

Madeline Rüegg
The Patient Griselda Myth

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Introduction

The story of Griselda elicits strong reactions in its audience. It tells of a young marquis who does not wish to get married, preferring instead to spend his time hunting until his subjects pressure him to find a wife. He agrees but insists on choosing his bride himself. As he hunts, he discovers a poor yet beautiful and extremely virtuous shepherdess and decides to marry her. After she gives birth to their first child, a daughter, he starts doubting her virtue and resolves to test her by taking away her baby, pretending that he is going to have their daughter killed. She complies with his wish. Some years later, she gives birth to a son, and the marquis repeats what he did with their daughter. Still not satisfied with his wife, despite her complete submission, the marquis claims he wants to remarry and thus repudiates her, so she goes back to her father. As the new bride and her train are about to arrive, the marquis sends for his previous wife and asks her to prepare the second wedding. Griselda gets everything ready, and when her former husband asks her what she thinks of the bride, she says that the young lady will be perfect for him. She adds, however, that he should not put his new bride through the same torment, because a noble-born woman would not stand it. The marquis then reveals that this young lady and the young man accompanying her are actually the children he supposedly killed. He says that he has only one wife, and he does not want anyone else as his spouse. The family is thus reunited.

This story made its first known appearance as Boccaccio's last novella in his *Decameron* (c. 1348–1353). This particular story, more than all the other 99 stories in the *Decameron*, attracted the attention of Boccaccio's master and friend, Petrarch. Petrarch translated it into Latin—making some alterations, as was customary for translators at the time—in order to present Griselda, or rather Griseldis, as an allegorical embodiment of the perfect Christian. Petrarch included his translation as part of a series of letters addressed to Boccaccio in 1373. Although these were originally private, they were soon copied and circulated throughout Europe. Petrarch's fame and popularity in Europe encouraged a great interest in his Latin translation of the Griselda story, which was not only copied but also more importantly translated to, and adapted for, European vernacular languages.

From the period ranging from the late fourteenth century (i.e. the period after Petrarch's 1373 version) until 1700, over 120 adaptations have been found in Catalan, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic,

Italian, Latin, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish.¹ This excludes re-editions of the same versions over the centuries, as was the case for the French, English, and German chapbook versions, and simple occurrences of Griselda's name that evoked her whole story, such as in Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* in the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

My primary focus is to understand why and how the Griselda story attracted such widespread attention throughout Europe, as well as learn about how it engaged with early modern culture. Therefore, the present study considers various versions of this story from its first known occurrence in Boccaccio's *Decameron* up to the early modern period. Although new adaptations continue to be made in the twenty-first century, including works about Griselda from after 1700 would be beyond the scope of this research. Drama is one of the most influential forms of literary media in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it is also the genre in which the story undergoes the most significant changes with regard to its engagement with early modern socio-political discourses, so plays adapting the Griselda story receive greater attention than other literary genres. I concentrate my analysis on works in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish (and to a much lesser extent Dutch),² because these were the vernaculars in which the story was most translated and adapted for between 1400 and 1700. They were also the languages of the dominant European monarchies of the early modern period.

Before I explain why I consider the Griselda story a myth and the methodology I use to examine the various realisations of this myth, let me first briefly trace the different shapes and paths *Decameron* X, 10 took from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. This helps to define the parameters of its circulation within the European cultural network and establish the importance of the story in the late medieval and early modern period. While Petrarch is clearly the dominant source text for the first European vernacular translations that appeared in Catalan, English, French, and German, Boccaccio's novella remained a direct source, mainly for Italian writers and for some European translators of his *Decameron*,³ at least until the seventeenth century, despite the fact that the

1 Raffaele Morabito, "La diffusione della storia di Griselda dal XIV al XX secolo," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 17 (1991).

2 I should mention here that I should have included more versions from the Netherlands in my analysis. However, my limited understanding of Dutch prevents me from providing a personal analysis. Consequently, I mostly rely on existing criticisms about versions of the Griselda story in Dutch.

3 These include Arigo (1476), the German translator of the *Decameron*; Antoine Le Maçon (beginning of sixteenth century), who was the second French translator of the *Decameron*; and John Florio for the English version (1620).

latter work was put on Pope Paul IV's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1559. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, another Latin version started to circulate in Europe: a short rewriting of the story by the Italian Jacopo Foresti, which appeared in his 1485 edition of the *Supplementum Chronicarum* and in his 1497 *De Plurimis Claris selectisque mulieribus* (with minor alterations).⁴ While the *Supplementum* was translated into Italian in 1491 and Spanish in 1510,⁵ the *De plurimis* was reprinted in Paris in 1521.⁶ Both texts were later used as sources in Spain and France, respectively, to produce new versions of the Griselda story.

The further away (geographically) from Italy adaptations are written, the more their source-text(s) are mixed. Sixteenth- or seventeenth-century versions appearing in England, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden do not use Petrarch as their source but rather one or several vernacular translations from one of territories between Italy and the country in question. Among the English versions—aside from Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*,⁷ which combines Petrarch and Philippe de Mézières's as its sources, and Brian Ansley's translation of Christine de Pisan *Livre de la cité des Dames*, which contains a short rewriting of the Griselda story—there is an anonymous chapbook that was most likely composed in the 1580s but whose first known printed edition dates back to 1619. According to its title page, the text of this chapbook is a translation from a French text. However, it is difficult to determine which version, even though it was most likely a chapbook as well.⁸ In Spain, another version entitled *La historia de Griseldis Marquesa de Salucesa* appears in another chapbook, most likely written at the end of the fourteenth century, though the first known printed edition dates back to 1554. The text not only appears to be a translation from a fifteenth-century French incunabulum deriving

4 Raffaele Morabito, *Una sacra rappresentazione profana: fortune di Griselda nel Quattrocento italiano* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1993), pp. 2–3.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

6 Lucia Megli Fratini, "Foresti, Giacomo Filippo," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Raffaele Romanelli, Fiorella Bartocchini, and Mario Caravale (1997).

7 Recent criticism argues that Boccaccio's *Decameron* may have also been one of Chaucer's source, see John Finlayson, "Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale,'" *Studies in Philology* 97, no. 3 (2000); Thomas Farrell, "Source or Hard Analogue? *Decameron* X, 10 and the *Clerk's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 37, no. 4 (2003); Jessica Lara Lawrence Harkins, "Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* X.10," *The Chaucer Review* 47, no. 3 (2013).

8 French chapbooks, first in the form of fifteenth-century incunabula and later as early modern printed texts, were particularly numerous and whose editions came out from presses scattered throughout the country: in Bréhan-Loudéac (Britanny), Troyes, Lyon, Paris, and Vienne (reprinted until the eighteenth century), see Marie-Dominique Leclerc, "L'histoire de Grisélidis en France. Les éditions anciennes," in *Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea*, ed. Rinaldo Comba and Marco Piccat (Cuneo: Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, 2011).

from a translation of Petrarch, but it was also the version used in the first anonymous Spanish translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* rather than Boccaccio's own novella.⁹ In the Netherlands, the various fifteenth-century writers who adapted the story in prose versions seem to have not known Petrarch's or Boccaccio's texts, instead relying on French adaptations, but it has not been established which.¹⁰ In Denmark, the 1592 prose version *Griseldis* is most likely a translation of the German chapbook *Van der duldicheit der vorwen gheheten Griseldis* (Hamburg, 1502), which itself is an adaptation in Low German from Heinrich Steinhöwels's German translation of Petrarch, *Diss ist ain epistle Franscisci Petrarche von großer stättikeyt ainer frawen Grysel gehaißen* (before 1462).¹¹ This Danish version is in turn the source of the Swedish *Grisilla* (Stockholm, 1622). As for the adaptations of the story in Icelandic, the various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prose and verse versions are indebted to both Dutch and Danish texts.¹²

Throughout Europe, from the sixteenth century onwards, an exact determination of sources for the numerous prose, versified, and theatrical versions that existed alongside translations of the *Decameron* becomes a more difficult task. As the reception grew, more texts became available as sources, so much so that for late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama, except in cases of direct textual borrowings,¹³ we can only speculate about the potential sources. Nonetheless, as a

9 Juan Carlos Conde, "Un aspecto de la recepción del *Decameron* en la península Ibérica, a la sombra de Petrarca. La historia de Griselda," *Cuadernos de filología italiana* Special Issue 8 (2001): 362–64.

10 Germaine Dempster, "Some Old Dutch and Flemish Narratives and Their Relation to Analogues in the *Decameron*," *PMLA* 47, no. 4 (1932): 925.

11 Margaret Schlauch, "Griselda in Iceland: A Supplement," *Speculum* 28, no. 2 (1953): 364.

12 See *ibid.*, pp. 363–64.

13 On the other hand, the phenomenon of direct borrowing is particularly clear in the case of German Renaissance drama. The rector of the Latin school of Steyr in Austria, Georg Mauritius, wrote a school play, *Comoedia von Graff Walther von Salutz / vnd Grisolden* (1582), borrowing around 2,000 lines from two previous plays: 1,000 lines from Hans Sachs's *Die gedultig und gehorsam marggräfin Griselda* (1546) and as many from another anonymous play, *Grysel, ain schoene Comedi von der demuetigkait und gehorsame der Weyber gegen ieren Ehmaennern zue nuz und dienst der Jugent gemacht und gstelt* (c. 1540). See Achim Aurnhammer, "Griseldis auf dem Schultheater. Georg Mauritius: Comoedia von Graff Walther von Saluz / vnd Grisolden (1582)," in *Die deutsche Griselda. Transformationen einer literarischen Figuration von Boccaccio bis zur Moderne*, ed. Achim Aurnhammer and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), p. 156. Whereas it is almost impossible to know how Mauritius came to know about the anonymous Augsburg play, Hans Sachs's popularity is well attested. As Erika Fischer-Lichte explains, "Seine Stücke wurden von mindestens zwei verschiedenen Truppen gleichzeitig und verschiedenen Plätzen der Stadt [i.e. Nuremberg] und zu verschiedenen Zeiten aufgeführt. Manchmal wurden sogar in anderen Städten Aufführungen veranstaltet", *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 2nd edition ed. (Tübingen: A. Francke, 1999), p. 38.

general rule for Spain, France, England, and Germany from the fifteenth century onwards, there was a tendency to use sources from the same country. In addition, subsequent rewritings often adapted these vernacular translations of Petrarch into other genres, such as ballads, *romanceros*, *cantari*, *roumant*, late medieval plays, or chapbooks.

The remarkable diffusion of the Griselda story has been studied since the end of the nineteenth century, first in articles or monographs detailing the reception in a single country like Germany,¹⁴ the Netherlands,¹⁵ Iceland,¹⁶ or France.¹⁷ This trend continued through to the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, with there being studies of the Griselda story in England¹⁸ and Spain.¹⁹ Since Käte Laserstein's more comprehensive study, *Der Griseldisstoff in der Weltliteratur* (1926), researchers have started to consider the phenomenon from a wider, European perspective, yet they have not analysed or compared versions from different countries. Raffaele Morabito edited two collections of studies by specialists in different European languages, but each scholar deals with versions in the language of her or his specialisation.²⁰ In France, more recently, two anthologies of various European (mostly medieval and early modern) versions of the Griselda story were edited

14 Friedrich von Westenholz, *Die Griseldis-Sage in der Literaturgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Karl Groos, 1888); Gustav Widmann, *Griseldis in der deutschen Literatur des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, Euphorion (Leipzig; Vienna: Carl Fromme, 1905); Achim Aurnhammer and Hans-Jochen Schiewer, eds., *Die deutsche Griselda. Transformationen einer literarischen Figuration von Boccaccio bis zur Moderne* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

15 J. Verdam, "De Griseldis-novelle in het Nederlandsch," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 17 (1898).

16 Halldór Hermannsson, "The Story of Griselda in Iceland," *Islandica* 7 (1914); Schlauch, "Griselda in Iceland: A Supplement."

17 Élie Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France au XIV^e et au XV^e siècle* (Paris: Droz, 1933); Marie-Dominique Leclerc, "Renaissance d'un thème littéraire aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles : La Patience de Grisélidis," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 91 (1991).

18 Judith Bronfman, "Griselda, Renaissance Woman," in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990); Judith Bronfman, *Chaucer's Clerk's Tale: The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Lee Bliss, "The Renaissance Griselda: A Woman for all Seasons," *Viator* 23 (1992).

19 I. Pisonero del Amo, "Un motivo boccacciano: "La paciente Griselda" en la literatura española," in *Homenaje a Alonso Zamora Vicente III. 2 Literatura española de los siglos XVI-XVII* (Madrid: Castalia, 1992); Conde, "Un aspecto de la recepción del Decameron en la península Ibérica, a la sombra de Petrarca. La historia de Griselda."

20 Raffaele Morabito, *La circolazione dei temi e degli intrecci narrativi: il caso Griselda. Atti del convegno di studi, L'Aquila, 3-4 dicembre 1986*, 2 vols., vol. 1, Griselda (Roma: Japadre, 1988); Raffaele Morabito, *La storia di Griselda in Europa. Atti del convegno 'Modi dell'intertestualità:*

in their original languages with a facing-page French translation in order to encourage comparative studies of these texts.²¹ Finally, the city of Saluzzo, where the Griselda story is set, organised a conference on the European reception of Boccaccio's novella in 2009 and published its proceedings in 2011,²² but as in Morabito's collection of studies, each article is written by a specialist in the literature of a single country.

Perhaps most surprising is that none of those studies attempts a transnational approach to outline the continuities of the story of Griselda's cultural values beyond national borders and, at the same time, to uncover discontinuities. Such an approach could shed light on the reason why the Griselda story managed to attract such broad interest from southern to northern Europe despite regional cultural differences. This would also enable a better understanding of the story's cultural impact in late medieval and early modern Europe as a whole.

Moreover, these studies address the reception and longevity of this story in two main ways. First, source studies try to determine where it originated, which versions fathered which versions, and in which ways the story spread throughout Europe and beyond. Second, critiques have considered the story as a literary theme, or "*Stoff*" in German, sometimes combined with the sociological notion of "figuration" in order to address its various realisations across time but rarely across cultures.

The problem I encountered while considering the first approach, source studies, is that, as has already been mentioned, by the early modern period, determining a single or a group of sources is almost impossible and unproductive. As for the notion of a literary theme or *Stoff*, this has the tendency of reducing the story to the Griselda's character only. While it is true that in the early modern period she is the central character of the story, the story is also that of her tyrannical and cruel husband, her lost and found children, and the marquis's incestuous feigned marriage to his daughter. In short, it tells more

la storia di Griselda in Europa, *L'Aquila*, 12–14 maggio 1988, 2 vols., vol. 2, Griselda (Roma: Japadre, 1990).

²¹ Jean-Luc Nardone and Henri Lamarque, eds., *L'histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes. Tome 1: Prose et poésie* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2000); Jean-Luc Nardone and Henri Lamarque, eds., *L'histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes. Tome 2: théâtre* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2001).

²² Rinaldo Comba and Marco Piccat, *Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea. Atti del convegno internazionale a 80 anni dalla nascita della Società per gli studi storici della Provincia di Cuneo: Saluzzo, 23–24 aprile 2009* (Cuneo: Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, 2011).

than a story about a patient wife. The children of the marquis and Griselda are also important, and they are used by adaptors to engage with contemporary socio-political discourses.

So far, I have purposefully only used the term “story” because the polymorphous ways in which the last *novella* of the *Decameron* was received resist any generic definition. While the plot presents an exemplary heroine, her exemplarity is problematic because her wifely perfection conflicts with the implications of her correlated motherly perfection. In other words, as an ideal, obedient wife, she should also be an ideal mother, so she should refuse to let her children be killed. The story therefore does not function properly as an *exemplum*. Like a martyr, she undergoes trials until she is proven to be virtuous, patient, meek, and obedient. However, she does not need to die to be rewarded, and her recompense is an earthly one, namely a reunion with her lost children and restoration of her rank, status, and social roles as a marquise, spouse, and mother. Thus, while she resembles saints and martyrs, it is not her faith that is tested but rather her perfection as a woman (i.e. the qualities men desired women to possess as wives and mothers). Indeed, it is not her relationship to God at issue but rather a male fantasy pushed to its extreme. Moreover, whereas the story presents a structure with a tripartite testing plot that is often found in tales, especially initiatory ones, there are no fairy-like or marvellous elements in this story. Finally yet importantly, it is more than a story, a text more than words, since it went beyond this to touch pictorial arts and to some extent music, although still in combination with text (e.g. a ballad’s lyrics or an opera’s *libretto*).

To complicate matters further, the story was (mis)understood, read, and rewritten as edifying literature from the end of the fourteenth century until the early modern period. The first to turn Griselda into an allegory was of course Petrarch. At the end of his Latin version, he provides a moral in which he clearly states the story’s purpose: “ut legentes ad imitandam saltem femine constantiam excitarem, ut quod hec viro suo prestitit, hoc prestare Deo nostro audeant”²³ (translates as “to incite readers to emulate this woman’s steadfastness, and what she proved to her husband, we should dare to prove to our Lord”). Alongside this Christian allegorical meaning, Griselda became the embodiment of the ideal child and the ideal wife. Not only did Christine de Pisan mention Griselda as an example of a daughter’s love for her father in her *Livre*

²³ Francesco Petrarch, “De oboedientia et fide uxoria, in *Seniles* (XVII, 3), 1373,” in *L’Histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, ed. Jean-Luc Nardone and Henri Lamarque (Toulouse, France: Presse Universitaires du Mirail, 2000), p. 94.

de la cite des dames (1404–5), but she also, perhaps more importantly, picked this story as the first of her exempla of women’s constancy and strength or firmness of character.²⁴ However, Griselda’s most diffused allegorical meaning is that of patient and obedient wife. This is what stands out when examining the story’s entrance in conduct literature for young ladies and wives, such as Philippe de Mézières’s *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* (ca.1384), Geoffroy de la Tour Landry’s *Livre du chevalier de la Landry pour l’enseignement de ses filles*,²⁵ the anonymous *Ménagier de Paris* (fifteenth century), and the anonymous *Castigos y doctrina que un sabio daba a sus hijas* (fifteenth century). In addition, Bernat Metge dedicated his *Historia de Valter e Griselda* (1388) in Catalan to Doña Isabel de Guimerá, a married noblewoman, extolling Griselda’s “pasciència, obediència e amor conjugal”.²⁶

All this, however, revolves around the figure of Griselda. In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the character of the marquis is developed to explore and address not only male and female anxieties regarding marriage but also the political issue of absolutism and the social taboo of incest, which of course also implies that Griselda’s children acquire relevance. Her son and daughter become prominent characters as well in versions of the story that place greater importance on the fact that they are lost and found again in the resolution, thereby developing the motif of the foundling and its various functions.

Another interesting phenomenon of this story concerns how it became more and more closely connected with the ritual of marriage. Apart from the already mentioned conduct literature, which employed Griselda’s exemplarity to prepare young maids to enter married life, it was common in Italy in the latter part of the fifteenth century to present aristocratic brides with *cassoni* (wedding chests), whose painted sides represented Griselda’s story. The sixteenth-century English *Ballad of patient Grissell* (attributed to Thomas Deloney) was sung to a piece of music named “the tune of the Bride’s good morrow”. (This music was apparently invented for the ballad *The Bride’s Good Morrow*.) Moreover, at least three of the dramatic adaptations of the story are thought to have been staged on wedding occasions. The anonymous French *L’histoire de Griseldis* (1395) may have been staged during festivities organised for the marriage of Richard II of England to

²⁴ Christine De Pizan, *Le livre de la cité des dames* (Paris: Stock, 1986), pp. 143, 96–201.

²⁵ Although the *Livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry* was composed in 1372, Griselda’s story is present only in manuscripts of this work dating from the fifteenth century, see Morabito, “La diffusione”: 251; Golenistcheff-Koutousoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, pp. 87–88.

²⁶ Bernat Metge, “Valter e Griselda”, in Bernat Metge, *Obras de Bernat Metge* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1959), p. 118.

the French Isabella of Valois. Likewise, Félix Lope de Vega Carpio's *El ejemplo de casadas o prueba de la paciencia* (1599–1604) may have been performed for a royal wedding or another wedding in the Moncada family. This is possible, because the male protagonist of the play, Walter, has been turned into el Conde Enrico de Moncada in this Spanish version, and the *loa* accompanying the *comedia* also refers to a Pascual de Moncada.²⁷ Moreover, it has been argued that John Phillip's *Comedy of Patient and Grissill* (1658–65) was presented before Elizabeth I in order to encourage her to marry.²⁸ Finally, Paolo Mazzi wrote to his patron, Earl of Viano Filippo Aldrovani, in a dedicatory letter to his comedy, *La Griselda del Boccaccio* (1620), that not only does he dedicate the play to him, but it is also a gift for his marriage to Isabella Pepoli.²⁹ This suggests it was very likely staged as part of the wedding festivities.

Until approximately the mid-sixteenth century, the story was often attributed to Petrarch or Boccaccio. This practice of acknowledging the source by writers adapting the story gradually diminished (with some exceptions), creating a sense that it belonged to some common European tradition and sometimes erasing Griselda's "Italian" origins altogether.³⁰ Furthermore, in the process of translation, writers often altered the name of Griselda to make it better suit the pronunciation of their respective vernacular language. In this way, not only did Griselda become Grissil or Grissel in England and Griselidis or Grisèlde in France, but the mere mention of her name sufficed to evoke her story.

The story's adaptations into numerous genres, its realisations in pictorial art, and its association with music (in other words, its cultural importance, although I am almost tempted to say "omnipresence") led me to envisage the possibility that it may be a myth. Only a few scholars suggest this idea without developing it much further.

27 See Déodat-Kessedjian, M.F., "Prólogo", *Comedias de Lope de Vega: Parte V*, ed. E. Garnier (Editorial Milenio, 2004), pp. 35–6.

28 See Louis B. Wright, "A Political Reflection in Phillip's Patient Grissell," *The Review of English Studies* 4, no. 16 (1928): 427; D.M. Bevington, *Tudor drama and politics: a critical approach to topical meaning* (Harvard UP, 1968), pp. 148–9.

29 Paolo Mazzi, *La Griselda del Boccaccio Tragicomedia Morale da Paolo Mazzi Dedicata all'Ilustriss. Sig. Filippo Aldrovandi Conte di Viano* (Bologna: Bartolomeo Cochi, 1620), sig. A2r-v.

30 Apart from the fact that Italy was not a unified nation, and would remain so until the nineteenth century, the marquisate of Saluzzo had to fight to remain independent under pressure from the Duchy of Savoy and the realm of France, a fight that Savoy ultimately won at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This must have contributed to the concept of the story as European cultural material, as opposed to a narrative belonging to, and applying to, a specific regional culture only.

First, Morabito briefly alludes to the possibility of considering Griselda's story a myth:

Per un “mito” come quello di Griselda (e sia consentito parlare di mito, anche se non ha l'importanza e il valore fondamentale—nel senso letterale di fondare la cultura occidentale—che George Steiner attribuisce ad altri e più antichi miti, come quelli di Edipo o di Antigone, o anche in certa misura a quello di Don Giovanni) non risulta quindi tanto rilevante l'interrogazione a proposito della fonte precisa; ma più significativa e più urgente appare invece un'altra domanda dello stesso Steiner: “How do the myths originate, if this notion of inception in observable time is, indeed, applicable? What process of canonization and of discard are to bring about the acceptance and transmission of certain myths and the obliteration of others?”³¹

Morabito, however, does not really elaborate on why the Griselda story could be considered a myth, despite not being a foundation myth, nor does he try to answer Steiner's questions after mentioning them.

Henri Lamarque, in the introduction to his *Histoire de Griselda: une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, treats the story as a tale, but envisages its mythic potential:

... le conte de Griselda est une création complexe, d'une grande richesse sémantique. Il y a plusieurs visages de Griselda: la paysanne, la marquise, l'épouse, la mère, l'amoureuse, la chrétienne exemplaire. Tous, bien sûr, n'apparaissent pas simultanément. Sous la surface lisse du récit est donné à entendre un autre sens ; le lecteur est averti de sa présence par un signe, l'étrangeté du sens littéral, dans le cas présent le caractère absurde ou paradoxal de la conduite de Gautier et de la soumission de Griselda. Les transpositions successives ont pu modifier ou aménager ce signe, mais elles ont parfaitement respecté la dualité organique du signifiant et du signifié qui donne à l'œuvre toute sa saveur. ... On sait que le domaine de prédilection de l'allégorie, c'est la poésie et en particulier le domaine de la fable. Or il se trouve que mythe et conte ont en commun plusieurs caractéristiques : ce sont des récits anonymes, le plus souvent de tradition orale, ils se répandent avec de nombreuses variantes et enfin proposent une mise en rapport de la nature humaine avec transcendance. Tout cela s'applique à merveille au conte de Griselda et du marquis de Saluces. Sa polysémie le place parmi les grands mythes de la spiritualité occidentale. C'est un réceptacle d'influences diverses, fondues dans une élaboration artistique telle qu'il a pu cristalliser les rêves ou conjurer les inquiétudes de nombreuses générations.³²

³¹ Morabito, *La storia di Griselda in Europa. Atti del convegno 'Modi dell'intertestualità: la storia di Griselda in Europa'*, L'Aquila, 12–14 maggio 1988, 2, p. 16.

³² Jean-Luc Nardonne and Henri Lamarque (eds.), Juan Timoneda, “Juan Timoneda, *Patraña segunda* 1567,” in *L'Histoire de Griselda: Une Femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, ed. Françoise Cazal (Toulouse: PU du Mirail, 2000), pp. 22–3.

These inspiring remarks, however, have not paved the way for any further analysis of these “influences diverses” or what those “rêves” and “inquiétudes” comprise.

Similarly, Juan Carlos Conde comments on the reception of the last *novella* of Boccaccio’s *Decameron* in Spain and the possibility that it is a myth, but he does so cautiously without discussing it at great length:

... la historia del rigor del atrabiliario marqués Gualtieri y de la paciencia de la abnegada e indolegable Griselda va a atravesar fronteras, lenguas y épocas, para llegar a transformarse, desde su primitiva naturaleza de texto literario individual, en una suerte de leyenda, mito o símbolo al alcance de todo tipo de ingenios literarios, en un proceso de regresión o inversión retórica desde el texto finalizado hasta la reducción privilegiada caudal de la *inventio* universal, retroceso que es garantía plena de la inmortalidad literaria.³³

Conde only adds one, but important, remark on the subject:

... [from the seventeenth century onwards] la historia de Griselda deja ya de ser una historia que se recibe como obra ajena y se trata de modo más o menos fiel y respetuoso y pasa a ser más bien un argumento, una temática tan al alcance de cualquier ingenio como cualquier mito o historia folklórica: los cambios, las alteraciones, la recreación individual exceden en ese caso los límites de la lealtad debida a un modelo imitado.³⁴

Additionally, in her book *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England*, Pamela Allen Brown devotes an entire chapter, “Griselda the Fool”, to the fate of the story in early modern England. She refers to it first as a legend and then, more insistently, as a myth that was not universally positively preached: “Because the fractured trajectories of the Griselda myth militate against a linear narrative, this analysis will examine moments in popular culture when counter-Griseldas ignore her example, when she is derided... when her didactic value is mocked, and ... questioned.”³⁵ While I find her arguments very convincing, I was also struck by the fact that she does not elaborate on the notion of myth in spite of its complexity, using it instead as a term of obvious, unproblematic meaning.

The most recent research that associates Griselda’s story with the notion of myth is the compilation of proceedings from the conference “Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea”, which was held in Saluzzo in 2009.

³³ Conde, “Un aspecto de la recepción del *Decameron*”, 351–2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 360–61.

³⁵ Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003), p. 182.

This compilation has the great advantage of studying the artistic representations of the story alongside its narrative versions. However, the only participant who refers to the story as a myth was Saluzzo's mayor, Paolo Allemano, who wrote the preface:

Questa storia [i.e. this conference and its proceedings] ha tre protagonisti: il primo è il mito dell'umile moglie del marche Gualtieri, Griselda, per alcuni una provocazione letteraria nata all'interno della civiltà cavalleresca, ma in ultima analisi una novella cha [sic!] ha fatto il giro del mondo passando attraverso ogni forma di espressione del pensiero umano e adattandosi con duttilità ai contesti locali in una metamorfosi ancora in essere.³⁶

Although he is not a literary scholar and does not elaborate on why he used the term "mito", his preface does offer an interesting perspective on how the twenty-first-century inhabitants of Saluzzo consider the story:

Il terzo protagonista è la città di Saluzzo, il cui centro storico parla ancora il linguaggio della civiltà cavalleresca e i cui cittadini sono fieri di condividere l'appartenenza alla storia del marchesato e al mito di Griselda. A loro non importa sapere se sia esistita o meno realmente Griselda, importa che il suo nome si sia diffuso nel mondo accompagnandosi a quella città di Saluzzo e materializzandosi nelle forme più nobili dell'agire umano.³⁷

While this may be viewed as merely a personal testimony rather than speaking for the whole town, there is other evidence of the population's enthusiasm for, and celebration of, the figure of Griselda. Aside from a street and a hotel that carry her name, there is a women's that was association founded in 2005 called "I passatempi di Griselda". It is devoted to embroidery and cooking, two activities that are no longer considered exclusively feminine activities but were viewed as ideal pursuits for women in the Middle Ages and early modern period. While Griselda in the story is never depicted doing embroidery, in many versions, she is seen spinning wool, especially in pictorial representations.³⁸ Furthermore, in 2014, the town entitled the third edition of its Marchesato Opera Festival "Griselda e il barocco musicale",³⁹ during which Vivaldi's

³⁶ Comba and Piccat, *Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea. Atti del convegno internazionale a 80 anni dalla nascita della Società per gli studi storici della Provincia di Cuneo: Saluzzo, 23–24 aprile 2009*, p. VII.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The association has a blog listing some of the events they organised: <http://ipassatempidi griselda.blogspot.ch/>.

³⁹ See the webpage of its tourism office: http://www.saluzzoturistica.it/eventi_scheda.php?id=4056.

opera *Griselda* was performed. There were also cultural activities for adults and children organised around the story of Griselda. The event as a whole celebrated Griselda as much as the great figures of Italian culture who participated in her fame (Boccaccio, Petrarch, Vivaldi, and Zeno). This festival, as much as the women's association, the use of Griselda's name for a hotel, and more importantly as an odonym, attests to her story's importance for Saluzzo and its inhabitants. These present-day manifestations of the cultural vitality of Griselda in this Italian area point to a conception of her story not as a myth but rather as a legend, especially given its extremely strong ties to a specific place and its cultural history. However, the modern conceptions of Griselda's story are not my main interest. Nonetheless, they help to shed light on this story's nature and reveal the enduring capacity of this story to arouse fascination and wonder.

The present study instead intends to elaborate further on the notion of myth and argues that the Patient Griselda story, despite not being a myth initially, gradually became one throughout Europe by the early modern period.

The word "myth" can denote a number of different concepts and requires a precise definition before I can develop why and how the Griselda story came to be a myth. The term refers to a complex cultural phenomenon for which thinkers from various research fields have developed definitions and analytic approaches. Philologists, anthropologists, psychoanalysts, historians (and in particular literary and religious historians), and so on, have all contributed to a better, richer, and more complex understanding of myths diachronically and synchronically from pre-history to modern times. Given that I cannot, at least within the confines of this research, do justice to all these scholars, I mostly focus on the main twentieth- and twenty-first-century thinkers who have brought major developments to this field of research.

Before I turn to some of the theories that have been elaborated on for myths, let me insist here that I do not consider *Decameron* X.10 to have been conceived by Boccaccio as a myth. On the contrary, I believe that the story underwent a process of "mythification" in the course of its European reception until the early modern period.

When examining the signification of "myth", one of the first seminal works that shaped the meaning of the word was Aristotle's *Poetics*. For Aristotle, *mythos* means "story" or "plot", where the structural specificity unfolds according to the sequence of beginning, middle, and end, yet it should be not so long that it cannot be easily remembered. In *Poetics*, the word *mythos* is defined in relation to theatre and the kinds of "stories" that best suit a dramatic performance. If we stick to Aristotle's basic concept of myth as applied to drama, the story of Griselda fits the definition: Indeed, it has been adapted into over 40 different

plays⁴⁰ between the late fourteenth century and the twentieth century, and at least 27 of these were composed during the late medieval and early modern periods.⁴¹ However, the concept of myth that I wish to outline here goes beyond that of a “story” or “plot” and encompasses a more complex set of features.

In his scholarly production on myth, William G. Doty does not elaborate a clear and universally valid definition of what myth is but always approximates instead. This is because, and I find his argument convincing, “*Myth* is a term with no singular historical usage; rather, it has carried and does carry a wide range of defining features, although individual writers tend to stress features most amenable to their own philosophical view of language, history, the human imagination, and presumed correlations with ritual.”⁴²

In his article “What is a myth? Nomological, topological and taxonomic explorations”, Doty asks, “what is ‘mythic’ity’, the rhetorical quality that establishes myth as myth? Some feature of narration or reference not found in science fiction or autobiography or historical fiction?”, but he does not give a straightforward answer.⁴³ In *Myth: A Handbook*, Doty rephrases the question of “mythic’ity” in the following way:

What seems essential is not the specific type of narrative that myth represents so much as finding some way to name what is mythic about a particular narrative myth. . . . it is probably important to recognize myth as a *type of communicative speech* (not necessarily oral, but represented as discourse directed at an audience). Roland Barthes refers to it as “a mode of signification, a form”.⁴⁴

Barthes is, indeed, a good starting point for explaining how the Patient Griselda story became a myth and what was perceived to be mythic about it.

For Barthes, myth is first and foremost “*parole*”. It is, in other words, “speech”, yet not just any type of speech. Since it is speech, anything can become mythical because what makes a myth is the form of speech or signifier,

40 This total does not include operas or translations from other existing plays, such as that of Friedrich Halm, *Griseldis* (1835).

41 See Morabito, “La diffusione”.

42 William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2000), p. 30.

43 William G. Doty, “What’s a Myth? Nomological, Topological, and Taxonomic Explorations,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 86 (2003): 396. Doty does allude, as the beginning of an answer, to “*the affective-effective dimension*” of myth, but as I will come back later in this chapter to this notion, I will not develop it here.

44 William G. Doty, *Myth: A Handbook*, Greenwood Folklore Handbooks (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004), pp. 17–18.

which he calls “mythic speech”,⁴⁵ rather than the content and the signified. Furthermore, this mythic speech can also be conveyed as much by written text, as well as through supporting mediums like images, sports, spectacles, and so on⁴⁶: “[C]’est parce que tous les matériaux du mythe, qu’ils soient représentatifs ou graphiques, présupposent une conscience signifiante, que l’on peut raisonner sur eux indépendamment de leur matière,” he explains.⁴⁷ Mythic speech is thus formed by any “unité . . . significative qu’elle soit verbale ou visuelle” because “le mythe relève d’une science générale extensive à la linguistique, et qui est la *sémiologie*”.⁴⁸ He thus analyses not only the relationship between the signified and the signifier, but also the sign, formed by both the signified and the signifier.⁴⁹ However, according to Barthes, in the case of myth, this model is complicated by the fact it implies a “semiologic chain”, which he also calls a “semiologic system of second degree”. The sign of a first degree of a semiologic system becomes the signified of a second degree of that semiologic system, and both levels of the semiologic system taken together form the myth.⁵⁰ In other words, there is a first language level or semiologic system, which he calls “*langage-objet*”, and this is appropriated by the myth in order to construct a second-level or second-degree semiotic system, which he calls “*méta-langage*”.⁵¹ Barthes renames the sign of the first level (or the result of the association of a first signifier and a first signified) on the level of speech “*sens*”, while on the level of the myth, it is named “*forme*”. The signified of the second, or myth, level becomes the “*concept*”, and the sign of the myth, or placing in the relation between the “*forme*” and the “*concept*”, is relabelled by Barthes as the “*signification*”.⁵²

Barthes insists that the signifiers, or “form”, of a myth are unlimited in number,⁵³ as well as in their historical contingency: “il n’y a aucune fixité dans les concepts mythiques : ils peuvent se faire, s’altérer, se défaire, disparaître complètement. Et c’est précisément parce qu’ils sont historiques, que l’histoire peut très facilement les supprimer.”⁵⁴ He further explains,

45 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1999), p. 193.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

48 *Ibid.*, emphasis in the original.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 200.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Le concept est un élément constituant du mythe : si je veux déchiffrer des mythes, il me faut bien pouvoir nommer des concepts. Le dictionnaire m'en fournit quelques-uns : la Bonté, la Charité, la Santé, l'Humanité, etc. Mais par définition, puisque c'est le dictionnaire qui me les donne, ces concepts-là ne sont pas historiques. Or ce dont j'ai le plus besoin, c'est de concepts éphémères, liés à des contingences limitées.⁵⁵

Here, I do not exactly disagree, but I would nuance Barthes's remarks, because any concept is always historically and culturally contingent. Goodness, charity, and health—as well as patience, to take the concept that Griselda most often embodies—cannot be defined once as a single dictionary definition for all times and places. Postmodern (cultural) studies have shown how the significance of these concepts varies from one culture to another as much as from one period to another and from one social group and/or gender to another. This contingency thus favours Barthes' notions of “concept éphémère”, because any concept is not only necessarily relatively ephemeral but also limited to a certain location, possibly even as much spatially as socially.

The French scholar also considers the relationship between the concept of the myth and the “sense” (or “sign” of the first semiotic level) as a “*déformation*”.⁵⁶ Thus, the sense is no longer a self-sufficient “sign”—it becomes a “parole disponible tout entière au service du concept”.⁵⁷

In semiology, the relationship between the signified and the signifier is completely arbitrary. However, as Barthes convincingly argues,

La signification mythique, elle, n'est jamais complètement arbitraire, elle est toujours en partie motivée, contient fatalement une part d'analogie. . . . La motivation est nécessaire à la duplicité même du mythe, le mythe joue sur l'analogie du sens et de la forme: pas de mythe sans forme motivée. . . . La motivation . . . n'est pas « naturelle » : c'est l'histoire qui fournit à la forme ses analogies. . . . en général, le mythe préfère travailler à l'aide d'images pauvres, incomplètes, où le sens est déjà bien dégraissé, tout prêt pour une signification : caricatures, pastiches, symboles, etc.⁵⁸

Barthes's theory, as applied to the Patient Griselda story, helps us understand how it became a myth, how it was “deformed” to become “at the service of a concept”, and, more accurately, how various “concepts” throughout time are altered due to the differing authorial intentions of the translators and rewriters of her story.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 212–13.

When Boccaccio wrote the last *novella* of his *Decameron*, he had none of these theoretical principles in mind, nor did Petrarch. However, what Petrarch did do was provide an interpretative tool, a moral conclusion, which postulates an allegorical meaning or mythic appropriation of the literal content in order to serve a second-level mythic signification, namely Christian steadfastness. This also suggests the possibility of using the story to serve two concepts. On one hand, Petrarch's conclusion invites his audience to adopt an allegorical reading of his text, where Christians are encouraged to emulate Griselda's enduring patience with regard to their God (“ut legentes ad imitandam saltem femine constantiam excitarem, ut quod hec viro suo prestitit, hoc prestare Deo nostro audeant”).⁵⁹ On the other hand, it suggests that the story would not function well as an example for wives, because his Griseldis would hardly be imitable (“michi vix imitabilis videtur”).⁶⁰

The concept of ideal wifeness, when linked to the literal meaning of the story, is not the one that Petrarch seems to have wanted to stress, since he attaches more importance in his conclusion to the allegorical meaning of Christian steadfastness. Nonetheless, both concepts made their ways into later re-writings and vernacular translations of this Latin version of the story of Griselda.

Petrarch's adaptation of *Decameron* X, 10 made it clearer than Boccaccio's original about how the story of Patient Griselda could be “at the service” of concepts and used, as Barthes describes it, as the signifier of mythic speech to produce at least two different meanings: a patient or ideal wifeness and steadfast faith in the Christian God, regardless of the ordeals one may be subjected to.

It is also true, however, that the story is ambiguous, because the extremes to which Griselda must go to prove her patience and obedience are morally and legally problematic. Indeed, a husband who orders his wife to surrender her children in order to have them killed is literally asking her to become an accomplice to infanticide, which is clearly against the Ten Commandments. Christian theology has never required wives to follow their husbands' orders if they imply committing, or being an accomplice to, a capital sin. On the contrary, women were advised to try and convince their spouses to not pursue sinful intentions. Moreover, infanticide, which was legal for the *pater familias* under Roman law as part of the *patria potestas*,⁶¹ was among the first laws to be

⁵⁹ Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 94.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ See Yan Thomas, “Vitae necisque potestas. Le père, la cité, la mort,” in *Du châtimeut dans la cité. Supplices corporels et peine de mort dans le monde antique. Table ronde de Rome (9–11 novembre 1982)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1984).

changed in 318 as part of a process of demarcation from pagan customs as Christianity began to impose itself in Europe.⁶² In addition, Griselda's stoicism in the face of her ordeals is often perceived as unnatural, especially when her children are supposedly killed.

The ambiguities inherent in the story, for example, led Geoffrey Chaucer in his "Clerk's Tales" (from his *Canterbury Tales*), on one hand, to have his narrator express sympathy for Griselda by blaming Walter for his cruelty. On the other hand, in the "Envoy", he cast doubts on Griselda's exemplarity by promoting a shrewish type of wife conforming in everything to the descriptions of the antifeminist tradition. Thus, Chaucer leaves his readers with as many questions about how to interpret the story as Boccaccio's audience after Dioneo, the novella's narrator, draws the conclusion in the *Decameron* that Griselda ought to have had an affair when the marquis repudiated her. This notwithstanding, many adaptors of Petrarch's (or Boccaccio's) text(s) were convinced of the story's didactic value as an exemplum. The majority of these writers tried, though never fully successfully, to emend the story or attenuate its ambiguities in various ways. For example, John Phillip, in his *Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissil* (c.1564–68) added the character of the nurse to provide a female voice to speak in Griselda's stead against the sinfulness of killing one's own child. Another interesting alteration is that, from the sixteenth century on, some versions present Griselda outwardly expressing her sorrow at her children's bereavement with tears and verbal laments, thus contrasting the stoicism she displays in Boccaccio's, Petrarch's, and the late medieval adaptations.⁶³

Consequently, there is indeed the potential for the story to be used to develop a concept or various concepts. However, Barthes's theory of the way mythic speech functions does not satisfactorily explain why a narrative may be used over and over again "at the service" of not only one but several concepts. In the fifteenth century, the proliferation process of the Patient Griselda story started. This implies that there is something inherent in Boccaccio's story that makes it worthy of attention but, most of all, worthy of being told over and over again. This happened not simply as a folktale or narrative prose text but also as a drama, ballad, and versified *nouvelle* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; as an opera in the eighteenth century; and as novels in the nineteenth century. Whereas the story of Griselda can indeed function as a signifier within the

⁶² Marie-José Laperche-Fournel, "Les enfants indésirables, l'infanticide en Lorraine au XVIII^e siècle," *Les Cahiers Lorrains* 1 (1989): 23–4.

⁶³ See, for example, Timoneda, "Juan Timoneda, *Patraña segunda* 1567," p. 224; John Phillip, "The Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissill," in *A Gathering of Griseldas. Three sixteenth-century Textes*, ed. Faith Gildenhuis (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1996), ll. 1080–89.

semiotic system of mythic speech, Barthes's theory does not explain why its use for mythic speech was activated over and over again in the early modern period to convey not only the concept of ideal wife, which varies through time and place, but others as well. Indeed, the story began to acquire new meanings and signify new concepts, such as "a child's obedience", "a subject's exaggerate patience towards a tyrant", "the unsuitability of incest", "social mobility is positive within the limits of certain circumstances", and so on.

While Barthes devoted most of his *Mythologies* to listing a great number of mythic concepts, he did not take into consideration that the particularly significant recurrent use of the same signifier could be part of the way in which myth is culturally produced. This happens not simply as a semiotic system but also as a certain type of story that acquires, or rather is given, a certain cultural relevance at a certain point in time. Some reasons for this longevity and polymorphism in terms of the story's numerous literary realisations, worthy of a classical myth, may be found partly in what Doty calls "*the affective-effective dimension*",⁶⁴ which itself, I argue, is related to the story's main characters (Griselda and the marquis) and its narrative structure.

As Doty explains with regard to myth's "*affective-effective dimension*":

Traditional stories and myths can grab one existentially; they are close to daily experience even while they name ultimately generative (originary) beginnings, apocalyptic endings, as large-as/larger than-life extensions of *Dasein*.⁶⁵

He further develops this idea:

Any mythology presumes a hermeneutical (interpretive) system in which it will be nurtured, and expanded as it is passed on and passed around. Myth appears to be a mode of language that welcomes change and resists linguistic fossilization. . . . a myth participates in the cultural evolution of societies.

...

Thus myth is "a peculiar kind of story" in that it transcends its texts . . . although it is difficult to stipulate what comprises that transcending, why it has such long-lived power. Clearly, mythic expressions are so important that they have to be recreated to fit the needs of new situations over and over again. *Mythopoesis* is nothing less than the ongoing emotional affectivity of the effectively mythic, but it is less easily defined than charted rhetorically and symbolically. . . . And, alas, such charting can deteriorate into trivial repetitions, according to which even the most sophisticated literature is reduced to just one or another archetypal scheme/pattern/figure.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Doty, "What's a Myth? Nomological, Topological, and Taxonomic Explorations," p. 396.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Although the Patient Griselda story does not refer to any “generative (originary) beginnings” or “apocalyptic endings”, its popularity in late medieval and early modern European literature, and to a lesser extent art and music, indicates that it is “‘a particular kind of story’ in that it transcends its texts”, as Doty describes it. While I would not argue that all myths generate interest through their mysterious central figures, in the case of the Patient Griselda story, its attraction for writers and readers certainly lies in Griselda and the marquis, as well as in the story’s structure.

In order to explore what kind of appeal Griselda, as a character, may have had for late medieval and early modern audiences, it is helpful to turn to another twentieth-century myth scholar, Mircea Eliade, who examined what could be considered modern myths in his *Mythes, rêves et mystères* from the point of view of the history of religions. Eliade defines myth as:

Le mythe se définit par son mode d’être : il ne se laisse saisir en tant que mythe que dans la mesure où il révèle que quelque chose s’est *pleinement manifestée*, et cette manifestation est à la fois *créatrice* et *exemplaire*, puisqu’elle fonde aussi bien une structure du réel qu’un comportement humain. Un mythe raconte toujours que quelque chose s’est *réellement passé*, qu’un événement a eu lieu dans le sens fort du terme. . .⁶⁷

As Eliade looks into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for reminiscences of myths, as they were conceived by “‘primitive’ and archaic societies”,⁶⁸ he places great emphasis on one of the two “constitutive dimensions of myths”, namely, “exemplarity” (the other being “universality”).⁶⁹ His reflections on exemplary models, as well as what he calls “mythic behaviour”,⁷⁰ over the past two centuries can help us to understand why the story of Patient Griselda may have been told and re-told.

As Eliade explains:

[p]our le chrétien, Jésus-Christ n’est pas un personnage mythique, mais, bien au contraire, historique . . . Néanmoins, l’expérience religieuse du chrétien se fonde sur l’*imitation* du Christ comme *modèle exemplaire*, sur la répétition liturgique de la vie, de la mort et de la résurrection du Seigneur, et sur la *contemporanéité* du chrétien avec l’*illud tempus* qui s’ouvre à la Nativité de Bethléem et s’achève provisoirement avec l’Ascension. Or, nous savons que l’imitation d’un modèle exemplaire et la rupture du temps profane par une ouverture qui débouche sur le Grand Temps, constituent les notes essentielles du

⁶⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Mythes, rêves et mystères* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 13, italics in the original.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

« comportement mythique », c'est-à-dire de l'homme des sociétés archaïques, qui trouve dans le mythe la source même de son existence. On est toujours contemporain d'un mythe dès lors qu'on imite les gestes des personnages mythiques.⁷¹

Although critiques have shown that in several versions of the Griselda story, she is compared to Christ, even going as far as arguing that she is a *figurae Christi*,⁷² I do not wish to argue that Griselda is an embodiment of the Saviour, nor does she emulate the sacrifice of his life in the manner of the martyrs. There is clear evidence that many late medieval and early modern authors (though not all of them) believed that her behaviour is exemplary and used her story either to incite Christians to emulate her as an embodiment of Christian steadfastness or to encourage young women to follow her example as an ideal wife or daughter. Therefore, I argue that Griselda's behaviour can be interpreted as the intent of the author(s) to invite readers to perform what Eliade calls "mythic behaviour", but when addressing young ladies, this goes only to the extent of being obedient to their spouses rather than inciting their husbands to try their wives to such extremes.

Eliade's further reflections on exemplary models in Antiquity and how they were received in the Renaissance shed light on the context in which the story of Patient Griselda was read and reactivated after Boccaccio:

Dans l'Antiquité, il n'y avait pas d'hiatus entre la mythologie et l'histoire : les personnages historiques s'efforçaient d'imiter leurs archétypes, les dieux et les héros mythiques.

A leur tour, la vie et les gestes de ces personnages historiques devenaient des paradigmes. Déjà Tite-Live présente une riche galerie de modèles pour les jeunes Romains. Plutarque écrit plus tard ses *Vies des hommes illustres*, véritable somme exemplaire pour les siècles à venir. Les vertus morales et civiques de ces personnages illustres continuent d'être le modèle suprême pour la pédagogie européenne, surtout après la Renaissance. Jusque vers la fin du XIX^e siècle, l'éducation civique européenne suivait encore les archétypes de l'Antiquité classique, les modèles qui se sont manifestés *in illo tempore*, dans le lapse de temps privilégié que fut, pour l'Europe lettrée, l'apogée de la culture gréco-latine.⁷³

It is no coincidence that very early on, Griselda made her way into catalogues of virtuous women, alongside Greco-Roman and Biblical figures such as Helen, Thisbe, and Judith. She even appears as the first example of women's strength of character and constancy in Christine de Pizan's famous *Livre de la cité des dames* (1404–5), a work in the tradition of collections of

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30, italics in the original.

⁷² See for example, Marga Cottino-Jones, "Realtà e mito in Griselda," *Problemi* 11–12 (1968).

⁷³ Eliade, *Mythes, rêves et mystères*, pp. 31–32.

illustrious men's lives but consisting mainly of women's lives. In addition, although the story was initially to be understood as fiction, and some authors express doubts about her historical existence, while others believed she existed or presented her as a historical figure. William Forrest, in his hagiography of Catherine of Aragon, *History of Grisild the Second*, argues that her story may have been fiction. Forrest, however, seems to express this doubt not so much because he is unsure but to strengthen his point that Catherine of Aragon, or Grisild the Second (as he renames her), better qualifies for sainthood than Griselda. This is because the historical existence of the queen cannot be doubted, whereas Griselda's is not clearly attested ("The *First* howe her dooynges weare brought abowte, / To vs in theis dayes they are vncertayne; / Many imagine that *Petrarke* dyd but fayne; / Howe muche the *Seconde* is true, that yee haue herde, / Somuche before *thither* she is too bee preferde").⁷⁴ Thomas III of Saluces, on the other hand, seems to have had no doubt about Griselda's historical existence, having included her story in his *Livre du chevalier errant* (1403–4) as one of his prestigious ancestors.⁷⁵

What these two examples further suggest is a tendency to "transformer une existence en paradigme et un personnage historique en archétype",⁷⁶ as Eliade puts it. Indeed, if there can be a second Griselda, and if a descendent of the ruling family of Saluzzo presents her life as exemplary, then her story becomes paradigmatic and archetypal but not universal. It is only archetypal for the society and time in which her story is reproduced, and since the tale was appropriated by cultures outside Europe only to a limited extent, it can only be said that the story was "mythified" by late medieval and early modern European cultures. This phenomenon is driven to a particularly great extent in Félix Lope de Vega Carpio's *El ejemplo de casadas y prueba de la paciencia* (1599–1604). In this play, Lope transposes the main elements of the Patient Griselda myth narrative into a Spanish setting, providing new Spanish names for all the characters. This process can be compared to the appropriation, or reactivation or realisation, of some mythic motifs, such as that of the "apple-shot" present in many myths, such as Palnatoki's in the *Gesta Danorum*, or Egil of the *Þiðrekssaga*. These are

74 William Forrest, *The history of Grisild the Second a narrative, in verse, of the divorce of Queen Katharine of Arragon* (London: Whittingham and Wilkins, 1875), <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924013279488>, p. 132.

75 Henry Lamarque, "Introduction générale," in *L'histoire de Griselda: Prose et poésie: Boccace, Pétrarque, Nerli, de Mezières, Metge, Timoneda, Trancoso, Deloney* (Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2000), p.16.

76 Eliade, *Mythes, rêves et mystères*, p. 32.

believed to be the sources for the most famous appropriation of this motif in the Swiss foundation myth of William Tell.

Apart from Petrarch's moral conclusion, other features inherent in the story's structure suggest that Griselda could be read as a model for behaviour. Another theoretical perspective will prove helpful in this task: the anthropological-structuralist approach.

The first striking aspect, which has been frequently mentioned by critics, is that Griselda's life, and more particularly her testing, is organised according to a tripartite structure. More precisely, it follows an initiatory pattern. Such patterns have been pointed out by Arnold Van Gennep in his study on rites of passages and initiations to a new stage in life in traditional societies. Rites of passage, according to Gennep, can be divided into three phases: separation, transition, and incorporation or aggregation.⁷⁷ These rites are performed when individuals undergo a major change in their lives, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. These three phases are also the basis of the narrative structure of many initiatory myths, given that myth and rituals are often interrelated and influence each other.⁷⁸

Griselda's story has never been related to any actual rite of passage for married women by teaching them how to be good wives. It was, however, symbolically used, as already mentioned, in wedding presents, such as *cassoni* on which Griselda's life was painted or as part of wedding celebrations in the form of stage drama or recommended reading for any young lady preparing for married life.

The story clearly revolves around Griselda's married life. Although her wedding constitutes a rite of passage in itself, given that Gualtieri takes her out of her father's home (separation), strips her naked (transition), and re-dresses her in a marquise's rich clothes (incorporation), this occurs before what is generally considered the "actual" testing in the story. Griselda's ordeals start 1–3 years after her wedding, when her first baby is weaned. This indicates that Griselda's testing has less to do with entering marriage and more to do with learning how to be an obedient wife in spite of the social elevation her marriage implied. Griselda is the central figure in the rite of passage and, more particularly, her testing is one of the elements that make the story so mysterious. It is therefore worth examining this aspect of the story more closely through the lens of Victor

⁷⁷ Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris: É. Nourry, 1909), pp. 13–14.

⁷⁸ On their interrelatedness and possible dominance of one over the other, see Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, pp. 335–67.

Turner's work on the transition phase of rites of passage, following and developing Van Gennep's theory.

Turner's research focuses on the transition phase or *limen* (in Gennep's terminology), or, in Turner's expression, the "liminal period".⁷⁹ According to this American anthropologist, the rites of passage "indicate and constitute transitions between states".⁸⁰ He defines these states as "a relatively fixed or stable condition", and they "designate also the condition of a person as determined by his culturally recognised degree of maturation as when one speaks of 'the married or single state' or the 'state of infancy'".⁸¹ Accordingly, he thus redefines Van Gennep's three phases:

The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a "state"); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the "passenger") is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated.⁸²

Turner, in *The Ritual Process*, pays particular attention to a certain kind of rite de passage (among others), the "*rituals of status elevation*",⁸³ in which "the ritual subject or novice is being conveyed irreversibly from a lower to a higher position in an institutionalized system of such positions".⁸⁴ These rituals are further characterised by a process of "humbling" the "candidate", who wither wishes to attain a higher status or is chosen for it from the social hierarchy.⁸⁵ As Turner observes:

[This humbling may be achieved through] ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character . . . [which] represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their [i.e. the novices] essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: an Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, ed. Arthur C. Moro Pamela A. Myers James Edward Lehmann (New-York, NY: McGraw-Hil, 1, 2000).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁸³ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1977), p. 167ff.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 103,71, 201.

In addition, the second phase of the rite is named the “liminal period” by Turner because it is characterised by “liminality”. In other words, it is “the essentially unstructured (which is at once destructured and prestructured)”.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the “liminal *personae*” or “neophytes”, who enter the ritual process “are at once no longer classified and not yet classified”.⁸⁸ Moreover, “they *have* nothing. . . no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows”.⁸⁹

Griselda’s ordeals have all the appearance of the humbling process of a ritual of status elevation (i.e. from being a ruler’s wife, she is forced to become a poor rejected woman). When the testing starts, Griselda had been redefined as a rich marquise, a wife, and a mother, and she no longer bears visible signs that she was once Janicola’s daughter or a poor shepherdess, since she lost these defining traits from an external point of view when she married the marquis. Boccaccio thus describes her mutation as follows: “La giovane sposa parve che co’ vestimenti insieme l’animo e’ costume mutasse. . . divenne tanto avvenevole, tanto piacevole e tanto costumata, che non figliuola di Giannucole e guardiana di pecore pareva stata ma d’alcun nobile signore”.⁹⁰ Petrarch renders this passage in a similar way: “non in casa illa pastoria, sed in aula imperiali educate atque edocta videretur, . . . vixque his ipsis qui illam ab origine noverant persuaderi posset Ianicole natam esse, tantus erat vite, tantus morum decor, ea verborum gravitas ac dulcedo”.⁹¹

During the testing, however, Griselda is gradually stripped of her motherhood (through the removal and supposed murder of her children), her status or rank and wifeness (through repudiation), and of her belongings (by being forced to return everything the marquis gave her, including her clothes). Griselda would have been virtually naked had she not begged for a smock. The only identity traits she has left or regains are her gender (she is still considered a woman, albeit a worthless one because she is poor again and a rejected wife, which is worse than being a widow) and her kinship to her father as the daughter of Giannucole/Ianicole. For a short period, starting from the repudiation and ending with the marquis asking her to come back to prepare his second wedding, the marquis treats Griselda as if she is again nobody to him. In other words, Griselda almost perfectly fits Turner’s description of the “liminal person”. She is almost entirely “no longer classified” and, for the marquis, until

87 Turner, “Betwixt and Between,” p. 49.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

90 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II vols., vol. II (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), p. 1238.

91 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 78.

he deems that he has tested her for long enough, she remains “not yet classified” as his wife, mother of his children, and rightful marquise.

Concerning the relationship between “neophytes” and their “instructor”, or those guiding them through the rite, Turner explains that “there is often complete authority and complete submission”.⁹² As he further remarks:

It is the ritual and the esoteric teaching which grows girls and makes men . . . It is not a mere acquisition of knowledge, but a change in being. His apparent passivity is revealed as an absorption of powers which will become active after his social status has been redefined in the aggregation rites.⁹³

According to Turner, this “esoteric teaching” or “communication of the *sacra*” is often achieved by “disproportionate” or “monstrous” means.⁹⁴ In addition, “much of the grotesqueness and monstrosity of liminal *sacra* may be seen to be aimed not so much at terrorizing or bemusing neophytes into submission or out of their wits as at making them vividly and rapidly aware of what may be called the ‘factors’ of their culture”.⁹⁵

The relationship between Griselda and the marquis is indeed one of complete submission, not because he is her “instructor” but because he is her husband and ruler, and because he wants her to swear to obey him in absolutely everything. In addition, no one would deny that the ordeals the marquis devised for Griselda are “disproportionate” and derive from a “monstrous” mind. Dioneo, Boccaccio’s narrator, even describes Gualtieri’s behaviour towards his wife as “matta bestialità”.⁹⁶ This expression refers to a passage from Dante’s *Divina Commedia* (*Inferno*, XI, 82–83), which itself makes reference, as Boccaccio’s text most likely also does, to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 7, where the vices and virtues and the conditions associated with them are discussed. Amy Goodwyn’s comments on this issue are enlightening:

Although to suit his purposes Aristotle narrows the meaning of bestiality to the most extreme acts of cruelty, such as cannibalism, he also recognizes the word’s broader usages. It is a term of reproach: “we also call by this evil name those men who go beyond all ordinary standards by reason of vice” (*Ethics* 1145a30). Later he applies the terms to a very different condition, “every excessive state” and gives these examples, “the man who is by nature apt to fear everything, even the squeak of a mouse, is cowardly with a brutish cowardice [and] . . . foolish people those who by nature are thoughtless and live by their

⁹² Turner, “Betwixt and Between,” p. 49.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁹⁶ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1233.

senses alone are brutish". Certain diseased states and forms of insanity resemble bestiality: "those who are so as a result of disease (e.g. of epilepsy) or of madness are morbid. Of these characteristics it is possible to have some only at times, and not to be mastered by them . . . but it is also possible to be mastered, not merely to have the feelings" (*Ethics* 1149a5–15). While not a cannibal, in his cruelty and his excessive, insatiable testing of Griselda, Gualtieri is bestial according to the other senses Aristotle grants this term.⁹⁷

Even if Dioneo's expression does not appear in Petrarch, since he cut Boccaccio's framing context from his translation, the marquis's behaviour remains extreme and excessive in all versions.

However, Turner's theory only partially applies to Griselda's testing for various reasons. First, only Boccaccio, Paolo Mazzi (in his *commedia ridicolosa, La Griselda del Boccaccio*, 1620), and Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton have their marquis justify the testing as a teaching process. In the novella, Gualtieri claims, "volendoti insegnar d'esser moglie e a loro di saperla tenere, e a me partorire perpetua quiete mentre teco a vivere avessi".⁹⁸ Mazzi follows his source, Boccaccio, very closely and has Gualtieri say to Griselda, "vogliendo a voi insegnare d'esser molgie, & à loro di saperla torre, e tenere, et à me partorire perpetua quiete, mètre cõ voi à viuere hauessi".⁹⁹ The English playwrights, meanwhile, have Gwalter declare, "I tride my *Grissils* patience when twas greene, / Like a young Osier, and I moulded it / Like waxe to all impressions: married men / That long to tame their wiues must curb them in, / Before they need a bridle, then they'll prooue / All *Grissils* full of patience, full of loue".¹⁰⁰ Gwalter's justification even seems to verbally anticipate Turner's formulation of the function of the ordeals neophytes have to undergo: "They [i.e. neophytes] have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society".¹⁰¹

Second, the duration of the testing is problematic: over twelve years.¹⁰² This is longer than any ritual. Whereas it is true that patience and constancy, like most virtues, need to be tested in order to attest that an individual "possesses"

⁹⁷ Amy W. Goodwin, "The Griselda Game," *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 39, no. 1 (2004): 48.

⁹⁸ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1247.

⁹⁹ Mazzi, *La Griselda*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, and William Haughton, "The Pleasant Comodie of Patient Grissill," in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1953), 5.2.238–43.

¹⁰¹ Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, p. 103.

¹⁰² The duration varies from one version to another, but 12 is the minimum if no time indications are provided, since the daughter of the marquis has to be old enough to act as a supposed bride-to-be, according to the marriage practices of the time.

them, Griselda's ordeals and humiliation have an overly cruel duration. Not even Job's suffering, to whom she is often compared, lasted so long.¹⁰³ Third, the "communication of the *sacra*", or "esoteric teaching" from Griselda's point of view, also raises a question for which, in most versions, no clear answer is provided: Did she actually learn anything? Griselda was patient, meek, humble, and loving. In short, she was a good wife and marquise from the first day of her marriage and a good mother to her children (until she accepted their being killed). She did not need to be humbled and humiliated to learn anything more about the virtues required by wifehood or her status as a ruler's consort, except perhaps that those virtues ultimately enable her to prevail and overcome anything. The latter holds true particularly for the early fifteenth-century dramatic versions of the story. These still bear some traits from the medieval morality play tradition and use either the removal of the children (especially the daughter, the first-born and in some rewritings, her only child) or her repudiation as means to teach patience in the face of a child's death and a reversal of fortune. Indeed, the heroine is presented as an "everyman-figure" tempted by one or more vice-figures and supported by personifications of virtues. This can be observed in John Phillip's *Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissill* and in Pedro de Navarro's *Comedia muy exemplar de la Marquesa de Saluzia llamada Griselda*. Navarro's Griselda differs from Boccaccio's or Petrarch's heroines in that she is forced to believe that her daughter really has been murdered, because the marquis's servant brings her a bloody heart that has supposedly been freshly cut from the child's chest, and Griselda laments and mourns the death of her baby in a very expressive and verbal way. Nevertheless, Navarro uses his protagonist's pain to allegorically teach how to cope with such a loss. First, "Consuelo" ("Comfort") tries to give her the patience and strength to overcome her grief by reminding her how many famous women before her have endured the same loss, thereby attempting to make Griselda relativise her own situation and put it in perspective, as well as by assuring her that God will help her. Next, "Desesperacion" ("Despair"), "Sufrimiento" ("Suffering"), and Consuelo appear on the stage, the former to tempt Griselda to commit suicide and the latter to lift her spirits and save her from temptation, which Sufrimiento manages. By displaying this psychomachia, Navarro clearly aims to uncover and help the audience to visualise the various stages through which Griselda goes as she learns to accept the death of her daughter in order to fulfil his didactic purpose. Similarly, though in a much more synthetic and less coherent way, Phillip's Grissil first expresses her woe at losing her baby girl, but

103 The exact length of time is not precisely mentioned in the Bible, but according to Job 7:3, it could be months, certainly not 12 years.

immediately after, she exhorts herself to be patient and comforts herself with the assurance that “God will revenge this bloody fact”.¹⁰⁴ Phillip only makes personified virtues intervene when Grissil is left alone with her father after her repudiation. Then, Constancy and Patience arrive and bring comfort to both Grissil and Janicle. Even though Phillip’s adaptation does not employ a psychomachia in which Grissil would be tempted to sin, because no vice-figures come onstage at that moment, his personified virtues still aim to reinforce the didactic purpose of inciting the audience to be patient in the face of adversity and Fortune’s turning of its wheel. Not only do they insistently claim to be there to “teach”¹⁰⁵ Grissil and Janicle to be strong and have faith, but Grissil and her father welcome them with open arms, and Grissil affirms, “Constancy . . . from despair will us shield”.¹⁰⁶

Even though the analysis, from a ritualistic perspective of Griselda’s testing, is highly problematic, the fact remains that most early modern rewritings of the story attest to an understanding of her character as exemplary and paradigmatic. This, I argue, is partly due to the tripartite structure of Griselda’s life, but also to the nature of her ordeals, which involve phases of status elevation and reversal, culminating in an aggregation rite: Griselda is reunited with her children and officially recognised as their mother and the marquis’s only true wife. Then she is undressed one last time and reclthed as a marquise. Finally, a feast is held, which can be symbolically read as a second celebration of her marriage to the marquis, since it was initially intended for his supposed second wedding. In other words, the testing has the appearance of a ritual, and this is enough for the adaptors of her story to consider it an actual ritual despite the problems my analysis reveals.

Apart from the study of rituals, the anthropological-structuralist approach offers other insights as to why the story was so popular in terms of a myth’s “deep structure” or its decomposition into constituent “mythemes”, which can be related to other myths. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss elaborated a structuralist system of myth analysis that postulates that the number of structures on which myths are based is limited:

Un recueil des contes et des mythes connus occuperait une masse imposante de volumes. Mais on peut les réduire à un petit nombre de types simples, mettant en œuvre, derrière la diversité des personnages, quelques fonctions élémentaires ; et les complexes, ces

104 Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissill,” p. 119, l.1091.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 142, ll. 1768, 74, 81.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 143, l.1792.

mythes individuels, se ramènent aussi à quelques types simples, moules où vient se prendre la fluide multiplicité des cas.¹⁰⁷

Lévy-Strauss then defines these structures as comprising units or mythemes that consist of a certain type of relation.¹⁰⁸ These relations can be then extracted from a given myth by breaking down its narrative into the smallest possible set of sentences, with each sentence being one mytheme.¹⁰⁹ The same relation can appear several times at different points in the narrative chronology of a myth. Therefore, by organising the relations into sets, the analysis offers as much a synchronic as a diachronic perspective.¹¹⁰ It is synchronic if one considers the set of recurring relations or diachronic if one considers the different relations as a set that chronologically constitutes the myth's narrative. Isolating relations synchronically enables Lévi-Strauss to account for the similarities he observed between the various myths coming from different cultures.

Lévi-Strauss tries thereby to theorise and determine the structural principles that underlie each and every mythic narrative. Although such a universalising purpose is questionable, it offers an analytic tool that can determine, for a particular culture, what Charles Segal calls “the network of more or less subconscious patterns, or deep structures, or undisplaced forms, which tales [or myths] of a given type share with one another”.¹¹¹ Such a comparative analysis thus highlights how aspects or mythemes of a particular myth may relate to other myths and the ways in which they are realised in a particular myth at a given time, place, and culture differ from those found in other myths with a similar or different culture. This sheds light on the meaning of these mythemes as they are used in a particular myth, not only at a certain point in history and in a certain culture but also as it evolves throughout time and translates from one culture to another.

Consequently, when applying this technique to the Patient Griselda story, it appears that its constituent units, or mythemes, are to be found in other stories and myths, thus linking Griselda's life story to a broader set of narratives. Moreover, it reveals that these mythemes acquired different functions or were enhanced or reduced in terms of their literary treatment, depending on the time and place in which the story is re-told, by whom it is told, and the varying

107 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), p. 225.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

109 *Ibid.*

110 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

111 Charles Segal, *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1986), p. 52.

authorial intentions involved in the process. In other words, the various constituent mythemes of the Griselda story participated in the lasting popularity of the *novella* but not equally for every version. The prominence of one or more mythemes in a particular adaptation of the story is always culturally contingent.

If one deconstructs the story of Patient Griselda into mythemes, this is what it may look like: (i) a young beautiful man shuns marriage in favour of the pleasures of hunting; (ii) a young man, who is of a high status, chooses a bride of low status and marries her; (iii) a mother agrees to have her children killed, or from the perspective of her husband, a father fakes the death of his children; (iv) a faithful and loving wife is repudiated; (v) a repudiated wife is almost forced to witness her husband marry another woman, or from the man's point of view, a father almost commits incest by appearing to marry his own daughter; (vi) the true identity of long-lost children is revealed; (vii) a repudiated wife is re-married to her original spouse and thereby re-elevated in status.

Every single one of these mythemes can be found in Greco-Roman myths, and some are also found in Biblical stories and other Western mythologies. I have no doubt that these mythemes also occur in mythologies from outside Europe. Elaborating on an exhaustive list of all the myths in which one of these mythemes appears would be unproductive. In the absence of contrary evidence, however, Boccaccio is the creator of the Griselda story. In other words, he is the one who assembled these mythemes into a coherent whole, a catalogue of the myths he knew and from which he could have consciously or unconsciously taken the patterns constituting those mythemes. This may be helpful for contrasting and shedding light on the way these mythemes function in the Griselda story as they appear in Boccaccio and later versions.

Whereas Boccaccio's familiarity with Greco-Roman myths and of course the Bible is well attested by abundant references and choices of topics throughout his own literary work, as well as by his relationships with other contemporary writers, it is less likely that he would have been influenced by mythologies from outside Europe. Moreover, it would be illusory to think one could ever produce an exhaustive list of the entire content of Boccaccio's "biblioteca mentale" ("mind library", as Igor Candido puts it).¹¹² Consequently, I will limit myself to a few examples that seem to me the most obvious.

The first myth that has been identified by source studies is that of Eros and Psyche, which appears in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (also known as the *Golden*

112 Igor Candido, "La fabula di Amore e Psiche dalle chiose del Laur. 29.2 alle due redazioni delle *Genealogie* di Boccaccio e ancora in *Dec. X*, 10," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 37 (2009): 174.

Ass). Recent criticism has examined in detail the relationship between the Griselda story, as elaborated by Boccaccio, and this Greco-Roman myth.¹¹³ It has highlighted verbal parallels between Boccaccio's *novella* and Apuleius's rendering of Eros and Psyche's myth, the most striking of which is Psyche's fictional description of her husband to satisfy the curiosity of her sisters: She tells them that he is a young handsome man who spends a lot of time hunting, just like Boccaccio's young marquis.¹¹⁴ Apart from this myth, no other verbal echoes have yet been clearly established between Boccaccio's text and the possible sources he had in mind, or at hand, while he worked on his *novella*. Attempting to identify other sources is not my intent, and it is beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, the remaining myths and biblical stories I list here are purely hypothetical influences. Although they can only remain conjectures, they will prove useful when I briefly expose below how these myths, which may have been in Boccaccio's mind when he wrote the story (because he knew them), were conjured up by later writers who adapted the Patient Griselda story.

The other notable Greco-Roman mythical figures who match the description of a young, handsome hunter shunning marriage are Narcissus and Hippolytus. Pygmalion, though not a hunter, is also worth mentioning since he refused to get married until he sculpted his ideal wife. Boccaccio could have known the former myth from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, while he may also have read the latter's story from either Euripides or Seneca. While the mytheme of the young man marrying below himself may have been Boccaccio's adaptation of a young god marrying a young mortal woman, as found in the myth of Eros and Psyche, the mytheme of (feigned or averted) infanticide has many famous occurrences, not only in Greco-Roman myths but also in biblical stories. Euripides' and Seneca's tragedies could also have been the way in which Boccaccio learnt about Medea's slaughter of her children. There is also Agamemnon's averted murder of his daughter Iphigenia, while in the Bible, Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac until God prevented him. In addition, Jephthah killed his own daughter due to an oath he made. The slaughter of the first-born babies in Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents can also be seen as related mythemes. Repudiation was experienced by the above-mentioned mythic figure of Medea. Concerning the mytheme of incest, the first examples that come to mind are Oedipus and Lot, but the nature of the former's incest (son–mother), and the fact that Lot was unwilling and drunk when his daughters had sexual

113 Igor Candido, "Apuleio alla fine del *Decameron*: la novella di Griselda come riscrittura della "lepada fabula" di Amore e Psiche," *Filologia e critica* 32, no. 1 (2007); Candido, "La fabula di Amore e Psiche."

114 Candido, "La fabula di Amore e Psiche," p. 181.

intercourse with him, suggests that Boccaccio may have thought of yet another example or simply adapted the mytheme to suit his purpose. The mytheme of the repudiated wife forced to witness her husband's second wedding calls to mind Medea again. As for the identification of the long-lost children, this is so commonplace in mythology and folklore that it would be hazardous to favour any occurrence of this motif over another. Finally, the (re-)marriage which restores the status of the woman as the wife and equal to her husband conjures up once more Eros and Psyche's myth, which ends in a similar way except in that Psyche is not simply socially elevated but made a goddess, undergoing a change in kind rather than just rank.

Such a list of mythemes, which displays a wide range of possible influences, could misleadingly suggest that Boccaccio was working as "mythmaker". According to Lévi-Strauss's notion of "bricoleur", "le propre de la pensée mythique est de s'exprimer à l'aide d'un répertoire dont la composition est hétéroclite et qui, bien qu'étendu, reste tout de même limité".¹¹⁵ He explains in *La pensée sauvage* that the aim of mythic thought is "comme du bricolage sur le plan pratique, . . . d'élaborer des ensembles structurés, non pas directement avec d'autres ensembles structurés, mais en utilisant des résidus et des débris d'événements. . . des bribes et morceaux, témoins fossiles de l'histoire d'un individu ou d'une société".¹¹⁶

However, as Jacques Derrida argued, this applies to the construction of any type of discourse,¹¹⁷ not just myth. This is far from demonstrating that Boccaccio created a mythic narrative, because there is no way to prove that he consciously or unconsciously elaborated his story like a "bricoleur". This inevitably incomplete list rather indicates the enormous evocative potential of the Griselda story. In later early modern rewritings of the Griselda story, some of these related myths were even explicitly conjured up, rendering apparent not only their hidden structural relatedness but also enriching the mythemes' significance by attaching to them not one but two or more myths. For example, in Navarro's *Comedia muy exemplar*, Griselda is called "fortissima Medea"¹¹⁸ (strong/resilient Medea) by the marquis when she humbly welcomes his supposed future bride. Thus not only is the Greek myth of Jason and Medea conjured up, but it is also used to contrast Griselda's submission and humbleness with Medea's violent reaction when she realises her husband plans to replace her with another

¹¹⁵ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), p. 26.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), p. 418.

¹¹⁸ Pedro Navarro, "Comedia muy exemplar de la Marquesa de Saluzia llamada Griselda," Bourland Caroline (ed.), *Revue Hispanique* 9 (1902): 353, l. 1002.

woman.¹¹⁹ Another instance appears in Lope de Vega's *Ejemplo de casadas*, when the Conde Enrico (Lope's marquis) tells his wife that he brought their son to his death, comparing him to the babies killed during the Massacre of the Innocents ("llevando a entregar el niño, / aquel angel inocente, / a la inclemencia de Herodes"—"as I went to bring the boy, / this innocent angel / to Herod's inclemency").¹²⁰ In other words, the Conde, who claims to have acted under the pressure of his subjects, attributes to them the cruelty of his deed, but he also ironically qualifies his own behaviour as tyrannical.

The mythification of the Patient Griselda story therefore appears to have been a process that begun in the fifteenth century, and it was fuelled by its numerous appearances in works celebrating women's virtue and conduct literature for young ladies. Whereas the myth seems to have reached its greatest cultural importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it started to lose its appeal towards the end of the eighteenth century. However, occurrences of revival can be seen as late as the twenty-first century, though with limited cultural impact and only in the English language.¹²¹ What changed through time and space as this Italian story reached other European countries is the way in which these mythemes were exploited by later writers, enhancing, diminishing, or erasing them to engage with new socio-political environments while keeping their narrative and chronological arrangement relatively intact. The study of these changes is the focus of the following chapters.

In order to do so, I examine the different realisations of the myth by applying Alain Montandon's concept of "sociopoetics" as a method to analyse myths:

Branche de la mythocritique, la sociopoétique envisage le mythe dans une perspective surtout historique et non seulement comme fond culturel. Le mythe n'est pas une structure stable, mais au contraire consiste en une série de variations, de tensions entre des éléments stables et des éléments qui varient sans cesse, qui se métamorphosent et sont modifiés. Une sociopoétique du mythe prend en considération non seulement cet ancrage, mais étudie comment dans une idéologie donnée, dans une époque donnée, dans

119 Marie-Françoise Déodat-Kessedjian, Garnier, Emmanuelle, "Lope de Vega. *L'exemple pour les femmes mariées et l'épreuve de la patience*, 1601 (?)," in *L'Histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, ed. Jean-Luc Nardone (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2001), p. 141.

120 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1804–6.

121 There are two notable examples of this. The first is a play by the English dramatist Carlyle Churchill, *Top Girls* (1982), in which Griselda appears in the first act along with other paradigmatic female figures, such as Pope Joan, a geisha, and Dull Gret. The second is an American short story only available as an e-publication by Tinney Sue Heath, *The Patience of Griselda* (2011), which presents a sequel to the story from the perspective of Griselda's daughter.

un milieu socio-politique spécifique, dans un ensemble de représentations sociales et culturelles, un mythe vient à reparaître, continuer à vivre, se réécrire et s'activer. Le mythe est lié à son énonciation : c'est ce qui est raconté à un moment donné, dans des circonstances données. Or prendre en considération les positions de l'énonciation, c'est tenir compte de la poétique—au sens fort—du mythe, de l'énonciation comme phénomène littéraire. Un mythe n'existe pas en essence, c'est une histoire, un schème repris sans cesse différemment, pour rendre le réel intelligible et lui donner un sens. La sociopoétique se donne donc pour objet d'études la manière dont les représentations sociales (prises au sens large) à une époque articulent, génèrent et structurent le mythe. Une telle recherche ne comprend pas seulement une perspective diachronique, elle s'enrichit d'analyses synchroniques qui examinent le statut du système mythique à une époque donnée.¹²²

Thereby, in the rest of this study, I hope to outline the continuities and discontinuities of the Griselda myth's engagement with socio-political discourses in Europe from the end of the fourteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century.

122 Alain Montandon, "Figures mythiques et médiévales aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles. En guise de préface," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 11 (2004): 7.

**Part I: Griselda—From ambiguous fictive character
to the embodiment of various ideals**

1.1 Griselda in Boccaccio

By the early modern period, Griselda clearly comes to embody various feminine ideals: the ideal wife, the ideal queen, the ideal daughter, and even the ideal mother. She does not necessarily represent all these ideals at once, nor are they uncontested or unquestioned. Boccaccio's novella continues to puzzle critics, especially in terms of the various potential signified attached to the character of Griselda. Before I turn to Griselda's various incarnations in early modern literature, however, it is important to understand how this process of coming to embody feminine ideals, which is at the core of the story's mythification, came into existence and grew.

Many scholars have interpreted the heroine of *Decameron* X, 10 as a symbolic figure embodying Christ,¹²³ the Virgin Mary,¹²⁴ Job,¹²⁵ Abraham,¹²⁶ the soul,¹²⁷ or some other idealised form of virtue. Some have read her from a sociological perspective as an “esemplare lezione di comportamento sociale”¹²⁸ or from a legal point of view in terms of dignity and rights, while others have insisted on the ambiguity of the text.¹²⁹ While I am inclined to side with the latter and underline the novella's ambiguity, I believe that in *Dec.* X, 10, Boccaccio experimented with the virtue of obedience and patient submission and questioned its moral validity when carried to great extremes.

123 See Cottino-Jones, “Realtà e mito in Griselda.”

124 See Branca's note in Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1240, n. 6; Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio medievale* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1970), pp. 96 and ff.

125 Karin Schöpflin, “Boccaccios Griselda und Hiob,” *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 42 (1991); Victoria Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction* (Florence: Olschki, 1993), p. 257; Janet Levarie Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta: The Narrator as Lover* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 191; Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's “Decameron”* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986), pp. 124–25.

126 See Branca's note in Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1240, n. 6; Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, “L'ambigua sociologia di Griselda,” in *Il potere della parola: studi sul Decameron*, ed. Giorgio Barberi Squarotti (Naples: Federico & Ardia, 1983), pp. 205–06.

127 See Marga Cottino-Jones, “Fabula vs. Figura: Another Interpretation of the Griselda Story,” *Italica* 50(1973); Georges Barhouil, “Boccace et Catherine de Sienne (La dixième journée du *Decameron*: noblesse ou subversion?),” *Italianistica: Rivista di letteratura italiana* 11, no. 2/3 (1982).

128 Barberi Squarotti, “L'ambigua sociologia di Griselda,” p. 215.

129 Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer, *Boccaccio und der Beginn der Novelle. Strukturen der Kurzerzählung auf der Schwelle zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1969), pp. 105–08; Giulio Savelli, “Struttura e valori nella novella di Griselda,” *Studi sul Boccaccio* 14(1983–1984); Morabito, *Una sacra rappresentazione profana*, p. 1; Robert Hollander and Courtney Cahill, “Day Ten of the *Decameron*: The Myth of Order,” *Studi sul Boccaccio* 23 (1995): 148–63.

If Griselda is considered within the framework of Aristotelian ethics and their Christianised application in Thomas Aquinas's works,¹³⁰ her behaviour suggests that she is on several accounts a borderline moral case. Thus, Boccaccio uses her to examine the concept of wifely obedience and its moral limitations, maintaining enough ambiguity throughout the novella so as to present Griselda as being simultaneously morally condemnable on the one hand and seemingly divinely inspired on the other. However, the predominance of the literal reading over the allegorical, since the story is not told in the manner of a continuous allegory, undermines the symbolic reading. Thus, Boccaccio uses these conflicting levels of interpretation for Griselda's character during her trials in order to show, on the one hand, that not every narrative that hints at allegory actually permits a typological reading, while on the other hand questioning the human limits of acceptance of earthly life and Christian expectations in terms of patience. Before I analyse how Griselda's virtuous wifely obedience is performed to excess from a moral point of view, let me first expose how the typological level is seemingly constructed and undermined.

In various passages from his *Genealogia deorum gentilium* and his commentaries on Dante's *Divina commedia*,¹³¹ Boccaccio demonstrates that other texts besides the Bible (i.e. poetical texts) are polysemous and can be read on the same four levels as the Scriptures, namely, literally or historically, allegorically or typologically, morally or tropologically, and anagogically.¹³² As Jonathan Usher explains, Boccaccio was aware that not every reader is capable of accurately reading all four levels of multi-layered texts,¹³³ so guidance is needed, which Boccaccio provides in many of his own treatises, commentaries, and collections of stories. Accordingly, scholars have envisaged Dioneo's conclusion to *Decameron* X, 10 as an invitation to re-read the novella allegorically. As Dioneo equates the female protagonist with "divini spiriti",¹³⁴ he not only suggests that Griselda belongs to souls that have been blessed with God's grace—like biblical characters, saints and even angels—but also indirectly encourages readers to go through the novella again, looking for other signs of Griselda's sanctity. However, such a

130 For more on Aquinas's influence on Boccaccio's writing, see Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*.

131 See for example Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, I, 3, 7–8; the whole of his *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia* is an analysis of Dante's masterpiece using the four levels of medieval biblical commentaries. See also Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante*.

132 See Jonathan Usher, "Boccaccio on Readers and Reading," *Heliotropia: Forum for Boccaccio Research and Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (2003); Candido, "La fabula di Amore e Psiche."

133 Usher, "Boccaccio on Readers and Reading," p. 82.

134 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1248.

re-reading provides a complex and inconsistent typology involving several Biblical and Greco-Roman mythical figures rather than a continuous and coherent allegorical embodiment of a single divine figure, as Branca, Cottino-Jones, and others have suggested. This inconsistency stems from the fact that whoever Griselda is apparently allegorically associated with, Gualtieri clumsily or hardly fits into the semantic frame of the typological level of interpretation.

While Cottino-Jones perhaps reads too much into Griselda's first description in the novella as a "povera giovinetta di una villa", which in her opinion connects Griselda with the "Franciscan virtue of poverty",¹³⁵ she rightly notices that Gualtieri's encounter with Griselda on the wedding day draws on Old Testament betrothal typology in order to present her as an ideal bride. Cottino-Jones, however, sees in the young woman who "con aqua tornava dalla fonte" only Rebecca,¹³⁶ whereas the scene echoes passages not just from Genesis 24 but also Genesis 29 and Exodus 2. In these, a well is indeed the origin of Rebecca's first meeting and later marriage with Isaac, as well as Rachel's and Sephora's meetings with their respective husbands, Jacob and Moses, which take place near a well. The water from the well in these encounters is a symbol of life, nourishment, and charity. In Rebecca's and Rachel's cases, it also symbolises their virtue, generosity, care, and hospitality. Since Griselda brings Gualtieri inside her house to her father, the biblical allusions encourage readers to associate her with these ideal wives of the Old Testament. In addition, the fact that Griselda is referred to as a "guardiana di pecore"¹³⁷ may be seen, as Cottino-Jones remarks, as a reference to Christ, since he is not only referred to as a shepherd in John 10:11–18 but also frequently associated with the sacrificial lamb.¹³⁸

Nonetheless, as Cottino-Jones extends the Griselda-Rebecca parallelism to Gualtieri, envisaging him as the embodiment of Isaac and as a "prefiguration of Christ", which in the course of the novella "grows into a Divine King or Divine Father figure",¹³⁹ it becomes harder to agree with her. Isaac is viewed by Christian exegesis as Christ, because his father was ready to sacrifice him to prove his faith and not because he married Rebecca. In spite of the fact that Christ is described as a bridegroom and symbolically married to the Church in the Bible,¹⁴⁰ considering Gualtieri as a figuration of Isaac as Christ when he marries

135 Cottino-Jones, "Fabula vs. Figura," p. 43.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

137 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1238.

138 Cottino-Jones, "Fabula vs. Figura," p. 44.

139 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

140 For Christ as a bridegroom, see John 3: 29 or Mathew 25: 1–13, among other passages, and for the Church as his bride, see Ephesians 5: 22–33.

Griselda seems rather farfetched, all the more so if Griselda is also supposed to embody Christ. In addition, as we shall see, the development of the novella, which includes other biblical types, makes it unlikely that Boccaccio constructed his marquis as a God figure.

When it comes to the trials, the potential typology widens from Christ to the Virgin Mary, together with Abraham, Agamemnon, Job, and more generally the saints and martyrs.¹⁴¹ Cottino-Jones sees Griselda as a Christ figure and her trials as a *Via Crucis*, and she sees her return and restoration as Gualtieri's wife and marquise as a resurrection.¹⁴² However, Griselda does not die, and she is not granted entry into heaven, nor are her trials as hard as those of the martyrs. In fact, in order to complete their *Via Crucis*, most martyrs suffer mental as much as severe physical torture, which of course finally causes them to die in a similar fashion to Christ on the Cross, thereby elevating them and securing their entrance into God's heavenly realm.

Branca, on the other hand, considers that the fact that Griselda is forced to give up her children as a sign that she is a *figura Mariae*.¹⁴³ It is true that Griselda is endowed with some of the Virgin's attributes, such as the heart pierced with knives.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the protagonist of *Decameron* X, 10 offers a rather outwardly stoic version of the *mater dolorosa*, which stands in stark contrast with the aggrieved Virgin Mary, whose cult was heightened in Italy and Europe after the plague, being often depicted in the arts with a painful expression in representations of the lamentation of Christ's death.¹⁴⁵ Although Ambrose and some twelfth-century churchmen, such as Richard of St. Victor and Arnould Bonnaevallis, envisaged the Virgin's acceptance of Christ's death as a stoic submission to God's will, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, her sorrow, both internal and external, as a facial and bodily expression became the object of sermons, prayers, and artistic works stressing the power of compassion. Indeed, Mary's grief also provokes the compassion of those who contemplate her image.¹⁴⁶

141 For Griselda as a martyr, see Filippo Fonio, "Dalla legenda alla novella: Continuità di moduli e variazioni di genere: Il caso di Boccaccio," in *La nouvelle italienne du Moyen Age à la Renaissance*, ed. Johannes Bartuschat (Grenoble, France: Université Stendhal, 2006).

142 Cottino-Jones, "Fabula vs. Figura," pp. 47–49.

143 Branca, *Boccaccio medievale*, p. 96 and ff.

144 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1244.

145 See Judith Steinhoff, "Weeping Women: Social Roles and Images in Fourteenth-Century Tuscany," in *Crying the Middle Ages. Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012).

146 See Maria Warner, *Alone of all her Sex. The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1976), pp. 214–17; Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2001),

Although Griselda's stoicism is only external, when Griselda's internal sorrow is finally expressed explicitly by the narrator, it happens not when her children are taken from her but rather when the remarriage of her husband appears as an inevitable reality. When she is bereft of her son, Griselda's pain is only indirectly alluded to by Gualtieri's wonder at her calm demeanour, which he does not mistake for insensitivity because he knows how deeply she loves her children ("carnalissima dei figlie . . . la vedea").¹⁴⁷ As he repudiates her and later invites her to come back to prepare his wedding, however, the narrator no longer remains silent about her interiority. He refers to Griselda's inward sadness and torment on three occasions in vivid terms, as if it grieved her more to hear about the dissolution of her marriage and Gualtieri's second marriage to another woman than losing her babies: "La donna, sentendo queste cose e parendole dovere sperare di ritornare a casa del padre . . . e vedere a un'altra donna tener colui al quale ella voleva tutto il suo bene, forte in se medesima si dolea"; "La donna, udendo queste parole, non senza grandissima fatica, oltre alla natura delle femine, ritenne le lagrime"; "Come che queste parole fossero tutte coltella al cuor di Griselda, come a colei che non aveva così potuto por giù l'amore che ella gli portava come fatto aveva la buona fortuna".¹⁴⁸ Thus, Boccaccio plays with the *mater dolorosa* figure and turns her into an "*uxor dolorosa*", whose pain arises not from her husband's death but rather from divorce. In other words, in applying the Virgin's usual attributes of passive acceptance and the "coltella al cuor" to Griselda during her marriage dissolution, Boccaccio transforms the holy sorrow of Christ's mother into a very secular, earthly grief, apparently not designed by God but merely by her worldly husband.

A similar process occurs when the novella seems to refer to Abraham's sacrifice or echoes Job's trials as she delivers her parting speech.¹⁴⁹ Even if, like Abraham, she is willing to let her children be killed or, like Job, have every possession taken from her, she is not tested by God but by Gualtieri. Furthermore, unlike Job, Griselda retains her physical health. It is true that in a similar way to Job's confrontation to God with his innocence, claiming that he does not deserve to be treated in such a terrible way, Griselda reminds Gualtieri that in making her return everything he gave her during their married life, he also

pp. 80–81; Eva De Visscher, "Marian Devotion in the Latin West in the Later Middle Ages," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 186.

147 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1241.

148 *Ibid.*, pp. 1242, 1243, 1244–45.

149 See *ibid.*, p. 1243. Compare with Job 1: 20–21. For a detailed analysis of the novella as an allegorical figuration of the Book of Job, see Schöpflin, "Boccaccio's Griselda und Hiob."; see also Branca's notes in Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1243, n. 4, 8.

asks her to become shamefully naked. However, the marquis's reaction clearly does not match God's, thereby preventing any sort of parallel between them and highlighting the limits of Gualtieri's earthly powers. Whereas God reminds Job of his almighty powerfulness and wisdom, causing Job to humbly repent, Griselda not only obtains a smock to cover her nakedness but arouses tears in her husband, who is then forced to hold them back ("Gualtieri, che maggior voglia di piagnere aveva che d'altro").¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the marquis's tears seem to signify that Griselda makes her husband start to repent or feel ashamed of his continuous testing of her, thereby reversing the parallelism with the Book of Job.¹⁵¹

Here, one could object that Gualtieri does not actually stand for God, or at least he only stands for God indirectly. It is indirect in so far as Gualtieri acts as his instrument, or rather the instrument of Fortune, because as Branca remarks, "[s]empre Griselda parla soltanto di 'cattiva' o di 'nemica' fortuna, mai della volontà di Gualtieri".¹⁵² Fortune at the time was a changing concept, and some still adhered to the medieval view of Fortune as the embodiment of God's providence, whose fickleness could deprive people of their material goods or cause their enterprises to fail as much as it could make them wealthy and successful. Fortune, according to thinkers from Augustine and Boethius to Dante, was part of God's order, and the expression, however unexpected or unjustifiable in appearance, of his providential plans. Fortune was also the means to manifest one's virtue, and virtue was the means to bear its blows. Consequently, from this perspective, the intention behind the testing may be God's will. However, during the fourteenth century, the concept of Fortune started to evolve towards the more secular meaning of "chance",¹⁵³ whereas virtue, especially in the form of intelligence or reason, began to be more than the mere acceptance of "bad Fortune". Rather, it becomes more clearly the means to turn "bad Fortune" into "good Fortune". In other words, virtue can overcome Fortune's power to ruin one's life. If Fortune can be reversed, it therefore loses its divine attributes and can no longer represent God's providence.

In the *Decameron* as a whole, Fortune, though capricious and capable of affecting men's successes and possessions in the manner of a divine entity, is not

¹⁵⁰ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1243.

¹⁵¹ See Job 42: 1–6.

¹⁵² Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1244, n. 4.

¹⁵³ Mazzotta, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's "Decameron"*, pp. 208 and ff; Vincenzo Cioffari, "The Conception of Fortune in the Decameron," *Italica* 17, no. 4 (1940).

ineluctable and can also be sometimes reversed through men's "ingegno".¹⁵⁴ However, in the case of the last novella, one can doubt whether Fortune has anything to do with Griselda's losses. Although Fortune may have led Gualtieri to set eyes on her and choose her to be his wife, her trials, on the contrary, appear less likely to be due to the workings of Fortune. A comparison with the other novellas helps to shed light on the fact that this instrument of God's providence is not what is at play in the last story of the *Decameron*. For example, throughout the novellas of the second day, the way the protagonists regain their wealth or are reunited with their lost children is entirely fortuitous and often occasioned by unexpected encounters enabling them to be restored to their former happy state. On the contrary, Griselda's loss of her daughter, son, husband, noble status, and possessions, as well as her recovery of them, can hardly be considered as fortuity because, by his own admission, Gualtieri had planned everything ("a antiveduto fine operava").¹⁵⁵ In contrast, in the first novella of Day X, the King of Spain leaves room for Fortune to intervene by giving Ruggieri the choice between two chests, one full of earth and the other full of jewels. The marquis, meanwhile, does not leave Fortune with any potential to interfere. Griselda faces a different kind of choice from Ruggieri's: It is not between two objects but rather between two actions, obeying and disobeying (i.e. between virtue and sin). Fortune has no influence over men's decisions to behave virtuously or not, only over their social status, wealth, and reunion with, or separation from, family members. Fortune cannot have any power over men's preferences for virtue or sin, because God granted them the free will to make moral choices for which they are accountable for in front of earthly judges and ultimately before the Lord. Thus, when the narrator describes the novella's events from Griselda's perspective, qualifying the first two trials as "ingiurie della fortuna"¹⁵⁶ and her repudiation and return to her father's place as a "fiero assalto della nemica fortuna",¹⁵⁷ this is merely describing Griselda's own perception and understanding of what has happened to her. It does not mean, however, that her own perception is accurate, especially since she has only a partial and limited access to the truth: she does not know that her children are alive or that her husband never intended to marry another woman.

It thus seems that each time Boccaccio provides hints at a possible allegorical reading of Griselda's life, he reduces it to an earthly, secular reality, thus

¹⁵⁴ See Barolini, Robert Alister Gordon Hastings, *Nature and Reason in the Decameron* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1975), esp. pp. 91–97.

¹⁵⁵ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1247.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1242.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1244.

preventing the allegory from surviving or having an actual existence of its own in parallel with the literal meaning. If there is no allegorical level to the novella, what are we to make of Griselda's supposed virtue of obedience? One way to answer this question is to assess her submission in terms of its moral acceptability within the limits of Christian ethics.

According to Aquinas, obedience is a moral virtue which pertains to justice.¹⁵⁸ Aquinas adopted Aristotle's view that virtues are "potentiae naturae", which are brought to a state of perfection through habit or repetition of a virtuous action (i.e. a "habitus operativus").¹⁵⁹ As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Gualtieri chooses Griselda for her "costumi", which he interpreted as a sign that he could live a quiet and happy life with her.¹⁶⁰ This suggests that Gualtieri saw in Griselda "potentiae naturae" or "virtues in potential". Among the latter, the marquis seems to value obedience above all, since he asks her if she would be acquiescent and obedient to him in every circumstance ("se ella sempre... s'ingegnerebbe di compiacergli e di niuna cosa che egli dicesse o facesse non turbarsi, e se ella sarebbe obediente e simili altre cose assai").¹⁶¹ This kind of obedience is considered a form of courage that Aristotle distinguishes from manly courage in his *Politics*: "the temperance of woman and that of a man are not the same, nor their courage and justice, as Socrates thought, but the one is the courage of command, and the other that of subordination, and the case is similar with the other virtues".¹⁶²

158 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947–48), II^a-IIae q. 104 a. 2 ad 2.

159 *Ibid.*, IIa, q. 55 a. 2 co. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that "[t]he virtues... are engendered in us neither by nature nor yet in violation of nature; nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit", see *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1934), II, i, 3; p. 71. In other words, "[T]he faculties [i.e. including virtues] given us by nature are bestowed upon us first in a potential form; we exhibit their actual exercise afterwards", *ibid.*, II, i, 4, p. 71. Thus, as virtue is exercised, it becomes more perfect: "The virtues... we acquire by first having actually practised them, just as we do the arts... we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts", *ibid.*, II, i, 4; p. 73.

160 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1235.

161 *Ibid.*, p. 1237.

162 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Harris Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1944), 1260a. If Boccaccio did not read it from Aristotle's *Politics*, which had been translated in Latin in the thirteenth century by William of Moerbeke, he most likely read Thomas Aquinas's commentary, which with respect to this passage states: "the same virtue does not belong to men and women and other subjects, as Socrates thought. Rather, the courage of men is to command, namely, that no fear causes them to fail to order what should be done, but women and any subjects need to have subservient courage, namely, that they do not fail to do their duty out of

In the writings of the early Christians and until Aquinas, women's submission to their male counterparts—be they father, brother, or husband—was not only sanctioned by the Bible¹⁶³ but also considered part of natural law¹⁶⁴ (i.e. women's natural propensity to be weaker and less capable of reason than men). This is a concept reinforced by the rediscovery of Aristotelian writings and in particular his political and medical treatises¹⁶⁵:

Ad secundum dicendum quod duplex est subiectio. Una servilis, secundum quam praesidens utitur subiecto ad sui ipsius utilitatem et talis subiectio introducta est post peccatum. Est autem alia subiectio oeconomica vel civilis, secundum quam praesidens utitur subiectis ad eorum utilitatem et bonum. Et ista subiectio fuisset etiam ante peccatum, defuisset enim bonum ordinis in humana multitudo, si quidam per alios sapientiores gubernati non fuissent. Et sic ex tali subiectione naturaliter femina subiecta est viro, quia naturaliter in homine magis abundat discretio rationis. Nec inaequalitas hominum excluditur per innocentiae statum, ut infra dicitur.¹⁶⁶

Although Aquinas thus explains that even in the state of Innocence, it was natural that Eve should be subjected to Adam, this does not mean that all women after the Fall followed natural law and submitted to their husbands without being taught to do so. As such, it is a propensity that individuals, both male and female, possess in potential but needs to be trained.

Consequently, we might argue that Gualtieri gives Griselda opportunities to practice, or rather perform, “obedient acts” so as to transform or mature her “obedience potential” or “moral disposition to obedience” into full obedience or courage as a wifely virtue. The idea that virtuous dispositions have to be trained from childhood onwards is sanctioned by Griselda herself. At the end of the novella, when Gualtieri asks her opinion about his supposedly new bride, she considers that her education and the habits she adopted with her father during her harsh childhood in countryside poverty were a form of a “training” that helped her sustain the trials. The young lady whom Gualtieri pretends to marry, in contrast, was raised in a noble environment and therefore, according to Griselda, unable to endure such treatment (“quelle punture, le quali all’altre,

fear” Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), chapter 10 “Family”, section 7; p. 73.

163 See Genesis 3: 16, 1 Peter 3: 1, Ephesians 5: 22, for the most famous verses.

164 See also among other passages: Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI, ii, 17; Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, IV; Augustine of Hippo, *Confessiones*, XIII, 32; Gratian, *Decretum*, XII.

165 Kilcullen, John, “Medieval Political Philosophy”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/medieval-political/>, retrieved February 2nd 2015.

166 Aquinas, *Summa*, I^a -iae q. 92 a. 1 ad 2.

che vostra fu, . . . non diate a questa, ché appena che io creda che ella le potesse sostenere, sí perché piú giovane è e sí ancora perché in dilicatezze è allevata”).¹⁶⁷ In other words, the “continue fatiche” that Griselda experienced “da piccolina” prepared her and gave her sufficient practice for her virtues to bear her husband’s testing.¹⁶⁸ Griselda thus agrees with Aristotle that “[i]t is therefore not of small moment whether we are trained from childhood in one set of habits or another; on the contrary it is of very great, or rather of supreme importance”.¹⁶⁹ Gualtieri also seems to have conceived his trials as a form of training when he justifies them as a means to teach her to be a good wife: “ciò che io faceva a antiveduto fine operava, volendoti [i.e. Griselda] insegnar d’esser moglie”.¹⁷⁰ Thus, “esser moglie” for the marquis means a wife should be obedient to her husband in every circumstance; in other words, she should display the feminine version of the virtue of courage that Aristotle describes. While this may seem straightforward, the moral problem or edge case stems from the extent to which a wife should obey her husband and whether indeed she should obey in every situation.

According to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, “moral qualities [i.e. virtues] are so constituted as to be destroyed by excess and by deficiency”, but they are “preserved by the observance of the mean”.¹⁷¹ This was also true according to medieval Christian ethics. Aquinas explains that a person can be excessively obedient or, on the contrary, insufficiently compliant with what is demanded:

Attenditur autem eius superfluum non quidem secundum quantum, sed secundum alias circumstantias, inquantum scilicet aliquis obedit vel cui non debet vel in quibus sicut etiam supra de religione dictum est. Potest etiam dici quod sicut in iustitia superfluum est in eo qui retinet alienum, diminutum autem in eo cui non redditur quod debetur, ut philosophus dicit, in V Ethic.; ita etiam obedientia medium est inter superfluum quod attenditur ex parte eius qui subtrahit superiori obedientiae debitum, quia superabundat in implendo propriam voluntatem, diminutum autem ex parte superioris cui non obeditur. Unde secundum hoc, obedientia non erit medium duarum malitiarum, sicut supra de iustitia dictum est.¹⁷²

Although it is unclear in this passage under which exact circumstances one ought not to obey, Aquinas comes back to the issue to specify that even if the Scriptures state that a servant or a child must obey his master or father, respectively, “in

¹⁶⁷ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1246.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1246.

¹⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Ethics*, II, i, 8; p. 75.

¹⁷⁰ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1247.

¹⁷¹ Aristotle, *Ethics*, II, ii, 6–7; p. 77.

¹⁷² Aquinas, *Summa*, II^a–IIae q. 104 a. 2 ad 2.

omnibus”, God’s law has precedence over man’s law. As Act 5: 29 states: “obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus”. He therefore argues that if the orders are against God, one should not obey (“Sed quandoque praecepta praelatorum sunt contra Deum. Ergo non in omnibus praelatis est obediendum”).¹⁷³ Consequently, when a parent or master gives an order that goes contrary to God’s precepts, if someone obeys, this person then falls into excess and sin.

Several questions arise from this: Can we consider Griselda’s obedience as excessive and therefore sinful? Is this true for all the parts of her trials or just some? Critics have displayed a tendency to overlook Griselda’s repudiation and have more closely examined the fact that she accepts having her children killed. Modern readers are usually more puzzled by the fact that Griselda passively yields her children to a certain death than by her acceptance of being sent back to her father.¹⁷⁴ However, from the point of view of medieval Christian ethics, infanticide, which is essentially murder, is as much a sin as the dissolution of a marriage. While murder goes against God’s Ten Commandments, marriage, as a sacrament, was considered a sign of God’s grace, and this sacramental status ensured its indissolubility and turned its complete dissolution into a transgression of divine law, except in the cases where some impediment could prove that the marriage bond was invalid in the first place.¹⁷⁵ The marquis, of course, dissimulates, and he never actually says that he wishes to have their daughter and their son killed, neither does he really want to divorce from Griselda. However, in examining the moral nature of her obedience, we have to consider the events from her perspective and her understanding of the circumstances.

The novella explicitly states that she understands that her children are destined to be killed (“La donna . . .comprese che a costui [i.e. Gualtieri’s servant] fosse imposto che egli l’uccidesse [i.e. her daughter]”, “similmente dimostrato d’averlo [i.e. her son] fatto ucidere”¹⁷⁶) and that her marriage is going to be dissolved in order for her husband to remarry (“lasciar te e prendere un’altra moglie”).¹⁷⁷ Indeed, without a dissolution, remarriage was not permitted by

¹⁷³ Ibid., II^a–IIae q. 104 a. 5 s. c.

¹⁷⁴ See Thomas G. Bergin sees Griselda as a “pathological wife”, *Boccaccio* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 323–25. So does Alfredo Bonadeo in “Marriage and Adultery in the *Decameron*,” *Philological Quarterly* 60 (1981): 291.

¹⁷⁵ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 123: “Lex autem divina supernaturalem quandam rationem apponit ex significatione inseparabilis coniunctionis Christi et Ecclesiae, quae est una unius. Sic igitur inordinationes circa actum generationis non solum instinctui naturali repugnant, sed etiam leges divinas et humanas transgrediuntur. Unde circa hoc magis ex inordinatione peccatur quam circa sumptionem cibi, aut alterius huius modi.”

¹⁷⁶ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, pp. 1240, 1241.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 1241.

medieval Canon Law.¹⁷⁸ Although Gualtieri provides justifications for his supposed intentions to kill his children and annul their marriage, they remain morally disputable if not condemnable.

Regarding the murder of his daughter and son, the marquis explains that they represent a potential threat to the *bonum communitatis*: “i suoi uomini pesimamente si contentavano di lei per la sua bassa condizione e spezialmente poi che vedevano che ella portava figlioli, e della figliuola che nata era tristissimi altro che momorar non faceano”; “poiscia che tu questo figliol maschio facesti... questi miei viver . . . si duramente si ramaricano che un nepote di Giannucolo dopo me debbia rimaner lor signore: di che io mi dotto, se io non ci vorrò esser cacciato”.¹⁷⁹ In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas admits that “si aliquis homo sit periculosus communitati et corruptivus ipsius propter aliquod peccatum, laudabiliter et salubriter occiditur, ut bonum commune conservetur, modicum enim fermentum totam massam corrumpit”,¹⁸⁰ provided that it is decided and carried out by a lawful “publicam auctoritatem”.¹⁸¹ While Gualtieri is the public authority of Saluzzo, and his children, as he pretends, endanger the *bonum communitatis*, they can hardly be considered persons corrupting the community with their sins. Griselda’s daughter and son rather belong to the category of “innocents”, given that at the time of their supposed death, they are too young to have committed any sin. Aquinas also evokes the fact that God ordered Abraham to kill his son, whom Aquinas refers to as an “innocent”, but he does it only to remind his audience that, on the one hand, “ille qui mandato Dei occidit innocentem, talis non peccat”,¹⁸² while on the other hand, in the absence of God’s command, “nullo modo licet occidere innocentem”,¹⁸³ since according to Exodus 23:7, it is forbidden to take the life of an innocent and just person. Consequently, Griselda should consider that her children cannot be lawfully put to death on two grounds: first, her husband’s command is not God’s and second, her daughter and son are innocent, so it is sinful to kill them. Even though she does not kill them herself, the fact that she willingly hands them over to Gualtieri’s servant, knowing he will murder them, turns her into an accomplice to infanticide.

178 While spouses could separate *a mensa et thoro* (i.e. live separately in different houses), this implied that their marriage bond was still valid and prevented remarriage.

179 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, pp. 1239, 1241.

180 Aquinas, *Summa*, II^a-IIae q. 64 a. 2 co.

181 *Ibid.*, II^a-IIae q. 64 a. 3 co.

182 *Ibid.*, II^a-IIae q. 64 a. 6 ad 1.

183 *Ibid.*, II^a-IIae q. 64 a. 6 co.

Even if we consider the problem from another angle—namely that of Griselda, who as a wife should temper her husband and guide him from sinful thoughts like murder—Griselda does not fulfil her duty. In the Middle Ages, there was a widespread belief that because women supposedly had a weaker and softer nature than men, they were well equipped to act as peacemakers and intercessors between different parties or simply to calm their husband's hotter, more violent temperaments.¹⁸⁴ Accordingly, Griselda should have talked Gualtieri out of his intention to murder his children and found another means to maintain the peace in her husband's realm.

Thus, an examination of the circumstances of Griselda's acceptance to let her children be slain reveals not only that her obedience is morally condemnable but also that she fails in her "generic role as man's *quietatio*".¹⁸⁵ In obeying, Griselda falls into excess and thereby into sin, although it is in part mitigated by the fact that her children do not actually die. Moreover, Griselda misses an opportunity to exercise a positive moral influence on her husband's excessive and sinful line of thought and action.

