

ORESTE BIRINGUCCI AND AMOR FERETRIO A MANTUAN BARRIERA FOR CARNIVAL 1585

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Izvleček: Članek obravnava opis turnirja, ki je potekal na dvoru v Mantovi med karnevalom leta 1585. Naročil ga je dedni princ Vincenzo Gonzaga pri dvornem arhitektu Oresteju Biringucciju. Biringuccijevo poročilo, naslovljeno *Apparato e barriera del tempio di Amor Feretrio*, opisuje gledališko sceno, sodelujoče plemstvo, predstavljene like (večinoma iz klasične mitologije in junaških del avtorjev, kot so Ludovico Ariosto, Bernardo Tasso in Curzio Gonzaga), pa tudi – zelo nenavadno za tisti čas – dvorne pesnike in glasbenike, ki so sodelovali pri dogodku. Glasba ima v opisu vidno vlogo, saj prihod vsakega bojevnika s solističnim spevom (v dveh primerih je bil to madrigal) naznani kateri izmed mitoloških likov. Eden od madrigalov je bil prepoznan kot antifonalna kompozicija dvornega skladatelja Benedetta Pallavicina. Razprava vključuje angleški prevod omenjenega opisa, povzema življenje in delo Oresteja Biringuccija ter razpravlja o vseh drugih zbranih virih o turnirju, ki se nahajajo v arhivu Gonzaga v Mantovi.

Ključne besede: Vincenzo Gonzaga, Oreste Biringucci, Benedetto Pallavicino, Curzio Gonzaga, turnirji

Abstract: The article examines a barriera held at Mantua for carnival 1585, commissioned by the hereditary prince Vincenzo Gonzaga from the court architect Oreste Biringucci. Biringucci's account of the *Apparato e barriera del tempio di Amor Feretrio* describes the theatrical setting, the nobility who participated, the characters represented (drawn from classical mythology and chivalric romances by Ludovico Ariosto, Bernardo Tasso and Curzio Gonzaga) and also – most unusually for its time – the court poets and musicians who contributed to this event. Music plays a prominent role, since mythological figures introduce each combatant with solo song – or, in two cases, with madrigals. An antiphonal madrigal by the court composer Benedetto Pallavicino has been identified as a component of the music performed on this occasion. The article offers an English translation of the *Apparato*, and a short study of the life and works of Oreste Biringucci, together with a corpus of documents relating to the barriera found in the *Archivio Gonzaga, Mantua*.

Keywords: Vincenzo Gonzaga, Oreste Biringucci, Benedetto Pallavicino, Curzio Gonzaga, tournaments

On Sunday 3 March 1585, a most extraordinary tournament was held in Mantua on the initiative of the hereditary prince of Mantua, Vincenzo Gonzaga, as an entertainment to conclude the carnival season and, in particular, to honour the visit of his sister Anna Caterina, who through marriage had become Archduchess of Austria. By some inexplicable oversight this tournament seems to have received very little attention from scholars

studying events at the Gonzaga court during the reign of Duke Guglielmo, nor – with one exception – has it been examined by scholars within the wider context of studies of tournaments in the northern cities of late sixteenth-century Italy.¹ This article attempts to remedy the oversight by providing a translation of the description of the event and a background for what must surely be one of the most complex cultural events held during the last years of Guglielmo’s reign under the direction of the hereditary prince, Vincenzo.

A full account of the tournament has been left by Oreste Biringucci, a young man of Sieneese birth who had been appointed *prefetto delle fabbriche* (head architect) for Duke Guglielmo only some eighteen months earlier, in June 1583, and who was responsible for its artistic conception. The *resoconto*, which occupies some thirty-four pages and is dedicated to Vincenzo’s wife, Eleonora de’ Medici, tells us that the *cartella* (or challenge) for the tournament was presented “on the last evening of the month of February, before a solemn gathering of all the beauties and nobility of Mantua and foreigners [i.e. the retinue of Anna Caterina], in the largest room in the castle”. The tournament itself took place three days later on 3 March, the last Sunday of Carnival, in the splendid theatre situated in the ducal palace complex, which was designed for “comedies and other magnificent spectacles”, as Biringucci tells us. We give here a translation of his detailed account of the tournament² before attempting to place it within its cultural context.

THE TEMPLE OF *AMOR FERETRIO*

Amongst the other merry entertainments offered this year at Mantua – of comedies, masquerades, jousts, and fine festivities – on the last evening of the month of February, their Highnesses the Princes invited to a public and solemn gathering all the beauties and nobility of Mantua and foreigners, in their largest room in the castle. Between dances and other merry entertainments Mercury appeared, accompanied by a great many cupids, and by very harmonious instruments played by the Graces, and by three Victories, who mysteriously were in his company. And coming before their Highnesses and the other lords and ladies present, he presented the *manifesto* or challenge of the *Barriera*,³ which read thus:

¹ The one exception is Stähler, who in “*Perpetuall monuments*”, 215–221, examines the occurrence of the setting of the *Tempio d’Amore* in theatrical events in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Italy. He offers a concise summary of the action and themes of the *barriera* within the context of a study of other *cavallerie* and *barriere* featuring the setting of the *Tempio d’Amore* (in particular, those of Ferrara, 1565, and Mantua, 1608).

² Biringucci, *Apparato e barriera del tempio di Amor Feretrio*. A copy from the Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina in Rome is available online: <http://www.internetculturale.it>.

³ Besutti, “Giostre, tornei, fuochi e naumachie”, 3–32, observes that the terms *torneo* and *barriera* were practically interchangeable in this period: “Nelle barriere e nei tornei – termini spesso usati indistintamente – lo scontro era fra cavalieri che, armati prevalentemente di armi cortesi – cioè smussate [i.e., without cutting edge or sharp points], a piedi o a cavallo, cercavano di prevalere gli uni sugli altri”. In fact, the *barriera* staged in the Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza in 1588, with three *mantenitori* and a limited number of knights in action, is described variously as a *torneo a piedi*, a *barriera* and, using the generic term, a *torneo*: see Follino, “Breve descrizione”. For confirmation of the equivalence of the terms, see also Pistofilo’s treatise *Il torneo* (I thank Maurizio Arfaioi for this reference). Besutti suggests – to my mind correctly – that the *barriera*

The Very Faithful Cavaliers, Custodians of the glory of *Amor Feretrio*,⁴ to all the honoured Warriors.

We see the most welcome Cupid, for whom neither amongst men nor the Gods can one find anyone who has not paid tribute to this his most famous temple, already adorned with lustre by the wise and powerful King Ocnus,⁵ and which the Heaven and the Earth, instead of opposing it, have done nothing other than offer new honours and trophies of spoils. And being aware of such examples, in this new age there is no longer anyone who is so rash as to dare to come to unequal battle with such a powerful God with human arms and force; so that for such inequality and superiority, the amorous battle is rarely undertaken, [thus losing] many occasions for gaining glory and happiness. He has appointed we three named below his most faithful champions, who for his sake must defend his temple, with knightly arms of whatever kind. One of us must prevent anyone from hanging trophies, or being admitted to the mysteries and joys of Love, if they have not previously shown themselves worthy of such glory through battle. Another must prevent any daring person from removing from the temple the trophies, epitaphs and emblems which surround it, if they have not previously shown by combat that they merit such grace. The third cavalier must contend all those who approach the famous Temple with scornful rage and rancour, which they will be unable to shed if they have not shown themselves worthy of such grace through combat. Of those cavaliers who lose, some will lose their arms alone, others their arms and their name, others yet again their arms, name and their liberty. And all the victorious warriors will not only be repaid with the granting of their just desires, but Cupid will show that he esteems their valour and devotion. Promising, by merit of the most faithful and mighty amorous Warrior, and above all others worthy of showing the glories and felicities of love, to all those who will not be profane, and to allow that daring Cavalier to distribute arms and captivity, according to his magnanimous and bountiful will.

staged in a courtly ambience tended to place more emphasis on literary and learned subjects than the *quintana*, *giostra* or battles staged on lakes. The *barriera* in the Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza is in fact punctuated by a great deal of recited verse as well as by a small amount of sung verse: hence it has a decidedly literary nature.

⁴ The appellation *feretrio* derives from the temple of Giove Feretrio said by tradition to be the first temple to be built in Rome, constructed by Romulus after his defeat of the king of the Caeninenses. The significance of the term *feretrio* (lat. *feretrius*) is by no means clear. Some attribute its origins to the Latin “ferire” (to strike), inasmuch as the spoils of the enemy struck down in battle (the *spolie opime*) were offered to Jove “who strikes”. Others derive the term from the Latin “ferre” (to take), inasmuch as those who achieved *spoglie opime* took them to the temple of Giove Feretrio in homage to the god. The epigram on page 8 suggests that Biringucci followed this second interpretation: see n. 19.

⁵ In Greek and Roman mythology Ocnus – also known as Bianore – was the son of the god Tiberino and the seer Manto. According to Virgil, he was the founder and first king of Mantua; he is numbered amongst the Etruscan allies of Aeneas in the war against the Rutuli. For Manto, Ocnus and myths regarding the foundation of Mantua, see Fiorini Galassi, “Legenda di Manto”. For this same subject in court spectacles, see Brunetti, “Origine mitica di Mantova”.



Figure 1

Title page of Oreste Biringucci's *Apparato e barriera del tempio di Amor Feretrio* (Mantua: Osanna, 1585), F-Pn, PALAT. Misc. B.4.F.116.10. (Reproduced by permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e per il turismo, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze. Further reproduction strictly forbidden.)

Declared in the Temple of *Amor Feretrio*, on the birthday of Pleasure and Joy
written by Desire, the principal secretary of Love,
and warranted with the principal seal of his quiver:
Don Filisello di Montespina, Knight of Amorous Hope,
Don Erotimo, Knight of Amorous Liberality,
Don Dicearco, Warrior of the Justice of Love.

Brought forth by Mercury, as we have said, this *cartello* was immediately taken from his hands by Fame, who with a thousand trumpets made it public not only at Mantua, but I believe throughout the whole universe, since not only the German Lords and Barons who had accompanied her Highness the Archduchess saw the spectacle, but also a great many foreigners of repute. These, together with the Mantuan nobility, were accompanied on the third day of March, the Sunday of Carnival, to a great theatre which His Highness the Duke has in his palace for comedies and other magnificent spectacles, a very large and ornate place. When the curtain fell, one saw the scene in its glory, which I will try to describe as best and as succinctly as I can.

Opposite the steps, and front of the theatre in a prominent place, and to be reached only by a wide and commodious rise, there appeared a large and very ornate round Temple, very similar in design to that of Albunea [*sic; recte* Albunea] situated at Tivoli above the Aniene,⁶ made similarly in the Corinthian style and richly ornamented with leaves, statues and partitions of precious stones and gold, surrounded by imitation columns of African marble, with gilded bases, capitals, architraves and cornices. Above shone a large Tribune of imitation silver, divided by flames and stars of gold, which terminated in a high lantern surrounded by small columns made to look like transparent alabaster, with a small cupola and globe of gold on top. The spaces between the principal columns on the lowest level were arrayed with various doors, windows and niches, with statues of various Heroes who had distinguished themselves in Love. These spaces between the columns were so well arrayed, and constructed, that with time, in a miraculous manner, the niches, the doors and the walls disappeared, and there remained only the columns, the statues, and the open Temple, within which one could see that which I will describe at length below. Such was the appearance of the temple, above whose frieze was written in large letters AMOR FERETRIO, whose invention every mediocre historian knows to be in imitation of that of the temple that Romulus dedicated to Jove *Feretrio*, having taken it with his own hands from the leader of the Caeninenses. To the right and left of the temple there were two wing-like structures made out of enormous columns, pyramids, palms, laurel, myrtle and olive trees, which seemed to invite one to come to the temple. These columns, pyramids and trees were arranged in perspective, so that drawing closer one could see that the pyramids were covered with hieroglyphics and seemed to be made from that Egyptian stone from which those of Rome are made. The columns were in part of serpentine, *augustale*, porphyry and partly white Pario marble, with bases and capitals

⁶ The so-called Temple of Vesta, overlooking the falls of the Aniene at Tivoli. It is not known for certain to whom the temple was dedicated: to Hercules, the tutelary god of Tibur; to Albunea, the Tiburtine Sibyl (as Biringucci would have it); to Tiburnus, the eponymous hero of the city; or to Vesta herself, whose more familiar circular Temple is to be seen in the Roman Forum.

made of bronze in all the styles and orders of architecture. But the columns of the left side corresponded to those of the right, just as the pyramids and the trees were of the same size and arranged similarly, with a pleasing and delightful variety on both sides. Above the pyramids were globes and turrets of gold bearing eternal lights, and above the columns vases with flames and lights, and moreover statues of Victory in various guises. But the trees had some branches cut in such a way that they formed trophies, bearing a variety of splendid armour and machines of war, both marine and terrestrial, while a great many more hung from the pyramids and the columns. It was most pleasing to see armour of all kinds, both ancient and modern, and from all the nations, together with military emblems of all types, and instruments relating to all the sciences and arts in outsize replicas suspended by chains and with details picked out in gold, silver and pleasing colours, which shone, reflecting and multiplying in the night lights, so that they were almost blinding to the sight. Most were pieces of real armour taken from His Highness's armoury, and some were imitations, made for the occasion, in the styles of various nations. And one saw, not only those of the Heroes and men famous in combat, in the arts and the sciences, but also all the *insegne* of the Celestial Gods. And everywhere there hung jewelled crowns, tiaras,⁷ diadems⁸ and sceptres, and many more kinds of crowns: *trionfali*,⁹ *ovali*,¹⁰ *ossidionali*,¹¹ *vallari*,¹² *rostrate*,¹³ *murali*,¹⁴ *civiche*,¹⁵ and all the other kinds of crowns and prizes that used to be given to reward the virtues of the body, soul and dignity, which it was usual to present in antiquity. Amongst the armour, instruments, books and other objects, there were positioned in appropriate places a series of epitaphs which declared how those things had been dedicated to the temple, and how they had come into the possession of Cupid. And just as there were arms of all the nations, so there were epitaphs in a variety of languages, and from a variety of countries. Of these I shall cite only a few, otherwise it would take too long to record them all. On the columns of the temple, under a variety of armour and weapons, were these inscriptions:¹⁶

⁷ According to Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, a tiara signifies "properly a round ornament or head-attire that Princes were wont to wear in Persia." The on-line source is without page numbers but, since this is a dictionary, the terms occur in alphabetical order.

⁸ Ibid., "a diademe, a wreath or crowne".

⁹ Ibid., "a Crowne sent to an Emperour or Captaine general in honour of triumph".

¹⁰ Ibid., "a Crowne given to Prince or Captaine that first raised a force or siege".

¹¹ Ibid., "partayning to a siege".

¹² Ibid., "as Castrense: a Crowne given to him that first invaded the enemies camp".

¹³ Ibid., "as Navale: a Crowne given to him who first boarded a ship".

¹⁴ Ibid., "a Crowne given to him that first scaled the walls".

¹⁵ Ibid., "a Garland of Oke given to him that saved a citizen by him that was saved".

¹⁶ I have found that Biringucci took some of these inscriptions from coins of antiquity (identified via on-line research): "Restitutori orbis terrar[um]", sestertius of Hadrian; "Dacia Capta", sestertius of Trajan; "Pax fundata cum persis", coined by Marcus Julius Philippus Augustus (Philippus Arabus); "Principi iuventutis", various sources; "Armenia, et Mesopotamia in potestatem redacte", sestertius of Trajan; "Aegypto capta, rexque Datus", various sources; while "Pace terra marique parta" may relate to a coin of Caesar Augustus. So it is likely that other inscriptions may similarly derive from coins.

Hominum ampliatori, universus foemineus sexus.
Restitutori orbis terrar.
Amoris col. sub arcto constit.
Debellatori gentium Deo. S.P.Q.R.
Signis à Diana, et Pallade receptis.
Orbis Tropheum opt. Principi.
Dacia Capta.
Pax fundata cum persis.
Connubij legib. promulgatis.¹⁷
Principi iuventutis.
Restauratori latitiae, quietisque
Pace terra marique parta
De Garamanthis.
Honesta voluptate instaurata.

On the other columns, the pyramids and the trees, were arranged in another way the following and similar things:

Armenia, et Mesopotamia in potestatem redacte.
Phylomatum triumphatori.
Pro sal. et vict. Aug. C.
Ex manubijs Amazonum.
Victoriae Getice. S.
De Scythis.
Aegypto capta, rexque Datus.
D. Iulius Caes. dict. perp. P.P. tri. pot. cos. V.
Amori feretrio D.

