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'THE FILIPINO KOMEDYA AND THE ITALIAN MAGGIO
CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELATED GENRES
OF POPULAR MUSIC THEATRE

Linda Barwick

'This paper argues that the Filipino komedya and the Italian maggio, farflung contemporary continuations of performance traditions associated with the chivalrous romance, embody the intercultural contact and conflict that have characterised their histories. The chivalrous romances are narratives of intercultural contacts of various sorts between East and West Mediterranean. Their structure typically opposes two warring courts, which nevertheless are frequently linked by amorous intrigues and the consequent birth of children of mixed ancestry.

The genre has always been polyglot and hybrid, existing in numerous forms (both verse and prose, both literary and orally transmitted), and in Medieval and Renaissance times appealed to both popular and court audiences, especially in Spain and Italy. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, new romances ceased to be written by 'respectable' authors, but reprints of the most popular literary romances and reworkings of the stories in various forms have continued to circulate in the cheap popular press until the present day, and popular tradition also has perpetuated, often in conjunction with the use of writing, performance traditions associated with the romance. While in present-day Spain itself the two principal forms in which such performance traditions survive are ballads drawn from the old romances and sword dances depicting battles between Christian and Muslim armies, full-scale dramas on these themes are performed only in Spain's former colonies and in European areas once under its influence. Later in this paper I argue that these theatrical genres bear the marks of attempts by missionising religious orders to use them as an instrument of propaganda to delight and indoctrinate the masses. These genres can thus be defined as 'cross-cultural' in a number of different senses, mediating between high art culture and popular culture, between written and performance media, between the sacred and the secular, between colonisers and colonised, as well as between different nations and language groups.

After introducing case studies drawn from the Filipino komedya and the Italian maggio, the historical background of performance traditions associated with the chivalrous romance will be surveyed, including review of contemporary survivals of these traditions in a number of performance media and the use of
writing in these and other popular traditions. More detailed information on textual, musical and dramaturgical aspects of the two case studies will follow. The probable role played by missionary orders of the Catholic church in promulgating these genres will be briefly discussed, and the paper concludes with an argument for the necessity of incorporating cross-cultural and historical perspectives in attempts to provide context for the study of these dramatic forms.

**Case study 1. The Filipino komedyana at Burgos (Ilocos Sur)**

Scenario: Aragon and Turkey are at war. The hero, Floramante, lost son of the King of Babylon, has come in disguise to the court of the king of Aragon to contest a tourney for the hand of the Aragonese princess, Pinarosa. Floramante fights the Aragonese general in a choreographed battle with fighting sticks, to the accompaniment of a brass band.1

The performers are an amateur troupe, mainly composed of farmers, performing on an outdoor stage at the annual town fiesta, in Burgos, Ilocos Sur (North Luzon, Philippines) on 17 February 1993 (see Figure 1). They do not memorise the text, but rather perform with the aid of a prompt, who feeds them their lines in the course of the performance. Komedyana performances traditionally take place once a year, at the annual town fiesta, and may last up to three days and nights.

The text, in octosyllabic quatrains, was written by recently deceased local author Tomas Daperoza in the local language, Ilocano (with a liberal sprinkling of archaic Hispanic-derived expressions).

**Case study 2. The Italian maggio at Piazza al Serchio (LU)**

Scenario: Armenia and Syria are at war. The hero, Eronte, king of Armenia, has come in disguise to the court of the king of Syria to contest a tourney for the hand of the Syrian princess, Leonide. Eronte fights the king's nephew, Adelino, in a choreographed duel to the accompaniment of a small ensemble of violin, guitar and piano accordion.2

This amateur performance company is mainly composed of marble quarry workers from a number of different villages surrounding the municipal centre of Piazza al Serchio. Here they perform on an outdoor stage on 23 August 1993 at Variliano, a small town in the Garfagnana valley in province of Lucca, Tuscany (see Figure 2). Maggie performances, once associated with May Day, now take place on summer Sunday afternoons at a number of different local venues, and usually last about three hours. The written text is not memorised, but rather fed to the performers a line at a time, by an on-stage prompt.

The text, in octosyllabic quininas (5-line stanzas; 4-line stanzas are also used for some texts), was written in Italian with some archaic and dialectic features by the local author Giuseppe Coletti in 1979.
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Although these two case studies display numerous features specific to their local tradition, significant parallels in subject matter, metrical form and performance style between the komedia and the maggio suggest that they are related, despite their wide geographical and cultural separation. While the available historical evidence supports this view, it shows that the nature of such a relationship is far from simple.

**Historical documents of performance traditions associated with romances**

Although most critical work on the romance genre has treated it as a literary tradition, historical records from Mediterranean Europe testify that the ways in which the written romance texts were used have more often than not included performance practices of various sorts. Without going into the much vexed question of whether Medieval manuscript versions of Carolingian romances derive from an original oral tradition, it is clear from such features as their division into cantos that they were designed with associated performance in mind rather than silent reading. Documented performance practices range from reading aloud to a group (common when there was limited literacy), to sung declamation of various sorts, to presentations of characters from the romances in tableaux and processions, to full-scale re-enactments of episodes from the romances. The earliest reference to such a re-enactment regards a mimed performance of a story from the Arthurian cycle mentioned by Aelred of Rievaulx in the middle of the thirteenth century.

**Verse forms and associated melodies**

Most of the metrical forms employed by Medieval poets, and not just the romances, seem to have had orally transmitted conventional musical settings (associated, I stress, with the *metrical form* and not the particular item), melodies that were so widely known that there was no necessity to write them down. These verse forms and their associated melodies were often known and used for both literary texts and popular ‘oral’ compositions. The two metrical forms most frequently used for the verse romances were the octosyllabic quatrain (which we have already encountered in the komedia and the maggio) and, especially in Italy, the ottava (eight hendecasyllabic lines rhyming ABABABCC).

