Entertainment for Melancholics: The Public and the Public Stage in Carlo Gozzi's *L'Amore delle tre melerance**

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L'Amore delle tre melerance (*The Love of the Three Oranges*, 1761), the first in a series of ten meta-theatrical fairy-tale plays by Carlo Gozzi (1720–1806), was initially defined by its author as a 'childish fable' ('favola fanciullesca') completely without serious parts ('ignuda affatto di parti serie')¹ and as 'a tale that grandmothers tell to their grandchildren, adapted to theatrical performance' ('il racconto delle nonne a' loro nipotini, ridotta a scenica rappresentazione').² These authorial statements imply that the comedy was merely the dramatisation of an old folk tale, but the description of its avid and passionate public reception ('resoundingly happy transformation, and such an immense diversion for the Public'; 'allegra rivoluzione strepitosa, e una diversione così grande nel Pubblico')³ suggests that the play's admirers were not the victims of a collective hallucination caused by the *favola*'s overwhelming visual effects of marvels and magical transformations. Even its undisguised satire of contemporary theatrical polemics—specifically the on- and offstage controversies between Carlo Goldoni (1707–1793) and Pietro Chiari (1712–1785) on the reform of Italian comic theatre—can hardly explain *L'Amore*'s immense success with its audiences—both erudite and uncultured—which indicates that there was something more at stake in this fairy-tale comedy. Indeed, in his *Ragionamento*

* This essay grew out of a talk delivered in various forms in Berlin, Oxford, Zürich, and Venice. It is most appropriate that this research on dialogic cultural encounters should have developed in the course of dialogue and that a study about audience responses to Gozzi's drama should itself owe a great deal to the constructive responses of the diverse audiences I encountered in these scholarly venues. For helpful comments, criticisms, and suggestions, I wish to thank Kirill Ospovat and Piermario Vescovo, in particular.

1 All quotations from the play are from Carlo Gozzi, *L'Amore delle tre melerance*, in *Fiabe teatrali*, ed. by Alberto Beniscelli (Milan: Garzanti, 2004), p. 6. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

2 Carlo Gozzi, *Memorie inutili*, ed. by Paolo Bosisio and Valentina Garavaglia. 2 vols (Milan: LED, 2006), I. 34, p. 402.

3 Ibid.

ingenuo, e storia sincera delle mie dieci fiabe teatrali (*Ingenuous Disquisition, and Sincere History of My Ten Tales for the Theatre*, 1772), and in blatant contradiction to his previous statements, Gozzi admitted that ‘the choice of titles, and of childish topics, was nothing more than an insidious art’ (*‘la scelta de’ titoli, e degli argomenti fanciulleschi non fu, che un’arte insidiosa’*), thus implying that the play was layered with double meaning.⁴ Similarly, in his retrospective account of the play’s genesis in *Le Memorie inutili* (*The Useless Memoirs*, 1797), the playwright confessed that the comedy’s novelty could not be reduced to its satirical subject matter.⁵ *L’Amore* was thus allegorical in the specifically eighteenth-century sense of allegory: the play was intended to have a second, non-literal significance.

Also symptomatic in this respect is the review by Gasparo Gozzi (1713–1793) of *L’Amore*’s première, in which the critic observed that the playwright ‘had the intention of covering, under an allegorical veil, certain double sentiments and meanings that have a different explanation from what is explicitly declared therein [...]’. These novelties and frivolous matters contain no small amount of doctrine’ (*‘ha avuta l’intenzione di coprire sotto il velo allegorico certi doppi sentimenti, e significati, che hanno una spiegazione diversa dalle cose, che vi sono espresse [...] Quelle novelluzze e bagatelle racchiudono non piccola dottrina’*).⁶ With his customary perspicacity Gasparo here raises a fundamental question: is this fairy-tale drama simply a cocktail of narrative structures characteristic of folk tales and *commedia dell’arte* stock characters mixed with topical allusions to Venetian theatrical warfare? It is significant that Gasparo, while emphasising the novelty of his brother Carlo’s work and seeing in it the rise of a new dramatic genre, shows no interest in the polemical aspect of the play. In any case, neither Gasparo’s questioning of the comedy’s presumed

4 Carlo Gozzi, *‘Ragionamento ingenuo’, e storia sincera dell’origine delle mie dieci fiabe teatrali*, in *Ragionamento ingenuo. Dai ‘preamboli’ all’‘Appendice’: Scritti di teoria teatrale*, ed. by Anna Scannapieco (Venice: Marsilio, 2013), p. 408. Subsequent quotations from the *Ragionamento ingenuo*, as well as from the *Appendice al ‘Ragionamento ingenuo’* and the *Prefazione al ‘Fajel’*, reference page numbers in this edition.

5 Cf. Gozzi, *Memorie inutili*, I, 34, p. 403: *‘la novità d’una tal Fola, ridotta ad azione teatrale, che non lasciava d’essere una parodia arditissima sull’opere del Goldoni, e del Chiari, né vuota di senso allegorico.’*

6 Gasparo Gozzi, *Gazzetta Veneta*, 103 (27 January 1761), unpaginated. On Gasparo Gozzi’s activity as a theatre reporter, see Alberto Beniscelli, *‘I due Gozzi tra critica e pratica teatrale’*, in *Gasparo Gozzi: Il lavoro di un intellettuale nel Settecento veneziano. Atti del convegno (Venezia-Pordenone 4–6 dicembre 1986)*, ed. by Ilaria Crotti and Ricciarda Ricorda (Padua: Antenore, 1989), pp. 263–79; Nicola Mangini, *‘Gasparo Gozzi, cronista teatrale’*, in *Gasparo Gozzi*, ed. by Crotti and Ricorda, pp. 315–29.

simplicity nor Carlo's claims (which occlude as much as they bring to light) seem to have attracted the critical attention of either eighteenth-century or more recent interpreters.⁷ Drawn instead to the manifestly polemical form of the play,⁸ the majority of its critics continue to insist, reductively, that *L'Amore* is little more than a satirical allegory of contemporary Venetian debates on the reform of comic theatre and an undistorted mirror of Gozzi's antagonistic and militant self-posturing.⁹

The polemic against Goldoni's and Chiari's psychologically realistic character comedies and their abandonment of *commedia dell'arte* undeniably occupies a central place in *L'Amore delle tre melarance*. In fact, it was with this very play that Gozzi brought what had already been a vicious assault against his opponents to a new level of intensity and visibility by shifting his attack from pamphlet writings circulating mostly in manuscript form to the highly

7 See *Antologia della critica goldoniana e gozziana*, ed. by Michele Bordin and Anna Scannapieco (Venice: Marsilio, 2009), pp. 249 passim. Two exceptions are Alberto Beniscelli's lucid study of the play's structure in his *La finzione del fiabesco: Studi sul teatro di Carlo Gozzi* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1986), pp. 61–73, and Piernario Vescovo's fine 'Lo specchio e la lente: Il ruolo dello spettatore (1760–62)', in *Gasparo Gozzi: Il lavoro di un intellettuale*, ed. by Crotti and Ricorda, pp. 383–412.

8 It is useful to recall that *L'Amore delle tre melarance* is the only one of Gozzi's plays that was published (both in the Colombani editio princeps of 1772–1774 and in the subsequent Zanardi edition of 1801–1804) not as a fully scripted dramatic text, as was the case for his other nine fairy-tale dramas, but in the unusual form of a 'reflexive analysis' (a term taken from the complete title of the play, *Analisi riflessiva della fiaba 'L'Amore delle tre melarance', Rappresentazione divisa in tre atti*): a dramatic outline with extensive authorial commentary on the comedy's content.

9 The recent discovery of a family archive that sheds new light on Gozzi's compositional process for theatrical and theoretical writings (and the subsequent acquisition of this archive by the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in 2003) has led to a revival of scholarly interest in Gozzi and to the appearance of a number of valuable studies that have highlighted various aspects of the playwright's production. To mention only two of the most recent publications: Javier Gutiérrez Carou, *Metamorfosi drammaturgiche settecentesche: il teatro 'spagnolesco' di Carlo Gozzi* (Venice: lineadacqua, 2011) explores Gozzi's adaptations of Spanish drama from the *Siglo de oro*; Giulietta Bazoli's *L'orditura e la truppa: Le Fiabe di Carlo Gozzi tra scrittoio e palcoscenico* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2012) investigates the playwright's relationship with his comic troupe. While my research is indebted to these and to other recent studies, their tendency is still to see in *L'Amore* an allegory of the theatrical polemic on theatre reform on the one hand and, on the other hand, an allegory of Gozzi's revival of the *commedia* tradition that was intended to counteract his rival Goldoni's abolishment of *commedia* archetypes.

public stage of the playhouse.¹⁰ In this essay, however, I intend to suggest that Gozzi's intentions went far beyond straightforwardly supporting a *commedia dell'arte* comeback at the expense of his antagonists, and that the comedy can in fact be viewed as his artistic manifesto. As such, I would assert that *L'Amore* aptly expresses not only Gozzi's ideas about theatre and spectatorship, but also his socio-political and aesthetic concerns. Although it has been acknowledged by recent scholarship that the play's main sources lie in the fairy-tale and *commedia* traditions,¹¹ I will argue that Gozzi's claim of having undertaken