The case of her repudiation, however, is different. From a doctrinal point of view, it is implausible that Gualtieri could have obtained a papal dispensation as he claims ("Donna, per concession fattami dal Papa io posso altra donna pigliare e lasciar te").¹⁸⁶ In order to obtain the dissolution of his marriage with Griselda, the marquis would have had to give proof that his marriage was invalid in the first place by evoking at least one of the several marriage impediments admitted by the medieval Church. These include pre-contract or *ligamen*, consanguinity, affinity, justice of public honesty, spiritual kinship, age, force and fear, crime, religious profession, impotence and frigidity, error of person or condition, disparity of cult, and legal kinship.¹⁸⁷ However, none of these applies in so far as what the novella lets readers know. Neither Gualtieri nor Griselda has contracted marriage with someone else before the solemnisation of their union. They are not members of the same family, nor are they related by marriage or coitus with one of their family members. They are not related by

184 See for example the Biblical Book of Esther, Thomas of Chobham, *Summa Confessorum* 7.2.15, Albertanus of Brescia, *Liber consolationis et concilii* or Christine de Pisan, *Livre des trois vertus* I.8. For more on the topic, see Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 82–95; Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," *Speculum* 61, no. 3 (1986).

185 Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, p. 84.

186 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1242.

187 This list comprises the main and most recurrent impediments as referenced by Henry Ansgar Kelly in "Marriage Impediment," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schlauch (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2006), pp. 525–26.

spiritual kinship either as they are too young. Neither has committed any crime or vowed to take part in a religious order. Gualtieri and Griselda are clearly not frigid because they have two children together, and Griselda later suggested frigidity (since she does not have another baby after her son) would not have been admissible as an impediment after their marriage had already produced offspring. The marquis not only makes the decision alone to marry Griselda but he also observed her before making that decision, so he could not have been misled about who she was or her condition. They are of the same religion and unrelated by adoption. As for the impediment of force and fear, although Griselda arguably gives her consent to the match under great social pressure because she owes obedience to her father and to Gualtieri as her lord, this pressure is only psychological and does not take the form of threats to her physical integrity or that of her father. Moreover, in keeping with the Church requirements for the validity of a marriage bond, she makes her wedding vow *per verba de praesenti* (“Signor mio, s’i”) in front of witnesses (“in presenza di tutta la sua compagnia”),¹⁸⁸ after having already positively answered all of Gualtieri’s questions regarding her role as his wife within the privacy of her home. These various textual indications therefore undermine a reading of Griselda’s consent as performed under force and fear as a way of coercing her into accepting the marital union. More generally, this entails that in theoretical terms, the marquis’s claim to have obtained a papal dispensation is implausible. For Griselda to have deemed it incredible, however, she would have had to have knowledge of the canonical marriage impediments. The novella’s silence on this aspect prevents the reader from reaching any conclusion as to Griselda’s opinion about the veracity of her husband’s claim. It can only be conjectured that Gualtieri’s material proof in the form of letters from Rome, albeit falsifications, may have convinced Griselda that the Pope had indeed declared their marriage null and void, especially since only the Church was able to decree marriage annulments. The mention of the Pope, as the ecclesiastical authority issuing the letters, also endowed them with an aura of truth.

Consequently, an examination into the circumstances of Griselda’s consent to her marriage annulment can only remain inconclusive with regard to her obedience. It cannot be determined if it is excessive, because it cannot be assessed with certainty that she truly considered the papal dispensation legitimate. It can only be hypothesised that she likely considered it lawful and therefore did not sin in obeying her husband’s orders to go back to her father. Whereas it appears that Griselda clearly was too obedient when she accepted to

188 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1237.

let her children be killed, it seems that she was not when she did not contest her repudiation.

As a moral limit case and an allegorical figure only in appearances, Griselda reminds readers that not everything is what it seems, and not every loss of a family member or social status is due to Fortune, as well as that wifely virtue can be excessive. The fact that she recovers everything lost does not necessarily mean she is actually rewarded for her obedience. Her reward is, after all, only an earthly one, just as in *Decameron* I, 1, Ser Ceparollo's (to whom scholars often oppose Griselda) earthly reward after his death is ironically to be remembered and venerated as a saint despite having been "il piggior uomo forse che mai nascesse" during his lifetime.¹⁸⁹ These novellas do not disclose where any of them go in the afterlife or whether they are destined for Hell, Purgatory, or Heaven. This is left to the readers' imaginations. In any case, Ser Ceparollo's story shows that the worldly celebration of a person is not a guarantee of their virtue. While I doubt that Boccaccio conceived Griselda as a character who, had she been real, would have ultimately ended up in Hell, he suggests through his narrator's conclusion that obedience was not the appropriate behaviour in the face of Gualtieri's unjustified tests, and, more importantly, that human wickedness exists and not everything is due to Fortune. While Dioneo's final remarks begin by seeming to praise Griselda's virtues, he also harshly condemns the marquis's judgment and ruling skills before expressing his regret that Griselda did not take revenge on her husband by cheating on him after he repudiated her. Even if the narrator's last sentence is meant as a bawdy joke to please and amuse his audience, Dioneo's conclusion also literally remodels Griselda's behaviour as rebellion, a form of disobedience, as the appropriate answer. Such sexual payback would undermine Gualtieri's masculinity and honour, just as he destroyed her femininity as a mother and as wife, reducing her value as a woman to nothing, given the loss of her virginity and dishonour as a repudiated spouse, according to medieval evaluation of a woman's social worth. Although Boccaccio may not have supported such sexual revenge, Dioneo's words hint at the fact that some events are simply due to human wickedness and require a human reply rather than a virtuous, holy or sacred one. Obedience, patience, and faithfulness have limits when it comes to earthly matters, and justice can also be worldly, so not everything has to wait until the Last Judgement. On a metaliterary level, the novella shows that not every story about a tested hero is an allegory in which the protagonist stands for some godly ideal or biblical figure.

189 *Ibid.*, I, p. 54.

While it is true that in the *Esposizioni*, Boccaccio concedes, while analysing the figure of Cerberus, that a single “character” may have various symbolic significations at once, Cerberus represents as much the vice of gluttony as that of avarice. When Boccaccio interprets Dante’s *Commedia* or literary texts from classic poets, he does so coherently and consistently for all the main characters:

Et ut quid velim facilius assumatur, ponemus exemplum. Perseus Iovis filius figmento poetico occidit Gorgonem, et victor evolavit in ethera. Hoc dum legitur per licteram hystorialis sensus prestatur. Si moralis ex hac lictera queritur intellectus, victoria ostenditur prudentis in vicium et ad virtutem accessio. Allegorice autem si velimus assumere, pie mentis, spretis mundanis deliciis, ad celestia elevatio designatur. Preterea posset et anagogice dici per fabulam Christi ascensum ad Patrem, mundi principe superato, figurari.¹⁹⁰

Whatever meanings Boccaccio ascribes to Perseus, those attributed to Medusa are given accordingly. Consequently, given Boccaccio’s mastery of all four levels of interpretation, it would seem strange that he would produce incoherence in his own literary works. What is more, Dioneo’s conclusion repeats this imbalance between Griselda and Gualtieri. While the former seems to be more than a human being, the latter is not equated with any heavenly or demonic figure but simply metaphorically deprived of his social status and thrown down at the bottom of the social scale as “piú degn[o] di guardar porci che d’averè sopra uomini signoria”.¹⁹¹

While Boccaccio believed that many poetical texts could be interpreted like the Bible on four levels, as Usher rightly remarks, this did not mean that he thought that every single fictional work was so conceived or those that could be read as such were allegorical in all their parts.¹⁹² Not only did he agree with Augustine in that “Non omnia, que gesta narrantur, aliquid etiam significare putanda sunt”,¹⁹³ but in his commentary on Dante’s *Commedia*, Boccaccio states that some Canti do not have any allegorical meaning attached to them, as in the case of Canti X and XI.¹⁹⁴

From his first novella onwards, Boccaccio therefore clearly affirms that appearances of the divine in real life can be deceiving. They can also be deceiving in terms of the form of a literary production, which he states indirectly in the last novella of his collection.

¹⁹⁰ Boccaccio, *Genealogia* I, 3, 7–8, quoted in Usher, “Boccaccio on Readers and Reading,” p. 74.

¹⁹¹ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1248.

¹⁹² Usher, “Boccaccio on Readers and Reading,” pp. 78–79.

¹⁹³ *De Civitate Dei* XVI, 2, quoted in Usher, *ibid.*, p. 79. Boccaccio evokes this passage of Augustine’s masterpiece in his comment on Dante’s *Inferno* I in the *Esposizioni*.

¹⁹⁴ Usher, *ibid.*, p. 80.

1.2 Griselda in Petrarch

When Boccaccio's master and friend, Petrarch, reads *Decameron* X, 10, he is so pleased with it that out of keen interest and affection for his friend and a desire to make the story available to non-Italian readers, he translates the story into Latin. As was usual at the time, however, the translation was not literal. Petrarch dedicates and sends his translation to Boccaccio along with framing letters explaining his reasons for translating this text and discussing its meaning. Although to a modern audience, the letters appear to be a private written form of expression, for Petrarch, this was not the case. Not only was he aware that the letters were intercepted, but he also conceived them as part of his *Seniles* (i.e. a collection of letters meant as an exemplary autobiography in the manner of Cicero's letter).¹⁹⁵ Consequently, the letters addressed to Boccaccio, as much as Petrarch's translation, are literary artefacts and must be approached as such.

Petrarch finds Griselda's story different ("dissimilem")¹⁹⁶ from the rest of the *Decameron* and lengthily insists on the fact that he profoundly likes this novella. For him, the last novella is more serious than previous ones, whose content is bawdier and more frivolous. Petrarch also suggests that his interest in this particular novella stems from the story's potential for moral teaching and allegory. Although Boccaccio apparently constructs Griselda as a moral edge case and a fake allegory, Petrarch, either ignoring this or animated by a willingness to change it, elaborates his translation so as to enhance Griselda's exemplarity and increase the coherence of her allegorical symbolism.

The laureate poet, however, seems to have been aware of the story's inherent ambiguities, since he leaves some doubt regarding the nature of the story, i.e. whether it is a *historia* or a *fabula*. This distinction is important with regard to not only Petrarch's version but also the way the story circulated after him and how it was understood. The opposition between *historia* and *fabula* can be traced back to Aristotle's chapter IX of *Poetics*, which considers poetical production (*poiésis*) as a serious kind of narrative capable of expressing philosophical truth because it deals with universals rather than with history, which describes particular actions and events. Although Petrarch may not have read William of Moerbeke's 1278 Latin

¹⁹⁵ See Maria Cristina Panzera, "La nouvelle de Griselda et les *Seniles* de Pétrarque," in *Pétrarque et le pétrarquisme*, ed. Maria Cristina Panzera and Johannes Bartuschat (Grenoble, France: Université Stendhal, 2005), p. 194; Francesco Paolo Terlizzi, "Gli epistolari di Petrarca e di Salutati," in *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, ed. Sergio Luzzatto and Gabriele Pedullà (Torino: Einaudi, 2010–2012).

¹⁹⁶ Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 66.

translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*,¹⁹⁷ he could have known about the philosopher's ideas through other texts such as the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De inventione*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, Macrobius's *Commentariorum in somnium Scipionis*, or Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum sive originum*.¹⁹⁸ In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, *fabula* and *historia* are not simply opposed to each other but presented together with *argumentum* as the three forms of *narratio*. Whereas *fabula* presents events that are "neque veras neque veri similes", *historia* refers to past exploits "ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota"; and *argumentum* tells of imaginary but realistic or plausible events.¹⁹⁹ The author specifies that the events described as *fabula* have been transmitted in the form of tragedies. The *Rhetorica* also mentions that the stories called *argumentum* are those found in comedies. Cicero in *De inventione*²⁰⁰ and Quintilian in *Institutio Oratoria*²⁰¹ provide the same definition for these three forms. Consequently, Aristotle's *poiésis* is reduced to the more specific meaning of *fabula*, partly used in the sense of Aristotle's *mythos* (in his *Poetics*), or what we today call "plot", and partly in its more general sense of a narrative account of incredible nature, which is sometimes used to disqualify a text and sometimes to refer to mythic accounts belonging to what we now refer to as mythology.²⁰² In the Middle Ages, Macrobius reflects on the different kinds of texts labelled *fabulae* without opposing them to *historia* or *argumentum* in his *Commentariorum in somnium Scipionis*. He bases his reflection on Plato's opposition between *mythos* and *logos* (*Republic*, X) to discriminate two types of *fabulae*, one that is pure invention, unbelievable, and aimed at entertainment and another that tells about "sacrarum rerum" under the veil of fabulous invention, which he renames "narratio fabulosa" to distinguish it from *fabula*.²⁰³ Isidore, on the other hand, reproduces the same tripartite distinction as the Roman authors, with history as truth ("res verae quae factae sunt"), *argumentum* as plausible events, and *fabula* discredited as neither plausible nor true but "contra naturam".²⁰⁴

197 See Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), pp. 117–18.

198 For a detailed list of all the books that Petrarch had access to or possessed, see Francisco Rico, "La biblioteca di Petrarca," in *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, ed. Sergio Luzzatto and Gabriele Pedullà (Torino: Einaudi, 2010–2012), pp. 229–34, esp. pp. 32–34.

199 [Cicero] *Ad Herennium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1954), I, viii, 13.

200 Cicero, *De inventione* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1968) I, 19, 27.

201 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1920–1922) II, 4, 2.

202 See Maurizio Bettini, "Mythos/Fabula: Authoritative and Discredited Speech," *History of Religions* 45, no. 3 (2006).

203 Macrobius, *Commentariorum in somnium Scipionis* (Padova: Liviana Editrice, 1981), I, 2.

204 Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis etymologiarum sive originum libri XX* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 1, xlv.5.

By leaving it unclear whether Boccaccio's novella and his translation are *historiae* or *fabulae*, Petrararch wishes to circumvent the story's ambiguities and avoid rejection of his version on the ground that it is a *fabula* in the sense of pure invention and therefore as worthless as it is unbelievable. At the same time, Petrararch suggests that it could be a *historia* conveying more than a mere moral teaching or, in other words, a mix of genres between *historia* and *fabula* in the sense of *narratio fabulosa* or a pseudo-historical *exemplum* with an allegorical level. Scholars have long noticed that Petrararch modelled his narration on the works of Valerius Maximus and Livy.²⁰⁵ This historiographic style enables him to endow the story with historical credibility. Roman historiographers are, however, not his only sources of inspiration: Petrararch also disseminates allusions to Augustine's *De obedientia et fide Abrahae* (*De Civitate Dei*, XVI, 23) and describes Griselda in terms that equate her to Abraham, Job, and Christ,²⁰⁶ and possibly also echo Apuleius's *fabula* of "Cupid and Psyche".²⁰⁷ Thus, as Albanese remarks, Petrararch turns Boccaccio's novella into a genre in between the historical *exemplum* and the "parabola allegorica dei Vangeli, dove la lettera del testo, la *fabula exemplaris*, può anche partecipare solo parzialmente della verità, classificandosi appunto come 'verosimile', giacché il *verum* è da ricercare nel significato profondo sotteso ad essa".²⁰⁸ In other words, Petrararch conceived his version of the Griselda story as a "*fabula-exemplum*", as Igor Candido puts it.²⁰⁹

Although Petrararch alters Boccaccio's novella to reduce its inherent ambiguities, he does not eliminate them. As many critics have noted, Griseldis stands out as an exceptional character from her very first appearance in the story. Where Boccaccio barely describes her before her wedding, Petrararch insists on her numerous qualities, and this culminates in her image as a *figura Christi* (in a much more explicit way than in *Decameron* X, 10) once she starts living in Valterius's palace: "omnes ad salutem publicam demissan ceta feminam

205 See Panzera, "La nouvelle de Griselda et les *Seniles* de Pétrarque," p. 41; Guido Martellotti, "Momenti narrativi del Petrarca," in *Scritti petrarcheschi*, ed. Guido Martellotti, Michele Feo, and Silvia Rizzo (Padova: Antenore, 1983); see also Gabriella Albanese's introduction to Francesco Petrarca, *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), p. 21.

206 See Rosella Bessi, "La Griselda del Petrarca," in *La novella italiana. Atti del convegno di Caprarola, 19–24 settembre 1988*, ed. AA. VV. (Roma: Salerno, 1988).

207 See Candido, "Apuleio alla fine del *Decameron*."; Luca Carlo Rossi, "In margine alla 'Griselda' latina di Petrarca," *Acme: Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano* 53 (2000): 139–60.

208 See Albanese's introduction to Petrarca, *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria*, p. 21.

209 Igor Candido, *Boccaccio umanista. Studi su Boccaccio e Apuleio* (Ravenna: Longo, 2014), pp. 151, 54–58.

predicarent”.²¹⁰ Thus, the potential lying within Boccaccio’s *Griselda* seems to have always existed in *Griseldis* and only needed the occasion to shine in everyone’s sight, making the subsequent testing either all the more absurd or similar to Job’s. *Griseldis*’s stoicism and acceptance of her lot without ever protesting is, according to Petrarch’s conclusion, an example of Christian forbearance: “non tam ideo ut matronas nostris temporis ad imitandam huius uxoris partientiam, que michi vix imitabilis videtur, quam ut legentes ad imitadam saltem femine constantiam excitarem, ut quod hec viro suo prestitit, hoc prestare Deo nostro audeant”.²¹¹ This has led scholars to interpret Petrarch’s translation according to the four levels of biblical exegesis: the literal sense presents a wife tested by her husband; the tropologic interpretation reveals that *Griseldis* embodies the virtue of wifely obedience; on the typological level, she is metaphorically associated with Abraham and Job; and finally, on the anagogical level, her story would be that of the soul gradually elevating itself to reach God in heaven.²¹²

However, *Griseldis*’s construction as an ideal Christian submitting to God’s will, even more than Boccaccio’s *Griselda*, seems to imply that Valterius is a *figura dei*. Indeed, not only does Petrarch eliminate Dioneo’s introductive and conclusive comments harshly condemning the marquis’s behaviour as a “matta bestialità” and criticising his worthiness as a ruler, but the laureate poet states in conclusion to his translation that he hopes the story will incite readers to imitate *Griseldis*’s constancy and “ut quod hec viro suo prestitit, hoc prestare Deo nostro audeant”.²¹³ The verbal repetition “prestitit/prestare”, which establishes a parallel in a chiasmic structure between these verbs’ respective datives (“viro suo” and “Deo”), strongly suggests a symbolic equivalence between Valterius and God. Whereas this circumvents the ambiguity of *Griseldis* as a moral edge case, since obeying God is always morally right and justified, so long as one adheres to this allegorical significance of Valterius’s character, some inconsistencies remain. Just as there are several passages that hint at Valterius’s exceptionality and superiority, there are others that undermine a reading of Valterius as God.

210 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 78.

211 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

212 See for example, Albanese’s introduction to Petrarca, *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria*, pp. 23–24; Mario Zanucchi, “Von Boccaccios ‘Griselda’ zu Petrarca’s ‘Griselidis,’” in *Die Deutsche Griselda. Transformationen einer literarischen Figur von Boccaccio bis zur Moderne*, ed. Achim Aurnhammer and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 31–38.

213 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 94.

Let me first enumerate the signs in the marquis's relationship with Griseldis that suggests he could be of divine nature. Throughout the verbal exchanges between Griseldis and Valterius, Petrarch increases the number of details enabling this allegorical interpretation of the marquis. Where Boccaccio's Griselda simply answers "yes" to his demand to obey him always and without ever protesting, Griseldis's answer to Valterius expresses a devotion that a Christian would vow to God: "Ego, mi domine . . . tanto honore me indignam scio; at si voluntas tua sique sors mea est, nichil ego unquam sciens nedum faciam, sed etiam cogitabo, quod contra animum tuum sit; nec tu aliquid facies, etsi me mori iusseris, quod moleste feram".²¹⁴ Thus, the form of marriage she agrees to is akin to the Roman marriage *in manu*, in which the *patria potestas* of the father over his daughter (i.e. his legal power over her, including the right to life or death) is entirely transmitted to the husband. This kind of marriage had long ceased to exist at the time of Griseldis's story, since marriages *in manu* were no longer the norm by 200 A.D., while the right in itself was later revoked by Christian emperors.²¹⁵ In the late Middle Ages, when a young woman got married, her father's *patrias potestas* was not transferred onto her husband. The latter did gain some legal authority over his wife but not all of it. As Thomas Kuehn explains,

By the formula worked out by Angelo degli Ubaldi and Paolo di Castro, the married woman was in a position with regard to her husband which was analogous to that defined by the civil law as existing between a freedman (*libertus*) and his patron (*patronus*). Both a freedman and a married woman owed their respective legal counterparts *servitia* and *obsequium* . . . Odofredus (d. 1265) and Jacopo d'Arena . . . following him said that the wife served her husband ('uxor viro servit') and was obedient to him ('in obsequio mariti'). It was the fact that a wife was in the *obsequium* of her husband which formed the basis of the civil law obligation of a husband to provide *alimenta* for his wife.

At his daughter's marriage, therefore, a father surrendered not his *patria potestas* but the right to the girl's service and labor.²¹⁶

Thus, Griseldis's marital contract defines her as being completely emancipated from her father's *patria potestas* and places her under Valterius's legal tutelage, implying that all of her father's rights over her have been handed over to her

214 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

215 See Richard Saller, "Patria potestas and the Stereotypes of the Roman Family," *Continuity and Change* 1, no. 1 (1986): 8; David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985), pp. 8–10.

216 Thomas Kuehn, "Women, Marriage, and Patria Potestas in Late Medieval Florence," *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis / Revue d'Histoire du Droit / The Legal History Review* 49, no. 1 (1981): 133–34.

husband. In other words, in legal terms, their relationship is better described as one of master and slave rather than husband and wife or freedman. However, Griseldis's willingness and readiness to die if Valterius wishes so, without bearing him any grudge for it, suggests yet another kind of relationship: that of Christians towards their God.

Griseldis displays complete submission to her husband's will, like pious people are expected to show towards God, leaving their lives in His hands and accepting their deaths as His wish and part of His providential plan. As Valterius implies that he is going to put their daughter to death, Griseldis replies: "Tu. . . noster es dominus, et ego et hec parva filia tue sumus; de rebus tuis igitur fac ut libet".²¹⁷ Where Boccaccio's Griselda willingly yields her will and body over to Gualtieri in order for him to preserve his humane, masculine condition, and happiness ("Signor mio, fa di me quello che tu credi che piú tuo onore o consolazion sia"),²¹⁸ Petrarch's Griseldis denies from the beginning of her speech that she has ever had any will or power over herself or her daughter. By defining herself and her daughter as Valterius's property ("rebus tuis"), she asserts that he has every power over them as their "dominus". In this context, even more than with Boccaccio's "signor", the word "dominus" does not simply mean "lord" or "master" but also evokes "God".

This becomes even clearer when the marquis announces to Griseldis that he will also take her son from her. Whereas Boccaccio's Griselda simply tells her husband that he should do as he pleases without caring about what she may think, Griseldis adds to this by again insisting on the fact that Valterius is her *dominus* and that through marriage, she entered into a form of communion of body and spirit with him in which he would decide for both of them what to do, think, and even feel ("in ipso enim tue domus introitu ut pannos sic et voluntates affectusque meos exui, tuos indui").²¹⁹ Moreover, Griseldis reaffirms that he has power of life and death over her: "Fac sentiam tibi placere quod moriar, volens moriar, nec res ulla denique nec mors ipsa nostro fuerit par amori".²²⁰ While Griseldis expresses her acceptance that Valterius may want to kill her, as if he were God taking her life, she also indicates that unlike the bond between a master and his slave, which is a bond based on coercion, theirs is a bond grounded in a love she freely embraced. In other words, she states that her obedience is a willing submission to Valterius's will, just as the

217 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 80.

218 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1239.

219 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 84.

220 *Ibid.*

obedience that Christians vow as they enter orders is an act of free will and willing subservience.

Although Griseldis's speeches and behaviour point towards a reading of Valterius as an *alter deus*, the narrator's portrayal of the marquis tells a more ambiguous story. From the beginning of the story onward, the narrative voice oscillates between praise and condemnation. In the story's opening lines, Valterius stands out as the first and most powerful of his line ("unus primusque omnium et maximus")²²¹ and almost perfect in every respect ("forma virens atque etate, nec minus moribus quam sanguine nobilis")²²² if he, as a ruler, did not lack prudence: "presenti sua sorte contentus, incuriosissimus futurorum erat".²²³ The marquis's clairvoyance for perceiving Griseldis's virtue behind her ragged clothes, which is not only praised after his wedding but also underlined by the narrator as Valterius contemplates her for the first time, suggests Valterius's understanding of human nature can pierce external appearances: "In hanc virgunculam Valterius, sepe illac transiens, quandoque oculos non iuvenili lascivia sed senili gravitate defixerat, et virtutem eximiam supra sexum supraque etatem, quam vulgi oculis conditionis obscuritas abscondebat, acri penetrarat intuitu".²²⁴ Whereas Valterius is, until then, described as an imprudent sovereign in so far as he lives only for the present without any care for the future, his sudden acuity regarding Griseldis transforms him into a wise leader almost beyond the norm, as the hyperbolic phrasing suggests: "quodque eximiam virtutem tanta sub inopia latitantem tam perspicater deprehendisset, vulgo prudentissimus habebatur".²²⁵

Valterius's portrayal reaches its climax of ambivalence when the narrator expresses an ambiguous value judgment about Valterius's reasons for testing his wife: "Cepit, ut fit, interim Valterius, cum iam ablactata esset infantula, mirabilis quedam—quam laudabilis doctiores iudicent—cupiditas sat expertam care fidem coniugis experiendi altius et iterum atque iterum retentandi".²²⁶ Although from the late fourteenth century onward, the obscure grammar of the phrase "mirabilis quedam quam laudabilis doctiores iudicent cupiditas" has puzzled translators of Petrarch's version of the Griselda story,²²⁷ I believe that

221 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

222 *Ibid.*

223 *Ibid.*

224 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

225 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

226 *Ibid.*, pp. 78–80.

227 The first two translators of Petrarch's letter, Bernat Metge in his *Valter e Griselda* (1388) and Philippe Mézières in *Le Livre du la vertu du sacrament de mariage* (c.1384), simply omit

the laureate poet did not make any grammatical error. Indeed, I agree with Martellotti that it is an indirect question or interrogative content clause in which the verb “to be” has been omitted because it is superfluous: “mirabilis quedam—Quam laudabilis? Doctiores iudicent—cupiditas” (“a strange desire—How laudable? Wiser people will judge—...”).²²⁸ Thus, Petrarch uses *dubitatio* and apophasis to suggest that the marquis’s intentions may be laudable while at the same time avoiding a discussion of how or why this might be the case. This rhetorical gesture seems to be a way to indicate that Petrarch refrains from judging Valterius²²⁹ in the same way that any Christian should refrain from judging God, as Job is reminded when he confronts God about deeming his misery undeserved given the pious life he has led. However, the narrator’s reticence to judge may also be interpreted as irony. Therefore, the suggestion that

this ambiguous phrase. The anonymous French author of the *Livre de Griseldis* translates it as: “Et veez cy que ie ne scay quelle ymaginacion merueilleuse print le dit marquis, la quelle aucun saiges veulent louer, c’est assavoir de experimenter et essayer sa femme plus avant. . .”, see Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, p. 202. Heinrich Steinhöwel, on the other hand, turns it into: “In dem als *das* kind etwent ward, do kom dem Walther ain wunderlich zu fal jn, ob das aber loblich sy gewesen, wil ich die gelernten lassen vrtailen. Das was ain grosse begird, sin wib, . . . höher vnd ze versuchen”, Heinrich Steinhöwel, “Historia Griseldis,” in *Heinrich Steinhöwels ‘Griseldis’* ed. Ursula Hess (München: C.H. Beck’sche, 1975), p. 201. The problem lies in how “quam” is interpreted. It is an adverb that can mean “how much” or “to what extent”, introducing either a digressive direct question followed by an elusive answer, “Quam laudabilis? Doctiores iudicent” (“To what extent [is it] laudable? More erudite people [than me] will judge”), or an indirect question, in which case “laudabilis” is not correctly declined and should be in the accusative “laudabilem” as the object of the verb “iudicent” instead of the nominative: “more erudite people [than me] will judge how much it is laudable”. However, “quam” can also signify “as much as” when used with “tam”, which in the present case would be elided but implied. Another possibility is to emend the phrase radically. Among the notes to the *Clerk’s Tale* in his edition of the *Canterbury tales*, Walter Skeat suggests that Petrarch’s text (as Chaucer’s source) should be read as “mirabilis quedam quàm laudabilis [*aliter*, an mirabile quidem magis quam laudabile,] doctiores iudicent) cupiditas”, see *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 7 vols., vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 346. This is also the reading adopted by Burke Severs in *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer’s Clerk’s Tale* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1942), p. 268.

228 See Martellotti, “Momenti narrativi del Petrarca,” p. 192, n. 17.

229 Zanucchi also remarks that the narrator suspends “ein expliziertes moralisches Urteil . . . über Valterius”, but he interprets it as an instance of *reticentia*, not in order to establish a parallel between Valterius and God but to alleviate the harshness of the trials the marquis inflicts on his wife, see “Von Boccaccios ‘Griselda’ zu Petrarca’s ‘Griselidis’,” p. 42. However, I doubt that the absence of moral judgment regarding the trials alters their cruel nature or the way they are perceived by Griseldis, her children or the readers.

his desire to test his wife may be laudable is actually an ironic comment indicating that it is not, implying that Valterius sins in doing it.

Petrarch also maintains the ambiguity regarding the morality of the trials as the narrator describes them in terms that can be read as either good or evil. In the above-mentioned introduction to the testing, the word used to explain Valterius's sudden change in attitude towards his wife is "cupiditas" (i.e. desire or affection of the soul). According to Augustine, desire in itself is neither good nor evil, but it is wrong or right depending on the will that accompanies it: if the will (*voluntas*) is good, then so is the desire, and if the will is evil, then so is the *cupiditas*.²³⁰ A similar intention also seems to lie behind the use of the words "curiositam solitam" to refer to the taking away of Griseldis's son. Whereas for Augustine, *curiositas* is always conceived as a vice insofar as it moves the soul into the pursuit of vain knowledge,²³¹ for Aquinas, when a person observes someone else's behaviour or tests them, as Valterius does, it can either be with a good intent aimed at virtue or with an evil one and thus an instance of *curiositas*:

prospicere facta aliorum bono animo, vel ad utilitatem propriam, ut scilicet homo ex bonis operibus proximi provocetur ad melius, vel etiam ad utilitatem illius, ut scilicet corrigatur si quid ab eo agitur vitiose, secundum regulam caritatis et debitum officii, est laudabile, secundum illud Heb. X, considerate vos invicem in provocationem caritatis et bonorum operum. Sed quod aliquis intendit ad consideranda vitia proximorum ad despiciendum vel detrahendum, vel saltem inutiliter inquietandum, est vitiosum. Unde dicitur Prov. XXIV, ne insidieris et quaeras iniquitatem in domo iusti, neque vastes requiem eius.²³²

Even if Petrarch, in the conclusion, sets Griseldis as an example to be emulated, implying that out of Griseldis's "bonis operibus proximi provocetur ad melius", Valterius never mentions that he tests his wife in order to encourage others to follow her virtues. Not only does the narrator consider the last testing a "dura . . . libidine"²³³; the marquis admits in the end that he has been "curiosu[s] atque experien[s]".²³⁴ Whereas "libido" always indicates an excessive form of desire in terms of Christian ethics, curiosity and a tendency to test others, which Valterius ultimately confesses to, are not sins as such but they still qualify as evil, an evil for which he is never held accountable within the story.

230 See Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 14.6; Johannes Brachtendorf, "Cicero and Augustine on the Passions," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 43 (1997): 300–01.

231 See *Confessions* 10.35 and *De vera religione* 49.

232 Aquinas, *Summa*, II^a-IIae q. 167 a. 2 ad 3.

233 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 70.

234 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

In order to make sense of this ambiguous portrayal, it could be hypothesised that Valterius is not a *figura dei* but rather an instrument of God. Knowing that Valterius would test Griseldis and expose her virtues to the world, the Lord's providence arranged their meeting, as the text suggests. Indeed, not only does Valterius claim that he will let God guide him to find a wife ("Quicquid in homine boni est, non ab alio quam a Deo est. Illi ego et status et matimonii mei sortes . . . commiserim"²³⁵), his clear-sightedness regarding Griseldis may also be interpreted as God's workings. However, considering Valterius only as God's instrument renders Griseldis ambiguous: if she does not consider her husband as a *figura dei*, in obeying him the way she does, she sins just like Boccaccio's Griselda, because Valterius is a human being, rather than a deity, making demands of his wife that are sinful and with which she should not comply.

Although Petrarch modifies Boccaccio's depiction of the marquis, both equating Valterius with God and considering him as His instrument remain problematic because the literal and the allegorical levels conflict. In spite of the text's ambiguities, its reception history testifies to the fact that Petrarch's readers and translators understood Griseldis's story as a moral example or a *historia*, and some have even interpreted it allegorically as well, seeing it as a *fabula*. Petrarch achieved this mostly thanks to the various devices and rhetorical manoeuvres that he used in the framing letters of his translation. The laureate poet's argumentation in the closing epistle goes back to the question of whether the story is a *fabula* or a *historia* and makes strong points in favour of its plausibility, thereby encouraging an interpretation of Griseldis's life as a true story. Aware of the narrative's improbability, though more in terms of Griseldis's extreme obedience rather than Valterius's cruelty or inconsistency as a *figura dei*, Petrarch constructs the concluding letter so as to guide his readers away from their potential intuition that the story they have just finished reading is implausible, and therefore not worthy of attention, and leaves them with the final impression that it actually happened.

Petrarch first pretends that he no longer knows "an res veras an fictas"²³⁶ and then claims that he prefers to call it "fabulam" before telling how two different men reacted to the story in order to convince his audience that the story is perfectly plausible and possibly true. Even if some critics have considered Petrarch's two unnamed readers to be real persons, whom he presents as mutual friends of his and Boccaccio's, the way he introduces them and uses them to draw a point rather indicates that they are rhetorical devices from his

235 Ibid., p. 72.

236 Ibid., p. 96.

imagination. The first of these supposed friends is deeply moved by the story, and his tears prevent him from reading it to the end, so he has to ask a friend to read it aloud for him. The second acquaintance, on the other hand, was not affected at all by what he read. He did not believe a word of it, because Griselda appears to him too exceptional and ideal as a wife to have ever existed. In order to discredit the second reader, Petrarch compares him to the other in various ways. The first acquaintance is a Paduan, whereas the second is a Veronese. Although this might seem anecdotal, since Petrarch had friends in both towns, the laureate poet seems to have used their respective origins as indicators of their capacity to interpret texts. Albeit a town of a certain importance, Verona could not compete with the proto-humanist influence of Padua, which had been the academic centre of the Veneto since the second Italian university (after Bologna) in 1222 was built there. The discrepancy in the intellectual auras of the two towns seems to be reflected in the manner which Petrarch describes his readers' mental capacities. While the Paduan is introduced in hyperbolic terms as a "vir altissimi ingenii multiplicisque notitie",²³⁷ the Veronese is simply "ingenios[us]".²³⁸ Thus, Petrarch suggests that the Paduan's superior intelligence enabled him to read and be moved by the story in the correct way: that is, to feel compassion. The Paduan's tears are directed at Griselda's suffering, as the Veronese's comment implies: He did not cry, not because he is "duri cordis" but rather because the story is "ficta", so he wonders, "si vera essent, que usquam mulier vel Romana vel cuiuslibet gentis hanc Griseldim equatura sit? Ubi, queso, tantus amor coniugalibus? Ubi par fides? Ubi tam insignis patientia atque constantia?".²³⁹ For Petrarch, compassion is the right way to read his Latin translation, because if Griselda represents the ideal Christian patiently suffering God's ordeals, her suffering then evokes that of Christ's Passion. The etymological meaning of compassion is to "suffer with somebody" or "share in someone's pain". Thus, in a medieval Christian context, to feel compassion also refers to an emotional communion with Christ's Passion, his suffering on the cross, either psychologically through meditation or physically.²⁴⁰ Compassion, according to Petrarch, also partakes in the good, even the best, of human nature, as his quotation of Juvenal's Satire XV indicates: "Mollissima corda / humano generi dare se natura

237 Ibid.

238 Ibid., p. 98

239 Ibid.

240 For more on medieval compassion as a mystic emotion, see Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Piroska Nagy, *Le Don des larmes au Moyen-Âge* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

fatetur, / que lachrymas dedit, hec nostril pars optima sensus”.²⁴¹ As such, compassion belongs to the qualities that not just a Christian but also a humanist should cultivate. Consequently, even though the Veronese defends himself by claiming that he is not heartless, whatever he argues to justify his lack of tears is already discredited by Petrarch’s introduction of the Paduan as his ideal reader. In addition, the laureate poet is careful to answer the Veronese’s doubts regarding Griseldis’s verisimilitude to minimise the number of readers who would side with him. Petrarch does not respond to the Veronese directly, but he addresses his argumentation to Boccaccio and by implication to the broader audience of the *Seniles* in order to create an atmosphere of intimacy and shared intelligence. He also affirms that his counterargument is simple (“Erat autem prona responsio”),²⁴² suggesting that anyone could have imagined it. Petrarch thereby flatters his readers, who are thus manipulated into being more easily convinced by what Petrarch has to say. As a result, when he states that only people who “quecumque difficilia eis sint impossibilia omnibus arbitrentur”²⁴³ would deem Griseldis implausible and places her in a catalogue of illustrious men and women as their equal, he intends his readers to feel compelled to agree with him that Griseldis is indeed as believable as any exemplary figure found in the works of historiographers such as Livy or Plutarch.

241 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 96.

242 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

243 *Ibid.*

1.3 Griselda: A true historical figure?

The fact that Petrarch could and did convince many of his readers that Griselda really existed becomes more intelligible if one considers medieval concepts of history and historicity, which differ from modern ones. As Hans Robert Jauss puts it, at the time “sont historiques . . . tout événement et toute expérience qui veulent être crus”.²⁴⁴ There was less of a distinction between “objective truth” and “subjective belief”.²⁴⁵ Moreover, as Suzanne Fleischmann contends, a “teleological view of human actions pervades chronicle history”.²⁴⁶ In those texts, “[e]vents are spelled out not for their intrinsic historical value, but in a way that makes them intelligible as a variation on a paradigmatic story, a repetition of a mythic—or, for the Middle Ages particularly, scriptural—intertext”.²⁴⁷ In medieval thought and until the eighteenth century, “historical truth was anything that belonged to a widely accepted tradition”.²⁴⁸

Such was the case of Griselda’s life. Bernat Metge, Philippe de Mézières, Romigi dei Ricci, Christine de Pisan, the Anonymous second French translator, Erhart Groß, and Heinrich Steinhöwel (all of who translated Petrarch’s Latin version into their respective vernacular languages), as well as Petrus de Hailles, Hermannus Bononiensis, and Hermann Korner (who rewrote in Latin the laureate poet’s text), all considered and presented their translations or rewritings of Petrarch’s version as true events that really happened at some point in the past.

Thus, both medieval views on historicity and Petrarch’s rhetorical manoeuvres explain why, after Petrarch’s translation, quite a number of his translators and imitators present Griseldis’s story as true and consider her a historical, exemplary character worthy of emulation in spite of the text’s inherent ambiguities. What is more, Petrarch’s translators and imitators in turn influenced others who wished to retell Griselda’s story.

Giovanni Sercambi, whose source is Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, is an interesting case among those presenting Griselda as a character worthy of emulation. While he first inserted the novella entitled “De muliere costante” as an *exemplum*

244 Hans Robert Jauss, “Chanson de geste et roman courtois. Analyse comparative du *Fierabras* et du *Bel Inconnu*,” in *Chanson de geste und höfischer Roman. Heidelberger Kolloquium (30. Januar 1961)*, ed. Kurt Badinger, Gerhard Hess, and Hans Robert Jauss (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1963), p. 65; Suzanne Fleischman, “On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages,” *History and Theory* 22, no. 3 (1983): 305.

245 Fleischman, “On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages,” p. 305.

246 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

247 *Ibid.*

248 *Ibid.*, p. 305.

of wifely constancy in his *Novelliere* (1400), modifying it by changing Griselda's name to Gostantina and by making her the wife of count Artú. Sercambi also includes the novella in a slightly shorter version in his *Croniche di Lucca* (1400–1424). There is no way to be sure that Sercambi did not read *Decameron* X, 10 as a *historia*, given that Boccaccio announced in the “proemio” of his work that it would be composed of “cento novelle o favole o parabole o istorie”.²⁴⁹ Unlike Morabito, I do not think that Sercambi knew that it was a fiction or *fabula*, but Morabito is right that the insertion of Gostantina's story “nel contesto di un'opera cronistica può aver contribuito a produrre la disposizione a considerare anche i fatti di Griselda, al pari di quelli a cui si affiancano nel libro, come storici”.²⁵⁰

In this process of the “historicisation” of Griselda's character and life, another case in late medieval French that is worth mentioning is that of Thomas III of Saluzzo's *Chevalier Errant* (1394–96). As Florence Bouchet describes so well, the *Chevalier Errant* traces Thomas's genealogy over one and a half centuries and is a “sorte de roman d'apprentissage allégorico-encyclopédique qui relate les aventures d'un Chevalier (figure spéculaire de Thomas) confronté successivement au dieu d'Amour, à Dame fortune et à Dame Connaissance”.²⁵¹ As Bouchet further explains, Thomas wrote this work of familial memory while a prisoner of an ally of Amedeus VIII, Count of Savoy, who wanted to be lord over Thomas and his lands. In other words, “[i]l s'agissait donc, pour notre marquis, de confronter son pouvoir menacé en réaffirmant sa légitimité et l'ancienneté de sa noble lignée”.²⁵² Within this context Griselda, or rather Grisilidis in this version, appears in chapters 267 to 274 of the book as an illustrious example of how one of Thomas's ancestors patiently withstood the whims of “Dame Fortune”.²⁵³ Thus, Grisilidis strengthens

249 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, I, p. 9, my emphasis.

250 Raffaele Morabito, “Griselda tra exemplum ed esempio,” in *Traité de savoir-vivre en Italie*, ed. Alain Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand: Association des publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1993), p. 33.

251 Florence Bouchet, “Héroïnes et mémoire familiale dans le Chevalier errant de Thomas de Saluces,” *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 30 (2009): 120.

252 *Ibid.*

253 Criticism from the beginning of the twentieth century claimed that the inclusion of Griselda's story in the *Chevalier errant* was not intended by Thomas of Saluzzo but was rather a later addition from his heirs, because her tale is only present in one of the two extant manuscripts of the work (in the Ms fr. 12559 from the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris but not in the Ms. L. V. 6. from the Biblioteca nazionale di Torino, see Golenistcheff-Koutousoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, pp. 133–34). However, modern criticism found that according to the late fifteenth-century chronicler Gioffredo Della Chiesa, during Thomas's stay in Paris in 1403–1405, the

Thomas in the face of his own political trials and endows him with a prestigious aura that has descended down to him through blood. Her historical legitimacy is ensured by the medieval practice of resorting to an *auctoritas*, in this case the fourth-century historian Orose,²⁵⁴ who is referred to in the text as a philosopher. As Thomas's fictive alter ego meets this philosopher, upon hearing who the "chevalier" is, this wise man decides to tell Grisilidis's story to the protagonist. However, Thomas does much more than simply copy her story from existing French versions (those of Mézières and the other, anonymous, translator of Petrarch): he blends and emends them so as to render the narrative more coherent and plausible.²⁵⁵ Thomas accomplishes this in two ways: first by making additions that render the marquis Gaultier slightly less of a tyrant figure and second by later providing another narrative that not only reveals Gaultier's own ascendancy but explains his lack of trust towards women and his need to test Grisilidis.

Although still mistreating his wife in a cruel way for more than 10 years, Thomas's Gaultier proves to be a less authoritarian or controlling figure. He asks Grisilidis's father, Janicole, for her hand in a manner that shows his willingness not to let his status and power coerce Janicole into accepting his proposal: "te prie que tu me vueillez donner Grisildis ta fille a femme et espouse et me vueillez tenir a gendre *de ton bon gré et consentement, et autrement non*".²⁵⁶ Where Petrarch and his French translators (Mézières and the anonymous translator) stop after the marquis asks to become Janicole's son-in-law, Thomas's

latter ordered a manuscript copy of his *Livre du Chevalier errant* that included Griselda's story, see Lea Debernardi, "Note sulla tradizione manoscritta del *Livre du Chevalier Errant* e sulle fonti dei *tituli* negli affreschi della Manta," *Opera Nomina Historiae* 4 (2011): 84. This is further corroborated by the fact that the illuminations of the Parisian manuscript have been identified as the work of the so-called "Maître de la Cité des dames", who was active in the French capital between 1400 and 1415. For a detailed analysis of these illuminations, see Florence Bouchet, *L'iconographie du Chevalier errant de Thomas de Saluces* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

254 Orose is not the only *auctor* Thomas uses to legitimate his work: Socrates, Dares, Virgil, Cicero, and Augustine are all evoked as *auctoritas*-figures throughout the book. For a discussion of the figure of Dares in the *Chevalier errant* in particular, see Delphine Burghgraeve, "Le lecteur herméneute : étude du double fictive du chevalier dans *Le Chevalier errant* de Thomas de Saluces et *La Bouquecharrière* de Jean de Courcy," *Fabula / Les colloques en ligne* (2014), <http://www.fabula.org/colloques/document2396.php>.

255 For a comparison of the differences between these three texts, see Marco Piccat, "La leggenda di 'Griselda' secondo Tommaso III, marchese di Saluzzo," in *Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea. Atti del convegno internazionale a 80 anni della nascita della Società per gli studi storici della Provincia di Cuneo*, ed. Rinaldo Comba and Marco Piccat (Cuneo: Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, 2011).

256 From Piccat's edition provided in appendix to his article, see *ibid.*, p. 64.

Gaultier continues to make sure Grisilidis's father expresses his own free will in consenting to the match. Moreover, at the end of the story, also previously unheard of, while revealing that his cruelty towards his wife was a test, Gaultier bids her to forgive him: "Et *me pardonne ce que j'ay fait de toy*, car je l'ay fait pour toy esprouver et essayer, et n'ay pas fait tuer mes enfants, comme tu le vois".²⁵⁷ This addition turns Gaultier into a more humane character, and Grisilidis's lack of protestation or apparent resentment towards her husband's abusive behaviour seems more plausible given her implied forgiveness.

Even if this does not entirely eliminate the ambiguities of the story, these emendations help in portraying Gaultier as a less excessive figure in order to present him as an ideal ruler. As Bouchet explains:

Gautier représente le prince idéal aux yeux de Thomas de Saluces (et même un peu son double fantasmatique), en même temps que la nécessité de son mariage engage la question éminemment politique de la succession et de la légitimité du pouvoir à transmettre.²⁵⁸

This process of "rehabilitating" the marquis into an ancestor worthy of mention and attention is completed by another narrative evoking Gaultier's ancestry, which not only provides him with a well-delimited place within the family tree of the marquises of Saluzzo but also with a reason for his incapacity to trust his wife and his propensity to try her. This "suite rétroactive" of Grisildis's story, which appears in chapter 335, "reproduit le procédé de continuation du matériau épique et arthurien entre le XIII^e et le XV^e siècle . . . [et] fournit tout à la fois l'histoire du père (Guillaume) et l'enfance du fils (Gautier)".²⁵⁹ This second story tells of Guillaume, son of Bertran of Saluzzo, who left his father's lands to gain honour through chivalric accomplishments. After 2 years of great deeds, Guillaume decides to return to Saluzzo, but before he leaves, he receives the King of Russia's daughter as his wife in reward for his bravery and service. On his way back home, Guillaume realises that his bride is with child, but he knows that he cannot be the father. He hides this from everyone and becomes marquis of Saluzzo after the death of his father Bertran. He then has a second son with his wife. Guillaume eventually also dies, leaving a will that suggests that one of his two sons is illegitimate, so only one of them is his rightful heir. In order to figure out which of the

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁵⁸ Florence Bouchet, "Lire, voir et écrire au XIV^e siècle : Étude du livre du Chevalier errant de Thomas de Saluces" (Paris IV, 1995), p. 51.

²⁵⁹ Florence Bouchet, "La nouvelle à l'épreuve du roman médiéval : le *Livre du Chevalier errant* de Thomas de Saluces," in *La nouvelle de langue française aux frontières des autres genres, du Moyen Âge à nos jours, Actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve, Mai 1997*, ed. Vincent Engel and Michel Guissard (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2001), p. 10.

brothers is the bastard and put an end to the war that has started between them, their uncle, the marquis of Monferrat, seeks advice from various wise and educated people in Europe. They come up with a solution: the bones of Guillaume's right arm should be exhumed, and each of his sons should drop blood from their right arm on them. The blood of the legitimate heir will adhere to them and stain them, while the bastard blood will not leave a trace on the bones.²⁶⁰ The younger son, named Gaultier, is of course revealed to be Guillaume's lawful heir. Thus, chapter 335 of the *Chevalier errant*, which discloses the traumas of Gaultier's youth, "permet de motiver la méfiance de Gautier à l'égard des femmes"²⁶¹ and his need to test his spouse through his mother's adultery and the consequent blood trial that Gaultier undergoes to prove his birth.

Thereby, Thomas of Saluces not only tries to "rehabilitate" Gaultier, he also establishes him as the rightful marquis, whose lineage cannot be contested because it has been proven true thanks to a test akin to a blood miracle. As a result, through Gaultier, Thomas further strengthens the legitimacy of his bloodline and his right to the lands of Saluzzo. Although Thomas, of course, invented Gaultier's past and most likely had no proof that Grisilidis ever existed, his inclusion of her story and that of Gaultier's youth in his allegoricogenealogical work contributed to transforming both Gaultieri and Griselda into historico-legendary figures.

About a century later, Gaultieri and his wife became part of another genealogical work dedicated to the marquisate of Saluzzo: Gioffredo della Chiesa's *Cronaca di Saluzzo, l'arbore e genealogia de la illustre Casa di Salucio dicesa dal Saxonico Sangue cum molte altre antiquitate agiuncte daltri potentaty e signory* (c. 1490).²⁶² As he delineates the ancestry of the House of Saluzzo, della Chiesa treats Gaultieri as a real nobleman whose bloodline can be traced back to Lombardy and Saxony through Aleramo, Marquis of Montferrat:

Questo [Bonifacio] fu el primo marcheze di Salucio de la casa de Aleramo. Et credemo che li marchexi di Salucio che erano in anty fussenno ancora discesi da quely saxony e longobardy et molte cosse presumere me lo fano. Prima questi nomy come Manfredo, Adalayda,

260 For a catalogue of the variants of this "blood test" motif from which Thomas could have taken inspiration, see Piccat, "La leggenda di 'Griselda' secondo Tommaso III, marchese di Saluzzo," pp. 53–62.

261 Véronique Duché-Gavet, "La diffusion de l'Histoire de Griselda en France (XIV^e–XVI^e siècles)," *Medieval Translator, Traduire au Moyen-Âge* 10 (2007): 200.

262 According to Renato Bordone, the author of the *Cronaca* is a descendant of the elder brother of Gioffredo della Chiesa (1397–c.1453), who was the secretary of Ludovico of Saluzzo. See Renato Bordone, "Della Chiesa Gioffredo," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Raffaele Romanelli, Fiorella Bartoccini, and Mario Caravale (Rome: Treccani, 1988), p. 753.

Valterio, Griseldis e simily nomy che tirano sopra quely nomy di coloro e sono inusitati . . . Ne fa credere ancora che la historia de Griseldis marchexa de Salucio he stata depinta ab antiquo nel castello di Pavia le quale era sedya regale dy coloro, la quale se trova in historia et in latino et in franzoso e italiano che noy medemy habiamo veduta in questy tre idioma.²⁶³

It is interesting to note that for della Chiesa, the criteria that helps determine the historicity and veracity of a narrative and its characters are the number of languages in which this narrative appears—including Latin, the language of knowledge at the time—and the fact that it was worthy of being the subject of a fresco in a castle. Architecture and art in Renaissance Italy were commonly employed by ruling families to make their wealth and power ostensible and legitimize them. Paintings that have come down to us show predilections for either chivalric themes, Roman figures or portraits of family members, all of which are meant to illustrate and convey their political stature and the virtues of their bloodline.²⁶⁴ Although there are no remains of the frescoes that della Chiesa alludes to, given aristocrats' motivations for ordering such works and the socio-historical function of these paintings, the historiographer's interpretation of the work of art as an indication that Gualtieri and Griselda truly existed is not surprising, although it is a misconstruction.

Della Chiesa's *Conaca di Saluzzo*—together with the contemporary historiographic work of Giacomo Filippo Foresti, *Supplementum chronicarum*—seems to have played a key role in the reception of Griselda and her husband as historical figures. Foresti includes Griselda and Gualtieri's story, a shortened and condensed version of Petrarch's text, in his *Supplementum* for the first time in the 1485 edition as part of the ancestry of the marquis of Montferrat.²⁶⁵ Foresti's work was translated into Italian by Francesco C. in 1491 and by Francesco Sansovino in 1540, as well as into Spanish by Narcis Viñoles in 1510.²⁶⁶ Foresti's influence in France is not attested by any French translation of his *Supplementum*

263 Gioffredo Della Chiesa, "Conaca di Saluzzo, l'arbore e genealogia de la illustre Casa di Salucio discesa dal Saxonico Sangue cum molte altre antiquitate agiuncte daltri potentaty e signory," in *Historiae Patriae Monumenta, Scriptores*, ed. Carlo Baudi di Vesme, Cornelio Desimoni, and Vittorio Poggi (Torino: Regis Caroli Alberti, 1848), col. 861.

264 See Randolph Starn, "Reinventing Heroes in Renaissance Italy," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (1986); Alison Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence. Art of the Italian Renaissance Court* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995); Susanne H. West, "The Renaissance Courts of Northern Italy: Culture and the Development of Art Patronage in Mantua," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2012).

265 Foresti's *Supplementum chronicarum* was first edited in Venezia in 1483 by Bernardino Benali.

266 See Morabito, "La diffusione": 247.

but rather by Antoine Dufour's *La vie des femmes célèbres* (1504), a French translation of Foresti's *De plurimis selectisque mulieribus* (1497) in which Griselda also appears. However, subsequent mentions of Griselda and Gualtieri by French and German historiographers are too short to determine whether they used Foresti, della Chiesa, or yet another source, such as Thomas de Saluce's *Livre du Chevalier errant*.

Jean Bouchet briefly mentions Griselda's existence as a real person who lived around 1020–1025 in at least the third edition of his *Annales d'Aquitaine* in 1535.²⁶⁷ On the other hand, the 1536 posthumous and augmented publication of Gilles Nicole's *Chroniques et annales de France* (Paris: Jehan Longis) situates Griselda and Gualtieri's lives around the time of the death of Lothaire of France in 986.²⁶⁸ In 1556, Antoine Noguier mentions in his *Histoire Tolosaine* that she lived during the first decade of the eleventh century, during the time of Pope John XVIII, Holy Roman Emperor Henry II (mistakenly numbered Henry I in the text), and a certain Raymond I, Count of Toulouse, whom Noguier confuses with William III of Toulouse.²⁶⁹

In 1546, there was printed in Lyon the *Mirouer des femmes vertueuses*, an octavo that comprises two stories: that of Joan of Arc followed by Griselda's. Although this may look like a random combination, the association acquires meaning beyond the fact that both women are introduced as the embodiment of female virtues worthy of emulation. This version of the Maid of Orléans's story consists of a slightly modified excerpt from Alain Bouchard's *Grandes chroniques de Bretagne* (1514). Thus, Joan of Arc's status as a historical figure may have contributed to, and reinforced, the idea that Griselda also existed.

In Germany, the poet and historiographer Georg Fabricius wrote the *Originum illustrissimae stirpis Saxonicae libri septem*, which was published

²⁶⁷ See Jean Bouchet, *Les annales d'Aquitaine, faits & gestes en sommaire des roys de France, & d'Angleterre, & país de Naples & de Milan* (Poitiers: Jacques Bouchet, 1535), f. 54r. Bouchet's *Annales d'Aquitaine* were first printed in 1524 by Jacques Bouchet in Poitiers. The same printer-bookseller printed and sold the third edition in 1535, explaining that it had been newly revised with additions and corrected by the author himself, see *ibid.*, f. 218v. Having not been able to date or trace back the second edition, I can only state here that from the third edition until at least that of the 1644 edition printed in Poitiers by A. Mounin, Griselda is mentioned to have lived around the time of William V of Aquitaine's death (referred as William VI in the text).

²⁶⁸ Gilles Nicole, *Chroniques et annales de France* (Paris: Jehan Longis, 1536), f. 74v.

²⁶⁹ Whereas Noguier is right that a Count of Toulouse named Raymond married a Joan of England, this was not Raymond I, but Raymond VI (1194–1222), and he did so in 1196, almost 200 years later than Noguier's allegations that situate his Raymond I's accession to his title as Count in 1003, see Antoine Noguier, *Histoire Tolosaine* (Toulouse: Guyon Boudeville, 1556–1557), p. 167.

posthumously in Jena in 1597. In this work, “Walterus C. Salutiarum” (i.e. Gualtieri) is said to have married “Griseldis”, appearing as the descendant of the Saxon King Wittechindus and the sixth son of Walramus (i.e. Aleramo Marquis of Montferrat).²⁷⁰

In the seventeenth century, Francesco Agostino della Chiesa, another historiographer for the marquis of Saluzzo, mentions Griselda in his *Della vita del servo di Dio Monsignor Giovenale Ancina, Vescovo di Saluzzo* (Torino, 1629). Although he is prudent and treats her as possibly fictional (“favolosa”), della Chiesa explains that Griselda is said to have come from the small town of Villanovetta.²⁷¹

Until the nineteenth century in France, and even the twentieth century in Italy, the belief endured that, beyond the improbabilities of the myth, some truth lay in Gualtieri’s and Griselda’s existence.²⁷²

In England, by contrast, no traces of Griselda or her husband have been so far found in historiographical works. It seems that Geoffrey Chaucer’s versified translation in English of Petrarch’s text as the *Clerk’s Tale* (probably composed in 1379) of his *Canterbury Tales* impacted their reception in that country more as fictional characters than as historical figures. Chaucer reproduces Petrarch’s oscillation between *fabula* and *historia* as the Clerk refers to his narrative as both a “tale” (i.e. a *fabula*) and a “storie” (i.e. a *historia*).²⁷³ Although the Clerk uses both “tale” and “storie” in the middle of his narration,²⁷⁴ the key passages

270 Georg Fabricius, *Originum illustrissimae stirpis Saxonicae libri septem* (Jena: Tobias Steinmann, 1597), p. 443. Beatrice del Bo mentions that Fabricius made a similar allusion to Gualtieri and Griselda in his *Rerum Germaniae magnae et Saxoniae universae memorabilium mirabiliumque volumina duo* (Leipzig: Henning Gross, 1609), but I could not find any mention of them in this work. See Beatrice Del Bo, “I rischi della verosimiglianza: Griselda come personaggio storico,” in *Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea. Atti del convegno internazionale a 80 anni della nascita della Società per gli studi storici della Provincia di Cuneo*, ed. Rinaldo Comba and Marco Piccat (Cuneo: Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, 2011), p. 32.

271 Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa, “Della vita del servo di Dio Monsignor Giovenale Ancina, Vescovo di Saluzzo,” ed Ettore Dao. (Cavallermaggiore: Gribaudo, 1992). See Del Bo, “I rischi della verosimiglianza: Griselda come personaggio storico,” p. 33; Golenistcheff-Koutouloff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, p. 26.

272 Del Bo, “I rischi della verosimiglianza: Griselda come personaggio storico,” pp. 34–36.

273 In its early use, the word “story” frequently applied to “passages of Bible history and legends of saints”, see Oxford English Dictionary, “*story, n.*” (Oxford UP), I.1.a. The entry provides examples from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.

274 See Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), ll. 383, 93, 760.

are the introduction and the conclusion. The Clerk presents his narrative as a “tale”:

I wol yow telle a tale which that I
 Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk
 As preved by his words and his werk.
 He is now deed and nayled in his cheste;
 I prey God so yeve his soule reste!
 Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,
 Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
 Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie.²⁷⁵

And he concludes by referring to the tale as a “storie”:

This storie is seyde nat for that wyves sholde
 Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
 For it were inportable, though they wolde,
 But for that every wight, in his degree,
 Sholde be constant in adversitee
 As was Grisilde; therfore Petrak writeth
 This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth.²⁷⁶

Thus, Chaucer seems to imitate Petrarch’s rhetorical gesture, suggesting first that it is a *fabula* before insisting on treating it as a *historia*. However, Chaucer provides a number of hints that he does not believe the story to be true. His narrator underlines the fact that Petrarch is a poet, and therefore a writer of *fabulae*. Chaucer denies him any other title, which would grant him authority in other liberal arts:

[Petrarch] whos rethorike sweete
 Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie
 As Lynyan dide of philosophie,
 Or lawe, or oother art particuler.²⁷⁷

Another indication that the story is meant to be understood as a *fabula* lies in the fact that the Clerk rejects Petrarch’s geographical introduction and refuses to translate it as a “thyng impertinent”.²⁷⁸ This passage at the beginning of Petrarch’s Latin translation, which is absent from Boccaccio’s novella, has been

²⁷⁵ Ibid., ll. 26–33.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., ll. 1142–48.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., ll. 32–35.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., l. 54.

identified by critics as an *excursus* and a sign of Petrarch's imitation of Roman historiography, this increasing the verisimilitude of the story.²⁷⁹ Thus, as the Clerk judges Petrarch's description of the Piedmont irrelevant, he indicates that the story does not need details to render it more believable, because it is a fiction. Finally, the "Lenvoy de Chaucer"—which provides the tale with a second, carnivalesque conclusion—may be interpreted as another indication that the story is a *fabula* rather than a *historia*. Not only does it claim that "Gisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience",²⁸⁰ ironically treating Griselda as a character who really existed in order to suggest that she never did and better disqualify her exemplarity; it also highlights the unlikelihood of the tale ("a storie of swich mervaille / As of Grisildis pacient and kynde").²⁸¹ Beyond the purposefully exaggerated tone of the Envoy, these lines and the grotesqueness of the whole song indirectly underline the fictional nature of the Clerk's tale.

After Chaucer, the first to mention Griselda again is John Lydgate, who names her among catalogues of virtuous women in the *Temple of Glas*, a dream-vision written in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and in the *Fall of Princes* (1431–1438/9), a translation of Laurent de Premierfait's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (c. 1409), which itself translates into French Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* (c. 1355–1360). As well as alluding to Griselda, the poet refers directly to Chaucer's version of her story and the Wife of Bath's Prologue in his *Disguising at Hertford* (c. 1426–1428), a royal mumming (i.e. a late medieval court performance). Lydgate's ambivalent contributions do not make any clearer statuses of Griselda and Gualtieri as fictional or real persons. However, it seems that for Lydgate, she is more likely to have existed, since he mentions her twice in the catalogues of famous ancient women. Similarly, John Metham writes about Griselda, placing her in the company of virtuous women from Antiquity in his *Romance of Amoryus and Cleopes* (mid-fifteenth century).

As a consequence, the reception of Griselda's story in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries depended on whether the reader or listener was ready to accept Griselda's extraordinary patience or Gualtieri's extreme cruelty as believable or not, even more than in Spain, France, Germany, and

²⁷⁹ See Martellotti, "Momenti narrativi del Petrarca.," Albanese's introduction to Petrarca, *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria*, p. 21; Panzera, "La nouvelle de Griselda et les *Seniles* de Pétrarque," p. 41.

²⁸⁰ Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," l. 1177.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1186–87.

Italy. The fact that hardly any English rewriters problematised their actual existence can also be interpreted in two ways: it could signify that everyone agreed that the story was a *fabula*, so there was no reason to question whether Griselda and Gualtieri ever lived; or it could mean that there was a general agreement on the fact that they existed in some distant past. However, given the extremeness of both Gualtieri and Griselda's behaviour, even within the framework of medieval thought and discourse, I find it hard to believe that there was a general, dominant view of the story as a *historia*. I rather think there was a tacit consensus that it was generally perceived as a *fabula*.

Even though not all European countries became convinced that she really existed, the historicisation process I try to delineate reinforces the view of Griselda as an exemplary figure in late medieval and early modern culture. As Fleischmann explains, for medieval chroniclers, the aim "was not so much to relate actions for their historical or documentary interest as to celebrate the values implicit in these actions. Man was considered 'teleologically' in light of these values which were regarded as a kind of immutable definition of proper human behaviour".²⁸² Concerning women in particular, Elizabeth Clark notes how the Church Fathers "paradoxically militated against a strictly historical reading" of the stories of Biblical and ancient women in their pursuit of young ladies' "chastisement and moral uplift". "In their hands", as she further contends, "the Biblical stories acquired a certain timelessness, that is, they took on the features of myth". In other words, they were deprived of their place in history in order to be considered within a repetitive, atemporal, and ideal paradigm. As she remarks, "[t]he 'history of women' has been flattened to the 'myth of woman'", which for the Church Fathers is, of course, that of a meek, obedient, silent, and chaste woman.²⁸³

²⁸² Fleischman, "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages," pp. 285–86.

²⁸³ Elizabeth Clark, "Ideology, History and the Construction of "Woman" in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 170.

1.4 Griselda: The ideal Christian

Regardless of whether their source is Boccaccio, Petrarch, or one of Petrarch's translators or adaptors, the authors rewriting Griselda's story treat her as an edifying character. Her exemplarity, however, was not uniform. In spite of Petrarch's warning that Griseldis should not be imitated by women because she is "vix imitabilis", for many of his followers, she initially embodies a combination of ideal wifely obedience and Christian patience or steadfastness, and humility, while a parallel trend saw her as the embodiment of female constancy or strength of character.

Most of the versions that present Griselda as an example for all Christians depict her mainly as an embodiment of *patientia* or steadfastness, which she manifests through her submission and obedience.

As Mark Sandona explains, in the Middle Ages, patience still featured some characteristics of its pagan ancestry, though it had been redefined by the Church Fathers as a typically Christian virtue. In Greco-Roman thought, however, and especially in the stoicism of Seneca and Cicero, "Patientia is, in the grammatical sense, a perfect goddess", for "she has completed her victory over suffering". Christian Patientia is a sort of virtue "in-process" whose characteristic is to "suffer gladly" continually "in anticipation of a future perfect reward".²⁸⁴ In the "stoic . . . ethical universe", Sandona contends, "patience, fortitude, and constancy determine the good life, and determine it solely within the context of this world."²⁸⁵ As he further argues, "the stoic is patient because passion is to be avoided; the Christian is patient because the Passion is a model for behavior".²⁸⁶

Like in stoicism, Christian patience is also associated with the dominion of emotions. Although *patientia* traditionally stands in treatises and poetical works in opposition to the vice of *ira* (wrath),²⁸⁷ this virtue ultimately helps to overcome all emotions. Thus, when Tertullian personifies *patientia*, he describes her with a "vultus illi tranquillus et placidus, frons pura nulla maeroris aut irae rugositate contracta".²⁸⁸ As Ralph Hanna comments,

284 Mark Sandona, *Patience and the Agents of Renaissance Drama* (Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts: unedited thesis, 1989), p. 18.

285 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

286 *Ibid.*

287 Sandona gives the example of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, in which the virtue of patience's vicious counterpart is *ira*, see *ibid.*, p. 35.

288 Tertullian, *De Patientia*, XV.4, quoted in Sandona, *Patience*, p. 31.

Augustine says that patience is “aequo mala tolerare” (“to endure evils with an even mind”). And Gregory the Great defines the virtue as “aliena mala aequanimiter perpeti” (“to endure external evils with equanimity”). These three statements are universally known. . . Their ubiquity as platitudes can be gauged by the widespread use of the nearly identical Gregorian and Augustinian versions in ordinary Sunday sermons.²⁸⁹

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, patience frequently appears in treatises discussing the classification of the cardinal virtues (temperance, justice, prudence and fortitude). As Corey Alec Owen points out, using for example Cicero’s *De inventione* or Macrobius’s *Commentarium in somnium Scipionis* as sources,

[a]uthors such as . . . Thomas of Chobham (c. 1160–c. 1236), Aquinas (1225–74), and Lorens d’Orléans (c. 1220–c. 1300) divide fortitude into aggressive and enduring qualities. For Aquinas in particular, the enduring aspect is more difficult, and thus more heroic, than the aggressive one, since acts of endurance must be conducted without the assistance of the passions; the essence of *fortitudo* is found in patience and perseverance, and its essential act is martyrdom.²⁹⁰

While Aquinas states that “patientia dicitur esse radix et custos omnium virtutum”, like Gregory the Great before him, instead of following Augustine and opposing it to *ira*, Aquinas considers that patience is the way to avoid the temptation of *tristitia* (sorrow or despair, often referred to as *acedia*): “Augustinus dicit, in libro de patientia, quod patientia hominis est qua mala aequo animo toleramus, idest sine perturbatione tristitiae, ne animo iniquo bona deseramus per quae ad meliora perveniamus”.²⁹¹ Aquinas considers that patience is a part of fortitude because it helps endure the evils inflicted by others, among which the hardest to bear is death:

Ad patientiam enim pertinet aliena mala aequanimiter perpeti, ut Gregorius dicit, in quadam homilia. In malis autem quae ab aliis inferuntur, praecipua sunt, et difficillima ad sustinendum, illa quae pertinent ad pericula mortis, circa quae est fortitudo . . . Et ideo patientia adiungitur ei sicut secundaria virtus principali.²⁹²

Thus, *patientia* as a part of *fortitudo* helps martyrs to bear all the evils they are afflicted with until through death, a greater good befalls them. As Owen

²⁸⁹ Ralph Hanna, “Some Commonplaces of Late Medieval Patience Discussions,” in *The Triumph of Patience*, ed. Gerald Schiffhorst (Orlando: UP of Florida, 1978), p. 68.

²⁹⁰ Corey Alec Owen, *The Passions of Sir Gawain: Patience and the Idiom of Medieval Romance in England* (Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia: unpublished thesis, 2007), p. 13.

²⁹¹ Aquinas, *Summa*, II^a-IIae q. 136 a. 1 co.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, II^a-IIae q. 136 a. 4 co.

remarks, fortitude finds its climatic expression in martyrdom, since it implies the renunciation of one's life in God's name.²⁹³

Although the biblical figure most frequently associated with patience is, of course, Job,²⁹⁴ as Sandona argues, both in texts and pictorial representations, “the most consistent form patience takes is that of a woman—a woman who remains victorious while suffering, and because of suffering”.²⁹⁵ This seems to be related to the fact that patient bearing of hardship is a passive attitude, in opposition to active attack or defence. In the medieval and early modern period, passivity was a typically feminine characteristic. Interestingly for Ambrose, the other biblical figure who embodies *patientia* is Rebecca in *De Jacob et vita beata*, in *De Fuga seaculi*, in *De Isaac vel anima*.²⁹⁶ However, Ambrose's view of Rebecca as an embodiment of patience did not seem to have influenced later Christian thinkers.

As argued above, in Boccaccio's novella, Griselda is already associated with Rebecca and other women from the Old Testament, but rather than indicating that she embodies patience, it introduces her as an ideal bride. Nonetheless, the parallel between Griselda and Job that both Boccaccio and Petrarch suggest, regardless of the stated ambiguities inherent in both versions, have induced many rewriters and translators to associate Griselda with *patientia*.

The earliest known French translation of Petrarch's version appeared under the pen of Philippe de Mézières (ca. 1327–1405) in his *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage et du reconfort des Dames mariees* (ca. 1384). Mézières organised his *Sacrement de mariage* in four parts: the first is dedicated to the spiritual marriage of Christ and the Church; the second to the figurative wedding of the Virgin Mary; the third to the virtues of marriage between a man and a woman; and the fourth to the spiritual union between God and the reasonable soul. The story of Griselda, entitled “Le miroir des dames mariees, la noble marquise de Saluce”, appears in the fourth part. She not only is an example of the union between the human soul and Christ but also of an exemplary wife displaying unflinching obedience towards her husband: “la noble marquise de Saluce . . . donne un exemple solempnel et plaisant a Dieu, non tant seulement aus dames mariees d'amer parfaitement leurs maris, mais a toute ame raisonnable [et] devote d'amer entierement Jhesu Crist son Espous immortel”.²⁹⁷ Mézières writes

²⁹³ Owen, *The Passions of Sir Gawain*, pp. 34–35.

²⁹⁴ See for example, Gregory the Great's *Moralia on Iob* or Prudentius's *Psychomachia*.

²⁹⁵ Sandona, *Patience*, p. 35.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

²⁹⁷ Philippe de Mézières, *Le Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* (Washington, D.C.: “The” Catholic University of America Press, 1993), p. 356.

this in his introduction to the story. He thus indicates from the beginning that there is an allegorical meaning that transcends Griseldis's sex and secular exemplarity, namely that of her "patience et obedience", which all Christians could emulate, something that turns her into a "vraye martire".²⁹⁸

The content of all eighteen manuscripts of Mézières's version (mostly from the fifteenth century) that have come down to us leaves no doubt that it was read as an edifying story. Aside from its appearance among moral treatises or as a part of, or appendix to, conduct books, at least one early fifteenth-century codex clearly considers her story as a hagiography: in Ms. 812 from the Bibliothèque of Cambrai, Mézières's text appears under the title "Vie et bonne patience de Griseldis" among pious texts, such as a partial French translation of the *Golden Legend* and a versification of Saint Gregory's life.²⁹⁹

The second (anonymous) French translation from the beginning of the fifteenth century, frequently referred to as the "B version" or "Livre Griseldis", follows Petrarch more closely than Mézières's. In this text, Griseldis embodies "constance et pacience",³⁰⁰ which, as in Petrarch, are such that they are "à paine . . . eusuivable et possible".³⁰¹

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Pierre de Hailles, secretary of Guy II, Count of Blois, wrote the *Vita Griseldis metrificata*. As the title indicates, this work not only turns Petrarch's version into verses but also associates Griselda's story with saints' and martyrs' lives or "vitae". Like Petrarch, Pierre de Hailles thinks that Griselda's wifely patience is hardly imitable, but he hopes her story will incite men to be less lazy and follow her example as an ideal Christian:

Hec igitur pando non tam pro solicitando,
quod reliquis tanta detur patientia, quanta
visa fuit plene laudabilis huius egene,
cum vix sectanda michi pareat aut toleranda,
quam pro pigrorum pulsanda parte virorum,
ut robur uxoris sit eisdem causa ruboris,
sic quod reddatur vir saltem pro deitate
ausus tot grate tollerare, quot hec recitatur
passa fuisse suo pro coniuge³⁰²

298 Ibid.

299 See Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, p. 40.

300 Ibid., p. 195.

301 Ibid., p. 213.

302 Petrus De Haille, "Vita Griseldis metrificata," in *Die "Griseldis" des Petrus des Hailles: ein philologischer Kommentar*, ed. Dieter Vetter (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen: unpublished thesis, 2005), ll. 503–11.

A fifteenth-century Latin version from Germany links Griselda with the virtue of patience even more explicitly. This adaptation appears in Hermannus Bononiensis's *Viaticum Narrationum*, a collection of edifying stories organised by rubrics or keywords referring to virtues or Christian precepts in alphabetical order. These were taken from authors such as Valerius Maximus, Dares Phrygius, Jacques de Vitry, and Caesarius von Heisterbach, as well as from Jacobus Voraginus's *Golden Legend*.³⁰³ The author integrates Petrarch's version (with minor modifications) into this work under the rubric "*paciencia*". According to Zuzana Pospíšilová, this version was later copied in a manuscript from the University of Prague to illustrate "deux maximes tirées des *Moralia* de Grégoire le Grand, c'est-à-dire que la force morale ne se reconnaît que dans l'adversité et qu'il est nécessaire de supporter patiemment les épreuves, car ce n'est qu'ainsi qu'il est possible de triompher du mal".³⁰⁴

In Spain, when Bernat Metge translated Petrarch's text into Catalan in 1388, in a letter addressed to his patron, Isabel de Guimerà, he describes the story as an example of "*pasciència, obediència e amor conjugal*" and a means to better withstand adversity with patience:

supplicant-vos que la present istòria vullats benignament oyr, en les adverstats, les quals algü en aquestas present vida no pot squivar, com loch serà, ben rememrar de aquella, per ço que mils e pus pascientment puxats aquellas soffarir.³⁰⁵

Although Metge's version does not seem to have much influenced adaptations of the Griselda story in Spanish, it is worth mentioning that it had an interesting reception of its own with the first Catalan translation of the *Decameron* in a manuscript from 1429, in which Boccaccio's last novella was replaced by Metge's translation of Petrarch.³⁰⁶

In England, while Chaucer did not intend his Grisildis as an exemplary figure,³⁰⁷ his narrator, the Clerk from Oxford, attributes the tale to Petrarch and rather faithfully reproduces the Italian poet's conclusion that she symbolises Christian steadfastness. This idea is underlined throughout the text, which

303 Zuzana Pospíšilová, "Quelques remarques à propos des versions latines de l'histoire de Griselda," in *La storia di Griselda in Europa, Atti del convegno 'Modi dell'intertestualità: la storia di Griselda in Europa'*, *L'Aquila*, 12–14 maggio 1988, ed. Raffaele Morabito (Rome: Japadre, 1990), pp. 243–44.

304 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

305 Metge, *Obras de Bernat Metge*, p. 118.

306 Conde, "Un aspecto de la recepción del Decameron en la península Ibérica, a la sombra de Petrarca. La historia de Griselda," pp. 354–5.

307 This interpretation of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* is further developed in the next section.

frequently associates Grisildis with patience³⁰⁸ and explicitly with Job.³⁰⁹ As a result, and possibly also because of the influence of Petrarch's version, which seems to have circulated in parallel with that of Chaucer's, the reception of Griselda's story in England is characterised less by her assimilation to Christian *patientia* but more as an example of a feminine, virtuous wife, from whom every young lady should learn about with a view to their future married life.

In parallel to these texts, which tend to envisage Griselda as first and foremost the embodiment of patience, a few others consider her story more generally as an *exemplum* of Christian ideals.

In July 1399, Romigi di Ardingo dei Ricci copied in a codex for personal use an Italian translation of Petrarch's text together with its allegorical conclusion. Given that the text appears in the collection after devotional and didactical texts—such as the Book of Genesis translated into Italian, Senecan proverbs, and Giovanni Gallico's *Breviloquio delle Quattro virtù*—it seems obvious that, as Morabito remarks, Romigi envisaged Griselda as an example of Christian values and virtues.³¹⁰

Jean Mansel also inserted Griselda's story into his *Fleur des histoires* (c. 1455). This work of Burgundian historiography places this story towards the end of the second volume. This second part begins with saints' lives and Gregory the Great's dialogues and moral examples. It then proceeds with Roman historiography until it blends with that of France and concludes with the history of several popes, followed by Griselda's story and two Christian moral treatises (the first on the cardinal virtues and the second on the soul). This ordering suggests that Griselda is envisaged as a saint, the embodiment of virtue, or a representation of the human soul.

In Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century, a *sacra rappresentazione* was composed, most likely by a writer from the Florentine area.³¹¹ It has survived only as a fragment, which begins when Griselda's children are taken away from her (apparently both at the same time). As Morabito remarks, this Griselda embodies various Christian figures.³¹² The first that appears in the text is the Virgin Mary through the Marian iconographic attribute of the knives piercing her heart: "Oimè, che cosa cruda e disonesta / ch'el padre facci e figliuoli amazare! / Quest'è el coltello che mi passa el petto".³¹³ Boccaccio seems

308 See Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," ll. 495, 623, 644, 670, 677, 688, 813, 919, 929, 1044, 1149, 1177, 1181, 1187.

309 See *ibid.*, l. 932.

310 See Morabito, *Una sacra rappresentazione profana*, pp. 3–4.

311 See *ibid.*, p. 9.

312 See *ibid.*, p. 12.

313 *Ibid.*, ll. 5–7.

to be the source of this imagery here, and the anonymous author of the *sacra rappresentazione* uses it to typify Griselda's anguish at yielding her children to be murdered. The play, thus, associates Griselda with the Virgin's sorrow at Christ's suffering and death, unlike Boccaccio's version, which employs this iconographic detail when Griselda grieves for the loss of her husband at the moment of her repudiation. Griselda in the *Sacra Rappresentazione* can also be compared to both a *figura Christi* and an embodiment of Job. She leaves her lot to God when, after being sent back to the countryside, she is abandoned by everyone, even her father:

O vero Iddio deh, non m'abandonare:
 ascolta un poco questa sconsolata!
 io mi viddi de' figliuoli privare
 e dal marito poi esser cacciata.
 Ora mi vego dal padre stranare
 e son da tutto el mondo abandonata.
 I' mi rimetto, Signor, nelle tuo braccia
 e son per fare quello che vuo' ch'i' faccia.³¹⁴

While the last lines echo Christ's words in Luke 23: 46 ("Jesus ait Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum"),³¹⁵ Griselda's entire speech reminds the reader of the voice of Job in Job 29–31 as she enumerates her woes. Like Job, she thinks that she deserves her lot and trusts God to look after her. In this adaption, among the usual virtues that Griselda explicitly represents—patience, obedience, and humility—her humbleness stands out. In a manner typical of the genre of the *sacra rappresentazione*³¹⁶ and its catechising aim, Griselda recognises her own sin of pride and accepts losing her luxurious clothes and

³¹⁴ Ibid., ll. 497–504.

³¹⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 12.

³¹⁶ The *sacra rappresentazione* was a fourteenth-century Florentine dramatic genre. Plots were characteristically based either on biblical stories, saints' lives or *exemplum*. Usually written in hendecasyllabic octaves, these plays were also framed by a prologue and an epilogue typically spoken by an angel figure. This genre, when written in vernacular languages, was conceived for a lay, not necessarily educated, audience with a view to predicate the Christian faith and its precepts. For a more detailed definition of the genre, see Paola Ventrone, "Per una morfologia della sacra rappresentazione fiorentina," in *Teatro e culture della rappresentazione. Lo spettacolo in Italia nel Quattrocento*, ed. R. Guarino (Bologna: il Mulino, 1988). For an analysis of the didactic function of the *sacra rappresentazione*, see Paola Ventrone, "La sacra rappresentazione fiorentina, ovvero la predicazione in forma di teatro," in *Letteratura in forma di sermone. I rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII–XVI*, ed. Ginetta Auzzas, Giovanni Baffetti, and Carlo Delcorno (Florence: Olschki, 2003).

jewels, which are characteristic objects of female vanity, and returns to a life of hard work as a just punishment from God:

Orsù, Griselda, ritogli I tuo' stracci,
ché s'ì superba eri diventata
che non temeви d'Iddio e minacci,
sconoscente, ignorante ed ingrata.
...
Ove son ora e diamanti e pendenti
che tanti avevo e al collo e d'intorno?
Ingrata, tu non meriti altrimenti!
Eco qui le delitie a ch'i' ritorno
pe' mie' peccati; e piace al Signore
ch'i' mangi el pane del mie propio sudore.³¹⁷

Griselda's speech is not only key to the didactic aim of teaching the mental and spiritual path to virtue by rejecting sin but also a common technique among dramatic genres to substitute the narrative voice, which in a novella, poem, or ballad would have given readers and listeners access to the character's thoughts and feelings.

A final fifteenth-century version worth mentioning for its particularity is the one that appears in *Dat kaetspel ghemoralizeert* (1431) by the Flemish jurist Jan Van den Berghe. This work allegorises the *jeu de paume* in order to illustrate the complexity of justice and its application. According to E. I. Strubbe, Van den Berghe “ne fait nullement œuvre dogmatique, son but est nettement moralisateur; il finit d'ailleurs son œuvre par l'énumération des vertus qui lui semblent nécessaires aux juges. Chaque enseignement est rehaussé d'exemples tirés presque tous de l'histoire ancienne ou biblique”.³¹⁸ Although the author does not produce a particularly original version of Griselda's story, the context, an allegorical treaty on justice and the law, shows that Griselda's virtues of constancy and rectitude (“gherechtichede ende ghestadichede”)³¹⁹ could perfectly easily be applied to men. By including her story in a book clearly destined to a masculine audience, Van den Berghe shows more obviously than other contemporary translators and adaptors that during the fifteenth century, Griselda could, and indeed did, incarnate Christian moral values not limited to, or strictly defined by, her gender.

³¹⁷ Morabito, *Una sacra rappresentazione profana*, ll. 321–36.

³¹⁸ E. I. Strubbe, “Jean van den Berghe, écrivain et juriste flamand (13... - 1439),” *Bulletin de la commission royale des Anciennes Lois et Ordonnances de Belgique* 12, no. 3 (1926): 182–3.

³¹⁹ Jan Van den Berghe, *Dat kaetspel ghemoralizeert* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1915), p. 53.

These late medieval translations and rewritings have in common their treatment of the Griselda story as an edifying story assimilated to either a moral treaty or a saint's life, and this trend continued well into the sixteenth century. Indeed, apart from its circulation in over 200 manuscripts and at least nine versions in print since Ulrich Zell's *princeps* edition in 1469, Petrarch's own version was considered an edifying treaty because it was detached from his *Seniles* to be inserted among his Latin treatise in the first edition of his *Opera Omnia*, which was printed in Basel in 1554.³²⁰

Even if from the sixteenth century onwards, Griselda's exemplarity is more and more secularised, her value as an ideal Christian continues to appear in religious contexts until the end of the eighteenth century. A notable case is the last English Catholic version of the story: William Forrest's *The History of Grisild the Second*, a verse hagiography of Catherine of Aragon renamed "Grisild the Second". Forrest directs his poem at Catherine's daughter, Queen Mary I. He frames his text with a "Prologe to the Queenis maiestee" and an "Oration consolatorye", which is also addressed to the queen. Ursula Potter contends that the poem depicts Catherine of Aragon as a martyr "to reinforce her daughter's right to the English throne; and to use the mother's martyrdom to argue the daughter's duty to promote Catholicism in England".³²¹

Forrest does not present his text as a hagiography, but "The prologe to the Queenis maiestee" gives several hints of hagiographical intent. It claims that children can learn from their parents' bad and good examples,³²² and it also defines Catherine's life as "holy",³²³ re-baptising her as "Grisild . . . for her [i.e. Catherine's] great patience".³²⁴ Exemplarity, a virtuous life, and juxtaposition with another exemplary figure are hagiographic features.

English royals were "venerated as saints and martyrs for their pious life and untimely death",³²⁵ and Medieval hagiographers frequently juxtaposed these noblemen's lives with those of canonical saints.³²⁶ Bearing the same name invited comparison. For example, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, was compared to St. Thomas the Apostle and St. Thomas Becket.³²⁷ These juxtapositions

³²⁰ See Albanese's introduction to Petrarca, *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria*, pp. 12–13.

³²¹ Ursula Potter, "Tales of Patient Griselda and Henry VIII," *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama* 5 (2002): 13.

³²² Forrest, *History*.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³²⁵ Danna Pirovansky, *Martyrs in the Making. Political Martyrdom in Late Medieval England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 1.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

“helped refine the representation of the ‘new’ martyr” and stressed his saint-like attributes.³²⁸ However, Forrest does not compare Catherine of Aragon to any of the St. Catherines or any other saint for that matter. He could also have drawn parallels between Catherine and the biblical queen Esther, whose portrayal in *Godly Queen Hester* (ca. 1529) is shaped to make her stand for Henry VIII’s wife.³²⁹ Instead, he chooses Patient Griselda, thereby indicating that despite his own doubts about the veracity of her story, he tends to envisage Griselda as a historical character who led the life of a saint.

Forrest does not simply juxtapose and compare Griselda’s tale with Catherine’s life, as medieval hagiographers do with English royalty and saints’ lives—he superimposes Catherine’s life onto Griselda’s tale. Griselda’s story becomes a substrate idiom onto which Catherine’s life is applied in the manner of a superstrate, creating a new language in which the substrate survives in only a few words (i.e. in the names of Grisild and Walter and the grammatical structures). It is a mould in which the Queen’s life is partially reshaped.

Forrest makes his superimposition obvious to readers by indicating that he rechristens Catherine “Grisild”. Forrest does not examine the etymology of Catherine’s name, as Jacobus Voraginus did in his *Golden Legend*, finding etymons showing that the saints’ name echoes their lives and virtues. Instead, Forrest re-baptises Catherine and gives her a name loaded with the meaning he wants her to incarnate. Moreover, following the four levels of Biblical interpretation, he probably read Griselda’s story as a potential anagoge of Catherine’s life. As Timothy Hampton explains:

the smallest semantic unit whereby the great life [of an exemplary figure] is represented [is] the exemplar’s name. The reader who comes upon the name of a heroic ancient exemplar in a text had come upon a single sign which contains folded within it the entire history of the hero’s deeds, the whole string of great moments which made the name a marked sign in the first place . . . The task of the Renaissance reader . . . is to unpack those great deeds from the mere appearance of the name.³³⁰

328 Ibid., p. 82.

329 Bevington, *Tudor drama and politics: a critical approach to topical meaning*, pp. 88–94; Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), esp. chapter 4; Janette Dillon, “Powerful Obedience: Godly Queen Hester and Catherine of Aragon,” in *Interludes and Early Modern Society: Studies in Gender, Power and Theatricality*, ed. Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2007).

330 Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History. The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca; London: Cornell, 1990), p. 25.

Queen Mary I probably read Griselda's story. In a letter, Vives advises Catherine that Mary should read about exemplary lives such as Joseph's, Lucretia's, or Griselda's.³³¹ Whether Forrest knew that Mary had read Griselda's tale or not, the expected effect of renaming Catherine is meant to conjure up Griselda's life in Mary's mind, as well as the virtues and values Griselda embodies in early modern European culture: patience, Christian steadfastness, wifely obedience, suffering motherhood, and passive heroism. This polyphonic process invites comparison between Catherine's and Griselda's life, highlighting their similarities and differences, whether real or shaped by Forrest.

Forrest's poem does not tell Catherine's entire life but focuses on moments that enhanced her holiness or bore similarity to Griselda. Her childhood is briefly described, in the manner of Jacobus's *vitae*, to enhance her devotion: she is depicted praying, meditating, and reading the Scriptures. Forrest's portrait echoes Petrarch's description of Griselda.³³² Forrest claims that "So perfect she was in personage, / But farre perfecter was her inward mynde",³³³ while Petrarch's version depicts her as having "forma corporis satis egregia, sed pulcritudine morum atque animi adeo speciosa ut nichil supra"³³⁴ (a rather remarkable physical beauty, but the beauty of her mores and her soul was brighter than anything else). Forrest mentions only two births after Grisild's marriage to Walter: a son who dies aged about 20 days and Mary.³³⁵ After describing how Grisild educates Mary, Forrest details the circumstances of Catherine's divorce, explaining Cardinal Wolsey's role (digressing on his fall from favour and death), commenting on the debates about the divorce, and focusing on key moments in Catherine's life that can be set against Griselda's. These moments reshape Catherine as a rather passive and obedient figure, whereas the historical Catherine actively sought papal help to prevent the divorce. After explaining that Walter, dissatisfied with the Pope's refusal to annul the marriage, proclaimed himself Head of the Church, Forrest describes Grisild's resistance when Walter asks her to surrender her crown. Griselda refuses to return to her father naked and bids for a smock, and likewise, Grisild refuses to yield her

331 Watson Foster, *Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), p. 144.

332 Petrarch seems to be Forrest's main Griseldian source because his name appears in the poem, see Forrest, *History*.

333 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

334 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 74.

335 It seems unlikely that Forrest did not know about Catherine's other four pregnancies; but reducing them to two reshapes Catherine's motherhood in terms of Griselda's, who had only two children.

crown, arguing that she never committed the adultery with his brother that he accuses her of. Walter then banishes her from court, just as the marquis sends Griselda back to her father. Grisild is then forced to accept her new title as “Ladye Douager”,³³⁶ live on rent unworthy of her rank, and dismiss some of her servants. Like Griselda, she patiently accepts her fate when forced to return to poverty. As death approaches, Grisild displays devotion and forgiveness, and likewise, Griselda never expresses any resentment and seems to forgive Walter for everything. Grisild sends Walter a letter allowing him to remarry since, through her death, God will undo their marriage, thus echoing Griselda’s benediction of the marquis’s remarriage. Grisild also bids her husband to his “Doughter *Mary* to caste not away”.³³⁷ In other words, she asks him not to submit *Mary* to the same treatment Grisild underwent, just as Griselda asks the marquis not to try his new bride as he tested her. In the penultimate chapter, Grisild appears among saints and the Virgin *Mary* interceding for England’s restoration to Catholicism. This restorative process is described in terms of conversion (“synners amendement”),³³⁸ God’s charity,³³⁹ and mercy.³⁴⁰ Forrest thus attributes England’s return to Catholicism to Grisild, the saints, and the Virgin *Mary*’s intercession, and he completes Catherine/Grisild’s sainthood with Grisild’s performance of some kind of miracle.

Apart from her “manly” and saint-like, yet failed, resistance to her deposition, Grisild the Second incarnates passivity, forgiveness, and obedience. As Forrest turns Catherine into Grisild and thereby exemplifies her, he takes away part of her humanity and shapes her as the allegorical embodiment of both patient suffering, like Griselda, and the realm of England decaying under Henry/Walter’s heretical tyranny. Catherine’s new name and redesigned life create a passive yet heroic figure that is endowed with a saint’s endurance. However, to raise readers’ compassion, Grisild displays so much pathos through her almost constant weeping that it undermines her affiliation with the *Mater Dolorosa* and does little justice to the historical Catherine, who actively fought for 7 years for herself and her daughter’s rights.

In addition, Forrest dedicates the whole of chapter 18 to a comparison of Griselda and Grisild the Second in order to prove that the latter is “farre more worthy of estimation then the First.”³⁴¹ Forrest argues that Catherine is more

336 Forrest, *History*.

337 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

338 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

339 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

340 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

341 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

admirable because she is highborn, whereas Griselda's baseness made her more able to sustain adversity. Forrest further contends that since Griselda's story lacks proof of its truthfulness, but the story of Catherine is true, the latter gains in merit and interest:

The First howe her dooynges weare brought abowte,
 To vs in theis dayes they are yncertayne;
 Many imagine that Petrarke dyd but fayne;
 Howe much the Seconde is true, that yee haue herde,
 Somuche before thother shee is too bee preferde.³⁴²

What appears important to Forrest is truthfulness. He wants his story to be plain and clear, yet he hides his heroine's name under that of another whose actual historical existence he doubts. At the heart of this paradox lies the fact that he needs his readership to draw parallels between Catherine and Griselda in order to more fully support his arguments in favour of Catherine's sainthood. In other words, he authorises and legitimises Catherine's martyrdom by comparing and contrasting it with Griselda's. This is yet another paradox, because Griselda is no orthodox saint but a fictive saint-like figure.

Consequently, Forrest's use of Patient Griselda allows insights into how that figure was perceived in mid-sixteenth-century England. Forrest's doubts suggest that it was unclear whether Griselda was a fictional character or a historical figure (i.e. whether her story was fictive or true). These doubts have their origin in Petrarch's hesitation between "historia" and "fabula", as commented on above. What is clear, however, is that Griselda's mere name powerfully suggested a whole imagery of perfection, from virtuous patience and martyr-like suffering to ideal wifehood. Forrest's use of her name shows that she could be deployed as a powerful signifier, which he did in order to prove the superior virtue of Catherine of Aragon.

As already mentioned, Forrest's *Grisild the Second* is not the last use of the Griselda myth for religious purposes. The sixteenth century marks the myth's entrance into Jesuit school theatre in Latin, as well as into Protestant school drama in the vernacular. In these plays, Griselda is always an edifying character for children of both sexes, as much in Protestant countries as in Catholic ones despite of the schism dividing Europe during the Reformation and afterwards. By the time her story reached the stage, Griselda had already become a common figure in conduct literature for girls, especially in France but also in Spain, but her story as a school production was performed by boys in front of

342 Ibid., p. 132.

various kinds of spectators: sometimes elite audiences of educated men and sometimes socially mixed audiences of both sexes.

The first school play that appeared was Eligius Eucharius or Elooï Hoeckaert's *Grisellis* (1519), whose explicit didactical aim, aside from offering students the opportunity to practice Latin and the oratory arts, is to incite the audience and actors to imitate Grisellidis's "virtutis & probitatis exemplar",³⁴³ since "Grisellidis admirabilem patientiam / Virtutis insignia, pudicitiae decus / Morum venustatem docuit comoedia".³⁴⁴ This Flemish school play was staged in Ghent by an all-male cast of students from the Latin school of the same town. Not only the actors but also the audience, among which few women would have been present and/or understood Latin, indicate that Grisellidis's patience in this play is understood as a Christian virtue not limited to her sex or status as wife, even though she also embodies the type of the ideal wife advising her husband against sin.³⁴⁵

Fifty years later, in 1569, the Flemish schoolmaster and priest Floris van den Bouchorst stages his *Dialogus Griselidis, de ferendis fortiter molestiis, ut quilibet cognoscere se possit et vite tueri munera* in the newly founded Jesuit school of St Omer. This drama, like that of Hoeckaert, was staged by male students for a most likely all-male audience, and, as its title indicates, it illustrates the virtue of fortitude through Griselidis's patience as an example for all Christians, regardless of the fact that the protagonist is a woman.

Around the same time in England, John Phillip composed his Tudor interlude, *Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissill*, for an as-yet unidentified boys' company. The first scenes in which Grissil appears, however, leave no doubt that the play's didactic targets include children: Grissil is a very well-behaved child showing the respect and obedience children were culturally expected to owe their parents. Even if Grissil's exemplarity is mostly oriented towards girls in these scenes, as she exhorts them not only to obey their parents but also to "Conserve and keep virginity" and shun "sinful lust" in her opening song, as the play's subtitle indicates, her obedience is valid for any child: "Wherein is declared the good example of her patience towards her husband, and likewise the due obedience of children towards their parents". In addition, as her story

343 Eligius Eucharius, *Grisellis* (Antwerp: Michaellem Hillenium, 1519), sig. A2v.

344 *Ibid.*, sig. H2v-H3r.

345 See Jan Bloemendal, "Neo-Latin Drama in the Low Countries," in *Neo-Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jan Bloemendal and Howard B. Norland (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 330.

unfolds, she comes to embody Christian patience—which applies to all, whether they be children or adults, women or men, as the “Preface” (i.e. prologue) suggests (“Let Grissil’s patience sway in you, we do all require”).³⁴⁶

However, the play’s rendering of Grissil’s patience is not uniformly convincing. During the first part of the trial, when her children are taken away from her, while she openly suffers but accepts her first child’s death (“This chance with patience I will sustain and bear / God will revenge this bloody fact, in end I nothing fear”),³⁴⁷ the behaviour of two other female characters, functioning as Grissil’s alter egos, contrasts her passive attitude, questions, and motherhood, thus undermining Grissil’s exemplarity. First, the baby’s Nurse refuses to yield the infant, even though Grissil has already given her consent. The Nurse argues against the marquis (Gautier), the interlude vice figure (Politic Persuasion), and a servant (Diligence) in order to save the child. Grissil, meanwhile, does not utter a word to try to change her husband’s mind and only laments over the baby’s fate, asking God for the strength to sustain this blow (“Lord help, Lord aid, my woeful plight, on me take some remord! / Albeit, such direful hap have chanced, grant patience to my pain / That I may seem this cross of thine, with joy for to sustain”).³⁴⁸ Thus, Grissil’s self-fashioning as Christ is contrasted with the Nurse’s relentless resistance and accusations that the marquis and his men are about to sin by committing murder (“There is a God which to revenge this act will not be slow / Perpend, attend, and give regard to that which he hath said, / Thou shalt not kill”³⁴⁹). The second female character is the Countess of Pango, who welcomes and looks after Grissil’s daughter. At the same time, as she also helps by portraying patience, because she grieves the death of her husband but the baby helps her bear this loss, and obedience by readily accepting the task of looking after her brother’s infant. Through these very features, the Countess is constituted as an alter ego for Grissil and especially as the mother she is not allowed to be. As much as the Nurse’s mother-like fight for the child’s life, the Countess’s motherly, nurturing care for Grissil’s daughter underlines Grissil’s passivity and undermines her embodiment of patience, because it makes her motherhood appear rather flawed in spite of the woe she expresses at her daughter’s loss. This is made even more obvious when Grissil’s second child is taken away. Again, her son is not torn away from her arms but from those of the Nurse. What is more, Grissil is almost entirely left out of the picture aside from the Nurse’s final remark of

346 Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissil,” p. 77.

347 *Ibid.*, ll.1090–91.

348 *Ibid.*, ll. 1188–90.

349 *Ibid.*, ll. 1103–05.

the scene: “I mourn thee poor Grissil, thy hap I lament, / But thou, in this case, art marvellous patient”.³⁵⁰ Grissil’s absence from the stage, while offering the Nurse a second opportunity to argue against the marquis’s sinful and inhuman behaviour, fails to prove the protagonist’s patience. On the contrary, her passivity appears to be indirectly condemned by the Nurse’s fierce opposition.

During the final trial, however, Grissil’s role as a didactic character instructing the audience how to be patient is more consistent and coherent, because it is not questioned by other alter-ego figures. Grissil not only accepts her repudiation (“For patience to this hath armed my heart. / This cross is not condemned but willingly embraced / On God my trust and confidence is placed”)³⁵¹ but also urges her father to shun impatience and wrath:

O father, be joyful, and praise God for my fall.
 For he that gave prosperity, can send adversity,
 ...
 Embrace patience, let go rash temerity,
 Blame not Fortune for my overthrow,
 As it was the will of God that it should be so.³⁵²

Thus, using Calvinist arguments from the doctrine of predestination, Grissil casts herself as, first a Christ and then an Adam figure, yet one whose fall will be redeemed by God’s providence, while denying that Fortune had any role in her being sent away. She sees in her misfortunes the sign of God’s grace (“This cross is to try us, as he doth his elect”).³⁵³ As if to confirm Grissil’s claim of one of God’s chosen ones, two allegorical figures enter the stage, Patience and Constancy. Given that their moral support remains unchallenged by any vice figure (Politick Persuasion has left the play and does not return), Grissil’s patience is ensured to be unfailing. From this perspective, Grissil’s eventual restoration to her former state as marquise can be read as a prefiguration of her salvation.

Whereas this play presents a more coherent marquis who tests his wife only because he is led astray by a vice figure, Grissil’s patience remains ambiguous because of the flaws in the portrayal of her motherhood, which is clumsily brought to light by the contrasting characters of the Nurse and the Countess. Nonetheless, Phillip’s interlude remains a testimony of early modern England’s view of Griselda as an embodiment of patience and a useful exemplary character for didactic purposes for children and adults of both genders.

350 *Ibid.*, ll. 1448–49.

351 *Ibid.*, ll. 1684–86.

352 *Ibid.*, ll. 1740–46.

353 *Ibid.*, l. 1748.

In Augsburg, Germany, sometime between 1531 and 1567, Philipp Ulhart (c.1500–1567) printed a school play entitled *Grysel, Ain schöne Comedi von der demütigkait vnd gehorsame der Weyber gegen jren Ehmännern zu nutz vnd dienst der Jugent gemacht vnd gstellt*.³⁵⁴ Despite lacking an identifiable author, it is very likely that the play was written for, and performed by, the students of St. Anna, because the title indicates that the play is designed for a young audience, and Ulhart had a strong and continuous collaboration with the Gymnasium bei St. Anna, a Latin school.³⁵⁵ In this drama, like in Phillip’s interlude, Grisel embodies the ideal child and as she gets married, the ideal wife. Yet, this *Comedi* does not insist much on generalising her virtues to all Christians, for its aim is rather to promote the Protestant ideology of marriage for everyone and wifely obedience. What is interesting about this play in terms of Griselda’s incarnation of Christian ideals more generally is its influence on another play: the *Comoedia Von Graff Walther von Saluz vnd Grisolden* of Georg Mauritius, which also heavily borrows lines from another Griselda drama, Hans Sachs’s *Comedi mit 13 personen, die gedultig und gehorsam marggräfin Griselda* (1546). Although he was born in Nuremberg, Mauritius was a professor at the grammar school in Steyr, Austria. In 1582, Mauritius’s school play was performed in Steyr. It was later published in Leipzig in 1606 and translated into Latin by his son in 1621 for the Academy of Altdorf near Nuremberg, which reached university status in 1622. Whereas its sources picture Griselda as an *exemplum* for parents and married people, Mauritius’s *Grisolden* starts by exhorting the audience to patience and humility:

Wolt Gott das all die vom Pflug kem
Ihrs vorign Stands so war möchten nemn
Wenn ihnen Gott ein Glück hett gebn
Dächtn bessr an Kittl vnd Bawrenschuh
Vnd brauchtn in demut ihrer Ruh³⁵⁶

Mauritius thus uses Grisoldis’s example to illustrate that God’s gift of good fortune should not be a cause for vanity, because it can be reversed and lost. Although in this passage, the “Epilogus” addresses in particular the lower strata

³⁵⁴ The only extant copy of this play is held at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel.

³⁵⁵ See “Ulhart” entry in the *Augsburger Stadtlexikon* (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2013), [http://www.stadtlexikon-augsburg.de/index.php?id=114&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=5704&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=139&cHash=a4989ddf68](http://www.stadtlexikon-augsburg.de/index.php?id=114&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5704&tx_ttnews[backPid]=139&cHash=a4989ddf68), retrieved 17th April 2015.

³⁵⁶ Georg Mauritius, *Comoedia von Graff Walther von Salutz / vnd Grisolden* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1606), sig. G6v.

of the social hierarchy, namely the peasants, this teaching remains valid for any Christian.

Probably aware of the inherent ambiguities of Griselda's patience, in order to render it more believable, Mauritius uses lines spoken by Griselda in Hans Sachs's *Comedi* that have no parallel in the anonymous Augsbuger play. When the "Graff" suggests that he will have to kill her daughter to keep his subjects at peace, Grisoldis expresses her belief that what is happening is part of God's plans for her: "Vielleicht wird es von Gott gewendt / Noch etwan zu eim guten end".³⁵⁷ This small addition significantly reduces the ambiguity of Grisoldis's agreement to let her children be murdered and helps to depict her patience and steadfastness in a more coherent way.

Two other sixteenth-century plays are worth mentioning: Georg Pondo's *Die Historia Walthers, eines Welschen Marggrafens, der sich Griselden seines ärmuten Bawren Tochter vermehlen lest, sehr lustig vnd lieblich* and Pedro Navarro's *Comedia muy exemplar de la Marquesa de Saluzia, llamada Griselda*. Although these plays were not meant for school performances or performed by students, they still share didactical characteristics with the sixteenth-century dramas examined so far: they also aim to teach patience to their audience using unidimensional types and/or virtue and vice figures.

Georg Pondo, who is also known as Georg Pfund, wrote *Die Historia Walthers* in the late 1570s. It was performed in Frankfort and Bern in 1579 and printed in 1590 in Berlin.³⁵⁸ While the title page of Pondo's play addresses, first and foremost, "Erbaren Frommen Frawen gegen ihre Ehgemahlen", it also states that anyone ("Menniglich")³⁵⁹ is supposed to be moved by Griseldis's virtuous behaviour.³⁶⁰ She is introduced as an extraordinary character in Act 1 scene 4, in which she claims to have seen a God-given vision in a prophetic dream, telling she would marry the Marquis of Saluzzo. In this play, Griseldis has a mother, Gertsch, who does not believe that her daughter's dream has any meaning at all, even more so than her father Janiculus. However, Griseldis tries to convince her otherwise using the biblical example of Joseph.³⁶¹ Thereby,

³⁵⁷ Ibid., sig. D8v.

³⁵⁸ See Morabito, "La diffusione": 272. The actual edition of the play that was held at the University Library of Breslau is now lost but a manuscript copy of the same can be found at the Humboldt Bibliothek, Berlin.

³⁵⁹ For a full definition and use of "menniglich" (i.e. "männiglich"), see *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, 16 vols (Leipzig, 1854–1961; reprint Berlin-Brandenburgischer und Göttinger Akademie der Wissenschaften 1971), vol. 12, Sp 1591–1593.

³⁶⁰ Georg Pondo, *Die Historia Walthers* (Berlin: Voltz, 1590), sig. A1r.

³⁶¹ Genesis 37: 1–10.

Griseldis also draws attention to the similarities between her situation and that of Joseph. Just as Joseph's father and brothers are incredulous and angry when he tells them about his dreams, so is Gertsch when Griseldis explains what she saw in her sleep. Like in Joseph's dream, Griseldis's own vision sets her as becoming socially superior to her parents, and much like the future patriarch, Griseldis believes her dream to be true. Thus, the audience may understand Griseldis as an exceptional character, as Joseph was, to whom God has given signs of being elected and capable of interpreting signs.

An original feature of Pondo's play is that Griseldis's separations, first from her daughter and later from her son, are not directly represented onstage but rather reported from the perspective of two characters who witnessed these two events: the children's nurse, Sophrona, and the marquis's courtier, who takes them away, Danus. A possible explanation for leaving these scenes offstage may be that while Pondo wished to depict a stoic Griseldis, like his source (Petrarch),³⁶² he was also aware of the dramatic potential of pathos to move audiences. As a consequence, reported speech surrounded by commentaries about the reported event appears to be an ideal way to reproduce Petrarch's narrative insistence on the difficulty for a mother to yield one's children to certain death while also adding add pathos to the scene. While Griseldis's stoic response is recounted, the onstage narrators can freely express their sorrow and/or astonishment at what they have just witnessed. However, the resulting portrayal of Griseldis's obedience and patience remains ambiguous.

As is usual with most versions of the myth, the separations are sequenced in two moments: the marquis announcing his intention to have his daughter killed and Griseldis actually surrendering her baby. Pondo keeps this sequence by first having the announcement reported by Sophrona and then the surrendering by Danus and again by Sophrona. Because she is very shaken by the event, Sophrona tells her friend Sophia about the marquis informing his wife about his intention to have his child murdered. The audience is prepared to receive what Sophrona has to tell as a very sad and traumatic experience, even before she actually reports any action or speech, since she first expresses her sorrow about what she saw and heard ("Ach Sophi Gott mag sich erbarmn / Vbr vnser Fürstin die viel armn").³⁶³ Then, given that the audience is placed in the same position as Sophia, her response to her friend's words functions as a mirror and example for how the audience is supposed to react. As she articulates her despair about the little girl's hopeless fate ("Sol man das edle Kindt

362 Pondo, *Die Historia Walthers*, sig. A2r.

363 *Ibid.*, sig. F2v.

ermorden / Wehr bessr wer nie geboren worden”) and what Griseldis must have felt (“Ach Griseld du viel zartes Weib / Wie unsehlg ist deinr Mutter leib”), the spectators are meant to identify with Sophia’s compassion.³⁶⁴ Finally, Sophrona explains how, contrary to her expectations and those of Sophia and the audience, Griseldis did not manifest any grief or anger, only kindness and obedience to her husband. Sophia, agreeing with Sophrona’s explanation, interprets it as love: “Hilff Gott das mus ein liebe sein / Die alzeit bstendig bleibt so rein / Ein mütrlich Hertz nicht kan vertragen / Es mus den tod jrs kinds bekla-gen”.³⁶⁵ On his way to deliver the child to the Count of “Panintz”, Danus comments upon the actual surrendering of the baby. He provides a similar picture of Griselda, where Danus feels guilty about the “grossen schmerzen”³⁶⁶ that the marquise must feel at the loss of her daughter.

