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Journal

Carte Italiane, 2(7)

ISSN

0737-9412

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Publication Date

2011

DOI

10.5070/C927011412

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Excess and Antagonism in Giordano Bruno's *Il candelaio*

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Any discussion of Italian intellectuals famous for their forbidden ideas would be incomplete without mention of Giordano Bruno. His brutal public execution and the fact that all of his books were placed on the Index of Prohibited Books are clear indications of just how controversial was his thought and polemical his personage. His trial is one of the most notorious in Italian history, along with that of Galileo, who, when confronted by the Inquisition, reacted meekly in comparison.¹ Maurice Finocchiaro writes in his comparative article on the two trials, "If the trial of Galileo epitomizes the conflict between science and religion, then the trial of Bruno may be said to epitomize the clash between philosophy and religion."²

Bruno's clash with the Church came about early on in his ecclesiastical career. Not long after being ordained in 1572, he found himself in disfavor for heretical ideas, and by 1576 had fled to avoid trial. He spent the greater part of his life traveling from center to center in Europe in search of patrons, publishers, and university employment, meeting with controversy almost everywhere he set foot; hence his imprisonment in Geneva and the dismissals from positions held in Marburg, Wittenberg, Prague, Helmstadt, Frankfurt, and Zurich. His frequent flights from city to city indicate his refusal to relinquish, or even to tone down, his beliefs no matter what the circumstances.

When he received an invitation to serve as tutor in the Mocenigo family, he returned to Italy, which proved a fatal error given that on May 23, 1592 Mocenigo filed a written complaint against Bruno with the Venetian Inquisition. The nobleman alleged that Bruno spoke ill of the Catholic faith, Church and officials; that he held erroneous opinions on the Trinity, on the divinity of Christ, on the Incarnation, on Jesus' life and death, and on the Holy Mass; that he denied the virginity of Mary and that sins deserve punishment; that he maintained the existence of a

plurality of worlds and their eternity; that he believed in metempsychosis and the transmigration of human souls into animals; that he approved of and practiced the magical arts; that he indulged in sexual sins; and that he had a previous criminal record with the Inquisition.³

Bruno denied all charges except the ones concerning the doctrine of the universe and the doctrine of the soul. In regard to these, he explained his views and justified himself by saying that he was speaking and reasoning as a philosopher. He could not bring himself to abjure philosophical opinions which he felt were not heretical and had never been formally declared to be heresies, and thus he was given the forty-day ultimatum to repent or die.⁴ Bruno did not waver from his last refusal, despite repeated attempts by the Inquisition to convince him to submit.⁵ Thus, on February 17, 1600 in Campo de' Fiori, the pugnacious philosopher was stripped naked, and with his tongue tied to prevent any offensive utterances, he was bound to the stake and burned alive. His last words with which he responded to the sentence that was publicly read to him on the eighth of February 1600 were: "Maiori forsan cum timore sententiam in me fertis quam ego accipiam" (You pass your sentence on me with greater fear than I feel in receiving it).⁶ Equally revealing was his initial remark at his first interrogation in Venice on the twenty-sixth of May, 1592: "Io dirò la verità: piú volte m'è stato minacciato de farmi venire a questo Santo Uffitio, et sempre l'ho tenuto per burla, perché io son pronto a dar conto di me."⁷

Having briefly demonstrated how up until his last words Bruno provoked controversy during his lifetime, I will examine how his words continue to stir up controversy even today. While his life and his scientific and philosophical works are undeniably provocative, can the same be said of his literary works? In recent years, scholars such as Nuccio Ordine and Ingrid Rowland have published studies which examine Bruno's *Eroici fuori* and *La cena delle ceneri*. Frances Yates's *Art of Memory* and Ioan P. Culianu's *Eros and Magic* also deal with *Eroici furori*. Bruno's play *Il candelaio*, on the other hand, has received relatively little attention. Amongst the critics that have examined the play over the centuries, there is a prevailing interpretation of the text as a work which signifies the end of a genre and a general disapproval of its content. Luigi Riccoboni, an eighteenth-century expert on Italian comedy and author of *Histoire du theater italien*, wrote, "there are thoughts in his play which could appeal to a few individuals but which generally horrify decent people."⁸ In the nineteenth century, De Sanctis denied aesthetic value

