

# Defining the '*Strano*': Madness in Renaissance Italy

Nicole Cama

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the degree of  
B.A. (Hons) in History.

University of Sydney

October 2009

## ***Contents***

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	3
<b>CHAPTER ONE:</b> <i>Social Deviance: Fear and Loathing in Renaissance Florence</i> .....	11
<b>CHAPTER TWO:</b> Il ‘Teatro’ del ‘Strano’: <i>The Cruel Gaze of the “Public”</i> .....	39
<b>CHAPTER THREE:</b> ‘La Gran Follia’: <i>The Genius of Melancholy?</i> .....	56
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	76
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	79

## ***Introduction***

It is easy to recognise madness, but how does one define it?<sup>1</sup> This thesis explores the different ways madness was defined and portrayed in Italian texts from the early fifteenth century through to the late sixteenth century. Although this thesis investigates how and why people were categorised as mad, various sources have shown that the treatment of these individuals varied according to different social, cultural and political contexts. In some cases madness was seen as an undesirable expression of social deviance and in other cases, a venerated symbol of wisdom. In light of these discrepancies, social structures stigmatised and often alienated those considered deviant and acted as powerful punitive and organisational mechanisms. The power of language juxtaposed deviant behaviour against acceptable behaviour and re-established a sense of order and control over the definition and, consequently, the treatment of madness. By madness I refer to a psychological condition that contributed to the display of behaviour, speech and appearances deemed culturally and socially unacceptable. In addition to this definition, texts from a range of literary genres including *novelle*, medical treatises, biographies, poems, letters, chronicles, and advice books, elude fixed definitions and reveal a colourful array of multi-dimensional perceptions of the nature of madness. The key questions that arise are what constituted madness, and what do these defining characteristics reveal about the society in question? The main problem this project poses is the act of historicising madness and its social and cultural context; the challenge, to borrow John Jeffries Martin's phrase, is to reconstruct Renaissance Italian ideas and beliefs 'on their own terms'.<sup>2</sup>

Firstly, it is important to outline what madness meant to Renaissance Italians as well as what it signifies to historical understandings of madness. The term madness is used instead of "mental illness" or "clinical insanity" because it covers more general territory and is open for reinterpretation without

---

<sup>1</sup> Similar question posed by Dr Jonathan Miller in *Madness by Dr Jonathan Miller: To Define True Madness*, (1991), dir. Richard Denton, British Broadcasting Corporation: Education & Training, (60 minutes).

<sup>2</sup> John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), this phrase is repeated throughout the book, p. 14, p. 19, p. 20 and p. 130.

privileging twentieth century conventions of psychoanalysis.<sup>3</sup> Although the word madness was not used to signify a mad person during the early modern period, it provides a unifying label under which different definitions can be explored.<sup>4</sup> Renaissance conceptions of madness were applied to individuals who would probably be classed as clinically insane today. The idea of madness also encompassed those who essentially transgressed the social norms and exhibited deviant behaviour, those ambiguously termed ‘*strano*’ (‘strange’).<sup>5</sup> Terms such as ‘*buffoni*’ (‘buffoons’), ‘*folia*’ (‘folly’), ‘*sciocchezza*’ (‘nonsense/foolishness’), ‘*frenetici*’ (‘frantic’), ‘*deliri*’ (‘delerious’) and ‘*scema*’ (‘stupid’) were also associated with the general term ‘*pazzia*’ (‘madness’).<sup>6</sup> In terms of available care for these individuals, hospitals were a medieval Arab invention that first appeared in Europe in Spain in 1409.<sup>7</sup> These were religious charitable institutions that also catered for abandoned children, the elderly and those in extreme poverty.<sup>8</sup> These institutions were not provided to cure ill individuals; they were a refuge for those who were considered “incurable”.<sup>9</sup> In Italy, hospitals for those incurables considered mad first appeared in Bergamo in 1352 and in Florence in 1387.<sup>10</sup> However, these institutions only admitted those who could not afford to be treated at home or did not have relatives willing to keep them away from the

---

<sup>3</sup> Carol Thomas Neely notes that these terms did not exist at this time and that they are nineteenth century creations in ‘Recent Work in Renaissance Studies: Psychology Did Madness Have a Renaissance?’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 44, no. 4 (Winter, 1991), p. 777. See also Monica Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness: An Analysis of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* and Garzoni’s *L’hospedale de’ Pazzi Incurabili*’, Ph.D., City University of New York, (2001), p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the etymology of terms related to madness in this period see Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> The word ‘*strano*’ appears throughout the primary texts in: Tomaso Garzoni, *Opere: Il teatro dei vari e diversi cervelli mondani, Il mirabile cornucopia consolatorio, L’ospedale dei pazzi incurabili, La sinagoga degli ignoranti, e una scelta di brani da La piazza universale*, a cura di Paolo Cherchi, (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993), p. 261. English translation: Tomaso Garzoni, *The Hospitall of Incurable Fooles: erected in English as neer the first Italian modell and platforme, as the vnskillfull hand of an ignorant architect could deuise*, Edward Blount, trans., (London: Printed by Edm. Bollifant, 1600). (Please note: the English translation is an online text accessed via Early English Books Online and does not have page numbers). See also Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver* (‘Novella del Grasso Legnaiuolo’), translation in Lauro Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet: Six Tales in Historical Context*, Luigi Ballerini & Massimo Ciavolella, eds., Murtha Baca, trans., (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2004), p. 206. (Subsequent references to the word ‘*strano*’ are from these primary texts).

<sup>6</sup> Garzoni, *Opere*, pp. 251-252.

<sup>7</sup> H.C. Erik Midelfort, ‘Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal of Michel Foucault’ in Barbara C. Malament, ed., *After the Reformation: Essays in Honor of J.H. Hexter*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 253.

<sup>8</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 87. For more detailed information on how these hospitals were run see pp. 87-91.

<sup>9</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 88.

rest of the community in the family home.<sup>11</sup> The local prison in Florence, Le Stinche, was another place where the mad were incarcerated in order to separate particularly violent individuals from the rest of society.<sup>12</sup> The use of the hospitals to store the “incurably” mad, especially in late sixteenth century Italy, shows that it was widely regarded as a permanent ‘*morbo*’ (‘disease’).<sup>13</sup> The various definitions of madness and the treatment of these individuals reveal that madness was also a cultural construct that changed over time.<sup>14</sup> The cures and advice given by physicians nor the gradual “medicalisation” of madness are themes pursued in this paper.<sup>15</sup> This thesis examines the way cultural constructions played a fundamental part in defining notions of ‘*insania*’ (‘madness’) and ‘*furor*’ (‘fury’) and isolating those who “*pateva un poco di cervello*” (“suffered a bit in the brain”).<sup>16</sup>

Other characterisations indicate that madness for some Renaissance contemporaries also involved the elaborate spectacle of erratic and violent behaviour. The stereotypical representation of the theatricality of madness is by no means one solely attributed to deviants in this period. In the medieval period, concepts of the ‘*bestialissimamente impazzo*’ (‘bestially crazed’) and the ‘disordered’ spectacle of madness were derived from a range of sources and permeated Renaissance depictions deviance.<sup>17</sup> The stereotypical characterisation of the animalistic madman flourished until well into the seventeenth

<sup>11</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 88. See also H. C. Erik Midelfort, ‘Madness and the Problems of Psychological History in the Sixteenth Century’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 12, no. 1 (Spring, 1981), pp. 7-8 and George Mora, ‘Stigma During the Medieval and Renaissance Periods’, in Paul Jay Fink & Allan Tasman, eds., *Stigma and Mental Illness*, (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1992), p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Monica Calabritto, ‘Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness: Madwomen in the Renaissance’, *Forum Italicum*, 36, (Spring, 2002), p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 91.

<sup>14</sup> Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 3 and Roy Porter, ‘Madness and Creativity: Communication and Excommunication’, in Corinne Saunders & Jane Macnaughton, eds., *Madness and Creativity in Literature and Culture*, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> For discussions of the ‘medicalisation’ of madness see Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and drama in the age of Shakespeare*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 24 and p. 66. The terms ‘*insania*’ and ‘*furor*’ were used to describe madness predominantly in Latin texts. For the Italian quote see Monica Calabritto, ‘A Case of Melancholic Humors and *Dilucida Intervalla*’, *Intellectual History Review*, 18, no. 1 (March, 2008), p. 143.

<sup>17</sup> For the ‘bestially crazed’ see Piers Britton, “‘Mio malinconico, o vero... mio pazzo’: Michelangelo, Vasari, and the Problem of Artists’ Melancholy in Sixteenth-Century Italy’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 34, no. 3 (Fall, 2003), p. 662. See also Paolo Valesio, ‘The Language of Madness in the Renaissance’, *Yearbook of Italian Studies*, 1, (1971), pp. 200-201 and W. Scott Blanchard, *Scholars’ Bedlam: Menippean Satire in the Renaissance*, (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1995), pp. 25-26. For medieval notions of madness see: Thomas F. Graham, *Medieval Minds: Mental Health in the Middle Ages*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967) and Judith S. Neaman, *Suggestion of the Devil: The Origins of Madness*, (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1975), p. 135.

century, recapitulating the nature of madness as both a fascinating and frightening spectacle. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) demonstrates the continuity of this powerful image:

*But see the Madman rage downe right  
With furious lookes, a ghastly sight.  
Naked in chains bound doth he lye,  
And roares amaine he knowes not why?  
Observe him, for as in a glasse,  
Thine angry portraiture it was.*<sup>18</sup>

This conception of bestial madness was also articulated in various Italian texts. The *Commedia dell'Arte* company travelled to Florence in 1589 staging various plays such as *La pazzia d'Isabella* ('The Madness of Isabella').<sup>19</sup> As the title suggests, Isabella performs the stereotypical frantic incoherence of a madwoman as she enters into a 'frenzy', speaks 'nonsensical' ramblings, '...tears her clothes from her body, and as if pushed by some force, goes running up the street.'<sup>20</sup> In other sources, such as the Florentine court records of 1407, 'Margherita, the wife of Lotto, who lives in Porta Fugia in the territory of Prato' is described as being 'insanam furiosam' ('furiously mad').<sup>21</sup> The record states that she was a 'Piromane' ('Pyromaniac') who often walked the streets of Porta Fugia with a lamp and one day set fire to the house of Stefano Tomasini.<sup>22</sup> Within the same month, Margherita left Porta Fugia for another village where she met a hostile resident who, thinking that she was "the mad Pierazza of Florence", refused to allow entry in their house saying, "I don't want to let insane people into the house."<sup>23</sup> In the end, the court ordered that Margherita be fined and then isolated from the rest

<sup>18</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol I-VI*, Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicholas K. Kiessling & Rhonda L. Blair, eds., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 'The Argument of the Frontispiece', p. lxii. For a discussion on madness in this period see Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> Anne MacNeil, 'The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 120, no. 2 (1995), pp. 195-196.

<sup>20</sup> Flaminio Scala, *Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte: Flaminio Scala's Il Teatro Delle Favole Rappresentative*, Henry F. Salerno, ed., and trans., (New York: Limelight Editions, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1989), pp. 288-290.

<sup>21</sup> Gene Brucker, ed., *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971), p. 168 and Gene Brucker, *Firenze nel Rinascimento*, presentazione di Sergio Bertelli, (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1<sup>st</sup> edn., 1980), p. 341.

<sup>22</sup> Brucker, *The Society of Renaissance Florence*, p. 169 and Brucker, *Firenze nel Rinascimento*, p. 341.

<sup>23</sup> Brucker, *The Society of Renaissance Florence*, p. 170 and Brucker, *Firenze nel Rinascimento*, p. 342: 'ché tu sei una pazza et non volgl[i]o pазze in casa'.

of society in the local prison for a year. If she did not pay her fine, ‘she was to be whipped through the streets of Pistoia....’<sup>24</sup> Margherita’s story illustrates just one case out of many, however, it reveals how stories about the deviant behaviour of certain individuals were circulated across towns and cities throughout Italy. It also highlights that a system of behavioural codes existed whereby people recognised and labelled deviants as ‘*strano*’ or ‘*pazzia*’. This analysis will explore other Renaissance characterisations that went beyond the universally recognised prototype of bestial madness, and relied on more fluid notions of social deviance. These characterisations and the social context that dictated the treatment of individuals like Margherita show how madness had numerous meanings for the Italian citizen living in the early to late Renaissance period.

There are a number of ways of analysing the primary source material; however, as a result of the complex nature of madness, a thematic structure is the most logical approach to this topic. The first chapter of this thesis delves into the ways that madness was often construed as a form of social deviance in early fifteenth-century Florence. Antonio di Tuccio Manetti’s *La Novella del Grasso Legnaiuolo* (c. 1480s) (*The Fat Woodcarver*), a colourful short story of Florentine social values, will be analysed in relation to the social elements of madness connected with friendship networks.<sup>25</sup> This source is important not only because it involves prominent historical figures, it is important because it illustrates how erratic behaviour recognised by society as ‘*strano*’ were facets of social deviance that took place in the streets of Renaissance Florence. The streets were transformed into a public arena for dramatic re-enactments of social deviance, and illustrate the way that social codes and institutions governed how people conducted themselves in the broader community.

---

<sup>24</sup> Brucker, *The Society of Renaissance Florence*, p. 170 and Brucker, *Firenze nel Rinascimento*, p. 342: ‘fustigetur et fustigari debeat per plateam comunis Pistorie et per alia loca publica....’

<sup>25</sup> For Manetti’s *The Fat Woodcarver* I use the translation in Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, pp. 171-212. All quotes from the story are from this edition unless otherwise indicated. Subsequent references to Martines’ analysis of the story will be entitled *An Italian Renaissance Sextet* and references to Manetti’s story will be entitled *The Fat Woodcarver*. The Italian text was also consulted: Antonio Manetti, *La Novella del Grasso Legnaiuolo: nelle redazione di Antonio Manetti, dei codici Palatino 51 e Palatino 200*, di Bernardo Giambullari e di Bartolomeo Davanzati, a cura di Antonio Lanza, (Firenze: Vallecchi Editore, 1989).

The second chapter will investigate how madness could also be construed as both a disturbing and entertaining spectacle. Tomaso Garzoni's *L'ospedale dei pazzi incurabili* (1586) (*The Hospital of Incurable Fools*) is the primary focus of this analysis and will be examined in relation to themes of theatrical space and performance.<sup>26</sup> Garzoni, with northern Italy in mind, produced a treatise that constructs a fictitious hospital for a range of 'pazzi incurabili'. His catalogue of madness reflects a period in the latter part of the sixteenth century where the number of hospitals in Italy increased. Although Garzoni constructs a hypothetical of tour of an imaginary hospital, his text is a cultural artefact detailing the ideological factors that governed the definition and treatment of social deviance. His patients were characterised as dangerous and amusing spectacles of disorder that needed to be isolated and confined.

The final chapter will explore the problematic notion of the genius of melancholy and how it often became identified with madness. The ways madness could be construed as an instigator for intellectual revelation and a powerful path to truth.<sup>27</sup> Apart from the positive connotations that heralded melancholy as the precious treasure of the Renaissance humanist, this analysis also illustrates the perceptions of madness as a bestial condition that often resulted in social alienation. Texts such as Marsilio Ficino's *De triplici vita* (1482-1489) (*Three Books on Life*) and Giorgio Vasari's *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani* (1550) (*The Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors*) will be studied in relation to the myth of divine madness and the darker side to melancholy that produced the 'ingegno offuscatti' ('obscure genius').<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Garzoni, *Opere* and Garzoni, *The Hospital*. Please note: both the Italian text and the 1600 English translation are used in this thesis. All seventeenth century spellings in the English translation have been preserved.

<sup>27</sup> Ernesto Grassi & Maristella Lorch, *Folly and Insanity in Renaissance Literature*, (New York: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1986), p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Marsilio Ficino: Three Books on Life*, Carol V. Kaske & John R. Clark, trans., (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies in conjunction with The Renaissance Society of America, 1989), Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists, Volume I*, George Bull, trans., (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1987) and Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of*



The historiographical developments on the issue of madness in the early modern period have reflected that there is a relatively considerable gap when it comes to studies of madness in Renaissance Italy in particular. Early seminal works focussed on madness in seventeenth century Europe and briefly analysed the Renaissance period as one that witnessed the ‘freedom’ of the mad and one that preceded an era that silenced these individuals with institutional confinement.<sup>29</sup> Criticisms of this conception of confinement have provided fruitful historiographical discussions especially concerning the nature of hospitals and other institutions in this period.<sup>30</sup> However, the general lack of adequate scholarship on this subject, led scholars to classify the Renaissance as a ‘black hole’ whereby madness constituted “‘*terra incognita*” (‘unknown land’).<sup>31</sup> Despite the lack of comprehensive scholarship, recent years have witnessed the emergence of more specific studies concerning madness in Renaissance Italy.<sup>32</sup> Other interpretations have provided a substantial base for this thesis in relation to conceptions of identity, the self, melancholy and the myth of the melancholic genius.<sup>33</sup> Melancholy has attracted a vast

---

*the Artists, Volume II*, George Bull, trans., (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987). For the term “‘*ingegno offuscato*” see Grassi & Lorch, *Folly and Insanity*, p. 97.

<sup>29</sup> For notions of confinement as an historical phenomenon see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Richard Howard, trans., (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 38 and pp. 63-64, Michel Foucault, ‘Madness, the Absence of Work’, Peter Stastny & Deniz Şengel, trans., *Critical Inquiry*, 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1995), p. 294 and Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, Jean Khalfa, ed., Jonathan Murphy & Jean Khalfa, trans., (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 44-77. For other analyses of confinement see Norbert Finzsch & Robert Jütte, eds., *Institutions of Confinement: Hospitals, Asylums, and Prisons in Western Europe and North America, 1500-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2007), p. 223 and p. 253.

<sup>30</sup> For analyses and criticisms of Foucault’s theory see Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, p. 89, Midelfort, ‘Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe’, pp. 247-265, Neely, ‘Did Madness Have a Renaissance?’, pp. 779-780, Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, p. 9 and Gary Gutting, ‘Foucault and the History of Madness’, in Gary Gutting, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2005), pp. 49-73.

<sup>31</sup> Neely, ‘Did Madness Have a Renaissance?’, p. 779. Neely takes this term from MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 2. This phrase is also used later in Roy Porter, ‘The Patient’s View: Doing Medical History from Below’, *Theory and Society*, 14, no. 2 (1985), p. 176.

<sup>32</sup> Recent studies: Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, Calabritto, ‘Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness’, pp. 26-51, Monica Calabritto, ‘Garzoni’s *L’Hospedale de’ Pazzi incurabili* and the Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image in Sixteenth-Century *Imprese*’, *Emblematica*, 13, (2003), pp. 97-130 and Calabritto, ‘A Case of Melancholic Humors’, pp. 139-154.

<sup>33</sup> Influential works for this thesis: Paolo Valesio, ‘The Language of Madness in the Renaissance’, *Yearbook of Italian Studies*, 1, (1971), pp. 199-234, Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, (New York: Academic Press Inc., 1982), Ronald F.E. Weissman, ‘The Importance of Being Ambiguous: Social Relations, Individualism, and Identity in Renaissance Florence’, in Susan Zimmerman & Ronald F.E. Weissman, eds., *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1989), Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, Lauro Martines, *Strong Words: Writing & Social Strain in the Italian Renaissance*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, Guido Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love: Sex,*

amount of scholarly attention; however, the concentration on madness as a form of social deviance remains a relatively unexplored approach.<sup>34</sup> This thesis aims to fill this gap and provide insights into how and why certain individuals were labelled ‘*strano*’. In the close reading of primary texts, this thesis will illustrate the social codes of behaviour that governed urban life, and how individuals who deviated from them were stigmatised in some way. The main texts dealt with in this project were selected because they each reveal the complexity and fluidity of madness as a cultural construct. The texts are cultural and intellectual snapshots of how madness was described in written form in this period. The unusual nature of texts such as Garzoni’s *L’ospidale* and the *The Fat Woodcarver* are a testament to the nature of this enquiry as a set of complex micro-histories, which reveal three specific features of a multi-faceted topic. Through a study of these social codes of behaviour, madness can be seen to be a term that signified a variety of meanings for a range of people from different walks of life in sixteenth-century Italian society. Intrinsic to this complex social landscape is the age-old conception that madness was the quintessential *loss* of the self. In the period that spanned between the early fifteenth and late sixteenth centuries in Italy, madness was often seen as set of actions and words displayed by someone who deviated from social codes and presented what contemporaries recognised as a serious threat. Possibly most striking of all, it often represented a degradation of the self, identity and social recognition within a broader community.

---

*Self, and Society in the Italian Renaissance*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007). Useful studies on melancholy: Britton, ‘Mio malinconico’, pp. 653-675, Grassi & Lorch, *Folly and Insanity*, Rudolf Wittkower & Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 1963), Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky & Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1964).

<sup>34</sup> Scholars who have noted the deficient scholarship on this area: Neely, ‘Did Madness Have a Renaissance?’, p. 779 and p. 784 and Midelfort, ‘Madness and the Problems of Psychological History’, pp. 5-12.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ***Social Deviance: Fear and Loathing in Renaissance Florence***

How can anyone dream that mere simplicity and goodness will get him friends, or even acquaintances not actually harmful and annoying? The world is so full of human variety, differences of opinion, changes of heart, perversity of customs, ambiguity, diversity, and obscurity of values. The world is amply supplied with fraudulent, false, perfidious, bold, audacious, and rapacious men. Everything in the world is profoundly unsure. One has to be far-seeing in the face of frauds, traps and betrayals.<sup>35</sup>

~Leon Battista Alberti, 1432~

Indeed, the mask *is* the man; he must never take it off.<sup>36</sup>

This chapter will analyse how and why madness in early Renaissance Florence constituted a form of social deviance. This focus on social deviance will investigate an incident that occurred in 1409 and the social context that facilitated an attack on one man's identity and sense of self. Antonio di Tuccio Manetti's reconstruction of this event, titled *The Fat Woodcarver* (c. 1480s), shows how conceptions of social deviance were constructed based on social classifications and friendship networks. This chapter examines how processes of stigmatisation and 'social networks' operated in relation to notions of deviance, and how they were based on cultural conceptions surrounding the presentation of the self.<sup>37</sup> These issues relate to Lauro Martines' quote concerning the obligatory social 'mask'; Manetti's tale illustrates a social context that emphasised the importance of maintaining a certain outward persona.<sup>38</sup> The social construction of 'strange' behaviour enabled the deviant in the story to suffer a fate considered by many of his contemporaries to be social suicide.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, this chapter

<sup>35</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence: I Libri Della Famiglia* by Leon Battista Alberti, Renée Neu Watkins, trans., (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), p. 266.

<sup>36</sup> Lauro Martines, 'The Gentleman in Renaissance Italy: Strains of Isolation in the Body Politic', in Robert S. Kinsman, ed., *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 89.

<sup>37</sup> The metaphor 'social networks' appears in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. x.

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of social 'masks' see: Michelle Z. Rosaldo, 'Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling', in Richard A. Shweder & Robert A. LeVine, eds., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 147 and Grassi & Lorch, *Folly and Insanity*, p. 77.

<sup>39</sup> For the concept of 'social suicide' see MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 131. Martines describes Grasso's final act as 'ritual suicide' in *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 213 and *Strong Words*, p. 179.

focuses on outlining the way that certain social structures in the Florentine community outlined acceptable forms of behaviour and, by default, systematically classified deviancy in a way that imposed social alienation. This interpretation explores the complexity behind the ‘perversity of customs, ambiguity, diversity, and obscurity of values’ that Leon Battista Alberti once described, in order to explore how and why social deviance was so intimately connected with social networks.