However, as Sophrona tells her version of the same event to Sophia, not knowing that the baby will live, she cannot understand how Griseldis could yield her child so easily, and she suspects that she has no feelings for her daughter (“steinem hertze”).³⁶⁷ Sophia expresses the same idea when Sophrona reports the announcement of the fate of her mistress’s second child. Whereas Sophrona, more prudent this time, supposes that even if the marquise does not show it, as a mother, she must feel “grossen schmerzen”. Sophia, meanwhile, thinks that Griseldis has a “steinem hertze”.³⁶⁸ The idea that their marquise’s behaviour might be explained by the love she bears her husband is not evoked again, and it seems discredited by the total absence of sorrow in her words, countenance, or behaviour. Thus, at the same time as the pathos of a mother’s great suffering at the loss of a child is underlined in both episodes through Sophrona and Sophia’s concerns and sorrow, Griseldis’s stoicism is all the more contrasted, appearing abnormal and inhuman according to Sophrona and Sophia’s incredulity and incomprehension towards Griseldis’s lack of emotion and resistance.

However, as the marquise is deprived of her rank and repudiated, Pondo has her being brought to her parents’ home by six ladies-in-waiting who express their support for Griseldis and their grief at her exile. Their kindness suggests that Griseldis has been a good mistress and an example to them.

As result, Griseldis’s portrayal is only tainted by remarks about her offstage behaviour, never when she appears in front of the audience. Perhaps Pondo

364 *Ibid.*, sig. F4r.

365 *Ibid.*, sig. F5r.

366 *Ibid.*, sig. F6r.

367 *Ibid.*, sig. F8v.

368 *Ibid.*, sig. H2r.

hoped that in this manner, the spectators would better accept her stoicism and be less shocked by her lack of emotion at the loss of her children's than if they had directly witnessed her almost happy compliance with her husband's wishes to have their babies murdered. Similarly, Pondo's invention of Griseldis's prophetic dream in order to introduce her as a holy character does not sufficiently prepare the audience to interpret her passive, stoic response as *patientia* and irresistible obedience to God because she has received His Grace. In spite of these emendations, Griseldis remains problematic because she is a woman and not a man like Abraham, her contemporary male counterpart in Protestant drama as the embodiment of the *sola fide* doctrine.³⁶⁹ As a woman and a mother, Griseldis is expected to express and show more emotions due to female weakness (i.e. lack of self-control and promptness to tears, whether genuine or feigned),³⁷⁰ so her stoicism is more surprising and shocking than Abraham's when he was ordered to sacrifice his son.

Whereas Pondo's play presents characters with a certain interiority, conceived in a manner tending towards the more elaborate end of late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century institutionalised theatre, Navarro's *Comedia muy exemplar de la Marquesa de Saluzia, llamada Griselda* (written after 1567 and printed in 1603) owes much more to medieval drama in style and character types. This Spanish play stands out for being one of the few late-medieval Catholic theatrical versions of the story. Its originality is marked by two features in particular. First, the author alters the story in an awestriking, bloody way. In the prologue of the play, the "Autor" reveals the *Comedia's* sources: Narcis Viñoles's translation into Spanish of Foresti's *Supplementum Cronicarum* and Juan de Timoneda's *Patrañuelo* (1567). Even if through Viñoles's text Navarro accessed a traditional, albeit shortened, version of the story, this playwright and actor preferred to modify Griselda's tests, perhaps inspired by Timoneda's alteration of the trials. Whereas Timoneda has Griseldis's children taken away from her during her sleep and replaced by other dead infants, Navarro reduces the number of babies to a single daughter, who is said to be murdered with utmost cruelty. Griselda is forced to witness the child's bleeding heart right after it has been ripped from her chest. This violent change in the manner of conducting this trial aims to portray more how Griselda overcomes despair than

369 See Detlef Metz, *Das Protestantische Drama. Evangelisches geistliches Theater in der Reformationszeit und im konfessionellen Zeitalter* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2013), pp. 315–526.

370 The Roman proverb "fallere, flere, nere tria sunt haec in muliere", which remained in use throughout the Middle Ages, is a famous example of the enduring patriarchal association of women with weeping, as well as other activities typically considered feminine, such as in this case, deceit and spinning.

how she submits to her husband's will. In addition, Navarro seems to accommodate within the Griselda myth the medieval motifs of the "eaten-heart" or "ripped-out-heart",³⁷¹ blending them into one and adapting the motif for Christian didactic purposes.

The "ripped-out-heart" belongs mainly to epic poetry and usually occurs during battles to avenge the death of a next of kin or as part of the funerary rituals, during which the heart is extracted and preserved in precious materials and sometimes compared to someone else's heart as a gesture of glorification.³⁷² As for the "eaten heart" motif, it appears in courtly poetry as an act of vengeance committed by a cuckold husband, who rips the heart out of his wife's lover and forces his spouse to eat it unwittingly before revealing the truth to her. Out of horror and despair, the wife then usually commits suicide.³⁷³

As in instances of the "ripped-out-heart" in epic poetry, Griselda is not forced to eat her child's bleeding organ but merely to contemplate this horrific vision. The idea of vengeance, however, is suggested by the reason evoked for the daughter's murder. She has to die because she is "de pastoral linaje"³⁷⁴ and therefore unworthy of inheriting her father's title and lands. Of course, this is only pretence on the part of Galtero, and the heart brought to Griselda is actually one from a lamb. In reality, her daughter is brought up as a princess in an unknown location from which she returns at the end of the play. He only tells his majordomo, Galisteo, to carry out the bloody deed in order to prove to him and his people that his wife is virtuous and obedient (i.e. noble enough in her heart to be worthy of his rank). The audience is left unaware of Galtero's deception until the end, however, so the play gives the impression that Galtero murders his own daughter because she would otherwise bring him dishonour and cause social disorder. Her death, then, appears as a sort of anticipated vengeance.

The other aspect that the *Comedia* shares with the "eaten-heart" stories concerns how Griselda despairs when she sees her daughter's heart and wishes to end her life. At this point, three personifications enter the stage: the Virtues

371 Françoise Denis has shown the relationship between these two motifs, see "Cœur arraché / cœur mangé : modulations," *Études littéraires* 31, no. 1 (1998).

372 See *ibid.*, pp. 97–101.

373 See *ibid.*, pp. 101–05. For more on this motif throughout history see Martina Di Febo, "Ignauré, la parodie « dialectique » ou le détournement du symbolisme courtois," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 5(1998), <http://crm.revues.org/1482>; Mariella di Maio, *Le Cœur mangé. Histoire d'un thème littéraire du Moyen Âge au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2005).

374 Navarro, "Marquesa de Saluzia," l. 590.

of Comfort (“Consuelo”) and Suffering (“Sufrimiento”) and the Vice of Despair (“Desesperacion”). Through these allegorical figures, the *Comedia* enacts Griselda’s mental struggle against suicide in the manner of a psychomachia, just as in medieval morality plays. In spite of Desesperacion’s argumentation, thanks to Consuelo’s initial support and Sufrimiento’s convincing speeches, Griselda does not commit suicide and bears her daughter’s loss with patience, because God will reward her continuous suffering (“tu toma exemplo de mi / y en al alto Dios confia / auras gozo y alegria / si sufres continuo assi”).³⁷⁵ In keeping with the usual didactic form of morality plays, Griselda’s psychological conquering of despair is enacted onstage as a visual, verbal, and physical battle between a Vice figure and a Virtue, who fight against each other to gain power over the protagonist’s mind until Virtue eventually wins. The spectators are supposed to learn from the Virtue’s arguments how to overcome evil temptations. In this case, perhaps because of the resemblance of Griselda’s story to romance poetry,³⁷⁶ Navarro decides to motivate the psychomachia not simply with Griselda learning that her baby will supposedly be killed but rather by using the ripped-out-heart and eaten-heart motifs and adapting them to suit his pedagogical purpose of teaching the virtuous way out of despair and towards patient, Christ-like suffering. As a result, Griselda appears as a martyr figure, eventually being rewarded for her steadfastness.

The use of the myth within a religious context for didactical purposes did not end with the sixteenth century—it lasted well into the eighteenth century in East Flanders and the southern German-speaking territories. The eighteenth-century dramatist and theatre historian Pierre-François Godard de Beauchamps records that between 1682 and 1693, there was a play entitled *La patience héroïque et victorieuse de l’envie, en l’histoire memorable de la marquise de Saluces, autrement Grislidis*, which is referred to as a “petite tragédie”.³⁷⁷ Beauchamps also mentions that the play was written for boarders at the convent of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary (Visitandines). This order welcomed women of all ages, including those who were ill or disabled. It is not clear whether

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 807–10.

³⁷⁶ Scholars have long noted that one of the sources Boccaccio may have used could be Marie de France’s *Lai de Frêne*. See Laura Hibbard, *Mediaeval Romances in England* (New York: Oxford UP, 1924), pp. 298–99; Dudley David Griffith, *The Origin of the Griselda Story* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1931); Wirth Armistead Cate, “The Problem of the Origin of the Griselda Story,” *Studies in Philology* 29, no. 3 (1932): 391–92; William Edwin Bettridge and Francis Lee Utley, “New Light on the Origin of the Griselda Story,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 13 (1971): 159 and ff.

³⁷⁷ Pierre-François Godard de Beauchamps, *Recherches sur les théâtres de France : depuis l’année onze cent soixante-un jusques à présent* (Paris: Prault père, 1735), p. 333.

Beauchamps means that the play was staged by the Visitandines or only that they were the intended audience or both. What is worth noting is that Griseldis is endowed with a “patience héroïque” (i.e. a saint-like attribute often mentioned in hagiography).

During the same period, an anonymous Jesuit play named *Heroa coniugalis fidei constantia sive Griselidis a proprio coniuge Waltero miris simulate furoris documentis exercita et in amore probate* was staged in Vienna in 1681 and later in 1692 (with slight changes) under the new title of *Nuptiae cum benedictione repetitae sive Gualterus et Griseldis secundo connubio juncti* and in the presence of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold 1st and Ernest Count of Trautson, Vienna’s Bishop. In this play, Griseldis has a brother who seeks revenge upon the marquis for the trials Griseldis was forced to undergo.

In the eighteenth century, two Jesuit plays were staged in Freisingen: *Amor personatus sive Gualterus in Griseldam simulate furens* (1736) and *Gaudens patientia* (1762).³⁷⁸ On 3 and 5 September 1783, the students of the St-Paul episcopal college of Regensburg (a Jesuit school until 1773) performed a *Griseldis* that was described as a “Trauerspiel”.³⁷⁹

In East Flanders, in Grandmont (today’s Geraardsbergen) the French *La Patience invincible trouvée dans la courageuse et très louable Reine Griseilde, éprouvée par le feignant et magnanime Waltere roi de Saluce* was staged by the students of the St-Adrien Jesuit college in the town on 30 August 1740.³⁸⁰ Finally, on 24 and 25 August 1775, at the Oratorian college of Ronse, the students performed a tragedy entitled *Oppressa patientia exaltata sive Griseildis*.³⁸¹

From this chronological survey of the Griselda myth’s use for religious didactical purposes, especially the teaching of *patientia*, several tendencies can be identified. While there are slightly more Protestant productions rewriting the myth within a religious context in the sixteenth century, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, only Catholic versions appear. A possible explanation for this phenomenon may be found in the way Catholics and Protestants each present the myth with nuances, due not alone to the individual socio-educative backgrounds of the various authors but also to the dogmas and precepts of their respective religions, which were both very eager to assert and promote

378 See Morabito, “La diffusione”: 248.

379 See “Anhang III” in *Verhandlungen des historischen Vereins von Oberpfalz und Regensburg*, vol. 37 (Regensburg: Historischer Verein für Oberpfalz und Regensburg, 1883), p. 154.

380 Ferdinand van der Haeghen, *Bibliographie gantoise*, 7 vols., vol. 6 (Gand: E. Vanderhaeghen, 1867), p. 170.

381 van der Haeghen, *Bibliographie gantoise*, 7 vols., vol. 3 (Gand: Impr. de E. Vanderhaeghen, 1861), p. 274.

during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods. Then, as the story became more secularised in Protestant culture as opposed to Catholic culture, Protestant schools stopped adapting the myth for dramatic performances.

Even if the differences in the perspective and development of the character of Griselda do not always strike the readership or audience as something clearly Protestant or Catholic, this is because it often lies in details of her portrayal rather than in dogmatic precepts clearly and directly expressed in the texts. There seems to be a tendency in Catholic rewritings to portray Griselda more as a saint-like figure, whereas in Protestant versions, she tends to be more obviously very industrious and embodies the *sola fide* doctrine. Where Catholic versions insist on her suffering as an emulation of Christ's passion, Protestant writers insist either on her stoicism or on her relentless obedience as signs implying that God has granted her faith and she cannot but act accordingly. The Catholic tendency to present Griselda as a martyr is particularly prominent in rewritings like Forrest's hagiography or Navarro's portrayal of Griselda's torment between *Sufrimiento* and *Desesperacion*, where *Sufrimiento* is a Virtue figure, and the same idea is suggested by the titles of the French and east-Flemish religious plays. As for the Protestant re-elaborations, Pondo's *Historia Walther*, as already mentioned, makes a point of depicting Griseldis's stoicism and passive obedience as signs of her being graced by God. Hans Sachs's interpretation of Griselda portrays her trials as ordeals willed by God, a passage that Mauritius copies in his *Grisolden*, and exemplifies her faith and obedience in a manner that also seems to promote the *sola fide* principle, because it justifies her passivity through her faith that the eventual outcome of her testing will be a happy one, according to God's will.

More generally, what the religious dramas show through their performances within or outside schools—whether in front of single-sex or mixed audiences, children or adults, and people from higher and lower social ranks³⁸²—is that all strata of society were targets for educating *patientia* through the Griselda myth. However, because the literal meaning interferes with the allegorical or the exemplarity of Griselda, she is never simply an example of *patientia*. What is more, no matter how hard an author may try to present her as primarily an example of patience and fortitude, she remains a wife first and foremost. Indeed, most writers simply took advantage of that and used the myth to promote female marital education as much as Christian *patientia*.

382 Jesuit drama, as much as Protestant drama, were staged both within their educational context and outside for special festive occasions, often in presence of prestigious local or national figures.

1.5 Griselda: The ideal wife

1.5.1 Griselda and the *Querelle des femmes* 1: Conduct literature

Medieval and early modern conduct literature for women takes the general premise that young girls need to be educated to follow the virtues of obedience, humility, silence, and marital submission. As such, they reflect contemporary beliefs about women's nature and therefore partake in the "*querelle des femmes*". Misogynist and philogynist discourses have existed from at least Antiquity onwards. Therefore, the term "*querelle des femmes*"—which was first coined in fifteenth-century France, although in a slightly different formulation as "*querelle des dames*"—may seem inadequate. The use of a French expression may also appear reductive or inadequate for qualifying what really was a European cultural phenomenon, even if it did first come to prominence in France. What is more, not only did the meaning of the word "*querelle*" evolve overtime, but the content of the debate ranged from love, marriage, and women's education and role in society, and it manifests small variations from one European country to another. However, the expression remains useful when examining late medieval and early modern discourses about women's nature, be it in conduct literature, in marriage treatises, or in literary debates opposing philogynist and misogynists. Consequently, for want of a better term, in this section and the following two, I will use "*querelle des femmes*" to refer to the group of texts that address the issues of a woman's position and value in marriage and society. Indeed, scholars of German, English, Spanish, and Italian literatures also employ it in this way as much as the French ones.³⁸³

The symbolism which most endures and defines Griselda—the patient, obedient wife—is what made the writers and adapters of her myth engage with the *querelle des femmes*, especially through conduct literature. From the first translations of Petrarch's text into vernacular languages and beyond, Griselda was often used in medieval and early modern discourses intended to influence and shape women. The myth is thus recurrently used in the patriarchal misogynist ideology of female conduct, trying to teach them to speak as little as possible, to be constant or faithful, and to shun their supposedly exacerbated sexual

383 For a detailed discussion of the term and its implications, see among others Gisela Bock and Margarete Zimmermann, "The European *Querelle des femmes*," *Disputatio* 5 (2002); Éliane Viennot, "Revisiter la « querelle des femmes » : mais de quoi parle-t-on ?," in *Revisiter la « Querelle des femmes »*. *Discours sur l'égalité-inégalité des sexes, de 1750 aux lendemains de la Révolution*, ed. Éliane Viennot (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2012).

appetite (according to the three main faults usually attributed to women, namely volubility, inconstancy and promiscuity). While Griselda's rarely interrupted silence and acquiescence attest to her exemplarity of constancy and taciturnity, her chastity only appears through the absence of any evidence to the contrary, while her unabated love for her husband, whom even on the day of his second wedding, she never considers anything other than her spouse.

In spite of Petrarch's warning against reading his *Griseldis* as an example for wives (since he deems her wifely patience "vix imitabilis"),³⁸⁴ the majority of his translators, and many other adaptors after them, seem to have disagreed, since they present Griselda as much as an ideal Christian as an ideal spouse. For some rewriters, this is due to their selective reading of Petrarch's comparison of Griselda to exemplary figures from Greco-Roman historiography. In order to strengthen his argument that a character such as *Griseldis* is believable and may have truly existed, Petrarch draws a parallel between Griselda and, first, seven men (Curius, Mucius, the Decius, father and son, as well as Cudrus and the Philaeni brothers) and, second, three women (Portia, Hypsicratea and Alcestis).³⁸⁵ In subsequent translations and rewritings, Griselda reappears in the company of other virtuous Greco-Roman and feminine biblical figures, with these being evoked in catalogue to illustrate Griselda's virtues. It is thus fair to assume that at least some of the first translators interpreted Petrarch's comparison of Griselda with Portia, Hypsicratea, and Alcestis as a sign that she was an example for women and wives in particular rather than an exemplary figure for anyone, as Petrarch suggests by drawing a parallel between her life story and those of famous ancient men and women.

This is clearly the case of the Catalan Bernat Metge. As already mentioned, Metge dedicates his translation of Petrarch's text to Isabel de Guimerà. In his introductory letter to his patron, he explains that at the same time as hoping that the story will help her find strength in adversity, he chose Griselda's story because he was looking for "alguna cosa ab la qual pogués complaura a les *donas* virtuosas".³⁸⁶ In other words, Griselda is an example of feminine virtues—more specifically "pasciencia, obediencia e amor conjugal"—which all women should emulate and use to strengthen their virtuous behaviour continually ("vos e les alters *donas* virtuosas prenats eximpli de las cosas en aquella contegudas . . . per ço que oynts la present istòria siats pus ardents en seguir les ditas virtuts").³⁸⁷ Evidence that he read and translated Petrarch's conclusion selectively can be

³⁸⁴ Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 94.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁸⁶ Metge, *Obras de Bernat Metge*, p. 118, my emphasis.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

seen in the fact that, while emulating Petrarch's framing comments and drawing on the laureate Poet's concluding letters and arguments advocating Griselda's plausibility, Metge compares her to Portia and Hypsicratea (though not Alcestis) in his own conclusion, yet without mentioning any male counterpart to these two famous women.³⁸⁸

Metge's letter is the first instance of the use of the Griselda story as an example for women. The end of the fourteenth century and the fifteenth century saw many more, mostly in French conduct literature for women. Metge's text is also a convenient starting point because it summarises the feminine ideal Griselda comes to embody in late medieval thought: "pasciencia, obediencia e amor conjugal". Whether or not all three virtues explicitly appear in subsequent textual or pictorial representations, Griselda is received and interpreted as an example of a perfect wife, because she is patient with her husband's extreme wishes. In other words, she obeys in everything he asks her, thereby displaying marital love. This marital love is characterised by lawfulness, faithfulness, and an eternally monogamous kind of love sanctioned by marriage. Thus, Griselda practices the only acceptable form of marital love according to the Church's precepts, and this is presented by rewriters and adaptors as displaying flawless obedience towards her husband, as was required from women after marriage.

Although most translators of Petrarch offer an interpretation of Griselda as an ideal wife identical to Metge's, there were a few who offered a slightly different reading. In Italy, Sercambi, as much in his *Novelliere* (1400) as in his *Croniche* (1400–1424), and, in France, Christine de Pisan in her *Livre de la cité des Dames* (1405) depict Griselda mostly as the embodiment of *constantia*. Whereas Sercambi renames Griselda as Gostantina, Pisan mentions Griselda as the first example of a woman whose firmness of character proves wrong those male thinkers who accuse women of changeability or inconstancy or claim that this is part of their essential nature.³⁸⁹

388 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

389 It is most likely an impossible task to trace the topos of women's changeability down to its origins, but women have been considered to be of a more instable nature than men because of the ancient concept of women's "imperfection" (i.e. the idea that they are weaker or less perfect beings than men). See for example Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1943), IV. vi; 737a. This is related to the idea that women's physiology presents a certain humoral "imbalance", which makes them of a more humid complexion than men, see Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, pp. 126–27. Aristotle's thoughts on this topic were particularly influential from the eleventh century onwards as some of his works began to be taught in universities. Other often quoted literary examples are Virgil's "varium et mutabile semper / femina" (*Aeneid*, IV.569–70) or Ovid's "verba puellarum, foliis leviora caducis" (*Amores*, II. xvi. 45). For

Another example concerns the appearance of Griselda in the Dutch love treaty *Der Minnen Loep* (1411) written by Dirk Potter. The author appropriates the narrative in order to move it closer to his audience by changing the names of the characters and places to give the impression it happened in the Netherlands. Griselda is called Lympiose, Gualtieri becomes Orphaen, and Griselda's father is renamed Arlamoen. However, Lympiose still embodies the ideal wife and more precisely the right form of love, i.e. conjugal love.

For the most part, however, it is Griselda's obedience that is stressed. Even if, as argued before, in his *Livre du sacrement de mariage*, Mézières presents Griseldis and Gautier's relationship as one between God and the soul, he does not obliterate the literal meaning nor wishes to do so. On the contrary, in his introductory comments for the story, he exhorts married women to follow her example in whichever way they can: "Les dames donques mariees, pour estre contentes et confortees a leur pooir et par grace, se doivent efforcier en aucune maniere d'ensuir la marquise de Saluce et de plaire premierement a leur Espous immortel et apres a leur mari mortel".³⁹⁰

Mézières's conduct book for wives seems to have started the trend for including Griselda's story in manuals for young women. Either towards the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth century, Mézières's version of the Griselda's story came to be isolated from the *Sacrement de mariage* and started to be appended to manuscripts of another conduct book, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*,³⁹¹ in the manner of a companion story or complement to the teachings of this didactical book. In addition, the anonymous author of the household book *Le ménagier de Paris*, written for the author's newly wedded wife, makes Mézières's version of the Griselda story the central *exemplum* in the part of his work concerned with moral.³⁹² The writer hopes thereby to teach his spouse wifely obedience,

more on this topic see also Blamires's *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: an Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992).

390 Mézières, *Sacrement de mariage*, p. 357.

391 At least five of these manuscripts are extant. Four of these include the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry* immediately followed by Mézières's translation of Petrarch's text (Bibliothèque Nationale de France Ms fr. 24398, 24397 and 1190; Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal Ms 2687), while and the fifth presents the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*, followed by *Le Livre de Mélibée et de Dame Prudence*, another allegorical story in which an ideal wife teaches *prudencia* to her husband, and, finally, Mézières's version of the Griselda story (British Museum, Western Manuscripts, Old and Royal King's Collections 19. C. VII), see Golenistcheff-Koutouloff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, pp. 34–42.

392 See Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose, *The Good Wife's Guide: Le ménagier de Paris, A Medieval Household Book* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009), p. 8.

since “plusieurs femmes ont gagné par leur obeissance et sont venues à grant honneur, et autres femmes par leur déobeissance ont esté reculées et désavancées”.³⁹³

Another very popular fifteenth-century French conduct book should be mentioned here: Olivier de la Marche’s *Le parement et triomphe des dames* (1493).³⁹⁴ In this treaty, de la Marche presents virtues as garments that a woman should wear, and each piece of clothing is first allegorically described and followed by an *exemplum*. The story of Griselda is the *exemplum* accompanying “lespinglier de patience” (“the pin-holder of patience”), from which ladies may benefit (“aucunes dames. . . pourront prouffiter ce que Dieu vueille”).³⁹⁵ In the sixteenth century, this treaty was printed in a slightly altered version in 1510 in Paris. In 1531, it was reprinted under another title: *La Source d’Honneur, pour maintenir la corporelle Elegance des Dames*. In addition, Pierre de l’Esnauderie uses de la Marche’s version in his *La louange de mariage et recueil des histoires des bonnes, vertueuse et illustres femmes* (1525). L’Esnauderie does not allude to the metaphor of the “espinglier” and only reproduces the text of de la Marche’s *exemplum* with minor vocabulary changes. However, he divides his book into seven parts and gives the story of Griselda a central position at the beginning of the fourth chapter, “De la patience, charite et liberalite des femmes”, thereby enhancing its significance.³⁹⁶

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, other genres helped convey the story’s exemplary value for wives outside Paris in the provinces. At some point in the fifteenth century, the tale was turned into a versified “roumant”, *Le Roumant du Marquis de Saluce et de sa femme Griselidys*, whose didactic aim is stated in the first stanza: “Affin de donner exemplaire / A toutez femmes de bien fayre / Et d’obeyr par courtoysie / A lours maris sans lour meffaire”.³⁹⁷ In addition, the story was reduced to the format of chapbooks that were first published in Troyes in 1491, and these went into many reprints until the beginning of the seventeenth century.³⁹⁸ This chapbook praises Griselda as a model for

393 *Ménagier de Paris*, (Paris: L’imprimerie de Crapelet, 1846), p. 99.

394 Olivier de La Marche, *Le parement & triumphes des dames* (Paris: Baillieu, 1870). The story of Griselda appears on sigs. E2r-E4v.

395 *Ibid.*, sig. E2r.

396 Pierre de L’Esnauderie, *La louange du mariage et recueil des histoires des bonnes, vertueuses et illustres femmes, composée par Mr Pierre de L’Esnauderie* (Paris: s. n., 1525). The story of Griselda is on ff. 42v–46v.

397 Quoted in Golenistcheff-Koutousoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, p. 137. At the end of this study (pp. 225–248), Golenistcheff-Koutousoff also provides an edition of the text of the *Roumant* from the Ms Douce 99, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

398 See *ibid.*, pp. 146–50.

married women in the prologue: “tres noble mirouer de vertu, de pacience, d’obediencie, de vraye humilité et de constance, ouquel se doivent mirer toutes les dame mariées voulans et desirans faire leur devoir en mariage”.³⁹⁹

In German culture, the myth first appears in Erhart Groß’s marriage treatise *Grisardis* (1432), which both encourages men to marry and instructs women to be guided by Griselda’s exemplarity. Groß’s *Grisardis* is depicted as an example for all the women of Saluzzo to follow, inspiring them to be as patient and obedient as her with their respective husbands: “man saget auch von ir, daz sie alzo geduldig, leidlich und gehorsam waz irem hern . . . wen wo ein fraw in den landen, do vor zeiten Grysardis ist gewest, yrem man ist wyderspanig, hoffertig ader zornig, so sprechen die andern weiber zu ir: ‘o du pist nicht Grysardi’”.⁴⁰⁰

In fifteenth-century England, Lydgate’s use of Griselda in catalogues of illustrious women shows that she had penetrated English culture as an ideal wife. In the *Temple of Glas* (c.1400–1425), she appears in company of Penelope, Alcestis Iseult, and Thisbe, among others, and is worthy of mention for her “innocence, / And al hir mekenes and hir pacience”.⁴⁰¹ In the *Fall of Princes* (1431–1438/9), she is first mentioned for her “parfit pacience”⁴⁰² together with Melibee’s wife, Dame Prudence, among Lydgate’s list of Chaucer’s works, than for her beauty in company of Helen.⁴⁰³ She is mentioned a third time “for hir gret pacience” as part of the author’s knowledge of Petrarch’s writings.⁴⁰⁴ In a very similar manner, Metham’s *Romance of Amoryus and Cleopes* presents Griselda as a woman worthy of mention among famous ancient female figures for her patience:

And yf I the trwthe schuld here wryght,
As gret a style I schuld make in every degré
As Chauncerys of qwene Eleyne or Cresseyd doht endyght,
Or of Polyxchene, Grysylde, or Penelopé.
As beuteus, as womanly, as pacient as thei were wunt to be,
Thys lady was⁴⁰⁵

399 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 147.

400 Erhart Groß, “Dieß puch heist der Grysard (1432),” in *Die Grisardis des Erhart Grosz. Nach der Breslauer Handschrift*, ed. Philipp Strauch (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931), p. 39.

401 John Lydgate, *The Temple of Glas* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 75–76.

402 John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes* (Washington: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1923), Book 1, l. 348.

403 *Ibid.*, Book II, l. 3381.

404 *Ibid.*, Book IV, l. 126.

405 John Metham, *Amoryus and Cleopes* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), ll. 2171–76.

In Spain in the second half of the fifteenth century, after Metge's translation and adaptation of Petrarch's letters, an anonymous writer composed *Castigos y doctrinas que un sabio daba a sus hijas*. The author addresses this small treatise to his daughters, assuming they wish to get married like any other women ("Porque comunmente todas la mugeres se desean casar y creo que así lo fazedes vosotras"). He thus defines his paradigmatic intended reader as any young woman who needs advice on marriage ("no sabiendo por eso ni pensando cuál es el cargo del casamiento ni lo que deuen guardar las buenas mugeres casadas, porende quierovoslo aquí delcarar").⁴⁰⁶ The author structures his text as "a sort of Decalogue" for the married woman (as Juan Cano Ballesta puts it).⁴⁰⁷ The first two sections advise the reader to love God above all else and care for their neighbours. The story of Griselda (based on Petrarch's version) appears in the third section as an *exemplum* illustrating the first piece of advice concerning marriage: "amedes y querades á vuestros maridos despues de nuestro sennor Dios sobre todas las cosas del mundo y les seades mandadas y obedientes saluo en aquella cosas que fuesen contra nuestro sennor Dios".⁴⁰⁸ Limiting wifely obedience to actions and words that are within God's law was common at the time and accepted not just in Spain but all across Europe as a clearly established principle of Christian morals. It seems, however, that most rewriters of the Griselda myth are so focused on Griselda's obedience towards her husband as an important precept to inculcate young girls that they dismiss or remain blind to the fact that she should have refused to allow her son and daughter be murdered.

Indeed, the distinction between obedience to a mortal (her husband) and obedience to God seems to be blurred in the writer of *Castigos's* discourse, with them falling into one and the same category. Before narrating Griselda's story, he comments on how God was pleased with the Virgin Mary's humility and His satisfaction with Abraham's obedience in his readiness to kill his own son in sacrifice. Thus, the author places the story of Griselda within a Biblical tradition of figures displaying total submission to God's will, thereby encouraging a hermeneutical reading of Griselda's acceptance to have her children murdered that

406 "Castigos y doctrinas que vn sabio daua á sus hijas," in *Dos obras didacticas y dos leyendas, sacadas de manuscritos de la Biblioteca del Escorial*, ed. German Knust (Madrid: Miguel Ginesta, 1878), p. 255.

407 Juan Cano Ballesta, "*Castigos y doctrinas que un sabio dava a sus hijas: un texto del siglo XV sobre educación femenina*," in *Actas del X Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, 1989*, ed. Antonio Vilanova (Barcelona: Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 1992), p. 143.

408 "Castigos y doctrinas," p. 258.

is akin to that of Abraham's willingness to kill his own son and Mary's patient acceptance of her son's crucifixion. However, this possible attempt to circumvent the moral problem inherent in Griselda's choice does not obliterate it. The fact remains that her husband is no God, and she is not agreeing to offer her children in a holocaust, only that they be murdered to prevent her husband's subjects from rebelling ("le conplia que no touiese más aquella hija, por que sus vasallo no sele revelasen").⁴⁰⁹ In other words, this Spanish writer follows the general European tradition, which, regardless of Griselda's morally problematic behaviour, sets her as an exemplary wife for her obedience towards her husband. Indeed, the author concludes that Griselda is not only an "exemplo de obediencia"⁴¹⁰ but she is also a model for any woman dissatisfied with her husband:

avnque á la muger parezca que su marido no es tan virtuoso ò rico ó de tanto estado como ella piensa que meresce, deue pensar que esto procede de su vanidad, pues que su padre y parientes que gelo dieron bien entendieron que bastava para su marido . . . vna de las cosas en que más nuestro sennor muestra sus marauillas es en los casamientos, y muchas vezes acaesce en pena de sus pecados á algunas darles tales maridos que no parece ygualdat, pero ni por esto le deue ser ménos vmille y obediente.⁴¹¹

This reasoning can only apply in a far-fetched manner to Griselda, since her story does not mention any sin she may have committed and for which she would have to be redeemed by having to bear a tyrannical and morally corrupt husband. Regardless of the inappropriateness of the Griselda story as an *exemplum* to support his point, the author continues using references to her story in his argumentation, notably her lack of outward emotion in the face of her trials and her endurance in front of adversity for over 15 years:

en todo [the wife] le [i.e. her husband] deue seruir y onrrar como á su marido, y por cosa qua á él plega no le deue mostrar cara triste . . . avnque él sea malo y peruerso, si la muger le quiere tratar bien y no dar mal por mal, de nessesario le fará ser Bueno y querla bien avnque no quiera.⁴¹²

What this rather illogical use of the Griselda story shows is the general tendency to disregard Griselda's moral responsibility towards her children's in favour of a selective reading of her life that enables an interpretation of her character as an ideal wife.

409 Ibid., p. 261.

410 Ibid., p. 265.

411 Ibid.

412 Ibid., pp. 265–6.

In 1523, Juan Luis Vives advised Catherine of Aragon about her daughter's education in a letter known today as *De ratione studii puerilis epistolae duae*. In this letter, he suggests that Mary should read exemplary lives such as those of Joseph, Lucretia, and Griselda, not only as an exercise to improve her Latin but also to learn virtuous behaviour.⁴¹³ The epistle does not specify whether Vives thought that Griselda was an example of wifely behaviour, Christian steadfastness or both. However, given that Griselda's name appears after that of Lucretia, who exemplifies female chastity, it is very likely that Vives considered that the Marquesse of Saluzzo was an example of feminine behaviour, especially as he thinks her story particularly fit for the education of a princess. Although Vives wrote this while he was in England, given that the work was written in Latin and its author's reputation, it became widely known in Europe and was printed several times in Basel, either as a single work or in combination with other works of his.

After Vives, Griselda continued to be presented as an ideal wife in various works, such as the anonymous chapbook *La Historia de Griseldis* (1544, a translation of a fifteenth-century French incunabulum), Juan de Timoneda's "Secunda Patraña" of his *Patrañuelo* (1567), one of the stories of Juan Perez de Moya's *Varia historia de Sanctas e illustres mugeres en todo genero de virtudes* (1583), and an anonymous *romancero* from the seventeenth century. Griselda's fame in Spain as an ideal wife enabled her to reach the American continent for the first time in 1602. Diego Dávalos Figueroa, a Spanish poet, left Spain to live in the viceroyalty of Peru, where he wrote and published his *Micelânea austral* (1602), which includes a *Defensa de las damas*, in which Griselda's story is briefly narrated in seven octaves.⁴¹⁴

In Italy, apart from Sercambi's use of Griselda as an example of *Constantia*, the myth appears in a series of *cantari* written by a certain Silvestro and, as already mentioned, in Foresti's *Supplementum chronicarum*. Although Silvestro clearly takes Boccaccio's novella as his source and borrows heavily from it, he presents the story as an *exemplum* for wives: "la novella / l'ò facta in rima per amaestrare / ad aver patientia quella donzella / la qual marito intende de pigliare".⁴¹⁵ As for Foresti's *Supplementum*,⁴¹⁶ in addition to its role in turning

⁴¹³ Juan Luis Vives, *De ratione studii puerilis epistolae duae* (1523) (Basel: per Balthasarem Lasium et Thomam Platterum, 1537), p. 30.

⁴¹⁴ This version of the myth is reproduced in José Fradejas Lebrero, "Nuevas versiones," *Epos: Revista de Filología* 13 (1997), pp. 371–73.

⁴¹⁵ Raffaele Morabito, *Cantari di Griselda* (L'Aquila; Roma: Japadre, 1988), XII.xlvii.1–4.

⁴¹⁶ Morabito edited Foresti's version in Morabito, *Una sacra rappresentazione profana*, pp. 76–79.

Griselda and Gualtieri into historical characters, this chronicle also contributed towards Griselda's fame as an ideal wife. Foresti concludes his narration in the following way: "Hanc itaque historiam exemplaritatis plenam hic ad multorum solatium conscribere volui, ut et matrone nostri temporis atque alii ad imitandum huius Griseldi[s] pacientiam, que mihi imitabilis videtur, excitarem".⁴¹⁷ Thus, unlike Petrarch, Foresti addresses women first and foremost ("matrone nostri temporis"), and he turns Petrarch's caution against reading his story as a wifely *exemplum* upside down (the laureate poet thinks that as a wife, Griselda is hardly imitable—"mihi vix imitabilis videtur").⁴¹⁸ Foresti, on the contrary, believes that Griselda's wifely obedience is indeed imitable ("mihi imitabilis videtur"). The simple omission of the adverb "vix" changes everything and inverts the meaning of the subordinate clause, transforming the symbolism of Griselda as an ideal Christian into that of an ideal spouse. Foresti seems to have valued the story to a great extent, especially given that he also included it in his didactical collection of women's lives, *De plurimis claris selectisque mulieribus* (1497).

Complementing many of these verbal versions and conveying the same symbolism, the story of Griselda began its pictorial life as book illustrations. From the fourteenth century, Griselda appears in manuscript illuminations and woodcut illustrations in incunabula, a phenomenon that continued in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed books. It remains, however, unclear whether this phenomenon began in manuscripts of the *Decameron* or in codices including only this novella (as a translation or adaptation from Petrarch's text, for example as in *L'Estoire*, which contains 19 illustrations) given that some manuscripts may not have come down to us. In fifteenth-century Italy, the story acquired particular relevance in paintings on wooden panels (or *spalliere*) on wedding chests (or *cazioni*),⁴¹⁹ as well as frescoes in the palaces of important families. Although these pictorial representations of the Griselda story have been little studied so far,⁴²⁰ it appears that they contributed not only to

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴¹⁸ Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 94.

⁴¹⁹ See Paul F. Watson, "A Preliminary List of Subjects from Boccaccio in Italian Painting, 1400–1550," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 15 (1985); Margaret Ann Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines: Power and Virtue in Renaissance Society* (Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), p. 96.

⁴²⁰ For a study of pictorial representations of Boccaccio's works, see Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio visualizzato: narrare per parole e per immagini fra Medioevo e Rinascimento. Opere d'arte d'origine italiana*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1999).

the mythification of the story through continuous iconic representations—leading to the association of the myth with a particular image, namely that of a young woman either carrying a pitcher of water or spinning wool as a noble hunter arrives on his horse—but also to Griselda's association with the ideal wife and the ritual of marriage.

Griselda's story in manuscripts and incunabula illustrations and paintings generally represents the story's key scenes. Her encounter with Gualtieri, her being undressed before her wedding, taking away of her children, her being undressed before being sent back to her father, and the reunion with her children are the events most recurrently depicted. Whereas they all underline her submission to her husband, the one that experienced the greatest longevity was the first encounter between Griselda and the marquis.

In the fourteenth century, in the manuscript of *L'Estoire*, Griseldis holds a distaff in her hand and is surrounded by four sheep when she meets Gautier, who is riding a horse and accompanied by another horseman and two dogs, suggesting that he is hunting. On the other hand, Griselda carries a pitcher or buckets of water as the marquis rides towards her on a horse in some manuscripts, such as the one held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Ms. It. 63 (f. 298r) and Ms. Fr. 12421 (f. 442v). This is also the case in the fifteenth-century paintings on wooden panels attributed to Francesco di Stefano Pesellino and Appollonio di Giovanni, as well as the first of the Spallieri panels, which were all wedding presents, and the 24 frescoes in the Castle of Roccabianca. The pitcher helps to evoke in the viewer's mind other feminine figures from the Bible who carried water, such as Rebecca and Rachel, who meet their future husbands, or an intermediary, near a well just before their marital union is finally decided. The distaff symbolises the typically feminine activity of spinning wool, which was considered an industrious handwork useful in fighting idleness among women. Thus, both attributes stress Griselda's symbolism as a virtuous wife or girl about to get married.

In France, this iconography was also found in incunabula, such as the one printed towards the end of the fifteenth century in Paris by Jehan Treperel and entitled *La patience Griselidys, Marquise de Saluces*.

In Germany, the only early modern illustration I could find were those of the incunabulum of Heinrich Steinhöwel's translation of Petrarch, published by Johann Zainer in Ulm in 1475. Among the 10 woodcuts of the anonymous Master of Ulm, the first shows Griselda with a distaff in her hands while encountering the marquis on his horse and accompanied by two dogs.

Whereas I have not come across any instance of such illustrations in Spain, the fortune of this iconography is particularly interesting in England in the early modern printed tradition of the story. In this tradition, Griselda does not

carry buckets of water but spins in front of her house.⁴²¹ A comparison of the woodcut illustrations of the 1624, ca. 1658–64, 1700, 1701, 1710, 1720, 1730, 1735, 1750, 1760, 1780 broadside editions of the *Ballad of Patient Grissell*, the 1640 edition of *The Pleasant and Sweet History of Patient Grissell* (a version of the ballad in chapbook format, framed with introductive and conclusive chapters in prose), and the 1663, 1674, 1682, 1690, 1750, 1780, 1800 editions of the chapbook entitled *The True and Admirable History of Patient Grisel* reveals that a strong and meaningful relationship had been established from the mid-seventeenth-century onwards between the iconic image of a spinning woman in front a house towards whom a noble man is riding and the Griselda story, even if the woodcuts used to reproduce this image varied slightly because they were reproduced by different anonymous artists over time. The presence of this illustration on the title page of the chapbooks and the ballads certainly had marketing value for printers and booksellers, who advertised their sales by posting title pages in the streets. The recurrence of this image in so many reprints of the story suggests that any passer-by would have recognised by the illustration alone that, possibly even without being able to read, the advertised chapbook or broadside ballad was about Griselda. More importantly, however, the iconography presenting the myth's heroine spinning wool seems to have had a particular significance in early modern England. This perhaps stressed Griselda's virtuousness even more clearly than her fetching water, since in the anonymous chapbook *The True and Admirable History of Patient Grisel*, the heroine is not said to produce yarn at any point in the narrative. This second type of iconographical representation of Griselda, which is absent from Boccaccio's text and derives from Petrarch's version of the novella, relates the young shepherdess to the ideal virtuous woman described in Proverbs (31: 10–13; 18–19), as well as to medieval postlapsarian iconography of Eve spinning beside Adam delving or Penelope's patient weaving and unweaving as she waits for Odysseus.⁴²² In addition, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, the image of a spinning woman associated with wifely virtue and ideal housekeeping had some circulation both in print and manuscripts, sometimes even with Proverbs 31: 19 ("She layeth her fingers to the spindle, and her hand taketh hold of the distaff") as an accompanying legend.⁴²³ Thus, an industrious and

⁴²¹ So does the young woman in the Master of Ulm's woodcut illustrations in *Historia Griseldis* (Ulm: Johannes Zeiner, 1473). This is the earliest instance, at least to my knowledge, of a pictorial representation of a spinning Griselda.

⁴²² See Jane Louise Carroll and Alison G. Stewart, *Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 138–9.

⁴²³ Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2010), pp. 324–6.

active Griselda making yarn, out of which she could not only create clothes but also keep herself away from idleness, the mother of all vices, had replaced the nourishing figure of the young woman carrying water. Both iconographical representations of Griselda, however, stress her virtuousness and therefore her suitability and desirability as a wife.

These pictorial and textual instances of the myth all underline Griselda's ideal wifely behaviour as an industrious, submissive spouse. Maintaining women in subjection was indeed considered a principle of Christian morality supported by the Scriptures,⁴²⁴ and it was nurtured throughout the Middle Ages and beyond by thinkers such as Tertullian, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Gratian, Aquinas, or Jacques de Vitry.⁴²⁵ Wives' obedience depended upon a correct balance and order in the household, with the man as the head. A wife showing supremacy over her husband brought him dishonour and shame. It diminished his masculinity by feminising his home. A lack of control over women, especially their bodies, is an anxiety fuelled by literature and religious texts.⁴²⁶ Controlling women's bodies did not simply mean controlling their movements, but also more importantly their chastity, thereby preventing them from debasing a man's bloodline, honour, and household. Western literature from Antiquity onwards has told of exemplary women either remaining virgins or defending their chastity sometimes to death, with Lucretia and Susanna being the most famous.

What is at stake in Griselda's story is not so much control of her body as of her mind. She is not a virgin persecuted by pagans like the female martyrs, or a virgin warrior like Judith or Joan of Arc, nor does she sacrifice herself to preserve her chastity, like Lucretia; die for her husband's sake, like Alcestis; or commits suicide out of love, like Thisbe and Dido. I believe that those who have searched for the source of the myth in the folktale type of the "Monster Bridegroom", of which the myth of Eros and Psyche is a subtype, miss the point that the heroine of such tales undergoes ordeals and is tested because she strayed rather than aiming to verify if her virtue of obedience could sustain any and every blow.⁴²⁷ Even though in medieval and early modern European culture

424 See for example 1 Peter 3: 1–22, Ephesians 5: 22–24 or 1 Timothy 2: 12.

425 See Blamires, *Women Defamed*.

426 For more on jealousy in early modern English literature, see Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

427 Others have linked Griselda's story to the "Patient of a Princess/Sultana" folktale-type found in Middle Eastern culture, see Bettridge and Utley, "New Light on the Origin of the Griselda Story," pp. 174–81. However, there are no means to determine which came first, Griselda or the Sultana, or whether Boccaccio had come across this folktale. In addition, this type of tale is more concerned with the way the Sultana overcomes her ordeals with the help of a doll substituting for the children that were taken from her than how she submits to her husband's

there are examples of other submissive wives—such as Eve after the Fall, Esther as a meek and obedient counterpart to the rebellious Vashti, or the woman in the 32nd novella of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron* (1558), where she is forced by her husband to drink from the skull of her dead lover—they usually become extremely obedient after being at fault. Esther is not even put to the test and carefully steps out of her meekness, becoming active and assertive in interceding with her husband in order to save her cousin Mordecai and the Jews of the Persian Empire. Griselda, on the other hand, does not have to pay for any crime or earn redemption because she strayed. She is tested so that the extent of her patience and obedience can be revealed or in other words, so that her virtue can be proved true and strong when exercised. Griselda is unique in terms of influence and widespread presence in medieval and early modern European culture, as well as in terms of her flawless willing obedience towards her husband, a kind of self-alienation and entire and complete voluntary subjection. Gualtieri thus determines what she is allowed to say or outwardly show as feelings. As the Marquis wishes to control her speech and her external production or expression of thoughts and emotions, which have to concord with his or be as he says, he literally asks Griselda to embody the fusion of two biblical precepts: first, that through marriage, each spouse yields his or her body to the other (Cor. 7: 4) and that the husband should be the head of the wife (Eph. 5: 22–23).

Beyond obedience and a willingness to be controlled, the testing also reveals that Griselda is supposed to put her husband first, even before her children. As Gualtieri takes away from Griselda her daughter and son, he expects her to show no horror or sadness, because his will and welfare has to be valued more than their babies’ lives, be they male or female. This test can also be viewed as a way to determine whether Griselda takes pride in motherhood, perhaps even more when she gives birth to a son and heir to perpetuate her husband’s bloodline. Of course, she does not. Whichever the gender of her child, Griselda reacts in the same accepting way, setting her motherhood second to her duties as a wife and maintaining her husband as the centre of her world, as indeed he wishes her to do. The myth therefore teaches women to be spouses over mothers, thus serving their husbands. The final part of the trials, the repudiation and welcoming of the new bride, in which Griselda is forced to become a servant, on the other hand, indicates that women or wives can be interchangeable. This interchangeability is

wishes. The Sultana is not asked to agree with her husband. She has no choice presented to her, and she can only let him do with her and her children as he pleases. Griselda, on the other hand, is asked to obey and willingly does so.

grounded and fuelled by classical and medieval understanding of reproduction and women's role in it, which derives from Galenic medicine and the implementation of the Salic law that gives precedence to male over female heirs. When conceiving a child, women were thought to bring the matter only, the clay, whereas men brought the substance, the spirit, the breathing of life into the body, and, of course, the bloodline and the name. The essence and name were what lasted beyond the death of an individual family member. Therefore, any woman could potentially fulfil this role of "matter-provider", although, in practice, social endogamy was preferred, unlike Gualtieri's choice to marry Griselda. The final test then appears a means for Gualtieri to make Griselda understand and accept her interchangeability, her lack of essentiality, and her dispensability as an individual. The man, meanwhile, is essential and indispensable for perpetuating the name, from father to son down the male line, in order to prevent the extinction of the household and the bloodline. As such, the Griselda myth is probably among the most misogynistic of all myths for it promotes a kind of "absolute patriarchy".

In spite of the moral problem that Griselda's extreme obedience poses, given her acceptance to be complicit with infanticide, rather than correcting her husband's sinful demands, the myth was readily received as a tool to educate and fashion women as ideal wives, as demonstrated above. With its insistence on wives' total abnegation and subjection to their husbands, as well as on women's interchangeability in marriage, the myth seems to have resonated well with late-medieval male nostalgia for a time when women could still be repudiated and remarriage was still possible. At the same time, it offered a *remedium* ("remedy") against the imposed indissolubility of marriage, namely by finding a wife like Griselda or teaching her to be like Griselda.

1.5.2 Griselda and the *Querelle des femmes 2: Commendatio matrimonii*

It was only from the second half of the eighth century that the Church started to intervene more in the civil matter of marriage and regulate it more strictly.⁴²⁸ Various ways of dissolving a marital union existed, and repudiation was the most frequently employed.⁴²⁹ Promoting an indissoluble and lifelong monogamous

⁴²⁸ Isabelle Réal, "Discours multiples, pluralités des pratiques : séparations, divorces, répudiations, dans l'Europe chrétienne du Haut Moyen Age (VIè-IXè siècles) d'après les sources normatives et narratives," in *Répudiation, séparation, divorce dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. E. Santinelli (Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2007), p. 169.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

marriage, the Church began to define the “consentement des époux, contrôle des parents, dotation maritale et publicité des noces”.⁴³⁰ As a result of the instauration of monogamy, second wives were turned into concubines.⁴³¹ Isabelle Réal further explains:

L’offensive s’amplifie lorsque l’Eglise élargit les interdits de parenté d’abord jusqu’à la quatrième génération, puis [graduellement] . . . en 874 jusqu’au septième [degré]. La question de l’indissolubilité entre également en lice avec un arsenal de mesures qui visent d’une part à limiter au maximum les causes de séparation, d’autre part à interdire les remariages après répudiation, décision relayée à partir de Charlemagne par la législation royale. Interdits de parenté et indissolubilité, heurtant de plein fouet les stratégies matrimoniales, ne pouvaient être acceptés comme tels par la société aristocratique. Les pratiques antérieures ont donc perdu.⁴³²

Even if the imposition of the Church’s matrimonial model did not go smoothly, ecclesiastical authorities continued their campaign and reinforced their legal measures between the ninth and twelfth centuries, eventually making marriage one of the sacraments in the thirteenth century after fighting its own internal opponents to marriage’s holiness, the followers of Jerome, who took the view that the conjugal bond was inferior to virginity.⁴³³ However, the Church continued its efforts to ensure that the precepts were applied. The imposed indissolubility and monogamy continued to be an issue, as evidenced by the proliferation of misogynist literary works against the innumerable faults of wives and women and more generally by conduct literature. From the thirteenth century, treatises for married women increased and collections of famous women augmented from the fourteenth century, eventually resulting in the numerous responses to misogynistic discourses in the fifteenth century, often considered the beginning of the *querelle des femmes*.

The Griselda myth engages with the two of the *querelle*’s debates: whether to marry or not and the question of women’s essential nature (evil or good). I first examine the most surprising of the two, the marriage debate, in order to show that the Griselda myth was used to encourage men to enter wedlock, from some of its earliest versions until about the end of the sixteenth century.

Boccaccio’s novella originally intended to tell the story of a male protagonist, a marquis, as not only the rubric (“Il marchese di Sanluzzo da’ prieghi de’

430 Ibid., p. 171.

431 Ibid.

432 Ibid.

433 Philippe Ariès, “Le mariage indissoluble,” *Communications* 35 (1982): 126–29.

suoi uomini costretto di pigliar moglie. . .”⁴³⁴) but also Dioneo, the narrator (“vo’ ragionar d’un marchese, non cosa magnifica ma una matta bestialità”⁴³⁵), indicate. This marquis, however, was clearly not intended as an example of masculine behaviour: “la quale [matta bestialità] io non consiglio alcun che segue, per ciò che gran peccato fu che a costui ben n’avenisse”,⁴³⁶ as Dioneo explains about the story he is going to relate. This notwithstanding, and most likely because Petrarch abandoned the novella’s frame and narrator in his Latin translation, some of those who translated his text into European vernacular languages did use and freely adapt the marquis’s initial carelessness regarding marriage to develop discourses and arguments in favour of the married state. The marquis thus became a character who authors used as a tool to encourage marriage. They seemed to have hoped that by representing not just his subjects’ dissatisfaction with their ruler’s unwillingness to embrace the married state but also a debate between courtiers and the marquis, their spectators and readers who may have been reluctant to get married would identify with the marquis. They hoped that just as he is gradually led to reconsider his position, they too would change their mind and settle into marriage.

Whereas Boccaccio had his narrator ironically comment that Gualtieri in having no thoughts of taking a wife or having children “era da reputar molto savio”,⁴³⁷ and only let Gualtieri express his arguments against marriage, Petrarch, on the contrary, innovatively presents the petition of the marquis’s subjects in direct speech. Thereby, he gives the marriage petition more prominence. Petrarch’s subjects argue that not only can death happen to anyone at any time (“morsque ipsa omni proxima est etati”)⁴³⁸ but also that the absence of an heir is a source of great anxiety (“molesta solitudine”⁴³⁹). As Beatrice Barbiellini Amidei remarks, these passages have been recognised as belonging to the *de nuptiis* controversy tradition and the numerous treatises recommending (*commendatio matrimonii* or *an uxor ducenda*) or, on the contrary, arguing against marriage (*molestiae nuptiarum*).⁴⁴⁰ The former offers a positive image of women, whereas

434 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1232.

435 *Ibid.*, p. 1233.

436 *Ibid.*

437 *Ibid.*, p. 1234.

438 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 72.

439 *Ibid.*

440 For a survey of the evolution of this topos from Antiquity until the early modern period, see Detlef Roth, “An uxor ducenda: Zur Geschichte eines Topos von der Antike bis zur Frühen Neuzeit,” in *Geschlechterbeziehungen und Textfunktionen*, ed. Rüdiger Schnell (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998).

the later developed the *topos* of the sinful wife: “come insopportabile fardello per il marito e impedimento alla vita del chierico o intellettuale”.⁴⁴¹

Marriage, as anthropologists from Van Gennep onwards have commented,⁴⁴² is a social enterprise rather than an individual’s freely made choice. It is influenced by one’s family and/or community and has repercussions on one’s life and community. Contemplating the consequences of marriage on one’s life or social group can generate anxieties⁴⁴³ for the individual entering matrimony, as well as for members of her or his circle of close relations. The Griselda story crystalises the anxiety of subjects faced with a ruler unwilling to marry, both in Boccaccio and in Petrarch. In Boccaccio’s version, he is a ruler who fears choosing an inappropriate wife (“come dura vita sia quella di colui che a donna non bene a sé conveniente s’abbatte”),⁴⁴⁴ while in Petrarch’s, he fears losing celibacy’s freedom (“delectabar omnimoda libertate, que in coniugio rara est”).⁴⁴⁵ Thus, many subsequent adapters of the story not only identified the arguments belonging as much to the *commendatio matrimonii* as those belonging to the *molestiae nuptiarum* present in Boccaccio’s and/or Petrarch’s versions, depending on whether they used one or the other or both as their source, creatively exploiting them in order to address the anxieties of their own socio-political cultural environment, to promote a particular royal match, or more generally, to encourage marriage among lay people, noble or otherwise.

The popular *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* (ca. 1384) by Mézières is an interesting starting point, because it shows not only how its author used the Griselda myth as part of a longer treatise devoted entirely to the *commendatio matrimonii* but also how this was perpetuated by copyists of his manuscript who extracted Mézières’s version of the Griselda myth and appended it to other texts in order to promote marriage. As already

441 Beatrice Barbiellini Amidei, “Griselda dall’*exemplum* alla novella,” in *Griselda: metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea, atti del Convegno internazionale a 80 anni dalla nascita della Società per gli studi storici della Provincia di Cuneo: Saluzzo, 23–24 aprile 2009*, ed. Rinaldo Comba and Marco Piccat (Cuneo: Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, 2011), p. 7.

442 See Gennep, *Les rites de passage*: esp. chapitre VII, “Les fiançailles et le mariage”, pp. 165–207.

443 Anxiety is here understood, according to the Freudian definition, as “a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one”, see Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, et al. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 12.

444 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1234.

445 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 72.

mentioned, Mézières's translation of Petrarch was so popular that it was reproduced in 17 manuscripts: two of them are copies of Mézières's entire book and the others reproduce only the story of Griselda in conjunction with other texts.⁴⁴⁶ Among the manuscripts which reproduce the story on its own, one that was copied in the fifteenth century is particularly noteworthy with regard to the *de nuptiis* controversy. The Ms Reginensi 1519 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana contains two works, the *Histoire de Griseldis* and the *Livre de Leesce*.⁴⁴⁷ The latter is the work that Jehan Le Fèvre appended to his 1373 French translation of Mathieu of Boulogne's *Liber Lamentationum Matheoluli* (c. 1300). As is well known, the *Lamentationum* is a treatise in the *molestiae nuptiarum* tradition. Jehan Le Fèvre wrote his *Livre de Leesce* as refutation of the *Lamentationum*, examining each of the misogynist arguments one by one to prove them wrong (more or less successfully).⁴⁴⁸ Thus, Mézières's version of the Griselda story in this manuscript appears to be an additional refutation of the *Lamentationum* and certainly has a complementary relationship to the *Livre de Leesce*,⁴⁴⁹ which although cannot be qualified as belonging to the *commendatio matrimonii*, it does take a stance against the *molestiae nuptiarum* tradition.⁴⁵⁰

Directly engaging with the *commendatio matrimonii* tradition, Mézières wrote another version, a dramatic piece named *L'Estoire de Griseldis* (1395). A whole scene is devoted to a discussion among two barons and five knights who are exposing their concern ("grant pensee")⁴⁵¹ about the marquis's lack of interest in marriage and adding new arguments in favour of the marital union, as spoken by the fifth knight who is charged with convincing the marquis to

446 For a detailed analysis of these manuscripts, see Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, pp. 33–81.

447 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

448 For a detailed analysis of the refutation mechanisms at play in the *Livre de Leesce*, see Renate Blumenfeld-Kosiski, "Jean Le Fèvre's *Livre de Leesce*: Praise or Blame of Women?," *Speculum* 69, no. 3 (1994).

449 Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff considers that the story of Griseldis "fortifie les arguments du *Livre de Leesce*", *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, p. 132.

450 A similar stance is adopted by Christine de Pisan in her *Livre de la cité des dames* (1405). This major work, often considered as the first of the *querelle des femmes* tradition, was also prompted by the *Liber Lamentationum Matheoluli* and also contains Pisan's version of the Patient Griselda story as the first exemplum of feminine constancy, courage and strength of character.

451 Philippe de Mézières, *L'Estoire de Griseldis, en rimes et par personnages* (1395) (Genève: Droz, 1957), I, 175.

take a wife for the “bien publique”.⁴⁵² He not only assures his ruler that many in marriage “vivent joyeusement”⁴⁵³ and with less care than those who do not, but also that the marquis’s fear of becoming “feminin”⁴⁵⁴ is unfounded, since “bien scez que pas ne domine / la femme, maiz ce fait li homs”.⁴⁵⁵ These additions have induced critics to suggest that Mézières may have used the play to intervene in a contemporary royal marriage. Mézières was Charles VI’s adviser and the French monarch mandated him to write a letter to the English King Richard II in order to favour a match with Isabelle of Valois. This *Epistre au roi Richart* from 1395–6 discusses the means to preserve peace between France and England; and marriage is presented in the fourth part as one argument among eight others. After explaining the various virtues of marriage (to avoid fornication, a means to be chaste, to create alliances with other princes), Mézières proceeds to enumerate various marriages between exemplary figures from the Old Testament, followed by some from the New Testament, presented as historical precedents. Then, just after mentioning Richard’s own parents, and the fact that a match between England and France with the help of Charles VI could help preserve peace, he concludes this part of the letter with Griselda as the embodiment of the ideal wife:

Or pleust a Dieu, tres debonnaire prince, que, pour nourrissement de paix de la crestiente et consolacion de vostre royale personne, il vous voustist ottroier et mander une tele espouse et compaignne comme il fist au marquis de Saluce, apelee Griseldis, qui fu fille d’un povre laboureur, et toutesfoiz, selonc la cronique autentique du dessus dit marquis / de Saluce et de Griseldis sa compaignne, escripte par le solempnel docteur et souverain poete, maistre Francois Petrac, depuis le commencement du monde jusques au jour duy, apres les saintes, ne se treuve pas femme si vertueuse en escript, ne si merveilleuse en l’amour de son seigneur, et merveilleuse vertu de pacience, comme fu la dicte noble marquise Griseldis, sicomme vous poez avoir veu, ou verres ou temps advenir, par la cronique d’icelle.⁴⁵⁶

At the time, the Marquisate of Saluzzo was under French protection because of the constant attacks from the Duchy of Savoy, who wished to have sovereignty

452 Ibid., l. 383.

453 Ibid., l. 381.

454 Ibid., ll. 369, 419.

455 Ibid., ll. 420–21.

456 Philippe de Mézières, *Letter to King Richard II. A Pleas Made in 1395 for Peace Between England and France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1975), p. 115. Coopland, the editor of the text, first provides an English translation, and then the text from the manuscript Royal 20 B VI, held at the British Library (see pp. 75–146).

over this territory.⁴⁵⁷ Thus, Mézières considers “Saluce” as part of the Kingdom of France. In other words, his choice of Griselda, or rather Griseldis, as the embodiment of the perfect wife is not simply an illustrious spouse he randomly picks. Indeed, Lucretia, Portia, or Rebecca could have suited him just as well, but the embodiment of the ideal French wife implies that Charles VI can find others like her in his realm, since she belongs to French history (“selon la cronique autentique”; “sicomme vous poez avoir veu, ou verres ou temps advenir, par la cronique d’icelle”). Thus, Griselda becomes a diplomatic tool and a *commendatio matrimonii* argument to settle a marriage alliance between France and England. This shows not only how Griselda’s story could quickly be appropriated to become part of a much greater geographical territory, namely France, despite originally belonging to the territory of the previously independent Marquisate of Saluzzo but also how thin and blurred the limit between *fabula* and *historia* could be at the time.

Mézières further blurred, or rather blended, the two types of *narratio* as he wrote the play *L’Estoire*, a fictional representation of Griseldis’s life, which he assumes to be historical. Due to its reference to Griseldis, the *Epistre au Roi Richard* has led critics to conjecture that Mézières may have staged *L’Estoire* before the actual wedding between Richard II and Isabelle of Valois as a further incentive addressed to the English King about the desirability of a match with a French noblewoman,⁴⁵⁸ especially as the only extant manuscript of *L’Estoire* is dated 1395,⁴⁵⁹ while the actual marriage ceremony took place in 1396. However, this may also indicate that *L’Estoire* was staged during the wedding, and the manuscript’s anteriority could just mean that Mézières composed it in anticipation of the event.

While most subsequent European versions simply reproduce Boccaccio’s or Petrarch’s versions without significant changes, sometimes even omitting the first part of the story entirely and beginning their narration when the marquis meets and marries Griselda, a German tradition started with the marriage treaty *Dieß puch heist der Grysard* (1432). This version was written by the Carthusian monk Erhart Groß of Nuremberg, and it develops the first part of the *novella* in order to engage with the *de nuptiis* controversy.

⁴⁵⁷ Mézières’s epistle was coincidentally written around the same time as, while imprisoned by Savoy, Thomas of Saluce, heir to the throne of the marquisate, composed his *Livre du Chevalier errant*, which includes not only a version of the Griselda myth but also the story of her husband’s youth and ancestry, as mentioned previously, see pp. 62–65.

⁴⁵⁸ Grace Frank, “The Authorship of Le Mystère de Griseldis,” *Modern Language Notes* 51, no. 4 (1936): 222.

⁴⁵⁹ The date appears on the last line of the manuscript.

Most of the works engaging with *de nuptiis* topos were written in Latin. However, Groß interestingly did not choose Latin but German as the language in which to compose this little treaty. This means, Detlef Roth argues, that Groß did not envisage the subject matter from a religious perspective—and therefore addressing a clerical, educated audience—but rather as a subject for lay people within a “laikale Gesprächssituation”.⁴⁶⁰

The first half of *Grysard* is dedicated to the elaboration of a debate in the tradition of *an uxor ducenda*, thus placing arguments from the *molestiae nuptiarum* in the mouth of the marquis, while those from the *commendatio matrimonii* are spoken by his courtiers and in particular one called Marcus. This re-elaboration of the usually briefly outlined mytheme of the young man shunning marriage in favour of hunting is particularly interesting, since it turns the whole story into a sort of marriage treaty aimed at convincing young men to marry through a cleverly structured dialogic argumentation. While the marquis’s misogynist discourse owes much to St. Jerome’s *Adversus Iovinianum* and concludes with a very literal translation, the first in German, of Theophrastus’s *Liber de nuptiis*,⁴⁶¹ Marcus’s answer challenges his sovereign’s opinion in a similar way as Jean Le Fèvre in his *Livre de leesce* (1380–87) or Heinrich Wittenwiler’s debate about marriage in his *Ring* (1408–10).⁴⁶² Marcus stresses that as a ruler, he should not apply to himself arguments in favour of celibacy and chastity, which as perfectly valid for clergymen. On the contrary, he has to take into account the *bonum communitatis* (“kunige und fuersten und ander prelate, die der gemein vor sein und auch die dez leibes nod vorsorgen”),⁴⁶³ which requires him to get married and produce an heir. To further convince the marquis, as Roth summarises:

stellt Marcus den *exempla in malo* die Namen tugendhafter Frauen aus dem Alten und Neuen Testament sowie aus der Christlichen (Heils-)Geschichte gegenüber und zählt danach eine Reihe heidnischer Exempla züchtiger, treuer Ehefrauen von Dido bis Martia aus dem letzten Teil des >Aversus Iovinianum< auf.⁴⁶⁴

As Roth further comments, “Groß gelingt es damit . . . die *molestiae nuptiarum* erfolgreich zu neutralisieren, indem er sie in den politischen bzw. ökonomischen Diskurs einfügt und zur Unterweisung für Eheleute verwendet”.⁴⁶⁵

460 Roth, “An uxor ducenda,” p. 205.

461 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

462 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

463 Groß, “Die Grisardis,” p. 17.

464 Roth, “An uxor ducenda,” pp. 203–4.

465 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Groß's work enjoyed popularity and influenced other refashionings of the myth, especially in sixteenth-century drama. The fact that dramatic forms rather than works of prose maintained and revisited the *commendatio matrimonii* in rewritings of the myth in early modern German literature can be explained by generic and intentional factors. Adaptations in prose are generally rather short booklets, often reproducing Petrarch's text in abridged versions, whose intention appears, based on their titles pages and other factors, to be to focus on Griselda's patience and obedience rather than on the marquis's initial refusal to marry. Moreover, drama, being a dialogic form, must have seemed an obviously suitable literary genre to transcribe a debate, all the more so in the sixteenth century, which saw the development of drama as a didactic tool in schools. Indeed, many of the theatrical adaptations following this tradition (i.e. using the marquis as a means to convince audiences to marry) were staged or written in educational contexts.

The first German play that displays this influence is Hans Sachs's *Die gedultig und gehorsam marggräfin Griselda* (1546). Nothing is known regarding when and where the play was staged. Sachs was not a clerk nor a teacher but most likely still a shoemaker in Nuremberg when he wrote this play. His practice and skills as a *Meistersinger*, along with his sympathy for Protestantism,⁴⁶⁶ are most likely what prompted Sachs to shape the Griselda myth into some kind of "didactic treaty",⁴⁶⁷ intending to promote marriage as a relationship based on peace, love, and loyalty ("Das also zwischen mann und weib / Fried, lieb und trewe auferwachs / Biss an das end, das wünscht Hans Sachs").⁴⁶⁸ In this comedy, Sachs turns the subjects' petition into a brief debate, during which the marquis's first counsellor who manages to convince his lord to take a wife is called "Marco", most likely after Groß's Marcus. The borrowing, however, seems limited to the name, since Marco's arguments are directly inspired from Petrarch: the counsellor reminds his lord that death can come any time and take anyone ("... menschlich leben / Teglich das alter hindter-keucht. / Dergleichen der tod nit verzeucht"),⁴⁶⁹ and that war would result in his dying

466 Johannes Rettelbach, "Hans Sachs," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, ed. V. V. Aa (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 2005). <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118604597.html>, accessed 5th March 2014.

467 Michael Dallapiazza, "Hans Sachsens comedi: die gedultig und gehorsam marggräfin Griselda," in *Die deutsche Griselda. Transformationen einer literarischen Figuration von Boccaccio bis zur Moderne*, ed. Achim Aurnhammer and Hans-Jochen Schwiewer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 144–45.

468 Hans Sachs, "Ein comedi mit 13 personen, die gedultig und gehorsam marggräfin Griselda (1546)," in *Hans Sachs*, ed. Adelbert Von Keller (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1870), pp. 67–8.

469 *Ibid.*, p. 43, ll. 4–6.

without an heir (“Solt ewer gnad mit tod abgehn, . . . / Sie must dulden ein frembden herrn, / Vil freydienst, stewer und wider-werrn, / Etwan krieg, raub, mord und brand”),⁴⁷⁰ rendering more explicitly and graphically what Petrarch implied by “molesta solitudine”.⁴⁷¹

The already mentioned anonymous Augsburg play *Grisel* (c. 1540) also follows this tradition of extending the beginning of the story to some extent in order to stage a debate about marriage. In this case, the marquis (der Graf) hears several of his courtiers, the Landamman, the Vogt, the Hauptmann, and the Alte Weyb. The Landamman and the Vogt, who speak first, try to convince the marquis to take a wife. The other two, behaving according to the stock characters they embody, deter their ruler from getting married. While the Hauptman or Capitan refuses to contradict the marquis in a typically coward gesture (“Des Brot ich yß des lied ich sing”)⁴⁷² and advises him to preserve his freedom by having several concubines rather than a wife (“Nempt sunst ain hüpsche zwu old drey / Damit ir dannocht bleiben frey”),⁴⁷³ the Alt Weyb or “lusty-widow-type” offer to take care of him (“Das ich euch wol versorgen mag”),⁴⁷⁴ or in other words, to marry him. The marquis does not seem attracted by the Alt Weyb’s offer, since he does not even answer her, and he would rather not take either a wife or a concubine, because both would subject him and make him weak (“Ir aigen macht und gantz zum knecht / Darzu leib her vnd gut mir schwecht / Das mueßt mir wesen ymmer laid”).⁴⁷⁵ Finally, the Pfarrer or priest is asked to intervene, and he convinces the marquis to get married out of care for, and duty towards, his people by reminding the marquis that “Ir seind nit ewer selbs allain / Sonder ain diener der gemain”.⁴⁷⁶

Pondo’s *Historia Walthers* (1590) does not exactly stage a debate between the marquis and his subjects, but in the first scene, it lengthily shows the Hoffmeister, the Hauptman, and the Marshall discuss political (*bonum communitatis*) and biblical (marriage as ordained by God) arguments for marriage. The play exaggerates Walther’s negligence by depicting him as someone who cares more about hunting, eating, and drinking than listening to the worries of his

470 Ibid., p. 43, ll. 7–11.

471 Petrarch, “De oboedentia.”

472 *Grysel, ain schoene Comedi von der demuetigkait vnd gehorsame der Weyber gegen ieren Ehmaennern zue nuz vnd dienst der Jugent gemacht vnd gstelt* (Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart, c. 1540), sig. A3v.

473 Ibid., sig. A4r.

474 Ibid.

475 Ibid., sig. A4v.

476 Ibid., sig. A5v.

people. In addition, he does not give an immediate answer to the petition, delaying his response to the next day. Thus, *Die Historia Walthers* encourages men to get married by voicing almost only pro-marriage arguments and ridiculing the marquis's apparent lack of interest in the matter. The religious concept that marriage is ordained by God is further developed by the additional episode in which Griseldis reveals that she dreamt she would marry the marquis ("Da trewmmet mich so scheinbarlich / Wie mich liesse vermehlen sich, / Der Marggraff unsr Genedger Herr"),⁴⁷⁷ presenting it as a prophetic dream.

Finally, the last German play to stage a debate between the marquis and his courtiers is Mauritius's *Grisolden*. Although Mauritius also borrows lines from Sachs, in his treatment of the subject's marriage plea, the professor of Steyr's Latin school follows more the structure found in the anonymous *Grysel*, his other source. As Achim Aurnhammer remarks, in *Grisolden*, the debate is enriched with new participants:

Hier kommen gleich fünf politische Instanzen zu Wort und drängen den Grafen Walther zur Heirat: eine dreiköpfige Ständevertretung. . . zwei „Vnterthanen“, die das Volk repräsentieren, die Hofrätthe, der engere Hofstaat des Grafen mit Statthalter, Pfleger, Hofnarr, Hauptmann und „Cantzler“ sowie der „Hofprediger“.⁴⁷⁸

In the end, however, the same arguments as those found in, and directly borrowed from, the anonymous *Grysel* convince the marquis to get married: "Ihr seye nicht ewer selbst allein / Sondern ein Diener der Gemein".⁴⁷⁹ What changes in Mauritius's play is that the marquis not only argues for marriage based on love, attesting to the "reformatorische Moraltendenz, eheliche Liebe und Sexualität zu verbinden",⁴⁸⁰ but he also critiques the lack of free will for rulers in choosing a wife. As Aurnhammer comments, this is what "motiviert die später geäußerte Bedingung seines Heiratsentschlusses, nämlich bei seiner freien Brautwahl der Praxis der niederen Stände zu folgen".⁴⁸¹

Despite the apparent circulation in print and performances of these plays within the European German-speaking territories, it is not possible to establish with certainty any clear influence on contemporary dramatic adaptations in other European languages.

⁴⁷⁷ Pondo, *Die Historia Walthers*, sigs. B7r-v.

⁴⁷⁸ Aurnhammer, "Griseldis auf dem Schultheater. Georg Mauritius: Comoedia von Graff Walther von Saluz / vnd Grisolden (1582)," p. 158.

⁴⁷⁹ Mauritius, *Grisolden*, sig. B6r.

⁴⁸⁰ Aurnhammer, "Griseldis auf dem Schultheater. Georg Mauritius: Comoedia von Graff Walther von Saluz / vnd Grisolden (1582)," p. 159.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

This tradition of extending the beginning of Griselda's story in order to encourage men to marry also appears in England in John Phillip's *Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissill* (1564–68). This comedy stages a small debate about marriage between Gautier's men, on the one hand, who favour marriage, and Gautier, on the other hand, arguing for virginity as a preferred state according to the scripture, as supported by Politick Persuasion, the Vice figure who describes the troubles of married people.⁴⁸²

Given that Phillip's play was most likely staged in front of Elizabeth I,⁴⁸³ having been composed at the beginning of her reign, when debates about who she might marry were a public matter, some scholars have adopted a topical reading and argued that the interlude tries to encourage Elizabeth I to marry. Louis Wright first remarks on the parallel between the courtiers' plea to Gautier to marry and Parliaments' pressure on Elizabeth to do the same. He contends that the play favours marriage between the Queen and William Pickering, the object of rumours in 1599 about Elizabeth's potential husbands, whose low birth links him with Grissil.⁴⁸⁴ David Bevington highlights that the testing plot begins only in the second half of the play, giving more space to the marriage plea and wooing process than in previous versions of Griselda's story. He argues that Grissil stands for Robert Dudley, another possible suitor in the early 1560s whose rank was also inferior to Elizabeth's.⁴⁸⁵ Susan Doran also interprets Grissil as a surrogate for Dudley and notes that the arguments of Politick Persuasion, the Vice figure of the play, against Grissil as a spouse are "similar to those made . . . against the Dudley marriage".⁴⁸⁶

However, Phillip's play is problematic. *Patient Grissill* undermines its own plea for marriage by picturing a marriage relationship that is far from happy for most of the play. Although Wright, Bevington, and Doran associate Grissil with Pickering or Dudley, Elizabeth I, being a woman and knowing that wives, even queens, were advised to obey their husband, could perfectly have seen her own miserable fate, were she to marry, in Grissil's fate. Moreover, the cross-gendered associations of Pickering or Dudley with Grissil and Elizabeth with Gautier do not work beyond the similarity between the Vice's denigration of Grissil's

482 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," ll. 153–90.

483 Not only is the Queen mentioned in the conclusion of the play but so are the "lords of the counsel", as all are prayed for by the Posthemus Actor speaking the epilogue, see *ibid.*, ll. 2078–93.

484 Wright, "A Political Reflection in Phillip's Patient Grissill," 424–28.

485 Bevington, *Tudor drama and politics: a critical approach to topical meaning*, pp. 147–50.

486 Susan Doran, "Juno versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561–1581," *The Historical Journal* 38 (1995): 257–74, especially, pp. 59–60.

modest origin and contemporary criticism of these suitors. Reading Gautier's cruel testing, Elizabeth's treatment of her future husband would insult the queen.⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, none of these critics address the other gender problem: the Vice's arguments invoking Grissil's rank do not have the same resonance as those against Dudley. In early modern England, a man could, although it was not recommended, marry below himself, but for a woman, this was far more problematic because it entailed that her husband acquired all her possessions and title, disrupting the blood-right construction of the social hierarchy. Moreover, Grissil's wifely obedience cannot apply to men without difficulty: they would be married to a queen and, as subjects, have to obey her, yet as husbands, displaying such wifely obedience would cast them as unmanly and Elizabeth as a shrew.

What these examples show is a clear tendency in Protestant countries to use the Griselda myth to encourage marriage, not just for rulers but also lay people. It would, however, be hasty to conclude that no Catholic writers other than Mézières were willing or saw the need to do the same. However, it is true that they generally preferred to use the myth to address the question of how to choose a wife, namely by encouraging men to look for Griselda's virtues in their potential spouses.

Another important aspect of early modern drama is how—with the secularisation and even more with the institutionalisation of theatre in England, Spain, France, and Italy—theatre became an object of consumption,⁴⁸⁸ albeit an immaterial one. Theatre was therefore subject to the market laws of demand and supply. In other words, if playwrights were to be successful, they had to adapt to the public's taste and satisfy the expectations of the majority. This is not to say that didacticism altogether disappeared, because plays could still convey educational messages, but this was only one among several other aspects, sometimes contradictory, of early modern theatre. As Ivan Cañadas explains:

[in early modern England and Spain] dramatists and players catered to the tastes of socially heterogeneous audiences. In addition, both theatres were, of course, subject to licensing and censorship by the authorities; dramatists and actors were, therefore, conscious of the danger of attracting their censure. . . .the effect of these conflicting pressures on playwrights and theatre companies has been the focus of considerable critical discussion, which has brought into focus the polyphony of individual plays.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ Bevington, *Tudor drama and politics: a critical approach to topical meaning*, p. 148.

⁴⁸⁸ See Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), esp. pp. 1–11; Ivan Cañadas, *Public Theater in Golden Age Madrid and Tudor Stuart London* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), esp. pp. 10–18.

⁴⁸⁹ Cañadas, *Public Theater*, p. 7.

Although it has been argued that Golden Age Spanish theatre mainly served as a propagandistic apparatus for the monarchy, I share George Mariscal's view that early modern drama in Spain did possess a certain "potential for multiples and even contestatory responses within the performance text itself (e.g. carnivalesque inversions such as *bailes*, *mojigangas*, etc.)."⁴⁹⁰

The Patient Griselda myth was adapted for the Spanish *teatro de corrales* by Félix Lope de Vega in *El ejemplo de casadas y prueba de la paciencia* (most likely written between 1599 and 1604 and printed in 1615 in Madrid and 1616 in Barcelona). While some aspects of the play do exploit the polyphonic potential of the genre, in its treatment of the *de nuptiis* controversy, the perspective adopted is, like in previous realisations of the myth, one of encouraging rulers to get married because it is their duty. However, *El ejemplo*, more than any other rewritings of the myth, gives greater importance to the marquis's anxiety about potentially marrying a sinful wife.

Apart from this particularity in the treatment of the mytheme of the young hunter shunning marriage, and before I analyse this aspect of the play, it is worth noting that Lope also changed the Italian setting of the myth from Saluzzo to Barcelona, Spain, and renamed all characters with Spanish names. Thus, the marquis Gualtieri becomes Enrico, "Conde de Barcelona", while Griselda's name is turned into Laurencia, and her father's name turns from Giannucole into Laureo, a "labrador viejo",⁴⁹¹ to mention just a few characters who bear a name in Boccaccio's text.

The play opens with Enrico expressing his overwhelming fear of getting married and more particularly of choosing a wife who might ruin his name and reputation: wrongly chosen, she would bring "en su rigor / una noche de su honor / y una infamia de su vida".⁴⁹² Lope, thereby, connects, or rather updates, the mytheme of the young hunter shunning marriage with another social matter, male honour, which was extremely popular among Spanish audiences. Indeed, Lope himself alludes to it in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (written around 1607–8 and printed in 1609): "Los casos de la honra son mejores, / porque mueven con fuerza a toda gente".⁴⁹³ While this famous passage has drawn much critical attention and debate, I share Ivan Cañadas's view that "Lope's

⁴⁹⁰ George Mariscal, "History and the Subject of the Spanish Golden Age," *The Seventeenth Century* 4, no. 1 (1989): 27.

⁴⁹¹ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, p. 49.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, vv. 18–20.

⁴⁹³ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias (1609)*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Catedra, 2009), vv. 327–28.

advice about the desirability of *moving* a heterogeneous audience ('toda gente') describes a unified *ideological* response". Indeed, as he further contends:

It can be argued . . . that Lope exploited tension and controversy, not universally accepted truths. The ability to move all sorts of people lay in the controversial nature of 'la honra' (reputation). This controversial nature is made implicit by Lope when he refers to 'los casos de la honra' . . . , given that the word *caso* ('case' or 'affair') carried connotations of the extraordinary, the polemical, and the topical.⁴⁹⁴

Whereas in most versions, the young hunter of the mytheme is usually rather carefree, Enrico is literally petrified by the very idea of choosing a spouse and specifically making the wrong choice: he considers this issue to be "materias . . . peligrosas"⁴⁹⁵ and a bad marriage to be worse than death ("un casamiento errado, no es tanta pena morir").⁴⁹⁶ Clearly elaborating from the *molestiae nuptiarum* tradition but in a parodic way, the play presents a male protagonist who grotesquely takes the "sinful wife" topos to the letter and as the only possible eventual outcome of marriage. Indeed, the Conde is so scared that he does not dare to make any choice at all. As Harold Bloch puts it, just as in the *molestiae nuptiarum* tradition, "[w]oman is conceived as a perpetually overdetermined signifier with respect to which man is always at risk",⁴⁹⁷ and she is perceived as such by Enrico.

Apart from stressing the hyperbolic nature of his fear, Enrico's comments also point to the fact that in early modern Spain (and Europe), a man's honour was worth more than his life. A man's honour depended generally on how he was able to perform and defend, when necessary, his masculinity. While it rested to some extent in his own hands and deeds by means of displaying bravery, fighting in duels when insulted, or achieving war exploits, among other things, for the most part, a man's honour laid beyond his control and depended on the chastity of the female members of his family, be they daughters, sisters, or a wife. If they proved unchaste, whether willingly or not, the husband's, brother's or father's *honra* was destroyed. A popular depiction in Spanish Golden drama was restoring honour by washing the deed away in blood, namely by killing the female relative. While these "honour plays" deal with the issue of conjugal honour, in most cases, they present the eventual restoration of that honour after it was endangered or annihilated. In *El ejemplo*, on the

⁴⁹⁴ Cañadas, *Public Theater*, p. 20.

⁴⁹⁵ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, v. 25.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, vv. 131–32.

⁴⁹⁷ R. Harold Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," in *Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy*, ed. R. Harold Bloch and Frances Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 3.

other hand, husbands' preoccupations with their wives' behaviour are ridiculed by staging a young ruler afraid of losing his honour even before getting married. As Mark Breitenberg explains:

Freud's understanding of anxiety leads us to a useful way of thinking about the pervasive masculine anxiety toward female chastity and women's sexuality in general that is so common in early modern texts. The anticipation of being cuckolded. . . exists prior to any definitive signs of its prospect . . . it is largely a projection of the husband's own fears translated into a story about his wife's inevitable infidelity or concupiscence.

Freud suggests as much in his claim that anxiety "protects its subject", as if it were a kind of psychic armor intended to safeguard the vulnerable ego within.⁴⁹⁸

While Enrico's anxiety indeed seems to function as "a kind of psychic armor", it also more importantly undermines his masculinity. As Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano remarks:

The male subjects of Lope's honor plays find themselves in situations which test their performance of masculinity as understood in their culture, often in opposition to a challenging male figure. These confrontations, real or imagined, bring the masculine identity of the husband into crisis, which can resolve in the direction of triumphant proof of manliness or disgraced failure to adequately perform according to his society's conception of manhood.⁴⁹⁹

Whereas the "challenging male figure" of Lope's other honour plays is usually a rival attempting to seduce the protagonist's wife, in *El ejemplo*, there is none. Or rather Enrico is his own enemy, a threat to his own honour.

Early modern society's conceptions of manhood are expressed by Roselio, his courtier:

Noble Enrico de Moncada
 . . . *estimado*
por tu ingenio y por tu espada
 mucho a tus vasallos pesa
 que de casarte rehúyas,
 y que de esa suerte arguyas
 el fin desta justa impresa.
 Todas las cosas se adquieren
 con *ciencia y valor romano*⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*, pp. 5–6. For Freud's definition of anxiety, see p. 111, n. 443.

⁴⁹⁹ Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *Feminism and the Honor Plays of Lope de Vega* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue UP, 1994), p. 32.

⁵⁰⁰ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 29–38. My emphasis.

Although Roselio admits that Enrico will ultimately have to rely on God to make his choice (“la buena mujer / viene de mano de Dios”),⁵⁰¹ his complaint is based on the topos of *sapientia et fortitudo*, which originated in Greek epic literature and defines the perfect hero as a man as intelligent as he is skilled in warfare.⁵⁰² The topos was frequently used in medieval chivalric literature and, in the Renaissance, unsurprisingly was part of the qualities required from a noble man that Castiglione describes in *Il Cortegiano* (1528).⁵⁰³ More importantly, as Ernst Robert Curtius notes:

Nowhere else has the combination of the life of the Muses and the life of the warrior ever been so brilliantly realized as in Spain’s period of florescence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—it suffices to call to mind Garcilaso, Cervantes, Lope, and Calderón. All of them were poets who also served in the wars. Neither France (excepting Agrippa d’Aubigné, who, however, wrote poetry *invita Minerva*) nor Italy can show anything of the sort. It is understandable, then, that the theme “armas y letras” was often treated in Spanish literature.⁵⁰⁴

The “valor romano” that Roselio refers to is not just a favourite Spanish literary theme—it also participates in the play’s construction of ideal noble masculinity, a masculinity that Enrico’s anxiety undermines. The threat his fear represents to his honour is all the greater as his own courtiers notice and question it:

ELARINO: . . . ¿Qué te impide?
 ¿Qué temor se descomide
 a tu valor y fortuna?
 ¿Cómo puede un gran señor
 errar en su casamiento,
 siendo un claro fundamento
 del polo de tu valor?⁵⁰⁵

Enrico’s failure to live up to the early modern Spanish ideal of manhood is ostensible, and it therefore requires him to take action in order to preserve his manliness and honour. His first reaction is to justify his fear by claiming that rather than getting married, he will face fierce beasts and undertake dangerous deeds:

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., vv. 59–60.

⁵⁰² Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953), p. 171.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., pp. 174–8.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 178.

⁵⁰⁵ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 78–84.

... antes entrara
 de una tigre en una cueva,
 y con fuerza heroica y nueva
 de los pechos le quitara
 un hijo, o con un león
 entrara a hacer desafío
 ...
 o me abrazara desnudo
 con las sierpes de Laoconte
 ...⁵⁰⁶

Whereas Enrico clearly intends, through this list of heroic exploits (which continues beyond the quoted lines for another ten verses), to prove to his courtiers that his courage is intact and thereby defend his honour, this actually results in the exact opposite. Indeed, marriage is not something to be feared, nor is it an act of heroism, just as Elarino's questioning of Enrico's anxiety implies, but Enrico's has the duty as a ruler for the *bonum communitatis*. The Conde's suggestion that marriage is a more fearful action than defeating wild, ferocious animals ridicules him and diminishes his manhood. Indeed, once Enrico leaves the stage, his courtiers continue to discuss his state of mind, as well as how it is affecting his manhood and preventing him from fulfilling his duty as a ruler:

ELARINO: Enrico es hombre prudente.
 ROSELIO: ¿Prudencia es la remisión?
 ¿Qué teme este hombre?
 ELARINO: No sé.
 ROSELIO: ¿Por qué cela el casar mal?
 ELARINO: Si un hombre tan principal
 lo teme, él sabe por qué.⁵⁰⁷

The repeated use of the word “hombre” rather than “señor” or “conde” to refer to Enrico deprives him of his rank and reduces him to a common man. In other words, both his nobility and his masculinity are diminished in the eyes of Enrico's courtiers, because his judgment is perceived as impaired (“¿Prudencia es la remisión?”). Even though Elarino tries to defend his lord by qualifying him as being “prudente” and “principal”, Roselio's unanswered questions (“¿Qué teme este hombre?”; “¿Por qué cela el casar mal?”) more strongly resonate, precisely because they remain unanswered.

After his capacity for discernment, Enrico's inaction is criticised. As preparations are made for the Conde to go hunting, Elarino disapproves of his ruler

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., vv. 109–18.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., vv. 167–72.

dedicating too much time to this activity (“¿No ves lo que pasa aquí? / En esto su vida emplea”).⁵⁰⁸ Although Elarino concedes that hunting forges masculinity (“hace muy fuertes los hombres, / cría gallardos soldados”⁵⁰⁹), in this case, however, rather than rendering Enrico manlier or stronger, the prospect of this hunting party further contributes to undermine his manhood, because it makes him look like a coward running from his duty (“Mucho huye de la corte”).⁵¹⁰

As Enrico’s servant Tibaldo explains, the Conde’s inaction stems from the fact that he looks for a rare type of wife who is perfect in every respect:

ELARINO: ¿Trata el casarse?
 TIBALDO: Querría,
 mas no hay quien mujer le corte
 a medida de su idea;
 que la bien imaginada,
 Lucrecia, en el ser honrada,
 en amor, Isicratea,
 Nicostrata en el saber,
 Judit en la fortaleza
 y Evadnes en la firmeza.
 ELARINO: Y ¿dónde habrá tal mujer?
 . . .
 porque de ese proceder
 se suele el gran monstruo hacer,
 como el que Tebas tenía.⁵¹¹

Each of the famous women in Tibaldo’s catalogue, whose life stories were well known in the early modern period,⁵¹² epitomises a single quality or virtue. That a woman may possess one or another of these virtues is plausible. However, that they all be united within the same individual, as Enrico wishes, is, as Elarino suggests, not only very unlikely but would also result in some kind of monster or sphinx (“el gran monstruo . . . / como el que Tebas tenía”). Enrico’s search for such a woman therefore seems as much impossible as it is foolish,

508 Ibid., vv. 191–92.

509 Ibid., vv. 197–98.

510 Ibid., v. 213.

511 Ibid., vv. 215–32.

512 Several late medieval works, which collected lives in praise of women, were still read and translated, and were widely influential in the early modern period: for example, Boccaccio’s *De claris mulieribus* (1361–2, printed in 1374), Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* (1386–88), the fourth book of Metge’s *Lo somni* (1399), Christine de Pisan’s *Livre de la cité des dames* (1404–5), Alvaro de Luna’s *Libro de las claras y virtuosas mugeres* (1446), etc.

and it may vainly keep him away from court for a long time (“Yo asiguro que no vuelve / a la ciudad en un mes”).⁵¹³

To complete this picture of the Conde as a man whose masculinity, capacity for discernment, and thereby honour are endangered by his paranoid fear of choosing a wife, Lope enriches the Griselda myth with yet another new sequence: three cases involving four prisoners are presented to Enrico for him to judge, all of which concern wedlock. As Marie-Françoise Déodat-Kessedjan and Emmanuelle Garnier observe, “Cette séquence . . . fonctionne comme contrepoint comique aux craintes du comte par rapport au mariage”. However, these three cases represent much more than simple “aléas du mariage”.⁵¹⁴ They seem to all come from legendary or folkloric material, and more importantly, they illustrate the worst that could happen in courtship or marriage.

Fabia is the first prisoner to be heard. Rumour has it that she killed her husband in order to marry her servant, whom she wedded the day after her husband’s death. This story can be associated with that of Clodia Metelli, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer’s wife. She entertained adulterous relationships with many men, most likely including the poet Catullus, and was suspected to have arranged the poisoning of her husband. Her life story was received in the early modern period through the rediscovery and translation of Cicero’s works and several of Catullus’s love poems, which are believed to trace back to his affair with Clodia. Sometime between 1588 and 1595, Lope wrote the play *Los embustes de Fabia* (printed in 1647) about this woman, but interestingly, he changed the names of the protagonists. Clodia is renamed Fabia, who is now married to Catulo. Her lovers are Vitelio and Lelio, Belariso and Emperor Nerón. Fabia asks Lelio to murder her husband, but Catulo discovers the plot and averts it. However, he eventually commits suicide on seeing how the extent of his wife’s adultery is past remedy and that not even the emperor respects his honour. Even though in *El ejemplo*, Fabia’s husband is called Eraclio, and her servant is Trebacio, the fact that Lope kept the woman’s name and gave Latin names to the other protagonists clearly indicates that he must have had *Los embustes de Fabia* in mind as he composed this scene. Given the relative proximity in time between the two plays, it is plausible that at least some members of the audience could have noticed the parallel between Fabia’s case in *El ejemplo* and the main female character of *Los embustes de Fabia*.

⁵¹³ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 233–34.

⁵¹⁴ Déodat-Kessedjan, “Lope de Vega. *L’exemple pour les femmes mariées et l’épreuve de la patience*, 1601 (?),” p. 131.

Comically, what troubles the Conde most in Fabia's affair is how quickly she could choose a new husband and marry him, whereas Enrico has not been able to take a wife, despite contemplating the idea for years. His questions, during the hearing, underline his astonishment about how little time Fabia needed to make a decision: "¿En una noche pensaste un casamiento?"; "¿En una hora una mujer / decreta y busca marido?"; "¿cómo yo no me atrevo / y en tantos años no pruebo, / que tú no puedes errar?"⁵¹⁵ Fabia thus stands as a feminine counterpart to Enrico, ridiculing his incapacity to make a spousal decision: "¿qué ciencia es menester [para casarse]?"⁵¹⁶ she asks. Since the only way out of matrimony that also allows remarriage is death of the other spouse, as Enrico observes, she found a hasty solution to her anxieties over an unhappy married life and the indissolubility of wedlock: murder. Yet in the absence of proof, he sets Fabia free.

The second case is that of Flora and Arnesto. According to Flora, Arnesto promised in front of witnesses that he would marry her, so she agreed to have sexual intercourse with him. However, he now refuses to marry her because he claims that she is lying—he says that he never vowed to marry her and that the witnesses are unreliable.

In the early modern period, while the Tridentine decrees insisted upon the importance of freedom of consent in the exchange of vows for a marriage to be valid, the publication of banns was also required three weeks before the actual ceremony, which a priest had to celebrate publically at the church doors. This public enactment of marriage blessed by a churchman was intended precisely to avoid such clandestine unions like that of Flora and Arnesto. In their case, it is difficult to determine whether the woman is the victim of an *estupro* (deflowered through violence or after having been seduced by marriage promises), in which the young man only feigned his vows to satisfy his sexual appetite, or whether the young lady is falsely claiming that her beloved promised to marry her in order to force him into marriage. Despite the laws of the Council of Trent, freely exchanged vows, even in absence of a priest, were still deemed essential. Trials often favoured *estupro* victims, who either then received financial compensation for the violation of their honour or earned the right to legalise the clandestine union by having it sanctified by a priest in a church ceremony.⁵¹⁷ However, at the time in which the play is set, at the end of the

⁵¹⁵ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 294, 301–2, 304–6, my emphasis.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 303.

⁵¹⁷ See Renato Barahona, *Sex Crimes, Honour, and the Law in Early Modern Spain: Vizcaya, 1528–1735* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Jesús María Usunáriz, "'Volved ya las riendas, porque no os perdáis': la transformación de los comportamientos morales en la España

twelfth century, a betrothal or *desponsatio* could be made either *per verba de praesenti* or *per verba de futuro*. If it was performed *per verba de praesenti*, nothing else was required, not even a witness. If it was enacted *per verba de futuro*, then some condition needed to be fulfilled (e.g. parental consent), or the marriage had to be consummated to become indissoluble.⁵¹⁸ Such betrothals were considered lawful marriages, called *matrimonium in facie dei*, so long as both parties freely agreed to their union.⁵¹⁹

In the case of Flora and Arnesto, it is impossible to determine who was deceived by whom, because nothing allows for understanding who is lying as the witnesses are never deposed. Therefore, either Flora is the victim of an *estupro* or Arnesto never consented to marriage, in which case, both are guilty of fornication. This lack of resolution concerning the guilty party may stem from the fact that Lope seems to have had another of his plays in mind, one based on this very issue. Apart from reproducing a classical, though ambiguous, case of “seduction by promise of marriage”,⁵²⁰ which were frequent as much in reality as in literature at the time, the litigation between Flora and Arnesto might be related to the Spanish myth of la Cava—also known as Florinda, a literary name she acquired in the late-sixteenth-century thanks to Miguel de Luna and his *La verdadera historia del rey Don Rodrigo* (1589).⁵²¹ The myth narrates the *estupro* of Florinda, daughter of the Conde Don Julián, by Rodrigo, the king of the Goths. Don Julián avenges his daughter’s honour by killing Rodrigo, which supposedly leads to losing the Guadalete battle and the subsequent invasion of Spain by

del XVI,” in *El Mundo social y cultural de La Celestina. Actas del Congreso Internacional, Universidad de Navarra, junio, 2001*, ed. Ignacio Arellano and Jesús María Usunáriz (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2003).

518 In the twelfth century, the Bologna school, led by Gratian, decreed that consummation was indispensable to the validity of a marital union, in addition to the spouses’ consent. Whereas for the Paris school, whose main thinker was Pierre Lombard, the exchange of vows *per verba de praesenti* only was sufficient. Toward the end of the twelfth century, Pope Alexander III ended the debate and adopted Lombard’s doctrine, see *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, “Mariage,” ed. Alfred Vacant, Joseph-Eugène Mangenot, and Emile Amann (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1926), cc. 2149–52; Barnett Jerome Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), pp. 16–17.

519 Jaime Contreras, *El Santo Oficio de la Inquisición de Galicia* (Madrid: Akal, 1982), p. 644.

520 See Abigail Dyer, “Seduction by Promise of Marriage: Law, Sex, and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 (2003).

521 Helena Establier Pérez, “Florinda perdió su flor’. La leyenda de La Cava, el teatro neoclásico español y la tragedia de María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera,” *Boletín de la Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo* 85 (2009), <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/florinda-perdio-su-flor-la-leyenda-de-la-cava-el-teatro-neoclasico-espanol-y-la-tragedia-de-maria-rosa-galvez-de-cabrera/html/>.

the Muslims. Apart from the closeness of the names of the female protagonists (Flora/Florinda), Lope was the first of the sixteenth-century rewriters of the myth to present the *estupro* of Florinda in *El último godo* (1599–1603) as highly ambiguous. Florinda claims to have been violated, but Rodrigo denies having used any recourse to violence to seduce her.⁵²² In the absence of evidence regarding the composition dates of *El último godo* and that of *El ejemplo*, which was written first can only remain a matter of speculation. Either Lope had his own Florinda play in mind while devising this scene or writing this scene gave him the idea for the initial situation of *El último godo*.

Regardless of which play came first, just as Florinda is condemned and considered guilty by her father, Enrico blames Flora more than Arnesto in *El ejemplo*. In addition, the Conde believes the young man when he casts doubts on the witnesses' legitimacy:

ARNESTO: ¿Qué testigos? Que es probanza
 hecha entre deudos y amigos.
ENRICO: De ti tengo confianza.⁵²³

Overwhelmed by his marriage anxieties, the Conde identifies with the young man who is forced into wedlock by Flora, just as Enrico is pressured by his subjects to find a wife:

... Di, Flora, ¿tan fácil cosa
es el casar que aunque a gusto [i.e. aunque justamente]⁵²⁴
se tiene por rigurosa,
que de un hombre, a su disgusto,
mueres por llamarte esposa?
Loco está el mundo. ¿Qué es esto?
Lo que temo, voluntario,
te piden por fuerza, Arnesto.⁵²⁵

Then, as Enrico accuses Arnesto of not keeping his alleged promise, the young man appeals to the Conde's desires for freedom and to his marriage anxieties, arguing that although he committed an offense in forcing himself on her body,

522 Ibid.

523 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 349–51.

524 Déodat-Kessedjian and Garnier emend the verse into “aunque a gusto”, which both in the 1615 and 1616 printed versions reads “aunque gusto”. I believe, however, that “gusto” is here another spelling for “justo”, either to obtain a richer rime with “disgusto” or as a printer's mistake. “Justo” could be used instead of “justamente” to fit the verse, and this makes perfect sense in this context.

525 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 354–61.

she is committing a greater offense in forcing his soul into an unwanted marriage. Enrico is influenced by his projection of his own fears onto Arnesto's case, but at the same time, he fights against these anxieties to render justice impartially, which would require either the punishment of both for fornication or that the young man keep his marriage betrothal to rectify Flora's dishonour:

ENRICO: ¡Qué bien habla en mi temor!
La vela, esperanza, calma,
que navegas en mar de honor.⁵²⁶

Enrico finally frees Arnesto and gives Flora a thousand ducats to use as a dowry, treating their case in a similar fashion to early modern Spanish trials for *estupro*, in which offenders were more often sentenced to provide financial compensation for honour violation than marry their victims publically in a church ceremony.⁵²⁷ However, the play's setting in the twelfth century would have required that not only, in a case of *estupro*, does the Conde recognise the validity of Flora and Arnesto's marriage but also that Enrico forces Arnesto to behave as Flora's husband and possibly punishes him for trying to run away. Justice is therefore not respected because Enrico's grotesque fears affect his capacity as a judge and make him render immoral sentences.

Last but not least, Evandro is introduced. His future eighth wife accuses him of having poisoned the first seven. Amazingly and comically, the Conde does not care if this man, or rather bluebeard-like monster, may have killed his seven wives. All Enrico can think of, and marvel at, are Evandro's seven marriages. Not only does the Conde question whether he is dreaming or is awake, but he repeats the word "siete" 10 times at various points in a long monologue in which he compares Evandro to mythical giants such as Atlas, Tityos, or Polyphemus, thereby endowing him with monstrous attributes.⁵²⁸ This catalogue of monsters echoes thematically the previous catalogue of terrifying beasts that Enrico elaborates at the beginning of the play when he describes his fear of getting married. This indicates that Evandro's seven marriages, more so than the previous two cases, bring the Conde face-to-face with his anxieties, making him completely lose his mind. Enrico frees Evandro, brushing aside that he may be a serial killer, and joking that he will ask a painter to draw his portrait as a

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, vv. 381–83.

⁵²⁷ Barahona, *Sex Crimes, Honour, and the Law in Early Modern Spain: Vizcaya, 1528–1735*, pp. 119–56.

⁵²⁸ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 424–483.

monster and place it in the hall (“Mando que luego un pintor / por monstruo te me retrate / y ponga en el corredor”).⁵²⁹

At least two tales about recidivist uxoricide appear to have circulated in sixteenth-century Europe. In France, the Celtic myth of Cunomorus or Conomor, a count of Brittany who murdered his three first wives as soon as they were pregnant because he believed his future son would kill him, appeared in saints' lives, such as those of Saint Trepheine and Saint Gildas. This myth is considered to be at the origin of the French oral folktale that inspired Charles Perrault's tale, *La Barbe bleue*. There is, however, no clear evidence that this folktale, or the Conomor myth, were also part of the sixteenth-century Spanish oral tradition. The other story that may have inspired Lope is the framing tale of the *Arabian Nights*, whose influence as an individual story on late medieval and early modern literature is attested in Italy and Spain. In this tale, the Persian King Shahryār came upon his wife cheating on him and killed her as a result. Following this, he marries a new virgin each night and beheads her the next morning until he meets Sheherazade. It is true that, as Samuel Armistead and James Munroe remark, “[n]o Hispano-Arabic version or Hispano-Romance translation of the [*Thousand and One Night*] or of any extensive portion of it has come down to us, to show that the work as whole might have circulated in medieval Spain”.⁵³⁰ Nonetheless, these critics also noted that “[i]n some form or another. . . the outer frame story of the *1001N* was also known in the West”⁵³¹ in the late medieval and early modern period. Echoes of the tale can be found not only in Giovanni Sercambi's novella CXVIII but also in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516, *canto* 28.4–74) and in Joanot Matorell and Martí Joan de Galba's *Tirant lo Blanch* (1460–1490). However, none of these echoes presents any kind of uxoricide but merely the husband catching sight of his spouse's adultery. This does not mean that the whole Shahryār's story, including the killing of his new wives the morning after the wedding night, was not circulating. In addition, aside from these possible legendary sources, it should be acknowledged that Lope may have taken his inspiration from the historical figure of the English King Henry VIII, who (in)famously beheaded two of his six wives.

On the one hand, the three cases Enrico has to judge show how the Griselda myth could not only engage with *de nuptiis* controversy but also invite associations with other mythic material and stories related to marriage. On the other hand, within the specific context of this play, the stories of Fabia, Flora, Arnesto,

⁵²⁹ Ibid., vv. 469–71.

⁵³⁰ Samuel G. Armistead and James T. Munroe, “Celestina's Muslim Sisters,” *Celestinesca* 13, no. 2 (1989): 4.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

and Evandro underline the fact that Enrico's own fears are driving him mad and preventing him from sanely delivering justice. The jail from which these four people have been confined in functions as a metaphor for the Conde's view of matrimony: a husband or wife who marries the wrong person permanently lives in a mental prison because of marriage's indissolubility. Two of these cases also literally imply that the only escape from marriage is to commit murder, which will lead one into a real jail. However, by setting the four prisoners free, Enrico grants them what he could never allow himself, namely an exit that puts an end to marriage without destroying one's honour. Granting grace to all these people indicates that Enrico's fears have diminished his capacities as a man and as a ruler, thereby threatening the good governance of his land. Because he is a Conde, the influence of his marital anxieties over his judgment has greater consequences than it would for other individuals. Indeed, the entire community and social order are troubled and put at risk by his liberation of potential murderers. As a consequence, these three cases convey the long-established and enduring idea that celibacy is not an acceptable way of life for aristocrats, because it generates disorder, or in other words, it threatens the *bonum communitatis* that rulers must preserve and protect. Finally, the prisoners, especially Evandro, further contribute to highlighting how unusual it is that Enrico takes such a long time to find a wife. The Conde's reading of Evandro's seven marriages as a monstrosity reflects, in an inverted way, the grotesqueness of Enrico's anxieties. These are ridiculed one last time by the fact that the Conde eventually decides rather quickly to marry Laurencia, even more so than Fabia's decision to remarry. After only a short conversation with Laurencia during their first meeting, the Conde decides to take her as his wife. Consequently, the first act or *Jornada* of the play, ending with Enrico and Laurencia's marriage, functions as an encouragement to marriage, downplaying and ridiculing any irrational fears about marrying the wrong woman.

The last early modern play to address the *de nuptiis* controversy while adapting the Patient Griselda myth is Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, and William Haughton's *The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grissill* (written in 1599 and printed in 1603), which was commissioned by Philip Henslowe to be performed by the Admiral's Men. In this version, the polyphonic potential of the genre is fully exploited, since the myth's narrative is contrasted with two subplots offering diverging views on marriage, particularly as to whether to embrace the married state or not at different stages in one's life and according to gender as well. The mytheme of the young hunter shunning marriage is altered and exploited to engage with the *de nuptiis* tradition in a broader manner than in any other version.

Whereas Gwalter, the marquis, enters the first scene as a young careless hunter, disdaining his "neighbour-Princes, who in loue / Offer their Daughters,

Sisters and Allies, / In marriage to your hand”,⁵³² this is but pretence. Even if Gwalter briefly protests that his brother and his courtiers wish to force his “free thoughts into the yoake of loue / To grone vnder the loade of marriage”, which he calls a “burthen”,⁵³³ he has in fact already made up his mind to marry Grissill: he had seen her before and courted her for a while (as we learn in Act I scene 2). The character in the play who actually shuns marriage is Gwalter’s sister Julia. This new character, to whom a whole subplot is devoted, seems, on the one hand, to be a parodic characterisation of Queen Elizabeth I. On the other hand, she gives voice to those early modern English people who did not want to get married in spite of protestant propaganda greatly encouraging marriage as a state designed by God for everyone.

