

Pulci's Transgressive Poetry and Two Sixteenth-Century Comedies

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ABSTRACT

APRIL D. WEINTRITT: Pulci's Transgressive Poetry and
Two Sixteenth-Century Comedies
(Under the direction of Professor Ennio Rao)

The *Morgante* attained immediate success around the Italian peninsula and in Europe, sparking the imitation of the two Pulcian paradigms *Morgante* and *Margutte*. The attempt to satirize and lampoon contemporary society inspires Pulci's attitude towards his contemporaries in his literary production, and demonstrates key points of similarity among Pulci, Ariosto, and Aretino. In *Il negromante*, Ariosto adheres to Pulcian features through an analogous character, common themes, and linguistic repetition. In *La cortigiana*, Aretino illustrates the false pretenses of gentlemen and the wretched conditions of servants by bringing Pulci's characters, themes, and language to light. The aspects of the *Morgante* that tend towards a comic, realistic language and style natural to comedy create a bond between Pulci and playwrights. These similarities bear witness to the ways in which Pulci and his work flourished in the early Renaissance and how his material, tone, and style were easily adapted in theater.

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INTRODUCTION

The comic genre in fifteenth-century Florence finds its home in the works of the poet Luigi Pulci. As a cultural figure present at the Medici Court, he acts as the legacy of a popular Tuscan tradition; however, as this analysis will show, he also became the predecessor and the inspiration of the Renaissance authors Ludovico Ariosto and Pietro Aretino. Pulcian characters, most notably Morgante and Margutte — the latter considered by most critics to be an original creation of the poet — demonstrate a use of the tradition of the anti-type, of the thematic of beastlike vitality, and of ironic characterizations of religious faith. I contend that these distinctive characteristics of Pulcian works and characters gain fame in a Florentine literary field, and eventually inspire comedies in the sixteenth century.

In my study, I will analyze the presence of Pulcian works, embodied in characters or named specifically in two Renaissance comedies: the first, *Il negromante* by Ludovico Ariosto, and the second, *La cortigiana* by Pietro Aretino. From this analysis, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which Pulci's enterprise can be considered an additional influence on the writers of comedies and a model for interweaving authorial intent into works of the sixteenth century. I will first delineate the immediate fame and the origins of the *Morgante* and the half-giant, Margutte, within the context of Pulci's larger goal, establishing a basis for the future literary reprises of his work. I will, then, evidence the hostile nature of Pulci's relationships at the Medici Court, specifically with Marsilio Ficino, in order to demonstrate similarities between the poet's satiric intent and that of

Ariosto and Aretino. I will, then, treat each comedy individually, focusing on reoccurring thematic elements and direct linguistic repetitions taken from Pulci's *Morgante*. In chapter two, I will address *Il negromante*, in which, Mastro Iachelino recalls Margutte through analogous characterization. In chapter three, I will demonstrate Pietro Aretino's use of both the cultural significance of *Morgante* and Margutte to heighten a criticism of servant quarters in Rome and Pulci's "La novella dello sciocco senese" as a drawing board for his comic narration in *La cortigiana*.

Origins and Fame of the Morgante in Contemporary Culture and the Author's Intent

Luigi Pulci most likely began the poem *Il Morgante* in 1461 at the request of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, wife of Piero de' Medici and mother to Lorenzo.¹ In soliciting the help of the poet, the pious woman sought to return fame to Charlemagne and his accomplishments for Christendom by elevating to literary dignity the popular writings on the subject. A first version of this work undertaken by Pulci was printed in 1478 with twenty-three cantos; however, this copy is lost to us, and subsequent copies contain the full twenty-eight cantos, published in 1483 after Lucrezia's death. The question of whether the author's treatment of the material was the composition Lucrezia had imagined does not depreciate the success of the poet's often comic, often deeply satiric literary creation; neither can an analysis of the cultural backlash to which Pulci was

¹ Most critics place the date of Lucrezia's request after 1460, most likely in 1461, because before this year Pulci worked at the bequest of Francesco Castellani, for whom he was secretary from 1459 to 1460, and for whom he also ran humble errands. It seems improbable, in my opinion as well, that Pulci could have known, or spent much time with, Lucrezia or Lorenzo before 1460, when he was actively in Castellani's service. Castellani most likely introduced him to the court in 1460 or shortly thereafter. Ernest H. Wilkins explores these possibilities and more regarding the composition of the *Morgante*.

subjected debase the value of the *Morgante*, which Paolo Orvieto calls a “best seller,” a work which imprinted its characters and stories on a literary era.²

Il Morgante acquired considerable fame upon its publication in 1478. The poem was reprinted various times, once specifically in 1483 with an additional five cantos, and diffused throughout European courts. Not by chance, at the end of the fifteenth century, one can find numerous imitations of Pulci’s poetic style. Two of the author’s central characters, Morgante and Margutte, must have enjoyed particular popularity as the episode of the two meeting in the eighteenth canto was printed separately from the entire body of work during the winter of 1480-1481 by the printery of Ripoli.³

Even though Pulci was considered a heretic within the overriding cultural atmosphere created by Marsilio Ficino and Platonic Academy, Antonio Cammelli based a sonnet on Morgante and Margutte’s meeting decades after its printing. The Duke of Este at Ferrara asked specifically for a copy of the episode between the celebrated Morgante and Margutte, particularly important to analyzing a future influence on Ariosto, employed by the Este court. One of Pulci’s closest confidants, Benedetto Dei, resided in Milan and often transcribed the poet’s works, leading one to believe they were also well-known at the Milanese court. The influence of the *Morgante* outside the Italian peninsula has also been vast, most notably so in the case of Rabelais with focus on the adoption of gastronomic terminology.

² Paolo Orvieto states: “Viceversa nomi e figure del *Morgante*, quasi *best seller* che impronta di sé per molti aspetti un’epoca, vengono adattati ai personaggi della Firenze laurenziana...” (*Pulci medievale* 184).

³ It is possible that the episode between the two was already in print by 1475, a date assumed by Orvieto on the basis of Benedetto Dei’s transcription, in which the names of Morgante and Margutte are changed to Bernardo and Antonio, respectively; yet, because of the close friendship between Pulci and Dei it is possible that Dei copied the episode directly from the poet’s manuscript (174). Volpi, in his edition to the *Morgante*, confirms the episode of the *cena a macca* to have been written in 1468, as the poet references it in a letter to Lorenzo the Magnificent.

The readiness with which writers of comedies in the sixteenth century reinterpreted Pulci's literary production becomes more apparent when one analyzes certain origins of Pulci's work. Especially in the case of Margutte, this analysis does not diminish Pulci's innovation, but instead clarifies his dual attempt to adhere to tradition and to advance it. A study of origins reveals Pulci's culture and highlights certain similarities between classical works, novelistic tradition, the *Morgante*, and sixteenth-century comedies. Paolo Orvieto dedicates a section of his book, *Pulci medievale*, to investigating the origins of Margutte.

