alla corona, estimo, che si come la Gloria dell'arme fiorisce, e risplende in Francia; cosi vi debba ancor con supremo ornamento fiorir quelle delle lettere'. Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, ed. by Giulio Preti (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), p. 70.

[70] Guillaume de Postel, *De Orbis Terrae Concordia*, 2 vols (Paris: Gromors, 1544), I, s.n.; also cited in Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 122; Joachim Du Bellay, *La Deffence, et illustration de la Langue Francoyse* in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Richard Cooper, Francis Goyet, Olivier Millet, and others, 2 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), I, book 2, ch. 5, p. 57.

[71] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Le Decameron de Messire Jehan Bocace Florentin*; Francesco Petrarca, *Les œuvres vulgaires*, trans. by Vasquin Philieul (Paris: Barthélémy Bonhomme, 1555). For more information on Petrarch in France, cf. *Les poètes français de la Renaissance et Pétrarque*, ed. by Jean Balsamo, Jean Paul Barbier-Mueller, and Michel Jeanneret (Geneva: Droz, 2004).

[72] Picot, *Les Français italianisants*, p. 8.

[73] Cf. Claude Chappuys's *Discours de la Court: présenté au Roy par M. Claude Chappuys, son libraire et Valet de Chambre ordinaire* (Paris: André Roffet, 1543). Cited in Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 31.

Lodovico Dolce (1508–1568), too, praised the improvement of the French language by virtue of its ultramontane influence: 'Il francese, ch'era un tempo cosi bestiale, oggi s'è domesticato e infratellito con noi'.[74] We shall explore in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis the reverence of French writers towards Italian culture, and the part the Italians were envisioned to play in the reinvention of comedy.

When in 1547 the Florentine Catherine de' Medici ascended the throne, having married François' successor Henri II in 1533, Italy's position as a prevailing force in France was reinforced and a further shift in the relationship between two of Europe's most powerful and prominent cultures began to take place. Although the French Court was already Italianised by this point, when Catherine became Queen the *fuorusciti* Italians began to infiltrate the Court in far greater numbers;[75] these Italians easily found favour with the monarch and, to the dismay of French courtiers whose cultural and political efforts often went unnoticed, were reimbursed for their work at the Court with generous sums of money.[76] Whilst this increased Italian presence rendered the Italian language and culture even more fashionable at the Court, the benefits given to Italian courtiers alongside the apparent neglect of French literature in favour of its Italian counterpart began to be resented. It was then, for example, that Rabelais mocked the obsession of French courtiers with Italianisms, and that Antoine de Saint-Denis boasted of having vastly improved on the work of Boccaccio in his *Comptes du monde adventureux*.[77]

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[74] Lodovico Dolce, *Il Ragazzo* (Venice: Niccolò Zoppino, 1541), preface, p. 5.
[75] Lucien Romier, *Le Royaume de Catherine de Médicis: La France à la Veille des Guerres de Religion*, 2 vols (Paris: Perrin, 1922), I, p. 20.
[76] The favour of Italian courtiers throughout the French Court is an important theme in Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*.
[77] Frère Jean, in the *Quart Livre*, mocks the use of Italianist phrases such as 'baise la main de vostre mercy, de vostre maiesta'. François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), ch. 10, p. 561. 'Cest autheur hardy a premier en la France / Imité le discours des comptes de Florence, / Et en les imitant a vaincu le Boccacce / Et devance ses pas suivant mesmes sa trace'. Antoine de Saint-Denis, *Comptes du Monde Adventureux* (Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1555), prefatory sonnet. Also cited in Sozzi, *Rome n'est plus Rome*, p. 154.

This resentment of Italian culture coincided with — and was no doubt fuelled by — what has been termed by some scholars as a crisis of exemplarity.[78] Whilst *imitatio*, the 'sacrosanct recourse to inherited cultural models' — in other words, appropriate ancient and immediate literary ancestors — was believed to facilitate the production of national writing,[79] many humanists were concerned that they were latecomers in literary history and that no work remained to be carried out.[80] One way to subvert the inhibiting literary achievements of the classics and, as we shall see in Chapter 4 and beyond, the Italians, was to employ not *imitatio* but *aemulatio*, surpassing one's literary models rather than simply replicating them.[81] Henri Chamard has posited that the desire of French writers to emulate their Italian counterparts was the prime motive behind the formation of the Pléiade during these years;[82] Eric MacPhail, too, rightly notes that French writers dually considered Italian literature to be 'an inspiring model and a dangerous rival'.[83] Just as Erasmus recommended not the reproduction of Cicero, but defeating him, leaving him behind,[84] we can take Saint-Denis's claim of having bettered the work of Boccaccio as an early example of cultural rivalry, the attempts of French writers to surpass their Italian counterparts and thus stake a claim to being arbiters of European culture. Chapter 4 will introduce the notion of cultural

[78] Cf. François Rigolot's 'The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54.4 (1998), 557–63.
[79] Ibid., p. 558.
[80] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 148.
[81] For more information on the *imitatio*/*aemulatio* debate during this period, cf. Martin McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); George Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33.1 (1980), 1–32; Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
[82] Henri Chamard, *Histoire de la Pléiade*, 4 vols (Paris: Didier, 1961–1964), I, p. 167. Cited in Eric MacPhail, *The Voyage to Rome in French Renaissance Literature* (Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1990), p. 34.
[83] MacPhail, *Voyage to Rome*, p. 34.
[84] Erasmus, *Il Ciceroniano*, ed. by Angiolo Gambara (Brescia: La Scuola Editrice, 1965), p. 116. Cited in Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', p. 24.

rivalry in comic drama at this time, examining the first manifestations of competitiveness against the Italians in this genre.

Interest in Italian culture in France continued to prevail, especially since the violent death of Henri II in a jousting accident in 1559. The demise of his successor François II a year later forced Catherine de' Medici to rise to the fore, acting as regent for the ten-year-old King Charles IX. Ruling during the most tumultuous and destructive period of the Wars of Religion, Catherine was at the forefront of many crucial decisions, influencing a wide number of edicts and policies. As well as holding substantial political sway, she fostered the Italianate culture at the French Court at every opportunity, patronising artists, writers and performers to bring new impetus and authority to the Italian presence in France. Italian swiftly became the fashionable language with which to communicate with other courtiers,[85] French humanists began to push more strongly for the use of Italian to elevate the French language,[86] and lexical borrowings from Italian in French became increasingly prevalent.[87] When Charles gained autonomy from Catherine, he continued to support Italian literature and arts;[88] Henri III, who ascended the throne in 1574, was also fully aware of his Medicean heritage, learning Italian under Jacopo Corbinelli, witnessing various plays in Venice and Mantua during his 1574–1575 tour of Italy, and possessing a wide range of books in Italian

[85] Cf. Jean Balsamo, 'L'italianisme lyonnais et l'illustration de la langue française', *Lyon et l'illustration de la langue française à la Renaissance*, ed. by Bernard Colombat, Gérard Defaux (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2003), pp. 211–29 (p. 222).
[86] Cf. Jean-Baptiste du Four's letter in Guillaume Rouillé's 1555 edition of the *Decameron*: 'Questo regno, oltre la sua lingua naturale tanto copiosa e vaga, si va di continovamente ampliando nella Toscana'. Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone*, ed. by Guillaume Rouillé (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1555), prefatory letter by Jean-Baptiste du Four.
[87] Bartina Wind and Thomas Hope have compiled extensive surveys of French neologisms inspired by Italian during this period: Bartina Wind, *Les mots italiens introduits en français au XVIe siècle* (Deventer: Æ. E. Kluwer, 1926); Thomas Hope, *Lexical Borrowing in the Romance languages: A Critical Study of Italianisms in French and Gallicisms in Italian from 1100 to 1900* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971).
[88] Charles generously patronised, for instance, the Franco-Florentine academies that had formerly been associated with his mother. Yates, *The French Academies*, p. 2.

in his personal library.[89] Jacques Yver, in the 1570s, acknowledges that everyone at the Court was expected to know the short stories of Boccaccio: 'C'est une honte entre les filles bien nourries et entre ces mieux apprins courtisans de les ignorer'.[90] During these years historian Jean-Papire Masson was also compiling his *Vitae trium Hetruriae Procerum*,[91] a work extolling the medieval Tuscan masterpieces by Dante, Petrarch, and Bocaccio, and Gabriel Pannonius was putting together his *Petit vocabulaire en langue françoise et italienne*.[92] Italian comedy was still admired and French writers were returning from their Italian travels having bought copies of Italian plays: Montaigne, for example, returned in 1580 with 'un paquet d'onze comedies'.[93] The commercial influence of the Italians in France was also becoming ever more significant. To take Lyon as an example, by the end of the 1560s Italian goods represented over two-thirds of sales in Lyon,[94] selling not only weapons but also a vast array of cultural wares: perfumes, cloths and even occasional theatrical props or costumes.[95] Marc Brésard rightly states that the commercial origins of Lyon were Italian, and indeed, many Italian families who had settled there, such as the Gondi and the Guadagni, were to be counted amongst the richest in France. As for France itself, in 1571 the Italians accounted for twenty-eight percent of France's taxed wealth, despite constituting only five percent of the taxed population.[96] Their endeavours were strongly supported by the French monarchy: for instance, when Italian expatriates complained in 1583 about the *droit*

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[89] Jacqueline Boucher, *La Cour de Henri III* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 1986), p. 27.
[90] Jacques Yver, *Le Printemps d'Yver* (Paris: J. Ruelle, 1572), 'Lettre au favorable et bienveillant lecteur'.
[91] Jean-Papire Masson, *Vitae trium hetruriae procerum Dantis, Petrarchae, Boccacii, ad Paschelem serenissimum Venetorum Ducem* (Paris: Denis du Pré, 1587).
[92] Gabriel Pannonius, *Petit vocabulaire en langue françoise et italienne* (Lyon: Roger de Brey, 1578). Cf. *Les traductions de l'italien en français au XVIe siècle*, ed. by Jean Balsamo, Vito Castiglione Minischetti, and Giovanni Dotoli (Fasano: Schena Editore, 2009), p. 329.
[93] Montaigne, *Journal de voyage en Italie*, ed. by Maurice Rat (Paris: Garnier, 1955), p. 192.
[94] Richard Gascon, *Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVIe siècle: Lyon et ses marchands*, 2 vols (Paris: Mouton, 1971), I, pp. 108–9.
[95] Listed as 'accoustrements pour faire momeries'. Cf. Marc Brésard, *Les Foires de Lyon aux quinzième et seizième siècles* (Paris: École de Chartes, 1914), p. 195.
[96] Ibid., p. 206; Balsamo, 'L'italianisme lyonnais', p. 212.

d'aubaine, a law which authorised a landowner to seize a foreigner's belongings if the foreigner died on his land, Henri promptly abolished it.[97]

Nonetheless, the resentment which began to manifest itself in the 1550s became ever more prevalent in the final period under discussion. A number of prominent humanists began to challenge the Italian cultural, political, and commercial imperialism in France, and attitudes towards Italy became increasingly hostile. These attitudes will be the subject of Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, and will be evaluated, for the first time, through the lens of comic theatre. To structure my argument, I argue that the portrait of Italy painted by French comedians is underpinned by three categories of anti-Italianism which characterised France's hostility towards Italy during these years. Jean Balsamo has identified the first two as 'résistance culturelle' and 'résistance politique'.[98] Though I draw on these two categories throughout my thesis, I examine them from the new angle of comedy, adding to their meanings and appropriating them as my own; I therefore anglicise them as 'cultural resistance' and 'political resistance'. In addition, I show that French playwrights were motivated not only by cultural and political resistance but also by cultural rivalry, which I employ as my third category of anti-Italianism. These three categories are defined in further detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

Starting with cultural resistance, two facets of Italian culture came under repeated attack by French playwrights during these later decades. The first is their behaviour at the Court, where they were judged to be upholding the principles of Niccolò Machiavelli and Baldassare Castiglione, denounced as deceitful and hypocritical.[99] Stating that their flowery

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[97] Brésard, *Les Foires de Lyon*, p. 116.
[98] Balsamo, *Rencontres des muses*, p. 30.
[99] According to Gentillet, these became popular in 1561: he comments in 1576 that 'les livres de Machiavel sont depuis quinze ansença aussi familiers et ordinaires ès mains des Courtisans'. Innocent Gentillet, *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner: Contre Nicolas Machiavel Florentin*, ed. by Charles Edward Rathé (Geneva: Droz, 1968), p. 39. This work shall henceforth be referred to as the *Anti-Machiavel*, as it was even before its publication. Cf. Antonio d'Andrea, 'The Political

and ornate style of speaking — dubbed *messeresque*, as we shall see, due to the vogue of referring to other courtiers as 'Messer' — was aimed at concealing their true natures, Innocent Gentillet was one such anti-Italianist to warn his fellow Frenchmen against being fooled by it or replicating it themselves.[100] Indeed, this Italian gallant and artful style of speaking saw the phrase 'dissimuler comme un Italien' become almost proverbial.[101] The second facet to come under criticism is the apparent cowardice and incompetence of the Italians in battle, intensified by their reported pusillanimity in the Wars of Religion. Though all soldier-writers used Italian vocabulary in their work, there being a lack of appropriate French military lexicon, Henri Estienne, the nephew of the pro-Italianist Charles Estienne we examine in Chapter 1, rejected all Italian terms for fear that future readers would mistakenly think that the Italians had taught the French to fight: 'Car d'ici peu d'ans, qui sera celuy qui ne pensera que la France ait appris l'art de la guerre en l'eschole de l'Italie quand il verra qu'elle usera des termes Italiens?'[102] More explicitly, Gentillet claims that Italian captains were 'couards, lasches et pusillanimes, qui descouragent plustost leurs soldats qu'ils ne leur donnent à combattre'.[103] In terms of cultural resistance we thus witness French playwright-polemicists attempting to counteract the pervasive Italian Court culture in France, which was manifesting itself in duplicitous and artificially gallant behaviour; we also see resistance to the apparent cowardice imported into France by the Italians.

Turning to political resistance, it is no coincidence that the majority of anti-Italian writers in sixteenth-century France — as noted above, Innocent Gentillet and Henri Estienne, for example — were prominent Huguenots. One anonymous Protestant pamphlet

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and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 23.4 (1970), 397–411 (p. 397, n. 1).

[100] This theme recurs throughout Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*.

[101] This phrase was first used by Yver throughout the aforementioned *Le Printemps*. Cf. Sozzi, *Rome n'est plus Rome*, pp. 23–4.

[102] Henri Estienne, *Traicté de la conformité du langage François avec le grec*, ed. by Léon Feugère (Geneva: Slatkine, 1853), p. 24.

[103] Gentillet, *Anti-Machiavel*, p. 303.

encourages the King to ban the Italians from France altogether.[104] Many blamed Catherine de' Medici and her Italian supporters for the outbreak and continuing violence of the Wars of Religion: Gentillet, for example, was one of many to point out the Italian Machiavellianism in French politics, commenting on their employment of various manipulative and deceitful tactics: 'Depuis on s'est gouverné a l'Italienne ou à la Florentine, c'est à dire en suyvant les enseignements de Machiavel florentin […] ne sont-ce pas Machiavelistes, Italiens ou Italianisez, qui manient les seaux de la France?'[105] Following the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, instigated by the failed assassination attempt on Huguenot leader Gaspard de Coligny — which many judged to be ordered by Catherine herself, as a weak and underhand peacemaking attempt — she was held in even higher contempt by the Protestants. As Venetian ambassador Giovanni Michele remarks in 1575: 'Elle est accusé de tous les malheurs qui ont désolé ce royaume. Étrangère et italienne, jusqu'ici elle était peu aimée; à présent elle est haïe'.[106] Another form of political resistance is resentment of the Italians' commercial superiority, and the notion that they were responsible for France's debts of millions of francs.[107] A great number of French nobles had already been ruined by the campaigns in Italy and others had run into debts, unable to keep up with the lavish lifestyle enjoyed by the Italians at the French Court;[108] many also resented the support given

[104] Precisely, 'defendre aux Italiens l'accès dans notre Pays'. *Traité de la grande prudence et subtilité des Italiens* (c. 1590). Only an English translation of this treatise survives: *A Discovery of the great subtilitie and wonderful wisedome of the Italians* (London: John Wolfe, 1591). Cf. Heller, *Anti-Italianism*, p. 209.

[105] Gentillet, *Anti-Machiavel*, p. 38. Although this may refer to Catherine herself, it is possible that Gentillet is also referring to René de Birague, Keeper of the Seals in France and close ally of Catherine and Charles IX.

[106] Niccolò Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens sur les affaires du France au XVIe siècle*, 2 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1838), I, p. 243. Cited in Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 155.

[107] For more on France's debts during these years, cf. Frederic Baumgartner, *Henri II: King of France 1547–1559* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 247.

[108] Indeed, between 1560 and 1580 no fewer than ten edicts had to be passed in France, banning sumptuous clothes and putting various caps on the amount of money a noble could spend on them. These are documented in François-Jacques Chasles, *Dictionaire universel, chronologique, et historique, de justice, police, et finances*, 3 vols (Paris: Claude Robustel, 1725), II, p. 368.

to the Italians by the French nobles. The extra taxes imposed in 1569 were widely blamed on the Italians, who seemed themselves to benefit from them,[109] and in 1573 Antoine du Verdier judged the Italian banks set up in France during the reign of François I as '[une] invention très dommageable ne tendant qu'à la totale ruine des hommes'.[110] This political resistance — the dual criticism of the Italians' religious and commercial dominance in France — reappears, as we shall see, throughout French comedy during this period.

Finally, cultural rivalry denotes the desire of French humanists and writers to surpass the literature and language of their Italian counterparts. Though Pauline Smith has explored the notion of rivalry in her *Anti-Courtier Trend*, she observes that anti-Italianism in France was often due to 'nothing more or less than jealousy':[111] this viewpoint is too simplistic. Certainly French writers resented the Italians' literary achievements: they had been the first to re-invent the epigram, the tragedy, the epic poem; nonetheless, we must also bear in mind the aforementioned crisis of exemplarity, the bid by French writers to break with their classical and Italian models. Jealousy alone did not encourage French writers to employ *aemulatio*; rather, they attempted to outdo the writings of their Italian models with the aim of being recognised as forerunners of European literary and linguistic culture. Ronsard, for example, began writing his own epic poem *La Franciade* with the intention of demonstrating that France was capable of excelling in any literary genre;[112] in language, humanists set out to prove that whilst Italian was the inheritor of Latin, France had more in common with the allegedly superior Greek.[113] Henri Estienne's manifesto *De la precellence du langage*

[109] Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 155.
[110] Antoine du Verdier, *Prosopographie* (Lyon: Antoine Gryphe, 1573), p. 491.
[111] Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 95.
[112] Paul Cohen, 'In Search of the Trojan Origins of French: The Uses of History in the Elevation of the Vernacular in Early Modern France', in *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alan Shepard, Stephen David Powell (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2005), pp. 63–80 (p. 71).
[113] Philip Ford, 'What does "Renaissance" mean?', in *Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. by William Burgwinkle, Nicholas Hammond, and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 180–7 (p. 185).

francois (1579), for example, seeks to prove not only that French is the best European language, but that it evidently surpasses Italian.[114] This final category of cultural rivalry did not just resist but was broadly transformative, an active attempt to overthrow Italian cultural imperialism. French playwrights, too, used their comedies not only to resist the influx of Italian politics and culture but also to rival Italian literature and language, using — ironically — Italianate comedy in order to do so.

Overview of Thesis Structure

My study of Renaissance comedy is split into three Parts, which explore in turn the three material conditions of poetics, performance, and politics. Each Part contains two chapters, which present various case studies on the condition they explore. Though this study is broadly thematic, each of these conditions is interconnected, overlapping and interacting with one another in order to produce a cross-cultural and intertextual survey of the changing status of comic theatre. The framework of my thesis is also largely chronological. However, since the progression of comic drama throughout the century was not at all teleological — we witness a wide variety of viewpoints regarding this new literary genre, especially in the first half of the century — I do not follow a wholly sequential timeline of dates. In this way I unwrite the neat and entirely convenient narrative of early modern comedy presented by a number of scholars,[115] showing instead that the shift from medieval farce to humanist comedy was anything but a smooth transition.

Part I focuses on poetics, and concentrates on the period 1540–1552. It traces the first endeavours of writers to reinvent comedy in France, examining their attempts to

[114] For a comprehensive survey of this manifesto, see Charles Baldwin, *Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice: Classicism in the Rhetoric and Poetic of Italy, France and England, 1400–1600* (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1959), pp. 34–6.
[115] Cf. Chasles, *La comédie en France*; Brereton, *French Comic Drama*.

establish the genre as a viable mode of humanist literary production — or indeed their efforts to prevent this from happening. The two chapters in this Part concentrate not on the comedies themselves, but on the writings about comedy, using close readings of prefatory and theoretical material to assess early approaches to comic theatre in France before any ideas were put into practice. Chapter 1 consists of the first ever detailed study of Charles Estienne (1504–1564), the earliest French writer to consider the worthiness of comedy as an autonomous literary genre. Assessing Estienne's promotion of comedy and his attempts not only to convince readers to leave behind the medieval farce but also to employ the Italian model as a useful intermediary between ancient and contemporary, I document the practical advice he provides to help prospective playwrights write their own comedies, paying special attention to the features he deems most important. Chapter 2 discusses the treatment of comedy in the first full-length poetic treatises in French, Thomas Sébillet's *Art poétique françoyse* (1548) and Joachim Du Bellay's *Deffence, et illustration de la langue francoyse* (1549), also analysing the preface to Jean-Pierre de Mesmes's 1552 French translation of Ariosto's *I Suppositi*. I argue that despite Estienne's exhortations for the reinvention of comedy in France, humanists remained unfamiliar with the genre and insufficiently convinced of its ability to elevate French literature compared to other literary categories. A particular emphasis is again placed on the role of Italian theatre as a model for imitation, with the mid-century French writers relatively reticent or ambivalent in the face of their Italian comic predecessors.

Part II moves from poetics to performance, focusing on the period 1548–1558. It considers the effects of the increased Italian presence in France on comic theatre, paying special attention to its influence at the French Court. I continue using the paratexts surrounding comic theatre — not treatises and dedicatory letters, as in Part I, but diplomatic correspondence, commemorative booklets, and a prologue — to shed light on the shifts in

Italian influence on French comic drama across the course of the mid-century. This allows me to assess more fully how the performance of Italian comedy in France and, by extension, the Italian patrons of theatre, inspired French writers not only to accept comedy as a viable and valuable mode of literary production but also to attempt to write their own. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth study of the 1548 performance of Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena's *La Calandra*, organised in celebration of the royal entry of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici into Lyon. This was the first performance of a comedy in France to be suitably documented, providing us with ample evidence that it put into practice several fundamental features of comic theatre outlined by Estienne five years previously, greatly impressing its spectators. Chapter 4 provides close readings of two Italian comedies subsequently acted at the French Court, also analysing Estienne Jodelle's attempt to produce the first French comedy and *masquarades*, inspired by, but also competing with, Italian models. Both chapters, then, pinpoint the ways in which these productions complement or contradict the poetic exhortations of earlier French humanists; however, they also look forward to the subsequent exploration of politics, using comedy to consider how the Italian cultural influence was beginning to undergo some significant changes during this period.

Part III focuses on the period 1561–1580, a period of widespread religious and cultural schism, when the Wars of Religion were at their bloodiest and when humanists were still seeking to consolidate France's place in the European literary sphere. It centres on the final material condition of politics which, in the context of my thesis, does not broadly refer to the governance of France; rather, it indicates specifically the unstable and increasingly hostile state of Franco-Italian relations. As we have seen, the admiration for Italian culture which characterised French poetics in earlier decades was slowly replaced by a violent sense of nationalism, which manifested itself in resistance and rivalry across French writings. Although I continue my use of paratexts to inform my findings, this final Part also draws on

the comedies themselves, since the characterisation, language, and plotlines of these plays reveal in further detail each playwright's relationship with Italy. Chapter 5 examines the first openly anti-Italian comedy to be written in France: Jacques Grévin's *Les Esbahis* (1561). Though it was based on Italian models, we can document throughout this play the tripartite categories of anti-Italianism — cultural resistance, political resistance, and cultural rivalry — resulting in the creation of an entirely unflattering image of Italy. Chapter 6 uses this same framework to assess the anti-Italianism inherent to the final French comedies written in the period under discussion: Pierre de Larivey's *Les six premieres comedies facecieuses* (1579) and Odet de Turnèbe's *Les Contens* (1580). This chapter compares and contrasts the various techniques used by these later playwrights to paint their own portraits of Italy, also analysing their reasons for diminishing or denigrating Italian culture and politics. Part III thus employs comic theatre as a lens to examine in further detail this final shift in the relationship between France and Italy, assessing how and why French playwrights, despite their close reliance on the Italian model, came to use comedy as a propagandist weapon against the Italians themselves.

The opening moves set out above can aptly be summarised by my title quotation: 'Sur le patron de plusieurs bons autheurs italiens'.[116] Though not pronounced by one of our dramatists to be studied, it brings together a number of key strands, looking ahead to several points of exploration throughout this thesis. It is the explanation given by Jean de la Taille when outlining how he composed his comedy *Les Corrivaus*, and marks a crucial juncture not only between medieval and contemporary but also between the admiration and antagonism expressed towards the Italians. Rejecting medieval comedy, La Taille bypasses his French predecessors entirely, stating that his own comic theatre will be humanist in nature. This — he claims — involved employing the 'bons autheurs italiens' as

[116] Jean de la Taille, *Les Corrivaus*, ed. by Denis Drysdall (Paris: Marcel Didier, 1974), p. 2.

intermediaries for the contemporary reinvention of comic theatre. In addition, La Taille's choice of the term 'patron' also brings to mind the ideological and financial support given to French comedy by various Italian nobles, which will also be a key notion in this thesis. This comment therefore proudly acknowledges the wide-ranging Italian influence on comic theatre in France, expressing no rivalry with — only reverence for — their transalpine exemplars.

La Taille's comment is, however, also an ironic presage of the difficulties which would very shortly be encountered. Written just as Catherine de' Medici was reaching new heights of power, and also as the first War of Religion threatened to take place, his praise in no way anticipates the turmoils which would overturn France only months later. La Taille himself was soon to join the anti-Italianist Huguenot faction, fighting against a party which had killed his own brother. If La Taille had been writing even slightly later, the attitudes he expresses towards the Italians would no doubt have been significantly different, and he may also have altered the way in which he utilises this new genre of comedy, turning it, like his contemporaries, to political or polemical ends. Thus as well as showing how perceptions of comedy had changed and revealing the significance of Italian predecessors, La Taille's comment is also evidence of the delicate and complex narrative of French comic drama in the sixteenth century. During these tumultuous and unpredictable years, even comedy balanced a fine line of cultural and political sentiment.

Part I

The Poetics of Comic Drama in Renaissance France (1540–1552)

Chapter 1: Charles Estienne: The French Precursor of Comedy

'J'espere que la trouverez telle, que si Terence mesmes l'eust composée en Italien, à peine mieux l'eust il sceu diter, inventer ou deduyre.'
Charles Estienne, *Les Abusez* (1543)

Introduction

Most celebrated in historiography for his anatomical publications, humanist and doctor Charles Estienne has been consistently underrepresented as a forerunner of French comic theatre.[117] He was, nonetheless, the first to make the case for comic drama, promoting it not as a money-spinner used to teach Latin at schools, but as an autonomous literary genre to be paid due attention by humanists and playwrights. Upon his return from Italy in 1540 Estienne began editing Terence's *Andria*, and two years later he translated it into French.[118] Printing it at his brother's press, Estienne accompanied his translation with his own treatise on comedy, the first to be written in the French language.[119] A year later he completed the first ever translation of an Italian comedy, rendering into French the 1532 play *Gl'Ingannati*, written by by the Accademia degli Intronati.[120] Entitling his translation *Les Abusez*, Estienne prefaced it with a dedicatory letter to the Dauphin of France in which he reiterates several ideas from his earlier treatise, discussing the position of French comedy in relation to its

[117] His guide to dissection, *De dissectione partium corporis humani libri tres* (Paris: 1545, Simon de Colines), is still celebrated today for its engravings and clear annotations.
[118] As Harold Lawton notes, Estienne's was 'la première traduction française d'une comédie latine entreprise par un homme de la Renaissance'. Lawton, *Térence en France*, p. 429.
[119] Henceforth I shall refer to this work as *L'Andrie*. Its prefatory material is reproduced in *La France des Humanistes: Robert et Charles Estienne: des imprimeurs pédagogues*, ed. by Bénédicte Boudou, Judit Kecskeméti, and Martine Furno (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), which is the edition of Estienne's treatise cited throughout this chapter.
[120] The Accademia degli Intronati was an acclaimed literary academy comprising members such as Alessandro Piccolomini. Since no modern edition exists of Estienne's prefatory letter to this play, references throughout this chapter will be to the 1549 edition: Accademia degli Intronati, *Comedie à la maniere des anciens, et de pareille matiere, intitulée Les Abusez*, ed. by Charles Estienne (Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1549).

medieval, classical, and Italian counterparts.[121] Close readings of this letter and treatise inform my discussion in this chapter; in addition, I present excerpts from a previously unseen manuscript of Charles Estienne's *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*. It is chiefly a guide to classical theatres, written before his treatise or letter, never produced in print and subsequently forgotten; however, it contains annotations and illustrations in Estienne's own hand, the earliest extant French sketches of a theatre.[122] My findings will seek to provide answers to several key questions: what does the work of Charles Estienne reveal to us about the status of comedy in France in its earliest stages? What role did Estienne consider the classical and Italian writers to play in its reinvention, and how does his stance reflect contemporary debates surrounding the principle of *imitatio*? What were Estienne's ultimate aims for comedy, and how did he intend to ensure they are put into practice?

1. Estienne and the Classical Models

As we saw in the Introduction to this thesis (cf. pp. 12–13), Terentian comedy was considered to be an excellent vehicle of good Latin, and Terence's plays had long been used as language manuals for schoolchildren, in editions most notably printed by Estienne's brother, Robert. Though readings of Terence's comedies had certainly taken place in France, doubtless aimed at language-learning, they were not deemed to be suitable entertainment.[123] A 1502 public performance of Terence's *Andria* recited in the original Latin by students at the Cour de l'Evêche, for instance, bored spectators to the point that they chased the students

[121] *Les Abusez* was the first translation of an Italian play — comedy, tragedy or tragi-comedy — into any language. Cf. Rachel Poulsen, 'Women Performing Homoerotic Desire in English and Italian Comedy: *La Calandria*, *Gl'Ingannati*, and *Twelfth Night*', in *Women Players in England 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage*, ed. by Pamela Allen Brown, Peter Parolin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 171–92 (p. 179).
[122] Charles Estienne, *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Reg. Lat*. 1697. References to this manuscript will henceforth be abbreviated as BAV.
[123] This question is discussed throughout Lawton, *Térence en France*.

off the stage.[124] Though Robert Estienne had claimed that the clarifications and corrections made in his most complete edition 'permettent desormais de comprendre Terence',[125] it is clear from Charles Estienne's paratextual material that he still considered classical comedy to be misunderstood by contemporary readers. As he would seek to prove with his treatise, prefatory letter, and sketches, comedy should be elevated from the discourse of language-learning tool to the literary canon, worthy of revival both in writing and on the stage.

Even the title of Estienne's translation of the *Andria* underscores his intentions to redefine the cultural worth of comedy. Unlike previous editions of Terence, Estienne omits all references to language or Latin, marketing his translation at those who are interested in 'antiques recreations': the entertainments, rather than the language, of the ancients.[126] This same emphasis is reiterated by Estienne in the opening lines of his treatise where he outlines his reasons for translating the *Andria*. Placing importance on the content rather than the language of the comedy, he asserts: '[Je] l'ay faict principalement afin que l'on prenne desormais quelque goust à l'autheur'.[127] Given the early modern significance of 'autheur' as related to 'authority',[128] Estienne suggests that attention should be turned to Terence's status as the creator of comic theatre, rather than as a linguist. In addition, Estienne's intention that Terence should finally command 'quelque goust' further confirms that the classical

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[124] For more information on this performance, cf. William Wiley, *Early Public Theatre in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 33.
[125] Cicero, *Ciceronis Epistolae familiares, Tertia editio*, ed. by Robert Estienne (Paris: Robert Estienne, 1532). Reproduced in Boudou, *La France des Humanistes*, p. 80.
[126] Terence, *Premiere comedie de Terence, intitulée L'Andrie, nouvellement traduicte de Latin en François, en faveur des bons espritz, studieux des antiques recreations*, trans. by Charles Estienne (Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1552). This new emphasis on the play's content, and not on the language, is in direct contrast with the subtitle of his earlier, Latin edition of the play: 'Addita est constructionis ratio, tum vulgaris, tum etiam latina, item scholia, quae selectiorum vocabulorum vim et bene latinarum locutionum formulas contineant'. Terence, *P. Terentii Afri comici Andria*, ed. by Charles Estienne (Paris: Simon de Colines and François Estienne, 1541). This translates as: 'In addition an explanation of constructions is offered, both for the Latin and the vernacular, and there is also a commentary which provides the meaning of the more difficult words as well as the rules pertaining to good Latin lexis'.
[127] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 349.
[128] Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, I, p. 412.

comedies had not been enjoyed or understood, only serving a didactic function. Nonetheless, Estienne does imply that certain circles — presumably the courtly intelligentsia to which he was well connected — had recently become interested in classical comedy, discussing how and why it was written: 'Plusieurs me semblent beaucoup travaillez à entendre la rayson et maniere des Comedies anciennes'.[129] Emphasising the contemporary lack of knowledge about ancient drama, he cites 'ignorance et cecité' as the reason for which medieval comedy is so far removed from its classical predecessor: 'Ce qu'[on] faict pour le present en telles matieres, ne sent rien moins que [la] comedie [de Terence]'.[130] Proposing to enlighten his readers about 'la maniere qu'il avoit à bien disposer et ordonner le sens et la matiere dont il escrivoit',[131] Estienne intends for his peers to gain a fuller understanding of classical comedy, the knowledge of which will in turn allow them to replicate it.

2. Estienne and the Italian Models

Like many other humanists,[132] Estienne understood the requisites of contemporary literature through reading and replicating its classical counterpart, seeking — somewhat paradoxically — to imitate ancient rhetorical and poetic techniques in order to introduce new genres into his national literature. Estienne, however, also regarded the Italians as a crucial intermediary between ancient and contemporary, as they had already successfully reinvented several literary categories, such as the epic poem. Studying in Italy during his twenties and later working there as a tutor to Jean-Antoine de Baïf,[133] Estienne was fluent in Italian and eager

[129] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 349.
[130] Ibid., p. 349.
[131] Ibid., p. 349.
[132] Lazare de Baïf, for example, had recently proposed to use classical tragedy to reinvent the morality play, whilst Clément Marot was attempting the first French translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with a mind to enrich French poetic verse.
[133] For his studies Estienne appears to have been in Padua and Bologna from 1530–1534, taught by Lazzaro Buonamici. Erich Lau, *Charles Estienne: Biographie und Bibliographie* (Leipzig: Vertheim Bechstein, 1930), pp. 11–13.

to utilise Italian literature to enrich its French counterpart. Taking over the printing press from his father in conjunction with his brothers, Estienne himself circulated Niccolò Machiavelli's seminal *Il Principe* for the first time in France, also translating into French and printing Ortensio Lando's controversial *Paradossi*.[134] Estienne was also keenly aware of Italy's achievements in the realms of theatre. Still neglected in France, no editions of Italian comedies had been printed across the border and troupes of Italian comic actors had not yet reached French towns:[135] Estienne's bid to make available and accessible an Italian comedy in France was the first of its kind. His admiration of the Italians' ability to reinvent classical comedy in their own language and context is evident even from the play's full title: *Comedie à la maniere des anciens, et de pareille matiere, intitulée Les Abusez*.[136] Stressing their successful replication of the ancient style ('manière') and subject matter ('matière') of comedy, Estienne clearly considers the status of the Italians as intermediaries between classical and contemporary to be the play's defining characteristic, a notion emphasised by Estienne in his prefatory letter. The Italians have, he claims, recreated comic theatre in contemporary language and culture so successfully that their work is indistinguishable from the comedy of Terence: 'J'espere que la trouverez telle, que si Terence mesmes l'eust composée en Italien, à peine mieux l'eust il sceu diter, inventer ou deduyre'.[137] Estienne thus places the Italians on an equal footing with the classics: they are a second, more immediate model for imitation.

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[134] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Le Prince*, trans. by Guillaume Cappel (Paris: Charles Estienne, 1553); Ortensio Lando, *Paradoxes, ce sont propos contre le commune opinion*, trans. by Charles Estienne (Paris: Charles Estienne, 1553).

[135] Peg Katritzky discusses the timeline of their arrival throughout her volume *The Art of 'Commedia': A Study in the 'Commedia Dell'Arte' 1560–1620 with Special Reference to the Visual Records* (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2006).

[136] Cf. footnote 121.

[137] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 9.

3. Comic Theatre and Imitating the Ancients

Medieval playwrights had frequently misinterpreted the ways in which classical comedies should be performed, initially judging that plays should be read aloud by one person from a kind of pulpit, whilst actors mimed the gestures below.[138] Although it was finally recognised that actors should recite the lines themselves, this same style was replicated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, manifesting in sub-branches of comedy such as the *sermon joyeux* (cf. Introduction p. 11). Estienne criticises the verbosity of such plays, suggesting that French writers should examine the work of their classical ancestors more closely, since ancient writers understood that much could be conveyed through gestures and that not every point had to be articulated: 'N'ayants [pas] encor' observé la maniere de taire et suplier, ce que facilement sans exprimer se pourrait entendre: qui est un des poinctz en quoy les anciens facteurs mettoient plus de peine.'[139] Alternative medieval experimentations with drama had taken the opposite direction: farces, for example, centred not on words or subject matter but on exaggerated gestures, such as chases or beatings. According to Estienne, this often resulted in a poorly-constructed plot, which he condemns as 'quelque badinage, sans autre invention'.[140] Advising playwrights again to abandon this style and imitate the ancients, he explains that it was only when classical comedians had removed these overly physical elements from their plays that they were able to please and delight the audience with their 'nouvelle comédie': 'Les anciens abolirent telles folies, comme pernicieuses et plustot incitatives de noyses et debatz que de plaisir et delectation [...] au lieu desquelles folies, trouverent la Comedie, qu'ils apelloient nouvelle'.[141] Here Estienne refers to the 'new' comedy which had replaced the coarse, Aristophanic 'old' comedy, its chief exponents being

[138] For more information on this misunderstanding of classical drama, cf. Jonas Barish, 'The Problem of Closet Drama in the Italian Renaissance', *Italica*, 71.1 (1994), 4–30 (p. 6).
[139] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 2.
[140] Ibid., p. 2.
[141] Ibid., p. 3.

Menander in Greek and Terence in Latin. Thus French writers should, Estienne claims, seek to incite 'plaisir et delectation' in their audience by striking a balance between the words and actions of their plays, looking to the classical writers as appropriate models.[142]

Estienne is the first writer to provide instructions on the style and subject matter of comedy, which he again advises should be imitated from the ancients. He begins by suggesting that comic theatre should have a specific structure, praising the *dispositio* of classical comedy: 'Je ne puis assez louër, mon Seigneur [...] la façon de disposer et poursuyvre leur sens et argument en icelles [Comedies]'.[143] He later clarifies that classical comedy was arranged into acts and scenes: 'Toutes comedies estoient divisées en cinq ou six actes'.[144] Whilst this structure had been referred to in the anonymous and little-known translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* a year earlier,[145] Estienne provides a definition of the term 'scene' — 'Quand deux personnages ou troys avoient devisé, et tenu propos ensemble, et que l'on se retiroit, ou qu'il en venoit un autre en nouveau propos, ilz apelloient cela une scene'[146] — and also sets out its visual purpose: 'Et par ce moyen jamais ne demeuroit l'eschaffault vuyde, en n'y avoit personnaige sur le pulpit, qui n'y fust necessaire, ou pour parler, ou pour escouter les autres à quelque intention.'[147] Whilst his account of the division of a comedy into acts and scenes is clearly founded on classical poetics, his conception of a scene's dual purpose — never to leave the stage empty and to remove any superfluous characters — appears to be derived from Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinzio's *Discorso*

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[142] This bid to use comedy to please one's audience will be revisited in Chapter 2.
[143] Ibid., p. 1. *Dispositio* in classical rhetoric refers to the structuring or arrangement of one's work.
[144] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 6.
[145] This translation turned out to be by Jacques Peletier Du Mans, who was to republish it a decade later under his own name. Horace, *L'Art Poétique d'Horace*, trans. by Jacques Peletier du Mans (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1541).
[146] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 6. It has previously been suggested that the first use of the term 'scene', denoting '[la] partie d'un acte d'un ouvrage dramatique', was in 1564. Cf. *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, ed. by Tristan Hordé, Alain Rey, and Chantal Tanet, 3 vols (Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 1992), III, p. 1892.
[147] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 355.

intorno al comporre delle commedie e delle tragedie which, though printed in 1554, was written and circulated in various forms far earlier.[148] In direct contrast with his thoughts on the purposeful classical and Italian employment of *dispositio* in theatre, Estienne judges the lack of structure of medieval French farces and morality plays to be one of their worst aspects: '[La disposition] est une des choses, en laquelle plus nous faillons et que plus je trouve inepte en noz jeux et saintes comedies'.[149] Estienne's prefatory material, whilst denigrating medieval drama, thus provides a classical structural framework for imitation, also taking inspiration from the Italians in order to consider its potential visual aspects. He is thereby positing the reinvention of comedy in France not only in written form, but also on the stage.

Another facet of *dispositio* in classical comic theatre promoted by Estienne is the interval, which he describes in his letter to the Dauphin: 'On voyoit des menestriers, buffons, sotereaux, et autres telz [personnages] qui par les intervales des actes delectoient le peuple'.[150] This is the first recorded use of the word 'intervale' in French to denote a break in a play, a term which would become common in later French theatrical lexis.[151] Certainly the word 'intervale' would also have been largely unused in spoken French, as evidenced by Estienne's addition of 'des actes', a clear attempt to ensure that his readership understands where the intervals should be placed. Estienne no doubt wished to see the 'intervale' reinvented by contemporary playwrights: in his treatise accompanying *L'Andrie*, he goes so

[148] Giraldi Cinzio describes a similar function of the scene, expressing the audience's general annoyance at redundant actors onstage: 'Cosa veramente sconvenevole, perchè il vedere gli istrioni in iscena che non favellino, e si stiano tuttavia negli occhi degli spettatori, reca fastidio'. Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinzio, *Discorso intorno al comporre delle commedie e delle tragedie*, ed. by Giulio Antimaco (Milan: Daelli, 1864), p. 86.
[149] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 7.
[150] Ibid., p. 6. By the term 'interval' in this thesis I refer not to its modern significance to mean a comfort break, but to its early modern equivalent, which denoted short theatrical pieces or musical interludes or *intermezzi*.
[151] Huguet does not consider the word 'intervale' in relation to theatre, explaining only that it denoted a generic period of time or space between two objects. Cf. Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, IV, p. 672.

far as to claim that acts were invented in order to accommodate it: '[L'acte] fut inventé [...] pour recréer les espritz par intervalles'.[152] Since no classical or Italian writers propose that the act and the interval are mutually supportive, it is likely that Estienne himself devised the notion as a means of promoting the technique in France.[153] His insistence that the interval should induce pleasure — it would 'delect[e] le peuple' and 'recréer les espritz' — along with his praise of the classical actors performing during intervals — the 'menestriers, buffons [et] sotereaux' — are also the first recorded instances of such statements in French, and are evidently intended to convince readers of the value of the interval.

Still discussing the interval, Estienne's treatise further considers the possibility of performing comedy according to the classical model, providing definitions of ancient comic actors such as the Ludi and the Aretalogi.[154] Estienne particularly focuses on the role of the Pantomimi, praising their versatility: 'Un Pantomimus seul jouoit une grande part d'une Tragedie ou Comedie, en changeant souvent de masque, d'habit, et de voix, ainsi que font aujourd'huy en Italie, ceulx que lon apelle Boufons.'[155] Also lauding the Italians in this description, his direct comparison of the Pantomimus with the Italian jester is another example of Italy's status as an intermediary between ancient and contemporary. In addition, since the Italians have successfully replicated a category of classical performer, Estienne again sets out how Italy can further act as a comic model for France. This passage on the Pantomimus was originally included in Estienne's manuscript of the *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*, but evidently he deemed it more suited to his prefatory material. What is clear is that Estienne had grown even more respectful towards the Italians since he composed

[152] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 355.
[153] As we shall see in Chapter 3, the interval was first put into practice in France six years later by a troupe of Italian comedians performing Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena's *La Calandra*.
[154] 'Il y avoit d'aultres joueurs, qui se nommoient Ludi: mais ceulx là recitoient motz pour rire, et se trouvoient principalement aux bancquets des seigneurs par passetemps. Aultres s'apelloient Aretalogi, lesquelz disorient aussi motz joyeux: mais graves.' Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 7.
[155] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 353.

the *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*, since this reference to the Italians is a later addition which cannot be found in the original manuscript (cf. figs. 1.1 and 1.2):

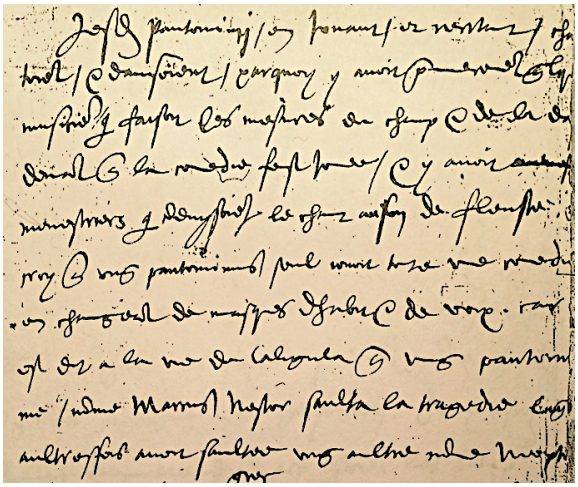
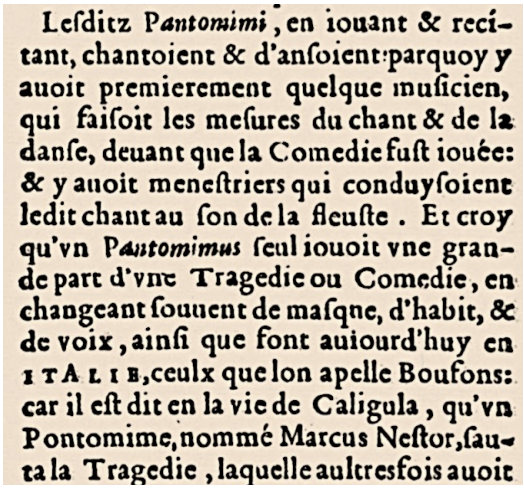


Figure 1.1. Estienne's *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*, fol. 27v, BAV. Omitting the reference to Italy, he continues straight from his description of the Pantomimus's 'masque, d'habit, et de voix' to a description of Caligula.



Leſditz P*antomimi*, en iouant & recitant, chantoient & d'anſoient: parquoy y auoit premierement quelque muſicien, qui faiſoit les meſures du chant & de la danſe, deuant que la Comedie fuſt iouée: & y auoit meneſtriers qui conduyſoient ledit chant au ſon de la fleuſte. Et croy qu'vn P*antomimus* ſeul iouoit vne grande part d'vne Tragedie ou Comedie, en changeant ſouuent de maſque, d'habit, & de voix, ainſi que font auiourd'huy en ITALIE, ceulx que lon apelle Boufons: car il eſt dit en la vie de Caligula, qu'vn Pontomime, nommé Marcus Neſtor, ſauta la Tragedie, laquelle aultresfois auoit

Figure 1.2. Same excerpt from the printed edition of the text, with the later addition of the comparison to Italy. Terence, *Premiere comedie de Terence, intitulée L'Andrie*, trans. by Charles Estienne (Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1552), p. 16. Gallica.BnF.fr.

In the time between composing his *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques* and writing the preface to *L'Andrie*, Estienne had obviously rethought his discussion and decided to reinforce even further Italy's status as an example. Drawing attention to the Italians' success in putting classical comedy on the contemporary stage, Estienne relates to the reader the possibility of professional actors, helping to bring comedy to life also in France.

4. Comic Theatre and Imitating the Italians

We have seen that Estienne advocates the reading and replication of ancient plays and poetics to facilitate the reinvention of comic theatre in France, also holding the Italians up as immediate models for imitation. Occasionally, however, he favours the Italians over their classical counterparts, proposing that imitation of the Italians — and rejection of the ancients — will help the French even to improve on classical comedy. Debates on the power of emulation over imitation by Italian writers such as Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola

and Pietro Bembo had recently been printed in France by Estienne's stepfather in a widely-circulated collection, sparking heated arguments amongst French humanists.[156] Instructions for authors not to follow but to surpass their forerunners began to emerge in countless discussions of *imitatio* in France: Estienne's appeal for French comedy to improve on its classical predecessor thus reflects contemporary debates on imitative rhetoric.

A major aspect of classical comedy improved on by the Italians, Estienne claims, is their prose form. Like classical theatre, the majority of medieval French drama, such as the widely-celebrated *La Farce de Maistre Pierre Pathelin*, had typically been composed in verse. Explaining his argument in his letter to the Dauphin, Estienne praises the Italians' decision to reject such a style:

> Tous noz Françoys se sont contraints aux rithmes de leur langue: comme aussi les anciens, ont tousiours fait à leurs metres. Mais les bons personnages compositeurs de ceste Comedie, voyants que les vers ostent la liberté du langage, et proprieté d'aucunes phrases: ont beaucoup mieux aymé faire reciter leur Comedie en belle prose (pour mieux monstrer l'efait et sens d'icelle) que de s'assubietir à la rithme.[157]

He uses the contrasting images of 'liberté' and 'subjection' in a stark illustration of the strain that verse places on language. Explaining that verse restricts a playwright's ability to use language freely and removes the nuances of some of its idioms, Estienne employs the verb 's'assubietir' to suggest that the limits placed on language by verse are artificial and unnecessary. In contrast, the 'liberté' afforded to comedy by prose will allow the playwright to 'mieux monstrer l'efait et sens d'icelle [Comedie]', greatly benefiting a play's clarity and resultant effects. The Italians and not the classics should be models in this regard, since they have already successfully freed comedy from the constraints of verse with their 'belle prose'.

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[156] Jacobus Omphalius, *De Elocutionis imitatione ac apparatu* (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1537). Cf. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, esp. pp. 187–228 and p. 264 on emulation.
[157] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, pp. 9–10.

Similarly, Estienne decides to translate into prose the *Andria*, originally written in verse. He again draws on the imagery of 'liberté' and 'subjection'/'contrainte' in his treatise, putting forward the strain that verse imposes on a play and asserting the importance of the freedom of language:

> Je ne l'ay point mise en rithme […] pour autant que la liberté d'un traducteur, tel que les Grecz appelloient *Paraphraste* (c'est a dire, qui rend le sens, la phrase, et l'esprit d'une matiere, sans contrainte du langage) facilement se pert soubz la subjection du vers.[158]

Here Estienne supplements his argument by drawing on the classical convention of paraphrase. Though it is true that, as Marc Bizer has noted, the frontiers between translation, imitation, and paraphrase were comparatively fluid in sixteenth-century France,[159] Estienne here denotes the need for a translator to move away from servile translations of classical models. Thus he continues to engage with contemporary discussions of *imitatio*, taking inspiration from Estienne Dolet's *La maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en autre* (1540), the only early modern French guidebook to translation.[160] Reacting violently against tendencies to pay too close attention either to prose or to verse when translating a text, Dolet, like Estienne, conveys his stance through imagery of freedom and subjection, favouring a more natural syntax over restrictive translation: 'Je ne veulx taire icy la follie d'aulcuns traducteurs: lesquelz au lieu de liberté se submettent à servitude [...] ilz sont si sots, qu'ilz s'efforcent de rendre ligne par ligne, ou vers par vers'.[161] In addition, although Estienne correctly notes that 'paraphrase' is originally a Greek term, his argument for prose over verse in comedy closely resembles the viewpoint of the Roman Cicero who had, throughout a

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[158] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 349.
[159] Cf. Marc Bizer, *La Poésie au miroir: imitation et conscience de soi dans la poésie latine de la Pléiade* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1995), p. 35.
[160] Estienne Dolet, *La maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en autre* (Lyon: Estienne Dolet, 1540). Cf. Valerie Worth–Stylianou, '*Translatio* and translation in the Renaissance: from Italy to France', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. by Glyn Norton, 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), III, pp. 127–35 (p. 128).
[161] Dolet, *La maniere de bien traduire*, p. 13.

recent collection printed by Estienne's stepfather, defended the utility of paraphrasing a text, especially in terms of rendering into prose the verse original.[162] The first French author to promote paraphrase over translation in theatre — here in the form of encouraging writers or translators to reject the classical verse style and instead embrace a more natural prose — Estienne again provides a framework for future dramatists to follow in their own work. His exhortation for writers to move away from the restrictions of the original text also forms part of ongoing debates about *imitatio*.[163]

It is worth mentioning that whilst Estienne openly advocates paraphrase in comedy, holding up as paragons in this respect the Italians, who had rejected classical prose, he fails to acknowledge in his letter to the Dauphin that he omits a character completely in his translation of *Gl'Ingannati*: Giglio, the Spanish braggart soldier. Few have noticed this omission and Estienne's decision to remove Giglio has never been properly justified.[164] Florindo Cerreta has suggested that Giglio's macaronic Italian would be 'a feat almost impossible to replicate'.[165] Estienne was, however, a highly accomplished and versatile translator and writer, adept at transplanting a vast range of ideas into different languages and cultures, and it is improbable that he would shy away from the challenge of translating Italo-Spanish jargon. Rather, it is more likely that Estienne did not want to cause controversy. Highly offensive to the Spaniards, the character of Giglio is unintelligent, unattractive,

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[162] Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum libri quinque, cum brevibus annotationibus Petri Joanis Olivarii Valentini* (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1537). For a useful summary of Cicero's argument in this volume, cf. Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and Their Humanist Antecedents* (Geneva: Droz, 1984), p. 196.

