

Taking the Measure of *La Lena*: Prostitution, the Community of Debt, and the Idea of the Theater in Ariosto's Last Play¹

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Bien pis y a, je me donne a saint Babolin le bon saint, en cas que toute ma vie je n'ay estimé debtes estre comme une connexion & colligence des cieulx & terre: un entretement unique de l'humain lignaige: je dis sans lequel bien tost tous humains periroient: estre par adventure celle grande ame de l'univers, laquelle selon les Academicques, toutes choses vivifie.

[But worse still, I give myself to the good saint, St. Babolin, if I haven't all my life looked upon debts as the connecting link between Earth and Heaven, the unique mainstay of the human race; one, I believe, without which all mankind would speedily perish. I looked upon them as, perhaps, the great soul of the universe which, according to the Academics, gives all things life].²

Ariosto's *La Lena* was performed in Ferrara during carnival in 1528, and in a second version with two added scenes, "Lena con la coda," in 1529 and again in 1532, on the permanent stageset built in the *Sala grande* of the ducal palace.³ During this same four-year span Ariosto revised earlier plays: a versified *La Cassaria* was played in 1528;⁴ the *Negromante*, begun in 1510, almost certainly in verse, and finished for a 1520 Rome performance that did not take place,⁵ was revised and played in 1528; *I Suppositi*, originally performed in prose in 1509 (and staged in Rome for Pope Leo X in 1519) was also versified around this time though this version is not known to have been produced.⁶ Although the immediate stimulus for the 1528 production of

¹ This essay is a much expanded version of a part of my entry "Spectacle" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Michael Wyatt (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 254–74; the argument was first presented as an MLA lecture in 2001. *La Lena* is cited from Ludovico Ariosto, *Tutte le opere di Ludovico Ariosto*, vol. 4: *Commedie*, ed. Angela Casella, Gabriella Ronchi, and Elena Vasari (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), 544–626. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

² For the French epigraph, see Note 57; the English translation is from François Rabelais, *Gargantua & Pantagruel*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1955), 297.

³ See Michele Catalano, *Vita di Ludovico Ariosto*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Olschki, 1931), 1:588–90. Giulio Ferroni, *Il testo e la scena: saggio sul teatro del Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1980), 150, points out that the evidence for the first performance of the amplified *Lena* in 1529 is far from clear.

⁴ Significantly, *La Cassaria*, Ariosto's first comedy depending on Roman models, included a procuress, "patrona della casa," known by her profession as *Lena*, mentioned in Act 3.1. See Ludovico Ariosto, *Commedie. La cassaria—I suppositi*, ed. Luigina Stefani (Milan: Mursia, 1997), 101.

⁵ See Irving A. Porta, "A Non-performance of *Negromante*," *Italica* 59 (1982): 316–29; also Angelo Romano, "La 'memoria' di Roma nelle *Satire*," in Claudia Berra, ed., *Fra satire e rime ariostesche. Gargnano del Garda (14–16 ottobre 1999)* (Milan: Cisalpino, 2000), 83–120, at 108–13.

⁶ See Catalano, *Vita*, 1:572–95; Giorgio Padoan, *L'avventura della commedia rinascimentale* (Padua: Francesco Vallardi, 1996), 52–55; Giulio Ferroni, *Ariosto* (Rome: Salerno, 2008), 72–84; Giuseppe Coluccia, *L'esperienza teatrale di Ludovico Ariosto* (Lecce: Piero Manni, 2001), 25–34. In 1528 Ariosto was named superintendent of spectacles for the Este court; see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:572.

Lena was to welcome Renée, daughter of Louis XII of France and bride to Ercole II, Alfonso d'Este's son, the dramatic activity of the years 1528–32 may also have been intended to reassert the status of Ferrarese theater after a long hiatus in productions, and to meet the artistic challenge posed by the Florentine, or rather Tuscan, Bernardo Bibbiena whose *Calandra* (1513), followed by Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (1519–20?), had staked a strong claim for prose as the preferred medium for comedy, and by the satirical verve of Ariosto's first version of *La Cortigiana* (1525).⁷ Ariosto's was not the only work featured in this retrospective consolidation of landmarks from the brief history of *commedia erudita*: the short play often held to be the first “regular” Italian comedy influenced by ancient models, Publio Filippo Mantovano's *Formicone*, first performed in Mantua (1503–05?) and published in 1524, played in Ferrara during carnival in 1531.⁸ Ruzante's *Moscheta* was likely produced in Ferrara along with *La Lena* in 1529, and again in 1531; however, his *Piovana* and *Vaccaria*, which recast respectively the Plautine originals *Rudens* and *Asinaria*, and were perhaps intended for Ariosto's theater (*Vaccaria* is especially indebted to *La Lena*) never played there because the theater was destroyed by fire on the last day of 1532.⁹ Around the same time, the publishing world had further refreshed awareness of the Ferrarese channel of Latin comic tradition: between 1528 and 1530 the Venetian printer Zoppino published many of the old vernacular versified translations of Plautus and Terence used in the productions staged by Duke Ercole d'Este between 1486 and 1509 (and after),¹⁰ beginning with the epochal performance of Plautus' *Menechini* on January 25, 1486, a text and an occasion that I will return to at the end of my essay.¹¹ That texts from 1486 to 1509 seminal for the genesis and development of *commedia erudita* were circulating or played anew in the second decade of the Cinquecento proved significant for the conception of *La Lena*, which in many respects summarizes a tradition.

Versification was the principal object of Ariosto's reworking of the plays he originally wrote in prose, the *Cassaria* and the *Suppositi* (though the *Cassaria*, when first performed, may actually have been in verse, *barzellette* and *frottole*, as reported to Isabella d'Este by eyewitness Bernardo Prosperi).¹² For these, as for the originals of *Negromante* and *La Lena*, Ariosto used hendecasyllabic verses ending in *sdruciole*, possibly designed to approximate the iambic *senarius* used in versified Latin comedies—although these employed numerous other meters as

⁷ For the success of *Mandragola*, see Padoan, *L'avventura*, 39, 52 (citing Marin Sanudo's report); for Machiavelli's linguistic challenge to Ariosto, as expressed in the *Dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua*, now commonly attributed to Machiavelli, see Coluccia, *L'esperienza*, 169. Ariosto drew from Bibbiena's Calandro for Cleandro in *I Suppositi* and for Camillo Pocosale in *Il Negromante* (see Coluccia, *L'esperienza*, 192).

⁸ See Catalano, *Vita*, 1:592 and Stefani's introduction to Publio Filippo Mantovano, *Formicone*, ed. Luigina Stefani (Ferrara: Bovolenta, 1980), 21.

⁹ Catalano, *Vita*, 1: 589–92; Padoan, *L'avventura*, 101; Ruzzante, *La Vaccaria* (in Ruzzante, *Teatro*, ed. Ludovico Zorzi (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), 1039–1179. For parallels of *La Vaccaria* and *La Lena*, see Zorzi's appended notes 20, 58, 88, 91, 135, 139. On *Vaccaria* and Plautus' *Asinaria*, see Ferruccio Bertini, “Aspetti della fortuna dell' *Asinaria* in Italia nei secoli XV e XVI,” in *Lecturae plautinae sarsinates II: Asinaria (Sarsina, 12 settembre 1998)*, ed. Renato Raffaelli and Alba Tontini (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 1999), 97–113, 144–46 and 149–50, 160 notes 30–34.

¹⁰ Duke Alfonso also may have asked Ariosto to make translations of Terence's *Andria* and *Eunuchus* in this period; see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:587–88, drawing from a notice by Giralaldi Cinthio.

¹¹ On the Zoppino editions, see also Vito Orlando, “Le edizioni rinascimentali e i volgarizzamenti di Plauto e Terenzio,” *Aevum* 14 (1940): 573–81, and Padoan, *L'avventura*, 56 note 34, on the 1530 editions. Francesco Minizio Calvo edited a 1524 anthology that included seven comedies: *Calandra*, *Cassaria*, *Suppositi*, *Mandragola*, *Formicone*, *Aristippia*, *Eutychia* (Padoan, *L'avventura*, 32). Ariosto in about 1529 also reputedly translated *Menechini* for a French version to be made for Renée of France (Catalano, *Vita*, 1:586–88; Padoan *L'avventura*, 55).

¹² Catalano, *Vita*, 2: 83, document 138; Coluccia, *L'esperienza*, 41–45.

well. Classical models and the opinion of humanists such as Poliziano,¹³ along with the Ferrarese experience of Roman plays rendered in Italian vernacular *terza* and *ottava rima*, evidently convinced Ariosto that despite the greater popularity of plays in prose and the preference for them declared by important patrons such as Isabella d'Este and her son Federico Gonzaga, the correct imitation of the ancients required the use of verse.¹⁴ Studies have shown how carefully Ariosto deployed his *versi sdruccioli* for the sake of suggesting natural speech rhythms, though opinions as to their success remained mixed until the second half of the century.¹⁵ The turn to verse has been linked to Ariosto's supple use of *terza rima* in his *Satire*, composed in the period 1517–25, when Ariosto returned to the practice of plays in verse (*Negromante* had been completed in 1520), and which share a number of features with the comedies, from dialogic structure and characterization by idiolect to sharp satire of corruption and excess, and in some cases touch on topics found also in *Lena*, as will appear in the remarks that follow.¹⁶

In *La Lena*, which was, like *Il Negromante*, originally composed in verse, the use of *versi sdruccioli* is demonstrably intrinsic to the play's overall verbal texture:¹⁷ nine of the fifteen

¹³ On these versified translations and their use as scripts, see, most recently, Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, "Ferrara, 25 gennaio 1486," in *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, ed. Sergio Luzzato and Gabriele Pedullà (Turin: Einaudi, 2010), 572–78, at 571–75. In Poliziano's letter to Paolo Comparini and prologue to the 1488 Florentine production of *Menaechmi*, Poliziano scorns unversified, unartistic comedies ("qui comoedias absque versibus, nullo nec artificio nec elegantia docent") and does so again in his prologue written, consistently with his view, in iambic *senarii*, to distinguish his work from those who of authentic comedy possess neither verse nor complex plots, only the titles (18–20: "Quorum nec ullis versibus comoediae / Nec argumento constant perpexabili / Nec quicquam habent comoediae praeter titulos") (text in Giovanna Bombieri, "Osservazioni sul Prologo ai *Menecmi* di Angelo Poliziano," in *Tradizione classica e letteratura umanistica. Per Alessandro Perosa*, ed. Romeo Cardini, Eugenio Garin, Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, and Giovanni Pascucci, 2 vols. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), 2:489–506.

¹⁴ See Catalano, *Vita*, 1:323–24, doc. 602; Fabrizio Cruciani, Clelia Falletti, and Franco Ruffini, "La sperimentazione teatrale a Ferrara negli anni di Ercole I," *Teatro e storia* 9 (1994): 131–217, at 133–34 (on Isabella's preference for prose).

¹⁵ See Pier Marco Bertinetto, "Il ritmo della prosa e del verso nelle commedie dell'Ariosto," in *Ludovico Ariosto: lingua, stile e tradizione: Atti del congresso organizzato dai comuni di Reggio Emilia e Ferrara 12–16 ottobre 1974*, ed. Cesare Segre (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), 347–377 and, in the same volume, Cecil Grayson, "Appunti sulla lingua delle commedie in prosa e in versi," 379–390; also Antonella Valoroso, "La 'poetica imitazione': L'esperienza teatrale di Ludovico Ariosto tra esercizio dei classici e esperienza drammaturgica," *Italian Culture* 21 (2003): 19–44, at 40, note 33. Mario Marti, cited in Bertinetto, "Il ritmo," 352, noted how Ariosto's prose harbors implicit rhythmic units adaptable to hendecasyllables. Coluccia, *L'esperienza*, 93–97, discusses the changing reception of Ariosto's versifications; for mid-16th-century assessments, see Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinthio, *Discorsi intorno al comporre*, ed. Susanna Villari (Messina: Centro interdipartimentale di studi umanistici, 2002), 252 (*Intorno al comporre* 2.101; unfavorable) and Leone de' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche*, ed. Ferruccio Marotti (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1968), 20–21, favorable. See also Ferroni, *Ariosto*, 60–84.

¹⁶ Cesare Segre, "Struttura dialogica delle satire ariostesche," in his *Semiotica filologica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), 117–30, at 130, observes, in outlining the dialogic structure of the *Satire*: "Le *Satire* sono forse le migliore commedie dell'Ariosto"; he also notes (129) the chronological parallel with the turn to verse in the plays. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, "La tradizione della terza rima e l'Ariosto," in *Ludovico Ariosto: lingua, stile e tradizione*, 303–314, points out the use of *terza rima* in Ariosto's milieu, including their use in translating Latin plays. See also Corrado Bologna, *La macchina del Furioso: Lettura dell'Orlando e delle Satire* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998), 44–46.

¹⁷ *Sdruccioli* were used to suggest rustic verses sung by shepherds in pastoral poems, or pastoral interludes in plays: cf. Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Pastorale* (1481–82), VII, rubric, "*contendono in sdruzola Damone e Gorgo*," Poliziano, *Orfeo*, lines 88–96, Gaspare Visconti, *Pasithea* (about 1495), which includes pastoral scenes entirely in *sdruccioli* (Acts 4.5, 5.3), and Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (1499), which begins and ends with them; as well as for the lyrics of minor Tuscan poets such as Filenio Gallo, Bernardo Pulci, and Francesco Arsocchi (see Bertinetto, "Il ritmo," 348); they are prominently featured in Quattrocento discussions of metrics (e.g., Guido Peppo or della Stella, discussed in

names for characters are *sdrucchioli*, or metrically treated as such: Pacifico, Corbolo, Egano, Torbido, Flavio, Fazio, Ilario, Bartolo, Menica. What is more important, thematically important *sdrucchiole* words for a play about economic pressures recur frequently in final verse position (e.g., *vendere, togliere, perdere, spendere, debito, credito, utile*).¹⁸ The implications of Ariosto's insistent choice of verse is no mere detail, nor is it wholly to be explained by Ariosto's fidelity to classical norms: it points, rather, to the importance of number and measure in *La Lena*, for what differentiates verse from prose is precisely measure and number (and often rhyme).¹⁹ Thus my larger argument in this paper concerns what I take to be Ariosto's systematic inclusion of identifiable topics of measurement and, more generally, of numeracy, throughout the play. As students of the play have observed, the predominance of economic forces in the action, constraining the characters, though not unfamiliar to the Latin comedies that were Ariosto's models, is in *Lena* elevated to central importance.²⁰ Further economic implications for the text of *Lena* may be observed in the play's references to the physical expansion of Ferrara known as the *Addizione erculea*, realized between 1492 and 1510, when Ariosto was establishing his theatrical career, and in relation to the practice of prostitution—in Dante's phrase, trade in "femmine da conio"—widespread in the ducal city.²¹

With regard to both Ferrarese urbanization and commodified female bodies, Lena's house, where she is sexually accessible to Fazio, is the focus and symbol. In the final analysis, we will see, the play is constructed in terms of an inventory of possessions and a book of accounts, the typical documents of a Ferrarese polity characterized by economic rationalism, surveillance, and control.²² Thus in the first scene of *Lena*, with which my analysis begins in the following

Carlo Dionisotti, "Ragioni metriche del '400," in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 124 (1947): 1–34. An otherwise unknown play "in versi di rime sdrucchiole" with a political theme, praising the Pope and the League of Cambrai, was produced for Isabella Gonzaga in Milan on 25 January 1513 (see Luigina Stefani's note 21 in Nicola Grasso, *Eutichia*, ed. Luigina Stefani (Messina-Firenze: D'Anna, 1981), 16–17).

¹⁸ A comparison with frequent *sdrucchiole* words in *Negromante*, a play that we know was first conceived in verse, shows that Ariosto's emphases are specific to that play, touching on supposed magic, fraud, impotence, and adultery: *astrologo* (21 times); *pentacolo* (4 times, plus *pentola* and *spantacchio* as related malapropisms); *invisibile* (4); *pratica* (9); *utile* (6); *adultera* (5); *impotenza* (3); *sponsalizio* (3), *sterili* and *gravida* once each; and once, wittily, *sdrucchiolo* (line 1732, referring to Nibio's motion from street to street). A scattering of words beginning *mal-* (*malissima-*, *malediche*, *malizia* [twice]; *malefica*; *malivoli*) is also thematic.

¹⁹ Rhyme also figures among the numerical aspects of verse, although not in Ariosto's versification in *sdrucchioli*. Ariosto hints at the importance of enumeration in the text of *Lena* itself: it is striking that *annoveri* ("you count, you number," and a *sdrucchiolo*) is found five times at the end of a verse of *Lena* (lines 278, 313, 453, 1194, 1490), four times emphasizing the need for, or the accumulation of, money. Roman numeracy (and avarice) were topical; see Horace, *Ars poetica* 325–32, as was scriptural emphasis on the numerical and geometrical "composition" of the creation (e.g. Proverbs 8.23–27, Wisdom 11.10). Italian literary tradition, especially in the case of poetry, often "counted" verses; for the topic of accounting linked to numerological form in Boccaccio's *Caccia di Diana*, see Arielle Saiber, "The Game of Love" (*Caccia di Diana*), in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Smarr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 109–17, at 115–17.

²⁰ Guido Davico Bonino, "Introduzione," *Teatro del Cinquecento*, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 1:xix: "la tecnica di vita è quella della truffa, e lo strumento dell'una e dell'altra è il denaro"; see also Ferroni, "Il testo," 149, and especially Paul Larivaille, "Spazio scenico e spazio cittadino ne *La Lena*," in *La corte e lo spazio*, ed. Amedeo Quondam and Giuseppe Papagno, 3 vols. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1982), 1:257–78; also Coluccia, "L'esperienza," 26.

²¹ For the concept of "coining" persons, see Ruzzante's *Lena*-inspired *Vaccaria*, in Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1095 ("o che ciascuno fosse signato della sua valuta come sono le monete").

²² For the despotic, frequently tyrannical, character of Este rule, see Werner L. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 272–81; Antonio Piromalli, *La cultura a Ferrara al tempo di Ludovico Ariosto* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1975), 37–62, 160–80; and Giorgio Masi, "The

paragraphs, the eponymous character rejects any bargain of trust with the young suitor Flavio other than a strictly monetary one, insisting on cash in hand before she will allow him entry into her house and access to the girl of his desire. In one sense this means Lena is true to her literary genealogy as a procuress, a *ruffiana*; but in Ariosto's broader perspective it is symptomatic of the dissolution of an idealized system of relations based on sworn loyalty or *fede*, between individuals within a feudal social structure. This occurred—even in the presence of what has been called, though note without challenge, the “re-feudalization of Europe” in the Cinquecento—as traditional chivalric values gave way to relations grounded in *realpolitik* and economic exploitation, changes due in part to the political crises and economic hardships that afflicted the peninsula after the French invasion of 1494.²³

La Lena is the most trenchant and original of Ariosto's plays, but not exactly in the way many readers have thought. Although it departs from the typical multiple plot of erudite comedy, it is not a progressive “liberation from models” as some English-speaking and Italian critics have claimed, who see *La Cassaria* and *I Suppositi* as the high-water marks of Ariosto's classical borrowings;²⁴ an influential book in English on Italian drama goes so far as to discount the influence of classical plays in *Lena*.²⁵ But *Lena* is no less mediated by classical models than the first version of *Suppositi*, which proclaims debts to Plautus and Terence in its prologue (as does the prologue to the first, 1528 *Lena*).²⁶ In the case of *Lena*, the borrowing has been adapted with

Nightingale in a Cage: Ariosto and the Este Court,” in *Ariosto Today: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Donald Beecher, Massimo Ciavolella, and Roberto Fedi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 71–92, at 72–73. For Ariosto's often subtle critiques of the Estensi and other Renaissance despots (e.g., the Pope) in this respect, see Albert Russell Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 381–89, and two essays by the same author, “Ariosto's ‘Fier Pastor’: Form and History in *Orlando furioso*”; and “Erichonius' Secret: Body Politics in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*,” 243–281, both collected in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 205–42, and 243–81. See also Ronald L. Martinez, “De-cephalizing Rinaldo: The Money of Tyranny in Niccolò da Correggio's *Fabula de Cefalo* and in *Orlando Furioso* 42–43,” *Annali d'italianistica* 12 (1994): 87–114.

