

Joseph Connors, "Chi era Ottonelli?," in *Pietro da Cortona*, Milan, 1998, pp. 21-27.

Ottonelli, Jean Dominique, [né à Fanano, mourut à Florence en 1670, à l'âge de 86 ans.] reçu en 1602, enseigna pendant quelques années les belles lettres, et devint ensuite recteur de Recanati et de Fermo. Il passa la plus grande partie de sa vie à Florence, s'occupant du salut des âmes, et de la composition de ses ouvrages. Ceux qui traitent du théâtre sont fort curieux, l'auteur en avait fait une étude particulière.

These few lines from de Baker and Sommervogel's *Bibliothèque des écrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus* of 1872 were almost all we knew of Ottonelli's biography. We have no dates for the time spent in the Jesuit colleges of Recanati and Fermo. Someone with the same last name, "Lelio Ottonelli Conte di Tregnano" published a devotional book in 1655 and this suggested to Sommervogel a noble origin for our Ottonelli (Gian Domenico). Baldinucci gives a report of sermon Ottonelli gave in Florence in 1640 (when Baldinucci was 15, therefore from hearsay) and says he did much good by his preaching, but even more by staying in his room and writing. Indeed his twenty books stack up to almost 7000 pages of dense confessional prose. Ottonelli wrote more than Vasari.

But what was he like as a man, why did he write on art, and especially why did he write on theater? "ses ouvrages...qui traitent du théâtre sont fort curieux, l'auteur en avait fait une étude particulière." In fact it is the books on theater, especially *Della Christiana moderazione del teatro*, that tell us much about Ottonelli. From the autobiographical anecdotes buried in these dense pages we can reconstruct Ottonelli's activities for the five crucial years preceding his arrival in Florence in 1640. They paint a surprising picture. Ottonelli comes across not as a theologian or writer, not as "il mite gesuita" that art theorists love to imagine, but as a man of action, a guerrilla engaged in combat against the theater and especially against the role of women in it. The point of this article is to give a brief biography of Ottonelli; his larger context, which in the end is not art theory but the "anti-theatrical movement" of the seventeenth century, will be treated in a future publication.

Our story opens with Ottonelli as the scourge of the Sicilian popular comedy. We catch our first glimpse of him in Catania in 1635 stopping a comedy because it featured a single obscene gesture. In Palermo we find him working with a fellow Jesuit (G.B. Carminatato) to condemn a poor charlatan to the galleys for making an obscene gesture during a performance: "Quel ciarlatano era tutto osceno per quel fatto solo di tanta oscenità." (I.35)

Ottonelli was a rugged traveler. In 1636 there was an incident of iconoclasm in Ragusa, "governata nel temporale da que' Signori Repubblicanti"), which must mean Ragusa on the Adriatic coast, which may have involved Ottonelli. During the feast of the Holy Sacrament the city was decked out for a procession along the route that the archbishop, Msgr. Antonio Severoli,

was expected to take. Many holy images were on display, but at one turn, high on a wall, a painting caught the bishop's eye: "Ma che?" It was a "quadro lascivo." His heart aflame, his face red with anger, his eyes flashing with "giusto furore," Severoli ordered the procession stopped, ladders to be brought, and "quel visibile vitupero della Pittura" to be taken down. The incident was witnessed by a Jesuit from Fanano. (T 399-402)

If indeed Ottonelli was this Jesuit, he was soon back in Sicily. He tells the story of two monks who leapt on stage during a performance of a comedy in Trapani in 1639 and stopped the performance by preaching to the audience. The outraged director was forced to give in and to exclude women and obscenity from the repertoire.

Ottonelli sent spies to plays and used information from the confessions of actors and especially actresses. An actress confessed to him her sad lot, forced to follow her actor-husband and to wear diaphanous blouses. The favors of actresses often had to be bought for a double bribe, one for the wife and one for the husband. Wives were often the common property of the whole troupe. (I.128-29) But there were worse fates. In 1641 an actress who had appeared on stage in front of a great lord was taken for a night. In fact Ottonelli knew of many cases of rapes of famous actresses, taken by overbearing noblemen from husbands powerless to protect them; one thinks of the "Unnamed" of the *Promessi Sposi*.