[163] Du Bellay, for example, was to defend imitation but reject translation in his *Deffence*. For more information on these debates, cf. Norton, 'Translation Theory in Renaissance France: The Poetic Controversy', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 11 (1975), 30–45.

[164] Even the most recent edition of the comedy, introduced and annotated by Luigia Zilli, fails to mention this omission, claiming instead that Estienne's translation has 'le mérite d'introduire en France dans toute sa pureté le modèle comique italien'. Cf. *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*, ed. by Luigia Zilli, 1.6, pp. 3–20.

[165] Florindo Cerreta, 'A French Translation of *Gl'Ingannati*: Charles Estienne's *Les Abusez*', *Italica*, 54.1 (1977), 12–34 (p. 20).

cowardly, and constantly ridiculed by the play's native protagonists. With the relationship between France and Spain finally harmonious and prosperous during this period, it would be foolish for Estienne, a member of the Court intelligentsia and a printer of the King, to risk causing controversy or offence. It is probable that Estienne deemed it far simpler to remove the character altogether, behaving as though Giglio were not even part of the original comedy, which also explains Estienne's failure to mention this substantial omission in his letter to the Dauphin. As early as the 1540s there thus existed an awareness of the political potential of Italianate comedy, an element which — as we will see — would be exploited by various French playwrights as the century progressed.

We have seen that Estienne holds the Italians up as examples of several performative aspects of comedy, such as the number of actors onstage as well as the professional quality of the actors themselves. However, another fundamental consideration by Estienne in his prefatory material pertains to a different performative element of theatre, again influenced by the Italians: the possibility of acting in a professional space. Staging requirements for medieval theatre were minimal: farces, for example, were acted on moveable platforms transported from village to village, requiring only a curtain behind which the actors could conceal themselves. No insight into classical staging by a French author had ever been written, and even the woodcuts commissioned for Johannes Trechsel's 1493 Lyon edition of Terence's comedies fuse ancient architectural devices with a medieval



Figure 1.3. Example of a woodcut from Trechsel's edition of Terence's comedies, p. 438.

setting, resulting in an odd portrayal of a farce stage with classical columns (cf. fig. 1.3).[166] The lack of knowledge about staging in France is testified by Estienne's letter to the Dauphin, where he explains even the most basic of devices, providing — for the first time in French — a definition of the word 'theatre', also explaining the 'demy rond', the notion that the spectators would sit on raised levels facing the play: 'Il vous convient sçavoir que le lieu auquel les spectateurs des Comedies anciennes estoient commodement assiz, s'appeloit theatre, et estoit fait à demy rond'.[167]

Though due attention has never been paid to Estienne's description of staging, the source of his other architectural explorations, such as *L'Agriculture, et maison rustique*,[168] has been correctly identified as Vitruvius.[169] As a result, several scholars have also attributed Estienne's ideas on staging to Vitruvius,[170] and indeed, Estienne does take some inspiration from this classical architect. Estienne's prescription for the height of a stage, for instance, is certainly imitated from Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, having no other possible precedents.[171] As we shall see, it is also true that Estienne's account of a comic set — alongside descriptions of its tragic or satiric counterparts — have their roots in the work of Vitruvius.[172] However, a greater influence on Estienne's staging ideas, though one which

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[166] Terence, *Terentii Comoediae sex, a Guidone Juvenale explanatae, et a Jodoco Badio, cum annotationibus suis, recognitae*, ed. by Guido Juvenalis, Jodocus Badius Ascensius (Lyon: Johannes Trechsel, 1493). Reproduced via Gallica.BnF.fr.
[167] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 3.
[168] Estienne, *L'Agriculture et maison rustique* (Paris: Jaques Du Puys, 1564).
[169] Cf. *The Gardens of Europe*, ed. by Penelope Hobhouse, Patrick Taylor (London: George Philip and Son, 1990), p. 72.
[170] Cf. Ludger Schwarte, 'Anatomical Theatre as Experimental Space', in *Collection, Laboratory, Theatre: Scenes of Knowledge in the Seventeenth Century,* ed. by Jan Lazardzig, Helmar Schramm, and Ludger Schwarte, 2 vols (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), I, pp. 75–103 (p. 99, n. 64).
[171] Vitruvius illustrates that 'eius pulpiti altitudo sit ne plus pedum quinque': 'the height of the stage is to be no more than five feet'. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, trans. by Frank Granger, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), I, p. 283; Estienne replicates this as 'au devant et à l'opposition dudit Theatre, estoit eslevé un eschafault de la hauteur de cinq piedz, et non plus'. Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 5.
[172] Vitruvius's description of this comic set can be found in the aforementioned *On Architecture*, I, p. 289.

has been thoroughly neglected, is the Italian architect Sebastiano Serlio (1475– c. 1554). It has gone unnoticed that Estienne refers directly to Serlio in his treatise: 'Au dessus dudit Theatre [...] estoient des voylles estanduës [...] à la maniere que demonstre l'Architecteur Sebastian Serlio au portraict de l'amphitheatre de Rome, et celuy de Pole.'[173] Evident from this discussion of Serlian ceiling drapes, during which Estienne also gestures to two of Serlio's other sketches of the amphitheatres of Rome and Pula, is that he has read and been thoroughly impressed by Serlio's work. It is also probable that though Vitruvius had initially differentiated between comic, tragic and satiric staging, Estienne had devised his own notion of a comic set using Serlio's development on these ideas. Vitruvius's discussion of the comic set provides no illustrations and only a cursory description of how it should look: 'Comicae autem aedificiorum privatorum et maenianorum habent speciem profectusque fenestris dispositos imitatione communium aedificiorum rationibus'.[174] Serlio, on the other hand, elaborates on Vitruvius's tripartite description by designing a 'scena in prospettiva' for comedy, mainly in the form of an illustration depicting realistic houses, balconies, pillars, doors, and windows (cf. fig. 1.4). Rather than accompanying his illustration with a lengthy

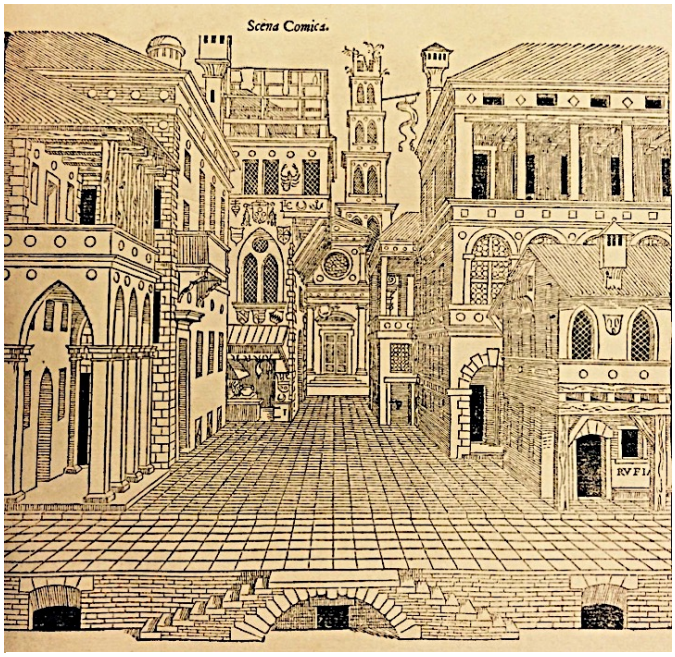

Figure 1.4. 'Scena comica'. Sebastiano Serlio, *De Architettura* (Paris: Jean Martin, 1545), p. 70. Gallica.BnF.fr.

[173] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 357.
[174] 'The comic [sets] have the appearance of private buildings and balconies and projections with windows made to imitate reality, after the fashion of ordinary buildings'. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, I, p. 289.

description, he specifies that he will provide no precise instructions, leaving details to the imagination of his successors: 'S'io volesi scrivere di tutti gli advertimenti che mi abbondano circa a tal' cose, io sarei forsi tenuto prolisso, perho io le lassaro nel'intelletto di coloro che in tal'cose, si voranno essercitare'.[175]

Estienne's description of the 'scena comica' is clearly influenced by Serlio's illustration, describing not only houses and windows in the Vitruvian style but also the doors and pillars which correspond precisely to Serlio's drawing: 'Peu au derriere desdites colonnes [...] se voyoient certaines portes, comme entrées de diverses maisons'.[176] Estienne also follows Serlio's advice by imagining himself how this set could be used. Picturing the possible functions of a door, Estienne describes how all characters must enter and exit their own houses, opening the doors only when such an entrance or exit is made: 'Desquelles [portes] sailloient les joueurs, et auxquelles se retiroient, selon ce qu'il apartenoit [...] et ne s'ouvroient, sinon quand un joueur entroit leans, puis soudain se refermoient'.[177] As for windows, he surmises that characters could potentially speak out of them, even giving the specific example that a character could answer from a window when another knocks on the door: 'Par les fenestrages susditz, au dessus des colonnes, l'on voyoit quelque fois les personnages parler, comme quand l'on buquoit à la porte de quelques uns, et celuy qui estoit leans, respondoit par la fenestre'.[178] Certainly Estienne seems to have Serlio's 'scena comica' in mind, portraying multiple doors and windows separated by a street, which would perfectly accommodate these physical effects. Also possible is that Estienne took inspiration from another member of the Accademia degli Intronati when forming his very precise vision of an actor answering a knock on the door from a window: Alessandro Piccolomini, himself

[175] Sebastiano Serlio, *Il primo e secondo libro d'Architettura* (Paris: Jean Martin, 1545), p. 67.
[176] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 5.
[177] Ibid., p. 5.
[178] Ibid., p. 5.

a prolific writer of comedies. When writing his 1536 comedy *L'Amor Costante*, Piccolomini included a famous scene of the servant Agnoletta and the cook Cornacchia, with the former banging on the door and Cornacchia responding, scandalised, from the window:

> Agnoletta: Tic toc, tic toc, toc, tic toc.
> Cornacchia: Chi diavol bussa si forte?
> Agnoletta: Apre [...] voglio una cosa.
> Cornacchia: Dimmela di costi.
> Agnoletta: Non si può dir dalla finestra![179]

First appearing in Venice in 1540, the same year that Estienne worked there as a tutor to Jean-Antoine de Baïf,[180] it is entirely plausible that Estienne read or picked up a copy of *L'Amor Costante* and, struck by this scene, used it as an example of how a Serlian perspective set could be employed.

Estienne's notion of set and stage design is thus derived in large part from Italian predecessors, with Serlio as a key influence. Imitating Serlian designs rather than focusing solely on Vitruvius for his 'scena comica', Estienne consistently holds up contemporary Italian works as successful reinventions of the ancients. Nonetheless, it is essential to bear in mind that Serlio's *Secondo libro* — the volume which contains his illustration of the perspective 'scena comica' — was not printed until 1545, two years after Estienne discusses this staging in his letter to the Dauphin. It is likely, then, that Estienne had seen Serlio's unpublished sketches or even discussed the comic set with Serlio. There was certainly ample opportunity for Estienne and Serlio to meet and exchange ideas: they lived in Venice during the same years and most likely kept similar company; in addition, having been invited in 1540 to France by the King to work as a royal architect, Serlio was no longer in Italy but had moved to Paris at the same time as Estienne. Creative and well connected, both Estienne

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[179] Alessandro Piccolomini, *L'Amor Costante*, in *Commedie del Cinquecento*, ed. by Nino Borsellino, 2 vols (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962), I, 3.2, pp. 374–5.
[180] Piccolomini, *L'Amor Costante, comedia del Stordito Intronato, composta per la venuta dell'Imperatore in Siena l'anno del MDXXXVI* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1540).

and Serlio moved in the foremost artistic circles at the French Court and would doubtless have encountered one another, possibly through connections with other prominent Italians, such as Serlio's patron Ippolito d'Este. It is therefore probable that our precursor of comic theatre in France was far closer to his Italian sources than we have previously realised, and that theatre, too, was more of a talking-point at the Court than we have imagined.

5. Further Italian Imitation: Exploring Estienne's Manuscript

Appended to Estienne's 1542 edition of *L'Andrie* is a short discussion of classical games entitled the 'Brief recueil de toutes les sortes de jeux, qu'avoient les anciens Grecz & Romains'. Whilst this 'recueil' is unrelated to our discussion of theatre, describing the feats of animals and gladiators rather than drama or performance, Estienne concludes the examination by promising to print his own illustrations of classical phenomena: 'Vivras en esperance d'avoir de ceste mesme main quelques beaulx portraictz et plates formes de diverses antiquitez'.[181] Though he never finished or printed these illustrations, the discovery of Estienne's *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques* proves that he did begin them and that he had real aspirations to bring such a volume into existence. Also evident from this manuscript is that Estienne aimed for his volume to focus mainly on theatre, since the preliminary sketches of these 'diverses antiquitez' contained in this manuscript all depict ancient theatres and theatrical devices.

Given Estienne's intellectual reliance on Serlio in his treatise and letter, we may expect Serlio to again be a source for his sketches in the *Livre des jeux et theatres antiques*. We find that Serlio is not one of many sources for Estienne's drawings, but is in fact Estienne's prime model, the vast majority of Estienne's sketches being imitated from

[181] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, 'Brief recueil', p. 377.

Serlio's *Terzo libro*.[182] Some of Estienne's sketches are even accompanied by a French translation of the corresponding page of Serlio's Italian text. So whilst Estienne is certainly portraying the promised 'antiquitez' — or more precisely, classical theatre — he is again using an Italian source as an intermediary between ancient and contemporary. Our first example is the aforementioned theatre at Pula. Having alluded to this theatre in his printed treatise when referring to Serlio's depiction of ceiling drapes (cf. p. 53), Estienne evidently aimed to offer a pictorial example of Pula, providing the 'profil du theatre', or the 'profilo del teatro' (cf. figs. 1.5 and 1.6):

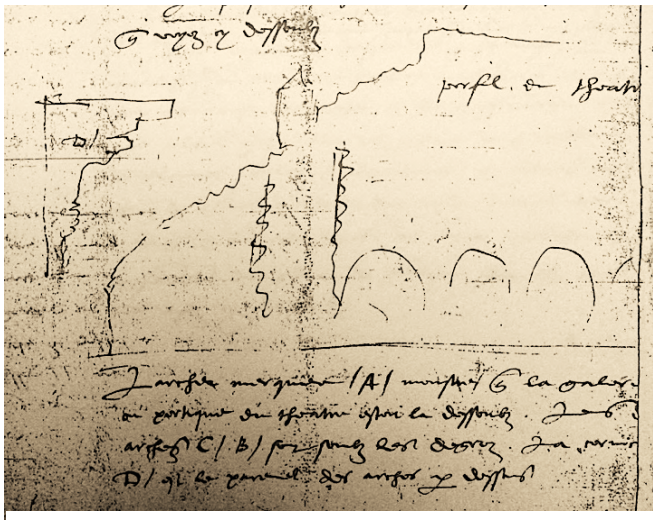

Figure 1.5. 'Profil du theatre', Estienne's imitation of Serlio's cross-section of the amphitheatre at Pula, Fol. 24v, BAV.

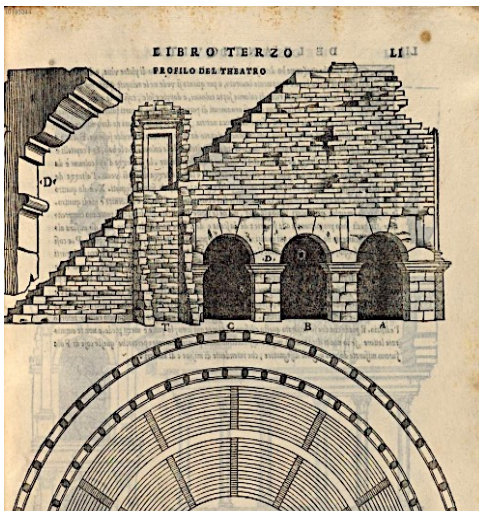

Figure 1.6. Serlio, 'Profilo del teatro', *Terzo libro*, p. 51.

The next page of Estienne's sketches can also be directly traced to Serlio's *Terzo libro*, in which Estienne describes the Corinthian designs on the stone of the classical theatre. He depicts nine drawings of details of theatre space, such as columns, arches and corners, which he again copies directly from Serlio's illustrations, even in their enumeration (cf. figs. 1.7 and 1.8):

[182]Again, this volume was printed in Venice in 1540, where Estienne was present and could easily acquire a copy. Sebastiano Serlio, *Il terzo libro di Sabastiano (sic) serlio Bolognese, nel qual si figurano, e descrivono le antiquità di Roma, e le altre che sono in Italia, e fuori d'Italia* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1540).

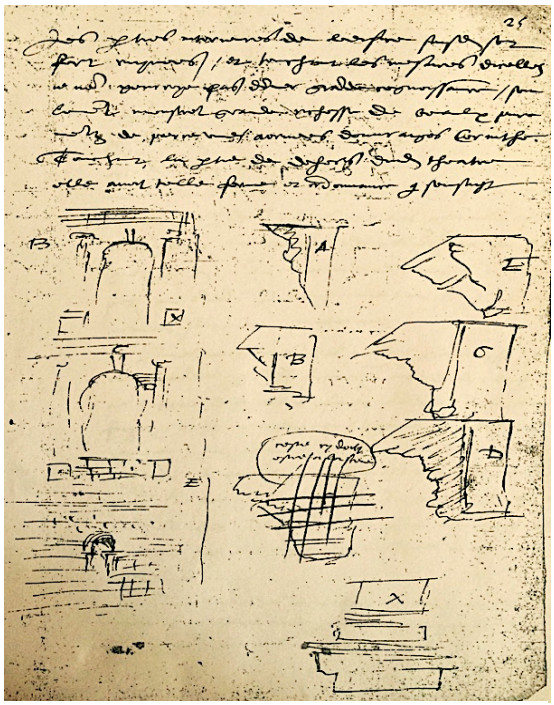

Figure 1.7. Fol. 25r, BAV.



Figure 1.8. Serlio, *Terzo libro*, p. 53.

In the passage introducing the sketches at the top of the page, Estienne writes that the theatre enjoys a 'grande richesse de beaulx parementz de pierre vive aornées d'ouvraiges corinthe'.[183] Thus as well as directly imitating the sketches from Serlio's *Terzo libro*, Estienne translates some of his text, since Serlio, too, introduces these illustrations by explaining that the theatre is 'molto ricco di ornamenti tutto di pietra viva, e di opera Corintia molto bene e riccamente lavorato'.[184]

[183] Fol. 25r, BAV.
[184] Serlio, *Terzo libro*, p. 52.

Another example of Estienne's pictorial imitations from the *Terzo libro* is the Ferento theatre. Estienne discusses the orchestra of the theatre as well as the angular pillars and the *cunei* dividing the audience (cf. figs. 1.9 and 1.10):

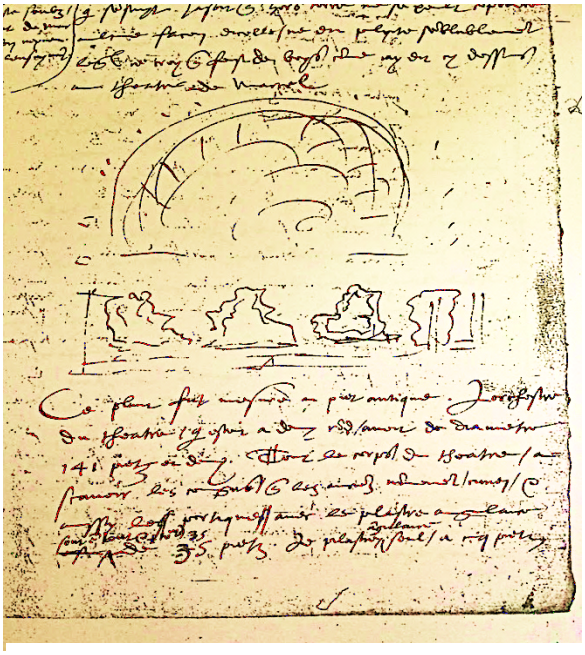

Figure 1.9. Transcription: 'Ce plan fut mesuré au piet antique. L'orchestre du theatre, qui estoit à demy rond, avoit de diametre 141 pietz et demy. Tout le corps du theatre, à sçavoir les coings, que les anciens nommoient cunei, et aussi les portiques avec le pilastre angulaire sont en tout et pour tout 35 pietz. Le pilastre angulaire seul a cinq pietz de chascun costé'. Fol. 22r, BAV.

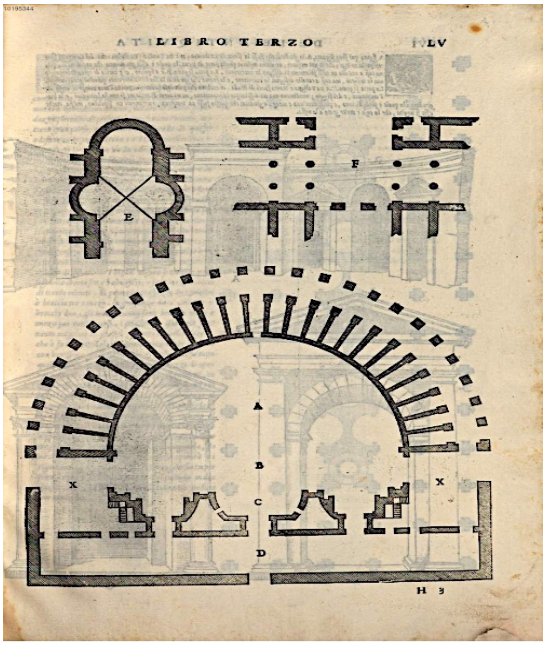

Figure 1.10. Serlio, *Terzo libro*, p. 55. The accompanying text on page 54 is as follows: 'Questa pianta fu misurata col piede antico, e prima parlando de la orchestra. A la quale di mezzo circolo, il suo diametro è piedi cento quaranta uno e mezzo, tutto al corpo del theatro, cioè i cunei con tutto il portico, e il pilastro angulare, è piedi trenta cinque. Il pilastro de l'angolo è piedi cinque per ogni lato'.

Estienne's translation is, as in the example of Corinthian architecture, mostly a word-for-word rendering of Serlio's original text, replicating the Italian architect's precise descriptions and measurements. In one marked difference, however, Estienne does provide a definition of the term 'cuneus', a detail which is absent from the original Italian text. 'Cuneo', a word already incorporated into Italian from the Latin, would have been easily understood by Serlio's Italian readers. However, a French readership would almost certainly be unfamiliar with this term, and so Estienne's clarification clearly attempts to provide for the needs of a French audience. These sketches and their accompanying descriptions did not

thus constitute a private exercise in drawing or in translation. By making his terminology comprehensible to a non-Italian-speaking public, it is evident that Estienne aimed to print his *Livre*, making available previously inaccessible or incomprehensible information on classical theatre to a French readership.

As a final example from Estienne's manuscript, it is worth considering a further description of the same theatre at Ferento (cf. figs. 1.11 and 1.12):

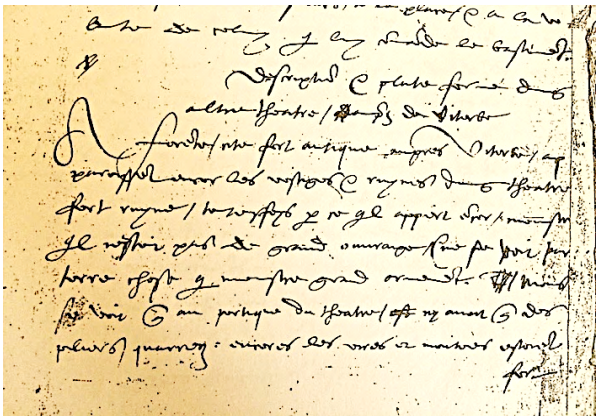

Figure 1.11. Transcription: 'A Ferente, cité fort antique aupres Viterbe apparoissent encor les vestiges et ruynes d'ung theatre fort ruyné, toutesfoys par ce qu'il appert encor monstre qu'il n'estoit pas de grand ouvraige, et ne se voit par terre chose qui monstre grand ornement. Mais se voit que au portique du theatre n'y avoit que des piliers quarrez: encores les vires et montoires estoient…'

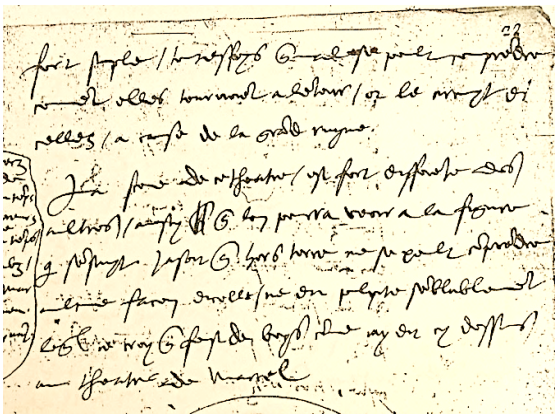

Figure 1.12. '… fort simple, toutesfoys que ne se peut comprendre comment elles tournoient à l'entour, ou le circuit d'icelles, à cause de la grande ruyne. La scene de ce theatre est fort differente des aultres, ainsi que l'on pourra veoir à la figure qui s'ensuyt. Jasoit que hors terre ne se peult comprendre aulcune façon d'icelle, ne du pulpitre semblablement lequel je croy que feust de boys comme j'ay dit cy dessus au theatre de Marcel', Fols. 22v–23r, BAV.

His description of the Ferento theatre is again a translation from the *Terzo libro*, which Estienne has rendered into French almost verbatim. Serlio's original passage is as follows:

> A Ferrento città molto antica presso a Viterbo sono li vestigi d'un theatro molto ruinato, e anche di poca opera, e di pochi ornamenti, per quanto si vede: percioche reliquie non ci sono, da le quali si possino comprender gli ornamenti, anzi si vede, che al portico del theatro erano palastri quadri, e anche le scale erano molto semplici, benche mal si comprende come stessero per le ruine loro. La scena di questo theatro è molto differente da le altre, come si vede ne la seguente pianta: ne sopra terra vi è in piede tanto, che si possa comprendere come stesse la scena, ne il pulpito.[185]

[185] Ibid., p. 54.

Estienne makes several short additions to his translation of this passage, which again appear to be aimed at providing further explanation for a French readership. 'Presso a Viterbo sono li vestigi d'un theatro molto ruinato' is, for example, translated as 'aupres Viterbe apparoissent encor les vestiges et ruynes d'ung theatre fort ruyné'. The addition of 'encor' appears to be accommodating for a French readership who may not know — like their Italian counterparts — that the Ferento theatre was still in existence. Again, Estienne is providing clarifications, translating Serlio's text *mutatis mutandis* to ensure its accessibility to a French readership. Estienne also adds at the end of this passage a reference to the Marcellus theatre in Rome, which he had sketched on a previous page. This illustration is — like several others in the *Livre* — absent from Serlio's edition. It is thus evident that Estienne was actively curating related drawings from other sources, or indeed inventing his own, with the aim of providing a comprehensive collection in French of illustrations of classical theatres.

The manuscript containing Estienne's sketches provides us with crucial evidence that he aimed to enrich the contemporary understanding of theatre space in France. His very venture of collating the most important theatre sketches of Serlio and others, accompanying them with informative and accessible descriptions, is a testament to his intention for classical theatre to be widely understood and accepted into contemporary French culture. Indeed, his decision to provide illustrations ensures that even an illiterate audience, or a readership which did not examine his text in detail, would be able to gain some understanding of ancient theatre in practice.[186] Estienne's interest in theatre space also shows, like several assertions made in his letter and treatise, that he was considering how comic theatre could be reinvented not only in written form but also in performance. In addition, Estienne's decision to use the Italians as his primary source of inspiration, and not the classical writers themselves, shows

[186] As Hester Lees-Jeffries posits, illustrations are also paratexts, which provide 'alternative points of entry to the text'. Hester Lees-Jeffries, 'Pictures, places, and spaces: Sidney, Wroth, Wilton House and the *Songe de Poliphile*', in *Renaissance Paratexts*, pp. 185–203 (p. 187).

that he held them in higher regard than we had heretofore estimated; clearly he considers the Italians to be contemporary authorities on theatre, having already understood and recreated the notion of an ancient stage. It is also evident that Estienne attempted to ensure the wider dissemination of Serlio's work, as he made his sketches and translated Serlio's notes some years before Serlio managed to put the *Terzo libro* into print in France. Whilst Estienne's drawings are rudimentary, I have no doubt that he wished to fulfil his promise of printing them, either improving on his own drawings or using Serlio's original illustrations.

Jean Martin, however, was swifter than Estienne in such an endeavour, translating the first five of Serlio's books into French in 1545 and accompanying them with Serlio's own sketches. Martin, who translated Sannazaro's *Arcadia* into French a year previously (cf. Introduction p. 14) may have been favoured over Estienne due to his position as the secretary of the Cardinal Robert de Lenoncourt, a friend and colleague of Serlio's patron Ippolito.[187] It is likely that Estienne thus deemed it unnecessary to print a guide focusing on classical theatre when much of his source material had already been produced in a more general edition. In any case, Estienne's manuscript provides fresh evidence that interest was being taken in classical theatre at an early stage in the century. Clearly he intended to popularise classical theatre in France, aiming not only for it to be understood, but also for it to be considered a literary category worthy of reinvention. This manuscript also underscores how Estienne utilised the Italians as a vital medium between ancient and contemporary, having already successfully revived the work of the ancient past to produce theatre in the present.

[187] Lenoncourt and d'Este had long been colleagues, having even been appointed as Cardinals on the same day — 20th December 1538 — by Pope Paul III. Cf. *The Papacy: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Philippe Levillain, 3 vols (London: Routledge, 2002) II, p. 1126.

Conclusion

Charles Estienne was the first French writer to make the case for the revival of comedy. He is thus a key figure in the history of humanist comic theatre. Acknowledging that some contemporary interest in comedy existed but that information about it was scant, Estienne both encourages playwrights to set their minds to writing comedy and provides a practical framework for its execution. This framework revolves mainly around the imitation of suitable exemplars: urging his contemporaries to surpass the work of medieval French comedians, he promotes the classical and Italian canon as exceptional models for imitation. As for the classical canon, Estienne stresses the utility of striking a balance between words and action and avoiding the verbosity or exaggeration of medieval drama; it is only through this balance, he claims, that the ancients were able to create their 'nouvelle comédie', which incited widespread pleasure. He also promotes classical *dispositio* in theatre — the use of acts, scenes, and intervals — proposing that French playwrights should take similar care when structuring their own comedies.

Nonetheless, emerging in contemporary discussions of *imitatio* was an emphasis on *aemulatio* — the notion of surpassing, rather than simply imitating, the achievements of one's predecessors. Estienne also suggests the possibility of improving on classical theatre, and to do so, he claims, it is imperative to look to another source: the Italians. Suggesting that the Italians have outdone the ancients in their use of prose over verse, he claims that their language in comedy is unrestricted and natural. In addition, he praises Italy's successful reinvention of professional comic performers, also taking inspiration from Italian writers in the function and utility of acts and scenes. In terms of theatrical space, he makes less use of Vitruvius than has previously been supposed, instead holding Serlio up as a paradigm, describing his comic set and imagining possible uses for it. He also draws on contemporary Italian comedies as inspiration for how this set could be employed, replicating a scene from

L'Amor Costante. In addition, his unpublished manuscript reveals that he aimed to produce a pictorial guide to classical theatres, mainly based on the work of Serlio, introducing the wider public to the space in which comedy could be performed.

Estienne's foray into the world of comedy reveals that, despite the claims of previous scholars (cf. Introduction pp. 2–3), there was an ongoing discussion about comic theatre during this early period. Estienne aimed not only to contribute to this discussion, providing information about comedy which was not previously available or understood, but also to inspire others to take up the cause of reinventing comic theatre. It is additionally evident from Estienne's prefatory material and from his manuscript that he considered the Italians to be crucial intermediaries between ancient and contemporary. Showing the Italians to be living proof that comedy could be revived in new languages and contexts — even improving in some respects on classical drama — he seeks to prove their value as immediate models which could help to establish comic theatre as an autonomous genre also in France.

Chapter 2: Comedy in the Mid-Sixteenth Century: Other Early Approaches

'Vous allez promener au mont de Parnasse avec les muses mignardes et par especial avec les Italiques.'
Jean-Pierre de Mesmes, 'Lettre du Traducteur', *La Comedie des Supposez* (1552)

Introduction

This second and final chapter of Part I turns from the single case study of Charles Estienne to a broader overview of the status of comedy during the 1540s and early 1550s. Continuing my focus on poetics, I evaluate the few discussions of drama printed in the years following Estienne's promotion of comedy, underlining the marked disparity between these other early approaches to comic theatre and noting the few parallels that can be drawn between them. As in Chapter 1, paramount to my study is an evaluation of the role of classical and Italian influence in these first discussions of comedy, and a further point of exploration will again be the status of comedy in relation to other theatrical practices. The series of questions which emerge, and to which I will attempt to provide answers in this chapter, are as follows: how did writers during this period engage with and present comic theatre in their various humanist works, and how do their views correspond with — or indeed contradict — Estienne's enterprises to reinvent the genre? What was their approach to classical and Italian models, and how important did they consider the relationship of ancient and transalpine comedy with its French counterpart? What do the theories and discussions of these first writers about drama ultimately reveal about the status of comedy at its earliest stages in France?

My corpus in this chapter consists of the first literary treatises in French to investigate comic theatre: Thomas Sébillet's *Art poétique françoyse* (1548)[188] and Joachim Du Bellay's

[188] Henceforth I shall refer to this work as the *Art poétique*. The edition referred to throughout this chapter is Thomas Sébillet, *Art poétique François*, ed. by Francis Goyet (Paris: Nizet, 1988).

Deffence, et illustration de la langue francoyse (1549).[189] Written with the aim of elevating French literature and culture, both treatises navigate their readerships through each major literary genre and advise on the most appropriate models for imitation. I also explore the prefatory material to the second French prose translation of an Italian comedy: Jean-Pierre de Mesmes's *La Comedie des Supposez* (1552).[190] Though little scholarly attention has been paid to the theatrical discussions of Sébillet and Du Bellay, even less interest has been taken in Mesmes's translation. This work has not been reprinted since the sixteenth century, with copies of its *editio princeps* increasingly rare: as a result, no study of its material has ever been produced.[191] In this thesis I employ the copy located and made available for my research by the British Library (cf. fig. 2.1), allowing me to evaluate for the first time Mesmes's prefatory letters, which shed new light not only on the status of comic theatre in mid-sixteenth century France but also on the role of its Italian paradigms.[192] The approaches to comic theatre expressed by each of the writers examined in this


LA COMEDIE
DES SVPPOSEZ DE M.
LOVYS ARIOSTE, EN ITA-
lien & François.
Auec priuilège du Roy.
A PARIS.
Par Eſtienne Groulleau, libraire demourant en
la rue Neuue noſtre Dame à l'enſeigne
Sainct Ian Baptiſte.
1552.

Figure 2.1. J.-P. de Mesmes, *La comedie des supposez de M. Louys Arioste, en italien et françoys (appended in an unidentified sixteenth-century hand: 'traduitte par Jean Pierre de Mesmes')*, (Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1552), British Library, London.

[189] Henceforth I shall refer to this work as the *Deffence*. The edition referred to throughout this chapter is Joachim Du Bellay, *La Deffence, et illustration de la Langue Francoyse* in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Richard Cooper, Francis Goyet, Olivier Millet, and others, 2 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), I.

[190] Henceforth I shall refer to this work as *Les Supposez*. The edition referred to throughout this chapter is Lodovico Ariosto, *La comedie des supposez de M. Louys Arioste, en italien et françoys*, trans. by Jean-Pierre de Mesmes (Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1552).

[191] Only eight copies appear to survive. As a future project I will consider the possibility of publishing this comedy in a modern edition.

[192] Whilst Émile Picot does refer to the first of these letters in *Les Français italianisants*, I, p. 302, he carries out no examination of the letter itself, providing only bibliographical details and a partial transcription.

chapter, who present comedy from entirely different ideological perspectives, create a fuller picture of the contentiousness and complexities inherent in the shifting status of comic theatre in France, further demonstrating that the transition from medieval theatrical forms to classically-inspired comedy was anything but straightforward.

1. Thomas Sébillet's *Art poétique* (1548)

The *Art poétique*, written by Thomas Sébillet (1512–1589), was the first attempt in France to compile a comprehensive treatise defining each major literary category. Treating in turn genres such as the sonnet, the ode, and the epistle, it explores how such writing is capable of elevating French culture and provides advice for readers who are turning their minds to these genres. As may be expected from a humanist, Sébillet presents a wide range of models for imitation from two main paradigms — the ancients and the Italians — often placing them in direct and unfavourable contrast with their medieval French successors. On rarer occasions, however, Sébillet can be described as a 'Marotique' in that he praises his immediate literary ancestors, proposing that some had already achieved the purpose of amplifying French literature: he commends, for example, their composition of the ballad and the *chant royal*. Nonetheless, we may still expect the *Art poétique* — the first commentary on drama in France since Estienne wrote his seminal treatise and letter —to follow Estienne's same line of argument, dismissing medieval theatre in favour of a comedy with clear ancient or Italian antecedents.

We find, however, that Sébillet places his entire section on comedy under the heading of 'La Farce'. The reader may still anticipate a diatribe against medieval theatre, especially since Sébillet opens his section by acknowledging that farce and French comedy have little in common: 'la Farce retient peu ou rien de la Comedie latine'.[193] Estienne had

[193] Sébillet, *Art poétique*, p. 164.

made a similar claim only five years earlier: 'Ce qu'[on] faict pour le present en telles matieres, ne sent rien moins que [la] comedie [de Terence]'.[194] However, whilst Estienne had made this statement in the hope of encouraging future playwrights to abandon the farce in favour of classical comedy, Sébillet's comment on the farce's distinction from classical comedy is not criticism, but praise. Sébillet — who had probably not read Estienne's treatise — subsequently explores three features of medieval theatre which, in his mind, make it superior to Greek or Roman comedy, and his arguments consistently contradict those put forward by Estienne, not only promoting the farce but also attempting to show the undesirability of reinventing its classical ancestor.

Sébillet's first criticism is of the *dispositio* of classical comedy, deeming its division into acts and scenes to be useless: 'Aussi a vray dire, pour ce a quoy elle sert, ne serviroient rien les actes et scenes'.[195] As we have seen, Estienne was not only the first to provide definitions of acts and scenes in the French language, but had also discussed their function, piecing together advice from Italian theoreticians to suggest that acts and scenes ensured that the stage was never left empty and that superfluous characters were left standing.[196] Additionally, Estienne had asserted that such a structure made way for intervals to be performed and for professional actors to entertain the audience. It is clear that Sébillet did not consider or accept any of these uses, and instead of replicating Estienne's exhortation for playwrights to transplant the classical *dispositio* into their farces, he describes the pointlessness of such a structure.[197] In a second criticism of classical comedy, Sébillet

[194] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 349.
[195] Sébillet, *Art poétique*, pp. 164–5.
[196] The notion of classical structure was by this stage clearly popularised by the second edition of Jacques Peletier du Mans's translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, printed in 1545 and far more prominent than the first. Horace, *L'Art Poétique d'Horace traduit en Vers François par Jacques II Peletier du Mans*, trans. by Jacques Peletier du Mans (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1545).
[197] A year later, François Rabelais also expresses displeasure at a comedy held at a banquet in Rome by the Cardinal d'Armagnac, which he deemed far too long: he complains of the 'longueur et mines Bergamasques assez fades'. He is thus extremely relieved that the festivities for the baptism of the Duke of Orléans lasted well into the night, which meant that the comedy planned for the occasion

denounces the ancients' verbosity, claiming that their plays contain a 'prolixité ennuieuse'.[198] In contrast, Estienne had in his treatise described the prolixity of some medieval theatrical forms, stating that playwrights had not yet managed to observe 'la maniere de taire et suplier';[199] he then praises the balance between words and action achieved by the ancients, suggesting that this equilibrium should be an example to writers of farce. Selecting, instead, the ancients' supposed verbosity as a target of attack, Sébillet evidently favours the action-based drama of the farce over any compromise between words and action achieved by classical comedians. In a third contradiction to Estienne, Sébillet denies the ability of the classical comedy to please. Asserting that the edifying function of the classical comedy greatly outweighs the playwright's intention to delight their audience,[200] he praises the liveliness and foolishness of medieval drama:

> Car le vray suget de la Farce ou Sottie Françoise, sont badineries, nigauderies, et toutes sotties esmouvantes à ris et plaisir. Le suget de la Comédie Gréque et Latine estoit tout autre: car il y avoit plus de Moral que de ris.[201]

As noted above, Estienne had set out a function of comedy as inciting 'plaisir et delectation', an end which would be achieved precisely by rejecting the 'badinage' of medieval drama, which he considered to have the opposite effect of prompting 'noyses et debatz'.[202] On the contrary, Sébillet, almost replicating Estienne's choice of wording, states that the 'badineries' of medieval drama are entirely able to please and delight — whereas their classical ancestors focus only on achieving a didactic end.

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could not in the end be performed. François Rabelais, 'La Sciomachie et festins faits à Rome au Palais de mon seigneur reverendissime le Cardinal Du Bellay, pour l'heureux naissance de mon seigneur d'Orleans', in *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 967-75 (p. 974).

[198] Sébillet, *Art poétique*, pp. 164–5.

[199] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 2.

[200] This may well be a reference to Aristotle's adage that literature must both teach and delight. Aristotle's *Poetics* — the eighth book of his *Politics* — had long been circulating in France, first printed in French over sixty years previously by Antoine Vérard: Aristotle, *Les Politiques*, trans. by Nicole Oresme (Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1486).

[201] Sébillet, *Art poétique*, p. 165.

[202] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 3.

Having set out the features which he judges to prove the superiority of farce to classical comedy, Sébillet makes a final attempt to show that medieval theatre deserves a place within contemporary French literature. Clearly aware that his treatise needs to appeal to a largely humanist readership, he begins to direct his argument for the continuation of medieval farce towards a supposed reliance on antiquity. Having denounced the classical comic models, he asserts that farce has other ancient roots: 'Nos Farces sont vrayement ce que les Latins ont appellé Mimes ou Priapées [...] pource toute licence et lascivie y estoit admise, comme elle est aujourd'huy en nos Farces'.[203] Though he argues that farce is directly inherited from the mime and *priapeia*, the farce has very little in common with the mime, other than its bawdiness,[204] and the *priapeia*, referring to a collection of erotic Latin poems possibly written by Ovid or Virgil, resembles the farce in no way other than its obscenity.[205] Sébillet is also wrong to imply that classically-inspired comedy does not allow 'licence et lascivie'; the comedies of Plautus, for example, are highly bawdy, and the reinvented Italian theatre of Bernardo Dovizi and Pietro Aretino could easily rival the French farce in its lewdness. It is clear from Sébillet's tenuous attempt to draw parallels between classical models and medieval comedy that he aimed to prove that farce was an ancient genre

[203] Sébillet, *Art poétique*, p. 165.
[204] Cicero is a major influence throughout other chapters in the *Art poétique*, and it is probable that Sébillet is replicating Cicero's description of the mime's lasciviousness. He neglects, however, Cicero's various observations that the mime is intensely witty, for example, only borrowing comments which support a parallel with the farce. Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. by Edward William Sutton, ed. by Harris Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), book II, line 259 and lines 273–74; Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*, ed. by David Roy Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), book VII, letter xi; Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum*, ed. by David Roy Shackleton Bailey (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1987), book XIV, letter ii. For a lengthier discussion on Cicero and the mime, cf. Costas Panayotakis, *Decimus Laberius: The Fragments* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010), p. 15.
[205] For several well overdue studies of the *priapeia*, cf. *Eros et Priapus: Erotisme et obscenité dans la littérature néo-latine*, ed. by Philip Ford and Ingrid De Smet (Geneva: Droz, 1997); see also *'Les vers du plus nul des poètes': nouvelles recherches sur les Priapées: actes de la journée d'étude organisée le 7 novembre 2005 à l'Université Lumière-Lyon II*, ed. by Frédérique Biville, Emmanuel Plantade, and Daniel Vallat (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, 2008).

already reinvented by the French — which would justify its place within literature from a humanist perspective.

Sébillet's approach to comic theatre is a clear backwards step from the exhortations of Estienne. Arguing for the continuation of medieval dramatic forms, which he sets out as superior to comedy, Sébillet in no way supports or promotes the reinvention of classical comic theatre; on the contrary, he undermines the possibility of recreating it on the contemporary stage. It may be that Sébillet was familiar with comedy only in the classroom, where it would have been used just for didactic purposes. Additionally, though he travelled briefly to Italy the year before he wrote the *Art poétique*, returning with Battista Fregoso's *Anteros* — which he later translated with the aim of enriching French language and culture — he may not have had the chance to witness any comedies there, which may account for his unusual lack of references to Italian sources.[206] His criticism of the structure and supposed verbosity and tediousness of classical comedy may then be explained by an unfamiliarity with how it could be reinvented in contemporary language and context or how it could be performed on stage. On the other hand, he was clearly familiar with and appreciated medieval theatre.[207] He must also have been aware of a threat to medieval dramatic forms, probably through the Parlement, whose members, as we saw in the Introduction (cf. p. 14) were negotiating an *arrêt* on the mystery play.[208] Most likely a

[206] In his prefatory letter of his translation of the *Anteros*, 'A tout Franc et débonnaire François', he promotes 'l'imitation [...] d'Italie, qui a tourné tous livres de toutes langues en la sienne vulgaire et maternelle', claiming that it would support the 'accroissement, l'enrichissement, et la splendeur de nostre Françoise langue'. Battista Fregoso, *Contramours: L'Anteros ou Contramour*, trans. by Sébillet (Paris: Martin le Jeune, 1581), pp. 4–5. Sébillet's translation is discussed throughout the collected volume *Anteros: actes du colloque de Madison*, ed. by Ullrich Langer, Jan Miernowski (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994).

[207] Many farces, such as the *Farce de la Pipée* (c. 1480) and the renowned *Pathelin*, centred around law or the courts, and as a lawyer himself, Sébillet may well have had a special appreciation for this dramatic form; he would also have been familiar with the Basochiens. Cf. Richard Cooper, 'Le Juge comme personnage littéraire à la Renaissance', in *L'intime du droit à la Renaissance*, ed. by Max Engammare, Alexandre Vanautgaerden (Geneva: Droz, 2014), pp. 451–77.

[208] Though Félix Gaiffe notes that the *arrêt* had already taken place by the time the *Art poétique* was printed, it did not in fact come into effect until November 1548, five months after Sébillet's work

combination of Sébillet's unfamiliarity with contemporary comedy and his appreciation for medieval dramatic styles, his discussion of comic theatre in the *Art poétique* is a defence of the farce which seeks to protect it and ensure its continuation onstage. At the same time, he strives to suppress classically-inspired comedy by presenting it as a prolix manual for teaching morals, providing no stimulus for its reinvention in France and seeking to prove its inferiority to the farce in every facet.

2. Joachim Du Bellay's *Deffence* (1549)

Like the *Art poétique*, this treatise by Du Bellay is focused on the reform of French literature, describing and promoting various literary categories with a view to elevating French language and culture.[209] Unlike Sébillet, however, nowhere does Du Bellay support the imitation of medieval genres;[210] instead he urges his readership to surpass such work, maintaining that the writings of his French literary ancestors 'corrompent le goust de nostre langue et ne servent sinon à porter tesmoignage de nostre ignorance'.[211] To bring glory or lustre — 'illustration' — to French language and culture,[212] writers must instead take inspiration from Greek, Latin and Italian sources: 'Je veux bien avertir ceux qui aspirent à

had gone to press. Sébillet, *Art poétique*, ed. by Félix Gaiffe (Paris Droz, 1932), p. 162, n. 2. Omitting the mystery from his section on theatre, however, Sébillet was surely aware of the current controversy surrounding religious performances.

[209] François Cornilliat has correctly noted that though the title of the *Deffence* may suggest its subject to be language, the focus of the treatise is in fact on literature. François Cornilliat, 'From "Defense and Illustration" to "Dishonor and Bastardization": Joachim Du Bellay on Language and Poetry', *Modern Language Notes*, 130.4 (2015), 730–56 (p. 732).

[210] Although Du Bellay never mentions Sébillet, it is widely thought that the *Deffence* was written as a caustic response to the *Art Poétique*. For a comparative discussion of the treatises of Sébillet and Du Bellay, cf. Joachim Du Bellay, *The Regrets, with the Antiquities of Rome, Three Latin Elegies, and The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language,* ed. and trans. by Richard Helgerson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 'Introduction', p. 5. Henrik de Noo also discussed the contention between the two theorists throughout his doctoral thesis: *Thomas Sébillet et son art poétique françoys: rapproché de la Déffence et illustration de la langue francoyse de Joachim Du Bellay* (Utrecht: unpublished doctoral thesis, Utrecht University, 1927).

[211] Du Bellay, *Deffence*, book 2, ch. 4, p. 54.

[212] Cf. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (New York: The Modern Library, 1934), p. 132; *The Regrets*, 'Introduction', p. 27.

ceste gloire d'immiter les bons aucteurs Grecz et Romains, voyre bien Italiens'.[213] Du Bellay praises, as Margaret Ferguson has outlined, the Italians' 'conversion to their maternal tongue', their ability to enrich not only Latin but also vernacular literature.[214] In some genres, Du Bellay concludes that the Italians have reinvented classical genres with exceptional success.[215] In the same way as Estienne had praised the Italians' reinvention of comedy by claiming that it was indistinguishable from the work of Terence,[216] Du Bellay asserts that the Italian epic — i.e., the *Orlando furioso* — equals its Greek and Roman models: '[Il faut] s'egaler aux superbes langues Greque et Latine, comme a faict de nostre Tens en son vulgaire un Arioste Italien que j'oseroy (n'estoit la saincteté des vieulx Poëmes) comparer à un Homere, et Virgile.'[217]

Unlike Sébillet, Du Bellay enjoyed the company of the foremost literati in France such as Jean Dorat, also forming part of the eminent literary circle which was to be known as the Pléiade. He should thus have been acutely aware of events discussed in the Introduction, such as the the *arrêt* of the mystery play, the 1548 performance of *La Calandra*, which took place in the weeks after Sébillet's treatise was printed, and the experimentation with classical theatre by humanists such as Baïf. Bearing in mind Du Bellay's elevated social connections as well as his overt opposition to medieval French writers and admiration of Italian models, we may expect Du Bellay's treatment of theatre to

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[213] Du Bellay, *Deffence*, book 1, ch. 4, p. 26. Du Bellay's attempt to delineate a space for the French national identity and to counteract the Italians as one of his main 'adversaries' — along with the issues inherent in his endeavour — is discussed throughout Marc Bizer's 'Qui a païs n'a que faire de "patrie": Joachim Du Bellay's Resistance to a French Identity', *Romanic Review*, 91.4 (2000), 375–95.

[214] Cf. Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 24.

[215] Much of Du Bellay's own treatise is imitated from the work of Italian humanist Sperone Speroni. Cf. Hassan Melehy, *The Poetics of Literary Transfer in Early Modern France and England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 24; Ignacio Navarrete, 'Strategies of Appropriation in Speroni and Du Bellay', *Comparative Literature*, 41.2 (1989), 141–54.