²³ The stresses of this transition make up one of Ariosto's great themes in the *Orlando Furioso*, and are at the heart of several essays by Albert R. Ascoli; see at least “Fede e riscrittura: Il *Furioso* del 1532,” *Rinascimento* 43, 2nd series (2003): 93–130.

²⁴ E.g., the introduction of Angela Casella (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, xxxvi); and the introduction to Ludovico Ariosto, *La Lena*, ed. Stefano Bianchi (Rome: Rizzoli, 1995), 13–14; followed by Maggie Günsberg, *Gender and the Italian Stage: From the Renaissance to the Present Day* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 245–46; and Andrews, *Scripts*, 83–87. Jackson Cope, *Secret Sharers in Italian Drama, Machiavelli to Goldoni* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 14, complains that Ariosto had not freed himself from Latin models—but it is far from obvious he wished to do so. None of these critics gives a satisfactory account of Ariosto's play; an exception is the unpublished lecture by Deanna Shemek, “Wives and Sexual Commerce on the Italian Renaissance Stage,” a talk at the Renaissance Society of America in 2012, kindly shared with me by the author, the only essay I know of that takes fully seriously the existential predicament of the title character and the commodification of female bodies that she represents.

²⁵ On Plautus and Terence in Ferrarese culture, which was animated by the educational program of Guarino Veronese during the marquissate of Leonello d'Este in the mid-Quattrocento, see Marco Villoresi, *Da Guarino a Boiardo: La cultura teatrale a Ferrara nel Quattrocento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1994), 15–71; on the continuance of such expertise through the ferrarese *studium*, see *ibid.*, 118 (“i commediografi latini mantennero senz'altro anche nella seconda metà del secolo quel ruolo preminente acquistato nel trentennio guariniano”).

²⁶ See the prologue to *I Suppositi* (Ariosto, *Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 197): “E vi confessa in questo l'autore avere a Plauto e Terenzio seguitato, de li quali l'un fece Cherea per Doro, e l'altro Filocrate per Tindaro, e Tindaro per Filocrate, l'uno ne lo *Eunuco*, l'altro ne li *Captivi*, supponersi.” “Supposition” also describes the exchange between the Latin and the vernacular play: Ariosto is “supposing” Latin characters with his own. The explicit references were removed for the revised version in verse.

great ingenuity to fit Ferrarese circumstances.²⁷

Indeed, despite the diligent elucidation of Latin precedents by editors such as Angela Casella and Luigina Stefani, Ariosto's reliance on ancient models remains incompletely catalogued. For example, to my knowledge, it has not been noticed that the discovery by Fazio's servant Menghino of Flavio embracing Licinia in the fifth act (line 1569), which is the last of the plot complications in *La Lena* and triggers the final dénouement, imitates an episode from the second act of Plautus' *Miles gloriosus* (lines 170–76) wherein the slave Sceledrus, standing on a rooftop over an *impluvium*, sees Philocomasium, the freeborn girl abducted by the braggart soldier, embracing her lover Pleusicles; there too the discovery precipitates an important turn in the plot.²⁸ The registration within this essay of some of the richness of Ariosto's debts to Plautus and Terence, as well as to his more contemporary vernacular predecessors, is intended not only to enhance the understanding of Ariosto's play, but to underline another sign of an "economic" dimension to the play, since—as I will show more fully later—it involves Ariosto's participation in an atemporal community of playwrights and authors, to which, as a writer, he owes significant debts and to which he hopes to bequeath a fruitful legacy.

For in *Lena* the incorporation of classical models goes a further step: in his last play Ariosto makes his borrowings instruments of reflection on the whole tradition, a *mise en abîme* of the Roman-inspired vernacular comic genre that he had helped to shape. For example, as is well known, the first scene of *Lena*, set in the early morning before Prime (about 6 AM), in which Corbolo and Flavio converse as they approach Lena's doorway, recalls in part the opening scene of Plautus' *Curculio*.²⁹ In the Latin play the door is opened by a drunken servant whose name, *Leaena*, "lioness," anticipates that of Ariosto's protagonist. The subsequent negotiation in *Lena* between Ariosto's Lena and Flavio over the price of entry to the house imitates, however, another doorway conversation, from Plautus' *Asinaria*, between the procuress Cleareta and Argyrippus, the young man to whom she is selling access to the sexual favors of her daughter

²⁷ In *Lena* Act 3.1, lines 578–93, Corbolo evokes Plautine and Terentian characters as challenges to his ingenuity. For catalogues of "Ferrarese" updating, see Ariosto, *Tutte le opere, Commedie*, ed. Casella, xlii–xlv and Larivaille, "Spazio scenico," in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:260–62, 274. Guido Marpillero, "I *Suppositi* di Ludovico Ariosto," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 31 (1888): 291–308 and "Il *Negromante* di Ludovico Ariosto," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 33 (1890): 303–39, canvassed Ariosto's imitations so as to impugn his invention. Recent emphasis on reflection of Ferrarese reality in *I suppositi* is in Sergio Costola, "La prima rappresentazione dei *Suppositi* di Ariosto nel 1509," in *Lucrezia tra Letteratura e Storia*, ed. Michele Bordin and Paolo Trovato (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2006), 75–96.

²⁸ I cite the bilingual Plauto, *Miles gloriosus*, trans. Giovanna Faranda (Milan, Mondadori, 1997), 23–25. Along with vernacular versions of Plautus' *Epidicus*, *Bacchides*, *Asinaria*, and *Casina*, the *Miles gloriosus* was played, in the vernacular version by Celio Calcagnini (*Milite glorioso*, lost) during the festivities celebrating the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este (January 3–8, 1502). See Catalano, *Vita*, 1:120; Padoan, *L'avventura*, 10; and Anna Maria Coppo, "Spettacoli alla corte di Ercole I," in *Contributi dell'istituto di filologia moderna, Serie storie del teatro*, Pubblicazioni dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, vol. 1, ed. Mario Apollonio (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1968), 30–59, at 38; Cruciani et al., "La sperimentazione teatrale," 143.

²⁹ *Curculio* lines 15–22, 88–96; 147–54 is a formal apostrophe of the door, a *paraclausithyron*: see Elizabeth H. Haight, *The Symbolism of the House Door in Classical Poetry* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950), 69–91 at 85–86, and Timothy J. Moore, "Pessuli, heus pessuli: La porta nel *Curculio*," in *Lecturae plautinae sarsinates VIII: Curculio (Sarsina, 25 settembre 2004)*, ed. Renato Raffaelli and Alba Tontini (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 2005), 11–36. The door is personified as well in Plautus, *Mercator* lines 830–41; see also *Pseudolus* lines 605–7; *Stichus* lines 324–29; *Truculentus* lines 631–44. On Ariosto's debts to *Curculio*, performed in vernacular form in Ferrara in February of 1490, see Ariosto, *Tutte le opere, Commedie*, ed. Casella, xxxviii. There are similar doorway scenes in Ariosto's earlier plays: see *Cassaria* Act 3.1, and *Suppositi*, Act 4.3. *Mercator (Il mercatante)* was performed in 1500, and *Pseudolus* in 1501, in a version by Guarino (see Coppo, "Spettacoli," 38; Cruciani et al., "La sperimentazione," 142; Padoan, *L'avventura*, 10).

Philaenium.³⁰ The important point is that doorway scenes are commonplace, indeed inevitable in Latin comedy, which because of the structure and conventions of the Roman stage virtually never shows the interiors of houses. Notably frequent are the doorways of procurers or prostitutes, as in *Menaechmi*, or house-entrances, as in the *Amphitruo*: that is, in the first two vernacularized Latin plays produced in Ferrara, in 1486 and 1487, and often repeated thereafter. In the latter play—one that particularly recommended itself to Duke Ercole in representing the event that led to the birth of his heroic namesake—disguised as Amphitruo’s servant Sosia, the god Mercury must, to safeguard the privacy of Jove and Alcmena as they engender Hercules,³¹ conduct literally the entire play around the doorway. The dénouement begins in fact when the real Amphitruo threatens to batter down the door to his own house.³² Humanist students and imitators of ancient and modern theater were well apprised of the doorway convention. The treatise on antique show buildings (*Spectacula*) written by Pellegrino Prisciani, the Ferrarese polymath and adviser to Ercole I d’Este, follows Vitruvius and Alberti in remarking the doors and windows, the *usse* [uscii] and *finestre* of stagesets; similar observations can be found in several of the surviving eyewitness accounts of Ferrarese performances.³³

The prominence of doorways—which would be the more evident in actual staging,³⁴ given

³⁰ On the vernacular translation of *Asinaria*, performed in 1502 in Ferrara, and which pleased Isabella d’Este, see Bertini, “Aspetti,” 31–65 and 143–162. *Asinaria*, Act 1.3, lines 159, and especially 240–41 (“portitorum simillimae sunt ianuae lenoniae: / si affers, tum patent, si non est quod des, aedes non patent” [the door to a procurer is like the one on a customs-house: if you bring something, they open, if not, the doors stay closed]) are recast in Lena’s quip that the money of credit is rejected even by exactors of customs duties (“questi che i dazi riscuoteno / per trista moneta la bandiscono,” *Lena* Act 1.1, lines 220–21; see also 533–34). Plautus’ *Pseudolus* includes a similar negotiation with the pimp Ballio, Act 1.3, lines 299–323.

³¹ Pandolfo Collenuccio’s lost translation of *Amphitruo* (played in 1487) included an encomiastic address to Ercole d’Este, cued by the play’s subject (the generation of Hercules by Zeus and Alcmena); see Padoan, *L’avventura*, 10 note 32, 11–12, and see Villosi, *Da Guarino a Boiardo*, 47–53 on Pietro Andrea de’ Bassi’s use of *Amphitruo* in his *Fatiche di Ercole* of 1475, and Franco Ruffini, *Teatri prima del teatro* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1983), 82 on Battista Guarini’s poem (*Baptistae Guarini poema Divo Herculi Ferrarensium duci dicatum*, Modena 1496); see also Bertini, “Aspetti,” 73–74.

³² On the door in *Amphitruo*, see Haight, *The Symbolism*, 81–84. See also the vernacular *Menechini* in *Teatro del Quattrocento: Le corti padane*, ed. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti and Maria Pia Mussini Sacchi (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1983), 98–99, 115, 130, 133. For a door-knocking scene in *Lena*, see Act 4.3, lines 1000–1005; there are parallels in Plautus, *Pseudolus* Act 2.2, lines 605–7, *Rudens* Act 2.4, line 414; and *Asinaria* 2.3, lines 384–403 (see Casella’s notes in Ariosto, *Tutte le opere, Commedie*, 1118–19, and 1053 n. 36). A parallel to *Amphitruo* 4.3, line 1021 is in *Suppositi* 4.4 (Ariosto, *Commedie*, see Stefani’s note). The tradition of echoing *Amphitruo* continued; Leone de’ Sommi’s *Tre sorelle* (1588) has a “defense of the door” in Act. 2.9; see Leone de’ Sommi, *Tre sorelle, Comedia*, ed. Giovanna Romei (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1982), 33–34.

³³ See Pellegrino Prisciani, *Spectacula*, ed. Danilo Aguzzi Barbagli (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1992), 45: “Et adornavase de colone, solari et de quali se potesse andare da l’uno a l’altro ad imitatione de case, cum ussi, porte et cum una in mezzo si come regale,” following Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, Book 8.7: “this section would be adorned with columns and entablature, one above the other, as in a house. In appropriate places portals and doors would be added, one in the center like a ‘royal’ door” (Leone Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and John Tavernor [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989], 273). In Bernardino Prospero’s description of the 1486 performance of *Menechini*, we hear of “Case V merlade, con una fenestra e uscio per ciascuna” (cited in Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, *Li due Orfei: da Poliziano a Monteverdi* [Turin: Einaudi, 1975], 364) and of the 1499 production of *Eunuchus* (cited in Pirrotta and Povoledo, *Li due Orfei*, 365): “se ge vedeva 5 case constructe con li sui ussi e finestre.” Ruffini, *Teatri*, 145–46, citing Alberti, notes that theaters are themselves “fatti tutte di aperture, cioè di scale e specialmente di porte e finestre” (see Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, 8.1.2).

³⁴ Doorways, keyed to sexual themes, play a role in humanist comedy: see Pier Paolo Vergerius, *Paulus*, line 489 (*Humanist Comedies*, ed. and trans. Gary R. Grund, 2 vols. [Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library,

that they serve for the actors's entrances and exits, often explicitly announced³⁵—may explain the popularity of a bit of stage business in several of the earliest *commedie erudite*. I refer to the servant's claim, when ordered by his master to open a door behind which illicit fornication is suspected—indeed, underway—that he or she cannot find the key: there are instances in the *Formicone* (Mantua, 1503) often described as the first regular Renaissance comedy (Act 4.3), in Bibbiena's *Calandra* (Act 4.4); in Ruzante's *Moscheta* (Act 3.4), sometimes thought to have been played along with *Lena* in Ferrara in 1529, as well as in plays later in the century.³⁶ Although a similar scene is not realized as such in *La Lena*, the topic of Lena's house—behind her closed door—as the rendezvous point for an illicit union of Flavio and Licinia hovers over the entire play. Expectations are in fact ironically reversed when, thanks to the movement of the barrel in which Flavio is hiding, the place of their embrace turns out to be Fazio's house, not Lena's (Act 5.10, lines 1569-86). Like the insistence on verse, thresholds and doors, beyond their practical utility for the stage action, carried meanings that were part of a repertory of conventions—what Louise George Clubb dubbed “theatergrams”—that Ariosto felt obliged to respect and exploit.³⁷

I included the word *fornication* in the previous paragraph advisedly, because the comic stage, both in theory and in fact, had a longstanding, not to say congenital, association with prostitution. Isidore of Seville, writing in the 7th century, identifies theaters with brothels, *prostribula*, because after the play (*ludus*) is done, prostitutes present themselves for sale (*prostant*).³⁸ In a celebrated image of the ancient theater published in the 1493 Lyon edition of Terence the theater space is literally built over the arches (*fornices*) from which prostitutes ply their trade, and from which the word *fornication* directly derives.³⁹ The association of the theater building with prostitution was strikingly reaffirmed in Este Ferrara in the generation before

2005], 38); Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Chrysis*, lines 503–504 (ibid., 323); Ugolino of Parma, *Philogenia et Epiphebus* scene 3 (Ibid., 181), “Salvete parietes atque fores” [“Hail walls and doors”].

³⁵ Thus constituting an embedded stage direction, as in Plautus (in Latin, *crepuere fores*; see Haight, *The Symbolism*, 76). One of the few nonsemantic sounds recorded in Early Modern playtexts is the sound of knocking (usually *tic toc*: e.g., Bibbiena, *Calandra* Act 3.10; Aretino, *Marescalco* Act 2.3; 5.8; but *ta ta ta* in de' Sommi's *Tre Sorelle* Act 2.4). For embedded stage directions on entrances and exits, see, for example, *I Suppositi* Act 1.1: 1.2; 1.3; 3.2; 4.6; 5.1.

³⁶ See Mantoano, *Formicone*, 58; Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, *La calandra: commedia elegantissima per messer Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena*, ed. Giorgio Padoan (Padua: Antenore, 1985), 52–53; *La moscheta*, in Ruzante, *Teatro*, 628–30. Lorenzo Strozzi's *La Pisana* (1516?), in Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, *Commedie: Commedia in versi – La Pisana – La Violante*, ed. Andrea Gareffi (Ravenna: Longo, 1980), 185–93 includes a similar scene (Act 5.3), though the problem is gaining entry, not enforcing delay. The topos is developed in Act 3.1 of Alessandro Piccolomini's *Alessandro* (published 1545) and in Francesco Maria Cecchi's *L'Assiuolo* (Act 4.2), played in 1549.

³⁷ Prologue to the *Suppositi* in prose: “perché non solo ne li costumi, ma ne li argomenti ancora de le fabule vuole essere de li antichi e celebrati poeti, a tutta sua possanza, imitatore” (Ariosto, *Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 154). For doorway scenes in Ariosto's earlier plays, see also *Cassaria* Act 1.2 and 2.2 in ibid., 87, 101–102, and *Suppositi* Act 4.3 and 4.4, in ibid., 196–97

³⁸ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 18.42 (J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 82.657C), “Idem vero theatrum, idem et prostibulum, eo quod post ludos exactos meretrices ibi prostarent.” See Donnalee Dox, *The Idea of the Theatre in Latin Christian Thought: Augustine to the Fourteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 11–43. In his mid-14th-century *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*, 14.19, Giovanni Boccaccio condemns “comedies” as uniformly obscene, Plautus and Terence excepted.

³⁹ For discussion of the 1493 Lyon Treschel frontispiece of Terence, see Ludovico Zorzi, *Il teatro e la città* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 314–315 (who underscores the historical coincidence of arenas, theaters, and prostitution) and Ruffini, *Teatri*, 30–47, discussing Antonio Filarete's construal of the theater as the *via voluptuaria*, lowest of the several ways toward wisdom offered by drama. In Filarete's account prostitutes are “monache di Venere” (ibid., 31–33).

Ariosto. In the Prisciani-directed Schifanoia frescoes, painted in 1465–70, the scene for the month of April includes an inset with a city scene and “Vitruvian” stage front of unmistakably Albertian provenance. On the fresco, Este courtiers witness the “race of the defamed” through Ferrara streets, a population that until 1476 included prostitutes: here again pointedly juxtaposed to the theater building.⁴⁰ And in what became for the later Cinquecento the standard scenography of the comic stage, published in 1545 but developed decades earlier, the only stage building labeled is the house of the procuress or *ruffiana*, as if that were alone sufficient to identify the comic genre.⁴¹ That the action of Ariosto’s last play is centered on the house of a character at once both a *ruffiana* and self-declared *puttana* is thus a metatheatrical reflection on the origins and nature of comic theater. Lena’s house, in one sense a school for Fazio’s daughter Licinia, is also poised to become the house of the girl’s prostitution, although that outcome fails to be realized. As will emerge later, in the case of *La Lena*, the play itself, along with its representation of a dystopian Ferrarese economy, may also be considered a “house,” one constructed by the playwright.

As I mentioned earlier, much Lena criticism interprets the use of Ferrarese place names as evidence that Ariosto’s later plays migrate from Latin exemplars toward a “commedia d’ ambiente.”⁴² But just as Dante (*Convivio* 1.11.14) and after him Bembo (*Prose della volgar lingua* 1.5) justified the turn to the vernacular by citing Cicero’s defense of Latin against Greek, Ariosto’s sensitivity to the Ferrarese environment had Latin precedents:⁴³ Plautus’ *Curculio*

⁴⁰ Zorzi, *Il teatro*, 10–16 discusses the Schifanoia April fresco image in light of the history of scenography in Estense Ferrara, including the roles played by Alberti and Prisciani. The Prisciani-directed Schifanoia fresco, illustrates the San Giorgio day race (in Ferrara, on April 23) of the defamed, including prostitutes (cf. in Zorzi *Il teatro*, 10, “gare umilianti,” and 39–43); see also Villoresi *Da Guarino*, 116–17, who notes Ercole’s 1476 edict requiring instead “pute oneste e da bene.” For sociopolitical and gender-political implications of this *palio*, see Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 17–44, and Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, “The Topography of Prostitution in Renaissance Ferrara,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60 (2001): 402–31, at 408–409. The Schifanoia fresco image of a “Vitruvian” stage, executed about 1469–70, betrays Prisciani’s role in directing the plan of the frescoes (his *Spectacula* draws heavily on Alberti’s *De architectura*, and on Vitruvius as well). In the fresco, there are visual references to Alberti’s Tempio Malatestiano (left unfinished in 1464) and Palazzo Rucellai façades. Alberti had visited Ferrara, and may have consulted on the monument to Niccolò III; Alberti’s play *Philodoxia* was in ducal library, as was his *De Architectura* (later lost). See Jon Pearson Perry, “A Fifteenth-Century Dialogue on Literary Taste: Angelo Decembrio’s Account of Playwright Ugolino Pisani at the Court of Leonello d’Este,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986): 613–643, at 625–28, and Charles Rosenberg, *The Este Monuments and Urban Development in Renaissance Ferrara* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 57–61, 129, 137–38, 270–72; see also “‘Mi mostrano a dito tutti quanti’: Disease, Deixis, and Disfiguration in the *Lamento di una donna ferrarese*,” in *Medusa’s Gaze: Essays on Gender, Literature, and Esthetics in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Paul A. Ferrara, Eugenio Giusti, and Jane Tylus, *Italiana* 11 (2004), 49–64. Ariosto’s prose *Suppositi*, Act 1.1 (*Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 157) refers to the Via Grande, the route of the San Giorgio *palio*.

