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## Dissimulation in the *Commedia dell'Arte* Scenarios of Flaminio Scala, 1611

*Commedia dell'arte* was the most influential and widespread theatre movement in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe. A considerable part of its popularity can be accounted for by its comic representations of stressful occurrences within everyday life in early modern Europe, including its representations of the period's widespread dissimulation. Among other things, the theatricality of *commedia dell'arte* provided a way for the audience briefly to dissociate itself from and to fantasize about ways of coping with dissimulation. A number of characteristics of *commedia dell'arte*, including disguise, lying, tricks, spying and gossip, and portrayals of honour, previously seen as separate, cohere in the concept of dissimulation. Natalie Crohn Schmitt is Professor of Theatre and of English, Emerita, University of Illinois at Chicago. She recently published *Befriending the Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala: the Comic Scenarios* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). In *New Theatre Quarterly* she has published 'Stanislavski, Creativity, and the Unconscious' (Vol. II, No. 8); 'Theorizing about Performance: Why Now' (Vol. VI, No. 23); "'So Many Things Can Go Together": the Theatricality of John Cage' (Vol. XI, No. 41); and 'The Style of *Commedia dell'Arte* Acting' (Vol. XXVIII, No. 4).

*Key terms:* sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian comedy, disguise, masks, tricksters.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE was the most important theatre movement in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe, far more important and influential than Italian literary drama or, in its time, Elizabethan theatre. Yet only in this century have a significant number of its 750 extant scenarios been published in Italian or in English translation. The primary reason that so little attention has been paid to the scenarios, while considerable attention has been paid to the *commedia dell'arte* characters, and to the history of the performing troupes, is, of course, that they are not plays but extremely abbreviated summaries of fast-moving actions entailing double or sometimes even triple plots represented in three acts, each with as many as eighteen scenes, showing its ten or so characters in ever-changing pairs or groups. They are hard to read.

The considerable reuse of earlier material, on which the scenarios relied, has also contributed to their neglect because they have been perceived as merely derivations or corruptions of earlier written comedy. In this latter respect, it is important to understand

that in the early modern period Seneca's analogy of creative work to the work of bees was widely disseminated and accepted: 'We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in.'<sup>1</sup> Not to engage in such culling and arranging in the process of creation was a mark of ignorance.<sup>2</sup>

In my own process of culling and arranging, I here focus on a particular social concern represented in the collection of *commedia* scenarios published by Flaminio Scala in 1611:<sup>3</sup> namely, dissimulation – that is, the hiding of one's true thoughts and motives by means of discretion and indirection. Early modern Europe was a period historians have come to regard as an age of dissimulation. Even in his own time, Montaigne identified dissimulation as 'among the most notable qualities of this century'.<sup>4</sup> Dissimulation was widespread and cut across many languages, cultures, institutions, and nations.

Of the fifty scenarios in Scala's collection, examination of the forty that are comic<sup>5</sup> in

terms of dissimulation shows clearly that they are not, as is generally thought, 'only minimally about social reality' – just skeletal theatrical artefacts, imitations of earlier theatre, from which the information that 'can be gleaned about contemporary history and society is quite limited'<sup>6</sup> – but humorous explorations of early modern anxieties, among others, about dissimulation.<sup>7</sup>

The theatricality of *commedia dell'arte* has blinded critics to its social import. But that theatricality provided a critical distance from the anxieties the scenarios took up. The enormous popularity of *commedia dell'arte* resulted not just from the appeal of famous characters such as Pantalone and Arlecchino, the skill of its famous actors, and its *lazzi* (or gags), but also from its rich comic treatment of social problems like dissimulation.

Scala was a well-established *cappocomico*, or deviser of scenarios and troupe leader. His collection of scenarios, the only one to have been published in either the sixteenth or seventeenth century, represents *commedia dell'arte* in its golden age, 1570–1630. Because the Scala scenarios were written for both readers and performers, they are more detailed than others remaining.

Thus, Scala's collection gives us, as noted scholar of drama of the period Louise George Clubb asserted twenty-five years ago, 'a fuller idea of the dynamics, tropes, and variety of improvised comedy than any other single text has done'.<sup>8</sup> More recently Richard Andrews expressed surprise that scholars are not buzzing around the Scala text 'like bees round a honeypot'.<sup>9</sup> I turn to Scala's collection of scenarios as representative of *commedia dell'arte* at its best and most clearly detailed.

### Coherence through Anxieties

If one looks for what we might think of as direct commentary on social or political history in the scenarios, it cannot be found: the scenarios are domestic comedies. But in them the anxiety that ran deep and wide in European social and political life – that things are not what they seem and people are not who they say they are – is expressed in a multitude of ways. The many disguises, lies,

language games, and tricks in the scenarios can be seen as manifold expressions of this anxiety, and the spying and gossip as representations of ways of attempting to discern, control, and sometimes falsely accuse others of dissimulation. Understood in terms of dissimulation, the scenarios reveal an important kind of coherence in what otherwise appear to be rather disparate elements.

The cause of so much dissimulation cannot be established with certainty but one contributing if not central cause was the rise of cities and the new anonymity that cities provided.<sup>10</sup> Despite the difficulty and dangers of travel, a great number of people were on the move in early modern Europe, including merchants, soldiers, students, labourers in search of work, pilgrims, and large numbers of vagrants. People moved to cities from rural areas and from one city to another to make themselves anew. Having left their community, reinvention of identity could serve as a useful and often quite easy option.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the cause, the period's characteristic consideration of the limits of human perception and of the capacity to make distinctions between appearance and reality was of a piece with dissimulation's prevalence and the considerable anxiety it caused. Dissimulation could render one's thoughts, feelings, and identity completely opaque and deny others the chance to know the true identity of the dissimulator, leaving everyone, as the Duke Louis d'Orleans lamented in 1594, as if 'in the darkness of night'.<sup>12</sup>

In Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*, 1528), one of the most widely distributed and influential books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe,<sup>13</sup> even the concept of dissimulation was hidden behind a neologism: '*sprezzatura*', which Castiglione defined as 'an art to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it'. It is an art 'which does not seem to be art'.<sup>14</sup>

Another early modern theorist of dissimulation, Torquato Accetto, referred in 1641 to dissimulation as 'a profession to which one cannot profess'.<sup>15</sup> In its aim to decouple one's efforts and intentions from one's self-

representation, dissimulation itself had to be dissimulated so as to pass without notice.

The virtually obsessive preoccupation with deceit<sup>16</sup> naturally found its way into discourses on its nature in innumerable plays, poems, and ballads of the period. Because this obsession took on particular force in Italy, where strategies of self-presentation reached a new level of intensity,<sup>17</sup> it makes sense to view drama, the art of dissimulation *par excellence*, and Italian drama in particular, through its lens.