From her very first appearance in Act II scene 1, Julia rejects wedlock on the grounds that she deems it “a kinde of hell”⁵³⁴ and compares it to war: “You may well call that a combat, for indeed marriage is / nothing else, but a battaile of loue, a friendly fighting, a kinde of / fauourable terrible warre”.⁵³⁵ Julia also claims, “I deale by marriage as some *Indians* doe the Sunne, adore it, / and reuerence it, but *dare not* stare on it, for *feare* I be starke / blinde”.⁵³⁶ These metaphors underline her anxiety, but she has so far no reason to fear anything. Julia has never entered wedlock, and she has not yet witnessed what married life is for the other couples of the play, Gwalter and Grissill, for whom marriage is a succession of trials. However, Sir Owen and Lady Gwenthyan, the Welsh characters of the other additional subplot, live their marital engagement indeed as a kind of “fauourable terrible war”. Julia prefers to remain unmarried because, apparently following Catholic doctrine, she values virginity over marriage: “sweet viginitie is that inuisible God-head that turns vs / into Angells, that makes vs saints on earth and starres in heauen: / here Virgins seeme goodly, but there glorious”.⁵³⁷

In the Middle Ages and early modern period, Roman Catholic discourse justifies virginity by referring to the Scriptures and the work of the Church Fathers (Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine). Without entering into doctrinal details, it suffices here to remember that Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians (7: 32–34) was often quoted and glossed to establish virginity as a holier state than marriage because it states that “unmarried” people care for spiritual matters,

532 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 1.1.22–25.

533 *Ibid.*, 1.1.61–63.

534 *Ibid.*, 2.1.259.

535 *Ibid.*, 2.1.273–75.

536 *Ibid.*, 2.1.276–78, my emphasis, except for “Indians”.

537 *Ibid.*, 2.1.263–65.

whereas those who are married care for their spouse (i.e. worldly matters). In addition, the Church Fathers also argued that since Jesus, and indeed his mother Mary, was a virgin, it must be, out of necessity, preferable to marriage. Following the Gospel of Luke (20: 36), both Jerome and Ambrose further claimed that virgins would be turned into angels once they reached heaven.⁵³⁸

Despite the fact that celibacy came to be rejected by Luther and Calvin, as Theodora Jankowski remarks,

The official Protestantization of England did not mean that all Roman Catholic influences were immediately purged from the country. . . the Reformation did not abruptly eliminate Catholicism or its discourses. . . England remained a country that can only be defined as simultaneously Catholic and Protestant, not strictly one or the other.⁵³⁹

Indeed, Jankowski further shows the persistence of the Catholic concept of virginity well into the seventeenth century by quoting the 1621 English translation of Leonard Lessius and Fulvius Androtius's *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons*, which conceives of chastity as "an imitation of Angelicall life . . . it is as spirituall Marriage, in which Christ is the spouse . . . it maketh [the mind] free, and at liberty to apply it selfe unto God, and to dwell as it were mentally and spiritually with the Blessed, in community of heavenly things".⁵⁴⁰

Julia's arguments clearly derive from such Catholic discourses. While this might stem from a desire on the authors' part to please those in the audience who still practiced Catholicism—or more generally to appeal to those who were afraid, reluctant or unwilling to get married—Julia also brings England's Queen Elizabeth I to mind in various ways. Julia is an Italian lady and sister to the marquis but not an English queen, however, so she is removed from Elizabeth by her nationality and her political position, although Julia is of similar rank and gender. Moreover, her Catholic arguments, placing virginity above the married status, can be read as a rhetorical gesture comparable to Elizabeth's self-fashioning as a Virgin Queen. Elizabeth I used the cult of the Virgin Mary, appropriating Marian poetics and pictorial representations, and combined these with her

538 Ambrose, *Saint Ambrose: Letters*, trans. Mary Melchior Beyenka (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), p. 171; Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance. Queer Virginity in Early Modern Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 55.

539 Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, p. 107. For more on the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism in England and the persistence of Catholic practices and discourses in the early modern period, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

540 Leonard Lessius and Fulvius Androtius, *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons* (Saint-Omer: English College Press, 1621), sigs. H1v-H2r. Quoted in Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, p. 108.

symbolic marriage to her nation as a device that allowed her “to receive the adulation of her subjects as the universal object of a Petrarchan religion of love, one that pervaded ballads, pageants, and dramatic entertainments” (as John King summarises).⁵⁴¹ Similarly, Julia employs her plea for virginity as a means to disdain her suitors, while encouraging them to follow her “religion of love”: “In heauen is no wooing yet all there are louely: in heauen are no wedding yet all are louers”.⁵⁴² The marquis’s sister enjoys the power she has over her suitors and treats them like pets. “Oh for a Drum to summon all my louers, my / suiters, my seruants together”,⁵⁴³ she wishes in Act IV scene 3, to which they answer in echoing terms:

Far. I appeare sweet mistresse without summons.

Ono. So does *Onophrio*.

Vrc. So does *Vrcenze*.⁵⁴⁴

Julia is no queen; and her ridiculous power over no less ridiculous followers clearly parodies Elizabeth I and her handling of her court and her worshippers.

In addition, the virginity of the marquis’s sister is presented as anomalous and monstrous-like. In Act II scene 2, trying to make sense of Julia’s rejection of love and marriage, Farneze says, “Then I perceive you meane to leade apes in hell”.⁵⁴⁵ As Gwendolyn Needham comments, this English expression most likely “originated in Protestant feeling against celibacy” and “[b]y its prediction of punishment in hell, the proverb expresses not mere derogation, but condemnation of celibacy as a positive evil”.⁵⁴⁶ “In proclaiming the doom of the unmarried”, Needham further contends, in its secular meaning “the proverb implicitly argues for the perpetuation of the race, recognises the social and economic necessity of woman’s prompt marriage, and criticises wayward female nature”.⁵⁴⁷ The proverb casts Julia either as a barren woman followed by apes that stand as substitute children or as a monstrous mother who gave birth to apes in hell. As Needham reminds:

⁵⁴¹ John N. King, “Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1990): 30.

⁵⁴² Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 2.1.265–679.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.3.176–77.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.3.179–81.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.2.257.

⁵⁴⁶ Gwendolyn B. Needham, “New Light on Maids ‘Leading Apes in Hell’,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 75, no. 296 (1962): 106–07.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

As a subman, the ape was believed capable of intercourse with woman and ever ready to ravish her. A symbol of sin and sexuality, the ape was often placed in contrast with the unicorn, the symbol of chastity and of Christ. As a fool, the ape's imitative nature permitted his representing all kinds of follies, as well as vices—a valuable instrument for humor and satire.⁵⁴⁸

Furthermore, Julia's suitors could also be likened to apes, for they can barely be differentiated from one another and some of their cues (such as those previously cited) echo or mimic each other. Thus, they might become the apes Julia will lead into hell.

The association of celibacy with monstrosity was not uncommon in the early modern period. If not monstrous, virginity was at least considered unnatural or anomalous by Protestant thinkers. Luther, in his "Sermon at Merseberg" (1545), states, "Who commanded you to vow and swear something which is contrary to God and his ordinance, namely, to swear that you are neither a man or a woman, when it is certain that you are either a man or a woman, created by God".⁵⁴⁹ Thomas Becon, in his preface to the 1541 edition of the English translation of Heinrich Bullinger's *Der christliche Ehestand*, writes, "Lette other prayse suche [i.e. those who vow to remain virgins] as maye iustly seme to be monstures of nature for theyr sterillite and barrennes".⁵⁵⁰ Moreover, as Theodora Jankowski argues, Elizabeth I was indeed an "anomalous" figure as a "Virgin Queen and eternally desired love object",⁵⁵¹ a definition that perfectly suits Julia (except for the title).

Consequently, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton seem to have employed the marquis's sister, on the one hand, to parody Elizabeth's cult of virginity and thereby exorcise social anxiety concerning her succession by turning this fear into laughter over the cause of the situation, i.e. the Queen's refusal to marry and have children. On the other hand, they used it more generally to satirise those who shun love and fear marriage.

However, as the play unfolds, yet another interpretation emerges. Julia's fears gradually appear more grounded and comprehensible, and so she becomes the voice of those men and women oppressed by marital life. Julia occupies, throughout the play, the position of witness and judge, contemplating

548 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

549 Quoted in Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, p. 11.

550 Heinrich Bullinger, *The golden boke of christen matrimonye* (London: John Mayler, 1541), sig. A3r. This book went into nine editions until 1575, see Needham, "New Light on Maids," p. 109. For an extended analysis of this passage, see Eric Joseph Carlson, "Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 1 (1992): 9.

551 Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, p. 13.

and drawing moral conclusions about the marquis's cruel testing of Grissill and the comical fight between Gwenthyan and Sir Owen over the right to rule over their marriage. Gwenthyan is a shrew, while Sir Owen is a braggart knight, so the display of their married life produces much humorously staged tension. Julia's particular position, aside from the action, transforms her into an audience member within the play, a function she shares with her suitors. Julia and her followers even acknowledge their status as spectators: Urcenze predicts that the union between Gwenthyan and Sir Owen will be a conflict, calling it a "welch tragedie".⁵⁵² Julia labels as "enterlude"⁵⁵³ the episode in which Gwenthyan dresses in rags and serves some beggars the banquet prepared for the marquis and his court. The audience is thereby invited to identify with Julia, and some members of the audience may have shared her fear and rejection of marriage and love, a fear reinforced by her witnessing the other characters' marital behaviour throughout the play:

... would you wish me to loue? when loue is so full of hate?
 ... my Lord
 and brother insults our *Grissill*, that makes me glad, *Gwenthyan*
 curbs *Sir Owen*, that makes you glad, *Sir Owen* is maistred by his
 Mistris, that makes you mad, poore *Grissil* is martred by her Lord,
 that makes you merrie, for I alwaies wish that a woman may neuer
 meete better bargaines, when sheele trust her sweet libertie into
 the hands of a man:
 ...
 Sweet seruant speake not in this language of loue, *Gwenthyan*
 peeuishnes and *Grissils* patience, make me heere to defie that Ape
Cupid. . .⁵⁵⁴

Julia condemns both the mistreatments that Gwalter and Gwenthyan inflict on their respective spouses, as well as Grissill and Sir Owen's passivity. Nonetheless, the attitudes of Gwenthyan and Grissill seem to be what troubles Julia the most, ultimately making her reject love. Indeed, Julia associates love with lechery by comparing it to a monkey ("defie that Ape *Cupid*").⁵⁵⁵ Julia suggests that yielding to lust ("that Ape *Cupid*") and giving away one's "sweet libertie" leads

552 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 2.1.230.

553 *Ibid.*, 4.3.173.

554 *Ibid.*, 4.3.205–18.

555 Apes had been commonly associated with inordinate sexual appetite since the Middle Ages. For more on the symbolism of monkey and apes, see Horst Woldemar Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1952); Needham, "New Light on Maids," p. 112; Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Animal Symbolism in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: The Imagery of Sex Nausea," *Comparative Drama* 17, no. 4 (1983): 374.

one either to become a shrew like Gwenthyan or the victim of marital verbal and psychological violence like Grissill. Julia develops these ideas in the comedy's tripartite epilogue. Interrupting her brother and preventing him from reciting the conclusion of the play and celebrating Grissill's patience, she says:

Nay brother your pardon awhile: besides our selues there are a number heere, that haue beheld *Grissills* patience, your owne tryals, and Sir *Owens* sufferance, *Gwenthians* frowardnes, these Gentlemen louertine, and my selfe a hater of loue: amongst this Company I trust there are some mayden batchelers, and virgin maydens, those that liue in that freedome and loue it, those that know the war of marriage and hate it, set their hands to my bill, which is rather to dye a mayde and leade Apes in hell, then to liue a wife and be continually in hell.⁵⁵⁶

Here, Julia tries to use the proverb “to lead apes in hell” to serve her own interest, like Beatrice in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. As Needham remarks:

[Beatrice] declares that the predicted punishment applies no more to lively maids than to gay bachelors. Delivering her apes to the devil at the gate, she will ‘away to St. Peter for the heavens: he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long’ (Act II, Sc. i [ll. 46–9]).⁵⁵⁷

Julia gestures towards a similar attitude and employs the proverb as a self-asserting means to express her determination to remain a virgin and oppose those who favour marriage: she prefers “to dye a mayde and leade Apes in hell, then to liue a wife and be continually in hell”. On the one hand, the phrase may be intended to echo the previously quoted comparison of Cupid to an ape and, thereby, to confirm Julia's mastery over love and lust, which she “leade. . . in hell”, condemning them to everlasting punishment while apparently preserving herself from their influence by being their leader. On the other hand, the expression helps Julia to stress through an epistrophe (“in hell”) that, in her opinion, marriage for women is an extremely painful and inescapable experience. “Society tolerated a high level of violence against wives as a normal feature of [early modern] society”,⁵⁵⁸ as Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford explain. Moreover, a wife's belongings, both financial and material, became her husband's possessions. It was therefore harder for women not only to find

⁵⁵⁶ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 5.2.275–83.

⁵⁵⁷ Needham, “New Light on Maids,” p. 112.

⁵⁵⁸ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), p. 140.

the means to start legal action against their husbands but also to obtain a separation *a mensa et thoro*. Even if neither the shrewish Gwenthyan nor the cruelly mistreated Grissill wish to be separated from their spouse, Julia expresses her impression that, regardless, there is no way out of marriage, and that wedlock is therefore a hell-like torment on earth.

However, the proverb can also mean that Julia will be punished with eternal life in hell. While she acts as the voice of men and women oppressed by marriage, and of wives in particular, the dramatists undermine her plea for freedom, probably to avoid accusation of sedition or of being Papists.⁵⁵⁹ Such a plea ran contrary to Protestantism, which condemned all forms of celibacy. Therefore, Julia does not speak the last words. Gwenthyan silences her and accuses her of “abus[ing] yong mens and damsels” and scaring them away from “good sportes and honorables states”.⁵⁶⁰ The conclusion of the play falls to Sir Owen, who gets tangled up in his plea for patience in marriage:

... if sir *Owen* was
not patient, her *Latie* had not beene pridled, if *Grissill* had not
beene patient her cozen *Marquesse* had not been pridled: well now
if you loue sir *Owens* *Latie*, I hobe you loue Sir *Owen* too, or is grow
mighty angry, Sir *Owen* loue you as God vdge mee out a cry, a
terrible teale, doe you heare now, they pray awl that haue crabbed
husbands and cannot mend them, as *Grissills* had, and awl that
haue fixen wiues, and yet is tame her well enough as sir *Owen*
does, and awl that haue scoldes as sir *Owen* does, and awl that loue
fair *Laties* as sir *Owen* does, to sed her two hands to his pill: and so
God saue you all. *Man gras wortha whee, Man gras wortha wee.*
[i.e. My grace is to you] God night Cozens awl.⁵⁶¹

Sir Owen’s comic confusion can be interpreted as an attempt to remind the audience that marital problems should be laughed at rather than generating anxieties. However, Julia’s voice may have resonated past Sir Owen’s last words and made a favourable impression in the audience. Indeed, some spectators may have preferred to remain bachelors and virgins, possibly because they were Catholic or as a life choice devoid of any religious motivation, simply because they wished to be free from the social obligation for marriage and its

559 For more on Elizabethan censorship of Catholic and “papistical books” see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), esp. ch. 4, pp. 79–102.

560 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 5.2.285, 86.

561 *Ibid.*, 5.2.301–13.

consequences.⁵⁶² Given that no man—not even the marquis, her brother and her lord—forces Julia to enter wedlock or condemns her speeches, she embodies a greater threat to patriarchal values and social order than the play’s shrew, who wants to rule over her husband. Gaultier’s sister therefore had to be silenced (although by a woman, Gwenthyan) and sentenced to hell (although by herself) for the playwrights and the Admiral’s Men to safely stage and later have the play printed.

Whilst the character of Gualtieri in early modern drama—as embodied by Enrico, Phillip’s Gaultier, and their German contemporaries—could still serve as a “negative” and often risible role model for encouraging marriage, the whole story could also function as a polysemous entity as much encouraging marital unions, by presenting the vicissitudes of marital life as a fatality, as it does deter from married life, as the character of Julia makes explicit.

These plays were the last in the early modern era to expand on the mytheme of the young hunter shunning marriage. Subsequent plays adapting the Griselda myth do not stage it altogether, because classicism started to impose itself upon playwrights, and its demands in terms of time unity caused this mytheme to be left off-stage as part of the plays’ argument and action anterior to the plays’ first scene. As a consequence, the tradition of the *commendatio matrimonii* ceased to be exploited by adaptors of the myth.

1.5.3 Griselda and the *Querelle des femmes* 3: Debates about women’s nature

Many European realisations of the Griselda myth reproduced or participated in the *querelle des femme*’s debates based on the dichotomy that women are (evil) Eves or (virtuous) Marys. In these texts, Griselda often contrasts the established figure of “the shrew”, implied or present as a character, and serves mostly as a positive example of wifely obedience that helps maintain and legitimise the early modern patriarchal, misogynist gender hierarchy. More rarely, Griselda is seen as a negative example of excessive subordination.

⁵⁶² Although according to Cyrus Hoy, the scenes dedicated to Julia and her suitors are believed to have been written by Houghton, see “Patient Grissil: Introduction,” in *Introductions, Notes and Commentaries to texts in “The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker”*, ed. Cyrus Hoy (1980), p. 144. Her character might have been present in Dekker’s mind when he wrote *The Roaring Girl* (ca.1611) in collaboration with Thomas Middleton. This latter play also portrays a virgin, Moll Cutpurse (based on a historical figure), who does not marry at the end of the comedy, because as Lee Bliss remarks, “like Julia, she wishes to maintain her liberty”, see “Renaissance Griselda,” p. 338, n. 65.

Although Christine de Pisan was a central writer of the *querelle*, she stands out as an exception in the way she uses the myth. As already mentioned, Pisan does not use Griselda to promote the image of an obedient, patient wife but rather to prove that women are not by nature inconstant, as they were so often described. The *constantia*-topos was often associated with sexual instability with underlying accusation of adulterous behaviour.⁵⁶³ As Blamires argues, Pisan was particularly remarkable in the way she promoted constancy for profeminine purposes:

What Christine has done ... is to subsume the narrow traditional question of sexual steadfastness within a much larger category of rational stability. This can be seen as a significant initiative precisely because most attempts to debate sexual stability *per se*, however profeminine in intention, entailed inadvertently accepting the misogynists' implication, that a woman's virtue was above all sexually constituted. Although Christine accommodates her profeminine predecessors' repudiation of masculine sexual egotism in the *Cité* she transcends the associated problem by redefining 'frailty' so as to desexualize it, to the extent that it becomes primarily a weakness of *mind* epitomized at its worst by the most infamously deranged of history's tyrannical male rulers.⁵⁶⁴

Accordingly, Pisan uses Griselda's story as an example of female constancy of the mind rather than chastity. As Blamires remarks, Pisan "gives it pride of place as the first demonstration that women are *not* changeable as was often alleged: the crux of Christine's version is the *grant fermeté, force et constance* of Griselidis".⁵⁶⁵ Thus, Pisan's unique proto-feminist appropriation of the myth differs from most other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers, who mostly emphasise Griselda's submissiveness as an ideal to be preached to women.

Apart from Griselda's appearance in Pisan's *Livre de la cité des dames*, her association with the *querelle* does not mean that she is mentioned in pamphlets traditionally associated with it.⁵⁶⁶ It rather means that several rewritings of her story take issue with the *querelle* in a dialogic manner imitating the debates usually considered to be at the core of *querelle*.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, pp. 137–38.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165, n. 48.

⁵⁶⁶ For examples of pamphlets pertaining to the literary debates of the *querelle*, see Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's *Declamatio de nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* (1509), Thomas Elyot's *The Defence of Good Women* (1540) or Giuseppe Passi's *I Donneschi Difetti* (1599).

⁵⁶⁷ Julie Campbell even considers the *querelle* a *topoi* appropriated by writers of all early modern literary genres, see Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), p. 1.

It could be argued that in Boccaccio's novella *Griselda*, the *querelle* is already hinted at. As Dioneo concludes his narration by wishing that *Griselda* had cheated on Gualtieri, which might have won her a nice dress, Dioneo's carnivalesque revision of the story depicts an unchaste and vain *Griselda*, who values sex and clothes more than her husband. Thereby, the narrator's cynical comments offer a shrewish alter ego to the novella's heroine, which incites the audience to interpret *Griselda*'s behaviour as too extreme and almost inhuman. Dioneo's final remarks thus recall the manner in which the texts of the *querelle* responded to others.

The first English rewriting of the myth to engage with the *querelle* was Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*. Chaucer, like Boccaccio, opposes *Griselda* to a shrewish figure in an elaborate way within the narrative frame of his *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer does not invent an additional character to contrast with *Griselda* in the *Clerk's Tale*, but he uses one of his pilgrims (the narrators), the Wife of Bath, to engage in a dialogic manner with the Clerk and his story.

From the early twentieth century onwards, criticism has debated the nature of the so-called "marriage group", namely which tales should be included within such a group or in which order these were composed by Chaucer.⁵⁶⁸ Whether or not Chaucer intended his audience to identify a thematic relation between the Merchant's, the Franklin's, the Shipman's, the Nun's Priest's, the Man of Law's, and the Manciple's tales, as well as Chaucer's Tale of Melibee, there is no doubt that the Clerk's Tale and its prologue were meant to be associated and considered in combination with the Wife of Bath's Tale and its prologue.

The Envoy and its two introductory stanzas⁵⁶⁹ serve this purpose and link *Griselda* with *Alisoun*, the Wife of Bath. Regardless of who the Envoy's speaker is (Chaucer or the Clerk), the Envoy establishes an obvious dialogic relationship between the Wife of Bath's Tale and its prologue and the Clerk's Tale. This relationship already appears, but in a subtler manner, when the Clerk of "Oxenford" announces that he intends to narrate a supposedly positive story about a wife who kept her husband. As scholars have often highlighted, *Alisoun*'s last

568 See Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographic Manual* (New York: MacMillan, 1908), p. 256; Geroge Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," *Modern Philology* 9 (1912); William Witherle Lawrence, "The Marriage Group in the *Canterbury Tales*," *Modern Philology* 11 (1913); Samuel Moore, "The Date of Chaucer's Marriage Group," *Modern Language Notes* 26 (1911); Donal R. Howard, "The Conclusion of the Marriage Group: Chaucer and the Human Condition," *Modern Philology* 57 (1960); James L. Hodge, "The Marriage Group: Precarious Equilibrium," *English Studies* 46 (1965); Velma Bourgeois Richmond, "Pacience in Aver-sitee: Chaucer's Presentation of Marriage," *Viator* 10 (1979).

569 Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," ll. 1163–76.

husband, Jankin, is also a “clerk of Oxenford”.⁵⁷⁰ What is more, the Wife claims that “any clerk wol speke good of wyves, / But if it be of hooly seintes lyves” and that “wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage”.⁵⁷¹ Thus, it has been argued that the Clerk purposefully chooses to tell Griselda’s story in order to prove Alisoun wrong.

The question of sovereignty in marriage is central to the Clerk’s Tale, the Envoy, and the Wife of Bath’s prologue. Both the Wife’s prologue and the Envoy argue for wives’ leadership in marriage, whereas the Clerk’s Tale seems to argue that men should be the exclusive head of the household. However, these three texts are fraught with ambiguities. The Wife of Bath did not initially have command over her last husband at all, neither is it certain that she attained the mutuality and equal status she claims she enjoyed: “I was to hym as kynde / As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde, / And also trewe, and so was he to me”.⁵⁷² Alisoun’s hyperbolic formulation (“as any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde”), which is supposed to underline how “kynde” and “trewe” she is towards Jankin, sounds rather dubious given that it is unlikely that all wives in the known world of the Middle Ages were faithful and kind to their spouses, with none ever having an affair or verbally or physically abusing their husbands. The Wife of Bath knows this very well, given that Jankin himself taught her the stories of several ancient and contemporary women who were unfaithful and/or active participant in their spouses’ murder—stories like those of Clymnestra, Eriphilem and Livia, among others—which Alisoun repeats to her fellow pilgrims.⁵⁷³ For the hyperbole to be more convincing and less ambiguous, Alisoun should have mentioned virtuous biblical, Greek or Roman wives, like Penelope or Lucretia, which would have provided named examples, a time-frame, a precise location, and therefore added weight to her argument. However, as vague, timeless and nameless as her comparison is, it may as well hint at the fact that, like “any wyf” anywhere in the world, she is nice and chaste when she feels like it but not when she does not want to be.

As criticism has often noted concerning Walter’s extreme sovereignty, the Clerk underlines the cruelty and unnecessary nature of Walter’s behaviour towards Grisildis throughout the testing: “I seye that yvele it sit / To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede”; “sturduinesse”; “cruel purpos”.⁵⁷⁴ Walter’s attitude as

570 Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath Prologue and Tale,” in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), l. 527.

571 *Ibid.*, ll. 689–90, 710.

572 *Ibid.*, ll. 823–25.

573 *Ibid.*, ll. 715–71.

574 Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” ll. 460–61; 700; 734; 740.

a husband therefore qualifies as marital tyranny, just as Griselda's patience is considered by the Clerk as too extreme ("inportable")⁵⁷⁵ to be real or possible:

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye,
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.⁵⁷⁶

Even though the Envoy playfully rules in favour of the Wife of Bath, Chaucer does not seem to agree with Alisoun or the Clerk.

A different picture emerges if we consider the various tales that address the issue of sovereignty in marriage, namely the Merchant's Tale, the Tale of Melibee, and the Franklin's Tale, especially if we include them as part of a more general debate than the personal game that the Clerk and Alisoun seem to play. Just as the Wife of Bath's prologue illustrates how the younger partner, whether it be woman or man, in marriage is more likely to have the upper hand, so does the Merchant's Tale. On the other hand, the Tale of Melibee and, even more so, the Franklin's Tale discuss the respective responsibilities of husbands and wives. These works give wives a hierarchical place in the marital union, which is close to, if not equal to, that of the husband, almost erasing the usually admitted marital superiority of men. Chaucer seems to delineate an ideal marriage in which spouses should have more or less the same age, both parties bear responsibilities towards each other—maintaining each other's physical and moral integrity—and there is a certain balance of at least partially, shared sovereignty, thus leaving room for the wife in the decision-making process but maintaining the husband as head of the marriage and family.

Consequently, unlike his contemporaries, Chaucer engages with the debates on women's nature and role in marriage in *The Canterbury Tales* by using Grisildis as a negative example of an extreme submission that wives ought not to emulate. He is unique in taking this stance so early, and this would not be repeated until the end of the sixteenth century.

As already mentioned, in spite of the growing popularity of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale in the fifteenth century, which also circulated separately from the *Canterbury Tales*, only Lydgate and Metham allude to Griselda, and they do so

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., l. 1144.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., ll. 1163–69.

mostly underlining her exemplarity as a submissive and obedient wife.⁵⁷⁷ However, Lydgate's *Disguising at Hertford* is particularly interesting because it draws from the Wife of Bath's prologue and the Envoy in order to make a different point than Chaucer's about Griselda. This Christmas mumming about sovereignty in marriage presents six husbands and six wives complaining about each other before a king. The husbands open the complaint and when they are finished, the wives, when arguing, speak in parody by taking "the worthy Wyf of Bathe"⁵⁷⁸ as an *auctoritas* to emulate. Just as the Envoy begins with the claim that "Grisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience",⁵⁷⁹ the Hertford wives affirm:

For theyre vertu of parfyte pacyence
Partenethe not to wyves nowe-adays,
Sauf on theyre housbandes for to make assayes.
Ther pacyence was buried long agoo,
Gresyldes story recordethe plainly soo.⁵⁸⁰

Eventually, the king does not make any decision, thus allowing the wives to continue bullying and beating their husbands for a year:

Wherefore the Kyng wol al this nexste yeere
That wyves fraunchyse stoned hole and entier,
And that no man withstonde it, ne withdrawe,
Til man may fynde some processe oute by lawe,
That they shoulde by nature in theyre lyves
Have soverayntee on theyre prudent wyves,
A thing unkouthe, which was never founde.⁵⁸¹

The ending of this comic piece with its satirical intent has been variously interpreted. It has been read as a failure with respect to its genre, which requires a happy ending and restoration of the social order.⁵⁸² It has also been envisaged as an example of how the English nation could get out of control if the young King Henry VI does not maintain its social and religious order.⁵⁸³ Finally, this

⁵⁷⁷ See Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996), p. 234, n. 9.

⁵⁷⁸ John Lydgate, "Disguising at Hertford," in *Mummings and Entertainments*, ed. Claire Sponsler (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), l. 168.

⁵⁷⁹ Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," l. 1177.

⁵⁸⁰ Lydgate, "Disguising at Hertford," ll.172–76.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 239–45.

⁵⁸² See Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), esp. pp. 157–63.

⁵⁸³ See Heather Hill-Vásquez, "Chaucer's Wife of Bath, Hoccleve's Arguing Women, and Lydgate's Hertford Wives: Lay Interpretation and the Figure of the Spinning Woman in Late Medieval England," *Florilegium* 23, no. 2 (2006).

ending has been considered as “an attempt to establish the unruly woman as a historical problem rather than simply a figure of comedy, and to assert the importance of subjecting her to legal regulation”.⁵⁸⁴

While I agree with Nicole Nolan Sidhu that the gender politics of the *Mumming at Hertford* deserve further attention, I disagree with her affirmation that “the unruly woman is exclusively a private problem, best resolved by the husband himself and not amenable to any public regulation”.⁵⁸⁵ Although it is true that the civil rule of coverture implied that men were held responsible for their wives’ actions,⁵⁸⁶ Canon law stated that wives were subject to their husbands.⁵⁸⁷ Thus, a wife’s unruly behaviour could not remain a private matter because it disrupted the godly ordained social order in which the man is the head of the household. What is more, there were regulations and punishments for scolds—men or women—breaking the peace and quiet of life.⁵⁸⁸

Consequently, the king’s claim that there is no rule or law subjecting women to men is ironic. Lydgate’s mumming proceeds to a carnivalesque reversal of gender roles only to underline its absurdity and the need for men to control their wives. Within this context, Griselda appears the natural opposite of the scold embodied by the Wife of Bath and epitomises the ideal obedient wife, albeit one who belongs to a distant past. While the wives argue that Gresyldes and her kind are dead and buried in order to justify taking the lead in marriage and mistreating their husbands, the principle of turning the world order upside down, which guides the composition of this mumming, seems to let show a certain male nostalgia for a marital Golden Age when women were supposedly more like Griselda. Unlike Chaucer who encourages husbands to share at least partial sovereignty with their wives, Lydgate takes a more traditional stance and advocates for male exclusive headship in marriage by ridiculing wives’ unruly behaviour and setting Griselda as the ideal to emulate.

The idea that Griselda represents a mythical past ideal that men nostalgically mention is again evoked by Thomas Feylde in his *Controversy between a lover and a jay* (1527). This poem stages an author’s dream vision in which he overhears a conversation between a rejected lover and a jay about women and

584 Nicole Nolan Sidhu, “Henpecked Husbands, Unruly Wives, and Royal Authority in Lydgate’s *Mumming at Hertford*,” *The Chaucer Review* 42, no. 4 (2008): 432.

585 *Ibid.*, p. 437.

586 See Sarah Margaret Butler, *The Language of Abuse: Marital Violence in Later Medieval England* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 42–43.

587 See Gratian, *Decretum*, Causa 33, question V. XII–XVII.

588 See Butler, *The Language of Abuse*, pp. 226–57; Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England 1370–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), pp. 59–68.

love. Truthful to medieval beliefs and symbolism surrounding jays as slanderers, in order to assuage the lover's pain, the bird exaggeratedly denounces women's untrustworthiness, describing them as the root of almost all problems and responsible for many a man's death, as well as depicting love as a futility and a madness ("yet trewly it is but foly / To loue continually / A thyng that is transitory / And not perpetuall").⁵⁸⁹ The lover admits to knowing this already and uses Griselda to support his claim:

Therefore as I fynde
 I wyll shewe my mynde
 Ryght fewe of Gryseldes kynde
 Is now lefte on lyue.
 This worlde is altered
 Condycyons are chaunged
 As is dayly proued
 By trewe experyence
 Trust is now trechery
 And loue is but Lechery.
 All thynges decayeth dayly
 Without repentaunce
 Though I more speke
 My herte wyll breke.⁵⁹⁰

Like Lydgate, Feylde sets Griselda in a remote past associated mostly with men and women from Greco-Roman mythology, such as Creusa, Climnestra, Daphne, Hypolyte, or Diana,⁵⁹¹ as found in the poem's numerous catalogues. Reproducing Lydgate's nostalgia for a time when women were more obedient, faithful, and constant like Griselda but in a sad tone, the lover's complaint serves Feylde's aim of discouraging young people from following their love instinct by showing that only pain and sorrow will ensue, supporting his argument with a misogynist depiction of women's inconstancy.

In sixteenth-century England, however, Griselda did not remain a myth of an unrecoverable marital Golden Age only used to deplore contemporary women's unruly behaviour. She continued to set an example for ideal wifely conduct not only in texts quoting her name but also in retellings of her whole story while engaging at some point with the *querelle's* discourses.

The already mentioned *Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissill* by John Phillip not only presents Grissil as an example of Christian steadfastness—it also portrays

589 Thomas Feylde, *Here begynneth a lytel treatyse called the contraverse bytwene a louer and a jaye lately compyled* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1527), sig. B3r.

590 *Ibid.*, Clr.

591 *Ibid.*, see B4v.

her as the victim of a misogynist Vice figure reluctant to admit that she does not have the flaws he finds in most married women. Politic Persuasion voices the usual accusations against wives, claiming that they are aggressive (“most wives are so knappish and cuted now”), seeking sovereignty in marriage (“they will be known to bear rule”), monstrous (“some wives resemble the cockatrice indeed”), impossible to live with, extremely talkative and moody (“Either brawling, jangling, snapping, or snarring, / Their tongues shall not cease but always jarring”), or manipulative hypocrites capable of feigning tears to achieve their ends (“they will counterfeit a kind of hypocrisy, / And simper like a frumenty pot; the finger shall be in their eyes”).⁵⁹² However, the Vice’s remarks are immediately condemned within the play by Gautier’s courtiers, Reason and Fidence. While Reason replies to Politic Persuasion that he speaks “malicious” words, Fidence provides a counterexample: his own spouse, who knows how to speak and behave properly (“my wife leadeth an honest conversation”)⁵⁹³ and who he lets make decisions from time to time:

POLITIC: Yea, but sometimes you give her her own will.
 FIDENCE: Yea, and reason.⁵⁹⁴

Whereas Fidence’s answer may imply that he only does so to have peace, as Politic Persuasion contends (“Or else . . . your ears with brawlings she would fill”),⁵⁹⁵ the use of the word “reason” suggests that either he does it “with reason” or that he also “gives reason” to his wife. In any case, both readings convey the idea that contrary to the medieval misogynist belief about women’s lack of reason, women can be reasonable and offer good advice or make intelligent decisions on their own, so they are deserving of their husbands’ approval. Thus, Fidence not only condemns anti-feminine discourses but also advocates the fact that not all women are shrews and husbands should listen to their wives and let them participate in the decision-making processes of the household.

However, as the play’s development continues to prove Politic Persuasion wrong, the ideal wife who is delineated is not Fidence’s spouse but Grissil, who is withdrawn, speaks little, does not seek sovereignty, and, more importantly, does not have any say in the management of her household, let alone the government of Saluzzo. Indeed, even before Gautier marries Grissil, she is set in direct opposition to the shrewish behaviours that Politic Persuasions enumerates, as her future husband describes her as the perfect virtuous and submissive wife:

⁵⁹² Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissill,” ll. 397–98, 412, 418, 421–24.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, l. 432.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 433–34.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 435.

She will observe a modest mien, her virtues shall increase,
 All hateful hate in her shall end, she loveth perfect peace.
 She feareth God, she dreads his name, she leads a godly life,
 And daily seeks for to subdue contention and strife.
 She will, as duty binds, her spoused mate obey,
 From husband's hests at no time she, for any cause, will stray.⁵⁹⁶

Nothing in this description, nor in the rest of the play, indicates that Gautier (like Fidence) listens to his wife or thinks she can provide sound advice. On the contrary, Gautier listens to the poor advice of Politic Persuasion who, given his distrust of women, is appropriately used as the instigator of Grissil's ordeals. While this provides an explanation for the marquis's sudden and mysterious desire to test his wife, the Vice's motivations are not so much related to Grissil's gender as to her lower rank when compared to her husband. This induces Politic Persuasion to think that Grissil will not be able to remain virtuous in the long run, according to the belief that virtue comes with nobility. As the plot unfolds, Politic Persuasion is proven wrong, but the wifely ideal that is delineated is that of a traditionally patient and obedient wife whose voice and thoughts do not interfere with the absolute patriarchy the play enforces upon her. By the end of the play, Fidence's suggestion that wives may deserve a worthier place within the household hierarchy has faded from memory.

The plot as a whole more forcefully suggests that, in order to have more wives like Grissil, parents should teach obedience and fear of God from infancy. Grissil's virtues are, as the play implies, not innate but gradually acquired through her education. When she first appears onstage, she immediately functions as an exemplary character for children, especially girls: she spins to show her shunning the vice of idleness and sings a song addressed to "virgins", telling them to be obedient to their parents, respect them, speak properly, shun lust, keep their virginity, and obey their superiors. The didactical intent is underlined as each stanza ends with the epistrophe "all come learn of me".⁵⁹⁷ The fact that obedience is an aptitude acquired through teaching and not innate is made clear by the first two lines of the second stanza: "Let children to their parents give / Obedience due, as they are taught".⁵⁹⁸

The actual educational process is then staged between Grissil and the added character of her mother. When Grissil's mother dies of old age, her last speech to her daughter is full of admonitions regarding her behaviour towards

596 *Ibid.*, ll. 385–93.

597 *Ibid.*, ll. 216–61.

598 *Ibid.*, ll. 221–22.

her father and, more generally, teaching her how to behave and speak, intending to shape her into a virtuous young woman:

Love and obey him [i.e. your father], give him due veneration,
 ...
 Be not high-minded, let not pride infect thee,
 Lest God in his wrath with his scourge correct thee.
 Be not pickthank, seek not the fruit of dissention,
 Be rather a peacemaker to banish contention.
 Be slow to speak, let thy words be witty,
 For, for a damsel to have many words it is unfitty.
 Let love and obedience in thy heart be fully placed,
 Let contumelious disdain be utterly defaced.
 Grudge not in aught against thy father's will,
 But always ready his mind to fulfill.
 And show thyself of a godly behavior,
 That of God and man thou mayest merit the favour.⁵⁹⁹

Obedience again appears a key notion to be inculcated to children as a Christian act ordained by God and understood as a willing submission to the father's will, which should never be disputed. In order to indicate that Grissil's education turned her into an extremely virtuous woman, and, lastingly so, the topic is evoked one last time before Gautier and his wife leave the countryside. Janicle, Grissil's father, advises the marquis on how to educate his future children, correcting them with corporal punishment if necessary. Gautier agrees, but more importantly, his courtiers, Reason and Sobriety, conclude that well-raised children will remain virtuous all their lives ("So in infancy, a child with good manners furnished, / In age, in virtue will willingly persist"; "Children chastised in infancy, in age fly sin").⁶⁰⁰

Beyond the homiletic discourse, the play establishes a link between Grissil's virtues as a daughter and her virtues as a wife, implying that she could sustain her testing only thanks to the good Christian education she received. Thus, virtuous wives appear to be the result of parents' teaching and correction.

Another instance of how the Griselda myth is rewritten in English to engage with the *querelle* is the already mentioned and very popular chapbook, *The Ancient True and Admirable History of Patient Grisel*. Whereas the earliest copy of this book to survive dates back to 1619, there is general agreement that it was

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., ll. 302–16.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., ll. 800–01, 03.

written in the late sixteenth century, even in the absence of conclusive proof.⁶⁰¹ Although the original text of the chapbook may well have been written in the 1590s, there are misogynist features in the 1619 edition—on the title page and two digressions disrupting the narration in chapter six and nine—which may have been later additions.

The late librarian and Secretary of the British Museum Arundell Esdaile recorded a now-lost 1607 edition of the chapbook, whose title page reads:

The Antient, True, and admirable History of Patient Grissel, a Poore Mans Daughter in France. Written in French, and now translated into English *E. All-de. 1607.*⁶⁰²

On the other hand, the 1619 edition, which Esdaile considers to be newer, has a longer title that is rather satirico-comic in tone:

THE ANTIENT, / True, and admirable History / Of / Patient Grisel, / A Poore Mans Daughter in France: / Shewing, / How Maides, by her example, in their good / behaiour may

601 The first to suggest a late sixteenth-century date was J. Payne Collier, who reproduced the chapbook for the Percy Society in 1842. Collier does not give any precise reason for this dating. However, he mentions in the notes that there is a close resemblance between the Marquis's refusal to have Grisel change her poor clothes as he restores her to her status of marquise in the chapbook ("for the sun will break through slender clouds and vertue shine in base array") and Shakespeare's lines in *The Taming of the Shrew*, when Petruchio sends away the tailor and decides that Kate and him will go in simple clothes to her sister's wedding ("And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds, / So honour peereth in the meanest habit", 4.4.165–166); see John Payne Collier, ed. *The history of Patient Grissell. Two Early Tracts in Black-letter* (London: The Percy Society, 1842), pp. viii, 62. The first edition of *The Taming of the Shrew* that has come down to us is Shakespeare's first Folio from 1623, but the play is generally thought to have been written between 1590 and 1592; the first record of its performance is from 1594. Given that Shakespeare alludes to Griselda in this play ("For patience she [i.e. Kate] will prove a second Grissel", 2.1.288), it seems more likely that Shakespeare read the chapbook and took inspiration from it, rather than the anonymous chapbook author imitating Shakespeare. In the absence of conclusive evidence, this obviously remains conjectural. However, Harold Jenkins provides another justification for a late sixteenth-century date: "Its style, rather elaborate and somewhat euphuistic, with a particular delight in antithesis, points to a date towards the end of the sixteenth century", see Harold Jenkins, *The Life and Work of Henry Chettle* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1934), p. 159. Later scholars simply accept Collier's and Jenkins's dating without providing further arguments, see Hoy, "Introductions, Notes and Commentaries," pp. 133–34; Anna Baldwin, "From the *Clerk's Tale* to the *Winter's Tale*," in *Chaucer Traditions. Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), p. 201; Faith Gildenhuis, *A Gathering of Griseldas: Three Sixteenth Century Texts* (Dovehouse Editions, 1996), pp. 58–59.

602 See Arundell James Kennedy Esdaile, *A List of English Tales and Prose Romances Printed before 1740* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1912), p. 72.

marrie rich / HVS BANDS; / And / Likwise, Wiues by their patience and obedience / may
 gaine much Glorie. / Written first in French. / AND / Therefore to French I speake and giue
 direction. / For English Dames will liue in no subjection. / But now translated into English.
 / AND / Therefore say not so. For, English maids and wives / Surpasse the French, in good-
 nesse of their lives. / AT LONDON, / Printed by H. L. for William Luggier; and are to be sold at
 his / shop in Bedlem, neere Moore-Fields. / 1619.⁶⁰³

If Esdaile's transcription of the title page of the now-lost 1607 edition is accurate, then the additions made to the 1619 title page most likely happened after 1607. Since there is no record anywhere of any other edition between 1607 and 1619, the additions may date from 1619. This, then, might also be the case of the narrator's anti-feminine digressions, given that there are similarities in tone and subject with the additions to the title page. Additions and revisions, even by a different writer, were common practice at the time and accepted by printers and booksellers because they could help increase the sales of an already known book. In this case, dating the anti-feminine parts of the *History of Patient Grisel* to 1619 also interestingly makes them resonate with a contemporary, immensely popular pamphlet debate of the English *querelle* that ran from 1615 until 1620. In 1615, Joseph Swetnam published his misogynist pamphlet *The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and vnconstant women*, which was published in no less than 15 editions from 1615 until 1660. It prompted three prose responses, Rachel Speght's *A Movzell for Melastomus* (1617), Ester Sowernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman* (1617), and Constantia Munda's *The Worming of a mad Dogge* (1617), as well as an anonymous play, *Swetnam the Woman-hater Arraigned by Women* (1620).

While the chapbook does not directly participate into the debate, as it never mentions any of these texts, it may have benefitted from the public enthusiasm for such literature. Its 1619 title page makes clear allusion to some of the topics addressed in this debate, such as women's alleged cupidity and vanity ("may marrie rich husbands") and their hierarchical place in marriage as subject to their husbands ("For English Dames will liue in no subjection"). What is more, it imitates the debate form as it stages a short dialogue in rhyming couplets between a misogynist ("Therefore to French I speake and giue direction. / For English Dames will liue in no subjection") and a champion of English women ("Therefore say not so. For, English maids and wives / Surpasse the French, in goodnesse of their lives").

603 *The Ancient, True, and Admirable History of Patient Grisel* (London: H[umphry] L[ownes], 1619), sig. A1r.

The title page's claim that the book addresses French women because English women cannot be taught submission is, of course, ironic. There is no doubt that the intended audience is English not French and that the narrator of the digressions aims at teaching his female English readers, to adopt a self-reflexive stance in order to teach them to submit to their husbands. The two digressions that denounce women's vices are strategically placed so as to enhance Grisel's patience and establish a stark contrast between what the narrator deems to be inappropriate feminine behaviour and Grisel's ideal responses to her husband's cruel whims. In the middle of the sixth chapter, immediately after the marquis announces that he is going to deal with her son as he did with her daughter, before Grisel reacts to this news, instead of continuing his tale, as would be expected, the narrator bursts out in an address to his female readers:

Now, you ladies and dames of these times that stand upon terms of spirit and greatness of heart (some will have it courage and magnanimity of mind), that are affrighted at the character of a fool and silly poor soul—I speak not of strumpets or of such as are willing to brand themselves with the impurity of uncleanness, and dare out of impudency or cunning tell their husbands to their faces they will go where they list and do what they please, but of such that under that impregnable target of honesty are yet so impatient at every distemperature that they dare answer taunt for taunt, yea, like viragoes indeed, offer the first blow, though a horrible confusion follow—what would you have answered this lord? Or with what fireworks would you have made your approaches unto him? I will not tarry for your answer, lest I pull the old house in pieces and so, though I 'scape the timber, I may be crushed with the rubbish. But I will now anticipate, or prevent, all objections by telling you what fair Grisel said and, if there be hope of reformation, insert it as a caution to divert you from your natural fierceness.⁶⁰⁴

The narrator, placing himself within the anti-feminine tradition and using its usual depictions of women's alleged faults, distinguishes three types of women: "strumpets", scolds, and patient, obedient and submissive wives like Grisel. Within his vision of womanhood, in which Grisel-like wifedom is the only acceptable behaviour for women, he considers that women of the first type are unredeemable, while he wishes to reform the women of the second type through the thirds' example. Thus, as in Phillip's play, Grisel is endowed with redemptive powers—she is a feminine saviour figure leading straying wives

604 "The History of Patient Grisel," ed. Faith Gildenhuis (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1996), pp. 179–80.

towards repentance and bringing them back to the straight and narrow path of submission that is assigned to married women.

The narrator apparently felt that a single digression on women's faults was not sufficient to draw his point that Grisel's behaviour is a wifely model to be taught and emulated. Whereas the first anti-feminine comment was addressed to women, the second one is directed at men, inciting them to exercise absolute control over their wives by providing husbands with arguments to justify their leadership in marriage. Just before the narrator tells of Grisel's next display of patience towards the marquis (i.e. her repudiation), the narrator pauses. He first responds to the idea that the story is impossible, using the same argument as Petrarch ("For the story, I answer that therefore it was thus published . . . nor is it any way stranger than many Roman passages and Grecian discourses"),⁶⁰⁵ which suggests that either he also had access to Petrarch's letters or that he used a now-lost French version that included Petrarch's concluding comments. Next, he expands at length on women's wish for superiority and liberty.

His discourse lists female behaviours that he condemns, such as intervening in men's businesses, asserting one's worth as being equal or superior to men, wandering alone in the streets, or holding private conversation with other unrelated men. The narrator's points are difficult to contradict, both because they are presented as facts and because he fashions himself as a direct witness to such behaviour: "I have seen them enter into the rooms of privacy where secret businesses of strangers have been imparted and were to be discuss"; "Yea, I have known them break open letters before they came to their husbands' overlooking, and have wondered even at soldiers themselves that would give way to such indecency".⁶⁰⁶ Moreover, as the narrator implicitly equates wives with "inferior officers" and "servants", the behaviours the narrator condemns are envisaged as a threat to men's masculinity and virility: "For there is no great man so weak but hath counsel and supportation of inferior officers, nor mean man so sottish but hath friends and servants in the dispatch of his business".⁶⁰⁷ Thus, these women's attitudes match what Breitenberg describes as typically eliciting masculine anxiety in early modern England:

Men need to "make themselves master of the situation," Freud writes, but the perilous "situation" to which they are responding derives ineluctably from an historically specific sex-gender system that anxiously figures masculinity in relation to specific constructions

605 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

606 *Ibid.*, pp. 186–87.

607 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

of woman—the very system that is intended to sustain the privileges of its male subjects ... this deep paradox can be found in any patriarchal distribution of power and authority.⁶⁰⁸

From the narrator's initial advocacy of absolute masculine control over masculine business—which requires a strict gendered division of activities in daily life and the exclusion of women from the public spheres of politics, economics, and trade—a plea for women's confinement to the domestic sphere logically ensues. Here, the narrator distinguishes women according to their cultural proveniences, echoing the title page, but this time considering that French and English women are equally unruly, as opposed to women in other parts of the world:

Oh, hellish device of the devil and fearful custom both of France and England! I hope that he that knows the fashions of the East, of Muscovy, Spain, Italy, and the Moors, understands that no married wife goes abroad but to honourable purposes and it is an introduction to death to salute any stranger or be seen in private conference.⁶⁰⁹

At the same time as these generalities cast English husbands, and therefore the male readers of the chapbook, as lesser men who let their wives wander about alone in the streets, they paradoxically also suggest that the reader identify with the “he” who “knows the fashions of the East” and other countries where wives are held in check. As the narrator continues, setting his own mastery over his wife as an example (“For, in true understanding, what business should any man have with *my* wife three hours together in private? Or why, without *my* leave—and upon good grounds—should she wander in public?”),⁶¹⁰ he further tries to convince his male readers to follow his advice on how to subject women. The narrator concludes by setting Griselda as the ultimate argument for making wives submit to their husband:

In which—say what women can—if there be not a moderation by nature, there must be an enforcement by judgement, and that woman that will not be ruled by good counsel must be overruled by better example, of which this now in hand—of Lady Griselda—is a mirror and transparent crystal to manifest true virtue and wifely duty indeed.⁶¹¹

There is no reason to consider that Griselda's story should function as a more convincing argument than any other admonition to subjection, except if wives are

608 Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*, p. 6.

609 “The History of Patient Griselda,” p. 187.

610 *Ibid.*, p. 187, my emphasis.

611 *Ibid.*, pp. 187–88.

meant to understand it as a threat that their husbands might start behaving like the marquis. Nonetheless, the narrator believes that she embodies the ideal wife who every man should dream of and aspire to shape theirs into.

In this rewriting of the myth, Griselda stands again in opposition to the shrew type, not from a nostalgic point of view but rather as an exemplary figure for contemporary women to emulate and contemporary husbands to teach their wives with. As the narrator engages with the *querelle's* discourses, he uses the myth to support the misogynistic point of view that any woman who does not imitate Griselda is vicious and strays from God's precepts. From this perspective, Griselda is not an exemplary woman who helps the proto-feminist cause but rather an ideal that upholds patriarchal values.

This view of Griselda's exemplarity as a didactical tool to teach women wifely submission must have been quite pervasive because the chapbook was very successful, having been re-edited several times during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Whereas it is true that in subsequent editions, the title page's anti-feminine additions and the second digression disappear, the fact that the narrator's first comment on unruly women addressed to his female readers remains at least until the 1690 edition⁶¹² attests to the popularity of this re-writing of the Griselda myth and its engagement with the *querelle* throughout the seventeenth century.

In the final years of the sixteenth century, as already mentioned, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton collaborated on *Patient Grissil*. The main feature that links this parodic rewriting of the myth with the *querelle* in this play is that Griselda, or rather, Grissil, is compared to a virgin, who remains single throughout the play, and a widow who soon remarries. Through satire and humoristic playfulness, this re-elaboration of the Griselda story explores the different statuses a woman may experience in her life through three feminine character types, all of which can be linked to traditional descriptions of women's behaviour in the different texts of the *querelle*. In other words, the play offers a contrasting performance culminating in a short debate in the epilogue, leaving it open to interpretation. In addition, the contrast between the widow, once remarried, and Grissil enables the authors to engage with contemporary discourses and especially literary productions about shrews and shrew-taming (a recurring issue in anti-feminine texts), as well as advice literature addressing male anxieties about unhappily married men. This comedy therefore satirically examines not

612 The first digression is only missing from the 1703 edition onward. During the eighteenth century, this chapbook was re-edited and re-published as a quarto until 1715, from 1740 until 1780 as an abridged duodecimo, in 1790 as a 24° and in 1800 as an octavo.

only the different ways in which women were perceived according to their marital status but also questions the ideal type that Griselda is supposed to embody.

From her first appearance onstage, Grissil is characterised as the ideal marriageable daughter. Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton seem to have taken the misogynist discourses to the letter in imagining her devoid of any of the faults that women are often accused of: she does not want to attract men's gaze; she prefers to stay inside her home than go outside; she is neither wanton nor vain; she humbly dresses and protects her virtue with all her will and power; she obeys her father, takes care of him, helps him with his trade, and prepares food for him.⁶¹³ Thus, in every respect, she embodies the ideal maid who any young bachelor should look for in a bride.

Even if at this early stage of the play her behaviour may not strike an audience as excessive, as it further unfolds, Grissil's actions and speeches become more obviously parodic and satirical, explicitly showing the extremes of the ideal she supposedly embodies. As mentioned earlier, obedience is a virtue so long as it is exercised in agreement with God's laws. However, in this play, since it is a parody, Grissil's obedience is not only excessive in terms of Christian ethics—it also turns her into a fool.

The first act focuses on the different ways in which an early modern woman may approach marriage depending on whether she is a maid, like Grissil and Julia (the marquis's sister), or a widow, like Gwenthyan, the wife of the marquis's late cousin. True to her type, Grissil submits to state authority as much as to her father's will. Throughout the marriage proposal scene (Act 1 scene 2), Grissil remains quiet and only speaks when questioned. In addition, she does not assert herself nor wishes to do so, except to underline that she is an inappropriate match for the marquis, Gwalter, given their difference in rank. Even when the marquis offers her the opportunity to choose a husband from his courtiers and himself, she refuses to pick anyone, claiming that she has "no skill to iudge proportions".⁶¹⁴ Gwalter objectifies Grissil and only praises her beauty, never once mentioning her moral virtues, in order to convince his courtiers of her worth, much like a salesman trying to persuade potential buyers using only the outward appearance of his product as a marketing argument. His ridiculous proposal turns the conventions of comedy upside down, mocking love declarations by considering Grissil as a saleable commodity offered in auction to his courtiers before admitting that he wants her for himself: "... Ile play

⁶¹³ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," See 1.2.25–52.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.2.210.1.

the cryer: once, twice, thrice, / Speake or shee's gone els: no, since twill not be, / Since you are not for her, no, since shee's for me".⁶¹⁵ Even though Gwalter professes his love for Grissil ("to thine eares mine Amorous thoughts impart, / *Gualter* protests he loues thee with his heart"),⁶¹⁶ it does not diminish the grotesqueness of this wooing scene in which the marquis spends more time whimsically using his status as the highest authority to manipulate Grissil and his courtiers than he does in declaring his feelings or making love oaths. Grissil eventually agrees to the match but only because her father had previously agreed to give her hand to the marquis: "If olde *Ianicola* make *Grissill* yours, / *Grissill* must not deny, yet had she rather, / Be the poore Daughter still of her poore Father".⁶¹⁷ Leaving her fate in other men's hands, Grissil not only submits to patriarchal figures, as early modern society expects from her, but also voluntarily denies herself any form of individuality, even when these figures are inappropriate, unreasonable and grotesque like the marquis.

Grissil's parodic, unromantic wooing is contrasted to Julia's and Gwenthyan's. While, as seen before, Julia is a virgin who wishes to remain so, Lady Gwenthyan is a shrewish widow courted by two braggart soldiers. As the play moves from the countryside to the city of Saluzzo, the two subplots involving the other two female characters and their love lives continue the parody of romance and chivalric conventions: two *miles-gloriosus*-types, Sir Owen ap Meredith and Emulo argue with one another over the favours of Gwenthyan. Unlike Grissil, who barely expresses her wishes, Gwenthyan makes clear to Sir Owen, who she eventually marries, that what she seeks is a submissive spouse, so she can have sovereignty in marriage: "Sir *Owen*, Sir *Owen*, tis not for faliant, *Gwenthyan* care so much, but for honest and fertuous, and loiung and pundall to leade her haue her will".⁶¹⁸ Likewise, Julia is courted by Farnese, Urcense, and Onophrio. Since she wants to remain a virgin, she rejects the conventions of courtly love: "Ile haue none / die for me. / I like not that coloure"; "of al saints I loue not to serue / mistris *Venus*".⁶¹⁹ She does not want to get married in order to live free rather than be subjected either by her feelings for someone else or by a husband. As such, Julia is an anomaly in the early modern world given that remaining single was uncommon for a woman and aroused suspicion that she might be leading a wanton and sinful life.

615 Ibid., 1.2.229–31.

616 Ibid., 1.2.236–37.

617 Ibid., 1.2.267–69.

618 Ibid., 2.1.192–94.

619 Ibid., 2.1.347–9, 255–56.

Whereas Grissil does not exercise any free will, Julia and Gwenthyan appear to make their choice about whether, and who, to marry without any consideration of social pressure.

As the marquis starts testing Grissil, the comparison with Julia is made less prominent, because the latter mostly functions as an “audience-within-the-play”. On the other hand, Gwenthyan’s subplot invites a thorough comparison with Grissil’s married life, not only because both get married in the early stage of the play but also because their respective experiences as newly weds mirror each other directly, as Gwenthyan’s parodies Grissil’s.

Even if Gwenthyan is obviously the play’s shrew and Grissil its antithesis, the marquis treats his wife as if she were a shrew for no other reason than a sudden urge to test her in spite of the love he bears her: “So dearely loue I *Grissil*, that my life / Shall end, when she doth ende to be my wife / . . . / Yet is my bosome burnt vp with desires, / To trie my *Grissils* patience.”⁶²⁰ The manner in which Gwalter tests Grissil differs from the usual pattern of the myth. The main reason for this seems to reside in the authors’ choice to link Grissil’s ordeals with the literary tradition of shrew taming, better known as the “shrew motif” or the “shrew story”. This type of European folktale seems to have existed from at least the thirteenth century onward.⁶²¹ According to Louise Vasvári’s definition, the “basic story of the shrew involves a man, often a new bridegroom, who tames his unruly wife. She is usually described as shrewish, but can also be lazy, or haughty, or have other ‘bad’ qualities. The husband tames his supposedly unruly wife through a ritual process of physical or psychological abuse”. At the same time as Gwalter’s test evokes the shrew-taming tradition, Grissil’s trials are staged like a play-within-the-play in which Gwalter is a playwright/director/actor of sorts, creating his own drama in order to witness, as himself or in disguise, Grissil’s actions and reactions. Thus, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton turn the marquis’s lies and feigned emotions into a performance and thereby draw the audience’s attention to the grotesqueness of it all. Although there are no stage directions, the actor playing Gwalter’s part is likely to have exaggerated his acting, since the marquis’s own words sound like an invitation to perform grotesquely: “To trie my *Grissils* patience, Ile put on / A wrinkled forehead, and turne both mine eyes, / Into two balles of fire, to threaten death.”⁶²²

620 *Ibid.*, 2.2.17–20.

621 See Louise O. Vasvári, “Examples of the Motif of the Shrew in European Literature and Film,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2002), <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1142>>; Jan Harold Brunvand, “The Folktale Origin of the *The Taming of the Shrew*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1966).

622 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 2.2.21–24.

The first part of Gwalter's testing is particularly reminiscent of the shrew-taming tradition. Like in the stories corresponding to the Aarne-Thompson type 901, the "taming" begins at the husband's place soon after the wedding.⁶²³ The testing begins earlier than with previous versions, namely right after the wedding. Instead of beginning by forcing Grissil to yield her children (who of course are yet unborn) to Gwalter, the latter wrongly accuses Grissil of being vain ("See woman here hangs vp thine auncestrie, / . . . / This is thy russet gentry, coat, and crest: / Thy earthen honors I will neuer hide, / Because this bridle shall pull in thy pride").⁶²⁴ Gwalter treats her worse than a domestic servant, asking her to "stoope" for a glove he lets fall to the ground and "kneelee euen to the meanest groome", and he asks her to tie the shoes of his servant, Furio.⁶²⁵ Gwalter continues by giving her absurd, contradictory orders (to leave and come back) and by asking her to obey his courtiers, Mario and Lepido. She complies with everything without complaining or showing any signs of discontent. While this resembles the final stage of Griselda's trials in the myth, when she is asked to prepare her husband's second wedding, Gwalter's behaviour is more like that of the bridegrooms of shrew stories in medieval and early modern European folktales and contemporary English plays: Gwalter imitates their "process of intimidating [their] wife psychologically"⁶²⁶ and more specifically performs what Vasvári calls "degradation ceremony".⁶²⁷ Forcing Grissil to fetch her husband's glove from the ground and tying his servant's shoes echoes Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which Katharina treads on her own hat, a metonymic gesture illustrating her yielding her head and will to her husband, and willingly places her hand under her husband's foot, displaying her entire submission.⁶²⁸ The only difference is that Grissil requires no teaching, because she never shows any sign of wilfulness or shrewishness.

The play further draws on shrew stories as Gwenthyán's subplot contrasts the main plot. How the marquis treats his wife does not, and cannot, remain a

623 See Vasvári, "Examples of the Motif of the Shrew in European Literature and Film"; Brundvand, "The Folktale Origin of the *The Taming of the Shrew*," p. 345.

624 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 2.2.63–67.

625 *Ibid.*, 2.2.79–86.

626 Vasvári, "Examples of the Motif of the Shrew in European Literature and Film".

627 In the tale XXXV of the *Conde Lucanor*, the wife has to bring her husband water for his ablutions, thereby performing one of the most intimate acts in which a woman may serve her husband. In a German version of this folktale type, the groom rides his bride on the way back home after killing his own horse to scare her, thereby performing another instance of "degradation ceremony". For both examples, see *ibid.*

628 William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Boston; New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 5.2.126, 81–83.

private matter. He is head of state, so whatever action he takes, be it in relation to his own household or his country, has repercussions for his people. For him, even less than for any other person in Saluzzo, there is no distinction between his private life, namely how he manages his marriage, and his public life, as a ruler. Sir Owen ap Meredith reminds him of this and of the fact that the way Gwalter treats Grissil affects the Welshman's life: "... pray cozen *Marquesse*, vse her Latie *Grissill* a good teale better, for as God vdge me, your hurd Sir *Owen* out a cry by maging her sad and powd so, see you?"⁶²⁹ Sir Owen shows that Gwalter and Grissil's lives are under the scrutiny not just of the marquis's sister, Julia, and her suitors but also of the entire Saluzzi court, and this influences how the nobility construct and enact married life. Indeed, as Sir Owen further comments about his wife's behaviour:

... *Gwenethyan* is worse
and worse out a cry, owe out a cry worse, out of awl cry,
shee's fear'd to be made fool as *Grissill* is, and as God vdge me, her
mag fine pobbie foole of Sir *Owen*, her shide and shide, and prawle
and scoulde, by God and scradge terrible somtime, owe and haid
her wil doe what her can, ha ha ha, and sir *Owen* were hansome
pacheler agen, pray cozen *Marquesse* tag some order in *Grissill*, or
tedge sir *Owen* to mag *Gwenethians* quiet and tame her.⁶³⁰

As Sir Owen's petition indicates ("tedge sir *Owen* to mag *Gwenethyan* quiet and tame her"), the Welsh subplot also parodies shrew-taming stories. However, as Gwalter suggests Sir Owen go cut some twigs, the Welsh knight wrongly understands that he is to use them to beat *Gwenethyan*, giving way to slapstick comedy in which Sir Owen is beaten up by his wife.

Although *Gwenethyan* is the play's shrew, and as such not a positive character or one who the audience might take seriously, her fear "to be made fool as *Grissill* is" sounds reasonable and justified, especially since there is no reason for Gwalter's sudden urge to test his wife. The Welsh lady not only calls Grissil a "ninny pobbie foole"⁶³¹ but cannot bear to hear any news about her ("*Grissils*, no podie but *Grissils*? what care I for *Grissill*").⁶³² *Gwenethyan*'s rejection establishes a parallel between her relationship with Sir Owen and the marquis and Grissil's marriage, highlighting women's fear of domestic violence. Whereas the Welsh lady's dispute with her husband over Grissil displays her shrewishness

⁶²⁹ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 3.2.115–18.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.2.138–45.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.2.202.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, 3.2.221.

and gives way to a comic verbal fight, the audience can only agree with her when she claims that Grissil is being abused by her husband.

The parallel between Grissil and Gwenthyan appears throughout the Welsh subplot. Already at the beginning of her testing, Grissil is “content / To weare this russet brauerie of my owne”⁶³³ and leave her rich clothes, if Gwalter wishes so. Gwenthyan, on the other hand, orders an expensive new piece of clothing: a rebato. As Natasha Korda explains:

The significance of the rebato in the scene is complicated by the Welsh couple’s broken English, which renders their linguistic and cultural competency suspect. When Sir Owen spies Rice delivering the rebato to Gwenthyan, he demands, “What pestilence is this for Gwenthyan?” (3.2.245). She responds, “For her neg [i.e. neck], is cald repatoes, Gwenthian weare it here, ist not prave [i.e. brave]?” (l. 246–47). The exchange highlights the rebato’s status as a high-fashion, luxury attire, identifiable only to those “in-the-know” who have both sufficient means to afford and cultural competency to recognize the latest trends in starched neckwear. Sir Owen himself seems not to know (or at least not to see) what the rebato is, so that Gwenthyan must cue him—and those in the audience not in-the-know—as to its proper name, form, and function.⁶³⁴

The contrast between Grissil’s russet gown is underlined by Gwenthyan’s use of the words “prave”, that is, “splendid, showy”⁶³⁵ and “braverie”, that is, “fine clothes”.⁶³⁶ The two characters therefore have a diametrically opposed conception of what makes a piece of clothing “brave” or a “bravery”. Whereas, for Gwenthyan it is fashion and trend, for Grissil it is its usefulness: she finds her gown “more warme”⁶³⁷ than her rich attires. As Korda further comments, “rebatos have no discernible use-value other than to stiffen the necks of wayward widows by inflaming their appetite for foreign fashions purchased outside the home”.⁶³⁸

Gwenthyan’s purchase of the rebato out of her own will and without consulting her husband may also be seen as a reversal of the tailor scene in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Petruchio uses fashionable clothes to display his control over Katharina’s body and mind. Whereas Katharina likes the hat and the gown that Petruchio has had tailor-made for her, she must keep

⁶³³ Ibid., 2.2.73–74.

⁶³⁴ Natasha Korda, *Labours Lost: Women’s Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 134.

⁶³⁵ See Oxford English Dictionary, “*braw*, *adj.* (and *adv.*) and *n.*” (Oxford UP), *adj.* A1.

⁶³⁶ See *ibid.*, *adj.* B3.

⁶³⁷ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 2.2.75.

⁶³⁸ Korda, *Labours Lost: Women’s Work and the Early Modern English Stage*, p. 136.

her modest clothes and obey her husband. Gwenethyan, meanwhile, has “her willes and desires”⁶³⁹ and keeps her rebato.

As the play unfolds, the Welsh lady’s assertion that Grissil is a “ninny pobbie foole” acquires more relevance than one would initially think. In view of how Janicola’s daughter reacts to the repudiation test, it is hard for the audience not to agree with Gwenethyan.

Whereas in the myth, Griselda usually has a daughter first and a son some years later, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton likely followed the mid-sixteenth century English *Ballad of Patient Grissell* in which Grissell gives birth to twins. This alteration, however, does not make the testing any shorter. On the contrary, the playwrights do not fall short of ideas to make it last longer. Every change they bring to the traditional pattern aims at showing how excessively compliant Grissil is with Gwalter’s whims. Instead of having two almost identical scenes during which Grissil would have to surrender her children, the playwrights prefer to split the repudiation into two parts. Given that, after the marriage, Gwalter not only brings Grissil but also Janicola’s entire household to his palace, including Grissil’s bother Laureo and a servant named Babulo, the repudiation starts with Grissil’s family being banished from court. Even though she is full of sorrow, Grissil does not argue with her husband, nor does she try to change his mind about it (“Whatever you think good I’ll not term vile”).⁶⁴⁰ She even defends Furio, who is in charge of banishing her family (“Brother forbear, hee is seruant to my Lord”).⁶⁴¹ Grissil is repudiated after she gives birth to her twin babies, who are sent along with her. Although she expresses her sadness, she has only nice words for Gautier and urges her family not to say anything against the marquis:

He gaue me gentle language, kist my cheeke,
 For Gods sake therefore speake not ill of him,
 Teares trickling from his eyes, and sorrowes hand
 Stopping his mouth, thus did he bid adue,
 Whilst many a deep fetcht sigh from his brest flew.
 Therefore for Gods sake speake not ill of him.
 Good Lord how many a kisse he gaue my babes,
 And with wet eyes bad me be patient,
 And by my truth (if I have any truth)

⁶³⁹ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 3.2.269–70.

⁶⁴⁰ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 3.1.122.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.1.56.

I came from Court more quiet and content,
 By many a thousand part then when I went:
 Therefore for Gods loue speake not ill of him.⁶⁴²

Her long and hyperbolic speech contrasts with how Gautier actually sends her back to her father: not only does he insult her, treating her with contempt, however feigned, but he never kisses his children goodbye:

Tempt me not Syren, since you are so louing,
 Hold you, take both your children, get you gon,
 Disrobe her of these rich abiliments,
 Take downe her hat, her pitcher and her gowne,
 And as she came to me in beggerie,
 So driue her to her father.⁶⁴³

Grissil's lies draw attention to the excess of her compliance with her husband. She thus truly appears like a "niny pobbie foole".

Anticipating the second wedding and final scene, the Welsh sub-plot offers a parody of a banquet. Sir Owen invites the marquis and his court to dinner. Angry that her husband tore her rebato and her ruff, Gwenthyan has beggars feast upon the nice meal intended for her Lord and cousin-in-law, welcoming her guests dressed in rags. Gwenthyan's revenge reverses two elements of the taming pattern from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The Welsh Lady's poor clothes, which are intended to humiliate her husband in front of his prestigious guests, call to mind Petruchio's clownish attire and embarrassing behaviour at his wedding with Kate (act 3 scene 2). On the other hand, Gwenthyan, who feeds beggars instead of her husband, the marquis and his court, seems to parody Petruchio's food deprivation technique on Kate when they are back at his place and he prevents her from eating with ridiculous excuses (act 4 scene 1). Gwenthyan therefore reproduces the "degradation ceremonies" of shrew-taming on her husband to teach him submission.

The contrast with Grissil is made apparent not only by the marquis, who on witnessing the event admires his wife's endurance ("My *Grissills* vertues shine"),⁶⁴⁴ but also by Julia, who draws the moral of Grissil's and Sir Owen misadventures:

... Would you wish me to loue? when loue is so full of hate?
 how vnlovely is loue? how bitter? How ful of blemishes? my Lord
 and brother insults our *Grissill*, that makes me glad, *Gwenthyan*
 curbs Sir *Owen*, that makes you glad, Sir *Owen* is maistred by his

⁶⁴² Ibid., 4.2.48–59.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 4.1.168–73.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 4.3.158.

Mistris, that makes you mad, poore *Grissil* is martred by her Lord,
 that makes you merrie, for I always wish that a woman may neuer
 meete better bargaines, when sheele trust her sweet libetie into
 the hands of a man: frye vpon you, you're nothing but woorme-
 wood, and oake, and glass: you have bitter tongues, hard heats,
 and brittle faith.⁶⁴⁵

Although Julia takes advantage of the circumstances to make her point that wedlock is not a happy state, her discourse also points to the excesses to be found in both Gwenthyan's and Grissil's respective behaviours.

Since it is a comedy, Grissil is eventually restored to her status as Gwalter's wife and marquise; and her family is brought back to court. Nonetheless, the playwrights do not take leave from the audience with this simple happy ending. Instead, they offer a threefold epilogue. Julia first reiterates her wish to remain a virgin, encouraging the audience's bachelors and maids to follow her example ("those that know the war of mariage and hate it, set their hands to my bill, which is rather to dye a mayde and leade Apes in hell, then to liue a wife and be continually in hell"⁶⁴⁶). Next, Gwenthyan enjoins women to bridle their husbands ("awl you then that haue husbands that you would pridle, set your hands to *Gwenthyans* bill, for tis not fid that poore womens should be kept always vnder").⁶⁴⁷ Finally, Grissil is invited to have the final word, but she is too "weary" to speak, as if patience has drawn all her strength.⁶⁴⁸ Instead, Sir Owen concludes, having the privilege of being last and therefore the one the audience will best remember. However, his discourse about patience in marriage is so comically confusing that it can hardly be convincing in any way and can only draw the audience's final laughter:

... if sir *Owen* was
 not patient, her *Latie* had not beene pridled, if *Grissill* had not
 beene patient her cozen *Marquesse* had not been pridled: well now
 if you loue sir *Owens* *Latie*, I hobe you loue Sir *Owen* too, or is grow
 mighty angry, Sir *Owen* loue you as God vdge mee out a cry, a
 terrible teale, doe you heare now, they pray awl that haue crabbed
 husbands and cannot mend them, as *Grissils* had, and awl that
 haue fixen wiues, and yet is tame her well enough as sir *Owen*
 does, and awl that haue scoldes as sir *Owen* does, and awl that loue
 fair *Laties* as sir *Owen* does, to sed her two hands to his pill: and so

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.3.205–214.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.2.280–83.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.2.290–92.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.2.297.

God saue you all. *Man gras wortha whee, Man gras wortha wee.*
[i.e. My grace is to you] God night Cozens awl.⁶⁴⁹

Thus, this parody does not leave the myth of Griselda and her embodiment of wifely patience intact. The continued criticism of the excesses of both Grissil and Gwalter does not encourage women, or men, to follow the protagonists' examples. Despite being once identified as an ideal wife, Grissil is turned into a fool. This is not to say that the play invites wives to become like Gwenthyran and tame their husbands. The play uses satire to denounce excesses of married (and unmarried) life by displaying grotesque behaviours in women—Grissil, Gwenthyran and Julia—as much as in husbands—Gwalter and Sir Owen. The threefold epilogue is there to remind the audience that excesses should not be followed, and they can be found in married as much as in single life. However, by letting Julia remain a virgin, instead of following the comic convention requiring that she get married too, the play leaves open the debate about whether one should enter wedlock or not.

This play was rather successful given that it reached print in 1603 and even came to be known on the continent: there are records of two performances. The first was staged in Dresden in 1626 by English actors and the second in Torgau in 1671.⁶⁵⁰ However critical this play was of Griselda and her extreme patience, it was not the only version through which British people could know the myth. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were versions that were even more successful: the *Ballad of Patient Grissell* and the chapbook *History of Patient Grisel*. These were far more conservative in their depiction of Griselda's patience as a wifely virtue. Consequently, these concurring versions of the myth participated in the *querelle* in England in opposing ways, contradicting each other about whether women should be blindly obedient to their husbands or not.

In Spain, as in most parts of Europe, the *querelle des femmes* was particularly prolific in fifteenth-century treatises. During the sixteenth century, ideas about women's nature continued to be conveyed through various works, either by complaining about their faults or taking their defence. For example, Ambrosio de Montesino, who wrote *Doctrina y reprehensión de algunas mujeres* at the

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.2.301–13.

⁶⁵⁰ See Johannes Bolte, *Kleinere Schriften zur Neueren Literaturgeschichte, Volkskunde und Wortforschung von Reinhold Köhler* (Berlin: Emil Felber, 1900), pp. 55–56; Gertrude Marian Sibley, *The Lost Plays and Masques 1500–1642* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1933), p. 197; Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700: an Analytical Record of all Plays Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Authors, Titles, Dramatic Companies, etc.* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 214.

beginning of the sixteenth century, laments that maids, wives, and widows fail to comply with the moral obligations of their status.⁶⁵¹ Other authors—such as Juan Luis Vives in his *De Institutione foeminae christianae* (1524), Juan de la Espinosa in his *Diálogo en laude de las mujeres* (1580), and Fray Luis de León in his *La perfecta casada* (1583), believe in women's capacity to behave virtuously. While these writers list the possible faults that can be found in women—such as their weakness, their inconstancy, their vanity, and so on—they are also convinced of their worth and ability to choose virtue over sin. Vives considers girls' education a necessity to teach them to shun evil:

The woman who has learned to make these and similar reflections [about chastity and vanity] either through instinctive virtue or innate intelligence or through reading will never bring herself to commit any vile act, for her mind will have been strengthened and imbued with holy counsels.⁶⁵²

However, Vives advised not extending women's learning beyond the usually feminine household work (e.g. spinning, cooking, etc.) and moral conduct in terms of chastity, modesty, and honesty. He especially discouraged female eloquence and any teaching pertaining to this art.⁶⁵³

For Fray Luis de León, the idea of perfection in a wife takes the name of “mujer varonil”, which means “virtud de ánimo y fortaleza de corazón, industria y riqueza, y poder y aventajamiento, y, finalmente, un ser perfecto y cabal en aquellas cosas a quien esta palabra se aplica”.⁶⁵⁴ For him, given the weaker nature of women compared to men, a wife has to possess numerous virtues to bear the vicissitudes and pains of married life, so much so that she almost becomes heroic:

Porque, como la mujer sea de su natural flaca y deleznable más que ningún otro animal, y de su costumbre y ingenio una cosa quebradiza y melindrosa, y como la vida casada sea vida sujeta a muchos peligros, y donde se ofrecen cada día trabajos y dificultades muy grandes, y vida ocasionada a continuos desabrimientos y enojos, y, como dice San Pablo, vida adonde anda el ánimo y el corazón dividido y como enajenado de sí,

651 For excerpts of this work and others from the Spanish *querelle*, see Robert Archer, *Misoginia y defensa de las mujeres. Antología de textos medievales* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2001), 333 and ff.

652 Juan Luis Vives, *De Institutione Feminae Christianae, Liber Primus* (Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill, 1996), p. 29.

653 Catherine R. Eskin, “The Rei(g)ning of Women's Tongues in English Books of Instruction and Rhetorics,” in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500–1800*, ed. Barbara Whitehead (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1999), p. 118.

654 Fray Luis de León, *La perfecta casada*, vol. 23 (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1928), p. 23.

acudiendo agora a los hijos, agora al marido, agora a la familia y hacienda; para que tanta flaqueza salga con victoria de contienda tan dificultosa y tan larga, menester es que la que ha de ser buena casada está cercada de un tan noble escuadrón de virtudes, como son las virtudes que habemos dicho y las que la propiedad de aquel nombre en sí abraza. . . el mostrarse una mujer la que debe entre tantas ocasiones y dificultades de vida, siendo de suyo tan flaca, es señal clara de un caudal de virtud rarísima y casi heroica.⁶⁵⁵

While these authors argued in favour of women's capacity to reason and learn how to behave virtuously, they still promoted and taught wifely submission in agreement with the early modern belief in the divinely ordained gender hierarchy that places man as the head of the household.

Other writers, such as Juan del Encina in his *Egloga de Fileno, Zambardo y Cardonio*, and Cristóbal de Castillejo in his *Diálogo de mujeres* (ca. 1540–44), include in their work a debate about women's nature between two characters, adopting opposing views on the matter.

Misogynist discourses complaining about feminine weaknesses and faults continued well into the seventeenth century. As Malveena McKendrick explains,

In seventeenth-century Spain, when moralist and creative literature became so often indistinguishable, poets and other writers surpassed churchmen in pouring upon women a stream of invective never before equalled, even by the misogynists of the feminist debate. Her beauty was a lie, her virtue a sham, truth and trust were incomprehensible to her. The vilification, both in serious and burlesque writings, was as unrealistic and often as stylised as the idealisation against which it was reacting.⁶⁵⁶

Lope de Vega perpetuates this ambivalence towards women in his appropriation of the Griselda myth, *El ejemplo*. In this play, Lope challenges some of the misogynists' stereotypes about women and uses Laurencia to prove them wrong, yet, without questioning or threatening the patriarchal principle of wifely subordination. Furthermore, the play interestingly attempts to justify Laurencia's behaviour through neostoicism.

Lope exploits this generic specificity of drama in order to bring the traditionally two-dimensional dialogues of the *querelle* to life and provide the audience with direct access to Laurencia's state of mind during her trials through various asides and dialogues with her lady-in-waiting or her father. Early mod-

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

⁶⁵⁶ Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and society in the Spanish drama of the Golden Age: a study of the Mujer Varonil* (London: Cambridge UP, 1974), pp. 11–12.

ern theatre often presents a play-within-the-play, which in the case of the Griselda story appears particularly suitable for the subject matter: the marquis's dissimulation and lies that are aimed at testing his wife are a performance in themselves. Whereas Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton used this aspect of the myth to underline its grotesqueness and Grissil's foolishness, Lope stages a play-within-a-play in which Enrico functions as playwright/actor/director and a hidden audience-within-the-play in order to make Laurencia's neostoic virtues even more obvious by underlining them with his comments in asides. However, like most versions of the myth, Laurencia remains problematic because of her exaggerated, morally condemnable compliance with her husband's whims.

The *querelle's* misogynistic common places are introduced in the play through Enrico's scepticism towards women: he expresses the contemporary widespread view that women cannot be trusted, so their apparent virtues must be put to the test in order to prove that they are merely feigned or, on the contrary, true perfections:

... ¿pretendéis contarme
lo que Porcia y Artemisa,
para que me dé más prisa
con este ejemplo casarme
como si Fabia y Albina,
Rosimunda y otras mil
no acompañaran la vil
y deshonesta Agripina?
...
Yo escogeré tal mujer
y la probaré de modo
que la halle buena en todo.⁶⁵⁷

Thus, even before meeting Laurencia, and whomever his wife may be, Enrico already knows that he will test her, so great is his distrust of women.

Laurencia is presented as being unique for her mind and beauty ("Alaban tu entendimiento / al igual de tu hermosura"⁶⁵⁸). Her knowledge comes from her education, which her father gave her. She knows about love and its consequences—fear and jealousy—from "discursos" without having ever felt the emotion ("Y aunque a práctica de manos / no haya llegado con él [i.e. love], / sabré por discurso en él / algunos principios llanos").⁶⁵⁹ As Enrico starts talking to

⁶⁵⁷ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 137–59.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vv. 545–46.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vv. 521–24.

her, the first thing he notices is her intelligence (“No han hecho mujer los cielos / que a ésta puede igualarse. / ¿Hay cosa igual? ¿Hay valor como éste? ¿Hay ingenio, hay talle?”).⁶⁶⁰ Although Enrico is immediately seduced by her wisdom and therefore marries her, no sooner than the birth of her second child, the Conde wishes to test her “humildad” (here in the sense of humility towards him, namely her submission) in order to prove to the world that she does indeed obey her husband’s every wish:

He visto tanta humildad
 en Laurencia que he querido
 certificar si es fingido
 ...
 Yo me he puesto en entender
 ...
 a qué llegará el valor
 de la más cuerda mujer.
 Porque si ésta ...
 llega lo que yo he pensado,
 verá este siglo engañado
 que hay una mujer perfecta.⁶⁶¹

Enrico assimilates “valor” (courage) to virtue and recognises that Laurencia is a “mujer varonil”, according to Fray Luis de León’s definition. However, influenced by misogynist discourses about women, he believes it can only be a pretence and feels the need to put Laurencia to the test.

Enrico’s distrust of Laurencia resembles that of the medieval writer Matheolus in his *Lamentations*, in which he makes clear that everything in women is deception and dissimulation. R. Howard Bloch describes Matheolus’s opinion as follows:

This is because the seducing sophistication of woman is that of illusion itself; she is by definition not only sophisticated (e.g., dirty, illusory) but is posited as that which exists in distinction to reason. If, as Mathieu admits, “By her sight my knowledge [*science*] was troubled,” it is because woman is conceived as that which escapes logic. Rather, she is portrayed as a kind of false logic, the sophism that vanquishes both grammar and logic: “En ce fu grammaire traïe / Et logique moult esbaïe” (In this was grammar betrayed and logic greatly confounded; book 1, lines 1105–6). Together grammar and logic constitute within the medieval language arts the *trivium*, the sciences of the true, respectively of rectitude of expression and of correct propositions. Woman, however, is posited as the opposite of the truth: “Femme de verité n’a cure” (Woman cares not at all for truth; book 1, line 966). More precisely, she becomes, in the misogynistic thinking of the High Middle

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vv. 771–74.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vv. 1283–94.

Ages, associated with the third element of the *trivium*—rhetoric, the art of persuasion that, by the thirteenth century, was synonymous with poetics. Woman is figured as the sophist, the dissimulator (“Faindre et dissimuler convient” ([To feign and trick comes naturally; book 1, line 1024]), the seducer with false arguments or subtlety: “Oultre les tencons et les limes / Par cinq manieres de sophismes / La femme meine l’omme a methé”.⁶⁶²

Indeed, Enrico was seduced by Laurencia’s witty speeches, by her rhetorical powers, as were her countryside friends: Danteo, Belardo, and Lucindo. While the medieval logic behind Matheolus’s writings applies to Enrico as a justification for his trials, nothing in his wife’s behaviour indicates that she might be feigning her humility and obedience.

As Enrico stages Laurencia’s testing, other characters also function as an audience-within-the-play, commenting upon Enrico’s and Laurencia’s behaviour. Thus, Enrico’s servant Tibaldo and Laurencia’s friend and lady-in-waiting, Fenisa, acquire great importance as the voices of reason between the two extreme protagonists.

First, Tibaldo’s remarks highlight the monstrosity and madness that characterise the Conde’s wish to test his wife in the cruellest fashion. Against Enrico’s misogynistic whims, Tibaldo stands out as Laurencia’s “defensor” in this “*querelle*” about her humility and obedience. Tibaldo punctuates the testing with remarks about Enrico’s intentions, underlining the strangeness of his wishes (“Estrañas cosas me cuentas”; “¡Estrañas quimeras son!”), his master’s lack of limits (“Luego también querrás / [probar] en cuanto honesta”),⁶⁶³ and gradually questioning Enrico’s decisions more vehemently:

¿Qué procuras
hacer de una mujer? ¿Es bronce, o piedra?
¿Qué edificio levantas en su pecho?
¿Qué quimeras fabricadas en su ánimo?
¿Para qué quieres tantas pefecciones?⁶⁶⁴

Even as his master justifies his actions by claiming that the testing will grant Laurencia a place in history (“labrarla estatuas de oro y mármol / y consagrar al Tiempo su memoria”), Tibaldo continues blaming him (“Tanto puedes probar y que la mates”), asking him to stop (“Señor vuélvele el niño, que esto basta / para saber que es obediente y casta”), underlining Enrico’s monstrosity by associating

⁶⁶² Bloch, “Medieval Misogyny,” p. 17.

⁶⁶³ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1279, 1313, 1295–96.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vv. 1809–13.

him with wild animals (“[El conde] Es fiera”) or cold inanimate objects (“es mármol, es nieve”), and finally even wishing for his lord’s death (“¡Mas que llores y revientes!”).⁶⁶⁵

Even if Tibaldo obeys, he is torn between loyalty to his lord and his own moral principles that are telling him to make Enrico abandon his cruel madness and show his master that Laurencia does not deserve such mistreatment. Thus, Tibaldo stands as Laurencia’s failing champion who tries in vain to make Enrico change his mind about testing her.

Two popular misogynistic proverbs frame the testing: “cordura no puede ser probar vidrio, espada, ni mujer” and its correlative “la mujer y el vidrio siempre están en peligro”. While the second insists more on women’s weakness or incapacity to resist temptation, and the first insists more on the fact that they cannot sustain testing,⁶⁶⁶ they both convey the idea that once a woman loses her honour, she can never become whole again.⁶⁶⁷ In Lope’s play, these proverbs first appear at the beginning of the testing, when Enrico claims that he does not wish to test Laurencia beyond reason:

Nunca un hombre ha de probar
la espada ni la mujer
porque ésta puedes torcer
y aquélla puedes quebrar.
Es quien proballas celebra,
como quien vidrio ha probado
para ver si está cascado,
que cuando lo prueban, quiebra.
En lo que yo te avisé
la quiero probar, no más.⁶⁶⁸

As Enrico eventually repudiates Laurencia, Tibaldo reminds him twice that she will not sustain it, using the proverb’s glass metaphor: “¿Persecución en un vidrio? / ¡Plega a Dios que no se quiebre!”; “¿Más golpes le das al vidrio? / ¡Plega a Dios que no se quiebre!”.⁶⁶⁹ These proverbs help to convey the fact that

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vv. 1819–20, 1821, 1802–03, 1927, 1953.

⁶⁶⁶ Juan José Álvarez Díaz, “Refranes españoles de la mujer y las armas,” *Paremia* 16 (2007): 55.

⁶⁶⁷ The popularity of these proverbial associations of women with glass in early modern Spain is attested by its use by contemporary authors such as Miguel de Cervantes (see *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de La Mancha* (1605), 2 vols., vol. 1 (Madrid: Ed. Castalia, 1978), p. 409.) and Carlos Boil (see *El marido asegurado* (1616) (Madrid: RAE, 1929), p. 445., quoted in Juan José Álvarez Díaz, “Refranes españoles de la mujer y las armas,” p. 55.

⁶⁶⁸ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1299–1308.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, vv. 1934–35, 1958–59.

Enrico's whim to test his wife is uncontrollable: in spite of his agreeing with the popular misogynist wisdom the proverbs contain, he continues to try his wife. However, the usual meaning of these sayings is slightly altered for the purpose of the play. Whereas the kind of testing implied by the proverbs concerns women's chastity, Enrico does not wish to try Laurencia's fidelity unless living in riches has made her vain and feign humility. Moreover, as Tibaldo urges his lord to stop, what he fears is not that Laurencia will have an affair or reveal she had one but rather that such cruelty will kill her ("Tanto puedes probar y que la mates").⁶⁷⁰ Finally, the proverbs underline Laurencia's exceptionality as she does not break, proving their implicit prediction and the glass-metaphor wrong.

However, Laurencia's extraordinary resilience is problematic. Although Tibaldo defends Laurencia's interests, he is not blind to her lack of apparent emotions as he takes away her children ("... ¿qué cosa más fiera / que verte tan obediente / viendo el ángel inocente / y condenado a que muera?"; "Ángel, vuestra madre es peña, / no siente vuestra muerte").⁶⁷¹ The same is true of Fenisa, Laurencia's friend from the countryside and lady-in-waiting ("De tu paciencia me espanto / Condesa y señora mía, / pues muestras el alegría / cuando me deshago en llanto. / Tus hijos muertos, ¿y estás con aquesa compostura?"; "No sé qué piense de ti, / de piedras tus ojos son, / de bronce tu corazón").⁶⁷² Both Fenisa and Tibaldo use the same imagery to underline Laurencia's insensitivity, comparing her either to a wild beast ("fiera") or inanimate objects ("peña"; "piedra"; "bronce"). The heroine's extreme behaviour is thus metaphorically linked with that of her husband, since Tibaldo used the same semantic field to illustrate his relentless, cruel wish to test his wife. The imagery suggests that both Laurencia and Enrico act without any use of reason, like animals or stones, and therefore fall into vice.⁶⁷³

Whereas Enrico sins, he makes amends for his actions by going on a crusade to Jerusalem, and in the following act, the interpretation of Laurencia's actions and reactions is made more complex as Enrico also comments on her behaviour. As he hides to watch Laurencia when Tibaldo explains why he comes to take away her daughter. His observations hyperbolically underline Laurencia's virtues:

670 *Ibid.*, v. 1821.

671 *Ibid.*, vv. 1429–32, 1468–69.

672 *Ibid.*, vv. 1824–29, 1856–58.

673 According to Thomas Aquinas, a vice "contra natura est" and vice is contrary to reason, because reason is the foundation of human nature ("vitium autem intantum est contra naturam hominis, inquantum est contra ordinem rationis"), see *Summa*: Ia-IIae q. 71 a. 2 co.

Aquí detrás, escondido,
 viendo esta heroica matrona,
 digna de mayor corona
 que todas las que han nacido
 en esta presente edad.
 ¡Qué santa correspondencia!
 [.]
 ¡Qué de virtud y humildad!
 Mil veces me vi tentado
 de salir y entre sus pies
 poner mi boca.⁶⁷⁴

According to Enrico's point of view, Laurencia qualifies as a saint worthy of veneration. He also considers her unique and one of her kind. Thus, Laurencia is described as following the topos of virtuous women as rare and few, usually belonging to a distant past about which men are nostalgic.

When Enrico asks for his son and Laurencia again complies, his asides and comments on her reactions are even more hyperbolic: "¡Qué notable paciencia y alegría!"; "¡Hoy llego / a ver un monstruo de valor vestido!"; "¿Hay humildad como ésta? ¿Hay obediencia? / ¿Hay varonil valor? ¿Hay sentimiento?".⁶⁷⁵ The Conde speaks only in exclamations and rhetorical questions to highlight Laurencia's extraordinary qualities. He even metaphorically sets her apart from the realm of human beings and natural order as he compares her to a monster. Thus, Enrico signifies that Laurencia's virtues are rare and exceptional, so they must be interpreted as a sign that God gives her the strength to resist temptation.⁶⁷⁶

During the testing, Laurencia's reactions can also be seen according to what she expresses in asides and how she justifies her compliance and indifference to both Tibaldo and Fenisa. Laurencia uses both moral duty and Christian stoicism or neostoicism as rationale for her actions. First, as Tibaldo reluctantly explains to Laurencia why he has come to take her daughter, she reminds him, and insists on, the social and moral obligation that binds them both to obey, especially her:

Tibaldo, el Conde es el dueño
 de ella y de mi gusto es
 que se la dé y tú le des

⁶⁷⁴ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1437–47.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vv. 1763, 1766–67, 1800–1891.

⁶⁷⁶ In the late medieval and early modern period, monsters were seen as signs from God. Their deformed bodies were to be analysed and interpreted to make sense of God's message.

gusto, pues que yo te enseño.
 Y tienen mucha razón
 sus vasallos en quejarse
 de que ha querido infamarse
 con tanta baja sujeción.

...

¿Puede el Conde errar en nada
 aunque sea contra mí?
 No, mal hablé, que nací
 a su servicio obligada.
 Por vasalla, es justa ley,
 y por mujer mucho más.
 ¿Cómo por ella no vas,
 que es ley un gusto de un rey?
 ¡Ea, pues! ¿En qué reparas?⁶⁷⁷

Laurencia's discourse shows that she understands and agrees with her husband in every respect. Her insistence on obedience demonstrates that she has perfectly assimilated the notion of wifely submission, according to God's order of things, and does not challenge it in any way, even under the direst circumstances. Thus, she is not acting out of an inordinate compulsion but rather in accordance with the cold reason of wifely duty. She then offers her own interpretation of the event: "De la Fortuna desde hoy / sabrás las dos caras. / Mostróme la alegre ayer, / hoy me ha mostrado la triste".⁶⁷⁸ Laurencia's rationalisation even makes her attribute what is happening to Fortune's whims. Thus, Laurencia admits that she has no control over her life ("No hay cosa segura alguna, / porque está en volver la cara / esta fortuna")⁶⁷⁹ and can only seek patience to help her overcome Fortune's blows.

This passive admission of her helplessness indicates that she views life through the prism of neostoicism. In the sixteenth century, stoicism was rediscovered and reinterpreted in agreement with Christian ethics. Not only the writings of Seneca but also those of Epictetus attracted the interest of various European thinkers like Flemish Justus Lipsius—who wrote, in particular, *De Constantia* (1584)—and French Guillaume du Vair, who composed the *Traité de la Constance* (1594).⁶⁸⁰ In Spain, while Vives was clearly influenced by stoicism

⁶⁷⁷ Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1381–1405.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vv. 1407–10.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vv. 1413–15.

⁶⁸⁰ For a detailed analysis of how Seneca was received in Spain from the Middle Ages to the early modern period, see Karl Alfred Blüher, *Séneca en España. Investigaciones sobre la recepción de Séneca en España desde el siglo XIII hasta el siglo XVII*, trans. Juan Conde (Madrid: Gredos, 1983).

in many of his works,⁶⁸¹ it was Francisco Sánchez de la Brozas who made Epictetus's *Enchiridion* available in Spanish under the title *Doctrina del estoico filósofo epicteto que se llama comúnmente enchiridion* (1600). This revival of stoicism distinguishes external things, those that man is helpless and powerless against, from the realm of the soul, which man can control.⁶⁸² This philosophical approach also emphasises the appreciation of external things according to their true worth.⁶⁸³ Moreover, neostoicism reinterprets the ancient Greek notion of *fatum* as divine providence, to which man has to submit and patiently accept.⁶⁸⁴ Thus, Laurencia's submission to Fortune is actually a neo-stoic acceptance of God's providence.

The heroine's asides show how she gradually comes to submit to her fate. Laurencia's initial lack of emotion is counterbalanced by her inner feelings. As she meets with her countryside friends who come to visit her in the city, she has just lost her daughter, and she voices her sorrow to the audience only: "¿Quién dirá que me han movido / a más tristeza que el daño / que del conde he recibido? / Ya envidio el grosero paño / y alabo el Tosco vestido"; "¡Ay, cuánto perdí aquel día / que vi esta grandeza inmensa!"; "¡Ay, riqueza adulatora! / ¿Qué sirve cubrir el luto? / Ríe el rostro, el alma llora".⁶⁸⁵ This more emotional and therefore more humane version of the traditionally stoic Griselda helps to see her as mother in every respect, one who mourns her children even as she accepts to yield them to their supposed untimely death. However, her sorrow soon turns into resignation, which she expresses using the typical neo-stoic topoi "life is borrowed" and "life is a dream" (or "life is a theatre"): "Todo este bien es fingido."; "Bien adivinaba yo / que era el estado prestado, / mas que era fingido, no".⁶⁸⁶

As Laurencia willingly yields her son, she provides a second example of how to apply neostoicism to her life. When she contends with Fenisa about the correct way to behave in such circumstances, her speech sounds like a manual for the perfect neo-stoic wife:

681 Vives not only considers that wisdom is based on the judgement of things according to their worth but also that Virtue stands above everything as the most valuable good and quality one can possess. Moreover, his writings convey the typically stoic topos "life is borrowed". See David Domínguez Manzano, "El estoicismo como moral en Vives, el Brocense y Quevedo," *Ingenium* 5 (2011): 113–14.

682 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

683 *Ibid.*

684 *Ibid.*, pp. 123–24.

685 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1553–57, 1561–62, 1600–602.

686 *Ibid.*, vv. 1570, 1575–77.

Tras la primera locura,
 ¿qué tengo que sentir más?
 Locura fue dar la mano
 a un príncipe,
 . . .
 Y pues entonces no vi
 el daño que agora tengo,
 véngome de mí, que vengo
 a menos de lo que fui.
 Pague el alma el sentimiento,
 que, para que no descanse,
 no lloro porque no amanse
 la fuerza el llanto al tormento.
 Fuera de eso, no he de hacer
 lo que las flacas mujeres,
 que es razón que consideres
 que soy del Conde mujer.
 A nobleza corresponde
 ser obediente al marido,
 ni es bien que haberlo sentido,
 lo diese a entender al Conde;
 porque mostrar sentimiento
 le daba a entender Laurencia
 que mostraba resistencia
 a su justo mandamiento.⁶⁸⁷

Laurencia stoically analyses her situation, attributing to each thing their true worth and taking control over what she can, namely her soul. She dismisses sorrow's folly ("la primera locura"), considering instead that she acted foolishly and was to blame for having agreed to marry above her rank, so she deserves to suffer inwardly. She looks for the strength to appear composed and remain obedient to her husband in every respect. Thus, Laurencia's various asides and speeches, together with Enrico's comments on her behaviour, contribute to reinforcing the idea that Laurencia is enduring her trials stoically like a saint.

This idea is further developed in the final act, or *jornada*, after her repudiation. Not only does her patience win her fame beyond her country, even reaching the ears of the Prince of Bearn—her final tests confirm her rejection of earthly pleasures and her faithfulness to her one and only husband. The Prince of Bearn is an additional character whose presence as a widower in search of a new wife offers the occasion to tell Laurencia's life story again, as one of his

687 Ibid., vv. 1830–55.

courtiers suggests her as a potential spouse. Anselmo, who narrates her story, speaks of her hyperbolically, underlining her virtues and perfections (“Dicen sus estados della, / con lágrimas generales, / que no ha nacido en el mundo / quien sus virtudes iguale”), imitating in a way contemporary books of illustrious women (conduct literature or even saints’ lives). Laurencia is therefore compared to “Porcia, Artemisa, Evadnes”, and as such is presented as worthy of an eternal laurel crown (“lauros le ofrece inmortales”) and as a saint (“Llámanla en todas sus tierras, / en extranjeras ciudades, / de las casadas ejemplo / único, santo, admirable”), living very humbly (“Mucho más hablan agora / en la humildad que trae / cuatro ovejas por el monte”).⁶⁸⁸ Thus, Anselmo becomes another of Laurencia’s champions, praising her virtues and unique qualities.

Convinced by his courtier, the Prince of Bearn proposes to Laurencia, but she refuses because she prefers to go back to Enrico’s court and help him organise his supposed second wedding. This additional episode functions as an external test of Laurencia’s fidelity to her husband after repudiation and another lesson on neosticism. It shows not only that Laurencia’s love and faithfulness are limitless but also that wealth and rank have no attraction for her. She does not wish to marry above her rank for a second time: when asked what her answer is, she replies, “Todo bien es corto y pequeño”, and that duty binds her to serve Enrico because he was her “dueño”.⁶⁸⁹ Laurencia reflects on the vanity (i. e. short duration) of everything earthly and prefers duty, virtue in other words, over the prospect of an easy, wealthy life that may only be ephemeral. Thus, the heroine stands out as a counterexample of women’s alleged fickleness and perfectly incarnates the stoic virtue of constancy throughout her life.

As Laurencia prepares Enrico’s second wedding, her behaviour and speeches show one last time that she suffers from the situation, but it is only when she is alone, and she seeks the strength not to let her husband see it: “sólo le pido a Dios me dé / en tantos malos paciencia, / que cuando la novia venga, / no sé que ha de ser de mí”.⁶⁹⁰ As Laurencia expresses her approval of his second wedding, Enrico is finally convinced of her sanctity, so he reveals the truth and praises his wife’s virtues one last time, comparing her to Greco-Roman illustrious women (“la mujer más famosa, / más perfecta y más honrada, / más humilde y obidiente

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., vv. 2361–64, 2332, 2368, 2377–80, 2369–71.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 2733, 2736.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., vv. 2867–70.

/ que en las historias se halla”) and to female saints (“fuera de⁶⁹¹ aquellas que tiene / la Iglesia en nombre de santas”).⁶⁹²

Regardless of the lessons in neostoic doctrine that Laurencia provides and the continuous presentation of her character as unique and extraordinarily virtuous, she remains problematic. By attributing Fortune as the agent responsible for the murder of her children, Laurencia clears herself (and Enrico) of any responsibility and guilt. However, Laurencia fails to see that Fortune is arguably not the agency behind what happened and that infanticide is not an order she should comply with, even if it comes from her husband.

In spite of its failure to convey a completely logical rationale for Laurencia’s behaviour, Lope’s play still offers an interesting example of conduct literature turned into drama, one in which the *querelle des femmes* becomes a three-dimensional phenomenon, providing “almost living” proof that women can be virtuous.

Whereas versions of Griselda’s story appeared in Italy, these did not particularly engage with the *querelle des femmes*; it was only at the end of the seventeenth century in France that the myth engages again with the *querelle des femmes* in the works of Charles Perrault and Louise-Geneviève de Sainctonge.⁶⁹³ Perrault not only had his *marquise de Salusses ou la patience de Griseldis* read by l’abbé de Lavau in front of the Académie française on 25 August 1691—this story most notably opens his first collection of tales published the same year. As for Sainctonge, her play, *Grisèlde ou la princesse de Saluces*, takes Perrault’s tale as its main source, and it was probably written around the same time.⁶⁹⁴

691 In their French translation of the play, Marie-Françoise Déodat-Kessedjian and Emmanuelle Garnier consider that “fuera de” means “hormis”. However, given the other instances in the text in which Laurencia is compared to a saint, I believe that here “fuera de” should be translated as “in addition to”, a meaning already attested by Covarrubias as an equivalent to the Latin “ultra”, see *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1611), f. 417Rb.

692 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 2923–26, 2927–28.

693 Before Perrault’s version, the myth was present in French literature but mainly as occurrences within conduct literature or catalogues of women’s lives praising Griselda’s virtues without altering the traditional story in any way, and this is especially relevant to the myth’s engagement with the *querelle*.

694 Critics have not yet come across any evidence enabling us to date Sainctonge’s comedy exactly. They usually take 1692 as a starting point, given that Perrault’s story is the main source, and 1714 as an upper limit, since the play was published that year, along with others of Sainctonge’s works, in her *Poésies diverses*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Dijon: Antoine de Fay, 1714), pp. 263–317.

As many critiques have noted, Perrault's *Griselidis* is one of the various texts pertaining to the *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, opposing him with Nicolas Boileau, and to these writers' respective engagement in the *querelle des femmes*. Both *querelles* were intertwined during this period. On the one hand, the Ancients advocated that literature had to take the example of authors from the Antiquity, whose mastery could not be surpassed; they established the rules of classic literary production (verisimilitude, decorum, purity, simplicity in style, etc.), and positioned themselves against what they considered the feminisation of literature, especially in the novel genre practiced by women at the time. The Ancients promoted masculine values both in literature and politics and therefore wished to exclude women not only from literature but also from any sort of cultural production. On the other hand, the Moderns were in favour of more stylistic freedom and a broader choice of sources, and they thought that contemporary authors could surpass their antic ancestors. The Moderns advocated for women's active presence in culture, both in terms of judgment and production.⁶⁹⁵ As Danielle Haase-Dubosc explains, they believed in,

un partage intellectuel et culturel entre hommes et femmes comme façon d'adoucir les mœurs viriles (et souvent brutales), donnant aux hommes la délicatesse qui leur manque, aux femmes la force, ainsi que la capacité de se définir en fonction de l'amour que l'on ressent et que l'on inspire aussi bien que par sa naissance.⁶⁹⁶

In 1694, Boileau published his *Satire X*, which is an invective against women and marriage. In response, Perrault not only had his *Griselidis* republished, but his own treaty in favour of marriage and in defence of women, the *Apologie des femmes* (1694), came out with an introduction explicitly answering Boileau's text. Given Saintonge's criticism of misogyny in her play, it seems likely that she also wrote it in response to Boileau's satire, shortly after reading Perrault's version of the Griselda myth.

On the one hand, Perrault uses both *Griselidis* and his *Apologie* to argue against the misogynists' exaggerated generalisations about women's vices by

⁶⁹⁵ For more information on the *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, see among others Anne-Marie Lecoq, *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes : XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); Ralph Dekoninck, "Premier âge moderne ou première modernité ? Retour sur la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," *Cahiers en ligne du GEMCA* 1 (2010); Melannie Walsh Miranda, "La querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," *Revista de Lenguas Modernas* 20 (2014); Antony McKenna et al., "Les écrivains de la querelle. De la polémique à la poétique, 1687–1750" (2012).

⁶⁹⁶ Danielle Haase-Dubosc, "Intellectuelles, femmes d'esprit et femmes savantes au XVII^e siècle," *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés [Online]* 13 (2001): 9.

presenting them as a disease clouding judgement and by exposing women's civilising effect on men, particularly on their husbands. On the other hand, Sainctonge takes the criticism of misogyny further and bluntly denounces its irrationality by showing how exacerbated passions can result in a small-minded view of women as untrustworthy in every respect, which in turn can lead men to sin.

In the 1695 preface to the fourth edition of his tale collection, Perrault offers an interesting example of how the *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* could appear together with the *querelle des femmes* within the same discourse. Perrault not only reaffirms his right and legitimacy as a Modern writer but also uses the topos of the shrewish figure, the “Matrone d'Éphèse”,⁶⁹⁷ to criticise the misogynist exaggeration that uses one bad example to condemn the whole sex and to extol Griselidis's virtues at the same time:

Je prétends même que mes Fables méritent mieux d'être racontées que la plupart des Contes anciens, et particulièrement celui de la Matrone d'Éphèse et celui de Psyché, si l'on les regarde du côté de la Morale, chose principale dans toutes sortes de Fables, et pour laquelle elles doivent avoir été faites. Toute la moralité qu'on peut tirer de la Matrone d'Éphèse est que souvent les femmes qui semblent les plus vertueuses le sont le moins, et qu'ainsi il n'y en a presque point qui le soient véritablement.

Qui ne voit que cette Morale est très mauvaise, et qu'elle ne va qu'à corrompre les femmes par le mauvais exemple, et à leur faire croire qu'en manquant à leur devoir elles ne font que suivre la voie commune. Il n'en est pas de même de la Morale de Griselidis, qui tend à porter les femmes à souffrir de leurs maris, et à faire voir qu'il n'y en a point de si brutal ni de si bizarre, dont la patience d'une honnête femme ne puisse venir à bout.⁶⁹⁸

In the last sentence, Perrault expresses the concept that husbands could be reformed by their wives and that Griselidis is a perfect example of this. Perrault firmly believes in women's civilising influence. He not only develops this idea in *Griselidis* but also in his *Apologie*. Although pertaining to different genres, the two texts echo each other as they draw their point. Whereas the *Apologie* uses logic and various examples in order to build a convincing argument in favour of marriage, *Griselidis* relies on a single imaginary instance of married life, which is developed in detail: two extreme fictional human beings are depicted, with the albeit failed intention of rendering them plausible, in order to promote the views that misogyny can only come from a clouded mind and that women

697 Perrault here alludes to Jean de La Fontaine's *Matrone d'Éphèse* (Book XII, Fable XXVI), see *Fables* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1985), pp. 762–70.

698 Charles Perrault, *Contes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp. 50–51.

play a central role in families and society at large by bringing order, decorum, good taste, and refinement.

