SKENÈ

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

Diegesis and Mimesis

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi

Flavia Palma*

Between Mimesis and Diegesis in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Girolamo Parabosco

Abstract

In Renaissance Italy the debate on literary genres almost ignored the novella form and while this theoretical void allowed for freedom in composition, it also caused generic confusion and brought forth peculiar overlaps between novellas and dramas. Girolamo Parabosco (1524-57) is a case in point of this peculiar commixture. The seventeen tales of his collection, entitled *I diporti*, and his eight comedies partially share common plots, but, if in sixteenth-century Italy tales normally inspired the composition of dramas, Parabosco actually wrote his plays before the novellas, following a quite unusual practice. The employment of dialogues and narrations in these texts is also peculiar; following Boccaccio's example, many writers blended narrations and direct speeches in order to achieve a vivid representation of the events, while the novellas Parabosco derived from his comedies (7, 9, 13, and 15) are sparing in dialogues and may be defined as notably diegetic and particularly attentive to the narrator's 'ideological' function (Genette 1980: 256) which emerges as especially prominent. In order to differentiate his novellas from their dramatic sources, he originally exploited the moods of speech and provided his readers with a 'new' product, thus indulging their tastes. Looking at his comedies, this hypothesis may be further supported by the presence of 'canonical' soliloquies in addition to clearly narrative ones. Parabosco might have considered the latter to be perfectly suitable for dramatic mimesis, a strategy he possibly derived from the contemporary commedia dell'arte scenarios, at which he also looked in order to satisfy his audience's taste for this kind of popular theatre.

Introduction

Born in Piacenza in 1524, Girolamo Parabosco grew up in Venice where he became first organist at the Basilica of San Marco in 1551. His professional career, though, was not exclusively dedicated to music and he early turned out to be an extremely versatile and successful writer, authoring madrigals, letters and, most importantly, a collection of novellas entitled *I diporti*, eight comedies, and a tragedy. The novellas and the comedies are particularly worth investigating since they offer a rather unexpected contribution

* University of Verona - flavia.palma@univr.it

to the contemporary debate on literary genres, indirectly highlighting their relation with the different employments of the moods of speech.[1]

While Italian sixteenth-century playwrights usually drew on novellas to write their dramas, Parabosco peculiarly adopted an opposite practice, as he probably derived the plots of some of his novellas from his own comedies. This is the case of four tales in *I diporti* (7, 9, 13, and 15), which are indebted to a series of dramatic antecedents. Interestingly enough, unlike the other novellas in the collection, which usually display a 'standard' mixture of dialogic and narrative passages, as was customary since Boccaccio, the ones that show a direct filiation from the plays always exhibit a series of strategies apparently aimed at stressing pure narrative and overt narrators as the characteristic mood of the genre (in Genette's terminology, 1980: 161ff.). In this regard, not only does Parabosco's unusual method of composition offer a fine opportunity to analyze how a Renaissance author reshaped his own material, but it also provides us with a stimulating, if indirect, outlook on his ideas about drama and novellas, as well as on his peculiar alertness to the audience's demands and tastes.

In the first part of this article I will suggest that in order to entice ever new readers by offering seemingly fresh literary works, while in fact 'recycling' his own dramatic plots, Parabosco exploited a stylistic device involving the moods of speech. He thus foregrounded narrative manipulation as a fit way to differentiate the two genres. On the other hand, an 'undramatic' use of narrative in some of the soliloquies of his comedies might contradict this assumption, suggesting instead unawareness of the distinctive generic dimension of the moods. As I will show in the second part of the article, however, in following the commedia dell'arte scenarios and their narrative proclivity, Parabosco did not seem to perceive their unrelatedness to the scenic action. This seems further to suggest that the functions of the moods of speech probably became relevant at a later stage, during the process of transmodalization.

---

[1] As a member of three different literary Academies (Accademia dei Fratteggiani, Accademia dei Pellegrini, and Accademia Veniera), Parabosco was well-established in the Venetian contemporary cultural and literary milieu and his career certainly benefited from the vivacious cultural relationships that he entertained with many sixteenth-century famous literati, such as Pietro Aretino. For a detailed description of Parabosco's life and works see, among others, Di Filippo Bareggi 1988; Feldman 1991; Pirovano 2005a. For more general discussion of Parabosco's *I diporti* see Bragantini 1990; Di Francia 1924; Fido 1988; Guglielminetti 1972; Guglielminetti 1984; Pirovano 2005a.

Renaissance Theories of the Novella

During the sixteenth century, Italy saw a growing interest in the definition of genres.[2] Nevertheless, the novella form, despite its great popularity among readers, did not receive much theoretical attention. Only one treatise, Francesco Bonciani's 1574 *Lezione sopra il comporre delle novelle* [*Lesson on Novellas Writing*], was completely dedicated to a theorization of the novella, while other works were only partially devoted to it. Francesco Sansovino briefly dealt with it in his introduction to the fourth edition of his *Cento novelle scelte* (1571) [*One Hundred Selected Novellas*], entitled *Discorso sopra il 'Decameron'* [*Speech on the 'Decameron'*], and in 1572 Girolamo Bargagli similarly confined his analysis to the final section of his *Dialogo de' giuochi* [*Dialogue on Games*]. The lack of a vivacious debate caused both freedom and confusion. Although he dealt with comical novellas only, in his *Lezione* Bonciani took Aristotle's *Poetics* as a model, and adjusted his discussion of tragedy and epics to comedy and humorous prose tales. Being limited to such texts, Bonciani's contribution had no major theoretical relevance. A couple of years earlier, Bargagli had gone no further when comparing the narrator of a novella to an actor: he considered the performative and oral dimension of storytelling and gave no instruction on how novellas should be written.[3]

In addition to these cross-references to the theatrical performance, many sixteenth-century Italian writers tried their hand at different genres, thus creating peculiar blends.[4] In his collection of novellas *Le piacevoli e amorose notti dei novizi* [*The Pleasant and Amorous Nights of the Novices*] (dating between 1555 and 1561, but published only at the end of the eighteenth century), Pietro Fortini, for instance, encapsulated within the narrative frame a

---

[2] On the Renaissance theoretical definition of the genre and the influence of the classics, in particular Aristotle, see Weinberg 1961; Javitich 1999; Norton 1999; Villari 2012. For a general discussion of the Renaissance theoretical definition of the novella, see Gibaldi 1975.