⁴¹ Depending on the edition of Serlio’s work, the label legible on the house is RVF or RVFIA; in Serlio’s Book II, page 139, it is specified that the house, an obligatory building for the comic scene, belongs to the *Ruffiana* (“ma sopra il tutto che non vi manchi la casa de la ruffiana”: misread, or misprinted, as “ruffi[ano]” in *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture*, vol. I (*Books I–V of Tutte le opere d’architettura et prospetiva* by Sebastiano Serlio), edited and translated by Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 434. Among humanist comedies, in the wake of both Plautus (*Asinaria*; see Bertini, “Aspetti,” 99) and Terence (esp. *Andria*, and *Eunuchus*), Vergerio’s *Paulus* and Piccolomini’s *Chrysis* are almost entirely focused on prostitution (but see Emily O’Brien, “Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini’s *Chrysis*: Prurient Pastime—or Something more?,” *Modern Language Notes* 124 [2009]: 111–36). Ugolino Pisani’s *Pamphila* depicts the regularization of adulterous concubinage, which occurs as well in Gaspare Barzizza’s *Cauteraria* and Giacomo del Carretto’s *I Sei contenti*.

⁴² Casella in Ariosto, *Tutte le opere, Commedie*, xxxvi.

⁴³ Compare Ariosto’s intentional blooper of mentioning the Ferrarese Moro tavern at the end of the prose *Cassaria*

again offers a model. Before Act 4.1, an interruption in the action by the property manager compares the events of the play, which is set in Athens like most Roman comedies, to an itinerary that takes us past places not in Athens but in Rome where vicious *Roman* behavior—bragging, gluttony, prostitution, usury, sodomy, perjury, and so on—is routinely to be found.⁴⁴ By redirecting his audience’s attention from an imaginary Athens to a contemporary Rome, the Latin author provided a model for Ariosto’s modernization, to a Ferrarese urban setting, of plots, situations, characters, and language themselves learned from the classical text: including the sharply satirical bite often found in Plautine comedy.⁴⁵ Nor was Ariosto the only Ferrarese writer doing this kind of updating: in 1479, Battista Guarino had felt the need to justify, writing to Duke Ercole (18 February) the modernization of details in translations of Plautus’ *Asinaria* and *Curculio*;⁴⁶ and in his *Spectacula*, left unfinished in about 1500, Pellegrino Prisciani explicitly discussed the city *piazze* of Ferrara as spaces for performances, from preaching to the recitation of chivalric poems—which I take to be Prisciani’s possibly proleptic version of the much-studied visual meditations by late 15th- and early 16th- century artists on the homology of the stageset and the idealized cityscape.⁴⁷

(Act 5.5), a play set in the city of Metellino on the island of Lesbos, or Ariosto’s mention in both versions of the *Negromante* (1.2, line 155) of the church of Santo Stefano, not found in Cremona but extant in Ferrara (see Ariosto, *Tutte le opere, Commedie*, ed. Casella, 1078 n. 19). Because drawn from Greek models conventionally set chiefly in Athens, Plautus’s plays often let slip Roman place names (e.g., the *porta trigemina* in the Servian wall near the *Forum boarium*, in *Captivi*, Act 1.1, line 90, supposed set in Aetolia). Marpillero, “*I suppositi*,” lists the following: *Pseudolus* Act 1.3 (Roman law and gate, *porta*); 2.2 (lines 13–15; 64, “extra porta huc in tabernam”); *Captivi* Act 3.1 (line 29: *velabrum*); *Cistellaria* Act 2.3 (line 21, “ex Tusco modo”), *Casina* Act 2.6 (line 354, “extra porta”). Other passages echo Roman institutions: *Aulularia* Act 1.2, 2.2, 3.5; *Menaechmi* Act 4.2 (*aediles*), *Poenulus* Act 3.1, *Captivi* Act 4.2; *Bacchides* Act 4.9 (line 933: “O troia o patria”); *Captivi*, lines 721–26.

⁴⁴ See *Curculio*, Act 4.1 (lines 467–91), unusual also because it represents an interruption by the *choregus*, the property-manager. On this scene and its depiction of the Republican forum see Timothy J. Moore, “*Palliata togata*: Plautus, *Curculio*, 462–86,” *American Journal of Philology* 112 (1991): 343–362 and Paolo Sommella, “La Roma plautina (con particolare riferimento a *Cur.* 467-85),” in Renato Raffaelli and Alba Tontini, eds., *Lecturae plautinae sarsinates VIII. Curculio* (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 2005), 69–116. The 16th-century glossator on Plautus Bernardo Saraceno assigns the scene to the braggart soldier and glosses the passage as moralizing satire on Plautus’ part: “Na[m] ueluti ueteris memor comoediae sub p[er]sona militis taxat uitia & malos urbis mores recenset” [For like an old comedy with the character of the soldier it reproves vices and examines the bad customs of the city] and goes on to identify the sites on the Roman forum. See Giovanni Battista Pio, Bernardus Saracenus, and Giovanni Pietro Valla, *M. Plauti linguae latinae Principis comoediae XX recens ex collatione multorum codicum q[ue] tum calamo scripti tum formulis excusi habebat[n]tur singularis diligentur recognitae : figurantur etiam ad p[er]fectiorem operis intellige[n]tiam singula narrationum capita* (Venice: Lazzaro de’ Soardi, 1511), fol. XCVI (in modern pagination, 194–95), accessed online 5/14/2016 at: http://reader.digital-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10195815_00001.html.

⁴⁵ Ariosto’s imagined account of a tour of Rome in his *Satira* 7.133–35 (“qui’ dica ‘il circo, qui il Foro romano / qui fu Suburra, e questo il sacro clivo; / qui di Vesta il tempio e qui solea aver Iano”); see Ludovico Ariosto, *Satire*, ed. Cesare Segre [Turin: Einaudi, 1987], 66) may in fact include an echo of *Curculio* 4.1, lines 468–82, which also articulates with anaphoric *qui* (beginning lines 470–71, 78–79) the tour of Roman sites (only the Forum is shared with Ariosto’s version, however). The modern text of *Curculio* is drawn from *Plautus’ Curculio*, ed. John Wright (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).

⁴⁶ For the text of the letter, recording Battista’s desire to “ridurre la cosa alla moderna,” see Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, “Commedie classiche in Ferrara nel 1499,” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 11 (1888): 176–89, at 177–78, with comment in Villorosi, *Da Guarino*, 121–24. For the question of modernizing Plautus in terms of a distinctively oral idiom, see Chiara Sbordoni, “A Vernacular Renaissance of Plautus: Texts and Performances of Battista Guarino’s Comedy *I Menechini*,” *The Italianist* 34 (2014): 379–99.

⁴⁷ “perche [*sic*] nui vedemo se se predica on in piazza on in qualche altro aperto loco, immo qualche fiata ad un tracto si vede in piazza tri et quatro zurmaduri, cavadenti, cantatori di gesta et le brigate adunarsi attorno tuti in forma circolare senza, come ho dicto, che loro li ponano altra fantasia e consideratione” (Prisciani, *Spectacula*, 48).

Similar emphasis on local place names can be found in earlier plays, especially *I Suppositi* and the unfinished *I Studenti*, both set in Ferrara, but in *Lena* the local references are selected to emphasize buying, selling, borrowing, and lending: the implicit map of Ferrara is an economic one. Indeed the plot of the play, always recognized as departing from the typical complex intrigue around disguised identity, is constructed by interweaving subplots focused on the acquisition or loss of three kinds of goods: clothing, household furniture, and real estate. As will appear later, the composition and order of this list, or rather this embryonic *inventory*, are thematically relevant and carefully motivated, and characteristic of a polity where everything has its price.

In the first scene of the play, Flavio turns up without the twenty-five florins Lena requires of him for granting him access to Licinia when she comes for her lessons in home economics. Flavio had attempted to borrow the money from his friend Giulio, but Giulio has instead arranged to obtain it from a third party, who has required collateral to make the loan. Recycling the arguments of *Asinaria*'s Cleareta—who is, significantly, a mother in the business of prostituting her daughter⁴⁸—Lena is deaf to Flavio's unfunded petition, and she expands the economic implications of Flavio's petition to the civic sphere by declaring credit to be a kind of illicit money proscribed by the collectors of import tariffs (the *dazio*), “fra le triste monete la bandiscono.”⁴⁹ She suggests instead that Flavio take his fancy *berretta* and cloak of *velluto* and pawn them to the Jews of Sabbioni, Riva, or Carri—but Flavio has his servant Corbolo take it to Flavio's friend Giulio instead, as previously arranged, in hopes the unnamed third party will fork over the cash. Later, when the servant Corbolo makes up a story for Flavio's father Ilario that the cap and cloak are missing because stolen in an ambush on Flavio (Act 3.2), Corbolo offers to inform Isac and Benjamin and other Jews in pawnshops on the Riva to look out for the articles supposedly stolen. Corbolo's elaborate fiction subsequently fails in clamorous fashion in Act 3.6 when Giulio, who can't make the loan after all since he is owed money that has gone unpaid, sends Cremonino back with the clothes, which end up being returned, unluckily, in Ilario's presence. In sum: Flavio, owing money to Lena, wants to go in debt to Giulio, who appeals for funds to another acquaintance, who proves unable to supply them. On the margins of the action, but literally at both the center (Sabbioni) and periphery of Ferrara (Riva) both onomastically and geographically,⁵⁰ professional moneylenders stand poised to lend, if provided with collateral: thus does the circle of fiscal dependency expand. The cap and cloak subplot provide a first

For the literature on the Baltimore, Berlin, and Urbino panels, and sifting of hypotheses about them, see Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, trans. John Goodman (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1994), 199–227. Damisch's sharp separation of stagesets from cityscapes in discussing the panels may be an excess of *distinguo* (though he later [ibid., 371] insists on the *scenic* force of the Urbino panel as an anticipation of stagesets). Compare Ruffini's view of the city (as order), the theater (as celebration), and the temple (as the sacred), forming an interlocking triad of cultural functions in the Renaissance polity (Ruffini, *Teatri*, 135–36, 189–92). On the “città ferrarese” as scenographic representation of Ferrara, see Pirrotta and Povoledo, *I due Orfei*, 357–71 and Zorzi, *Il teatro*, 5–19.

⁴⁸ Like Lena, the mother of Gymnasium, in *Cistellaria*; and for the whole scene, cf. that of the pimp Ballio in *Pseudolus* (Act 1.3, lines 230–348) and of the *lena* Cleareta in *Asinaria* (Act 1.2–3, lines 127–248). The modern text of *Asinaria* consulted is *Asinaria: The One about the Asses*, Plautus, ed. John Henderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ Piccolomini's *Chrysis*, too, has a similar scene (see *Humanist Comedies*, 331–35) derived from Plautine models, notably *Asinaria* (see Bertini, “Aspetti,” 35–40).

⁵⁰ In Ferrara, the name of the Jewish Sabbioni moneylenders echoes the Via dei Sabbioni which opens off the main square adjacent to the Duomo of San Giorgio, while the family name Riva reflects the area near the river, known as Rippa or Riva (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 1117, note 59).

map—I use the metaphor advisedly—of how financial obligations spread both spatially and socio-economically throughout Ferrara.⁵¹

Another set of Ferrarese place names, and another system of perverse economic relationships, emerges from Corbolo's shopping trip. Hoping to soften up Lena's obduracy, Flavio gives Corbolo a florin for luxury food items: quail, doves, pigeons, capons, pheasant, wine, and cheese. In making his purchases, Corbolo tours the black market in game fowl that are supposedly at the disposal of the Duke, and comes into contact with the corrupt ducal gamekeepers in central city locations: the Castello, or Este fortress; the *porta del cortil*, that is, the entrance to the ducal palace; the stalls of the *orafai*, or goldsmiths, at the eastern end of the *Piazza Duomo*, and the *Vescovado*, the episcopal palace, just north of the cathedral. In this way he again extends the purchases for an intimate feast by touching upon a range of locations germane to the city's economic and civic life. The purpose of Corbolo's shopping, furnishing a banquet for a lover and a courtesan—in this case Lena and Pacifico—is another standard topic of Latin comedy: such a banquet is prominent in *Menaechmi* and it concludes Plautus' *Bacchides*.⁵² The lovers' meal, obviously enough, gives a displaced picture of their sexual activity, and its terms give rise to a series of obscene puns: that Flavio orders some birds roasted (*arosto*), and some braised (*lesso*) is a coded description of sexual acts (cooked "dry," and cooked "wet").⁵³ More seriously, as Corbolo reveals in Act II.3: 506–511, the Duke's fraudulently obtained pheasants are contraband foods proscribed to the public by statute, and thus suitably consumed in private by whores and their lovers ("ne le camere con puttane i bertonni se li mangiano").

With remarks of this kind, Corbolo channels Ariosto's disapproval in the *Satire* of the rich and expensive diets of the privileged, which include pheasants, turtledoves, and partridges (*Sat.* 2, lines 41–42: "ch'or vòl fagiani, or tortorelle, or starne") and fat pigeons and capons (*Sat.* 2.67–68: "grossi piccioni e capon grassi) and, more generally, diets that entail inequitable distribution of foodstuffs. Thus the *famiglia* of the wealthy cardinal that Ariosto satirizes dines on scraps (*Sat.* 2.238–40),⁵⁴ while, as Corbolo remarks, food in general is scarce in Ferrara and good meat unavailable: "penuria [...] di ogni buon cibo, né si mangiano se non carnacce" (2.476–78). Ariosto transforms the lovers' banquet, an obligatory feature of the comedy genre, into a satire on the extravagance of the privileged.

Recovery of debts is in turn central to Acts 3 and 4, where we find out about Pacifico's

⁵¹ See Larivaille, "Spazio scenico," in *La corte*, Quondam and Papagno, eds., 1: 274 on Corbolo's movements, and on his shopping (ibid., 1: 260–62). Casella's note (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, 1115, note 28) explains how Corbolo's remark that Flavio was beset by brigands wielding "arme d'asta" (*Lena* Act 3.2, line 673) contains word-play using slang (*asta* = money) that reflects at the lexical level Corbolo's use of double meanings that conceal the "wounds" to Flavio's purse (and thus to Ilario's) throughout the whole scene. Ariosto here rewrites the joke in Plautus' *Asinaria*, lines 589–90: "nimis velle habere perticam [...] qui verberarem / asinos, si forte occeperint clamare hinc ex crumina" ["I really wish I had a pole [...] to beat those asses with, if they start to bray inside my pocket], *asinos* standing for the Latin *as*, a small coin. See Note 65.

⁵² See, for example, Plautus, *Bacchides* Act 5.2, and *Menechini* (in *Teatro del Quattrocento*, Benvenuti and Sacchi, eds., 119), "a tavola e nel letto." Vernacular comedy, following Terence's *Eunuchus* Act 4.1, line 5 ("sine baccho et cerere friget Venus"), associated banqueting closely with prostitution, and with sex in general, e.g., Strozzi, *Commedia in versi*, Act 2.4–5, and *Suppositi* Act 3.1 (Ariosto, *Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 184).

⁵³ The *lesso* vs. *arosto* distinction is analogous to the distinction made in *Decameron* 5.10.9, between walking in the dry or sailing in the wet ("andare in zoccoli per l'asciutto" and "portare altrui in nave per lo piovoso"). See Branca's note (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca [Milan: Mondadori, 1976], 1313–14). See also Shemek, *Ladies Errant*, 172–73, 190, for a parallel in Bandello.

⁵⁴ *Satira* 2.238–40 (ed. Segre, 20): "Perciò li avanzi e le miserie estreme / fansi, di che la misera famiglia / vive affamata, e grida indarno e freme."

obligations to Bartolo Bindello of 40 lire 15 soldi, although Bartolo complains he has spent twice that much in legal and administrative fees in attempting to recover the money. First mentioned at Act 1.1, these are the debts Fazio has promised to settle in partial return for Lena's favors, but clearly has not done. By deferring their exploration to the center of the play, Ariosto underscores their importance in motivating Lena's morally questionable behavior. Among the objects Bartolo wants seized in lieu of nonpayment of debt is the cask belonging to Giuliano, who had previously lent it to Pacifico to make his wine ("bollire il mosto").⁵⁵ With the cask episode and its associated events, human relationships in the play come to be expressed through a cascade of interlocking obligations, in this case referring not to personal items like Flavio's hat and cloak but to household goods. The Ferrarese are all shareholders in the credits and debits of this debt-ridden economy: Flavio shares in his father's patrimony, and helps dilapidate it; so will the moneylenders have a share, if they take in pawn the clothes; Giuliano and Bartolo and in a sense Pacifico claim shares in the wine-cask; Fazio and Pacifico share in both the house and in Lena. Lena herself has a stake as well, for she is the breadwinner in her household, and her dowry in the form of inventoried movables is the only thing standing between her and the ruin brought on by Pacifico's debts (Act 4.2, 4.6, 5.11). This coextensiveness of human and economic interest becomes explicit when Corbolo, hoping to further tangle up the property dispute between Giuliano and Bartolo, announces that he also has a share in the wine cask (*appertiemmi*)—rightly so, for his young master is trapped within it (Act 4.6). Ariosto plays on the word *appartenere*, using it three times at the end of a verse in forms made *sdruciole* by addition of enclitics. The exchange is remarkable in exemplifying how the economic theme, the elaborate stage business of the cask, and verbal invention—driven in part by the need for *sdruciole* endings—all coincide in the play.⁵⁶ As if anticipating Panurge's praise of debt in the third book of François Rabelais' *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, where the reciprocity of borrower and creditor is spoken of as the equivalent of how the Platonic world-soul establishes the harmony of the universe, what Ariosto's characters most intensely share, and what appears as the basis of Ferrarese social and economic life, are the burdensome obligations of debt.⁵⁷

Just as the chief debt in the play is Pacifico's, one that requires his complaisance in the face of Lena's sexual subservience to Fazio, the chief contested property, as I mentioned at the outset, is Lena's house, before which the play's action unfolds. Her, or rather Fazio's, house is mentioned in the first four acts of the play, and by inference also in the fifth, in a passage to be discussed later. We saw that all of Act I takes place before the front door of the house; in the very first scene (156), Flavio quotes Fazio's claim that Lena ought to be thankful that she has the place rent-free "d'aver la casa e non pagermene / pignon alcuna." Act II, scene 1 brings Fazio's first threat to sell the house in order to chasten Lena's pride; and by Act III scene 4, Fazio has called for the surveyor; Act III.9, marks the arrival of Torbido the *perticatore* and the actual measurement of the property; Act IV.7 brings Torbido back once more, furious at being robbed by one of the hired muscle-men come to seize Pacifico's goods. The house, its value, and its measurement are foregrounded throughout the play.

⁵⁵ And so make the cask smell better (Pacifico has cleaned it out: cf. Boccaccio, *Decameron* 7.2.29–31).

