

## **The Play of the Nativity of Christ**

A translation of *La rappresentazione della Natività di Cristo*  
beginning “A laude e gloria dello eterno Dio.”

first published in Florence by Antonio Miscomini, ca. 14

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For further discussion, see Nerida Newbigin, *Making a Play for God: The Sacre Rappresentazioni of Renaissance Florence*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2021), 287–289.

## **Characters**

THE ANGEL *who announces the play and appears to the Shepherds*

NENCIO DI PUCHIO, *shepherd*

BOBI DEL FATUCHIO, *shepherd*<sup>1</sup>

RANDELLO, *shepherd who plays the bagpipe*

NENCIETTO, *a young shepherd*

MARY

JOSEPH

BABY JESUS, *with a halo*

THE OLD KING

THE YOUNG KING

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE

KING HEROD

THE FIRST SAGE *of King Herod*

THE SECOND SAGE *of King Herod*

THE THIRD SAGE *of King Herod*

THE ANGEL *who appears to the Magi*

HERALD *of King Herald*

THE SENESCHAL *of King Herod's court with his men*

TARSIA, *nursing mother*

CALCIDONIA, *nursing mother*

CANDIDORA, *nursing mother*

MONUSMELIA, *nursing mother*

THE ANGEL *who bids farewell to the audience*

## **Places**

THE MOUNTAIN *with the Shepherds' cave*

THE STABLE *in Bethlehem*

HEROD'S PALACE *in Jerusalem*

## **Also required**

SHEEP

GIORDANO *and* FALCONCELLO, *sheep dogs*

CHEESES *and* APPLES, *gifts of the Shepherds*

WINE, CORNAMUSE

THE MANGER

THE OX *and* THE ASS

GIFTS *of the Magi*

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<sup>1</sup> D'Ancona transcribes 'Farucchio'.

## **This is the play of the Nativity of Christ.**

*And first the ANGEL announces:*

1. In praise and glory of eternal God,  
Fixed point and one in holy Trinity,  
All come, devout, attentive, filled with love,  
And see all about his nativity,  
Remembering that for our wicked sin  
He came to earth with such humility.  
Shepherds and wise men you'll see here bring gifts  
Provided that you pay attention now.

*THE ANGEL appears to the Shepherds and says:*

2. O Shepherds who are watching o'er your flocks,  
Rise up, go now and see the true Messiah  
Who's born in Bethlehem, as it was writ,  
With ass and ox to keep him company.  
And this will be the sign of him who rules:  
You'll find him wrapped in Mary's swaddling clothes,  
Laid in a manger in a cattle stall,  
Poor and humble, awaiting sinners all.

*The Shepherds stand up and NENCIO says:*

3. What does this mean, o Bobi del Fatuchio?  
We're standing round as if we're all quite dazed.  
We seem to have collapsed in a great heap  
As if we'd all be beaten with a stick.

*BOBI replies to Nencio:*

Just listen to me now, Nencio di Puchio,  
We really haven't be at all astute just now.  
We should have told him that he had to wait  
For us to get some clothes on for the road.

*RANDELLO to the other Shepherds:*

4. My dear companions, these are mighty signs  
That come to us from glory high in heav'n,  
Granted by God to make us fit to see  
The living king of everlasting life,  
And let each of us try to find him now,  
Who is the Lord of heaven and of earth.  
Let's go to Bethlehem where he is born,  
Just as the tidings of the angel said.

*NENCIO replies to Randello:*

5. Randello, certainly what you have said  
I verily do know to be the truth.  
Let's go together, searching all around

Through every hill and dale, district and town.  
Let us not fail through any fault of ours  
For never in the world was such a boon.  
But just before we go from here I think  
That we should make ourselves something to eat.

