

Where Have All the Brave Knights Gone? Sicilian Puppet Theater and the Tuscan-Emilian Epic *Maggio* *

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Already in 1894 the Sicilian writer Luigi Capuana voiced his sadness over a profound transformation in his homeland that had led to the disappearance of many aspects of popular culture he had known as a youth. As he explained: "Non li rimpiangevo per una specie di malintesa predilezione archeologica, ma perchè mi sembravano più belli, più buoni, più caratteristici di tutto quel che gli si è venuto sostituendo" (137). In 1960, the American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax reflected on an even more radical loss of local popular traditions throughout the world: "Now, we of the jets, the wireless and the atom blast, are on the verge of sweeping completely off the globe what unspoiled folklore is left, at least wherever it cannot quickly conform to the success-motivated standards of our urban-condition consumer economy. What was once an ancient tropical garden of immense color and variety is in danger of being replaced by a comfortable but sterile and sleep-inducing system of cultural super-highways" ("Saga," 56).

Today, at the onset of the third millennium, we must look beyond the constant bombardment of images and sounds delivered by globally oriented marketing systems and mass media if we want to seek out the clusters of local cultural traditions kept alive by the sheer passion of their practitioners. Two such "endangered" but still surviving popular traditions of Italy are the Sicilian *Opera dei Pupi* and the epic *maggio* of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines. Both are forms of theater, which before the advent of television and cinema was the privileged vehicle for bringing stories to life, and thus for shaping and challenging ideologies, creating and sustaining collective memories and identity, and for trying to understand what it means to be human.¹ What most notably sets these two traditions apart from other forms of popular Italian culture is the fact that they take medieval and Renaissance chivalric literature as their principal subject matter. In this essay, in addition to discussing some parallels between the *Opera dei Pupi* and the epic *maggio*, I look at ways in which the "elite" chivalric epics of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries were recreated in these two forms of "popular" theater of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²

1. Origins.

Both traditions are related to ancient forms of theater: puppet theater not only existed in Siracusa, Sicily, in classical times (Xenophon, *Symposium*), but can be found throughout the world from Northern Europe to Indonesia; the epic *maggio* has been linked both to medieval Italian *sacre rappresentazioni* and to ancient pagan festivals celebrating the rites of spring.³ Neither art form, however, has developed directly from ancient roots, and the concrete origins of both are a matter of speculation due to scanty documentation prior to the early nineteenth century.

The *Opera dei Pupi* is a form of prose theater that dramatizes primarily chivalric narratives using large wooden puppets with full armor, swords, and shields. The puppets weigh an average of twenty-two pounds in the Palermo tradition and sixty-five pounds in the Catanese tradition, and they are manipulated from above by means of iron rods. These characteristics distinguish the *Opera dei Pupi* from other forms of *teatro di figura*, such as the *marionette* (light-weight puppets supported by strings) and the *burattini* (hand-puppets), which present varied, primarily comic, stories outside the context of chivalry.

Readers of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* may remember how the ill-fated knight mistook puppet theater for reality and attempted to save the puppet Melisenda from the Moors (II.25-26). Whether or not the *Opera dei Pupi* came to Sicily from Spain (or from Naples, as some sources suggest), it is documented on the island in the early 1800s. Sicilian puppeteers appear to have transformed the art form by creating puppets dressed in decorative metallic armor and capable of intricate movements.⁴ Although it was successful elsewhere in Italy, notably Rome, Naples, and Modena, the *Opera dei Pupi* achieved its greatest popularity in Sicily during the course of the nineteenth century. Puppet theater companies have traditionally been in greater number in western Sicily and Palermo than eastern Sicily and Catania. The eminent Sicilian folklorist Giuseppe Pitre (1841-1916) counted twenty-five puppet theaters in Sicily in 1884, with nine in Palermo, three in Catania, and the rest spread out throughout the island. Of these twenty-five companies, nineteen had originated in Palermo (340-41).

The *maggio epico*, also called *maggio drammatico* to distinguish it from *maggi lirici* (springtime festival songs), is traditionally performed in a natural setting during the summer months.⁵ The outdoor *maggio* theater is ideally at the edge of a forest, or near trees that provide some shade from the afternoon sun, and preferably on an incline that serves as a natural

amphitheater. The public, seated on chairs and/or benches, forms an outer circle around the performance space. The *Maggio* performers (called *maggerini* in Emilia and *maggianti* in Tuscany) sing a melopoeia, a slow melody, maintaining the same tonality throughout. The text is predominantly comprised of eight-syllable verse quatrains with an ABBA rhyme scheme. While the *quartina* is used for dialogue, battles, and monologues, other poetic forms, notably the five-verse *arietta in ottonari* (with an ABCC rhyme scheme) and the hendecasyllable *ottava rima* (the standard verse form of the romance epic), are used for joyous, tragic, or otherwise dramatic moments, as well as for the concluding verses sung by all. Throughout the performance, the director (*capomaggio*) prompts the *maggerini* with their lines and gives stage directions in full view of the audience.⁶

Although the lyric *maggio* is documented at least as far back as the Renaissance, the earliest extant epic *maggio* dates from the 1808. A 1792 document recently discovered in the Modenese Apennines, however, refers to the epic *maggio* as an "antica usanza" (Piacentini, "Tradizione e innovazioni"). Of the three principal areas traditionally associated with the *maggio* — the *pisano-lucchese*, *garfagnino-lunigianese*, and *emiliana* — the primary material of the latter two areas is epic (Venturelli 51). It is suggestive to think that these two areas were part of the Ferrarese state ruled by the Estense dukes, under whose patronage were written the three major romance epics of the Renaissance: Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. It is even more suggestive to think that the *maggio*'s purported site of origin, the territory of the Garfagnana and nearby Lunigiana, has a direct link to Lodovico Ariosto since he was the ducal commissioner of the Garfagnana under Alfonso d'Este from 1522 to 1525. It is generally believed that the *maggio* spread from the Garfagnana to neighboring mountain towns through seasonal workers.⁷ In the absence of concrete documentation, the hypotheses regarding the *maggio*'s origin are varied, including a playful one that traces it back to Ruggiero, the fictitious knight created by Boiardo as the founder of the Estense dynasty: "il maggio a noi provien da quel Ruggero / che degli Estensi fu poi la radice" (Costi 28).