Manetti’s account of the incident, though written well after the event, is widely considered to be the most thorough, not only because he personally knew the story’s characters, but also because it seems to be the most detailed version of the story.<sup>40</sup> The story belongs to the tradition of the Italian *novella* along with the Florentine ‘*beffa*’, which were tales of ‘practical, often cruel, jokes’.<sup>41</sup> It details how one Sunday evening in the winter of 1409, the famous architect Filippo di Ser Brunelleschi and a host of other well known patrons and artists including Donatello, gathered for dinner in the house of ‘a most respected’ political figure named Tomaso Pecori.<sup>42</sup> After a period of time it became clear to the group that their friend, affectionately nicknamed Il Grasso (‘the Fat One’), did not attend the dinner party and, as a result, without so much as a fleeting moment’s consideration for Grasso, they decided to play a ‘prank’ on him.<sup>43</sup> This does not seem like a major cause for concern, since Brunelleschi and Grasso knew each other well, so much so that he had ‘sometimes discreetly amused himself at Grasso’s expense.’<sup>44</sup> However, the operative word in this instance is ‘discreetly’, and as the story progresses, it becomes very clear that the joke played on Grasso is deliberately publicised and takes on a more serious nature. Grasso was targeted because he did not attend an important social event with his ‘intimate group of friends’ and patrons.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, his friends felt ‘a bit snubbed’ because he

---

<sup>40</sup> Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Fat Woodworker by Antonio Manetti*, Robert L. Martone & Valerie Martone, trans., (New York: Italica Press, 1991), p. ix.

<sup>42</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 171 and Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 215.

<sup>43</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 172.

<sup>44</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 173.

<sup>45</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 173.

neglected his social obligation to a group of men ‘of a higher rank and station’.<sup>46</sup> For that reason, Grasso’s friends devised the harshest penalty they could imagine: “‘we’ll make him believe that he has become someone else and that he’s no longer Grasso the woodcarver.’”<sup>47</sup> To add further insult to injury, this “‘someone else’” was to be Matteo, a man who was known for his trouble with the debt collectors. In a symbolic act of social exclusion, Grasso was to become a man ‘who was not part of the intimate group of friends who used to dine together.’<sup>48</sup> What follows is an elaborate *beffa*, detailing how Brunelleschi tricks Grasso by pretending his mother is ill and then breaking into his house. When Grasso arrives home, Brunelleschi imitates Grasso’s voice and tells him to leave. In a state of confusion, Grasso decides to go back to his place of work in the Piazza di San Giovanni, so that someone he knew would walk past and recognise him. Unfortunately, at that point debt collectors, who were in on the joke, arrested and incarcerated Grasso in the Mercanzia (the local court and gaol). During his time in gaol, Grasso is tormented by the prospect that he has not only turned into someone else, but that he has lost his possessions and more importantly, his identity. Grasso, ‘struggling to hold back his tears’ decides to tell a judge of ‘considerable merit’ about his situation.<sup>49</sup> The judge, realising that someone has played a joke on Grasso, amusingly offers advice. After spending time in the gaol talking to the judge, Grasso is eventually released when Matteo’s brothers, who are also in on the prank, pay the debt and take him back to their home. The brothers chastise Grasso, saying that his ‘misconduct’ has brought ‘shame’ on their family.<sup>50</sup> They ridicule Grasso further by inviting a priest who, believing Grasso to be Matteo, lectures him about his behaviour. During this time, Grasso becomes more and more convinced that he has turned into Matteo and, after Matteo’s brothers drug him with a strong opiate, Grasso goes to sleep that night with the horrifying knowledge that he had lost everything he owned. During the night, Brunelleschi and a few other friends move Grasso back to his own bed. Grasso awakes to the sound of the bells in the Santa Maria del Fiore and becomes overjoyed

---

<sup>46</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, pp. 172-173. For an analysis on status and position within this social group see Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 172.

<sup>47</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 173.

<sup>48</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 173.

<sup>49</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 180 and p. 183.

<sup>50</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 183.

to find that he woke in his own bed. Still unconvinced, he decides to venture into the town centre in order to ‘verify’ that he was Grasso and not Matteo ‘by meeting other men’.<sup>51</sup> He meets Brunelleschi and Donatello in the Duomo and engages in an exchange whereby Brunelleschi and Donatello continue to taunt Grasso about the events that unfolded the day before. Grasso eventually discovers that he had been ‘the victim of a practical joke’ and, in the end, with no other foreseeable alternative, Grasso decides to flee Florence for Hungary.<sup>52</sup>

In light of Manetti’s tale, it is necessary to outline the social and cultural framework that delineated madness as a form of social deviance in Grasso’s story of friendship, betrayal and alienation. The elements of the story are comprehensible when placed in a social context that privileged words, actions and behaviour as symbols within an elaborate communication system.<sup>53</sup> This system of verbal and behavioural codes designated ‘fama’ (‘reputation’) as the core component of social relations.<sup>54</sup> The inexorable social structures of ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’ (‘honour’ and ‘shame’) dictated the complexity behind ‘fama’ and social relations.<sup>55</sup> This facilitated the ‘face-to-face’ nature of society which was characterised by an elaborate system of behavioural codes in which the individual was tested on a daily basis.<sup>56</sup> Although these were elements integral to the proper functioning of civic life, it is important to note that this was also a society that defined the male role in society as distinctly public in nature and appointed women as the absent players in the community.<sup>57</sup> Women’s absence from this public role meant that a man’s social status in the community depended on his ability to project a certain level of

---

<sup>51</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 207.

<sup>53</sup> Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, (New York: Academic Press, 1980), p. 129. For another discussion on the importance of symbols and behavioural codes see Richard C. Trexler, *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence*, (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), pp. 8-9. See also Roy G. D’Andrade, ‘Cultural Meaning Systems’, in Shweder & LeVine, *Culture Theory*, p. 116.

<sup>54</sup> For an analysis on reputation see Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 25. For a detailed discussion on the concept of ‘fama’ see Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution During the Florentine Renaissance*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> The terms ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’ appear in Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1987), p. 194 and Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 83.

<sup>56</sup> Trexler, *Dependence in Context*, p. 8, Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 35 and Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance Florence*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 6 and p. 90.

<sup>57</sup> Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, p. 13 and Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 86.

‘social ambiguity’ and decipher the range of gestures, words and behaviour presented to him.<sup>58</sup> Those who did not preserve their honour and maintain the right level of ambiguity within their social relations faced a serious social threat. This ambiguity was colourfully reflected when, in 1609, the Venetian scholar Paolo Sarpi wrote, “I am constrained to wear a mask, in as much as one can do no less, if he lives in Italy.”<sup>59</sup> However, this theme was noted in earlier Italian texts. As early as the mid fourteenth century, Paolo da Certaldo, highlighted the importance of façade, and even went so far as to compare his secrets with his ‘liberty’ saying that those who revealed their secrets ‘were mad.’<sup>60</sup> Da Certaldo also noted the centrality of ‘fama’ saying that the respect of fellow citizens was “worth more than great riches”.<sup>61</sup> In a culture that privileged the importance of ‘fama’ and the intricate workings of surface appearance, ‘words, actions, and works’, ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’, were all intimately connected.<sup>62</sup> Hence, social alienation remained an ever-present possibility for those who neglected the importance of façade. This emphasis on façade indicates that an individual’s sense of self was “bounded” or restricted by the external pressures that threatened shame on those who acted against the prescribed social codes.<sup>63</sup> An individual’s sense of self and identity was like a complex patchwork. It included a multiplicity of overlapping features that demanded loyalty to a range of groups such as patrons, ‘*parenti, amici e vicini*’ (‘kin, friends and neighbours’).<sup>64</sup> Consequently, a person’s obligations and allegiances meant that their actions, gestures and words often conflicted with their desires and

<sup>58</sup> The term ‘social ambiguity’ appears in Weissman, ‘The Importance of Being Ambiguous’, p. 271.

<sup>59</sup> Paolo Sarpi, Letter to Jacques Gillot, (1609), quoted in Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 41.

<sup>60</sup> Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> Da Certaldo, quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 25 and Nicholas A. Eckstein, ‘Neighborhood as Microcosm’, in Roger J. Crum & John T. Paoletti, eds., *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 220.

<sup>62</sup> For the importance of ‘words, actions, and works’ see Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, p. 44. For another similar comment about honour and reputation see Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, *Ricordi*, (1393-1411), in Veronica Branca, ed., *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*, Murtha Baca, trans., (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1999), pp. 71-72. For an analysis of the system of ‘face-work’ see Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, p. 14. For an analysis on reputation, honour and shame see Daniel R. Lesnick, ‘Insults and Threats in Medieval Todi’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 17, (1991), pp. 71-72.

<sup>63</sup> Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 13, pp. 17-18 and p. 39. Martin, in referring to the individual as “bounded” on p. 39, was quoting Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, (1983). See also Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 10 and Ruggiero, Machiavelli in Love, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Lydia Cochrane, trans., (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 68. See also Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 175, Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 27, Peter Burke, ‘Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes’ in Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 18.

beliefs.<sup>65</sup> However, as noted previously, this was a community that centred on notions of ‘fama’, ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’ and so, an individual often faced the challenging task of consolidating their own interests and self-preservation with what external groups and institutions expected of them.<sup>66</sup> Their behaviour was constantly mediated by the awareness that what they did in front of their fellow citizens would be noted, disseminated and never forgotten. Madness, understood as form of social deviance, thus represented the moments where the social ‘mask’ failed, where an individual temporarily suspended their vigilant persona and revealed words and behaviour commonly interpreted as ‘*strano*’.

Analysis of the cultural framework that dictated social interaction alludes to another dominant theme of life in early Renaissance Florence – ‘*amicitia*’ (‘collective, corporate or communal friendship’).<sup>67</sup> This was a world where individuals played a precarious balancing act between ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’ depending on how they managed their social networks because, as Alberti commented, “social exchanges hid many layers of meaning, even during exchanges between friends.”<sup>68</sup> Da Certaldo provided some illuminating statements concerning the nature of friendship as he maintained that “a man who loses his friends is worse than dead.”<sup>69</sup> Such comparisons echo the familiar Italian expression, “It is better to die than to live with shame”; however, there is another element to these proverbial statements that connects with how social deviance was perceived.<sup>70</sup> Alberti noted that friendships were the most ‘highly prized’ of all relationships, indicating that it was not only an

---

<sup>65</sup> Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> The term ‘*amicitia*’ appears in N.P.J. Gordon, ‘The murder of Buondelmonte: contesting place in early fourteenth century Florentine chronicles’, *Renaissance Studies*, 20, no. 4 (2006), p. 468. See also F.W. Kent “‘Be Rather Loved Than Feared’”: *Class Relations in Quattrocento Florence*’ in William J. Connell, ed., *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Alberti, quoted in Weissman, ‘The Importance of Being Ambiguous’, 272.

<sup>69</sup> Paolo da Certaldo, *Libro di buoni costumi*, (c. 1360), quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> This is my translation of the phrase “Meglio è morir che viver con vergogna”, quoted in Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, p. 95. This saying also often appears as “Meglio è morir con onore che viver con vergogna” (‘It is better to die with honour than to live with shame’).



essential part of social survival, but a fundamental ingredient to ‘living well and rightly.’<sup>71</sup> Also writing in the early fifteenth century, Francesco d’Altobianco degli Alberti claimed that “nulla senza gli amici si può far” (“nothing can be done without friends”).<sup>72</sup> The ability to maintain friendship networks in this context was seen as a virtue, and one that required consistent attention and skilful ambiguity as Da Certaldo once proclaimed: ‘Now, I am not saying that you should be completely distrustful, but rather that there should be a happy medium in all things. If you always keep to this happy medium in every aspect of your life, you shall be praised and considered wise.’<sup>73</sup> Not long after Da Certaldo’s comments, Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli recorded his thoughts in a chronicle, also recognising the critical ability to maintain a vigilant disposition: ‘Once you have won your friends and relatives...you must be sensible enough to keep their friendship, and even to increase it; and this is how to do it. Don’t be ungrateful for favors received....If you see that you can be useful to them or honor them, do so; don’t wait to be asked.’<sup>74</sup> Social deviance, in light of these characterisations, represented the rifts and cracks in social networks. The process of stigmatisation served as a social demarcation of ‘strange’ behaviour in a way that reinforced the importance of what Alberti termed, “the face value of social exchanges”.<sup>75</sup> If social relationships were part of a complex tapestry, then Alberti’s metaphor of the ‘*filo e tessura*’ (‘the thread and fabric’) of friendship is an accurate description of this element as it formed the backbone of life in the Florentine commune.<sup>76</sup> This mentality indicates that those who exhibited ‘strange’ behaviour and neglected to project a certain persona were deviant because they threatened the very existence of the social codes established to mediate behaviour in the first place. They were mad insofar as they did not conform; they threatened social harmony in the community by desecrating the virtues considered central to maintaining the imperative social masquerade. Contemporary comments concerning the complexity of social relations highlight the way that social

---

<sup>71</sup> Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, p. 94. See also Eckstein, ‘Neighborhood as Microcosm’, p. 220.

<sup>72</sup> Francesco d’Altobianco degli Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 159.

<sup>73</sup> Paolo da Certaldo, *Libro di buoni costumi*, (c. 1360), in Branca, *Merchant Writers*, p. 48.

<sup>74</sup> Morelli, *Ricordi*, in Branca, *Merchant Writers*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>75</sup> Alberti, quoted in Weissman, ‘The Importance of Being Ambiguous’, p. 272.

<sup>76</sup> This metaphor is quoted and applied in Kent, *Friendship, Love and Trust*, p. 8.

codes mediating identity and the self were perceived as a sacred order, and an intrinsic part of the community's cultural make-up that people honoured and occasionally undervalued.

Based on this social context, Grasso's behaviour and that of his friends can be analysed and understood more comprehensively. In order to fully understand how Grasso's actions were construed as deviant in early Renaissance Florence, it is necessary to explore the vocabulary for madness applied to those who transgressed behavioural prescriptions and earned the label of the social deviant. One example of how the language reveals mentalities toward social deviance is how the joke is classified at the beginning of the story. On the surface, it all seems like a practical joke amongst friends; however, underlying these comical exchanges is something far more serious. The vocabulary for Grasso's punishment switches from 'prank', to an 'amusing joke', to 'vendetta' or 'revenge'.<sup>77</sup> These subtle linguistic shifts communicate the extent of Grasso's social mistake within this particular friendship group, as well as the underlying gravity of social deviance in the broader context of the community. There are other descriptions throughout the story that consistently depict Grasso as mad or in the process of going mad. Phrases such as, 'half out of his wits', "'crazy antics of his'", "'his brains overturned'", "'mad frenzy'", 'like a man possessed', 'driven out of his mind by an overwhelming melancholy' and so on, all certainly show that terms of reference to madness were applied daily, whether carelessly or not.<sup>78</sup> Grasso's contemplative moments, made as the *beffa* unfolds, reveal how those considered "'damned'" and out of their "'wits'" were treated everyday:

It is certain that I'm no longer Grasso and have become Matteo. Damn my luck and misfortune! For if this gets out, I shall be humiliated and taken for a madman and the children will taunt me and I'll run a thousand risks on account of it. And also, what have I

---

<sup>77</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 172 and p. 173. For analyses on the idea of 'vendetta' see Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta & Factions in Friuli During the Renaissance*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Gordon, 'The murder of Buondelmonte', pp. 459-477.

<sup>78</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, for each phrase respectively: p. 176, p. 187 (for both "'crazy antics of his'" and "'his brains overturned'"), p. 188, p. 177 and p. 181.

to do with another man's debts, or the scrapes he's gotten into—I, who have always avoided this and a thousand other dangerous mistakes?<sup>79</sup>

This interior monologue reiterates the volatile environment of the Florentine commune and the centrality of maintaining an honourable persona. Grasso's character, especially his apparent blind acceptance of the situations presented to him, also needs to be looked at more closely. Grasso's comments concerning identity were more than just the tragically innocent ramblings of a simple-minded man who felt his world falling apart. In the beginning he is described as being 'a touch simple' but 'by no means a fool.'<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Grasso is aware of the fragility of reputation and the balance of 'onore' and 'vergogna'; when he is arrested he desperately verbalises the seriousness of his disgrace: "I'm not who you think I am, and you're committing a great injury by shaming me like this...."<sup>81</sup> Throughout the story, Grasso epitomises the complicated nature of an individual's sense of self within an often suffocating and critical community; he consistently measures his own feelings and desires up against the expectations of his friends and his fellow Florentines. Although he often kept within the community's expectations and boundaries, unfortunately for Grasso, the far-sightedness Alberti once described was not a quality he possessed. As a result of Grasso's inability to play the social game designed to entrap him in the first place, he suffered a cruel assault on his social status and perhaps more importantly, his sense of self. Grasso may have been no fool, but this was essentially one "dangerous mistake" that he underestimated.<sup>82</sup>

Manetti shows how the distinctly male-centred nature of social networks in Florentine urban life operated based on each man's social and economic status.<sup>83</sup> Factors including their age and occupation

---

<sup>79</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*: for the word "damned" see p. 187, for the word "wits" see p. 176 and for the longer quote see pp. 179-180.

<sup>80</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 172. Martines also points out the ambiguity surrounding Grasso's intelligence in *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 222.

<sup>81</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 176.

<sup>82</sup> The term "dangerous mistakes" is used by Grasso in Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 179.

<sup>83</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 15 & 86. Ruggiero notes that the 'masculine identity' and 'masculine culture' is an intrinsic part of this story.

feature in the story, illustrating how friendship networks followed a strict hierarchy.<sup>84</sup> Like Alberti's description at the beginning of this chapter, the layered social exchanges and processes that engineered and publicised Grasso's alienation reflect the elaborate workings of social life in the Florentine commune. Brunelleschi clearly understood the intricacy of social networks, and this was displayed through his engineering of a joke which was to signal the ridicule and social exclusion of the single man in the group who did not fully grasp the politics of friendship. The illustration of Brunelleschi's character as the mastermind of this cruel joke and the social scene within which he operated, provide illuminating insights into the way that group solidarity often coincided dangerously with social exclusion. Da Certaldo once wrote, "Test your friend a hundred times...for he who was your friend earlier has become your enemy because of the trust that you placed in him."<sup>85</sup> Grasso's story of trickery, the complexity of Florentine social networks and the consequences of behavioural transgressions represents the volatile undercurrents evident in Da Certaldo's social commentary. Grasso's loss of social acceptance as a result of his snub was seen as a logical consequence; the clever metaphorical joke of his loss of identity was designed to "teach him a lesson" since he did not appreciate his position within and obligations to his particular friendship group.<sup>86</sup> Therein lies the crux of Grasso's madness: he transgressed the codes of behaviour crucial to maintaining his position in his social network and therefore warranted the punishment of social alienation and shame at the hands of his friends. This *novella* epitomises the intricate nuances of ritual and social relations in the Renaissance Italian town; there is a powerful sense that the actions and words contained within the story are layered with meanings that played a role in signifying a person's place in the Florentine

---

<sup>84</sup> For an analysis not on friendship but of the related hierarchical nature in kinship networks see Nicholas Terpstra, 'In *Loco Parentis*: Confraternities and Abandoned Children in Florence and Bologna', in Nicholas Terpstra, ed., *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 130-131.

<sup>85</sup> Da Certaldo, *Libro*, in Branca, *Merchant Writers*, p. 48. Also quoted in Weissman, 'The Importance of Being Ambiguous', p. 272. Morelli also made a similar phrase, quoted in Weissman, 'The Importance of Being Ambiguous', p. 272.

<sup>86</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 172.

commune.<sup>87</sup> This analysis of Grasso's actions, words and behaviour reveals how his story can be seen as a re-enactment of the classification of social deviance under the guise of madness.

These classifications of social deviance and descriptions of Grasso's state of mind not only reveal a universally recognised vocabulary for 'strange' behaviour; they also illustrate a dispossession or displacement of the self. In 1512, Niccolò Machiavelli devised the concept of 'virtù' in *The Prince*. Machiavelli stipulated that 'virtù' encompassed a range of qualities that a prince would need to possess in order to run his state successfully.<sup>88</sup> The word referred to a person's "talent", "skill" and "prowess" not so much the English word "virtue".<sup>89</sup> In chapter fifteen, Machiavelli lists a range of attributes 'for which men, and especially princes, are praised or blamed'.<sup>90</sup> Some of these 'good' and 'miserly' characteristics included men who were 'effeminate and cowardly' and 'sincere' and 'cunning'.<sup>91</sup> These polarised character traits pointed to the central characteristic that defined a man's level of 'virtù', and that was, the assertive political power that ennobled the quintessential masculine persona.<sup>92</sup> Although this concept was outlined in a later period, the elements of 'virtù' can be seen in Manetti's reconstruction of Brunelleschi's *beffa*. Grasso's community was one that prized the 'regime of virtù' which dictated the way identities were perceived and interpreted.<sup>93</sup> The notion of 'virtù' encompassed the way that men in the Florentine community displayed their persona, a persona that was to be characteristically 'masculine' in order to guarantee one's social status, 'onore' and 'fama'.<sup>94</sup> For men within this framework, 'onore' rested in his ability to avoid public ridicule and maintain

<sup>87</sup> Martines makes a similar point in relation to this literary form in *Strong Words*, p. 174.

<sup>88</sup> See Cary J. Nederman's 'Introduction', in Niccolò Machiavelli, *Niccolò Machiavelli's The Prince: On the Art of Power: The New Illustrated Edition of the Renaissance Masterpiece on Leadership*, W.K. Marriott, trans., (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2007), p. 14. See also Cary J. Nederman, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, created September 13 2005/updated September 8 2009, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, USA, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/machiavelli/#3>>, viewed 1 October 2009.

<sup>89</sup> Nederman, 'Introduction' in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 14.

<sup>90</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 115.

<sup>91</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>92</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 167.

<sup>93</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 87.

<sup>94</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 86.

certain levels of ‘ambiguity’ in his social networks.<sup>95</sup> The Renaissance Italian’s ‘social and psychic survival’ depended on his ability to maintain a strong network of friends.<sup>96</sup> Madness in this context was socially constituted and constructed based on the man’s ‘*virtù*’.<sup>97</sup> In the broader social sense, beyond his mental state, Grasso was exhibiting characteristics considered inherently offensive. These classifications of madness and those people, like Grasso who were “prone” to “some mad whim”, illustrate how performances of identity and the maintenance of that all-important façade signalled an ongoing struggle with a social reality that demanded certain obligations.<sup>98</sup> These qualities, if perverted, could be construed as violated in some way and therefore, Grasso’s inability to follow the rules of ‘*virtù*’ signalled a de-masculinised persona through the exhibition of social deviance. Grasso failed to honour his commitment to a group of important male patrons and intellectuals and when faced with the consequences, he also failed to maintain a level of rational control and authority of the situation. Ultimately, Grasso’s seemingly simple mistake cost him his place in the sacred order of ‘*virtù*’.

Aside from the conceptualisation of madness as social deviance and vice versa, Manetti’s text demonstrates the complicated apparatus of the social network and the way it mediated behaviour, words and actions. Da Certaldo’s musings about a man’s secrets is echoed as Grasso articulates his awareness of the treatment he will receive if he displays his true feelings: “I can’t confide in anyone, or ask advice, and God knows I need it!”<sup>99</sup> Morelli later reiterated Da Certaldo’s comments about friendship and also warned of the deceptive surface appearance of kind gestures: “Do not extend your trust easily or lightly; and all the more, he who demonstrated with his words that he is faithful, trust him all the less, and he offers to help you, do not trust him at all.”<sup>100</sup> After Grasso’s friends set the

---

<sup>95</sup> Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 26. This is also discussed in Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, p. xxvi.

<sup>96</sup> Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 29. This point is also made in Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, p. 63.

<sup>97</sup> Ruggiero also notes the dangerousness of madness in Grasso’s context saying that ‘...ultimately even madness threatened his place in the regime of ‘*virtù*’ in *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 95.

<sup>98</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 172. For the notion of drama in the streets see also Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, p. 6 and p. 90.

<sup>99</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 180.

<sup>100</sup> Morelli, quoted in Weissman, ‘The Importance of Being Ambiguous’, p. 272.