to the play and found in its spirit “il più profondo disprezzo e fastidio della società.”⁹ Mario Apollonio in the twentieth century was even harsher in his criticism, finding little to be admired in the bitter tone and furthermore declaring the play to be void of scenic or structural unity.¹⁰ In fact, he altogether dismisses the play, claiming any comment to be superfluous.¹¹ Among those who appreciate Bruno’s artistry, there is still a general consensus that the work is excessively enigmatic, offensive, and obscene.

But these excesses that have so aggravated critics are entirely intentional. By including an exasperating number of prologues and an overabundance of obscenity, cupidity, false learning, pedantry, and related motifs, Bruno explored the limits of erudite comedy to see just how far he could out go without destroying the genre altogether. He does not transgress the conventions; rather, his radical transgression consists in exaggerating these conventions to the point of parody. This tendency toward exaggeration, as well as the penchant for complexity evidenced by the play, is entirely in keeping with Bruno’s polemical personality. I view *Il candelajo* as a quintessential example of his aesthetic philosophy of the extreme and his attitude of antagonism.

Renaissance comedies, are, by definition, an art form of excess, of hyper-intricate plots and elaborate jokes, of situational irony and improbable coincidence, but Bruno’s incorporation of these elements goes beyond a reasonable threshold. This threshold, of course, corresponds to the patience of the audience. The complexity and intricacy of the play is such, that calling it “tedious” would be an understatement.¹² Any audience would be exasperated even before the action begins, for instead of a single prologue, as is the norm, the play is preceded by the author’s presentation of himself, a sonnet, a dedication *Alla signora Morgana B.*, a twelve-page section on the argument and ordering of the play, an ‘antiprologue,’ a ‘pro-prologue,’ and finally a comic dismissal by a janitor.

It is within the excesses of these prologues that Bruno establishes an antagonistic, intimidating relationship with his audience. Our author presents himself as an *Academico di nulla Academia detto il Fastidito*. By calling himself an “Academico di nulla Academia” he asserts his autonomy from sixteenth-century academic culture and adopts an uncompromising stance of condemnation, which will be elaborated throughout the play. *Il candelajo* is essentially a polemic against petrarchism and against a philosophical and philological humanism which

Bruno saw as empty formal academism.¹³ His refusal to identify himself with any academy is indicative of his tendency to detach himself from society, while the additional appellative “Fastidito” provides us with a sense of his outright contempt for this society.

What follows is a sonnet in which he pretends to entreat the audience’s sympathy towards his literary creation. Bruno’s true intention, however, is not to seek audience approval, as would a traditional prologue, but to mock this tradition and thereby accuse the contemporary men of letters of literary conformity. Daniela Quarta calls the sonnet “una violenta invettiva antipedantesca.”¹⁴ Subsequently, in the *Antiprologo*, after a brief return to the theme of his intellectual independence, Bruno continues his radical self-portrait:

L’Autore, si voi lo conosceste, dirreste ch’ave una fisionomia smarrita: par che sempre sii in contemplazione delle pene dell’inferno; par sii stato alla pressa come le barrette: un che ride sol per far comme fan gli altri: per il più, lo vedrete fastidito, restio e bizzarro, non si contenta di nulla, ritroso come un vecchio d’ottant’anni, fantastico com’un cane ch’ha ricevute mille spellicciate, pasciuto di cipolla.¹⁵

This self-portrait is a clear exaggeration of Cinquecento norms. Ariosto and Machiavelli may have feigned humility to gain the sympathy of the audience towards their innovation, but they did not belittle themselves. Bruno presents himself as an outcast of society that is barely human (che ride sol per far comme fan gli altri), and his self-presentation does nothing to incite our sympathy.