[216] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 9.

[217] Du Bellay, *Deffence*, book 2, ch. 5, p. 57.

be detailed and dynamic like the explorations of Estienne. Instead we find that he devotes just one sentence to drama:

> Quand aux Comedies, et Tragedies, si les Roys, et les Republiques les vouloint restituer en leur ancienne dignité, qu'ont usurpée les Farces, et Moralitez, je seroy' bien d'opinion, que tu t'y employasses, et si tu le veux faire pour l'ornement de ta Langue, tu scais ou tu en doibs trouver les Archetypes.[218]

Though his statement is brief, it does paint a general picture of Du Bellay's stance on theatre, and it is one which — contrary to the sweeping statements made by previous scholars — fully contradicts the viewpoint of Sébillet.[219] Firstly, Du Bellay is unambiguous in pushing for the reinvention of classical drama: his direct address and emphatic 'bien' ('je seroy' bien d'opinion, que tu t'y employasses') leaves no room for doubt that he considers its revival to be an important task. Secondly, he explicitly advises against the continuation of medieval forms, claiming that 'les Farces, et Moralitez' have usurped the 'ancienne dignité' of classical drama. Thirdly, he suggests that drama has the humanist potential to enrich the French language, advising writers to reinvent theatre 'pour l'ornement de ta Langue', before finally asserting that several obvious models must be imitated when seeking to reinvent classical theatre: 'Tu scais ou tu en doibs trouver les Archetypes'.

Whilst Du Bellay's argument for the reinvention of comic theatre is more forward-looking and humanist in nature than the exhortations of Sébillet, he is clearly reluctant to provide an in-depth discussion of theatre. His praise of the 'ancienne dignité' of classical theatre implies a direct and unfavourable opposition to its medieval successor; nonetheless, he fails to clarify or exemplify the nature of this 'dignité' or exactly how it should replace the farce or morality.[220] Similarly, though the *copia* — the varied register, lexis transplanted

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[218] Du Bellay, *Deffence*, book 2, ch. 4, p. 56.

[219] Marvin Carlson, for example, suggests that if Du Bellay had decided to write a chapter on theatre, 'it would probably not have differed radically from Sébillet'. Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 70.

[220] This statement is surrounded by ambiguity to this day. Donald Stone, for example, supposes it to mean dignity of expression or *copia* of rhetoric; it seems to me as though Du Bellay is advocating a

from classical drama, and broad range of colloquialisms and idioms in Italian comedy — was widely praised for having enriched the Italian language,[221] Du Bellay does not describe how theatre could similarly amplify French. Finally, whilst his 'Archetypes' no doubt refer — as they do throughout the *Deffence* — to the ancients and the Italians, Du Bellay implies that these models are common knowledge, failing to recommend specific writers or even a general canon for imitation. Elsewhere in the *Deffence* Du Bellay is far more specific regarding appropriate models: even in this same chapter he recommends, for example, the imitation of Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius for the elegy.[222] Indeed, it is only in his discussion of theatre that the generic term 'archetypes' appears. Though Terence was a prominent text used in French schools, Plautus was still the subject of little interest and Italian comedy — despite Estienne's treatise and letter — remained largely unknown in France.[223] Since dramatic models were clearly in need of greater definition, Du Bellay's implication that the reader would already recognise them appears to be deliberately opaque.

Du Bellay's denunciation of medieval comedy and promotion of its classical counterpart is a clear humanist statement. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that he knowingly glosses over several details which are crucial to his argument. His failure to set out practical guidelines or justifications for the reinvention of comedy — not to mention the very brevity of his discussion — suggests that, despite enjoying better social and literary connections than Sébillet, Du Bellay understood little about drama. There is no evidence in his treatise that he had encountered Estienne's prefatory material and he makes no allusion to the Italian

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balance between words and action in drama, replacing the action-based farce. Donald Stone, *French Humanist Tragedy: A Re-Assessment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), p. 67.

[221] An annotated edition of Pietro Aretino's *Il marescalco* (1533), for example, even indicates that comic drama was being used to teach new Italian words to native speakers. This is reproduced in Bianca Finzi-Contini Calabresi, '"Bawdy Doubles": Pietro Aretino's *Commedie* (1588) and the Appearance of English Drama', *Renaissance Drama,* 36 (2010), 207–35 (p. 220).

[222] Du Bellay, *Deffence*, book 2, ch. 4, p. 54.

[223] Cf. Marie Delcourt, *La Tradition des Comiques Anciens en France avant Molière* (Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1934), pp. 34–48.

performance of *La Calandra*, staged in Lyon as he began composing the *Deffence*. The example of Du Bellay underscores that even the most humanist and pro-Italianist of Paris's literary circles was failing to devote attention to the reinvented comedy which was enjoying such success in Italy. Du Bellay's discussion of theatre conforms to humanist rhetoric only on the surface, and whilst his suggestion for the writer to reject medieval comedy in favour of its ancient or Italian ancestor is consistent with his other instructions for literary reform in the *Deffence*, it contains no real substance and does little to alleviate the widespread 'ignorance' of which he complains earlier in the same chapter.

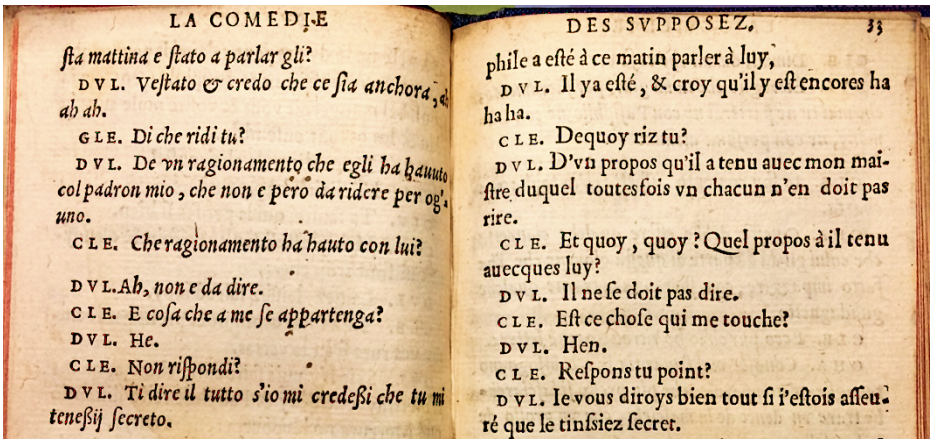
3. Jean-Pierre de Mesmes's *Les Supposez* (1552)

Though he is relatively unknown today, Mesmes was arguably France's leading Italianist in the mid-sixteenth century. His 1548 handbook to Italian grammar, *La Grammaire italienne, composée en Françoys*, met with immediate success and was reprinted in various editions across France until well into the 1700s, becoming the most famous foreign guidebook to the Italian language.[224] He composed his own acclaimed poetry in Italian and was also celebrated for his ability to speak the language: his peer Olivier de Magny asserts that Mesmes's elegant and nuanced Italian could rival even that of native speakers: 'Il [est] capable de congnoistre toutes les délicatesses de ceste langue estrangère, et mesme de la parler et de l'escrire avec autant de grâce et d'ornement que s'il fust né sur les rives du Pau ou sur les bords du Tybre'.[225] Though Mesmes never mentions living in Italy in his writings,

[224] Jean-Pierre de Mesmes, *La Grammaire italienne, composée en Françoys* (Paris: Gilles Corrozet, 1548). For more information on the reception of Mesmes's *Grammaire*, cf. Nicole Bingen, 'Sources et Filiations de la *Grammaire italienne* de Jean-Pierre de Mesmes', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 46.3 (1984), 633–38 (p. 633).

[225] Olivier de Magny, *Hymne sur la naissance de Madame Marguerite de France, fille du roy Henri II, en l'an 1553, par Olivier de Magny, avec quelques lyriques de luy* (Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1553). For a lengthier discussion of this quote, cf. Guillaume Colletet, *Vie de Jean-Pierre de Mesmes* (Paris: M. Ph. Tamizey de Larroque, 1878), p. 14.

his expert knowledge of the language and his dedications to a series of distinguished Italian humanists indicate that he spent a great deal of time there and was very well connected.[226] His command of Italian also brought him into close contact with France's leading literati. Invited to write a preliminary sonnet for Pierre de Ronsard's *Odes* (1550), he collaborated with other Pléiade members for Ronsard's *Le Tombeau de Marguerite de Valois*, translating its Latin poetry into Italian whilst others focused on Greek and French translations.[227] In 1552 his *Les Supposez* was printed, a French translation of Ariosto's comedy *I Suppositi.* This is the second French translation into prose of an Italian comedy following Estienne's, and is the earliest example of an Italian-French parallel text, its Italian printed verso and the corresponding French translation recto (cf. fig. 2.2).



LA COMEDIE

ſta mattina e ſtato a parlar gli?
DVL. *Veſtato & credo che ce ſia anchora, eh ah ah.*
CLE. *Di che ridi tu?*
DVL. *De vn ragionamento che egli ha hauuto col padron mio, che non e però da ridere per ogni uno.*
CLE. *Che ragionamento ha hauto con lui?*
DVL. *Ah, non e da dire.*
CLE. *E coſa che a me ſe appartenga?*
DVL. *He.*
CLE. *Non riſpondi?*
DVL. *Ti dire il tutto s'io mi credeßi che tu mi teneßij ſecreto.*

DES SVPPOSEZ. 33

phile a eſté à ce matin parler à luy,
DVL. Il ya eſté, & croy qu'il y eſt encores ha ha ha.
CLE. Dequoy riz tu?
DVL. D'vn propos qu'il a tenu auec mon maiſtre duquel toutesfois vn chacun n'en doit pas rire.
CLE. Et quoy, quoy? Quel propos à il tenu auecques luy?
DVL. Il ne ſe doit pas dire.
CLE. Eſt ce choſe qui me touche?
DVL. Hen.
CLE. Reſpons tu point?
DVL. Ie vous diroys bien tout ſi i'eſtois aſſeuré que le tinſsiez ſecret.

Figure 2.2. Example of Italian-French parallel text. Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, 2.4, pp. 32v and 33r.

Though Mesmes's aptitude for Italian ensured his renown, the prefatory letter to his *Grammaire*, addressed to the 'Amateurs de la Langue Tuscane', indicates that his aim was not to gain fame through his linguistic acumen; rather, he was more interested in facilitating France's rising interest in Italian language and culture. He advises his readership that an

[226] The *Grammaire*, for instance, is dedicated to the 'Messire Hector Fregose Evesque d'Agen', the son of eminent Italian diplomat and scholar Cesare Fregoso. Cf. Picot, *Les Français italianisants*, I, p. 298.
[227] Mesmes's translation of Ronsard's Latin poetry is discussed in Philip Ford, *The Judgement of Palaemon: The Contest between Neo-Latin and Vernacular Poetry in Renaissance France* (Boston: Brill, 2013). pp. 127–59.

Italian speaker in France is held in especially high esteem, reminding them that Italian is the most useful language in business and commerce:

> Je priseray beaucoup un Gentilhomme Françoys, un marchand, et tout homme de lettres, qui sçait et entend les langues Italienne, Germanique, et Angloise: et par especial la premiere, comme celle qui est [...] pour le jour d'huy plus commode pour les affaires de la rep. Françoyse, et Italienne.[228]

As well as encouraging his readers to embrace Italian language and literature for personal and commercial reasons, Mesmes uses his letter as a form of cultural diplomacy between France and Italy. Describing the Greek and Roman nations, he praises their decision to learn the other's language with the dual aim of enriching their own culture and maintaining a harmonious relationship: 'Les enfants Romains [...] parvenuz en age employoient la meilleure partie de leurs ans aux letres Græques, tant pour enricher les Latines, que pour entretenir en bonne amytié la gent Græque'.[229] He draws parallels with the present-day relationship between France and Italy — in many writings, synonymous with Tuscany at this time — whose peoples, he claims, have enjoyed a mutual elevation of their cultures, given that they have exchanged highly different languages and characteristics:

> D'avantage celà me fait dire, et quasi affirmer, que non sans cause on a ceu et voit on encor' entre les Françoys et florentins une amytié ferme et ancienne, laquelle n'eust esté si entiere, estants leurs langages autant differents, que leurs meurs et facons de faire.[230]

Mesmes paints a portrait of unity and synthesis between Italy and France, promoting the importance of linguistic and literary exchange since, he asserts, both cultures have much to learn from one another. Whilst his *Grammaire*, then, is doubtless aimed at facilitating the widespread learning of the Italian language, a secondary purpose of his guidebook is to maintain and enhance the cultural alliance between France and Italy, encouraging the influx of Italian literature and language into France, and vice versa.

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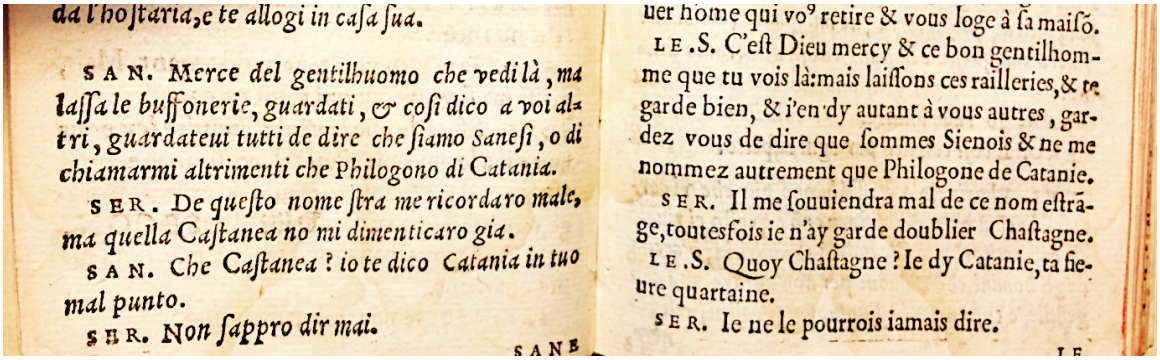
[228] Mesmes, *Grammaire*, 'Aux Amateurs de la Langue Tuscane', pp. 2–3.
[229] Ibid., p. 3.
[230] Ibid., p. 3.

It may thus be assumed that Mesmes's translation of Ariosto's comedy forms part of his bid to cultivate this mutual linguistic and cultural benefit. Estienne had already put forward the possibility of enriching French literature with the comedy recently reinvented in Italy, and Du Bellay had also briefly referred to the ability of theatre to elevate the French language. Indeed, the very endeavour of creating the first prose translation of Ariosto — the great reinventor of the epic — seems in itself to be imitating Italian culture with the aim of enhancing its French counterpart. Nonetheless, there is no evidence in the translation itself that Mesmes intended to elevate the French language. Whilst he translates the original Italian highly faithfully, he introduces no Italianate neologisms into French, even where it may be prudent to include some new terms. For example, he translates the Italian 'cavilloso' into 'cautelleux', which does not capture exactly the same meaning: this could have been replaced with a gallicised term, thus introducing a new Italianate word into French and enriching the language.[231] Many other contemporary French writers were filling their work with Italian-inspired words, and Du Bellay had throughout his *Deffence* recommended the importation of neologisms from other languages as fundamental to elevating French. Certainly, however, Mesmes himself does not capitalise on this opportunity.

As for enriching French culture, Mesmes's aforementioned prefatory letters, the first to his cousin, the renowned humanist and statesman Henri de Mesmes, and the second to the reader, allow us a fresh outlook on Mesmes's approach to comedy and to cultural elevation. His letter to Henri de Mesmes opens with a disclosure that he had completed his translation of Ariosto as a young student, subsequently forgetting about it: 'En revisitant ces jours passez les vieilles compositions de ma premiere jeunesse, je trouvay (sans y penser) la presente traduction'.[232] Whilst it may be tempting to conclude that the comedy would be

[231] Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, 1.3, pp. 17v–18r.
[232] Ibid., p. 1.

juvenile and unpolished, this is not the case. We see throughout Mesmes's text that, when working on this translation, he already had an impressive grasp of Italian and is able to translate a wide variety of registers, idioms and wordplay with very few errors (cf. fig. 2.3):



da l'hoſtaria, e te allogi in caſa ſua.

SAN. Merce del gentilhuomo che vedi là, ma laſſa le buffonerie, guardati, & coſi dico a voi altri, guardateui tutti de dire che ſiamo Saneſi, o di chiamarmi altrimenti che Philogono di Catania.

SER. De queſto nome ſtra me ricordaro male, ma quella Caſtanea no mi dimenticaro gia.

SAN. Che Caſtanea? io te dico Catania in tuo mal punto.

SER. Non ſappro dir mai.

SANE

uer home qui vo⁹ retire & vous loge à ſa maiſõ.

LE.S. C'eſt Dieu mercy & ce bon gentilhomme que tu vois là: mais laiſſons ces railleries, & te garde bien, & i'en dy autant à vous autres, gardez vous de dire que ſommes Sienois & ne me nommez autrement que Philogone de Catanie.

SER. Il me ſouuiendra mal de ce nom eſtrãge, toutesfois ie n'ay garde doublier Chaſtagne.

LE.S. Quoy Chaſtagne? Ie dy Catanie, ta fieure quartaine.

SER. Ie ne le pourrois iamais dire.

LE

Figure 2.3. To take one example, when the 'Servo' in the Italian repeatedly mistakes 'Catania' (the city) for 'Castanea' (chestnut), Mesmes innovates in the French with another malapropism, replacing 'Catanie' with 'Chastagne', again meaning chestnut. This is a nuance which a young student of Italian working on a hasty and easily forgotten translation may not have been able to grasp. Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, 2.2, pp. 28v and 29r.

Mesmes's translation is not the work of a novice, and it is highly likely that he edited the work before it went to print. As such, it is probable that Mesmes's comment is not a genuine confession of having worked quickly or as a young and inexperienced student, but a statement forming part of the modesty topos which was widely executed during these years, a form of *captatio benevolentiae* primarily aimed at protecting the writer from the censure of his readers. Usually employed when engaging with a little-known literary genre or one which could attract controversy,[233] Mesmes's rhetoric of humility defends his decision to translate comedy — as a 'vieille composition de [sa] premiere jeunesse' — and forestalls a critical reaction, indicating both that comic theatre had received little attention and that fellow humanists were still unconvinced that it deserved a place within French literature. Nonetheless, Mesmes's letter to his cousin does indicate that there was a market for comedy:

[233] For an informative discussion of the modesty topos used for such a purpose during these years, cf. Susanna De Schepper, '"For the Common Good and for the National Interest": Paratexts in English Translations of Navigational Works', in *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print and Culture in Britain, 1473–1640*, ed. by Sara Barker, Brenda Hosington (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 185–208 (p. 207).

he states that he is printing the work in order to 'donner [...] contentement aux curieux espritz'.[234] Despite his false humility and pre-emptive apology, comic theatre clearly remained a subject of some interest, at least amongst literary circles. Mesmes's claim that he is fulfilling some sort of societal demand or interest in comedy — reminiscent of Estienne's claim a decade previously — certainly points to his hope that it may be favourably received, and possibly accepted as a new genre within French culture.[235]

Still bearing in mind the potential of comedy to enrich French culture, also evident from Mesmes's prefatory material is his emphasis on the role of the Italians in reinventing comic theatre. The very title of his translation — *La comedie des supposez de M. Louys Arioste* — stresses its Italian roots, and his letter to Henri de Mesmes closes by reminding his cousin of their mutual love of Italian literature and culture, promising that the reading of this comedy will allow him access to a higher plane, inhabited by the Italian models: 'Vous allez promener au mont de Parnasse avec les muses mignardes et par especial avec les Italiques, lesquelles vous sont familieres et privées, voire autant ou plus que les Grecques et Latines'.[236] Mesmes's references to the Muses follows the convention popularised by Pindar and later classical poets, who invoke the inhabitants of Parnassus for poetic inspiration, a conceit widely employed by early modern French writers.[237] Claiming that in reading the

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[234] Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, p. 1. Jean Balsamo's statement — possibly informed by its small print numbers — that Mesmes's translation was intended to be 'confidentiel' can thus be rejected. Jean Balsamo, *Rencontres des muses*, p. 54.

[235] 'Plusieurs me semblent beaucoup travaillez à entendre la rayson et maniere des Comedies anciennes'. Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 349.

[236] Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, p. 1.

[237] Clément Marot, for example, claims that 'plus d'esprits de noble Poesie' had sprung forth from the 'double Mont des Muses'. Clément Marot, 'Enfer', in 'Opuscules', *Œuvres de Clément Marot*, ed. by Alfred Philibert-Soupé, 2 vols (Lyon: Louis Perrin, 1869), I, line 388, p. 63. Ronsard too aspires to reach the summit of Parnassus, opening his ambitious *Franciade* by invoking Calliope to oversee his work: 'Muse qui tiens les sommets de Parnasse, / Guide ma langue, et me chante la race / Des Roys Françoys yssuz de Françion'. Pierre de Ronsard, *La Franciade*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Paul Laumonier, Raymond Lebègue, and Isidore Silver, 18 vols (Paris: Nizet, 1983), XVI, lines 1–3, p. 46. More general information on the early modern treatment of the Muses can be found in Stella Purce Revard, *Pindar and the Renaissance Hymn-Ode, 1450–1700* (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).

comedy, his cousin will be able to ascend Parnassus 'avec les Italiques', Mesmes is elevating the Italians to the most prominent literary position, depicting them as founts of inspiration which, when embraced by the French, will allow them to elevate their own culture. As well as advising the French to look to the Italian comic paradigm, he goes so far as to place the Italians above the classical model: they are 'familieres et privées, voire autant ou plus que les Grecques et Latines'. It is perhaps not surprising that Henri de Mesmes, also an enthusiast of Italian culture and upcoming French representative of Siena,[238] favoured Italian literature over its ancient counterpart. Still, Mesmes's decision to preface *Les Supposez* by commending Italian writings above others — also placing them at the very summit of Parnassus — acts as a vital reminder of their literary success, predisposing French readers to the newly reinvented Italian comedy.

Mesmes's prefatory letters indicate two final features he considered significant in comedy. Describing classical comedy as 'delectable', just as Estienne had illustrated its potential to induce 'delectation',[239] Mesmes promises that it will distract his cousin from the burdensome study of law: '[je l'ay mis] en lumiere avec sa source Italienne pour donner [...] à vous plus de passetemps, mesme quant serez ennuyé de l'estude de la tetrique Jurisprudence qui demande (comme j'ay tousjours ouy dire) l'homme tout à soy'.[240] Mesmes thus emphasises, like Estienne, the potential of comedy to evoke pleasure, in contradiction to Sébillet's assertions that it can only be edifying. A second feature put forward in his prefatory material — this time in his letter to the readers — is the importance of paraphrase over translation. In the same way as Estienne had used images of 'subjection' and 'contrainte' when translating classical comedy into verse,[241] Mesmes states that his

[238] For more information on Henri de Mesmes's interests and connections, cf. Janet Espiner-Scott, 'Note sur le cercle de Henri de Mesmes et sur son influence', in *Mélanges offerts à M. Abel Lefranc par ses élèves et ses amis*, ed. by Jacques Lavaud (Paris: Droz, 1936), pp. 354–58.
[239] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 3.
[240] Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, p. 1.
[241] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 2.

translation does not correspond 'mot pour mot à l'Italien [...] car le Traducteur ne s'est voulu tant assubiettier ny contraindre'.[242] Drawing on the same allegory of freedom and constraint as Estienne, it is clear that Mesmes also wished to embrace some freedom whilst translating comedy. However, since he does translate highly faithfully, it is clear that his allegory is not intended to suggest that he has introduced new words, characters, or plotlines into his translation. Bearing in mind that Mesmes had made a conscious decision to translate the original prose and not Ariosto's revised verse edition of *I Suppositi*,[243] it is more likely that Mesmes's allegory is focused, like Estienne's, on drawing attention to his use of Italianate prose rather than classical verse. An innovation in itself, Mesmes follows Estienne's suggestion to use prose, thus making available in France a second Italian comedy in this new style.

Though the comments Mesmes makes in his prefatory letters certainly shed some light on his stance on comic theatre, in the end he provides little specific information about the genre, and no further parallels can be drawn between Estienne's paratextual material and Mesmes's own. He does not utilise Italian comedy to enrich the French language, and though he indicates that comic theatre commanded some interest, he never overtly states that he aims to elevate French culture with comedy. Similarly, though he places the Italians in the highest position in terms of their literary achievements, also emphasising the potential of comedy to evoke pleasure, he does not explicitly encourage his readers to imitate their comic writings. We cannot thus state with certainty that Mesmes's translation was founded on the humanist objective of enriching French language or culture and, though Mesmes spent his

[242] Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, p. 6.
[243] Ariosto had rendered his comedy into verse with the aim of producing a work more faithful to the classics. The notion that Terence's comedies were in verse and not prose was a conclusion reached by Italian humanists only several years before Ariosto wrote his prose version, the discovery of which he may not have been aware. Cf. Martin McLaughlin, 'The Recovery of Terence in Renaissance Italy: From Alberti to Machiavelli', in *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance*, ed. by Tom Earle, Catarina Fouto (London: Legenda, 2015), pp. 115–39.

career trying to create a linguistic and literary alliance between France and Italy, the prefatory material to his translation of *I Suppositi* does not overtly promote the popularisation of Italian comedy in France.

Neither must we overlook the volume's status as a parallel text, since it is possible that Mesmes primarily intended this comedy to be used as a language-learning manual. French-Latin parallel texts had, in the early sixteenth century, proved to be a useful method of language-learning;[244] it is possible that Mesmes was experimenting with Italian comedy, which contained relatively colloquial language and an entertaining subject, as a means of enhancing the Italian language tools available in France.[245] Indeed, *Les Supposez* was reprinted later in the century with its title modified to reflect its language-learning properties: *La comedie des supposez de M. Louys Arioste, italien et françois. Pour l'utilité de ceux qui desirent sçavoir la langue italienne* (1585).[246] Estienne had attempted to override the sole use of comedy as a means of teaching language, emphasising the worth of Terence's plays in their own right, and the potential function of *Les Supposez* as a language-learning manual still clearly overshadows the notion that comic theatre is worthy of being regarded as an autonomous literary genre. Nonetheless, whilst Mesmes may not have set out to reinvent comic theatre in France by proxy of the Italians, we must bear in mind that *Les Supposez* is still only the second prose translation of an Italian comedy into French. Widening France's corpus of literary material and facilitating the apparent interest in drama, the translation itself is a significant contribution to French theatre, marking another step forward in the world of comedy.

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[244] Cf. Valerie Worth-Stylianou, 'Reading Monolingual and Bilingual Editions of Translations in Renaissance France', in *Translation and the Transmission of Culture between 1300 and 1600*, ed. by Jeanette Beer, Kenneth Lloyd-Jones (Kalamazoo: Kalamazoo Press, 1995), pp. 331–58.

[245] Still, though in his *Grammaire* he gives several examples from the work of Petrarch and Boccaccio, nowhere does he draw on comedy to illustrate his points.

[246] Lodovico Ariosto, *La comedie des supposez de M. Louys Arioste, italien et françois. Pour l'utilité de ceux qui desirent sçavoir la langue italienne*, trans. by Jean-Pierre de Mesmes (Paris: Hierosme de Marnef, 1585).

Conclusion

In the theoretical or prefatory writings of the 1540s and early 1550s it is possible to document a distinct variety of viewpoints about comic theatre. The literary treatises and prefatory material of Estienne's successors — whilst they do not all fully reject his appeal for comic theatre to be reinvented — do little to support or promote comedy, showing few signs that they had agreed with or even read his appeals. Though their treatment of comedy additionally indicates that the public maintained an interest in the genre, none of these mid-century writers put forward a thoughtful or systematic set of advice for the writing of comic drama in the way that Estienne had done, nor do they actively encourage their readership to turn their minds to the genre. Similarly, though both of our later writers lean towards suggesting the imitation of classical and Italian theatrical sources, neither explicitly advise it, and our first theoretician strongly advises against such imitation. Furthermore, whereas Estienne had recognised and explored the stageworthiness of comedy, the genre is treated by Sébillet, Du Bellay, and Mesmes as belonging firmly on paper.

There is as such no neat way of mapping a correlation amongst the stances taken by these early writers towards comedy. Sébillet clearly favours medieval drama over comedy, setting out arguments for the superiority of medieval forms of theatre and falsely asserting that the farce has classical roots in a bid to justify its continuation to his humanist readership. Though Du Bellay stresses the importance of creating new genres in France, we find just one sentence devoted to theatre, and though he promotes the imitation of classical and Italian sources, he makes no references to any specific models and provides no helpful advice for the writing of comic drama. As for Mesmes's translation of *I Suppositi* along with its little-known letters, though Mesmes does mention that the public is interested in comedy and also emphasises the achievements of the Italians, nowhere does he attempt to justify the status of comedy as an autonomous literary genre, and he does not explore the potential of Italian

comedy to enrich French literature. As we have seen, it is also possible that Mesmes intended the text to be used simply as a language-learning manual.

As we have explored, these writers may have had little experience with comedy. Even Mesmes, who had spent time in Italy, may not have had the chance to see one performed, and it is unlikely that Sébillet or Du Bellay had encountered comedy outside of the classroom. Such an unfamiliarity may well account for their highly diverse approaches, with Sébillet promoting medieval farce and denouncing classical comic theatre, Du Bellay showing insincere support for comedy without assessing the practicalities or need for its reinvention, and Mesmes providing a full-length translation of an Italian comedy with no consideration of the part it might play within French literature. There was no cohesive approach to comic theatre during this period, and we can situate no neat continuity or linear development of the genre — as proposed by scholars such as Émile Chasles or Geoffrey Brereton[247] — since Estienne put forward his bid in the early 1540s. Strongly emerging from this study is the notion that Estienne's endeavour to promote the reinvention of comedy in France was an anomaly: overlooked by later humanists, it failed in its attempt to prove the significance of comic theatre in France. Also clear is that, by the mid-sixteenth century, even the foremost French literati had little understanding of or interest in comedy. As we shall see in Part II, it remained for the Italian colony in France to make a significant impact in establishing comic theatre as an autonomous literary genre: performance, and not poetics, was to substantiate the creation of comedy as a valuable humanist endeavour.

[247] Chasles, *La comédie en France*; Brereton, *French Comic Drama*.

Part II

The Performance of Comic Drama in Renaissance France (1548–1558)

Chapter 3: From Page to Stage: The Italian Influence

'Circa alla soddisfatione della comedia, non pur sua Maestà che lo disse piu d'una volta, ma ancora i Signori e Gentilhuomini di Corte per una voce tutti affermavano non haver mai veduto il piu bello spettacolo.'
Francesco Mazzei, 'La magnifica et triumphale entrata del christianiss. re di Francia' (1549)

Introduction

Chapter 3 moves from poetics to performance, leaving behind the theoreticians and translators of Part I to assess the impact of the Italian presence in France on comedy. Its central focus will be on the 1548 performance of *La Calandra*, written in around 1507 by Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena (1470–1520).[248] Acted in the original Italian, this performance took place in Lyon as part of the celebrations organised for the royal entry of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici, the new queen consort of France. It is one of the earliest performances of a comedy in France and is the first to be properly documented, since we know very little about the aforementioned 1541 and 1542 carnival comedies (cf. Introduction, p. 12). Analysing the little-known paratextual material surrounding this performance of *La Calandra*, I provide a close study of this seminal production, seeking to identify the ways in which it correlates with earlier French appeals for the reinvention of comedy, the features and concepts it introduces into the sphere of French theatre, and the methods used by the play's Italian organisers to ensure its success. Additionally, I consider the role of Italian patrons such as Catherine de' Medici in inaugurating such performances in France, also examining the part played in this endeavour by Catherine's Italian supporters at the Court,

[248] Though this play has in previous scholarship been referred to both as *La Calandra* and as *La Calandria*, Giorgio Padoan, in the most authoritative edition of the play, has argued convincingly for the former, and so I shall refer to the play as *La Calandra* throughout. Cf. Bibbiena, *La Calandra: commedia elegantissima per Messer Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, testo critico annotato a cura di Giorgio Padoan* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1985), 'Introduction', p. 5.

with a particular focus on Ippolito d'Este and the growing Florentine colony in Lyon. Several key questions will form the basis of my argument in this chapter: how important were the Italians in France in reviving comedy, and what were their intentions for inaugurating the production for the 1548 entry? Why was *La Calandra*, one of the first comedies to be performed outside of Italy, of especial importance in reinventing the genre in France? What literary and conceptual features of comic theatre did *La Calandra* first put into practice across the border, and how were these innovations received by their French spectators?

My corpus in this chapter consists of several little-known accounts of the entry, reproduced in Richard Cooper's indispensable volume *The Entry of Henri II into Lyon: September 1548*.[249] Maurice Scève's *livret* commemorating the Lyon entry has proved to be a particularly useful account,[250] as well as its long-forgotten Italian translation, which comprises a lengthy section on the production of *La Calandra* absent from Scève's original.[251] Although the translator is listed on the title page only as F.M., Cooper has convincingly argued that these initials stand for Florentine merchant Francesco Mazzei, and so in this chapter the translator is referred to by this name.[252] As well as Scève's indispensable *livret* and its Italian translation, other contemporary accounts, such as bulletins and letters, will be valuable in this first in-depth analysis of the performance. My exploration of these materials is essential not only in creating a fuller picture of the production of *La Calandra* in France and of the role of the Italians in this enterprise, but also in helping us to

[249] Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, ed. by Cooper.
[250] Scève, *La magnificence de la superbe et triumphante entree de la noble et antique Cité de Lyon faicte au Treschrestien Roy de France Henry deuxiesme de ce nom, et à la royne Catherine son Espouse le XXIII. de Septembre M.D.XLVIII* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1549). Provided as a facsimile in Cooper, *Entry of Henri II*, pp. 161–249.
[251] Francesco Mazzei, *La magnifica et triumphale entrata del christianiss. re di Francia Henrico secondo, Colla particulare descritione della Comedia che fece recitare in Lione la Natione Fiorentina a richiesta di sua Maestà Christianissima* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1549). Provided as a facsimile in Cooper, *Entry of Henri II*, pp. 249–75.
[252] Cf. Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 139.

understand the Italian impact on the broader development of comic theatre at the Court and beyond.

1. Theatrical Celebrations and the Italian Influence

We saw in the Introduction that by 1548 humanist theatre had in some measure already emerged at the French Court (cf. Introduction pp. 13–14); we also explored the rapid acceleration in Italian literary dominance during these years, coinciding with the rise to power of Catherine and the arrival of her supporters (cf. Introduction p. 23). However, as well as leading the way for France regarding humanist literature, Italians were also forerunners in terms of festivities. The Medici family were particularly well known for their elaborate celebrations, often comprising a minimum of one classically-inspired theatrical performance, seen to be a mode of excellent hospitality similar to that offered by the Greeks and Romans.[253] It had long been customary in France to perform *saynètes* — short theatrical pieces — along the route of a royal entry;[254] however, following the precedent set by the ancients and revived by the Italians, we witness an entirely new emphasis placed on theatre with classical elements for this 1548 entry.

Arriving several days before Catherine, Henri was greeted by crowds of Lyon's inhabitants and regaled with games, religious services, and feasts. He was also entertained with several theatrical productions, all boasting classical or Italian roots. A mythological play was acted portraying the Roman goddess Diana hunting a lion, the symbol of the city:

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[253] For a comprehensive study of these early performances, cf. Alois Maria Nagler, *Theatre Festivals of the Medici, 1539–1637* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

[254] François I, for example, had witnessed 'farces et comedies de matières joyeuses' a decade previously, performed for his entry into Villers-Cotterêts. Léon de Laborde, *Les Comptes des Bastiments du Roi*, 2 vols (Paris: Libraire de la Société, 1880), II, p. 270. However, as Alan Knight has shown, the players were a group of 'joueurs de farces et moralitez', and the claim that they acted 'comedies' was almost certainly erroneously made by a court clerk. Knight, *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 45.

this is an early attempt at staging a play in the pastoral style of the Italian writer Jacopo Sannazaro. A second, more sophisticated fight subsequently featured 'douze Gladiateurs', for which even the pageboys were dressed 'à la mode de l'antique chevalerie romaine'.[255] Though such mock-battles had their origins in classical literature and culture, this style of performance had long been reinvented in Italy as the *battagliola* and sometimes used to entertain the Italian nobility.[256] The Italians also inspired a third *saynète* — a mock-battle between Neptune and Athena — which brought to life the recent etching by Antonio Fantuzzi at Fontainebleau (cf. fig. 3.1):



Figure 3.1. Antonio Fantuzzi, 'La controversia tra Nettuno e Atena', Fontainebleau, c. 1545. Now held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

[255] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.
[256] More information on the *battagliola* can be found throughout Elvira Garbero Zorzi's chapter 'Court Spectacle' in *Italian Renaissance Courts*, ed. by Sergio Bertelli, Franco Cardini, and Elvira Garbero Zorzi (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1986), pp. 127–89 (esp. pp. 169–72).

The classical and Italianate theatrical celebrations continued after Catherine's arrival and another mock-battle — an elaborate *naumachia* — was performed on the Saône. Though the *naumachia* was a tradition of Lyon, this performance was far grander and more classical than past mock-battles, complete with galleys which were 'tellement painctes, pannocellées, enrichies et garnies de soldards braves et fors'.[257] Again, this aquatic Roman performance had been reintroduced by the Italians and widely enjoyed throughout the Italian Courts (cf. figs. 3.2 and 3.3).[258]

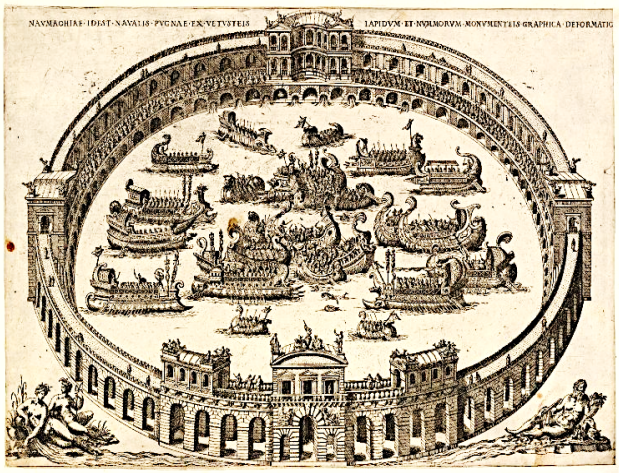

Figure 3.2. Early modern French representation of a classical *naumachia*. Estienne Dupérac, 'Naumahiae [sic] id est navalis pugnae ex vetusteis lapidum et nummorum monumenteis, graphica deformatio', etched for the series *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* (Rome: Antonio Lafreri, c. 1577), p. 49. Image from *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, A44, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago Library.



Figure 3.3. Woodcut by Bernard Salomon representing the 'Gallere blanche et verte' of the naumachia staged at Lyon. Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. L.2r.

[257] Denis Sauvage's Appendix to Nicolas Gilles, *Le second volume des Croniques et Annales de France* (Paris: R. Anvil for J. de Roigny, 16 Aug. 1549, fol. CXLV). Included in the Appendix to Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, pp. 325–26. Indeed, this *naumachia* impressed the spectators to the extent that it was used as a model for performances for later royal entries into Paris and Rouen.

[258] For a detailed study of the history of the *naumachia* in France, including the water-battle which took place during this entry, cf. Richard Cooper's 'French Waterbourne Festivals in the Sixteenth Century', in *Waterbourne Pageants and Festivities in the Renaissance*, ed. by Margaret Shewring, Linda Briggs (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 9–36. More information on the early modern Italian *naumachia*, and particularly on the Medici *naumachia*, can be found in Patrick Eyres, 'British Naumachias: The Performance of Trial and Memorial', in *Performance and Appropriation: Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes*, ed. by Michel Conan (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007), pp. 171–94 (p. 172).

These efforts to replicate the classical and, by extension, the Italian theatrical festivities constituted a clear attempt to tailor the festivities to the tastes of a Medici queen and her husband, and no time or expense was spared in their planning.

As well as striving to please the King and Queen, the organisers were no doubt aware of the other possible benefits of these performances. The enactment of Diana capturing a lion is a clear allegory for Henri's mistress Diane de Poitiers winning the King's heart, a representation which would have had an obvious flattering effect for her. Diane was in the King's highest favour during this period, having recently been granted the duchy of Valentinois, and it is likely that the citizens of Lyon — a city deeply in debt — hoped she could help them in their plight to evade the annual tax.[259] A theatre performance, then, could also have political sway: the favourable portrayal of a powerful patron could well incite their support in other endeavours. Such overt references to classical theatre, particularly the enactment of a gladiator battle and the *naumachia*, also function as a reminder to Henri that Lyon was a Roman city.[260] Scève even points out that the Lyon citizens were magnificent hosts precisely because they were descended from the Romans: 'Parquoy Messieurs de la Ville, ne voulant degenerer à leur antique generosité Romaine, comme descenduz d'icelle, se resolurent unanimement d'estrendre leur debvoir'.[261] The first printed bulletin of the entry also stresses that the Lyon festivities could rival those held for the ancient Roman *triumphus*: 'Qui feirent [les Lyonnois] si bien leurs apprestz, et meirent si bon ordre, que l'entrée fust tres magnifique. Et ne puis croyre, que le triumphe tant renommé de Cesar, fust de si grande valeur et estime que cestuy cy'.[262] Reminding the King of Lyon's Roman heritage would

[259] Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 81.
[260] Lyon had been a key Roman city in Gaul known as Lugdunum.
[261] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. A.2.
[262] This printed bulletin is anonymous. *Le grand triumphe faict à l'entrée du Treschrestien et tousiours victorieux Monarche, Henry second de ce nom, Roy de France, en sa noble ville et cite de*

have a dual effect: firstly, it persuades the King that Lyon's citizens had a natural aptitude for putting on entertainment, being, like the Italians, direct inheritors of classical festivities; secondly, the focus on victory in battle portrayed by the gladiators and the *naumachia* invites Henri to recall the city's former militaristic glory. Showcasing the city's classical roots, these mock-battles were employed as a persuasive tool to gain respect and, vicariously, potential reward from its powerful spectators.[263] Largely innovations in France, each of these classical and Italianate performances were indeed extremely effective in pleasing their royal spectators.[264]

2. Royal Support of Comic Theatre

The tradition of performing comedies on special occasions was already extremely popular in Italy and, as we shall see, several set a particularly important example for *La Calandra*. It is thus unsurprising that the organisers took the opportunity also to incorporate classically-inspired Italian comedy into this entry, along with all of its typical accompanying features. Lyon was in addition an especially apt choice of city for such an innovation to take place. As we saw in the Introduction (cf. p. 12), Lyon had long and well-established roots in comic theatre; furthermore, its many Italian inhabitants were able to employ both their social connections and their advantageous financial situations to ensure its success.

Bibbiena's *La Calandra* was first performed in Urbino as part of the 1513 carnival, and later met with success in Rome, where Bibbiena had it performed before Catherine's

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Lyon. Et de la Royne Catherine son espouse (Paris: B. de Gourmont, 1548). Provided as a facsimile in Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, p. 276–98.

[263] Again, Rouen would follow in Lyon's footsteps, staging in a later entry a triumph modelled on Paulus Emilius.

[264] Though many documented their enjoyment at the performances, perhaps the most remarkable report is that the legs of the female actors were particularly successful in pleasing the nobles. Cf. Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 256; cf. also Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 81.

great-uncle the Medici Pope Leo X, a close friend of Bibbiena who had created him a cardinal. Vincenzo Pacifici writes that the comedy's début on stage was so grand that every Court in Italy was discussing it,[265] and the play was also popular in print, enjoying twenty-three editions between 1521 and 1586.[266] Though this comedy was no doubt one of the century's most celebrated plays, *La Calandra* was likely chosen because of the playwright's strong link with the Medici family.[267] Bibbiena had served them for many years in various capacities, being appointed as secretary to Cardinal Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici and promoted to Papal Treasurer when Giovanni became Pope Leo. In 1512 he also played a central role in bringing the Medici family back to Florence, whence they had been in exile since 1494.[268] Building on these rapports with the Medici, Bibbiena acted as ambassador to France, even bringing to Fontainebleau as a gift for Catherine's father-in-law François I — who collected paintings of female beauty 'designed for his delectation'[269] — Raphael's

[265] Vincenzo Pacifici, *Ippolito II d'Este, Cardinale di Ferrara: da documenti originali inediti* (Tivoli: Società Storia e d'Arte, 1984), pp. 99–100.
[266] Pamela Stewart, 'A Play on Doubles: The *Calandra*', *Modern Language Studies*, 14.1 (1984), 22–32 (p. 22).
[267] The very exportation of *La Calandra* to France would have been considered a testament to its popularity, since early modern Italian authors often deemed the market for a comedy abroad the best indicator of its success. Addressing his critics, Giambattista della Porta had for example set out the exportation of his comedy abroad as evidence of its worth: 'O Goffi che sète che l'opre son giudicate dall'applauso universale de' dotti di tutte le nazioni, perché si veggono stampate per tutte le parti del mondo, e tradotte in latino, francese, spagnuolo, e altre varie lingue'. Prologue to *Gli Duoi Fratelli Rivali*, in *Le Commedie di Giambattista Della Porta*, ed. by Vincenzo Spampanato, 2 vols (Bari: G. Laterza e figli, 1910–1911), II, p. 197. Cited in Emilio Goggio, 'The Prologue in the *Commedia Erudita* of the Sixteenth Century', *Italica*, 18.3 (1941), 124–32 (p. 129).
[268] For more information on Bibbiena's role in returning the Medici to Florence, cf. Jack D'Amico, 'Drama and the Court in *La Calandra*', *Theatre Journal*, 43.1 (1991), 93–106 (p. 96).
[269] Joanna Woods-Marsden, 'Portrait of the Lady, 1430–1520', in *Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo's 'Ginevra de' Benci' and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, ed. by David Alan Brown (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2001), pp. 62–87 (pp. 80–81); Ivan Cloulas, *Henri II* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), pp. 210–11.

portrait of Doña Isabel de Requesens y Enríquez de Cardona-Anglesola (cf. fig. 3.4). Given Bibbiena's long service to Catherine's family, the decision to perform *La Calandra* would no doubt have pleased both the King and Queen. As we witnessed when examining the entry's mock-battles, pleasing the nobility brought with it the prospect of royal support or financial reward: it is probable, then, that Catherine's admiration for Bibbiena played a central role in the choice of comedy.



Figure 3.4. Raphael, Portrait of Doña Isabel de Requesens y Enríquez de Cardona-Anglesola, 1518. Now held in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

Conversely, the production of *La Calandra* may not have been able to come to fruition without the support of the King and Queen. Even the title of Mazzei's Italian translation of Scève's *livret*, describing the 'comedia fatta recitare in Lione da la Natione Fiorentina à richiesta di sua Maestà Christianissima', asserts that Henri himself had specially requested for a comedy to be acted at the entry. Again in the *livret* Mazzei praises the 'cortese benignità con laquale [la sua Maestà] si era degnata comandare che fusse recitata davanti a lui'.[270] For a third time, Mazzei iterates Henri's special request for a comedy to be performed, recalling the apology of the acting troupe for the supposed inferior quality of the play, which they blame on the short notice that the King had given them:

> Appresso havendola pregata che se il breve tempo che si havevano proposto che corer dovessi (havendo al principio di luglio sua Maestà domandata la Comedia per mezzo Agosto) e la lontananza di cose infinite à cio necessariamente richieste la rendessero ancor men degna.[271]

[270] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. N.5.
[271] Ibid., fol. N4. We shall see later in this chapter that their apology is another example of *captatio benevolentiae*.

Whilst Mazzei puts forward in no uncertain terms that Henri had asked for a comedy to be performed, it seems as though Catherine herself had a special interest in this production. Hieronimo Dandino, the Papal Nuncio in France, and Michele della Torre, an Italian bishop, recount to the Cardinal Farnese Catherine's desire for Farnese to visit Lyon at the time of the entry, since she wanted him to see the comedy: 'La Nation florentine prepare une belle comedie qui sera jouée à cette occasion [...] la Reine voudroit que le cardinal Farnese vint à Lyon pour ces fetes'.[272] Evidently, Catherine was not only aware that a comedy would be performed, but was also particularly looking forward to this part of the entry. We can thus establish from these little-known accounts that the highest-ranking nobles played a far more active role in the reinvention of comedy than has heretofore been realised.

3. Support of the Italian Colony in Lyon

Whilst it is certain that the performance of a comedy was requested by the King and Queen, that the comedy was specifically chosen to please them, and that they greatly anticipated its performance, Henri and Catherine played no other part in bringing it to life. Similarly, though Scève was the *maestro delle preparazioni*, organising much of the entry as well as documenting it in his *livret*, there is no evidence to suggest that he was involved in arranging the comedy. Indeed, he was far more interested in banquets, religious services, and gardens than he was in theatre, and the cursory detail regarding the comedy in his booklet has led some scholars to believe that he did not even see it.[273] In addition, Mazzei's translation and

[272] 'Dandino e della Torre au Cardinal Farnese', Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 14.092. fols. 205v–209r. Reproduced in *Correspondance des nonces en France: Dandino, Della Torre et Trivulto (1546–1551)*, ed. by Jan Lestocquoy (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1966), p. 347.

[273] Bonner Mitchell, for example, contends that Scève was absent. Cf. Mitchell, 'Firenze illustrissima: l'immagine della patria negli apparati delle Nationi fiorentine per le feste di Lione del 1548 e di Anversa del 1549', in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500: Relazioni artistiche; il linguaggio architettonico*, ed. by Giancarlo Garfagnini, 3 vols (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1983), III, pp. 995–1004 (p. 997).

the correspondence of Dandino and della Torre state that the comedy was the work of the Florentine colony in Lyon. Turning back to the examples we have just seen, Mazzei's title advertises *La Calandra* as the invention of 'la Natione Fiorentina' and Dandino and della Torre claim that 'la Nation florentine' was in the process of preparing the comedy. Though both accounts leave unclear the identity of these Italians, the analysis of other evidence can help us to create a clearer picture of who was involved.

A letter written by Lyon printer Guillaume Rouillé to Lucantonio Ridolfi (1510–1570) indicates that Ridolfi himself recommended the Italian translation of Scève's *livret* along with a special focus on the comic performance: 'Mosso da tale vostra persuasione, feci nella detta lingua tradurre e stampare l'entrata del Re qui in Lyone insieme colla descrittione della comedia: laqual mia impressione penso che se non in tutto almeno in qualche parte vi sodisfacessi.'[274] Ridolfi was one of Lyon's foremost Florentine *fuorusciti* and a distant relative of Catherine de' Medici.[275] He was also a prominent *letterato*, who would in future be known for editing a dialogue between Alessandro degli Uberti and Claude d'Herberé on language in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a topic of much interest amongst the French intelligentsia in the mid-century.[276] His very request for an Italian translation of the booklet confirms that the Italians played a significant part in the entry, since they clearly wanted a written account of its events for their contemporaries living in Lyon, and possibly also for international propaganda. Given that Ridolfi also demands that a special focus be

[274] Prefatory letter, *Il Petrarca*, ed. by Antonio Brucioli (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1550). Cited in Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 139.
[275] Catherine's great-aunt Contessina dei Medici was Piero Ridolfi's wife. Cf. Richard Cooper, 'Le Cercle de Lucantonio Ridolfi', in *L'émergence littéraire des femmes à Lyon à la Renaissance: 1520–1560*, ed. by Michèle Clément, Janine Incardona (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2008), pp. 29–50 (p. 29, n. 6). Though the Ridolfi family had historically been hostile towards the Medici, any rifts had been transcended by the 1540s.
[276] Lucantonio Ridolfi, *Ragionamento havuto in Lione da Claudio de Herbere, Gentil'huomo Franceze, et da Alessandro degli Uberti, Gentil'huomo fiorentino, sopra alcuni luoghi del cento novelle del Boccaccio* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1557). For more information on this volume, cf. Glyn Norton and Marga Cottino-Jones, 'Theories of prose fiction and poetics in Italy: novella and romanzo', in *Cambridge History*, pp. 322–38 (p. 324).

placed on the production of *La Calandra* — and indeed, Mazzei goes into far more detail about the performance than Scève — the Italians likely had more to do with this production than any other aspect of the entry. The involvement of Ridolfi himself is also suggested not only by his request for this translation to be produced, but, as we shall see later in the chapter, the part played in the production by Ridolfi's Florentine connections.