**Octosyllabic quatrain**

The first written evidence of the octosyllabic romance metre in Spanish (in 1421) appears to derive from popular tradition. As well as serving as the standard metre for the Spanish literary verse romance and its shorter descendant the sung ballad or *canción*, the octosyllabic quatrain was also used by seventeenth century Spanish dramatists such as Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca.
for their secular comedias and sacred autas sacramentales. In the sixteenth
century, when the Spanish literary romance was at its most popular, a number
of court composers, again reportedly drawing on popular models, set melodies
used for octosyllabic romance texts either for solo voice and vihuela (Navarre,
Pisador, Fuenllana) or as the canus firmus in polyphonic vocal compositions
(Milan, Encina and others).

Ottava rima
The classic ottava was and still is used widely in Italy for a number of
purposes besides the romance. The most famous chivalrous romances in
ottava rima are of course Ariosto's Orlando furioso and Tasso's Gerusalemme
liberata. There are numerous testimonies from the sixteenth to the nineteenth
centuries of the common people in Venice and Rome singing the chivalrous
verse epics of Ariosto and Tasso (as documented by Montaigne as early as
1581) — a practice no doubt facilitated by the existence of numerous other
popular songs in the same stanzaic form. Early musical settings, again
reportedly based on popular practice, suggest that a two line melody was
repeated four times to cover a complete stanzza.

Many early operas also drew on chivalrous epics for their plots (for
example, Jacopo Peri's Lo sposalizio di Medoro ed Angelina (1610), Caccini's
La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina (1625), and Monteverdi's
Combattimento di Tancred e Clorinda (1624) and Armida abbandonata (1626),
as well as later works by Handel, Gluck, Lully and Haydn). Use of the ottava
form, too, continued into early opera, although the extensive melodic repetition
documented for popular forms was avoided in operatic settings. One famous
example is Don Alfonso's aria (act II, aria xiii) on the fickleness of women, the
source of the title of the Da Ponte/Mozart opera, Cosi fan tutte.

Dance

Another performance tradition associated with the chivalrous romance for
which we have historical records from Medieval and Renaissance periods is the
moresca sword dance (also known as mazurca or balletta). Morescas seem
to have been used for interludes in many Medieval and Renaissance theatrical
performances, and not just romances, although the dances' reenactment of
battles between Moors and Christians seems particularly apt for the romance.
Thoinot Arbeau gives illustrations of sword positions and music and explicit
instructions for the movements of the dancers in his 1588 treatise, Orchesographic.

Survivals in popular culture

In Mediterranean Europe today, and in various other parts of the world with
historical links to Spain, these performance traditions survive in a number of
different forms. There are reports of romance texts being sung, chanted and even danced in Spain and Central and South America, practices that are also documented for the Philippines. Sephardic Jews, expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century, also maintain an oral tradition of sung romances.

In Central Italy, sung ottavas drawn from Ariosto and Tasso may still be heard, and the same verse form and melodic modules are used for the improvised ottava a contrasto. The ottava is also the standard verse form of the braccio, sung popular theatre of southern Tuscany, which like the octosyllabic maggio of northern Tuscany, draws on a variety of published and unpublished sources including both prose and verse romances. Similarly, in the Philippines some kamedya texts are performed in dodecaisyllabic metre. In Italy octosyllabic quatrains are widely used in religious carolling songs as well as in the maggio and in sung religious dramas which often use similar melodies and performance techniques to the maggio.

Puppet theatres of northern and southern Italy also presented chivalrous themes and characters using both prose and verse, and like the maggio and the kamedya, often included incidental music to accompany battle scenes. Full performance of the epic cycles could take many weeks of nightly performances. The tradition still continues in Sicily, and has been documented in recent times in both Northern and Southern Italy.

Morena sword dances are still to be found in popular tradition in a number of areas along the Tyrrenian coast, including Piedmont, Tuscany, Lazio, and Campania. In addition to the rhythmic dance-like movements incorporated in the sword-fighting encounters in the maggio, separate morena dances have until quite recently been presented after maggio performances in the Garfagnana area. There is a remarkable similarity between the small heart-shaped shield and short wooden sword shown in Arbeau’s 1588 illustrations of morena dancers with the props used by performers in the Tuscan maggio today.

Use of writing in popular traditions associated with the chivalrous romance

Justifiable interest has been focussed on the survival in Europe of ‘pure’ oral forms and techniques of oral composition, but until recently the ways in which popular culture has used written texts in conjunction with orally transmitted performance practices has been relatively neglected. The kamedya, the maggio, and other Italian dramatic forms such as the braccio and puppet theatre all use written texts adapted from written versions of the romances, among other literary sources. Such adaptations frequently involve the recasting of the literary text into a new written form to serve as a performance script (for example, the hendecasyllabic ottava rima of Ariosto’s and Tasso’s chivalrous epics are recast in the octosyllabic quatrain of the maggio). In Italy, not only
are new narratives still being generated on the old models of the chivalrous romance, but narratives from other sources that lend themselves to similar treatment are also used. For example, maggio performances in recent years have been based on a variety of sources, including a fifteenth century Tuscan prose romance, a B grade TV 'toga saga' movie, and Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe. All these scripts, recast in octosyllabic quatrains or quinelines, are performed using the standard orally-transmitted maggio melody.

It is clear that maggio authors must have had access to a wide range of printed literature. For the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Giovanni Giannini has documented 76 prose titles and a massive 654 poetry titles (of which 31 are maggio scripts) published in cheap editions by various small printing companies. Many of these titles are chivalrous romances, whose popularity among the lower classes evidently persisted long after their heyday as 'art' literature. Such works, which have also been documented for previous centuries, found markets not only in the city but also in the countryside via the cantareros and other travelling salesmen who sold these works at country markets and the like, usually advertised by their own performances of the material.

