

‘and I would like to be hearing
about them night and day’¹

Orlando. I pray you, mar no more of my verses
with reading them ill-favouredly.
William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 3.2.257-258

1. *Recollections, Memoires, Diaries*

Augustinus Hipponensis, *Confessiones*

Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by J.G. Pilkington (1943), from Book V

To Milan I came, to Ambrose the Bishop, known to the whole world as among the best of men, Thy devout servant; whose eloquent discourse did then plentifully dispense unto Thy people the flour of Thy wheat, the gladness of Thy oil, and the sober inebriation of Thy wine. To him was I unknowing led by Thee, that by him I might knowingly be led to Thee. That man of God received me as a father, and showed me an Episcopal kindness on my coming. Thenceforth I began to love him, at first indeed not as a teacher of the truth (which I utterly despaired of in Thy Church), but as a person kind towards myself. And I listened diligently to him preaching to the people, not with that intent I ought, but, as it were, trying his eloquence, whether it answered the fame thereof, or flowed fuller or lower than was reported; and I hung on his words attentively; but of the matter I was as a careless and scornful looker-on; and I was delighted with the sweetness of his discourse, more recondite, yet in manner less winning and harmonious, than that of Faustus. Of the matter, however, there was no comparison; for the one was wandering amid Manichaeian delusions, the other teaching salvation most soundly. But salvation is far from sinners, such as I then stood before him; and yet was I drawing nearer by little and little, and unconsciously.

¹ Miguel de Cervantes, *The ingenious gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, translated by John Ormsby (1885), Part I, chap. 32. Unless otherwise stated, translations of works not available in English are by the compiler of this Appendix. I wish to thank Carmelina Imbroscio for the suggestion of the French (and not only French) texts that appear in this Appendix.

Dante Alighieri, 'Inferno', *La divina commedia*, from Canto V, 115-138

Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io,
e cominciai: 'Francesca, i tuoi martiri
a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.

Ma dimmi: al tempo d'ì dolci sospiri,
a che e come concedette Amore
che nosceste i dubbiosi disiri?'

E quella a me: 'Nessun maggior dolore
che ricordarsi del tempo felice
ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore.

Ma s'a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
dirò come colui che piange e dice.

Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.

Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.

Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
esser baciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,

la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante.
Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante'.

Dante Alighieri, 'Hell', *The Vision, or Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, of Dante* (1814), translated by H.F. Cary, from Canto V, 112-135

Then turning, I to them my speech address'd,
And thus began: 'Francesca! your sad fate
Even to tears my grief and pity moves.
But tell me; in the time of your sweet sighs,
By what, and how Love granted, that ye knew
Your yet uncertain wishes?' She replied:
'No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when misery is at hand. That kens
Thy learn'd instructor. Yet so eagerly
If thou art bent to know the primal root,
From whence our love gat being, I will do
As one, who weeps and tells his tale. One day,
For our delight we read of Lancelot,

How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no
 Suspicion near us. Oft-times by that reading
 Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
 Fled from our alter'd cheek. But at one point
 Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
 The wished smile so raptoriously kiss'd
 By one so deep in love, then he, who ne'er
 From me shall separate, at once my lips
 All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
 Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
 We read no more.'

Samuel Pepys, from *Diary* (1660-1669)

Saturday 4 November 1665

Thence I to the Swan, ... and so I by water to Deptford, and there made a visit to Mr. Evelyn ... He read to me very much also of his discourse, he hath been many years and now is about, about Guardenage; which will be a most noble and pleasant piece. He read me part of a play or two of his making, very good, but not as he conceits them, I think, to be ... He read me, though with too much gusto, some little poems of his own, that were not transcendant, yet one or two very pretty epigrams; among others, of a lady looking in at a grate, and being pecked at by an eagle that was there.

...

Tuesday 4 June 1667

To the office all the afternoon, where I dispatched much business to my great content, and then home in the evening, and there to sing and pipe with my wife, and that being done, she fell all of a sudden to discourse about her clothes and my humours in not suffering her to wear them as she pleases, and grew to high words between us, but I fell to read a book aloud in my chamber and let her talk, till she was tired and vexed that I would not hear her, and so become friends, and to bed together the first night after 4 or 5 that she hath lain from me by reason of a great cold she had got.

...

Tuesday 26 May 1668

Up by four o'clock; and by the time we were ready, and had eat, we were called to the coach, where about six o'clock we set out, there being a man and two women of one company, ordinary people, and one lady alone, that is tolerably handsome, but mighty well spoken, whom I took great pleasure in talking to, and did get her to read aloud in a book she was reading, in the coach, being the King's Meditations; and then the boy and I to sing, and so about noon come to Bishop's Stafford, to another house than what we were at the other day, and better used.

Vittorio Alfieri, *Vita di Vittorio Alfieri da Asti, scritta da esso* (1804)
Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Victor Alfieri; Written by Himself, translated
 by Henry Colburn (1810)

I had successively read all these tragedies in different societies composed of men of letters, literary females, others, who though not possessed of cultivated minds were yet susceptible of all the passions, and of others again who were grossly ignorant, and wholly destitute of education. In reading them, it is true, I had utility not praise in view; I knew the world, and especially the great world, too well to be inflated with pride, or stupidly to believe in any praises which flow not from the heart, but which cannot well be refused by a well-bred audience to an author who makes no pretensions, and who fatigues himself by reading his productions for their amusement. I estimated therefore the eulogiums I received at their true value, but I knew how to appreciate, and was extremely attentive to the praise and disapprobation of looks, if I may be permitted to employ the expression. Whenever twelve or fifteen individuals are assembled together, such as I have described, the general feeling which pervades this assembly will very much resemble that of a pit in a theatre. Though not compelled to be present, and though politeness requires that they should appear to be satisfied, it is nevertheless impossible to conceal the coldness and ennui they may feel, and still more so, to assume a lively interest in what is going forward, or to display an ardent curiosity to reach the development of the plot. As an auditor can neither command his features, nor fix himself to his seat, his countenance and motions must afford a sufficient indication to an author respecting the sensations which his work is calculated to produce. This was almost the sole object I had in view by reading my pieces; and I thought I could remark, that during two thirds of the time my hearers gave to them an undivided attention, and that their anxiety redoubled on approaching the catastrophe. ... I must here also acknowledge that those tedious and languid passages, which fatigued and disgusted me on a reperusal were done ample justice to by the eternal yawnings, involuntary coughs, and restless motions of my hearers, who in this manner afforded me, without intending it, the most salutary counsel.

...

As, however, I neither wished to expose myself to the charge of plagiarism, nor of the sin of ingratitude, and as I conceived this tragedy belonged by right to Euripides, I placed it among my translations, where it remains under the title of *Alceste II.* by the side of *Alceste I.* which led me to conceive and execute the former. I mentioned not the infraction of my vow to any one, not even to my better half, hoping to derive some amusement from this silence. In the month of December, I read this production, as a translation from Euripides, to a party of friends, whom I had purposely invited to my house. Those who did not thoroughly remember the original fell into the snare; but

an individual happening to be present who perfectly recollected it, discovered the joke towards the end of the third act; and the reading, which began in the name of Euripides, concluded in mine. This drama was well received, and even I myself, though I saw in it much to correct and retrench, was on the whole not displeased with it.

...

I read Homer in the original Greek, pronouncing every word in an audible tone of voice, and rendered literally, into Latin, those verses which I wished to study in the morning. Those frequently amounted to sixty, eighty, or even a hundred and the blunders I committed in this exercise never interrupted my progress. After mangling these verses, I endeavoured to accent them properly.

2. *Courtesy and Conduct Books*

Baldesar Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528)

The courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes, done into English by Thomas Hoby (1561), from Book I

So the daye after the Pope was departed, the companye beeinge gathered to the accustomed place, after muche pleasaunt talke, the Dutchesse pleasure was that the *L. Emilia* should beginne these pastimes: and she after a litle refusing of that charge, sayd in this maner: Syth it is your pleasure (Madam) I shall be she that must giue the onsett in oure pastimes this night, because I ought not of reason disobey you, I thinke meete to propounde a pastyme, whereof I suppose shall ensue litle blame, and lesse trauayle. And that shall be to haue euery man, as nigh as he can, propounde a deuysed not yet hearde of, then shall we chuse out such a one as shall be thought meete to be taken in hande in this companye. And after she had thus spoken, she tourned her vnto the *L. Gaspar Pallauicin*, willynge him to propounde his ... After the *L. Gaspar* hadde thus spoken, the *L. Emilia* made a signe vnto the *Lady Constance Fregosa*, because she was next in order, to folow: who was now about to speake, whan the Dutchesse sodeinlye said: Seinge the *L. Emilia* will not take the paine to fynde out some pastime, reason willeth that the other Ladyes should be partakers of the same priuilege, and be also fre from this burden for this night: especially seing there are so manye men in place, for assure your self we shall want no pastimes. So shall we do, aunswered the *L. Emilia*, and puttinge the *L. Constance* to silence tourned her to the *L. Cesar Gonzaga*, that sat next her, commaunding him to speak ... This pastime was muche praysed, and therefore dyd euerye man setle himselfe to reason vpon this matter. But the *Lady Emilia* holdyng her peace *M. Peter Bembo*, that satt next in order, spake in this maner: My Lordes, this pastime that the *L. Octauian* hath propounded hath rayseed no smal doubt in my mind, where he hath resoned of the disdiegnes of loue, the whiche though they be sondry,