Also likely is that the Florentine business colony in Lyon helped with the organisation of the performance. The Guadagni family had been exiled at the same time as the Medici:[277] they were not only sympathetic to Catherine, but had become such important stakeholders within the Lyon economy that the phrase 'riche comme Gadagne' became almost proverbial.[278] The Gondi family were closely connected to Florentine humanists such as Ridolfi, and had been supporters and business partners of the Medici for several centuries.[279] Amongst the most affluent families in the city, both may have made a financial contribution to the performance, especially since many of Lyon's native citizens were in extreme debt. As we shall see later in this chapter, it is also likely that they made use of their Florentine connections in order to ensure the smooth running of the performance. The Florentines in Lyon certainly had much to gain by pleasing the King and Queen: many were, for example, *fuorusciti* and anxious to return to their native city. We know for instance that the famous Ridolfi 'gardait les yeux fixés vers Florence'.[280] Catherine may well have supported their cause to return to Florence; even if she did not directly help, it would be beneficial to gain the advocacy of the Florentine Piero Strozzi, their highly influential

[277] Dale Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence, 1426–1432* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 175–6.
[278] Gascon, *Grand commerce et vie urbaine*, p. 108.
[279] The link between the Gondi and Medici families is discussed throughout Joanna Milstein's excellent *The Gondi: Family Strategy and Survival in Early Modern France* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).
[280] Balsamo, 'L'italianisme lyonnais', p. 224.

marshal in Lyon and favourite of Catherine, who may in turn have been able to exercise his political leverage in their favour.[281]

There is also evidence to suggest that much of the impetus behind the performance of *La Calandra* came not from a Florentine but from another Italian: the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. Ippolito was protector of France in the Roman Court and had been Archbishop of Lyon since 1540;[282] he was also popular with the King and had long found favour amongst the courtiers at the Court — especially its women, who would greet him with 'accoglienze impudiche'.[283] Ippolito's family had patronised comedy for many years, and it is well known that the introduction of comic performances into Ferrara in the early *Cinquecento* is largely a result of the support of the Este family.[284] Ippolito himself was a great patron of theatre, and he began to pioneer Italianate drama at the French Court soon after his arrival: in 1541, for instance, he organised and acted in a lavish *mascherata* in which the Duke of Orléans appeared as a 'zingaro' and — somewhat unbelievably — the King of Navarre, together with the Cardinal, were 'stranamente vestiti [e] i più burloni della schiera'.[285]

Although his close links with France, familial patronage of comedy, and experience in arranging productions of Italianate theatre all suggest that Ippolito may have been involved in organising the 1548 performance, there is evidence to suggest that he may have had a hand in choosing the comedy. He would have been aware of Catherine's family connections to Bibbiena and may have even heard first-hand of the play's success: Elisabetta Gonzaga, the sister-in-law of Ippolito's aunt Isabella d'Este, had famously enjoyed a 1514

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[281] Cf. Scott, Sturm-Maddox, *Queen's Day*, p. 45.
[282] Balsamo, 'L'italianisme lyonnais', p. 212.
[283] Pacifici, *Ippolito II d'Este*, p. 63. Carlo Sacrati, the ambassador to the Duke of Ferrara, even reports the greeting of the Cardinal at the Court by five of the most beautiful royal French women naked in their bath. Cf. AS Modena, *Ambasciatori Francia*, busta 34, Carlo Sacrati, 18th June 1540, cited in Pacifici, *Ippolito d'Este*, p. 64.
[284] Cf. Bonner Mitchell, 'Circumstance and Setting in the Earliest Italian Productions of Comedy', *Renaissance Drama*, 4 (1971), 185–97 (p. 188).
[285] Cf. AS Modena, *Ambasciatori Francia*, busta 256, Carlo Sacrati, 6th February 1541. Cited in Pacifici, *Ippolito II d'Este*, p. 66.

production of *La Calandra* in Rome. Ippolito's accounts also indicate that he had considered several options for the performance: in the months leading up to the entry he ordered eight comedies, specially picked out by a representative in Venice and sent to his residence in France.[286] Such evidence suggests not only that Ippolito had an important say in the choice of comedy, but also that he had considered the decision at length, and his eventual choice of Bibbiena's comedy over a Ferrarese play — indeed, a comedy by Ariosto would have been more obvious — again suggests that he was aiming to please Catherine. In addition, a further examination of Ippolito's accounts indicates that he may have largely funded the production. Ercole d'Este's envoy to the French Court, Giulio Alvarotto, writes that Ippolito spent a total of ten thousand ducats on the entry;[287] this corresponds exactly to Brantôme's later report that the comedy cost ten thousand *écus*.[288] Indeed, whilst no mention is made of the cardinal in Scève's *livret* or in the *Particolare descritione*, Brantôme explicitly credits the performance to Ippolito and is highly complimentary of *La Calandra* which 'ce grand et magnifique cardinal de Ferrare, primat de la Gaule et archevesque de Lyon, fit représenter'.[289] We have no reason to disbelieve Brantôme's statement: since he composed his memoirs some thirty years after the production, which was witnessed by Brantôme's mother and grandmother who accompanied Marguerite de Navarre, it was evidently widely thought that Ippolito had co-ordinated the performance, and certainly the other contemporary evidence we have examined suggests his involvement.

Ippolito also had several possible motivations for organising this performance. We have seen that he had an interest in patronising Italian theatre in France, and it is thus

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[286] Richard Cooper, 'Court Festival and Triumphal Entries under Henri II', in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance*, ed. by Elizabeth Goldring, Ronnie Mulryne, pp. 51–75 (p. 64).
[287] Giulio Alvarotto's letters to the Duke of Ferrara, 1548, AS Modena, *Ambasciatori Francia*, busta 25, fol. 187: 'Io assicuro alla Ex. V. che la venuta de sua Maestà in Lione costerà a S. S^{ria} R^{ma} 10m ducati'. Letters included as an Appendix in Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, pp. 315–20.
[288] Brantôme, *Œuvres*, III, p. 256.
[289] Ibid., p. 256.

plausible that he wanted to take this opportunity to introduce another new genre into the French Court, further enriching France's culture with inspiration from his own. In addition, such an innovation would certainly delight its spectators, and as we have established, there were a number of benefits to pleasing Henri and Catherine. Ippolito had already greatly profited from royal favour, being rewarded for his cultural and political efforts with generous pensions, opportunities abroad, and an advantageous position at the Court: it is, as a result, unlikely that he would have missed this opportunity to remain closely allied with the King and Queen.

4. Sets and Staging

The Italians had long considered themselves to be models in terms of sets and staging. Almost a century before the performance of *La Calandra*, for example, Leon Battista Alberti's *De Re Ædificatoria* (c. 1452) describes the Roman theatre as 'noster', suggesting that the Italian and Roman theatre and sets share so many features that the former must be the direct descendant of the latter.[290] Outside of Italy the Italians were also regarded as innovators. We have already explored in Chapter 1 Estienne's praise of the designs of Serlio, who had been enticed from Italy by the French King. We also saw that Serlio was patronised by Ippolito: however, by the time of the Lyon entry — at which Serlio was present — Serlio was living in Ippolito's lodgings and had designed much of his Italianate residence in Paris,

[290] 'Sed theatra Graeca ab Latinis differebant ea re, quod illi choros et scenicos saltatores media in area perducentes pulpito indigebant minore; nostri, quod totis ludionibus fabulam agerent in pulpito, id ea de re habere laxius voluere'. This translates as: 'Greek theatres differed from Latin ones in the size of their stage: they required a smaller one, because the chorus and theatrical dancers performed in their central area, whereas we preferred a larger stage, because there all our action took place'. Leon Battista Alberti, *L'architettura* [*De re aedificatoria*], ed. by Giovanni Orlandi, Paolo Portoghesi, 2 vols (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966), II, p. 731. The English translation is taken from Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. and ed. by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 270.

dubbed 'Le Grand Ferrare', which possibly contained a theatre.[291] It can come as little surprise, then, that though no mention in contemporary accounts is made of Serlio's contribution to the architectural work which took place for the performance of *La Calandra*, the theatre was most likely designed by Serlio. It was built in the 'Salle Saint-Jean' in Ippolito's Lyon palace, which Brantôme describes as an initially unappealing room.[292] Such a use for the Salle is not without precedent: the 1542 performance of an unknown Italian comedy (cf. p. 12) had also been performed there.[293] Following the dimensions provided by Cooper, Eugene Johnson has produced a visual reconstruction of this theatre (cf. fig. 3.5):[294]

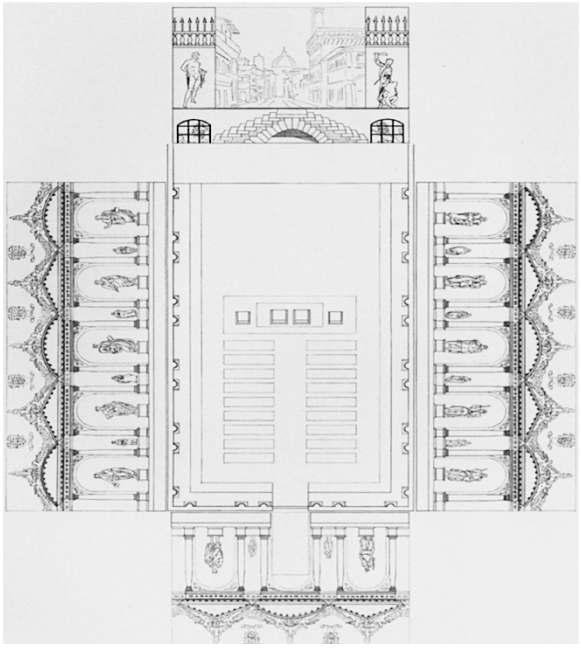

Figure 3.5. Serlio's theatre plan for *La Calandra*, designed by Eugene Johnson and illustrated by Grace McEniry. Cf. Johnson, 'The Theater at Lyon of 1548', fig. 1, p. 174.

[291] On rooms purpose-built for entertainment in Ippolito's lodgings, cf. Eelco Nagelsmit, 'Visualizing Vitruvius: Stylistic Pluralism in Serlio's Sixth Book on Architecture', in *The Transformation of Expression in the Early Modern Arts*, ed. by Joost Keizer, Todd Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 339–72 (p. 352); Serlio, *Sebastiano Serlio on Domestic Architecture: Different Dwellings from the Meanest Hovel to the Most Ornate Palace: The Sixteenth-Century Manuscript of Book VI in the Avery Library of Columbia University*, trans. and ed. by Myra Nan Rosenfeld (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1978), 'Introduction', p. 23.

[292] Brantôme recounts how it was 'une chose vaste, layde et sans aucune forme de beauté ny gentillesse, comm'un certain galletas'. Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 256. Cited in Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 102.

[293] Cooper, 'Scève, Serlio et la Fête'.

[294] Eugene Johnson, 'The Theater at Lyon of 1548: A Reconstruction and Attribution', *Artibus et Historiae*, 35.69 (2014), 173–202.

Since the walls of this reconstruction strongly resemble those designed by Serlio for the Château d'Ancy-le-Franc, and the painted steps leading up to the stage also recall the Serlian designs in the comic set encountered in Chapter 1 (cf. p. 53, fig. 1.4), it is probable that Serlio himself designed the theatre.[295] As a result, *La Calandra* was in all likelihood performed in a specially made Italianate theatre, designed by an Italian architect, and in the palace of an Italian cardinal.

Though Serlio most likely designed the theatre, it seems as though he did not design the perspective set that was included in the performance: the *Particolare descritione* indicates that this was undertaken by a certain 'maestro Nannoccio che qua si trova gia sono piu anni al servitio del Cardinale di Tornon'.[296] This was probably Nannoccio della Costa a san Giorgio,[297] introduced to the Cardinal of Tournon by Tommaso Guadagni[298] — yet further evidence that the Guadagni were involved in this production. Nannoccio was also connected to the Medici family through his teacher Andrea del Sarto, who was an ally of the Medici family and had painted the famous 'Sacra Famiglia Medici', commissioned by Catherine's cousin Ottaviano when del Sarto was teaching Nannoccio (cf.



Figure 3.6. Andrea del Sarto's 'La Sacra Famiglia Medici' (1529), Palatine Gallery, Florence.

[295] Ibid., p. 188.
[296] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. M.2.
[297] Cf. Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 110; Elsa Kammerer, 'Une sainte femme desirée: le *Magdalon de la Madalena* de Jean de Vauzelles', in *L'émergence littéraire des femmes*, pp. 69–88 (p. 83).
[298] Dominique Thiebaut, 'Un artiste florentin au service du Cardinal de Tournon: Giovanni Capassini', *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana* (Munich: Bruchmann, 1992), pp. 176–85 (p. 178).

fig. 3.6).[299] Showcasing Florentine talent and appointing a designer known to the Medici, the choice of Nannoccio appears again to be aimed at pleasing Catherine.

The perspective set was a complete innovation for France, having never been included in a performance. However, although Mazzei mentions the 'prospettiva col foro' and Scève makes a brief reference to the 'perspective de Relief', the accounts make no further praise of this set, instead celebrating its realism and accuracy in depicting the city of Florence.[300] This was the only significant edit made to the original text of *La Calandra*: originally Rome, the set was switched for the 1548 performance to Catherine's hometown of Florence. Mazzei praises the way in which Nannoccio replicates not just Florence's smaller buildings but also the city's major landmarks so successfully that the spectator is almost transported to Florence itself: 'E figurate per Firenze cosi bene che per non dire delli altri minori edificii: la cupola, il campanile di santa Reparata, quello del Palazzo Ducale hareste detto che fussimo stati veramente quivi'.[301] The Mantuan ambassador, Giorgio Conegrani, writing to the Duke of Mantua, again emphasises how realistically the cityscape portrayed Florence: 'Al scoprir' puoi che si fece la scena apparve ad un tratto la città di Firrenza benissimo et molto artificiosamente fatta'.[302] Since the perspective set was an innovation for France, no doubt impressing its spectators who may never have seen one, this focus in the accounts on the realistic portrayal of Florence serves to underline just how elaborate and impressive the sets must have been. Certainly, Italians were proud of the realism of their sets and judged this realism to play a central role in performance.[303]

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[299] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architetti,* ed. by Fernandino Ranalli, 2 vols (Florence: Batelli e Compagni, 1848), II, p. 1261.
[300] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. M.2; Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.
[301] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. M.2.
[302] Giorgio Conegrani's dispatch to the Duke of Mantua: 'Descrittione dell'entrate delle Maestadi del Re et Regina in Lione', Lyon, 4th October 1548, AS Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, Serie E, busta 641, fols. 234r–246v. Included in the Appendix of Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, pp. 301–15.
[303] Cf. Fabio Finotti, 'Perspective and Stage Design, Fiction and Reality in the Italian Renaissance Theater of the Fifteenth Century', *Renaissance Drama*, 36 (2010), 21-42 (p. 27).

Nonetheless, their efforts to depict Florence convincingly, incorporating its most impressive buildings, would also have the effects of glorifying the city itself, flattering Florentine spectators — chiefly Catherine — with the majesty of their hometown. The aim of this deliberate change of scene and of Nannoccio's realistic portrayal was thus not only to delight the audience with the beauty of the sets, but also to please the Florentine Queen.

Whilst Scève makes a brief mention that there was an elevated stage — 'une platte forme de deux piedz de haulteur' — far more attention is paid in every account to the role of decorative statues which helped prepare the Salle for the comedy.[304] These were sculpted by Zanobi Lastricati (1508–1590), another protégé of the Medici family. It is likely that Lastricati was singled out by his great ally Ridolfi as a further Florentine contributor who would please the Queen, and is thus yet another example of prominent Florentine figures in Lyon exploiting their connections to elevate the quality of the performance.[305] The most elaborate of these statues was that of a young girl: placed in the antechamber and standing next to the door of the Salle, she was intended as a figure welcoming spectators to the performance.[306] She held a red lily and the pedestal on which she stood was inscribed with the words 'LILIA MAGNA PRECOR, NOSTRUM NE TEMNITE PARVUM'.[307] Whilst this statue certainly enhanced the aesthetics of the Salle and provided an attractive entrance to the comedy, Zanobi was also making a political statement. The red lily was the emblem of Florence, and the inscription, appealing for the single lily of Florence to be supported by the many lilies of France, is clearly a flattering gesture to Henri, a statement of Italian deference, suggesting that France's military and cultural powers are beginning to overtake

[304] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. E.
[305] Lastricati had already been commissioned to create several works in bronze for the Medici. Cristina Acidini Luchinat, *The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 214. He also enjoyed close links with the Ridolfi family, sculpting 'un Mercurio di bronzo' for Lorenzo di Piero Ridolfi's palace. Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori*, p. 498.
[306] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. M.2.
[307] Ibid., fol. M.2. This translates as: 'I beg the big lilies not to look down on our little lily.'

those of their Italian counterparts. Conversely, it also invites spectators to consider Catherine's role in bringing Florentine culture to France, especially in light of the Italian comedy they are about to witness. The symbol of the lily reappears in the comedy itself: during one of the intervals Catherine is recorded as being presented with 'une grande fleur de lys en or sur laquelle sont gravés des lys rouges'.[308] This present is again heavily allegorical, since the red lily on a field of silver and the golden lily on a field of blue had long symbolised the alliance between Florence and France.[309] This expensive gift was paid for by unknown Florentines — possibly the Gondi or the Guadagni, the most likely candidates to be able to afford it — and was clearly aimed at reminding Catherine of her status as a connection between Florence and France.[310] Such symbolism in the decoration of the room is thus another political manoeuvre on the part of the Florentines residing in Lyon: it flatters the King and Queen respectively, with the ultimate aim of reminding them of their Florentine connections and inviting reward for the Florentines in France.

The statues decorating the Salle itself were designed to draw attention to the humanistic and militaristic successes both of previous Florentines and of the Florentines currently living in Lyon. Twelve statues depicting Florentine worthies were placed around the room, half depicting poets and the other half soldiers. Mazzei is correct in identifying the six statues portraying poets as Dante, Petrarch, Claudian, Boccaccio, Ficino, and Accursius; the military statues then represent Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, Filippo Buondelmonti degli Scolari, Farinata degli Uberti, Federico Folchi, and

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[308] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.

[309] Particularly since Lemaire de Belges had related in his *Concorde* (c. 1510) the story of Emperor Charlemagne founding Florence and establishing the lily as the heraldic device connecting France with the city so that 'toute Ytalie sera à jamais concordée avecques France'. Jean Lemaire de Belges, *La Concorde des deux langages* (Paris: Droz, 1947), lines 295–98. For more information on this narration, cf. Robert Cottrell, 'Allegories of Desire in Lemaire's *Concorde des deux langages'*, *French Forum*, 2.1 (1998), 261–300 (pp. 291–2). Also cited in Scott, Sturm-Maddox, *Queen's Day*, p. 46.

[310] The lily cost an impressive two hundred and fifty *écus*. Cloulas, *Henri II*, p. 212.

Giovanni Strozzi.[311] All of the poets — with the exception of Claudian, who is an odd choice — were born in or associated with Florence. They are also, as Scève tells us, 'toguez à l'antique et coronez de Laurier',[312] drawing parallels with classical poets and indicating that the Florentines have equalled the work of the ancients. Turning to the military statues, the presence of Lorenzo is doubtless on account of his dual status as Catherine's father and the first Medici to marry into France; the others are glorified *condottieri* who battled outside Florence, a representation which both flatters Catherine and celebrates the Florentine *fuorusciti* who had found success in Lyon.[313] Again, whilst these statues were certainly successful in enhancing the aesthetics of the theatre space,[314] they also functioned to flatter Henri and Catherine, reminding them of the Florentines' diverse and far-reaching talent, not only fulfilling the humanist aim of reinventing classical literature in a contemporary setting but also securing military victories across Europe. It is clear that much of the stage and set design — whilst, as we shall see in Chapter 4, providing an important model for France — was also aimed at gaining important allies, flattering its noble spectators with the possible end of financial or political reward. The fate of the Florentines in Lyon was inextricably linked with royal favour, and the opportunity to please Henri and Catherine was without doubt fully embraced.

5. The Interval

As well as introducing a specially-designed theatre and perspective set with lavish painted scenery and statues, *La Calandra* was the first performance in France to comprise a series

[311] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fols. M.4. and M.5.
[312] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.
[313] Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 106.
[314] Mazzei recounts how the spectators even lingered to admire the statues after the comedy had ended: 'Stetteno tutti Fermi à rimirare buon pezzo di poi lo apparato ilquale nel vero faceva un bellissimo e suntuosissimo vedere'. Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. M.5.

of intervals. This feature had long been a staple of Italian theatre, first put into practice towards the end of the fifteenth century in Ferrara and Mantua, not just in comedy but also in the *sacre rappresentazioni*.[315] The Medici family were also well known for patronising the interval at their various festivities, employing figures such as Bernardo Buontalenti and Giovanni Bardi for the very purpose of writing impressive intervals.[316] We saw that several comedies performed on special occasions in Italy had set important precedents for *La Calandra*, and here we can take the example of Antonio Landi's comedy *Il Commodo*, performed for the 1539 Florentine wedding of Cosimo I de' Medici and Eleonora di Toledo.[317] A series of seven extensive, specially-written intervals played an important part in this performance, quickly becoming well known and deemed by some to be the comedy's most impressive feature.[318] In a clear bid to replicate the sumptuous Italianate celebrations, intervals were also specially commissioned for *La Calandra*, incorporating elaborate music, costumes, and stage directions.

Clearly struck by the innovative aspect of the interval, Scève emphasises several times that it had never before been seen in France, being 'une nouvelle mode, et non encor usitee aux recitementz des Comedies'.[319] Like Estienne, who had clarified the position of intervals by calling them 'intervales des actes', Scève also terms them 'intermedies des actes',[320] which indicates that his readership may still be unfamiliar with the function of an interval and further stresses its novelty. In addition, Scève's decision to term them

[315] Bonner Mitchell, 'Les intermèdes au service de l'état', in *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, ed. by Jean Jacquot, Elie Konigson, 3 vols (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1956), III, pp. 117–31 (p. 117).
[316] Ronald Martinez, 'Spectacle', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. by Michael Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 239–59 (p. 241).
[317] Another example would be the intervals performed during the five Plautine plays staged for the wedding of Lucrezia Borgia to Alfonso d'Este, which were vastly preferred by Isabella d'Este to the plays themselves. Cf. John Shearman, *Mannerism* (London: Pelican, 1967), p. 105.
[318] For more information on the intervals performed at this wedding, cf. Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 133–34.
[319] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.
[320] Estienne, *Les Abusez*, p. 6; Scève, *Magnificence*, K.3.

'intermedies', rather than Estienne's 'intervales' is clearly an Italianism, replicating the term *intermezzo* rather than the French *entrevalle*.[321] This suggests that the intervals for *La Calandra* had been conceived by the Italians in Lyon, who had spoken about the idea in their own language, and evidence indicates that the author of these intervals was indeed a Florentine. Whilst Bonner Mitchell has expressed certainty that the author will remain anonymous, claiming that we cannot even identify whether he was French or Italian,[322] and Judith Bryce has suggested that the writer may have been Palla Strozzi,[323] neither assertion is correct. Bryce's position is based on her discovery in the Florentine Archivio di Stato of a document containing the 'Intermedi alla comedia del 46 di Palla Strozzi'; however, these 'intermedi' were evidently written in 1546, two years before the Lyon production took place, and since the intervals performed during *La Calandra* were tailored to this production, it is unlikely that the document she discovered pertains to the 1548 entry.[324] The writer is in reality far more likely to be another Florentine: Luigi Alamanni.

Conegrani's little-known dispatch is unequivocal in its assertion that Alamanni wrote the intervals: 'Ne era lo authore Mr Luigi Allamani'.[325] Since Conegrani took a close interest in these intervals — even recalling who delivered each line — and since there would be no benefit in falsely extolling Alamanni to the Duke of Mantua, who would not have known Alamanni, we have no reason to disbelieve Conegrani.[326] Alamanni was also an obvious choice to write these intervals. He had prior experience with classically-inspired drama, having witnessed performances during his youth in Italy and also completed the first

[321] Which, as we saw in Chapter 1, had long been used to denote a space in between two objects. Cf. Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, IV, p. 672.
[322] Mitchell, 'Les intermèdes au service', p. 130.
[323] Judith Bryce, 'The Theatrical Activities of Palla di Lorenzo Strozzi in Lyon in the 1540s', in *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance*, ed. by Ronnie Mulryne, Margaret Shewring (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 55–72 (pp. 58–9).
[324] Strozzi was, however, involved in the 1541 comic production in Lyon.
[325] Conegrani, 'Descrittione', fol. 246.
[326] Ibid., fol. 246; Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 116.

Italian translation of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*.[327] Additionally, Alamanni was popular with Henri II, who admired his writings and granted him special favours.[328] He was, furthermore, patronised by Ippolito d'Este who loaned him money without interest and allowed him to stay in his lodgings, also forming part of Ippolito's retinue in the 1548 entry.[329] Another of Alamanni's protectors was Tommaso Guadagni, whose family, as noted earlier, almost certainly helped to co-ordinate the performance.[330] Piero Manucci, a musician unrenowned in Italy and in Lyon, was chosen to compose and conduct the music for the intervals, and whilst he may initially seem like a strange choice, he was the organist of Tommaso Guadagni's chapel.[331] Guadagni thus clearly had a say in deciding on the other Florentine collaborator for the intervals.

We saw in Chapter 1 that, according to Estienne, the aim of the interval is to 'delect[er] le peuple' and to 'recréer les espritz',[332] and this function is also singled out for attention by several accounts documenting the 1548 intervals. Despite being more serious in nature than the highly saucy comedy, Scève praises how the intervals commanded 'grandissime attention et plaisance de tous spectateurs',[333] and Conegrani also states that Alamanni was successful in his bid to 'sattisfare ad ogn'uno'.[334] An exceptionally pleasing factor appears to have been the music of the intervals, which unfortunately appears to be lost. Just as Estienne had alluded to the pleasure evoked by the ancient 'menestriers', Scève describes the 'recreation de la diversité de la Musique'[335] and Conegrani explains that all

[327] Élie Borza, 'Catalogue des travaux inédits d'humanistes consacrés à Sophocle, jusqu'en 1600', *Humanistica Lovaniensia: journal of Neo-Latin studies*, 52 (2003), 196–216 (p. 197).
[328] Lucien Romier, *Les origines politiques des guerres de religion: Henri II et l'Italie (1547–1555)*, 2 vols (Geneva: Slatkine-Megariotis, 1974), I, p. 147.
[329] Pacifici, *Ippolito II d'Este*, p. 84; Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 5.
[330] Mitchell, 'Firenze illustrissima', p. 996.
[331] Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 116.
[332] Estienne, *L'Andrie*, p. 355.
[333] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.4.
[334] Conegrani, 'Descrittione', fol. 246.
[335] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.

spectators were delighted by the music accompanying the intervals: 'Ad ogn'uno medesimamente piacque la armonia che li accompagnava'.[336] As these accounts indicate, the ability of the interval to evoke pleasure was a significant reason for its inclusion, and it certainly fulfilled this function for Henri and Catherine: Brantôme writes that 'forces intermedies et faintes [...] contenterent infiniment le roy, la reyne et toute leur court'.[337]

As noted earlier, however, the organisers of the comedy often had political or personal objectives for pleasing Henri and Catherine, and their intentions for the interval were no different. Especially considering Alamanni's difficult history with the Medici family — he only resided in France because he had been exiled there following a notorious failed plot to overthrow Cardinal Giulio de' Medici — Alamanni would no doubt have aimed to use his intervals to flatter the nobles.[338] To take as an example the final intervals, we see a lavish progression through the seven ages, starting at the Age of Iron and finally reaching the Age of Gold.[339] This progression is extremely humanist in nature, representing the apparent Dark Ages of literature and culture and opposing them with the sublimity considered to have been achieved by present-day writers and artists.[340] The intervals explore how this progression was only able to take place with the help of royal greatness, the performers depicting Henri II's possession of the cardinal virtues, Temperance, Prudence, Justice, and Fortitude and acting out the ways in which these virtues allowed French society to enter into the Age of Gold. In a further sign of respect and deference to the King, each performer bowed each time they entered and exited the stage: 'Et finita la Musica l'età del Ferro fatta di nuovo reverenza al Re, si come feccion sempre al venire e al partirsi tutte

[336] Conegrani, 'Descrittione', fol. 246.
[337] Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 256.
[338] Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici: Favour and Finance in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 73.
[339] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fols. N.1–O.3.
[340] Cf. Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 119.

quelle persone che uscivano per intermedii'.[341] The subject and execution of these intervals, then, was clearly intended to flatter the King and Queen by praising their efforts to enrich French literature and culture, suggesting that they were able to single-handedly restore France to its former classical glory. Thus as well as being an innovation in France and able to delight its spectators, the interval again functioned as a political tool employed by a *fuoruscito*, capitalising on the opportunity of pleasing France's most powerful couple and gaining royal favour.

6. Professional Performers

We have seen in the Introduction (cf. p. 21, n. 67) that actors in France ranged from commoners to lawyers to courtly figures, with the most prominent members of the nobility performing in productions of farces, mysteries, and moralities. Though Estienne had praised the classical and Italian professional actors, with the possible exception of the 1541 and 1542 performances no such troupes had yet performed in France and plays had never been acted by highly-skilled performers who had made a career from comedy. Conegrani provides the first indication that the 1548 production of *La Calandra* was performed by Italian professionals, detailing that Henri sat to watch 'una Comedia che dovean far' gli Firrentini'.[342] It is unclear, however, as to whether this is another assertion that the play was organised and funded by the Florentines or indeed whether it was acted by them. The latter possibility is confirmed by a brief reference to 'Barlacchi' by Mazzei, indicating that *La Calandra* was performed by Domenico Barlacchi and his troupe la Cazzuola.[343] Barlacchi would certainly be the obvious choice: his was the foremost acting troupe in Italy, and it had performed a range of comedies from Ariosto's 1508 *La Cassaria* to Machiavelli's 1525

[341] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. O.
[342] Conegrani, 'Descrittione', fol. 244v.
[343] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. P.2.

Clizia. It had also performed *La Calandra* on a previous occasion, and would therefore clearly be suited to putting together this play at the short notice it was given.[344] Barlacchi was, furthermore, a prominent Florentine and linked to others involved in the 1548 production.[345] In addition, the anonymous *Facezie, motti, buffonerie et burle del Piovano Arlotto* (1565) later recounts that: 'Fu il Barlacchia, oltre all'essere piacevole e faceto, eccellente dicitore a comedie, et massime facendo le parti di un vecchio, et per questo fu egli una volta chiamato in Francia dalla Regina, dove fu benissimo visto e largamente presentato'.[346] The specification that he particularly excelled in roles as a 'vecchio' suggests that he played the famous part of Calandro (cf. Appendix II, p. 230). The additional claim that Catherine specially requested Barlacchi to perform in the production is also significant: he was a much-loved performer at the Medici Court and clearly known to Catherine. As well as being experienced and talented, then, this troupe may have been chosen at the request of the Queen herself.

Another innovation in this performance was the inclusion of female actors. Although courtly figures such as Marguerite de Navarre had taken part in private, all-female performances of playlets, the idea of a woman acting professionally on stage would have been entirely novel.[347] Such a reaction is testified by Brantôme, who distinguishes in his memoirs between the 'comédiens et comédiantes' and points out — somewhat surprised — that the latter were 'très belles [et] parloient très-bien et de fort bonne grâce'.[348] As well as

[344] Giorgio Vasari, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, ed. by Gaetano Milanesi, 9 vols (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, Editore, 1878), VI, p. 618. Also cited in Antony Cummings, *The Maecenas and the Madrigalist: Patrons, Performers and the Origins of the Italian Madrigal* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2004), p. 99.
[345] Del Sarto, for example, the master of *La Calandra*'s set designer Nannoccio, belonged to Barlacchi's company, painting the sets for annual comedy performed at their feasts. Vasari, *Le opere,* p. 618.
[346] Anon, *Facezie, motti, buffonerie et burle del Piovano Arlotto* (Florence: I Giunti, 1565).
[347] Cf. Virginia Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France: 1540–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[348] Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 256.

being impressed by the professional actors, however, the spectators were also struck by what they wore. The acting and the costumes are described as one in several accounts: Conegrani, for example, praises the acting skills of the performers, adding that the production was enhanced by its lavish costumes: 'È bellissima [...] per gli recitatori di buona gratia [...] e per gli vestimenti sontuosi'.[349] The inclusion of sumptuous, specially designed costumes — described by Scève as being made of 'satin et velours cramoisy, drap d'or, et d'argent, broché d'or' — was again an innovation in France, and additionally served to emphasise the setting of the play.[350] Mazzei notes that 'tutti li Strioni furono [...] vestiti richissamamente alla Fiorentina', functioning as an additional reminder to the audience that the play was not, like the original version of the play, set in Rome, but that it had instead been relocated to the Queen's native Florence.[351]

The professional standard of the acting, along with the lavish costumes tailored for this specific performance, were innovations in France which made an obvious impact on their spectators, even though some may not have been able to understand the Italian. Despite the actors' pre-emptive apology for the poor quality of the comedy — surely not founded on genuine concern but, like the appeals of Mesmes explored in Chapter 2, part of a modesty topos — the cast were extremely successful in pleasing Henri and Catherine. A Florentine troupe dressed in the Florentine manner was no doubt particularly aimed at gratifying the Medici Queen, and indeed, despite the efforts of the other Florentines in the city to please Catherine, the money given to these actors is the only evidence of actual reward offered for this comedy. Each performer, as Mazzei tells us, returned to Florence far richer than before:

> Piacque à sua Maestà [...] stare con alcuni Signori à vedere sul palco [...] fattisi venire avanti tutti li strioni [e] fece donare alli strioni cinquecento scudi d'oro, e la Regina

[349] Conegrani, 'Descrittione', fol. 246.
[350] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.
[351] Mazzei, *Magnifica,* fol. P.2.

> trecento, di modo che il Barlacchi, e li altri strioni che di Firenze si feciono venire in giu sene tornano con una borsa piena di scudi per ciascuno.[352]

The positive reaction of the King and Queen to these actors, along with the unanimous approval of the other spectators, indicates that France was — as Estienne had suggested six years previously — ready to welcome professional performers into French theatre, leaving behind the tradition of drama being played by the playwright's friends or colleagues.

7. Prose vs. Verse

Though none of our accounts refer to the use of prose in *La Calandra*, it is worth making a few brief comments on this final innovation. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, French drama had traditionally been written in verse, and so *La Calandra* is the first comic play to be performed in France which instead employs a prose style. Several French writers had considered the superiority of prose over verse in comic theatre, with Estienne discussing the freedom of language a writer could employ when using prose, claiming that the Italians had improved on the ancients in this respect; Mesmes also decided to translate the prose version of Ariosto instead of its revised verse form. Indeed, the prose style of *La Calandra* may well have been another factor in Ippolito's decision to stage this comedy. In practice, Italian writers were, with the exception of Ariosto, far more frequently using prose rather than verse in their comedies. Bibbiena, too, advocated a prose style, and the very first line of the Prologue to *La Calandra* calls attention to his decision to use prose: 'Voi sarete oggi spettatori d'una nova commedia intitulata *Calandra*: in prosa, non in versi; moderna, non antiqua; vulgare, non latina'.[353] By opposing the use of prose and vernacular in the 'commedia moderna' with the use of verse and Latin in the 'commedia antiqua', Bibbiena proudly asserts that the ancient verse style has been usurped by modern writers, clearly

[352] Ibid., fol. P.2.
[353] Bibbiena, *La Calandra*, 'Prologue'.

aiming to set a precedent for his contemporaries.[354] The decision to stage a comedy which overtly advocated the prose style increasingly favoured by Italian humanists may well have been influenced by a desire to demonstrate the effectiveness of this style in performance.

The prose style of Boccaccio was also becoming increasingly influential, not just in Italy but also in France. We saw in the Introduction that the *Decameron* had been translated into French (cf. p. 13) and widely circulated throughout the country; we have also seen that Boccaccio was one of the six statues which stood in the 'Salle de la Comédie'. It is significant, however, that his statue did not wear a laurel wreath on his head like Dante and Petrarch, but was instead adorned with an oak crown.[355] As Cooper has correctly noted, this oak crown is in all likelihood a specific representation of Boccaccio's innovation in using prose and his expertise with the style, introducing it into Tuscan literary practice.[356] *La Calandra* has close parallels with the *Decameron*, being the first comedy not only to base its eponymous hero on a character from Boccaccio's collection — the widely popular Calandrino — but also to replicate its prose style, a form which, as is testified by the oak crown, was clearly admired in France.[357] Ridolfi himself was one such admirer, extolling Boccaccio's prose throughout the aforementioned *Ragionamento havuto in Lione*; the French nobility, too, had long appreciated this style, Emilio Ferretti in the prefatory letter of Maçon's translation of the *Decameron* highlighting the respect of François I and Marguerite de Navarre for the 'poeta in prosa'.[358] Bibbiena's forward-looking use of the Boccaccian prose style, pleasing its spectators and introducing another innovation into France, may thus

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[354] For a further exploration of Bibbiena's use of prose, cf. Ronald Martinez, 'Etruria Triumphant in Rome: Fables of Medici Rule and Bibbiena's *Calandra*', *Renaissance Drama,* 36 (2010), 69–98.
[355] Scève, *Magnificence*, fol. K.3.
[356] Scève, *Entry of Henri II*, 'Introduction' by Cooper, p. 107.
[357] Further borrowings from Boccaccio by Bibbiena can be found in Anna Fontes-Baratto, 'Les fêtes à Urbin en 1513 et la *Calandra* de Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, in *Les Écrivains et le Pouvoir en Italie à l'Époque de la Renaissance*, ed. by André Rochon (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1974), pp. 69–75.
[358] Boccaccio, *Le Decameron de Messire Jehan Bocace Florentin*, sig. ã iijr. Cited in Glyn Norton, 'Theories of prose fiction in sixteenth-century France', in *Cambridge History*, pp. 305–13 (p. 308).

have been a further contributing factor in the choice of *La Calandra* as the comedy to be performed for the entry.

Conclusion

The performance of *La Calandra* was a resounding success amongst its French and Florentine spectators. Scève recounts how Henri demanded to see the comedy for a second time at the end of the week, and when the entry was over it was acted for a third time for townsmen who had not managed to see it: 'Le soir sa Magesté voulut encor ouir reciter la Comedie pour la seconde foys. Laquelle fut aussi de rechief rejoüee le Lundy apres pour Messieurs du grand Conseil, et autres de la Ville, qui n'avoient peu entrer aux premiers recitementz'.[359] Mazzei elaborates on the Court's excitement at the comedy, claiming that the second performance was even better than the first, lasting for four hours:

> Circa alla soddisfatione della comedia, non pur sua Maestà che lo disse piu d'una volta, ma ancora i Signori e Gentilhuomini di Corte per una voce tutti affermavano non haver mai veduto il piu bello spettacolo [...] prolungò per dopo [la cena] la Comedia, che durò quatro hore, ò davantaggio e ando sempre tanto bene che non vi segui mai pure un minimo errore dallaquale poi partendosi sua Maestà disse essersi piaciuta ancora più che la prima volta.[360]

Since a performance of *La Calandra* can be delivered in around an hour,[361] the extended timespan of this second performance implies that the actors were extremely well received: they must have been encouraged to improvise, and their performance must have met with regular laughter and applause. The King enjoyed it so much that, as the catalogues of his library indicate, he subsequently acquired a copy of *La Calandra* for his personal library.[362] Thus, only several weeks after Sébillet claimed that comedy could not please, *La Calandra*

[359] Scève, *Magnificence*, K.3.
[360] Mazzei, *Magnifica*, fol. P.2.
[361] Based on my experience of directing plays of a similar length.
[362] Omont, *Anciens Inventaires*, p. 105.

proved that the exact opposite was true.[363] The play's organisers intended to achieve the exact end of pleasing their spectators, particularly Henri and Catherine, tailoring many details of the comedy specifically to their tastes. As we have seen, they brought in Florentine performers, 'vestiti alla Fiorentina', who had been favourites at the Medici Court; they incorporated excellent intervals written by a Florentine and following a narrative which was highly flattering to the King and Queen; they also relocated the setting from Rome to Catherine's native Florence, for which beautiful and highly realistic scenery depicting her hometown was provided. Indeed, the play itself may have been chosen as much for the playwright's connection to the Medici as for its widespread reputation to please.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the Florentine organisers of the play did not strive to please the King and Queen for this end in itself. As a speaker in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528), Bibbiena himself had stated that comedy could be employed by the King as a canny tool to win the popularity of his people — 'per acquistar la benivolenzia dei populi';[364] conversely, with the 1548 performance of *La Calandra*, we witness the Florentine colony in Lyon using comedy to win the favour of the nobles themselves. This chapter has shown that the network of Florentines producing *La Calandra* is far more closely allied than we had previously imagined, a collaborative effort between Ippolito d'Este, the Gondi and Guadagni families, and their protégés including Alamanni, Nannoccio, and Manucci. This collaborative attempt to ensure the play's success would potentially bring with it a series of rewards, desired in greater or lesser measure by each of the Florentine collaborators. They may initially have intended to gain the patronage or protection of the King and Queen, which brought with it promises of financial security and an elevated position at the Court or in society. Secondly, the representation of a comedy so

[363] Sébillet, *Art poétique*, pp. 164–5.
[364] Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, p. 152.

tailored to Henri and Catherine would be an opportunity to heal any past rifts; Alamanni, for example, may have aimed to gain further Medici favour. Finally, a desire to return to their hometown of Florence may have incited these *fuorusciti* to please the King, Queen, or even Strozzi, the Lyon marshal. The involvement of Ridolfi, for example — who was indeed able to return to Florence almost twenty years later — may well have been instigated by such an objective. The purpose of comedy was not only to please its spectators but also to function as a political or a persuasive tool, capable of helping those involved in its production to achieve their own ends. This function of comedy was, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, an indicator of how the genre would continue to be employed throughout the century, as French playwrights themselves grew increasingly adept at dramatic writings.

This performance of *La Calandra* was also a complete innovation. Not only was it one of the first performances of a comedy in France, but the Italians also incorporated a number of entirely new features, all of which were thriving in Italy but had never been seen across the border. These include professional sets and staging, intervals, professional comic actors, and the use of prose in comic theatre. Almost a decade previously, Estienne had discussed the importance of each of these features, praising the Italians' success in reinventing them and appealing for his French readership to incorporate these features into their own work. Despite making several bids emphasising the value of these aspects of comedy, not only in his treatise but also in his later letter to the King, it is evident that his work had either been overlooked by his contemporaries or that they had failed to be convinced by his arguments. It was thus the Italians — who this chapter has shown to be far more involved in the production than has previously been realised — who first put comedy

and all of its features into practice in France, making this performance an irrefutable landmark in the reinvention of comedy north of the Alps.[365]

Unlike Estienne, however, we cannot say that the Italian organisers of this performance — with the possible exception of Ippolito d'Este, who had a track record for bringing Italian categories of drama to France — directly intended to enrich French culture by introducing into France a reinvented literary genre. Nowhere in any account of the performance are there indications that the Italians in Lyon specifically wanted to fulfil this humanist aim. Nonetheless, this performance set new standards for comedy in France, providing visual evidence to French spectators of its value — an end which the many printed versions of Terence, and Estienne's prefaces and translations, had not been able to accomplish. A corollary of this performance was also that, as we shall see in Chapter 4, a series of further Italian performances was patronised in France, in turn inspiring French writers to turn their minds to writing comedy themselves. So whilst the performance of *La Calandra* may not have been an overt literary and humanist experiment for the Italians, as it was for Estienne, it nonetheless played a crucial role in establishing comedy in France. Brantôme also recognised the importance of this production in the reinvention of comic drama, pointing out the success of *La Calandra* in usurping its medieval predecessors in France and also calling attention to its Italian roots:

> [La comedie estoit] chose que l'on n'avoit encores veu, et rare en France; car paradvant on ne parloit que des farceurs, des connardz de Rouan, des joüeurs de la Basoche, et autres sortes de badins et joüeurs de badinages, farces, mommeries et sotteries: mesmes qu'il n'y avoit pas longtemps que ces belles tragédies et gentilles comedies avoient estré inventées, jouées et représentées en Italie.[366]

[365] Indeed, though many features of this entry were imitated when the King entered Rouen in 1550 — the elaborate *naumachia*, for example, was reproduced — the lack of a comedy at the 1550 entry again suggests that the presence of Ippolito and the Florentines in Lyon made such a production possible.

[366] Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 256.

Indeed, *La Calandra* marked the beginning of a new Italianate tradition in French comedy on stage and in print which, as we shall see in Chapter 4 and beyond, would preoccupy French writers for the next thirty years.

Chapter 4: Later Italianate Performance at the Court: Imitation and Emulation

‘Jodelle heureusement sonna
D’une vois humble et d’une vois hardie
La Comedie, avec la Tragedie,
Et d’un ton double, ore bas, ore haut,
Remplit premier le François échafaut.’
Pierre de Ronsard, ‘À Jean de La Péruse’ (1552)

Introduction

This final chapter of Part II continues its focus on performance, concentrating on the position of comedy at the French Court from 1552–1558. It is split into two main sections: the first, like Chapter 3, is centred on the Italian innovators of comic theatre at the Court; the second, longer section turns to French writers of comic drama, examining the first attempts to write and stage original Italianate theatre in French. I establish how French writers during this period radically changed their conceptual approach to comic drama, also investigating their reasons for deciding to put theatre into practice. To determine the nature of this shift I draw parallels between these first French comedies and the cluster of Italian plays performed at the Court during these years, assessing the Italian influence on the initial endeavours of playwrights to write and perform drama. Bearing in mind the earlier exhortations of Estienne and others for writers to engage proudly with their models, I also explore the ways in which French dramatists interact with their Italian influences, asking how the increasingly complex relationship between these first writers of comedy and their sources is manifested in their theatrical work. My analysis in this chapter thus provides answers to several questions: compared with its cultural status in the first half of the century, what was the position of comic theatre in the 1550s? What factors played a part in encouraging French writers to embrace comedy, and how did they intend their newly reinvented theatre to be received? What role did the Italians play in their continuing influence on French playwrights, and what

does the drama written during these years reveal about the relationship between France and Italy in the mid-century?

In this chapter I focus mostly on the paratexts surrounding these first comedies, including letters, a prologue, and a programme of celebrations. I firstly provide brief surveys of two little-studied Italian comedies acted at the French Court: Agnolo Firenzuola's *I Lucidi*, performed in 1554, and Luigi Alamanni's *La Flora*, written in 1549 though not performed until 1555. Since I follow these surveys by analysing a performance of a French comedy performed two years earlier, my study in this chapter is again unchronological. Still, though several Italianate plays were performed at the French Court during these years, *I Lucidi* and *La Flora* are the best documented, and are thus able to provide a fuller representation of the typical Italian comedy performed at the Court during this period and a clearer perspective on its French imitators.[367] The French performance I examine is Estienne Jodelle's *L'Eugène* (1552), the first original comedy to be written in French.[368] Jodelle's prologue provides an insight into his humanist endeavour to create France's first comedy, shedding light on his aims and intentions for comic theatre and also on his attitudes towards Italian models. My final case study in this chapter is Jodelle's 1558 *masquarades*.[369] *Masquarades* were not strictly comic; however, Jodelle's plays have extensive Italian influences and also provide useful continuity from the same author, allowing us to document the changing perspective on professional performance throughout this decade and also the

[367] For a fuller list of these comedies, cf. Lebègue, 'Tableau', pp. 282–3.
[368] The edition referred to throughout this chapter is Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, ed. by Michael Freeman (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1987). Estienne Pasquier commented in his *Recherches* that '[Jodelle] fit deux Tragedies, la Cleopatre et Didon, et deux Comedies, La Rencontre et l'Eugène': cf. Pasquier, *Des Recherches de la France*, 10 vols (Paris: L. Sonnius, 1617), VI, chapter vii, s.n. It has thus long been thought that Jodelle wrote another comedy, *La Rencontre*. However, Victor Graham has convincingly shown that *L'Eugène* and *La Rencontre* are the same play in his 'Jodelle's *Eugène*, ou *La Rencontre* Again', *Renaissance News*, 14.3 (1961), 161–64, and although further research into this question would no doubt be valuable, for the purposes of this thesis I accept that *L'Eugène* and *La Rencontre* are the same play.
[369] A series of playlets popular in Italy, often retelling classical myths with the use of masks.

unstable relationship of French dramatists with their Italian counterparts.

1. Italian Theatre at the Court: Agnolo Firenzuola's *I Lucidi* (1554)

Firenzuola's comedy *I Lucidi* was performed at Fontainebleau in 1554. Though, as we saw in the Introduction (cf. p. 14), the production of *La Calandra* several years earlier had sparked the trend of Italianate theatre acted at the Court, it seems as though the unknown organisers of this performance aimed in some respects to move away from the precedent it had set. Firenzuola's other, more famous comedy *La Trinuzia* was not chosen for this occasion: a close imitation of *La Calandra*, it was perhaps thought that such a play would invite spectators to compare it unfavourably to the highly successful — and expensive — entry performance. *I Lucidi* is instead based on Plautus's *Menaechmi* and is thus the first production in France of a comedy to be inspired by Plautus and not the well-known Terence. It is plausible, then, that the organisers of this performance aimed to showcase Italian talent in France, demonstrating the breadth of their theatrical endeavours and their successful replication of several Latin playwrights. It may have been Alamanni to make the suggestion of *I Lucidi*, since Alamanni was a close friend of Lazzaro Buonamico, both writers of comedy and members of the Accademia degli Infiammati;[370] Buonamico in turn had long been guided by Firenzuola, who first encouraged Buonamico to turn his mind to comedy.[371] Respected amongst the Infiammati, it is possible that Alamanni was eager to promote the work of his fellow Florentines, an endeavour which would no doubt please Catherine. A favourite of Henri II, Alamanni would also have known that the King would appreciate the sauciness of *I Lucidi*. Growing increasingly lascivious, Henri was by this year notorious for his appreciation for all things lewd, as Giovanni Correro, the Venetian ambassador to

[370] The Accademia degli Infiammati was a literary academy active in Padua throughout the 1540s.
[371] Agnolo Firenzuola, *Opere*, ed. by Adriano Seroni (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), p. 627.

France, comments dryly during this year: 'Non gode finalmente altra sorte di piaceri che onesti, se per avventura non procedesse si cauto che a nessuno fosse manifestato'.[372]

I Lucidi was, then, known to the network of Florentine literati at the Court; it was suited to the tastes of the King and Queen; and, as a Plautine reinvention, it constituted a further innovation in France, demonstrating once more the Italians' theatrical talents. It was also widely accepted that *I Lucidi* was a play which lent itself to performance. The dedicatory letter prefacing the 1552 Florentine edition of *I Lucidi*, written by the Italian humanist Lodovico Domenichi to Aldighieri della Casa, states that reading the comedy will make the reader want to see a performance of it:

> Leggetela adunque [...] e cosi venite inganando il desiderio, che forse hora havete d'udire alle presenza gli argutissimi poemi di questa qualità, i quali a noi nella vostra leggiadra lingua, e nella vostra fioritissima patria di questa lieta stagione è concesso ascoltare.[373]

Also setting out the prowess of Italian language and culture in creating this comedy, Domenichi suggests that *I Lucidi* is exemplary not only in its performability but also in its capacity to showcase Italian genius. Additionally, his reference to Italy's 'leggiadra lingua' may be a praise of the comedy's use of prose. Firenzuola was particularly celebrated throughout Italy as an excellent prose writer, which he employs not only in his comedies but also in his acclaimed satirical writings.[374] Further showing, like *La Calandra*, the versatility of Italian writers, Firenzuola's successful rendering of Plautus's verse into the celebrated new prose style for comedies may also have proved *I Lucidi* to be an apt choice for this

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[372] Giovanni Correro, 'Relazione del Clarissimo Messer Giovanni Cappello, ambasciator in Francia nell'anno 1554', in *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, II, pp. 366–85 (p. 372).
[373] Firenzuola, *I Lucidi, commedia*, ed. by Lodovico Domenichi (Florence: I Giunti, 1552), dedicatory letter 'Al magnifico e suo molto onorato messer Aldighieri della casa'.
[374] Cf. Firenzuola, Giovanni Battista Gelli, *Tesoretto della lingua Toscana*, ed. by Nicola Giosafatte Biagioli (Paris: G. Didot, 1822), 'Preface', pp. 8–10. Giuseppe Parini, for example, far preferred Firenzuola's use of prose to his use of verse: in his account of the 'Principi delle belle lettere' he dubs Firenzuola a 'scrittore leggiadrissimo di prosa ed assai mediocre nel verso'. Cf. Giuseppe Parini, *Versi e prose di Giuseppe Parini*, ed. by Giuseppe Giusti (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1846), p. 460.

French production. As a play which was famously performable and which also showcases some of the most innovative features of Italian comedy, clearly this production aimed to impress its French spectators, also helping to establish comedy as an Italian literary category in France.