*beffa* in motion, the next important scene in the story is Grasso's incarceration. The proverbial comparison between shame and death is resonated when a judge dramatically tells Grasso, "...you couldn't be more miserable if you were about to die, or were in danger of some great disgrace."<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, Grasso opens up to the judge, informing him that he is telling him his story because the judge is a 'man of distinction' who has shown 'compassion' to his plight.<sup>102</sup> Grasso also unknowingly articulates the nature of the *beffa* as one that was "funny" just as long as "it's not happening to you!", to which the judge wisely responded, "We're all at risk."<sup>103</sup> The judge's final comments echo the volatile nature of the Florentine community. Contrary to contemporary advice about questioning the façade of compassion and to his detriment, Grasso reveals his secret and his true feelings, and in doing so, he relays his sense of humiliation to a person who will act as a further vessel of communication of the *beffa*.<sup>104</sup> Other figures in the story recognise this dangerous reality. When Grasso is taken from the Mercanzia to Matteo's house he meets the local priest who informs him that by "going mad" Grasso will become "an object of ridicule" and "be in trouble and shame all the rest of your life."<sup>105</sup> The priest in a sense performs a social duty and reminds Grasso of the consequences of his actions: "the more people you talk to, the more you will broadcast this affair, and the worse it will get and the more it will be held against you."<sup>106</sup> Grasso's silences reveal his acute sense of inferiority when faced with Brunelleschi. In one of the final exchanges with Brunelleschi in the Duomo, he speaks up and in doing so, demonstrates this awareness and also his interior struggle:

Filippo, these are strange things, and from what I hear, things like this have happened before. Matteo has spoken and you two have spoken and I have something I could say too, but it might make you think I'm crazy. I'd better keep quiet. Come, Filippo, let's not talk about it any more.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 180.

<sup>102</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 181.

<sup>103</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 182.

<sup>104</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 181.

<sup>105</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 189 and 190.

<sup>106</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 191.

<sup>107</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 206. For a description of Grasso's 'inner' struggle see Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 94.

In light of Morelli's writings on social exchanges, Grasso's statements violate the vital code of silence and simultaneously signal an awareness of the dangers of outwardly displaying characteristics that would incur the harsh judgement of his peers. Despite his mistakes, the account of Grasso's thoughts throughout the story reveals that he is highly aware of his position as a fairly prominent artisan with a host of important patrons he can call his friends and protectors. He is clearly deeply conscious of the power of actions and words in his community and at times, remains silent about his situation, not so much out of a mute stupidity, but more so out of the fact that anything he said or did would have undoubtedly become the stuff of gossip. Morelli reiterated the dangers of indiscretion, echoing Da Certaldo and preceding Alberti's 'unsure' world: 'Because there are deceitful people in Florence who will try every trick to corrupt you, and because you can't recognize all of them, always speak well of everyone and don't agree with those who speak ill of others; either hold your tongue, or speak well.'<sup>108</sup> Grasso may have been able to read and interpret the importance of social obligations, however, his fundamental mistake resided in the fact that he had trusted too much. The ambiguity and double entendre that held strategic social value and ruled the world of social relations in fifteenth-century Florence, reveals that Grasso's fate rested in an absent ability to manage a complex web of friends, patrons and common acquaintances.

The 'microsocial behavior' contained in these parts of Manetti's story express how the framework of 'virtù' operated as a classification mechanism, identifying those who transgressed behavioural codes as "'strange'".<sup>109</sup> The 'face-to-face' nature of Florentine society is crucial to an adequate understanding of Grasso's story, because it accounts for the clearly mediated nature of social interaction as well as the generally volatile environment that both sustained and destroyed identities. Indeed for Grasso, as

---

<sup>108</sup> Morelli, *Ricordi*, in Branca, *Merchant Writers*, p. 72.

<sup>109</sup> For the word "'strange'" see Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 206. For the term 'microsocial behavior' see Ronald F.E. Weissman, 'Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology: The 'Chicago School' and the Study of Renaissance Society', in Richard C. Trexler, ed., *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1985), p. 40.



for Da Certaldo, “a man without a friend is like a body without a soul”.<sup>110</sup> Seen in this light, the final scenes of the story and Grasso’s seemingly dramatic decision to flee are understandable. In the end, public sentiment and judgement ruled; it outweighed and essentially negated any solace that Grasso could have gained from his beloved city.<sup>111</sup> He had lost his sense of *belonging* not only to his social group, but also to his city. If he stayed, he would have been socially branded, laughed at and ridiculed as a “madman”.<sup>112</sup> But these depictions also reveal that “foolishness or idiocy or whatever we may call it”, were also forms of behaviour that people viewed as intrinsically part of life in the commune.<sup>113</sup> Men of the Florentine community essentially recognised the need to conceal these questionable passions and actions in the name of self-preservation and also in order to function as an honourable man “of worth”.<sup>114</sup> The only option for Grasso in order to escape the *beffa* and the humiliation tagged onto it, was to literally flee Florence, to salvage whatever honour he could and *salvare la faccia* (“to save face”).<sup>115</sup> The real danger associated with madness, in this historical context and for Grasso, was to do with the social consequences of an overall loss of self and reputation. Grasso was not simply restored to his previous self, along with his reputation, social networks and other characteristics so intrinsic to his sense of identity. So when Grasso asked himself, “Am I losing my mind?” and thought, “I’m really in trouble”, the question that arises is whether or not he was also referring to the social implications of his actions.<sup>116</sup> In the eyes of his Florentine counterparts, he had become an ‘infamous victim of a famous *beffa*’, a classic fool, and therefore, all the honour he had worked so hard to cultivate evaporated as quickly as did his sense of self.<sup>117</sup> Instead of confronting him directly, Grasso’s friends provide an allegorical drama designed to teach him about the nature of male social bonds and its hierarchical structure in what Guido Ruggiero termed, ‘a

<sup>110</sup> Da Certaldo, quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 28.

<sup>111</sup> Similar idea in Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 223.

<sup>112</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 179.

<sup>113</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 195.

<sup>114</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 189. Honour and cleverness is also discussed briefly in Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, p. xxvi.

<sup>115</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 207. This expression is used by Grasso after he finds out the nature of the *beffa*. For an insightful discussion of this mentality see Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, pp.117-119.

<sup>116</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 175 & 180.

<sup>117</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 107.

virtually perfect poetic justice.<sup>118</sup> Brunelleschi's trick communicated a harsh lesson; there really was no room for social deviance and anyone who assumed this was clearly mad or "out of his wits".<sup>119</sup> Grasso failed to project the right mask, neglected the social codes that stressed the importance of restraint and therefore, made an exhibition of himself in a drama where his critical audience christened him the village idiot and his friend, Brunelleschi, the clever trickster. The kind of ritualistic public shaming of Grasso's behaviour would have had a strong power not only over the immediate group of friends, but also over the community. Grasso was held up as an example of what happened when men did not honour their patronal obligations, and such a carefully orchestrated prank was designed to induce a certain level of conformity. From another perspective, Grasso endured a ritualistic and figurative process of emasculation amidst a culture that privileged a system of 'virtù'. Grasso's nonconformity was punished and in the end, he bent to the will of his friends and the nature of social and cultural systems long instilled in Florentine society. In this sense, he fully perceived and understood the gravity of his social negligence and the shame tagged onto it and, as a result, he performed the only socially acceptable act left available to him and fled his community.

This analysis has shown how Manetti's *The Fat Woodcarver*, although a lively depiction of Florentine life in 1409 is more than just a story about a prank amongst friends; it was a dramatic illustration of how social deviance was literally performed in the streets in a way that honoured and destroyed identities. The fact that this story was deliberately retold, re-enacted and documented substantiates the claim that it symbolised a 'social drama' that ventured beyond the friendship group in question.<sup>120</sup> The privileging of theatrical themes such as stage space and performance illuminate how forms of social deviance were recognised and treated by its spectators on a daily basis. Stories of losing identity or the

---

<sup>118</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 91.

<sup>119</sup> See Da Certaldo's observations in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 31. Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 176.

<sup>120</sup> Martines notes that there are at least 'five versions and fourteen different manuscripts' of this story in *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 254. On the re-enactment of the story, Manetti notes this in *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 212. For the term 'social drama' see: Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, pp. 30-31, Richard C. Trexler, 'Introduction', in Trexler, *Persons in Groups*, p. 7 and Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, pp. 6-7.

transformation of the self were not wholly uncommon delineations of madness, with one example being a baker from Ferrara who thought that he was ‘composed of butter, and durst not sit in the sunne, or come neere the fire for feare of being melted’.<sup>121</sup> Grasso’s story exhibits the key characteristics of the nature of community in early fifteenth century Florence. Grasso’s tale also reveals how civic spaces and social groupings were seen as strictly male domains.<sup>122</sup> Identities were informed and shaped by the intimately organised city spaces and the complex social networks.<sup>123</sup> This element is crucial to an adequate understanding of Grasso’s story and his close-knit social group, because it accounts for the clearly mediated nature of social interaction as well as the general volatile environment that dictated personal agency and identity. Brunelleschi’s *beffa* and its theatrical components of stage and performance ultimately illustrate just one comical play out of a multitude of social dramas that spanned the grand theatre of the Florentine commune.

The projected personas and ‘public signification’ of actions in this elaborate ‘historical drama’ spotlight the centrality of space, and raise the problematic dichotomy of the “public” and the “private”.<sup>124</sup> In this analysis, the idea of space, the “public” and the “private”, does not necessarily solely refer to physical spaces. The “public”, on the one hand, can signify a collective group mentality such as the “fama comune” (‘voice of public opinion’) or a particular social network of friends.<sup>125</sup> Notions of the “private” or privacy, on the other hand, did not exist or at least did not have the same meaning in this historical context. The visibility of cultural, social, economic and political exchanges meant that privacy was an illusory construct.<sup>126</sup> Physical spaces such as streets and alleyways formed

<sup>121</sup> Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 402.

<sup>122</sup> Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, p. 13.

<sup>123</sup> Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 35 and Burke, *The Italian Renaissance*, p. 218.

<sup>124</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> This term is highlighted and defined in Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, p. 107

<sup>126</sup> For illuminating discussions on the “public” and “private” see: Trexler, *Public Life*, p. 130, Burke, *The Italian Renaissance*, p. 213, Edward Muir, ‘The 2001 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 55, no. 1 (Spring, 2002), p. 13, Cordelia Beattie & Anna Maslakovic, ‘Introduction – Locating the Household: Public, Private, and the Social Construction of Gender and Space’, in Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic & Sarah Rees Jones, eds., *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe C. 850 - C. 1550: Managing Power*,

visible stages of social interaction. Paolo da Certaldo voices this spatial awareness and the fragility of privacy in a colourful description of how city streets were often risky spaces:

...take care not to say anything in the street or near a thin wall that you don't want everyone to know....As the saying goes, "Speak no lies when you're in the street." Never say anything in a place where you don't know that you cannot be heard by some man or woman whom you cannot see....Beware of hedges and trees, and structures or walls or corners or any other place where someone can hide – man or woman, large or small – if you don't want your secrets to be known.<sup>127</sup>

Yet Da Certaldo also seems to articulate another characteristic of city spaces; he acknowledges the phonetic potential of the town streets. This acoustic awareness was also articulated by other Renaissance contemporaries who realised the damaging potential of Florence's nooks and crannies. The streets and *piazze* represented a colourful cacophony of Florentine social life and culture. Francesco Alberti's sonnets from the fifteenth century detail this harsh reality of the power of neighbourhood, both in geographical and social terms. Francesco explained the volatile nature of the Florentine commune: "Let him who does not hear the sound not enter in the dance, for anyone who doesn't keep the tempo, or doesn't share it, is without honor and loses all his property."<sup>128</sup> The phonetic sensibility is figuratively illustrated here as Francesco claims that to mishear or ignore the sounds of the neighbourhood is to make a terrible mistake, resulting in a loss of that all-important element in a Renaissance Italian man's life – 'onore'. It also illustrates the fluid nature of the public and private as a construct that was based in a society where conceptions of community operated through a process of exclusivity; ultimately, 'The "public" was a private club.'<sup>129</sup> Francesco's work reflects the 'strains' of living within a close-knit community.<sup>130</sup> This social anxiety articulates the reality of those who inhabited the realm of shame; these were the outsiders, who experienced persistent

---

*Wealth, and the Body*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), p. 8, Elizabeth Horodowich, 'The Gossiping Tongue: Oral Networks, Public Life and Political Culture in Early Modern Venice', *Renaissance Studies*, 19, no. 1 (2005), p. 29, Eckstein, 'Neighborhood as Microcosm', p. 220 and Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 86.

<sup>127</sup> Da Certaldo, *Libro*, in Branca, *Merchant Writers*, p. 47.

<sup>128</sup> Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 161: "Chi non intende il suon non entri in danza,/perché chi non va a tempo, o nol comparte,/manca l'onore e perde ogni sustanza." See also Eckstein, 'Neighborhood as Microcosm', p. 220.

<sup>129</sup> Muir, 'The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy', p. 13. See also Foucault, 'Madness, the Absence of Work', p. 293.

<sup>130</sup> Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 160.

“*affanno*” (‘anxiety’) as a result of the pervasive cruel gaze of the neighbourhood.<sup>131</sup> Interestingly though, Francesco adopts the vocabulary designed to describe the kind of behaviour that he himself exhibited to illustrate social life in Florence; he refers to the volatility of society as ‘*dubbio e strano*’ (‘doubtful and strange’).<sup>132</sup> Contemporary writings on civic life reveal that space was a complex entity. The geographical layout of the city facilitated many viewing platforms and the demographic conglomeration of the city’s inhabitants meant that space could vary in meaning according to each individual.<sup>133</sup> The spectacle thus formed the melodramatic hustle and bustle of everyday life. The exploration of city spaces in Manetti’s text highlights how they, for Grasso, housed “cages for madmen and difficult traps which, in springing, have ominous tricks, a build-up of errors and fullness of lies.”<sup>134</sup> Manetti’s *novella* reveals the different ways how those who did not, as Francesco put it, keep up with the ‘tempo’ of social life in the Renaissance Italian town were vibrantly spotlighted in theatre spaces designed to caricature elements of social deviance.<sup>135</sup>

Manetti’s text communicates the ways that tangible spaces were utilised as public stages for the dramatic display of deviant behaviour. In many ways, the spectacle of madness was validated by the intrusive ‘public face of the neighbourhood and urban space.’<sup>136</sup> Spaces such as the *piazze*, streets, workshops, churches and private dwellings were all essentially pervasive forces in everyday life. Yet it also reveals the presence of more complex set of intangible spaces that were based on fluid constructions of public and private domains. Brunelleschi’s carefully orchestrated joke was one that

<sup>131</sup> Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 162.

<sup>132</sup> Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 160 and p. 162.

<sup>133</sup> Elizabeth S. Cohen, ‘Seen and Known: Prostitutes in the Cityscape of Late-Sixteenth-Century Rome’, *Renaissance Studies*, 12, no. 3 (1998), p. 395, Sharon T. Strocchia, ‘Theaters of Everyday Life’, in Crum & Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence*, p. 62 and Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 175.

<sup>134</sup> Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 162: “gabbie da pazzi e trappole ritrose,/c’hanno nello scoccar sinistri inganni,/cumul d’errore e ripien di bugie.”

<sup>135</sup> For a discussion about spaces as stages and spectatorship in general see: Trexler, *Public Life*, p. 10, Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, pp. 30-31, Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, p. 8, Nicholas A. Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence*, (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1995), p. 97, Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti, ‘Introduction: Florence - The Dynamics of Space in a Renaissance City’, in Crum & Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence*, p. 1 and Strocchia, ‘Theaters of Everyday Life’, pp. 55-62. Also, for a colourful analysis of the ‘ritual stage’ of Venice’s bridges and neighbourhoods see Robert C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 13-46.

<sup>136</sup> Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 11.

was deliberately set within the bounds of public physical spaces and social networks. Brunelleschi begins the *beffa* by breaking into Grasso's house and by pretending to be Grasso. Consequently, Brunelleschi invades any sense of privacy and transforms it into a place that loses its value for Grasso as part of his possessions and consequently, his identity. Grasso then decides to venture to one of the most important civic spaces in Florence, the Piazza di San Giovanni, in order to validate his own sense of identity since it is there that his shop is located and there that he meets and greets people on a daily basis.<sup>137</sup> Unfortunately, this space, rather than the usual marker of his social status as a highly skilled craftsman, turns into a dramatic arena of public humiliation when he is taken to gaol all the while voicing his awareness of his own disgrace proclaiming the “great injury” to his ‘fama’.<sup>138</sup> Even in the darkest spaces, such as gaol, Grasso can never escape the presence of the public; the space becomes dangerously ambiguous as he resolves not to “send word home” because “they’ll make a laughingstock out of me.”<sup>139</sup> This intimate nature of civic spaces is articulated by Matteo’s brothers when they tell Grasso, “...we’ll come for you tonight...when there’ll be fewer people around, so that everyone doesn’t learn of our misfortunes and we won’t be so shamed on your account.”<sup>140</sup> Grasso’s choice to flee is even more comprehensible because, as if treading a walk of shame through the streets of Florence, he ‘happened to go by several places where he heard people talking about what had happened to him, and everyone was laughing and joking about it.’<sup>141</sup> This reiterates the nature of the space as completely altered for him in terms of meaning, especially as it forms the stage for future re-enactments of the joke. Yet it also meant that he could no longer walk the city streets as an honourable citizen, since it was his sense of self and honour attached to it that had been stripped from him. Furthermore, Grasso’s constant references to the enigmatic “them” or “they” represent the persistent presence of the neighbourhood, monitoring and inhibiting his actions and words. This changing face of the neighbourhood parallels Francesco Alberti’s metaphorical construction of the Florentine streets: “I

---

<sup>137</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 176.

<sup>138</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 176.

<sup>139</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 178.

<sup>140</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 183.

<sup>141</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 209.

see stretching through diverse streets hidden trap-nooses, terrifying and strange, to catch one who, going over the open plains, passes in danger of slashing swords.”<sup>142</sup> One gathers a sense of the dangerous undertones contained in Francesco’s words through the city spaces and neighbourhood gossip, ““slashing”” like ““swords”” at Grasso as he walks through the streets, early in the morning, desperately avoiding any more encounters. The public and private dimensions in this story thus become inextricably bound up in the communality of the space; a person’s name and reputation was literally circulated and reverberated throughout the city streets.<sup>143</sup> Space was essentially one of the many signifiers of a person’s identity. Throughout the story, Grasso ventures into civic spaces he thought he knew in search of validation and meaning. Without these familiarities, Grasso loses that sense of belonging intrinsic to social survival in fifteenth century Florence. As a result, Grasso sees no point in staying in the city because it had changed and essentially turned against him. Deviant behaviour was seen as the ultimate spectacle, suffocated by the cruel gaze and gossip of the community.<sup>144</sup> In Grasso’s world, ““Nothing was so private a matter that it lay beyond the reach of the commune.””<sup>145</sup> There is a profound sense that he was aware of the temperamental nature of a city he both loved and feared, because for Grasso, ‘the city truly does whisper in the sleeper’s ear place and identity.’<sup>146</sup>

The notion of the performance of madness through certain words and behaviour also features in Manetti’s *novella*. The story’s characters are illustrated in a way that points to the importance invested in performance as a crucial deciding factor of social deviance. Throughout the story, each character has a ‘script’ to follow and the complex interplay of language, gesture and appearance all produce a

---

<sup>142</sup> Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 162: “Io veggio tesi per diverse strade/occulti lacci, ispaventosi e strani,/per prender tal, che per li aperti piani/passa a periglio di taglienti spade.”

<sup>143</sup> Martines also highlights this in: *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 228 and *Strong Words*, p. 208.

<sup>144</sup> Weissman, ‘Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology’, p. 40.

<sup>145</sup> Daniel Waley, *Siena and the Sienese in the Thirteenth Century*, (1991), quoted in Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 256.

<sup>146</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 106.

complicated picture of social relations.<sup>147</sup> For instance, when Grasso's punishment begins, 'Filippo made a show of being very surprised' about hearing of his mother's supposed illness and, in another part, Matteo is described as 'playing his part well'.<sup>148</sup> Grasso's performances are also illuminating components of the drama. Descriptions such as "mad frenzy" and "like a man possessed" reveal that these labels were applied based on his behaviour.<sup>149</sup> Grasso is aware of the terrifying reality that faces the deviant and this disturbing prospect is confirmed later in the story when Matteo's brother tells the local priest, "For you know that once someone begins to show such signs, even if later he becomes the most sober person in the world, he'll be teased and mocked ever after."<sup>150</sup> The local priest also informs Grasso of the risks of social deviance, "Among other things, if you brought such a disgrace upon yourself, you would run the risk of having children taunt you in the streets, and you would be in trouble and shame all the rest of your life."<sup>151</sup> This connects with the element of 'virtù' because the dishonour brought by having children, who were considered inferior, throw stones would have been considered a further assault on a man's masculinity.<sup>152</sup> The brothers, the priest and Grasso all give the same story; it is clear that they understand the gravity of being labelled the social outcast. And it seems that Grasso's fears were not wholly unfounded. In 1325, the famous artist Giotto painted a series of frescos depicting Saint Francis' life. One particular scene shows two children on the bottom right and left hand corners holding stones ready to hurl at Saint Francis.<sup>153</sup> In another *novella*, a character by the name of Taddeo falls in love with a neighbouring noblewoman and becomes the victim of a cruel *beffa*. Relatives of the girl punish him to a point where "even his mother would not have recognized him," for "he seemed the strangest beast that had ever been seen."<sup>154</sup> Taddeo flees the city, appearing like the 'perfect picture of lunacy'; stark naked and horrifically beaten he luckily

---

<sup>147</sup> Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, p. 21 and Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 225.

<sup>148</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 174 and 203.

<sup>149</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, for each phrase respectively, p. 177 and 181.

<sup>150</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 187.

<sup>151</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 190.

<sup>152</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 95.

<sup>153</sup> See Patricia Lee Rubin's *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 151.

<sup>154</sup> Anton Francesco Grazzini, *Le cene*, (c. 1549-1584) quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 188.



escapes the fate the priest described in Grasso's story.<sup>155</sup> Like in Grasso's story, his punishment takes on a distinctly public and theatricalised nature as it is performed in city spaces such as the Mercato Vecchio.<sup>156</sup> Also like Grasso's case, the perpetrators of the *beffa* “went throughout Florence, gaily describing the whole prank, and bringing laughter to all who heard it.”<sup>157</sup> Taddeo's attackers perform their own kind ritualistic castigation and flog him in a public square in order to teach him a lesson, and perhaps also, send a message to onlookers about the dishonour brought on by Taddeo's actions.<sup>158</sup> In a cultural and social context that prized ‘onore’ and avoided ‘vergogna’ at all costs, Taddeo's punishment was a necessary measure and a just form of punishment inflicted on someone who compromised the honour and respectability of a family of solid standing within the community.<sup>159</sup> Taddeo's story, although fictitious, mirrors Grasso's case in terms of the social codes that governed and mediated behaviour in the Florentine community. Both Taddeo and Grasso were seen to have shown certain “signs” and were therefore, unmasked for all to see in a theatrical display of social deviance.<sup>160</sup>

The performance of a bestial or animalistic demeanour also make an appearance in Manetti's text and reiterate the masculine discourse that dominated social interaction. Grasso, for example, is strongly advised to “act like a man, not an animal.”<sup>161</sup> Other performances identified as erratic characteristics of madness appear throughout the story as Grasso “proceeded to wring his hands and roll his eyes up and down from floor to ceiling”.<sup>162</sup> His consciousness of the treatment he will receive if he continues his performance of unrestrained passions is communicated when he asks himself, “what shall I say so

<sup>155</sup> Grazzini, *Le cene*, in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 188 and 191. The phrase ‘perfect picture of lunacy’ is Martines’. He also notes that ‘he would have been killed in the streets, we are told, by children and young hired hands....’