Together with these in prose there were many in verse, made by a number of most ingenious gentlemen, amongst which, very popular, the epigrams given below written by Signor Giulio Capilupi,¹⁸ generous heir to the intellect of his elders not only in poetry but also in mathematics:

Quae suspensa vides magni sunt Caesaris arma,
Vicerat hic orbem, victus Amore cadit.
Audaci hac mihi parta manu VINCENTIUS
Dedicat, aude[m] du[m] est, ora' vincit Amor (arma

Those you see appended here are the arms of great Caesar,
he who won the world fell conquered by Love.
VINCENZO dedicated to me these conquests with audacious hand:
one must realize that Love wins over every weapon.

¹⁷ In the copy of Biringucci, *Apparato e barriera del tempio di Amor Feretrio* held by the Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati of Siena, five lines are inserted here in a manuscript hand: "Finib. impij propagatis. / Delicijs virtute munitis / Meretrici b. expulsis. / Societate inita eu' pudore et vereeundia / Livoris [?] et ingratiitudinis tyran'ide extincta".

¹⁸ A descendant of the ancient Mantuan family of Capilupi, the poet and mathematician Giulio Capilupi (illegitimate son of Ippolito, Bishop of Fano) is known to have been in the service of Vincenzo Gonzaga, but little else is known of his life. Besides his *Centoni virgiliani*, which went through several editions in Rome and Mantua between 1588 and 1595, he contributed to the collection of works by *literati* of the Capilupi family: the *Capiluporum carmina*, published in Rome in 1590, and a *Fabrica et uso di alcuni strumenti horarii universali* which he dedicated to Vincenzo Gonzaga in the same year. For the poets of the Capilupi family, see Carpino, *I Capilupi*.

Dedicat has pulcras aedes mihi Mantua Amori,
Et merito Feretri nomen habere iubet.
Huc quonia[m] magni Heroes spoglia ampla,
mariq[ue] Bellando et terris, me duce parta
ferunt.¹⁹

Iam nunc alta Iovis cedant mihi templa Feretri
Ornata exuijs sint licet illa Ducum;
Nam Regum hic spoglia, et vatis quoq[ue]; Apollinis
Pendent, et magni tela trisulca Iovis.
(arma

Mantua dedicated these fine temples to me, Love,
and rightly orders that we carry the name Feretri
Because the great heroes brought ample spoils,
from combating on the sea and on land.

The lofty temples of Jove now give way to me,
they are embellished by the tombs of the leaders:
Here hang the spoils of the King, and also of
the seer Apollo, and the three-pronged javelin of Jove.

Many other epigrams, both Latin and Greek, were composed for this temple in the name of the cities, of scholars, of Academies, philosophers, poets, and others skilled in Love. There were Chaldean, Hebrew, Turkish, Tartar, Hungarian, Muscovite and Polish epigrams, all in the name of great men from those provinces, which since they are all in antique foreign languages I need not give them here. It is sufficient to remember that those who composed them made use of very fine concepts. There were also epitaphs in prose in other languages, such as these in Greek.

ΑΔΕ ΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΜΕΤΑΣ ΑΥΤΟΚ.
ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΙΤΩΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ.
ΕΦΕΣΙΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΩΝΑΣΙΑΣ.
ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΙΝΩΝ ΜΟΜΟΝΟΙΑ.
ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΚΥΠΡΙΩΝ.

Alexander the Great, autocrat
Of the citizens of Athens
Of Ephesus the first of Asia
Concord of the Greeks
With the Cypriots

There were also some Spartan, some Theban, and some of other peoples of Greece and their citizens, glorious in arms of diligence and of Love of all the reigns and monarchies of the world. Signor Ottaviano Cavriani, a Mantuan gentleman who had lived in Flanders, composed two in Flemish verse, which were judged very fine by those who understood them; just as all the French peoples present judged well these two below, composed by Signor Margarino Franzese, a most excellent musician of His Highness:²⁰

D'Orlando la grand vertu
Seul Amour ha eu puissance,
Dele avoir gaigne, et vaincu,
Avec ses dars sans resistance.
Renald le valereulx
En toutes ses bathailles a gloire,
Avoir este bien heuz eulx,
Quand'Amour eu de lui vittoire.

Only Love could prevail
over the great virtue of Orlando,
it conquered and defeated him
with its darts, without resistance.
Rinaldo the valorous
won glory in all his battles
but he was truly happy
when Love was victorious over him.

The following and others in Spanish were composed by Signor Giulio Capilupi,²¹ who is an excellent poet also in that language:

¹⁹ See n. 3. This epigram suggests that Biringucci understands the derivation of *Feretri* to be the Latin “ferre” (to take) rather than “ferire” (to strike).

²⁰ A “M[esser] Margarino Dupré cantore” is listed in a payroll which is said by Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 192–193, to date from between 1590 and 1596 (Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga [hence ASMN, AG], busta 3146, cc. 47–53).

²¹ See n. 18.

Estos trofeos ganados
Con esfuerzo y con valor
Toda Spanna hà dedicados
Al poderoso Amor.
Delas Indias de Occidente,
Los despoios conquistados,
Manda a Amor sian dedicados,
La de Spanna fiera gente.
Estos arneses son, o Dios de Amor,
Que ofrece a ti Fernando,
Ganados en batalla, peleando,
Contra el Moro Almanzor.²²
Las armas conquistadas,
Hasta en el Ethiopia, y en Oriente,
Da la muy Fiera gente
De Portugal, à Amor sian dedicadas.

These trophies gained
with virtue and valour
all Spain has dedicated
to powerful Love.
From the Indies to the West
the conquered spoils
may be dedicated by Love
to the proud people of Spain.
These weapons, O God of Love,
are offered to you by Ferdinando,
gained in battle fighting
against the Moor Almanzor.
The weapons conquered
in Ethiopia and in the East
by the proud people of Portugal
are dedicated to Love.

There were similarly many epigrams in German, to honour the Lords and Barons of that illustrious nation, amongst which these, composed by Robert the German:

Già la gente Tedesca fù soggetta à Bacco,
adesso l'Amore ne hà preso intero dominio.
La grandissima casa d'Austria non si gloria meno,
che tutto il mondo le porga tributi,
che d'esser ella tributaria d'Amore.

The German nation was already subdued by Bacco;
now Love has acquired entire dominion.
The great house of Austria is of no less
glory, so that all the world pays it tribute,
for it is a vassal of Love.

Messer Leone de' Sommi²³ composed an epigram in Hebrew, much praised, which was

²² In the late tenth to early eleventh centuries Muhammad ibn Abi Aamir, better known as Almanzor, was the *de facto* ruler of Muslim Iberia (al-Andalus), whose rule marked the peak of power for al-Andalus. Almanzor's expansion of the Great Mosque of Cordoba served to demonstrate his power; to help finance this, and other projects such as his city of Medina al-Zahira, he carried out some fifty military campaigns which brought back plunder and filled his coffers with tribute from northern Spanish kingdoms. On one of those campaigns Almanzor sacked the Cathedral of Santiago and had Christian slaves haul its bells to Cordoba. Since we do not find evidence of a Ferdinando whose forces engaged directly in battle with Almanzor, we wonder whether these verses might refer to Ferdinand III (1199/1201–1252), King of Castile from 1217, King of León from 1230 and King of Galicia from 1231. When Fernando III conquered Cordoba in 1236, he ordered that the bells sequestered by Almanzor be immediately returned to the Cathedral of Santiago.

²³ The *corago* Leone de' Sommi, or Yehuda Sommi di Portoleone (c. 1527 to 1529–c. 1590), the greatest Jewish playwright of the Renaissance, was a native of Mantua. He wrote several plays in Italian (besides one in Hebrew), but is today remembered mostly for his treatise on dramatic art – the first systematic work on theatrical matters – which has been published in modern edition as *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche*. Sommi was nominated scribe for the Mantuan academy Gli Invaghiti (named in the *barriera*), because he was unable to have official membership on account of his religion, and because in any case he could not hold the necessary noble title, which was denied to Jews. In his capacity as scribe he wrote plays and *intermedii* for the academy and for court festivities, including the two marriages of Vincenzo Gonzaga. Sommi's participation in *barriere* was not limited to this occasion, for in a letter of May 1 of the following year, he wrote to an unknown person at the court saying that he has described new subjects for tournaments and court celebrations, as Prince Vincenzo had requested, and will send them when required (ASMN, AG, busta 2634, c. 31). For the life and

placed under Samson's jaw; he composed another in Chaldean and some in Tuscan. I would produce a great book instead of a brief narrative, were I to write them all down, but to prove that no language was lacking, I pray hear these two verses which were received by all Mantua with mirth and hilarity:

Baldus, Falchettus, Cingar, Fortezza Cipadae,
Hic sberludentas attaccavere dagas.²⁴

Baldo, Falchetto, Cingar, Fortezza Cipadae,
hung their shining swords.

There were [epigrams] in our language from all the famous heroic Cities and Academies of Italia:

Trofeo dell'Italia

Trophy of Italy

Armi Toscane

Tuscan arms

Invaghiti, Filarmonici, et Illustrati

The Invaghiti, Filarmonici** and Illustrati***

Ancore di Sicilia

Anchors of Sicily

Arnesi di Roma²⁵

Armour of Rome

La gioventù Fiorentina serva d'Amore

The Florentine youth, servants of Love

Offerta delle bellissime donne Senesi

Offering from the beautiful women of Siena

Timoni Venetiani e Genovesi

Venetian and Genoese rudders

Spade Bresciane

Swords of Brescia

Tributo dello studio²⁶ di Padova

Tribute from the university of Padua

Corsaletti Milanesi

Corselets of Milan

Primitie della nobilissima Academia di Vice[n]za

The first fruits of the noble Academy of Vicenza

* The Mantuan Accademia degli Invaghiti was founded in 1562 by Giulio Cesare Gonzaga, Prince of Molfetta and Count of Guastalla, whose Mantuan palace was the seat of its meetings. Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 36–37, tells us that “from its inception the Invaghiti was typical of aristocratic and courtly academies in its emphasis on chivalric ceremonial and the arts of oratory and versification [...]. Theatrical productions were also sometimes given, and on some occasions at least the general public was admitted [...]. Carnival season, the principal feasts in the Church calendar, and important events in the lives of the Gonzaga often prompted the Invaghiti to orate and dispute, and occasionally the fruits of their efforts were published.” See also Maylender, *Storie delle academie d'Italia*, 363–366.

** The Accademia Filarmonica of Verona, said to be the oldest European academy of its kind, was the most prominent and prestigious academy devoted to music in sixteenth-century Italy.

works of Leone de' Sommi, see in particular D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano*, 2:403–421; and Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi*, 1–xxv. See also Belkin, *Leone de' Sommi*.

²⁴ This refers to the work of the Mantuan poet Teofilo Folengo, who under the pseudonym Merlin Coccajo published a macaronic *poema comico-cavalleresco*, which describes in hexameter verse, in a mixture of bastard Latin and Italian dialects (including that of Mantua), a disordered world in which are narrated the adventures of Baldus – a grotesque version of tales of knights and paladins – along with his rascally companions Cingar, Falchetto and the giant Fracasso. The first episodes are set in the village of Cipada near Mantua (hence Fortezza Cipadae) and are succeeded by fantastic adventures, which include imprisonment, battles with local authorities, pirates, shepherds, witches and demons; and a journey to the underworld. Published in 1517, *Baldo* soon attained a wide popularity (although it was also often censored), and within a very few years passed through several editions. The first edition appears in 1517 as *Merlini Cocai poetae Mantuani liber Macaronices libri XVII*.

²⁵ The significance of “arnesi” in this context derives from the French “harnois”, meaning armour. I thank Maurizio Arfaoli for this information.

²⁶ Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, offers a number of meanings for *studio*; this seems the most likely in the context.

Founded in 1543, it included among its members the noted Veronese patron of music, Conte Mario Bevilacqua, who was an active member from his nomination as *Padre* in 1582 until his death in 1593. Numerous volumes of late sixteenth-century music were dedicated to the Accademia Filarmonica, including Giaches de Wert's fifth book of five-part madrigals in 1571, and Benedetto Pallavicino's first book of four-part madrigals in 1579 (Giaches de Wert and Benedetto Pallavicino both produced music for the *barriera*; for Wert, see n. 39; for Pallavicino, n. 118). The Academy's holdings of early music prints and manuscripts, as well as a valuable collection of early musical instruments, are still extant today. For the Academy, see Turrini, *Accademia Filarmonica*. See also Maylender, *Storie delle accademie d'Italia*, 386–395. More recent studies include Rigoli, *Coelorum imitatur concentum*; and Di Pasquale, "Intorno al patronato della musica". An article by Mari, "I Gonzaga e l'Accademia Filarmonica", which promises to be relevant to this essay, is forthcoming in the Acts of the conference "The Soundscape of the Venetian Terraferma in the Early Modern Era: International Conference celebrating 475 Years of the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona", held in Verona in May 2018.

***The Accademia degli Illustrati of Casale Monferrato, said to have been founded c. 1560, was dedicated to satire, philosophy and the sciences. The writer Stefano Guazzo, perhaps best known today for his *Ciuil conuersatione*, a dialogue which deals with such themes as education and social and family life, was among its founding members. The activities of the academy seem to have ceased in the early seventeenth century, purportedly because of the war of succession for Casale between Duke Ferdinando of Mantua and Carlo Emanuele of Savoy. See Maylender, *Storie delle academie d'Italia*, 144–146.

And other similar, but amongst them all the epigrams below, composed by Ascanio Mori da Ceno,²⁷ who has shown himself to be familiar with the Muses in both Tuscan verse and prose, were read with applause:

Qui appesi il Re dell'Etra
Mira i folgori suoi, turbato in vano.
El biondo Apollo l'arco e la faretra.
Orna il sublime Tempio di Cupido
Lo scudo del gran Dio delle battaglie,
Ad altri amaro à lui sol dolce e fido.
Pluto Re de Tesori e dell'Inferno
Col suo tributo à queste altere porte
S'inchina humil gioioso di sua sorte.
Ecco del Marin Rege il gran Tridente,
Ecco il Tirso di Bacco,
E la clava di quel che domò Cacco.
Del caduceo si spoglia, e d'ogni onore,
Di Maia il figlio per ornare Amore.

Here the fair Apollo, king of the Air,
admires his hung bow and arrow
and his lightening, which confounds in vain.
The shield of the Great God of battles
adorns the sublime temple of Cupid,
to others bitter; to him alone sweet and faithful.
Pluto the King of Treasures and Hell
with his tribute for these proud doors
kneels humbly, joyful in his fate.
Behold the great Trident of the Marine Realm,
behold the Thyrsus of Bacchus,
and the club of he who tamed Cacus.
[Hermes] the son of Maia gives up his wand,
along with every honour, to adorn Love.

²⁷ The soldier and poet Ascanio Mori da Ceno published his first work, the *Giuoco piacevole* – on the *moeurs* of courtly life – with the Mantuan printers Ruffinello in 1575. A second edition, with the addition of *Alcune rime* and *Ragionamento in lode delle donne*, was published by the same firm five years later, and a third edition, by Osanna, the ducal printers in Mantua, in 1590. Mori's *Lettere a diversi padroni, et amici suoi*, printed by Osanna in 1589 and reprinted by the same firm the following year, include missives to a number of persons mentioned in the *resoconto* of the *barriera*: Prospero Cattaneo, Tullio Guerrieri, Cristoforo and Baldassare Castiglione (see n. 34), the "Signori Cavalieri Invaghiti", and – most significantly – the *corago* Leone de' Sommi *hebreo* and the composer Giaches de Wert. For Mori, see Faccioli, "Ascanio de' Mori", 501–552.

Questo di fino aciar lucido usbergo,
 Ch'armò già il duro tergo,
 Del famoso Trioian, degno Trofeo,
 Per cui l'ardito figlio di Peleo²⁸
 Si pregia hor tanto qui, non pur tra i suoi;
 T'offre il maggior Guerrier, che sia tra noi.
 Questa lancia fatale Amor ti dona
 La valorosa donna di Dordona.²⁹
 Mille scudi mill'elmi, et altrettanti
 Famosi Usberghi, de più eccelsi Heroi,
 Pendon da questi marmi in tutti i canti,
 Gloria ad Amor, e meraviglia à noi.