### Strategies of Self-Presentation

Scala's comic scenarios, with one exception, are like earlier Italian written comedies in being set on a street or in a piazza.<sup>18</sup> Italian comedy of the period was an urban drama arising in one of the most urbanized countries in Europe. The early modern city could be viewed as a stage for everyday performances of identity.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the late sixteenth-century reshaping of public squares was directly influenced by perspectival stage sets so as to better display the urban elite as if they were on a stage.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, in the public areas, as the theologian Paolo Sarpi observed in 1609, it was as if one were 'obliged to wear a mask because no one in Italy may go without one'.<sup>21</sup>

Correctly and more sweepingly, the secretary Bonifacio Vannozi wrote at the start of the seventeenth century, 'This is a century of appearances, and one wears a [metaphorical] mask all year round.'<sup>22</sup> Unlike the earlier written comedy, *commedia dell'arte* employed actual masks. Thus the frequent analogy between dissimulation in everyday life and the mask particularly invites the analysis of *commedia dell'arte* in terms of dissimulation.

Of course, it is important to observe that there is a difference between the mask in life and in theatre: the dissimulator in society announces nothing and allows no one to know if a mask is even in use, whereas the masked actor openly acknowledges the artifice of the stage.<sup>23</sup> On the *commedia dell'arte* stage that artifice was announced not only by the actors' use of actual masks, but also by the comic exaggeration and plot improb-

abilities, and by the audience's awareness of the tricks and deceits being perpetrated.

For the audience, the dramatic performance served as an observation of and release from everyday life and corrective to it, to a life in which, as Accetto commented, 'there are many foxes among us and they are not always known to us'.<sup>24</sup> The theatre audience had not only knowledge of the characters' real thoughts and intentions but also, in the course of the action, the characters' masks were revealed as just that; dissimulators were exposed and offenders humiliated. Justice was done. The foxes were trapped.

In the literature on dissimulation in the period some authors went to extravagant lengths in their effort to try to distinguish between 'dissimulation' – that is, hiding one's true thoughts and motives by means of discretion and indirection – and 'simulation', or pretending what is not the case, viewing the first as honourable and the second as not.<sup>25</sup> Others like Stefano Guazzo, writing in 1574, believed that both could serve honest ends.<sup>26</sup> Famously in *The Prince* (1532), Machiavelli argued that, to succeed, the prince had to be both 'a great simulator and dissimulator'.<sup>27</sup>

Scala made no distinction between simulation and dissimulation and argued, in the usual defence against antitheatricalism, that the goal of his scenarios was to help the audience by example, even 'in seeing those who live badly', including in pretending what is not the case.<sup>28</sup> Scala's ends, like those of the tricksters in the scenarios, were over-archingly honest. Old men, who represented themselves as honourable but then proved to be lecherous, were humiliated. By means of disguise, lies, and tricks, young girls were provided with the means to escape arranged marriages with old men and to marry their young lovers in resolutions improbably satisfactory to both fathers and offspring, and where no means other than disguises and deceptions would have sufficed.

I turn now to the elaboration of the kinds of representations cohering in the concept of dissimulation in Scala's scenarios – disguise, lies, tricks, honour – and to representations of efforts to control dissimulation through spying and gossip.



Plate 1. Woodcut representing a scene from an unidentified *commedia dell'arte* performance. The servant Harlequin, disguised as Horatio, a self-described 'foreign knight and lord', woos an upper-class lady, as Capitain Cocodrillo secretly looks on. Harlequin's traditional black mask and patched garb are clearly evident beneath his gentleman's disguise of plumed hat, cloak, and sword. Scala himself only rarely represents such violations of sumptuary law. From *Recueil Fossard*, mid-1580s, National Museum, Stockholm.

Disguise is certainly the most obvious feature of the *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, a feature of early modern comedy frequently examined in theatrical terms.<sup>29</sup> But it had a profound connection to early modern daily life. Men and women from all walks of life were inventing, fabricating, and disguising themselves, lying about who they were or pretending to be someone they were not.<sup>30</sup> Impostors of every sort were ubiquitous.

Degree and status in the scenarios, as in life, were normally indicated by apparel and accessories. The obsession with sumptuary laws arose in the attempt to make clothing serve as a clear demarcation between man and woman, gentleman and servant, decent woman and prostitute, Christian and non-Christian, local resident and foreigner.<sup>31</sup> Not surprisingly, a social hierarchy regulated by

strict dress codes made it all the easier to assume a false identity: clothing as a marker of identity could be appropriated.<sup>32</sup> And this appropriation fostered the already deep anxiety about dissimulation, 'a crisis of recognizability', as one critic has called it.<sup>33</sup>

### Disguise: Theatricalizing the Imposter

Scala employs disguise in all but six of his comic scenarios. Making clear the popularity of such self-misrepresentation in drama, nine of the scenarios advertise in titles like *The Fake Madwoman*, *The Fake Servants*, and *The Four Fake Possessed Men* that they feature disguise. In the scenarios, disguise takes a wide range of forms and serves in a variety of ways. Characters, on their own, decide to disguise themselves or do so on the recommendation



of someone else, usually the servant Pedrolino, who is often the plot manipulator. A number of the Scala scenarios are set during Carnival and are likely to have been played at that season, when all sumptuary laws and dress codes were suspended. Cross-dressing and the wearing of all manner of costumes were permitted. There is no evidence, however, that Scala restricts his use of disguise to the context of Carnival. His use of it is pervasive and wide-ranging.

Many times characters disguise themselves as other named characters: Flavio disguises himself as Pantalone, for instance. Occasionally, Scala makes clear that these disguises are minimal, consisting of the character's distinctive 'hat and cape' or 'beard and hair' (Plate 1, on previous page). When the assumed character is a masked one as were the comic characters – the servants, old men, and Captain Spavento – there is no indication that the characters impersonating them took on their masks. So while the disguise served clearly to identify the character being impersonated and to mislead the other characters, it left the identity of the character beneath the disguise readily apparent to the audience.

It had to have been the acting that was persuasive in suggesting the possibility of the other characters having been fooled and for the actors to impress the audience with their skills. When the characters are partially hidden in windows, their disguise is often specified as being no more than a change in voice (probably along with a change in dialect to that identified with the character being impersonated).

The darkness of night frequently facilitated and enhanced the use of disguise. But the misidentifications occurring in night scenes – played in light as bright as that of day scenes – like the disguise costumes, can never have left any doubt in the minds of the audience members about the true identity of the underlying characters. The audience's pleasure lay not only in its appreciation of the acting but also in its superior knowledge.

In the darkness behind a shuttered window, the serving maid Franceschina within could be made to substitute in a bed-trick for

an upper-class young lady.<sup>34</sup> In these cases, the darkness itself functioned as a disguise. In the dark, even Arlecchino could be utilized as a female in a bed-trick. The audience was left to imagine what was involved in the discovery of the dissimulation within. To the hilarity of those gathered outside the house, the victim of the bed-trick, fleeing from within the house, was suitably humiliated for his inappropriate lust. (The substitute in the trick is merely a lower-class pawn and not considered as a victim.)