A little-known letter written on 5th March 1555 by the Italian humanist and diplomat Stefano Guazzo, who lived at the French Court from 1552–1559, also sheds new light on this performance.[375] Writing to the *châtelain* of Mantua, Sabino Calandra, Guazzo makes a brief mention of the performance of *I Lucidi*:

> Questo Natale si recitorno *I Lucidi*, comedia del Firenzuola, innanzi a Sua Maestà, della quale io ne dissi una parte, e il simile ho fatto in una comedia del Sig. Luigi Alamanni, intitolata *Flora*, laquale si recitò già otto giorni a Fontanableo, con grandissimo piacere di Sua Maestà et tutta la Corte.[376]

Guazzo's account firstly establishes that the comedy was performed as part of the Epiphany festivities: clearly the Italian tradition of performing a comedy for celebrations or festivities, first put into practice in France at the 1548 entry, was thriving. Additionally, the specification of 'questo Natale' also suggests that Epiphany productions were regular events, with comedies performed at earlier Epiphanies. Secondly, explaining that 'della [comedia] io ne dissi una parte', the letter indicates that the performance was highly Italian in nature. Since Guazzo was invited to play a role, *I Lucidi* evidently did not take place in French, but, like *La Calandra*, was performed in the original Italian. Furthermore, since it was customary for Italian actors to invite members of the audience up on stage to perform, Guazzo's role indicates that a professional Italian troupe was, as it had been for *La Calandra*, brought over

[375] This letter has been largely overlooked. Lucien Romier, for example, makes a brief reference to it, though he provides no exegesis and even refers to Guazzo as a 'comédien italien', which — despite his brief appearances in these comedies — he certainly was not. Cf. Romier, *Les origines politiques*, I, p. 5, n. 1.

[376] Reproduced in *Il Bibliofilo*, ed. Carlo Lozzi, 11 vols (Bologna: Società tipografica già compositori, 1884), VI, p. 85.

to perform this comedy.[377] Performed in Italian and by Italian actors, comedy was still — even several years after *La Calandra* was staged — very much associated with the Italians.

Whilst evidence surrounding this performance of *I Lucidi* is scant, it still reveals several characteristics of comedy at the French Court during these years. The tradition of performing comedies as part of celebrations or festivals, for example, was thriving; it is also likely that the Florentine colony at the French Court still had a hand in producing these plays. In addition, we see that the organisers were attempting to introduce new material into France: performing a play based not on the widely-celebrated *La Calandra* but another, more obscure prose comedy derived from Plautus, the Italians clearly wanted to bring out their wide-ranging comic achievements, also pleasing Catherine with its Florentine roots. Finally, *I Lucidi* was highly Italian in nature, not only showcasing wherever possible Italian innovations but also performed in its original language and by Italian actors. Comedy in France was, in 1554, still largely characterised as an Italian genre.

2. Luigi Alamanni's *La Flora* (1555)

Turning back to Guazzo's account of the performance, he notes his participation in a second comedy, performed less than two months after *I Lucidi*: Alamanni's *La Flora*. Though Alamanni's *La Flora* was first performed in 1555, it was written as early as 1549 and possibly recited informally before the King and Queen shortly after its composition, like Baïf's French translation of Sophocles' tragedy *Electra* (cf. Introduction, p. 14). As we saw in Chapter 2, Alamanni had in 1548 made every effort to please Henri and Catherine with his intervals for *La Calandra*, especially given his former contentiousness towards the Medici family. By all accounts he succeeded: a year later Catherine employed him as her

[377] Cf. Lebègue, 'La comédie italienne en France' au XVIe siècle', p. 1.

steward, and he met with increasingly generous pensions for his work;[378] the King also sent Alamanni on several diplomatic missions to Italy and England, and Alamanni was often called upon to act as an intermediary in Italian affairs in France.[379] It is no coincidence that Alamanni wrote *La Flora* the year after the success of *La Calandra*, a production which had no doubt contributed to his elevated position at the Court and which paved the way for a second comedy to be performed.

Little evidence surrounds the 1555 performance of *La Flora*, and the play has never been examined in detail.[380] It is nonetheless possible, as it was for *I Lucidi*, to gain a better understanding of the status of Italian comedy at the French Court through an examination of its context and paratexts. We can again establish three fundamental characteristics of the performance from Guazzo's letter. His claim that he had acted in it — 'il simile ho fatto in una comedia del Sig. Luigi Alamanni, intitolata *Flora*' — firstly suggests that the play was performed in its original Italian language; secondly, the play must again have been acted by professional Italian comedians, who invited audience members up on stage. It is thus evident that Alamanni, like the organisers of *La Calandra* and *I Lucidi*, intended his comedy to be a wholly Italian work, showcasing the language and talent of his home country. The other detail of Guazzo's letter — that *La Flora* was performed 'già otto giorni' — reveals that *La Flora* was performed in late February, and therefore as part of the carnival celebrations. This further confirms the earlier assertion that comedies were, in the Italian style, beginning to be regularly performed in France as part of celebrations or festivities.

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[378] Balsamo, 'L'italianisme lyonnais', p. 224.

[379] See Henri Hauvette, *Un exilé florentin à la cour de France au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette & Cie, 1903) , pp. 144–45. He was also commissioned by the King to write *Gyrone il Cortese* (1548) and the unpublished *Avarchide*, both highly pro-French and nationalistic works.

[380] The most recent edition of *La Flora* was printed in 1859. Cf. *La Flora, in Versi e prose di Luigi Alamanni, edizione ordinata e raffrontata sui codici per cura di Pietro Raffaelli, con un discorso intorno all'Alamanni e al suo secolo*, ed. by Pietro Raffaelli, 2 vols (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1859) II, pp. 321–403.

The prologue to *La Flora*, written especially for the 1555 performance, provides us with further evidence that Alamanni wanted his comedy to be as Italian as possible in nature. It is firstly clear that, like *La Calandra*, the performance incorporated costumes, since Alamanni refers in the first line of the prologue to the actors' 'rozzi veli' and 'negletto habito'.[381] Though the costumes may well have been simple and run-down, such an effect is what the play required: Alamanni is thus drawing attention to his inclusion of specially-made costumes, emphasising both the innovative and Italian nature of his comedy. Secondly, we can see from Alamanni's prefatory plot summary that, like Bibbiena, he had closely relied on the *Decameron*, since the story of *La Flora* takes inspiration from several of its tales.[382] We have seen that the *Decameron* was widely celebrated throughout both Italy and France at this time, and *La Calandra* had indeed set a precedent for many Italian comedies to base their plots — and prose — on Boccaccio's *novelle*.[383] Replicating this style in *La Flora*, Alamanni is producing a comedy both based on an Italian source and highly typical of the representations taking place in Italy, again emphasising the Italian nature of his play.

Also evident from Alamanni's prologue is that the King and Queen attended the performance, with Alamanni addressing his speech to 'Henrico invitissimo', 'Catherina Cristianissima', and 'Margherita unica'.[384] Though they were each present, the highly Italianised nature of Alamanni's play indicates that he was interested in pleasing Catherine above all, as does the Florentine focus of this comedy. A letter written just before the performance by the Sienese ambassador, Bernardo Buoninsegni, even insinuates that the representation of Florence was a major reason behind the composition of this comedy:

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[381] Luigi Alamanni, *La Flora, comedia, con gl'intermedii di A. Lori* (Florence: s. p., 1556), Prologue, p. 2. Throughout this chapter all references to *La Flora* shall be from this edition.
[382] For example, the third tale of the second day, revolving around poverty, mistaken identities, and an eventual marriage which resolves everything. It is not, as Raymond Lebègue has claimed, solely 'imitée des pièces de Térence'. Lebègue, 'Tableau', p. 302.
[383] For example, Jacopo Nardi's *I Due Felici Rivali* (1513) or Machiavelli's *La Mandragola* (1518).
[384] The latter refers to Marguerite de France. Alamanni, *La Flora*, 'Prologue', p. 2.

'Domane si recita a Fontanableò una bella commedia del signor Luigi Alamanni intitolata Flora per rappresentar Firenze'.[385] Even the title of the comedy — along with its eponymous heroine — calls the spectator's attention to Florence. Henri Hauvette rightly suggested that by this stage in Alamanni's career, the name 'Flora' itself had become synonymous with Florence, as part of the folk etymology of 'Fiorenza';[386] the comedy's protagonist Geri also claims that he named her Flora 'per amore alla patria'.[387]

The focus on Florence is continued throughout much of Alamanni's prologue. It draws attention to the Florentine setting of the comedy, repeating that the location of the play is Florence and inviting the spectator to imagine that they are in this city: 'Questa è Fiorenza [...] vi debbe essere per la divina sua pianta, che è qui.'[388] Here he aims praise directly at Catherine, conveying the notion that she, the 'pianta', is the embodiment of Florence and — since she is present — the spectators should be sufficiently convinced that they are in the city. In the next lines he asks the spectators to recall 'la sincera fede, e [...] l'amore humile che a gigli d'oro porta'.[389] As well as praising how Catherine exemplifies the city's virtues, Alamanni reintroduces the topos of the golden lilies that he incorporated into his *Calandra* interludes, claiming that her qualities enhance Florence's 'gigli d'oro'. Harking back to the success of the Lyon entry, this reference is clearly intended to remind Catherine of the golden gift symbolising her role as interconnector between Florence and France. Similarly, it reminds spectators of the Franco-Florentine relationship: the comedy they are witnessing is a Florentine endeavour, largely brought to them by Catherine, the 'pianta' linking the two cultures. Indeed, the performance certainly succeeded in its political aim of flattering Catherine, as testified by Guazzo's letter stating that it was received 'con

[385] *Miscellanea storica senese*, anno IV, facs. 12, p. 201. Cited in Hauvette, *Un exilé florentin,* p. 145.
[386] Hauvette, *Un exilé florentin*, p. 152.
[387] Alamanni, *La Flora*, 5.5, p. 24r. Cited in Hauvette, *Un exilé florentin,* p. 350.
[388] Alamanni, *La Flora*, 'Prologue', p. 2.
[389] Ibid., 'Prologue', p. 2.

grandissimo piacere'. It must have also been well received by the rest of its spectators, since it gained renown extremely quickly. A year later it had made its way to Italy and was printed and performed for the 1556 Florence carnival.[390] The play was apparently smuggled out without Alamanni's knowledge, and by the time it was printed in Italy, Alamanni was dying.

The evidence surrounding the 1555 performance of *La Flora* helps us to fill further gaps in our knowledge about Italian comedy at the French Court during this decade. Like *La Calandra* and *I Lucidi*, *La Flora* was acted as part of a series of festivities, indicating that France had well and truly appropriated the Italian custom of performing comedies at special occasions. Alamanni also focused on bringing out his comedy's Italian elements, ensuring that it was performed in Italian, by Italian actors, and emphasising its Florentine setting. Additionally, he takes inspiration from *La Calandra* by basing his plot on the *Decameron* and also incorporates Italianate features such as specially-made costumes, further highlighting the Italian prowess in comedy. Also clear is that Alamanni again intended to flatter Catherine by showcasing her status as a crucial link between France and Italy. It is likely that he would have aimed to be rewarded for this flattery, but, given his emphasis on the Italian nature of his comedy, it may also be that he was interested in inaugurating further Italian performances at the Court, thereby solidifying comedy's position as an Italian genre in France. Catherine was a Queen who greatly appreciated comic theatre, and nobody in France was in a better position to support this bid.

[390] Cf. the prefatory letter of the 1556 edition 'Al molto Mag. et nobilissimo M. Filippo Salviati, Andrea Lori': 'E mi fu, questo Carnoval passato [...] mostra una Comedia di Luigi Alamanni'. Alamanni, *La Flora* (Florence: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1556).

3. French Theatre at the Court: Estienne Jodelle's *L'Eugène* (1552)

With the exceptions of Estienne and, to a far lesser extent, Du Bellay and Mesmes, French humanists had by this stage shown little interest in reinventing comic theatre. It was left to Italian patrons of theatre to invite French writers to set their minds to the genre, and in 1552 Catherine de' Medici — still the foremost supporter of comic theatre in France — asked a newly arrived courtier, the twenty-year-old Estienne Jodelle (1532–1573), to write his own comedy.[391] It is possible that she deemed Jodelle suitably experienced with the genre on account of his recent stay in Italy where, like Estienne, he seems to have witnessed productions of comedy.[392] In autumn 1552, only three months after Mesmes's translation of Ariosto's comedy was printed (cf. fig. 4.1, confirming the *privilège* as granted in May), in which Mesmes made no allusion to the possibility of performing Italianate comedy, Jodelle's verse play *L'Eugène* was performed before the King and Queen at the Hôtel de Reims, and was acted for a second time several weeks later at the Collège de Boncourt. At the Hôtel de Reims Jodelle's Italianate tragedy, *Cléopâtre captive*, was also performed; meeting with a warm reception from the King,[393] it starred Jodelle himself in the title role of Cleopatra.[394] To avoid repetition, *L'Eugène* will be referred to as a comedy throughout this chapter; however, we shall see that it is not strictly classically-inspired comedy but can more accurately described as a transitional play. Few documents survive which allude to the performance itself of *L'Eugène*; however, Jodelle's widely-overlooked prologue provides

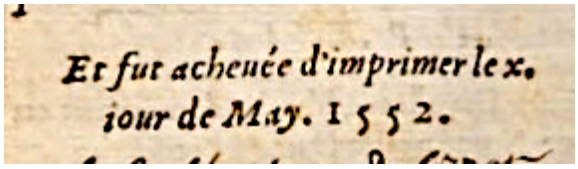
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Figure 4.1. Mesmes, *Les Supposez*, 'Extrait du privilège'.

[391] It seems that his tragedy *Cléopâtre captive*, written during this same year, may also have been requested by Catherine. 'Je fis responce que j'avois et des tragédies et des comedies [...] dont la plus part m'avait été commandée par la Reyne et par Madame seur du Roy'. Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 74.
[392] Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, 'Introduction' by Freeman, p. 7.
[393] Jodelle was apparently gifted five hundred *écus* from the King for this tragedy. Cf. *L'Eugène*, 'Introduction' by Freeman, p. 27.
[394] Pasquier, *Recherches*, VI, chapter vii, s.n.

crucial evidence of his intentions for Court and Collège performances, helping us to understand his motives for attempting to write France's first comedy and also providing a new perspective on how he positioned himself in relation to Italian drama, already well respected in Italy and at the French Court. Indeed, we can be certain that the prologue was intended solely for these performances: Jodelle had little interest in printing his dramatic writings and they appeared only twenty years after the performances in a posthumous volume of his works.[395]

A close reading of Jodelle's prologue reveals that he is first and foremost preoccupied with proving that his comedy is an innovation. He opens the prologue by announcing to spectators that comedy 'à tous ne plai[t] pas'.[396] This is clearly untrue: we have seen that *La Calandra* had met with an extremely positive reception and that Italianate comedies were enjoying rising acclaim at the French Court, evidently a reason for which Catherine initially commissioned Jodelle to write a comedy. It is likely that Jodelle is at once flattering the courtly audience for their discerning taste in enjoying comedies and reassuring his Collège audience that his play will be entertaining. As noted in Chapter 1, early players of Terence in the original Latin had been booed off stage, and Sébillet too — a writer excluded from courtly circles — was unconvinced that classical or humanist comedy could be enjoyable. Jodelle's subsequent verses stress that he is the first to write comedy in French:

> Voyant aussi que ce genre d'escrire
> Des yeux François si long temps se retire,
> Sans que quelqu'un ait encore esprouvé
> Ce que tant bon jadis on a trouvé,
> A bien voulu dépendre ceste peine,
> Pour vous donner sa Comedie Eugene.[397]

[395] Jodelle, *Œuvres et meslanges poétiques*, ed. by Charles de La Mothe (Paris: Mamert Patisson, 1574). Baïf and Jean Dorat also had little interest in printing their own dramatic works.
[396] Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, 'Prologue', line 2, p. 3.
[397] Ibid., 'Prologue', lines 25–30, p. 3.

Claiming that no writer has yet produced comedy in French, Jodelle neglects the precedent set by his contemporaries, making no mention that Estienne, Bourgeois, and Mesmes had all translated Italian comedy into French. He is, then, aiming to further emphasise the innovative qualities of his play, suggesting that his work should be appreciated because he is the first writer in France to recognise the worth of the genre. He additionally makes an outward show of using the classical canon to enrich contemporary literature, claiming that his comedy surpasses the work of medieval playwrights and harking back to the ancients who produced far superior drama: 'Ce que tant bon jadis on a trouvé'. Though he no doubt oversells his role in helping to bring comedy to France, glossing over the reality that Italian comedy had been enjoyed for several years at the French Court and that several of his compatriots had already sought to import it into the country, Jodelle inarguably aimed to prove his worth to fellow humanists as a successful reinventor of literature.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the humanist practice of *imitatio* prescribed the appropriation of suitable models when working with certain literary categories. In terms of comic theatre, Estienne and Du Bellay had already alluded to the importance of imitating the classics and the Italians, and as mentioned above, Jodelle too praises the excellence of the ancients in his prologue. However, whilst Jodelle claims that his work can equal that of the ancients, he also states in his prologue that he has taken no inspiration from them:

> L'invention n'est point d'un vieil Menandre,
> Rien d'estranger on ne vous fait entendre,
> Le style est nostre, et chacun personnage
> Se dit aussi estre de ce langage.[398]

Synecdochically referring to the ancients as 'Menandre', the Greek playwright who greatly influenced Terence, Jodelle asserts that he has avoided the incorporation of any classical elements into his comedy. Whilst it is evidently paradoxical to claim that he has reinvented

[398] Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, 'Prologue', lines 32–36, p. 4.

the work of the ancients but not employed 'invention' in the first place, Jodelle is clearly again attempting to emphasise the originality of his work. However, in addition to denying classical influence, he claims that there will be nothing foreign — 'rien d'estranger' — in his comedy. Since the only foreign theatre to have been imported into France was Italian, Jodelle is also asserting that his play takes no inspiration from the Italian reinventors of comedy: he thus maintains that his play is based on neither of Estienne's recommended models: the classics or the Italians. Instead he accentuates that the play is written in French — 'de ce langage' — again stressing his innovation in writing and performing this play. His overt rejection of classical and Italian mores, as well as his emphasis that spectators will not have seen a similar play, also insinuates that his comedy is superior to the work of the ancients or Italians. This responds to the insistence which was emerging in contemporary debates on *aemulatio*, rather than on *imitatio* (cf. p. 48): paramount to successful literary creation was the surpassing, and not simply the reproducing, of previous work. Indeed, in the subsequent lines of his prologue, Jodelle reiterates the idea that he has surpassed the comic theatre of his literary ancestors:

> Mais retraçant la voye des plus vieux […]
> Cestuy-ci donne à la France courage
> De plus en plus ozer bien d'advantage.[399]

Of course, by describing his following of the path of the ancients — the oft-cited *via* topos employed by classical and medieval writers when discussing *imitatio* — he acknowledges that he is imitating the models he has just rejected.[400] Still, his reiteration that he has aimed higher than his classical counterparts, aspiring to create superior work, further manifests Jodelle's attempt to convince the reader that they are about to see something entirely new.

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[399] Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, 'Prologue', lines 43–46, p. 4.
[400] See for example George Pigman's discussion of Petrarch's letter to Boccaccio, in which Petrarch reproduces the *via* topos first elaborated on by Seneca. Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', p. 21.

In his attempts to impress the reader with his innovations, it is already evident that much of Jodelle's self-promotion is unfounded. Indeed, the remainder of his prologue makes it even more obvious that he was aware of the precedents that had been set and that he aspired to measure up to them. He alludes to three features typical of comedy: classical staging, the interval, and the division of comedy into acts. As for staging, he apologises for the lack of 'demy rond' to accommodate the spectators and hopes that they will tolerate its present condition: 'Il faut qu'on le supporte'.[401] Though the Italians had not incorporated a 'demy rond' — a feature first described in French by Estienne (cf. p. 52) — into their performances in France, we have seen that the extravagant theatre space of *La Calandra*, for example, had greatly impressed its spectators. Evidently Jodelle was aware of the impressive staging that had been recreated in France by the Italians, and also perceived that such a space would be expected by his courtly audience. Jodelle secondly refers to the interval, which had again been praised by Estienne a decade earlier. In a warning clearly directed to his Collège audience, he claims that since comedy had previously only been witnessed by French royalty, they may initially dislike the interval:

> Veu que l'exquis de ce vieil ornament
> Ore se voüe aux Princes seulement:
> Mesme le son qui les actes separe,
> Comme je croy, vous eust semblé barbare.[402]

Though intervals are not included in the script and no music composed for the performance survives, Jodelle's reference indicates that the performance did include them; additionally, his preliminary warning also suggests that he wanted the public at large to be able to appreciate this feature. It is worth noting that Jodelle's choice in this passage of the Italianised adjective 'barbare' — a term which, as we shall see in Chapter 5, was swiftly becoming synonymous in France with the Italians themselves during these years — gestures

[401] Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, 'Prologue', lines 64–66, p. 4.
[402] Ibid., 'Prologue', lines 67–70, p. 4.

to the Italian roots of the interval: again, Jodelle certainly knew that this feature had also been put into practice in France by the Italians, most likely in Alamanni's *La Calandra* interludes.[403] Linked to this is Jodelle's division of the comedy into acts — 'mesme le son qui les actes separe' — another feature which had first been promoted by Estienne and put into practice by the Italians in France. Thus whilst Jodelle claims to have taken no inspiration either from his classical, Italian, or French counterparts, he clearly feels the burden of the precedent they have set, and seeks to live up to their achievements wherever possible.

Jodelle's claim that he has not been influenced by the Italians is even more illogical when we recall that his endeavour to write comedy was requested by France's foremost Italian figure. Indeed, his reliance throughout his comedy on the Italians is also linguistic: he uses the insult 'Messer Coyon', for example, which employs the Italianism 'Messer' to mock the Italian courtly greetings and the Italian 'coglioni' to create the neologism 'coyon'.[404] The use of these terms in French comedy, employed as anti-Italian propaganda, will be revisited in Chapters 5 and 6. In addition, though Jodelle also claims to have moved away from medieval comedy, he also takes inspiration from the farce, writing his play in octosyllables instead of the Italianate prose and inventing a highly obscene *dénouement*, far more suited to the farce than to humanist comedy.[405] What becomes even clearer, then, is

[403] On the use of the term 'barbare' to denote the Italians during these years, cf. Marina Marietti, *Quêtes d'une identité collective chez les Italiens de la Renaissance* (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1990), p. 80.

[404] 'Coglioni' denotes 'testicles': Messire Jean: 'Ce sot, ce Messer Coyon pense / Avoir eu seul la jouissance.' (line 413, 1.2).

[405] Louis Petit de Julleville goes so far as to define *L'Eugène* as a 'véritable farce, mais prolongée, divisée en actes et en scènes'; Madeleine Lazard also comments that le 'cynisme du dénouement' — in which the town's abbot reaches a deal with the husband of his beloved that both may sleep with his wife (cf. Appendix II, p. 231) — is also directly inherited from the farce model. An anonymous reader at the start of the next century even expressed shock at the play's obscenity, annotating on their 1583 copy of *L'Eugène* that it was a 'mauvaise pièce'. (*La comédie à l'époque d'Henri II*, ed. by Anna Bettoni, 1.6, p. 347). Cf. Louis Petit de Julleville, *Le Théâtre en France, Histoire de la littérature dramatique depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: A. Colin, 1921), p. 85; Madeleine Lazard, *Le théâtre en France au XVIe siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1980), p. 178. Further examples of *L'Eugène*'s parallel with the farce can also be found in *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, ed. by

the divergence between Jodelle's theory — which paradoxically emphasises his rejection of the ancient, medieval and Italian models, draws attention to his *aemulatio* of the classics, and stresses that he has created something completely new — and his practice, which reveals his close reliance on every source he claims to deny. We can establish, then, that Jodelle is insincere in his claim to observe several humanist requisites: the urgency to reinvent classical literature within a contemporary setting; the quest for originality recommended by many contemporary humanists, part of the crisis of exemplarity we examined in the Introduction (cf. p. 24); and the increasing emphasis on *aemulatio*. Though Jodelle does fulfil these requisites to some extent — his is the first such play to incorporate features such as the interval and a division into acts and scenes; it is also the first with an original plot and naturalised within a French setting — his prologue is, to draw on a Shakespearean cliché, a case of 'protest too much'. Clearly Jodelle seeks to escape from the overshadowing precedent set by ancient and Italian playwrights, and his repeated attempts to assert his originality and prove his contribution to humanist literature work only to reveal his debt to his models.

Jodelle's haste in composing the play — which he completed in only several days — further indicates his desire to be a forerunner of comedy.[406] Perhaps he wanted to ensure that nobody produced a comedy more quickly: as Jean Vauquelin de la Fresnaye somewhat crossly mentions, Jean-Antoine de Baïf first had the idea of writing the tragedy of Cleopatra but Jodelle had been swifter in completing it:

> Jodelle moy present, fist voir sa Cleopatre,
> En France des premiers au Tragique theatre,
> Encor que de Baïf, un si brave argument

Martin Banham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 386, and Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy*, p. 100.

[406] 'La plus longue et difficile Tragedie ou Comedie, ne l'a jamais occupé à la composer et escrire plus de dix matinees: mesme la Comedie d'Eugene fut faite en quatre traittes'. Jodelle, *Œuvres et meslanges poétiques*, ed. by La Mothe, 'Preface', p. 12.

Entre nous eust esté choisi premierement.[407]

Perhaps Baïf — who did indeed later write his own comedy — had also expressed an interest in the comic genre, but Jodelle's expeditiousness subverted his attempt. A final look at Jodelle's prologue sheds further light on his eagerness to be recognised as the first French playwright:

> Que recueilleriez-vous,
> Quels vers, quels ris, quel honneur, et quels mots,
> S'on ne voyoit ici que des sabots?
> Outre, pensez que les Comicques vieux
> Plus haut encor on fait [sic] bruire des Dieux.[408]

Metonymising farce as 'sabots' — wooden shoes worn by the farce actors — Jodelle asserts that this move away from medieval comedy would ensure the honour of its playwright. He describes how 'vers et mots' would be dedicated to a writer of comedy, insinuating that they would be celebrated in posterity for their innovation. He also invites the spectator to consider the fame of classical comedians — 'plus haut encor on fait bruire des Dieux' — further emphasising the potential of drama to bring renown and recognition. The implication is that Jodelle, as the reinventor of the comedy he discusses, deserves to reap similar rewards. He is thus highly aware of the fame and status he would be accorded if he were to be recognised as France's first dramatist, and wants to convince the spectators at all costs that he is deserving of the title.

Perhaps Jodelle also wanted to be known as the first European dramatist. We have already seen that Jodelle employs the terms of 'barbare', 'Messer', and 'coyon' in *L'Eugène*, and that such words were being used increasingly frequently to insult the Italians: evidently Jodelle himself had some subtle prejudices against the Italians by the time he wrote *L'Eugène*. Later in the decade Jodelle's attitude towards the Italians became far more hostile,

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[407] Jean Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, *Art poétique*, ed. by Georges Pellissier, 2 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1885), II, lines 1035–38, p. 119.
[408] Jodelle, *L'Eugène*, 'Prologue', lines 57–62, p. 2.

and he mocked their 'vices vilains' and 'cœurs effeminez';[409] he also deplored their competitiveness, criticising their aims to be superior to all others at the Court:

> Mais que diray-je de leur race,
> Qui encore aujourd'huy pourchasse
> De se faire nommer de tous
> Le peuple le mieux né de tous?[410]

It is possible that Jodelle's endeavour to gloss over his Italian models in this comedy represents part of an attempt to rival their work, to establish the French as forerunners of comedy. This may also be a reason for his employment in *L'Eugène* of the medieval French verse — as opposed to the popular Italianate prose — which would also draw attention away from its Italian roots. However, given that he makes no allusion to such an aim elsewhere in his comedy, we can only speculate that his play was a slight on the Italian writers and organisers of comedy at the French Court. We will return to this notion of cultural rivalry between France and Italy, which emerges far more strongly in subsequent decades, in Chapters 5 and 6.

Though Jodelle was clearly unable to escape from the classical and Italian traditions, despite attempting to conceal his influences, he largely succeeded in his aim to be recognised as France's first playwright. Clearly Catherine was not offended by any anti-Italian slurs: at the Court *L'Eugène* was met with 'un grand applaudissement de toute la compagnie', and at the Collège it attracted such a multitude of spectators that the windows were 'tapissées d'une infinité de personnages d'honneur, et la cour si pleine d'escoliers que les portes du collège en regorgeaient'.[411] Soon welcomed into the Pléiade, Jodelle was singled out by Ronsard in a 1554 poem for being the first to bring comedy and tragedy to France:

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[409] Jodelle, 'Estienne Jodelle au peuple français', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Enea Balmas, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), II, pp. 113–21 (p. 114).
[410] Ibid., pp. 114–15. More information about Jodelle's criticism of the Italians' competitiveness in this poem can be read in Richard Cooper, 'Mario Equicola et la France', in *Parcours et rencontres: Mélanges de langue, d'histoire et de littérature française offerts à Enea Balmas*, ed. by Paolo Carile, Giovanni Dotoli, and Anna Maria Raugei, 2 vols (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), I, pp. 167–82 (p. 167).
[411] Pasquier, *Recherches*, VI, chapter vii, s.n.

> Jodelle heureusement sonna
> D'une vois humble et d'une vois hardie
> La Comedie, avec la Tragedie,
> Et d'un ton double, ore bas, ore haut,
> Remplit premier le François échafaut.[412]

Jodelle also gained the appreciation of many others at the Court: Estienne Pasquier wrote that 'quand à la Comedie et Tragedie, nous en devons le premier plant à Estienne Jodelle',[413] and after the double representation of his comedy and tragedy a goat was reportedly sacrificed to Bacchus to represent the introduction of ancient theatre onto the French stage.[414]

Despite the praise of Jodelle's contemporaries, it is reductive to claim, as some scholars have done, that *L'Eugène* itself established comedy as an autonomous genre in France.[415] We have explored how earlier writers, theoreticians, and the Italian patrons and playwrights in France had contributed to a renewed perspective on the genre, seeking to prove that comedy was a worthwhile and entertaining branch of humanist literature. Jodelle's play forms part of these many attempts, the first physical demonstration that comedy could be written and performed in French. It is a transitional play, then, in that whilst it is still heavily inspired by the farce, it brings to life some exhortations of earlier French writers and imitates the work of the classics and Italians in France, in turn paving the way for later playwrights to create their own comedies in French. It is also a transitional play in its attempts to introduce comedy outside of the French Court and, as we saw in the Introduction (cf. p. 21), the majority of comedies which were shortly to be written were composed by Collège dramatists. It is clear that the nobles had more faith in the Italian

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[412] Ronsard, 'À Jean de La Péruse, Poète', *Œuvres complètes*, V, p. 262.
[413] Pasquier, *Recherches*, VII, chapter vi, s.n.
[414] For an account of this event cf. Willard Thorp, *The Triumph of Realism in Elizabethan Drama 1558–1612* (New York: Gordian Press, 1970), p. 7.
[415] Cf. Donald Perret, *Old Comedy in the French Renaissance (1576–1620)* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), p. 15; Philip Koch, 'French Drama in the Seventeenth Century', in *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, ed. by Maurice Charney, 2 vols (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005), II, pp. 331–49 (p. 333).

comedians than they did in Jodelle: unlike the Italian productions in France, *L'Eugène* was not performed as part of popular celebrations, and it evidently did not receive funding to cover professional actors, costumes, or staging. However, this play is a turning point in proving that comedy did not belong to the classics or Italians alone, but could meet with success also in French.

4. Jodelle's *Masquarades* (1558)

Jodelle's renown at the Court reached its apex in the years following his 1552 performances. Having established himself as one of the foremost courtly poets and a favourite of Henri II, Jodelle was in 1558 commissioned by the Conseil de Paris to compose the elaborate entertainments celebrating the King's triumphant return to Paris, having recaptured Calais from English troops. Though the King was due to return in only three days, Jodelle was confident in his abilities to put together a spectacular series of celebrations. As well as decorating the palace of Fontainebleau and writing a vast array of Latin *icones*, all designed to praise France's most distinguished personages such as Catherine de' Medici, Diane de Poitiers, and Marguerite de France, Jodelle hastily organised a series of *masquarades*, comprising a singing Orpheus; a procession of the Argonauts, along with a specially built Argo; a number of monologues from illustrious classical figures such as Minerva; and a parade by Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory.

No part of these *masquarades*, however, went to plan. Despite the efforts of Jodelle's friends to placate him — 'ni ma raison ni les raisons de tous mes amis ne m'ont persuadé qu'à grand peine que ce desastre fust peu de chose' — clearly the performances were catastrophic.[416] Since these are *masquarades* and not comedy, the following case study will be briefer than our previous explorations. Nonetheless, Jodelle's failed attempts to

[416] Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 121.

inaugurate the *masquarade* in France, along with each of its Italianate features, shed light not only on the status of French theatre and on its performance as the decade came to a close, but additionally on the continuing influence of the Italian dramatic paradigms in France and on the French rapport with these models. I continue to employ the paratexts surrounding the performance of these *masquarades*, rather than a script of the *masquarades* themselves, drawing mainly on Jodelle's own account of the performances recounted in his 1558 *Recueil des inscriptions, figures, devises, et masquarades*. Though the *Recueil* has usefully been reproduced in a modern edition by Victor Graham and William McAllister Johnson,[417] the introduction to their volume provides only the most basic details about the *masquarades*, and little attention has been paid to the performances in subsequent research, with some scholars even failing to recognise that the *masquarades* went wrong.[418]

It has also never been remarked that Jodelle's decision to stage a series of *masquarades* derives from Italian influence. Clearly he recognised the custom in France — first put into practice by the Italians for the 1548 entry, and well and truly in place a decade later — of producing an elaborate performance as part of courtly celebrations, and wanted to imitate this. The *masquarade* itself was an Italian invention, especially popular in Florence at this time and introduced into France during the 1550s by Ippolito d'Este.[419] Though Ippolito had returned to Italy by 1558, he continued to be widely respected and influential within French culture, [420] and evidently Jodelle aimed to replicate in French this new style of Italianate performance, much as he had with *L'Eugène*. Evidently the Italians

[417] It is this edition of the *Recueil*, cited in the Introduction to this thesis, to which I refer throughout this chapter.
[418] See for example David Potter, *Renaissance France at War: Armies, Culture and Society, c. 1480–1560* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), p. 273, and Pauline Smith, who notes only that there was a 'technical hitch' in the production. Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 111.
[419] Even Jodelle's spelling of 'masquarade' replicates the Italian 'mascarata', as it was written at this time.
[420] Indeed, though he had returned to Italy, most of Ippolito's income still came from French sources. Mary Hollingsworth, Carol Richardson, *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety and Art* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2009), p. 133.

were continuing to set the standard for theatre in France, and much as he had for *L'Eugène*, Jodelle again felt the burden of such a precedent, lamenting at the start of his account the 'expectation qu'on avoit de moy'.[421] Clearly trusted with the production of the *masquarades*, however, Jodelle was given an impressive sum to fund this performance, and he set about organising a wholly elaborate and ambitious series of plays, able to rival the work so often showcased by the Italians in France.

A first feature which Jodelle planned to include in his *masquarades*, in clear imitation of the professional Italianate productions enjoyed at the Court, is an array of lavish costumes. His vision for these costumes was ambitious: the first scene, for example, comprised a dozen actors who were 'tous habillés à la matelote antique de blanc et de noir, qui sont les couleurs du Roy': clearly a team of seafarers all dressed in Henri's colours was aimed at flattering the King, recently victorious in his war against overseas enemies.[422] However, instead of describing how Henri received them, Jodelle focuses on the disaster of what he had intended to be the most impressive costumes of the *masquarades*: three children representing cherubs, naked and complete with elaborate wings, accompanying the entourage of Mnemosyne. The children, however, turned up to the production fully clothed and wearing less than convincing costumes which, Jodelle complains, ruined the effect of the wings and stockings he had given them: 'Au lieu d'enfans nuds, les Parisiens mirent de leurs enfans vestus et bien peu desguisés, tellement que les ailes et les trousses [...] demeurerent au peintre'.[423] The children had also been instructed to carry baskets containing diadems of laurels, palms and ivy to gift to each member of the nobility; however, the diadems could not be completed in time and the leaves had to be imitated since natural ones

[421] Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 117.
[422] Ibid., p. 121.
[423] Ibid., p. 123.

could not be found, instead being made — as Jodelle confesses — 'de toutes les sortes'.[424] His elaborate plans for the costumes, he claims, were entirely thwarted by the Parisians who, incapable of picturing his artistic vision, had 'mequaniquement mesnagé les habits'.[425]

A second feature which fell short of Jodelle's elaborate plans was the theatre space. Taking place after a feast, Jodelle had arranged for the tables to be removed, the King and his retinue to be seated on a raised platform and the rest of the spectators lining the walls, with a large space left for the performance to take place:

> Quant à la salle on m'avoit asseuré que [...] les tables des deus costés s'abbatroient, et que le Roy avecques sa compaignie tenant tout ce hault qu'on avoit fait plancheyer pour eus, tout le reste se rangeroit des deus costés devers le hault, tellement que la moitié Presque de la salle me demeureroit tout vuide.[426]

This planned layout closely replicates the classical 'demy rond' he had wanted to provide for *L'Eugène*, providing as authentic and impressive an experience as possible given the short changeover time and giving the impression, as Jodelle states, of being 'comme dedans un theatre'.[427] For the room itself he also took inspiration from the Italians, not only in his idea to decorate the room, like the organisers of *La Calandra* had done, but also in his choice of Janus as a recurring figure: Janus was a motif used throughout the decade at Fontainebleau by his ally Francesco Primaticcio.[428] In terms of the set, Jodelle additionally attempted to imitate the Italians. As in *La Calandra*, he instructed that an elaborately painted backdrop be produced, and since, as he indicates, these designs included 'rochers', it is possible that

[424] Ibid., p. 123.
[425] Ibid., p. 117.
[426] Ibid., pp. 118–9.
[427] Ibid., p. 119.
[428] Jodelle was well acquainted with the Primaticcio family, even dedicating a poem to Madame de Primadis. John Hall, 'Primaticcio and Court Festivals', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 58.2 (1976), 353–77 (pp. 374–5).



Figure 4.2. 'Scena satirica'. Serlio, *De Architettura*, p. 73. Gallica.BnF.fr.

he was endeavouring to replicate Serlio's pastoral set (cf. fig. 4.2).[429] Again, his ambitious arrangements were not able to be carried out. Far too little space was left for the stage area, and the performers ended up agitated, mixed up with the spectators and far too close to the monarch: '[Ils fussent] troublés [...] perdus dedans ceste multitude, et parlans jusques contre la face du Roy'.[430] The *Registres des déliberations* even state that the room was so crowded that the performance could not even take place: 'Il y avoit si grande confusion et presse en la Grande Salle, qu'ilz ne sceurent achever leur jeu'.[431] As for the rocks he had instructed the Parisians to paint, it seems as though they misheard him and instead painted bell-towers: 'Voir qu'on m'avoit fait au lieu des rochers des clochers [...] que peut-on penser que je devinse?[432] Though this complaint may be hyperbolic,[433] Jodelle's statement underscores that he deemed his colleagues to be incompetent, ruining his ambitious plans to produce an extravagant Italianate performance.

Several other Italianate features which Jodelle attempted to incorporate into his *masquarades* were outright failures. Though it is evident that he initially planned to hire professional actors, as the Italians had done for *La Calandra*, he complains that he ran out

[429] Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 117.
[430] Ibid., pp. 118–9.
[431] François Bonnardot, *Registres des déliberations du Bureau de la Ville de Paris (1552–1558)*, 21 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1888), IV, p. 522.
[432] Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 117.
[433] Cf. Enea Balmas, *Un poeta francese del Rinascimento: Estienne Jodelle. La sua vita, il suo tempo* (Florence: Olschki, 1962), pp. 369–72.

of time to find any: 'Comment bon Dieu eussé-je cherché de bons acteurs, veu que les trois jours que j'avois d'espace se fussent coulés à les chercher?'[434] We have seen that the music composed for the Italian intervals in France had also been a great success, and though Jodelle closely imitated the rhyme scheme for his *masquarades* from the Italians,[435] he talks of the humiliation caused by a wrong note at the very beginning of the performance, which set the tone for the whole production: 'Voyant dès le commencement par la faute d'une musique se naistre une rizée'.[436] It is clear that whilst Jodelle's plans for an extravagant Italianate performance were detailed and ambitious, comprising all of its most celebrated features with no expense spared, none of them could be brought to realisation, resulting in such an embarrassing production that the Prévôts demanded he return the money they had given him for it.[437]

There are many possible reasons for the failure of these *masquarades*. As noted above, Jodelle was quick to blame the lack of time for preparations; perhaps it was also a challenge to present as a conquering hero Henri, who had suffered a long series of setbacks throughout the decade, such as the defeats in Siena in 1555 and at Saint-Quentin in 1557.[438] Jodelle was also highly unpopular amongst other courtiers — Pierre de L'Estoile dubbed him 'le poëte le plus vilain et lascif de tous' — and he may have found them less than willing to help with the production.[439] Jodelle also claims that his fellow Parisians were simply

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[434] Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 117. Jodelle himself played the part of Jason: cf. Jodelle, *Les Œuvres et meslanges poétiques d'Estienne Jodelle*, ed. by Charles-Joseph Marty-Laveaux (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1868), 'Sur Estienne Jodelle', p. 30.
[435] Jodelle, *Recueil,* p. 103, n. 86.
[436] Ibid., p. 121.
[437] Adeline Lionetto-Hesters, 'Splendeurs et misères de la ville de Paris dans le *Recueil des Inscriptions, Devis et Masquarades* de Jodelle', *Seizième siècle*, 9 (2013), 81–93 (p. 83).
[438] Cf. Richard Cooper, 'The Theme of War in Renaissance Entries', in *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, ed. by Maria Ines Aliverti, Ronnie Mulryne, and Anna Maria Testaverde (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 15–46 (pp. 25–6).
[439] Pierre de L'Estoile, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France depuis 1515 jusqu'en 1574*, in *Mémoires-journaux, 1574–1611*, ed. by Alphonse Lemerre, 12 vols (Paris: Tallandier, 1982), XII, pp. 386–7.

incompetent, unable to envisage his creative plans: 'Chacun sçait que la main de mes ouvriers ne peut suivre l'abondance de mes executions'.[440] It is most likely a combination of each of these elements that resulted in the catastrophic *masquarades*. The Italians had succeeded because, as noted above, they had a great deal of experience in producing such performances and also enjoyed a network of skilled and knowledgeable contacts on which they could draw. Jodelle had neither, and despite the financial support he was given, it was not sufficient to make the performance a success.

A final noteworthy suggestion of Jodelle in his *Recueil* is that he wrote the *masquarades* with the aim of bringing 'honneur' to his culture: 'L'ignorance que sembloient avoir ces Parisiens de ce qui leur pouvoit apporter honneur [me rompt la teste]'.[441] We saw that he had stressed his innovations in his performance of *L'Eugène*, emphasising that he was the first to reinvent a classical genre, and that he ultimately aimed to gain acclaim for himself and possibly to rival the Italians. Here Jodelle is outlining the potential of the *masquarades* — a new genre in French — to bring his culture renown and recognition, as though a humanist and patriotic decision to produce them may be able to justify its failure and earn him forgiveness. It is again also possible that he had initially planned to rival the Italian playwrights in France, also establishing the *masquarade* as a French theatrical genre. However, in never mentioning the influences of his Italian models in his *Recueil* — as opposed to his overt denial of them in *L'Eugène* — it is likely that Jodelle had in this case intended to draw attention away from the far more successful exemplars which he had tried to emulate, which would perhaps make his own failure seem less significant. Jodelle's plans, however, testify not only that he was acutely aware of the prevailing features of humanist drama and of the standard that had been set throughout the decade, but that he was confident

[440] Jodelle, *Recueil*, p. 88.
[441] Ibid., p. 116.

in his ability to rival it successfully. Part III will explore how playwrights in the following decade found an entirely different method of using their plays against the Italian theatrical models, and one which, at the same time, was able to both resist and rival other Italian paradigms in France.

Conclusion

The performances which took place at the Court in the 1550s reveal to us several key features of comedy in France during the mid-century. They indicate, for example, that Italian comedy prevailed at the Court, and that the productions which took place were professional and of a high quality. The organisers of these Italian productions were skilled at showcasing Italian talent, varying the material they put into action and flaunting their prowess with specifically Italianate characteristics such as the prose style and costumes. They also made no concessions to their French audience and ensured that their plays remained as Italian as possible in nature, leaving the comedies in their original language, demonstrating very clearly that the plays were set in Italy and written by Italian playwrights, and hiring Italian actors to bring their theatre to life. It is also clear that there was a network of Florentines at the Court able to advise on these comedies and guarantee the smooth running of performances: Alamanni, for example, was extremely well connected with literati in Italy and knowledgeable about comic theatre. It additionally appears that these Italian productions were generously funded either by royal patrons or by the Italian organisers of the comedy, with the organisers able to bring over Italian troupes and incorporate specially-made costumes. We see also that these comedies were starting to form part of celebratory and festival culture, an Italianate tradition which was firmly establishing itself in France during this decade. These performances were extremely well received and largely geared towards pleasing their royal spectators, no doubt with the prospect of financial reward in the minds

of their organisers. It may also have been, however, that these organisers hoped to secure patronage for further comic productions in France and, given the highly Italian nature of each of the performances, they may well have intended to establish comedy as an Italianate genre at the French Court.

It was also an Italian — the long-time supporter of theatre, Catherine de' Medici — who requested that a French author first set his mind to comedy. Though previous writers had paved the way for Jodelle, providing a set of recommendations for the writing of theatre and translations of classical and Italian comedy, *L'Eugène* was a turning point in putting a number of typical theatrical features into practice, providing an original plot, and introducing comedy to an audience outside of the Court. Whilst we cannot say whether the comedy would have been written without Catherine's request, it is clear that Jodelle swiftly saw in *L'Eugène* the opportunity to be recognised amongst humanists as France's first dramatist. Unlike the work of his Italian counterparts at the Court, Jodelle's prologue thus makes few specific efforts to please its royal spectators: rather, he is more focused on using his comedy to create a name for himself within French literature. He emphasises throughout the prologue his innovations, claiming to have created something entirely new in France and also asserting that he has simultaneously rejected, reinvented, and improved upon his classical and Italian predecessors. Whilst he was celebrated for his theatrical achievements by his contemporaries, he is wrong in stating that he takes no inspiration from classical, medieval and Italian sources, and his argument regarding his use of these models is clearly illogical. It is evident that Jodelle is making considerable efforts to draw attention to his achievements and to prove his worth as a great humanist writer; it is also possible that he wished to remove the spotlight from his Italian contemporaries at the Court. Already hostile towards the thriving Italian courtiers, whose culture was very much in vogue at the Court and who were easily and swiftly gaining favour and recognition, it could be that Jodelle felt the burden of

the precedent and expectations they had set and wished to replace their Italian theatre at the Court with his own plays, establishing comic drama as a French genre.

Though the Italians had throughout the decade dedicated large sums to their productions, Jodelle was the first French writer to be trusted with a generous fund for organising a performance, which he spent on his 1558 *masquarades* to celebrate Henri's victory over the English. Again heavily inspired by Italian theatre — on this occasion, by the *mascarate* which were newly arrived at the Court — Jodelle attempted to incorporate each of the most prominent and successful Italianate features such as professional costumes, staging, actors, and music. Though he had evidently been confident in his ability to create a performance able to rival the Italian productions, the entire proceedings were a fiasco, with every arrangement failing in some respect. Whilst Jodelle blamed everyone but himself for the disaster, it is probable that he lacked the experience or contacts to ensure the success of such a major production, both elements which the Italians enjoyed in abundance. It additionally appears from his account as though he wrote the *masquarades* with the intention of enriching French culture with a new addition to its literary categories, possibly connected to a secondary aim of further rivalling the Italians in their theatrical endeavours in France.

Unable to succeed in either of these two aims, these *masquarades* signalled the beginning of Jodelle's downfall. He was given a last opportunity to write a celebratory play, being invited by the Cardinal of Lorraine to compose and stage a comedy for the 1559 double royal marriage, and whilst this comedy also seems to have been generously funded and influenced by the Italian model — records indicate that a professional Italianate stage, for example, was constructed for the occasion — the King's sudden death in a jousting accident prevented the celebrations from taking place, and Jodelle never again regained favour at the

Court.[442] Still, it is clear that by the end of this decade Italian and comic plays were being treated with a newfound respect and were increasingly considered to be a viable mode of humanist literary production, a shift in which Jodelle played no small part. He was, with the performance of his original comedy at a Collège, also instrumental in helping to popularise comic theatre outside of the Court. Whilst Jodelle himself was to never write comedy again, we shall see in Part III that the genre had started to thrive well outside of royal circles, Collège students having been convinced to turn their minds to writing drama. Also clear is the key role played by Italian patrons in popularising Italian and comic plays in France, not only inaugurating a series of Italian productions but also recommending the composition of the first ever comedy in French. Jodelle's attempt to mask his models and the hints of hostility towards the Italians that we witness in his plays, however, were a portent of things to come. Part III will explore not only the continuing Italian influence on French comedy as the century came to a close, but also the ways in which French dramatists became so skilled at writing Italianate comedy that they were able not only to mask their models, but wholly to transform their work into virulent anti-Italian polemic.

[442] The marriage was of Henri II's sister Marguerite and daughter Elisabeth to the Duke of Savoy and Philip of Spain: 'La Comedie qu'on esperoit representer en la maison de Guise [fut] par le commandement de Monseigneur le Reverendissime Cardinal de Lorraine'. Cf. Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, IX, p. 193. Cited in Jodelle, *Recueil*, 'Introduction' by Graham and McAllister-Johnson, p. 15. A note in the margin of Gabriello Simeoni's 1561 *L'Epitalamio* indicates that 'sur un mode nouveau [un] Théâtre [fut] érigé a Paris pour représenter des comédies'. A modern and edited edition of this text can be found in Gabriello Simeoni, *Description de la Limagne d'Auvergne*, ed. by Toussaint Renucci (Paris: Didier, 1944), p. 17. On this stage see also Richard Cooper, 'Gabriele Simeoni visionario', in *Cinquecento visionario tra Italia e Francia*, ed. by Nerina Clerici (Florence: Olschki, 1992), pp. 279–97.

Part III

The Politics of Comic Drama in Renaissance France (1561–1580)

Chapter 5: Resistance and Rivalry: Early Manifestations of Anti-Italianism in French Comic Theatre

‘Nostre France est trop abbreuvee
De vostre feinte controuvee
Et deceptive intention.’
Jacques Grévin, *Les Esbahis* (1561)

Introduction

Shifting the main focus from performance to politics, this first chapter of Part III examines the portrait of Italy painted by French comedy in the early 1560s. In contrast to Jodelle’s muted attempts to rival the Italians with his comedy, we see at this later stage in the century — when the relationship between France and Italy was growing increasingly hostile (cf. Introduction pp. 27–31) and, indeed, when French playwrights were becoming more adept at writing their own plays — that originally Italianate comedy was being used by the French as an overt weapon against the Italians themselves. As we explored in the Introduction to this thesis, we can document three main categories of anti-Italianism in France during these years, which manifest themselves throughout many French writings. Comedy is no exception, though it has never been used as a means of documenting anti-Italian sentiment. My argument in Part III, structured according to the threefold framework of cultural resistance, political resistance, and cultural rivalry, seeks to fill this gap, examining how French playwrights in this period employ comedy not only as a tool for resisting Italian cultural characteristics or political systems, but also as a means of rivalling Italian culture. Chapter 5 thus provides a fresh perspective on anti-Italianism in France in the early 1560s, using comedy as a lens for re-evaluating the relationship between the two cultures and for illuminating how this relationship was verbalised and negotiated. It seeks to provide answers to the following questions: in which ways did comic theatre manifest the cultural resistance,

political resistance, and cultural rivalry which abounded in anti-Italian rhetoric during these years? What were the intentions of French writers when transforming their Italianate plays into pieces of anti-Italian propaganda, and had they truly become so skilled at writing comic theatre that they succeeded in turning it against the Italians themselves? Ultimately, in what ways had the nature and function of comic theatre changed since Estienne's 1540 exhortations to reinvent it?