[3] "Besides, the person who tells a novella must not always be a mere narrator, but sometimes he must speak as if he were an actor, embodying this or that character of the novella, and also in a way that the character itself could not have done differently, even if it had perfectly spoken" ("Colui oltre a questo, che la novella racconta, non ha da essere sempre puro narratore, ma talora, come se istrione fosse, dee parlare o in persona di questo o di quello di cui si tratta nella novella, e parlare anco in tal modo che colui stesso, quando avesse ottimamente detto, non potesse altrimenti aver parlato", Bargagli 1996: 149-50). Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Italian passages are mine.

[4] In sixteenth-century Italy, connections between the novella form and the drama were not unusual: see on this Baratto 1977; Padoan 1982; Borsellino 1989; Guidotti 2000; Barberi Squarotti 2006.

number of dramas which were to be performed by the characters in front of the *novellatori*. Cinthio too, like Parabosco, employed the same plots in both dramas and novellas, but, as pointed out in his dedicatory letter to cardinal Aluigi da Este in the second part (*deca*) of his 1565 *Gli ecatommiti* [*The Hecatommithi*], he opted for an opposite route – from the novellas to the plays: "As you were very pleased to see the performance of these tragic events, so now reading them in the narrative form, which inspired me to write theatrical versions, should not displease you" (Giraldi Cinzio 2012: 371).[5]

As a matter of fact Parabosco did not clearly say what he wrote first: what is apparent, though, is that all his plays, with the exceptions of *Il ladro*, *La fantesca*, and *La progne*, share plot correspondences with his novellas. For the theatre, he penned a tragedy, *La progne*, published in Venice in 1548, and eight comedies, printed between 1546 and 1556: *La notte* [*The Night*] (1546); *Il viluppo* [*The Tangle*][6] (1547); *L'hermafrodito* [*The Hermaphrodite*] (1549); *I contenti* [*The Happy People*] (1549); *Il marinaio* [*The Sailor*] (1550); *Il pellegrino* [*The Pilgrim*] (1552); *Il ladro* [*The Thief*] (1555); *La fantesca* [*The Maidservant*] (1556). Repeatedly published during the sixteenth-century, these comedies were not written only to be read, but were likely meant for performance, as a few surviving references seem to confirm. In his 1549 cookbook *Banchetti, compositioni di vivande e apparecchio generale* [*Feasts, compositions of food, and general setting*], Cristoforo di Messisburgo recorded how on 14 February 1548 *La notte* was performed at his house on the occasion of a Carnival feast (Padoan 1982: 199; Pirovano 2005a: 37; Vecchi 1977: 6). Textual evidence too points to the same conclusion. The comedies' own prologues often include allusions to the speaker's apparel and to the presence of an audience, frequently addressed as *ascoltatori* [hearers] (in *Il ladro*) or *spettatori* [spectators] (in *La fantesca*, and in *I contenti*), as well as final cues that anticipate

---

[5] ". . . come ella si prese molto diletto in vedere rappresentare in scena questi avenimenti tragici, così non le debba essere ora discaro leggergli in quella guisa descritti che mi porse materia di dar loro forma di tragedia". A further confirmation of the fact that Cinthio's draw on his novellas to write his tragedies can also be found in the *Lettera del signor Bartolomeo Cavalcanti* [*Letter of sir Bartolomeo Cavalcanti*], addressed to Cinthio himself in 1560 and appended to the *Hecatommithi*'s first edition in 1565: "Besides, your novellas . . . are profitable sources for comedies and tragedies, . . . which I know you have already composed and some of which have already been performed, such as your never enough praised *Orbecche*, the *Altile*, the *Selene*, the *Antivalomeni*, and the others, which I saw performed too" ("Oltre di ciò dalle favole vostre . . . si ha larghissimo campo di comporre e comedie e tragedie, . . . delle quali so che voi n'avete già composte e rappresentate alquante, come la vostra non mai a bastanza lodata *Orbecche*, l'*Altile*, la *Selene*, gli *Antivalomeni* e le altre, delle quali ne sono anch'io in parte stato spettatore", Giraldi Cinzio 2012: 1886).

[6] Viluppo is also the proper name of a servant in the comedy. For further details on Parabosco's production see Pirovano 2005a: 43.

the entrance of other characters.[7] Besides, in *Il viluppo* the prologue takes the form of a dialogue, in which two characters mention that the comedy itself will be subsequently acted in a private house (Vecchi 1977: 7). Thus, one can safely assume that Parabosco conceived his pieces for performance, while the publication of the scripts was probably meant to reach a wider public and to earn the author higher profits (see Pirovano 2005a; Guglielminetti 1984).

Moving to Parabosco's novellas, two editions of *I diporti* were printed while he was alive. The *editio princeps* is undated, but several internal pieces of evidence set its publication during the late spring of 1551; the second edition dates to 1552, and its proximity to the first, as well as to the other reprints issued by the end of the sixteenth century, prove the success of this collection among readers (Pirovano 2005a: 3-5).[8] Donato Pirovano aptly pointed out that, due to the difficulties in dating the single novellas of *I diporti*, one cannot state for sure what came first, the novellas or the plays (2005a: 31). However, the publication dates suggest the novellas' filiation from the plays, with the only exception of *Il pellegrino*, a comedy published in 1552, a year after *I diporti*'s first edition.[9] This would make of Parabosco an exceptional instance in the panorama of Italian Renaissance literature and drama, since, countering the common practice which normally saw playwrights drawing on novellas for inspiration, he plausibly adapted his dramatic plots into narratives, making the novellas flow out of the plays

---

[7] In *Il marinaio*, for example, we read: "I am here to tell you the argument . . ." ("Io era comparso per farvi l'argomento . . .", Parabosco 1977b: 4r). In *L'hermafrodito*: ". . . I come into view in front of you dressed in this way as you see me . . ." (". . . io comparisco innanzi a voi così vestito come mi vedete . . .", Parabosco 1977d: 4r). In *I contenti*: "These eyes, these tongues, and these ears, by which I am almost wholly covered, are now shown by me to you, spectators . . ." ("Questi occhi, queste lingue e queste orecchie di cui quasi tutto coperto mi vedete sono a voi spettatori da me mostrate . . .", Parabosco 1977a: 4r). In *La fantesca*: "Here is the argument, spectators" ("Eccovi l'argomento spettatori", Parabosco 1556: 5). In *Il ladro*: ". . . this comedy, for which you came here . . ." (". . . questa comedia, per la quale sete venuti . . .", Parabosco 1555: 4r). I slightly modernized the punctuation and the spelling of the sixteenth-century originals.

