Museo internazionale
delle marionette
Antonio Pasqualino

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THE SICILIAN PUPPETS

Gli archivi di Morgana
Studi e materiali per la storia
della cultura popolare
25

Graphic project:
N ONDIGITAL.COM
Photographs by:
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On cover:
Rinaldo against the seamonster

ANTONIO PASQUALINO

THE SICILIAN PUPPETS

STUDIES AND MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF FOLK CULTURE 25
ASSOCIAZIONE PER LA CONSERVAZIONE DELLE TRADIZIONI POPOLARI

Museo internazionale
delle marionette
Antonio Pasqualino

Regione Sicilia
Assessorato dei Beni Culturali, Ambientali
e della Pubblica Istruzione

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Foreword

Janne Vibaek

Antonio Pasqualino, founder of the Association for the Conservation of Folk Traditions and of the International Marionette Museum, died in September, 1995. It was never easy to bestow continuity on his undertaking, even when a certain financial equilibrium was attained following the passing of the Regional Law, no.51, (13/7/95). Pasqualino was the Museum's soul, and it was through his research and the talks he gave that the Museum also achieved fame and consensus outside Sicily. In February, 1996, as deserved recognition for this extraordinary work, the museum was presented with its official title in a ceremony attended by representatives from the support committee, and, among others, Marc Augé, Umberto Eco and Vincenzo Consolo. The Department of History of Folk Traditions, of "La Sapienza" University of Rome, on May 16, 1996, also dedicated a round table to "Antonio Pasqualino, the man and his work", with the participation of Antonino Buttitta, Alberto M.Cirese, Daniel Fabre and Luigi Lombardi Satriani.

The magazine "Nuove effemeridi" dedicated to Antonio Pasqualino a monographic issue (Year IX, no.33, 1996/I) edited by Antonino Buttitta and Janne Vibaek.

His posthumous volume L'opera dei pupi a Roma, Napoli e in Puglia *(The Puppet-theatre in Rome, Naples and Puglia), was published in 1996, in the series Studi e materiali per la storia della cultura popolare (Studies and Materials for the history of folk culture), edited by the Association for the Conservation of Folk Traditions. This work took a long time to appear, and Pasqualino only managed to finally complete it in the last few months of his life. The volume was edited by Janne Vibaek, with a foreword by Roberto De Simone; it was officially presented at the Naples Circolo filosofico, by Alberto Varvaro and Antonino Buttitta, in the presence of De Simone himself.*

In 1997, the Association published the volume of photography Ricordo di Antonio Pasqualino, *edited by Roberto Andò, with contributions from Vincenzo Consolo, Umberto Eco, Francesco Orlando and Janne Vibaek. In 1999, in honour of Antonio Pasqualino, a convention was held, under the title of Le vie del cavaliere (lit. The paths of the knight); the minutes are being published by Sellerio.*

Over the last few years, the Association for the Conservation of Folk Traditions has published catalogues of all its exhibitions abroad, and also the volume Segni e simboli nell'arte popolare *(Signs and symbols in folk art), by Gabriella D'Agostino, in the series Studi e materiali per la storia della cultura popolare (Studies and Materials for the history of folk culture), 1996. Two volumes edited by the Association have just been published by Sellerio:* Museo e cultura, *edited by Jean Cuisenier and Janne Vibaek, and* I colori e le storie, *by Alessandro Napoli.*

In the last few years the Museum has concentrated its activities more and more in the area of its institutional role. Visitors arrive from all over the world, as do schoolchildren, for whom guided visits are laid on, as well as seminars, workshops and actual performances. Further exhibitions soon followed the early ventures abroad: Copenhagen (1996), New York, Los Angeles, Chicago (1997), Montreal, Charleville-Mezières (1998), Haifa, Hebron (1999), Hanoi (2000). In 2001 a didactic exhibition was held at the Spasimo, in Palermo: Il cavaliere della memoria *(lit. Knights of memory), the theme of which was knightly tradi-*

tions in Sicily. The Festival di Morgana Puppet-theatre season has continued to take place regularly, on an annual basis, under the aegis of the Association. From 1999 to 2001, the Association carried out a survey of marionettes in European museums, in collaboration with three partners: l'Institut international de la marionnette in Charleville Mezières, la Fondation Toone VII in Bruxelles and the Marionetmuseet in Stockholm. The results of the project denominated Pupmus, as part of the Raffaello programme of the European Council, were published in the CD-rom Where are the Puppets? (Marionettes in European Museums), in English, French and Italian. The Cd-rom contains information about 140 museums in 24 countries, 690 photos, 45 minutes of video and allows extensive cross-referencing. At the end of February the finished product was presented simultaneously in the four partner cities. The initiative created many important contacts with other museums and contributed to a wider knowledge in Europe of the Antonio Pasqualino International Museum of Marionettes.

In 2000, with an report by Elsa Guggino, a member of the Italian UNESCO Committee for the Intangible and Oral Heritage, the Association presented the candidacy of the Sicilian Puppet-theatre, for the first declaration on the part of UNESCO of "Masterpiece of the Intangible and Oral Heritage of Mankind". The Italian UNESCO Committee, whose general secretary is Prof. Gianni Puglisi, backed this candidacy for Italy; in June 2001 it was among the nominations accepted by the international jury. The Puppet-theatre has, therefore, become not only part of the Sicilian heritage, but that of all mankind, although the Sicilians were awarded actual custody.

The status quo of the Puppet-theatre was detailed in the article sent to Unesco. It mentioned about fifteen companies, of which, as was emphasised, only three deserve to be fully considered , at the present time, as professional and long-standing. The other companies are too commercial, or merely amateurish. A few have sprung up in the last few years around the grandchildren of the last great puppeteers, who have recently taken up their forefathers' professions. The skills required to form excellent companies are not lacking, but there is a noticeable lack of imprinting that only daily contact with the theatre from an early age can give, in order to assimilate all its techniques, which are not merely those of construction and puppet-manipulation, but of actual recital too. The growth of the number of operators is a positive fact in its own right; therefore the newer companies should be helped to improve and to better understand how the spirit of their art is now recognised as belonging to all mankind's great oral tradition.

At present the three most stable and long-standing professional companies are:

1) the Marionettistica of the Fratelli Napoli of Catania, which, in 1978, received, along with three other companies, Bread and Puppets, Yves Joly and Tandarika, the Erasmus prize, the "Nobel" of Holland, which, in that year, was dedicated to marionettes. Although, in the past, it has often not had its own permanent theatre, the company has continued its activity, updating techniques whilst leaving intact the particular style of the traditional Catanese puppet-theatre. On the death of his uncle, Pippo Napoli, and his father, Natale, Fiorenzo took control of the company. In the wings, as always, there is the ever-present

Italia, wife of Natale and mother to Fiorenzo and his two brothers Giuseppe and Salvatore. Today the company also includes Agnese Torrisi, Fiorenzo's wife, their three children, Davide, Dario and Marco, and their cousin Alessandro Napoli. Since June, 2001, the Marionettistica, have had assigned by the A.A.P.I.T. (Provincial Tourist Office) of Catania a permanent seat at the "Ciminiere", an industrial complex that has been converted into a cultural centre. The company puts on performances in Italy and abroad, and works widely with schools, often organising workshops for creating puppets.

2) The Teatroarte Cuticchio company of Girolamo Cuticchio and his children. After a short interruption, it has operated constantly since 1970. This company has for many years put on weekly shows featuring traditional tales, at the Antonio Pasqualino International Museum of Marionettes. Since June 2001, thanks to the Cefalù town council, it has occupied the Corte delle Stelle, a multi-functional structure in the centre of the town. Here it has set up its theatre and a permanent exhibition of theatrical props. The company has often travelled abroad, both independently and as representative of the Museum. It also collaborates with schools and in schools. At present, apart from Girolamo, there are his three children Teresa, Giacomo and Franco who make up the company.

3) The company, Figli d'arte Cuticchio, run by Mimmo Cuticchio. Apart from faithfully putting on shows of the traditional variety, since the seventies, the company has been striving to create a new type of theatre; this has its roots in the puppet-theatre, but is aiming to go beyond this in order to create a more up-to-date show, more suitable for the audiences of today. The company organises an annual festival "La macchina dei sogni" (the Dream-machine), and has to its name a long series of shows in prestigious theatres both in Italy and abroad. Since 1997 Mimmo Cuticchio has been running a school with three-year courses for puppeteers; in the first two years it was subsidised by Palermo city-council, and it has subsequently continued its operations without subsidies.

At this moment new horizons are opening up, as well as new challenges for the puppet-theatre and for the Association. The theatres and authorities need to be advised and aided in order to proceed with this salvage operation, which the Association has been supporting for almost forty years, and for which it received, in 2001, the prestigious international "Costantino Nigra" award in the section devoted to museums.

The publication of this volume about the puppet-theatre is a further opportunity to remember Antonio Pasqualino and render him homage. Published in 1975, and revised by him in 1981, it keeps its scientific and informational values intact. It seems opportune to include a short essay about the International Museum of Marionettes, published in 1992, in his last book Le vie del cavaliere.

Sicilian puppets

Antonio Pasqualino

0.1. Definition

The *opera dei pupi* is the traditional Sicilian marionette theatre. The puppets differ from other marionettes in the plays presented, in their mechanism, their figurative style, their scenic organisation and in their manner of recitation. The subjects are mainly long cycles, vicissitudes presented in instalments based on epic-chivalrous literature and particularly on the Carolingian cycle. The repertory, however, also includes the lives of bandits, those of saints, historical events and Shakespearean dramas.

Two separate traditions of the puppet theatre exist in Sicily, the Palermo one, spread throughout Western Sicily, and that of Catania, in Eastern Sicily, which differ from one another in certain aspects of the mechanism, the figuration and for some particular subjects.