In the darkness of the bedroom, as in Shakespeare's *A Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, a wronged love could also be bedded with her rightful partner. The elaborate clothing of the upper-class females, which prevented people from knowing very much about the individualizing particulars of their bodies, probably made such tricks more plausible for their contemporary audience than they are for us.

The central characters, the middle-elite, and the servants in their households, also disguised themselves as various street people: a pimp, a ruffian, pilgrims, gypsies, soldiers, astrologers, magicians, fortune-tellers, beggars, and dentists.<sup>35</sup> Scala represented many other street vagabonds, card sharks, rogues, police, musicians, old hags, and actors, and in so doing provided a sense of the urban street life of the early modern Italian city. In real life, such figures, mostly impoverished, and many of them dissimulators by trade, were a regular part of the city scene. Magicians and astrologers in the scenarios are always phonies. While perhaps the majority of people believed in magic and astrology, the church prosecuted magicians and astrologers. Scala played it safe and the magicians and fortune-tellers as obvious tricksters were anyway more fun and, as tricksters, replicated the performance itself.

### Purposes of Disguise

Only in rare instances (I have counted three), do the characters, in violation of the sumptuary laws, dress above their station. Most notably, in *The Husband*, Franceschina, an extremely loyal nursemaid, feigns death

and burial, and leaves town. After a year she returns as planned, disguised as a gentleman of Rome. As such, she marries her mistress so as to prevent her from having to marry a man chosen by her father, so she can await the return of her beloved. Franceschina's violation of sumptuary law is perhaps excused as wholly in the service of her superior.

In the scenarios, girls frequently disguise themselves as male servants so that they can more safely leave the protection of their home, travel, seek employment in the cities where their lover lives, and sometimes (as in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*) work as male servants even in the very houses of those they love. Cross-dressing, of which there is some record in real life, while it was nowhere near as prevalent as in the scenarios, served, as in the scenarios, to better the opportunities for the women.<sup>36</sup> It could be more persuasive then than now both in life and on the stage because sexual maturity occurred later in boys and girls, and because early teenage males and females were regarded as androgynous.<sup>37</sup> Only infrequently do men dress as women and such disguise is rarely their idea; rather, they are bribed or tricked into it and often shamed by it. To gain access to the houses of their sheltered loves in the scenarios, youths pose as jewellers, physicians, notaries, and in one case even as ghosts.

Scala uses certain conditions and attributes as disguises. Feigned madness and death, common disguises of young women, could save them from unwanted marriages or, in *The Fake Sorcerer*, distract a gullible father from perceiving the real cause of his daughter's very large belly. The fearful Captain Spavento on occasion seeks to protect himself from harm and gain sympathy with feigned wounds. In *The Fake Blindman* Flavio has wandered as a beggar with his eyes closed for three years, pretending blindness as penance for having taken an interest in his best friend's girl. In *The Promise Not Kept*, Pedrolino persuades Burratino that to get the lady pilgrim, he must remain mute for three days. Like character disguises, pretended attributes could be either self-selected or recommended by another with either favourable or unfavourable results. One disguise is

not assumed by the character but rather attributed to him: Pantalone is tricked by everyone into believing that his breath stinks – with the result that he has four good teeth pulled.

Disguises might consist of no more than living under an assumed name or role. In *The Letter Carrier*, Pantalone is really Stefanello, and his daughter Isabella is really Hortensia. We are told in the Argument that precedes the scenario proper that Stefanello and his daughter had escaped with new names to a new city because in their former city Stefanello had arranged to have someone killed to preserve his honour. In *The Promise Not Kept*, we learn, also in the Argument, that Stefanello Bottarga was attacked and left for dead because of his wealth. He escaped to a new town and, for safety, took the name Pantalone. Scala's representation of such dissimulation would not have seemed improbable. The diarist Romolo Allegrini in 1581 reports that between ten and fifteen per cent of the men from Perugia were in exile or on the run.<sup>38</sup>

A number of characters are not disguised but appear as, represent themselves as, or are taken to be someone else or in another condition: twins, slaves, or ghosts. In real life Italians were enslaved as a result of 'Turkish' piracy both on land and at sea.<sup>39</sup> Some major characters in Scala's scenarios first appear as slaves and their true identity is not discovered for some time. Characters presumed to be dead when seen alive are taken to be ghosts. Although the Inquisition played an important role in propagandizing for and enforcing a withdrawal of the spiritual, ghosts, generally understood to be condemned souls who forebode eternal damnation, continued to be genuinely frightening to many.<sup>40</sup> The body was regarded as porous or permeable, thus allowing souls to leave it.<sup>41</sup> Fear of ghosts was a reality.

### Purposes of Disguise

In general, in the scenarios the disguises allow characters to engage in actions they could not otherwise undertake and to gain access to places otherwise not accessible to

them. They are allowed to escape, to get money, to effect revenge, to disrupt arrangements they dislike, and to find those they love and marry them. Disguises can also serve to punish social improprieties.

Disguise served the construction of the scenarios as well as the characters. A hundred years ago, Victor Freeburg observed that:

Disguise was useful to the writer because it initiated, developed, and terminated plots easily, because it made the action compact, and because it permitted veiled allusion in the dialogue; . . . it was useful in the theatre because it permitted pantomime, bodily mimicry, and stage business in the manipulation of costume and the accessories of make-up, and because it permitted elocutionary dissimulation, most subtle of all in the veiled allusions.<sup>42</sup>

Make-up changes seem not to pertain to Scala's scenarios. Our information about what the actors said is limited to the few instances of verbatim speech that Scala provides. For the rest, Freeburg's observations serve well. I add others.

In real life, the presence of women out-of-doors suggested their sexual availability and, in fact, left them vulnerable to sexual advances including rape. Lower-class women's work often required them to be about in the street, but without the protection of patrimony in question, their virginity was not taken very seriously by the authorities. Public sexuality of vagrants was assumed.<sup>43</sup> Upper-class women, however, were largely confined to the house. In the scenarios, disguising them as male or lower-class allowed Scala to move them more freely outside the house.

Thus, by using the traditional street or piazza, Scala could engage his upper-class women in numerous adventures. He found a continual source of comedy in the sexual accosting of upper-class women disguised as lower class. In *The Two Fake Gypsies*, Pantalone pursues his fleeing daughter, disguised as a gypsy 'in order to enjoy her'. In *The Promise Not Kept*, Orazio, fantasizing that Isabella dressed as a manservant is his beloved, kisses 'his' eyes, face, and mouth.

Scala sometimes uses disguise as a running motif. In *The Woman Believed to Be Dead*,

characters engage in a series of clothing exchanges. Each character happens in turn upon the doffed clothing of another and, for one reason or another, puts it on and discards his or her own clothing only to have it found by another character who in turn exchanges it for another's. In *The Troubled Isabella*, most of the major characters first appear as beggars.