2. Texts.

Tales of chivalry, primarily stories about Charlemagne's knights (the Carolingian cycle) and King Arthur's knights (the Breton cycle), came into Italy from France during the Middle Ages, giving rise to a myriad of rewritings as well as highly original elaborations by such authors as Andrea

da Barberino and Pulci in Florence, and Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso in Ferrara. Chivalric narratives captured the imagination not only of the lettered elite who doubtless saw idealizations of their own courtly aspirations in the knights and ladies of old, but also of the rest of the population who heard the same narratives from storytellers and singers, in some areas right up until recent decades. Indeed, the *cantastorie* (singers) and *contastorie* (story-tellers) may have helped give rise to both later traditions through the precedent of retelling epic source material in a performance setting. Regrettably, however, these art forms have virtually disappeared from the horizon without ever having been the object of extensive or systematic study.⁸

Henry Festing Jones, who traveled throughout Sicily with Samuel Butler, found it remarkable that the *popular* puppet theaters of the *late 1800s* were giving life to the *elite* chivalric stories of the *Renaissance*: "It is as though in England the cab-drivers, railway porters and shop-boys were to spend evening after evening, month after month, looking on at a dramatized version of the *Arcadia* or *The Faerie Queene*" (82). He noted, moreover, that the Sicilians' irrepressible passion for chivalric matter was more easily satiated by going to the puppet theater than by dusting off volumes of epic poetry: "The Sicilian, however, no matter how uneducated he may be, has an appetite for romance which must be gratified and, as it would give him some trouble to brush up his early accomplishments and stay at home reading Pulci and Boiardo, Tasso and Ariosto, he prefers to follow the story of Carlo Magno and his paladins and the wars against the Saracens in the teatrino" (81-82).

What this Englishman might not have realized, however, was that not only were chivalric works by these authors and others readily available in Sicily from the Renaissance through to the modern period (Li Gotti 109), but that both the public and the puppeteers of the time were reading the principal Renaissance chivalric romances in a new format: Giusto Lo Dico's *Storia dei Paladini di Francia* (1826-1906). This three-thousand page prose compilation by a schoolteacher from Palermo, originally published in installments (1858-60), not only provided an "authoritative" written version of the same stories that the puppeteers were already dramatizing, but it was a best-seller. In Palermo there were more than three thousand subscribers from all social classes and age groups (Pitrè 350-51). Lo Dico's work was so popular that in 1895-96 it was edited for republication by Giuseppe Leggio (1870-1911), who included additional episodes, principally the events surrounding Charlemagne's birth and youth as related in Andrea da Barberino's *Reali di Francia*. This extended *Storia*

dei Paladini di Francia, reprinted several times in the early 1900s, follows the *armi* and *amori* of Christians and Saracens across three centuries of romance epic, including Andrea da Barberino's *Reali di Francia* and *Aspramonte*, Tasso's *Rinaldo*, Cieco da Ferrara's *Mambriano*, Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and *Cinque canti*, Francesco Brusantino's *Angelica innamorata*, and Pulci's *Morgante*.⁹ As one can see from the above list, the *Storia dei Paladini* follows the chronology of the fictional stories, not the order in which the original texts were written. The success of this retelling led to various sequels, the most notable being those written and published by Giuseppe Leggio. These sequels, which eventually led to a prose version of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, were also incorporated into the *Storia dei paladini* cycle performed in daily *puntate* by the puppeteers.

Many of the fourteenth to sixteenth century epics that comprised Lo Dico's retelling, and thus formed the basis of the *Opera dei Pupi* repertory, are widely represented in the *maggio* tradition. Moreover, *La Storia dei Paladini di Francia* also circulated in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines and served as the basis for various *maggio* scripts. The veteran *maggerini* Berto Zambonini and Franco Sorbi of Villa Minozzo (RE) remember having read a voluminous work called *I paladini di Francia* in their youth.¹⁰ Umberto Monti lists *I paladini di Francia* and *Guidosanto* (Giuseppe Leggio's sequel) among the books read by Giacomo Alberghi (1875-1944), a prominent *maggio* author from the Reggian Apennines (231). Alberghi actually wrote two *maggi* based on *Guidosanto*, as well as one entitled *Morbello*, after the name of a character from the *Storia dei Paladini di Francia* whose invention is attributed directly to Giusto Lo Dico.¹¹ At times the use of Lo Dico or Leggio is self-evident, as when Giuseppe Grandini entitles his *maggio I Paladini di Francia*. At other times, familiarity with the Sicilian retellings can only be surmised. For example, Vincenzo Coloretti's *maggio Le guerre d'Albracca* is based on episodes from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, but in naming the enchantress Drogantina rather than Dragontina (see Vezzani, "Gli autori," 364), Coloretti is following the precedent of Lo Dico adopted by the Sicilian puppeteers. Other *maggio* authors based their scripts on Leggio's sequels to the Carolingian cycle as well as on other late nineteenth century chivalric texts published by Leggio's popular press. These *maggi* thus create a link not only to Lo Dico's prose retelling of Renaissance epic, but also to original chivalric narratives by contemporary Sicilian authors.

Puppeteers and their traditional public shared a preference for episodes based on the romance epics of Boiardo and Ariosto. The puppeteer

Mimmo Cuticchio writes: "'l'Arrivo di Angelica a Parigi' è uno degli episodi più amati dal pubblico degli appassionati, perchè da questo punto cominciano le storie più belle, intrecciate d'amore, di duelli, di incanti" (*Pina* 50). This episode, in fact, marks the beginning of the *Orlando Innamorato*, and thus of the innumerable interlaced adventures narrated by Boiardo and Ariosto, spanning hundreds of pages in Lo Dico's prose retelling.¹² In the *maggio* tradition, Ariosto is the most prevalent author, with several *maggi* based on the entire *Orlando Furioso* as well as on individual episodes, such as that of Ginevra and Ariodante or of Ruggiero and Leone. In the earliest dated *maggio* found in the Reggian Apennines, entitled simply *Maggio dato 1808*, the anonymous author dramatizes episodes from the *Orlando Furioso*, focusing in particular on the story of Ruggiero and Leone. The anonymous *Rodomonte*, believed to have been written in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, consists of 551 quatrains and requires over five hours to perform in its unabridged form. *Maggio* author, director, and archivist Romolo Fioroni writes that even *maggi* written on other subjects find their model in the *Furioso* ("Filoni" 1-2).¹³

Tasso is also well represented in both traditions, albeit with a different emphasis. Whereas the *maggio* repertory contains various versions of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the puppet tradition privileged Tasso's *Rinaldo*, a romance account of Rinaldo's youth that was included in the *Storia dei Paladini*. The puppet tradition also incorporated a sequel to Tasso's *Rinaldo* that Giusto Lo Dico wove into his compilation. In Tasso's text, Medea predicted that noble and valorous twins would be born to her niece Floriana from her union with Rinaldo. Lo Dico names the twins Carinda and Guidon Selvaggio, and then goes on to insert their numerous adventures among the interlaced episodes of the *Mambriano* and the *Orlando Innamorato*. While Guidon Selvaggio was already present in the tradition as the illegitimate son of Rinaldo or, as Ariosto would have it, of Amone, Carinda appears to have been invented by Lo Dico himself.

