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‘Cattle of this colour’: Boying the Diva in *As You Like It*

Shakespeare may have written for an all-male stage, but his plays are full of women who relish acting. ‘Bring us to this sight, and you shall say / I’ll prove a busy actor in their play’ (3.4.54–5), says Rosalind, as eager as Bottom or Hamlet to get into the act.¹ Why such stress on female theatricality on a womanless stage? My theory is that *As You Like It* and other plays show the imprint of the ground-breaking actresses who took the lead in Italian professional troupes decades before Shakespeare’s debut. A startling innovation when they appeared in Commedia dell’Arte companies in mid-century, women soon performed in scripted and improvised plays in every genre. A few directed their troupes and became international stars, sought after by royal patrons throughout Europe. News reached London from diplomats, travelers, and players, and in the 1570s Italian players appeared several times at Elizabeth’s court, culminating in the 1578 visit of an *arte* troupe that included actresses.²

English playwrights responded quickly to the challenge. From the late 1570s, writers created exotically histrionic ‘women’ who seize the stage to deliver passionate arias of love and despair, scheme with virtuosic flair, and display elegant wit and rhetorical sophistication. Major female roles grew longer than ever before, while expanding in range, significance, and complexity. Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe placed unprecedented demands on the boy player, calling for displays of rhetorical mastery, feats of actorly control, and torrents of passion and frenzy. They offered their new paying audiences a radically new stage type: the foreign diva played by skilled English boys.³

Shakespeare’s first divas are comediennes: Julia of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Viola of *Twelfth Night*, Beatrice of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Portia of *Merchant of Venice*. All are elegant, theatrical, and volatile, and three of them cross-dress and pursue lovers in secret — features characteristic of the innamorata played by the female stars across the Channel. Shakespeare’s greatest creation in this kind is Rosalind, whose juggling of identities propels the

plot in *As You Like It* (1599). The boy cast as Rosalind/Ganymede — the longest female role in Shakespeare's canon — had to memorize and deliver more than seven hundred lines, switching from the voice and gestures of a duke's daughter to those of a 'saucy lackey' and back again. Only twenty years earlier female characters in English plays rarely spoke more than two hundred lines, and only a handful were protagonists. Indeed half of all plays had no female roles at all. It isn't just Rosalind who is loquacious in *As You Like It*: total lines spoken by its female characters surpass those of any extant English play from 1508–1614.⁴

As more 'women' claimed centre stage in England, a more gender-inclusive drama evolved, despite the apparent limitation of the all-male stage. Playwrights attracted audiences with woman-centred plots and amplified their own dramatic horizons, in part by exploiting novel female personae and methods that were invented and perfected abroad.⁵ Boy players brought these flamboyant new roles to life, but the playwrights who wrote their parts based them on stories and plays from the continent, where the star actresses led the way. As this essay demonstrates, Shakespeare responded to the pressure of the actress by forging a novel simulacrum of the diva in roles such as Rosalind, an ingenious hybrid of the Italian actress and the skilled English boy. Women began to perform in Commedia dell'Arte troupes about a decade after the *comici* first formed companies in 1545. There are scattered notices of women playing in Italy and France before 1564, but the first record of an actress in a company is found in an Italian contract from that year.⁶ Some played the comic *balia* or nurse, others the bawdy *servetta*; but those who could play the poeticizing *inamorata* became leading attractions. The English had known about the Italian innovation since at least 1571–2, when English officials reported from the continent about the new Italian mixed-gender companies. In Paris in 1571 and 1572, ambassadors Lord Buckhurst and the earl of Lincoln saw troupes with leading actresses perform at celebrations hosted by the king, and both recorded their pleasure at the novelty. Buckhurst and his entourage, including the young Philip Sidney, were treated to a comedy by the prestigious Gelosi company, starring the prima donna Vittoria Piissimi.⁷ Buckhurst wrote Burghley that he had been amused by 'a comedie of Italians that for the good mirth and handling thereof deserved singular comendacion'.⁸

Visits by Italians to England soon followed. In 1574, a company of Italians played for the queen at Reading and Windsor, presenting a comedy and the first Italian pastoral played in England. This troupe probably

included women, because very soon afterward Italian women were drawing crowds in London by performing acrobatics, causing one official to rail at their ‘unchaste, shameless & unnaturall’ tumbling.⁹ In 1578 an Italian company with actresses played at Elizabeth’s court and in London. At the time Drusiano Martinelli was the leader but his wife Angelica Alberghini Martinelli was the star, playing the innamorata. The Italians’ tour came at a crucial moment, just as the English were establishing the commercial theatre business. Since the Martinelli players were licensed to perform ‘in London and the liberties’, it is possible that they appeared at Burbage’s new Theatre in Shoreditch, where new audiences were hungry for new spectacles.¹⁰ In addition to ‘la Angelica’ and Drusiano, who played pantalone, the troupe probably included the *seconda donna* Angela Salmone and a *servetta* named ‘Franceschina’ in the records. Drusiano’s more famous brother Tristano Martinelli, credited with inventing the mask Arlecchino, also may have come on the English trip.¹¹ What they played is not recorded, but on tour they usually offered a mix of scripted and improvised comedy and pastorals, dancing with music, and tumbling.

Less exalted Italian entertainers and players had been ‘familiar sights’ in England as early as the 1560s.¹² Italian players often crossed paths with English actors abroad as well as on their own soil. The foreign players were a rich source of theatrical knowledge and innovation — Louise George Clubb calls them ‘sellers of theater’, prime suppliers of theatrical wares throughout Europe¹³ — but they also represented potential competitors for patrons and audiences. The spectacle of the actress contributed to at least one bout of xenophobia. Thomas Nashe called the Italian actors ‘a sort of squirting baudie Comedians, that have Whores and common Curtizens to playe womens partes’, and slammed them for specializing in obscene farces ‘played by a whore, a pantaloon, and a zany’. Nashe claimed the English, by contrast, specialized in manly histories and ‘true tragedies’.¹⁴ His screed is far from accurate, but it does assume readers know about actresses, while its shrillness betrays anxiety over the threat of a rival stage. Perhaps because of such English attitudes, heightened by a lively bias against both Catholics and women performing onstage, the Italian players did not gain a permanent foothold in the English market.¹⁵