RANDELLO *replies to Nencio:*

6. I am in full agreement with this plan  
Which is, dear friend, a wise idea indeed,  
For I can tell you, I feel like a drink,  
And I intend to have something to eat  
And then we'll do our duty and set out  
And travel swift and strong, just like the wind,  
And take along with us some excellent cheese  
Because we have no other gift to take.

*While the Shepherds are eating, THE ANGELS at the stable sing:*

*We sing with hearts rejoicing  
In praise of Jesus Christ, the world's redeemer.*

1. Glory to God's great majesty in heaven,  
And here on earth, we bring to you both true  
And perfect peace to all men of good will.  
Dear Lord, we praise you truly from our hearts,  
We bless you now in peace  
And worship you alone, o sweetest Lord.

2. We glorify, giving you our thanks  
For your glory, great and infinite.  
Lord of heaven, fill our minds with love  
That we should ever keep you in our hearts.  
You are the king of glory,  
And our almighty and eternal maker.

3. Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God almighty,  
Who came into this world today for us,  
For us whose sins condemned us to oblivion,  
To pay the price and set us free from sin;  
Wherefore in every corner  
Let everyone sing forth your praise forever.

THE VIRGIN MARY *worships Jesus and says:*

7. O Lord Creator who created all,  
Our very God, now become living man,  
Who deigned to make me handmaiden and bride,  
(as Gabriel announced to me in person)  
And came into my womb free of all sin,  
And now you're born amid such poverty,  
Dear God, I thank you for this honour now,

As my Lord's mother and his daughter too.

8. O son and father, and beloved husband,  
Transformed from God into an earthly man,  
In cold and wind, bare and impoverished,  
Looking as if you're going to faint away,  
Where is your palace, servants, clothes and bed?  
Here in the stall, the ox, the ass, the hay.  
O Lord of all, whom everyone must follow,  
You haven't even clothes to cover you.

9. For the first sin of my first two ancestors  
That was so dark and horrible and deep,  
You suffer hunger, cold and such privation  
And with yourself wish to redeem the world.  
In this the just will find joy and delight,  
For they will come with you to heaven's joy.  
Do not look yet upon their worldly sins,  
But rather show your mercy to the sinners.

JOSEPH *worships Jesus and says:*

10. Eternal Lord, I thank you evermore  
For giving me such certainty in you,  
For you have granted me the time to find  
Some consolation in my final years.  
I'll never tire of praising you, because  
My heart is burning with joy and delight.  
A blessing on you, sweetest love of mine,  
For verily, you are the Son of God.

*Now the Shepherds have eaten and NENCIO says:*

11. It seems to me it's after midnight now:  
The hen and chicks are risen. Let us go!

BOBI *replies to Nencio:*

The Bull's tossing the Bear, and I can see  
That many stars are moving through the skies.

RANDELLO *says to his companions:*

I wouldn't want to leave the table set  
Because the dogs would come and break our bowls,  
But young Nencietto here can clear away  
And stay behind to watch over the sheep.

NENCIETTO *says to the others:*

12. Why do you want to leave me here alone?  
Don't you believe that I might want to come?  
I might be small, but I can walk as far  
And I have understood what has been said,  
And I mean to come along now on this quest,

And leave the animals, and follow you,  
And come what may, I want to be there too.

NENCIO *replies to Nencietto*:

13. Don't even think there's any way that you  
Are coming with us anywhere at all.

NENCIETTO *says to Nencio*:

But why can't I? You're really mean to me.  
Well, you can go to hell for all I care.

NENCIO *says to Nencietto*:

If you keep on annoying me like this  
I'll soon show you the place where he was born  
With this old staff of mine across your back  
And all your glory will turn into pain.

BOBI *tells Randello to get the dogs*:

14. Come on, Randello, take Giordano's leash  
And Falconcello comes along with me  
So that we're safe, because the weather's wild  
And it's too hard to find our way without him.  
It's midnight now: come on, let's make our way  
Together, and with haste, to find the one  
Who'll bring great consolation to our hearts  
When we behold him, king of mighty lords.