This chapter interrogates the work of one French writer Jacques Grévin (c. 1539–1570). Grévin was a courtier, a Huguenot, the one-time fiancé of Charles Estienne's daughter Nicole, and doctor and personal physician to Marguerite de France.[443] His 1561 comedy *Les Esbahis* was the first to be employed as overt anti-Italian polemic, a prototype of the divisions of cultural resistance, political resistance, and cultural rivalry which were becoming increasingly manifest at this time.[444] I examine each of these divisions of anti-Italianism using the paratexts surrounding Grévin's comedy: his 'Brief discours pour l'intelligence de ce theatre', his prefatory letter 'Au Lecteur', and also a unique first edition of Grévin's *Theatre*, which belonged to the author himself and which contains annotations and revisions, dating from 1567, in his own hand.[445] Whilst Bernard Weinberg is correct in his assessment that Grévin's prefatory texts tell us nothing new about the methods behind writing comic drama during these years,[446] Grévin's material does shed light on the Franco-Italian relationship, helping us to explore from a new angle the French perception of Italy in the 1560s. As well as using Grévin's paratexts, in this chapter I also employ the comedy itself as further evidence of his anti-Italian discourse since, despite revealing much about the contemporary relationship between France and Italy and the ways in which comedy

[443] Like Jodelle, Grévin was also a writer of tragedy, composing *Jules César* in 1561.
[444] All references to *Les Esbahis* and *La Trésorière* are taken from Grévin, *Comédies*, ed. by Lapeyre.
[445] This edition is held in the Musée Plantin-Moretus, whose curators, Dirk Imhof and Nico de Brabander, kindly allowed me to employ it for the purposes of this thesis.
[446] Bernard Weinberg, 'The Sources of Grévin's Ideas on Comedy and Tragedy', *Modern Philology*, 45 (1947), 46–53 (p. 53).

functioned as propaganda, there is currently no study devoted to the anti-Italian attitudes in Grévin's play.

1. Jacques Grévin's *La Trésorière* (1559): Anti-Italianism in the Making

As a preface to the chapter's main case study of *Les Esbahis*, it is worth exploring *La Trésorière*, Grévin's first attempt at writing comedy. Given the focus of Part III on politics, about which *La Trésorière* — as opposed to *Les Esbahis* — reveals little, this examination will be brief. Still, this comedy provides us with a quick glimpse into Grévin's early anti-Italianism, which it manifests in several different ways. *La Trésorière* was written almost a year after Jodelle's disastrous *masquarades* took place, and was commissioned by Henri II for the wedding of his daughter Claude in January 1559. However, the performance was cancelled 'pour quelques empeschemens différée': possibly it could not in the end fit into the tight schedule of the wedding celebrations.[447] *La Trésorière* was thus brought to life in a low-key performance in February at the Collège de Beauvais, the author's *alma mater*.[448] Having also previously studied at the Collège de Boncourt, it is likely that, as a thirteen-year-old scholar, Grévin had witnessed the performance of Jodelle's *Eugène*.[449] This initial Boncourt performance may well have inspired Grévin to write his own comedy: indeed, scholars have long noted that the plotline and language of *La Trésorière* bear some similarities to their precedents in *L'Eugène*.[450] Given Grévin's clear familiarity with and

[447] Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin*, p. 48.
[448] Lucien Pinvert, *Théâtre complet et poésies choisies de Jacques Grévin* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1922), 'Introduction', p. 5.
[449] Opinions are divided on whether Grévin studied at Beauvais, Boncourt or both. It is probable that the latter is true: for arguments on both sides, cf. Marcel Raymond, *L'influence de Ronsard sur la poésie française* (Geneva: Droz, 1965), p. 286; Henri Chamard, 'Le Collège de Boncourt et les origines du théâtre classique', in *Mélanges offerts à M. Abel Lefranc*, pp. 246–60 (p. 251, n. 1); Pinvert, *Théâtre complet*, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[450] Cf. Chasles, *La comédie en France*, p. 37; Gustave Attinger, *L'esprit de la commedia dell'arte dans le théâtre français* (Paris: Librairie Théâtrale, 1950), p. 93.

admiration of Jodelle's play, it is perhaps unsurprising that the three manifestations of anti-Italianism in Grévin's first comedy are exposed in much the same way as Jodelle had conveyed his own anti-Italianist views in *L'Eugène*.

Firstly, we saw in Chapter 4 that Jodelle had made every effort to prove his originality in writing French comedy, claiming that he was taking influence from no foreign sources, whereas in reality he had based much of his play on the work of classical, medieval, and Italian authors. In the same way, Grévin denigrates medieval French drama, claiming that his spectators will find in his *La Trésorière* only the reinvented comedy of the ancients: 'N'attendez donc en ce Théâtre / Ne farce, ne moralité: / Mais seulement l'antiquité'.[451] Whilst he proudly recognises the classical model for his play, it is notable that, like Jodelle, nowhere does Grévin pay intellectual debt to Italian sources. It has long been accepted that Grévin's play relies closely on the Italian comic model: Barbara Bowen has shown, for example, how the plot makes use of Ariosto's *I Suppositi*;[452] others have explored the ways in which the characters — most notably Richard and Boniface — are heavily influenced by prototypes in Italian comedy.[453] We saw how Jodelle had concealed his Italian sources with the aim of aggrandising his own achievement, seeking to establish himself as the reinventor of comedy by giving the impression that the modern creation was wholly his own. Similarly, it is likely that Grévin aims to emphasise the French nature of his play to ensure that it was recognised as a French genre and not an Italian one.

Secondly, in the same way, and to an even greater degree than Jodelle, Grévin ensures that his play is as French as possible in nature. Whilst Jodelle had indicated only that the action of his play takes place in Paris, Grévin specifies in his prologue that *La*

[451] Grévin, *Comédies*, 'Prologue', lines 60–63, p. 5.
[452] Barbara Bowen, *Les Caractéristiques essentielles de la farce française et leur survivance dans les années 1550–1620* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 107.
[453] See for example Grévin, *Comédies*, 'Introduction' by Lapeyre, p. 38.

Trésorière is set 'non loing de la place Maubert'.[454] In addition, he indicates that some of the characters will be identifiable to the spectators: he points out, for example, that the character of the Protenotaire is a member of the Collège de Beauvais: 'Vray est que le Protenotaire / Principal de tout' ceste affaire / Est de nostre université'.[455] Though he takes inspiration from an Italian plot and also Italian characters, his attempt to make his comedy highly French in nature — to the extent that his spectators will recognise individual places and people — works to conceal his initial Italian influence, also excluding any Italian readers or spectators from fully understanding his comedy. His creation of recognisable characters and settings, then, may also form part of an attempt to establish comedy as a French genre.

Thirdly, whilst we can establish to some degree Jodelle's anti-Italianist sentiments through his linguistic reliance on the Italians — his use of the terms 'Messer' and 'coyon', for example — Grévin's very lack of Italian lexis indicates his desire to break away from Italian culture. We have already seen that Italian literature and language were extremely popular during these years (cf. Introduction pp. 25–7), and the employment of Italian terminology in humanist French writings was highly fashionable and almost customary. Grévin's avoidance of such lexis appears almost deliberate: Lapeyre, too, has observed 'la réticence de Grévin [à la langue italienne] et son propos délibéré de céder le moins possible à cette invasion'.[456] His marked avoidance of Italian terms no doubt constitutes a further attempt to ensure his play appears more French in nature, thereby moving away from its Italian influence and establishing comedy as a wholly French genre. It also appears to be part of an initial bid to rally against the ubiquity of Italian language in France, promoting the use of French above all foreign influences.

[454] Grévin, *Comédies*, 'Prologue', line 74, p. 6.
[455] Ibid., 'Prologue', lines 75–78, p. 6.
[456] Ibid., 'Introduction' by Lapeyre, p. 51.

Therefore, though we cannot say that Grévin directly criticises Italian culture in *La Trésorière*, these three elements hint at the beginnings of his anti-Italianist attitudes. We can detect in his attempts to conceal his Italian influences, masking and ultimately overthrowing the prevalence of Italian theatre in France during these years, that he was keen to establish comedy as a French genre. Additionally, we can see in his endeavours to emphasise the French nature of his comedy — in its setting, characterisation and avoidance of the highly fashionable Italian lexis — a further bid to prove that comedy was a French and not an Italian literary category. Inherent in this is an initial indication of Grévin's resentment of Italian cultural dominance in France and his intentions to subvert it. Thus whilst Grévin's first comedy expresses no overt anti-Italian sentiments, it does mark the start of his venture to use theatre as a polemical weapon, foreshadowing the virulent attack on the Italians he was to launch two years later in *Les Esbahis*.

2. Grévin's *Les Esbahis* (1561): Shifts in the French Approach to Italy

Grévin's *Les Esbahis* was performed in February 1561 before the Court and met with instant success, even earning Grévin entry into the Pléiade.[457] France's religious circumstances, however, were growing increasingly dire (cf. Introduction p. 20), and it seems as though another comedy written by Grévin, entitled *La Maubertine*, was censured: Grévin describes 'la Maubertine […] que j'avoye bien deliberé de donner, si elle ne m'eust este desrobée'.[458] The Protestants in particular had started to suffer during these years, and shortly after the

[457] Ronsard deemed that Grévin had outshone the other members of the Pléiade, who had already done their best work: 'Tu nous as surmontez, qui sommes jà grisons'. Jacques Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin de Cler-mont en Beauvaisis, à tres illustre et treshaulte princesse ladame Claude de France, Duchesse de Lorraine. Ensemble, la seconde partie de L'Olimpe & de la Gelodacrye* (Paris: Vincent Sertenas, 1561), 'Élégie de Pierre de Ronsard à Jacques Grévin', fol. Aiijr.

[458] Ibid., 'Au Lecteur', p. 40. Pinvert has suggested that *La Maubertine* is simply another name for *La Trésorière*, but given that Grévin provides two separate plot synopses for each play and also laments the censuring of *La Maubertine*, it is highly unlikely that they are the same comedy. Pinvert, *Jacques Grévin*, p. 172.

performance of *La Trésorière* took place, Grévin's printer Martin L'Homme was hanged as a heretic and Grévin himself, having converted to Huguenotism, was exiled to England.[459] Grévin returned only when Catherine de' Medici had freed the Duke of Condé, who was at the forefront of the 1560 Amboise Conspiracy, and had made peace with the king of Navarre.[460] Grévin's early anti-Italianism had started to manifest itself in his *La Trésorière*: however, following his return to France, when he began composing his new comedy *Les Esbahis*, it is clear that his attitude towards the Italian culture had grown drastically more hostile, to the extent that *Les Esbahis* essentially functions as a piece of anti-Italianist rhetoric.

3. Cultural Resistance in *Les Esbahis*

Ever the precursors, the Italians had already used comedy to paint unflattering portraits of other cultures. Especially during the final French invasions of Italy, which were judged to have brought an end to Italy's golden age, a usual target was France. Machiavelli in his *La Mandragola* (c. 1518), for example, had launched a diatribe against the French invaders: 'In capo di dieci cominciorono, per la passata del re Carlo, le guerre in Italia, le quali ruinorono quella provincia';[461] Aretino also accuses in his *Il Marescalco* (c. 1533) the French of bringing syphilis into Italy, dubbing it the 'mal francioso': 'Che minor pena è il mal francioso con tutte le solennità delle gome, delle bolle e delle doglie'.[462] The Spanish, too, were targets of attack by Italian comedians, especially following the sackings of Prato in 1512 and Rome in 1527 by the Spaniards. As Daniel Boughner has convincingly outlined, a

[459] *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*, ed. by Catherine Douël Dell'Agnola, 2.7, p. 5.
[460] Ibid., p. 73.
[461] Niccolò Machiavelli, *La Mandragola, Clizia*, ed. by Ezio Raimondi, Gian Mario Anselmi (Milan: Mursia, 1984), 1.1, p. 72.
[462] Pietro Aretino, *Il Marescalco*, in *Pietro Aretino: Teatro*, ed. by Giovanna Rabitti, Carmine Boccia, and Enrico Garavelli, 2 vols (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2010), II, 1.6, p. 38.

main way in which Italian comedy mocked the Spaniards was by caricaturing the Spanish soldier as a prototypical Roman braggart.[463] We saw in Chapter 1 that Estienne omitted altogether from his translation of *Gl'Ingannati* the character of the Spanish braggart soldier Giglio, averting the problems of presenting an offensive and xenophobic caricature in his comedy. By contrast, Grévin takes the Spanish soldier of Italian comedy and transforms him into an Italian one, whom he places firmly at the centre of the comedy's action. Turning an Italian mode of cultural attack against the Italians themselves, Grévin's soldier — called Pantaleoné — is a caricature of the expatriate Italian, a vehicle for exploring and expressing Grévin's cultural resistance.

Pantaleoné firstly parodies the courtly mode of behaviour of the Italians in France. Grévin was, during these years, famously prejudiced against the Italians at the Court: his 1561 collection of poems, *La Gélodacrye*, which is at once comic and bitter — even signifying literally 'laughter and tears' — is preoccupied with showing how courtly life had been ruined by the Italians. It rejects Castiglionian behaviour and portrays the Italians as affected, duplicitous and untrustworthy;[464] Smith goes so far as to term mockery of Italians at the French Court Grévin's 'field of speciality' in his poetry.[465] However, also in his comedy Grévin draws attention to the features he most detests about the Italians at the Court, using Pantaleoné as a vehicle to show their behaviour to be ludicrous. Pantaleoné is firstly transformed into a would-be courtly lover. We know from the outset that Pantaleoné's bid to seduce his beloved will be unsuccessful, since — unsurprisingly — Grévin conveys that the Italians are widely considered to be unattractive, by very virtue of being Italian.[466] The

[463] Daniel Boughner, 'The Braggart in Italian Renaissance Comedy', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 58.1 (1943), 42–83 (pp. 48–9).
[464] Cf. MacPhail, *Voyage to Rome*, pp. 115–16.
[465] Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 117.
[466] Though the classical soldier figure is clearly not courtly or Italian, the braggart also portrays the spurned lover in several ancient comedies: cf. Pyrgopolynices in Plautus's eponymous *Miles gloriosus* or Thraso in Terence's *Eunuchus*.

character Josse scolds his wife Agnès, for example, for lowering her standards enough to sleep with an Italian, which he deems just as contemptible as sleeping with a bandit or stranger:

> Josse: Et va mechante, miserable
> Apres qu'avec un ruffien,
> Puis avec un Italien,
> Mesmement le premier venu,
> Tant l'estranger que l'incogneu.[467]

Though we can infer that Pantaleoné's bid to seduce his beloved will be unsuccessful, his attempts to woo the female protagonists, informed by Italian courtly tradition, help in no way and only serve to ridicule him further.

In the Italian representation of the Spanish braggart, the Spanish styles of pursuing women are frequently parodied. In Piccolomini's *L'Amor Costante* (1536), for example, the Capitan Francisco Marrada kisses the servant Agnoletta's hand in the Spanish fashion, a gesture which was no doubt played by the Italian actor in the most exaggerated and affected manner.[468] In the same way, Grévin holds up to ridicule Italian courtly modes of seduction, which primarily involved a reliance on poetry and music. Though the Provençal troubadour tradition had originated in France, where noble women such as Éléonore d'Aquitaine had supported practices such as singing and poetry recitation to seduce one's beloved at the Court, by the 1500s these conventions had long died out.[469] In Italy, however, a reliance on such practices still prospered: Castiglione, for example, advises the courtier that music and poetry can be a highly fulfilling means of attracting one's beloved: 'Chi intende nella dolcezza della musica per altra causa, che per questa? Chi a compor versi, almen nella lingua vulgare, se non per esprimere quegli affetti che dalle donne sono causati?'[470] Pantaleoné

[467] Grévin, *Comédies*, 5.4, lines 2391–95, p. 213.
[468] This gesture is discussed further in Boughner, 'The Braggart', p. 51.
[469] Joan Kelly, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?', in *The Italian Renaissance*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2004), pp. 151–76 (esp. p. 160).
[470] Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, p. 277.

embodies this Italian courtly gallant who pursues Magdalêne with music and poetry, standing underneath her window in the Italian-style serenade,[471] and showering her with Ariosto's most passionate verses whilst playing the lute:

> Pantaleoné: Per rihaver l'ingegno mio m'è aviso
> Che non bisogna che per l'aria io poggi
> Nel cerchio de la Luna, o in Paradiso;
> Che 'l mio non credo che tanto alto alloggi.
> Ne' bei vostri occhi e nel sereno viso,
> Nel sen d'avorio e alabastrini poggi
> Se na va errando; et io con questo labbia
> Lo corrò, se vi par ch'io la rihabbia.[472]

These recognisable lines from canto XXXV of the *Orlando furioso* discuss Ariosto's own lack of sanity in love, comparing himself to Orlando already in the grips of his *furia*. Clearly, then, the actor playing Pantaleoné has ample opportunity in turn to deliver these lines in an overblown and unhinged manner, showing how exaggerated Grévin considered Italian love poetry to be and how unsuccessful it would prove in love. The actor would, in addition, be able to take advantage of the music's comic potential. The ability to sing whilst playing the lute was so commended by Castiglione as a virtue of the courtier that Thomas Hoby included it the summarising rules of his 1561 English translation of the *Cortegiano*.[473] Nonetheless, the actor playing Pantaleoné would no doubt sing and play the lute as tunelessly as possible — earlier in the play, his lute is in fact described as 'mal acordé'[474] — showing how infuriating Grévin found the convention to be and, again, one which would prove thoroughly unsuccessful in the pursuit of love.

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[471] The Italian style of serenade is the subject of much discussion throughout Katritzky, *The Art of 'Commedia'*.
[472] Grévin, *Comédies*, 2.3, lines 831–58, p. 129. This is the second stanza of the thirty-fifth canto of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. by Marcello Turchi, Edoardo Sanguineti, 2 vols (Milan: Aldo Garzanti Editore, 1974), II, p. 955.
[473] Rule 43: 'to play upon the Lute, and singe to it with the ditty'. Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtyer*, trans. by Thomas Hoby, ed. by Virginia Cox (London: Dent, 1994), p. 369.
[474] Grévin, *Comédies*, 1.3, line 402, p. 110.

Grévin's mockery of the courtly traditions of using ornate poetry and music as a means of seducing women is linked to his criticism of another Italian convention he witnesses at the French Court: *sprezzatura*. Now defined as 'studied carelessness',[475] the notion of *sprezzatura* was first proposed by Castiglione as a means of achieving one's aims through concealing the effort of impressing one's superiors, and was subsequently practised by Italian courtiers in Italy and France. Many French writers thus deemed Italian behaviour at the Court unnatural and duplicitous: Guillaume Budé, for example, claimed that courtly eloquence — 'aulicam facundiam' — was highly deceitful: terming it 'Italismus', he blamed the trend for ornate and artificial language entirely on the Italians at the French Court.[476] Du Bellay, too, in his poem 'Contre les Pétrarquistes', deplored the flattering and unnatural language used by the Italians to seduce their beloved, using Petrarch's poetry as an example: 'J'ay oublié l'art de petrarquizer, / Je veulx d'Amour franchement deviser, / Sans vous flater, et sans me déguiser'.[477] In *Les Esbahis*, Pantaleoné's ineptness at the practice of *sprezzatura* — attempting to make his poetry and music appear uncontrived — shows how Grévin deems it to be the exact opposite: artificial and untrustworthy. Grévin additionally demonstrates that it is correct to disbelieve the words or actions of an Italian: in the same way as Piccolomini had depicted his Spanish soldier as philandering,[478] Pantaleoné cannot be trusted in his love for one woman, chasing after every female in the play; indeed, it transpires

[475] *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2016, www.oed.com/view/Entry/187693. Accessed 31 July 2017.
[476] Guillaume Budé, *De l'institution du Prince* (Paris: Nicolas Paris, 1547), pp. 59–60. Cited in Sozzi, *Rome n'est plus Rome*, pp. 104–5.
[477] Du Bellay, *Œuvres complètes*, 'Contre les Pétrarquistes', p. 257. For more information on this poem, cf. Bernard Weinberg, 'Du Bellay's "Contre les Pétrarquistes"', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 12 (1972), 159–77.
[478] Francisco: Quiero bien á otra persona del mundo si no alla señora Anioletta. Agnoletta: Credete ch'io non sappia che voi avete altre pratiche che le mie? (Piccolomini, *L'Amor Costante*, 1.12, p. 329).

that prior to the comedy's action, he had taken Agnès, a married woman, to Italy to be his lover (see Appendix II, p. 232).[479]

The French characters regularly take the opportunity to point out Pantaleoné's artifice and to emphasise that they will not be deceived by it, even chasing him off the stage at the end of the play when his affair with Agnès is revealed. The servant Julien claims that he does not even have to speak to an Italian to know that they are untrustworthy: 'Vous n'avez gueres que la bave, / Je le scay bien, je vous cognoy, / Vous regardant quand je vous voy';[480] he also boasts that a Frenchman would never be misled by Italian flattery:

> Jamais, jamais la faincte voix
> N'eust pouvoir envers un François.
> Il ne vault point tant de gambades,
> Tant de chansons, ny tant d'aubades.[481]

Whilst mocking Italian flowery rhetoric and artifice, Grévin is also promoting the frankness of the French literary style, a trait which was widely vaunted amongst French humanists and even used in wordplay: the term 'franchement' in Du Bellay's aforementioned poem, for example, draws parallels with the word 'France'.[482] In contrast to the Italian style, which Grévin judged to prioritise aesthetics whilst concealing meaning, he outlines in his 'Brief Discours' that in his own writings he had tried to '[ensuyre] la nayveté de nostre vulgaire et les communes manieres de parler', refusing to use a verbose and ornate rhetoric which he deemed only able to 'espouvanter les petits enfans'.[483]

As well as using Pantaleoné to mock Italian courtly behaviour, it has long gone unnoticed that this protagonist is also a tool for deriding the cowardice of the Italians,[484]

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[479] Dora Rigo Bienaimé has also noted that despite playing the 'amante sospiroso [...] in sostanza rimane un essere infido, sciocco, vile, infigardo.' Dora Rigo Bienaimé *Grévin: poeta satirico, e altri saggi sulla poesia del Cinquecento Francese* (Pisa: Editrice Giardini, 1967), p. 129.
[480] Grévin, *Comédies*, 5.1, lines 2097–99, pp. 196.
[481] Ibid., 5.1, lines 2080–83, p. 195.
[482] Du Bellay had of course already promoted the French frankness throughout his 1558 *Regrets*.
[483] Grévin, *Theatre*, 'Discours', p. 5.
[484] Giacomo Cavallucci, for example, even fails to identify Pantaleoné as a soldier. Cavallucci, *Odet de Turnèbe* (Naples: Raffaele Pironti, 1942), p. 80.

another feature famously held in contempt by Grévin. Deeming the Italians too busy with courtly society to focus on military endeavours, in his *Gélodacrye* Grévin refuses to refer to Italians from Rome as 'Romains', with its historical connotations of great warriorship, terming them instead 'leurs bons successeurs, les braves Courtisans'.[485] He also persuades the unidentified Beaumais against a trip to Italy, where he would learn not only how to deceive but also how to be a coward:

> On dit qu'en Itale un François se desguise:
> Aussi tu pourrois bien en feignant deviser,
> Ainsi comme un Prothé me faire desguiser,
> Tant un Italien finement poltronisé.[486]

In *Les Esbahis* Grévin takes care to heighten Pantaleoné's status as an arrogant soldier. Pantaleoné boasts incessantly of his military endeavours ('Moy qui pour une cannonade / Jamais ne me suis estonné'),[487] is ostentatiously dressed like a soldier, proudly sporting 'sa cappe et sa tocque',[488] and is possibly even named after the captain Pantaléon, who famously escaped from a shipwreck when travelling from the Indies to Portugal in the year before *Les Esbahis* was written.[489] These overblown features would no doubt be emphasised by the actor portraying Pantaleoné, with licence to swagger, use a booming voice, and interact with the audience, a parody which thus works extremely effectively in comedy.

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[485] Grévin, *Gélodacrye*, book I, sonnet 22, line 9, p. 41.
[486] Ibid., book I, sonnet 13, lines 11–14, p. 35.
[487] Grévin, *Comédies*, 5.1, lines 2107–8, p. 167.
[488] Ibid., 3.3, lines 356–57, p. 153.
[489] Clearly his name also alludes to a stock type in the *commedia dell'arte*, a line of enquiry we will follow on p. 175. The importance of this name has, however, been overlooked: Teresa Jaroszewska, in her study of the ironic names of the *fanfaron* in sixteenth and seventeenth-century theatre, singles out 'Pantaleoné' as being insignificant. Cf. Jaroszewska, 'Un capitain italien en costume espagnol', in *Les mots et les choses du théâtre: France, Italie, Espagne, XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 2017), pp. 211–26 (p. 223). Although Captain Pantaléon has long been forgotten — his name was last mentioned in Archibald Duncan's *Mariner's Chronicle* (New Haven: George Gorton, 1834), p. 392 — he was well known to an early modern readership. His story can be read, for example, in Pierre du Jarric, *Histoire des choses plus memorables advenues tant ez Indes Orientales*, 3 vols (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1610–1614), I, p. 399.

Grévin juxtaposes this hyperbolic presentation of the Italian soldier with Pantaleoné's actual behaviour. Much like the eponymous protagonist in *Le Franc-Archer de Bagnolet*, who boasts of his countless feats and then collapses in terror, having mistaken trees for police officers,[490] and also Piccolomini's Capitan Francisco, who brags that his military victories have gained him fame in Africa and Italy and who then flees from a street brawl,[491] Pantaleoné swaggers about his own triumphs but ultimately runs away from the servant Julien, who threatens to strike him. Grévin is again painting a portrait of the Italians as untrustworthy, advising against being deceived by the false appearance they present. He is also careful to emphasise that no French character is misled by Pantaleoné's bravado: when the Advocat asks whether Julien has seen Pantaleoné, he is met with the reply — ironically laced with Italianisms — 'Qui, ce forfante? [...] Je l'en incaque, ce coion';[492] other characters repeatedly refer to him as 'Messer Coioni', parodying the *messeresque*,[493] and even his attempts to quote Ariosto are dubbed 'sa belle rime poltronisque'.[494] The servant in particular is unimpressed with his swaggering:

> Julien: Vous le verrez tantost vanter,
> Tantost elever ses beaux faicts,
> Et conter ceux qu'il a deffaicts
> A la prise d'un poulaillier,
> Et comme il sçait bien batailler
> Quand il fault romper un huys ouvert
> Ou bien un paste descouvert
> Pour y plonger ses mains dedans.[495]

As well as only being brave enough to break down an open door or into a meat pie, Julien claims that Pantaleoné impresses only himself: 'Prime de la caze Frenese, / Grand escuyer

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[490] A fuller explanation of this monologue can be found in Georges Gassies, *Anthologie du théâtre français du Moyen Âge: théâtre comique: jeux et farces des XIIIe, XVe et XVIe siècles*, 2 vols (Paris: Delgrave, 1925), II, pp. 25–138.
[491] Boughner, 'The Braggart', p. 51.
[492] Grévin, *Comédies*, 3.3, lines 1350–2, p. 153.
[493] Ibid., 2.3, line 785, p. 127.
[494] Ibid., 5.1, line 2062, p. 194.
[495] Ibid., 2.3, lines 806–13, p. 128.

de sa maison / Quand il est seul'.[496] Here Grévin also manages to mock the distinguished Farnese family, who were celebrated in Italy for their military careers. Gallicising their name to 'Frenese', meaning 'frantic' or 'frenzied',[497] Julien shows that Italian soldierly prowess is worthy of mockery by even the lowest echelons of French society, and that Italian bravado deceives no-one. Grévin thus uses comedy to explore and express his cultural resistance, here in the form of the Italians' courtly and cowardly behaviour. Exploiting the genre's potential for stage directions, costumes, music, and parodic acting, he induces laughter in his spectators whilst also creating an extension of many of the anti-Italianist sentiments he had already expressed in his *Gélodacrye*. Humour is thus used to make a series of highly political statements, resisting the influx of Italian features and foibles and demonstrating their discordance with French culture.

4. Political Resistance in *Les Esbahis*

As a Protestant, Grévin was instinctively opposed to the Italians, who remained supporters of Catholicism and largely unaffected by the religious arguments prevalent in France and elsewhere. Catherine Douël Dell'Agnola rightly observes Grévin's contempt for Catherine de' Medici, scorning as cowardly her endeavours to avoid civil war and to safeguard the throne for her sons, such as appointing Michel de l'Hôpital — who was not properly identified with either religious faction — as Chancellor, and making sporadic Protestant alliances in a bid to keep the peace.[498] Grévin also deemed the Italians' Catholicism itself artificial and untrustworthy, claiming that they hid their vice under a veil of feigned piety: his *Gélodacrye*, for example, outlines how the Italian clergy in France made it their mission

[496] Ibid., 5.1, lines 2102–4, p. 196.
[497] For variants on this word, cf. Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, IV, 205.
[498] Douël Dell'Agnola, 'Introduction to *Les Esbahis*', p. 73 and p. 82; Scott, Sturm-Maddox, *Queen's Day*, p. 14.

only to 'faire tousjours grand'chere et s'addonner aux vices'.[499] Grévin was additionally resentful that many French bishoprics were being given to the Italian clergy, who were arriving at the Court in far greater numbers since Catherine's accession. Though he claims in the Avant-Jeu to *La Trésorière* that his comic writings will not 'mesler la religion / Dans le subject des choses feinctes',[500] in practice his comedy can accurately be described as anti-Catholic — and by extension, anti-Italian — propaganda.

Throughout *Les Esbahis* Grévin paints a highly critical picture of the Catholic faith. Most characters — with the exception of Pantaleoné, of course — remark on the Catholics' indecent behaviour: the Gentilhomme, for example, comments that Agnès must be 'quelque demourant de chanoine'.[501] Grévin makes more specific anti-Catholic slurs, using, for instance, monasticism as an analogy to explain that affairs could no longer be secret, since everyone who knew would want to be involved:

> Gentilhomme: Mais qui desormais vouldra rire
> Et demener vie joyeuse
> Avecq une religieuse
> Du bas mestier, il fault devant
> En advertir tout le couvant
> Qui ne les vault prendre à la chaude.[502]

This allusion seems to be inspired by the fourth tale recounted on the first day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where a monk who, having smuggled a beautiful woman into the monastery, was spotted by an abbot who also has his way with her.[503] Grévin thus again uses an Italian source to criticise the Catholics — and, vicariously, the Italians. Many other anti-Catholic slurs in the play centre on their untrustworthiness: the Advocat, for example, tells of the many times he has heard of women forced to dress up as monks and live as lovers in a

[499] Grévin, *Gélodacrye*, book I, sonnet 21, line 11, p. 40.
[500] Grévin, *Comédies*, 'Avant-Jeu', lines 6–7, p. 47.
[501] Ibid., 3.2, line 1231, p. 147.
[502] Ibid., 3.2, lines 1136–41, p. 143.
[503] Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. by Elena Ceva Valla, Mario Marti (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1974), pp. 47–51.

monastery.[504] Underscoring the deceitful and underhand natures of Catholic practitioners in France, which are masked by alleged faith, Grévin creates parallels with the two other Italianate figures criticised in *Les Esbahis*: the courtier who disguises his true self with ornament and rhetoric, and the coward who conceals his pusillanimity with overblown bravado.

To represent the Italians as even greater shams of Catholicism, Grévin consistently portrays Pantaleoné himself as morally corrupt. Though he is always spending time at church, he is also a drunkard and, as we have already seen, lascivious in his behaviour towards women. The French characters repeatedly accuse him of other sins, such as jealousy: Claude, for example, expresses relief that Agnès is safe from the clutches of the 'jalous Italiens'.[505] Julien also accuses Pantaleoné of sodomy: 'Je vous feray parler François, / Encor' que soyez bougrino'.[506] Sodomy was often referred to in early modern France as an Italian import, even dubbed 'le vice italien'.[507] Though this was clearly inaccurate, the French were no doubt aware that prominent artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, and of course Giovanni Antonio Bazzi — better known as 'Il Sodoma' — had been accused of the vice, and that high numbers of arrests for sodomy were taking place across Italy.[508] Increasingly resentful of the Italian presence at the Court, many writers —

[504] Grévin, *Comédies*, 3.4, lines 1390–4, p. 155.
[505] Ibid., 3.3, line 1286, p. 150.
[506] Ibid., 5.1, lines 2123–24, p. 197.
[507] Du Bellay, for example, criticised the relationship of the late pope Julius III with Innocenzo del Monte, who had been made a cardinal for no apparent reason: Du Bellay calls Innocenzo 'un Ganymede avoir le rouge sur la teste'. Du Bellay, *The Regrets*, ed. by Helgerson, sonnet 105, p. 157. For a more detailed discussion of the French view of homosexuality as Italian during these years, see Melanie Hawthorne, '"Comment Peut-on Être Homosexuel?": Multinational (In)Corporation and the Frenchness of Salomé', in *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence*, ed. by Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 159–82 (pp. 164–5).
[508] The high number of arrests in Italy were probably due to effective law enforcement. Indeed, policing in various regions was so efficient that by the late fifteenth century two-thirds of Florentine men had been officially charged with sodomy by the age of forty. Cf. Michael Rocke, 'Gender and Sexual Culture in Renaissance Italy', in *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Judith Brown, Robert Charles Davis (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 150–70 (p. 166).

Grévin included — had thus been quick to associate the Italians with the vice. By portraying Pantaleoné as thoroughly depraved, indulging in indecent and illegal behaviour, Grévin aims to draw further attention to the Italians' hypocrisy and insincerity in their adherence to Catholic doctrine, showing the Catholic faith to be a convenient mask for immorality and also the Italians to be untrustworthy in conforming to it.

We have seen that the French at this time also resented the royal support given to the Italians in France, judging the state to be too lenient towards expatriates (cf. Introduction p. 30). Grévin takes the opportunity in his comedy to emphasise that the Italians are unwelcome in France, again using the character of Pantaleoné to mock how quickly the Italians request royal favour and to outline that they are undeserving of help:

Pantaleoné:	J'implore la faveur du Prince: Sommes nous en une province, Ou la rigueur ha plus de lieu Que la justice?
Gentilhomme:	Vertu Dieu Pensez-vous donc avoir affaire A celuy qui vous veult complaire?[509]

Grévin implies that the Italians will seek princely help at the most meagre of problems, here showing Pantaleoné appealing for royal assistance when the woman he is attempting to seduce turns out to have slept with another man. On the one hand, Grévin is demonstrating that the Italians rely far too heavily on the protection of the French Court, emphasising that they should stop asking for help. On the other, he is conveying a message to the French Court to stop providing the Italians with extra support, indicating that they should not facilitate the dependent and overbearing Italian presence in France. Just as Grévin had employed comedy to express his cultural resistance, then, *Les Esbahis* is used as a vehicle

[509] Grévin, *Comédies*, 5.4, lines 2316–21, pp. 209–10.

to resist the political hegemony of the Italians in France, criticising the Italian Catholic presence and denigrating their frequent demands for royal support.

5. Cultural Rivalry in *Les Esbahis*

As we saw in the Introduction (cf. p. 30), cultural rivalry was surfacing in various writings during these years, as French authors attempted not only to resist Italian cultural and political hegemony but also to assert their own literary and linguistic superiority. Cultural rivalry had manifested itself to some degree in comedy, Jodelle glossing over his Italian models with the possible intention of competing with them, and Grévin masking Italian influence in his *La Trésorière* and avoiding Italian lexis in a bid to overturn the Italian cultural dominance. In *Les Esbahis*, however, Grévin wholly renews his efforts to prove France's prowess in terms of both literature and language, trying out various methods to showcase French humanist talent. He makes these efforts to demonstrate not only that France could hold its own on a literary and linguistic level, but also that it could rival and eclipse Italian culture. As we shall see, some of his techniques even anticipate the advice of several anti-Italianist writers, such as Henri Estienne and Innocent Gentillet, who would promote cultural rivalry with the Italians over a decade later. Grévin's dual endeavour — firstly, to show French literature to be superior to its Italian counterpart; and secondly, to prove that the French language surpasses Italian — thus uses Italianate comedy as a means of subverting Italy's position at the apex of the cultural élite.

Firstly, to examine Grévin's attempt to prove the superiority of French literature over its Italian counterpart, we see him using a technique similar to Jodelle in *L'Eugène* and also his own in *La Trésorière*: the deliberate obscuring of Italian models. Though Pinvert asserts that since Grévin so clearly despised the Italians, he would not have utilised any Italian

sources, this is evidently untrue.[510] Scholars have long pointed out the close reliance of *Les Esbahis* on the plots, themes, and characterisations of Italian comedy:[511] several have drawn close parallels between *Les Esbahis* and Alessandro Piccolomini's *L'Alessandro*, for example, and others have shown how Grévin closely imitates Estienne's translation of *Gl'Ingannati* which, given that Grévin was engaged to Estienne's daughter, is hardly surprising.[512] Despite this obvious influence, Grévin makes no reference at all to Italian models in his prefatory material, and even in his praise of Jodelle's first attempt at writing comedy, he refers only to classical inspiration and not to any Italian sources: 'Je sçay bien qu'Estienne Jodelle [...] les a tirées des Grecs et Latins pour les remplanter en France'.[513] Drawing attention away from any Italian influence, he again seeks to emphasise the achievements of the French in reinventing classical comedy, establishing the new genre as a French one and inciting the reader or spectator to forget the major precedent set for comedy by Italian authors. In addition, Grévin gives his play a specifically French location: in the same way as he set *La Trésorière* near the very precise 'place Maubert', the action of *Les Esbahis* takes place only a few feet away, still in the university quarter, at the Carrefour Saint-Séverin (cf. fig. 5.1):

[510] '[À cause de son] dégoût et l'horreur de l'italianisme [...] l'auteur ne demanderait pas un modèle à l'Italie'. Pinvert, *Théâtre complet*, p. 182.
[511] Attinger, *L'esprit de la commedia dell'arte*, p. 93; Enzo Bottasso, 'Le commedie dell'Ariosto nel teatro francese', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 128 (1951), 41–80 (p. 44).
[512] Max Kawczyński, 'Über das Verhältnis des Lustspiels *Les Contens* von Odet de Turnèbe zu *Les Esbahis* de Jacques Grévin und beider zu den Italienern', in *Festschrift zum VIII. Allgemeinen deutschen Neuphilologentage in Wien Pfingsten*, ed. by Jakob Schipper (Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1898), pp. 239–50, (p. 250), cited in Grévin, *Comédies*, 'Introduction' by Lapeyre, pp. 31–2.
[513] Grévin, *Theatre*, 'Brief discours pour l'intelligence de ce theatre', p. 1.



Figure 5.1. Sebastian Münster's map of Paris, with the Place Maubert of *La Trésorière* ('Collegia') and the Carrefour Saint-Séverin of *Les Esbahis* circled. Cf. *Cosmographia* (Basle: Heinrich Petti, 1550), pp. 88–9. Digitised by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Again, emphasis is placed on the French nature of the play, with the objective of concealing any Italian influence and establishing comedy as a French genre. It is possible that, like Jodelle, Grévin also employed the traditional French verse in order to draw further attention away from Italian prosaic influences. In a different approach, however, Grévin also intends to undermine the Italian comic model by deliberately confusing the spectator: as Douël Dell'Agnola has correctly observed, Grévin's choice of name for Pantaleoné is an attempt to 'affaiblir les types comiques'.[514] As well as being the name of a famous captain, 'Pantaleoné' evokes a stock type in the *commedia dell'arte*, which was, as we saw (cf. Introduction p. 17), appreciated by the French nobles during these years. Since Pantalone of the *commedia dell'arte* is the figure of the parsimonious merchant, Grévin's Pantaleoné has

[514] Douël Dell'Agnola, 'Introduction to *Les Esbahis*', p. 82.

nothing in common with this stock type. Thus as well as drawing attention away from his Italian models with the intention of aggrandising the French comic achievements, Grévin also puts the Italian comedy into deliberate disarray, weakening the French understanding of Italian drama and inciting spectators to prefer his French play.

Though Grévin acknowledges Jodelle's work, he adds that classically-inspired theatre is non-existent in France: 'Je diray ceci sans arrogance, que je suis encores à voir Tragedies et Comedies Françoises'.[515] Clearly he was aware that Jodelle's comedy was heavily inspired by farce and is keen to suggest that he himself takes no influence from medieval models, making his play the first to deserve of the title of 'Comedie'. Though this is evidently an overstatement, it is true that Grévin's comedy conforms far more closely to the classical — and, by extension, the Italian — comic model, and Grévin is clearly aware of this. He himself wants to set the standard for comic theatre in France, proving to his audience and readership that *Les Esbahis* is a prototype for comedy. The amendments he makes to his printed edition of the comedies act as further evidence that he believed his own play to have surpassed native work; they also insinuate that he is convinced of having improved on all foreign drama. Though Grévin probably began revising his comedy with a view to produce an updated edition, he died midway through, aged thirty-one, and so this new edition never materialised: the following attempts to establish his own theatre as a paradigm, then, have never before been seen.[516]

Firstly, he emphasises that his theatre is superior to the work of past French playwrights. Whereas in the 'Brief discours' he scorns the work of Jodelle, when editing this same prefatory material he simply removes all references to other French dramatists. In the 1561 edition, for example, he outlines the inspiration for his tragedy *César*, claiming that

[515] Grévin, *Theatre*, 'Brief discours pour l'intelligence de ce theatre', p. 1.
[516] All references are taken from Grévin's own copy of the 1561 edition cited previously in this chapter, held in the Musée Plantin-Moretus.

Marc-Antoine de Muret (1526–1585), who had taught him at Boncourt, had influenced him to some degree with the writing of his Latin tragedy *Julius Caesar* (c. 1549).[517] We can see from Grévin's edits, however, that he omits all references to Muret, deciding to outline more simply that he had imitated only the aforementioned 'Latins' (cf. figs. 5.2 and 5.3):

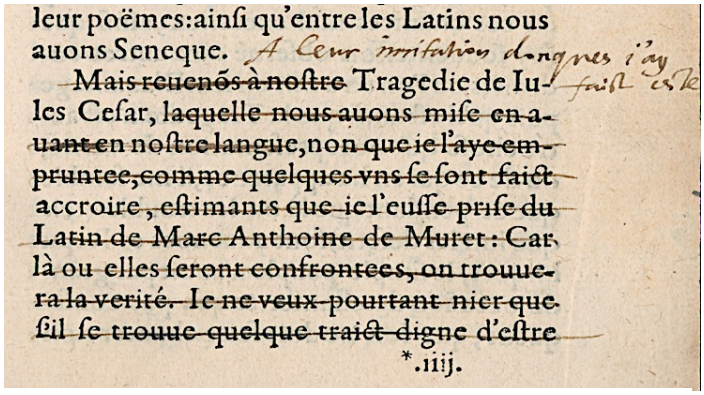
leur poëmes: ainſi qu'entre les Latins nous
auons Seneque. A leur imitation donques j'ay
Mais reuenõs à noſtre Tragedie de Iu-
les Ceſar, laquelle nous auons miſe en a-
uant en noſtre langue, non que ie l'aye em-
pruntee, comme quelques vns ſe ſont faict
accroire, eſtimants que ie l'euſſe priſe du
Latin de Marc Anthoine de Muret: Car
là ou elles ſeront confrontees, on trouue-
ra la verité. Ie ne veux pourtant nier que
ſ'il ſe trouue quelque traict digne d'eſtre
*.iiij.

Figure 5.2. As well as changing his original statement to: 'A leur imitation [les Latins] donques j'ay faict ceste Tragedie de Jules Cesar', he crosses out the entire paragraph pertaining to Muret. Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin*, fol. iiijv.

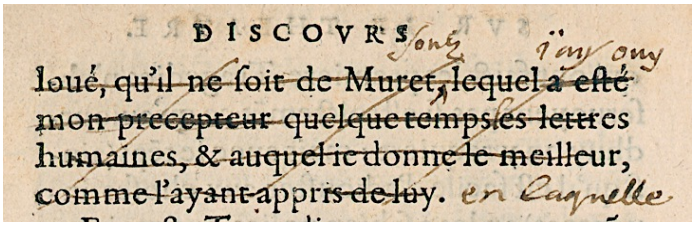
DISCOVRS
loué, qu'il ne ſoit de Muret, lequel a eſté
mon precepteur quelque temps es lettres
humaines, & auquel ie donne le meilleur,
comme l'ayant appris de luy.

Figure 5.3. The remainder of the paragraph which omits all reference to Muret. Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin,* fol. vr.

Clearly Grévin is, since writing the 1561 'Brief discours', no longer content to acknowledge any intellectual debt to Muret; rather, he aims to convince the reader that he himself has imitated the Latin playwrights and that no intermediary has been of any use. It is also evident from fig. 5.3 that before altogether omitting his reference to Muret, Grévin was intending to change 'lequel a esté mon precepteur' to 'j'ay ouy a esté mon precepteur'. This further emphasises his reluctance to recognise immediate models: whereas in 1561 Grévin readily

[517] For more information on Muret's tragedy, cf. Patrick Kragelund, *Roman Historical Drama: The Octavia in Antiquity and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 408–9.

admits that Muret was his predecessor in theatre, later in the decade he considers stating that this is just hearsay. Obviously Grévin eventually deemed it easier to omit all references to Muret, crossing out his annotation. He is, however, going to lengths to allege that there are no suitable intermediaries between ancient and contemporary and that his theatre is thus the first which can properly be deemed classical, thereby setting the standard for future playwrights. We saw in Chapter 1 (p. 47) that Estienne had revised *L'Andrie* with the aim of adding further examples of immediate models, highlighting the Italians' success of comedy on the stage. In contrast, Grévin removes his own such references, seeking to reinforce the public sense of his personal innovation.

Although he recognises his debt to 'les Latins', it is clear from Grévin's edits that he also wants to break free from his ancient predecessors to some extent. Crossing out a number of allusions to ancient poets which he had included in his 1561 edition, he excludes, for example, each of Horace's dicta (cf. figs. 5.4 and 5.5):

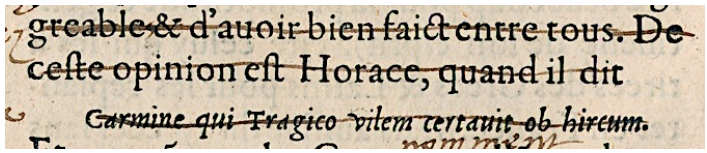
greable & d'auoir bien faict entre tous. De
ceſte opinion eſt Horace, quand il dit
Carmine qui Tragico vilem certauit ob hircum.

Figure 5.4. Grévin eliminates Horace's description of the first poet winning the prize of a goat for his tragedy. Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin*, fol. vir.

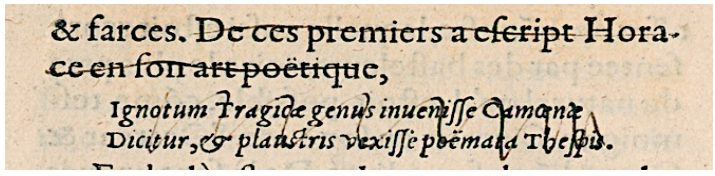
& farces. De ces premiers a eſcript Hora-
ce en ſon art poëtique,
Ignotum Tragicæ genus inuenisse Camœnæ
Dicitur, & plaustris vexisse poëmata Thespis.

Figure 5.5. Grévin eliminates Horace's description of the poet Thespis introducing a new style of tragedy. Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin,* fol. vir.

Diverting attention away even from classical sources, Grévin wants the focus to be on his statements on theatre, and not on the work of his forerunners. He is taking ownership of comic theatre — the insinuation is that he, and nobody else, is setting the standard for theatre in France — and he intends his readers to take note of this. A final significant edit to Grévin's prefatory material is, when describing his comedies, to change 'celles cy' to 'les miennes' (cf. fig. 5.6):

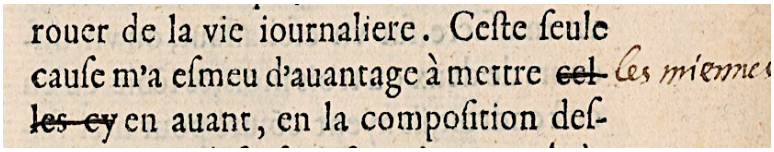
rouer de la vie iournaliere. Ceſte ſeule
cauſe m'a eſmeu d'auantage à mettre ~~cel-~~ les mienne
~~les cy~~ en auant, en la compoſition deſ-

Figure 5.6. Grévin changes 'celles cy' to 'les miennes'. Grévin, *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin*, fol. vir.

It is again clear from Grévin's decision to specify that the comedies are his own — 'les miennes' — that he is unwilling to admit taking influence from any predecessor, refusing to share credit with another model.

The notion that Grévin aimed for his plays to be regarded as the definitive French comedies is reinforced by the closing lines of his prefatory material. In the brief letter 'Au Lecteur' which precedes his two comedies in the 1561 edition, he claims that 'Celles cy pourront suffire pour monstrer le chemin à ceux qui viendront apres nous'.[518] To return to the *via* topos explored in Chapter 4, whereas Jodelle employs this metaphor to describe following the ancients, Grévin uses the same metaphor to demonstrate that writers must instead follow him. Portraying his comedies as the models to imitate, Grévin not only rejects his immediate French sources but also puts Italy out of the picture, implying that he has single-handedly reinvented comic theatre. Here we can draw on the classical tripartite analysis of the *via* topos according to George Pigman: following a literary model, catching

[518] Grévin, *Theatre*, 'Au Lecteur', p. 48.

up with it, and finally surpassing this model.[519] Jodelle aims to catch up with the classical models, but Grévin describes having overtaken everyone else on the path. He is, then, rivalling the sources — classical and French, but also very much Italian — of which he is highly aware, suggesting that he himself is setting the standard for comedy and providing the most superior model for imitation. If his arguments were accepted then comedy would be established as a French genre, eclipsing the many Italian efforts put forward in France — an outcome which Grévin no doubt hoped to achieve.

In addition to his attempts to show that French comedy surpasses its Italian counterpart, Grévin also uses *Les Esbahis* to prove the superiority of the French language.[520] He pursues this bid mainly through Pantaleoné, who does not only parody the courtly, cowardly, and Catholic attitudes of the Italians in France, but is also a vehicle to demonstrate the inferior nature of the Italian language. As we know, Gentillet was to criticise the use of the Italian *messeresque* which emerged at the French Court during these years (cf. Introduction p. 28); we also explored in Chapter 4 Jodelle's employment of the term 'Messer Coyon' to mock the Italian courtly greetings. Though Grévin, as we have seen, also employs the term 'Messer Coioni' in *Les Esbahis* to parody the *messeresque* in his play, he takes his mockery far further than Jodelle. Whilst in *La Trésorière* he makes a perceptible effort to use Italian terminology as seldom as possible, in *Les Esbahis* Grévin employs a wide range of Italian lexis, though — crucially — it is always used to denote a foolish or depraved concept. He employs, for example, the aforementioned terms 'ruffien' (line 1292), from 'ruffiano'; 'forfante' (line 1350), from the Italian word of the same spelling; 'incaquer' (line 1352), from 'incagare'; and 'poltron' — which he even adjectivises as 'poltronisque' (line

[519] Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', pp. 25–6.
[520] Though he goes into little detail, Édouard Bourciez observed over a century ago the opposition to the Italian language in this comedy: 'Nous pouvons voir quelle revanche prenait déjà l'esprit français contre l'invasion du langage étranger'. Édouard Bourciez, *Les mœurs polies et la littérature de cour sous Henri II* (Paris: Hachette et cie, 1866), p. 293.