- 10 By the time *L'Amore* premiered on the stage of the San Samuele theatre on 25 January 1761, the battle between Gozzi, Goldoni, and Chiari, which had begun in the late 1750s, was already at its height. Gozzi's pamphlet writings—such as *Il Teatro comico all'osteria del Pellegrino*, *La tartana degl'influssi per l'anno bisestile 1756* (1757), and *La scrittura contestativa al taglio della Tartana* (1758)—however, could not give the playwright his desired level of public visibility in this polemic affair. In particular, the publication of *Il Teatro comico* was unauthorised by the censors; it therefore remained unpublished until 1805. On these issues, see Fabio Soldini's introduction to Carlo Gozzi, *Commedie in commedia. Le gare teatrali. Le convusioni. La cena mal apparecchiata*, ed. by Fabio Soldini and Piermario Vescovo (Venice: Marsilio, 2011), pp. 9–107 (esp. pp. 44–51); Anna Scannapieco, 'Noterelle gozziane ("in margine" al teatro di Antonio Sacco e di Carlo Gozzi): Aggiuntavi qualche schermaglia', *Studi goldoniani*, 11.3, n.s. (2014), pp. 101–23.
- 11 On folk tales as a principal source of Gozzi's inspiration, see Angelo Fabrizi, 'Carlo Gozzi e la tradizione popolare (a proposito de *L'Amore delle tre melerance*)', *Italianistica*, 7.2 (May–August 1978), pp. 336–45. Fabrizi's analysis of the six Italian versions of *The Love of the Three Oranges* underscores the divergence of Gozzi's play from the literary tradition of fairy tales stemming from Giambattista Basile's collection *Lo Cunto de li cunti* (1634–1636), highlighting instead *L'Amore*'s affinity to Northern Italian folk tales. Vescovo, 'Lo specchio e la lente', and Scannapieco, 'Noterelle gozziane', esp. pp. 112–16, emphasise, on the other hand, Gozzi's heavy reliance on the *commedia* tradition. Both Vescovo and Scannapieco quote from the letters of Abbot Gennaro Patriarchi, a member of the Granelleschi Academy who—in an update to his friend on the novelties of the Venetian stage (and hence on the performance of Gozzi's fairy-tale drama)—wrote on 31 January 1761: 'L'Amore delle tre melerancie è l'antica fiaba, ma tutta allusione come rileverete dalla Gazzetta n° 103. I Comici di S. Samuele ne sono autori, ma vi so dire che alquanti accidenti o episodj le furono appiccicati dal C. Carlo Gozzi per orticcheggiare il Goldoni ed il Chiari.' With Patriarchi's account in mind, Vescovo claims that, although the actors were authors of an improvised dialogue ('a soggetto') in the play, the real creator and director of the performance was the playwright. In contrast, according to Scannapieco (who, interestingly, does not mention Vescovo's 1989 analysis of Patriarchi's letter in her article), Gozzi's tacit renouncement of authorship (the play was indeed staged anonymously) reveals that the actors' contribution to the creative process was more decisive than we have yet acknowledged. None of these three scholars' reconstructions of the play's sources contradict each

much 'effort and study [...] on these ten most unproductive subjects, such that works not unworthy of an Audience resulted' ('la fatica, e lo studio [...] in que' dieci sterilissimi argomenti, perché riuscissero opere non indegne d'un Pubblico')¹² hints at his relentless reflection on and appropriation of other philosophical, political, and aesthetic writings. In my opinion, what calls into question the presumed simplicity of the play and explains its dense cross-references to texts not belonging to improvised comedy *canovacci* or to the fairy-tale tradition, is the fact that Gozzi casts the sharp debates over Italian comic theatre reform in distinctively political terms. A reconstruction of references in *L'Amore delle tre melarance* can thus shed new light on the genesis of Gozzi's theatrical tales and strengthen our grasp of his conception of entertainment. In a larger sense, an analysis of the sources upon which the Venetian playwright drew can also highlight how traditions and ideas come into circulation and become accessible. In other words, such an analysis can reveal how the transmission of different forms of knowledge occurs. In addition, given the play's allegorical association of theatregoers in *la Serenissima*—the Venetian Republic—with Gozzi's protagonist prince, who embodies the political antithesis of a republican citizenry, this essay investigates the role of audiences and their responses in both eighteenth-century theatre practice and critical theory.

1 'A Melancholy of My Own'

In order to understand what is fundamentally at stake in Gozzi's project, it will be productive to delve more deeply into the motif of the melancholic sovereign that catalyses the entire action of the comedy. Prince Tartaglia, the protagonist of the play and an allegory of the Venetian public that audience members themselves would have recognised during performances of *L'Amore*,¹³ suffers from hypochondriac melancholy. This disease affects the mind and digestive organs of the King of Hearts' only son and heir; the illness was brought upon him,

other, nor do scholars dispute the density of the play's cross-references to other writings, as I will argue in the ensuing pages.

12 Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, p. 409.

13 See note 8 on *L'Amore* as an unusual 'reflexive analysis': a sketch of the comedy's content with extensive authorial commentary. Also striking is a fact not yet sufficiently addressed by Gozzi scholarship: though the play was published ten years after its first performance, it gives the impression of having been written down immediately after its première because it describes the public's reaction so vividly.

the audience is told, by two ‘melancholic poets’ (‘poeti [...] malinconic[i]’),¹⁴ whom the author intended (and his audience understood) to be Carlo Goldoni and Pietro Chiari. At war with each other and disguised, respectively, as the magician Celio and the evil fairy Morgana, these two allegorical characters practice magics with political aims. Morgana promotes the cause of Tartaglia’s antagonists (Princess Clarice and First Minister Leandro), who want to kill the prince and take his kingdom for themselves. Celio intends to defeat the plotters’ plans by sending Truffaldino (who represents *commedia dell’arte*) to the court in order to heal the prince’s malady by making him laugh. During feasts and spectacles set up to amuse Tartaglia, fountains of oil and wine are erected in front of the palace with the idea that seeing passers-by slipping and bumping into each other would cheer up the prince, and this indeed occurs: Tartaglia cannot control his laughter when he sees Morgana slip on the oil. Celio and Truffaldino’s plan is thus successful, but their victory is short-lived. Infuriated by Truffaldino’s insults and by Tartaglia’s laughter, Morgana casts a spell that makes the prince fall in love with three magic oranges, allegorically representing the three theatrical genres of comedy, tragedy, and improvised comedy. The quest for these oranges and their eventual acquisition fill the second and the third acts of the comedy. Predictably enough, the play ends with the cured prince’s marriage to a maiden hidden inside one of the enchanted oranges—a figure who represents *commedia dell’arte*. In the overtly allegorical and self-reflexive dimension of the play, therefore, the melancholy prince represents the Venetian audience, which is increasingly bored with the reformed plays of Goldoni and Chiari—plays that consciously suppressed improvised comedy. I will argue that the prince’s quest for the enchanted oranges allegorises both Gozzi’s resuscitation of the *commedia dell’arte* tradition in order to revitalise Italian comic theatre and Tartaglia’s evolution as a spectator from passive observer to critically productive audience member.

Every time Gozzi refers to the sources of his fairy-tale drama, he claims to be faithful to the folk tradition, and Angelo Fabrizio has compellingly demonstrated that *L’Amore* corresponds directly to northern Italian folk tales in several places (including the archetype of the prince who no longer laughs).¹⁵ At the same time, melancholy has its own distinct cultural history. Considered by ancient medical doctrine to be a disorder arising from an imbalance in the body’s four humours, melancholy came to denote a psychological state and even to acquire a certain intellectual prestige, eventually becoming a subject of fascination that inspired numerous artistic works. As Jean Starobinski puts

14 Gozzi, *L’Amore delle tre melarance*, p. 14.

15 Fabrizio, pp. 339–42.

it, melancholy had a long career, and by the time it arrived on the early modern stage and printed page it was at once understood as a symptom of sickness, a form of madness, a feeling of sadness, a marker of acute intelligence, a way of perceiving the world, a mode of self-fashioning, and a type of personality.¹⁶ Jennifer Radden claims that melancholy was a central cultural idea that served to focus, explain, and organise the way people saw the world and one another;¹⁷ indeed there has always been a strong cultural link between melancholy and theatre, and in particular between melancholy and the genre of comedy as a means of curing humoral disease by provoking positive emotions. Nevertheless, although Gozzi's universe is undeniably comic, the initial situation in *L'Amore* is potentially tragic: Tartaglia's condition is contagious and murderous; it is seen as analogous to the diseased society to which it is, simultaneously, a response.¹⁸ Indeed, Truffaldino is summoned to court in order 'to preserve the king, his son, and all those people from the contagious disease of the aforementioned Martellian verses' ('preservare il re, il figliolo, e tutti que' popoli dal morbo degli accennati brevi [in versi martelliani]').¹⁹ Thus, as Socrates hints in Plato's *Symposium* (223c–d), a comic catastrophe that makes us laugh may at any moment take a turn for the worse and have a real, felt impact on individuals and society. What further elicits audience sympathy for Tartaglia and inspires respect for his (almost) heroic stance is that melancholy in *L'Amore* is both political ploy and weapon aimed at ruining the kingdom and killing the prince. We might thus legitimately inquire whence positive connotations of the prince's melancholy come, and why Gozzi incorporates political terminology in his description of physical disease. Indeed, why set a play about public theatre in republican Venice at an imaginary absolutist court characterised by conspiracy and treacherous intrigues?

By the eighteenth century, melancholy was not only identified as a physical and mental disorder; it also had a long-standing positive association with genius, which can be traced back to the (pseudo-)Aristotelian discussion

16 Jean Starobinski, *Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie des origines à 1900* (Bâle: Geigy, 1960).

17 Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. vii.

18 As Adam Kitzes argues, the introduction of melancholy into early modern discourse in the late 1500s took place in the context of renewed interest in the classical theory of the 'body-politic' which 'had posited an analogy between the individual human body and the collective "body" that political organisations consisted of'. Cf. Adam H. Kitzes, *The Politics of Melancholy from Spencer to Milton* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 5.

19 Gozzi, *L'Amore delle tre melarance*, p. 14.

of melancholy in the *Problemata physica*.²⁰ Seeing melancholy as a sign of extraordinary brilliance, Aristotle thus reinterpreted the entire problem of the melancholic disposition in terms of a condition of greatness. His examples of outstanding men afflicted by melancholy—Lysander, Ajax, Bellerophontes, Plato, Socrates, and Empedocles—indeed established the archetype of the melancholy man, who was likely to be a philosopher, poet, artist, or politician.

The authority of the (pseudo-)Aristotelian account that established a positive correlation between melancholy and artistic genius proved irresistible over the centuries, and can thus explain Gozzi's fascination with this elite malady. Indeed, the playwright frequently fashioned himself as melancholy man both in his memoirs²¹ and in his private correspondence (under the pen name *il Solitario*, 'the Solitary') as a member of the Granelleschi Academy. As Fabio Soldini has pointed out, Gozzi's letters abounded with self-representations of a withdrawn intellectual prone to hypochondria—to the point where he actually titled the correspondence the 'Gazzette ipocondriache'.²²

Although the (pseudo-)Aristotelian emphasis on melancholy's intellectual prestige clearly offered an attractive model for Gozzi's self-fashioning (as well as for the portrayal of some melancholic characters in his works),²³ it is not my intent to suggest that this model be regarded as the direct source for the melancholy prince in *L'Amore*. Indeed, Tartaglia's condition is not 'natural' (since

20 Aristotle, *Problems*, trans. by W.S. Hett, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1953–57), II, chapter 30.1, p. 155. Recent scholarship has attributed the discussion of melancholy in this chapter to Theophrastus. For a thorough discussion of Aristotle's account, see Philip van der Eijk, *Medicine and Philosophy in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially chapter 5, 'Aristotle on Melancholy', pp. 139–68; Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (New York: Basic Books), 1964.

