

# Visions of the City in Seventeenth-Century Roman Popular Theatre

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## Abstract

The extraordinary circulation of comic scripts (texts, manuscripts, scenarios and *zibaldoni*) in seventeenth-century Rome allows us to observe the profiles of a 'self-referential theatre' that involved citizens, amateur actors and authors, and depicts clear images of milieus, conventions and habits of the city.

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Countless printed and manuscript editions of comedies, tragedies, and operas, an immense repertoire of disparate fragments and scenic scripts, the richest existing repository of materials for *teatro all'improvviso* (not only the collections of *canovacci* and *scenari* deposited in the Corsiniana and Casanatense libraries, but also the folders of *zibaldoni* and *generici* that progressively emerged from research in the city archives)<sup>1</sup> record both an impressive dramaturgical production and a feverish theatre activity that took

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the collections of Basilio Locatelli, *Della scena de' soggetti comici di B. L. R. Parte Prima. M.D.C.XVII.*, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. F. IV. 12, Cod. 1211 and *Della scena de' soggetti comici et tragici di B. L. R. Parte Seconda. M.D.C.XX.*, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. F. IV. 13, Cod. 1212, to the *Raccolta di Scenari Più Scelti d'Istrioni Divisi in Due Volumi*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, Racc. Corsiniana, Mss. 45.G.5 published now in Hulfeld 2014, to Ciro Monarca, *Dell'Opere Regie*, (sec. XVII), Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. 4186, or to those housed in the Biblioteca Vaticana, Codice Vaticano Latino 10244 and Codice Barberiniano Latino 3895, all partially edited and transcribed (Testaverde 2007) to which reference is made with regard to the bibliography. To this list we must add the collection entitled *Motti e detti faceti per diverse persone. Miscellanea componimenti drammatici detti berneschi idea degli antichi storici*, Archivio Doria Pamphilj, Fondo Archivio, Tome XX, busta 122 (121), cc. 464 (cc. 414-465) edited by Ciancarelli (2008, 163-219) and the *Generico* relating to the part of the Captain of Anonymous, *Bravure da Capitano*, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Cartari-Febei, vol. CXV cc. 374v-375v; 376r-380v; 383r-383v, ed. by Luciano Mariti (Ciancarelli and Mariti 2015, 246-255).

place in seventeenth-century Rome, involving ‘the whole performing city’ (Ciancarelli and Mariti 2012; Ciancarelli and Mariti 2015).

The passion for theatre, which was cultivated as a pedagogical discipline by boarding school students and accompanied citizens during their whole existence, diffused throughout the century, despite Papal prohibition policies. The endemic pervasiveness of Roman theatre at the time can therefore be considered the result of an action of conquest of abandoned lands. Theatre appeared as a citizens’ space for action and intervention and was destined to be the true connective tissue of the community. Over the years, as citizens gathered in groups and associations (from the most prestigious academies to the *conversazioni*, which functioned as social outposts and theatre workshops), the role of theatre as a ‘public space’ was progressively consolidated and strengthened. Even if it was under the surveillance of political power, Roman theatre was entrusted to citizens and protected by academics and intellectuals; thus, it became an instrument of immediate socialization, a true ‘public theatre’ that was open to the manifestation of the most varied talents, a competitive alternative to professional theatre.

Among the stacks of manuscripts preserved in the Roman archives, a series of documents recently discovered gives an adequate account of the ‘whole performing city’ phenomenon. In the view of Luciano Mariti (2013, 93-104; 125-135), first of all it is worth mentioning the *Index* written by Giovanni Briccio, one of the most renowned protagonists of the Roman theatre of the time, which proves, in a circumstantial manner, the presence of actors practising theatre *all'improvviso* in Rome during the first decades of the seventeenth century (1630-1645). They are catalogued according to skills deriving from natural qualities, artistic knowledge, crafts and life experiences. The one hundred actors mentioned by Briccio were not professionals and their social identity reflected the city’s complex organization: they were students, teachers, artisans, traders, soldiers, and also writers and academics, painters, musicians, courtesans, notaries, judges, lawyers, doctors, surgeons and even priests. But there are even more high profile figures that could not be mentioned, because, as Briccio suggested, it does not seem suitable ‘fare il nome dei tanti uomini nobilissimi, e Prencipi, che hanno in compagnia nostra privatamente recitato ne’ loro Palazzi’ (Mariti 2013, 135).<sup>2</sup>

The images of the ‘whole performing city’ can be related to other images that, by way of unpublished sources, testify to the regularization of the Roman theatrical calendar. They regard the phenomenon of the progressive transformation of halls and warehouses (those in which Giudiate floats were set up during Carnival) into theatrical spaces with well-defined and permanent functions. This process originated in consortiums and associations of layabouts,

<sup>2</sup> ‘To name the noblest men, and Princes, that privately performed with us within their Palaces’. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

idlers or modest traders and craftsmen who were connected to the protagonists of the most infamous Roman Carnival masquerades. They were groups of young people able to gradually increase their range of action and put on a regular repertoire of farces and comic entertainments in small city theatres, such as the *conversazione* of Rotonda at the Pantheon or the Botticella in Trastevere (Franchi 1988, 720), which inaugurated the first real year-round Roman theatre seasons (Ciancarelli 2014, 112-114).