Nonetheless, the influx of Italian sources and methods continued apace. *Erudita*, popular plays, and *novelle* supplied matter for the new stages, while *arte* masks, gestures, and *lazzi* became familiar tropes.¹⁶ English playwrights and actors eagerly culled information about Italian playing via contacts with

Italian language teachers, musicians, artisans, and merchants, but their most important contacts were the Italian players they saw at work at home and abroad.¹⁷ The new actresses were a must-see for travelers who reported on the mixed troupes. Fynes Moryson commented on the improvisatory skill of the Italian players he saw in Florence, ‘especially the women’. George Whetstone commended a troupe of actors and actresses in Ravenna for devising an impromptu comedy that had ‘some matter of moralytie, but a greate deale of mirth’, and Thomas Coryate marveled that actresses in Venice played women’s parts as well as male players at home.¹⁸

‘The English may have disparaged the Italians, but they made good use of them’, notes Marvin Herrick. ‘By 1590 or thereabouts the English writer had so thoroughly absorbed the methods and some of the humours of the Italians that he was hardly conscious of imitating either learned or popular comedy.’¹⁹ Some bit the hand that fed them. Player-turned-playhater Stephen Gosson griped that writers ‘ransackt Italian books for the stage’, but sheepishly confessed to having written *The Comedie of Captain Mario*, ‘a cast of Italian devices’ — in other words, a comedy that featured the capitano role and copied the material and methods of the Italian professionals.²⁰

An excellent place for ransacking of this kind was John Florio’s library. There one could learn about the glamorous Italian actresses and read the writings of leading actors. Florio also owned dozens of Italian plays (and probably *arte* scenarios) performed or quarried by the Commedia dell’Arte. Ben Jonson consulted his library when he needed Italian materials, as did Florio’s patron Southampton, and Shakespeare had ample reason to use it, too.²¹ In *Queen Anna’s New World of Words* (1611) Florio lists as a source *Le bravure di Capitano Spavento*, a volume of rodomontades by Francesco Andreini, the husband and acting partner of Isabella Canali Andreini, often called the greatest Renaissance actress. Florio also names Tomaso Garzoni’s famous *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (1585), which describes all the occupations of Venice, including actors of all kinds.²² Garzoni treats street players with contempt, but not the star troupes and their glamorous leading actresses, whom he praises for their skills in dance, gesture, singing, poetry, and languages. Garzoni heaps honours on Vincenza Armani, who won special fame for her writing, singing, and oratory.

To the gifted Vincenza I cannot do justice, who imitating *la facondia Ciceroniana*, has placed the Comic art on a level with Oratory, and partly with her marvelous beauty, partly with inexpressible grace, erected an enormous triumph

all her own to the watching world, revealing herself as the most excellent Actress of our time.²³

Garzoni saves his greatest reverence for Andreini, a *virtuosa* in poetry, letters, and drama who became the star and co-director of the Gelosi, the most prestigious troupe in Europe. He salutes her as 'The gracious Isabella ... ornament of Theatres, superb spectacle not least of virtue, that with her beauty also enriches this profession, in such a way, that, while the world endures, each tongue, each voice, will resound with the celebrated name of Isabella.'²⁴ His hyperboles were matched by other admirers who treated *la divina Isabella* as a prodigy because of her achievements in performance, literature, music, and languages. She created a singularly exalted and influential variation on the innamorata type, elevating her love-scenes using improvised and memorized poetry, foreign languages, and learned allusions and detours into philosophy. On occasion she could also wield the clown's *bastonata* or mimic the zanni, and in her famous mad scenes she could dance, sing, and declaim wildly in many languages and dialects, switching from comic to tragic modes in an instant. She had her first great triumph playing a madwoman in *La pazzia* at a Medici court wedding in 1589, a performance that became her trademark.²⁵ A self-styled 'woman of intellect', she won membership in the Accademia degli Intenti of Pavia, corresponded with humanists, and enjoyed the patronage of Marie de' Medici and the dukes of Tuscany. After a lifetime of travel, she died in Lyons in 1604 after a miscarriage. The town fathers gave her a state funeral, a medal was struck in her honour, and she was buried in church with fervent eulogies.²⁶ Proud of her stardom in drama and literature, she styled herself 'Accesa' (the inflamed one), pictured by a rocket bursting into the sky.²⁷

The Actress Gap

The English professionals had no grand divas, or even any workaday actresses. What they did have was the boy player and knowledge about the materials and methods of the mixed-gender companies, especially their romantic comedies mixing clowns and lovers. From this knowledge the English began to devise a simulacrum of the diva from across the sea. Suitably costumed and painted, a boy might pass as a pint-sized *prima donna assoluta* at a distance, but her arsenal of graceful elegance, improvisatory skill, literary wit, and versatility was almost impossible to simulate. Nonetheless, the English

professionals refitted the foreign import to suit the trained bodies and voices of English boys. Those who excelled at this newly translated kind of female impersonation were always rare and valuable commodities.

Fittingly, the first plays to capitalize on the Italian model came from playwrights writing for companies of choristers, boys selected for their performance skills. Children's companies became testing-grounds for commedia-influenced impersonations in the late 1570s and early 1580s, just after the visit of the Italians to Elizabeth's court. Many of these roles involved virtuosic singing, in a close parallel to the new singing roles performed by actresses with this special talent. Boys performed passionate female leads with solo songs and laments in *The Wars of Cyrus* (probably by Richard Farrant), George Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*, and Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis*.²⁸ Lyly was the most inventive early adapter of these new performative models from abroad, which he used in devising avant-garde entertainments. With the notoriously Italianate earl of Oxford as his patron, Lyly offered lightly Englished versions of Italian female sophistication and theatricality to courtly and paying audiences. His pastorals and comedies, often showing the influence of Tasso's celebrated *Aminta*, uniquely focus on goddesses and women, with provocative overlays of roles, genders, and players.²⁹

