**Three studies on Morrocchesi’s plates for the acting of Pilade’s monologue ‘Feroce troppo…’**

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I have imposed two conditions on my performance of the piece, which though not completely arbitrary, should not be uncritically observed. They are meant to facilitate the experiment, by fixing some variables, so that the objects under investigation become more salient.

The first condition pertains to the declamation: I decided to respect the pentameter throughout, meaning that all the elisions are respected. This is particularly evident in enumerations such as that found in the first line or the twelfth. I am not aware if declamatory practice at the time would have been as strict (though it is conceivable, in light of recitation practices in other countries and in earlier times) and therefore this choice should not be taken for its historical accuracy. It poses, however, an additional, and fruitful, challenge to the enchaining of attitudes, since little time is left for their articulation. For that same reason, it provides a touchstone for the transition itself: if the transformation from one attitude to the next can be made in a constricted time frame, when the vocal thread is kept unbroken, it can also be made in a freer one, when pauses and silences are allowed at the elisions.

The second condition is to separate the timing of facial movement and gaze from that of the rest of the body. Following the great majority of acting accounts up to the time of Morrocchesi (Austin’s *Chironomia* might be useful here), the senses in general, and the eyes in particular, seem to be given precedence to any other movement belonging to a thought or emotion. Closely following them is the expression on the countenance, which betrays the first signs of an emotion. Thus, whenever possible and proper, I have anticipated the plates by a change in gaze and countenance. This means that, effectively, the face and eyes arrive at the illustrated position earlier than the rest of the body. Once again, this decision is made in full ignorance of Morrocchesi’s opinions on the subject, and serves only the purpose of rendering the performance, as far as I am concerned, more convincing, by reconciling attitudes which could otherwise seem irreconcilable.

**The studies**

In order to prepare a performance of the material at hand, there seem to be two major pieces missing, and one minor. The two major omissions are: the timing, or where in the text which accompanies each of the plates the full force of the attitude should fall; and the transitions, or the nature of the change which occurs between attitudes. The minor omission regards three instances in which a longer piece of text, containing potentially varied expressions, is given only one attitude.

In order to begin exploring these questions, three studies are suggested:

1. The attitude should always be arrived at before the text which corresponds to it is uttered.
2. The attitude should fall on the accented syllable of a chosen emphatic word of the text corresponding to its plate.
3. A mix of the two previous options is allowed, to which are added: the possibility of building up an attitude, i.e., having limbs move to the final position at different points in the corresponding text; and adding extra attitudes, not present in Morrocchesi, between existing ones.

Tempting as it might be for me to see the third study as closer to a finished product, ready for performance, it is important to give all of the studies the benefit of the doubt, and to place any perceived shortcomings on the shoulders of the performer (or attribute them to insufficient rehearsal!), rather than on the principles themselves. The fact that I myself cannot warm up my imagination in equal degrees for the three studies does not mean that a better actor would not pull them off equally well…

And finally, there might be slight inaccuracies pertaining to the exact angle of feet, torso, arms, and hands. These I chose not to dedicate too much attention to, as not fundamental to answering the above mentioned questions. A future stylistically accurate performance can take these aspects into account. Those aspects in the overall attitude which I did prioritize were: the placing of the weight, the direction of gaze, and the energy level conveyed by the apparent tension in the muscles.