The chronicles of the time allow us to approach the contexts in which the city theatre grew and developed. They also provide significant information on the phenomenon of the theatrical *conversazioni*, which can be described as a heterogeneous set of environments comprising different resources and distinct specializations. The *conversazioni*, which reflected the complex and stratified social organization of the city, could consist of meetings of ladies and gentlemen held in aristocrats' palaces or gatherings of humble traders and artisans, but were also connected to the enterprises of some of the most renowned artists of the time, such as Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Salvator Rosa or the Cavalier d'Arpino, who were all engaged in continual experimentation linking theatre and painting.

Moreover, chronicles help us to reconstruct the accounts of these theatrical environments, which were able to sustain impressive theatrical productions and functioned as theatrical workshops where new schemes of comedy and unusual comic types developed. The result of these theatrical and dramaturgical experiments is tangible if we think of the Roman assimilation of the masks of Pulcinella and Pantalone, but also of the invention of comic masks such as those of 'The Jew' and 'The Frenchman', the *Villano* Moccicone and the *Norcini* Baciocco, Ciampicone, Ciraglio and Tizzone, of the crowd of young servants and Roman boys, and dumb, playful Don Pasquale.

These inventions shaped a theatre staging the city stories, relationships and protagonists in a game of resonances whose effectiveness was guaranteed by a self-referential context.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Images of the city could materialize throughout the re-contextualization of conventional spaces such as the taverns. Real places like 'Il Cavalletto', 'La Scrofa', 'Il Turchetto' and 'La Vacca' (which were located between 'Via Panico' and 'Porta Settimiana', between the Banchi and Torredenona prisons, between Borgo and Capo le Case, between the springs of Tor Sanguigna and Campovaccino up to the meadows of Villetta della Caffarella) are often mentioned in Roman farces and transformed into settings complete with traps, pitfalls and all kinds of dangers. Further significant resonances arise from the mention of characters and figures gravitating towards specific city settings: the 'pellicciaio' ['furrier'] from Regola, 'Patocchia il Ciavarino' ['key maker'] poet in Campo Marzio, the 'ricottaro' ['cheese maker'] Tartaglia' with their friends: 'salsicciari, lupinari, nociari, cicoritari' ('sausage sellers, lupin sellers, walnut sellers, chicory sellers'; Ciancarelli 2015, 76). Other resonances arise from city life glimpses, materialized in the names of places (which could even help to reconstruct a detailed toponymy of ancient Rome) or from the recollection of habits of pleasant pastimes such as the Sunday trip to the 'Valle della Caffarella' ('Caffarella Valley'). There, in a comedy of the time (Lorenzani 1692), the brat Ciurlo is described while he is occupying the place for

This theatre staged real or legendary facts, those Bragaglia defined as ‘popular gossip’, and ‘gushes of living local blood’ (1958, 121) that had resonance and clamour, as in the case of the allusions to the vicissitudes of the irresistible political rise of Donna Olimpia Pamphili (sister-in-law of Pope Innocent X) in the decade from 1644 to 1655, of her decline and subsequent rehabilitation. The theatrical primacy of Donna Olimpia is intertwined with important Roman political events, such as the hostilities between the faction she headed, which supported Spain, and the one connected with the Barberini family, who supported France. The staging of the play *Il Principe balordo*, commissioned by Donna Olimpia in 1646, refers to the marriage of her son Camillo to the princess of Rossano, which she opposed. The echo of her power even spread to the English court, where the play *Marriage of the Pope* (Ciancarelli 2008, 59-60), staged in 1650, satirically alluded to her hypothetical marriage with the Pope.

It is therefore evident that the Roman theatre collected and expressed the voices, insinuations and slanders spread throughout the city. An example is the case of Salvator Rosa, who was accused by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Ottaviano Castelli of the infamous crime of robbing some silver candlesticks from a church, as we can still read in a fragment from the coeval rhymed controversy repertoire between Bernini, Castelli and Salvator Rosa, which comprised invectives that soon degenerated into accusations of dishonourable actions (Passeri 1772, 178; Molinari 1999, 221-229). Later on, this cruel insinuation would often be recalled in Roman dramaturgy of the time, as for example in the manuscript of a comedy entitled *Osteria del Gallo*, where, in a quarrel scene, Coviello-Pascariello (a character who was inextricably linked to the theatrical training of Salvator Rosa) is apostrophized as ‘quel furbo che rubbò un candeliero alla Pace’ (‘that clever man who stole a candlestick from Peace’).<sup>4</sup> Progressively, the

his masters since dawn ‘in quel paradiso dove, nei giorni di festa, si balla, e si canta e c’è chi alza la vetrina, chi sbalbisce, chi tira di poveta, chi il cavo legno sona, chi gioca le ciambelle, chi rompe l’ova toste’ (‘in that paradise where, during the holidays, everybody dances, sings and plays...’) and all sorts of untranslatable games.