⁵⁶ In Ariosto's time *appartenere*, *appertenerere* is also found at *Cassaria* in verse (2.4, lines 1062, 1065) and twice in the *Suppositi*: in prose, at Act 2.1 (Ariosto, *Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 171) and in verse, Act 2.1: lines 539, 541 (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere, Commedie*, ed. Casella, 284). See Stefani's note in Grasso, *Eutichia*, 106. For the metatheatrical sense of this "sharing," see below in the text.

⁵⁷ See François Rabelais, *Gargantua e Pantagruel, Tierz livre*, ed. Michael Andrew Screech (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1974), 37–57, at 40–41, quoted in part as the epigraph to this essay.

Indeed, Ariosto's skill at plotting is much in view in the distribution of material over the nine scenes of Act three: as we saw, the fiction that Flavio's hat and cloak have been stolen in a street mugging, proposed in the second scene by Corbolo, collapses in scene six. These two long scenes featuring clothes frame the central fifth scene, in which Fazio warns Pacifico of the arrival of the *perticatore*, thus raising the danger of Flavio's being discovered, partially unclothed, in Lena's house; although the scene does not mention the cask, it establishes the necessity of that expedient.⁵⁸ When Corbolo and Pacifico decide on the cask-trick in scene seven, their plan is in effect juxtaposed to the arrival of Torbido in scene eight: indeed, the plan frames that scene of measurement, as the cask is mentioned again in scene nine with the entrance of Giuliano, anxious over the fate of his property after hearing of Bartolo's warrant.

Thus the nested plotting of Act III closely imbricates all the contested commodities: hat and cloak (standing for Flavio's person, as he is not seen after Act 1.2); the wine-cask, Flavio's eventual escape capsule; and Lena's house, the metatheatrical stage building of the *ruffiana* and archetype of the stageset with its doors and windows, entrances and exits. The playwide emphasis prepares the final, troped, set of references to Lena's house. In the first of the two added scenes for the 1529 performance, the dialogue between Lena and Pacifico—the only such exchange in the play—Lena bitterly observes that Pacifico would have been pleased for her to enlist both her front and back doors to increase the profits from sexual traffic, a remark that makes all but explicit how the house, the prison of Lena's dismal marriage and the space that enables her concubinage with Fazio, also stands for her prostituted body: (lines 1657–1659): “Né questo *uscio dinanzi* per riceverli / tutti bastar pareati, e consigliavimi / Che *quel di dietro* ancor ponessi in opera.” The idea is insinuated, in an offhand and obscene way, in the prologue to the 1529 version, affirming that the new *Lena*—referring to the play—is pleased to have a tail attached (“Ma la sciocca s’imagina / d’esser più bella, or che s’ha fatto mettere / la coda drieto,” lines 10–12).⁵⁹

As will soon appear, the actual measuring scene is one of the most richly and specifically Ferrarese episodes of the play. Still, even this scene may have a Latin comedy precedent in Plautus' *Mostellaria*, where the façade and doorway of the house supposed recently sold, standing next to the one supposed haunted by the ghost implied by the title, is presented as having been praised by a famous architect, its doorway measured and celebrated.⁶⁰ And indeed

⁵⁸ Two small *casse* are mentioned, which wouldn't hide Santino the dwarf in *giubbon* [in a shirt] (*Lena* Act 4.5, lines 809–10).

⁵⁹ The trope of the “argomento” taken both as the play's subject and as the clyster-pipe (*cristiero, serviziale*) for administering suppositories (alluding to anal penetration) is a topos of Italian learned comedy, arguably instituted by Ariosto himself in the prologue to the *I suppositi* of 1509 (Ariosto, *Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 154) and in the prologue to the revised version of *Il Negromante* (lines 61–64, with mention of *Lena*, line 58); taken up by Bibbiena in *La Calandra*, 16) and by Aretino in the first (1525) version of *Cortegiana* (*Prologo*, in Pietro Aretino, *Tutte le Commedie* (Milan: Mursia, 1991), 64 and *Argomento*, 65–7); see also Donato Giannotti's *Vecchio amoroso* Act 4.1 (1538), in *Commedie del Cinquecento*, ed. Nino Borsellino, 2 vols. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962), 1:53.

⁶⁰ In Tranio's scheme in *Mostellaria* to deceive his master Theuropides by presenting the house next door as having been purchased with his master's money, he describes plans for women's quarters, baths, and a porch or arcade: e.g., lines 754–56 in *M. Plauti* (“sed senex / gynecum aedificare volt hic in suis: & balneas / Et ambulacrum: & porticum” [but the old man wants to build a woman's suite here in his own house, baths, too, and a walkway, and a porch]), and claims an architect has praised the house and wishes to take it as a model, lines 760–62 (“Nam sibi laudasse ait architectorem / Nescio quem aedificatas has sane bene / Nunc hinc exemplum capere volt”). Later the beauty and strength of the portico is praised, lines 818–19, and at lines 908–11 its large dimensions extolled (“Tr. Cuiusmodi gynaeceum: quid porticum? Te. insanum: bonam / Non equidem ullam in publico esse maiorum has existimo./ Tr. Quin ego ipse & philolaches in publico omnis porticus / sumus co[m]mensi. Te. quid igitur. Tr. longe omniu[m] longissima est” [Tr. What a great suite for the women! What of the porch? Te. Incredibly good. I don't

the most remarkable part of Ariosto's scene is the emphasis on the exact measurement of the house with the measuring-rod, or *pertica*, a conveniently *sdrucchiola* term that is used three times in this one scene (III.8). Linear and square *pertiche* were common units of measurement in Ferrara and adjacent territories, and the *pertica* itself was a familiar, everyday instrument: in an account entry of 1519 in Ariosto's hand we find thirteen *pertighe da fossa* lent by Ariosto to his tenants, and *pertighe* and *pertighati* are described in contemporary accounts of the earthworks, ditches, and roads built for the *Addizione erculea*, the great urban expansion effected by Ercole I between 1490 and 1505 that more than doubled the area of the city.⁶¹ Working closely with engineers and architects, *perticatori* or surveyors were masters of the kind of practical mathematics taught in the manuals known since Fibonacci as *liber abaci*, and thus they often bore the name dell'Abbaco—which is in fact the name of a *perticatore* Fazio first throws out when he conceives of the plan of selling the house in Act II sc. 1 (409).⁶² It is also probable that the elaborate stage business of the measuring scene was familiar to Ariosto, who had acquired his modest house, the *parva domus*, in contrada Mirasole in the year previous to the first performance of *La Lena*. Indeed, as Torbido the *perticatore* in the play refers to a historical individual, the surveyor Domenico de' Torbidi, attested as active in that profession in 1516 and 1525, the character of Torbido in the play might well be a portrait.⁶³

think there is any one larger in the public buildings. Tr. Why, I myself and Philolaches measured of all the porches in the public buildings. Te. And? Tr. This is bigger than all of them]). Line numbers are to a modern edition, Plautus, *Mostellaria*, ed. Frank R. Merrill (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2002); the 1511 text quoted here, has a different order of scenes. Valla's note to Plautus' mention of an architect refers to Vitruvius (*M. Plauti*, fol. CLVI, p. 315): "Architectu[s]. q[ui] aedificiis co[n]cine extruendis p[ot]est: un[us] & de architectura uictruu[i] liber" [Architect. One who can put up buildings well: one as in Vitruvius' book on architecture]. Ruzzante's quip in *Vaccaria* (Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1104), mocking the erudite word for the architect, appears to be a reference to Plautus, and perhaps to Ariosto as well: "Un hibeto [*arcombiato*, earlier] è de qui ch'è miegio che murari, che va fagando fràbiche. A' ghe dissi a la vegia che l'iera vegnù a veêr la ca' per mesurar no sè che colmiegi" [An architect, one of those who is better than a mason, who goes about putting buildings together. He said to the old lady that he had come to see the house to measure I know not what columns]. Zorzi, in his note (Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1539, note 144) sees the reference as an homage to Alvise Cornaro, Ruzzante's patron, and an architect. Guido Arbizzoni, "Riprese nella *Mostellaria* nel teatro comico italiano del Rinascimento," in *Lecturae plautinae sarsinates XIII: Mostellaria (Sarsina, 29 settembre 2009)*, ed. Renato Raffaelli and Alba Tontini (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 2010), 97–116, at 102, sees scant influence of *Mostellaria* on Ariosto, noting only a possible plot element used in *La Cassaria*. But the strong influence of *Lena* on Ruzzante's *Vaccaria* makes a retrospective case for the passage in *Mostellaria* as a source for the measuring scene in *Lena*.

⁶¹ See *Tutte le opere di Ludovico Ariosto*, vol. III: *Satire* (ed. Cesare Segre), *Erbolato* (ed. Gabriella Ronchi), *Lettere* (ed. Angelo Stella) (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1984), 543: "si sono costituiti miei debitori de L. 3 s.10 e de un porco di sei pesi, e de pertiche 13 di fossato." For Ariosto's household account book (*vacchetta*) see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:559–60. On the use of *pertiche* for the *Addizione*, see Francesca Bocchi, "La 'Terranova' da campagna a città," in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:167–93, at 170–74, citing the letter of Siviero Sivieri on the Duke's surveillance of the works (ibid., 173: "andossene alle vie nove, a le quali ha fatto fare li *pertigati de pali e perteghe nove* et spianare le culture") [emphases mine]. The term goes back to its use by Roman *agrimensores*, especially those who measured out land for army veterans (see Lewis & Short, s.v. *pertica*). On the various Early Modern devices for measuring land (chains, ropes, rods, etc.), see Uta Lindgren, "Land Surveys, Instruments, and Practicioners in the Renaissance," in David Woodward, ed., *A History of Cartography*, III: pt. I. *Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 477–508, at 490.

⁶² On the surveyor's profession and the modest mathematical knowledge required, see Lindgren, "Land Surveys," in Woodward, *Cartography*, 500–504.

⁶³ Ariosto was intensively involved with real estate after the death of cousin Rinaldo Ariosti in 1519, when litigation began over the so-called *Arioste* properties (see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:503–20) and when dividing the family patrimony after the death of Alfonso Ariosto in 1525 and of Carlo Ariosto in 1527 (Catalano *Vita*, 1:56–65). For the historical Torbido, see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:170–71.

Torbido's measurement of the house down to the last *picciolo* culminates a series of scenes in which goods and services are priced—or measured. In Act I.1, according to Fazio, the rent on Lena's house is worth twelve lire a year, but her tutoring, were it paid to anyone else, would yield only ten giulii (about three lire); leaving the remaining nine lire as the annual price she gets for her concubinage (by comparison Ariosto's stipend in 1520 was about 240 lire per year). Earlier in the same scene, Fazio exacts from his castaldo (*fattore*) reports about the firewood and animals produced on his farm; tempted to take a lamb for consumption, he decides, on second thought, not to: better to sell it for a profit. Ilario in Act III.2 reckons the cost of Flavio's supposedly lost *berretta*, twelve ducats, with a gold *medaglione* and *pontali* (aiglets); the cloak (*roba*) of *velluto* comes to eighty scudi, both significant sums.⁶⁴

In Modena and Ferrara, the *pertica* was a stave about three meters, or about ten feet, in length; doing his job of measuring Lena's house, Torbido registers a distance of two *pertiche* and two sixths of a foot short of *tre piedi*, so about twenty-two and two-thirds feet. But the *pertica* can do more than measure. Asked by the boy Gemignano whether measuring rods can speak—in the sense that they can reveal value—Torbido quips back that *pertiche* “spesso fan parlar, stendendole / in su le spalle altrui.” The characteristically Ferrarese *pertica* thus assumes for Ariosto's play the function of the ubiquitous staves and clubs used to threaten servants in Latin plays with corrective beatings: often described as elm-rods (*virga, ulmos*), the threat of their use provided Plautus especially with occasions for extravagant poetic invention.⁶⁵ In this respect Ariosto follows Plautus's lead in Act 4.7, when Torbido, lashing out at the *sbirro* who tries to steal his cloak, wields the stick, as he says, like the pike of a *landsknecht*, thus imbuing the *pertica* with the potential of lethal force,⁶⁶ and offering a reminder that *Lena* was finished shortly after the sack of Rome in 1527.

For the *pertica* also signifies the overwhelming punitive power of established authority in

⁶⁴ One function of the *Liber abaci* was to offer business problems involving conversion of monetary units, since a multitude of different coinages circulated in the early Cinquecento: see Warren van Egmond, *Practical Mathematics in the Renaissance: A Catalog of Italian Abacus books and Printed Manuscripts to 1600* (Florence: Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza, 1981), 21–22; also Argante Ciocci, *Luca Pacioli e la matematizzazione del sapere nel rinascimento* (Bari: Cacucci, 2003), 69–73. Coinages mentioned in *Lena* are: *denari, ducati ungheresi, fiorini, ducati, scudi, lire, soldi, bolognini, giulii, and piccioli*.

⁶⁵ Ariosto would have remarked (see Note 51) the sole use of *pertica* in Plautus' corpus, at *Asinaria* lines 588–90 (Act 3.2), “nimis vellem habere *perticam* [...] qui verberarem asinos” [I really wish I had a pole [...] to beat these asses with]; as well as the sole use in Lucius Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 7.28.1, where a rod used to hold shut a door is used to beat the transformed Lucius (“*pertica* qua stabulis offermare solebant”). Examples of Plautus' inventiveness on the topic of beating with rods: *Asinaria* Act 2.1 (lines 262–64): “sed quid hoc, quod picus ulmum tundit? non temerariumst [...] aut mihi in mundo sunt virgae” [the wood-pecker's tapping on an elm; that's not accidental [...] elm rods are in store for me]; *Persa* Act 1.1 (line 28). “Vide modo, ulmeae catapultae tuom ne transfigant latus” [see that no elm-rod catapults make a breach in your flanks]; *Epidicus* Act 2.3, lines 5–6: “ne ulmos parasitos faciat, quae usque attondeant” [I fear the elm-rods will turn into parasites and flay me to the bone]. In *Satira* 7.178–81 (ed. Segre, 67) the poet's last words, Ariosto jokes that he is fit to be beaten with a club for alleging his desire to be near Alessandra Benucci as reasons for refusing a possibly lucrative post at Rome (“S'io ti fossi vicin, forse la mazza / per bastonarmi piglieresti”); in Ludovico Ariosto, *Le satire*, ed. Alfredo d'Orto (Parma: Ugo Guanda, 2002), 219, the editor notes Ariosto's insertion of these lines at the bottom of his manuscript page. See also Claudia Berra, “La ‘sciocca speme’ e la ‘ragion pazza’: la conclusione delle *Satire*,” in Berra, ed., *Fra satire e rime*, 165–182, at 174–76.

⁶⁶ *La Lena* Act 4.7, lines 1114–1117: “e mi venia a proposito / L'aver meco portata questa pertica, / Che in spalla, ad uso d'una pica, avendola, / sarei paruto un Lanzchenech o Svizzaro”; see also Act 1.2, lines 236–37. There is a similar reference in *Negromante*, second version, Prologue, 36–37 (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 450), which, since the play was revised for a 1528 performance, echoes the Sack.

the larger sense. In Act 3.8 we hear Torbido's enunciation of a hegemonic economic rationalism, "fino ad un picciolo," while scene nine shows us Giuliano arriving with a warrant for attaching Pacifico and Lena's goods. The scene of precise measurement leading to accurate pricing is immediately juxtaposed to evidence of the comprehensive fiscal administration of the city and the duchy, as they were run out of the Palazzo dei Savi and the Ducal chamber (*camera del duca*).⁶⁷ In the context of Ferrara, then, the *pertica* measures ditches, canals, streets, houses, and land, but also metes out, that is, measures out punishment; it associates, indeed unifies, correct measurement with discipline, the fiscal strictures imposed by authority with the licit if arbitrary violence of masters against their servants. Indeed, Ariosto's insistence on the *pertica* may echo Duke Ercole's literal use of both *pertighe* and straight-edges measurements to rule and define the spaces of the *Addizione Erculea* in what some contemporaries felt was a kind of tyrannical geometry.⁶⁸

We are not done with real estate, however. In the most elaborate confirmation of Ariosto's keen interest in the urban topography of Ferrara, late in the fourth Act Lena sends away Menica, Fazio's housekeeper (*massara*), lest she notice Flavio's presence in Fazio's house. The supposed errand is to the *Addizione erculea*, and Lena directs Menica up the Via degli Angeli, the main north-south street in the *Addizione*, and then left, or west, between the gardens of the Mosti palace, and the recently established convent (1501) of St. Catherine of Siena to the house of a fictional Dorotea and Pasquino in *contrada* Mirasole.⁶⁹ Sending an inconvenient witness on a wild-goose chase is another Latin comedy device but in the present case Menica's destination is curiously and doubly specular.⁷⁰ Dorotea is supposed to teach reading, as does Lena, and lives on the very same neighborhood and street where Ariosto acquired property in 1527.⁷¹ Because of this double specularity, Lena's instructions to Menica, in addition to including the *Addizione* as a significant cityscape for the play, invite the question: where does Menica *start* from? Where, in Ariosto's carefully mapped Ferrara, is Lena's disputed, prostituted (and prostituting) house?⁷²

⁶⁷ Enrica Manenti, "Lo spazio amministrativo centrale. Un'indagine sulla struttura della Camera Marchionale poi Ducale Estense a Ferrara," in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:107–118.

⁶⁸ See Notes 98, 122, and 126.

⁶⁹ Not by the Certosa, as sometimes indicated in annotations (e.g., Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 1120, n. 49; Ariosto, *La Lena*, ed. Bianchi, 175 n.78)—as going there would have taken Menica due East, in the wrong direction. Lena's directions are anything but random: Santa Maria degli Angeli, halfway up the Via toward the Porta degli Angeli, was the Este pantheon, which Ercole had decided to amplify: see Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este, 1471–1505, and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 171–73, 180–83, 379–82, and Rosenberg, *The Este Monuments*, 145–46. Sta. Caterina da Siena was a recent Este foundation, intended to demonstrate Ercole I's piety (Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara*, 176–77, 180–82, 371–73; Rosenberg, *The Este Monuments*, 145–46; Bocchi, "La 'Terranova,'" in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 172, 181–83). The named features on Menica's itinerary underscore Ercole's decisive impact on the built environment. Cf. *Il Negromante* second version, Act 4.3, lines 1500–1505.

⁷⁰ For examples, see Terence, *Hecyra* 431–41; 800–805; *Adelphoe* 573–84; 713–18; and Ariosto, *Negromante* (second version) Act 4.3, lines 1455–63 (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 515), and see Casella's note (*ibid.*, 1089 note 6).

⁷¹ On Ariosto's acquisition of the Mirasole *parva domus*, see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:556–71. Ariosto's desire to remain in Ferrara, close to Alessandra Benucci, his mistress, later his wife, is a recurring note of the *Satire*, see 1.185, 227, 232–24; 3.49–66, 73–75; 4.115–17; 127–74; 5.68–70, 7.150–63. *La Lena* begins with reference to the taverns and drinkers of Gargadello, Act 1.1, 64–66; cf. *Satire* 2.64–69.