*Now they set out and Nencio takes a sack and Bobi takes six apples and Randello takes a lot of round cheeses and they set out. And when they are close, NENCIO says:*

15. This shining light is so resplendent that,  
My dear companions, verily I think  
That this is where we'll find the mighty king  
Who'll save the world from infamy and woe.

RANDELLO *replies to Nencio*:

Ah, let us still be careful and devout,  
For nowhere was there ever such a realm  
Nor anything like this of such perfection.  
Let us go contritely and with great devotion.

*Now they go and when they reach the stable, NENCIO says:*

16. We have come with such reverence  
Just as the angel told us from on high,  
And likewise we have come into your presence  
For we've been told that this is the true God.  
Just one most excellent grace is all we ask  
That you should grant us, and we'll be consoled:  
Because you truly are the Lord and God  
I want to kiss your foot with all my love.

NENCIO *kisses his foot and stands up and BOBI kneels down and says:*

17. God save you, blessed son, upon whose head  
The crown of sanctity shines forth its rays.  
Tonight your angel came to us and said  
With great rejoicing and with sweetest song  
That you were born, so perfect and so good  
That words could not describe nor say how much;  
But when I heard his words, I went and fetched  
Six apples and I came to find you here.

RANDELLO *kneels down and says:*

18. My Lord, well met! You are most welcome here  
With ass and ox as your companions here,  
And this old man, your father, here beside you,  
And with this Lady, whose piety shines forth.  
Grant me your favour I beseech you know,  
For you are lord and father and messiah.  
This cheese is what I want to give to you,  
And with my little pipe I'll play for you.

RANDELLO *plays the bagpipe and then JOSEPH says:*

19. I thank you all as much as words can say  
For all the cheeses you have brought us here.  
It would have been enough just to bring to  
And set aside the other for yourselves,  
But Jesus in his goodness will reward you  
For all the love you've shown to him here.  
Come warm yourselves, you surely must be cold,  
And were there wine, you'd have some supper now.

BOBI *replies to Joseph:*

20. I have a little flask here full of wine  
So, my dear Joseph, you don't need to worry.  
But since we've been three hours on the road,  
I'm someone who would like a spot to eat.

NENCIO *says to everybody:*

I think I have a *marzolino* here  
With me so pass the knife, I'll cut it up.  
And spread this sack out on the ground: I want  
To sit on it, because I'm quite tired out.

*Now they have supper, and when they have finished* NENCIO  
*says to Joseph:*

21. O dearest Joseph, it is nearly day.  
We have to leave, with love filling our hearts,  
And make our way back to our herds of sheep,  
For they've been left without a shepherd's care.

JOSEPH *replies to the Shepherds:*

I do entreat you, come back very soon.  
I place you in the care of Christ the Saviour.

NENCIO *replies to Joseph:*

God go with you, and we're off to our caves  
Because there's still a lot of darkness left.

*The Shepherds leave and return to their sheep, and two Magi meet, and the OLD KING says:*

22. Where are you going, great and mighty king?  
Whence do you come with all these barons here?

THE YOUNG KING *replies to the Old King:*

I come here from the lands of orient.  
I've come to try and find the true Messiah.  
I'm following the star you see up there  
That shown me the way as far as here.  
I've come to try and see the true Redeemer  
To give him gifts and ask him for his peace.

THE OLD KING *replies to the Young King:*

23. And I have come from the Levant in the hope  
Of finding God by following this star  
And with its help I've got here safe and sound.  
I called at many cities seeking him  
But I've not found him, so it seems I must  
Without more questions follow where it leads  
For doubtless it will lead us safely there  
And show us to the place wherein he dwells.

*Now THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE arrives and says to them:*

24. God save you, noble barons, strong and brave.  
Pray tell me, if such knowledge is allowed,  
Where, and in which direction is he born,  
The true Messiah, for I've come from far  
Away, the star has been my only guide.  
On this the scriptures are both firm and true:  
In Bethlehem Judea he will dwell,  
And now he's come and I will find him there.