yet vnto me haue they alwaies bin most bitter. Neither do I beleue that I can learne any sauce y^t shalbe sufficient to sweten them. But peraduenture they are the more & the lesse bitter according to the cause wherof they arrise. For I haue in my daies (I remember) seene the woman whom I serued, stirred against me, eyther vpon a vaine suspicyon that she conceyued her self of my trustinesse, or elles vpon some other false opinyon that had bine put into her head by some mennes report to my hindraunce, so that I beleaued no grief might be compared to myne . . . Therefore woulde I oure pastyme were to haue euerye man declare his opinion, where there must be a disdeigne agaynst hym in the person beloued, of whom he woulde the cause of this disdeigne shoulde haue his beeginning, whether of her or of him selfe: to know which is the greater grief, eyther to dysplease the wight beloued, or to receyue dyspleasure of the wyght beloued. Euery man looked what the *L. Emilia* woulde make aunswere to this, but without anye woord speakyng to *Bembo*, she tourned her and made a signe to *Sir Friderick Fregoso* to shew his deuysse. And he incontinentlye beegan thus: Madam, I woulde it were lawfull for me, as the maner is manye tymes to remytte me to the iudgement of an other, for I for my part woulde wyth all my heart allowe some of the pastymes that haue bine already propounded by these Lordes, bicause in deede me thinke they would be worth the hearing. Yet least I shoulde breake the order, thys I saye: who so woulde take in hande to praise our Court leauing a part the desertes of the dutchesse, which ghostly spirite, with her influence, is sufficient to drawe from the earth vp into heauen the simplist wittes in the worlde, he might wel do it without suspicion of flattery. For peraduenture in all Italy a man shall haue muche a do to fynde out so many gentlemen and noble personages that are so worthy, and besyde the principall profession of Chiuallrye so excellent in sundry thinges, as are presently here. Therfore if in any place men may be founde y^t deserue the name of good Courtyer, and can iudge what belongeth to the perfeccion of Courtyership, by reason a man may beleue them to be here. To disgrace therefore many vntowardly asseheades, that through malepertnes thinke to purchase them the name of a good Courtyer, I would haue suche a pastime for this night, that one of the company myght bee picked out who should take in hand to shape in woordes a good Courtyer, specifying all suche condicions and particuler qualities, as of necessitie must be in hym that deserueth this name. And in suche thinges as shall not appere necessarie, that it may be lawfull for euery man to replye against them, as the maner of Philosophers schooles is against him that kepeth disputacions. *Syr Friderick* proceaded styll forward, in his talke, whan the *L. Emilia*: interruptyng hym, sayde: If it bee my *L.* the dutchesse pleaser, this shall be our pastime for this once. The dutchesse aunswere: I am wel pleased. Then (in maner) all the company began to say both to the dutchesse, & among themselues that this was the trimmest pastyme they could haue, and without looking for answeere the one of the other, thei craued vpon the *Lady Emilia* to appoint who shoulde first beginne.

Giovanni Della Casa, from *Galateo overo de' costumi* (1558)

Galateo of Maister Iohn Della Casa, Archebishop of Beneuenta. Or rather, A Treatise of ma[n]ners and behaiours, done into English by Robet Peterson (1576)

Neither in sporte nor in earnest, must a man speake any thing against *God* or his *Saintes*, how witty or pleasaunt so euer the matter be. Wherein, the company that *Giouan Boccaccio* hathe brought to speake in his *Nouvelles* and tales, hath faulted so muche: that me thinkes euery good body, may iustly blame them for it. And you must thinke *It is not only a token of great detestation & Impietie in a man, to talke in iesting wise of God: but hee is a vvicked & sinfull man, that will abyde to heare it.* But you shall finde some suche good men, as will flie asmuche as the plague, the company of such as talke so vnreuerently, and without respect, of the incomprehensible Maiestie of God. *And vvee must not alone speake religiously of him: but in all our talkes wee must auoyde what vvee may, that our vvordes may not vvitnes against our life and our vvorkes.* For me[n] doe hate their owne faultes otherwhile, when they see them in another. Likewise it is vnsauourie, to talke of things out of tyme, not fitting the place and company: although the matter it selfe, and spoken in tyme, were otherwise both good and godly. We must not then rehearse Fryers sermones to young gentlewomen, when they are disposed to sporte the[m] selues ... And in feastes & at table, wee must beware wee doe not rehearse any sorowfull tales, nor put them in minde of woundes, of sicknes, of deathes, of Plagues, or of other dolefull matters. But if another man chauce to moue suche matter: it shalbe good, after an honest and gentell sorte, to exchange that talke, and thrust in some other, yt may giue them more delighe and pleasure to heare it.

...

So that, in no wyse, I can excuse our friend *Philostrato*, for his worke that hee made full of dule and of death, to suche a company as desired nothing more then myrthe. Wee must the rather vse sylence, then discourse of suche sorrowfull matters. And they doe asmuch amisse too, that neuer haue other thing in their mouthe, then their children, their wife, and their nourse. *My litle boy, made mee so laughe yesterday: heare you: you neuer savue a svveeter babe in your life: my wyfe is such a one, Cecchina told mee: of troth you vvould not beleeeue vvhat a vvit shee hath:* There is none so idle a body, that will eyther intend to answer, or abyde to heare suche foolishe prytte prattle. For it yrcks a mans eares to harken vnto it. There be some againe, so curious in telling their dreames from point to point, vsing such wonder and admiration withall, y^t it makes a mans hart ake to heare them: & specially because (for y^e most parte) they be such kinde of people: as it is but labour lost to heare, euē the very best exployts they doe, when they be most awake, and labour most to shew their best. Wherefore we must not trouble men with so base and absurde matter as dreames bee: especially suche foolyshe things, as most tymes men haue.

...
Our vvordes (be it in longe discourses or other communication) *Must be so plaine, that all the companie may easily vnderstand them:* and withall, for sounde and sense they must be apt and sweete. For if you be to vse one of these two wordes: you shall rather say, *Il ventre:* then *L'Épa.* And where your country speache will beare it, you shall rather say: *La Pancia,* then *L'Ventre:* Or, *il Corpo.* For, by these meanes you shalbe vnderstoode, and not misse vnderstoode, as we *Florentines* say, nor be darke and obscure to the hearers.

...
 It is not then for a man to vse any talke, with him that vnderstandeth not that language you talke vnto him. Nor yet, bycause a *Douche man* vnderstandes not the *Italian tounge,* must wee (for that cause) breake of our talke, to holde talke with him, to make our selues counterfets, as Maister *Brufaldo* did, and as some other be woont, that fondly and coldly, without any grace, thrust them selues in to Chat in their language with whome they talke, what so euer it be, and chop it out euery worde preposterously. And many times it chaunceth, the *Spaniard* talkes *Italian* with the *Italian,* and the *Italian* babbles againe in a braueuery and gallantnes, the *Spanishe tounge* with the *Spaniard.* And yet, it is an easier thing to know, y^e they both talke like strangers: then to forbear to laugh at the folish follies that scape them both in speache. *Let vs not therefore vse our forreigne language, but vvhen it is needefull for vs to be vnderstoode, for some necessitie or other, that appertaineth vnto vs:* And in common vse, vse our owne tounge, though not altogether so good: rather then a forreigne language, better then our owne that is naturall vnto vs. For a *Lumbarde* shall speake his owne tounge more aptly (which is, notwithstanding, but base and barbarous) then he shall speake the *Tuscane,* or other language: euen bycause he hath not so redily, so proper and peculiar wordes, althoughe he studie much for them, as wee our selues that be *Tuscanes.*

Stefano Guazzo, from *La civil conuersazione* (1574)

The ciuile conuersation of M. Steeuē Guazzo written first in Italian, and nowe translated out of French by George Pettie, deuided into foure bookees (1581), from Book I

Guaz. [William Guazzo]

For that this is a profitable and pleasant matter, I beséech you that in these thrée dayes which I haue to stay héere with you, wée may employ héerein that little leasure which shalbe left you from practising on your patients: and that you will shewe vnto me all those things which belong to conuersation, to the ende, that comming in company with any, of what calling and condition soeuer, I may bee sure to omit nothing whith [*sic*] I ought to performe.

Annib. [*Annibal Magnoca*]

I cannot throughly satisfie your desire, for many causes: and first, for that to searche out all the particular points of conuersation, were a matter, if not impossible, yet at least that would require manie monethes worke: besides, we must consider that (as the Philosophers say) there can be no certaine and determinate science, from particular to particular. Then the particularities of conuersation being knowne for the most part to men of meane vnderstanding, I should do you wrong, & should thinke my self to speake superfluously (yea, euen when I should speak to those ignorant and vnskillfull fellowes) if I should intreate of things so ordinarie and common. And therefore it shal suffice vs to intreate of those things which are principally required in conuersation, wherewith perchance we shall haue occasion to mingle & ioyne so manie other bymatters, that I doubt not but you shall rest satisfied.

Guaz.

Uerily, I see by this time that as well for the diuersitie of matters which occurre in conuersation, as for the difference of the life & manners of men, with whom we are conuersant, you shall take vpon you a trauell & charge farre greater than the twelue labors of *Hercules*, throughly to intreate of it. For considering that people differ one from another in degree, in age, in kinde, in life, in maners, and in profession, it were a hard & tedious peece of worke to set downe fully and absolutely the proper dueties of euery one of these, and of whosoever shall frequent their companie. And I am of opinion, that when one shall haue prescribed a certaine fourme of conuersation to all those, yet hee shal not then haue doone, for that there must bee respect has not onely to the difference which is betwene one kind and another, but to that also which is betwene persons of one onely kinde: for not onely young men differ in behaiour from olde, and Gentlemen from Yomen: but euen young men amongst themselues differ, as also one olde man differeth in behaiour from another olde man, and one Gentleman from another Gentleman.

Annib.

Seeing that these differences fall out in all kindes, I will briefly set fourth certaine generall and most needefull meanes, whereby all of them may bee reduced to one law: Touching the fourme afterward required in conuersation, with persons different in state and condition, whom wee haue already named, to the end you bee not deceiued, you shal vnderstand, my meaning is not to discourse formally of their duetie, neither to lay before you all those morall vertues which pertaine to the perfection and happy state of life.

Guaz.

Why deferre you to speake of a matter so profitable.

Annib.

Two speciall causes withholde mee: the one, for that I know that not onely the *Greekes & Latines*, but also all other nations haue filled the worlde with diuers volumes full of precepts of Philosophie.

Guaz.

The more bookes of Philosophie we haue at this day, the fewer Philosophers we haue but tell me if it please you, the other cause.

Annib.

The other is, that if I should make a ful & perfect discourse of Morall *Philosophie*, it would stande none in stéede, but such as are of deep vnderstanding, as you are, but minding to speake in particular, of the manners of conuersation méete for all sortes of people, it behouoeth mée to haue an eye to the common profite, weighing that the most parte of men, is not only destitute of intellectuall and morall vertues, but besides, is neither in wit apte, nor in wil desirous to receiue them, so that it were a vaine thing (that I may not say foolish) to goe about to teache by Art, and improper tearmes, theforesaide vertues to such kinde of people.

Guaz.

I holde well with that you haue saide, and for that perchance the time approacheth, that you are to visite your patientes, it shall doe well heere to make a pause, and to morrowe if it please you, wee will take againe our matter in hand, either héere, or at your house at your choice.

Annib.

If it shal not trouble you, I can stay heere with you a little while longer, and we can choose no fitter place for our purpose then this same, which with the goodly sight of diuerse pleasant pictures (wherwith it is adorned) doth meruellously recreate or mindes, and ministreth occasion of witty talke.