<sup>156</sup> Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 191.

<sup>157</sup> Grazzini, *Le cene*, in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 188.

<sup>158</sup> Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 191.

<sup>159</sup> For comments about contextual elements of punishment see Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 193. See also Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, pp. 65-66 and Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>160</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 187.

<sup>161</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 190.

<sup>162</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 180.

that I won't be taken for a madman or a fool?"<sup>163</sup> However, the moments where he reveals his true thoughts meant that Grasso's private feelings literally became public property. Renaissance individuals were 'bound' by their 'passions'; their behaviour was constantly mediated by the knowledge that what they said and did in front of the community was monitored and potentially condemned. This story contains the spectrum of passions that formed part of the overall dramatic spectacle of Grasso's loss of self; emotions such as deep sadness, fear, despair and confusion all feature in this story from Grasso's laughing friends to his own sense of hopelessness when he exclaims, "God help me"<sup>164</sup>. In the end, despite Grasso's best efforts to conceal his feelings, they were nevertheless recorded in some form and perpetuated, emphasising the way that identity and the performance of the self went beyond the private domain and infiltrated the public sphere. These colourful descriptions in the story communicate how madness was recognised by its bestial, "unmanly" characteristics. The castigation of deviant behaviour was one that needed to be performed on the streets in order to reinforce notions of acceptable behaviour and ritually isolate and exclude those who threatened social order. People within the commune essentially recognised the need to conceal certain "signs" and questionable passions in the name of self-preservation. Grasso's main punishment was not dissimilar to the '*pittura infamante*' ('defamatory portrait').<sup>165</sup> The '*pittura infamante*' was a late medieval practice whereby anyone who had fled the city without paying their debts had their names physically inscribed on the Palace of the Podestà.<sup>166</sup> In Grasso's case, he may not have had his name inscribed on the city walls; however, he experienced the same kind of punishment as he walked through the city streets. Grasso's ritual exclusion is vibrantly illustrated when, in the final scene of this social drama, he 'mounted the horse and set out for that city as if he were a hunted man'.<sup>167</sup> Grasso's 'infamia' ('infamy' or 'symbol of

---

<sup>163</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 184.

<sup>164</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 195.

<sup>165</sup> Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, p. 15 and p. 75. See also Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 229.

<sup>166</sup> Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, p. 75.

<sup>167</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 208.

disgrace’) resided in his social sin and, as a result, his final step as the town fool *had* to be to flee Florence in a symbolic act of self-imposed exile.<sup>168</sup>

Manetti’s tale epitomises the dramatic nature of the spectacle of madness through the ‘mean streets’ and cruel gaze of the Florentine community.<sup>169</sup> The nature of the space as one that shifted continuously between notions of public and private reveals how the loss of identity or the self could pose a particularly dangerous problem. In light of these serious ramifications, Brunelleschi’s prank went further than sheer “‘pleasure and entertainment’”.<sup>170</sup> Apart from the presence of theatricality and performance in the story, another theme presents itself to the reader. Manetti’s story represented a definitive, quite public stamp of group solidarity. But what did this really mean for the victim who was excluded from this public show of camaraderie? In Grasso’s case it meant a great deal; it was a public, ritualistic imposition of shame, in which not only his social group was guilty of engineering but also in which the wider Florentine community also willingly participated. The ritualistic public shaming of Grasso’s behaviour would have had a strong power not only over the immediate group of friends, but also over the ‘*cittadini*’ (‘urban denizens’).<sup>171</sup> Grasso was held up as an example of what happened when men did not honour their patronal obligations, and such a carefully orchestrated prank was designed to induce a certain level of conformity.<sup>172</sup> From another perspective, Grasso endured a ritualistic and figurative process of emasculation because he exhibited characteristics that deviated from established social codes concerning the value of ambiguity and façade. Grasso’s nonconformity was punished and in the end, he bent to the will of his friends and the nature of social and cultural systems long instilled in Florentine society. In this sense, he fully perceived and understood the gravity of his social negligence and the shame tagged onto it and, as a result, he performed the only socially

---

<sup>168</sup> For a discussion on ‘infamia’ see Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, p. 60. For an analysis of Grasso’s final act of ‘ritual suicide’ see Martines: *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 213 and *Strong Words*, p. 179.

<sup>169</sup> Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 85 and p. 105.

<sup>170</sup> Brunelleschi uses these words to describe the *beffa* in Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 173.

<sup>171</sup> Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 174.

<sup>172</sup> For ideas on conformity see Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 194.

acceptable act left available to him and fled his community. Manetti's text reveals how the city spaces were territories of honour and shame, where physical and psychological warfare took place in order to claim and reclaim a place in the masculine domain of '*virtù*'.<sup>173</sup> Grasso's musings show that he was considering not only the possibility that he was going mad, but the fact that he was also *permanently* losing a sense of self and identity. Even though the joke had ended, the loss of identity never went away as his friends continued to re-enact "one episode to another", as a kind of perpetual staged show designed to reaffirm group involvement in this clever prank.<sup>174</sup> Thanks to the public and theatrical nature of the *beffa*, his disgraced self would perpetuate, encased in an oral tradition that helped preserve his humiliation. Identities and attitudes were articulated through the city walls, streets and *piazze* and social relationships were also constructed, consolidated and destroyed within these spatial parameters. As a result, the character of Il Grasso became etched into the memory of the Florentine public, and it seems in our memory too, as Brunelleschi declared, "This will make you much more famous than anything you ever did...people will still be talking about you in a hundred years."<sup>175</sup>

Manetti's reconstruction of Grasso's social exclusion illustrates that madness could be seen as more than a condition of the mind; madness in early Renaissance Florence was also seen as a series of behavioural and verbal attributes classified as categorically deviant. Texts about the '*strano*' people not only reveal what behaviour was considered unacceptable in the broader community, but also illuminate what behaviour was praised and valued and how social encounters were governed by these behavioural prescriptions.<sup>176</sup> These prescribed behavioural codes, stigmatisation and the intensely hierarchical principles of social networks were mechanisms that juxtaposed acceptable behaviour against deviance. A person's incapacity to observe and act out these codes was perceived as behaviour

<sup>173</sup> A similar idea about city spaces and 'demonstrative maleness' is highlighted in Davis, *The War of the Fists*, pp. 109-111. For an analysis of the 'urban hotspots' see Strocchia, 'Theaters of Everyday Life', p. 61.

<sup>174</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 210.

<sup>175</sup> Manetti, *The Fat Woodcarver*, p. 211.

<sup>176</sup> A similar point has been made by Lesnick, 'Insults and Threats', p. 72.

that needed to be publicly mocked and eradicated through a systematic and often cruel process of stigmatisation and alienation. Other contemporaries also reveal that stigmas associated with deviancy were predicated on social structures such as ‘fama’, ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’. The sources in this analysis show how Renaissance contemporaries delineated and treated the ‘strange’ people, the people who were seen as somehow not belonging. This sense or consciousness of belonging were culturally and socially constructed and shifted in meaning and nature over time. Manetti’s tale would never have been as popular and widely known as it was if it had not mirrored social elements of life in fifteenth-century Florence.<sup>177</sup> His *novella* is the archetypal example of what happened when social codes of behaviour were challenged and social bonds tested. Grasso’s story is emblematic of the complex social mechanisms in place in fifteenth-century Florence that fostered the volatile nature of friendships and social bonds as entities that engaged in ritualistic processes of exclusion. Grasso’s public social suicide may have been seen, to a certain extent, as self-inflicted, however, it was also endorsed by a community that operated based on gossip systems and intimate civic spaces. If Grasso was mad to have acted the way he did, it was because his friends and neighbours made it so through their subscription to social and cultural traditions that stressed the centrality of façade. Grasso’s story of humiliation may strike the twenty-first century reader as inherently cruel, but where there was cruelty there was also what Renaissance Florentines saw as practicality and perhaps, necessity coupled with general amusement.<sup>178</sup> The *beffa* was a punitive tool designed to exclude and eliminate those who transgressed social codes and friends, neighbours and spectators were the moral arbiters.<sup>179</sup> Grasso’s ‘*pittura infamante*’ was not a tangible inscription on a civic building. It was a figurative inscription of shame and humiliation onto another public space, that is, the common knowledge of the ‘*cittadini*’ of Florence. Grasso may not have really become mad since he had discovered that he was still Grasso and had not really turned into Matteo. This, however, did not matter. In the end, the powerful social and cultural traditions of fifteenth century Florentine society overruled any attempts to slip back into a

---

<sup>177</sup> The historical value of the *novella* is also noted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, p. 14, Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet*, p. 11, Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 9 and Branca, *Merchant Writers*, p. xx.

<sup>178</sup> Martines presents a similar point in *Strong Words*, p. 180 and p. 194.

<sup>179</sup> Martines also notes this dynamic in *Strong Words*, p. 193.

sense of normality. What was Grasso's life before and after the *beffa* were two completely different things. Madness as a form of deviancy was constructed in this way in order to reinstate certain social and cultural values. The public castigation of the deviant acted as a didactic mechanism in a way that ritually instilled the essential traits of social deviance. The processes of social classification and the precarious nature of social networks may have been a cultural component of Renaissance Italian society; however, what they also introduce is the motif of the spectacle of madness. This chapter has outlined the cultural and social framework within which madness was conceptualised as a form of social deviance through a prescribed code of actions and words. The spectacle and theatrical motif, which will be explored in the next chapter, instead sets the scene for the performance of madness in a dramatic '*Teatro*' del '*strano*' ('Theatre' of the 'strange').

## CHAPTER TWO

### Il 'Teatro' del 'Strano': *The Cruel Gaze of the "Public"*

Madnesse is nothing else but too much appearing passion.<sup>180</sup>

~Thomas Hobbes, 1651~

Thomas Hobbes' statement, though made in a later period, sums up one of the central facets of madness as social deviance in the Renaissance Italian imagination. This core characteristic of social deviance, i.e. the display of unbridled passions, is one that pervades primary source material from this period. This chapter explores how behavioural transgressions were held under a powerful social microscope and played out as a public 'transaction' for all to see in a vibrant 'Teatro' del 'strano' ('Theatre' of the 'strange').<sup>181</sup> Tomaso Garzoni's *L'ospitale dei pazzi incurabili* (1586) demonstrates how the recognition of madness depended heavily on behavioural elements and the performance of the self. The previous chapter delved into the social framework of this study, i.e. the system of behavioural codes that determined what actions were categorised as shameful and the process of stigmatisation that demarcated those who transgressed these social barriers. This chapter ventures further by exploring the role that the "stage" of the spectacle and the "performance" of certain behaviour played in the characterisation of madness as social deviance. Deviant behaviour was construed in such a way that it was considered disturbing in one sense, and amusingly entertaining in another sense. The spectacle of madness enabled a dramatic and public process of social derision designed to castigate the deviant. This ritualistic punishment raises a number of questions in relation to the main text: Why does Garzoni insist that the '*pazzi incurabili*' of his hospital be constantly stared at and mocked? This study will investigate the deep recesses of Garzoni's 'Theater of sundrie humors and inclinations', tune in to the 'shrill cries and exclamations' of the 'abandoned' and observe those 'enchanted in braine' to account

<sup>180</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (1651), quoted in Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), p. 42.

<sup>181</sup> I have adapted this particular metaphor, however, the words '*Teatro*' and '*strano*' are used by Garzoni to describe his hospital and its inmates in Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252 and p. 261. The term 'transaction' is used to describe the nature of emotions in this period in Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe & Mary Floyd-Wilson, 'Introduction', in Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe & Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 18. See p. 2 for a discussion of Renaissance understandings of emotions as "passions". For other discussions of emotions see Robert C. Solomon, 'The Jamesian Theory of Emotion in Anthropology', in Shweder & LeVine, *Culture Theory*, p. 248.

for why spectators responded with *'risi'* ('laughter'), *'maraviglie'* ('admiration') and *'stupirvi'* ('woonder').<sup>182</sup> This analysis will delve into the meaning behind Hobbes' statement to account for how a colourful Florentine imagination fostered a sense that social deviance involved the display of too much "passion".

Tomaso Garzoni's *L'ospitale dei pazzi incurabili* is a colourful treatise that locates madness as the quintessential expression of social deviance. Garzoni was a priest of the Lateran Canon which was an adjunct of the *'canonici regolari'* ('regular canons') operating in northern Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>183</sup> This order followed a regime based on the rule of Saint Augustine which included a strictly communal, cloistered and contemplative lifestyle.<sup>184</sup> Garzoni's contemplative lifestyle led him to produce a text full of an array of humoral theories, classical allegories and contemporary *'aneddoti'* ('anecdotes') highlighting the complexity of deviant behaviour.<sup>185</sup> Garzoni's treatise is a mix of moralistic commentary, 'pseudo-medical' terminology and contemporary colloquialism.<sup>186</sup> His text has been situated in the genre of the 'theatrum', which was a popular literary form in the sixteenth century.<sup>187</sup> The 'theatrum' was defined as an encyclopaedia; however, others interpreted the 'theatrum' to signify a piece of literature used to stage the characteristics of humankind.<sup>188</sup> Garzoni's dynamic approach to madness is embodied by his fictitious hospital of *'pazzi incurabili'*. He provides twenty-nine *'discorsi'* ('discourses') describing various attributes of madness.<sup>189</sup> He introduces the *'discorsi'* with a prologue outlining a range of forms of madness. In the

---

<sup>182</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 251: 'Teatro de' miei cervelli', p. 270: 'odi ed ascolta non le voci, ma i stridi veri di questi abbandonati' and p. 254: 'fra risi e maraviglie' and 'stupirvi'. See also Allen Thiher, *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 63.

<sup>183</sup> Calabritto, 'Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image', p. 97 and Calabritto, 'The Subject of Madness', p. 99.

<sup>184</sup> Calabritto, 'Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image', p. 97.

<sup>185</sup> The word *'aneddoti'* appears in Paolo Cherchi's explanatory premise concerning Garzoni's stylistic approach in Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 247. See also Calabritto, 'Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness', p. 33.

<sup>186</sup> Calabritto, 'Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image', p. 97 and p. 98. See also Calabritto, 'The Subject of Madness', p. 81.

<sup>187</sup> See Cherchi's commentary in Garzoni, *Opere*, pp. 248-249. See also Calabritto, 'The Subject of Madness', p. 94.

<sup>188</sup> Calabritto, 'The Subject of Madness', p. 94. See also George W. McClure, *The Culture of Profession in Late Renaissance Italy*, (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2004), p. 30 and p. 76.

<sup>189</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 254.



prologue he summons the metaphorical symbolism of his hospital, painting it as an heroicised bastion for society's deviants:

...I being amazed and astonished at this their so great folly, after my Theater of sundrie humors and inclinations, have taken upon me to build this most famous Hospitall, where the renowned folly of these men may be seene and discerned, written (as it were) in Text letters, and in chambers of lodgings apart, painted and set forth by me with so beautifull and workmanlike prospective, that other Fooles shall flocke about them; and as the Kings of Fooles, they shall receive an open-mouthed applause of them all....<sup>190</sup>

This excerpt indicates Garzoni's recognition of the fundamental difficulty in describing madness as he appropriates an image of himself as a '*maestrevole*' ('masterly') painter through his use of the verb '*dipinta*' ('paint').<sup>191</sup> Garzoni chooses to *illustrate* it, cloaking it with richly textured metaphorical imagery and literary tropes. As a result, his text switches between the colourful, allegorical depictions of the '*amica de' buffoni*' ('friendly and pleasant sort of Buffones'), to the more formal descriptions of his collection of '*bizarri e furiosi*' ('brutish and furious').<sup>192</sup> Garzoni's segments his hospital patients both conceptually and physically in order to impose a system of alienation. The broad spectrum of symbolic behavioural characteristics indicates that he envisages madness to mean more than just a physical imbalance of the bodily humors. It signified a code of words, gestures and behaviour that pushed the bounds of social conduct and ventured into the realm of the '*strano*'.

<sup>190</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 251: '*...io, di tanta loro follia stupido ed attonito, mi ponga a fabricare, dopo il Teatro de' miei cervelli, questo solennissimo Ospidale, dove la gloriosa pazzia di costoro ha da vedersi a lettere maiuscole in un camerone appartato, con sì bella e maestrevole prospettiva da me dipinta che gli altri pazzi gli faranno corona intorno; e, come re de' matti, riceveranno uno strabocchevole applauso da tutti...*'

<sup>191</sup> Although Blount translates this word as 'workmanlike', the word '*maestrevole*' could have also been used in this instance as a variation of the word '*maestro*' ('master'). See Pat Bulhosen, Francesca Logi & Loredana Riu, eds., *The Pocket Oxford Italian Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 2006. *Oxford Reference Online*, <[http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK\\_SEARCH.html?book=t66a&subject=s16](http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK_SEARCH.html?book=t66a&subject=s16)> viewed 24 April 2009.

<sup>192</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 251 and p. 252.

The characterisation of Italy as a ‘*società spettacolo*’ (‘theatre society’) is a persistent one in scholarly research on Renaissance communities.<sup>193</sup> In order to fully appreciate how social deviance was construed as a spectacle, it is necessary to reiterate the central importance of identity and projected personas. Social façades were ‘performances’, played in a range of spaces as part of a process that both reaffirmed cultural values associated with behaviour, and reinforced a person’s place in the community.<sup>194</sup> These were not fixed identities and neither were they solely based on this performance motif.<sup>195</sup> The ‘mask’ that was vital to social survival was subject to a cruel gaze which juxtaposed the honourable man against the ‘social sinner’.<sup>196</sup> Despite persistent characterisations of the deviant as odd and repulsive in some way, the performances in Garzoni’s text reveal that there was a special place allocated for society’s misfits.<sup>197</sup> Another example of this role was the city feasts in Florence in the mid 1400s which included the “triumphal wagon full of madmen” paraded through the city streets as civic entertainment.<sup>198</sup> This special role is reflected in Garzoni’s text as he presents an encyclopaedia of in which different ‘species’ of madness serve as a message to spectators about the treatment of these individuals.<sup>199</sup> Garzoni was writing in an historical context witnessing the rise of the “ospedali degli incurabili” (“hospitals of the incurables”) across Italy.<sup>200</sup> The forces of the Catholic Church and independent lay groups and institutions combined in order to improve these hospitals.<sup>201</sup> In Rome in 1548, the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà de’ Pazerelli was established to care for “all those

---

<sup>193</sup> The term ‘*società spettacolo*’ appears in Virgilio Titone, *La società italiana sotto gli spagnuoli*, (1978), quoted and analysed in Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*, pp. 10-13. For other interpretations on this motif see: Richard C. Trexler, ‘Florentine Theatre, 1280-1500. A Checklist of Performances and Institutions’, *Forum Italicum*, 14, no. 3 (1980), pp. 454-475, Sharon T. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 149-177, Cohen, ‘Seen and Known’, p. 392, Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 18 and pp. 35-36, Strocchia, ‘Theaters of Everyday Life’, p. 55 and Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 93. For another more specific interpretation with this prevalent motif see Davis, *The War of the Fists*, p. 47.

<sup>194</sup> The word ‘performances’ is used in Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 14. See also Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 7.

<sup>195</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 8. Similar expression also in Burke, ‘Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes’, p. 18.

<sup>196</sup> The metaphor ‘social sinner’ is appropriated in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 180 and 186.

<sup>197</sup> Roy Porter, *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p. 125.

<sup>198</sup> Trexler, *Public Life*, p. 255.

<sup>199</sup> The word ‘species’ appears in Blount’s introduction in Garzoni, *The Hospitall*.

<sup>200</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 91.

<sup>201</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 91.

who lack brain and who are mad, of any sex and country”<sup>202</sup> Perhaps these developments are a testament to the fact that authorities realised they could no longer keep the ‘*pazzi*’ on the streets in front of the wider community. In 1561, Pope Pius IV created a bill that commended the Hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà as a place where ““all the mad individuals abandoned and deprived of any other help and subsidy may be accepted...in this hospital they may be governed and fed with everything necessary to them...”<sup>203</sup> Garzoni’s *L’ospidale*, and indeed two of his other works *Il teatro dei vari e diversi cervelli mondani* (1583) (*The theatre of the various and disparate brains of the world*) and *La sinagoga degli ignorant* (1589) (*The synagogue of ignorant people*), seem to focus on outlining the essential characteristics of social deviance. Considered in light of the religious turmoil of the Catholic Reformation that characterised the mid sixteenth century, it is possible that Garzoni’s text is a conscious attempt to provide a comprehensive list of behaviour that he and by extension, the Catholic Church, considered inherently offensive.<sup>204</sup> At any rate, the widespread popularity of Garzoni’s text, as it was translated into French and English, attests to the idea that his encyclopaedia connected with his readership.<sup>205</sup> Garzoni’s mode of expression reflected the contemporary vernacular and contributed to a ““discorso generale”” (‘general discourse’) amidst an intellectual environment witnessing increased literacy and book buying rates.<sup>206</sup> This chapter ventures further than describing the characteristics of deviant behaviour. Based on the literary and contextual elements outlined above, Garzoni’s text was a cultural expression of how madness formed a source of voyeuristic pleasure and entertainment for spectators as much as it was used to systematically punish and ostracise.

Garzoni’s treatise affords an extensive vocabulary outlining deviant behaviour and provides an insight into how madness may have been conceptualised in the sixteenth century. For Garzoni, his hospital

---

<sup>202</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 89: ““tutti quelli che sono poveri di cervello, e pazzi di qualsivoglia sesso, o nazione””.

<sup>203</sup> This quote is taken from Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 89: ““tutti li Matti derellitti et abandonati d’ogni altro aiuto, et sussidio, siano accettati...nel quale Hospitale siano governati et alimentati di tutto quello gli sarà necessario...”’

<sup>204</sup> Calabritto, ‘The Subject of Madness’, p. 100.

<sup>205</sup> Thiher, *Revels in Madness*, p. 63.

<sup>206</sup> McClure, *The Culture of Profession*, p. 29.

served as a haven for ‘many infirme, and naked of wit and understanding’.<sup>207</sup> His language implies that this task is a necessary evil: ‘Considering, I have taken upon my selfe this burden, to manifest to the worlde, the prodigious and monstrous kindes of folly....’<sup>208</sup> His hospital consists of a range of ‘*lunatici*’ (‘lunatics’), some violent and some an entertaining spectacle.<sup>209</sup> Garzoni provides an extensive list of labels designed to classify madness; his cell occupants ranged from the ‘franticke and delirant’, ‘melancholike and savage’, ‘ydle and carelesse’, ‘forgetfull and fickle headed’, ‘stupide, lost, and halfe dead Fooles’, ‘the ridiculous’, ‘the vaine-glorious’, ‘desperate’, ‘heteroclite, light-brained, and addle-headed’, ‘scoffing Fooles’ to the ‘mischievous or diabolicall Fooles’.<sup>210</sup> The behaviour described is diverse and even includes descriptions of the ‘*ubbriachi*’ (drunken fools’) as one of the many forms of ‘*folia*’ (‘madness/folly’).<sup>211</sup> Da Certaldo claimed that drunken behaviour was a serious threat to a person’s social status because it lessened a man’s ability to judge within reason.<sup>212</sup> Garzoni furthers this concept equates drunken behaviour with a loss of masculinity and honour: ‘*Bacchus* was painted in forme of a boy, in that, drunkardes forgoe their wit and understanding, and in womans forme, because drunkards performe no operation manlike....’<sup>213</sup> This gendered perspective implies that social deviance could often involve a degrading process of emasculation; ‘strange’ behaviour was unmanly and by default, it was categorically feminine.<sup>214</sup> These gendered labels and classifications also communicate that Garzoni presupposes that the locus of madness resided ‘in every speech, gesture, word, signe, and action’.<sup>215</sup> The deviant was someone who performed in a way that was ‘*perversa*’

<sup>207</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252: ‘*tanto infermi e nudi di ogni senno*’.

<sup>208</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 254: ‘*Dapoi c’ho preso questo carico alle spalle di fare publiche al mondo le mostruose maniere della pazzia....*’

<sup>209</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252.