THE OLD KING *replies:*

25. We happen to be here for this same thing:  
To try and find the Saviour, him alone.

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE *replies:*

Let's keep behind the star that brought us here  
For it will take us safe to the Redeemer.



THE YOUNG KING *replies*:

Since we have stopped in this place for a while,  
You know that Herod is the ruler here.  
I seems to me that we should question him.

THE OLD KING *replies*:

You have a point: let's go and visit him.

*The Magi go to Herod and THE OLD KING says:*

26. O mighty Herod and magnanimous,  
God save you and maintain and grow your state,  
We come to you from oriental parts  
To worship the redeemer who is born.  
We're sure that such a thing is known to you,  
And where he is who will be called your king,  
Because the scripture clearly shows that he  
Must certainly be born here in your land.

27. We've come together, guided by a star  
That led us all from different places here,  
A bright and star that shone full fair  
And brought us to your realm and left us here.

HEROD *replies to the Magi*:

We've had no talk of this among ourselves.  
I haven't asked my sages, it is true,  
So rest a while and meanwhile will ask  
And then I'll tell you all that I find out.

*The Magi rest and HEROD says to his Sages:*

28. Good sages of my court, I wish to know  
All that the scriptures tell you about this.  
Discuss among yourselves and tell the truth:  
Where is the king of Nature to be born?  
Now this idea has come into my head,  
So that I'm almost frightened of his coming.

THE FIRST SAGE *says to Herod*:

We'll go and talk of this among ourselves  
And tell you then the where and what and when.

*Now they go and debate the matter, and THE FIRST SAGE says:*

29. Isaiah says, from what I've found in here,  
A shoot will issue forth from Jesse's root.

THE SECOND SAGE *replies*:

And the Tiburtine Sibyl has declared  
That Christ is to come forth in Bethlehem  
And he's to be announced in Nazareth.  
Happy the mother who will nourish him!

THE THIRD SAGE *says*:  
Excelsis here on earth, says Eritrea  
And from a Jewish virgin he'll be born.

THE FIRST SAGE *replies*:  
30. There would be many points here to rebut  
And argue over and debate at length,  
But now we'd best tell Herod that he has  
Been born, or will be born, in Bethlehem.

THE SECOND SAGE *replies*:  
Let's go and tell to search high and low  
And if this king is found he should despatch him,  
For, as you surely know, the prophet says  
That he will be the last king of the Jews.

*The Sages return to Herod and* THE THIRD SAGE *says*:  
31. We have debated this case at some length  
And we find Bethlehem is where he'll come,  
One who will be made flesh within a virgin,  
The son of God, who on the cross must die.  
By several signs it's clear to us he's born:  
Heaven begins already to obey  
Him with this star that they have spoken of.  
We know no more than this, now question them.

HEROD *says to the Magi*:  
32. O venerable kings, who from the East  
Have travelled here and entered my domain,  
Guided by no more than one bright star,  
And not attempt to find the true Messiah,  
When did this this star appeared? How long ago?  
Tell me the place, the hour, the way, the route  
That you've been guided up until this point,  
And where and what and when it disappeared.

THE OLD KING *replies*:  
33. It's thirteen days since I first saw the star.  
I lost it when I came before you here.

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE *says*:  
I came here with it in much the same way:  
I haven't seen it since I spoke to you.

THE YOUNG KING *says*:  
It's thirteen days since I set out ride  
And ever since it's always been my guide,  
Save for now, I can't see it. To sum up:  
The star appeared to all of us at once.

HEROD *says to the Magi:*

34. You can go and search all Bethlehem  
To see if you can come across this king  
And when you've found him, come back here to me  
Because I want to come and visit him,  
And all you, give me your solemn promise,  
That you'll not fail to come back here to me.