Guaz.

Goe forwarde (I pray you) hardly so farre as it shall please you, for I assure you I neuer hearde more delightful harmonie then this same.

Annib.

For so much then as your question was what manner of conuersatiō is necessarie for the attaining of that perfection which we haue spokē of, I set a part al other sorts, and propose for this purpose the ciuile conuersation.

Guaz.

What meane you by that woord, Ciuile?

Annib.

If you meane to know my meaning of it, I must first aske if you know any citizen which liueth vnciuilly?

Guaz.

Yes mary doe I, more then one.

Annib.

Now let me aske you on the contrarie, if you know any man of the countrey which liueth ciuilly.

Guaz.

Yea very many.

Annib.

You séc then, that we giue a large sense & signification to this woorde (*ciuile*)

for that we would haue vnderstoode, that to liue ciuilly, is not sayde in respect of the citie, but of the quallities of the minde: so I vnderstand ciuile conuersation not hauing relation to the citie, but consideration to the maners and conditions which make it ciuile. And as lawes and ciuile ordinances are distributed not onely to cities, but to villages, castles, and people subiect vnto them, so I will that ciuile conuersation appertaine not onely to men inhabiting cities, but too all sortes of persons of what place, or of what calling soeuer they are. Too bee shorte, my meaning is, that ciuile conuersation is an honest commendable and vertuous kinde of liuing in the world.

Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622), from chapter 6 ('Of stile in speaking and writing, and of Historie)

Since speech is the Character of a man, and the Interpreter of his mind, and writing, the Image of that: that so often as we speak or write, so oft we undergoe censure and iudgement of our selues: labour first by all meanes to get the habit of a good stile in speaking and writing, as well in English as Latine. I call with *Tully* that a good and eloquent stile of speaking, *Where there is a iudicious fitting of choise words, apt and graue Sentences vnto matter well disposed, the same being vttered with a comely moderation of the voyce, countenance, and gestures*. Not that same ampullous and Scenicall pompe, with empty furniture of phrase, wherewith the Stage, and our petty Poeticke Pamphlets sound so big, which like a net in the water, though it feeleth weighty, yet it yeeldeth nothing ... and as *Plutarch* saith, when our thirst is quenched with the drinke, then wee looke upon the enameling and workmanship of the boule; so first your hearer coveteth to have his desire satisfied with matter, ere hee looketh upon the forme or vinery of words, which many times fall in of themselues to matter well contriued, according to *Horace*:

Rem bene dispositam vel verba invita sequuntur
To matter well dispos'd, words of themselves doe fall.

Let your stile therefore bee furnished with solid matter, and compact of the best, choice, and most familiar words; taking heed of speaking, or writing such words, as men shall rather admire than understand.

...

In speaking, rather lay downe your words one by one, than powre them forth together, for, ... beside the grace it giueth to the Speaker, it much helpeth the memory of the hearer, and is a good remedie against impediment of speech. Sir *Nicholas Bacon*, sometime Lord Chancellor of *England*, and father to my Lord of *S. Albanes*, a most eloquent man, and of as sound learning and wisdom, as *England* bred in many Ages: with the old Lord *William*

Burghley, Lord Treasurer of England; haue aboue others herein beene admired, and commended in their publike speeches in the Parliament house and Starre-Chamber: for nothing drawes our attention more than good matter, eloquently digested, and vttered with a gracefull, cleere, and distinct pronuntiation.

3. *Telling Tales in a Garden, on the Road, before the Fireplace*

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, translation attributed to John Florio (1620), from 'Giornata prima'

In the morning, the Queene and all the rest being risen, accounting ouermuch sleepe to be very hurtfull: they walked abroade into a goodly Meadowe, where the grasse grew verdantly, and the beames of the Sunne heated not ouer-violently, because the shades of faire spreading trees gaue a temperate calmenesse, coole and gentle winds fanning their sweet breath pleasingly among them. All of them being there set downe in a round ring, and the Queene in the middest, as being the appointed place of eminencie, she spake in this manner.

You see (faire company) that the Sunne is highly mounted, the heate (else-where) too extreme for vs, and therfore here is our fittest refuge, the aire being so coole, delicate, and acceptable, and our folly well worthie reprehension, if we should walke further, and speede worse. Heere are Tables, Cards, and Chesse, as your dispositions may be addicted. But if mine aduice might passe for currant, I would admit none of those exercises, because they are too troublesome both to them that play, and such as looke on. I could rather wish, that some quaint discourse might passe among vs, a tale or fable related by some one, to vrge the attention of all the rest. And so wearing out the warmth of the day, one prety Nouell wil draw on another, vntil the Sun be lower declined, and the heates extremity more diminished, to solace our selues in some other place, as to our minds shal seeme conuenient. If therefore what I haue sayde be acceptable to you (I purposing to follow in the same course of pleasure) let it appeare by your immediate answer; for, til the Euening, I think we can deuise no exercise more commodious for vs.

The Ladies & Gentlemen allowed of the motion, to spend the time in telling pleasant tales; whereupon the Queene saide: Seeing you haue approoued mine aduice, I grant free permission for this first day, that euery one shall relate, what to him or her is best pleasing. And turning her selfe to Pamphilus (who was seated on her right hand) gaue him fauour, with one of his Nouels, to begin the recreation: which he not daring to deny, and perceiuing generall attention prepared for him, thus he began.

Messire Chappelet du Prat, by making a false confession, beguyled an holy Religious man, and after dyed. And hauing (during his life time) bene a verie bad man, at his death was reputed to be a Saint, and called S. Chappelet.

The first Nouell

Wherein is contained, how hard a thing it is, to distinguish goodnesse from hypocrisie; and how (vnder the shadow of holinesse) the wickednes of one man, may deceiue many.

It is a matter most conuenient (deare Ladies) that a man ought to begin whatsoeuer he doth, in the great and glorious name of him, who was the Creator of all things. Wherefore, seeing that I am the man appointed, to begin this your inuention of discoursing Nouelties: I intend to begin also with one of his wonderfull workes. To the end, that this beeing heard, our hope may remaine on him, as the thing onely permanent, and his name for euer to be praised by vs. Now, as there is nothing more certaine, but that euen as temporall things are mortall and transitory, so are they both in and out of themselues, full of sorrow, paine, and anguish, and subiected to infinite dangers: So in the same manner, we liue mingled among them, seeming as part of them, and cannot (without some error) continue or defend our selues, if God by his especiall grace and fauour, giue vs not strength and good vnderstanding. Which power we may not belecue, that either it descendeth to vs, or liueth in vs, by any merites of our owne; but of his onely most gracious benignity. Mooued neuerthelesse, and entreated by the intercessions of them, who were (as we are) mortals; and hauing diligently obserued his commandements, are now with him in eternall blessednes. To whom (as to aduocates and procurators, informed by the experience of our frailty) wee are not to present our prayers in the presence of so great a Iudge; but only to himselfe, for the obtaining of all such things as his wisdom knoweth to be most expedient for vs. And well may we credit, that his goodnesse is more fully enclined towards vs, in his continuall bounty and liberality; then the subtilty of any mortal eye, can reach into the secret of so diuine a thought: and sometimes therefore we may be beguiled in opinion, by electing such and such as our intercessors before his high Maiesty, who perhaps are farre off from him, or driuen into perpetuall exile, as vnworthy to appeare in so glorious a presence. For he, from whom nothing can be hidden, more regardeth the sincerity of him that prayeth, then ignorant deuotion, committed to the trust of a heedlesse intercessor; and such prayers haue alwaies gracious acceptation in his sight. As manifestly will appeare, by the Nouell which I intend to relate; manifestly (I say) not as in the iudgement of God, but according to the apprehension of men.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, original text ed. by F.N. Robinson (1933), from 'The General Prologue', 751-858

A semely man oure hooste was withalle
 For to han been a marchal in an halle.
 A large man he was with eyen stepe —
 A fairer burgeys is ther noon in chepe —
 Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,
 And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
 Eek therto he was right a myrie man,
 And after soper pleyen he bigan,
 And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
 Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges,
 And seyde thus: now, lordynges, trewely,
 Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
 For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
 I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
 Atones in this herberwe as is now.
 Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.
 And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
 To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
 Ye goon to caunterbury — God yow speede,
 The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!
 And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
 Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
 For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon
 To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
 And therefore wol I maken yow disport,
 As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
 And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
 For to stonden at my juggement,
 And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
 To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
 Now, by my fader soule that is deed,
 But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
 Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche.
 Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche.
 Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
 And graunted hym withouten moore avys,
 And bad him seye his voidit as hym leste.
 Lordynges, quod he, now herkneth for the beste;
 But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.
 This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,

That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,
 In this viage shal telle tales tweye
 To caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
 And homward he shal tellen othere two,
 Of adventures that whilom han bifalle.
 And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle,
 That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
 Tales of best sentence and moost solaaas,
 Shal have a soper at oure aller cost
 Heere in this place, sittyng by this post,
 Whan that we come agayn fro caunterbury.
 And for to make yow the moore mury,
 I wol myselfen goodly with yow ryde,
 Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde,
 And whoso wole my juggement withseye
 Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
 And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,
 Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
 And I wol erly shape me therfore.
 This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore
 With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
 That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,
 And that he wolde been oure governour,
 And oure tales juge and reportour,
 And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,
 And we wol reuled been at his devys
 In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent
 We been acorded to his juggement.
 And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
 We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
 Withouten any lenger taryyng.
 Amorwe, whan that day bigan to spryng,
 Up roos oure hoost, and was oure aller cok,
 And gradrede us togidre alle in a flok,
 And forth we riden a litel moore than paas
 Unto the wateryng of seint thomas;
 And there oure hoost bigan his hors areste
 And seyde, lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.
 Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde.
 If even-song and morwe-song accorde,
 Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
 As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
 Whoso be rebel to my juggement

Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.
 Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
 He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.
 Sire knyght, quod he, my mayster and my lord,
 Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
 Cometh neer, quod he, my lady prioresse.
 And ye, sire clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse,
 Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!
 Anon to drawn every wight bigan,
 And shortly for to tellen as it was,
 Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
 The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knyght,
 Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,
 And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
 By foreward and by composicioun,
 As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
 And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
 As he that wys was and obedient
 To kepe his foreward by his free assent,
 He seyde, syn I shal bigynne the game,
 What, welcome be the cut, a goddes name!
 Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.
 And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,
 And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
 His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.

Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quixote de la Mancha*, Part I (1605)
The ingenious gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha, translated by John Ormsby (1885), from chapter 32

While at dinner, the company consisting of the landlord, his wife, their daughter, Maritornes, and all the travellers, they discussed the strange craze of Don Quixote and the manner in which he had been found; and the landlady told them what had taken place between him and the carrier; and then, looking round to see if Sancho was there, when she saw he was not, she gave them the whole story of his blanketing, which they received with no little amusement. But on the curate observing that it was the books of chivalry which Don Quixote had read that had turned his brain, the landlord said:

'I cannot understand how that can be, for in truth to my mind there is no better reading in the world, and I have here two or three of them, with other writings that are the very life, not only of myself but of plenty more; for when it

is harvest-time, the reapers flock here on holidays, and there is always one among them who can read and who takes up one of these books, and we gather round him, thirty or more of us, and stay listening to him with a delight that makes our grey hairs grow young again. At least I can say for myself that when I hear of what furious and terrible blows the knights deliver, I am seized with the longing to do the same, and I would like to be hearing about them night and day.'

'And I just as much,' said the landlady, 'because I never have a quiet moment in my house except when you are listening to some one reading; for then you are so taken up that for the time being you forget to scold.'

'That is true,' said Maritornes; 'and, faith, I relish hearing these things greatly too, for they are very pretty; especially when they describe some lady or another in the arms of her knight under the orange trees, and the duenna who is keeping watch for them half dead with envy and fright; all this I say is as good as honey.'

...

'And you, what do you think, young lady?' said the curate turning to the landlord's daughter.

'I don't know indeed, senor,' said she; 'I listen too, and to tell the truth, though I do not understand it, I like hearing it; but it is not the blows that my father likes that I like, but the laments the knights utter when they are separated from their ladies; and indeed they sometimes make me weep with the pity I feel for them.'

...

The landlord was carrying away the valise and the books, but the curate said to him, 'Wait; I want to see what those papers are that are written in such a good hand.' The landlord taking them out handed them to him to read, and he perceived they were a work of about eight sheets of manuscript, with, in large letters at the beginning, the title of 'Novel of the Ill-advised Curiosity.'

The curate read three or four lines to himself, and said, 'I must say the title of this novel does not seem to me a bad one, and I feel an inclination to read it all.'

To which the landlord replied, 'Then your reverence will do well to read it, for I can tell you that some guests who have read it here have been much pleased with it, and have begged it of me very earnestly; but I would not give it, meaning to return it to the person who forgot the valise, books, and papers here, for maybe he will return here some time or other; and though I know I shall miss the books, faith I mean to return them; for though I am an innkeeper, still I am a Christian.'

'You are very right, friend,' said the curate; 'but for all that, if the novel pleases me you must let me copy it.'

'With all my heart,' replied the host.

While they were talking Cardenio had taken up the novel and begun to read it, and forming the same opinion of it as the curate, he begged him to read it so that they might all hear it.

‘I would read it,’ said the curate, ‘if the time would not be better spent in sleeping.’

‘It will be rest enough for me,’ said Dorothea, ‘to while away the time by listening to some tale, for my spirits are not yet tranquil enough to let me sleep when it would be seasonable.’

‘Well then, in that case,’ said the curate, ‘I will read it, if it were only out of curiosity; perhaps it may contain something pleasant.’

Master Nicholas added his entreaties to the same effect, and Sancho too; seeing which, and considering that he would give pleasure to all, and receive it himself, the curate said, ‘Well then, attend to me everyone, for the novel begins thus.’

Henry James, from *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

The story had held us, round the fire, sufficiently breathless, but except the obvious remark that it was gruesome, as, on Christmas Eve in an old house, a strange tale should essentially be, I remember no comment uttered till somebody happened to say that it was the only case he had met in which such a visitation had fallen on a child. The case, I may mention, was that of an apparition in just such an old house as had gathered us for the occasion — an appearance, of a dreadful kind, to a little boy sleeping in the room with his mother and waking her up in the terror of it; waking her not to dissipate his dread and soothe him to sleep again, but to encounter also, herself, before she had succeeded in doing so, the same sight that had shaken him. It was this observation that drew from Douglas — not immediately, but later in the evening — a reply that had the interesting consequence to which I call attention. Someone else told a story not particularly effective, which I saw he was not following. This I took for a sign that he had himself something to produce and that we should only have to wait. We waited in fact till two nights later; but that same evening, before we scattered, he brought out what was in his mind.

‘I quite agree — in regard to Griffin’s ghost, or whatever it was — that its appearing first to the little boy, at so tender an age, adds a particular touch. But it’s not the first occurrence of its charming kind that I know to have involved a child. If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to TWO children —?’

‘We say, of course,’ somebody exclaimed, ‘that they give two turns! Also that we want to hear about them.’

I can see Douglas there before the fire, to which he had got up to present his back, looking down at his interlocutor with his hands in his pockets. ‘Nobody but me, till now, has ever heard. It’s quite too horrible.’ This, naturally, was declared by several voices to give the thing the utmost price, and our friend, with quiet art, prepared his triumph by turning his

eyes over the rest of us and going on: 'It's beyond everything. Nothing at all that I know touches it.'

'For sheer terror?' I remember asking.

He seemed to say it was not so simple as that; to be really at a loss how to qualify it. He passed his hand over his eyes, made a little wincing grimace. 'For dreadful — dreadfulness!'

'Oh, how delicious!' cried one of the women.

He took no notice of her; he looked at me, but as if, instead of me, he saw what he spoke of. 'For general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain.'

'Well then,' I said, 'just sit right down and begin.'

He turned round to the fire, gave a kick to a log, watched it an instant. Then as he faced us again: 'I can't begin. I shall have to send to town.' There was a unanimous groan at this, and much reproach; after which, in his preoccupied way, he explained. 'The story's written. It's in a locked drawer — it has not been out for years. I could write to my man and enclose the key; he could send down the packet as he finds it.'

...

'You'll receive the packet Thursday morning?' I inquired.

'Probably not till the second post.'

'Well then; after dinner —'

'You'll all meet me here?' He looked us round again. 'Isn't anybody going?' It was almost the tone of hope.

'Everybody will stay!'

...

I knew the next day that a letter containing the key had, by the first post, gone off to his London apartments; but in spite of — or perhaps just on account of — the eventual diffusion of this knowledge we quite let him alone till after dinner, till such an hour of the evening, in fact, as might best accord with the kind of emotion on which our hopes were fixed. Then he became as communicative as we could desire and indeed gave us his best reason for being so. We had it from him again before the fire in the hall, as we had had our mild wonders of the previous night. It appeared that the narrative he had promised to read us really required for a proper intelligence a few words of prologue. Let me say here distinctly, to have done with it, that this narrative, from an exact transcript of my own made much later, is what I shall presently give. Poor Douglas, before his death — when it was in sight — committed to me the manuscript that reached him on the third of these days and that, on the same spot, with immense effect, he began to read to our hushed little circle on the night of the fourth. The departing ladies who had said they would stay didn't, of course, thank heaven, stay: they departed, in consequence of arrangements made, in a rage of curiosity, as they professed, produced by the touches with which he had already worked us up. But that only made his little final auditory more compact and select, kept it, round the hearth, subject to a common thrill.

4. *Reading and Reciting: Letters, Poems*

William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or, What You Will*, from 2.5

Malvolio. [*seeing the letter*] What employment have we here?

Fabian. [*aside*] Now is the woodcock near the gin.

Toby. [*aside*] O, peace, and the spirit of humors intimate reading aloud to him.

Malvolio. [*taking up the letter*] By my life, this is my lady's hand! These be her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus she makes her great P's. It is in contempt of question her hand.

Andrew. [*aside*] Her c's, her u's, and her t's. Why that?

Malvolio. [*reads*] To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes — Her very phrases! By your leave, wax. Soft. And the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal — 'tis my lady! [*he opens the letter*]. To whom should this be?

Fabian. [*aside*] This wins him, liver and all.

Malvolio. [*reads*]

Jove knows I love,

But who?

Lips, do not move;

No man must know.

'No man must know.' What follows? The numbers altered. 'No man must know.' If this should be thee, Malvolio!

Toby. [*aside*] Marry, hang thee, brock!

Malvolio. [*reads*]

I may command where I adore,

But silence, like a Lucrece knife,

With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore;

M.O.A.I. doth sway my life.

Fabian. [*aside*] A fustian riddle!

Toby. [*aside*] Excellent wench, say I.

Malvolio. 'M.O.A.I. doth sway my life.' Nay, but first let me see, let me see, let me see.

Fabian. [*aside*] What dish o' poison has she dressed him!

Toby. [*aside*] And with what wing the staniel checks at it!

Malvolio. 'I may command where I adore.' Why, she may command me; I serve her; she is my lady. Why, this is evident to any formal capacity. There is no obstruction in this. And the end — what should that alphabetical position portend? If I could make that resemble something in me! Softly! 'M.O.A.I.' —

Toby. [*aside*] O, ay, make up that. — He is now at a cold scent.

Fabian. [*aside*] Sowter will cry upon 't for all this, though it be as rank as a fox.

Malvolio. 'M' — Malvolio. 'M' — why, that begins my name!

Fabian. [*aside*] Did not I say he would work it out? The cur is excellent at faults.

Malvolio. 'M.' But then there is no consonancy in the sequel that suffers under probation. 'A' should follow, but 'O' does.

Fabian. [*aside*] And 'O' shall end, I hope.

Toby. [*aside*] Ay, or I'll cudgel him and make him cry 'O.'

Malvolio. And then 'I' comes behind.

Fabian. [*aside*] Ay, an you had any eye behind you, you might see more detraction at your heels than fortunes before you.

Malvolio. 'M.O.A.I.' This simulation is not as the former, and yet to crush this a little, it would bow to me, for every one of these letters are in my name. Soft, here follows prose. [*reads*] If this fall into thy hand, revolve. In my stars I am above thee, but be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em. Thy fates open their hands. Let thy blood and spirit embrace them. And, to inure thyself to what thou art like to be, cast thy humble slough and appear fresh. Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants. Let thy tongue tang arguments of state. Put thyself into the trick of singularity. She thus advises thee that sighs for thee. Remember who commended thy yellow stockings and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered. I say, remember. Go to, thou art made, if thou desir'st to be so. If not, let me see thee a steward still, the fellow of servants, and not worthy to touch Fortune's fingers. Farewell. She that would alter services with thee, The Fortunate-Unhappy. Daylight and champaign discovers not more! This is open. I will be proud, I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance, I will be point-devise the very man. I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me; for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me. She did commend my yellow stockings of late, she did praise my leg being cross-gartered, and in this she manifests herself to my love and, with a kind of injunction, drives me to these habits of her liking. I thank my stars, I am happy. I will be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross-gartered, even with the swiftness of putting on. Jove and my stars be praised! Here is yet a postscript. [*He reads*] Thou canst not choose but know who I am. If thou entertain'st my love, let it appear in thy smiling; thy smiles become thee well. Therefore in my presence still smile, dear my sweet, I prithee. Jove, I thank thee! I will smile. I will do everything that thou wilt have me [*exits*].