Immediately we can notice that the name Pulci chose for the half-size giant, Margutte, is similar to Homer's *Margites*, the prototype exemplar of *vituperatio* (Orvieto 171). Little remains by way of analysis of the *Margites*, apart from Aristotle's characterization in his *Poetics* of Homer's ability: "...Homer is pre-eminent among poets ... he too first laid down the main lines of comedy, by dramatizing the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire. His *Margites* bears the same relation to comedy that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to tragedy" (293). A connection between the dramatization of the ridiculous and Margutte places Pulci within the comic tradition, as does a character's association with servants in Latin comedies.

A similarity between Margutte and servants provides special context for a discussion of his mention in Aretino's *La cortigiana*. In fact, as astute character, the *servus* of classical comedies was already a well-known literary figure in fifteenth-century Florence. The servants from classical comedies and the medieval *Geta* serve as a recognizable basis for Margutte's behavior, yet it is Pulci's characterization that becomes so prevalent in Florence that Lorenzo the Magnificent referenced a court servant in letters

as “Margutte” (Orvieto 184).⁴ While Margutte may derive from tradition, Pulci’s interpretation of the servant clearly surpasses that of previous works, as evidenced by this inclusion into contemporary culture.

From a broader perspective, the *Decameron*’s Ser Ceparello must also be included in an investigation of possible origins, as he represents the same nonchalant sacrilegious behavior as Margutte’s. In the *Morgante*, Margutte overturns the structure of a medieval “perfect confession” into parodist transgression, similar to the Boccaccian method when he writes the story of Ser Ceparello. Transgressive medieval tradition perpetuated deformative and parodist versions of the *vita-modello*, which Pulci and other poets translated into culinary structure (189). Comic and sacrilegious behavior is a Boccaccian feature adopted also by Burchiello. The writings of Burchiello, Pulci, Franco, Bellincioni, and Cammelli epitomize the tradition of the anti-type, and their creations become a universal type to be imitated. It appears that Pulci follows a literary strategy taught by Burchiello: the adoption of the unscrupulous sinner, which allows for the identification of the characters with real people (Orvieto 185-86).⁵ An additional verisimilar trait given to the figure of Margutte establishes Pulci’s *Morgante* as far more realistic in its representation and in its inspiration than its predecessor *Orlando*.

⁴ These letters of Lorenzo de’ Medici are found in *Protocolli del carteggio di Lorenzo il Magnifico*. Ed. M. Del Piazzo. Firenze: Olschki, 1956. 283-431.

⁵ Orvieto sustains an in-depth argument for the animation of a contemporary Florentine in the character Margutte. Given Dei’s transcription of *Morgante* and Margutte’s meeting with the names Bernardo and Antonio, Orvieto analyzes the likeness of occupation between Antonio di Guido and Margutte: both are soldiers and *cantori*. He also references a sonnet written against di Guido by Antonio Bonciani, in which the Florentine appears as less than virtuous, lacking three virtues like Margutte. In addition, in 1459 Antonio di Guido sang the praises of the Duke of Milan Francesco Sforza, recalling heroes of classical antiquity as does Margutte in Pulci’s description. Finally, sources demonstrate that di Guido was particularly fond of gastronomic pleasures, owned a bottega and probably a tavern (171-83).

Pulci's authorial intent for the *Morgante* and for his characters needs to be considered in an effort to affirm reasons for Ariosto's and Aretino's adherence to his satirical method. Franca Ageno affirms that the characterization of Morgante and his encounter with Margutte are central to the theme of exuberant vitality and physicality, of primitive and irrational violence, of hunger and voracity. These beastlike qualities of Morgante are seen in larger relief because of Margutte: insatiable giants who display their animalistic needs (XVI). The novel Margutte presents the author's poetic movement towards comic attention to hyperbolic attributes: the half-giant represents the combination of satirical exaggeration and charlatan boastful spirit. Attilio Momigliano observes that the poem becomes luminous and sparkling when Margutte arrives and, furthermore, that his characterization consolidates the overarching theme of the work: a playful and unscrupulous description of villainy (275-309). Truly compelling for Pulci is the scoundrel's witticism that incarnates not an arbitrary or casual insertion of creativity on Pulci's part, but an authorial desire to create the anti-ideal of chivalric virtue found in the *Orlando*. By creating Margutte, Pulci veers towards the Tuscan novelistic tradition that celebrates vice and vulgar happiness. Therefore, the poet sets the *Morgante* as a true and proper parody of noble and *gentile* ventures, creating the species of the negative ideal through the roguish wit of his character (Ageno XVIII).

Many aspects of Pulci's writing draw him near the theatrical genre of comedy. His inspiration for creating such an unscrupulous character was the intrigues and disputes at the courts (Momigliano 104-06). This exposure of courtly quarrels requires a realistic disposition and a vocation on the part of the poet to focus on exterior aspects of life and physicality, representing characters and scenes based on facial lines and gestures and on

an exhaustive, vivid, picturesque sense of the human. This realistic disposition is one element that makes Pulci so appealing in the sixteenth century. The poet accomplishes this realistic goal also through language, employing a linguistic key opposed to the dominant literary and noble language; the poet refuses to be a slave to an elevated language. He denies the cultural preoccupation of form, elegance, and substance, so particular to his humanist peers.

His linguistic choices, however, do not distance the poet from the literary field; they enable him to create a dialogue filled with extraordinary liveliness and precision in his representation of the immediate aspects of reality, defined as the poet's "dramatic-theatrical suggestion" (Ageno XIX). As such, the work participates with the reader on an immediate level of communication, as if the live page creates degrading, ironic and extreme metaphors, comparisons, and hyperboles in a proverbial and familial speech that lends a true note of authentic color to the work (DeRobertis 43-50). The nature of the *Morgante*, with its many dialogues and monologues in place of lengthy warfare descriptions, posits itself as a work capable of being recalled in theater.

Pulci's realistic approach, language, and his unscrupulous characters continue a Tuscan tradition, yet his satire of chivalric values and of humanist culture produces a comical, theatrical work that immediately appeals to the readers. The satire of the prevalent culture of Platonic Christianity provides a basis for future literary reprise. This intentional poetic operation would have been clear to Ariosto and Aretino, and it is properly in this light that their adoption of Pulcian vocabulary or characters can be understood.