[8] Four novellas contained in *I diporti* had already been published in 1548 in Parabosco's *Secondo libro delle Lettere amorose* [*Second book of the Amorous Letters*], yet none of the texts there published find correspondences in Parabosco's dramas. The four novellas published in the *Secondo libro delle Lettere amorose* became the fourth, the tenth, the fourteenth, the sixteenth novellas in *I diporti*. See Pirovano 2005b: 661-2.

[9] See, for example, Pellizzaro 1901: 169-70, 178; Padoan 1982: 204, 207-8; Magnanini 2001: 218. While acknowledging the relations between Parabosco's narrative and dramatic production, Fido (1988) focused on the debts of Parabosco's works to the ones written by other authors (such as Boccaccio and Bibbiena), rather than on the mutual relations between Parabosco's own novellas and dramas. For more details about this issue, see Appendix.

(see Guidotti 2000). As I will try to demonstrate, by moving from a dramatic to a strictly narrative context, Parabosco departed from his contemporaries' practice inspired by Boccaccio. He did not resort to mixed diegesis (Plato *Rep.* 392c; Halliwell 2013), but clearly differentiated the two genres stylistically so as to offer his readers two clear-cut products. The moods of speech were key to this.

Rewriting Comedies for the Book: Diegesis in Parabosco's Novellas

Among the seventeen novellas of *I diporti*, one finds a group of tales whose plots closely resemble the sequence of events staged in some of Parabosco's comedies. In particular, the seventh novella recalls one of the storylines of *I contenti* (1549); the ninth is based on a practical joke which can be found in both *Il viluppo* (1547) and *L'hermafrodito* (1549), while the events narrated in novella 13 are remindful of *La notte* (1546), *Il viluppo* (1547), and *Il marinaio* (1550); also, the plot of the fifteenth novella corresponds to a story told by a character in *L'hermafrodito* (1549) (Pirovano 2005a: 31; Magnanini 2001: 208, 218).[10] Pirovano has suggested that these novellas especially display such a reduced use of dialogues that they seem mere diegetic summaries of the corresponding comedies (2005a: 31). Indeed, they privilege either indirect speech (7, 9, 15) or pure narration with no inclusion of conversations (13), clearly departing from the other novellas of the same collection, which often include direct speeches. This transposition of dialogues into narratized or transposed speech in indirect form, as Genette would put it,[11] displays the centrality of the narrator, which Parabosco likely perceived as pivotal in his narrative adaptations. The narrator guides the reader's interpretation of the text by providing an ideological evaluation of the events (Genette 1980: 256); he mediates between the text and the reader, employing both comments and rhetorical devices, such as familiar similes, which allude to a shared cultural background and therefore strengthen the relationship between readers and narrative voice. This negotiation practice clearly distinguishes the novella from drama, which does not allow for the presence of a mediator who may influence the readers/spectators (Segre 1980). One clear example comes from the play *I contenti* and novella 7: in both a young woman is married to an old man who cheats on her, but

---

[10] Pirovano (2005a: 31) also suggested that novellas 6 and 16 might have been successfully adapted for a stage performance. Besides, for Bianchini, novella 11 derives from *La notte* and *Il viluppo* (see Parabosco 2005: 188n). See also the Appendix.

[11] I am here referring to Genette's tripartite classification with regard to narrative distance: "reported speech", "transposed speech, in indirect style", and "narratized speech" (1980: 169-73). For a specific analysis of diegesis and mimesis, see Genette 1976.

she too is unfaithful and at some point she manages to pass her lover off as a cousin of hers who has just returned home from the East. In the play, the credulous husband delivers a soliloquy centred on his wife's virtue:

> Oh, che donna da bene! Oh, che santa! Oh, che Lucretia! Oh, che Iudit! Con quanto amore ella m'ha ripreso, con quanto tremore perch'io mi rimanga di questo amore! Ma io non so chi sia questo suo cugino. Pure ei m'ha aspetto d'uomo galante, ancora che così vestito egli paia un facchino; egli non si deve, per la fretta del venire costì, ancora aver potuto fare altri vestimenti. (Parabosco 1977a: 23r-v)

> [Oh, what a good woman! Oh, what a saint! Oh, what a Lucretia! Oh, what a Judith! With such love she scolded me, with such trepidation so that I end this new love! But I do not know this cousin of her. However, he looks like a gentleman, despite the fact that, dressed in this way, he seems a porter; he might not have had the time to get dressed otherwise because he was in a hurry to come here.]

In the corresponding novella, Parabosco recast this soliloquy as follows:

> Il quale, *mezo confuso e tutto vergognato*, credette ciò che la moglie detto gli aveva . . . Onde *il buono uomo*, rampognando se stesso e togliendosi la sentenza volontaria contra, col capo basso aspettando di peggio e pareggiando la moglie in onestà con la romana Lucrezia, se ne andò per i fatti suoi . . . (Parabosco 2005: 155; emphasis added)

> [He, half confused and completely ashamed, believed in what his wife had told him . . . Therefore, the good man, blaming himself and thinking he was wrong, with a hanging head expecting a worse fate and comparing his wife with the Roman Lucrece for her honesty, went his own way . . .]