Molière, *Les précieuses ridicules* (1659)

The Pretentious Young Ladies, translated by Henri Van Laun (1880), from 1.9

Madelon. I must admit that I dote upon portraits; I think there is nothing more gallant.

Mascarille. Portraits are difficult, and call for great wit; you shall see some of mine that will not displease you.

Cathos. As for me, I am awfully fond of riddles.

Mascarille. They exercise the intelligence; I have already written four of them this morning, which I will give you to guess.

Madelon. Madrigals are pretty enough when they are neatly turned.

Mascarille. This is my special talent; I am at present engaged in turning the whole Roman history into madrigals.

Madelon. Goodness gracious! that will certainly be superlatively fine; I should like to have one copy at least, if you think of publishing it.

Mascarille. I promise you each a copy, bound in the handsomest manner. It does not become a man of my rank to scribble, but I do it only to serve the publishers, who are always bothering me.

Madelon. I fancy it must be a delightful thing to see one's self in print.

Mascarille. Undoubtedly; but, by the by, I must repeat to you some extempore verses I made yesterday at the house of a certain duchess, an acquaintance of mine. I am deuced clever at extempore verses.

Cathos. Extempore verses are certainly the very touchstone of genius.

Mascarille. Listen then.

Madelon. We are all ears.

Mascarille. *Oh! oh! quite without heed was I,*

As harmless you I chanced to spy,

Slyly your eyes

My heart surprise,

Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief I cry!

Cathos. Good Heavens! this is carried to the utmost pitch of gallantry.

Mascarille. Everything I do shows it is done by a gentleman; there is nothing of the pedant about my effusions.

Madelon. They are more than two thousand miles removed from that.

Mascarille. Did you observe the beginning, *oh! oh!*? there is something original in that *oh! oh!* like a man who all of a sudden thinks about something, *oh! oh!* Taken by surprise as it were, *oh! oh!*

Madelon. Yes, I think that *oh! oh!* admirable.

Mascarille. It seems a mere nothing.

Cathos. Good Heavens! How can you say so? It is one of these things that are perfectly invaluable.

Madelon. No doubt on it; I would rather have written that *oh! oh!* than an epic poem.

Mascarille. Egad, you have good taste.

Madelon. Tolerably; none of the worst, I believe.

Mascarille. But do you not also admire *quite without heed was I? quite without heed was I*, that is, I did not pay attention to anything; a natural way of speaking, quite without heed was I, of no harm thinking, that is, as

I was going along, innocently, without malice, like a poor sheep, *you I chanced to spy*, that is to say, I amused myself with looking at you, with observing you, with contemplating you. *Slyly your eyes ...* What do you think of that word *slyly* — is it not well chosen?

Cathos. Extremely so.

Mascarille. *Slyly*, stealthily; just like a cat watching a mouse — *slyly*.

Madelon. Nothing can be better.

Mascarille. *My heart surprise*, that is, carries it away from me, robs me of it.

Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! Would you not think a man were shouting and running after a thief to catch him? *Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!*

Madelon. I must admit the turn is witty and sprightly.

Mascarille. I will sing you the tune I made of it.

Cathos. Have you learned music?

Mascarille. I? Not at all.

Cathos. How can you make a tune then?

Mascarille. People of rank know everything without ever having learned anything.

Madelon. His lordship is quite in the right, my dear.

Magdelon. Certainly, my dear.

Mascarille. Listen if you like the tune: *hem, hem, la, la*. The inclemency of the season has greatly injured the delicacy of my voice; but no matter, it is in a free and easy way. [*He sings*]. *Oh! Oh! quite without heed was I*, etc...

Cathos. What a passion there breathes in this music. It is enough to make one die away with delight!

Madelon. There is something plaintive in it.

Mascarille. Do you not think that the air perfectly well expresses the sentiment, *stop thief, stop thief?* And then as if some one cried out very loud, *stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop thief!* Then all at once like a person out of breath, *Stop thief!*

Madelon. This is to understand the perfection of things, the grand perfection, the perfection of perfections. I declare it is altogether a wonderful performance. I am quite enchanted with the air and the words.

Cathos. I never yet met anything so excellent.

Mascarille. All that I do comes naturally to me; it is without study.

Molière, from *Les femmes savantes* (1672)

The Learned Ladies, translated by C.H. Page (1908), from 3.2

Philaminte. Serve us at once your exquisite repast.

Trissotin. For this great hunger that you manifest,
A single course of eight lines seems but little;
I think I might do well to reinforce

The epigram — or madrigal — by adding
 The relish of a sonnet, which a certain Princess
 Esteemed quite delicate;
 It is seasoned throughout with Attic salt,
 And you will find, I think, that it is really rather tasty.

Armande. Ah! I am sure of that.

Philaminte. Quick, let us hear.

Belise. [interrupting him each time he starts to read]

I feel my heart leap up for joy beforehand ...

I do love poetry quite to distraction ...

Especially when gallantly expressed.

Philaminte. If we keep talking, he can't say a word.

Trissotin. Son ...

Belise. [to *Henriette*] Niece, be silent.

Trissotin. Sonnet: To Princess Uranie, Upon Her Fever

Your prudence sleepeth, by my fay

To treat so fair and splendidly

And lodge in state luxuriously

Your foe that lies in wait to slay.

Belise. A lovely opening!

Armande. How gallantly 't is turned!

Philaminte. For lighter verse, he stands alone.

Armande. There's no resisting his *Your prudence sleepeth.*

Belise. To lodge her foe is full of charms for me.

Philaminte. I love *luxuriously* and *splendidly*;

Two adverbs rhymed together; so effective!

Belise. Let's listen to the rest.

Trissotin

Your prudence sleepeth, by my fay

To treat so fair and splendidly

And lodge in state luxuriously

Your foe that lies in wait to slay.

Armande. Prudence asleep!

Belise. To lodge her foe!

Philaminte. *Luxuriously* and *splendidly*!

Trissotin

Send her away, whate'er they say

From your rich lodging presently;

Th' ungrateful wretch most shamelessly

Doth make your lovely life her prey.

Belise. Ah! gently! Give me breathing-space, I beg you.

Armande. Oh! grant us, please, a moment to admire.

Philaminte. These verses thrill you to the inmost soul.

With some strange feeling that quite makes you faint,
Armande. Send her away, whate'er they say
From your rich lodging presently.
 How well that lovely phrase, *rich lodgings* fits!
 How skilfully the metaphor is chosen!
Philaminte. Send her away whate'er they say —
Whate'er they say is in such perfect taste!
 I think that passage altogether priceless.
Armande. Yes, I'm in love too, with *whate'er they say*.
Belise. Yes, I think, too, *what'ver they say* is happy.
Armande. I wish I'd written it.
Belise. 'T is worth whole poems.
Philaminte. But do you feel its finer shades of meaning as I do?
Armande and Belise. Oh: Oh! Oh!
Philaminte. Whate'er they say —
 No matter who may take the fever's part.
 Pay no attention, never mind their babble.
Send her away whate'er they say
Whate'er they say, whate'er they say.
Whate'er they say says much more than it seems to,
 I'm not quite sure if others feel with me;
 But in that phrase I find a million meanings
Belise. 'T is true it says more things than it seems big with.
Philaminte. [to Trissotin] But when you wrote that grand *whate'er they say*,
 Did you yourself, then, fully feel its power?
 Had you in mind, then, all it means to us?
 And did you know you'd put such genius in it?
Trissotin. Eh! eh!
Armande. I can't forget *th'ungrateful wretch*
 The fever, that ungrateful, low-bred creature,
 That injures those by whom 'tis entertained.
Philaminte. In fine, the quatrains both are wonderful.
 I beg you, let us hear the tercets straightway.
Armande. Oh — but once more, please, read *whate'er they say*,
Trissotin. Send her away, whate'er they say —
Philaminte, Armande and Belise. Whate'er they say!
Trissotin. From your rich lodging presently —
Philaminte, Armande and Belise. Rich lodging!
Trissotin. Th' ungrateful wretch most shamelessly —
Philaminte, Armande and Belise. The ungrateful wretch, the fever!
Trissotin. Doth make your lovely life her prey.
Philaminte. Your lovely life!
Armande and Belise. Ah!

Trissotin. What, shall so rude a creature dare
 Touch noble bloody and rank so fair —
Philaminte, Armande and Belise. Ah!
Trissotin. And night and day insult you so!
 If to the baths you chance to go
 Then seize her without more ado
 In your own hands and drown her there.
Philaminte. I faint.
Belise. I swoon.
Armande. I'm dying with delight.
Philaminte. It thrills you with a thousand gentle shivers.
Armande. If to the baths you chance to go —
Belise. Then seize her, without more ado
Philaminte. In your own hands, and drown her there.
 There drown her, in the bath, with your own hands.
Armande. Each step, in lines like yours, shows special beauties.
Belise. And everywhere one walks, is sheer delight.
Philaminte. One cannot tread save on the fairest flowers.
Armande. 'T is little garden-paths all strewn with roses.
Trissotin. You think the sonnet ...
Philaminte. Admirable, novel; nothing so fine was ever done before.

Antoine Baudeau Sieur de Somaize, *Le grand dictionnaire des précieuses, ou la clef de la langue des ruelles* (*A great Dictionary of the 'précieuses', or, the key to the language of the alcove*), Nouvelle édition augmentée (1661); from 'Préface' to the 1856 edition by M. Ch.-L. Livet

But the main kind of entertainment was the discussion of literary issues. They argued about certain ways to soften pronunciation. M.me de Rambouillet, for instance, favoured *serge* rather than *sarge*; they read in public letters of absent people, which had been written and refined to this effect. The author, who seemed to be conscious that the only newspapers were at the time letters, made sure to fill them with quaint elements. By quoting a thousand authorities, he appealed to the readers' memory, now light and playful, now austere and serious ... It is curious to see that, in all letters that have survived from that time, the deep knowledge that both men and women showed in languages, in philosophy; and it is no less curious to see how prompt they were in praising the letter of a rival in order to get his or her approval by the next mail, and how they were generous with those whose praise was most expected.