<sup>210</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252: ‘*frenetici e deliri*’, ‘*maninconici e selvatici*’, ‘*scioperati overo trascurati*’, ‘*smemorati overo dementi*’, ‘*stupidi, persi e morti*’, ‘*ridicoli*’, ‘*gloriosi*’, ‘*disperati*’, ‘*eteroclitici, balzani, stroppiati del cervello overo matti spacciati*’, ‘*buffoneschi*’ and ‘*infernale de’ pazzi da mille forche overo del diavolo*’.

<sup>211</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252.

<sup>212</sup> Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 31 and Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>213</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 277: ‘*...Bacco si dipingeva in forma di putto (perché gli ubbriachi perdono il senno e l’intelletto); in forma di donna (perché gli ubbriachi non fanno operazione alcuna ch’abbia del virile)....*’

<sup>214</sup> For another analysis on the gendered definitions of madness see Calabritto, ‘Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness’, pp. 26-51.

<sup>215</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 288: ‘*in ogni motto, gesto, parola, cenno ed azione*’.

(‘perverse’) as much as it was ‘*strano*’.<sup>216</sup> This preoccupation with the perverse is evident through his sustained figurative construction of madness as a parasitic monster: ‘But now retire a little while the monster is loosed and fixe your eies steadfastly upon him, if you will wonder at the first sight.’<sup>217</sup> This sustained metaphor is reiterated when he personifies madness as a poisonous female monster, intent on perverting the qualities held most important to the Renaissance man: ‘...who entering once into the seate of the braine, she obfuscateth imagination, perverteth conceit, alienateth the minde, corrupteth reason, and so disturbeth and hindreth a man, that he can neither read, deliver, nor act any thing as he shoulde doe....’<sup>218</sup> Garzoni’s constant shift from disturbing forms of violent behaviour to lighter modes of folly represents a discrepancy that suggests that madness was seen as a diverse form of social deviance. His imaginary hospital inmates were those ‘borne into the world to be unquiet, and a disturber’.<sup>219</sup> The articulations of social disquiet and the gendered ideas ingrained in Garzoni’s text illustrate the concern that existed at the heart of late Renaissance perceptions of madness as social deviance, and that is, perversion.

Themes of perversion and the gendered nature of Garzoni’s catalogue of ‘*pazzi incurabili*’ is further demonstrated when the reader comes across the final section of the hospital, that is, the woman’s quarter. Although this section comprises the smallest part of the entire text, it is perhaps the most detailed and divergent description of social deviance. In light of Garzoni’s broad vocabulary for madness, the labels and imagery served a didactic purpose in not only identifying deviant behaviour but also in representing it as a perverse parasite. Each woman is described in relation to their behaviour

---

<sup>216</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370.

<sup>217</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 254: ‘*Or ritiratevi alquanto, ch’ei scioglie il mostro. E stato bene con gli occhi affissi se volete stupirvi al primo tratto.*’

<sup>218</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 255: ‘*La quale, entrado dentro alla casa del cervello, offusca l’immaginitiva, pervertisce la cogitazione, aliena la mente, corrompe la ragione, impedisce, che l’uomo non discerne, non elegge, non parla, non opera cosa che sia a proposito....*’

<sup>219</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 347: ‘*nacque al mondo per non riposare e per essere inquieto.*’

and appointed an *'impresa'* or symbol to connote their form of madness.<sup>220</sup> One Terenzia Sannite is described in relation to her ceaseless 'laughter' and the 'thousand gestures, with her hands, and eies, sometimes this way, then that way'.<sup>221</sup> Terenzia is characterised according to her bestial behaviour as she would 'grunt like an hog' and told her audience that 'the occasion of her calling them together, was to no other ende, but that so noble a grunting belch, might bee honored with so goodly an assembly as there then was...'<sup>222</sup> Terenzia's *'impresa'* takes the form of the *'maschera'* ('mask') of the *Commedia dell'Arte* character known as Zani, symbolising her role as the hospital's clown, to be laughed at and mocked in her cell.<sup>223</sup> However, other women, such as Giacoma da Pianzipane are described in relation to another side of social deviance. Giacoma 'who is chained to a bedde...is a certaine beastly foole...who the other day plaide this fine pranke, for a boie comming neere to her to haue emptied her close stoole, she tooke the pot and laide it on his head, so despitefully, that the poore lad was three daies after, ere he came to himselfe.'<sup>224</sup> The violence present in this description of deviance, however, is overshadowed when the reader comes across Ostilla Mutinese. Garzoni reserves the harshest labels for Ostilla and yet he deliberately omits any information about her behaviour. She is classified as 'diabolicall, and stuffed vp euen to the verie gorge with all kinde of flagition and villanie.'<sup>225</sup> Garzoni declares her 'so monstrous and malignant' that 'there is no deuise in the world that can sufficiently expresse her peruerse, wicked, and abhominable nature.'<sup>226</sup> Garzoni's portrait of Ostilla ventures beyond the bestial madness attributed to Terenzia and Giacoma. Ostilla remains the only

---

<sup>220</sup> Calabritto, 'Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image', p. 100 and Monica Calabritto, 'Women's *Imprese* in Girolamo Ruscelli's *Le imprese illustri* (1566)', in Donato Mansueto & Elena Laura Calogero, eds., *The Italian Emblem: A Collection of Essays*, Volume 12, (Glasgow: Glasgow Emblem Studies, 2007), pp. 65-67.

<sup>221</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 367: '*...questa volta (non senza risa però) fece mille atti di mani e di occhi, ora da una parte ora dall'altra....*'

<sup>222</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 367: '*rutto da porcella*' and '*disse che non per altro gli aveva conragati se non perché un rutto sì gentile fosse onorato da una sì grossa compagnia com'era quella.*'

<sup>223</sup> Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 367. See also Calabritto, 'Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image', p. 112.

<sup>224</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 368: '*Quella, poi, che sta incatenata presso a quell letto é una certa matta bestiale...la quale fece l'altr'ieri quella bella botta che, avvicinandosi un garzone a lei per vuotarli la cassa dai suoi bisogni, presse il pitarro in mano e li menò sul capo di maniera spietatamente che il poveretto é stato più di tre giorni che non era in lui.*'

<sup>225</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370: '*diabolica e d'ogni cattiverie piena*'.

<sup>226</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370: '*strana e maligna*' and '*che non é arma al mondo che possa sufficientemente significare la sua perversa, iniqua ed abominevole natura.*'

‘foole’ in the entire hospital not described in full, not given an *impresa* and, as a result, Garzoni instead leaves the reader with an ominous warning:

So that honourable beholders I conclude thus much, that it were much better for you neuer to come neere her Cell: for if she doe but perceiue your being here about, make account that like another *Alcina*, she will turne you all into beasts, trees, or stones; and instead of entring into an Hospitall Fooles, you shall finde your selues in that palace, where cursed destinie transformeth men into Asses, and this is all you might gaine by the sight of her.<sup>227</sup>

In this passage the ‘monster’ described earlier is personified by Ostilla, the female inhabitant of the last cell of Garzoni’s grand tour. Ostilla’s ‘strange and enormious properties’ threatened the power dynamics between the social deviant and her scrutinizers.<sup>228</sup> Garzoni chooses to end his tour of the hospital with a reiteration of the idea that the ‘*strana e maligna*’ (‘strange and malign’) madwoman deprived the Renaissance man of reason, and by extension, his authority.<sup>229</sup> In general, Garzoni’s interpretation of what constituted ‘*pazzi incurabili*’ reveals that the sixteenth century Renaissance conceptualisation of madness extended beyond social classifications. For Garzoni, madness was not only a manifestation of social deviance through behaviour; it could also be an illness with humoral origins physically located in the brain and the rest of the body. In spite of Garzoni’s proclamations of the opposite, the hospital was not a place where madness was cured or protected; it was a public arena organised in such a way that *displayed* the performance of deviant behaviour. The locus of madness thus resided mainly in the Renaissance man or woman’s behaviour; there existed a system of signs that illustrated a person’s deviance and forced the social classification of conditions onlookers felt they could only label as ‘*perversa*’ and ‘*strano*’.<sup>230</sup>

---

<sup>227</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, pp. 370-371: ‘*Talché, onorati spettatori, io conchiudo questo, che meglio sarà per voi non accostarvi a patto alcuno alla sua cella, perciocché, se costei s’accorge del vostro star qua attorno, fate conto che a guisa d’un’Alcina vi mutarà tutti in bestie o in sterpi o sassi, e, in cambio d’essere entrati dentro in un ospedale da matti, vi troverete in quel palazzo dove la fata pessima trasforma gli uomini in asini. E questo é quello che da costei potresti guadagnare.*’

<sup>228</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370: ‘*strane ed enormi proprietà*’. See also Calabritto, ‘Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness’, pp. 42-43.

<sup>229</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370. These words appear in the Blount translation as ‘monstrous and malignant’.

<sup>230</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370.

This vision of Garzoni's hospital as a public arena designed to display deviant behaviour conjures up the spectacle motif, especially in relation to the body. Nakedness and the spectacle of the body play a prominent role in Garzoni's conceptualisation of the hospital's '*pazzi incurabili*'. Stripping one's clothing in this context involves more than just a physical action; it connotes a metaphorical chastisement of the self because it exposes the individual '*in publico*' ('to public view').<sup>231</sup> These concepts of ritual punishment are nowhere more evident in Garzoni's text than in the section designated specifically for women. Garzoni bypasses the token classical anecdote in his consideration of the '*misero spettacolo*' ('miserable spectacle') and he immediately makes clear the focus of his demonstration of '*strano*' behaviour in women.<sup>232</sup> It is as if there is a deep-seated fascination with the spectacle that madness in women proposes; Garzoni fetishizes the madwomen through the language that he employs: '...beholde with your eies, the most ridiculous employments of foolish women, that euer peradventure you haue seene in the worlde....'<sup>233</sup> One woman, Lucilla da Camerino, is described in relation to the spectacle of her body and the physicality of her condition:

Now this woman about noone time besmeareth all her body ouer, and being naked draweth heere to the maides of the keepers house, when it is about dinner time, so that all of them agast at so foule a sight, runne away, and leave the table and meate as a praie to that rauenous she wolfe, who without any discretion at all, doth in a manner ordinarilie plaie those pranks, to the children, servants, and all the rest of the house.<sup>234</sup>

His vision of the 'foule' 'sight' forms most extreme form of female deviance; it involves one of the women being completely naked, encompassing the ultimate example of feminine perversion – immodesty. Perhaps even more compellingly, Garzoni's graphic description of Lucilla's nudity as

---

<sup>231</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 350. See also Valesio, 'The Language of Madness', p. 203.

<sup>232</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 357.

<sup>233</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 357: '*...farvi vedere con gli occhi propri i più ridicolosi soggetti di femine pazze ch'abbiate mai per sorte visto al mondo....*'

<sup>234</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, pp. 362-363: '*Ora costei da mezzo dì si tinge tutta la persona, e nuda si va accostando presso alle donne della famiglia del custode, quando sono da mezzogiorno a far collazione, tanto che tutte, di sì brutta cosa ispaventate, fuggono via e lasciano la mensa in preda a quella lupa che senza discrezione alcuna fa questi tratti quasi per ordinario, alle puttee ed alle serve ed a tutta la casa.*'



exhibiting a form of assertiveness represents a further affront to standardised female behavioural codes. The naked females were ‘*strane*’ and quintessentially perverse because they emanated an air of authoritative control over the situation.<sup>235</sup> Despite this potential for power, the scenario remains clear, and that is, the women in Garzoni’s hospital are exposed to the public gaze and are therefore open to the scrutiny, stigmatisation and ridicule of their spectators. There are some instances where male nudity is involved; however, Garzoni briefly describes it and moves on to actions and behaviour that he ranks as more perverse. Contrary to the women’s nakedness, the male cases are set in city spaces such as market squares, buildings and streets. He gives an example of a man who ‘in the Hospitall of Milan’ would call ‘straungers to him saying; that he woulde shewe them the valley of *Iehosaphat*, and by little and little discovering to them his bare buttockes, he made euery one blush for shame that came neere him.’<sup>236</sup> In another case, Lorenzino of Chioggia:

...would run naked through the market places, discovering all his priuie parts...hee went through the market place, iustling all those he met withal...he woulde lay at men with staues & stones, and sometimes (being a matter exceedingly woorth the laughing at) he woulde disple himselfe vpon the naked buttocks...running after the boies, with the filthie and stinking bowels, and casting them at those that came about him, like a companie of birdes about a madge-howlet.<sup>237</sup>

The ‘*Teatro*’ of the ‘*strano*’ was a place, in Garzoni’s imagination, designated for the ‘fooles, who day by day perform things so strange, fantastical, and vnusuall, that partly for the raritie of them, and partly for their excesse therein, make anie one laugh that seeth or giueth any eare vnto them....’<sup>238</sup> It was a space that housed those who performed without their obligatory social ‘mask’, and onlookers observed

<sup>235</sup> Similar idea in Calabritto, ‘Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness’, p. 34 and pp. 40-41.

<sup>236</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 295: ‘...nell’ospidale di Milano, che dimandava i forastieri a sé, dicendo di volergli mostrare la valle di Giosafat; e pian piano scoprendo le natiche, faceva arrossire di vergogna qualunque se gli accostava.’

<sup>237</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 312: ‘...in modo che nudo correva per piazza mostrando tutte le vergogne; e talvolta, inviluppato in un cestone, andava urtando per piazza tutti quelli che incontrava; talora poi, uscendo del seminato in tutto, con sassi e con bastoni percolava le persone; e qualche volta (cosa da ridere fuor di modo) con una trippa di bue sulle natiche nude si disciplinava in mezzo alla piazza, e dopo correva dietro a’ putti con l’intestina marce e fracide, slanciandole contra quelli ch’erano ridotti intorno a lui come gli ucceletti intorno ad un civettone.’

<sup>238</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 299: ‘...pazzi i quali fanno alla giornata certe cose cotanto strane, inusitate ed insolite che, parte per la novità, parte per l’eccesso, danno da ridere a qualunque le vede overo ascolta.’

with fascination the ‘novità’ (‘novelty’) of social deviance.<sup>239</sup> Garzoni’s text incorporates the spectrum of social deviance, from the archetypal figure of the fool, to the ‘wilde and vntamed’ ‘*lunatici*’; these outsiders, misfits and eccentric individuals often provided a unique exhibition of human folly.<sup>240</sup> In Garzoni’s hospital hallways, cells and the streets in towns across sixteenth-century Italy, the performance of social deviance was witnessed, laughed at and categorically scorned in a dynamic theatre of contemporary life.

Garzoni’s *L’ospidale* also communicates the theatrical motif and the spectacle of madness through the metaphorical stage of the hospital. Like Alberti’s “gabbie da pazzi” (‘cages for madmen’) described in the first chapter, Garzoni constructs ‘*celle distinte*’ (‘distinct cells’) for each ‘foole’ in his hospital.<sup>241</sup> He appeals to pagan Gods to ‘permit euerie one to enter within the gates of this Hospitall, that they may behold the miserie of these vnhappie and infortunate....’<sup>242</sup> Acting as a tour guide, Garzoni manoeuvres his guests through the space and prepares his audience with a statement loaded with anticipation and wonder. He also depicts his hospital as a kind of freak show, where spectators pay, for ‘no small delight and pleasure’, to view the patients:

The first thing shewed, shall be a monster with many heads, who with his deformity shall make euerie one amased, neither were *Hydra*, *Medusa*, or *Python* so dreadfull and horrible as he will be: And then one after another you shall see the palace of the Witch *Alcina*, chamber by chamber, full of people enchanted in braine, and transformed with brutish Metamorphoses into vnreasonable and sottish folke, where betweene laughter and admiration, euerie one shal thinke his nine-pence well spent, departing well satisfied with the Author, who with new Magicke will hereafter represent vnto you the castle of *Atlas* full of Dawcocks, and he will labour to conduct you thither in safety by *Logistilla*, giuing you

<sup>239</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 299.

<sup>240</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 334: ‘*furibondi e bestiali*’.

<sup>241</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252. See also Calabritto, ‘Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness’, p. 33.

<sup>242</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 252: ‘...che lasci entrare ciascuno dentro alla porta di questo ospizio per vedere la miseria di questi infelici e sfortunati.’

*Angelicaes* ring in your hand, by meane whereof, discovering other mens follies, you may shew your selues the wiser.<sup>243</sup>

The opening of hospitals to the public was not a figment of Garzoni's imagination. In 1575, the Hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà opened its doors for public viewing to raise money and patients were taken out for a "passeggiata" ("stroll") in the streets of Rome.<sup>244</sup> This exhibition was designed to spur philanthropic feeling from those who witnessed the spectacle, however, it also provided a stark reminder of what happened to those who performed deviant behaviour or, in sixteenth century terms, those who revealed too much "passion".<sup>245</sup> This phenomenon and the above excerpt communicate the contradictory perception of the spectacle of social deviance. In one sense it was seen as a wonderful and potentially amusing sight, but in another sense, it was seen as inherently disturbing. Garzoni thus paradoxically envisages it as something that needed to be contained and separate from the broader community, and at the same time, something that was paraded and open for general amusement. Through the inclusion of mythical allegories and anecdotes, his text lingers between historical drama detailing fictitious and actual events, and the contemporary reality underlining sixteenth-century perceptions of madness.

The main theatrical feature of this text is the performers, or cast, featured in the 'Theater of sundrie humors and inclinations'. Garzoni illustrates the performative elements of madness through his emphasis on behaviour, words and actions. The 'pictures of true folly' were those who performed actions categorised as '*strano*' and this is represented when he describes the second discourse of

---

<sup>243</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, 253: '*non picciol diletto e piacere*' and p. 254: '*La prima cosa che si mostrerà sarà un mostro di più teste, che farà stupire ogni uno con la sua difformità: né l'Idra, né Medusa, né Pitone furono così orribili e spaventosi, come sarà questo. E poi, di mano in mano, si farà vedere il palazzo della fata Alcina a camera per camera, pieno di gente incantata nel cervello e trasmutata con bestiale metamorfosi in gente stupida ed irrazionale; dove che, fra risi e meraviglie, ognuno s'allegrerà d'averci speso vinti soldi, partendo sodisfatto dall'autore, che non nuova magia vi rappresenterà il castello d'Atlante pieno di balordi, e cercherà di condurvi a salvamento da Logistilla, dandovi in mano l'anello d'Angelica, per lo cui mezzo, scoprendo le pazzie degli altri, tanto più saggi vi dimostriate.*'

<sup>244</sup> Calabritto, 'Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness', p. 34 and p. 48 and Calabritto, 'The Subject of Madness', p. 90.

<sup>245</sup> Calabritto notes the charitable purpose of the "passeggiata" in 'The Subject of Madness', p. 90.

‘franticke and doting Fooles’.<sup>246</sup> This section calls to mind the notorious figure of the fool and is personified by ‘one Santino of Tripalda’ who interrupted a conference of scholars in the University of Padoa to claim he had ‘more wit, then al the doctors, & schollers that were in Padoa’.<sup>247</sup> Amidst the ‘laughter’ from the scholars, Santino:

...all in iesting manner consenting therevnto, and crying out with a liuely voice, long liue *Santino* of Tripalda...comming downe from the pulpit or readers place, turning to all the assemblie hee saide: Friends and companions, euery one performe his part, and I giue you place, in the lecture following I meane to returne to my towne of Tripalda, doctorized thus by your grace, and fauour....<sup>248</sup>

In another discourse Garzoni describes the ‘grosse and three elbowed fooles’ who specialise in ‘vtering iestes that procure laughter, and playing their pranques out of all season’.<sup>249</sup> In the twelfth discourse, Garzoni examines those ‘fooles’ who did not ‘procure laughter’ and performed deviant behaviour considered more disturbing than entertaining. He reveals how social deviance involved the violation of social codes and the neglect of the imperative social mask through the story of ‘a certaine vicious foole’ who was:

...standing one day at a window, and seeing a faire yoong maide in an other right ouer against him, as if in an instant hee had beene enflamed with her loue, he saide to her, *Signora lei volete bene ad io?* Ladie will it please you my heate to coole? *Signor no, perché sete un sier Mattio:* No sir, said she, bicause you seeme but a foole: then he replied; *Lasciatemi adunque fare il fatto mio:* Let me yet furbish you with my toole.<sup>250</sup>

<sup>246</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 256: ‘*ritratto di vera stultizia*’ and p. 261: ‘*De’ pazzi frenetici e deliranti*’.

<sup>247</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 264: ‘*che più cervello avevano i buoi dalla Tripalda che quanti dottori e scolari erano in Padoa.*’

<sup>248</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 264: ‘*E consentendo tutti per burla, e gridando ad una voca «Viva Santino dalla Tripalda» (per essersi dato nel ragionamento a conoscere per tale) esso smontò del pulpit e, voltatosi a tutta quella brigata, disse: «Compagni, ciascuno faccia la sua parte; io vi lascio la cattedra vuota; in sequenti lectione io tornerò alla Tripalda addottorato per grazia vostra.»*’

<sup>249</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 338: ‘*De’ matti sperticati o di tre cotte*’ and ‘*dicendo botte da far ridere, e facendo cose mattesche non troppo secondo il tempo*’.

<sup>250</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 295: ‘*D’un certo matto vizioso si racconta questa: che un giorno fattosi a una finestra e visto all’incontro una certa giovane bella, quasi che in un tratto fosse acceso del suo amore, disse verso di lei: «Signora lei volete bene ad io?» E quella rispose: «Signor no, perché sete un sier Mattio». Ed esso contrarispose: «Lasciatemi adunque fare il fatto mio».*

This excerpt also illustrates the intimate nature of the city spaces. The woman in this story is kept away from the masculine domain of the public streets, however, her visibility is evident as the ‘vicious foole’ is able to view and communicate with her through a window. This ‘foole’ was ‘vicious’ because he spoke disrespectfully to an unmarried woman in the streets and in doing so, he violated the social codes that monitored and controlled male and female interaction. In keeping with the social ‘mask’, the fool symbolised the masked figure who vibrantly unveiled the reality of human error and folly.<sup>251</sup> The fool discarded the all-important social codes designed to mediate behaviour and acquired a special status as both an appreciated entertainer and an isolated freak. Garzoni’s Santino of Tripaldo and that ‘certaine vicious foole’ both embodied the fool who did not respect ‘time, place, persons, nor a thousand other necessarie circumstances.’<sup>252</sup> They recognised the value in performance and the idea that ‘*ciascuno faccia la sua parte*’ (‘euery one performe his part’).<sup>253</sup> However, the fool also symbolised the quintessential ‘social sinner’, all the while playing a vital role in a society that both laughed at and condemned him.

The text’s literary genre and its variable nature of expression, provide a critical insight into how madness may have been translated as a form of social deviance during the latter part of the Renaissance period. Decades before the supposed imposition of confinement in the seventeenth century, Garzoni wrote about the institutional isolation of the deviant in a way that contradicts romanticised views that the Renaissance witnessed the liberation of the mad.<sup>254</sup> Garzoni’s hospital patients did not just include those who, in their town, were considered the archetypal social deviants. Garzoni’s hospital maps more expansive territory to include those who were literally “incurable” and performed violent actions against themselves and other individuals. Garzoni’s systematic

---

<sup>251</sup> For a thorough analysis of the figure of the fool see Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 1-3.

<sup>252</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 338: ‘...non risguardando (*come dico*) *al tempo né a luogo né alle persone né a mill’altre circostanze necessarie.*’

<sup>253</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 264. This can also be translated as ‘everyone plays their part’.