Although Arthurian themes are present through the Renaissance romance epic, actual Arthurian stories are less common than Carolingian ones in the *maggio* tradition and virtually absent from the *Opera dei Pupi*.¹⁴ The most represented *maggio* from the Breton cycle is *Tristano e Isotta*, an anonymous and undated *maggio* found in Frassinoro (MO). Sesto Fontana notes that one could trace its possible origin to a medieval *cantare* about Tristan, to the medieval prose romance *La Tavola Ritonda o Istoria di Tristano* (published in Bologna in 1864), or to perhaps another publication of the legend unknown to us (115). In keeping with the tenets of the genre,

the *maggio* does not end with the death of the lovers (as it does, for example, in Wagner's opera), but with the imprisonment of Re Marco by Re Artù and Lancilotto for having slain Tristano, and with Marco's subsequent suicide.

Both traditions include plays based on classical epic (e.g., the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), local legend and chronicle, hagiography (e.g., *Santa Genoveffa*), Greek and Shakespearian tragedy (e.g., *Macbeth*), and historical figures or political events. Yet chivalry is such a part of both traditions that even plays that are not based on medieval and Renaissance romance epic nevertheless continue to follow the same narrative structure and themes. Referring to the *maggio*, Fioroni writes: "nessuno di noi può oggi capire un *maggio* senza la cavalleria, perchè l'anima del poema cavalleresco è così profondamente penetrata nel cuore e nella fantasia del popolo che ha contaminato ogni argomento e fonte" ("I 'Maggi'" 6).

3. Themes.

The *maggio* performers adhere strictly to a script, while the puppeteers improvise the dialogue, but in both traditions the verbal aspect is of paramount importance. Because both dramatize "elite" chivalric narratives written in Italian, they use the standard, albeit sometimes anachronistic, Italian of the source texts rather than local dialect, the more common language of orally transmitted culture. The enunciation is consistently clear because comprehension is an indispensable part of the experience for the public.

The principal themes of chivalric narrative are elaborated in both the *maggio* and *Opera dei Pupi* traditions. Fioroni sums up these themes in speaking of the *maggio*, but his words are equally applicable to the *Opera dei Pupi* tradition: "Ogni autore, in sostanza si preoccupa di presentare al suo pubblico un mondo diverso da quello reale; un mondo ideale, dove il bene trionfa, l'ingiustizia è bandita, l'inganno è punito e la lealtà riceve il meritato premio; un mondo dove il dolore trova il suo posto come mezzo di espiazione e di purificazione, ma alla fine è fugato dalla gioia e sublimato dalla speranza riservata a coloro che hanno perseguito sempre, e in ogni caso, il bene e il vero" ("I 'Maggi'" 5).

At the same time, the *maggio epico* and the *Opera dei Pupi* do not simply translate chivalric texts into dramatic form, but refashion them according to the characteristics of the genre and the individual inspiration of those who create and stage the plays. Yet because both traditions so fully embrace the weltanschauung present in the chivalric epics they

dramatize, the creative transformation often leads to intensification, rather than alteration, of the original themes.

To give an indication of this creative process, I would like to note a few instances of how the *maggio* plays *Ginevra di Scozia* and *L'arme e gli amori*, and the puppet play *La pazzia di Orlando*, accentuate certain themes in their dramatization of episodes from the *Orlando Furioso*. In the anonymous *Ginevra di Scozia* (found in Castelnuovo Garfagnana [LU]), the *paggio*, the figure who traditionally states the plot and/or message in his introductory quatrains, prefaces the narrative with a moral warning about the horrid fate awaiting the evil and the fraudulent who oppress the innocent: "E vedrem quanto funesta / sia la sorte ai delinquenti, / che a oppression degl'innocenti / il ver tace o il falso attesta" (5). Whereas the episode in the *Furioso* begins with Rinaldo at the monks' table hearing of Ginevra's plight and vowing to defend her regardless of guilt, the *maggio* establishes from the start that Ginevra is an innocent victim of another's treachery. In fact, the *maggio* author forgoes Rinaldo's visit to the monks and begins instead with two new scenes showing Ginevra interacting affectionately with her beloved Ariodante and her father. The spectator is thereby acquainted with Ginevra's character before Polinesso sets his deceitful plot in motion and thus may follow her ordeal with greater emotional participation.

In the *Furioso*, although Rinaldo initially condemns the law of Scotland as unjust, it remains in place at the conclusion of the episode. The *maggio* goes beyond the *Furioso*'s original plot in which Ginevra is vindicated and Polinesso punished, to include the abolition of the unjust law that punished women's private affections with public humiliation and death. After embracing Ariodante, Ginevra addresses her father and the judges:

Caro padre, e voi, giurati,
io vi prego di abolire
l'empia legge che al martire
condannò una innocente. (164)

The immediate assent of the king and judges is expressed in the next (and final) verse of the *arietta*: "Lo faremo certamente!" This collective resolve to procure justice and social harmony is signaled by this chorus of authoritative voices repeating the rhyme of Ginevra's final word.

Marcello Sala's *L'arme e gli amori* (1982) heightens Ariosto's skepticism toward the motives and abilities of those in power by further

elaborating episodes that already contain this theme. For example, while in the *Furioso* an unruly mob tries to kill Zerbino, in the *maggio* it is Charlemagne himself who intends to execute the knight based on a false accusation. While Charlemagne asserts his power over Zerbino — "Sono il re e tengo in mano / la giustizia e la tua sorte" (40) — Zerbino evokes a moral universe that is superior to the king's will: "Morderà la tua coscienza / l'ingiustizia che si trama" (41). Isabella, accompanied by Orlando, arrives just as Charlemagne is about to kill Zerbino and calls for him not to strike an innocent man. When Charlemagne refuses to heed her plea, she accuses the emperor of having disregarded the knight's right to due process:

Sol l'accusa hai tu ascoltato.
Né alcun dubbio più ti smuove;
di raccogliere delle prove
non ti sei preoccupato. (44).