Bruno’s antagonism becomes even more apparent upon examination of his relationship with the dedicatee of his play, a woman named B. Morgana, whose identity is still a matter of controversy among critics. Traditionally, Renaissance playwrights dedicate their works to whoever commissioned it or to a powerful figure with whom they hoped to gain favor. Bruno emphasizes his refusal to dedicate his work to any authority:

Ed io a chi dedicarrò il mio *Candelaio*?...A Sua Santità? No. A Sua Maestà Cesarea? No. A Sua Serenità? No. A Sua Altezza, Signoria illustrissima e reverendissima? Non, no. Per mia fe’ non è prencipe o cardinale, re, imperadore o papa

che mi levarrà questa candela di mano, in questo sollennissimo offertorio. (117–118)

In Italian a *candelaio* is colloquial for a sodomite, and it goes without saying that the candle functions as a phallic symbol. When the author offers Lady Morgana his candle he tells her, “o l’attaccarrete al vostro cabinetto o la ficcarrete al vostro candeliero” (118). There have been numerous interpretations of this passage and of the term *candela*, but the obvious obscenity cannot be overlooked. The dedication, like the sonnet, apart from being offensive and obscene, provides clues as to how Bruno imagined his work would be received. He continues, “eccovi la candela che vi vien porgiuta per questo *Candelaio* che da me si parte, la qual [...] potrà chiarire alquanto certe *Ombre dell’idee*, le quali in vero spaventano le bestie e, come fussero diavoli danteschi, fan rimanere gli asini lungi a dietro” (119). Here Bruno establishes the play as a philosophical text, in so much as it will shed light on his book on memory, *On the Shadows of Ideas*.¹⁶ Indeed, Bruno’s philosophical ideas are interspersed throughout *Il candelaio*. For example, when he writes, “Il tempo tutto toglie e tutto dà; ogni cosa si muta, nulla s’annihila; è un solo che non può mutarsi, un solo è eterno, e può perserverare eternamente uno, simile e medesimo” (120–1), he stresses his belief in the universality and eternal flow of the world, as elaborated in his dialogues on the structure of the universe, *De la causa, principio et uno* and *De l’infinito, universi, e mondi*. Thus, *Il candelaio* is not only a polemical work, it is also theoretical, and is inextricably tied to Bruno’s philosophical ideas, which he declares, will surely cause the pedants to flee and leave the imbeciles gasping far behind.¹⁷ Judging from these words, the play contains ideas and findings which Bruno believes many will not understand or appreciate. He describes the play as “una specie di tela, ch’ha l’ordimento e tessitura insieme,” and states rather indifferently, “chi la può capir, la capisca; chi la vuol intendere, l’intenda” (138).

Bruno’s doubt as regards the audience’s comprehension of his work comes off as quite insulting. He is either placing them on the level of the characters, who are too engrossed in their quests for love and wealth to engage in the quest for truth, or, he is doubting their intellectual capacity in general, and thereby asserting his own superior intelligence. He maintains a condescending attitude towards his readers throughout the play, so much so that Donald Beecher, in his introduction to the comedy, calls *Il candelaio*:

a testimonial [...] to Bruno's rather sophomoric self-advertisement as a man of incredible intellectual powers in a world of pygmies. Perhaps Bruno believed that his universe was not only infinite, but infinitely complex, and that he was among the elect few to have mastered its hidden principles [...] We hope it was not merely to get the upper hand on his readers by telling riddles without answers.¹⁸

I've included Beecher's comment not because I think Bruno intended his play to be an unsolvable enigma, but because it demonstrates how the play gives readers the sensation that Bruno is toying with them. This is most evident in the *Argomento ed ordine della comedia*, which is one of the most original and unusual aspects of the play. Bruno's maniacal precision in providing a scene by scene summary of all the action of the comedy is puzzling to say the least. It is a mysterious move indeed, considering that this preamble, which would wear down anyone's patience, is certainly not included for entertainment value. Furthermore, it strips the spectators of the "spectacolo" so to speak, by depriving them of surprise entrances and exits of characters, suspense, unexpected complications, and the denouement. What was Bruno's motivation for including this seemingly inexplicable and unprecedented prologue? One possible explanation is that Bruno wanted to create a theatre of memory. Following Bibbiena's *Calandria*, which employs a double plot involving twin protagonists, Renaissance plays became increasingly complex. It was an intellectual "game" for audience members to keep the intrigues straight in their minds throughout the play and despite the distracting *intermezzi*. The *Argomento* could be interpreted as an exaggeration of the typical Renaissance mnemonic game, all the more plausible considering Bruno's allusions in the *Candelaio* to his mnemonic writings.