Ottonelli says all this not to defend women but to exclude them from the stage: "Le Donne teatrali son Amazoni infernali, armate di spada, e di saette." (I.85) "Non havete mai incontrato per strada femmine vestite da cavalle di giostra, cariche di pennacchi, cimieri, zuffi, ricci e ventagli, con vesti ricamate, e code fuori d'ogni misura?" (I.74) He could not stand the idea of an old woman looking young on stage: "farsi vedere bella, ornata, vana" and by definition impudica (I.130). The Sicilian confessional revealed to him many cases of seduction by a woman's eyes. (I.137-39) A scholar once told him that Aristotle said their pupils contained poison. (I.132)

Women were essential to the economics of the popular theater, and Ottonelli explains why. They sold the tickets and threw in a glimpse of face or bosom for good measure. They peddled merchandise during performances: "mercantie, profumeria, saponetti, moschardini, o simili coserelle." They sang, performed acrobatics, and passed a cup for tips, a lucrative practice. Good actresses brought in clients both to the plays and to games of chance. Gifts were sent backstage. And there was outright prostitution: "per le grosse offerte pecuniose fatte per arrivar à godere le sozze, e dishoneste lordure della carne con le Comiche." Ottonelli knew of at least one poor gentleman who in 1639 sold all he had to enjoy the favor of an actress (I.122 f.)

Ottonelli knew that in England actresses were prohibited (though women from continental troupes occasionally appeared on stage and the queen and her ladies preformed in court masques). But the general rule in Shakespeare's London was to use boy actors for the women's

parts. When the troupe of travelling players comes to Elsinore, Hamlet greets the boy who will play the part of his mother, the queen, and notes how he has shot up in height and his voice has begun to crack:

You are welcome masters, welcome, all.... -What, my young lady and mistress?
By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the
altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not
cracked within the ring."

Ottobelli knew of the English practice and recommended it for Italy, though he knew that Italian actors were dead set against it. And he also realized there was a danger in throwing boys and old men together. (I.89) The line between transvestism and sodomy was a thin one. In 1641 he was shown a letter from Venice describing how a young transvestite was mutilated, a punishment of which he thoroughly approved. (I.189). Thinking of such horrors as he writes, he begins to disapprove of dressing boys as women, and in the end allows at most a female voice to be heard from backstage. (I.197)

Ottobelli is part of a larger European current, called by Jonas Barish the "Antitheatrical Prejudice." The parallels are interesting, in particular with England, and I hope to develop them at length in a future paper. The most significant attack on the theater in Elizabeth's reign came from a Cambridge-trained scholar formed in the New Learning. Stephen Gosson had tried his hand at playwriting but then in 1579 published an attack on the theater entitled *The School of Abuse*. The ensuing controversy prompted Gosson to write a second attack, *Playes Confuted in five Actions*, in 1582. Gosson's massive ordering of the classical arguments against the theater fed a generation of anti-theatrical criticism.

But the most vitriolic critic of the English stage and the man whose work most resembles Ottobelli was William Prynne (1600-1669). His *Histrio-mastix* (scourge of players) was published in 1633, about a decade before Ottobelli's work was composed. Prynne was a strange citizen. As Barish acutely observes, his book is "a gargantuan encyclopedia of antitheatrical lore which scourges every form of theater in the most ferocious terms, in a style of paralyzing repetitiousness from which everything resembling nuance has been rigidly excluded." (83) Prynne is the English Ottobelli, and Ottobelli the Italian Prynne. Barish describes the English Puritan's book as laden with a "cargo of invective and top-heavy with its freight of learned citations, [which] quickly turns the whole operation into a logorrhaic nightmare." (86) No one who has read Ottobelli's *Cristiana Moderatione del teatro* will feel very differently.

In 1639 Ottobelli crossed the Straits of Messina and worked his way steadily north. In Naples ("un Principe Vice Rè di un nobilissimo, e fioritissimo Regno") he planned an attack on a new and difficult target, the court theater. He composed an invective against it, particularly against the appearance of women on stage. With the assistance of the Jesuit provincial he sued for the

right to preach against the theater and demanded that licenses be withheld wherever women appeared on stage or banco. He adduced the examples of states that had expelled actors: Genoa in 1584 and Venice recently, both Charles V and Philip II. The prince received the document with docility and Ottonelli pushed on towards Rome. Shortly afterward, as Ottonelli learned by letter, palace comedies were halted and the comedians expelled from the Regno. (I.244-50).