This form of popular theatre used to be performed for audiences of the poor quarters of the city and those of small towns. The proprietors of the theatres manoeuvre the puppets, make them talk, sometimes manufacture them, paint the scenes and posters for them and are called *opranti, teatrinari* or *pupari* (strictly speaking a *puparo* is the man who makes them). They used to stop in a town to present one or more cycles which lasted for months or years of daily performances, until the audiences became bored with them and it was necessary to move elsewhere.

1.1 Origin and Diffusion

It is difficult to establish exactly when and where these puppets originated. Some authors who have dealt with the *opera dei pupi*, fascinated by the memory of the Syracusan marionettists, who, in the times of Socrates and Xenophon, exercised their profession as far afield as Athens,

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have supposed that the art of the modern Sicilian puppeteers could be traced back to these. But the marionette theatre has been found, with various technical and thematic characteristics all over the world ever since very remote times. The origin of the Sicilian puppets does not coincide with the origin of the marionettes.

The subject becomes less vague if one confines it to marionettes which present chivalrous subject matter and which possess given mechanical characteristics. As regards the Middle Ages, the only known indication of a puppet theatre performing chivalrous themes is a miniature in a French manuscript of the 14th century which shows a theatre with armed warrior-puppets. At the end of the 16th century performances with chivalrous marionettes were produced in Spain. In fact, in an episode of Don Quixote, the knight of La Manca is present in the puppet theatre of *mese Pedro* at a performance of which the plot is taken from the Carolingian romance, *Don Gaifero*.

A theatre with similar subject matter and marionettes not unlike the Sicilian ones can still be seen today at Liège in Belgium. Since both Southern Italy and Flanders in the 16th century were Spanish dominions, this might suggest a common Spanish origin. This interesting hypothesis however, cannot be upheld, since these chivalrous marionettes were taken to Liège in 1854 by an Italian, Alessandro Ferdinando Pompeo Conti, born at Castelvecchio, in the province of Lucca.

During the 19th century, shows of this type are reported not only in Sicily and Naples but in other parts of Italy as well. In the South, apart from Naples and Sicily, the puppet theatre, up until a few years ago, was widespread in Apulia. The recent repertories of North Italian puppeteers also contain a number of chivalrous subjects from the Carolingian cycles. A glove puppetmaster of Tortona even used to present a complete history of Charlemagne and his Paladins in instalments. A number of chivalrous plays can also be found in the repertories of marionette theatres of other European countries.

There is no reason to suppose that the chivalrous marionette theatre is a phenomenon arising from a single source. Chivalrous narrative has been wide spread in all Europe ever since the Middle Ages and, at least on a popular level, it continued to arouse lively interest. The idea of taking the adventures of the Carolingian heroes as subjects for performances may have originated in different places and various periods.

In the theatre of live actors, between the 16th and 17th century these subjects were performed by the companies of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and later by the companies organised by the Jesuits for instance we have such plays by the Sicilian authors Ortensio Scammacca and Giuseppe D'Emma. While this happened in Italy Robert Garnier and Philippe Quinault in France drew on the epic poems of Ariosto and Tasso. In Spain, Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderon della Barca took plots from the *Chansons de Geste* . Ever since the 17th century melodramas inspired by *Orlando Furioso* and *Gerusalemme liberata* have flourished. The subject matter of the marionette theatre almost always follows the lead of the live theatre. It would therefore seem logical to assume that plays about chivalry were present in the repertories of the 16th century marionettes, if not previously, alternating with subjects of a different kind.

Certain peculiarities of the *opera dei pupi*, however, such as the absolute prevalence of chivalrous subjects, the canonical arrangement of

the repertory, the metal armour which makes the puppets both splendid and noisy and the mechanism particularly suited to combats with the sword, would seem to have come into being only in the first years of the 19th century in central-southern Italy or in Sicily. This is the transformation we refer to when we say that the *opera dei pupi* originated in the 19th century. Before this subjects of a chivalrous nature were handed down in books, were spread by ballad singers and story-tellers and were performed in theatres by human actors, puppets and marionettes. But the *opera dei pupi* really began when, in Rome, Naples, Palermo and Catania the chivalrous repertory obtained such a clamorous success that it supplanted every other kind. This was probably due to a delayed effect of the pre-romantic and romantic style of the Middle Ages. But it is also in consequence of ingenious technical inventions which made it possible to give extraordinary effectiveness to combat scenes which become a sort of exalting dance, with a crescendo rhythm and which arouses an intense psychomotory participation in the audience.

According to information gathered by Pitrè and confirmed by the tradition still maintained in certain puppeteer families, simple marionettes operated by strings arrived in Palermo from Naples with Don Giovanni Greco in the first thirty years of the 19th century. Their transformation into armoured puppets is due to the puppeteers Gaetano Greco (1813-1874) and Liberto Canino. On the other hand some Neapolitan puppeteers, it seems, used to say that the *opera dei pupi* had come to Naples from Sicily. At Catania the founders of this theatre were Gaetano Crimi (1807-1877) and his rival Giovanni Grasso (1792-1863) of whom it is said that he learned the art in Naples. The theatre of the paladins is therefore not exclusively Sicilian. Nevertheless, it was in Sicily that it was perfected and it enjoyed great and lasting success from the mid-19th century up until the 1950s.

At the turn of the last century the *opera dei pupi* was at the peak of its fortune. Pitrè counted twentyfive theatres in the whole island, plus two or three touring ones, "two at Messina, three at Catania, nine in Palermo alone, the base for almost all the puppet-masters of Western Sicily; Balestrate, Alcamo, Trapani, Marsala, Agrigento, Taormina, Termini and Trabia each have their own permanent theatre. Three or four *opranti* travel from town to town and sometimes one and sometimes another visit Cagliari and Tunis and stop there for a good half of the year". In the 'thirties the spread of the cinema did not cause any serioùs crisis for the Sicilian marionette theatre. In 1937, in fact, there were twelve theatres at Palermo. Also at Catania, Messina, Syracuse, Trapani, Caltanissetta and Caltagirone several theatres were in operation. Many others worked the smaller towns, periodically moving on every three or six months. On the heels of Sicilian emigrants the *opera dei pupi* also reached Tunis, Alexandria, Buenos Aires, New York and San Francisco. The puppeteers continued to consider theirs a lucrative activity even after World War II: in Palermo fourteen theatres were re-opened, thirteen in other cities and towns in Western Sicily and six at Catania.

At the end of the 'fifties, as a result of the development of show business and television, and the upheaval urban reneval with the consequent disintegration of the social tissue of the alleyways and the quarters where the little theatres used to thrive, the *opera dei pupi* underwent a serious cri-

sis. Many puppet-masters sold their puppets, others, having sold their paladins to antiquaries and tourists dirt cheap or having set them aside, have changed their occupation; very few have continued in the face of hardships and sacrifices. There was a moment, at the beginning of the 'sixties, when not one single theatre was open in Palermo and, at Catania and in the provinces, the situation was not much better.

1.2. The present situation and prospect for the future

From 1965 onwards, thanks to the interest taken by the Association for the Conservation of Popular Traditions, the local tourist authorities have begun to grant modest contributions to active theatres. A number of puppeteers have resumed their activity and have found a fresh audience among the tourists. More recently the press, radio and television have frequently devoted time and space to the Sicilian marionettes, arousing considerable interest among a different and vaster public than the traditional one. In 1975 the Association for the Conservation of Popular Traditions founded the International Marionette Museum, the result of ten years of research on the *opera dei pupi,* and the first edition of this paper was published. At that time the rebirth of the *opera dei pupi* was still in its initial and uncertain phases. In fact, I wrote:

> "This revival begins with a change of audience which tends towards a profound transformation of the spectacle.
>
> The success of the *opera dei pupi* had been linked in the past with its natural audience, namely the population of the poorer quarters of the city and of the villages, who followed the plot by instalments, every evening for months and months. This audience has been eliminated by competition and by the mass media. The refusal of traditional culture on the part of those who have only just attained relatively comfortable economic well-being in an industrialised society is a well-known and well-documented phenomenon, especially in connection with popular music. The elements of old-time culture are considered symbols of poverty whilst the culture of the masses is identified with riches. Only after a considerable number of years and sometimes only with a new generation is interest in popular culture renewed, stimulated by an awareness of one's own roots in the past and of the "difference" as a source of pride and sometimes as a weapon in a controversy.
>
> This not yet happened in Sicily and thus the traditional audience of the *opera dei pupi* has been substituted by tourists and the middle classes in search of local colour. A spectacle based on a series of episodes cannot convey its message to the audience of a single evening's

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performance: tourists and those Sicilians, who behave like tourists in their own city, once their curiosity has been satisfied, are unlikely to come back for more. They only see the exterior aspects of the performance. In the face of an audience which is present at the spectacle without the capacity or desire to interpret its meanings, the event is emptied and, like an empty sack, can no longer remain upright. This has had a negative effect on the character and quality of the performances, inducing many puppeteers to put on shows for one evening only, all based on spectacular effects. Without knowledge of the sense of the episodes presented, the world of the *opera dei pupi*, very distant from us in time, unreal, full of monsters, dragons, mermaids and magical spells, battles between Christians and Saracens, appears as a childish entertainment which every now and then can be enjoyed out of curiosity, even by adults on holiday. To study the problem of the significance assumed by chivalrous culture and to try to understand its social function, on the other hand, renders the enjoyment of show a rewarding and interesting experience.

The myth of the Paladins of France, in fact, for the social group of its devotees, did not represent a world of pure evasion. The marionettes exemplified the hopes, the struggles, the victories and the defeats of their own existence. *The History of the Paladins of France* expressed the ideology of the poor in a gamut of emotions running from resignation to revolt.