The greatest warrior in our company
 offers you this fine coat of mail of shining steel,
 which once covered the resilient back
 of the famous Trojan, a worthy trophy,
 for which the bold son of Peleus
 honours it here, rather than amongst his own.
 This fatal lance of Love is given to you
 by the valorous woman of Dordona.
 A thousand shields and helmets, and as many
 famed coats of mail of the most excellent Heroes
 hang from those marbles, and sing to us
 of Glory and Love, to our wonder.

Signor Capilupi,³⁰ besides the other Tuscan verses, composed the following:

Ecco le spoglie opime³¹
 Del gran Ferrante³² d'ogni lode degno.
 Che contra Amor non val forza, ne ingegno.
 Qui di Ruggier³³ son l'honorate spoglie;
 Ecco che contr'Amore
 Nulla giova il valore.

Behold the rich spoils
 of the Great Ferrante, worthy of every praise.
 Against Love neither force nor wit can prevail.
 Here are the honoured spoils of Ruggiero.
 Against Love
 valour cannot avail.

All these epitaphs were written in large letters on *cartelle* of various forms, and on great slabs of marble and bronze, which could also be read from a distance, being illuminated by a pair of vast lamps. Besides the many torches held in the air by the eagle which illuminated the theatre [the principal candelabra?], there were many little cupids riding on the whitest of swans and they [too] held a great many torches in the air around about the theatre. Some were in the act of shooting an arrow, while others threw down handfuls of flowers and crowns, a pleasing and graceful sight. There were also white doves, which held lightening bolts, so that they, and not the eagle, seemed to be the administrators of light. There were moreover smaller lights arrayed in the temple, in the columns, and the obelisks, and in a great quantity, so that nowhere was lacking the magnificence and splendour due to these great Princes. When the curtain fell, amidst the sounds of trumpets, drums and attendants, one saw, in ferocious stance before the temple, the three defenders. The first was the Serene Prince, who wore an armour inlaid with gold and enamel, with the largest,

²⁸ Achilles, son of the immortal nymph Thetis and the mortal Peleus, king of the Myrmidons. The central character and greatest warrior of Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles was a Greek hero of the Trojan War: his most notable feat was the slaying of the Trojan hero Hector outside the gates of Troy.

²⁹ "La valorosa donna di Dordona" refers to Bradamante, daughter of the Duke of Dordona: see Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Canto XII.

³⁰ See n. 18.

³¹ Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*: "Rich or fat spoils which were taken when a King or General of any Army slew with his hand the King or General that was his enemy".

³² Most probably Ferrante Gonzaga (1507–1557): a military leader who was at various times Viceroy of Sicily, Supreme Commander of the Imperial Armies, and Governor of Milan. Ferrante became a legend after his death, and his memory was kept alive. I am most grateful to the anonymous reader of my article who identified the 'gran Ferrante' cited here. For Ferrante Gonzaga, see Campana, *Arbori delle famiglie*, 67–70.

³³ Ruggiero: one of the principal protagonists of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*.

most beautiful and most pleasing helmet that was ever seen. With a cloak of royal hue, decorated with gold and silk flowers, with golden half boots, and hose covered with pearls, garnets and other gems of great price, and marvellous to behold, he carried most unusual arms. Wearing the Prince's colours (green, white and pink) and dressed in the Hungarian style, Signor Morgantino, a very handsome and well proportioned dwarf, carried the train of his cloak. The second defender was Signor Francesco Gonzaga, recently married, all in white and with a magnificent helmet. The third was Christoforo Castiglione, son of Conte Camillo, and grandson of the great Baldassare, who in robes of silver, gold, green and black, with a superb helmet and with fine stature and disposition, resembled a Mars adorned by Venus. And all three declared that they were worthy champions of Love. A great number of little Cupids played drums and trumpets, while in a raised area recalling Parnassus a chorus of Muses with their instruments applauded every victory of the knights with sweet melodies, celebrating their worth and their trials. The office of Master of Ceremonies was given to four beautiful nymphs, representing Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Four other very lovely nymphs, who served as Godmothers for all the Knights, were the Four Seasons. There were four Priests of Love, pleasing youths with rich and fantastical robes, who bore the symbols and colours of the four elements. These had the roles of understanding from the Judges which combatants were worthy of reward, and which penalties, and this they did by introducing some of the victorious through a door unknown to the multitude, in Love's glory, where erecting their trophies, or confiscating their arms, or taking them captive with chains and yokes of gold, or having them shot by the Cupids, and giving them other awards or penalties as they variously merited. But their roles were different, since Air and Fire, more active, speedy and more adorned, had to bestow the prizes, while Water and the Earth, more sluggardly, and without ornament, had to punish. The Judges were not visible; one could see only their emblems, that is: the Mirror, the Balance, the Diamond and the Brake for the four principal Virtues, who stayed with the others within the temple, observing the action of others but not being seen at all. And it is here that one could begin to understand that there was no part of this *barriera* in which virtuous or moral sentiments would not be presented in allegorical form. This was the more easily perceived at the conclusion, when with regard to the legitimate contenders, one saw, besides the notable awards of crowns and other ornaments, a token of a happy and blessed union, the last encompassing reward for every great merit, and, according to the philosophers who dispute the nature of true love, the end of all desire of true lovers, beyond which it is not legitimate to pass, for those who love with honest and perfect Love.

Conte Baldassare Castiglione³⁴ appeared, the first to venture, in the guise of Marfisa, but without company other than that of the hideous Gabrina, who in youthful dress, sit-

³⁴ *Il conte* Baldassare Castiglione appears to have taken a deep interest in theatrical productions; in 1592 he would act as temporary secretary to Duke Vincenzo in connection with his attempt to stage Guarini's *Pastor fido* in Mantua that year. There are no fewer than nineteen known letters relating to the production between Baldassare Castiglione, Giovanni Battista Guarini and Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga between 18 April and 25 May 1592 (see the website *Herla: Mantova Capitale Europea dello Spettacolo* [<http://www.capitaleospettacolo.it/ita/herla.asp>] for an index of this correspondence). See also D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano*, 2:547–563. For a study of Vincenzo Gonzaga's production of the *Pastor fido* at Mantua, see Sampson, "Mantuan

ting on the crupper of Marfisa's horse, drew a great laugh from everyone.³⁵ Marfisa was richly adorned and in short dress, with a silver Phoenix on her helmet, and with a crown divided in three parts on her breastplate. Having circled the field, they stopped in front of the temple and before their Serene Highnesses, where Gabrina sang, in a voice suitable to the nature of her personage, these verses written by Prospero Cattaneo:³⁶

Gabrina i[o] son, indegna condottiera
Dell'invitta Marfisa, all'armi nata,
Di rabbia e sdegno contr'Amor armata;
Cui di spegner le faci e troncar l'ali,
Spezzar l'Arco e li Strali,
Ella presume; anzi mostrar, che errore
Fù l'erger questo Tempio al cieco Amore.

I am Gabrina, unworthy leader
of the unconquered Marfisa, born to carry arms;
armed by rage and disdain against Armed Love;
she presumes to extinguish the torches and cut short
the wings, to break the Bow and Arrows,
and indeed, to demonstrate the error
of erecting this Temple to blind Love.

Marfisa withdrew, and having dismounted contested the defender as to who could touch the challenge with three blows of the pike, one of the lance and five of the sword.

And there immediately appeared in the company of numerous drums and trumpets a fine group of various Virtues, and two fair Knights, richly adorned, before whom a formation of Cupids carried a fine Trophy, composed on a laurel branch with a beautiful silver base. And above it hung a cartella with gold lettering which read:

Pirro³⁷ figlio d'Achille l'armi, e l'alma,
Opime spoglie³⁸ e salma
Perde al Tempio d'Amore,
Turbar osando il marital honore.

Pyrrhus son of Achilles lost his arms, his soul,
his spoils and his body,
at the Temple Of Love
from daring to disorder husbandly honour.

Thus Concord, who was the guide for the two Knights, and the other Virtues, sang together

Performance". Castiglione is also mentioned in the description of the *barriera* at Mantua in 1594: see Follino, "Breve descrizione", 77.

³⁵ For the episode of the lady Marfisa, who assumes the role of a knight, and assists the elderly and ugly Gabrina in chivalrous manner, see Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Canto xx.

³⁶ The aristocratic poet Prospero Cattaneo is cited by Cagnani in a list of Mantuan *literati* in his *Raccolta d'alcune rime*, 6. Three of his poems were published in the collection *Rime di diversi nobilissimi et eccellentissimi*, 117–118. We can deduct from surviving correspondence that Cattaneo was greatly interested in music: see ASMN, AG, busta 2636, c. 723, 22 August 1586, Prospero Cattaneo to Guglielmo Gonzaga, "di Casa": "Le raccomandi i libri di musica della Amoroza Spoglia ch' si possano recuperare quando non sia per servizio di S. A. Ser.ma et il tutto si ricevera a molta gratia". (Incidentally, the *Spoglia amorosa*, an anthology of madrigals first published by Scotto in 1584, includes madrigals by Alessandro Striggio and Giaches de Wert, both of whom are named in the account of this *barriera*). Prospero Cattaneo was the dedicatee of Alessandro Milleville's *Secondo libro de madrigali a cinque voci*, published in Ferrara in 1584.

³⁷ In Greek mythology Pyrrhus (also known as Neoptolemus) was the son of the warrior Achilles and the princess Deidamia, and the mythical progenitor of the ruling dynasty of the Molossians of ancient Epirus. These verses refer to Hermione, his betrothed, who had been given to Orestes in marriage. Pyrrhus appealed to Menelaus, who took Hermione from Orestes and gave her back to him. Orestes, insulted, slew Pyrrhus as he was sacrificing to Delphi, and recovered Hermione.

³⁸ For *opime spoglie*, see n. 31.

with them these words set to music by Signor Iaches, most excellent *maestro di cappella* of His Highness:³⁹

Pilade e Oreste⁴⁰ il par d'amici fido
Con le spoglie di Pirro ingiusto, et empio,
Ch' Hermione bella dal consortio nido⁴¹
Havea rapito con nefando esempio,
Vengono à farne offerta, il chiaro grido
Udito havendo del famoso Tempio;
E fatti degni di cotanto honore
Sempre difenderan l'armi d'Amore.

Pylades and Orestes, faithful friends,
with the spoils of Pyrrhus, unjust and impious,
that so wickedly removed
the fair Hermione from her conjugal home,
come to offer them, having heard
of the fame of the famous Temple;
and having made themselves worthy of such honour,
they will always defend the arms of Love.

These two Cavaliers were Signor Alfonso Gonzaga and Signor Massimiliano Cavriani, truly Pilade and Oreste in friendship and in behaviour. These two made combat with pike, axe and sword.

Then came a knight with a fine cloak, and rich Regal company, born on a splendid chariot adorned with armour and pulled by the whitest of horses, which belonged to Auriga the Victory, who sang gracefully this madrigal:⁴²

Ecco il pietoso Enea, che dopò tanti
Pericoli, travagli, errori, e pene,
Con Cibeles, Vulcan, Nettuno, Amore,
Dopo haver vinto Turno; e i Sacrosanti
Penati in grande honore
Posti nelle Latine piagge amene;
Dal Tebro se ne viene
Per esser d'alta gloria satio, e pago,
Al Tempio d'Ocno e del bel Mincio al Lago.

Behold compassionate Aeneas,⁴³ who after many
dangers, labours, errors and much suffering
with Cibeles, Vulcan, Neptune, and Love, who
after having conquered Turnus;⁴⁴
and his household Gods with great honour
placed amongst the pleasant Latin shores;
comes from the Tiber
satiated and rewarded with high glory
to the Temple of Ocno and the fair lake of Mincio.

³⁹ The Flemish musician Giaches de Wert was *maestro di cappella* at the court of Mantua from 1565 until his death in 1596 (in the last years of his life the position was nominal, on account of his poor state of health). MacClintock, *Giaches de Wert*, remains the fundamental overview, but for a study of Wert's secular music within the context of the Mantuan court and that of nearby Ferrara; see also Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 135–146. Fenlon also offers new material (some of which contradicts information given by MacClintock), in *Giaches de Wert: Letters and Documents*.

⁴⁰ Pylades was the son of King Strophius of Phocis and of Anaxibia, sister of Agamemnon and Menelaus. He is mostly known for his friendship with his cousin Orestes, son of Agamemnon, who, having been raised with him, was like a brother to him.

⁴¹ For Orestes, Pyrrhus and Hermione, see n. 37.

⁴² Auriga: a driver for chariot races in Homeric times. Presumably the term madrigal would signify here not a polyphonic composition, but rather some kind of accompanied 'solo' song.

⁴³ Mythical hero of Troy and Rome, son of the goddess Aphrodite and Anchises, Aeneas was a member of the royal line of Troy and cousin of Hector. He played a prominent part in defending his city against the Greeks during the Trojan War, being second only to Hector in ability. Homer implies that Aeneas did not enjoy his subordinate position, and from that suggestion arose a later tradition that Aeneas helped to betray Troy to the Greeks. The more common version, however, made Aeneas the leader of the Trojan survivors after Troy was taken by the Greeks. In any case, Aeneas survived the war, and his figure was thus available to compilers of Roman myths.

⁴⁴ In Virgil's *Aeneid* Turnus was the King of the Rutuli, and the chief antagonist of the hero Aeneas.

This was Tullio Guerrieri, who, if his most noble family did not carry that name, would himself be sufficient to gain it, since in arms and in magnanimous acts he has shown himself to be a valorous Warrior [*guerriero*]. Besides other arms he used also an iron club.

Immediately afterwards appeared a richly adorned knight, preceded by a huge rhinoceros which carried two Cupids, one of whom held a fine golden branch in the right hand and a mirror in the left, while the other held a lovely garland. They were preceded by Fame, who sang these words:

Quel Fidamante si celebre, e chiaro,
Vittorioso in tutte l'alte imprese,
D'alto e costante Amor' esempio raro,
Che'l Tempio arricchit' hà di molto arnese,
E per amor di sua gran Donna al paro
D'ogn' altro merta (mostrando palese
Di Patientia, è Fè vinti gli incanti)
D'entrar fra i chiari e gloriosi Amanti.

That Fidamante so celebrated and fair,
victorious in all high undertakings,
rare example of high and constant Love,
who has adorned the Temple with many weapons,
and for love of his great Lady
equal to any merit (showing clearly that
Patience, and Faith have overcome incantations)
to join the fair and glorious Lovers.

This invention was taken from the very fine poem by Curtio Gonzaga, great ornament of this century,⁴⁵ and the rhinoceros represented none other than Force subjected to Love and Beauty. This knight was Signor Statio, son of Signor Massimo Gazzini.

⁴⁵ As Biringucci notes, this personage derives from the epic poem by Gonzaga, *Il fido amante*, first published in Mantua in 1582. For a modern edition, see Gonzaga, *Il fidamante*. The introduction, by A. M. Razzoli Roio (who has also edited *Cavalieri ed eroi*, dedicated to this work), contains an extensive bibliography on Curzio Gonzaga, but we consider that the article by Belloni “Curzio Gonzaga” still remains a fundamental source for the life and works of the poet. Diplomat and writer, Curzio Gonzaga (c. 1530–1599) was the son of Marchese Luigi Gonzaga of the cadet branch of the Gonzagas of Palazzolo. In the later part of his life he lived in the family palace in Borgoforte and frequented the circles of Ferrante II Gonzaga of Guastalla. His epic poem *Il fido amante*, first published in Mantua by Ruffinello in 1582, was reprinted as *Il fidamante* in Venezia in 1591. Belonni, “Curzio Gonzaga”, 382, proposes a lost edition of 1585, cited in a manuscript by Carlo D'arco in the Gonzaga Archives. In fact, Bettinelli, in his *Delle lettere e delle arti mantovane*, 86, mentions an edition of *Il fido amante* published in Vicenza in 1585, and notes that according to Eugenio Cagnani, Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga wrote music for that work. See also Canal, *Della musica in Mantova*, 684–685, who suggests that Guglielmo may have set some of the *lamenti*. Guglielmo Gonzaga was a highly competent composer: he published a book of motets and a book of madrigals (both anonymously) with the firm of Gardano in Venice in 1583, as well as leaving a number of sacred works in manuscript sources. I have ascertained that Guglielmo's book of madrigals of 1583 contains a setting of a poem by the same Curzio Gonzaga, written in honour of Guglielmo's daughter Margherita: see Gonzaga, *Rime dell'illustriss. sig. Curtio Gonzaga*, 16: “Madrigale terzodecimo: CARA PERLA, et pregiata”. The author of this text is unknown to the editors of the madrigals of Guglielmo and scholars of his music. For a modern edition of his madrigals, see Gonzaga, *Madrigali a cinque voci*; for his motets, see Gonzaga, *Sacrae cantiones quinque vocum*; and for his Masses, *The Gonzaga Masses in the Conservatory Library of Milan, Fondo Santa Barbara*. For studies of Guglielmo Gonzaga as composer, see above all Sherr, “Publications of Guglielmo Gonzaga”; and chap. “Guglielmo Gonzaga and the Santa Barbara Project” in Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 79–117. See also Gallico, “Guglielmo Gonzaga”. Gallico recognizes the poem as encomia for members of Guglielmo's family called Margherita (he suggests that it is principally addressed to Guglielmo's daughter, but refers also to his mother and his first daughter-in-law), but not the author of the text. Guglielmo's setting

Then followed, in fine company, Theseus, and Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons, who was subdued and subjugated to Love by Theseus, with other captive Amazons, and with much armour to offer up [in homage].⁴⁶ Hippolyta came forth and made reverence to the temple singing thus:

Teseo che già di me fu vincitore
Amazona Guerriera
Conduco in campo, e s'io nell'armi fiera
Fui da lui vinta, hor ben dal suo valore
Fede vi posso far sperar poss'io,
Che'l Bellicoso Dio
Lo scorga ad altre gloriose imprese
D'Amor al Tempio queste spoglie appese.