Printed works, however, probably represent only a small proportion of the written material circulating in popular milieux. Certainly for the maggio and bruscello handwritten copies seem to have been the main form in which scripts circulated. Although some of these can be directly related to versions from the popular press, there is no evidence of printed circulation of the vast majority of the maggio scripts documented for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since the 1970s, printed booklets of maggio texts have been sold at performances and are used by some members of the audience to follow the action.

In the Philippines, too, there was wide circulation of chivalrous romances in the form of popular chapbooks. See further below under 'Religious links' for a summary of the historical literature on circulation of these texts in the Philippines.

Some idea of the circulation and practical use of performance scripts can be gained from more detailed analysis of the two case studies presented earlier.

Case study 1. The Filipino komedya at Burgos (Ilocos Sur)

The Burgos komedya text, 'Kahibiang ni Floramante' (Life story of Floramante), was reportedly written in 1955 especially for a performance in early 1976 and exists in several typewritten roneoed copies, one of which has been loaned to me by Dr Raul Perierra. This text is used only by the prompt, and is not copied for audience use (see Figure 3). Several other komedya manuscripts reportedly written by the same author, Tomas Daproza, have been lost or
Translation: Oh my heart where formerly / fate was most bitter / I will not be sorrowful and sad / but have patience and perseverance.

Figure 4: Intonation pattern used for the first stanza of 'Kabihag ni Pia Ramako' as performed by Armin Gabanleng. January 1976 (recording and English translation: Ray Pimentel).
destroyed since his death (the tropical climate and termites mean that paper deteriorates quickly under normal conditions). 49

According to the Philippine scholar Mario Rosal, Ilocos Sur (the province in which Burgos is located) has been a centre of production of komedya texts that now circulate in neighbouring provinces of Northern Luzon. 50 Although the earliest documentation of komedya performances in Ilocos is not until 1882, Rosal speculates that the practice must have spread much earlier, probably contemporaneously with the other Luzon provinces and Cebu, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 51 Almost all the commonplace plot devices described by Rosal as typical of the Ilocano komedya are present in Daproz's 'Kabibsiag ni Floramante'. 52

Musical organisation of the text

Although the komedyantes of Burgos do not sing the komedya text, there is an intonation pattern to which the performers should adhere. 53 The lines are read two at a time by the prompter, 54 and then repeated by the performers (see Figure 4). At certain points in the plot, unscripted songs, usually love duets taken from popular music or sarsuwela, 55 are performed unaccompanied, often in two-part harmony. A brass band composed of semi-professional musicians plays set melodies (ten in all) to accompany different movement patterns performed by the characters (choreographed entrances, exits, and various sorts of fighting). The prompt cues these melodies via a system of whistles and the music ceases as soon as the performers have completed their movement pattern (rather than at the end of a musical section).

Case study 2. The Italian maggio at Piazza al Serchio (L.U)

Maggio texts display a high degree of redundancy in plot and character, and make liberal use of metrical formulae. These formal features, which are also found in many of their popular literary antecedents, 56 have been described as characteristic of oral epics, 57 but it may be more appropriate to see them as characteristic of popular texts designed for performance, regardless of whether their mode of transmission involves writing. 58

To give some idea of the processes of production and use of texts for performance, I'll go into some detail on the known provenance and use of the maggio text 'Eronite'. The story of King Eronite, who wins the Syrian princess Leonide in a tourney, has circulated widely in the Tuscan maggio area and exists in numerous manuscript versions. 59 This particular version was adapted from an anonymous typescript held in the personal archives of Giuseppe Bernardi of Barga, who had obtained it (stage 5 in Figure 5) from the nearby town of Fabbriche di Vallico. 60

This manuscript formed the basis of the text written by Giuseppe Coltelli in 1979 especially for the company of Vagli di Sopra-Roggio, in which he was
an actor (stage 2 in Figure 5). As is common in the maggio tradition in the Garfagnana-Lunigiana area, the text was reportedly completely rewritten by Coltelli, respecting only the original plot. In 1987, another maggio company, Regnano-Pieve San Lorenzo-Codiponte, performed a second adaptation of the original manuscript, which had been copied by Giacomo Tognoli, organiser of the maggio company of Gorlignano (stage 3 in Figure 5), before being adapted to suit the Regnano-Pieve San Lorenzo-Codiponte company by members Adamo Bertolucci and Giuseppe Malaspina (stage 4 in Figure 5). This adaptation reportedly stayed close to the original, consisting principally in the addition of several introductory stanzas addressed to the audience and of a number of ottavas, which are used at moments of dramatic intensity and which provide scope for virtuosic display by singers. These days, the contraction of the population base in this area (up to 80% of the population has emigrated) frequently leads to coalescence of several companies, with the result that nearly all performers are 'stars', each of whom demands their own ottava.

Several years later, in 1992, the company of Piazza al Serchio performed its own adaptation, this time based on Coltelli's version of the text (stage 5 in Figure 5). This adaptation stayed very close to Coltelli's original, with the addition of some extra ottavas to accommodate the 'stars' from the Regnano-Pieve San Lorenzo company who have recently come to form part of the Piazza al Serchio group (stage 6 in Figure 5).

In the course of the 1992 season, I observed that several further amendments were made to the printed text by the Piazza al Serchio company, some of them apparently to capitalise on particularly successful moments in the drama. In fact, all the changes I documented appeared to be responding primarily to the particularities of performance practice (including relationship to the audience) rather than to any desire to produce a coherent literary text.