On the other hand a return of the Sicilians to the *opera dei pupi* in the form and manner of bygone days is unthinkable. This theatre, in its customary form, is poor in scenographic resources, is slow-moving, makes wide use of iteration and conveys its messages slowly only to the daily audience. Its decline, as happens in many forms of traditional culture, is largely due to technical backwardness as compared with the entertainments offered by contemporary society rather than to the lack of topicality of its contents and out-of-date ideology. The puppeteers are the heirs to a precious traditional patrimony which has made them the intellectuals of their group. But society has undergone profound changes and they - whilst in everyday life they have naturally adapted themselves to these changes - cannot do the same as artists. Their cultural heritage is not sufficient to make them the promoters of a transformation which will re-establish their contact with the audience. A serious effort for theatrical revival (like that of Folk Music Revival) can only be based on an intelligent cultural mediation. Students and men of the theatre must collaborate with the puppeteers in a permanent theatre to create new proposals and to carry out experiments, making a contribution of different cognizances and sensitivities, new stimuli and prospects. In this theatre, of which the Association for the Conservation of Popular Traditions has laid the foundations by means of the creation of the International Marionette Museum, there will be scope for all the puppet-masters who, availing them selves also of new theatrical techniques, will be able to investigate new subjects and at the same time repropose traditional ones which still have great potentialities for reinterpretation and re-adaptation.

This project falls within the framework of a very precise tendency of contemporary culture. Today we are witnessing a re-awakening of interest in the traditional forms of the popular theatre: the Farces, the *Bruscelli*, the *Maggi* and the *Sega-la-vecchia*. The gamut of these attempts runs from their philologically faithful rendering to the free utilization of their forms for the communication of new contents. It has been sustained that these operations are always of a subversive nature insofar as, by putting new values on the culture of the lower classes, they deny the supremacy of the culture of the wealthy and prepare the way for a new culture of prole-

tarian hegemony. In any case, whoever wishes to facilitate the formation of a new national and popular culture, as desired by Gramsci, a culture common to all citizens, cannot fail to be interested in attempts to graft traditional forms of popular culture onto modern culture".

Today, even though a culture which is the culture common to all citizens is still a distant objective, part of the desires expressed in the past has been achieved: the revival of the *opera dei pupi* has been consolidated, interest in this subject has substantially increased and liaison with educational bodies has been intensified. Several companies of veteran puppeteers have been reactivated on the initiative of their sons and some of them have tried to combine the search for innovation with the traditional perfor mances. The International Marionette Museum has been the catalyst and interpreter of this activity, which will perhaps give rise to important transformations. The puppeteers in their renewed contact with audiences, and particularly in collaboration with teachers and theatrical operators of a different extraction, have developed a new professional conscience. *The Rassegna dell'opera dei pupi*, a festival organised yearly by the Museum, has given an impulse to the creation on the part of the puppeteers of an authentic new repertory. These are performances which, being designed for an audience which will not return the following evening, present a whole episode concentrated into an hour and a half. Unity, clarity and pace are obtained by simplifying the plot. Scenic resources and spectacular effects are exploited to the full. In the most successful of these shows the themes and personages of the *History of the Paladins of France* are presented with the same density of dramatic and ideological interest as used to be brought out gradually in the course of the instalments of the traditional versions.

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But, whilst the performances put on by the Festival always attract a very numerous audience, the paying spectators of the ordinary shows are not always sufficient in number to ensure the puppet masters of continuous activity.

The collaboration between the various groups, the finding of sites for multiple decentralised theatres, collaboration with schools and courses to create new levies of marionettists and puppet-makers might be in the field of the marionette theatre, the best instrument for introducing tradition into the modern world.

In any case, to understand what the *opera dei pupi* is today one must know what it used to be in the past and what it represented in Sicilian culture.

2.1. The theatre and the stage

The theatres of the *opera dei pupi* were generally set up in warehouses or in stables with the roof supported by arches and sometimes in wooden huts.

The Palermo marionettes are smaller than the Catania ones. Thus in the Palermo area the theatre is only rarely capable of holding a hundred or more spectators whilst in the Catania area theatres with two hundred or more seats are normal. The spectators sat on rough wooden benches, fastened to the ground on police orders. Some theatres were equipped with seats on rising platforms forming a sort of gallery and were called *palchi* (stands). The seats in the front rows were reserved for children and the walls were, and are, decorated with posters.

In Palermo the stage is always elaborately decorated with 19th century ornamentation, which simulates drapery and stuccoes. At Catania it is often composed of a velvet drape. The curtain which is larger than necessary, to give the impression that the theatre is larger, is one of the most important pictorial elements of the marionette theatre and displays pitched battles, duels or tournaments. In the Palermo area, apart from the principal curtain, which is drawn between one act and the next, there is a smaller curtain located a little way back from the footlights, this is the *fondino* (small back-cloth) which is drawn between one scene and the next, and in front of which the announcing puppet, known as the *per domani* (for tomorrow), appears to give a summary of the next instalment. The stage beyond the footlights is divided by the wings into spaces, generally three, in each of which the marionettes can be moved, walking parallel to the proscenium, passing from the hands of the manipulator on one side to those of the one on the other side. This is why the width of the scene is limited by the possibility of leaning over without being seen from the sides. The duels normally take place within one of these spaces between one puppet, normally the Christian on the right (the spectator's left) and another one, normally the Saracen on the left (the spectator's right). To be moved from backstage or vice versa, that is to say from one space between the wings and another, the marionettes have to go off-stage. Thus the stage is deeper than it is wide. The scenery can be mounted near to the proscenium, but if they are arranged in depth and the whole stage is utilized

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three simultaneous duels can be presented. In this case six manipulators are required, one of whom is generally the operator who produces the voices. Two people are enough to put on a modest performance. When a personage is not moving and during a combat he can be hung up to a rope or chain from above to lighten the efforts of the manipulator. Otherwise the latter may rest his left arm, which carries the weight of the marionette, on a leather support suspended from above. Special supports parellel to the footlights, placed in correspondence with the three wings, allow a series of puppets to be hung up in a row.

In the Catania area the stage is not so deep because the marionettes, being manipulated from a platform behind the backdrop called the *scann'appoggio*, are moved along a single plane and can only move a little way from the backdrop. Owing to their great weight assistants are needed to take the puppets from the supports where they hang when off-stage and hand them to the manipulators on the platform. The speakers are different persons and stand on one side. Evidently a performance in Catania requires a greater number of operators than a Palermo one.

Both at Catania and Palermo the space reserved for the manipulators is limited. The puppets off stage are hung up on two sides, Christians on the right, Saracens on the left. The cloth scenery, fastened to sticks and rolled up, rest against the wooden structure supporting the wings.

The differences between the Palermo and Catania theatres of which we have spoken have a considerable influence on the organisational and economic character of the undertaking. In Palermo a theatre is run with very modest means and is always a single family concern, because it doesn't, and never did, make enough profit to maintain more than one family, even when the profit was relatively higher. When the sons of a puppeteer marry, in fact, they try to start a new theatre on their own.

In Catania, on the other hand, the size of the theatre permits larger box-office receipts and sometimes certain theatres are run by several persons in partnership. Sometimes the owners take no active part in the productions. The professional milieu of the marionette theatre of Palermo was very restricted. Not so at Catania where the af-

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fairs of the puppeteers were continually intermingled with the comic dialect theatre, the Sicilian realistic theatre and variety shows which have always flourished in this city. Sometimes the same premises were used both for marionette performances and for those of dramatic players. Sometimes the male and female speakers, apart from lending their voices to the marionettes, have been actors and actresses as well.

2.2. The manipulation of the puppets

The Palermo and Catania puppets have mechanical characteristics basically in common but under various aspects they differ. Both are moved by two robust iron rods, one for the head and one for the right arm and by a few auxiliary strings with at least one to move the left arm. Their structure is always in wood and is formed of a skeleton and a head. The skeleton is composed of a trunk from which the legs are articulated, which have a pendular movement, free forwards but limited backwards and the arms, which are free to move in all directions because the hand and forearm are joined to the shoulder by a segment of stuffed material.

The head is pierced by the main iron rod which has two hooks: a small one low down which is hooked to the trunk between the shoulders and one on top by which the puppet can be hung up. The strings for manipulation are fixed near the upper hook. By inclining the principal rod backwards or forwards, the head is made to execute an upward or downward movement. The point of the lower hook re-enters a second hole in the neck,, thus causing the rod to rotate on its own axis, the head of the puppet is made to turn to the right or the left. More forceful rotary. movements are transmitted to the trunk so that whilst the head turns to the right the left side is pushed forward and the right side backwards. Contrarily, when the head turns to the left, the shoulder and right side are pushed forwards and those on the left backwards. By means of the trunk the same movements are transmitted to the legs of which one is pushed forwards and the other backwards and, if raised from the floor, start an alternate pendular movement. To make the pup-

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pets walk, advantage is taken of this movement which is produced and controlled by the main iron rod. Moving the puppet backwards so that the legs touch the floor the right one, which is a little shorter, moves backwards. Slight lateral inclinations allow one foot to remain on the floor and to let the other oscillate. Once one foot is in front and the other behind all that is needed is to lift the puppet slightly from the floor and the leg which is behind will move forward and vice versa. The puppet is made to walk by repeating this manoeuvre whilst it is made to advance.

The rod connected to the right hand allows it and the arm to make energetic movements which are particularly important in fighting and result in more accurate gestures than those obtained with a string. The right hand is clenched and holds the sword at right angles to the arm like one holds a dagger.