<sup>254</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 38 and p. 64. However, Foucault also acknowledges Garzoni’s early vision on p. 35.

stigmatisation of deviant behaviour promoted a vision of the *'strano'* as a condition that extended beyond the inherited ideological and classical definitions of madness. He presents a paradoxical picture of his hospital patients; they incited amusement coupled with a sense of danger. Both cases display a voyeuristic preoccupation in a way that reveals how madness was defined from the point of view of the spectator or the socially designated "sane" person. This brings up yet another aspect of madness – the nature of personal agency. Garzoni dismisses any traces of personal agency and authority through the power of language. He depicts the patients as he wishes to see them, as *'perversa'*, *'strano'* or as a *'novità'*. Despite of the absent voice of his *'pazzi incurabili'*, the situations reveal that they had some agency even though much of it is filtered through the descriptions of the viewer. Yet another dominant theme is presented to the reader in relation to both Manetti's and Garzoni's texts. A heavily gendered conceptualisation of madness flows throughout these texts. Manetti illustrates the dominating role that men played in public civic spaces in fifteenth-century Florence through the male-centred nature of friendship networks. In Garzoni's text, there is a decisive division between madness as experienced by men as opposed to madness experienced by women as he automatically transforms his manner of expression when describing the female section of his fictitious hospital. Ultimately, Manetti's depiction of Florence's 'mean' spaces and Garzoni's fortress for the *'pazzi incurabili'* both offer interpretations of spaces as public arenas designed to exhibit the typical features of the social deviant.

In closing, Garzoni's *'pazzi incurabili'* reflect those members of Renaissance Italian society who were unmasked in a theatrical display of social deviance and in front of the ubiquitous cruel gaze of the broader community. This chapter has traced the ways that Garzoni's sixteenth century anthology of deviance actively recognised and exploited the theatrical value of figurative and tangible spaces such as hospital hallways and the body. This theatrical motif was integral to the cultural and social landscape and facilitated the projection of a range of identities that the wider community both

commended and occasionally shunned. Garzoni's treatise communicates the power of language as a classificatory mechanism; he determines the definition of deviance, from the '*diabolica*' ('diabolicall'), to the '*sfrenata*' ('wilde') and the '*diavolosa*' ('diuelish') 'fooles'.<sup>255</sup> The power dynamic invoked by the spectacle of madness is represented by how these designated social deviants were sometimes transformed into a spectacular freak show, exhibiting behaviour, words and gestures that served a moral lesson to all those who witnessed their humiliation. The social disquiet reveals that underneath the conception of madness as an entertaining spectacle resided a darker expression of deviance. Garzoni's "incurable" patients were a personification of social disorder. His patients inhabited the metaphorical space of the hospital cell where their behaviour was dramatically spotlighted in such a way that emphasised their perversion. In this sense, the '*novità*' of madness coincided with the underlying chaotic dangerousness that the social deviant posed for the broader community. One compelling feature raised by the first two chapters, and perhaps a perplexing problem for the study of madness, is the notion that the worst outcome that madness posed for Renaissance Italian individuals was not so much the experience of the condition. Instead, the most devastating element associated with madness was its social consequences; social deviance and its nature as a theatrical spectacle resulted in the destruction and censure of the self. The spectacles of madness analysed in chapters one and two have relayed the vast 'urban production' that facilitated the performance of behaviour and identities.<sup>256</sup> This particular study has demonstrated how the spectacle motif often embellished conceptions of madness and set the scene for the performance of social deviance in a dramatic '*Teatro*' del '*strano*'.

---

<sup>255</sup> Garzoni, *The Hospitall* and Garzoni, *Opere*, p. 370.

<sup>256</sup> Martines uses the word 'urban production' in *Strong Words*, p. 174.

### CHAPTER THREE

## 'La Gran Follia': *The Genius of Melancholy?*

...I came a little out of my melancholy, or rather my madness....<sup>257</sup>

~Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1525~

Saturn seems to have impressed the seal of melancholy on me from the beginning....[I]f it should be necessary that it does issue from Saturn, I shall, in agreement with Aristotle, say that this nature itself is a unique and divine gift.<sup>258</sup>

~Marsilio Ficino, 1476~

The image of Michelangelo Buonarroti's complex and troubled personality has plagued popular notions of the Renaissance artistic genius. Implicit in these characterisations is the romanticised conclusion that without Michelangelo's moody moments, he would not have produced what was, and still is, widely regarded as some of the most beautiful artworks in European history. Yet his offhand statement and the melancholic persona that ensued, communicates one colourful trope that dominates humanist literature and theory in this period. Various sources illustrate that melancholy was seen as a condition that induced exceptional intellectual qualities and one that became increasingly synonymous with madness. For Renaissance humanists, 'la gran follia' ('the great folly') represented a form of madness that was acceptable in certain social contexts and, to a certain extent, a desirable quality.<sup>259</sup> Michelangelo's conflation of melancholy and madness, although minor, indicates an illuminating linguistic slip-up. Although Michelangelo's use of the word '*pazzo*' should not be taken as a true reflection of his state of mind, it nevertheless betrays the underlying perceptions of melancholy's

<sup>257</sup> Michelangelo Buonarroti, Letter to Sebastiano del Piombo, (May, 1525), quoted in Britton, 'Mio malinconico', p. 662: '...uscì um pocho del mio malinconicho, o vero del mio pazzo....' This letter also appears in a different translation in E.H. Ramsden, ed., *The Letters of Michelangelo Volume I & II*, E.H. Ramsden, trans., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), volume 1, Letter no. 170, p. 160: 'I emerged a little from my depression, or rather from my obsession.' See also Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, p. 74: '...it drew me forth a little from my melancholy, or shall we call it my mad mood....'

<sup>258</sup> Marsilio Ficino, Letter to Giovanni Cavalcanti, (1476), quoted in George W. McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 150. Also in Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 20 and p. 22.

<sup>259</sup> The phrase 'la gran follia' appears in Grassi & Lorch, *Folly and Insanity*, p. 93. The idea of madness as a 'compliment' or desirable quality is also pointed out in Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, p. 66.



association with madness.<sup>260</sup> This perception of melancholy and its link with madness will be demonstrated first by examining the inherited classical theories responsible for instigating this motif. This analysis will then delve into Renaissance Italian texts that propagated the idea of creative madness, with particular attention to Marsilio Ficino's characterisation of the 'divine gift' of melancholy. In order to fully illustrate Ficino's influence, this chapter will survey specific examples of how certain artistic and literary figures of the age possessed the 'gift' or at least reflected on the issue of melancholy in their work. At this point it is important to recognise that melancholy, as delineated in classical literature and the early modern period, signified a great many things and did not necessarily solely refer to the notion of intellectual brilliance. Furthermore, it should also be noted that there is a noticeable absence of women in contemporary evaluations of the illness indicating that the melancholic genius was categorised as uniformly male.<sup>261</sup> Aside from the gendered exclusivity, two things are clear when it comes to Renaissance interpretations: one is the emergence of the notion of intellectual and creative brilliance of the melancholic individual, and the second is that melancholy has closely been associated with or defined as a type of madness. The previous chapters on social deviance and the spectacle have shown how madness in Renaissance Italian societies was recognised based on social codes that spotlighted behaviour that was '*strano*'. This chapter turns the conception of madness as social deviance on its head. It shows how '*pazzia*' and '*folia*' occupied two facets of the same general idea: madness could be the dark, chaotic expression of deviance and simultaneously represent coherent, transcendental wisdom itself.<sup>262</sup> It explores the ways that Ficino's 'sick and invalid scholars' could be construed in a positive light, and how popularised views of melancholy as a form of sublime madness immortalised key intellectual, literary and artistic figures of the Italian Renaissance.<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>260</sup> Britton, 'Mio malinconico', p. 662. Also pointed out in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, p. 101.

<sup>261</sup> Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 3 and p. 110.

<sup>262</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 13 and p. 35 and Foucault, *History of Madness*, pp. 28-35. Midelfort notes Foucault's view of madness as both a negative and positive condition in 'Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe', p. 250.

<sup>263</sup> The words 'sick and invalid scholars' are Ficino's in *Three Books on Life*, p. 109.

Firstly, it is important to outline the ideological foundations of Renaissance thought on melancholy along with how it came to be associated with exceptional talent and creativity. Although the purpose of this essay is not to go into detail about humoral theory, it is necessary to explore the inherited cultural and medical perceptions of melancholy and more generally, madness.<sup>264</sup> Theories on the nature of melancholy can be traced to Hippocratic conceptions of the four humors. Hippocrates concluded that the locus of melancholy was in the black bile humor and resulted from an “‘excess’” or general ‘imbalance’ in the humors.<sup>265</sup> The Roman philosopher, Galen, later adapted and developed Hippocratic theory to conclude that melancholy went beyond the physiological origins, was related to ‘temperament’ and should be included amongst the ‘*psychological* complexions’.<sup>266</sup> Other ancient texts termed it as a “‘disease of heroes’” and key figures, such as Seneca, declared “‘there never has been great talent without some touch of madness’”.<sup>267</sup> Apart from humoral interpretations, Platonic theory delineated the nature of poetic genius as one who possessed the “‘divine frenzy’” (“‘*mania*’”) of inspirational madness, later termed “‘*furor*’”.<sup>268</sup> Aristotle, who reiterated humoral features of melancholy, however, was the first to connect melancholy with genial ability illustrating it as a form of ‘good madness’.<sup>269</sup> Aristotle opened his *Problemata* with a crucial question concerning the nature of melancholy: “‘Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholics, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile?’”<sup>270</sup> Aristotle also implied that melancholy somehow improved intellectual and

---

<sup>264</sup> A similar point is made in Jennifer Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>265</sup> Neaman, *Suggestion of the Devil*, p. 7, Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 3, Salkeld, *Madness and drama in the age of Shakespeare*, p. 20 and Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered*, p. 5.

<sup>266</sup> Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 97, Salkeld, *Madness and drama*, p. 23 and Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered*, p. 5.

<sup>267</sup> For the term “‘disease of heroes’” see Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, XVIII, quoted in Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 16. For the Seneca’s quote see Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, p. 99: “‘nullum magnum ingenium sine mixture dementiae fuit’”.

<sup>268</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, M.C. Howatson & Frisbee C.C. Sheffield, eds., M.C. Howatson, trans., (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, p. 21, Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, p. 66, Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 101 and pp. 103-104 and Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 17.

<sup>269</sup> The phrase ‘good madness’ appears in M.A. Screech, ‘Good Madness in Christendom’, in W.F. Bynum, Roy Porter & Michael Shepherd, eds., *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, Volume 1, (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985-1988), p. 35.

<sup>270</sup> Aristotle, *Problemata*, XXX, I, reproduced in Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 18 and Jennifer Radden, ed., *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press,

creative endeavours: ““But many, because the heat is near to the seat of the mind, are affected by the diseases of madness or frenzy, which accounts for the Sibyls, soothsayers, and all inspired persons....Maracus, the Syracusan, was an even better poet when he was mad....””<sup>271</sup> Platonic, Aristotelian and Galenic thought pervaded early Christian thought and remained widely available sources of information to the learned men of the Renaissance.<sup>272</sup> These classical notions shifted between conceptions of melancholy as a pathological condition and a character attribute. They consequently transformed the mythical status of the mad genius into something far more tangible, and contributed to an important conception adopted and promoted by Renaissance intellectuals, i.e. that all great men were inevitably melancholic.

Aside from the ideological foundations of melancholy and its associations with ‘divine’ madness, Marsilio Ficino’s *De triplici vita* (1482-1489), has been generally acknowledged as the most influential of all texts on melancholy in this period.<sup>273</sup> Ficino’s perspective, as both a self-diagnosed sufferer of melancholy and a commentator on the causes and effects of the illness, offers a unique portal into the Renaissance conception of melancholy and the ‘mente divina’ (‘divine mind’).<sup>274</sup> In Book I, Ficino furthers Aristotelian notions of genius and melancholy to imply that there was not just a link between the two; the genius was fabricated and shaped by the melancholic humor of black bile. In defining melancholy as a character type, Ficino elevated the ““vita contemplativa”” (‘speculative life’)

---

2000), p. 57. This text has been attributed to one of Aristotle’s followers, Theophrastus; however, the general consensus is that the work is at the very least, Aristotelian in nature. For a discussion of the authorship of this source see Winfried Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, (Wiesbaden: In Kommission bei Otto Harrassowitz, 1991), p. 20 and Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, p. 55.

<sup>271</sup> Aristotle, *Problemata*, XXX, I, in Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, p. 58. Also in Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 24 and pp. 36-37.

<sup>272</sup> This influence is noted in Nancy G. Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Training in Italian Universities after 1500*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 15 and Thiher, *Revels in Madness*, p. 45.

<sup>273</sup> For Ficino’s widespread influence see Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia*, p. 26, Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 98, Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 115 and p. 160 and Angus Gowland, ‘The Ethics of Renaissance Melancholy’, *Intellectual History Review*, 18, no. 1 (March, 2008), p. 107.

<sup>274</sup> Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 242 and p. 243.

into a domain accessed by the privileged few.<sup>275</sup> However, this life came at a price; the gifted intellectual faced the persistent reality of ‘furiososque’ (‘madness’).<sup>276</sup> This mutual dependence of ‘melancholicis’ (‘melancholy’) and ‘divinum furorem’ (‘divine madness’) is illustrated when Ficino cites his theoretical influences:

This Aristotle confirms in his book of Problems, saying that all those who are renowned in whatever faculty you please have been melancholics. In this he has confirmed that Platonic notion expressed in the book *De scientia*, that most intelligent people are prone to excitability and madness. Democritus too says no one can ever be intellectually outstanding except those who are deeply excited by some sort of madness. My author Plato in the *Phaedrus* seems to approve this, saying that without madness one knocks at the doors of poetry in vain. Even if he perhaps intends divine madness to be understood here, nevertheless, according to the physicians, madness of this kind is never incited in anyone else but melancholics.<sup>277</sup>

Ficino not only derived his theories from Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, he added Christian and astrological embellishments claiming that all melancholics were born under Saturn.<sup>278</sup> Aside from astrological elements, Ficino highlighted the humoral causes of melancholy stating that melancholics:

...are compelled to secrete...black bile, which they call melancholy...melancholy, if it is too abundant or vehement, vexes the mind with continual care and frequent absurdities and unsettles the judgement. Hence it can justly be said that learned people would even be unusually healthy, were they not burdened by phlegm, and the happiest and wisest of mortals, were they not driven by the bad effects of black bile to depression and even sometimes to folly.<sup>279</sup>

It has been suggested that Ficino consolidated classical and astrological notions in order to produce a theory of the melancholic genius that fostered a specific ‘ego-formation in men.’<sup>280</sup> The notion of

<sup>275</sup> Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 243. See also, McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation*, p. 149. The words “vita contemplativa” can also be translated as “contemplative life”.

<sup>276</sup> Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 116.

<sup>277</sup> Ficino, *Three Books on Life*: for the Latin terms see p. 116 and for the latter quote see p. 117.

<sup>278</sup> Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, p. 13.

<sup>279</sup> Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 113.

<sup>280</sup> Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 16.

Ficino's motive to include himself amongst the talented is clear in one letter to his friend, Niccolò Michelozzi. In it, he concludes that he seems "to have gone mad" in the manner of the inspired poet or philosopher.<sup>281</sup> This and the concept of 'ego-formation' invoke the consistent absence of any female figures from classical and Renaissance theories on melancholy; it was a heroic condition reserved for the learned man. In any case, Ficino's main achievement was that he resurrected the melancholic and black bile and instigated a renewed interest in the intellectual value of the sufferer. For him, melancholy was a condition that hovered between despair and aesthetic pleasure, between madness and divine inspiration.<sup>282</sup> His personal experience with the illness and conception of it as a 'unique and divine gift' meant that he fashioned melancholy into an 'elite "illness"', and propelled it into a cult status that was to continue for generations to come.<sup>283</sup>

Ficino's text formed one of the foundations of Renaissance conceptions of what it meant to be a "melancholic" and his outline of the physiological and temperamental characteristics permeated other Italian texts, demonstrating how the trope of genial melancholy gained momentum throughout this period. These texts contain a designated vocabulary for melancholy that recognised a connection between melancholy and madness. Adjectives such as '*strano*', '*salvatico*' ('wild', 'antisocial'), '*bizarro*' ('bizarre'), '*capriccioso*' ('capricious'), '*stravagante*' ('extravagant'), '*grottesche*' ('grotesque') and '*fantastico*' ('fantastical') all illustrate this connection.<sup>284</sup> However, they also illuminate how melancholy was seen exclusively as a disease inflicted upon those of exceptional intellectual and creative potential. The Florentine theologian Fra Giovanni Maria Tolosani, outlined the typical features of the melancholic in a poem in 1514 and, in doing so, contributes to a popular perception of the melancholic genius:

<sup>281</sup> Ficino, Letter to Niccolò Michelozzi, (c. 1476), quoted in McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation*, p. 150.

<sup>282</sup> Schiesari makes a similar point in *The Gendering of Melancholia*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>283</sup> For the term 'elite "illness"' see Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 7. This is also noted in McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation*, p. 150 and Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, p. 37. Schiesari also notes that Ficino's work was widely popular amongst the 'social and cultural elite of the Renaissance' in *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 115.

<sup>284</sup> Britton, 'Mio malinconico', p. 666. See also, Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, Edward J. Olszewski, ed., and trans., (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., 1977), Book I, chapter vi, pp. 121-122.

The melancholic is cold and dry  
 Like earth, and always has a bitter heart;  
 He is pale and spare and seems lost,  
 And he is mean, grasping and miserly:  
 He lives in anguish, grief, pain, and mourning,  
 And for his sickness there is no remedy:  
 He is solitary, and seems like a monk,  
 Is without friends, and has a fantastical mind.<sup>285</sup>

In this excerpt, other characteristics are introduced, shifting the locus of melancholy from physiological elements endorsed by classical and medieval writers, to demeanour and character traits. Moreover, the romanticised perception of the solitary melancholic intellectual in despair is also depicted; the melancholy sufferer underwent a transcendental state of self-imposed ‘*alienatio*’ (‘alienation’).<sup>286</sup> Aristotelian theories claiming that melancholy somehow enhanced creative talent appears both explicitly and implicitly in various Renaissance Italian texts. This is not to say that there were not critics of this perception. Later in the period, contemporaries began to question the ideas of genial melancholy propagated by Ficino and, in 1586, the painter Giovanni Battista Armenini proclaimed that:

An accursed abuse has entered into the minds of ordinary people, and perhaps even of the learned, to whom it seems as it were natural that one cannot be an excellent painter, unless one is sullied with some ugly and unspeakable vice, and, on top of that, possessed by a capricious and fantastical humour caused by many peculiarities of the brain.<sup>287</sup>

<sup>285</sup> Fra Giovanni Maria Tolosani, ‘La Nuova Sfera’, (1514), Book II, stanza 30, quoted in Britton, ‘Mio malinconico’, p. 656.

<sup>286</sup> For the term ‘*alienato*’ see Gowland, ‘The Ethics of Renaissance Melancholy’ p. 107.

<sup>287</sup> Giovanni Battista Armenini, *De’ veri precetti della pittura*, (1586), quoted in Christopher Allen, ‘Caravaggio’s Complexion: The Humoral Characterization of Artists in the Early Modern Period’, *Intellectual History Review*, 18, no. 1 (March, 2008), p. 61: ‘è entrato un maledetto abuso ne gli animi delle genti volgari, e forse anco de’ savii, a i quali par come naturale che non possa esser pittor molto eccellente, che non sia macchiato di qualche brutto e nefando vizio e che, appresso, non sia accompagnato da un umor capriccioso e fantastico per molte bizzarrie di cervello.’ See also Armenini, *On the True Precepts*, Book III, chapter xv, p. 274.

Armenini further claimed that the painters of the day did not achieve ‘greatness and fame’ through their ‘capricious and eccentric’ temperament.<sup>288</sup> Additionally, his advice was to ‘keep far away from the vices of madness and incivility.’<sup>289</sup> Despite these oppositions, Armenini’s cynical perspective seems to constitute the voice of the minority in the Renaissance humanist world of literature and the arts. In these contemporary texts, the special vocabulary for the melancholic as ‘fantastical’ and ‘capricious’ is repeated and it suggests that melancholy was more than just a debilitating illness with humoral origins. The consistent use of the word ‘complexion’ indicates that melancholy was perceived to be much more than an illness in the ‘brain’ or ‘mind’; it was not an acquired physical torment of the mind, it was a natural temperament that encouraged intellectual brilliance.<sup>290</sup> In contemporary depictions of the melancholy, there is a consistent struggle between physiological explanations and temperamental and behavioural attributes. However, they demonstrate that melancholy had, by the late fifteenth century, well and truly entered the Renaissance humanist consciousness as a ‘unique and divine gift’.

Aside from contemporary interpretations and analyses of melancholy, it is necessary to assess the ways that it was, both as an illness and character type, ascribed to artistic figures of the day. The topos of the wilful heteroclit appears in numerous Renaissance biographies, *novelle*, letters and chronicles. Before turning to Michelangelo, the greatest melancholic of them all, there are interesting connections between madness or melancholy and certain other artistic figures. In one tale featured in Francesco Sacchetti’s *Il Trecentonovelle*, a painter’s wife alluded to the nature of the melancholic artist: “‘You painters are all whimsical and of ever-changing mood; you are constantly drunk and are not even

---

<sup>288</sup> Armenini, *On the True Precepts*, Book III, chapter xv, p. 278.

<sup>289</sup> Armenini, *On the True Precepts*, Book III, chapter xv, p. 278.

<sup>290</sup> The term ‘complexion’ is quoted in Britton, ‘Mio malinconico’, p. 653 and in Gowland, ‘The Ethics of Renaissance Melancholy’, p. 103. This term is also used to describe melancholics or those of ‘sanguine complexion’ in Garzoni, *The Hospitall*.

ashamed of yourselves!”<sup>291</sup> However, no other text illustrates the extent of the topos of the melancholic artistic genius better than Giorgio Vasari’s *Le vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani* (1550). The language used to describe the artists re-emphasise the vocabulary designated for the melancholic genius, however, words such as ‘*bizarro*’, ‘*grottesche*’ and ‘*fantastico*’ imply different meanings. When Vasari applied this vocabulary to artworks, it contained positive connotations. Conversely, when he used them to describe behavioural and temperamental attributes, it contained negative undertones.<sup>292</sup> One example of this paradoxical application is when he describes the work of Florentine painter, Piero di Cosimo. Piero’s ‘wildly inventive and fanciful’ disposition enabled ‘grandiose and ingenious’ artistic creations that exhibited unique ‘freakish, bizarre, and fantastic’ characteristics.<sup>293</sup> However, the ‘strangeness of Piero’s mind’ meant that ‘through his brutish ways he was rather held to be a madman’.<sup>294</sup> Similarly, another painter, Graffione Fiorentino, is described as being ““a bizarre and fantastic person.””<sup>295</sup> The common depiction of the melancholic as a solitary figure also appears in numerous character portraits of contemporary artists. Vasari attributes this tendency for ‘solitude’ to Piero di Cosimo, Jacopo Pontormo and Francesco Salviati.<sup>296</sup> Leonardo da Vinci reflected on the solitary nature of the artist, reinforcing the myth of the lone melancholic genius and the ““vita contemplativa””: ““the painter must live alone, contemplate what his eye perceives and commune with himself””.<sup>297</sup> Girolamo Borselli Bolognese wrote a chronicle on the sculptor Niccolò dell’Arca exposing how he ““...did not want to have pupils nor to teach anybody. He was strange and had barbaric manners; he was so rough that he repulsed one and all. As a rule he lacked even the necessities of life; being pig-headed, he never accepted the council of friends.””<sup>298</sup> Vasari also describes Bolognese painter Amico Aspertini as possessing ‘*un capriccioso e pazzo*

<sup>291</sup> Francesco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, (late fourteenth century), quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 14.

<sup>292</sup> Britton, ‘Mio malinconico’, p. 666. See also Bernard Mc Elroy, *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>293</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol II*, p. 108 and p. 111.

<sup>294</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol II*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>295</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani*, (1550), quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 71.

<sup>296</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol II*, p. 105, p. 256 and p. 289.