2062), a hapax — from 'poltrone'. His choice of lexis, then, always describing a negative concept or alluding to adverse Italian characteristics, shows also the Italian language and — by extension, Italian culture — to be ridiculous. Grévin's use of Italian pre-empts one of Henri Estienne's most famous pieces of advice, issued over a decade later in the 1578 *Deux dialogues*: that Italian words should only be employed in French to denote foolish concepts or words that relate to Italian idiosyncrasies. Estienne gives as an example the term 'ciarlatano', which, because the Italians are charlatans themselves, he says can be rendered into 'charlatan' in French.[521] In showing the *messeresque* to be ridiculous and the Italian language only useful for denigrating the Italians themselves, Grévin demonstrates the French language to be superior. Indeed, when a French character in the play speaks little or no Italian, they wear it like a badge of honour, as the servant Julien smugly exclaims: 'Je suis Julien, / Qui n'enten mot d'italien'.[522]

Grévin also conveys his resentment at the Italian invasion of the French language by making Pantaleoné a 'personaggio storpialingue'.[523] His macaronic French, a mixture of French and Italian which Henri Estienne was later to dub 'jergonnage', is highly infuriating to the other characters and shown to be wholly unwelcome in France.[524] Again, Grévin appears to have imitated Piccolomini's *L'Amor Costante* in this regard, turning Italian tropes back on the Italians themselves: Capitan Francisco speaks macaronic Italian mixed with Spanish, often resulting in comic double-entendres and much frustration on the part of the Italian characters: 'Y por la lengua se puede conocer; que me ha quedado la habla toscana assi bien come se fuesse nascido en medio de Sena'.[525] Whilst there are no double entendres

[521] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, p. 93.
[522] Grévin, *Comédies*, 5.1, lines 2120–21, p. 197.
[523] Enrico Malato, *Storia della letteratura italiana: La letteratura italiana fuori d'Italia*, 14 vols (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002), XII, p. 310.
[524] Cf. Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, prefatory poem: 'Remonstrance aux autres courtisans, amateurs du françois italianizé et autrement desguisé', line 3, p. 44.
[525] 'Sena', by which he means 'Siena', is possibly a play on words as the form 'seno'/'seni' actually means 'breasts'. Piccolomini, *Amor Costante*, 2.1, p. 39.

in Pantaleoné's macaronic French, he gets confused throughout the play: 'En despetto de ce vieil pere [...] Despetto du pere felon / Et du jeune advocat ici'.[526] Whilst his mistakes would certainly make the spectator laugh, they also show his unpopularity amongst his fellow Parisian characters, who are so exasperated that they eventually respond by insulting Pantaleoné in macaronic Italian:

> Julien: Forfanti, Coioni, Poltroni,
> Li compagnoni di Toni,
> Le mal San Lazaro te vingue
> Et le mau de terre te tinge![527]

The actor playing Pantaleoné no doubt capitalised on the comic potential of his role by using an exaggerated Italian accent, further showing his alienation from the French language and difference from the other characters. Grévin thus uses Pantaleoné as an example of how the bastardisation of French, the 'jergonnage' prevalent at the French Court, is unwelcome in France and will provoke the scorn and ridicule of other French citizens. He also contrasts Pantaleoné's mixture of French and Italian with a very pure form of French used by the other characters. They all carefully retain, for example, the inflection of the diphthong 'oye' as '[wa]', whereas in the 1560s the Italianised pronunciation of '[e]' was fashionable.[528] Thus Grévin not only resists the invasion of the Italian language at the French Court, but shows French to be far preferable: no Italianism — with the exception of words denoting negative, Italian concepts — is accepted, and France has a duty to safeguard the pre-eminence of its own superior language.

It is finally worth examining a speech pronounced by the Gentilhomme in the closing scene of *Les Esbahis*. Whereas the final scene of a comedy usually resolves the problems

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[526] Grévin, *Comédies*, 2.3, lines 775–79, p. 127.
[527] Ibid., 2.3, lines 839–42, p. 130. 'Toni' refers to Saint Antoine, whose companion is a pig; the 'mal San Lazaro' is leprosy. Cf. Grévin, *Comédies*, p. 130, n. 840–1.
[528] They rhyme, for instance, 'monnoye' with 'proye'. Cf. Grévin, *Comédies*, 'Introduction' by Lapeyre, p. 51.

encountered throughout the play, leaving its characters — and its spectators — satisfied and content, Grévin instead includes a bitter diatribe against the Italian language. Addressing Pantaleoné, the Gentilhomme claims:

> Gentilhomme: Pensez vous nous rendre estonnez
> Par une langue deceptive
> Comme si la nostre captive
> Ne pouvoit respondre un seul mot?
> Pensez vous le François si sot,
> Qu'il n'egalle bien en parole
> Toute l'apparente frivolle
> De vostre langue effœminee,
> Qui comme une espesse fumee
> Nous donnant au commencement
> Un effroyable estonnement,
> A la parfin s'esvanoüit
> Avecque le vent qui la suit?
> Nostre France est trop abbreuvee
> De vostre feinte controuvee
> Et deceptive intention.[529]

Immediately clear from this speech is the message that the Italian language cannot compete with its French counterpart. Though he acknowledges that the French were initially impressed at the Italian language ('Nous donnant au commencement / Un effroyable estonnement'), he is confident that French has never been surpassed by Italian and, claiming that French is not 'captive' to Italian, underlines the notion that French is still the predominant language in France. In addition, the two languages are not presented as 'egalles'; rather, the Gentilhomme declares that French will 'egalle *bien*' (my italics) its Italian counterpart, suggesting that French even surpasses its rival. Another idea presented in this speech is Grévin's contempt for those who follow a language just because it is fashionable, later referred to by Henri Estienne as 'pindarizans'.[530] Using the metaphor of smoke blowing away with the wind, he depicts how the French admiration for Italian is nothing but a passing trend which will be forgotten when another distraction comes along:

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[529] Grévin, *Comédies*, 5.4, lines 2339–49, p. 211.
[530] Cf. Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, 'Remonstrance aux autres courtisans', line 2, p. 44.

'Comme une espesse fumee / A la parfin s'esvanoüit / Avec le vent qui la suit'. Like smoke, the Italian language is empty and capricious; French, however, is unaffected, straightforward, and robust enough to withstand the whims of fashion. Though Italian initially made an impact at the French Court, Grévin uses *Les Esbahis* to state that the vogue for Italian is temporary and that French is vastly to be preferred.

The Gentilhomme's speech again criticises a feature we have already explored: the untrustworthiness of the *messeresque*. The range of adjectives used to describe Italian — 'deceptive' and 'frivolle', for example —point to its deceitfulness and superficiality, and Grévin's description of the language as 'effœminee' also implies that it is vain and self-conscious: embellished with too many ornaments, it is impossible to perceive the truth behind the language.[531] Repeating for a second time the term 'deceptive', he emphasises at the end of the speech that the whole of France is weary of the slyness and artifice of Italian: 'Nostre France est trop abbreuvee / De vostre feinte controuvee / Et deceptive intention'. Whilst clearly reiterating that the Italian language is unwelcome in France, Grévin also draws a division between the two cultures with 'nostre' and 'vostre', suggesting that there are two rivalling sides. It is obvious from the Gentilhomme's speech that the French language is considered to be superior, and that Italian, as an artificial and unwanted importation, is to be rejected. Leaving the spectator to consider their approach to the Italian language as the play closes, Grévin employs *Les Esbahis* as linguistic propaganda, capable of showing that the French language has rivalled and surpassed its Italian counterpart, and that the vogue for Italian in France will, as a result, be unable to endure.

[531] For an informative account of the early modern approach to effeminacy, see Mario DiGangi, '"Male Deformities": Narcissus and the Reformation of Courtly Manners in *Cynthia's Revels*', in *Ovid and the Renaissance Body*, ed. by Goran Stanivukovic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 94–110.

Conclusion

Whilst Grévin's first attempt at writing comedy, *La Trésorière*, can be seen as a preliminary attempt to sketch out some anti-Italian sentiments, glossing over its Italian sources and avoiding Italian lexis with the intention of promoting comic theatre as a French genre, *Les Esbahis* can properly be described as the first theatrical piece of anti-Italian propaganda. It navigates the threefold elements of cultural resistance, political resistance, and cultural rivalry, resisting what Grévin considered to be Italian cultural and political dominance but also rivalling and undermining the Italian position on a literary and linguistic level. In terms of cultural resistance, Grévin turns Italian comedy against the Italians themselves, transforming the Spanish soldier of Italian plays into an Italian braggart, parodying their courtly and cowardly attitudes and ultimately creating a portrait of the Italians as a thoroughly artificial and untrustworthy people. He exploits the potential of comedy for acting as a parodic and polemical tool, giving the actor playing Pantaleoné props such as an out-of-tune lute, ensuring he is wearing a soldier's cape and hat, and indicating stage directions such as a serenade under the female protagonist's window. Whilst each of these audio and visual devices incite laughter, they also draw attention to the Italians' *sprezzatura*: though the Italians might make great claims to success in courtly love and in battle, there is little substance behind their declarations, and their presence in France should ultimately be scorned.

Grévin's political resistance in *Les Esbahis* calls into question the Italians' Catholicism, again suggesting that the appearance presented by the Italians should not be trusted, since they use religion only to conceal their vicious practices. He also mocks the reliance of the Italians on French royal assistance, inciting them to stop asking for help so readily and, in turn, encouraging the French to stop responding to their demands. Turning to the final category of cultural rivalry, not only does Grévin seek to conceal his Italian

influences, but he attempts to establish *Les Esbahis* as the exemplar of comedy, taking ownership of the genre and thus claiming it for France, thereby demonstrating his nation's superiority in terms of literature. He also uses *Les Esbahis* as a means of proving that the French language has surpassed Italian. He mocks not only the overblown *messeresque* but also suggests that Italian is only useful in describing foolish concepts, since the Italians themselves are foolish. He also parodies the ornateness of Italian by using grossly macaronic French, and explicitly claims that the popularity of Italian in France is a passing trend. Each of these techniques and claims are aimed at demonstrating the supremacy of his native language, and so *Les Esbahis* not only resists the Italian cultural and political dominance in France, but seeks to overthrow it.

Les Esbahis provides us with a new approach to understanding the anti-Italianism prevalent in France in the 1560s. As well as helping to create a fuller picture of the resentment experienced by French courtiers towards the Italians, it also provides a fresh insight into the use of comedy to convey a polemical message. Indeed, the hierarchy presented by Grévin between the French and Italian cultures in *Les Esbahis*, and the techniques he uses to depict this hierarchy, contribute significantly to our perception of comedy during this era as a political and nationalistic tool. This study of *Les Esbahis* has also revealed that Grévin anticipates a range of opinions put forward by Protestant polemicists such as Henri Estienne and Gentillet in the next decade, pre-empting much of their advice on how to resist and rival the Italian influence. *Les Esbahis* was no doubt popular: as we saw in the Introduction, it was the first French comedy to be produced in book form (cf. p. 19), certainly a testament to its success; there was also sufficient demand for a second edition to be printed a year later, and it is possible that it was performed again

in 1578.[532] Nonetheless, whilst we may expect Grévin's comedy to have met with outrage from the Italians — especially since, as we have seen, Catherine may well have been present at its début (cf. Introduction, p. 19) — there are no recorded Italian responses to *Les Esbahis*, and we cannot prove whether or not *Les Esbahis* succeeded in conveying a message to the Italians in France.

What is clear, however, is that the French approach to Italians in comedy had changed drastically since Estienne wrote his first treatise only twenty years previously. Although Grévin was engaged to Charles Estienne's daughter, and aimed no doubt to impress his future father-in-law by fulfilling his wishes to reinvent comedy,[533] we witness a complete reversal of the role played by Italians. Estienne omits the controversial Spanish soldier of Italian comedy, Grévin remodels him into an Italian parody; Estienne proudly advertises his Italian sources, Grévin seeks to conceal them; Estienne encourages writers to imitate Italian comedy, Grévin advises writers to imitate him. Admiration for the Italians had turned into an antagonism which would only intensify as France's political and religious strife persisted. We shall see in the final Chapter 6 that although Grévin's anti-Italianist comedy may not have evoked a direct response from the Italians, it set a precedent for future French playwrights, who not only followed Grévin's propagandist dramatic model, but also expanded on his example.

[532] Jules Haraszti explores this possibility in his article 'La comédie française de la Renaissance et la scène', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 16 (1909), 285–301.
[533] Indeed, Jean Liebault, who ended up marrying Estienne's daughter instead of Grévin, worked tirelessly on Estienne's editions, rewriting his *Praedium rusticum* (Paris: Charles Estienne, 1554) and printing it as the widely successful *L'Agriculture, et maison rustique* (Paris: Jacques du Puys, 1564).

Chapter 6: From Admiration to Antagonism: Anti-Italianism in Later French Comic Theatre

'Vous le recognoistrez à ses grandes moustaches noires, retroussées en dents de sanglier.'
Odet de Turnèbe, *Les Contens* (1580)

Introduction

This final chapter continues its focus on the politics of comic theatre, examining the anti-Italianism inherent in comedies written in the late 1570s. As in Chapter 5, it explores the appropriation of Italian comic material by French playwrights, assessing the ways in which dramatists transformed an originally Italian genre into a weapon which could be used against the Italians themselves. Though Grévin anticipated in his comedy many of the anti-Italianist sentiments which would be expressed by Huguenots such as Henri Estienne and Innocent Gentillet, by the late 1570s these Protestant works had come into circulation. Objections to Italian culture in France were thus far more prevalent and forcefully put forward, especially following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 and the heightened violence and strife that ensued.[534] Also causing unrest was the accession of Henri III in 1574 — the fourth king on the French throne over a period of fifteen years — and the ever-growing influence of Catherine de' Medici, who by this point sided with the Catholics. As we saw in Chapter 5, several French writers in the 1560s were already attempting to preserve France from Italian customs and also to reverse Italian cultural dominance, a bid which Grévin had tried to achieve with his *Les Esbahis*. However, as the century advanced, with tensions between France and Italy continuing to increase and works such as Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel* and Henri Estienne's *Deux dialogues* starting to appear, writers of theatre grew more

[534] Anti-Italian tensions were reaching an apex even before the Massacre. Two months before it occurred, a riot against the Italians took place in Lyon, with some French citizens convinced that Italians were slaying children, whose blood was being purchased for secret uses by Catherine de' Medici. Cf. Heller, *Anti-Italianism*, pp. 80–1.

experimental with presentations of Italy in their comedies, exploring different techniques which would allow them to express and negotiate their relationships with the peninsula. As in Chapter 5, this chapter employs as a structural framework the tripartite division of anti-Italianism as cultural resistance, political resistance, and cultural rivalry, discussing the ways in which later French comedians used their plays as anti-Italian propaganda and examining how they not only replicated Grévin's techniques for denigrating Italian culture, but also expanded on them. This final chapter thus seeks to answer a number of key questions: in what ways did later French playwrights continue and develop their use of comedy as anti-Italian propaganda? To what extent was their polemic motivated by political or religious concerns, and how was comic theatre employed as a means of resisting or overturning the apparent Italian cultural supremacy in France? What shifts do we ultimately witness in the French perception of comic theatre — and also the role played by the Italians in French comedy — since interest in the genre was revived forty years previously?

Chapter 6 begins with a brief exploration of Pierre de Larivey's *Les six premieres comedies facecieuses* (1579), a collection of six French translations of Italian comedies.[535] Unlike the other playwrights examined in Part III, Larivey, as a staunch Catholic, was largely unopposed to the Italian presence in France. However, the prefatory material to his comedies demonstrates a resentment of the Italian cultural influence which has been largely overlooked. This preliminary case study is followed by the chapter's main examination of *Les Contens* (1580),[536] a comedy written by the Huguenot Odet de Turnèbe for the Advent

[535] Though Luigia Zilli is currently working on a modern edition of Larivey's six comedies, only the first three of his plays have so far been published: Pierre de Larivey, *Théâtre complet: Les six premieres comedies facecieuses* (*Le Laquais*, *La Vefve*, *Les Esprits*) (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011). As such, references to the prefaces cited in this chapter will be from the *editio princeps* held in the Bodleian Library which contains all six comedies: Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies facecieuses de Pierre de Larivey Champenois, à l'imitation des anciens Grecs, Latins et modernes Italiens* (Paris: Abel l'Angelier, 1579), shelfmark 287. C. 34.

[536] All references to *Les Contens* will be from the text reproduced by Charles Mazouer, in *La comédie à l'époque d'Henri III* (1580–1589), 2.8.

festivities shortly before his premature death.[537] Close readings of the paratexts surrounding *Les Contens*, and also of the play itself, reveal anti-Italianism to be one of the comedy's defining characteristics, an aspect which has been neglected in scholarship. The analyses in this chapter of anti-Italianism in Larivey and Turnèbe thus offer a fresh perspective not only on the changing function and status of early modern comic theatre in France at this time, but also on Franco-Italian relations as the century drew to a close.

1. Pierre de Larivey's *Les six premieres comedies facecieuses* (1579)

Larivey (1541–1619) spent much of his life working in Paris as secretary to the *conseiller du Roi* Monsieur de Pardessus, before retiring to Troyes where he was appointed as canon of Saint-Estienne church.[538] He formed part of the Parisian circle of 'Français italianisants',[539] who all extolled the importance of Italian literature in France; indeed, evidence suggests that Larivey himself had an Italian background, originating from a family of Florentine printers called the 'Giunti' and directly gallicising his name.[540] As noted earlier, Larivey's Catholicism also rendered him sympathetic to the Italian presence in France, whose most important figures were supporting the Catholic cause.[541] Publishing his

[537] Though Turnèbe never openly declared himself a Protestant, his Huguenot views are clearly exemplified throughout his 'Sonets sur les ruines de Luzignan par Odet de Tournebu', printed posthumously in Catherine des Roches, *La Puce de Madame des Roches* (Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1582), pp. 71v–74v.

[538] Larivey, *Le Lacquais*, ed. by Madeleine Lazard, Luigia Zilli (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1987), 'Introduction', p. 9.

[539] Others in this circle included Pierre Tamisier and Claude Binet. A fuller description of the 'Français italianisants' in the group can be found in Jean Balsamo, 'Larivey Traducteur de *L'Institution Morale*', in *Pierre de Larivey, Champenois*, pp. 73–81 (pp. 77–8).

[540] 'Giunti' means 'the arrived', just like 'L'Arrivee', as it was sometimes written during his lifetime. The earliest reference to Larivey's ancestry is by eighteenth-century scholar Pierre-Jean Grosley, who describes Larivey as an 'ayeul de la famille des Giunti de Florence, ayant passé en France [et qui] avoit pris le nom de l'Arrivé qui rend le Giunto Italien'. Grosley, *Mémoires historiques et critiques pour l'histoire de Troyes*, 2 vols (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1774), II, p. 419. Louis Morin suggests that the Giunti family may have been present in France since the thirteenth century: Morin, *Les trois Pierre de Larivey, Biographie et bibliographie* (Troyes: J.-L. Paton, 1937), cf. pp. 5–11.

[541] Larivey was clearly content with the contemporaneous massacre of the Protestants, maligning those who complained about the era and claiming that 'c'est un grand pêché que tels personages

collection of six comedies in 1579, they were possibly performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne or at private homes.[542] Guillaume Chasble, another member of this circle of 'Français italianisants', praised the positive reception of Larivey's comedies, commenting that 'il tient les écoutans penduz à sa parole';[543] Larivey's prefatory material also seems to gesture to a specific audience: the preface to his fourth play, *Le morfondu*, indicates that spectators will know the performers, 'une troupe de jeunes hommes, quasi tous vos parens ou amis'.[544]

However, Madeleine Lazard has correctly asserted that since Larivey's prefaces are translated in some part from the Italian, we cannot confirm that Larivey's comedies were indeed acted for French spectators or whether he is simply translating a statement initially directed at an Italian audience.[545] Such an ambiguity — leading the reader to believe that his achievement was greater than it may have been in reality — is typical of a number of other issues inherent in Larivey's prefatory material which, despite his interest in Italian culture, indicate his engagement in cultural rivalry. Though he gallicises the names of places and people, erases references to Italian politics and history, and removes several of the longer Italian monologues,[546] his comedies are otherwise highly faithful translations of Italian plays: *Le Lacquais* comes from *Il Ragazzo* by Lodovico Dolce; *La Veuve*, *La Vedova* by Niccolò Buonaparte; *Les Esprits*, *L'Aridosia* by Lorenzino de Medici; *Le Morfondu*, *La Gelosia* by Antonfrancesco Grazzini; *Les Jaloux*, *I Gelosi* by Vincenzo Gabbiani; *Les Escolliers*, *La Zecca* by Girolamo Razzi. Nowhere, however, does Larivey present his

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vivent [...] il n'y eût jamais temps plus plaisant, ny plus heureuse vie que celle du jourd'huy'. Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies*, 'Prologue' to *Le Lacquais*, p. 1r.

[542] Cf. Haraszti, 'La comédie française de la Renaissance', pp. 285–301.

[543] Piccolomini, *La philosophie et institution morale d'Alexandre Piccolomini*, trans. by Larivey (Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1581), liminary sonnet.

[544] Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies*, 'Preface' to *Le morfondu*, p. 166v.

[545] Lazard discusses this confusion throughout 'Le dessein de Larivey et son public', in *Pierre de Larivey, Champenois*, pp. 49–60.

[546] A concise summary of Larivey's process of gallicisation is included in Toldo, 'La Comédie Française de la Renaissance', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 7 (1898), 554–603 (pp. 593–4).

comedies as translations. Whilst scholars such as Michael Freeman have previously observed Larivey's reluctance to acknowledge that his plays are direct translations of Italian models, the methods he employs to conceal his sources reveal in greater depth the author's relationship with Italy and his intentions for comic drama.[547]

Certainly Larivey does attribute some influence to the Italians. He advertises his play as imitating 'des anciens Grecs, Latins et modernes Italiens' (cf. fig. 6.1); in his dedicatory letter to future playwright François d'Amboise he also mentions his inspiration by writers such as 'le Cardinal Bibbiene, le Piccolomini, et l'Aretin, tous les plus excellens de leur siècle'.[548] However, his allusion to the Italians is a red herring, designed to lead readers away from suspecting that he has directly translated Italian playwrights. Even his advertisement of the plays as 'imitations' is dissimulating, since this falsely implies that they are creative adaptations of existing comedies and not direct translations. In addition, having mentioned these Italian models in his letter, they reappear nowhere in the collection; instead, the prefaces to each play focus only on his supposed use of classical sources, giving the impression that he has bypassed the 'modernes Italiens' and has himself adapted the work of the ancients. In the preface to *Les Esprits*, for instance, Larivey states that '[il] a faict ceste Comedie à l'imitation et de Plaute et de Terence ensemble'.[549] This is only a half-truth: whilst Lorenzino de' Medici constructed *L'Aridosia* using classical sources, *Les Esprits* is none other than a translation of Lorenzino's comedy. Such signposting of various classical

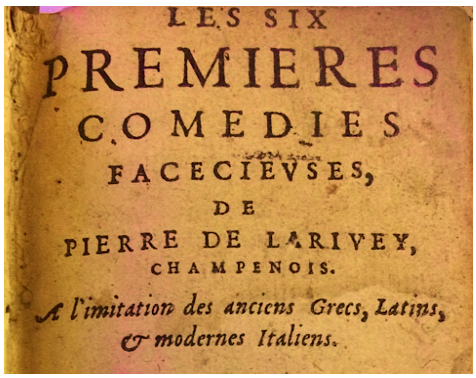
LES SIX
PREMIERES
COMEDIES
FACECIEVSES,
DE
PIERRE DE LARIVEY,
CHAMPENOIS.
A l'imitation des anciens Grecs, Latins,
& modernes Italiens.

Figure 6.1. Title page, Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies,* shelfmark 287. C. 34

[547] Larivey, *Les Esprits*, ed. by Michael Freeman (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1978), 'Introduction', p. 12.
[548] Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies*, 'Epistre à Monsieur d'Amboise, Avocat en Parlement', s.n.
[549] Ibid., 'Preface' to *Les Esprits*, p. 111v.

models turns attention away from possible Italian originals, leading the reader to believe that the comedy is not a direct translation but Larivey's own work. Similarly, Larivey's repeated references to the ongoing crisis of exemplarity add a further layer of disguise to his Italian sources.[550] The preface to *Les Esprits*, for example, sets out the difficulty of creating original work, since the ancients were so enterprising: 'Il nous est impossible pouvoir parfaitement faire ou dire aucune chose, sinon ce qui a esté dict ou faict par eux'.[551] Larivey again draws attention away from Italian sources, insinuating that he has, against the odds, succeeded in producing original drama, and not simply translated Italian models which had already achieved such a feat.[552] Marketing his plays as 'imitations', mentioning Italian authors as possible — though false — sources, and drawing disproportionate attention to classical models, Larivey seeks to convince the reader that he has not translated, but inventively transplanted a variety of material into his work, thus creating original comedy.

Larivey's choice of comedies to translate is further evidence of his aims to conceal his Italian sources. Though he could have chosen to translate a comedy such as *La Calandra* — well known in France, not yet translated into French, and the playwright Bibbiena already praised in his letter — he instead selects more obscure comedies. Yvonne Bellenger seeks to justify Larivey's choices by suggesting that his ancestors, the Giunti, had printed most of these plays:[553] moving in Paris's prominent literary circles, however, amongst some of France's foremost intelligentsia, he clearly had access to many more. Patrizia De Capitani has also suggested that Larivey aimed to introduce new plays which would contain elements

[550] This concern that originality was impossible is perhaps best exemplified by Montaigne's assertion a year later that 'tout exemple cloche'. Montaigne, *Essais*, III, p. 280.
[551] Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies*, 'Preface' to *Les Esprits*, 111v.
[552] This originality topos had been used by the Italians from Alberti onwards. Ironically, Larivey has lifted his own sentence about originality from Ercole Bentivoglio, who had set out such difficulties in the preface to his comedy *I Fantasmi*. Cf. footnote 557.
[553] Yvonne Bellenger, 'Avant-propos', in *Pierre de Larivey, Champenois*, pp. 7–11 (p. 8).

'susceptibles d'enrichir la scène française', a notion upheld by Céline Lombi.[554] Whilst Larivey clearly aimed for his comedies to enrich French theatre, this does not negate the fact that he also knew these plays to be unfamiliar to the public at large, and thus unlikely to be recognised as pure translations. In addition, though he closely translates even the titles of comedies by minor authors — *I Gelosi* by Vincenzo Gabbiani, for example, is rendered as *Les Jaloux* — he modifies the titles of the comedies by the better-known writers Lorenzino, Grazzini, and Dolce, further ensuring that his sources would not be identified. In another bid to lead the reader away from suspecting his sources, Larivey does not match the translations of the better-known comedies with their original Italian prefaces. Though he does put forward many of his own sentiments in his prefatory material — such as his false declarations of classical influence — he also inserts entire sections lifted from Italian prefaces which do not correlate with the comedy he subsequently translates: although *Les Esprits* is imitated from Lorenzino's *L'Aridosia*, for example, Larivey employs the preface of Ercole Bentivoglio's *I Fantasmi* as the source text for his own preface and, presumably, his title.[555] Finally, Larivey seeks to draw attention away from his translations by claiming that although comedy is still a 'nouveau genre', several of his contemporaries are worthy of praise for their attempts to translate it: 'Je sçay qu'assez de bons ouvriers, et qui méritent beaucoup pour la promptitude de leur esprit, en ont traduict quelques unes'.[556] Since he does not include himself amongst these translators, contrasting their attempts to translate comedy with his own 'imitations', Larivey is again attempting to mislead and confuse his readers, concealing his Italian sources and presenting his own plays as more original works.

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[554] Patrizia De Capitani Bertrand, *Du spectaculaire à l'intime: un siècle de commedia erudita en Italie et en France* (Paris: Champion, 2005), p. 248. Cited in Céline Lombi, *La lecture du comique chez le Champenois Pierre de Larivey et les auteurs français de la fin du XVIe siècle: le renouveau de la comédie et ses modèles italiens* (Paris: unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, 2017), p. 108.

[555] Cf. Michael Freeman, 'Une source inconnue des *Esprits* de Pierre de Larivey', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 41 (1979), 137–45.

[556] Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies*, 'Epistre à Monsieur d'Amboise, Avocat en Parlement', s.n.

Larivey's attempts to show his readers that his plays are eclectic imitations, created from a variety of sources, and not word-for-word translations of Italian comedies, contrast starkly with his translations of Italian short stories and philosophy, where he advertises the Italian writers clearly in his title: Giovanni Francesco Straparola's short stories are *Les facecieuses nuictz de Straparole*;[557] Firenzuola's philosophical works are *Deux livres de filosofie fabuleuse de m. A. Firenzuola*;[558] and those of Piccolomini become *La philosophie et institution morale d'Alexandre Piccolomini.*[559] It is evident that Larivey understood the importance of referring to precise Italian sources which, given the continued interest in Italian literature in France at this time (cf. Introduction, pp. 25–7), would ensure that his works sold well and enjoyed a certain intellectual prestige. However, the Italian models of his theatrical works could presumably be far more easily concealed, as they were still little-known in France, and the genre of comedy still open for cultural ownership. The idea of presenting his six comedies as his own work and showing France to excel at creating comedy was clearly far too tempting. His scheme was indeed highly successful: almost three hundred years had passed before anyone recognised his plays as translations of original Italian texts.[560] Whilst he appreciated Italian culture and attempted to promulgate it in France, it is clear that he manipulated his Italian sources with the aim of establishing comic theatre as a French genre. His preface to *Le Lacquais* even states that he wrote these comedies 'affin de n'[en] aller plus chercher ailleurs':[561] France, and no other culture, would provide the models of comic theatre, having appropriated the genre as its own. Whilst not overtly antagonistic towards Italian models, *Les six comedies facecieuses* is an example of cultural

[557] Giovanni Francesco Straparola, *Les facecieuses nuictz de Straparole*, trans. by Larivey (Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1576).
[558] Firenzuola, *Deux livres de filosofie fabuleuse de M. A. Firenzuola*, trans. by Larivey (Lyon: Benoist Rigaud, 1579).
[559] Piccolomini, *La philosophie*, trans. by Larivey.
[560] Cf. Freeman, 'Une source inconnue', p. 137.
[561] Larivey, *Les six premieres comedies*, 'Preface' to *Le Lacquais*, p. 2v.

rivalry in that it seeks to subvert Italian cultural imperialism, exploiting Italian sources themselves with the aim of elevating French literature above its Italian counterpart.

2. Odet de Turnèbe's *Les Contens* (1580): Further Shifts in Franco-Italian Relations

Odet de Turnèbe (1552–1581), a young lawyer, magistrate, and the 'Premier President de la Cour des Monnaies', wrote his comedy *Les Contens* in the winter of 1580.[562] When he died suddenly of a 'fièvre chaude',[563] *Les Contens* was printed posthumously by his friend Pierre de Ravel in 1584, who had spotted it by chance at a relative's house in Paris.[564] Though there are very few contemporary mentions of the play and no evidence that it was performed, the play itself — along with its prefatory material — can tell us much about the context in which it was written, providing us with a new perspective on the writer's relationship with Italy. Though Turnèbe may have initially admired Italian culture, travelling to Italy for his studies and writing sonnets in fluent Italian for the humanist *salon* hosted by Madeleine des Roches,[565] he was — in contrast to Larivey — a member of the Huguenot faction, who

[562] Though Claude and François Parfaict were the first to estimate that *Les Contens* was written in 1580, they do not explain their reasoning. Cf. Claude Parfaict, François Parfaict, *Histoire du théâtre françois*, 15 vols (Paris: Godard de Beauchamps, 1735), III, p. 430. My view is that *Les Contens* was written in late 1580 in preparation for the 1581 Epiphany celebrations: Rodomont's mention of a Flanders expedition and his boasts that 'Je ne crandrois d'affronter le camp du Roy d'Espagne' (1.3, line 144, p. 276) refer, for example, to the preparations for battle against the Spanish King Philip II which took place in the final weeks of 1580. Cf. Turnébe, *Les Contens d'Odet de Turnèbe*, ed. by Robert Aulotte (Paris: Sedes, 1985), p. 45. There are also several references to the month of January, such as Girard's claim that 'pour un mois de janvier il fait merveilleusement villain', 4.4, line 1364, p. 335. Given that Turnèbe had died before another January had passed, he must have written his play as the year 1580 was coming to a close.

[563] Possibly the plague. Cf. La Croix du Maine, Antoine Du Verdier, *Bibliothèque françoise de la Croix du Maine et de Du Verdier*, ed. by Jean Antoine Rigoley de Juvigny, 6 vols (Paris: Michel Lambert, 1772), II, p. 203.

[564] 'Me trouvant au logis de quelques miens parens de par-de là, je rencontray en ma voye une comedie escrite à la main, dont Odet de Tournebu, qui est allé de vie à trespas n'a pas longtemps, estoit auteur'. Turnèbe, *Les Contens: Comedie nouvelle en prose Françoise*, ed. by Pierre de Ravel (Paris: Felix le Mangnier, 1584), 'Lettre à Monsieur du Sault', p. 2. Despite my efforts to locate this manuscript, it appears to be lost.

[565] For more on his work for this *salon*, cf. Anne Larsen, 'Chastity and the Mother-Daughter Bond: Odet de Turnèbe's Response to Catherine des Roches', in *Renaissance Women Writers: French*

increasingly despised the Italian presence in France. Turnèbe's father Adrien, one of France's foremost humanists and Greek scholars, also towards the end of his life treated the Italians with increased hostility. Though no evidence suggests that Adrien scorned the Italians for their Catholicism,[566] he criticised their attitudes at the Court, singling out the Italian duplicity, bragging, and sense of cultural superiority: here, for example, he gives the would-be French poet ironic advice in his Latin epistle *De Nova Captandae Utilitatis e Literatis Ratione Epistola*:

> Si le rusé marchant est menteur asseuré,
> Et s'il sçait pallier d'un fard bien coloré
> Mille bourdes qu'il a en France rapportées
> Assez pour en charger quatre grandes chartées;
> S'il sçait, parlant de Rome, un chacun estonner;
> Si du nom de Pavie il fait tout resonner […]
> Si, vanteur, il sçait bien son art authoriser,
> Louer les estrangers, les François mespriser;
> Si des lettres l'honneur à luy seul il reserve
> Et desdaigne en crachant la françoise Minerve […]
> Bref, d'un Italien tu auras le pelaige.[567]

Clearly Adrien passed on these anti-Italianist sentiments to his son: as we shall see throughout this chapter, Turnèbe himself criticises each of these facets of Italianism in *Les Contens*, with the added denunciation of their Catholicism.

As Norman Spector has shown, *Les Contens* was heavily inspired by Grévin's *Les Esbahis*:[568] even the plotlines, revolving around the deflowering of the female protagonist

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Texts/American Contexts, ed. by Anne Larsen, Collette Winn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), pp. 172–88.

[566] Efforts were certainly made, however, to prove posthumously that Adrien had been a Protestant. Cf. Geneviève Demerson, *Polémiques autour de la mort de Turnèbe* (Clermont-Ferrand: Éditions du Centre de Recherches sur la Réforme et la Contre-Réforme, 1975); John Lewis, *Adrien Turnèbe, 1512–1565: A Humanist Observed* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), pp. 295–315.

[567] Adrien de Turnèbe, *De Nova Captandae Utilitatis e Literatis Ratione Epistola ad Leoquernum* (Paris: Veuve P. Attignant, 1559), fol. 2r. French translation by Du Bellay: cf. Du Bellay, *La Monomachie de David et de Goliath, ensemble plusieurs autres œuvres poétiques*, ed. by Ernesta Caldarini (Geneva: Droz, 1981), lines 37–68, p. 145. More information on this poem can be found in Smith, *Anti-Courtier Trend*, p. 121.

[568] Spector provides a lengthy appendix of possible borrowings in his edition: cf. Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, ed. by Spector, pp. 145–68.

with the inevitable outcome of marriage (cf. Appendix II, p. 232), are strikingly similar. However, it has gone largely unnoticed that Turnèbe also imitates Grévin in his employment of the figure of the braggart soldier as a vehicle for denigrating Italian culture. Both playwrights also have the same targets in mind: Turnèbe's soldier Rodomont is, like Pantaleoné, used to express the anti-Italian cultural resistance, political resistance, and cultural rivalry prevalent during these years. Rodomont, however, is constructed using an entirely different technique, which reveals a series of anti-Italian sentiments absent from Grévin's comedy. Whereas Grévin's soldier in *Les Esbahis* is Italian, Turnèbe's is a French soldier desperate to model himself on several Italian prototypes. Both figures exhibit outdated and exaggerated behaviour considered by the playwrights to be typically Italian, inflating characteristics and customs with the intention of showing them to be ridiculous. However, Turnèbe's would-be Italian braggart shows the foolishness of attempting to imitate Italian behaviour in France, providing new evidence of contemporary French attitudes towards these imitators.

3. Cultural Resistance in *Les Contens*

Like Grévin, Turnèbe seeks to resist two facets of Italian culture: courtly and cowardly behaviour. To firstly examine his attitudes towards the Italian courtly culture, Turnèbe did not play an active role at the Court, unlike his predecessor Grévin. However, he had no doubt heard of Italian courtly behaviour from his father and, as we shall see, read anti-Italianist works by writers such as Henri Estienne, who had been an admiring student of Turnèbe's father at the Collège Royal or Trilingue.[569] Given the presentation of his soldier as a would-be Italian, clearly Turnèbe had the impression that French courtiers were striving to replicate the manners and behaviour of their Italian counterparts. Estienne was complaining that

[569] Cf. Louis Clément, *Henri Estienne et son œuvre française* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1967), p. 185.

Italians were ubiquitous at the Court: 'Pour quarante ou cinquante Italiens qu'on y voyoit autresfois, maintenant on y voit une petite Italie',[570] and Gentillet blamed the negative traits of the French courtiers on their bid to imitate the Italians who surrounded them: 'Plusieurs François Italianisez [sont] perfides et desloyaux, ayans apris de l'estre par la doctrine de Machiavel'.[571] It is also evident that Turnèbe considered a defining characteristic of Italian courtiers — and their imitators — to be a reliance on medieval codes of chivalry and honour, judging themselves to be, as Aldo Scaglione has described, 'direct descendants' of the medieval knight.[572] Estienne had singled this trait out for mockery in his *Deux dialogues*, criticising the 'courtisan nouveau [qui] s'estime un bien grand cavalier / Voire entre les grands singulier'.[573] Though Grévin had already alluded to the outdated reliance of the Italian courtier on the troubadour tradition, ridiculing the conventions of seducing women through music and poetry, Turnèbe takes a different direction in *Les Contens*. Instead he mocks the chivalric plight of winning one's beloved through ostentatious displays of valour and honour, popularised in France not only by the Italian courtiers themselves but by the importation of masterpieces such as Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*.

Thus in contrast to Pantaleoné's reliance on the chivalric commonplaces of music and poetry, Rodomont, the embodiment of the courtier 'qui s'estime un bien grand cavalier', is convinced that claims to honour and valour will win the love of the protagonist Geneviefve. His deeds in love will be inspired by — and even, as he claims, outdo — the plights of great lovers of chivalric literature:

> Rodomont: J'avois tousjours jusques ici pensé que tout ce que l'on lit dans [...] Roland le Furieux et autres Romans, fussent choses controuvées à plaisir [...] Mais maintenant que j'esprouve en moy-mesmes, quelles sont les passions qu'une beauté cruelle peut donner, je ne m'estonne

[570] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, p. 397.
[571] Gentillet, *Anti-Machiavel*, p. 41.
[572] Aldo Scaglione, *Knights at Court: Courtliness, Chivalry and Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 230.
[573] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, 'Remonstrance aux autres courtisans', lines 25–30, p. 45.

> plus des armes que ces anciens preux faisoient: et me semble encores qu'il s'y portoient assez laschement.[574]

In this way he pledges that to win her graces he would 'tuer dix ou douze mille hommes d'armes, ou [...] prendre quelque ville impregnable',[575] and even in the epilogue he attempts to seduce the female spectators with boasts of his horsemanship: 'Et là vous pourrez cognoistre avec quelle dexterité je manie un cheval, à courbettes, au galop, à bons, à ruades, et luy donne carriere'.[576] Additionally, he considers love itself to be militaristic, repeatedly outlining the effects of passion in bombastic warlike terms: he describes, for example, Geneviefve's expressions as 'coups de canon qui battent en flanc dans les bastions de mon ame'.[577] For Rodomont, chivalric deeds and prowess in war will sufficiently impress and beguile the object of one's affections.

We have seen that the Italianate 'grand cavalier' was scorned in France during these years, and Michel Simonin, too, has shown how the chivalric romance was falling out of favour in some circles, as the realities of war juxtaposed with the feats completed by imagined heroes.[578] Turnèbe, as a Protestant, would have been particularly sceptical regarding this valorous approach to courtship still practised by many Italians, having witnessed himself the horrors endured by fellow Huguenots. As such, Rodomont's behaviour is shown to be ineffective on all counts: just as Pantaleoné fails to impress Magdalêne with his Italian serenading, Geneviefve is horrified by Rodomont's attempts to win her over with his boasts of military feats. Even Rodomont's servant Nivelet is embarrassed at his master's foreign and outdated wooing techniques. Turning the Italian comedy against the Italians themselves, Turnèbe imitates a joke from Piccolomini's

[574] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 2.4, lines 743–55, pp. 301–2.
[575] Ibid., 1.3, line 147, p. 276.
[576] Ibid., 5.6, line 2097, p. 363.
[577] Ibid., 1.3, line 124, p. 275.
[578] Michel Simonin, 'La disgrâce d'Amadis', *Studi Francesi*, 28 (1984), 1–35.

Alessandro, in which the Italian Capitan Malagigi continually spurns his servant's advice, instead dismissing it with a 'si vede ben che tu non sei prattico nelle Guerre'.[579] Similarly, in *Les Contens,* when Nivelet urges Rodomont to adopt an approach to women more suited to the French, Rodomont brushes him off since he is not a soldier:

> Nivelet: Monsieur les filles de Paris ne se plaisent point à ouir parler de meurtres et carnages. Elles veulent qu'on les entretienne de petits propos joyeux [...] elles vous fuyent, comme une mauvaise beste, tant vous leurs faites pœur.
>
> Rodomont: Je cognois à tes propos, que tu n'as gueres bien retenu ce que je t'ay monstré touchant le fait de la guerre. Car si tu eusses pris plaisir au mestier des armes, tu ne parlerois de la sorte que tu fais, et te dis bien plus que tu trouverois [...] le son des trompettes, fifres et tambours, plus harmonieux que celuy des violons, luths et espinettes.[580]

Whilst Nivelet acts as a foil to emphasise the foolishness of Rodomont's outdated Italian approach to love, Rodomont's reference to the 'luth' also harks back to Pantaleoné's attempts to seduce Magdalêne. Turnèbe thus comments on Italian excess, as opposed to French straightforwardness: whereas French women simply prefer 'petits propos joyeux', the Italian approach is always exaggerated, either relying on overblown music and poetry or on great claims to chivalry.[581] The more measured and frank techniques of the French courtier, who in no way imitates the Italian approach to love, are shown to be vastly preferable.

Turning to Turnèbe's resistance to Italian cowardice, he is also careful to highlight that Rodomont's grandiose boasts of military success are, like those of Pantaleoné, completely without substance: he is a further comic example of Grévin's Italian 'poltron courtesan'.[582] As well as boasting to the object of his affections, Rodomont brags about his

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[579] Cf. Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 'Appendix' by Spector, p. 146. Piccolomini, *L'Alessandro*, ed. by Florindo Cerretta (Siena: La Galluzza, 1966), 1.4, p. 185.
[580] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 1.3, lines 150–60, pp. 276–7.
[581] Contemporary attacks on the Italian rhetorical excess are discussed in Heller, *Anti-Italianism*, p. 36.
[582] Grévin, *Gélodacrye*, book I, sonnet 12, lines 1–2, p. 34.

deeds to every other character, even introducing himself by describing at length his military prowess and enumerating the ways in which he has fought: 'En camp clos, armé, desarmé, à la pique, à l'espee et cappe, à l'espee et dague, à la hache, et à l'espee à deux mains'.[583] His claims grow increasingly ludicrous throughout the play, to the point where he describes how warriors beg him to test their armour, since no weapon is as strong as Rodomont himself:

> Rodomont: Aussitost que quelque Capitaine veut acheter un corps de cuirasse [...] il me prie de luy faire compagnie, pour esprouver ses armes: et si elles sont si bien trempées qu'elles puissent resister à un coup de poing deschargé de toute ma force sans estre faucées, alors il les achète, s'asseurant bien qu'il n'y a mousquet qui les puisse enfoncer.[584]

We saw in Chapter 5 that Italians were already fabled to be cowards, and their reputation for pusillanimity only deteriorated throughout the various paroxysms of the Wars of Religion. Henri Estienne, in his 'Remonstrance aux autres courtisans', sets out a long diatribe against Italian cowardice, claiming that the Italians had been of no use in combat since ancient Roman times and that the French had to teach and fend for themselves: 'On est venu à nouvelles leçons, / Que les François aux François ont apprises, / Et bravement en usage ils ont mises'.[585] Indeed, Turnèbe takes every opportunity to draw attention to Rodomont's cowardice in *Les Contens*. The very name of Rodomont, derived from Orlando's boastful enemy Rodomonte in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, serves to emphasise the pusillanimity of Turnèbe's soldier.[586] Since Ariosto's Rodomonte was infamous for his boasting, the term 'rodomontade' was swiftly coined to denote the act of bragging:[587] the reader or spectator is immediately aware, then, that the claims of Turnèbe's soldier are only bravado. Additionally, since the boasts of Ariosto's Rodomonte are actually founded on substance —

[583] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 1.3, lines 118–20, p. 275.
[584] Ibid., 4.2, lines 1287–90, pp. 331–2.
[585] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, 'Remonstrance aux autres courtisans', lines 206–8, p. 58.
[586] Ariosto in turn has taken this name from the character in Matteo Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*.
[587] Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, VI, p. 616.

he is a wholly fearless character — the cowardice of the French Rodomont is further emphasised. Indeed, Turnèbe presents Rodomont as the opposite of a daring warrior: when arrested for debt he is taken away by the sergeants 'comme une mariée',[588] and he even leaves the stage at one point because he is cold and misses his fire.[589] Ironically, Rodomont also asserts that he does not boast — in the same sentence inventing ever greater feats — drawing further attention to his cowardice: 'Je ne suis homme qui prenne plaisir de me vanter: mais si ma rapier pouvoit parler, elle diroit choses qui vous feroient faire le signe de la croix'.[590] Like Pantaleoné, the words of Rodomont are feigned and untrustworthy: he is thus an example of the detrimental effects of attempting to imitate Italian culture in France.

Whereas Grévin indicates that Pantaleoné wears a soldier's cape and hat, Turnèbe capitalises to a far greater degree on the visual potential of comedy, further emphasising Rodomont's cowardice using two main elements. Turnèbe firstly exploits the use of costumes: the servant Antoine claims that Rodomont owns only a 'vieil harnois tout descloué, et quelque meschante haridelle qu'encores possible il doit',[591] and in other scenes he dresses in a 'habit de velour, lequel il porte autant meschant que bon'.[592] These elaborate clothes indicate that Rodomont is further trying to present himself as a great soldier; however, in their dilapidated condition they fail to deceive the other characters or indeed the readers or spectators. Also evident is that Turnèbe has given Rodomont an excessive moustache: he sports '[des] grandes moustaches noires, retroussées en dents de sanglier'.[593] A moustache was not only regarded as proof of masculinity but was also a feature typical of

[588] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 3.2, line 935, p. 314.
[589] Ibid., 1.4, line 263, p. 281.
[590] Ibid., 4.2, line 1296, p. 332.
[591] Ibid., 1.4, line 211, p. 279.
[592] Ibid., 1.2, line 102, p. 274.
[593] Ibid., 3.1, line 880, p. 311.



Figure 6.2. 'Il Capitan Spavento' (1577): Maurice Sand, *Masques et bouffons: Comédie italienne*, 2 vols (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860), I, p. 175.

great soldiers, often parodied in the *commedia dell'arte* (cf. fig. 6.2, in which 'Capitan Spavento' draws special attention to his moustache). Henri Estienne, too, had recently mocked the courtly fashion of growing a moustache, and many others associated it with the Italians, the French word 'moustache' even derived from Italian term 'mostaccio'.[594] Since Rodomont is only skilled at boasting, avoiding a fight wherever possible, his enormous moustache is highly ironic, again demonstrating how his semblance of valour fails to convince anyone but himself. Secondly evident is that Turnèbe mocks the Italian soldier's gestures, writing in lines which would no doubt be exploited by the actor and played in a highly comic and exaggerated manner:

> Rodomont: Mettant bravement la main à ma flamberge, je les ay receus d'une telle façon, que d'une imbroncade que j'ay ruee au milieu de la pance du premier, je l'ay jetté tout plat dans le ruisseau, et n'a eu autre mal à cause de la cuirasse qu'il avoit, sinon qu'il est esvanouy.[595]

Not only is Rodomont's poorly-concealed cowardice ridiculed by these overblown actions, but Turnèbe is again mocking Rodomont's excess. Such Italian gestures had started to be a source of irritation in France during these years, and Estienne, for example, despaired of the French courtiers who were attempting to replicate such actions: 'Je me suis avisé de vous

[594] Estienne however claimed that it was a Turkish fashion: 'quelcun aura dict qu'il faiset beau voir une barbe faicte à la marquizotte, ou à la turque (on ne gardant que les moustaches)'. Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, pp. 190–1.
[595] Ibid., 4.2, lines 1262–66, p. 330.

demander si les François n'italianizoyent point quant aux gestes aussi'.[596] Turnèbe uses Rodomont to show these gestures to be foolish and overblown and, by extension, their imitators in France to be worthy of ridicule.

Though the French characters in *Les Esbahis* demonstrate a genuine contempt of Pantaleoné, the protagonists of *Les Contens* behave differently towards Rodomont. They are clear, even from the first Act, that they will not be deceived by him, calling him a 'beau Capitaine de trois cuittes' and an 'happelourde'.[597] Nonetheless, rather than being offended by his false appearance, like the characters in *Les Esbahis*, they turn his dissimulations back on him, showing Rodomont instead to be the dupe. Turnèbe manifests this through a series of jokes made by the other characters: Alfonse, for example, chides Rodomont for his lack of chivalry when he refuses to marry Geneviefve: 'C'est bien loing de soustenir leur honneur [...] ainsi que faisoient les anciens chevaliers de la table ronde'.[598] Though this is clearly hyperbolic, aimed at making the audience laugh, Rodomont takes this slight on his chivalry extremely seriously, making the audience laugh even more. Eustache, too, continually mocks Rodomont, acting overly surprised at each of his tales of valour: 'Je n'avois encores esté desjeuné de telles prouesses, et ne les croyois pas facilement, si un autre me les racontoit, Dieu me le veuille pardonner'.[599] Though Eustache's irony would again please the audience, Rodomont's smug reaction to what he thinks is a compliment shows him to be even more ridiculous. With a series of asides, Turnèbe also brings the audience in on these jokes that Rodomont is too dim-witted to understand: when Eustache dismisses Rodomont's boasts, for example, delivering the aside 'je vous en croy sans jurer, mais non pas demain',

[596] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, p. 322.
[597] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 1,4, line 215; 1.4, line 216. Turnèbe possibly imitates 'trois cuittes' from Rabelais (cf. *Pantagruel*, in Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 209–335, ch. 31, p. 329: 'c'est monsieur du roy de trois cuittes'. Huguet defines 'trois cuittes' as 'ayant subi trois cuissons', and 'happelourde' as 'fausse pierre précieuse'. Cf. *Dictionnaire* II, p. 677, and IV, p. 438.
[598] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 5.5, line 1965, p. 358.
[599] Ibid., 4.2, line 1294, p. 332.

he repeats it to Rodomont as 'un chascun doit bien craindre vostre main', who is satisfied at the others' apparent terror of him.[600] Whilst the other characters are often exasperated with Rodomont, they tolerate him and treat him almost as a source of amusement. Unlike in *Les Esbahis*, then, it is clear that the Italianate character is no longer regarded as a threat. The French protagonists see through his façade and humour him, rather than despise him: they also invite the audience to laugh at his foolishness. The 'François italianisants' at the Court, then, appear to have been regarded by some only as a joke, figures to be ridiculed and looked down upon but not to be driven away in contempt.

4. Political Resistance in *Les Contens*

As already explored in Chapter 5, the Protestant Grévin had used *Les Esbahis* as anti-Catholic propaganda, showing the Italians' Catholicism to be dissimulating and a veil for their corrupt ends.[601] Despite the increasing danger of airing Protestant views in France — a notion which presumably led Donald Beecher to claim, wrongly, that *Les Contens* contains no anti-clericalism — *Les Contens* can indeed be read as a piece of anti-Catholic and, vicariously, anti-Italian rhetoric. Like Grévin, Turnèbe makes a series of general anti-Catholic jibes throughout his comedy: he insults, for instance, the Dominican mode of preaching, the character Louise exclaiming: 'Que le sermon m'a ennuié ceste matinee: jamais je n'ay pensé voir l'heure que ce Jacobin sortiroit de chaire'.[602] However, in the same way as Grévin, Turnèbe also makes more detailed criticisms of Catholicism, repeatedly presenting it only as a means of fulfilling evil ends. Organised worship, for example, is shown only to be a subterfuge for committing immoral acts: Basile arranges to visit

[600] Ibid., 4.2, lines 1327–30, p. 333.
[601] Donald Beecher, *Odet de Turnèbe: Satisfaction all Around* (Ottawa: Carleton University Renaissance Center, 1979), 'Introduction', p. 21.
[602] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 2.2, line 541, p. 293.