The Palermo puppets are eighty centimetres to one metre high and weigh about eight kgs. They have flexible knees and can draw and sheathe the sword. In fact they have a string attached to the rod of the right arm which, through the fist, reaches the hilt of the sword. In certain Palermo theatres the puppets have a string connected to the left thigh which, by starting the pendular motion of the legs, facilitates the taking of the first step, serves to express impatience or anger by an agitation of the leg and finally permits the personage to kneel with one knee raised. However the puppeteers who don't use this string consider it a superfluous addition. Similarly Catanese puppeteers criticise the Palermo puppets because they can draw and sheathe their swords and bend a knee. One of them was heard to say: "a real paladin always has his sword in hand and never bends a knee".

The Catania puppets are between one metre ten and one metre thirty high and are much heavier than the Palermo ones, about sixteen kilogram. Their knees are rigid and, if they are warriors, they always or almost always hold their swords in hand. The rigid knees allow the weight of the puppet to rest on the floor of the stage between one step and another.

Both at Palermo and Catania the personages without armour are lighter but move with the same mechanism and the same system of control except for some which have a string for the right hand instead of a rod. The movements, therefore, are like those of the warriors: their gestures and gait are pronounced, sudden and emphatic, very unlike the graceful, pretty and somewhat affected gesturing of the typical marionettes with strings.

The animals of the *opera dei pupi* are not very articulated. In Palermo they are generally of solid wood; they are thus heavy and cumbersome and so their appearance on the stage is made as short as possible.

The Palermo puppets are manoeuvred from the sides with outstretched arms. The manipulator stands in the wings on the same stage where the puppets perform. The Catania puppets, as we have mentioned, are manoeuvred from above from a platform behind the backdrop and those of Acireale, which differ from the Catanese ones by being just a little smaller, from a scaffold higher than the front of the stage. In this case the rods and strings for manipulation are longer.

The Neapolitan puppets, one metre ten in height, differ from the Sicilian ones insofar as, instead of a rod for the right hand, which is open, they have a string. The sword is fixed to this hand by fitting the hilt into a hole in the palm so that it points in the same direction as the arm. The mo-

tion of the sword-play is obtained by rapidly moving the string stretched out in front first in one direction and then in the other which makes the out-thrust swords of the opponents clash rhythmically. The legs have flexible knees like the Palermo puppets and the manipulations carried out from a low platform behind the backdrop as for the Catania puppets.

The puppets of Liège, manipulated from behind the backdrop, have only one rod fixed to a ring on top of the head. Turning it laterally one can turn the head or the whole body. If one shakes it, one shakes the puppet, which advances with a skipping motion, fights by jumping rhythmically backwards and forwards but obviously can only jerk its arms.

2.3 Theatrical equipment

The complete equipment of a theatre is called in jargon *mestiere* (trade). On an average well-supplied theatre had somewhat fewer than a hundred puppets. About half of these were warriors clad in metal armour; the others kings, ladies, prelates, civilians, etc., were dressed in cloth. About eighty spare heads, if one also changed the shields and cloaks, allowed one to resurrect the corpses of previous evenings into new characters.

The armour of brass, copper or nickel is embossed and decorated with elements of other metals. The imaginative ornamentation, geometric or floral, which enriches it also includes, the emblems, which together with the visual features and clothing, enable the principal personages to be recognised. The signs of recognition in use in Palermo are different from those used in Catania, which are somewhat similar to those of Naples, but they remain constant in each particular area. This allows habitual spectators to recognise their heroes immediately.

Special marionettes portray animals, monsters and supernatural creatures: horses, lions, dogs, stags, large birds, donkeys, bulls, centaurs, mermaids, snakes, devils and angels.

The backdrops are painted with great care and represent courts, castles, battlemented towns, squares, camps, gardens, woods and landscapes. Each theatre had at least a hundred.

Large posters, painted in vivid colours, were hung up outside the theatre to inform the public about the evening's performance. They show what point has been reached in the cycle in a

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manner clearly intelligible to the habitués. The pictures on the posters conform to the schedule of a long-established repertoire and to the typology of the personages similar to that, which permits the recognition of the marionettes. The Palermo posters are painted on cloth and are divided into squares, generally eight, each one of which depicts a scene referring to one evening of the cycle. Those of the Catania type are painted on wrapping paper and are composed of a single scene. The better to make clear the scene in question, the puppet-master used to apply a sheet of paper to the poster with a brief résumé of the episode of the day. Furthermore, at Palermo the word "today " was stuck onto the square concerned.

The Palermo theatres had about seventy posters but those of Catania many more because each served for one evening only.

The expensive marionettes, with their armour of wrought metal, were roughly handled; especially in battles; and wore out within a few years, but the scenery lasted a long time. The posters on the other hand, painted with such loving care, were regardlessly exposed to all kinds of weather. Often, in fact, they were soaked by rain and spread out flat to dry on the benches of the theatre. Thus the paint had to be retouched every five or six years.

This careless handling called for continuous renewal of the theatrical equipment of the *opera dei pupi*. However the forms remained unchanged because the sculptors of heads, the craftsmen of armour, the seamstresses of the clothes and the scene and poster painters preferred to follow the designs of their predecessors.

2.4. The figurative aspect

The puppets, the scenery and the posters of the opera, as regards the design of the costumes, physical attributes, and the type and style of the scene represented, are based on the theatrical culture of the last century.

The problem of presenting the Middle Ages visually arose for stage designers halfway through the 18th century when, after a long period of oblivion, there was a re-awakening of literary interest in mediaeval subjects. In the theatre this problem was overcome largely by ignoring historical accuracy; as this solution was successful, it was imitated so that for a long time, the scenes and costumes which appeared on the stage were very approximate.

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Drawing freely from different sources, mainly based on the works of painters of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, considered generally speaking, as "antique" and thus suited to portray a world of "chivalry", a composite image was created which in the first half of the 19th century, was already a codified and generally accepted convention.

This image inspired the creators of the Sicilian marionettes and their scene and poster painters. The knights in fact, wear Renaissance armour, the sorcerers are dressed like Doctor Faust and the Spanish moors the enemies of Charlemagne, like Spanish noblemen of the 17th century. The other Saracens differ from the Christians because they usually wear trousers instead of a sort of kilt and often have turbans. The ladies are dressed in the fashions of the beginning of the last century, inspired by the portraits of Van Dyck. Angelica, the Princess of Cathay, (East Indies) is portrayed as an Indian woman of the Americas (West Indies) with a feather head dress and sometimes with a bow and quiver over her shoulder.

The mediaeval character of the architecture in the scenery and on the posters is even vaguer. The backdrops, which display romantic-looking and often Nordic landscapes, huge gloomy prisons, town squares, castles, vast halls at court and military camps, are also derived from 19th century theatrical tradition.

These models influenced the marionette theatre both through the theatre, particularly the lyric opera (a direct connection with melodrama is proved by the case of the puppeteer and poster painter Giovanni Di Cristina who was also a technician and scene painter at the Teatro Massimo of Palermo). The illustrations in popular editions of stories of chivalry have also had an influence on the figurative aspect of the puppets. Particularly worthy of mention are the woodcuts of Mattaliano, illustrations of the first edition of Lodico's *Storia dei Paladini*, a work consulted by all the puppeteers.

These illustrations had, indeed, an influence on popular painting of chivalrous subjects comparable to that of chivalrous literature on the theatre. They are very simply drawn illustrations characterised by a certain archaism, the similarities of which to other illustrations of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century editions of the chivalrous poems are, when one comes to think of it, of limited importance.

3.1. The performance

The performance began at sundown and, during the 19thcentury, this was announced by the rolling of a drum in front of the theatre - until the police put a stop to it.

While the public comes flocking and pays at the box-office, where the owner's wife generally sat and still does, barrel-organ plays while chickpeas, toasted pumpkinseeds and fizzy drinks are sold. Then the show begins at its usual slow pace, slow because of the numerous changes of scene and consequent intervals. An overseer used to keep order by whacking disturbers of the peace with a long bamboo cane.

During the intervals the puppet-master issues instructions to his assistants for the following scene. Every time one of the manipulators has to effect the entry of a new character, he takes his time to ensure that the marionette is in good working order while the audience waits patiently, commenting on the show.

The pauses and resumption of the action are accompanied by music which ceases when the

characters speak, the cue being given by the puppet-master who stamps twice to start it, to interrupt it or start it again.

In the middle of the 19th century one or more violins provided the music. Later, in the Palermo area the barrel organ came into favour whilst in the Catania area one sometimes hears a small fanfare of wind instruments. However, more and more frequently use is made of gramophone records and tape recordings. Two of the tunes still in use are traditional ones peculiar to the puppet theatre, the same which were played in the 19th century, thev "battle" and the "lament". Others are taken from lyric operas of the19th century and still others are popular songs of some fifty years ago. In the Catania area one of the most frequently used pieces of music is the fanfare of the *Bersaglieri.*

Perhaps over a hundred years ago the puppets used to speak Sicilian, but none of the puppeteers still alive remembers hearing them speak dialect. The comic characters that represent the people appearing in the farces in stories about bandits and also in the chivalrous subjects, playing the parts of equerries or servitors, speak dialect. The language of the paladins, on the other hand, was and still is sometimes, a special jargon, neither Italian nor Sicilian, which employs lofty-sounding

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words and phrases borrowed from literary sources, interspersed with Sicilian and Italian colloquial terminology, but prevalently making use of Sicilian grammatical structures.

The recitation is highly varied in tone and quality and the experienced puppeteer knows most of the text by heart. If he has time, he rereads his script, a notebook carefully copied out in longhand, containing the outline of the episode he has to present that evening. It is merely an outline of the plot, like that of the *Commedia dell'arte* which is not concerned with the dialogue so much as with the order of the scenes, the indication of the setting, the characters present, the action, the subject-matter of the dialogue with a phrase or two of particular importance or of a solemn speech or again the text of letters. In some cases the script also contains a group of verses, a relic religiously handed down from a literary source of which it is unlikely that the puppeteer has any direct knowledge.