On the one hand, the *Apologie* uses a simple rhetorical question to show the misogynists' exaggeration:

Il est, j'en suis d'accord, des femmes infidelles,
Et dignes du mespris que ton Cœur a pour elles ;
Mais si de deux ou trois le crime est avéré,
Faut-il que tout le sexe en soit deshonoré.⁶⁹⁹

Perrault reiterates the same idea to insist on his point and make apparent the misogynists' use of hyperboles blaming the entire female gender as an intimidation technique:

Rejette donc, mon fils, cette fausse maxime
Qu'on trouve rarement une femme sans crime,
C'est seulement ainsi que parle un Suborneur,
Qui de femme sans foy, sans honte & sans honneur,
Fait, près de son Iris, une liste bien ample,
Pour la faire tomber par le mauvais exemple.⁷⁰⁰

On the other hand, in *Griselidis*, Perrault resorts to early modern medical concepts, imagery, and metaphors in order to signify and explain the misogynists' error and faulty argumentation. The French author thus depicts a Prince who appears ideal and lovable but who suffers from an illness that causes his irrational judgement of women as vain and feigning hypocrites. As many critics have noted, the tale's second stanza, which introduces the nameless Prince of Saluces, draws on contemporary laudatory descriptions of Louis XIV,⁷⁰¹ thereby inducing contemporary readers to conceive highly of the male protagonist. However, the text quickly draws attention to the Prince's fault:

Ce temperament héroïque
Fut obscurci d'une sombre vapeur
Qui, chagrine et mélancolique,
Lui faisait voir dans le fond de son cœur
Tout le beau sexe infidèle et trompeur :
Dans la femme où brillait le plus rare mérite,
Il voyait une âme hypocrite,
Un esprit d'orgueil enivré,

⁶⁹⁹ Perrault, *L'Apologie des femmes* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694), p. 3.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁰¹ See Jean-Pierre Collinet's note on the tale, Charles Perrault, *Contes*, p. 276; Béatrice Didier, "Perrault féministe?," *Europe : Revue Littéraire Mensuelle* 68, no. 739/740 (1990): 106.

Un cruel ennemi qui sans cesse n'aspire
 Qu'à prendre un souverain empire
 Sur l'homme malheureux qui lui sera livré.⁷⁰²

As Jean-Pierre Collinet rightly remarks, the Prince suffers from melancholy. According to contemporary beliefs, this illness occasioned fear and sadness without apparent cause and made people say or do irrational things due to brain alteration from melancholic vapour or humour, also referred to as melancholia or black bile.⁷⁰³ While the melancholic prince is a topos of early modern literature and particularly theatre,⁷⁰⁴ the variety of its transcription in fiction resists clear and definitive classification and/or meaning. However, in his study on melancholy in literature, Laurent Cantagrel manages to elaborate a definition of what he calls “l'exception mélancolique”:

En l'absence d'une présentation systématique de la doctrine ayant fait autorité, nous ne disposons pas d'un portrait unique du tempérament mélancolique. Chaque auteur en compose sa version, mêlant sources et songes, médecine et mythologie. Néanmoins à travers certains de ses caractères les plus récurrents se dégage une interprétation du mélancolique comme d'un être en rupture avec l'ordre du monde. Cette définition négative, dans une doctrine de l'harmonie universelle, fait le caractère exceptionnel de ce tempérament, en bien comme en mal, que l'on retrouvera dans ses incarnations littéraires ou sa valorisation philosophique.⁷⁰⁵

The Prince of Saluces is in “rupture” with the world's order, not only because he refuses to get married but more importantly because he cannot see any good in women. He suffers from the same type of melancholy as Molière's misanthrope, Alceste, but instead of hating everyone, Perrault's Prince specifically hates women. Whereas Alceste is in rupture with his world because of his inaptitude to live with his own time,⁷⁰⁶ Perrault's Prince reproduces seventeenth-century misogynist arguments from Boileau's *Satire X* about the “Dévoté”, the “Coquette”, the “Précieuse”, and the “Joueuse”, even though he comes from a distant Italian past.⁷⁰⁷ The rupture lies in his inability to see virtue in any woman and marry, as his rank requires. This distorted vision that amplifies the

702 Perrault, *Contes*, pp. 59–60.

703 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

704 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London; New York: Verso, 1998), esp. pp. 142 and ff.

705 Laurent Cantagrel, *De la maladie à l'écriture. Genèse de la mélancolie romantique* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004), p. 45.

706 See Anne Teulade, “La mélancolie est-elle curable ? Les fonctions thérapeutiques de la fiction théâtrale,” *Études Épistémè* 16(2009), <http://episteme.revues.org/679>.

707 Perrault, *Contes*, p. 62. See also Collinet's notes on this passage, *ibid.*, p. 301, n. 9–13.

number of women with faults leads the Prince to faulty logic and generalisation. Whereas Alceste falls in love with Célimène, the Prince falls in love with Griselidis. However, if Célimène is a slanderous *coquette*, Griselidis is extremely virtuous. While Alceste finds no cure to his illness, the Prince is gradually brought back to sanity by Griselidis's virtues.

Upon her first appearance in the tale, Griselidis is said to be able to “dompter les cœurs les plus sauvages”.⁷⁰⁸ This line is best understood in the light of Perrault's reference to women's civilising influence in the *Apologie*:

Peux-tu ne sçavoir pas que la Civilité
 Chez les Femmes nâquit avec l'Honesteté ?
 Que chez elles se prend la fine politesse,
 Le bon air, le bon goust, & la delicatesse ?
 Regarde un peu de près celui qui Loupgarou,
 Loin du sexe a vescu renfermé dans son trou,
 Tu le verras crasseux, mal-adroit & sauvage,
 Farouche dans ses mœurs, rude dans son langage,
 Ne pouvoir rien penser de fin, d'ingenieux,
 Ne dire jamais rien que de dur ou de vieux.⁷⁰⁹

Although clearly not as uncivilised as the “Loupgarou”-type of man described in this passage, the Prince's unwillingness to perform his moral duty as a ruler leads him to lose his way, literally and figuratively. Right after his heated argument with his courtiers, he flees his responsibilities and leaves them the task of finding him a perfect, virtuous, and will-less spouse, while he goes hunting in an almost beast-like way:

Le Prince ayant mis fin à ce discours moral,
 Monte brusquement à cheval,
 Et court joindre à perte d'haleine
 Sa meute qui l'attend au milieu de la plaine.⁷¹⁰

What is more, the Prince's eagerness to act alone, according to his will only, makes him lose track of his dogs and hunting companions:

Le Prince, par hasard ou par sa destinée,
 Prit une route détournée
 Où nul des Chasseurs ne le suit ;

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 64.

⁷⁰⁹ Perrault, *L'Apologie des femmes*, pp. 7–8.

⁷¹⁰ Perrault, *Contes*, p. 63.

Plus il court, plus il s'en sépare :
 Enfin à tel point il s'égaré
 Que des chiens et des cors il n'entend plus le bruit.⁷¹¹

He thus completely leaves civilisation, and no sign of it returns until he meets Griselidis. She not only offers to bring him back to the right track ("Mais n'ayez point d'inquiétude, / Je remettrai vos pas sur un chemin connu")⁷¹² but also prevents him from drinking like an animal:

Dans ce temps elle voit que le Prince se baisse
 Sur le moite bord du ruisseau,
 Pour éteindre dans le cours d'eau
 La soif ardente qui le presse.
 « Seigneur, attendez un moment »,
 Dit-elle, et courant promptement
 Vers sa cabane, elle y prend une tasse
 Qu'avec joie et de bonne grâce,
 Elle présente à ce nouvel Amant.⁷¹³

Whereas Griselidis's assistance in helping the Prince find his way back to his castle is a metaphor for her leading him back to organised human society, her providing him with a cup also stands for her civilising influence over the Prince. This instrument is what distinguishes men from animals: the manner in which they satiate their instinctive, basic, vital need of water. This simple, almost anodyne, gesture indicates the Prince's regressive beast-like state and alludes to Perrault's idea that women are the origins and keepers of good manners. Griselidis's effect over the Prince is highlighted by the fact that he is mesmerised by her beauty and virtues, so much so that he loses his aplomb in front her:

Saisi d'une frayeur pour lui toute nouvelle,
 Il s'approche interdit, et plus timide qu'elle,
 Lui dit d'une tremblante voix,
 Que de tous ses Veneurs il a perdu la trace.⁷¹⁴

The Prince thus appears as an inferior in need of help, care, guidance and teaching, which Griselidis humbly provides.

While Griselidis's civilising influence enables the Prince to reconcile himself with her sex and serenely approach marriage with her, his "illness" is

711 Ibid.

712 Ibid., p. 65.

713 Ibid., pp. 65–66.

714 Ibid.

particularly resistant. As he is not entirely cured yet, melancholy again serves as a justification for his sudden wish to test her after the birth of their daughter:

Soit que le Prince eût l'âme un peu moins enflammée
 Qu'aux premiers jours de son ardeur,
 Soit que de sa maligne humeur
 La masse se fût rallumée,
 Et de son épaisse fumée
 Eût obscurci ses sens et corrompu son cœur,
 Dans tout ce que fait la Princesse,
 Il s' imagine voir peu de sincérité.
 Sa trop grande vertu le blesse,
 C'est un piège à sa crédulité
 ...
 Pour guérir les chagrins dont son âme est atteinte,
 Il la suit, il l'observe, il aime à la troubler
 Par les ennuis de la contrainte,
 Par les alarmes de la crainte.⁷¹⁵

He takes away her jewels and rich garments to test her vanity, but she gladly gives away everything and interprets his actions as God's trials on her faith ("Que telle est du Seigneur la conduite sur moi / Et que de tant de maux l'en-nuyeuse durée / N'est que pour exercer ma constance et ma foi").⁷¹⁶ Although she patiently bears the Prince's torments, only after he takes away her daughter do her virtues start to affect him, slowly awakening his remorse:

Le Prince qui tâchait d'éloigner par la chasse
 Le vif remord qui l'embarasse
 Sur l'excès de sa cruauté,
 Craignait de revoir la Princesse,
 ...
 Cependant, il en fut traité
 Avec douceur, avec caresse,
 ...
 Par cette complaisance et si grande et si prompte
 Il fut touché de regret et de honte ;
 Mais son chagrin demeura le plus fort.⁷¹⁷

Again, as the Prince claims that their daughter is dead, he is almost redeemed by Griselidis's "amitié conjugale", but his "bile" overpowers her curing

715 Ibid., p. 74.

716 Ibid., p. 75.

717 Ibid., p. 78.

effect.⁷¹⁸ It is only years later, after repudiating her and pretending that he is going to marry another young lady, that his illness disappears from the text, suggesting that he is definitively cured by Griselidis's lifelong endurance.

Consequently, the Prince's melancholy provides a medical explanation for his misogyny and his cruel decision to test his wife. Each allusion to the power of the black bile over his brain and heart is an opportunity to present to the reader the Prince's internal conflict between his condition's influence and Griselidis's civilising effect. However, the verisimilitude of this process is undermined by the duration of Griselidis's testing, as well as by the lack of final comment from the narrator about the disappearance of the melancholy and the restoration of the Prince to humoral balance. He relapses too many times during the tale for a complete recovery to be believable and convincing. As for Griselidis, she also remains ambiguous. Perrault was aware of her problematic nature and the difficulty of making her extreme patience realistic: in the epistle to "Monsieur***", an unknown and possibly fictional figure,⁷¹⁹ the author addresses the issue. Using the genre of a letter and a similar rhetorical stratagem to that of Petrarch, Perrault claims that he read his tale to two of his friends and reports their respective reactions in order to convince his readers that everything in his tale is necessary, justified, and believable. While the first friend finds some passages tedious and complains about the length and the verisimilitude of the main characters, the second one finds no faults in the Prince's depiction or in Griselidis's "réflexions chrétiennes", which in his opinion are "absolument nécessaires" in order to "rendre croyable la Patience" of the female protagonist.⁷²⁰ The last speaker having the most rhetorical weight, Perrault, thus hopes to silence any further negative criticism. In spite of his intradiegetical (The Prince's melancholy and Griselidis's Christian interpretation) and paratextual (the letter) efforts, the two protagonists remain problematic.

As Béatrice Didier argues, Perrault is far less a feminist than some of his contemporaries, such as Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon or François Poulain de la Barre.⁷²¹ Although Perrault comes to women's defence by extolling their civilising power, he remains a partisan of patriarchal authority over women within marriage and society at large. In her tragicomedy *Griselde*, Sainctonge, on the other hand, offers a more feminist-oriented version of the Griselda myth. The main and most meaningful change Sainctonge brings to the traditional structure of the myth regards the fact that Griselde is not tested by

718 Ibid., pp. 78–79.

719 See Collinet's remark, *ibid.*, p. 305, n. 1.

720 Perrault, *Contes*, pp. 92–3.

721 Didier, "Perrault féministe?"

her husband—he instead torments her because he is a melancholic misogynist. While Sainctonge takes from Perrault the idea of the Prince's melancholy, her play exacerbates his melancholy, which not only manifests itself through irrational misogyny but also through extremely passionate love. Whereas in Perrault's tale, melancholy only affects the Prince, in Sainctonge's play, melancholy is not limited to the Prince: other characters suffer from black bile excess. Thus, a contrast emerges between the relatively benign form that the illness takes in the other characters affected by melancholy and the sinful aspect it acquires in Griselde's husband.

Before I turn to the analysis of melancholy and its effects on the various characters, let me briefly summarise the plot. As in Perrault's version, Griselde and the Prince only have one daughter, Isabelle. She is introduced as their niece, and neither of them know that she is their daughter because the Prince's sister told them their child died soon after they left the baby in her care. As with Perrault, Isabelle has a lover, Frédéric, but the Prince only learns about their love in the course of the play. Moreover, Sainctonge adds two characters: Phénice (Griselde's servant and confidant) and Hidaspe (the Prince's former tutor). The play opens with Griselde explaining to Isabelle how the Prince stopped loving her and started tormenting her by taking away their only daughter. The Prince then arrives and repudiates her, but before she can leave for the countryside, he makes her stay to prepare his second wedding with Isabelle, who does not know he wishes to marry her. Griselde reluctantly informs Isabelle of the Prince's plans. Isabelle then tells him that she refuses to marry him out of friendship for Griselde. The Prince gets angry and leaves her in Frédéric's care, not knowing that they are lovers. Helped by Phénice, they try to leave Saluzzo. However, hoping to make the Prince change his mind about the wedding, Hidaspe tells his former pupil that Isabelle loves someone else. The Prince easily guesses that it is Frédéric and manages to prevent the young couple from running away. As he meditates upon how to punish them, starting to doubt the morality of his own conduct, a messenger arrives to reveal Isabelle's true identity. The Prince realises the extent of his error: Isabelle is his long-lost daughter, and Griselde's virtues are true, so he restores Griselde as his wife and allows Isabelle and Frédéric's marriage.

The Prince's excesses appear more intelligible when analysed through the lens of contemporary beliefs about melancholy. Aristotle's explanations of the varying influences of black bile on the body and mind were still prevalent at this time, and it was also the basis for most medical approaches toward melancholy.⁷²² Aristotle starts his examination of melancholy with a question:

722 See Cantagrel, *De la maladie à l'écriture. Genèse de la mélancolie romantique*, pp. 39–62.

Why is it that all those men who have become extraordinary in philosophy, politics, poetry, or the arts are obviously melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are seized by the illnesses that come from black bile, as is said about Heracles among heroes?⁷²³

This question lies at the origin of the association between kings and melancholy in early modern theatre. However, this does not mean that only “extraordinary men” suffer from melancholy not that all those who are melancholic are, as a result, men of exception. According to Aristotle, while anyone can be affected to some extent by black bile through what they eat, its effect is the greatest on individuals whose temperament is melancholic by nature and varies according to the amount of bile naturally within them, as well as by whether it is cold or hot:

Now black bile, being cold by nature and not on the surface, when it is in the condition mentioned, if it abounds in the body, produces apoplexy or torpor or spiritlessness or fear, but if it becomes overheated, it produces high-spiritedness with song, and insanity, and the breaking out of sores, and such things. In most people, therefore, arising from their daily nutrition, it produces no difference in character, but only brings about some melancholic disease. But those in whom such a mixture has formed by nature, these straightaway develop all sorts of characters, each difference in accordance with the different mixture; for instance, those in whom (*the black bile*) is considerable and cold become sluggish and stupid, whereas those in whom it is very considerable and hot become mad, clever, erotic, and easily moved to spiritlessness and desire, and some become more talkative. But many too, owing to this heat being near the location of the intelligence, are affected by diseases of madness or inspirations, whence come Sibyls and Bakides and all the inspired persons, when (*the condition*) comes not through disease but through natural mixture. . . . But those in whom the excessive heat is relaxed toward a mean, these people are melancholic, but they are superior to the others in many respects, some in education, others in the arts, and others in politics.⁷²⁴

In Sainctonge’s play, the Prince is defined as a man of exception by his former tutor, Hidaspe:

Un héros tel que vous . . .
Intrépide aux dangers, heureux dans les combats,
La valeur fait toujours triompher votre bras.
Le Ciel de ses présents ne vous fut point avare.⁷²⁵

⁷²³ Aristotle, *Problems: Books 20–38*, trans. Robert Mayhew (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011), p. 277.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 285–87.

⁷²⁵ Louise-Geneviève Sainctonge, “Griselde,” in *Théâtre de femmes de l’Ancien Régime. XVII^e–XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Aurore Evain, Perry Gethner, and Henriette Goldwyn (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2011), 1.4.174–77.

Therefore, the Prince is assumed to have a melancholic temperament by nature. This assumption was extremely common at the time, not only with regard to the melancholic king *topos* in literature (especially tragedy) but in reality as well.⁷²⁶ Whereas this temperament makes the Prince a great warrior, it also makes him prone to what Aristotle calls “diseases of madness” or “insanity”, which the philosopher believed to be at the origin of Heracles’ furious outbursts. In Sainctonge, the Prince’s melancholy causes his extremely passionate love for Isabelle, yet it also triggers the misogyny that manifests itself in his cruelty and irrational judgements of women’s behaviour.

As a learned man and the Prince’s confidant, Hidaspe perceives and reveals the link between the Prince’s misogyny and his melancholy. As the old man tries to understand why the protagonist doubts Griselde’s virtues, he suddenly realises that the Prince’s error lies in a humoral imbalance in his body:

Après plus de quinze ans d’une égale conduite,
 Il faut, Seigneur, il faut qu’elle [i.e. Griselde] ait un vrai mérite.
 Une fausse vertu se [re]connaît aisément,
 En mille occasions notre Cœur se dément,
 Et lorsque la raison est toujours la maîtresse,
 C’est ce qu’on doit nommer véritable sagesse.
 Ah, Prince ! Revenez de la fatale erreur
 Qui depuis trop longtemps occupe votre cœur,
 Dissipez pour jamais une sombre tristesse :
 Un héros tel que vous doit être sans faiblesse.
 ...
 Cessez de les gâter par votre humeur bizarre.
 Elle empoisonne tout jusques à vos plaisirs.⁷²⁷

Because it is caused by melancholy, the Prince’s misogyny is completely irrational. This appears as the protagonist expresses his hatred of women in such terms that he unconsciously projects onto them his own faults:

Si Grisèlde autrefois à mes yeux fut aimable,
 Son sexe en général m’est toujours haïssable.
 Ce n’est rien que faiblesse, orgueil, ambition.
 On y trouve jamais ni bon sens, ni raison ;
 En tous lieux, en tout temps, le caprice guide ;
 Les vents sont moins légers, la mer est moins perfide.⁷²⁸

726 See Louis Marin, “Le roi mélancolique,” *Silex* 27–28 (1984).

727 Sainctonge, “Griselde,” 1.4.165–79.

728 *Ibid.*, 1.4.153–58.

Even though it draws from the common misogynistic themes found in many texts of the *querelle* (women's weakness, vanity, irrationality, whimsical nature, etc.), the irony of this speech lies in the Prince's incapacity to see that he behaves precisely in the way he accuses women of. The audience can clearly recognise this, even as the play just begins. In the second scene, the Prince makes an arrogant entrance and treats Griselde with condescendence as he repudiates her:

... j'accorde enfin à mon peuple ce qu'il désire.
 Il souhaite, Madame, avec beaucoup d'ardeur
 Qu'un glorieux hymen me donne un successeur.
 Pour flatter mon espoir et croître ma puissance,
 Je suis contraint de faire une illustre alliance.
 ...
 Je ne veux point laisser de tache à ma mémoire,
 Un divorce avec vous satisfera ma gloire :
 Je n'écoute plus qu'elle, il faut vous retirer.⁷²⁹

Not only does he speak without any regard for what Griselde might feel—he also lies. Shortly after, Hidaspe guesses that the Prince leaves Griselde because he is in love with Isabelle:

HIDASPE Ciel ! Je m'en doutais bien, une nouvelle ardeur
 Agite votre esprit autant que votre cœur
 ...
 Vous montrez à Griselde une injuste colère,
 Sans doute qu'Isabelle aura trop su vous plaire.
 LE PRINCE Cela vous paraît-il un si cruel malheur ?⁷³⁰

The Prince's rhetorical question implies that he admits to having a new love and shows that he is as inconstant as he believes women to be. The lies he tells Griselde reveal his deceitfulness and his whimsical attitude. This shows the faulty logic and insanity of the Prince's misogyny. Given that these are symptoms of melancholy, his hatred of women therefore appears to be caused by the black bile imbalance in his body.

In addition, the excesses of his love for Isabelle also result from melancholy. Whereas Aristotle only briefly links melancholy with eroticism, early modern medical discourse treats love as a melancholic disease, i.e. a disease

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 1.2.74–83.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., 1.4.183–91.

of the mind that creates false images in the mind and perturbs reason.⁷³¹ For example, in Lazare Meyssonier's *Des maladies extraordinaires, et nouvelles* (1643), love is a kind of madness, "un désir de posséder continuellement quelque chose" that can be good in nature, or at least perceived as good, while actually deceiving the mind through its "apparente bonté".⁷³²

According to Jean Aubery's *Antidote de l'amour* (1599), love enters the body through the eye ("Car les yeux des objets, outrepassant par les nostres suscitent & attisent vn brasier dans nos veines, c'est par les yeux que l'amour élance ses estincelles lasciuies sur nous, desquelles il nous affole, & consomme"⁷³³) and reaches the "sens commun", which

advertit l'imagination, & elle par entresuite represente à l'intellect l'advis qu'elle a receu des sens abusez de l'excellence de leus objets, le plus souuent desguisez, l'ame ainsi trahie prend ses conclusions, & r'enferme le tout en la bougette de la memoire, qui par importunité passe & repasse ce souvenir agréable au deuant des sens, & enfante aussi tost vn appetite de s'vnir à la chose qui a semblé aymable : cest appetit ensemencé & nourry dans le foye croissant, fera croistre l'Amour, par le luxe & oysiueté ses suffragans, l'amour croissant & habitué dans nous, deuiendra fureur : car l'amour est la fureur de l'homme.⁷³⁴

What Aubery says "la bougette de la memoire" is at the origin of the "fictions mélancoliques" (as Frédéric Gabriel puts it),⁷³⁵ having been created by love in the lover's mind and manifested themselves as daydreaming or raptures:

Veritablement la passion d'amour maistrisant sur tout l'imagination, luy remet souuent l'image agreable de l'obiect aymé, au deuant de ses yeux, & luy portrait de si vivues couleurs, qu'elle croit la voir tousiours presente, de sorte que tout sentiment & mouuement de l'homme cessent, & faisans ioug à la principauté de ceste faculté apprehensiue, laisse l'homme pensif attaché à son idole, par les liens de l'imagination.⁷³⁶

As he first enters the stage, the Prince appears caught up in meditation: "La seule rêverie ici conduit mes pas".⁷³⁷ Since he then suddenly tells Griselde that

⁷³¹ See Frédéric Gabriel, "Fictions mélancoliques : maladie d'amour, possession et subjectivités aliénées à l'époque moderne," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 58, no. 1 (2011): 193–95.

⁷³² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 193.

⁷³³ Jean Aubery, *L'antidote d'amour* (Paris: Claude Chapelet, 1599), f.13r.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, f.11v–12r.

⁷³⁵ See Gabriel, "Fictions mélancoliques : maladie d'amour, possession et subjectivités aliénées à l'époque moderne": esp. 207–15.

⁷³⁶ Aubery, *L'antidote d'amour*, f.38v–39r.

⁷³⁷ Sainctonge, "Griselde," 1.2.72.

he repudiates her, the implied link between his daydreaming and Griselde's rejection appears to be his love for Isabelle. The madness of his attachment to this young woman lies in the fact that he assumes that she loves him back as if it could not be otherwise: he starts making wedding plans without even informing Isabelle of his love or intention to marry her, cruelly asking Griselde to tell her instead ("Elle ignore le choix que mon cœur a fait d'elle, / Je vous charge le soin de lui faire savoir / Que demain notre hymen doit remplir mon espoir")⁷³⁸ and to begin preparations. The possibility that Isabelle might reject him does not even cross his mind, and when she does, it infuriates him, showing the insane and despotic ascendancy that love has over his mind:

LE PRINCE	Cesser de vous aimer n'est plus en ma puissance, Vos regards m'ont flatté d'une douce espérance. Quand vous n'auriez pour moi que haine et que mépris, Votre main doit payer tout ce qu'ils m'ont promis.
ISABELLE	Comment d'un doux espoir ai-je flatté votre âme, Puisque jusqu'à ce jour j'ignorais votre flamme ?
LE PRINCE	Ingrate, par mes soins, par mes empressements, Vous deviez pénétrer mes secrets sentiments. ⁷³⁹

Thus, melancholic diseases affect the Prince's mind twofold: through his misogyny and his love. The black bile induces him to fashion false imaginations, not just about women in general being deceitful and filled with faults but also fantasises that Isabelle loves him and should have known that he loves her, even though she had no way to know. Both melancholic misogyny and melancholic love make him extremely irascible. Given love's obsessive nature, the Prince's mind is entirely occupied by Isabelle's image. As a result, the mental illness has a very strong hold on him and is hard to cure.

Whereas Perrault's *Griselidis* has a civilising effect on her Prince, which in turn corrects his humoral imbalance, Saintonge's *Griselde* fails to reform her husband because his melancholy has such an overwhelming effect on his mind that he misinterprets the reality of her virtues:

Avec ce beau dehors [i.e. Griselde's], c'est ainsi qu'on surprend,
Et tout autre que moi le prendrait pour garant
De son fidèle amour et de sa patience.
Mais, des femmes, doit-on juger à l'apparence ?
Non, leur sexe souvent fourbe, artificieux,

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.3.346–48.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.2.569–76.

N'est rien moins dans le cœur que ce qu'il est aux yeux ;
 Il sait que la vertu nous plaît, nous paraît belle,
 Et veut, pour nous tromper, en emprunter le voile.⁷⁴⁰

Griselde's "patience" cannot have any effect on the Prince because his black bile excess distorts his perception and creates an image of feigned virtue where there is only sincerity. Consequently, a mere observation of her suffering and obedience is not enough to deliver him from his delirium.

As an illness provoked by humour, melancholy was sometimes treated with purgation, broths or juleps in order to expel the excess of black bile and cool down the blood.⁷⁴¹ Another common view at the time, in order to correct the humoral imbalance provoked by melancholic love in particular, was to encourage men to have sexual intercourse with a woman with whom they were not in love with, thereby using the act of ejaculation as a form of purgation and cooling-down process.⁷⁴² Given the obvious ethical problem this implied at the time, doctors usually prescribed other treatments. Some considered the psychological aspect of the disease and tried to create a diversion from the love object through physical exercise, the arts in general (literature, theatre, music, etc.), or entertainment from friends.⁷⁴³ Moral advice was also often suggested, given that melancholic love was considered to endanger the soul.

In seventeenth-century drama, these treatments are reproduced and discussed, even ridiculed. Notably in Molière's comedy *L'Amour médecin* (1665), Sganarelle is cured from his excessively possessive love for his daughter, Lucinde, by an elaborate fiction created by Lucinde and her lover, Clitandre, thereby showing more generally theatre's therapeutic virtue.⁷⁴⁴ However, Sainctonge here seems to draw inspiration from other plays, particularly Jean Racine's tragedy *Britannicus* (1670) and *La folie du sage* (1645), a tragi-comedy by François L'Hermite, also known as Tristan.

In *Britannicus*, Néron's love melancholy, which turns him into a tyrant, seems to be briefly cured by Burrhus, who manages to reason with the Emperor and make him see that fratricide does not befit the kingly virtues he has

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.3.123–30.

⁷⁴¹ See Donald Beecher's analysis of Jacques Ferrand's pharmacological practice to cure love melancholy, Donald Beecher, "Des médicaments pour soigner la mélancolie: Jacques Ferrand et la pharmacologie de l'amour," *Nouvelle Revue du XVI^e siècle* 4 (1986).

⁷⁴² Ibid., p. 88.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ Teulade, "La mélancolie est-elle curable ? Les fonctions thérapeutiques de la fiction théâtrale". For more on Molière's representation of medical discourse on melancholy on stage, see also Patrick Dandrey, *Les tréteaux de Saturne : scènes de la mélancolie à l'époque baroque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2003), pp. 65–80.

displayed until then. However, Burrhus's victory is only ephemeral, as Narcisse's own argumentation excites Néron's anger and re-ignites his melancholic fury by claiming that Burrhus lied and thereby only sought to maintain his own political power.⁷⁴⁵ In *Griselde*, like Burrhus, Hidaspe tries to use logical reasoning in order to guide his former pupil out of his sinful passion.

First, Hidaspe argues with his former pupil in order to show him that unless he comes to terms with his doubts about women's sincerity, he will find that doubt overwhelms him over and over again:

Quand vous croyez son sexe infidèle et trompeur
Lorsque tout est suspect à votre âme jalouse,
Prince, vous voulez prendre une nouvelle épouse.
Aurez-vous, en changeant, plus de tranquillité ?
Non, le Ciel punira tant de légèreté.
Par les redoublements de votre jalousie ;
Les chagrins, les soupçons troubleront votre vie ;
Enfin, si vous suivez ce penchant dangereux,
Vous serez. . .⁷⁴⁶

However, melancholy gives the Prince such arrogance and confidence that he believes himself to be in control of everything, implying that no one can resist him and even that he is unafraid of divine punishment: "Jusqu'ici de mon sort je fus toujours le maître, / Hidaspe, et je serai ce qu'il me plaira d'être".⁷⁴⁷ This shows that melancholic diseases affect him with what Aristotle calls "too much boldness . . . as happened to Archelaus, king of Macedonia".⁷⁴⁸

Hidaspe also argues about the uselessness of alighting an unrequited love:

Mais qu'on ne vante point la beauté d'une chaîne :
Quand on la porte seul, c'est une affreuse peine,
Et tel en la formant qui s'en laisse enchanter,
Lorsqu'il en sent le poids, vient à la détester.
Que nous sert-il d'aimer un objet adorable,
Si l'amour à nos vœux le rend inexorable ?⁷⁴⁹

745 For a detailed analysis of melancholy in this play see Dandrey, *Les trétaux de Saturne*, pp. 39 and ff.; Laurence Giavarini, "Mélancolie du prince, héroïsme et représentation dans la tragédie racinienne," in *Jean Racine, 1699–1999*, ed. Gilles Declercq et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), esp. pp. 553–59.

746 Sainctonge, "Griselde," 1.4.192–200.

747 *Ibid.*, 1.4.201–02.

748 Aristotle, *Problems: Books 20–38*, p. 291.

749 Sainctonge, "Griselde," 3.5.593–97.

Then, the tutor warns his former pupil of the possible moral consequences of his actions:

Craignez, craignez du Ciel la vengeance terrible !

...

Et peut-être, Seigneur, peut-être ferez-vous
Ce que font aujourd'hui tant de fâcheux époux :
Lorsqu'ils ont fait mourir dans un dur esclavage
Une première épouse aussi belle que sage,
Nous les voyons enfin, par un juste retour,
Dans un second hymen esclaves à leur tour.⁷⁵⁰

Hidaspe also points out the Prince's lack of logic and consistency underlying his distrust of women:

Quoi, vous pouvez, Seigneur, aimer cette princesse [i.e. Isabelle]
Quand vous la soupçonnez d'une telle bassesse [i.e. to feign rejection to make him love her more] !
Le seul mérite a droit d'enflammer les grands cœurs.
Qui pourra désormais excuser vos ardeurs ?⁷⁵¹

Not even the evocation that the Prince's actions and irrational pursuit may cause Griselde's, and eventually Isabelle's, death has any effect upon the protagonist.⁷⁵² Thus, Hidaspe helps to demonstrate how passionate love goes against reason, as well as showing the difficulty of bringing someone back to sanity when their vice is caused by melancholy. His mind is tricked by the false images his melancholy creates, distorting his perception of reality. Therefore, he cannot see that his actions and inconstant love lead him to sin. Indeed, they do so quite literally, because Isabelle is actually his daughter, so marrying her would be an incestuous act. Even though the Prince does not know this, the audience were most likely familiar with the Griselda myth through Perrault's tale or the popular chapbooks and must have been aware of the possibility of incest.

It could be argued that even before the final revelation, the Prince's desire to marry Isabelle is incestuous given that they are supposedly uncle and niece, a blood relation from the first to the third degree that was considered a diriment impediment by canon law since the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). However, it was not unheard of for uncles and nieces to petition the Pope or their local bishop for a dispensation, not just in France but also within the early modern

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.3.601–16.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., 3.3.645–48.

⁷⁵² Ibid., 3.3.669–76.

Catholic world as a whole.⁷⁵³ Moreover, the protagonist's social status as an aristocrat, and even more so as a prince, qualifies him as an exception to this aspect of canon law. This explains why no single character in the play problematises the Prince's wish to marry Isabelle as incestuous.

On the other hand, the play's final revelation proves that first-degree filiation in marriage constitutes incest, and that it is recognised as such by all the characters. Indeed, the violence and shock of the final revelation force the Prince to abandon the phantasmagoric world created by his melancholic mind and face the obvious reality of his error and insanity. Emotional shock therapy was known from ancient Rome as a treatment for mental disorders. As Patrick Dandrey explains:

Or, parmi les remèdes non pharmaceutiques agissant en complément de la cure des mélancolies et autres folies, la science ancienne connaissait l'effet de certaines situations expérimentales, les unes agissant par la « secousse profonde » de l'émotion ou de la surprise (l'expression est du médecin latin Celse), les autres par une feinte satisfaction apaisant le désir délirant. En effet, selon Celse, quelque nécessité qu'il y ait de s'opposer par force aux égarements de la démence,

« on doit cependant se prêter plus souvent aux idées des maladies qu'on ne doit y résister, et il faut tâcher de ramener peu à peu leur esprit de la démence à la raison. »⁷⁵⁴

Thus, Sainctonge brings about the Prince's recovery from melancholy by using characters who throughout the play, particularly in the final act, argue with the protagonist in order to reason with him. Furthermore, Sainctonge devises an emotionally shocking revelation, which much like a *deus ex machina*, completes the healing process and enables the comic resolution. On the one hand, Isabelle entreats the Prince one last time to abandon his tyrannical project to marry her:

Ah, Prince, que plutôt mille fois je périsse !
 Quand vous me proposez de m'unir à vous,
 Vous me percez le cœur des plus funestes coups.
 Une secrète horreur me saisit et m'étonne,
 Et sans savoir pourquoi, je tremble, je frissonne.
 Seigneur, je n'aurais pas ce noir pressentiment
 Si le Ciel approuvait un tel engagement.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ See Jean-Marie Gouesse, "Mariages de proches parents (XVI^e–XX^e siècle). Esquisse d'une conjoncture," in *Le modèle familial européen. Normes, déviances, contrôle du pouvoir. Actes des séminaires organisés par l'École française de Rome et l'Università di Roma (1984)* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1986).

⁷⁵⁴ Dandrey, *Les trétaux de Saturne*, p. 140.

⁷⁵⁵ Sainctonge, "Griselde," 5.6.1222–28.

Although the Prince has an immediate negative and choleric reaction, he shows in an aside that, through their accumulative effect, the other characters' speeches start to reawaken his reason, slowly making him face reality:

Mais pourquoi me livrer à des transports affreux ?
 Il faut plutôt éteindre un amour malheureux.
 Depuis que je ressens sa dévorante flamme,
 Les plus cuisants soucis ont déchiré mon âme :
 Barbare pour Griselde, et toujours furieux,
 On me voit sans pitié la bannir de ces lieux.
 Isabelle me hait, Isabelle m'outrage,
 Ah, sortons pour jamais d'un si dur esclavage !
 J'ai formé mille fois ce généreux dessein,
 Faut-il que la raison me parle encore en vain ?⁷⁵⁶

In order to finalise the cure, as well as ensure a happy ending for all the other characters, Saintonge uses the revelation that Isabelle is the supposedly deceased daughter of Griselde and the Prince in a similar manner to Tristan's *La folie du sage*, where the news that Ariste's daughter, Roselie, (also thought dead) is alive positively affects the melancholic characters of this tragicomedy. Roselie's resurrection functions as shock therapy for both the King of Sardinia, who is madly in love with her, and her father's deep and sorrowful melancholy, which not only cures them but also enables Roselie's marriage to her lover Palamède.⁷⁵⁷ Just as Dandrey explains about Tristan's *La folie du sage* that the shock therapy is not a "facilité dramatique", nor is it for Saintonge's *Griselde*, but rather an "expression poétique de cette thérapie de choc", which enacts actual treatment used at the time.⁷⁵⁸

The disclosure of Isabelle's true identity uses the taboo of incest as a socially structuring device in order to facilitate the return to social and political order. The inescapable and monstrous reality of incest forces the Prince into a complete and definitive remission as he simultaneously experiences the horror of desiring his daughter in a morally sinful way and the joy of having found her again. Marriage between the Prince and Isabelle becomes obscene, inadmissible, and

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., 5.7.1239–48.

⁷⁵⁷ Shock therapy is also used in Corneille's comedy *Méliste* (1633). In order to put an end to Eraste's delirium, which makes him believe that he is dead and descended into Hades, Méliste's nurse feigns to be Méliste with him in Hades. When she asks him to look at her very closely, he starts to describe her, realises who she really is, and is brought back to sanity by a comic turn of events. For a close analysis of this process, see Radu Suciú, "Extravagance et mélancolie. La problématique mélancolique comme support de l'exception cornélienne," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philologia* LII, no. 3 (2007): 26–31.

⁷⁵⁸ Dandrey, *Les tréaux de Saturne*, p. 140.

impossible. The Prince's cured mind can now see Griselde's virtues, and he admits that she is the only wife he ever wished for and envisages Isabelle and Frédéric's marriage as a logical consequence of their love. The revelation also contributes to an understanding of why the Prince fell in love with Isabelle in the first place. An unconscious recognition of the filial relationship had already taken place between Griselde and Isabelle, as well as between the Prince and Isabelle: while both women immediately form a friendly bond when they first meet, the Prince feels love for Isabelle but misinterprets it erotically because of his melancholic temperament. This "call of blood" motif, very common in classical theatre,⁷⁵⁹ not only completes the explanation of the Prince's attraction to Isabelle but also helps to create more dramatic tension before the appearance of the undeniable token of recognition, namely the letter from the Prince's sister disclosing her lies about the baby's death.

Therefore, while the last scene may appear implausible, it actually does not go against verisimilitude. In fact, it is quite the opposite thanks to the melancholy and the dismissal of the idea of testing Griselda, because Sainctonge manages to portray a version of the marquis that comes to terms with his inherent ambiguities as represented in previous versions of the myth.

In order to convey its condemnation of misogyny, the play contrasts the Prince's melancholy with that of Griselde and the more moderate gallant love that Isabelle and Frédéric share.

Sainctonge's Griselde is likely the least stoic of all the traditional Griselda figures. Her pathos and outspokenness make the abuses the Prince has her undergo all the more unjust. From the onset of the play, Griselde expresses her sorrow and does not seek to hide it. She shares her feelings with her servant Phénice and with Isabelle. Griselde's sadness defines her as a loving spouse whose love is not altered by her husband's inconstancy and rejection. Even though the Prince took her daughter for no reason beyond a melancholic fit, Griselde still adores him. As he announces that he wishes to divorce from her, not only in order to remarry and produce an heir but also to erase any trace of his socially unacceptable "mésalliance" with her, Griselde remains constant in her feelings for him. However, Sainctonge turns Griselda into a woman who does not accept her lot without arguing and who is clear-sighted enough to understand that her husband's rejection is due to his inconstancy in love:

⁷⁵⁹ This topos has been extensively analysed by Clifton Cherpack in his *The Call of Blood in French Classical Tragedy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1958). See also Silvia Montiglio, "The Call of Blood: Greek Origins of a Motif, from Euripides to Heliodorus," *Syllecta Classica* 22, no. 1 (2011).

Mais un nouvel amour, sous le nom de la gloire,
 Vous parle contre moi ; Seigneur, faut-il croire ?
 La gloire d'un grand prince est de garder sa foi.
 Eh, qui pourra jamais vous aimer comme moi ?
 Vous me voyez soumise, attachée à vous plaire,
 Tremblante, et redoutant toujours votre colère,
 De vos plus dures lois me faire des plaisirs,
 Et n'oser pas former seulement des désirs.
 Cependant j'ai cessé de vous paraître aimable.
 Aurez-vous pour une autre un amour plus durable ?
 Non, après votre hymen, les chagrins, la froideur
 Retrouveront encor place dans votre cœur :
 Ils éteindront bientôt votre nouvelle flamme,
 Mille troubles secrets agiteront votre âme.

...

Si je pouvais vous croire exempt d'inquiétude,
 Après m'avoir perdue, ah ! j'irais à ma mort,
 Sans me plaindre jamais de mon funeste sort.⁷⁶⁰

Griselde is not afraid to remind the Prince that his duty as a ruler is not to act upon a whim but to remain constant (“garder sa foi”). Although it is true that early modern European kings were known to have mistresses (Louis XIV was famously no exception), inconstancy in men (or women) was not approved in aristocratic circles, which, thanks to reason, promoted control over one’s feelings and actions.

Whereas the Prince’s melancholy leads him to behave cruelly, tyrannising everyone, Griselde’s own melancholy caused by his rejection drives her to the verge of despair:

Grandeur, Fortune, Amour, tyrans impitoyables,
 Ne m'avez-vous paru d'abord si favorables
 Que pour me faire voir un courroux si éclatant ?
 Je ne soupirais pas après un rang suprême ;
 Que n'était-ce un berger que le héros que j'aime ?
 Son cœur aurait été plus tendre et plus constant.

...

Hélas ! Contre un amour si violent, si tendre,
 Le dépit, la raison n'osent rien entreprendre ;
 C'est mon seul désespoir qui peut me secourir.
 Je ne suis plus aimable aux yeux d'un infidèle :
 Il me livre aux horreurs d'une absence éternelle.
 Tous mes plaisirs sont morts, je n'ai plus qu'à mourir.

760 Saintonge, “Griselde,” 1.2.97–116.

Ô vous, qui punissez le crime et l'inconstance,
 Grands dieux, gardez-vous bien de prendre ma vengeance
 Contre un cher ennemi qui trahit mon amour.
 Si vous êtes touchés de ma cruelle peine,
 Obligez cet ingrat à renouer sa chaîne :
 C'est là le seul moyen de me rendre le jour.⁷⁶¹

Whereas her melancholic, selfless love, and obedience are praised as virtues by Hidaspe, they also appear irrational to Phénice, who tries to reason with her mistress:

Je le vois, vous aimez le mal qui vous possède :
 De crainte d'en guérir, vous fuyez le remède,
 Et contre la raison, votre cœur révolté
 Excuse d'un ingrat jusqu' à la cruauté.
 ...
 La gloire nous apprend qu'il est honteux d'aimer
 Ce que notre raison nous défend d'estimer.
 ...
 Quel charme vous retient près d'un prince volage
 Qui, toujours furieux et toujours inhumain,
 Semble ne vous parler que la foudre à la main ?⁷⁶²

Phénice of course fails; and Griselde remains true to the Prince throughout the play, which in turn allows her to get her husband back. However, the fact that Griselde obeys and stays instead of running away, like Phénice suggests, potentially makes the heroine appear as “la plus stupide de toutes les femmes”.⁷⁶³ While Perrault presents his *Griselidis* as figuring out that God tests her, Sainctonge only shows Griselde protesting against her husband’s cruelty but still complying with his wishes because she hopes to win him back. Although she eventually regains the Prince’s love, her patience, and constancy do not play a decisive role in that process. Even if the Prince finally recognises Griselde’s virtues and praises her for them (“Je reconnais enfin qu’un astre favorable / M’a fait trouver en vous une femme adorable, / Une femme fidèle, ô trésor précieux !”),⁷⁶⁴ these virtues do not cause him to come back to reason. It is rather because he is cured from his melancholy and able to think logically again that he is then able to see Griselde’s virtuousness for what it is and no longer doubt it. Consequently, Griselde’s constant

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 2.1.215–44.

⁷⁶² Ibid., 3.6.785–96.

⁷⁶³ Perrault, *Contes*, p. 93.

⁷⁶⁴ Sainctonge, “Griselde,” 5.9.1285–87.

but extremely submissive love does not seem to be an ideal to follow, even if it is globally presented as an acceptable, though foolish and melancholic, form of love.

Saintonge's tragicomedy attempts to promote a more appropriate type of affection: Isabelle and Frederic's mutual and egalitarian love. The young couple's relationship embodies the ideal of "amour galant", as described in the influential work of Madeleine de Scudéry, *Clélie, histoire romaine* (10 volumes published between 1654 and 1660). Apart from her famous "Carte du tendre", which metaphorically represents the geographical codification of the social practice of "amitié tendre" in the form of a map, helping a man to gain a woman's friendly affection,⁷⁶⁵ Scudéry's novel presents various conversations that introduce and establish the ethics of *galanterie*: "Conversation sur la naissance de l'amour"; "Éloge de la paresse et du loisir"; "Peut-on joindre les douceurs de l'amour et les plaisirs de l'amitié".⁷⁶⁶ As Jörn Steigerwald argued, these conversations delineate the differences between friendship, love, and how the ideal of *galanterie* does not necessarily exclude marriage. According to the "Conversation sur la naissance de l'amour", gallant love is based on tenderness, a necessary quality to regulate passion and prevent it from falling into undesirable excesses, thus helping prevent melancholy from settling in the lover's mind⁷⁶⁷:

la tendresse est une qualité encore plus nécessaire à l'amour, qu'à l'amitié . . . l'amour . . . qui est presque toujours incompatible avec la raison, et qui du moins ne peut jamais lui être assujettie, elle [i.e. love] a absolument besoin de tendresse pour l'empêcher d'être brutale, grossière, et inconsidérée. En effet, une amour sans tendresse, n'a que des désirs impétueux, qui n'ont ni bornes, ni retenue ; et l'amant qui porte une semblable passion dans l'âme, ne considère que sa propre satisfaction, sans considérer la gloire de la personne aimée ; car un des principaux effets de la véritable tendresse, c'est qu'elle fait qu'on pense beaucoup plus à l'intérêt de ce qu'on aime, qu'au sien propre.⁷⁶⁸

Whereas the Prince clearly loves Isabelle without tenderness and only wishes to fulfil his own desire, Frédéric and Isabelle display tender love for each other.

⁷⁶⁵ For a discussion of the medium of the allegorical map to convey the concepts of *galanterie*, see Delphine Denis, *Le Parnasse galant. Institution d'une catégorie littéraire au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2001), pp. 13–19; Jean-Michel Pelous, *Amour précieux, amour galant (1654–1675)* (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1980).

⁷⁶⁶ See Jörn Steigerwald, "L'oiconomie des plaisirs. La praxéologie de l'amour galant : à propos de la *Clélie*," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 118, no. 3 (2008).

⁷⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 246–47.

⁷⁶⁸ Madeleine de Scudéry, *Clélie. Histoire romaine*, 5 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: Champion, 2001–2005), p. 119. Quoted in Steigerwald, "L'oiconomie des plaisirs. La praxéologie de l'amour galant : à propos de la *Clélie*," p. 247.

Frédéric has for Isabelle “l’amour le plus tendre”.⁷⁶⁹ When Frédéric plots with Phénice to run away with Isabelle in order to prevent her marriage to the Prince, he doubts only for an instant (“Faudra-t-il immoler ma gloire à ma tendresse, / ou perdre pour jamais mon aimable princesse ?”),⁷⁷⁰ because his honour tells him that betrayal does not befit an “homme galant”, who is supposed to be honest in every circumstances⁷⁷¹ (“Si je veux d’un rival trahir la confiance, / Un rigoureux devoir murmure et s’en offense, / Et me fais souvenir qu’un homme tel que moi / Même à ses ennemis, devrait garder sa foi”).⁷⁷² This hesitation is brief, however, because his intense love tells him to put Isabelle before himself: “l’amour vient m’en presser : / Je ne veux écouter que sa voix qui m’appelle. / Il faut servir Griselde et sauver Isabelle. / Bientôt loin de ces lieux . . .”.⁷⁷³ As for Isabelle, she also places Frédéric before herself and hides from him her worry and sorrow about the fact that the Prince wishes to marry her in order not to add to his own agitation upon the matter: “J’étouffais mes soupirs, je dévorais mes pleurs / Afin de t’arracher à tes vives douleurs. / Trop sensible pour toi, trop cruelle à moi-même, / Je redoublais mes maux par cet effort extrême”.⁷⁷⁴

Because they both put each other before themselves, neither takes the lead, and both discuss and listen to each other before making any decision regarding their future, only seeking each other’s happiness. This conception of their relationship is seen to prevent momentary excesses in black bile or other humoral imbalance from becoming more permanent. However, a question remains as to whether this love can outlive marriage, or if its healthy and balancing effect will necessarily fade and turn their relationship into an oppressive one in which the husband tyrannises his wife, as the Prince does with Griselde. In the conversation entitled “Peut-on joindre aux douceurs de l’amour les plaisirs de l’amitié ?”, Valérie, a character of *Clélie*, addresses the issue⁷⁷⁵:

Je vous assure, dit Valérie, qu’il est plus difficile que vous ne pensez, d’être tout à la fois un bon mari, un agréable amant, et un fort honnête homme ; car pour être amant, il faut être esclave ; pour être mari avec honneur, il faut être maître ; et pour être un fort honnête

⁷⁶⁹ Sainctonge, “Griselde,” 3.1.501.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.1.833–34.

⁷⁷¹ See Alain Viala, *La France galante. Essai historique sur une catégorie culturelle, de ses origines jusqu’à la Révolution* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), p. 113.

⁷⁷² Sainctonge, “Griselde,” 4.1.825–28.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 4.1.848–51.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.1.491–94.

⁷⁷⁵ See Steigerwald, “L’oiconomie des plaisirs. La praxéologie de l’amour galant : à propos de la *Clélie*,” pp. 252–53.

homme, il ne faut être ni le tyran, ni l'esclave de sa femme. Je soutiens même qu'il y va de l'honneur de celles qui ont de bon maris, de leur laisser une autorité qui paraisse aux yeux du monde, quand même par excès d'amour, ou par quelque autre cause, ils n'en voudraient pas avoir, et qu'une fort honnête femme ne doit jamais souhaiter qu'on dise qu'elle est la gouvernante de son mari, mais seulement qu'elle a du crédit sur son esprit, qu'il l'estime, qu'il la croit, et qu'il l'aime, et non pas qu'il lui obéit aveuglément, comme s'il était incapable de se conduire par lui-même. Mais aussi ne trouvai-je pas bon, qu'un mari fasse éternellement le mari, et le mari impérieux, qui regarde sa femme comme la première esclave de sa maison, qui ne lui confie rien, qui ne la considère point, et qui la traite enfin comme si elle n'avait pas l'usage de la raison, comme s'il n'était pas obligé de l'aimer et comme s'il lui était permis d'en aimer cent autres, sans qu'elle le trouvât mauvais.⁷⁷⁶

The play does not reveal how Frédéric and Isabelle's married life evolve, and it only reveals details about how the Prince, upon recovering his use of reason, realises his error and enables their marriage. Nonetheless, given the drama's adherence to the gallant code, it could be conjectured that Frédéric and Isabelle's relationship will likely remain egalitarian after their wedding. After all, it is mainly because the Prince falls prey to melancholy that he loses reason and mistreats Griselde. Frédéric never shows any sign of having a melancholic temperament. When jealousy overcomes Frédéric and makes him doubt Isabelle ("Le calme de votre âme augmente ma souffrance, / Il montre de nos feux quelle est la différence, / Et ne fait que trop voir, à mon cœur alarmé, / Que le vôtre jamais ne fut bien enflammé"),⁷⁷⁷ it is Isabelle's apparent calmness that rouses his mistrust rather than the fact that she may feign love. Moreover, Isabelle quickly convinces him of the truth of her feelings, causing him to repent immediately ("Madame, pardonnez aux transports de ma flamme, / La crainte de vous perdre a jeté dans mon âme / Un affreux désespoir que je ne puis calmer").⁷⁷⁸ This is in contrast to the Prince, whose melancholic mind misconstrues Griselde's love and virtues as insincere.

Consequently, the play builds a strong case against misogyny and abusive husbands, using the Prince and Griselde to denounce domestic psychological violence. Furthermore, Frédéric and Isabelle, as egalitarian lovers, stand in contrast to the Prince and Griselde, and their "amour galant" is portrayed as an ideal to pursue.

⁷⁷⁶ Madeleine de Scudéry, *Clélie. Histoire romaine*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Paris: Champion, 2001–2005), p. 130. Quoted in Steigerwald, "L'oiconomie des plaisirs. La praxéologie de l'amour galant : à propos de la *Clélie*," p. 252.

⁷⁷⁷ Saintonge, "Griselde," 3.1.485–88.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.1.497–99.

Part II: The socio-political implications of social exogamy

In the late Middle Ages and early modern period, choosing a spouse was often considered a delicate issue because of marriage's indissolubility, which could lead to a lifelong painful relationship. In other words, the choice had enduring consequences, either good or bad, for both the individuals getting married, their families, and their associates. Marital unions were generally a result of arrangements and negotiations made between the parents and legal representative of the prospective spouses. This was even more true among the nobility, particularly European royalty, for whom the negotiations often started when the children were still extremely young. Consequently, while marriage obviously bound two people together, it also bound two families and sometimes even two communities or countries (in cases of royal marriages). In other words, marriage had consequences not just for the two individuals directly involved—it could also affect their social environment and sometimes even national or international politics, since marriage is not only the basis of the constitution of the state but also of its preservation and permanence.⁷⁷⁹

The Patient Griselda myth presents a socially exogamous “inter-order” marriage, one between a man from high nobility, a ruler of his land, and a commoner maid. This case of masculine hypogamy has thus both political and social consequences. In order to understand the implications of such a union, and before examining how the various realisations of the myth creatively rephrase and exploit the mytheme of “the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl”, it is useful to outline briefly what historians have uncovered in recent years about medieval and early modern nobility, particularly with regard to how nobles perceived and defined themselves as a social group and what this entailed in terms of marriage and the children born out of the union.

As Jonathan Dewald explains:

Nobles saw themselves as different from other people. By their birth, so they argued, they had inherited distinctive qualities, qualities that their education had refined and strengthened. This combination of genetic and cultural inheritance, so they claimed, separated them from others and gave them special aptitudes for protecting and commanding. In turn these social roles justified wealth and honor: because they commanded others, the nobles needed esteem and deference, and they needed to be free of the material cares that dominated ordinary lives. Privilege, they argued, was both a precondition of effective rule and a suitable reward for its troubles. In most parts of Europe, these privileges acquired the force of law.⁷⁸⁰

779 See Pierre Bourdieu, “De la maison du roi à la raison d’État. Un modèle de la genèse du champ bureaucratique,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 118, no. 55–68 (1997): 56.

780 Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), p. 1.

Nobility was neither monolithic nor impermeable. There were different ranks (princes, dukes, marquis, earls or counts, barons, knights, and in some countries, even noble without titles), as well as social groups within the nobility itself. Over time, commoners could be knighted, especially after displaying heroic behaviour in times of war, or the king could ennoble them because they held or financially acquired some high office. Moreover, within the nobility, a distinction was made between those who were born into an “old noble” family (i.e. relating to the nobility of race) and those who obtained their title through royal privilege (i.e. “new nobles”). While they considered themselves a distinct group, their “distinctiveness was based on a dual acknowledgement: externally by others and internally by the different groups that regarded themselves as ‘noble’”, as Jörn Leonhard and Christian Wieland remark. In addition, this idea of nobility “usually implied a more general belief in the rightfulness of a hereditary ruling class [and] it implied nobility as a social norm”.⁷⁸¹ Although different concepts of nobility co-existed within Europe, European nobility as a whole used the same “nominalist marker”—noble—to distinguish themselves from other social groups and thereby create “a self-image” that “instead of describing a common reality, generated a common reality”.⁷⁸²

With such an exclusive conception of identity, marriage between different social orders was, for the nobility, neither desirable nor the norm. Even within the noble orders in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, historical studies have shown that old nobles generally did not marry new nobles,⁷⁸³ as well as that the higher nobility (dukes, princes, marquis) did not marry lower nobles (e.g. counts, earls, barons, knights). If this came to be the case, then the husband usually belonged to the old or higher nobility and the wife to the new or lower nobility.⁷⁸⁴ As Dewald comments, “ideally marriage was intended to

781 Jörn Leonhard and Christian Wieland, “Noble Identities from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century. European Aristocratic Cultures in Law, Politics and Aesthetics,” in *What Makes the Nobility Noble? Comparative Perspectives from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jörn Leonhard and Christian Wieland (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), p. 7.

782 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

783 However, there could be regional exceptions: Donna Bohanan finds that among the nobility of Aix-en-Provence “old and new noble families intermarried to the extent that *anoblis* never emerged as a distinct and opposing group defined by function as well as by antiquity”, because marriage was used by the nobles of this French area as “an avenue of upward mobility”, see “Matrimonial Strategies Among Nobles of Seventeenth-Century Aix-en-Provence,” *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 3 (1986): 503.

784 See Dewald, *European Nobility*, pp. 168–73; James B. Wood, “Endogamy and Mésalliance, the Marriage Patterns of the Nobility of Bayeux, 1430–1669,” *French Historical Studies* 10, no. 3 (1978); Judith J. Hurwich, “Marriage Strategy among the German Nobility,

secure for a family distinguished connections, connecting the family with in-laws who could bring it new lustre and powerful political connections. Far more important, marriage had to serve economic needs”.⁷⁸⁵ In the early modern period, inter-order marriages became more frequent, although there were still exceptions, as impoverished aristocrats started to consider wealthy merchants’ daughters as suitable spouses for their considerable dowries.⁷⁸⁶

So long as the Italian context of the Patient Griselda myth is preserved, which in most realisations is the case, Gualtieri, as the marquis of Saluzzo, is a “marchese sovrano”, i.e. ruler and lord of his marquisate, with no sovereign king above him to whom he owes allegiance. The few early modern instances in which Gualtieri has his title changed are in Lope’s *Ejemplo de casadas*, Galeotto Oddi’s *Griselda* (composed most likely between 1613 and 1619, but never printed), Charles Perrault’s *Griselidis* (1691), and Geneviève de Saintonge’s *Griselde*. Whereas Lope turns Gualtieri into Enrico de Moncada, Count of Barcelona, Oddi makes him King of Denmark, and Perrault, as well as Saintonge, call him the “Prince de Saluces”. As an independent county, the *Condado de Barcelona* was led by counts whose rank was as high those of princes. Indeed, in 1150, Ramón Berenguer IV of Barcelona married Petronila of Aragon, heiress to the Aragonese throne. Consequently, since Lope’s play is set in the twelfth century, its fictional Enrico de Moncada, even if he is not a king, does possess a rank among the highest aristocracy. In other words, when Gualtieri is not a sovereign marquis, already a member of the high nobility, he is either a king or a prince who could claim to offer royal status through marriage. This entails that the marital strategies he should have envisaged, and was expected to follow, were not just those of members of the nobility but also those of European royal houses.

Pierre Bourdieu, in his description of dynastic state, remarks:

1400–1699,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 2 (1998); Irene Fosi and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, “Marriage and Politics at the Papal Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Marriage in Italy, 1300–1650*, ed. Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).

785 Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 168.

786 Germany was a notable exception in this practice, since inter-order marriage between nobles and commoners were extremely rare, see Hurwich, “Marriage Strategy among the German Nobility, 1400–1699,” pp. 176–77. In fifteenth-century Venice, laws regulated and limited inter-order marriages—a practice despised by the contemporary elite—by allowing *popolane* young women to bring a dowry of a maximum value of 2,000 ducats, see Stanley Chojnacki, “Marriage Regulation in Venice, 1420–1535,” in *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society*, ed. Chojnacki Stanley (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins UP, 2000), p. 60.

Le roi est un “chef de maison, socialement mandaté pour mettre une politique dynastique, à l’intérieur de laquelle les stratégies matrimoniales tiennent une place décisive, au service de la grandeur et de la prospérité de sa “maison”.

Nombre de *stratégies matrimoniales* ont pour fin de favoriser des extensions territoriales grâce à des unions dynastiques fondées dans la seule personne du prince.⁷⁸⁷

Patricia Fleming, describing those matrimonial strategies in more detail, comments that “[m]arriage alliances were continually used to bind together the various royal families and their countries during both peace and war . . . Once established, a marriage bond could influence, or justify, a multitude of subsequent political and personal activities”.⁷⁸⁸ Royal marriages were generally motivated by “political considerations”, such as a “desire for territorial aggrandisement and consolidation”, but they could also result from economic need, on the part of the groom or the bride’s family,⁷⁸⁹ since the exchange of money between the two royal families could continue years after the marriage ceremony itself had taken place. In any case, “[r]elative equality of rank . . . was frequently an important consideration in marriage negotiations”.⁷⁹⁰

787 Bourdieu, “De la maison du roi à la raison d’État. Un modèle de la genèse du champ bureaucratique,” p. 57. Emphasis in the original.

788 Patricia H. Fleming, “The Politics of Marriage Among Non-Catholic Europe Royalty,” *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (1973): 236.

789 *Ibid.*, pp. 237–38.

790 *Ibid.*, p. 236. Even though Fleming’s study covers royal marriages from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the marriage strategies she discusses apply to the early modern period as well. It is sufficient here to provide three examples taken from the royal families ruling at the time when the authors of my main corpus wrote their plays. First, Elizabeth I of England: although she never married, among the princes with whom she negotiated possible marriage as clear political alliances were the Archduke Charles of Austria and Francis Duke of Anjou, see Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Philip III of Spain married Margaret of Austria in 1599, his cousin and sister to Emperor Ferdinand II. On several occasions, the marriage between Philip and Margaret proved to be financially useful to Ferdinand II, see Magdalena S. Sánchez, “Pious and Political Images of a Habsburg Woman at the Court of Philip III (1598–1621),” in *Spanish Women in the Golden Age. Images and Realities*, ed. Magdalena S. Sánchez and Alain Saint-Saëns (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), p. 100. Finally, Louis XIV’s first marriage to Marie-Thérèse of Austria, daughter of Philip IV of Spain was celebrated in 1660 as a further peace settlement after the Treaty of the Pyrenees, which set the borders between Spain and France in 1659, see Heinz Duchhardt, “The dynastic marriage,” *Inst. f. Europ. Geschichte*, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/duchhardt-2010-en>. May 24th, 2014, § 14.

Arrangements or negotiations, such as in the Griselda myth, do not occur because Gualtieri is apparently an orphan without any tutor, regent, or advisor counselling him or ruling in his stead. The only thing the novella states, and this remains unchanged in all the versions, is that he is young, but nonetheless, he is old enough to govern Saluzzo on his own. Those who bring the marriage plea to his ears are his subjects, sometimes unidentified, sometimes designated as knights or courtiers. While they offer their help in finding a suitable wife in terms of rank and qualities, Gualtieri insists on making his decision alone. The only event resembling a marriage arrangement occurs when the marquis asks Janicola for his daughter's hand, before he asks Griselda herself. However, even if Janicola and Gualtieri are in discussion alone, the extreme rank discrepancy, as well as Gualtieri's sovereignty over Janicola, radically distorts the terms of any possible negotiation between them. To be relatively fair, negotiations would require a certain degree of equality between the negotiating parties. Far from being the marquis's social equal, certainly not in terms of power but also in terms of wealth, and bound by his duty to obey, Janicola has no real negotiating power. He therefore has no choice but to accept, because Gualtieri, as ruler and judge, holds the right of life and death over him, even if the marquis never express a wish to exercise it. Gualtieri knows this. The same is true for Griselda when she is asked if she consents to the match. She is actually under even more social pressure to accept, because she not only owes obedience to Gualtieri but also to her father.

As a consequence, Gualtieri's marriage to Griselda, a poor commoner of his own country, based on his personal choice and affinity, is on all accounts a rarity and potentially controversial. His decision could be regarded as overstepping his sovereign right, not just because Janicola and Griselda cannot refuse Gualtieri's proposal but also because Griselda cannot help the marquis secure any political alliances or bring any more power, land, or wealth to his country. More importantly, her base origins potentially represent a threat to his bloodline and the legitimacy of his heirs. The match is therefore a source of social disorder, especially in the early modern period when the myth is re-elaborated in ways that draw more attention to these issues.

Since nobility, and royalty even more so, was inherited by blood, according to the Roman Law principle of *jura sanguinis*,⁷⁹¹ it was generally believed that both the father and the mother needed to be of noble ancestry for three or four generations in order for their children to be considered truly noble or noble by

791 See Bourdieu, "De la maison du roi à la raison d'État. Un modèle de la genèse du champ bureaucratique," p. 59.

race and thus rightful successors and rulers of a country or city. However, there were regional differences and various degrees of toleration and acceptance if the mother was not of noble descent.

In Germany, the issue was regulated through laws that rendered the succession and the matter of inheritance problematic if a nobleman married a commoner because of the endangerment of the bloodline that such a marriage implied. As Hurwich explains:

Marriage to non-nobles, even to the wealthiest of the urban patriciate, was almost out of the question for the German nobility. Such unions continued to carry the legal disability of “inequality of birth” (*Unebenbürtigkeit*), which meant that children of the marriage could not inherit the title or estate of the higher-ranking parent. The nobility also protected its exclusivity by requiring members of the elite cathedral chapters and tournament societies to prove four generations of purely noble ancestry. Hence, a nobleman’s marriage to a non-noble wife would affect the prospects of his descendants for more than a century.⁷⁹²

Similarly, in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venice, laws preserving the blood purity of the ruling elite became increasingly strict:

In 1422, the Great Council acted to deny noble status to the sons, even legitimate, of noble fathers and mothers of servile or otherwise “vile” status. The stated purpose of the legislation, to prevent “denigration” of the council by unworthy members, was overwhelmingly endorsed. . . . By instituting a requirement that all claimants to noble status document their mothers’ identities along with their fathers’, it made maternity a determinant of nobility.⁷⁹³

The first third of the sixteenth century saw the instauration of the *Libri d’Oro*, in which were recorded the name of the sons issued from the nobility, along with both their father’s and mother’s birthplaces and names.⁷⁹⁴ As Stanley Chojnacki argues:

Those requirements put the highest value on mothers born of noble families, whose pedigree and virtue were recognizable by all and whose inscription in an official register would be a permanent document of the bilateral patrician bloodlines of their sons, whether born in Venice or abroad.⁷⁹⁵

792 Hurwich, “Marriage Strategy among the German Nobility, 1400–1699,” p. 177.

793 Chojnacki, “Marriage Regulation in Venice, 1420–1535,” p. 56.

794 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

795 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, there was much debate around the question of nobility's imprescriptibility. This debate resulted from the "tension between the idea that it [i.e. nobility] came only from the king and the idea that it was natural and transmitted through bloodline".⁷⁹⁶ From the middle of the seventeenth century onward, under Colbert's influence, investigations were undertaken in order to more clearly define who belonged to the nobility and who did not by looking into nobles' ancestry until 1560. As Elie Haddad explains:

By imposing the year 1560 as a limit to the proof of nobility which had to be given, the monarchy fixed a tacit recognition of prescription before this date. But it also lengthened the time ordinarily presumed for prescriptibility (three generations). Moreover, it instituted a fixed point in time which divided "true" and "false" nobility. The very logic of customary *immémorialité* was thus demolished.⁷⁹⁷

Even though the question of imprescriptibility remained a matter of debate in the eighteenth century, the "Colbertian definition of nobility" was a "compromise [which] guaranteed both monarchical control on the second order and the ideology of race, which was so important in noble view".⁷⁹⁸ Regardless of the way in which this definition of nobility gave more controlling power to Louis XIV, it shows the persistence of the idea that nobility is an inherited quality and that any trace of common blood could stain the bloodline and prevent one from belonging to the second order.

In Britain, the definition of nobility was very restrictive and reproduced, in a very strict sense, the principle of primogeniture: "only the eldest son of a nobleman received his father's status, the other children being in law commoners unless the family possessed courtesy titles which passed to one or more younger sons".⁷⁹⁹ According to Lawrence Stone, although the nobility was experiencing financial difficulties, hardly any marriages were contracted between the nobility and lower orders, for "marriage of a nobleman into a mercantile family was to the sixteenth century a distinct *mésalliance*".⁸⁰⁰ Only in the seventeenth century

796 Elie Haddad, "The Question of the Imprescriptibility of Nobility in Early Modern France," in *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Romaniello and Charles Lipp (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 165.

797 *Ibid.*, pp. 159–60.

798 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

799 H. M. Scott and Christopher Storrs, "The Consolidation of Noble Power in Europe, c. 1600–1800," in *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. H. M. Scott (London: Longman, 1995), p. 15.

800 Lawrence Stone, "Marriage among the English Nobility in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3, no. 2 (1961): 196.

was it that the gentry “swallowed their pride and were courting the merchants”.⁸⁰¹ Since nobility was transmitted by inheritance from father to eldest son (or next male heir in the family line), according to agnatic succession,⁸⁰² there seem to have been nothing preventing the passing on of titles and estates. For example, in the case of an inter-order marriage between a noble heir and a commoner’s daughter, there is nothing to prevent the match other than the scorn from peers who might look down upon the *mésalliance*.

The situation seems to have been slightly more flexible in Spain. Grace Coolidge found several examples of noblemen, who, having no legitimate heir, legitimised their bastard children in order to continue the bloodline and have them inherit without taking into account who their ancestor’s from their mother’s line were: while it is true that “if her [i.e. the mistress’s] social status was low it could compromise a nobleman’s ability to successfully transfer his property”.⁸⁰³ Coolidge further comments, “Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spanish society . . . did not automatically stigmatise illegitimate offspring. Men like the Count of Arcos were able to establish their illegitimate offspring as noble and socially acceptable”.⁸⁰⁴

Another way in which Gualtieri’s marriage could be considered problematic, apart from endangering his bloodline, is the fact that by marrying a commoner, he displays poor management of his estate. Indeed, a peasant, especially a very poor one like Griselda, as already mentioned, cannot bring him greater wealth or elevate his family name, nor can she help guarantee the security of Saluzzo by forming a political alliance with some neighbouring ruler.

Indeed, as part of the definition of nobility, members of this order were expected to possess by birth and demonstrate through their actions a number of virtues or qualities: “virtuous Christianity, moderation in behaviour and lifestyles that would allow them to control and administer their households and estates, sexual restraint and chastity, wealth that was derived from productive sources (not loans or mortgages), restraint in dress, and demonstrable military skills and service”.⁸⁰⁵

801 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

802 For more on succession and law in England, see Eileen Spring, *Law, Land, and Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800* (Chapel Hill, N.C., and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

803 Grace E. Coolidge, “Contested Masculinity: Noblemen and their Mistresses in Early modern Spain,” in *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Romaniello and Charles Lipp (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 71.

804 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

805 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Consequently, when Gualtieri, the highest-ranked man in the marquisate of Saluzzo, a major marquisate historically that had existed since 1142, decides, without consulting anyone, to marry Griselda, one of the poorest people in the land, Saluzzo's social order and peace are potentially threatened. There is hardly any country in late medieval and early modern Europe where Gualtieri's marriage would not have been scorned or at least strongly disapproved of. This is because his choice goes against his dynastic duty to preserve the family line, property, and name, all of which should transcend the marquis's individuality,⁸⁰⁶ and this is expected to dictate his matrimonial strategy rather than personal desire. By leaving his subjects and courtiers no choice, and making them face a fait accompli, the marquis avoids being dissuaded from his decision to marry Griselda. This does not mean, however, that the problem of Griselda's rank is solved. On the contrary, the marquis's marriage implies a series of questions that are more or less extensively addressed by the various realisations of the myth. Is the marquis trying to abuse Janicola or Griselda? Was the marquis right in marrying Griselda? In other words, how should a man choose his wife? Assuming he was right, because taking a spouse for her virtues is to behave like a good Christian, where do these virtues come from? If they come from God, Griselda is exceptional and does not present a threat to nobility's concept of its own identity as composed of a set of virtues inherited by blood. If these virtues have been learned by Griselda, then, her ensuing *savoir-être*, which enables her to display a noblewoman's genuine behaviour and qualities, arousing the people wonder that she was so lowly born, challenges the assumption that noble virtues are genetically inherited. Furthermore, if a peasant girl can become a marquise, this might incite other young peasant women to conceive similar aspirations, thereby encouraging social mobility and threatening nobility's impermeability as a social group. Finally, given Griselda's baseness of blood, are her future children to be considered legitimate heirs, or does her blood pose a threat in terms of bloodline and succession rights?

Although in Boccaccio's *novella*, the peace of the marquisate is never actually threatened, the question of noble virtues' origin is problematised throughout the narrative. In other words, *Decameron* X, 10 engages with the "nature vs nurture" debate, questioning whether virtues are inherited through blood or acquired through learning. What is implied by the latter is the concept of the human mind as a *tabula rasa*, that is to say a blank tablet on which knowledge gradually appears thanks to education and empirical observations, as well as

806 See Bourdieu, "De la maison du roi à la raison d'État. Un modèle de la genèse du champ bureaucratique," p. 59.

experiences.⁸⁰⁷ Gualtieri, from this perspective, may be considered the embodiment of the never firmly fixed conceptualisation of noble virtues in relation to blood and heredity only. In the first part of the novella, he adopts a stance that implies his belief that noble virtues are acquired through learning. However, during the trials, he displays doubts that these virtues can be permanent in an individual who is not born noble.

As Gualtieri's subjects try to convince him to take a wife, he not only affirms that the qualities and virtues of parents are difficult to ascertain but also doubts whether these qualities and virtues are actually inherited by their children: "E il dire che voi vi crediate a' costumi de' padri e delle madri le figliuole conoscere . . . io non sappia dove i padri possiate conoscere né come i segreti delle madri . . . quantunque, pur conoscendogli, sieno spesse volte le figliuole a' padri e alle madri dissimili".⁸⁰⁸ What Gualtieri first suggests here is that relying on mere observation to determine whether a person actually possesses certain qualities may be misleading, because people can fake nobleness of mind or action and also because the senses are an untrustworthy source for knowledge acquisition. This passage thus alludes to the widely disseminated concept of the unreliability of sensory perception to understand appearances and to the practice of dissimulation, which was especially used by courtiers to obtain favours from their sovereign or to plot against other courtiers in order to make them fall into disgrace. Second, the phrase "segreti delle madri" is particularly relevant because it uses the word "segreti" and not "costumi", implying that mothers have something to conceal, most likely from their husbands. In other words, this phrase evokes the fact that at the time, it was truly impossible to determine with absolute certainty who a child's father was. While there could be no doubt about the identity of the mother at the time of birth, fatherhood was a dire issue. If a woman was careful enough to keep her extramarital affair(s) unknown, she could pass off her bastard children as legitimate. In other words, Gualtieri suggests that bastardy caused by mothers' extra-conjugal secret liaisons always remained a possibility. Bastardy not only sullied bloodlines—it also brought dishonour on families' names.

Gualtieri thus chooses a wife according to her "costumi" after having observed her for quite a while ("Erano a Gualtieri buona pezza piaciuti i costumi d'una povera giovinetta").⁸⁰⁹ The narration does not provide details of the

807 The Greek concept of *tabula rasa*, evoked by Aristotle in his treaty *On the Soul* (III, 4), was spread into the Christian world through Thomas Aquinas's writings, and in particular his *Summa Theologica* (I^a I q.79 a.2 co).

808 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1234.

809 *Ibid.*, p. 1235.

circumstances of this observation. It is therefore difficult to determine whether Gualtieri was looking at her from afar unseen or whether they actually met, if only once. Since Gualtieri warned his subjects against limiting oneself to observation only in order to know a person's qualities and virtues, it seems likely that he maintained some distance and remained hidden. This would enable him to avoid giving Griselda the opportunity to feign any particular behaviour in, or because of, his presence. In doing so, Gualtieri believes he can increase the likelihood of observing her genuine nature.

In any case, what is most important to the marquis is that he may lead with her a "vita assai consolata".⁸¹⁰ While this seemingly self-centred choice of a poor wife, albeit one of good qualities, apparently disregards the interests of the *bonum communitatis*. Gualtieri's choice turns to his own advantage and honour when his subjects discover that their new marquise is perfectly capable of behaving according to her rank. They actually think highly of him to have been so wise as to see Griselda's virtues hidden beneath her ragged clothes: "dir soleano . . . che egli era il piú savio e il piú acceduto uomo che al mondo fosse, per ciò che niuno altro che egli avrebbe mai potuta conoscere l'alta virtù di costei nascosa sotto i poveri panni e sotto l'abito villesco".⁸¹¹ It appears that Griselda's "costumi", or her "alta virtù", are precisely what makes her potentially worthy of pertaining to the highest order.

Whether noble virtues were actually inborn or acquirable overtime through hard work was still a matter for debate in the early modern period.⁸¹² While these virtues were obviously understood in terms of Christian ethics, the Renaissance and early modern understanding of the word "virtue" in relation to the concept of nobility was also influenced by Aristotle's treatises *Nicomachean Ethics* and *On the Soul*, as well as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, in whose works the virtues necessary for being a good ruler are not necessarily acquired through birth but can be learned through proper education and training.⁸¹³

Whereas Xenophon does not clearly appear to be a direct source for Boccaccio in this novella, the influence of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on Boccaccio's

810 Ibid.

811 Ibid., p. 1238.

812 Ryan Gaston, "All the King's Men: Educational Reform and Nobility in Early Modern Seventeenth-Century Spain," in *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Romaniello and Charles Lipp (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 168–69.

813 Matthew Vester, "Social Hierarchies: The Upper Classes," in *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, ed. Guido Ruggiero (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 228–30.

writings and his *Decameron* is well attested.⁸¹⁴ According to Aristotle, *eudaimonia* (“happiness”), which was also referred to as *eu zên* (“living well”), is man’s ultimate goal, and it is achieved through the “active exercise of his soul’s faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best and most perfect among them”.⁸¹⁵ Nonetheless, *eudaimonia* is not to be understood, as Susanna Barsella remarks, “né in senso assoluto né soltanto individuale, ma relativa al bene inteso come fine della politica. . . Dal punto di vista collettivo, la felicità è il bene pratico più alto che la politica persegue ed è superiore a quello individuale (*EN* 1094b 5-10)”.⁸¹⁶

Consequently, when Gualtieri sets his mind on Griselda for her virtues (“costumi”) in order to live well with her (“aver vita assai consolata”), not only does he choose a partner who presents nobles qualities, apparently acquired through education—he makes his decision with the aim of achieving *eu zên*. As Griselda’s “alta virtù” turns out to please his subjects, his marriage appears to promote the *eudaimonia* and *eu zên* of his people as well. Thereby, the novella seems to promote a concept of nobility that can be acquired if one possesses certain virtuous predispositions to it. Thus, while his choice of wife and the way in which he obtains her hand may seem an abuse of his sovereignty in pursuit of personal interest, up to this point in the novella, they actually appear to serve the common good and welfare of his country.

However, Boccaccio’s novella obviously does not end there: Gualtieri then proceeds to test Griselda’s virtues. He is, after all, not the embodiment of the ideal ruler, despite his clear-sightedness in selecting Griselda as a spouse, but rather one of what Dioneo calls “matta bestialità”,⁸¹⁷ a concept that will be developed in the next chapter. It suffices for now to say that for Aristotle, bestiality is often associated with madness and represents some kind of excessive and morbid cruelty. As part of his cruel plan to test his wife, Gualtieri alludes to Griselda’s low birth in order to justify each of the three ordeals he submits her to. This suggests that not only is Griselda’s patience and obedience as a wife tested but also her worthiness as a marquise and her virtues as a noblewoman.

814 See Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio’s Fiction*; Kurt Flasch, *Poesia dopo la peste. Saggio su Boccaccio* (Bari: Laterza, 1995); Francesco Bausi, “Gli spiriti magni. Filigrane aristoteliche e tomistiche nella decima giornata del Decameron,” *Studi sul Boccaccio* 27, no. 2 (1999).

815 Aristotle, *Ethics*, I.vii.15–16; p. 33.

816 Susanna Barsella, “I marginalia di Boccaccio all’ *Etica Nicomachea* di Aristotele (Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana A 204 Inf.),” in *Boccaccio in America. Proceedings of the 2010 International Boccaccio Conference*, ed. Elsa Filosa and Michael Papio (Ravenna: Longo, 2012), p. 147.

817 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1233.

Before sending a servant to take away their daughter, Gualtieri claims that “i suoi uomini pessimamente si contentavano di lei per la sua bassa condizione”.⁸¹⁸ After their son’s birth, using the same line of argument but being more specific in terms of the threat to the social order, the marquis tells Griselda:

Donna, poscia che tu questo figliuol maschio facesti, per niuna guisa con questi miei viver son potuto, sí duramente si ramaricano che un nepote di Giannucolo dopo me debbia rimaner lor signore: di che io mi dotto, se io non ci vorrò esser cacciato, che non mi convenga fare di quello che io altra volta feci e alla fine lasciar te e prendere un’altra moglie.⁸¹⁹

As Gualtieri is about to repudiate Griselda, he confesses to his courtiers that he believes he erred when he decided to marry Griselda: “con molti de’ suoi disse che per niuna guisa piú sofferir poteva d’aver per moglie Griselda e che egli conosceva che male e giovenilmente aveva fatto quando l’aveva presa”.⁸²⁰ Finally, as Gualtieri repudiates his wife, he alludes one last time to her rank and blood:

... e per ciò che i miei passati sono stati gran gentili uomini e signori di queste contrade, dove i tuoi stati son sempre lavoratori, io intendo che tu più mia moglie sia, ma che tu a casa Giannucolo te ne torni con la dote che tu mi recasti, e io poi un’altra, che trovata n’ho convenevole a me, ce ne menrò.⁸²¹

Gualtieri is of course lying because his subjects do not care about Griselda’s low birth and never actually criticise their marquis’s choice of spouse. However, these four speeches allude to several of the components of nobility’s identity, especially those that were controversial. The subjects’ supposed discontent “che un nepote di Giannucolo dopo me debbia rimaner lor signore” alludes to the problem of succession rights if the heir’s mother was a commoner and thereby to the necessity of blood purity on both the father’s and mother’s sides in order to legitimise a ruler’s position as head of a country. Gualtieri’s fear of “esser cacciato” envisages a threat to social order caused by the fact that his son would be deemed an illegitimate sovereign. His feigned recognition that he made a mistake (“male e giovenilmente aveva fatto”) expresses the nobility’s moral sanction against inter-order marriages, which, as previously mentioned, could be accompanied with legal repressive measures. These might include forbidding that children issued from such unions may succeed their father, as in the case of early modern Germany, or become part of the political elite, as in

818 Ibid., p. 1239.

819 Ibid., p. 1241.

820 Ibid., p. 1242.

821 Ibid., pp. 1242–43.

Renaissance Venice. In the last of these speeches, the opposition between the marquis's ancestors ("i mei passati sono stati gran gentili uomini e signori di queste contrade") and Griselda's ("i tuoi stati son *sempre* lavoratori") reiterates their rank difference and evokes the concept of "immemorial nobility". Gualtieri also acts as if he is finally sanctioning imprescriptibility, since Griselda's repudiation reverses her ennoblement. Even if nothing of what he says is true, and Griselda sees her marquise's title restored, indicating that in her case, nobility can be prescribed, Gualtieri's insistence in these three speeches places ever greater stress on the rank difference between Griselda and himself and testifies to contemporary attitudes concerning inter-order marriage. Furthermore, it suggests that he is to some extent uneasy about rank difference in marital relationships. He seems to need greater proof than his pre-marital observation of Griselda's "costumi", since a virtuous person cannot be called so unless their virtue is put to the test.

While patience and obedience were virtues that women of all ranks were encouraged to cultivate, as was chastity. Strangely, the latter is not among the virtues that Gualtieri tests in Griselda. Wives' chastity was perhaps even more important to noblemen than those of lower ranks given the threat that bastardy posed to their bloodline, identity, honour, and masculinity. According to Lois E. Bueler, the feminine virtue most frequently tested in literature is indeed chastity.⁸²² However, Bueler links chastity to obedience:

Whatever the occasion, the issue underlying the test is obedience to conflicted patriarchal authority, and the tested woman plot moves towards a resolution of conflicts and contradictions. . . . The calumniated woman may be welcomed back from grave or exile, received back into a marriage, allowed back into the good graces of a household, made the figurehead of a political or military campaign. But the health celebrated is that of the patriarchal establishment that has regained its properly constituted hold on itself and its world.⁸²³

From the very beginning, the quality that Gualtieri values most in a wife is obedience: total submission is what he asks Griselda to pledge before he finalises their union ("domandolla se ella sempre. . . s'ingegnerebbe di compiacergli e di niuna cosa che egli dicesse o facesse non turbari, se ella serebbe obediente").⁸²⁴ The reason why chastity is neither part of this pledge nor the testing may reside in the fact that, if, as Bueler argues, chastity implies obedience to the patriarchal

822 Lois E. Bueler, *The Tested Woman Plot. Women's Choices, Men's Judgments, and the Shaping of Stories* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2001), pp. 11–13.

823 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

824 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1237.

system, then, in this case, obedience towards one's husband may imply chastity for Gualtieri. Indeed, the novella never suggests that Griselda has ever cheated on her husband. Dioneo even jokes in his conclusion and final words that she ought to have had an affair when Gualtieri repudiated her as a revenge for what he made her endure, which in turn implies that Griselda was always faithful to her husband ("Al quale [i.e. the marquis] non sarebbe forse stato male investito d'essersi abbattuto a una che quando, fuor di casa, l'avesse fuori in camiscia cacciata, s'avesse sí a un altro fatto scuotere il pillicione che riuscito ne fosse una bella roba").⁸²⁵

Although her ordeals do not prove that Griselda remained chaste, they do attest to her unflinching obedience, even in the most extreme circumstances. In other words, she does not represent any threat to her husband's authority. Since Gualtieri is also a ruler, this means that she does not interfere with his government either, unlike many other noblewomen in the medieval and early modern period who used their position not only to influence their husbands' political decisions⁸²⁶ but also to obtain certain services from courtiers or to promote culture,⁸²⁷ like Joanna of Naples who encouraged and supported Boccaccio's literary production. In other words, Gualtieri ensures that a very strict model of patriarchy is safely maintained both within his household and within his country's politics.

Consequently, Boccaccio's novella addresses medieval and early modern noble anxieties regarding social mobility, albeit from a very reassuring perspective. While it ennobles Griselda, it does so only in a very specific and exceptional case. She is a woman who possesses virtuous predispositions rather than a man starting a new bloodline. Griselda only provides children to continue Gualtieri's line. In other words, Griselda, as a woman, cannot make a major addition to the closed, small circle of nobility. An ennobled man, on the contrary, would represent a greater threat to the nobility's construction of its identity through bloodline because of his capacity to create a new noble estate and household. Griselda's access to the rank of marquise also takes place in extreme circumstances, and she has to pass Gualtieri's excessively cruel ordeals before she is fully accepted as his wife and marquise. Nobility can thus hardly feel threatened by the idea that the story may encourage the practice of inter-order marriage. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however,

825 Ibid., p. 1248.

826 See for example Sánchez, "Pious and Political Images of a Habsburg Woman at the Court of Philip III (1598–1621)."

827 See Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier and Eugénie Pascal (eds), *Patronnes et mécènes en France à la Renaissance* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2007).

as I will show later in this chapter, social mobility is given a less reassuring treatment; and orders are presented as either more permeable or, on the contrary, much more closed.

Petrarch's Latin translation, on the other hand, offers a model in which any virtues, and the exercise thereof, is to be attributed to God, since it is constructed as a Christian *exemplum*. Within such a framework, any member of the nobility belongs or comes to take part in it because of God's will and providential plan for humankind. Although, like Gualtieri, Valterius believes that children can be very different from their parents, he is also convinced that "Quicquid in homine boni est, non ab alio quam a Deo est" and therefore relies on His providence to find a wife ("Illi ego et status et matrimonii mei sortes, sperans de sua solita pietate, commiserim").⁸²⁸ When Petrarch expands Boccaccio's suggestion that Gualtieri's marriage to Griselda may serve his people's well-being, he does so by adding Christian overtones, which omits the possibility that Griseldis may have acquired her virtues through education. While Valterius's unconventional union also makes him gain the respect of neighbouring rulers ("Sic Valterius, humili quidem sed insigni ac prospero matrimonio honestatus, summa domi in pace, extra vero summa cum gratia hominum vivebat"⁸²⁹), Petrarch endows Griseldis with saviour-like ruling qualities, enabling her to preserve and maintain the *bonum communitatis*:

Neque vero solers sponsa muliebria tantum ac domestica, sed ubi res posceret, publica etiam obibat officia, viro absente, lites patrie nobiliumque discordias dirimens atque componens tam gravibus responsis tantaque maturitate et iudicii equitate, ut omnes ad salutem publicam demissam celo feminam predicarent.⁸³⁰

This description underlines Griseldis's exceptionality by turning her into a Christ-like figure and implies that her virtues and political skills are heavenly gifts. Indeed, Petrarch introduces his first description of Griseldis, claiming "sed ut pauperum quoque tuguria nonnunquam gratia celestis invisit",⁸³¹ indicating that her noble qualities are innate, offered to her by God at birth, not acquired through education.

More importantly, during the trials, Valterius does not regularly mention, as Gualtieri does, his difference in rank with Griseldis, and when he does, he always attributes the complaints about this issue to his subjects. While Gualtieri pretends to feel remorse and expresses that his marriage with Griselda was

⁸²⁸ Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 72.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

a mistake, Valterius never recants for his own sake his decision to marry Griseldis, but for the sake of his people, he claims that he has no other choice than to take a new wife: “*tuo coniugo delectabar, mores tuos non originem respiciens; nunc quoniam, ut video, magna omnis fortuna servitus magna est, non michi licet quod cuilibet liceret agricolae. Cogunt mei, et papa consentit, uxorem me alteram habere iamque uxor in via est statimque aderit*”.⁸³² Valterius most likely does not regret his decision to marry Griselda, because the “*senili gravitate*” and the “*acri . . . intuitu*” that made him see Griseldis’s “*virtutem eximiam*” and be suddenly willing to take a wife (“*Unde effectum ut et uxorem habere, quod nunquam ante voluerat*”), are suggested to be God’s workings.⁸³³ Moreover, the fact that Valterius never expresses doubts about his decision to marry Griseldis, and that he was right in marrying for her “*mores*” and not her origins, excludes any notion that he shares nobility’s resentment for inter-order marriage in any way. In other words, Petrarch’s translation neutralises, to a certain extent, the novella’s problematisation of noble bloodline, social mobility, noble imprescriptibility, and succession rights.

Probably because most versions of the myth derive from Petrarch’s translation, the majority either rather faithfully translate his Latin text or summarise the beginning of the story and announce Griselda’s first pregnancy after the marriage without insisting on, or questioning, the rank discrepancy between her and the marquis in a particularly creative way. Aside from a few fifteenth-century exceptions, from the sixteenth century onwards, more and more realisations of the myth, especially in drama and verse, display a tendency to problematise Gualtieri’s decision to marry Griselda and present actual characters developing arguments against the match before and/or after the wedding. In other words, the re-writers of the myth often deemed it unlikely and unrealistic that no one would protest the marquis’s choice at any point in the narrative, so they inserted criticism of the socially exogamous nature of the marriage, as spoken either by Griselda’s father, herself or by the marquis’s knights, courtiers, and other advisors. Because of the myth’s strong link with didactic literature, most of these realisations use the mytheme of “the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl” and its socio-political implications with views to various educational purposes.

Unique of its kind, a moral interpretation of the story that explicitly links the rank difference with the wife’s testing is Iacopo Mazza’s retelling of the Griselda story. Mazza was a Franciscan monk who reached the status of minister

832 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

833 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

for the province of Calabria.⁸³⁴ Mazza's text is an Italian translation of Foresti's version in the *Supplementum*, and it was inserted in his *Scala de virtuti et via de paradiso* (1499). The *Scala* is a collection of *exemplum* addressed to a lay audience, and it guides the Christian man on the path of salvation. As one of these edifying stories, Griselda (now renamed Clisedia) occurs in the eleventh chapter, which is devoted to marriage. In this chapter, Mazza lists four precepts concerning the marital bond: (1) God's will must be respected in everything, including marriage matters; (2) spouses must be of the same social status; (3) spouses should be good parents, because good parents generate virtuous children; and (4) both spouses should be virtuous.⁸³⁵ Clisedia's story illustrates the second precept as a negative *exemplum* of what may happen in a socially exogamous marriage. For Mazza, "Quando non è equalitati in generationi, non è intra tali matrimonio ma una crudeli subiectioni".⁸³⁶ Accordingly, after translating Foresti's rather brief version, Mazza concludes, "Hagio quisto icquà dicto che si non havissi stato quilla muglieri di manco conditioni, non haviria tanto patuto. Et però nullo voglia piglari meglio marito che è la sua conditioni, ne meglio mugleri, altramenti haviria piglato continui straçi et frevi".⁸³⁷ As Filippo Conte remarks:

La pazienza con cui la donna sopporta la crudeltà e le prove servirebbe a giustificare il brusco passaggio della sua condizione di guardiana di percore a *domina*. In tal modo l'ordine sociale nuovo trova una giustificazione sul piano dei valori morali. Tuttavia nel nostro frate la crudeltà delle prove non è funzionale al superamento della disparità sociale tra la figlia del pecoraio e il marchese, non deve servire a compensare con la virtù la modestia dei suoi natali. Qui vi è solo un accanimento giustificato apparentemente della mancanza di quella "equalitati in generationi" che il nostro ritiene una delle quattro regole necessarie per una perfetta vita coniugale.⁸³⁸

Thus, Mazza's version, although not particularly innovative in terms of how it re-writes the mytheme of "the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl", is unique in its time for the way the mytheme is moralised and used as the basis

834 See Filippo Conte, "'Nam quae indotata est ea in potestas est viri': La Griselda di Iacopo Mazza," *Critica del Testo* 16, no. 2 (2013): 294–95.

835 See *ibid.*, p. 296.

836 Iacopo Mazza, *Scala de virtuti et via de paradiso* ed. G. Lalomia (unpublished PhD thesis: Università degli Studi di Catania, 1991–1994), p. 174. Quoted in Conte, "'Nam quae indotata est ea in potestas est viri': La Griselda di Iacopo Mazza," p. 296.

837 Mazza, *Scala de virtuti et via de paradiso*, p. 175. Quoted in Conte, "'Nam quae indotata est ea in potestas est viri': La Griselda di Iacopo Mazza," p. 297.

838 Conte, "'Nam quae indotata est ea in potestas est viri': La Griselda di Iacopo Mazza," p. 304.

for an interpretation of the story. This goes against the usual reading of Griselda as an ideal wife, which was common by the end of the fifteenth century. As such, Mazza's Clisedia crystallises lay and religious anxieties surrounding inter-rank marriage as a disruption of the social order that was divinely established and sanctioned by God.

Other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century versions, however, display creativity in terms of the inter-order mytheme's realisation of the moment of the marriage proposal. These versions demonstrate a view to exorcising various kinds of social anxieties rather than igniting them.

Given the extreme status discrepancy between the marquis and Griselda, it is legitimate to assume that the said proposal may involve some degree of authority abuse. While Boccaccio does not dwell on how Janicola accepts giving his daughter over to the marquis and simply presents Griselda agreeing to marry Gualtieri ("rispose di sí"),⁸³⁹ Petrarch's Ianicola submits to his lord's will because he is his "dominus" and Griseldis consents, deeming herself unworthy to be his spouse ("tanto honore me indignam scio") and ready to die if he would so require ("nec tu aliquid facies, etsi me mori iusseris, quod moleste feram").⁸⁴⁰ In some of the later versions, a recurring concern expressed by Griselda or her father when approached by the marquis to ask for his daughter's hand, is that this lord is trying to take advantage of him or his daughter in some way or another. Although never explicitly stated, this abuse seems to imply that Gualtieri may actually want Griselda merely to satisfy his sexual needs as a concubine or mistress. The argument evoked against the marriage proposal is that it is too extraordinary for a marquis to marry a peasant girl, so the proposal is a mockery. This argument is systematically silenced by Gualtieri's affirmation and reassurance that he indeed intends to make Griselda his lawfully wedded wife. Since lawful marriage resolves the issue, it suggests that the fear of abuse is indeed that of sexual abuse, which would stain the honour of both Griselda and her father.

In German realisations, Janicola systematically argues against the match as the marquis comes with his proposal. In Groß's marriage treaty *Die Grisardis* (1432), Grisardis's father cannot believe the marquis is telling the truth ("wie mag das gesein . . . daz ir daz von mir begert, eym armen petler, und also sein auch gewest meyn eltern, und ir seit von gepurt eyn fuerst?"), but, more importantly, he fears what the marquis really means without expressly naming it ("ich nicht darft ansehen, daz volkumen tugunt von unrecht und gewalt schal

839 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1237.

840 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 76.

dernyder lygen”).⁸⁴¹ The words “unrecht” and “gewalt” suggest that the old man thinks his daughter will be forcefully taken from him to be his lord’s mistress. The anxiety of Grisardis’s father is, however, rapidly whipped out by the marquis’s assurance that he means well and only desires to marry Grisardis, naming God as his witness to support his proposal (“schal got mein zeug sein, daz ich meinen veinden unrecht zu keynen zeiten wolte nye beweiffen . . . daz ich dir deine tochter sweche! . . . do ich leicht in erlichen sachen moechte die deine tochter neme, mir zu eym weib, wen ez ir wille”).⁸⁴²

Similarly, Sachs’s *Die marggräfin Griselda* (1546) presents an incredulous Janiculus who believes the *marggraff* is mocking him (“Gnediger herr, was ist von nôt / Mit mir zu treyben das gespöt?”), because it seems impossible to him that a marquis would marry his poor, low-born daughter (“Ach Gott, mein tochter aller ding / Ist ewren gnaden vil zu ring, / Denn das ir sie nembt zu der eh”), but he changes his mind as soon as he hears that the marquis means to take her as his “gemahel”.⁸⁴³

Janickl in Mauritius’s *Grisolden* (1582) also agrees to the match once reassured about the marquis’s intentions, but what he fears is not the sexual abuse of his daughter but rather economical and personal abuse. He assumes that his lord is playing a joke (“spott”) on him and is perhaps after wealth, because the marquis thinks Janickl has “einn Schatz vergrabn”, or that his sovereign might dishonour him by revealing that Grisoldis brought no dowry to the marriage (“Ohn all Außstewr vnd Morgengab”).⁸⁴⁴ Janickl is comforted only when Walther affirms that his only intention is to obtain Grisoldis’s hand.

The only late medieval Spanish play that stages the myth, Navarro’s *Comedia muy ejemplar de la Marquesa de Saluzia, llamada Griselda*, is also the only play in which the marriage proposal is perceived as a bad joke, not just by Janicola but also by Griselda: “Yo, señor, tengo entendido / que burlas de tu criada. / Que ser yo, señor, tu esposa, / parece cosa increyble: / tengolo por imposible”.⁸⁴⁵ Like, in the German plays, the marquis’s reassurance of his lawful intentions calms Griselda’s worries.

Phillip’s *Patient and Meek Grissill* (1564–68) is the only version that clearly and explicitly alludes to the potentially purely sexual intentions that Gautier may have towards Grissill. It elaborates slightly more on the topic by introducing the idea that Gautier is actually dearly in love with Grissill. Gautier

⁸⁴¹ Groß, “Die Grisardis,” pp. 30, 31.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁸⁴³ Sachs, “Die Marggräfin Griselda,” p. 45.

⁸⁴⁴ Mauritius, *Grisolden*, sig. C3v-C4r.

⁸⁴⁵ Navarro, “Marquesa de Saluzia,” ll. 249–53.

describes his feelings in Petrarchan rhetoric as a “force of ardent fire that boils in [his] secret breast”.⁸⁴⁶ Subjected to his burning desire, the marquis may seem condemnable for having given in to sin, as indeed Grissil’s father Janicle believes: he advises him to “Assuage [his] filthy lust”⁸⁴⁷ and master it. However, like in the German versions, Grissil’s father becomes favourable to the match when the marquis explicitly affirms, “I mind not, as a harlot, I, with her to lead my life, / But, by the force of wedlock’s knot, to take her as my wife”.⁸⁴⁸

While in all these texts, this potential abuse of his sovereign status to obtain sexual favours is clearly always proved wrong, it indicates an anxiety due to the imbalance in the power relationship between Janicola and Gualtieri, thus providing the subject for a discussion of the relationship between lust and marriage. Even though just Philip’s comedy goes deeper into this issue, the underlying didactic purpose of all these exchanges between Gualtieri and Janicola or Griselda is to include an exemplary figure through the marquis. This example is set not just for rulers—so they do not take advantage of their subjects, particularly women—but also for any early modern young males who sexually desired a woman (i.e. he should either fight those passions or marry the young woman in question). These early modern realisations of the myth promote the Christian view that marriage provides a lawful framework and solution for the sin of lust.

This is, however, not the only way in which masculine hypogamy is problematised. Two of these plays develop the consequences of such *mésalliance*. Mauritius’s Janickl then proceeds to argue further against the union with a long analogy, comparing the marquis and the nobility to oxen and himself, his daughter and all the poor people to asses:

Man duerfft dem Ochn da gar nicht trawn
 Das er wuerd viel auffn Esel schawn
 ...
 Die andern Esel nah vnd ferr
 Wuerden vber mich bald kommen her
 Mir ihren zaehnen zreissen mich.
 Die Ochn auch manchen stoß und stich
 Mit ihren Koernern vngehewr
 Zufurng kem also leiden thewr
 Mich armen Esl die Heyrath an
 Vnd muest den Spott zum schaden han.
 Drumb nicht geringe gefahr ich seh
 Wenn Esel woellen steigen in d’hoeh

⁸⁴⁶ Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissill,” l. 635.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., l.641.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid., ll. 725–26.

Vnd sich zu Stier vnd Ochsen gleichn
Das ist die Armen zu den Reichn.⁸⁴⁹

On the one hand, Janickl's conceit stresses the rank discrepancy between nobility and commoners by making them belong to two different species or races, thereby reproducing the contemporary conception of nobility's identity as a different race than the rest of the people. This was especially the case in French discourses about nobleness, which opposed the *noblesse de race* to the *noblesse d'épée* or *de robe* (titles acquired through royal service). Nevertheless, some social practices, as previously mentioned, in France, some states of Italy and Germany required proof of blood purity in order to be able to rule or be exempted from taxes, and this also participated in this construction of nobility as being genetically different from the rest of a country's people.

Moreover, in Mauritius's play, social disorder is underlined as a consequence of a match between a noble and a commoner, as Janickl imagines himself attacked by both the asses and the oxen, if the marquis was to marry Grisoldis, in a vivid description of violence that could well degenerate into an "asino-bovino-machia", in other words, into a civil war. Using the rhetorical guise of classical and medieval teachings that compare and/or turn humans into animals, as in the Greco-Roman tradition of fables and metamorphoses or the medieval bestiaries, Janickl tries to appeal to Walther's common sense to make him revise his decision for the *bonum communitatis*. However, Grisoldis's father, not applying his own advice to himself, as the marquis remarks in an aside ("Er gutem rath offt nicht gehorcht"),⁸⁵⁰ agrees to the match once reassured about the marquis's intentions, thereby undermining his point.

Similarly, Phillip's Grissil considers that the difference in rank is an issue, well aware of the consequences that her blood may have on Gautier's descendants:

Right sovereign lord, respect your young and tender days,
Your noble state, your dignity, your honor, and your name,
Your worthy birth, your parents' race, achieving trump of fame,
And eke lift up thine eyes, my poor degree behold,
...
For they may blemish quite thy stock and worthy race,
Thy honor and thy ancestors, at once they do deface.

⁸⁴⁹ Mauritius, *Grisolden*, sig. C3r–v.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, sig. C4r.

Therefore go choose a better choice, elect a meeter mate,
Which may increase and ample make thy worthy sanguine state.⁸⁵¹

Gautier finds in Grissil a witty opponent who is not easily convinced by his argument that he loves her for her virtues (“Thy virtues noble do thee make”).⁸⁵² However, like in Mauritius’s play, her words fall on deaf ears, and, of course, the marriage takes place anyway.

Likewise, Jean Du Pré, who briefly narrates her story in *Le Palais des nobles Dames* (ca. 1539), elaborates on Petrarch’s idea that Griseldis expresses her unworthiness and turns it into an argumentation in which his Griselidis tries to convince the marquis not to marry her:

Griselidis/ayans viz rubicunde
Quant ouyst ce/fust toute verecunde
Et sefforça/a y contrarier
Pour le marquis/de son vueil varier
Luy demonstant/que si tres puissant prince
Estoit decent/que quelque dame prinse
De Grant estouffe/non pas vne bergiere
Aux champs nourrye/& parmy la fougriere
Mais le desir/du marquis & la flamme
Fust si tres grant que la print pour sa femme
Et fuft alors par la vertue exquise
La bergerette/faicte noble marquise.⁸⁵³

In this version, Griselidis is not even heard agreeing to the match, and she only protests that it goes against proper behaviour. The marquis’s choice of spouse not only follows personal desire (“le desir . . . & la flamme”), without taking into consideration the *bonum communitatis*, but it is also condemned by the social decorum evoked by the young shepherdess (“Estoit decent”). Griselidis’s bold refusal to marry the marquis proves her virtuous self-control, knowledge, and care for the people’s welfare, and this antagonises the marquis’s passionate lack of strength of mind and disregard for the consequences of a marriage with a commoner for his subjects.

Even if these arguments problematising the consequences of a socially exogamous marriage and/or its inadequacy and impropriety had to be eventually dismissed in order for the story to pursue its course, they are symptomatic of the need that adaptors felt to evoke these issues, if only to show readers or audiences that such a marriage was not only unusual but also neither harmless

⁸⁵¹ Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissill,” ll. 656–58.

⁸⁵² *Ibid.*, l. 684.

⁸⁵³ Jean Du Pré, *Le Palais des nobles Dames* (s. l.: s. n., ca. 1539), sig. h3v.

nor desirable. In other words, even while they undermine their point by having the marriage become reality, they clumsily argue that rank discrepancy should normally be taken as an impediment and that masculine hypogamy is not an example to follow. Griselda's exceptionally virtuous nature is the only reason why Gualtieri's extraordinary *mésalliance* is possible and viable.

Griselda's qualities are precisely what are at stake. Some versions of the myth present debates among the marquis's men about his choice of spouse, and these texts aim to teach readers how to choose a wife, specifically what should and should not be considered when making such a decision.

In the anonymous fifteenth-century *Roumant du marquis de Saluce et de sa femme Griselidys*,⁸⁵⁴ Griselidys is now the daughter of a "vavassour",⁸⁵⁵ a member of the lowest tier of medieval feudal nobility. This new social rank may explain her good manners ("Ne se maintint pas comme folle ; / A nulluy ne tenoit parole"),⁸⁵⁶ unless they come from her school education, which was exceptional for a girl at the time ("Ung poc ot estey à l'escolle ; / Souvent dit le bien qu'elle savoit ; Ne dit fables ne parabolles, Ne suyvoit dances ne karollez").⁸⁵⁷ Even if Griselidys and her father Jehan Nicolle live in "mont grant povreté", they still belong to the same order as the marquis, who is renamed Bertyer. However, as previously mentioned, while a knight may marry a *vavas seur's* daughter, marriages between the higher and the lower nobility were extremely rare, and when they did happen, they were generally motivated by the financial benefits that the bride's dowry might constitute. While the *Roumant* reduces the social gap between Griselidys and Bertyer, perhaps to augment the story's verisimilitude, a certain social discrepancy in terms of rank is preserved through Jehan Nicolle's extreme poverty and the fact he bears the lowest noble title, thus enabling the problematisation of masculine hypogamy.

After the wedding, the nobles' opinions about Bertyer's choice of wife are divided: "Ly ungs disoient que bien ait fait ; / Et ly aultrez dient que non ait, / Et qu'elle est de trop bas amys ; / Maix il n'en challoit au marquis, / Ne tenoit compte de lour dis".⁸⁵⁸ However, with the birth of Griselidys's daughter, any

854 The *Roumant* appears in only one manuscript (Oxford, Douce 99), whose exact date is unknown. As Golenistscheff-Koutouzoff remarks, the author wrongly attributes it to Petrarch ("Franchois Pietat" l. 2) the French translation used as a source. See Golenistscheff-Koutouzoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, p. 138.

855 "Roumant du marquis de Saluce et de sa femme Griselidys (15th c.)," in *Histoire de Griseldis en France au XIVe et au XVe siècle*, ed. Élie Golenistscheff-Koutouzoff (Paris: Droz, 1933), l. 178.

856 *Ibid.*, ll. 103–04.

857 *Ibid.*, ll. 105–08.

858 *Ibid.*, ll. 225–259.

bad opinions regarding the origins of Bertyer's wife seem to have disappeared: "Helyanor fust appellée / La demoiselle de nouvelle née. Tout ly pueple Dieu en loat ; / Je ne croy pas qu'en la contrée / Eust oncquez dame mielx amée / Que la mere qui la portait".⁸⁵⁹ Strangely, the attitudes of Bertyer's subjects are again divided after Griselidys's repudiation. Some agree with his desire to take a new wife of "haulte lignyée": "Sa volontey lui accorderent / Et dyrent que c'estoit bien fait",⁸⁶⁰ while others condemn this decision:

Et lez aucuns mont leu blamerent
Coielement et en murmurerent,
En disant que pechié faisoit
Quant Griselidis ainssy laiçoit,
Qui moult tres belle dame estoit,
Que oncques millour ne trouverent.
De sa povretey lour pesoit
Et de l'anuy que on luy faisoit,
Mais en riens parler n'en oserent.⁸⁶¹

The condemnation of Bertyer's behaviour, which is more extensively described, seems to become the dominant opinion overtime. When Griselidys comes back to Bertyer's castle to prepare his second wedding, those who see her are not only shocked at how the marquis makes her work like a "chambriere de bas pris" but they also condemn once more his decision to remarry ("Sans occasion la vult laisser / Et une aultre dame espouseir").⁸⁶² However, when Bertyer introduces his supposed new bride and her brother, freshly arrived from Florence, the general opinion seems to change again:

Syre, de luy et de son frère
Sera bien le pays pareis.
Griselidis ait un povre peire,
Longtemps at que mourut sa meire,
Vers vous est de bas parenté.
Pregnez ceste pour sa beaultey,
Vous y serez bien assigney.
Et Griselidys s'en voise arriere.
Donnez luy don vostre aplantey,
Sy que jamaix n'ait povetey,
Et la renvoyez en chieux son peire.⁸⁶³

859 Ibid., ll. 275–80.

860 Ibid., l. 641, 43–44.

861 Ibid., ll. 645–53.

862 Ibid., ll. 745–47.

863 Ibid., ll. 807–17.

The marquis's courtiers seem to oscillate between their esteem for Griseldys, whose virtues they admire, and the fact that her low birth remains a fault in her character and a trait that makes it impossible for her to compete with Bertyer's beautiful new bride, who is of a higher, nobler extraction. Griseldys's poverty is also the reason why she is a less advantageous match than the young woman from Florence, as well as the reason for why the knight pities her and advises Bertyer to help her financially. Since the marquis's subjects are eventually all happy that Griseldys is restored as Bertyer's wife and that their children are safe and sound, their attitudes towards Griseldys's birth and poverty suggest that her qualities should be valued more than a woman's rank. However, if a man from the high nobility has a choice between two brides of apparently equal virtue, one from the high nobility and the other from the low nobility, the former should be preferred. Thus, in the *Roumant*, while low birth is an issue in exogamous marriage that can be overcome by personal merit, it remains a flaw. Despite the fact that the poem acknowledges that virtues can be acquired through education, noble blood appears to be an unfailing determiner of good manners and virtuous behaviour.

