

**Rappresentazione d'un miracolo del Sacramento**  
**composto da messer Bernardo Cungi dal Borgo San Sepolcro**

with English Translation

**Play of a Miracle of the Sacrament**  
**composed by Messer Bernardo Cungi from Borgo Sansepolcro**

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## Play of a Miracle of the Sacrament

This text with translation of *The Play of a Miracle of the Sacrament* was prepared for the late Lynette R. Muir, scholar of medieval French drama, repository of a wealth of information about the dramas of medieval Europe, and generous hostess in her home in Leeds.

This desecration of the Host play, with emblematic characters of the Jew and the Christian, is quite different from the *Rappresentazione di un Miracolo del Corpo di Cristo*, which may date as early as 1473.<sup>1</sup> Here a Christian sells a host to a Jew, gambles away the six ducats he receives, and becomes a bandit in the forest where the Capuchins are founding a hermitage. As the Christian laments that there have been no wayfarers, he is eaten by a lion. The Jew takes the host into the same forest to see if Christ is inside. He tries to throw the host into the spring, but it sticks to his hand then flies on to a rock. He tries to stab it on the rock but his hand then adheres to the rock and is crushed by it. He is converted, and then saved by the prayers of the Capuchins. I have not identified the source of this legend: it is notable for the fact that the Christian, who dies in sin and despair, is punished, while the Jew is quite exceptionally allowed to convert and enjoy the triumph of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

A manuscript from the first quarter of the sixteenth century, containing works by authors from Borgo San Sepolcro, Biblioteca Comunale, Borgo Sansepulcro, MS j.114, opens with various works by Cungi,<sup>3</sup> including this play, but without further information about the author or the year of composition. Since the Capuchins were founded only in 1520, that year must constitute an *ante quam non*, but in the absence of other information about Messer Bernardo Cungi, I cannot suggest a date or a purpose for this very short and whimsical play.<sup>4</sup>

This edition and translation have been prepared from: RAPPRESENTATIONE D'VN MIRACOLO DEL / SAGRAMENTO. / *Composto da M. Bernardo Cungi dal / Borgo San Sepolcro*, which was included as a single folio (cc. 2) in the third volume of the three-volume collection published by the Heirs of Bernardo Giunti (printer unknown), *Il terzo libro di feste, rappresentationi, et commedie spirituali, di diuersi santi, e sante, del Testamento vecchio & nuouo, composte da diuersi autori. Nuouamente poste insieme, e parte non piu stampate. Aggiuntoui nel fine vna scelta di laude spirituali* (1578).<sup>5</sup> The copy used is in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, E.6.5.1.<sup>11.30</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Nerida Newbigin, "Dieci sacre rappresentazioni sacre inedite del Quattro e Cinquecento," *Letteratura italiana antica*, 10 (2009): 21–397 (74–97).

<sup>2</sup> The outcome was usually physical violence against the Jews; see Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Giuliani Maggini, "Poeti del Cinquecento a San Sepolcro," in *L'Umanesimo nell'Alta Valtiberina: Arte, letteratura, matematiche, vita civile*, ed. Andrea Czortek and Matteo Martelli (Umbertide: University Book, 2015), 317–328 (318).

<sup>4</sup> On medieval sacrament plays, see Lynette R Muir, *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama: The Plays and their Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 50–54.

<sup>5</sup> See Alfredo Cioni, *Bibliografia delle sacre rappresentazioni* (Florence: Sansoni Antiquariato, 1961), p. 271, XCI.1.

## Personaggi

THE CHRISTIAN

THE JEW

TORQUATO, SERVANT OF THE JEW

PRIOR OF THE CAPUCHINS

RINIERI, *a Capuchin*

OTHER CAPUCHINS *who do not speak*

GAMBLERS *who do not speak*

A MAN-EATING LION

## Properties

A "DOOR"

A FOREST WITH TREES

A SPRING *or* WELL

A RIVER *with water and rocks*

A HOST

A DAGGER

## Miracolo del Sacramento

UN CRISTIANO, *avendo venduto l'ostia al Giudeo, partendosi da lui dice:*

1. E sempre accinto a far quel che ti piace.

GIUDEO:  
Anch'io son per servirti.