THE OLD KING *replies to Herod:*

And so we promise, on our purest faith.

HEROD *replies:*

Then go in peace, may God grant you success.

*The Magi depart and THE FIRST SAGE says to Herod:*

35. O mighty Herod, if this king is born,  
For you it is a cruel and wicked turn,  
For he will rob you of both state and honour,  
And snatch the orb of office from your hand.  
I have already given this much thought  
And still I don't know what its best to do.  
But ill discovered early is soon healed,  
More than the old: now do what you think best.

*Enraged, HEROD says:*

36. If by chance I can find out where he is,  
He's going to meet a very sorry end,  
Because, without delay, I'll have him killed,  
Without regard to youth or to old age.  
A dead man can't ascend to rulership.  
Just wait until I have him in my power  
For I'll use ways and means to deal with him  
So that I keep my kingdom safe and sound.

THE SECOND SAGE *replies to Herod:*

37. O sacred majesty, this is the best.  
I think that you have taken good advice  
Because were there again some other lord  
This kingdom would descend into confusion.  
You'd be deprived of glory and of honour,  
There'd be great muttering from all around.  
Try to capture him, with delight and joy.  
Make sure he dies, whatever it may cost.

*Enraged, HEROD says to his Sages:*

38. The idea I have firmly in my mind  
Is that if I can snare him in my nets  
I will escape this tedious vexation.  
I burn, I burst, I want to go and find him.

THE THIRD SAGE *replies to Herod*:  
Don't do it, Herod! That would be great folly!  
Wait for the Magi, and arrest him then.

HEROD *replies to the Sages*:  
Since they have to return, let's wait for now,  
And woe betide him if he comes my way.

HEROD *stops and the Magi see the star stop above the stable*  
*and THE OLD KING says*:

39. I think I see the star has stopped on high  
And makes no further progress on its path.

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE *replies*:  
It is much brighter and more beautiful  
I'm certain the Redeemer's in these parts.

THE YOUNG KING *says*:  
This will be good tidings certainly.  
The stable, there, is full of a great light.  
Be you all now attentive and devout:  
This is the place we shall find full joy.

*They go to the side of the stable and THE OLD KING says*:

40. Because I'm old and most advanced in years  
Among those who have come to give you gifts,  
Age forces me to say I'll be the first  
To make an offering to this mighty lord.

Now THE OLD KING *presents his gift and says*:  
Supreme Creator, as I truly judge,  
I have come here to do you reverence.  
Don't punish me according to my sin  
But through you mercy let me now be saved.

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE *presents his gift and says*:

41. O true, immaculate, eternal God  
Who made heaven and earth and fire and sea,  
And was made flesh because of our fell sin,  
With your own blood you must redeem us now.  
I beg you, Lord, look not on my transgression,  
But rather use humanity with me.  
I ask you, grant me peace in this short life  
And at my end repose with you in heaven.

THE YOUNG KING *presents his gift and says*:

42. O glorious word, O God who's taken flesh,  
To save us, you are born of a pure virgin  
In humble poverty among the beasts,

Beneath a barren stable, found by chance.  
O fortunate old man, granted by God  
To be custodian of the King of nature,  
Pray to the Lord for us, if he so pleases,  
To give us grace to follow as he wills.

*When the Magi have given their gifts, JOSEPH says as follows:*

43. O worthy, venerable and good kings,  
Who here have worshipped the true god made flesh  
And offered him magnificent rich gifts,  
I thank each one of you, with all my heart.  
May Christ never abandon you on your way  
And safe and sound lead you all home to him  
And grant you peace and love, virtue and strength  
In this world, and salvation then in heaven.

THE OLD KING *replies to Joseph:*

44. Joseph, we now must take our leave of you,  
Each to return to the land where he rules,  
And first of all we have to go to Herod's,  
To tell him where the true Redeemer's born.