After Lyly, adaptations of the diva model would foreground the bi-gendered allure of the boy actor and his special skills, while stressing the continental flavour of his roles. This was no easy job for the boy who had to do it. Pressure on the boy actor rose exponentially as 'female' protagonists took the stage in comedy, tragicomic romance, and tragedy. Boys playing Kyd's *Bel-Imperia* or Shakespeare's *Portia* were handed roles charged with metatheatricality, generic versatility, self-awareness, and emotional volatility. A few were entrusted with 'iconic' moments such as Cleopatra's final scenes, which Michael Goldman calls 'vividly simplified expressions of the actor's power' that make the player's 'high vitality and animation more terrific'.³⁰ When Cleopatra mocks the 'squeaking boys' who dare to impersonate her, her *sdegno* invokes the *prima donna* who considers herself inimitable. Shakespeare takes the risk of revealing his own player as inadequate: though most boy players had painfully acquired Latin, memorization skills, and musical training, these were hardly enough to 'boy' the greatness of a Cleopatra, or even a Rosalind. For the boy actor handed a diva role, motivation might well include the fear of being beaten as well as being hissed.³¹ Nonetheless, as Goldman argues, Shakespeare continued to create 'iconic' roles that pushed the boy player 'to go beyond the limits of his art'.³²

The push came from the adult players and writers, but the source of this pressure lay outside the companies. The players knew that Elizabeth and her court strove to compete in the highly charged arena of court performance, led by the courts of France and Italy, where the *comici* were favourites. Furthermore, the theatre business was part of a transnational market in theatrical forms, texts, and methods, on which the English drew heavily. English professionals were, in short, highly conscious of the Italian players whose praises reached English ears, and who had dared to play in London and at court. Compared to Italy, Spain, and France, which all had actresses, England was an anomaly, and some foreigners dismissed it as a cultural backwater. English ladies performed in court masques and non-elite women worked as entertainers and performed in parish and household dramatics,³³ but the nation wholly lacked the charismatic professional actress famed for her scenes of elegant wit-play and poeticized passion.³⁴ Some audiences were eager to see women act and were willing to pay. The scandal over *England's Joy* (1602) is a telling sign of an unmet market: Richard Vennar sold expensive tickets for a spectacular play featuring Elizabeth herself, promising it would be performed 'by Gentlewomen and Gentlemen', but he was arrested for unpaid debts.³⁵

John Marston dramatizes the 'actress gap' in *Histriomastix* (1600), making it clear that national pride is at stake. A snobbish Italian courtier in England scoffs at an all-male troupe hired to impress him. Italianate English aristocrats droop in shame as 'Oliver Owlet's Men' — ragtag actors who invent their 'patron' out of whole cloth — trot out an absurd hodgepodge before their sophisticated guest, Lord Landulpho. The poet Post-Hast runs through their repertory:

POST-HAST *Mother Gurtons needle* ; (a Tragedy.)
The Diuell and Diues ; (a Comedie.)
A russet coate, and a Knaues cap ; (an Infernall)
A proud heart and a beggars purse ; (a pastorall.)
The Widdowes apron-strings ; (a nocturnall.) (2.1)³⁶

As a sample of their finest wares, the all-male troupe (composed of the proverbial 'three men and a boy') play a lugubrious scene between Troilus and Cressida, which falls flat. In desperation they launch into 'extemporal' patter and rude songs.

Landulpho sneers that such tawdry stuff delivered by ‘lawlesse bastards’ lags far behind the heady brilliance of theatre back home, spurred by female performers of the highest calibre:

LANDULPHO I blush in your behalpes at this base trash;
 In honour of our Italy we sport,
 As if a Synod of the holly Gods,
 Came to tryumph within our Theaters,
 (Alwaies commending English curtesie.)
 Our Amphitheaters and Pyramides
 Are scituate like three-headed *Dindymus*,
 Where stand the Statues of three striuing Queenes,
 That once contended for the goulden ball,
 (Alwaies commending English curtesie.)
 Are not your curious Dames of sharper spirit?
 I have a mistresse whose intangling wit,
 Will turne and winde more cunning arguments,
 Then could the Cretan Labyrinth ingyre. (2.1)

His claims seem extravagant, but the leading actresses were indeed compared to goddesses, and their pursuit of fame led to intense and showy rivalries.³⁷ What set the great divas apart from the common players was their ‘sharper spirit’, elegant poetry, and graceful extemporal playing. As the diva was ‘Englished’, self-confidence, hauteur, and inventiveness also came to define the type. Boys had to master the aural and kinetic codes — gestures, postures, and vocal tones, as well as speeches — befitting ‘curious Dames of sharper spirit’ whose *sprezzatura* and theatrical *inventio* were tempered by an attitude of haughty *sdegno*.

‘Rosalinde of many parts’

Orlando proclaims that ‘Rosalinde of many parts / By heavenly synod was devised’ (3.2.143–4). Rosalind mocks his versemaking, but Orlando is correct in calling her a composite. Rosalind’s ‘intangling wit’, ‘sharper spirit’, and virtuosic multiplicity distinguish her as an actress-type who can be desiring and desired, boyish and womanly, proud and giddy at the same time. To an unusual degree, Shakespeare gives Rosalind the kind of self-awareness and connection with the audience that distinguishes overtly theatrical, actor-like characters such as Falstaff and Richard III. Diva-like in her poise, cultured

wit, versatility, and capacity to improvise, she is boyishly English in her cheekiness and her merry misogyny, as well as her attitude toward co-actors and audience.

Rosalind's protean inventiveness stems from pleasure in performance itself, in the rare joys of shifting her identity at will and indulging in unsupervised erotic games. Such 'female' pleasures may well have seemed lascivious and Italianate or perhaps Frenchified to an early modern audience, and her aggressive wit may have made her seem unnaturally masculine, with her tongue at liberty under male guise. In one role she shows the attributes of an English 'ganymede' (that is, a saucy boy actor, an erotic plaything, or both) on the one hand, and an adventurous, literary, pleasure-seeking, and distinctly Catholic woman player on the other. She is after all a 'boy/girl/boy' in love with a character named Orlando De Boys, whose Ariostan name is successively Italian, French, and English and puns on 'bois' and 'boys.' She banters with an Italianated English traveler with the French name of Jaques, and she flirts in breeches with men and women alike, with the aplomb of a French princess or an Italian actress. This sophisticated innamorata resembles the renowned salonnistes of France and the women players of Italy more than she does the gentlewomen of England,³⁸ and her playground (with its lions and palms) resembles the exotic landscapes of French romance more than the prosaic groves of Arden.