CRISTIANO.  
Adio!

GIUDEO:  
Va in pace.

CRISTIANO:  
2. Chi non s'aita è pazzo, e che m'importa,  
se venduto ho al Giudeo Cristo o Maria?  
Questa mia borsa or piena è buona scorta  
tra quanto gira il Sol per ogni via.  
Sì che taci, Coscienza, che già sorta  
mi sei nel petto a pormi in frenesia.

GIUDEO:  
Pur venne il giorno in cui veder mi lice  
s'entro qui sta quel Cristo che si dice.

3. Ma per fuggir l'error come si deve,  
però che de' Cristian questo è ricetta,  
lontanarmi di qui non mi sia greve,  
s'io vo' vederne il fin senza sospetto  
Torquato, porta giù quel cap>el breve,  
e mia spada a pugnàl.

TORQUATO:  
Ecco l'effetto.  
Padron, vuoi ch'ancor'io ti segua a lato.

GIUDEO:  
No, torna in casa, il mio fidel Torquato.

[*Adesso CRISTIANO si mette a giocare e perde tutto.*]

CRISTIANO, *partito da gioco, disperato:*  
4. Ben'è lo mio destin malvaggio e rio  
e i cieli incontro a me son congiurati.  
Ecco, molto non ha dianzi fu ch'io  
mi partij dal Giudeo con sei ducati,  
e da me, come suol l'acqua dal rio,  
son repente fuggiti e dileguati.  
Tanto non puonno i dadi e carti ladre,  
che vi si adopra Cristo con la madre.

5. Onde mi duol che pria ch'io lo vendessi  
al Giudeo non gli diè due pugnalate,  
ma mi morrei di ver s'io non credessi

## Miracle of the Sacrament

A CHRISTIAN, *having sold the host to the Jew, takes his leave from him saying:*

1. And I'm always ready to oblige you.

JEW:  
And I'm at your service.

THE CHRISTIAN:  
Farewell!

THE JEW:  
Go in peace.

THE CHRISTIAN:  
2. Only a fool doesn't help himself, and what do I care  
if I've sold Christ or Mary to the Jew?  
My full purse will keep me now in good supply  
for the next day anyway.  
So Conscience, be quiet: you've already stirred  
enough in my breast to disconcert me.

THE JEW:  
So the day has finally come when I can see whether the  
Christ they say is inside is really here.

3. But to avoid trouble as one must,  
because this is sacred to Christians,  
I should really go far from here  
if I want to see what happens without arousing  
suspicion.  
Torquato, bring down my short cloak  
and my dagger.

TORQUATO:  
Here you are.  
Master, do you want me to come along with you too?

THE JEW:  
No, go back inside, faithful Torquato.

[*Now THE CHRISTIAN starts gambling and loses everything.*]

THE CHRISTIAN *leaves the game, desperate:*  
4. My fate is indeed cruel and bitter  
and the heavens have conspired against me.  
See, not long ago, when I  
left the Jew I had six ducats,  
and they drained away from me  
as quickly as water from the stream.  
Thieving cards and dice can't do this  
if Christ and his mother take a hand.

5. I'm sorry I didn't stab the Jew a couple of times with  
my dagger before I sold it to him,  
but I would truly die if I didn't believe

le gli fosser tardando radoppiate.

GUARDIANO *de' Cappuccini*:

E pensar che nel bosco ci siam messi  
per far cose che Dio l'abbia aver grate,  
con pazienza, e sopportar gli affanni,  
cauti a le tentation, cauti a gl'inganni.

6. Figliuol mio, chi mal fa, mal Dio gli rende,  
accioché la giustitia abbia suo loco.  
A chi nel ben oprar caldo si rende,  
gli dona poi del ciel giocondo il loco.  
Dunque pronto nel ben fa' che ti rende,  
mentre te lo concede 'l tempo e 'l loco.  
Or caminiam, che già riscalda il sole  
fervidamente queste piaggie sole.