CHAPTER ONE

Cultural Currents at the Medici Court

Pulci's *Morgante* and lesser works have been studied in depth in recent years in order to attest to his strictly medieval heritage. However, an analysis of his use of tradition also highlights his position within his contemporary society. In this chapter, I argue that in order to grasp the comic effect and satiric intent of Pulci's literary creation, it is necessary to consider his rejection of the new tenets of cultural life proposed by the philosopher Marsilio Ficino. By analyzing the divergent views of the two influential fifteenth-century intellectuals, I highlight how one can recognize, in Pulci, a pungent and comical refutation of Ficino's theory of immortality, of the importance of religion, and of Ficino himself. Furthermore, this analysis of Pulci's negative relations with the favored cultural current Platonic Christianity will provide a basis for the study of those authors who adopt his methods or his characters in order to lampoon prevalent cultural viewpoints.

During the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Pulci and Ficino were both influential individuals at the Medici court; yet, Lorenzo, favoring the cultural climate created by Ficino, eventually dismissed Pulci. The philosopher, Marsilio Ficino, gained favor early in life under Lorenzo's grandfather, Cosimo the Elder, for whom he translated, among others, Platonic and Neoplatonic works. His conception of Humanism hinged on a reevaluation of Platonic thought in the light of the Christian religion. As the leader of the Platonic Academy, a position also delegated to him by Cosimo, Ficino

enjoyed a vast following of Florentine intellectuals willing to participate in his discussions of religion and philosophy, albeit beyond their ability. Pulci was initially present at the Academy, yet he was always considered as an outsider, not entirely subscribing to Ficino's theories. The social relations between Ficino and Pulci grew tense when Matteo Franco, Lorenzo's chaplain, drew up an invective against Pulci and his writings. Pulci solicited the help of Ficino, who instead joined Matteo Franco in criticizing his blasphemies, prompting Pulci's eventual removal from the Medici court. The ensuing cultural feud between Ficino and Pulci played out on a literary stage. Pulci's derision of Ficino's philosophical and religious studies takes a comical twist in the *Morgante* and his sonnets of religious parody, specifically "Costor che fan sì gran disputazione," while Ficino similarly wrote invectives against Pulci in his letters.

In the fifteenth century, what appears to be a solitary philosophical field collides with society inasmuch as Ficino's theories begin to interact with other forms of secular culture. In fact, the polemic center of the study of Platonism and Neoplatonism was not in commentary, but in a fusion of religion, the arts, and philosophy. The diffusion of these works clashed with Pulci's literary reprise of chivalric tales and of the cantari, which he re-elaborated in his own comical vein. While Ficino argued for the union of Platonic doctrine and Christian religion, Pulci created the *Morgante*, which integrated popular elements and cultural attacks that come to resemble a parody of the late fifteenth-century Humanist atmosphere.

Pulci's unified satire of both philosophy and religion can be analyzed in reference to Ficino's mission for the two fields. Paul Oskar Kristeller affirms that the renewal of Platonic philosophy was included in the universal rebirth of the arts and institutions, but

the philosophy of Ficino also had at its base the objective to lead men to beatitude in accordance with Christianity (*Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* 20). In Ficino's major works, *La teologia platonica* and *De christiana religione*, he delineates theories regarding the immortality of the soul, contemplative life, and dignity of man. In fact, we find in his works and letters many re-elaborated Platonic doctrines, such as ascendance through knowledge and refutation of worldly pleasures.

Pulci's literary creation effectively represents this cultural atmosphere through comical contradictions, exaggerations, and derision. To express his intolerance, he developed characters who oppose Neoplatonic Christianity. In the *Morgante*, the character Margutte provides this satiric interpretation of religion. In his sonnets, Pulci criticizes the useless philosophical discussions that have taken over society. One should not, however, conclude that Pulci's playful poetics, revealed in the *Morgante* and in his lampooning of his contemporaries, make him an altogether lighthearted soul. Rather, we should view his attacks as indication of a comic vein that provided insight into a philosophy of *this* life (Rossi 365): a life that Pulci called "uno zibaldone mescolato di dolce e di amaro e mille sapori vari" (*Morgante e lett.* XXII). Thus, Pulci's position is one not only of degrading religion and philosophy, but also a premise for savoring earthly pleasures, which constitute a refusal of Ficino's new conception of man and his life. By revisiting Ficino's main tenets of the immortality of the soul, the importance of religion, and the dignity of man, we can identify the stimuli for Pulci's comic creativity.

Ficino proposes the immortality of the soul as central to Christian religion and as essential to man's experience of God in the contemplative life. In a gradual ascendance, man distances himself from that which surrounds him and proceeds through various

levels to arrive at the immediate vision of God. The rarity of this union during mortal life is the premise for the immortality of the soul inasmuch as it presupposes a future life. The contemplative life is the Platonic concept that permits this combination of Christianity and philosophy.

Another important subject for Ficino – Christian religion – does not escape Pulci’s satiric pen. In a letter to Cosimo de’ Medici, Ficino, who took holy orders in 1473, acknowledges his task of reconciling revelation and reason, and of leading men to God via Plato:

Volendo per tanto, e desiderando tutti esser felici, [...] lasciando andare ogn’altra cosa, ciascuno si debbe sforzare, con ogni studio di diventare sapientissimo. Percioché così l’anima nostra diventa simile a Iddio, che è la stessa et vera sapientia, ne la quale simiglianza, Platone pensava che consistesse il vero, e sommo grado de la nostra beatitudine. (3)

Ficino sustains that to leave behind mundane pleasures and to search for knowledge, as Plato believed, contains the true degree of beatitude.

Concerning the dignity of man, Ficino developed a hierarchy in which man finds himself capable of ascending to the level of angels and God or falling to the status of beasts and inanimate objects. Ficino elaborates this progression of beings to advocate for a distancing from the terrestrial world. The philosopher explains in a letter to Giovanni Cavalcanti how to avoid corruption of the soul: “Adunq; di qui lassù, cioè da l’amor del corpo, e da la cura de le cose che nostre non sono al culto d’Iddio e de l’animo fuggendo tornare siamo da Platone ammestrati; altrimenti non si possono schifare questi mali” (44). When one highlights theories dear to Ficino, the target of Pulci’s comic innovation becomes apparent.

Pulci's sonnet "Costor che fan sì gran disputazione" displays the small consideration that he gave to philosophical discussions as he mocks both their utility and the very possibility of immortality. He describes the continual debates on those topics as exaggerated and fruitless, satirizing the members of the Platonic Academy for their vision of the world and comparing the soul to fruit:

Costor che fan sì gran disputazione
dell'anima, ond'ell'entri o ond'ell'esca,
o come il nocciuol si stia nella pesca,
hanno studiato in su 'n gran mellone.⁶ (1-4)

The literary tradition of the word *mellone*, as signifying vain arguments, can be retraced to Boccaccio's use of the word in the *Decameron*, Day Eight, Story 9, in which tricks are played on Maestro Simone from Bologna.⁷ With Pulci's adoption of Boccaccian vocabulary not only do we detect a tradition of comically downgrading those men who believe to possess a higher level of intelligence, but also an announcement of Pulci's beliefs concerning immortality. In other terms, the sonnet demonstrates very clearly the opposition between Pulcian pessimism and Ficinian optimism with regard to postulates of future life (Nigro 66).