The rest of the dialogue is improvised and based on the memory of what the puppeteer heard his *maestro* recite when, as a child or a boy, he was serving his apprenticeship and of what he himself had improvised when presenting the same episode a couple of years back. The puppeteer considers it indispensable that the marionettes, backdrops and other scenic material be kept in the most scrupulous order. But he doesn't need to prepare his lines, they will come to him by themselves during the show, because he has a repertoire of stereotyped formulae with multiple uses, as in the case of other forms of oral or semi-oral literature. At the very most he may, with a rapid glance, consult a sheet of paper pinned up in the wings listing difficult names of localities or minor characters which he would consider it unseemly to mispronounce. This is particularly true of the Palermo theatres where the speaker also manipulates the puppets. In the Catania area, the speakers and the manipulators are different persons in consequence of the size and weight of the puppets and so the speaker can hold the script in his hand and read it. For this reason at Catania one sometimes finds scripts which are not a simple plot-outline but which also contain the complete dialogue like those of the Roman theatres of the last century and those of the Neapolitan theatres.

In Palermo all the roles, even those of the women, are often spoken by the puppeteer himself with versatile changes of voice and to hear women speaking in a man's falsetto recalls ancient and noble theatrical traditions. In the Catania area, on the other hand, one often hears the voices of several speakers including a female one, which renders the performance more varied.

3.2. Production

The fact that the puppet shows are largely *impromptu* does not mean that the imagination of the puppeteer creates them on the spur of the moment from nothing. The production of the puppet show might be described as a series of choices on the part of the producer, first of all at the level of the major components and then, gradually, at that of the minor elements, each choice partially conditioning the subsequent ones.

In fact, once one of the cycles of the repertory has begun, the episodes of a given evening are determined both by the sequence of the narrative as well as by the succession of the instalments. As long as he respects the fundamental unfolding of the story the puppeteer makes use of stereotyped units: macro performance, but the episodes which can be glossed over, expanded or shortened are predetermined by custom. The events to be presented on a single evening are divided into

acts and scenes. This presupposes further decisions regarding the more or less synthetic or analytical presentation of the various episodes. In order to compose his production then, the puppeteer makes use of stereotyped units: macro units consisting of type-scenes and micro-units which are phrases and groups of phrases and movements and gestures or sequences of movements and gestures. This choice is governed by the rules of compatibility or incompatibility and takes into account the particular circumstances of the evening (length of performance foreseen, audience reaction, state of mind of the puppeteer). The show is thus so unstable that it can only be pinned down by a tape recorder. The type-scenes are a limited number of pre-ordained schemas which largely determine the entrance, exit, positions and movements and a series of phrases of the characters conforming to a general typology (king/soldier, old man/young man, etc.); they also include music and sound effects. Each type-scene can be adapted to various situations in the narrative. Therefore any situation in the narrative can be fitted into a series of type-scenes compatible with it. The elements determined by the narrative situation are those which form individual typology of the personages.

The script contains indications of the plot, its division into evening performances and into acts and scenes of which it also suggests the type. The rules which govern the type of scene and the use of micro units as related to those rules, to the narrative situation and to the individual typology of the personages, are only learned by word of mouth and experience.

4.1. The subjects and their sources.

The actual programmes of the *opera dei pupi* are almost always concerned with the deeds of Charlemagne and those of his ancestors and descendants. However, the repertory of the puppeteers also includes other stories of chivalry, historical events such as *Roger the Norman Conquers Sicily* , *The Sicilian Vespers* , *The Story of Victor Emanuel and Garibaldi* and a number of Shakespearean subjects such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth* . There are also the lives of bandits such as *Antonio Di Blasi known as Testalonga*, *Giuseppina the Brigandess* , *Marziale the Murderous Brigand*, *Varsalona* , *Pasquale Bruno* ,

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two. different versions of the *Beati Paoli*, lives of saints such as *S.Rita of Cortona* , *S. Geneviève* and other religious subjects, amongst which the *Passion* and the *Nativity*.

Often at the end of the serious performance short farces were put on in Sicilian dialect. The subjects of the farces in the Palermo area date back to the *vastasate*, comic sketches derived from the *Commedia dell'Arte* which had great success in Palermo towards the end of the 18th century. This word comes from the trade of the personages: porters, in Sicilian *vastasi*, and has the connotation of a coarse, vulgar fellow. The protagonists of the farces are Nofriu, Virticchiu, Peppinninu, Pasquinu, the Neapolitan Testuzza, the baron, the doctor, Lisa and Rusidda. Nofriu, the porter, Lisa, his wife, and the baron are personages of the *vastasate* and the repertory of the farces of the puppeteers includes *Lu curtigghiu di lu Raunisi*, identical in its subject matter to the only text of a *vastasata* still in existence. Furthermore, the list of *vastasate* which we have includes several titles which are the same as those of the farces of the *opera dei pupi*. In the Catania area the protagonist of the farces is Peppinninu. The minor characters of the farce even varied from one quarter to another in Palermo. In fact, in the quarters of the Capo and S. Cosimo the lead was played by Testuzza, a Neapolitan with a big head, while in the Borgo quarter the lead was Citrolo, who has a big nose.

Characters from the farce sometimes appear among those of the chivalrous cycles to play the parts of equerries, servitors of the paladins to express, in dialect, the point of view of the people and to make joking comments on the action.

The source of the historic events is to be sought among historical publications or popular historic romances such as those frequently published by editors like Salani, Vallardi and Bietti. A direct comparison, on the other hand, is impossible because these productions only had a momentaneous success, were not repeated many times and no scripts remain, let alone recordings.

We have scripts of *Romeo and Juliet* and Macbeth which, generally speaking, correspond to the two tragedies of Shakespeare. However the differences are so numerous that it seems likely that the script writer used a summary rather than a translation of Shakespeare's text.

The lives of bandits are an important element in the repertory. The surviving titles are not numerous and refer to single evening performances or those lasting only a few evenings. They have rarely been presented during the last post-war period. In the past the police authorities have impeded these productions and, from their point of view, not without reason. To the people the bandit represents a hero who has had the courage to rebel against an unjust social situation.

The importance of this theme is confirmed by presence of examples of banditry in the repertory of street ballad singers and the so-called *guapparia* or outlaw repertory of the Neapolitan marionette theatre. Again, in the story of the paladins one of the principal elements is the rebellion of the barons against the sovereign, which is clearly a sublimated version of the bandit's rebellion against the law. The popular press has diffused a great number of more or less romanticised lives of bandits and the marionette theatre certainly drew on these for subject matter. It should be noted that the *Story of the Bandits Testalonga and Guernaccia* appears among the titles of the *vastasate. The Story of Pasquale Bruno*, furthermore, is taken from a novel of the same title by A. Dumas the elder.

The stories of the Beati Paoli also owe their

success to the spirit of rebellion and aspirations for justice on the part of the people. The sect of the *Beati Paoli,* in fact, would seem to have been a secret society formed in Palermo between the 17th and 18th centuries to punish the injustices and oppression of men in power. The two versions produced by the *opera dei pupi* are based one on a short story by Linares and the other on Natoli's novel. Both the lives of bandits and the stories of the *Beati Paoli* are to be found in the repertory of theatres in Western Sicily but not in that of the theatres in the Catania area.

The lives of the saints naturally have their sources in religious literature. The titles we have listed are the most common, but some puppet-masters in Eastern Sicily used to boast (if invited to the town's feast) that they were prepared to present the life of the patron saint "whoever he might be, provided that he was either a holy warrior or a martyr".

Whilst almost all the other subjects are short and provide material for only one or very few performances, the stories of chivalry of major success are long narratives presented in instalments.

The remote sources of the popular chivalrous traditions are represented by two types of French mediaeval literature: the epic, namely the "*Chansons de Geste*", and the *Arthurian Romances.*

The derivation of the Carolingian cycle from the *Chansons de Geste* is more direct. These poems, originally handed on orally and sung, tell, in the spirit of the crusades, of the wars of the Christians, led by the Emperor Charlemagne, against the Saracens or of the rebellions of the barons against the high-handed Sovereign: a social evil which hampered the Holy War. The episodes in some of these, for example the wars of Charlemagne in Southern Italy narrated in *Aspremont*, part of the adventures of Rinaldo narrated in *Renaud de Montauban*, and the treachery of Gano with the battle of Roncisvalle narrated in the most famous *Chanson de Geste*, *Roland*, come to light again, with modifications which, at first sight, may seem marginal, even in the Sicilian marionette theatre.

Other parts of the legend have undergone profound transformations and the insertion of developments into the narrative of subsequent invention which are largely derived from the *Arthurian Romance*. This type of literature reveals the ideals of behaviour of court society in the 13th century: in it the amorous themes outweigh those of the warriors and politicians. The feats performed by the heroes are often of a magical or charmed nature to win the love of a lady. Many of the late *Chansons de Geste* contain, parallel with the theme of the Holy War and that of feudal discord, magical and amorous topics. In 14th century France the epic poem declined owing to the preeminence acquired by the adventure story which, apart from court readers, also won favour with the bourgeoisie. It was during this period that the *Chansons* began to be divulged in book form rather than by word of mouth. It was then that in France and other European countries, in Scandinavia, Spain and Italy, prose versions were produced as well as cyclic editions. Both in Spain and Italy the French epic legends had great vitality and continued to develop in an original form up until the 17th century, by which time they had long been forgotten or thought poorly of in France.

In Spain this good fortune was mainly manifested in the *Romancero*, that is in epic-lyric ballads of oral divulgation and in the theatre; in Italy in poems and prose romances. Gradually the fusion of the motifs of the epic and the romance,

which had already begun in France, became more profound. In Italy it increased the value attributed to the figures of the rebel barons and devalued that of the sovereign; furthermore, it arranged the grouping of the traitors and of the pure heroes into two blocks in permanent strife with one another.