<sup>297</sup> Leonardo da Vinci, quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 64.

<sup>298</sup> Girolamo Borselli Bolognese, quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 68.



*cervello* ('a capricious and crazy brain').<sup>299</sup> Aspertini's madness, it seems, went beyond his behaviour and into his work as he painted figures considered '*pazze e capricciose*' ('mad and capricious') before he finally became '*bestialissimamente impazzo*' ('bestially crazed') in his later years.<sup>300</sup> The bestial decent of the artistic genius is also colourfully expressed in Vasari's account of Francesco Mazzuoli:

Finally, still always obsessed by that alchemy of his, like all the others who have once lost their wits over it, and changing from a gentle and fastidious person into an almost savage man quite different from what he was, with a beard and long straggling locks, he was assailed, in this sorry state of melancholy and oddness, by a grave fever....<sup>301</sup>

Borselli's and Vasari's allusions to the 'barbaric', 'strange' and bestial aspects of madness comprise the darker side of the melancholic genius. Although there is no evidence to associate Vasari's conclusions on melancholy with Ficino's work, the connections made between melancholy and artistic brilliance would suggest that, at the very least, Aristotelian theories on this were widely known.<sup>302</sup> In a statement echoing Aristotle's famous rhetorical question, Vasari wrote:

...the majority of the artists of the past have had from their nativity a certain madness or wildness, which, apart from making them absent-minded and fantastical has been the reason, more often than not, that the shadow and darkness of their vices has been more visible than the brightness and splendour of those virtues that rightly make Raphael's followers immortal.<sup>303</sup>

In spite of Vasari's subscription to classical notions of divine madness, there were paradoxical elements to these characterisations. The '*strano*', in its appropriate context, i.e. when it involved the production of art deemed aesthetically brilliant and unique, signalled situations when the artist's melancholy was commended. When Vasari used words such as '*fantastico*' and '*bizarro*', he was

<sup>299</sup> Vasari, *Vite*, quoted and translated in Britton, 'Mio malinconico', p. 662.

<sup>300</sup> Vasari, *Vite*, quoted and translated in Britton, 'Mio malinconico', p. 662.

<sup>301</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol II*, p. 196.

<sup>302</sup> Britton concludes that there is no evidence that Vasari was quoting Ficino in 'Mio malinconico', p. 658. However, the Wittkowers conclude that Platonic and Aristotelian theories were widely read in *Born Under Saturn*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>303</sup> Vasari, *Vite*, quoted in Allen, 'Caravaggio's Complexion', p. 65: '...quasi la maggior parte de gli artefici passati avevano sempre da la natività loro arrecato seco un certo che di pazzia e di salvatichezza, la quale oltre il fargli astratti e fantastichi fu cagione, il più delle volte, che assai più apparisse e si dimostrasse l'ombra e l'oscuro de' vizi loro, che la chiarezza e splendore di quelle virtu, che giustament fanno immortali i seguaci suoi'.

remarking on an artwork's 'whimsical' and 'imaginative' aspects.<sup>304</sup> However, in an inappropriate context, i.e. through the presence of 'oddness' in demeanour and the general exhibition of erratic behaviour, the melancholic genius was projected as a 'savage' manifestation of '*pazzia negative*' (negative madness) or the failure of melancholy.<sup>305</sup>

Michelangelo and the reflections contained in his letters to friends, patrons and especially to his family, offer a colourful illustration of his 'mad mood' and account for how he came to occupy pride of place in Vasari's imagination of the melancholic genius.<sup>306</sup> Michelangelo was widely reported to be a troubled and difficult person by fellow artists and key patrons. In 1512, Pope Julius II told Sebastiano del Piombo: "He is terrible, as you can see, and one cannot deal with him."<sup>307</sup> From a young age, Michelangelo's '*terribilità*' appears in his letters to his brother and father.<sup>308</sup> In what he called his "*gran passione*" ("grand passion"), when he was just twenty-two years old he wrote to his father of his melancholic nature: "Do not wonder if I have sometimes written irritable letters, for I often suffer great distress of mind and temper"<sup>309</sup> This statement seems to suggest that he viewed this "*gran passione*" as more part of his character as an artist than as a physiological illness. His sense of suffering continued throughout his life: '...for twelve years now I have gone about all over Italy, leading a miserable life; I have borne every kind of humiliation, suffered every kind of hardship, worn myself to the bone with every kind of labour, risked my very life in a thousand dangers, solely to help my family....'<sup>310</sup> Michelangelo also referred to his 'stupendous labour' and his lack of friends, reiterating the myth of the solitary artistic genius: 'I am living here in a state of great anxiety and of the

<sup>304</sup> For a discussion of these elements see Britton, 'Mio malinconico', p. 667.

<sup>305</sup> For the term 'oddness' and 'savage' see Vasari, *Lives, Vol II*, p. 196. For the term '*pazzia negative*' see Grassi & Lorch, *Folly and Insanity*, p. 96.

<sup>306</sup> The term 'mad mood' is from Michelangelo's letter to Sebastiano del Piombo, (May, 1525), quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, p. 74.

<sup>307</sup> Pope Julius II's comment is quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 73.

<sup>308</sup> For the term '*terribilità*' see Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 73.

<sup>309</sup> Buonarroti, quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 74. See also Buonarroti, Letter to Domenico Lodovico Buonarroti in Florence, (August, 1497), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol I, letter no. 3, p. 5.

<sup>310</sup> Buonarroti, Letter to Giovan Simone di Lodovico Buonarroti in Florence, (June, 1509), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol I, letter no. 49, p. 52.

greatest physical fatigue; I have no friends of any sort and want none.<sup>311</sup> His dramatic reflections continued, consistently emphasising his unstable temperament: ‘For I lead a miserable existence and reckon not of life nor honour – that is of this world; I live wearied by stupendous labours and beset by a thousand anxieties. And thus have I lived for some fifteen years now and never an hour’s happiness have I had....’<sup>312</sup> Aside from these intense meditations, he also seemed aware of the way that his contemporaries contributed to his famous reputation. In 1524, he wrote to his friend, Pietro Gondi, exclaiming:

No-one ever entered into relations with me...to whom I did not do good with all my heart. Afterwards, some trick of temper or some madness [“*pazzia*”], which they say is in my nature, which hurts nobody except myself, gives them an excuse for speaking evil of me and calumniating my character.<sup>313</sup>

Michelangelo’s tormented musings remain a prevalent theme throughout his letters, especially in his later years when he consistently expresses a consciousness of his own mortality, dramatically declaring: ‘I am an old man and death has robbed me of the dreams of youth....’<sup>314</sup> In spite of Michelangelo’s ‘burdens’ and despair at his ‘treacherous world’, he contradicts his articulations of sorrow by hinting at the positive, almost purifying aspects of the melancholic disposition.<sup>315</sup> When he was seventy-four years old, Michelangelo wrote to his friend, Giovan Francesco Fattucci attesting to the nature of melancholy: “‘You will say that I am old and mad; but I answer that there is no better way of keeping sane and free from anxiety than being mad.’”<sup>316</sup> Classical notions of melancholy and madness, including the idea that melancholy was an essential ingredient to artistic and intellectual

---

<sup>311</sup> Buonarroto, Letter to Buonarroto di Lodovico Simoni in Florence, (July, 1512), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol I, letter no. 77, p. 70 and Letter to Buonarroto di Lodovico di Buonarroto Simoni in Florence, (October, 1509), Vol I, letter no. 51, p. 54.

<sup>312</sup> Buonarroto, Letter to Lodovico di Buonarroto Simoni in Florence, (October, 1512), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol I, letter no. 82, p. 75. Also, see Vasari’s letters from Michelangelo reproduced in his *Vite: Vasari, Lives, Vol I*, p. 406.

<sup>313</sup> Buonarroto, quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 74. See also Buonarroto, Letter to Pietro Gondi in Florence, (January, 1524), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol I, letter no. 161, p. 153.

<sup>314</sup> Buonarroto, Letter to Messer Luca Martini in Florence, (March, 1547), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol II, letter no. 279, p. 72.

<sup>315</sup> The terms ‘burdens’ and ‘treacherous world’ appear in Buonarroto, Letter to Messer Giorgio Vasari in Florence, (February, 1556), in Ramsden, *The Letters*, Vol II, letter no. 410, p. 161.

<sup>316</sup> Buonarroto, quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 74.

creativity, appears through Michelangelo's transitory use of the terms '*malinchonico*' and '*pazzo*'.<sup>317</sup> Michelangelo's reflections suggest that he was not only conscious of his growing mythical status as a melancholic genius, but that he also perceived the positive qualities of his condition and perhaps nurtured it because, as he once put it, "Melancholy is my joy,/And discomfort is my rest."<sup>318</sup>

In addition to the apotheosis of Michelangelo and his 'mad mood', the "divine" madness allotted to poetic figures is another facet of the melancholic genius. During the late fourteenth century, Francesco Petrarca categorised melancholy as a 'morbus' ('disease') of '*acedia*' ('sloth').<sup>319</sup> Petrarca alluded to his 'inexorable passion' in his letter to the Abbot of St. Benigno and claimed that 'I find myself always in a sad and languishing state when I am not writing....'<sup>320</sup> He attributes his 'ills of the soul' to his lack of inspiration and reiterates one of the themes thought central to the melancholic genius, i.e. '*alienato*': 'It is after all but a poor consolation to have companions in misery. I should prefer to be ill by myself....They are afraid, I infer, that my disease will not make way with me promptly enough. Between their goading and my own madness I shall doubtless gratify their wishes.'<sup>321</sup> Although Petrarca never explicitly acknowledges a connection between melancholy and intellectual brilliance, he nevertheless subtly echoes Renaissance conceptions of the unique genial and melancholic qualities of the poet:

If you would find an explanation for all this, you must recollect that although the delights of poetry are most exquisite, they can be fully understood only by the rarest geniuses, who are careless of wealth and possess a marked contempt for the things of this world, and who are by nature especially endowed with a peculiar elevation and freedom of soul....How

<sup>317</sup> On the extent of Michelangelo's awareness of this connection see Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 105.

<sup>318</sup> Buonarroti, quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 74: "La mia allegrez' é la maniconia/E'l mio riposo son questi disagi." Also in Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 8.

<sup>319</sup> Gowland, 'The Ethics of Renaissance Melancholy', p. 112. See also Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, p. 36.

<sup>320</sup> Francesco Petrarca, Letter to the Abbot of St. Benigno, undated, reproduced in *Familiar Letters*, in James Harvey Robinson, ed., *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, James Harvey Robinson, trans., (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), created August 1995, Hanover Historical Texts Project, Hanover College, via The Internet Medieval Sourcebook hosted by Fordham University, USA, <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/petrarch/pet03.html>>, viewed 1 August 2009, p. 162.

<sup>321</sup> Petrarca, in *Familiar Letters*, <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/petrarch/pet03.html>>, p. 164 and pp.165-166.

delightful indeed must this gift be to those who really possess it, when it can exercise such a fascination over sluggish minds....It pricks my conscience that I should be responsible in great part for fostering all these forms of literary madness....But never mind, I suffer for my sins, for I am in a rage if I stay at home, and yet hardly dare nowadays to venture into the street.<sup>322</sup>

Petrarca fostered the image of “divine furor” of the poet in subtle ways.<sup>323</sup> His characterisation of ‘literary madness’ pervaded Renaissance Italian poetry and strengthened the myth of genial melancholy. It seems, however, that this ‘delightful’ ‘gift’ that Petrarca described, transformed into something far more serious in the case of fellow fourteenth century contemporary, Simone Serdini da Siena or Il Saviozzo (‘the sage fool’).<sup>324</sup> Saviozzo occupied a position that bordered on the opposing forces of societal and patronal obligations and a severe psychological affliction.<sup>325</sup> He voiced the interior workings of a tormented soul in his *Rime*, contradicting the positive connotations that other contemporaries associated with melancholy as a form of transcendental poetic madness. His condition deteriorated so rapidly toward the end of his life that he had turned into “‘a wild beast’” and wrote a stanza in prison alluding to the darkness he felt had consumed him: “‘I know not whether shadow or disgrace wraps itself around my mind, now all out of line, not as it was.’”<sup>326</sup> His despair in prison continued and his vocabulary indicates that he had descended into the darker side of melancholy and acquired the bestial qualities of madness. He communicated his “‘insanity’” (*l’insania mia*), his sense of “‘oblivion’” and the bestial elements of his madness concluding that he, “‘a monster to the world’”, desired nothing more than death itself.<sup>327</sup> In the end, possibly during one of his fits of despair, Saviozzo stabbed himself to death in his prison cell.<sup>328</sup> Francesco d’Altobianco degli Alberti, another contemporary poet, also articulated a discrepancy between positive conceptions of the poetic genius

<sup>322</sup> Petrarca, in *Familiar Letters*, <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/petrarch/pet03.html>>, pp. 166-168.

<sup>323</sup> This is also pointed out in Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 248 and Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 167.

<sup>324</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, ed., *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia, Volume 2, L-Z Index*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 1022.

<sup>325</sup> Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 113.

<sup>326</sup> Saviozzo of Siena, *Rime*, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 131: “‘Io non so che si sia, ombra o disgrazia, che mi s’avvolge intorno de la mente, tal che tutta é disforme a quel ch’l’era.’”

<sup>327</sup> Saviozzo, *Rime*, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>328</sup> Saviozzo’s suicide took place in 1419 or 1420, Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 113.

and ‘*pazzia negative*’: ““Be off, go away, Melancholy; let me not find you here; go lodge somewhere else...Go with God, and may He strike you with calamity.””<sup>329</sup> Aside from the tragedy involved with Saviozzo and the Francesco’s persistent melancholy, another poet who endured the dark side of melancholy was Torquato Tasso. French philosopher, Michel de Montaigne, wrote of Tasso’s gifted poetic abilities proclaiming his status as a ““Platonic maniac””.<sup>330</sup> However, Montaigne rejected Ficino’s conceptions of the ‘divine gift’ in light of the fact that Tasso’s ““genius”” was ““marked by squalid lunacy””.<sup>331</sup> In 1579, Tasso was eventually imprisoned in the hospital of Saint Anne in Ferrara, placed under supervision and, much to Montaigne’s dismay, he was in ““so pitiful a state, surviving himself, not recognising himself or his works...””<sup>332</sup> Saviozzo’s suicide, Francesco’s torment and Tasso’s confinement demonstrate that Ficino’s popularised views of the ‘divine gift’ of melancholy did not translate into the experience of some Renaissance Italian poets. These figures exhibited the bestial or ‘strange’ characteristics considered a negative by-product of melancholy, and consequently suffered a persistent assault on the self that negated any comfort derived from their creative abilities.

The myth of the innovative, melancholic genius in possession of non-conformist characteristics that make him the object of fascination amongst his contemporaries remains a persistent motif throughout historiographical studies on Renaissance humanism. However, the repetition of the genius of the melancholic artist and the incorporation of a vocabulary of the ‘*bizarro*’, underscores another popular myth. The construction of the artistic genius as completely autonomous is one that has pervaded secondary scholarship on Renaissance Italian history.<sup>333</sup> An example of this concept is the elevated

---

<sup>329</sup> Alberti, quoted in Martines, *Strong Words*, p. 141: ““Spacciati, vaten via, Malinconia, Fa’ ch’io non ti ci truovi; altrove alloggia...Vatti con Dio, che lui ti dia il malanno.””

<sup>330</sup> Michel de Montaigne, quoted in M.A. Screech, *Montaigne & Melancholy: The Wisdom of the Essays*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2000), p. 38.

<sup>331</sup> Montaigne, quoted in Screech, *Montaigne & Melancholy*, p. xvii and p. 38.

<sup>332</sup> Montaigne, quoted in Screech, *Montaigne & Melancholy*, p. 38. See also Torquato Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered: Gerusalemme liberata*, Anthony M. Esolen, ed., and trans., (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>333</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1995). For critical analyses on the concept of individualism and identity see Robert A. LeVine, ‘Properties of Culture: An Ethnographic View’, in Shweder & LeVine, *Culture Theory*, pp. 67-69, Trexler, ‘Introduction’, in Trexler, *Persons in Groups*, pp. 3-15,

status appointed to the artist, and the subsequent concessions made in light of ‘*strano*’ character traits and behaviour. This heroicised view of the artist is demonstrated throughout Vasari’s *Vite*. In 1420, Filippo Brunelleschi was placed in a difficult situation that raised questions about his level of artistic freedom and, perhaps ironically for this analysis, his state of mind. In 1417, Brunelleschi, whom Vasari described as being ‘sent by heaven’, was asked to work on the cupola of the Santa Marie del Fiore in Florence.<sup>334</sup> According to Vasari, Brunelleschi told the wardens of the Duomo to summon architects from around Europe to assess the cupola in an attempt to demonstrate his architectural brilliance.<sup>335</sup> Each architect was to explain their plan, however, when it came time for the great master himself to speak, the wardens ‘mocked and laughed at him’ believing him to be ‘talking nonsense.’<sup>336</sup> Brunelleschi ‘grew more and more heated’ as he tried to explain his vision, was dismissed as ‘an ass and a babbler’ and forcibly removed from the conference ‘leaving all the people at the audience convinced that he was deranged.’<sup>337</sup> In language reminiscent of the prank he had engineered and the subsequent fate that had befallen his friend, Grasso, he refused to walk the streets, ‘for fear of hearing people call out: “There goes the madman”’ and even considered fleeing Florence altogether.<sup>338</sup> Vasari describes how Brunelleschi, ‘anxious for the fame it would bring’, demonstrated his theory and was eventually granted the commission.<sup>339</sup> However, fellow artist Lorenzo Ghiberti was commissioned to share the work, much to the ‘despair and bitterness’ of Brunelleschi.<sup>340</sup> The way that Vasari characterises Brunelleschi and this event, reiterates the elevated mythical status of the artist. Brunelleschi’s ‘impetuosity’ and his ambitious motivations evoke the idea that the artistic genius was complicit in, or at least encouraged, the fabrication of a character type.<sup>341</sup> It reinforces the idea that

---

Weissman, ‘Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology’, pp. 39-45, Burke, *The Italian Renaissance*, p. 193 and p. 239, Weissman, ‘The Importance of Being Ambiguous’, pp. 269-279, Roy Porter, ‘Introduction’, in Porter, *Rewriting the Self*, p. 2, Burke, ‘Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes’, pp. 17-26, Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love*, pp. 5-18, Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, p. 5.

<sup>334</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 133.

<sup>335</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 144.

<sup>336</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 145.

<sup>337</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 145.

<sup>338</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>339</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 149.

<sup>340</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 150.

<sup>341</sup> Vasari, *Lives, Vol I*, p. 150.

there existed a specific ‘ego-formation’.<sup>342</sup> Despite the appearance of bold independence on the surface, underneath, Brunelleschi suffered the ‘agonies of the mind’, and the volatile social environment that once hailed him an architectural genius turned on him, and found another genius to venerate.<sup>343</sup>

Aside from Brunelleschi’s political game and Vasari’s reconstruction of his failed pursuit of artistic autonomy, contemporary character portraits of Michelangelo point to the creation of another myth. References to Michelangelo’s temperamental character fostered a common perception that he was one of the very few artists of the period who wielded a free hand over his commissions. The Renaissance conception of the ‘*divino artista*’ (‘divine artist’) was one that had been around since Plato’s theory of poetic “‘furor’”.<sup>344</sup> In 1436, Leon Battista Alberti subscribed to this idea saying that the artist was an ‘alter deus’ (‘another god’).<sup>345</sup> In his *Vite*, Vasari further endorsed this myth of the artist by reserving the word ‘*divino*’ mainly for Michelangelo.<sup>346</sup> As in Brunelleschi’s case, Vasari believed that Michelangelo was the ‘perfect exemplar in life’ and was also sent by God to remedy the lack of ‘true art’.<sup>347</sup> However, when he broaches the issue of Michelangelo’s famous ‘*terribilità*’, he remains remarkably conciliatory. Unlike the ‘brute beast’, Piero di Cosimo, and his ‘fiercely unsocial behaviour’ and, contrary to Pontormo’s ‘estrangement from human companionship’, Michelangelo’s ‘solitudine’ (‘solitude’) assumes a more positive, if not mandatory, status: ‘No one should think it strange that Michelangelo loved solitude, for he was deeply in love with his art, which claims a man with all his thoughts for itself alone.’<sup>348</sup> Michelangelo’s ‘*terribilità*’ and ‘*stranezza*’ (‘strangeness’) thus came to signify both the obligatory expression of his troubled melancholic character and paradoxically,

<sup>342</sup> For the term ‘ego-formation’ see Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 16.

<sup>343</sup> Vasari, *Lives*, Vol I, p. 151.

<sup>344</sup> Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 98.

<sup>345</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *De pictura*, (1435), quoted in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 98.

<sup>346</sup> Vasari, *Lives*, Vol II, p. 129.

<sup>347</sup> Vasari, *Lives*, Vol I, p. 325.

<sup>348</sup> For the quotes concerning Piero and Pontormo see Vasari, *Lives*, Vol II, p. 107, p. 114 and p. 256. For the term ‘solitudine’ see Giorgio Vasari, *La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, quoted in Allen, ‘Caravaggio’s Complexion’, p. 65. For the larger quote see Vasari, *Lives*, Vol I, p. 419.



the quintessential expression of his genius and aesthetic brilliance of his art.<sup>349</sup> Despite the concessions made concerning Michelangelo's character and behaviour, artistic figures in this period were constrained by various political, social and economic factors that inhibited any sense of true authoritative independence.

The myth of artistic freedom and the social reality of the restrictions placed on the Renaissance Italian artist's creativity are clearly demonstrated in another case. In July 1573, the painter Paolo Veronese appeared before the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Venice and was questioned about the thematic content of a painting he had completed earlier in the year. One of the many interesting exchanges in the tribunal was when Veronese was asked "What is the meaning of those armed men, dressed in the German style, each with a halberd in his hand?"<sup>350</sup> Veronese answered this probing question with the following: "I must say a few words here....We painters take the same licence as do poets and madmen...."<sup>351</sup> This comment seems to echo Michelangelo's statements concerning the character type assigned to him by his contemporaries. Yet Veronese's statement also appears to be a double entendre; he indicates the subtle power that artists and poets may yield in terms of their licence to push the boundaries and he also, perhaps inadvertently, connects the creative genius with madness. These may seem like the words of a non-conformist, determined to exercise a certain level of freedom over his subject. When situating these comments in context, however, it can be seen that there existed a restrictive set of social codes and values that dictated notions of patronal obligation and exactly how far an artist's idea of "individuality" could be stretched.<sup>352</sup> In an attempt to justify the liberty he had taken with his painting, he pointed to one of his contemporaries, Michelangelo, reiterating the common perception of Michelangelo as not only the most famous melancholic genius of all but as one who

---

<sup>349</sup> Similar point expressed in Wittkower & Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, p. 73. For the term 'stranezza' see Vasari, *La vita di Michelangelo*, quoted in Allen, 'Caravaggio's Complexion', p. 65.

<sup>350</sup> David Chambers & Brian Pullan with Jennifer Fletcher, *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630*, (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 234.

<sup>351</sup> Chambers, Pullan & Fletcher, *Venice: A Documentary History*, p. 234.

<sup>352</sup> For an analysis on the idea of individualism in this case and more generally see Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, pp. 3-4.

pushed moral, political and social boundaries: “...I must say again that I am obliged to follow the example of my predecessors....In Rome Michelangelo, in the papal chapel, depicted Our Lord Jesus Christ, his mother and St John, St Peter and the heavenly court, all of them...naked...and with little reverence.”<sup>353</sup> The prevalent trope of the melancholic plagued by a certain degree of ‘*pazzia*’ represents a tradition in which some intellectual figures deliberately fashioned a myth or image of themselves as a ‘divine’ genius. However, this does not detract from the barriers that restricted these talented figures. As chapter on social deviance and spectacle demonstrated, certain institutions and groups governed and manipulated any sense of individuality that a person may have felt in social, cultural and political contexts. Artists and poets may have enjoyed an elevated status, however, Brunelleschi’s public scrutiny, Michelangelo’s consistent references to his financial pressures and patronal responsibilities in his letters and Veronese’s trial all demonstrate that they were also constrained and bound by political, economic and social obligations.