Sachs's *Die marggräfin Griselda* is the first of the early modern plays to stage a debate between the marquis's subjects, giving voice to the people's wonder and, in some cases, disapproval of the marquis's marriage with a farmer's daughter: "Ey, pfuy der schanden! . . . / Was will er mit der bewrin than? / Wo hat er nur sein gnad hin gedacht?", says Antoni, a soldier, after the wedding.⁸⁶⁴ However, his companion-in-arms Miser Lux contradicts him and praises Griselda's qualities, which make her even more beneficial for the people of Saluzzo than if she were a king's daughter:

Sie wird vol adlen iren namen
 Mit demut on allen bracht und stoltz
 Weil sie der schäflin vor dem holtz
 Gehütet hat mit ringer narung
 In mü und arbeyt hat erfahrung
 . . .
 Und ist nützer der landschafft her,
 Denn wens eins künigs tochter wer.⁸⁶⁵

Marco speaks similar words as the marquis asks him what his subjects think of his wife: "Kein edlere het ewer gnad künnen finden / Undter all künig und

⁸⁶⁴ Sachs, "Die Marggräfin Griselda," p. 49.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

fürsten-kinder".⁸⁶⁶ Sachs's play therefore strongly suggests that virtues come from labour and hard times rather than birth. In other words, Griselda's low birth actually makes her more virtuous than any noble lady could be, precisely because the vicissitudes of life inscribed on the *tabula rasa* of her mind taught her how to be patient and humble in the face of adversity.

On the other hand, the anonymous *Grysel, ain schöne comedi* uses the dialogue among the *Hauptman* (captain), the *Vogt* (reeve), and the *Pfarrer* (priest), which discusses the marquis's decision to marry Grisel, to preach about the qualities that should be sought in a wife. After the wedding, while the *Hauptman* expresses his disapproval of his lord's choice of bride because of her low birth ("Haben dann fürsten vnd Grafe nicht / Von Adel vnd ehrn kind geboren / Das er im hie hat außerkorn / Ains armen schlechten bauren kind / Ich main mein herr sey recht star blind"),⁸⁶⁷ and the *Vogt* agrees, but the *Pfarrer*, on the contrary, praises the marquis's decision. Although this is not a real debate *per se*, since neither the *Hauptman* nor the *Vogt* reacts to the *Pfarrer's* sermon, the *schöne comedi* gives more weight to the latter's arguments, because he is the last one to speak. The *Pfarrer* supports the marquis's choice because "Das sy jr tugent edel macht" and because "er weder reichthumb noch staht / Allain frümkkait ansehen hat".⁸⁶⁸ Thus, the play uses the *Pfarrer's* words to teach how to choose a proper wife. The choice should be made according to her piety or devoutness ("frümkkait"), not the wealth ("reichthumb") her family can bring through her dowry and other wedding presents.

As already mentioned, Mauritius's *Grisolden*, through the comic guise of Janickl's grotesque anxieties, stresses how unusual the marquis is in choosing a wife without any financial interest in mind. Indeed, being disinterested in money and searching for virtues is precisely what *Grisolden* intends to teach young men of marriageable age, since Mauritius borrows the discussion between the *Hauptmann*, the *Vogt*, and the *Pfarrer* from the anonymous *Grysel*, making a few additions to stress the main argument that wealth and rank should not be looked for in a future bride.⁸⁶⁹

In Phillip's *Patient and Meek Grissill*, unlike in most other versions, Gautier explicitly and lengthily states why he loves Grissil, since he has to convince her that she is a suitable spouse for him despite their rank difference:

866 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

867 *Grysel*, sig. B1v.

868 *Ibid.*, sig. B2v.

869 Mauritius changes the *Vogt* into a *Pfleger*, another word for "reeve", and the *Pfarrer* is more precisely defined as *Hofprediger* (priest of the court). In addition, even if the lines of the dialogue are copied almost word for word, the *Hofprediger* does not have the last word. The

It [i.e. Grissil's low birth] shall no whit abase my state, nor diminish my renown,
But cause thy fame thundered forth throughout our royal town.

...

Thy poverty can nought prevail thy rigor to obscure,
But rather cause and stir each wight disdain to put in ure.
Thy ragged clothes thee argue not in poor estate to live.
Thy virtues noble do thee make, such fate doth fortune give,
That thou above all virgins art, by trump of fame extolled.⁸⁷⁰

Gautier's love, enflamed by Grissil's virtues, like in the German plays, provides a model for the qualities to look for in a wife. Instead of being condemned for being led astray by sin and personal interest, disregarding his family's honour and name, and thereby potentially causing future social unrest, Gautier is praised for the purity of his feelings, which exemplify adequate Christian behaviour. In other words, the Christian didacticism overrides the nobility's prerogative requiring a socially endogamous marriage.

This is only momentarily, however, because the vice figure of the play, Politick Persuasion, convinces Gautier to torment Grissil. Politick first tries to convince the marquis's courtiers, Reason and Sobriety,⁸⁷¹ that Grissil is an unfit match for their lord, using arguments revolving around her base origins:

Is she [i.e. Grissil] any more than a beggar's brat, brought up in spinning?
Her father is indigent, needy and lame

...

In her there is no jot of noble sanguinity,
Therefore unfitly that her seed should rule or have dignity.⁸⁷²

Far from being of the same opinion, the courtiers actually see through the vice figure's scheme, and they denounce his gratuitous maliciousness and continue to praise Grissil's virtues as being worthy of a noble lady. The problem of Grissil's origins is thus dismissed as an argument only sinful people would bring, one that should be banished from the mind of anyone trying to follow Christian principles. Although Politick Persuasion then manages to persuade Gautier to test Grissil's virtues, convinced that they are only a pretence ("You shall see her

exchange is, thus, turned into a debate in which the *Hauptman* can express in the end that his doubts that have only been soothed rather than completely erased by the *Hofprediger*.

870 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissil," ll. 671–85.

871 Although their names seem to define them as allegorical embodiments of virtues, Reason and Sobriety are not allegorical figures *stricto sensu*, like those typically found in medieval drama. Gautier's courtiers only represent virtue in so far as they behave and speak well, but they are not in strict agreement with the specific virtue their names suggest.

872 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissil," ll. 907–11.

decline from virtue so rife, / And alter topsy-turvy her saintish life. / Her patience quickly shall changed be”),⁸⁷³ the fact that she withstands all the trials actually reinforces the play’s point that virtues, rather than birth or wealth, are what a man should look for in a wife.

In Navarro’s *Marquesa de Saluzia*, a year after the wedding, the marquis’s major-domo Galisteo doubts that Griselda is a suitable wife because she is low-born, and much like the Hauptmann in the anonymous *Grysel* (and Mauritius’s play, which reproduces this passage from *Grysel*), he reproaches the marquis of being blind:

Porque tu amoroso fuego,
me parece que estas ciego,
y con gran contentamiento;
pero yo tu casamiento
lo reprueuo casi luego.

...

Si fuera de tu metal!
pero es tan desigual
en hazienda y en estado,
que yo me estoy espantado
como la hazes tu yqual.⁸⁷⁴

It is very unlikely that the blindness attributed to the marquis is an indication of textual borrowing of any sort. Blindness in love is a *topos* of Greco-Roman literature from Plato to Horace and Seneca, among many others.⁸⁷⁵ What these German and Spanish dramas have in common is the knowledge of this traditional representation of love, and the fact that they use this common place as an argument against masculine hypogamy. As already mentioned, the marquis’s choice of bride is extremely unusual, as Navarro’s Griselda puts it: “parece cosa increíble”. Love’s blinding effect thus appears almost as evidence to make sense of what seems impossible. The next logical step these plays make is to employ the idea of love blinding as a means to question the marquis’s choice.

Galisteo evokes the social disorder that may ensue as a consequence of the marquis’s *mésalliance*: “Con tu gente lo has de auer: / que si hija te ha nacido, / y de pastoral muger, / el pueblo sera afligido / auella de obedecer”.⁸⁷⁶ Whereas Phillip’s Gautier started to test Grissil because of the vice figure’s slander, this

⁸⁷³ Ibid., ll. 981–83.

⁸⁷⁴ Navarro, “Marquesa de Saluzia,” ll. 316–30.

⁸⁷⁵ Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 95–97.

⁸⁷⁶ Navarro, “Marquesa de Saluzia,” ll. 401–05.

late medieval play has Galtero, the marquis, testing Griselda to prove Galisteo wrong and anyone else who may think in the same way. Unlike Gautier, however, Galtero does not behave badly because he has been led astray by temptation but rather because he is animated by a sense of justice. Galisteo is indeed convinced by the trials of Griselda's worthiness as a marquise. As he witnesses Griselda's acceptance of her daughter's death and readiness to die if the marquis so asks, Galisteo replaces his scorn with admiration ("o que muger excelente! / Platon lo dize y no calla: / muger Hermosa y prudente / muy pocas vezes se halla").⁸⁷⁷

Consequently, the anonymous *Roumant*, Sachs's *Die marggräfin Griselda*, the anonymous *Grysel*, Mauritius's *Grisoldis*, Phillip's *Patient and Meek Grissill*, and Navarro's *Marquesa de Saluzia* all use the imagined or real political consequences of hypogamy to further a view of virtues acquired by hard life experiences and/or education, rather than birth, as being as valuable as if these virtues had come from noble ascendancy. This concept of learnt nobleness of mind, or merit, is employed to valorise Griselda's qualities and promote them as those a good Christian should consider when choosing a wife. The ambiguity, however, resides in the fact that in these versions, Gualtieri either needs further proof of Griselda's virtues or wants to demonstrate to his subjects that she does not pretend to be virtuous. The excess into which the marquis then falls undermines any justification for the trials, because it is unrealistic to gather proof over such an extended period as 12 to 15 years.

Apart from these versions, which belong to didactic literature, there are two other sixteenth-century English re-writings worth mentioning for their treatment of the socio-political consequences of the masculine hypogamy of the myth.

First, encouraging more social permeability, the anonymous chapbook *The History of Patient Grisel*⁸⁷⁸ presents a subtitle that very radically, and perhaps ironically, advises young women to marry above their condition in order to financially profit from the match:

The ANCIENT, / True, and Admirable History/ of / Patient GRISEL, / A poore Mans Daughter in France: / Shewing, / How Maides, by her example, in their good / behaiour may marrie rich / HVSBANDS; / ...⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid., ll. 642–45.

⁸⁷⁸ The first edition that has come down to us dates from 1619, but the presence in the text of euphuistic traits points to a composition date in the 1580s or 1590s, see Jenkins, *The Life and Work of Henry Chettle*, p. 159.

⁸⁷⁹ *The Ancient, True, and Admirable History of Patient Grisel*, sig. A1r.

While the title page incites young women to imitate Grisel's choice of husband, the actual content of the chapbook does not further promote this idea but rather only suggests that Grisel is an "example [of] good beahuiour" and as such an ideal and an exception, in the manner of Petrarch's Griseldis. The subtitle's very pragmatic advice, which is at odds with the rest of the book, may then be a marketing addition of the bookseller/publisher, William Lugger, in order to increase his sales, given that title pages were used as posters in London to advertise which books were sold where. As publisher, Lugger owned the rights to the text and was thus able to modify it as he pleased. This example remains, however, symptomatic of a growing link between the Griselda myth and social mobility.

Second, Deloney's *Pleasant Ballad of Patient Grissell* deploys an argument about hypogamy similar to that in Phillip's or Navarro's plays but from a different perspective, because the ballad addresses a different kind of audience. *Patient and Meek Grissill* was most likely written for the Children of St. Paul, being conceived partly for children's education and partly as court entertainment.⁸⁸⁰ Whereas hardly anything is known about the possible staging circumstances of Navarro's play, its title, *Comedia muy ejemplar de la marquesa de Saluzia, llamada Griselda*, and its allegorical figures, Consuelo, Desesperación, and Sufrimiento, who come to tempt and save Griselda, respectively, after her daughter's supposed death, clearly indicates that the *comedia* belongs, like Phillip's play, to the tradition of didactic literature. On the other hand, the ballad, by definition a popular kind of literature and considered a low genre by contemporaries, could have been consumed by an audience ranging from the lowest to the highest social strata.⁸⁸¹ While ballads sometimes conveyed "religious and moral precepts" among other topics,⁸⁸² this is not the case for *Patient Grissell*, which is more preoccupied with a type of social injustice that would have appealed to commoners. Most likely, this song would have won, at best, the amused scorn of the nobility and, at worst, its expeditious dismissal: *The Ballad of Patient Grissell* takes the side of the worthy poor people, who are looked down upon by the elite simply because of their low social extraction.

880 Bliss, "Renaissance Griselda," p. 304, n12.

881 See Garrett Sullivan and Linda Woodbridge, "Popular Culture in Print," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1500–1600*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), pp. 271–73; Natascha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad, 1550–1650*, trans. Gayna Walls (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), pp. 243–48.

882 Sullivan and Woodbridge, "Popular Culture in Print," p. 269.

Grissell's marriage to the marquis actually creates "great strife"⁸⁸³ among the nobles, unlike in most other versions, where the marquis uses the nobles' discontent as a false excuse to justify taking away Grissell's children and repudiating her. While the ladies are jealous of her "beauty shin[ing] most bright", the lords reproach the marquis for his "base[. . .]" marriage, arguing that his "noble issue" will be "deride[d]" and "scorn[ed]" because of the children's "blood so base by their mother's side".⁸⁸⁴ In Philip's comedy, the discourse about Grissell's threat to the marquis's bloodline is presented as unchristian, because it is mostly found in speeches by the vice figure or dismissed as contrary to the ideology of the nobility within the play. On the contrary, the ballad, like the French *Roumant*, presents noblemen taking issue with Grissell's origins. The ballad condemns their attitude, accusing them of "malic[ing] Grissell's good estate" and calling them "foes".⁸⁸⁵ *Patient Grissell* even justifies the testing as a way to prove to the lords and ladies that Grissell is worthy of being their marquis. This justification is, however, undermined by the fact that the trials last 16 years and by the ballad's failure to provide any evidence that the nobility recognises Grissell's virtues and worthiness as a ruler's wife by the end of the testing. The marquis's admonition to those "that envied her estate" that they should "blush for shame, and honor [Grissell's] virtuous life"⁸⁸⁶ is the only reference to the lords and ladies' depreciation of his wife once the testing is over. More importantly, though, it does not prove that the nobles have changed their minds about the marquise as a consequence of Grissell's success through her ordeals. Consequently, despite the marquis's happy conclusion that "The chronicles of lasting fame / Shall evermore extol the name / Of patient Grissell, my most constant wife",⁸⁸⁷ social unrest may actually continue.

While the ballad advocates personal merit over birth, it hardly presents a threat for the contemporary social hierarchical system. Although the ballad takes issue with the noble ideology of and identity construction through blood, the character elaborating the defence of Grissell as the victim of social injustice is the marquis himself. The marquis is not a member of the people—he is the lord and sovereign of the unnamed country of the ballad. In other words, social order is re-established by the head of the state, the ultimate figure of earthly

883 Thomas Deloney, "A Most Pleasant Ballad of Patient Grissell. To the Tune of the Bride's Good Morrow.," in *A Gathering of Griseldas. Three Sixteenth-Century Texts*, ed. Faith Gildenhuis (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1996), 1. 39.

884 *Ibid.*, ll. 34, 47, 50, 49.

885 *Ibid.*, ll. 55, 62.

886 *Ibid.*, ll. 177, 79.

887 *Ibid.*, ll. 180–82.

authority, thus preventing any real subversive reading that questions the early modern social hierarchy.

Whereas the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama versions of the myth address the same questions as previous versions, they tend to privilege some over others depending on the genre's characteristics (comedy, *commedia ridicolosa*, tragicomedy) and the extent to which these plays follow the classical unity of time.

Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton's *Patient Grissil* and Lope's *Ejemplo* belong to the genres of Elizabethan comedy and Spanish *comedia nueva*, respectively, in which the unity of time is easily circumvented by using act division as an indication of an ellipsis and the passage of time.⁸⁸⁸ In other words, since these plays deal with larger narrative timeframes more freely than classical drama, they transpose the whole Patient Griselda story onstage. On the other hand, the other seventeenth-century dramas, Galeotto Oddi's *Griselda* (composed most likely between 1613 and 1619, but never printed)⁸⁸⁹ and Paolo Mazzi's *La Griselda del Boccaccio* (composed and printed in 1620) belong to the second category of early modern theatre that follows the classical unities. This entails that they all provide a summary of the Griselda story up to the point of the repudiation, spoken either by Griselda herself or by her father.⁸⁹⁰

888 In the absence of prescriptive rules—such as those of French and late seventeenth-century English neoclassical drama, which were expected to be applied—Elizabethan drama dealt variously and rather freely with the classical unities, especially that of time. Even though playwrights display knowledge of Aristotle's, Horace's, or Donatus's poetical treatises and commentaries, there was no institution, like the French Academy, to strictly prescribe the form of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical production. In Spain, Lope's immensely prolific theatrical production gave him the prerogative of producing an influential treaty on drama, *El Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), which he presented before the Spanish Royal Academy. However, in spite of his acknowledgment of the classical authorities in this treaty and recommendation to follow them, Lope considered that there was no absolute necessity for a play to last only 24 h and that the passing of time could be signified by act divisions, functioning as ellipses, compensated for by summaries of reported action by characters at the beginning of the act, see *Arte nuevo*, vv. 193–97.

889 It is, however, attested that Oddi's play was staged in Rome and met with considerable success: "con tanta magnificenza e con sì vaghi e splendidi intermedij, che se fosse stata rappresentata da qualsivoglia Principe poco più si poteva fare", see Cesare Alessi, "Elogio degli uomini illustri di Perugia," (Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, Perugia, 1627), cc. 68rv., quoted in Jean-Luc Nardone, "Il manoscritto originale delle "Rime" inedite di Galeotto Oddi, principe dell'accademia romana degli Umoristi: nuovi elementi biografici e presentazione del manoscritto," *Studi Secenteschi* 45 (2004): 35.

890 Mazzi starts his play just before Griselda is repudiated but he first introduces his other plot, which has little to do with Griselda's story, and only provides in act 1 scene 9 the summary of Griselda's life until her repudiation.

Since these Italian plays only transpose onstage the last mythemes of the myth, namely those about the repudiation, the fake second wedding, the revelation of the true identity of the supposed dead children, and Griselda's restoration to her status as a wife and marquise, it would seem logical that they do not problematise inter-order marriage. While it is true that they do not address the question of a potential authority abuse on the part of the marquis, these plays still engage with the legitimacy of the marquis's choice of spouse, the origin of Griselda's virtues, social mobility, and the legitimacy of her children as heir to the throne.

However, let us first examine the English and Spanish plays that address the issue of potential authority abuse. That a nobleman should wish to marry a low-born woman was still considered suspect and anomalous at the turn of the century.

Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton's comedy not only addresses issues of potential abuse of authority and bloodline but more importantly it focuses on the question of social mobility related to the mytheme of socially exogamous marriage. As a satiric kind of parody, this play derides Grissil's extreme patience with her husband, but at the same time, it offers a sympathetic portrait of country artisans' life in the manner of classical pastoral poetry, i.e. contrasting it with the corruption of courtly life, which is grotesquely satirised.

Griselda's birth and early life as a shepherdess in the countryside led several authors to rewrite the beginning of her myth in the pastoral mode. Critics such as Judy Kronenfeld, Paul Alpers, Louis Montrose, or Annabel Patterson have argued that pastoral poetry from Virgil onward has been used to engage with ideological and socio-political discourses.⁸⁹¹ As Patterson points out, in early modern England, two poetical treatises in their commentary of Virgil's eclogues (George Puttenham's 1589 *Arte of English Poesie* and Philip Sidney's 1595 *Defence of Poesie*) underline the fact that verses about singing shepherds may actually "shewe the miserie of people, vnder hard Lords, or rauening Souldiours",⁸⁹² and also that their "political subtexts . . . were more likely to have been seen as subversive"⁸⁹³:

891 Judy Z. Kronenfeld, "Social Rank and the Pastoral *Ideals of As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1978): 334; Paul Alpers, "What is Pastoral?," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 3 (1982); Annabel M. Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Louis Adrian Montrose, "Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form," *English Literary History* 50, no. 3 (1983).

892 Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: Thomas Creede, 1595), sig. F2r.

893 Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry*, pp. 127–28.

under the vaile of homely persons, and in rude speeches to insinuate and glance at greater matters, and such as perchance had not bene safe to haue been disclosed in any other sort, which may be perceiued by the Eglogues of *Virgill*, in which are treated by figure matters of greater importance then the loues of *Titirus* and *Corydon*.⁸⁹⁴

Patient Grissil exploits the potential of the pastoral mode to engage with socio-political issues inherent in the mytheme of the young noble man marrying a peasant girl. Whereas other versions of the myth, such as the medieval drama *L'Estoire* or Lope de Vega's *Ejemplo de casadas*, simply develop Griselda's early life as a shepherdess in the pastoral mode, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton use this mode more creatively to depict a bucolic image of the small community that Grissil, Janicola her father, Laureo her brother, and their servant Babulo embody. They combine this community image with a Protestant discourse about work, thereby enhancing their respectability in spite of their humbleness, stressing its contrast with the corrupt world of the marquis's court. *Patient Grissil* therefore puts forward the concept of nobility of the mind, which derives from the exercise of virtues rather than birth. However, this socio-political discourse is clumsily carried out and undermined by the satirical portrait of the marquis's grotesque and exacerbated cruelty, which makes him party to courtly corruption as much as his sycophantic courtiers for most of the play, despite the marquis's hidden agenda to sanitise his court.

The play maintains an aura of the Golden Age classical pastoral poetry in which the inhabitants of the country usually live peacefully in the open, enjoying nature as a *locus amoenus* and singing songs to each other. However, instead of leading an existence of mostly *otium*—providing for themselves by collecting from the plentiful trees and fields, as is often the case in the idyllic world of classical bucolic literature—Grissil and her family are no longer shepherds but basket makers, and they have enough to sustain themselves because they work hard. This new trade, which in appearance may seem anti-pastoral, is actually part of shepherds' activities, as described in a 1588 anonymous translation of Theocritus's Idyll XI: "O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither is thy wit and reason flowne? / If thou wouldst *baskets make*, and cut downe browsing from the tree, / And bring it to thy Lambes, a great deale wiser thou shouldst be".⁸⁹⁵ Even though in this case, the poem is about a Cyclops rather than a human

⁸⁹⁴ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), p. 53.

⁸⁹⁵ In an early modern translation that could have been available to the authors, the lines 72–74 of Idyll XI are rendered as, see Theocritus, *Sixe Idillia* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1588), sig. A4v.

shepherd, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton may have taken inspiration from this version for Grissil's new trade. Another influence may also be Virgil's second eclogue, which closely adapts this idyll emphasising the usefulness of work as an additional means apart from poetry, only implied in Theocritus, to forget the pain of unrequited love. In John Brinsley's 1620 translation for schoolboys, which exemplifies the kind of course books that may have been read by *Patient Grissil's* authors,⁸⁹⁶ the concluding lines of the poem read as follows:

Ah *Corydon*, *Corydon*, what madnesse hath caught thee?
 Thou hast a vine halfe pruned in a thicke branching elme.
 But prepare thou rather at least to make something, whereof there is neede: with oziers
 and soft bulrushes.
 Thou shalt find another [companion] if this *Alexis* do thinke scorne of thee.⁸⁹⁷

Here, basket making is implied by the phrase "make something . . . with oziers", the very wood used by Grissil's family in the play. In addition, the insistence on the usefulness of the activity "whereof there is neede" suggests that it may increase the shepherd's welfare, even that of his flock or family, and have the power to restore the herdsman's mental health, which was impaired because of Corydon's focus on his scornful lover. Whereas this valorisation of basket making as a useful activity is based on its value as a distraction from love sickness, the suggestion that working is necessary to well-being can also be read as an encouragement to avoid idleness, and idle is precisely what Grissil and her family are not.

Like classical pastoral characters, they enjoy simple sensory pleasures from nature such as "the warme Sunne", or when it is too hot, they "coole [their] sweating browes in yonder shade". However, they are not resting but "work [ing] tooth and naile . . . then [they] must have victuals".⁸⁹⁸ When they sing, it is not a song about the surrounding landscape or about love inspired by the

896 While nothing is known of Dekker's, Chettle's, or Haughton's education, Dekker knew Latin, so he must have frequented a grammar school, see John Twyning, "Dekker, Thomas (c. 1572–1632)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008). Virgil's *Eclogues* were part of the fourth year curricula of early modern grammar schools, see Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson, Shakespeare and Early Modern Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 44. In addition, Chettle wrote a prose romance, *Piers Plainness' Seven-Years' Prenticeship* (1595), which combines elements of the picaresque and the pastoral to address issues of social mobility and master–servant relationships, see Paul Salzman, "Prose Fiction," in *Tudor England: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and David W. Swain (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), p. 574.

897 John Brinsley, *Virgils Eclogues, vvith his booke De apibus* (London: Richard Field, 1620), sig. E1r.

898 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissil," 1.2.22, 24, 1–2.

Muses but rather so “that [their] labour may not seeme too long” and to encourage themselves to work:

The Song.
 ... Art thou poore yet hast thou golden Slumber:
 Oh sweet content!
 ...
 Worke apace, apace, apace, apace:
 Honest labour beares a lovely face,
 ...
 Canst drinke the waters of the Crisped spring,
 O sweet content!
 ...
 Then hee that patiently wants burden beares,
 No burden beares, but is a King, a King,
 O sweet content, & c.⁸⁹⁹

The song epitomises the whole scene’s combination of pastoral elements with Protestant ideologemes about work: the contented or ideal rural life (“golden Slumbers”; “sweet content”; the comparison of the countryman to a “King”), the *locus amoenus* that provides easy and immediate refreshment (“drinke the waters of the Crisped spring”) and appears in conjunction with, and dependence upon, industriousness (“work apace”) and the respectability of humble office (“honest labour”), which replaces the usual pastoral *otium*.

As the character of Griselda is introduced in the various realisations of the myth, she is generally never depicted as idle. However, only two other plays—before that of Dekker, Chettle and Haughton—place greater emphasis on her industriousness and valorising hard work: Sachs’s *Die marggräfin Griselda* and Phillip’s *Patient and Meek Grissill*. In Sachs’s text, Miser Lux, one of the marquis’s servant, only briefly comments that because Griselda “In mü und arbeyt hat erfahrung”, she will be a better marquise than if she were a “künigs tochter”.⁹⁰⁰ In contrast, in Phillip’s play, not only the behaviour and speech of the allegorical figure Indigent Poverty (“She never ceaseth toiling but laboreth always”) but also Grissill’s own (“To labor still to comfort them, these hands shall never cease”) and that of her father Janicle (“But thou for us continually, by labor dost provide”), underline how hard working Grissill is.⁹⁰¹

Interestingly, none of the early modern Italian, French, or Spanish versions of the myth place such great emphasis on Griselda’s experience of hard labour.

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid., 1.2.93–110.

⁹⁰⁰ Sachs, “Die Marggräfin Griselda,” p. 49.

⁹⁰¹ Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissill,” ll. 267, 82, 86.

They usually mention it only as a lesser quality compared to her other virtues of patience and obedience, something to indicate that she shuns idleness or cares for her father, but they do not present hard work itself as a particularly important or valuable activity. In other words, while Catholic realisations of the myth depict Griselda as an obedient and caring daughter, only in Protestant versions is her labour highlighted. Thus, her quality as provider is enhanced and employed to further the beliefs about work that the Reformation was promoting, namely that hard work pleased God and was man's duty and service for the well-being of the commonwealth.⁹⁰²

Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton carry this discourse a step further as they apply it not only to Grissil but also to her entire family as well. *Patient Grissil* presents the father's basket making in typically Protestant valorising terms as an honest trade providing enough money to sustain Janicola, Grissil, their servant Babulo, and Grissil's brother Laureo, a poor student who arrives from university at the beginning of the play: "the cheare is meane, / But be content, when I haue sold these Baskets, / The monie shall be spent to bid thee [i.e. Laureo] welcome".⁹⁰³ The family's other activities complement each other and serve the benefit of the small community that Janicola, Grissil, Laureo, and Babulo constitute: "while I worke to get bread, / And *Grissill* spin vs yarne to cloath our backs, / Thou shalt reade doctrine to vs for the soule, / Then what shall we three want, nothing my sonne".⁹⁰⁴ Janicola's words reflect Protestant work ideology, in which the manual or intellectual labour of each member of a society plays an equal role in maintaining the spiritual, material, and bodily welfare of the community.⁹⁰⁵ Consequently, not only Grissil but also her father and brother participate in the play's engagement with Reformation discourses about work and industriousness. The combination of these work ideologemes

902 See, for example, among the sermons to be regularly read on Sundays in church during Elizabethan times, [*The Second tome of homelyes of such matters as were promised and intituled in the former part of homelyes*], ([London]: [Richard Iugge and Ihon Cawood], [1563]), Fol. 266v–73r. Fol. 266v–273r.

903 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissil," 1.2.154–56.

904 *Ibid.*, 1.2.164–67.

905 See, for example, this passage from Martin Luther's *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung* (1520): "Ein Schuster, ein Schmied, ein Bauer, ein jeglicher hat seines Handwerks Amt und Werk, und doch sind alle gleich geweihte Priester und Bischöfe, und ein jeglicher soll mit seinem Amt oder Werk den andern nützlich und dienstbar sein, so daß vielerlei Werke alle auf eine Gemeinde gerichtet sind, Leib und Seele zu fördern, gleich wie die Gliedmaßen des Körpers alle eines dem andern dienen", in *Luther Deutsch: Die Werke Martin Luthers in neuer Auswahl für die Gegenwart*, ed. Kurt Aland, 10 vols., vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), p. 163.

with the previously mentioned pastoral setting and atmosphere produces an image of a “Protestant Golden Age”, which further underlines Grissil’s and her family’s worthiness as individuals and representatives of the craftsmen social group.

This “Protestant Golden Age” resembles what Louis Montrose, in his analysis of Elizabethan pastoral literature, calls “Christianised georgic mode”.⁹⁰⁶ Montrose finds instances of this mode in Thomas More’s *Utopia* and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as “a belief in the original dignity of labor”, which in the first instance translates as a depiction of an ideal commonwealth in which men as much as women occupy themselves with farming for the general welfare, and which, in the latter, translates to an unconventional description of prelapsarian Adam and Eve, who worked the earth of Eden.⁹⁰⁷ As Montrose explains, “[i]n the texts of More and Milton, the validation of agricultural labor goes hand in hand with a radical critique of aristocratic values and styles—a critique that is, of course, not proletarian in characters but rather religious, intellectual, and bourgeois”.⁹⁰⁸ However, the kind of pastoral literature produced between More and Milton, namely in the second half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, “is dominantly aristocratic in values and styles” and its “criticism . . . against courtly decadence or the inequities of courtly reward . . . tends to measure either the court’s distance from its own ideals or the courtier’s distance from the satisfaction of his ambitions”.⁹⁰⁹ Consequently, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton produce a kind of pastoral drama or rather a play with pastoral elements that does not follow the contemporary uses of this literary form but rather revives the kind of political critique found in Virgil’s first Eclogue from a Christian-satiric perspective, not unlike More’s and Milton’s but far less serious in tone.

According to Paul Alpers, in Virgil’s opening poem of his *Bucolics*, “the well-being of these shepherds [Melibeus and Tityrus] is dependent on those in political power”, who decide who can stay on their land or who are to be condemned to exile.⁹¹⁰ Similarly, in *Patient Grissil*, the representative of “political power”, the marquis, is the agent and determinant of social mobility. Although in Virgil’s first Eclogue, the instance that enables Tityrus to stay and forces Melibeus into exile is referred to as a god (“Oh *Melibeus* [our] God hath wrought this peace for vs”), it was no mystery to early modern English readers familiar

906 Montrose, “Of Gentlemen and Shepherds,” p. 426.

907 Ibid.

908 Ibid.

909 Ibid.

910 Alpers, “What is Pastoral?,” p. 451.

with this poem that this was a metaphor describing the breadth of power of the political ruler, the Roman emperor, as well as his superior status. Brinsley's translation is accompanied by a gloss that explicitly states that "By God be meaneth the Emperor *Augustus* who had granted him [i.e. Tityrus] his lands and liberties, for so the Romans flatteringly made their Emperours gods".⁹¹¹ In a similar way, in *Patient Grissil*, Janicola eludes to the marquis's enquiry about what the old man thinks of his frequent visits by saying that "The will of Princes subjects must not serch".⁹¹² This implies that Gwalter possesses god-like superiority and is someone whose ways are unsearchable.⁹¹³ Even though the marquis's depiction in Janicola's sentence may more likely stem from the early modern belief that kings embodied the Christian God on earth, like the god of Virgil's first Eclogue, the marquis appears as much a disruptive force as a benevolent one.

The potential threat that Gwalter represents to the peaceful life that Grissil's family leads in the countryside is evoked by Janicola's comment that the marquis has been visiting and wooing Grissil. The old man is not naïve, and he is well-aware that Gwalter's interest in his daughter might be purely sexual:

Oh my dear Girle trust not his sorceries,
Did he not seeke the shipwracke of thy fame?
...
If thou wilt be the *Marquesse* concubine,
Thou shalt weare rich attires: but they that thinke,
With costly garments, sins blacke face to hide,
Weare naked brauerie and ragged pride.⁹¹⁴

Even if Gwalter, of course, intends to marry Grissil, Janicola's fear that his daughter might become "the *Marquesse* concubine" is not entirely unjustified: at the end of the scene, Babulo, Janicola's servant and the play's fool, reminds the marquis, "I knockt you once for offering to haue a licke at her [i.e. Grissil's] lips".⁹¹⁵ The play thus shows that behind the seductive aspect of wealth and power, the potential for abuse exists. Grissil's belief that Gwalter would never wrong her ("all his words and deedes are like his birth, / Steept in true honor")⁹¹⁶ reveals her own candour: if the marquis's actions were indeed nothing but honourable, he would not have attempted to kiss her. Even if these

⁹¹¹ Brinsley, *Virgils Eclogues, vvith his booke De apibus*, sig. B2v, gloss 10.

⁹¹² Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 1.2.198.

⁹¹³ Cf. Roman 11:33.

⁹¹⁴ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 1.2.59–66. Emphasis in the original.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.2.328.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.2.69–70.

kisses were to remain harmless and lead to marriage, they are not taken so lightly by the other men in the play, because they take action to maintain and preserve the patriarchal honour code. Indeed, not only does Babulo prevent the marquis from doing anything else to Grissil by “knocking” him—Gwalter sanctions his behaviour by giving him a “golden recompense”,⁹¹⁷ thereby admitting that kissing Grissil was inappropriate.

The evocation of the kiss is embedded in a humorous and witty exchange between Gwalter and Babulo, playing on the fact that the marquis let the fool get away with violence against his sovereign person, a treasonous crime punishable by death, which diminishes the very serious threat the kiss implies, namely the potential for sexual intercourse outside a lawful marriage, resulting in the woman’s loss of her virginity, and causing dishonour to her and her family. However, what is laughed at is not the kiss itself or its implications but rather the incongruity that the servant of a poor man may insult his own marquis and not only remain unpunished but also receive money for his inappropriate behaviour. Here, humour functions to reinforce the patriarchal order, which entails the respect of its honour code, based on the preservation of women’s chastity. Although the patriarchal hierarchy is literally trodden upon by having an underling beat a nobleman, it is allowed because of the play’s fool, who enjoys comic freedom of speech and actions. Moreover, this passage illustrates the precedence of the honour code over social hierarchy within the patriarchal system. In the early modern period, a higher position in the social scale gave an individual authority over socially lower people but not the right to abuse this authority to obtain sexual favours from low-born women, which in turn would dishonour the woman and her family. Consequently, at the same time that Babulo’s potentially subversive violence is neutralised by comic licence, Gwalter’s unlawful behaviour is condemned, first by Babulo and then by the marquis’s rewarding of the servant, thereby restoring the social hierarchy and reinforcing the honour code. In this case, the potentially disruptive force endangering the peace and quiet of the countryside life that Gwalter represents is thus turned into a benevolent one.

As well as the issue of the potential sexual abuse, the first two scenes also begin the play’s problematisation of social mobility that Gwalter and Grissil’s socially exogamous marriage entails. As Gwalter chooses Grissil for her virtues, not her birth, like in all versions of the myth, according to his own wish rather than to social practice or nobility’s marriage strategies aiming at preserving

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.2.330.

noble identity and privileges, he goes against his courtiers' views and challenges the relative impermeability of medieval and early modern social groups.

Whereas in Sachs's, Mauritius's, and Philip's plays there is a debate among the marquis's courtiers about Griselda's worthiness as a wife, in Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton's comedy, there is also a discussion about Grissil's qualities. However, the marquis participates in this debate and tries to convince his courtiers, Mario and Lepido, as well as his brother Pavia, that because of her virtues, Grissil is an appropriate spouse, not only for him but also for any nobleman. Pavia, Mario, and Lepido are of the traditional and conventional opinion that a marquis should accept one of "all those neighbour-Princes, who in loue / Offer their Daughters, Sisters and Allies, / In marriage".⁹¹⁸ As Gwalter introduces Grissil to his courtiers, emphatically praising her beauty ("Me thinks her beauties shining through those weedes, / Seemes like a bright starre in the sullen night"),⁹¹⁹ her social rank is immediately perceived as an obstacle by Mario: "Were but *Grissils* birth / As worthe as her forme, she might be held / A fit companion for the greatest state".⁹²⁰ The marquis then attempts another unconventional, carnivalesque approach: he asks Grissil what she thinks of him and his courtiers in a parodic reversal of the judgement of Paris and offering whomever she prefers as a husband. While Grissil elusively claims that she has "no skill to judge proportions",⁹²¹ and Mario and Lepido are horrified by the fact that Grissil may choose one of them as a spouse: Lepido claims that he has "vowed to lead a single life", while Mario swears that "she nere shall be [his] bride".⁹²² Their fear indicates that being married to such a low-born woman would be some sort of punishment for them, since even vowed chastity appears to be a better option. As the marquis reveals that he actually intends to make Grissil his wife, Mario and Pavia make it explicit that hypogamy "will distaine" the Marquis's "nobleness" and ruin his honour and reputation ("What will the world say when the trump of fame / Shall sound your high birth with a beggers name?").⁹²³ While Gwalter fails to convince his courtiers that Grissil is a worthy spouse because "[s]hee's rich: for virtue beautifies her face", his condemnation of their opinion ("[t]he world still lookes a squint, and [he] deride[s] / His purblind iudgement")⁹²⁴ promotes the concept of true nobility as theorised by

918 Ibid., 1.1.22–24.

919 Ibid., 1.2.174–75.

920 Ibid., 1.2.188–90. Emphasis in the original.

921 Ibid., 1.2.210.

922 Ibid., 1.2.216, 226.

923 Ibid., 1.2.275; 279–80.

924 Ibid., 1.2.278, 281–82.

Giovanni Battista Nenna in his *Nennio, or a Treatise of Nobility*, which was translated into English by William Jones in 1595:

For nobility of the minde, is no other thinge, but a shining brightnesse which pceedeth from vertue, which maketh them famous and noble that are possessed therewith . . . surely I finde it neither so diuers, nor so changeable, nor so vnconstant as the other [i.e. nobility of blood], but it is always, and euery where, after one fashion, certaine and stable. It onely taketh beginning from vertue, and with good and vertuous actions is conserued. Whereupon some doe call it perfect nobilitie, because it standeth in neede neither of bloud, nor of the riches of other men.⁹²⁵

Even if Gwalter's argumentation about Grissil's worthiness works only insofar as he silences Mario, Lepido, and Pavia, the audience would have most likely been inclined to side with him. Although the audience may not have agreed that Gwalter was right to marry so extremely far below his rank, spectators may still have considered that the courtiers' scorn at Grissil's birth is not only disrespectful but also unjustified. The reason for this lies in the fact that, as already mentioned, Grissil is no longer a shepherdess but the daughter of a basket maker. The English playwrights thus turn her into a child of a craftsman, someone belonging to one of the poorest category of tradesmen. While this change does not elevate her condition (she still belongs to the same social rank)⁹²⁶ or make her any richer, this new trade helps an urban audience of Londoners to identify with Grissil and her family more than if they were shepherds. The social group of artisans and tradesmen was flourishing in early modern London. Not only were the majority of playgoers craftsmen or merchants, but many actors, playwrights, and other Elizabethan theatre shareholders, such as James Burbage or Philip Henslowe, were previously craftsmen or merchants.⁹²⁷

As already mentioned, the marquis determines the other characters' social movements along the social scale before and during the play. Generally, in the myth, Griselda's new status as a marquise, granted to her by Gwalter through

925 Giovanni Battista Nenna, *Nennio, or a Treatise of Nobility*, trans. William Jones (London: Peter Short, 1595), fol. 74r.

926 According to William Harrison, society under Elizabeth I was divided into "four sortes": "Gentlemen, Citizens or Burgesses, Yeomen, and Artificerers or labourers"; and under "artificers", he lists such trades as "Taylours, Shoomakers, Carpenters: Brickemakers, Masons, etc.", see "Description of Britaine", in Raphael Holinshed, *The first [last] volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande* (London: John Harrison, 1577), fols. 103r, a; 05v, b. Even though he does not mention basket makers, they are evidently included in the "etc." which concludes Harrison's non-exhaustive list.

927 See Theodore B. Leinwand, "Shakespeare and the Middling Sort," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1993): 287.

marriage, is in itself, given the extreme baseness of her rank, already a challenge to the usually limited ways in which medieval and early modern individuals can achieve a higher status. However, this challenge is exacerbated in Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton's play, since the social elevation includes Grissil's entire family from the beginning, where previous, and most of the later, rewritings of her story elevate Griselda's father only at the end, enabling him to live at court as part of his daughter's rewards for having withstood the ordeals. This unique feature alters and extends the consequences of hypergamy, which usually affects Griselda's status only, to a small community of basket makers, and can be read as representative of the whole group of lower sort of people in early modern England. Indeed, in act 1 scene 2, as Babulo comments on the fact that Grissil is already of marriageable age, implying that through marriage they will lose her as a worker and source of revenue, he illogically but comically links this to general decay. Babulo depicts society's decrepitude in mercantile terms, complaining about the degrading economic state of the various trades and associating basket makers with other craftsmen:

I haue seen little girls that yesterday had
scarce a hand to make them [i.e. cradles]⁹²⁸ ready, the next day had worne wedding
rings on their fingers, so that if the world doe not ende, we shall
not liue one by another: basket making as all other trades runs to decay,
and shortly we shall not be worth a butten, for non in this
cutting age sowe true stitches, but taylers, and shoomakers, and
yet now and then they tread their shooes a wrie too.⁹²⁹

Babulo's lament does not describe any economic reality and mostly serves a humorous purpose, yet it participates in giving basket making as a trade a particular prominence and representativeness, making it function as the antithesis of being a courtier. As we have seen, the second scene stresses the industriousness of Grissil's family as they busily weave baskets, whereas the marquis and his court, in the opening scene, enter the stage hunting, a typical leisure pastime of the nobility, while Grissil, her father, and Babulo sit down to work. Thus, basket making becomes the means to construct a pastoral critique of courtly life, not from the standpoint of the classical bucolic shepherd-poet but rather from the early modern perspective of commoners ranging from the poorest labourers to sometimes richer tradesmen and craftsmen whose wealth

928 Cradles were often made of osier and crafted by basket-makers, as Babulo indicates when he explains at the beginning of this speech that he has just sold one.

929 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 1.2.82–88.

enabled them to climb up the social scale and even obtain relatively influential political positions, such as that of Lord Mayor of London.⁹³⁰

Moreover, in symbolic terms, the product of Grissil's family's trade, the basket, as an object employed to carry things can be seen as a visual metonymy for (hard) labour and, as an item that moves as much horizontally as vertically, passing from hand to hand and possibly changing owners, can also be considered a metaphor for social movements as much along the social scale as within the same rank. As such, one could perhaps even argue that it represents Grissil's upward, downward, and upward again trajectory along the social hierarchy of the play and her "changing owners". English women's legal dependence on men at the time lasted almost throughout their lives.⁹³¹ Indeed, Grissil goes from being a basket maker's child to the marquis's wife before returning to her status as Janicola's daughter after her repudiation. She is then finally elevated again to the rank of marquise.

The play's pastoral social critique, designed to reveal the corruption of Saluzzo's court, contrasts Grissil's virtues and her family's dignity, when Gwalter's whims lower their statuses and send them back to the countryside, with the scorn and envy of the courtiers, making use of flattery to encourage the marquis in his mistreatment of this wife and keep his favour. So long as Mario and Lepido see Gwalter acting with Grissil normally, they call her "vertuous". However, as soon as the marquis starts pretending that his wife's social status has damaged his honour and name ("I haue wrong'd my state, / By Louing one whose base-ness now I hate"⁹³²), their responses radically change. As the marquis lowers Grissil's status within the court by forcing her to attend to his courtiers and himself like a mere servant, Lepido is "glad to see her pride thus trampled downe", while Mario congratulates Gwalter, "Your wisdom I commend that haue the power / To raise or throw downe as you smile or lower".⁹³³ Although this shows

930 Shortly before *Patient Grissil*, Dekker wrote one of his most famous plays, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, which was performed in 1599 and shows how social hierarchy was redefined in early modern England by the fact that enriched commoners could aspire to politically influential positions, such as the Lord Mayor of London, like Roger Oatley and, at the end of the play, the shoemaker Simon Eyre, or negotiate inter-rank marriage alliances on an equal foot with noblemen, like the respective father and uncle of the young couple of this comedy, Rose, Oatley's daughter, and Rowland Lacy, the Earl of Lincoln's nephew.

931 As Frances Dolan explains, "through marriage woman conferred many of [her] rights and responsibilities onto her husband, who exercised them for her; she could not regain them except as a widow", see *The Taming of the Shrew. Texts and Contexts* (Boston, New York: Bedford, St. Martin, 1996), p. 194.

932 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 2.2.134–35.

933 *Ibid.*, 2.2.140, 144–45.

how Mario and Lepido are actually dissatisfied with their prince's marriage, their discontent is not the reason why the marquis begins devising ordeals for his wife, which is still as mysterious and whimsical as it is in most realisations of the myth. Before the courtiers enter the scene, Gwalter tells his servant Furio, "So dearely loue I *Grissil*, that my life / Shall end, when she doth ende to be my wife. / . . . / Yet is my bosome burnt vp with desires, / To trie my *Grissils* patience".⁹³⁴ On the other hand, the courtiers' delight at Grissil's mistreatment is meant to illustrate the way in which Gwalter's court is corrupt and filled with counsellors who not only fail to advise their lord to treat his wife more respectfully but also encourage him to behave cruelly because they despise Grissil and her family for being commoners. In short, they cannot bear the fact that the marquis elevated their status: they "had rather fall to miserie, / Then see a begger rais'd to dignitie".⁹³⁵

In this version of the myth, before he repudiates Grissil, Gwalter banishes her father, her brother, and Babulo from court. The marquis decides on their banishment following Lepido's and Mario's advice, not because it is "profound wisdom",⁹³⁶ as he ironically tells Mario, but because he sees in this an additional means to test his wife's patience. While Mario and Lepido are delighted that Grissil's family has to return to poverty, Babulo and Janicola defend their dignity. The fool comically claims, "it shall ease me of a charge. . . as long as we haue good cloathes on our backes, tis no matter for our honesty, wee'll liue any where, and keep Court in any corner".⁹³⁷ When the marquis justifies their banishment, invoking the "publicke weale" and the fact that his "people murmure euerie houre / . . . Scofe at her [i.e. Grissil's] birth, and descant on her dower", Janicola denounces the injustice done to them by reminding Gwalter, "Alas my Lord, you knew her state before".⁹³⁸ Once in the countryside, Janicola displays resilience and finds "comfort" in his work ("This labour is comfort to my age"),⁹³⁹ thereby showing that in spite of his family's loss of princely favour, they can live happily and peacefully: there, they can "taste the quiet of this country life" in their "olde homely home, and that's still best".⁹⁴⁰

With the help of Mario and Lepido, Gwalter eventually also repudiates Grissil after she has given birth to their twins, a boy and girl. Interestingly,

934 Ibid., 2.2.17–21.

935 Ibid., 2.2.176–77.

936 Ibid., 2.2.172.

937 Ibid., 3.1.36–38.

938 Ibid., 3.1.74–79.

939 Ibid., 4.2.2.

940 Ibid., 4.2.5, 20.

in this version of the myth, Grissil is sent back to her father along with her children. Whereas this may seem anodyne, it actually functions to further demonstrate the independence of Grissil's family from courtly comfort and luxury. As Janicola remarks, even with more mouths to feed, they will not lack anything because their industriousness nature will provide: "Thou [i.e. Grissil] and these tender babes to me are welcome. / We'll worke to finde them foode, come kisse them soone, / And let's forget these wrongs as neuer done".⁹⁴¹ Although the repudiation may make the babies appear illegitimate, Janicola's welcoming of them and Babulo's insistence on their innocence ("this little Pope Innocent")⁹⁴² actually turn them into the embodiment of a craftsmen's dignity: "Come, where be these infidels? heere's the cradle of security, / and my pillow of idlenes for them, and their Grandsires [i.e. grandfather's] cloake / (not of hypocrisie) but honesty to couer them".⁹⁴³ The metaphoric clothing of the twins in Janicola's "cloake" of "honesty", as opposed to that of "hypocrisie", clearly alludes to craftsmen's honesty, which Janicola epitomises, as the antithesis of courtly hypocrisy, since the only characters in the play accused of making use of deception to achieve their ends are the courtiers, Mario and Lepido, and the marquis. This opposition therefore suggests that the education and care the little children will receive among the country artisans will be honest and virtuous, in stark contrast to how the court may corrupt them.

The children, of course, do not stay long in the countryside: Gwalter sends his servant Furio to take them away from Grissil and then pretends he will murder them. The marquis comes disguised as a basket maker to witness the scene unbeknown and brings gold with him for his wife, which he "let . . . fall of purpose to relieue her".⁹⁴⁴ After he and Furio leave, Janicola proudly refuses to spend any of this money:

Grissill lay vp this golde, tis *Furioes* sure,
Or it may be thy Lord did giue it him,
To let it fall for thee, but keep it safe,
If he disdaine to loue thee as a wife,
His golde shall not buy foode to nourish thee.⁹⁴⁵

941 Ibid., 4.2.89–91.

942 Ibid., 4.2.41.

943 Ibid., 4.2.92–94.

944 Ibid., 4.2.210.

945 Ibid., 4.2.224–28.

Janicola's rejection of pity and financial help reinforces their depiction as economically independent tradesman in need of no one's charity nor any political favour or patronage. As Bliss comments:

The pastoral critique allows the play to foreground and give new value to the (literally) working class without threatening the traditional hierarchy. . . . it insists on a fundamental human equality and dignity within the status system it upholds. The Janicola household is not merely contented with its lot; they are proud of what they are and feel an intrinsic worth as contributing member of society that the disdain of their social superior cannot erase.⁹⁴⁶

In contrast, Mario and Lepido, who are never said to possess any skill or trade, and whose current rank is the result of Gwalter's generosity, depend entirely on his good will and financial support: "The hand of pouerty held downe your states, / As did *Grissils*, and as her I rays'd, / To shine in greatnes sphere, so did mine eye, / Throw gilt beames on your births".⁹⁴⁷ Therefore, as the marquis remarks, their "soule should sympathise"⁹⁴⁸ with Grissil and her family, but they never show any sympathy. The injustice of Mario and Lepido's scorn for the low-born people is thus enhanced by their total socio-economic dependence on the marquis.

The play, however, inconsistently carries out its social critique of the noblemen's scorn of the lower sort. While Gwalter uses Grissil's trials to see how far Mario and Lepido's encouragements in his cruelty will be pursued, constantly asking them their opinions, he systematically receives praise for mistreating his wife. While this reveals Mario and Lepido's hypocrisy and true nature as sycophants, it does not legitimise the marquis's actions. After restoring the statuses of Laureo and Janicola to courtiers and Grissil to marquise, Gwalter banishes Mario and Lepido from court on the grounds that they "haue wrong'd" his wife and children, that they are "flatterers", and that their "soules are made of blacke confusion".⁹⁴⁹ Although this is meant to resemble a purging from the court of its corrupted parts, something reinforced by Janicola and Laureo's request for forgiveness for deeming the marquis unjust, Gwalter had no legitimate reason to doubt his wife and test her by repudiating her, by pretending to kill her children, and by treating her family disrespectfully in the process. In the epilogue, as Sir Owen puts the marquis in the category of "crabbed husbands",⁹⁵⁰ it suggests that in spite of the play's happy resolution, the court of

⁹⁴⁶ Bliss, "Renaissance *Griselda*," p. 337.

⁹⁴⁷ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissil," 3.1.129–32.

⁹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.1.133.

⁹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.2.203, 209–10.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.2.306–07.

Saluzzo is not entirely purified: its ruler perhaps would have deserved some kind of punishment for his excesses. Beyond the apparent celebration of the marquis's wisdom for the purifying his court of corruption, thereby seemingly to uphold courtly values and ideals, these very values and ideals are undermined by Gwalter's extreme methods. In other words, what the play actually celebrates is the craftsmen's capacity to live independently of their ruler's favour. Their honesty and dignity is ultimately rewarded by their restoration to courtiers whose true nobility is of the mind and "in need neither of blood, nor of the riches of other men",⁹⁵¹ which may actually be the real way to achieve better governance.

The other comedy that also extends the social mobility implied by the mytheme of "the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl" to the other members of Griselda's family is Paolo Mazzi's *Griselda del Boccaccio* (1620). This play, however, does not seriously engage with socio-political discourse but merely in a carnivalesque way, because as a *commedia ridicolosa*, its main aim is, as Mikhail Bakhtin puts it, "festive laughter",⁹⁵² and the celebration of the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order".⁹⁵³ The Italian comic genre of the *commedia ridicolosa* flourished in Rome during the beginning of the seventeenth century. As Jackson Cope explains, not only were those plays created for Roman carnival celebrations, but "[a]s a standard feature of the extended carnival world of early seventeenth-century Rome, the *commedie ridicolose* performances were attended by incalculable numbers of the middle and lower classes of Roman society".⁹⁵⁴ Mazzi's comedy was not composed for the occasion of a carnival but for another festive occasion: the marriage of Isabella Pepoli to Filippo Aldrovandi, Conte di Viano, who was a member of the senate of Bologna and Mazzi's patron.⁹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the play was no doubt intended for a broader audience than its aristocratic addressee and it possesses all the characteristics of the *commedia ridicolosa* genre. It follows the classical unities and is divided into three acts. The comedy presents three intertwined plots, and many

⁹⁵¹ Nenna, *Nennio, or a Treatise of Nobility*, fol. 74r.

⁹⁵² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), p. 11.

⁹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁵⁴ Jackson I. Cope, "Bernini and Roman *Commedie Ridicolose*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 102, no. 2 (1987): 180.

⁹⁵⁵ In the dedicatory letter to Aldrovandi, Mazzi writes, "Io dunque per mostrarmi partecipe dell'allegrezza, che nelle lor felicissime nozze dal commune applause vien dimostrata, le dedico e dono questa mia nuova Comedia, ne per altro certo, se non perche diffidatomi del proprio merito, le procure questo appoggio", see Mazzi, *La Griselda*, sig. A2v.

of its characters are types from the *commedia dell'arte*. Mazzi does not use dialect but makes some characters speak in a language with dialectal patina. The humour of the play arises from disguises, *quiproquo* and puns.⁹⁵⁶ Finally, Mazzi's text was printed in *duodecimo*, a format often used for this type of comedy because of its cheap and easy diffusion.⁹⁵⁷

By the time a purchaser of Mazzi's play would start to peruse it, any form of festivity would most likely have ended, but nevertheless, the book preserves carnival's spirit through its prologue not only for the readership but also for the audiences. This enables the reactivation of the carnivalesque frame during the revival of the comedy in possible later performances. In this prologue, after a long introduction to the virtues of carnival through the personified figure of a doctor preserving man's health through "gioualità, & allegrezza"⁹⁵⁸ and curing melancholy, the play and other theatrical performances are compared to the kinds of medicine that a doctor would prescribe for his patient-spectator:

L'Autore dunque di questa nuoua Comedia, che noi siamo per rappresentarui, sapendo questo, & in oltre credendo, che trà li passatempi, che sono come tanto sciloppi, e medicine, che vengono poste auanti da sorbire dal nostro versatissimo Mastro Carneuale, le rappresentationi sceniche siano delli primi, come quelle che tolgono l'animo fuori di se, e l'alienano d[']ogni altra cura; hà deliberato darui questa tratta dale fauole del Boccaccio.⁹⁵⁹

Thus, by presenting carnival and plays as "gay physicians" (as Bakhtin would have called them), the prologue sets the tone of the play, which in spite of the marquis's cruel treatment of his wife, offers many comic scenes. The comedy arises as much in the *Griselda* plot as in the other two, where humour is conceived along the lines of Rabelais' concepts of "the therapeutic power of laughter".⁹⁶⁰ Indeed, the influence of the French sixteenth-century writer is evident in one of the character's name, Panurgo, who is named after Rabelais's Panurge, Pantagruel's friend in the eponymous novel. Apart from the story of *Griselda*, the comedy also tells of two identical brothers, although they are not twins, Tedaldo primo and Tedaldo secondo, who are both believed dead but

⁹⁵⁶ Massimo Ciavolella, "Text as (Pre)Text: *Erudite* Renaissance Comedy and the *Commedia Ridicolosa* the Example of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *L'Impresario*," *Rivista di Studi Italiani* 10, no. 2 (1992): 27.

⁹⁵⁷ For a discussion of the cultural importance of the *commedia ridicolosa* as a printed text, see Cope, "Bernini and Roman *Commedie Ridicolose*."

⁹⁵⁸ Mazzi, *La Griselda*, sig. A5v.

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, sigs. A6r–v.

⁹⁶⁰ See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 68.

come back to Saluzzo hoping to renew contact with their father but fearing his reaction. The extreme resemblance between the two brothers offers several comic quid pro quo scenes. The third and last plot tells of a young lady, Hermellina, whose husband Ricciardo is wrongly accused of murdering Tedaldo primo in a classic storyline of romance comedy.

In order to respect the unity of time, the play starts representing the Griselda myth from shortly before her repudiation. Whereas most scenes concerned with Griselda's story are directly and rather faithfully borrowed from Boccaccio's *novella* with usually only small additions or re-arrangements, those involving Griselda's father, Gianucolè—his presence at court or his being cast away from it—are Mazzi's invention. After the introduction of some of the characters of the other plots, Gianucolè first appears in scene five and comments on his new status as the marquis of Saluzzo's father-in-law, starting the humorous depiction of his social elevation. Given that his name is a diminutive of Giovanni and that his previous occupation was that of a labourer, in this play Gianucolè naturally becomes a *commedia dell'arte* Zanni-type,⁹⁶¹ not the “foxy” or “astute” one, though, but rather the “more *stultus* . . . ox, beast type”.⁹⁶² Whereas his social elevation resembles the comic crowning of carnival celebrations, the play shows that titles and rich clothes do not turn Gianucolè into a gentleman, and it comically exploits the discrepancy between his rustic simplicity and his new noble lifestyle. Even though he is not knighted or granted a title, having been merely allowed to live at court, the attitudes of people towards him have radically changed:

Da pò, ch'à son duuintà soccer dal Sig. Marches d'Saluzz', beat' chi m'po far più huno, e più carezz'. Quand'à iera zappador da terra, ngun' n'm'acgnusseua, à pena qui, c'haue-nin bsojn della mia oura, m'dseuin Gianucol. Adessa ogniun m'saluta. Bondi Sig. Gianucol. Sruitor' à V. Eccel. Sig. Gianucol. Sruitor à V. S. Illustriss. . . . Sia pur bndetta l'houra ch'à vultò la schina à i coppi, e ch'à t'inzenerò fiola mia. che pr'l'tò blezz' ti è duuintà muier d'vn Princip', e s'è stà la mia ventura.⁹⁶³

The contrast between Gianucolè's rusticity and the titles (“V[ostra] Eccel[lenza] Sig[nor] Gianucol”; “V[ostra] S[ignoria] Illustriss[ima]”) creates a comic effect through the oddity of his receiving such an honourable treatment, especially considering his original baseness, of which the reader or spectator is constantly

⁹⁶¹ Zanni is the diminutive form of Giovanni in Venetian, see John Rudlin, *Commedia dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 67.

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁹⁶³ Mazzi, *La Griselda*, p. 13.

reminded of through the rural dialectal patina of Gianucole's language. However, what is more important and more carnivalesque and grotesque in nature is his delight in the food he can now taste as a courtier:

Mò alla fin' quest'è pò tutt'vent', e fum' e mi d'vent', e fum', a n'm'pass'. al m'pias'd'dar manza à i budie, e pr'quest' più, che per'altr'à i hò à car'd'esser'duuintà zintilhom. prche s'à vag' in cusina, (ch'à i hò quest' pr'cstum' d'andar più prest'in cusina, ch'in sala) à m'mett'à sder li appres'al fuog', e s'god'al rmor' dl' padel, al zigar di sped', al buier dl'pgnat', à vder' qul'arrost', e qul'tort', ch'fuma. ohime che cunsulation. am'dstruz' sol à pinsargh', al cuog'm'stà inanz' con la cappel in man. i sguattari m'fan la riuerentia. e sag' dig'. olà. fattemi della polenta. subit' i m'vbbidissin'. sà dig'. à vorrè di macaroni bè informaiadi. it'm'in fan'vn cadin. che quand'à i manz', al buttier cola da pr' tutt', e al furmai fila, ch'vn fà vn mulinel da lana. oh che piaser, ò che gust'.⁹⁶⁴

Even if people now address Gianucole with the reverence due to noblemen, he cannot quite live like one: he prefers to spend time in the kitchen, where the cooks and servants eat, rather than in the castle's dining hall (“hò quest' pr'cstum' d'andar più prest'in cusina, ch'in sala”), where the court has its meals. As many a Zanni “suffers from the spasms of an ancestral hunger. . . [and] is, as a result, insatiable”,⁹⁶⁵ Gianucole similarly enumerates the dishes that the cooks prepare for him (“qul'arrost', e qul'tort'”; “polenta”; “di macaroni bè informaiadi”; “al buttier cola da pr' tutt', e al furmai fila, ch'vn fà vn mulinel da lana”), which he vividly depicts by calling the audience's attention to the multifaceted sensorial pleasure (“oh che piaser) he takes from the food, as much auditorily (“s'god'al rmor' dl' padel, al zigar di sped', al buier dl'pgnat') and visually (“à vder' qul'arrost', e qul'tort', ch'fuma”) as gustatorily (“ò che gust”). This mouth-watering description imitates the *Commedia dell'Arte*'s Zanni, whose hunger often “leads to a vision of Utopia where *everything* is comestible, reminiscent of the followers of gluttony in Carnival processions”.⁹⁶⁶ The relationship between Gianucole's soliloquy and carnivalesque eating is clearly established in this comedy through echoes and similitudes between the prologue and Griselda's father's words. Like Gianucole, the prologue lists dishes (“la carne, [le] offelle, i pasticci, le torte, e le crostate, & a[l]tre simili viande”) that “Carnevale Medico indulgente ce le condisce, ce le mette auanti, e ci conforta, & inuita à tranguggiarle”, just as the cooks take care of Gianucole's food.⁹⁶⁷ Whereas Griselda's father likes to sit in the kitchen “appres'al

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹⁶⁵ Rudlin, *Commedia dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook*, p. 71.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁷ Mazzi, *La Griselda*, sigs. A5v-A6r.

fuog”’, so does the prologue’s speaker as he eats: “quando nel mio Camerino, auanti vn buon fuoco, . . . mi sono posto à sedere con qualche saprosa, e ben condita viuanda”.⁹⁶⁸ In other words, as not very astute and self-centred type he embodies, Gianucole appreciates and articulates the changes implied by his new status on a very rudimentary level. He does so both in terms of how much more attention and reverence he receives from other people, without questioning their honesty or imagining that he might not deserve such treatment, and in the very sensorial terms of his basic human need to eat.

In addition, the play uses the presence of Gianucole at court to construct a comic counterpoint to Griselda’s repudiation. Gianucole and his daughter’s respective reactions are contrasted as Gualtieri casts them away in order to enhance Griselda’s patience and love for her husband. Indeed, her father shows ridiculous despair at being forced back to his previous poor state.

Immediately after Gualtieri announces to Griselda that she has to leave court because he is going to marry another woman, Griselda, in a pathetic soliloquy of Mazzi’s invention, displays her changing emotions, beginning with sorrow, soon evolving into anger, and ending up in sad resignation. Rather than first lamenting her forced return to her poor life in the countryside, Griselda first laments the loss of her beloved (“infelice, per rimaner senza colui che tu più, che la proprio vita amauì”). She then goes on to blame Gualtieri for being excessively cruel in repudiating her (“ti doueua pur bastare, crudele, l’auer vcciso que pargoletti foglioli viscere del corpo mio . . . che altro da te, inhumano aspettar si puoteua che vna tale, & anco peggior risolutione?”) before she checks herself and repents having dared to speak ill of Gualtieri (“ò sconsolata, & abbandonata Griselda. taci mia lingua, e soffri, e guardati di non offendere colui, che deui sempre in ogni tua fortuna amare, e riuerire”), instead resolving to obey him (“fà, fà ciò, che il tuo Signore t’hà commesso, e disponi ad vbidirlo”).⁹⁶⁹

While this soliloquy reshapes Boccaccio’s Griselda into a much more humane character who expresses her various and complex feelings about her husband and the loss of her children, in this play it also functions to contrast with Gianucole’s reaction to the same events. Unlike Boccaccio’s Giannucole, who had anticipated his daughter’s repudiation and therefore preserved her old clothes (“creder non avea mai potuto questo esser ver che Gualtieri la figliuola dovesse tener moglie, e ogni dí questo caso aspetando, guardati l’aveva i

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid., sig. A6r.

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 21–22.

panni”),⁹⁷⁰ Mazzi’s Gianucole blames the astrologer who had predicted that he would be cast away from court in a soliloquy parodying that of Griselda:

O’ sort’ tradittora, ò destin crudel, ò stell’ nmig’, e congiurà al mal dal pour’, e sfortunà Gianuol. ch’hà da essr’ dal fatt’ me? hoia da turnar’ vn’ altra volta à zappar la terra? hoia da laurar tutt’al dì, e la nott’, quand’ al sol ardent’, quand’ alla fredda luna? ò prche n’m’dà in ti pè qu’ Astrolg’, ch’ m’hà pronosticà sta ruuina, ch’à vorrè cauargh’ al cor, el’ budel à vsanza d’naspa.⁹⁷¹

Panurgo, Timeo primo’s servant, disguised as an astrologer and having heard of the marquis’s intention to take a new wife, revealed to Gianucole through a fake divination that he would have to go back to his labourer’s life. In other words, far from having foreseen anything or supporting his daughter in her misfortunes, like the self-centred Zanni he is in this comedy, Gianucole does not patiently submit to his lot and wants to take revenge on Panurgo. Unlike his daughter, he laments having to go back to poverty, eat unsavoury food (“pan d’melga”, “ai, e civolla”, cauli con vn pò d’mzina ranza”), and sleep in an uncomfortable bed (“durmir in s’la paia in vece dei morbidi lini”).⁹⁷² Like Griselda, Gianucole blames Gualtieri (“ah Gualtier assassin, nò Princip’ no, ma furia infernal, e Diauol bech’ cornù”), not for having killed his grandchildren and repudiating his daughter but rather for forcing him to become a “pour’ hom” again.⁹⁷³ Finally, Gianucole’s self-centeredness leads him to despair, and he envisages suicide in a grotesque fashion. He tries to find the courage to die by his own hand through several means: by giving names to his sword parodying the chivalric custom (“Spada, anzi mia fidel Balisarda, ò Durlindana”⁹⁷⁴), which alludes to Ruggiero’s and Orlando’s blades in Ludovico Ariosto’s epic poem *Orlando Furioso*; by depicting himself not as the greatest knight that ever existed but as the most courageous “eater” (“[il] più valent’ mangiator, che caualcass’ mai d’Piazza in Bcaria, e d’ Sala in Cusina”)⁹⁷⁵; and by imagining his own epitaph in macaronic Latin. This reads:

Hic iacet Gianuolus, quondam Pedrazzi, quondam Zampettæ, quondam Zamboni de’ Malfinidis di Val buslecca d’sotta, de pauper hortulano factus Princeps e perche placuit

⁹⁷⁰ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1244.

⁹⁷¹ Mazzi, *La Griselda*, p. 38.

⁹⁷² Ibid.

⁹⁷³ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 40. “Bcaria” is Gianucole’s rustic pronunciation of the Venetian word “beccaria”, which means “butcher’s shop”.

alla fortuna iniqua, e fella, ch'ex opulentio, & mangianimo al turnass' pauper, più tost',
che lauurar mai più la terra, al vols' andar con l'sò man sotterra.⁹⁷⁶

Although Gianucole should comfort his daughter, being the supposedly wiser parent, Griselda is the one comforting her father and staying his suicidal hand. She even tries to convince him of the benefits of living in the countryside by offering a moral critique of the courtly way of living:

Et hora, che hò prouato la vita non solo Cittadinesca, ma delle Corti, conosco . . . che nō
puo all'humo dal Cielo darsi maggior felicitade, che lo stare, & il viuere in Villa. perche
essenda la vita rustica maestra, e come vn'esempio della diligenza, e della parsimonia
non si puoteua trouare cosa più vtile, più dolce, ne più diletteuole, doue l'huomo da gli
odii, dalle iuidie, dalle cupidità, dalle ambition sta lontano.⁹⁷⁷

While Griselda praises the countryside lifestyle as opposed to the corruption of the city, she is far from Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton's celebration of the honest working craftswoman. Her depiction seems to be taken directly from a moral schoolbook, simply imitating the usual presentation of the topos opposing the city and the countryside. Indeed, Gianucole mocks her discourse, underlining its artificiality by pointing out in a very down-to-earth manner that their life at court was much easier than the one they expect now: "An' dsput' adessa dalla Villa alla Città, al m' dà da far, l'essr', cmod' era Lurinzon mèlò, d'gran past', e poca fadiga".⁹⁷⁸

Of course, both are eventually restored to their respective statuses as marquise and courtier, but not without some more comic confusion on Gianucole's part. Griselda's father enters the last scene not knowing his daughter has just had all that she had lost, including her children, restored. With an avenging spirit, he presents himself as "il Rè di Sarza Rodomonte",⁹⁷⁹ continuing the allusions to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, in the manner of the *commedia dell'arte* type of the *capitano*. The farcically defying and threatening Gianucole, ready to fight Gualtieri for having wronged his daughter's honour, is soon soothed and reduced to almost infantile incredulity: he feels the need to ask the marquise three times ("El' uera Sig. Gualtier? ò costù m'dà la burla?", "Es' son' un'altra botta al uostr' Mssirin?", "E si n'm' farì mai più cazzar uia?"),⁹⁸⁰ before he is convinced that he is a courtier again and his daughter is the marquise's only

976 Ibid.

977 Ibid., p. 42.

978 Ibid.

979 Ibid., p. 96.

980 Ibid.

legitimate wife. Naturally, Gianucole happily concludes the play by going back to eating: “A tavola. dou’uè altri Signori m’uedrì mnar’ l’ man’ da paladin’, s’ à m’mnari qualch’un d’uè uosch’à cena. e bona sira, e bon ann’”.⁹⁸¹

Consequently, in terms of comical treatment of the Griselda myth and the social mobility implied by its mytheme of “the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl”, the generic difference between Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton’s Elizabethan comedy and Mazzi’s *commedia ridicolosa* also implies different concepts of laughter in their respective approaches and presentations of Griselda’s and her family’s movements along the social scale. Although Babulo, the English play’s fool and closest comic equivalent to Gianucole, could have merely produced grotesque humour—like other characters in the play like the Welsh couple, Sir Owen and Gwenthyan—he most of all serves the authors’ satirical purposes, inviting the audience to shun from showing scorn to the lower sort of people and hold their industriousness and honesty in respect. Gianucole, on the contrary, embodies the carnival spirit of Mazzi’s *commedia ridicolosa*, and he is employed to create “festive laughter”,⁹⁸² with no intention of reforming the audience but rather relieving them from the cares of everyday life for the duration of the performance. In Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton’s play, Janickl embodies the Protestant work ideology and its related virtues (also present in Grissil) and patiently accepts his own banishment and that of his daughter from court. In contrast, Gianucole’s ridiculous suicide attempt, while it underlines Griselda’s patience and obedience, mainly functions as comic entertainment for the spectators.

The other major issue in early modern dramatic realisations of the myth inherent to the mytheme of “the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl” is the question of the legitimacy of Griselda’s children as future rulers of their father’s country and/or another land through marital alliance. In other words, these realisations examine the concept of true nobility. Whether nobleness comes from blood, from education, or from (innate) virtues, as already mentioned, is one of the recurring questions that the Griselda myth addresses. Whereas in medieval versions of the myth, after Petrarch’s translation, some writers present Griselda’s extraordinary virtues as God’s gift and providence, early modern drama shows that Griselda’s qualities were acquired through education and demote God’s will to a secondary influence. Whereas in Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton’s play, as well as in Lope de Vega’s *Ejemplo de casadas*, the question of the nobleness of Griselda’s children is addressed only when they are born,

⁹⁸¹ Ibid.

⁹⁸² See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 11.

Oddi explores issues of birth and noble identity from the first to the final scene of his tragicomedy *Griselda* (c.1613–1619), because in this play, Griselda's daughter and son are young adults whose parts are as fully developed as that of their mother.

If understood as a quality inherited by blood, nobility entails beliefs about conception and the different roles the father and the mother play in it. By presenting a socially exogamous marriage out of which children are born, the *Griselda* myth not only questions the legitimacy of these children but also places gender at the centre of the debate about noble identity, both in terms of *Griselda*'s worthiness as a spouse and of women's role in reproduction and the extent of its influence on the bloodline. But where do *Griselda*'s virtues come from? And to what extent does her base blood affect her daughter and son? These questions underlie all versions of the myth. However, in early modern theatre, they are addressed through additions that transcribe current medical discourses about generation and contemporary beliefs about embryology.

In the early modern period, Greek medical theories were still prevalent in terms of how human reproduction was understood. The writings of Aristotle and later Galen about embryology were the major influence on the medieval and early modern concept of generation, called epigenesis, until the end of the seventeenth century when preformation became the dominant concept. Epigenesis “viewed the embryo as produced through gradual development from unorganised matter”.⁹⁸³ Preformation, on the other hand, postulates the pre-existence of a miniature being, or at least some structure of a being, in either the male (animalculism) or the female (ovism) seed that then grows into the womb until birth.⁹⁸⁴ Although nineteenth-century science has discarded preformation and re-established epigenesis, the early modern understanding of epigenesis obviously differed from our modern scientific knowledge about embryology.

Aristotle, in the first book of *On the Generation of Animal*, describes animal reproduction in general, including that of humans. He conceives of male semen as a “residue” from “useful nourishment”, i.e. blood “which has been concocted”⁹⁸⁵ by the natural heat of men's bodies, and, therefore, produced in smaller quantity and white in appearance. While Aristotle argues that women do not secrete semen because the equivalent of male semen is women's menstruation, maintaining that it is “impossible that any creature should produce

983 Nancy Tuana, “The Weaker Seed. The Sexist Bias of Reproductive Theory,” in *Feminism and Science*, ed. Nancy Tuana (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989), p. 163.

984 *Ibid.*, pp. 163–64.

985 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, p. 89; 726a, 26b.

two seminal secretions”,⁹⁸⁶ but he still considers menstrual fluid as a blood residue, which is produced in “greater . . . amount and less thoroughly concocted” and thus more resembles blood, since women are colder and weaker than men.⁹⁸⁷ More importantly, according to Aristotle, “The male provides the ‘form’ and the ‘principle of the movement’, the female provides the body, in other words, the material”.⁹⁸⁸ Supplying only what Aristotle also calls “prime matter”, women are therefore passive in reproduction, whereas men are active, “causing movement”.⁹⁸⁹ Thus, “the offspring is formed . . . from that which has imparted movement to it, or that which is its ‘form’”.⁹⁹⁰ The male contribution through semen is clarified in Book II, where Aristotle adds that the semen “emitted by the male, is accompanied by the portion of soul-principle and acts as its vehicle”.⁹⁹¹ In other words, while men are the active part furnishing the spiritual element and the dynamic principle that will result in the growth of the foetus, women more passively provide the matter or nourishment, “contain[ing] all the parts of the body *potentially*”, which the “soul-principle” needs to develop into an actual soul within an actual human body.⁹⁹²

However, as Roberto Lo Presti argues, women’s role in generation as a provider of matter does not mean that it “is characterised by the absence of form *at all*,” and neither that her passivity is not “to be understood in terms of inertness of her matter”.⁹⁹³ On the contrary, “although the female matter does not contain in itself the originating source of its movement, it is actually capable of movement in virtue of its *dynamis pathētikē*”.⁹⁹⁴ In other words, as Aristotle explains in the fourth book of the *Generation of Animals*, any dynamic movement inducing change “in its turn gets acted upon by that upon which it acts”.⁹⁹⁵ Aristotle uses this argument to explain the fact that children may resemble their mother. The more that the semen of the father is pure and hot—in other words, strong in both its “faculties” of being male and “father-like”—the more the son will resemble his father. Even if the male faculty is stronger, if the

986 *Ibid.*, p. 97; 727a.

987 *Ibid.*, p. 93; 726b, p. 95; 27a.

988 *Ibid.*, p. 109; 729a.

989 *Ibid.*, p. 111; 729a, p. 113; 729b.

990 *Ibid.*, p. 115; 729b.

991 *Ibid.*, p. 173; 737a.

992 *Ibid.*, pp. 173–75; 737a.

993 Roberto Lo Presti, “Informing Matter and Enmattered Forms: Aristotle and Galen on the ‘Power’ of the Seed,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* sp. is. on “Medical Powers” (2014): 11.

994 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

995 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, p. 411; 768b.

“father-like” faculty of the male semen is weaker than the female matter, then the embryo will become a son who resembles his mother. If the male faculty is weaker, then a daughter resembling her father will be born. If both faculties are weak, the daughter will take after her mother.⁹⁹⁶ Aristotle thus provides a scale of varying influences from the male semen and the female matter, all of which interact to produce not only one or the other gender but various degrees of resemblance of the father, the mother, or their respective ancestry depending on the strength of their dynamic power. Consequently, while in Aristotle’s view the female is more passive than the male, the movements set in motion by the male soul-principle organise the female matter in conjunction with it in a reciprocal dynamic of varying dominances of either male or female influences.

By taking Aristotle literally and failing to see that his notion of female passivity has to be nuanced, Galen likely not only undertakes to prove the existence of female semen but also criticises Aristotle for considering the female contribution to generation as passive.⁹⁹⁷ According to Galen, the embryogenetic process is active as much on the female as on the male part.⁹⁹⁸ By means of dissection, Galen finds “testicles . . . alongside the uterus”—in other words, he identifies the ovaries and considers them the equivalent of male testes—and concludes from this observation that “the female had to discharge semen not externally, like the male, but into its own uterus”.⁹⁹⁹ Although Galen agrees with Aristotle that male semen is the result of concocted blood and considers that female semen is less perfect than male semen because “strong heat is needed for the production of precisely perfected semen”,¹⁰⁰⁰ Galen differs from Aristotle in that he attributes as much generative power to the female as to the male:

both the semen and the menstrual blood have both principles, but not with matching strength, the semen having the strongest active principle but a very small amount of the material principle, whereas in the blood the material principle is most abundant and the dynamic very weak.¹⁰⁰¹

996 *Ibid.*, pp. 401–11; 767b–68b.

997 Lo Presti, “Informing Matter and Enmattered Forms: Aristotle and Galen on the ‘Power’ of the Seed,” p. 15.

998 *Ibid.*

999 Galen, *On Semen. De Semine*, trans. Phillip De Lacy (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), p. 145; 2.1.2.

1000 *Ibid.*, p. 177; 2.4.23.

1001 *Ibid.*, p. 165; 2.2.20.

Since male semen is purer and stronger (or more “active”) than female semen, the “active principle” contained in the menstruation blood, nourishing the foetus, compensates for the lack in dynamism of female semen and thereby explains why children can resemble their father as much as their mother, depending on which male or female “active principle” dominates in the shaping process of the embryo’s body members and organs:

as for similarity, . . . so far as the strength of the semen goes, the offspring should always resemble the father. But the female semen received the power from the menstrual blood as a contribution to its strength, which in nine months compensates for the deficiency at the first encounter. For since the semen of the female is congenial to it, (the menstrual blood) increases and strengthens the substance and power of that semen rather than of the male semen.¹⁰⁰²

Even though Galen’s or Aristotle’s medical theories could be said to underlie all versions of the Griselda myth in their engagement with discourses on blood and nobility, only two of the early modern theatrical versions of the myth are directly informed by these Greek theoreticians and use them more extensively: Lope’s *Ejemplo de casadas* and Oddi’s *Griselda*.

In both plays, Aristotle’s embryology is selectively alluded to or misunderstood, as indeed Galen did, and attributes to the mother only a nourishing role in the generation of the foetus. Aristotle’s theory in both cases appears in cues spoken by Griselda (renamed Laurencia in Lope’s *comedia*) in order to enhance her children’s innocence and legitimacy. Galen’s studies on embryology, on the contrary, function either as subtexts to question the right of Griselda’s son and daughter to rule after their father and to justify their feigned assassination, since their blood and identity is stained by their mother’s baseness, or to praise masculine hypogamy, although only when the wife’s virtues compensate and surpasses what she lacks in lineage.

In Lope’s *Ejemplo de casadas*, masculine hypogamy is not presented as ideal but is not seen as an impediment. Whereas the Conde Enrico’s, Lope’s equivalent of Gualtieri, courtiers favour geographical exogamy combined with social endogamy (“[E]sta [mujer] hallarán en Castilla, / Aragón o Portugal, /

1002 Ibid., p. 167; 2.2.22–24. See also p. 197; 2.5.74–76: “when the temperament of the fetus is hotter and drier a male animal is produced, and it is colder and wetter a female . . . the similarity in individual form to one or the other of the parents is brought about by the molding and shaping power contained in the semen. . . . some become similar to ancestors in accordance with the formula of the semen not only on the father’s side but also on the mother’s is evident from what has been said.”

Francia o Saboya, tu igual, / digna de tu cetro y silla”,¹⁰⁰³ their lord does not care for geo-politics or social considerations: he looks for “virtud fama, honestidad”, and does not care for anything else (“lo demás me nieguen”).¹⁰⁰⁴ Enrico wishes for a peaceful marriage and knows that only virtue can guarantee it (“sola virtud procuro / que es el dote que deseo”).¹⁰⁰⁵ When he meets Laurencia (Lope’s Griselda), she gives him advice in very similar terms about how the Conde Enrico should choose a wife:

pregunte a la fama
de la virtud y valor,
recato, honesto temor
y sangre de alguna dama;
aunque, si digo verdad,
de la sangre no pregunte,
porque basta que la junte
a su illustre calidad¹⁰⁰⁶

The blood of the Conde’s future wife, that is to say her lineage and rank, is not important, although not for the same reasons as those previously expressed by Enrico. Laurencia justifies her rejection of bloodline considerations on the grounds that once the wife’s blood is united with his quality, as lord of Roussillon and Cerdanya, his spouse’s origin will no longer be an issue. This implies that through marriage, the wife’s status, if it is not already so, becomes the equivalent of her husband’s. More importantly, since Laurencia uses the word “sangre” to refer to the future bride’s rank, her argument also suggests that the Conde’s blood dominates over his wife’s, not simply in terms of the titles she will gain through the wedding. Given that Aristotle and Galen describe both male and female generative fluids as concocted blood, any children Enrico and his future wife will have, of necessity, result from the joining of their respective blood. In addition, Laurencia’s dismissal of the importance of the origin of the wife’s “sangre” entails that the Conde’s blood will dominate, endowing his heirs with his “illustre calidad”, regardless of their mother’s rank before marriage.

Laurencia’s belief that the father’s role in reproduction is dominant stems from her interpretation of Aristotle’s generation theory. As she laments the supposed imminent death of her son, Laurencia reasons about his innocence in terms of Aristotelian embryology, thereby stressing the injustice done to the infant:

1003 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 89–92.

1004 *Ibid.*, vv. 155–56.

1005 *Ibid.*, vv. 151–52.

1006 *Ibid.*, vv. 753–60.

Hijo, ¿queréis saber vuestro delito?
 Sabed que os matan porque fuiste nieto
 de la humildad de un viejo a quien imito,
 que ya tienen de vos tan mal concepto;
 mas si *materia* o *forma* os han escrito,
 la *materia* soy yo de poco efeto,
 la *forma* fue del Conde. Hase engañado
 quien os quiere *formar* de mal culpado.¹⁰⁰⁷

Laurencia does not know that Enrico is lying about his subjects' discontent. However, her use of Aristotle's theory of human reproduction proves incorrect the traditional fake accusation of the myth that her son is not a rightful heir to his father's throne because his grandfather Lauro is a "labrador grosero".¹⁰⁰⁸ However, her knowledge of the Aristotelian concepts of "form" ("forma") and "matter" ("materia") appears very restricted. Laurencia focuses on Aristotle's explanation of the generation and growth of a foetus without any reference to the ways in which it may physically take after the father's or the mother's family equally. She thus limits her role and influence in the generation of her son ("soy yo de poco efeto") and emphasises her husband's dominant role. Laurencia takes women's passivity in reproduction to the letter in that they provide only the matter or nourishment necessary for the foetus's growth, while men play an active role in transmitting the form or "soul-principle". In addition, in Laurencia's discourse, "forma" as "soul-principle" seems to encompass not only the "movements" that provokes the foetus to grow, but also his noble identity as well as the qualities and virtues that her husband's rank implies, since Enrico's role in his son's generation prevents the child from inheriting any base quality from his maternal grandfather in Laurencia's conclusion ("la forma fue del Conde. Hase engañado / quien os quiere formar de mal culpado").

Whereas this passage seems to indicate that the *comedia* advocates for an Aristotelian understanding of human reproduction, supporting a concept of nobility as strictly inherited through the father's blood and in which the mother plays no part, other scenes suggests otherwise. Lope complicates Griselda's usual final trial, in which she is asked by the marquis to come back to his castle to prepare his supposed second wedding. Instead of showing Laurencia deciding whether or not to serve the Conde and prepare the banquet, *El ejemplo* presents a third possibility to Laurencia: the widower and heirless Gosfredo, Prince of Bearn, desires to marry her and proposes to her. Thus, in the scene before the proposal, the Prince and his courtiers discuss who should replace

1007 Ibid., vv. 1788–95, my emphasis.

1008 Ibid., v. 1747.

his late wife, so he may provide them with a legitimate heir (“casarme y daros prometo / ligítima sucesión”).¹⁰⁰⁹ In a dialogue echoing that between Enrico and his men at the beginning of the play, where Gosfredo’s lords advise him to conform to the usual practice of social endogamy coupled with geographical exogamy (Muchas ilustres señoras / del alemán y español se ofrecen”),¹⁰¹⁰ the Prince places a higher value on virtue:

Ni el ser rica, ni el ser bella,
ni el ilustre me persuade.
La virtud, la discreción
por mejor dote quisiera,
porque de igual prenda os diera
cuerda y santa sucesión.
No me anima la grandeza,
ni el oro me da inquietud,
porque sola la virtud
la verdadera nobleza.¹⁰¹¹

Unlike Enrico, the Prince’s reason for preferring virtue over wealth, beauty, and rank does not reside in a fear of marrying a shrew who would ruin his honour but rather in his identification of virtue with true nobility (“sola la virtud / la verdadera nobleza”). Whereas some of the Conde’s men in the first act of the *comedia* doubted their lord would ever find a virtuous wife (“Tibaldo: . . . no hay quien mujer le corte / a medida de su idea”; “Elarino: Y ¿dónde habrá tal mujer?”),¹⁰¹² Gosfredo’s courtiers, on the contrary, encourage him and help him find such a spouse. Having heard of Laurencia’s wifely perfections, of her children’s assassination by their father and her repudiation, Anselmo advises the Prince to marry her because she would increase his fame, and he suggests that he would have perfect offspring with her:

si la hicieras tu mujer
para que tu nombre ensalce,
para que el oro divino
de tu sangre diese esmalte
con la virtud de sus [o]bras,¹⁰¹³

1009 Ibid., vv. 2267–68.

1010 Ibid., vv. 2277–79.

1011 Ibid., vv. 2283–92.

1012 Ibid., vv. 216–17, 224.

1013 In Déodat-Kessedjian and Garnier’s edition, which here follows that of Menéndez y Pelayo, line 2387 reads “con la virtud de sus hebras” (see Lope de Vega Carpio, *Obras de Lope de Vega publicadas por la Real Academia*, 15 vols., vol. 15 (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyera,

¡qué fama habrá que no alcances!¹⁰¹⁴

As Anselmo metaphorically mingles Gosfredo's blood with Laurencia's virtue, he alludes to the ancient art of adorning and colouring metals with vitreous enamel, which was very common in Renaissance gold and silver working. While this may be read as a metaphor to express how Laurencia would enhance and beautify his lord's reputation, the word "sangre", even more than "nombre", evokes the Prince's bloodline and the means through which his title, qualities, and nobility are passed to his descendants through reproduction. In other words, Anselmo's metaphor may also be an allusion to the conception of Laurencia and Gosfredo's future children, in which her virtue is the enamel colouring the gold of the Prince's blood, implying that their offspring would inherit as much their father's nobility through his "sangre" as they would their mother's virtuousness, because both are fused in the figurative enamelling process.

As Laurencia, of course, does not marry the Prince of Bearn, and she is eventually restored by Enrico as his legitimate spouse and *condesa* of Rousillon and Cerdanya with hyperbolic praise for her patience, humility, and obedience, turning the feast organised for his supposed second wedding into a celebration of her virtues. The ending of Lope's *comedia* therefore reaffirms one last time

1913), p. 39). This line is, however, rather obscure since the Spanish term "hebra" means "thread" or "string". In their French translation of the play, Déodat-Kessedjian and Garnier resort to the poetical meaning (absent from Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua española* (1611)) of "hebras" (in plural) signifying "hair", see Lope de Vega Carpio, "*L'exemple pour les femmes mariées et l'épreuve de la patience*, 1601 (?)," in *L'Histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, ed. Marie-Françoise Déodat-Kessedjian, et al. (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2001), p. 219. The line would then mean "with the virtue of her hair", which does not seem to have any clearer metaphorical signification than "with the virtue of her strings". Although Laurencia's beauty is frequently praised in the course of the play, not once is her hair given any attention, whose colour or length is not even mentioned. Moreover, in spite of several references to her occupation as shepherdess ("pastora"), she is never seen onstage weaving or spinning, let alone keeping sheep. Therefore, it seems unlikely that any character in the play would associate her virtue with her hair or threads of wool from her unseen sheep. On the other hand, if one looks at the first edition printed in Alcalá in 1615 or at the second edition of 1616 printed in Barcelona, the spelling of the line's last word there is "ebras" (sig. C4v in both editions), which indicates that "hebras" with an "h" is an emendation the French scholars probably took from Menéndez y Pelayo's edition of the play. This opens up the possibility that the compositor of the 1615 edition actually made a mistake and spelt "ebras" where he should have spelt "obras" (like for example in l. 627 where one can read "sebon" (sig. A8r), which Menéndez y Pelayo emended into "se ven" following the logic of the context). The line then obtained, "la virtud de sus obras", appears much more logical and meaningful.

1014 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 2383–88.

that virtue is what a man should look for in a wife, not rank or wealth. Whereas the play may seem to encourage masculine hypogamy, Laurencia's exceptional-ity prevents such a generalisation and sets her as an ideal, an example for other women to follow, as the title and the last words of the play indicate: "Aquí, Belardo da fin / . . . / a la historia verdadera / de *El ejemplo de casadas*".¹⁰¹⁵ What Laurencia's restoration—and particularly Enrico's restitution of her son, Ramón, to legitimacy as heir ("Don Ramón, . . . / es el Príncipe heredero / de Ruisellón y Cerdania")¹⁰¹⁶—do imply, however, is that her blood is no impediment. Even if the play does not conclusively prove that Laurencia's children actually inherited their mother's virtues, since they barely participate in the final action and speak only a few words, her desirability as wife and mother for the future heirs of other princes on an international level, as indicated by the Prince of Bearn's proposal, suggests a strong belief that her virtuousness would be passed onto her babies. *El ejemplo* thereby appears to follow a Galenic model of human reproduction or, at the very least, it invalidates Laurencia's view of Aristotelian generation in which only the father provides for the soul principle that supplies the infant's nature and qualities.

The last play worth mentioning in relation to the mytheme of "the young nobleman marrying a peasant girl" and its socio-political implications is Oddi's *Griselda* (1613–19). The changes Oddi brings to the myth, which are strongly contingent upon the conventions of tragicomedy as a genre, enable him to engage with the notion of "true nobility" or "virtuousness" and its origins in a more complex way than other early modern realisations, whether as inherited qualities through noble lineage, education, personal effort, or intrinsic nobility of mind, which can be either innate or God-given. Indeed, Oddi multiplies the myth's instances of potential hypogamy through *Griselda*'s children and increases the number of dialogues in which blood and identity are addressed as central issues.¹⁰¹⁷

Oddi's play presents a double-plot structure in which *Griselda*'s story is intertwined with that of her grown-up children, who with two other characters, form two couples of lovers whose loves are thwarted. All the main characters belong to royalty, and as a result, their personal conflict is often expressed in monologues and opposes their love interest and the *raison d'État* that tells

1015 Ibid., vv. 2939–43.

1016 Ibid., vv. 2909–12.

1017 See Jacqueline Malherbe and Jean-Luc Nardone, "Galeotto Oddi, *Griselda*, vers 1620," in *L'Histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, ed. Marie-Françoise Déodat-Kessedjian, et al. (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2001), pp. 248–51.

them to marry someone who will help them secure a political alliance in order to maintain peace, without any deep affection. Apart from the traditional comic resolution, in which the lovers are allowed to marry their beloved and secure the *bonum communitatis* of their country, Oddi's *Griselda* is interspersed with scenes that present non-noble comic characters that provide most of the humour of the play. Whereas Italian tragedies with a happy ending, such as those of Cinthio, stage plots that are both chivalric and romantic, Oddi transposes the setting of Boccaccio's novella into a chivalric mythical middle ages, through reference to two mythological traditions: the Arthurian literature through the character of Lancelotto, Griselda's son, and his resemblance to the Round Table knight he is named after, and, to a lesser extent, the *Gesta Danorum*, since the play is set in medieval Denmark and involves the heirs of Norway and Sweden as its main characters. As the play starts shortly before Griselda's repudiation, her son and daughter appear as young adults from the beginning, enabling the audience or readership's assessment of their character.

Since being noble is an identity trait that must be acknowledged not only by oneself but also by others belonging to the social group of nobility, as well as pertaining to other social groups, it involves a recognition process that in terms of the chivalric nobility of the play, requires as much proof of identity as the "performance" of virtues or virtues put into practice. On the other hand, recognition, or *agnorisis*, is also a dramatic convention. As the Italian dramatist Cinthio explains, in tragedies with a happy ending, "ha specialmente luoco la cognition, od agnitione, che la uogliamo noi dire, delle persone, per la qual agnitione sono tolti dai pericoli, & dalla morte coloro, dai quali ueniua l'horrore, & la compaBione".¹⁰¹⁸ As he further remarks, "Et tra tutte le agnitioni, che ci insegna Aristotile . . . quella è lodeuole soua le altre, per la quale nasce la mutation della fortuna da misera a felice".¹⁰¹⁹ Thus, recognition becomes a central concept of Oddi's tragicomedy, a dramatic convention he puts to the service of the play's questioning of what determines noble's identity.

While Oddi alters the setting of the myth and stages his *Griselda* in Northern Europe, turning the Marquis Gualtieri into King Ernesto of Denmark, he also changes the narrative by presenting Ernesto's subjects as truly threatening to rebel if he does not kill his children and repudiate his wife. In most versions, the marquis merely pretends to be afraid that his people may revolt against him, and he claims they are dissatisfied with Griselda as their lord's spouse

1018 Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinthio, "Discorso intorno al comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie (1543)," in *Discorsi di M. Giovambattista Giraldi Cinthio* (Venezia: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari e Fratelli, 1554), p. 220.

1019 Ibid.

because of her low origin, using this as an excuse to test her. Oddi, on the other hand, transforms these lies into reality, precisely to address the question of true nobility and merit as opposed to blood purity as a necessary characteristic of noble identity and the qualities or features that make a ruler legitimate. Thus, Ernesto is forced to take Griselda's children away, and he does so unwillingly. The fact that he does not kill them therefore becomes a clever manoeuvre to save their lives while pretending to everybody else that they are dead. In most previous versions, either Gualtieri's subjects are perfectly happy with their lord's marriage or, even when some are not, the marquis does not listen to them and pursues his own quest to prove that Griselda's virtue is unailing. In Oddi's tragicomedy, Ernesto's people actually question their King's *mésalliance* and the legitimacy of Griselda's children to govern after him because of their half-commoner blood. As Griselda's father, Rosteno, explains in the opening scene, "la superbia de' grandi di questo regno, non potendo a nessun patto i figlioli di si bassa donna per lor signori sofferire".¹⁰²⁰

Since the play begins moments before Griselda's repudiation, with the return of her children to Denmark after 18 years of exile, Oddi provides a full portrayal of her son, Lancelotto as a young adult who does not know his true identity and origin. Oddi's representation of the daughter, Almatea, is less developed and she is only seen as a silent character onstage. The play therefore not only gives full shape to Griselda's children, but through them, it develops its engagement with nobility and its various contrasting definitions. Evocatively named after Lancelot, the famous knight of French romances, Griselda's son shares many significant defining features with this medieval fictional character. Oddi's tragicomedy seems to expect the audience to draw parallels between the mythical figure of Arthurian literature and Griselda's son in order to induce spectators into assessing and recognising Lancelotto's nobility through the stage embodiment of his alter ego's chivalric ideals. From the very beginning of the play, Lancelotto invites such a comparison as he tells Rosteno about himself in the opening scene:

Ma di me non potrei mai dirvi altro che il nome, ch'è Lancelotto, e la opinion, che io vi ho detto haversi del sangue mio, ch'ei sia regio. La quale onde si spicchi io nol so; né credo che se non pochi, ed a me incogniti, il sappiano. Cavaliere errante son io; vivo con Almatea mia sorella, a' servigi della principessa Rosmonda di Svetia.¹⁰²¹

1020 Galeotto Oddi, "Griselda tragicomedia del balì Galeotto Oddi," in *L'Histoire de Griselda. Une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes*, ed. Marie-Françoise Déodat-Kessedjian, et al. (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2001), p. 377.

1021 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

Both Lancelotto and Lancelot are known by a nickname rather than by their birth name, which they ignore, and they grew up from a very young age away from their parents, not knowing who they are. Both received a noble education worthy of a king's son and were told they were of royal descent. Even the number of years that has elapsed since Almatea, as a new-born child, and Lancelotto, as a one-year-old boy, left the Danish court to be raised in Paris until their return seems inspired by the French Lancelot's romance. In most versions of the myth, if mentioned at all, between 12 and 16 years pass between the moment Griselda's son is supposedly murdered and his return with his sister for the second pretence marriage. Oddi's decision to alter it to 18 years, which is the longest exile I have come across in the various medieval and early modern realisations of the myth, is unlikely a simple coincidence, knowing that Lancelot was made a knight of Arthur's court precisely on the year of his eighteenth birthday (one of the very few time indications in his life story).¹⁰²² Just as Arthur accepts to dub Lancelot a knight, having been convinced by Gawain that the young man's beautiful appearance and demeanour are indicators of noble lineage,¹⁰²³ Lancelotto's bravery made him worthy of becoming a knight in the King of Sweden's eyes.¹⁰²⁴ According to his friend Gernando, heir to the throne of Norway, Lancelotto's courage "è chiarissimo testimonio dell'altezza del sangue".¹⁰²⁵ Both Lancelot and Lancelotto are knight-errants, whose quest for noble exploits is also that of their own identity and lineage, which is eventually revealed to them after they distinguish themselves through some knightly accomplishments.

The tragicomedy's opening scene also draws another parallel between Griselda and Lancelotto and their struggle to be recognised as worthy of the nobility. After having heard from Rosteno how Griselda was forced to let her children be killed and how she is soon to be repudiated because of her sterility, and since Ernesto's subjects want their lord to take a new wife to produce an heir, Lancelotto compares her lot to his:

1022 See *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, 8 vols., vol. 3 (Washington: The Carnegie Institution, 1910), pp. 111–27.

1023 *Ibid.*, pp. 122–124. In medieval literature, physical beauty signals spiritual and moral beauty, or in other words, virtuousness, see for example Mihaela Voicu, "Le fils, autre même que le père : Lancelot et Galaad dans le *Lancelot-Graal*," in *L'Imaginaire de la parenté dans les romans arthuriens (XII^e–XIV^e siècles)*, ed. Martin Aurell and Catalina Girbea (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 61–62.

1024 Oddi, "Griselda," p. 397.

1025 *Ibid.*, p. 396.

Ahimè! Ché voi altri [i.e. Griselda], come che degnissimi siate di compassione, ritornate nondimeno alla fine colà d'onde partiste e, senza menomar punto lo stato dalla natura concedutovi, quello restituite che vi fu dalla fortuna prestatò. Ma che dovrò dir io, misero, di me, spogliato dalla fortuna di quello stato che la natura mi diede; e che, dove per natura sovrastare agli altri dovrei, alla principessa Rosmonda, mia signora, con doppia servitù di fortuna e di amore doppiamente soggiaccio.¹⁰²⁶

While Lancelotto describes his and Griselda's fates as depending on what "natura" gave them at birth and "fortuna" provided them with, or deprived them of, his discourse also indirectly points out the importance of blood and recognition in order to establish one's identity. In other words, the extent to which belonging to nobility is dependent upon recognition by those belonging to this social group, perhaps even more than the bloodline. The commoners in this play are those who need to perceive Griselda, Lancelotto and, by extension, his sister Almatea as their superiors. That is to say, they need to perceive them as more virtuous and noble in order for them to accept them as worthy of ruling over them. This concept of nobility perpetuates the medieval belief that the nobility was in charge of government because of its moral superiority. Because this superiority was supposedly genetically inherited, Griselda's worthiness as a ruler is questioned since she was born a commoner, as much as Lancelotto and Almatea's nobleness is an issue, since they cannot prove their royal descent, not knowing who their parents are. In other words, the latter's identity is perceived as incomplete, lacking the essential information—paternity and maternity—which would enable them to be socially identifiable with absolute certainty as belonging either to the commoners or to the nobility, the only two social groups of the play.

Within the world of Oddi's tragicomedy, the process of recognition seems natural for some characters. As they all belong to the nobility, they see in Griselda and Lancelotto their social equals through their observation of them and their identification with them. Just as Ernesto, after visiting Griselda many times, was struck by her "singolare accortezza e natural . . . prudentia" and chose to marry her after "matura e già stabilita diliberatione", the King of Sweden, his nephew Gerando, and his daughter Rosmonda, see proof of his alleged royal lineage in Lancelotto's merit and virtues.¹⁰²⁷ On the contrary, for commoners, this same recognition process has to go through an initial phase of de-identification in order to perceive them as "not-commoner" or "not-equal". This is necessary in order to achieve the necessary distance and detachment to

1026 Ibid., p. 379.

1027 Ibid., pp. 400, 375.

enable them to perceive Griselda and Lancelotto as noble. This process, in the case of Griselda, takes years of witnessing her extraordinarily patient acceptance of her children's death (as Ernesto tells Griselda, "il vostro merito vi ha reso amabile a loro")¹⁰²⁸ and her loyalty towards her husband, even after her repudiation. For Lancelotto and his sister Almatea, the process is facilitated by the revelation of their high lineage at the end of the play, when their true identity is finally revealed, providing an irrefutable proof of nobility for those among the commoners who were still sceptical, as well as for those in the nobility who were not readily convinced of Lancelotto's and Almatea's noble ancestry: Rosmonda's aunt, Gostanza, and Gernando's stepmother.

The dramatic irony underlying the commoner's recognition of Griselda's nobility in Oddi's play is that it occurs when she can no longer have children and her previous children are supposedly dead. This leads to the people petitioning Ernesto to replace her with a more fertile wife capable of providing a rightful heir to the throne. Since Oddi rewrites the myth as an early modern tragicomedy, following the dramatic pattern of this genre, the play adds several complications to the repudiation of the myth involving the lovers of Griselda's children. As Lancelotto and Almatea arrive at the court of Denmark, they hope to marry their respective lovers, Gernando of Norway and Rosmonda of Sweden. However, Rosmonda's late father stipulates in his will that his daughter must marry within the crown of Denmark, and, if this is not possible, she should then marry Gernando. When Ernesto learns about this will, he pretends to give his subjects double satisfaction by repudiating Griselda and marrying Rosmonda, who would enable him not only to have other children but also acquire another kingdom. At the same time, he sends for his children, believing they are still in exile, with the hope of eventually restoring Griselda as queen and having his son and daughter accepted as legitimate heirs. Gernando, who wishes for his cousin Rosmonda to marry Lancelotto, so the latter would give him his sister's hand in return, asks for the help of his aunt, Gostanza, to convince Rosmonda not to marry the King of Denmark.

Gostanza, although a secondary character, embodies the voice of those within and outside the nobility who need more than chivalric exploits, namely proof of the bloodline, in order to recognise that an individual belongs to the nobility. She reminds her nephew that princes do not usually, or so easily, marry commoners: "come il soverchio disio vi trasporta, o giovanetti, a non conoscer quanto difficilissimamente, e quas' impossibilmente, possa succedervi di ritener voi, principe, una privata, e egli ottener, privato, una principessa per

1028 *Ibid.*, p. 400.

moglie”.¹⁰²⁹ Although she claims to have only Gernando’s best interests at heart (“Io non dico così perché brami meno il vostro contento che il mio”),¹⁰³⁰ her words betray her need for proof of bloodline before she can consider Lancellotto and his sister noble and not commoners (“privato”; “privata”). She also underlines that Lancellotto’s presence on the throne would not, in her opinion, go without rebellion:

L’uomo, che per natura è libero, pur troppo di mala voglia soffre di ubbidire ad altr’-uomo, benché lo stimi in alcuna cosa sé prevalere. Pensate hora voi come per insopportabile havrebbe di trovarsi soggetto a chi pari a sé, e forse inferior, esser crede. Credete forse voi che tra vassalli della Corona di Svetia vi sia niuno che al governo de’ regni meno atto di Lancellotto si stimi? Non per certo, ché pur troppo ciascuno del suo sapere si promette. Hor come credete dunque che [...] sofferrebbono per signore?¹⁰³¹

Her discourse clearly indicates that nobility is related to how people perceive others as superior and therefore recognise them as legitimate rulers, and that when that superiority is questioned due to a lack of proof of noble bloodline, as in Lancellotto’s case, then, their legitimacy is undermined. The fact that Gostanza does not acknowledge Lancellotto and Almatea’s nobility is further highlighted by the fact she changes her mind when she learns about the will of Rosmonda’s father. Whereas she was willing to help Gernando and argue on his behalf with Rosmonda to incite her to decline Ernesto’s proposal and marry Lancellotto, as soon as Rosmonda mentions her father’s last wishes, Gostanza resolves to manoeuvre to arrange a match between the two cousins, since the King of Sweden wanted his daughter to marry Gernando in case she could not marry within the crown of Denmark:

Gernando mio, questa non è occasione da spregiare. Si tratta di regni qua. Tu ben saresti sciocco se per una incognita damigella così alta ventura tu rifiutassi. Eccogli appunto ambidue [i.e. Gernando and Lancellotto]. Benché Rosmonda, all’altro scoprirò lei esser destinata per lui. E quanto più a Lancellotto farò suo caso disperato, tanto solleciterò più Gernando a non lasciare altrui della sua sorte godere.¹⁰³²

From Gostanza’s point of view, the unknown origin of Almatea (“una incognita damigella”), and by extension that of her brother, is an obstacle, almost an impediment, to marriage within the European royalty, regardless of rumours about their royal ancestry. In Gostanza’s eyes, because there are higher stakes

1029 Ibid., p. 395.

1030 Ibid.

1031 Ibid., p. 396.

1032 Ibid., p. 414.

at play, namely a political alliance that would bring the union of two kingdoms (“Si tratta di regni qua”), Almatea’s and Lancelotto’s incomplete identities, through their lack of a bloodline and known parents to account for them, disqualifies them and prevents them from being recognised as the same “sorte” of people as Gernando and Rosmonda, i.e. from belonging to the nobility.

Another character who does not appear onstage but who also embodies nobility’s potential reluctance to acknowledge Almatea’s, and again by extension her brother’s, nobility is Gernando’s stepmother. The play’s single allusion to this character is brief but significant:

Gernando: . . . [Almatea] con sommo, ma per me importune, avvedimento, non vuole che il mio matrimonio con lei, privata e sconosciuta donzella, porga . . . occasione a mia matrigna di provocare l’ira paterna in guisa che senza regno e con eterno pentimento di queste nozze io rimanga.¹⁰³³

Whereas Gernando’s speech illustrates Almatea’s humility, placing her lover’s interests before her own, it also depicts Gernando’s stepmother as a noblewoman potentially sharing the same views as Gostanza on noble identity, thus requiring more than hearsay, merit, and personal accomplishment to acknowledge an individual as a peer.

Interestingly, the two characters questioning Lancelotto and Almatea’s nobility possess inherent features that undermine their judgement or point to their bias. Almatea’s fear, shared by Gernando, is that his stepmother may induce his father to disinherit him, and this describes a traditional pattern of relational conflict associated with the *saeva noverca*-type in Roman declamations (especially in Quintilian, whose influence on Renaissance thought and literature is well attested).¹⁰³⁴ Thus, Gernando’s stepmother can hardly escape the stigma of wickedness attached to her type, which condemns her morality and discounts any opinion she may have about Almatea or Lancelotto.