In the development of the chivalrous narrative in Italy three phases can be identified. The first consists of so-called Franco-Venetian literature, poems written from the 13th to the beginning of the 15th century in a hybrid and artificial language, half-way between French and a Northern Italian dialect. The second phase begins in the mid-14th century and is that of the *cantari* (popularising poems in octaves) and romances in Tuscan prose. Among the latter, owing to their great and uninterrupted circulation on a popular level, one must mention *I Reali di Francia* and *Guerrino Meschino*, romances by Andrea da Barberino. In these first two phases whilst the urban bourgeoisie and the working classes took over ever increasingly from the aristocracy the enjoyment of books, the texts assumed a more crude form and a more popularesque style which was often jocular. Later on, however, towards the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries, chivalrous narratives were restored to the level of the dominating culture by a refined literary operation. The third phase of the Italian chivalrous narrative is that opened by three famous poems *Morgante* by Luigi Pulci, *Orlando innamorato* by Matteo Maria Boiardo and *Orlando furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto. These works, composed in the atmosphere of the courts of Florence and Ferrara, apart from a series of imitations of modest value, were followed by *Gerusalemme liberata* by Torquato Tasso. The last although it occupies a

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very distinct place in literary histories insofar as it marks the crisis and change in taste which put an end to the creation of chivalrous works, has been given a place along with other chivalrous literature in popular appreciation.

For a long while after the élite literary production had abandoned chivalry, the most famous poems and romances which we have mentioned and also others much less celebrated continued to be some of the first reading books of the popular classes. On the other hand, this was not only the case in Italy but also in France and other European countries.

In the 18th century in Palermo Villabianca unearthed a story of *Orlando* and another of the *Meschino,* the works of blind street ballad singers and Vico heard *Orlando Innamorato* and *Orlando furioso* read by Neapolitan *rinaldi* (ballad singers).

One cannot establish with certainty today what the repertory handed down by storytellers was in Sicily at the beginning of the 19th century. It is known that the *Reali di Francia* and *Guerrin Meschino* (frequently printed in Palermo and Messina), *Calloandro* by Marini, *Morgante* by Pulci, *Orlando innamorato* by Boiardo, *Orlando furioso* by Ariosto, *Mambriano* by Bello, *Rinaldo* by Tasso, *Orlandino* by Folengo, the *Prime imprese di Orlando* by Dolce and *Angelica innamorata* by Brusantini were easily obtainable books. A careful examination of the documents collected and published by Pitrè at the end of the century (reports on plays and stories, scripts, lists of posters, isolated bits of information on personages and plots) allow one to establish that already in the first part ol the 19th century the repertory of the street storytellers inclluded: *Calloandro*, the *Reali di Francia*, a story of *Orlando and Rinaldo* and perhaps also *Drusiano del Leone, Meschino* and *Trabazio*. All these subjects, moreover, together with *Gerusalemme liberata*, the *Guelfo e Alfeo di Negroponte* (a story of Alexander the Great and his son) had certainly become part of the repertory before 1889;

From half-way through the century up until the first decades of the 19th century, when the *opera dei pupi* was already well-established, a wave of publishing activity also hit the island heralded, between 1858 and 1860 by the great success of the *History of the Paladins of France* by the elementary school teacher, Giusto Lodico, which was reprinted in 1862, in 1893 and in 1895-96 with certain additions by Giuseppe Leggio and frequently afterwards still with these additions. It was composed of the compilation and partial fusion of the plots of a large number of poems. In its wake other works were published which were the more or less faithful re-editions or re-elaborations of ancient subjects and others, which, although they were made up of variations on the motifs and schemas characteristic of the traditional chivalrous style, were largely fruit of the imaginations of artisans of popular literature. Among these were Giuseppe Leggio from Palermo, mentioned above, who was also the most active publisher of these romances, and Costantino Catanzaro, Luigi Arangio and Salvatore Patané from Catania. These publications are the direct sources of the *opera dei pupi* , even if they did not all become theatrical subjects.

We do not know whether the stories about Charlemagne, Orlando and Rinaldo, which formed part of the repertory at the beginning of the century, were the same as those one reads in

the *History of the Paladins of France* by Giusto Lodico. As Rajna suggested to Pitrè, when discussing the great success of this work, different traditional versions may have been forgotten.

The documents published by Pitrè contain several divergences from the romance which we may thus consider a sure indication of discordant traditions. However, one cannot establish whether the contribution of Lodico vas of major importance or whether on the contrary, the differences between the old and the new version were merely marginal. One might consider that, prior to the publication of the *History of the Paladins of France*, the repertory only contained the plots of easily-obtained books such as *Morgante* , *Orlando innamorato* , *Orlando furioso* , *Mambriano*, *Rinaldo*, *Orlandino*, *Prime imprese di Orlando* and *Angelica innamorata* . But Sicilian storytellers also used to sing stories which had not been reprinted recently. The storyteller Ferrari, in fact, even before the publication of Lodico's work, used to tell an episode from *Trabisonda*, a poem of which the last edition known to us dates back to 1558.

This rather leads one to believe that the differences between the old and the new version were not very radical, to such a small extent that Rajna informs us that the repertory of the *rinaldi* , Neapolitan ballad singers, used to include, insofar as the adventures of Charlemagne, Orlando and Rinaldo are concerned, apart from *Orlando innamorato* and *Orlando furioso* , other poems not nearly so well known such as *Ancroia* , the *Innamoramento di Carlo Magno* and *Spagna*. We further learn from Pitrè that the Sicilian storytellers ; like the *rinaldi* , possessed hand-written or printed copies of chivalrous poems and romances.

The most important difference between the cycle repertory of the *rinaldi* and Lodico's text is that the latter fuses and harmonises its sources whilst the former is made up of an ordered sequence of poems without "damaging the integrity of any of the works used to make up the system; each work is read as a whole, without the interposition, either wholly or in part, of any other composition. Thus the whole construction remains somewhat irregular and in many cases the superimposed stones do not even fit together approximately... These partial anomalies and solutions of continuity are remedied by the listeners on their own account mentally so that all the elements are recomposed in a perfect unity" (Rajna).

When chivalrous subjects assumed predominant importance in the repertory of the marionettes, the puppet-masters very likely first of all drew on both written sources and oral ones. Lodico then rearranged the traditional material, by connecting up the sources, eliminating incongruities and excluding single episodes or whole works (like *Ancroia* and *Ricciardetto*) which were difficult to fit in with the general structure of the composition. In fact, it is possible that the oral sources contained almost all the narrative material which is to be found in the *History of the Paladins of France.*

The sources of this compilation are: *Orlandino* by Folengo, *Prime imprese di Orlando* by Dolce, *Rinaldo* by Tasso, *Dama Rovenza del Martello* anonymous, *Mambriano* by Bello, *Rinaldo appassionato* by Baldovinetti, *Rinaldo* in Tuscan prose - anonymous, *Antifor di Barosia* anonymous, *Orlando innamorato* by Boiardo, *Orlando furioso* by Ariosto, *Cinque canti aggiunti al Furioso* by Ariosto, *Angelica innamorata* by Bru-

santini, *Leandra* by Durante of Gualdo, *Morgante* by Pulci, the *Innamoramento di Carlo* anonymous, *Trabisonda* anonymous and *Amadigi* by Bernardo Tasso.

Apart from the adventures described in the History of the Paladins of France, the Gesta di Carlomagno deals with his ancestors and descendants. The first part begins with the ancient Trojans and goes from the siege of Troy up to the time of the Emperor Constantine. The tale is told by inter weaving other historical and mythological events from *Giulio Cesare e Tarquinio Cuore di Leone* by Costantino Catanzaro (tracing of the Trojan ancestry of the paladins which is referred to in the fifth canto of the third book of *Orlando innamorato* , stanzas 18 - 29) a work which seems to be a rehash, at least in part, of an antique original. The part that follows, the *Reali di Francai* retraces the work by Andrea da Barberino that has the same title and covers the generations from Constantine to Charlemagne. Then come the feats of Charlemagne and his paladins told in the *History of the Paladins of France* by Giusto Lodico. This is followed by the story of the descendants of Charlemagne told in the serial novel *Drusiano del Leone* which is derived from an ancient poem in octaves of the same title. This work is known to almost all the puppet-masters but in recent times its success and diffusion has been vastly inferior to those of *Guido Santo e i nipoti di Carlomagno*, another continuation of the *History of the Paladins* composed by Emanuele Bruno of Catania at the end of the 19th century and rewritten at the beginning of the 20th by Giuseppe Leggio under the title of *Il figlio di Ricciardetto Guido Santo e i discendenti di Carlomagno*. Leggio continued the series with *Dolores e Straniero o il prete rinnegato*, with *Rinaldino ovvero l'emulo di Guido Santo* and *Gerusalemme liberata* which, for the most part, is a translation in prose of Tasso's poem.

Not all the parts of this long series of stories have been equally lucky. The central part of the cycle, that is the story of Carlomagno, Orlando and Rinaldo, has been the most successful and has been presented the most frequently, so much so that the puppeteers say: "Orlando and Rinaldo are always the ones to put the pasta on to boil", that is to say those who enable the puppeteer and his family to make both ends meet.

The events between Constantine and Charlemagne and those of Guido Santo have had a certain amount of success, whilst those of the earliest ancestors and latest descendants have seldom been presented.

Since the first decades of the 19th century the chivalrous repertory of the *opera dei pupi* has included the following cycles:

- *Gesta di Carlomagno, dei suoi antenati e dei suoi discendenti*
- *Storia dell'Imperatore Trabanzio e dei suoi figli* told in serial form in *Trabazio* and *Chiarimonte*, the material of which corres ponds to the Spanish romance *Espejio de principes y caballeros.*
- *Guerrino detto il Meschino* corresponding to the work by Andrea da Barberino, *pièce de resistance* of some puppeteers but which has never been presented by others.