Theseus who had conquered me
the Amazon warrior
I lead into the field, and if I, proud in arms, was
won over by him, I bear witness to his valour
and I can hope
that the warlike God
will lead him towards other glorious undertakings
of Love having hung these spoils at the Temple.

The Amazons could be recognized by their particular distinctive dress, and Theseus by his shield with the labyrinth and the Minotaur. The knight who represented him was Signor Count Giovan Giacomo d'Arco. Then followed Amadigi,⁴⁷ in fine company: he was Guido Gonzaga, guided by a Fairy who sang these words composed by Messer Leone de' Sommi.⁴⁸

Urganda io son la sconosciuta Maga,
Ch'Amadigi conduco il Cavaliero.
E di Marte, e d'Amor degno Guerriero,
Che come già accapò l'alta aventura,
Dell'invincibil spada, hor da famoso
Alto Tempio vittorioso
E nell'hasta, e nel brando s'assecura
Levarne spoglie, appendervi Trofei,
E guerra fare al vincitor de Dei.

Urganda I am, the unknown enchantress
that leads the knight Amadigi:
worthy warrior of Mars and Love,
who undertook the lofty adventure
of the invincible sword, now from the famed
lofty Temple victorious,
and in the lance and sword, to assure that
he will remove the spoils, to hang Trophies
and make war against the conqueror of the Gods.

Then appeared in the field three Knights in black dress, but richly covered with gold and gems, guided by three infernal Judges⁴⁹ – Eaco, Minos and Radamanto – and by the Furies,⁵⁰ the first of whom sang with horrid and funeral voice:

is also unknown to Stefano Patuzzi, who has identified musical settings of verses by Curzio Gonzaga; see Patuzzi, “Musiche su un volgarizzamento oraziano”. Leaving aside Guglielmo, verses by Curzio seem to have been set to music only by Cornelius Verdonck (in 1603) and Giovan Domenico Montella (in 1605).

⁴⁶ In Greek mythology Theseus, having slain the Minotaur, wished to marry Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, to provide a queen for Athens. In one of the more frequent versions of the myth she refused Theseus after prolonged courting and was subsequently abducted by him, but rescued by her Amazons before the wedding could take place. This verse instead suggests that she was conquered by both love and warfare.

⁴⁷ Amadigi and the fairy Urganda are characters deriving from an epic poem by Bernardo Tasso, *Amadigi*, first published in Venice by Giolito De' Ferrari in 1560.

⁴⁸ The Mantuan *corago* Leone de' Sommi *hebreo*; see n. 23.

⁴⁹ The tradition of Eaco, Minos and Radamanto as judges of the dead in the underworld derives from Plato. Eaco and Radamanto in particular were considered to be severe, impartial judges.

⁵⁰ In Greek mythology the Furies, also known as the *Erinyes*, were female deities of vengeance; they were sometimes referred to as “infernal goddesses” (*χθόνιαί θεαί*). According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, when the Titan Cronus castrated his father Uranus and threw his *genitalia* into the



Figure 2

Title page of Curzio Gonzaga's *Il fido amante: poema eroico* (Mantua: Ruffinello, 1582), F-Pn, PALAT. 12.4.4.9. (Reproduced by permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e per il turismo, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze. Further reproduction strictly forbidden.)

Noi Megera, Tesisone, e Aletto,
Di questi tre Guerrier fidate scorte,
Siam da Pluton mandate à queste porte,
Sol per levare voi tre da quel ricetto.

Questo primo pretende ogni diletto
Solo fruir nel Tempio; e se per sorte,
O virtù vera, avvien che ne riporte,
Vittoria, ei fia quel dalla speme detto.

L'altro, che l'arco hà d'Hecate, e li strali
Per dedicarli à questi eccelsi marmi
Di liberalità ricerca il nome.

Il terzo tolto via l'arnese, e i carmi,
Da quel mirto, di giusto havrà cognome.
Si promette Pluton farli immortali.

We – Megera, Tesisone and Aletto –
faithful escort of these three warriors,
have been sent by Pluto⁵¹ to this court,
to subtract you three from that enchantment.

The first of us requires that every delight
must be found within the temple, and if by fate
or true virtue it should happen to bring
Victory, it must be that agreed upon.

The second, who has Hecate's⁵² bow and arrows
to dedicate to them those excellent marbles,
seeks the name of liberality.

The third, if he removes the weapons and tributes
from that myrtle tree, will carry the name of the Just.
Pluto promises to make them immortal.

These three Knights were Signor Vincenzo Bagni, Signor Federigo and Signor Muzio Cattabene.

Once the battle was finished, two White Knights appeared in the theatre, of which the first was Signor Federico Gonzaga, that perhaps alluding to his name, and the nobility of his soul, took for his guide Faith, who sang these verses:

Candido il manto, candidi i pensieri,
Scuopron candido il core,
Anzi fiamme d'honore
Spargon intorno questi miei Guerrieri;
Et io che son la Fede,
Sel mio candor, qual è da voi si vede,
Fede vi faccio in questi brevi carmi,
Ch'in amar fidi sono fieri nell'armi.

Pure [white] the cloak, pure the thoughts,
the heart will be found pure –
flames of honour
will surround these my warriors;
And I, who am Faith,
if my purity is that which you see,
I will assure you in these brief verses
that loving faithfully they are proud in their arms.

The other knight of the Faith was Signor Conte Fulvio da Collatro.

And then was seen to appear a huge and ferocious Knight, that had four enormous Giants with him, whose strange gestures firstly created fear, and then laughter in the theatre. They had huge bear and lion skins over their naked flesh, and two of them, like Polyphemus, had only one eye in their forehead, which most incredibly opened and shut, a club in their right hand, and an enormous iron chain in their left. The laughter increased

sea, the Erinyes (along with the Giants and the Meliae) emerged from the drops of blood which fell on the earth (Gaia). A formulaic oath in the *Iliad* invokes them as “the Erinyes, that under earth take vengeance on men, whosoever hath sworn a false oath”. Their number is usually left indeterminate. Virgil recognized three sisters: Alecto or Alekto (“implacable anger”), Megaera (“jealous rage”), and Tisiphone or Tilphousia (“vengeful destruction”), all of whom appear in the *Aeneid*. Alecto castigated the moral crimes of humans (such as anger), especially if directed towards others. Megera was predisposed towards envy and jealousy and punished in particular matrimonial infidelity. Tisiphone punished crimes of murder: parricide, fratricide and homicide (in bk. 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid* she is described as the guardian of the gates of Tartarus, “clothed in a blood-wet dress”).

⁵¹ Pluto: the ruler of the underworld in Greek mythology.

⁵² In Greek mythology Hecate is the powerful goddess of magic, crossroads, fire, light, the moon and the underworld.

when one of them, who had bent down to enter into the door of the theatre, between kneeling down and with the others pushing from behind, lay down and was unable to get up, impeding entrance to the giant following him, so that only two Giants walked around the field. The knight was armed with Serpent's scales, and had a dragon on his helmet which threw out flames. Before him marched Disdain, who with a fierce and scornful voice sang these Stanzas sung by Disdain, Minister of the invincible Armedonte, King of the Scythians, the fear and scourge of the Universe:

Del Scitico Armedonte alto e possente,
Vendicar vuol di vil Fanciulla i Torti,
In Cipro ricevuti l'alta mente,
Con strage, incendio, aspre ruine, e morti,
In onta di Cupido, e d'ogni gente,
O celeste o terrena, che gli apporti
Con armi, o con inganni aiuto alcuno
Venghin pur soli, a coppia, o tutti in uno.
E vuol arder Cupido e i suoi serventi
Annullar sì, che alcun non sene trove,
Con diversi, inuditi, aspri tormenti;
Venga loro in soccorso, o Marte o Giove,
Che fien mal grado loro, e domi e spenti,
Senza a schermo trovar' in forme nuove,
E quei Giganti meno seco parmi,
Per portarne in un fascio il Tempio e l'Armi.

The haughty mind of the Scythian Armedonte, lordly and powerful
wishes to avenge the wrongs of the vile wench
that he received in Cyprus
with slaughter, fire, cruel ruins and Death
in reproach of Cupid, and of every person,
whether heavenly or earthly, who would bring
any help, with arms or deceit,
whether alone, coupled, or all together.
And he wishes to burn Cupid and destroy
his servants, so that no one will be found
with diverse, unheard, bitter torments.
May Mars or Jove come to their help
should they be against their will subdued and extinguished
without finding new forms as defence.
And here there seem less Giants with him
for bringing together the Temple and the Weapons.

This Armedonte was Signor Conte Prospero d'Archì, who also took his device from the fine poem of Curzio Gonzaga, cited above, but never sufficiently praised.⁵³

There also appeared, but separately, Signor Sigismondo Farone, and Signor Conte Febino, the one almost flying, in the form of Perseus, who carried the head of Medusa, riding on the subjugated whale from whom he had wished to take the freed and won Andromeda.⁵⁴ The other came truly flying, in the person of Ruggiero on the Hypogriff, to ask for arms from his predecessor Hector.⁵⁵

Then appeared Signor Tebaldo as Romulus, with many companions roughly armed, to dedicate the arms of the Caeninenses and the Sabines, judging that these offerings were

⁵³ See n. 45. These stanzas refer to Armedonte, feared king of the Scythians, who in Curzio Gonzaga's epic *Fido amante* attacks the city of Troy, attempting to sack it with the help of his four giants (hence the four giants who precede the ferocious knight in the *barriera*). The giants are killed, Armedonte retreats to his fleet, rides a storm and is washed up on Cyprus. Here the *maga* Argentina, Queen of Cyprus, humiliates him by putting him under a spell and riding on his back in a joust in which the other contestants are seated on wooden horses. See Gonzaga, *Il fido amante*, Canto XVI (for the giants and Troy), and Canto XVI–XVII (for Argentina, and Armedonte's humiliation). Notwithstanding the poetic sources, the interpretation of these verses remains problematic.

⁵⁴ Andromeda was the virgin daughter of Cassiopea, who considered herself to be more beautiful than the Nereids, the water nymphs. To repair the consequences of her pride, Cassiopea was obliged to sacrifice Andromeda as an offering to a sea monster. Perseus freed Andromeda and later wed her.

⁵⁵ For the episode of Ruggiero and the hippogriff, see Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Canto IV, Canto VI.

more appropriate to the Temple of Love rather than that of *Giove Feretrio*, since they were acquired in amorous battle.⁵⁶

Ulysses carried on his shield a dolphin, his *insegna*, and before him he had carried the Palladio, the Horse, the Arrows and images of burning Troy spinning in a most wonderful way, accompanied by his Penelope, gracefully dressed, who with an instrument in her hand, sang this madrigal:

Ulisse⁵⁷ dopo haver' acceso Troia
Errato con Nettuno in preda à i Venti,
Veduto molte genti,
E d'ogni altro piacer sentendo noia,
Con la sincera Fede,
A me su sposa riede,
Penelope sua cara, e i Proci uccide,
Ond'è ch'io mi confide
Di poterlo introdurre, ove l'Amore
Tempra con refrigerio il santo ardore.

Ulysses, after having set Troy on fire,
roamed with Neptune prey to the winds,
and having seen many people,
and with every other pleasure feeling only boredom
with sincere faith
returned to me, his wife
Penelope, his beloved, and killed his rivals,
so that I am confident
that I can introduce him to where Love
tempers with refreshment every sacred ardour.

But who could narrate in detail all the ingenious and magnificent inventions, the rich and wondrous costumes, the noble and witty emblems to be seen in this festive combat! What force of language would be sufficient to recount the fine blows, the graceful movements, the many kinds of arms that so many valorous warriors used – all the noble youths and comely spring of that florid and happy city? It is enough to say, with the limits of my humble style, that having fought with that ardour that the amorous glances of many Suns and many beautiful ladies had enflamed, the combattents [were] punished or rewarded according to their merits. The Victorious came one by one to try to open the Temple and to reveal the glory and bliss of Love. But this was only achieved by none other than His Serene Highness the Prince, on whose arrival, after great thunder and lightening, the temple opened, and one saw seated in majesty on an ample Throne of gold and silver, decorated with gems and crystal columns, a most beautiful *Amore*, neither blind, nor with wings, but mysteriously holding a lightning bolt in her hand, and with a globe of the world under her foot. In the other hand she held a fine garland, which she placed on the head of the Prince, and it was well merited, because in the many battles that he engaged in that evening, he showed himself always to be the most bold and courageous, and with universal wonder and praise it seemed that he took vigour from his endeavours. When the Temple opened, a sweet perfume filled the whole Theatre. And one saw around the Throne of Love all the Virtues, and infinite glorious Heroes taken from the triumph of Love, with rich and glittering robes, who gave a beautiful concert of music composed and directed by the most excellent Signor Giaches [de Wert] mentioned above, which featured, as well as the exceptional Capella of His Highness, with their most harmonious

⁵⁶ Referring to the rape of the Sabines by Romulus and his followers. For *feretrio*, see n. 3.

⁵⁷ King of Ithaca, son of Laertes and Anticlea, husband of Penelope and father of Telemachus, Ulysses (also known as Odysseus) desires to return to his native Ithaca and his family after ten years passed in Troy on account of the war, but the hatred of Poseidon prevents him. Constrained to continual wandering and fantastical adventures, he is able to return to his faithful wife Penelope only after another ten years have passed, thanks to the intervention of the goddess Athena.

instruments, Signor Alessandro Striggio,⁵⁸ together with one of his virtuous sons. They sang the madrigal given below, written by Signor Prospero Cataneo, a most gentle and learned soul, who needs only to be named to be praised:⁵⁹

Noi la gloria d'Amore
Tempio sublime all'alto nume eretto,
E de i Guerrieri suoi, l'opre e'l valore;
Hora cantiamo, e in questo luogo eletto,
All'Imprese d' Honor, d'Amor, di Marte,
Se pur del Canto d'arte,
Se non potranno i Carmi,
Ben confidiam nella Virtù dell'armi.

We the glory of love –
sublime temple erected to the heavenly deity
and to her warriors, the deeds and the valour –
will now sing, and in this chosen place,
of the emblems of Honour, Love and Mars:
but even if the art of Song
may result impotent,
we can confide in the virtue of arms.

And one saw, at the same time, come out from the high tribune of the Temple the whitest of doves, sparrows and white swans in great quantity, which brought branches and crowns of laurel leaves, and other fronds and flowers, in which were carried leaves of paper with amorous mottos and sayings, which fell into the hands of people almost as by fate. These flew all about the theatre and were with great pleasure caught by this or that person, who read the writings thereon, all in verse. The branches which carried them were ingeniously made, since within every frond was written two verses or Amorous sayings, of which I will give here the first few that I gathered, taken for the most part from the greatest Philosopher who ever studied Love:⁶⁰

Chi di Candido Amor seguita l'orma,
In divina bellezza si trasforma.