21 Cf. Gozzi, *Memorie inutili*, I, 31, p. 356.

22 Cf. Gozzi's letter to his friend Innocenzo Massimo from 18 April 1785, in Gozzi, *Lettere*, ed. by Fabio Soldini (Venice: Marsilio, 2004), p. 153. See also the 12 February 1785 letter to the same correspondent, in which the playwright wrote: 'Sarà vero che il mio male non sia che un'affezione ipocondriaca' (ibid., p. 147). Soldini argues that 'raramente il Gozzi trattiene stati d'animo o giudizi e in prevalenza—s'è visto—è l'ipocondria il sentimento dominante'. Cf. 'Introduzione', in: ibid., p. 8. Gozzi's melancholy, as it emerges in his epistolary exchange with Innocenzo Massimo, is also elegantly analysed by Giuseppe Ortolani, 'Carlo Gozzi ipocondriaco', in *La riforma del teatro nel Settecento e altri scritti*, ed. by Gino Damerini (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1962), pp. 313–31.

23 Examples are many; it is sufficient here to recall the consumptive king ('re tísico') from *I due fratelli nimici*, in Gozzi, *Opere del Conte Carlo Gozzi*, 8 vols (Venice: Colombani, 1773), v, pp. 281–388.

it is caused by external circumstances), nor can the (pseudo-)Aristotelian account (according to which melancholy is a distinctive sign of the select few) explain why the prince is an allegory for the entire Venetian public. Rather, I would argue that, in his staging of Tartaglia's malady, the playwright interwove seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century references to melancholy—and, more specifically, that he drew upon Blaise Pascal's and Jean-Baptiste Dubos's reflections on *ennui* and *divertissement*. The next section will explore these references and their implications.

2 'Un roi sans divertissement'

Aristotle's account continued to intrigue and trouble the Baroque, which was replete with literary, dramatic, and pictorial representations of the melancholic condition. In fact, in the *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1928), Walter Benjamin detects in melancholy a characteristic feature of the Baroque *zeitgeist* and of the German mourning play in particular.²⁴ Benjamin invokes Pascal as a central witness who 'gives voice to [this] feeling of his age',²⁵ making reference to the *Pensées*'s fragment on 'un roi sans divertissement'.²⁶ It is worth quoting this passage at length since, as I will argue in what follows, the connection that Pascal establishes between melancholy and sovereignty constitutes an important precedent for Gozzi's portrayal of his melancholic prince.

La dignité royale n'est-elle pas assez grande d'elle-même, pour celui qui la possède, pour le rendre heureux par la seule vue de ce qu'il est? Faudrait-il le divertir de cette pensée come les gens du commun? Je vois bien que c'est rendre un homme heureux de le divertir de la vue de ses misères domestiques pour remplir toute sa pensée du soin de bien danser, mais

24 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), p. 142.

25 Christopher Braider claims that despite the apparent 'absence' of the Baroque during the 'classical' century in France, between the founding of the Académie Française (1635) and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), 'Pascal's vaunted "classical" austerity incorporates a deeply baroque perspectivism'. Cf. Christopher Braider, *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth: Hercules at the Crossroads* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), p. 145.

26 For an excellent discussion of the function of this reference to Pascal in Benjamin's argument, see Hall Bjørnstad, "'Giving voice to the feeling of his age": Benjamin, Pascal, and the Trauerspiel of the King without Diversion', *Yale French Studies*, 124 (2013), pp. 23–35.

en sera-t-il de même d'un roi, et sera-t-il plus heureux en s'attachant à ses vains amusements qu'à la vue de sa grandeur, et quel objet plus satisfaisant pourrait-on donner à son esprit? Ne serait-ce donc pas faire tort à sa joie d'occuper son âme à penser à ajuster ses pas à la cadence d'un air ou à place adroitement une barre, au lieu de le laisser jouir en repos de la contemplation de la gloire majestueuse qui l'environne? Qu'on en fasse l'épreuve. Qu'on laisse un roi tout seul sans aucune satisfaction des sens, sans aucun soin dans l'esprit, sans compagnies, penser à lui tout à loisir, et l'on verra qu'un roi sans divertissement est un homme plein de misère. Aussi on évite ce la soigneusement et il ne manque jamais d'y avoir auprès des personnes des rois un grand nombre de gens qui veillent à faire succéder le divertissement à leur affaires, et qui observent tout le temps de leur loisir pour leur fournir des plaisirs et des jeux, en sorte qu'il n'y ait point de vide. C'est-à-dire qu'ils sont environnés de personnes qui ont un soin merveilleux de prendre garde que le roi ne soit seul et en état de penser à soi, sachant bien qu'il sera misérable, tout roi qu'il est, s'il y pense. (Laf. 136)²⁷

Is not the royal dignity sufficiently great in itself to make its possessor happy by the mere sight of what he is? Must he be diverted from this thought like ordinary people? I quite see that it makes a man happy to be diverted from thinking about his domestic woes by filling his thoughts with the concern to dance well. But will it be the same with a king, and will he be happier in the pursuit of these idle amusements than in considering his greatness? And what more satisfactory object could be presented to his mind? Would it not spoil his delight to occupy his soul with the thought of how to adjust his steps to the rhythm of a tune, or how to place a bar skilfully, instead of leaving him to enjoy quietly the contemplation of the majestic glory surrounding him? Let us test this. Let us leave a king all alone to reflect on himself at his leisure, without anything to satisfy his senses, without any care in his mind, without company, and we will see that a king without diversion is a man full of miseries. So this is carefully avoided; there never fail to be a great number of people near the retinues of kings, people who see to it who see to it that diversion follows the kings' affairs of state, watching over their leisure to supply them with pleasures and games, so that they have no empty moments. In

27 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* [1670], in *Œuvres complètes (L'Intégrale)*, ed. by Louis Lafuma (Paris: Seuil, 1963). The numbering of fragments from the *Pensées* follows this edition and is given in the text with the abbreviation 'Laf.'

other words, they are surrounded by people who take wonderful care to insure that the king is not alone and able to think about himself knowing well that he will be miserable, though he is king if he does think about it.²⁸

Pascal argues that the peaceful contemplation of royal glory cannot be a satisfying way for a prince to fill his time, nor it is enough to make him happy. Without his affairs of state and diversions, the prince will be miserable, since he will inevitably end up 'penser à soi'. As Pascal goes on to explain, during this self-contemplation the prince realises that his mortal human nature prevails over his immortal body politic, and that he is thus no different from his subjects. It is as if his supreme position among men, instead of making him less human, makes him even more fragile and miserable, 'un homme plein de misère'. The prince's recognition that his greatness only underscores his 'condition faible et mortelle' presents itself through what Benjamin calls melancholy and Pascal terms *ennui*. Thus, by implicitly providing yet another answer to the Aristotelian question as to why rulers are melancholic, Pascal—as Benjamin puts it—makes the sovereign 'the paradigm of the melancholy man'.²⁹

What, however, differentiates the Pascalian discussion of melancholy from the (pseudo-)Aristotelian account—and what makes it relevant for our understanding of Gozzi's association of the prince with the theatre-going public—is that, for Pascal, melancholy is not a rare and distinguishing feature of the chosen few, but a common human condition. Indeed, his example of 'un roi sans divertissement' highlights that man is born into the condition of *ennui*, and that no one can escape from it—not even a prince.³⁰ In the *Pensées*, Pascal in fact maintains that human existence is defined by the impossibility of complete rest: 'man's unhappiness arises from one thing alone: that he cannot remain quietly in his room' (Ari. 38; 'tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos dans une chambre', Laf. 136). For Pascal, *ennui* thus represents the external manifestation of an inner restlessness in human nature as well as man's lack of self-sufficiency.

28 Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. and trans. by Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), p. 42. Unless otherwise noted, English quotations of Pascal are from this edition. Since Ariew's translation follows Philippe Sellier's ordering of the fragments, I give page references to this edition, which hereafter appears in the text with the abbreviation 'Ari.'

29 Benjamin, p. 142.

30 Nicholas Hammond, in 'The Theme of Ennui in Pascal's *Pensées*', *Nottingham French Studies*, 26.2 (1987), pp. 1–16 (p. 1), has pointed out that Pascal most likely derived his definition of man's *ennui* from Michel de Montaigne's 'humeur mélancolique [...] produit par le chagrin et la solitude'. Cf. *Essais* II. 8, in *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), II, p. 370.

Ennui, moreover, is what renders the human condition intolerable, and is the very root of man's *misère*:

Rien n'est si insupportable à l'homme que d'être dans un plein repos, sans passions, sans affaires, sans divertissement, sans application. Il sent alors son néant, son abandon, son insuffisance, sa dépendance, son impuissance, son vide. Incontinent il sortira du fond de son âme l'ennui, la noirceur, la tristesse, le chagrin, le dépit, le désespoir. (Laf. 622)

Nothing is so intolerable for man as to be in complete tranquillity, without passions, without dealings, without diversion, without effort. He then feels his nothingness, isolation, insufficiency, dependence, weakness, emptiness. Immediately there arises from the depth of his soul boredom, gloom, sadness, chagrin, resentment, despair. (Ari. 163)

Man therefore tries to escape the source of his unhappiness and disquiet through *divertissement*, which gives him momentary relief:

La seule chose qui nous console de nos misère est le divertissement, et cependant c'est la plus grande des nos misères. Car c'est qui nous empêche principalement de songer à nous, et qui nous fait perdre insensiblement. Sans cela, nous serions dans l'ennui, et cet ennui nous pousserait à chercher un moyen plus solide d'en sortir. Mais le divertissement nous amuse, et nous fait arriver insensiblement à la mort. (Laf. 414)

The only thing that consoles us for our miseries is diversion, and yet this is the greatest of our miseries. For it is mainly what prevents us from thinking about ourselves, leading us imperceptibly to our ruin. Without it we would be bored, and this boredom would drive us to seek a more solid means of escape. But diversion amuses us and guides us imperceptibly to death. (Ari. 6)

Pascalian *divertissement* is thus a mechanism by which man seeks to avoid both awareness of his unhappiness and meditation on his mortality. Entertainments—such as gambling, billiards, or sporting events—do not bring him happiness in themselves, but they can at least becloud the uneasiness of existence and alleviate its inherent *ennui*.

