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THE RELATION OF THE THREE CRETAN RENAISSANCE COMEDIES TO THE ITALIAN CINQUECENTO THEORIES OF LAUGHTER

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When studying in general the relationship of the three Cretan comedies, *Katzourbos* by G. Chortatsis (dated between 1595-1600), *Stathis* by an unknown poet (dated to the beginning of the seventeenth century) and Foskolos's *Fortounatos* (1655), to the Cinquecento theories of poetry and drama[1], it is inevitable that one should begin with the very issue that is exclusive to and characterizes the comic genre: laughter. Laughter is 'il riso' of sixteenth-century critics while 'il ridiculo' (the ridiculous) is the means that evokes laughter. I have preferred to use the term "theories of laughter" rather than "of the ridiculous", as "to move to laughter" as opposed to ridicule itself is, in fact, one of comedy's aims[2].

a. *Cinquecento theories of laughter*

The first point to be clarified, before any further discussion is started, is the distinction between the notions of ridiculousness

1 The present study is part of a wider study (to be defended as a Ph. D. thesis in Cambridge, Spring 1992) exploring the possible relation of the Cretan comedies to their theoretical background, that is to the Italian literary criticism of the sixteenth century. Apart from laughter, other issues of Cinquecento literary theories whose presence in the comedies is studied are the notion of decorum (propriety of characters, of literary genre, of versification), the rhetoric of the texts (presence of rhetorical figures and tropes in the comedies) and a number of practical dramaturgical rules. The aim of the study is to throw new light upon the process by which Cretan comedy approached Renaissance Italian comedy and was inspired by it, by answering questions such as "Was Cretan comedy the result of a more profound contact with the very theory that was developed around drama in sixteenth-century Italy, and if so, to what degree?".

2 See, for instance, the definition of comedy by Bernardino Pino da Cagli, in Weinberg *Trattati*, vol. 2, pp. 636-7.

and ugliness, their interrelation and the role they play in the definition of comedy. The dependence of laughter upon ugliness, as old as the *Poetics* of Aristotle[3] and the *De Oratore* of Cicero (Book II), where the essence of *ridiculum* is found in *turpitudo* (ugliness) and *deformitas* (deformity), concerned sixteenth-century critics, and figures in most of the definitions of comedy[4]. What really interests the critics is to clarify that when they define comedy as an imitation of the vicious and ugly, they do not mean the vicious and ugly in their extreme, but only as far as they are necessary in order to cause laughter[5].

What, however, is most important with laughter is its function as a means of *catharsis* in comedy. Riccoboni, who, in his essay *Ars comica ex Aristotele derivata* (1585), tried to reconstruct a theory of comedy from Aristotle's analysis of tragedy, talked of the comic ***admiratio***— a notion invented by Maggi, synonymous with surprise or the unexpected — which is an important feature of comic catharsis. Riccoboni speaks of comic catharsis (purgation), always in the context of a comparison with tragic catharsis: "Just as tragedy moves admiratio in pitiable and fearful matters, so comedy in ugly and ridiculous matters"[6].

3 "Ἡ δὲ κωμωδία ἐστίν, ὥσπερ εἴπομεν, μίμησις φαυλοτέρων μέν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστι τὸ γελοῖον μόριον τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστι ἁμάρτημά τι καὶ αἶσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθὺς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὀδύνης". (*Poetics* V, 1, 49a). The Greek τὸ γελοῖον was translated into Latin as *ridiculum* and αἰσχρὸς as *turpis*. Herrick 1950, p. 38.

4 Minturno's view on the issue, included in his definition of comedy, is a good case in point: "Nam quod ridiculum dicitur, id erratum quoddam est, et doloris damnique expers turpitudo? Ad ridicula persona non foeditatem quandam deformitatemque ab omni quidem offensione alienam habet?" *De Poeta*, p. 281.

5 "Basta sapere che la comedia è imitazione dei cattivi e viziosi, ma non in ogni estremità di vizii, ma solamente di quello che è brutto dal quale nasce il ridiculo", explains Trissino who devoted an extensive part of his discussion of comedy to laughter (*La sesta divisione della poetica*, 1549) Weinberg *Trattati*, vol. 2, p. 57. Other theorists who insisted on this distinction were Minturno (Charlton, 1913, pp. 137-8). Bernardino Pino (Weinberg *Trattati*, vol. 2, pp. 636-7), and Tasso (Cavalchini-Samuel 1973, p. 173).