JOSEPH *replies to the Magi:*

May he to whom you came to do obeisance  
Guide you all safe and sound within his love.  
Each one go now wherever you do wish.

THE OLD KING *replies to Joseph:*

Bide now with God, and all here dwell in peace.

*The Magi depart and when they have left THE OLD KING says:*

45. Because the road is dark and rough and rocky,  
It would seem best, companions, that we rest:  
Because the night is dark and full of shadows,  
And the day's journey too will have its risks.

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE *replies to the Old King:*

Indeed you're right, we journey at our peril.  
Let us rest, then tomorrow we can rise  
And travel on our way and make up time.

THE YOUNG KING *replies:*

Let's rest, because it's mad to go by night.

*The Magi sleep and AN ANGEL comes and says:*

46. O Magi who've brought gifts to the Messiah,  
Do you now want to go and inform Herod?  
He's trying every means to murder him,  
With tricks and ruses, and with traps and fraud.  
Go to your kingdoms by another route

And flee him who delights in ill alone.  
The ruin and the evil that he plans  
Will come back down on him and on his realm.

THE OLD KING *wakes up and says:*  
47. My friends, wake up, get up without delay  
Because we must depart from here at once  
Without stopping to visit Herod's court.  
He's seeking God and wants to make him die,  
The angel came and told all this to me  
As I lay wakeful here upon the ground.  
Go to your kingdoms by another route  
And flee from him who wants to mock us so.

THE KING OF MIDDLE AGE *replies saying:*  
48. Just now I too did hear the angel speak,  
And heard the words that you have just relayed.  
And to be sure, he didn't wake me first,  
Just sowed mistrust of Herod in my mind.

THE YOUNG KING *says:*  
This way here's the one that we must take:  
It will be a good path, both straight and true,  
And our desires will all be satisfied.

THE OLD KING *replies:*  
Well now, let's go, and praise be unto God.

*The Magi depart and they take the road that he said. HEROD says to his Sages.*

49. What does this mean? The time has come and gone  
When those three kings were meant to come back here.  
I'm sure it means that they have found this king  
And then they've left in order not tell.  
If I'm to keep my status and my state,  
It's crucial to me that I find him now.  
It's time for you to plan some trap or snare  
So that I seize him safely, without fuss.

THE FIRST SAGE *replies to Herod:*  
50. Make an announcement throughout Bethlehem  
To anyone with sons one year or less,  
And you'll pretend your holding a great party.  
Give orders that they all be brought to you  
So that we all can celebrate with them,  
And those who bring them will be given gold.  
We've learned he's born of poor and humble folk,  
And they'll come for this gold without delay.

51. So everyone will come to get the treasure

And also since they fear to disobey.  
As soon as they arrive, without delay,  
Immediately then have them all killed.

HEROD *replies to his Sages:*

I like this. Come now, let us send for them.  
I want to follow this plan step by step.  
Rich or poor, anyone you bring to court,  
I have decided, I'll put him to death.

HEROD *turns to his Herald and says:*

52. Herald, go quickly and proclaim this news  
Throughout the length and breadth of all my land.  
To all my subjects I make this command:  
That anyone with sons one year or less  
Must here present themselves in front of me,  
Because I'm full of happiness and joy  
And want to celebrate and give them treasure.  
And those who don't come will be cruelly punished.

THE HERALD *goes to make the proclamation and says:*

53. Herod makes this command and proclamation:  
That anyone with sons one year or less,  
Both rich and poor must bring them all to him;  
And they, and those who bring them, will get gifts;  
For he wishes to give them much great treasure,  
Just to the little boys that he invites.  
He wants to celebrate with a great feast  
And those who don't come will be doubly punished.

Now THE ANGEL *appears at the stable and says as follows:*

54. Joseph, wake up! You have to leave, and go  
Away at once with the boy and his mother,  
Because King Herod wants to have him killed.  
Make hast to Egypt, flee without delay,  
And wait there till I come to bring you word  
That you can return safely to you home.  
Depart at once, there's no time to be lost,  
Because it's dangerous to linger here.