Musical organisation of the text
Maggio texts are sung to a partly improvised melodic contour, the precise details of which vary from singer to singer and from region to region. The most stable melodic elements are the line final pitches, prolonged by the singer as the prompt whispers the next line. The melodic contour corresponding to the octosyllabic quatrains of quintina that forms the 'recitative' is repeated for each of the one hundred and twenty to two hundred and fifty stanzas that make up a complete performance, interspersed with sporadic use of the two special metrical forms, the ottava and the arietta, which occur at especially dramatic or poignant moments of the performance. Like the recitative, these melodies are semi-improvised around a fixed melodic framework (see Figure 6). The five lines of the stanza, rhyming ABBCC, are divided into two sections, composed of two and three lines respectively, by instrumental interludes played by the violin and accordion. The first two lines cadence on the tonic and the supertonic respectively (the first and the second degrees of the scale).
Figure 5: Map showing known circulation of the text 'Eraste' in the Garfagnana valley.
Figure 6: Maggie recitativo (quintina form). Stanza 72 of ‘Erondo’, as performed by Luciano Tramontana in the part of Erondo, recorded at Piazza al Serchio, 5 July 1992 by Linda Barwick (transcription: Jim Franklin). Translation: ‘If you want to see your daughter / I will show you the way to my house / But if instead by a different path / you wish to travel unaccompanied / you can leave and live in peace.’
while the last three lines all cadence on the tonic. When the four-line quastina stanza is used, the singer omits the melodic material covered in the fourth line of the quintina.

Staging in the komedy and the maggio

Many aspects of performance practice and staging are common to both komedy and maggio. Most obvious is the presence of an on-stage prompt in everyday dress. Performers make no attempt to learn their lines, but rather rely on the prompt; both komedyantes and maggianti frown on memorisation of the text as it is thought to distract from the performers’ attention to the style of declamation. In Italy the prompt may also make suggestions on appropriate gesture and stage movements, as well as seeing to the introduction of appropriate props, which are usually minimal. In both areas, the two courts are distinguished by colour of dress: the Moors wear red or yellow, while the Christians wear blue, black, or green. In the Philippines, the two sides are further distinguished by their style of movement: the Christians enter with a slow march step, while the Moors have a fast and relatively complicated jig. When the Moors convert to Christianity, they adopt the Christian movement mode. The presence of clowns, who make fun of the characters and make ribald remarks in local dialect to the audience, is another common feature to both traditions, although in Italy only one Emilian maggio company still maintains this tradition.

There are also a number of parallels in organisation and use of the stage space between the komedy and the maggio, most notably in the conceptual division of the stage space into two sides, each belonging to one of the warring camps. These similarities, as well as many differences, are best illustrated by reference to examples drawn from our two case studies.

Case study 1. The Filipino komedy at Burgos (Ilocos Sur)

In Burgos, the komedyantes used the municipal stage located in the main plaza of Burgos. Constructed of concrete, the stage is raised about a metre above the level of the audience. A series of steps enable easy passage from the stage to the audience area, and the komedyantes made use of a space immediately in front of the stage when necessary (as in the opening procession and for an elaborate war scene). The stage itself is covered by a curving canopy, but the audience is without any protection from the weather. In addition to two long wings extending several metres on either side, the stage also features at the back a raised podium reached by two steps, and flanked by two side entrances.

The stage space is divided up into the two rival courts. Plate 1 shows the right-hand, Christian, side of the stage, marked by the label ‘Reyno iti Aregonia’ (kingdom of Aragon); the chairs were the only scenic props used. Plate 2 shows the left-hand, Moorish, side of the stage, marked by the label ‘Emperio iti Turkia’ (Turkish empire). A third sign, placed in the middle of the stage.
and visible on the extreme left of Plate 2, reads 'Lugar dagiti Enghantada' (Place of the Enchantress) and represents an intermediate space, the enchanted woods ruled over by Cleopatra, the lost princess of Babylon. The two side entrances, which can be seen immediately behind the Aragonese and Turkish stage labels, are used exclusively by characters from the relevant side, except that Cleopatra and her brother Floramante always enter and leave from the Aragonese side despite their apparently neutral status. The wings on the stage are used for the brass band (stage left), and a public address system (stage right) with some audience members on both wings. Amplification, by means of a microphone suspended over the performers' heads, was necessary to compete with a fairground (complete with sideshows and loud music) that was installed immediately adjacent to the stage area for the week of the annual fiesta. Although in Burgos the komedyantes' use of an existing public stage means that the stage is organised frontally, past evidence suggests that theatre spaces could also be organised more or less in the round.84

Case study 2. The Italian maggio at Piazza al Serchio (LU)

Maggio staging must adapt to a number of different venues, as the company tours the performance to various towns. Most performance venues are located outdoors in a shaded place on the outskirts of a village; some are purpose-built low stages, sometimes also used for other community events such as dancing, others are simply flat clearings in the forest. When a scheduled performance is threatened by rain, the venue is sometimes transferred undercover, and some night performances may be given in an open space such as a piazza in the centre of the village, which during the day would be too hot for the comfort of performers and spectators.

Plates 3 and 4 show the performance space used by the Piazza al Serchio company for their performance of La vendetta di Falalme on 4 July 1993. This took place in the middle of the town of Piazza al Serchio, in a small pine grove located near the elementary school and usually used as a children's playground. The playground equipment was moved to one side, and was used by spectators as seating.

Plate 3 shows a group of Christian characters (in this maggio identified as Syrians) in front of their court, symbolised by a small table draped with a cloth bearing a shield with a cross superimposed on two crossed swords. The prompt, in white shirt and black trousers, can be seen feeding the lines to one of the performers, and on the left, approximately in the middle of one long side of the stage area, is seated the piano accordionist (the violinist is out of the picture immediately to the accordionist's right). The chair in the foreground on the right will later be used by one of the performers to 'die' into, so as not to dirty his costume.