None of this is coincidental. Shakespeare wants his characters and setting to appear both local and exotic, both Arden and Ardennes. Making his protagonist a witty female player and leader of her own traveling troupe, he invites viewers into the cosmopolitan world of female performance, using the 'Italianated' English boy player as go-between and guide. Facing the untaught Orlando, who must be schooled in the elegancies fitting a true innamorato, 'Ganymede' explains why he can easily play Rosalind: 'boys and women are cattle of this colour' (3.3.370). As the playboy boasts he will be as good as a woman at acting the woman's part, Shakespeare creates a gendered *agon* concerning female impersonation. From title to epilogue the play teases audiences (and Orlando) with a quibbling question: Who is best at playing the woman's part, a woman or a boy?

Considering women and boys as professional players helps ground this question in theatrical identity rather than erotic performance alone. Shakespeare practically orders us to do so: 'All the world's a stage, / And all the men *and women* merely players' (139–40, emphasis mine). The many set scenes that make up the plot showcase three facets of the player's craft: ability to

improvise with the requisite *copia* and *faconditas*, ability to run the gamut of emotions, and ability to pull off complex gender disguises. A boy player's motives for going 'beyond the limits of his art' in such scenes were not the same as those of an actress. While a great deal of attention has been paid to the sexual identity and erotic appeal of the transvestite boy actor, less has focused on the *acting* demands of the Italianate (and actress-inspired) leading roles he played, or the ways in which those roles clashed with or exploited his status and talent.³⁹ While the lives and careers of boy players differed substantially from those of their female counterparts, there are a few striking similarities. Like the actresses, some boy players gained applause and attention for their singing, others for their skill at comic banter, cross-gender disguise, or tragic pathos. On the negative side, both transvestite boy players and professional actresses were favorite targets of irate antitheatricalists, who denounced them as abhorrent purveyors of vice and sin — and for some of the same reasons: female theatricality on stage was whorish and sinful, no matter who performed it, and the sight of theatrical women, actual or counterfeit, made men effeminate.

The most important parallel lies in the Italian derivation of their plays and roles. Both boys and women starred in plots based on many of the same sources in Italian comedy, novella, and romance epics, and their roles evolved in part from Roman New Comedy updated by Italian learned and popular comedy.⁴⁰ The actresses were Italian, the boys merely Italianate at times, but both played the innamorata role invented in Italy and developed by the *comici*, in plays that increasingly placed the woman centre stage. Women's roles became 'more autonomous', articulate and 'sympathetic' in pastoral and comedy due to women's own efforts and the contributions of some playwrights, especially those associated with the Sieneese Accademia degli Intronati.⁴¹ Because of the peripatetic troupes, the mixed-gender *comici* were the leading diffusers of Italian plays of all kinds throughout the West. The players spliced together elements of scripted drama and literary texts of many kinds to create their improvised works, using theatregrams of action and speech as building blocks, such as the mad scene (*pazzia*), insults (*lusinghe*), boasts (*bravure*), laments (*lamenti*), and lovers' debates (*contrasti*). Their playmaking depended on humanist drama and came to influence humanist playwrights in turn.⁴² As if to recognize his own debts to the *arte*, Shakespeare has the Italianate traveller Jaques name members of a troupe in his most famous speech, including the 'lean and slipper'd Pantaloon', the nurse or *balia*, the lover or innamorato 'sighing like a furnace', and the blustering soldier 'full of

strange oaths', the trademark of the capitano (2.7.189). The innamorata is not forgotten: the lover writes ballads 'to his mistress's eyebrow' (157), and Jaques lists her most important playing partners: the lover and the capitano fight often for her hand, and pantalone plays her lecherous suitor almost as often as he plays her father.

A key distinction between the English and Italian players was the relative autonomy of the actress, in contrast to the subjugation of the boy player.⁴³ Unlike the boys, leading actresses were full company members, not lowly apprentices who could be bought, traded, or sold, and women often composed their own material rather than being bound by a script. Calling women and boys 'cattle of this colour' is not just metaphor when applied to the apprentice boy players, who were far more like fungible, marketable cattle than were the star actresses who led troupes around Europe and negotiated contracts.⁴⁴ On the other hand, divas were always rare. Most actresses eked out scanty livings as piazza performers and never reached these heights; many laboured with little control over their work, like many actresses today. Some probably came from the ranks of courtesans and prostitutes and may have returned to those callings.⁴⁵ In a more general sense, as women lacked most property rights and their subordination to males was lifelong, they might be treated as a special type of chattel commodity, especially in the marriage market. As Rosalind notes in her putdown of Phoebe: 'Sell when you can. You are not for all markets' (3.5.61).

A second distinction concerns the working methods of the English versus the Italian players. The English boy player was handed a part and had little motive to expand it or depart from it in improvisation.⁴⁶ For the leading actress of the *comici*, developing a distinctive persona was largely in her own hands rather than those of a master actor or playwright. In improvised plays, which were guided by a scenario showing cues for action, the Italian players inserted memorized material culled from literary texts and other sources, or they adapted well-worn dialogues to the occasion, varying them in performance. Even when she had a fixed script to memorize and play, the actress could incorporate moments of improvisation, expanding lines when the occasion warranted, as Richard Andrews has argued in his analysis of improvisatory passages in scripted plays.⁴⁷

A third difference is the greater potential for a talented woman to gain fame and prestige in an Italian company than a talented boy could hope for in an English one. The careers of boy actresses were short, and none had time to grow so famous as to rival an adult star such as Burbage or Kemp.⁴⁸ Some

actresses started performing very young, like the boys, but if successful they might continue to play for decades. A boy who had been trained up in minor roles might play leading roles for a few years at most, but actresses played blushing maids from their teens into middle age. Isabella joined the Gelosi at fifteen and played the innamorata until her early death in her forties.