Two opposing attitudes towards *divertissement* are discernible throughout the fragments of the *Pensées*. On the one hand, its meaning is almost always negative ('la plus grande des nos misères'), for in the logic of Pascal's unfinished apology all human pleasures are essentially corrupt. Since diversions

and pleasures are inseparable from man's fallen state, they only intensify his disquietude in his state of wretchedness without God: 'If man were happy, the less diverted the happier he would be, like the Saints and the God' (Ari. 38; 'Si l'homme était heureux, il le serait d'autant plus qu'il serait moins diverti, comme les saints et Dieu', Laf. 132). At times, however, Pascal invests *divertissement* with positive meaning, since it is what allows men to forget their all-encompassing sense of *ennui* ('sans cela, nous serions dans l'ennui', Laf. 414). The Pascalian notion of diversion thus includes the more literal notion of turning away from one's concerns and of keeping one's mind off worrying topics: 'If our condition were truly happy, we would not need to divert ourselves from thinking about it' (Ari. 22; 'Si notre condition était véritablement heureuse, il ne faudrait pas nous divertir d'y penser', Laf. 70). As Nicholas Hammond has argued, Pascal 'returns to the etymological sense of the *divertir*, that of "action de détourner, de se détourner", a meaning which was hardly apparent in seventeenth-century usage of the term'.³¹

What is also worth noting, before we return to Gozzi's play, is Pascal's choice of theatrical imagery to describe the human condition as well as the distinctively theatrical connotations of *divertissement*.³² The end of human life is perceived by Pascal as the '[tragic] final act, however happy all the rest of the play is' ('le dernier acte est sanglant, quelque belle que soit la comédie en tout le reste', Laf. 165).³³ The theatricality of life off stage is also evident in another Pascalian *pensée*:

L'unique bien des hommes consiste donc à être divertis de penser à leur condition ou par une occupation qui les en détourne ou par quelque passion agréable et nouvelle qui les occupe, ou par le jeu, la chasse, quelque spectacle attachant, et enfin par ce qu'on appelle divertissement. (Laf. 136)³⁴

31 Nicholas Hammond, *Playing with Truth: Language and the Human Condition in Pascal's 'Pensées'* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 109.

32 On theatrical undertones in the Pascalian description of the human condition, see Nicholas Hammond, 'Levez le rideaux': Images of the Theatre in Pascal's *Pensées*, *French Studies*, 47.3 (July 1993), pp. 276–87 (p. 280); Henry Philips, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 152.

33 I follow W.F. Trotter's translation here—*Thoughts* (New York: F. Collier & Son, 1910), p. 79—whereas Ariew translates the famous fragment quite literally as 'the final act is bloody' (Ari. 52).

34 For an insightful discussion of the medieval theological roots of the metaphor of life as performance in relation to Walter Raleigh, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and his Roles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 31–56.

The unique good of men thus consists in being diverted from thinking about their condition either by an activity that diverts them or by some pleasant and new passion that occupies them, or by a game, the hunt, some appealing spectacle, and finally by what we call entertainment.

It is striking to find a reflection on melancholy and entertainment that runs along similar lines in Gozzi's writings that reconstruct the genealogy of his dramatic works. A passage from *Le Memorie inutili* is particularly significant. In it, the playwright recalls his public reading of *L'Amore* for the Accademia di Granelleschi before submitting the 'script' to Antonio Sacchi's comic troupe. Describing his discussion with the Granelleschi members (who advised him against staging the play, predicting its instant failure and challenging the playwright's daring theatrical innovation), *il Solitario* recounts how he rejected their criticism by arguing that

*conveniva assalire l'intero Pubblico sul Teatro per cagionare una scossa di diversione. Ch'io donava, e non vendeva il mio tentativo di nobile vendetta all'Accademica vilipesa a torto, e che le loro Signorie intelligentissime di coltura, d'esattezza, e di buoni libri, conoscevano molto male il genere umano, e i nostri simili.*³⁵

It was worth assaulting the entire Audience in the Theatre in order to cause a jolt of diversion. Because I gave, and did not wrongly sell my attempt at noble revenge against the despised Academics, and because their Signorias, most intelligent with regard to culture, precision, and good books, very poorly comprehended humankind, and ours as well.

Two aspects are important to emphasise here. First, Gozzi's defence of his comedy is grounded neither on the efficacy of the allegorical fairy-tale formula for the purposes of anti-Goldoni and anti-Chiari revolt nor on the necessity of theatre reform. Rather, the playwright refers to his knowledge of humankind, closely mirroring Pascalian reflections on the 'condition de l'homme'. Second, Gozzi invests the diversionary effect ('scossa di diversione', or 'jolt of diversion') that he intends to trigger among the play's spectators with the Pascalian etymological force of a *divertissement* capable of turning the audience's attention away from its unpleasant concerns. This conception of theatrical entertainment as an activity designed to provide relief from the tediousness of life is intensified in the *Prefazione al 'Fajel'*, in which Gozzi claims that

35 Gozzi, *Memorie inutili*, I. 34, p. 403; italics are mine.

L'umanità per lo più oppressa dalle amare circostanze, e dagli acerbi pensieri, concorre alla Commedia per trarne qualche sollievo. Nella Tragedia ella lo riceve insensibilmente dal vedere i Principi soggetti alle passioni, alle debolezze, alle afflizioni, ed a tutte quelle miserie che eguagliano la umanità.³⁶

Humankind, burdened with sad circumstances and bitter thoughts, comes to the Comedy to get some relief. In Tragedy it gets [relief] from watching the princes be subjected to passions, weakness, afflictions, and all these miseries that are the same for all humankind.

What puts the theatregoers 'on the trail of diversions' ('in traccia di divertimenti') and makes them 'eager for new productions' ('bramos[i] di produzioni novelle'),³⁷ therefore, is less their hedonistic impulses or insatiable longing for novelty (which is understandable, considering the flooded Venetian theatre market) than the audience's need to be distracted from the many anxieties of daily life: 'amare circostanze, e acerbi pensieri' and 'tutte quelle miserie che eguagliano la umanità'.

Gozzi's tragic vision of the human condition, which lurks behind his ruminations on theatre, thus directly evokes Pascalian *divertissement* as a means by which man can distract himself from 'a thousand mishaps, which cause inevitable distress' ('mille accidents, qui font les afflictions inévitables', Laf. 132). The playwright's assertion appears even more striking since it is, as Scannapieco has pointed out, anomalous in the context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dramatic criticism, 'which tended to evoke the deterrent value of theatre as compared to other (dissolute) diversions, or its ethico-cognitive function'.³⁸ The anomalous nature of Gozzi's arguments supports the notion that his position shared a deep affinity with Pascalian theories of *ennui* and *divertissement*. If, as Gasparo Gozzi observed, the play stemmed from the idea of a game ('That King of Cups, those Magicians, those confusing muddles, those melancholic and exhilarating moments express the moves of the game and the enchantment of fortune that is at times good, at times the contrary, in [the game]'; 'Que' Re di Coppe, que' Maghi, quegli scompigli, quelle malinconie, quelle allegrezze dinotano le vicende del giuoco, e l'incantesimo or buono, ora con-

36 Gozzi, *Prefazione al 'Fajel'*, p. 182.

37 Ibid., p. 178.

38 Cf. Scannapieco's commentary on the passage in question from *Prefazione al 'Fajel'*, in Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, p. 228.

trario delle fortuna in esso'³⁹), it can be argued that the playwright's portrayal of the entire world in terms of mere card-playing represents a dramatisation of the Pascalian concept of *divertissement*. Indeed, far from simply mirroring the Venetian obsession with gambling (as has been proposed by DiGaetani, among other scholars⁴⁰), this idea is clearly traceable back to Pascal, who saw *divertissement* as encapsulating 'not only the pursuit of particular pleasures such as gambling and hunting, but a whole way of life'.⁴¹

Gozzi's affinities with Pascal are so suggestive that it does not seem unreasonable to argue that, although the playwright was employing the fairy tale as his mode of storytelling, in his reflections on the function of theatrical entertainment he was actually looking to Pascal for insight. Of course, parallels and points of resemblance between two authors, however significant, do not constitute proof of influence. Considering that Gozzi never explicitly referred to the French philosopher in any of his writings nor kept any volume of Pascal's works in his library,⁴² the question remains as to whether Gozzi actually read the *Pensées*.⁴³ Nonetheless, it has recently been demonstrated that the

39 Gasparo Gozzi, *Gazzetta Veneta*, 103 (27 January 1761), unpaginated.

40 John Louis DiGaetani, *Carlo Gozzi: A Life in the 18th Century Venetian Theatre, an Afterlife in Opera* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000), p. 110.

41 D.C. Pott, 'Pascal's Contemporaries and "Le Divertissement"', *Modern Language Review*, 57.1 (January 1962), pp. 31–40 (p. 31).

42 Cf. the inventory of Gozzi's library, which is conserved in the State Archive of Venice (ASVE), Notarile, Atti, busta 13191, notaio Raffaele Todeschini (25 aprile 1792–30 aprile 1806), carte 1925^v–1934^r. I wish to thank Giulietta Bazoli for making available to me a digital reproduction of this document, which was found by Marta Vanore. The absence of Pascal's works in Gozzi's library does not constitute a decisive proof that Pascal had no influence on the Venetian playwright: Gozzi did not possess any of Goldoni's plays and yet quoted extensively from them, often indicating the page of reference. The inventory is from the last years of the dramatist's life, and it would be worth investigating the possibility that his complete library had been dispersed or moved to his country house or to the libraries of his parents at an earlier date.