By ironically labelling him as "buono uomo" (good man), the narrator focuses his attention on the old man's shame and confusion in front of his wife's (seemingly) earnest behaviour, thus orienting the readers' views towards the adoption of a positive, Boccaccian approach to young women involved in extramarital affairs. The extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator allows the reader to perceive an ironic distance between his own point of view and that of the old man. A similar narrative irony crops up also at the beginning of novella 9, where again an old man in love with a young woman is presented as excessively forward to the point that he does not care to be "old and readier to have his bread cut, than to cut someone else's flesh".[12] Irony resides in these two 'cutting of food' metaphors which, imbued with

---

[12] ". . . vecchio e più tosto buono per farsi tagliar il pane, che ad altrui voler tagliar la carne . . ." (Parabosco 2005: 164).

sexual innuendo, unveil his ridiculous presumptuousness and pretended sexual vigour.

The limited presence of dialogues in these novellas makes room for frequent narratorial interventions in the form of either implicit or explicit comments, which makes the narrative voice far from neutral. In novella 7, for instance, he heavily underlines the old man's wife un-Roman preparedness to receive her lover: "The knock was heard by Betta, who would have heard even silence, since Love had made her ears sharp".[13] Also, the employment of parenthetical remarks with commonplaces establishes a mutual understanding between narrator and reader, tacitly suggesting shared judgement: "Thus spoken, she started (as one skilled in doing it) crying her heart out so as if a son had just died at her feet".[14] The histrionic talent of the unfaithful wife is here stressed and she is introduced as a consummate actress, accustomed, when suspected to be unchaste, to putting on feigned shows of sadness in order to cover up her extramarital affairs. The reader is thus indirectly admonished that appearances can be deceptive. Parenthetical remarks, clichés and irony clearly unveil the presence of an overt narrator, who negotiates the message with his readers, guiding their reception.

Due to the different strategies employed in the two genres, the transposition of the plots from drama to narrative also entails some necessary rewriting of the comic scenes in order to make up for the lack of the performative dimension. An example is offered by novella 9, which, based on *Il viluppo* and *L'hermafrodito*, develops a storyline common to both: a servant plays a vicious practical joke on his womanizer master and on a necromancer, whose wife he seduces. After convincing the former, Giuvenale, that the woman he likes will yield to his desire, the servant talks him into hiding into a sepulchre. At the same time, he asks the latter, Nebbia, to fetch a skull there preserved and advises him to disguise himself as a woman in order not to be recognized. Predictably, as soon as Nebbia approaches the tomb, Giuvenale grabs him, mistaking him for the woman he lusts after. The two men are eventually put to flight by the servant's friends who, masqueraded as devils, scare them to death. In the meantime, the servant, disguised as Nebbia, tricks the man's wife into sleeping with him. Later on, coming home to her, the necromancer finds out what has happened and realizes that he has been deceived by the crafty servant. In Act 4 of *L'hermafrodito* the tomb scene is dramatized as follows:[15]

---

[13] ". . . il quale picchio sentito dalla Betta, che il silenzio avrebbe sentito, così le aveva Amore le orecchie assottigliate . . ." (Parabosco 2005: 153)

[14] "E così detto, incominciò (come quella che sempre lo sapea fare) così dirottamente a piangere, che pareva che un figlio le fosse morto ai piedi" (Parabosco 2005: 154).

[15] Another very similar scene can be found in *Il viluppo* (Parabosco 1977c: 52v).

MINIATO	Bene sia venuto la mia dolce vita, ora mi saziarò pur di te, stella mia rilucente!
NEBBIA	Ahimè! O santo Bolino, o san Bernardo, incatena questo diavolo!
MINIATO	Ove ne fuggi? Sta' salda. Or ch'io t'ho presa, non mi fuggirai. Mille anni è ch'io t'aspetto!
NEBBIA	Croce, croce, acqua santa, qui habitat in adiutorio!
MINIATO	Che acqua! Io ti voglio portar con esso meco. Sta' per virtù di chi ti costringe!
	(Parabosco 1977d: 4ov)

[MINIATO Welcome, my sweet life, I will now glut myself on you, my shining star! // NEBBIA Alas! O saint Bolino, o saint Bernard, chain up this devil! // MINIATO Where are you running? Stand still! Now I have you, you can't escape. I've been waiting for you for ages! // NEBBIA Cross, cross, holy water, qui habitat in adiutorio! // MINIATO What water? I want to take you with me. Stay, I command you!]

Comparing this scene with the corresponding passage in the novella, one may notice how Parabosco expounded the episode, adopting a variable focalization that combines the narrator's point of view, who ironically judges the characters from an extradiegetic 'position', with the necromancer's:

Il quale [Nebbia], tosto che dove era l'arca fu giunto . . . *il buon vecchio*, che fin allora con grandissimo desiderio in persona d'altri aspettata l'aveva, se 'l prese per lo braccio subitamente . . . uscendo fuor del sepolcro. Sentendosi ritenere il braccio là entro, e appresso vedendone uscir colui, credendo che veramente il diavolo fosse, incominciò Nebbia a gridare *e con mille orazioni e nomi* a volersi aitare, ma il vecchio per ciò non lo lasciava, anzi . . . si sforzava d'accostargli la bocca al viso; per che pareva al negromante che egli *vivo vivo* se lo volesse *inghiottire*. (Parabosco 2005: 168; emphasis added)

[As soon as the necromancer arrived at the tomb . . . *the old good man*, who with great desire had been waiting for him under someone else's appearance, immediately grabbed him by the arm . . . and jumped out of the sepulchre. Realizing that his arm was being held and seeing him coming out from the tomb, [and] mistaking him for a devil, Nebbia started crying and imploring the blessing of the saints *with a thousand prayers*, but the old man did not let him go, and, on the contrary, . . . made several efforts to put his own mouth to his cheek, so that the necromancer thought that he wanted *to swallow him alive.*]

While in the two comedies the action revolved around a series of funny misunderstandings, here the narratized speech is made livelier by the al-

ternation of the points of view of the extradiegetic narrator and of the nec-
romancer, whose being terrified is conveyed by apt lexical choices, such as
the emphatic verb *inghiottire* [to swallow] or the vividly expressive *vivo vi-
vo* [alive, alive]. The laughable tone of the narrative and the derisory rep-
resentation of both Giuvenale and Nebbia make up for the lack of 'scenic
action', making them appear as ridiculous and foolish to the readers' eyes.