Charlemagne finally releases Zerbino, but only after Orlando vouches for Isabella's trustworthiness. By transferring the figure of unreasonable vengeance from an angry mob to the emperor himself, Sala condemns the abuse of political power. This also follows the paradigm of the Carolingian epic, where Charlemagne is constantly persuaded by (Gano's) false accusations to banish the valorous knight Rinaldo from court and even to seek his death.

The *maggio* further develops the criticism of those who abuse power in the episode of Astolfo on the moon. To Ariosto's list of various items on the moon that had been lost on earth, Sala adds: "la misura dei sensali, / l'onestà dei funzionari, / il valor dei militari, / l'equità dei tribunali" (115). When Sala's Astolfo then pauses to reflect on the grim reality of power that lies behind all the fanfare, he expresses himself in an *ottava rima* stanza that indicates heightened dramatic intensity in the *maggio* tradition and replicates the poetic form of the *Furioso*:

Ignari noi viviamo sulla terra,
timore coltivando oppur rispetto
per chi può scatenare atroce guerra,
per chi di nostra vita fa un oggetto;
sacro è per noi il poter che in pugno serra,
perciò non dubitiam del suo intelletto,
ma che succederà quando la gente
s'accorgerà ch'è vuota la lor mente? (117).

The Chorus concludes the *maggio* by reminding the public that its themes, and by implication those of Ariosto, are still relevant today ("orrore della guerra, / miseria del potere, / pazzia dell'amore / non son finite ancor"; 160). One could also say that this *maggio* author, while adapting the source material and respecting the requirements of the genre, underscored those themes he found to be of greatest contemporary relevance.

Scripts of puppet plays are not readily available and, in most cases, non-existent, since *pupari* traditionally worked from sketched outlines.¹⁵ The plays, however, are often carefully constructed to bring out deeper values and themes behind the actions they represent. In *La pazzia di Orlando*, for example, Mimmo Cuticchio accentuates the themes of desire, seeking, and loss present in Ariosto's poem. In the opening scene, Angelica searches for her brother Argalia, while in the second Orlando searches for his beloved Angelica. As Ferrau also seeks Angelica, he loses his helmet; Argalia's skeleton emerges from the stream and urges him to seek Orlando's helmet instead. The insatiable Rodomonte has vowed to conquer Orlando's sword, Rinaldo's horse, as well as the city of Paris. Medoro then searches for his leader Dardinello. Given this succession of relentless seeking, it is comical that when Ferrau comes upon Angelica, he cannot find the words to speak to her: "E' tanto tempo che vado cercando Angelica, e ora che l'ho trovata, non so che cosa vi devo dire." In the meantime, Rinaldo finds what he was *not* seeking. As he says: "Vado per cercare Rodomonte e invece trovo Ferrau e la bella Angelica." While Ferrau and Rinaldo battle over Angelica, she disappears from view, and thus they agree to postpone their battle and resume their search. Astolfo then appears on stage searching for Orlando, and finds instead Atlante's palace. Orlando's search for Angelica becomes obsessive as he sees her in every tree, in every stump, in the very air he breathes. A solicitous shepherd brings him to his home, and the theme of acquisitive desire takes on a note of comic realism when the shepherd's wife remarks: "forse alla fine anche lui ci farà un ricco regalo." When Orlando hears that the object of his desire has married another, his folly begins with an act of misplaced desire: he starts hugging and kissing the old shepherd. The play ends as the mad Orlando, stripped of his armor, still calls out the name of his beloved. This concentration of scenes presenting variations on the theme of desire, combined with the fast-paced movement of the puppets and the repeated calling out of the name of the person sought, vividly dramatizes one of the principal themes of Ariosto's poem.

4. Aspects of performance.

Although both traditions are heavily word-based, other elements related to performance are equally essential. Both traditions alternate the spoken (or sung) word with instrumental music. At a *maggio*, musicians with a guitar, an accordion, and sometimes a violin, are situated at the edge of the performance space. They play very brief motifs to set off the quatrains, and they also play themes from waltzes, polkas, and mazurkas in-between scenes.¹⁶ The *Opera dei Pupi* also adopted popular music of the nineteenth century. In the tradition of Palermo, music for intervals between the scenes was first provided by a violinist, and then by a roller or cylinder piano played by hand or a pre-set player piano (Pitrè 318). In Catania, the basic instrument was the drum, essential for the battle scenes. Today some puppet companies use prerecorded music.

Change of location is signaled in Sicilian puppet theater through a substitution of the painted backgrounds. These brightly colored scenes depict settings such as fortresses, enchanted palaces, dungeons, battlefields, forests, or a royal court. In the *maggio*, small tents (*padiglioni*) set up along the edge of the performance space in a circular fashion designate the various locations. Signs above the entrance indicate the name of the court or city represented.

In both traditions, the props, when used, are simple and stylized. In the *maggio*, a low gate represents a prison; a wooden platform indicates a bridge; a wide strip of blue cloth indicates a river; leafy branches placed on the ground represent a forest. On the puppet stage one can also find fountains, prison gates, and other objects as required by the plot.

The costumes, on the other hand, are elaborately crafted. The puppet costumes and armature, like the painted scenes on the posters (*cartelli* or *cartelloni*) announcing the puppet shows, recall the illustrations in Lo Dico's *Storia dei Paladini* and other nineteenth century installments, many of which were in turn taken from those printed in earlier editions of chivalric romance (Li Gotti 11).¹⁷ The female knights, principally Bradamante, Marfisa, and the Dama Rovenza, wear the same armor and plumed helmets as their male counterparts, but their faces express feminine beauty as well as strength. The Saracens are identified by the half-moon insignia on their helmets and on their rounded or oval shields, as well as by a scimitar. Their costumes are often colorful, especially those of sultans or kings, who sometimes have downward-curving mustaches. The principal knights on both sides are further identified by the insignia on their shields.