Pulci's declaration of his intolerance of philosophical discussions leads to ridicule of religious convictions further along in the sonnet. He describes *his* afterlife as a dark place underground where he will not be forced to hear alleluia, a place different from that described by friars:

⁶ Throughout this work, I will use Paolo Oriveto's edition of Pulci's minor works and I will abide by its transcription and its punctuation.

⁷ "Buffalmacco rivolto al maestro [Simone] disse: 'Maestro mio, egli si par bene che voi siete stato a Bologna e che voi infino in questa terra abbiate recata la bocca chiusa; e ancora vi dico più, che voi non apparaste miga l'abicí in su la mela, come molti sciocconi voglion fare, anzi l'apparaste bene in sul mellone.'" (*Dec.* 8.9.64). Also see Branca's footnote that gives more information concerning the origin of the word and its uses. Branca also cites a phrase taken from Sacchetti, CXLVII: "Antonio che già aveva studiato e letto l'abicí in sul mellone" (*Dec.* 8.9n7).

E' vanno dietro a' frati:
noi ce n'andrem, Pandolfo, in valle buia,
senza sentir più cantar alleluia! (21-23)

In the *Morgante*, Pulci's skeptical attitude about religion shines through when Margutte comically compares the function of religion to that of a tickling feeling:

la fede è fatta, come fa il solletico:
per discrezion mi credo che tu intenda. (18. 18: 3-4)

Whether Pulci intends to reveal religion as a small, constant nagging or to characterize it as a laughable matter, in both cases we acknowledge the inconsequential value attributed to it, disparaging, again, a central belief of Ficino.

Pulci's satire of Ficino's call to leave behind earthly pleasures and to practice an active Christianity culminates in the belief system of Margutte, an ironic and parodic pantheism based on gastronomic delight. The parody of Ficino's theories and religious beliefs constitute Margutte's creed:

Rispose allor Margutte: — A dirtel tosto,
io non credo più al nero ch'a l'azzurro,
ma nel cappone, o lessa o vuoi arrosto;
e credo alcuna volta anco nel burro,
nella cervogia e, quando io n'ho, nel mosto,
e molto più nell'aspro che il mangurro;
ma sopra tutto nel buon vino ho fede,
e credo che sia salvo chi gli crede;

e credo nella torta e nel tortello,
l'uno è la madre, e l'altro è il suo figliuolo;
e 'l vero paternostro è il fegatello,
e posson esser tre, due ed un solo,
e deriva dal fegato almen quello.
E perch'io vorrei ber con un ghiacciuolo,
se Macometto il mosto vieta e biasima,
credo che sia il sogno o la fantasima. (18.115-16)

Pulci implies his own propensity for enjoyment of mortal life in this profession of faith by Margutte: the world does not lead man to corruption, but it permits man to live well,

consuming terrestrial pleasures, especially those of gastronomy. In similar fashion, in “Costor che fan sì gran disputazione,” Pulci creates another gastronomic parody of the pleasures that Ficino and his followers vainly believe await them in Paradise:

Ma dice un che v'è stato
nell'altra vita, e più non può tornarvi,
che appena con la scala si può andarvi.
Costor credon trovarvi
e' beccafichi e gli ortolan pelati
e buon vin dolci e letti sprimacciati. (15-20)

Pulci discreetly alludes to a ladder (*scala*) in line 17, most likely referring to Ficino's hierarchy of beings (*La scala degli esseri*), which, in the sonnet, one can ascend only to arrive at more terrestrial delights in the Afterlife. Pulci's description of this theory and of the promises of the Afterlife effectively deride Ficino's philosophy and his portrayal of the pleasures of Heaven.

The assertion that Ficino and his followers should find good wine in Heaven represents an even further ridiculing attack on Ficino's person. His aesthetic life was characterized completely by his discipline and religious beliefs. In fact, Arnaldo della Torre affirms that Ficino practiced sobriety as a duty and condemned without remorse drunkenness and laziness, believing that such activities inhibited a philosopher from practicing philosophy (633). The discipline that he practiced regarding intoxication and laziness also influenced his alimentation, so much that he was a vegetarian. Ficino argued that eating in excess blocked the capacity to think and to reflect and, therefore, hindered the possibility to arrive at contemplation of divine beings. Pulci uses the extravagant Margutte, lover of all mundane gastronomic pleasures, to express an outlook completely contrary to that of Ficino. We can note that almost the entirety of Margutte's profession of faith is written in an alimentary code with a proper emphasis on meat.

In his work *Pulci medievale*, Paolo Orvieto affirms Nigro's description of the conflict between Pulci and Ficino as one of complete friction between two diametrically opposed philosophies, in which the discussion of the immortality of the soul provides one example. As a result of the opposition between these philosophies concerning life and immortality, two opposing cultural professions collided. Ficino was revolutionary, Neoplatonic, and religious; Pulci was conservative, scholastic, and allegoric. Ficino represented the cultural elite, while Pulci formally attacked it and continued to work with popular culture (219-20).

In fact, Pulci's intolerance and subsequent satire of Ficino and Platonic Christianity does not end with the features given to the character of Margutte; in the *Morgante* he weaves a personal attack on Ficino's character into his depiction of Marsilio, King of Spain. Facing Rinaldo in the thirteenth canto, Marsilio, the noble Saracen, realizes the uselessness of Hermes Trismegistus and Plato on the battlefield.