<sup>4</sup> *Osteria del Gallo* (‘The Cock’s Inn’), of which a transcription of some scenes appears in the appendix, is part of a collection of seven volumes of manuscript texts held in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, identified by the signature of *Opere sceniche diverse in prosa* (399, II, cc. 1v-63v). The collection of the Archivum, which includes 41 scenic works, of which 4 are pseudonymous and 22 anonymous, is a heterogeneous miscellany of comedies and tragicomedies, moral and Pulcinella operas, of translations and re-elaborations of the French and Spanish repertoire. Arlecchini who harrassed holy women, Zanni disguised as philosophers, wise men transformed into shepherds, Pulcinella in the roles of servant or king, Covielli, Pasquarielli and Norcini coexist with Corneille’s *Orazio* translated for young Roman seminarians, while dialogues written for the ‘catechumeni’ children are conserved next to a scenario of a tragicomedy or a spiritual representation for the school girls of a Roman convent (Ciancarelli 2008, 65-71). The lists of this collection include unknown authors, authors that hid their identity under pseudonyms (such as in the cases of Filarete, of the so called ‘Commentator of Hurania’ or of the Neapolitan Reginaldo Sgambati, who signed his works with the false name of Vincenzo) or to protect themselves behind anonymity. Alongside unknown beginners

references to Salvator Rosa dimmed, but the episode, reformulated and turned into a farce, would even affect the honour of Pulcinella in the manuscript

and debutants in the art of comedy, obscure lawyers, parish priests and teachers, who are all occasional authors, there are more accredited names of academics, actors and writers often mentioned in the dramaturgical repertoires and theatrical chronicles of the seventeenth century. They are, for example, the companions of theatrical adventures of Salvator Rosa, as is the case of Giovan Battista Ricciardi, the Pisan writer who invented, inspired by the scenic improvisations of Salvator Rosa, Trespole, a vile and ignorant comic character. Among the manuscripts of the Archivum collection there are *La Forza del Sospetto* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 403, VI, cc. 278v-334v) and *Amore, Medicina e Veleno degli Intelletti* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 403, VI, cc. 216v-273v) which turned out to be versions for the Roman public of texts written by Ricciardi that had been circulating for years in other theatrical contexts. These two comedies were composed by Ricciardi in Florence between 1641 and 1649 and were part of the theatrical repertoire of the 'Accademia dei Percossi' ('Academy of the Beaten'), founded by Salvator Rosa during his stay in Florence. *Amore, Medicina e Veleno degli Intelletti* was known as the *Trespole tutore* and under this title was published in Bologna in 1669, while *La forza del sospetto* would be printed in Ronciglione by Francesco Leone, in 1674 (*La Forza del Sospetto ovvero Trespole hoste*; Di Muro 1999, 145-193). Traces of the significant tradition of the theatre of the *Siglo de Oro*, of the 'Italian-Spanish' repertoire, made familiar in Rome also through translations made by the writers of passing Spanish companies, appear in the collection of the Archivum. This is the case of *Tanto fa la Donna, quanto vuole con il Laberinto intrigato d'amore* by a Spanish Company, 1659 (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 398, I, cc. 204r-222v) which testifies to a text for performance in the city theatres either by a Spanish troupe or mixed troupes of Spanish and Roman actors. It appears to be the Italian version of *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, a rare remake of the palatine comedy by Calderón of 1640 (Ciancarelli and Mariti 2015, 224-243; Ciancarelli 2016, 83-86). In this work the masks of Pantalone and the Doctor appear alongside a list of Spanish characters and document the overlapping of different theatrical traditions. Spanish theatre became known in Rome especially by way of translations, re-workings, adaptations and plagiarism of works already known and published. In this collection, *Il segreto palese* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 400, III, cc. 345v-394v) appears as an anonymous work, but it actually is an adapted version for the Roman public of *Il segreto in pubblico* by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, that, in turn, comes from Calderón de la Barca. The interest of this collection lies in the information it provides on the Roman theatre of the time. Unpublished portraits of theatrical habits emerge from *L'Onore riacquistato* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 400, III, cc. 4v-100r), an anonymous work that recalls evening pastimes in a Roman theatre, with the intrigues of love of an ambiguous singer who performs in her house to lure wealthy suitors. This play deserves to be mentioned because it recalls an unknown image of a seventeenth-century Roman *conversazione*. This is what also emerges from *La Verità nella favola* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 402, V, cc. 6v- 81r), a comedy which describes the preparations of a show made by a *conversazione* 'alla rotta di Panico' ('close to the Panico's Route'), in an apartment converted into a theatre during Carnival. The audience is supposed to access the apartment on payment of a fee, thus Philadelphus, who has been chosen to set up the show, spares no expense and prepares a performance which is out of the ordinary, 'un misto di serio e ridicolo fatto per incontrare la diversità degli humori' (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 402, V, c. 15v; 'a mixture of the serious and facetious to suit different moods'). But a crowd of intrusive visitors and spectators who try to attend the play without paying, disturbs the rehearsal. They recall with nostalgia the repertoire of 'little *bagatelle* and old comedies', or the performances of 'autori che si fanno uscì una commedia di testa in quattro dì' ('authors who write a comedy in four days'), alternating with the improvisations of poets of octaves accompanied by the music of archlute players. They insolently turn to Philadelphus insisting on giving advice and proposing solutions for the show. They discuss the choices of the author and they especially disapprove