No English boy had the advantage of being married to another star and co-actor, like Isabella Andreini, her daughter-in-law Virginia Ramponi, and Angelica Martinelli, whose husbands provided them with a degree of respectability, and with whom they collaborated on creating roles and plays. Marriage did not obscure a woman's fame: on the contrary, the husband often served as an agent and promoter of his wife and accepted his secondary status since her drawing power was so much greater. Drusiano Martinelli acknowledged his wife's stardom, jokingly calling himself 'il marito d'Angelica' (the husband of Angelica)⁴⁹ and Francesco Andreini played both the innamorato and capitano roles with the more famous Isabella, and edited and published her letters and stage dialogues after her death. Some women, such as Diana Ponti and Vittoria Piissimi, became sole leaders of troupes, making arrangements with wealthy patrons, corresponding with dukes and queens.⁵⁰

Cross-Dressing Emotion, Improvising Gender

Both Italian women and English boys cross-dressed in many plays, but the existence of the transvestite stage put a different spin on the trope in England. As a matter of an assumed role, actresses appeared in male disguise more often than English boys in female roles cross-dressed as males. Cross-dressed innamorati had been featured in humanist comedy ever since Bibbiena's *La Calandra* (1513) and the anonymous *Gli Ingannati* (1531), and the *comici* had wrung endless changes on it before Lyly or Shakespeare began to write. As the innamorata role grew in importance in the Italian repertory, female cross-gender and cross-class disguising became more common because it showcased the skills and attractions of the actresses. Of the scenarios printed in the impresario Francesco Scala's famous collection, which celebrates the roles played by the Andreinis and other stars, one-third require the innamorata to cross-dress as part of the plot.⁵¹ The English adapted Italian sources and methods to their transvestite stages, and the theatregram that had burgeoned to showcase the star actress fell to the lot of the boy player. As Lyly, Peele, Shakespeare, Jonson, and others knew, adding and subtracting layers of gender on a transvestite stage stepped up a play's Italianate quality,

bred spectacle and suspense, and heightened comic friction and, in some cases, eroticism, although it tended to mute the overt lesbianism found in the Italian sources.⁵²

Skillful cross-dressing might involve altering one’s voice, emotive range, bearing, and gesture, a far more difficult task than switching wigs and costumes. *As You Like It* foregrounds the actor’s efforts to meet this challenge. The struggle draws attention to the difference between a boy player and an actress, particularly when Rosalind/Ganymede claims it does not exist. As if auditioning for the part, ‘Ganymede’ assures Orlando he can play Rosalind because boys are ‘changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something, and for no passion truly anything; as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this color’ (3.3.368–70). What we see and hear is a flippant boy merrily flipping a misogynist coin equating childishness and femaleness, but metatheatricality disrupts this rhetorical juggling act. As Rosalind/Ganymede promises to amuse him and the audience with seesawing emotions — ‘At which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow’ (365–8) — these postures are presented as vendible items or modules in a player’s repertoire. Later Rosalind/Ganymede teases Orlando that when they are wed, she will change her moods to oppose his, and brags about manufacturing stage passions out of nothing. She promises to be ‘more new-fangled than an ape, more giddy in my desires than a monkey. I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain, and I will do that when thou art disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyena, and that when thou art inclined to sleep’ (4.1.129–33). On one level she is a witty inamorata teasing her lover, on the other an ‘apish’ playboy rehearsing his hermaphroditic bag of tricks for playing the woman’s part.

While this passage has been read for what it suggests about homo- and heteroerotic desire and object choice, what hasn’t been remarked is how *useful* such emotive lability is as part of an actor’s arsenal. Audiences love to see quick-changing emotions, but this was a prime attribute of the Italian inamorata long before any ‘boy actress’ took on the task. The diva was renowned for her ability to modulate between many moods and genres — ‘full of tears, full of smiles’. Rosalind welcomes the challenge; her joy in acting is the engine of the play. Downcast at first at her father’s exile and her banishment, her mood soars when the thought of acting occurs to her. She recasts herself as Ganymede and takes Arden for her stage, creating playlets

and improvising at will. Improvisation is the hallmark of the Italian players and the English stage clown, but Rosalind/Ganymede surpasses Touchstone at thinking on her feet and turning the plot 'as she likes it'. She shows this skill in her flash decision to court her own lover while disguised as a boy. She boldly recasts Orlando as her student, transforming the forest into a stage for lovemaking, and then prolongs the wooing game she has invented. She becomes intensely curious, sexually desirous, playful, and loquacious, traits which defy early modern notions of gender decorum but conform to the new actress-driven trend in comedy. She revels in wielding quick ripostes:

JAQUES Why, tis good to be sad and say nothing.

ROSALIND Why then, 'tis good to be a post. (4.1.8–9)

Such eager theatricality befits a French duke's daughter whose extempore playing echoes the female aristocrats who often played at the French court, and the talented Italian actresses who were patronized by the French royals.⁵³ When Orlando 'can no longer live by thinking', she promptly plays a magician who can 'do strange things', performing a stagy miracle to save the day, just as the innamorata does in scenarios such as 'Isabella the Astrologer', preserved in the collection commemorating Isabella Andreini and other star players.⁵⁴ Rosalind also displays her 'sharper spirit' in the stylized wooing between Phoebe and Silvius, which Corin calls 'a pageant truly played / Between the pale complexion of true love / And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain' (3.4.46–8). Her chief delight lies in ambushing and berating Phoebe:

Who might be your mother,
That you insult, exult, and all at once,
Over the wretched? What though you have no beauty
(As, by my faith, I see no more in you
Than without candle can go dark to bed)
Must you be therefore proud and pitiless? (3.5.35–7)

When Phoebe falls hard for her, Rosalind the 'busy actor' promises Silvius and the audience a verbal display of insults: 'He's fall'n in love with your foulness, and she'll fall in love with my anger. If it be so, as fast as she answers thee with frowning looks, I'll sauce her with bitter words' (3.5.64–9). Rosalind revels in the privilege granted by her doublet and hose, and playing the disdainful youth lets her fire off some of her best quips.