Pulci writes:

Quando Marsilio vide il cavaliere,
fra sè diceva: "Aiutami, Macone!
ché poco val qui contro al suo potere
allegar Trismegisto o vuoi Platone." (13.37:1-4)

Inasmuch as Ficino's fame derived from his translations of Plato and Hermes Trismegistus, Orvieto confirms that it is the philosopher who is referenced in these lines (252). The juxtaposition of subtle discourses and an approaching assailant can be viewed as a comic opposition between an academic approach and a serious peril. Discourse will

not save the King. Thus, Marsilio turns to religion, his last weapon, recognizing that recourse to philosophers is fruitless.⁸

In the second version of the *Morgante*, the added cantos provide a transformation in the representation of King Marsilio from playfully ridiculous to villainously traitorous:

Ma quel Marsilio, se nessuno lo ignora,
fra molti vizii tutti osceni e brutti
una invidia ha nell'ossa che il divora,
che si cognosce finalmente a' frutti:
io l'ho sempre veduto in uno specchio
un tristo, un doppio, un vil traditor vecchio. (26.21:3-8)

In the twenty-sixth canto, Pulci reveals King Marsilio's simulated religiousness in public and his irreverence in private. Such accusations about his religious convictions must have been alarming for Ficino:

Era Marsilio un uom che in suo segreto
credea manco nel Ciel che negli abissi:
bestemmiator, ma bestemmiava cheto;
pur questa volta volle ognuno udissi;
e se fu gentile e discreto,
come in altro cantar già dissi e scrissi,
io il dico un'altra volta, e parlo retto,
ché questo non emenda altro defetto:

ché e' sapeva anche simulare e figner
castità, santimonia e devozione,
e la sua vita per modo dipignere
che il popol n'ebbe un tempo aspettazione.
Ma perch'io sento la battaglia strignere,
diciàn che si dolea di Falserone
e bestemmiava il Ciel devotamente,
pur come io dissi, in modo ch'ognun sente. (26.118-19)

⁸ I have not analyzed in depth another striking component of these lines, which is the connection drawn between Ficino and King Marsilio, a Saracen, who begs for intercession from "Macone." Orvieto discusses this aspect of Pulci's characterization of Ficino, calling to mind the sonnet XCVIII, line 16: "tu se' il Saracin in piazza" (251). The very mention of Macone, a popular epithet used to describe Mohammad in fifteenth-century circles, would have been most offensive to Ficino, without mentioning the uselessness of his translation of the two philosophers listed.

A small grin may arise in reading the octaves used to describe King Marsilio; yet, tensions in Florence were clearly building. Pulci's adversarial relations with Ficino and other members of the Medici Court and the ridicule that he cast on Ficino's theories resulted in his alienation and ultimate banishment. He died near Padua, unfulfilled in bringing down the "cultural program" of Neoplatonic Christianity, unable to convince the religious of his true faith with his *Confessione*, and was buried as a heretic in unconsecrated ground.

To complete the analysis of not only the comic effect of Pulci's writing but the pungent criticism that Ficino felt, I turn to a section of the letter that the philosopher wrote to Bernardo, Pulci's brother, in which he affronts Pulci's supposed atheism:

Mi dici che il tuo fratello ti dà un gran biasimo, per essere egli da ciasuno tenuto bugiardo e instabile. Io non posso già negare, che egli non sia bugiardo, conciosia che contra la divina maestà, che è un'infinita verità, tanto empicamente e così insolentemente adoperi la venenosa sua lingua e la penna ... poi che Iddio ancora sofferisce le sue ingiuriose parole. (90-91)

We can affirm that comic effect had the effect of making an enemy of Ficino. Pulci's "work," that of dismantling the favored intellectual climate, was left unfinished; however, his literary fortune in the following decades and in the next century would grow. The poet's development of a comical anti-hero, of anti-establishment poetry, of satire, at times brutally employed, would find followers. A tradition, which Ariosto and Aretino strived to emulate, not drawing directly from late medieval sources, but from Pulci, as the mediator between Tuscan anti-literary tradition and the comedies of the Renaissance.

CHAPTER TWO

Ariosto's *Il negromante*: Maestro Iachelino and Margutte

Ariosto completed the comedy *Il negromante* in 1520 at the request of Pope Leo X, but the records we possess indicate that it was first performed in 1528 in Ferrara during the Carnival season.⁹ In the comedy, a necromancer succeeds in duping an entire cast of Cremona's citizens who seek his help. Mastro Iachelino is originally called to Cremona to cure the (false) impotence of Cintio, Massimo's son, who was recently married to noble Abondio's daughter, Emilia. The necromancer succeeds in procuring funds not only from Massimo and from Cintio (who desire opposing outcomes), but also from Camillo, a young man in love with Emilia. After a series of fortunate, or unfortunate, events, the services of Iachelino do not resolve the situations of the Cremonese, and he barely escapes with his life and without riches.

Crucial to note is that Mastro Iachelino, the necromancer, demonstrates no remorse throughout the play and, more than once, boasts of his success. Of the cast, only one member does not completely turn over his faith to the necromancer's arts: Temolo, a servant who seems to analyze accurately the nature of this society, mirroring Ariosto's view of the falsities of life, which multiply in a courtly space. The playwright, in fact, bases the entire action of the comedy on superficial and deceptive appearances, which

⁹ I.A. Portner studies in depth the reasoning behind various datings of *Il negromante*, including an opposing conclusion to my own concerning the construction of Mastro Iachelino. He claims that the comedy was not performed in Rome in 1520 for two reasons: first, because Machiavelli's *Mandragola* was chosen in its place, and secondly, because the characteristics and beliefs of Iachelino were too similar to Pope Pius II's predilections.

call into question every human conviction of control over events. While the *Orlando furioso* emerges as a work based for the most part in fantastical elements, which demonstrates the lack of human control over supernatural events, *Il negromante* focuses on more realistic behavior by men, according to the nature of the comic genre, and concerns a more restricted social stratum: sixteenth-century courtly life. The criticism of society in the comedy takes form in the inability to discern deceptive appearances constructed by men, not by fantastical forces.

Here, I draw a similarity with the work of Pulci, which employs satirical strategies to criticize contemporary society. Pulci takes Platonic Christianity as his object of satire, and in similar fashion Ariosto uses satire, evidenced in attacks on superficiality and foolishness, to criticize the prevailing lifestyle and thought of his time. Indeed as early as the prologue, Ariosto criticizes the misguided state of men, so obsessed with riches, self-worth, and the external that they cannot identify the thief directly placed in front of their eyes:

Questi san tutte le cose che occorrono
di fuor; ma quelle che lor più appertengono,
che fan le mogli, che fan l'altre femine
di casa, mentre essi stan quivi a battere
il becco, non san forse, e non si curano
di saper ... (*Neg.* Prologo:39-44)

Therefore, the true victims of the audience's laughter are Cremona's citizens themselves, who seem too engrossed in their problems or too blind, or still, too ignorant, to grasp the hoaxes orchestrated by Iachelino. In fact, the noble men of Cremona in the comedy seem particularly inept, a judgment that could not have escaped unnoticed by the spectators at the Este court.

On the contrary, Mastro Iachelino represents the only character not reliant on the generosities of ambivalent fortune. The architecture of the play is such that it proves difficult for a spectator to dislike Iachelino, or his methods. I hold that Iachelino has much in common with Pulci's Margutte, the half-sized giant, who despite all his sins, appears just as likeable to fifteenth-century readers as to today's. One has to admire Iachelino's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, to mold his potential victims and strategies to gain greater profit, and most of all, to control the outcome of his intrigues. For Margutte and Iachelino, success derives directly from their dishonest behavior. This characterization of Iachelino as crafty and independent requires further linguistic analysis that will evidence his identification with Pulci's half-sized giant.