These three first cycles are spread all over Sicily.

In the Catania area another six are presented, all of recent invention.

- *Erminio della Stella d'Oro and Gemma della*

Fiamma, a story of which the authorship is credited by some to the puppeteer don Ciccio Rasura and by others to the puppeteer don Gaetano Crimi; Salvatore Patanè made two serial novels from it.

- *Guido di Santa Croce*, a story based on three serial novels by Costantino Catanzaro.

- *Farismane and Siface*, a story made up by the puppeteer Crimi of which Luigi Arangio made a serial novel.

- *Tramoro di Medina* another story by Crimi made into a serial novel by Arangio.

- *Uzeda il Catanese*, a story made up by the puppeteer Raffaele Trombetta from which Giuseppe Malfa made a serial novel, presented at Catania in particular.

- *Belisario da Messina*, a story concocted by the Messina puppeteer Gargano and presented at Messina in particular.

Three cycles are hardly known except to a few puppeteers whereas they formed a regular part of the repertory during the 19th century.

- *Calloandro*, which is derived from Marino's novel which was also republished in serial form.

- *Guelfo da Negroponte*, taken from a serial novel by Giuseppe Leggio.

-*Alessandro Magno*, taken from a serial novel by the puppeteer Gaetano Crimi or from the one by Costantino Catanzaro.

4.2. Audience reaction and significance of the opera dei pupi

To understand the reasons for the success of these stories one should realise that they have not always remained the same but have continued to change with the times. The tenacious persistence of the popularity of the chivalrous epic is only apparently constant as it has undergone many changes, some obvious, others subtle and recondite. The meaning of what at first glance would appear to be the same old story has changed; the "outlook on life" to which the story may be correlated has also changed with the times. Today, each puppet-master (though generally proclaiming his deference and fidelity to tradition) gives his own particular slant to a happening which is influenced by public opinion. On the other hand, as we shall see, certain stories of the repertory convey different messages to different spectators either owing to their intrinsic characteristics or due to the different powers of comprehension of different people. Interpretations from widely differing viewpoints explain the enormous possibilities of enjoying the *History of the Paladins of France* from a different angle. These possibilities have made it an efficacious means of meditating on the world, accounting for its life for such a long period under such varied historical and social conditions. These same possibilities today open up a wide field for experiment and changes in treatment.

The chivalrous subjects, the stories of bandits and those of sainted martyrs conjured up the picture of a world and its struggles which, by a radically anachronistic reading, became a picture of the daily realities of the audience: friends and enemies, open enemies and occult enemies, loyalty,

treachery, ingratitude and the injustice of those in power. The personages of the *History of the Paladins of France* belong to a typology which is still sometimes used to classify persons one meets in the street. A traitor not to be trusted is a Gano di Magonza. A rich and avaricious man, who allows himself to be hoodwinked by evil-doers is a Charlemagne. A very strong, and faithful man, not crafty, very serious and without much luck with women, is an Orlando; a strong rebellious and wily man, capable of making the best of things, a jester and a Don Juan, is a Rinaldo. A cheerful, generous, rash ne'er-do-well is an Astolfo.

By showing hatred for the wicked traitors and admiration and affection for the heroes, one expressed ones allegiance to the laws of the people's world.

The "fans" of Orlando and those of Rinaldo were the two main sub-groups into which the audience was divided. Belonging to one or the other meant approving of a certain particular way of behaving.

The passion and fury of the traditional audience used to be demonstrated in paradoxical episodes by the spectators of the show, episodes the versions of which are all very similar and told about in many theatres in different places. At Porto Empedocle (and in New York) a puppet-master was woken up at 2 a.m. by a spectator who could not get to sleep and who, in tears, obliged him to accompany him to the theatre to free Rinaldo who had remained chained up in a dark prison at the end of the evening performance. When his hero had been liberated, he cheered up and went off to bed. Applause is not, generally speaking, forthcoming for the excellence of the recitation or for the skill of the manipulation, but greeted victories, weddings and such like: Don Chiaro who flogs Almonte because he has treacherously killed the valiant Milone; Orlando, who has recovered his sanity and appears armoured after his lunacy; the reconciliation between Orlando and Rinaldo, the rival cousins. At Paternò, on the occasion of the wedding of Ruggiero to Bradamante, the puppet-master distributed sugared almonds to the audience. Even up until yesterday reactions against a traitor could still explode into violence. A spectator at Gela purchased the Gano di Maganza, hung him up on a tree and riddled him with buckshot. The following evening, when a new puppet appeared on the stage in the role of the traitor, the executioner raised merry hell, claiming that it was not possible because he, personally had done away with him. At Partinico one spectator took post-shots at Gano with a pistol. Some years ago, after Ruggiero had been treacherously murdered by the hated Gano, we saw with our own eyes a spectator take off his shoe and hurl it violently several times at the traitor. In spite of the protests of the puppeteer, the lynching of the expensive marionette went on for several minutes. Finally the spectator put his shoe on again and went back to his seat, swearing to carry on the good work on other evenings until the hated puppet was completely destroyed. Gano di Maganza, sadly dented, rose to his feet and went on to say that he hoped that all the other paladins would soon suffer the same fate as Ruggiero, adding in Sicilian dialect: « and that, too, holds good for my friend who can't keep his shoes to himself! ».

Gregorovius had been present at a very similar scene in Rome in 1854. Often at the end of the

History of the Paladins of France, when Gano is quartered, the audience grabbed the pieces of his corpse to maltreat them tear them to shreds and share them out.

On the other hand, enthusiasm did not exclude a certain dose of irony which took the form of asking for the unlikely deeds of valour of the heroes to be cut down to size. The dialogue between the puppeteer, who made a paladin say "I killed a hundred enemies with a single blow", and the audience who by shouting "Come off it! Chum! Not that many" make him reduce the number of slaughtered foes, has already been reported by Pitrè, and in some theatres it became a regular gag through tacit agreement on either side.

Even outside the small group of regular habitués of the *opera dei pupi* , the popular audiences of the South had a sketchy knowledge of the chivalrous epic which enabled them to understand the references which classified the personages. Between the picture of the world presented by the puppets, which did not always coincide with literary sources, and that of the southern lower classes, there was complete correspondence. The ideological ambiguity innate in the narrative structure of the *Story of the Paladins of France* permitted a series of different interpretations corresponding to the mentality of the different social classes represented in the audience; from the lower middle class to the down-and-outs. Take, for example, the relationship between the sovereign Charlemagne, the evil councillor Gano di Maganza and the barons who react against injustice by rebelling, some with greater and some with lesser intolerance: there are the unreconcilable ones like Malaguerra, the reconcilable with difficulty like Rinaldo or those ready for reconciliation like Orlando; this situation was enjoyed because it presented a picture of the relationship between the dominated classes and the seat of power and it was suitable for expressing either a revolutionary ideal or a moderate ideal of social reconciliation.

In its essential features, however, the *opera dei pupi* is a rite of passion, death and vengeance. Evening after evening the heroes piled up claims on the love of the audience and the villains on its hatred and scorn. The death of the former, awaited with trepidation and that of the latter, looked

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forward to gives rise to an interminable seesaw of grief and joy. Gano di Maganza, the traitor, a despicable and detested character, is not only a scapegoat who takes upon himself all the evil and all the crimes until the end, when he is condemned to be quartered by four horses, but, small and dressed in black, he also represents death. A curious similarity unites this arch-villain to the personages of the farce who often are introduced into the serious play in the guise of servitors of the heroes like the masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte* from which they originate. Both Gano and Peppinnino and Virticchio are small in stature, move and speak in a ridiculous way and absurdly lift one leg like a macroscopic phallus. In the Roman and Neapolitan marionette theatres of the 19th century, the mask was Pulcinella, who wore white. On a certain level the masks, who speak dialect, represent the people, the daily round and anti-heroism. On a deeper level one may say that the diabolical figures of the ancient ritual theatre have doubled up to form a white death and a black one. On the one hand there are Pulcinella, Peppennino or Virticchio, righteous comic characters, who assist the heroes in their undertakings and skip in triumph on the fallen foe; on the other is Gano, who obstructs the heroes, leads them to their deaths and jumps for joy when they are killed.

If this is true, the fact that it should have been Virticchio, Peppennino or Pulcinella to carry out Gano's death sentence (in certain versions it is even they who discover and take him prisoner) does not only mean that people set themselves up as the instrument for re-establishing justice, but also for ensuring the triumph of righteous supernatural forces over evil ones. This is confirmed by the striking fetishism with which not only the handsome, shining heroes, Orlando, Rinaldo and the other paladins are treated, but also the other shady characters. To touch Virticchio brings good luck and to lynch Gano di Maganza, rend him and take a piece of his body home appeases one's anger and grief for the injustice of the world and delivers one from evil.

The International Museum of Marionettes

Antonio Pasqualino

The puppet-theatre has continued to survive thanks to the aid it has received from a museum institution. The long path which the International Museum of Marionettes has followed since 1975, the year of its inception, with constant reference to any requirements that might have cropped up, has led it to combine its role as purely a museum with that of a theatre; the former was basically a continuation of tradition, but subsequently also of research and innovation. To once more travel over the whole 16-year period consents one to bring together the various strands of the continual adjustments of interpretative criteria, and changes in understanding that objects as replete with meaning as marionettes inevitably tend to suggest.

The Museum had its beginnings in the Association for the Conservation of Folk Traditions, in 1965, in the 1967 Palermo congress about "Museografia e folklore" (the museum and folklore), and a collecting craze on the part of a few intellectuals. As always this collecting craze followed the logic of giving back "unity and a homogeneous sense of togetherness in the face of the dissipation of objects" (Calvino 1984, p 118).