⁷² On the mapping of Ferrara in the 15th and early 16th centuries, see Bocchi, "La 'Terranova'" in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 167–72; for the surveying, mapping, and chorographic description of the Early Modern city, see Lindgren, "Land Surveys," in Woodward, *Cartography*, and Hilary Ballon and David Friedman, "Portraying the City in Early Modern Europe: Measurement, Representation, and Planning," in *ibid.*, 680–704 (who do not discuss Ferrara, however); see also Lucia Nuti, "Mapping Places: Chorography and Vision in the Renaissance," in

Corbolo's ready access to Via Sabbioni and the central Piazza, and Lena's mention, in the first scene of the second Act, of Il Paradiso and El Gambaro (line 387), suggest that Lena's house is to be imagined as very near the other houses Ariosto had inhabited in Ferrara: the family residence on Via Bocca Canale 31, and Niccolò Ariosto's, once the poet's father's house, close by across the Vicolo del Granchio.⁷³ The Palazzo del Paradiso possessed by Rinaldo d'Este was nearly contiguous with the Ariosti houses just south of it, and the Via dell'Inferno, notorious for prostitution, was contiguous to the Palazzo but one block east. Before 1501 the El Gambaro brothel was just south of the old walls dividing the old city from the *Addizione*, on the current Via dei Bersaglieri del Po; after being demolished in 1498, the brothel was by 1501 reestablished in the parish of St. Agnese, close to the Ariosti houses. When Lena says, in her argument with Fazio about the house (Act 2.1, lines 379–92), that she would just as soon vacate his premises and move to Paradiso or the Gambaro, she is referring to a move of a few blocks; the proximity of Fazio's house to the brothels articulates in urbanistic terms the contiguity of full-scale prostitution with widespread concubinage in Ferrara.⁷⁴

Indeed, recently uncovered evidence, as well as other passages in Ariosto's plays, suggest that the Lena-Fazio-Pacifico *ménage à trois* was hardly uncommon in Early Modern Ferrara. Corbolo's story, invented in the fifth Act to obtain the twenty-five florins by convincing Ilario that Flavio is in danger because caught by Pacifico in an adulterous embrace with Lena, might have recalled to a Ferrarese audience an episode of 1488—Ariosto would have been an impressionable fourteen—when a *casalinga meretrice* named Margherita was murdered by her lover's legitimate son.⁷⁵ In fact, Lena's references to experience as a working prostitute, and her present life as both wife to Pacifico and concubine to Fazio, might reflect what Diane Ghirardo sees as the repeated unsuccessful attempts of Ferrarese legislation to clearly distinguish respectable women from *femmine pubbliche* and *casalinghe meretrici*. Lena herself possesses a name that suggests strength (*lena*, “breath,” “wind”) as Deanna Shemek observes,⁷⁶ and her name evokes not just the *leno* and occasional *lena* of Latin plays but, as Angela Casella notes,⁷⁷

Mappings, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 90–108.

⁷³ Not to mention the house of Alessandra Benucci, not far away and near Santa Maria del Vado across from the Palazzo Schifanoia; see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:618, 620. For the house Ariosto financed for an earlier mistress, Olivia of Sassomarinio, see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:612 and accompanying documents from 1518–20 (Catalano, *Vita*, documents 331, 337, 405, 2:187, 188, 221). Ariosto, because at that time an archpriest, was exempted from fees on the contract for the house.

⁷⁴ See Ghirardo, “The Topography,” 412–20 on the location of brothels in Ferrara in the period 1490–1520; and see *ibid.*, 414–18 on the moving of the El Gambaro brothel between 1499 and 1501. On concubinage in Verona, see Emlyn Eisenach, *Husbands, Wives, and Concubines: Marriage, Family, and Social Order in 16th Century Verona* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2004), esp. 134–77. A recent full study of prostitution in Rome is Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷⁵ See Ghirardo, “The Topography,” 407. To be sure, for the servant to tell a story that casts his young master in peril so as to wheedle money out of the worried father is a commonplace of comedy: see Plautus, *Bacchides* Act 3.10, lines 810–70, and Casella's note, Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 1121; also *Cassaria* in prose Act 5.4, and Casella's note, *ibid.*, 1016, note 49, citing the same parallel.

⁷⁶ See Shemek, “Wives,” with thanks to the author. In a passage included in the 1551 Giuntina edition, Lena nearly brains with a *stanga* one of the officials who searches her house (Act 5.6; for the text, see Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 963), establishing her as a *virago* who can defend herself better than Pacifico can. Andrews, *Scripts*, 256 n. 35, defends the scene as probably authentic. It would in fact provide a more satisfying climax to the episode.

⁷⁷ As we saw, Ariosto has a *lena* in *La Cassaria* Act 3.1 (“Lena si chiama la patrona della casa”)—an early association of house of prostitution (“saprò venir sì ritto”), door (È una porta piccola, fatto di nuovo”), and prostitute; see the editor's note in Ariosto, *Commedie*, ed. Stefani, 101. Among the poet's Latin *carmina* is a

historical [He]Lenas of mixed reputation, from St. Helena mother of Constantine (according to St. Jerome, a *stabularia*, an innkeeper, and concubine to the first Constantius) and a local *beata*, Elena, mocked by Aretino; her name also recalls Maddalena, St. Mary Magdalen, mistakenly identified in patristic tradition with the woman taken in adultery and thought a repentant prostitute, and thus in Catholic folklore the protectress of prostitutes.⁷⁸ The unclear demarcation between vice and virtue implicit in Lena's name is another form of the unclear distinction between prostitute, concubine, and "respectable" woman in Ferrara.⁷⁹

Although it is only in *Lena* that Ariosto chooses a prostitute to be his principal and indeed eponymous character, earlier plays reveal Ariosto's observation of the ordinary status of both prostitution and concubinage in Ferrara and its surrogates. In his *Negromante*, begun as early as 1510 but completed in 1519 for a Rome performance that did not occur, Ariosto in the first Act (lines 162–167) has the Cremonese resident Cambio, whose name denotes financial transactions,⁸⁰ justify the prostitution of his wife ("L'essere / lei gentil, graziata e bella giovane, / mi dà d'ogni stagione buona rendita") by observing that his fellow-citizens routinely hire their wives out ("Quanti ne credi tu / che sien in questa terra, che più tengono / per uso altrui le moglie che pel proprio?").⁸¹ In Gabriele Ariosto's continuation of his elder brother's *I Studenti*, the character who bears the sobriquet "la veronese" fears public infamy and punishment as a woman of loose morals because of her part in assisting her ward, the foundling Ippolita, to meet her lover Claudio.⁸² The risks of exposure to public defamation would have likely also concerned Ariosto and Alessandra Benucci, linked romantically after 1513, and who presumably cohabited occasionally in Ferrara after her husband Tito di Leonardo Strozzi's death in 1515 and before their secret marriage in 1528.⁸³ At the top of the social hierarchy, Alfonso I d'Este, Ariosto's patron after 1517, lived in concubinage with his mistress Laura Dianti after the death of his wife Lucrezia Borgia in 1519, before probably making her his third wife shortly before his death.⁸⁴

damning portrait of a *lena*, a procuress or go-between, consisting of a collection of traditional *topoi* that concludes by describing her as a witch; the poem is in iambic trimeter, a more rigorous form of the iambic *senarius* used in Latin comedies (Ludovico Ariosto, *Opere*, vol. 3: *Carmina, Rime, Satire, Erbolato, Lettere*, ed. Mario Santoro (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1989), 120–23).

⁷⁸ See Casella's note on several Elenas in Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, 1109–1110, n. 43. The refuge for repentant prostitutes built in Ferrara after 1537 was named, as customarily, after St. Mary Magdalen; see Ghirardo, "The Topography," 422.

⁷⁹ For the blurring of this distinction, see also Elizabeth S. Cohen, "'Courtesans' and 'Whores', Words and Behavior on Roman Streets," *Women's Studies* 19 (1991): 201–208, at 201–203; Shemek, *Ladies Errant*, 27–32; Ghirardo, "The Topography," 405–408; Eisenach, *Husband, Wives*, 134–77 (on elite concubinage in Verona in the 1570s, but with data for the period 1525–40); and Storey, *Carnal Commerce*, 63–68. Along with the conventional misogyny, Ariosto's recommendations in his sixth *Satira* on safeguarding a wife's chastity reflect this same anxiety (see *Satira* 6.274–97, esp. 289–90, "Lievale quanto puoi / l'occasione d'esser puttana").

⁸⁰ The Florentine *Arte del Cambio* was incorporated in 1202; it trafficked in specie and dealt in credit.

⁸¹ In the second version of *Negromante*, Ariosto deleted the reference to the prostitution of the wife.

⁸² Cf. Gabriele Ariosto, *La scolastica* (a passage not annotated by Casella), Act 5.1, lines 400–409, "E ben credo aver fatto, già che toltami / Son fuor di casa, perché molto dubito / Che, se quell'uom tornava, essendo in colera, / Possibil non saria stato il diffendermi / Che con male parole ingiuriatami / Non avesse, e ruffiana e peggio dettomi. / E se parole sole state fussero, / Io mi sarei restata, ma il pericolo / Di toccar delle busse e farsi scorgere / Per tutta la città, m'ha fatto fuggere" (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 716). On the form of public shaming known as the *scopa*, see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:106 (citing Bernardino Prosperi's letter to Isabella D'Este of 21 Sept. 1497), Shemek, *Ladies Errant*, 35, and Ghirardo, "The Topography," 402, 409.

⁸³ For Ariosto's relations with Alessandra and their secret marriage, see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:610–23.

⁸⁴ See the entry under her name in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, accessed online 5/14/2016 at: http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/laura-dianti_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/

Despite official disapproval, the involvement of the Estensi in the trade in women was a matter of record, and may be assumed to tacitly inform Ariosto's presentation of the arrangement between Lena and Fazio. And despite official persecution of prostitutes,⁸⁵ the Estensi profited handsomely from rents from brothels they owned or leased, like El Gambaro, revealed as ducal property in a sale document of 1488 witnessed by Biagio Rossetti, and from taxes on the sale of wine at associated taverns, such as that of Montealbano near the San Biagio gate. Indeed most brothels were owned or managed by the Ducal chamber. These usually but not always profitable contracts are on record being handed down as legacies: in 1587 cardinal Luigi d'Este bequeathed tax income from a *postribolo* to Cesare d'Este, Duke of Modena.⁸⁶

Such background makes highly interesting Lena's sharp retort to Pacifico's reproach of her in the first of the two added scenes of the 1529 *Lena*: "Chi m' ha fatto puttana?" Retorting with a malicious pun (though more for the eye than the ear), Pacifico places the blame on Lena's free will, "Imputane la propria tua volontà." But Lena will have none of it. She sees herself trapped in a double bind:

Or che'l disegno ha cattivo esito,
me sola del commun peccato biasimi;
ma se i contanti compariti fussero,
la parte, e più che la parte, volutane
avresti ben (Act 5.11, lines 1686–189)

[Now that the scheme has come to nothing,
you blame me alone for our common failure;
but if the cash had turned up, your part,
and more than your part,
you'd have willingly taken up]

Her words can be generalized to her profession and class, which bore the brunt of collective blame for immorality in Ferrara. Lena's is in fact a strikingly modern, social-contextual explanation, if not justification, for her shameful treatment of Licinia: she argues that it is Pacifico's sponging off her, and, more broadly her sexual exploitation by Fazio and the economic pressures of living in the duchy, that drive her to look out for herself and prostitute her pupil, "ruffianar la discepola," as Corbolo puts it early in the play, and Pacifico near the end.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Sabadino degli Arienti praises Ercole's measures against prostitution; see *Art and Life at the Court of Ercoli I d'Este: The De triumphis religionis of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti*, ed. Werner L. Gundersheimer (Geneva: Droz, 1972), 83–84, although Catholic doctrine, taking its cue from Augustine (*De Ordine* 2.4; see J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 32.1000) and Aquinas, following him (*Summa theologica* IIa-IIae, q. 10, art. 11, resp.), tolerated prostitution as a lesser evil in that it would help minimize greater social disorders such as rape and fornication.

⁸⁶ Information in this and previous paragraph from Ghirardo, "The Topography," 414–15 and 424; note especially the focus in ducal decrees on controlling doorways and windows as places of interaction between the public street and the private interior (ibid., 411–12: "doors and thresholds [...] marked the point at which a prostitute passed into the city's public space, and fell under the supervision of civil authorities"; also 425); and see Ruzzante, *Vaccaria* Act 4.4 (Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1137), where prostitution is associated with lingering in windows and doorways: "far la cortigiana, stare a finestre o sopra la porta."

⁸⁷ For *ruffianar*, see Act 1.1, line 117, and 5.11, lines 1668–69. Coluccia, *L'esperienza*, 279–84, views the play as demonstrating the vagaries of chance, "la vittoria del caso"; but he is wide of the mark, since Ariosto's whole point is that it is not abstract, impersonal (or even providential) agents that shape human destinies in Ferrara, but the power of the duke, the pursuit of money, and the struggle for survival. See Mario Baratto, *La Commedia del*

Although Richard Andrews, with the observation that in 1528–32 Lena’s part would necessarily have been played by a man,⁸⁸ rejects as anachronistic any possible audience sympathy or identification with Lena, he may be answered with the observation that since prostitutes often cross-dressed for their clients, the doubling of Lena’s gender—female in the theatrical illusion, but male in biological fact—may have in fact accentuated the realism of the character for a contemporary playgoer.⁸⁹ Even more important, Lena’s ambiguous gender, combined with her subaltern status, might express an aspect of the existential predicament of male courtier-servants in the audience:⁹⁰ not least of these Ariosto himself, for like many a minor courtier, Ariosto suffered repeated economic maltreatment at the hands of his Este patrons, including delay or nonpayment of wages owed (*Satira* 4.171–77) and, subsequent to the death of Rinaldo Ariosto in 1519, summary and uncompensated expropriation of land (the Arioste lands) setting in motion a lawsuit that lasted until well after Ariosto’s death.⁹¹

By way of casting further light on the mentality of aggrieved subordination, Lena’s curt, and devastatingly accurate answer to Pacifico may be juxtaposed with a brief exchange in Act 2.3 between Lena and Corbolo regarding the difference between *udire* and *intendere*: in a pair of powerful lines including three *sdrucchiole*, Lena observes that the asses turning the millstone can be heard braying, but cannot be understood: “Gli asini ragghiar s’odono alla macina, / né s’intendon però.” With his suggestion that the asses are braying for love, Corbolo turns Lena’s words into a witticism about his own sarcastically intended desire for a roll in the hay. But in the context of Lena’s later self-identification, as a prostitute, with beasts of burden (Act 5.11, lines 1647–48: “per pascerti, / mi son di cento gaglioffi fatta asina”), Lena’s invocation—for the sake of a gratuitous semantic quibble—of the dreaded punishment imposed on slaves in Latin comedy makes her reference to asses at the mill a generalized image of exploited labor, whether of

Cinquecento (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1975), 111 for more perspicacious comment: “Si tende allora a un rovesciamento effettivo dello schema comico, perché la ‘lena,’ personaggio tipico nella commedia antica, una volta divenuto personaggio popolare di una certa Ferrara, non è più solo né tanto un tipo moralmente riprovevole, ma una figura che rovescia sulla città e sulle sue istituzioni le colpe della propria corruzione, rinviando a un contesto più vasto la responsabilità del proprio mestiere e della propria vita.”

⁸⁸ See Egidio Scoglio, *Il teatro alla corte estense* (Lodi: Biancardi, 1965), 92, where Sebastiano Clavignano da Montefalco is named as the actor playing Lena.

⁸⁹ Andrews, *Scripts*, 86–87. On cross-dressing in Italian drama in general, see Günsberg, *Gender*, 49–87, and Laura Giannetti, *Lelia’s Kiss: Imagining Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Italian Renaissance Comedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); for *I suppositi*, see Costola, “La prima rappresentazione”; as deployed in Ferrarese prostitution, see Shemek, *Ladies Errant*, 28–32, 93, 114–115, 173, and Ghirardo, “The Topography,” 411–412.

⁹⁰ Renaissance readers knew that Plautus and Terence had been in service; for Plautus, see Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 3.3.14, on Plautus *in pistrino* (working in the mill); data in Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 214. See Bombieri, “Osservazioni,” in *Tradizione classica* 1:503 on Poliziano’s references to Plautus as a *molitor* (miller) in his *Menaechmi* prologue, echoing Aulus Gellius (“cum [...] ad circumagendas molas [...] operam dare pistori locasset Plautus” [seeking to feed himself found employment as a corn-grinder, turning a mill-wheel]). Plautus inserts an autobiographical self-reference in *Mostellaria*, commented on by Saraceno in *M.Plauti*, fol. CLVI (p. 314): “Quid sarcinatis. Alludit Pla[utus] ad ipsius natale[m] terra[m]. Sarsinas i[n] umbria p[ro]vincia tusciae ut ex Strabone.” [Why from Sarcina? Plautus alludes to his own country. As found in Strabo, Sarsina is in the province of Tuscia]. On slave torments, the grist mill, and the crucifixion of slaves, see Eric Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 148–54, 214. A vivid account of beatings is given in *Cassaria*, second version, Act 3.4, lines 1324–27.

⁹¹ Reflected in the play by Bartolo’s legal troubles (Act 4.1, lines 968–998), and Corbolo’s discouraging words for Ilario on going to law (5.3, lines 1411–37). For the suit over the Arioste lands, see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:503–20. For reference to economic hardship in the *Satire* see 1.166, 219–46; 2.158–201, 232–52; 3.123–44; 6.199–200; 125; 6.125.

servants, prostitutes, slaves, or animals.⁹²

Most suggestive in establishing for *Lena* the strictly fiscal basis of human relations and the commodified status of women is the discussion in Act 3.2 between the wealthy aristocrats Ilario and Egano, a character who does not otherwise appear.⁹³ The scene serves the plot only insofar as it establishes Ilario as a stereotypical avaricious old man. Corbolo, speaking in the immediately preceding scene, boasts that he can compete with the Terentian clever servants Davus and Geta (both from Terence's *Phormio*), and by the same logic, Ilario is a Chremes or a Simo, a typical *senex avarus* justifiably gulled by Corbolo's tricks. But Ariosto's employment of a Latin stock character brings with it new meanings closely tied to Ferrarese experience. In their conversation, sententiously articulated like a humanist dialogue with phatic Latin formulas (*ita, intelligitur*),⁹⁴ Egano and Ilario condone a ruthless thrift regarding the fungibility of women: were it allowed by law and custom, they agree, women ought to be available for sale; that not being licit, then traded in barter or given as gifts, or at least given for use ("ma darle in uso par che si toleri"), phraseology that might suggest the usurious lending of money.⁹⁵ This last remark of course alludes maliciously to Pacifico's "lending" of *Lena* to Fazio, but, in light of what follows, also alludes to the practice of the *zoadega*, by which landowners in the Ferrarese leased out livestock for use over limited periods.⁹⁶ The terminology betrays what is—even for the period—a strikingly cynical commodification of women.⁹⁷ Without skipping a beat, Ilario shifts

⁹² Compare *Satira* 1.247–65 (ed. Segre, 12), giving Ariosto's self-presentation (adapting Horace, *Epodon liber* 1.7.29–33) as a courtier-*asino*, who having overfed at his master's trough must vomit the superfluity to escape capture and a beating. For other *asini* and beasts of burden or dray in the *Satire* as metaphors for human traits, see 2.13–15; 3.4–6; 34; 4.76–78; 5.199 (priests, who carry *no* burdens), 247; 7.21, 49–54. For the perception among courtiers that they were merely servants, see Linda S. Carroll, "Who's on Top? Genre as Societal Power Configuration in Italian Renaissance Drama," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1989): 531–58, at 550, and Masi, "The Nightingale," 80.

⁹³ His name, *sdrucchiolo*, derives from *Decameron* 7.7, the husband of Beatrice in Bologna who is pummeled with a *bastone* by Anichino, Beatrice's lover, disguised as Egano's servant. On Ariosto's practice of taking names from Boccaccio for non-appearing characters (a Beritola in the versified *Suppositi*, Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, line 1152; an Anastagio in the first *Negromante*, *ibid.*, line 1836, etc.), see Casella's note, *ibid.*, 992, note 1. Licinia, Flavio's *innamorata*, who also does not appear, has a name from a lost Florentine Latin comedy (or perhaps a "morality") by Piero dei Domizi, *Licinia*: see Antonio Stäuble, *La commedia umanistica del Quattrocento* (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1968), 101–106; Federico Doglio, "Il teatro in latino nel Cinquecento," in *Atti del convegno sul tema: Il Teatro classico italiano nel '500 (Roma, 9–12 febbraio 1969)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), 163–196, at 171–73; Franco Ruffini, "Preliminari per un'analisi dei *Menaechmi* ferraresi del 1486," *Schifanoia* 3 (1987): 125–35, at 126–127.