Iachelino recalls Margutte not only in attributes but also in its creator's lexical choices. Massimo Scalabrini affirms this connection between Iachelino and Margutte and delineates the most important aspects of Iachelino's character that mirror those of Margutte's: gluttony, heterodoxy, bisexuality, avidity, fraud, and thievery.¹⁰ Here, it is important to note that Ariosto would have had full knowledge of Pulci's *Morgante*, as would also the members of the Este Court.¹¹ Thus, the spectators of the comedy would have recognized very well the characterization of the necromancer, as Scalabrini suggests, in the light of the "picaresque paradigm of the anti-hero in vulgar literary tradition," that is, Margutte (175).

¹⁰ Furthermore, Scalabrini argues that the richness and vitality of Iachelino's personality in the comedy cannot derive from highly cultured humanist tradition or tractates, albeit the necromancer possesses metamorphic abilities like the all-encompassing man of Pico della Mirandola (169).

¹¹ As stated previously, the Duke of Este had requested both a copy of the complete *Morgante* and a separate copy of the Eighteenth Canto containing the first meeting between Morgante and Margutte.

Comparing the gluttony and astuteness of the two anti-heroes, we can find particular passages enlightening. Nibbio, Iachelino's servant, states:

Mio padrone è ben ghiotto, e pien d'astuzia
ma non già de' più cauti e più saggi uomini
del mondo: ch'ove gli appaia una piccola
speranza di guadagno, non considera
se l'impresa è sicura o di pericolo... (*Neg.3.4:1322-26*)

Camillo affirms to Nibbio: “Ah ghiotton, ladro, traditore e perfido, / e tu e tuo padron!,” and Temolo remarks in an aside: “Quasi dettogli ho che pare un ghiottone e un ladro” (*Neg.5.2:1744-45; 5.4:2071-72*). Margutte describes himself similarly: “Tu mi diresti certo ch'io sia ghiotto” (*Morg.18.124:3*). His gluttony climaxes when he describes *l'arte della gola*:

Qui si conviene aver gran discrezione,
saper tutti i segreti, a quante carte,
del fagian, della starna e del cappone,
di tutte le vivande a parte a parte,
dove si truovi morvido il boccone;
e non ti fallirei di ciò parola,
come tener si debba unta la gola. (*Morg.18.123:2-8*)

Ariosto repeats certain lexical choices of Pulci in his characterization of Iachelino:

... Te' tu questi, comprane
due buone paia di capponi, e siano...
tu intendi: fa che di grassezza colino. (*Neg.2.2:574-76*)

Ariosto also gives weight to “starne” in Mastro Iachelino's gastronomic predilections:

Nib. De le tre starne che in pié avete, ditemi,
qual mangiarete?
Astr. Vedra' mi ir beccandole
ad una ad una, et attaccarmi in ultimo
alla più grassa, e tutta divorarmela. (*Neg.3.2:1009-12*)

Deceiving villainy and astute, fox-like character further describe both Iachelino and Margutte. Margutte states:

Io rubo sempre ciò ch'io do d'intoppo,
s'io dovessi portare un orciuolo;
poi al partir son mutol, ma non zoppo.
Se tu dovessi torre un fusaiuolo,
dove tu vai, to' sempre qualche cosa;
ch'io tirerei l'aiuolo a una chiosa. (*Morg.*18.146:3-8)

and in reference to lies:

Delle bugie nessun non se ne vanta,
ché ciò ch'io dico fia sempre il contrario. (*Morg.*18.139:5-6)

Iachelino is reputed as: “l ribaldo (che) s'adopri pel contrario,” “una volpaccia vecchia,”
and “avido di guadagnare assai” (*Neg.*3.5:1338; 1.3:338; 1.3:434-35).

The most recognizable similarities between the two scoundrels consist in their religious difference, their enumeration of sins committed, and their capacity easily to mutate identity. From the *Morgante*:

ed Apollin debbe essere il farnetico,
e Trivigante forse la tregenda.
La fede è fatta come fa il solletico:
per discrezion mi credo che tu intenda.
Or tu potresti dir ch'io fussi eretico;
acciò che invan parola non ci spenda,
vedrai che la mia schiatta non traligna
e ch'io non son terren da porvi vigna.

Poi che m'increbbe il sonar la chitarra,
io cominciai a portar l'arco e 'l turcasso.
Un dì ch'io fe' nella moschea poi sciarra,
e ch'io v'uccisi il mio vecchio papasso,
mi posi allato questa scimitarra
e cominciai pel mondo andare a spasso;
e per compagni ne menai con meco
tutti i peccati o di turco o di greco;

Tanto è ch'io posso andar per tutto 'l mondo
col cappello in su gli occhi, com'io voglio;
com'una schianceria son netto e mondo;
dovunque i' vo, lasciarvi il segno soglio,
come fa la lumaca, e nol nascondo;
e muto fede e legge, amici e scoglio,

di terra in terra, com'io veggo e truovo,
però ch'io fu' cattivo insin nell'uovo. (18.117,119, 141)

Similarly, of Iachelino, Nibbio recounts:

Andiamo come zingari
di paese in paese; e le vestigie
sue tuttavia, dovunque passa, restano,
come de la lumaca, o per più simile
comparazion, di grandine o di fulmine;
sì che di terra in terra, per nascondersi,
si muta nome, abito, lingua, e patria.
Or è Giovanni, or Piero; quando fingesi
greco, quando d'Egitto, quando d'Africa;
et è, per dire il ver, giudeo d'origine,
di quei che fur cacciati di Castilia. (*Neg.*2.1:542-50)

The derivation of Iachelino from the famous paradigm of Margutte demonstrates both an essential knowledge and admiration of Pulci's works and similar authorial intent to construct a satire of contemporary society. Both Pulci and Ariosto aspire to create a character that contradicts the behavior of nobility, defying and ridiculing courtly values and exalting a scoundrel as the comic paradigm. Ariosto's inspiration from Pulci is not apparent only in the *Orlando furioso*, but is also evident in his comic creation of Iachelino. In *Il negromante*, Ariosto follows Pulci's intent to create a satire of society and to portray the anti-hero, by repeating topical vices and lexical choices.