43 Another issue that must be raised is what edition of Pascal was known to eighteenth-century readers. As Marta Vamos argues, confusion reigned in the first Port-Royal edition of the *Pensées*, and Pascal's original work wasn't restored by modern scholarship until well into the nineteenth century: cf. 'The Forgotten Book of Pascal's *Pensées*', *Romanic Review*, 62.4 (1971), pp. 262–69. If Gozzi was as familiar with the *Pensées* as he appears to have been, he must have read it in the Port-Royal version, as this was the only edition available to readers in Europe. (It was reprinted about thirty times before the 1844 Faugère edition.) As Vamos notes, the Port-Royal *Pensées* was an incomplete and distorted version of what we read under the same name today since it suppressed many fragments, altered the author's style and the ordering of the material, and even violated Pascal's thought (p. 265).

playwright was familiar with (and, in many respects, influenced by) the 1719 *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* by Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742).⁴⁴ This treatise, authored by a learned diplomat, historian, and member of the Académie Française, was one of the most widely circulated works of the eighteenth century;⁴⁵ it marked a turning point in both theatre and art criticism by inaugurating proto-reception theory and modern aesthetics. What is crucial to emphasise here is that the underlying principle of Dubos's entire aesthetic theory in the *Réflexions critiques* is, again, that of Pascalian *ennui* and the need to escape it.⁴⁶ Dubos, however, secularises the Pascalian concept, moving the debate from knowledge of God to the role of literature and the visual arts in providing man with an escape from tedium.⁴⁷ In fact, Dubos

The group of *pensées* dealing with *divertissement* and *ennui* discussed above, however, were present and unaltered in the Port-Royal edition.

- 44 Jean-Baptiste Dubos (sometimes spelled Du Bos), *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 2 vols (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1719). For a discussion of the relationships between Dubos's aesthetic arguments and Gozzi's theoretical writings on theatre, see Anna Scannapieco, 'Il pubblico teatrale nella riflessione teorica e nella prassi drammaturgica di Carlo Gozzi', in *Autori, lettori e mercato nella modernità letteraria*, ed. by Alberto Zava, Illaria Crotti, Enza Del Tedesco, Ricciarda Ricorda (Pisa: ETS, 2011), pp. 100–11, and her introduction to Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, pp. 9–92 (esp. p. 44).
- 45 Cf. D.G. Charton, 'Jean-Baptiste Du Bos and Eighteenth-Century Sensibility', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 266 (1989), pp. 151–62 (p. 152): 'The publication of seven editions in French in its first half-century down to 1770, plus three reprinted editions, and translations into Dutch, English and German, serve to illustrate Lombard's claim that the author was "un initiateur de la pensée moderne" who exercised significant influence on numerous readers, both French and foreign.'
- 46 On the sources of the *Réflexions critiques* and the relationship between Dubos's and Pascal's concept of *ennui*, see Alfred Lombard, *L'Abbé Du Bos, un initiateur de la pensée moderne (1670–1742)* (Paris: Hachette, 1913); Salvatore Tedesco, 'Du Bos fra retorica e antropologia: Huarte de San Juan e François Lamy', in *Jean-Baptiste Du Bos e l'estetica dello spettatore*, ed. by Luigi Russo (Palermo: Centro internazionale studi di estetica, 2005), pp. 45–54 (esp. pp. 45–46).
- 47 On Dubos's secularisation of the epistemological and critical tradition that preceded him, see Ann T. Delehanty, 'Dubos and the Faculty of Sentiment', in *Literary Knowing in Neoclassical France: From Poetics to Aesthetics* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013), pp. 145–68. Cf. also Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Rule of Reason and the Ruses of the Heart: A Philosophical Dictionary of Classical French Criticism, Critics and Aesthetic Ideas* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970), pp. 20–21: 'Du Bos's theory of art resolves the problem posed by Pascal [...]. The hedonistic theory of art turns into a therapeutic of the distressed soul of man in his fallen state, and Du Bos and others formulate, in effect, the classical solution to man's condition. An ideal solution to the problem of the human condition is reached when the passions and the imagination, that

begins his treatise by claiming that *ennui*, also envisaged here as a languid state of indolence or mental inactivity, is one of the most unpleasant aspects of the human condition:

L'ame a ses besoins comme le corps; & l'un des plus grands besoins de l'homme, est celui d'avoir l'esprit occupé. L'ennui qui suit bientôt l'inaction de l'ame, est un mal si douloureux pour l'homme, qu'il entreprend souvent les travaux les plus pénibles, afin de s'épargner la peine d'en être tourmenté.⁴⁸

The soul hath its wants no less than the body; and one of the greatest wants of man is to have his mind incessantly occupied. The heaviness which quickly attends the inactivity of the mind, is a situation so very disagreeable to man, that he frequently chooses to expose himself to the most painful exercises, rather than be troubled with it.⁴⁹

Dubos maintains that arousal of the passions is one of the most effective means of dispelling boredom. Arguing that any engaging spectacle—from gladiatorial combat and public executions to less frightful and bloody diversions, such as gambling or watching tragedies on stage—might prove pleasant to spectators to the extent that it diverts them from *ennui*, Dubos goes on to connect the importance of the arts with their capacity to provide pleasant relief from the tedium of everyday life: 'those imaginary passions which poetry and painting raise artificially within us, by means of their imitations, satisfy that natural want we have of being employed' (I. 5, p. 22; 'ces phantômes de passions que la Poésie & la Peinture sçavent exciter, en nous émouvant par les imitations qu'elles nous présentent, satisfont au besoin où nous sommes d'être occupés', I. 3, p. 27). According to the French aesthetician, the passions to which works of art give rise are able to keep men occupied and do so without causing suffering since they are only superficial 'phantômes de passions'

source of error, are kept occupied without harm. [...] The Abbé Du Bos' solution may not be the Christian solution to the problem of man's estate, but it may be significant that the greater degree of secularisation of his time also corresponded to a greater interest in the arts.'

48 Dubos, *Réflexions critiques*, I. 1, p. 6. All references to Dubos's text are by volume, chapter, and page number in the seventh edition (Paris, 1770; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1967). Dubos's orthography and punctuation have been retained.

49 Dubos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, trans. by T. Nugent, 2 vols (London: John Nourse, 1748), I, p. 5.

with meagre strength and of short duration.⁵⁰ Dubos consequently defines the excellence of an artwork in relation to its capacity to impact the beholder and to the resulting effect, namely art's capacity to please and excite the passions, exposing viewers to virtuous models that might help them know themselves better and encourage them to emulate good behaviours.

When Gozzi represented the Venetian audience's disappointment with the dramatic works of Goldoni and Chiari through the allegory of Tartaglia's melancholy, he was articulating the inspiration he drew from Dubos's further elaboration of the Pascalian themes of *ennui* and *divertissement*.⁵¹ As did Dubos, Gozzi thus advocated for a form of theatre that enhances the spectator's sensory pleasure and satisfies a very human need to be diverted from melancholy. Indeed, he claimed that,

Collo sguardo sull'Italia, e specialmente sopra a Venezia, di cui mi vanto buon Cittadino; ho ordite, e composte forse venti rappresentazioni teatrali di nuovo e bizzarro aspetto, ed ho avuto l'ardire di farle esporre sulle nostre scene *coll'unico desiderio di giovare, e di divertire*.

Il vedere i grandi che reggono, i Cittadini colti, e il minuto popolo d'un Pubblico ch'io amo, *occupati, ed attenti in vari apparecchi d'innesti*, ch'io mi sono ingegnato a procurare che sieno cangianti, e proporzionati a tutti quegli intelletti differenti che compongono un Uditorio, fu il compenso non meritato de' miei spettacoli teatrali, quali si sieno.⁵²

With my eye upon Italy, and especially upon Venice (of which I pride myself on being a good Citizen), I formulated and composed about twenty plays of a new and bizarre kind, and I had the courage to have them performed on our stages *with the sole desire to please and to entertain*.

To see the great who rule, the cultured Citizens, and the small [lower-class] people of a Public that I love, *absorbed in, and attentive to various interpretive devices* that I designed to provoke in order that they be changeable and proportional to all those different minds of which an Audience is composed, was the undeserved compensation of my theatrical spectacles, such as they are.

50 Dubos, *Réflexions critiques*, I. 3, p. 28: 'Cette impression superficielle faite par une imitation, disparoit sans avoir des suites durables, comme en auroit une impression faite par l'objet même que le Peintre ou le Poëte a imité'.

51 If Gozzi did not in fact read Dubos directly, he was at the very least reusing ideas in circulation in Venice that originated with Dubos and his followers.

52 Gozzi, *Prefazione al 'Fajel'*, pp. 186–87. Italics are mine.

The fact that Gozzi echoes Dubos's ruminations on the role of artwork-as-*divertissement* allows us to see more clearly the value that the playwright ascribes to theatrical entertainment. If theatre, according to Gozzi's own definition, is an 'enclosure of diversion' ('recinto di divertimento'),⁵³ it is not because watching a play is a vain and mindless leisure activity. Instead, it is because the theatre allows its audience to be temporary relieved of the tedium of humanity's earth-bound existence.

3 'Una artificiosa difficile illusione'⁵⁴

Gozzi's critical engagement with Pascal's and Dubos's ideas elucidates why, for the playwright, the most important aspect of theatre was the entertainment of the audience. Why, then, did Venetian cultural life—so vibrant and intense that it rendered the entire society 'sick of pleasures' ('nauseata de' piaceri')⁵⁵—and the various forms of theatre available—ranging from character comedies to translations of French *dramme bourgeois* and *comédies larmoyantes*—remain incapable of diverting spectators from their *ennui*? Why, specifically, did Goldoni and Chiari's realistic plays fail to create a dramatic illusion that would emotionally engage spectators—fail, indeed, to the extent that they became the target of Gozzi's parody in *L'Amore*? These two queries raise yet another set of questions: How and why did Gozzi come to conceive his 'new, enchanting, and strongly passionate genres' ('nuovi generi di mirabile, e di forte passione')⁵⁶ precisely when Italian dramatists were searching for a model that would revitalise Italian theatre in French dramatic practice, unable as this practice was to do justice to the onstage manifestation of magic and the marvellous? (Indeed, magic and the *merveilleux* were deemed inappropriate for onstage representation by French Enlightenment dramatists and critics in particular, who dismissed fantastic spectacles as disruptive of the illusion created by

53 For Gozzi's definition of theatre as a 'recinto di divertimento' or 'recinto di passatempo', see especially the *Prefazione al 'Fajel'*, p. 184: 'Lunge dal credere i Teatri una cattedra, io non ho mai potuto giudicarli più che recinti, ne' quali delle adunanze vanno in traccia di spassarsi per il corso di tre ore circa; e senza paragonare le colte colle incolte opere di Teatro, anzi separandone il genere; ho creduto a proposito quelle che hanno intrattenuto un Pubblico senza pregiudicarlo nel buon costume, recando dell'utilità a' Comici.'