The *Argomento* could also be Bruno's way of reinforcing that the primary purpose of a play is not to entertain. He implores the audience, "considerate chi va chi viene, che si fa che si dice, come s'intende come si può intendere: ché certo, contemplando quest'azioni e discorsi umani col senso d'Eraclito o di Democrito, arrete occasione di molto o ridere o piangere" (139). Here Bruno assures his audience that they will have their laughs and tears, but not before a good deal of contemplation. The argument places an increased emphasis on the meaning of the actions of the protagonists, and on the social value, which each, in their folly, fails to represent.

The theme of the play is declared to be “l’amor di Bonifacio, l’alchimia di Bartolomeo e la pedanteria di Manfurio,” and he defines Bonifacio, Bartolomeo and Manfurio, respectively, as “insipido amante,” “sordido avaro,” and “goffo pedante” (122). These, of course, are the stock characters of Renaissance and classical comedy. But Bruno’s stock characters are not quite as straightforward, since “l’insipido non è senza goffaria e sordidezza; il sordido è parimente insipido e goffo: et il goffo non è men sordido et insipido che goffo” (122). With these three characters Bruno engages in three polemics.¹⁹ Through Bonifacio, the lover, Bruno parodies petrarchan poetic language and literature, which, adopting pre-existing forms and formulas, becomes devoid of meaning. His anti-petrarchan polemic involves using colloquial language to express ‘poetic’ concepts and a use of physiological-sexual terminology to parody the situations and metaphors of the petrarchist lyric.²⁰ For example, directly following Bonifacio’s speech on the motif of the unpredictability and blindness of love is Bartolomeo’s satirical allusion to the physiological and sexual behaviors of the animal world, which has “il coito servile solamente per l’atto della generazione” and in particular to the behaviors of donkeys: “però hanno determinate legge del tempo e loco; come gli asini” (152).²¹ Shortly thereafter, Bartolomeo makes a direct comparison between the love of Petrarch and breeding of donkeys: “In questo tempo s’inamorò il Petrarca, e gli asini, anch’essi cominciano a rizzar la coda” (154). The implicit and explicit condemnations of petrarchan lyric which populate the play were subsequently elaborated by Bruno in the philosophical arguments of *Gli eroici furori*.

The second of Bruno’s polemics centers around the character of Bartolomeo, the vain alchemist. Bartolomeo serves to exemplify scientific folly, which Bruno viewed as a form of intellectual obscurantism preventing real study and the pursuit of authentic learning and higher truths. The story of the charlatan magician or alchemist is a common motif of both the *novella* and of Renaissance comedy, but Bruno creates his own version of the alchemist ‘type.’ The originality of Bartolomeo becomes apparent in the description of him given by his sex-deprived wife Marta: “La faccia di mio marito assomiglia ad uno il quale è stato trent’anni a far carboni alla montagna di Scarvaita [...] poi mi viene avanti con quelli occhi rossi et arsi, di sorte che rassomiglia a Luciferre” (175). Bruno does not merely mock the alchemist Bartolomeo; he equates him to the devil on several occasions. Bartolomeo’s obsession with false truth is seen as evil rather than merely foolish.

Manfurio is the prototype of all pedants and is the focus of Bruno's more general anti-pedantic and anti-humanist polemic, which would later be developed in *Dialoghi italiani*. Throughout his life, Bruno criticized his contemporaries who were such rigorous followers of Aristotle that they could not think for themselves. Naturally, as he visited Europe's university centers, Bruno met with fire for his denouncing of all things Aristotelian. Nevertheless, he continued to speak out against the intransigent academics he encountered who infuriated his sense of free inquiry and speculation.