CHAPTER THREE

Pietro Aretino's *La cortigiana*: The Sienese *besso* and Mistreated Servants

Pietro Aretino staged the comedy *La cortigiana* in 1525 in Rome, during his residence there, and revised the work in 1534 in Venice. In both versions of *La cortigiana*, Aretino launches a criticism of the Roman court's lifestyle by presenting an ingenuous Sienese man, Messer Maco, and a rich nobleman of Rome, Messer Parabolano, both of whom fall prey to tricks. Messer Maco, desiring to become a gentleman, is tricked by Maestro Andrea into performing behavior contrary to that of a gentleman. Messer Parabolano, desiring to have sexual relations with a noble woman, is deceived by his servant and a courtesan, and sleeps instead with the wife of a lowly baker. The comedy's first plot development centers around the construction of a fake *cortigiano*, who negates the rules set forth previously by Baldassare Castiglione, and the critical and satirical look into the contradictory culture and lifestyle of the Roman court. The second plot development features Parabolano, who, blinded by his love, falls prey to the sordid plans of servants who exploit his weakness in order to avenge their social situation.

Aretino's comedy affronts a cultural trend, in which men seek to participate in an elevated level of culture and society; yet in doing so, they expose their particularly naïve character. The attack on the papal court and on courtly society reveals a culture that adheres to philosophical and existential principles set forth by Ficino's brand of Platonic Christianity. Aretino's battle to expose what he considers a cultural fallacy mirrors that of

Pulci. Considering that Pulci's fate as a heretic failed to expunge these beliefs from the core of the court's society, Aretino takes up the Pulcian pen in satire. Drawing upon his intent to criticize society, similar to that of Ariosto's, Aretino employs elements from Pulcian works in his elaboration of the double plot of *La cortigiana*.

The plot surrounding Messer Maco, the Sieneſe man deceived by Mastro Andrea, highlights his ingenuous, ridiculous character. A similar conclusion is found in Pulci's short story "La novella dello sciocco ſeneſe," in which two Sieneſe men appear, one with the ludicrous personality found in the Aretinian comedy, while the other's ridiculousness is more indirectly shown. In Pulci's short story, also called the "Novella del picchio ſeneſe," a simple, unnamed Sieneſe citizen attempts to reconnect with Pope Pius II, with whom he passed his childhood years. This objective takes form when he encounters Messer Goro, a fellow Sieneſe, whom he invites to dine with his fellow *cortigiani*.¹² For the disastrous banquet, the ingenuous Sieneſe desires to ſerve peacock (*pavoni*), upon hearing of their fame in Florence and in Rome. Instead, he ſerves deceptively prepared goose (*oca*) with a mutilated beak and cut off legs. The short story continues to demonstrate the ſimplicity of the Sieneſe when he buys a woodpecker (*un picchio*) from a farmer believing it to be a parrot (*un pappagallo*). After ſending the bird to Pope Pius II, the Sieneſe man, loved by his fellow citizens, is derided by the Pope's cultured company for his ingenuous character. The ſimplicity of the Sieneſe man from *La cortigiana* of Aretino bears striking reſemblance to the man from the ſtory of Pulci.

¹² According to Stefano Carrai, Messer Goro is none other than the cousin/secretary of Pope Pius II, Gregorio Loli Piccolomini, who was present at the Aragonese court as a Sieneſe ambassador at the ſame time as Pulci (57).

Regarding Aretino's knowledge of Pulci's story, we can confirm that he would have had three possible methods of acquiring it. The first method is a direct knowledge of an episode in the *Morgante*. Pulci writes:

Il picchio v'era, e va volando a scosse;
che 'l comperò tre lire, è poco, un besso,
perché e' pensò ch'un pappagallo fosse:
mandollo a Corsignan, poi non fu desso,
tanto che Siena ha ancor le gote rosse.
Quivi è il rigogoleto, e 'l fico appresso;
e 'l pappagallo, quel che è daddovero,
ed èvvi il verde e 'l rosso e 'l bianco e 'l nero. (*Morg.*13.53)

Secondly, Aretino could have possessed a copy of the short story itself obtained from his close friend, Antonfrancesco Doni, who was the first editor and printer of Pulci's story.¹³

The third means by which Aretino could have gained knowledge of the story could have been Benedetto Dei's *Cronaca*. These three possibilities solidify a connection between Pulci and Aretino.

Aretino rewrites the story of the simple Sienese in *La cortigiana*, and textually references exactly this episode in Act One, Scene One, displaying from the outset of the comedy the nature of Messer Maco's simplicity:

Messer Maco: Ascolta, un pappagallo favella.
Sanese: Gli è un picchio, padrone.
Messer Maco: Egli è un pappagallo, al tuo dispetto.
Sanese: Egli è uno di quegli animali di tanti colori, che il vostro avolo comperò in cambio d'un pappagallo.
Messer Maco: Io ne ho pur mostre le penne a lo orafo ottonaio, e dice che al paragone elle sono di pappagallo ben fine.
Sanese: Voi siete una bestia, perdonatimi, a credere a l'orafo. (*Cort.*1.1.2)

¹³ For some time, it was believed, according to Carlo Pelligrini's theory in *Luigi Pulci. L'uomo e l'artista*, that Doni counterfeited the short story attributing it to Pulci when, in fact, he had written it himself. Pelligrini's theory has been subsequently replaced by Stefano Carrai who investigates the dating of the story by taking into account Pulci's dedication (53-74).

From this excerpt, the reader can already anticipate similar “Sieneſe” ingenuousness from Meſſer Maco, given that he believes the bird to have been truly a parrot.

The dating and the intent behind Pulci’s ſtory clarify certain ſocio-political realities and a preferred line of literary tradition to which Aretino could have ſubſcribed. Pulci reſided at the Aragonese court along with three Sieneſe ambaaadors, one of whom is the protagonist of the ſhort ſtory: Meſſer Goro. In the dedication of the ſhort ſtory, Pulci ſtates that he wrote it for Madonna Ippolita, having been inſpired by Maſuccio Salernitano, a follower of the eſteemed Boccaccio. Thus, he creates a line of Tuſcan noveliſtic tradition, which anticipates the *Raccolta aragonese* (Orvieto, *Opere minori* 124). However, Orvieto argues further that Pulci’s writing ſurpaſſes the traditional ſcheme of anti-Sieneſe parodies by Florentine citizens, ſuch as thoſe of Boccaccio, Burchiello, and Lorenzo the Magnificent, in order to achieve a true attempt at diſcrediting the Sieneſe in general, and more ſpecifically, the three Sieneſe ambaaadors (124).

Stefano Carrai ſuſtains that Pulci’s work preſents the “irreducible ridiculousneſſ” of the Sieneſe man, and alſo lampoons Meſſer Goro, diſplaying his ſtupidity. Carrai deſcribes the ſhort ſtory as a parody; in other words, as an *exemplum pulciano* (61). The “irreducible ridiculousneſſ” of Aretino’s Sieneſe man, tricked again and again by Maſtro Andrea to perform actions contrary to thoſe of a gentleman, mirror the ſimplicity of the Sieneſe about whom Pulci had previously written. Aretino uſes ſpecific Pulcian references to draw from the tone and material of Florentine tradition.