The use of disguise helps to establish the moral economy of the scenarios. At least for a time, pretentious and powerful people are brought down by those in disguise or hidden in bed-tricks, or they are made to look foolish by the disguises they are persuaded to put on. Disguise serves to help youth triumph over age. And servants masquerading as magicians, dentists, and Mercury, or having persuaded their masters to disguise themselves, gain at least temporary control over their betters.

Disguise also served the actors. It allowed them, as the characters they routinely played, to show off their abilities as these characters in other roles. In *Jealous Isabella*, the actress plays both herself and her male twin in a *tour de force* of alternating appearances. Actresses in disguise, and particularly in disguise as males, were afforded a far wider range of roles to play, roles that sometimes displayed, as did their characters, remarkable skill and versatility that they would otherwise have had little opportunity to display.

Those relatively recently writing about disguise in early modern drama<sup>44</sup> have seen it as having ramifications unlikely to have been intended by either authors or actors: disguise in early modern texts could serve to challenge the idea of a stable or essential self. Behind the profound anxiety reflected in the sumptuary laws lay the recognition that identity was mutable. In the scenarios, when young women misrepresent themselves as young men, far from being punished for their transgression they succeed in getting what they want by its means, and thus indirectly challenge fixed gender roles.

The myriad ways in which Scala used disguise and the considerable interest in disguise on the part of the theatre audience evidenced by its repeated use, can be accounted for as

closely linked to the anxiety in the period surrounding the prevalence of dissimulation in real life.

### Lies in Words and Actions

Disguise is only the most obvious manifestation of dissimulation in the scenarios. Verbally misrepresenting something as what it is not – out-and-out lying – is a regular part of the scenarios. In *The Portrait*, not exceptional in this respect, I count twenty-eight lies. Two of these lies are corroborated and elaborated upon by other characters. The scenario also contains lying actions: in two parallel ruses to extract money from potential victims, the offenders pretend to cry to lower the defences of their victims. Lying actions, like lying words, are a regular part of Scala's scenarios.

The magnitude of lies in the scenarios ranges from the mundane, the kind many people excuse because they simply make daily interactions easier or more graceful, to those more strongly objectionable, and to those utterly preposterous. The lies serve in small unrelated ways or as part of some grand scheme. They are virtually innumerable in their variety.

Examples of mundane lies are: ordering the servant to say that the master is not home, pretending ignorance of what one knows or incomprehension of what one understands, behaving coyly, hiding the real reason for one's tears, pretending to be in an argument so as not to be caught scheming, and pretending to have been searching far and wide for someone by entering out of breath. Then there are the more serious lies: falsely claiming that someone is in love with someone else, claiming that a letter was written by someone other than its actual author, crying rape in response to a perceived slight, blaming someone else for a theft one has committed oneself, agreeing to marry someone without any intention of doing so, and falsely claiming that someone, even oneself, is dead.

Substituting a false jewel for a real one serves as an example of a serious lying action. Like characters, objects can be disguised.

Fantastic lies include Arlecchino's representation of himself as a bale of silk and the promise Pedrolino makes, when providing a bottle of wine separately to Graziano and to Pantalone, that the first person each meets with a bottle of wine like his, will, if the wine is consumed slowly, turn into Flaminia, whom each loves. Of course, the two old men first encounter one another, proceed to get drunk, and make fools of themselves.

Because Scala was primarily describing actions and intentions rather than providing dialogue, it is impossible to say anything about dissimulation in the exact words the actors spoke. But there is considerable indication that language was a source of dissimulation. Scala makes clear that sometimes the characters speak at cross-purposes because they do not understand one another, but, as often, because they seek to avoid saying what they might otherwise say.

They also make veiled references. Claudio, a gentleman in *The Alexandrian Carpets*, having been misled into believing that Pantalone is bankrupt, when obliged to talk to him about the matter, speaks in metaphor. Pantalone, who is not in financial trouble at all, has no idea what Claudio is talking about. In *The Portrait*, an actress with whom Pantalone has become quite smitten tries to fleece him by promising (in language, I am sure, full of sexual innuendo) to tell him something that will make him very happy.

Indirect actions serve as effectively as indirect language to provide sexual innuendos: Burattino in *The Jealous Old Man*, reproaching his daughter because she still doesn't know about 'digging and planting' even though she is old enough to marry, instructs her in how to handle 'a hoe'. In the same scenario, by means of showing dancing on stage, Scala represents the joy of the sex taking place offstage.

### Tricks – to Corrective Ends

Tricks constitute an important part or the primary part of many of the scenarios. They are, of course, a form of deceit or dissimulation and, Richard Andrews notes, the persistent love of the practical joke or trick



continues to be evident in contemporary Italian comic performance. Its continuing popularity is of a piece, Andrews believes, with the almost 'mystical search for the perfect sucker, to whom everyone can feel derisively superior'.<sup>45</sup>

Playwrights can either make clear the nature of a trick at its onset, so that the audience is colluding in the trick, or they can keep the trick secret from them.<sup>46</sup> At the opening of *The Tooth-Puller*, Pedrolino is bitten hard by his angry and out-of-control master, Pantalone. Almost immediately, Pedrolino decides to seek revenge by duping Pantalone into having his teeth pulled. He enlists a large number of people, some with their own grievances against Pantalone, serially to convince Pantalone that his breath stinks. Then he bribes Arlecchino to pose as a dentist. When the fake dentist appears, Pantalone seeks out his services with the result that four of his teeth are needlessly pulled.

The characters and the audience are in on the trick from the onset. By contrast, in *The Fake Sorcerer*, Pedrolino says in the first act that he has worked out a scheme to meet the needs of the lovers, but that scheme or trick is disclosed neither to the characters nor to the audience until the end of Act Three. Indeed, it is far from certain, until near the very end, that Pedrolino has any scheme in mind at all.

The business of Pantalone's teeth being pulled in *The Tooth-Puller* is concluded by the end of Act One. The happy resolution of the problems with which *The Fake Sorcerer* begins only comes at the very end of the scenario. In *The Tooth-Puller*, Pedrolino's motive is revenge. In *The Fake Sorcerer*, Pedrolino unselfishly contrives to satisfy the needs of the four young lovers. Even more importantly in that scenario, by a trick entailing disguises Pedrolino saves the honour of the families by getting the two couples married just before the young women give birth. His only satisfaction is in his evident pleasure in his own wit and in the justness of his schemes.

In *The Tooth-Puller*, we admire the appropriateness of Pedrolino's revenge and his skill in enlisting others into his plot, and we cheer his victory over his ill-tempered master.

We may also see his revenge as unnecessarily cruel. But Scala is very careful in setting it up. The scenario begins with Pantalone telling Pedrolino of the love that he feels for a young woman and his fear that his son is his rival in love, for which reason he intends to send him off to university. Pedrolino objects, they begin to quarrel; and finally, Pantalone bites Pedrolino's arm very hard. Pantalone's lust, his unseemly plan to try to satisfy it, which he persists in trying to carry out, and his rage are all socially out of bounds.

