

**I novellieri italiani  
e la loro presenza  
nella cultura  
europea: rizomi  
e palinsesti  
rinascimentali**

**a cura di  
Guillermo Carrascón  
e  
Chiara Simbolotti**

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Questa miscellanea di studi si colloca tra i risultati del Progetto di Ricerca “Italian Novellieri and Their Influence on Renaissance and Baroque European Literature: Editions, Translations, Adaptations” dei **Dipartimenti di Studi Umanistici** e di **Lingue e Letterature Straniere e Culture Moderne** dell’**Università degli Studi di Torino**, finanziato dalla **Compagnia di San Paolo** attraverso l’accordo con l’Università per lo sviluppo della ricerca scientifica.

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## The King and the Countess, or: Bandello at the Baltic Coast

Manfred Pfister

Freie Universität Berlin

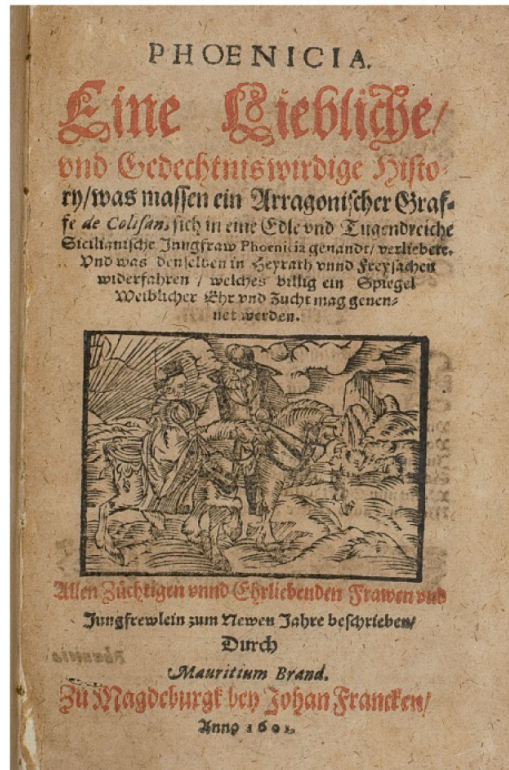
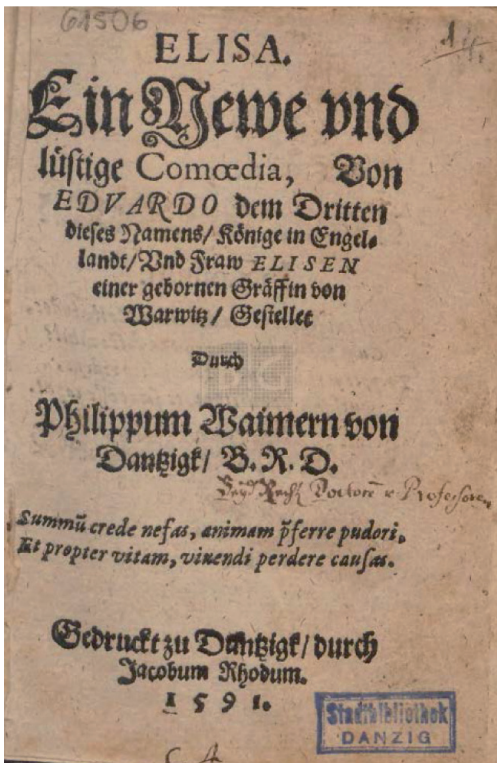
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I. Who knows how Bandello's *Novelle* reached the far-away coast of the Baltic sea less than half a century after their first appearance in Italy (1554, 1573)? That they did, though, we know for sure as they triggered a play in 1591, first performed and printed in Gdańsk, Philipp Waimer's *Elisa. Ein neue und lustige comoedia, von Edvardo dem dritten dieses namens Koenige in Engellandt und Fraw Elisen einer gebornen Graeffin von Warwitz*<sup>1</sup>, based on novella II, 37, and soon after a German prose version of the story of Timeo and Fenicia (I, 22) by Mauritius Brand(t), published in Gdańsk in 1594 under the title *Phoenicia. Eine schoene, zuechtige, liebliche unnd gedechtnuesswuerdige History, wassmassen ein arragonischer Graffe de Colisan sich in eine edle und tugendreiche sicilianische Jungfraw Phoenicia genandt verliebet*<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Jakob Rhode, Gdańsk 1591. One of the rare copies of the play is in the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy (sign. De 1001 8°; Pomeranian Digital Library 828 8° adl4). I researched this paper during my stay at Gdańsk as Humboldt Honorary Research Fellow for 2004-2005 and wish to thank both the Foundation for Polish Science and the librarians at the BG PAN for their support.

2. See K. GOEDEKE, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen* [2nd edition, Ls. Ehlermann, Dresden 1886; reprinted: Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2011], vol. II, p. 575. The imprint of the first edition states: «Gedruckt zu Dantzick; durch Jacobum Rho-



«Habent sua fata libelli»: Bandello's *Novelle* may have travelled to Gdańsk within a rapidly growing international book trade or in the baggage of travelers to or from Italy, one of them the author of *Elisa*, Philipp Waimer, professor of law at the Gdańsk *Akademische Gymnasium* since 1580 and till his death in 1608, who had been to Italy in the 1570s<sup>3</sup>. They may have arrived

dum: in Verlegung Diterich Michel Bayer, Buerger und Buchfuehrer in Dantzigk»; a copy of a later edition – Johan Francken, Magdeburg 1601 – is in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (sign. Lm 328).