Geneviefve to sleep with her whilst her mother is at church; meanwhile, Alix spends her holiday working as a prostitute after having told her husband that she will be on a pilgrimage.[603]

Turnèbe also shows specifically Catholic practices to be employed only to transgressive ends. Confession, for example, is used as a means of persuading Geneviefve to sleep with her next-door neighbour, since Françoise advises that her confessor has strictly taught that 'il fault aymer son prochain comme soy mesme'.[604] Sermons are also shown to justify corrupt ends: when seeking to convince Geneviefve to sleep with Basile, Françoise claims that Geneviefve must listen to her since, as she heard in a sermon, she is older and therefore wise: 'Mesme j'ay ouy prescher cest advent dernier, que le diable est fin, pour ce qu'il est vieil'.[605] The eavesdropping Nivelet repeats to the audience how easy it is to 'faire son profit des sermons', adding that Françoise must have learnt her scheming ways from a friar: 'Je croy que ceste vieille sempiternelle a esté à l'eschole de quelque frere frapart'.[606] In addition, Turnèbe shows Rodomont, the would-be Italian, to be the most corrupt of all the characters. Not only is he untrustworthy, he is immoral in every other regard: spending all of his money 'aux dez, aux Bordeaux et aux cabarets',[607] he also seems to have committed a series of heinous crimes. Basile mentions that if Geneviefve marries Rodomont 'elle pourroit bien dire que son douaire seroit assigné sur un gibet: car je pense que ce beau traine-gaine n'a point de plus certain heritage', and he is described throughout the play as a 'pendart'.[608] Like Grévin, Turnèbe is thus making a statement on Catholic and, in turn, Italian hypocrisy, denouncing their ingenuity in making great shows of piousness whilst at

[603] Ibid., 4.1, line 1214, p. 328.
[604] Ibid., 1.2, line 417, p. 288.
[605] Ibid., 1.2, line 408, p. 287.
[606] Ibid., 1.2, line 380, p. 286. Turnèbe appears to have also taken the term 'frere frapart' from Rabelais. Cf. *Quart Livre*, in *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 515–720, ch. 15 (p. 575).
[607] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 1.2, line 332, p. 284.
[608] Ibid., 1.4, line 219, p. 279; see for example 3.3, line 950, p. 315.

the same time concealing their immorality. Though Protestants were at this time widely persecuted, Turnèbe nonetheless uses comedy as a mouthpiece for his views, making his audience laugh whilst promoting Huguenot beliefs and denouncing those of the Italian Catholics, largely in control of France at this time.

As we saw in the Introduction (cf. p. 30), political resistance also refers to commerce, French citizens being widely resentful of the dominant financial position of the Italians in France. Again, however, Turnèbe turns the tables, portraying the French as dominating the would-be Italian soldier and being entirely unthreatened by him. On the one hand Rodomont again presents a false appearance, aiming to give the impression of affluence: he has a valet, a clear sign of prosperity, and, as noted above, he is dressed in run-down velvet and armour. Whilst the shabby appearance of Rodomont's formerly expensive clothing makes it clear that he has no money, not even the addition of a valet successfully convinces anyone of Rodomont's affluence. Nivelet describes how he is forced to wear 'vieux escarpins tous descousus qu'il me donne, apres les avoir portez un an ou deux',[609] also complaining that his master '[n'a] jamais assemblé cent escus en une bourse',[610] and indeed, Rodomont's failure to save money seems to be a Paris-wide joke: 'Quand on veut parler d'un homme liberal, voire plustost prodigue, on n'use plus d'autre comparaison, sinon que l'on dit, il ressemble au Capitaine Rodomont'.[611] Thus the would-be Italian, famed to be so excellent with money, is throughout *Les Contens* mocked for his poverty. On the other hand Basile, Geneviefve's French suitor, is his antithesis: canny and frugal, even Rodomont's valet praises his resourcefulness: 'Vrayement je ne m'estonne pas si le Seigneur Basile est en grace, puis il a le bruit d'estre riche, et de ne faire folles dispenses'.[612] Basile's financial

[609] Ibid., 1.2, line 103, p. 274.
[610] Ibid., 1.6, line 331, p. 284.
[611] Ibid., 1.6, line 335, p. 284.
[612] Ibid., 1.6, line 336, p. 284.

success thus emphasises the ineptitude of Rodomont, again subverting our expectations. Whilst the Italian in France was at this time widely recognised — and despised — for his monetary skills, in *Les Contens* it is the Frenchman who is admired for his wealth and the would-be Italian who is eventually jailed for debt. In addition, whilst Italians were thought to be duping the French through means such as inflated taxes (cf. Introduction p. 30), in *Les Contens* it transpires that the French merchant Thomas has instead cheated Rodomont out of money, selling Rodomont's goods for twice their value.[613] Though Turnèbe is recognising the anti-commerce attitudes towards the Italians in France at this time, he is again refusing to be threatened by them, instead showing that the Italians are underestimating the French.[614]

Finally, in the same way as Grévin criticises the royal support received by the Italians in France, so Turnèbe presents Rodomont as naïve and ignorant in the way he expects help to be given to him. In his attempt to claim Geneviefve as his wife, for example, he instructs his valet to run to the 'corps de garde du Louvre, et dis au Corporal que je luy prie de m'envoyer trois ou quatre harquebusiers, ou autant de mousquetaires, pour me faire compagnie en un affaire qui importe au service du Roy'.[615] Since the King would not be concerned by Rodomont's mission to marry Geneviefve, Turnèbe is parodying the inflated opinion the Italians have of their needs, and that they expect the support of the Court even in the most minor of cases. Again, when Rodomont is arrested for debt, he attempts to convince the sergeants to set him free by proclaiming that he must see to 'un affaire que le Roy m'a expressement enchargé' and that he is bound to fulfil 'le commandement du Roy'.[616] The sergeant's scornful reply, however, further emphasises the notion that the King

[613] Ibid., 4.1, line 1207, p. 327.
[614] This is a borrowing from Estienne's 1566 *Apologie pour Hérodote*, a caustic attack on the difficulties of his era, in which Estienne describes the 'marchands qui prestent de la merchandise, au lieu d'argent, contans cependant la merchandise pour deux fois autant qu'elle vaut' Henri Estienne, *Apologie pour Hérodote*, ed. by Paul Ristelhuber, 2 vols (Paris: Lisieux, 1879), I, p. 182. Noted in Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 'Appendix' by Spector, p. 161.
[615] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 5.4, line 1875, p. 355.
[616] Ibid., 3.2, line 929, p. 314.

would have no interest in helping a would-be Italian like Rodomont: 'Voire, pardieu je croyois tantost que le Roy se voulust servir de telles gens que vous. C'est trop contesté'.[617] Like Grévin's comedy, *Les Contens* suggests that Italians should not ask for royal favours, nor should they be given such help. Again the impression is given that the needs of French citizens should be prioritised and the entitled Italians, who expect for help to be provided at every minor problem they encounter, should not be given extra support from the crown.

5. Cultural Rivalry in *Les Contens*

Like Grévin, Turnèbe employs his comedy in an attempt to overthrow the dominance in France of Italian culture, endeavouring to prove that French literature and language surpass their Italian counterparts. Though he aims for the same ends as Grévin, Turnèbe uses several different techniques in order to achieve them. We shall firstly focus on Turnèbe's attempt to show the superiority of French literature, which he does by endeavouring to claim comic theatre as a French and not an Italian genre. Ironically, *Les Contens* is again influenced in large part by the Italians, despite replicating some lines from Terence.[618] We have seen that it takes inspiration from several Italian plays by authors such as Piccolomini, and additionally, scholars have long shown how it is also based on models such as Bibbiena's *La Calandra* and Girolamo Parabosco's *I Contenti*, replicating much of its dialogue and even its title.[619] We also know that it was imitated from Grévin's *Les Esbahis*, which was in turn based on Italian exemplars. Attempting to conceal these influences, however, Turnèbe seeks to turn his Italian sources against the Italians themselves, using their comedy to prove

[617] Ibid., 3.2, lines 931–32, p. 314.
[618] Cf. Lawton, *Térence en France*, pp. 141–3.
[619] It has even been thought for several hundred years that *I Contenti* and *Les Contens* were the same comedy. La Croix du Maine, Du Verdier, *Bibliothèques françoises*, IV, p. 56. For an informative discussion of Turnèbe's employment of *La Calandra*, cf. Florindo Cerreta, 'A Case of Homophonic Word-Play in Turnèbe's *Les Contens*', *Italica*, 41.4 (1964), 434–37.

that France was fulfilling the humanist condition of reinventing classical genres and thereby enriching European literature.

As explored in Chapter 5, Grévin endeavours to draw attention away from his Italian sources by ensuring that his comedy was highly French in nature, and Turnèbe employs this same device. Though scholars as far back as Eugène Lintilhac have acknowledged that this comedy is 'très française', nobody has examined how Turnèbe achieves this.[620] Firstly, like Grévin, he refers to extremely specific locations, ensuring that a French audience would recognise the settings as Parisian ones: however, whereas Grévin names just one place of action — the Carrefour Saint-Séverin — Turnèbe describes a wide range of them. Antoine, for example, describes running all over the city in a bid to find Françoise: 'Apres j'ay passé par les blancs manteaux, les Billetes, Sainte Croix, et m'en suis venu à Saint Merry, Saint Jacques, Saint Eustache, Saint Germain, et autres Eglises et lieux de devotion'.[621] As well as ensuring that his comedy is unmistakeably Parisian, this is also an in-joke for his French audience: the churches visited by Antoine are at opposite ends of the city, meaning that he took an unnecessarily convoluted route (cf. fig. 6.3):[622]

[620] Eugène Lintilhac, *Histoire générale du théâtre en France*, 5 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1904–10), II, p. 377.
[621] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 5.1, lines 1662–66, p. 346.
[622] Beecher, *Odet de Turnèbe*, p. 101.



Figure 6.3. The same map by Sebastian Münster explored in Chapter 5, here showing the needlessly complicated route of the churches visited by Antoine in his attempt to locate Françoise. *Cosmographia*, pp. 88–9.

Thus as well as giving his comedy a distinctly French setting, this joke excludes all foreigners, directing it only towards his fellow French citizens who would recognise these churches. Secondly, Turnèbe appears to have made use of a real-life situation in *Les Contens*, again appealing to a specifically French readership or audience. After having discovered that Basile has taken her daughter's virginity, Louyse exclaims: 'Dois-je envoyer querir le commissaire? Si je le mets en justice un chascun se rira de moy, et qui plus est, on me jouera aux pois pillez et à la bazoche'.[623] Since Louyse and her dilemma are evidently already being portrayed on the stage, it is likely that this is an ironic comment, alluding to

[623] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 3.7, line 1062, p. 321. For more information on the 'pois pillez', which may be a troupe of basochiens or even another name for the Enfants–sans–souci, cf. Heather Arden, *Fools' Plays: A Study of Satire in the Sottie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 26.

someone who may be present in the audience and a real event which has taken place. Whilst such a reference would certainly induce laughter in the audience, like the convoluted route taken by Antoine, it also gives the play a highly French character, not only creating a recognisable situation for its French audience but again excluding any foreigners who may be watching or reading the comedy. To an even greater extent than Grévin, Turnèbe thus draws attention away from the comedy's Italian roots by making his play as French as possible in nature, seeking to show that comedy has been fully appropriated by the French and has left behind the Italians.

Another technique aimed at proving that comedy belongs to France, used by Grévin and replicated in *Les Contens*, is to use paratextual materials to draw attention away from Italian sources. No mention at all is made of Turnèbe's models in his prologue; rather, the author is focused on flattering potential female spectators, praising their 'esprit vif' and 'capacité d'entendement'.[624] Nonetheless, there is a revealing sonnet included as a postscript to Ravel's edition of the play which, despite being the only instance of such a feature in sixteenth-century French comedy, has been overlooked by scholars. This sonnet is entirely aimed at proving the playwright's originality:

> Resjouy-toy Paris œil unique de France,
> Un de tes citoyens monte sur l'eschafaut
> Du Theatre François, à qui point il ne chaut
> De ceder la couronne au Comique Terence [...]
> Nous trouverons enfin que de Tournebu vault
> Trop plus que l'Africain, et que son eloquence.
> Terence ne faisoit luy seul son beau Latin,
> Deux grands seigneurs romains avoient part au butin [...]
> Il n'est ainsi du nostre, ains il a ce Bonheur
> Qu'il n'a second ny tiers qui partisse l'honneur,
> N'ayant pour compagnons Scipion ne Lelie.[625]

[624] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 'Prologue', lines 17–18, p. 267.
[625] Ibid, 'Sonnet', p. 365.

Though it is possible that this sonnet was not written by Turnèbe but by his friend Ravel in the posthumous edition of *Les Contens*, it is evident that the comedy's alleged originality was considered to be its major selling-point. As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, each of the previous writers of comedy also claimed originality, Jodelle maintaining that he borrowed not from the ancients nor anything 'd'estranger' and Grévin erasing all references to classical and contemporary predecessors in his 1567 amendments, describing his comedies firmly as 'les miennes'. Though Turnèbe — and indeed Ravel — knew of these previous French attempts at reinventing comedy in France, also relying on classical and Italian sources throughout the play, this sonnet is used to gloss over the existence of other contemporary comedies and also to diminish the achievements of classical playwrights, again with the intention of establishing comedy as a French genre.

Claiming that Turnèbe has finally ascended 'l'eschafaut du Theatre François', the sonnet incites the city of Paris to rejoice in Turnèbe's accomplishment.[626] This attempt to allege that Turnèbe is the first to fulfil the conditions of this theatre is clearly aimed at aggrandising his achievement, seeking to prove to future readers that Turnèbe is the forerunner of comedy in France. However, the sonnet attempts to show not only that Turnèbe is the first in France to write comedy, but is also the first to reinvent classical comedy, claiming that Terence — 'l'Africain'— should '[céder] la couronne' to Turnèbe. The playwright is presented, then, as the contemporary reinventor of comedy, the only writer deserving of the recognition that Terence enjoyed. The Italians are therefore completely bypassed as intermediaries between ancient and contemporary, and their many prior reinventions dismissed. Ironically, it is again an Italian genre — here the sonnet — which is used to diminish the Italians' own achievements.[627] The second half of the sonnet draws

[626] Ironically, as we saw in Chapter 5, Ronsard had used a very similar wording to describe Jodelle's feat of writing comedy: '[Jodelle] remplit premier le François échafaut'.
[627] Du Bellay also used the sonnet to denigrate the Italians throughout *Les Regrets*.

further attention away from Italian comic models, stating that Turnèbe has written the comedy alone, with no support or guidance from other sources. The author of the sonnet thus asserts that Turnèbe is worthy of even greater accolades than Terence, since Terence was assisted in writing his comedies: 'Deux grands seigneurs romains avoient part au butin'.[628] As such, whereas Grévin had omitted prior references to the classics in his own paratextual material, the sonnet of Turnèbe or Ravel goes even further, overtly dismissing the achievements of ancient comic predecessors. Since Turnèbe's comedy was of course largely inspired by the work not only of Terence but, above all, of his Italian contemporaries, the author of the sonnet is wholly overstating Turnèbe's innovation. By diminishing the achievements not only of contemporary playwrights but even their classical models, this sonnet incites readers to forget about or disregard previous attempts at writing comedy, constituting a further attempt at establishing comic theatre not only as belonging to Turnèbe, but also to France.

A final technique employed by Turnèbe with the intention of claiming ownership over comic theatre for France is to present the Italians as uneducated and ignorant. Whilst the Italians had long been regarded as precursors of literature and language, Turnèbe again turns the tables and suggests that the French instead have more interest and skill in the study of letters, overtaking the Italians in this domain. Rodomont constantly boasts of being uncultured, flaunting the fact that he cannot read the Greek inscription on his sword, for example, and claiming that a love of language and literature is cowardly: 'Son droit nom soit Pleure sang: ainsi qu'un grand cler m'avoit trouvé escrit sur la poignée en lettres Grecques, que je n'ay peu jamais lire, ny tous mes parens: car jamais homme de ma race

[628] These 'deux seigneurs' denote the later 'Scipion [et] Lelie', considered by authors such as Donatus, Cicero and Quintilian to have assisted Terence with his plays. In the prologue to *Adelphoe* (160 B.C.) Terence defends himself from the accusation that Scipio and Laelius had helped him write his plays, but Montaigne accepts it in the first book of his essays, published several months before Turnèbe wrote his comedy. Montaigne, *Essais*, I, p. 301.

n'eust le cœur si lasche, que de s'adonner aux lettres'.[629] Alluding to the famous 'arms versus letters' dispute prevalent throughout the sixteenth century,[630] Turnèbe may also be counteracting Castiglione's claim that the French excel at arms and the Italians at literature.[631] The Italianate figure cannot properly use his sword, much less read its inscription: he thus relies on the French not only for militaristic support but also for intellectual help. Turnèbe thus portrays that the would-be Italian in France is nothing but a drain on resources, with even the Italian speciality — the study of letters — eclipsed by the French. Once more Turnèbe shows that French literature surpasses its Italian counterpart, again outlining the futility of imitating Italian culture in France.

Moving to Turnèbe's bid to show the superiority of the French language, he replicates Grévin's technique of employing Italian lexis which describes foolish concepts, which had by this stage been promoted by Henri Estienne. He introduces a range of terms absent from *Les Esbahis*, but which again all allude to the negative characteristics of the Italians: we see, for example, 'bravade' (line 1859) from 'bravado' and 'chiourme' from 'ciurma' (line 1314).[632] Unlike Grévin, however, Turnèbe also transposes into French several Italian words, initially referring to negative concepts, which are nonsensical when rendered into French. As Florindo Cerreta has observed, for example, Turnèbe transposes Bibbiena's term 'barbafiorito' into 'barbefleurie'.[633] The character Ruffo in *La Calandra* continually misprounounces 'ermafrodito', calling it 'barbafiorito'; however, when Louyse in *Les Contens* also mistakenly uses 'barbefleurie', it is an anti-climax when this is revealed to be 'hermafrodites', since the two words little resemble each other.[634] Turnèbe is thus so

[629] Turnèbe', *Les Contens*, 4.2, lines 1302–6, p. 332.
[630] Cf. James Supple, *Arms Versus Letters: The Military and Literary Ideals in the 'Essais' of Montaigne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)
[631] Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, pp. 70–1.
[632] Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 5.4, p. 355, and 4.2, p. 333.
[633] Cerreta, 'A Case of Homophonic Word-Play', pp. 434–7.
[634] Ibid., p. 436.

keen to follow Estienne's advice of using Italian words which show the Italian culture to be ridiculous — in turn inciting the French courtiers to stop using them — that he even transposes Italian words into French which are unlikely to be understood.

Turnèbe, however, disregards Estienne's advice which claims that French should not employ Italian military words in case future French speakers wrongly assume Italy's superiority to France in war. On the contrary, he goes to the other extreme and gallicises a superfluity of them: we see, for example, 'bastion' (line 124) from 'bastione' and 'embuche' (line 1549) from 'imboscata'.[635] As though to underline that each of these words is derived from the Italian, he also employs highly unusual terms such as 'imbroncade' (line 1264) borrowed from 'imbroccata', and 'lancepessade' (line 1282), from 'lanciaspezzata', both of which he coined himself.[636] Though Estienne recommended avoiding such terms altogether, Turnèbe does use them to an anti-Italianist end: since they are pronounced by Rodomont, who proves that he is entirely incapable of putting any of these words into practice, the Italian language is again shown to be untrustworthy. Though Italian military lexis may help to present Italian soldiers as superior in skill and courage, Turnèbe emphasises that their words are not founded on substance and that French citizens should not be duped by them. Similarly, French courtiers who employ Italian militaristic terminology — Estienne gives the example of the vogue for the Italianised term 'cavalier' at the Court — should also be mocked for their artifice.[637]

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[635] Turnèbe, 1.3, p. 275; 4.5, p. 342. Listed by Spector in Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 'Introduction', pp. 31–4.
[636] Ibid., 4.2, p. 330; 4.2, p. 331. 'Imbroncade' is a hapax, and 'lancepessade' instead became 'anspessade' later in the century. Cf. 'imbroncade' in Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, IV, p. 555; 'lancepessade' in Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, IV, p. 766.
[637] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, p. 121.

As though to counteract the duplicity of Italian language presented in *Les Contens*, Turnèbe uses a highly natural French throughout his comedy. Charles Maupas, in his 1626 edition of the play, praises Turnèbe's unaffected and idiomatic style, explaining that it can even help the reader to pick up various colloquialisms: 'Tissue de plusieurs beaux traicts et façons de parler de nostre langue [*Les Contens* enseigne] quelques formules de parler et Compliments François'.[638] Turnèbe also employs a wide range of adages and aphorisms, far more than any previous French playwright, ensuring that his French is even more idiomatic.[639] In addition, Turnèbe's use of prose — again an Italian imitation — emphasises the natural flow of his comedy's speech: scholars have indeed observed the difference between Turnèbe's unrestricted and unaffected language and the contrived verse employed by Jodelle and Grévin.[640] With very few precedents in this regard,[641] Turnèbe's employment of prose was an undeniable selling-point, advertising its status on the title page of the *editio princeps* (cf. fig. 6.4). Though initially based on the Italian style, Turnèbe's juxtaposition of his highly natural and idiomatic

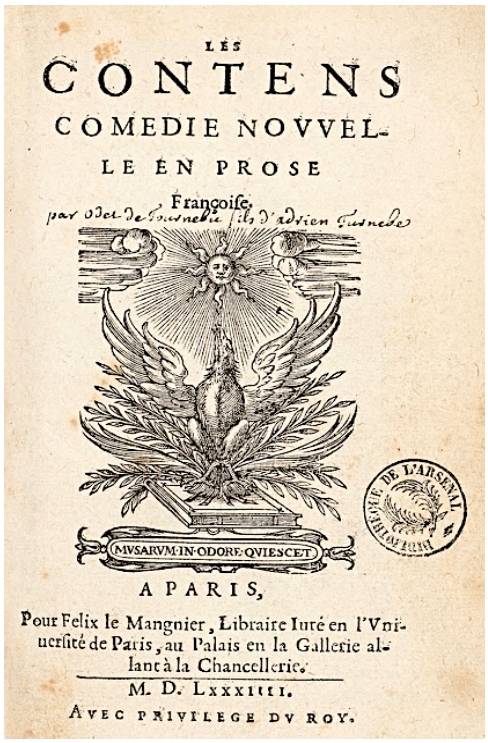
LES
CONTENS
COMEDIE NOVVEL-
LE EN PROSE
Françoise,
par Odet de Turnebe fils d'Adrien Turnebe
MVSARVM·IN·ODORE·QVIESCET
A PARIS,
Pour Felix le Mangnier, Libraire Iuré en l'Vniuersité de Paris, au Palais en la Gallerie allant à la Chancellerie.
M. D. LXXXIIII.
AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY.

Figure 6.4. Title page of Turnèbe's *Les Contens*, advertised as a 'Comedie Nouvelle en Prose Françoise'. Gallica.BnF.fr.

[638] Turnèbe, *Les Desguisez*, ed. by Charles Maupas (Blois: G. Collas, 1626), pp. 1–2. Maupas means 'Compliment' in the pre-17C use of the term, signifying both to complete and to express respectfully; thus Turnèbe's French will aid readers in replicating a full and elegant language themselves. Cf. Huguet, *Dictionnaire*, II, p. 393.
[639] For instance: 'Quand on parle du loup on en voit la queuë', Turnèbe, *Les Contens*, 2.7, 783, p. 308; 'Il n'est pire eau que celle qui dort', Ibid., 3.7, line 1059, p. 321.
[640] Charles Mazouer, for example, criticised Jodelle's 'vers toujours un peu abrupt et compliqué' in comparison to Turnèbe's natural prose. Cf. *La comédie à l'époque*, 'Introduction to *Les Contens*', ed. by Charles Mazouer, pp. 231–61, p. 237.
[641] La Taille had been the first to use prose in his original comedy *Les Corrivaus*. For more information on his use of prose, cf. La Taille, *Les Corrivaus*, 'Introduction', ed. by Drysdall, p. 8.

French against the artifice of the Italian words he chooses for his play again seeks to show the French language to be far preferable to its Italian counterpart. This juxtaposition also emphasises that these Italian words are out of place in France, conspicuous against the more natural French terms within which they are intermingled: he thus implies that French courtiers should dismiss these fashionable Italianate words in favour of their frank native style.

Conclusion

It is true that anti-Italian sentiments were propagated in many forms of literature during these years. The dialogues of Henri Estienne come to mind, as do the tracts of Innocent Gentillet and the poetry of Adrien de Turnèbe and Du Bellay. It has gone unnoticed, however, that the comedies written during these years also functioned as anti-Italian propaganda. Playwrights, like the writers of other genres, believed in the potential of their work to promote the cultural, political, and literary status of France, resisting and rivalling the influence of other nations. They employed a range of techniques to ensure the effectiveness of their comedies in achieving this end, which involved using Italian comedy directly against the Italians themselves.

Larivey was celebrated as one of the country's foremost 'Français italianisants', using Italian sources to help reinvent philosophy and also Straparola's *fabula* genre in France. Whilst he proudly acknowledges his Italian models in other literary categories, his approach to Italian comedy is entirely different, instead creating the illusion of having single-handedly reinvented comic theatre in France. Though his comedies are largely faithful translations of Italian plays, Larivey employs a range of techniques to convince the reader or spectator that they are original creations. He briefly mentions Italian influence in his prefatory letter, but only as a red herring: throughout the rest of his prefatory material he

concentrates instead on proclaiming the ancient sources of his plays, also lamenting the difficulty of reinventing comedy in the contemporary era since the classical authors had already completed great work. Even advertising his plays as 'imitations', he gives the impression of having creatively utilised a range of exemplars in his comedy, in the end producing original work, rather than taking Italian plays and simply transplanting them into French settings with French characters. In addition, he chooses to translate Italian plays which may not be identifiable to his readership or audience, also taking special measures such as changing the titles of better-known comedies to further mislead the reader. Neatly bypassing the Italians as intermediaries between the classical comedians and himself, Larivey diminishes the Italian achievements and amplifies his own. His plays are thus presented as the first true reinventions of comic theatre, claiming the genre for France in a veiled manifestation of cultural rivalry.

Though *Les Contens* is still adapted from a range of Italian sources, Turnèbe also turns his comedy into a mode of anti-Italian rhetoric. He mainly achieves this through the character of Rodomont who, despite fulfilling some of the same functions as Pantaleoné in *Les Esbahis*, differs entirely from Grévin's braggart soldier, as a ridiculous imitator of the Italian culture. He is used to parody what Turnèbe considers to be the most contemptible features of Italian culture imported into France, and his first criticism is the courtly art of being a 'grand cavalier'. Rodomont's boastful and militaristic attempts to seduce his beloved see him become a laughing stock, showing how the candid and natural approach of the French is preferable to the artificial and brash techniques of the Italians. Italian cowardice is, like in *Les Esbahis*, the second feature under attack in *Les Contens*. Though Rodomont brags of his innumerable feats, he fails to accomplish any of the overblown promises he makes and is, in the end, shamefacedly led away by two sergeants. To emphasise further his bravado, Rodomont is named after the most famous boastful soldier in Italian literature and

is additionally given an oversized moustache, bedraggled suit of armour, and a ridiculous demonstration of swordplay, which each show his pretence of warriorship to be unfounded. The Italians are shown to be boastful cowards, and their imitators in France to be useless both in seducing women and in warfare. Like Grévin, Turnèbe also shows the Italian Catholicism to be a veil for their immorality, and furthermore, though the Italians had long been associated with — and resented for — their financial success, Rodomont's failure to manage his money is ridiculed throughout Paris. The French hero, on the contrary, is shown to be extremely judicious and resourceful and is widely admired for this characteristic. Even duped by a French merchant, the would-be Italian is shown to be inept in the commercial sphere and surpassed by his French counterparts. Rodomont is also rejected by the Court when he repeatedly demands help, and Turnèbe thus incites the Italians to stop relying on French royal support and his French audience to reconsider their generosity regarding Italian expatriates.

In terms of cultural rivalry, too, Turnèbe attempts to show French culture to be superior to its Italian counterpart. Directing his attentions towards literature, he seeks, like Jodelle, Grévin, and Larivey, to establish comic theatre as a French genre by glossing over his Italian sources. Setting his comedy in a series of highly recognisable locations and basing his plot on real life, Turnèbe not only draws attention away from the comedy's Italian origins but also seeks to exclude foreigners from appreciating the localised jokes his comedy includes. The sonnet aimed at proving Turnèbe's originality is a further example of this bid to establish comedy as a French genre. Exaggerating his achievements and overtly stating that his originality makes him preferable to Terence, who had help composing his own comedies, the sonnet again bypasses the Italians as mediators between ancient and contemporary and wholly diminishes their role as important models. In a final attempt to prove the superiority of French literature, Turnèbe paints a portrait of the Italians as

unlettered, instead focusing the audience's thoughts on French literary talent. Also aiming to show that the French language surpasses Italian, Turnèbe manipulates Italian lexis, choosing, like Grévin, foolish words to emphasise the ridiculousness not only of the Italian language but also of its culture. Rejecting the advice of Henri Estienne, Turnèbe also gallicises extremely specific Italian military terms, showing them to be ultimately meaningless and, by extension, the Italian language to be artificial. He is, in contrast, careful to use a highly naturalised French language, interspersing his prose with adages and aphorisms, again with the intention of demonstrating the superiority of the frank and straightforward French language over its ornamented and untrustworthy Italian counterpart.

The other characters do not react violently to Rodomont, however, as the characters in *Les Esbahis* treat Pantaleoné. Since Turnèbe portrays the French as superior to the Italianate character in every aspect, even where the Italians had long been recognised as exceptional, the French characters are unthreatened by Rodomont and instead mock him and humour his ineptitude. By extension, Turnèbe demonstrates that the would-be Italian at the Court is worthy of ridicule by his fellow French citizens. Thus, whilst Turnèbe himself was not involved in courtly life, he was certainly aware of the Italian cultural and political presence in France and resented the bids of his compatriots to imitate the Italian expatriates. He was also conscious of the Italian literary and linguistic influence in France and was keen to demonstrate its unwelcomeness. Turnèbe thus uses *Les Contens* to react against this importation of Italian culture: whilst showing the French courtiers to be foolish for imitating their Italian counterparts, his comedy also seeks to replace the Italians as arbiters of European literature. Rodomont is a key tool in this strategy of resistance and rivalry and,

given that he is entirely superfluous to the plot, Turnèbe's very decision to include him shows the importance of anti-Italian discourse during these years.[642]

The skilful French manipulation of Italian models to transform comedy into a weapon against the Italians themselves is a testament to the success of French playwrights in appropriating the genre. Clearly French writers had largely mastered comedy, being able not only to replicate Italian techniques but also to exploit them to political and polemical ends. More broadly, comedy has throughout Part III shown itself to be a lens for providing a new perspective on the Franco-Italian relationship, shedding light not only on French cultural and political resistance to the Italians, but also on their endeavours to rival the presence of Italian culture on a national and international level. The devices inherent in comedy in particular, such as costumes, word play, and gestures, have also revealed a series of nuances to Franco-Italian tensions which the study of no other genre has made obvious. The study of comedy thus tells a new story of how, over the course of just four decades, admiration for Italy was turned into antagonism and the Italians transformed from paragons into parodies. Initially held up as all-encompassing models of imitation, the Italians had, through the enmity and ingenuity of their French successors, become the subjects of their own jokes.

[642] Rodomont in fact creates a certain *imbroglio*, there being already two potential lovers for Geneviefve.

Conclusion

"Avez-vous leu ceste farce [de *Pathelin*] de bout en bout? Car desja tantost vous en avez fait mention."

"Ouy, mais il y a longtemps. Toutesfois il me souvient encore de plusieurs bons mots, voire de maints bons et beaux traicts, et de la bonne disposition conjoincte avec l'invention gentille; tellement qu'il me semble que je luy fay grand tort en l'appelant une farce, et qu'elle merite bien le nom de comedie."[643]

This comment made by Henri Estienne towards the end of the period examined in this thesis brings together a number of lines of enquiry. Pushing for *Pathelin* to be regarded as a comedy and not as a farce, it is evident that by the late 1570s a hierarchical distinction was being drawn between comedy and the medieval genres, particular standards being expected of a play before it was deemed deserving of the title of comedy. Estienne's comment also indicates that the new Italianate comedy was gaining momentum and recognition throughout France, and that proto-nationalist writers, striving to preserve native genres and diminish the importation of Italian culture, deemed it necessary to show the worthiness of medieval French theatre. The standards expected of comedy which Estienne acknowledges — as well as the utility of the Italian exemplar which he seeks to subvert — had first been promoted by his own uncle, Charles Estienne, just forty years previously. A series of significant cultural shifts had thus taken place throughout this period, and we see transformed not only the humanist perception of comic theatre but also the nature and status of Franco-Italian relations. In this thesis I have identified and analysed these shifts, using the Italian comic model to trace the complex trajectory of French approaches to comedy and, conversely, comedy as a means of mapping the French attitudes towards the Italians and their culture.

Key to the portrait of Franco-Italian comic culture I have created is the notion that the shift from medieval farce to classically-inspired comedy was anything but a

[643] Estienne, *Deux dialogues*, p. 156.

straightforward one. The three material conditions I have employed to identify literary and ideological changes in comedy — poetics, performance, and politics — have worked to reveal a number of difficulties faced by playwrights, in an era when humanists were unconvinced that comedy deserved a place within the culture they were seeking to forge, when competition with one's literary counterparts was all-encompassing, and when the utility and purpose of comedy were still uncertain. The earliest endeavours of Charles Estienne to utilise the Italians to reinvent comedy in France went largely unnoticed, and the interest shown in comic theatre by mid-century writers such as Du Bellay and Mesmes did little to encourage others to turn their minds to the genre; indeed, they were themselves hardly convinced of the worthiness of reviving comedy, and Sébillet was repelled by the idea. The Italian performance of *La Calandra* in 1548, however, was living proof that comedy could succeed and impress, and the series of Italian comedies subsequently patronised at the Court inspired French writers also to master the genre. Nonetheless, as the century advanced, the influx of Italian culture sparked resentment and, combined with the humanist endeavour to establish France as the arbiter of European culture, French writers began to compete against Italian theatre with varying degrees of success. Growing more familiar with the genre and increasingly skilled at writing comedy, towards the end of the period in question playwrights began to use their Italianate theatre not only to resist the influence of Italian culture but to outwardly rival it, turning their comedies into anti-Italian, nationalistic propaganda. Across the century we can thus document critical changes not only in the way that comic theatre was perceived and employed by French playwrights but also in the role that the Italians were considered to play in the reinvention of comedy. This thesis has thus challenged the long-standing position that sixteenth-century playwrights neatly prepared the stage for their more illustrious successors, and also calls into question the value judgement that their comedies were simply poor. The development of comic theatre in

France was fraught with controversies, tensions, and anxieties, and the political and cultural statements made by playwrights in their comedies point to their value not only as literary *œuvres* but also as historical sources. This study has also brought out in more detail than before this forward and backward movement in the rise of French comedy throughout the sixteenth century, and the crucial role played by Italian literature and culture in that movement.

It is worth pointing out that the development of comic theatre in France was no more linear even after the period under discussion. Clearly French literati were still interested in Italian comedy: the exile Giordano Bruno printed his Italian comedy *Il Candelaio* in Paris in 1582, and though it is unlikely to have been performed, it met with reasonable success, a second edition being printed later that same year.[644] François d'Amboise, a friend of Larivey, printed his comedy *Les Neapolitaines* in 1584 which — though based on Italian sources — was used as a weapon against the Spanish, the braggart Dom Dieghos caricaturing various facets of Spanish culture.[645] Nonetheless, farce also continued to be popular: even during the same year as Henri Estienne called for *Pathelin* to be accepted as a comedy, this very play was performed at a festival at Saint-Maixent.[646] Additionally, the notion that comedy should be used as a language-learning tool continued to thrive after the period in question: Mesmes's *I Suppositi* was reprinted in 1585 with a didactic slant — advertised as 'pour l'utilité de ceux qui desirent sçavoir la langue Italienne' — and in 1577 schoolmaster Gérard de Vivre wrote a comedy for his students, *La Fidélité Nuptiale*, considering comedy to be the best way of teaching languages.[647] Though Charles Estienne

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[644] Giordano Bruno, *Il Candelaio* (Paris: Guillaume Julian, 1582); Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 243.
[645] François d'Amboise, *Les Neapolitaines* (Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1584).
[646] Cf. Lanson, 'Études sur les origines', 205.
[647] 'Il n'y a moyen plus facile, ny plus profitable à la jeunesse (qui desirent de bien profiter en quelque langue que ce soit) que l'exercice d'apprendre, et jouer quelquefois des Comedies'. Gérard de Vivre, *La Fidélité Nuptiale* (Paris: Nicolas Bonfons, 1577), 'Aux Lecteurs', p. 1.

and a number of successors had attempted to prove that medieval drama was outdated and that comedy was worthy of greater feats than language-teaching, clearly they did not entirely succeed in their aims.

Interest in comedy waned altogether when the great Italian patron of theatre, Catherine de' Medici, died in 1589 and when, eight months later, Henri IV ascended the throne. Largely focused on political and religious affairs, the new King paid little attention to comedy, even confessing to having fallen asleep during one performance and relating in a letter to the Marquise de Verneuil his distraction at a later comedy: 'J'ay ouy une fort belle comédie, mais je pensois plus en vous qu'en elle'.[648] Nonetheless, he greatly appreciated farce, which made him laugh 'jusqu'aux larmes';[649] his Court thus supported medieval comic forms far more than their Italian counterpart, initiating a long hiatus in comedy which was not to be revived until the works of Alexandre Hardy and Pierre Corneille grew in popularity amongst the French public. By the time Corneille wrote his first comedy *Mélite* in 1625, he even complained of having no precedents to follow: 'Je n'avais pour guide qu'un peu de sens commun avec les exemples de feu Hardy'.[650]

As a result, we cannot claim that comic theatre immediately or easily met with the success first envisioned for it by Charles Estienne. My study of the trajectory of comedy across the course of the sixteenth century has, however, revealed and clarified some more pertinent ideas about comic theatre and its wider context within early modern France. It has established that writers, initially sceptical about the humanist potential of comic theatre, were convinced by Italian playwrights, performers, and patrons to accept comedy as a viable

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[648] Henri IV de Bourbon, *Recueil des Lettres missives de Henri IV*, ed. by Jules Berger de Xivrey, Joseph Guadet, 12 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1843–1876), VII, p. 12. Cited in Lanson, 'Études sur les origines de la tragédie', p. 220.

[649] Pierre de L'Estoile, *Mémoires et Registre-Journal de Henri III, Henri IV et de Louis XIII*, ed. by Jean-François Michaud, Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat, 2 vols (Paris: Champollion-Figeac, 1847), II, p. 413.

[650] Pierre Corneille, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Georges Couton, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), I, *Examen de Mélite* (c. 1660), p. 5.

mode of literary production. It has also used comedy as a means of documenting the changing relationship of France with Italy, identifying how the general admiration for Italian culture was transformed into antagonism. This thesis has in addition provided evidence of comedy as a propagandist weapon, with Italianate comic theatre eventually manipulated by French playwrights to make a series of anti-Italianist statements. The ability of these later French playwrights not only to write their own, original comedies but also to turn Italianate theatre against the Italians themselves reveals, in turn, their increased dexterity with the genre. Not only convinced of the worthiness of creating comedy, these playwrights were, by this stage, so adept at writing theatre that they were able to transform and manipulate it to their own ends.

These key findings, in distinct yet interconnected strands, hint at the broader ramifications of this work. Though I have provided only a snapshot, working within a specific period and with one theatrical genre, the methodological approach I have taken — centring on historical, textual, and cross-cultural analysis — can be utilised well outside the scope of this thesis. A subsequent project could revolve around the *commedia dell'arte*, the pastoral drama, or even the tragicomedy, all overlooked branches of Italianate theatre which broadly influenced French drama and its wider culture. My methodology, which has shown comedy to be a useful lens for examining from a new perspective the literary, political, and cultural conditions of sixteenth-century France, could no doubt also be fruitfully applied in the study of these other theatrical categories.

In closing, one could still say that there is nothing funny about comedy. However, comedy's most valuable contribution is, in this case, the rich depth of insights it can provide into the world that created it, and which, in turn, it created.

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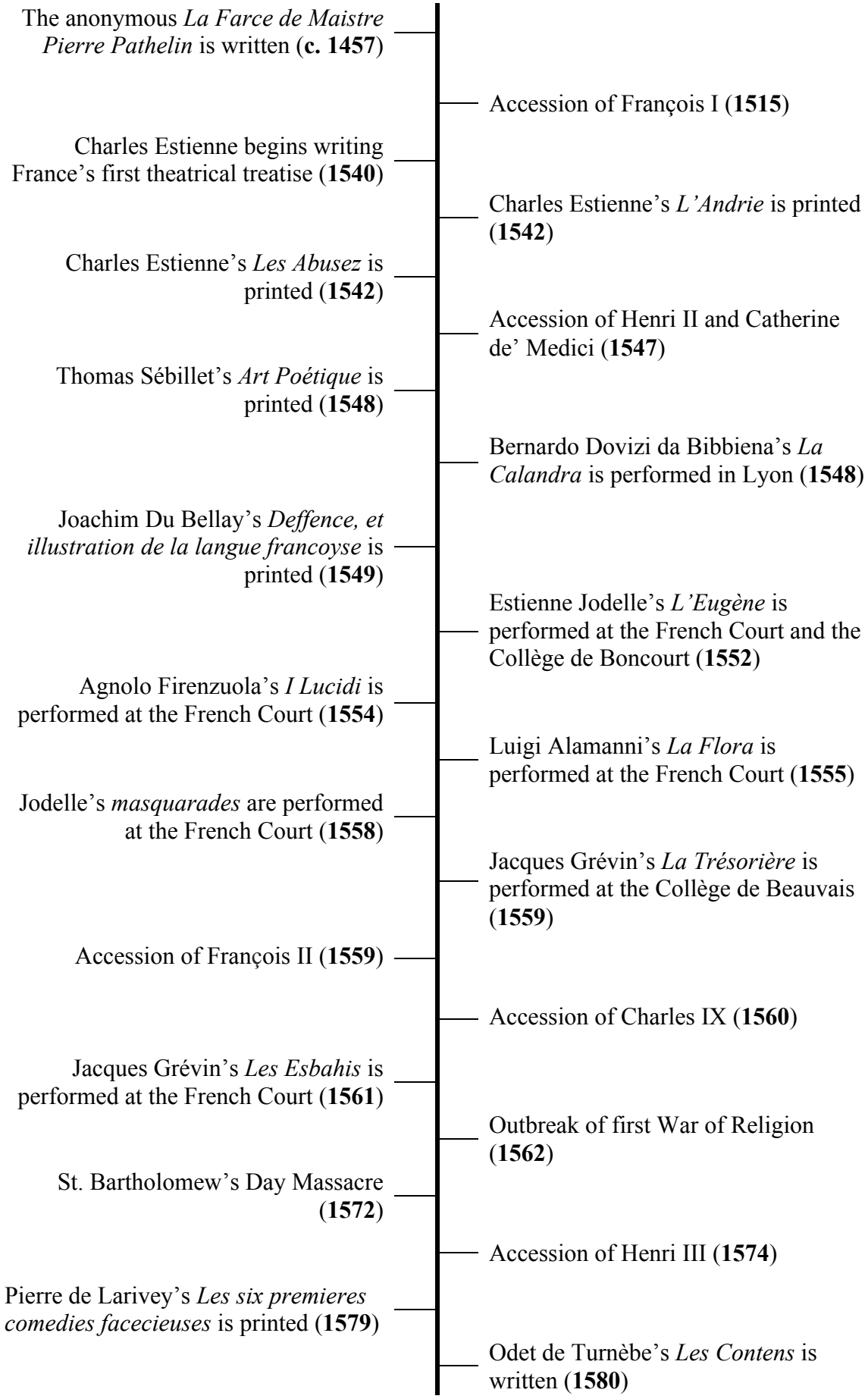
Appendix I: Timeline of Key Dates



Appendix II: Plot Synopses

[Even where the comedy under discussion is a French translation, for clarity I have provided a synopsis of the original Italian play.]

Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena: *La Calandra* (c. 1507)

A twin boy and girl, Lidio and Santilla, are separated when their father dies in the Turkish invasion of Modon. Santilla is disguised as a boy, taking on her brother's identity, by the servant Fannio and sold to Perillo. Lidio, meanwhile, is saved by a servant and goes to Tuscany. Time passes but Lidio never ceases looking for Santilla, eventually deciding to try to find her in Rome. There he falls in love with the beautiful Fulvia. Since Fulvia is married to the rich merchant Calandro, Lidio dresses up as his sister Santilla to gain access into Fulvia's home and they begin an affair. Calandro mistakes Lidio for a young woman and also arranges an affair with Lidio, who escapes. Fulvia, upset that Lidio now avoids the house, pays a necromancer to make Lidio fall in love with her again. Seeing Santilla dressed as a boy, the necromancer mistakes her for Lidio and sends her to Fulvia's house where, after much chaos, the twins realise that they are brother and sister.

Lodovico Ariosto: *I Suppositi* (1509)

Erostrato loves Polinesta, whose father Damonio wants her to marry Cleandro, who is rich but far older than Polinesta. Erostrato and his servant Dulippo both disguise themselves, Dulippo as the master of the house and Erostrato in Dulippo's rags to gain access to Polinesta's home as a labourer. The two men find it difficult to keep up the pretence and are eventually found out by Polinesta. It emerges that Erostrato is the lost son of Cleandro who, delighted that he has found the son he thought he had lost during the Ottoman invasion of Otranto, sanctions the marriage of Erostrato to Polinesta.

Accademia degli Intronati: *Gl'Ingannati* (1531)

Lelia and Fabrizio are twins, separated when their father loses Fabrizio in the Sack of Rome. Lelia disguises herself as a man she calls Fabio and serves the handsome Flamminio as a page in order to escape an arranged marriage to Gherardo, an old man. She falls in love with Flamminio; however, Flamminio loves Isabella, and he uses Lelia — disguised as Fabio — to deliver love letters. Isabella, however, falls in love with Lelia, still dressed as Fabio. Lelia exploits Isabella's love for her and pretends that she too loves Isabella, thus inciting Isabella to further rebuke Flamminio's advances. Isabella meets Fabrizio and, thinking her to be Fabio, marries him. When Flamminio sees Fabrizio he mistakes him for Fabio, thinking that his servant has betrayed him, but when Lelia reveals the plot to Flamminio he is sympathetic, and Lelia and Flamminio also marry.

Agnolo Firenzuola: *I Lucidi* (c. 1540)

The play is set in Bologna. Two twins, Lucido Tolto and Lucido Folchetto, the sons of Agabito of Palermo and Madonna Lucrezia, are separated when Lucido Folchetto is lost in Naples. Lucido Folchetto goes to Bologna to find his twin and many misunderstandings ensue. Lucido Tolto is cheating on his wife Fiammetta with the next-door neighbour,

referred to only as 'Signora', and when she sends him out so that she can cook a dinner for him, his twin brother turns up. Instead the Signora cooks for Lucido Folchetto, who is delighted at his unexpected welcome in Bologna. After the meal he finds himself at the house of the angry Fiammetta, who calls a physician when Lucido Folchetto — mistaken for her husband — fails to recognise her. Finally, Lucido Tolto also reappears at his wife's house and the twins are happily reunited.

Luigi Alamanni: *La Flora* (1549)

Geri has a wife, Clemenza, and a daughter, Porzia. Heading to Sicily on business, he has a relationship culminating in a daughter, Flora. Porzia, meanwhile, dies giving birth to Attilio. Geri eventually returns to Florence, but Flora is captured by pirates *en route*, eventually sold to Scarabon who takes her to Florence. Simone's son Ippolito is in love with Flora, but cannot afford the high price asked by Scarabon. Flamminia, a prostitute, is in love with Attilio, who is in turn in love with Virginia. Attilio explains to Flamminia Ippolito's predicament, and Flamminia negotiates with Scarabon to get the price lowered. Meanwhile, Ippolito uses the money Simone gives him to buy books to instead free Flora, and Ippolito and Attilio plan to leave Florence to escape the wrath of their fathers. In the end, Geri and Clemenza speak with one another, both finally understanding the true identities of Flora and Attilio. The play ends happily, with the double marriage of Ippolito to Flora, and Attilio to Virginia.

Estienne Jodelle: *L'Eugène* (1552)

[A scene-by-scene summary can be found in Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy*, p. 172]

The abbot Eugène has engineered the marriage of Alix to the dim-witted shopkeeper Guillaume. Pretending that Alix is his cousin, Eugène's true purpose is to be able to visit and sleep with Alix himself. Meanwhile, Guillaume is delighted that he has found himself such a chaste and honest wife. Florimond is a Gascon soldier back from Germany and intends to marry his beloved Alix: he is, however, unaware that he is loved by Hélène, the sister of Eugène. Chaos ensues as Florimond, furious at Eugène's lascivious intentions for Alix, resolves that he must murder Eugène. Florimond goes with Guillaume and Hélène to Eugène's residence. Eugène is terrified and wants to find nearby sergeants to help him. He is stopped by Hélène, however, and forced to quickly solve the situation. His sister Hélène will marry her beloved Florimond, and Eugène's confessor proclaims that they will be far happier since she has waited so long to be with him. Having paid Guillaume's debts for him, Guillaume decides that he does not mind if Eugène also sleeps with Alix.

Jacques Grévin: *La Trésorière* (1559)

[A scene-by-scene summary can be found in Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy*, p. 173]

Loys loves Constante, wife of the Trésorier, and tells his servant Richard that he hopes to capitalise on the Trésorier's trip out of Paris. During a visit to the Trésorier's residence Richard eavesdrops on Marie, Constante's servant, thereby learning that Constante prefers the Protenotaire to Loys. The Protenotaire is in a precarious financial situation and his servant Boniface is cunningly able to procure a large amount of money from Constante, after eavesdropping on her making arrangements to meet Loys. Richard then witnesses Constante allowing the Protenotaire into her house, and informs Loys. The Trésorier, Loys, and Richard forcibly enter the Trésorier's locked house, and discover Constante in her

unfaithfulness. Loys decides that he will be content if the money that he has given to Constante is returned and if the debt he owes to the Trésorier is cancelled. The money lent by Constante to the Protenotaire is also kept and everyone is content.

Jacques Grévin: *Les Esbahis* (1561)

[A scene-by-scene summary can be found in Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy*, p. 174]

Josse is an old man, presumed to be a widower after his wife Agnès left him for another man in Italy. He is extremely smug at now being engaged to Magdalêne, the beautiful young daughter of Gérard, although Josse himself is unattractive, impotent, and in poor health. He boasts of the excellent sex life he will enjoy with his new bride. The Advocat is also in love with Magdalêne, a relationship supported by his servant Julien and the Gentilhomme. Magdalêne has another suitor, the swaggering Italian expatriate Pantaleoné, overblown, parodic, and scorned by the other characters. Pantaleoné attempts to serenade Magdalêne with lines from Ariosto outside her window but only succeeds in infuriating the others. Meanwhile, Gérard is overheard speaking in the town, and he plans to have Magdalêne married to Josse by the very next day. The Advocat decides that he must take matters into his own hands and, in Josse's clothing, breaks into Magdalêne's house to make love to her. He is, however, seen through the keyhole by Gérard and mistaken for Josse. When Josse arrives he denies being there and begins to argue Gérard, annoyed that his bride is no longer a virgin. Magdalêne is terrified at her actions and wonders what the outcome will be. At the same time Agnès turns up and, recognised by Josse, is invited back into his home. It transpires that Agnès's Italian lover is Pantaleoné, who is driven away by the other characters. L'Advocat and Magdalêne are married.

Odet de Turnèbe: *Les Contens* (1580)

[A scene-by-scene summary can be found in Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy*, p. 178]

Louyse aims for her daughter Geneviefve to marry Eustache. However, Geneviefve has two other suitors who are far more interested in her: Basile and Rodomont, a would-be Italian courtier and soldier. When Basile plots to visit Geneviefve disguised as Eustache, Rodomont decides to follow this same plan, and both borrow a recognisable red suit from Eustache. Eustache, in the meantime, has been told by the bawd Françoise that Geneviefve has deformed breasts, and he no longer finds her attractive. Françoise also impresses Geneviefve with advice from her confessor and sermons she has heard, thereby convincing Geneviefve to allow Basile to visit her. Rodomont is unable to reach Geneviefve's house, since he is arrested for debt, so Basile gets there first. Geneviefve has managed to stay at home after telling her mother that she has a cold; she lets Basile in and they make love. Louyse returns home from church, sees Basile, and thinks he is Eustache; she locks the door. Basile escapes from the window and instead helps a prostitute named Alix into the room, whom he dresses in the red suit. Louyse is perplexed at finding Alix, and offers Geneviefve to Rodomont, who, since discovering the plot and realising that Geneviefve is no longer a virgin, is also no longer attracted to her. Basile subsequently admits to dressing up as Eustache and Louyse concedes that Basile must marry Geneviefve.

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