Rome, which he passed through in 1639 on his way north, puzzled Ottonelli. There was an appalling climate of tolerance. Charlatans were permitted (though not allowed to jump on a banco), and women acted (though not in love comedies). All decency dissolved at carnival. Tolerance in Rome was used as an excuse for tolerance elsewhere. He dared not criticize the hierarchy openly: "Le Aquile grandi spiegano i vanni loro sopra gli amati figliuoli, per esser celebrate, e non censurate." Still, he knew how to work the curia and put pressure on his own Jesuit superiors. When he published his book on the theater 12 years later (1651) three cardinals complimented him, Altieri, Roma and Lugo, the last proud of the fact he had never been to a play, "per non mettermi à pericolo di sentire qualche scappata." But given Ottonelli's outlook, it is highly improbable he made any inroads on the Barberini circle in 1639, or met Cortona.

Ottonelli pushed on to Tuscany. In Montepulciano he met a monk, like him an antitheatrical crusader, who recounted an incident that had happened to him two years before. While travelling on a country road in the dead of winter the priest encountered a troupe of actors. They recognized him by his habit as a member of an order that preached against comedies. One actor pushed the monk into a snow-filled ditch while the others roared with laughter. One can imagine Ottonelli's indignation.

At about this time Ottonelli preached Lent in an unidentified city. He stayed on through summer and autumn, and soon carnival [1640 or 1641?] was approaching, and a troupe of actors had begun their performances. One Sunday, during the exposition of the Eucharist in the Jesuit church, Ottonelli felt inspired to get up and launch an invective against actors. He spoke "con impeto grandissimo," without knowing where the words came from. Various gentlemen and even fellow Jesuits took offence at his excess. The Principessa summoned the leading lady of the troupe and urged extreme caution. Ottonelli went to a performance and found the moral standards high, for once, and soon left to preach lent in another city. However, on his return he found that the actress, "strumento del Diavolo," had completely corrupted morals among the youth. Her appearances on stage and her conversation were seductive, and worse was her participation in "certe Assemblée infernali, chiamate Accademie." When a leading cavaliere, a married man, got entrapped in this circle a powerful relative had the actors banished from the city. (I.125) Ottonelli had been right all along.

We can place Ottonelli in Florence in 1640. Baldinucci tells how he preached in the Jesuit church of S. Giovannino, and how crowds flocked to hear him. He used a crude print ("fatto fare

a persona di poco sapere”) to illustrate his words. The painter Fabrizio Boschi (1570-1642) offered to draw a better version of the image (*Moribundus* caught in the struggle between the devil and an angel). Boschi was a strange man (“di natura così spiacevole, inquieta, stravagante e collerica” p. 638) but so was Ottonelli, and the two became fast friends for the two years more the artist had to live. Boschi was the prelude to Cortona, Ottonelli’s first confidant among artists.

Courtly spectacle was a central fact of Florentine cultural and political life. Marriages, betrothals and carnival were always accompanied by splendid plays, horse ballets or river spectacles. Cortona and Cardinal Sacchetti witnessed one of the most splendid of these performances, the *Nozze degli dei*, put on in 1637 as the public celebration of the marriage of Ferdinando II to Vittoria della Rovere. Ottonelli published his first invective against the theater in 1640, but Florence was no place for a rabid critic of the theater, or of anything that savored of criticism of the court. If he wanted to survive, Ottonelli had to diversify his interests. He wrote one book against gambling and others (almost a thousand pages) against *conversationi*, salons with indecent women, singers or “Accademiche.”

But it was the treatise on art, which took shape between 1641 and 1645, that struck the most resonant chord in Florence. Ottonelli himself tells us that the *Trattato* on painting was meant to appear as the third book of his series on the theater, but that he was persuaded to defer the publication. Indeed there was a close link between the two subjects. The defenders of lascivious theater often confronted their critics with a problem: “Si permettano le Pitture, e le Statue oscene: dunque si possono permettere anche le Comedie poco modeste.” Lascivious painting was a fortified outpost that had to be taken before the castle of obscene theater could be taken. But it was a specialized field, and Ottonelli knew that he would need help, and that he could not count on his fellow-Jesuits, who were often hostile to his extremism. But just at this moment there was a great and pious painter in town, travelling in the company of a cardinal, and engaged in frescoing the ceiling of the Palazzo Pitti. Ottonelli gives us a thinly veiled account of how he met Cortona.