6 Herrick 1950, p. 52. On Riccoboni's theory of comic catharsis and its dependence upon Maggi see also Bonora 1970, p. 160, who cites the whole original passage from pages 151-2 of the 1585 edition. Other critics of the late Cinquecento who extended the application of purgation to comedy by means of laughter and ridicule were Guarini ("Comedy, through laughter, releases the soul from melancholy, renders its operation light and quick", *Il Verrato*, 1588, Weinberg *History*, p. 658). Torquato Tasso ("to both comedy and tragedy can be applied both homeopathic and allopathic purgation", *Del giudizio sovra la sua Gerusaleme*, 1585, Hathaway 1962, p. 294), Buonamici ("Comedy purges us with laughter, tragedy with compassion", *Discorsi Poetici nella Accademia florentina in difesa d'Aristotele*, 1597, Weinberg *History*, p. 691), and Ingegneri ("The end of comedy is purgation by means of ridicule", *Della poesia rappresentativa*, 1598, Hathaway 1962, p. 295).

In general terms, the issues composing the theories of laughter can be traced in a number of theoretical treatises, covering the whole of the sixteenth century, which may deal either with poetry in general, or exclusively with the comic genre. In both cases, however, the treatises belong to the Horatian-Aristotelian line of Cinquecento criticism, to that critical tradition, in other words, which was based on Horace's *Ars Poetica* and on Aristotle's *Poetics*, and which provided the sixteenth-century critics of comedy with the necessary theoretical background in order to form their own theories. Most important among general poetic theories examining the issue of laughter were Trissino's *La quinta e la sesta divisione della poetica* (published in 1561), where we find the first 'full-scale' study of the subject: laughter here is itself the purpose of comedy, rather than the moral teaching that comes with it; Scaliger's *Poetices libri septem* (1561)[7], Castelvetro's *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta* (1570)[8], and Tasso's *Discorsi del poema eroico* (1994). On the other hand, treatises devoted exclusively to comedy containing the discussion of laughter and the ridiculous are:

—Fausto's *De comoedia libellus* (1511)[9],

—Maggi's *De ridiculis* (1550), where, in contrast to Trissino's view, the notion of laughter is linked with the moral purpose of

7 Scaliger, however, does not insist on laughter as much as on parody being the central cause of it.

8 Castelvetro makes merely incidental remarks on the comic, which he limits to a ludicrous thing, this being a source of the comic that entails no sense of injury or destruction (Charlton 1913, pp. 134-5).

9 In this treatise comedy is considered in a way that is believed to fit Aristotle's conception of this genre, as an imitation of the ridiculous in the ugly. Weinberg Trattati, vol. 1, p. 8. See also Herrick 1950, p. 40. In this latter book, Herrick devotes some 20 pages (pp. 37-57) to the description of the risible as it was conceived by sixteenth-century theorists.

comedy to make vice unattractive[10];
—the *Breve considerazione intorno al componimento de la comedia de' nostri tempi* (1572) by the theorist and comic playwright Bernardino Pino, who emphasizes the moral, but also the political and social inhibitions in his treatment of the comic and the laughable; he devotes most of his treatise to cutting down the range of turpitude which is legitimate: he selects those types of turpitude which conform to his moral and social purposes and outlaws the rest[11].
—The third part of Denores's *Poetica* (1588)[12],
—Rossi's *Discorsi intorno alla comedia* (1589)
—and Del Bene's *Cha la favola della Comedia vuole esser onesta, e non contenere mali costumi* (1574). In this lecture to the Accademia degli Alterati, Del Bene takes the moral purpose of comedy even further than Maggi, requiring that all examples of bad behaviour must be altogether excluded from comedy.

It is noteworthy that laughter is often connected with the moral end of comedy[13] or, in other words, with the message each comic playwright wants to give to his audience according to the theoretical line he follows: the message could cover a spectrum starting from the simple spontaneous delight through laughter and ending in strict moral teaching and the maintainance of social institutions.

If we are now to proceed to the actual examination of the presence of Cinquecento theories in the Cretan comedies, we should focus on exclusively practical instructions given by the

10 Maggi's theory also isolates the ridiculous from all the other issues of comic art, admiratio being an essential part of it.
11 Andrews 1983.
12 In this part of his treatise, which is devoted to comedy, Denores includes a long discussion of the ridiculous when he analyzes the "proprietà et condizioni della favola comica". Sixth among the characteristics of the comic plot he considers "che la [la favola comica] debbia essere piacevole, amorosa, et ridicolosa" (p. 123v and then again p. 129).
13 Cicero, with his conception of comedy as the "mirror of our everyday life", had provided the Cinquecento theorists with the necessary authority for the definition of comedy, which they elaborated by emphasizing the moral usefulness of the plays. The illusion of reality in comedy was conceived by the theorists in such a way as to serve the very important moral purpose of comedy.

theorists, in the wider context of their conception of the laughable as we have seen it so far, namely on how the ridiculous should appear and function in a comedy. Practical issues are the only possible ones to identify, as the only comparative material we possess are the texts of the Cretan comedies. After all, it is to be expected that specific practical instructions influenced the practising Cretan dramatists if they came into contact with the work of Cinquecento critics.