opera *Le nozze dei Baroni durano poco ovvero Le fortunate Prosperità infelici di Pulcinella* ò *Le Allegrezze sognate a occhi aperti* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 399, II, cc. 65v-102v), in which Pulcinella steals the candlesticks surrounding the catafalque of the King of England, while watching over his corpse. In a theatre that incorporated and shaped the relationship with its spectators, the theft of the candlesticks became a comic paradigm, a game of echoes continually repeated and varied.

Alongside these examples we find a sinister image of Rome, which is depicted as a sordid and violent city, fascinated by horrible and frightful stories and obscene bloody narrations, as documented by the endless catalogue of macabre *lazzi*, that fill the collections of the Roman *scenari*. The catalogue of comic horrors, especially in the collection of Ciro Monarca, *Dell'Opere regie*, includes beheadings, suicides, impalements, uxoricides, infanticides, amputations, sadistic executions and even the desecration of a corpse (in *La Vittoria cacciatrice. Lo scherno delli favolosi dei antichi con le metamorfosi amorose di Zaccagnino creduto Apollo e Spinetta Diana* there is a description where Silvio is 'condotto legato dai pastori, che l'hanno trovato à far essagerazioni sopra d'un cadavero d'una donna in campagna, mà tanto lacerata, sfigurata e smembrata che non si puole ne meno più conoscere solo che si vede esser morta di fresco'; Monarca, c. 51v),<sup>5</sup> or ethnic massacres: in *La Ninfa del Cielo tradita nell'honore con la forza del pentimento*, Magnifico and Dottore announce the decision of the Duchess to exterminate all the inhabitants of Neapolis and Messina who will walk down the street (c. 182v), while in *La casta e costante Ipsicratea con i trionfi di Pompeo nel regno di Ponto nella Farsaglia*, 'si vede il Rè ... l'anello in bocca stratato alla peggio in terra, la Regina col petto ignudo insanguinata stratata anch'essa su la sedia, e pugnale in mano in altra posizione, i consiglieri in diverse positure morti alla tavola anco apparecchiata, e Zenonima e l'altre dame tutte in diverse maniere

of his decision to assign the female parts to 'giovani che sono tanto grandi che per parlargli all'orecchio ci vuole una scala di trent agradini' ('boys who are so big that to talk to them in the ear a ladder of thirty steps is needed'). The allusion to boys cast as female characters is very significant, because it certifies the tradition of proscriptions and prohibitions of women on stage, which lasted in Rome for two centuries (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century). Bans and ostracisms, that can only be seen as a clear sign of isolation and closure (if compared with the theatre of the time elsewhere), in some cases, and in an unexpected way, functioned as an intriguing reference for some excellent spectators. This malpractice can also be perceived as an original characteristic of Roman theatre. Goethe, a spectator of Goldoni's *Locandiera* in Rome in 1778, was to provide a different interpretation of this anachronistic convention, turning it into a potential resource for the Roman theatrical system.

<sup>5</sup> 'Brought tied up by shepherds, who found him in a field while he was raping the corpse of a woman; and the woman was so torn, disfigured and dismembered that it was impossible to recognize her; you can only see that she has just died'.

anch'esse morte dal veleno' (cc. 31v-32r).<sup>6</sup> Masks too are hanged (as is the case of Bertolino, in *Il fraticida, crudele, e le finte caccie*, (c. 158v), throttled (as happens to Finocchio, in *La giustizia catalana*, (Monarca, c. 96r) or impaled (as is the fate of Pulcinella in *Baldovino e Carlotta*, c. 91v).

Attempts at rape and bloody sacrifices fill the 'devotional' plays that were very successful in Rome from the beginning of the century and that are centred on figures of saints and martyrs, of heroes and sinners, and virgins converted to Christianity. Contaminated by the presence of comic characters, once incorporated and assimilated into comic repertoires, they were gradually transformed into ridiculous caricatures and parodies of the original models. Among many possible cases of comic characters accompanying the torments of martyrs and saints, the silly servant Bambacione, who appears in the *opera sacra* of Giuseppe Berneri *Susanna vergine e martire* (1675), can be given as an example of the complete coexistence of antithetical registers. The chaste Susanna, animated by an unshakable faith, manages to defend herself from the traps of an endless line of suitors who desire her alive or even dead (an angel with an unsheathed sword must intervene from the sky to protect her).

As a part of this catalogue of 'comic horrors', it is worth mentioning the so-called 'pellecchia' ('lazzo of the cuticle'), which appears in *La Mula*, in the collection of the Locatelliani of the Casanatense Library. The list of stage *Robbe* includes '8 candellette, 8 cappelli gialli, 8 bavarole, bacile, bocaliera, coltello grande per la circoncisione' (Locatelli, 44,1212, c. 349r),<sup>7</sup> that are meant to ridicule Jews. It is a sad and miserable example of an anti-Semitism that spread relentlessly during the seventeenth century in Rome, in the theatre and dramaturgy of the time.