What gives Rosalind trouble is performing adult manhood — she can be pert but not stoic, and her stolidity vanishes as he faints at the sight of Orlando's blood. Her actor's pride is hurt, and she repeatedly tries to pretend she is only counterfeiting shock. 'Ganymede' begs Oliver to 'tell your brother how well I counterfeited!' (4.3.166–7). By letting the gender mask slip, Shakespeare draws attention to the boy who is cleverly acting a woman who *fails* to 'counterfeit to be a man', as Oliver bids him (4.3.180). This boy diva is a specialist who is 'naturally' better at playing the woman's part. But then, a boy was explicitly not a man — neither a woman nor a man but something unformed and malleable, apt to mercurial shifts in emotion and ambiguities fitting the slippery calling of player. With this nuance, Shakespeare points to the subaltern boy beneath the role, since the boy players apprenticed to an adult actor and often rehearsed with him; sometimes the master would play the lover opposite his boy playing the innamorata.⁵⁵ We may speculate, therefore, that the actor playing Orlando may be Rosalind's master and teacher, a wholly theatrical relationship contributing to this scene, and to the dynamics of all their scenes together. In a pastoral comedy of this kind played by the *comici*, the analogous relationship between the lovers might be that of husband and wife, with the wife the 'master' in terms of stardom and economic power.

After the play is over, Rosalind boldly removes her gender mask, in a joke that seems artlessly unrehearsed: 'If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me' (Epilogue, 14–16). Invoking the absent woman player here may be Shakespeare's way of bidding adieu to the actress his play has summoned, since she was often charged with seducing her male spectators and going off with them to kiss, and more, after the play.⁵⁶ As in Cleopatra's putdown of the boy players, in this moment the boy actress invites the audience to judge whether he has personated a woman so well that he can name the woman player and still gain applause.

In short, women and boys were not 'cattle of this colour' when they played roles on stage. As I have argued, the English knew this all too well, having heard about their glamorous rivals years before the first paying theatres were built. They could not help feeling a touch of 'diva envy' as they struggled to generate plays that would pull in crowds of men and women with both rumbustious male-centred action and romantic plots full of elegant wooing, star-crossed lovers, and witty women capable of bawdy quibbling and mercurial passions. Diva envy generated pressures that were highly productive for English drama, leading Shakespeare and others to create, for the first

time, complex, central, articulate, and agential female roles that combined the Italianate glamour and methods of the foreign actress with the skills and distinctive identity of the English boy player.

Some boys knew very well they were not up to playing bi-fold roles like Rosalind/Ganymede. The Induction to John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (1600) shows amused pity for the boy cast to play the tricky doubled lead of Antonio and his disguise as Florizell, the beautiful Amazon.

ANTONIO I was never worse fitted since the nativity of my actorship. I shall be hissed at, on my life now.

FELICE Why, what must you play?

ANTONIO Faith, I know not what — an hermaphrodite, two parts in one; my true person being Antonio, son to the Duke of Genoa, though for the love of Mellida, Piero's daughter, I take this feigned presence of an Amazon, calling myself Florizell and I know not what. I a voice to play a lady? I'll ne'er do it. (Ind. 64–79)⁵⁷

His fellow player tells him he simply has no choice. The stage is no place for the faint-hearted: 'Not play two parts in one? Away, away, 'tis common fashion. Nay, if you cannot bear two subtle fronts under one hood, idiot, go by, go by, off this world's stage' (71–3). The 'common fashion' demanded subtler dualities, and the English complied with plays that came to surpass those from the continent. Exploiting the inherent duplicity of the all-male stage, the English devised a novel form of double translation using the mimetic arsenal of the Renaissance actress, a key figure in the transnational exchange of theatrical forms.

Some of their virtuosic audacity was translated through scripts, but the proof came in performance, when that virtuosity was 'translated' via the bodies and voices of young male actors who had the challenge of greatness thrust upon them. The resulting new stage type was a hybrid marvel forged under pressure — neither Italian nor English, neither boy nor woman, but a boy diva. The players and writers who built a flourishing business on 'Englished' Italian materials and methods had little choice but to adapt: the revolution in playing and playmaking caused by the advent of the actress was irreversible. The diva might be parodied, simulated, or bewhored, but she could not be ignored.

Notes

- 1 All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, 2009).
- 2 E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1961), 2.261–5; Kathleen M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy: A Study in the Commedia dell’Arte, 1560–1620* (2 vols) (New York, 1962), 2.347–9.
- 3 See Pamela Allen Brown, ‘Dido, Boy Diva of Carthage’, Eric Nicholson and Robert Henke (eds), *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater II* (forthcoming). The prima donna never confined herself to comedy, adding tragicomedy and the occasional tragedy to the Italians’ repertory, as Robert Henke has shown in *Performance and Literature in the Commedia dell’Arte* (Cambridge, 2002), chapter 6, and ‘Virtuosity and Mimesis in the Commedia dell’Arte and *Hamlet*’, Michele Marrapodi (ed.), *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare & His Contemporaries* (Aldershot, 2007).
- 4 David Mann, *Shakespeare’s Women: Performance and Conception* (Cambridge, 2008); see appendix on size of female roles over time.
- 5 Works on the Renaissance actresses in relation to early modern English drama, all of which have influenced and enriched this essay, include Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (New Haven, 1989), esp. 257–80 on the career and writings of Isabella Andreini compared to Shakespeare’s, Henke, ‘Virtuosity’, Eric Nicholson, ‘Ophelia Sings Like a *Prima Donna Innamorata*: Ophelia’s Mad Scene and the Italian Female Performer’, Eric Nicholson and Robert Henke (eds), *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater* (Aldershot, UK, 2008); Julie Campbell, ‘“Merry, Nimble, Stirring Spirit[s]”: Academic, Salon and Commedia dell’Arte Influences on the *Innamorate* in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*’, and Rachel Poulsen, ‘Women Performing Homoerotic Desire in English and Italian Comedy: *La Calandria*, *Gl’Ingannati*, and *Twelfth Night*’, both in Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin (eds), *Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot, 2005), Frances Barasch, ‘Italian Actresses in Shakespeare’s World: Flaminia and Vincenza’, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 18.4 (2000), ‘Italian Actresses in Shakespeare’s World: Vittoria and Isabella’, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 19.3 (2001), and Peter Parolin, ‘“A Strange Fury Entered My House”: Italian Actresses and Female Performance in *Volpone*’, *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 39 (1998). Also see Pamela Allen Brown, ‘The Counterfeit *Innamorata*, or The Diva Vanishes’, Holger Michael Klein and Michele Marrapodi (eds), *Shakespeare and Italy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