3. See his entry in a *Stammbuch*, dated Naples, 2 May 1579, in L. Kurras (ed.), *Die Handschriften des Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1988, vol. v, part 1, p. 12. It may have been Waimer who brought back from Italy the earliest edition of selected *novelle* by Bandello in their French translation now in the Gdańsk PAN library (sign. Dk 1774): xviii *Histoires Tragiques: Extraicts des œuvres Italiennes de Bandel, & mise en langue Française*, translated by Pierre Boaistuau and François Belleforest (Cesar Farine, Torino 1582). *Novella* II, 37, on which Waimer's play on the King and Countess, *Elisa*, is based, features prominently as the first in this selection. The link with Waimer, of course, has to remain mere speculation as we do not know when, and how, this edition entered the Gdańsk library.

via French translations and adaptations – Boaistuau’s *Histoires tragiques* (1559) or those of Belleforest (1560-1582) – or English translations of French translations – Painter’s *Palace of Pleasure* (1566, 1575) – or they may have travelled, packaged as a play, with the bands of strolling players from London, who began to visit Gdańsk from the late 1580s on their Baltic route<sup>4</sup>. One of the plays they might have performed, the anonymous *Reign of King Edward III*, dramatizes in its first two acts – those presumably written by Shakespeare – the story of the English King and the Countess, but as this Shakespeare *apocrypha* could not have been written before late 1592, as its most recent editor claims<sup>5</sup>, and was first printed in 1596 (stating on the title page that it «hath bin sundrie times plaied about the Citie of London» before), it could not have been a source for Waimier’s *Elisa*, first performed five years before the first edition<sup>6</sup>. But, who knows, there might have been an earlier version of the English play taken abroad and now lost. And finally, an early Italian print of Bandello’s *Novelle* may have found its way across the continent or along the coasts in the baggage of some other Polish traveler to Italy or Italian traveler to Gdańsk.

This latter possibility is actually a fact, even if this particular fact sounds like a miracle or improbable fiction. On August, 25<sup>th</sup> 1591, a Neapolitan nobleman, Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio, Marchese d’Oria, born in 1517, shipwrecked in front of the harbor of Gdańsk together with his library of more than 1200 volumes, which he had collected during his long life and restless journeys across the whole of Europe. He was that *rara* – not too *rara* – *avis*, a Protestant Italian, and it was the flight from the Inquisition and the wish to preserve his

4. Cf. J. LIMON, *English Players in Central and Eastern Europe. 1590-1660*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, p. 37.

5. G. MELCHIORI, Introduction to W. SHAKESPEARE, *King Edward III*, in G. Melchiori (ed.), *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 5 and 9.

6. To my knowledge, Waimier’s play has never been carefully studied in itself nor in its relations to the part-Shakespearean *Edward III*. What Shakespeare scholars have to say about it is mainly from hearsay. Thus, even the most recent study of apocryphal Shakespeare, according to which the play ist «vermutlich sowohl auf Bandello als auch auf das Drama zurückzuführen» gets it doubly wrong: first, the play is not ‘presumably’ related to Bandello but its author says so explicitly in his preface, and secondly, it cannot be dependent on a play that to our best knowledge did not exist at that time. See C. JAHNSON, *Zweifelhafter Shakespeare. Zur Geschichte der Shakespeare-Apokryphen und ihrer Rezeption von der Renaissance bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, LIT, Münster 2000, p. 28.

intellectual autonomy, the quest for a congenial habitat for his Melanchthonian or Philippist spirituality and the search for ever new volumes for his fast-growing library of classical and modern, literary, scientific, philosophical and theological books which had driven him across Europe from Southern Italy to the Baltic Sea, from the Balkans to France and England in the long years of his exile from 1557 to this death in Gdańsk in 1597<sup>7</sup>. Half of his books survived the shipwreck, among them three editions of Italian *novelle*: Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (Giovanni Griffio, Venice 1549), Giovanni Fiorentino's *Pecorone* (Domenico Farri, Venice 1565) and Matteo Bandello's *Primo, Secondo e Terzo volume delle novelle* (Camillo Franceschini, Venice 1566)<sup>8</sup>. This three-volume edition is, to my knowledge, the earliest edition of Bandello's *Novelle* in Italian to be found in any Polish library now<sup>9</sup>. Bonifacio himself survived the shipwreck, though destitute and turned blind by the shock, and was taken care of by the magistrate and citizens of Gdańsk until his death in an ex-Franciscan convent next door to the *Akademische Gymnasium*, the recently founded municipal Academic Grammar School, surrounded by his remaining books of some five hundred volumes, which he donated to the city and its school, «damit sich derselben gelernte Leutte undt die liebe christliche Jugendt dorsebst zu ihren besten gebrauchen möge», 'so that the learned among the citizens and the dear Christian youth may use them to their improvement'<sup>10</sup>. An early historian of Gdańsk, Georg Reinhold Curicke, was to emphasize this close nexus between the grammar school and Bonifacio's books for the cultural and academic aspirations of the city some ninety years later:

7. See for the story of his exile M.E. WELTI, *Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio, Marchese d'Oria im Exil. 1557-1597*, Droz, Genève 1976, and for his earlier life ID., *Dall'Umanesimo alla Riforma. Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio marchese d'Oria. 1517-1557*, Amici della 'A. de Leo', Brindisi 1986. See also D. CACCAMO's entry on Bonifacio in the *Treccani Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (1971), vol. XII.

8. See the catalogue of Bonifacio's books compiled by M. WELTI, *Die Bibliothek des Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio, Marchese d'Oria, 1517-1597*, Peter Lang, Bern 1985. See also S. VALE-  
RIO, *La biblioteca umanistica di Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio* in C. Corfiati, M. de Nichilo (eds.), *Biblioteche nel Regno fra Tre e Cinquecento. Atti del Convegno* (Bari, 6-7 febbraio 2008), Pensa, Lecce 2009, pp. 303-320.

9. Two further French editions of Bandello's *Histoires tragiques* besides the one in PAN (see above note 3) in the Polish National Library arrived considerably later, published in Rouen in 1603 and 1603-1604.

10. Quoted from the city archives of Gdańsk in WELTI, *Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio* cit., p. 229; my translation.



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Then the Right Honorable Council decided to build a library for the 'Gymnasium' and soon set to work. Today one can see there a great number of wonderful old and new books, of which some have been bought and others are the legacy of Herrn Johannes Bernardinus Roberti, last scion of the house of the Bonifacians, former Margrave of Oria (who for religion's sake had renounced the honour and glory of his rank)<sup>11</sup>.