Starting chronologically with Faustus, the only practical recommendation that we find in his Latin treatise, is a list of seven rhetorical figures that are suitable for laughter ("verborum autem modis septem comici rusus excitabant"), such as *ὁμωνυμία, συνωνυμία, παρωνυμία* etc.[14]. Trissino, several years later, separates the ugliness that characterizes the ridiculous and causes laughter into ugliness of mind (ignorance, imprudence, credulity) and ugliness of body (deformities) and gives specific examples of things that move laughter: "an ugly and distorted face, an inept movement, a silly word, a mispronunciation, a rough hand, a wine of unpleasant taste, a rose of unpleasant odour"[15]. The important issue, however, is the notion of surprise: "That which deceives expectation is the mode most appropriate to the ridiculous, because it reveals the imprudence of one who waits"[16]. Trissino also referred to those rhetorical figures that served the ridiculous, that is *ambiguity, irony, allegory, hyperbole,* and a sharp answer to a proverb[17].

The notion of the unexpected is also used by Maggi although we saw that his opinions rather opposed those of Trissino. Maggi believed that from the unexpectedness which is of things and of words, springs surprise (*admiratio*) "which necessarily moves

14 Weinberg *Trattati*, vol. 1, p. 9.
15 Herrick 1950, p. 41.
16 Trissino accompanies this statement with examples. For instance: "Therefore the *Amphitryo* of Plautus and *I Simillimi* are very gay comedies because the persons in them many times deceive themselves, and because of resemblance take one person for another and speak to one when they think they speak to another; thus they reveal that they themselves and the others are in some slight way ignorant, and frequent ridiculous situations arise..." Gilbert 1962, p. 231.
17 Weinberg *Trattati*, vol. 2, p. 74.

laughter"[18]. An example of this sort of device is the employment of an honourable epithet which becomes a source of amusement when replaced by a dishonourable one, especially when this is unexpected[19]. A defect of Maggi's conception of the ridiculous and the laughable, from the point of view of our examination here, is that he excludes drama from his examination and lacks modern illustration. He merely follows the ancients and takes all his examples from Cicero[20]. Scaliger also gives an example to illustrate what he means by parody being the cause of laughter: "Laughter is often caused by parody, when serious verse is so changed as to become ridiculous [...]. So in a passage of the same number of lines, and of almost the same number of words, he calls, not for arms, but for cooking utensils"[21]. Castelvetro distinguished two kinds of turpitude, the mental (knavery or folly) and the bodily (unpleasantness or pleasantness), and four kinds of laughter: because of affection (a mother when seeing her child), of deception (which is the truly comic laughter), of knavery or physical defects (here comes the element of surprise), and, finally, laughter as a result of indecencies[22].

Bernardino Pino da Cagli emphasizes, as we have already seen, morality in the ridiculous and does not want dishonourable things to be presented on stage: "il ridicolo della comedia, che è quasi la sua propria bellezza, nasce de la bruttezza de l' atto, della parola, o dal caso [...], non dal vizio il quale è tutto contrario alla virtù". He thinks that laughter must be provoked only by absurd and ignorant behaviour and goes as far as to approve the use of ridicule against servants and the lower classes rather than (for example) against respectable fathers of families[23].

18 Herrick 1950, p. 46.
19 Herrick 1950, p. 47.
20 See Herrick 1950, p. 42. Herrick in pages 41-52 gives a detailed account of Maggi's theory of the risible.
21 Padelford 1905, p. 67.
22 Charlton 1913, pp. 134-5.
23 For the original see Weinberg *Trattati*, vol. 2, pp. 636-640. Richard Andrews (1983) clarifies Pino's idea: "One of the standard comic types, the old man foolishly enamoured of a young woman, is ruled out on grounds of indignity, and the objections seem to arise chiefly from the old man's social position. It doesn't matter so much what the servants get up to, because a gentleman is not going to identify with them and be led astray".
24 Denores, 1588, pp. 123-126 and 129-131.
25 Cavalchini-Samuel 1973, p. 172.

Denores, whose *Poetica* has in general a rather practical drift, gives a list of things that make a comic plot 'ridicolosa': "Et piacevole, amorosa, et ridicolosa rendono la Favola Comica le burle, i motti, le facetie, gl' inamoramenti, et gl' inganni de' ruffiani, e de' servi"; like others, he distinguishes the ridiculous into that which arises from mental ugliness and that which arises from the ugliness of the body; he finds, like Pino da Cagli, that there are two ways to express both sorts of the ridiculous: the ridiculous expressed in things (actions) and the ridiculous expressed in words. Under the latter he gives a list of figures that are appropriate to it: *ambiguity, deception of the expectation, similitude, dissimulation* and *hyperbole*[24]. Finally, Torquato Tasso illustrates his opinion that laughter arises from ugly things, with examples of words which set ugliness before our eyes, or else images of ugly things[25].