54 Carlo Gozzi, *Processo a difesa, ad offesa della Commedia*, in *Amore assottiglia il cervello, Opere edite ed inedite*, 14 vols (Venice: Zanardi, 1801–1804), XIII, p. 154.

55 Ibid.

56 Gozzi, *Appendice al 'Ragionamento ingenuo'*, p. 531.

theatre.⁵⁷) In other words, what—in enlightened eighteenth-century Venice, which was dominated by mistrust of the irrational and by abandonment of the world of illusions—made Gozzi convinced that ‘the passion of the wondrous [...] will always be the queen of all human passions’ (‘la passione del mirabile [...] sarà sempre la regina di tutte le umane passioni’)?⁵⁸

If Tartaglia’s melancholy represents Gozzi’s and the audience’s discontent with Goldoni’s and Chiari’s plays, it could be useful to revisit the fundamental points of disagreement between Gozzi and his adversaries. Since Gozzi considered Chiari to be merely the Plagiarist (*il Saccheggiato*), a blind and talentless imitator of Goldoni, in what follows I will primarily examine the aesthetic grounds of the quarrel between Gozzi and Goldoni. These more general considerations of Gozzi’s poetics will bring us closer to answering the question I raised at the outset: why is the (republican) audience’s emotional response to art translated, in *L’Amore*, into the sovereignty of a prince?

Goldoni notoriously claimed—in the preface to the Bettinelli edition of his works (1750), the most well-known exposition of his poetics of drama—that ‘what is represented in Theatre should not be other than a copy of what happens in the world’ (‘quanto si rappresenta sul Teatro non deve essere se non la copia di quanto accade nel Mondo’).⁵⁹ He also made it plain that ‘over the

57 Friedrich Melchior Grimm, for instance, claimed that ‘le poët dramatique et le peintre ne doivent me représenter que des objects dont le modèle existe dans la nature’, and required that enchantment be employed only to depict sentiment. See his *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* (1753–1793) (Paris: Garnier, 1877; Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1968), II, 15 avril 1754, p. 345). Voltaire, too, considered Corneille’s use of magic in his *Médée* inappropriate because it interfered both with the play’s verisimilitude and with its dramatic tension. Magic, in Voltaire’s view, belonged exclusively to the genre of opera. In Diderot’s opinion, ‘the world of magic can amuse infants’, but ‘reason is pleased only by the real world’: *Diderot’s Writings on the Theatre*, ed. by F.C. Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 51. Illusion, as theorised by eighteenth-century critics, required that the spectator perceive artistic representation as reality. For this generation of critics, as Marian Hobson observes, ‘theatrical reality must not obtrude. [...] Nothing must refer away from the subject, from what is seen: there must be no awareness that what is seen is appearance, no flickering between the reality of the theatre and the subject which is represented.’ Cf. *The Object of Art: the Theory of Illusion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 144.

58 Gozzi, *Prefazione a Zeim, Re de’ genj*, in *Opere del Conte Carlo Gozzi*, 8 vols (Venice: Colombani, 1772), III, p. 131.

59 Carlo Goldoni, ‘Autore a chi legge’, in *Polemiche editoriali. Prefazioni e polemiche*, ed. by Roberta Turchi (Venice: Marsilio, 2009), I, p. 100. Goldoni’s famous description of his poetics paraphrases René Rapin’s *Réflexions sur la Poétique d’Aristote et sur les ouvrages des Poètes anciens et modernes*. See Maria Grazia Accorsi, ‘La prefazione di Goldoni all’edizione

marvellous, the simple and natural wins in the heart of man' ('sopra il meraviglioso, la vince nel cuor dell'uomo il semplice e naturale').⁶⁰ From Goldoni's standpoint, theatre is continuous with life, and its heroes have the capacity to reflect their times. In his *Teatro comico* (*The Comic Theatre*, 1750)—a comedy that he defined as 'poetics in action' ('poétique mise en action') and designed as a model for Italian theatre reform—Goldoni claimed that comedy should have a 'familiar, natural, and easy style, in order not to depart from the verisimilar' ('stile familiare, naturale e facile, per non distaccarsi dal verisimile').⁶¹ He therefore staged such an accurate representation of domestic life that the audience was convinced it was watching real events affecting real people during the performance. The aesthetic illusion the playwright sought to produce required an error of perception: he hoped his spectators were deceived, if only for a moment, into mistaking art for reality.

It is this conception of the role of dramatic illusion that constitutes the fundamental point of disagreement between Gozzi and Goldoni. According to the former, the latter was oriented wrongly from the beginning because his plays constituted a facsimile of life on stage:

Espose sul Teatro tutte quelle verità che gli si pararono dinanzi, ricopiate materialmente, e trivialmente e non imitate dalla natura, né coll'eleganza necessaria ad uno Scrittore.

Non seppe, o non volle separare le verità che si devono, da quelle che non si devono porre in vista sopra un Teatro; ma si è regolato con quel solo principio che la verità piace sempre.⁶²

Bettinelli e il razionalismo arcadico: Rapin, D'Aubignac, Muratori', in *Scena e lettura: Problemi di scrittura e recitazione dei testi teatrali* (Modena: Mucchi, 2002), pp. 141–200, on how Rapin's and D'Aubignac's treatises served as the principal points of reference for Goldoni's formulation of dramatic principles. According to Accorsi, Goldoni continues to refer to the terms of neoclassical poetics (*bienséance, vraisemblance*, order, nature) in all his later statements about the poetics of theatre, clearly positioning himself in the context of French rationalist aesthetic thought.

60 Goldoni, 'Autore a chi legge', p. 95.

61 Carlo Goldoni, *Teatro comico* (II. 2), in *Tutte le opere*, ed. by Giuseppe Ortolani, 14 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1935–1956), II (1936), p. 1068.

62 Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, p. 398. Gozzi also criticised Goldoni on ideological grounds, claiming that his plays constituted a moral threat to Venetian society and undermined traditional values.

[Goldoni] presented on stage all the truths that he saw in front of him, copied out in a rough and trivial manner and imitated neither from nature, nor with the elegance necessary for a Writer.

He did not know, or did not want, to separate the truths that one must bring onto the stage from those that one must not; but he ruled himself with the sole principle that the truth always pleases.

If Goldoni was convinced that only a dramatic work that holds a mirror up to life and nature can please its spectators, Gozzi—drawing on Pascalian *divertissement*—believed instead that theatre should provide a type of illusion that allows theatregoers to avoid seeing reality as it is. This is why, for Gozzi, it is important that the playwright represent his characters and their adventures on stage as overtly fictitious, and that the action take place in a world of pure fantasy. If the human condition is indeed miserable, a universe visibly distinct from the one actually inhabited by the play's spectators will seem to them more interesting, more believable, and more intoxicating than their own reality. From this perspective, the setting of an imaginary realm ('regno immaginario') populated by princes and kings is not an expression of Gozzi's reactionary and aristocratic ideology. Rather, it is indicative of his perceived need to create an unambiguous dissimilarity between the action on stage and the world from which that action draws its inspiration.

Gozzi was not unconditionally opposed to Goldoni's imitation of the real world, however. Instead, he reacted against the trivial, graceless, and thoughtless copying of nature ('ricopiate materialmente, e trivialmente e non imitate dalla natura'):

Moltissime delle sue Commedie non sono, che un ammasso di scene, le quali contengono delle verità, ma delle verità tanto vili, goffe, e fangose, che, quantunque abbiano divertito anche me medesimo animate dagli attori, non seppi giammai accomodare nella mia mente, che uno Scrittore dovesse umiliarsi a ricopiarle nelle più basse pozzanghere del volgo, né come potesse aver l'ardire d'innalzarle alla decorazione d'un Teatro, e soprattutto come potesse aver fronte di porle alle stampe per esemplari delle vere pidoccherie.⁶³

Many of [Goldoni's] comedies are no more than an agglomeration of scenes that contain truths, but truths so base, clumsy, and sloppy, that, however much they might have entertained even me [when] brought to

63 Ibid., p. 399.

life by actors, I don't remotely know how to make space in my mind for the notion that a Writer must humiliate himself by copying truths from the lowest, most vulgar mud puddles, nor how he could dare raise them up to ornament a Theatre, and above all how he could have the courage to place them with publishers as specimens of real garbage.

Gozzi thus advocates a theatre that can provide its audience with more than just a perfect facsimile of the mundane world. As follows from his synthetic description of what his theatrical tales present—namely 'a strong passion, a serious facetiousness, a clear allegory, a reasoned critique, morality' ('una forte passione, un seriofaceto, una chiara allegoria, una critica ragionata, la morale')⁶⁴—he argues for a dramatic form that offers the true and the marvelous in a combination that both pleases spectators (through its dramatic marvels) and shows them something true to nature (through its realism).

According to Gozzi, Goldoni's approach was also wrong because verisimilar drama could not emotionally engage the audience: '[theatrical subject matter], reduced to truth and to nature, was pleasing, but it was pleasing [precisely] from the birth of that boredom that is natural in men, especially in matters of delight' ('[la materia teatrale] ridotta questa al vero, e alla natura piacque, ma piacque sino al nascere di quella noia ch'è naturale negli uomini, specialmente nelle cose di voluttà').⁶⁵ And, furthermore, 'boredom among the people was a consequence of these restrictive rules, and many Playwrights, [who] persisted in [following] these rules, filled their works with great absurdities that [writers for theatre] would not have filled [their works] with, if it had not been permitted' ('la noia ne' popoli fu una conseguenza di queste ristrette regole, e molti Scrittori teatrali, ostinatisi in queste, empierono le opere di maggiori assurdi che non le avrieno empiute, se ne fossero dispensati').⁶⁶

In Gozzi's quarrel with Goldoni's adherence to verisimilitude, the imprint of Dubos's aesthetic arguments (as presented in the *Réflexions critiques*) is discernible. In fact, in addition to its concern with the centrality of the emotional appeal of the arts, the treatise also marked a turning point in debates on the problem of *vraisemblance*. Reacting against neoclassical doctrine, Dubos was