Plate 4 shows a group of Muslim characters (in this play identified as Egyptians) enacting a scene in their court, which is symbolised by the cloth
The Filipino komedya and the Italian maggior

bearing the Muslim symbol of crescent moon above crossed scimitars. Seated behind the table can be seen one of the performers (the Muslim princess), who is not required in this scene. Seated to the right of the group is the Christian king, who has been captured by the Egyptians and is ‘sleeping’ in a chair representing his prison cell. Audience members are located on all four sides, and it is noticeable that the active performers cluster in inward-facing groups rather than playing outwards to the audience as would be expected in a proscenium arch theatre. It is only in the introductory and final stanzas that the audience is directly addressed.

Religious links

Now let me reom to more detailed information on the historical links between the komedya and the maggior. Numerous commentators, both in the Philippines and in Italy, have noted the often moralising messages of these dramas, and suggested involvement of the Church in its promulgation. This involvement can be documented both in regard to the literary genre of the romance, and in regard to its performance as a drama. Intriguingly, the first documentation of the maggior genre in Europe is not until a full century later than the earliest secure dating of the komedya in the Philippines in the early seventeenth century.

In the course of the sixteenth-century Spanish craze for literary romance, priests wrote numerous religious parody romances, often allegorical in construction (King Arthur and the Knights of the round table, for example, might symbolise the apostles at the last supper, and so on). It was these religious romances that were later prohibited by the Inquisition, while their often amoral secular counterparts were spared.

Despite a royal decree in 1531 forbidding the importation into the American colonies of ‘idle and profane’ romances, and a further decree forbidding romances from being printed, sold or read in the New World, numerous shipments were documented by the end of the sixteenth century. In the Philippines, the verse romances were reportedly introduced as didactic tools by the evangelistic missionary orders who were mainly responsible for colonisation.

One of the earliest texts in Ilocano (the Philippine language of the komedya I have been discussing) was a catechism translated into Ilocano in the early seventeenth century by the Augustinian priest Francisco Lopez in collaboration with Pedro Bukaneg, a blind Ilocano assistant. The work included several romances translated into Ilocano, which, significantly for my argument, maintained the original rhyme and metre. According to the introductory note, the romances were included “to move the Ilocanos to fervor and to introduce some seriousness of tone which was allegedly lacking in Ilocano poetry in those days.”
Evidence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also indicates that the evangelistic missionary orders consciously developed the use of spectacle and theatre as a conversion tool, where possible integrating elements of indigenous traditions as a way of attracting and indoctrinating converts while supplanting pagan beliefs and practices. In 1637, the first recorded secular *komedy* on the theme of Christian/Muslim conflict, written in Spanish by Fr Jerónimo Pérez to celebrate a Spanish victory over the Muslim leader Corralat, was performed in Cavite province. But as early as 1602, there are reports of missionaries staging religious plays in the local languages.

By the nineteenth century there was wide circulation in the Philippines of chapbook versions of verse (or ‘metrical’) romances in both octosyllabic and dodecasyllabic metres, which drew on and elaborated the chivalrous tales in local Philippine languages. Although the verse romances seem to have been primarily designed for reading aloud, there are clear parallels in subject matter and metrical form with *komedy* texts. To judge by one text reproduced by Eugenio, a very high proportion of stanzas in verse romances were in the form of dialogue, so that, as reported also for the Tuscan *braccio* dramas, one way of converting these written texts for performance as a drama would be simply to omit the narrative stanzas. This suggestion is lent further weight by the similarities between a melody used for singing of twelve-syllable verse romances in 1883 reproduced by Eugenio and that used for declamation of the twelve-syllable *komedy* in Cavite.

The same metres as used in the romances and the *komedy* were also used in religious dramas, which are still performed today in various places all over the Philippines. As for the secular verse romances and *komedy*, Filipino religious *payao* readings and dramas display a ‘partnering’ of written texts used for chanted reading (in the case of the practice of *palusahan*) and the extended dramatisation of the stories in full-scale theatrical presentations (the Lenten dramas known as *isakulu* or *payao*). Such performances also share a number of dramaturgical characteristics with the *komedy*, such as the use of brass band music for entrances and exits of characters. Religious dramatisations in verse (*sacre rappresentazioni*) are also still continued in the same areas of Central America and Italy where secular forms cognate with the *komedy* are performed, and it seems that these religious and secular genres may need to be considered together.

In summary, it seems that both verse romance and dramatic spectacle were used by missionary orders as tools of cultural indoctrination from the seventeenth century on, and that the *komedy* genre represents one survival of these practices in contemporary Filipino popular culture, now without any official support from the Church. Indeed many features of contemporary *komedy* plots (such as the use of magical powers) are contrary to religious teachings.
The Garfagnana and Emilia, the areas of Italy where the maggio now flourishes, were also subjected to various missionary campaigns by Jesuit priests in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in an effort to stamp out such pagan practices as May Day celebrations as well as to re-establish the authority and orthodoxy of the Church. In doing so, many priests were inspired by news of the conversion practices of their brethren in the Far East. Thus, the counter-Reformation in Europe drew on the practical experiences of the missionary orders in the Americas and Asia. Although it is possible that lack of documentation rather than lack of performance tradition accounts for the discrepancy of date between the earliest documentation of the komedya in 1637 and that of the maggio, which cannot be securely dated before 1726, another possible explanation is that the particular combination of drama, sung recitation and dance seen in the maggio and the komedya crystallized first in the colonies before being introduced for similar didactic purposes into 'backward' regions of Europe.

Conclusion

The discussion so far may give some idea of the complexity of establishing a historical context for these dramatic forms. As a research exercise, it is rendered particularly difficult because of the hybrid and international nature of the form and its multiple links with other written and performance traditions. Like its wandering chivalrous heroes, it has respected neither linguistic nor national boundaries, let alone academic categories of discipline and genre. Here we can see that, as Edward Said has argued, 'all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic'.