Tricks, like this one of Pedrolino's, in the main serve the moral economy of the scenarios. However socially inappropriate they may be in themselves, they almost always serve as corrective to arrogant and errant behaviour and they champion the oppressed young over the old patriarchs. They are honest tricks.

Castiglione, elaborating on the sources of humour in real life in his time, distinguished two kinds of tricks. One is when someone is clearly tricked in an adroit and amusing fashion, and the other is when, as it were, a net is spread and a little bait is offered, so that the victim causes his own downfall.<sup>47</sup> *The Jealous Old Man* provides examples of both kinds. Old Pantalone is married to a young woman with whom he is overbearing, suspicious, and, as it turns out, impotent. He is tricked in an adroit and amusing fashion into being cuckolded. While he stands guarding the house door to keep out anyone who might imperil the purity of his wife within, she and her lover, who has already gained entrance to the house, are vigorously having sex. In the same scenario, Old Graziano seeks to sleep with a young widow, and when he is told that she awaits him within, he becomes the victim of a bed-trick. A net is spread, the bait offered, and Graziano takes it. Both lustful old men are suitably humiliated in complementary tricks.

The trickster character manifests itself in many forms and cultures throughout history. But, as I have argued, dissimulation took on particular force in the early modern period, notably in Italy where strategies of self-presentation reached a new level of intensity.<sup>48</sup> Adovardo in Leon Battista's Alberti's

fifteenth-century treatise on the family commented that 'The world is amply supplied with fraudulent, false, perfidious, bold, audacious, and rapacious men. Everything in the world is profoundly unsure.'<sup>49</sup> Tricksters were potentially everywhere.<sup>50</sup>

There are scenarios, such as *The Alexandrian Carpets*, where Pedrolino, the usual trickster (and stand-in for the author), brilliantly controls the action through an escalating series of machinations. At the end, facing the prospect of his master Pantalone being arrested, Pedrolino relents, confessing the extent to which he has controlled the proceedings through a succession of dissimulations: he stole and sold Pantalone's oriental carpets through a ruse; through another ruse in which he persuaded Pantalone to dress as a slave, he even managed to sell him. With the first theft, Pedrolino enabled Pantalone's spendthrift son to throw a party. With the proceeds of the second theft, he facilitated the son's deceptive plan to run off to Naples.

Through yet more deception, Pedrolino had another servant arrested and arranges the marriages of Pantalone's son and also of his son's friend, both without paternal approval and to women of unknown families and fortunes. His behaviour has been so outrageous that only a *deus ex machina* can bring this otherwise fine scenario to an (improbably) happy ending: as it turns out at the very last moment, the marriages are into well-to-do families, and with marriage, the youths are presumably transformed into responsible citizens. Pedrolino, his confession of what he has done notwithstanding, takes pride in it, and we too celebrate his mental agility and the audacity of his tricks. They serve an honest end.

In other scenarios, Pedrolino has only a very minimal role as a trickster, or he is not a trickster at all. In *The Betrothed*, he is a rather hapless fellow whose desire to marry comes to naught. There is no trickster. A scenario often has a number of characters who play tricks. In *Flavio, Fake Magician*, Franceschina, and Pedrolino both play tricks, but, as the title indicates, the chief trickster is Flavio. In *Isabella Astrologer*, the primary trickster is female.

## The Primacy of Honour

An analysis of honour in terms of dissimulation does not nearly do justice to this important topic. Honour was the most important thing in anyone's life.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, for virtually everyone, it was more dear than life itself.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, it is highly instructive to regard it in terms of dissimulation because honour was not a measure of actual behaviour but of appearances, of managed self-representation and of public acceptance. It could be no more than a façade.

In the scenarios, the characters present themselves as honourable fathers, obedient children and servants, faithful friends, or as a brave warrior, often to have their honour exposed as only a mask. The appearance of honour that the characters in the scenarios seek is time and again in conflict with reality. Their emotional life threatens to or actually overwhelms the appearance of honour. Cultural historian John Jeffries Martin comments that in real life, 'What seems to have been at stake in the Renaissance was . . . the fundamental question of how the relation between [the interior life and societal ideals] . . . should be understood or, when there was conflict between them, resolved.' He sees this conflict as a recurring if not the dominant theme of early modern theatre.<sup>53</sup>

Pantalone the merchant and Graziano the professional man, the usual patriarchs in Scala's scenarios, each presents himself as upstanding and honourable. But that honour could be quickly destroyed, as in life, not only by disobedient children and servants, but as often by themselves. Scala's patriarchs are given to rage in public at their servants or children, thus exhibiting that they lack the control to which patriarchs pretend. As often, it is lust, unseemly among the elders, that causes them to lose face. In the scenarios, the old patriarchs are frequently shown pursuing lower-class married women or young upper-class single women, even competing with their sons for them. Lust might even render them victims of bed-tricks, resulting in a most humiliating loss of honour.

Characteristically in *commedia dell'arte*, beneath the façade of honour presented by

Pantalone the merchant, lies greed and stinginess. Old Dr Graziano's usual macaronic Latin and foolish talk belied the façade of great learning on which his professional authority was based.<sup>54</sup> Scala's scenarios rarely make explicit either Pantalone's greed and meanness or Graziano's academic pretence. There is ample occasion, however, for these to have been made evident in actors' improvisation: sons financially dependent upon their fathers, as they would have been in real life, frequently resort to financially desperate measures and would have spoken about what necessitated these measures. Pantalone is provided opportunity to engage in unseemly dowry negotiations. Similarly, the actor playing Graziano is afforded occasion to exhibit Dr Graziano's phony learning in speech. We can only surmise that actors took advantage of these opportunities.

The mask of honour falls relative to friendship in a number of the scenarios. In real life, expectations of loyalty in friendship, like those of a son for his father, were extremely high. Diogenes Laërtius (c. 300 AD) asked rhetorically about friendship, 'Who is a friend?' and answered, 'Another I.'<sup>55</sup> Such was also the early modern Italian ideal – which, in the scenarios, friends repeatedly fail to uphold, most frequently by covertly pursuing their best friend's woman.

Scala sometimes portrays the Captain as honourable, but in the main his Captain Spavento, recalling the classical braggart warrior, and – more significantly at the time – the still reviled Italian *condottiere* of earlier centuries, and the Spanish who occupied large parts of Italy, is a warrior whose cowardice and pretence of prowess in war and with women is very evident beneath his swagger, braggadocio, and grandiose language, indicated in the scenarios, and even in his name (*spavento* literally meaning 'fear'). His mask of honour is transparent.