Parabosco's rewriting practice shows that he perceived the need to com-
pensate for the absence of the performative dimension of drama by adopt-
ing stylistic strategies specifically devised for the written text: from a var-
iable focalization to the narrator's implicit and explicit comments. At the
same time, it should also be noticed that the *I diporti*'s own structure may
have played a role in this. The novellas are enclosed by a frame tale about a
group of learned gentlemen, members of the Accademia Veniera, who gath-
ered together and recounted stories for recreation (*diporti* meaning pas-
times or diversions). Although the single novellas are narrated by differ-
ent *novellatori*, they share the same point of view, thus providing the reader
with a unified outlook. The narrator's frequent ironical interventions might
in fact be ascribed to this overarching gentleman-like external perspective.

Although Parabosco did not write any theoretical work on literary and
dramatic genres, from his production one may draw a series of implicit
suggestions on what his conception of them might have been. His aware-
ness of the specific function of the moods of speech in drama and narrative
emerges precisely when he works on the same plots in his plays and novel-
las. Indeed, struggling not to produce what might be perceived as mere du-
plicates, in his tales he emphasized the narratized or transposed speech,
instead of dialogues – typical of drama –, and at the same time strove to
make pure diegesis as lively as possible through vivid lexical choices, ef-
fects of focalization, and a subtle handling of the narrator's ideological
function. It is not coincidental that in the tales of *I diporti* not derived from
his comedies he did not pay the same attention to the moods of speech,
while still relying upon the aforementioned narrative *outillage*.

Supporting this view, also in the only case of an ascertained filiation of a
play from a novella, he followed a strategy meant clearly to distinguish the
play from the tale. As already mentioned, *Il pellegrino* (1552) derives from
the twelfth novella of *I diporti*, a tale which included a large number of di-
rect speeches. This made the moods-of-speech device 'unavailable' to his
end. Thus, Parabosco had to find another solution, and what he resorted to
turned out to be quite extraordinary: he rewrote the whole story in verse,
making it stand out within the corpus of his comedies entirely written in
prose.

Diegesis on the Stage: Parabosco's Soliloquies and the Commedia dell'Arte

Even though Parabosco often devised his soliloquies as 'standard' self-addresses spoken by solitary characters revealing their innermost feelings, a few of them are shaped as brief narratives, which appear dramatically unjustified at both a psychological and dramatic level. In fact, they actually function as short inserts that, on the one hand, suggest the soliloquizer's character traits, and, on the other, indirectly provide the audience with pieces of information about the characters or the plot. *L'hermafrodito* offers a couple of especially revealing examples. The first one can be found in Act 3, where the servant Cucca recalls his recent imposture at the expense of a gentleman and an old woman:

> Cancaro alla mavagía! So che io per un pezzo ho avuto uno stordimento così fatto. Mai più ne bevo! Ma ora bisogna ch'io mi guardi bene intorno, ché la vecchia mi deve andar cercando e per aventura in compagna de' birri. Cancaro, la fu bella! Venendo da Trevigi così a piè a piè, io ritrovai una vecchiatta in compagnia d'una sua figliuola giovanetta. La quale così ragionando . . . mi disse ch'ella veniva per riscuotere un lasso di una sua patrona morta, che gli avea lasciato per lo maritar di sua figliuola, ma che il gentiluomo ch'avea da sborsare i dinari . . . non voleva darli, se prima non sapeva che la fanciulla fosse maritata e vedeva il marito. . . . E finalmente [il gentiluomo] non vuolse espedir la vecchia prima che l'altro giorno e così si fece una bella cena e volle che io e la fanciulla soli – ha ha ha, io creppo delle risa! – si richiudessimo in una camera. La vecchia fece ogni opera per venirci anco lei, ma mai il buon vecchio gentiluomo non volse, dicendo che non era lecito ch'ella ci turbasse il nostro piacere. La povera vecchia non osava dire ch'io non era suo genero; da l'altro lato dubitava di quello che gli intravenne. . . . La vecchia mi deve andar cercando. Ma ecco ecco Miniato, il mio padrone. Oh, a lui e a quel negromante la voglio anco far bella. Adagio pure, già me l'ho pensata, perché egli m'ha detto di non so che teste di morto. (Parabosco 1977d: 30v-31r)

> [Damned malvasia! I know that I have been in a terrible daze for a while. I will never drink it again! But now I have to be careful, since the old woman must be searching for me, maybe even with the watchmen. Oh boy, how cool it was! On my way from Treviso, while I was walking on my own, I bumped into an old woman with her young pretty daughter . . . She said that she would cash in the bequest of a dead mistress of hers, who had left her some money for her daughter's wedding, but that the man who should give her that money . . . would not give it to her until he knew that the girl was actually married and had met the husband. . . . Finally, [the gentleman] did not let the old woman leave before the following day and we had supper

together, and he wanted me and the girl – ah ah ah, I die laughing! – to lock ourselves alone in a bedroom. The old woman did her best in order to come in with us, but the good old gentleman did not consent, saying that she should not trouble our pleasure. The poor old woman did not dare to say that I wasn't her son-in-law; on the other hand, she suspected what actually happened. . . . The old woman must be searching for me. Here is Miniato, my master. Oh, I want to trick both him and that necromancer. But soft, I have already planned everything, because he told me about some skulls.]

Introduced by the stage direction "Cucca solo" [Cucca alone], the soliloquy initially develops as a normal self-address, at least until Cucca starts talking about the old woman. In fact, he already knows what he has done, and he is not debating within himself a particular issue. His only aim seems to be here to inform the audience about what has just gone by, although indirectly. The passage itself is framed by the expression "la vecchia mi deve andar cercando", and as Cucca pronounces it for the second time, thus closing his tale, he resumes his 'theatrical status' and starts thinking about what he will be doing in the here and now of the dramatic action.