The pedant, of course, is a staple of Roman and Renaissance comedy, so how does Manfurio differ from Bibbiena's Polinico, Ariosto's Cleandro or Machiavelli's Nicia? Again, Bruno takes the character of the pedant to the extreme. Manfurio is arguably the most important character in the play, having the most stage presence. His unusual style of expression is infinitely more complex and problematical than that of his antecedents. He speaks in a hybrid of Latin and vernacular which results in a linguistic disintegration that is more often than not incomprehensible. His presumption, pedagogic manner, and grammatical obsessions are of such prominence in the play that it would annoy and confound even the most passionate of classicists. Furthermore, while the pedants in Aretino, Ariosto and Machiavelli are the object of satire, they do not inspire profound contempt. The violent punishment that Manfurio incurs at the end of the play (he is repeatedly insulted, robbed, and beaten) also differs from the playful endings of most Renaissance comedies.

Bruno's characterization of Bonifacio, Bartolomeo, and Manfurio involves ample images and chains of anecdotes. He does not define them in straightforward terms, but always with ambiguity and abstraction, consistent with his principles of negation of the stable ontology of things in the world. The complex theme of the comedy (false ideologies) is distributed between the three protagonists and is not necessarily developed during the course of the five acts; rather, it is reiterated in myriad ways. For example, all of the monologues and dialogues involving Bonifacio are variations on the theme of intellectual blindness, but while one may be directed primarily at petrarchist presumptions, a subsequent dialogue will explore the terrain of pseudoscience. Bruno's technique often involves departing from a hypothesis, stated by one character, which is subsequently negated by another. Exemplary of this strategy is the end of the first act, when Gianbernardo deconstructs the monologue of Cencio

so thoroughly that even Cencio is no longer sure of his own convictions. Similarly, in the dialogue between Manfurio and Ottavioano in the second act, a hypothesis is developed only to be deconstructed piece by piece. With such a technique, which is anything but concise, it is easy to get lost in Bruno's literary meandering. The three plot lines (which are all three too complex for me to relate here) are intertwined to the point where they become unrecognizable. Although Bruno begins with a basis from fifteenth and sixteenth-century traditions, he proceeds to complicate and amplify these traditions while subjecting them to his own motives and goals.

As if the play-by-play given in the *Argumento* were not enough, in the *Proprologo* Bruno continues to recapitulate, expand, and comment upon the action to come with novel observations and innovative analogies:

Vedrete in un amante suspir, lacrime, sbadacchiamenti, tremori, sogni, rizzamenti, e un cuor rostito nel fuoco d'amore; pensamenti, astrazione, colere [...] Vedrete in una di queste femine sguardi celesti, sospiri infocati, acquosi pensamenti, terrestri desiri e aerei fottimenti [...] Vedrete ancor la prosopopeia e maestà d'un omo masculini generis. Un che vi porta certi suavioli da far sdegnar un stomaco di porco o di gallina [...] Voi vedrete un di questi che mastica dottrina, olfance opinioni, sputa sentenze, minge autoritadi, eructa arcani [...] Vedrete ancor in confuso tratti di marioli, statagemme di barri, imprese di furtanti; oltre, dolci disgusti, piaceri amari [...] In conclusione vedrete in tutto non esser cosa di sicuro: ma assai di negozio, difetto a bastanza, poco di bello, e nulla di buono. (140–145)

This passage, and in particular the phrases “aerei fottimenti” and “maestà d'un omo masculini generis,” seems to have something of the spirit of F.T. Marinetti. Bruno's deformation of petrarchan syntax is akin to Marinetti's destruction of syntax, and *Il candelaio* shares with the Futurist “Teatro della Sorpresa” a contempt for the audience and for literary conventions.²² Through language Bruno accomplishes his culturally and morally polemical intentions: the demystification of petrarchan language through the plot of Bonifacio, the corrosion of contemporary scientific language through the alchemy of Bartolomeo

and Cencio, and the ostentatious deformation of pedantic Latin with the character of Manfurio.