L’anno 1641 dimorava in una Città principalissima d’un Principe supremo un famoso Pittore, andato colà per ornare con le sue pitture alcune stanze del nobilissimo Palazzo, habitatione di quell’altezza [This is transparently Cortona at Palazzo Pitti]. Un Gentil’uomo, soggetto di molta virtù, e d’universale eruditione, un giorno dimandò al Pittore. O Signor mio non dipingere già alcuna Donna ignuda? Nò Sig rispose, & aggiunse parole di senso tale, che fece intendere, non esser egli per far figura alcuna, che fusse di vergogna, ne al Serenissimo, ne al Palazzo, ne à se stesso.

Cortona was by all accounts a pious man, from the days of his early youth to an old age obsessed by the cult of S. Martina. As a painter he is *moyen-sensuel*. Passeri describes an erotic painting

done in his youth for Marino's gallery, *Rinaldo Enchanted by Armida*, where Rinaldo "a lei giaceva lascivamente nel seno con lo specchio in mano." But this phase soon passed. In the scene of *Purity Chastizing Lasciviousness* in the Barberini ceiling he absorbs much of the physical sensuousness of the Farnese Gallery, but turns it to the service of the Barberini program of sacred poetry.

Cortona could doubtless talk his way out of a tight situation, and it is not hard to imagine what he would have said to the "gentilhuomo" who accused him of indecency in the Sala di Venere in 1641. Just as in opera, some characters had to be sensuous for the allegory to convince. The semi-nudity of Cortona's semi-lascivious girls is no more than the costume demanded by their roles. Strange is their uniform, but they too are troopers in the army of *Sacra poesia*. (One thinks of the worldly Carthusians of Venice, who defended Paolo Piazza's diaphanously draped sibyls in their church, the Redentore, by saying that this symbolized the way they foretold the future, sometimes clear and sometimes veiled.) However ingenious the explanation, in this climate all sensuous art was vulnerable to fanatics, and the brush with this "gentleman" must have made Cortona nervous. Better seek out the critics and make one's peace with them before they attacked. Fear, opportunism, self-defense: these I propose were Cortona's motivations for his pact with the devil.

In the course of many conversations Cortona fed Ottonelli platitudes and commonplaces from seicento art theory. The doctrine of the *affetti* resurfaces in the *Trattato* in simplified form, as does the idea of the combination of varied excellences, familiar from the Carracci academy. Cortona encouraged Ottonelli to appreciate the high social status of painting, its power to confer nobility, its usefulness for generals and princes. He taught him the old Plinian stories about Apelles tricking dogs and horses with his paintings, and brought them up to date with a story of Titian fooling passersby with his portrait of Paul III. He told him what to read: Vasari, Boschini, Armenini, which the Jesuit put on his shelf next to more familiar books: Baronius, Paleotti, Bellarmine, and many Spanish and Italian moralists.

Cortona made a few personal revelations as well. He told Ottonelli about his original idea of having Jupiter as the central figure of the Barberini ceiling, which was vetoed by the pope. He described how the true valenthuomo will never try to work in haste, since so many unexpected changes can happen while bringing a great work to perfection. Surely this is an echo of Cortona's experience with the Barberini ceiling, which changed so radically after his trip to Venice, as John Scott has shown.

Most importantly, Cortona convinced Ottonelli that many great artists were decent. So we hear praise in the *Trattato* of Leonardo and Giorgione, Tintoretto and Veronese, Peruzzi and Raphael. Correggio was a splendid illusionist and one would have to reach up with a stick and tap the surface of his cupolas in Parma to realize they are not real. Sarto was a much-esteemed master

who never painted anything indecent. Annibale Carracci did great religious paintings and “la celebre Galleria del Palazzo Farnesiano in Roma.” Titian’s small Presepio in the collection of the Grand Duke is a source of just as much diletto and consolazione as the large *Danae* and *Adonis* in the Farnese palace in Rome.

