

## Culinary Professions in Early Modern Italian Comedy

April Danielle Weintritt

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Studies.

Chapel Hill  
2018

Approved by:

Ennio Rao

Maggie Fritz-Morkin

Jessica Wolfe

Marisa Escolar

Federico Luisetti

© 2018  
April Danielle Weintritt  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

April D. Weintritt: Culinary Professions in Early Modern Italian Comedy  
(Under the direction of Ennio Rao)

This dissertation explores representations of the cook and the deliveryman – *il cuoco e lo zanaiuolo* – in Renaissance Italian comedy (1509-1560). The figure of the cook is well established in ancient comedy and in Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae* (*The Learned Banqueters*), and centuries later several playwrights, including Ludovico Ariosto, Agnolo Firenzuola, Alessandro Piccolomini, Giovan Battista Gelli, and Giovanni Maria Cecchi, feature cooks and novel food purveyors in their comedies. In a rapidly changing Early Modern society, culinary professionals provide crucial insight into the sustenance of households in urban centers, mediating how communities interact with their foods. As members of the working class, cooks and deliverymen offer a unique perspective on social dynamics of the period, different from that offered by political and religious courts. Comedies that include these professionals rely, in part, on previous canons to characterize the figures, yet they do so in conversation with contemporary settings and everyday realities of Early Modern Italy. As cooks reappear on the stage throughout the sixteenth century, typified roles establish them as a Renaissance version of the classical stock character. The development of the novel deliveryman as a member of the cast, instead, suggests an increasingly diverse number of professions in Italian city centers and a consequential push towards innovative representations of a more inclusive world in Early Modern theater.

“Alla mia massara e il mio cuochino – siete i doni (δῶρα) della mia vita”

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 1: PARADIGMS OF THE COOK .....	21
INTRODUCTION .....	21
THE ANCIENT COOK: <i>MAGEIROS</i> AND <i>COQUUS</i> .....	23
THE MEDIEVAL COOK: THE DEVIL IN THE KITCHEN.....	30
THE CULINARY SWERVE: HOW THE COOK BECAME MODERN .....	47
CHAPTER 2: THE COOKS OF ARIOSTO, FIRENZUOLA, AND PICCOLOMINI .....	71
INTRODUCTION .....	71
AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF THE COOK: DALIO IN ARIOSTO’S <i>I SUPPOSITI</i> .....	72
“GRATTUGIA, GRATTUGIA SENZA CACIO:” FIRENZUOLA’S COOK IN <i>I LUCIDI</i> .....	88
PICCOLOMINI’S COOK <i>CORNACCHIA: UN AMORE COSTANTE</i> FOR AGNOLETTA .....	105
CHAPTER 3: FLORENCE’S <i>ZANAIUOLI</i> IN MID-SIXTEENTH CENTURY COMEDY.....	120
INTRODUCTION .....	120
<i>ZANAIUOLI</i> = DELIVERYMEN .....	126
THE COMEDIES OF GIOVAN BATTISTA GELLI.....	130
GIOVAN MARIA CECCHI’S <i>L’AMMALATA</i> .....	141
FRANCESCO D’AMBRA’S <i>I BERNARDI</i> AND OTHER MENTIONS OF <i>ZANAIUOLI</i> .....	144

THE PLACE OF <i>ZANAIUOLI</i> AND OTHER URBAN CULINARY PROFESSIONALS IN COMEDY AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT.....	149
CONCLUSION .....	162
REFERENCES.....	166

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores representations of the cook and the deliveryman – *il cuoco e lo zanaiuolo* – in Renaissance Italian comedy (1509-1560). The figure of the cook is well established in ancient comedy and in Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae* (*The Learned Banqueters*), and centuries later several playwrights, including Ludovico Ariosto, Agnolo Firenzuola, Alessandro Piccolomini, Giovan Battista Gelli, and Giovanni Maria Cecchi, feature cooks and novel food purveyors in their comedies. In a rapidly changing Early Modern society, culinary professionals provide crucial insight into the sustenance of households in urban centers, mediating how communities interact with their foods. As members of the working class, cooks and deliverymen offer a unique perspective on social dynamics of the period, different from that offered by political and religious courts. Comedies that include these professionals rely, in part, on previous canons to characterize the figures, yet they do so in conversation with contemporary settings and everyday realities of Early Modern Italy. As cooks reappear on the stage throughout the sixteenth century, typified roles establish them as a Renaissance version of the classical stock character. The development of the novel deliveryman as a member of the cast, instead, suggests an increasingly diverse number of professions in Italian city centers and a consequential push towards innovative representations of a more inclusive world in Early Modern theater.

In this study I will adopt different approaches. Any study of the theatrical representations of culinary professionals must consider the state of material and metaphorical food studies, of Italian Renaissance theater studies, and how these two relate to notions of the comic. Current

trends in food studies interact with literary and artistic fields to address how – and what – food communicates about people and places; food is used both to create social and political distinctions and to bring people and discourses together. Italian Renaissance theater studies have always been in a tough spot: on the one hand, exalting the masters of *commedia erudita* and, on the other, denouncing a lack of originality among all other “average” playwrights. Attempts have been made over the years since the 1970s to pinpoint the innovation of Renaissance playwrights, most of these highlighting only the most radical levels of innovation that usually serve future studies in the genre very little. The most difficult realm in which cooks and food purveyors must be studied is the comic, which intersects both with the playful use of food and a playwright’s understanding of the genre. The comic, particularly non-satiric laughter, is not a fixed point now, nor was it in Early Modern Italy. Theater scholars’, and in particular Douglas Radcliff-Umstead’s and Richard Andrews’, appreciation of the divergence between theory and practice in comedy helps us understand how deliverymen can create laughter without being exclusively laughed at. While it may seem trite, this is important. It is, in my opinion, properly the flexible social position of the culinary professional that releases him from the carnival-comedy role of the servant and warrants such a study. To close the introduction, I will outline the three chapters that compose this study.

Food is an essential unifier of peoples and places, highlighting our needs for survival and nutrition, community, pleasure, yet also the omen of starvation and plight. Foods and their diverse meanings are the subject of many recent literary and cultural studies. Massimo Montanari tells us that food is always a cultural fact, in production, preparation, and consumption. Indeed, in *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern*



*Europe*, Timothy Tomasik and Juliann Vitullo introduce food as a ‘total social fact’ drawing on the terminology of Marcel Mauss. As an integral part of culture, foodways represent a privileged site of cultural communication. Food communicates both materially and metaphorically: it – and culinary professionals – are the subject of real, historical social data and of the symbolic codification of meanings. The material and metaphorical cultures of food intersect to reveal how preparation and consumption nourish and feed social, cultural, and spiritual realities. And it is near impossible to dissociate on a superficial level metaphorical from material uses of food in the arts. Yet this fact demonstrates the richness and complexity of food’s place in human culture (Tomasik and Vitullo xi-ii). Indeed, some scholars have worried that the material culture of food and literary genres, such as satire, parody, and fiction more broadly, will clash in a struggle between truth and fantasy. This is a true challenge, to which many have responded. Food scholars Massimo Montanari, Alberto Capatti, and Jean-Louis Flandrin are careful to provide historical/anthropological perspectives on gastronomic culture. Piero Camporesi, Allen Grieco, and Ken Albala, very different scholars amongst themselves, have nevertheless spent their individual careers carving out a space in which we can talk of food as materiality and hyperbole, as everyday ritual and carnival. Thus, alimentary-focused discourse can be analyzed within literary tradition and for its linguistic invention. Here, I always include the cook and other culinary professionals in my idea of alimentary-focused discourse. In my view, we simply cannot dissociate how we study food from how we approach those who prepare it.

In Early Modern studies, we have already mentioned Timothy Tomasik and Juliann Vitullo’s edited volume *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2007). Michel Jeanneret also completed a massive, wonderful study of Rabelais and other humanist and Renaissance banquets with his *Des mets et des mots*:

*banquets et propos de table à la Renaissance (A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance - 1991)*. He sought to illustrate how banquet and convivial discourse unifies high art and low culture at the same table. Bruce Boehrer's *The Fury of Men's Gullets* (1997) traces the same contamination of high, stylized art (theater in sixteenth-century England) and low culture in Ben Jonson's use of alimentary and digestive motifs. The demand for spices – their material and symbolic meaning in relation to class and social status – and the high volume of traffic on trade routes to the East have also been studied in depth in the last thirty years. These mark only a few methods of imagining authentic and codified uses of foodstuffs across Early Modern Europe.

The weight of gastronomy in the Italian literary imaginary is well known. An extensive, encyclopedic collection of food *topoi* from Dante to Camilleri by Gian Mario Anselmi and Gino Ruozzi in 2013 recently reestablished this fact. In Early Modern Italian studies, focus has been placed on the burlesque poets, championed by Francesco Berni, the use of food in the *Decameron* and Renaissance epic, and in the *pittura ridicole* and the realism of late sixteenth-century visual arts. As an example, Laura Giannetti analyzes the food motifs that bring about a creative explosion of new works in sixteenth-century Italian poetry. She examines metaphors, parodies, and cultural readings of alimentary discourse in Francesco Berni and his followers, the *poeti berneschi*. Here, food is the gateway to the interpretation and contamination of cultures and offers a humorous outlet for transgression of *auctoritas* and genre (*Alla mensa dei poeti burleschi*, 143). Pina Palma points to food's power to reveal larger social facts: "by studying food one can understand social and cultural phenomena of those who consume it" (*Of Courtesans, Knights, Cooks, and Writers*, 37). Palma argues that political and religious invectives as well as transgressions of social norms can be found by decoding the presence of food in her studies on Boccaccio and Renaissance epic.

A select number of food historians have recently studied cooks and other early culinary professionals in the Early Modern European context. Terence Scully's *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages* (1995) and Bridget Ann Henisch's *The Medieval Cook* (2009) excavate a wealth of evidence concerning the medieval cook, whereas Katherine McIver and Claudio Benporat have contributed volumes on Renaissance food for Italian and English-speaking scholar communities in the last decade: *Cooking and eating in the Renaissance* (2015) by McIver and *Cucina e convivialità nel Cinquecento* (2007) by Benporat. Benporat's research also focuses on convivial and banquet culture in the Tre and Quattrocento. Some scholars include discussions of the cook in their histories of Italian food: John Dickie in his *Delizia! The Epic History of Italians and Their Food* (2007) and Fabio Parasecoli in his *Food Culture in Italy* (2004) and *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy* (2014). Luigi Ballerini's introduction to the first autographed cookbook in *volgare* by Maestro Martino of Como situates the cook into the economic and social realities of fifteenth-century Italy. Thus, the cook in a historical sense has been dutifully studied. All scholars underscore the importance of cookery and cooks to understanding the foodways of the Early Modern period, and they will all be referenced in detail in Chapter One's survey of the figure of the cook.

Indeed, because theater is the locus of people, society and culture, a study of culinary professionals brings to the surface new ways of understanding how people lived. John Dickie's description of the cook's role in society proves the special character of the profession:

Cooks made a living from their appreciation of what the countryside could offer the city, and of what the city's trades and artisans could offer its wealthy classes. They were the great go-betweens of Italian gastronomy. As the seasons, the prices and their employers' or customers' fancy changed, they would network constantly to find suppliers and discover recipes. It was through cooks that an understanding of good food circulated between poor and rich, the country and the town. The leading cooks were therefore the monarchs of Italy's famed urban markets, sampling, questioning and commanding as they strode knowledgeably from stall to stall. [...] In a world where honour was all, a cook

was expected to put his employer's honour, and his own, above everything else. Chefs moved between social classes, between their employers and their own staff, so they had to be polite to everyone, while trusting none of their underlings. The best chefs were alert, clean, patient, and as sober as possible – drink was known to interfere with the natural taste of things. (106-7)

Dickie places the cook at the heart of urban society, but in a way that expresses the intense cultural and social mobility of his position. Cooks moved between social classes, frequented noble and bourgeois homes as well as less esteemed areas of the marketplace. While Dickie's language may make his image of a cook idealized, the essence of his statement is not wrong. When such a socially flexible and mobile character appears on stage, we can expect to learn a great deal about – to borrow from Palma – the cultural and social phenomena of the cook's contact zones. Yet unlike Palma's work, this study shifts interest away from food as a symbolic object of power and/or transgression in order to prove that playwrights were innovating by giving attention to the everyday quality of their environment.

Yet no study combining Italian Renaissance theater and foodways or culinary professionals exists to date. Meanwhile, such analyses have been performed on other important theatrical traditions. A collection of essays on food on Shakespeare's stage – *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England* – has been recently published. John Wilkins' *The Boastful Chef: The Discourses of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy* treats the image of the cook in ancient Greek comedy, and J.C.B. Lowe's studies of the Plautine cooks seek to navigate the contamination of literary imitation of the Greeks with contemporary Roman realities of cooks and butchers. Lowe identifies the situations and motifs that we might look for when studying Italian theater: "Ordinary, as well as special, meals are naturally often mentioned in comedy, as part of the everyday world which comedy depicts [...] In carefully constructed plots, meals and their preparation can also perform a useful technical function by marking the

passage of time and by motivating characters' movements" (75-6). All these studies illustrate how the thematics of the everyday, the culinary, and the comic work together in comedy. What people ate – food as a symbolic and material object – is clearly indicative of a society, as should be the people who produce and prepare it. We know that early sixteenth-century Italian theater offers the model of dramatic practice to most later European theaters. In parallel, food and cooks that become famous in Early Modern Europe are based on an Italian model. If Shakespeare's use of foodstuffs and craftsmen merits study, Italian archetypes should be addressed. Thus, I view research in Italian theater as a necessary addition to the growing list of studies that attempt to understand how literary, philosophical, and cultural discourses interface with the realities of food and people. In Renaissance theater studies, the specific details of quotidian settings and characters are of paramount importance.

It can be unequivocally stated that Renaissance Italian comedy gains much from classical models, from *novella*, and, by the mid-sixteenth century, also from the first endeavors of Ariosto and Bibbiena in *commedia erudita*. Comedy should also be recognized as a site of continual reassessment of its task of representing ever-changing contemporary society and its population. The portrayal of contemporary mores may both delight spectators and critique some of society's more pressing ills. Yet, the history Renaissance theater criticism is far more complex.

Today we still contend with the strong pronouncements of Francesco De Sanctis, Benedetto Croce, Alessandro D'Ancona, and their American counterparts, such as Marvin Herrick, in the study of Renaissance theater and of texts for the stage. They assert in various formulations that early Renaissance dramatuges were above all copyists of their classical forefathers. Italian playwrights wrote "commedie di ricostruzione, di puro meccanismo" (De

Sanctis 493-540). Furthermore, Renaissance comedies were “lavori di ricalco e compilazione, importanti nella storia della cultura, ma non in quella della poesia, nella quale sono muti (Croce 12-20).” In English these remarks have translated to a common condemnation of “slavish imitation.” Even when forced to acknowledge the contamination of sources and innovation by the writers of comedy, many twentieth-century scholars still viewed the stories as excessively based on plotlines from Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence, and Boccaccio. Past generations of scholars have quickly set aside many comedies after mere surface level reviews. With the exception of three or four masterpieces, Italian Renaissance comedies were considered unoriginal and of little interest.

Before moving on to scholars who have properly worked against these prejudices, it is useful to point out a few historical facts that may temper them. The fifteenth century was widely a period of transition for theater performances. The first comedies performed in humanist and early Renaissance centers were original plays of Plautus recited in Latin. Also original theatrical works were performed in Latin for student populations that did not seem to pronounce judgments on acceptable percentages of original versus imitative content. Furthermore, illustrated text editions of original Roman plays also circulated in this period; the characters and backgrounds, however, reflected Renaissance urban spaces and dress. These illustrated edition of original Roman comedies must have profoundly influenced their staged performances. Finally, studies in the history of Italian theater – *storia dello spettacolo* – reveal that renowned playwrights were producers and directors of unaltered Roman comedies for the courts. Such is the case of Ludovico Ariosto’s early theater work when he directed Plautine comedies in Ferrara for the Este court.

These factors led to a willful and conscious imitation of those classical plays in their original state. Ariosto, in fact, never failed to acknowledge his reliance upon Plautus and Terence in all of his original dramatic pieces. In the prologue to *I suppositi*, for example, he pays homage to his predecessors and directly addresses this debate.<sup>1</sup> He declares to have used Plautus and Terence's works as inspiration, and he is sure that they would not consider his action thievery. Clearly there is an awareness of intellectual theft in this period, else Ariosto would not mention the possibility of plagiarism. However, the poet claims that he has not committed such an act and no epistolary evidence suggests that others found *I suppositi* too similar to its models. Therefore, a study of the text and its models side-by-side indicates the level of flexibility and ambiguity allowed in the relationship between classical and Renaissance comedies in the playwright's contemporary society.

Yet a benevolent eye to imitation has rarely been granted over the centuries. Scholars routinely cite that Italian theater was crucial to European development, but resign many playwrights to oblivion after briefly admonishing them for their all too faithful imitations of ancient models. Louise George Clubb's keen study of Italian Renaissance theater criticism explains this excellently, giving as example Ludovico Zorzi. To begin her work, Clubb suggests almost comically that we have long apologized for Italian Renaissance theater. Even a scholar such as Zorzi, who, by no short measure, establishes the Italian field of *storia dello spettacolo* and brings about countless new understandings of Renaissance playwrights, often gives Italian drama less than its due. Zorzi was a renowned scholar of Angelo Beolco, il Ruzante (1496?-1542) – the premier dramaturge of the Veneto region before Carlo Goldoni – but he hesitates to

---

<sup>1</sup> Addressing debates in theater or specific criticisms is not a new development of the Renaissance stage. It was widely practiced by Terence, most famously in his first comedy *Andria*.

glorify Ruzante in his own right. Instead, Zorzi forwards an anachronistic idea that Ruzante “shakespeareggia”:

per dirla con Marx, [Ruzante] scopre veramente sé stesso e shakespeareggia: se shakespeareggia significa, secondo il concorde giudizio, rappresentare la genuina natura umana contro gli schemi convenzionali, e la costruzione di personaggi secondo idee perconcette e modelli moralistici” (Introduzione dell’editore a *Teatro, prima edizione completa* of Ruzante).

According to Zorzi’s assessment, Ruzante can only be exalted within Shakespearean terms. Also significant is the fact that if he is praised, it is only because his works break with conventional and ‘classicheggiante’ schemes. The apologetic tone and ensuing polarization between ‘classicheggiante’ and ‘moderno’ are problematic, not in the least because ‘classicheggiante’ is, therefore, bad and unworthy of study.

Thus Zorzi and his fellow scholars sought to revitalize Renaissance Italian theater as a site of invention. They did so by emphasizing only those works that completely distance themselves from the standard precepts of the genre.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Roberto Alonge has followed suit. His history of theater and performance (*Storia del teatro e dello spettacolo* - 2012) includes analyses of only those comedies that exist outside the normative structure of the period, thus furthering the binary of ‘classicheggiante’ and ‘moderno’ (65-82). But as Clubb suggests, isolating and celebrating certain works as anomalies of their times fails to fully explain theater as

---

<sup>2</sup> In these same years, Douglas Radcliff-Umstead completed a worthy study of comedy for an English and American audience with his *The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (1969). Radcliff-Umstead celebrates Italian drama a good deal more than his Italian contemporaries and he provides an essential review of comedy’s reception in literary history from the eighteenth century to his present day. He situates his study within the field by declaredly following in the footsteps of Alberto Agresti for whom “classical imitation in no way prevented the Erudite Comedy from presenting an accurate and masterful portrait of the sixteenth century” (15). Radcliff-Umstead distances himself, however, from Agresti’s “narrow moral opinions” and declares the aim of his study “to detail those elements which can be considered ‘modern’ in a theater that earlier critics have labeled as imitative and unoriginal” (22). Despite his efforts to recover comedies from previous scholars’ prejudice, he too analyzes mainly the recognized masters of the genre and divides comedies into: 1) The Humanist Prelude, 2) The Emergence of the Erudite Comedy, and 3) Rebel and Academic Comedies.



a site of multiplicity and proves “the political implications of such metahistorical polarization” (4).

In its stead, Clubb has proposed the term ‘theatergrams’ to help theorize diversity and assemblage in Renaissance theater. A theatergram is the character type that assumes all sorts of interesting characteristics depending on the necessities of the individual drama. In *Italian Drama in the Time of Shakespeare*, Clubb explains the dramaturges’ willful search for progressive variations and combinations across traditional and more irregular works of the sixteenth century. The singular peculiarities of characters that fit into a theatergram become crucial, and not futile, to understanding the place of the work as a whole in its contemporary community. Kristin Phillips-Court has expanded Clubb’s theory with the term “complex.” Having studied countless Petrarchan lover character types, she theorizes a theater complex, where pieces of plots and patterns are reconfigured in infinite new ways by each playwright. A complex “indicates an economy of meaning growing out of and around the cultural figure in question” (“Petrarchan Lover” 5). Court’s contribution establishes the broader cultural and social significance of plot and character development and helps us understand the importance of individual differences among culinary professionals in different comedies in this study. The concept of ‘theatergram’ or ‘complex’ of the cook and deliveryman allow for infinite new combinations of consciously imitated characteristics alongside the particularities of urban environments.

Returning to the evolution of Italian scholarship, the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century have seen periods of rebirth for Italian theater. The novel and exhaustive representations of urban realities have been exalted. A long list of Italian scholars includes Cesare Segre, Siro Ferrone, Giulio Davico Bonino, Giuliano Innamorati, Giorgio Padoan, Ludovico Zorzi, Giulio Ferroni, and Roberto Alonge. Their research investigates the portrayals

of the cities and landmarks that provided the settings of comedies. These scholars occasionally touch on comedy's characters, but overall their studies remain rather holistic evaluations and only of the distinctly new elements of the comedy under observation. In essence, if something seems classical at first glance, it is categorized as such and these scholars quickly move on.<sup>3</sup>

Recent theater work by Salvatore Di Maria underscores how a closer look at the seemingly 'classicheggiante' can be fruitful. His careful side-by-side readings of source drama and Renaissance texts prove originality even when they appear "too" similar on the surface.

The goal of Di Maria's *The Poetics of Imitation in the Italian Theatre of the Renaissance* is to demonstrate the original elements of Renaissance Italy's theater within the context of vast imitation of the classics. He denies the claim of slavish imitations of Roman theater, even if once itself an imitation of the ancient Greeks. His fresh consideration of Renaissance comedies looks to the proliferation of subtle plot changes, character complexes, and hybrid genres by attentive source studies, including ancient theater, Boccaccio, and accounts of contemporary historical events. It is here, in the minutiae of deviations, that Di Maria pinpoints those moments when playwrights "speak" to their contemporary society. For Di Maria, the semblance of social, political, and familial realities on stage demonstrate how the author critiques social mores (16-7). Unfortunately, Di Maria argues that the condemnation of corruption and immorality and the subsequent correction of behavior is what drive the updated, modern plots. Furthermore, he participates in the binary division of classical and modern by signaling the importance of only what is "modern" and ignoring the place of continuity in the remaining bits of text. It is here that

---

<sup>3</sup> This methodology is championed earlier in the twentieth century by Ireneo Sanesi. Radcliff-Umstead explains that the problem with Sanesi's exhaustive studies has been his understanding of artistic originality. For Sanesi, if a plot was similar to Terence and Plautus, the Renaissance comedy was not worthy of consideration. The late twentieth century is slightly different. Theater scholars are pushing past imitative plot models and now analyzing other comedic elements for signs of innovation. Sanesi's problem remains, however. If these "new" elements under consideration appear classical at first glance, they are ignored in favor of more radical changes, like an adaptation of the setting to the contemporary city or the use of a very popular form of the vernacular.

the culinary professional fits well into future research. The classical features of the cook cannot be ignored, as his characterization combines some stereotypes of older cooks with modern responsibilities and settings. Often, the enduring features of the cook are the comic ones, another vital aspect of understanding theater criticism.

Giulio Ferroni offers an important analysis of the comic on the Renaissance stage. Examples of the comic as biting satire are found in the negative commentary and critique of contemporary society. But this is just one typology of the comic and it can cloud research attempts in the foundational purpose of comedy: to delight spectators. In a discussion on the comic in Renaissance comedy, Giulio Ferroni hones in on the typologies of what seems to make us laugh. The comic finds fertile ground from *novella* to theater, first in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and then in the rest of Italian comic tradition. The comic similarity of the two genres is granted by their schemes of contradiction:

In termini più generali si può dire che l'esercizio del comico si dà principalmente sotto un segno che per me è essenziale, quello della contraddizione: una delle spinte fondamentali del comico di tutti i tempi è, infatti, legata a questa grande categoria, che indica la capacità di rovesciare qualcosa, vederla in un altro modo, osservare la realtà da un altro punto di vista. Il riso sorge sempre da uno scatto contraddittorio nei confronti dello svolgersi normale dell'esperienza, del discorso, del sentimento: la contraddittorietà del riso e del comico è fondamento della comicità, del *Decameron* e poi di tutta la tradizione comica italiana.<sup>4</sup> (Ferroni 19)

Ferroni suggests that the comic is bound to the unexpected and to the ability to observe reality from another point of view. Therefore, we can trace the comic also in the continual interest to make spectators laugh. The overturning of traditional social classes and domestic culture – the victory of a servant over a master or a wife berating her husband – appear comical throughout the ages. On the contrary, Florinda Nardi imagines the comic as exclusively modern. As editor of

---

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that Ferroni's articulation of the comic is not an absolute novelty. It resembles greatly Pirandello's theory on comedy as humor: an increasing feeling or perception of *il contrario* (the opposite) in an experience or event.

the collected volume *Comico, riso e modernità nella letteratura italiana tra Cinque e Ottocento*, she writes that the comic is *hic et nunc*, directly opposed to the classical: “Il comico, in tutte le sue forme, si fa rappresentazione di una società nell’*hic et nunc* [...] Lo stesso potere eversivo del comico costringe bruscamente a quel confronto con il ‘classico’, il ‘regolare’, persino il ‘normale’ che fa del comico un naturale veicolo del nuovo, del moderno” (XVII). It is certainly just as conceivable that situations arising in contemporary society make spectators laugh more than the jokes of Plautus and Terence. This is why it is important to study a Renaissance comedy alongside its classical model and contemporary material history of its characters. Once both sources have been considered, a better judgment can be made about the originality and modernity of the comic.

Source studies and contemporary material history are both better instruments than contemporary poetic and comedic theory. It is true that all playwrights practiced *imitatio*, *contaminatio*, *innovatio* as a maxim that included assemblage from diverse forms of inspiration. Alongside this trio was Cicero’s phrase handed down by Donatus’ commentary of Terence: *Comoedia est imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis*.<sup>5</sup> Only later did pure theoretical works appear; the Latin translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics* by Alessandro de’ Pazzi in 1536 and Giraldo Cinzio’s *Discorso intorno al comporre delle commedie e delle tragedie* in 1543 may discuss the composition of spectacle, but often they were not as influential as one might think. And Castelvetro did not publish a vernacular translation of the *Poetics* until 1570. Radcliff-Umstead makes a clear distinction between theory and practice: “When these first modern literary critics [those of the second half of the sixteenth century] considered the comedy, they were not referring to contemporary comedies. The critics of the Renaissance wanted to see

---

<sup>5</sup> Quintilian, Seneca, and Lucian also enter into erudite discussions on theater, yet only Seneca was actively read, commented, and imitated in the development of tragedy.

clear through to the idea of the perfect comedy. There was a preceptive approach that sought the immutable schemes of art" (*Birth of Modern Comedy* 2). Debates on theory flourished in the later half of the sixteenth century but they did not profoundly influence the actual practice of composing comedies for performance.

In the realm of theater practice, a discussion of the comic and moral utility, lively festivity and biting criticism, would be remiss not to consider the Bakhtinian approach. We know that most comedies were imagined for the topsy-turvy period of a world transgressing social norms, and the majority of performances are recorded as taking place during carnival. After carnival, social and domestic culture would return to 'normal.' Michal Bakhtin contributed to our understanding, in eager and euphoric tone, of the social, anthropological and psychological components of carnival. And the Bakhtinian approach today seeks to highlight a rich and vibrant comic spirit of the past, a moment in time before the comic loses its universality and turns into satiric and corrective laughter. We can easily see in early sixteenth-century comedy a complex set of socio-cultural impulses, in which both positive laughter and negative derision coexist. As previously mentioned, this represents a divergence of the practice and theory of comedy, as Richard Andrews has suggested:

Such carnival instincts, involving deliberate titillating play with the scurrilous, were firmly present in both life and texts of the Italian Renaissance, but the comic theory of the time was quite unable to face them. This was because all aesthetic theory, whether inherited from classical sources or from medieval theologians, was inextricably bound up with ethical and moral theory [...] A moral justification for comedy (as for all fiction, all culture) had been implicit in the commentaries of Donatus, and explicit in Aristotle, Cicero and Horace. (210)

It is certain that non-satiric laughter is hard to grasp and ambivalent, and Bakhtin's work persists as an excellent model for study of comic ambivalence. Instead of a binary and mutually exclusive typologizing of humor, understanding laughter as a mixture of praise and abuse is a

better approach to the cook and other culinary professions in Renaissance comedy. Richards confirms this by highlighting how Trissino's theory of the comic is a one-sided description of satiric laughter, not congruent with the comedies staged earlier in the century:

[It] does not cater for approving laughter, which in drama may be evoked by a virtuous trickster preying on a comic victim [...] by ingenuity of a piece of intrigue, or by any verbal wit and paradox which is a piece of deliberate skill rather than the result of error. Nor does Trissino's formulation make any reference to the carnival spirit whereby a fool, rogue, bawd or lecher can temporarily get the audience on his or her side, winning collusive approval for precisely those elements of 'ugliness' which in normal life would be disapproved and avoided. (209)

In the representations of cooks and deliverymen there will be veritable moments of "approving laughter" and "carnival spirit," distinct from the moralizing stances of pure comic theory. As we shall see, not all cooks are laughed at in order to deride them, and some will provoke laughter from a position of power in their comedies. We cannot suggest, as Di Maria does, that all updates to the setting and cast of Renaissance dramas are made in an effort to make critical commentaries on social mores. By doing so, we fail to grasp the light-hearted nature in contemporary parody by focusing too intently on satire, when we know that the carnival spirit was also present. It is as John Parkin has stated: "to dismiss the satiric potential of parodic forms or to read parody out of critical satire is tantamount to telling people what they are entitled to laugh at and why" (133).

Through the appreciation of the sociological and anthropological aspects of carnival and delight at vice, we can turn to the thematic approach of material and metaphorical food culture. Bruce Boehrer, who has worked extensively on Ben Jonson and Early Modern English Drama, suggests a more complex conceptualization of many authors' alimentary fascinations that draw on anthropological studies and Bakhtinian theory. His theoretical work provides excellent parallel points for our Medieval and Renaissance authors because the Italian context is pregnant with comic-realist literary heritage. Boehrer suggests that the study of alimentary and digestive

motifs offers a model of comedy governed by “normative and revisionary impulses [...] occupying relative positions, not of antithesis, but of two among many mutually necessary and mutually enabling conceptual possibilities, capable of changing their own sociopolitical character in accordance with shifts in the context within which they function” (18). If we agree that normative is the classical and revisionary impulses are modern, we see how easily Boehrer’s assessment of Ben Jonson’s comedy is one that applies to many theatrical works in sixteenth-century Italy. His articulation of mutually enabling conceptual possibilities draws out both Clubb’s call for recognition of comedy as a site of multiplicity and Court’s theory of a theater complex as an economy of meaning that may take on many forms. Moreover, Boehrer’s suggestions about the sociopolitical character of these impulses that can change according to the shifts in context are similar in some ways to Ferroni’s view of the comic that transverses many viewpoints and observes reality from another perspective.

Recently within studies on comedy the question of realism and realistic tendencies has been raised. Giulio Ferroni addresses this in his monographic study on Ariosto. Franco Fido also notes that intellectuals like Giovanni Battista Gelli and Giovanni Maria Cecchi took the premise of a realistic representation seriously. Ariosto’s *I suppositi* include a cook named Dalio, and of course, there was most likely no cook named Dalio in Ferrara in 1509 or deliverymen named Polo or Gian Pitto as suggested by Gelli’s *La sporta* and Cecchi’s *L’ammalata*. However, we can look to the inclusion of these characters with some conclusions in mind because they were important enough to the fabric of public and private spheres to be included in the works. Within the genre of theater a host of stock characters associated more or less with alimentary concerns and the body, including the parasite and the servant, has persisted since the classical period, yet neither staple is properly considered a culinary profession at the time. This is not the case of

cooks and deliverymen, who are included in the census data of various cities such as Florence, as we will see in Chapter Three. Thus, their realistic representations in comedy can tell us something of society that the great histories of principalities and court life cannot. Following the tenets of *speculum vitae* representations, more culinary professionals on stage would reflect more people working in the sector in the city. Often the story of the poor, the liminal, the marginalized is forgotten both by major histories and by most commissioned literary works. This is why an innovative ‘modern’ theater that pushes the boundaries of who is represented on stage proves so important to unlocking new perspectives on society.

To conclude, the battle to attribute dignity and pertinence to the authors of *commedia erudita* post-1525 is ongoing. Machiavelli obtains a preeminent spot as the truly innovative among playwrights and almost all other endeavors are dismissed as works of lesser quality. While the genius of Machiavelli should not be doubted, it should be mentioned that the unequivocally successful *La mandragola* is but one of his comedies. Machiavelli also penned *La Clizia*, a drama heavily reliant upon its Roman model. Therefore, it cannot be said, as some modern scholars do, that Machiavelli objected to the imitation of classical models. I believe that Guido Davico Bonino recounts best how we might approach this experience for a playwright. Bonino describes Ariosto’s battle for innovation and his urban consciousness as an open and continual game:

[...] il teatro dell’Ariosto s’apparenta poco o nulla all’archeologia teatrale: semmai rappresenta la sfida, assunta in proprio da un grande poeta, ad uscire fuori dai recinti della tradizione, latina e greca, per ricercare – grazie ad uno schietto senso della contemporaneità – una più temperie drammaturgica. *L’Ariosto vinse sempre e del tutto questa sfida? No certo. Ma è proprio questo senso di una partita aperta, di un conto mai interamente saldato con il passato, che ci affascina quando rileggiamo le sue commedie.* (VI)<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Italics in this quotation are my own.



It is the openness of the game, of comparison and confrontation with the past, that speaks to a more ambivalent understanding of classical and modern and of praising laughter and satire. I hope that this research revives interest in lesser-known comedies and playwrights as well as enriches our appreciation of culinary professionals active in evolving social practices in the Italian Renaissance. The authors who choose to include culinary professions on stage participate in the innovation of comedy through *contaminatio* of a multiplicity of sources and new portrayals of contemporary culture.

In this Introduction, I have surveyed two important fields that inform my perspective: the bridging of literary analysis and food studies and history of theater criticism. These two camps lead to smaller ones to be addressed in subsequent chapters. Chapter One surveys the image of the cook from classical Greek and Roman comedy, as well as other sources, the Medieval devil-cook represented in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and a *sacra rappresentazione* of fifteenth-century Florence, Boccaccio's cook Chichibio, the (self) representation of the cook in early recipe books, and the intermingling of fact and fiction in the alimentary discourses of burlesque. From the stage in antiquity to the Early Modern arts and society, the cook and other culinary professions undergo shifting considerations and reevaluation of their place in society. These paradigmatic changes clearly influence the way we can understand their representations in the Renaissance, and a survey of these topics will background a study of specific comedies in the two following chapters.

In Chapter Two, I will review the figure of the cook in three early sixteenth-century comedies by Ludovico Ariosto, Agnolo Firenzuola, and Alessandro Piccolomini. They are, respectively, *I suppositi* (1509), *I lucidi* (1538-), and *L'amor costante* (1536). The detailed analysis of scenes and interactions between characters and references to the urban consciousness

of each comedy are also necessary because of a lack of critical scholarship on culinary figures. Through close textual analysis, I will affirm that the cook is a changing complex in comedy, not unlike other typified characters in the sixteenth century, related to three sources of inspiration: classical models, *novella*, and contemporary urban settings. Chapter Three focuses more closely on the emerging urban profession of the *zanaiuolo* in the comedies of Giovanni Battista Gelli, Giovanni Maria Cecchi, and Francesco D’Ambra. I argue that this new character, the language(s) he speaks, and his interactions with other members of the cast reflect the cityscape of sixteenth-century Florence. Although there are reasonable forefathers to this character in the tradition of Greek comedy, I will show that these figures work as a catalyst for dialogue and encounter – physical and verbal – among “high” and “low” members of contemporary society. They do so to a greater extent than any of their classical models. Finally, I will offer some conclusions about the cultural mobility of diversifying culinary professions in the Renaissance. This suggests how one might further study alimentary discourse in Renaissance comedy.

## CHAPTER ONE: PARADIGMS OF THE COOK

### Introduction

The study of cookery as a profession entails a compilation of responsibilities and associations, including many socio-economic and political factors in urban and rural environments throughout the classical and early modern worlds. Representations of the cook derive from straightforward (and sometimes idealized) historical records and an interpretation of literary, religious, and secular norms. As Massimo Montanari warns, one must be careful not to paint history with the artist's tools. It is equally impossible to study the representation of the Renaissance cook in theater without turning to literary tradition and social conditions. To think that a cook would have just one ancestor – a Greek or Roman character 'type' – is not sufficient. The reason is twofold: both because our Renaissance playwrights are inspired readers of medieval fathers Dante and Boccaccio, and because their intentions are to display contemporary urban areas, with a focus on average people. This places the Cinquecento theater cook somewhere between the households of nobles and the upper-middle class. Their tastes, with nutritional and social implications, speak to a growing bourgeoisie, a term infrequently used by literary critics today, but still in vogue amongst food historians. And, it serves our study well. Indeed a precept of Renaissance erudite comedy, and comedy more generally according to the *Poetics*, is to stage the everyday life of a widely identifiable society. Throughout this chapter we will see that there is reasonable evidence to recreate the table and the cook who has prepared the

food, from fact and fiction. Court feasts and noble banquets are, as it turns out, easy to discriminate from the quotidian upper-middle class experience.

The review of paradigmatic cooks has three stops: the classical, the medieval, and the early modern. Still, this chapter contains period surveys of different lengths and levels of detail. First, some ancient texts exist only in fragments and their cultural currency is not always the same. In the Renaissance, the reception of classical works is based on Humanist rediscoveries that occur over time and they are circulated at different times in intellectual centers. Thus, an individual author's desire to 'surpass' the ancients and participate innovatively in a renewal of classical culture varies in form and style. Furthermore, records of the early medieval (prior to the year 1000) cook are far less pertinent than later medieval representations, and distinguishing the development of medieval societies country by country is problematic. Nevertheless, the cook of the Italian peninsula is accorded greater importance than those of the rest of the continent. Finally, concerning material food culture and gastronomic literature, I rely heavily on the exhaustive work of renowned food historians. They provide detailed and perceptive analyses of the function of the Early Modern cook in society and I cite them frequently.

Fact and fiction, realism and verosimilarity, authentic representation and caricature are all hopelessly at play in this study. Food historians tend to rail against the over-application of literary theory to comprehend daily convivial experience. Claudio Benporat, for example, calls this exercise the "esperata intellettualizzazione del momento conviviale, visto più come palestra di esegesi psicoanalitiche che come elemento essenziale della nostra storia, della nostra cultura e della nostra civiltà" (*Feste* 6). However, after this chapter, we will see that theater studies, comedy specifically, may present an alternative path to the studies that Benporat accuses of over-intellectualizing or relying on psychoanalytics to theorize conviviality. In comedy, there is a

common *ethos* of representing everyday life; and sometimes, everyday life, including the cook, is both realistic and funny, fact and fiction.

### **The Ancient Cook: *Mageiros* and *Coquus***

The figure of the cook is already well established in Old and New Comedy, and in Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae* (*The Learned Banqueters*), as mentioned in the Introduction. The role of the cook is predictably related to the context of society and culture. In Greek society, the prevalent diet consisted of cereals and fish as the terrain was not particularly rich for agriculture and pasture. Athenian diners have often been considered quite poor, and meat was seldom eaten in occasions other than ritualized sacrifice of an animal. While everyday meal preparation was left to slaves, *mageiroi* cooks appear in many Greek sources as professionals with three functions: sacrificers, butchers, and hired cooks. Thus, their role has always combined ritual and culinary tasks, and often, especially as documented by Old Comedy, they were freed men. Fifth-century sources, such as Xenophon, Aristotle, and Aristophanes attest to *mageiroi* as free experts.<sup>7</sup> Even so, they were undoubtedly of low social status. At most they could claim the religious significance of their work as a sign of dignity. In his study of Greek qualities in Plautus' Roman cook, J.C.B. Lowe compiles an image of the Greek *mageiros*:

He was never, however, an ordinary cook, but cooked only for special occasions. He was also much more than a cook, and if by the later fourth century his social status was low (Thphr. *Char.* 6.5) he still retained his sacrificial function and could with some justice boast that his art was a sacred one (Men. *Dysc.* 646, Athenio, fr. 1 K).<sup>8</sup> (74)

---

<sup>7</sup> Xenophon, *Economics* 9.9; Aristotle, *Politics* I.1255b22-27; Aristophanes, *Pax* 1017-8 and *Acharnians* 1015. These references are taken from John Wilkins and J.C.B. Lowe's lists of the cook as an expert in ritual slaughter and cooking in the fifth century.

<sup>8</sup> Three essential studies of Greek comedy and gastronomic society exist: E. M. Rankin, *The Role of mageiroi in the Life of the Ancient Greeks*, H. Dohm, *Mageiros*, and G. Berthiaume, *Les Roles du mageiros*. Wilkins and Lowe cite these works repeatedly. I have chosen to follow Wilkins and Lowe not only because they carefully revisit older scholarship, but also because their studies are largely about theater. Consequently, they always have an eye on the stage even when discussing societal norms.