Bruno's linguistic invention is also evident in the last of the unconventional prologues to the play, in which a janitor comes out on stage to address the audience:

E pare a voi ch'un soggetto come questo, che vi si fa presente questa sera, non deve venir fuori e comparire con qualche privilegiata particolarità? Un eteroclitto babbuino, un natural coglione, un moral menchione, una bestia tropologica, un asino anagogico come questo, vel farò degno d'un connestabile, si non mel fate degno d'un bidello. (146)

Renaissance comedy had never before been introduced by a *Bidello*, or been equated to an "eccentric baboon," "a natural dickhead," an "amoral fuckwit," "a tropological beast," or "an anagogical ass."²³ Bruno makes a mockery of everything, including his own comedy.

In conclusion, Bruno's exaggeration of the elements of sixteenth-century comedy results in a play that is infinitely complex and offensive, and which critics have generally either dismissed entirely or acknowledged on behalf of its status as the end of the genre. The antagonistic attitude he adopts towards his audience and the excessive vulgarity are indicative of Bruno's propensity to encourage controversy, which he managed to do throughout Europe, and which eventually cost him his life. Alan Barr writes in his essay on *Il candelaiò*: "Even in this earliest of his efforts, Bruno's tendencies cynically to anatomize society, to buttress his satire with irony and paradox, deliberately to hold himself dramatically aloof, and to speak out unabashedly are manifest."²⁴ Also indicative of his personality is his utter indifference as to whether the audience will find his work appealing or even comprehensible (*chi l'intende, l'intende*). He is obviously not obsequiously seeking the approval of his public.²⁵ On the contrary, his intention was to mock the contemporary men of letters who wrote and watched such plays, and, through the exaggeration of the established conventions, parody a genre whose rules had become altogether too fixed for his liking. He no doubt fostered the same contempt for his contemporaries who followed the unofficial rules laid out by Ariosto as he did for the pedantic worshippers of Aristotle. In all that he did, Bruno proved himself to be an independent and unconventional thinker who had no qualms about breaking the rules, in this

case literary. Given the satirical intent, it is with good reason then that *Il candelaio*, although not the last ever written, is considered the end of erudite comedy.

Besides calling *Il candelaio* the “end” of the genre, the adjective most oft employed by critics to describe the play is “enigmatic.”²⁶ Bruno was unwilling to alter his artistic output to make it more accessible to a larger audience if that meant compromising his own poetic truth. Is this merely a further indication of his antagonistic attitude and belief in his own superiority? Has he, as Beecher jokingly insinuates, set about creating an unsolvable riddle in spite of us? Of course not. Bruno’s intention, apart from parodying erudite comedy, was to create a play which was decisively more speculative than ludic, and to lace its pages with his philosophical thought. Given that in his writings he was obscure, ambiguous, and infinitely complex, his texts, both philosophical and literary, are not easily decoded. His life and ideas seem to deny any kind of strict categorization, and thus, throughout the centuries, have undergone numerous interpretations. Ingrid Rowland, commenting on the diverse portraits of Bruno in scholarship writes, “the Inquisition had made him a martyr...A martyr to what? That was, and is, the question.”²⁷ His “forbidden” ideas will no doubt continue to create controversy for centuries to come, as scholars attempt to solve the enigma that is Giordano Bruno.

Notes

1. Cf. Maurice A. Finocchiaro, “Philosophy versus Religion and Science versus Religion: the Trials of Bruno and Galileo,” in *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, ed. Hilary Gatti (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 51–96.

2. *Ibid.*, 54.

3. Both Finocchiaro and Luigi Firpo summarize the charges in this way. Finocchiaro, 56; Also see Luigi Firpo, *Il processo di Giordano Bruno*, ed. Diego Quaglioni (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1993), 16, 21.

4. Firpo, 98–101 and 329–333.

5. For example, on 21 December, during the Christmas visit to the Inquisition prisoners by the cardinal-inquisitors, Bruno told them he had nothing to retract. When the general of the Dominicans and his deputy tried next, he told them that his views were not heretical and had been misinterpreted by the officials of the Holy Office. Firpo, 101–2 and 333–9; Finocchiaro, 64.

6. Kaspar Schoppe to Konrad Rittershausen (Rome, 17 February 1600) in Firpo, 351. Also see Finocchiaro, 73 and Ramon G. Mendoza, *The Acentric Labyrinth: Giordano Bruno's Prelude to Contemporary Cosmology* (Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1995), 66.