Whosoever follows the way of spotless Love
is transformed into divine beauty.

Principio, mezo, e fine Amor si chiama
E largo donator d'honore e fama.

Love is known as the beginning, middle and end
and generous donor of honour and fame.

Nasce l'Amor da bellezze Divine,
Ond'è che'l Regno suo non trova fine.

Love is born from Divine Beauty,
so that its Reign is without end.

La bellezza è splendor di Divin raggio,
Ond'è ch'ogni Amator si può dir saggio.

Beauty is the splendour of a divine ray,
so that every lover can consider himself wise.

La bellezza divina in ogni cosa
Si trova sempre, o palese o d'ascosa.

Divine beauty is always found in
everything whether openly apparent, or hidden.

Ritornate o mortali alla Figura
Antica, che può Amor più che natura.

Return, O Mortals, to the ancient Image,
since Love is more powerful than Nature.

⁵⁸ The composer and musician Alessandro Striggio, of aristocratic Mantuan descent, was connected for most of his life with the Medici in Florence, where he excelled in the production of music for court festivities. In 1586, the year after the *barriera*, he is said to have moved with his family to Mantua where he remained until his death, although continuing to send music to the Medici from that city, and taking part (as performer) in *intermedii* for Medici wedding celebrations in 1586 and in 1589. His son Alessandro, also a musician, would later compose the libretto for Monteverdi's opera *Orfeo*. See Kirkendale, *Court Musicians in Florence*, 68–99. The participation of Striggio father and son in Biringucci's *barriera* seems not to have been observed by scholars of their lives and works: Burratelli, *Spettacoli di corte a Mantova*, 116, notes it *en passant*, but without paying other attention to the *barriera*.

⁵⁹ For Prospero Cattaneo, see n. 36.

⁶⁰ Namely Plato.

Non si trova tra voi odio né sdegno,
Chi segue Amore è possessor d'un Regno.

E buono e bello Amor, indi è beato,
Di sovrana bellezza al mondo nato.

Ne creatura mai, nè creatore,
Fù senza compagnia di grande Amore.

E tua colpa non già del Dio Cupido,
Se non fai quel che fece Enea con Dido.

Amor può dotte far le genti grosse,
Ogn'un ricorga à sue stupende posse.

Lasciate o genti il volgar vile Amore,
E nel Divin fermate il vostro core.

Sentirà dell'Amor l'arco e li strali,
che si pone ad amar Donne immortali.

Se vuoi far come Angelica e Medoro
Non servi l'Amoroso alto Decoro.

Amor insegna il tutto à suoi diletti;
Chi vuol sapere à seguir lui si metti.

Amor del viver vostro hà in man la chiave,
E con Catene d'or giogo soave.

Non vuol Cupido haver in conto o cura,
Chi spregia i suoi gran doni e di natura.

Chi fedelmente serve il santo Amore,
Vive beata vita, e mai non muore.

La giostra che volea far Bradamante,
Col buon Ruggier,⁶² conviene ad ogni Amante.

Non fuggè Amor, quando la prima volta
Fonda in Virtù la sua potenza molta.

Proteo non tolse mai così bel Manto,
Che non sia quel d'Amor bello altrettanto.

Quel che non nacque, e non fù fatto al Mondo
Non era nel saper, così profondo.

Come la vosta passa ogni Vittoria,
Si vi conviene l'Amorosa gloria.

In questo punto, in questa felice hora
Saprai, che content'hà chi s'inamora.

Amor tra gli infiniti suoi Trofei,
Vuol che sia prima il viso di Costei.

Nor hate nor scorn can be found within you:
he who follows Love possesses an entire Reign.

Love is both good and kind, and is thus blessed;
born into the world from sovereign beauty.

Neither creature nor creator was there ever,
if not accompanied by great Love.

The fault is yours, not that of the God Cupid, if
you do not do that which Aeneas did with Dido.⁶¹

Love can instruct the most ignorant;
may everyone gather his powerful strength.

Leave, o people, the vulgar vile Love,
and seal your heart with the Divine.

He who sets himself up to love immortal Women
will feel the bows and arrows of Love.

If you wish to follow the example of Angelica and Medoro,
do not follow decorum in Love.

Love teaches all to his chosen ones,
he who wishes to learn must follow him.

Love has the key to your life in her hands,
and with golden chains is a yoke of sweet tyranny.

Cupid does not wish to account for or dispute with
he who despises his great gifts and his nature.

He who faithfully serves sacred Love
lives a blessed life, and never dies.

The joust which Bradamante wished to engage
with the good Ruggier, is apt for every lover.

Do not flee Love, when for the first time
it finds its great power in Virtue.

Proteus never removed such a beautiful cloak
if not that of Love, which is equally beautiful.

That which was not born and not made in this World
was not so profound in knowledge.

As your Victory surpasses any other,
the same does the glory of Love.

In this place, in this happy hour,
you will know the happiness of one who loves.

Love amongst its infinite trophies
wishes that the first be Her face.

⁶¹ Bk. 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid* tells of the love of Dido, Queen of Carthage, for the Trojan hero Aeneas.

⁶² Angelica, Medoro, Bradamante and Ruggiero are all characters in Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando furioso*.

In quest' il fin della Filosofia
Et il principio fanno compagnia.

In this the end of Philosophy
and its beginning keep company.

The verses and the birds having fallen into the hands of many lords and ladies, it would be a rare opportunity to write a pleasing and enjoyable work by assembling together all the witty and ingenious declarations which were given to the noble souls of Mantua – both the amorous youths and the beautiful women – through the verses which by chance fell into their hands. In the meanwhile, the most faithful and powerful crowned Knight, having released with compassion the prisoners and returned their arms to them, accompanied them, deservedly praised and thanked by all, to the site of the tournament, where, since all had behaved with valour, they were introduced to the glories of Love.

Whereupon the donation of inscriptions and arms and a variety of crowns, proportionate to their merits, brought a merry end to the spectacle at the fifth hour of the night, at which time all the Lords and Ladies, and the most noble men, together with the knights, were welcomed to a most solemn public feast, demonstrating the truth of the saying of Paolo Emilio⁶³ that to celebrate feasts and public festivities is the duty of those same magnanimous Heroes who prove to valorously win in war.

Oreste Vannocci

*

The nature of this tournament, would seem, at least at first reading, to be notably complex. But before we discuss the event in detail, it is essential to examine the figure of its creator, Oreste Vannoccio Biringucci. A descendant of the famous Vannoccio Biringucci who had published the highly successful treatise *De la Pirotechnia libri X* in 1540, Oreste was born in Siena in 1558. The young architect Biringucci is said to have been esteemed in Roman circles for his study and translation of Greek and Latin literature; his translation of the *Parafrasi* [...] *sopra le Mecaniche d'Aristotile* by Alessandro Piccolomini was published in that city,⁶⁴ and we know that another translation, of Herone's *Spiritium* (unpublished), was dedicated by Biringucci to Bernardo Buontalenti, having been produced on his request.⁶⁵ Biringucci was recommended to Guglielmo Gonzaga by no less than the Roman Giacomo della Porta, “primo architetto” of that city,⁶⁶ and

⁶³ We think this refers to Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus, twice Consul of the Roman Republic, and conqueror of Macedonia in the third Macedonian war. On his return to Rome his conquest was celebrated with a spectacular triumph which lasted all of three days.

⁶⁴ Piccolomini, *Parafrasi di monsignor Alessandro Piccolomini*.

⁶⁵ See Biringucci's letter to Bernardo Buontalenti dated 28 December 1582 in: Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, Codice VI: 44, no. 161, which says “[...] the most illustrious *signore* Hippolito Austini, magistrate of Siena, wrote to me to say that Your Excellency wished to have a copy of Herone Alessandro's *De li Spiritali* translated into our language [...] after having overcome many difficulties, I have finished the work, which I will send you, so you can use it at your pleasure” (the original letter is published in Milanese, *Documenti per la storia*, 3:255, but with an erroneous shelfmark: Cod. VI.44 [recte Cod. L.VI.44]). In the manuscript cited in n. 71 one of the two compilers named Pecci declares that he has in his possession a manuscript copy of this translation by Biringucci.

⁶⁶ On 30 April 1583 Monsignor Aurelio Zibramonte wrote to the Mantuan court to say that “the foremost architect of this city, responsible for the buildings of Saint Peter, the fortifications, and

was appointed “prefetto alle fabbriche” on 13 June 1583.⁶⁷ Most of what we know today about Biringucci derives from Sieneese sources. In the manuscript *L'indice degli scrittori sanesi*, now in the Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati of Siena,⁶⁸ the compilers, Giovanni Antonio and Pietro Pecci, tell us that:

Vannoccio Biringucci Oreste had an excellent knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages; he was a fine architect, having been appointed *Prefetto delle Fabbriche* for His Highness the Duke of Mantua, at the age of 22.⁶⁹ He was a talented poet, and very knowledgeable about history, especially that of the Greeks. He made a fine translation from Latin into Tuscan of the *Paraphrases* of Monsignor Alessandro Piccolomini on the *Mechanics* of Aristotle, the which he published in Rome in 1582, with a thirty-sixth chapter, a new and most learned discourse on winding screws.⁷⁰ He wrote a treatise on the most noble buildings and constructions of the world – both ancient and modern – which was not published until after his death.⁷¹ He translated, also in 1582, the *Spiritualium* of Hero of Alessandria, the original of which, unpublished, I (the author of this index) have in my own possession. He also produced another work, which dealt with all the armaments of war which were used in Antiquity [in another hand: “manuscript in the possession of the priest Giovacchino Taluschi”]. He died while in the service of the Duke of Mantua aged 27,⁷² not without suspicion of poisoning.⁷³

public works, called Maestro Giacomo Della Porta, has proposed as architect for His Highness Signor Oreste Vanocci, a Sieneese gentleman, praising him greatly to me, and saying that he is the best that His Highness can find in this city [...]. Since I do not understand this science, I send Your Lordship three of his drawings, from which you can understand whether he designs well or not. He is a youth of 24 years, a noble gentleman of Siena, with fine manners, and is ready and willing to serve His Highness according to the conditions sent to me by Your Lordship in your letter [...]. For a complete transcription of the original, see Bertolotti, *Artisti in relazione coi Gonzaga*, 19.

⁶⁷ ASMN, AG, busta Bb, IV (1513–1697), varie, Salariati, c. 45, 13 June 1583: “Commissione Ducale che M[esse]r Oreste Vanocci va messo per Architetto Ducale invece del fu M[esse]r Bernardino Brognolo, colla Provvisione annessa ad esso Impiego. v[ede] Libro delle Commissione fol. 163f.”

⁶⁸ Pecci, *L'indice degli scrittori sanesi*, fol. 150v (modern numbering; originally p. 296), n. 6, chap. “Vannocci Biringucci Oreste”.

⁶⁹ Since he died at the age of twenty-seven in 1585 (see his necrology in n. 75), he must have been appointed at the age of twenty-four or twenty-five.

⁷⁰ See n. 65.

⁷¹ See n. 65. This work has been lost, along with the translation of the *Spiritualium*.

⁷² ASMN, AG, Necrologici v. 16, 1584–1586. n. 21 [luglio]: “[...] lo m[ae]s[tr]o M[esse]r oreste vanocci Prefetto delle fabbriche di S. Alt. nella cont[r]ada dell’Acquila è morto di febre, e cataro infermo giorni quindeci d’anni n° 27.” A letter from Teodoro [?] Sangiorgio to an unidentified person at the court of Mantua on 22 June 1585 speaks of Biringucci having an illness which impeded him from producing as requested ideas for a festive occasion, which was almost certainly the reception of four Japanese noblemen at Mantua in July of 1585 (ASMN, AG, busta 2630, 33 June 1585). See Fabbri, *Gusto scenico a Mantova*, 37.

⁷³ Pecci, *L'indice degli scrittori sanesi*, n. 6: “Vannocci Biringucci Oreste ebbe la piena cognizione delle lingue greca, e latina, fu valente Architetto perche d’anni 22 venne dichiarato Prefetto delle Fabbriche del Ser.mo Duca di Mantova, possede l’ornamento della poesia e molto versato nelle storie, e particolarmente nelle Greche. Tradusse felicemente dal Latino nel Toscano il libro delle meccaniche d’Alessandro Piccolomini, la qual traduzione si vede alle stampe, imprese in Roma nel 1582; colla giunta della trigesimasesta questione, col nuovo, e dottissimo discorso

This manuscript source is notable for two statements which find no confirmation elsewhere: Biringucci's compilation of a work on armaments of war in Antiquity, and the suspicion of poisoning regarding his death. But otherwise similar information comes from an undated letter written after Oreste's death by Adriano Politi to Biringucci's father Alessandro Vannocci. Politi writes to him a letter of condolence regarding

this noble offshoot of your blood, who for his natural inclination, after a fortunate course of study, applied himself to architecture, and at the age of 18 translated most excellently into our language the *Mechanics* of Alessandro Piccolomini, Archbishop of Patras, with its addition of the thirty-sixth dispute, a new and most learned discussion of winding screws. And at the age of 22 [*recte* 24], recommended by principal architects, he was considered worthy of the role of Prefect of Buildings for His Highness of Mantua, with five hundred *scudi* of recompense, after having shown with regard to the buildings of the said Highness, and then during the nuptials of the Prince [Vincenzo], the acute and lively nature of his flourishing skill with many inventions, and with much evidence of his erudition with regard to poetry, emblems, devices and ornamentation for solemn festivals, so that he demonstrated that he had added a perfect knowledge of letters to his skill as architect. Finally, in the flower of his youth, and our hopes, he passed to a better life at the age of 24 [*recte* 27].⁷⁴

Sic ingenia quo illustriora, èb breviora sunt,
non ubi incremento locus non est, vicinus oculus est.

If I remember that one could not discuss with him anything about which he was not already informed, nor could one ask him a question to which he could not give a satisfactory answer, having always present in his mind that which he had read on account of his splendid memory, of Plato, Aristotle and other serious authors, and in particular Seneca and Plutarch, and with great knowledge of all the poets, I cannot cease to marvel at such an intellect, nor the pain of such a loss. It is certainly most hard, and worthy of continual mourning, were it not brought about by the hand of God [...] I inform your Lordship that only a few months ago he wrote to say that he had almost completed a lengthy treatise on the most noble edifices and buildings of the world, both ancient and modern. I had shortly before sent him information about certain places regarding Niceforo. I desire, now that we cannot remedy his loss of life, to at least save his precious works. Il Signor Lorenzo Castellani [...] has written to Signor Don Cesare Gonzaga,

delle vite [in another hand: "v[ede] Adriano Politi a 74"]. Compose un trattato sopra gli edifici, e fabbriche nobili del mondo, antiche, e moderne, che rimasse inedito, e gli fu publicato dopo la morte. Tradusse ancora nell'anno 1582 dal Greco nel Toscano l'opera degli Spirituali d'Erone Alessandrino che si conserva, nel proprio originale, inedita, appo' di me Autore del presente Indice. Altra opera che tratta di tutte le armi da guerra, che furono in uso preso gli antichi [in another hand: "un ms in mano del sacerdote Giovacchino Faluschi"]. Mori al servizio del Duca di Mantova, d'età d'anni 27 l'anno 1585 non senza sospetto di veleno." [in another hand: "v[ede] Adriano Politi 155"]. Biringucci's Mantuan necrology speaks of his dying of fever and catarrh; however, Adriano Politi, in his letter to Oreste's father Alessandro, emphasizes at great length Oreste's death as an act of God, which leads us to wonder whether rumours of poisoning had indeed circulated. Bertolotti, *Artisti in relazione coi Gonzaga*, 61, interprets the Mantuan necrology as referring to his wife, and says that after her death Biringucci, disconsolate, renounced his position at the court: a romantic fantasy which has no documentary foundation.