The religious function of their culinary talent may have guaranteed some social status, or at least the right to boast of one. John Wilkins, who performs an exhaustive study of the Greek cook in *The Boastful Chef: The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy*, believes that in the earliest comedies they may have been the protagonists: the central figure of household and ritual (369-75). In fact, by the end of the fifth century, the *mageiros* was an expert in cooking all sorts of food for special meals, including, predictably, fish.<sup>9</sup> Possibly in the same period, and definitely in the fourth century, they could be hired at the market, where they also sold meat, probably leftovers from ritually slaughtered animals. Operating as free enterprise individuals confirms that the early *mageiroi* were indeed free men.

It may have been appropriate that the *mageiros* possess free status in comedy because of his sacred role and importance, regardless of the norm in real life (Lowe 75). There is also an exception to this free status: Athenaeus gives an example of a slave *mageiros* in Posidippus *Syntrophi* fr. 23 K. However, the comingling of free and slave may not be as problematic as one might think. First of all, as trite as it may seem, politics and wars constantly changed the composition of societies; a native Greek citizen may have been a free cook while foreign slaves of conquest were purchased to perform the same duties. This model of labor has repeated itself consistently throughout history. Additionally, Lowe reminds us that free and slave doctors also coexisted in fourth-century Athens (75). It is difficult to prove with certainty a whole community's sentiments concerning free men and slaves. What is most important is to establish the Greek *mageiros* as routine character in a drama and as ritual sacrificer, butcher, and eventually cook for hire in society.

---

<sup>9</sup> Lowe lists various occasions that use the cook to reflect ordinary Athenian life: Aristophanes *Av.* 1637 at the Hoopoe's house, *Ran.* 517 at Persephone's, at the shrine of Pan in Men. *Dysc.* 430 ff., for weddings, funerals, and other home affairs in Men. *Asp.* 216 ff., *Sam.* 283 ff., *Hegesipp.*, fr. 1 K., *Poll.* 9.48; Diog. Laert. 2.72.; Thphr. *Char.* 6.9; Artem. *On.* 3.56, Ar. *Eq.* 300-302.

On the stage in Attic and New Comedy, *mageiroi* exude confidence and channel self-importance, growing as a character ‘type’ or stock character. Fragments quoted by Athenaeus further confirm the frequent appearance of the *mageiros* in service of special events cooking. This is not surprising: food and drink are regularly related to feasts, particularly to weddings, and this is attested in most forms of comedy henceforth. Even in Menander, for whom descriptions of foods are less important, the comic role of a *mageiros* becomes a stock character (Lowe 74). *Mageiroi* consider themselves expert cooks, and they are also loquacious, much to the aggravation of their interlocutors, as seen in Athenaeus.<sup>10</sup> In *Deipnosophistae*, cooks are given lengthy monologues and dialogues in which they often exaggerate their talents. Finally, *mageiroi* also boast regularly of their small-time pilfering on the job.

Two contextual changes in culture drive the adaptation of the Greek *mageiros* by Roman playwrights. First, in the transition from Greek to Roman cook there is a loss of ritualized and religious significance in the cook’s role, including the function of butcher (*lanius*). Studies associate this trend to the overwhelming amount of meat Romans ate, not only as sacrifice but also as daily meal. This led to the development of butcher as individualized profession and indeed the lands for cultivation and pasture were greater on the Italian peninsula. The second aspect is a change in scenery and social status: *coqui* in Rome are confined to one household, and generally as slaves. Thus, Roman cooks are not a profession equivalent of *mageiros* or *lanius*. In the Republican period, household-slave Roman cooks are attested in Cicero *Rosc. Am.* 134, *Pis.* 67, *Fam.* 9.20.2 and 16.15.2, and Sallust *Jug.* 85.39. Furthermore, in Athenaeus’s *Deipnosophistae*, the slave cook recounts the dignity and free status of the cooks of old (6.275b, 83). His lamentation suggests that slave cooks were, by now, normalized in the Roman world.

---

<sup>10</sup> The exasperation of a *mageiros*’s conversational partner can be found in Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 7.288c-93e, 9.376e-80c, 14.660e-62d.

Roman *coqui* are equally ubiquitous in Plautus' comedies; the *Pseudolus*, *Aulularia*, *Curculio*, *Mercator*, and *Miles Gloriosus* are a few examples. These cooks are often household slaves with little skill and low social status, possessing none of the dignity or character development accorded to the professional ritual sacrificers of previous Greek society.

The development of meat-specific professions seems to adhere to the Roman diet both in society and in theater. Popular Roman taste and diet dictate that meat be eaten more often in Plautus' Rome. Whether regularly consumed by the poor or not, it was not a luxury food. Lowe confirms that Plautine references to pig meat indicate it was foodstuffs for average Rome: "[they] are part of the Roman coloring he [Plautus] gave to his Greek originals... [this] Plautine addition is an indication of Roman popular taste and confirmation that the Romans were greater meat-eaters than the Athenians ... [and] there is no evidence that *lanii* ever sacrificed" (78-9). In addition to mentions of the actual meat, specialized butchers are referred to in many Roman sources. The secular butcher and meat-seller – *lanius* – is another well-established figure in Plautine drama, separate from the cook.<sup>11</sup> According to Livy 3.48.5, Roman *lanii* existed well before in 449 B.C. and they appear in six republican inscriptions.<sup>12</sup> More examples include Juvenal's fifth satire, lines 113-20, which features a professional whose only task is to carve different meats; in Letter 47 to Lucilius, Seneca also writes of the carvers of meat. Meat carvers, like cooks and butchers, have a place in Renaissance society too: as we will see soon, *il trinciante* has a manual published by the late sixteenth century.

---

<sup>11</sup> This is true in *Apt.* 818, 905, *Curc.* 483, *Pseud.* 197, 327, 332, and *Trin.* 407.

<sup>12</sup> A. Degrassi studies these inscriptions in *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae Rei Publicae* (Firenze, 12 1965) nos. 97, 98, 105a-b, 716, 794. Interestingly, half of the butchers represented are free men and the other half, presumably, slaves. This indicates that the profession of butcher – like most culinary labor – did not enjoy a particularly high social status.



Whereas Greek *mageiroi* were specialized in ritual sacrifice and cookery, butchers in Rome, *lanii*, are not cooks. In *Social and Private Life at Rome in the Time of Plautus and Terence*, G.W. Leffingwell confirms that the role of *mageiros* was potentially divided amongst many craftsmen in Rome: butchers, carvers, sellers, cooks. Servants too were of many specializations: *ianitor*, *atriensis*, *cellarius*, *promus* (82-85). In the development of Roman society, the term *coquus* – the one who cooks – regularly denoted only the kitchen-slaves of larger households and may fit in well among other specialized servants of *ianitor*, *atriensis*, *cellarius*, *promus*. Furthermore, Lowe confirms that, if the cooking was simple, a *coquus* kitchen-slave would be afforded even less status than other household slaves (82).

The evolution and reputation of cooks are strongly related to the development of culinary luxury in Roman society. The freedom to indulge one's household presumably increased significantly after the Second Punic War. This was the result of the annexation of Sicily as a Roman province. The island of Sicily was famous throughout antiquity for its elaborate cuisine, and increased cultural contact seems to have had an effect. For example, Cato and Livy both mention the rising costs of purchasing a cook in Roman society. Lowe summarizes that "As the rich came to demand skilled cooks, they would be prepared to pay more for them but would still expect to buy rather than hire, and foreign slaves, especially from the Greek world, would be available in abundance to supply the demand" (83). Thus, Cato and Livy's complaints demonstrate the fact that these "professionals" were *purchased* household slaves. Yet despite their social condition, it seems that the status of cooks was rising in Roman society. Cato also protests two statues erected to celebrate cooks (ORF fr. 96). Lowe interprets these historical sources as a sign of 'enhanced status' in the later Roman world, but poses a new problem: "What

is more difficult to establish is how far the growth of culinary luxury had progressed during the period in which Plautus was active as a dramatist, that is, before 184” (80).

To achieve this study, Lowe systematically – and with the support of some documentation of material culinary history – distinguishes the cooks on stage as of Greek origin or of Plautus’ own creation. His categorization begins by asserting that Plautus’ cooks were slaves, more similar to other household slaves than to *mageiroi*: “Even if we cannot altogether rule out the possibility that there were some cooks for hire in Plautus’ Rome, it seems unlikely that there were many and even less likely that they were free men. In any case, we may take it as certain that, then as always, most *coqui* were household slaves” (84-5). However, there is one pesky reference to a hired cook in Porphyry’s comment on Horace’s *Satire* 1.1.101. This is evidenced by the fact that the cook is clearly a household member over a long period of time, at least a year. We gather that the cook is hired because the text and commentaries tell us that the cook had a contract for a large annual sum. Still, this is little evidence when confronted with the overwhelming presence of slave cooks in other sources.

On stage, when Plautus’ cooks retain more characteristics of the role attributed to them in Attic and New Comedy, it is most probable that Plautus is staging a Greek *mageiros* for the viewing of his Roman public. This is likely the case in *Pseudolus* when the story references the *forum coquinum*, a market to hire or purchase a cook. As previously mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that hired cooks or a marketplace to hire them existed in Rome. In this case, the setting of the comedy is Athens and it corroborates that the cook is a *mageiros*:

Insofar as Plautine cooks retained the peculiar features of *mageiroi*, they would seem essentially Greek to a Roman audience, part of the exotic, if not entirely strange, world of the *palliata*, comparable with mercenary soldiers, for example. They belonged, after all, to that very sphere of activities to which the Romans applied the word *pergraecari*. (Lowe 85)

Even if the natural translation of *coquus* in a *palliata* is *mageiros*, connotations of the two terms are strikingly different. There was nothing like the *mageiros* of Greek comedy in Plautus' time – a free man and an expert cook, boasting of skills. Lowe addresses the question about the demand for special occasions: could skilled cooks have become a profession in Rome especially among those who could not afford a fulltime household slave? Lowe offers three reasons why this is not the case: 1) it presupposes a broad demand for culinary luxury during the time of Plautus that cannot be strongly evidenced, 2) it is not simply inevitable that a profession of the type develop as it did in Greece. It is more reasonable that there be more and more qualified household-slave cooks according to the sources; and 3) there is no additional evidence of cooks being hired from the market on special occasions in Rome (Lowe 83-4).

Recently, Sophia Papaioannou has attempted to revive the debate on cooks and slaves in Roman comedy. She theorizes why there are two cooks in Plautus' *Aulularia* and only one servant.<sup>13</sup> This study mirrors to a certain degree my suggestions in Chapter Two that the cook serves a special function and communicates specific realities that a typical servant cannot. Overall, it is important to note that scholars like Lowe and Papaioannou are analyzing Plautine comedy in order to highlight originality within the imitation of Ancient Greek sources. They attempt to prove the playwright's dedication to theatrical innovation through a reflection of contemporary social mores.

There are few comparable mentions of pig-meat, butchers, or cooks in Terence's comedies. Instead, he composes everyday scenes that focus on cooking by household slaves, as exemplified in *Adelphoe*. These slaves are not specialized cooks and cooking is apparently a hard

---

<sup>13</sup> See Papaioannou, Sophia. "Duplication and the Politics of Comic Destructure: or, Why There Need Not be Two Slaves, While There Are Two Cooks in the *Aulularia*." *Plautine Trends: Studies in Plautine Comedy and Its Reception*. Eds. Ioannis Perysinaskis and Evangelos Karakasis. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.

job for simpletons.<sup>14</sup> One exception might be the figure of Sosia in the *Andria*, composed – according to Terence himself – in imitation of Menander’s *Andria* and *Perinthia*. A Greek *mageiros* would presumably be the precedent for this character, because Sosia is reported to be Simo’s freedman and occupies himself with meal preparation. Indeed, the scene in Terence’s *Andria* is Greek. Nonetheless, Sosia’s role is far less developed than most of Plautus’ cooks and he never returns after the first scene of the comedy. Furthermore, Sosia’s role in the first scene cannot be retraced to either of Menander’s plays that Terence mentions in the prologue. Thus, Terence must be drawing upon Ancient Greek comedy *and* contemporary social settings – whether Roman or Greek (*pergraecari*) –when portraying cooks, just as Plautus does. Overall, it is fair to say that Plautus was more interested in continually representing the character of *coquus* or imitating models of the *mageiros*. In sum, the prevalent image of the cook that is passed down to Renaissance playwrights is of two models: the skilled and loquacious freedman of Greek society (*palliata*) or the enslaved, rather average household worker of the playwrights’ contemporary Rome. If the individual who does the domestic cooking is not even defined as a *coquus*, then a larger statement about the wealth and status of the home is probably being made.

### **The Medieval Cook: The Devil in the Kitchen**

Predictably, the Church’s teachings strongly influence the representation of the cook throughout the Middle Ages. Persistent doctrine condemning gluttony and other deadly sins creates a threatening image of the gastronomic arts. It, in turn, signals the retreat of pagan, folkloric, and agrarian concepts of eating and drinking. Analyzing this shift towards fear and anxiety for foodstuffs and producers is the late Piero Camporesi. He produced seminal studies on popular medical and alimentary culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He began *Il*

---

<sup>14</sup> These two characterizations can be seen in lines 361 and 845-47 of the *Adelphoe*.

*paese della fame* explaining the transformative role of *La divina commedia* in changing the image of cooks and their workspace. Camporesi posits that the profound associations of devil-cook (*diavolo-cuoco*) and hell-kitchen (*inferno-cucina*) have been transformed by a Dantean cosmic vision. It represents a new paradigm that erases the generative function of folkloric alimentary culture:

*L'Inferno* uscito dalla complessa elaborazione dantesca appare come un nuovo “paradigma” culturale [...] [e] finirà con lo scalzare l'antica immagine “agraria” e non cittadina dell'inferno-cucina, del diavolo-cuoco, del dannato utilizzato come pezzo di carne in un indecifrabile processo alimentare legato all'umorismo culinario, alla dialettica fisiologica e al metabolismo viscerale del ciclo nutrizione/defecazione, distruzione/generazione, all'immagine del fuoco-cottura (e quindi alimento), al rapporto stomaco (forno del corpo)-sole (forno dell'universo), cardine dell'equilibrio nutritivo e vitale. (5-6)

The cook and the sinner are no longer the comic, boastful or mischievous actor of antiquity. Nor is he the symbol of a cyclic and generative understanding of man, nutrition, and nature. The culinary professional is now an urban citizen, not a rural simpleton. He, like other devils and Lucifer himself, falls to temptation and creates temptation in others. In punishing the sinner nothing remains of the “culinary humor” that Camporesi sees in earlier traditions. Following this passage, the scholar continues to explain how the *diavolo-cuoco* is reduced to complete identification with Lucifer:

Il processo di sfaldamento progressivo e di parallela perdita di significanza dell'inferno-cucina si verificherà anche per la figura del gigante divoratore/fecondatore (il sole) delle leggende celtiche (Gargantua, Brabone) il quale si rimpicciolirà nella figura di Luciferò, strumento di pura e brutale demolizione e punizione, grottesco robot giustiziere [...] senza conservare più alcuna traccia della parallela funzione generativa [dell'] iconologia popolare [...]. (6)

Kitchen and cook are bound to Lucifer by way of *Inferno*. Lucifer is preceded in this relationship by his three-headed demon-watchdog Cerberus in *Inferno* VI, the resting place of damnation for the gluttons. A number of scholars have studied the process of transformation from pagan beasts

to Christian devils in *The Divine Comedy*. Cerberus is the first pagan monster turned Christian demon in the *Inferno* to personify the *diavolo-cuoco*, the “instrument of pure and brutal demolition and punishment, grotesque robot of justice,” that the pilgrim and his guide encounter.

The Dantean paradigm is, then, a necessary stop in the association of alimentary discourse to characters of literary tradition. Notwithstanding the importance of classical stock characters in theater, it is equally useful to consider the inspiration of alimentary discourse post-Dantean intervention. If the cook handed down in the writings of Athenaeus was above all a master of his trade, maybe a small-time thief, the cook’s truly negative stereotypes, those that incite fear and condemnation, evolve from the image brought to us in *Inferno*. Including Dante’s text in the ancestry of Renaissance cook representations advances the idea that varied cultural impulses influence playwrights: classical texts are not the always exclusive source for later drama, but often contaminated cooperatively with other literary examples.<sup>15</sup> As we will see in this section, *La divina commedia* proves its significance defining the devil-cook for at least one type of drama, the *sacra rappresentazione*, and the *Decameron* also provides imagery to Renaissance comedy. First, I will consider the characterization of Cerberus and the gluttonous in the sixth Canto of the *Inferno*. We will then follow the image of the cook to an example of *sacra rappresentazione* of fifteenth-century Florence. Finally, we will see how Boccaccio partially overturns this paradigm. He does so through a cook, Chichibio, who is a secular, devilish trickster, but is praised for his quick wit in the *Decameron*.

---

<sup>15</sup> The argument is not farfetched in the study of Dante and *The Divine Comedy*. Dante’s use of the classics represents an intense referential scheme that has been studied by a wealth of scholars. The contamination of sources is also a widely accepted thesis with regards to Boccaccio’s place in inspiring Renaissance theater; I believe that the sixth Canto has a place in the genealogy of culinary professionals as well. Traditional theater studies are far more likely to cite classical sources and Boccaccian tradition because of similarities in genre, yet we know that all of our Renaissance playwrights were avid readers of *La commedia*.

The three-headed Lucifer waiting to devour the condemned in the lowest point of Hell is a well-referenced image in the arts. Yet the first impact that Dante, Virgil, and the readers of the *Divine Comedy* have with the *inferno-cucina* arrives before, in the encounter with Cerberus. It is the third circle of Hell in which the gluttonous receive their eternal punishment. Dante awakes to a brutal scene of constant rain and mud, the condition that looms for those who ate and drank in excess while on Earth:

Io sono al terzo cerchio, de la piova  
eterna, maladetta, fredda e greve;  
regola e qualità mai non l'è nova.

Grandine grossa, acqua tinta e neve  
per l'aere tenebroso si riversa;  
pute la terra che questo riceve. (7-12)

Biblical sources have inspired this rain to be constant and hard, including hailstorms. Pietro di Dante's commentary includes that the bad weather is nothing other than "gravamen ciborum." Instead, of Dantean creation is the bad odor, marking the first sign of *contrappasso* for the sinners. The sweet smells of earthly foods, cited in Boccaccio's commentary as "diligate vivande e savorosi vini," are mutated into a disgusting sensorial attack for the condemned. Insisting on the image of a foul odor, Dante uses 'pute' to remark on the smell of the gluttonous' own bodies. The entire representation by Dante is in function of the vice of gluttony that Cerberus embodies and punishes:

Cerbero, fiera crudele e diversa,  
con tre gole caninamente latra  
sopra la gente che quivi è sommersa.

Li occhi ha vermigli, la barba unta e atra,  
e 'l ventre largo, e unghiate le mani;  
graffia li spirti ed iscoia ed isquatra. (13-18)

The second element of the sinners' fate is to be consumed by Cerberus. He embodies gluttony: three mouths, a beard soaked with oil, a full chest, and rapacious hunger. The pagan monster of antiquity is half-transformed into a Christian demon, but his basic image is derived from the

*Aeneid*:

Here Cerberus, with triple-throated roar,  
Made all the region ring, as there he lay  
At vast length in his cave. (VI.417-8)

Alongside the Virgilian reference, Robert Hollander's commentary draws attention to the role of the *Roman d'Eneas* in the creation of Dante's Cerberus:

Cerberius est d'Enfer portiers,  
garder l'entrée est son mestiers,  
moult par est lais a desmesure  
et de moult orible faiture.  
Jambes et piez a touz velus  
et les arteilles touz crocus,  
telz ongles a comme grifons,  
encoiz est comme gaignons;  
agu dos a et recorbés,  
et le ventre gros et enflé  
une estrume a desor l'eschine,  
et maigre et seche a la poitrine;  
espaules grailles et braz gros,  
telz ongles a comme un cros;  
.III. colz a gros et serpentins,  
et de coulovrez sont ses crins,  
.III. chiez a tiez comme de chien;  
onques ne fu plus laide rien.  
Com chien abaie par coustume,  
de sa bouche chiet une escume,  
une herbe en naist mortel et laie,  
nulz hom n'en boit a mort ne traie: (2644-65)

As with other pagan monsters, classical and Christian traditions coexist in Cerberus. Arturo Graf argues that the cohabitation of mythological devils and Christian ones serve as references to both literary and popular tradition (56). In *Il Diavolo nei primi secoli della letteratura italiana*, Annalisa Pirastu attempts to locate the true nexus of the problem: where the difference lies in the



development of mythological and Christian devils according to Dante. She contends that there is a break between the more pagan demons and the Christian ones depending on the circle of Hell. Those who are contracted into the native state of a beast and monster are the first we encounter, and later on, the Christian demons only liminally acquire the bestial nature (48-9). However, several of Cerberus's features function in the opposite manner. His "barba unta e atra, e 'l ventre largo, e unghiate le mani" personify human traits that are functional to the sins of voracity and craving. A few lines before, Cerberus howls like a dog with three mouths: "con tre gole caninamente latra." On this verse, Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi comments that, while there are classical precedents, Dantean images evoke something of the human dimension:

Ma il latrato di Cerbero sui dannati danteschi sembra avere, come già osservò il Buti, un valore non soltanto figurativo: 'sopra ciascuna gente grida questo demonio: imperò che la coscienza del peccato grida contro ciascuno.' Come sempre, la poesia antica indugia a rappresentare perfettamente le forme; quella dantesca esprime, in quelle stesse forme, una ulteriore dimensione – dell'uomo e dell'universo – agli antichi ignoti. (180)

Moreover, both Chiavacci Leonardi and Hollander draw attention to the realistic force of Cerberus's actions: "graffia li spirti ed iscoia ed isquatra." Scratching, skinning, and breaking into pieces the sinners is only minimally of Virgilian inspiration: "Cerberus, / crouching o'er half-picked bones in gory cave" (VIII 296-7). More importantly, the tormented are treated like meal provisions. "Graffia li spirti" can allude to the rotation of cooking on a fire, a first preparatory step to removing the skin and breaking down chunks to feed one's cravings.<sup>16</sup> Again, the precise and weighty realism of Dante's verse serves the sin of gluttony.

---

<sup>16</sup> I find the image of cooking, or threat to cook and eat, an interesting parallel to other classical texts. In Cratinus's *Odysseus*, Wilkins suggests that, while the Cyclops is not explicitly a *mageiros* (as he is in Euripides's satyric *Cyclops*), he threatens a preparatory sequence of cooking: "in return for which, I shall grab your stout-hearted companions and toast, boil, grill over charcoal, and roast you and into salt-dip and vinegar-salt dip and garlic-salt dip will I dip you hot, whichever of you all seems to me to be the most roasted, and gobble you down, my good soldiers" (fr. 150 qtd. in Wilkins 375-6).

There is interesting slippage between the demon Cerberus and the gluttons in the next *terzine*. The sinners are both victims of Cerberus's awful screams ("caninamente latra") and they scream "come cani" in identification with him:

Urlar li fa la pioggia come cani;  
de l'un de' lati fanno a l'altro schermo;  
volgonsi spesso i miseri profani.

Quando ci scorse Cerbero, il gran vermo,  
le bocche aperse e mostrocci le sanne;  
non avea membro che tenesse fermo.

E 'l duca mio distese le sue spanne,  
prese la terra, e con piene le pugna  
la gittò dentro a le bramose canne.

Qual è quel cane ch'abbaiando agogna,  
e si racqueta poi che 'l pasto morde,  
ché solo a divorarlo intende e pugna,

cotai si fecer quelle facce lorde  
de lo demonio Cerbero, che 'ntrona  
l'anime sì, ch'esser vorrebber sorde.

Noi passavam su per l'ombre che adona  
la greve pioggia, e ponavam le piante  
sopra lor vanità che par persona. (19-36)

The condemned are lowered to Cerberus's level of being, and Dante reminds us of Cerberus's association with Lucifer through the epithet "il gran vermo." Whereas the Cerberus of the *Aeneid* was fed sweet bread dipped in honey, Virgil the guide throws dirt at the demon-beast, recalling the dirt that was the serpent's punishment in Biblical tradition. The flux between pagan beast and degradation permits the continued (negative) identification with the human realm and experience. It confirms Camporesi's notion that any generative function of *la gola* has been erased by Dante.

Finally, Boccaccio notes that the disturbing sounds, which lead the souls to wish for deafness, serves to counter the sweet sounds of banquets and feasts that the gluttons attended in life (comm. VI.7-12, qtd. in Hollander 63). The festive *contrappasso* sets the background for Ciaccio's prognostication on the political state of Florence:

Elle giacean per terra tutte quante,  
fuor d'una ch'a seder si levò, ratto  
ch'ella ci vide passarsi davante.

"O tu che se' per questo 'nferno tratto",  
mi disse, "riconoscimi, se sai:  
tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto".

E io a lui: "L'angoscia che tu hai  
forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,  
sì che non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai.

Ma dimmi chi tu se' che 'n sì dolente  
loco se' messo, e hai sì fatta pena,  
che, s'altra è maggio, nulla è sì spiacente".

Ed elli a me: "La tua città, ch'è piena  
d'invidia sì che già trabocca il sacco,  
seco mi tenne in la vita serena.

Voi cittadini mi chiamaste Ciacco:  
per la dannosa colpa de la gola,  
come tu vedi, a la pioggia mi fiacco. (37-53)

With a reminder of the sin of gluttony – Florence “trabocca il sacco ... d'invidia” – politics is revealed as the main topic of the sixth Canto. Yet, it needs repeating that the setting is one orchestrated by a devilish creature-cook. The condemned like Ciaccio roll around in the horrible-smelling mud, a seasoning of sorts. They are scratched and pushed around, and when Cerberus is ready, they are skinned and chopped up. The culinary arts are transformed into eternal punishment.

The gluttons are constantly reminded of their terrestrial excess, but an effort to identify Ciaccio in Dante's contemporary Florentine circles remains inconclusive. Nonetheless, Boccaccio picks up on Dante's placement of Ciaccio in the third circle and gives him a tale (IX.8) in the *Decameron*. Here, he is precisely a frequent participant in banquet festivities. Chiavacci Leonardi sums this characterization thus: "gli appare uomo di corte, che frequentava le nobili famiglie fiorentine, dedito con eccesso ai piaceri della tavola, ma non privo di acume e capace di bel parlare; una specie di saggio giullare..." (189).<sup>17</sup> Not only is the imagery of *inferno-cucina* and *diavolo-cuoco* replete with anthropomorphic slippage in Cerberus; also, Ciaccio's identification with the pleasures at noble Florentine tables and his ability in rhetoric and language preview the urban devil-cook of sacred drama and later literary tradition.

The perpetuation of the *inferno-cucina* and *diavolo-cuoco* is noted in an example of *sacra rappresentazione* of the Florentine Quattrocento. The essential function of sacred drama across the continent was didactic; it indicated a path to righteousness through negative *exempla* and recommended to steer clear of certain sects of society. In the anonymous *Rappresentazione di San Bernardo d'uno signore facea rubare le strade*, the moral lesson is two-fold: one, gluttony is a sin, and cause of further sin; and two, the devil will hide himself and tempt others through the body of the culinary worker.<sup>18</sup> The devil, having taken over the assistant cook and hiding in his body, corrupts the nobleman – *signore* – and his working staff. He has the nobleman instruct his servants and affiliates to steal on the road leading to the city. Saint Bernard arrives and corrects

---

<sup>17</sup> Other possibilities include: Ciaccio as a nickname, because it often meant pig, or as a proper name deriving from Jacopo (as baptismal records suggest). The poet Ciaccio dell'Anguillara never goes without mention in commentaries on the *Commedia*, but, again, these studies are inconclusive.

<sup>18</sup> This sacred drama is included by Nerida Newbiggin in her anthology of Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* but no other study exists.

this evil, revealing the presence of the devil in the cook, Falserone. The meaning of the cook's name could not be clearer to us, and we would assume that it would be so for a spectator of Quattrocento Florence.

More original is the cook's character development in the story. Generally, the desire to instruct in morality creates a retracted and underdeveloped plotline, especially with regards to the sinner or demon. Instead, the cook Falserone is first praised for his abilities in the kitchen by the head cook:

El nome (suo) chiamato è Falserone.  
Delle facende, che in cucina, ha tante,  
non ebbi mai ignun cotanto dotto  
né più intendente di qualunche cotto. (149-52)

Falserone seems to be highly skilled in the kitchen and "dotto." This level of talent is interesting when viewed in relation to the social and material studies on the cook in the next section; Quattrocento cooks were gaining prestige for their culinary endeavors and knowledge of foodstuffs. Thus this cook is given not only a name, but also the narrative space to tell of his miseries and plead with the master for employment (152-60). The master-nobleman then accepts him voluntarily into service and is deceived. He declares, "costui mi piace" (161). Inhabited by the devil, the cook now encourages all sorts of bad acts by the nobleman and his fellow servants. Gluttony arises as a stronghold of the devil in the medieval Christian cultural framework and is commonly viewed as an entrance-level sin. The corruption of cooks and the kitchen is a frequent worry for the ecclesiastic offices in this period.

Falserone is again awarded space for character development as the drama closes. When Saint Bernard discovers and attempts to send away the cook, his victory is not instantaneous. Of course, the brevity and linear quality of the conflict-resolving miracle is usually appreciated and the master is predictably, and very quickly, saved thanks to his quotidian Marian prayers.

Falserone, instead, puts up various defenses. An attempt to explain away one's sins is even more rare than the initial extra development provided to his character. Falserone tells of his misfortunes in an effort to avoid punishment:

Signor, questa brigata m'ha diserto,  
vennono 'n cucina con furia tale,  
trovaron l'uscio quasi mezzo aperto,  
entrono drento, e fecion ogni male.  
El fuoco m'hanno spento, e quest'è certo,  
versoronm'una pentola di sale,  
e rotte tante pentole e scodelle  
che la cucina è guasta sol di quelle. (377-84)

His pitiful tale of a ransacked kitchen is most likely a testament to working conditions of the day: entering unannounced and uninvited, putting out the only fire, dumping out a pot of salted water – salt cost a good deal at the time – and breaking pots and pans are serious pains for an average smaller household, especially rural. However hopeful these defenses were, they are not successful. Saint Bernard ridicules the cook in vituperation and punishment, speaking directly to him, but as *exemplum*, to all cooks.

After the victory of Saint Bernard, the signore and his servants return to moral normality, and it is the setting of the drama that we are left to consider. The backdrop and the wide variety of people – farmers, *rustici*, citizens, foreigners – from whom the servants stole under Falserone's spell, emphasize in particular the urban and contemporary realities just outside the doors of Florence. In this way, a plot focused on the culinary professional has created a space inhabited by more than one social class, from the meeting and intersection of the road that brings a variety of people into the city. Like Dante's setting of urban politics in the realm of the gluttons, this story connects food and danger, devil and cook. All invite the human faithful down an evil path.

In *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages*, Terence Scully affirms the medieval association of devil and cook through gluttony. The push towards sobriety is well known in treatises, even in antiquity's health handbooks. The more serious question in the late Middle Ages was also a moral one. Scully writes: "There is, for instance, no more persistent theme in early European literature than that of the tragic consequences of excess, excess in any form" (*Cookery* 180). Moderation governed most, if not all, concepts of sanctifying the human body; weakness, a lack of control over one's appetites, has everything to do with the belly and the cook. As examples, Scully cites a Northern European sermon of the late fifteenth century and a portrait of the gluttonous's afterlife in Bonvesin de la Riva's *Libro delle tre scritture* as a "Dantesque glimpse" (182). Indeed, the *Grant kalendrier et compost des Bergiers* presents the same filthy and malodorous, wet conditions forced upon the voracious. Instead of being eaten, these sinners are forcefully fed poisonous animals, surrounded by a dirty table setting. The sermon explains how the Devil enters the gluttonous and expands his sins:

The throat is the castle gate of a person's body ... likewise the Devil who once wins a man's throat by gluttony will easily have the rest and will enter into his body along with all other sins. For the gluttonous readily give way to all other sins, and therefore a good guard is necessary on that gate so that the Devil may not win it. For when you hold a horse by its bridle you can lead it wherever you wish; so does the Devil to the glutton, leading that man wherever he wishes. The servant who is fed too freely becomes mutinous against his master, and the body that is too filled with wine and food becomes mutinous against the mind, so that it is no longer inclined toward good works... And those who feed their body too well only prepare food for worms, so that the glutton is but a cook for the worms. (qtd. in Scully 182-3)

It is above all the didactic function that permits us to gather these examples of devil-cook and of hell-kitchen. The skilled and inventive cook did marvelous things with foodstuffs from all over the world, yet "in terms of sin and evil the cook is perhaps indeed the Great Tempter of the Middle Ages" (Scully, *Cookery* 184).

Bridget Ann Henisch begins her study of the medieval cook with this characterization and the double jeopardy that the cook faces: “Whether damned for his skill or damned for his incompetence, he was assumed, always and in either case, to be working hand in glove with the powers of darkness. Moralists claimed that the Devil sent the good cooks, while lesser mortals grumbled that he groomed the bad ones” (1). Henisch’s study is replete with sources from medieval English culture: an early Tudor book of Latin exercises, a tenth-century play *Dulcitus*, to which we will return, Alexander Barclay’s *A Ship of Fools*, and John Earle’s *Microcosmographie*. While written in 1628, *Microcosmographie* looks back to the medieval vision of the cook and surmises: “The kitchen is hell, and he the devil in it. He is a pitiless murderer of innocents” (qtd. in Henisch 10-1). In *Dulcitus*, the Roman villain stumbles into a dark kitchen in search of three Christian heroines and fondles, by mistake, pots and pans. Covered in soot as he exits, he is taken for the devil and suffers kicks and bruises all the way down the stairs. In the production of mystery plays in the towns of Beverly and Chester, Henisch brings to our attention that the cooks’ guild was responsible for staging the *Harrowing of Hell*, given that they had the right equipment: stewpots, long-handled ladles, and flesh hooks (11).<sup>19</sup> It is neither rare nor surprising that the relationship between devil-cook-gluttony traversed the continent. Gluttony was perhaps the filthiest of the cardinal sins and was served by a number of readily available examples in contemporary culture, at the table and at the market. As Scully infers, there would not be so much data to consider if no one was partaking in excessive feasts or insisting on succulent meals from the cook (*Cookery* 183).

In line with Camporesi, the examples put the devil-cook in direct connection to the city and eliminate the agrarian perspective. Cookery and cooks lose any generative or nutritive

---

<sup>19</sup> Of course, Henisch also mentions a friar in Chaucer’s tales that scares his victims with the image of the inferno-kitchen (*The Summoner’s Tale*, II.22-3). Chaucer’s cook was also distinctly unappealing, and the sort of whippings that came from the kitchen with the long-handed ladle were popular moments to include in stories (Henisch 12).



function in service of a negative *exemplum*. They emphasize the destructive relationship between food and men, and their intermediary, the cook. Considering these *topoi* it may be difficult to follow a process, not to mention any sign of progress, to the role of the cook in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and in sixteenth-century dramatic works. A possible thread is to view gluttony as it is reduced and explored in the secular immorality of the city. Boccaccio writes a story capable of contaminating various influences and images that recover a comic function of the cook in dictating cultural norms. What connects Boccaccio's Chichibio to previous literature is an urban understanding of gluttony, cooks, and trickery. For many scholars, the cook's trickery, no longer viewed from the perspective of religious dogma, symbolizes the comic subversion of socio-political norms.

Chichibio's tale is a brief one in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It is the fourth story recounted on the sixth day, a day in honor of the *motto di spirito* that can help one avoid a difficult situation. Elissa is queen of the sixth day, and Neifile narrates. Chichibio is not the only craftsman/artisan that we find on the sixth day; Cisti the baker and Giotto have their own tales of clever retorts. Yet Neifile seems to report that it is only through Fortune that Chichibio finds apt words; she characterizes him as part of 'the timid' and an exception to his circumstances (VI.4.3). Despite this social standing, Chichibio was not without talent. He was "buon cuoco... e era viniziano." The fact that Chichibio be of Venice may be of interest moving forward; there is reason to assume that Venetian cooks and cookery enjoyed good reputations in the later Early Modern period.

The story of Chichibio is as follows: as the household cook for the noble Currado Gianfigliuzzi, Chichibio seems to enjoy reasonable treatment and respect for his qualities as a

cook. When Currado goes hunting one day and kills a crane, he instructs Chichibio to roast it and prepare a dinner. As the cook is intent at his work, a wonderful smell arises and a young girl Brunetta, whom Chichibio very much loved, smells the roasting crane. She enters the kitchen and begs him for a leg:

[Currado] sí gli mandò dicendo che a cena l'arrostisse e governassela bene. Chichibio, il quale come nuovo bergolo era così pareva, acconcia la gru, la mise a fuoco e con sollicitudine a cuocer la cominciò. La quale essendo già presso che cotta grandissimo odor venendone, avvenne che una feminetta della contrada, la qual Brunetta era chiamata e di cui Chichibio era forte innamorato, entrò nella cucina, e sentendo l'odor della gru e veggendola pregò caramente Chichibio che ne le desse una coscia. (VI.4.6-7)

Chichibio initially refuses Brunetta's wishes but one type of appetite gets the better of him and he gives her the leg that she desires: “Voi non l'avrì da mi, donna Brunetta, voi non l'avrì da mi.” Di che donna Brunetta essendo un poco turbata, gli disse: ‘In fé di Dio, se tu non la mi dai, tu non avrai mai da me cosa che ti piaccia,’ [...] alla fine Chichibio, per non crucciar la sua donna, spiccata l'una delle cosce alla gru, gliela diede” (8-9). This is one risk that Chichibio takes seriously and he obliges Brunetta with the roasted meat.

When Currado gathers with his friends and sees that the crane has but one leg, he questions Chichibio on the matter. Chichibio retorts: “Signor mio, le gru non hanno se non una coscia e una gamba.” Currado is incredulous and the cook will be forced to prove this truth to his master the following day. When Chichibio and Currado go out the next morning in search of one-legged cranes, it is only after some time that they find some cranes standing on one leg. Currado quickly scares the cranes with a “Ho! Ho!” that causes the animals to lower their other leg. It is here that Chichibio reveals his *motto di spirito* when forced to explain how the roasted crane the previous evening had only one leg: “Messer sí, ma voi non gridaste 'ho, ho' a quella d'iersera; ché se così gridato aveste ella avrebbe così l'altra coscia e l'altro piè fuor mandata,

come hanno fatto queste” (VI.4.18). Having thought of such a clever response, the cook sidesteps the anger and punishment of his master.

The attribution of quick wit to a humble character is a striking aspect of Boccaccio’s tale. Like many medieval professionals, Chichibio is introduced as a good cook of low class origins. What is anomalous is that he has the ability to convert his master’s fury into laughter. In fact, the *novella* includes multiple occasions in which Currado’s anger is the focus, an outrage that we can only assume to be normal when faced with deception by his cook:

ma io ti giuro in sul corpo di Cristo che, se altramenti sarà, che io ti farò conciare in maniera, che tu con tuo danno ti ricorderai, sempre che tu ci viverai, del nome mio (13); la mattina seguente come il giorno apparve, Currado, a cui non era per lo dormire l’ira cessata, tutto ancor gonfiato si levò e comandò che i cavalli gli fosser menati (14); Chichibio, veggendo che ancora durava l’ira di Currado e che far gli convenia pruova della sua bugia, non sappiendo come poterlasi fare cavalcava appresso a Currado con la maggior paura del mondo, e volentieri, se potuto avesse, si sarebbe fuggito. (15)

Masters’ threats to their servants or slaves are common comical devices that communicate the order of society. But after Chichibio’s *risposta pronta*, Currado’s fury dissipates quickly: “A Currado piacque tanto questa risposta, che tutta la sua ira si convertí in festa e riso, e disse: ‘Chichibio, tu hai ragione, ben lo doveva fare.’ Così adunque con la sua pronta e sollazzevol risposta Chichibio cessò la mala ventura e paceficossi col suo signore” (19-20). Chichibio’s ability to change his master’s mind through his clever retort signals a new type of cook who can rely on his intellect, no matter his social status.

Chichibio and Currado’s world may seem vastly different than that of the *sacre rappresentazioni* that condemn and punish excess, trickery, and pilfering, but the setting of the drama-story is quite similar. In both works we are in the household and in the countryside. As such, we encounter more than one character of different social strata. Furthermore, the kitchen is on display in these stories. Both the descriptions of Falserone’s ransacked place and Chichibio’s

working environment color an image of the medieval-Early Modern culinary locale. The difference then lies in the weight and consequence of the trickery. On the one hand, Falserone is the devil impersonated and his sins (incitement to sin) are moral faults that no defense can excuse. On the other hand, Chichibio ‘wins’ not through a defense, but with playful wit. He is a gratifying type of trickster, more devilish than actual devil. These are ultimately differences of genre and authorial intent, granting Boccaccio’s cook the ability to play with food and social norms.