JOSEPH *says to Mary:*

55. Mary, wake up! Take Jesus in your arm  
And climb at once upon this little ass.  
King Herod would seize him from us with great shame  
And strife, according to what Gabriel told me.  
Let's go without delay and flee to Egypt,  
So that his cruel and wicked plot will fail.  
Because it's night, and our path is through desert,  
Ask God to light the heav'ns along our way.

*Now they leave and when they have left HEROD says:*

56. It's all prepared: let them come in good time.  
Now I need lots of soldiers here with me,  
So when I give the shout and my command  
They'll all be seized and killed and put to rout.  
Seneschal, come here without delay:  
With your companions armed, come and stand here,  
And anyone I indicate you kill.

THE SENESCHAL *replies:*

We're here and ready, waiting to obey.

*The Mothers<sup>2</sup> meet up, and one of them, called TARSIA, says to all the others:*

57. Lovely ladies, where are you walking to?  
You seem to be a happy little band.

*One of them called CALCIDONIA replies:*

We're off to pay a visit to his lordship,  
The mighty Herod, who has summoned us.

TARSIA *replies, and says to all of them:*

We can all go together, inasmuch  
As we are going too to visit him.

CALCIDONIA *says to Tarsia:*

And what's the name of this dear little boy?

TARSIA *says to Calcidonia:*

His name is Abraham.

CALCIDONIA *replies:*

Mine's little Samuel.

*One of the Mothers called CANDIDORA says to Monusmelia as follows:*

58. Your baby, Monusmelia, has mange:  
Don't let him come near any of these babies.

MONUSMELIA *replies:*

It's only cradlecap.

CANDIDORA *replies:*

Or leprosy!

His head's a resting place for little travellers.  
Just look at mine, he's white as milk and snow,  
And blond and fair and worth a hundred florins.

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<sup>2</sup> In Italian, these rough and bawdy women are *balie* or wetnurses, but their words indicate that they are the mothers or rather than the wetnurses of the infants.



MONUSMELIA *replies angrily:*

He's handsome, but he's like a little rat,  
And has a face just like a marmoset.

TARSIA *reproaches Monusmelia saying:*

59. O Monusmelia, have you gone quite mad?  
The king will think that everyone is stupid.

MONUSMELIA *replies to Tarsia:*

It's Candidora off her head today.  
She seems to think that everybody stinks.

CANDIDORA *says to Monusmelia:*

I'll spill the beans on you, you evil witch,  
On what you are and what they say you are.

CALCIDONIA *says to everyone:*

Come on, be quiet, or else just go to hell.  
We're off to see King Herod, bright and gay.

*They go to Herod and TARSIA says:*

60. O mighty Herod, since you've summoned us  
To come with our boy children to the feast,  
We all dressed up and came and here we are,  
And we have all obeyed without delay.

HEROD *replies to the Mothers:*

Could there be any women left behind?  
Because the road is long? By accident?

CALCIDONIA *replies to Herod:*

Herod, through all your people and your land,  
Those who were meant to come are present here.

HEROD *says to himself:*

61. A mortal man's astuteness and control  
Have managed to outwit the mighty prophets  
Who say a baby can so far prevail.  
Today they'll all be rendered mute and quiet.  
Ignorant fools, O empty-headed gourds,  
Today great secrets are concealed from you;  
Because he would banish me from my realm  
Will die because of me, and I'll rule on.

*Now he turns to the Seneschal and says:*

62. Now, so you earn the bonus I have promised,  
Come, seneschal, and act without delay.  
See that they all are put to death at once  
And make quite sure that no one gets away.  
Despatch them quickly; come on, onto them!

Run the blade of your sword through every one.

THE SENESCHAL *replies*:

I will, my Lord, although it grieves me so.