CRISTIAN *nel bosco, messosi alla strada*:

7. Ahi quanto quel che suol dettarsi è vero:  
chi sventurata nasce miser vive,  
né gli giova cangiar loco o pensiero,  
ché 'l Ciel la vita troppo salda scrive.  
Testimon ne son'io che 'l destin fero  
vincer credea fra queste piaggie e rive,  
ond'io venni a predar, spettando al passo,  
poiché 'l gioco m'avea d'ogni aver casso.

8. E nissun mai vi fu, da ch'io vi fui:  
questa è pur una espressa crudeltate!  
Ma Cristo n'è cagion, piacer di cui  
fu sempre mai tenermi in povertate,  
ond'a schiere eschin or da' regni bui  
le dannate alme d'inferral contrade,  
e confondino il ciel, la terra e 'l mare,  
e quanto sta nascosto e quanto appare.

*Cristian devorato da un leon, FRA RINIERI dice:*

9. Misericordia, Dio! Gran meraviglia,  
padre! Giesù, Giesù! Mirate, padre,  
ch'un leon mangi un uom qua mi somiglia!

GUARDIANO:

Giesù, Giesù! Maria, Vergine Madre!  
Tosto, Rinieri, al mio parer t'appiglia.  
Oriam del ciel a quell'eterno Padre,  
che ne faccia saper di questo il vero,  
che grande esser non può senza mistero.

*I Capuccini orando, GIUDEO giunto al bosco dice:*

10. Questo loco è per me, che l'ombra e il rio  
favorevol mi son. Or vedrò aperto  
s'entro è quel Cristo qui, che vero Dio  
falsamente i Cristian tengon per certo.  
Cristo così verace, giusto e pio,  
tu hai sete? Sì, che 'l viaggio è stato erto!  
Or bevi! Ecco il bel rio, che te ne invita.

that if I delay I'll pay him back him twice over.

THE PRIOR *of the Capuchins*:

Remember that we have come into the forest  
to do things that are pleasing to God,  
with patience, and to bear our travails,  
watchful for temptation, watchful for snares.

6. My son, he who does ill is rewarded in kind  
by God, so that justice has its day.  
He who does good is warmly rewarded  
by God, who gives him his joyful place in heaven.  
So make yourself ready to do good  
while the time and the place allow it.  
Now let us walk, for the sun is already heating up these  
solitary slopes with its fervour.

THE CHRISTIAN, *who has become a highwayman in the forest*:

7. Ah, how true the saying is:  
if you are born wretched you live wretchedly,  
and a change of scene or of mind doesn't help,  
because Heaven dictates your life too rigidly.  
I'm witness to this: I thought I could beat  
my cruel destiny amid these banks and streams  
where I came to prey, waiting at the pass,  
because gambling had taken everything I had.

8. And nobody has passed since I've been here:  
this is indeed deliberate cruelty!  
But Christ is the cause, and it was always  
his pleasure to keep me in poverty.  
So now let the hordes of damned souls come  
forth from the dark realms of the infernal regions  
and confound heaven, earth and sea,  
and whatever is hidden and whatever can be seen.

*The Christian is devoured by a lion, and then FRIAR RINIERI says:*

9. Mercy, o God! A marvel,  
father! Jesus, Jesus! Look, father,  
I think a lion is eating a man here!

THE PRIOR:

Jesus, Jesus! Mary, Virgin Mary!  
Quickly, Rinieri, do what I way.  
Let us pray to our eternal Father in heaven  
to let us know the truth of this,  
that cannot be great without some mystery.

*As the Capuchins pray, THE JEW arrives in the forest and says:*

10. This is the place for me, the shadows and the stream  
suit me. Now I'll see clearly  
if that Christ is in here, that Christians  
wrongly believe is the true God.  
Now Christ, all true, just and pious,  
are you thirsty? Yes. because the way was steep!  
Drink up! Here's a nice stream, calling you.

Che sarà? Evvi il visco in le mie dita?