The subversion of social and political norms through the metaphors of food is the subject of Pina Palma’s *Savoring Power, Consuming the Times: The Metaphors of Food in Medieval and Renaissance Italian Literature*. Her “Language of Food in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*” focuses on the introduction on the first day, the tale of the marchioness of Monferrato (1.5), and the story of Alibech (3.10). While Chichibio does not fit into Palma’s analysis of subversive food metaphors, she argues for the place of alimentary discourse in the *Decameron* as a whole:

[food] encapsulates the essence of two mutually exclusive worlds: the world of the powerful, who have access to it, and the world of the powerless, who do not. In the representation of the stronger and the weaker, of the empowered and the disempowered, created on the basis of those who have food and those who do not, there persists the systematic reinforcement of the mechanisms that accentuate social disparity. Subsumed and determined by both the quality and the quantity of food consumed, this social stratification constructs a system of political legitimacy. (33)

Chichibio’s appropriation of his master’s crane, a volatile food source, is a signpost of the sin of gluttony according to alimentary ideology of the period. It conflicts with the narrative that higher quality foods are meant for higher quality social classes, as Allen Grieco argues.<sup>20</sup> The ladder of beings and humoral theory was theorized into nutritional guidelines for princely, noble, and upper bourgeois citizens that distinguished their proper foodstuffs from those of the working

---

<sup>20</sup> See Grieco, “Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy.” *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. Ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

poor and rural peasants. Chichibio's tale takes this action one step further by conceding the crane thigh to his lover Brunetta. It encapsulates more than one type of excessive appetite, gluttony and sexual drive. However, Chichibio's tale is not only about transgressing social structure and health treatise recommendations through metaphor. It is his cleverness that saves him from his master's wrath in a very real social act of appropriation and consumption.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, Chichibio is not punished for his action. Much like other later parodies of master-servant relations, Chichibio's intellect is praised.

Boccaccio's *Decameron* is a prominent source for Renaissance comedy storylines for these reasons. The comic is often bound to the subversion of norms and to a surprise contradiction of circumstances. Yet using the cook as a source of laughter is not exclusive of his representation as skilled, and there is growing reason to respect the talent and status of the cook in the following century. The attribution of talent and inspired wit is one type of character development that we will see in cooks and deliverymen in Renaissance comedy.<sup>22</sup> Once the negative medieval stereotypes of the cook are overcome, the new identity of the cook most likely directly relates to the documented prosperity of the profession and his peers in the next centuries.

### **The Culinary Swerve: How The Cook Became Modern**

Most medieval and Early Modern banquets were organized by masters of the house (*maestro di casa*) and stewards (*scalchi*). Their records were usually written firsthand, and they are available to us in archives and some early printed manuals. The cook, instead, does not author texts until

---

<sup>21</sup> Other studies on this *novella* confirm the cook's intellect and subversive power: Luigi Rosso's "Chichibio cuoco della leggerezza mentale" and Ada Testaferri's "Motto di spirito e potere eversivo di Chichibio."

<sup>22</sup> The performances of Renaissance comedies were often tied to Carnival celebrations in the early sixteenth century. It is not by chance that Boccaccio's tales were inspiring at this time. The subversion of social classes was a prominent feature of the holiday, as Bakhtin and all Bakhtinian scholars have since indicated.

the late fifteenth-century development. Nonetheless, a number of studies seek to recreate the historical and social image of the cook in these years. Through careful analysis of multiple sources – official documents explaining domestic hierarchies and sanctioning the cook’s role, memoirs and letters, and finally the arrival of printed recipe collections – Terence Scully, Bridget Ann Henisch, Katherine McIver, and Claudio Benporat have shed light on the figure of the cook.<sup>23</sup> This survey will move from general characteristics in medieval and Early Modern society to the groundbreaking work of Bartolomeo Sacchi, otherwise known as Platina, and Maestro Martino before arriving at the ideal cook of the late sixteenth-century: Bartolomeo Scappi. A final section will address the interplay of fact and fiction in the representation of the cook.

All Early Modern food historians note that the cook was part of a clear social and domestic hierarchy: *maestro di casa* (master of the house), *scalco* (steward), *sopracuoco* (master or chief cook), *cuoco* (cook), *credenziere* (cupboard keeper), *assistente del cuoco* (assistant cook), *ragazzo della casa* (scullery boy), etc. Unlike the *scalco*, the late medieval and Renaissance cook was commonly from rural areas and of humble origins; often, they are remembered only by their first names. Cristoforo da Messisbugo, for example, was Ferrara’s steward at the court of Alfonso I and Ercole II. He was of noble origin, and the humble cook who answered to him was simply known as Andrea.

The class level of the household dictated the organization and duties of the cook. The roles of one or two servants in an upper-middle class home might be divided among a sea of hundreds employed at a princely court. Accordingly, the responsibilities of each cook differ, ranging from shopping, encounters with spice traders and other suppliers, advising as a pseudo-

---

<sup>23</sup> Other scholars have contributed greatly to the study of the Renaissance cook, such as John Dickie with his massive history of Italian cuisine and Luigi Ballerini with his introduction to Maestro Martino’s cookbook in English translation. Montanari and Capatti, with Jean-Louis Flandrin, play a significant role in alimentary history, as does Allen Grieco for the study of food, wine, spices, and social class. However, these scholars are interested mostly in foodstuffs, not the development of the cook as a professional.

physician or pharmacist, surveying the works of others as head cook, to the very straightforward task of cooking.<sup>24</sup> The view from the master cook's chair must have been very different than that of the cook in a modest household. So is described the view of the "surveying" cook in Olivier de la Marche's *Memoirs*:

The Cook orders, regulates and is obeyed in his Kitchen; he should have a chair between the buffet and the fireplace to sit on and rest if necessary; the chair should be so placed that he can see and survey everything that is being done in the Kitchen; he should have in his hand a large wooden spoon which has a double function: one, to test the pottages and brouets, and the other, to chase the children out of the Kitchen, to make them work, striking them if necessary (qtd. in Scully, *Cookery* 243-4).

In de la Marche's mid-fifteenth-century French kitchen there were: two kitchen clerks, three cooks, and twenty-five sub-specialists, including roasters, pottagers, larderers, even fire-tenders! Sometimes cooks worked closely with other professions, particularly the physician. When they worked in unison, the physician's instructions – according to the temperament and constitution of the patient – were transformed into a delectable diet plan by the cook (Henisch 21-2). Bridget Ann Henisch draws attention to Andre Boorde's commentary in the sixteenth century, which says that "A good coke is halfe a physycyon. For the chefe physyche (the counceyll of a physycyon excepte) doth come from the kytchyn [...]" (qtd in Henisch 22). A cook's knowledge of spices and herbs also influenced his work and the health of his master; a keen interest in aphrodisiac foods plays out in many recipe collections and medical treatises.

A good cook was highly sought after for his talent, his knowledge of foodstuffs, and his fidelity. Terence Scully comments at length on the value of the cook's skills and the respect he received:

---

<sup>24</sup> Scully reports that Olivier de la Marche's *Memoires* list the cook as responsible for rendering the accounts of all spices (including sugar) that were purchased for the household even if de la Marche employed two spicers with two assistants (*Cookery* 243). Elsewhere, Scully enumerates the cook's tasks as "complex and demanding," including to know one's position within the hierarchy of household, acknowledge formal responsibilities to superiors, organize and accept responsibility for those who worked under him, ensure supplies of foodstuffs, labor, utensils, and fuel, maintain a broad repertoire of dishes for different circumstances and seasons, including religious holidays, and be skillful (253).

Though he (the cook) was subject to severe restrictions, especially financial constraints, on the scope of his activities, within the sphere of those activities he could accord full rein to his professional abilities. He was highly respected for these abilities and undoubtedly took a vast amount of pride in the exercise of his position . . . it underscores (as I have done) both the enormous trust that any grandee had of necessity to place in his cook, and the enormous responsibility that the cook bore for the health and well being of his master and the whole of the master's household (*Cookery* 246).

In this period, fear of poisoning was rampant: a master's meals were tasted multiple times before arriving at his table. The cook was held foremost responsible for a positive outcome. Thus, the cook's reputation was made on good meals, and also safe ones. Scully considers the implications of this job description rare in the period: "we have in the cook's privileges [...] an individual enjoying recognition and some considerable status because of his native abilities rather than because of his birth (*Cookery* 252). Contrary to the privileged position of the steward or master of the house, owed to them by birth, the cook earned his place in domestic space.

Yet the cook never becomes his own master no matter how high he rises. He may work his way up the ranks, beginning with an (obligatory) apprenticeship. After some time, he would be granted the status that allows him to serve autonomously in another household. Even among professional cooks, distinctions in ability were made. De la Marche surely has no issue finding a superb cook, but other reports suggest a difference between noble and 'citizen's' cooks. This is illustrated by Henisch when she cites a "prosperous and well-connected householder" of late fourteenth-century Paris who desired a particular recipe, *Farced Chickens, Coloured or Glazed*. This employer had to factor in his cook's actual skill level with some disappointment: "[...] but there is too much to do, it is not a work for a citizen's cook, nor even for a simple knight's; and therefore I leave it" (qtd in Henisch 20).

The cook was a craftsman, an artist in service of a *padrone*, but generally not a very well paid one. Scully references the classification of average annual income by thirteenth-century



Genoese journeymen to demonstrate the meager pay of the cook.<sup>25</sup> According to craft, the smith, weaver, and metalworker make the most per year, while the cook is found below the muleteer and just above the turner (239). These thirteenth-century numbers are very early in the timeline of this study; however, they lead to an important fact that the greatest chance to improve one's station was to enter into wealthy bourgeois or noble household. Hensch confirms the difference in these positions:

The life of a master chef in a royal household was worlds apart from that of a short-order cook with a stall on some busy city street but, at least in the later medieval period, there was one common thread to link the two together. Each, in order to be allowed to practice his craft, had to be a member of a professional organization, a local Cooks' Guild. (20)

The cook's guild that existed in Paris around 1268 was recorded in the *Livre des métiers* of Etienne Boileau. Its statutes define the proper activities of any professional member, among them, maintaining cleanliness and having completed an apprenticeship. Its prohibitions include the cooking and selling of rotten, or suspect, meats, keeping them for over three days, and the luring of customers away from other cook's stalls mid-bargaining agreement.<sup>26</sup> In London, a guild appeared only later in the late fifteenth century. Scully explains the cook's association with butchers as a factor delaying the professional incorporation in England (*Cookery*, 237). Of guilds on the Italian peninsula we know less, but scholars have also shown less interest. Benporat, as example, does not study guilded cooks in his surveys of Trecento, Quattrocento or Cinquecento cookery. A lone fact remains that Sts. Vincenzo and Anastasio alla Regola in Rome was designated as the guild chapel of the brotherhood of cooks and pastry men. Bartolomeo Scappi, whom we will see a little later as an exalted late sixteenth-century professional, is buried there.

---

<sup>25</sup> Scully gleans this analysis from Steven Epstein's study *An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe: 1000-1500*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> These statutes derive from Title LXIX, pp. 145-7 of the 1980 Slatkine Edition printed in Geneva. Scully notes that the work of Boileau was edited by René de Lespinasse and François Bonnardot in the late nineteenth century.

These guilds must have communicated some professionalization and who could call himself a cook.<sup>27</sup> In Paris the majority of the cooks considered for admittance have city-street stalls. They cook near or in a public market. Because cooks were assimilated with butchers for some time in London, the definition of a cook is more ambiguous. Furthermore, by the sixteenth-century John Stow complains that entrepreneurs have compounded their specializations: “there [...] was a common cookerie or Cookes row [...] whereby it appeareth that in those dayes (and till of late time) every man lived by his professed trade, not any one interrupting another. The cookes dressed meate, and sold no wine, and the Taverner sold wine, but dressed no meate for sale, &c” (qtd. in Scully, *Cookery* 238). This passage clearly marks the fear that one businessman would cut into the profits of another. If a cook sold meat *and* wine, or a taverner offered wine *and* meat, customers would only require a visit to one stall instead of spreading their purchases throughout the market. An Italian example of expanding offers of businesses may be found also in sixteenth-century Florence. Cooks and deliverymen/short-order cooks work alongside professions such as *pizzicagnolo* or the owner of a *bottega da treccone*. These stalls at the market sold a wide variety of items, not only food/cooked food and wine, but other small trinkets. They will reappear in the analysis of Chapter Three as a profession that a deliveryman aspires to. Here, it appears that the *pizzicagnolo* and others like him enjoyed more social status and freedom than the cook or deliveryman. On the basis of current scholarship, we know much more about cooks’ social status when they are employed directly by households, large and small, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Cookery manuscripts implicitly communicate the

---

<sup>27</sup> For example, women, predictably, were not considered professionals. There are no records of female members of cooking guilds across the continent, although in simple households or in rural areas women did most, if not all, of the cooking. Hensch dedicates a chapter to the ‘cottage’ kitchen and female cookery in her study and female servants were also charged with many cooking duties if a household was not wealthy enough to employ multiple servants.

movement and contacts of the household cook and the quality of foodstuffs that he prepared for his master.<sup>28</sup>

Within the home, the social structure of servant staff, including the responsibilities of the cook, does not change substantially from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, but remarkable other shifts are taking place. The growth of a social aristocracy of mercantile and communal institutions combines with the trickling down of humanist ideas to create an ideal and practical apparatus of cultural life, including at the table. There is – and can be widely seen across the arts – a strong desire to act upon this vision of the world. While implementing the theory of the “scala degli esseri,” the ladder of beings did not change the power structures of employment in noble households nor in those of the courts, the exaltation of man and the arts ushered all ‘steps’ on the ladder towards the perfect articulation of their being, and cooks can be seen within this cultural program.<sup>29</sup>

These fifteenth-century changes are so transitional for the profession that food historians and scholars of medieval and/or Renaissance Italian culture often create ambiguities with their language. John Dickie shows no reservation with his sweeping statement: “During the

---

<sup>28</sup> From the Roman days of Apicius, European cookbook manuscripts reappear in the fourteenth century. The central disagreement among food historians, such as Allen Grieco, Giovanni Rebori, Terence Scully, and Bruno Laurioux, concerns the ideal recipients of these recipe collections. Were they professional cooks, future ones, or the young of noble households interested in the art? In Latin, the *Liber de coquina* seems to be the origin of two early fourteenth-century manuscripts: the *Liber* of the Vatican library and in vernacular *Libro della cucina* from an anonymous Tuscan source. A second group of manuscripts all include recipes for twelve people. They are deposited in the Riccardiana Library in Florence, the International Gastronomic Library in Sorengo, in Nice, in the Casanatense Library, in the Marciana, and in London. Furthermore, Guillaume Tirel, called Taillevent, late fourteenth-century chief cook to Charles V and Charles VI, compiled the *Viandier*. In Germany, the *Kuchenmeysterey* appeared, and numerous manuscripts circulated in Great Britain. Benporat believes that these cookbooks are the first to help us understand eating habits across the peninsula. They communicate something about the emerging middle class of society and differentiate between everyday meals and those served at court feasts (*Feste* 39-40). Allen Grieco has explained well the difference between foods philosophically appropriate for upper, middle, and lower classes according to an application of the ‘ladder of beings’ and humoral theory. In my perspective, it is clear that acceptable alimentations for social classes will change over the next century as more ‘lower class’ foods (i.e. vegetables) appear in the noble diet.

<sup>29</sup> Claudio Benporat in *Cinquecento* also notices the employment of the *catena di esseri*, the hierarchy of beings expounded prominently by Marsilio Ficino, as a confirmation that culinary arts should be brought to their maximum perfection (13).

Renaissance, Italy's urban-food system became wealthier and more sophisticated" (65). Of course, Dickie is referencing the late fifteenth century and the work of Bartolomeo Sacchi (Platina), a humanist who is *scalco* to the pope and eventually obtains the coveted position of Vatican librarian. Platina composes the first printed cookery book, *De honesta voluptate et valitudine* (1474), based in large part on the recipes of Maestro Martino da Como. Terence Scully turns in the opposite direction and considers Platina's cook medieval:

The medieval cook was a craftsman – perhaps occasionally even an artist – who both excited and then satisfied the taste of his employer. But he was also at the same time a professional who understood the laws of theoretical physics that must govern all that went on his kitchen. With all these responsibilities, with this knowledge and skill, he was entirely justified in craving the praise that Platina said was his due. Both Platina and he, the cook, knew his worth. (*Cookery* 253)

Ken Albala also considers Maestro Martino and Platina medieval, but argues that they indicate the coming development of new cultural norms (*The Banquet*, x). Katherine McIver chooses to align herself here, and views Martino as the “transitional marker from medieval to Renaissance” (2). Luigi Ballerini confirms that Maestro Martino and his recipes represent “[...] an essential pivot in the structure of Western gastronomy, one that divides the history of cooking into two distinct epochs: before Martino and after Martino” (22). For our purposes, Platina and Maestro Martino are properly humanists, and the intense study of the ancients in order to surpass them will be highlighted here. Furthermore, the superior element of humanist Italian cooking lies in the valorization of local vegetables, fruits, and herbs and in the elevation of the status of the cook.

Platina puts the cookery of Martino da Como in conversation with classical texts and proves how Martino has outdone the ancients.<sup>30</sup> Even if the structure and form of the collection are similar, there are no traces of Apicius's recipes here. Rivaling the ancients is, as in many

---

<sup>30</sup> Maestro Martino and Platina most likely met in the summer of 1463 when Martino was in the service of Cardinal Lodovico Trevisani and Platina was a frequent guest at the Cardinal's home in Albano.

other fields, research for a valid contemporary alternative. *De honesta voluptate et valitudine* demonstrates how fifteenth-century humanists sought to challenge the wisdom of the ancients without creating direct conflict: “uno schema dialettico tipicamente umanistico, che la cucina rinascimentale avrebbe potuto reggere agevolmente il confronto con quella classica piuttosto che riesumare e riproporre tecniche e sapori che certamente nessuno avrebbe compreso o accettato” (Benporat, *Feste* 57). Platina says as much in the dedication of *De honesta voluptate*:

Ho scritto delle cose che si mangiano seguendo l’ese[m]pio di Catone, uomo di straordinarie virtù, di Varrone, sommo tra i dotti, di Columella e di Celio Apicio, non già per esortare i miei lettori a una vita lussuosa, ché sempre nei miei scritti mi sono sforzato per distoglierli dal vizio, bensì per giovare a un uomo costumato che desideri la buona salute e un vitto rispondente al decoro piuttosto che a colui che ricerca il superfluo; e in secondo luogo per mostrare ai posteri che questa età ha avuto ingegni i quali hanno ardito, se non eguagliare gli antichi, almeno imitarli in ogni genere del dire. (Dedicatoria)

And later on, Platina makes an infamous statement: “Non c’è infatti nessuna ragione per cui si debbano anteporre i gusti dei nostri antenati a quelli di oggi, poiché, se ci hanno superato in quasi tutte le discipline, quanto al gusto noi siamo insuperabili” (qtd. in Montanari *La cucina italiana* 118). Platina calls upon a wide range of ancients: Aristotle, Xenophon, Cicero, Homer, Livy, Ovid, Varro, Virgil, Pliny the Elder, Hortensius, but mainly does so *pro forma* and certainly not when it comes to actual taste. Following Joseph Dommers Vehling’s *Platina and the Rebirth of Man*, Luigi Ballerini sees a reorientation of the cultural axis and the welcoming of a new perspective that was sophisticated and allowed culinary study to reach the arts:

Openly contradicting the gargantuan extravaganzas of the guzzlers, gluttons, and profligates that ecclesiastical agencies had successfully dismissed for centuries, this notion canceled out the *de facto* connection between bodily pleasure and sin, introducing the far more sophisticated belief that culinary pleasure, on a par with pleasures of all kinds, was the ultimate goal of artistic research. (12)

To prove his point, Ballerini specifically draws out the contrast, not only with the ancients, but also with medieval religious sermons and literary examples that would damage the image of the

cook. The ‘Great Tempter of the Middle Ages,’ to use Scully’s term, is no longer a threat to one’s salvation. Similarly, privileging the alimentary aspect of health concerns over other health factors transforms Platina’s treatise into a veritable recipe book (Benporat, *Feste* 58-9). It was absolutely successful, printed a vast number of times in the following century and translated into Italian, French, and German.

Yet Platina was not without his critics. The kitchen was previously a vulgar, base topic, no matter the fact that the humanist was signaling a new relation between pleasure and a healthy life (Benporat, *Feste* 57-8). The attention toward the healthy pleasures of the table also represents a stark contrast to the traditions of eating and feasting politically.<sup>31</sup> Platina was an active member of the Roman Academy in these years, and bits of revealing information and gossip feature in his discussions of health science and cookery. Some studies on the Roman Academy uncover that the social function of academy evenings could indeed not be more different from courtly banquets; Platina gives us the images of ‘real’ evenings, with real food for real people at his Roman Academy (Ballerini 7).<sup>32</sup> Not only were the academy members detailed

---

<sup>31</sup> It is Massimo Montanari who notices an ulterior break with the banquets of previous medieval generations and the banquet of this generation of princes. The banquet of princes is no longer a *locus* of social cohesion but a device to transmit class distinction and power (*The Culture of Food*, 92). There are many studies of how power is communicated through food and spectacle in Early Modern courts. Timothy Tomasik and Juliann Vitullo have edited an excellent volume: *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Brepols 2007).

<sup>32</sup> The “realistic” view of the Roman Academy as a venue of moderation is somewhat suspect because many scholars have studied the luxurious, and even themed, events that were hosted there. The members were accused multiple times of improper lifestyles, and in fact Platina was jailed and interrogated in Castel Sant’Angelo in the 1460s. Nonetheless, Ballerini cites a letter from Castel Sant’Angelo that Platina writes to Cardinal Giacomo Ammannati Piccolomini in which the cook writer is aware of the “greasy and sordid” business of foodstuffs. Platina also claims that the cook and his work “are not far removed from genius” (11). Thus, the kitchen may have been a vulgar and quotidian art but it is one that Platina and his fellow academy members are interested in. Some scholars have also unabashedly viewed Platina’s interest in certain foodstuffs: “On sex, as on peacocks, Platina writes like a man with something to hide. In *Respectable Pleasures* he displays an obsession with aphrodisiac foods. He writes of dozens of ingredients and dishes that stir the libido: from pine nuts to partridge, from chickpeas to ‘Golden Balls’ (which we would call French toast). Broad beans stimulate lust because they look like testicles. Apparently onions taken in small doses ‘arouse sexual appetite, and increase its nourishment with lustful dampness’. Oysters are ‘valuable to the libidinous because they arouse even deadened passion’. It is not at all clear whether Platina considers these qualities dangerous, useful or both” (Dickie 76).

in describing their experiences, but they also showed novel attention to the cook and permitted less socially powerful people to join them (11). It is probable that Martino was a frequent guest alongside his role as cook (17). In any case, Martino's own recipe collection in vernacular *Ars coquinaria* was already enjoying considerable success in manuscript form in these years.<sup>33</sup> Not long after, it was printed, referenced openly, and copied ruthlessly. Thus, the rejection of a medical-philosophical or religious framework was already in action, and Maestro Martino had illustrated Italian cooking in its contemporary glory.

Indeed Martino's recipes are the first collection deemed worthy of "mechanical reproduction" (Ballerini 2). Benporat writes that Maestro Martino's collection, before Platina's, was a new manual-type that broke with the past:

la *summa* di una nuova manualità, risultato di una svolta di portata storica a confronto con le obsolete formule medievali perché, rinnegato ogni legame con il passato, proponeva soluzioni del tutto originali, una *nuovelle cuisine* destinata a lasciare un'impronta indelebile nella cultura gastronomica quattrocentesca. (*Feste* 57)

Platina rightly credits Martino for his originality and praises him often. In Book One, Chapter 11, *De coquo*, he calls on all other cooks to follow Martino's example: "[il cuoco] cerchi di assomigliare in tutto, se gli riesce, a Maestro Martino da Como, principe dei cuochi ai nostri tempi, dal quale ho appreso il modo di cucinare ogni pietanza." Again in Book 6, Chapter 177, *Cibaria alba*, Martino has surpassed all other cooks: "Quale cuoco, o dei immortali, può essere paragonato al mio Martino da Como, dal quale proviene la maggior parte delle cose che scrivo? Lo diresti un altro Carneade se lo ascolti quando parla improvvisando sugli argomenti proposti." Martino was *cuoco per eccellenza*.

Of course, Platina's recipes are mostly Martino's: 240 of 250. One might say that at least Platina references his source. Martino was copied unashamedly and without mention by

---

<sup>33</sup> Claudio Benporat has studied four manuscripts of Martino's *Ars coquinaria* and claims that they all speak to the changing tide of renewed culture.

Giovanni de Rosselli, pseudonym of Jean Duval, twice in the beginning of the sixteenth century; in Venice, Agostino Zanni da Portese prints the *Opera nova chiamata Epulario* in 1516. In Milan, Pietro Paolo Verini rearranges and removes material to republish Rosselli's text in the 1530s. These are virtual copies of Martino's collection, but there are other manuscripts that attest to the multitude of culinary practices in the panorama of fifteenth-century gastronomic literature across the peninsula. The *Modo singular de cucina* and the *Apparecchi diversi da mangiare e rimedii* seem to both derive from the Neapolitan community. They are inspired by Catalan cooking, which is identifiable in the use of spices, sugar, rose water, and almonds.<sup>34</sup> Benporat identifies these manuscripts as still quite medieval, but he believes that they confirm the success of different manuals in the period:

E' la riprova che, nel corso di questo secolo, la cucina italiana si è espressa a più livelli e ha saputo generare opere di valore diseguale, talvolta guardando al passato in una nostalgica rievocazione di formule obsolete ma altre volte volgendo l'attenzione verso il futuro in un'alternanza di impulsi che si inquadrano perfettamente nella cultura del secolo, divisa tra passato e presente, in bilico tra tradizione e innovazione.<sup>35</sup> (*Feste* 62)

Benporat sums up the fifteenth century as a period caught between the ancient-medieval schemes. The new proposals of Maestro Martino confirm an ideological break with the Trecento that also guarantees him fame unlike the anonymity of his predecessors.

---

<sup>34</sup> The language and vocabulary – including the origin of foodstuffs – speak to the southern locale, and are similar to the Catalan *Libre de doctrina pera ben servir* by Ruperto da Nola. Another recipe collection known only as Ms. Western 211 also seems southern and of medieval, hybrid character between early Spanish and Italian cuisines. Another, by Johannes Buckehen, proclaims to be a cook at the time of Martino V, thus 1431. It is a bizarre text, with nothing original according to Benporat, possibly deriving from a conclave (*Feste* 60-2). The last is the manuscript R3550 in the Ruskin Gallery of Sheffield. It is a collection of banquets and more simple meals composed between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth.

<sup>35</sup> Ballerini also sees culinary excellence in line with the presumed advancement of other Renaissance arts: “Imitating to ‘surpass’ the ancients seems to be the driving force behind all aesthetic endeavors of the Renaissance. An example of a similar claim, in an area by far more pervasive than gastronomy, will be made a few decades later by the celebrated Venetian courtesan and poet Veronica Franco (1546-91), who writes a letter to Tintoretto in which she expresses her enthusiasm over her portrait: ‘I can’t bear to listen to people who praise ancient times so much and find such fault with our own... I have heard gentlemen expert in antiquity [...] say that in our era and even today, there are painters and sculptors who must be acknowledged not only equal but to surpass those of ancient times [...]’” (38-9).



Martino's complete modernity includes arranging recipes into chapters by food type, not in alphabetical or casual order. He valorizes local Italian and Mediterranean ingredients and offers his advice and opinions with mature and professional language. Benporat summarizes Martino's affect on the decline of spices from the East:

Con Martino la stagione delle pungenti spezie orientali sembra volgere progressivamente al termine. Egli ne raccomanda un uso discreto 'che sia secondo el commune gusto o non sia forte o dolce secondo el gusto del patrone' mentre sempre più sovente fa ricorso alle erbe odorose e alle essenze locali: salvia, rosmarino, origano, menta, prezzemolo, maggiorana in una concezione più moderna per una rinnovata cucina mediterranea [...] il maggior merito di Maestro Martino sta nella continua ricerca di accostamenti inediti e di soluzioni alternative a quelle classiche proposte dalla cucina medievale in uno sforzo tendente a valorizzare l'ampia varietà degli alimenti mediterranei, carni, pesci, frutta e verdure ma soprattutto degli aromi e delle erbe odorose dei nostri orti [...] (*Feste* 64-5)

Some medieval – and more Iberian – ingredients fade slowly from the kitchen. Martino still makes use of sugar and rose water to contrast vinegar and lemon. He also makes abundant use of almonds. Yet his innovation lies in the re-introduction of Italian and Mediterranean aromatic herbs that enhance the existing flavor of meats and vegetables. Furthermore, Martino's cooking became increasingly important to changing the social identity of vegetables. Katherine McIver confirms: "Because of Maestro Martino, vegetable dishes that had been the hallmark of the poor man's diet found a dignified place next to roasts and brined fish on the tables of the rich. He rehabilitated vegetables [...]" (40). The communal implications of privileging vegetables corroborate what Platina saw in Martino: an opportunity to propose real food on an everyday table, even that of the powerful.

Another ideological break with the past is the author's intent. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts were written as manuals for consultation and records of accepted practice. There are generally no introductions, commentaries, or recommendations for serving the recipes

transcribed. As previously mentioned, the recipes were arranged in alphabetical order or not at all. This is not what is suggested of Martino. As Katherine McIver insists:

Maestro Martino was a transitional figure and a major influence to those who followed [...] Martino changed the way people ate. His recipes, in his treatise-like compendium, reveal the secrets and tricks of the trade. [...] quite the opposite from the average medieval cook who made notes merely to remind himself how to make a particular dish as he did not want to divulge his secrets. (39)

In this way, Maestro Martino belongs, again, in the context of the entire cultural project of the new society – the merchant class in place of medieval aristocracy – that sought excellence in all fields. Ballerini, too, argues that Martino is the first cook with the clear desire to divulge his professional secrets; his reputation and compensation would increase in relation to his *bravura* as long as it was well known. In fact, measuring one's achievements in this period became crucial, and the desire to document one's talent and receive credit can be seen across Martino's work: in intent, structure, and language, which all demonstrate a "socio-linguistic commitment" to multiple class levels (Ballerini 23-4).<sup>36</sup> Indeed, according to Henisch, by the time we arrive at Platina "the cook's approach and attitudes are poles apart from those of the wild-eyed, grimy, quarrelsome figure of tradition. Behind this decorous, disciplined façade there had to burn the ambition of a true artist. It was not quite enough for a cook to cook well. He must want 'especially to be praised for it'" (15-6).

Interestingly enough, Martino's own vision of a cook does not mention the desire for praise or fame. He says that a cook is "neither a madman nor a simpleton, but he must have a great brain" (qtd. in McIver 34). Even if Martino's definition of a cook is brief, exalting the intellect of the cook is a substantial change from the past and reason for fame. Before Martino

---

<sup>36</sup> Ballerini notes that, by writing in vernacular, Martino was able to communicate many more nuances of local ingredients than Platina, who was writing in Latin and Martino is also responsible for an explosion of new verbs to describe cooking tasks (24).

cooks were of very low social class and very poorly paid. Benporat considers this newfound importance something that the cook has properly won:

Già nelle prime righe Martino lascia trasparire la sua nuova filosofia alimentare [...] ora il cuoco ha conquistato una sua indipendenza intellettuale e si muove con assoluta libertà di scelta [...] E' il cuoco che decide in cucina, in piena autonomia di giudizio [...] istruzioni precise che connotano una profonda conoscenza delle materie prime e delle tecniche di cotture [...]. (*Feste* 63-4)

We recall that the masters of the house and stewards were of noble birth in this period. The man who became a cook had no particular birth right to his position. He had to prove himself worthy of his responsibilities, but he was also not asked to decide very much. Martino's *Ars coquinaria* is the first example of a cook determining – and recommending to others – the proper ingredients and spices and pairing dishes in a meal for the benefit of taste. Cooks following Martino seem to be granted more liberties and more respect, as their profession becomes an art.

While Martino stands as *exemplum* to other cooks and offers the *Ars coquinaria* as a guidebook that highlights changes in diet and identity among social classes, stewards' manuals and a series of official documents from the court of Urbino describe more uniform characteristics and responsibilities of cooks among household workers. These manuals include standards for the aforementioned *scalco*, *cuoco*, *credenziere*, but also new ones, such as the *trinciante* (meat carver) and *coppiere* (cupbearer).<sup>37</sup> Cristoforo da Messisbugo in his *Banchetti* (1549) and Giovanni Battista Rossetti in *Dello scalco* (1584) include little of this treatment of the cook, but Domenico Romoli, called Il Panunto, describe the necessary qualifications and attitude of the professional cook in mid-century Florence. His is a mixture of idealization and personal experience; Romoli began as a cook, and apparently acquired his nickname – oiled bread – in

---

<sup>37</sup> Indeed more manuals appear towards the end of the sixteenth century, including those specialized ones like Vincenzo Cervio's *Il Trinciante*, the meat carver, published first in Venice in 1581. Cesare Evitascandalo's *Dialogo del trinciante, Il maestro della casa*, and *Libro dello scalco* were written in the 1570s but published in the following century. Manuals continue to be popular prints well into the seventeenth century.

this way. Eventually he “graduated” to *scalco* and performed this duty for Pope Julius III. In *La singolare dottrina* (1560), il Panunto recommends that the cook have short hair and no beard and has prescriptions for his clothing: a dress shirt with white, clean *grembiule*. He should be “piacevole, ubbidiente, umano, allegro” and hopefully ‘italian’ (c.5v). Earlier, the *Ordine et officij de casa de lo illustrissimo signor duca de Urbino* evolved from the complexities and irregularities facing Federico da Montefeltro’s court. In Urbino, the cook should be all these things:

prosperoso, sollicito, fidele, pratico et intendente del gusto del signore, al quale solo et a la tavola sua ello habia a servire cum netteza sopractucto, et sia discreto et intendente de omne vivanda più che se po’, et non immundo, et accurato al honore del signore che non manche niente cum fare intendere tucto el bisogno al scalcho; et de’ essere in cucina superiore a tucti, et habia charicho de tucti li instrumenti apertinenti a l’officio suo per inventario correspondente a quello de la guardarobba, a ciò che ‘l possa et sia tenuto a renderne bom conto. (59-60)

Isabella d’Este, influential in all aspects of life in Mantua, also has certain requirements for her cook at court. McIver reports that, according to personal letters, she was displeased with the cook and sought a suitable replacement: “For a cook, she wanted a young man with appropriate training, yet who was willing to learn and please not only her but her husband with the dishes he prepared; as well, he had to be capable of handling meals for large banquets” (47).<sup>38</sup> At the end of the sixteenth century, Rossetti (*Dello scalco* – 1584) focuses on the cook’s skill; the cook should be resourceful in using fats and primary materials, should know how to repurpose leftovers into new dishes, vary the meals he prepares particularly when guests are present, disguise dishes that are spoiling with decorations, always choose the best cooking method for any given food, and have vast knowledge of all spices and herbs, including which foods they are best suited to accompany (Benporat *Cinquecento* 32).

---

<sup>38</sup> McIver cites various letters from the first decades of 16<sup>th</sup> century housed at the Archivio di Stato Mantova and Archivio Gonzaga that describe Isabella’s search for a cook.

Bartolomeo Scappi, the exclusive focus of the following paragraphs, has much advice and warnings to offer the cook as well. Scappi's cook should have intimate knowledge of all foodstuffs: meat, fish, four-legged creatures and volatiles. The same is valid for his knowledge of spices and herbs, fruits and vegetables, and their best growing seasons. His dishes should be both delicious and pleasing to the eye (*Libro I, cap. I*). The cook's personal habits must also be kept in check: "Soprattutto si raccomanda che sia sobrio 'perché, per il gran caldo il troppo bere gli leva le più volte il cervello, onde ne possono nascere mille inconvenienti'" (qtd. in Benporat, *Cinquecento* 16). Scappi makes these recommendations for the profession in his *Opera*, yet also through his life and career he demonstrates the qualities of the ideal Renaissance cook.

*L'opera di Bartolomeo Scappi: L'arte et prudenza d'un maestro cuoco* (1570) was published after a lifetime of success. Scappi, cook of various titles in noble and ecclesiastic households, ultimately serves as cook to Pope Pius IV and as personal cook (*cuoco segreto*) to Pius V. Yet little is known of his early life and career. The cook must have been active through most of the sixteenth century, and probably of some prominence already in the 1530s. In 1536, he prepares an important meal, offered by his supposed employer Bolognese Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio, in honor of Charles V's arrival in Rome. When Campeggio dies, it is believed that Scappi went into the service of Cardinal Marino Grimani in Venice. Later, he is found in the service of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio di Carpi as master cook. In this capacity, he prepared dishes at multiple conclaves, including those of 1549 and 1555, which endured for months. Scappi's *bravura* gained him not only fame, but also titles within the Vatican, such as Lateran count and macebearer, that were granted to him by Pius V. In the early 1570s a new wave of popes required much less of Scappi's efforts. His role in exquisite meal preparation diminished as the popes hoped to make their austerity known throughout Rome and Christendom in the climate of the

Counter Reformation. Most scholars joke that he would have had ample time to write in those later years! Nevertheless, it is also probable that he was composing the *Opera* already in the 1560s. Overall, Scappi's desire to train future generations is clear. Throughout the *Opera* he directs his teachings to Giovanni, his apprentice, preparing him for a lifetime as a cook.

In the *Opera*, Scappi takes an even more systematic approach than Maestro Martino, providing detailed accounts of specialties across the peninsula's kitchens. Benporat identifies this as a true moment of glory for Italian cuisine: "Con Bartolomeo Scappi [...] la cucina italiana raggiunge piena e consapevole maturità. Questo ricettario, così ordinato nella forma ed esauriente nell'articolata partizione degli argomenti [...] [è] massima espressione della cucina italiana del Cinquecento sia per contenuto sia per una veste editoriale particolarmente lussuosa, arricchita da 27 tavole" (*Cinquecento* 24; 27). The cook meticulously lays out recipes for all sorts of foodstuffs in an organized pattern, but he also provides the advice and commentary that helps his pupil understand the essential nature of foods. Terence Scully estimates that half of Scappi's recipes were original and many others had been substantially updated from the previous century (*Opera* 27-8). Furthermore, the well-known sketches of Renaissance kitchens derive, in fact, from Scappi's *Opera*. From them, we gain a good understanding of culinary tools present in different kitchens of the period.

Scappi describes the responsibilities of the cook and the steward as he has served them both. From the start of Book One, the author reminds Giovanni that his role as cook is very special: "che piu tosto possa egli [il cuoco] servire nel'ufficio di Scalco, che lo scalco per Cuoco" (I,1). In fact, the dinners of conclaves are described in detail, including arrangements and routines, which would have been previously the work of the steward alone. Instead, Scappi makes it clear that the devotion and integrity of the cook was highly valued in this grave and

exceptional moment (Scully, *Opera* 26). Yet again, a cook is demonstrating that the particular character of his work requires proven intellect and talent and is not a position that one obtains easily (through noble birth).

Scappi's recipes continue the work of Maestro Martino and Platina because the call for a mix of ingredients that does not adhere to recommendations according to social class. Even at the elite dinners of the conclave, Dickie suggests that Scappi combined culinary traditions:

we can identify tempting traces of the intimate relationship between the diet of the ordinary people and the food of the elite [...] He puts even more humble ingredients to imaginative use in the *Work* [...] But it is not only the ingredients of popular eating that make it to the pope's table: Scappi is not ashamed to admit that many of his recipes have risen as far up the social scale as he has. (127)

Moreover, in the *Opera*, Scappi recounts regularly his conversations with multiple strata of society. He uses the fishermen of Chioggia and Venice as an example of the previously rare "dialogue between producers and consumers that cooks like Scappi orchestrated" (Dickie 128). In fact, Dickie labels Scappi as a cook that speaks to a larger reality: "[...] the *Work's* very existence was remarkable – a comprehensive cookery guide, and a meticulously illustrated monument not just to one exceptionally successful career but to the careers of those hundreds of nameless cooks who had brought Italian food to such heights" (108).

It is evident that, by Scappi's time, professionalization was important. Even middle class homes enjoy the services of a cook, and that cook enjoyed specific privileges. Terence Scully highlights life in these households:

In relatively modest bourgeois establishments, that individual [the cook] might enjoy the intimacy of the master, might perhaps be on roughly the same social level as the master, yet still received wages from the master. In addition to such indoor areas as the master's bed chamber, he had responsibility for the kitchen [...] By the sixteenth century a cook was a significant and valued figure among the common retainers of a household, being remunerated at rates comparable to those accorded middle managers today. (*Opera* 3-4)

In Book One of the *Opera*, Scappi tells us that an ideal cook's contract was made up of stipends and allowances, including benefits and perquisites. The earnings of the cook provided enough food products and salary to support multiple families (Dickie 107-8).<sup>39</sup> Food scholars concur that a well-respected cook in a wealthy home could expect a horse, his own room, a large winter supply of firewood, an ample food allowance, and the right to all the waste in the kitchen. It is likely that the urban network encouraged the professionalization of the cook and elevated the expectations of their craft. More respect for the profession followed.

Food writers like the steward Giovanni Battista Rossetti and the meat carver Vincenzo Cervio would remember Scappi explicitly in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>40</sup> But the literary arts also intersect with Scappi and his peers in a meaningful way. Anton Francesco Grazzini, *il Lasca*, remembers Scappi in his *Rime burlesche* and Tommaso Garzoni also makes mention of him in his *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*. The intense battle for the status of foodstuffs and cooks would enter even further into the sphere of poetry and prose, for example, in the works of Francesco Berni and Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo.

In her study of the medieval cook, Henisch includes two excellent, but brief, sections on the 'cook as character' and 'fact and fiction.' It is well attested that the cook is male in literature and art, although we are quite sure that housewives did the cooking in all lower class homes and in the countryside. The male cook, instead, was a professional, employed and assigned specific kitchen – or more – responsibilities. When represented in literary works, the cook is never a happenstance cook.

---

<sup>39</sup> A master cook in noble homes would be promised 3lbs of bread daily, same wine as the gentleman's, a daily ration of 2.5 lbs of beef or mutton, a chicken or capon or their equivalent in eggs and fish on lean days (Dickie 107).