b. *Evidence for knowledge of the theories of laughter in the Cretan comedies.*

In all three Cretan comedies we *can identify* all these elements previously analysed, as the theorists themselves prescribed them. The ridiculous is expressed in words and actions, through the mental and bodily ugliness of the characters; it is also expressed in the parodying of serious verses which are turned into silly verses, and in unexpected comments which cause surprise to the audience; finally, different series of rhetorical figures serving comic purposes can also be traced in each comedy. Yet, one could maintain that the simple identification of such elements in the texts of the comedies is not in itself a persuasive argument in support of my thesis, because their existence can be attributed to mere imitation of the common comic practice of the period or to the comic instinct of the poets. For this reason I shall here focus on those issues

which give each comedy its particular comic stamp. We can identify a differentiation in the use of the various comic elements from one comedy to another and in the importance given to them.

Katzourbos

Apart from the common laughter-provoking elements such as the "ridiculous in things" — that is the actions and appearance of the characters on stage — and the "ridiculous in words" — such as abuse and indecent phrases, and other silly sayings and slapstick jokes[26] — which aim at causing impulsive laughter, and can be found in all Renaissance comedies no matter whether they follow some theory or not, Chortatsis emphasizes a series of elements which make his handling of the ridiculous more sophisticated.

One technique widely exploited by the Rethymniot playwright, and very much emphasized by the theorists, is that of surprise resulting from an unexpected statement. The very first scene contains many such instances, such as Katzarapos's unexpected personification of his belly which "hates these tastless words" of love (I. 18), as well as the personification of other parts of the digestive system a few verses later (I. 27-8: Σκιὰς κολατσιὸ ἂς εἴχαμε κάμει, μὰ τ' ἄντερά μου βουρβουρακιάζουν καὶ πονοῦν, καὶ μάχετ' ἡ κοιλιά μου). Here two verbs that are otherwise used in serious contexts (in the description of a battle, for instance: πονοῦν, μάχεται) and one verb that Tasso would call an 'ugly word' (βουρβουρακιάζουν) are used to describe a

26 Indecent thoughts and plans, abuse, ugly sayings and references to physical defects (the theorists' bodily ugliness) provoke laughter throughout the play. Often these elements are combined with slapstick descriptions of erotic scenes involving maidservants and the old man:

Πῶς εἶναι μπορεζάμενο κι' ὁ Νικολὸς ν' ἀφήση
τὸ γέρο μὲ τὴν κόρη του νὰ κάτση νὰ δειπνήση,
νὰ τὴ φιλῆ στὰ μάτια του, νὰ πιάνη τὰ βυζά τση,
κι' ὡσὰ γεροντογάιδαρος νὰ ρεύεται κοντά τση; (III. 215-18)

κι' ἄλλοι μόπιάναν τὰ βυζιά, κι' ἄλλοι μ' ἐχαιρετοῦσα
κι' ἄλλοι μ' ἀνασκεπάζασι κι' ἐβγάνασι τὴν ψή μου,
καὶ σύρε ξέσυρε θαρρῶ νὰ σκίσαν τὸ κομμί μου. (IV. 6-8)

in which cases Pino da' Cagli's requirement that laughter should not be caused by the vicious is not met.

humble picture that provokes laughter and ridicules a servant. Among many other unexpected statements in this scene is when the pleasure of seeing a beautiful young woman, or a luxurious palace is compared to the delights offered by foods in a busy kitchen, the latter being superior to the former:

Ποτέ μου δὲν ἀγάπησα νὰ βλέπω κόρης κάλλη,
μουδὲ παιγνίδια, οὐδὲ χαρές, οὐδὲ ξεφάντωση ἄλλη·
σὲ τσικνιασμένο μαγερειὸ καὶ καπνερὸ καλλιά 'χω
- πούρι νὰ ψήνουν τίβοτσι - πᾶσα καιρὸ νὰ λάχω,
παρὰ στὸ πλιὰ 'μορφύτερο καὶ ξάκουστο παλάτι.
(43-47)

The same effect is caused by the use of verbs and phrases related to death or love (δοξεύγει, μὲ σφάζει, μ' ἔχει θανατωμένο, μοῦ σφάζει τὴν καρδιά, ἠγαπημένες, συχναναστενάζω, ἀπ' τὰ βάθη τῆς καρδιᾶς) to describe the effect of such 'humble' subjects as looking at or eating various foods (vv. 53-64)[27].

A scene equivalent to this will take place in the Third act (scene 3) with the same participants and the same sources of laughter, namely surprise at the unexpected and serious descriptions of funny subjects: so, the son of Pisporditi who wounded Katzarapos (a parody of the son of Aphrodite who wounded Nikolos I. 51) is nothing but the smells and the look of various foods, while the actual wound is, according to Katzarapos, nothing more than hunger (III. 89-91)[28].