7. Primo Costituto del Bruno (Venice, 26 May 1592) in Firpo, 154; quoted in Finocchiaro, 74.

8. My translation: “il y a dans sa pièce des pensées qui pourroient plaire à quelques personnes, mais qui généralement font horreur aux honnêtes gens.” *Histoire du théâtre italien*, ed. Luigi Riccoboni (Torino: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1968), 144. Originally published in 1730 in Paris.

9. Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Milano: Mondadori, 1961), 859: “Una commedia, il *Candelaio*, Bruno vi sfoga la sue qualità poetiche e letterarie. La scena è in Napoli, la materia è il mondo plebeo e volgare, il concetto è l’eterna lotta degli sciocchi e ce’ furbi, lo spirito è il più profondo disprezzo e fastidio della società, la forma è cinica. È il fondo della commedia italiana dal Boccaccio all’Aretino, salvo che gli altri vi si spassano, massime l’Aretino, ed egli se ne stacca e rimane al di sopra.”

10. *Storia del teatro italiano*, Vol. II (Firenze, 1940), pp. 184–186.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Not surprisingly the play was never performed during Bruno’s lifetime.

13. Cf. Buono Hodgart, *Giordano Bruno's The Candle-Bearer: An Enigmatic Renaissance Play* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 5.

14. Daniela Quarta, “Sul *Candelaio* di Giordano Bruno”, in *Il mago, il cosmo, il teatro degli astri: saggi sulla letteratura esoterica del Rinascimento*, ed. Formichetti (Roma: Bulzoni, 1985), 179–197; 185.

15. Giordano Bruno, *Candelaio*, ed. Isa Guerrini Angrisani (Milano: Rizzoli Editore, 1976), 136. All quotes from the *Candelaio*, hereafter referenced with parenthetical citations, are from this edition.

16. *De umbris idearum*, dedicated to the king of France, Henry III, published a year before the *Candelaio*.

17. Cf. Aquilecchia, *Giordano Bruno* (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1971), 21–24.

18. Donald Beecher, “Introduction to *The Candlebearer*”, in *Renaissance Comedy: The Italian Masters*, Vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 325–334; 332–333.

19. For a detailed discussion of antipetrarchism and philosophical, social and moral polemics in *Il Candelaio*, see Buono Hodgart *Giordano Bruno's The*

Candle-Bearer: An Enigmatic Renaissance Play (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

20. Cf. *ibid.*, 37–59.

21. *Ibid.*, 45.

22. Squarotti calls Bruno's technique an "operazione di eversione dei linguaggi istituzionalizzati fossilizzati, delle varie tradizioni letterarie, filosofiche, scientifiche" or in a word "avantguardia" "non ha come oggetto soltanto situazioni di comunicazione, dati formali, ma, anzitutto, le situazioni precise della cultura e della società che dietro quelle forme linguistiche e il loro uso hanno costruito la propria tranquillità, la buona coscienza, la sicurezza." Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti, "Introduction to *Giordano Bruno's Candelaio*," in *Il candelaio* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1964), 8.

23. The translation is Beecher's, 348.

24. Alan Barr, "Passion, Extension, and Excision: Imagistic and Structural Patterns in Giordano Bruno's *Il Candelaio*," in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language: A Journal of the Humanities*, vol. XIII, 3 (Fall 1971), 351–363; 352.

25. In fact, the play was written in Paris, far from the audiences that were most accustomed to erudite comedy.

26. A case in point is Buono Hodgart's book *Giordano Bruno's The Candle-bearer: An Enigmatic Renaissance Play*.

27. Ingrid Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 13; Late nineteenth-century Italians saw Bruno as an apostle of modern science. Two mid-twentieth century scholars in London, Frances Yates and D.P. Walker, recast him as a religious reformer, a mystic, and a practitioner of magic. Giovanni Aquilecchia, their younger contemporary and an influential Bruno scholar, saw Bruno primarily as a philosopher. His alter ego in *Il candelaio* is not a philosopher or scientist, but an artist.