The Emilian *maggerini* also wear costumes that follow specific codes.¹⁸ The knights wear intricately embroidered black velvet jackets with a short cape, riding pants, and high black boots. The cape, also richly decorated, is black, indicating a Christian knight, or red, indicating a Saracen. The Christian knights' pants are black, ankle-length, and decorated with a golden band and fringed border while the Saracens wear shorter and wider velvet pants that match the red color of the short cape. The helmets are plumed, as in the *Opera dei Pupi*, and the swords are made of steel.¹⁹ Female knights wear the same style costume as their male counterparts, along with a short skirt over their pants and a cape. The other females wear ankle-length dresses recalling fourteenth century gowns, often decorated with embroidery and/or pearls, sometimes also with a shawl or long cape. In some companies, shields are painted with insignia indicating one's alliance: blue shields with a lion or a griffin signal a Christian knight while a red shield with a half-moon is used by the Saracens. The names of the knights are written on a strip of tape and placed on their shields.

Chivalric narratives sometimes involve demons, angels, wizards, monsters and various animals such as serpents, lions, and dragons, and these various non-human characters have consequently found their way into both traditions. In both cases, the costumes draw from traditional iconography, e.g., a wizard is indicated by a special hat, cape, and book, while an angel inevitably has wings and a white gown. The animals are fashioned out of papier-mâché (in the *maggio* tradition, a papier-mâché lion head or serpent upper body would be worn by a young boy playing the respective animal).

Knights are the center of attention in both traditions, and they are not only outfitted for battle, with helmets, swords, and shields as described above, but their performance inevitably includes a confrontation. These battles are choreographed with precision. Antonio Pasqualino refers to the *Opera dei Pupi*'s stylized battles as the "fight dance of the puppets," noting the fast and uniform rhythms of the movements and sounds ("Humor" 18). The actions are symmetrical and rhythmically repetitive: knights facing each other lunge and strike each other's sword simultaneously. The sound of clashing swords is accompanied by other battle sounds created by the stomping of the puppeteer's clogs on the floorboards and, in the Catanese tradition, also by the rhythmic beating of drums. In the *maggio* tradition, the battle is also very much a "fight dance": the two knights skip toward each other and strike each other's shield simultaneously as they twirl their swords in their other hand. The battles may be stylized like a dance, but in both traditions they dramatically depict the release of agonistic energies.

The clashing of the shields in the *maggio* is not a symbolic tap, but a violent impact that requires both physical strength and stamina on the part of the *maggerini*. In the *Opera dei Pupi*, the knights shout as they thrust their swords at their opponents, and in the ensuing violence, shields can break into two, armor can fall, knights can be decapitated or sliced in half.

While the battles are decidedly played out on a heroic register, both traditions contain a comic register to offset the tension. In the *Opera dei Pupi* tradition, puppets representing lower-class figures, such as servants, speak in dialect.²⁰ The *maggio* tradition introduces humor through the figure of the *buffone* who comments jokingly about the action (although his presence has been rare in recent decades). His dialogue is generally extemporaneous, but in some *maggi*, such as *Tristano e Isotta*, his part is written into the script.

5. Reception.

Both the *Opera dei Pupi* and the *maggio* once constituted the principal form of entertainment for their traditional spectators, who participated actively in the drama. The *maggio* audience, even today, generally applauds after the *ottava rima* soliloquies or duets, as well as at other moments, in reaction to either the *maggerino*'s skill or to the words and deeds of the fictional characters. The traditional audience of the *Opera dei Pupi* habitually voiced their opinion about the actions unfolding on stage, collectively admiring the valorous Rinaldo and hating the traitor Gano. Members of the audience would sometimes purchase the Gano puppet in order to have the pleasure of destroying it themselves.²¹

The traditional puppet theater audience followed the cycle of performances each evening during the course of the year, and after a break during the hot summer months, would start over again in the fall. They often knew the lives of the characters almost as well as the puppeteers did, and would be quick to point out any mistakes. Although the *maggio* performances took place only on Sunday afternoons during the summer months, the shared experience was also extended in time. The public often attended the final rehearsals, and the summer *maggi* became part of the collective memory of the mountain communities as they were discussed and retold during the winter. Even today elderly members of these communities remember *maggi* they had seen in their youth, just as many Sicilians who once formed part of the traditional audiences still recall episodes in vivid detail.²²

The Sicilians' long-lived fascination with an art form that dramatizes battles between Christian defenders and Saracen invaders is

sometimes attributed to the island's long history of invasion by foreign armies, while the ever-present theme of justice has been seen by some as a fictional compensation for the injustices inherent in the society itself. According to Mimmo Cuticchio: "the puppet theater became the place of people's dreams, where they could imagine themselves free from outside invaders and free from the feudal servitude of their past."²³ Yet the *maggio* communities, which were equally attached to these stories, had a different history. While Sicily was subjected to foreign invasions by diverse cultures, these Northern mountain communities lived in isolation even from nearby cities. Moreover, the puppet theater audience was comprised of the urban working class, whereas the *maggio* authors, actors, and public were the farmers, shepherds, and artisans from sparsely populated mountain towns. To some extent, the conflict of good and evil underlying chivalric matter could be seen as a universal theme. Yet this does not help to explain the development and tenacity of these two independent forms of cultural expression based on the same source material. Despite their different histories, however, both regions could be contrasted to the "elite" culture of Northern cities. Antonio Gramsci, in fact, linked the South to the Northern mountain communities through a social inferiority complex, although he also warned that the comparison of different folklore areas "non può permettere conclusioni tassative, ma solo congetture probabili" (notebook 9 [XV], 1105).

6. Crisis and Revival.

Although both traditions underwent a reduction in their area of representation over the course of time, the moment of greatest crisis for these traditions, as for many others, came with the economic boom of the 1950s. Increased industrialization in the North and emigration from the Apennines disrupted the peasant culture of the *maggio* communities. Cinema and especially television in the home provided new forms of entertainment that made puppet theater suddenly seem obsolete. The ethnomusicologist Tullia Magrini notes further: "The socioeconomic changes of the 1950s were also accompanied by the diffusion of new models of behavior assumed from a rapidly modernizing pan-Italian and international urban culture and by estrangement from local dialect and traditions" (*Italian Treasury* 1). This was disastrous for the *pupari*, who derived their income exclusively from their art, and most of them were forced to sell their puppets to collectors and seek their livelihood through other means.