<sup>40</sup> Abroad others make ample use of Scappi's work in new recipe collections: in Germany and in Spain the *Ein new Kochbuch* and *Libro del arte de cozina*, respectively, copy over half of the recipes in the *Opera* and in the Netherlands, the *Koochoec oft Familieren Keukenboec* takes 135 of its 167 recipes from Scappi (Benporat, *Cinquecento* 28).



In the arts, the realm of the cook is the comic. Hensch sums this relationship up well: “bodily appetites and functions, while rarely discussed in polite society, have always made people laugh, and so cooks and comedy have been partners for a very long time” (9). From the Greeks to the Romans, whether loquacious, boastful, simple, or litigious, the cook of antiquity was stereotyped as comic. In the following centuries, the image of the medieval cook grows decisively darker: cross and devilish. Hensch argues for crossover between literature and social class in this case: the multitude of negative *exempla* of the cook directly resulted in his lowered status, among the lowest on the social ladder (13). Furthermore, according to Hensch, these characterizations are based on specific and *true* working conditions: the kitchen is hot, tempers flare, unsavory assistants are inept, commands are barked at the cook all whilst pots bubble over and fat sears (9).<sup>41</sup> Boccaccio’s Chichibio might disprove such a negative portrait of the medieval cook on the Italian peninsula. In the view of most scholars, the *Decameron* slants towards parody, comedy, and social criticism. These characteristics return to a cook, such as Chichibio, that is skilled and clever.

When focusing our attention on the the Renaissance, further corrections to our understanding of the cook can be made. Drawing from multiple sources, we see fifteenth-century cooks already making a name for themselves and carving out the special traits of their professions. Furthermore, fact and fiction intermingle precisely because the cook’s work reverberated through everyday existence. Therefore, we must look to a compounded image of the

---

<sup>41</sup> Hensch’s last example for such a negative image of the cook stems from the *Chanson de Roland* in which the cook’s low social class is used as an instrument of the court. Being beaten by a cook inflicts further punishment on a knight simply by virtue of social class. Hensch concludes that “such associations as these, with death and dishonour, choler and confusion, shape in bold outline the traditional portrait of the cook. This, established over the centuries as an instantly identifiable ‘type’ is, nevertheless, more eye-catching than convincing. Like those other staples of comedy, the henpecked husband, the nagging wife, or the skinflint father, the cook’s ‘character’ has a grain or two of truth in it, but it is a likeness slanted to catch laughter, not to show truth [...] these images of black farce distort reality.” (13-15). In general, I agree with Hensch’s assessment. However, her fleeting mention of comedy’s stock characters as similar stereotypes is problematic simply because she never cites an example of a cook in comedy in her work.

cook. Henisch advocates for “a mosaic portrait assembled from these tiny pieces [of fiction that] offers an impression of the real cook in the real world which serves to soften the bold outlines of the caricature ‘type,’ and subdue the glow of the idealized self-portrait” (23). Ballerini makes similar suggestions about literature that can serve as “bona fide source of historical knowledge” when he cites a market sonnet by the fourteenth-century poet Antonio Cammelli (il Pistoia). Ballerini argues that we gain a decent idea of bourgeois-aristocratic culinary practices and nutritional concerns if we view the works of il Pistoia and his peers in conjunction with the recipes of Martino (18-9). Before il Pistoia, for example, also il Burchiello wrote sonnets such as *Natura morta* and *Ricetta* that instructed his houseboy on market purchases and common cures for gout. Seeking out ‘realistic’ themes in the arts can help assemble that compound image of the cook as he navigates Early Modern society. We will see that culinary professionals share some outlines of the ‘type’ but playwrights also, and in equal measure, direct their innovation towards the representations of the contemporary world. They participate in a Renaissance theater that, like Martino, Platina, and Scappi, gives us a pluri-perspective field.

As previously mentioned, the sixteenth century saw the explosion of foodstuffs in poetry and the visual arts. Often used as metaphor, alimentary images become playful, yet transgressive elements of a work. Commentators of Francesco Berni, for example, have long decoded his odes to foodstuffs as sexual metaphors, and John Varriano completes a similar study of food erotica in Renaissance painting. Another food historian, Ken Albala, seeks to explain how the satirical, food-related genre of farce flourishes in Renaissance Italy. He views odes to foodstuffs as a negation of doctor’s recommendations, and they lift food to heroic status precisely to frustrate the reader for ‘pure fun’ (240-1). It is likely as Albala says, but only in part. Renaissance

‘realistic-bourgeois’ poets participate in multiple cultural movements and they respond to various impulses and sources of inspiration. Above all, they are aware of their choices.

If we can put to rest binary struggles of vulgar and classical traditions, foodstuffs and cooks shed light on the reciprocity of material and metaphorical images. Laura Giannetti has pointed to this level of contamination of cultures in alimentary discourse:

Burlesque poetry of the time employed the language of food and cuisine to humorously parody the prevailing literary genres and traditions, bringing the classic authorities and contemporary authors down to the most prosaic level of everyday life (fruits and vegetables, nature, peasant) [...] drawing attention to a literary production in which the noble and the humble, the classic and the popular, the cultured and the mundane intersect and mix creatively. (143)<sup>42</sup>

Giannetti is thinking of Francesco Berni’s sonnets such as “Capitolo dei cardi” or Firenzuola’s “In lode all’anguilla,” among many others. However, even more indicative are Berni’s attempts to explain the realistic-bourgeois background and ethos. In *Capitolo al Cardinale de’ Medici* Berni acknowledges his role as poet of food:

Provai un tratto a scrivere elegante  
in prosa e in versi e fecine parecchi  
e ebbi voglia anch’io d’esser gigante,  
ma messer Cinzio mi tirò gli orecchi  
e disse; ‘Berni, fa pur dell’Anguille,  
ché questo è il proprio umor dove tu pecchi;  
arte non è da te cantar d’Achille;  
ad un pastor poveretto tuo pari  
convien dar versi da boschi e da ville. (37-45)

The landscape of alimentary discourse and the cook shifts drastically with each new culture, drawing on past understandings of his role and conforming to contemporary society’s needs. Food and professionals of all types in the late Renaissance are changing; even poets of food – such as Berni – and cooks enjoy fame and cultural status. With them, humble things, vulgar things, ‘real’ things are gaining ground too. We will see how comedy is the perfect place to

---

<sup>42</sup> This translation of Laura Giannetti is my own, taken directly from her article published in Italian “Alla mensa dei poeti burleschi: Parodia letteraria e interpretazione di culture.”

confirm these cultural changes: at the base of alimentary discourse and representations of cooks is the combination of cultural impulses from all social strata. In turn, the linguistic and literary invention inherent in incorporating authentic foodstuffs and culinary professionals is a dynamic new cultural project.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE COOKS OF ARIOSTO, FIRENZUOLA, AND PICCOLOMINI

### Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the representations of cooks by Ludovico Ariosto, Agnolo Firenzuola, and Alessandro Piccolomini in three of their early sixteenth-century comedies: respectively, *I suppositi*, *I lucidi*, and *L'amor costante*. I will highlight different characterizations of the profession, from servile and dedicated household employee to sexualized comic figure across the comedies. While these depictions nearly correspond to a chronological perspective of the comedies under consideration, a more striking trajectory of their development exists: throughout this period, the cook loses his clear relationship to the kitchen, ultimately serving as a comic participant in sexually charged scenes in Piccolomini's drama. Here, no overt mention of the cook's culinary talents or role within the household can be found. Although the primacy of culinary workers in Renaissance households will come into question, an informed study views the late characterization of the cook in conversation with burlesque poetry, in which the union of sexual metaphor and foodstuffs is the focus of comic rhymes, or with more general medical and scientific association of herbs and remedies. Still, as a study of Renaissance comedy and the role of urban culinary professionals, I analyze in depth the imitative and innovative aspects of the three cooks (and comedies), highlighting the cultural, social, and class-consciousness of the works. Thus, I will refer to classical comedies and the theories of literary imitation – both in antiquity and in the Renaissance – throughout this chapter to chart the changes each playwright has made to his model and predecessors. I have subdivided the study by comedy and dramaturge:

firstly, Ludovico Ariosto's *I Suppositi* (1509), secondly, Agnolo Firenzuola's *I Lucidi* (1538-), and lastly, Alessandro Piccolomini's *L'amor costante* (1536).

### **An Early Example of the Cook: Dalio in Ariosto's *I Suppositi***

Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) requires little introduction as a prominent cultural figure of the Este court and the Early Renaissance. Virtually every generation has contemplated his works over the last 500 years, and scholars continue to examine *L'Orlando furioso*, his satires, and his theater. Ariosto's first comedy, *La cassaria* (1508) is generally considered to mark the beginning of *commedia erudita*. It works to re-establish the formal characteristics of ancient comedy: unity of time and place, standardized five-act structure, and use of fixed character types, or stock characters. Yet, it also confirms a willful divergence from classical masters and theories. The poetic move toward *imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis* is present in a peer drama, *La Calandria* by Cardinal Bibbiena, and evermore so in Ariosto's future works. Among the Ferrarese's other theatrical successes are *I suppositi*, *Il negromante*, and *La Lena*. His last comedy, *Gli studenti*, was incomplete at the time of his death and later finished by his heir. This chapter will focus on the second of Ariosto's comedies: *I Suppositi*. It was penned and performed in prose for the Carnival season of 1509. Like *La cassaria*, Ariosto modified *I suppositi* between 1528 and 1531 to be printed and performed in verse. For our purposes, no significant change has been made to the elements in question; the verse version features necessary revisions to language and style, but the content and characterization of the cast remain untouched in the adaptation.

In line with the precepts of the period, *I Suppositi* is classically inspired. There are *topoi* of abandonment and recognition of two children and the amorous plot complexities that require

identity swaps. The focal moments of the plot are formed around the ambiguities that ensue when two characters attempt to act as another. In the prologue, Ariosto indicates Terence's *Eunuchus* and Plautus' *The Captives* as his classical models. Prologues are important designators of a playwright's intentions when "copying" the ancients, and Ariosto reveals that he is aware that too much *imitatio* can be conceived as a lack of originality.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Ariosto professes that his relationship to classical literature is not plagiarism but inspiration. He imagines publically that Terence and Plautus would not be angered by his literary operations: "[ha preso da loro]...ma si modestamente però che Terenzio e Plauto medesimo, risapendolo, non l'arebbono a male, e di poetica immaginazione, che di furto più tosto, li darebbono nome" (Prologue, *I suppositi*). The prologue also positions Terence and Plautus in relation to Greek playwrights, declaring that the Latin plays have imitated Menander, Apollodorus, and other Greek writers. In *I suppositi*, Ariosto has relied on the established elements of classical comedy, yet his dependence upon them is part of a larger tradition of imitation and is not to a degree that should incite anger.

*Imitatio, contaminatio, and innovatio* is well documented across the theatrical production of playwrights of erudite comedy. Additional sources are identifiable in Ariosto's *I suppositi*: like Cardinal Bibbiena, he draws upon Boccaccio's *Decameron* for content, language, and style. Yet in *I suppositi*, Ariosto emphasizes for the first time a modern scene of daily life in Ferrara, and further still, in *La Lena*.<sup>44</sup> The preeminent scholar of theater history, Ludovico Zorzi, concludes his essay "Ferrara: il sipario ducale" with his analysis of Ariosto's work. Zorzi considers playwrights, particularly Ariosto, in broad terms, including texts, directing, and the

---

<sup>43</sup> Ariosto was also strongly impacted by the performances of Plautus' plays that he saw in his youth. For example, there is a record of a performance that he attended of the *Menaechmi* at age 11. Donald Beecher explains that his interest in drama continued in youth as he created roles for his brothers and sisters and participated in Matteo Boiardo's theater troupe. His opportunity for originality derived from a loss of interest in performing Plautine plays even in the vernacular. In 1507, Duke Alfonso and Ippolito desired a new drama for the next Carnival season (39).

<sup>44</sup> While Ariosto updates some aspects of his first comedy *La cassaria* to contemporary reality, the scene is set in Mytilene (Greece), not in Italy.

role early dramaturges played in stagecraft. Zorzi comments on Ariosto's urban consciousness and the precision with which he depicts contemporary Ferrara:

E tuttavia, grazie alla compresenza di un abile testo, l'artificio scenografico della Ferrara ariostesca riusciva a materiarsi di temi concreti. Di commedia in commedia, la fedeltà urbana dell'autore, professata in versi famosi, viene precisandosi come minuta topografia della Ferrara reale e dei suoi dintorni. La convenzione della commedia latina, dove gli intervenienti si fingono reduce dal foro o dal porto, spinge i personaggi ariosteschi a tessere itinerari tra la piazza del Duomo e gli scali del fiume o i ponti oltre le mura, arricchendo i percorsi di nomi di vie, di porte, di bordelli, di osterie, di botteghe, di chiese. Di questa realtà domestica e consuetudinaria ("Cochiolino e Gorgadello") si è compilato, in margine a un'edizione critica recente, il catalogo pressoché completo. L'Ariosto, tra i commediografi rinascimentali, è il primo a compiere il passo (esile in apparenza, ma sostanziale per le sorti del testo e della scenografia) del trasferire nella realtà di un ambiente circostanziato e riferibile l'indefinita astrattezza del luogo scenico latino. Nella *Cassaria* del 1508 la scena è ancora quella di una generica "cittade," identificata per volontà dell'autore con il luogo remoto e alienante della tradizione classica; ma già nei *Suppositi* dell'anno seguente la scena è condotta a Ferrara, dove rimarrà anche per la *Lena* e per gli *Studenti* degli anni che verranno. (31)

In this proclamation of Ariosto's essential creativity and fidelity to the urban environment, Zorzi focuses on the topological references that innovate Latin comedy. In *I suppositi*, Ariosto embeds references to places and aspects of "domestic and everyday" Ferrerese life. This transfers an abstract Latin scene to the "reality of a circumstantial and referenced environment" that would not be lost on spectators. Zorzi never truly analyzes the text or characters of a drama, preferring the study of theater performances. He briefly notes that an "abile testo" renders this image of the city possible, and he barely names the characters that run itineraries of the city. Building on Zorzi's spatial theory of urban consciousness, I argue that the reflection of a world familiar, captivating and comical, includes the cook Dalio. If Zorzi considers the passage from abstract to concrete reality outwardly tenuous, but substantial for the study of the scene, I argue that Dalio is the seemingly inconsequential character that offers a view into various social relations and domestic spaces.



In the plot of the five-act comedy, Polinesta's wetnurse (*Nutrice*) begins by describing the amorous complications that set the scene: Erostrato, a student in Ferrara, and Cleandro, a doctor, both desire to marry Polinesta, the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Erostrato has taken on his servant Dulippo's identity in order to get close to the young woman and Dulippo ambles around the city dressed as his master. Unfortunately the doctor is very close to achieving Polinesta's hand because of the dowry he can provide her father. The parasite, Pasifilo, appears to help the cause of the doctor, but is only truly interested in his next meal. Dulippo and Erostrato devise a plan to have a Sienese man stand in for Erostrato's father and guarantee the dowry for Polinesta's hand. However, this plan is disrupted as Erostrato's father arrives in Ferrara to find his son and argues with the Sienese man about true identity. All identity swaps are eventually revealed and a happy ending ensues for Erostrato and Polinesta once Erostrato's true father promises a large dowry to her father.

In the complicated plot of marital plans and switched identities, the cook Dalio appears as the repository of familiar and quotidian concerns. He provides the portrait of the cook in the household kitchen and indicates the relationships among culinary workers and other characters of the city. In order to appreciate the richness of Dalio's exchanges, I will analyze each encounter with Dalio in detail.

Act Three begins with the cook's failed attempt to locate the eggs that he has purchased at the market because he has charged the boy (*ragazzo*) of the play, Caprino, with bringing them home:

DALIO            Come siamo a casa, credo ch'io non ritrovarò de l'uova che porti in quel cesto uno solo intero. Ma con chi parlo io? Dove diavolo è rimasto ancora questo ghiotto? Sarà restato a dar la caccia a qualche cane o a scherzare con l'orso. A ogni cosa che truova per via, si ferma: se vede facchino o villano o giudeo, non lo terrieno le catene che non gli andasse a fare qualche dispiacere. Tu verrai pure una volta, capestro: bisogna che di

passo in passo ti vadi aspettando. Per Dio, s'io truovo pure un solo di quelle uova rotte, ti romperò la testa. (III.1)

From this characterization, Caprino appears essentially young and immature, lackadaisical in his work ethic. He is easily distracted and Dalio, of more mindfulness, laments waiting for him at every turn, eventually making a somewhat empty threat of bashing his head in if he broke the eggs. Of interest to spectators and readers is Dalio's recreation of a Ferrarese street and its inhabitants. He describes the types of people that Caprino would typically stop to visit: a porter, a *villano*, a pejorative term for a peasant, or a Jew. In response to Dalio's lamentations, Caprino continues to demonstrate his youth through his barking responses and eagerness to provoke the cook. Caprino seems to understand how to spark Dalio's anger; he calls him "carico di vino o di bastonate":

CAPRINO     Sì ch'io non potrò sedere.  
DALIO        Ah! frasca, frasca.  
CAPRINO     S'io son frasca, son dunque mal sicuro a venir con un becco.  
DALIO        S'io non fussi carico, ti mostrerei s'io sono un becco.  
CAPRINO     Rade volte t'ho veduto che tu non sia carico, o di vino o di bastonate.  
DALIO        Al dispetto ch'io non dico!...  
CAPRINO     Ah poltrone! tu biastemi col cuore e non osi con la lingua.  
DALIO        Io lo dirò al patrone: o ch'io mi partirò da lui, o che tu non mi dirai villania.  
CAPRINO     Fammi il peggio che tu sai. (III.1)

Dalio's direct response to these accusations reveals a serious cook, a person of moderation and sensible behavior. Nevertheless, one might think that Dalio is reminiscent of a litigious Plautine cook. In the Morlacchi edition of Ariosto's comedies, Luigina Stefani notes Nicola Casella's observation that the beginning of this scene retraces an *exemplum* of Plautine comedies. Casella cites the opening scene of Act Three of the *Aulularia*, in which Congrio monologues about his city adventure, as analogous. Reminiscent as it may be, Ariosto has taken significant steps to render modern the streets of Ferrara and to define the cook's position within the cast by having

him dialogue with the boy. Ariosto's dialogic approach in depicting a cook goes well beyond the soliloquy that Congrio delivers in Plautus' version and places Dalio in a better light than his Roman predecessor.<sup>45</sup> The only recurrent image from Plautine sources is of a cook that has been beaten: in Ariosto, Caprino refers to Dalio as "carico di bastonate;" in Plautus, Congrio mentions a beating that he has received directly previous to the scene. He appears very, very low on a social class scale in this comedy:

CONGRIO     So sadly have they mauled wretched me and my scullions with their sticks. I'm aching all over, and am utterly done for; that old fellow has so made a bruising school of me; and in such a fashion has he turned us all out of the house, myself and them, laden with sticks. Nowhere, in all the world, have I ever seen wood dealt out more plentifully. (III.1)

On the contrary, in *I suppositi*, Dalio has not been beaten on the streets and the only reference to this characterization comes from Caprino. In place of the Plautine monologue, Dalio moves with apparent ease in the community and reveals realities of the market and his commissions, lost and broken eggs, and the people that populate the streets of Ferrara.

Moreover, the fact that Ariosto's cook has higher moral or social standing than his predecessors also illustrates how the Renaissance playwright has chosen to distinguish cook from parasite. Parasites have a long (comical) history of intrinsic and constant hunger and a secure role in the plot of most comedies. Giorgio Barberi Squarotti confirms the parasite's clear function in these years of comedic production:

Tra i personaggi è presente quello, di derivazione classica, del parassita, Pasifilo, e così l'Ariosto inizia la rappresentazione di un tipo destinato a perpetuarsi per tutto il teatro comico del cinquecento con la funzione dell'exasperazione paradossale della fame, della lode dei cibi, dell'attesa di mangiare, dell'assoluta e monomaniaca idea del mangiare ripetuta senza fine, costituendo così il risvolto ridevole e il controcanto delle battute 'serie' e aprendo uno spazio autonomo di forte capacità d'attrazione per il pubblico, in

---

<sup>45</sup> Stefani argues for the linguistic success of the dialogue even if she believes Congrio and Dalio are essentially the same: "è piuttosto da rilevare che, in questo frangente, Ariosto riesce a trovare una sintonia con i ritmi dialogici plautini più forte del consueto: le battute tra Dalio e Caprino sono serrate e veloci perché legate [...] dai giochi linguistici, a costruire una breve partitura squisitamente teatrale" (222, n. 3).

quanto sfrutta l'argomento drammatico, ma al tempo stesso divertente, della gastronomia, del livello basso della cucina, della fame, che si sazia nella commedia di parole, di speranze, di illusioni, di nomi di cibi gustati nell'attimo di pronunciarli. (50-1)

A study of parasitic relations to the kitchen would yield a difficult study of culinary figures in Early Renaissance Italy. The parasite of *I suppositi* is a good example of what Barberi Squarotti calls the “paradoxical exasperation of hunger, of praise of foodstuffs.” Pasifilo’s commentaries on food and hunger – along with those of other parasites – rely and aliment themselves almost exclusively on traditional imitation and exaggeration of sources. Dalio, instead, communicates the nuanced, the simple, and the everyday realities that a spectator might notice as those of his own city. Dalio’s scenes with Caprino are comical, but the cook never seems anything but serious and moderate concerning his culinary affairs.

The most striking element of the cook’s role remains his position within the household. In his threat to relay this nuisance to their master (*patrone*) and to quite literally quit his job, we must acknowledge a cook that is free to choose his employment, a fact that distinguishes him from other servants.<sup>46</sup> The quickness and frankness with which Dalio makes such a threat indicates, above all, his perceived social station. Concerning the freedom to vacate his position, it is possible that Ariosto derived this particular characteristic from at least one Roman cook of longer hire. J. C. B. Lowe refers to the possibility of a hired cook in Porphyryon in Horace’s *Satires* 1.1.101: “here the cook is evidently a regularly member of the household, although a freedman hired by the year rather than a slave. It seems probable that the other freedman cooks worked on similar long-term contracts, especially those who belonged to the imperial household” (84). The influence of Horace on Ariosto’s own *Satires* is well evidenced, but Lowe explains that

---

<sup>46</sup> Even if the cook were a servant, there are few servants who reasonably threaten to leave their positions, preferring complaints or subversive actions to their masters’ plans. Servants are either completely indebted and loyal to their – usually young – masters’ plans; or bitter servants who work utterly against their masters’ ends. If they do threaten to leave their positions, it is generally “just talk” and principally because a master has treated them unfairly, not an indictment of working conditions.

there is no trace in Roman comedy of freed cooks compared to the number who are household slaves. At least initially, it appears that a new market principle regarding the employment of servants, instead of slaves, is at work in early sixteenth-century Ferrara to permit the cook such license.

As the scene continues, the intervention of Erostrato in this quarrel renders a theory of Dalio's higher social standing more difficult to substantiate. The professional relationship between master of the house and cook does not indicate any care for the working conditions of the cook. Erostrato hears nothing of Dalio's complaints:

EROSTRATO	Che romore è questo?
CAPRINO	Costui mi vuol battere, perché io lo riprendo che biastema.
DALIO	E' mente per la gola: mi dice villania perch'io lo sollicito che venga presto.
EROSTRATO	Non più parole. Tu apparecchia ciò che fa di bisogno; come io ritorno, ti dirò quello ch'io voglio che sia lessa, e quello arrosto; e tu, Caprino, pon giù quel cesto e torna che mi facci compagnia. O come ritroverei volentieri Pasifilo! e non so dove. Ecco il patron mio, forse me ne saprà dare egli notizia. (III.1)

The master of the house has no interest in the argument between the young boy and Dalio. On his order, Dalio shall make preparations and await word for how the foodstuffs should be cooked, boiled or roasted. The exchange does not suggest Dalio's superior position among the staff. Firstly, he will not make any decisions about cooking methods and must defer to Erostrato's instructions. Secondly, Erostrato's treatment of Dalio might exclude any probability that he be more respected than a normal servant. It is difficult to decipher the social relations in the scene.

Interpreting the amount of respect due to Dalio is difficult for two reasons: the comedy is built on shifting identities and there are many inconsistencies in the textual editions. Erostrato and Erostrato *finto*, as designations of the real or supposed Erostrato, never appear systematically

when the master/nobleman speaks. Likewise, when the first editions of the comedy indicate Dulippo, a reader must deduce whether the part belongs to Dulippo, the servant, or Erostrato, dressed as Dulippo. The various errors, missing sections, and misunderstandings in the 1509 edition, most likely published by the editor Bernardo Zucchetta, were resolved neither in the second edition nor in the 1551 edition published by Giolito (Coluccia 106).

From the characters' lines in the text, we can posit that Erostrato is actually his servant Dulippo for various reasons. First, an exchange between Dalio and Dulippo would appear more natural if harsh and abrupt.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, it is likely that it is Dulippo speaking because the character announces the arrival of his master to end the scene: "Ecco il patron mio." Donald Beecher follows this theory in his translation of *I suppositi* in *Renaissance Comedy: The Italian Masters*. In the mention of characters present in 3.1, he lists the *false* Erostrato and *false* Dulippo as participants in this scene (68).<sup>48</sup> Thus, if Dulippo is speaking with Dalio and Caprino we can understand the scene better. As Erostrato's close servant and confidant, Dulippo is acting as master of the house (*maestro di casa*) if he directs Dalio how to prepare foodstuffs for a meal. Dalio's role in an individual bourgeois household includes tasks of preparing meals and marketplace purchases, but no decision-making. Dalio answers to Dulippo, and this fact is predictable according to the analysis of the cook's role by many cultural historians mentioned in Chapter One. The advantages of his position as cook are that is free to terminate employment as he wishes and he has power over the boy Caprino.

---

<sup>47</sup> Controversy that includes bitter attacks between servants is very common. A "no nonsense" or "cut to the chase" approach to conversation among household servants can be found in almost any sixteenth-century comedy. We cannot be certain whether Dalio expected more sympathy and respect from Dulippo, dressed as Erostrato, or the true Erostrato, dressed as Dulippo.

<sup>48</sup> Beecher maintains a rigorous distinction between *false* and *true* Erostratos and Dulippos throughout his translation.

Dalio returns from scene four to seven in Act Four and further establishes his intermediary position in the household. In these encounters, he acts as a representative of Erostrato and provides humor in the sequence of events. The cook will interact with Filogono, Erostrato's father from Sicily, his servant Lico, and a Ferrarese citizen who guides the two foreigners around the city. They begin to knock on the door of Erostrato's home with increasing strength. Dalio appears on scene questioning the fury with which they are knocking:

DALIO	Che furia è questa? Ci volete voi spezzar l'uscio?
LICO	Io credo che voi dormivate.
FILOGONO	Erostrato che fa?
DALIO	Non è in casa.
FILOGONO	Apri, che noi inriamo.
DALIO	Se avete fatto pensiero di alloggiare, mutatelo, che altri forestieri ci sono prima di voi, e non ci capiresti tutti.
FILOGONO	Sufficiente famiglio, e da far onore a ogni patrone! E chi c'è?
DALIO	Filogono di Catania, il padre di Erostrato, è arrivato questa matina di Sicilia.
FILOGONO	Vi serà, poi che tu arai aperto. Apri, se ti piace.
DALIO	L'aprirvi mi serà poca fatica; ma siate certi che non vi potrete alloggiare, che le stanze sono piene.
FILOGONO	E chi v'è?
DALIO	Non mi avete inteso? Io dico che v'è il padre di Erostrato, Filogono di Catania.
FILOGONO	Quando ci venne prima che adesso?
DALIO	Sono più di quattro ore ch'egli smontò all'osteria de la Corona, dove ancora sono li cavalli suoi, et Erostrato vi andò poi e l'ha menato qui.
FILOGONO	Io credo che tu mi dileggi.
DALIO	E voi avete piacere di farmi star qui, perché non faccia quello che ho da fare.
FILOGONO	Costui debbe essere imbracciato.
LICO	Ne ha l'aria; non vedi come è rosso in viso?
FILOGONO	Che Filogono è questo di chi tu parli?
DALIO	E' un gentiluomo da bene, padre del mio patrone.
FILOGONO	E dov'è egli?
DALIO	E' qui in casa.
FILOGONO	Potrei io vederlo?
DALIO	Credo che sì, se cieco non sei.
FILOGONO	Dimandalo in servizio, che venga di fuori, tanto che io gli parli.
DALIO	Io vo.
FILOGONO	Non so quello che mi debba imaginare di questo.

LICO                                    Patrone, il mondo è grande. Non credi tu che vi sia più d'una Catania e più d'una Sicilia, e più d'uno Filogono e d'uno Erostrato, e più d'una Ferrara ancora? Questa non è forse la Ferrara dove sta il tuo figliuolo, che noi cerchiamo.

FILOGONO                              Io non so ch'io mi creda, se non che tu sia pazzo e colui imbrocato, né sappia che si dica. Guarda tu, valentuomo, che non abbi errato la stanza.

FERRARESE                            Non credi tu ch'io conosca Erostrato di Catania, e non sappia che stia qui? Pur ieri ce lo vidi; ma ecco chi ti potrà chiarire, che non ha viso d'imbrocato come quel famiglio. (IV.4)

For the first time in Renaissance comedy, the exchange of information at Erostrato's doorstep presents a budding stereotype of the cook. With the backdrop of a Sieneese man standing in for Filogono, who is confident that this misunderstanding of identity has no logical standing, he quickly identifies Dalio as a drunken cook. "He must be drunk. In fact, take a look at his red cheeks," state Filogono and Lico (IV.4). Drinking among cooks becomes a regular *topos* of scenes that feature other culinary professionals and kitchens, as we will see in Chapter Three. We know from Scappi and other prominent cooks of the sixteenth century that the cook should keep his drinking under control, aided by the master of the house or steward if necessary. Cooks and kitchens become tightly associated with drinking across Early Modern European theater.<sup>49</sup> If Dalio is this type of cook, he cannot be charged with any large responsibility for the household, and it is probable that Dulippo closely oversees his work.

Another interesting aspect of this conversation is its so-called *batti-becco* of quick, conversational, and witty exchanges in which Dalio appears of equal standing. Dalio demonstrates some keen humor and throws a few jabs at the stupidity of his interlocutor, but overall this scene is comically playful without injury or attack to either party. This fact lends

---

<sup>49</sup> The link between cooks and beverages is not lost on the Shakespearean stage. In an essay featured in *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England*, Tobias Doring studies the "kitchen scene" of *Twelfth Night* presumed to take place in a kitchen, where Sir Toby holds his nightly drinking and fun (162). Malvolio rebukes the drinkers, charging that they make an alehouse of his lady's house (*TN*, 2.3:83-4). It is indeed a simple and brief example of the widespread association between cooks and drinking.



more equal footing to its two principal speakers, especially in comparison to those insults – *ribaldo*, *ghiotto*, *villano* – so commonly and immediately attributed to lower class individuals when they rebuke noblemen in Ariosto’s other plays (*Il negromante*, for example). Following the occurrence of these insults, we might consider the fact that Dulippo calls Caprino, the boy, *ghiotto* in the first act of *I suppositi* or that in another scene Filogono attributes *ribaldo* to the Sienese man. This type of language is, thus, present in the comedy, and it is not applied to Dalio.

In his second appearance in Act Four, Dalio takes a primary position defending the supposed, but not actual, father of his master. Filogono continues to make accusations of stolen identity – essentially true – against the Sienese man who adamantly maintains he is the true Filogono. As the two Filogonos continue their heated conversation, Dalio jumps in and decides that enough rhetorical injury has been done to his master’s father:

FILOGONO	O Dio, che audacia, che viso invetriato! Filogono di Catania sei tu?
SENESE	Quanto più vuoi ch’io te lo ridica? Io sono quel Filogono che io t’ho detto. E di che ti maravigli?
FILOGONO	Che un uomo di tanta presunzione si ritruovi! Né tu, né maggior di te far potrebbe che tu fussi quello che sono io; ribaldo, aggiuntatore che tu sei.
DALIO	Patirò io che tu dica oltraggio al patre del patron mio? Se non ti lievi di questo uscio, ti caccierò questo schidione ne la pancia. Guai a te, se Erostrato qui si ritruovava! Torna in casa, signore, e lascia gracchiare questo uccellaccio ne la strada, tanto che si crepi.

(IV.5)

In the closing lines of scene five, Dalio speaks violently against Filogono and appears to carry a stick with which he threatens the man. At first glance, Dalio seems a “noble” defender of the (supposed) father of his master. However, his simplicity becomes apparent rather quickly. Dalio positions himself as strongly allied with the identity thief, while the spectator/reader knows that this is not the case. It seems that Dalio is not aware of his master’s plan and knows no truth other than the superficial one provided to him by Erostrato and Dulippo. Furthermore, the likelihood

that he would actually do harm with this *schidione* is slim, and thus his threat is quite empty.

Both facts create the sense that he is foolish. Through these scenes we obtain the impression of Dalio as a cook who drinks too much, carries a useless weapon, and speaks in defense of a false truth.

When Erostrato appears two scenes later, Dalio confirms his simple and brutal nature.

Dalio argues with Erostrato's true father and makes threats:

EROSTRATO	Che vuoi tu avere udito altrimenti nominarmi, che per il mio proprio nome? Ma sono bene io pazzo a dare audienza a parole di questo vecchio, che mi pare uscito del senno.
FILOGONO	Ah fuggitivo! ah ribaldo! ah traditore! A questo modo si accetta il patron suo? Che hai tu fatto del mio figliuolo?
DALIO	Ancora qui abbaia questo cane? E tu comporti, Erostrato, che ti dica villania?
EROSTRATO	Torna indietro, bestia, che vuoi tu fare di quel pestello?
DALIO	Voglio spezzare la testa a questo vecchio rabbioso.
EROSTRATO	E tu pon giù quel sasso. Tornatevi tutti in casa; non guardiamo al suo mal dire; abbisi rispetto all'età. (IV.7)

Erostrato – who is Dulippo in disguise – aids in characterizing Dalio's foolish nature by revealing that his "big stick" is a *pestello* and now addressing him as *bestia*. This insult is comparable to the *ghiotto* or *ribaldo* and is common for someone of lower social rank who displays less than desirable qualities, particularly a lack of social manners or graces. It seems that someone else has a rock in hand, ready to employ it in defense of his master. This person is likely the boy, Caprino, although he is not mentioned by name. To conclude this distinction between social class and behavior, Erostrato instructs Dalio to show respect for Filogono's age. The comedy is nearing its completion and social order is slowly returning as Erostrato demonstrates the qualities of a nobler citizen compared to these two, a cook and a young helper boy.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, this scene displays the same ambiguity as a previous scene regarding the ranking and performance of social classes within Erostrato's household. In this scene, it is evident that it is truly Dulippo who is acting as

One final crucial development of Dalio's character appears in the sixth scene of Act Four. The Ferrarese man who has guided Filogono and Lico in their search to find Erostrato makes a statement of interest concerning the cook. After their encounter with Dalio, Lico insults the city of Ferrara and the man feels pressed to defend his city. He states: "Hai torto a dir male de la terra nostra: questi che vi fanno ingiuria, non sono Ferraresi, per quanto vedo il loro idioma" (IV.6). The injuries mentioned here are those words and actions of Dalio. Thus, the Ferrarese man reveals that Dalio is not a native citizen of Ferrara. He understands this because of his *idioma*, his language. Although this man has indicated that Dalio is foreign, the cook's speech never concretely reveals his origins.<sup>51</sup> It is probable that Dalio is a *forestiero* and that the Ferrarese guide relieves himself of all responsibility for the cook's harsh words and actions. Regarding nationality, foreign slave cooks existed in both ancient Greece and Rome (Lowe). Yet as we have already seen, it is dubious that Dalio is a slave at all. Given the breadth of his use of the vernacular, it seems hardly likely that he would be native to a distant place in the Mediterranean like foreign classical cooks. It is more likely, then, that Dalio is a contracted cook of Erostrato's household who is foreign to Ferrara but not to the peninsula.

Lastly, it is necessary to address a lack of scholarship for the figure of Dalio within fields of theater and comedy and to remediate, at least partially, this lack of attention. We have just seen how intriguing, and yet difficult, it is to understand Dalio's place in the community and household without relying on the hierarchical apparatus of the kitchen, which is studied by food and culture historians. We have also noticed how Dalio's role is substantially different from –

---

Erostrato. Therefore, his scene-closing comment about respecting elders can be interpreted in multiple ways: it is as expedient for the drama as it is indicative of a larger orientation around social class and graces in the larger reality of Ferrara. Again, it may be illuminating that Dulippo speaks to Dalio in this way on both occasions. A servant-to-servant exchange is, in my opinion, more likely to include such facile name-calling and litigious, aggressive play. Similar to Dalio's introductory scene in the drama, Dulippo, under the guise of Erostrato, does not hold his tongue for Dalio.

<sup>51</sup> A single "io vo" from IV.4 is certainly not enough to declare him Florentine.

although commonly interpreted through –classical models. Giulio Ferroni writes of the minor characters in *I Suppositi* without mentioning Dalio:

“[La] “chiusura” dell’oggetto scenico è rafforzata anche dalla presenza di una gamma abbastanza variegata di figurine, che tende a riassumere [...] l’arco piuttosto vasto dei personaggi minori della commedia latina. C’è la nutrice, che protegge l’amore tra Polinesta e il finto Dulippo; una ancella, con qualche appena accennato attributo di “malefica vecchia”, che svela questo amore al padre di Polinesta; un rissoso “ragazzo” Caprino. Di maggior spessore sono poi dotati il parassita Pasifilo, [...] o la figura dello “sciocco” puro e vuoto, rappresentata dal senese, [...] o infine quella del vecchio innamorato Cleandro [...] (58-9).

It seems impossible to me to exclude Dalio in this cast of *figurine*. Yet, Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, Cesare Segre, and Giuseppe Coluccia also stop short of mentioning the cook, most preferring to mention the boy Caprino for his brief spat with the *ancella* in Act Four.<sup>52</sup> Overall, these scholars present strong analyses of the classical roots and contemporary setting of the comedy, championing the vision of Ariosto as the new, modern playwright of the Early Renaissance. In my opinion, Dalio adds to this conceptualization of Ariosto the playwright. As Zorzi suggests of Ariosto’s theatrical production, we are in front of an urban consciousness that informs not only the scene, but also the cast.<sup>53</sup> Dalio communicates to the reader – and to the spectator of Ferrara’s 1509 Carnival season – a cultural make-up of the city and maintains an intriguing social position among the cast. Unlike the cooks of Plautus, Dalio is not accused of

---

<sup>52</sup> I disagree with the fact that the “rissoso” Caprino would receive more attention than Dalio in the arch of minor characters. While the scene in question is a strong example of Caprino’s biting language and harsh tones, I hesitate to separate his presence in the comedy from Dalio’s in this way. Even when Caprino is not dialoguing with Dalio, he mentions the cook. In Act One, the *false* Dulippo questions Caprino about the *false* Erostrato’s whereabouts. Caprino says that he met him in the market and was directed to assist Dalio: “I saw him later in the piazza, and he told me to get this basket and come right back. Dalio is waiting for me there, so I’m on my way” (1.4). Furthermore, I am surprised that, according to Segre and Bonino, Caprino demonstrates the foolish aggressiveness that substantiates the playwright’s creative characterization of the cast. It is Dalio who speaks more frequently and is called by name in these scenes. In Act Four, it is Dalio who is commanded by name to lay down his arms, and Caprino, who we can imagine to be holding also a rock, is simply addressed as “e tu.”

<sup>53</sup> Of course, Zorzi has not singularly discovered Ariosto’s fidelity to urban settings, and he notes three other scholars intent on establishing Ariosto’s movement towards contemporaneity: Lanfranco Caretti, Cesare Segre, and Guido Davico Bonino.

stealing, nor is he overly litigious; instead, he is provoked to anger and accused of drunkenness, but neither of which truly fits his character.

Dalio's scenes are commented in three editions of *I suppositi*. Luigina Stefanini's analysis of Dalio's opening scene has already been discussed in this chapter. In Cesare Segre's edited volume of Ariosto's complete works, Angela Casella provides the commentary of *I suppositi*. She cites various Plautine cooks to characterize Dalio in her footnotes. However, none of Plautus' cooks are truly similar to Dalio, as the example of Congrio demonstrated. Instead, Dalio's social relations are furnished by contemporary kitchen culture and norms. Guido Davico Bonino comments Dalio's appearance in his edition of *I suppositi*, yet he follows the example of Segre and others by giving the boy Caprino as the example of innovative language and minor characters in his introduction. Although Bonino does not cite Dalio as an example, he may have best expressed the idea that the cast of characters is an important site of change and innovation for Ariosto:

Ma è soprattutto nel disegno dei personaggi che questa freschezza di tocco si evidenzia. Certo il modello classico, plautino e terenziano, o quello, altrettanto operante sui primi commediografi del secolo, del Boccaccio maggiore e minore è presente ad ogni passo. Ma quando abbozza figurine del popolo minuto, quando punta su personaggi plebei, su servi e ruffiani, l'Ariosto vince la scommessa [contro i classici]. (viii).

In his introduction to *La Lena* – which I have cited previously – Bonino gives us an attractive and forgiving perspective on the tensions between past source dramas and present realities, depicting Ariosto's situation as a series of challenges that cannot all be won. Here, in this passage, Bonino argues that Ariosto has come out victorious properly in the development of minor characters, “personaggi plebei,” servants, and ruffians in his comedies. This argument proves the importance of studying Dalio in *I suppositi*. In both comical and straightforward ways, Dalio reveals aspects of domestic relations of Ferrara that mirror material and cultural

histories of the kitchen and the cook. His flexible and intermediary social position within the comedy, the seriousness with which he approaches his job in the kitchen, and the open, stereotyped way he is called a drunk confirm the realities of urban and domestic spaces. The other cooks in early sixteenth-century drama also have realities to unlock, and Firenzuola's cook Grattugia will also help us further understand how a Renaissance comedy cook departs from Plautine models.