While acknowledging the importance of performances in articulating deeply felt attachments to tradition and to landscape, I believe it is imperative not to lose sight of the fundamental 'entanglement' of these seemingly remote agricultural communities in global processes of cultural contact and change.

This was as true in the seventeenth century as it is today. For example, the Spanish were not the only foreigners in early Manila. Although most took Spanish names, many of the early Jesuits in the Philippines were from other Catholic areas in Europe, including the Italian provinces. In fact, one of the earliest Jesuit arrivals in the Philippines (in the year 1601) was the priest Angelo Armano, who came from the diocese of Lucca (in which province the maggie survives today). Among other duties, Armano directed the Jesuit College of San José in Manila for some time, where in 1611 there was held a literary competition that gives some idea of the cultural melting pot that Manila must have been at the time. Some 250 compositions were entered, in the Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Basque, and Mexican languages,
as well as in the Philippine languages Tagalog and Bisayan. Today, the export of young women as domestic labour, the principal source of foreign income in the Philippines, touches nearly every community. In Bungus, many women between 30-45 are or have been overseas for extended periods in Singapore, Hong Kong or the Middle East, where they can earn far more as domestic servants than is possible for even a well-paying job in the Philippines. In other nearby communities, the women go instead to Italy or other European countries. 49

Intercultural contact has always been a fact of life, too, in the Garfagnana, the Italian area in which I recorded the maggio. In this area of marginal economic viability, seasonal migration of part of the population was a feature of life for many centuries, as flocks were taken to winter in the more temperate climate of the southern Tuscan coast, and labourers hired themselves out as harvest workers in the more fertile country on the Emilian side of the Appennines or as charcoal burners in Corsica. 50 Although there would never have been any real threat of Moorish invasion of this remote mountain valley, Garfagnini may have encountered Turkish pirates along the southern Tuscan coast, where they took their flocks to winter, and would certainly have heard of the exploits of the notorious Christian pirates, the knights of San Stefano, in nearby Pisa. 51 This century, most emigration has been long-term, to industrial areas of Northern Europe as well as to the Americas and to Australia. These historical processes of engagement with extra-Garfagnino communities have led within the valley to an extraordinarily diversified popular culture, including children’s playground rhymes of Latin American origin and funeral laments of Corsican derivation. 52 Throughout their diaspora, Garfagnini continue to maintain a sense of their ‘imagined community’, 53 including a sentimental attachment to the particular village of their affiliation in the Garfagnana, and, often, to the maggio as a characteristic local tradition (many Australian Garfagnini, for example, own private recordings of maggio performances). As I have pointed out elsewhere, “it is surely no accident that the most typically Garfagnino genre, . . . maggio, . . . is centrally concerned with the problematics of cross-cultural interaction.” 54

Perhaps one reason for the readiness with which this form has entered into popular tradition in so many different cultural contexts is the fundamental ambiguity inherent in its dramatic structure. Even if the overt moral message of the narrative is that the Christians always win, the stage, and the action, is divided equally between the two warring courts. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that in Spain’s former colonies, audiences seem to identify with the Moors, either overtly (as is reported for Mexico, where the Moros are the feted heroes of the piece) 55 or covertly (as seems implied by the great pleasure apparently taken by Philippine performers and audiences in the elaborate dance steps that mark the Moro characters). Coloniser and colonised
can each see represented in these dramas both cultural Self and cultural Other.

Let me end by attempting what will be perhaps neither the first nor the last interpretation of the enigmatic title of this symposium. Drama masks time, not only by substituting the time-frame of the dramatic event for that of everyday life, but also in the sense that living performance traditions actualise the past in the present, make relevant to contemporaries themes and characters originating in past contexts that were sometimes very different. This transcendent integrating quality of drama may explain why, in both Italy and the Philippines, the seemingly antiquated dramatic forms discussed are felt to have a special connection with the experiences of the performers today, and even to represent what it means to be Ilocano or Garfagnino. Perhaps paradoxically, in their contemporary contexts in both Italy and the Philippines these performance traditions have been used to assert and articulate the uniqueness of local and national identities. From the perspective of contemporary performers, both Filipino and Italian, the issues addressed by these dramas are vitally relevant to contemporary experiences of intercultural contact and conflict.

Conversely, time masks drama, in that the paucity of past recordings of performance practice often leaves us with only indirect evidence of what those past contexts of drama may have been. In the case of the romance, critics have been able to treat it as a purely literary genre, ignoring or devaluing the strong evidence of its parallel but largely undocumented performance history. What evidence we have been able to piece together of the history of the various performance practices implicated in the genre suggests that cross-cultural processes of contact, conflict and exchange have been associated with the chivalrous romance from its very beginning, and have continued to operate at every stage of its wanderings.
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Notes


2. In the symposium presentation, video footage was shown of the kamayda 'Kabibang ni Floramante', by Tomas Daperoa, performed by the kamaydaster of Burgos (Ilocos Sur, Philippines), led by Benjamino Escobar, at Burgos 17.2.93. Hi-8 video recording by Linda Barwick (Barwick field tapes VT93/3-7). (Fieldwork undertaken in conjunction with Dr Raul Pertsierra, University of New South Wales.)

3. In the symposium presentation, video footage was shown of the maggiore 'Eronic', by Giuseppe Cotelli (1979) performed by the Piazza al Serchio company, led by Andrea Bertei, at Varliano (LU), 23.8.92. Hi-8 video recording by Linda Barwick (Barwick field tapes VT92/23-25).


5. J.J. Duggan, 'Oral Performance, Writing and the Textual Tradition of the Medieval Epic in the Romance Languages: The Example of the Song of Roland', Parergon, NS 2 (1984), 79-95; and W.A. Trindade, "The


Thomas, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry*, p. 179, cites contemporary accounts of court performances in Flanders 1549 and Barcelona 1613.