As the ethnomusicologist Roberto Leydi noted, however, not all local traditions fell victim to collective indifference following the economic boom of the 1950s; on the contrary, some were practiced with a greater awareness of their value as an alternative to mass-produced culture (10). The *Opera dei Pupi* and *maggio epico* were kept alive, or in some cases revived, primarily through the efforts, passion, and tenacity of those who practiced these arts as part of their family heritage. Families, such as the Cuticchio and Napoli in Sicily and the Fioroni and Zambonini in Emilia, found continuity in the younger generations, the *figli* and *nipoti d'arte*. In the 1960s and 1970s, moreover, individuals and groups created structures to safeguard the future of both traditions in various ways. The journal *Il Cantastorie* was founded by Giorgio Vezzani in 1963 to provide coverage of popular culture, in particular, *cantastorie*, all types of puppet theater (i.e., *pupi*, *marionette*, *burattini*), and the *maggio*. The *Centro per la raccolta, lo studio e la valorizzazione delle tradizioni popolari* in the province of Lucca, established in 1979, has actively promoted the *maggio* tradition through publications and initiatives. In its first year, under the direction of Gastone Venturelli the *Centro* instituted an annual *Rassegna nazionale di teatro popolare*, subtitled *La tradizione del maggio*.

Looking to the Sicilian puppet theater, the folklorist Antonio Pasqualino (1931-1995), in addition to writing books and articles on puppet theater, founded the Associazione per la conservazione delle tradizioni popolari (1965), the Museo Internazionale delle Marionette in Palermo (1975), and the yearly *Rassegna di Morgana* (1976). In 1970 Felice Cammarata edited a thirteen-volume *Storia dei Paladini di Francia*, which was based on Leggio's 1912 edition. In 1984 Mimmo Cuticchio initiated an annual Festival, *La macchina dei sogni*, in honor of the fifty years of activity of his father, Giacomo Cuticchio.

7. Recent changes.

Perhaps the most notable change in both traditions regards the role of women, in consonance with the increasingly active role women have played in Italian society in the latter part of the twentieth century. In the *Opera dei Pupi*, women traditionally played an auxiliary role such as sewing costumes for the puppets and providing female voices during performances (although it was, and still is, more common for male *pupari* to speak female parts in falsetto in the Palermo tradition). Women did not even enter the *teatrino* as audience members, except on special family days. In recent

decades, however, women have taken more visible roles in puppet theater companies, from that of organizer to *pupara*.²⁴

In the traditional *maggio* communities, women used to contribute to the production by sewing and embroidering costumes, but female characters were played by male actors. When the *maggio* resumed after World War II, however, women began performing on a regular basis. Women now portray not only damsels such as Isolde and Angelica, but also take on the role of the famed female knights of the romance epic tradition, such as Marfisa and Bradamante, carrying out strenuous battles with male counterparts. Natascia Zambonini has suggested that the presence of female actors has led to greater psychological development of the characters and greater space for tender, elegiac moments (39). The presence of female *maggerine* may also account for the greater space and more varied treatment allotted to female characters in *maggi* written in recent decades.

Regarding the nature of the *maggio* itself, while most companies feel that their plays represent universal themes and values still relevant today, some companies have more actively pursued the question of how to modify the *maggio* to give it more contemporary relevance. Quoting Eduardo De Filippo's definition of theater as a "disperato tentativo di dare una logica alla vita," Marco Piacentini argues that the *maggio* should continue to be open to innovation and experimentation in order to avoid losing its vitality and relevance to today's spectators.²⁵ Most *maggi* written in recent decades continue to use the chivalric context, even when staging original stories. Luca Sillari's recent *maggio* about a vampire, *Antinea*, contains most of the traditional elements of the Renaissance romance epic, such as knight errants seeking adventure, a dangerous seductress lying in wait, and an evil wizard enchanting the realm with a cruel custom fatal to unwary travelers.

Although Sicilian puppeteers continue to use *Lo Dico* as their main source, they no longer play out the entire cycle of the *Storia dei Paladini*, but perform a selective repertory for an audience generally much less familiar with the subject matter. Since the 1970s, puppeteers have moved in markedly opposing directions as they fought to survive. To attract a public consisting mostly of tourists, some *pupari* simplified the plot, reduced the dialogue, increased the number and sensationalism of the battles, and added special effects. Others, privileging creative expression, experimented with new subject matter and/or form, and found a more educated and discriminating audience. At the same time, a number of *pupari* have continued to work within the tradition framework, while paying greater attention to the quality of the single

plays than was possible when they were performed within a cycle of three hundred or more *puntate*. Puppeteers continue to express passion for the cultural tradition that they are keeping alive. Alfredo Mauceri, a 27-year-old *puparo* who, along with his 20 year old brother Daniel, continues his grandfather's puppet theater in Siracusa, reflects on his choice: "A volte ci domandiamo perché abbiamo scelto questo mestiere, in un momento storico e sociale che tende a sviluppare e scoprire nuovi orizzonti; la risposta è semplice, amiamo in modo viscerale quest'arte."

8. Today.

The present vitality of both popular traditions, as well as some instances of increased local administrative support in recent years, at least allows for hope for the near future. Regarding the *Opera dei Pupi*, in 2001 the *Festival di Morgana*, organized through the *Museo Internazionale delle Marionette* in Palermo, was in its twenty-sixth year, and the eighteenth edition of *La Macchina dei Sogni*, organized by the association *Figli D'Arte Cuticchio*, combined energies with the third edition of the *Rassegna del Teatro delle Marionette* in Sortino (province of Siracusa) to bring about exhibits, puppet shows, discussions, and a volume that included a census of puppeteers. During the same year, the *Teatro Stabile dei Pupi* was inaugurated in Catania and the *Associazione Teatroarte Cuticchio* opened the *Opera dei Pupi* museum in Cefalù (province of Palermo).²⁶ In May of 2001, UNESCO recognized puppet theater as an "Oral and Intangible Masterpiece of the Heritage of Humanity." Traveling throughout Sicily in the summer of 2002, I found seven puppet theater companies operating in Palermo and Western Sicily, and five in Catania and Eastern Sicily. While the battle of Roncesvalle was the most frequently represented episode in eastern Sicily, thanks particularly to the companies of Acireale operating in the shadow of the late Emmanuele Macrì, Boiardo and Ariosto supplied the material for the majority of puppet plays staged by companies in Western Sicily (although it was mostly via *Lo Dico*'s prose retelling of their poems). A sampling of recent titles indicates the continued prominence of characters and themes of the Renaissance romance epics: "Rinaldo, le armi e il cavallo," "L'assedio di Parigi," "Ritorno di Angelica nel regno di Catai," "Il duello di Orlando e Agricane," "L'incantesimo di Angelica," "Gli amori di Ruggiero e Bradamante," "Orlando e Rinaldo per Angelica," "Durlindana e Trinkera," and "Angelica e Fiordiligi."