### Spying and Gossip

Spying and gossip were attempts to deal with the dissimulation involved in disguise, lying, tricks, and tricksters, and in the dissimulation of honour. In early modern

Italian cities, the neighbourhood or *vicinanza* in which people lived provided a tightly knit informal grouping linking members of the same parish or neighbours bordering the same piazza,<sup>56</sup> where one was always under the watchful eyes of friends and neighbours. Everyone knew everyone else.

The commonplace Baroque metaphor of the theatre of the world<sup>57</sup> implied not only that everyone was an actor but also that all were spectators. The Spanish Jesuit Baltasar Gracián (1601–58) cautioned that one should 'always behave as though others were watching'.<sup>58</sup> The least word too many might have serious or unanticipated consequences even beyond the circle of conversation in which it was spoken.<sup>59</sup> Keeping up appearances was very important – but it made distrust a central feature of life. No one knew with certainty whether the face was already a mask and the person to whom it belonged no different from an actor in a comedy. In the culture of deception and secrecy the natural was always already artificial.<sup>60</sup> It was prudent, legitimate, and routine, to suspect dissimulation in the words and behaviour of others, whether one had reason to suspect them or not. Such suspicion was essential to everyday interactions.<sup>61</sup> Eavesdropping was a logical corollary of dissimulation (Plate 2).

Not surprisingly, eavesdropping was a major literary motif<sup>62</sup> and it plays an important role in Scala's scenarios. It can serve to interpret actions for the audience and to motivate them for the characters. Flaminia, disguised as a gypsy, in hiding, overhears Pedrolino explain to Orazio how he stole Orazio's father's carpets and sold them. She then comes forth, pretends to read Pedrolino's palm, tells him that he is a thief and refers to the carpets stolen from the house.

In that example, Flaminia's overhearing frames the figures being observed and puts her, along with the audience, in a superior position. In *The Tutor*, Pedrolino, standing aside, overhears the tutor in the house comfort Pantalone's wife, the lady of the house, promising 'to satisfy her needs'. After they exit, Pedrolino observes that the tutor is a duplicitous scoundrel, and that the wife seems of a mind to go along with him. Pedrolino thus



Plate 2. An unidentified *zanni* spies on the interaction between the penniless servant Francisquine and a woman. The legend beneath the picture makes clear that Francisquine is giving the woman (probably the servant Colombine) 'a newly acquired bag of money' while telling her that she 'shouldn't worry about where it came from' (probably through a trick), and that with it he hopes to secure her affections. Crispin de Passe (c. 1564–1637), *Five Scenes from the Italian Comedy: Francisquine* (Thott. 403), Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

serves to reaffirm our suspicions and to await the disclosure of their duplicity.

In many scenarios, someone in the window, usually female, overhears or observes the true nature of things. In *Jealous Isabella*, Isabella, at the window, would seem to occupy this usually superior vantage point and to see behind the façade of her lover Orazio. But the audience understands that Isabella quite mistakenly interprets Orazio's joshing of a maidservant as an earnest sexual proposition. In effect, she mistakes Orazio's mask for his face. Her mistaken inference fuels the scenario's primary action.

Gossip was a potent form of power that could create or destroy the honour of both

men and women.<sup>63</sup> In real life, gossip can be seen as another consequence of the pervasiveness of dissimulation. It was a way of trying to learn what was really the case and, on occasion, of taking advantage of that information or of disseminating misinformation about people, falsely accusing them of dissimulating. Slandorous attributes, like 'adulteress', 'whore', 'dirty whore', or 'poxxy whore', employed both in Scala's scenarios and in life, could lead to the impression that a woman's chastity was but a mask. In the Argument preceding *The Troubled Isabella* we are told that, despite Pantalone's warnings, two noble and rich brothers frequently lingered longingly under Pantalone's daugh-



ter's window. To avoid the inevitable resulting gossip impugning the girl's virtue and thus destroying his honour, Pantalone feels that he has no recourse but to murder the two men.

The appearance of chastity for women was as important as its actuality. In *The Book of the Courtier*, the well-known playwright Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena observes that, in real life, for women the accusation of a dissolute way of life 'means such utter opprobrium and shame that any woman of whom ill is once spoken is disgraced forever, whether what is said be calumny or not'.<sup>64</sup> The further gossip spread, the greater could be the dishonour. And in the *vicinanza* gossip spread quickly.

I have shown how a number of characteristics of *commedia dell'arte* heretofore seen as disparate cohere in the concept of dissimulation. And I have argued that the theatricality of *commedia dell'arte* provided a way for the audience to briefly dissociate from the widespread dissimulation present in early modern Europe and to fantasize about ways of coping with it. In some cases the scenarios actually show ways of managing the stress dissimulation added to everyday life, principally by laughing at it or, more seriously, by disclosing and humiliating its perpetrators. The theatricality of *commedia dell'arte* served to distance it from life but, rather than leading away from life, it provided an insightful perspective. The popularity of *commedia dell'arte* was due in considerable part to its particular representation of life.

### Meta-Dissimulation

In a coda, I wish to explain the kinds of meta-dissimulation on the part of the actors and the audience not present in the scenarios but in their performance and in the very act of their presentation. The performers benefited from what was not disclosed to the audience. The widespread idea that *commedia dell'arte* actors were freely improvising was probably first promulgated by the actors themselves, serving to enhance their reputations and to suggest the excitement of indeterminacy that is characteristic of sport. The idea of free

improvisation intimates that not just the characters but the actors themselves were entangled in risky undertakings and plot complications, the outcomes of which were uncertain.<sup>65</sup>

While *commedia dell'arte* performers did not use scripts, and in that sense were indeed improvising, they did work from scenarios. And the best of these, like Scala's, were hardly skeletal: they were carefully crafted around plots with logical and usually complicated sets of causally related circumstances. They specify repeated motifs, like dissimulation, parallel structuring, rapidly contrasting scenes, sudden changes in emotion, *lazzi* (verbal and visual gags) inherent to the action, and they encapsulate moral debates.

The improvisation or seeming improvisation upon the scenarios was like Castiglione's when he claimed to have written *The Book of the Courtier* 'without effort and almost without any thought about it . . . in a few days'. Castiglione's claim was his own act of *sprezzatura*: the book was a result of twenty years' work.<sup>66</sup> And the actor's study was lifelong. Just as gathering *auctoritates* was an attribute of good writing, and imitation – creating new savours from others' rhetorical flowers in emulation of honey bees – was foundational to good writing and speaking, so it was also to improvisational theatre.<sup>67</sup>

Like all orators of the period, the *commedia dell'arte* actors memorized great amounts of material. Petrarch wrote to Boccaccio that the ancient authors had 'become absorbed into my being and implanted not only in my memory but in the marrow of my bones, and have become one with my mind so that even if I never read them again in my life, they would inhere in me with their roots sunk in the depths of my soul'.<sup>68</sup> So with the actors. The playing of the same role for life and the accumulation of vast stores of material, from both the oral and written traditions, meant that the good actor, like the good writer, could seamlessly accommodate new plots and appear to be freely improvising.