- 6 M.A. Katritzky, *The Art of Commedia: A Study in the Commedia dell'Arte 1560–1620 with Special Reference to the Visual Records* (Amsterdam, 2006), 86.
- 7 Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, 2.261. On Sidney, see Michael G. Brennan, 'English Contact with Europe,' *Shakespeare and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Paul Hammond (London, 2005), 72–3.
- 8 Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, 2.347–9.
- 9 Key visits by Italian players took place in 1574, 1577, 1578, and 1602; actresses appear in records of these visits in 1574 and 1578, although they may have come more frequently. See Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, part three, Robert Henke, 'Back to the Future: A Review of Comparative Studies in Shakespeare and the Commedia dell'Arte', *Early Theatre* 11.2 (2008); and Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte: A Documentary History* (Oxford, 1990), esp. 262–6.
- 10 Robert Henke, 'Back to the Future', 222.
- 11 Only Drusiano Martinelli is named on the license of 1578 but the presence of actresses is noted. For speculation on their names, see Katritzky, *Art of Commedia*, 88–9.
- 12 *The Revels History of Drama in English*, Clifford Leech, T.W. Craik, and Lois Potter (eds), 8 vols. (New York, 1996), 2.227.
- 13 Clubb, *Italian Drama*, 279–80.
- 14 Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse His Supplication to the Diuell* (London, 1595), 27.
- 15 Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte*, 264.
- 16 Richards and Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte*, 263, Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, 339–697; on intertexts and adaptations in drama see Michele Marrapodi (ed.), *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare & His Contemporaries: Rewriting, Remaking, Refashioning* (Aldershot, 2007).
- 17 On the special importance of language training and translation in this process see Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation* (Cambridge, 2005), and Jason Lawrence, 'Who the Devil Taught Thee so Much Italian?' *Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2005). On touring players see Andrew Grewar, 'Shakespeare and the Actors of the Commedia dell'Arte', David J. George and Christopher J. Gossip (eds), *Studies in the Commedia dell'Arte* (Cardiff, 1993), and Louis B. Wright, 'Will Kemp and the Commedia dell'Arte', *Modern Language Notes* 41.8 (1926).
- 18 Charles Hughes (ed.), *Shakespeare's Europe: Unpublished Chapters of Fynes Moryon's Itinerary* (London, 1903), 465, George Whetstone, *An Heptameron of Ciuill Discourses* (London, 1582), sigs. R2–R4, Thomas Coryate, *Coryats Crudities; Hastily Gobled Vp in Five Moneths Trauells* (London, 1611), 247.
- 19 Marvin Herrick, *Italian Comedy in the Renaissance* (Urbana, 1960), 227.

- 20 Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London, 1582).
- 21 Robert Henke, *Pastoral Transformations: Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Newark, DE, 1997), 46. Florio cites plays he used in compiling *Queen Anna's New World of Words* (London, 1611), including 'Amor Constante', 'Celestina', 'Clitia', 'Inganni', 'La Dalida', 'Pastor Fido', 'Spiritata', and 'Torrismondo'.
- 22 Florio also mentions Garzoni twice in his Epistle to *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598), saying that English readers learned in Italian will find some writers hard, such as 'Petrarch, Boccace, Dante, Aretino ... so how can we aim at Francesco Doni, who is so fantasticall, & so strange? Tomaso Garzoni in his Piazza universale [?]'.
- 23 Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Venice, 1626), 319v-321v. Translation by author.
- 24 Andreini has attracted more scholarly attention than any Renaissance actress, in part because of her published poetry, drama, and letters. For overviews see Julie D. Campbell, 'Introduction', Isabella Andreini, *La Mirtilla, A Pastoral*, trans. Julie D. Campbell (Tempe, 2002) and Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Oxford, 2003).
- 25 James M. Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven, 1996), Clubb, *Italian Drama* 262–6, and Eric Nicholson, 'Ophelia Sings Like a Prima Donna Innamorata'. Nicholson shows that the complex theatregram of female madness was international in scope and shaped Ophelia's tragicomic madness.
- 26 MacNeil, *Music and Women*, Richard Andrews, 'Isabella Andreini and Others: Women on Stage in the Late Cinquecento', Letizia Panizza (ed.), *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society* (Oxford, 2000), Francesca Romana de' Angelis, *La divina Isabella: vita straordinario di una donna del Cinquecento* (Florence, 1991). On Andreini's intellectual self-fashioning see Sarah Ross, *The Birth of Feminism* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 213, 234.
- 27 See the title page in Isabella Andreini, *Lettere D'Isabella Andreini Padovana, Comica Gelosa, et Academica Intenta, Nominata l'Accesa* (Venice, 1607).
- 28 Lucy Munro discusses these and other plays in 'Song and Women's Theatricality in Elizabethan Children's Company Plays' (unpublished essay, 2009) and suggests that newly dramatic singing roles for boys owes something to the influence of foreign women singers and performers in the period (19). I would like to thank Dr Munro for sharing her work with me before publication.
- 29 Michael Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly: Eros and Eliza* (New York, 1996), Violet Jeffery, *John Lyly and the Italian Renaissance* (Paris, 1928).
- 30 Michael Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama* (New York, 1975), 49–51.