...

In addition to the daily events which can be found behind a very thin veil, they learned 'to compose notes and reports, entrances and exits; in what way one should address princes, in what obsequious guise one should address

ladies; how to express status, and how to govern sexes'. These works, read in public, submitted to the judgement of the bedchamber before being sent to the printer, became in a way a collective work. There are numerous traces about the way in which the meetings of the *précieuses* took place. In the works of Vion D'Alibray we find some *dissertations galantes* that cannot have been composed in a different circumstance; in the same source one can read some pre-ordered portraits, who had become fashionable following Cyrus² and which were later published in collections. For fun, they assigned themselves some subjects to be proclaimed out loud sometimes unprepared, other times a week apart. More than once ... issues were addressed such as: should one write according to pronunciation, or follow ancient common orthography? We should not think that the seriousness of these subjects would intimidate the ladies: indeed, they were as eager as the men to treat them, and, if the men were entitled to the honour of decisions at the *Bureau d'adresse* or at the Academy, the women reigned incomparably in the bedchambers.

5. Rehearsals and Public Performances

Sir William Corne-Waleys the younger, *Essayes* (1600-1601). From Essay 15 ('Of the obseruation, and vse of things')

I haue not beene ashamed to aduenture mine eares with a ballad-singer, and they haue come home loaden to my liking, doubly satisfied, with profit, & with recreatiō. The profit, to see earthlings satisfied with such coarse stuffe, to heare vice rebuked, and to see the power of Vertue that pierceth the head of such a base Historian, and vile Auditory.

The recreation to see how thoroughly the standers by are affected, what strange gestures come from them, what strained stuffe from their Poet, what shift they make to stand to heare, what extremities he is driuen to for Rime, how they aduenture their purses, he his wits, how well both their paines are recompenced, they with a filthy noise, hee with a base reward.

George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, *The Rehearsal* (1672), from 1.1

[Enter three Players upon the Stage.]

1 *Play*. Have you your part perfect?

2 *Play*. Yes, I have it without book; but I do not understand how it is to be spoken.

3 *Play*. And mine is such a one, as I can't ghesse for my life what humour I'm to be in: whether angry, melancholy, merry, or in love. I don't know what to make on't.

² John Denton suggests that the name Cyrus is probably an allusion to Madeleine de Scudéry's novel *La grand Cyrus* (1649-1653).

1 Play. Phoo! the Author will be here presently, and he'l tell us all. You must know, this is the new way of writing; and these hard things please forty times better than the old plain way. For, look you, Sir, the grand design upon the Stage is to keep the Auditors in suspense; for to gness presently at the plot, and the sence, tires 'em before the end of the first Act: now, here, every line surprises you, and brings in new matter. And, then, for Scenes, Cloaths and Dancing, we put 'em quite down, all that ever went before us: and these are the things, you know, that are essential to a Play.

2 Play. Well, I am not of thy mind; but, so it gets us money, 'tis no great matter. [*Enter Bayes, Johnson and Smith*].

Bayes. Come, come in, Gentlemen. Y'are very welcome Mr. — a — Ha' you your Part ready?

1 Play. Yes, Sir.

Bayes. But do you understand the true humour of it?

1 Play. I, Sir, pretty well.

Bayes. And Amarillis, how does she do? Does not her Armor become her?

3 Play. O, admirably!

Bayes. I'l tell you, now, a pretty concept. What do you think I'l make 'em call her anon, in this Play?

Smi. What, I pray?

Bayes. Why I'l make 'em call her Armarillis, because of her Armor: ha, ha, ha.

Johns. That will be very well, indeed.

Bayes. I, it's a pretty little rogue; she is my Mistress. I knew her face would set off Armor extreamly: and, to tell you true, I writ that Part only for her. Well, Gentlemen, I dare be bold to say, without vanity, I'l shew you something, here, that's very ridiculous, I gad.

[*Exeunt Players*].

Johns. Sir, that we do not doubt of.

Bayes. Pray, Sir, let's sit down. Look you, Sir, the chief hindge of this play, upon which the whole Plot moves and turns, and that causes the variety of all the several accidents, which, you know, are the things in Nature that make up the grand refinement of a Play, is, that I suppose two Kings to be of the same place: as, for example, at Brentford; for I love to write familiarly. Now the people having the same relations to 'em both, the same affections, the same duty, the same obedience, and all that; are divided among themselves in point of devoir and interest, how to behave themselves equally between 'em: these Kings differing sometimes in particular; though, in the main, they agree. (I know not whether I make my self well understood.)

Johns. I did not observe you, Sir: pray say that again.

Bayes. Why, look you, Sir, (nay, I beseech you, be a little curious in taking notice of this, or else you'l never understand my notion of the thing) the

people being embarrass'd by their equal ties to both, and the Sovereigns concern'd in a reciprocal regard, as well to their own interest, as the good of the people; may make a certain kind of a — you understand me — upon which, there does arise several disputes, turmoils, heart burnings, and all that — In fine, you'll apprehend it better when you see it.

[*Exit, to call the Players*].

Smi. I find the Author will be very much oblig'd to the Players, if they can make any sence of this.

Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (1780), from vol. I

The amiable author read his *Boadicea* to the actors. But surely his manner of conveying the meaning of his poem was very unhappy; his voice was harsh, and his elocution disagreeable. Mr Garrick was vexed to see him mangle his own work, and politely offered to relieve him by reading an act or two; but the author imagining that he was the only person fit to unfold his intention to the players, persisted to read the play to the end.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed* (1781), from 1.1

Dangle. Now, Mrs Dangle, didn't you say it struck you in the same light?

Mrs Dangle. No, indeed, I did not — I did not see a fault in any part of the play, from the beginning to the end.

Sir Fretful. Upon my soul, the women are the best judges after all!

Mrs Dang. Or, if I made any objection, I am sure it was to nothing in the piece, but that I was afraid it was, on the whole, a little too long.

Sir Fret. Pray, madam, do you speak as to duration of time, or do you mean that the story is tediously spun out?

Mrs Dang. O lud! no. — I speak only with reference to the usual length of acting plays.

Sir Fret. Then I am very happy — very happy indeed — because the play is a short play, a remarkably short play. I should not venture to differ with a lady on a point of taste; but, on these occasions, the watch, you know, is the critic.

Mrs Dang. Then, I suppose, it must have been Mr Dangle's drawling manner of reading it to me.

Sir Fret. Oh, if Mr Dangle read it, that's quite another affair! — But I assure you, Mrs Dangle, the first evening you can spare me three hours and a half, I'll undertake to read you the whole from beginning to end, with the Prologue and Epilogue, and allow time for the music between the acts.

Mrs Dang. I hope to see it on the stage next.

Carlo Goldoni, from *Mémoires* (1787)
Memoirs of Carlo Goldoni, translated from the Original French by John Black (1877)

Before quitting Tuscany, I was anxious once more to pay a visit to the city of Florence, the capital. In taking leave of my acquaintances, it was proposed to me to visit the Academy of the Apatisti. It was not unknown to me; but I wished to see that day the sibillone, a sort of literary amusement which takes place from time to time, and which I had never yet seen. The sibillone, or great sibyl, is a child of only ten or twelve years of age, who is placed on a tribune in the middle of the assembly. Any one of the persons present puts a question to the young sibyl; the child must pronounce some word on the occasion which becomes the oracle of the prophetess, and the answer to the proposed question. These answers of a boy, without time for reflection, are in general destitute of common-sense; but an academician beside the tribune rises up, and maintains that the sibillone has returned a very proper answer, and undertakes to give an immediate interpretation of the oracle. That the reader may have some idea of the Italian imagination and boldness, I shall give some account of the question, the answer, and the interpretation, the day when I was present. A person who, like myself, was a stranger, asked the sibyl to inform him why women weep with greater ease and more frequently than men. The only answer which the sibyl returned was straw; and the interpreter, addressing the author of the question, maintained that nothing could be more decisive or satisfactory than the oracle. This learned academician, who was a tall and lusty abbé of about forty, with a sonorous and agreeable voice, spoke for nearly three quarters of an hour. He went into an analysis of different slender plants, and proved that straw surpassed them all in fragility; he passed from straw to women; and in a manner equally rapid and luminous, entered into an anatomical view of the human body. He explained the source of tears in the two sexes. He proved the delicacy of fibres in the one, and the resistance in the other. He concluded with a piece of flattery to the ladies who were present, in assigning the prerogatives of sensibility to weakness, and took care to avoid saying anything of their having tears at command. I own that this man surprised me. It was impossible to display more erudition and precision in a matter which did not seem susceptible of it. These are tricks, I am willing to admit, something in the taste of the masterpiece of an unknown author; but it is not the less true that such talents are rare and estimable, and that they only want encouragement to rise to a level with many others, and carry those who possess them to posterity.

Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814), from chapter 18

Everything was now in a regular train: theatre, actors, actresses, and dresses, were all getting forward; but though no other great impediments arose,

Fanny found, before many days were past, that it was not all uninterrupted enjoyment to the party themselves, and that she had not to witness the continuance of such unanimity and delight as had been almost too much for her at first. Everybody began to have their vexation. Edmund had many ... Tom himself began to fret over the scene-painter's slow progress, and to feel the miseries of waiting. He had learned his part — all his parts, for he took every trifling one that could be united with the Butler, and began to be impatient to be acting; and every day thus unemployed was tending to increase his sense of the insignificance of all his parts together, and make him more ready to regret that some other play had not been chosen. Fanny, being always a very courteous listener, and often the only listener at hand, came in for the complaints and the distresses of most of them. She knew that Mr. Yates was in general thought to rant dreadfully; that Mr. Yates was disappointed in Henry Crawford; that Tom Bertram spoke so quick he would be unintelligible; that Mrs. Grant spoiled everything by laughing; that Edmund was behindhand with his part, and that it was misery to have anything to do with Mr. Rushworth, who was wanting a prompter through every speech ... Everybody had a part either too long or too short; nobody would attend as they ought; nobody would remember on which side they were to come in; nobody but the complainer would observe any directions. Fanny believed herself to derive as much innocent enjoyment from the play as any of them; Henry Crawford acted well, and it was a pleasure to her to creep into the theatre, and attend the rehearsal of the first act, in spite of the feelings it excited in some speeches for Maria. Maria, she also thought, acted well, too well; and after the first rehearsal or two, Fanny began to be their only audience; and sometimes as prompter, sometimes as spectator, was often very useful. As far as she could judge, Mr. Crawford was considerably the best actor of all: he had more confidence than Edmund, more judgment than Tom, more talent and taste than Mr. Yates ... Lady Bertram seemed quite resigned to waiting. Fanny did not share her aunt's composure: she thought of the morrow a great deal, for if the three acts were rehearsed, Edmund and Miss Crawford would then be acting together for the first time; the third act would bring a scene between them which interested her most particularly, and which she was longing and dreading to see how they would perform. The whole subject of it was love — a marriage of love was to be described by the gentleman, and very little short of a declaration of love be made by the lady. She had read and read the scene again with many painful, many wondering emotions, and looked forward to their representation of it as a circumstance almost too interesting. She did not believe they had yet rehearsed it, even in private. The morrow came, the plan for the evening continued, and Fanny's consideration of it did not become less agitated.