The comic type of the Jew provides unmistakable clues of the most disturbing and degraded aspects of city life. In Rome, at Carnival, year after year, the ritual of the *pallium* ordered that Jews should run naked at breakneck speed while stones and mud were thrown at them. Another brutal tradition would force them to roll, shut up in a barrel, from the top of the Campidoglio or Monte Testaccio. Such shameful episodes are recalled in *mascherate* and find complete expression in the *Giudiate*, the ferocious parodies written in music and to be seen on the floats during Carnival (Crescimbeni 1702, 99).

Alongside these cruel amusements, compositions that recovered and actualized these degraded traditions proliferated and were accepted in some performances that included punishments for the Jews, such as beatings and death sentences of the cruelest kind.

<sup>6</sup> 'The king, with his ring in his mouth, is lying on the ground, the Queen, with her breasts uncovered and covered with blood, is lying on a chair, with a dagger in her hand, the counsellors, in different postures, are dead on the set table; even Zenonima and the other ladies are lying poisoned.'

<sup>7</sup> '8 little candles, 8 yellow hats, 8 towels, basin, jug, big knife for circumcision.'

Together with these images of a gloomy Rome, of a city involved in crime, brutality and violence of all kinds, that seems to be populated only by vagabonds and litigants of every sort, graceful theatrical depictions of more reassuring, even light-hearted and peaceful aspects of city life can also be found.

A crowd of rascals swarming through the streets of Rome, a colourful company of Roman servants and boys who seem to be catapulted out of the city's alleys, through the Roman theatre of the time. They are impertinent rascals who spend time mocking girls, lazing around, playing all day long at different games like *'alla lippa, a cavacece, al trent'uno, al quaranta, o al chiamare, o al carlino'* (Ciancarelli 2014, 88). Their favourite pastimes consist of some ingenious and imaginative pranks, real works of art that involve complex strategies conceived to take advantage of their victims' naivety.

The mask of Norcino is an easy prey for this bizarre comic company. He is the villain who arrives in the city to sell his garden products and becomes a victim of all kinds of deception. Prototype of the troublemaker and the *cafone* ('peasant') unable to adapt to the city rules, Norcino is always grappling with exorbitant and ruthless lawyers and notaries. His theatrical fortune is linked to his special comic language that contaminates different dialects, studded with contumelies, cripples, vulgar tones and curses (Cruciani 1995).

Among the crowds of foreigners and commuters, implanted in a city that boasts of being the *'comune ricetto di tutte le nazioni del mondo'* ('common shelter of all nations of the world'), the French character makes his way through a whole repertoire of comic prodigies. Victim of ruthless parodies that combine stereotypes and characteristics of the stubborn and presumptuous type, refined and vain, The Frenchman realizes comic masterpieces consisting of obsessions that arise every time his nationalist pride or his disproportionate sense of honour merge with his fear of being the victim of betrayals. Such obsessions materialize when he talks compulsively, when he insists upon a concept, when he tortures and cripples the meaning of words, or performs inconclusive philosophical tirades.

Next to this list of characters we find Don Pasquale. After his first appearances in the Carnival performances in 1632 (Bouchard 1976, 141) he soon became successful in the Roman comic repertoires of the time. He represents the 'first true Roman character', the emblematic caricature of an aristocrat's behaviour. A young gentleman, hilarious and lazy, a comic mixture of malice, ingenuity and dazed madness, always somewhere between ridicule and pathos, capable of uncontainable and unpredictable extravagance.

If the strength of the rooting of the theatre in the city context and the image of Rome as a significant melting-pot of theatrical models, practices



and cultures, as a 'città-teatro' in which everything tends to be spectacular was confirmed and consolidated by these stage inventions, it is right to entrust the claim of its many primacies to a mask, to a 'Roman' Pulcinella that celebrates the city with these words: 'qua ce fioccano da ogni banne, li virtuosi, non solamente dell'arte comica, ma in tutte l'autre scientie, e professioni, perché qua li virtuosi so premiati, e so conosciuti, à dispetto delli maligni, e dell'ignoranti...'<sup>8</sup> (Verucci 1628, p. 7).

### *Appendix*

The document that is presented below is a fragment of a seventeenth-century Roman manuscript comedy: *Osteria del Gallo* by Anonymous, ms. in *Opere sceniche diverse in Prosa*, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Opp. N.N. 399, volume II, cc. 1v-63v. The text, of which here we offer a transcription limited to the first two scenes of Act I and the third scene of act II, presents a list of characters that comprises the most famous masks of seventeenth-century Roman theatre. Its plot is an example of a typology that is widespread in the comic texts of the period: a slender thread (the transformation of a house into an improvised inn to attract and rob patrons) is developed randomly through a series of facts and an assembly of comic gags with no organic connection. It is worth mentioning the significant presence of the character of Pasquariello/Coviello, the mask that refers to the theatrical adventures of Salvator Rosa.