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11. My translation from G.R. CURICKE, *Der Stadt Dantzig historische Beschreibung* (Amsterdam/Gdańsk 1688), p. 341: «Hernachmals hat E.E. Rath für gutt befunden im Gymnasio eine Bibliothecam einzurichten / welches auch ins Werck gestellet worden / und ist heutiges Tages nicht eine geringe Anzahl schöner herrlicher alter und neuer Bücher darin zu sehen / welche theils gekauft / theils hinein verehret und legiret worden. In massen der Herr Johannes Bernardinus Roberti, der letzte vom Geschlecht der Bonifacier, gewesener Marggraf von Orien (welcher der Religion halber seine Ehre und Stands Herrlichkeit verlassen / und nach dem er hin und wieder im Elende lange Zeit sich kümmerlich gedrückt / und viel außgestanden / endlich anhero nach Dantzig gekommen / da daselbst Anno 1597 gestorben) seine Bibliothec dem Gymnasio beschieden hatt / wie solches aus eben angeführtem Epitaphio, so ihm Herr Bartholomæus Schachtman Gottseliger Gedachtnuß in der Kirchen zur H. Dreyfaltigkeit hat setzen lassen / zu ersehen ist». A more contemporary account of Bonifacio's life and death and the legacy of his books to the *Akademische Gymnasium* is in the «Oratio de vita et morte I.B. Bonifacii», with which Andreas Welsius, professor at the grammar school, prefaces Bonifacio's posthumous *Miscellanea Hymnorum, Epigrammatum et Paradoxorum quorundam*, Jakob Rhode, Gdańsk 1599, pp. 1-24.



They now form, though in the meantime sadly reduced to 448 Bonifaciana, the richest treasure of the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Science (PAN), and his deathbed portrait looks down with blind eyes upon the scholars working in its reading room.

And what also remains is his beautiful epitaph in the Holy Trinity Church, recording his life as if it were a *novella* full of the most surprising events, and, at the same time an emblem of a new Early Modern intellectual unrest and transcultural migrancy<sup>12</sup>, indeed a compelling example of what Stephen Greenblatt has called «cultural mobility»<sup>13</sup>.

II. Bonifacio's interest in his three volumes of *novelle* was a limited one. In his predominantly Latin and scholarly library, the fairly small *corpus* of Italian vernacular texts occupies a marginal position and within it these three literary and fictional texts are marginal to the second power. In contrast to the other volumes in his collection, which he has clearly worked through pen in hand, these show very few traces of his having actually read them: his *Pecorone* copy is totally virginal, in the *Decamerone* he only occasionally annotates or under-

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12. See the transcription in P. BUXTORF, *Das Epitaph des Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio*, in «Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde», 48 (1949), pp. 217-223: «Even if Time may destroy this image, as it does everything, it will not be able to destroy the immortal soul. – To Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio, son of Robert, great-son of Andreas, Marquis d'Oria and Lord of the lands of Francavilla and Castelnovo, born in the year of Christ 1517 not without premonitory signs – engaged in learned studies in Rome, France and Spain – after the death of his father hereditary judge of the Academy and City of Naples – who soon went however from there, amidst the fury of the Spanish Inquisition and after having discovered in the writings of Melanchthon the light of the Gospel into voluntary exile – first to Venice then, persecuted by the angry Pope, to Switzerland and Germany and to the Disputation at Worms – then travelled full forty years across the whole of Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Turkey, England, Scotland, Denmark and Sweden – finally suffered shipwreck here, suddenly struck blind, after a voyage to England – was hosted generously by the High Council, to whom he had bequeathed his library, the consolation of his exile here, six years until his death – among the Italians banished for similar reasons by far the most learned in languages and things – to this renowned scholar Bartholomäus Schachmann, Proconsul of the City, dedicated this last altar both as a monument to his virtue for later generations – and as a token of his (Schachmann's) gratitude for the kindness of strangers he had met with on his own journeys across Europe, Asia and Africa – this monument erected willingly with his own means. – He died devoutly at the age of 80, after a long life of celibacy and renunciation and thus as the last scion of the Bonifacio family on 24 March of the year of the Lord 1597. – The moral remains of a man driven too long across lands and seas have found their final rest here after all their wanderings»; my translation.

13. S. GREENBLATT *et al.*, *Cultural Mobility. A Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009.





lines passages with an anti-clerical or moralistic thrust, and in his *Bandello* there are only a few marginal strokes every now and then highlighting what does really appear to be particularly remarkable to us<sup>14</sup>. Clearly, Bonifacio's interests were not aesthetic or literary and he obviously was not aware of the literary quality and potential of the novelistic trilogy he had introduced into the multicultural situation of Gdańsk, the harbor and Hanse town open to the East and West<sup>15</sup>, North and South, ruled over by a predominantly German-speaking magistrate and yet maintaining close political and linguistic ties with the Polish kingdom, its old catholic beliefs shaken by religious and ecclesiastical reform movements, of which he himself is an illuminating instance.

14. In his copy of the novella *Odoardo Terzo Re d'Inghilterra ama la figliuola d'un suo soggetto e la piglia per moglie* (vol. II, pp. 80-96), for instance, Bonifacio highlighted only two passages with marginal strokes, where the Countess' father reminds the King of his glorious military victories (p. 86) and where the mother is blamed for considering God as encouraging adultery and fornication (p. 92).

15. An exhibition of the Gdańsk library in 2003 documented the English-Gdańsk cultural exchanges in terms of the books in its holdings; see the catalogue *Magna Britannia. Great Britain in the Collection of the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences*, S. Sychta (ed.), Bernardinum, Pelplin 2003, which also rubrics Waimier's *Elisa* (p. 40).