Referring to this same soliloquy, Magnanini noticed that "in Act 3 of *L'hermafrodito*, Parabosco interrupts the action of the plot with a novella narrated by the servant Cucca. Although entertaining, the tale is completely extraneous to the action" (2001: 213). Acknowledging the lack of relations between this tale and the actual plot of the comedy, Pellizzaro also remarked that its main purpose is to make the audience laugh (1901: 172). Yet, even though Cucca's brief tale is self-contained and shares no connection with the dramatized events, it is far from being useless, in that it provides a fine introduction to the character's crafty and malicious nature; the trick he played on the old woman reveals him as the prototype of the smart servant, coherently anticipating the practical joke he will later play on his master and to which he alludes at the end of his soliloquy.

Parabosco tried to make Cucca's tale reflect the point of view of the speaker himself. At the turning point of his narration, Cucca uses a colloquial parenthetical exclamation, "io creppo delle risa" [I die laughing], and also resorts to typically spoken expressions, such as diminutives and hypocoristic terms ("vecchietta", "giovanetta", "figliuola", "il buon vecchio", "la povera vecchia"). In particular, the way he refers to the old woman varies depending on her attitude towards him: before he starts telling what has happened, she is perceived as a potential threat, since she is searching for him in order to take her revenge, and he accordingly calls her "la vecchia" ["the old woman"]; then, when he actually begins his narration, he calls her "la vecchietta" ["the little old woman"], a diminutive which reveals how unprepared she was to what Cucca would do to her and how inferior in wit and powerless she would turn out (she is giving her daughter to a

man whose cleverness she cannot weigh, thus involuntarily allowing him to take advantage of the situation). Later on, when he reports how she tried to oppose him, she is again called "la vecchia", while, after Cucca eventually defeats her, she becomes "la povera vecchia" ["the poor old woman"], a hypocoristic expression which highlights her definitive impotence. Finally, when the story returns to its starting point ("la povera vecchia mi deve andar cercando"), the old woman is once again referred to as "la vecchia", a label that, bringing the tale full circle, also restores to the woman a threatening aura.

At first sight, this attempt to adapt the tale to its speaker's point of view may recall Parabosco's likely source for this plot, that is, Ruzante's *Vaccaria*, a comedy performed in Padua in 1531, and published for the first time in Venice in 1551 (see Getrevi 1983; Padoan 1982).[16] In Act 3, in a dialogue with his young master, his master's beloved, and a fellow servant, Truffo repeats a story similar to Cucca's one.[17] In this case, however, the narrative represents not only a voluntary digression aimed at mocking the lovers and their impatience (see Ruzante 1967: 1540n), but also a prop to foreground the servant's own comic quality. Ruzante successfully adapted the tale into a dialogue, and comically emphasized the disparity between lower and upper classes through the use of dialect in contrast with literary language. On the contrary, Parabosco did not play on the same linguistic variance and used but few colloquialisms, justified by the tale's internal focalization. Thus, if Ruzante should be considered as a possible source for the comic plot of Cucca's narrative, it is not to him that Parabosco looked for his style, which instead appears indebted to another dramatic model: the commedia dell'arte's scenarios. It would not come as a surprise that, living in Venice at the time when the commedia dell'arte was rapidly becoming very popular, Parabosco might have been fascinated by its features.

Analysing sixteenth-century Venetian theatre, Richard Andrews has highlighted that the "comedies which were published in the 1540s and 1550s all show signs of tensions between on the one hand the pressure to imitate literary models (which by now included the more successful Italian come-

---

[16] It should be remarked that Cucca's tale, whose content later served as a plot for novella 15 in *I diporti*, was in fact a very successful story used by many of Parabosco's fellow-writers: it can be found in Agnolo Firenzuola's *Novelle pratesi* [*Novellas from Prato*] (published in 1548), in Il Lasca's *Le Cene* [*The Dinners*] (composed between 1540 and 1584), and in Pietro Fortini's *Le piacevoli e amorose notti dei novizi* [*The Pleasant and Amorous Nights of the Novices*] (written between 1555 and 1561). However, Parabosco may have known only Firenzuola's text, since Il Lasca's and Fortini's works did not circulate widely at the time and were published only in the eighteenth century (see Getrevi 1983; Guglielminetti 1984).

[17] See Ruzante 1967: 3.4.120-42.

dies, as well as Plautus and Terence) and on the other hand a reluctance to ignore the growing theatrical repertoire which was in demand, and which was based on the discoveries and contributions of Ruzante and the local tradition" (1993: 145). Interestingly enough, Andrews included Parabosco among the dramatists who devoted themselves to an "apparently 'regular' comic writing", but indeed revealed their debt to both the "commedia regolare" and the "teatro popolaresco" (161). Likewise, Magnanini has defined *L'hermafrodito* as "predominantly a 'commedia regolare', being only in small parts 'teatro popolaresco'", and clearly acknowledged other comedies by Parabosco as such, while Lommi, talking about *La notte*, explicitly defined it as "very close to the growing commedia dell'arte" ("molto prossima alla nascente commedia dell'arte", 2008: 11n).

Parabosco may have patterned his 'narrative' soliloquies precisely after the dell'arte scenarios, which often include similar 'narrative' formulas. In Basilio Locatelli's *Il gran mago* [*The Great Wizard*], Zanni tells his own story while he is alone on stage, thus presumably interrupting the comedy's action:

> . . . *Sireno* parte per e. *Zan*[*ni*] resta dicendo dell'esser venuto in Arcadia per fortuna di Mare . . . et haver menato li figlioli delli loro padroni, quali sono fatti grandi et pastori, lui esser bifolco, dicendo dell'essere del paese; havendo detto il tutto, parte per strada D.[18] (Neri 1913: 58)

> [. . . Sireno exits through e. Zanni remains and says that he came to Arcadia after a sea storm . . . and that he took with him their masters' children, who are now adults and shepherds; that he himself is a cowhand and describing the land; having said everything, he exits from D.]