⁹⁴ The scene is rarely discussed in depth; but Larivaille, "Spazio scenico," in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:264–66 observes that it helps fill out the socioeconomic spectrum of Ferrarese citizenry within the play.

⁹⁵ See also *Negromante*, first version (Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, lines 165–67). On prostitutes and Jews associated in repressive Ferrarese statutes, see Shemek, *Ladies Errant*, 25–26, and Ghirardo, "The Topography," 426–27, notes 13 and 29; on Jews in Ariosto's plays, see *Negromante*, second version, lines 548–552, with Innamorati's note (Ludovico Ariosto, *Opere*, ed. Giuliano Innamorati [Bologna: Zanichelli, 1968], 1251).

⁹⁶ Ruzzante's *Vaccaria* echoes this scene (Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1055), when the servant Truffo argues for a statute that would allow returning women and unhealthy horses to their sellers: "El besognerae che'l ghe fosse un statuto sora de dar indrio le mugiere, come sora de dar indrio i cavagi in cao de tanto tempo, co' 'l se ghe catasse defeto" [there should be a statute about giving women back, and one about giving horses back after a while if a defect should be found]; the servant Vezzo also mentions the *zoadega* (Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1105: "Cancarò, gi è assé dinari, da dare a na vaca per zovego d'un ano" [Crikey, that's a lot of money, enough to hire a cow for a year]; see Zorzi's note, *ibid.*, 1539 n. 148). The practice, often a form of extortion, was well known to Ariosto the landowner, who leased cattle in this way to his dependents. See Ariosto's "Conto dei Contadini," in Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Satire, Erbolato, Lettere*, 544, 546, 548, 552, 554; see note on 722.

⁹⁷ For the commodification of women in Italian Renaissance drama generally, see Günsberg, *Gender*, 69–79; *Lena* is

the discussion—as if still speaking about women—to his recent sale of a pair of oxen for thirty golden ducats in order to withdraw them from the obligation of being lent once a week to the superintendent of ditches (“giudice delle fosse”) for work maintaining the canals that routed the waters of the Po di Volano through and around the city. This task had been greatly magnified within historical memory, as we know, by the *Addizione erculea*: and we know also that among objections and complaints to the works of the *Addizione* while in progress was Ercole’s requisitioning and expropriation of lands and imposition of forced labor in an similar way.⁹⁸ The reference to the ditches (*fosse*) links this episode with Fazio’s earlier inventory of his farm’s productive activity (Act 2.1, lines 311–12, “fa’ che li fossi ti mostrino / che hanno cavati”). Even propertied aristocrats, in short, must endure economic inconvenience imposed by ducal ambition, though Ariosto’s point in having Ilario sell the oxen to evade his responsibility for a collective enterprise underscores how the privileged contrive to shirk their duty to the community.⁹⁹

Ariosto’s fiercely satirical portrait of Ferrarese political economy is well-known to students of the play, especially through Paul Larivaille’s essays. I would argue, however, that the picture of economic inequality and constraint is neither merely reactive nor solely representational, but part of Ariosto’s reflective observation of how, in the early modern duchy of Ferrara, an economic *racion di stato* imposed by the ducal administration—what Larivaille calls a “pseudo-ordine tutto fondato sull’onnipotenza del denaro,” when joined to a mathematically based rationality rooted in Ferrarese humanist culture, strictly conditioned the existential circumstances of the characters in *La Lena*.¹⁰⁰ This network of imperatives based on measure and number might explain why, for example, an expert reader such as Guido Davico Bonino finds the pattern of trickery in the work susceptible of an almost mathematical organization.¹⁰¹ Expanding on his insight, one might think of this conditioning as the result of a series of grids underlying the world of the play: the legalistic grid of civic administration; a constraining economic grid in the form of taxes, fees, and fines, high prices and low wages; an architectural and urbanistic grid represented

not discussed in this respect, however. Ariosto uses broadly similar misogynist language in *Satire* 5.100–105, 247–49, but it remains well short of Ilario and Fazio’s coldly pragmatic approach.

⁹⁸ Information on *Addizione* exactions, with contemporary documents voicing complaints, are in Bocchi, “La ‘Terranova,’” 170–81; Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara*, 121–41. See Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 130–48, on the forced labor of peasants, expropriations of agricultural lands, and redistricting and redrawing in straight lines (see Notes 119 and 123). A sample of testimonials are recorded in *ibid.*, 260–65: see page 260, note 116 (regarding previous exactions of the Duke), for modifications to Castello, in 1489 Hondedio da Vitale wrote in his *Cronaca*, folios 19v–20r: “fece ruinare con dano di molti cittadini [...] Lui fece più pallaci a suoy favoriti, che erano poveri e lui li fece ricchi.” On the forced labor of *villani*, see *ibid.*, 262, note 126, citing Jacopo da Marano, *Cronaca di Ferrara sino al 1512*, fol.151: “poi alle 28 furono incominciato à cavare gli fondamenti e le fosse a’ spese de contadini del suo territorio et gli vennero di Romagna 100 huomini et d’Argenta 50. Comandati per un mese.” See *ibid.*, 263–64, note 133, on Theodosio Bruza’s tax collecting, citing *Diario Ferrarese* p. 199, March 31, 1497: “In dicto giorno fu dato principio a dovere scodere li danari per far fornire le mure nove de Ferrara, cum tante biasteme, cridi et maledictione che è una maraviglia.” See *ibid.*, 264, note 134, for folios 285–86 of Ugo Caleffini’s *Diario* for Feb. 17, 1502, on Tito Strozzi, imposer of ducal taxes: “Tito Strozzi malivolo in tuto et per tuto al popolo de Ferrara.” See *ibid.*, 265, note 138, for, Caleffini’s *Diario* fol. 278 (Jan. 1492): “Ferrara isto tempore mal contenta le retrovava et in cativissimi termine per le cagioni alias dicte.”

⁹⁹ Contemporary parallels spring all too easily to mind.

¹⁰⁰ Larivaille, “Spazio scenico,” in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:277.

¹⁰¹ See *Teatro del Cinquecento*, 1:xix: “tutti si adoprano senza soste a frodarsi l’un l’altro. Si potrebbe matematizzare (ora che tra i critici va di moda il computo e la formalizzazione degli eventi teatrali).” Though clearly a *battuta*, a throwaway remark, Davico Bonino’s is nevertheless an important insight, nor need we apply structuralism or semiotics to see its value.

by the *Addizione*, not only its planning and execution but its expropriations and exactions: in short, the significance of the all-measuring *pertica*; and even the disciplinary regime that imparted piety, literacy and numeracy to the Ferraresi as children. That Ariosto could associate the entry into the world of avarice and cupidity with the introduction of private ownership of land, standardized weights and measures, and binding contracts,¹⁰² is made explicit in the *Orlando furioso* in the *ekphrasis* about the beast of cupidity pursued and killed by the crowned heads of Europe (and by Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, author of *Calandra*, as well).

Questa bestia crudele uscì del fondo
de lo inferno a quel tempo che fur fatti
alle campagne i termini, e fu il pondo
trovato e la misura, e scritti i patti (*Orlando furioso* 26.40.1–4)

[This cruel beast emerged from the depths
of Hell in the time when boundaries were set
to the fields, and weight and measure were
discovered, and contracts written down]

A few illustrations of this hypothesis in relation to the plot of *Lena* follow.

Ariosto falls into the category of humanists identified by Gundersheimer who played a constructive role in the ducal administration, and in the larger culture.¹⁰³ He was sufficiently qualified in both law and basic economics as a onetime law student, an ex-governor of Garfagnana, and the administrator of his own agricultural lands, cattle, and property, and in the same year as the first production of *La Lena* (1528), he was appointed one of the Maestro degli Savi, the councilors who managed the affairs of the city.¹⁰⁴ But he was also, perhaps primarily, a poet with humanist aspirations, which may explain why he explicitly presents the institutional reach of ducal government and even cultural indoctrination as mediated through written materials.¹⁰⁵ Among documentation mentioned in the play, the most comprehensive are the *statuti* and *capituli* published by the *Ufficio delle bollette*, the strictures regarding credit and debt cited by Bartolo Bindello in Act 4.2 (lines 968–98; also 1002) as he attempts to recover what Pacifico owes him: we also hear of the *bollette* issued by the *dazio*, the customs-office, for the carriage of goods into and throughout the city (Act 5.1, lines 1276–84; also 1464), and the *gride*, or posted proclamations of the ward captains or *podestà* regarding enforcement of law, like those Ariosto himself published when he was the ducal *commissario* in Garfagnana (lines 508, 719).¹⁰⁶ Most significant for my present purposes are the narrowly economic forms of recording

¹⁰² As commentators on the passage observe, Ariosto has in mind the shift from the Ovidian Golden Age, when all was held in common, to that of Iron, when the wicked love of ownership (“*amor sceleratus habendi*,” Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.131) entered the world. For the onset of land-surveying and private property with the rule of Jupiter, see Virgil, *Georgics* 1.125–27: “*ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni: ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum / fas erat*” [before Jove’s time no settlers worked the land: nor was it licit to mark the fields or divide them with boundaries].

¹⁰³ See Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 221–25, for a typology of Ferrarese humanists. Compare Ariosto’s scorn of otiose Roman humanists who ostentatiously give themselves ancient names, *Satira* 6.58–66.

¹⁰⁴ Catalano, *Vita*, 1:572–73; 2: 290, 300–301 (documents 527, 549, 550); Ariosto intervened several times on fiscal matters.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the first *Negromante*, lines 378–383 and 774–787, with the editor’s note (*Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 1085–86) on Ariosto’s expert use of legal terminology.

¹⁰⁶ See Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Satire, Erbolato, Lettere*, 497–501.

information: the notebook in which Torbido writes down his measurements of Lena's house witnessed by Fazio, who lends him a pencil (line 936: "Io lo noto, eccolo") and the *inventario* of goods in Pacifico's house shielded from confiscation because part of Lena's dowry (lines 994–96, "eccoti / la moglie comparir con l'inventario / de la sua dote"; also line 1098). And there are further implicit inventories. One is Lena's list of Fazio's cheap gifts in Act 2.1:¹⁰⁷ some leftover soup, two bread sticks, spoiled wine, some scraps of firewood, and no gowns of fine cloth but rather a skirt, worn shoes, or slippers ("una saia, scarpacce e pantofole").¹⁰⁸ Another, as I anticipated at the outset, is made up of the commodities that articulate the economic plot: Flavio's hat (with its gold aiglets and medallion) and well-lined cloak, Giuliano's wine-cask, and Lena's house. In other terms, property personal, movable, and immovable: as I mentioned at the outset, the whole play is in a sense constructed around inventories of goods.

The prominence of the inventory in *Lena* may point to the influence of another book, or kind of book, on Ariosto's concept of a debt-ridden, dystopian Ferrara. According to the second chapter of the treatise on bookkeeping and business mathematics included in Luca Pacioli's vernacular *Summa de arithmetica* (published in 1494 and reprinted in 1523), which updated the long tradition of such business primers going back to Fibonacci (A.D. 1202),¹⁰⁹ the first act of the prudent merchant is making an inventory of money and goods on hand.¹¹⁰ We know from the *Satire* of Ariosto's unhappy experience with the bookkeeping duties he was forced to assume on his father's death in 1500, and which required that he abandon Greek studies for books of accounts in order to begin providing for his brothers and sisters: "ch'io muti in squarci e vacchette Omero" he writes (*Sat.* 6.201), using terms also found in Pacioli for loose leaf (*squartafogli*) and leatherbound household expense books (*vacchette*). There is an extant inventory in Ariosto's own hand, compiled in 1519, of the goods left by his cousin Rinaldo Ariosto,¹¹¹ which follows the order prescribed by Pacioli (excluding in this case cash and jewels), listing personal effects, household goods, and finally real estate.¹¹² What we might call

¹⁰⁷ Reminiscent of Ariosto's iteration in the *Satire* of the poor foodstuffs given to the *famiglia* of a churchman (*Sat.* 2.238–255; ed. Segre, 20). For similar inventories in earlier plays, see Coluccia, *L'esperienza*, 90–91 (*Cassaria*, second version, Act 3.4, lines 1307–27), 126 (*Suppositi* first version, Act 1.2), and 128–47.

¹⁰⁸ Some leftover "minestre o brodo," "due coppie di pane, vin putrido, un legno picciolo," no aristocratic gowns ("cotte di rase o di velluto"), rather a skirt, worn shoes, or slippers. See *La Lena*, 2.1, lines 341–353.

¹⁰⁹ See Warren van Egmond, *Practical Mathematics in the Renaissance: A Catalog of Italian Abacus books and Printed Manuscripts to 1600* (Florence: Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza, 1981), for editions, and listing of the contents of an abacus book (*ibid.*, 21–26); see also Paul Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 306–29.

¹¹⁰ Luca Pacioli, *Trattato di partita doppia, Venezia 1494*, ed. Annalisa Conterio, B. Yamey, and Gino Belloni (Venice: Albrizzi, 1994), 57 (*Summa de arithmetica, de computis et scripturis*, Distinctio nona. Tractatus XIO: *Particularis de computis et scripturis*, ch. 2; part 1): "E però prima conven che faccia suo diligente inventario in questo modo: che sempre prima scriva in un foglio, overo libro, da parte, ciò che se ritrova haver al mondo de mobile e de stabile, commençando sempre da le cose che sonno in più pregio e più labili al perdere, commo sono li denari contanti, cioè argenti, etcetera, perché le stabili, commo sonno casi, terreni, lacune, valle, peschiere e simili, non si possano smarrire come le cose mobili."

¹¹¹ See Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Satire, Erbolato, Lettere*, 559–62, an inventory divided among "robe serrate in guardaroba" (valuables), ordinary household furniture (beds, tables, a *forzero* [chest]); and *robe immobili* (houses and lands). A last entry is credits (arguably out of sequence).

¹¹² Pacioli, *Trattato*, 66 (7.3): "ma in uno (ditto memoriale, overo vachetta, o secondo alcuni ditto squartafacio) ciascuno di suoi familiari de casa a la giornata poteva scrivere per le ragioni sopra asegnate." Ariosto might have seen a copy of the *Summa de arithmetica*; Alan Sangster, "The Printing of Pacioli's *Summa* in 1494: How Many Copies were Printed?," *Accounting Historians Journal* 34 (2007): 125–45, calculates that as many as two thousand copies might have been printed of the 1494 edition, for a reading public of merchants, craftsmen, and mathematicians (rather than university students and professors); see also Alan Sangster, Gregory N. Stoner, and

account-book conventions also inform other scenes in the play: Fazio's homily on getting up early (lines 300–304: “chi non si lieva per tempo, e non opera / la matina le cose che l'importano, / perde il giorno, e i suoi fatti non succedono / poi troppo ben”) might seem to echo, from chapter four of the treatise, Pacioli's reiteration of proverbial wisdom about how the laws favor those who rise early to work, “a chi vegghia e non a chi dorme le leggi soveng[o]no.”¹¹³ Ilario, when reckoning the loss of Flavio's *birretta* (12 ducats) and cloak (80 scudi), estimates their value down to the value of the gold aiglets (*pontali d'oro*) on the hat's drawstrings, and has Corbolo mark it down in the *libro dell'uscita*, the book of outlays, or debits. The passage underlines Ilario's avarice, given that Pacioli deems superfluous the keeping track of occasional expenses in a separate domestic account-book, which he refers to as a book of “uscite and entrate,” in addition to standard account books kept at the business (*memoriale, giornale, quaderno*).¹¹⁴

A further set of formative “books” is implied by the instruction Lena is giving Licinia. In addition to weaving and needlepoint, Lena teaches Licinia to read and recite her prayers and church offices, relying on a primer, the *tavola*, and a psalter or book of hours (*ufficio*).¹¹⁵ But it's a different children's reader that Lena appears to have read for herself. In justifying, in the play's penultimate scene, her planned exploitation of Licinia as a hedge against old age, Lena cites the proverbial thrift of the ant, “ma come le formiche si proveggono / pel verno, così è giusto che le povere / par mie per la vecchiezza si proveggano” (Act 5.11.1673–75). Lena's provision for her old age is of course a reflex gesture of the aged go-between familiar from Ovid, Apuleius, the Latin *Pamphilus*, Boccaccio, Fernando de Rojas, and contemporary literature on prostitutes.¹¹⁶ But it is interesting to find thrift praised in the same terms in the fourth chapter of the bookkeeping treatise of Pacioli's *Summa*: “Lo exemplo ancora del sapiente molto fo a ciò conveniente, dicendo al pigro che si specchiasse nella formica.”¹¹⁷ Both Pacioli and Lena are

Patricia McCarthy, “The Market for Pacioli's *Summa Arithmetica*,” *Accounting Historians Journal* 35 (2008): 111–34; also Grendler, *Schooling*, 308–29.

¹¹³ Pacioli, *Trattato*, 63 (Chapter 4.6).

¹¹⁴ The “libro dell'uscita,” *Lena* line 704 (of which we also hear in the second version of *Negromante*, line 2115; Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 541): “Al libro dell'uscita avete a metterla.” See also Ariosto's autograph accounts in his “Conto de' contadini,” in Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Satire, Erbolato, Lettere*, 543–556 (an informally structured ledger, with no use of double-entries). Jacopo Nardi in his *Due felici rivali* (possibly acted in 1513; see *Tre commedie fiorentine del primo 500: Amicitia, Due felici rivali*, di Iacopo Nardi; *Iustitia*, di Eufrosino Bonini, ed. Luigina Stefani [Florence: Gabriele Corbo, 1986]), Act 5.1, mentions a “libro dell'entrata,” and in Girolamo Bargagli's *La pellegrina* (1564), Act 1.6, “doppio” is used in reference to a double-entry book (Borsellino, *Commedie del Cinquecento*, 2:451).

¹¹⁵ On the use of various materials as Latin primers (*tabula, carta, psalterium*) in Renaissance schools, see Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 36–44. Ariosto in *Satira* 5.115–17, expresses a preference for more pragmatic education of girls, trained to sew and spin, such as that furnished by Lena, rather than more courtly arts (see *La Lena* Act 2.1, lines 362–64).

¹¹⁶ Ovid's *anus dipsas* and the go-between of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 9.17–22, the medieval *Pamphilus de Amore*, the *vieille of the Roman de la Rose*, and Boccaccio's *Decameron* 5.10.14–23, immortalized by the Troaiconventos of *La Celestina* (Burgos, 1499; translated and published in Rome in 1506). See also Giovanni Aquilecchia, “Per l'attribuzione e il testo del *Lamento di una cortigiana ferrarese*,” *Medioevo e umanesimo* 17 (1974): 3–25, at 23–24 (lines 46–81); and comment in Shemek, “Mi mostrano a dito,” 53. To justify selling her daughter Philaeneum Plautus' Cleareta also speaks of self-interest (*Asinaria*, line 189, “vera dico: ad suom quemque hominem quaestum esse aequomst callidum” [I say true: every one must look to his own], and of saving up for old age (line 539, “meum caput contemples, si quidem ex re consultas tua” [gaze on my grey head, and consider your own interest])).