This chapter has shown how men of a certain social and intellectual calibre occupied a precarious position in the balance between socially acceptable behaviour and the erratic bounds of madness. This transcendental madness was cloaked with a range of euphemistic labels designed to detract from behaviour considered ‘*strano*’. The most famous of these euphemisms was Ficino’s ‘unique and divine gift’ of melancholy. This conception of melancholy and its common conflation with madness can be seen in popular *novelle*, biographies, letters and poems produced from the late fourteenth century through to the late sixteenth century. Giorgio Vasari’s most prized ‘*divino artista*’, Michelangelo Buonarroti, was perhaps Italy’s most popular melancholic, and what Vasari’s biography and Michelangelo’s letters clarify, is that melancholy quickly transformed into an acceptable form of madness. The acceptability of this form of madness, however, did not constitute the same treatment for all artistic and literary figures of the day. The descriptions and poetry from the likes of Saviozzo of

---

<sup>353</sup> Chambers, Pullan & Fletcher, *Venice: A Documentary History*, p. 236.

Siena, Francesco Alberti and Torquato Tasso illustrate the unstable interplay between ‘la gran follia’ and ‘*pazzia negative*’. In general, contemporary characterisations have illuminated how a unique ‘cultural idiom’ flourished in certain intellectual circles and dominated humanist literature of the Renaissance.<sup>354</sup> It transformed itself from an imbalance of the humors, to a stylised and exclusively male illness. This final chapter has highlighted only one particular trope of Renaissance interpretations of melancholy. The foregoing contemporary comments and case studies, being merely excerpts, cannot convey the complete picture of Renaissance conceptions of melancholy. Despite this, these ideas of melancholy can pave the way for more comprehensive studies of the mythical notion of the Renaissance individual. Although this analysis does not completely reject the notion that this period witnessed the birth of the modern individual, more fluid interpretations concerning personal agency and the construction of the self need to be considered in light of social, political and financial obligations. Texts such as Ficino’s *De Vita* need to be read alongside more cynical explanations such as Armenini’s *True Precepts*. Vasari’s idealised work and the dramatic events Veronese’s trial demonstrate that these principles of artistic and intellectual freedom require consistent revision and that for some melancholic geniuses, the demands of society often clashed perilously with the ongoing torment of the mind.

---

<sup>354</sup> The term ‘cultural idiom’ appears in McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation*, p. 165.

## ***Conclusion***

Madness in the fifteenth to the late sixteenth century in Italy represented behavioural and verbal attributes that were systematically classified under one general term – ‘*strano*’. The chronicles, poems, treatises, *novelle*, letters, biographies and advice manuals from this period illuminate how madness often pointed to the social mechanisms that stigmatised and alienated certain individuals. The systematic labelling of people reinforced cultural and social values and demarcated those who threatened or swayed away from these rules. These codifications acted as powerful social dividers and markers for the control and manipulation of identities.

The first chapter has revealed how madness in early fifteenth-century Florence was not considered a permanent condition of the mind, but more a range of behaviours that deviated from fixed social codes. Social commentary from Paolo da Certaldo, Giovanni Morelli, Leon Battista Alberti and Francesco Alberti show how the nature of social deviance also depended on social constructs such as ‘onore’ and ‘vergogna’. It highlights how social narratives of the past can reflect social values on a smaller scale. The *novella* provides access to these elements because it stages moral and social crises that test an individual’s sense of self. Brunelleschi’s status as trickster in the elaborate *beffa* personifies a social and cultural environment that functioned based on a range of overlapping and often demanding expectations. His was a character that publicly affirmed the hierarchical nature of social relations and the elements of ‘*virtù*’. Grasso’s story, played out on the streets of Florence, shows how identity depended on validation from neighbours, friends, acquaintances and patrons. His comments and interior struggles reveal a sense of anxiety and a strong feeling of urgency to have his ‘fama’ reinstated. This analysis shows that the Florentine community functioned based on a ritualistic system designed to ostracise those who deviated from social norms. This system cleansed the community of

its deviants and reinforced social and cultural traditions. Self-policing was a form of control over behaviour and a disciplinary measure designed to keep people's "desires" and "passions" in check.<sup>355</sup>

The second chapter has shown how conceptions of confinement and isolation emerged out of a critical awareness of the need to contain madness. Garzoni's '*pazzi incurabili*' enabled the projection of different forms of folly and were the ultimate critique on the human condition. They were a social necessity, a part of everyday life in the streets and *piazze* of Renaissance Italian towns and served to juxtapose 'social sin' against acceptable behaviour. However, there was a dark side to this view of madness; the 'bestiall' and 'diabolicall' individuals represented dangerous manifestations of madness. The spectacle of madness in terms of civic space, performance and the body highlight the purpose of the theatrical motif. It was often strategically utilised by some Renaissance contemporaries in a way that re-established the power dynamic between those in authority and those considered '*strano*' and '*perversa*'.

The final chapter highlighted how madness could be construed as acceptable and even desirable in certain intellectual circles in Italy throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Another interesting concept has arisen in the research of this topic: the language concerning madness such as "folly" and "melancholy" often formed fancy euphemisms for the dangerous reality of madness. Ficino's treatise and Vasari's biography reveals how cultural contributions to the myth of the melancholic genius directed attention away from the negative aspects of madness. However, as the letters and poems from these gifted melancholics have demonstrated, the social, cultural and financial obligations often weighed heavily in their minds and contravened any enjoyment of the benefits of melancholy.

---

<sup>355</sup> Ruggiero presents a similar idea in *Machiavelli in Love*, p. 18.

In connection with Martin's comments in the introduction to this thesis, the historian ventures further than defining attitudes and beliefs based 'on their own terms'. The historian acts as a 'translator' of these elements in to ascertain what they can reveal about the society in question.<sup>356</sup> Instead of presenting interpretations couched by medicalised assumptions of madness, and in place of value judgements concerning the nature of treatment for madness in this period, madness needs to be historicised in terms of its nature as a relative cultural and social construct. Madness and forms of madness in this period were 'social artefacts', situated within a historical context where its people decided what was '*strano*' based on cultural tradition and values.<sup>357</sup> This criterion for classifying madness reflects the way that Renaissance Italian societies functioned. I started this thesis with an approach framed by an interest in exploring concepts of madness and deviance in this period. What resulted was a complex investigation of the way that madness could incur a range of cultural and social connotations for different individuals. Analysing this inadequate and general term can reveal a more complex social and cultural reality, one that presents the possibility that madness never signified one, definable thing. It materialised in many different forms as shown in the cases of Magherita the Pyromaniac, Grasso the social deviant, Santino the joker, Ostilla the 'wicked' and Tasso the 'savage' melancholic genius.

---

<sup>356</sup> Peter Burke uses the term 'translator' in 'Cultures of translation in early modern Europe', in Peter Burke & R. Po-Chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>357</sup> Midelfort, 'Madness and the Problem of Psychological History', p. 12.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

(NOTE: sixteenth-century manuscripts were accessed through Early English Books Online and dissertations/theses are available through ProQuest on The University of Sydney's Library Website).

### PRIMARY SOURCES:

Alberti, Leon Battista, *The Family in Renaissance Florence: I Libri Della Famiglia* by Leon Battista

*Alberti*, Renée Neu Watkins, trans., (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969).

Ariosto, Ludovico, *Ludovico Ariosto: Orlando Furioso*, Guido Waldman, trans., (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Orlando Furioso (The Frenzy of Orlando): A Romantic Epic by Ludovico Ariosto Vol 1 & 2*, Barbara Reynolds, trans., (Harmondsworth and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975).

Armenini, Giovanni Battista, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, Edward J. Olszewski, ed., and trans., (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., 1977).

Boccaccio, Giovanni, *The Decameron*, Guido Waldman, trans., (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Bright, Timothie Dr., *A Treatise of Melancholy*, (London: Imprinted by Thomas Vautrollier, 1586).

Branca, Veronica, ed., *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*, Murtha Baca, trans., (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1999).

Brucker, Gene, ed., *The Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, Julia Martines, trans., (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967).

\_\_\_\_\_, ed., *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Firenze nel Rinascimento*, presentazione di Sergio Bertelli, (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1<sup>st</sup> edn., 1980).

- Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol I-VI*, Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicholas K. Kiessling & Rhonda L. Blair, eds., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
- Chambers, David & Brian Pullan with Jennifer Fletcher, *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630*, (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *Tusculan Disputations 3 & 4*, Margaret Graver, trans., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- Ficino, Marsilio, *Marsilio Ficino: Three Books on Life*, Carol V. Kaske & John R. Clark, trans., (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies in conjunction with The Renaissance Society of America, 1989).
- Garzoni, Tomaso, *Opere: Il teatro dei vari e diversi cervelli mondani, Il mirabile cornucopia consolatorio, L'ospidale dei pazzi incurabili, La sinagoga degli ignoranti, e una scelta di brani da La piazza universale*, a cura di Paolo Cherchi, (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Hospitall of Incurable Fooles: erected in English as neer the first Italian modell and platforme, as the vnskillfull hand of an ignorant architect could deuise*, Edward Blount, trans., (London: Printed by Edm. Bollifant, 1600).
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, *Niccolò Machiavelli's The Prince: On the Art of Power: The New Illustrated Edition of the Renaissance Masterpiece on Leadership*, W.K. Marriott, trans., (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2007).
- Manetti, Antonio, *The Fat Woodworker by Antonio Manetti*, Robert L. Martone & Valerie Martone, trans., (New York: Italica Press, 1991).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Fat Woodcarver*, in Lauro Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet: Six Tales in Historical Context*, Luigi Ballerini & Massimo Ciavolella, eds., Murtha Baca, trans., (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2004).



Petrarca, Francesco, *Familiar Letters*, in James Harvey Robinson, ed., *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, James Harvey Robinson, trans., (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), created August 1995, Hanover Historical Texts Project, Hanover College, via The Internet Medieval Sourcebook hosted by Fordham University, USA, <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/petrarch/pet03.html>>, viewed 1 August 2009.

Plato, *The Symposium*, M.C. Howatson & Frisbee C.C. Sheffield, eds., M.C. Howatson, trans., (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Radden, Jennifer, ed., *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Ramsden, E.H., ed., *The Letters of Michelangelo Volume I & II*, E.H. Ramsden, trans., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).

Salernitano, Masuccio, *The Novellino of Masuccio Volume 1 & 2*, W. G. Waters, trans., (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1895).

Scala, Flaminio, *Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte: Flaminio Scala's Il Teatro Delle Favole Rappresentative*, Henry F. Salerno, ed., and trans., (New York: Limelight Editions, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1989).

Tasso, Torquato, *Jerusalem Delivered: Gerusalemme liberata*, Anthony M. Esolen, ed., and trans., (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Vasari, Giorgio, *Lives of the Artists, Volume I*, George Bull, trans., (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1987).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Lives of the Artists, Volume II*, George Bull, trans., (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987).

## SECONDARY SOURCES:

### **Books:**

Ascoli, Albert Russell, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

Beattie, Cordelia, Anna Maslakovic & Sarah Rees Jones, eds., *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c. 850 – c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

Bivins, Roberta & John V. Pickstone, eds., *Medicine, Madness and Social History: Essays in Honour of Roy Porter*, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Blanchard, W. Scott, *Scholars' Bedlam: Menippean Satire in the Renaissance*, (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1995).

Brucker, Gene, *Florence: The Golden Age, 1138-1737*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

Burckhardt, Jacob, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1995).

Burke, Peter, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1987).

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

\_\_\_\_\_ & Roy Porter, eds., *The Social History of Language*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

\_\_\_\_\_ & R. Po-Chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

- Bynum, W.F., Roy Porter & Michael Shepherd, eds., *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, Volume 1, (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985-1988).
- Cipolla, Carlo M., *Public Health and the Medical Profession in the Renaissance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
- Connell, William J., ed., *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).
- Crum, Roger J. & John T. Paoletti, eds., *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Davis, Natalie Zemon, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).
- Davis, Robert C., *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Diefendorf, Barbara B. & Carla Hesse, eds., *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993).
- Eckstein, Nicholas A., *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence*, (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1995).
- Edgerton, Samuel Y., *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).
- Fink, Paul Jay & Allan Tasman, eds., *Stigma and Mental Illness*, (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1992).

- Finzsch, Norbert & Robert Jütte, eds., *Institutions of Confinement: Hospitals, Asylums, and Prisons in Western Europe and North America, 1500-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Foucault, Michel, *Mental Illness & Psychology*, Alan Sheridan, trans., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1976).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Richard Howard, trans., (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *History of Madness*, Jean Khalfa, ed., Jonathan Murphy & Jean Khalfa, trans., (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
- Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1959).
- Gouk, Penelope & Helen Hills, eds., *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine*, (Hants and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005).
- Gowland, Angus, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Graham, Thomas F., *Medieval Minds: Mental Health in the Middle Ages*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967).
- Grassi, Ernesto & Maristella Lorch, *Folly and Insanity in Renaissance Literature*, (New York: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1986).
- Greenblatt, Stephen, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

- Gutting, Gary, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2005).
- Herlihy, David & Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Castato of 1427*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1985).
- Hershkowitz, Debra, *The Madness of Epic: Reading Insanity from Homer to Statius*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
- Jones, Colin & Roy Porter, eds., *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine, and the Body*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
- Kent, D.V. & F.W. Kent, *Neighbours and Neighbourhood in Renaissance Florence: The District of the Red Lion in the Fifteenth Century*, (Locust Valley: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1982).
- Kent, Dale, *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance Florence*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- Kinsman, Robert S., ed., *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
- Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Lydia Cochrane, trans., (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).
- Kleinhenz, Christopher, ed., *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia, Volume 2, L-Z Index*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Klibansky, Raymond, Erwin Panofsky & Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964).
- Lloyd, G.E.R. & G.E.L. Owen, eds., *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses: Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Aristotelicum*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

- MacDonald, Michael, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Maggi, Armando, *Satan's Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).
- Malament, Barbara C., ed., *After the Reformation: essays in honor of J.H. Hexter*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).
- Mansueto, Donato & Elena Laura Calogero, eds., *The Italian Emblem: A Collection of Essays*, Volume 12, (Glasgow: Glasgow Emblem Studies, 2007).
- Martin, John Jeffries, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
- Martines, Lauro, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists 1390-1460*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Strong Words: Writing & Social Strain in the Italian Renaissance*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet: Six Tales in Historical Context*, Luigi Ballerini & Massimo Ciavolella, eds., Murtha Baca, trans., (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2004).
- Mc Elroy, Bernard, *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989).
- McClure, George W., *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Culture of Profession in Late Renaissance Italy*, (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2004).
- Merback, Mitchell B., *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
- Muir, Edward, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta & Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
- Najemy, John M., *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance: 1300-1550*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006).
- Neaman, Judith S., *Suggestion of the Devil: The Origins of Madness*, (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1975).
- Neely, Carol Thomas, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).
- Papio, Michael, *Keen and Violent Remedies: Social Satire and the Grotesque in Masuccio Salernitano's 'Novellino'*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).
- Parker, Patricia & David Quint, eds., *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
- Paster, Gail Kern, Katherine Rowe & Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

- \_\_\_\_\_, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- Peterson, David S. & Daniel E. Bornstein, eds., *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John M. Najemy*, (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008).
- Porter, Roy, *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1987).
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Madness: A Brief History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Radden, Jennifer, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Rosen, George, *Madness in Society: Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- Rubin, Patricia Lee, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).
- Rubinstein, Nicolai, ed., *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1968).
- Ruggiero, Guido, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).



\_\_\_\_\_, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Machiavelli in Love: Sex, Self, and Society in the Italian Renaissance*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

Salkeld, Duncan, *Madness and drama in the age of Shakespeare*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993).

Saunders, Corinne & Jane Macnaughton, eds., *Madness and Creativity in Literature and Culture*, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Schiesari, Juliana, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Schleiner, Winfried, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, (Wiesbaden: In Kommission bei Otto Harrassowitz, 1991).

Screech, M.A., *Montaigne & Melancholy: The Wisdom of the Essays*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2000).

Shweder, Richard A. & Robert A. LeVine, eds., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Siraisi, Nancy G., *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Training in Italian Universities after 1500*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Clock and the Mirror: Girolamo Cardano and Renaissance Medicine*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

- \_\_\_\_\_, *Medicine and the Italian Universities 1250-1600*, (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- Spierenburg, Pieter, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2007).
- Starn, Randolph, *Contrary Commonwealth: The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).
- Strocchia, Sharon T., *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
- Swain, Barbara, *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932).
- Szasz, Thomas S., *Ideology and Insanity: essays on the psychiatric dehumanization of man*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1983).
- Terpstra, Nicholas, ed., *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- Thiher, Allen, *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- Trexler, Richard C., *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, (New York: Academic Press Inc., 1980).
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1985).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence*, (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Studies, 1994).
- Weissman, Ronald F.E., *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, (New York: Academic Press Inc., 1982).

Wisch, Barbara & Diane Cole Ahl, eds., *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Wittkower, Rudolf & Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 1963).

Zatti, Sergio, *The Quest for Epic: From Ariosto to Tasso*, Dennis Looney, ed., Sally Hill & Dennis Looney, trans., (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2006).

Zimmerman, Susan & Ronald F.E. Weissman, eds., *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1989).

### **Journal Articles:**

Allen, Christopher, 'Caravaggio's Complexion: The Humoral Characterization of Artists in the Early Modern Period', *Intellectual History Review*, 18, no. 1 (March, 2008), pp. 61-74.

Britton, Piers, "'Mio malinconico, o vero... mio pazzo": Michelangelo, Vasari, and the Problem of Artists' Melancholy in Sixteenth-Century Italy', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 34, no. 3 (Fall, 2003), pp. 653-675.

Burke, Peter, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of the History of Mentalities', *History of European Ideas*, 7, no. 5 (1986), pp. 439-451.

Calabritto, Monica, 'Medical and Moral Dimensions of Feminine Madness: Madwomen in the Renaissance', *Forum Italicum*, 36, (Spring, 2002), pp. 26-51.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Garzoni's *L'Hospedale de' Pazzi incurabili* and the Ambiguous Relation between Word and Image in Sixteenth-Century *Imprese*', *Emblematica*, 13, (2003), pp. 97-130.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Review: [untitled]', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56, no. 4 (Winter, 2005), pp. 484-487.

- \_\_\_\_\_, 'A Case of Melancholic Humors and *Dilucida Intervalla*', *Intellectual History Review*, 18, no. 1 (March, 2008), pp. 139-154.
- Cohen, Elizabeth S., 'Seen and Known: Prostitutes in the Cityscape of Late-Sixteenth-Century Rome', *Renaissance Studies*, 12, no. 3 (1998), pp. 392-409.
- Foucault, Michel, 'Madness, the Absence of Work', Peter Stastny & Deniz Şengel, trans., *Critical Inquiry*, 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1995), pp. 290-298.
- Fullinwider, S.P., 'Insanity as the Loss of Self: The Moral Insanity Controversy Revisited', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 49, no. 1 (1975), pp. 87-101.
- Gordon, N.P.J., 'The murder of Buondelmonte: contesting place in early fourteenth century Florentine chronicles', *Renaissance Studies*, 20, no. 4 (2006), pp. 459-477.
- Gowland, Angus, 'The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy', *Past and Present*, no. 191 (May, 2006), pp. 77-120.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Ethics of Renaissance Melancholy', *Intellectual History Review*, 18, no. 1 (March, 2008), pp. 103-117.
- Groebner, Valentin & Pamela Selwyn, 'Losing Face, Saving Face: Noses and Honour in the Late Medieval Town', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 40 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 1-15.
- Horodowich, Elizabeth, 'The Gossiping Tongue: Oral Networks, Public Life and Political Culture in Early Modern Venice', *Renaissance Studies*, 19, no. 1 (2005), pp. 22-45.
- Lesnick, Daniel R., 'Insults and Threats in Medieval Todi', *Journal of Medieval History*, 17, (1991), pp. 71-89.
- MacNeil, Anne, 'The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 120, no. 2 (1995), pp. 195-215.

- Midelfort, H. C. Erik, 'Madness and the Problems of Psychological History in the Sixteenth Century', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 12, no. 1 (Spring, 1981), pp. 5-12.
- Muir, Edward, 'The 2001 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 55, no. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 1-18.
- Neely, Carol Thomas, 'Recent Work in Renaissance Studies: Psychology Did Madness Have a Renaissance?', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 44, no. 4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 776-791.
- Origo, Iris, 'The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Speculum*, 30, no. 3 (July, 1955), pp. 321-366.
- Paster, Gail Kern, 'The Unbearable Coldness of Female Being: Women's Imperfection and the Humoral Economy', *English Literary Renaissance*, 28, no. 3 (September, 1998), pp. 416-440.
- Porter, Roy, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below', *Theory and Society*, 14, no. 2 (1985), pp. 175-198.
- Scalzo, Joseph, 'Campanella, Foucault, and Madness in Late-Sixteenth Century Italy', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 359-372.
- Scott, Joan W., 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review*, 91, no. 5 (December, 1986), pp. 1053-1075.
- Trexler, Richard C., 'Florentine Theatre, 1280-1500. A Checklist of Performances and Institutions', *Forum Italicum*, 14, no. 3 (1980), pp. 454-475.
- Valesio, Paolo, 'The Language of Madness in the Renaissance', *Yearbook of Italian Studies*, 1, (1971), pp. 199-234.

### ***Dissertations/Theses:***

- Calabritto, Monica, 'The Subject of Madness: An Analysis of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso and Garzoni's L'hospedale de' Pazzi Incurabili', Ph.D., City University of New York, New York, (2001).
- Güven, Ferit, 'The Death of Philosophy and the Beginning of Madness: Plato, Hegel, Heidegger, and Foucault on Madness and Death', Ph.D., DePaul University, Chicago, (1999).
- Mellyn, Elizabeth Walker, 'A History of Madness, Medicine, and the Law in Italy, 1350-1650', Ph.D., Harvard University, Cambridge, (2007).
- Russell, Kara Molway, 'Best of Bedlam: Madness on the English Renaissance Stage', Ph.D., The University of Rochester, Rochester, (2001).
- Schmidt, Jeremy, 'Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in England 1580-1750', Ph.D., The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, (2004).
- Zininger, Jane M., 'Analysis of Melancholia: A Critical Study of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*', Ph.D., University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, (1950).

### ***Websites:***

- Bulhosen, Pat, Francesca Logi & Loredana Riu, eds., *The Pocket Oxford Italian Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 2006. *Oxford Reference Online*,  
 <[http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK\\_SEARCH.html?book=t66a&subject=s16](http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK_SEARCH.html?book=t66a&subject=s16)>, viewed 24 April 2009.
- Hoad, T. F., ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 2003, *Oxford Reference Online*,  
 <[http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK\\_SEARCH.html?book=t27&subject=s8](http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK_SEARCH.html?book=t27&subject=s8)>, viewed 24 June 2009.

Morwood, James, ed., *The Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2003,  
*Oxford Reference Online*,  
<[http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK\\_SEARCH.html?book=t131a&subject=s16](http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/views/BOOK_SEARCH.html?book=t131a&subject=s16)>, viewed 18 May 2009.

Nederman, Cary J., *Niccolò Machiavelli*, created September 13 2005/updated September 8 2009,  
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, USA, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/machiavelli/#3>>,  
viewed 1 October 2009.

**Film:**

*Madness by Dr. Jonathan Miller: To Define True Madness*, (1991), dir. Richard Denton, British  
Broadcasting Corporation: Education & Training, (60 minutes).