Cited by Massimo Oldoni, “Techiche di scena e comportamenti narrativi nel teatro profano medievale (secc. IX-XII)”, in *Il contributo dei giullari*, p. 34.

classici (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), p. 230. For example, Petrarch apparently sent copies of his poems to be performed by singers.


16 Einstein, The Italian Madrigal, iii, 49–51 reproduces Francesco Cortecchia’s 1547 setting of an ottava from Ariosto’s Orlando furioso. Einstein also cites L’Hoste da Reggio’s 1554 setting for an ottava lamento (ibid, i, pp. 285–6). The musical structure used for the ottava when it occurs as a special verse form in the Italian maggio today is also a fourfold repetition of a two-line melody, apparently continuing the popular traditions reported for the sixteenth century.


18 According to Joan Amades, the earliest record of a moresca dance depicting a battle between Moors and Christians was in 1137, on the occasion of the marriage of the Count of Barcelona Ramón Berenger IV with Petronila de
Aragón – see Joan Amades, Las danzas de moros y cristianos (Valencia: Instituto de Estudios Ibéricos y Etnología Valenciana, 1966), p. 91. D’Ancona, Origini del teatro italiano, i, p. 266, cites one example, from L. Lancellotti’s Cronaca modenese (1494), in which ‘balli alla moresca’ were integrated into a dramatic performance to celebrate the feast of San Gemignano in Modena. More explicit details are cited by Roberto Lorenzetti, Due rituali carraresechi in un Comune dell’Italia Centrale: La Moresca e la Rappresentazione dei Messi a Contigliano (Rieti: Istituto Eugenio Cirese, 1980), p. 9, from a letter by Isabella d’Este describing the wedding of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso D’Este in Ferrara in 1502 (original source Marino Samuto, Ordine di pome e spettacoli per la nozze di Lucrezia Borgia a Ferrara (Venezia 1888)). See also entries under ‘Dance: Early Renaissance’, ‘Moresca’, and ‘Matachin (les bouffons)’, in New Grove, v and xii.


See the illustrations of chivalrous puppets from Naples, Sicily and Milan in Burattini, marionette, pupi, pp. 157, 235, 240, 242, 245.

For Piedmont, see Italo Sordi, Teatro e rito. Saggi sulla drammatica popolare italiana (Milano: Xenia Edizioni, 1990), pp. 18-19; for Lazio, see Lorenzetti, Due rituali carnevalese, passim; for Campania, the film Franco di Chiara, The Joys of the Women, musical director Kavisha Mazzella (Perth: Electric Pictures/Realworld Pictures/WA Film Council, 1993), includes a brief passage of dance from Ischia that appears to be a circle dance between Turks and Christians. For Tuscany, as well as the monza by the Garlagnana


* See Cardona, "Cultures dell’oralità e culture della scrittura", *passim*.


* The Emilian company of Costabona, directed by Romolo Fiorenti, presented this *maggio* in 1992, a performance of which, at Variano (L.U.) on 9.8.92, was filmed by the Centro Tradizioni Popolari di Lucca.


* Beer, *Romanzi di cavalleria*, pp. 327–69; Geneviève Bollème, "Letteratura popolare e commercio ambulante del libro nel XVIII secolo", in Armando


19 At least 341 maggio texts of known authorship have been performed in Emilia in living memory; as compared to the mere thirty-one published maggio texts listed by Giannini for the nineteenth century. See the list of 'Maggi ciati' following Giorgio Vezzani's 'Gli autori del Maggio drammatico. Dizionario bio-bibliografico', in *Il Maggio drammatico*, pp. 407-10.

20 *Maggio* booklets have been published in recent years by the Comune of Villa Minore (for the Emilian maggio) and the Centro Tradizioni Popolari della Provincia di Lucca, the Comuni of Buti (PI) and Piazza al Serchio (LU), and the Provincia di Massa (for the Tuscan maggio).


23 Rosal, *The Drama in Iloilo*, p. 130.


26 In other areas of the Philippines the text may be sung or chanted. For example, on the island of Catanduanes, the men declaim the text while the women sing their quatrains (as seen on private video of Catanduanes *komedyia*).

27 This perhaps supports the contention of various commentators who analyze the basic metrical structure of the *Spanish romance* as a sixteen-syllable, rather than eight-syllable, line (e.g. Di Stefano, 'La tradizione orale e scritta dei romanze', p. 203).


As argued by Paolo Merci, ‘Circolazione orale e tradizione scritta’.

Reported by Daniela Menchelli, in her preface to *Eronte, secondo il testo adottato dai maggioli di Vagli di Sopra-Roggio* (LU), a cura di Daniela Menchelli, CTP Lucca Quaderno 9 (Lucca: Centro Tradizioni Popolari di Lucca, 1970).

See the preface by Fabio Baroni in *Re Eronte, secondo il testo adottato dalla compagnia di Regnano–Pieve San Lorenzo–Codiponte*, a cura di Fabio Baroni, CTP Lucca Quaderno 107 (Lucca: Centro Tradizioni Popolari di Lucca, 1987). In the Garfagnana the name and date of the copyist, rather than the original author, are commonly added to these manuscript versions, and extensive modifications are commonly made to adapt the text for particular performance groups (see Venturelli, ‘Le arce del Maggio,’ p. 61).

The text of this version was published for sale at performances by the Centro Tradizioni Popolari della Provincia di Lucca.