As in the case of Cucca's soliloquy, Zanni's does not display the characteristics of a self-address, but resembles a proper narration which does not have any psychological or circumstantial justification. In the same scenario, a similar example is provided by the wizard's soliloquy; alone on stage, he likewise "speaks about his powers and his knowledge, and his having foreseen that he will lose everything if he does not remedy what needs to be changed; he talks about the arrival of strangers in Arcadia" (Neri 1913: 59).[19] Several other examples can be found in Flaminio Scala's scenarios, published at the beginning of the seventeenth century. All these instances show some similarities with Parabosco's narrative soliloquies and might in fact prove that the scenarios provided a model for them. If 'regular thea-

---

[18] In the scenarios, letters were used to indicate entry and exit points on stage.
[19] ". . . narra le sue virtù, et fra poco la sua scientia, et haver previsto di perdere il tutto, se lui non rimedierà a quanto fa bisogno; dice della venuta de' forestieri nell'Arcadia . . .".

tre' employed the soliloquies as self-addresses aimed at penetrating a character's inward deliberations, Parabosco could have resorted to a different kind of soliloquies, whose structure and function appear to be closer to the commedia dell'arte tradition.

Should further proof of Parabosco's indebtedness to the scenarios' templates be needed, one could consider that narratives are embedded also within the dialogues of his comedies with no apparent relation to the action, precisely as happens in the commedia dell'arte. This is the case of the exchange between Polissena and her servant, Santina, in Act 2 of *L'hermafrodito*; gossiping about a friar, Santina tells of his many affairs, thus temporarily interrupting the dialogue with her mistress.[20] Similar examples can be easily found in the scenarios, where two or three dialoguing characters stop talking in order to listen to a story told by one of them (see Andrews 2008; Neri 1913).

While Parabosco's practice reinforces the idea that he knew and exploited the scenarios in his own dramas, his composition of both 'canonical' soliloquies and 'undramatic' narrative ones might also suggest that he did not perceive a clear difference between them. On the contrary, he likely considered both of them perfectly suitable for the dramatic mimesis, since the commedia dell'arte itself made use of these two kinds of soliloquy. Parabosco might have simply thought that what he found in this popular kind of theatre was perfectly mimetic and he probably did not even realize that his narrative soliloquies were actually undramatically narrative.

This debt to the commedia dell'arte is probably not unintended. Intermingling elements taken from the 'regular' comedy with others deriving from a more 'popular' theatre such as the commedia dell'arte, Parabosco could satisfy an audience who relished what Lommi defined as "hybrid dramaturgy" ("drammaturgia ibrida", 2008: 24). Indeed, as Magnanini pointed out, "while 'the commedia regolare' bestowed a certain amount of literary prestige on the author, the 'teatro popolaresco' assured the approval of Venetian audiences" (2001: 211-12). No playwright would ever disdain the public's favour, and Parabosco, who considered literature (and music) as his main source of livelihood, needed it more than others.

Parabosco's peculiar exploitation of mimesis and diegesis in his narrative and drama production reveals important aspects of his artistic personality. On the one hand, the strategies he employed to highlight narratized and transposed speech in the novellas that he derived from his comedies suggest that he consciously worked on the moods of speech, moving from what he thought could especially denote a theatrical genre (mimesis)

---

[20] See Parabosco 1977d: 18r-v. For this tale within Santina's speech, see also Pellizzaro 1901: 172.

to what could best identify a narrative genre (pure diegesis). This required the adoption of different stylistic and communicative strategies, replacing character-interaction with the mediation of an overt narrator endowed with a prominent ideological function. On the other hand, the presence of narratives inserted within 'undramatic' soliloquies did not belie Parabosco's wish to differentiate the two genres through opposite uses of the moods of speech. The 'undramatic' narrative soliloquies of commedia dell'arte probably strengthened Parabosco's feeling that they were in fact mimetic pieces. Finally, what justifies Parabosco's stylistic choices is always his great attention to the audience's tastes. His desire to please his readers, providing new literary products, probably led him to exploit the moods of speech as the most appropriate device for distinguishing theatrical and literary texts. At the same time, his comedies imitated the scenarios in order to satisfy his spectators' tastes and expectations. A comparison between the different strategies employed by Parabosco certainly shows that his production is not as simple and plain as it could seem, but entails interesting connections with his contemporary cultural and literary milieu.

Appendix

Chart 1. Parabosco's dramas

Date of first publication	Drama
1546	*La notte*
1547	*Il viluppo*
1548	*La progne*
1549	*L'hermafrodito*
1549	*I contenti*
1550	*Il marinaio*
1552	*Il pellegrino*
1555	*Il ladro*
1556	*La fantesca*

Chart 2. Parabosco's novellas

Date of publication	Literary Work
1548	First edition of *Il secondo libro delle lettere amorose*, containing four novellas which will be published in *I diporti* becoming novellas 4, 10, 14, and 16
1551 (Late Spring)	First edition of *I diporti*
1552	Second edition of *I diporti*

Chart 3. Plot connections between *I diporti*'s novellas and Parabosco's comedies[21]

Novella	Comedy	Details
7	*I contenti*	The practical joke in the second act of *I contenti* is similar to the one narrated in the novella
9	*Il viluppo* *L'hermafrodito*	The novella is based on a servant's practical joke, which appears in both comedies

[21] For further details, see Pirovano 2005a: 31.

12	*Il pellegrino*	Close thematic and lexical similarities between the novella and the comedy
13	*Il marinaio* *La notte* *Il viluppo*	The events experienced by a father and his sons in the novella can be found in *Il marinaio* too. The novella also displays some similarities with *La notte* and *Il viluppo.*
15	*L'hermafrodito*	The novella's plot corresponds to the tale told by Cucca in a soliloquy he delivers in Act 3 of *L'hermafrodito*

Works Cited

Andrews, Richard (1993), *Scripts and Scenarios. The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

– (2008), *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala: a Translation and Analysis of 30 Scenarios*, Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, and Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press.

Baratto, Mario (1977), *La commedia del Cinquecento*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore.