If we pause for a moment we will realize that Ottonelli never set foot in the Palazzo Farnese, and if he had he would have had a heart attack in front of Titian’s *Danaë* or Annibale’s loves of the Gods. Cortona skillfully manipulated the Jesuit into praising paintings he had never seen. In the case of Giulio Romano he completely pulled the wool over Ottonelli’s eyes. Giulio emerges from the *Trattato* clean as a whistle, a great painter who did wondrous works “senza oscurarli con l’ombra della dishonestà.” Aside from the small matter of a few “disegni turpi,” for which Clement VII called him on the carpet, Giulio did the wonderful Sala di Costantino in Rome and the splendid Palazzo del Te in Mantua, famous for the *Fall of the Giants* (“modestissima”) and *Icarus* (“opere honestissime, & artificiosissime”). Ottonelli admits that Giulio may have let his standards down a bit in the Sala di Psiche (“ove si veggono alcune apparenze forse troppo licentiose”) but even this added to the painter’s fame.

Ottonelli had been led by Cortona to praise the most Rabelian of all Renaissance painters. But the vast bulk of his book is not about such art at all. His main aim is to combat nudity and to preach the ideal of the Christian gentleman’s house, decorated with edifying paintings, unmixed with erotic trash. Nothing can justify sensuous paintings of saints: “la santità non è vernice, che apporti splendore all’oscurità del Peccato.” (IV.314) And nothing--not quality or fame or price--can justify the “miscuglio osceno” of lascivious and sacred art in sala of a great house. When the Grand Duke sent a Florentine count to negotiate his marriage to Vittoria della Rovere in 1629, the man had to receive two friars in a palace room hung with nudes (310f.). They left scandalized. The very sight of such pictures hurt the soul like a basilisk’s glaze. (319) Better burn them.

In the end Ottonelli reluctantly admitted a double standard for the upper aristocracy. This was undoubtedly due to Cortona’s influence. Some lascivious paintings by famous artists “servano alla grandezza e magnificenza d’un gran Palazzo” and thus can be kept, though they must be banished to secret galleries and secluded inner rooms. There is a curious overlap in these matters with the *Considerazioni sulla pittura* of Giulio Mancini (1621). The doctor-collector, different in so many ways from the Jesuit preacher, gave similar advice on how to hang a collection. Portraits of rulers and famous men, paintings of peace and war, civil actions: this is the sort of art to hang in the sala. Landscapes should go in a semi-public gallery, along with the overflow that comes from avid collecting. Nudes should be hung in private rooms accessible only to connoisseurs. The veil might also be lifted for one’s consort. Erotic paintings in the bedroom helped produce--through a complicated medical process that Mancini describes in detail--“figli belli, sani e gagliardi.”

Strangely enough Ottonelli believed, like Mancini, that images could exert a powerful influence on conception. He quotes Pliny's story of a woman who gave birth to a black child after seeing a picture of an Ethiopian during conception. He recounts folktales of a woman who gave birth to a child with fair face but hairy body after seeing a picture of John the Baptist, or a woman who gave birth to a devil-like creature after seeing her husband dressed up like the devil.

The confessional allowed Ottonelli to penetrate deep into the recesses of the Florentine patrician dwelling, and he was not surprised to learn that many Florentine gentlemen ("molti, e molto qualificati") had rooms full of Venuses, Lucretias, Susannas, Bethsheebas. They could not all be eliminated, but they could be quarantined in closed chambers and secluded galleries. The evidence suggests that Ottonelli's crusade was in some degree successful.

For example, when Paolo del Bufalo died in 1665, about 275 paintings were inventoried in his palace near S. Maria Visdomini. In the first outer rooms we come across 90 saints and madonnas, still-lives, battles, 55 landscapes and about 60 portraits, including the Grand Duke, Mazarin, French and English royalty, Pope Innocent X and members of his family. But as we penetrate into the house we find pictures with more delicate subject matter: 27 Venuses, Susanna in several versions of her Bath, Caritas, the Magdalen, various renderings of Danäe and Diana, "una donna, che mette uno stilo nel petto," "una donna con pelliccia in spalla," "una donna in bagno con amore," "una sposa che va al letto," Joseph and Potiphar's wife, and twelve "quadretti lascivi." Paolo's association with Borromini provided the only masculine element in these rooms: along with the 70 nudes and *lascivie* hung "Il disegno del campanile di S. Andrea delle Fratte."