In contrast to the *Opera dei Pupi*, which now depends largely on school children and tourists as its public, the *maggio* still draws a local

crowd. In fact, today one finds an audience comprised not only of the old *passionisti*, as they are called, but also of young people and families. New *maggi* continue to be written by local poets, some of them in their twenties and thirties.²⁷ Davide Borghi, a 29-year-old author and *maggerino*, expresses this collective passion:

“Noi cantiamo ancora oggi il Maggio perché lo sentiamo dentro ed è l'unico motivo che alimenta la nostra attività: non è il lucro (peraltro nullo), non è l'applauso, non è il desiderio di ostentare la nostra cultura. Il Maggio è una necessità, forse un modo di essere, forse un modo di urlare al mondo chi siamo e come vogliamo la nostra vita, gridare che le ingiustizie verranno punite e che la morte del giusto o del semplice non rimarranno invendicate, è fede in una giustizia superiore a quella spesso effimera e corrotta degli uomini, è stare insieme e festeggiare il ritorno del sole con la promessa che se farà troppo freddo staremo ancora più vicini per scaldarci” (Vezzani, “Giovani autori,” 37).

The *Museo del Maggio* in Villa Minozzo (RE) was inaugurated in 2000, and Tullia Magrini's bilingual CD-ROM, entitled *Maggio drammatico: Folk Theatre in Emilia*, is forthcoming. The journal *Il cantastorie*, still edited by Giorgio Vezzani, celebrated its fortieth year in 2002. In the context of the 2001 *Rassegna nazionale di teatro popolare*, eleven Emilian and Tuscan companies performed eighteen different *maggi* in Reggio Emilia (15), Modena (6), Lucca (6), Massa (2), and Carrara (1) between July and early September. This continued involvement of the community and local institutions is essential to the *maggio*'s survival since this art form is still relatively unknown outside this small group of Tuscan-Emilian mountain towns that can be reached only by traveling along winding single-lane roads. At the same time, this relative isolation has ensured the integrity of the *maggio* as the cultural expression of a community for itself.

No living tradition can be static, and the *Opera dei Pupi* and the epic *maggio* continue to change as each art form tries to balance tradition with the perceived interests of contemporary audiences. At the same time, however, the basic themes and moral values that they adopted from chivalric epic remain intact. One can expect to find the struggle between good and evil as individuals make choices, experience and fight against injustice, face obstacles, love, hate, suffer, and grieve.

Conclusion.

Just as the scientific community is actively engaged in preventing the extinction of countless species of animals, for over a century members of the humanistic community have tried to preserve the world's cultural heritage. Since the 1800s, some have not only lamented the loss of oral traditions throughout the world, but have documented, valorized, and attempted to save them from extinction.²⁸ Lomax's warning with regard to the extinction of musical traditions is applicable to all forms of local culture: “It is only a few sentimental folklorists like myself who seem to be disturbed by this prospect today, but tomorrow, when it will be too late — when the whole world is bored with automated mass-distributed video-music — our descendants will despise us for having thrown away the best of our culture” (“Saga” 56).²⁹

With the disappearance of the *contastorie* and *cantastorie*, the *Opera dei Pupi* and the *maggio epico* are the only popular traditions based largely on a chivalric repertoire, yet they are only two examples of Italy's rich heritage of orally transmitted culture. Lomax noted in 1955 that Italy had the most complete folk-song history of all the countries of the West (“Italian” 126). Yet these “folk” traditions, or what is left of them, have been mostly ignored in mainstream academia. Even within the burgeoning field of Italian cultural studies, “folk” culture remains marginalized despite the fact that these oral traditions were the primary *cultural* expression of Italian communal life for centuries.

The larger question, then, but one that goes beyond the scope of this study, is whether in our time we are content to let popular traditions continue to die out and, if not, what we can do to help keep them alive. In the preceding pages, I hope to have offered a glimpse into the poetic and moral visions presented by two traditions of popular theater in Italy that, in both overlapping and independent ways, find their most basic inspiration in the tales of the knights of old.

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Notes

* A shorter version of this paper was presented as a public lecture at Seton Hall University in December, 2002.

¹ As Jean-Paul Desaiave has put it, “We are scarcely capable today of imagining the impact of the theater on the societies of the past, rural as well as urban”

(268).

- ² There is no satisfying term in English for the form of popular theater called *il maggio*, named after the month that marks the return of warm weather. *Opera dei Pupi* can be translated as 'puppet theater,' but I mostly use the Italian term to note that I am speaking about one specific form of puppet theater.
- ³ According to Alessandro D'Ancona, the epic *maggio* was derived from other forms of medieval popular culture, such as the *sacra rappresentazione* (*Origini del teatro italiano*). Paolo Toschi later challenged this nineteenth century view, emphasizing instead the genre's functional link to the pagan rites of springtime (*Le origini del teatro italiano*).
- ⁴ For comprehensive studies of Sicilian puppet theater, see Pasqualino, *Le vie del cavaliere* and *L'opera dei Pupi*.
- ⁵ For references to the *maggio lirico* in Ferrara and Florence during the Renaissance, see D'Ancona, vol. II, 248-252. For more recent traditions of the *maggio lirico* in various parts of Italy, see Bronzini 216-220. Michele Feo discusses a pastoral *maggio* from Renaissance Siena which, although it does not include knights, does dramatize a battle (31-42). The *maggio* can also be seen in relation to Tuscan *giostre* and *bruscelli*. See Toschi 241-58.
- ⁶ Less material is available on the epic *maggio* than on Sicilian puppet theater. See Fioroni and Vezzani. "*Vengo l'avviso a dare*," and Magrini, ed., *Il Maggio Drammatico*.
- ⁷ The mountainous Garfagnana area, part of the Estense dukedom in Ariosto's day, had always had close ties to the nearby Tuscan towns and was eventually relegated to Tuscany after Italian unification.
- ⁸ Prior to the late 1800s, one finds only random and scattered testimony of oral epic tradition. The philosopher Giambattista Vico, for example, noted that men read the *Orlando Innamorato*, the *Orlando Furioso*, and other romances in rhyme to the masses on feast days, stopping after each stanza to explain the action in prose (411). Pitre provided the most detailed overview of the *contastorie* in Sicily and other parts of Italy in the nineteenth century (346-91). His essay includes the partial transcription of a Sicilian *contastorie*'s tale taken from the early cantos of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (which he mistakenly attributed to Ariosto), 363-4. See also the brief essays by Pio Rajna and Benedetto Croce on the Neapolitan *contastorie*, commonly referred to as *Rinaldi*.
- ⁹ For a complete list of sources, see Pasqualino, *L'Opera dei pupi*, 67.
- ¹⁰ Although neither has a copy of the text in his possession, Zambonini recalls that it was comprised of three large volumes, which would correspond to Leggio's editions (interviews, July, 2002).
- ¹¹ Michele Costa (1868-1942) is also credited with writing two *maggi* entitled *Morbello* (Vezzani, "Gli autori" 366).
- ¹² The puppeteer Onofrio Sanicola remarks: "Un po' tutti i pupari amano prevalentemente Boiardo, io in modo particolare, perchè è come quando si dice l'amore a prima vista [. . .]. Non ho fatto nemmeno un fidanzamento con Boiardo. Appena tu lo leggi, ti prende, ti acchiappa, ti porta dove vuoi"