Other examples of surprise from the unexpected can be found in scene II. 1 where laughter is based on Katzourbos interrupting his master's bragging assertions, which he ridicules[29], and on Kous-

27 Similar situations (ridicule from a surprise) continue in the following verses (65-78). The surprise comes in v. 75 when it becomes obvious that Katzarapos has been talking about himself being in love with a sow and not with a woman. See also vv. 115-18 where eating a lot of food is suggested as the answer to Nikolos' love problems and vv. 17-30 where Katzarapos promises to accompany his master's singing by 'playing' a piece of meat as if it were a flute.

28 Other funny switchings from serious subjects to food in this scene can be found in vv. 107-110 and 129-136. The monologue of Katzarapos in III. 4 has also been constructed in the same laughable context, having as its main subjects, amplified by facts and arguments, the hunger and the small size of the human belly. Katzarapos will provoke laughter again with his ugly appearance and his silly sayings in scenes III. 10, III. 12 and V. 4.

toulieris' own unexpected insults and indecencies in the middle of his serious verbal shows of strength: Τρομάσσει με ἡ μιλίτσια, κι' οἱ τζάφοι ὄντα μὲ δοῦσι ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο τὸν πολὺ *τσὶ βράκες τως τσιρλοῦσι* (vv. 9-10)· τρακόσους νὰ ξεσκίσω σολδάδους καὶ τσαούσηδες ... νὰ διώξω σὰ *γαϊδάρους* (43-6)· π' ἀνὲ στραφῶ μὲ μάτια θυμωμένα, μονάχα νὰ σὲ στοχαστῶ, *χέζεσαι*; (66-7).

Surprise at an indecent saying, a sexual allusion (μὲ τὰ κοπέλια ποὺ κρατῶ, κι ὄντε τὰ ζαμινάρω θὰ τούςε δίδω πάντα μου τὴ ζάμινα ἀπὸ πίσω, vv. 220-1) not normally expected from a Schoolmaster, is also laughter-provoking in scene II. 5, a scene dominated by the ugly stage appearance of this character, which conforms to the bodily ridicule of the theorists[30].

Parody, in the way Scaliger described it, is apparently another favourite device of Chortatsis. A most successful example of it can be found in the distichs that Katzarapos sings to the salutary influence of wine following the pattern of the distichs his master sings for his beloved to appear at the window :

Nik: Μὲ τὸ γλυκὺ κιλαδισμὸ τὸν ἥλιο προσκαλοῦσι
κάθε πουρνὸ ὅλα τὰ πουλιὰ νά 'βγη νὰ τόνε δοῦσι,-
Katz: Μὲ τὸ μοσκάτο τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ μ' ὅμορφη λογάδα
κάθε πουρνὸ οἱ φρόνιμοι διώχνουσι τὴν κρυάδα,-
Nik: νὰ πάρουν φῶς τὰ μάτια τους καὶ λάμψη ἀπὸ κεῖνο,
τὰ ταίρια τους γιὰ νὰ μποροῦ ν' ἀνταμωθοῦσι, κρίνω.
Katz: νὰ πάρουσι τὰ μέλη τους δύναμη, νὰ βαστοῦσι
τσὶ κόπους καὶ τσὶ λογισμοὺς ὁποὺ τσὶ τυραννοῦσι.
Nik: Γιαῦτος μὲ τὸ τραγούδι μου κι' ἐγώ, γλυκιὰ κερά μου,
σὲ κράζω νά 'βγης νὰ σὲ ἰδοῦν τὰ μάτια τὰ δικά μου.
Katz: Γιαῦτος κι' ἐγὼ 'χα πεθυμιὰ σήμερα νά 'χα χάρη
σ' ἕνα βουτσὶ νὰ βρίσκουμου γὴ πούρι σὲ πιθάρι.
(I. 133-144)

29 Similar humorous effects are also found in scene II. 2, where Kassandra and Katzourbos deflate Koustoulieris' displays of strength at a moment when Koustoulieris' folly is already known to the audience.

30 As we learn later in the play (IV. 291, IV. 322-3) the Schoolmaster is supposed to appear dressed in rags, making the other characters think that he is a beggar.

We shall find parody of serious verses as a laughter-provoking element again in the first act when Moustrouchos explains his master's phrases μὲ τὸ νερὸ ποὺ νίβεται and μὲ ροδόσταμο [λαντουρᾶ με], as ἀποσαπουνάδες and κατούρημα (vv. 300-303).