The *Trattato* was not a treatise on art but a confessor's manual salted and peppered with stories about art. It was not meant to be read cover to cover, as Collareta wisely showed. A confessor was expected to use the index to locate the right place in the text followed by *quesiti, risposte a dubbij, difficoltà*. The proportion of Ottonellesque jeremiad to Cortoneque nugget is by my count about 20 to 1.

No one realized more than the Jesuit censors just how bombastic the *Trattato* was. In the anonymous reports they submitted in c. 1645 they blamed the book for being grossly inflated. It could be cut down to the size of a *libretto* by eliminating redundancies, *quesiti*, undigested passages from Paleotti, and long quotations in Spanish. The style was pedestrian. The authorities--cited "senza condimento"--lent little weight to the book. One censor objected to the "Ultimo trattato" which told much about how to paint well, which is not the business of a Jesuit. Ottonelli was used to having trouble with his Jesuit superiors, but finally he had an irreproachable defense:

Il libro si ha da stampare e si dirà nel titolo, stampato ad istanza del Sr. Pietro da

Cortona famosissimo Pittore questo è Penitente dello Autore, e da cui egli ha havuto la notizia di molte cose, che ha poste nell'opera, oltre molte altre, che ha letto in varij scrittori. (Casale, *Paragone*, p. 98)

Cortona diffused Ottonelli's attack on painting. He softened the guerrilla of the popular theater and prevented him from doing excessive harm in Florence. But he was too shrewd to let his name appear on the book:

..il Pittore, che hà cooperato assaissimo alla compositione di questo libro, non hà voluto seguire il costume antico N. *faciebat*, over N. *pingebat*... ha voluto attendere all'ammaestramento, e salute de' Fedeli, & all'honor dell'Arte sua, senza negotiar il talento della sua gloria, per darle nel mondo il meritato accrescimento, non solo con le Pitture, mà anche con questo libro.

So Ottonelli reverted to pseudonyms, a practice that he had used in his first book of 1640 but later abandoned, publishing the later books of his work on the theater under his own name. Cortona must have been furious. It did not matter, however, since for all Ottonelli's efforts to promote his book, it had almost no circulation and no one ever read it beyond the limited circle of confessors who were in the end its real audience.

Of course, attacks on lascivious art continued throughout the 17th century. Under Clement IX (1667-69) Cardinal Bona submitted a brief to the pope to cover over all indecent painting in the churches and palaces of the city. Innocent XI had a similar decree in mind. This was the pope who ordered Bernini to clothe the figures of *Caritas* and *Nuda Veritas* on the tomb of Alexander VII, a fate that had already befallen the statue of Clelia Farnese on the Tomb of Paul III (See Balthasar di Monconys, *Journal des voyages...*, Lione 1665-1666, p. 453 sg.: “une si belle figure que la tentation qu'elle causoit a quelques personnes a obligé d'y faire une chemise de bronze, pour achever de couvrir ce que celle de marbre laissoit decouvert trop lascivement”; an anonymous Englishman in 1675: “which for being Ravish'd by a Spaniard, wears now a Drapery of brass”). Similar clothing was added, probably at around the same time, to the figure of Charity in the tomb of Urban VIII and the figures of Mercy and Truth in the De Silva memorial in S. Isidoro. In 1681 Huguétan remarked: “Le Pape Innocent X a orné les pilastres de quantité de grosses & hautes colonnes de porphyre, & tout autour quantité de petits anges de marbre blanc tout à nud, ce que quelques-uns ont trouvé mauvais: puisque dans la ville à plusieurs statues Grecques qui estoient de mesme on a fait ajoûter des feüilles de vignes de cuivre” (*Voyage d'Italie curieux et nouveau*, Lione 1681, p. 65).

By the early 18th century violent attacks on nudity in art and on the popular theater may be said to have abated. In 1785 Lorenzo da Ponte invented for Mozart the character of Cherubino, a girlish boy, a “damerino,” a “farfallone amoroso,” a “Narcisetto,” an “Adoncino d'amor.”

Cherubino is irresistibly attracted to women, but of course played by a woman, and all boundaries between the sexes are dissolved when he disguises himself as a woman:

Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio...
Or di foco, ora sono di ghiaccio...
Ogni donna cangiar di colore
Ogni donna mi fa palpitar.

Ottonelli would not have let such lines be sung on the Florentine stage. Cherubino is the symbol of the final, resounding defeat of everything that Ottonelli stood for.

Notes