¹¹⁷ Pacioli, *Trattato*, 63.

likely echoing Latin versions of the fable of the grasshopper and the ant—*cicada e formica*—attributed to the *sapiente*, that is, Aesop, and widely found in editions of the fables provided with pithy moralities and used to teach Latin reading, such as the illustrated volumes that began to be published in 1479;¹¹⁸ nor is it hard to see the grasshopper and ant of the Aesopic fable mirrored in Pacifico and Lena, since, as she observes, his idleness depends on her industry.¹¹⁹ Like the avarice of Fazio and Ilario, Lena’s morally questionable thrift may be traceable to an established Ferrarese education in literacy, numeracy, and morals.¹²⁰

To what extent the economic constraints portrayed in *Lena* can be generalized is not easy to determine, but there is perhaps enough evidence in the play to suggest a certain consistency to Ariosto’s picture of a broad effect of the calculating arts on the Ferrarese polity in the first three decades of the Cinquecento, at a time when simple triumphalism due to the successful rationalization of space had begun to seem reductionist in light of the possible adverse consequences of a geometric and mathematical approach to reality.¹²¹ Pellegrino Prisciani, a confessed Albertian (though not averse to supplementing Alberti with Biondo Flavio, and with Vitruvius himself) was also an early convert to the omnipotence of measure and number: indeed, Prisciani viewed the demonstrations of Euclid’s *Elements* as methodological models for his *Historiae ferrariae*, which Zanella describes as “per lo più fredda come non può che essere un teorema.”¹²² But Prisciani’s sense of the relevance of geometry was no more energetic than

¹¹⁸ On the widespread (and longstanding) use of Aesop as a school-text, see Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers, and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 115; Black, *Humanism*, 226–33, 409–21. Five editions of Francesco del Tuppo’s *Aesopus moralisatus*, which included the *Vita Aesopi*, were published in Italy between 1485 and 1498, and an edition of the *Vita Aesopi* in Milan in 1520. *Fabule de Jsoppo in vulgare* constitute Item 192 in the 1495 catalog of Duke Ercole’s library; see Giulio Bertoni, *La biblioteca estense e la coltura ferrarese ai tempi del Duca Ercole I (1471–1505)* (Turin: Loescher, 1903), 241. The Ferrarese bookseller Domenico Sivieri listed a moralized Aesop among his stock in 1503: see Angela Nuovo, *Il commercio librario a Ferrara tra XV e XVI secolo: La bottega di Domenico Sivieri* (Florence: Olschki, 1998), no. 420, which lists illustrated editions published in Italy.

¹¹⁹ Ariosto mentions Aesop in *Satira* 4.205–207 (ed. Segre, 40); the reference is to Phaedrus’ version, *pullus ad margaritam*, 3.12) and *Satira* 6.163–65 (ibid., 59), where the fabulist is named. On Ariosto’s Aesop and the use of fables in the *Satire*, see Alessandra Villa, “Gli apologhi delle *Satire*,” in Berra, ed., *Fra satire e rime*, 183–206, at 190–92. The authors Aesop and Plautus often traveled together in Ferrarese culture: Pandolfo Collenuccio’s *Apologo* (Pandolfo Collenuccio, *Apologhi in volgare*, ed. Giorgio Masi [Rome: Salerno, 1998], 37–110), has Aesop as the protagonist and *sapiens*, in dialogue with Plautus, Hercules, Lucian, and the King. In Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, 43.135.1–6, Aesop’s proverbial ugliness is attributed to an Ethiop who tempts Adonio (see Martinez, “De-cephalizing Rinaldo,” 110–111). For a searching examination of the resonance of Aesop in the *Orlando furioso*, see now James, forthcoming.

¹²⁰ In being educated, and controlling her dowry, Lena is herself an instance of the Roman *uxor dotata*, or “endowed wife” (a significant example is the unnamed *matrona* in Plautus’ *Menaechmi*).

¹²¹ For the thesis that the rationalized geometric and pictorial space of the Italian Renaissance was epoch-making and instrumental in driving the scientific revolution, see Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), and *The Heritage of Giotto’s Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1–22. Edgerton’s views have been called into question for their reliance on *Weltanschauung* rather than definite proof; some recent research does, however, suggest that Albertian perspective studies, for example, were instrumental in making the three Ptolemaic geographic projections more intelligible: see Angelo Cattaneo, “Map Projections and Perspective in the Renaissance,” in *Ptolemy’s Geography in the Renaissance*, ed. Zur Shalev and Charles Burnett (London-Turin: The Warburg Institute–Nino Aragno Editore, 2011), 51–80. For ambivalence and “melancholy” arising from rampant numeracy, see Carla Mazzio, “The Three-Dimensional Self: Geometry, Melancholy, Drama,” in *Arts of Calculation: Quantifying Thought in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Glimp and Michelle R. Warren (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 39–65, with bibliography.

¹²² Gabriele Zanella, “Le *Historie ferrarienses* di Pellegrino Prisciani,” in *La storiografia umanistica* (Messina:

Pacioli's prosletyzing for the applicability of mathematics; the friar's interests extended well beyond commercial arithmetic to include geometry, perspective, and architecture, discussed at length in the *Summa* as well as in the *De Divina proportione* of 1509. Since the days of Euclid, Ptolemy, and Vitruvius these disciplines had been crucial not only for architecture, but also for geography, urban planning, land-surveying, and hydrology—technologies essential to the safety and prosperity of the duchy of Ferrara.¹²³ Recent work on Ariosto's sources for Ferrarese history, especially the annalists Riccobaldo da Ferrara and Pellegrino Prisciani, have emphasized the space allotted in these texts to the peculiar situation of Ferrara in the Po estuary, and its long history of hydrological projects that inevitably engaged the rulers of the marquisate and the duchy.¹²⁴ In Ariosto's play, Torbido's correlation of lengths in linear *pertiche* with sale value ties the measurement of space to prices and markets in a way that was likely second nature for Ferrarese architects and engineers like Biagio Rossetti, who during the last years of the Quattrocento helped to develop and fill with buildings—exactly to what extent is disputed—the *Addizione erculea* that more than doubled the size of the city.¹²⁵ From this vantage, we might hypothesize that the economic pseudo-order Larivaille sees deployed in the play may be homologous, or rather commensurable, with the architectural grid of the *Addizione erculea*, so conspicuously present in the text of *Lena* through Menica's lengthy excursion, and whose rectilinear nature was specified as abusive by Ferrarese citizens who complained about it.¹²⁶ It

Sicania 1992): 253–65, at 265. Prisciani's text, quoted there, is: "Premisit mathematicorum omnium antiquissimus pater Euclides in admirando elementorum opere suo, premiserunt et post eum scriptores alii plurimi in profundissimis, et geometrie, et arithmetice vigiliis suis, comunes quasdam animi conceptiones; nec non in demonstrandis prepositionibus suis eisdem sibi sint necesse illas semper reppetere, ipsis fuere necessarium. Sic et ego in presentiarum [...] in disputationes, argumentationes, et demonstrationes finium horum nostrorum, ne innotam rem ingrediar premittam nonnulla, que ubi michi opus sit pro iam demonstratis habebuntur" (*Historie ferrariensis* Book 2, ch. 3, incipit)

¹²³ For a general account, see Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 135–38; see also Marco Cattini, "Strade liquide e arcipelaghi di terre: lo spazio estense visto da Ferrara," in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:119–26 and in the same volume Piero Ugolini, "Percorsi di terra, percorsi d'acqua e sistema territoriale," 127–165. For Ariosto's attention to the fluvial geography near Ferrara in the *Orlando furioso*, see Ronald L. Martinez, "Two Odysseys: Rinaldo's Po Journey and the Poet's Homecoming in *Orlando furioso* 43," in *Narrative Transactions*, ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham: Duke University Press 1999), 17–55, and especially now James, "An Aethopian Sodomite."

¹²⁴ See Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 135–38; Teresa Bacchi, "Pellegrino Prisciani e la sua vocazione cartografica," *Schifanoia* 6 (1988): 187–91, and Laura Fortini, "Ariosto lettore di storie ferraresi," in *Testimoni del vero. Su alcuni libri in biblioteche d'autore*, ed. Emilio Russo, in *Studi e (testi) italiani* (Rome: Dipartimento di Italianistica e Spettacolo dell'Università di Roma "La Sapienza," 2000), 147–170, at 160–61. Ariosto's Latin epithalamium for the Borgia-Este wedding in 1502 (Ariosto, *Opere: Carmina*, 148–59) refers both to Ercole as augmentor of the physical city (line 104, "auctae molibus urbis") and, in mythological terms, to his hydrological *bonifiche* of the Ferrarese, as if he were Hercules stemming the hydra's multiplication (lines 60–65 and 135–36: "ubi multiplicem Dux inclutus hydram / contudit"); similar terms are used by Sabadino when he places land reclamation among Ercole's achievements (Gundersheimer, *Art and Life*, 67). Ercole's *bonifiche* are also recalled in the 1516 *Orlando furioso* 3.48 ("de le paludi mossa / tra campi fertilissimi da lui) along with the *Addizione* ("con muro e fossa / meglio capace a' cittadini sui") and the construction of public buildings, including a theater ("di teatri e di mille agi"); see also *Of* 43.59–61.

¹²⁵ Bruno Zevi's claims for Biagio Rossetti as chief architect and planner of the *Addizione*, in his *Saper vedere l'urbanistica: Ferrara di Biagio Rossetti, la prima città moderna europea* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), 142–66, have been received with skepticism; see Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara*, 283–88 (pointing rather to Ercole, *ibid.*, 277–83) and Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 136–37, and 366 n. 44 (who also sees the Duke as the planner, *ibid.*, 148–52).

¹²⁶ Lena's directions to Menica imply a series of 90 degree turns once she reaches the Via degli Angeli. While Sabadino degli Arienti, in his encomium of Ercole in *De triumphis religionis*, praises a view of the *Addizione* from a garden as being "ad sexto e ad misura," that is, orderly and well-proportioned (Gundersheimer, *Art and Life*, 70), Siviero Sivieri's letter, as we saw, repeatedly speaks of the laying out of roads as creating geometrically confusing

might even be hazarded that the checkerboard floor sometimes found in images of perspective stagesets of the period suggested to Ariosto the practicing playwright an implicit metaphor for the economic visegrip imposed by early modern ducal Ferrara on its citizens: for example, both the Herculean architectural grid, and what may have been a traditional stage *prospettiva* of the city are fused in a woodcut view of Ferrara attributed to Prisciani.¹²⁷ If, as Hubert Damisch has suggested, the chess- or checkerboard (*échiquier*) is a visual metonymy for constructed perspective renderings of three-dimensional space,¹²⁸ and if perspective allows a rationalized representation of the cityscape in scenography, it may be equally arguable that the chessboard is

areas (see, cited in Bocchi, “La ‘Terranova,’” 174, note 18, for the letter of 1493, dated February 1: “attese pur al gioco di scachi fino a le XXII hore, che sua excellentia montò a cavallo et andoe a la via di Anzoli dove l’ha designata una bella via larga pedi vinti, la quale scaveze per mezo la terra di frati [...] et de tuti li altri et ha fatto tirare le paline a drito filo comenzando al muro del monestero de la Certosa [...] la drizarà più oltre verso Sancta Lucia et farala passare al drito filo per suso quelle poche de terre.” See also the letter of September 17, 1493: “le quali madama mia, a dirlo fra nui, fano malcontente persone assai, perché scavezano molti belli terreni secundo che le se imbateno ad andare *e per traverso e per de lungo* et reducono li pezi de le terre cum bruti *bisquadri* et assai che sono *squadrate* et ben poste le vie nove le reducono et metono in *bisquadri e trianguli* et in stranie forme de terreni [...] et ogni cosa riman in *bisquadro et in in bislongo e in triangolo et in strani pezoli* e pozoliti di terra [...] scavezami tuti i miei casali da co de dreto” [emphases mine].

¹²⁷ There are perspective checkerboard pavements in the Ferrara woodcut, dated 1490, whose conception is attributed to Prisciani (see Notes 33, 40, 47, above). The woodcut, actually made c. 1493–4, and included in *Historiae Ferrariae*, Book IV, biblioteca ms. 130, folios 20v–21r, is preserved in the Modena Archivio di Stato, and is reproduced in Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 135; see also the temple-entrance frontispiece (*Ierosolymis Porta Templi Domini Dicta Speciosa*) to the section on regular solids in Pacioli’s *De divina proportione* (1509; Luca Pacioli, *Divina proportione* (Venice, 1494), page 137 (accessed online 5/14/2016 at: http://issuu.com/s.c.williams-library/docs/de_divina_proportione); the illustrations to Cesariano’s 1521 commented edition of Vitruvius, with urban *palazzi* provided with checkerboard courtyard pavements (e.g., Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione *De architectura libri decem, traducti de latino in vulgare affigurati, comentati, & con virando ordine insigniti: per il quale facilmente potrai trouare la multitudine de laibstrusi & reconditi vocabuli a li soi loci & in epsa tabula con summo studio expositi & enucleati ad immensa utilitate de ciascuno studioso & beniuolo di epsa opera* [Como], Gotardus de Ponte [1521] (facsimile reprint, Bronx: B. Blom, 1968), Book VI, fol. LXXXVIII) (on Cesariano in Ferrara between 1400 and 1500, see Ruffini, *Teatri*, 71–94); the 1520 Strozzi panel, probably a stageset/cityscape of Ferrara (see Note 136). Prior to all these, from about 1470, a book that may have entered the Este library after the marriage of Anna Sforza and Alfonso I d’Este (1491), the illustrated Este edition of Sacrobosco’s astronomical primer (see *De Sphaera. Commentario all’edizione in facsimile del codice miniato a.x.2.14 = LAT. 209 della Biblioteca Estense Universitaria di Modena*, ed. G. Venturi, A. Battini, G. Lazzi, M. Bertozzi, M. Incerti [Modena: Il Bulino, 2010], 59–93), of the fourteen illustrations of the seven planets (two pages to each), has eight that include checkerboard pavements as part of the designs illustrating the activities of the “children of the planets”; in the case of Mercury, activities requiring *ingegno* are conducted on a checkerboard floor; in the case of Venus, the city outside the pleasance where lovers disport themselves has a checkerboard *piazza*; in the case of the Sun, courtiers surround their sovereign in a checkerboard-floored throne room; in the case of Jupiter, points of law and legislation are debated on a checkerboard floor, and in the accompanying image, commerce is conducted over a checkerboard pavement; in the case of Saturn, a real checkerboard is also the centerpiece of one image, echoing the pavement design; in the accompanying image, executions take place on a checkerboard *piazza*. Only the images for the Moon and Mars display no checkerboard surfaces.

¹²⁸ See Damisch, *The Origin*, 23: “it [perspective] managed, over an extended historical time frame, to appropriate for its graphic ends a set of objects essentially borrowed from architecture—aediculae, architectonic elements, colonnades, coffered ceilings, and vaults in recession, not to forget the pavement divided into squares that was the foundation of *costruzione legittima*, study of whose trace lines would eventually lead to the discovery of the vanishing point, according to Panofsky’s argument.” See also *ibid.*, 392: “perspective’s lessons are localized: in the construction of a site in which the apparatus and the actors of the *istoria* will find their places, on the checkerboard paving that’s the ground of the *costruzione legittima*.” See also *ibid.*, 267, 298, and 447: “Alberti discusses construction of the perspective checkerboard on a plane in the first person.”

a visual metaphor for the use of number in measurement, tabulation, and counting—and what is more important, *accounting*. Damisch in fact associates Alberti’s *costruzione legittima* with the assignment of a unique space for each included “figure” as if indexed on a grid, a formulation that Bernhard Siegert boldly interprets as establishing an “analogy between perspectival space and the place-value, system of Indo-Arabic numbers.”¹²⁹ Indeed, checkerboard grids permeate the domain of numeracy: multiplication by grid, by *scaccario*, is one of the techniques Pacioli teaches in his treatise on practical mathematics, and medieval French and English terminology for the state treasury as exchequer or *échiquier* long made the *scaccario* or *scacchiera* synonymous with the counting table (the *tavola*) and the book of accounts.¹³⁰

Now, it is arguable that the economic pressures on Ariosto’s characters may reflect what some economic historians have called the second great price wave of early modernity, which in Italy—thanks to the French and Spanish invasions—was thought to have lasted through much of Ariosto’s lifetime, and began to peak significantly about 1520, placing increasing strains on the poor and on modestly salaried courtiers such as Ariosto himself. If this is the case, then the economic themes of *Lena* might be thought to merely reflect its historical moment.¹³¹ But the

¹²⁹ See Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 100: “Damisch makes it clear that both the grid and checkerboard of the *perspectiva artificialis* are structures in the Saussurian sense. The representation of objects in pictorial space implies their substitutability, which in turn reveals the analogy between Alberti’s perspectival space and the place-value system of Indo-Arabic numerals.” Siegert is commenting on Damisch, *The Origin*, xxi: “If by ‘paradigm’ one understands a model used in declension or conjugation, then *costruzione legittima* fits this definition quite literally: its apparatus is characterized by the conjunction, the bringing together at a given point designated the ‘origin,’ of lines that measure the declension of figures, by establishing their relation to a shared horizon line, while simultaneously determining their conjugation on the plane. Clearly such a configuration functions syntactically. But this insight should not lead to neglect of its paradigmatic dimension. To each figure its place: *at each point on the underlying checkerboard, if not within each of its squares, one figure and only one, among all those that are possible, can be situated*—which brings us back to an order of combinations (or as Ferdinand de Saussure would say, ‘associations’) that have no spatial extension.” [emphasis mine]

¹³⁰ Among the definitions of Italian *abacco* in John Florio’s 1611 dictionary are: “Arithmeticke. Also a deske, a cabinet or casket. Also a court-cupboard, or counting table. Also a chesse-boord, a paire of playing-tables [...] Also a merchants book of accounts, a shop-booke, or counter” (Consulted online 5/14/2016 at <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/016small.html>). Chessboards are grids for arithmetical calculations in Pacioli’s *Summa de arithmetica* (1494, reprinted 1523): “multiplicatio bericoculi vel scachierij” (fol. 26r). For counting-tables like chess-boards, see the *Dialogus de Scaccario* of 1180–90 (Richard FitzNeal], *De necessariis observantiis Scaccarii Dialogus*, commonly called *Dialogus de Scaccario*, ed. Arthur Hughes, C.G. Crump, and C. Johnson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), 60–62: “scaccarium tabula quadrangula est [...] quia scaccarium lusilis simile habet forma.” In Ariosto’s play, Pacifico spends his time playing *tavola* (Act 5.4, lines 1461–62: “è solito / di giuocar, quant’è lungo il giorno, a tavole”) as the dukes played chess (see Note 126 about Ercole’s chess-playing when supervising the building of the *Addizione*). Of recent discovery (2006) is Luca Pacioli’s treatise on chess, *De ludo scachorum* (its alternate title, *Schifanoia*, might have caught Ercole’s ear) written about 1500, with some chess problems, it is claimed, done in collaboration with Leonardo Da Vinci.

¹³¹ It was long thought that the economic downturn caused by the French invasions (1494–1529), population growth, and the need to import foodstuffs, chiefly wheat, led to rising prices and famines and made the first decades of the 16th century a time of economic hardship in Northern Italy. For these factors see Harry A. Miskimin, *The Economy of later Renaissance Europe, 1460–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 24, 43, 48–51, 71–74, 118–20, and Ugolini, “Percorsi di terra,” in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 142. Studies of prices suggest an upward spike beginning in about 1520 (chart in Miskimin, *The Economy*, 48). In the Ferrarese duchy as elsewhere the bulk of expenditures went toward the war chest (between 50 and 75 percent of revenues; see Carlo Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000–1700*, 2nd ed. [New York and London: Norton, 1980], 53–55). English travelers to the coronation of Charles V in Bologna in 1529 saw “in some places nother horsmet nor mans mete to be found, the goodly towns destroyed and desolate” (cited in Cipolla, *Before the Industrial*, 254). Recently, however, the claim of a “depression” of the Italian economy in the early Cinquecento has

organization and emphases of the play suggest that Ariosto's *Lena* goes about quite deliberately exposing the drawbacks to a rationalized economic system manipulated by the *camera del duca*, with consequences ranging from the misbehavior of ducal officials to the oppression and moral corruption of the citizens of Ferrara.¹³²

Still, caution is in order. If such an economic and spatial model of the city is in fact implicit in Ariosto's play, going so far as to condition the idea of the playworld itself—in the sense that, to quote again Larivaille, it “de-mythologizes the ideal city in the perspective backdrop”¹³³—this is not solely evidence of a Foucauldian panopticon surveilling and controlling the citizenry. Ariosto understood how measurement and numeracy could cut both ways, enabling either a reductive fiscalization of human values or, on the other hand, in more traditional terms, manifesting the number, weight, and measure of the created cosmos. As Ingrid Rowland showed of Egidio da Viterbo's oratory on behalf of the Pope,¹³⁴ and what is abundantly demonstrated in Pacioli's treatises, a certain continuity could join idealizing concepts of numerical order in the cosmos with the prosaic aspects of practical mathematics. Whatever ambivalence might exist about the “melancholy” of measure and number, the *bonifica* of the Ferrarese thanks to canals, dikes, and ditches, like the success of the *Addizione Erculea* in creating a well-articulated complement to the medieval city also testifies to the benefits of the arts of calculation,¹³⁵ and Ariosto, as a practicing man of the theater, likely also grasped the value of measurement in supervising the stagesets, and perspective cityscapes, for his plays.¹³⁶

been met with skepticism: see Judith Brown, “Economies,” in *Cambridge Companion*, 320–37, at 324 (although acknowledging that the critique of the larger trend does not rule out smaller, local disturbances). See also Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 203–07, 217–18, and Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 132–34 on Ercole's debts and the harsh taxation of his subjects.