Gostanza’s case is more complicated. Her particularity is that she is an illegitimate child: the *dramatis personae* in the manuscript of the play indicates that Gostanza is the “zia naturale di Rosmonda”, and Gernando refers to her

1033 Ibid., p. 396.

1034 Danielle Van Mal-Maeder, “Déclamations et roman. La double vie des personnages romanesques: le père, le fils et la marâtre assassine,” in *Les Personnages du roman grec. Actes du colloque de Tours, 18–20 novembre 1999*, ed. Bernard Pouderon, Christine Hunzinger, and Dimitri Kasprzyk (Lyon: Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux, 2001), p. 62. The type of the wicked-stepmother is also a common place of folktales literature all around the world, see Patricia A. Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers: Myth, Misogyny and Reality* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 258–66.

as “illegitima” in act 2 scene 2, in which she makes her first appearance.¹⁰³⁵ If she had been a character in an early modern English play, her illegitimacy would have stigmatised her as being somehow corrupt,¹⁰³⁶ yet bastardy in Italian Renaissance drama does not necessarily imply that a character’s morality is questionable. The fact remains, nonetheless, that Oddi marks her out as illegitimate in a tragicomedy in which bloodline and blood purity is undeniably a central issue. Gostanza is not an evil character. She clearly loves Rosmonda and Gernando as she would her own children (she calls them “figliolo” and “figliola”, who in turn consider her like a mother (“Gern. . . io non conosco altra madre che voi”; “Rosm. Gostanza, voi siet sempre da me stata come madre osservata e gradita”).¹⁰³⁷ However, she mistrusts their judgement and acts against their will in order to obtain what she thinks is best for them. This is what turns her into an obstacle to their respective loves. By telling Gernando that Rosmonda’s father stipulates in his will that both cousins should be united in marriage, omitting that the late king first mentioned that he wishes his daughter to marry within the crown of Denmark, Gostanza provokes Gernando’s anger. He then believes that Ernesto has no right over Rosmonda’s hand and no reason to repudiate Griselda. Gostanza further betrays her nephews by revealing to the Ambassador of Sweden Gernando’s intention to prevent Ernesto’s marriage with Rosmonda by force if necessary, to claim her not for himself but for Lancelotto, who would give him Almatea in return. The Ambassador, as Gostanza hoped, informs the King of Denmark, who, as a result, decides not to marry Rosmonda but rather Almatea, thereby compromising both young couples’ marital intentions. Although Gostanza is not motivated by self-interest but rather by the hope of securing greater political power in her nephews’ hands, even at Lancelotto and Almatea’s expense, her actions have harmful consequences, not only for Lancelotto and Almatea but also for Gernando and Rosmonda. Consequently, as the play so obsessively engages with issues of bloodline and noble identity, it invites the audience to draw a connection between Gostanza’s distrust of Lancelotto and Almatea’s actual noble ancestry (through which she justifies

1035 Oddi, “Griselda,” p. 397.

1036 See for example Michael Neill, “‘In Everything Illegitimate’: Imagining the Bastard in Renaissance Drama,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993); Michael Neill, “Bastardy, Counterfeiting, and Misogyny in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36, no. 2 (1996); Tony Prince, “‘Bastards of the Time’: the Violent Contexts and Dramatic Ancestry of Bastards and Illegitimates in *Titus Andronicus* and *King John*,” *Dandelion* 5, no. 1 (2014).

1037 Oddi, “Griselda,” pp. 397, 412, 397, 412.

her betrayal) and her own illegitimacy. Oddi's tragicomedy seems to suggest Gostanza's bastardy may have prevented her from recognising and acknowledging Lancelotto and Almatea as members of royalty.

Another character who does not question Griselda or Lancelotto's nobility but complicates the play's definition of nobleness is Almonio, Count of Valkemborg and Griselda's chief chamberlain. Having been in love with Griselda ever since she was made Queen of Denmark, Almonio discloses his feeling to her only when Griselda, now repudiated, is sent back to the countryside. Hoping that away from court and her ex-husband he may have a chance to win her love, the Count of Valkemborg visits her at her father's place, accompanied by his sister Daria, who used to be Griselda's main chambermaid. Almonio, however, pushes his luck too far and tries to rape Griselda when she refuses his advances. Instead of admitting and repenting his crime, the count plots with his sister to ruin Griselda's reputation, accusing her of having revealed the existence of the King of Sweden's will to Gernando and Lancelotto. In other words, Almonio claims that Griselda, seeking revenge after her repudiation, is the one who encouraged the young men to prevent the King's marriage to Rosmonda. As a result, Griselda is suspected of treason and put in jail pending trial. Daria, Almonio's sister, cannot bear the fact the Griselda is unjustly accused and goes to Gernando and Lancelotto for help. A Danish law enables a lady accused of lese-majesty to be defended by a knight of royal ancestry against her accuser. The legal disposition multiplies the number of knights ready to succour the "damsel in distress", as they see Griselda, since no one really believes she is guilty. Both Lancelotto and Gernando defend Griselda's honour. In spite of not being from royal descent, the clown of the play, Posternio also stands up for his queen, claiming that his "sangue è meglio di quel del re".¹⁰³⁸ Finally, the King of Denmark himself secretly resolves to act as Griselda's champion. The tragicomedy therefore establishes a sharp contrast between these characters and Almonio. While the formers' courage and nobility are enhanced by their willingness to fight in a duel and sacrifice their life for Griselda, Almonio's fear increases as he discovers how many brave princes volunteer to face him: "Ohimè, come non sono io più quel che io era? Che horror, che timore è questo, che internamente mi spaventa? Hor s'io dovessi farm'incontro alle migliaia de' nemici, potre' i' temer quanto io temo, di avventurarm' in questa bataglia?".¹⁰³⁹ In other words, while the play underlines the chivalric virtues of respect and defence of the innocent, as well as those of self-sacrifice and bravery in the face

1038 Ibid., p. 446.

1039 Ibid., p. 459.

of lethal danger, as embodied in Griselda's champions, the tragicomedy sets these qualities in opposition to Almonio's lechery, selfishness, and cowardice. Although he belongs to the nobility and is recognised as a nobleman, Almonio's behaviour proves to be less and less noble. After using violence against Griselda to obtain sexual favours, he calumniates her, and he then becomes incapable of surmounting his fear. This completes the picture of the anti-knight, or anti-nobleman, he has come to embody.

The duel, as can be expected from a tragicomedy, never takes place. Gostanza reveals that she was the one who informed Lancelotto and Gernando about the King of Sweden's will and exonerates Griselda. Almonio at first despairs, but then he listens to his sister's advice and atones for his sins through self-banishment: he decides to wander through the realm to fight its enemies, turning himself into a knight-errant.

The prospect of the fight, however, had forced Lancelotto's friends to intervene in order to prove that royal blood indeed runs through his veins, expounding what they know about his infancy in Paris to the King of Denmark. Upon hearing about the French capital, Ernesto realises Lancelotto and Almatea are actually his children, Gisberto and Gismonda. This is confirmed by Zenochio, who had raised them until the King of Sweden decided to take them with him during one of his visit to the court of France. Thus, the last scene of the play not only re-establishes Griselda as Queen, to the people's great joy ("Griselda . . . dal popol tutto è con ismisurata letitia desiderata e gridata reina")¹⁰⁴⁰ but also irrefutably establishes Lancelotto and Almatea as belonging to the royalty as heirs to the throne of Denmark. The final *anagnorisis* also enables the comic happy ending with the prospect of the double marriage of the four young lovers (and the re-marriage of Ernesto and Griselda).

As a consequence, Oddi's tragicomedy explores the concept of nobility through a myriad of characters in a series of, at times, overly intricate plots. The multiplication of possible realisations or performances of nobleness incarnated by individuals from various births—Griselda as commoner, Lancelotto and Almatea as children of unknown origin, Ernesto, Gernando, and Rosmonda as princes, Gostanza as an illegitimate daughter, and Gernando's stepmother and Almonio as vile members of the nobility—actually converges on a view of nobleness in which virtue and personal merit are what constitute true nobility. Whereas noble birth initially remains for some a prerequisite, time allows the commoners to recognise Griselda's superior virtues, which make her worthy of being their legitimate and acclaimed Queen. Similarly,

1040 Ibid., p. 465.

Lancellotto and Almatea, having in the beginning only their personal merit and a rumour of royal ancestry to speak for them, are also acknowledged in stages. First, through their virtues, they acquire the recognition of the King of Sweden and his extended family, which the King then turns into a public and official matter by granting Lancellotto the seignery of Gilberga.¹⁰⁴¹ By the end of the play, when their true identities are known, the whole court bows to them (“dalla corte tutta per principi di questo regno inchinati”),¹⁰⁴² no longer questioning their superiority or legitimacy but generally acknowledging their royalty, even down to greeting rituals, rendering the recognition manifest. Since no one any longer contests Griselda’s nobility, the half-commoner’s blood of her children is no longer a cause for dissension, because Griselda has proved through her merit that her blood is as noble as that of her husband. Like Gernando and Rosmonda, Ernesto remains for the most part true to the behaviour expected by his undisputed noble ancestry. When he fakes his children’s deaths, it is a political strategy to calm his subjects. Although it results in cruelty to his wife, in that she is kept unaware that her children are still alive, the manoeuvre works: it maintains the realm’s peace and, with the passage of time, brings the people to acknowledge Griselda’s virtuous patience in facing the supposed loss of her son and daughter. Even when Ernesto repudiates Griselda, which he also does to appease his subjects, the audience is also almost immediately made aware of his intention to bring his children back from Paris in order to ultimately restore Griselda as Queen and establish their children as legitimate heirs. Ernesto thereby proves to be a rather prudent king. On the contrary, Almonio, whose blood and nobility are never contested, shows he can be as much the antithesis of a nobleman in his amoral behaviour during most of the play, but as a brave knight, when he repents, he shows readiness to make amends. Somewhere in between stands Gostanza. Her blood must be at least half-noble, since she is Gernando and Rosmonda’s aunt, but she is the fruit of an illegitimate union. In spite of being well-intentioned towards her nephews, her half-truth about the King of Sweden’s will end up being detrimental not only to Lancellotto but also to Gernando and Griselda as well.

In conclusion, Oddi’s tragicomedy presents a variety of characters, all of which point to the absence of any correlation between nobility by birth and virtue. Ultimately goodness, self-sacrifice, patience, or prudence come down to the choices the individuals make. By constantly, and insistently, calling attention to blood in the dialogues, the tragicomedy actually points to its irrelevance in matters of personal merit.

1041 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

1042 *Ibid.*, p. 465.

**Part III: The state-as-household metaphor and
tyranny in the patient Griselda myth, between
political criticism and literary convention as
propaganda**

The core of the Patient Griselda myth is, of course, Griselda's testing. This part of the story can either be envisaged from her perspective as the individual who has to prove her virtues, unaware that she is being put to the test, or from the marquis's perspective, as the tester and one who needs proof by almost any means. Whereas Griselda's perspective and the various ideals she comes to embody over the years as she overcomes her ordeals have been examined in the first section of the present research, this final part provides an analysis of the variations in the way the marquis is presented as a tester. In other words, this section examines certain mythemes and their continuous and discontinuous development in late medieval and early modern realisations of the myth: "a man tests his wife"; "a man fakes the death of his children to try his wife"; "a man repudiates his wife to test her"; "a man forces his wife to witness him (almost) marry another woman to see her reaction"; or "a father almost commits incest by faking his desire to marry his own daughter to see his wife's reaction". These mythemes carry ethical implications, not only in terms of the husband–wife relationship but also with regard to the myth's political dimension, since the husband of this particular relationship is also a ruler. The ethical implications vary from one version of the myth to another depending on their socio-historical context and their authors' position with regard to their political environment.

More has been written about Griselda than Gualtieri in Boccaccio's novella, especially the ambiguous significance of the trials and what she stands for. This is not to say that no critiques have yet analysed the story from Gualtieri's perspective. This critical phenomenon is, however, not new. Whereas Boccaccio's text tends to privilege Gualtieri's perspective in the beginning, but gives Griselda and her husband equal protagonism as the story unfolds and in the conclusion, subsequent medieval and early modern rewritings display the same tendency as modern critics in endowing Griselda with a more major role in the story than her husband.

During the novella's mythification process, Griselda clearly stands out as the paradigmatic character whose name (in all its derivative spellings) is used in other, mostly literary, texts as part of catalogues of famous biblical, Greek or Roman women, such as Helen, Judith, or Lucretia, to describe the qualities of another female character. This notwithstanding, Gualtieri did also achieve some paradigmatic statuses of his own, although of a lesser stature than Griselda. Whereas the marquis's symbolic value in terms of his embodiment of a young man refusing to get married has been analysed, this chapter explores another more prominent paradigm of Gualtieri's symbolism in relation to the testing part of the myth and its political dimension.

The marquis's attitude towards his wife has puzzled readers and rewriters of the story since its first occurrence. Boccaccio offers a rather unclear explanation for his behaviour, leaving the door open for interpretation. This has led to the proliferation of attempts by writers adapting the myth to provide satisfactory grounds for his testing of Griselda, and to either praise, as incredible as that may sound, or criticise his actions harshly.

Boccaccio's narrator, Dioneo introduces the novella with these often quoted words:

Mansuete mie donne, per quel che mi paia, questo dì d'oggi è stato dato a re e a soldani e a così fatta gente: e per ciò, acciò che io troppo da voi non mi scosti, vo' ragionar d'un marchese, non cosa magnifica, ma una matta bestialità, come che ben ne gli seguisse alla fine; la quale io non consiglio alcun che segue, per ciò che gran peccato fu che a costui ben n'avenisse.¹⁰⁴³

Thus, even before Gualtieri starts testing Griselda, his future action is extremely negatively labelled as a "matta bestialità" and "gran peccato", and readers are forewarned against imitating him ("io non consiglio alcun che segue"). Branca signals in a footnote of his edition of the *Decameron* that the expression "matta bestialità" is a reference to "Inferno" XI, 82–83 of Dante's *Divina commedia*, which he glosses in the following way: "dal senso tecnico nel linguaggio degli aritotelici e degli scolastici, passa qui a un senso generico di *sciocca crudeltà, stoltezza crudele*".¹⁰⁴⁴ Given that Dioneo additionally qualifies the marquis's "matta bestialità" of "gran peccato" and proposes to narrate a novella in opposition to the day's theme of "magnificence" ("non cosa magnifica ma una matta bestialità"), which in this context has been understood as "magnanimity" or "greatness of the soul" and refers to this highest Aristotelian virtue, I doubt that the Aristotelian or the scholastic meanings attached to it are actually as neutralised as Branca argues, leaving only a "generic" signification. Beyond the already mentioned fact that Boccaccio was a reader of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas's comments on Aristotle's work, Boccaccio's commentary on Dante's *Divina commedia* clearly links the whole passage ("Inferno", XI, 79–84) with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, i, 1 and provides a definition for the concept of "bestiality":

è la terza disposizione che 'l ciel non vuole. Questo adiettivo "matta", pose qui l'autore [i.e. Dante] più in servizio della rima, che per bisogno che n'avesse la bestialità, perciocché bestialità e mattezza si posson dire essere una medesima cosa. È adunque questa

¹⁰⁴³ Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1233.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1233, 4n.

“bestialità” similmente vizio dell’anima opposto, secondo che piace ad Aristotile nel settimo dell’*Etica*, alla divina sapienza, il quale, secondo che l’autor mostra di tenere, non ha tano di gravezza quanto la malizia.¹⁰⁴⁵

Boccaccio’s understanding of bestiality as a “vice of the soul” (“vizio dell’anima”) supports the argument that his allusion to the concept of “bestiality” in *Decameron* X, 10, in association with “great sin” (“gran peccato”) is bound to induce readers to connect “matta bestialità” with Aristotle’s concept of “*thēōriotês*” (“bestiality”) in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

I will therefore expound the meaning of this concept in Aristotle’s work before I trace parallels between the classical understanding of this vice and Boccaccio’s use of it in relation to Gualtieri. Bestiality, for Aristotle, is a rare state of mind that lies at the limits of being human. Just as very few people are extraordinarily virtuous, almost divine in their virtuousness, there are very few bestial individuals whose nature is beyond viciousness¹⁰⁴⁶ or any capacity of self-control, so much so that they become akin to beasts lacking judgement or reason, so they are less accountable for their crimes. In other word, they are “less evil” than they are vicious.¹⁰⁴⁷ These people belong to categories that Aristotle calls “barbarians” or “savage tribes”, to the insane, or to those who developed bestial tendencies because of a disease “as a result of arrested development or from habit[s]” such as “plucking out the hair, biting the nails, eating cinders and earth, and also sexual perversion”, “or in some cases owing to natural depravity”.¹⁰⁴⁸ Among the bestial “pleasures” or crimes committed towards others by savages or madmen, Aristotle lists “rip[ping] up pregnant females and devour their offspring . . . delight[ing] in raw meat or in human flesh, . . . provid[ing] a child for the common banquet . . . offer[ing] up [one’s] mother to the gods and part[aking] of the sacrifice, . . . [eating a] fellow slave’s liver”.¹⁰⁴⁹

Even though Gualtieri is obviously not a barbarian and does not commit any of these bestial crimes, the novella draws parallels between the marquis’s actions and Aristotle’s description. By not providing a reasonable explanation for Gualtieri’s sudden wish to test his wife, Boccaccio opens up the possibility of his insanity. Indeed, Francesco d’Amaretto Mannelli, the copyist of the 1384 MS Pluteo 42, 1 of the *Decameron* (Laurentian Library, Florence), considers the

1045 Boccaccio, *Il commento alla Divina Commedia e gli altri scritti intorno a Dante* (Bari: Laterza, 1918), p. 79.

1046 Aristotle, *Ethics*, VII, i, 1–3.

1047 *Ibid.*, VII, vi, 7.

1048 *Ibid.*, VII, i, 3; VII, v, 1–3.

1049 *Ibid.*, VI, v, 2–3.

marquis mad in his glosses, even before the testing: next to the description of Gualtieri forcing Griselda to undress in front of everyone before he has her re-clothed as a marquise, Mannelli wrote “A’ pazzi”, an expression he uses again to comment on Griselda’s repudiation.¹⁰⁵⁰ Moreover, the marquis’s choice of test, namely faking his children’s death while still at a very tender age, cannot be just a coincidence. Although it only results in psychological violence to Griselda and not in the actual assassination of his daughter and son, using them to tempt his wife into intemperance, anger, or disobedience still appears as a bowdlerised version of the bestial crimes involving children in Aristotle’s catalogue. In addition, the fact that Griselda’s ordeals occur over more than 13 years could be read as an indication that Gualtieri had formed a “habit” of torturing his wife. Finally, Dioneo’s conclusion relates him to the animal world and to what is often considered its filthiest specimen, the pig, as he judges the marquis worthier of “guardar porci che d’avere sopra uomini signoria”.¹⁰⁵¹

However, Gualtieri does not embody what Aristotle calls bestiality because he is not acting out of a bestial propensity inherent to his nature because of disease, insanity, arrested development, life-long habits, or natural propensity. Mannelli’s interpretation that the marquis is mad, while entirely personal and not legitimised by any scientific methodology, may have been conditioned by Dioneo’s introductive comment about his intention to present a case of “matta bestialità”. This notwithstanding, according to Aristotle’s definition of madness, i.e. lacking reason and “living solely by sensations”, Gualtieri is not “irrational by nature”.¹⁰⁵² The novella does not provide any indication that he may have been victim of an illness that impairs his judgement or that he suffered from a condition affecting his mental growth. On the contrary, the marquis proves to be manipulative and extremely adroit mentally, so he is perfectly capable of reason. It cannot be deduced that he has a natural tendency to commit bestial acts, since the marquis only feigns killing his children. He does not actually desire their deaths, and he shows no indication of wishing to eat their flesh, nor does he take any pleasure in using them.

What remains, however, is that he develops a habit of inhumanly testing his wife. Even if there is no clear indication that Gualtieri likes the actual manipulation of his wife, he does feel satisfaction and wonder at her patient endurance (“Questa risposta fu molto cara a Gualtieri”; “maravigliandosi egli della sua constanzia”; “Gualtieri si maravigliava forte”).¹⁰⁵³ These feelings,

1050 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1237 n. 4; 1243 n. 11.

1051 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1248.

1052 Aristotle, *Ethics*, VII, v, 6.

1053 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, pp. 1239, 1240, 1241.

combined with his stubbornness, persist even when his wife's dignity in suffering arouses his compassion ("Gualtieri, che maggior voglia di piagnere aveva che d'altro, stando pur col viso duro, disse: 'E tu una camiscia ne porta'"¹⁰⁵⁴), suggesting not only that the marquis enjoys witnessing his wife overcoming his tests but also that the continuation of these tests is unnecessary. In other words, the novella portrays him as immoral and cruel at the very least. Moreover, the means he employs to test Griselda are at various moments during the novella labelled in a way that is akin to Aristotle's use of "bestial" as an epithet, that is, to qualify types of vices when "they run to excess".¹⁰⁵⁵ First, the excessiveness of the ordeals is anticipated by the narrator's remark that the testing which is about to begin is going to be of a long duration ("lunga esperienza") and intolerable ("cose intollerabili"); then, Gualtieri's subjects believe their lord has had his children killed "il biasimavan forte e reputavanlo crudele uomo e alla donna avevan grandissima compassione"; finally, before Gualtieri makes the final revelation that his son and daughter are actually alive and he does not want any other wife than Griselda, he remarks that many have deemed him "crudele e iniquo e bestiale".¹⁰⁵⁶ Although the murders and repudiation are only pretences, in other words feign bestiality, the novella still suggests through Dioneo's conclusion condemning Gualtieri that the trials are excessive in nature and therefore bestial. Consequently, the ethical and moral issue embodied by Gualtieri is not a form of intrinsic or psychological bestiality that should not be followed but rather related to his choice of method to try Griselda and the legitimacy of his trials. In other words, it is about whether the ends (proving his wife's virtuousness) justify the means.

One could hypothesise that the exceptional virtue that she supposedly embodies requires exceptional ordeals in order for it to appear and prove extraordinary or divine, and since Aristotle opposes "Superhuman Virtue" to "Bestiality", then it seems fit to apply a bestial method to test "divine goodness". However, aside from the fact that Griselda's exemplarity is also very ambiguous and questionable, this is not how virtue is measured in *Nicomachean Ethics*. While Aristotle defines virtues as a set of various moral principles or excellences, which are all the result of finding the right or just middle state between two extremes (either in excess or in deficit), he also envisages virtue as a potential anyone can be born with, and which can be increased through practice and training from childhood onward.¹⁰⁵⁷ In addition, virtue is assessed in action and proven true

1054 Ibid., p. 1243.

1055 Aristotle, *Ethics*, VII, v, 5–6.

1056 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, pp. 1239, 1241, 1247.

1057 Aristotle, *Ethics*, II, i, 4–8.

only if the action is voluntary and based on personal choice. In other words, Aristotle does not provide a scale according to whether a person displays more of a particular virtue than someone else but rather one where a virtue is performed or not and the virtuous behaviour stands in the middle of the scale (anything tending to one or the other extreme of the scale is not virtuous). He does not discuss any hierarchy of difficulty according to what actions become irrefutable proof of virtue, even though if it is easily accomplished, an action would not prove anything, since it would not partake in excellence. Thus, the excess of Gualtieri's trials is not necessarily justifiable but may even lead to an excessive response on Griselda's part, thereby questioning or undermining the virtuousness of her actions or reactions.

While everyone at the end of the novella celebrates Griselda's patience and endurance, her restoration as a marquise and the return of her supposedly dead children, the fact that Gualtieri escapes any form of punishment for bestially trying his wife remains a puzzling issue. Even more curious is the fact that he eventually gains the reputation of being a wise man ("savissimo reputaron Gualtieri").¹⁰⁵⁸ How the marquis actually displays wisdom remains unclear. Is it because he was able to see Griselda's virtuousness in spite of her poor attitudes? But why would he then need to test her? Is it because he tried his wife knowing full well that she would overcome his trials? Nothing in the text indicates this. How could he foresee that she would? Griselda's promise on their wedding day was to always obey and please him without complaint is insufficient proof. Pledges can be made and broken later. Furthermore, by endowing Gualtieri with a reputation for being wise, the novella draws from the tradition of so-called "wisdom literature" and within the Christian tradition, from the Biblical wisdom parables and books. From the latter tradition, the closest story in which a ruler gains or increases his fame of being wise after threatening to kill a child is the "Judgement of Solomon" (1 Kings 3: 16–28). In this biblical account, Solomon shows his wisdom by predicting, although he does not disclose his prophecy, that a "true" mother could not accept having her baby cut in two, and she would rather give him up to someone else to let him live than let him die, so Solomon discovers from the two courtesan plaintiffs who the child's real mother was. Are readers of Boccaccio's novella then meant to conclude that Solomon's "sapientiam Dei" (1 Kings 3: 28) is what enabled Gualtieri to foresee the outcome of the trials? Even though Solomon's *sapientia* is presented as a divine gift or God enlightening him with His unfathomable omniscience ("magnus Dominus noster et multus fortitudine prudentiae eius non est

1058 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1248.

numerous”, Psalms 146: 5), the wisdom Solomon displays is not heavenly or mysterious but rather easily explainable with earthly logic. According to contemporary constructions of, and beliefs about, women and motherhood (which persisted in the medieval and early modern period), it is in a mother’s nature—part of her natural propensities—especially if she has recently given birth like the two plaintiffs in “Solomon’s Judgement”, to protect her new-born baby at any costs, even if it implies abandoning the infant. She certainly would not actively seek her baby’s death. As a consequence, Solomon’s awareness of, and belief in, this construction of female nature induces him to resort to a threat to kill the baby in order to resolve the litigation. Since Gualtieri knows that Griselda is “carnalissima de’ figliuoli”,¹⁰⁵⁹ if he had applied the same predictive logic based on the same premises about motherhood as Solomon used, there would be no way he could have been certain that Griselda would accept letting her children die merely to obey him. If Griselda was to react according to Solomon’s prediction, she would have failed her husband’s test. Given that Griselda’s yielding of her son and daughter to what she believes is their certain death contradicts medieval understandings and representations of motherhood, Gualtieri’s wisdom is either indeed divine, and therefore unfathomable, or he has no wisdom at all. Rather, Gualtieri’s subjects interpret the paradoxical fact that, within a Christian framework of expectations, Griselda is rewarded for her patience and obedience, while Gualtieri’s cruelty is not punished.

Boccaccio’s narrator does not favour an interpretation of the marquis’s inhuman behaviour as an example of God’s infinite prudence. Dioneo’s final remarks state quite the opposite: “Che si potrà dir qui? se non che anche nelle povere case piovono dal cielo de’ divini spiriti, come nelle reali di quegli che sarien piú degni di guardar porci che d’aver sopra uomini signoria”.¹⁰⁶⁰ While he metonymically implies that Griselda (“nelle povere case”), and not Gualtieri (“nelle reali”), is the one endowed with a divine spirit, Dioneo suggests that the marquis did not deserve to have sovereignty over men and was only worthy of taking care of pigs. Boccaccio’s narrator also gestures toward the bestiality of the marquis’s cruel treatment of his wife by comparing him to a swineherd, thereby suggesting that Gualtieri is a pig: the analogy between “guardar porci” and “aver sopra uomini signoria” opens up the possibility of considering a swineherd like a prince, in other words, as an individual of the same species than those he looks after. More importantly, Dioneo’s comparison questions

1059 *Ibid.*, p. 1241.

1060 *Ibid.*, p. 1248.

Gualtieri's capacity as a political leader and, thus undermines the subjects' interpretation of the novella's events and who "savissimo reputaron Gualtieri".

By alluding to the marquis through the metonymy of "case reali", Boccaccio's narrator suggests that he belongs to the same ruling category as kings, or in other words, the category of rulers whose position within the social hierarchy and right to govern others is granted by God through virtue of the *rex dei gratia*. According to Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* (1277–1279), hereditary and unlimited monarchy is defined by a king, who is almost a demi-god (*quasi demideus*) and the incarnation of the law (*lex animata*).¹⁰⁶¹ Thus, Dioneo's conclusion questions not only the divine grace of monarchy but also its hereditary nature, since in his opinion, Griselda is the one who received the *dei gratia*, not Gualtieri.

As Hollander and Cahill show, Dioneo's conclusion can also be set against another passage from the "Inferno" of Dante's *Commedia* about unworthy kings lying in hell-like swine:

Quanti si tegnon or là sù gran regi
che qui staranno come porci in brago,
di sé lasciando orribili dispregi!¹⁰⁶²

Boccaccio's comment on these lines, as Hollander and Cahill have noted, highlights how he metaphorically links "porci" and "tiranni"¹⁰⁶³:

... il "re" è dinominato da "rego regis", il quale sta per "reggere" e per "governare". Di questi cotali, quantunque di molt sieno le lor teste ornate di corona, non son però tutti da dovere essere reputati re . . .

A dimostrazione della qual verità ottimamente favela Seneca tragedo in quella tragedia la quale è nominate *Tieste*, dove dice: "Non fanno le ricchezze li re, non il colore del vestimento tirio, non la corona della quale essi adornano la fronte loro, non le travi dorate de' lor palagi: re è colui il quale ha posta giù la paura e ciascun altro male del crudel petto; re è colui il quale non è mosso dalla impotente ambizione e dal favore non stabile del precipitante popolo; sola la buona mente è quellache possiede il regno: questa non ha bisogno di cavalli né d'armi; re è colui il quale alcuna cosa non teme da non temere". Dalle quali parole possiam comprendere quanti sieno oggi queglii li quali degnamente si possano tenere. Non sono adunque re questi coltali che re si tengono, anzi son tiranni.¹⁰⁶⁴

If we apply this definition to Gualtieri in light of the opposition established by Dioneo's conclusion between "divini spiriti" and swineherds, the marquis appears

1061 Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought: 300–1450* (Abington; New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 133–34.

1062 *Inf.* VIII, 49–51, quoted in Hollander and Cahill, "Day Ten," p. 152.

1063 *Ibid.*

1064 Boccaccio, *Il comento*, vol. 2, p. 274.

to fall into the category of tyrants, while Griselda belongs to those of the “buona mente”. Although Gualtieri’s actual motivation for testing his wife remains unclear, the nature of the testing suggests that they stem from masculine anxieties about female fickleness and unreliability, in other words, from irrational fear or in Boccaccio’s words, from “alcuna cosa . . . da non temere”.

Thus, many elements of Boccaccio’s novella encourage an interpretation of the marquis not as a wise monarch but rather as a tyrant pursuing only *bonum suum*. In turn, this opens up questions about ethics in marriage and politics without providing any clear answers. The absence of an explicit reason behind the testing and the fact that Gualtieri’s tyranny is ultimately not condemned, with Griselda painfully sacrificing 12 years of her life to satisfy her husband’s cruel and whimsical curiosity, prevents any form of real closure for the Christian reader. While the reader may expect virtue to be rewarded and sin punished, neither is enacted in spite of Dioneo’s carnivalesque conclusion, which provides comic relief by imagining Griselda taking revenge on her husband by cheating on him after he repudiated her.

However, the novella’s inherent ambiguities did not prevent Petrarch from seeing the opportunity for an *exemplum* in Griselda’s ultimately rewarded virtue. The laureate poet tried to compensate for and diminish the inconsistencies by erasing most of the political allusions. Accordingly, the patent critiques of the marquis’s mistreatment of his wife are reduced to more evasive comments to enable Valterius to incarnate, if not God himself, at least his instrument. The first obvious labelling feature to disappear is of course the “matta bestialità”. Instead of Dioneo’s introduction indicating the subject matter of the novella, Petrarch provides an introductory letter, addressed to Boccaccio, in which he greatly insists on the merit and worth of the story. As already mentioned, Petrarch attempts to render his version more believable. In keeping with this idea, Petrarch tries to depict the marquis in a different, less excessive light in order to make him seem more human. Valterius’s desire to test his wife over and over again, while still presented as a “mirabilis . . . cupiditas” in the same vein as Gualtieri’s “nuovo pensier”,¹⁰⁶⁵ is relativised by the narrator’s comments that “such things happen” (“ut fit”) and by the possibly ironic suggestion that wiser people than himself may find the marquis’s wish praiseworthy (“quam laudabilis doctiores iudicent”).¹⁰⁶⁶ Petrarch introduces the testing in a much less negative tone than Boccaccio, omitting any allusion to the nature of the trials, which as has already been mentioned, are qualified as “intolerable” in the

1065 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1239.

1066 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 78.

novella. Similarly, after the son's birth, where Boccaccio's narrator condemns Gualtieri's behaviour, considering that he is inflicting Griselda an even greater pain than before ("maggior puntura"),¹⁰⁶⁷ Valterius is only accused of further pursuing his "curiositatem solitam".¹⁰⁶⁸ Finally, as the repudiation is about to take place, Petrarch insists on Valterius's stubbornness and obstinacy but only as a human propensity also found in other people: "Poterant rigidissimo coniugi hec benivolentiae et fidei coniugalis experimenta sufficere, sed sunt qui, ubi semel inceperint, non desinant, imo incumbent hereantque proposito".¹⁰⁶⁹ The only instance in which the marquis's behaviour is qualified as inhuman and animal-like, yet not bestial in Aristotle's sense, is when Petrarch presents the opinion of his subjects about their lord. They of course disapprove of the supposed murders of the children and consider them acts of "savage and inhuman hardness" ("effera et inhumana duritie").¹⁰⁷⁰ However, where Boccaccio adds that the people feel compassion for Griselda, Petrarch leaves her out of the picture, instead explaining at great length how Valterius loses his honour and gains his subjects' hatred ("multis infamem odiosumque reddiderat").¹⁰⁷¹ Since one of Petrarch's frequently cited major alterations to Boccaccio's novella is the accentuation of Griselda's stoicism, it is not surprising that among the depictions of the trials, only the marquis's repudiation speech is explicitly introduced. This introduction indicates the trials will result in pain and shame for Griseldis ("doloris ac pudoris ad cumulum in publicum adducte")¹⁰⁷² instead of focusing on Valterius's stubborn curiosity. In other words, for the most part, Petrarch initiates the description of each test from Gualtieri's point of view, providing information on his motivations, namely the vices that influence him ("cupiditas", "curiositatem" and stubbornness). Petrarch simultaneously qualifies them as human faults and not especially excessive, whereas Boccaccio introduces the testing from Griselda's (the victim's) perspective, indicating what she is expected to feel as a result or what readers would feel in her place. Thus, Petrarch not only diminishes the impression that the marquis's testing is bestial but diverts readers' attention away from the emotional manipulation and painfulness it implies in order to focus on Valterius's human vices.

More importantly, Petrarch never really explicitly questions the marquis's legitimacy as a ruler. Whereas Dioneo's conclusion would prefer Gualtieri to govern

1067 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1240.

1068 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 82.

1069 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

1070 *Ibid.*

1071 *Ibid.*

1072 *Ibid.*

over pigs than men, Petrarch puts any critiques of Valterius into the mouths of his subjects during the testing (when they believe he ordered the murder of his children). Since he is never actually guilty of these crimes, this can hardly be interpreted as an instance of doubt concerning his capacity as sovereign. Moreover, as Petrarch completely eclipses Dioneo's final remarks and concludes by asking readers to understand Griselda's trials allegorically as Christian trials instigated by God in order that man may recognise his own fragility,¹⁰⁷³ the Latin translation rewrites *Decameron* X, 10 and diminishes the marquis's controversial nature as a potential representation of misrule or even tyranny.

Consequently, it could be reasonably expected that among the fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century rewritings at least, those stemming from Petrarch would remain rather uncritical, while those coming from Boccaccio's novella may have picked up Dioneo's conclusion condemning the marquis. The real picture is actually less clear-cut, and interestingly, it does not necessarily follow the logic of the source text (when the latter is clearly established). First, there are those like Nerli, who had Boccaccio's novella accessible while writing their version of the story, or Metge, who worked with Petrarch's translation. They provide texts that are faithful to their respective source in terms of the treatment of the marquis. Second, other rewriters of Petrarch, like Groß or the anonymous author of *La defensione delle donne* (first half of the fifteenth century), appear to praise the marquis for testing his wife. Finally, there are those like Mézières and Chaucer, who in spite of having Petrarch as their primary or sole source, provide a much more critical account of the marquis's behaviour either through their respective narrator's value judgments or by emphasising how unbearable the testing must have felt for Griselda.

Since the first group of rewritings does not bring any relevant changes, I will not devote any further attention to them. Instead, allow me to briefly discuss the second group before turning to the third. As already stated, in some fifteenth-century versions of the myth, the marquis's idea to try his wife is considered a sign of wisdom. Whereas it has been argued that the strong modern reactions with regard to Griselda or her husband are due to modern sensibilities being radically different from medieval ones, actual praise of the marquis's behaviour is thus far not a feature of the majority of Griselda accounts. This opinion needs contextualisation to be understood.

I found four texts praising the marquis. First, Groß's *Grisardis* (1432) states that he proceeded "mit großer vorsicht"¹⁰⁷⁴ and excuses his lies and pretences by

1073 *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95.

1074 Groß, "Die Grisardis," p. 40.

comparing them to Christ's first appearance to Mary Magdalen,¹⁰⁷⁵ who mistook him for a gardener and to two young men "in alia effigie"¹⁰⁷⁶: "alzo tet unser lieber her nach seiner heyligen auferstehung, do er an lügen erschein Magdalenen in eyns gertners pild und zwen jungern underwegen in eyner andern gestalt".¹⁰⁷⁷ Groß's comparison has obvious limits, since it is not clear from John's gospel that Jesus intended Mary Magdalen to mistake him for a gardener, nor is it clear that this was any sort of test. In addition, Mark's gospel is no more explicit with regard to what the "alia effigie" is or what meaning lies behind it. Regardless of how (un)successful it may have been in terms of its logic, Groß's intention here is, on the contrary, rather clear: to establish an allegorical link between the marquis and God in order to legitimise the testing by turning it into a holy means to make Grisardis an example and increase her virtues. Even Grisardis recognises in the end that her husband did well in an almost thankful way:

"sie gedacht auch nicht, wie sie den hern reiſet zu untugent, das er ir sulch unrecht beweist het, sonder sie het in deſter liber und vergaß aller vergangen ding, als sie nye geschehen weren, und sie beweißet sich also gen im, das er si durch ir groß tugent und demut muß liber haben den er sie vor ye gehabt het".¹⁰⁷⁸

Groß changes the details of the testing by condensing the forced removal of the (now three) children into one episode and alleviating the humiliation of the repudiation by setting it during the night in the privacy of their bedchamber, while having Grisardis changing her clothes out of her own volition. Despite this, the fact remains that the marquis pretends to have her daughter and two sons killed and then marry another woman, forcing her to act as a servant for him and his supposed new bride. In other words, the marquis still displays a cruelty that can hardly be compensated for, and legitimised, by a clumsy and unconvincing comparison to Christ.

Similarly, in the anonymous French *Roumant du marquis de Saluces et de sa femme Grisildys* (end of the fifteenth century), the poem's speaker argues that the marquis tested his wife because he loved her too much, literally applying to the story the Latin proverb "qui bene amat bene castigat"¹⁰⁷⁹:

1075 John 20: 15.

1076 Mark 16: 12.

1077 Groß, "Die Grisardis," p. 41.

1078 *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.

1079 This proverb was also in use in middle French since the fourteenth century at least: "qui bien aime bien chastie" (see the etymological and historical remarks about "châtier" in the *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, <http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/advanced.exe?8;s=1587638925>; retrieved 14 October 2014).

Oncques home à femme ne fist pys
 Qu'il li fist, maix tousiours l'amast.
 Il l'amat trop fort voyrement,
 Et la courroussat trez forment,
 Maix depuys sy bien ly merit
 Qu'elle s'en lowait haultement
 Et à Dieu et à toutes gens
 Du merite qu'il luy rendit.¹⁰⁸⁰

While the author of the *Roumant* briefly concedes in his conclusion that the marquis was accused by “Plusieurs” of having committed a “grant folie”,¹⁰⁸¹ it is only to convince those who reached the same conclusion of their mistake:

Maix des sages . . .
 Ains disorient qu'il n'en vault pas pys
 S'il ait esprouvey Griselidys,
 Car cellez qui orront la vie
 Penront en elle sens, nom pas follie.¹⁰⁸²

Opposing the neutral, generalising “plusieurs” to the more alluring “sages”, the *Roumant* induces its audience to side with the “wise ones” and reject condemnations of the marquis’s mistreatment of his wife by means of flattery. However, like in Groß, neither the legitimisation through proverbial wisdom nor the rhetorical allurements are sufficiently convincing in the face of the marquis’s excesses.

The other two versions that praise the marquis for testing his wife appear in story collections of famous and virtuous women and bear features that indicate Petrarch, or an adaption thereof, was the source: Agostino Strozzi’s *Defensione delle donne* (end of the fifteenth century) and Olivier de la Marche’s *Parement et triomphe des dames d’honneur* (1493). They apparently turn Petrarch’s ironic comment, “quam laudabilis doctiores iudicent”,¹⁰⁸³ into an affirmation that Valterius is indeed laudable: “Ma perchè era lui uomo di grande ingegno e diligente prudenzia, volendo provare la pazienza della nova sua moglie, fece grandissima esperienza dell’animo e virtù sua”¹⁰⁸⁴; “le marquis qui fut home subtil et de for couraige praticque pour executer son desir et

1080 “Roumant du marquis de Saluce,” ll. 262–69.

1081 *Ibid.*, l.889.

1082 *Ibid.*, ll.892–98.

1083 Petrarch, “De oboedentia,” p. 78.

1084 *Defensione delle donne* (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1876), p. 146.

voulut essayer et prouver la constance et obeysance de sa femme”.¹⁰⁸⁵ Accordingly, in these versions, the marquis is never blamed or negatively commented upon, let alone punished.

Alongside these rewritings, which attempt to emend the story by clumsily and unsuccessfully presenting a praiseworthy marquis, other French and English versions from as early as the late fourteenth century are much less sympathetic to Griselda’s husband. The first example of this is Mézières’s translation of Petrarch in French in his *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* (1384–89). Although the narrator does not make a more direct condemnation of the marquis’s behaviour than Petrarch’s narrator, the pathos of the trials is emphasised by insistently emitting plausible hypotheses on Griselda’s internal feelings beyond her acknowledged external impassibility: “Finées les paroles du marquis, qui le cuer de la dame naturelement devoyent trespescier”; “Passée ceste tempeste, raisonnablement trespersant les entrailles de Griseldis”; “O quell dolour ceste dame . . . pouvoit avoir en son cuer, recordant la vilaine mort de sa fille et que son seul fil de laage de II ans la mort pareille estoit déterminée. Qui est celui . . . qui se porroit trouver oyans de son seul fil telle sentence, qui le peust dissimuler”.¹⁰⁸⁶ The text thus indirectly points to the marquis’s cruelty more acutely than Petrarch’s Latin translation.

As already mentioned Mézières’s version was soon widely copied, and as early as 1393, it was integrated into the anonymous conduct book *Le ménagier de Paris* (1393). The changes the author makes in relation to Mézières’s text mostly concern Grisildis and her role as an exemplary wife rather than the characterisation of Gautier, the marquis. However, the anonymous author’s conclusion to the Griselda story condemns Gautier’s behaviour not simply in terms of his wife’s mistreatment but also with regard to his marital choice of social exogamy:

Et je qui seulement pour vous endoctriner l’ay mise cy, ne l’y ay pas mise pour l’appliquer à vous, ne pour ce que je vueille de vous telle obeysance, car je n’en suis mie digne, et aussi je ne suis mie marquis ne ne vous ay prise bergière, ne je ne suis si fol, si outrecuidié ne si jeune de sens, que je ne doie bien savoir que ce n’appartient pas à moy de vous faire tels assaulx, ne essais ou semblables. Dieu me gart de vous par ceste manière ne par autres, sous couleur de faulces simulations, vous en essayer! Ne autrement en quelque manière ne vous vueil-je point essayer, car à moy souffist bien l’espreuve jà faicte par la bonne renommée de vos prédécesseurs et de vous avecques ce que je sens et voy à l’ueil et cognois par vraie experience. Et me excuse se l’istoire parle trop grant cruauté, à mon

1085 La Marche, *Le parement & triumphes des dames*, sig. Eiiiv.

1086 Mézières, *Sacrement de mariage*, p. 368.

avis plus que de raison, et croy que ce ne fust onques vray, mais l'histoire est telle et ne la doy pas corriger, ne faire autre, car plus sage de moy la compila et intitula.¹⁰⁸⁷

The author clearly considers that the marquis's behaviour is extreme ("trop grant cruaulté . . . plus que de raison"), but more importantly, it needs reassuring comments, as well as an apology, to prevent his wife from thinking he might be willing to test her again in the same way. In other words, he is aware that the marquis's excessive cruelty could frighten his wife or appear so implausible that it would undermine the teaching he intends to convey to her: to be an obedient and ever acquiescent spouse. The issue of whether the story is a *historia* or a *fabula* is here addressed through its practical implications that, if it is received as a *fabula*, its intended didacticism will fail. At the same time, however, the author hopes to close down the debate by invoking the notion of *auctoritas* ("plus sage que moy la compila et intitula") to legitimise the story as a *historia* and thereby its didactic content.

As already noted, in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, the narrator is very critical of the marquis's behaviour throughout the text. There is a gradation in his condemnation of the marquis's behaviour throughout the testing, from initial "evil needlessness" ("I say that evyl it ist / T'assaye a wyf whan that it is no need")¹⁰⁸⁸ to "ruthlessness" (i.e. "studiness" in the original middle English)¹⁰⁸⁹ and "cruelty" ("cruel purpose"),¹⁰⁹⁰ when the repudiation is about to take place. Like in Mézières's and Boccaccio's versions, the Clerk also insists on several occasions about how much Grisildis must be suffering. At the end of the tale, the narrator explains that the marquis's son, after he succeeded his father, "fortunate was eek in mariage, / Al putte he nat his wyf in greet assay",¹⁰⁹¹ implying once again that the testing was unnecessary and does not make wives any more pleasant to their husbands. In spite of all these condemning comments, the tale concludes by leaving Walter unpunished as usual. Nevertheless, Chaucer, like Boccaccio through Dioneo's conclusion, provides comic relief in the carnivalesque *Envoy* appended to the *Clerk's Tale*, exhorting wives to rebel against their husbands and take the lead in marriage.

What distinguishes Chaucer's tale from Mézières's version, or that of the *Ménagier de Paris*, is that it is more openly critical of the marquis's behaviour, and that it can be, and has been, read as a comment on contemporary politics. In virtue of the analogy between the state and the household, critics have

1087 *Ménagier de Paris*, pp. 125–26.

1088 Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," ll. 460–461.

1089 *Ibid.*, l. 700.

1090 *Ibid.*, l. 734, repeated in l. 40.

1091 *Ibid.*, ll. 1137–38.

offered political interpretations of the *Clerk's Tale* since the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁹² Ever since Aristotle, in his *Politics*, deployed the analogy that entails that a ruler's authority over a country is similar to a husband's over his wife and children, medieval and early modern political discourses have used it to describe the functioning of the monarchy from a Christian perspective, thus justifying the social hierarchy with biblical arguments.¹⁰⁹³ When applied to the *Clerk's Tale*, and the Patient Griselda myth in general, this analogy turns Gualtieri, the cruel husband, into an abusive monarch and Griselda, the mistreated wife, into the victim of his despotic rule. In other words, by analogic extension, she represents the oppressed subjects of Gualtieri's bad governance.

Medieval political theory, drawing on classical treatises and most notably Aristotle's *Politics*, distinguished good monarchy from its sinful opposite, tyranny, in terms of the legitimacy of the king and his governing principles. According to Thomas Aquinas's *De regno ad regem Cypri* (1267), the more a ruler seeks to satisfy his own interests rather than the *bonum commune*, the more unjust he will be, and from this results a tyrannical form of government because it serves the interests of a single individual:

per hoc regimen fit iniustum, quod spreto bono communi multitudinis, quaeritur bonum privatum regentis. Quanto igitur magis receditur a bono communi, tanto est regimen magis iniustum. . . . plus receditur a bono communi in tyrannide, in qua quaeritur bonum tantum unius . . . Regimen igitur tyranni est iniustissimum.¹⁰⁹⁴

Aquinas explains that a tyrant oppresses his subject because he has fallen prey to the passions of cupidity and anger, which then incite him to divest his subjects from their goods or lands and kill them for no apparent reason. As he further contends, "Nec solum in corporalibus subditos gravat, sed etiam spiritualia eorum bona impedit".¹⁰⁹⁵

1092 See Margaret Schlauch, "Chaucer's Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants," *Speculum* 20, no. 2 (1945); Phillipa Hardman, "Chaucer's Tyrants of Lombardy," *The Review of English Studies* 31, no. 122 (1980); Carol Falvo Heffernan, "Tyranny and Commune Profit in the *Clerk's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 17, no. 4 (1983); David Wallace, *Chaucer Polity. Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997); Michael Hanrahan, "'A Strange Succesour Sholde Take your Heritage': The *Clerk's Tale* and the Crisis of Ricardian Rule," *The Chaucer Review* 35, no. 4 (2001).

1093 See Constance Jordan, "The Household and the State: Transformations in the Representation of an Analogy from Aristotle to James I," *Modern Language Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1993).

1094 Thomas Aquinas, *De regno ad regem Cypri*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan and I. Th. Eschmann (Toronto: Thomas Aquinas's De regno ad regem Cypri 1949), Book 1, ch. 4, § 24.

1095 *Ibid.*, Book 1, ch. 4, § 26.

It has been argued that Walter is not a tyrant because his intentions, revealed at the end of the ordeals, to test Grisildis's "stedfastnesse", her "purpose" (i.e. perseverance) and "wille"¹⁰⁹⁶ are actually enhancing her virtue.¹⁰⁹⁷ However, the exact opposite can also be argued. Like in Boccaccio or Petrarch, the testing starts when Grisildis gives birth to her first daughter.¹⁰⁹⁸ Whereas this particular event does not seem to be what triggers the marquis's wish to test his wife but rather gives him the means to perform it, what happens before the child's arrival may provide some indication concerning the marquis's motivations, even more so in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* than in previous versions. Before Grisildis welcomes her baby, the narrator lengthily describes her metamorphosis from a peasant girl into a marquise. In this passage, Boccaccio's novella praises Griselda for being obedient to her spouse and "graziosa e tanto begnina"¹⁰⁹⁹ with her husband's subjects. Modifying his source, Petrarch endows her with political skills to resolve conflicts in Valterius's absence:

Neque vero solers sponsa muliebria tantum ac domestica, sed ubi res posceret, publica etiam obibat officia, viro absente, lites patrie nobiliumque discordias dirimens atque componens tam gravibus responsis tantaque maturitate et iudicii equitate, ut omnes ad salutem publicam demissam celo feminam predicarent.¹¹⁰⁰

Chaucer expands on Petrarch's praise of Grisildis's political skills, which primarily aims to present her as a saviour figure:

Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit
 . . .
 . . . whan the cas required it,
 The commune profit koude she redresse.
 Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
 In al that land that she ne koude apese,
 And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese.

 Though that hire housbonde absent were, anon,
 If gentil men or othere of hire contree
 Were wrothe, she wolde bryngen them aton;
 So wise and rype wordes hadde she,
 And juggmentz of so greet equitee.¹¹⁰¹

1096 Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," l. 1056, 778.

1097 Hardman, "Chaucer's Tyrants of Lombardy."

1098 Although this may suggest that the marquis is motivated by a fear that the child is not his, nothing in the nature of the trial provides any proof concerning the child's legitimacy or illegitimacy.

1099 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1238.

1100 Petrarch, "De oboedentia," p. 78.

1101 Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," ll. 428–39.

While the English translation preserves the allusion to Christ (“That she from hevene sent was, as men wende / Peple to save and every wrong t’ amende”), this is preceded by a much more detailed description of Grisildis’s capacity to work for the “commune profit”, an expression absent from the Latin source, which mentions the more general “res. . . publica”¹¹⁰² rather than the *bonum communitatis*.

According to Aquinas, a tyrant does not appreciate that people other than himself possess virtues, especially if these virtues may put him in the shade (“suspicientes omnem subditorum excellentiam suae iniquae dominationi praeiudicium esse. Tyrannis enim magis boni quam mali suspecti sunt, semperque his aliena virtus formidolosa est”).¹¹⁰³ Grisildis’s political skills clearly exceed those of her husband, who until he married her, “on his lust present was al his thoght”,¹¹⁰⁴ were not directed towards the *bonum communitatis*. In this aspect, again, Chaucer is more critical than Boccaccio or Petrarch, since his narrator literally blames Walter for being so careless. In other words, the *Clerk’s Tale* suggests that Walter may have felt threatened by his wife’s extraordinary political clear-sightedness and therefore started to test her obedience to make sure that she would not undermine his authority in any way. In a similar way, according to Aquinas, tyrants actively seek to prevent those among their subjects who are virtuous from acquiring any political power and keep them in subjection (“Conantur igitur praedicti tyranni, ne ipsorum subditi virtuosi effecti magnanimitatis concipiant spiritum et eorum iniquam dominationem non ferant”).¹¹⁰⁵

One could object here that this does not change the fact that in the end, Grisildis’s virtues are even more celebrated once the trials are over, so Walter did not actually hinder her excellences but helped her to develop them further. However, the duration of the testing, some 12 years, indicates that Walter is particularly doubtful of his wife’s loyalty beyond common understanding. Moreover, there is no textual evidence that her virtues are greater after the marquis stops testing her, only that she has been constant in her obedience and patience. More importantly, the aspects of her virtuousness that are praised in the end are no longer her political skills, which are never mentioned again after the beginning of her trials, but the very qualities that make her an ideal submissive wife and subject, over whom the marquis’s dominion is undoubtable. Even if Grisildis’s re-establishment as a marquise may eventually prove beneficial for Walter’s people, nothing in the text indicates that he

1102 Petrarch, “De oboedientia,” p. 78.

1103 Aquinas, *De Regno*, Book 1, ch. 4, § 26.

1104 Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” l. 80.

1105 Aquinas, *De Regno*, Book 1, ch. 4, §27.

grants his wife her title back for her political skills. It is more because he finally satisfies his cruel, enduring curiosity and sees her “pacience” but more surprisingly because she shows “no malice at al / . . . / Continuyng evere hire innocence overal”.¹¹⁰⁶ Again innovating with regard to previous versions, the *Clerk’s Tale* suggests that Walter was suspicious that his wife may have entertained evil intentions, just like the tyrants in Aquinas’s description, who suspected and felt threatened by good people. Although Walter does not actually kill any of his subjects or divest them of their goods (except Griseldis briefly), he does display all the traits of a suspicious tyrant, pursuing his own interest and being extremely eager to maintain his political power exclusively within his own hands.

While critics have been prone to adopt political readings of the myth in relation to Chaucer’s version, few have done so with regard to Boccaccio’s *novella* or Petrarch’s epistles. Among Chaucerians, David Wallace offers an interesting reading of all three texts and their respective authors’ position with regard to contemporary tyrants. Wallace draws attention to Boccaccio’s criticism of Petrarch’s toleration of the tyrannical rule of his Milanese patrons—the Visconti, which came to be known in contemporary historiography as the “tyrants of Lombardy”¹¹⁰⁷—and underlines the novella’s depiction of Gualtieri as a despotic ruler. While he acknowledges that “Petrarch’s translation relieves Boccaccio’s story of its specific historical urgency”, Wallace argues that “the political dimensions of Boccaccio’s *novella*, its embeddedness in contemporary ideological debate, do have an important bearing on [his] reading of the *Clerk’s Tale*”.¹¹⁰⁸ Whereas Wallace’s reading of Chaucer is more concerned with its relationship with and implied criticism of Petrarch’s Latin version, other critics have focused on the *Clerk’s Tale*’s engagement with contemporary English politics and in particular Richard II’s reign. Margaret Schlauch was the first to discuss how Chaucer lived in an age preoccupied with tyranny, not only in fourteenth-century England but also in Italy in writings from the opposing factions of the Gelfhs and the Ghibellines, as well as among humanists in relation to the Visconti. Her discussion of the *Clerk’s Tale* involvement in such discourses, however, is very brief and only presents Grisildis as embodying an ideal ruler caring for the *bonum communitatis*.¹¹⁰⁹ Phillipa Hardman, on the other hand, not only lists the above-mentioned passages in which Walter is criticised for mistreating his wife but also draws attention to the fact that on

1106 Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” ll.1044–48.

1107 Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, pp. 269–71; Hardman, “Chaucer’s Tyrants of Lombardy.”

1108 Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, p. 282.

1109 Schlauch, “Chaucer’s Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants”: 153.

three occasions, Chaucer insists on the fact that Walter comes from Lombardy,¹¹¹⁰ a geographical area associated with tyranny because of the despotic rule of the Visconti, both in Chaucer's time and in his writings. However, instead of concluding that these elements are signs that the marquis is a tyrant, she argues that on the grounds that "his motive for ending the experiment is . . . the opposite of tyranny", Chaucer actually intended to make a realistic portrait of a prince characterised by "an imperfect mixture of pity and tyranny".¹¹¹¹ Carol Falvo Heffernan and Michael Hanrahan, on the contrary, interpret Walter as a tyrant. For Heffernan, the tale focuses on how to turn tyranny into good government, namely "how to make Walter . . . more like Griselda",¹¹¹² whereas Hanrahan envisages Chaucer's text as a "study in governance [which] entertains Richard II's failure as a ruler: not simply because he is (or has the potential to become) a tyrant, but because he has failed to produce an heir".¹¹¹³

A surprising feature of these articles is that in their analysis of the political dimension of the *Clerk's Tale*, none of them really addresses in detail what is perhaps the most vexed part of Chaucer's text: the *Envoy*. Whereas Schlauch sees only humour in it, Hardman and Hanrahan simply do not mention the *Envoy*. Only Heffernan picks up on its political vocabulary, interpreting it unconvincingly as carnivalesque irony indicative of Chaucer's love for the poor.¹¹¹⁴ I consider, on the contrary, that the *Envoy* is politically significant, especially if Walter is envisaged as a tyrant and the alter ego of Richard II. As Wallace points out, Chaucer frames his tale with clear references to the fact that Petrarch, rather than himself or the Clerk, is the author of the story. This detachment, which according to Wallace is part of Chaucer's criticism of Petrarch culminating in the *Envoy*, pointing at his source's "contradictions and incoherencies",¹¹¹⁵ can also be read as Chaucer distancing himself from Petrarch's conclusion to the story, namely that in the face of adversity, patient submission must always be the adequate behaviour. While Chaucer altered Petrarch's text (and his other anonymous French source)¹¹¹⁶ to introduce elements

1110 Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," ll. 46, 72, 945.

1111 Hardman, "Chaucer's Tyrants of Lombardy": 175.

1112 Falvo Heffernan, "Tyranny and Commune Profit in the *Clerk's Tale*": 332.

1113 Hanrahan, "A Strange Succesour Sholde Take your Heritage": The *Clerk's Tale* and the Crisis of Ricardian Rule," p. 336.

1114 Falvo Heffernan, "Tyranny and Commune Profit in the *Clerk's Tale*": 337.

1115 Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, p. 293.

1116 Whereas there is no critical consensus over Chaucer's possible use and access to Boccaccio's novella, ever since Severs's source study of the *Clerk's Tale*, it is attested that Chaucer used the late fourteenth-century anonymous French translation of Petrarch's *Seniles* XVII, 3, also known as "B version", see Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale*.

evoking and denouncing tyranny, the Envoy, which is exclusively a Chaucerian invention, continues what the *Clerk's Tale* started, but it offers a different response to oppressive rule than passivity and obedience. Since Chaucer added commentaries in his narration criticising Walter's cruel behaviour, pointing to his Lombard lineage and augmenting the pathos of Griseldis's suffering, all of which make the story even more inconsistent, these additions may appear meaningful if seen as part of Chaucer's (re-)introduction of a political dimension.¹¹¹⁷ This political dimension is one that Petrarch had systematically and deliberately not translated from Boccaccio's original. However, any political criticism, especially coming from a court poet such as Chaucer, could not be directly stated and had to be veiled so as not to be perceived as a crime of lese-majesty. Consequently, Chaucer's criticism is astutely disguised in several ways¹¹¹⁸: he does not speak directly, but through a narrator, the Clerk, and tells a story about a marquis who is tyrannical towards his wife only rather than the entire population; the story is also clearly attributed to Petrarch; the didactic purpose of the story is, according to Petrarch, to further Christian steadfastness; and the alternative moral of the tale appears through a carnivalesque Envoy in the form of wifely rebellion against male domination in marriage.

While it is clear now what the political discourse of the tale itself consists of, let me go through the Envoy to unveil it in this second conclusion. The two stanzas¹¹¹⁹ introducing the Envoy proper, as has often been noted, ignore the Petrarchan allegorical interpretation of the tale advocating for a Christian reading of Grisildis's story and instead, bring the focus of both the intra- and the extradiegetical audiences back to the literal level. While introducing the Envoy, the Clerk¹¹²⁰ laments that there are few women like Grisildis left who would

1117 Technically speaking, it can only be considered a re-introduction of the political dimension if one considers that Chaucer read Boccaccio's novella, otherwise it is only an "introduction" of a new meaning, which is potentially there in Petrarch, but it is something he did not seem to wish his readership to activate given his efforts in the framing letters to induce an allegorical interpretation of his Latin translation, in which Griseldis embodies the ideal Christian rather than the oppressed subject(s) of a tyrant.

1118 For a discussion of similar and other self-censorship techniques applied to another of the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Manciple's Tale*, which is also critical of Richard II's tyranny, see Anita Obermeier, "The Censorship Trope in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale* as Ovidian Metaphor in a Gowerian and Ricardian Context," in *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, ed. Stephen Partridge and Erik Kwakkel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 80–105.

1119 Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," ll. 1163–76.

1120 There is no agreement among critics as to whether the lines 1163 to 1210 are spoken by the Clerk or Chaucer himself given that most manuscripts' scribes label the song "Lenvoy de

withstand “swiche assayes”, and he wishes to sing a song to cheer up his audience from this sad fact and “for the Wyves love of Bathe”. Thus, he not only dismisses the possibility of an allegorical reading but places the tale within the literary tradition of lamentations on the woes of marriage by alluding to his fellow narrator among the Canterbury pilgrims, the shrewish Wife of Bath. The song, better known as the Envoy, that follows encourages women to take the lead in marriage and submit to the will of their husbands. Although conceits of war and strife are typical of the *molestiae nuptiarum* tradition, their use in the Envoy is charged with political overtones through terms such as “prudence”,¹¹²¹ a virtue considered essential for rulers from Antiquity onward; “gouvernaille”,¹¹²² which in Middle English can mean “the action . . . of governing” or “government”¹¹²³; and most of all, “commune profit”¹¹²⁴ or *bonum commune*. While these words may seem only to belong to the song’s argumentation inciting wives to take control over their husbands, they also suggest that the analogy between household and state that can be read between the lines of the *Clerk’s Tale* proper also applies here. That is to say that the irony or double-entendre of the Envoy is not that Chaucer portrays a ridiculous shrewish female rebellion against male domination in order to encourage them to be as patient as Griselda but rather that his actual addressees are not “noble wyves” but rather noblemen, possibly even Richard II’s counsellors and Lords, and he is exhorting them not to tolerate tyranny. I do not think, however, that the intention was to call for tyrannicide. The type of tyranny evoked in the Envoy is mostly verbal, although it is not voiced aloud but in written language, and it is vague: “Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence / To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille / As of Grisildis, pacient and kynde / Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille”; “Ne suffreth that men yow doon offence”.¹¹²⁵ These lines, however, leave the possibility of tyrannical abuse leading to the unjust killing of a subject open by suggesting that too much patience throws oneself into “Chichevache”’s “entraille”. This notwithstanding, for all the warfare terminology employed in the Envoy, the actual “weapons” that appear are all

Chaucer”. However, given that I do not see more inconsistencies between the tone of the Envoy and the tale proper than between the novella proper of *Decameron* X, 10 and Dioneo’s conclusion and that these last lines evoke as much Grisildis as the Wife of Bath, another of the Canterbury pilgrims and narrators, I am inclined to simply treat the Envoy and its introductive stanzas as voiced by the Clerk.

1121 Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” l. 1183.

1122 *Ibid.*, l. 1192.

1123 See definition 2a, in Oxford English Dictionary, “† *governail, n.*” (Oxford UP).

1124 Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” l. 1194.

1125 *Ibid.*, ll. 1185–89, 1197.

related to language and encouragement to speak up: “Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille”; “holdeth no silence, / But evere answereth at the counter-taille”; “Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille”; “The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence / Shal perce his brest, and eek his aventaille”.¹¹²⁶

Of course, chattiness and verbal rebellion were tropes and common accusations held against women in classical medieval misogynist or misogamist texts. However, the Envoy introduces the series of exhortations not to remain silently patient, embedding them with the already mentioned political terminology and exclusively alluding to rightful and just forms of government. The song’s addressees are considered “full of heigh prudence”¹¹²⁷ or in other words, endowed with the capacity to discern right from wrong and act or make political decisions with knowledge of the past. This praise of the audience is immediately followed by an encouragement to speak freely, thereby implying that to govern right or to display prudence is also to answer one’s king and show him that his behaviour or actions are tyrannical. In addition, when the Envoy advises, “Beth nat bidaffed for youre innocence, / But sharply taak on yow the governaille. / Emprinteth wel this lesson in youre mynde / For commune profit, sith it may availle”,¹¹²⁸ what this may actually signify, once stripped of its carnivalesque exaggeration, which functions as a veil over the political content, is an encouragement for ministers to not let themselves be treated as simpletons by their monarch and express themselves for the country’s welfare.

The phrase “commune profit” also echoes the previously mentioned description of Grisildis’s political skills, praising her capacity to maintain and if necessary re-establish the *bonum communitatis* (“The commune profit coulede she redresse”).¹¹²⁹ What both this passage and the Envoy have in common is the suggestion that no ruler is irreplaceable, but he will be deemed a “prudent man”,¹¹³⁰ like Walter was immediately after he married Grisildis, if he can surround himself with counsellors like Grisildis, be they male or female, with whom he can work for the *bonum communitatis* and trust them to do so in his absence.¹¹³¹ The Envoy, however, appearing after Walter proved he could be a

1126 *Ibid.*, ll. 1184, 1189–90, 1200, 1203–204.

1127 *Ibid.*, l. 1183.

1128 *Ibid.*, ll. 1191–94.

1129 *Ibid.*, l. 431.

1130 *Ibid.*, l. 427.

1131 Other tales in Chaucer’s collection foster such a view of politics, such as the *Tale of Melibee* and the *Franklin’s Tale*, in which decision-making is not in the hand of a single individual but more collective, with the help of counsellors, interestingly all female, and both tales do so through the state as household metaphor.

tyrant, and it also seems to imply that tyrannical government requires at least verbal resistance to a monarch to make him focus on the “commune profit” again rather than his own selfish whims and anxieties.

Even though the fifteenth century offered ground for using the Griselda myth to criticise other tyrants or to engage with contemporary theories about ideal government, none of the realisations of the myth that appeared during that period were actually critical. In England, no new rewritings of the story appeared (or at least none have survived) before the sixteenth century. In France, although Mézières’s translation of Petrarch continued to be copied and even started to circulate as an incunabulum, which mixed Mézières’s text with the other anonymous French translation of Petrarch, no one really exploited the potential for a critique of misgovernment in the Griselda myth as Chaucer did, instead envisaging the myth as an *exemplum* for wives. One has to wait until the sixteenth century to see the Griselda story being used again in relation to political discourses.

The striking feature of the sixteenth-century realisations of the myth, which engage with political discourses and are mostly plays, is the appearance of the actual word “tyrant”, which is absent from all previous versions, Boccaccio’s and Petrarch’s versions included. Not even Chaucer—who, as we have seen, is the most political of all the early (re)writers of the story—does not use this word in his *Clerk’s Tale* but only implies it through the geographical reference to Lombardy.¹¹³² Even if the word is mentioned only once or twice in these sixteenth-century texts, the accusation is a serious one. Indeed, the evocation of tyranny is symptomatic of the multiplication of peasants’ revolts in the late Middle Ages, which was fuelled by the gradual spreading of the Reformation doctrine and ideology.

In sixteenth-century German plays, Griselda is rarely referred to as a shepherdess but much more often with the umbrella terms of a “Bauerin” or “Bauern-tochter”, with an emphasis more pronounced than in previous versions. While this may seem insignificant for writers and contemporary audiences, the word “Bauerin” must have had a political resonance, even if in the feminine form, especially when used in antagonism with the aristocratic prestige and power of “Marggraf” Walther, whose behaviour is qualified as “tyrannisch”, given that the end of the fifteenth century until the first quarter of the sixteenth century was marked by several peasant uprisings in Southern Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.

¹¹³² Chaucer does use the expression “tyraunts of Lumbardy” in “The Legend of Good Women,” G, l. 354. Quoted in Hardman, “Chaucer’s Tyrants of Lombardy,” p. 172.

Within the German-speaking territories of the Holy Roman Empire, from the last decade of the fourteenth century until 1525, during the “Bundschuh-Bewegung” (1493–1517), the “Armer Konrad” revolt (1514) and the Peasants’ war (1524–1525), the poorer strata of the population rebelled against their respective local authorities (Dukes, Marquis, etc.). While their unrest was caused by harsher living conditions due to poor crops, heavy taxes, the confiscation of communal fields, and the annulation of some of the “old rights”, such as fishing, hunting, or collecting wood within the lands, some groups of peasants also demanded the end of serfdom and independence from the Emperor or Rome, along with the right to choose their own local church authorities. Of all the peasants’ upheavals that occurred during the late Middle Ages, including those that happened outside the Holy Roman Empire, none succeeded and all were severely suppressed. The Peasants’ War of 1524–5 had the deadliest outcome for the uprising party: it is estimated that by the end of the conflict, around 100,000 peasants and their allies were killed or tortured after the battles to deter further rebellious attempts.¹¹³³

The Griselda myth features potentially subversive elements that audiences could interpret as encouragement to rebel. These include Griselda’s social elevation from *bauerin* to marquise, as well as Gualtieri’s potentially tyrannical behaviours, including his initial careless hunting and hawking (the very activities peasants were denied) and his mistreatment of his wife.

However, the three authors of the plays in which the myth is used to address the marquis’s tyranny were all Lutherans, agreeing with the reformer’s political views. Although Martin Luther in his *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung* (1520) preached equality among

1133 Scholars still debate the extent to which Protestantism functioned as an indispensable unifying force fuelling the peasants’ thirst for freedom through its ideology of “Christian liberty” and whether the uprisings must be seen as part of the religious conflicts emerging from the Reformation and Counter Reformation or not. See Frantisek Graus, “From resistance to revolt: The late medieval peasant wars in the context of social crisis,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 3, no. 1 (1975); Peter Blickle, *Die Revolution von 1525* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1975); Peter Blickle and Cathleen Catt, “Peasants Revolts in the German Empire in the Late Middle Ages,” *Social History* 4, no. 2 (1979); Oscar L. Arnal, “Luther and the Peasants: A Lutheran Reassessment,” *Science & Society* 44, no. 4 (1980/1981); Adolf Laube, “Social Arguments in Early Reformation Pamphlets, and Their Significance for the German Peasants’ War,” *Social History* 12, no. 3 (1987); Norman Housley, “Historiographical essay: Insurrection as religious war, 1400–1536,” 25 2, no. 141–154 (1999); Tom Scott, “The German Peasants’ War and the “Crises of Feudalism”. Reflections on a Neglected Theme,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 6, no. 3 (2002); John Witte, “Rights, Resistance, and Revolution in the Western Tradition: Early Protestant Foundations,” *Law and History Review* 26, no. 3 (2008).

men with regard to God and the Scriptures, denying the necessity of a Pope or a priest specially appointed to interpret the Bible for the laymen, this equality was only intended to level the church hierarchy rather than be translated to the social and political worlds. As Oscar Arnal points out, “Luther’s concept of the priesthood of believers was tied to a rigid class-stratified doctrine of vocation”,¹¹³⁴ which his enumeration of the various crafts and occupations clearly indicates:

Ein Schuster, ein Schmied, ein Bauer, ein jeglicher hat seines Handwerks Amt und Werk, und doch sind alle gleich geweihte Priester und Bischöfe, und ein jeglicher soll mit seinem Amt oder Werk den andern nützlich und dienstbar sein, so daß vielerlei Werke alle auf eine Gemeinde gerichtet sind, Leib und Seele zu fördern, gleich wie die Gliedmaßen des Körpers alle eines dem andern dienen.¹¹³⁵

Some of Luther’s contemporaries, such as Andreas Karstadt or Thomas Müntzer,¹¹³⁶ interpreted his sermon differently and used its potential for revolutionising society by applying to the social hierarchy Luther’s idea that anyone can be his or her own priest, as well as its corollary abolishment of the functions of the Pope, cardinals, bishops, and so on. While churchmen like Karstadt and Müntzer thus provided theological legitimation and additional purpose to the peasants’ uprisings, Luther, who disapproved of the revolts, quickly demonstrated his opposition by distancing himself from the conflicts and their leaders and made clear that he never intended to encourage rebellion or the levelling of social hierarchy.

In response to the rebellious party’s manifesto, the “Twelve Articles”, which were published in March 1525, Luther wrote in April the *Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauernschaft in Schwaben*, in May *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern*, and at the end of June, the *Brief von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern*. Initially, Luther avoided taking a side and encouraged a peaceful resolution. In the *Ermahnung zum Frieden*, Luther condemned both parties for not behaving as good Christians, and he accused the aristocracy of not taking into account the needs of the poorer parts of society, namely keeping the *bonum communitatis*, and he reproached the peasants for rebelling, especially for doing so in God’s name. Luther claimed that God’s providence organised society according to a divinely ordered hierarchy, one whose questioning would entail meeting His wrath. Luther’s second pamphlet, *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern*, treats the

1134 Arnal, “Luther and the Peasants: A Lutheran Reassessment”: 449.

1135 *Luther Deutsch: Die Werke Martin Luthers in Neuer Auswahl Für Die Gegenwart*, ed. Kurt Aland, 10 vols., vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), p. 163.

1136 see Arnal, “Luther and the Peasants: A Lutheran Reassessment”: 454–455.

rebels much more harshly, affirming that they were sinning against God by not obeying and submitting to their earthly authorities, by rioting against their lords, stealing and committing murders, and by claiming to act in God's name. Therefore, according to Luther, the peasants deserved their deathly punishment. Finally, in the *Brief von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern*, after apologising for having written his last pamphlet while being overpowered by anger, he still blames the peasants for having tried to change the divine order of things. Even though the last two pamphlets give the impression that Luther had definitively sided with the aristocracy and fully supported its brutal repressive measures, in a letter from 21 July 1525 to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, Luther proved he could also show compassion for the rebels once their troops were disbanded. Indeed, he interceded in their favour to prevent further deaths. In this epistle, Luther asked the Archbishop to have mercy upon a young man whom he believed to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time during the storming of a barricade. His argumentation, nonetheless, goes beyond this particular case to evoke his opinion, as usual based on the Gospel, on rightful government more generally:

So ist es nicht gut, Herr sein mit Unlust, Widerwillen und Feindschaft der Untertanen; es hat auch keinen Bestand. Es ist gut, dass Ernst und Zorn bewiesen ist, als die Leute aufrührerisch und in der Tat störrig und verstockt gefunden wurden. Nun sie aber geschlagen sind, sind es anderen Leute und neben der Strafe der Gnaden wert. Zu viel zerrisse den Sack auf beiden Seiten; Mass aber ist zu allen Dingen gut, und die Barmherzigkeit rühmt sich wider das Gericht, sagt Jak. 2, 13.¹¹³⁷

Even though this letter remained private and did not reach print, another of Luther's written intercessions was published towards the end of September 1525 as a preface to Andreas Karlstadt's public excuses for having preached in favour of, and incited, the peasants' rebellion. In this preface, Luther expressed similar ideas to those in the letter to Albrecht of Mainz, i.e. that rulers should take into account their subjects' needs and not take measures that can induce them to riot: "Dann es kainen bestand haben mag wa ain volck seine herrn nit liebet sond allain fürchten mues vnd geschicht wie jener sagt Welchen vil fürchten & mues widerub vil fürchten Dann er kan nit sicher noch froelich sein bei denen die nit lust nor liebe zu im haben".¹¹³⁸

1137 Martin Luther, *Luther Deutsch. Die Werke Martin Luthers in neuer Auswahl für die Gegenwart: Die Briefe*, 11 vol. (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1983), vol. 10, p. 161.

1138 Martin Luther, "Allen lieben Christen für die dise schafft kombt Gnad und frid vom Gott unserem Vatter und Jhesu Christo", in *Entschuldigung D. Andres Carlstats des falschen Namens der Auffruor, so jm ist mit Unrecht auffgelegt* (Wittenberg: 1525), sig. A2v.

In spite of differences in form, tone, and intended audiences, some consistency in Luther's thoughts emerge from these texts: the divine order of things is to be respected as much by peasants as by princes; each party must work for the *bonum communitalis*; the former by pledging their obedience to their lords and patiently submitting to authority; the latter by treating their subjects well and justly, punishing them when necessary but showing them compassion too. These principles reappear in the German plays about Griselda.

The first of these is Hans Sachs' *Comedi*. A native and resident of Nuremberg, Sachs was a fervent Lutheran from the 1520s, as his publications from the 1520s and through the following decades attest.¹¹³⁹ Even if the play dates from 1546, 21 years after the end of the Peasants' War, peace within the German territories in the 1540s was precarious, not because the lower social strata were threatening to rebel again but rather because the shadow of religious war was lurking. This was because the Holy Roman Empire was trying to break the religious freedom granted in 1532 and force the reformed population back into the Catholic Church.

While Sachs's *Comedi* primarily aims to encourage young men to marry and young women to be obedient wives, the play is structured to draw attention to the fact that tyranny is not always what it seems and that rulers may have motives unknown to their subjects and counsellors. In other words, this drama promotes obedience not only on the implicit ground that God divinely ordered society and attributed a place for each individual in its hierarchy but also because although a ruler's decisions and actions may appear tyrannical, they may eventually serve the *bonum communitalis*. Therefore, princes should not be judged without knowing their ultimate motivations.

As already mentioned, the *marggraff's* first counsellor, Mario, describes to him the necessity of producing an heir in more graphic terms than Petrarch:

Solt ewer gnad mit tod abgehn,
Wie wurd es umb die landschaft stehn?
Sie must dulden ein frembden herrn,
Vil freydienst, stewer und wider-wernn,
Etwan krieg, raub, mord und brand.¹¹⁴⁰

1139 Sachs most famous propagandistic works to promote Lutheranism are *Die wittenbergisch Nachtigall*, *Die man jetzt höret überall* (1523) and his four "Reformationsdialoge" from 1524, *Von einem Schumacher und Chorherren*, the *Gespräch von den Scheinwercken der Geistlichen und ihren Gelübden*, the *Dialogus des Inhalt ein Argument der Römischen wider das Christlich Häuflein den Geiz*, and the *Gespräch eines Evangelischen Christen mit einem Lutherischen*.

1140 Sachs, "Die Marggräfin Griselda," p. 43.

The foreign lord—whose rule would bring unpaid labour, taxes, and social unrest in the form of vengeance, war, theft, murder and fire—seems to evoke the Peasants' war, most likely still in the memory of Sachs's audience. Although the *marggraff* is initially unlike this “frembden herrn” since he gets married to satisfy his people, he begins to resemble this foreign prince in his people's eyes after he pretends to murder his children. The audience, however, is aware that the aim of the testing is to “[Griselda's] gehorsamkeyt anschauen”¹¹⁴¹ and that Walther's daughter and son were brought to Walther's sister to be educated by her, since the spectators saw the *marggraf* give orders to his servant at the end of Act III. At the beginning of the following act, they witness Mario lamenting that his lord committed such a horrible crime as killing his own flesh and blood:

Ach Got, wie nimbt mich so groß wunder,
 ...
 Das er sein eygne kind lest tödten,
 ...
 Im land geht gar ein böß greschrey
 Uber solch tyrannische that.¹¹⁴²

To complete the image of a tyrant murdering his own blood, Therello shows how much he fears Walther, by promptly interrupting Mario: “O schweigt! und solt ers warden innen, / Er sölt uns in als unglück stosen”.¹¹⁴³ However, Therello disabuses Mario as he reveals:

Er hats getan an unsern rat.
 Unser keyner schuld daran hat.
 Wir hettens sunst gestattet nit.
 Ich glaub, er dretz die fürsten mit.
 Uns zimbt ihn nicht drumb an zu reden.¹¹⁴⁴

Thus, Sachs provides the *marggraff* with a reason for testing his wife and appearing to kill his children, namely to pretend to follow Therello's advice, who does not know the young man and woman are still alive. The scene also draws the audience's attention to the fact that appearances may be deceitful, that is to say, when a ruler may seem to act like a tyrant, he may actually have an ulterior motive.

1141 Ibid., p. 51.

1142 Ibid., p. 57.

1143 Ibid.

1144 Ibid.

Even though Mario may have revised his opinion of his lord as a result, Walther continues to behave like a wilful tyrant, dismissing the advice of his courtiers and preventing them from arguing against his opinions or contradicting his decisions. As Therello predicted, the *marggraf* walks onto the stage as Mario and Therello discuss the death of the two heirs and after reminding them that it is not their place to question his decisions, Walther announces he has arranged to obtain the annulment of his marriage with Griselda. Upon hearing the news, both counsellors plead in her favour and beg Walther not to repudiate her. Whereas Mario argues that the *marggraff* will not find a more patient wife (“Ewer gnad hats ins vierzehend jar / Inn aller gehorsamkeit fürwar. / Ewer gnad wirts nit verbessern wol”),¹¹⁴⁵ Therello fears the country might rise against him:

Irs lobs das gantze land ist vol.
 Sie hat gnedig helfen regiern.
 Das volck wirts nit geren verliern.
 Begnad sie! bitt wir alle bed.¹¹⁴⁶

To complete the impression of the *marggraff*'s tyrant-like attitude, Walther harshly silences them: “Schweig! es hilfft kein bitt noch einred”.¹¹⁴⁷

Although the audience knows that the *marggraff* intends to test his wife one last time, and that his children are being brought back from “Bononia” under the pretence that his daughter is Walther's new bride, the spectators are left to guess the nature of the last trial. The cruelty of the lord's behaviour during this concluding part of the trials is underlined one last time. As Griselda is forced to act like a servant and welcomes the guests to the *marggraff*'s supposed second wedding, a lady intercedes in her favour, pointing out Griselda's humiliation at being brought back to court wearing only her peasant's smock and not being allowed to wear clothes more appropriate to the place and festive circumstances:

Die ander hof-jungfraw spricht:

Gnediger herr, es its ein schand,
 Griselda so in schlechtem gwand
 Soll umb-gehn bey den edlen gesten.
 Ach bekeydet die ehren-festen
 Etwan mit eyner bösen wat!

Der marggraff spricht:

Kleyder sie gnug auff diß mal hat,
 Die sie wol tregt in irem adel.

¹¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Griselda, schaw! laß niemand zadel!
 Shaw, ob das mal schir sey bereyt!
 Es ist zu essen grosse zeit.¹¹⁴⁸

This exchange, which is absent from Petrarch's version, is an elaboration from Boccaccio's novella (most likely through Arigo's German translation) and omits the fact that the court ladies also ask that she should remain in another room as an alternative to changing Griselda's dress ("che la Griselda si stesse in una camera").¹¹⁴⁹ The omission makes the *hof-jungfrau* much more sympathetic to Griselda. As this is combined with the immediacy of turning Boccaccio's indirect speech into performed dialogue, the harshness of Walther's response appears much more vivid when expressed with actual words and performed on stage, as opposed to Boccaccio's simple indication that the ladies had begged "in vano".¹¹⁵⁰

The lady's remark completes the series of openly expressed critiques of the *marggraff's* behaviour towards his wife and children, to each of which Walther answers by reminding his courtiers of their lower position with regard to him and the unquestionability of his absolute command. In spite of pointing to a tyranny Walther only feigns, the persistence of these comments indirectly draws attention to the duration of the trials, and combined with their explicit criticism, undermines the legitimacy of the *marggraff's* means to test his wife.

While Sachs's play is structured to reveal that from the beginning of the trial, Walther's tyranny is the result of artful deception, thereby pointing at the necessity of remaining obedient to one's ruler, like Griselda, even if he appears cruel and despotic, the *comedi* does not, however, resolve the ambiguity inherent in the testing method or its duration. On the contrary, these ambiguities are enhanced by the courtiers' accusations and remarks. Walther may not be a tyrant, but he is not an ideal ruler either. As Marco's and Therello's speeches indicate, the *marggraff's* cruelty towards his wife and children has consequences in the way his subjects perceive him ("Das er sein eygne kind lest tödten / . . . / Im land geht gar ein böß greschrey / Uber solch tyrannische that"; "Sie [i.e. Griselda] hat gnedig helffen regiern. / Das volck wirts nit geren verliern").¹¹⁵¹ Therello's prediction is that the people will not appreciate losing Griselda as a marquise, since her skills as a ruler were held in high esteem. This echoes the words of Miser Lux, a soldier who in the second act approves of his lord's

1148 Ibid., p. 62.

1149 Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, II, p. 1246.

1150 Ibid.

1151 Sachs, "Die Marggräfin Griselda," pp. 57, 58.

choice of bride precisely because Griselda's poor origins may help Walther's government:

Weil sie der schäflein vor dem holtz
 Gehütet hat mit ringer narung,
 In mü und arbeyt hat erfahrung.
 Derhalb kan sie dest bas den armen
 Glauben und sich ir not erbarmen.
 Und ist nützer der landschafft her,
 Denn wens eins künigs tochter wer.¹¹⁵²

In other words, Miser Lux assumes that Griselda will use her experience of peasants' living conditions to advise her husband on how to treat them, maintain the peace, and prevent rebellion. Therefore, when Walther decides to repudiate her, he not only deprives, albeit temporarily, himself from her insight and knowledge about the great majority of his subjects' expectations and possible demands—he also indirectly signals to his subjects that he does not care for them, especially if they considered Griselda their representative at court, as Miser Lux suggests (“Und ist nützer der landschafft her, / Denn wens eins künigs tochter wer”).

Consequently, at the same time as the *Comedi* tries to discourage rebellion regardless of how unchristianly a ruler may govern, the play warns princes against such imprudent disregard for the opinions of the masses, presenting Walther's feigned tyranny as a negative example and arguing for a form of government that works for the *bonum communitatis* precisely by taking into account the nobility as well as the poor, as Griselda's role at court indicates. Thus, Sachs's drama seems to reproduce Luther's political discourses but in a moderate form only, urging the peasants to know their place and encouraging local authorities to be merciful and take care not to provoke their subjects' displeasure.

In his *Grisolden* (c. 1582), as already mentioned, Mauritius borrows many lines from Sachs's *Comedi* but argues for a form of government that takes into account the poorer strata, particularly the peasants, in a more complex, intertextual way. In addition, Mauritius also takes issue with the problem of the farmers' upheavals, which in Austria was ongoing since 1356 and would eventually culminate in the peasants' war of 1626. Mauritius addresses these political topics through the clever combination of a number of scenes and paratextual elements of his own creation, which incorporate some of Sachs's dialogues as well as some from his other source, the anonymous Augsburg

¹¹⁵² Ibid., p. 49.

play *Grysel*, which, however, does not engage with the topical issue of peasants' revolt.

At the same time, as Mauritius multiplies the number of characters who question the marquis's behaviour, he also provides various legitimations and excuses of different kinds. Immediately following the scene in which Grisoldis's daughter is supposedly killed, although she is actually taken to the marquis's sister in "Bononia", a scene of Mauritius's invention shows two peasants, Crispinus and Claus Niemandgut, discussing the death of the young heiress. Claus Niemandgut believes that the only explanation for his lord's cruelty is that some devil has recently taken possession of him:

Ich glaub er sey vom Teufel besessen
 Das er thut Weib un Kind vergessen
 Sein Fleisch und Blut. Nun merckt man frey
 Ob ihm ein Ernst gewesen sey
 Sein thun vnd lebn von anfang z' end
 Im heyrathn vnd Regiment.
 Wolt schier darumb nicht mehr auffstehn.
 Weil ich she alles so zugehn.¹¹⁵³

Although Claus does not know it, he is not far from the truth: Mauritius inserted in his play a Vice figure, who is first named "Hofteuffel" ("Court-devil") and later "Eheteuffel" ("Marriage-devil") or Asmodaeus and who claims to influence the marquis's decisions. However, Asmodaeus's room for manoeuvre is, according to his own admission, limited: after the wedding, he confesses that he tried to prevent the marquis from marrying anyone but failed, and he hopes to be more successful as he schemes to "ihn oder sein Gemahl / Sampt der Landschafft bring in vnfall".¹¹⁵⁴ Asmodaeus does not come back at any other moment in the play, and he does not interact directly with Walther or any other character, nor does he have any counterpart Virtue figure to stage an external psychomachia of the *Graff's* inner moral conflict in the manner of a morality play. However, Asmodaeus's fleeting presence just before the testing starts to indicate that there is something ungodly about the trials, otherwise he would not be preying upon Walther ("den Graffn ins Netz zu bringen").¹¹⁵⁵

After the supposed death of Griseldis's son, Mauritius presents the court's reaction to the event rather than the reaction of the peasants. He reproduces Sachs's dialogue between Mario and Therello, renaming them "Herr Friderich"

¹¹⁵³ Mauritius, *Grisolden*, sig. E2v.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, sig. D6r.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. D5v.

and “Herr Lucas”, and couples it with the parallel passage from the anonymous *schöne comedi*, in which the *Hauptmann* (the captain) and the *Vogt* (the reeve, renamed *Pfleger* by Mauritius) lament the disappearance of the marquis’s daughter and his cruelty towards his wife, albeit in milder terms than Mario.

Thus, Mauritius stresses Sachs’s allusion to the potential rebellion threat by multiplying the voices expressing disapproval of the tyrannical way in which Walther treats Griselda through borrowings from the *schöne comedi* and by offering not only the nobility’s opinion but also that of the lower strata as well.

However, Mauritius cuts Sachs’s scene before the marquis arrives to interrupt Mario and Therello in order to present the *Graff* giving orders to his servant, Pomptulus, to bring back his children from Bononia under the pretence that his daughter is his new bride. Thereby, Mauritius undermines the accusations of tyranny by reminding the audience that the children are safe and sound, while he announces that Grisoldis’s next trial will be a fake wedding.

In the last scene in which Walther’s behaviour is criticised, however, as Mauritius rewrites the words spoken by the *hof-jungfrau* interceding for her ex-marquise and Walther’s answer, the playwright brings slight but significant changes to Sach’s text:

Sachs:

Die ander hof-jungfraw spricht:

Gnediger herr, es its ein schand,
Griselda so in schlechtem gwand
Soll umb-gehn bey den edlen gesten.
Ach bekleydet die ehren-festen
Etwan mit eyner bösen wat!

Der marggraff spricht:

Kleyder sie gnug auff diß mal hat,
Die sie wol tregt in irem adel.
Griselda, schaw! laß niemand zadel!
Schaw, ob das mal schir sey bereyt!
Es ist zu essen grosse zeit.¹¹⁵⁷

Mauritius:

Hofmeisterin

Ach gnaediger Herr es ist ein schand
Das Grisold in so schlechtem Gwand
Sol vmbgehn bey den edlen Gestn
Bekleidet doch die Eherenveften
Das sie hrein geh mit groesser zier.

Graff.

Sie hat jetzt Kleider gnug bey ihr
Es thuts zu ihrem Adel wol
*Jedr nach seinm Stand sich kleiden sol.*¹¹⁵⁶

¹¹⁵⁶ Ibid., sig. F7r, my emphasis.

¹¹⁵⁷ Sachs, “Die Marggräfin Griselda,” p. 62.

Whereas Sachs's *marggraff* underlines the fact that Griselda no longer is a marquise but now his servant, Mauritius's *Graff* additionally legitimises his refusal to let Grisoldis wear more elegant clothes by alluding to the sumptuary laws that at the time required that "Jedr nach seinm Stand sich kleiden sol". These regulations, generally established for the whole of the German Holy Empire, presented regional differences and were particularly numerous within the German-speaking territories. Recent historical studies on the subject have shown that they were symptomatic of a need to both regulate or control social mobility and maintain internal peace within the various lands of the Empire.¹¹⁵⁸ Not only were they regularly updated, but they were also strictly implemented. Court records indicate that individuals were frequently fined for spending too much money, for example, with regard to their rank in clothes or wedding expenses. Even when these people were not contracting debts and were wealthy enough to pay for all these goods, the problem lay in the anxiety among the nobility, which felt its group identity threatened because such display of riches levelled down the distinctive traits that separated aristocracy from the commoners. Moreover, the rich merchants or artisans who could afford the lifestyle of men from the lower nobility, or even spend more than them, were not only vain, but also from a religious perspective, they were disrupting the divine order of things. Consequently, Mauritius's *marquis* may be harsh, but he actually wants the law to be applied. Although he is clearly not an ideal ruler, he is not a tyrant either. Rather he is a prince who was momentarily led astray and exaggerated the testing of his wife to make sure her social elevation would not cause social disorder.

In addition, to counterbalance this negative example, Mauritius provides in the framing paratext an indication of how a prince should govern. In the second argument ("Der ander *Argumentator*"),¹¹⁵⁹ which he writes to convince his audience that the story they are about to watch of Grisoldis is true, that is to

1158 Robert Jütte and Neithard Bulst, "Einleitung. Zwischen Sein und Schein: Kleidung und Identität in der ständischen Gesellschaft" *Saeculum* 44 (1993); Neithard Bulst, "Zum Problem städtischer und territorialer Kleider-, Aufwands- und Luxusgesetzgebung in Deutschland (13. – Mitte 16. Jahrhundert)" in *Renaissance du pouvoir législatif et genèse de l'État*, ed. A. Gouron and A. Rigaudière (Montpellier: Publications de la Société d'Histoire du Droit et des Institutions des Anciens Pays de Droit Ecrit / Société d'Histoire du Droit et des Institutions des Anciens Pays de Droit Ecrit, 1988); Gerhard Jaritz, "Leggi suntuarie nelle aree di lingua tedesca," in *Disciplinare il lusso: La legislazione suntuaria in Italia e in Europa tra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, ed. M. G. Muzzarelli and A. Campani (Rome: Carocci, 2003); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, "Reconciling the Privilege of a Few with the Common Good: Sumptuary Laws in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009).

1159 Mauritius, *Grisolden*, sig. A4r–A5v.

say a *historia* and not a *fabula*, he narrates the legend of Libussa and Přemyslíd, or Primislaus in his spelling, introducing it as one of the many “Historien” about socially unequal marriages that he found in the works of the “weitbruemt *Historicus* / . . . *Aeneas Sylvius*”.¹¹⁶⁰

Mauritius draws parallels between the Griselda myth and the founding myth of the Přemyslíd dynasty, of the people from Bohemia, and of the city of Prague, which also happened to be the main residence of Rudolf II when *Grisoldis* was written. Beyond the initially expressed intention of proving through this example that hypogamy is not as uncommon as it may seem, this second argument exploits Libussa and Primislaus’ story to forward a certain ideal of government, namely that a prince should listen to the needs and petitions of his people and know how to surround himself with people who can help him, regardless of their birth. Libussa inherits the throne of Bohemia and prudently rules over her realm on her own until two knights, dissatisfied with the way she tries to resolve their dispute over the inheritance of a small piece of land and with the fact that she is a woman, ask her to find a husband who would govern in her stead. Libussa agrees and marries Primislaus, a peasant. While his inferior social condition may indicate that Libussa still retains power and authority over him, according to Mauritius’s version of the story, they rule the country together as social equals: “[er] Regiert als eim fürsten gebuert / Mit Frau Libussa seinem Gmahl / Der er gefolgt vberall”.¹¹⁶¹ Libussa not only complies with the knights’ request in spite of its unfairness, but she also chooses a husband, who being a labourer, rules no less wisely but with the humility of one who knows the honour made to him while not thinking any less of himself because of his simple origins:

Sprach er [i.e. Primislaus]: Ich wil s’ fleissig auffhebn
 Das mein Nachkoemmeling so bey lebñ
 Wenn sie d’ Schuh [i.e. Bauernschuh] etwan sehen henckñ
 In ewigkeit daran gedenckñ
 Das ihr Anherr eine bfoerdert sey
 Vom Acker zum Herzogthumb frey.
 Vnd das ihr keiner nicht stoltzier
 Das er so kommen sey herfuer.¹¹⁶²

In other words, Primislaus’s humility and awareness of where he comes from helps him be a prudent sovereign, because he knows that he is allowed to govern

1160 Ibid., sig. A4r.

1161 Ibid., sig. A5v.

1162 Ibid.

over a country only thanks to Libussa's decision to favour him. Primislaus' proud display of his peasant's shoe, the symbol metonymically representing his previous condition, also suggests that he feels a responsibility towards his former peers as he is now a ruler over them.

The shoe is not the only object associated with Primislaus's status as a labourer: as Libussa comes towards him, he is described as leaving his plough behind ("vnd bald hernach den Pflug verließ").¹¹⁶³ These farmer's attributes are evoked again in the epilogue alongside Grisoldis's peasant smock, the one she leaves at her father's place after the marquis strips her naked to redress her as a marquise and which she wears again after her repudiation, since the marquis asks her to give him back everything he gave her, including all her dresses. After reminding the audience how patient and humble Grisoldis was throughout her trials, the "*Epilogus*" draws the following lesson:

Wolt Gott das all die vom Pflug kemm
Ihrs vorign Stands so war moechten nemn
Vnd sich nicht theten vberhebn
Wenn ihnen Gott ein Glueck hett gebn
Daechten besser an Kittl vnd Bawernschuh
Vnd brauchtn in demut ihrer Ruh.¹¹⁶⁴

As Mauritius generalises Grisoldis's case to anyone who advances their social status in order to exhort them to stay humble, he uses the plough and the peasant's shoes as metonymies for anyone belonging to the social group of labourers, just as these objects were used to describe Primislaus's condition before he became a duke. Whereas these items echo the myth told in the second argument, they also evoke medieval and early modern postlapsarian Adamic iconography, which depicted Adam performing his divine punishment, i.e. ploughing in order to obtain food from the earth. Consequently, the phrase "all die vom Pflug kemm" may also by metonymy refer to Adam's sons by signifying "all those who come from Adam". This passage from the epilogue then reminds the audience that all mankind comes from Adam and that only certain people were allowed by God to no longer live as labourers ("Wenn ihnen Gott ein Glueck hett gebn"). This includes rulers, who should nevertheless remember that their ancestors were ploughmen, just as Primislaus wants his descendants to keep that in mind. Mauritius does not seek to level social hierarchy; and his play is full of allusions to the necessity of maintaining the social order as it

1163 Ibid., sig. A5r.

1164 Ibid., sig. G6v.

is,¹¹⁶⁵ but it does want to demonstrate that God gave some individuals the task to rule and therefore freed them from manual labour in the fields. This, however, does not imply that those rulers should take any pride in this freedom. Thus, the peasants' attributes, which were used as rallying symbols for the rebelling lower strata of society at the beginning of the century, are transformed into symbols and reminders of humility.

Although in 1582, when the play was staged, Steyr was at peace and benefitted from its central role in the Austrian iron trade, its economy was in decline. Even the attempt to regulate the market with the foundation of the iron trade company in 1581 did not improve the situation.¹¹⁶⁶ This meant that social unrest could have arisen among workers, perhaps fuelled by the more general bellicose atmosphere within the Holy Roman Empire caused by the peasants' upheavals and religious wars. Consequently, when the *Epilogus's* exhortation to humility, made by inciting the audience to keep their social origin in mind, it also exhorts them to peace ("Ruh") by reminding them that their social elevation is only attributable to God ("ihnen Gott ein Glueck hett gebn"). Mauritius simultaneously implies that what God has given, He can also take away. In other words, the play's conclusion invites its audience to maintain the social peace, because revolts go against God's will and may cause the loss of people's wealth and welfare.

The last of the German plays that actually uses the word "tyranny", or more precisely its verbal derivative "tyranisirn", is Georg Pondo's *Historia Walthers* (1590). Like Sachs and Mauritius, Pondo does not evoke tyranny to create or incite social unrest, quite the opposite.

In a very similar way to Mauritius, he introduces an "Eheteufel" to justify the marquis's mistreatment of his wife. This devil, very much like the one in Mauritius's play, recites monologues on stage in Act 2 scene 1, Act 3 scene 2, and Act 4 scene 1 and claims to influence Walther's decisions and behaviour. In Act 2 scene 1, the *Eheteufel* expresses his willingness and intention not only to induce Walther to perform evil actions but also to hurt Griseldis:

Denn gegen sie [i.e. Griseldis] wil ich anhetzen
 In selbst er [i.e. Walther] sol sie nicht hoch schetzen
 Sondr jr als dann bey nacht bey tage

¹¹⁶⁵ For example, the already mentioned scene in which Janickl, Grisoldis's father, argues against his daughter's marriage with the marquis because it would result in social struggle, picturing it allegorically as a war between asses and oxen, see Part 2, pp. 217–218.

¹¹⁶⁶ Knut Schulz, "Das Eisengewerbe des Reviers von Steyr bis zum Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts," in *Städtische Wirtschaft im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Franz Irsigler zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Rudolf Holbach and Michel Pauly (Köln: Böhlau, 2011), p. 314.

Anthun all marter angst vnd plage
 Sol jr das leben machn so sawr
 Solt wuenschn sie hett genomn einn bawr.¹¹⁶⁷

Both his subsequent soliloquies underline his satisfaction at seeing Griseldis's miseries. Thus, like Mauritius, Pondo provides a supernatural explanation for Walther's sudden decision to test his wife, but he focuses more on the ends (i.e. tormenting Griseldis) than on the fact that tempting Walther to commit sins will ultimately win the *Eheteufel* another soul to bring back to Hell. The audience's attention is thereby shifted away from the marquis's unjust maltreatment of his wife to concentrate on the effects of this treatment, namely Griseldis's suffering.

As already mentioned, the removal of the children is not staged but evoked through the dialogue of one servant, Sophrona, reporting the events to another, Sophia. Mediating the spectators' reception of the trials through the onstage narration lessens its effect and enables Pondo to direct the audience's attention towards the grief Griseldis must have felt. This is achieved by having Sophrona lengthily express how sad and sorry she is for her lady rather than having the play's addressees focus on the cruelty of the marquis's actual actions.

Just as the courtiers of Sachs's and Mauritius's play intervene to change Walther's mind about repudiating his wife, the marquis's counsellors in Pondo's play also intercede in favour of Griseldis and beg Walther not to send her back to her father. The circumstances are, however, very different: the marquis has just informed them that he does not really intend to annul his marriage with Griseldis but will put her patience and obedience to the test one last time. The ensuing plea for the marquise is, as a result, not only more urgent but also more critical, pointing at the sinfulness of the deed:

Cantzler.

Ach Gnediger Herr wil gebethen han
 Ewr Gnad wolt mein rath hoeren an
 ...
 Wo ewer Gnadn ein solchs nehm vor
 Wuerdn dieselbn nicht allein empoehren
 Ihr Vnterthan wo mans wurd hoern
 Sondern dazu das gantze Land
 Diss hettn wir den allgrosse Schand

Der erste Rath

...

1167 Pondo, *Die Historia Walthers*, sig. C6v.

Ihr Gmahl die ist genutz tugentreich
Ach Gnediger Herr wer ist jr gleich?

Der andr Rath

Ach Herr es wil sich nicht gebuehrrn
Das ewer Gnadn tyrannisirn

Der dritte Rath

Genedger Herr es gschieht zu spoth
Vnd Hohn des eh vnd vnserm Gott.¹¹⁶⁸

These intercessions make the marquis's decision to repudiate Griseldis appear as a true act of tyranny: he does not listen to the *Cantzler* and the three *Rathen*, who advise him against it, and silences them ("Schweigt still").¹¹⁶⁹ Thus, his action actually fulfils his own selfish desire and disregards the potential consequences it may have for the *bonus communitatis*, in spite of the *Cantzler's* warning ("Wuerdn dieselbn nich allein empoehren / Ihr Vnterthan . . . / Sondern dazu das gantze Land").

There is, of course, no actual negative outcome to the marquis's fake repudiation: none of his subjects revolt or physically try to prevent him from further tormenting his wife. The play ends ambiguously, exploiting the pathetic potential of Griseldis's happy reunion with her daughter and son, while, on the other hand, leaving a mitigated impression about Walther, who has put an end to his tyrannical obstinacy and gets away with it.

These three plays show the necessity of explaining and justifying the marquis's behaviour, which the versions of Boccaccio and Petrarch fail to account for, as well as providing at least one positive example to contrast with Walther's momentary tyranny. While fourteenth- and fifteenth-century versions narrate the story without providing any explanation for the marquis's sudden decision to test his wife (with the notable exception of Groß, as above mentioned), the sixteenth-century versions display a tendency not only to question the marquis's behaviour but also to involve courtiers or supernatural forces as instigators to motivate the marquis's irrational actions, such as the devil figures of Mauritius's and Pondo's plays. In addition, whereas previous rewritings did not particularly develop Petrarch's depiction of Griseldis as an ideal, Christ-like ruler (with the exception of Chaucer's account), Mauritius's and Sach's plays exploit this aspect to counterbalance Walther's negative exemplarity and include a positive image of government in their drama as well.

1168 Ibid., H5r.

1169 Ibid., H5v.

Even though Mauritius and Pondo wrote their plays over 50 to 60 years after the end of the Peasants' War, appropriations of Protestant doctrine inspired by both Luther and Calvin continued to fuel discourses about tyranny. Local authorities were no longer considered unjust because they applied restrictions on hunting or wood collecting but rather because they were enforcing Catholicism on the people. This was particularly seen to be the case when the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope started taking measures to counter the spread of the new faith, such as the Augsburg Interim in 1548 and the Council of Trent from 1545 to 1563. While the revolts at the beginning of the century were mostly due to socio-economical causes, the second half of the sixteenth century witnessed the multiplication of conflicts clearly based on religion all across Europe. Protestant texts defending the right to resist and even to resort to force and violence against tyrants (i.e. any sovereign authority) who would impose Catholicism on their subjects began to appear, such as the Magdeburg Confession from 1550, Theodore de Beza's *Concerning the Rights of Rulers over Their Subjects and the Duty of Subjects towards Their Rulers* (1574),¹¹⁷⁰ George Buchanan's *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* (1579), and the Huguenot tract, *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, published in Basel in 1579 and reprinted in 1580, 1581, 1589, 1599, and 1622.¹¹⁷¹ Defences of tyrannicide were not, however, exclusively written by Protestants. Most famously, the Jesuit Juan de Mariana wrote in 1599 his controversial *De Rege et de Regis Institutione*, which argued that it was legitimate to kill a tyrant. In France, Mariana's arguments were appropriated as much by Protestants as by Catholics, and this led to the burning of his treaty in Paris in 1610 after Henry IV's murder by a Catholic extremist.

Consequently, even if the Griselda myth does not address religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics, when Mauritius and Pondo composed their dramas, tyranny was not a topic to treat lightly, especially for Mauritius, who wrote his play as a Lutheran professor in the Catholic Austrian town of Styer. The general political atmosphere in Europe therefore helps to explain not only why these dramatists take issue with Walther as a potentially tyrannical ruler but also why Mauritius contrasts the negative example of the marquis with not one but two exemplary rulers in the characters of Griseldis and the couple formed by Libussa and Primislaus.

1170 For a detailed discussion of these first two pamphlets, see Witte, "Rights, Resistance, and Revolution in the Western Tradition: Early Protestant Foundations."

1171 For a discussion of the influence of this pamphlet on republicanism in seventeenth-century England, see Anne McLaren, "Rethinking Republicanism: 'Vindiciae, contra tyrannos' in Context," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006): 24.

These tendencies were, however, not limited to German realisations of the myth. In England, dramatic rewritings display the same need to motivate the marquis's sudden cruelty, make it appear more human, and contrast his tyrannical behaviour with that of Griselda or the other characters.

John Phillip's Tudor Interlude, *Patient Grissil*, uses the vice figure Politick Persuasion, a dramatic convention of the genre,¹¹⁷² to explain why Gwalter decides to try his wife. Whereas Politick Persuasion bears many similarities with the *Eheteufels* of the German plays, he is a character who directly intervenes, interacting, and speaking with others onstage. In contrast to the German *Eheteufels*, he is not some kind of ethereal evil force, acting behind the scenes and only coming forward onstage to brag about his exploits or complain about his lack of success. His influence is visible as much in action as in words, perpetuating the late medieval dramatic tradition of allegorical vices tempting the "every-man-protagonist" of the morality plays. Despite their comic nature, vice figures seriously threaten the victim-hero's moral integrity. Because the vices frequently draw attention to their own theatricality by explaining what their plans are,¹¹⁷³ through dramatic irony they encourage spectators to distrust them and keep them at a critical distance while entertaining the audience.

As already mentioned, Phillip's interlude suggests that Elizabeth should marry according to Protestant family values. Like the German plays, his play also invites a political reading: the "posthemus actor"¹¹⁷⁴ or epilogue bids God to bless Elizabeth and asks that "The Lords of the counsel . . . govern aright".¹¹⁷⁵ Critics have therefore examined both how effectively Grissill conveys exemplarity and what kind of political statement Phillip's interlude seems to make.¹¹⁷⁶ *Patient Grissil* provides advice on how to be a good ruler, both through a negative example of a ruler in the form of Gautier and through two positive examples of response to a ruler by Grissill and the additional character of the Nurse, who looks after Grissill's babies. These political purposes, however, undermine one another and the play fails to make its point.

Offering an interpretation of *Patient Grissill's* treatment of despotism, Leah Marcus contends that Grissill's exemplary patience against her tyrannical husband evokes the passive resistance of Elizabeth and the Protestants to Mary I's

¹¹⁷² See Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken, *Interludes and Early Modern Society* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); Peter Happé, "Deceptions: "The Vice" of the Interludes and Iago," *Theta* 8 (2009).

¹¹⁷³ Happé, "Deceptions," p. 111.

¹¹⁷⁴ Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," l. 2066.

¹¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 2087–88.

¹¹⁷⁶ See Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 168; Potter, "Tales of Patient Griselda and Henry VIII."

repressive religious policy,¹¹⁷⁷ given that Elizabeth was portrayed,¹¹⁷⁸ and indeed presented herself, as a passive heroic figure.¹¹⁷⁹ Marcus concludes that the play celebrates “the survival and steadfastness of a persecuted people who had suffered” and “warns her [i.e. Elizabeth] and her government to ‘govern aright’ so that they will avoid the tyranny illustrated in Gautier”.¹¹⁸⁰

However, the play is more than a celebration of subjects’ passive resistance of, or a warning against, tyranny: a closer look at the genre’s conventions suggests that *Patient Grissill* offers the means for a monarch or a parliament to repress the temptation to corrupt their rule with tyranny.