Outside Gdańsk, Poland and Germany<sup>16</sup> Bandello's *Novelle* had already, for a few decades, enjoyed great popularity at that time: in France, the translations of Pierre Boaistuau and François de Belleforest, collected in the seven-volume *Histoires tragiques* (1560-82), were so successful that they soon launched a wave of Bandello translations and adaptations in England as well. William Painter included seven of them, among them the story of King Edward's amours, in his collection of stories, *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566, enlarged in 1575) – translated from Belleforest's French, because he considered Bandello's Lombard Italian too uncouth, as he wrote in his preface «To The Reader»<sup>17</sup> – and Geoffrey Fenton offered thirteen of Bandello's *novelle* under the title *Certaine tragicall discourses written oute of Frenche and Latin* (1567). Through such international channels of mediation Bandello's stories soon found their way into the English theaters in the anonymous *Edward III*, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* or *Twelfth Night* or in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. In contrast to this early proliferation of Bandellian texts and motifs in the West of Europe, there are few or no traces of them to be found in Polish or Baltic-German literature before Waimer's and Brandt's Bandello offshoots printed in Gdańsk in the 1590s<sup>18</sup>. The author of the first of them, Philipp Waimer, was, as he proudly signs of his dedicatory preface, «extraordinarius Iurium Professor in Gymnasio Dantiscano», in the highly distinguished *Akademische Gymnasium* there, and he had written his play to be performed by his students – literally next door to the ex-Franciscan convent

16. For Bandello's belated reception in Germany see R. KLESCZEWSKI, *Frühe italienische Novellistik in deutschen Übersetzungen*, in B. König, R. Kleszczewski (eds.), *Italienische Literatur in deutscher Sprache. Bilanz und Perspektiven*, Gunter Narr, Tübingen 1990, pp. 123-130, here p. 127. See also A. MARTINO, *Die italienische Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum*, Chloe 17, Rodopi, Amsterdam 1994.

17. W. PAINTER, *The Palace of Pleasure*, J. Jacobs (ed.), D. Nutt, London 1890, vol. I, p. 11.

18. This cannot have been for want of political, commercial and cultural transactions between Italy and Poland at that time. After all, to mention only a few examples, a member of the powerful Milanese Sforza dynasty, Bona Sforza of Bari was the second wife of King Sigismund I 'the Old' and later succeeded in taking over the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; postal services operated between Venice, Vienna and Cracow from 1558 and ecclesiastical delegations crisscrossed the lands in religious turmoil; Polish students and scientists studied and worked in Italy (as Copernicus did at Bologna and Padua) just as a host of Italian artists were active in Poland, and, for a literary example closer to our immediate concerns, Lukasz Górnicki, who had studied in Italy, adapted Castiglione's *Cortegiano* for his countrymen under the title *Dworzanin polski*, 'The Polish Courtier' (1566).

where Bonifacio resided with his books that were soon to be integrated into the school's library.

III. My concern here is, however, not to prove irrefutably that Bonifacio's three volumes of *novelle*, which he bequeathed to the city of Gdańsk and its *Akademische Gymnasium*, were «the only begetters» of the two Bandello remakes first published there in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century or to establish once and for all with positivistic fervor a linear genealogy of textual dependence. Such an undertaking would be vain, to begin with, in the face of the many translations and transformations of Bandello's *novelle* which circulated in Europe already at that time. Moreover, even Bandello's derived from other texts which in turn, more often than not, spawned further permutations. What we are confronted with is an intertextual web or a rhizome of texts rather than linear affiliations. This may be true of all texts, as the theory of intertextuality has shown and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have taught, but it is particularly true of particular texts. Among them are mythological stories and also *novelle*: their very mode of existence is constant permutation; their plots live and survive in ever new versions across cultures, languages, genres and media. Bandello's *novella* II, 37, «Odoardo Terzo Re d'Inghilterra ama la figliuola d'un suo soggetto e la piglia per moglie», is a good case in point here: the Italian *novella* deals with English history and is based in this on French historical sources, the *Vrayes Chroniques de Jean de Bel* (circa 1370) and *Le Chroniques de Froissart* (after 1369); its French translation is translated into English, this translation is integrated into an English collection of stories and used, together with a perusal of at least one of the earlier French historiographical versions, that of Froissart, to mount an anonymous English play, *The Reign of King Edward III*, printed in 1596<sup>19</sup>. Who would venture to say with total conviction how exactly Waimier's *German-Polish* or *Gdańsk* school play of *Elisa* is affiliated with this web of versions? And even if its author says explicitly in his dedication to the magistrates of Gdańsk that it was the Italian «Bandelius» who had given him the idea for his play, claiming at the same

19. There is also a contemporary ballad, composed by Thomas Deloney, «Of King Edward the third, and the faire Countesse of Salisbury», which appears to be based on the play; MELCHIORI, Introduction cit., p. 9, note 2.

time that he considers the story truly historical in spite of its absence in Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* and referring for this to his colleague, the French law professor and Tacitus commentator Aemilius Ferretus (d. 1552)<sup>20</sup>, his argument opens up the intertextual web of transmutations and variations to a wider field of textual mediation than Bandello's *novella* alone. Under such circumstances, it seems to be more promising and profitable to focus not on the provenance of story, its source(s), but on what Weimar has done with, and to, it and what kind of wider interests that reflects and serves.

IV. Why, to begin with, should Waimier have chosen a Bandellian *novella* with an English subject matter for his play, or, to be more precise, with a plot that involves England, Scotland and France? This seems a plot closer to an English history play of the period than an Italian *novella*. No wonder, one recent study of this genre considers Waimier's *Elisa*, erroneously, as «the earliest recorded instance of the English history play abroad»<sup>21</sup>! In contrast, Matteo Bandello's motivation for choosing this particular subject is clear from the outset. As the Dominican monk states in his dedication of this tale to Cardinal d'Armignacco, Edward's illicit desire for the Countess serves him, after the recent death of the philandering King Henry VIII (1547), as yet another example of the notorious immorality of so many English kings:

Ma io crederei poter veramente scrivere che in molti dei regi inglesi le sceleraggini loro di gran lunga avanzano quelle poche buone parti che avevano, con ciò sia cosa che alcuni per le azioni loro si sono non rettori, prencipi e regi, ma fieri e crudelissimi tiranni dimostrati.

And he continues in this vein in the first sentences of the tale itself:

Avendo sentito i molti e varii ragionamenti che qui fatti si sono, a me pare che di questi regi d'Inghilterra, o siano della Rosa bianca o siano della rossa, venendo tutti d'un ceppo, si possa dire che quasi a tutti siano piaciute le donne altrui e

20. *Elisa*, A iii-iv.