#### Act One

The work opens with the young Fantino, Ascanio and Camillo. Lionetto mentions the 'trick' against Varrone by Lionetto and the loss to gambling of Ascanio (son of Tiburzio) while he was with Camillo (son of Metello). Ascanio asks Fantino how he can pay off his debt. While they are talking, Zan Caldara (servant of Pantalone) arrives loaded with luggage. Zanni is looking for an inn. Fantino asks him why he is in Rome and what he is doing there; Zanni replies that he is looking for the 'Osteria del Gallo' on behalf of his master, and in the meantime he discovers that he spilled some broth on himself and that he needs to get changed and eat.

He is angry with his master who treats him as a servant, although he is very rich: as a matter of fact, he has a purse full of money around his neck. Fantino plots the prank and invites Zanni to enter the house. Fantino tells Ascanio he found a way to make money: they will pretend that the house

<sup>8</sup> 'Everybody comes here: people who stand out not only in comic art, but also in all the other sciences and professions, because in this place virtuous people are awarded and renowned, despite malicious and ignorant fellows...'

is the 'Osteria del Gallo' and they will deceive the rich Pantalone. They will also change their identities: Ascanio will pretend to be Zampino and Fantino will pretend to be Raspa. Lionetto is also involved in the prank. In the meantime, Zanni is eating and drinking. Doctor Varrone (speaking ridiculously in Latin) enters the house and Zanni confuses him with a thief. Moccicone (an ignorant peasant), the servant of Camillo, enters the house insulting Zanni. Meanwhile, Fantino, Lionetto and Ascanio managed to transform their father's house into the 'Osteria del Gallo' (they even found the sign). Zanni, who was asleep, is woken up by Ascanio; as he comes downstairs he meets the French Risciardet, philosopher and alchemist, who is also looking for an inn. There are many misunderstandings between the two, because of their languages. Then The Spaniard arrives: he is Don Guan of Cardon de Cardona, and he is looking for an inn as well. Pantalone enters with Zanni in the fake 'Osteria del Gallo'. Coviello speaks with Varrone about Tiburzio. As soon as they arrive at Tiburzio's home they realize that it has been transformed into the 'Osteria del Gallo'.

#### Act Two

Ascanio is worried because Tiburzio is coming home and he has not managed to steal the jewel box from Pantalone yet. He talks about it with Fantino and together they devise a new strategy: they will disguise themselves. Meanwhile Metello (a judge), father of Camillo, asks Moccicone why his son does not want to talk with Varrone. Tiburzio arrives in front of his house (that is now transformed into an Osteria) and asks who had the audacity to alter his house in such a way. Fantino, disguised, begins to stutter to avoid being recognized and replies to Tiburzio that he cannot help him; Tiburzio recognizes him despite his stuttering. Fantino asks The Frenchman for help to prevent Tiburzio from entering; Coviello comes to Fantino's defence, Zanni does the same; Tiburzio threatens him, Pantalone defends him. They pull out daggers and knives, even The Spaniard intervenes, in a feast of dialects and theatrical languages. Fantino decides to bring Tiburzio to the judge for the offense received and goes away with Pantalone. Meanwhile, inside the inn, Ascanio and Lionetto pretend that the 'Osteria' is on fire to make everyone flee. Pantalone returns, he claims he has been cheated because instead of going to the Judge Fantino escaped. Zanni understands that his master no longer has a penny; he then decides to let him sit in a wheelbarrow, which they will use to go around and ask for charity. Pantalone is ashamed, but Zanni convinces him. Meanwhile Tiburzio and Ascanio argue: Tiburzio accuses him, Ascanio denies everything and asks for the comfort of Fantino, who blames Varrone. Tiburzio, angry, says for the first time that Ascanio is not his son. Ascanio faints. Tiburzio decides to go to Varrone to clarify what has happened. Varrone, urged by Tiburzio (who wants to send him to jail), asks Norcino to help him to disguise himself.

## OSTERIA DEL GALLO

[cc 3r – 6r]

Atto Primo Scena P.<sup>a</sup>

Fantino Camillo et Ascanio

Fantino O come è riuscita pur bene la trappola, che hoggi hà fatto Lionetto à questo D. Marrone spaventachio de stornelli. Ascanio ha comesso li errori e il Pedante vi hà fatta la penitenza li argenti han servito per pagare i creditori di Ascanio, et il bastone per le spalle di questa bestia salvatica. Ma i sbirri che vi hà detto messer Tiburzio che faccia venire acciò siano tirate le reti avanti ch' il tordo eschi fuor della machia chi li chiamerà? Ti so dire che mi fa a proposito trattar con sbirri; fuggo la Corte più che il gatto la quaresima Asc. Sig. Camillo traditore se presto non fuggivo in verità che col mantello ci lascio ancora la vita. Mò li 90 scudi che vi hò perso, d'onde li caverò? Son disperato almeno trovassi Fantino. Ò eccolo a punto. Fantino son perduto se non m'aiuti Fan. È un pezzo che vi perdeste nel giuoco, ed onde volete cavi io questi denari dagl'occhi? Hora ritiratevi in Casa, e non abbaiate più alla Luna lasciatemi fare qualche Incantesimo

Asc. Mi getto tutto nelle tue braccia

Fant. Hor che me l'havete tagliate, aspetate ch'io vedo da lontano un fachino carrico di robbe chi sà che la fortuna non ce lo mandi? Sapete che fate portate giù quel piatto di macherroni con un buon pezzo di cagio parmeggiano del prosciutto, e del buon vino. Miettetevi dentro alla porta si che questo Zanni balordo vi possa vedere perché questa è l'unica e potente calamita di tirar questa sorte di [gh]iottoni.