However, there is also a group of scenes in *Katzourbos* which reveals another manifestation of Chortatsis's comic talent and indicates the variety of laughter-provoking elements he has at his disposal. The subtle irony of these scenes, as opposed to the slapstick jokes of the other laughter-provoking scenes which cause impulsive laughter, enriches and embellishes the comic parts of the play in a more sophisticated way. Such a scene is II. 7, when Arkolia presents rather indecent actions, namely Poulisena's sexual exploitation of Kassandra for money, as being in fact very wise, decent and honorable:

Πάντα μου σ' εἶχα *γνωστική*, μὲ φρόνεση μεγάλη,
μὰ τώρα *φρονιμότερη* παρὰ γυναίκα ἄλλη,
γιατὶ σὲ στράτα σὰ θωρρῶ θὰ βάλεις τὸ παιδί σου
κέρδος νὰ κάμει καταπῶς τό 'καμες κι' ἀπατή σου.
(vv. 313-16)

Poulissena and her maidservant are in fact so much impressed by the detailed advice of Arkolia that they do not hesitate to call her "δασκάλισσα [τῆς τέχνης]" (vv. 339 and 356). Such is also the case in scene III. 6 with Aneza describing the 'job' of a 'roufiana' as a decent way of earning money, while narrating the 'morals' of the past, which were in fact rather immoral.

Δὲν εἶν' ὁ κόσμος σήμερον σὰν ἤτανε κι' ἀλλότες,
ὁποὺ γυναίκα στὸ στενὸ δὲν ἤβλεπες ἐτότες,
κι' ὁπού 'χεν ἀγαπᾶ κιαμιά, χρειά 'τον σὲ ρουφιάνες
μέρα καὶ νύχτα νὰ γλακᾶ κι' εἰς ἄλλες παραμάνες·
χρειά 'τον τὸ σακούλι του νὰ τρέχη σὰν τὴ βρύση,
γιὰ νὰ μπορέση μιὰ φορὰ μόνο νὰ τῆς μιλήση. (vv.303-8)

In this way, Chortatsis exploits even the theory of *decorum*[31] — which holds a very prominent position in Cinquecento literary criticism — for comic purposes and attempts exactly the opposite of what the group of theorists who emphasized the moral handling of the ridiculous maintained: Chortatsis, with this comedy, reverses the teaching of morality by ridiculing it. He prefers this sort of indirect teaching because at the same time he avoids wearisome moral messages, and enriches the comic element of his play. From this point of view he is of course very much closer to the theories of Trissino — who considered laughter as the aim of comedy, and not the moral teaching that goes with it — than to any other theorist's.

In addition, in *Katzourbos* we find the best exploitation of the possibilities of rhetoric in the service of the ridiculous. In this comedy we not only find those rhetorical figures prescribed by the theorists as the most suitable for comedy, but we also encounter rhetorical figures which belong to more sophisticated literary genres being used in comic contexts. Devices like the apostrophe[32], the sophisticated metaphor[33], or the rhetorical scheme of the monologue[34], normally belonging to tragedy, if put in a clearly

31 It is not necessary at this point to enter into details on this very important topic. For a general introduction to the notion of decorum in Italian sixteenth-century literary criticism see Herrick 1946 and in particular for decorum in comic theory see Herrick 1950.

32 Instances of apostrophe in comic contexts can be found when the Schoolmaster addresses Koustoulieris ("Quam vis suspectus, domine, temeritatis ero, o miles praestantissime, tibi fortasse in vero-" IV. 295-6), his own knowledge and one of his books ("Ω γράμματα, oh scienzia, oh umanità μου, ὀιμένα, κι' ἴντα λογῆς τὴν σήμερον εἶστε καταντημένα! Βόηθα μου ἐσύ, Μαρτσιάλε μου! IV. 389-91), or six ancient gods ("O fulminantes Jupiter, o Giove, o Saturno, o Diana boscareccia, Apolline, Nettuno" V. 287-8), and when, finally, Armenis addresses the very house of Poulisena in a ridiculous attempt to talk with schemes of imagery (V. 21-5).

33 The use of a serious metaphor by a comic character can be an additional source of comic tone in this character's speech. See, for instance Armenis when he describes how much wiser he has become because he is in love:

"Αν εἶχε ζῆ ὁ Πλάτωνας καὶ μαθητὴ νὰ μ' ἔχη
τόσα περίσσια πράματα δὲν ἤθελα κατέχει
σὰν τὰ κατέχω σήμερο, γιατὶ ἔχω *δάσκαλό μου*
τὸν *Ἔρωτα, πόψὴλωσε τόσο τὸ λογισμό μου,*
ὁποὺ μπορῶ σοφώτατος νὰ κράζωμαι ὅπου λάχω. (III. 489-93)

34 Katzarapos uses the whole scheme of *exordium, narratio* and *peroratio* in

comic environment, become even more laughable than the proper comic figures.

Stathis

At first glance, comic elements do not appear as frequently in *Stathis* as they do in *Katzourbos*. However, such an impression has no great significance since we cannot know the content of the parts that were removed when the play was adapted into the form that we possess today. What is more important is to determine the category to which the comic elements belong and to examine the possibility that they were inspired by specific directions given by the theorists.