21. In T. Hoenselaars (ed.), *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 18.

tutti piú sete abbiano avuto del sangue umano che non ebbe  
Crasso mai de l'oro<sup>22</sup>.

In the course of the telling of his story though, and particularly at its happy ending, Bandello will, however, lose sight of his initial anti-English fervor inherited – and put to his own anti-Reformation purposes – from French historiography, in particular from de Bel's version of the story, which culminates in the King's rape of the Countess. In Waimer's play, in contrast, such anti-British chauvinism is absent from beginning to end. After all, there was no occasion for such hostile emotions in a Gdańsk which was a thriving English trading post for cloth and other commercial goods, second home to a growing community of British expatriates, and in a vivid cultural exchange with England. From the mid-nineties of the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was frequently visited by troupes of 'English Comedians', its Academic Grammar School drew students from England, its library collected a notable number of English books, and some of the Gdańsk intellectuals became members of London learned societies, among them, most famously, Samuel Hartlib, son of an Elblag merchant and an Englishwoman from Gdańsk, who had «a great impact on English education by popularizing in England the idea of schools supervised by the government»<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, why should a religiously reformed school like the city's grammar school nourish and host a play stimulating hostile feelings against a nation that was, after all, on their own side of the confessional divide?

The same applies to the Scots and Scotland. They do not feature strongly in Bandello's version, but in one English version, the scenes presumably written by Shakespeare for *The Reign of King Edward III*, the Scottish soldiers attacking the Countess' castle are satirized as blustering villains and cowards<sup>24</sup>. Again: why should Waimer, professor at the grammar school of a city which, since the late middle ages, hosted a highly valued minority of Scottish craftsmen (and till to-

22. M. BANDELLO, *Novelle*, in F. Flora (ed.), *Tutte le opere di Matteo Bandello*, Mondadori, Milano 1942-1943<sup>2</sup>, [http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/Volume\\_4/t77.pdf](http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/Volume_4/t77.pdf), last visit 30/09/2015, pp. 1163 and 1168.

23. Sychta, *Magna Britannia* cit.

24. MELCHIORI, Introduction cit., pp. 11-13.

day remembers their presence in the name of two districts, 'Old' and 'New Scots'), have wished to alienate their feelings without any provocation? Accordingly, Waimer's Scots, though playing a far from heroic role, are spared satirical flagellation, and what appears to be a cliché thrasonical Scot, Waimer's aptly named Thraso, eventually proves to be a second Falstaff – and English.

Thus, unlike all previous versions of the story, Waimer's play remains essentially free of all chauvinistic English- or Scots-bashing – as behoves a school play for the grammar school of a city cherishing its international trade connections and proud of its status as a harbor town, indeed a member of the Hanse, open to other nations and their stories, whether they come from England, France, Italy or elsewhere. To mount a play about an English King and Countess with its xenophobic potential defused is in itself an expression of this openness and interest in the other. Moreover, the Gdańsk version does not only not denigrate the English, as other versions did, it actually pays homage to them. The name given to the Countess here – «Elisa» and not «Alis» (as with Jean le Bel), nor «Aelis/Alys» (Froissart), «Aelips» (Bandello), «Alice» (Painter) or the nameless «Countess of Salisbury» of *The Reign of Edward III* – turns its chaste Elisa into an idealized image of the famed and fabled English virgin queen «Eliza», Elizabeth I.

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V. All the versions of the story which Bandello narrates as a *novella* share one basic plot: the English King Edward III falls in love with a married Countess and tries to gain her love. The 'zero-version' of this plot makes do with only mentioning the illicit love affair without elaborating on its circumstances or consequences. We find this zero-version in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), where the English historian describes the institution of the Order of the Garter – *Honi soit qui mal y pense* – at a royal feast given by Edward III in Windsor Castle: «K. Edward finding either the garter of the queene, or of some ladie with whom he was in love, being fallen from hir leg». Only in a marginal note does he identify the lady-friend as «the countess of Salisburie», whereas his source here, Polydore Vergil's *Latin Anglica historia* (1555), refrains from naming names, identifying the garter as «reginae seu amicae», «of the queen or of lady-

friend»<sup>25</sup>. None of the two allusions to the King's amour suggests any serious problems; it remains within the bounds of a courtly game.

Elaborated further, such a plot, however, always involves two kinds of problems: the asymmetry of affection and the feudal disequilibrium between the King's regal authority and the Countess' dependence and obedience. The most important parameter of variance between versions resides in the legal nubility of the two: when the King is unmarried or widowed and the married Countess loses her spouse, she has the option to yield to the King's desire and give herself to him in marriage; when both – or only one of them – are already married a legal wedding is impossible. This latter, the worst-case scenario, rules out a happy ending in wedlock and more often than not results in a rape narrative of the 'Rape of Lucrece' kind. Such a tragic solution we find in the first fully-fledged account of the romance, Le Bel's in chapters 50 and 65 of his historical *Chronique*. It ends drastically in brutal violation and in the final, brutal abandonment of the raped Countess by the King.

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[...] et au derrain, le poigny si fort l'aguillon d'amours que il en fit telle chose dont il fut amerement blasmè et repris, car quant il ne peut faire sa volenté de la noble dame par amours ne par priere, il l'eut à force, ainsy que vous orrez cy apres.

[...] l'enforcha à telle doulour e à tel martire qu'onques femme ne fu ainsy villainement traittié[e]; et la lascia comme gisant toute pasmée, sanant par nez e par bouche et aultre part. [...] Puis s'en parti l'endemain sans dire mot<sup>26</sup>.

Even darker versions would conclude in murder – the killing of the King by the victim of his rape or a member of her family, or the killing of the victimized lady to silence her – or the Lucrece-like suicide of the lady. None of the stories about the King and the Countess, however, go as far as that. A softer or softened version of the rape narrative is

25. Both quoted in MELCHIORI, Introduction cit., p. 22. For the 'Garter' context see G. MELCHIORI, *Shakespeare's Garter Plays. Edward III to Merry Wives of Windsor*, University of Delaware Press, Newark 1994.