- 31 The father of Thomas Clifton, a boy forcibly impressed into a company, complained that the players threatened Thomas with a beating if he did not learn his part. On the notorious 'kidnaping' case see Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge, 2005), 17, 37; and Jackson Cope, 'Marlowe's Dido and the Titillating Children,' *English Literary Renaissance* 4 (1974), 318.
- 32 Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom*, 52.
- 33 The first professional actresses on the English stage appeared in 1660; but see the discussion in Brown and Parolin, *Women Players*, 3–5. On why the English stage remained all-male for so long see Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge, 1996), and Michael Shapiro, 'The Introduction of Actresses: Delay or Defensiveness?', Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (eds), *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage* (Urbana, 1999). Orgel argues that the English preferred transvestite boys; Shapiro argues that lack of trained women and the demands of the master-apprentice system were more significant.
- 34 Brown and Parolin, *Women Players*, and Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage* (Manchester, 2002).
- 35 Richard Vennar, *England's Joy* (London, 1602), Herbert Berry, 'England's Joy', *English Literary Renaissance* 31.2 (2001).
- 36 John Marston, *Histriomastix. Or the Player Whipt* (London, 1599), 2.1.
- 37 See Robert Henke on the lavish funeral oration for Vincenza Armani by the actor Adriano Valerini, and Luigi Rogna's report on the rivalry of Armani and Flaminia in Mantua, where they adapted and starred in a tragedy and tragicomedy. Henke, *Performance and Literature*, 86–100.
- 38 On salonnistes and actresses see Julie D. Campbell, "Merry, nimble, stirring spirit[s]".
- 39 For an excellent overview of both, see Roberta Barker, "Not One Thing Exactly': Gender, Performance and Critical Debates over the Early Modern Boy-Actress", *Literature Compass* 6/2 (2009).
- 40 To take one important example, Italian plays and scenarios with disguised siblings and cross-dressing often bear the marks of *Gli Ingannati*, as does *Twelfth Night* (Robert Melzi, 'From Lelia to Viola', *Renaissance Quarterly* 9 [1966]). Italian and English playwrights and actors based many plots on the same tragic novellas: the Gismonda story from Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Bandello's *Romeo and Giulietta* are examples.
- 41 Richard Andrews, 'Shakespeare and Italian Comedy', Paul Hammond and Andrew Hadfield (eds), *Shakespeare and Renaissance Europe* (London, 2005), 127, and 'The

- Cinquecento: Theatre', Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (eds), *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge, 1996), 282, 298.
- 42 On theatregrams see Clubb, *Italian Drama*, 1–28. Richard Andrews provides a helpful list of *erudita* comedies that provided plot elements to the *comici* as reflected in scenarios, including the Intronati's *Gli Ingannati*, Bibbiena's *La Calandra*, Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*, Piccolomini's *Amor costante* and Bargagli's *La Pellegrina*; see *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala: A Translation and Analysis of 30 Scenarios* (Lanham, MD, 2008), xix.
- 43 While she does not consider the impact of actresses, Marianne Novy examines 'tragic women as actors and audience' and explores parallels between actual women and the male actors who played them (low social status, dependence on pleasing others, marginality), in *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill, 1984), 82–124.
- 44 Amanda Bailey, "'Bought my boy": The Boy as Accessory on the Early Modern Stage', M. Bella Mirabella (ed.), *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories* (Ann Arbor, 2011), 314, and Jackson Cope, 'Marlowe's Dido', 318.
- 45 See Kerr, 'The Italian Actress', 186–7. Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino maintain that actresses came from the ranks of the *cortigiane oneste*; Taviani and Schino, *Il segreto della Commedia dell'Arte* (Florence, 1982).
- 46 Lois Potter believes that boys usually did not improvise (*Revels History*, 2.210). Also see Cope, 'Marlowe's Dido', 318, and Scott McMillin, 'The Sharer and His Boy: Rehearsing Shakespeare's Women', Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (eds), *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2004). John Marston imitates backstage chatter among boy players in *Antonio and Mellida*, but whether that suggests a greater liberty in children's plays is hard to say. Though a few 'boy actresses' gained short-lived fame (such as Salomon Pavy, Richard Robinson, and Stephen Hammerton), it seems unlikely that any had the standing of stars like Kemp or Burbage who could risk throwing other actors 'out' by improvising. On the other hand, playscripts existed in so many separate parts that actors had to ad lib to cover inevitable gaps and missed cues, as Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern argue in *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford, 2007).
- 47 Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 1993), 70–1, 158–9, 176–85.
- 48 Scholars continue to debate the age of 'boy actresses,' but evidence suggests that boys in adult companies began acting minor roles at about age 12, when they were paired with a master who trained them; and most ended their careers by age 21. See David Kathman, 'How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?', *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005). Also see Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of*

- Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York, 1977), Mann, *Shakespeare's Women*, and McMillin, 'The Sharer and his Boy'.
- 49 Martinelli signed a letter to the Duke of Mantua in this fashion. Alessandro D'Ancona, *Origini de teatro italiano* (Torino: E. Loescher, 1891), 478–9.
- 50 Diana Ponti directed the Desiosi; Vittoria Piissimi was prima donna of the Gelosi, but left to direct the Confidenti. Isabella Andreini succeeded her in the Gelosi and co-led the troupe at times with her husband Francesco. Giacomo Oreglia, *The Commedia dell'Arte*, trans. Lovett F. Edwards (New York, 1968), 136–9.
- 51 For many examples see Andrews, *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala*.
- 52 Peter Stallybrass, 'Transvestitism and the "Body Beneath": Speculating on the Boy Actor', and Bruce R. Smith, 'Making a Difference: Male/male "desire" in Tragedy, Comedy and Tragic-comedy', both in Susan Zimmerman (ed.), *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* (London, 1992), and Denise A. Walen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, 2005), Poulsen, 'Women Performing Homoerotic Desire'.
- 53 See Virginia Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France: 1540–1750* (Cambridge, 2010) and Virginia Scott and Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Performance, Poetry and Politics on the Queen's Day: Catherine De Medicis and Pierre De Ronsard at Fontainebleau* (Aldershot, UK, 2007).
- 54 See Day 36 (*Isabella l'astrologo*), in Andrews, *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala*. The innamorata plays a wonder-working magician in Day 44, *Rosalba incantatrice* (a 'Heroic Drama').
- 55 McMillin, 'The Sharer and His Boy', 237.
- 56 Boy players were also charged with seducing audiences (both male and female) but this moment insists for its wit on the erotic distinction between a woman player and a boy player.
- 57 Induction, *Antonio and Mellida*, in John Marston, *The Malcontent and Other Plays* (Oxford, 1997), ll 64–9.