What's this? Do I have birdlime on my fingers?

*E volendo gittar l'Ostia nel fonte, gli fugge onde segue:*

*He tries to throw the Host into the spring but it escapes from his hand, and he continues:*

11. No-l può far! Dio, oimé! Oimé, la mano!  
La man si stronca, oimé, lasso ch'io moro.

11. It can't do it! O God, alas! Alas, my hand!  
My hand is being crushed, alas, woe, I'm dying.

RINIERI:

Padre, io sento gridar di qua, «la mano!»,  
e dir, «oimé, oimé, lasso ch'io moro!».

RINIERI:

Father, I can hear someone calling over here 'my hand!',  
and saying 'alas, alas, woe, I'm dying!'.

[A] *Giudeo:*

Oggi che fia, signor?

[To] *the Jew:*

What's going on now, good sir?

GIUDEO:

Oimé, la mano!  
Soccorritemi tosto. Oimé ch'io moro.

THE JEW:

Alas, my hand!  
Help me quickly! Alas, I'm dying.

GIUDEO:

Misericordia, Dio! La man si chiude  
tenacemente in queste pietre nude.

THE JEW:

God, have mercy! My hand is trapped  
tight in these bare rocks.

⟨I CAPPUCINI dicono:⟩

12. Deh, dinne la cagion, misero e tristo,  
ché noi siam di pietà compunti e morsi.

THE CAPUCHINS say:

12. Well, tell us the reason, miserable wretch,  
so that we will be filled and smitten with pity.

GIUDEO:

Aimé, s'egli era il ver ch'in l'ostia Cristo  
si chiudea non è molto tentar volsi,  
e or nel fonte che di sangue è misto  
di gittarla ne l'animo raccolti,  
e mentre che far quest'io mi credea  
spicarmela da' diti io non potea.

THE JEW:

Alas, not long ago I wanted to test whether  
it was true that Christ was enclosed in the host,  
and now I set my mind on throwing it  
into the spring that is mixed with blood,  
and as I was trying to do this,  
I could not detach it from my fingers.

13. Allor tressi la man per entro a forza  
gittarla, ella fuggì sopra lo scoglio,  
ond'io velocemente della scorza  
trassi'il pugnale, di che mi pento e doglio;  
e mosso allor, con la mia maggior forza,  
tutto d'ira ripien, carco e d'orgoglio,  
feri'la, e nel ferir col reo pugnale  
la man ficcossi, ond'io son giunto a tale.

13. When I drew my hand back to throw it  
in by force, it escaped onto the rocks  
and I snatched my dagger from its sheath,  
which I repent and regret;  
and then all stirred up, with all my strength,  
all full of wrath, weighed down by pride,  
I stabbed it, and as I stabbed it with the cruel dagger, I  
stabbed my hand, so that now I am attached.

14. Ma se vi cal di me, pregate voi  
questo Cristo, signor vero e possente,  
che mi renda la man perch'io da poi  
battezzermi in lui veracemente.  
Deh sì, voi siate pur de' servi suoi:  
non guardate s'io fui troppo nocente,  
che tanto piangerò pien di dolore  
quanto grave stato è il commesso errore.

14. But if you care about me, pray to your  
Christ, true and mighty Lord,  
to restore my hand, because then in truth  
I shall be baptised in him.  
Ah yes, you are his servants:  
do not ask whether I was too wicked,  
for filled of sorrow I shall lament the full extent of the  
sin that was committed.

*Orando ⟨i⟩ frati inginocchioni, ⟨IL⟩ GUARDIA⟨NO⟩ dice:*

15. Signor, quella pietà ch'al tuo bel regno  
ne tornò, allor che 'l mondo vivo e morto  
t'ebbe, il mio priego degno  
faccia, perché il Giudeo si tragga al porto.

*As the friars kneel and pray, THE PRIOR says:*

Lord, may that pity which brought us back to your fair  
kingdom when the world had you living and dead, make  
my prayer  
worthy, so that the Jew is brought home.

IL FINE

THE END