64 Gozzi, *Prefazione al 'Fajel'*, p. 189.

65 Gozzi, *Appendice al 'Ragionamento ingenuo'*, p. 531.

66 Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, pp. 391–92. In the passage immediately preceding, Gozzi claimed: 'Le regole lasciateci da' rigidi maestri antichi sull'opere di Teatro, particolarmente nell'unità della scena, e nel giro di ventiquattrore di tempo, non furono che per vincolare i talenti a comporre un'opera, che la probabilità, e l'unione delle parti facesse comparire un idoletto di perfetta armonia, proporzione, e interezza' (p. 391).

the first to disconnect the pleasure produced by dramatic illusion from the imitation of reality, remaining convinced that the theatre's engendering of pleasure in the spectator was not triggered by the illusion of reality:

Des personnes d'esprit ont cru que l'illusion était la première cause du plaisir que nous donnent les spectacles & les tableaux. Suivant leur sentiment, la représentation du *Cid* ne nous donne tant de plaisir que par l'illusion qu'elle nous fait. Les vers du grand Corneille, l'appareil de la Scène et la déclamation des Acteurs nous en imposent assez pour nous faire croire, qu'au lieu d'assister à la représentation de l'événement, nous assistons à l'événement même, & que nous voyons réellement l'action, et non pas une imitation. Cette opinion me paraît insoutenable. (I. 43, p. 451).⁶⁷

'Tis the opinion of several men of sense, that the pleasure we receive from spectacles and pictures is merely the effect of illusion. Pursuant to their way of thinking, the representation of the *Cid* affords us so much pleasure merely thro' the illusion that deceives us. The verses of the great Corneille, the apparatus of the scenes, and the declamation of the actors, impose upon us so as to make us believe that instead of assisting at the representation of the event, we are present at the event itself, and that we really see the action, and not the imitation. But this opinion seems to me to be quite unwarrantable. (I. 43, p. 349)

67 Dubos argues that complete illusion in the mind of the spectator cannot take place because he or she, unlike Pridamant in Corneille's *L'illusion comique*, does not arrive at the theatre predisposed to believe that what s/he sees is real. Anticipating the central concern of Ernst H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* (1960) about the role of convention in our response to art, Dubos goes on to explain that the spectator knows that s/he is going to see a play because the poster says so: 'L'affiche ne nous a promis qu'une imitation ou des copies de Chimène & de Phèdre. Nous arrivons au théâtre, préparés à voir ce que nous y voyons; & nous y avons perpétuellement cent choses sous les yeux, lesquelles d'instant en instant nous font souvenir du lieu où nous sommes, & de ce que nous sommes' (I. 43, p. 452). This brings Dubos to question whether illusion and its intensity are the source of the spectator's pleasure. Arguing that the better one knows a work the more one enjoys it, Dubos demonstrates that pleasure and illusion do not occur in proportion to each other: 'Le plaisir que les tableaux & les poèmes dramatiques excellents nous peuvent faire, est même plus grand, lorsque nous les voyons pour la seconde fois, & quand il n'y a plus lieu à l'illusion' (ibid., p. 456). On Dubos's differentiation between the beholder's reaction to art on the one hand and to external reality on the other, see Charlotte Hogsett, 'Jean-Baptiste Dubos on Art as Illusion,' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 73 (1970), 147–64.

Dubos thus substituted the values of *vraisemblance* with those of sentiment and emotion, espousing a radically new approach to understanding our relationship to art. Rather than looking for beauty in a work's objective qualities or in its conformity with established aesthetic rules, he argued that the real measure of art's perfection lies instead in the reaction it elicits from its observer:

Non seulement le public juge d'un ouvrage sans intérêt, mais il ne juge encore ainsi qu'il en faut décider en général, c'est-à-dire, par la voie du sentiment, & suivant l'impression que le poëme ou le tableau font sur lui. Puisque le premier but de la Poësie & de la Peinture est de nous toucher, les poëmes & les tableaux ne son de bons ouvrages qu'à proportion qu'ils nous émeuvent & qu'ils nous attachent. Un ouvrage qui touche beaucoup, doit être excellent à tout prendre. Par la même raison l'ouvrage qui ne touche point & qui n'attache pas, ne vaut rien; & si la critique n'y trouve point à reprendre des fautes contre les règles c'est qu'un ouvrage peut être mauvais, sans qu'il y ait des fautes contre les règles, comme un ouvrage plein de fautes contre les règles, peut être un ouvrage excellent. (II. 22, pp. 339–40)

The public gives not only a disinterested judgment of a work, but judges likewise what opinion we are to entertain of it in general, by means of the sense, and according to the impression made thereon by the poem or picture. Since the chief end of poetry and painting is to move us, the productions of these arts can be valuable only in proportion as they touch and engage us. A work that is exquisitely moving, must be an excellent piece, take it all together. For the same reason, a work which does not move and engage us, is good for nothing; and if it be not obnoxious to criticism for trespassing against rules, 'tis because it may be bad, without any violation of rules; as on the contrary one full of faults against rules, may be an excellent performance. (II. 22, p. 237)

Dubos believed, moreover, that the audience forms its judgement by relying not on reason or on a code of fixed rules, but on sentiment and taste; he was the first to point out that drama is effective only if it evokes strong emotions. Dubos thus initiated a new trend in critical thinking: before him, critical reviews had formulated their judgement of a given dramatic work in terms of its aesthetic merit, but from the mid-eighteenth century on, works of art started to be evaluated based instead on their effect upon spectators. Public response thus began to rival specialist judgement as the predominant arbiter of the quality of theatrical performances.

These ideas appear to have had a most profound effect on Gozzi, who maintained that ‘only what pleases us is beautiful’ (*‘è bello sol tra noi quello che piace’*) and that ‘the Public has the supreme right to be fascinated by what fascinates it and not to be willing to be affected by hypochondria’ (*‘il Pubblico ha somma ragione di allettarsi di ciò che lo alletta, e di non voler cadere negli effetti ipocondriaci’*).⁶⁸ He was thus convinced that the audience relies upon the emotional appeal of theatre in making its judgements, and—much like Dubos, who argued that the opinions of the *doctes*, which were based upon rational reasoning, led to false conclusions—empowered the public with an ability to decide for itself: ‘without any distinction, the whole Public has bought the full right to expect entertainment and amusement’ (*‘senza distinzioni di teste, il Pubblico intero ha una ragione comperata, di trovar cosa che lo intrattenga, e lo diverta’*).⁶⁹

I suggest that Gozzi’s placement of public opinion at the forefront of the theatrical enterprise opened up new perspectives into his dramaturgical research. His theatrical fables might appear to be nothing more than an antidote to (and an attack on) Goldoni’s shallow, predictable, and impoverished constructions of reality, but this is only a superficial reading. Gozzi’s plays also provided him with an excellent means to compete for the favour of the Venetian audience (which thrived on scandal and novelty), but even this was not his only purpose. As Gasparo Gozzi observed, with a reference to the Aristotelian theory of catharsis in another review of his brother’s plays, ‘the transformations and the marvellous serve to manage passion’ (*‘le trasformazioni e la meraviglia servono a maneggiare la passione’*),⁷⁰ which is so important in the diversion of spectators from their boredom and melancholy. On careful reflection, therefore, the ‘new genres of the wondrous and of strong passion’ (*‘nuovi generi di mirabile, e di forte passione’*) are, for Gozzi, genres that first and foremost allow for the creation of a new relationship between dramatic performance and the subjectivity of the spectator—a relationship in which audience responsiveness to art becomes of primary importance.

68 Gozzi, *Prefazione al ‘Fajel’*, p. 190. Cf. also: ‘Il pubblico genio non va soggetto alle leggi delle Poetiche nella pubblica materia teatrale, e queste leggi non devono avere nè la facoltà, ne la sopraffazione di scemare d’un atomo il Pubblico ne’ sui teatrali piaceri, se questi piaceri sono innocenti, e non feriscono le leggi de’ Principati’ (Gozzi, *Processo a difesa*, p. 157).

69 Carlo Gozzi, *Più lunga lettera che sia stata scritta*, in *Opere edite ed inedite*, 14 vols (Venice: Zanardi, 1801–1804), XIV, p. 10.

70 Gasparo Gozzi, *Osservatore Veneto*, xcviII (9 January 1761), quoted in Vescovo, ‘Lo specchio e la lente’, p. 411.

4 The Public and the Public Stage

The rise of an aesthetic attentive to the emotional response of the public—which had, as we have seen, emerged from Dubos's insights, and which began to dominate art and theatre criticism from 1750 onward—provides one explanation for Gozzi's allegorical equation of audience and prince in *L'Amore*. Suggesting that the spectator can match the sovereign in greatness is, however, highly charged—even more so considering that theatre performance is a powerful form of symbolic action and a potent social force. Once again, then, we return to our initial question: why, in a play so intimately related to the Venetian context, is the republican citizenry of *La Serenissima* allegorised by its exact opposite: a prince, the figure for and source of absolutist political authority? Why, in other words, does the audience's response in *L'Amore* come to exercise an aesthetic and cultural authority previously reserved only for a monarch?

The theory of public opinion articulated by Jürgen Habermas will be useful in finding an answer to these questions. In his widely influential work *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962), Habermas argued that the explosion of the periodical press, the proliferation of public spaces, and the changing practices of reading and writing in the eighteenth century brought about the emergence of a 'bourgeois', or 'authentic' public sphere (*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*), in which public opinion became the authoritative judgement of a collective consciousness.⁷¹ If the court ceremonies of the Ancien Régime served less to please their participants than to 're-present' the monarch's power and prestige to passive observers (where, to echo Louis Marin, 'the prefix re- [is] no longer a substitution of value, but rather an intensity or frequency'⁷²), by 1750 the public was becoming a sovereign tribunal to which even governing institutions were subjected. Building on this Habermasian account, recent scholarship on public opinion has underscored that theatre, along with print culture, was one of the principle media involved in shaping and constructing an increasingly influential and politically engaged

71 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (repr. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

72 Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. by Martha M. Houle, foreword by Tom Conley, *Theory and History of Literature*, 57 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 5.