6. *Improvising and the Commedia dell'Arte*

Adriano Valerini, from *Oratione d'Adriano Valerini veronese, In morte della Diuina Signora Vincenza Armani, Comica Eccellentissima* (*An Oration by Adriano Valerini, Veronese, in Death of the most Excellent Comica, Lady Vincenza Armani*) (1570)

... as you have probably heard, this Lady played in three different styles: the Comic, the Tragic and the Pastoral, observing the decorum of each so perfectly that the Accademia degli Intronati in Siena, in which admiration for acting was rife, intimated many times that this Woman succeeded by improvising much better than expert authors did writing at ease ...

...

she was to be praised not only when playing on a stage, but also when composing the very Poems, and when instructing her interlocutor in this same art.

Leone de' Sommi, from *Stanze di L. S. H. Alla Signora Vincenza Armani*, in Valerini (1570)

Voi ben potreste, uoi Vincenza esporre
 in versi, il bello, oue altra non ha parte:
 Voi dirne sola, quanto dir ne occorre
 Deureste, e dispiegarlo in uoce e in carte,
 ma se vostra modestia humile, abhorre,
 in propria laude oprar lo stile, e l'arte,
 mè aiuti si, ch'io regga vn tanto pondo,
 d'aprir cantando, vostra gloria al mondo.

You might, Vincenza, well expose
 in verse, beauty, where other women cannot:
 You only what is fit to say of it
 could say, unfolding it on paper and by voice,
 but if your humble modesty disdains
 in your own praise to employ your style and art,
 help me, that I may bear so heavy a burden
 to open, singing, your glory to the world.

Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'Arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso* (1699)
A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation, translated by F.
 Cotticelli, A. Goodrich Heck and T. Heck (2007), from Part II

The choragus [director], leader, master, or the most experienced person in the company, should coordinate the *soggetto* before it is staged, so that the performers know what the comedy contains and understand where to conclude their speeches, and so they can work on any possible new witticism or *lazzo*. The task of this organizer is not only to read the *soggetto*, but also to explain the characters with their names and traits, the subject of the story, the place where it is set, the houses, the *lazzi*, and all the necessary details, paying attention to the properties required for the comedy, such as letters, purses, daggers, and anything else noted at the end of the *soggetto*. He should say, for example, 'the play we are to perform is *La Trapolaria*. The characters are Tartaglia, father of Fedelindo and master of Coviello; Pulcinella, a slave merchant, and Turchetta, his slave girl; Isabella, a courtesan, and her servants, the parasite Pespice and Pimpinella; the Capitano, master of his manservant Pasquariello; Donna Laura, Tartaglia's wife, who arrives from abroad with a manservant; a peddler; and people to play the constables, both real and feigned. Tartaglia will be played by Mr. So-and-so; Fedelindo by Mr. Such-and-such'. He will then name the households, assigning the first house on the right as Tartaglia's, the second on the left as Pulcinella's, and the second on the right as Isabella's. He should then give the storyline as follows.

Plot of La Tripolaria

Tartaglia Raganelli, a merchant from Naples, got into a serious dispute with another merchant, who had called him a failure, and was induced to stab him with his dagger. As a consequence, being exiled from his fatherland and pursued by his enemies, he left for Barcelona with his pregnant wife. Upon arriving there ...

Francesco Bartoli, *Notizie istoriche de' comici italiani che fiorirono intorno all'anno 1550. Fino a' giorni presenti* (*Historical Accounts of the Italian Comici who Flourished about the Year 1550. Up to the Present Day*) (1782)

This virtuosic actress [Isabella Andreini], finding herself in Rome, was not only portrayed but crowned in laurel in a coloured headform placed between portraits of Tasso and Petrarch when, after a banquet offered to her by the

Most Eminent Cardinal Cintio Aldobrandini, great patron of artists, where at table six most learned cardinals, the above mentioned Tasso, the Cavalier de' Pazzi, Antonio Ongaro, and other very illustrious poets, among whom, writing and improvising sonnets in a fine contest, Andreini, with sparkling wit, came second only to the great Torquato Tasso.

Edward Gordon Craig, from 'The Commedia dell'Arte Ascending', *The Mask* 5, 2 (October 1912)

The manager-author would call the company together and explain to each the relation he was supposed to bear toward all the others. Then he would indicate the sequence of scenes in the several acts; and this scenario, as it was called, would be written out and pinned up behind the scenes. The play might begin with a violent altercation between Pantaleone [*sic*] and the Doctor; but this would be no difficult demand upon either performer, since they had often quarrelled in earlier plays. A little later might come a long love-scene for Lelio and Leonora: and this again would be no novelty, since he had been making love to her in almost every other piece since he joined the company. Lelio had in stock a dozen perfervid declarations of devotions; and Leonora had by experience a dozen different ways of receiving that declaration.

In this fashion, the story of the loves of Romeo and Juliet might be unrolled by means of these stock-figures, each of which retained his own name always and his own individuality. And in this fashion, any other story, tragic or comic, might be represented by a similar company of Italian comedians, accustomed to one another, and realizing the advantages of conscientious 'team-play'.

...

It demanded men of great talent ... For to be a good Italian actor means to be a man who possesses a rich store of knowledge, who plays more from fancy than from memory, who while he plays invents all he says; who seconds his colleagues on the stage, that is, matches his words and actions so well with those of his comrade that he enters at once on all the movements to which the other invites him, and in such way as to make everybody believe that all has been settled beforehand.

7. *Mountebanks and Street Players*

Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (*The Universal Piazza of All the World's Professions*) (1585); from Discorso CIV ('Of performers in general and, in particular, of mountebanks and charlatans')

In our time, the number and kinds of these mountebanks have grown as weed, so that in every city, land or square you see nothing but mountebanks

or *cerretani*, who could be better called good-for-nothings. These, with many devices and deceits cozen the minds of the populace, and entice their ears to hear the lies they tell, their eyes to see their trifles, and all their senses to pay attention to the ridiculous demonstrations they make.

...

But who wishes to tell all the ways and manners practised by these *cerretani* in order to make money will have to spend a lot of time. To tell only some, at one corner of the piazza you can see our gallant Fortunato who, together with Frit[t]ata, tells exaggerated lies, keeping the people every night from 10 p. m. until midnight, telling tales, inventing stories, performing acrobatics, quarrelling and then making peace between them, dying from laughing, quarrelling again, fighting on the banco, disputing; at last, they shake the dice and come to the point of the money they want to grab with these most pleasant and graceful blabbers. At another corner, Burattino clamours as if the hangman were hanging him. Wearing the sack of a postman, a cap on his head which gives him a roush air, he calls the audience in a loud voice; the people approach, the populace bump into each other, gentlemen come closer and, as soon as he has pronounced his farcical and hilarious Prologue, Burattino starts a strange tale about the Master, a tale which makes your heart sink, disheartens your spirit, and makes those who have gathered around him become demoralized. And if the first with pleasant gestures, with foolishly witty quips, with words which sound savoury to people's ears, with ridiculous expedients, with his neck like that of a hanged man, with his shrewd moustache, his voice like a monkey's and all his rascally deeds gains a large audience, the second, with his rude way of speaking, his Bolognese diction, his vapid talk, his mumbling tale, with the inappropriate advertisement of the privilege of his doctoral knowledge, the ungratious display of noblemen's long grants, by acting the medical doctor though having no science, eventually loses all his audience, and stands like a cricket in the middle of the piazza. In the meantime, from under the porches comes out the Tuscan and mounts the banco with his girl companion ... People gather in a ring around him, and the audience is intent on watching and hearing. Then, all of a sudden, he starts a rambling speech in a ridiculous Florentine dialect ... From another corner of the piazza, the Milanese, wearing a velvet cap and a white feather ... smartly dressed like a gentleman, plays the lover with Gradella, who mocks his master, makes obscene gestures to his face, curses behind him, swears he is ready to take a lot of blows, lowers his cap to his whisker, pulls out a small knife, and with cross eyes, a dark face, and a muzzle like a pig, looking with a sneer at his master's rivals, takes on the appearance of a scowling bulldog.

...

Nowadays, the piazza is full of these *ciurmatori*. There are those who sell a powder to set the wind from behind free, those who give housewives a recipe to make the beans pour out of the pan, those who sell tallow for perpetual

candlewicks, others sell the philosophers' oil, others the quintessence for becoming rich, others oil of mullein against colds; others tallow ointment from castrated animals against flakyskin, others mange unguent for memory, others cat or dog dung to apply on crackings, others lime paste to kill mice, others iron crutches for those who have broken bones, others mirrors to kindle a fire when placed against the sun, others spectacles to see in the dark; there are those who put horrible sensational monsters on show, those who eat tow and spit out a flame, those who oil their hands with oozing out grease, those who wash their face with melted lead, those who feign to cut the nose of another with a contrived knife, those who pull twenty yards of rope out of their mouth, those who make a playing card suddenly appear in the hands of another person, those who, blowing into a shell case, dye some scoundrel's face, and those who make the same eat excrementas if it were a good meal.

Thomas Coryate, from *Coryats Crudities* (1611)

I hope it will not be esteemed for an impertinencie to my discourse, if I next speake of the Mountebanks of Venice, seeing amongst many other things that doe much famouse this Citie, these two sorts of people, namely the Cortezans and the Mountebanks, are not the least: for although there are Mountebanks also in other Cities of Italy; yet because there is a greater concurse of them in Venice then else where, and that of the better sort and the most eloquent fellowes; and also for that there is a larger tolleration of them here then in other Cities (for in Rome, &c. they are restrained from certain matters as I have heard which are heere allowed them) ...

...