The initial core of the collection and the first steps in research that would eventually result in the Museum were taking shape around the Sicilian puppets; this research was of inestimable value since it was linked to a world that within a few years would vanish without trace. This was a time when the actual decisive action of collecting and conserving objects that no longer seemed to have either a public or life on the stage, was governed by intense commitment and the puppets' gradual reintegration into a relationship and confrontation with a new audience, the only possible, different to the one that thus far the puppet-theatre had encountered. This action had created a kind of complicity between the researchers, the puppeteers and the meagre residual audience that had survived the crisis of the sixties, and were precious witnesses to values from the past. In those years hundreds of recordings were collected, of shows bound to traditional models, tracked down in small provincial towns; dozens of interviews were carried out with puppeteers and habitués, which document the value of this fragile narrative and theatrical procedure as a paradigm of the social universe; many new shows, of which we have spoken, were created and their development was followed at first hand. During this extraordinary research experience, on the crest of deep change in Sicilian and Italian society, an idea took deep root of how it might be possible to separate these subjects from the chain of living relationships that had brought them to life.

From the shapeless and chaotic stacks of materials in a citrus warehouse, in what was then still visibly the Conca d'oro (lit. the golden valley), the move was made to the first home of the museum, an aristocratic palace with prestigious frescoed reception rooms, where finally the materials, in the words of Calvino,

lived out their redemption, subjected to an initial stock-taking and comparative analysis of typology (Calvino, 1984). In this way the Museum was building up a framework before becoming a concrete reality; since its very conception it had never been an abode for lifeless objects, but had assumed a character in which research was interwoven with the activity of the puppet-theatre. The puppet-theatre Festival had had a fundamental role up to the Museum's inauguration, and opened up a path to reflection on the role of the museum and its relationship with separation from reality. It was not by mere chance that it was a Danish lady who had moved to Sicily, and who had internalised since early childhood all the advanced ideas about civilisation from the North European museums, who consciously guided this project and retrieved it from its Sicilian chaos.

Recalling the history of the enlightened culture, which exists and continues to live on in Palermo and Sicily in the face of so many obstacles, it should be said that that the undertaking of setting up a museum was only possible due to the tenacity and the enthusiastic commitment to an ideal on the part of several professional figures, guided by the passion and intellectual lucidity of Antonino Buttitta and the care and vigilance of Peppino Bonomo, true heirs of the schools of Pitré and Cocchiara.

The prestigious framework of the aristocratic building played a vital role in the ensuing, and not inconsiderable, success of the opening of the Museum. Apart from any strategy of communication, this conferred on the Sicilian puppets an aura of authenticity and respectability in the eyes of the local middle-classes, and reconciled with those beloved objects, those people who had mistaken modern progress for some sort of act of cancellation from the memory.

Following the warm reception the city of Palermo had bestowed on the initiative, and the revitalised relationship between the puppet-theatre and the general public, a strategy on a much larger scale was then put into action: on the one hand there was an acquisition campaign that broadened the range of the Museum's collection, opening up to items from non-European traditions, and on the other hand the reappearance of shows that had long since vanished from the Sicilian scene. From the very beginning, within the Museum, a group of specialised operators looked after the research and maintenance, making inventories of materials, as well as organising thematic exhibitions at the Museum itself or in other cities. Over the years the presence of the museum was consolidated among the stable theatre companies, with permanent programmes in the city and important appearances on the national and international stage: Aarhus, Copenaghen, Montecatini, Colonia, Lille, Arras, Milan, Venice, Pisa, Caracas, Berkeley, *Festival d'automne* in Paris, Italy in Houston, the Edinburgh Festival, Maison des Cultures du monde in Grenoble, Festival of Berlin etc.

It is important to emphasise the close bond that was established between the

regular annual dates of the Festival and the opportunities for acquisition thrown up by the arrival of companies from distant parts. Here the interdependence was evident, between the various functions and activities of the Museum. The Festival allowed meaningful in-depth analysis of the Sicilian and southern Italian repertoires; it restored the puppeteers to a position of professional dignity, and laid the groundwork for the study of non-European theatrical practices, the repercussions of which would be evident in the research-trips and acquisition campaigns to Indonesia.

The Museum was evicted from its premises in 1985, and risked remaining without a home: but then with the help of the Sicilian Regional government it managed to find a home in more spacious and functional premises, in such a way that the whole lay-out had to be rethought, thus separating the administrative sections, the library, the videothèque, the photothèque, and the conservation store-rooms open to the public.

In that very year the Festival of Morgana accomplished an aim that had been cherished for a long time, which involved not only the *figure-theatre* in the strict sense, but also forms of traditional, ritual theatre. The exploration of these theatrical practices encouraged a broader scope and attention for the anthropological foundations of the theatre; the contemporary theatre also owed a great debt to the non-European ritual and theatrical traditions, inheriting from the experiences of the avant-garde a meta-linguistic vocation in dealing with objects, as well as the possibility and perhaps the necessity to fuse all these elements in its approach to exhibiting.

Recently , the Museum's theatrical activities have embraced the production of innovative shows, in collaboration with writers, painters, visual artists, contemporary musicians (we might mention Calvino, Guttuso, Kantor and Pennisi) and these activities have enabled the Museum to acquire materials of great artistic interest.

The intermingling of problem areas deriving from various experiences and stimuli becomes part of a wider relationship with theoretical cases of contemporary museography, which are tending to transform museums from "a temple of knowledge" for the very few into places of global communication aimed at much wider audiences. The great European exhibitions of the last decades, often very similar to theatrical staging, have presented works with selected themes, taking them apart and putting them together again, just as in the working of the theatre, sharing with the theatre the same ephemeral vocation that promises an ongoing and updatable debate.

On this broader canvas the tradition of puppets today flourishes once more through the various experiences of its young representatives.

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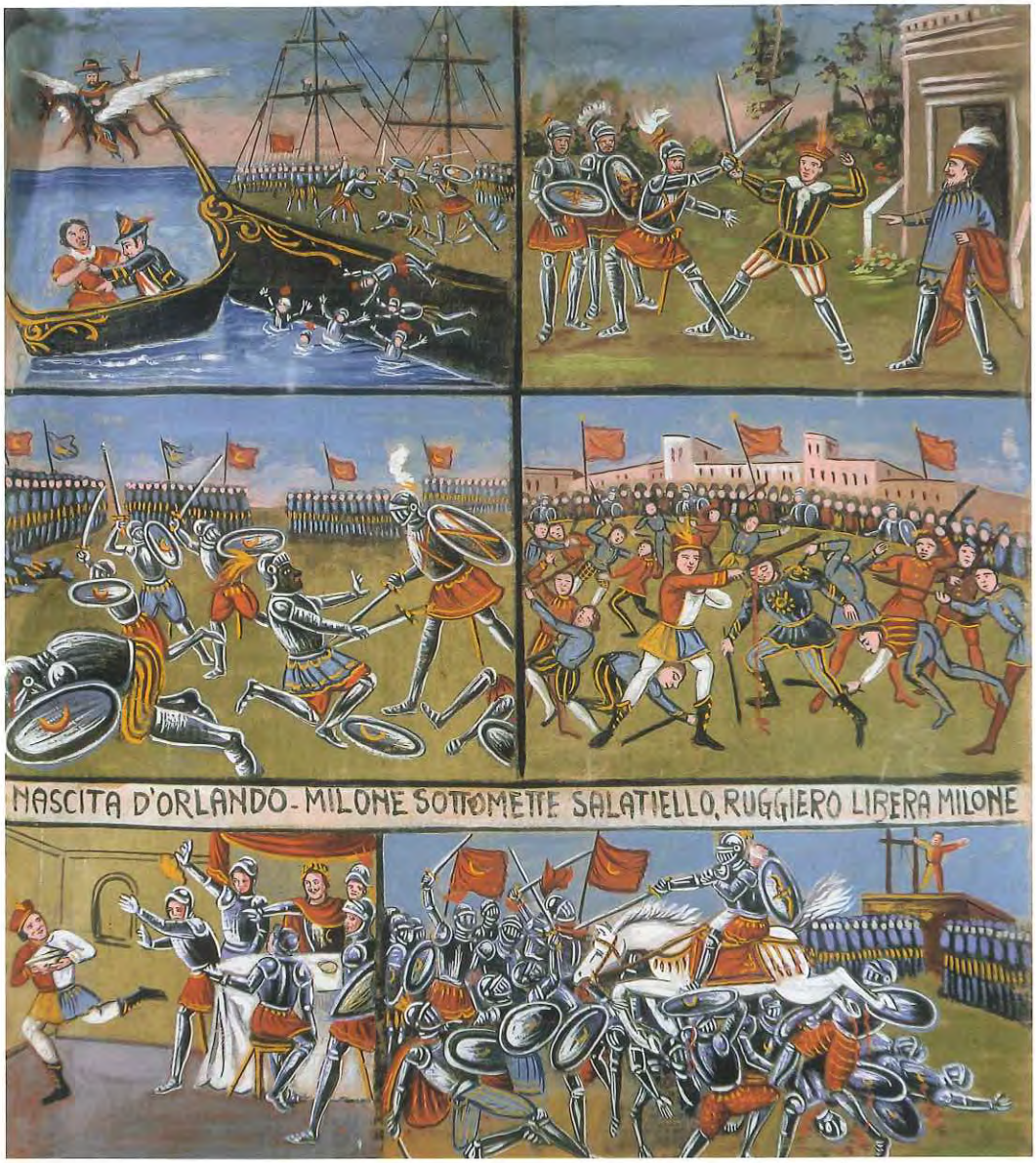
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