Asc. Lasciate pur fare à me.

Scena Seconda

Zanni e Fantino

Zan. Venga ol cancher al primo pensir che vegni in tel mazzuch de messer Pantalù mi Padrù d'andar peregrinand pel mod', à son pur statol gran merlot' à lassar metermi sto gharg'adoss che mi hàdislombà tutt'una spala.

Fau. Ecco l'esca da pigliare il pesce.

Zan. Mò che diavol de piazza le stà questa d'isti zon al zert che messir zove ol dif haver fatt di ogni banchett. Al ghe versat tanta la brod della cuxina de sovra via che l'è un subiss', olme par d'esser stat mess int'un bugat tant son bagnad de tutt' band'. Mò cancher ai architett d'esto Paese el non han fatt' ne anch' un hosteria chillo e dis pur ol proverb che Rom ghe la cuxina de meior boccon del mond.

Fan. O pover Zan Caldara e quant'è che tu sei venuto à Roma? Chi t'hà fatto far questo viaggio con tanta carrica adosso?

A.

el ghe port all col  
un cassetin de zoie  
e de zechin. Mocancher  
mi hò scovert il  
secret del Padrù

Zan. Al mi son vegnù adess' adess', quel che mi cargò d'èsta maniera senza discretion ol vegnirà despò de mi. A. Ma carolin messir dezif un pog' quella là che stà chilò di chi l'è

Fan. È la nostra perché

Zan. Mò non vedi che collù se manza el formai

Fan. Lascialo mangiare che vuol dire che tu ti gratti la gola?

Zan. Ol patis d'un zerto mal messir che com' i veg qualch' ozzett' manzator massem quand mi ho fam ol me sent un brussor al gorgoz

Fan. Che robbe stanno in questo sacco è? M'hanno cera di panni.

Zan. Si pur ch'ei son pan' che messer Pantalù l'è mercant de pan. Mò Diavol stà i n zervell che colù ol te manza el presut fa

Fau. Fa molto bene; o come è bagnata questa Scrittura

Zan. Mò s'è piovud e se se bagna i homen non vole che se bagna la Scriturazz'.

Fan. Mò perche tu dovevi portarla in petto

Zan. Ma de si i pulez i zimez e che soi mi qualch' alter che fa viaz co mi havrif rosegat tutt' i litter. Mo al corp d'un sanguinoz che colù se bef tutt' elzervel.

Fan. In questa Casa il Padrone hà caro che i servi sguazzino

Zan. Non potref piar anche mi per servitor?

Fan. Entra pure e mangia allegramente; Sig. Ascanio lasciate mangiar questo galant' huomo.

(Atto secondo)

### Scena Terza

Tiburzio Fantino Francese Pasquarello (Coviello) Zanni

Pantalone Spagnuolo Ascanio

Tib. Pur troppo comincio à credere à quel che m'hà detto Varrone se ben tardi. Io non so siamo in Roma opure in Baccano. Io non so vedere d'onde mi possa venire un ingiuria così rilevata. Basta comunque sia questi sono assassinamenti vituperosi, io voglio gridare.

Fan. Qua qua quale insolenza mi è sta sta stata fatta homomomo da bebene

Tib. Onde è uscito questo quagliotto di settebatute

Fant. Vovoglio aiuiutarmi cocon questo foforcocone

Tib. Chi t'hà dato licenza d'entrar in casa mia come hai preso quel forcone dalla mia stalla

Fant. Chi sesesete vovostra mamaesta tututu che voi usurpapapare l'hosteria del Gagagallo

Tib. Tanto havessi mai tu fiato che questa è la casa di mastro Tiburzio

Fant. Non ci sono tataborse qua su

Tib. Levati di qua vituperoso

Fant. Li merciai sososono taccaborse nono li hosti

Tib. Corpo del Cielo che questa e la voce di Fantino come io sono Tiburzio costui è Fantino

Fant. Rumores fuge ò messer francese non lasciate entrar costui

Fran. Chi essere quelle sfasciate che vole fare l'insolente contre le hostellerie delle Galle

Tib. Questa sì ch'è scaltra. Con che licenza sei tu entrato nella casa di messer Tiburzio

Fran. Non son queste le sciase di messere tiralebuffe andate per le fatte vostre che altramente tirarete le buffettone se non basta le buffe