In fact, the point of view from which the unknown playwright of *Stathis* considers the ridiculous is very different from that of *Katzourbos*. Once again, in this comedy, we find the ridiculous expressed through words[35] and actions, and based on the mental and bodily ugliness of the characters[36]. In addition a considerable

order to describe how despicable his master is in going home for lunch without him, that is without a man who is totally dependent upon food for a happy life, as opposed to Nikolos who is totally dependent upon love (III. 163-206).

35 Ironic and other humiliating comments made by one character to another are an expected source of laughter for every comedy, and *Stathis* is no exception. The characters involved are usually the two match-makers and the servants, who aim their comments at the braggart soldier (Bravos) or other servants, even if those servants have from the beginning appeared as serious characters. The misunderstandings of the Schoolmaster's language; the Schoolmaster's monologue in II. 3, full of ludicrousness as he considers himself the most handsome and clever man on earth; the attempt of the ignorant and apparently illiterate Petroutsos to give the etymological origin of the letters of the alphabet in II. 3; Petroutsos's ironical air when he pretends to admire his master for his achievements (III. 1); Folas's misunderstanding of λουρί and κουρτέλα, which his master has asked him to fetch, as βρακολούρι and κορδέλα, which imply that Stathis suffers from hernia (νὰ μάθου τὸ ψεγάδι μου κι ὅλοι νὰ μὲ γελοῦσι admits Stathis himself in v. II. 312); finally, the verbal contest of the Schoolmaster, Bravos and Petroutsos in III. 3, where Petroutsos downgrades and parodies the serious subjects of discussion of the other two (letters, armaments) by talking about food using the Schoolmaster's and Bravos's own expressions; all these are specimens of the verbal ridicule aimed at by the playwright of *Stathis*.

36 Hints at the mental and bodily ugliness of the characters deployed as the object of the ridiculous can also be found in this comedy. Stathis in I. 5 emphasizes his servant's ugly appearance (183-4). In addition to this, Folas emerges as a typically silly person. His words are not witty as those of

number of purely comic rhetorical figures is used in this comedy too. The element of ridiculing from an unexpected statement is also to be found in *Stathis*. The parody in switching from the heroic themes of Bravos to the humble desires of his servant Petroutsos[37]; the substitution of such nice phrases as "messo d'amor", "μαντατοφόρος τς ἀγάπης" and "μεσίτη πόθου" by the prosaic "ρουφιάνος" (II. 173-5); the silly reason (dislocation of his jaw) that rendered the Duke of Crete unable to judge:

Μέρες ὁ Δούκας ἔκαμε ὀκτὼ σωστὲς νὰ κρίνη,
γιατὶ ἐξεμασελίστηκε τόσα πολλὰ ὁποὺ ἐγέλα
καὶ κρίσιμο δὲν ἔδιδε, πονώντας στὴ μασέλα (III. 56-8)

and the strange load Petroutsos cast overboard during a storm:

Τότες ποιὸς ἔμπωθε βουτσί, ποιὸς ἔριχνε βαρέλα
ποιὸς ἄδειαζε τὰ ροῦχα του κι ἐπέτα τὴν κασέλα·
'ς τοῦτο αὐτὴ τὴν ἀζουδιὰ[his wife] ξάφνου κι ἐγὼ ἥρπαξά τη
καὶ τέτοια λόγια λέγοντας ζιμιὸν ἐγκρέμνισά τη. (III. 395-8)

are instances of funny things not expected to be said at the specific moment when they are said.

What, however, becomes apparent from the characters involved in the comic scenes, either by being subjected to parody and irony, or by provoking laughter themselves with their words, is that they include no character supposed to be a respected member of the family and society[38]. This is most striking in the case of the old enamoured man who is heavily ridiculed in the other two comedies, but not in *Stathis*. The monologue of Dotores in I. 7 does not remind us at all of the corresponding monologues by Armenis

Petroutsos or of the servants in *Katzourbos* and *Fortounatos*, but mostly seem those of a naïve person. His next appearance in II. 3 (carrying stolen meat) conforms again with this bodily ugliness prescribed by the theorists and so does Petroutsos's self-description in the same scene (καὶ δὲν μπορῶ τὰ σάλια μου τὰ γένια μου νὰ ραίνου. v. 94) and Aretas' description by Alexandra (Δὲν εἶναι ὁ πόθος ὀγιὰ σέ, μισᾶ τὲς ζαρωμάδες, τὰ μαῦρα δόντια σχαίνεται, καὶ διώχνει τὲς ψαράδες. II. 253-4).

37 I. 102-12 and III. 66-7: Br: [...] μεγάλο πόλεμο μοῦ προμηνᾶ ἡ καρδιά μου. Pet: Κι ἐμένα ἀμάχη ἡ κοιλιά.

38 The only exception in *Stathis* is the incident with the βρακολούρι where again the aim is to point out Folas's silliness more than to ridicule Stathis himself.

in *Katzourbos*. There are no clues to suggest that Dotores is a silly (in mind and in appearance) old man; on the contrary, he seems rather like any serious mature man in love. Nor is there any ridiculing of Dotores in II. 7, where he appears again. Only the Schoolmaster warns him not to approach the pillars of Hercules (apparently a funny metaphor for a woman's pudenda) because he will find a deep sea. But even this allusion is not taken any further and so the old man's incapacity for sexual activity is not emphasized any more.