### **“Grattugia, grattugia senza cacio:” Firenzuola's cook in *I Lucidi***

Agnolo Firenzuola was born in Florence in 1493 and died in Prato in 1543; thus, he was still a young boy when Ariosto penned the prose version of *I Suppositi* in 1509. While Firenzuola's literary and dramatic works are less studied than the *commedia erudita* of Ariosto, he had no shortage of cultural stimuli and important meetings in his youth. His childhood was spent in a humanist learning environment in his native city, and at sixteen he began a degree in Siena. In 1516, he completed these studies in Perugia. Both cities introduced Firenzuola to fellow intellectuals who marked his life and career. In Siena, he met Claudio Tolomei and in Perugia he befriended Pietro Aretino. Firenzuola's service to the papacy began two years later, in 1518. Under Leo X he held the office of Prosecutor in the Curia and continued to serve through the papacy of Clement VII.<sup>54</sup> Thanks to his Roman employment, Firenzuola enjoyed the company of a wide range of intellectuals, such as new acquaintances Annibale Caro, Giovanni della Casa, Francesco Maria Molza – one would imagine also Francesco Berni, to whom the previous three poets were loyal – as well as his old friends from Siena and Perugia. His works on language (*Dialogo*), the translation and modification of Apuleius' *Asinus aureus* (*Golden Ass*), and his *Ragionamenti* derive from his Roman period. Some biographies emphasize the disillusionment

---

<sup>54</sup> His service to the papacy was interspersed with a brief period in Florence during Hadrian VI's papacy.

and health issues that Firenzuola faced as he felt his chances at becoming a *cortigiano* grew slim (Fatini, *Opere scelte* 23).<sup>55</sup> From 1526 to 1538 – the year when he left Rome – the author underwent significant bouts of illness and distress. After approximately twenty years in Rome, Firenzuola left the city permanently and settled in Prato.

In the Tuscan town, Firenzuola wrote more dialogues, poetry, two *novelle*, and his two comedies: *La trinumzia* and *I lucidi*. Scholars believe that both speak well to his environment in Prato.<sup>56</sup> By most accounts, it was a tranquil and satisfying city. It supported good health, an active social life, two attempts at intellectual academies, and Firenzuola's love interests. On this last account, Firenzuola wrote numerous rhymes and the *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne intitolato Celso* that seem to anticipate seventeenth-century Arcadia. Thematically similar to his previous *Ragionamenti* – the inspiration for which easily comes to mind – structurally, in the *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne*, Firenzuola moves away from the much-copied Decameronian style of *giornate*. While his activity as a playwright seems subordinate to his interest in pastoral themes, poetry, and female protagonists in dialogic encounters, the numerous sixteenth-century editions of *I lucidi* indicate posthumous interest in the work. The comedy was reprinted five times from 1549 to 1595.

Still, there is scarce record of any performances of Firenzuola's two comedies. It is reasonable to assume that his attempts at forming academies played a role in their creation. For example, the role of the academy is clearly robust in the creation of comedy in nearby Siena and

---

<sup>55</sup> Another important biography of Firenzuola is by Adriano Seroni. Konrad Eisenbichler and Jacqueline Murray's translation and edition of *On the Beauty of Women* provides a good introduction to Firenzuola's works and a biography in English.

<sup>56</sup> Giuseppe Fatini, again, is the most prolific scholar on Firenzuola. He champions this interpretation of Firenzuola's works, and other scholars, such as Seroni and Tonia Caterina Riviello, confirm Fatini's opinions.

Florence in the same years.<sup>57</sup> Fatini confirms this probability and praises Firenzuola's life and works in Prato:

Per opera sua in Prato si ebbe un risveglio intellettuale senza precedente; egli diede vita all'accademia dell'Addiaccio [...] promosse rappresentazioni drammatiche, offrendo al godimento dei Pratesi due sue commedie; riprese a novellare e a poetare, seguendo specialmente la sua vena comica e caricaturale. (1053)

Fatini situates Firenzuola's two comedies within the same creative space and with the same attractive force as the *Due novelle pratesi*. He calls attention to the "vivezza descrittiva, coloritura di scena e ricchezza di espressioni vive e argute" of the comedies, "nonostante la loro prolissità e l'abuso di modi di dire particolari al popolo" (1060).<sup>58</sup> It is within this context of popular and municipal consciousness – an asset more than an abuse – that we can understand the contemporary environment and cultural impulses of his comedy.

Textually, *I lucidi*, is a quite faithful reworking of Plautus' *Menaechmi*. Although the scene is Bologna, two twin brothers are destined to find one another through various encounters with an unwitting madam, servants, and the cook Grattugia in a standard five-act comedy. It is immediately evident, along with other elements, that the cook's Roman counterpart Cylindrus occupies the same basic function in the *Menaechmi*. For this reason, *I lucidi* represents a crucial moment in this study. Clearly indentifying source drama, and subsequent changes by the Renaissance author, reveal specific realities otherwise unattainable when sources are diverse and contaminated. Close review of the comedy establishes an expanding role for the cook, new character traits, and the practices of adaptation that Firenzuola makes of classical works. The cook Grattugia exemplifies the playwright's innovation in civic and popular realism through

---

<sup>57</sup> In Siena, we can think of the Congrega/Accademia dei Rozzi, the Accademia degli Intronati, and in Florence, the Accademia degli Umidi became the Accademia fiorentina under Cosimo I.

<sup>58</sup> The italics of *nonostante* in this quote are mine.



quite funny moments of play, local sayings, and adept dialogue.<sup>59</sup> After analyzing the scenes of the cook, I will compare the source drama in detail. This procedure is similar to the analyses of Salvatore di Maria, who dedicated his recent *The Poetics of Imitation in the Italian Theatre of the Renaissance* to such intimate source studies. It posits that the minutiae of often overlooked, or sometimes subtle, changes to classical models become clear moments of contemporary observation and innovation.

Grattugia appears in Act One and Two of the comedy, as a household member of the nameless courtesan. Similar to the household setting in Ariosto's *I suppositi*, there is a boy (a *ragazzo*) named Roffetto that serves with the cook and is generally under his command. However, unlike the comical scenarios that pit Dalio and Caprino against one another in *I suppositi*, Grattugia's obvious and metaphorical counterpart in *I lucidi* is the parasite, Sparecchia. Immediately apparent is the fact that Grattugia and Sparecchia share vernacular names more congruent with their professional role and interests in the story than Ariosto's Dalio and Pasifilo. Grattugia's name is a clever reference by the author to a kitchen grater, usually of cheese. Thus, the names Grattugia and Sparecchia communicate one extent to which Firenzuola has comically adapted the source drama to fit the interests of his contemporary spectators and environment.<sup>60</sup> The relationship between cook and parasite identifies them as a couple, following Plautus' example. In the first culinary-focused moment of the play, Grattugia reasons through the extra meal preparation he will undergo on the parasite's account. The Signora confirms that Sparecchia will fulfill his role and make Grattugia's preparations worthwhile.

---

<sup>59</sup> Fatini lauds Firenzuola's language and comic spirit: "spassosa ilarità sprizzante dalle burle e dai copiosi motti di spirito e per la spigliata freschezza dialogica" (1060).

<sup>60</sup> The fact that the nameless character of the group be the courtesan *Signora* is intriguing. This suggests that Firenzuola was indeed responding to the inclinations of his crowd by delineating some characters – the cook and the parasite – more than others. Moreover, more space is accorded to their character development than in his classical and modern predecessors. It should be added, although, that Plautus is a likely source of naming of the cook for a kitchen utensil. *Cylindrus* seems to reference the shape of one such item.

Departing from the Plautine model, the fourth scene of Act One offers new characterizations of the cook's social position in the cast. Initially, the cook is called by the boy of the house, Roffetto, to receive instruction from the courtesan about food purchases and meal preparation:

SIGNORA	Roffetto, Roffetto.
ROFFETTO	Signora, che comandate?
SIGNORA	Chiamami giù il Grattugia, spacciati, a chi dich'io?
ROFFETTO	Grattugia, o Grattugia senza cacio.
GRATTUGIA	Chi è là, chi chiama?
ROFFETTO	Cammina, vien giù alla Signora presto, trana: oh, vè cuoco freddo!
GRATTUGIA	Eccomi, Signora, che comandi? ecci nulla di nuovo?
SIGNORA	Piglia la sporta: eccoti uno scudo, va in piazza, e compera tanta roba da desinare, che basti a tre persone: fa ch'ella non manchi, e anche ch'ella non si abbia a gittar via.
GRATTUGIA	E chi hanno a esser questi tre?
SIGNORA	Va cercarlo: che ne vuo'tu sapere chi s'abbiano a essere? fa quel che ti è detto, e non cercar più là.
GRATTUGIA	Faceva per sapere di che qualità e' sono, e ordinare secondo gli uomini.
SIGNORA	Oh, vè dove l'aveva: abbiamo a esser, Lucido, e il suo Sparecchia, e io.
GRATTUGIA	Ecco a te: qui bisogna ordinare per dieci, e non per tre.
SIGNORA	Perché?
GRATTUGIA	Perché lo Sparecchia sparecchia per otto al sicuro.
SIGNORA	Io ti ho detto, chi noi abbiamo a essere; del resto io ne lascio la cura a te, e s'egli sparecchia, e tu apparecchia: e se quello scudo non basta, eccotene un'altro; spendi il manco che tu puoi, e sia quei adesso.
GRATTUGIA	Sì testè, e corri, gli è già cotto ogni cosa: di che si pongano a tavola.
SIGNORA	Orsù, non tante ciance, va via e spacciati: avanza tempo, ch'egli è tardi.
GRATTUGIA	Non dubitare, io farò qui ora, e sarà fatto con prestezza, e bene. (I.4)

This introductory scene establishes Grattugia's culinary talent, playful nature, and ranking within the household. Grattugia surely commits hyperbole near the end by stating that everything "is already cooked" when he has yet to leave for the market. This type of exaggeration should not surprise us; it is included to convey confidence in his ability and to reassure his lady.

Additionally, while this level of *bravura* is not common in Plautine cooks, it is a stock feature of the cook that can be found in the model of the Greek *mageiros*. The *mageiroi*, too, were known for boasting of their talents. Some Plautine cooks boast more than others, which can be predicted at times by the source of Greek comedy that Plautus had in hand (Lowe). Firenzuola seems to have found that this characteristic of cooks particularly resonated with his Renaissance society because he expands this aspect of the scene, having Grattugia repeat his abilities more often than Plautus' *Cylindrus*.

Still more confidence in Grattugia's abilities is confirmed through the Signora's reliance on his judgment. She will leave all the particulars of the food purchases and the meal to his management. There is no mention of another servant to whom Grattugia would answer, making his role in the kitchen a decisive one. It is clear that this cook has full power to act as he see fit, supported by talent and intellect. The courtesan even goes as far as to offer him additional money (an extra *scudo*) for his trip. Even while she advises him not to overspend, allowing the cook to bring extra funds to the market demonstrates a level of trust seldom seen between culinary professional and his patron. It is a stark contrast to the classical models of cooks who are depicted as thieves or at the very least untrustworthy, and is not present in Plautus' *Menaechmi*.<sup>61</sup> There is also reason to believe that this relationship appears open and respectful, almost between equals. By linguistic analysis, the cook has prominent standing in the household because he speaks informally to the lady multiple times, while the boy systematically uses the formal *Voi* to address her. These signs of his position and reputation among the cast – and in domestic space – are not found in Firenzuola's classical models nor in Ariosto.

---

<sup>61</sup> Another character named Grattugia in Firenzuola's *Discorsi degli animali* is called an "audace e famoso ladrone [...] ripieno d'una rapace invidia" (*Opere*, 464). Firenzuola's choice to represent this Grattugia as a thief, and not the cook Grattugia in *I lucidi* is significant because it indicates a pivot from Plautus' Roman cook who often practiced thievery. Firenzuola demonstrates his awareness of this characterization and turns away from it in the comedy, preferring to emphasize other depictions of the Renaissance cook.

This scene also helps establish Grattugia's more playful nature. It is first expressed in the fact that he takes no affront to the boy's call: Grattugia senza cacio. Cacio is the general term for cheese, and this name-calling is more subtle and clever than what we have seen previously. According to the boy's jab, Grattugia is associated with his function through a lack: he is a cheese grater without cheese to grate. We recall that Dalio, Ariosto's cook in *I suppositi*, did not respond so well to the boy when he commented about drinking or fighting. This brief example serves as an *anteprema* to the cook's later comic development; Grattugia's tendency towards light-hearted joking continues in his second scene. Because there is no trace of the simplicity, aggression, or bruteness of Ariosto's Dalio and no animosity between Grattugia and the boy Roffetto, Grattugia is truly a more complex character than Ariosto's Dalio. Although there is no way to determine the terms of his employment or contract, it is reasonable to assume that he is a respected member of the household for the language he uses and the way he handles himself in conversation.

As mentioned previously, Grattugia's counter position to the parasite Sparecchia is explored in this scene. The cook inquires about the guests of the dinner party in order to have an idea of the quality of men, and consequentially of the quality of foods he should choose.<sup>62</sup> While Grattugia does not specifically comment on Sparecchia's quality in the community, he suggests his gastronomic character: Sparecchia eats for at least eight others, as a stereotypical, famished parasite might. To this comment, his lady responds: "e s'egli sparecchia, e tu apparecchia." This counterposed, dichotomous function makes an important suggestion about the cook's position in the comedy. Grattugia rises to the level of other stock characters in comedy: old men, boys,

---

<sup>62</sup> The theory that one should purchase and serve different types of foods to different social classes is prevalent in the period. See Massimo Montanari, Allen Grieco, or Ken Albala for detailed discussions of how Galenic medicine and the "ladder of beings" influenced the socially-acceptable diets of each class.

courtesans, maidens, servants, and parasites. At their level, his character maintains distinct from the parasite. The parasite is by function and purpose he who is ever famished and seeks to dine excessively – and for free. The parasite is guaranteed so much gastronomic bounty and devious interactions in the urban space of the comedy specifically because he runs after any opportunity to satiate his hunger of epic proportions. The cook is not famished, and he lacks the self-serving attitude of the parasite. The cook’s ultimate role in the plot is not of deception or advantage, but a direct and practical relationship to the preparation of food and to his master or *signora*. The transparency of the cook’s ends also distinguishes him from his stock character “family” of servile characters. Almost all non-descript servant characters have ulterior, or self-serving, motives that play out during the comedy. The cook shares this honest characterization only with the “good” servant who helps his (young) master at every turn with no desire for retribution.<sup>63</sup>

In Act Two, Grattugia opens the second scene by commenting again on his ability to prepare an exquisite meal. We know this because he designates it as “da cristiani”. He immediately sees Lucido Tolto arriving at the home of his lady. Grattugia believes he will participate in a friendly jest with Lucido Tolto, who is, in actuality, Lucido Folchetto accompanied by his servant Betto. The conversation turns sour as the nobleman denies knowing all of the people that Grattugia mentions: Sparecchia the parasite, the cook himself, his lady the courtesan, and even the hostile relationship to Lucido’s supposed wife and his home. Here Grattugia demonstrates some of his wit and knowledge of Bolognese citizens:

GRATTUGIA	Io ho provisto un desinare da cristiani, e così a mio modo, i’ ti so dire, ch’i’ gli farò sguazzare. Ma ecco Lucido, che mi è già alle spalle.
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Betto, costui viene alla volta nostra.

---

<sup>63</sup> This servant works endlessly and wholeheartedly to assist his master in marrying the young woman that he loves, the same attitude the cook seems to possess towards his work. This characterization of the loving servant is present in multiple comedies by Ariosto: Dulippo in *I suppositi*; Cordone in *La Lena*. Servants of both sexes are similarly found in Machiavelli’s *La mandragola* and in different scenarios provided by the Accademia degli Intronati.

BETTO	Lasciatelo pur venire, state in cervello.
GRATTUGIA	O la va di rondone: gli osti tornano a desinare, innanzi che le vivande sieno in cucina. Aspetta, i' voglio un pò di burla seco. Buondì, Lucido, tu se' già tornato, eh? Sollecita addove si manduca, Iddio mi vi conduca, e dove si lavora, mandi fuora.
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Che Dio ti dia ciocchè tu desideri, poichè tu mi hai chiamato per il nome mio: molto l'hai saputo presto!
GRATTUGIA	Gran fatto alla fè; ma dov'è'l compagno tuo?
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Che compagno va'tu cercando?
GRATTUGIA	Il tuo Sparecchia vivande.
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Che sparecchia, e che vivande! tu debbi esser qualche sciocco: va pe' fatti tuoi, e farai bene.
BETTO	Non vi ho io detto, padrone, che vo' stiate in su le vostre, e che non c'è, se non trappole? Olà, che compagno dicevi tu?
GRATTUGIA	Quel ribaldone dello Sparecchia, o del divora, che voi ve lo vogliate chiamare.
BETTO	Che arte è la tua, deh, di'l vero? giri tu'l filatojo, o macini a secco? che divorato sie tu da lupi.
GRATTUGIA	E tu sie divorato da cani, bagaglione. (II.2)

Overall, the beginning of the scene is quite civil: Grattugia is proud of his culinary work for the day and the action is set for the comical and lengthy misunderstanding concerning Lucido's identity. Of notable importance, this scene is one of the longest for a cook in Renaissance comedy. Unlike some servant counterparts, Grattugia remains an ambiguous interlocutor for some time. He is not deferential in his treatment of Lucido and only responds with an insult to Betto's remarks about his skills: "Che arte è la tua, deh, di'l vero? giri tu'l filatojo, o macini a secco." Overall, this is not the litigious Plautine cook who served as a model for Ariosto's Dalio. The scene continues, alternating between more serious doubt and incessant laughter at the expense of the other:

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	O uomo dabbene, di che mese viene la Befania in questa terra?
GRATTUGIA	Oh, to questa: perchè?
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Perchè, secondo ch'i' veggio, la ci debbe esser di state, poichè le bestie ci favellano: che a dirti il vero, alle cose che tu di, tu mi pari un leofante.
GRATTUGIA	Io sono il Grattugia.

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO O caldaja, o come tu mi bolli! Che tu ti sia, io non ti conosco, e non ti vidi mai: e anche adesso, per lo piacere ch' i' me ne abbia, non mi curo di conoscerti.

GRATTUGIA Diavol che io non sappia, che tu hai nome Lucido.

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO Di questo hai tu ben mille ragioni; che nel vero io ho cotesto nome: ma dove mi hai tu conosciuto?

GRATTUGIA Dove i' ti ho conosciuto! Oh, to se questa sì calza: dove tu hai conosciuto me, in casa della Signora, di chi tu se' innamorato.

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO Di qual Signora?

GRATTUGIA Della Signora mia padrona, di chi se' morto fradicio.

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO Io non sono innamorato, né mi pare esser morto, né fradicio, e non conosco né Signora né padrona, e non so ciocchè tu ti abbaì.

GRATTUGIA Così non lo sapestu in tuo servizio, che buon per te, e per quella poverina di mogliata; che il tuo varrebbe più qualcosa: la comar sen' è bene ella avveduta, che senza una discrezione al mondo il pettina all' insù. Eh, pover' uomo, ti so dire, che tu stai fresco; tu non puoi far testamento. Lucido, non ti ricordi tu, che quando tu vi vieni la sera a dormire ch' io ti scalzo? ah Lucido.

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO Deh, vedi che bella festa è questa! io non so chi mi tiene ch' io non cavi il crino del capo a costui. Tu mi hai scalzato eh? e non fui mai più, in questa terra.

GRATTUGIA Niega pur, bajone: ho fatto a questa volta come i pifferi di montagna; io voleva un poco di burla del fatto suo, e se l' ha presa di me: disortech' i' sto infra due, se egli è lui egli, o s' i' sono io me. Lucido, non se' tu Lucido, che stai colaggiuù in quella casa?

LUCIDO FOLCHETTO Io vorrei volentieri, che quella casa sprofondasse con chiunque vi sta dentro, o chi vi stette mai, e tu con esso loro insieme; che m' hai fradicio: levamiti dinnanzi.

GRATTUGIA Oh, oh, costui è ito in villa con la brigata, ah, ah, ah, e' farebbe rider' il pianto, ah, ah: oh, vè bestemmia che si è mandata da se a se, senza un proposito al mondo. Lucido, sa' tu quel ch' i' ti vò dire adesso, senza farti la madre d' Orlando? tu avevi una gran ragione a domandare della Befania, che tu sentivi bene come tu stavi dentro: oh, io non conobbi mai la maggior bestia di te. (II.2)

The unique serious part of this conversation comes when Grattugia seems to question his certainty about Lucido's identity, and his own, but he immediately seizes the comic nature of Lucido's response about his home to laugh openly: "ah, ah, ah, farebbe rider' il pianto." Where

kind treatment and simple laughs began the scene, Folchetto and Betto have grown tired of this game and believe Grattugia to be completely mad at this point:

BETTO	Deh, levatici dinanzi, che tu ci hai ormai stracco, fastidioso importuno, che tu se': quando l'uomo ti avesse assai sofferto.
GRATTUGIA	Eh, e' vuol la baja del fatto mio: gli è usanza sua di motteggiar meco, e massime quando gli è fuor della moglie.
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Pur moglie!
GRATTUGIA	Infine e' non la vuol sentire ricordare, sia per non detto: lasciamola andare, che l'ora si fa tarda. Credi tu che queste cose bastino a dar mangiare a te, alla Signora, e allo Sparecchia?
BETTO	Bè, quanto ha a durar questa taccola, viso di pazzo?
GRATTUGIA	Vè questo fornimento da cuori! io non favello teco; e non ti vidi mai più; bada a casi tuoi, e lasciami favellar con costui, che conosce me, e io lui.
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Compare, tu debbi aver fatto colazione a digiuno: io ti conosco bene io.
GRATTUGIA	S' i' non l'ho fatta, i' la farò. Addio: tu hai fatto bene a ricordarmelo: lasciami andar' a ordinar da desinare. Vedi 'n un batter d'occhio sarà cotto ogni cosa: non ti discostar troppo.
LUCIDO FOLCHETTO	Che tu rompa il collo al primo scaglione.
GRATTUGIA	Ah, tanto male! Io non son mogliata io: vientene vientene in casa a' ntrattenere la Signora; e parte t'uscirà la stizza: cotesto è tutto amore che ti scanna: i' levò dire, che tu ci se'.

(II.2)

Notwithstanding such an uncommonly long scene for a cook, we do not learn much more about Grattugia's many positive qualities as a culinary professional nor is he described with any truly stereotypical character traits.<sup>64</sup> Unlike Dalio who was subject to derision in his later development, Grattugia is a decisively comical agent. Firenzuola grants larger freedom to the cook's ability to incite the spectator/reader to laughter. This is demonstrated over and over again

---

<sup>64</sup> It should be mentioned that the cook's scene in the *Menaechmi* is also quite long, and from Athenaeus it seems as though it was more common for cooks to have more lines in Attic and New Greek Comedy than in Plautus. A few insults may relate to the ones thrown at other cooks: "viso di pazzo" or that he fall at the first step down. This "scaglione" is most likely the entrance to the kitchen that was located below the main floors in many households. It appears odd that Ariosto's Dalio was twice accused of drunkenness and Grattugia undergoes no such character development. However, with closer observation, Grattugia is accused of being crazy, the natural consequence of Dalio's drunkenness.



in the scene through indications of laughter on stage and in the various exchanges of both playful and progressively harsher name-calling.

Moreover, we perceive Grattugia to have a wide breadth of knowledge about the inter-workings of his lady's household and of Lucido Tolto's affairs, including his relationship with his wife. These elements prove the cook to be more than a cursory character, involved in many aspects of the everyday relationships of the group. If Lucido Tolto dines regularly with the courtesan and if the first scene of the comedy – that of Lucido Tolto and his wife arguing intensely – takes place in an open space, Grattugia has ample access to such developments in the domestic sphere. Also, a sexual allusion made to undressing Lucido Tolto while he is preparing for bed with the courtesan is also comical and may indicate that Grattugia is very much *on the inside* of these relationships.

It seems quite improbable that the cook is doing anything more than undressing Lucido, but the scene demonstrates his relationship to his lady to be intimate. Again, in comparison to Dalio and his master Erostrato in *I suppositi*, this cook enjoys access to private moments and the respect of his employer. We recall that he uses informal language to speak to the courtesan and that she trusts him to fulfill his job and to act conscientiously with her money. This assumption of financial responsibility releases Grattugia from the caste of untrustworthy or unintelligent servant-like characters. Moreover, the stereotype of the small-time thief of classical comedy does not apply because the cook does not have to haggle for a few more *scudi* and does not bring the audience to laughter by stating how he will skim off the top. Likewise, his counter position to Sparecchia is maintained throughout the drama. This aspect of the comedy allows us to notice that the cook is not a deceptive and ruthless consumer of foods as much as its designated preparer and shopper. Not only is he more rational than an average servant, he is not parasitic in

his relationships to other members of the community. Grattugia is different from servants and ancient cooks in these ways; he is more respected and not limited to his social class.

Of course, in the source drama, the *Menaechmi*, the cook Cylindrus has a role that must be considered closely because there are few dramas based on Plautus' *Twin Brothers* as faithful as Firenzuola's. Yet the differences we have seen demonstrate that the innovative mindset, different municipal circumstances, and social constitution, as well as functions of the comic, have changed. This is an especially important point to draw out in the case of *I lucidi* because its longtime reputation among scholars is of "slavish imitation." Even Tonia Caterina Riviello, who has written a near monographic study in *Agnolo Firenzuola: The Androgynous Vision*, attributes meaningful innovation to Firenzuola's dialogic works in Prato, but she repeats the notion of almost mindless copying in Firenzuola's comedies of the same period. When discussing the stylistic evolution of narrative works, she states: "We intend to demonstrate that Firenzuola freed himself in his period in Prato from a slavish imitation of classical and contemporary models and that he combined ancient and contemporary aesthetic doctrines with clarity, grace of style, and ease" (25). But later on in a subsection entitled "The Tales of Dramatic Influence," Riviello argues for mindless imitation in his comedies: "Just as in his comedies, here, too, Firenzuola strives to capture the essence of Florentine society; but whereas his comedies suffer from a slavish imitation of traditional themes and character types borrowed from Plautus and Terence, his *novelle* all have contemporary settings and possess a spontaneous, often autobiographical flavor" (127). It is true that Firenzuola's comedies do not have the autobiographical feel of his *novelle*. However, the contemporary setting of *I lucidi* in Bologna and the spontaneity of the more-present-than-ever popular language of his characters – including the cook – are clear. This is especially clear when analyzing closely its Roman inspiration.

In Act One, Scene 4 of *Menaechmi*, Cylindrus and Erotium speak of his errands and the dinner he will prepare:

EROTIUM	Take a hand-basket and some money. See, you have three didrachmns here. (Giving him money.)
CYLINDRUS	I have so.
EROTIUM	Go and bring some provisions, see that there's enough for three; let it be neither deficient nor overmuch.
CYLINDRUS	What sort of persons are these to be?
EROTIUM	Myself, Menaechmus, and his Parasite.
CYLINDRUS	Then these make ten, for the Parasite easily performs the duty of eight persons.
EROTIUM	I've now told you the guests; do you take care of the rest.
CYLINDRUS	Very well. It's cooked already; bid them go and take their places.
EROTIUM	Make haste back.
CYLINDRUS	I'll be here directly. (I.4)

We are immediately struck by the brevity of this scene and of the lack of characterization of Cylindrus. Moreover, Firenzuola's additions and adaptations truly help delineate who the cook is in this society and what his relationship is to his lady. Instead, the second scene of Act Two of Plautus approaches the length of Firenzuola's scene but lacks many of the comic and revealing particulars with which the mid-sixteenth-century playwright colors the scene. The initial reference to a conversation whose purpose is playful jest is specifically well received in Renaissance comedy after the success of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and other authors of *novelle*. In Plautus, there is no overt indication that this scene would be intended for comic relief, whereas Firenzuola's Grattugia demonstrates himself to be dedicated to the practice. Further differences with Plautus' *Menaechmi* are plentiful: 1) Lucido Folchetto's failure to reveal his relationship with the courtesan to his servant, preventing that his wife know everything; 2) Lucido Folchetto asks about Carnival and speaking animals to indicate Grattugia's madness whereas the Plautine version speaks of pigs for sacrifice; 3) exaggerated terms to describe the

love he feels for the courtesan: *morto fradicio*; and 4) no mention of undressing the nobleman in the evenings. Plautus' scene reads:

CYLINDRUS	I've catered well, and to my mind. I'll set a good breakfast before the breakfasters. But see, I perceive Menaechmus. Woe to my back; the guests are now already walking before the door, before I've returned with the provisions. I'll go and accost him. Save you, Menaechmus.
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	The Gods bless you, whoever you are. ...
CYLINDRUS	... who I am?
MESSENIUS	I' faith, not I, indeed.
CYLINDRUS	Where are the other guests?
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	What guests are you enquiring about?
CYLINDRUS	Your Parasite.
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	My Parasite? Surely this fellow's deranged.
MESSENIUS	Didn't I tell you that there were many swindlers here?
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	What Parasite of mine, young man, are you enquiring about?
CYLINDRUS	Peniculus.
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	... Where is my ... ?
MESSENIUS	See, I've got your sponge all safe in the wallet.
CYLINDRUS	Menaechmus, you've come here too soon for breakfast; I'm but now returning with the provisions.
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	Answer me this, young man: at what price do pigs sell here, unblemished ones, for sacrifice?
CYLINDRUS	At a didrachm a-piece.
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	(holding out his hand). Receive, then, a didrachm of me; bid a sacrifice be made for you at my expense; for, by my faith, I really am sure in very truth that you are deranged, who are annoying me, a person that's a stranger, whoever you are.
CYLINDRUS	I am Cylinderus; don't you know my name?
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	Whether you are Cylinderus or Caliendrus, confound you. I don't know you, and, in fact, I don't want to know you.
CYLINDRUS	Well, your name, however, is Menaechmus, that I do know.
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	You speak like a sane person when you call me by my name. But where have you known me?
CYLINDRUS	Where have I known you, you who have Erotium, this mistress of mine pointing to the house, for your lady?
MENAECHMUS SOSICLES	By my troth, I have not, nor do I know yourself what person you are.
CYLINDRUS	Not know who I am, who have many a time filled the cups for your own self at our house, when you've been drinking?
MESSENIUS	Woe to me, that I've got nothing with which to break this fellow's head.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES Are you in the habit of filling the cups for me, who, before this day, have never beheld Epidamnus, nor been there?

CYLINDRUS Do you deny it?

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES Upon my honor, I decidedly do deny it.

CYLINDRUS Don't you live in that house? (Pointing to the house of MENAECHMUS of Epidamnus.)

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES May the Gods send to perdition those that live there.

CYLINDRUS Surely, this fellow's mad, who is thus uttering curses against his own self. Do you hear, Menaechmus?

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES What do you want?

CYLINDRUS If you take my advice, that didrachm, which you just now promised to give me--you would order, if you were wise, a pig to be procured with it for yourself. For, i' faith, you really for sure are not in your senses, Menaechmus, who are now uttering curses against your own self.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES Alas! By my faith, a very silly fellow, and an annoyance to me.

CYLINDRUS (to MESSENIO). He's in the habit of often joking with me in this fashion. How very droll he is, when his wife isn't present. How say you----?

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES What do you mean, you rascal?

CYLINDRUS (pointing to the basket). Has this that you see been provided in sufficient quantity for three persons, or am I to provide still more for yourself and the Parasite and the lady?

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES What ladies--what Parasites are you talking about?

MESSENIO What, you villain, urges you to be an annoyance to him?

CYLINDRUS Pray what business have you with me? I don't know you; I'm talking to this person, whom I do know.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES By my troth, you are not a person in his right senses, that I know for sure.

CYLINDRUS I'll have these things cooked directly; there shall be no delay. Don't you be going after this anywhere at a distance from the house. Do you want anything?

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES You to go to utter and extreme perdition.

CYLINDRUS I' faith, 'twere better for you to go in-doors at once and take your place, while I'm subjecting these things to the strength of the fire<sup>4</sup>. I'll go in-doors now, and tell Erotium that you are standing here, that she may fetch you away hence, rather than you be standing here out of doors. He goes into the house.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES Is he gone then? He is gone. By my faith, I find by experience that your words are not untrue.

MESSENIO Do you only be on your guard; for I do believe that some woman in the harlot line is living here, as, in fact. this madman said, who has just gone away from here.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES But I wonder how he came to know my name.  
 MESSENIO I' faith, 'tis far from surprising: courtesans have this custom; they send servant-boys and servant-girls down to the harbour; if any foreign ship comes into port, they enquire of what country it is, and what its name is; after that, at once they set themselves to work, and fasten themselves upon him; if they inveigle him, they send him home a ruined man. Now in this harbour there stands a piratical craft, against which I really think that we must be on our guard.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES I' troth, you really counsel aright.  
 MESSENIO Then, in fine, shall I be sure that I've counselled aright, if you are rightly on your guard.

MENAECHMUS SOSICLES Be silent for a moment, then; for the door makes a noise.  
 MESSENIO Let's see who's coming out from there.  
 MESSENIO Meanwhile, I'll lay this down. He puts down the wallet. Do you keep watch upon these things, if you please, you sailors. (II.2)

We have copious evidence of innovation in Firenzuola's adaptation of the original Plautine model. The cook is the main conduit for observations about contemporary society and his role in it. This reflection of the new world – as the playwright saw it – may derive from the growth of new social classes. In an early study of Firenzuola, Fatini addresses how Firenzuola puts the new bourgeoisie on display. The premise to *Agnolo Firenzuola e la borghesia letterata del Rinascimento* explains his study and its title:

[...] mano a mano che allargavo e approfondivo il mio esame, l'autore mi si è presentato in una luce nuova, perché in lui a me è sembrato di scorgere tutte e sole le caratteristiche della società borghese del Rinascimento con la sua leggerezza e amenità, col suo contrasto tra idealismo teorico e sensualismo pratico. Tale opinione mi si è andata confermando col proseguire nelle ricerche, finché a lavoro compiuto, nel Firenzuola ho creduto di dover riconoscere e presentare il tipo di questa classe [...] Perciò la sua attività intellettuale presenta una varietà che a volte sembra trapasso brusco, contraddizione, stonatura, precisamente come nei salotti e nelle ville borghesi le dissertazioni sulle arti e sui filosofemi più astrusi [...] si alternano alle narrazioni scollacciate e ai frizzi satirici dei canti berneschi” (*avvertenza*).

Fatini rightly presents Firenzuola as an author who unifies the divide between aristocratic and popular, giving voice to a growing Renaissance bourgeoisie, that seeks both the aesthetic

pleasure of the aristocracy and the recreational pastimes of the middle class (*avvertenza*). A growing middle class and freely employed cooking class, even though at the service of individual households, can shape our ideas about class and urban consciousness in the early Renaissance. Looking forward, the cook of Alessandro Piccolomini in *L'amor costante* might remind us more clearly of the salacious narrations and allusive poetry of Francesco Berni, which were much in vogue during these years.

### **Piccolomini's *Cornacchia*: un amore costante for Agnoletta**

Alessandro Piccolomini (1508-1579) spent his young life and career in his native Siena where he became a driving force and premier *literato* of the city's cultural elite. At age twenty, Piccolomini was introduced as a member of the Accademia degli Intronati. His early influence in Siena helped produce academy dramas and ritualized performances, such as *Il sacrificio* and *Gl'ingannati* in 1531. In fact, *The Deceived Ones*, the Intronati's most famous work, has been studied multiple times for traces of proof that it was Piccolomini's – Lo Stordito – work alone.<sup>65</sup> In 1536, Piccolomini penned *L'amor costante* as an academy commission. Yet there is no question of authorship; the Balìa of Siena requested a dramatic work in honor of Charles V's arrival. *L'amor costante* was not performed that year.<sup>66</sup> Charles V delayed his arrival in Siena

---

<sup>65</sup> In his edition of *Gl'ingannati*, Florindo Cerreta allies himself with other scholars, including Nino Borsellino, Marvin Herrick, and Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, on the proposal that Piccolomini substantially authored this early comedy by the Academy. Daniele Seragnoli does not address the problem of authorship in detail but acknowledges Piccolomini's strong creative hand in the work. Recently, Louise George Clubb provides a succinct overview of the theories behind the creation of *Gl'ingannati* in her work on Pollastra. Piccolomini was a new member of academy life at the time, which may have influenced his participation in the drama. We know that Piccolomini joined the Intronati at age 20 because statutes of the group dictate this age requirement. Cerreta also discusses the fundamental issue of manuscript editions and the confusion between *Il Sacrificio* and *Gl'ingannati* as a reason for the anonymous authorship.

<sup>66</sup> Nerida Newbiggin, Daniele Seragnoli, and Stefano Lo Verme contend that *L'amor costante* was performed for the first time in Venice for the Carnival season of 1541. They cite a letter by Piccolomini to Lodovico Dolce in which Piccolomini desires to “finally” see the performance (29, n.9).

and the Balia had already made the decision that the logistics of performance were too complex.<sup>67</sup> This notwithstanding, the comedy enjoyed numerous print editions – the first in Venice in 1540 – and performances in different cultural centers for years to come. Piccolomini is also author to *L'Alessandro* (1543) and numerous scientific and literary treatises. After his early involvement with the Intronati, Piccolomini moved freely and often around the peninsula before returning permanently to Siena.

He left for Padua in 1538, when he joined an active group of Aristotelians at the university and became a member of the Academy of the Infiammati. There, he introduced Pietro Aretino into the Academy and he worked closely with Sperone Speroni. Although Piccolomini had always been a strong supporter of the *volgare*, in Padua he adopted Speroni's ideas promoting the use of Tuscan in scientific and philosophical works. Piccolomini began composing scientific treatises and Aristotelian commentaries during this time. After a brief period in Bologna in 1542, he returned to Siena and authored *L'Alessandro* while working at the university. In 1546 we find him in Rome, where Piccolomini's focus on natural philosophy in the vernacular takes precedent over his literary efforts. He was, again, in Siena in 1558 attempting a rebirth of the Intronati Academy, now as the Archintronato, no doubt thanks to his fame and success over the past years. Here, he published his commentary to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and his fame as a commentator of Aristotelian theory continued to grow. In 1575, his commentary on the *Poetics*, *Annotationi nel libro de la Poetica d'Aristotile*, appeared, published in Venice. The same year, Torquato Tasso comes to Siena to meet in person with Piccolomini and to discuss his poetic theory and interpretation of Aristotle. Piccolomini died four years later in his native city,

---

<sup>67</sup> The Balia's decision seems to be an economic question. Reference can be found in Pietro Vigo's *Carlo Quinto in Siena nell'aprile del 1536. Relazione di un contemporaneo*. Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1884. pp. 42-44. Newbiggin also discusses the problem of funding a performance of the comedy. Seragnoli makes reference to the practical difficulties of scenography (25).



after a life spent at the core of intellectual and literary life across the peninsula. His work is considered fundamental for understanding sixteenth-century literary theory, his *L'amor costante* representing only an early attempt at practical application of an evolving theory.

As in many of the Intronati's productions, *L'amor costante* would suggest that the only constant thing in love is deception. A constant love is, in essence, a deception, of which the comedy is full.<sup>68</sup> Notwithstanding its apparently simple messaging, almost all of the comedy's features are complex. For example, a contaminated mixture of other comedies serve as sources: Ariosto's *I suppositi*, the Intronati adaptation of Plautus' *I prigioni* and its own *L'Aurelia*, as well as *La calandria* and the *Decameron*, all serving to enrich the various storylines. Additionally, in *L'amor costante*, there are twenty-eight characters, who speak multiple languages, including Italian, Spanish, Neopolitan, and a German/Latin/Barbaric-Italian mix from the scholar/pedant. The scene in Pisa is also somewhat complex because of its copious and precise temporal and spatial details. Nerida Newbigin states that there is no point at which a character leaves the scene without indicating exactly where he or she is headed in the city (9). And all of these destinations are veritable locations in the comedy's contemporary Pisa. This aspect demonstrates a sense of urban consciousness for which Ariosto was first praised, but that is now possibly exasperated by Piccolomini.

Common *topoi* throughout these works ground the new comedy, although the incomplete *L'Aurelia* is its most fundamental source. The plot explores the complexities of legitimate/incestuous love, disguised/exchanged identities, and father/son relationships, all of these due to severe political unrest. Ioandoro (*alias* Messer Giannino) and Ginevra (*alias* Lucrezia) are twins separated many years before; Ferrante (*alias* Lorenzino) and Ginevra are the

---

<sup>68</sup> Newbigin explains: " siccome amore e inganno sono una cosa, l'unico elemento costante in amore è l'inganno, e lo scopo di qualsiasi commedia cinquecentesca è inevitabilmente quello di perpetrare l'inganno o di scoprirlo, cosicché i giovani possano sposarsi con l'approvazione della vecchia generazione e della comunità" (1-2).

two young lovers who eventually obtain their happy ending, only after discovering that the poison they drank was innocuous. Two fathers, Consalvo and Pedrantonio (also with an *alias* Guglielmo da Villafranca), are similarly at the center of the drama, the latter as the father of the twins Ioandoro and Ginevra. Among the figures that carry over from *L'aurelia* to *L'amor costante* are the Spanish captain, the parasite, a young *amorosa*, and various servants.