⁷⁴ The Mantuan necrology entry gives his age of death as twenty-seven: see n. 72.

requesting His excellency to keep safe the writings of the defunct, and I have written to Signor Arrivabene [...].⁷⁵

Sadly, no trace of this treatise – cited by Pecci as well as Politi – remains today, but the codex S IV.1 in the Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati di Siena, known as the *Taccuino di Oreste Biringucci*, which contains his sketches, elevations and drawings of buildings (both ancient and modern), fortifications, armaments of war, and decorative elements (including vases and helmets), has proved to be of great interest for art and architectural historians.⁷⁶

Biringucci is also said by Politi to have contributed to the festivities for the marriage of Vincenzo Gonzaga and Eleonora de' Medici: apparently in the conception of decorative elements and the invention of appropriate devices and emblems. No evidence of this remains elsewhere, but that there was a *barriera* also for this occasion, is confirmed by payment records.⁷⁷ But we know of a letter from Biringucci to the young Prince, sent on 6 December 1584, which refers to his preparations for the tournament for carnival of 1585:

Your Serene Highness and Patron: I am sending the included inventions for festive

⁷⁵ Politi, *Lettere*, 74–77: “[...] questo nobil germoglio del suo sangue, che per sua naturale inclinazione, dopo un felicissimo corso di studio, s'applicò alle cose d'Architettura, ed di 18. anni tradusse così felicemente nella nostra lingua la *Parafrasi* del nostro Mons[ignor] Alessandro Piccolomini sopra le *Meccaniche* di Aristotle, alla quale aggiunse quella trentesimasesta questione, con nuovo, e dottissimo discorso delle vite; e che a 22 anni [*recte* 24 / 25; see n. 69] per relatione di tutti i più principali architetti d'Italia fù giudicato degno del carico di Prefetto delle fabbriche del Serenissimo di Mantova con 500 scudi di provisione, dopo have mostrato nelle fabbriche di quell'Altezza, e poi nelle nozze del Principe, la vivacità, et acutezza del suo fioritissimo ingegno con tante inventioni, con tanti segni d'eruditione per le poesie, per i motti, e per l'impresie, e tanti altri ornamenti di quelle solenissime feste, finalmente nel fiorir delle sue, e delle nostre speranze, di 24 [*recte* 27] anni è passati alla vita migliore. Quando mi ricordo, che non si poteva ragionar seco di cosa che non sapesse, ne se gli poteva far questione alcuno, a cui non desse soddisfattione, havendo presente sempre in ogni occorrenza, per la felicità della sua memoria, tutto quel che una volta havesse veduto, così di Platone, d'Aristotele, come d'altri grandissimi autori, particolarmente di Seneca, e di Plutarco suoi familiari, con la notizia esquisita di tutti i poeti, non posso cessar dalla maraviglia di tanto intelletto, ne dal dolore di tanta perdita. Dura cosa certo, e degna di continuo pianto, se non fusse opera del mano di Dio [...] Fò sapere a V. S. che sono pochi mesi ch'egli mi scrisse haver in buon termine un lungo trattativo de gli edifitij, e delle fabbriche nobil del mondo, così antiche, come moderne; havendo io poco avanti mandata a lui nota, a quest' effetto, d'alcuni luoghi di Niceforo. Desidererei hora, che non potendo più remediare il danno della sua vita, si procurasse almeno la vita alle sue prestiose fatiche. Il Signor Lorenzo Castellani (primo motore di quell'infelice partito) ne scrive con questo spaccio caldamente a Signor Don Cesare Gonzaga, pregando S. E a far tenere in buona custodia le scritture del morte; et io ne scrivo al Signor Arrivabene [...]”. Published by Heydenreich, “Über Oreste Vannocio Biringucci”, 435–438. Since the entry on Oreste Biringucci in Ugurgieri Azzolini, *Pompe Sanesi*, 665–666, derives from this letter, we do not give it in this article.

⁷⁶ See Caltarossa, “Il codice di Oreste Vannocci Biringucci”, 43–60, for a recent examination of the codex, including extensive references to earlier studies (including the article by Heydenreich).

⁷⁷ ASMN, AG, busta 401, c. 354v: “Nota per il pagamento di L. 105 a Giovanni di Soldati ‘lanzaro’ per la forniture di 210 picche da barriera, di braccia 10 l’una, consegnate per fare la mostra della barriera per le nozze”.

combat, with which I hope to please you, having taken them from various [elements] of history, as you will see. Please accept this modest gift together with a pure intention and the zeal of a sincere servant, and where there is something lacking in that which I send, any your request will awake my invention and implement my desire and your merits, and with this I beg that Your Highness will always be happy. In Mantua, 6 December 1584. Your Highness's humble servant, Oreste Vannocci.⁷⁸

It is disappointing that hardly any first hand accounts of the performance of this tournament can be found in the Mantuan archives. The only one known to me is a statement in a letter of 9 March, from a certain Ferucci to “Mons[igno]r L'Abbate Gonzaga in Rome”, which reads laconically:

Last Sunday we had a fine *barriera* here at the court in which many *cavalieri* took part. The defenders were the Prince, Count Cristoforo Castiglione, and il S[igno]r Francesco son of Sig[no]r Gonzaga; all of them performed well [...].⁷⁹

Given this silence, one might perhaps think that there could have been a considerable discrepancy between Biringucci's account and the reality of the production of the *barriera* in Mantua, since we know that festival books were intended to produce an account of an ephemeral event which would preserve its memory for history in the best possible light, in order to reflect the brilliance and power of the court.⁸⁰ But, in fact, we can find confirmation of many elements described by Biringucci in the payment records of the court. We are told by Biringucci that Vincenzo Gonzaga was dressed “with a cloak of regal hue, decorated with gold and silk flowers, with golden half boots, and hose covered with pearls, garnets and other gems of great price, and marvellous to behold and pearls and garnets”,⁸¹ while on the previous 26 February it is recorded that a quantity of garnets

⁷⁸ ASMN, AG, busta 2625, 6. 12. 1584: “Ser[enissi]mo Signor Principe e P[ad]rone: Mando a V[ostra] A[ltezza] S[erenissi]ma le incluse inventioni di combattimenti festevoli, con desiderio di farle cosa grata, havendone tolte le inventioni da historie, come la potrà vedere. Accetti per gratia questo leggiero dono et insieme una purissima intentione e zelo d'un servitor sincero, e dove sarà mancamento nelle cose che mando, potrà con i suoi comandamenti svegliarmi la inventione e procurarmi à supplir al desiderio mio et al merito suo, e con questo fine prego il Signor che la conservi sempre felice. In Mantova il 6 di dicembre 1584. Sig.re di V[ostra] A[ltezza] humil servitore, Oreste Vannocci”.

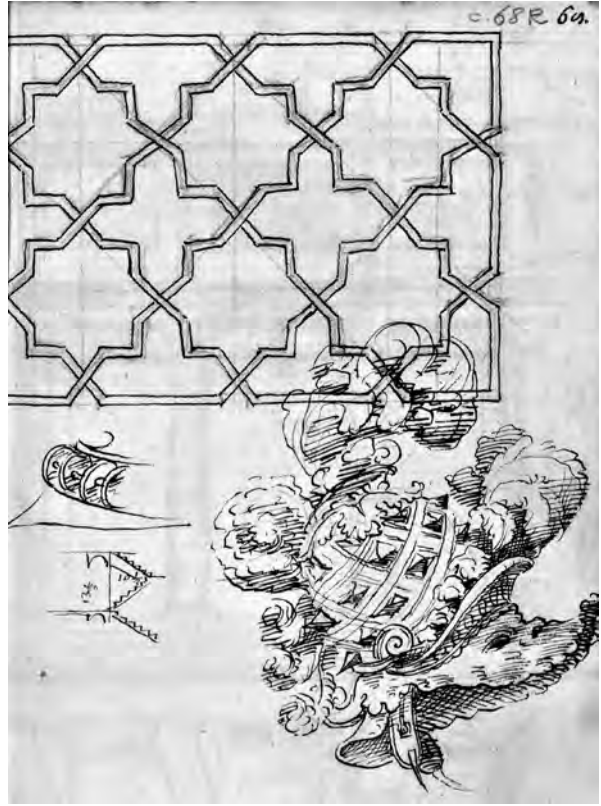
⁷⁹ ASMN, AG, busta 2629, 9 marzo 1583: “Domenica pass[at]a havevamo qui una bella barriera in Corte dove intervennero molto cav[alie]ri; li mantenitori furono il S. Pr[inci]pe, Co[nte] Christoforo Castig[lione] et il S[igno]r Fran[ces]co figlio del Sig[no]r Gonzaga; tutti si portarono bene”.

⁸⁰ On festival books as records of ephemeral courtly events, see Watanabe-O'Kelly, “Early Modern European Festivals”, 15–25.

⁸¹ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 442, A di p[rimo] marzo 1585: “La corte del ser[enissi]mo sig[no]r Principe di Mant[ov]a de[ve] dare a noi Gratiano et fratelli Abolatti [...] Per g 2 ½ tela d[or]o et ar[gen]to per fodrare u[n]o p[ai]o di calze di raso verdosino a tagli recamati d'oro e perle e granate p[er] S[ua] A[ltezza] S[erenissima] a y 18 il monta 40-20”. See also ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 429, a di 24 febr[raio]: “[...] per onze 2 2/m de seta sotila gialla e bianca datto ali r[i] cam[ato]ri p[er] cosir il recamo delle calze de raso verd[osi]no con oro arg[en]to e perle per la Barriera [...] 3 16 6”. See also ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 444, il premio di marzo: “M[esse]r

Figure 3

Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, Codice S.IV.1, *Il taccuino di Oreste Biringucci*, fol. 68r (used by permission)



had been bought from Lelio Masferan *hebreo*⁸² and a certain Messer Cesare is paid for his embroidery with pearls.⁸³ Three men are paid for having worked all Sunday of Carnival to produce the Prince's cloak,⁸⁴ which is silk, of colour *incarnato* (flesh pink?) and embroidered. A jacket of white satin and taffeta is likewise made for the Prince, which is

Iseffo di Pori a lavorato sei giornate nelle calze verde da barera a' un quarto di scudi la giornata [...] M[esse]r Antoni[o] Maria de Biasi giornate sei al sopra detto prezzo [...] M[esse]r Aschanio di Fontana ha lavorato giornate tre al sopra detto [...] M[esse]r Agostino di Pralon per sua fatura di avere agiulato [*sic?*] in dette calze”.

⁸² ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 430, a di 26 febbraio 1585: “Io Lelio Masferan hebreo [devo avere] per un miaro e mezo de granatini ho dato per fare i ricamo p[er] bisogno del suo Ser[enissimo] y 36”.

⁸³ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 450: “[...] a M[esser] Cesare recam[ato]re [...] per infilar perle p[er] le calze r[i]cam[a]te di S[ua] A[ltezza] per la barera: y 1 6”. Regarding the pearls and garnets, we find the following in ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 382: “[...] per un mandato de granate da Cremonisi orifici: 139-13-0; per un mandato di Lelio de Rossi ebreo per perle: 120-0”.

⁸⁴ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 454, a di 6 marzo: “M[esse]r Antoni[o] Maria Biasi [h]a' lavorato la domenica di Car[ne]va[le] in un manto da bariera per sua A[ltezza] Ser[enissi]ma per suo pagamento per essere festa i-u 178. M[esse]r Isepo de Pori [h]a' lavorato nel medesimo manto la istessa giornata et per il suo pagamento monta i u 178. M[esse]r Aschanio Fontana medemamente [h]a' lavorato conforme di sopra all detto prezzo monta i u 178. Il summ[ario] 5 11 28”.

said to have required the work of a number of men for a whole day and night.⁸⁵ A certain Aurelio Zanachi is paid for a high fringe of gold to be attached to the crest of his Highness's helmet.⁸⁶ Other payments record such minimal details as candles to illuminate the work of those working with the jewels for the embroidered hose,⁸⁷ and their *carta da disegno*.⁸⁸

Biringucci tells us that “wearing the Prince's colours (green, white and pink) and dressed in the Hungarian style, Signor Morgantino, a very handsome and well proportioned dwarf, carried the train of [Vincenzo's] cloak”. We find amongst records of payments, on 4 March, that the same Lelio Masferan *heb[re]jo* named above was paid for embroidered green satin to make hose and a *briola* [a jacket, or short cloak?] for Signor Morgantino to wear for the *barriera*.⁸⁹

Besides the quantity of documents regarding the preparation of costumes, we also find a great many regarding the weapons used in the *barriera*. From 25 February payments are recorded to Giovanni di Soldato “lanzaro” for arms for the *barriera*: pikes, half pikes, poleaxes and lances.⁹⁰ On 26 March, a certain Anastasio *pittore* is paid for having painted and gilded five *martelli*⁹¹ for the *barriera*.⁹² And to confirm the decorative use of arms in the scenario we can even read that for its preparation a chest of arms was brought from Ferrara, temporarily deposited in the house of Tullio Guerrieri, the chancellor of the court, and then transferred to the *guardaroba* of the theatre.⁹³ This was not the only assistance requested from the court of Ferrara for the occasion, for on 16 February Prince

⁸⁵ ASMN, AG, busta D. XII 7, fol. 425: “A 4 braccia 4 ½ raso bianco nostrano a lire y 6 il braccio, datto per far un giupone a Sua A[ltezza]; braccia 2 ½ cendal bianco ordinario p[er] fodrar detto a soldi 33 il braccia lire 4 2 6; braccio ½ ermesino bianco p[er] far mostr' à detto 3 0 0; ½ Seda bianco p[er] cusir detto 0 17 0”. ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 449v: “[...] pagati sarti per haver lavor[a]to un giorno e tutta una notte p[er] far un giupon p[er] S[ua] A[ltezza]”.

⁸⁶ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 425, 22 febbraio 1585: “Et più ¾ di franza alta d'oro [...] per atacar a un favore che va atacato al cimero di Sua A[ltezza] S[erenissima] p[er] la barera [...] 11-5-0”.

⁸⁷ ASMN, AG, busta 401, c. 442, 21 febbraio 1585: “[...] p[er] candele p[er] detto orificie et bisogno de questo robba: y 1-16”.

⁸⁸ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 429, 24 febbraio 1585: “[...] contanti a M[esser] Cesare [...] p[er] comprar carta p[er] [...] far disegni e copiare à li ricami: i-15-0”.

⁸⁹ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 448, a di 4 marzo 1585: “La corte del Seren[issim]o Prencipe de[ve] dare a Lelio Masferan heb[re]jo 1/3 3 2/3 raso verde lavorato per far un paro de calzi et uno briola al S[ignor] Morgantino p[er] la barera: 22; calzi di stame verde per dito 4.10; il sum[a]rio 26.10”.

⁹⁰ The payments in ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 354v–355, are given summarized here: (2 febbraio) “Piche da barera, n. 12; Marteli numero 4 di noce con li suoi stanegi”; (2 marzo) “[...] megie Piche n. 18 grosse per comparer nela barera, lanze tonde per la Barera n. 18, Marteli n.o 14 de Piella come le Aste de piella longe, Piche da Barera n. 150 per far la Barera nella siena [i.e. scena]; Altre 4 lanze più grosse et tonde per deta Barera; un Altro Martelo simile a quelli di sopra”.

⁹¹ The term *martello* in this context signifies the weapon known in English as a poleaxe, somewhat similar to a halberd.

⁹² ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 458, 25 marzo 1585: “Io Anastasio di Anastasij pittore sono creditore del Altezza del Ser[eniss]mo Prencipe di lire quindecim e queste per la pitture e adoratura di cinque martelli per servizio di S[ua] A[ltezza] nella barriera fatta a questo carnevale pross[im]o o passato [...]”.

⁹³ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 458: “[...] pagasi ai fachini per riportar un casson d'arme giunto da Ferrara poi tolse a casa del. Ill. S.r Tullio e portato in g[uard]arobba y o 12”.