To this we can add the fact that in this play a servant is ridiculed rather than himself ridiculing other characters. Both these facts constitute some kind of laughter-provoking elements which are in accordance with Pino da Cagli's instruction for the ridiculous: that is, harsh ridiculing of the characters supposed to belong to lower classes (these must show an absurd and ignorant behaviour) and no ridiculing at all of those supposed to belong to the upper classes.

Fortounatos

Unlike the previous two comedies, in *Fortounatos* there are no specific laughter-provoking techniques which would allow us to speak with some certainty about this comedy's dependence upon a certain theoretical tradition as far as the theories of laughter are concerned. Although the comic element of the comedy occupies a prominent part in the play, this is expressed mainly by harsh ridiculing of specific characters (Louras and Tzavarlas mainly) in both words and actions. The comedy also abounds in coprology and sexual innuendo as part of the verbal ridicule, in addition to the usual insults that can be found in the other comedies.

The technique in which Foskolos is particularly good and inventive, more than the previous two playwrights, is in creating and using whole lists of insulting and funny ('ugly' as the theorists might have called them) adjectives, both in Greek and in Italian, for the characters he wants to ridicule:

Καὶ βλέπεσε καημένε
ἄνοστε, ἀδούλη καὶ φαγὰ καὶ χοῖρε βρωμεσμένε. (I.11-2)
'Νοῦς γέρο ξεπεσμένου,
ἀνήμπορου καὶ ἀνάστολου καὶ ξετραχηλισμένου
(II.261-2)
Κι ἴντα τοῦ προσερέγεται, 'νοῦς βρώμου, 'νοῦς σαλιάρη,
'νοῦς κακομοίρη καὶ ἄνοστου, καὶ 'νοῦς κατσιποδιάρη
σὰν αὐτουνοῦ. (II.367-9)

Καθὼς ὁ νοῦς του τρέχει
καὶ ὁ κῶλος του, ἔτσι νά 'τρεχε τὸ αἷμα τοῦ σαλιάρη,
τοῦ φαφλατᾶ καὶ τοῦ ἄνοστου, τοῦ βρώμου, τοῦ ἀφορ-
μάρη. (II.446-6)

Λέγει πὼς εἶσαι ξένος,
πὼς εἶσαι γέρος καὶ ἄνοστος, λωλὸς καὶ ξεπεσμένος.
(IV.355-6)

Καὶ δὲν ἐφάνηκεν ἐδῶ ἡ φαφλατοῦ, ἡ ψιψίνα. (V.2)

Μὰ πάλι ἂν ἤθελα 'σται γρὰ ψόφια καὶ ζαρωμένη (V.24)

Che bufalozzo, ignoranton, giotto, sardanapalo. (V.237)

Va' su le forche φράγκικα, guidon, rufian, furbazzo,
κόρακα, ἀχόρταγε, φαγά, mariolo, visdecazzo. (V.255-6)

Yet, this technique may by attributed rather to Foskolos' comic talent and experience of comic performances than to any relationship with some specific laughter theory. The very limited use of rhetorical figures, an area in which Foskolos is proved much less efficient than his predecessors, also leads to the same impression.

* * *

If we are now to draw some conclusions, in so far as the comic elements and their compliance with the theoretical requirements are concerned, we notice that although the main laughter-provoking features are common to all the three comedies, there is, however, a considerable degree of differentiation in the importance given to, and in the handling of, these comic elements.

Although *Katzourbos* is not the lengthiest play, in number of verses, the proportion of the laughter-provoking elements that I have recorded from this comedy is much higher than in either of the others. What, however, is even more important, is not the proportion of comic elements but the variety that characterizes them. *Katzourbos* exhibits by far the greatest variety of comic features, ranging from slapstick ridiculing to subtle irony. The element of surprise from the unexpected is also better exploited here than in the other two comedies.

Neither do we get in *Katzourbos* the exaggerated exploitation of the feature of ugliness as a source of laughter that we get in *Fortounatos*, through an insistence on various characters' silliness, ugly appearance and long lists of characterizations. The last element adds to my belief that *Fortounatos* bases its comic merits more on Foskolos's comic talent than on the careful and conscious use of some specific Cinquecento theory.

In *Stathis*, finally, what is most striking is the one-sided ridiculing of characters belonging to the lower classes, rather than of respected family members, thus highlighting the moral more than the entertainment function of the ridiculous. In contrast, in *Katzourbos*, the playwright is notably succesful in bringing two theoretical lines together, managing not to exclude moral teaching from his comedy, yet at the same time varying and highlighting its comic elements.