Barberi Squarotti, Giorgio (2006), *La letteratura instabile: teatro e novella fra Cinquecento ed Età barocca*, Treviso: Santi Quaranta.

Bargagli, Girolamo (1996), "Dialogo de' giuochi", in Nuccio d'Ordine (ed.), *Teoria della novella e teoria del riso nel Cinquecento*, Napoli: Liguori.

Bonciani, Francesco (1996), "Lezione sopra il comporre delle novelle", in Nuccio d'Ordine (ed.), *Teoria della novella e teoria del riso nel Cinquecento*, Napoli: Liguori.

Borsellino, Nino (1989), "Novella e commedia nel Cinquecento", in *La novella italiana. Atti del Convegno di Caprarola, 19-24 settembre 1988*, Roma: Salerno: 469-82, vol. 1.

Bragantini, Renzo (1990), "La sorte e il riso (mancati)", in *Il tema della fortuna nella letteratura francese e italiana del Rinascimento. Studi in memoria di Enzo Giudici*, Firenze: Olschki: 373-80.

Di Filippo Bareggi, Claudia (1988), *Il mestiere di scrivere. Lavoro intellettuale e mercato librario a Venezia nel Cinquecento*, Roma: Bulzoni.

Di Francia, Latterio (1924), *Novellistica*, Milano: Vallardi, vol. 1.

Feldman, Martha (1991), "The Academy of Domenico Venier, Music's Literary Muse in Mid-Cinquecento Venice", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 44 (3): 476-512.

Fido, Franco (1988), "Fra 'Decameron' e 'Cortegiano': l'autunno della novella nei 'Diporti' del Parabosco, in Franco Fido (ed.), *Il paradiso dei buoni compagni: capitoli di storia letteraria veneta*, Padova: Antenore: 75-85.

Genette, Gérard (1976), "Boundaries of Narrative", *New Literary History*, 8 (1): 1-13

– (1980), *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method (Discours du récit, 1972)*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Getrevi, Paolo (1983), "Dalla Toscana a Venezia: l'itinerario della sposa cucita", in *Umanesimo e Rinascimento a Firenze e Venezia. Miscellanea di studi in onore di Vittore Branca*, Firenze: Olschki: vol. 3.2: 619-39.

Gibaldi, Joseph (1975), "The Renaissance Theory of the Novella", *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 2 (2): 201-27.

Giraldi Cinzio, Giovan Battista (2012), *Gli ecatommiti*, ed. by Susanna Villari, Roma: Salerno Editrice, 3 vols.

Guglielminetti, Marziano (1972), "Introduzione", in Marziano Guglielminetti (ed.), *Novellieri del Cinquecento*, Milano and Napoli: Ricciardi.

– (1984), *La cornice e il furto. Studi sulla novella del '500*, Bologna: Zanichelli.

Guidotti, Angela (2000), "Novellistica e teatro del Cinquecento", in Gabriella Albanese, Lucia Battaglia Ricci and Rossella Bessi (eds), *Favole Parabole Istorie. Le forme della scrittura novellistica dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*, Roma: Salerno: 395-418.

Halliwell, Stephen (2013), "Diegesis and Mimesis", *The Living Book of Narratology*, http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/diegesis-%E2%80%93-mimesis (last access 10 November 2016).

Javitich, Daniel (1999), "The Assimilation of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Sixteenth-Century Italy", in Glyn P. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 53-65, vol. 3.

Lommi, Antonella (ed.) (2008), *Due commedie patetiche del Cinquecento. Il Pellegrino di Girolamo Parabosco. I Fidi Amanti di Francesco Pondiani*, Milano: Edizioni Unicopli.

Magnanini, Suzanne (2001), "Girolamo Parabosco's *L'Hermafrodito*: an Irregular *Comedia Regolare*", in Keala Jewell (ed.), *Monsters in Italian Literary Imagination*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press: 203-21.

Neri, Ferdinando (1913), *Scenari delle maschere in Arcadia*, Città di Castello: Casa Editrice S. Lapi.

Norton, Glyn P. (ed.) (1999), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 3.

Padoan, Giorgio (1982), *La commedia rinascimentale veneta*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore.

Parabosco, Girolamo (1555), *Il ladro*, Venezia: Per Francesco e Pietro Rocca Fratelli.

– (1556), *La fantesca*, Venezia: Appresso Stefano di Alessi.

– (1977a), "I contenti", in *L'hermafrodito. I contenti*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

– (1977b), "Il marinaio", in *Il marinaio. Il pellegrino*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

– (1977c), "Il viluppo", in *La notte. Il viluppo*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

– (1977d), "L'hermafrodito", in *L'hermafrodito. I contenti*, ed. by Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

– (2005), "I diporti", in *Diporti*, ed. by Donato Pirovano, Roma: Salerno Editrice.

Pellizzaro, Giambattista (1901), *La commedia del secolo XVI e la novellistica anteriore e contemporanea in Italia*, Vicenza: Stabilimento tipo-litografico G. Raschi.

Pirovano, Donato (2005a), "Nota introduttiva", in Donato Pirovano (ed.), *Girolamo Parabosco: Diporti*, Roma: Salerno Editrice.

– (2005b), "Nota al testo de *I diporti*", in Donato Pirovano (ed.), *Girolamo Parabosco: Diporti*, Roma: Salerno Editrice.

Ruzante (1967), "La Vaccaria", in *Teatro*, ed. by Ludovico Zorzi, Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore.

Segre, Cesare (1980), "A Contribution to the Semiotics of Theater", *Poetics Today*, 1 (3): 39-48.

Vecchi, Giuseppe (1977), "Premessa", in Marina Calore and Giuseppe Vecchi (eds), *Girolamo Parabosco: La Notte. Il Viluppo*, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

Villari, Susanna (2012), "Introduzione", in Susanna Villari (ed.), *Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinzio: Gli Ecatommiti*, Roma: Salerno Editrice, vol. 1.

Weinberg, Bernard (1961), *A History of Literary Criticism in Italian Renaissance*, Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, vol. 2.