Vincenzo wrote to Ferrara asking that he be sent three or four designs for *maschere* for the *quintana*, and that a certain Messer Francheschino, together with his assistant – or at least one of them – come to Mantua, as they had sometimes done in the past, to help with the carnival celebrations to honour his sister the Archduchess.⁹⁴

A payment on 22 March referring to “rami di lauro d’argento” (silver laurel branches) to a certain Messer Bastian *fiamengo* most probably refers to the “fine Trophy, composed on a laurel branch with a beautiful silver base”.⁹⁵

Last but not least, we might note that there are also payment documents regarding birds of various kinds, which presumably were those involved in the final moments of the *barriera*, when they were set free and flew about the theatre, carrying twigs and crowns of laurel leaves and other fronds and flowers, and releasing the epigrams composed for the occasion. Biringucci speaks of doves, sparrows and white swans, while the payments speak of doves, quails, pheasants and a parrot (birds whose presence would have been more substantial – and possibly more audience-friendly – than that of sparrows).⁹⁶

To conclude, we offer our readers some considerations on the *barriera* of 1585, in an effort to evaluate it within its historical and cultural ambience. Firstly, the scenography and architecture of Biringucci’s *barriera*, depicting the *Tempio d’Amore Feretrio*, is in itself not particularly novel. We should remember that it was of necessity circumscribed, by being placed within the confines of the theatre of the Mantuan court, which is described thus, in Toscano’s poetic work *Rime ai serenissimi Vicentio Gonzaga e Leonora de Medici duchi di Mantoua & di Monferato. Sopra la edificatione di essa* [...].⁹⁷

⁹⁴ ASMN, AG, busta 2955, c. 165v–166r, 16 febbraio 1585: “A S[igno]r D[uca] Alfonso d’Este: Il desiderio che io ho di servir sempre all A[ltezza] V[ost]ra mi fa ardito à pregarla che voglia favorirmi di mandarmi tre o quattro disegni di mascherata per correr alla Quintana, et far anco opera che M[esse]r Franceschino, et qual suo huomo che altre volte è stato a servirmi ò almeno uno di loro se ne venghino a Mantova a lavorare nella occasione delle feste che faranno questo carnevale per honorare la sig[nor]a Archiduchessa mia sorella che deve giungere hoggi qua. Et perche giudico soverchio le molte parole di cerimonie fra noi, bacio a V[ost]ra E[ccellenza] le mani e al Sr D[on] Cesare et finisco. Di Mantova il 16 di febraro 1585. Di V[ost]ra. E[ccellenza] aff[ezionatissi]mo servitore, Il Principe di Mantova”.

⁹⁵ ASMN, AG, busta D.XII 7, c. 356, 22 marzo 1585: “Il Serenissimo principe mi fece dar da far p[er] mano da me Bastian fiamengo tre rami di lauro d’argento [...] p[er] manufatura da esi tre rami fusimo dacordo scudi sei [...]”.

⁹⁶ ASMN, AG, busta 401, c. 422, 21 febbraio 1585: “[...] p[er] un sacho di Milio p[er] le totore, qualie e fasani y 4-0-0” (for a sack of millet for the doves, quails and pheasants); “[...] p[er] un star di form[en]to p[er] bisogno de detti fasani y 2-14-0” (for a bushel of wheat for the needs of the said pheasants); “[...] pagato p[er] [...] de formento et [...] p[er] fasani et papagallo y 1-12” (paid for the wheat and for the millet and for pheasants and parrot).

⁹⁷ I have consulted the edition of Toscano, *Rime ai serenissimi Vincentio Gonzaga*, B3v–B4. This work was first published in Padova by Pasquati in 1586, thence by Bianchi in Turin, 1586 and Osanna in Mantua, 1587. An edition was also published in Gionta, *Il fioretto delle croniche di Mantova ... Aggiuntovi di nuovo l’Edificatione di essa Città di Rafaello Toscano*. See Schizzerotto, “I poemetti mantovani di Stefano Giunta e Raffaele Toscano”, 71–79. Bertinotti, *Artisti in relazione coi Gonzaga*, 109–110, tells us that the theatre, which was known throughout Italy for its magnificent decorations and scenes, was burnt down in 1591, along with the adjacent armoury containing a myriad of treasures. Gionta, *Il fioretto delle croniche di Mantova*, 80, records that

Ricca è la scena, à gli strioni intenti
 A le bell'opre concorrono spesso,
 I cui superbi, e nobili ornamenti
 Mostra' quant'arte l'Arte ivi habbia messo:
 Di travi e fabricata, e d'assamenti
 A pitura, à rilievo, e segne appresso
 Una città, qual par che sia ripiena
 Di quant'arti, è virtuti unqua hebbe Athena.
 Contra il gran Palco che con gratia pende
 Mille gradi il Bertan pose architetto.
 Ch' un mezo circol fanno, e vi s'ascende
 Con gran facilità sù fin al tetto;
 Giù resta un campo, ove sovente accende
 Il fiero Marte à suoi seguaci il petto;
 Tempi, Torri, Palazzi e Prospettive,
 E figure vi son, che paion vive.

The scene is rich, where the comedians are often intent
 on their work,
 its superb and noble decorations
 showing how much Art has placed there:
 beams, frames, and constructions
 painted or in relief, the design
 of a city, which seems as full
 of arts and virtues as had been Athens.
 In front of the great stage, which gracefully inclines
 Bertani the architect placed a thousand steps,
 which make a semicircle,
 from where one easily reaches the roof;
 below remains a field, where
 fierce Mars often enflames the breast of his followers;
 there are temples, towers, palaces, prospectives,
 and images of people, which seem real.

The theatre itself is said to have been of imposing size, but being an enclosed area the scenic activity was perforce limited, in comparison to the *cavallerie* of Ferrara, held in outdoor spaces, sometimes in considerably extended areas and using water courses.⁹⁸ Fireworks, perforce, could not be part of this spectacle, as they were often in Ferrara, and indeed the greater part of Mantuan spectacles held out of doors. We note the mention of Mars, which suggests that the theatre was on more than one occasion used for *barriere*.

The scenography of the *barriera* representing the Temple of Love has a precedent in the Ferrarese *cavalleria Il Tempio d'Amore*, held in nearby Ferrara in 1565. Notwithstanding the distance of some twenty years, and the diversity of the physical spaces involved, there seem to be notable similarities between the two temples (if we are to believe the printed descriptions)⁹⁹ with niches and columns of variegated colour, seemingly made from precious stones and metals, and each with a globe at the summit. Moreover, on both occasions, the approach to the temple is delineated by trees and pyramids. Biringucci tells us that:

To the right and left of the temple there were two wing-like structures made out of enormous columns, pyramids, palms, laurel, myrtle and olive trees, which seemed to invite one to come to the temple. These columns, pyramids and trees were arranged in perspective, so that drawing closer one could see that the pyramids were covered with hieroglyphics and seemed to be made from that Egyptian stone from which those of Rome are made (*Apparato*, 9).

In the *cavalleria* held in Ferrara twenty years earlier two pyramids had been symmetrically placed on the set: one surrounded by a labyrinth of myrtle bushes, and the other by a wood of cypresses, both of which were the site of the performance of music (the one

“Nel 1591 abbruciò la Scena, l'Armaria, et il luogo della munitione, che fù un danno grandissimo sia per la bellezza di quella, come per il valore dell'armi, et arnesi antichi, che si consumarono”.

⁹⁸ See, for example, the *cavalleria Isola beata* held in Ferrara in 1569.

⁹⁹ Excerpts can be read in Stähler, “*Perpetuall monuments*”, 215–221. Besides that in Mantua, 1585, the author examines scenarios from Ferrara, 1565 and Mantua, 1608.

“soavissima”, of voices and instruments; the other, “suono da fiato”).¹⁰⁰ Pyramids, with their hieroglyphs, seem in fact to be a *topos* of the scenography in tournaments of the last decades of the sixteenth century as symbols of hierarchy and power (but perhaps also simply for the pleasing effect of their geometric form on a stage set). Such pyramids can already be seen placed at each side of the temple in the reproduction of the setting of the *cavalleria Il Castello di Gorgoferusa*, staged at Ferrara in 1561.¹⁰¹ So it does not surprise us that Follino’s account of the *barriera* held in Mantua in 1594 again mentions pyramids in the setting for that tournament.¹⁰²

The reader will have seen that the allegorical personages assigned to the knights of the *barriera* are often drawn from chivalrous epics and romances: Bradamante and Ruggiero, Angelica and Medoro, Marfisa and Gabrina from Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, and Amidigi and Urganda from Bernardo Tasso’s *Amadigi*. The participation of characters taken from the chivalric epic *Il Fido amante* by Curzio Gonzaga, a member of the Mantuan nobility, is entirely predictable in the circumstances. But we should note that the representation of specific characters from chivalric epics by authors such as Ariosto and Bernardo Tasso¹⁰³ is an innovation, since it is not to be found in earlier *barriere* or *cavallerie ferraresi* – or, for that matter, in the next *barriera* held in Mantua, in 1598.¹⁰⁴ From this point of view, Biringucci’s *barriera* would seem to be a truly unusual event. Also novel is the intense reflection of Biringucci’s own interests in ancient history and philosophy: from its setting of the temple, said to be similar to that of Albunero overlooking the Tivoli,¹⁰⁵ to citations from Plato on love, Latin quotations, epigrams, stories of the ancient heroes such as Ulysses and Achilles, references to mythical personages and to such obscure historical figures as Paolo Emilio,¹⁰⁶ and the decorative use of arms and trophies of ancient times. In fact, the reader of the *libretto* of *Amor Feretrio* cannot help but be impressed – perhaps even oppressed – by the quantity of learned quotations and epigrams that Biringucci offers the reader in Latin, Italian, French, Spanish and Greek. Moreover, we are told by Biringucci that many other epigrams were written and exhibited in languages such as Hebrew, Chaldean, Turkish, Tartar, Hungarian, Muscovite and Polish, but not published in the *libretto*, since composed in languages which were unlikely to be

¹⁰⁰Argenti, *Cavalerie della città di Ferrara*, 2:9–10, 40–41.

¹⁰¹Archivio di Stato di Modena, Mappario Estense, fabbriche, 92/18; reproduced in Marcigliano, *Chivalric Festivals*, 167. Pyramids are also mentioned in Tassoni, *Isola beata*.

¹⁰²Follino, “Breve descrizione”, 13. We might even speak of pyramid-mania, if we were to note that all of twenty-four pyramids could be seen in the set of the festivities for the wedding of Don Cesare d’Este and Virginia de Medici held in Florence in 1586: see De’ Rossi, *Descrizione*, 24. The title page and dedication are dated February 1585 Florentine style (= February 1586).

¹⁰³It is perhaps surprising that Biringucci did not draw on characters from Torquato Tasso’s epic, an edition of which was published by the ducal printers of Mantua Osanna in 1584, but Tasso’s liberation from prison in Ferrara and protection by Vincenzo Gonzaga did not come about until 1586.

¹⁰⁴See Follino’s description of this event in his “Breve descrizione”, 37/81. For epics in spectacles in Florence in the early seventeenth century, see Testaverde, “Trattino i cavalier d’arme e d’amori”, 231–253.

¹⁰⁵See n. 6.

¹⁰⁶See n. 63.

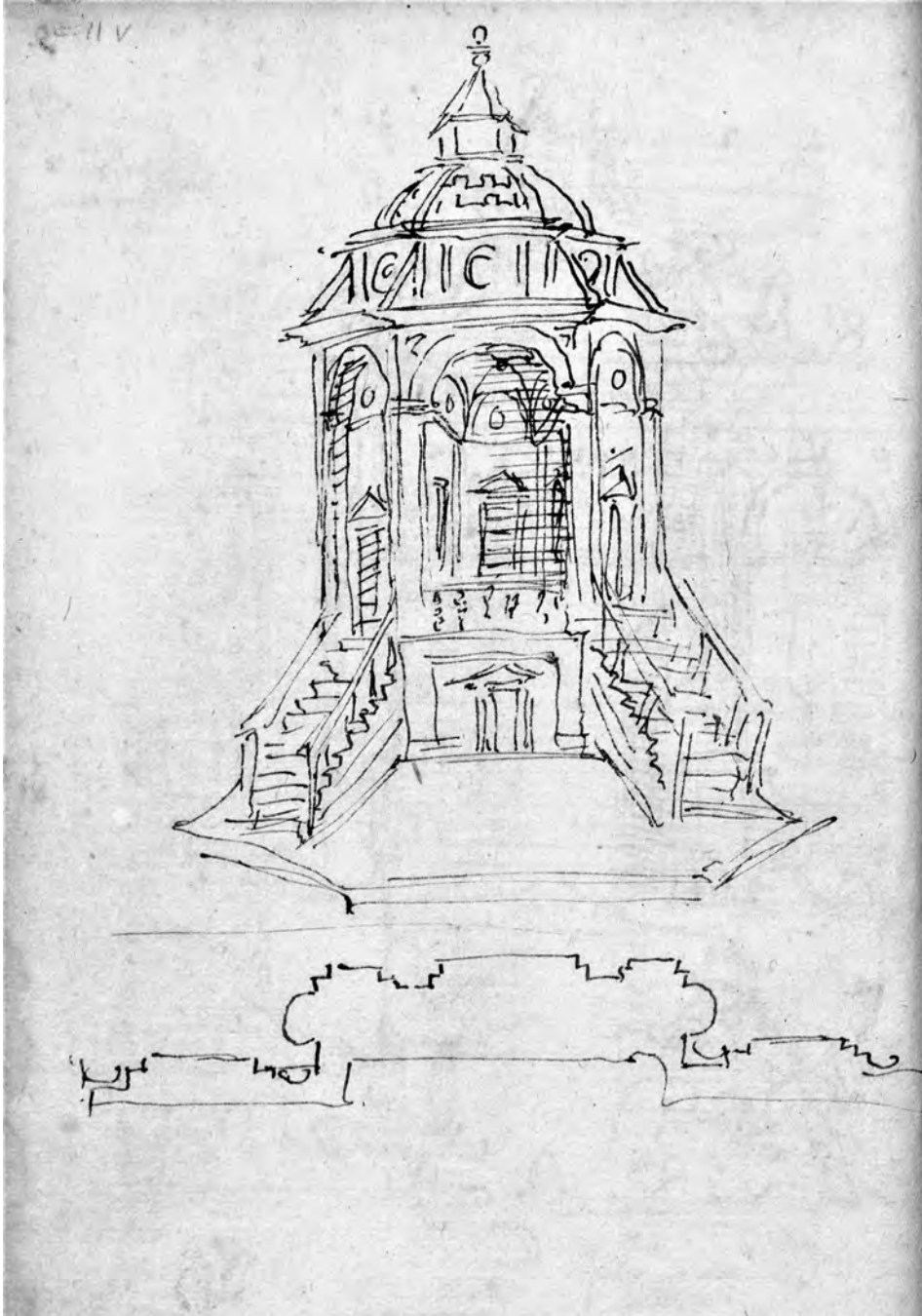


Figure 4
Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, Codice S.IV.1, *Il taccuino di Oreste Biringucci*, fol. 11v (used by permission)

understood by the reader. The impression one gets, at the conclusion of the *resoconto*, is that of an immensely intellectual event, in which learning and *belle lettere* carry the day. But if we consider that these epigrams and learned citations are in effect simply components of the decor (although an essential and substantial part, it is true), we are left with an event which is reasonably traditional in construction for a tournament of its time – indeed, decidedly conservative in comparison to the *cavallerie* of the neighbouring court of Ferrara. The plot is so simple as to be hardly a plot at all: a sequence of knights come to combat with three defenders of the *tempio*, and according to how they fight, will be awarded trophies, or will lose their arms and be confined within the Temple. The winner will be given the power of opening the Temple, and all the combatants will then be awarded their just deserts. As with the Ferrarese *cavallerie*, the action is choreographed, in the sense that the outcome is already planned: Prince Vincenzo Gonzaga will triumph. But unlike those *cavallerie*, there is no overall plot of theatrical nature, in which knights will contest the ill will of fairies and enchantresses and break the spells of evil forces, amid combat with monsters of land and sea, in that “dream world of chivalry composed of love, honour, magic, marvel, courtesy and adventure”.¹⁰⁷

Music plays a prominent and innovative role in Biringucci’s *barriera*. Each knight or group of knights is accompanied to combat by an allegorical figure such as Fame, Faith or Disdain, or historical/mythical figures such as Hippolyta and Penelope, who present them to the audience with sung verses. Each *combattimento* is thus preceded by music, which acts as an introduction, and sometimes also an explanation, of the personages about to engage in combat. We are also told that a great number of little Cupids played drums and trumpets during the *barriera* – presumably to accompany the knights during their entries, or while in combat – while in a raised area recalling Parnassus a chorus of Muses with their instruments applauded every victory of the cavaliers with sweet melodies, celebrating their worth and their endeavours. At the conclusion of the *barriera*, when the Temple opened, the public saw the Virtues along with other allegorical figures, who sang music composed and directed by Giaches de Wert and performed by the “exceptional Capella of His Highness, with their most harmonious instruments”.¹⁰⁸ The naming of a composer is most unusual: no composers or musicians are ever mentioned in the published accounts

¹⁰⁷ Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, 13.