Tib. Mira presunzione lasciami dico entrare in casa mia forfantone insolente

Fran. State lontane che altramente io vi taglio le nase con queste forbiscie d'Alchimie

Tib. Hai ben viso d'Alchimista. Non dubitare che ne pagherai la pena

Fran. Scesone le pene in queste paese, à quelle che essercitano l'Alchimie? Caparascie ie non voli intrighe, o quelle xentilhomine Napolitane non lasciate entrare all'hostellerie queste forfantonascie

Tib. E che essercito di forfanti s'è accampato nella casa del misero Tiburzio

Cov. Che tira bolge o tira balige intienne buono che te dico naso de taratufolo affrittelato dintro nò sputachio di goliatto: se non parti da loco dall'hosteria dello Gallo vi ha senz'altre bolge, o balige collo viatico di cinquecento stilletate te faccio fare lo pelegrinaggio delli farisei all'hospetale de satanasso

Tib. Eh che non hò io un manicho di scopa alle mani per accompagnarti infino all'hospedale de pazzarelli

Cov. Tirate di reto non t'accostare pezzo de carne rostuta metto mano alla spata che mò te boglio sventrare, sfegatare, sponzionare, trittare de muodo che lo pezzo chiù grande sia lo dito piccirillo dello pede mancino

Tib. Per mia fe che costui alle fattezze è quel furbo che rubbò un candeliero d'argento alla Pace

Cov. O che pozzi essere impiso colle cauze a braghe, semo conosciuti pe ladri, lassame fuire dintro che non pozza piggiare la stampa d'esta mia faccia zanne ò zanne vorria che tu mandasse a Diavolo questo spione

Zan. Laghè pur far à mì che i vo' co stò spedazzar stòfegadel' senza set'

Tib. Mira quest'altra fantasma ceffo d'Asino levate davanti à quella porta

Zan. Cosa volivù da sta porta messer non vi riguarda vù vis de polancha vecchia. Fatevi lardare e poi vegni nello spedon

Tib. Ti torno à dire che la casa e di messer Tiburzio vattene in mal' hora

Zan. Chi e sto messer trit' l'orz? se voli tritate l'orz andè in qualche stalla de mulater; e nù che volessi tritar i pollaster' starem' all'Hosteria del Gallo

Tib. Sguattaro puzzolente da qua quello spidone e te va all'Hosteria del Gallo ecco la strada

Zan. Oi de podè oh' messer spa[ra]gnol vegni sus che te vegnia ol cancher; ti non voi sentir

Pant. Che rumorxe questo. Fermev' quel zentilhom' lasce star al mio servidor ch'all' cospetazz dell'ostreghe vegniremo al quibus in zinquà Deis

Tib. Questo metter inanzi le mani per non urtar le forze non vi gioverà che pensate di star a Venetia qui farò ben io vedere che cosa e la giustizia di Roma

Pant. Ma questo xe quello che si desidera perche dunque vegnite con stà insolenza in casa d'altri?

Tib. Che insolenza; che insolenza e la vostra ad occuparmi la casa con tutto quello che è dentro

Pant. Veddi quomod' el sa finzer mettege un pogo il dito in bocca a stò fantolin

Tib. Si può ritrovare il maggior affronto di questo sotto la Luna vecchio sfacciato levatevi da quella porta

Pant. Ma pian co le male crianze messer zovan porte zuzu quella zinquà Dea veni zuzu con l'armi

Cov. Non hai fatto lo testamento ancora e dove sono li beccamorti fa venire momò le cannele che te boglio scippare l'interiora, e po far portare lo fegato, e Polmone alla Tavola de Iuda, e Pilato

Fran. Per manfoi per manfoi con queste pistolese voler tagliare in buone pezze, e fare une belle pastiscie

Zan. A vis de cavial al te vol sfrissar il mazzuch' co stò cortelaz de molina

Tib. O questo si che è un assassinamento alla strada hora hora voglio dar la querela

Pant. Ande in t'una mal hora bestiazza

Fran. Se ie non tirave queste mane riverse incontra le nase non si partive in utte le sciorne

Zan. Se Zan Caldara non ghe minazzava sto ferr'in tol mazzuch à non se n'andava fin a nott

Spag. Dove sono quei vigliaccos che pretendea far [---] alla pollienta de D. Cardon de Cardona?

Fran. Ad esse sciongono le gravite spagnolesche

Pant. Ben vegnuo el soccorso de Liga

Zan. Ol ghe stad' aspettand' la risposta dal consciole spagnù

Spag. In verdad che à pena arrivado totos s'è rapacificados

Zan. À doved' esser sudad vù messer sparagnol per mi havi fatt'un gran combatter'

Spag. Basta à nos con la propria presienza mandar in fuga lo nimigos

Fant. Sig. Pantalone questo non è tempo da perdere **F** ritiriamoci noi.

FV.s. non sa l'usanza di questo paese M. Tiburzio hà fatto il primo l'insolenza et è il p.mo a darmi la querela; e necessario dunque se V.S. non vuol restar di sotto che ancor che la dij che vi farò accompagnare da un garzon

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*Negotiating Meanings*  
*Text and Stage Reception*