public.⁷³ Going far beyond the government's less ambitious (and more self-protective) intention to keep the public pleased and entertained by spectacle, *a* public (which, of course, self-constitutes as an audience upon arrival at the theatre) translated itself into *the* public—a new and powerful social and critical entity.⁷⁴ In this respect, Johann Wolfgang Goethe's description of the city of Venice, which notably gave birth to the first public playhouses, is revealing. What made *La Serenissima* remarkable in the eyes of Goethe is indeed that she was 'a grand venerable work of combined human energies, a noble monument, not of a ruler, but of a people' ('ein groſes, respectables Werck versammelter Menschenkraft, ein herrliches Monument, nicht Eines Befehlenden sondern eines Volckes').⁷⁵ That Goethe's portrayal of 1786 Venice in his *Italienische Reise* is more than the routine praise of a foreign traveller, and that the city really was an living exemplar of conscious citizenship and of the public's critical power, is attested to by recent historical assessments. Indeed, though Habermas argued his case on examples of the emergence of the public sphere in England and France, insisting on the geographical specificity of his analysis, literary scholars and historians of cultural and political communication have dated this hypothetical 'public sphere' to early modernity and have expanded the relevance of the Habermasian framework to encompass the Italian context.⁷⁶

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- 73 On the role played by the press and print culture in the evolution of public opinion, see *Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775–1800*, ed. by Robert Darnton and Paul Roche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham 1991); Mona Ozouf, "Public Opinion" at the End of the Old Regime', *Journal of Modern History*, 60 suppl. (Sept. 1988), pp. 1–21. On the importance of theatre in crafting the public sphere, cf. recent studies by Logan J. Connors, *Dramatic Battles in Eighteenth-Century France: Philosophes, Anti-Philosophes, and Polemical Theatre* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012) and Jeffrey S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theatre and French Political Culture, 1680–1791* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). To my knowledge, there are no critical studies on the role played by Italian theatre in shaping the emergent intellectual and social figure of the public.
- 74 These insights were pioneered by Johann Gottfried Herder in his '57. Brief (Haben wir noch heute das Publikum und Vaterland der Alten?)', in *Fünfte Sammlung: Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, ed. by Hans Dietrich Irmscher (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1991), pp. 301–38 (cf. especially pp. 308–12).
- 75 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Tagebuch der italienischen Reise für Frau von Stein*, in *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ed. by Hendrick Birus et al., 40 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985–1999), vol. 15.1 (1993), ed. by Christoph Michel and Hans-Georg Dewitz, pp. 599–745 (p. 682). The English translation is from Goethe, *Letters from Italy*, in *The Auto-Biography of Goethe: Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life*, trans. by John Oxenford, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), II, p. 294.
- 76 On the extension of the Habermasian model to Italy and its relevance to seventeenth-century Venice in particular, see the excellent volume by Filippo De Vivo, *Information*

With this theoretical model in mind, we can affirm that Gozzi's transfer of agency from the aristocratic arena of government to republican public authority, allegorised in his equation of audience and prince, demonstrates the extent to which his first fairy-tale drama both reflected and helped conjure into being a new and critically productive spectatorship. According to Habermas, the emergence of the public sphere mirrored an ongoing shift away from princely authority towards an authority rooted in the enlightened and rational processes of the *Publikum* itself. It is therefore significant that it is Gozzi, long considered a reactionary promoter of the aristocracy's elitism and the values of Venice's conservative oligarchy, who was witness to and instigator of the transfer of power from state to citizen. Furthermore, Gozzi's vision of the public, which comprises 'a learned and unlearned Audience' ('un Uditorio dotto, ed indotto'),⁷⁷ is even broader than that of Dubos. Indeed, while conferring significant decision-making power upon the public, Dubos still narrowed his public to a restricted circle of learned 'men of taste'.⁷⁸ The expansive and thus revolutionary nature of Gozzi's bestowal of critical power upon public opinion is also apparent in comparison with Pietro Chiari's scornful representation of

and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Massimo Rospoche, 'Beyond the Public Sphere: A Historical Transition', in *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Massimo Rospoche (Bologna: Il Mulino; Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 2012), pp. 9–28.

- 77 Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, p. 409. See also the revealing observation of Paolo Farina, who points out that '[t]rent'anni più tardi, nella sua conclusiva riflessione critica sul teatro e sulla propria attività teatrale, svolta nella *Più lunga lettera*, rivendicando la coerenza di una vita, Carlo mette a fuoco ancora una volta la sua idea di teatro "per tutti" con parole non dissimili da quelle usate un tempo: "Io guardai sempre, e guardo tutt'ora la moltitudine de' nostri Teatri aperti all'universale con occhio poetico è vero, ma altresì con occhio morale, non meno che con occhio politico". Cf. Paolo Farina, 'Carlo Gozzi "conservatore rivoluzionario"? Declinazioni dell'anti-illuminismo', *Studi goldoniani*, 11.3, n.s. (2014), pp. 67–88, esp. p. 75.
- 78 Dubos, *Réflexions critiques*, II, 22, p. 316: 'je ne comprends pas le bas peuple dans le public capable de prononcer sur les poèmes ou sur les tableaux, comme de décider à quel degré ils sont excellents. Le mot de Public ne renferme icy que personnes qui ont acquis des lumieres, soit par la lecture soit par le commerce du monde. Elles sont les seules qui puissent marquer le rang des poèmes & des tableaux, quoiqu'il se rencontre dans les ouvrages excellents des beautés capables de se faire sentir au peuple du plus bas étage & de l'obliger à se recrier. [...] Le public dont il s'agit icy est donc borné aux personnes qui lisent, qui connoissent les spectacles, qui voient & qui entendent parler de tableaux, ou qui acquis de quelque maniere qui ce soit, ce discernement qu'on appelle *goût de comparaison*, & dont je parlerai tantôt plus au long.' Cf. also 'Jean Baptiste Du Bos', in *Il Gusto. Storia di una idea estetica*, ed. by Luigi Russo (Palermo: Aesthetica, 2000), p. 239, n. 15.

theatre-goers. Comparing the reading public to theatre audiences, Chiari—in many respects a progressive intellectual likewise influenced by the tenets of the French Enlightenment, albeit a less talented dramatist than either Goldoni or Gozzi—suggested that the latter were too ill-informed, capricious, and uneducated to form an accurate opinion on aesthetic and artistic matters: ‘This Public, that must itself decide, is not as mixed with plebeian and ignorant dregs as is, the majority of the time, the Theatre audience’ (‘Questo Pubblico, che deve di essi decidere non è così mescolato di feccia plebea, ed ignorante, come lo è il più delle volte la platea d’un Teatro’).⁷⁹

As Michael Warner puts it, however,

No single text can create a public. Nor can a single voice, a single genre, or even a single medium. All are insufficient to create the kind of reflexivity that we call a public, since a public is understood to be an on-going space of encounter for discourse. It is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time.⁸⁰

The sources for Gozzi’s fairy-tale drama and its reference to the philosophical, political, and aesthetic postulations that I have individuated in Pascal’s *Pensées* and Dubos’s *Réflexions critiques* highlight that it is ultimately complex cultural encounters (both in terms of participants involved and information transmitted) as well as the circulation of knowledge across national borders, that bring about the creation of publics and, in particular, Gozzi’s innovations in dramaturgical practice. As Voltaire eloquently wrote:

Ainsi presque tout est imitation. L’idée des *Lettres persanes* est prise de celle de *l’Espion turc*. Le Boiardo a imité le Pulci, l’Arioste a imité le Boiardo. Les esprits les plus originaux empruntent les uns des autres. [...] Il en est des livres comme du feu dans nos foyers; on va prendre ce feu chez son voisin, on l’allume chez soi, on le communique à d’autres et il appartient à tous.

79 Cf. ‘Autore a’ Leggitori’, preface to *Commedie rappresentate ne’ Teatri Grimani di Venezia cominciando dall’anno 1749*, 4 vols (Venice: Pasinelli, 1752), I, p. x. For a valuable discussion of Chiari’s distinction between readership and spectatorship, see Ann Hallamore Caesar, ‘Theatre and the Rise of the Italian Novel: Venice 1753–84’, *Italian Studies*, 67.1 (March 2012), pp. 37–55 (pp. 40–41).

80 Michael Warner, ‘Publics and Counter-Publics’, *Public Culture*, 14.1 (2002), pp. 49–90 (p. 62).

Thus nearly everything is imitation. The idea of *The Persian Letters* was taken from the idea of *The Turkish Spy*. Boiardo imitated Pulci, Ariosto imitated Boiardo. The most original writers borrowed from each other. [...] There are books that are like a fire in our hearths; we go to take fire from our neighbour, we light our own, we give it to others, and it belongs to everyone.⁸¹

In conclusion, I would argue that the reconstruction of Gozzi's intellectual sources undertaken herein challenges—if not overturns—the longstanding critical attitude according to which this last protagonist of the eighteenth-century Venetian stage is considered a conservative-minded and uncultivated playwright.⁸² Gozzi's engagement with Dubos's treatise (a work that exercised significant influence on numerous men of letters and philosophers of the Enlightenment⁸³) reveals Gozzi as a progressive intellectual and a most original theorist of theatre. His placement of the public at the forefront of the theatrical enterprise and his concern with its emotional response further illuminates how the centrality of spectators in the socio-political sphere and their impact as art critics informs his dramatic writing and influences his relationship with his audiences. What I hope to have elucidated, then, is that Gozzi's *L'Amore delle tre melarance* encodes meanings other than those that were played out in the form of dramatic performance, and that this work can in fact be considered this playwright's artistic manifesto—one which most befittingly expresses his ideas on both theatre and spectatorship.

81 Voltaire, 'Lettre XXII: sur M. Pope et quelques autres poètes fameux', *Lettres philosophiques*, in *Mélanges*, ed. by Jacques van den Heuvel (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 1342.

82 My interpretation also adds weight to Scannapieco's recent evaluation of Gozzi's writings on theatre: 'la riflessione sul teatro del conte Gozzi non solo non si reduce a un'idea di corvina evasione edonistica, sfaccendata e regressiva [...], ma si nutre anzi di una prospettiva critica che riconduce costantemente l'analisi del fenomeno teatrale alle sue implicazioni sociopolitiche'. Cf. her introduction to Gozzi, *Ragionamento ingenuo*, pp. 45–46.

83 On Dubos's wide-ranging impact on European Enlightenment thinking about artistic matters and on the importance of his *Réflexions critiques* for the history of aesthetics, see Charton, 151–62; Ermanno Migliorini, 'Note alle *Réflexions critiques* di Jean-Baptiste Du Bos', in *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia toscana di scienze e lettere*, 27 (1962–1963), pp. 287–88; James F. Jones, 'Du Bos and Rousseau: A Question of Influence', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 127 (1974), pp. 231–41; Thomas M. Kavanaugh, *Enlightened Pleasures: Eighteenth-Century France and the New Epicureanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).