Within the courſe of the ſecond plot development of *La cortigiana*, the malicious, yet aſtute ſervant Rosso juſtifies his actions againſt his maſter in a converſation with

Aluigia, his courtesan partner in crime. In a long diatribe that denounces all of the injustices committed against servants, one of his remarks specifically references Morgante and Margutte. Aluigia probes Rosso as to why he fears so desperately the *tinello*, the dismal dining area of servants, and Rosso responds:

Aluigia: Dimmi, è così terribile il tinello, che faccia tremare un Rosso?

Rosso: Egli è sì terribile che si sbigottirebbe Morgante e Margutte, non che Catellaccio, che la minor prova che facesse era di mangiarsi un castrone, duo paia di capponi e cento ova a un pasto. (*Cort.5.15.3*)

Rosso asserts that not even Morgante and Margutte would live under such conditions while describing the abysmal setting in which servants are forced to live. Aretino's use of the animalistic form of the two giants serves as an establishment of the audience's knowledge of the two characters and of their continued fame decades after the *Morgante* began to circulate. Aretino's literary reprise of the famous characters from the *Morgante* establishes his culture and his intent for the *Cortigiana*.

As Franca Ageno affirms of Pulci's *Morgante*, the two giants represent the violent, animalistic aspects of life (XVI). Aretino, similarly, uses the role of Rosso and Aluigia, particularly their conversation about living conditions, to evoke the same image of violence and inequity in Roman courtly life. The Pulcian giants are known for their poor living conditions, tricking each other for food, and, like their counterpart Catellaccio, eating *capponi*, but not even they could stand the conditions of the *tinello*. The comparison between these living conditions and the Pulcian giants re-evokes the literary paradigm of Morgante and Margutte.

The character of Rosso can also derive from the paradigm of Margutte, inasmuch as both have been identified with the *servus* of Latin comedies. Rosso appeals to the

audience as a thief, one willing to do anything to make money, unscrupulously deceiving his master. Rosso, in a monologue, states:

Io son pur diventato cursore, che cito le roffiane dinanzi al mio padrone, il quale mi vuol far suo maestro di casa. Io starei prima a patto d'esser nihil, che maggiordomo, i quali ingrassano e se medesimi e le concubine e i concubini de i bocconi che i ladroni furano a le nostre fami; io ne conosco uno tanto traditore, che presta ad usura al suo Monsignore i denari che gli ruba nel governo de la casa. O ghiottoni, o asinoni, che cosa crudele è 'l fatto vostro! Voi andate al destro con le torce bianche, e noi al letto al buio: voi bevete vini divini, e noi aceti, muffe e cerconi; voi carni cappate, e noi Buovo d'Antona in vaccareccia. (*Cort.*4.13.1-2)

Rosso's characterization of himself, of his fellow servants, and of their masters bears a resemblance to Pulci's satiric method. Rosso calls others *ghiottoni*, yet it is easy to identify his vices with those which he ascribes to others; his description of masters and servants recalls Pulci's sonnet "Costor che fan sí gran disputazione," in which he speaks of fine wines and of going into *valle buia*:

costor credon trovarvi
e beccafichi e gli ortolan' pelati
e buon' vin' dolci e letti sprimacciati;
e vanno drieto a' frati.
Noi ce n'andrem, Pandolfo, in valle buia
sanza sentir più cantar alleluia! (18-23)

The fundamental difference in his speech and Margutte's confession is justification concerning social status: Rosso feels justified in deceiving his master because of what he has suffered, while Margutte seems to feel satisfied with his life and his actions. Both characters show no remorse, yet Rosso seems to be cognizant of the negative quality of his action to the point of justification, while Margutte's awareness of wrongdoing only leads to further exaltation of it.

Aretino's numerous literary works and public life reflect his intentions and his methods for describing surrounding, contemporary lifestyle and culture with pointed

criticism. Like Pulci, he rebelled against the cultural trends of the age, criticizing political-social reality with satiric genius. Furthermore, Aretino adopts a linguistic register for his plays, which draws him nearer to a spoken, living language, as Pulci had done decades before in his mock-epic; these choices allow the playwright to express realistic characters with immediacy and with a burlesque sense of the comic. Aretino, highly admired by Ariosto, finds himself in a similar situation: while he fully recognizes the false aspects of the court, he is in a complicit condition with the court; yet more similarly to the Pulcian method, Aretino revels in programmatic anti-establishment literary choices. He utilizes the same mimetic realism of Pulci within the traditional aspects of comedy. In *La cortigiana*, Aretino effectively reinterprets Pulcian works and adopts Pulcian methods as they serve his literary intentions.

CONCLUSION

The *Morgante* attained immediate success in Florentine circles, across the Italian peninsula, and in areas of Europe, sparking the imitation of the two Pulcian paradigms Morgante and Margutte. It should not be surprising that sixteenth-century comedies draw inspiration from Margutte, as the half-size giant resembles the stock character of the *servus* in classical comedies. In fact, it becomes only natural to look to Pulcian characters in an attempt to satirize and lampoon contemporary society. The state of relations at the Medici court inspires Pulci's attitude towards his contemporaries in his literary production, and demonstrates key points of similarity among Pulci, Ariosto, and Aretino. In *Il negromante* and *La cortigiana*, we find writings and representations for the court, members of which possessed a cultural formation capable of unlocking references to the comic paradigms of Pulci's literary production.

Ariosto adopted the paradigm of Margutte in order to create Mastro Iachelino, a character of wit in the face of alternating fortunes, who displays the same sins exalted by Margutte: gluttony, heterodoxy, bisexuality, avidity, fraud, and thievery. Ariosto demonstrates his attachment to Pulcian features through this analogous character, common themes, and linguistic repetition, all in virtue of the shared goal of criticism of society. Aretino, likewise, criticizes the debased state of Rome that he witnessed firsthand by illustrating the false pretenses of gentlemen and the wretched conditions of servants. His methods of attaining this criticism bring Pulci's characters, themes, and language to light. The playwright's use of the story of the ingenuous Sieneese reinterprets

an event that Pulci had first turned into a literary work. Finally, Aretino solidifies his Pulcian heritage by directly employing the paradigm of Morgante and Margutte in subject and in language.

A study of the literary fortune of Pulci's characters does not limit the innovation attributed to these playwrights, in the same way that a literary tradition, which accumulates in the *Morgante*, does not negate Pulci's creativity and originality. The aspects of the *Morgante* which tend towards a comic, realistic language and style natural to comedy create a bond between Pulci and playwrights. The similarities I have pointed out among Pulci, Ariosto, and Aretino bear witness to the ways in which Pulci and his work flourished in the early Renaissance and how his material, tone, and style were easily adapted in the theater.

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