HEROD *replies*:

Come on, despatch them quickly, no more talk!

*Now they slaughter all the children, and when they have killed them, TARSIA weeps over her child and says:*

63. O my sweet baby boy, your life is done!

Ah me, alas! Unfortunate, afflicted!

And what will you, dear husband, have to say?

Alas, O sorry and distressful day!

Ah woe, dear sisters, in what wretched state

Do we, poor sorry souls, now find ourselves?

The empty treasure of the king that I

So longed for is now pain and bitter tears.

CALCIDONIA *weeps over her child and says:*

64. Is this the son that I conceived and brought  
Into the world with travail and with pain?

Is this the son I suckled at my breast

And cared for in the world so lovingly?

Alas, contrary fortune, to what woe

Have you reduced me in my quest for honour!

Alas, O husband, hoping for great treasure,

For you son you'll receive just pain and woe.

CANDIDORA *too weeps over her son and says as follows:*

65. O wretched mother! Alas, bereavèd father!

What will you say about your slaughtered son?

I'll not find happiness while yet I live?

Who'll be ambassador for such great woe?

MONUSMELIA *says:*

Sisters, let's stay no more here with the king,

But rather let us depart now as a group.

Let's go back to our homes where we will find

The grieving fathers, and we'll comfort them.

TARSIA *says to Herod:*

66. O cruel and wicked king, so harsh and base,

Is this the gift you talked about before?

Alas, my hands are full of blood not gold!

O faithless king, more cruel than any other.

HEROD *replies to the Mothers:*

You're just busting my brain: don't waste your words.

Get out, out of my sight, be gone from here,

Or else I'll have you punished two times over.

CALCIDONIA *replies*:  
And may you get an everlasting ague.

*The Mothers depart and MONUSMELIA says to Candidora:*  
67. O Candidora with the funny cravings,  
Where did you leave your little milksop boy?

CANDIDORA *replies*:  
I can feel both my hands starting to itch  
And you're looking to come to blows with them.

MONUSMELIA *replies*:  
I too have five good fingers, strong and sound  
And I've a mind to sort you out right here.

CANDIDORA *replies*:  
A threat is nothing: I'll do it for real!

MONUSMELIA *replies*:  
Well, blathermouth, come on! I'm not afraid.

*Now they tussle and slap each other, and the others separate them and TARSIA says:*  
68. You are behaving worse than little children  
And showing that you've very little brain.

CANDIDORA *replies to Tarsia*:  
It's Monusmelia's fault, I didn't speak  
When she reproached me for my Samuel.

TARSIA *says to Monusmelia*:  
And you're behaving worse than a young girl.

MONUSMELIA *replies*:  
That's it! I can't keep my hands off her.

CALCIDONIA *says to them all*:  
Stop it, for pity's sake! We've woe enough.  
Let's all go home to wallow in our pain.

*The Mothers depart and HEROD says:*  
69. Now all parts of my kingdom are secure  
And happy and I've nothing more to fear,  
And all designs on it are gone and void,  
My walls will all survive both safe and sound;  
For I have used my wits to such effect  
That I have already da the King of Nature;  
And let this day forever be remembered

With celebration, triumph, joy and glory.

THE ANGEL *comes to bid farewell to the audience:*

70. O people who have seen the Saviour,  
Poor and wretched, but enduring all,  
Receiving tribute from shepherds and kings,  
And offered him obedient devotion;  
Cruel Herod, ready to commit such ill,  
You saw pass sentence for the children's deaths.  
God save and protect you from sin;  
We thank you, and bid you all farewell.

203–4: D’Ancona has emended Miscomini’s “che senza dubio  
salui cigiderea / & illuogo doue edlie cimosterrae” with lines  
from the second Bartolomeo de’ Libri ed: “che senza dubbio  
salui meneracci / eltempo elloco eldoue mosterracci”.  
427 menera in > merra’ in