Nerida Newbigin has published the lone edition of *L'Aurelia*, and for this reason, we are able to chart a small yet significant change from *L'Aurelia* to *L'amor costante*: the cook of the second comedy is merely a servant in the first. Newbigin briefly mentions that the cook Cornacchia derives from the place occupied by the servant Bronchetto, but she does not explore the similarities or differences in the characters (13). Comparison of the two comedies reveals that substantial action has been taken in redesigning the scenes of Bronchetto and his relationship with the servant Agnoletta. References to a loving and/or sexual relationship exist between Betta and Bronchetto exist in *L'Aurelia*, but Piccolomini refines the character of servant-cook and composes all their scenes anew for *L'amor costante*.

Unlike his counterparts in Ariosto and Firenzuola's comedies, Messer Giannino's cook Cornacchia is quintessentially devoid of any culinary talent or responsibility. He maintains an ongoing sexual friendship with Agnoletta, the female servant of Maestro Gucciardo, and this role consumes any other characterization his figure would undergo. I will discuss possible Plautine sources for an underdeveloped slave-cook; these cooks are usually simpletons and sometimes are simply servants who perform culinary duties. However, the Plautine model is not enough to explain Cornacchia's role in the comedy. From the close analysis of the cook's role and connections to medical and literary developments of the period, I will suggest a few theories that may inform his character development. Firstly, the author's perceptions of popular pseudo-

scientific/medical knowledge may inform the cook's relationship to food and his lover.

Furthermore, the cook and his lover Agnoletta furnish the spectator/reader's imagination with an actualized love partnership, which foreshadows for the first time the conclusion of the young lovers and grounds the presence of lower class love scenes in comedy.

In the first scene of Act Three, Messer Giannino calls Cornacchia the cook into action and orders him to inform any visitors of where his master has gone:

MESSER GIANNINO	Non ti so far piú parole. Alla giornata conoscerai s'io ti farò piacere o no. Ma non indugiar piú a andare a trovar questo Lorenzino. E mi trovarai alla buttiga di Guido orafo: ch'io vo' veder di far finir quello anello acciò che Lorenzino, volendo, el possa portare stasera a Lucrezia.
SGUAZZA	Lassate il pensiero a me, ch'io non farò altro.
MESSER GIANNINO	Cornacchia!
CORNACCHIA	Signore!
MESSER GIANNINO	Vien da basso.
VERGILIO	Sapete quel ch'io vi ricordo, padrone? Io non fidarei, così per la prima volta, a Lorenzino un anello di tanto pregio; che val quel diamante piú di cento scudi.
MESSER GIANNINO	Importan poco cento scudi ove ne va la vita.
CORNACCHIA	Eccomi, padrone: che comandate?
MESSER GIANNINO	Se vien nessuno a domandarmi, di' ch'io sia alla buttiga di Guido orafo, intendi?
CORNACCHIA	Così dirò. (III.1)

Cornacchia essentially completes the duties of a servant in this scene; he accepts this role by quickly responding "Così dirò" to his master's command. Indicative of his servitude, Cornacchia addresses Messer Giannino as *Signore*, uses the formal *voi*, and semantically reveals Messer Giannino's power over him with the verb *comandate*. Cornacchia places himself far below his master on the social ladder of the period. Furthermore, there is no detail of his professional quality or role as a cook within the household. Only a close look at the character list and a brief reference to the domestic space *da basso* – likely referring to the kitchen and working spaces – allow us to recognize his status as a cook.

The use of a cook in place of a servant is not without precedent in some Plautine comedies. A recognizable feature of this type of Plautine cook is his similarity to servants and his simple nature. When interacting with other characters of the comedy, he is clearly confined to the environment of a specific household. Still, the Plautine cook is commanded to perform kitchen or market tasks. The initial depiction of Cornacchia, instead, does not rely on traditional models in which cooks are often skilled or, at a minimum, charged with culinary duties. Additionally, Lowe recommends considering a cook to be of Plautus' creation (standard Roman *coquus*) – and not Greek – when he is dispensable to the plot (16). However, theorizing which characters are dispensable to plot development does not apply exceptionally well to Renaissance comedy. Even if cursory, Cornacchia will appear onstage multiple times and be mentioned by his lover, Agnoletta, in a soliloquy. The cook's scenes even include a final rendezvous in Act Five, a distinctive honor that neither Ariosto or Firenzuola grant to their cooks. It is especially difficult to consider Cornacchia dispensable in the case of *L'amor costante*, where I will argue that Cornacchia and Agnoletta are the two exponents of constant love, fulfilling the title of the comedy.<sup>69</sup>

In Act Three, scene six, we are introduced to Cornacchia's relationship with Agnoletta as she arrives to leave a gift for Messer Giannino. Their tongue in cheek exchanges do not seem very friendly at first, yet the spectator/reader comes to understand that they are lovers:

AGNOLETTA.	Tic toc, tic toc, toc, tic toc.
CORNACCHIA.	Chi diavol bussava si forte?
AGNOLETTA.	Aprè.

---

<sup>69</sup> Many scholars contend that the action of the plot in Renaissance comedy is a closed circuit (Giulio Ferroni comes to mind) in which the main storyline is not truly affected by the brief encounters and tasks of the servant population in the scenes. The two young lovers or two lost siblings, generally speaking, are destined for a happy ending whether or not, for example, Cornacchia tells another cast member where his master has gone. For further discussion of this matter, see Nino Borsellino's *Il Cinquecento: dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma. Grandi Opere*, where the scholar argues that comedy develops on two parallel but never intersecting planes: the noble and the comic. I will return Borsellino's theory of two distinct planes of interaction later in the chapter.

CORNACCHIA. Oh! Se' tu, scimiarella? Non ci è messer Giannino, ch'io so che tu vuoi lui.

AGNOLETTA. E dov'è?

CORNACCHIA. (tra sé e sé: Non gliel vo' dire, che io so che non la vede volentieri.) Che diavol ne so io? So che in casa non eie nessuno.

AGNOLETTA. Non ci è nessuno? Dunque sei solo?

CORNACCHIA. Solo, solissimo. Perché? Vuoi niente?

AGNOLETTA. Sì. Apre.

CORNACCHIA. Che vuoi?

AGNOLETTA. Voglio una cosa.

CORNACCHIA. Dimmela di costi.

AGNOLETTA. Non si può dir dalla finestra.

CORNACCHIA. Ah! ah! ah! T'intendo, per Dio! Tu vorresti fare, un tratto, la criniformia, ch?

AGNOLETTA. Eh! tu se' 'l bel frasca! Apre, se tu vuoi aprire.

CORNACCHIA. Dimmi se tu vuoi questo.

AGNOLETTA. Tel dirò poi.

CORNACCHIA. Dimmel ora.

AGNOLETTA. Sì. Orsù! Or, apre.

CORNACCHIA. Non ci è verso.

AGNOLETTA. Perché ?

CORNACCHIA. Perché non si può.

AGNOLETTA. O perché non si può?

CORNACCHIA. Perché non ci ho niente in ponto la fantasia.

AGNOLETTA. Se non ci è altro che questo, lassane il pensiero a me. So far muine dell'altro mondo.

CORNACCHIA. La vo' far un poco rinegare Dio. In fine, perdonami: io non ti voglio aprire.

AGNOLETTA. Apremi, di grazia, el mio Cornacchia. S'è partito. Ha imparato, questo furfante, a esser crudel da messer Giannino. Mi vien voglia di far quel conto di lui che lui fa di me. Ma, in fine, m'ha còlto troppo in sul bisogno. Tic toc, tic toc.

CORNACCHIA. Eh! Vatti con Dio; non ti fare scorgere nella strada. Non vedi che io non ti voglio aprire?

AGNOLETTA. Uh Dio! a che so' condotta! Eh! Apremi, el mio Cornacchino dolce, di sapa, di mèle, di rose, di fiori melati.

CORNACCHIA. Non bisogna farmi piú muine, che tu t'aggiri.

AGNOLETTA. Mi perderei el tempo tutto di. Sarà buon che io me ne vada.

CORNACCHIA. Sarà buon ch'io non la lassi partire, che m'ha aguzzato l'appetito ancor a me. Ove vai, Agnolettina? Vieni, che mi giambavo. Non sai che tu sei la mia speranza?

AGNOLETTA. Ho voglia or di non voler io.

CORNACCHIA. Orsù, la mia Agnoletta! Aspettami, che vengo a aprire.

AGNOLETTA. Oh! Io credo che io arò el buon tempicciuolo, per un poco.

CORNACCHIA.	Or entra.
AGNOLETTA.	Oh! 'l mio Cornacchion dolce, dell'oro, amor mio, camiciuola mia!
CORNACCHIA.	Lassami chiuder la porta. (III.4)

There is no room for hypothesis regarding this scene. It was surely designed for the pleasure of spectators and readers and it proves a sexual relationship between Cornacchia and Agnoletta. Initially, we might assume that this scene is based on a stereotypical conversation of contrast between servants of different households.<sup>70</sup> However, Agnoletta changes the course of the scene by “sweet talking” Cornacchia. When he finally opens the door, she seems to pounce on him with lust. The cook shuts the spectator out and ends the scene, not before insisting that she let him *at least* close the door.

Like the cook’s first appearance, this scene offers no direct mention of his aptitude in the kitchen. The few references to food serve as romantic incitements and sweet words from Agnoletta: “el mio Cornacchino dolce, di sapa, di mèle, di rose, di fiori melati” and his mention of a rousing appetite has little connection to hunger for food: “Sarà buon ch’io non la lassì partire, che m’ha aguzzato l’appetito ancor a me.” The exaggerated diminutives and possessive adjectives with which they speak to one another contribute to a light-hearted, comical feeling. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that there are no additional elements of the scene that would condemn their amorous activity. Newbigin cites Piccolomini’s *Annotationi* concerning the comic: “La struttura comica è costruita su personaggi non comici in sé stessi; il comico, la cosa ridicolosa, secondo Piccolomini consiste in ‘un certo errore, & peccato, & una bruttezza, insomma, che non rechi seco dolor acerbo, né corruttivo”” (*Annot.*, p.89, qtd in Newbigin 16). Piccolomini demonstrates that his theory of theater distinguishes between noble and lower class

---

<sup>70</sup> For example, this type of argument scene is present in Ariosto’s *I suppositi* between the boy Caprino and an *ancella*. This is, indeed, the same scene for which Caprino is guaranteed fame by theater scholars mentioned earlier in this chapter.

individuals, not between noble and base moral states (Newbiggin 15). Thus Agnoletta and Cornacchia are not presented within a moral complex of corruption and sin. Their lengthy conversation serves two superseding purposes of the playwright: one, to break up the main plot-advancing scenes of Act Three; and two, to put on display an actualized romantic relationship among two members of the cast.

Scene ten advances the story of the sexual encounter between Cornacchia and Agnoletta.

Marchetto knocks on the door and the two lovers would prefer to be left alone:

MARCHETTO	Tic toc, tic toc, tic toc, tic toc. Olá ! Oh! Diavol, non ci è nessuno? So ch'io mi farò sentire, io. Tic, toc, tic.
CORNACCHIA	Chi è lá? chi è lá? Potta di san Frasconio! Vuoi mandare in terra quella porta?
AGNOLETTA	Eh! Non gli risponder. Bada qui.
MARCHETTO	Dov'è messer Giannino?
CORNACCHIA	Non è in casa.
MARCHETTO	O dov'è?
CORNACCHIA	Non lo so, io.
AGNOLETTA	Lassai dire, amor mio. Udimene!
MARCHETTO	Eh! Dimmelo, che son Marchetto che gli vo' dire una cosa che importa.
CORNACCHIA	Deh! Lassami stare un poco, Marchetto, di grazia.
MARCHETTO	Oh!... che importa assaissimo, dico.
CORNACCHIA	Or, or, ora: aspetta un poco.
AGNOLETTA	Leva questa gamba di qui. Orsú! orsú!
MARCHETTO	Che diavol fa costui? Mi par sentir gente con esso.
CORNACCHIA	Oh! orsú! Che vuoi, ora, Marchetto? Cancaro ti venga!
MARCHETTO	Che tu mi dica dove gli è messer Giannino.
CORNACCHIA	Va' alla butiga di Guido orafo, che ve lo trovami.
MARCHETTO	Certo?
CORNACCHIA	Certissimo. Sta' sopra di me.
MARCHETTO	Pigliare la via di qua, che sarà piú corta. (III.10)

Six unfalteringly comical scenes later, Agnoletta attempts to coax the cook into ignoring the knock at the door. When Cornacchia gives in to the visitor Marchetto, Agnoletta makes reference to the physicality of their romantic involvement by telling Cornacchia to remove his leg: “leva questa gamba di qui.” By now, it is very obvious that the cook is not a culinary figure to be

developed in Greek or Roman fashion, nor according to Ariosto's model. Again in Act Four, Agnoletta explicitly praises the cook's talents as she compares him to other "men." Cornacchia is not present in this scene, but his lover's monologue confirms that his talents extend beyond the kitchen:

AGNOLETTA.       Lassami un po' scuoter la gonella, ch'io credo esser tutta  
imbrattata. Io vi so dir, donne mie, che non sognava chi trovò 'l  
proverbio che dice «un uomo val cento e cento non vaglian uno». Io mi so' trovata mille volte con qualcuna di queste uominesse, di queste canne fiacche e ho avuto a far mille civettanze inanzi ch'io gli facci scroccar un tratto; e poi Dio sa come! Ma il mio Cornacchia, mi possa venir la morte se, in tre ore ch'io son stata con esso, non siamo arrivati a questi [dicendo così alzava tre dita] valentissimamente. De' Cornacchi se ne trovan pochi. Fate a mio modo, donne. Lassateli andare queste maritesses che tutta volta «chié, chié, chié», e non fan poi mai niente. Orsú! Voglio andar a casa per venir poi, di qui a un'ora o due, a riveder se messer Giannino sarà tornato. (IV.8)

The attention to popular wisdom and material language in this scene is in no way obscured.

Agnoletta reports that Cornacchia is capable of unusual sexual feats. She gives evidence of this by the mention of three hours spent together and allusion to three orgasms. Other men, whom Agnoletta describes as feminine, cannot come close to Cornacchia's abilities; they are, essentially, all talk. Her recommendation to the female spectators, common receptors of the Academy of the Intronati's messaging, is clear and direct: find a man, a cook, like Cornacchia for yourselves. The satisfying relationship between cook and sexual prowess is evident.

Piccolomini chooses to characterize Cornacchia for his bedroom qualities rather than for his culinary ones. The cook's appeal in sexual encounter may derive from a more playful association between sex and foodstuffs. Food and drink were regular metaphors for sexual organs and sex acts in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, for example, or in burlesque poetry of the period, such as Francesco Berni's multiple *lode* to certain foods. Associating appetites is



certainly reminiscent of Boccaccio's tale of Chichibio who gives his lover Brunetta the leg of meat for which he finds himself in a tight spot with his master Currado. Furthermore, Piccolomini was surely aware of Berni's work, and his longstanding friendship with Aretino makes Piccolomini's knowledge of risqué dialogue almost impossible to refute. The playwright's desire to place Cornacchia and Agnoletta in explicit sexual encounter is also evidenced through the censured revision that Marcantonio Piccolomini attempted. Newbiggin has found the "polite" version in the Biblioteca Comunale di Siena's manuscript of the younger Piccolomini's *Trattato* on love. It makes no mention of "uominesse" or sex acts: "[...] Egli è pur vero che quando altri sta in piacere, e in consolatione, il tempo ne vâ più che di volo: e maggiormente nelle oneste bramate, e dolci occasioni; come avvenuto è a me col mio Cornacchia, tutto galante, e tutto valente. Fosse tre ore di tempo, che siamo stati a trattener l'uno l'altro, sono passate in un soffio" [...] (qtd. in Newbiggin 9, n.15). An amended version that features nobler language and content allows us to reflect on the original author's potential references in popular culture when describing Cornacchia's sexual energy.

In literature and theater, a robust sexual drive is associated with many medical theories and herbal remedies of the period. Comedies, such as Machiavelli's, are replete with references to the search for herbs and techniques to favor conception or enhance sexual performance. Both drink and herb would be of easy access to culinary figures of the time, and we know that certain stewards and cooks – for example Platina – seem very interested in highlighting aphrodisiacal foods. We remember that the popular preconception of (excessive) drinking among culinary staff is used against a cook in other early Renaissance plays. However, Piccolomini makes a novel contribution to this idea. When poets compose elegies to suggestive foods or artists conceal sexual references in food objects in their paintings, the associations of people with salacious or

sexual – albeit risible – acts are less apparent than the foodstuffs and sex organs. Piccolomini seems to have taken suggestion from other artistic and literary genres and adapted them to the theater where people are central to communicating cultural trends. Daniele Seragnoli points to Piccolomini’s Paduan years as an indication of his profound interest in people: “[...] risalgono in Piccolomini gli interessi per una ricerca teoretica avente come fine essenzialmente l’uomo. Non casualmente l’indagine sull’individuo, morale, politica ed economica [...] vita civile tout court, dai buoni costumi alle regole comportamentali [...] coinciderà con l’inizio di progetti e meditazioni teoriche sul teatro” (96-7). The years in Padua directly follow the composition of *L’amor costante*, yet I would argue that the fundamental importance of representing people has always been at the heart of the playwright’s work. He embeds a popular understanding of literary and food culture in an original and unique cast member.

Cornacchia returns to the stage in Act Five for a farewell scene that references the lovers’ preferred activities. As previously mentioned, this is the only occasion where a cook is given the chance to reappear in the final act of a comedy. As Agnoletta and Cornacchia reappear, they plan a future appointment. It transports their love story outside the end of the comedy:

AGNOLETTA	Tic toc, tic toc.
CORNACCHIA	Chi è lá? chi è lá? Oh! oh! Addio, Agnoletta. Oh! Tu sei prete ingordo! Non ci è piú ordine.
AGNOLETTA	No, no; non vo’ cotesto: el serbaremo a domane. Ma dimmi: è tornato messer Giannino?
CORNACCHIA	Non è tornato, grattugina mia dolce.
AGNOLETTA	Addio. Sai? A rivederci domane.
CORNACCHIA	Si, si. Come le sardelle!
AGNOLETTA	Dove diavol è intrato, oggi, costui? Bisognerà riserbarlo a domane.

(V.2)

The popular sexual-societal reference to gluttonous and greedy priests is unmistakably present.

The lingering allusion to their position “come sardelle” confirms, once again, their carnal interest in one another. All of these jests precede a predictable final comment from Agnoletta. She

identifies with the female public with a timeless statement: “Dove diavol è intrato, oggi, costui? Bisognerà riserbarlo a domane.” What could Cornacchia possibly be thinking? Twice in one day? This is activity for tomorrow! This scene represents a closure-non-closure for the two amorous characters and their story. They reappear as if it were an opportunity to bid farewell to the spectator/reader, and the conversation allows them to live on in the imagination of spectators and readers by confirming a future appointment between the lovers.

Erudite comedies regularly close with two possible invitations: join the feast in honor of the newly married couple or leave them to their intimate time together. In this scene of Act Five, Piccolomini is offering two sets of lovers to the imaginative possibilities of the audience: the predictable and established Ferrante and Ginevra and the truly physical, low-culture, funny Cornacchia and Agnoletta. To explain the potential of dual plot lines of comic and ideal in the Intronati’s *Gl’ingannati*, Florindo Cerretta and Nino Borsellino contend that the Academy playwrights felt an unconscious desire to avoid contaminating the ideal world with the low culture of “gente meccanica più volgare e rozza” (Cerreta 31).<sup>71</sup> More than a statement on social class, Borsellino sees this structure as it affects the pace of the plot: “lo spettacolo comico dei servi, dei parassiti, dei pedanti, degli spagnoli che rallenta il ritmo della trama per il pieno esplicarsi dei pezzi di bravura” (25). I believe that these impressions also inform how we conceptualize *L’amor costante*. Even if the two worlds never collide, we should recognize Cornacchia and Agnoletta as a viable alternative to the young lovers. They are real and exciting, and we know much more about their intimate lives. The Plautine stock character “household-

---

<sup>71</sup> Newbigin views Piccolomini’s introduction of the comic plot as an antidote to serious topics: “Le loro [classe dei servi e dei poveri] apparizioni sono distribuite per la commedia quasi come antidoto all’argomento serio, e attraverso loro, Piccolomini satirizza molti aspetti della società contemporanea: il cinico materialismo del clero, la corruzione della chiesa, le stravaganze dei poeti (o ancora peggio, dei napoletani), e la falsità dei soldati spagnoli” (16). I agree with Newbigin that the comic plot grants Piccolomini more freedom to satirize contemporary culture, but I do not believe that sociopolitical satire is the central function of the comic plot, as I have stated elsewhere in the Introduction.

slave cook” may be dispensable to the plot, but Piccolomini’s Cornacchia is only dispensable to Borsellino’s “ideal world.” He is central to the comic world.

Piccolomini is one of few playwrights to have published in theory and practice of comedy. His theoretical interest in stock characters permits a closing analysis of the peculiar development of the cook throughout these examples. It has been proven that they are not mere servants in the character lists, and two of them have specific culinary commissions and duties. Ariosto’s Dalio and Firenzuola’s Grattugia share some characteristics of Plautine cooks because they work for an individual household. However, their status as employees, and not slaves, also becomes apparent, especially as developed in their interactions with their masters. On the other hand, Cornacchia’s conversations with his master are secondary to his relationship with Agnoletta. He has no clear model in classical comedy. Piccolomini never mentions a cook when theorizing character development in his letters or in his commentary on the *Poetics*. Although the playwright declares to have applied his theories in *L’amor costante* and *L’Alessandro*, the cook does not fit well into the schemes of psychological and anthropological categorization that Piccolomini lays out. It is more likely that his representation derives from practical or revisionary cultural impulses to find ways to talk about sex, food, and vitality.

Across the three comedies, the cook’s personality and social position are more flexible than that of other stock characters. For example, he is never the untrustworthy, fraudulent, or lying servant or ruffian. He is not an insolent soldier or a gluttonous parasite. None of the traditional or reportedly verosimilar vices of low class individuals apply the cook. These explanations of character types and personalities in the *Annotationi* have been placed into the schematic tables by Daniele Seragnoli in his study of Piccolomini (98-134). Seragnoli takes his analysis further to question the parallel development of playwright’s dramatic corpus and in the

*Annotationi.* Through this study, the scholar ultimately denies that we can equate the theory and practice of comedy (135). We have seen in the Introduction that Richard Andrews also separates theory and practice. I agree, and I think that the figure of the cook is an excellent demonstration of how an innovative appeal to contemporary society defy theory.

## CHAPTER THREE: FLORENCE'S *ZANAIUOLI* IN MID-SIXTEENTH CENTURY COMEDY

### Introduction

Many Early Modern centers were livened by bustling municipal and economic activity and the Tuscan city of Florence is no exception. By the sixteenth century, cities of the Italian peninsula enjoyed record volumes of trade and commerce as well as the success of financial institutions. Despite the political turbulence of wars and invasions, Florence's fortune – and that of the reinstated Medici rulers – promoted the arts and secured employment for local and foreign painters, sculptors, and authors. Florence's representative arts under Lorenzo the Magnificent and his grandson Cosimo I are largely remembered for their lavish festivities and "high culture", ceremonial court spectacles. Cosimo I surrounded himself with prized citizens such as Giorgio Vasari, Benvenuto Cellini, and Agnolo Brozino among others. Despite the fact that wealthy families supported and commissioned art, literature, and theater as key symbols of economic power, there is evidence that a growing number of intellectuals began to choose how they functioned in and outside the court and to question their place in society. The most active authors and scholars of mid-sixteenth century Florence were members of the Accademia fiorentina, which included Giovan Battista Gelli, Giovanni Maria Cecchi, Francesco D'Ambra, and Anton Francesco Grazzini. They are not as well remembered as the city's greats – Dante, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli – and they belonged to a distinctly new middle class of Florentine citizens. Indeed, most of the members of the Florentine Academy practiced a trade, exercising dual professions of *artigiani* and *letterati*. In their youth, these men first listened to the learned

discussions at the Orti Oricellari. Decades later they developed their own Accademia degli Umidi, later the Florentine Academy, to maintain a space of intellectual encounter. Though they are considered minor authors today, they were prolific and influential producers and disseminators of culture in Renaissance Florence.

The Florentine Academy focused its energies on many scholarly and literary pursuits, including comic theater, in which we find signs of lively urban environments and changing momentum in societies across central Italy. And yet, as a whole, Renaissance Italian comedy is accused of banality the more the sixteenth century pushes forward. Tireless re-workings of recognizable plots and themes – from Athens and Rome, Boccaccio’s stories, Machiavelli’s theater, and Ariosto’s, too – are all too common in the proliferation of printed editions, of literary circles, and of amateur dramaturges themselves. When closely studied, the Florentine Academy playwrights demonstrate the opposite. While the theater of the Florentine Academy follows many of the standards of classical and early Renaissance models, the playwrights faithfully follow the creed of Cicero (*comoedia est imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis*) by drawing upon their municipal consciousness and dedicating more space to images of contemporary people and customs.

Interest in the “popolo minuto” of Florence and Siena builds on the recent work of Virginia Cox and Sarah G. Ross and integrates its perspective into Renaissance theater studies. We have already seen in Chapter Two how scholars such as Zorzi and Bonino were interested in Ariosto’s portrayals of contemporary settings and minor characters. Florentine Academy dramaturges’ own status as members of a growing upper middle, merchant, artisan, and scholarly class emancipated them, to a certain degree, from writing comedy intended exclusively for the Medici court (even though generally sponsored by the family and its network), and it gave them

access to raw material for a dynamic representation of the ordinary people and their realities in the contemporary landscape. In fact, this brand of comedy further unlocks the door to multiple voices and more modest, “everyday” renaissances of the period. Firstly, on stage and in society, Florence and Siena are shown to be a locus of developing urban professions. While both cities are remembered for their most illustrious individuals, there were undoubtedly many more inconspicuous agents of cultural and economic development in the growing urban areas of the peninsula. As Virginia Cox has recently pointed out, the Renaissance stands on the backs of many men and women who participated in quieter ways in the all-encompassing renewal of classical culture and the innovation that carried forth into the century to follow (*A Short Guide to the Renaissance*, 1-2). Cox is the latest to mention the example of the tailor who acquired enough influence and reputation to commission a self-portrait in his work environment. This level of emphasis on the individual merit of a tailor – an artisan by trade – is highly significant of collapsing gradations of a vertical society. In fact, the comedies analyzed in this chapter reveal a society with some permeable boundaries. Ultimately, the developing interest in lesser-known (culinary) professions may reflect their rising status in society.

Sarah G. Ross has also recently investigated the phenomenon that she entitles *Everyday Renaissances* by surveying the drive of more modest Venetian citizens for learning and literature. She states:

Scholars and broader audiences alike now tend to level charges of elitism at “the Renaissance” as a cultural phenomenon, and with some justice [...] Yet *Everyday Renaissances* claims that ordinary people also participated energetically in culture, and that attending to them offers a sharper picture of the era’s intellectual and literary ferment. (1)



This fresh perspective on the significance and development of the Renaissance in Venice – and of the Individual<sup>72</sup> – allows for the reevaluation of mid-century Florentine Academy dramaturgues who are interested in divulging learned materials and in staging the lesser-known professions considered in this study. Furthermore, Sara Mamone points to this ideology in theater in her study of the seventeenth-century academies and confraternities in Florence. She argues that their works are tied to the fluidity and ordinary character of civil life and that they put the entire community on display (18-19).<sup>73</sup>

This chapter observes one such example of novelty in the onstage portrayals of the *zanaiuolo*, a deliveryman, across the Florentine Academy’s playwrights and compares these representations with that of *osti*, innkeepers, in a Sienese comedy of the same period.

Deliverymen are depicted as contractually employed individuals who represent a new group of food purveyors, acting and interacting freely in society. In short, they deliver foods and messages from the market to the home and can be hired for special events and in-home meal preparation. Innkeepers are also free members of society, found only in the Accademia degli Intronati’s *Gl’Ingannati*. Inhabitants of Modena, they host city visitors and provide tavern-style meals that they advertise in the streets. Innkeepers demonstrate entrepreneurial characters similar to deliverymen. Both professions are somewhat liminal to the core action of the comedies. For the most part, they exist on what Nino Borsellino terms the “comic plane” of the plot, rarely

---

<sup>72</sup> In Jacob Burckhardt’s well-known study *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, the second section is titled “The Development of the Individual.” It is here that he posits Renaissance Italy as the birthplace of modern individualism and Renaissance Italian men as “the first-born among the sons of modern Europe.” Like Virginia Cox, I will maintain that modernity and individualism were developed from the cultural stimuli and work of many men. While I agree generally with Sarah Ross, who states to have no intention of reviving “Burckhardt’s conception of egalitarianism in Renaissance Italy,” I intend to point out that the Florentine and Sienese authors featured in this chapter are particular in their desire to forward the notion of a society with more permeable boundaries tending towards equality.

<sup>73</sup> Mamone’s specific analyses are of religious and intellectual academies’ and confraternities’ productions under Cosimo II and Ferdinand II. I believe that her findings apply also to a reevaluation of sixteenth-century Florentine Academy members, Gelli, D’Ambra, and Cecchi as well as Siena’s Accademia degli Intronati.

intersecting in a meaningful way with the “ideal” characters. However, as I did with cooks in Chapter Two, I will argue that deliverymen and innkeepers are hardly dispensable. Even if their interactions with noble characters are brief, these minor characters are tied to the upper class in the fabric of society. Most importantly, new figures for the cast signals innovation among familiar storylines in theater, and they provide a window into mid-century make-up of society, cultural identity, and mobility.

Food purveyors who work sporadically in urban environments as self-employed or contractually employed individuals are a previously understudied and unusual class of culinary workers. In Chapter One, various studies of the Early Modern cook and household kitchens were surveyed. Bridget Ann Henisch’s *Medieval Cook* includes the closest comparisons to the role of the Florentine deliverymen in her discussion of short-order cooks with market stalls in medieval London and Paris. All these food purveyors and cooks seem to act *and interact* often on their own accord and they differ from the cooks in Chapter Two because they have been emancipated from indentured servitude in noble households. Whereas household cooks interact as clients and representatives of their masters purchasing goods in the market, deliverymen, market-stall cooks, and innkeepers must sell their goods and their services to other city dwellers. This aspect of their employment is overwhelmingly evident in comedy. Their conversations reveal the dynamics of cultural and material exchange, while their references to monuments and neighborhoods map out the cityscape. Similar to the analysis of the cook’s position in the household, we can calculate the food purveyors’ positions in society from their interactions.

In this chapter, I will first provide an introduction to the term *zanaiuolo* and a brief history of its usage. Then, I will analyze the role of the *zanaiuolo* in Giovan Battista Gelli’s *La sporta* and *L’errore*, Giovan Maria Cecchi’s *L’ammalata*, and Francesco D’Ambra’s *I Bernardi*,

also making reference to the deliveryman in Anton Francesco Grazzini's *La spiritata*. Through a close textual study, these depictions of deliverymen in differing circumstances will provide the breadth of their interactions.<sup>74</sup> To remark on the significance of food purveyors in society and the accuracy of their representations, I will situate *zanaiuoli* in the innovative and popularizing cultural projects of the authors in question and relate their portrayals to that of the *osti* by the Accademia degli Intronati.

It is important to note that I consider food purveyors' representations within a tendency towards mirror images of society and their realistic implications. The Florentine Academy was particularly interested in near-realism on stage. Franco Fido has written of Gelli and his contemporaries' particular keenness for contemporary culture, which they embed into classical structure and flavor. Reflecting on Gelli's prologue of *La sporta*, Fido confirms: "Gelli not only accepts the Latin definition [of *comedia*], but is well aware of its, so to say, realistic implications: and this, we shall see, truly corresponds to the interest in everyday life that we find in several Florentine comedies, by Gelli, Lasca, and Cecchi, toward the middle of the century" (86). It is not by chance that Fido mentions three of the five playwrights of the Florentine Academy who feature *zanaiuoli* in their comedies. Of course, it should not be taken for granted that comedies, and mirrors, also distort images and examples of budding stereotypes and probable exaggerations will be drawn out. While it is my intent to prove a *zanaiuolo* ultimately different from typical servants and cooks, I look to the *stile comico* of a fixed scene of stylized encounters among *padroni* and *servi* to evaluate these differences.

---

<sup>74</sup> As more and more older editions are digitized, I find more inclusions and mentions of deliverymen. To date I have found the following occurrences: Giovan Battista Gelli's *La sporta* and *Lo errore*, Francesco D'Ambra's *I Bernardi*, Giovanni Maria Cecchi's *L'ammalata*, *Le cedole*, *La serpe*, Anton Francesco Grazzini's *La spiritata* and *Le cene*, in a comedy by Lionardo Salviati, another Academy member, as well as in some Tuscan proverbs and in the letters mentioned previously. I have chosen to highlight the most significant portrayals of the deliveryman.

### ***Zanaiuoli* = Deliverymen**

To repeat, by the first few decades of the sixteenth century the masters of erudite Renaissance comedy, notably Ariosto and Machiavelli, have staged their finest works and they are now held in the high esteem previously reserved for the fathers of the developing “national” literature, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.<sup>75</sup> Together with the architects of classical comedy, these authors provide the models from which most playwrights source their dramas. Over the course of the sixteenth century Italian Renaissance playwrights feel an equal impulse to innovate and comedy is pushed in many different directions. Some comedies take on new formal characteristics, no longer respecting the classical unities of Aristotle: action, time, and place. Singularly focused plots seem to explode into many subplots of equal importance as demonstrated by Piccolomini’s comedies in Chapter Two.<sup>76</sup> Other comedies undergo significant linguistic overhaul, as in the case of Giordano Bruno’s *Il candelaio* (1582). The dramaturges who feature in this chapter defy their models by interjecting even more images of contemporary customs than their predecessors and by emphasizing the municipal consciousness of their theater.

In this context, Florentine comedy creates a new cast member: a *zanaiuolo*. First, there are scarce examples of professions similar to the *zanaiuolo* in classical or medieval literary tradition. One immediately looks to the classical stage for precedent, yet the models are not sufficient. While ancient Greek *mageiroi* functioned as cooks for hire for sacrifice or special events as deliverymen sometimes do, *mageiroi* have a sacred role in society that does not apply to the deliveryman. Moreover, the majority of Terence’s comedies do not include even a

---

<sup>75</sup> Both Cardinal Bibbiena and Pietro Aretino may be included in the list of already successful playwrights, but while Bibbiena’s sole comedy, *La calandria*, is imitated frequently, Aretino is much less so. The greater popularity of *La calandria* may be due to the fact that that comedy’s plot relies heavily on the familiar *Decameron*.

<sup>76</sup> Another such case from Siena is Pollastra’s *Parthenio* which has been recently (2010) studied in depth and translated by Louise George Clubb. *Pollastra and the Origins of Twelfth Night* details developments in romantic comedy, tracing Sienese modifications to classical and erudite Renaissance models.

designated household cook much less an ambulatory one. Plautine comedies feature household cooks more often, but we will recall that they were regularly slaves and rarely long-term employees. It is conceivable that Plautus' portrayals of Greek society (*palliata*) offered a model of a cook for hire from the *forum coquinum* in comedies such as *Mercator*. However, in Plautus' comedies set in Greece, this profession is referred to as a *coquus* just as the household slave. As a precedent, it excludes the primary function of the deliveryman according to his name and many interactions in different Renaissance plots.

Before arriving at definitions of the deliveryman, it is important to note that archival studies support the real presence of the *zanaiuolo* in sixteenth-century Florence. It is a declared profession in the census data, the *Descrizione delle bocche di Firenze*, of 1562. In the four historic neighborhoods, there are sixteen individuals identifying as deliverymen and the widow of a late professional (ASF, Misc. medicea, 1562, busta 224). By 1562, the *zanaiuolo* is a recognized profession separate from the cook and from market stall owners such as *pizzicagnolo* and *treccone* shop owners. Thus, despite the appeal of theatrical antecedents, the *zanaiuolo* is evidenced best by his presence in contemporary Renaissance society. As such, he is a core example of originality in the form of *speculum consuetudinis*.

An intuitive etymological definition of a *zanaiuolo* is one who, by profession, carries something in a wooden basket strapped onto his back. *Zana*, a small wooden basket, and *aiuolo*, a typical suffix given to professions, is a compound term readily understood also by recalling the contemporary Italian word *zaino* which denotes a 'backpack'. Although *zana* is a word of Lombard origin, in current Italian dictionaries *zanaiuolo* is reported obsolete and said to exist only in Tuscan vernaculars. In fact, I have found *zanaiuolo* exclusively in the comedies of the members of the Florentine Academy. Occasionally *lo zana* is substituted for the longer version

*zanaiuolo* in early editions of the comedies in question. In these contexts it is differentiated from *la zana*, intended as a basket alone, which is present in many Early Modern Florentine letters and in the lectures of members the Florentine Academy.

*Zanaiuolo* appears in diverse forms in Italian dictionaries over the centuries. Usually, it is found with an orthographic change dropping the –u from the suffix (*zanaiolo*). One reputable dictionary, Zingarelli, defines the profession as “chi portava merci a domicilio con la zana” [“the person who would bring goods to the home with a chest”]. The Grande Dizionario Italiano of the editor Hoepli echoes Zingarelli’s definition. A third contemporary source, Garzanti Linguistica, has eliminated the term from its publications. Recent developments in an online Italian – Neapolitan dialectal dictionary features the term. It offers the translation *vastasu*, for the Italian *zanaiuolo* or *facchino* (Glosbe).<sup>77</sup> Historically, the Accademia della Crusca maintained the term in its printed dictionaries into the eighteenth century. In the fourth edition (1729-1738) of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, the definition of the term *lo zanaiuolo* reads: “colui, che prezzolato provvede, e porta altrui colla zana robe per lo più da mangiare” [“he who provides for a fee, and brings to others with his basket things above all to eat”]. No contemporary dictionary mentions that the *zanaiuolo* would cook for hire.

Editors of Florentine theater and *novella* have defined and interpreted *lo zanaiuolo* in various ways. Gaetano Milanesi’s 1856 Florentine Le Monnier edition of Giovan Maria Cecchi’s comedies insists that the *zanaiuolo* is a “*facchino che porta pesi e robe colla zana*” (“a porter who brings weighty items and [other] things with a chest”) (144). In the glossary accompanying works of il Lasca, *lo zanaiuolo* is understood by Giovanni Grazzini and Bruno Migliorini as a

---

<sup>77</sup> A curious development in free access, user-guided public humanities, Glosbe is a growing multi-lingual online dictionary. Further research could be done on Neapolitan literature to ascertain whether a *zanaiuolo*-type existed in Early Modern communities of the region.

*vivandiere* – a seller of meats (630).<sup>78</sup> In Chiara Cassoni’s monographic volume on Giovan Battista Gelli, she describes a *zanaiuolo* as a *forestiero* (a stranger), who does the job of a *facchino*, that is, a porter who also may happen to cook in homes (250). This definition mirrors that of the *Dizionario della lingua italiana* compiled by Niccolò Tommaseo and Bernardo Bellini which offers the definition of the Accademia della Crusca but adds “*e anche talvolta le [robe per lo più da mangiare] cucinava*” [and also at times he cooked them [things above all to eat]].<sup>79</sup> These differences when defining *zanaiuoli* are important when we consider their place in comedy and how they mirror the purveyor’s function in Florentine society. It is not by chance that Chiara Cassoni, together with Tommaseo and Bellini, give the most accurate definition of the *zanaiuolo* as portrayed in comedy. In line with these definitions and in order to capture the culinary aspect of his work, I have elected to translate *zanaiuolo* as “deliveryman”.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Giovanni Grazzini is the sole editor of the works of il Lasca. However, he thanks Bruno Migliorini in the preface to the glossary for his invaluable assistance and advice defining some terms. Given its obscure nature, I strongly believe *zanaiuolo* to be one of the terms with which Migliorini assisted. *Vivandiere* is an interesting choice for defining the deliveryman. It seems that Grazzini (and Migliorini) might have relied more on classical tradition than on contemporary context; the *vivandiere* suits the ancient Greek *mageiros* or the butcher (*lanius*) of Plautus more than the Renaissance *zanaiuolo*.

<sup>79</sup> This definition is found in the *Tommaseo Online* of the Accademia della Crusca and the Editor Zanichelli. The entry also contains reference to a Tuscan proverb “*Chi ha da essere zanajuolo nasce col manico in mano*” and a note from the nineteenth-century philologist Pietro Fanfani who recalls that “D’Ambra chiama *Zanajuolo* (Bernard. att. V. scen. IX.), quello che altrove ha chiamato *Cuoco*.” In the *Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua italiana* edited by Manlio Cortelazzo and Paolo Zolli “*zanaiuolo*” is not an entry but can be found referenced under the word “*zanni*” as the similarity in the two words quickly comes to mind. However, a relationship between *zanaiuoli* of Florentine Academy comedies and the *Zanni* of *Commedia dell’arte* is tenuous because the supposed etymology of ‘*zanni*’ speaks to the Venetian dialect as the dictionary suggests (1979: 1846). Still it is tempting to consider the *zanaiuolo* and the *Zanni* of the *Commedia dell’arte* as natural brothers. However, I lack any conclusive evidence that would suggest that the two are one and the same in evolution. A *zanaiuolo* is not a servant of a single *padrone* and is highly associated with foodstuffs, but not insatiable hungry. Furthermore, the *zanaiuolo* is a profession declared by members of the community in the 1562 census, whereas, when I have found *zanni* as a profession – for example in Tommaso Garzoni’s *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* – he is clearly a stage actor or buffoon. For references to the *zanaiuolo* as a profession, I should also mention that it is found in a letter of Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori and one of Michelangelo Buonarroti to his brother from 1507.