26. J. LE BEL, *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, J. Viard, E. Déprez (eds.), Renouard, Paris 1904-1905, vol. I, p. 293 and vol. II, p. 31.



an inconclusive ending in which the countess remains determined till the end to resist the King's increasingly urgent suit, with the King eventually refraining from using physical violence. We find such a version in Froissart's *Chronique* (chapters 77 and 89), in which the frustrated King after his failed attempt to win her over at a feast given to her honour turns to higher things, his war against the French, and the Countess just disappears from the tale. The white-washing goes even further in the version put on stage in the first two acts of *The Reign of Edward III* attributed to Shakespeare: here the King abandons his illicit love affair after much heart-searching and the encounter with his son, which reminds him of his wife, and the Countess' bold determination in II, ii, confronting him with the charge of killing both his wife and her husband if he wants to obtain her body, seals his heroic decision to renounce his sinful desire. This victory over his own passions prepares him for his victory over his enemies in France in the following three acts; it is an important step in his formation as ideal king.

The softest version, of course, is that with the happy ending of the marriage of two nubile partners earning and deserving their love for each other. We find it programmatically highlighted in the title of Bandello's *novella* II, 37, the earliest version to turn the horror tale of a rapist King into an *exemplum* of unassailable female chastity and female virtue eventually rewarded by her persecutor's conversion. With the King widowed from the beginning and the Countess' husband conveniently killed off in France in the course of events, her offer of suicide finally persuades the King to make her his wife and queen<sup>27</sup>. Bandello in the sexual imbroglios of his *novelle* does not in general avoid the tragic outcome of rape; there is, for instance, Giulia da Gazuolo, «per forza violata» in I, 8, Paolina in III, 19, or, the archetype of rape and suicide, Lucrezia, in II, 21. But here, obviously, he saw greater narrative and emotional potential in a happy ending with virtue triumphing on both sides.

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27. In this version there is one problem of plotting which neither Bandello nor Waimer really resolve: why doesn't the unmarried King offer marriage to the beloved Countess once she is a widow and available? That would, of course, make the story come to an end before it has become interesting.

It was this version which eventually became the standard, even if some of its followers had qualms about the historical misrepresentation underlying it. William Painter for instance, in his *Palace of Pleasure*, weighs the «grace» of this version against its lack of truth to history:

that the said Edwarde when hee saw that hee could not by loue and other perswasions attaine the Countesse but by force, married the same Countesse, which is altogether untrue, for that Polydore and other aucthors do remember but one wife that hee had, which was the sayde vertuous Queene Philip, with other like defaults: yet the grace of the historie for all those errours is not diminished<sup>28</sup>.

And Philipp Waimer, writing from Gdańsk, points out that according to Polydor Vergil, whose official *Anglica historia* of 1534 omits the story of the King and the Countess altogether, Edward III was already more than 50 years old when his Queen Philippa had died and that Vergil, by omitting the story, had avoided to present the King unfavourably as a second old and lusty King David with his Bathseba – as he himself will do with his young actors and school audience in mind<sup>29</sup>.

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Further variations in the plotting of the various versions are related to their different spatial arrangements: the historiographical versions (de Bel, Froissart) move freely across Scotland, England and the battlefields of France; the Shakespearean part of *The Reign of King Edward III* makes do with only one setting, the Countess' embattled castle, for the love affair (scenes I, ii to II, ii); Waimer's school drama *Elisa* is spatially bi-partite, acts 1 and 2 set at Countess Salbrick's castle and acts 3 to 5 in London; Bandello's *novella* moves from the Countess' Salberí castle, where the King falls in love with her, to London, where he intensifies his pursuit and the plot thickens, and on to the King's riverside palace up the Thames (Windsor), a *locus amoenus* suitable for the happy ending, and back to London and the public ratification of their union there. This variance in spatial structure is more directly related to generic differences between historiographical, nov-

28. PAINTER, *The Palace of Pleasure* cit., vol. II, p. 336.

29. *Elisa*, iiiii.

elistic and dramatic texts than to differences in the plotting itself.

These latter involve also the difference in number and importance of characters other than the two protagonists of the erotic dyad: husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, councillors and servants. All or some of them play more or less important roles in the erotic scenario as opponents or obstacles, confidants, connivers or supporters to the King's illicit desire. In Le Bel's account, the chamberlains of the King connive with it, silent and without intervening, and the Countess' husband, informed by his wife of the violence done to her, abandons her to her fortunes. Froissart does not bring any third persons into play and focuses entirely on the dialogues between the King and the Countess. It is with Bandello's *novella* that the cast involved in the love affair takes on a new dimension: he introduces a Count Ricciardo, whom the King makes his – unwilling – *mezzano* and he invents a father and a mother for the Countess, upon whom he puts the pressure of threats and promises to achieve his illicit ends. With such additions, the story both in Bandello's and in later versions of Painter and Waimer, unfolds as a series of dialogues between the King and the Countess, the King and his adviser, the King with the Countess' father and mother and as well as the Countess with her parents. Together, these dialogue now make up the greater part of each of the versions and the often extended speeches now allow for elaborate debates and discussion of the values at stake in this scenario: marital truth and female chastity vs. male desire and passion; the King's feudal responsibility to his subjects, particularly those who, like the Countess' family, are ready to sacrifice their lives for him; worldly advantages gained through sin vs. an impeccable life and eternal bliss after death; life in sin vs. suicide to save one's honour and eternal bliss.