¹³² On the powers of the ducal *camera*, see Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 285–96, and Manenti, “Lo spazio amministrativo,” in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:107–18.

¹³³ Larivaille, “Spazio scenico,” in *La corte*, ed. Quondam and Papagno, 1:275, my translation. For a recent proposal regarding power relations inherent in theatrical perspective in Ariosto's *I suppositi*, see Costola, “La prima rappresentazione,” 200–204.

¹³⁴ Ingrid D. Rowland, “Abacus and Humanism,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995): 695–727, at 701–03

¹³⁵ Damisch, *The Origin*, 155–56, though distancing himself from Erwin Panofsky's claim that Brunelleschi's perspective experiments presupposed or demonstrated homogeneous and isotropic infinite space, points to perspective construction as an early stage in the impulse for more precise measurement of the phenomenal world that culminates in the scientific revolution.

¹³⁶ Isabella d'Este and Ruzzante counted on Ariosto for preparing the Ferrara stageset (“Messer Ludovico Ariosto sarà buono per fare acconciar la scena”); see Catalano, *Vita*, 1:589 and 2:319–20, doc. 593. Note the description by Prosperi of the 1508 *Cassaria* stageset (“contracta et prospectiva”); the representation of central Ferrara as in part a perspective stageset in the woodcut self-dating to 1490 (published 1499) (illustration and analysis in Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 249 note 51); the Strozzi panel self-dating to 1520, for which see Götz Pochat, “Architectural drawings with scenographic motifs from Northern Italy, 1500–1510,” in *La prospettiva rinascimentale: codificazioni e trasgressioni. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi tenutosi al Castello Sforzesco, Civiche Raccolte d'Arte di Milano, dall'11 al 15 ottobre del 1977*, ed. Marisa Dalai Emiliani, 2 vols. (Florence: Centro Di, 1980), 1:267–279, at 267–68, 273, who refers to it as “an actual stage setting from Ferrara at this time”; also Götz Pochat, *Theater und Bildendekunst im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance in Italien* (Graz: Adakemische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1990), 303–306, and Irving Lavin, “The Campidoglio and Sixteenth Century Stage Designs,” in *Essays in Honor of Walter Friedländer* (New York, 1968), 114–18, at 115, who treats it as a stageset design because of the double stairway (“an unmistakable earmark of a stage design”); and the drawing reproduced in the *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*, vol. VI, ill. 86, and in Elena Povoledo, “La sala teatrale a Ferrara da Pellegrino Prisciani a Ludovico Ariosto,” *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 16 (1974): 105–128, ill. 21, of uncertain date but thought by Povoledo to reflect Peruzzi's influence (so datable to 1520–30), reproduced also in Zorzi *Il teatro*, after p. 124, ill. 23, but dated to after 1553, and placed with strong arguments in the sphere of Girolamo da Carpi. All entail perspective and all depict Ferrara explicitly or implicitly. Pirrotta and

It is in fact in relation to Ariosto's craft as a dramatist that the idea of scrupulous measurement finds its benign dimension. Not for nothing did Ariosto in the first prologue to *La Lena* (lines 13–15) describe comedies as the most difficult kind of poetic invention: “Io, che so quel che dettomi / ha mio maestro, che fra le poetiche / invenzion non è la più difficile.”¹³⁷ As we've seen, Ariosto's requirements for the correct realization of comic form included the detailed assimilation of Latin models, rigorously constructed plots, and versification in *versi sdruccioli*. Even the play's precise temporal scheme, which leads Andrea Gareffi to call the play a clockword comedy, “una commedia ad orologeria,” can attest to the artistically productive aspects of number and measure.¹³⁸ Again, there is a classical precedent for the idea of the playwright as careful designer: Ariosto certainly knew the prologue to Plautus' *Poenulus* where the speaker of the prologue, a stand-in for the playwright, compares himself to a land-surveyor [*finitor*] insofar as he determines the boundaries of the plot.¹³⁹ Measuring and building a house and constructing a play are closely akin; and the homology of house, stage, and city posited by Ruffini, for example, means that the same kind of rigorous measurement and proportion may govern the construction of a play as well as that of a theater building or stage set; Ruffini also recalls the ancient practice of planting a reed (*canna, harundo*) as the symbolic first step in planning the city, akin to the practice, recalled by Livy, of ploughing a perimeter to mark the first outlines of the *pomerium* of ancient Rome.¹⁴⁰ The idea of measurement has moral and judicial

Povoledo, *Li due Orfei*, 375–78, contend that the 1508 Pellegrino da Udine set included perspective, as Prospero reported, and that this constituted its innovation. So that despite authoritative proponents (Zorzi, *Il teatro*, 26–32, Cruciani et al., “La sperimentazione,” 168–170, 179–180), the nullification of Prospero's witness to support the contention that Ferrarese stages lacked scenery in perspective even in Ariosto's day is hard to accept without question, especially in the absence of unambiguous visual evidence, as no images of Ariosto's theater survive. Had he arranged his stage as Zorzi and others maintain, Ariosto would also have had to ignore the precedents set by celebrated stagesets known to include perspective, such as the 1513 Urbino *Calandra* of Bibbiena described by Baldessar Castiglione, the 1514 Rome production of *Calandra* with a set by Peruzzi described by Giorgio Vasari, the 1519 production of *Suppositi* in Rome with a set designed by Raphael, and the 1531 *Bacchides* in Rome with stageset by Peruzzi (see Pirrotta and Povoledo, *Li due Orfei*, 375–84). The question remains open.

¹³⁷ The line is often misread and mistranslated (*non* is pleonastic); if read to mean that plays are the *easiest* poetic form, the rest of the prologue becomes nonsense.

¹³⁸ Andrea Gareffi, “La *Lena*, commedia ad orologeria,” in *L'uno e l'altro Ariosto: In corte e nelle delizie*, ed. Giovanni Venturi (Florence: Olschki, 2011), 227–37, compares Ariosto's plot in detail to that of Machiavelli's *Mandragola*. Ariosto's play begins before dawn and ends before nightfall, while Machiavelli's goes overnight, so that Lucrezia and Callimaco may consummate their union.

¹³⁹ The anonymous vernacular version of Plautus' play (*Penolo*) was first played by Duke Ercole's players in 1493 in Pavia before Ludovico il Moro (Ariosto was part of the troupe), in Mantua in 1496, and again in Ferrara in 1499; it was published in 1520 (by Zoppino) and 1526 (by Bindoni and Pasini). See Catalano, *Vita*, 1:118–23; Scoglio, *Il teatro*, 56; Cruciani et al., “La sperimentazione,” 165–66; Padoan, *L'avventura*, 56 n. 34. For his *Cassaria* Ariosto took from *Poenulus* the planting of incriminating evidence in the house of the *leno*; see the editor's notes in Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, xiv, 1001, citing *Poenulus* Act 1.1, lines 170–80 for *Cassaria* in prose, Act 2.1. For the speaker of the prologue as definer of the play's limits, see *Poenulus*, prologue, lines 46–49, coming after instructions regarding the movement of persons in the theater (lines 16–39): “Ad argumentum nunc vicissatim volo / remigrare, ut aequae mecum sitis gnarures / eius nunc regiones, limites, confinia / determinabo: ei rei ego finitor factus sum” [Now I want to go back to the argument, so you'll know as much as I. I will trace its areas, limits, and boundaries; I am made surveyor for that purpose]. See also Valla's comment in *M. Plauti*, 467: “procuratores caeterorum ludorum *designatores* appellari possunt: ex hoc plautino dicto patet” [the curators of other such plays can be called *outliners*: this is clear from Plautus' words]. [emphases mine]

¹⁴⁰ Ruffini, *Teatro*, 189. See Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.44 (“aggere et fossis et muro circumdat urbem; ita pomerium profert” [He (Fabius Pictor) encircled the city with a rampart, ditches, and a wall, and so extended the “pomerium”]); see also Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.425 (“pars optare locum tecto et concludere sulco” [some choose a site to be roofed, and enclose it with a furrow]) on the building of Dido's Carthage.

implications as well: featuring the house-measurement scene so prominently in his play, Ariosto the Augustinian moralist may well be alluding to Revelations 21.15, where the celestial city is measured with a golden reed, closely related to a *pertica*: “and he measured the city with the golden reed [*arundine*], to measure the city and the gates thereof, and the walls.”¹⁴¹ But Ariosto’s Ferrara is no celestial city, descending from heaven, arrayed like a bride; rather Ferrara, and in a sense Ariosto’s very idea of the theatre, are emblemized by the house of a concubine and occasional *ruffiana*, Lena herself.

Earlier I mentioned Panurge’s mock-serious encomium in Rabelais’ *Tiers livre*, where the mutual obligations of lending and borrowing are claimed to be a form of the cosmic harmony that holds the world together. A recent interpreter of this passage, Elizabeth Chesney Zegura, has proposed that Panurge’s concept of reciprocal debts and credits has a literary equivalent in the imitation and intertextuality that joins authors to one another in the community of a continuous literary tradition.¹⁴² This is a good description of Ariosto’s intricate, assiduous, but also reverential relation to his classic models in Plautus and Terence, on the one hand, and on the other to authors of early and contemporary *commedie erudite* (from Publio Filippo Mantovano to Lorenzo Strozzi, Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, Machiavelli, and the early Aretino)—not to omit Boccaccio, the narrator whose several *novelle* involving a chest, barrel, or jar offer the model of Giuliano’s barrel, the object that is the most “shared” of all the possessions in the play, a “sharing” that also has its metatheatrical aspect. Indeed, by the time Ariosto incorporated the barrel as a container in *Lena*, Bibbiena had exploited the idea for the *forziere*, the chest in which Calandro is conveyed to his supposed encounter with Santilla (*Calandra* Act 2.6, 3.2).¹⁴³ The system of borrowing payed forward as well, most immediately in Ruzante’s use of Ariosto in plays like *Vaccaria* and *Anconitana*,¹⁴⁴ but also generating further imitations throughout the

¹⁴¹ See Apoc. 21.15 in the Vulgate: “Et qui loquebatur mecum, habebat mensuram arundineam auream, ut metiretur civitatem, et portas ejus, et murum”; see also Apoc. 21.21, where the length, height, and breadth of the city are measured.

¹⁴² Elizabeth A. Chesney Zegura and Marcel Tetel, *Rabelais Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1993), 95–96. For Ariosto’s use of Renaissance concepts of world-harmony in the *Orlando furioso*, see Robert M. Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 123–24, 251 (notes 7–10) and for its ironic, dystopian form, “orribile armonia,” see Ascoli, *Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony*, 4–6, 357–58.

¹⁴³ More than a casual reference, Ariosto’s container for Flavio likely alludes to all the *cassa* and *arca* scenes in Boccaccio’s collection: see *Decameron* 2.9.25 (the *cassa* used by Bernabò Lomellini to enter a chaste wife’s bedroom); 4.10.15–26 (Ruggero d’Areoli placed unconscious in a chest, a *cassa* and *arca*); *Dec.*7.2 (Peronella’s *doglio* or tub permits the consummation of an embrace); 8.8.18 (an embrace conducted on a *cassa*); 9.2.9 (a priest visits an abbess in a *cassa*); also entailed is Calandro’s “death” in the *forziere* in *Calandra* (Act 2.6, 3.2) which is being used to transmit him to an assignation presumably with Santilla (but in fact with the strumpet Sofilla). Reference to the *cassa* that provides the title of Ariosto’s *Cassaria*, and which also organizes that play’s action, is implicit as well (see *La Cassaria* Act 2.1, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.7, 5.4 [*cassa o forziere*]); as is the ruse devised in *Negromante*, where *cassa* is used nine times between lines 1087 and 1739 (see Ariosto, *Tutte le opere: Commedie*, ed. Casella, 1087, note 32).

¹⁴⁴ The beginnings of *Lena* and *Vaccaria* are similar, as they both rely in part on Plautus’ *Asinaria*; see Ruzzante *Teatro*, 1048, in which Truffo, speaking the prologue, points to Celega’s house: “e in st’altra ghi sta na rufiana, che ha na figiuola che’l figiuolo del me paron gh’è innamorò; e perché el no ha dinari da darghe co’l ghe ha dò, la ‘l vuole cazare fuor de ca’, e nu a’ vossàn catarghe sti dinari da nostra posta” [And in this other house is the procuress, who has a daughter that my lord’s son is in love with; and because he doesn’t have the money to give her what he owes, she wants to kick him out of the house, and we want to find this money to give him on our own account]. For further parallels between the plays, see Note 9; Ruzzante also borrows (*ibid.*, 1056–57 and 1528 note 52) from *Lena* Act 1.1, lines 161–63 the same idiom (with obscene meaning) regarding use of the loom: “Mo se in lo menar de le calcole à spandessam può el buosèmo” [if in the working of the pedals to the loom we’ll afterwards spread out the sizeing liquor] (cf. Boccaccio, *Decameron* 8.9.26). For Ruzzante’s extensive borrowings from Ariosto in

Cinquecento.¹⁴⁵

I conclude therefore with a striking instance of Ariosto keeping faith with both Latin and native Ferrarese dramatic traditions. A significant inspiration for *La Lena*, and its inventory-like plot structure, may have come from the final lines of the first *volgarizzamento* of a Latin comedy staged in Herculean Ferrara: Plautus' *Menaechmi*, now thought translated by Battista Guarini with the title *Menechini*. In the final lines of the play it is announced that the chattels, house, and wife of Menaechmus of Epidamnus—yes, an inventory—are going for sale at auction, for a price of seventeen hundred gold ounces. We know this was the vernacular version played in 1491, in celebration of the marriage of Alfonso d'Este and Anna Sforza, since that same price is quoted in a letter of that same year written by the Milanese ambassadors to Ferrara: “epso Menechino fece mettere alla crida tutti i suoi beni dicendo volerli dare per millesetecento onze d'oro con la moglie sopra el pretio.”¹⁴⁶ And it is likely the same version that was played in 1486, when under Duke Ercole's direction the series of translated Latin plays began in Ferrara. The text is presented as a public announcement or declaration, a *Crida* or *Grida*, exactly like those by the authorities in Ferrara and in Garfagnana by Ludovico Ariosto:

Li servi, massarizie e il fornimento,
la casa serà data a chi la vole,
chi dinar porti ad ogni suo talento
fra sette giorni, a far breve parole:
Per oncie mille d'oro e settecento,
roba de Menechin compri che vole!

[The servants, household goods and furnishings,
and the house, to whoever wants them, will be given;
in short, to whomever brings money for their every desire
within seven days, let whoever wants Menechino's things
buy them for eleven thousand, seven hundred gold ounces!]

The text goes on to add, as if anticipating the conversation of Egano and Ilario in Act 3.1 of *La Lena*, that although the wife is included in the auction, acquisition of her would be disadvantageous even if a gift:

La moglie sopra il prezzo anche se intende
mal per chi compra e ben per chi la vende.
Nessun la toglia, che mai fu derata
de moglie, se la fusse ben in dono¹⁴⁷

[The wife is included in the price, it's understood;
good for the seller, but bad for the buyer.

Anconitana, see Padoan, *L'avventura*, 104–106.

¹⁴⁵ The Mantuan Leone de' Sommi, for example, a practicing professional of the theater, writing in the late 1550s, cites Ariosto as the foremost comic playwright (de' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi*, 20), and Giraldi Cinthio praises Ariosto's plot resolutions; see Cinthio, *Discorsi*, 223–24.

¹⁴⁶ *Menechini*, in *Teatro del Quattrocento*, ed. Benvenuti and Sacchi, 79.

¹⁴⁷ *Menechini*, in *Teatro del Quattrocento*, ed. Benvenuti and Sacchi, 166–67.

Let no one take her, for a wife was never
a useful acquisition, even if she were a gift]

The presence of an inventory, the idea of women for sale or gift, and the link to the prestigious inaugural moments of vernacularized Latin comedy in Ferrara, suggest that the remote origins of *La Lena* might be traced to the 1486 or 1491 performances of *Menechini* in the ducal palace of Ferrara, which the adolescent Ariosto surely witnessed.¹⁴⁸ In any case, the recall of that founding moment for Ferrarese classicizing vernacular drama in Ariosto's last play, where it becomes the foundation of a very different extensive satire on commodification of persons, is the conclusive metatheatrical gesture of the playwright, who died in the year following—his morale crushed, Catalano suggests, by the destruction of the Ferrarese theater by fire on the last day of 1532.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ We know of his participation as early as 1493, on the Pavia tour with Duke Ercole's players; see Catalano *Vita*, 1:123–24; Cruciani et al., “La sperimentazione,” 139. *Menechini* was frequently replayed during the first three decades of the Cinquecento: in Ferrara in 1491, at the wedding of Anna Sforza to Alfonso d'Este; again in 1493 in Pavia, for the visit to Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este (with Ariosto among the players); again in 1501 for the visit of Beatrice of Aragon; again in 1503 and again in Rome in 1511. See Cruciani et al., “La sperimentazione,” 165–66, and Chiara Sbordoni, “A Vernacular Renaissance of Plautus: Texts and Performances of Battista Guarino's Comedy *I Menechini*,” *The Italianist* 34 (2014): 379–99, at 394. For Ariosto's possible translation of the play, see Note 10. In Venice in 1526 *Mandragola* played with *Menechini*, which was judged “una cosa morta” by the diarist Marin Sanudo (Padoan, *L'avventura*, 52; Sbordoni, “A Vernacular,” 394).

¹⁴⁹ There are traces in *Lena* of Plautus' *Menaechmi* and/or the vernacular *Menechini*: e.g., the character Menghino (= Meneghino = Menechino). The alteration of the title of *Menaechmi* into *Menagin* and *Domenagin*, reflecting local dialect, is attested in Caleffini's record of the 1486 performance, cited in Coppo, “Spettacoli,” 44; see also *Vaccaria*, contemporary with *La Lena*, in Ruzzante, *Teatro*, 1120: “con fè na volta i Minighi, che un disea ch l'iera elo, e l'altro che elo giera l'altro” [as it happened once with the *Menaechmi*, where one said he was the other, and the other said he was the one]. Ariosto's character Gemignano (through the Latin form of the saint's name, Geminianus, but sometimes Geminus, as venerated at Modena) may also allude to the twin *Menaechmi*, who are *gemini*). Phatic references to *Menechini* and *Amphitruo*, the plays that began the vernacular cycle in Ferrara, constellate the vernacular comedy tradition; cf. *Formicone*, Act 4.2, a Geta-and-Birria like scene about carrying loads between Geta and Dromo; and *Tre sorelle* by de' Sommi, which partially incorporates the whole plot of *Formicone* as the inception of *commedia erudita* in Mantua (Leone de' Sommi, *Tre sorelle, Comedia*, ed. Giovanna Romei [Milan: Il Polifilo, 1982], 30–45).