The performers thus engaged in a kind of meta-dissimulation. But also, at least in one case, part of the audience dissimulated as well. The Grand Duke of Florence provided

for himself secret access to a place from which he and his familiars could privately view (probably salacious) *commedia dell'arte* performances while keeping his public reputation intact.<sup>69</sup>

In his prologue to his good friend Scala's publication of scenarios, Francesco Andreini explains that Scala did not provide details about the sets 'because every city contains skilled men who delight in mathematical sciences'. So, he suggests that, at least, ideally, Scala's sets were perspectival.<sup>70</sup> Perspective painting is, of course, a kind of simulation. Each scenario, situated wholly out of doors, specifies the city in which the action supposedly occurs.

Evidence from the written comedy suggests that the visual representation of the city was quite generic,<sup>71</sup> and in performance the name of the city could readily have been changed to that of the city in which the performance was taking place, while, for an added frisson, local colour about the city could have been included in the dialogue. If the place where the action was set was supposedly the city in which the performance took place, the simulation of reality was intensified. A perspectival set and any reference to the locale would have been kinds of meta-dissimulation in which the audience participated.

*Commedia dell'arte* performance, like much theatrical presentation, was itself is a kind of meta-dissimulation, but also one of which the audience was fully aware. The fantastical, exaggerated nature of *commedia dell'arte* performance made especially clear that it was make-believe. At the same time, it was dissimulative to the extent that it was not merely fantasy but was rather, in many respects, representative of reality.

## Notes and References

1. Translation of Seneca's letter to Lucilius by Thomas M. Greene, in Greene, *The Light in Troy*, p. 73–4. For examples of recent poetry using the same culling practice, I refer the reader to Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), or to the practice of 'sampling' in music.

2. Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: a Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; revised edn 2008), p. 272.

3. Flaminio Scala, *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative* (Venice: Pulciani, 1611); ed. Ferruccio Marotti, 2 vols. (Rome: Il Polifilo, 1976).

4. Michel Montaigne (1580), in *Montaigne's Essays and Selected Writings: a Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Donald M. Frame (New York: St Martin's, 1963), p. 285.

5. I attend to the comic scenarios because they are easier to analyze in terms of their relation to social history than are the ten remaining scenarios in a variety of genres that Scala calls respectively 'mixed', 'royal', 'heroic', 'pastoral', and 'tragic'.

6. Richard Andrews in *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala: a Translation and Analysis of 30 Scenarios*, ed. and trans. with commentary by Richard Andrews (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008), p. xlvii.

7. For a discussion of other societal anxieties manifest in the scenarios – for instance, anxieties about famine, the state of marriage, unruly children and servants – see Natalie Crohn Schmitt, *Befriending the Commedia dell'arte of Flaminio Scala: the Comic Scenarios* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

8. Louise George Clubb, 'Italian Renaissance Theatre', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, ed. John Russell Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 107–41 at p. 128–9.

9. Richard Andrews, 'How – and Why – Does One Print Scenarios? Flaminio Scala, 1611', *Italian Studies*, LXI, No. 1 (2006), p. 36–49 at p. 36.

10. Peter Burke, 'Imagining Identity in the Early Modern City', in *Imagining the City, 1: The Art of Urban Living*, ed. Christian Emden, et. al. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 23–38 at p. 36. Katharine Maus, who restricts her focus to England, finds her explanation for so much dissimulation 'in the far-reaching political, religious, and economic realignments that constitute the English Reformation'. See Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), p. 15. The phenomenon extended to Catholic countries as well, however.

11. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 199–200.

12. Louis d'Orléans, *Le Banquet ou après-dînée du conte d'Arete, ou il se traicte de la dissimulation du Roy de Navarre, et des moeurs de ses partisans* (Paris: Arras, 1594), in Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. xiv.

13. Approximately sixty-two editions of *The Book of the Courtier* were published in Italy and at least another sixty-nine in various European languages. See Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 71. Snyder refers to the book as 'the fountain head of all early modern discourse on dissimulation at court', *ibid.*, p. 74.

14. Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528) (Milan: Garzanti, 1981), Book 1, Section 26; trans. as *The Book of the Courtier*, by Charles S. Singleton, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: Anchor, 1959), p. 43.

15. Torquato Accetto, *Della dissimulazione onesta*, ed. Salvatore S. Nigro (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), p. 22, in Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 4. Snyder identifies Accetto (c. 1590–1641) as an obscure secretary and minor poet, and as 'one of the finest Baroque prose stylists in Italian', p. 44, 59.

16. Toon van Houdt, 'Word Histories, and Beyond: Towards a Conceptualization of Fraud and Deceit in Early Modern Times', in *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the*

*Early Modern Period*, ed. Toon van Houdt et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 1–32 at p. 29.

17. Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 33.

18. Day 6, *The Jealous Old Man*, is set in the grounds of a villa near Padua. In fact, the movement in it and the houses seem very similar to that in the urban setting. The ten remaining scenarios are set in exotic or pastoral locations.

19. Peter Burke, 'Imagining Identity in the Early Modern City', p. 25.

20. Alexander Cowan, 'Cities, Towns, and New Forms of Culture,' in John Jeffries Martin, *The Renaissance World* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 101–17 at p. 107.

21. Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 59, citing Paolo Sarpi, *Lettere ai Gallicani*, ed. Boris Ulianich (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1961).

22. Bonifacio Vannozi, *Della suppellettile degli avvertimenti politici, morali, et christiani*, 3 vols. (Bologna: Giovanni Rossi, 1609–1613), cited in Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 58.

23. Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. xiii.

24. Torquato Accetto *Della dissimulazione onesta*, cited in Jon R. Snyder, *ibid.*, 4.

25. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

26. 'Frank sincerity is a quality much extolled among men and pleasing to everyone, while simulation, on the contrary is detested and condemned. Yet for a man's self, simulation is of the two by far the more useful; sincerity tending rather to the interest of others.' Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi* (1483–1540), Series 2, No. 104; with an English translation by Ninian Hill Thompson (New York: Vanni, 1949), p. 201.

27. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and ed. Angelo M. Codevilla (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 66.

28. Flaminio Scala, second prologue to *Il Finto Marito* in Flaminio Scala, *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative*, Vol. I, p. cxvii.

29. Victor Oscar Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama: a Study in Stage Tradition* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1915); M. C. Bradbrook, 'Shakespeare and the Use of Disguise in Elizabethan Drama', *Essays in Criticism*, II (1952), p. 159–68; Robert Weimann, 'Society and the Individual in Shakespeare's Conception of Character', *Shakespeare Survey* 34 (1981), p. 23–9; David Bevington, *Action is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Thomas Hyde, 'Identity and Acting in Elizabethan Tragedy', *Renaissance Drama*, XV (1984), p. 93–114; Edward Burns, *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* (New York: St Martin's, 1990); Lloyd Davis, *Guise and Disguise: Rhetoric and Characterization in the English Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Peter Hyland, *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).

30. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors*, p. 1.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

32. Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 50.

33. Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: a History of Sumptuary Law* (London: Macmillan, 1996), cited without page number in Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors*, p. 163.

34. Like most comedy, Scala's represents non-aristocratic elites, variously referred to as *cittadini* in Venice, *pololo* or *ceto civile* in Naples, *popolo grosso* (people of substance) in Genoa, and more generally as those of the

middling sort (*quelli dell sorte mediocre*). By and large this group included those who enjoyed an independent income; those who worked in the courts of law; and merchants and craftsmen who were especially esteemed, such as goldsmiths, printers, physicians, and architects. See Domenico Sella, *Italy in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1997), p. 69.

35. 'The phenomenon of false pilgrims, like other kinds of false beggars, was well known. Nor was it a complicated matter to dress up as a pilgrim, an occupation which carried with it significant benefits.' Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors*, p. 125, 183. Dentistry, the profession of barbers and itinerant quacks, was conducted on seated patients in public places.

36. 'All the evidence indicates that transvestism in early modern Europe was mostly a female phenomenon. The reasons for the imbalance [between the sexes] seem obvious: by passing for men, women upgraded their status and could enjoy better opportunities.' *Ibid.*, p. 169.

37. Laura Giannetti Ruggiero, 'When Male Characters Pass as Women: Theatrical Play and Social Practice in the Italian Renaissance', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXXVI, No. 3 (2005), p. 743–60 at p. 757.

38. Robert C. Davis, 'The Renaissance Goes Up in Smoke,' in *The Renaissance World*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 398–409 at p. 400.

39. 'Turk' was the general term for those from Muslim lands. Christians enslaved people too and, less frequently, Scala shows this.

40. Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 17. The spiritual and material world continued to seem very close. Guido Ruggiero, 'Witchcraft and Magic', in *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002), p. 475–90 at p. 477.

41. John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Basingstock: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 15, 22.

42. Victor Oscar Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama: a Study in Stage Tradition*, p. 202.

43. Linda Woodbridge, 'Renaissance Bogeymen: the Necessary Monsters of the Age', in *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, p. 444–59 at p. 455.

44. See the more recent of the publications cited in note 29.

45. Richard Andrews, 'Shakespeare and Italian Comedy', in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Paul Hammond (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005), p. 138.

46. Donald A. Beecher, 'Intriguers and Tricksters: the Manifestation of an Archetype in the Comedy of the Renaissance', in *Comparative Critical Approaches to Renaissance Comedy*, ed. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Ottawa, CA: Dovehouse, 1986), p. 53–72 at p. 61.

47. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 133. The speaker is Bernardo Dovizi, called Bibbiena, known for his love of practical jokes.

48. Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 33.

49. Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, trans. Renee Neu Watkins as *The Family in Renaissance Florence* (University of South Carolina Press, 1969), p. 265.

50. Linda Woodbridge, 'Renaissance Bogeymen,' p. 454.

51. Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, p. 149.

52. Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1993), p. 255. Muir cites the dialogue on honour

by Annibale Romei. See also James R. Farr, 'Honour, Law, and Custom in Renaissance Europe', *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, p. 124–38 at p. 127.

53. John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 16.

54. In real life, so great was the frustration with the self-presentation of professions that to this day the term 'deformazione professionale' is used for the way in which people are thought to be 'affected or peculiarly shaped by a profession'. See Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. ix.

55. Cited in Timothy J. Reiss, *Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 360.

56. Edward Muir and Ronald F. E. Weissman, 'Social and Symbolic Places in Renaissance Venice and Florence', in *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, ed. John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 81–103 at p. 88, 90.

57. On the early modern use of theatre as metaphor see Martin Euringer, *Zuschauer des Welttheaters: Lebensrolle, Theatre-metaphor und gelingendes Selbst in der Frühen Neustadt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000).

58. Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation*, p. 97.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 5. Snyder posits that the revival of interest in the ancient pseudo-science of physiognomy in the second half of the sixteenth century reflected the depth of concern over the practice of dissimulation. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

62. Linda Woodbridge, 'Renaissance Bogeymen', p. 453.

63. Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance*, p. 60.

64. Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 138.

65. The importance of the scenario and of the actors' set material continues to be downplayed in popular acting texts such as John Rudlin's. 'In the end, or rather the beginning, the only way to learn to play *commedia* is to go outside, put on a mask, stand on a box and give it a try.' See Rudlin, *The Commedia dell'Arte: a Handbook for Actors* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 48, now in its sixth edition. The vast amount of memorization that was in

fact employed by *commedia dell'arte* performers makes the art, as it was then practised, virtually unteachable today.

66. Singleton, 'Preface', *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 3.

67. This analogy to the work of the bees, originating with Seneca, was itself endlessly imitated. See the translation of Seneca's letter to Lucilius by Thomas M. Greene, in Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, op. cit., p. 73–4. Domenico Bruni, in a dramatic prologue of 1621 (he wrote no scenarios) gives some idea of the extensive preparation involved in seemingly improvised performance. In this prologue, a character, Ricciolina, complains 'Hey Ricciolina, bring me the Lover's part from *Fiammetta*, I want to study it. Pantalone wants the letters of Calmo. The Capitano needs the *Bravure of Captain Spavento*. Zanni needs Bertoldo's *Astuzie*, the *Fugilozio* and the *Novissima Poliantea*, while Franceschina wants a copy of *Celestina* so that she can learn how to play the bawd. The Lover wants the works of Plato . . .' See Bruni, 'Prologo, *Miserie de comici*', reprinted in *La commedia dell'arte: Storia e testo*, 6 vols., ed. Vito Pandolfi (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), IV, p. 60, trans. Tim Fitzpatrick, in Fitzpatrick, *The Relationship of Oral and Literate Performance Process in the Commedia dell'arte: Beyond the Improvisation/Memorisation Divide* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), p. 22.

68. In Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: Norton, 2011), p. 124.

69. Robert Henke, 'Toward Reconstructing the Audiences of the *Commedia dell'Arte*', in *Essays in Theatre*, XV, No. 2 (1997), p. 207–20, at p. 213.

70. Francesco Andreini, 'Cortesi lettori', in Flaminio Scala, *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative*, Vol. I, p. 12; trans. Richard Andrews, in Flaminio Scala, *The Commedia dell'arte of Flaminio Scala*, p. 1–2. Manfred Pfister notes that the Italians glory in what they call 'feigned' materials: simulated marble, cleverly disguised concrete, and a cunning assortment of ashlar, or thin stone slabs applied to resemble weighty blocks. That is, even the material reality is simulated. See Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 219.

71. For instance, Machiavelli, in the prologue to his *La mandragola* (1524), said quite clearly: 'Watch now the stage, as it is set up for you; / this is your Florence; / another time perhaps, Pisa or Rome / don't laugh too hard, or you'll break your jaw.'