¹⁰⁸ A letter from a functionary of the court, Cesare Cavriani, to the Bishop of Casale in Goito, dated 6 February 1585, says that “concerts can be well organized as long as Masnelli and Giacomo dal Cornetto return from Verona. As I understand it, the viols are at Goito, and must be sent back to Mantua to be made in good order, and tuned to accord with the instrument [...]. A room will be necessary to organize the instruments [...]” (“Si potranno metter in ordine delli concerti molto bene pur che ritornino da Verona il Masinello e M[esse]r Giacomo dal Cornetto. Oltre dicitò intendo che le viole sono à Goito, et bisognarebbe mandarle a Mantova accio si possano metter all’ordine et anco acordar col istromento [...]. Bisognarebbe una camera da ridursi coll’Istromenti [...]”: see ASMN, AG, busta 2629, 6 February 1585. This letter may well be related to preparations for the music for the *barriera*. Paolo Masnelli is registered amongst the court musicians of Mantua in a payroll (ASMN, AG, busta 3146, c. 64) dating from c. 1589–1592, see Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 192–193. His presence is recorded in Mantua in a letter from court musician Benedetto Pallavicino to Federico Cattaneo, functionary of the court, dated 1 November 1586 (ASMN, AG, busta 1517, cc. 644–645).

of the highly elaborate *cavallerie* at the nearby court of Ferrara. Alessandro Striggio and his son, who are said to have performed a madrigal (together with voices from the court cappella) were members of an aristocratic family of Mantua, which fact can justify their naming as performers in the *resoconto*,¹⁰⁹ but the mention by name of the *maestro di cappella*, Giaches de Wert, for both composition and musical direction, is truly unusual.

Historians of music will inevitably be intrigued by the amount of ‘solo’ song in this *barriera*; since the allegorical or historical figures who introduce the combatants are specifically said to have sung, rather than recited, verses. In only two of these cases are the knights presented through madrigals: one sung by Concord and the Virtues (not specifically described as a madrigal, but clearly a polyphonic work), and the other performed by Alessandro Striggio and his son, with voices from the *cappella*. The personages of Auriga and Penelope are also said to have sung madrigals (Penelope with instrument in hand), but they clearly performed some kind of ‘solo’ song. All of the nine interventions, in fact, seem to have been in the form of ‘solo’ song.¹¹⁰ We are fortunate to have accounts of *intermedi* performed in Florence early the following year within the performance of a comedy by Giovanni di Bardi, entitled *Amico fido*, for the wedding festivities of Cesare d’Este and Virginia de’ Medici.¹¹¹ The formal description gives details of instrumental accompaniments for ‘solo’ song, and suggest likely accompaniments for this Mantuan occasion, ranging from lutes and harps for high voices, to more substantial groups of viols, harpsichords and wind instruments, according to the personages represented.¹¹² Some of the verses cited in Biringucci’s *barriera* were obviously sung by men: the hideous Gabriela (a comic cross-dressing role), and Disdain, who “with a fierce and scornful voice sang stanzas by the Minister of the invincible Armedonte, King of the Scythians, the fear and scourge of the Universe”. The Fury dressed in black, who to introduce three knights sang verses with a “horrid and funereal voice”, was perhaps another male cross-dressing character.¹¹³ And it is possible that boy sopranos from the *cappella* may have participated in the female roles, suitably dressed. But we can be almost certain of the collaboration of the two young Pellizari sisters from nearby Vicenza, well known for

¹⁰⁹See n. 58. Striggio is mentioned as musician in De’ Rossi’s *Descrizione* of the *intermedi* presented in Florence for the marriage of Cesare d’Este and Virginia de’ Medici in February 1586, but almost certainly because of his noble birth.

¹¹⁰Presumably a melodic line with a reduction of polyphony performed by instruments as accompaniment. For ‘pseudo-monody’, see Palisca, “Vincenzo Galilei”, 344–360; Haar, “Arie per cantar”, 31–46; Canguilhem, “Monodia e contrappunto”, 25–42.

¹¹¹De’ Rossi, *Descrizione*. See n. 102, n. 109.

¹¹²Mercurio, in the first *intermedio*, is accompanied by “viole, liuti, clavicembali e organo”; Flegias, in the second, being associated with the underworld, by “tromboni e bassi di viole”; Flora, and then Zeffiro, soloists in the third, by “liuto ed arpa”; Teti, the soloist of the fourth, first by “liuti”, and then by “liuti, arpe, tromboni e flauti traversi”; Guignone, the soloist of the fifth, by “liuti, arpe e cembali”. Note that Alessandro Striggio senior was responsible for the music for the first, second and fourth *intermedi* of this event, as the *Descrizione* tells us. A summary of details regarding the music of the *intermedi* has been published by Ghisi, *Feste musicali*, XLII.

¹¹³We can imagine the voice of the Fury – and perhaps also that of Disdain – being accompanied by “tromboni e bassi di viole” (and perhaps also a regal), as befitting “funereal” and “scornful” voices: see the second *intermedio*, n. 115.

their virtuosic performances as singers and players of the *cornetto* and trombone at the Accademia Olimpica. A letter from Gabriele Calzoni, secretary to the Duke in Venice, reports on the performance of the Pellizari sisters in entertaining four Japanese noble youths who had been converted to Christianity by the Jesuits, when they were entertained at the Teatro Olimpica of Vicenza on their way to a state visit to Mantua in the summer of 1585. We are told that they were greeted by music by “the young girls who were at Mantua”, who with trombones, *cornetti* and a variety of other instruments, played and sang most sweetly, to the great pleasure of the said youths. After an oration, there was more music, this time for *viole*, with the collaboration of the same young ladies, and at the conclusion, a concert of organ with trombones and *cornetti*, in which the girls played the *cornetto* with such grace and sweetness, that the Princes departed the next day with great happiness and satisfaction.¹¹⁴ We cannot be certain, naturally, that it was for the *barriera* that the Pellizari sisters were called to Mantua, but it is probable that it would have been for an event of some importance, requiring a number of musicians, as on this occasion. In the presentation of the “cartello” before the *barriera*, they may have been amongst the Graces who accompanied Mercury playing “very harmonious instruments”. In the *barriera* itself they may have taken female roles such as Hippolyta or Penelope, or the fairy who accompanied Amadigi. And it is not difficult to imagine the two girls as part of the company of allegorical figures, including the Virtues, who concluded the *barriera* with song accompanied by harmonious instruments, directed by Giaches de Wert.

We are fortunate to possess the music of one work which was almost certainly performed on the occasion of this *barriera*: an eight-part madrigal dialogue by a composer at the court of Mantua, Benedetto Pallavicino, published in his *Quinto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* in 1593.¹¹⁵ The text deals with the defeat in battle of Love, who is disarmed by the beauty of a goddess who has descended on earth:

¹¹⁴ ASMN, AG, busta 1515, c. 216–218, 11 July 1585, Gabriele Calzoni from Verona to the Duke of Mantua: “Furono condotti i Principi sulla scalinata del Teatro di Vicenza piena del popolo, et adornato di belliss[im]e [...] gentildonne di quella città. Compare sul sulla vaga scena la musica delle citelle che furono a Mantova che con tromboni cornetti et altri vari instrumenti si fecero sentire suonando et cantando soaviss[im]e, con gran gusto di detti Principi [...]. Dopo la quale oratione comparve un'altra musica di viola con intervento di quelle giovannii che con suoni et canti trattenero gli presenti con molto conforto loro [...] per ultimo si fece sentir in concerto di un organo le due giovani col tromboni et cornetto risuonando quel cornetto con tanta legiadria et soavità che contenti partirono i Principi di Vicenza hier mattina et molto sodisfatti”. See Bosi Monteath, “*Tenshō Shōnen Shisetsu*”, 230–243. Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 127–128, addresses the Pellizzari sisters’ connection with the court of Mantua.

¹¹⁵ Pallavicino, *Il quinto libro de madrigali*. For a critical edition, see Pallavicino, *Opera omnia*, vol. 3. The composer Benedetto Pallavicino was employed as musician at the court of Mantua from c. 1583–1601. In 1596, on the death of Giaches de Wert, he became *maestro di cappella* and after his death in November 1601 was succeeded in this position by Claudio Monteverdi. For a study of his life and madrigal production, see Bosi Monteath, “Five-Part Madrigals”. On his secular works, see also Flanders, *Madrigals of Benedetto Pallavicino*. Arnold, “Monteverdi”, 110–115; and Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 143–146, discuss some features of Pallavicino’s madrigals; while I examine Pallavicino’s style in his first four madrigal publications in a later article: see Bosi Monteath, “Ferrara Connection”.

Onde ne vieni Amore
 Privo de l'armi e carco di dolore?
 Vengo da un'aspra guerra
 Ch' hebbe con una Dea che scese in terra.

Dov'è l'arco e gli strali
 Terror di tutti gl'uomini mortali?
 Tutte l'armi m'ha tolto
 Con la beltà del suo divino volto.

Talché giovan'audace
 Non val s'oprar con lei l'ardente face?
 No, no, che'l suo splendore
 De la mia face ebbe virtù maggiore.

Qual fur l'armi dei lei
 Per acquistar di te palmi'è trofei?
 L'armi fu guard'è riso
 Che m'han senz'il morir nel campo ucciso.

Dunque, se mort'è Amore,
 Chi dar'al mondo più forz' e vigore?
 Chi vuol me, vad'a lei,
 Ch' in lei son or tutti gl'effetti miei.

Dunque lodiami costei
 Che di valor'avanza gl'altri Dei.

Whence do you come Love,
 without arms and weighed down with sorrow?
 I come from a bitter war
 with a goddess descended on earth.

Where are the bow and the arrows,
 the terror of all mortal men?
 She took away all my arms
 with the beauty of her face.

Why then, as an audacious youth,
 do you not use with her a burning torch?
 No, no, her splendour
 had greater power than my flame.

Which were the arms,
 with which she took your palms and trophies?
 The arms were her glance and smile
 that killed me in the field, without my dying.

Thus, if Love is dead,
 who will give the world force and vigour?
 He who desires me should go to
 her since all my powers are within.

Thus let us praise she
 who excels in valour the other Gods.

The text is clearly consistent with the occasion (and, we note, unlike any other text in Pallavicino's madrigal corpus); the music, in predominantly homophonic polyphony, with antiphonal exchange between two four-part choirs (no doubt at times doubled by instruments), is exactly that likely to be most effective in a large space.

Lastly, we should note that the poets and literary figures at the court of Mantua who played some role in this *barriera* are mentioned by name, and this, too, is most unusual in comparison with the *cavallerie* of Ferrara, where the multitude of verses written for these productions, judged by Marcigliano to be highly theatrical and of undoubted value, remain strictly anonymous.¹¹⁶ In the Mantuan *barriera* we even have the name of poets of some of the sung verses: the aristocratic poet Prospero Cattaneo,¹¹⁷ and the *corago* Messer Leone de' Sommi, *hebreo*.¹¹⁸ As we have seen, verses were also contributed by the poet Giulio Capilupi.¹¹⁹ His epitaphs for Oreste Vannucci Biringucci, ideator of the tournament, which were published in the *Capiluporum carmina* (Rome: Lilioti, 1590) a compilation of works by four *literati* of the Capilupi family of Mantua, provide a fitting conclusion for this excursus on Biringucci's *barriera*.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Marcigliano, *Chivalric Festivals*, 52.

¹¹⁷ See n. 36.

¹¹⁸ See n. 23.

¹¹⁹ See n. 18.

¹²⁰ *Capiluporum carmina*, 289–290. The volume also includes epitaphs by Ippolito Capilupi for Curzio Gonzaga (73–74).

Epit. Orestis Vannoccii
Beringutii senensis.

Sena tibi patria est, gelido te maesta sepulcro,
Mantua defunctum condit ante diem,
Te iuvenem virtus summo decoravit honore,
Ed dedit aeterna nobilitate frui:
Illa igitur tanto meritò se iacet alumno;
Haec fleat interitus ante sepulcra tuos.

Eiusdem epit.

Hoc tumulo qua'vis lateas tua cognita Orestes
In terris virtus sol et in ave micat:
Tu invenis verum potuisti noscere causas
Quas natura suo continet ampla sinu.

Eiusdem epit.

Hoc iacet in tumulo Senis oriundus Orestes,
Vitruuij ingenio nec minus arte valens;
Naturae hic celeri potuit res mente latentes
Noscere, quas tarda vix valet arte senex;
Cuius nunc virtus magnam quae sparsa per orbem,
Sol velut in caelis undiq' clara nitet.

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ORESTE BIRINGUCCI IN *AMOR FERETRIO*: PUSTNI TURNIR LETA 1585 V MANTOVI

Povzetek

Članek obravnava opis turnirja (*barriera*) na dvoru vojvode Guglielma Gonzage v Mantovi med karnevalom leta 1585, ki ga je naročil dedni princ Vincenzo Gonzaga pri dvornem arhitektu Orestu Biringucciju. Biringuccijevo poročilo, naslovljeno *Apparato e barriera del tempio di Amor Feretrio*, je dolg in podroben opis tega dogodka in zato zanimiv primer za raziskovanje slovesnosti na dvoru Guglielma Gonzage. Presenetljivo doslej ni bil deležen večjega zanimanja, ampak se je omenjal zgolj obrobno.

Naj poudarimo, da je Biringucci, ki je bil po rodu iz Siene, zelo dobro poznal grško in rimsko kulturo. V središču prizorišča je Amorjev tempelj (ki – je treba priznati – je *topos* za viteške dogodke tistega časa; npr. tudi na prireditvah v Ferrari leta 1565) in na vsaki strani templja piramida, prav tako pogost prizor na tovrstnih dogodkih. Turnir v mantovskem dvornem gledališču je poln navedkov iz grške in rimske literature; navaja epigrame, na dekoracijah stebrov, drevesih in drugih delih gledališča so zapisani namigi na klasične vire, kar dogodek postavlja na visoko intelektualno raven. Vitezi često poosebljajo alegorične like iz viteških epov in romanov. Taki so: Bradamant in Ruggiero, Angelica in Medoro, Marfisa in Gabrina, vsi iz Ariostovega *Besnečega Rolanda* (*Orlando furioso*); Amadigi iz pesnitve *Amadigi* Bernarda Tassa ter Fidamante iz *Zvestega ljubimca* (*Il Fido amante*) Curzia Gonzage, člana mantovskega plemstva, ki je svojo epsko pesnitev objavil v Mantovi leta 1582. Pomembno je vedeti, da je uporaba oseb iz viteške epike avtorjev, kot sta Ariosto in Bernardo Tasso, novost, saj jih na zgodnejših podobnih prireditvah (razne *barriere* in *cavallerie ferraresi*) ne najdemo, niti niso prisotne na naslednjem mantovskem turnirju leta 1598. S tega vidika se zdi Biringuccijev turnir res nenavaden primer.

Glasba ima na Biringuccijevem turnirju pomembno in inovativno vlogo. Bojevnike s pétimi verzi spremljajo alegorične figure, kot so Slava, Zvestoba, Prezir, ali zgodovinsko-mitični liki, kot sta Hipolita in Penelopa. Vsak spopad (*combattimento*) uvaja glasba, ki ustvarja uvodno vzdušje, in včasih tudi razlago o osebah, ki se bosta spopadli. V sklepu turnirja je občinstvo zagledalo Kreposti – te so skupaj z ostalimi alegoričnimi figurami pele glasbo, ki jo je napisal in na dogodku vodil Giaches de Wert. Izvajalci so bili člani »izjemne Kapele Njegovega Visočanstva s številnimi glasbili v rokah«. Poimensko navajanje dvornega skladatelja je zelo nenavadno, saj navadno niti v tiskanih poročilih o sicer dovršenih viteških dogodkih (*cavallerie*) na bližnjem ferrarskem dvoru skladatelj ali glasbeniki nikoli niso omenjeni. To, da sta bila v poročilu omenjena Alessandro Striggio in njegov sin, ki sta pela madrigal (skupaj z dvorno kapelo), bi lahko razložili z dejstvom, da sta bila člana plemiške družine iz Mantove, a navedba imena dvornega kapelnika Giachesa de Werta kot skladatelja in glasbenega vodje je res nenavadna, kot tudi poimenovanje Leoneja de' Sommija, judovskega režiserja (*corago*). Med glasbenimi deli, ki so spremljala turnir, je bil prepoznan tudi antifonalni madrigal dvornega skladatelja Benedetta Pallavicina.

Razprava vključuje celoten angleški prevod opisa turnirja, povzema življenje in delo Oresta Biringuccija ter razpravlja o vseh drugih zbranih virih, ki se nahajajo v arhivu Gonzage v Mantovi in pričajo o navadah ter orožju, ki so ga uporabljali na prireditvi.