Tudor interludes constructed around a vice, like *Patient Grissill*, imply that the vice’s hero-victim evolves following two dramatic patterns. The first pattern is a sequence of innocence/fall/redemption inherited from the morality plays¹¹⁸¹: a hero-victim lives in innocence until he is misled by the vice and eventually redeemed by figures named after virtues or allegorical concepts, as in Nicolas Udall’s *Respublica* (1553) or Lewis Wager’s *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* (1558). The second pattern is reminiscent of the folk-plays’ death and regeneration pattern based on revival rituals.¹¹⁸² In Elizabethan plays that feature a female hero-victim, this dramatic sequence presents a vice who seeks to ruin the woman by persuading a male figure to mistreat her; the female hero-victim finally emerges stainless and recovers her honour, fame, and social status, just as in Thomas Garter’s *Virtuous and Godly Susanna* (1569) or *Appius and Virginia* (1564). These patterns are not mutually exclusive and share a torment/rescue sequence that enables playwrights to intertwine the various patterns. Indeed, Phillip’s *Patient Grissill* can be read according to both patterns.

On the one hand, Grissill’s virtue remains unthreatened until her daughter is born, when she experiences what Gautier makes her believe is her first fall from the lords and commons’ favour, which at the same time is accompanied

1177 See Leah Marcus, “Dramatic Experiments: Tudor Drama, 1490–1567,” in *Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1500–1600*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

1178 Marcus mentions Fox’s narration of Elizabeth’s sufferings under Mary in his *Acts and Monuments*, see *ibid.*, p. 147.

1179 Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 26–54.

1180 Marcus, “Dramatic Experiments: Tudor Drama, 1490–1567,” p. 149.

1181 For a description of this pattern in morality plays see Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play, Origins, History, and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 6–10.

1182 For a discussion of folk-plays’ relationship with regenerative rituals and influence on morality plays and interludes, see *ibid.*, pp. 10–16.

by a subsequent social though not moral fall when Gautier feigns repudiation and forces her to renounce her title and return to her father's cottage. Finally, she is raised to her former social status in a process reminiscent of the redemption pattern. In *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene*, Jesus Christ, with the help of Faith and Repentance, redeems Mary Magdalene; likewise, the virtue figures of Patience and Constancy, appearing when Grissill is at her lowest social status, comfort, and strengthen her. Grissill's final raising illustrates that patient endurance overcomes tyranny.

On the other hand, not only can Grissill's trials be interpreted as a social death and her restoration as Gautier's wife as a revival, but death is an omnipresent motive, counterbalanced by revivals and regenerations. When Grissill's mother dies, following the life cycle, Grissill replaces her in the family. The Countess of Pango, Gautier's sister, to whom the children are entrusted, mourns her long-dead husband, but when she sees Gautier's daughter, she literally "revives".¹¹⁸³ The two scenes announcing Grissill's children's supposed murders create a vivid image of violent death through lexical repetitions, such as "scorch or shear the infant's corpse",¹¹⁸⁴ "(spilled or effused) blood",¹¹⁸⁵ "direful, glittering or bloody sword",¹¹⁸⁶ "kill",¹¹⁸⁷ "cruel cut of knife",¹¹⁸⁸ "murder",¹¹⁸⁹ "our child with sword shall straight be slain",¹¹⁹⁰ "death/die".¹¹⁹¹ Although the spectators know that the children are safe, these phrases evoke the murders as if they really occurred. When the mother and children are reunited, audiences may share Grissill's sense of resurrection. Moreover, the presence on stage of several generations of the same family at the beginning (Grissill and her parents) and at the end of the interlude (Janicola, Gautier, Grissill, their children, and Gautier's sister) is also a feature of the folk-drama's use of the cycle of life.¹¹⁹² This pattern enhances children's value and thereby implies England's need of an heir.

1183 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," l. 1256.

1184 *Ibid.*, ll. 1029, 1132.

1185 *Ibid.*, ll. 1067, 1091, 1136, 1144, 1155, 1170, 1394, 1445.

1186 *Ibid.*, ll. 1077, 1094, 1137, 1146.

1187 *Ibid.*, ll. 1087, 1105, 1415.

1188 *Ibid.*, l. 1089.

1189 *Ibid.*, ll. 1077, 1102.

1190 *Ibid.*, ll. 1079, 1115, 1120, 1163, 1168, 1408, 1416.

1191 *Ibid.*, ll. 1106, 1123, 1158, 1386, 1398, 1415, 1420, 1446.

1192 For a discussion of how Greek and English folk-plays' use of the cycle of life influenced medieval moralities and Tudor drama, see Peter Happé, "The Vice and the Folk-Drama," *Folklore* 75, no. 3 (1964): especially pp. 166 and 88.

Plays portraying virtuous heroines mediate the vice's influence on them via another male character who is eventually punished. However, in *Patient Grisill*, this male character (Gautier) remains unpunished. A similar problem appears in *Appius and Virginia*. Virginia is killed by her father to prevent Appius, influenced by the vice figure Haphazard, from raping her. Although her honour is restored (i.e. Appius commits suicide in prison and Haphazard is hanged by Virginia's father), "the Father, who actually performs the killing [of his own daughter], becomes a triumphant figure of retribution".¹¹⁹³ Since the play is based on a Roman story recorded by Livy, "a tension naturally arises between the ritual sequence of the morality plot... and the facts of the 'fable'".¹¹⁹⁴ The same applies to *Patient Grissill*: the conventional facts of her story prevent Gautier from being punished.

However, the play does not treat Gautier as the vice's only instrument to ruin Grissill: he is also a hero-victim morally corrupted by Politic Persuasion as husband and ruler. Politic Persuasion's first intention is to become Gautier's advisor and manipulate him into "obstinate, stubborn and forward"¹¹⁹⁵ behaviour. The vice, like the German *Eheteufels*, tries but fails to convince Gautier not to marry, a failure possibly also resulting from tensions between the morality plot and the "facts of the 'fable'". However, another explanation emerges if we consider that Gautier evolves according to the innocence/fall/redemption pattern. Gautier's courtiers are named after virtues: Fidence, Reason, and Sobriety. Critics have argued that they do not act according to their names. It is true that they do not introduce themselves by mentioning their name and purpose, in contrast to the other virtues, Patience and Constancy; nor are their names ever said by other characters. However, given the play's publication around 1564–66, their names were accessible to Elizabethan readers. As for theatrical audiences, a character list may have reached spectators, since character lists sometimes accompanied printed arguments and were distributed like programmes nowadays.¹¹⁹⁶ In any case, the courtiers behave like virtues. While they are present, Politic Persuasion has no influence on the marquis: he fails to convince Gautier not to marry and that Grissill is not worth marrying. In contrast, when Politic Persuasion is alone with Gautier, the vice can manipulate him, and this prompts Griselda's trials. During the testing plot, Gautier's courtiers disappear and only Reason and Sobriety return to accompany Grissill to her father, showing their disapprobation of

1193 Potter, *The English Morality Play*, p. 121.

1194 *Ibid.*

1195 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," l. 136.

1196 Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 6, and chapter 5.

the marquis's action by lamenting her misery. Fidence's name explains his absence: since he represents fidelity, he cannot remain faithful to Gautier and express disapproving grief for Grissill's misfortune. In other words, once Politic Persuasion starts influencing Gautier, the virtue courtiers desert him; and Sobriety and Reason shift their virtuous support from Gautier to Grissill.

Gautier's moral evolution as a ruler almost entirely follows the innocence/fall/redemption pattern. While he listens to his virtue courtiers, he remains in a state of innocence following Christian principles. He disregards marriage because, according to St. Paul, virginity is holier, yet in order to behave as a benevolent and attentive marquis, he quickly yields to his courtiers' petition for marriage.¹¹⁹⁷

Once the virtue courtiers disappear, the vice's influence is immediate. Gautier enters merrily singing his wife's virtue and daughter's birth. When he hears Politic Persuasion's cruel plan to test Grissill, he instantly agrees to carry it out and changes his joyful countenance for a grim face. Gautier's behaviour is then indirectly depicted as cruel, tyrannical, and sinful. Although Gautier blames his lords for forcing him into exile if he does not kill his daughter, spectators know that the "ruthless hearts, which her to kill, do cruelly accord",¹¹⁹⁸ are actually Gautier's. Likewise, although the child is not taken away from Grissill's arms but from the Nurse's, when she reminds Diligence, the servant who comes for the babies, that he is about to commit "murder"¹¹⁹⁹ and sin, the murderer and sinner is Gautier, who is present throughout the scene. Divine prohibition of murder has no effect, so the Nurse evokes Nature's law, implying that the marquis is worse than fierce and wild animals, which protect their offspring from death ("The ravenous ramping lion will her whelps from danger save. / The savage bear . . . will . . . / often lick and cherish them").¹²⁰⁰ Even self-sacrifice—the Nurse offers to leave the country with the little girl—does not change Gautier's mind. When Diligence comes to take Grissill's son, even though they are this time alone on stage, the Nurse claims that he will "slay an innocent",¹²⁰¹ indirectly equating Gautier with Herod, who was responsible for the Massacre of the Innocents.¹²⁰² These accusations attest to Gautier's fall, moral corruption, and tyranny: he has no reason for cruelly manipulating Grissill other than satisfying the vicious curiosity that Politic Persuasion managed to plant in his mind. In addition, even if

1197 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," ll. 170–72.

1198 *Ibid.*, l. 1089.

1199 *Ibid.*, l. 1102.

1200 *Ibid.*, ll. 1126–1128.

1201 *Ibid.*, l. 1408.

1202 Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, p. 190.

the marquis does not actually murder his own children, the Nurse's qualification of his behaviour as worse than beast-like seems to revive Boccaccio's "matta bestialità" and in even more condemning terms echoes Aquinas's comparison of tyrants with ruthless beasts:

Nec est mirum, quia homo absque ratione secundum animae suae libidinem praesidens nihil differt a bestia, unde Salomon: leo rugiens et ursus esuriens princeps impius super populum pauperem; et ideo a tyrannis se abscondunt homines sicut a crudelibus bestiis, idemque videtur tyranno subiici, et bestiae saevienti substerni.¹²⁰³

The redemption part of the pattern is, however, never fully enacted. When Gautier commands Grissill to return all her clothes and jewellery, she summarises the adversities she has undergone at his hands. Her pathetic discourse almost redeems Gautier: he feels ashamed ("this fact will me reward with shame")¹²⁰⁴ and acknowledges that he is committing a "sin".¹²⁰⁵ Grissill influences Gautier like a redemptive virtue figure, but this affects him only temporarily: Politic Persuasion intervenes to pressure Gautier into completing his plan. Although the vice then disappears, Gautier never again confesses any sin nor shame for his cruelty. His tyranny goes unpunished and unredeemed.

Gautier functions as a negative example of a despotic ruler, while Grissill and the Nurse are positive examples of rightful government and remedy against tyranny. Early in the play, Grissill's mother educates her daughter to be a peacemaker: she advises Grissill, "Be not pickthank, seek not the fruits of dis-sention, / Be rather a peacemaker to banish contention".¹²⁰⁶ These recommendations concern married life. Grissill also applies them in a political context when Gautier feigns his lords' and commons' dissatisfaction with his marriage, because she thinks that her leaving will "end this conceived strife",¹²⁰⁷ or in other words, resolve a tension within the government. Gautier and his courtiers praise her wisdom and advice: Reason admires "wisdom's obsequies [i.e. ready compliance]"¹²⁰⁸ in her; Sobriety her "courteous facts [i.e. deeds]"¹²⁰⁹; and Gautier her display of "wisdom's art"¹²¹⁰ and her "counsel grave".¹²¹¹ Before her

1203 Aquinas, *De Regno*: Book 1, ch. 4, §29.

1204 Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," l. 1550.

1205 *Ibid.*, l. 1559.

1206 *Ibid.*, ll. 306–07.

1207 *Ibid.*, l. 1545.

1208 *Ibid.*, l. 890.

1209 *Ibid.*, l. 893.

1210 *Ibid.*, l. 958.

1211 *Ibid.*, l. 974.

marriage, Grissill is her parents' provider, clothing, and feeding them. Although she owes her father obedience, she also takes responsibility for their well-being, just as a king obeys God while ensuring his kingdom's welfare. In addition, by almost redeeming Gautier, she shows that patience may cure tyranny. Grissill therefore possesses qualities essential for rulers as well as wives.

The Nurse's argument against infanticide offers the means to counter tyranny and suggests how to govern lawfully: she invokes the Scriptures, Nature's law, and self-sacrifice against tyrannical cruelty in her indication of the (concepts/notions) teachings kings should bear in mind to avoid moral corruption. However, the Nurse fails to convince anyone. The first debate between Diligence and the Nurse about Grissill's daughter finishes offstage, as if Phillip was unwilling to prove her wrong within the audience's sight; while Diligence cuts short the discussion about Grissill's son by grabbing him and leaving the scene. The tension between the tale and the play's political purpose undermines the Nurse's argument. Moreover, while her discourse underlines Gautier's corruption, it also highlights Grissill's passive compliance and therefore her complicity in child murder.¹²¹² Consequently, the Nurse promotes the value of children in the lifecycle pattern, but her role in Gautier's fall in the morality pattern compromises Grissill's exemplarity as a patient figure and ruler. Phillip tries to correct the tension between the Nurse's argumentative verve and Grissill's passivity: the Nurse praises Grissill's patience after Diligence takes her son.¹²¹³ However, Grissill is absent from the stage when her second child disappears, and she is not seen either yielding or fighting for him.

Gautier's negative example of despotism is ambiguous because his sins remain unacknowledged and unpunished. Yet, he participates in restoring Grissill's honour and social status and, by revealing the truth about his supposedly dead children, "resurrects" them. Grissill's exemplarity through her patience and good government is jeopardised by the Nurse's argument against infanticide. Finally, the Nurse's means to fight tyranny are made ineffective by the tale behind the play.

One could therefore wonder about Elizabeth's response to such an interlude. Although we have no evidence that Elizabeth saw *Patient Grissill*, the epilogue, which wishes her a long life, indicates that the interlude was destined for court performance. In Elizabeth's November 1566 speech to parliament on marriage and succession issues, she paradoxically asserts her sovereign will through an implied comparison between herself and Griselda: "I am your

¹²¹² Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, p. 189.

¹²¹³ Phillip, "Patient and Meek Grissill," l. 1449.

anointed Queen. I will never be by violence constrained to do anything. I thank God I am indeed endued with such qualities that if I were turned out of the realm in my petticoat I were able to live in any place of Christendom”.¹²¹⁴ Elizabeth reinterprets her symbolic marriage with England as Walter and Griselda’s marriage, such that if her Walter-like subjects were to banish her from the kingdom, she would, like Griselda in her smock, endure it with Christian patience. She thereby underlines her preceding accusation to the House of Commons of exercising tyranny upon her (“by violence constrained to do anything”) and highlights their treachery. Similarly, Phillip’s Grissill believes she must return to her father because of the lords’ and commons’ pressure upon her husband, referring to this as a “banishment”.¹²¹⁵ Elizabeth’s analogy may also imply that if she names a successor, he might conspire against her and force her into exile. Moreover, Elizabeth perhaps fears that if she marries, her husband would treat her like Griselda. Elizabeth clearly considers that Griselda’s story does not encourage marriage. However, she recognises the tale’s warning against tyranny and uses it against her parliament. Elizabeth also envisages Griselda’s heroic steadfastness, which she herself possesses, as a valuable quality in a queen. Although Elizabeth stops the analogy after her imaginary banishment from England, Griselda’s heroic steadfastness implies that if Elizabeth were to suffer tyranny from her parliament or her future husband, she would be courageous enough to sustain it and would rise again, just as Griselda was restored marquise at the end of the tale.

The other English play about Griselda that Elizabeth I may have seen towards the end of her reign is Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton’s *Comedy of Patient Grissil* (1599). In spite of the comic exaggeration that characterises the portrayal of most of its characters, the political satirical intentions of the play appear to denounce the corruption of courtly life and, as already evoked, the dangers of falling into tyranny when rulers distrust everyone around them and follow only their own interest.

As previously mentioned, Gwalter puts the courtiers Mario and Lepido to the test already in act 1 scene 2: he tricks them into revealing what they truly think of Grissil by pretending to let her choose one of them as a spouse, which they actively refuse because they despise her humble origins. The marquis also admits in this scene to have already tested Grissil: “when I tride / What vertues were intemped in her brest / My chast hart was swore that she should be my

1214 Leah Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I. Collected Works* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2000), p. 97.

1215 Phillip, “Patient and Meek Grissill,” l. 1544.

bride”.¹²¹⁶ Consequently, when in act 2, scene 2, Gwalter reveals that he has often tested the loyalty of his servant Furio before starting his wife’s ordeals and trying Mario and Lepido in the process to see to what extent their sycophancy will go, he continues what is apparently an old habit of his.

A striking difference between Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton’s play and previous versions of the myth is the altered and rearranged form of Grissil’s trials: she is first treated almost like a slave, forced to serve Furio in a humiliating way; second, she has to witness her family banished from court, as her father, Janicola, and her brother, Laureo, and their servant, Babulo came to court with her when she got married; third, she is repudiated; fourth, Furio is sent to Grissil’s house in the countryside to ask her to surrender her children before she is finally brought back to court, along with her family, so she can help the servants prepare the supposed second wedding. Grissil’s family is therefore also victim to the marquis’s obsession with testing his subjects, albeit collaterally, since Gwalter does not actually intend to try them but rather only to examine Grissil’s reaction as he mistreats her father and brother.

As a result, several critics have offered a psychological analysis of the marquis’s irrepressible urge to control almost everything and everyone.¹²¹⁷ Whereas Cyrus Hoy mildly suggests that the fact that “the Marquess has occasion in the course of the play to test others besides his wife may be intended to make his testing of his wife seem less egregious” and underlines the “dramatists’ efforts to suggest rational motives for behaviour that is essentially irrational”,¹²¹⁸ Vivian Comensoli highlights “[t]he inordinate nature of the testing” and envisages “Gwalter’s cruelty as the manifestation of a dark inner impulse, its catalyst being not only repressive social claims and temporary weakness but also the Marquess’ brutal exploitation of his power”.¹²¹⁹ Similarly, Guildenhuys finds the marquis’s behaviour “sadistic”.¹²²⁰ On the contrary, Pechter observes that “Gwalter himself seems to derive no pleasure from the experience”,¹²²¹ and he rather considers that the marquis constantly tests people around him “more to assuage his own insecurity than anything else”.¹²²² In a similar way, Lee Bliss

1216 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissil,” 1.2.256–58.

1217 See Hoy, “Introductions, Notes and Commentaries.”; Bliss, “Renaissance Griselda.”; Edward Pechter, “Patient Grissil and the Trials of Marriage,” in *The Elizabethan Theatre, XIV*, ed. A. L. Magnusson and C. E. McGee (Toronto: Meany, 1996), p. 91.

1218 Hoy, “Introductions, Notes and Commentaries,” p. 142.

1219 Viviana Comensoli, “Refashioning the Marriage Code: The Patient Grissil of Dekker, Chettle and Haughton,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 25, no. 2 (1989): 207.

1220 Guildenhuys, *A Gathering of Griseldas*, p. 69.

1221 Pechter, “Patient Grissil and the Trials of Marriage,” p. 91, n. 26.

1222 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

labels the marquis's behaviour "staged schizophrenia".¹²²³ I believe, however, that Bliss should have pursued her insightful remark that "[h]umanizing the marquis paradoxically makes him monstrous"¹²²⁴ in order to read Gwalter as a grotesque version of the marquis in the myth, an exaggeration aimed at satirising and deriding tyranny.

Whereas the play certainly exaggerates the marquis's control obsession for the sake of comedy and parody, this may have been prompted by the atmosphere created by contemporary events during the period in which the play was composed and staged at the end of 1599 and beginning of 1600. As Pechter notes, a "normative paranoia may have been particularly intense around the time of *Patient Grissil* which was also the time of Elizabeth's suspicions about Essex (she recalled him from Ireland to London in September 1599)".¹²²⁵ Although Pechter advises against "press[ing] historical specificity too hard",¹²²⁶ the possibility of topical interpretation is not to be dismissed, especially at this precise moment in Elizabeth's reign, in which her political decisions, particularly those concerning Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, came under close scrutiny. Consequently, I wish to argue that not only did the authors intend their play to be a warning against tyranny for their queen, but the audience and later readership may also have envisaged it as such.

Essex's military exploits against the Catholic nations of continental Europe and his fervent defence of Protestantism had made him very popular and a member of the Queen's Privy Council. Since 1598, however, Essex's relationship with Elizabeth became more and more tumultuous. Disagreeing with her political decisions about the way to maintain peace with Spain, as well as who should be nominated new lord deputy for Ireland, Essex left court in the beginning of July 1598 after turning his back on the Queen, breaching royal protocol and violently angering Elizabeth. The details of Essex's political disagreements with the Queen became, to a certain extent, public knowledge through the circulation of two documents in manuscript: the *Apologie*, a text in the form of a letter to Anthony Bacon in which Essex denied wishing that England be continually at war but warned against the potentially dangerous consequences of making peace with Spain, for he considered this nation untrustworthy; and Essex's epistolary exchange from July 1598 with the Lord Keeper, Thomas Egerton. The latter advised Essex to seek reconciliation with the Queen and be more obedient to her, yet Essex refused to show submission

1223 Bliss, "Renaissance Griselda," p. 329.

1224 *Ibid.*

1225 Pechter, "Patient Grissil and the Trials of Marriage," p. 93, n. 27.

1226 *Ibid.*

and questioned the incontestability of royal power as divinely sanctioned. Even though Essex regained the Queen's favour and was eventually designated on 30 December as Lord Lieutenant to lead the campaign in Ireland to crush the Irish resistance against the spreading of English dominion and Protestantism, this last appointment provoked his downfall. England had been at war with Ireland for almost 5 years when Essex arrived in Dublin in April 1599. The Irish opposition soon proved stronger than he expected. As the months went by and the costs of Essex's campaign grew higher, Elizabeth became more and more displeased with her Lord Lieutenant and his management of the Irish issue, which was initially envisaged as a relatively quick military expedition. Anxious to bring the conflict to a resolution and return to London to appease the Queen, Essex signed a truce with the Irish leader Hugh O'Neil, Earl of Tyrone in September and left Ireland despite Elizabeth's orders to stay. Angered by his disobedience and his failure to win the war, the Queen forced him to justify his actions before the Privy Council, which condemned him to house arrest in his York residence on 29 September. Essex's house confinement was publicly legitimised on 29 November until further measures could be taken because of his bad health.¹²²⁷ According to Alexandra Gajda, "[t]he very purpose of the florid performances by senior council luminaries in Star Chamber on 29 November 1599 was to stem a relentless tide of public sympathy for Essex".¹²²⁸ Although he was not officially tried but rather sentenced to house arrest and discharged of public office until 5 June 1600, during the 4 months preceding his trial, various scandals show that he still had the support of the population who disagreed with the Queen and her council's decision to sentence Essex to house imprisonment.¹²²⁹

As a consequence, although another year had to pass, Essex attempted to rebel against the Queen and was charged with treason and sentenced to death in February 1601. Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton were already writing *Patient Grissil* in the end of the autumn of 1599.¹²³⁰ At this time, Essex's case was a virulent issue and remained so even when the performances of the play by the

1227 See Paul E. J. Hammer, "Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565–1601)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008).

1228 Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), p. 201.

1229 See *ibid.*, pp. 202–03; Hammer, "Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565–1601)."

1230 Entries in Philip Henslowe's diary indicate that the playwrights were working on the play from mid-October until end of December 1599 and beginning of January 1600, see Walter W. Greg, ed. *Henslowe's Diary* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904), Fol. 65r, 66v, 67r.

Admiral's Men had started at the Rose Theatre towards the end of January 1600.¹²³¹ Even though *Patient Grissil* does not bear any direct link with the actual events of Essex's falling out of favour, the play's politics suggests, at the very least, that the playwrights had these contemporary events in mind.¹²³²

The comedy does not allude to any war that resembles Essex's campaign in Ireland, but its satirical treatment of tyranny, flattery, the loss of a ruler's favour, and banishment from court does suggest that Essex's downfall, perceived as an injustice by many, functions as a kind of subtext when it comes to the play's alterations and additions to the mythemes concerned with Griselda's testing in this dramatic transposition of the myth.

The particular text that the dramatists may have had in mind while working on their comedy was Essex's letter exchange with Thomas Egerton in July 1598 about his disagreement with Elizabeth's policies for Spain and Ireland, dating from before the campaign in Ireland and written during his absence from court. In answer to Egerton's urge for patience and obedience, Essex is particularly

1231 On January 26th, Henslowe recorded a 20-shilling payment "to geue vnto the tayler to buy a grey gowne for gryssell", which suggests that by the end of January, the play's staging had begun, see *ibid.*, Fol. 67r.. Gajda notes that in January 1600 "the appearance of an engraving of Essex by Thomas Cockson . . . depicting the earl on horseback with the slogan 'Vertues honor Wisdomes valure, Grace seruaunt, Mercies love, Gods elected, Truths beloved, Heavens affected'" participated in "the smouldering ashes of rumour and popular indignation", Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, p. 202.

1232 Whereas no study of Chettle's or Haughton's political engagement in their respective dramatic productions has been conducted, in *The Dragon and the Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker*, Julia Gasper demonstrates that Dekker's "plays provide an extensive commentary on the acts of three successive monarchs during a quarter of a century: they participate energetically in religious-political affairs, attacking, defending, or satirising, and always stirring up support for the Protestant cause at home and abroad" Julia Gasper, *The Dragon and the Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), p. 10. Although she does not analyse *Patient Grissil*, Gasper devotes an entire chapter to Dekker's views on the Essex Rebellion, arguing that *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (written in collaboration with John Webster) about the eponymous rebellion under Mary I's reign can actually be read as a commentary upon the uprising led by Essex in 1601, which transcribes Dekker's criticism of Elizabeth's policy in relation to that particular event of her reign *ibid.*, pp. 44–61. For other studies on Dekker's literary involvement with contemporary politics in other plays and works, see Fredson Bowers, "Essex's Rebellion and Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*," *The Review of English Studies* 3, no. 12 (1952); Phillip Shaw, "The Position of Thomas Dekker in Jacobean Prison Literature," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 62, no. 2 (1947); Susan E. Krantz, "Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in the *Whore of Babylon*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 35, no. 2 (1995); Marta Straznicky, "The End(s) of Discord in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36, no. 2 (1996); Paul Frazer, "Performing Places in Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*," *Philological Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (2010).

virulent against the Queen, vexed that she had not yet asked him to return to court, even though her angry orders for him to leave after his violent and insulting breach of protocol were entirely legitimate and justified. When exactly the letters began to circulate is unknown. However, Joel Swann has recently reconstructed the way they were received by their readership at the time, when Essex was officially confined to house arrest (from 29 November) until his trial in June 1600 and the role they played in representations of Essex's character. It appears from non-autograph manuscript copies of these letters that in most cases they were considered to have been written in 1599 after Essex's return from Ireland rather than in 1598.¹²³³ This recontextualisation process was enabled by the letters' content, which indicates that Essex is not at court but rather in his own residence, and it is vague enough about the reasons for Essex's banishment that it could apply either to Essex's absence from court in 1598 or to his house confinement in the fall of 1599. This change in timeframe in the letters evidently greatly alters what readers believed to be the circumstances of their composition and, consequently, their meaning. For the readership who might have envisaged Essex writing this letter during the house arrest after his campaign in Ireland, his complaint about receiving "violent and unseasonable storms com[ing] from above", while he "expect[ed] a harvest of [his] careful and painful labors",¹²³⁴ indicates that Essex expresses his disappointment at the fact that Elizabeth does not value his military actions or his temporary peace settlement. Essex thus appears either as a traitor unlawfully portraying his queen as a tyrant and questioning her judgment (as his enemies at court and his judges accused him of during his trial in June 1600)¹²³⁵ or as the pitiful victim of an unjust ruler. In any case, he is not the bold aristocrat of the original circumstances, hurt in his pride for not being called back to court as the Queen had already done in the past after similar, albeit less violent, disagreements.

There is no way to ascertain how much was known about these letters through the English populace, but aside from copyists and readers, even illiterate people may have had friends read them aloud or overheard conversations

1233 Some copies are not dated and only present circumstantial indications, such as "being in resrainte", which "may refer to Essex's imprisonment under Egerton's guard in October 1599 following his return from Ireland", or "on his returne from Ireland". Others were variously dated by their copyists in the fall of 1599, one manuscript even gives precise dates: 12 October 1599 for Egerton's letter to Essex and 14 October for the latter's reply. See Joel Swann, "The Second Earl of Essex's 'Great Quarrel' and its Letters," *Lives and Letters* 4, no. 1 (2012): 138.

1234 Walter Bouchier Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1853), pp. 499–500.

1235 See Swann, "The Second Earl of Essex's 'Great Quarrel' and its Letters," pp. 141–42.

about Essex and his epistles. In any case, given his popularity, it can be assumed that after his house arrest was made official and public in late November 1599, his confinement and how he must have felt about it must have been a frequent topic of discussion and debate, in which the content of the letter exchange between Egerton and Devereux may have been evoked. As a result, most likely the educated audience members of *Patient Grissil*, and potentially also the groundlings, could have drawn parallels between Essex's sentiment of injustice and incomprehension, as expressed in his letter, and the characters in the play who manifest their feeling that the marquis treats them inhumanely without reason.

Grissil is obviously the first and main victim of her husband's unjustified testing, but she never rebels. As if she were blind to her husband's abuses, Grissil always defends him and her only accusation of tyranny is to Gwalter's courtiers, Mario and Lepido ("Thus tyranny oppresseth innocence, / Thy looks seeme heavy, but thy heart is light, / For villaines laugh when wrong oppresseth right").¹²³⁶ Although Grissil's accusations indirectly blame Gwalter, like the Nurse's protests against Diligence in Phillip's play, she can hardly be associated with Essex, because she never questions the marquis. Her brother, Laureo, on the other hand, displays a spirited nature, an outspokenness, and hurt pride at being banished from court, which resemble the sentiments shown by Essex in his letter to Egerton, even without verbal parallels.

As already mentioned, when Gwalter decides to marry Grissil, he invites her father, brother, and servant to come to live at court like noblemen in spite of their humble origins. After a while—and for no apparent reason other than his grotesque and constant need to try the loyalty of the people around him, be they servants, courtiers, or family members—he starts to test his wife simply because his "bosome [is] burnt vp with desires, / To trie . . . *Grissils* patience".¹²³⁷ In other words, he seems possessed by a tyrant's lust to assuage his personal curiosity, even at the expense of his next of kin or his subjects. As already mentioned, changing the usual pattern of the trials, Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton present the marquis first humiliating his wife and treating her worse than a servant. Apparently short of ideas to test Grissil further, Gwalter asks Mario and Lepido for advice, fully aware that they are unhappy about his hypogamous marriage, which in their opinion sullies his name and honour.¹²³⁸ Arguing that his "subiects doe repine at nothing more, / Then to behold *Ianicola* . . . / And

1236 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 4.1.191–93.

1237 *Ibid.*, 2.2.20–21.

1238 See *ibid.*, 1.2.275–80.

[Grissil's] base brother lifted vp so high", Mario and Lepido suggest to "banish them from Court".¹²³⁹ Feigning happiness for the idea, Gwalter gives orders to send Janicola, Laureo, and Babulo away, seemingly succumbing to his courtier's influence. Thus, the banishment of Grissil's family appears to them utterly unjustified and pure tyranny.

As the marquis's servant, Furio announces to Janicola, Laureo, and Babulo that they need to leave without giving any explanation or reason. Laureo questions the marquis's decision using the verb "disgrace", implying that they were favourites and lost this privileged status of political influence: "What haue wee done, wee must bee thus disgraced?".¹²⁴⁰ Laureo's question, apart from underlying his incomprehension, is almost rhetorical, since his family has done virtually nothing to deserve such treatment. Similarly, but in a much more emphatic and dramatic way than Laureo, Essex complains to Egerton, "I give no cause to take so much as Fimbria's complaint against me, for I did *totum telum corpore recipere*".¹²⁴¹ Quoting Cicero's famous defence of Sextus Roscius of Ameria, who was unjustly accused of parricide, Essex portrays himself as Scaevola Pontifex, whom Fimbria attempted to murder (according to Cicero) and indirectly as Sextus Roscius. In other words, at the same time as Essex compares his case to a victim of attempted assassination and a victim of unjust murder accusations, he also suggests that Elizabeth is Fimbria, Sextus's wrongful accuser, or in other words, a tyrant.

Although Laureo does not offer much resistance at the moment of his banishment, he finds it difficult to bear his misfortune with patience once in the countryside. Whereas his father displays acceptance of his lot ("The *Marquesse* hath to been mercifull, / In sending me from Courtly delicates, / To taste the quiet of thie country life"),¹²⁴² Laureo bitterly disagrees: "Call him not mercifull, his tyranny / Exceedes the most inhumaine".¹²⁴³ Whereas Egerton advised Essex "to yield and submit to [his] sovereign, between whom and [him] there can be no proportion of duty" and "to conquer himself, which is the height of all true valor and fortitude",¹²⁴⁴ Janicola exhorts his son to calm down:

Peace my son,
I thought by learning thou hadst been made wise,
But I perceive it puffeth vp thy soule,

1239 Ibid., 2.2.168–71.

1240 Ibid., 3.1.22.

1241 Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 1, p. 501.

1242 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 4.2.3–5.

1243 Ibid., 4.2.6–7.

1244 Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 1, p. 198.

Thou takst a pleasure to be counted iust,
 And kicke against the faults of mighty men:
 Oh tis vaine. . .¹²⁴⁵

However, when Egerton “endorses a doctrine of monarchical power akin to that held by Elizabeth herself, of the perpetually irresistible authority of the prince” and makes “a statement of divinely ordained descending power”,¹²⁴⁶ Janicola, on the contrary, insists on the vanity of attempting to obtain justice because of the power inequality in the fight (“Those that doe strive to iustle with the great, / Are certaine to be bruz’d, or soon to breake”),¹²⁴⁷ not because of the unequal “proportion of duty” between subject and sovereign. Janicola’s advice concerns self-preservation and humble acceptance of one’s power limitations to counter the injustice of “the great”, whereas Egerton reminds Essex that obedience to a sovereign is due in virtue of “policy, duty and religion”, calling to his political and moral sense of duty.¹²⁴⁸ However, they both see through the young men’s anger and try to humble down their “puff’d up” spirit.

The soothing effect of Janicola’s words does not last long: as soon as Grissil is banished from court in her turn, Laureo lets his indignation flow again: “Oh father now forswear all patience, / *Grissil* comes home to you in poore array, / *Grissill* is made a drudge, a cast-away”.¹²⁴⁹ As Furio then comes to take Grissil’s babies, Laureo’s outrage and readiness to use force if necessary to defend his nephew (“He shall not hale them thus, keep them perforce, / This salue looks on them with a murdering eye”¹²⁵⁰) indicate that rebellion could breed were it not for Grissil, who willingly hands over her children to Furio.

However, as the testing reaches its end, the dominant feeling that the audience is left with is, along with Janicola’s tears of helplessness, poor people’s powerlessness in the face of tyranny: as Laureo tells Babulo, “The *Marquesse* is the rich deuouring Crane, / That makes vs lesse then *Pigmies*, worse then wormes”.¹²⁵¹ As if to confirm Laureo’s accusation, immediately after this, Grissil and her family are forced to go back to court to help prepare Gwalter’s supposed second wedding. However, at the same time that Laureo recognises the power imbalance between the marquis and his family, he continues to resist

1245 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 4.2.7–12.

1246 Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, p. 160.

1247 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 4.2.17–18.

1248 Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 1, p. 498.

1249 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 4.2.29–31.

1250 *Ibid.*, 4.2.144–45.

1251 *Ibid.*, 5.1.55–56.

verbally. As the marquis makes Janicola, Grissil, Babulo, and Laureo carry coal and wood, one of the meanest activities a servant may perform and certainly unfit for an old man like Grissil's father, Laureo not only protests and refuses to continue but is ready to be imprisoned if this is the price to pay ("Lodge me in dungeons, I will still exclaime, / On *Gwalters* cursed acts and hated name").¹²⁵² Similarly, in his letter, Essex admits that he "owe[s] to Her Majesty the duty of an Earl and Lord Marshal of England", but draws a line at being treated like a slave: "I have been content to do her Majesty the service of a clerk, but can never serve her as a villain or slave".¹²⁵³

In the end, of course, Gwalter reveals that his tyranny was only feigned to teach Grissil to be patient, and he eternally praises her name as she overcomes all the tests. Nonetheless, this is not sufficient to exonerate him. Throughout, the play insists on the theatricality of courtly life and courtly schemes. While Gwalter, in numerous asides, signals what he really thinks and reveals his true intentions and thereby uncovers his extremely manipulative nature, the testing appears as a theatrical, grotesque performance. However, this dramatic device aimed at justifying the marquis tyrannical behaviour actually underlines his tyranny. The marquis's testing has consequences for Grissil and her family; and Gwalter knows it. As the marquis is about to try Grissil, he describes to his servant Furio how he intends to make her believe that he is angry with her:

... Ile put on
 A wrinkled forehead, and turne both mine eyes
 Into two balles of fire, and claspe my hand
 Like to a mace of Iron, to threaten death.
 ...
 ... all my words,
 Shall smack of wormewood, all my deeds of gall
 ...
 Yonder she comes: on goes this maske of frownes.¹²⁵⁴

Gwalter's description alludes in grotesque terms not only to facial expression but also to tone, attitude, and actions, as well as drawing attention to the fact that he will be acting by mentioning the actor's attribute by excellence, the "maske". In addition, as in Sachs's and Mauritius's plays, at the end of the first two parts of the testing (after he banishes Grissil's family and after he repudiates her), Gwalter reminds the audience in monologues addressed to them that

¹²⁵² Ibid., 5.2.7–8.

¹²⁵³ Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 1, p. 501.

¹²⁵⁴ Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, "Patient Grissill," 2.2.21–32.

he is only trying his wife, implying that he fakes his ill-temper and does not mean to be unjust. The theatricality is brought almost to the level of a play-within-the-play when Gwalter disguises himself as a basket maker in order to observe Grissil surrendering her children to Furio and confirm that his servant follows his orders to the letter. The marquis pushes the game close to schizophrenia as he sides with Grissil's family against Furio, trying to prevent him from taking the baby twins and accusing himself of being an iniquitous ruler: "The *Marquesse* is a tyrant and does wrong".¹²⁵⁵ Gwalter's indirect confession that he is hurting Grissil and he is "wrong" echoes previous schizophrenic asides in which he admits he torments his children and wife, preventing her from nursing their twins before her repudiation: "I shall spend childish teares: true teares indeed, / That thus I wrong my babes and make her [i.e. Grissil] bleede"; "Poor babes I weep to see what wrong I doe".¹²⁵⁶ Gwalter even acts upon his remorse at the end of the scene in which Furio comes to take away the twins, because he drops a purse of gold to provide for Grissil and her family for the years to come, thereby indicating that he realises that banishing first Janicola, Laureo, Babulo, and later his wife from court places them in a precarious situation. As a result, the testing appears as a grotesque and nonsensical relentless pursuit, which even the marquis himself considers unjust.

Apart from admitting he is wrong to hurt his wife, another technique the marquis employs to alleviate his guilt is to lay the blame on others, at least partially. Throughout the trials, the marquis involves Mario and Lepido, asking them for advice and giving them orders to mistreat Grissil ("... frowne vpon her when she smiles, / ... scorne her, call her beggers brat, / Torment her with your looks, your words, your deedes").¹²⁵⁷ As Gwalter actually follows Mario's advice to banish his wife's family from court, he acts as if he is listening to their flattering arguments, but what he is really doing is pretending to agree with them to see how far they are willing to humiliate Grissil. While he thus makes them his accomplices, Gwalter tries to convince the audience that Mario and Lepido are more to blame than he is:

... oh these times, these impious times,
 How swift is mischief? with what nimble feete
 Doth enuy gallop to doe iniury?
 They [i.e. Mario and Lepido] both confesse my *Grissils* innocence,
 They both admire her wondrous patience,
 Yet in their malice and to flatter me,

¹²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.2.170.

¹²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.1.69–70; 4.1.128.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.2.157–60.

Head-long they run to this impiety.
 Oh whats this world, but a confused throng
 Of fooles and mad men, crowding in a thrust
 To shoulder out the wise, trip downe the iust.¹²⁵⁸

By using generalisations and placing the fault on the “spirit of the times”, which he believes to be “mischief” and “enuy”, Gwalter tries to diminish his role and the fact that Lepido and Mario act to “flatter” him as much as to hurt Grissil, hiding behind platitudes concerning the surrounding corruption and omitting his active participation in it. The marquis thus underlines his courtier’s readiness to commit injustice in order to conceal the fact that he actually manipulates them and exploits their sycophantic nature in order to torment his wife.

When Gwalter eventually restores Grissil as his wife and marquise and her family as members of the court, he also banishes Mario and Lepido. As a result, Laureo feels compelled to repent for having thought ill of the marquis:

Pardon me my gracious Lord, for now I see,
 That Schollers with weake eyes, pore on their books,
 But want true soules to iudge on Maiestie:
 None else but Kings can know the hearts of Kings,
 Hence forth my pride shall fly with humbler wings.¹²⁵⁹

However, even as Laureo admits that he wrongfully and too hastily condemned Gwalter, the voices that throughout the play underline the marquis’s tyranny are hardly forgotten by the end of the performance, especially given that Gwalter is not sanctioned for playing with his subject’s lives. As Bliss remarks, because “we have been asked to identify with the social rebels”, Laureo’s admission in the final scene that he was vain and misjudged Gwalter “can[not] erase what the play has staged”. “The old hierarchies have been for too much of the play openly contested”, she further argues, so the “happy ending provides generic but not ideological closure”.¹²⁶⁰ As a result, *Patient Grissil* constructs an image of courtly life as a theatre in which hypocrisy and manipulation are the norm; and tyranny appears as the excessive use of dissimulation techniques for personal interest. Divinely ordained sovereignty in this picture seems to be questioned, much like in Essex’s letter:

¹²⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.1.150–59.

¹²⁵⁹ Ibid., 5.2.214–18.

¹²⁶⁰ Bliss, “Renaissance Griselda,” p. 338.

What, cannot princes err? Cannot subjects receive wrong? Is an earthly power or authority infinite? Pardon me, pardon me, my good Lord, I can never subscribe to these principles. Let Solomon's fool laugh when he is stricken; let those that mean to make their profit of princes shew to have no sense of prince's injuries; let them acknowledge an infinite absoluteness on earth, that do not believe in an absolute infiniteness in heaven. As for me, I have received wrong, and feel it.¹²⁶¹

Consequently, when Sir Owen says in his clumsy epilogue that there may be people in the audience who “haue crabbed husbands and cannot mend them, as *Grissils* had”,¹²⁶² instead of applauding with good cheer, as the Welsh knight bids them to, it is possible that they would rather, like Essex, be given “license to use a crabbed style” to complain about their “crabbed fortune”.¹²⁶³

In Spain, tyranny and more particularly regicide were also debated issues. Although Lope de Vega could be critical of tyrannical ruler figures in some of his *comedias* and may even invite rebellion (although it should be noted that it is never against the king himself, who usually restores the social order at the end of his plays), *El ejemplo de casadas* is not one of these. Even if his Gualtieri figure, Count Enrico of Moncada, is decried by several characters in the play for treating his wife, Laurencia, cruelly, Lope redeems Enrico and portrays him as making amends for himself, his spouse, and his people. Tyranny thus appears as not always ineluctable but as an amorality that can also be momentary and therefore is redeemable. As such, the play offers a vision of sin atonement, which is typically catholic, for it is achieved through the performance of the sacrament of penance, a sacrament that Protestants rejected. Lope's resulting portrayal of the marquis figure is less ambiguous and, as we shall see, part of the play's design for self-promotion sought the support of the Moncada family, one of the most influential aristocratic houses in Spain at the time.

In this play, Lope condenses the testing, as the taking away of the children and the repudiation occur all in one day during the second Act. Nonetheless, *El ejemplo* stages a version closer to the usual configuration of the trials than *Patient Grissil*. Laurencia does not have twins but rather gives birth to a daughter and, a year later, to a son. They are supposedly killed one after the other, but only a couple of hours actually elapse between each child being taken from their mother and Laurencia's repudiation.

This condensation of events, which in previous versions usually lasts at least 6 years, is not so much a technique to conform with the classical unity of

1261 Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 1, pp. 501–02.

1262 Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton, “Patient Grissill,” 5.2.6–7.

1263 Devereux, *Lives and letters of the Devereux, earls of Essex*, 1, p. 502.

time, which the play completely disregards, but rather as a way to render the testing more plausible and present it as a sudden whim of a shorter duration. Whereas for Laurencia, her repudiation lasts 10 to 12 or 13 years,¹²⁶⁴ from Enrico's perspective, only a day passes, and not the usual 12 years, from deciding to take away her daughter until he finally tries Laurencia by sending her back to her father.¹²⁶⁵ In addition, Lope's characterisation of the count throughout the first act as an insecure man who is almost insanely anxious about getting married because of the threat to his honour marriage implies, anticipates, and prepares the audience for Enrico's doubts about his wife's virtues. This is comparable with Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's play in which Grissil's testing appears a continuation of Gwalter's habit of distrusting his entourage and devising plots to ensure their loyalty. Consequently, Enrico's wish to verify whether or not his wife feigns her humbleness ("He visto tanta humildad / en Laurencia que he querido / certificar si es fingido")¹²⁶⁶ can be read as a relapse into his previous state of irrational fear that women can only ruin men's honour:

Temí el estado en que me vi, Tibaldo,
Escogí a la mujer que tengo humilde,
y ver que no la muda el alto estado
me ha puesto procurar saber del todo
de aquella condición heroica el centro.¹²⁶⁷

Thus, the condensation of the trials participates in the characterisation of the count as a more humane figure than Boccaccio's or Petrarch's marquis, coherently

1264 The play does not give any clear indication (other than "años ha", v. 2353) of time and of how long Laurencia stays with her father until Enrico calls her back to prepare his supposed second wedding. However, her daughter must be at least 12 years old, which is the average marriageable age among the nobility in the Middle Ages and early modern period, in order to appear as a plausible bride. Given that her daughter was one when she was taken away from her mother, and the latter was repudiated on the same day, Laurencia is likely to have spent at least 11 years in the countryside until she is finally asked to come back to court.

1265 Although Boccaccio does not provide clear time indications, most versions more or less closely follow Petrarch, who mentions that after Griseldis's daughter is taken away, 4 years elapse before she gives birth to a son, who is taken away when he is weaned at around 2 years old. In addition, 12 years pass between the moment of the daughter's birth and Griseldis's repudiation; and in the absence of clear indications, it seems fair to estimate that Griseldis remains in the countryside only a couple of weeks (a month at the most) to give time for the marquis's sister in Bologna to receive her brother's letters asking her to bring back his children to Saluzzo and for them to arrive to celebrate the supposed second wedding.

1266 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 1283–85.

1267 *Ibid.*, vv. 1814–18.

continuing the portrayal of Enrico as a man overcome and led astray by his masculine anxieties, a picture frequently staged in the very popular genre of Spanish honour drama.

Aside from Enrico's humanisation, the *comedia* also demonstrates harsher and harsher criticism of his actions, especially by his chamberlain and accomplice Tibaldo, who knows why and how the count tries his wife. Tibaldo's awareness of the finality of the object (*finis operis*) and Enrico's actions in testing Laurencia's obedience, the circumstances after 2 years of marriage, and the irreproachable behaviour directed towards Laurencia by pretending to have her children killed and sending her away, as well as his intentions (*finis operantis*) to put his anxieties at rest and prove to the world that she is a perfect wife, makes Tibaldo not only a witness but an ideal judge of the morality of the trials. This means that it is possible for Tibaldo to assess each of the three *fontes moralitatis* through Enrico, according to which scholastic doctrine can evaluate human actions. Even though Enrico's intentions aim to, and eventually do, result in good for Laurencia and the count's subjects, the finality of his actions and especially their circumstances seriously undermine the ultimate goodness of Enrico's actions, which as a result qualify as evil. Consequently, as Tibaldo depicts the count as insensitive, inhumane, and beast-like, recalling Boccaccio's "matta bestialità", the audience would most likely be inclined to agree with him. As the chamberlain learns about his lord's plan to test his wife, he suggests in an aside that Enrico is out of his mind ("¡Estrañas quimeras son!").¹²⁶⁸ The fact that Tibaldo fears to advise his lord against trying Laurencia ("No le puedo replicar, / aunque ¡por Dios que me pesa!")¹²⁶⁹ indicates that Enrico no longer listens to his courtiers and therefore begins to act like a tyrant. Tibaldo, nonetheless, attempts several times to stop the count. After taking away Laurencia's daughter, Tibaldo timidly tries to reason with Enrico, but the latter stops him abruptly before he can say anything more than "señor".¹²⁷⁰ When it comes to Griselda's son, Tibaldo starts arguing more seriously: "Señor, vuélvele el niño, que esto basta / para saber si es obediente y casta".¹²⁷¹ As Enrico still does not listen, instead of simply begging the count to give up, Tibaldo questions his lord's motivations (¿Qué procuras / hacer de una mujer? ... / ¿Qué quimeras fabricas en su ánimo? / ¿Para qué quieres tantas perfecciones?)¹²⁷² and expresses his fears that the Count might kill Laurencia

1268 Ibid., v. 1313.

1269 Ibid., vv. 1310–11.

1270 Ibid., v. 1415.

1271 Ibid., vv. 1802–03.

1272 Ibid., vv. 1809–13.

(“Tanto puedes probarla que la mates”)¹²⁷³ but to no avail. Tibaldo’s fruitless intervention underlines the fact that Enrico’s obstinacy has turned him into a cruel man. As he publically repudiates Laurencia, not only Tibaldo but also Floriano and Celio condemn Enrico’s decision in terms of emphasising his insensitivity and beast-like attitude:

FLORIANO: ¿A quién no le rompe el alma
la mujer más obediente
...?

No sé cómo puede el Conde
No sé cómo el Conde puede,
Tibaldo, sufrir el llanto.

TIBALDO: ¡Es fiera, es mármol, es nieve!

CELIO: Esperiencias tan sangrientas,
será poco que le cuesten
la vida.¹²⁷⁴

Whereas in most preceding versions, critiques of the marquis’s behaviour and decisions stops after the repudiation, in a similar way to how Laureo in *Patient Grisil* continues to complain about Gwalter by comparing him to a crane attacking defenceless pigmies, in the final act, several characters in Lope’s play keep on denouncing the tyranny of Enrico’s actions while the repudiated Laurencia lives again with her father. Fenisa, Laurencia’s friend and chambermaid who went back with her to the countryside, laments in the manner of a Greek chorus over Laurencia’s misfortunes, considering that Enrico is a “tirano enemigo” and underlines his inhumanity by comparing him to a deadly mythical monster (“fiero basilisco”).¹²⁷⁵ In addition, in a scene of Lope’s invention, the Prince of Bearn’s servant, Anselmo, tries to convince his lord to marry Laurencia by describing her ordeals in a way that condemns Enrico’s abuses, defining them as tyrannical insanities (“... tirano / que tales locuras hace”).¹²⁷⁶

However, Enrico’s bestial behaviour is not inherent to his nature but rather a momentary immorality. In the course of this same act, the Count starts to make amends, thereby changing his image from that of a tyrant into that of a true Christian ruler, unlike any other marquis figure in the medieval and early modern realisations of the myth. To compensate for Enrico’s cruelty, Lope presents him leaving for Jerusalem on a Holy Crusade. This redeeming action engages with the question of the permanence of individuals’ propensity to sin

¹²⁷³ Ibid., v. 1821.

¹²⁷⁴ Ibid., vv. 1920–30.

¹²⁷⁵ Ibid., vv. 2137, 43.

¹²⁷⁶ Ibid., vv. 2375–76.

and capacity for change, namely to improve one's own nature by abandoning vice and leading a virtuous life.

As we have seen, Enrico is a morally condemnable ruler. His case may seem to be one of venial sin, given that he mostly lied. However, he does so repeatedly and not only to his wife but to his subjects as well. These lies threaten the social order, making his behaviour a potential case for mortal sin unless he makes reparation by engaging in penance. According to the Council of Trent, penance consisted of three important acts: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. In a similar way to Boccaccio's and Petrarch's marquis fight against their willingness to cry, Enrico leaves the stage confessing his intention to let his tears flow ("A llorar me voy, Tbaldo")¹²⁷⁷ after Laurencia leaves the court to go back to her father's. Although, these tears could simply indicate compassion for Laurencia's hidden suffering or for his own sorrow at parting from his wife, they may also be a sign of Enrico embarking on the path of contrition, even if he tests Laurencia one last time by asking her to prepare his supposed second wedding. In addition, the count departs for a crusade because he vowed to God that he would do it: "Yo hice voto al cielo, en un peligro / de ir a Jerusalén con mis soldados / no lo he cumplido, y vivo con disgusto".¹²⁷⁸ The circumstances of his promise ("en un peligro") remain unclear and are open for interpretation. While the danger Enrico faced may have been for his earthly body during some military expedition, he may also allude to a danger for his soul, i.e. a sin he repents and wishes to repay by participating in a holy war. The "peligro" could then be to stay in his anxious state, which causes him to lie to his wife, dissimulating and endangering the *bonum communitatis*. Although his courtiers reproach the count for the fact that he leaves them without a successor to embark on a bellicose enterprise during which he may die, Enrico reassures them by revealing that the children he had with Laurencia are still alive ("en lo que toca a daros heredero, / heredero tenéis de algunos años, / que algunos años ha que me case").¹²⁷⁹ He thereby hints about his intention to restore her and his children as legitimate spouse and heirs, respectively. Enrico therefore displays various signs of his willingness to not only make reparation for what he made Laurencia undergo but also to re-establish the social order for his people once he has proved to God his worth and faith as a Christian knight. The count's crusade then seems to be the first step in his attempt to amend his sin by good works, namely by performing the final stage of the sacrament of

1277 Ibid., v. 1952.

1278 Ibid., vv. 2217–19.

1279 Ibid., vv. 2231–33.

penance: satisfaction. By engaging in a holy war, Enrico demonstrates he is willing to sacrifice his life for God if necessary in the same manner as “Christo Jesu, qui pro peccatis nostris satisfacit”.¹²⁸⁰

Even if the play does not show more than these allusions to Enrico’s intention to make reparations, the full extent of his process of contrition and his confession may have occurred offstage. Penance did not need to be public and could be led almost entirely in private. A complete act of contrition, expressing sorrow for one’s sins, and resolving to never commit them again could be made during confession to a priest alone. Indeed, the Council of Trent professed a preference for private over public confession.

Lope also modifies the final trial so as to enhance Laurencia’s unalterable love for her husband in a way that paradoxically diminishes his agency and therefore his cruelty. As Lope introduces the Prince of Bearn’s wedding proposal to Laurencia at the same time as Enrico’s courtier bids her to come back to court to prepare the count’s supposed second wedding, Laurencia’s choice becomes less socially determined than in previous versions. Griselda usually has to decide between refusing to comply with an order from her lord as his subject or to just submit and obey, which leaves her little room for freedom of choice. However, Lope grants Laurencia more entitlement to individual sovereignty: the Prince of Bearn’s offer potentially turns Laurencia into a person of almost equal rank to Enrico by giving her the possibility to become a princess, as opposed to just acting as Enrico’s servant. Thanks to this potential social elevation, her choice becomes less influenced by pressure from societal codes and expectations to obey and more by her feelings towards Enrico. In the process, Laurencia’s agreement to come back to prepare the count’s wedding, as an act of love and voluntary self-abnegation, alters the moral evaluation of Enrico’s demand. His petition can only be judged cruel if Laurencia unwillingly suffers from it. As she voluntarily submits, the pain she feels¹²⁸¹ results from her own freely made decision to endure it rather than from Enrico taking advantage of his higher social position to force her to serve him, thereby causing her unnecessary sorrow. In other words, the circumstances of his last morally disputable action are different from the previous parts of the testing, making it less condemnable.

1280 Council of Trent, Session XIV, Ch. viii.

1281 Laurencia does not remain insensitive to the fact that Enrico supposedly marries another woman, as her monologue just before the bride’s arrival indicates, especially the last verses: “solo pido a Dios me dé / en tantos males paciencia, / que cuando la novia venga, / no sé qué ha de ser de mí / . . . ¡Ay, quiera Dios que ella venga!”, Lope de Vega Carpio, *Parte V*, vv. 2867–72.

To complete his portrayal of the penitent ruler, Lope suggests that Enrico is granted God's reconciliation, i.e. the aim of the sacrament of penance. Not aware yet that Laurencia has accepted his demand, the count states, in terms implying that he would interpret her acceptance as God's doing, that she will: "Espero que hoy el cielo me conceda, / por todas la demás conquistas mías, / hechas en honra del sepulcro santo, / el bien que adoro y que celebro tanto".¹²⁸² As Enrico obtains what he was praying for, the play's ending functions as a sign that the count is back in God's grace. Consequently, whereas Laurencia embodies virtuous constancy, moral fortitude and immutability, Enrico's behavioural fluctuations exemplify redemption and the non-fatal nature of sin.

Aside from the play's propagandistic purposes, as Lope decided to appropriate the myth to turn it into a *comedia genealógica*,¹²⁸³ using the genre in this case to gain favour from the influential Moncada family, the counts and marquises of Aytona, it was even more pressing and necessary to portray Enrico's more human side and ultimate redemption. Lope's praise of the saint-like ancestry in the figure of a Griselda metamorphosed into a Moncada-bride among the first women who contributed to perpetuating the bloodline (i.e. an Eve figure) also implies that her husband, the actual bearer of the family name, appears as an abusive husband, and by extension a tyrant, for most of the play. Thus, as Lope transposed the myth into national historiography, albeit a poetical manoeuvre devoid of historical facts or truth¹²⁸⁴ to turn Griselda into a

1282 *Ibid.*, vv. 2769–72.

1283 Teresa Ferrer Valls defines the genre and its purposes in terms of patronage in Lope's production, as much as plays ordered by patrons as written out of the playwright's own initiative with hope to gain their support in two of her articles: "Lope de Vega y la dramatización de la materia genealógica (I)," in *Teatro cortesano en la España de los Austrias*, ed. José María Díez Borque (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1998); "Lope de Vega y la dramatización de la materia genealógica (II): lecturas de la historia," in *La teatralización de la historia en el Siglo de Oro español, Actas del III Coloquio del Aula-Biblioteca Mira de Amescua*, ed. R. Castilla Perez and M. González Dengra (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2001).

1284 In *comedias genealógicas*, praise of a household and its ancestry, its past, or contemporary achievements was more important than historical accuracy, which Lope often disregarded, sometimes going as far as complete invention as the case of *El ejemplo de casadas* and *Don Juan de Castro I* and *II*. See Ferrer Valls, "Lope de Vega y la dramatización de la materia genealógica (I)." As Marcella Trambaioli remarks, in *El ejemplo* and other plays, Lope turns the Moncada into Counts of Barcelona, a title they did not own. However, as she explains, "otorgar a una stirpe un título nobiliario que no le pertenecía es un típico procedimiento de la comedia genealógica", "Lope de Vega y la casa de Moncada," *Criticón* 106 (2009): 12. Lope himself referred to this practice of poetic licence as "historia verdadera con otro nombre, y por la licencia referida, fábula poética", quoted in Thomas E. Case, *Las dedicatorias de Partes XIII-XX de Lope de Vega: Estudio crítico con textos* (Madrid: Castalia, 1975), p. 226. For Lope's

Spanish hero, and more specifically into one of the first ancestors of the Moncada in order to glorify their household, Lope could not leave the marquis's ambiguity unaltered and his sins unpunished or unredeemed for fear of offending the Moncada.¹²⁸⁵ For Lope to obtain the support and patronage of this family, Enrico had to be a character with which the audience could identify, understand his anxieties, and appreciate his evolution from sin to redemption.

Since Lope wrote no less than 13 plays involving a Moncada, either as a protagonist or secondary character, even in the absence of historical evidence, as Trombailoli remarks, it is very likely that Lope must have entertained a particular relationship with one or more of the members of the family from the beginning of the seventeenth century until 1629.¹²⁸⁶ This suggests that the Moncada must have been pleased with Lope's fictional treatment of their imaginary ancestors in *El ejemplo de casadas*.

In Italy, while playwrights such as Paolo Mazzi and Galeotto Oddi presented Gualtieri as a good ruler, however abusive of his wife he actually is, Carlo Maria Maggi, in his tragedy *La Griselda di Saluzzo*, offers a more critical portrayal of a corrupt Saluzzean court, where dissimulation reigns. In this version, Gualtieri welcomes two additional characters to his castle, Ridolfo and Violante, his sister who fled Arezzo because of the war between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The play's argument states that before the tragedy begins, not only did Gualtieri try his wife's patience by feigning to have their only daughter Giannetta killed but also used Violante to test Griselda's jealousy and, as a result, caused Violante to fall in love with him. Ridolfo believes that Gualtieri really wishes to repudiate Griselda and obtain a marriage annulment. Violante's brother, already one of Gualtieri's favourites, hopes to secure his influential position at court by enabling his sister's marriage to the marquis. In addition, the argument explains that Giannetta was raised as Matilde, the daughter of the Count of Panago, and that Gualtieri secretly sent Ugone, a parent of his, to bring her back to Saluzzo as his new bride. Finally, it adds that Guido, the son of the Count of Montefeltro, is in love with Giannetta/Matilde and comes to

treatment of historical material more generally in his plays, see Joan Oleza, "Variaciones del drama histórico en Lope de Vega," *Anuario Lope de Vega. Texto, literatura, cultura* 19 (2013); Joan Oleza, "Los dramas históricos de hechos particulares, de Lope de Vega: una exigencia de sujetos," *Revista sobre teatro áureo* 7 (2013).

1285 As Ferrer Valls notes, Lope could make faux-pas in his *comedias genealógicas*, as in the case of *Los Porceles de Murcia* (1617), which provoked the ire of Doña Paula Porcel de Peralta for relating the origin of the family name to the Latin word for pigs, *porcellus*, see "Lope de Vega y la dramatización de la materia genealógica (I)," p. 226.

1286 See Trombailoli, "Lope de Vega y la casa de Moncada," p. 37.

Saluzzo under the name of Tancredi in order to understand what happens, managing to earn Gualtieri's trust and becoming his cupbearer.

Thus, this *tragedia di lieto fine* presents a complex web of characters, ideal for the court intrigues that unfold. Griselda is not only tested by her husband but also the victim of conspiracies that highlight her virtue and martyr-like readiness to die for Gualtieri. In other words, unlike previous versions of the myth, the play hardly needs the household-as-a-state metaphor to enable a political reading. Beyond the interpretation of Gualtieri's abuses over his wife as a ruler's tyranny over a subject, Griselda is not merely a victim within the domestic sphere of her marriage but also the victim of the political sphere where courtiers make secret moves against her in order to fulfil their personal ends. Most of Gualtieri's testing—the taking away of their daughter, his courtship of Violante in order to try Griselda's jealousy, and the repudiation—occurs before the play even begins. As Gualtieri involves Violante in his testing of Griselda, it has clear and immediate repercussions over Saluzzo's court and politics: Ridolfo sees the interest Gualtieri manifests for his sister as a means to advance his own position and acquire more influence. This version of the myth therefore uses the testing mythemes and expands them to offer a political reflection on tyranny as much in a ruler figure as in figures of Machiavelian courtiers.

The play opens with Griselda's arrival at her father's place in the countryside, expressing her sorrow after her repudiation. As her father Giannole leaves to get her some clothes, a complex murder plot is outlined. Nello, Ridolfo's servant, arrives with orders to kill her, supposedly coming from Gualtieri. Griselda is ready to die at her husband's command, but Guido, under the name of Tancredi, arrives and stops Nello. The latter then reveals that the order to murder Griselda did not come from Gualtieri himself but rather from Violante. Guido shows mercy and lets Nello go. Guido explains to Griselda that he met Ridolfo the night before and was asked by him to kill Nello should the servant have murdered Griselda. In exchange, Ridolfo offered to use his influence over Gualtieri to obtain favours from the marquis for Guido. Even though the young man promised he would, he could not find it in his heart to commit such an evil crime. Guido also tells Griselda that he discovered that the order to kill Griselda could not have come from Gualtieri but rather from Violante only, because the marquis actually sent him to bring Griselda back to court to prepare his second wedding with Matilde. They then both go back to Saluzzo. At court, Gualtieri learns from Nello what has happened and decides to get his revenge on Violante and Ridolfo, one that takes effect when Griselda is restored as marquise. Violante not only learns that Griselda is still alive but that she has another rival, namely Matilde who arrives with Ugone.

The first act sets the tone and shows that no one from the Saluzzean court is sincere or honest apart from Griselda. Violante and Ridolfo are Machiavellian courtiers who do not hesitate to resort to murder to achieve their ends or conceal their crimes. Gualtieri is a cruel husband, according to Griselda (“Il mio signor crudele”) and a pitiless man according to Giannole (“Oh spietato Gualtieri!”), and he reigns from an “insidiosa corte”.¹²⁸⁷ Although Guido is a good man at heart, one who usually prefers to follow Christian ethics rather than his personal ambition for advancement, especially when it comes to murder, he also knows people do not always tell the truth and he is perfectly capable of dissimulation if the situation requires it. Not only does he hide his true identity within the Saluzzean court, given his love for Matilde, but Guido lies to Ridolfo and does not keep his word to kill Nello. Only Griselda and her father are sincere. Even if Griselda lengthily laments over her lot, describing herself as a martyr-like victim (“Mi rende i miei martiri / Più dolorosa ed empì / L’amaro rimembrar dei dolci tempi”),¹²⁸⁸ she remains obedient to her husband and is even ready to prepare his second wedding and die for him.

The second act displays even more plots and dissimulation. Not knowing what to do or who to turn to in order to prevent the wedding between Matilde and Gualtieri, Guido reveals to Griselda his true identity and asks for her help, since Matilde is also in love with him. Griselda promises she will, but she actually remains faithful to her husband and tells him who Guido really is and what his intentions are. Gualtieri, who already knows all this from Ugone, feigns anger at her evil report just to see how she will react. In order to further please her husband, Griselda even tries to convince Matilde that Gualtieri is a worthy husband. As for Violante, given that her brother momentarily refuses to help her, she seeks Ugone’s support as he used to be in love with her. Feigning that she still has feelings for him, she approaches him. Aware that she is not being sincere, Ugone dissimulates as well and agrees to help her, but only to learn about her plans and later report back to Gualtieri. Upon hearing Guido and Matilde talking about their affection for each other, Ridolfo decides to help them run away to prevent Gualtieri from marrying her and instead arranges for the marquis to wed his sister. Ugone hears about this plan from Violante and arrives with Gualtieri to stop the young lovers.

Thus, as the play unfolds, more dissimulation and betrayal occur. Even Griselda appears capable of both. Although she does it out of loyalty and obedience

1287 Carlo Maria Maggi, “La Griselda di Saluzzo,” in *Scelta di poesie e prose edite e inedite di Carlo Maria Maggi*, ed. Antonio Cipollini (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1900), pp. 192, 95, 93.

1288 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

towards her husband, she still lies to Guido and betrays him, conscious that revealing the young man's love for Matilde to Gualtieri may have dire consequences for the cupbearer. The marquis continues to test his wife, even as he recognises his own cruelty and her virtue in suffering ("E tace, e soffre, e vive? / Saldo mio cor. La maestà crudele / della finta ira mia / Dalla vera pietà vinta non sia"),¹²⁸⁹ but he proves to be a smart schemer, standing two moves ahead of everyone thanks to his trustworthy Ugone informing him of the plans and plots of everyone else. Guido's decision to run away with Matilde is a betrayal of Gualtieri's trust, which had granted the young man a prominent position as cupbearer. Ridolfo continues to use any available means to pursue his personal ambition, namely securing a wedding between his sister and the marquise in order gain more political influence, and does not hesitate to help Guido and Matilde, even though this turns him into a traitor in Gualtieri's eyes. Violante cleverly uses her power of seduction to feign love and obtain help from Ugone, but he double-crosses her, being perfectly aware of her dissimulation.

The third act brings about the seemingly happy resolution. In a last attempt at eliminating her rivals, Violante seeks Ugone's support to poison Matilde by alluding to his own claim to the throne of Saluzzo: "Questi nuovi Imenei, / Riparando a Gualtieri l'estinta prole, / Toglion pur ad Ugon la ricca e bella / Signoria di Saluzzo".¹²⁹⁰ While Ugone reports to Gualtieri about Violante's murderous intentions, Guido and Ridolfo lament over their respective lot and fear the worst. During the final scene of the wedding celebration, Gualtieri asks Violante to be the first to drink in the hope that she will thus betray herself. Instead, she claims that Ugone should be the first to drink some wine, but he in turn says that Ridolfo ought to have this privilege. As Ridolfo then finds a pretext not to drink, Gualtieri, exasperated by their cowardice, reveals that there is poison in the wine and asks Griselda to choose who should drink it. Thus, the poisoned alcohol turns into a last test of her virtue: unwilling to be responsible for anyone's death, she resolves to sacrifice herself and announces that she will drink the wine. Before she does, Griselda delivers a very pathetic monologue in which she denounces Violante and Ridolfo's perfidy and reiterates her love for Gualtieri and for Matilde. Giannole, who was invited to the wedding, stops his daughter from drinking and accuses Gualtieri of cruelty towards his innocent daughter ("In che t'offese mai questa innocente?").¹²⁹¹ The marquis then reveals that Matilde is really his daughter Giannetta and that Griselda is his only

1289 Ibid., p. 221.

1290 Ibid., p. 232.

1291 Ibid., p. 239.

true wife and marquise of Saluzzo. He justifies Griselda's testing by claiming that he wishes to prove to his subjects that despite her base origins, she is full of virtue. Finally, Gualtieri banishes Violante and Ridolfo from court and gives Giannetta's hand in marriage to Guido.

Although all the characters at some point or another dissimulate or betray those who trust them, except Giannole, they can be divided into two categories: those who are capable of murder, if needs be, in order to achieve personal ambition and those who will not kill, regardless of whether it is to fulfil personal ends or punish. As we see, Violante and Ridolfo belong to the first category. They not only are Machiavellian in the sense that any means justifies their intended ends, but they are also tyrannical courtiers since they pursue personal interests, regardless of its consequences for the community. Their passions, namely Violante's love and Ridolfo's political ambition, cloud their moral judgement to the point that they try to legitimise murder if it enables them to achieve their aims. Within the ethical microcosm of the Saluzzean court, this is what makes them evil and separates them from the other characters, who through their opposition, should acquire the label "good" from a Manichean perspective. However, the play's portrayal of the various characters does not exactly follow Manichaeism. In order to pursue his personal interest, Guido lied about his identity and betrayed his lord by plotting to run away with Matilde, who was ready to follow him. Ugone dissimulated and feigned love in order to trick Violante to tell him her schemes. Although she is mostly presented as martyr-like, and even Christ-like in the final scene, Griselda lies and uses dissimulation as well, although only out of loyalty towards her husband. Ugone and Griselda stand out in their pursuit of an interest that is not personal but rather out of sincere care for their ruler's well-being, or in other words, the state's welfare, since the two are tightly linked through Gualtieri's person. Compared to Violante and Ridolfo's murderous recklessness, these characters' faults are minor. On the other hand, Gualtieri's behaviour, especially his cruelty towards his wife, is not as easily morally excused. His justification only comes at the very end:

Io, sentendo allor quanto a' miei vassalli
 Tua nativa umiltà fosse in dispetto,
 Mi accinsi a mostrar loro
 Quanto avesse Griselda
 Per eccelse virtù l'anima illustre.
 Quel che finor sofferse
 La fortissima donna,
 A ripensar, non che a ridirsi è duro.
 E perchè ognor sua sofferenza invitta

Vinse le mie speranze e 'l rigor mio,
 Volli provar con le fierezze estreme
 Quanto può sofferendo un petto forte.
 Quinci nell'alta sua costanza ognuno
 Ben ravvisar potè la chiara e grande
 Nobiltà del suo cuore.
 Fidi amici e vassalli,
 Ecco la vostra donna,
 La cui viltà creduta
 Così sdegnaste un tempo.¹²⁹²

Providing this explanation at this moment of the story follows the traditional pattern of the myth. However, given the play's insistence on dissimulation, the audience is by then habituated to distrust what characters say. This may have influenced the way in which Gualtieri's rationale for Griselda's testing was received. First, Gualtieri's trials are what causes all the other characters to scheme and plot against him, Griselda and Giannetta. If the marquis had not shown any sign of wishing to repudiate Griselda, or had he not manifested any romantic interest whatsoever towards Violante, the latter may not have fallen in love with him or at least been more reasonable and suppressed her passion. Ridolfo would most likely not have seen any opportunity for marrying his sister to Gualtieri or plotted against Griselda if she had remained the marquis's uncontested spouse. Finally, Guido would have encountered no obstacle to his marrying Giannetta. In addition, the perception of Gualtieri at the end of the play is complicated by the fact that Giannole, at several points in the tragedy, offers harsh criticism of the marquis's treatment of his daughter. The old man not only calls the marquis "spietato" in the second scene—towards the end of the second act in a pathetic monologue—but he also laments over what he considers a "crudeltà superba", by which he means the fact that Gualtieri invites him to witness Griselda's being replaced by another woman as the marquis's second wife. Giannole accuses Gualtieri one last time of unjust cruelty as he tries to prevent his daughter from drinking poison:

Ah spietato Gualtieri!
 In che t'offese mai questa innocente?
 Ma se pur del suo volto
 Fu misfatto il piacerti,
 Questo misero padre in che peccò,
 Che ne' suoi giorni estremi
 Tu gli trafigga il core
 Con perdita sì dura?

1292 Ibid., p. 240.

Tu gli tormenti i lumi
 Con spettacol si fiero?
 Ah se forse t'offende
 Il vederti sugli occhi ignuda e vile
 Chi fu scelta al tuo letto,
 Ben trarrò per lontane erme contrade
 Con la misera figlia il fianco antico,
 Ove non giungerai pur col pensiero.
 Non mel negar, Gualtieri!
 Che sarà mai che mova
 Cotesto cor, se non ottien clemenza
 Vecchiezza ed innocenza?¹²⁹³

Even if Giannole is soon proved wrong, his discourse still aims to move the audience and undeniably points to the excess and exaggeration with which Gualtieri tests Griselda for at least 12 to 16 years (which is implied in order for Giannetta to be of marriageable age). This adds yet further to the problematic and ambiguous nature of Gualtieri in his own use of dissimulation, with not only Griselda but the other characters as well. The marquis seems to follow some of Machiavelli's principles to the letter, especially those about a ruler's loyalty and keeping his word in *Il Principe* (1532). About loyalty, charity, humanity, and religion, Machiavelli advises:

Debbe, adunque, avere uno principe gran cura che non gli esca mai di bocca una cosa che non sia piena delle soprascritte cinque qualità, e paia, a vederlo e udirlo tutto pietà, tutto fede, tutto integrità, tutto umanità, tutto religione. E non è cosa più necessaria a parere di avere che questa ultima qualità. E gli uomini in universali iudicano più agli occhi che alle mani; . . . e quelli pochi non ardiscano opporsi alla opinione di molti, che abbino la maestà dello stato che li defenda; e nelle azioni di tutti gli uomini, e massime de' principi, dove non è iudizio a chi reclamare, si guarda al fine. Facci dunque uno principe di vincere e mantenere lo stato: e' mezzi saranno sempre iudicati onorevoli e da ciascuno laudati; perché il vulgo va sempre preso con quello che pare e con lo evento della cosa; e nel mondo non è se non vulgo; e li pochi non ci hanno luogo, quando li assai hanno dove appoggiarsi.¹²⁹⁴

This applies perfectly to Gualtieri, because he disregards the means (extreme cruelty for a very extended period of time) in order to prove his wife's virtue and thereby eventually appears not only loyal, to his spouse at least, but also charitable (he accomplishes a good deed by proving her virtuousness) and

¹²⁹³ Ibid., p. 239.

¹²⁹⁴ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Milano: Mondadori, 2013), p. 138.

religious, since Griselda's virtues stand as an example for everyone thanks to his testing. By making this obvious through monologues, soliloquies, and asides of when and who dissimulates, the play as a whole draws the audience's attention to the means rather than simply the ends or intentions. Thus, Gualtieri's integrity as a ruler remains questionable and problematic.

Consequently, in spite of having the appearance of a happy ending, the play's conclusion leaves a bittersweet aftertaste. Dissimulation occupies such a great space in the play's actions, and this instils so much doubt about most of the characters' true intentions that the restored social order seems fragile with no guarantee that it will last. With its emphasis on the characters' untrustworthiness, *La Griselda di Saluzzo* highlights the theatricality of the courtly world as a *theatrum mundi*, leaving the impression that everything is nothing but "*vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas*", as mentioned in Ecclesiastes (1: 2). Thus, the play traces a movement from chaos, insecurity, and doubt towards a fragile order, which itself is presented as precarious and temporary, suggesting that ultimate peace can only be found in heavenly salvation. However, the religious interpretation is not the only one that emerges. The tragedy's dominant pessimism also seems to attest to some disenchantment from Maggi's part with his own government, which was leading the city into decline.¹²⁹⁵ The fact that much of the chaos in the play, as well as the evillest Machiavellian schemes, are devised by Violante and Ridolfo (two outsiders and foreigners in Saluzzo) is probably no coincidence and hints that they represent the Spanish governance of Maggi's Milan. In this case, the *vanitas vanitatem et omnia vanitas* that emerges from the play may also be an expression of helplessness in front of Spanish rule, which failed to improve Milan's economy or political influence as a duchy in northern Italy.

In France, the myth's potential to engage with political discourse seems to have been ignored until the last decade of the seventeenth century, when Perrault decided to turn one of the chapbooks still in circulation into a versified tale. Whereas some have seen a criticism of Louis XIV's absolute monarchy and the dangers of its ideology as a way of justifying a king's perverse behaviour in *Griselidis*,¹²⁹⁶ I rather think that the tale instead glorifies monarchy as a valid political system, like much of the contemporary literature at the time.

Critics have noted the similarity between portrayals of Louis XIV and the Prince's depiction at the beginning of the tale. Whereas this is clearly not

¹²⁹⁵ Claudio Beretta, ed. *Carlo Maria Maggi e la Milano di fine '600 nelle "Commedie" e nelle "Rime"* (Milano: Di Baio, 1999), pp. 5–11, esp. 7–9.

¹²⁹⁶ See Anne Defrance, "La politique du conte aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles. Pour une lecture oblique," *Féeries* 3 (2006).

sufficient to discern a significant parallel, given that it was a common literary topos at the time, the story also reveals how monarchical power fashions itself as a paternalistic entity, working towards the glory of God and the *bonum commune* in a similar way to how the French King did. Historians have demonstrated how Louis XIV used not only literature but also the arts in general as a way to glorify his own image and thereby strengthen his power and authority.¹²⁹⁷ Even though Perrault's Prince is clearly not Louis XIV, because the parallels stop there, he can still appear as an Italian alter ego with a similar concept of kingship and way of building the image of an ideal monarch in his subjects' mind. Although he does not use any artist, Perrault's Prince creates a narrative for his people to see, fashioning himself as a good ruler in spite of appearances.

The duality of the Prince's portrait has often been noticed:

Vivait un jeune et vaillant Prince,

...

Le Ciel, en le formant, sur lui tout à la fois
Versa ce qu'il a de plus rare,
Ce qu'entre ses amis d'ordinaire il sépare,
Et qu'il ne donne qu'aux grands Rois.

Comblé de tous les dons et du corps et de l'âme,
Il fut robuste, adroit, propre au métier de Mars,
Et par l'instinct secret d'une divine flamme,
Avec ardeur il aima les beaux Arts.
Il aima les combats, il aima la victoire,
Les grands projets, les actes valeureux,
Et tout ce qui fait vivre un beau nom dans l'histoire ;
Mais son cœur tendre et généreux
Fut encor plus sensible à la solide gloire

De rendre ses Peuples heureux.
Ce tempérament héroïque
Fut obscurci d'une sombre vapeur
Qui chagrine et mélancolique,
Lui faisait voir dans le fond de son cœur
Tout le beau sexe infidèle et trompeur.¹²⁹⁸

In this description, misogyny stands out as the Prince's only fault among his numerous divinely inspired qualities. Whereas this could seem a minor flaw, it

1297 See Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1981); Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 1992), pp. 49–60; Gérard Sabatier, "La gloire du roi. Iconographie de Louis XIV de 1661 à 1672," *Histoire, Économie et Société* 19, no. 4 (2000); Louis Marin, *Politiques de la représentation* (Paris: Kimé, 2005).

1298 Perrault, *Contes*, pp. 59–60.

has political consequences in that it prevents him from choosing a wife and therefore producing an heir. However, as previously discussed, Perrault attributes this misogyny to the Prince's melancholy, a disease that often affects kings in literature. This illness not only brings the benefit of explaining the Prince's distorted view of women—it also explains why he starts testing Griselidis after their wedding. A disease, as a justification for insane behaviour, also conveniently offers the possibility of being cured, thereby making it occasional and temporary. In other words, the Prince's irrational thoughts about women, his fear of being dominated in marriage (“Un cruel ennemi qui sans cesse n’aspire / Qu’à prendre un souverain empire / Sur l’homme malheureux qui lui sera livré”),¹²⁹⁹ and his cruelty towards Griselidis are the result of momentary alterations in his reason rather than a permanent way of thinking or behaving.

In most versions of the myth, the entire test lasts quite a long time, but many authors do not necessarily comment on how the marquis and Griselda spend the time that passes between the moment of the second child's supposed death and her repudiation or how they feel during that period. In contrast, Perrault describes the nature of their relationship during the 15 years that separates the supposed death of Griselidis's daughter and the Prince's arrangements for his fake second wedding:

Dès ce bienheureux jour telle des deux Époux
Fut la mutuelle tendresse,
Qu'elle n'est point plus vive aux moments les plus doux
Entre l'Amant et la Maîtresse.¹³⁰⁰

Thus, the Prince's disease manifests itself in fits, which do not last long because Griselidis's patience, obedience, and unconditional love calm and appease them, so much so that after 15 years, the Prince seems healed. Although the testing is not over, the protagonist no longer shows signs of acting or thinking under the influence of some melancholic excess, merely a “bizarre envie”. Unlike before, the narrator does not mention any black bile elevation: the Prince is not overcome by “chagrin”; no “maligne humeur” burns inside him.¹³⁰¹ This entails that whereas the Prince's previous cruelties could be attributed to his illness, the final part of the testing cannot, and as a result, it may be understood as actual, inexcusable tyranny. However, another reading emerges if we examine the manner

¹²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

¹³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

¹³⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 74, 78, 79.

in which the Prince elaborates on, and plans, Griselidis repudiation and uncovers the final revelation that he never intended to divorce her.

First, the narrator explains that the Prince concealed from Griselidis the fact that their daughter is alive because “il peut être utile de taire” this to his wife.¹³⁰² Then, he decides to include the Princess and her lover in his plans, pretending to marry her while the Prince is perfectly happy to accept her young lover as his son-in-law (“Il était beau, vaillant, né d’illustres aïeux / Et dès longtemps pour en faire son Gendre / Sur lui le Prince avait jeté ses yeux”).¹³⁰³ Whereas this indeed seems “bizarre”, the revelation scene actually shows that it is part of his bigger plan for them, Griselidis and his people as a whole. In fact, the Prince intends to teach his subjects a lesson on the deceptiveness of appearances. Under the pretence of getting married and using the ceremonial aspect of the reunion of his lords, the Prince introduces the revelation of his bride’s true identity in a speech displaying his mastery of rhetoric:

Rien au monde, après l’Espérance,
N’est plus trompeur que l’Apparence ;
Ici l’on en peut voir un exemple éclatant.
Qui ne croirait que ma jeune Maîtresse,
Que l’Hymen va rendre Princesse,
Ne soit heureuse et n’ait le cœur content ?
Il n’en est rien pourtant.

Qui pourrait s’empêcher de croire
Que ce jeune Guerrier amoureux de la gloire
N’aime à voir cet Hymen, lui qui dans les Tournois
Va sur tous ses Rivaux remporter la victoire ?
Cela n’est pas vrai toutefois.

Qui ne croirait encor en sa juste colère,
Griselidis ne pleure et ne se désespère ?
Elle ne se plaint point, elle consent à tout,
Et rien n’a pu pousser sa patience à bout.
Qui ne croirait enfin que de ma destinée,
Rien ne peut égaler la course fortunée,
En voyant les appas de l’objet de mes vœux ?
Cependant si l’Hymen me liait de ses nœuds,
J’en concevrais une douleur profonde,
Et de tous les Princes du Monde
Je serais le plus malheureux.¹³⁰⁴

1302 Ibid., p. 79.

1303 Ibid., p. 80.

1304 Ibid., p. 86.

The Prince's very elaborate discourse, insisting on the untrustworthy nature of external appearances, actually implies that while his cruelty towards Griselidis may have seemed tyrannical, it was in fact nothing more than his way of fashioning her virtuous fame. Although he admits that his behaviour towards his wife was "dur et barbare",¹³⁰⁵ he attributes to himself the glory of having exposed her virtue, almost suggesting that he is at the origin of her extraordinary qualities:

Et si dans tous les temps doit vivre la mémoire
Des ennuis dont son cœur ne fut point abattu,
Je veux que plus encore on parle de la gloire
Dont j'aurai couronné sa suprême vertu.¹³⁰⁶

In other words, the Prince's claim to have endowed Griselidis with "gloire" is a way of attributing to himself the glory of being a very clear-sighted ruler, working for God by promoting virtue through his wife's example. The revelation thus not only re-establishes Griselidis as his legitimate spouse endowed with as many extraordinary, God-given qualities as he has, but also enables the marriage between his daughter and her lover. As a result, the Prince performs a real masterstroke: he manages to self-fashion himself heroically while rehabilitating the wife he cruelly mistreated, and he ensures the country's peaceful future by producing an heir and giving her a husband, thus securing the succession after his death and beyond. Indeed, once the Prince finishes his speech about appearances, not a single voice is raised against him. There is only happiness everywhere, as described in a manner almost suggesting that the Prince can even control the weather as well:

Comme un épais nuage
A le jour obscurci,
Et que le Ciel de toutes parts noirci,
Menace d'un affreux orage ;
Si de ce voile obscur par les vents écarté
Un brillant rayon de clarté
Se répand sur le paysage,
Tout rit et reprend sa beauté ;
Telle, dans tous les yeux où régnait la tristesse,
Éclate tout à coup une vive allégresse.¹³⁰⁷

1305 Ibid., p. 87.

1306 Ibid.

1307 Ibid., pp. 87–88.

This analogy implies that the Prince is responsible for bringing the “sun” into his people’s lives. As already mentioned, the Prince’s self-fashioning as a hero through an elaborate public, rhetorical performance brings to mind Louis XIV’s own theatrical self-representations as an ideal majestic king through public appearances, pictorial representation, and other arts. In addition, Perrault seems to trace through the metaphor of the sun yet another parallel between his Prince and Louis XIV, who was famously nicknamed “Roi-Soleil” and who used the sun as a personal symbol, as well as being compared to this star by many poets.¹³⁰⁸ Perrault thus adds prestige to the conclusion of his Prince’s portrayal.

What emerges from Perrault’s tale is a kingly figure who initially presents human flaws, although they are only due to a humoral imbalance, but who manages to reverse his image as a cruel ruler and turn it into a glorious, almost faultless, self-portrait. The tale turns the Prince into a poet-playwright who fashions his public identity by writing Griselidis’s, his daughter’s, and his son-in-law’s lives and forcing them in spite of themselves to perform his play on the stage of his own palace. The Prince conceals and manipulates to uncover a truth shaped by himself in order to obtain the people’s approval and strengthen his power:

Des peuples la complaisance est telle,
 Pour leur Prince capricieux,
 Qu’ils vont jusqu’à louer son épreuve cruelle,
 A qui d’une vertu si belle,
 Si séante au beau sexe, et si rare en tous lieux,
 On doit un si parfait modèle.¹³⁰⁹

Thus, Perrault uses the Griselda myth as a way to elaborate on the question of appearances and reality in politics, offering a reflection on the mechanisms of the theatrical representations of power and the manner in which they legitimise monarchy by inducing the people’s “complaisance”. Whereas this may sound subversive, it actually reinforces monarchical power by humanising kings, suggesting that if they may present flaws, it is only temporary, and they will find a way to compensate for any wrong they committed by providing an even greater good for the *bonum communitatis*. After all, the Prince is no usurping tyrant who only pursues his personal interests but rather a man whose melancholy leads him astray, yet he cleverly finds a radical and cruel way to restore order,

1308 See Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, pp. 22, 45, 66.

1309 Perrault, *Contes*, p. 89.

his own public image, and secure his country's future in a single *coup de théâtre*.

As already explained, Perrault inspired Sainctonge's play *Griselde*. This does not mean, however, that her play deals with the figure of the Prince in the same way. The fact that the Prince no longer tests Griselde changes his portrayal completely. In its single printed edition, Sainctonge's *Griselde* is labelled "comédie". However, apart from the ending, it does not present any of the features of the comic genre. The plot rather indicates that it is a tragedy with a happy ending. The protagonist's melancholy leads him to develop extreme misogyny, reject Griselde and paradoxically fall in love with a younger woman, Isabelle, who does not love him back because her heart already belongs to Frédéric. To complicate matters even further, in Perrault's tale, the Prince knows that his daughter is not dead and only pretends to marry her, but Sainctonge's protagonist has no idea that Isabelle is his daughter. The audience indeed may have assumed from the beginning that the Prince is in love with his daughter. While this may have been indicated in the play's argument, given that no argument was printed along with the play in its 1714 edition, there is no way to tell whether this was the case. However, Perrault's tale was popular and was edited several times. In addition, the chapbook that Perrault used as his source continued to be very popular as it was reprinted several times during the eighteenth century. Consequently, there were several ways in which Sainctonge's audience and readers might have known the Griselda myth: through versions in which the marquis feigning marriage to his daughter or others where it is easy to infer that Isabelle is likely the Prince's daughter. This entails that the play presents a tragic, in the Racinian conception of the word, initial situation with a heroic kingly figure who has already fallen prey to his melancholic love and, as a result, tyrannises his repudiated wife as much as his future bride. Thus, imitating the pattern Racine elaborated for Néron in *Britannicus*, Sainctonge offers a portrait of the Prince as a virtuous ruler and a perfectly legitimate one (unlike Néron), turning the Prince into a tyrant under the influence of the excesses of his black bile. In other words, this tragedy with a happy ending reflects on the causes, manifestations, and possible cures for tyranny. In *Griselde*, the Prince is a conflation of different types: the melancholic lover, the rival, the judge, and the father. Although in most of the play he incarnates at least two of these types, one is often presented as dominant over the other depending on the circumstances. His embodiment of these identities, one after the other, underlies his evolution as a character and eventually enables the happy ending.

The Prince first enters the stage as a melancholic lover and a cruel husband, blinded by his misogyny. However, already in the fourth scene, the Prince's

former tutor Hidaspe understands that “une sombre tristesse” causes his “humeur bizarre”, or in other words, the black bile alters the Prince’s reason despite his many qualities (“Intrépide aux dangers, heureux dans les combats, / La valeur fait toujours triompher votre bras / Le Ciel de ses presents ne vous fut point avare”).¹³¹⁰ Thus, the Prince is as much a heroic character as a tyrannical, melancholic lover who harshly mistreats his wife.

The Prince is so caught up in his melancholic fantasy about Isabelle that he cannot imagine her rejecting him, so he starts making wedding plans without so much as informing her about his feelings or asking if she wants to marry him. When Griselde informs Isabelle about the Prince’s intentions, because he cruelly asked her to, Isabelle is outraged and refuses to marry the Prince out of love for Griselde. As Isabelle tells the Prince that she does not want to be his wife, this infuriates him. The protagonist then becomes a rejected lover, misinterpreting his mistress’s rejection as a sign of love on her part. Thus, the melancholy grows in him, augmenting its grasp on his mind and making him less and less reasonable and more and more tyrannical and sadistic, especially towards Griselde: he asks her to persuade Isabelle to marry him.

Isabelle and Frédéric attempt to run away to Florence. However, warned by Hidaspe that Isabelle has a lover, the Prince understands that it is Frédéric and stops them from going anywhere. The Prince thus realises that he has a rival and that both Isabelle and Frédéric have betrayed him. The protagonist’s fury then reaches its climax. As Frédéric and Isabelle both entreat him to let them get married or kill them, the Prince is cast as a judge with the right of life or death over them. However, he is still a rival too. Thus, at the beginning of the trial scene, the rival appears to be the dominant identity within him, and he lets his anger show at being betrayed by Frédéric and still rejected by Isabelle. Then, upon hearing Isabelle’s foreboding and Griselde’s last attempt at speaking in favour of Isabelle, the judge inside him takes precedence, enabling his reason to overcome his melancholy and instilling doubts in him:

Non, cessez de me parler pour elle.
 J’abandonne mon cœur à mes ressentiments,
 Je n’ai que trop contraint ses jaloux mouvements :
 Nommez mon action tyrannie, injustice,
 Il faut dans ce moment que l’hymen nous unisse.
 (*À part.*)
 Mais pourquoi me livrer à des transports affreux ?
 Il faut plutôt éteindre un amour malheureux.
 Depuis que je ressens sa dévorante flamme,

1310 Sainctonge, “Griselde,” 1.4.175–77.

Les plus cuisants soucis ont déchiré mon âme :
 Barbare pour Griselde, et toujours furieux,
 On me voit sans pitié la bannir de ces lieux.
 Isabelle me hait, Isabelle m'outrage,
 Ah, sortons pour jamais d'un si dur esclavage !
 J'ai formé mille fois ce généreux dessein,
 Faut-il que la raison me parle encore en vain ?¹³¹¹

As I argued in the first part of the present research, the Prince's sudden lucidity may be explained by the accumulation of other character's speeches pointing at his irrationality and cruelty. This process seems to be facilitated by his position as a judge in this scene. Since he has to decide how to punish those who betrayed him, he is forced to distance himself from the events in order to render impartial justice. Whereas the first part of his discourse reveals his incapacity to take a step back and prevent his emotions from clouding his judgement, his words also describe how he recovers his lucidity and realises his own condemnable and inadmissible behaviour ("Nommez mon action tyrannie, injustice"). Even though he imagines how Frédéric, Isabelle, and Griselde would judge his actions, naming his own sins to himself has the effect of bringing him face to face with reality. This forces him to examine his conscience, assess his state of mind, and admit the extent of his error. The Prince thus regains lucidity and reason and starts to see how tyrannically he has acted.

The final revelation of Isabelle's true identity, thanks to the letter of the Prince's sister, then casts him as a father. This radically changes his perspective and understanding of his identity in relation to the others: the moral pressure of the incest taboo is so strong that, as Isabelle's father, he can no longer envisage himself as Isabelle's rejected lover or as Frédéric's rival. The tyrant definitively disappears as he becomes a parent faced with the idea of marrying his own daughter, an idea contemplated with utmost horror as the incarnation of what is not only forbidden and amoral but also one of the greatest evils.

As a consequence, Saintonge's play portrays the Prince as a ruler who falls prey to tyranny, albeit only temporarily, following tragicomic conventions. He thus cannot be considered a real tyrant but nonetheless deserves to be punished in line with the rules of decorum. As Héléne Baby explains, the Prince's melancholy only causes him to enter what she calls the "parenthèse tyrannique":

le souverain tragi-comique même entraîné dans la parenthèse tyrannique, ne devient pas un tyran: dans la tragi-comédie, l'exercice tyrannique du pouvoir ne peut entraîner son

1311 Ibid., 5.7.1234–48.

illégitimité. Du coup, le caprice royal se trouve légitimé par le pouvoir lui-même. L'action tragi-comique ne véhicule pas de revendication politique, mais exploite simplement le cadre référentiel de la monarchie.¹³¹²

Indeed, Sainctonge's play does not engage with topical issues of contemporary politics but rather uses the Griselda myth while slightly altering it to examine on a psychological level how a prince—who could be representative of any monarch, not just Louis XIV—can be affected by melancholy and, as a result, behave like a tyrant. However, instead of ending on a pessimistic note where tragedy usually leaves its audience, the playwright preferred to retain the myth's conclusion and restore the rightful divine order of things at the end of her play.

1312 Hélène Baby, *La tragi-comédie de Corneille à Quinault* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2001), p. 200.

Conclusion

The patient Griselda myth presents problematic characters who are not easily comprehended by the modern mind. This, however, was not the case for medieval and early modern people, who clearly enjoyed the story of Griselda. None of the rewriters of the story saw the inherent ambiguities in the myth's plot and main figures as impediments in creating new versions of her story. While some tried to emend the narrative's flaws, other simply rewrote Boccaccio's or Petrarch's versions without major or significant alterations.

The extensive geographic range of the myth—from Italy to Portugal, to the British Isles, to Iceland, to Scandinavia, and to as far east as Hungary—during the late medieval and early modern periods attests to the story's popularity and capacity to please a variety of audiences through time and space. The symbolism of Griselda as the perfect wife enabled and favoured the long-lasting interest in the myth. The basic social structure of the European family, with the husband as head and the wife and children as subordinates, remained more or less the same until the twentieth century. As a consequence, the embodiment of Griselda as the ideal spouse only had to adapt to this evolving concept, from passive and stoic submission to a gradually more pathetic and active subjection, but it was almost always subjection. This seems to be the reason why the myth maintained its didactical value beyond 1700: not only were *Volksschauspiel* staged in German-speaking Europe, but Jesuit plays were staged in Belgium.

While Gualtieri's behaviour sometimes becomes crueller than in Boccaccio's *novella* or Petrarch's Latin translation, the evolution of the way in which his unjust treatment is justified appears to be quite similar from one country to another. Whereas in the fifteenth century, there were few attempts to make his desire to test his wife more comprehensible, in the sixteenth century there was a clear tendency in drama to use hellish figures as evil influences that arouse in him a need to try Griselda. In the seventeenth century, madness, either in the form of an exaggerate anxiety or a humoral imbalance, becomes a recurrent explanation for Gualtieri's sadistic whims. Gualtieri's fears towards marriage, on the other hand, were not exploited beyond the beginning of the seventeenth century. This is perhaps because encouraging the laity, especially men, to get married was no longer such an urgent issue.

As for Griselda's originally nameless children, while the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century adaptations increasingly assign them names, they only become fully fleshed-out, three-dimensional characters on the seventeenth-century stage. This is principally due to classical drama's time unity, which constrained the narration of the myth to 24 h only, thereby forcing playwrights to

concentrate on the section lasting from the last part of Griselda's testing, from the repudiation until the second fake marriage. This all happened in 1 day and meant that the rest of the action was left to narrative accounts spoken by Griselda or her father in introductory scenes. Nonetheless, Griselda's children therefore become protagonists of the story as much as their parents, if not more. Although they appear as part of love intrigues of their own, which are intertwined with Griselda's testing through the second mock wedding, playwrights display creativity in the way they combine these plots and use them to address a variety of socio-political issues.

In its wide geographic range and variety, the myth tends to bring Griselda's story closer to its audience by adapting the names into the respective vernacular language of the recipient audience. Sometimes this implies a complete nationalisation process, as in Dirk Potter's *Minnen Loep* or Lope's *Ejemplo*, which entirely changes the names of not only the characters but also the location. This phenomenon also occurs in a less visible way, as was the case in Mézières's letter to King Richard II, where it is implied, but not directly stated, that Griselda is French, since Saluzzo, or rather Saluce, was under France's dominion when Mézières wrote his epistle. Another way in which the story is made more familiar to local audiences is the establishment of links with regional culture, as can be seen in Mauritius's evocation of the Libussa myth in the prologue to his play or the absurdly comic presence of the Welsh characters at the court of Saluzzo in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's comedy. If Griselda's story acquires any particularly marked cultural specificity, it is only through literary genres that possess local specificities in terms of poetic metric or, in the case of drama, the presence or absence of a subplot and so on. Whereas this process alters the shape and form of the story, condensing it to fit a very short format or expanding it with numerous additions (especially in terms of characters), this only endows the myth with a regional coloration. It does not change, however, Griselda's essential symbolism as an ideal Christian, an ideal wife, or an ideal subject.

As already mentioned, religion does not significantly modify the portrayals of either Griselda or Gualtieri, even though the myth was adapted as much by Protestant as by Catholic authors throughout the sixteenth century. The only minor observable difference is that Protestant writers tend to underline Griselda's industriousness and hard-working nature more than Catholic writers. This is as far as Protestant propaganda goes in its appropriation of the myth, most likely because this is the easiest way in which Griselda's life story can highlight doctrinal differences.

The present research has demonstrated how various versions engaged in a specific way with a particular socio-political issue and highlighted the similarities, such as the use of the vice figure in Phillip's *Grissill* and the *Eheteufel* in

Mauritius and Pondo, as well as the specificities of each of these adaptations, particularly the ways in which they engaged with their own socio-historical contexts through contemporary philosophical, social, literary, political, or medical discourses. My chronological survey has outlined a historical evolution, especially in terms of Griselda's symbolism, which is gradually desacralised, and therefore gradually neutralises her value as ideal Christian in favour of that of an ideal spouse. However, synchronically, and in spite of contextual contingencies, the alterations and additions that specific authors bring to the myth do not attest to any radical cultural variation among the various geographical areas examined: Griselda embodies the ideal Christian, the ideal wife, or the ideal subject by displaying the same generic virtues throughout Europe. Although this downplays the amazing creativity displayed by many authors in their rewritings of the myth, the fact remains that Griselda's humility and obedience are cultural and social constants shared throughout Europe in the definition of the perfect Christian in relation to God, of the flawless wife in relation to her husband, and of the loyal subject towards his ruler.

The most persistent of these constant virtues in the Griselda myth is that of the ideal spouse. This ideal maintained the interest in her story during the eighteenth century, particularly in Italy, France, Germany, and England. In Spain, however, the story's success was declining: only one version appears, a *comedia nueva* entitled *La constante Griselda* (Barcelona, 1797). In Germany, two plays and four prose versions, as well as a sermon are based on the myth. In France, there were two plays, two prose versions, a narrative poem, and a comic opera adapting Griselda's story.¹³¹³ In England, a prose version, a narrative poem, and a pantomime were produced alongside re-editions of the sixteenth-century anonymous chapbook and the ballad I analysed.¹³¹⁴

Within the confines of this conclusion, I cannot do justice to these adaptations of the myth, but I would like to expand on the fortune of the myth in opera briefly, given that it is a new genre in which Griselda has appeared with great international success. Whereas all the operatic works in which she is the protagonist are Italian, some of these were also staged in other European countries. According to Walter Tortoreto, Griselda's story combined several elements that made it conform to the expectations and requirements of the operatic genre, and he offers the following explanation for why it was so often adapted to this genre:

1313 See Leclerc, "Renaissance d'un thème littéraire aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles : La Patience de Grisélidis."

1314 Morabito, "La diffusione." For England more specifically, see Bronfman, *Chaucer's Clerk's Tale: The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated*, pp. 60–61.

Perché una tale fortuna musicale? Le ragioni possono essere tante. Si può anzitutto tener conto, senza per questo stabilire una graduatoria dell'evidenza del lieto fine, regola ferrea dell'opera seria settecentesca, alla quale si contravveniva molto raramente. Si può dire, con una metafora consueta nel mondo musicale, che il canto di Orfeo doveva trionfare, in ultima analisi, su ogni ipotesi di catastrofe, al punto da giustificare il macchinoso intervento del *deus ex machina*. Inoltre, la trama favoriva, nell'evidenza alla teoria degli affetti (*affektenlehre*) classificati attraverso l'individuazione di formule, figure, simboli, grazie ai quali si potevano giudicare esteticamente e valutare tutti gli atteggiamenti umani. Ciò avveniva, del resto nell'ambito della "totale affermazione della teoria edonistica", per adoperare un'espressione felice di Plebe. C'è da aggiungere che lo scrittore cerca l'efficacia e l'immediatezza scenica del dramma puntando essenzialmente all'azione, forse perché intuisce che "nell'opera in musica l'azione celata agli occhi dello spettatore, rappresentata non scenicamente ma solo verbalmente, è uno sbaglio drammaturgico".¹³¹⁵

Among the 11 different operas that are based on *Griselda*, I will mention only the most famous. First, there is Apostolo Zeno's *Griselda* (1701), which was accompanied with various music from different composers until 1724 and gave way to seven refashionings of the *libretto* by other writers, including Carlo Goldoni's 1735 version with music by Antonio Vivaldi. Second, Paolo Antonio Rolli's *Griselda* (1721) with music by Giovan Battista Bononcini was staged in London in 1721, and its *libretto* was printed in a bilingual version with the original Italian facing its English translation. Finally, *La Griselda* (1793) of Angelo Anelli, better known by its 1798 title *La virtù al cimento* with music by Paër, is perhaps the most interesting of these operas from the point of view of the myth's circulation in Europe. In the nineteenth century, it was translated three times in German, twice in French, and once in Polish, Swedish, English, Russian, and Spanish.¹³¹⁶ Not many critics have analysed these works. While Tortoreto underlines the edifying quality of the story in these operas, Nardone examines Zeno's melodrama and the alteration Goldoni brought to it in order to show how Goldoni's version establishes links between *Griselda*'s story and the myth of *Alcestis*.¹³¹⁷

During the nineteenth century, the continuous success of the myth in Italy and France occurred mostly through new operas and plays, while in

1315 Walter Tortoreto, "Griselda nel teatro musicale della prima metà del settecento," in *La circolazione dei temi e degli intrecci narrativi: il caso Griselda. Atti del convegno di studi, L'Aquila, 3-4 dicembre 1986*, ed. Raffaele Morabito (Roma: Japadre, 1988), p. 109.

1316 Morabito, "La diffusione": 243-45.

1317 Tortoreto, "Griselda nel teatro musicale della prima metà del settecento"; Jean-Luc Nardone, "De la *Griselda* de Boccace à l'*Alceste* de Gluck : un exemple de mélange des sources et de réécriture dans l'opéra du XVIII^e siècle," in *Teatro e musica*, ed. Raymond Abbrugiati (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1999).

contrast, only one original play was produced in Spain. However, in England and in German-speaking countries, the Griselda myth greatly gains in popularity in comparison to the eighteenth century on account of the romantic interest for medieval subject matter.¹³¹⁸ Over 15 different versions appear (excluding translations from foreign rewritings and the re-edition of medieval and early modern texts) in German. Among these, the most popular and interesting is undoubtedly Friedrich Halm's play *Griseldis* (1835). Although this drama is little studied today, its relevance to reception of the Griselda myth is unquestionable, not only in Austria but also in Europe and beyond. Halm's play was translated into Hungarian, Polish, Swedish, Dutch, Russian, French, Croatian, Italian (three times), and English (also three times), and it was adapted as a dramatic poem in five acts in the United States.¹³¹⁹ The international interest in this particular version may have stemmed from its combination of the Griselda myth with the Arthurian myth. This play is set in King Arthur's court; and Griseldis is Percival's wife. Percival is very proud of his wife and boasts about her virtues. However, he is forced by Queen Ginevra to test Griseldis to prove her virtue because he offended the Queen by asking her to kneel before his low-born wife, for the queen had mocked him for having married a charcoal-burner's daughter.¹³²⁰

In England, the interest in the Griselda myth was mostly mediated through renewed attention to Chaucer's works. Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* was adapted into poems, plays, novels, tales, and an opera. Given the rise of the genre during the nineteenth century, I will briefly discuss the Griselda myth in novels. First, Maria Edgeworth's *The Modern Griselda: A Tale* (1800) portrays a Griselda who feigns submission as a means to gain power over her husband. Given that the latter does not wish to be governed by his wife, their relationship fails and ends in divorce. Edgeworth's work inspired Barbara Hofland's *Patient and Perseverance; or, The Modern Griselda: A Domestic Tale* (1813, in four volumes). In this version Gualtieri, renamed Edward, is a bad husband, a gambler, and a drunkard who is eventually reformed by his virtuous wife. Alice Mangold published her *Griselda: A Novel* in 1885, which "ingeniously parallels Chaucer's plot with

1318 See Morabito, "La diffusione"; Bronfman, *Chaucer's Clerk's Tale: The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated*, pp. 61–72.

1319 Morabito, "La diffusione": 260–61, 275.

1320 For more on this play, see Peter Skrine, "Halm's 'Griseldis': A Landmark in Nineteenth-Century German Drama," *The Modern Language Review* 63, no. 2 (1968); Luigi Reitani, "Griseldis am Artus-Hof. Friedrich Halm: *Griseldis. Ein dramatisches Gedicht* (1835/1837)," in *Die deutsche Griselda. Transformationen einer literarischen Figuration von Boccaccio bis zur Moderne*, ed. Achim Aurnhammer and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

contemporary events in a modern setting”.¹³²¹ Finally, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt’s *Griselda: A Society Novel in Rhymed Verse* is perhaps the most radical revision of the myth. In this novel, Griselda is a 17-year-old woman who marries the 50-year-old Lord L., who barely speaks to her. After 16 years of unfortunate, childless marriage, Griselda runs away with a young man, with whom she becomes pregnant. The affair makes Lord L. realise how much he actually loves Griselda, so she comes back and they then live from then on happily with Griselda’s bastard child.

In the twentieth century, the myth ceases to produce new versions in most European countries. The only exceptions are Germany, in which a poem (1901) and two plays (1908 and 1909) appear, as well as the English-speaking world, where Chaucer’s influence prompted novels, plays, and parodic rewritings.¹³²²

All these eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century works obviously deserve to be further analysed, especially for their impact on European literature. Such a study would complete the picture of the evolution of the Griselda myth in European culture.

The decline in adaptations of this myth appears to be linked to the rise of feminism and the levelling of the hierarchy within the European family structure. If wives are their husbands’ equals, then the Griselda myth loses its edifying, socially structuring function. Given that the relationship between Griselda and Gualtieri lies at the very core of the myth, and from this derives any other forms of engagement with religious or socio-political discourses, and if the way in which they relate to one another becomes obsolete, then only historical and literary interest in Boccaccio, Petrarch, or Chaucer can and does produce revivals of the myth. This is the case with the sequel to the *Clerk’s Tale*, Tinney S. Heath’s *The Patience of Griselda* (2011), and cultural manifestations in Saluzzo. In spite of the final promise in many versions that Griselda’s fame would live eternally, the fact is that in the twenty-first century, and for the majority of people in Europe, just as Chaucer said at the end of the fourteenth century, “Grisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience”.¹³²³

1321 Bronfman, *Chaucer’s Clerk’s Tale: The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated*, p. 69.

1322 *Ibid.*, pp. 72–81.

1323 Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” l. 1177.

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