**VI.** It is the semi-dramatic structure of a series of extended monologues and dialogues so typical of Bandello's *novelle* in general and of *novella* II, 37 in particular that recommends the story of the King and the Countess for dramatic and theatrical re-workings. We can see that in the first two acts of *The Reign of Edward III*, where the long dialogues between the King and the Countess (I, ii, 102-165; II, i, 185-277; II, ii,

122-198), between him and her father (II, i, 293-347) and between her father and the Countess (II, i, 368-460) replay the themes and arguments of Bandello's rhetorical set pieces<sup>30</sup>. Waimer's *Elisa* is even closer to Bandello here in offering theatrical counter-pieces to most of the dialogues and soliloquies in the *novella*: there are four lengthy dialogues between the King and the Countess (in Bandello one), two between the King and her father (as in Bandello), a dialogue each between the Countess and her father and her mother (as in Bandello)<sup>31</sup>, and two soliloquies by the King (in Bandello one) and one each by the Countess and her father (in Bandello none). These speeches both in Bandello and Waimer – and in Waimer even more so than in Bandello – serve a double purpose: first, as rhetorical show-pieces demonstrating the workings and power of rhetoric to an audience of courtiers (in Bandello's case) or of grammar school students (in Waimer's case); secondly, as the medium of dramatic confrontations of passions and values as well as of psychological introspection into contradictory states of mind and emotions and the processes of resolving them and coming to decisions. The more than doubled number of soliloquies in Waimer's play thus reflects both the generic difference between a tale and a play, on the one hand, and, on the other, Waimer's, the law professor's, heightened interest in the dialects of opposing values, aims and emotions and in Elisa's self-determined resolution to preserve her chastity and honour against all persuasions, promises and threats, which will eventually win her the crown of queenship and of paradigm of virtue rewarded.

Though the speeches in Waimer's *Elisa* are more numerous and longer than in Bandello's *novella*, there is, however, a dimension to the play totally absent from the *novella*, which frames and relativizes all that speechifying. This resides in the huge chunks of humour and farce, which counter-balance

30. There is only one new departure in this in the Elizabethan adaptation, and that shows the master's, Shakespeare's, touch: the dialogue of the King with his confidant on how to approach the Countess is turned into a writing scene, with Edward correcting – and finally rewriting himself – the love letter he solicits his secretary Lodowick to write for him (II, i, 48-184).

31. Alone the dialogue between the King's *cameriero* and the Countess' mother remains without a direct equivalent in Waimer's version.

the high-seriousness of the inherited plot about virtue tested, threatening rape and triumphant victory of female virtue. The play is announced in the title already as a «lustige comœdia», and it is, indeed, a comedy not only by way of its happy ending but also in the fun and horseplay which accompanies the heroic plot throughout and puts it into place. This brings with it, in the first place, a further and considerable enlargement of the cast: there are now – besides the protagonists and the supporting characters of parents and advisors and besides an additional sister and waiting women – two fools with their wives, the down-to-earth Zani and Dominus Johannes, proudly parading his Latin, the braggart soldier and coward Thraso, a rich Pantalon and the legacy hunter Amandus. Their names already give them away as stock figures of Terentian comedy, *commedia dell'arte* or homely farce and the turmoil of their various sexual, military and economic pursuits running parallel with those of the exalted personages goes some way towards carnivalizing what with Bandello was an austere constructed tragic dilemma. This is now embedded in the teeming life of a city community reaching far beyond, or far below, Bandello's world of aristocracy and nobility. The juxtaposition of citizens and princes also extends the stylistic range of the play in contrast with the *novella*. The polished eloquence of all of its characters is here split up into two levels. Though all of them speak verse, the fairly unpretentious four-beat couplets in the style of the *Meistersinger* and sixteenth-century German playwright Hans Sachs, Waimier's aristocrats maintain the decorum of serious drama while the comic or lower class characters lard their verse with the folk wisdom of homely proverbs, with racy puns and quibbles, snatches and songs, parodies and riddles and with a vocabulary close to the body and material reality.

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This juxtaposition or confrontation of the serious with the funny has little to do with Bandello's exemplary story of regality regained and virtue rewarded. It reminds one rather of the mingling of kings and clowns in the contemporary English theatre, which Sir Philip Sidney had already castigated for its «mongrel tragi-comedies» in the late 1570s<sup>32</sup>. Sidney's label

32. Sir P. SIDNEY, *An Apology for Poetry*, in E.D. Jones (ed.), *English Critical Essays. Sixteenth*,

would also fit the usual fare of the ‘English Comedians’ touring the Continent from the late sixteenth century onwards. So, without having to posit a play about King Edward and the Countess performed by them as the source of Waimer’s play, we may consider the genre mix of their performances as providing a structural model for it. The standard work on the German Gdańsk theatre of the period calls it «the earliest attempt of a German writer to rival the performances of the English professional actors»<sup>33</sup> and a recent edition of the play texts of the ‘English Comedians’ sees in the introduction of the «obligate couple of Mr. Pantalon and his servant Zani» one of the earliest examples of such comic personages on a German stage<sup>34</sup>. There is, therefore, a double nexus between the Gdańsk play and both English and Italian culture: in its subject matter and its dramatic form it responds to English history and to the practices of the contemporary English theatre; in the construction of its main plot and in some of its characters it is indebted to the Italian *novella* and to *commedia dell’arte*.

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This cultural in-betweenness is also reflected in the heteroglossia of the speeches: Thraso and Dominus Johannes, for instance, consider themselves «Gentilmen»<sup>35</sup> and when Elisa’s father refuses to play the King’s pander or go-between, the Italian expression «Ruffian» or *ruffiano* as employed by Bandello in the same context is used three times<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, there is the variety of dialects so typical of the streets and market places of Gdańsk, down to the ‘Billingsgate’ of the fish market, from which the fool’s wife returns with the news of the King’s rumoured amours in iv, vi. And finally, there is the Latin of the epigraph on the title page, of the stage directions and of the frequent tags and quotes which permeate the dialogue. This is clearly a play written for performance by grammar school students and for an educated audience

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*Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, The World’s Classics, Oxford University Press, London 1947, p. 46.

33. J. BOLTE, *Das Danziger Theater im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Leopold Voss, Hamburg und Leipzig 1895, p. xiv: «der früheste Versuch eines Deutschen, mit den Aufführungen der englischen Berufsschauspieler zu wetteifern».

34. A. NOE, *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne, vol. 6: Realienband*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2007, p. xxx.

35. *Elisa*, Bvb and Bvjb.

36. *Elisa*, Gij, Gijj and Gv; for Bandello see *Novelle* cit., pp. 1190 and 1194.

familiar with classical learning; both would also appreciate its division, not surprisingly indicated in Latin, into the obligate five acts.