See extensive discussion of the varying attitudes to the written maggio texts by companies in the three areas of contemporary diffusion of the tradition (Pisano-Lucchese, Garfagnana-Lumigniana, Emilia) in Gastone Venturelli, ‘Le arce del Maggio’, pp. 48, 61–2, 84–5. Venturelli even goes so far as to say ‘it is to be considered anomalous and outside the tradition when we find almost identical copies of the one text: in such cases we can be certain that what we have before us is a copy made for conservation and not a script to be performed’ (my translation)(p. 61).


This version of the script was published by the Comune of Piazza al Serchio.

For example, extra stanzas were added to dwell on the baptism of one of the Syrian soldiers, who converts to Christianity for the love of the Armenian princess, Fidalma. After this scene, the couple went through the audience collecting money in a helmet. Other adaptations consisted in the development of a battle scene to allow two of the best fighters in the company to meet, and in variations to the final chorus, sung by the whole company. The final chorus, which may change according to the performance venue, is frequently not present in the printed text.

In other words, the prompt delivers one eight-syllable line at a time.

The quintina, composed of five octosyllabic lines rhyming ABCCB, is used only in the Garfagnana-Lunigiana area, where quatrains rhyming ABBA may also be employed; in Emilia and in the Pisa-Lucca areas only quatrains are used (see Venturelli, "Le aree del Maggio").

This prescription is especially strictly followed by the Piazza al Serchio company; the other Garfagnino maggio company is less strict, especially when, as in recent years, the maggio story is set in ancient Rome or in some other way does not lend itself to clear division of the two camps.

Different areas within the Philippines vary in the precise choreography of the Christian and Moorish marches, but the distinction Christian-slow, Moor-fast appears to be maintained.

The "Montecusena" company of Asta (RE). See Venturelli, "Le aree del Maggio", pp. 56, 74–5, 95–8. The Garfagnino companies that once used the Buffone are now defunct.

See the illustration in Nicason Tiongson, "An Essay on Dulaan—Philippine Theatre", booklet to accompany video Dulaan—Philippine Theatre (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas [Cultural Centre of the Philippines], 1989), pp. 8–9, which reproduces a late-nineteenth-century drawing of a komedy performance in Bicol. A brass ensemble is shown on the right of the stage, with audience members, including what appear to be high-ranking dignitaries on a raised platform at the rear of the stage, located on the other three sides.

The Filipino komedya and the Italian maggio

47 Thomas, Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry, p. 166, cites several examples, including the Cavalleria del Sol (1552) by Pedro Hernández de Villanobras (translated into Italian by Pietro Lauro, 1557).

48 Ibid., p. 176. Thomas cites the banning of the Cavalleria celestale del Pie de la Rosa Fragante (1554) by Hieronimo San Pedro.

49 See Thomas, Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry, p. 178 (citing Francisco Rodríguez Marín, El Quijote y Don Quijote en América (1911)). All Spanish traffic to the Philippines was via Mexico.


52 Ibid.


55 Eugenio, Avar and Corrido. Bienvenido Lumbrera (‘The Literary Relations of Tagalog Literature’, in Antonio G. Manuud (ed.), Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1987), pp. 318–9) is of the opinion that prior to this date verse romances would have circulated orally due to widespread illiteracy.
20 Over two-thirds of the 496 quatrains in the text of the Seven Princes of Lara are wholly or partly in speech. See Eugenio, *Avui and Corrido*, pp. 359–604.
21 As argued by Clemente-Frusta-Giannelli, 'Scritti dei contadini senesi', p. 60.
23 Private video recording of a Catanduanes komedy a lent to me by music students at the University of the Philippines, 1993.
26 See Adriano Prosperi, 'La religione della Controriforma'.
32 Ibid., p. 609.
33 Ibid., p. 244.
34 Ibid., p. 365.
The Filipino komedya and the Italian maggior

In the town of Piddig, for example, returned domestic helpers from Italy have built Italian style houses, grow Italian vegetables, and even speak Italian in the market (Alicia Pinggol, personal communication).


See Braudel, The Mediterranean, pp. 629–33.


For Italy, see Barwick and Page, ‘Performance Spaces/Imaginary Places’, p. 5 of typescript.


For Italy, see Barwick and Page, ‘Performance Spaces/Imaginary Places’, and di Chiera’s film The Joys of the Women, where extra-regional origins of the merscna sword dance are hotly denied by Ischian emigrants in Australia. For the Philippines, see Teofilo del Castillo y Tuazon and Buenaventura S. Medina Jr, “Philippine Literature from Ancient Times to the Present” (Quezon City: Teofilo del Castillo, 1966), p. 107: ‘The comedia de capa y espada, commonly known as the moro-moro, is unique in the sense that no nation has conceived and staged a similar play. It is only the Philippines that has engrossed herself in the creation of moro-moro to such an extent that this work eventually became identified with the Filipino way of life for nearly two centuries . . . [the moro-moro is] believed to have originated from the traditional armed encounters between the Christian and the Muslim Filipinos’. With discovery of the komedya’s international links, however, it is now regarded by most Filipino intellectuals as an instrument of Hispanic indoctrination and domination (see Tsong, ‘An Essay on Dulaan’, p. 18).

Further Sources


Diego Pisador, Libro de musica de vihuela (Genève: Minkoff Reprints, 1973; facsimile of first edition, Salamanca, 1552)

Maggio ‘La vendetta di Fidalma’ edited by Andrea Bertei, as performed by the Piazza al Serchio company, led by Andrea Bertei, at Piazza al Serchio (L.U), 4.7.93. Hi-8 video recording by Linda Barwick and Allan Marett (Barwick field tapes VT93/10–11)
Plate 1: The 'Christian' (in this case Aragonese) side of the Burgos komedya stage 17 February 1993. (Photograph: Linda Barwick)

(Photograph: Linda Barwick)
Plate 4: The 'Muslim' (in this case, Egyptian) side of the maggio performance space at Piazza del Sercchio 4 July 1997.

(Photograph: Linda Burwick)