<sup>80</sup> I believe porter is an acceptable translation for *facchino* although some translators may use bellhop. If we were to imagine today’s cosmopolitan and urban areas another option may be a runner. My choice of deliveryman is the first and only translation into English at this time. All translations from Italian to English are my own. The works of Gelli, D’Ambra, Cecchi’s that I consider have never been translated nor has the critical work of the scholars cited in Italian in this paper.

## The comedies of Giovan Battista Gelli

Giovan Battista Gelli, scholar-artisan of sixteenth-century Florence, included a *zanaiuolo* in both of his theatrical works. He penned *La sporta* in 1543 and *Lo errore* in 1555. For much of his life, Gelli held the two vocations of *calzaiuolo* (shoemaker) by day and member of the *litterati* in the evening at the Florentine Academy, obtaining near midlife reputable positions of power within the Academy ranks and in Florentine political life as a member of the Twelve Good Men. He was censor of the Academy three times; in 1548 he became consul and, in 1553, by will of the Grand Duke Cosimo I, he delivered and published in-depth commentaries on the first 26 cantos of the *Inferno*. The majority of Gelli's posthumous success stems from his two dialogical works: *I capricci del bottaio* and *Circe*; yet his talent for popular speech and themes can be seen across his production, no doubt aided by the rich life experiences afforded by his double role of artisan and scholar.

The idea that even the shoemaker in Florence is a man of letters was exactly the reputation Florence enjoyed during the Renaissance and into the following centuries. In his monographic volume on Gelli and the Florentine Academy, Armand De Gaetano explains that Gelli purposefully decided to remain an artisan in order to sustain economic independence: "He could, like others with less ability, have found steady employment at the court of the Medici, but he refused to do more than occasional services for it [...] Furthermore Gelli believed that manual work was edifying" (33).<sup>81</sup> His two comedies were not commissioned for court performances, even if reports indicate that Gelli read *La sporta* to Cosimo I. I believe this fact renders Gelli's

---

<sup>81</sup>. In the *Capricci* Gelli mentions ancient authors who also exercised a trade, or an *arte*. Surely the use of *arte* denotes the pride he feels toward artisan trades, particularly as it does among those who belonged to the *Arti Maggiori* (34). De Gaetano also mentions that there were other artisan-scholars, like Gelli, to come out of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century Renaissance culture: Michele Capri of Florence; Jacopo *sellaio* of Bologna; a shoemaker in Venice; Camerino *legnajuolo*, a Florentine carpenter; and Matteo Palmieri, a merchant and statesman.



comedies more ambiguous than other court-sponsored theater performances from the outset. Of course, Gelli's plots and structures follow Roman models, but we also find sparks of originality and illustrations of the contemporary and uninhibited nature of his inspiration in them.

Gelli's first comedy *La sporta* (1543) is modeled on Plautus' *Aulularia*. As such, Ghirigoro is ridiculed throughout the play for being a desperately avaricious old man who refuses to marry his daughter to a man of higher class for fear of future financial obligations. All members of the cast are aware that his only concern is sufficiently protecting his *sporta*, a wooden money chest, from external and in-house threats. To this end, Ghirigoro even takes the chest out of his home, fearing that his female servant may turn on him and carry off with it. This foolish behavior guarantees him mockery from all sides, including from the *zanaiuolo* Polo and a servant, Berto. Alongside Berto, the deliveryman appears in Act Four for three scenes and is given a name, Polo. Alongside Berto, Polo arrives at the home of Ghirigoro in order to deliver and cook goods for a dinner offered by another nobleman of the drama and potential husband for Ghirigoro's daughter.

No knowledge of the location of a performance of *La sporta* or the company of actors is easily found. Traces of this information exist in the dedicatory letter of the published drama, in which Gelli attempts to respond to his critics. He states that these criticisms were made during a household performance and to answer them he has read the comedy directly to Cosimo I. Thus, if it is true that *La sporta* was performed in a home, we could expect the spectator public to be prevalently Florentine and belonging to Gelli's own *artigiani-literati* class. Even if the spectators would have had intimate knowledge of the comedy's classical model, many of the characterizations of Polo the *zanaiuolo* stem from the observation of customs contemporary to Gelli and his peers.

Thus Polo the *zanaiuolo* appears in Act Four for three scenes. He initially satisfies the terms of employment that he lays out in his first line: he accompanies Berto in bringing food to Ghirigoro's home with the intent to prepare it there. We know that Berto is employed as a household servant of Lapo. Only Polo can be employed short-term to cook in Ghirigoro's home.<sup>82</sup> The scene establishes Polo's role and ranking among the characters of the comedy and in the Florentine community as represented on stage. First, Polo must be a recognized member of the community because it is apparent that Berto and Polo are acquaintances, if not friends. Moreover, within his first few lines, Polo seizes the opportunity to retell the mocking made of Ghirigoro at the market and the way he is known there:

POLO	Berto, non disse il tuo padrone, se io intesi bene, che noi portassimo a casa Ghirigoro de' Macci suo suocero queste cose e le cocessimo quivi?
BERTO	Sì, disse. Perché?
POLO	Egli ha tolto la figliuola per moglie, eh?
BERTO	Tu vedi, Polo.
POLO	Oh! non ha egli il modo, cotesto vecchio, a fare una cena da sé, senza che 'l genero vi abbia a pensare?
BERTO	Sì, credo io; ma egli è il più avaro uomo di Firenze.
POLO	Ah! Ah! Egli è quel vecchio che vien qualche volta in mercato con quella sportellina sotto che pare uno famiglio della grascia, e è tanto vantaggioso, che non truova ortolano né beccaio che gli voglia vendere, anzi tutti lo cacciano, faccendogli le baie?
BERTO	Sì, sì, cotesto è esso.
POLO	Oh! e' si chiama degli Omacci in mercato, non de' Macci. (IV.2)

From Polo's descriptions, the audience gains a mental image of Ghirigoro's out-of-scene adventures. The old man, with his little chest under his arm, is turned away by all vendors of vegetables and meat alike, who mock him for his greedy nature. Surely the scene provided comic relief as is common of mini-plots and side action, especially in the *topos* of interaction between a

---

<sup>82</sup> The *zanaiuolo*'s culinary trade and talent in the kitchen are made clear in these two scenes. Furthermore, Berto even calls Polo a "cook" in conversation with Brigida, Ghirigoro's servant, in scene three: "Piglia queste cose, e andate sù, *tu e questo cuoco*, e mettete in ordine la cena per le due ore" (4.3). Italics are mine. This use of *cuoco* would confirm what Tommaseo and Bellini report of Pietro Fanfani's mention of Francesco D'Ambra as using the two terms interchangeably.

*padrone* and a servile character. The fact that the deliveryman recounts these stories is striking because he does so as a member of the community. Not only is Polo the creator of satire and not the object, but he is also not the servant of a specific household deriding a master. This role, along with his use of the Florentine *idioma*, carves out a special place for him socially and will distinguish him from other *zanaiuoli*.

While getting settled in Ghirigoro's home, another fact distinguishes Polo from other *zanaiuoli*. In a conversation that reads like "kitchen small talk," Polo entertains the idea of larger career plans. Rather than remaining a deliveryman, he could own a shop at the market. He would achieve this goal through a scheme of suspect ethical character but he has seen others accomplish the ruse:

- BERTO ... E credo, Polo, che gli abbia de' danari; ché io ho conosciuti delli altri così fatti come è egli, che poi alla morte se n'è lor trovato qualche buon gruzzolo.
- POLO Se io piglio sua pratica, io voglio a ogni modo vedere se e' mi vuol prestare dieci ducati, per aprir anch'io un poco di treccone in mercato vecchio.
- BERTO Sì, tu hai trovato l'uomo! Io non credo che ti prestasse la fame, quando bene è se la potesse spiccar da dosso.
- POLO Tu la intendi male, Berto; ché questi simili si giungono più facilmente che gli altri, come si mostra loro qualche poco d'utile. E' ne viene un altro in quel mercato, che non vi è pizzicagnolo né treccone né beccaiolo quasi che non abbia danari di suo: e dànnogli ogni dì qualcosa, e 'l capitale sta fermo. Così vo' fare io con lui.<sup>83</sup> (IV.2)

The scheme plotted by Polo, and presumably others, is intriguing because of its timeless appeal in dealing with credit lenders: offer a little something every day and your capital remains in place. That the deliveryman would seize this opportunity to play on Ghirigoro's supposed foolishness should not shock us. After all, he is simply looking to take advantage of the situation

---

<sup>83</sup> Sanesi notes that *treccone*, as indicated by Tommaseo and Bellini, is a *rivendugliolo*, that is, a *rivenditore di cose commestibili di poco prezzo*. I would translate *treccone* as a small foods vendor, that is, a vendor of food items that have little value and small cost. This type of shop mirrors the sixteenth-century changes on Cookes Row in London that were lamented by John Stow, as referenced in Chapter One.

in order to gain a storefront for himself. In fact, the quality of *virtù* or astuteness valued by Early Modern Florentine society in literature and comedy is well documented.<sup>84</sup> What is important, instead, is his link to the market area and the seemingly mobile society in which the *zanaiuolo* lives. He can aspire to become a shop owner – presumably a more prosperous profession and of higher social standing – and he has seen others do it too.

Polo's direct interaction with Ghirigoro confirms that the deliveryman's social position is more flexible than one might expect. When Polo asks Brigida, Ghirigoro's servant, to hand him the *sporta* that he has brought with him to Ghirigoro's home, the old man overhears the conversation from the street and rushes in fearing that Polo has stolen his *sporta*. Entering the home, Ghirigoro threatens Polo with beatings and worse punishments. Polo eventually leaves the old man's home as directed, but he defends himself against a man of supposedly higher social standing and speaks of his excellent reputation in the community:

POLO	Mona colei, porgetemi un poco quella sporta.
GHIRIGORO	Ohimè! Che sent'io dire di sporta? egli aranno trovato e' mia danari. Ohimè! Ohimè! Io son spacciato! <sup>85</sup>
.....	
GHIRIGORO	Fuora, fuora, assassino, ladro, io ti farò impiccare. Sì che è sì va così per le case d'altri, eh? Di che cercavi tu sotto quella scala, che non vi sta se non spazzatura? Ribaldo, che credevi tu trovarvi?

---

<sup>84</sup> In their Introduction to *Five Comedies from the Italian Renaissance*, Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero state: "In some comedies [...] the characters who display the most virtù are, suggestively, not male members of the upper classes but servants like Fessenio, men of lesser standing on the make like Ligurio, and women like Lelia or Santilla. This may be simply because virtù was expected of upper-class men and thus was funnier and more interesting to imagine in its lack than in its presence among such individuals. In turn, the power of virtù is clearly more visible and telling when we see it working where one would normally not expect it: in servants, men of lesser standing, and young women [...]. Of course, the plot lines of these plays were often drawn from ancient comedies or Renaissance popular stories, both of which genres typically featured clever servants and the weak triumphing over the strong. But from their central role in these comedies it is clear that these themes had special resonance in the sixteenth century as well. The centrality of these themes in Renaissance comedy may also reflect deeper tensions in the period such as an increasing sense of powerlessness in the upper classes related to political and social changes associated with foreign domination and the rise of a more courtly society" (xxiv).

<sup>85</sup> Only at the end of these scenes do we find out without a doubt that Polo is talking about a *sporta* he has brought with him. The suspense of which *sporta* he is asking Brigida to hand him might have been entertaining or could be simply an oversight leading to ambiguity.

POLO                                   Cercava delle legne per cuocer quelle cose che io ho recate, che le manda il vostro genero.

GHIRIGORO                        Io non so che genero, io; anzi, cercavi d’imbolarmi qualcosa.

POLO                                   Ghirigoro, io non fui mai ladro, e vo tutto ‘l di per le case degli uomini da bene a cuocere, e sono conosciuto; e non mi avete da dir cotesto.

GHIRIGORO                        Tu m’hai inteso: lievamiti dinanzi, ché io ti spezzerò la testa, ladroncello.

.....

BERTO                                Ohimè, Ghirigoro, che vuol dire questo?

GHIRIGORO                        Come, che vuol dire? Costui che m’ha mandata tutta la casa sozzopra.

BERTO                                Oh! ei ve l’ha mandato a cuocere Lapo vostro, per farvi onore.

.....

GHIRIGORO                        Io t’ho detto. Io ho una serva che sa fare da sé. Andatevi tutt’a dua con Dio ...

POLO                                Lasciatemi almen tornar in casa per la mia zana e per la mia sporta.

GHIRIGORO                        Et anche questo non farò. Pàrti ch’ei l’avesse pensata? Aspettami qui, ché te le arrecherò io.

BERTO                                Polo, che ti par di questo vecchio? Riescet’egli come io ti dissi?

POLO                                Io, per me, non viddi mai il più arrabbiato. E me ne par esser ito bene, che non mi ha rotto la testa. (IV.5)

Polo remains unharmed by the anger and speech of Ghirigoro and is defended by his friend, Berto. In the end, Polo’s market-stall scheme sorely fails as he is booted from Ghirigoro’s home, but he is not a thief and will not be treated as one. In *La sporta*, the *zanaiuolo* appears to be a free agent of Florentine society, equipped with aspirations and culinary talent.

Gelli’s second comedy is *Lo errore*. We know that it was performed by the Compagnia de’ Fantastici in Florence in 1555 at a dinner offered by Roberto di Filippo Pandolfini. A performance by the Fantastici is announced in the prologue as are the similarities to Machiavelli’s *Clizia*: an older man, Gherardo, has fallen in love with a younger woman, Ginevra, wife of Averardo Tieri. In order to cover up his “error” he must facilitate a match between his son and the woman’s daughter. In *Lo errore* the *zanaiuolo* is met on the street by Gherardo at the beginning of Act three. Unlike *La sporta*’s Polo, this deliveryman remains nameless. He is charged with bringing alimentary goods from the market to Gherardo’s home and delivering a

message to the old man's wife about preparing lunch. In this case, the conversation between Gherardo and the deliveryman develops from concerns about the amount of payment to patterns of insult and injury to the profession:

ZANAIUOLO            Aggio facenna.  
 GHERADO                E dove vai?  
 ZANAIUOLO            In Via Pentolini.  
 GHERADO                Oh! odi: tu puoi fare un viaggio e due servigi.  
 ZANAIUOLO            E come? Di' sù.  
 GHERADO                Posa anche queste cose in casa mia, ché sto quivi in quelle case nuove da Santo Ambruogio  
 ZANAIUOLO            Orsù, mette qua.  
 GHERADO                Sai tu il nome mio?  
 ZANAIUOLO            Eh! Io ti conosco ben, sì, ché ti veddi l'altra sera quando ero a cuocere in casa Binno Bostichi  
 GHERADO                Ah, sì, sì, Oh! tien qui; va' via.  
 ZANAIUOLO            E che vuoi tu che faccia d'un quattrino?  
 GHERADO                E che vuoi tu? Che io ti dia una dote, che non rallunghi venti passi la via?  
 ZANAIUOLO            Dammi tre quattrini, se vuoi che ci vada; se no, non ci voglio annare.  
 GHERADO                Io non me ne meraviglio, poi che tu di' che *sei un di quel che vanno a cuocere*.  
 ZANAIUOLO            E che facciamo *noi altri che anniamo a cuocere?*  
(III.1, italics mine)

Gherardo confirms a *zanaiuolo*'s association with carrying and cooking food when he says "I'm not surprised, because you say you are one of those who go to cook." When prodded, he describes negatively the behaviors of those who practice that trade:

GHERADO                Io non me ne meraviglio, poi che tu di' che sei *un di quel che vanno a cuocere*.  
 ZANAIUOLO            E che facciamo *noi altri che anniamo a cuocere?*  
 GHERADO                Cavate tanto, la prima cosa, da il pollaiolo, da il pizzicagnolo, da il treccone, e da tutti quegli da chi voi fate comperare le cose; e, d' poi, rubate tanto, oltre lo aver trovato che i colli de' polli e le spezierie che avanzano hanno a essere vostre, nelle case ove voi entrate, che voi non stimate poi questi guadagnuzzi d'un quattrino.  
 ZANAIUOLO            Oh! ve' bella cosa che ha trovato questo vecchio.  
 GHERADO                E io ti direi delle altre cose che tu non pensi che io sappia; ché vi beete in cucina, quando voi non siate veduti, insino alla peverada de' capponi, come si fa propriamente l'acqua d'orzo.

ZANAIUOLO  
 GHERADO

Te dirò; questo si fa per star sano.  
 E tu vedi bene che voi altri che andate a cuocere avete certe carni  
 fini e certi visi rossi che voi parete fanciulle lisciate; e non siate  
 scuri, come questi altri che non attendono se non a far servigi.  
 (III.1, italics mine)

Initially the *zanaiuolo* responds in a sarcastic manner to the accusations of Gherardo, noting predictably his age and the grand novelty of what the gentleman has said. The criticisms of the profession read as quite funny even today. Firstly, they take a lot – evidently unjustly – from all manner of market stall owners: *pollaiolo*, *pizzicagnolo*, *treppone*, and more. Secondly, they steal. Not only do they pretend that leftover meats and spices belong to them, but they also appropriate other items from their employers’ kitchens. With such habits of pilfering through kitchens – similar to that of the ancient Greek *mageiros* – the *zanaiuolo* then dares to lament that he should be paid a larger sum. Next, Gherardo arrives at a stereotype of kitchen works that we have seen applied to the cooks in Chapter Two: *zanaiuoli* drink on the job. When Gherardo mentions this, the nameless deliveryman defends the tradition of drinking as healthy. Finally at the allusive mention of a deliveryman’s complexion, red face, and delicate appearance – possibly caused by the drinking, but there is clearly something more to the comment – the *zanaiuolo* quickly ends the conversation. He resigns to accept whatever payment Gherardo sees fit:

ZANAIUOLO

Deh! Da’ qua, per l’amor de Dio, quello che vuoi, ché non resteresti mai de dire.

GHERADO

Te’, eccoti due quattrini, ché io non vorrei però che tu penassi che io stessi con un quattrino; ma io ho voluto che tu vegga che io vi conosco.

ZANAIUOLO

Vuo’ che faccia altro?

GHERADO

Di’ loro che ordinino da desinare, ché io tornerò ora. (III.1)

As the deliveryman walks the streets of Florence to perform his charge, he laments the lengthy conversation necessary to ensure employment: “Oh! ve’ quante parole ha fatto questo vecchio per un quattrino. Io aggio disposto sei volte di non far loro servigi; e poi non me ne saccio

guardare, che gli venga lo cancaro. Ma eccomi a casa” (3.1). He arrives at Gherardo’s home, delivering briefly and efficiently the goods and message of his employer. His service to the comedy is complete.

The *zanaiuolo* of *Lo errore* possesses a spirited character similar to Polo’s of Gelli’s *La sporta*. His vibrant exchange with Gherardo suggests the liberty and entrepreneurship of someone briefly employed by an upper class gentleman. We might expect far more deference from an indentured servant. Indeed not only is he emancipated from the household and authority of one *padrone* and takes temporary work in a casual street encounter, he is able to negotiate payment. He chooses to complete the service for less than he had requested. The conclusion to the scene is most likely motivated by expediency; it should not suggest that the deliveryman could not have obtained the sum that he had asked. Instead, the deliveryman’s free license to discuss terms of service signifies significant character development with respect to generic *facchini* and some mobility on the social scale.

In the end, while maintaining a more flexible social position with respect to a stylized servant, the deliveryman is not safe from the criticism of Gherardo. Alongside stereotypes of kitchen workers, the striking new characteristic of this nameless *zanaiuolo* is his markedly Southern dialect. He states: “Eh! Io ti conosco ben, sì, ché ti veddi l’altra sera quando ero a cuocere in casa Binno Bostichi. . . . Dammi tre quattrini, se vuoi che ci vada; se no, non ci voglio annare” (3.1). Chiara Cassiani, a Gelli scholar, suggests that the dialect in question is Neapolitan: “nell’*Errore* viene introdotto anche il dialetto napoletano di uno *zanaiuolo* che discute con Gherardo “(254 n.46). She contends that he speaks in Neapolitan by citing “io aggio disposto sei volte di non far loro servigi; e poi non me ne saccio guardare, che gli venga lo cancaro” (3.1). ). I agree with Cassiani that this deliveryman is surely from the Southern half of the peninsula



because *saccio*, *aggio*, *annare* bespeak a southern vernacular, including the Neapolitan. Yet, with no further evidence to confirm the *zanaiuolo*'s speech as exclusively Neapolitan, I do not believe we can exclude other Southern dialects.

What is clear in this instance, thirteen years after Gelli's first comedy, is that the traits of the *zanaiuolo* are changing. In the course of the act, he is berated for attributes and customs linked to an entire profession and to culinary trades more broadly. He is known to take things without permission from the kitchens in which he works; he drinks on the job. *Lo zanaiuolo* is no longer the author of ridicule, but the object of derision. He is scorned by the amorous *senex* of *Lo errore* who is usually the most ridiculed of characters in the history of comedy.<sup>86</sup> In this way, the deliveryman assumes a lower position on the social ladder of the comedy and we learn of apparent regionalization.

In addition to laying out the stereotypes of deliverymen, the interaction of Gherardo and the *zanaiuolo* provides the reader or spectator with information about the changing cityscape of Florence. For one of the first times in Florentine comedy, the interlocutors make enough references to actual town spaces that we are able to map the area where this scene is set. If we follow this spatial aspect of the encounter, we hear from Gherardo that he lives in the newly constructed homes in Sant' Ambrogio. Then we notice that the deliveryman is headed toward Via Pentolini. From Gherardo's remark that the *zana* can double his service in one trip, their

---

<sup>86</sup> Ridicule towards the amorous *senex* belongs to the normative standards of sixteenth-century comedy as it did in Greek and Roman comedy as well. This fact can be partially explained by the morally charged nature of ideas on the family and society in conventional comedy. An elderly man who does not know his personal limits and demonstrates himself unwise by attempting to court, or bed, a much younger woman is often found belittled by the end of the plot. Traditionally ridicule follows the amorous *senex*. So common is the derision of the amorous *senex* that even in the example of Machiavelli's personal identification with the amorous *senex*, as is the case when he penned his comedy *La Clizia*, the out-of-place man is quite harshly reprimanded at the comedy's end. That he has the upper hand in *Lo errore* with a fellow class member is indicative of the deliveryman's social class.

conversation must be somewhere that allows him to frequent both places.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, previous use of Gelli's comedies as historical and objective documents is noted in De Gaetano's study: "customs and institutions of his environment [are represented] by showing both sides of the coin ... [this] is confirmed by the fact that his observations have been used as documents for sociological studies on the Italian family in the sixteenth century, for example, in the works of Nino Tamassia" (329). Regardless of how extensively or faithfully we would like to analyze the intersection of factual urban development and its representation on stage, there is little doubt that the intimate municipal feeling of Gelli's comedy is a conscious choice made by the author. Chiara Cassani comments on the spontaneity of street encounters and their effect on the genre in this way: "Il fatto che i personaggi si incontrino continuamente per la via, vicino alle loro abitazioni, accresce la freschezza e la spontaneità della messa in scena [...] Colpisce anche la precisione delle determinazioni ambientali che richiamano i luoghi a lui più familiari, le chiese e le strade di Firenze [...]" (254). The deliveryman's encounters are the catalyst for dynamism and spontaneity in their representation of the city and their comic theater.

---

<sup>87</sup> Today Via Pentolini is the section of Via de' Macci between Piazza Sant' Ambrogio and via Ghibellini. It had taken the name Pentolini because of an *osteria* famous for a door to which small pots (*pentolini*) had been attached. It's indicated that these small pots were used by the *oste* to sell mustard. The section of the street between Via dell' Agnolo and Piazza Sant' Ambrogio remained Via Pentolini at least through 1731 when a Florentine map drawn by Ferdinando Ruggieri was published while the section between Via dell' Agnolo and Via San Giuseppe had taken on the name Via de' Macci (*La grande guida delle strade di Firenze* 355). Additionally, there's overlap of the surname Macci in that area of the city in Gelli's plays. The foolish *senex* from *La sporta* is Ghirigoro de' Macci. Florentine records indicate that the Macci family fell from grace so to speak and had their houses and towers confiscated by the Republic at which time they moved to the area of Via Pentolini and Via Malborghetto (*Grande guida* 355). The latter was named purposefully for the presence of miserable homes of the poorest population of the city. Given that Ghirigoro is not wealthy (his fear of losing his small fortune is extreme) and that he is ridiculed, it wouldn't be unlikely in my opinion that the spectators of the comedy, likely only academy members, had this area of the city in mind. At a minimum I believe that the relationships between Florentine cultural history and Gelli's comedies are endless and proof of his zealous attention to *theatrum mundi* lies within these relationships.

### **Giovan Maria Cecchi's *L'ammalata***

Giovan Maria Cecchi is certainly the most prolific of mid-sixteenth century Florentine playwrights and the most celebrated dramatist of the Florentine Academy. In public life, he exercised the profession of notary, was involved in the wool trade, and occupied the important public offices of proconsul and Chancellor of the Maestri di Contratto. As an author, Cecchi experimented in many genres: prose, treatise, poetry, and theater. With over fifty theatrical works, including comedy, intermezzi, sacred drama and farce, Cecchi's dramatic production was tireless. The playwright's twenty-one comedies – some lost today – consistently refashion and infuse tried-and-true classical and Renaissance models with sparks of innovation; his masterpiece is the renowned *Assiuolo*. Although they contain mirror images of Florentine life, several of Cecchi's comedies have remained unpublished and unedited for centuries. Such is the case of *L'ammalata* of which there is no record of performance or printing before 1855. Like the other members of the Florentine Academy, Cecchi included present-day circumstances in the plots and settings of his comedies, allowing them to be analyzed for the social realities of the time. Franco Fido has commented on Cecchi's innovation in *L'Assiuolo* by drawing attention to his particular contribution via language, which signals departure from his models. Whereas others – Machiavelli and il Lasca – have defended their stylized cast yet modern comical language in their prologues for the purpose of *diletto* or talent, Fido claims that “for the bourgeois and religious Cecchi, author of many dramas for nuns and high-school teenagers, the exceptionally colorful language of *L'Assiuolo* needs a specific justification, and this is found in a closer, realistic approach to everyday life, presented as a consequence of, and a compensation for, giving up the traditional devices and stylizations” (89).

*L'ammalata* is thus another example of Florentine comedy that communicates urban reality through the encounter of a *zanaiuolo*. In 4.4, a deliveryman appears onstage carrying a letter. The task is similar to that of the unnamed *zanaiuolo* of Francesco D'Ambra's *I Bernardi* that we will see in the next section, but Cecchi's deliveryman does not fail to mention his talent in the kitchen. The *zanaiuolo* also provides his name – Gian Pitto – and where one can easily find him – *il mercato vecchio* – should his services be needed in the future. The one scene interaction between Gian Pitto and Alesso, a nobleman, remains civil, but we will notice immediately Gian Pitto's southern vernacular. We also notice that Gian Pitto orients himself with relative ease in the conversation, and that this representation is reminiscent of Gelli's first *zanaiuolo*, Polo. No negative stereotypes associated with the *zanaiuolo* of *Lo errore* are mentioned, notwithstanding how we may interpret his dialect. Gian Pitto enquires about a servant named il Volpe and a conversation ensues:

ZANAIUOLO	Buon iorno a Vostra Sinnoria. Sta qui Un servidor che s'annomanna il Volpe?
ALESSO	Sì, sta. Che cosa volevi da lui?
ZANAIUOLO	Darli quista. Ello in casa, che tu sacci?
ALESSO	Non c'è, no.
ZANAIUOLO	I' torneraggio.
ALESSO	Mostra qua: Da chi vien?
ZANAIUOLO	Non lo saccio, messer, ma La deggio dar in mano a isso.
ALESSO	Dà Qua, ché è mio famiglio; che saranno Imbasciate di donne.
ZANAIUOLO	Sempre quanno Lo zana porta lettere, ti pienzi Che sieno polli?
ALESSO	Oh! che gli è il vostro solito.
ZANAIUOLO	Per guadagnare io porterei imbasciate Allo diabol.
ALESSO	Dà qua, ch'io ti farò Servigio.
ZANAIUOLO	Tu me toglì un'altra gita.

	Ma famme, ve', di grazia buon servizio.
ALESSO	Sì, sì.
ZANAIUOLO	Me ne risposo, vedi, sopra De te. Vuo' tu accomandarme niente?
ALESSO	Vatti con Dio.
ZANAIUOLO	O messer, se tu avessi A far convito, oh! i' son valente coco, Potta de santa mamma mia! io saccio Far buon arrosti, pasticci ...
ALESSO	Sta bene; Io t'arò a mente.
ZANAIUOLO	Se tu hai bisogno, Vien pur là in Mercato, e si domanna Gian Pitto.
ALESSO	Or via.
ZANAIUOLO	Così me chiamo. Addio: Mi raccomanno. (IV.4)

The *zanaiuolo*'s utterances in this scene confirm his usual aptitude and employment in the kitchen, and he even suggests where he can be found, at the market. His boasting and loquaciousness recall a Greek *mageiros* more than any Roman counterpart. We will recall that the *mageiroi* often considered themselves highly skilled and exasperated their conversational partners in Athenaeus. A further connection to the kitchen might be expressed in the line "ti pienza/che siano polli?" Gaetano Milanesi suggests an idiomatic meaning for the deliveryman's question would characterize the *zanaiuolo* negatively. Milanesi states that this question can be intended as "fare il ruffiano" (*to be a ruffian*). We could imagine a scenario in which the deliveryman would be a ruffian and the *Grande Dizionario dell'Italiano* mentions that the *zanaiuolo* can be identified as such in "Proprietà di mercato vecchio" by Antonio Pucci. By Pucci, he is mentioned alongside other undesirables: "E meretrici vi sono e ruffian / battifancelli, zanaiuoli e gaioffi / e i tignosi e scabbiosi cattani". However, I argue that this line may not be so easy to interpret. *Lo zanaiuolo* is commonly encountered carrying food items, particularly those that he intends to cook in the home. And scenes with deliverymen from other comedies indicate

that a literal association of *zanaiuoli* with chicken (*polli*) also exists; we recall the unnamed deliveryman of *Lo errore* who had this connection to *pollaiolo*.

The market in question in *L'ammalata* is surely the *mercato vecchio*, occupied today by the Piazza della Repubblica at the heart of Florence's historic center. In Gelli's *La sporta* Polo also mentions the *mercato* as the space in which he would open his *bottega da treccone* or become a *pizzicagnolo*. It is also where Ghirigoro would attempt to negotiate with food vendors and be laughed away. Polo's narration of Ghirigoro's laughable encounters with food vendors and his own daydream of opening a *bottega* depict a lively space of exchange, and Gian Pitto's pitch for his services leads a reader to believe that he, alongside other *zanaiuoli*, congregate at the *mercato vecchio* awaiting short-term labor, delivering goods and post or soliciting the opportunity to prepare meals in bourgeois homes. As is the case with Gelli's *Lo errore* in which the deliveryman and his interlocutor depict Florence through mention of Sant' Ambrogio and Via dei Pentolini, Cecchi's *L'ammalata* pinpoints the old market as a space of encounter and contractual day labor in mid sixteenth-century Florence.

### **Francesco D'Ambra's *I Bernardi* and other mentions of *zanaiuoli***

Another prevalent Florentine Academy member is Francesco D'Ambra who penned *I Bernardi* in verse between 1547 and 1548. Very little is known of his private life, but his comedies seem to have received more attention over the centuries than Gelli's; D'Ambra's *I Bernardi* has been included in Irene Sanesi's *Commedie del Cinquecento*.<sup>88</sup> As a member of the Academy, he obtained positions of censor and consul, and the main focus of his commentaries was Petrarchan sonnets. His comic theater satisfies many of the conventions and themes of the

---

<sup>88</sup> To be fair, Sanesi completed an edition of Gelli's works printed by UTET in 1952 and reprinted in 1968. However, it does seem odd that D'Ambra would be included in a survey of sixteenth-century comedy and Gelli would remain unmentioned.

genre to a large extent because it imitates so heavily classical comedy and Ariosto's theater. Nevertheless, *I Bernardi* contains one scene in which a deliveryman and two noblemen dialogue. Moreover, there are many references to the Florentine urban landscape throughout the comedy. Together these elements confirm that contemporary reality inspires D'Ambra.

In *I Bernardi*, the *zanaiuolo* arrives onstage in Act Two and interacts with two elder noblemen of the comedy, Cambio and Fazio. The *zanaiuolo*'s purpose in the plot is to deliver a letter to the home of Cambio. The letter goes undelivered and the plot unchanged by this deliveryman's sole scene. Furthermore, this comedy is the only one in which the *zanaiuolo* is not a culinary expert and is never charged with delivery of foodstuffs. However, he is differentiated from two other *facchini* (porters) in the character list of the published play, eliminating any doubt that he is merely a *facchino*, a figure in Renaissance society who commonly does contractual work transporting heavy or bulky items. Although he is not a mere *facchino*, the *zanaiuolo*'s lack of connection to foodstuffs still presents an anomaly in Florentine Academy comedies. In this context, the importance of defining the term as a deliveryman who sometimes cooks, and not a cook who sometimes delivers, is more apparent.

In the Second Act, D'Ambra's nameless deliveryman approaches the two men in the streets to ask for directions. It so happens that Cambio, one of the two men, is the person to whose home the letter is addressed. Unfortunately, the *zanaiuolo* does not seem to understand this fact and D'Ambra characterizes him as fairly simple-minded and as a brute:

ZANAIUOLO            Non saccio s'e' disse, lo quarto uscio essere,  
                             o 'l terzo quel, dove ho bussare: co' diavolo  
                             Si domanna costui, che vi abita?  
                             Me l'ho scordato, e non saccio com'abbia  
                             A saperlo; ma gli è scritto in la lettera:  
                             Me lo diranno questi gentiluomini. --  
                             Messer, tien un po' qui, leggi di grazia;  
                             E, dove sta costui, saccimi dicere. (II.7)

The way in which the worker mumbles to himself and seems to fumble around at the beginning of the scene announce his feeble mental capacity. It is further demonstrated when he refuses to leave the letter with Cambio, resolutely desiring to leave it with a female servant (*una fante*) as was his charge:

FAZIO	Non è necessario Bussare; non potevi meglio abbatterti; Questo è appunto colui, che tu cerchi.
ZANAIUOLO	No no, Diavolo; dammi per qua in man la lettera Che l'ho a lasciare ad altri. Che ne saccio io? a una fante debbola Lasciare, non a uno uomo; or'intennimi Tu? (II.7)

When the men attempt to forcefully take the letter from his hands, he responds in threats and violence:

CAMBIO	Deh vanne via di grazie, e spacciati!
ZANAIUOLO	Non me ne voglio annar; dammi la lettera Qua, ed andronne. Che male mi puoi far? (minacciando)
CAMBIO	(ritraendosi) Fazio, soccorrimi, Che mi vuole sforzar. (II.7)

Like his peers in Gelli's *Lo errore* and Cecchi's *L'ammalata*, the deliveryman in *I Bernardi* speaks in an unmarked Southern dialect. "Non saccio s'e' disse, lo quarto uscio essere, o 'l terzo quel, dove ho bussare: co' diavolo, Si domanna costui, che vi abita?" is ample evidence of a southern vernacular. The fact that more than one deliveryman has been presented with the linguistic characteristics of a Southern vernacular may indicate that status as a *forestiero*/foreigner is also influencing the *zanaiuolo*'s place in Florentine society. The only information we have about an out-of-town cook is the reference to Dalio in Ariosto's *I suppositi*. The Ferrarese man contends that Dalio is, or must not be, from Ferrara because his *idioma* is not



of that place. However, the editions of *I suppositi* available today do not make it clear where Dalio is from according to his language.

In the 1562 census data only one *zanaiuolo* is reported as *forestiero* and he is reported to be from Romagna. Further information may be contained in the Decime tax records of Florence under Cosimo I, but deliverymen are difficult to locate in tax records. This is primarily because of a trait they share with cooks of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: they are remembered only by their first names. We can recall the mention of the cook of the Este family, Andrea, in Chapter One. It is, of course, more natural that a cook or a deliveryman only be given a first name in a comedy, yet, in this case, it also seems to mirror contemporary custom. If *zanaiuoli* are from the South, we have only Gelli, Cecchi, and D'Ambra's comedies as readily accessible proof. Along these same lines, it is interesting to note as previously mentioned in Chapter One that both in ancient Greece and Rome cooks and cuisine from Sicily were highly praised and sought for positions in private homes.

Returning to *I Bernardi*, the deliveryman's simple-minded and aggressive nature clearly implies that the *zanaiuolo* is one of the least respected members of the cast. Brutish behavior would generally be enough to designate a lowly spot on the social ladder for a culinary worker such as the deliveryman or the cook. This characterization is quite similar to that of Dalio in Ariosto's *I suppositi*. It may not be by chance that D'Ambra was greatly inspired by, and imitated often, Ariosto's theatrical corpus. In this case, both Dalio and the unnamed *zanaiuolo* are unable to grasp the truth and facts of the situation and express themselves violently for a futile cause. It was presented more than once in *I suppositi* that Dalio could not be charged with any large or important task, and so the *zanaiuolo* of *I Bernardi* cannot even deliver this letter. Of the culinary professionals analyzed in this study, these two are the least esteemed.

One last brief example can be found in Anton Francesco Grazzini (Il Lasca)'s *La spiritata* (1560). Although the *zanaiuolo* does appear onstage, the reference to his cooking expresses his talent in the kitchen. Grazzini is another very well-known member of the Florentine Academy and of intellectual life in mid-sixteenth-century Florence. He remained an important cultural figure in society and, as most accounts describe, a fierce rival of Gelli.<sup>89</sup> Grazzini penned works in many genres, as was common for the academy members. The author's comedies are well remembered, as is his poetry and his work *Le cene*, a series of *novelle* fashioned after the *Decameron*, but with a culinary twist.

His comedy referencing a *zanaiuolo*, *La spiritata*, is one of seven in his production. In the last scene of Act Four, two noblemen speak with Guagniele, a servant. Guagniele insists that the men, Giulio and Amerigo, eat breakfast before departing. He persuades them to have something to eat when he states that the food is "the most delicate in the world" and that "lo zanaiuolo vale oro," that is, "the *zanaiuolo* is worth gold." Here, the nameless and speechless *zanaiuolo* is valued exclusively for his abilities in the kitchen with no reference made to transporting goods. Grazzini's inclusion of a deliveryman is significant because it is completely gratuitous. There is no clear reason how a *zanaiuolo* or this scene would act as a catalyst in the plot. Yet it is properly this lack of necessity that speaks to the deliveryman's common presence in the fabric of Florentine society.

Summarizing the comedies analyzed in this chapter thus far, there is only one occurrence in which a *zanaiuolo* is not associated with the kitchen and delivery of foodstuffs (D'Ambra's *I*

---

<sup>89</sup> Grazzini accused Gelli of plagiarism three times in his *Rime*, including plagiarism of Machiavelli: one, "che fè già sì gran furto al Machiavelli," two, "in poesia solenne ladro," and a third time by accusing Benedetto Varchi of lack of creativity in his *La suocera* and considering him made of the same cloth as Gelli. Many scholars, including Sanesi, treat this topic; Sanesi, in his edition of Gelli's works for UTET. The rift between Grazzini and Gelli seems profound and irreparable in some studies; M. Plaisance in *Culture et politique à Florence* states that even though Il Lasca was a founding member of the Accademia degli Umidi he was progressively marginalized and cast out in 1547, when the Accademia fiorentina assumed the protection of Cosimo I, and only when Gelli had died in 1566 was Grazzini reintegrated into the community (194).

*Bernardi*). In every other comedy he is a culinary worker who may also deliver letters (Gelli's *La sporta* and *Lo errore*, Cecchi's *L'ammalata*, Grazzini's *La spiritata*). Each playwright characterizes the deliveryman as a foreigner, specifically of Southern origin, at least once and twice the profession is accused of immoral behavior and ill temperament.

### **The Place of *Zanaiuoli* and Other Urban Culinary Professionals in Comedy and the Urban Environment**

From the close analysis of Gelli, D'Ambra, and Cecchi, the appearance of the *zanaiuolo* signally suggests the playwrights' desire to mirror contemporary society and to widen the coterie of cast members with whom the audience could identify its surroundings. A realistic portrayal of the community – and language – in an appeal to audiences is not rare. We know well from prologues that our playwrights placed great emphasis on the Ciceronian creed (*comeodia est imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis*). The idea of special resonance or willful playfulness with the social and political tensions of the period is often a basic tenet of scholarship on Italian Renaissance comedy. In their introduction to *Five Comedies of the Italian Renaissance*, Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero comment further on the importance of imagining one's everyday (upper middle class) reality in comedy:

They [Renaissance comedies] lived on in the imagination of the upper-class audiences who saw them, because they were so deeply rooted in the everyday realities, humor, and the tensions of their world. They also lived on in that they were not merely played out on the stage, they were replayed as literature in published form – often reworked, embellished with yet cleverer wordplay and more complex humor – and were read widely thanks to new, cheaper forms of printing that made such material widely available. And they lived on in the form of endlessly retold tales and jokes, converted back to the oral tradition from which many of them had originally come. (xii)

This observation hones in on the fact that the premise of comedic production for playwrights such as Gelli and his peers includes the realistic characterization of contemporary society, as Franco Fido has suggested. The choice of food purveyors, then, provides the opportunity to

furnish clever and comical dialogue across social classes and advances ordinary motifs as dignified for academy stages.