**VII.** As we have seen, Waimer always had his audience of 'Gdańskers' in mind, the professors and students of the *Akademische Gymnasium* as well as the magistrates and citizens of the free city. So did Bandello his. But their audiences were, of course, vastly different. Bandello wrote his *novelle* in constant dialogue with a refined readership of aristocrats and higher clergy in their palaces, episcopal sees or villas across the Italian peninsula. His stories emerge from the *Civil conversazione* (Stefano Guazzo, 1574), in which a leisured cultural elite defines itself, its tastes and values, and passes its time telling, listening to and discussing true, though surprising stories – or, as Goethe said, defining the *novella*, «sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheiten», 'actually happened unheard of incidents'<sup>37</sup> – in particular about the painful or absurd vagaries of sexual relations. As Bandello's prefaces to each of these stories insist upon, he is himself a part of this select society. He has first heard them told in this social context; he then writes them down und returns them to it transformed into literature, singling out one particularly illustrious member of it as dedicatee for each of them. Although he occasionally harks back to the Horatian formula of *delectare et prodesse*, his main intention surely is to entertain his audience with his comic or tragic stories of love's joys and sorrows, of love high and low, wedded or illicit, of love at cross purposes, of adultery and philandering, cunning ruses, rape and bloody revenge, and at the same time to please his readers with the delightful variety, novelty and psychological intricacies of his stories, the elegant *sprezzatura* of his style and his narrative skill in preparing surprising turns and pointing up dialectical resolutions. To insist too much on moral lessons in this would have been a breach in *decorum* and good taste.

In contrast, Waimer's audience, to which he is as closely related as Bandello is to his, expected just that. His pre-

37. J.P. ECKERMANN, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, P. Stapf (ed.), Vollmer, Wiesbaden 1958, p. 231.



dominantly bourgeois and Protestant audience and the grammar school set-up of the performance called for more than surprising novelty and psychological interest. Only as a 'moral institution'<sup>38</sup> could the theatre justify itself in such a context and even the fun and horseplay in the play are intended to serve a didactic purpose, namely as comic relief to keep the students' attention on the serious matter awake. The claim that the performance serves a moral purpose and the definition of the particular lesson this play teaches are insisted upon again and again in its paratexts; after all, repetition is the schoolmaster's tool as the grammar school professor knows only too well. There are the eight pages of a long dedicatory epistle to the city authorities, the mayors and magistrates, which dissociates the plot from vain and idle fiction and claims for it the dignified status of true history from which an increasingly immoral present can learn a timely lesson about female virtue. There is the prologue which refrains from disclosing the outcome of the plot in order to keep up suspense – another piece of schoolmasterly didacticism! – and introduces Elisa as a mirror of virtue, self-control and honour so rare these days. Balancing that, there is a long epilogue of again eight pages to be recited by five schoolboys that appeals to the audience to take Elisa's chastity as a model for widows to either re-marry or avoid carnality and for the young and the virgins to preserve their chastity, prays to the Almighty to instill the authorities with political wisdom and gives thanks to them who support the school in maintaining order. As if these framing paratexts were not enough to make the moral and political message clear, Waimer adds further paratexts in the form of *argumenta* to each one of the five acts, summing up the action and putting it under a moral perspective. Moreover, he provides an epigraph on the title page, which anticipates the lesson to be learnt in Elisa's readiness to sacrifice her life to her honour: «Summum crede nefas animam praeferre pudori et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas»<sup>39</sup>. This is indeed the heart of the matter here, and Elisa's resolution to die

38. My anachronistic allusion is to Friedrich Schiller's speech on «Die Schaubühne als seine moralische Anstalt betrachtet» (1784).

39. 'Count it the greatest sin to prefer life to honor, and for the sake of living to lose what makes life worth living', quoting Juvenal, *Satires* VIII, 83.

rather than submit to the King's sinful passion is echoed again and again in her speeches, most emphatically in scene iv, iii, where she blames her father for not being a second Virginius killing his daughter rather than allowing her to be raped – whereby she, like a good scholar, does not forget to mention her source for this, Livius' *Ab urbe condita* (3. 44–58), which compares Virginia's sacrifice to that of Lucrece. And, finally, Waimer does not omit anything in Bandello of educational potential; even his two long extradiegetic digressions on the depravity of courtiers and court life are not erased but turned into dramatic speech and dialogue in III, ii and IV, v.

As Waimer writes in his dedicatory epistle, his play was performed at the *Akademische Gymnasium* by his students a number of times to the great acclaim of the citizens and magistrates of Gdańsk. Giving all the names of the boy actors and the magistrates and professors performing in his show, he re-enforces the close link between his play, the school and the city that maintained it. This link, a veritable feedback, is as close as that between Bandello's *novelle* and his readers, who feature in them as sources and dedicatees of the stories. With Waimer, however, the link is one of civic, political and religious morals, not of aristocratic tastes; its range is local as opposed to Bandello's network of princely courts spreading across Italy from the Veneto to Sicily. At the centre are the educational institutions and aspirations of the free city of Gdańsk, three in particular: its *Akademische Gymnasium*, struggling with its native «Philippus Waimerus», professor of civil and canonical law, for intellectual distinction; its growing library of books to which those of Bonifacio contributed such a precious stock and which served as the municipal library; and a flourishing printing trade dominated by a dynasty of local printers, the Rhodes, who served these aspirations as a kind of Gdańsk University Press<sup>40</sup>. It was Jakob Rhode I (Jacobus Rhodus, 1563–1603) who first published both Waimer's *Elisa* and the other Bandello off-shoot, Mauritius Brandt's *Phoenicia* in the 1590s – and under his imprint also Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio's literary remains, the *Miscellanea Hym-*

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40. See Ch. RESKE, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet: auf der Grundlage des gleichnamigen Werkes von Josef Benzing*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2007, p. 146.



*norum, Epigrammatum, et Paradoxorum quorundam* (1599), a monument to the city's gratitude to, and pride in, its distinguished expatriate<sup>41</sup>.

It is here that our Bandellian *periplus* around Europe and Gdańsk comes full circle and my tale of Bandello and Bonifacio at the Baltic Sea to an end.

41. The shelf-mark of the Gdańsk copy is Cf 2960 8°.