(interview, July, 2002).

- ¹³ Fioroni compares verses from *Rodomonte* as well as from Stefano Fioroni's *Orlando Pazzo* (of 414 quatrains) and *Ginevra di Scozia* (315 quatrains), to Ariosto's original.
- ¹⁴ Noting the absence of Arthurian narrative in the puppet tradition, Onofrio Sanicola recently created a new series of plays entitled *Excalibur*, based on medieval Arthurian texts.
- ¹⁵ They are occasionally printed in scholarly studies. Li Gotti prints the duel between Orlando and Rinaldo over Angelica, based on Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* and rewritten by a Sicilian puppeteer (141-47). Fortunato Pasqualino published a selection of his family's original scripts (*Teatro con i pupi siciliani*).
- ¹⁶ Fioroni notes that while the short motifs are intrinsic to the *maggio* tradition, the waltz, polka, and mazurka melodies were added in the nineteenth century as a tribute to melodrama (www.costabona.it).
- ¹⁷ Vibæk notes, for example, that three illustrations from the first edition of the *Storia dei Paladini* are an exact replica of incisions from a 1785 Venetian edition of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* ("Il teatro dei cavalieri," 59).
- ¹⁸ By contrast, the costumes of the Tuscan *maggianti* are much simpler. In the Garfagnana they consist of various colored shirts, a short cape, black pants with embroidered sides, and a helmet. In Lucca and Pisa costumes are rented from local theater companies for representations. For a detailed account of costumes, props, and other performance related aspects of the *maggio*, see Zambonini 38-70.
- ¹⁹ One could argue for a direct link between the costumes of both traditions since both the *maggio* actor and the puppet recall the figure of the knight as found in illustrations from printed editions of Renaissance romance epics and reprinted extensively in *La Storia dei Paladini di Francia*. The seamstress Elisa Canovi, who designed the costumes for the *maggio* companies of Villa Minozzo (RE) for several years following World War II, noted that she followed, along with her own fantasy, the illustrations from romance epics read by her father, most notably *I Paladini di Francia* (Vezzani, "Gli autori" 360).
- ²⁰ For humor in Sicilian puppet theater, see Pasqualino, "Humor"; for humor in the *maggio*, see Toschi 209-303.
- ²¹ The public setting fire to Gano was related to me by the puppeteer Carmelo Cuticchio as a personal memory, but similar incidents of public revenge against the Gano character are noted in histories of the puppet theater.
- ²² For the importance of the community for the *maggio* tradition, see Zambonini 7-37, 72-80.
- ²³ Cited by Jenkins (10). The threat of Eastern invasion has survived to the present day in Sicilian sayings such as "Sei stato preso dai Turchi?" used when asking why someone appears agitated.
- ²⁴ Pitre noted an exception to the earlier rule: a female relative of Achille Greco not only supplied the voice of the heroines but also handled puppets (319).

From 1985-1995, Anna Cuticchio (sister to Mimmo) ran her own puppet theater, named Teatro Bradamante after the great female warrior and sister to Rinaldo. For a brief account of female puppet characters and *pupare*, see Vibaek, "Le donne," 9-15.

- ²⁵ Piacentini, in fact, developing the genre's potential for social engagement, wrote a *maggio* about the Fascist period (*Marzo 1944*).
- ²⁶ Sicilian puppet theater exhibits can also be seen in Caltagirone, Randazzo, Palermo, Sortino, and Taormina.
- ²⁷ See Vezzani, "Giovani autori del maggio."
- ²⁸ In addition to the work of Lomax, Leydi, and Magrini, cited above, see Luisa Del Giudice, especially *Cecilia* and "Italian Traditional Song in Toronto."
- ²⁹ Lomax, accompanied by the Italian ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella, made the "first recorded exploration of the entire body of Italian folk music" in 1954-55, collecting about three thousand pieces from several regions, including an excerpt from a *maggio* in the Reggiano Apennines and a battle between Orlando and Rinaldo by a Sicilian *contastorie*, both now available on CD (Rounder Records).

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In addition to the works noted below, this essay is based on live performances of puppet and *maggio* plays, informal conversations and taped interviews with *pupari* and *maggerini*, and filmed material available at the Museo Internazionale delle Marionette in Palermo. I am especially grateful to Natascia Zambonini and Romolo Fioroni for making available to me *maggio* scripts and other publications regarding the tradition, and to Mimmo Cuticchio for showing me tapes of some of his puppet plays.

The website of the Museo del Maggio (www.teatrodeimaggi.it) contains a photo gallery, background information, and a schedule of events for all *maggio* companies. The Italian journal *Il Cantastorie: Rivista di tradizioni popolari* now also has a website (<http://rivistailcantastorie.interfree.it>). Although there is no official organ that coordinates puppet theater events, most puppet companies have their own website. Two of the most informative websites, with useful links to puppet companies, publications, and museums, are those of Fortunato Pasqualino (www.pupisiciliani.com) and Antonino Butitta (<http://digilander.libero.it/operadeipupi>).

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