The principall place where they act, is the first part of Saint Marks street that reacheth betwixt the West front of S. Marks Church, and the opposite front of Saint Geminians Church. In which, twice a day, that is, in the morning and in the afternoone, you may see five or sixe severall stages erected for them: those that act upon the ground, even the foresaid Ciarlatans being of the poorer sort of them, stand most commonly in the second part of S. Marks, not far from the gate of the Dukes Palace. These Mountebanks at one end of their stage place their trunke, which is replenished with a world of new-fangled trumperies. After the whole rabble of them is gotten up to the stage, whereof some weare visards being disguised like fooles in a play, some that are Women (for there are divers women also amongst them) are attyred with habits according to that person that they sustaine; after (I say) they are all upon the stage, the musicke begins. Sometimes vocall, sometimes instrumentall, and sometimes both together. This musicke is a preamble and introduction to the ensuing matter: in the meane time while the musicke playes, the principall Mountebanke which is the Captaine and ring-leader of

all the rest, opens his truncke, and sets abroach his wares; after the musicke hath ceased, he maketh an oration to the audience of halfe an houre long, or almost an houre. Wherein he doth most hyperbolically extoll the vertue of his drugs and confections:

Laudat venales qui vult extrudere merces.

Though many of them are very counterfeit and false. Truly I often wondred at many of these naturall Orators. For they would tell their tales with such admirable volubility and plausible grace, even *extempore*, and seasoned with that singular variety of elegant jests and witty conceits, that they did often strike great admiration into strangers that never heard them before

...

After the chiefest Mountbankes first speech is ended, he delivereth out his commodities by little and little, the jester still playing his part, and the musitians singing and playing upon their instruments. The principall things that they sell are oyles, soveraigne waters, amorous songs printed, Apothecary drugs, and a Commonweale of other trifles. The head Mountbanke at every time that he delivereth out any thing, maketh an extemporall speech, which he doth eftsoones intermingle with such savory jests (but spiced now and then with singular scurrility) that they minister passing mirth and laughter to the whole company, which perhaps may consist of a thousand people that flocke together about one of their stages. For so many according to my estimation I have seene giving attention to some notable eloquent Mountbanke.

Ben Jonson, *Volpone* (1616), from 2.2

[*Enter Volpone, disguised as a mountebank doctor, and followed by a crowd of people*]

Volpone. [to Nano] Mount zany.

Mob. Follow, follow, follow, follow!

Sir Politic. See how the people follow him! he's a man

May write ten thousand crowns in bank here.

Note, [*Volpone mounts the stage*] Mark but his gesture: — I do use to observe

The state he keeps in getting up.

Per. 'Tis worth it, sir.

Volp. Most noble gentlemen, and my worthy patrons! It may seem strange, that I, your Scoto Mantuano, who was ever wont to fix my bank in face of the public Piazza, near the shelter of the Portico to the Procuratia, should now, after eight months' absence from this illustrious city of Venice, humbly retire myself into an obscure nook of the Piazza.

Sir P. Did not I now object the same?

Per. Peace, sir.

...

Volp. I protest, I, and my six servants, are not able to make of this precious liquor, so fast as it is fetch'd away from my lodging by gentlemen of your city; strangers of the Terra-firma; worshipful merchants; ay, and senators too: who, ever since my arrival, have detained me to their uses, by their splendidous liberalities. And worthily; for, what avails your rich man to have his magazines stuff with moscadelli, or of the purest grape, when his physicians prescribe him, on pain of death, to drink nothing but water cocted with aniseeds? O health! health! the blessing of the rich, the riches of the poor! who can buy thee at too dear a rate, since there is no enjoying this world without thee? Be not then so sparing of your purses, honourable gentlemen, as to abridge the natural course of life —

Per. You see his end.

Sir P. Ay, is't not good?

Volp. For, when a humid flux, or catarrh, by the mutability of air, falls from your head into an arm or shoulder, or any other part; take you a ducat, or your chequin of gold, and apply to the place affected: see what good effect it can work. No, no, 'tis this blessed unguento, this rare extraction, that hath only power to disperse all malignant humours, that proceed either of hot, cold, moist, or windy causes —

Per. I would he had put in dry too.

Sir P. 'Pray you, observe.

Volp. To fortify the most indigest and crude stomach, ay, were it of one, that, through extreme weakness, vomited blood, applying only a warm napkin to the place, after the unction and fricace; — for the vertigine in the head, putting but a drop into your nostrils, likewise behind the ears; a most sovereign and approved remedy. The mal caduco, cramps, convulsions, paralyties, epilepsies, tremor-cordia, retired nerves, ill vapours of the spleen, stopping of the liver, the stone, the strangury, hernia ventosa, iliaca passio; stops a disenteria immediately; easeth the torsion of the small guts: and cures melancholia hypocondriaca, being taken and applied according to my printed receipt. [*pointing to his bill and his vial*] For, this is the physician, this the medicine; this counsels, this cures; this gives the direction, this works the effect; and, in sum, both together may be termed an abstract of the theorick and practick in the Aesculapian art. 'Twill cost you eight crowns. And, — Zan Fritada, prithee sing a verse extempore in honour of it.

Sir P. How do you like him, sir?

Per. Most strangely, I!

Sir P. Is not his language rare?

Per. But alchemy, I never heard the like: or Broughton's books.

Nano. [*sings*] Had old Hippocrates, or Galen, That to their books put med'cines all in, But known this secret, they had never (Of which they will be guilty ever) Been murderers of so much paper, Or wasted many a hurtless taper; No Indian drug had e'er been famed, Tabacco, sassafras not named; Ne yet, of guacum one small stick, sir, Nor Raymund Lully's great elixir. Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart, Or Paracelsus, with his long-sword.

Per. All this, yet, will not do, eight crowns is high.

Volp. No more. — Gentlemen, if I had but time to discourse to you the miraculous effects of this my oil, surnamed Oglgio del Scoto; with the countless catalogue of those I have cured of the aforesaid, and many more diseases; the pattendts and privileges of all the princes and commonwealths of Christendom; or but the depositions of those that appeared on my part, before the signiory of the Sanita and most learned College of Physicians; where I was authorised, upon notice taken of the admirable virtues of my medicaments, and mine own excellency in matter of rare and unknown secrets, not only to disperse them publicly in this famous city, but in all the territories, that happily joy under the government of the most pious and magnificent states of Italy. But may some other gallant fellow say, O, there be divers that make profession to have as good, and as experimented receipts as yours: indeed, very many have assayed, like apes, in imitation of that, which is really and essentially in me, to make of this oil; bestowed great cost in furnaces, stills, alembecks, continual fires, and preparation of the ingredients (as indeed there goes to it six hundred several simples, besides some quantity of human fat, for the conglutination, which we buy of the anatomists), but, when these practitioners come to the last decoction, blow, blow, puff, puff, and all flies in fumo: ha, ha, ha! Poor wretches! I rather pity their folly and indiscretion, than their loss of time and money; for these may be recovered by industry: but to be a fool born, is a disease incurable. For myself, I always from my youth have endeavoured to get the rarest secrets, and book them, either in exchange, or for money; I spared nor cost nor labour, where any thing was worthy to be learned. And gentlemen, honourable gentlemen, I will undertake, by virtue of chemical art, out of the honourable hat that covers your head, to extract the four elements; that is to say, the fire, air, water, and earth, and return you your felt without burn or stain. For, whilst others have been at the Balloo, I have been at my book; and am now past the craggy paths of study, and come to the flowery plains of honour and reputation.

Sir P. I do assure you, sir, that is his aim.

Volp. But, to our price —

Per. And that withal, sir Pol.

Volp. You all know, honourable gentlemen, I never valued this ampulla, or vial, at less than eight crowns, but for this time, I am content, to be deprived of

it for six; six crowns is the price; and less, in courtesy I know you cannot offer me; take it, or leave it, howsoever, both it and I am at your service. I ask you not as the value of the thing, for then I should demand of you a thousand crowns, so the cardinals Montalto, Fernese, the great Duke of Tuscany, my gossip, with divers other princes, have given me; but I despise money. Only to shew my affection to you, honourable gentlemen, and your illustrious State here, I have neglected the messages of these princes, mine own offices, framed my journey hither, only to present you with the fruits of my travels. — Tune your voices once more to the touch of your instruments, and give the honourable assembly some delightful recreation.

8. *Nomadic Readings*

BBC News, Wednesday 16 June, 2004, 'Celebrations mark Joyce centenary' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/3811171.stm>, accessed 18.02.2018

More than 1,300 people have gathered in Dublin for the 100th anniversary of Bloomsday, marking the day James Joyce's classic *Ulysses* was set. Irish President Mary McAleese joined lovers of the book for the centenary.

...

Fans have travelled to Dublin from all over the world, including pilgrimages to Joyce's house to join in with the centenary celebrations.

...

The breakfast featured food in keeping with Bloom's love of 'the inner organs of beasts and fowls' as described at the start of the book, at a cost of 12 euros each (£ 7.88). It recreated chapter four of the book, where Bloom cooks a mammoth breakfast for himself and his wife Molly, including mutton kidneys. 'We've found that mutton kidneys aren't terribly popular. We have some available, but they tend to end up in the bin', said Helen Monaghan, a grand niece of Joyce who runs the James Joyce Centre.

...

Readings from the book — which recounts Bloom's day spent walking around the centre of Dublin — will be performed by TV host Gay Byrne, playwright Gerry Stembridge and musician Ronnie Drew.

The readings will also take place on the streets of Dublin, with a cast of actors dressed as characters from the book.

...

To Celebrate Centennial of Proust's *Swann's Way*...

<http://frenchculture.org/about-us/press-room/4896-celebrate-centennial-prousts-swanns-way>, accessed 18.02.2018

As part of a year-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way*, dozens of French and American writers, artists, scholars, and Proust fans, ... will participate in a weeklong live reading of the classic at venues across city beginning November 8th.

...

Presented by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, 2013: A Year with Proust Centennial Celebration has showcased festivities throughout New York City, including exhibition of manuscripts, notes, letters and other materials at the Morgan Library and Museum, a screening of *The Captive* by Chantal Akerman, based on the fifth volume of *La Recherche*, and a concert and reading devoted to the composers and works that inspired the famous *Vinteuil Sonata*. From November 8-14, *Swann's Way: A Nomadic Reading* will feature the entirety of the iconic work read in three hour increments in locations from the Bronx to Brooklyn. In a traveling tribute, each location will echo a major theme of the reading: a hotel bedroom, for the famous opening pages; the forest of the Botanical Gardens for Proust's childhood in the countryside; a theater, to evoke the writer's fascination with actors; a nightclub, to recall *Swann's* late-night searches for the unfaithful *Odette*.