Gelli and his works serve as both example and model of the faithful representation of Renaissance Florence and of the popularizing ideology of the Florentine Academy. In Paul Oskar Kristeller's preface to De Gaetano's *Giambattista Gelli and the Florentine Academy: The Rebellion against Latin*, Kristeller agrees with his pupil's conclusion that Gelli and the Florentine Academy's success aided in the "popularization of public instruction for a wider public of curious and educated laymen" (vii-viii). Gelli's ideas to propagate education through use of the Tuscan vernacular and the academy's interest in society and education are the focus of De Gaetano's study. Ireneo Sanesi, too, centers in on the fate and dignity of the *volgare* as well as the role of the intellectual in his appraisal of Gelli's work. In an edition of Gelli's theater, the scholar attests:

[Gelli] volle, cioè, dimostrare con la maggior parte dei suoi scritti ai pertinaci oppositori della nostra lingua che l'italiano è adattatissimo alla trattazione di tutte le discipline, storiche, filologiche, filosofiche, scientifiche, e che in italiano, né più né meno che in latino, si possono esprimere alti e profondi e fin anche astrusi concetti: sostenendo, al tempo stesso (e attuando in forma concreta questa sua convinzione) che gli uomini sapienti non devono chiudersi orgogliosamente nella ròcca solitaria della loro dottrina ma devono, anzi, liberalmente comunicarla a quel maggior numero di persone che sia loro possibile. (*Opere* 12-13)

In the footsteps of Renaissance comedy fathers like Machiavelli, the dimensions of Gelli, Cecchi, and D'Ambra's comedies are municipally-focused with fresh and communicative language.<sup>90</sup> In fact, Gelli's description of language in his *Ragionamento sopra le difficoltà del mettere in regole la nostra lingua* speaks to his belief in the continual mutability of all things in this world, including *la lingua*: "ella è viva, e va all'insù." Such attention to the detailed *present* of language

---

<sup>90</sup> It seems Gelli had opportunity to attend the meetings at the Orti Oricellari where he would have listened to the debates on the *volgare*. As such he remained faithful to the suggestion of Machiavelli for the cultural rebirth of Florence.

parallels the dedication to the ever-changing faces of social composition and furthers the popularizing spirit of the dramas in question.

In addition, Cassiani has recently looked at Gelli's dialogic corpus and has found within it what she calls a cultural project of dialogue. She suggests that Gelli's works point to a philosophy of "things" in an all-inclusive community:

Gelli intende proporre una filosofia di "cose" all'interno di una comunità dove "alto" e "basso", in senso sociale e culturale, non siano separati e possono dialogare... anche le commedie si rilevano parte integrante dell'unitario progetto politico e culturale di Gelli, incentrato sulla costruzione di un'etica civile nella quale la dimensione privata e quella pubblica si fondono armonicamente. (250-1)

In this company, I contend that we can make sense of Gelli's and the Florentine Academy's comedies as a part of the cultural project not only because of a preference for civil morality, as Cassani suggests, but more importantly through the staging of food purveyors. The interaction of *zanaiuoli* in more or less spontaneous street/piazza scenes brings about the physical and verbal dialogues of "high" and "low" members of society in dialogues that render the two factions less distinguishable. It is in this way that deliverymen cause multiple strata of society to communicate and coexist.

Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero confirm that Renaissance comedy takes an all-inclusive perspective on its society: "Beyond theater, beyond literature, beyond the distinctions of high and low, elite and common, licit and illicit, many of these comedies played out of stage and played imaginatively with the Renaissance itself (xii)". The two scholars have in mind the fact that many Renaissance comedies originate in quotidian humor, actuality, and anxieties. The comedies coming out of the Florentine Academy take this action a step further because they are embedded so deeply and precisely in one city's cultural make-up that they furnish local professionals not identifiable on a national stage. Like most cast members, *zanaiuoli* reflect

aspects of the consciousness of the peninsula, but they also allow for the discovery of the peculiarities of specific societies' relationships between urban citizens and their foods.

As these professions emerge onstage, the local feel of the vernacular aids the claim that the representation of the city is realistic and helps inform when the *zanaiuolo* is an outsider or a foreigner. Gelli's style of prose works in relation to his cultural project. De Gaetano has noticed this too:

He [Gelli] shows a thorough mastery of the Florentine tongue and a keen sensitivity for its usage... Few write with such spontaneity and freshness, such local flavor, such typical Florentine wit, and sense of humor. His writings are documents of the Florentine used by educated people of his time and are considered as some of the best prose of the Renaissance. His perception of linguistic changes and distinction was keen in differences of speech and intercommunal variation. (47)<sup>91</sup>

As previously mentioned, we learn from De Gaetano that Gelli's comedies have even been used as case studies in the works of Nino Tamassia, given the objectivity with which he portrays customs and institutions of his environment (329). Franco Fido suggests further that "if, as we have seen, the Renaissance playwright does not feel responsible for the structure or "order" of comedy, established once for all by the Latins and handed down to him through Ariosto or Bibbiena, he does know that in language lies his peculiar contribution to theater [...]" (89). In the case of Gelli and the Florentine Academy, the attentiveness to language and the presence of food purveyors together further a playwright's innovation. Our comedies' features – the presence of food purveyors, local and foreign linguistic flavor, and contemporary references to urban space – communicate the playwrights' strong advocacy for the vernacular's competence.

One could argue that the Academy employed two parallel strategies: one that focuses on accessible and contemporary language to identify society with the stage, and the other that uses the particulars of the stage, cast, and setting to reinforce the capacity of that accessible language.

---

<sup>91</sup> Pirandello certainly feels similarly. He comments in *Sull'umorismo* that if Gelli would have been born English and everyone would have read his works, the Italian sense of humor would be a household name.

With Gelli at its charge, the Florentine Academy's cultural production opened the doors between what takes place in comedy and in civic life, how the public comprehends through language and identifies its community. What *zanaiuoli* do onstage and in street encounters, this type of Florentine comedy attempts to do for public instruction: blurring boundaries between social classes. These two tendencies, one in drama, one in communal intellectual life, confirm the accessibility of popular (culinary) culture and the purposeful inclusion of middle class habits and authentic lower class individual, at times in addition to, at times in place of, stereotypical, classically modeled characters such as servants and *facchini*.

If we return to Cassoni's idea of cultural projects that inform the spontaneous street/piazza scenes of physical and verbal dialogues of "high" and "low" members of society, the *zanaiuolo* is not the only food purveyor to accomplish this on stage in sixteenth-century Tuscany. *Osti* (innkeepers) are also present in the highly celebrated comedy *Gl'ingannati* composed by the Accademia degli Intronati, and a brief look at their roles helps solidify the arguments concerning the movers and marketers of the kitchen. The Accademia degli Intronati was composed of aristocratic intellectuals and *litterati*, who exercised strong cultural influence in Siena and eventually abroad.<sup>92</sup> They functioned like most academies of the day, with interests in Tuscan and Greco-Roman poetry and comedy as a part of a cultural agenda to rehabilitate the *volgare* after a century-long dominance of Latin use by the humanists (McClure 30). Among the

---

<sup>92</sup> The Intronati's involvement in the direction of theater should not be underestimated. The academy was of the utmost importance in developing trends in continental European drama. Particularly in the development of romantic comedy, their prominent role is unquestioned. As an example of this, Louise George Clubb cites Girolamo Ruscelli's *Delle comedie elette* in which the Intronati occupy three of five spots as the models of the comic theater genre (2). As Louise George Clubb suggests, they were the natural heirs of the masters of erudite comedy and they used this role to build something also for themselves. "The Intronati approached the emergent form of *commedia erudita* as the generation in line to inherit the achievements of Bibbiena, Machiavelli, and Ariosto" (51). Louise George Clubb's point with this claim is another. She argues that the Intronati as heirs apparent of *commedia erudita* have also appropriated material from the pre-Rozzi artisans of Siena and Pollastra to further create/ignite the genre of romantic comedy. The extensively researched commonalities and differences with the Rozzi and pre-Rozzi, who maintained a more popular position, serve to show how the Intronati distinguished themselves as cultivated (*Pollastra* 4).

most illustrious members of the academy was Alessandro Piccolomini, “lo Stordito Intronato,” whose *L’amor costante* (1536) we have analyzed in Chapter Two. Some scholars, including Louise George Clubb, believe Alessandro Piccolomini to be the principal planner of the comedy of interest in this section because he eventually became the chief dramaturge and theorist of the academy (21). Despite various conjectures, *Gl’ingannati* remains a work of many hands. It was written for the carnival season of 1532 and performed for the first time on February 12<sup>th</sup> of that year.<sup>93</sup>

*Gl’ingannati* is a clever tale of deception, not of the malicious sort, but of a series of disguises that end immediately before a potentially salacious homosexual encounter of two young women. The Intronati had a clear mission to cheerfully apply the concept of *theatrum mundi*, but the setting of the comedy is not their native Siena. It is another city, Modena. Our interest in the comedy begins as the long-lost brother of Lelia, Fabrizio, returns to Modena in search of his father. In Act Three, two culinary-focused characters appear on the stage for the first – and only – time in Renaissance comedy. These *osti* (innkeepers) are in the streets with Fabrizio, his servant, Stragualcia, and the unnamed pedant of the drama. The interaction between the three potential guests and the two innkeepers is a comic one that reveals detailed descriptions of foods, among other facts, meant to persuade the visitors to lodge with one host or the other.

Already in Act Three, scene one, the potential guests set up the expectation that the innkeepers would consult them and court their business. They converse:

STRAGUALCIA	Io so ch’io non uscirò di cucina, per me. Chi ci vuole andar ci vada. Or sollecitiam d’alloggiare.
PEDANTE	Tu hai una gran fretta.
STRAGUALCIA	Cancaro! Io mi muoio di fame e non ho mangiato altro, stamattina, ch’una mezza gallina che v’avanzò in barca.

---

<sup>93</sup> The Intronati’s first work *Sacrificio* is sometimes identified as a comedy, sometimes only as a poetic text from the party that was indeed entitled *Sacrificio*. This text was included in the first edition of *Gl’ingannati* printed by Curzio Nave in Venice in 1537.



FABRIZIO Chi trovarem noi che ci meni a casa di mio padre?  
 PEDANTE Non. A me pare che noi ci andiamo a metter prima in una osteria, e quivi assettarci un poco e con comodità poi investigarne.  
 FABRIZIO Mi piace. Queste debbono esser l'ostarie. (III.1)

Stragualcia truly performs the task of endeared servant to Fabrizio and typical parasite in *Gl'ingannati* as he is ever famished. He and the pedant spar frequently throughout the comedy, and here he brushes off the pedant's comment by saying that he only ate half a chicken this morning! But the pedant is also interested in trying out the local cuisine in an *osteria*, and Fabrizio closes the scene by indicating that the innkeepers stand waiting in the street to greet them.

In scene two, the *osti* make their pitches from the very beginning. One, called L'Agiato, and the other, Frulla, are ready to appeal to the desires of the traveling men. They yell:

AGIATO Oh gentili uomini! Questa è l'ostaria, se volete alloggiare. Allo "Specchio"! allo "Specchio"!  
 FRULLA Oh! Voi siate i ben venuti. Io v'ho pure alloggiati altre volte. Non vi ricordate del vostro Frulla? Entrate qua dentro, ove alloggiano tutti e' par vostri.  
 AGIATO Venite a star con me. Voi arête buone camere, buon fuoco, buonissimi letti, lenzuola di bocata; e non ci mancherà cosa che voi aviate.  
 STRAGUALCIA Di cotesto mel sapevo.  
 AGIATO Volsi dir che voi vogliate.  
 FRULLA Io vi darò il miglior vin di Lombardia, starne tanto larghe, salciccioni di questa fatta, piccioni, polastri e ciò che voi saprete domandare; e godere.  
 STRAGUALCIA Questo voglio sopra tutto.  
 PEDANTE Tu che dici?  
 AGIATO Io vi darò animelle di vitella, mortatelle, vin di montagna; e, sopra tutto, starete dilicati. (III.2)

In no small fashion, the marketing strategies of Siena, or be it Modena, are revealed in these scenes. Of the two *osti*, Frulla begins with a method still well known today of pretending to know his guests in order to increase his odds of obtaining clients. Instead, Agiato describes what his

rooms have to offer. Stragualcia, further revealed as the embodiment of both foolish servant and ravenous parasite, immediately disregards this information in favor of more important details.

The menu begins to be read aloud with mention of meats and mortadella and it grows as the servant prods “that can only be an appetizer:”

FRULLA	Bastarannoti un paio di capponi? Porta qua. Questi son per te solo.
STRAGUALCIA	Non, eh! Ma gli è per uno antipasto.
AGIATO	Guardate che prosciutto, se non pare un cremisi!
PEDANTE	Questo non è cattivo.
FRULLA	Chi s’intende di vino?
STRAGUALCIA	Io, io, meglio che i francesi.
FRULLA	Assaggia se ti piace; se non, te ne darò di dieci sorti.
STRAGUALCIA	Frulla, al mio parer tu sei più pratico di questo altro che prima ci mostra il modo da far bere che sappia se ‘l vin ci piace. O padrone, gli è buono. Tolle, tolle questa valigia.
.....	
FRULLA	Va’ un poco in cucina, fratello [Stragualcia], e vedi.
STRAGUALCIA	Io non mi partirei di qui, s’io ne fusse strascinato. Vadin costoro dove vogliono. Padrone, son tante pignatte intorno al forno, tanti pottaggi, tanti savoretti, tanti intengoli, spedonate di starne, di tordi, di piccioni, capretti, capponi lessi, arrosto e miramessi, guazzini, pasticci, torte che, s’egli aspettasse il carnovale o la corte di Roma tutta, gli bastarebbe.
FRULLA	Hai tu bevuto?
STRAGUALCIA	E che vini! (III.2).

Not only is the scene for lighthearted laughs. Eventually Stragualcia is invited into Frulla’s kitchen to taste the delicious food and wine. The scene is also an unmistakable document of local culture embedded in drama.<sup>94</sup> As Clubb states, “Of course it [Intronati drama] took shape in correspondence and competition with fashionable models of comedy produced at Urbino, Rome, Florence, Ferrara, but the impetus came from Siena, jointly from circles tangent to the Studio and *from local popular culture*” (47).<sup>95</sup> In an animated dialogue, descriptions of exotic and locally

<sup>94</sup> The innkeepers’ attempts to obtain guests reveal popular foods and wines, but their dialogue also contains an interesting list of visitors from other parts of Italy and foreigners outside the peninsula in 3.2.357-9.

available foods and the tactics of professionals of the industry reveal an encounter that, while most likely exaggerated its long lists of food items, is also representative of quotidian reality.

The use of contemporary, everyday language lends a causal tone to the scene, and we can assume that the scenario is recognizable in form and style, if not by direct experience of the spectator public. The Early Modern urban environment portrayed in the interaction of a young nobleman, a servant, a pedant, and two innkeepers appears less stratified than one might expect. The interlocutors of the group maintain diverse positions on a hierarchical social scale and yet they converse in a dynamic, lighthearted way. To communicate the lightheartedness, it is not by chance that the pedant, a usual stock character of weighty or ironically inconsequential statements, has very little to say and that the servant is given the lion's share of the lines.<sup>96</sup>

The use of middle class innkeepers functioning as culinary and cultural disseminators help demonstrate an emerging trend of food purveyors as motifs included on the sixteenth-century stage. Like *zanaiuoli*, and the mentions of *trecconi*, *pizzicagnoli*, and *pollaioli*, the *osti* are not servants in individual households, but liberal entrepreneurs who occupy themselves with foodstuffs. They exist in local environments that provide small bits of innovation in classical and early-sixteenth-century-referenced works. Unfortunately, there is but this singular example of such loquacious *osti* on the Renaissance Italian stage. *Zanaiuoli*, however, are granted much more space for character development in the corpus of Florentine Academy theater.

What the deliverymen and innkeepers share with their creators can be understood through the concept of cultural mobility. Stephen Greenblatt and his colleagues argue in their *Manifesto*

---

<sup>95</sup> Italics are mine.

<sup>96</sup> At the end of the comedy *Stragualcia* makes reference to the *ostaria* again by inviting the spectators to dine with him. He concludes the comedy by stating: "Spettatori, non aspettate che costoro eschin più fuore perchè, di longa, faremmo la favola longhissima. Se volete venire a cena con esso noi, v'aspetto al "Matto". E portate denari, perchè non v'è chi espedisca *gratis*. Ma, se non volete venire (che mi par di no), restativi e godete. E voi, Intronati, fate segno d'allegrezza." (5.8.397)

that not only in the twenty-first century may we associate cultural and social change with radical mobility; cultural mobility allows us to comprehend new patterns of meaning created by human societies in virtually all periods. New characters onstage in Renaissance comedy are, in fact, indicative of the ever-changing constitutive components of society, through their diversifying and multiplying professions, their language, and their attention to the shifting cityscape. If we are attentive to them, our analysis of Renaissance culture can be pushed past holistic, rooted and undamaged concepts of elite artistic production. These analyses are necessary because a unitary vision of Renaissance culture remains prevalent today.

Indeed, it is tempting to reassert the persistence of classical models and imitative practices because they are so easily recognized in the form and ethos of early Renaissance masterpieces. As scholars have evidenced, the ideals of comedy and spectacle are far more conspicuous in the early theater. In this chapter too, we have seen that Gelli's comedies are modeled from Plautus and probably Machiavelli, D'Ambra makes great use of Ariosto, and Cecchi has been inspired by many classical dramas. Yet, deliverymen – and innkeepers to a certain extent – allow us to notice a less obvious set of relationships proving that these societies were also constantly in flux. A playwright's observations of contemporary realities are confirmed not only superficially quoting the simple phrase “questo non è Atene” or “moderna non antica, volgare non latina” in prologues. It is also through the composition of the cast that innovation is put on display for spectators and readers. I would argue that this element of comedy may prove even more convincingly that societies and their cultures are mobile. Changing constitutions in the cast is an excellent example of radical cultural mobility because it

counters a naïve notion that inland Renaissance communities like Florence or Siena were coherent *culturally or ethnically*.<sup>97</sup>

Cast members that represent the “popolo minuto” also help us to understand how literary academies function in “liminoid” zones of society. Victor Turner, among other scholars, has argued that the world of play is ritualized and rests at the limen of society; for instance, as Bahktin proved, one might invert the hierarchies of society through theater or play at Carnival. The end of Carnival most often signals the return and reinforcement of the normal order of society: masters return to being masters, and servants return to their lowly position. Turner argues that tribal societies are often characterized by the liminal because they compel everyone’s participation in festivities that occur in cyclical and seasonal patterns, which can reinforce the status quo through the expectation of an eventual return to “normal.”

Beyond theories of the liminal in Carnival comedy performances, some theater scholars see the critique of social mores and a moral utility plan in a comedy’s plot. Young lovers should be accepted and normalized into society through marriage; a mistreated servant should get the better of his master now and then. These outcomes stipulate that, during Carnival, comedies offer legitimate models for change. In his own studies, Turner moves past the liminal to propose the “liminoid” zone. He considers it “more marginal but also more permanent in nature, more freely chosen, and more prone to offering critiques of the status quo” (qtd in McClure 35). George McClure cites Turner to argue that the sixteenth-century Italian academies, specifically the Accademia degli Intronati, belong in this space of the liminoid in the development of parlor games and counter-culture. I agree that both the Florentine and Sienese academies are agents of

---

<sup>97</sup> We widely recognize, and rightfully so, that coastal cities, such as Venice, and Rome, as the center of the Catholic Church, were ethnically diverse, while Tuscany is often quietly assumed to be more uniform in its cultural make-up. Regarding Siena, it is widely recognized that foreigners visited the city, not the least of them, the Spaniard who actually speaks in Spanish for most of his lines in various Sienese comedies of the period.

change *and* popularization of culture in Renaissance Italy. Sara Mammone, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, might also agree. She views later Florentine academies as truly innovative because they have a strong sense of offering civic comedy and put the whole of society on display. I would add that academies strategize their social and intellectual position in the liminoid zone by placing characters on the stage who are ambiguously located in a similar space as they are: between old and new comic conventions, at times outside “native society” or socially flexible themselves.

In conclusion, the role of a *zanaiuolo* and the *oste* is also characterized by the ability to move in “contact zones” where cultural goods are exchanged. Greenblatt states that “certain places are characteristically set apart from inter-cultural contact; others are deliberately made open, with the rules suspended that inhibit exchange elsewhere. A specialized group of “mobilizers” – agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries – often emerges to facilitate contact (Manifesto). For instance, the court and the home are traditionally set apart from inter-cultural contact. However, a *piazza*, convergence of streets, is a deliberately open area that allows for exchange and encounter, especially and willfully displayed in theater. As it concerns a *zanaiuolo*, this exchange establishes the deliveryman as the intermediary of urban citizens and their foods, creating contact between the market, the street, and the home. For an *oste*, his presence in the streets surely allows for advancing consumerism, the inter-cultural contact that exists among foreign and local guests, and for the continual development of quotidian persuasive rhetoric. Particularly at the end of the sixteenth century, Tommaso Garzoni has grasped the ways that societies and professions are changing. His *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* puts forward the notion of a more horizontal society in the metaphor of a piazza. The piazza has many corners, meeting places, and side streets; it has no vertical spheres and makes

little distinction between its visitors. The guests themselves frequently wear markers of their social position, but the space itself is devoid of hierarchies and invites movement. In the piazza or convergence of streets, we find food purveyors in mid-century drama that represent innovation in an otherwise static cast and that indicate changes coming about in society.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, I will return one more time to Guido Davico Bonino's idea of an ever-evolving game that a Renaissance author played with the past. With every new work, a playwright began a new match, negotiating new meanings between classical models and his contemporary landscape. Rendering more difficult this conciliation were the diverse, and sometimes contrasting, elements of this contemporary landscape: fluctuating social and political realities, the will and favor of his prince or other noble sponsor, and emerging canons of literary and theatrical models. As is natural, not all his individual battles were won. Yet as the common phrase goes, it was worth the fight. Comedy is an endless assemblage of old and new, rearranged for (hopefully) maximum effect according to each shifting sociopolitical context.

What I have attempted in this dissertation is to demonstrate that a fresh look at material and literary sources can release more Renaissance playwrights again from their prison of "slavish imitation." I have shown that mine is not the only attempt in this field. The difference between my study and that of other scholars lies in my focus on culinary professionals and the type of cultural studies considered. The material culinary history included in this dissertation centers on the position of working class individuals in society and their qualities. Others, such as Salvatore Di Maria, have included historical accounts of recent events in their analyses of classical and modern elements of the theater. But these historical accounts are very different from the type of material history referenced here. Historical accounts of social and political events are often written by – and for – the courts, and rarely do they recount ordinary events. They are chiefly



concerned with battles. We recall, for example, that the setting for Machiavelli's *Mandragola* has been dated through Callimaco's mention of the invasion of Italy by Charles V or that many later comedies make reference to the Battle of Lepanto. Instead, the information left to us about cooks and other culinary professionals of the "popolo minuto" describes the regular, quotidian functioning of households and city centers.

The Introduction has addressed current scholarship and inserted my research into debates on Early Modern food studies and Renaissance theater. Cooks and deliverymen have a special place in the combination of anthropological and literary histories. In fact, the same material history of foodways cannot be applied to the parasite. His role in comedy is too defined by tradition to represent the inclusion of realistic contemporary elements. The same reasoning applies to the alimentary discourses of old and young noblemen, young maidens, and most servants of both sexes. Yet the cook is also not completely free of tradition. Careful source studies, such as the ones researched for this dissertation, must be done in order to assess the contemporary aspects of his characterization. Once completed, we can begin to interpret the playwright's intentions and messaging through the insertion of a culinary professional.

This dissertation has offered a renewed consideration of sixteenth-century theater culture through the avenue of gastronomy and profession. Playwrights who choose to include culinary professions on stage participate in the innovation of comedy, *contaminatio* of sources, and portrayal of contemporary culture on stage. One of Chapter Two's main accomplishments is acknowledging the cook as comically ambivalent. While Ariosto's Dalio may be laughed at for his simplicity, we laugh alongside Firenzuola's Grattugia. Piccolomini's Cornacchia proves, moreover, that laughter is not always corrective or satiric. These two cooks – Grattugia and Cornacchia – are not downtrodden or beaten (as was apparently common in Plautus' Rome and

possible for Ariosto's more classically-modeled Dalio). Instead, the inclusion of most cooks and deliverymen can delight audiences and bring them to laughter through a variety of social positions within each comedy.

The analysis of deliverymen in Florentine Renaissance comedy demonstrates much of the same findings. Gelli's Polo is quintessentially free in society, as is manifested by his social and economic mobility and in his use of the Florentine vernacular. Other unnamed deliverymen are decisively less respected in society; their interactions confirm common negative stereotypes of culinary professions. Finally, Cecchi places his *zanaiuolo* Gian Pitto somewhere in the middle. Regardless of social status, deliverymen inhabit the city more than a specific home. They are emancipated from a profession that resembles servitude, as is the case for cooks. In this way, deliverymen help us imagine the city as they wander about fulfilling their duties in one job or another.

In fact, as I have argued, the presence of *zanaiuoli* in more or less spontaneous scenes on the streets near homes works as a catalyst for dialogue among diverse members of society. In the last decades, many culinary histories of Europe and studies of Renaissance feasts, actual and imagined, have cast new light on the contamination of high art and low culture and a desire to transgress genre and social boundaries through the creative exploration of foodstuffs. Through this analysis we see that the cultural project of the Florentine Academy – stemming from popularizing ideologies – promotes a similar unification of high art and low culture that contribute original works to the corpus of Renaissance comedies. In this light, mid sixteenth-century comedies are anything but stagnant imitations of their predecessors.

One additional culinary profession – *l'oste* (innkeeper) – found only in the Accademia degli Intronati's *Gl'Ingannati*, confirms this theory. Innkeepers are most revealing and comical

as they compete for customers, marketing their foods loudly in the streets. However innovative and important their inclusion is to the messaging of Renaissance playwrights, innkeepers are exceedingly rare on the stage. A viable path forward for this study might be to expand the coterie of culinary professionals and to evaluate their presence also in *novella*. In such a study, tavern owners (*tavernai*) and bakers (*fornai*) may further prove the originality of playwrights and *novellieri* and, at the same time, shed light on the role of culinary professions in contemporary society. For example, Boccaccio's *Decameron* VI.2 centers on a male baker, Cisti fornaio, who gets the best of a servant and gains the favor of the servant's master. Cisti fornaio reflects a normalized social structure in fourteenth-century Florence, yet he is not lacking in wit, using a clever *motto* to jab at the servant, a lower class individual than himself. We may interpret the evolving place of self-employed artisan/alimentary workers in society: superior to a servant's but not granted the liberties of a nobleman or mercantile entrepreneur. The consequences of both cook Chichibio and baker Cisti in *novelle* on Day Six (the day of the *risposta pronta*) might play a larger role in their influence on later interpretations of the professions. In all, both additional professions are peculiar. Tavern owners are found exclusively in Early Modern *novella*, not on the Renaissance stage, and only *female* bakers exist in comedy. A theory of their inclusions in comedy and *novella* might prove the same conclusion of increased dialogue across strata of society, or their representations might simply be a source of comparison for research that seeks to combine material and literary studies. For now, the *cuoco* and the *zanaiuolo* (cook for hire/deliveryman) are truly the great go-betweens of Renaissance gastronomy.

## REFERENCES

### Original Works

Accademia degli Intronati. *Gl'ingannati*. Ed. Ireneo Sanesi. *Commedie del Cinquecento*. Bari: Laterza, 1912.

---. *La commedia degli Ingannati*. Ed. Florindo Cerreta. Firenze: Olschki, 1980.

---. *Gl'Ingannati (The Deceived)*. Trans and ed. Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella. New York: Italica, 2018.

Ariosto, Ludovico. *Commedie*. Vol. 1. *La Cassaria, I Suppositi*. Ed. and intro. Luigina Stefani. Perugia: Morlacchi, 2007.

---. *La Lena*. Ed. Guido Davico Bonino. Torino: Einaudi, 1976.

---. *Opere minori*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1964.

Athenaeus. *Deipnosophisti = Dotti a banchetto: Epitome dal Libro I*. Ed. 1. Bologna: Pàtron, 2010.

Berni, Francesco. *Le rime*. Ed. Danilo Romei. Milano: Mursia, 1985.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Decameron*. Torino: Einaudi, 1980. Reprint 1992.

Burchiello, 1404-1449. *Antologia burchiellesca*. Roma: Colombo, 1949.

---. *Sonetti inediti e rime*. Bologna: Zanichelli, 2009.

Cecchi, Giovanni Maria. *Commedie*. Ed. Gaetano Milanese. Firenze: Le Monnier. 1856.

D'Ambra, Francesco. *I Bernardi*. Ed. Ireneo Sanesi. *Commedie del Cinquecento*. Bari: Laterza, 1912.

Dante Alighieri. *Commedia*. Ed. Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi. Milano: Mondadori, 1991.

---. *La Commedia di Dante Alighieri*. Ed. Robert Hollander. Firenze: Olschki, 2011.

*Descrizione delle bocche della città et stato di Firenze fatta l'anno 1562*. Archivio di Stato Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea, busta 224.

Firenzuola, Agnolo. *Opere*. Ed. Adriano Seroni. Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1958.

---. *Opere scelte*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Giuseppe Fatini. Torino: UTET, 1966.

Garzoni, Tomaso. *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*. 1585. Torino: Einaudi, 1996.

Gelli, Giovanni Battista. *La Circe. Capricci Del Bottaio. La Sporto e Lo Errore*. Milano: E. Sonzogno, 1878.

---. *Opere*. Ed. Ireneo Sanesi. Torino: UTET. 1968.

- Grazzini, Anton Francesco. *Teatro*. Ed. Giovanni Grazzini. Bari: G. Laterza, 1953.
- Juvenal. *The Sixteen Satires*. Trans and Intro. Peter Green. Baltimore: Penguin, 1967.
- La rappresentazione di San Bernardo d'un signore che faceva rubate le strade. Nuovo Corpus di Sacre Rappresentazioni fiorentine del Quattrocento*. Ed. Nerida Newbiggin. Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua/Casa Carducci, 1983.
- Maestro Martino of Como. *The Art of Cooking: The First Modern Cookery Book*. Ed. Luigi Ballerini. Trans. Jeremy Parzen. Los Angeles: U of California P, 2005.
- Platina (Bartolomeo Sacchi). *Il piacere onesto e la buona salute*. Ed. Emilio Faccioli. Torino: Einaudi, 1985.
- . *On Right Pleasure and Good Health*. Ed. and Trans. Mary Ella Milham. Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998.
- Plautus, Titus Maccius. *Plautus*. Trans. Wolfgang de Melo. 4 vols. Cambridge: Loeb-Harvard UP, 2011.
- Piccolomini, Alessandro. *L'amor costante*. Ed. Nerida Newbiggin. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1980.
- Le Roman D'Eneas*. Ed. Aimé Petit. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1997.
- Romoli, Domenico. *La singolare dottrina*. Venezia: M. Tramezzino, 1560.
- Scappi, Bartolomeo. *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570): L'Arte Et Prudenza d'Un Maestro Cuoco*. Trans. Terence Scully. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008.
- Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. *Letters on Ethics: to Lucilius*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2015.
- Vergil. *Aeneid*. Trans. Theodore C. Williams. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1910.

### **Critical Sources**

- Albala, Ken. *Food in Early Modern Europe*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003.
- . *Cooking in Europe, 1250-1650*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006.
- Alonge, Roberto and Franco Perrelli. *Storia del teatro e dello spettacolo*. Novara: UTET, 2012.
- Andrews, Richard. *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1993.
- At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Timothy J. Tomasik and Juliann M. Vitullo. Turnhout: Marston, 2007.

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- Ballerini, Luigi. Introduction. Maestro Martino of Como. *The Art of Cooking: The First Modern Cookery Book*. Ed. Luigi Ballerini. Trans. Jeremy Parzen. Los Angeles: U of California P, 2005.
- Baldi, Andrea. *Tradizione e parodia in Alessandro Piccolomini*. Lucca: Pacini-Fazzi, 2001.
- Banchetti letterari: Cibi, pietanze e ricette nella letteratura italiana da Dante a Camilleri*. Ed. Gian Mario Anselmi and Gino Ruozzi. Roma: Carocci, 2011.
- Beecher, Donald. *Renaissance Comedy: the Italian Masters*. Vols. 2. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008.
- Benporat, Claudio. *Cucina e convivialità italiana del Cinquecento*. Firenze: Olschki, 2007.  
 ---. *Feste e banchetti: convivialità italiana fra Tre e Quattrocento*. Firenze: Olschki, 2001
- Boehrer, Bruce Thomas. *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997.
- Bonino, Guido Davico. "Nota introduttiva." *La Lena* by Ludovico Ariosto. Torino: Einaudi, 1976.
- Borsellino, Nino. *Il Cinquecento: dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma. Grandi Opere*. Vol. 4. Ed. 2. Bari: Laterza, 1973.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Phaidon, 1995.
- Campanini, Antonella. *Dalla tavola alla cucina: Scrittori e cibo nel Medioevo italiano*. Roma: Carocci, 2012.
- Camporesi, Piero. *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*. Trans. David Gentilcore. Cambridge: Polity, 1989.  
 ---. *Il paese della fame*. Milano: Garzanti, 2000.
- Capatti, Alberto and Massimo Montanari. *La cucina italiana: Storia di una cultura*. Bari: Laterza, 1999.
- Caretti, Lanfranco. *Ariosto e Tasso*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.. Torino: Einaudi, 1977.
- Cassiani, Chiara. *Metamorfosi e conoscenza: i dialoghi e le commedie di Giovan Battista Gelli*. Roma: Bulzoni. 2006.
- Cerreta, Florindo. "Introduzione e note." *La commedia degli Ingannati* by Accademici Intronati di Siena. Firenze: Olschki, 1980.

- Cesati, Franco. *La grande guida delle strade di Firenze: storia, aneddoti, arte, segreti e curiosità della città più affascinante del mondo attraverso 2400 vie, piazze e canti*. Roma: Newton Compton. 2003.
- Clubb, Louise George. *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989.
- Coluccia, Giuseppe. *L'esperienza teatrale di Ludovico Ariosto*. Lecce: Manni, 2001.
- Cox, Virginia. *A Short History of the Italian Renaissance*. London: I.B. Tauris. 2016.
- Croce, Benedetto. *Ariosto, Shakespeare, Corneille*. Bari: Laterza, 1920.
- De Amicis, Vincenzo. *L'imitazione latina nella commedia italiana del XVI secolo*. Roma: Studio Bibliografico A. Polla, 1979.
- Della Terza, Dante et al. *Ambiguità del comico*. Ed. Giulio Ferroni. Palermo: Sellerio, 1983.
- De Gaetano, Armand L.. *Giambattista Gelli and the Florentine Academy: The Rebellion against Latin*. Firenze: L.S. Olschki. 1976.
- De Sanctis, Francesco. *Storia della letteratura italiana*. Ed. N. Gallo. Torino: Einaudi, 1958.
- Di Maria, Salvatore. *The Poetics of Imitation in the Italian Theatre of the Renaissance*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2013.
- Dickie, John. *Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2007.
- Dizionario etimologico della lingua italiana*. Eds. Manlio Cortelazzo and Paolo Zolli. Bologna: Zanichelli. 1979.
- Doring, Tobias. "Feasting and Forgetting: Sir Toby's Pickle Herring and the Lure of Lethe." *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England*. Ed. David B. Goldstein and Amy L. Tigner. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2016. pp. 157-78.
- Epstein, Steven. *An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe: 1000-1500*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009.
- Fatini, Giuseppe. "Agnolo Firenzuola." *Letteratura italiana: i minori*. Vol. 2. Milano: Marzorati, 1961.
- . "Nota biografica." *Opere scelte di Agnolo Firenzuola*. Torino: UTET, 1966.
- Ferrone, Siro. "Sulle commedie in prosa dell'Ariosto." *Ludovico Ariosto: lingua, stile e tradizione. Atti del Congresso organizzato dai comuni di Reggio Emilia e Ferrara, 12-16 ottobre 1974*. Ed. Cesare Segre. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976.

- Ferroni, Giulio. *Ariosto*. Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2008.
- . *Il testo e la scena: saggi sul teatro del Cinquecento*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1980.
- Fido, Franco. "Reflections on Comedy by Some Italian Renaissance Playwrights." *Medieval Epic to the "Epic Theater" of Brecht*. Ed. Rosario P. Armato and John M. Spalek. Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press. 1968.
- Five Comedies from the Italian Renaissance*. Trans. and Ed. by Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP. 2003.
- Flandrin, Jean-Louis, Massimo Montanari, and Albert Sonnenfeld. *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.
- Giannetti, Laura. "Alla mensa dei poeti burleschi: Parodia letteraria e interpretazione di culture." *Acta Histriae*, vol. 17, no. 1-2, 2009, pp. 141 – 150.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*. New York: Cambridge UP. 2010.
- Grieco, Allen. "Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy." *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. Ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.
- Harcum, Cornelia Gaskins. *Roman Cooks*. Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1914.
- Henisch, Bridget Ann. *The Medieval Cook*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009.
- Herrick, Marvin T. *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century*. U of Illinois P, 1950.
- Jeanneret, Michel. *A Feast of Words. Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*. J. Whiteley and E. Hughes, trans. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Leffingwell, Georgia Williams. *Social and Private Life at Rome in the Time of Plautus and Terence*. New York: Columbia UP, 1918.
- Lowe, J. C. B. "Cooks in Plautus." *Classical Antiquity*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1985, pp. 72-102.
- Mamone, Sara. *Dèi, semidei e uomini. Lo spettacolo a Firenze tra neoplatonismo e realtà Borghese (XV-XVII secolo)*. Roma: Bulzoni. 2003.
- McClure, George W. *Culture of Profession in Late Renaissance Italy*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004.
- McIver, Katherine A. *Cooking and Eating in Renaissance Italy: From Kitchen To Table*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.



- McLaughlin, Martin L. *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Montanari, Massimo. *The Culture of Food*. Trans. Carl Ipsen. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994.
- . *Gusti Del Medioevo: I prodotti, La cucina, La tavola*. 1st ed. Roma: Laterza, 2012.
- . *Italian Identity: In the Kitchen, Or, Food and the Nation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2013.
- Nardi, Florinda. Introduction. *Comico, riso e modernità nella letteratura italiana tra Cinque e Ottocento*. Ed. Florinda Nardi. Roma: Edicampus, 2012.
- Padoan, Giorgio. *L'avventura della commedia rinascimentale*. Milano: Vallardi, 1996.
- . *Rinascimento in controtuce poeti, pittori, cortigiane e teatranti sul palcoscenico rinascimentale*. Ravenna: Longo, 1994.
- Palma, Pina. *Savoring Power, Consuming the Times: The Metaphors of Food in Medieval and Renaissance Italian Literature*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2013.
- . "Of Courtesans, Knights, Cooks, and Writers: Food in the Renaissance." *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 119, no. 1, 2004, pp. 37-51.
- Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy*. London: Reaktion Books, 2014.
- Parkin, John. *Humour Theorists of the Twentieth-Century*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1997.
- . "Comic Modality in Rabelais: Baisecul, Humevesne, Thaumaste." *Etudes Rabelaisiennes*, vol. XVIII, pp. 57-82.
- Phillips-Court, Kristin. *The Perfect Genre: Drama and Painting in Renaissance Italy*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2011.
- . "The Petrarchan Lover in Cinquecento Comedy." *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 125, no. 1, 2010.
- Pirandello, Luigi. *On Humor*. Trans. Antonio Illiano and Daniel P. Testa. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1974.
- Pirastu, Annalisa. *Il Diavolo nei primi secoli della letteratura italiana*. Cosenza: Pellegrini Editore, 2004.
- Radcliff-Umstead, Douglas. *The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969.
- . *Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play: the Renaissance Dramas of Giovan Maria Cecchi*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1986.
- Riviello, Tonia Caterina. *Agnolo Firenzuola: The Androgynous Vision*. Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1986.

- Ross, Sarah Gwyneth. *Everyday Renaissances: The Quest for Cultural Legitimacy in Venice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2016.
- Rosso, Luigi. "Chichibio cuoco della leggerezza mentale." *Belfagor*. Vol. 51.302 (1996): pp. 187-83.
- Ruggiero, Guido. *The Renaissance in Italy: A Social and Cultural History of the Rinascimento*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2015.
- Sanesi, Ireneo, ed. *Commedie del Cinquecento*. Bari: Laterza, 1912.
- Scully, Terence. *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995.  
---. Introduction. Bartolomeo Scappi. *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi*. Trans. Terence Scully. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008.
- Segre, Cesare. *Esperienze ariostesche*. Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1966.
- Seragnoli, Daniele. *Il teatro a Siena nel Cinquecento: "Progetto" e "modello" drammaturico nell'Accademia degli Intronati*. Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1980.
- Squarotti, Giorgio Barberi and Sergio Zatti. *Ludovico Ariosto. Torquato Tasso*. Letteratura italiana. Vol. 2. Roma: Marzorati – Editalia, 2000.
- Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. London: Methuen, 1986.
- Testaferri, Ada. "Motto di spirito e potere eversivo di Chichibio." *Quaderni d'Italianistica*. Vol. 12.2 (1991): pp. 223-30.
- Varriano, John L. *Tastes and Temptations: Food and Art in Renaissance Italy*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2009.
- Wilkins, John. *The Boastful Chef: The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Yates, Julian. "Shakespeare's Messmates." *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England*. Ed. David B. Goldstein and Amy L. Tigner. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2016. pp. 179-98
- Zorzi, Ludovico. *Il teatro e la città: Saggi sulla scena italiana*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1977.
- Zorzi, Ludovico, Giuliano Innamorati, and Siro Ferrone. *Il teatro del Cinquecento: i luoghi, i testi e gli attori*. Firenze: Sansoni, 1982.