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Pulcinella's Mouthfuls: The pulcinellate of Carlo Sigismondo Capece and the Language of Otherness

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Résumé de l'article

Carlo Sigismondo Capece, a member of the classicizing Arcadian Academy in Rome, was among the most influential librettists of 'Arcadian' opera in the 1710s and 1720s. He also wrote dozens of pulcinellate, or 'Pulcinella plays.' My article centers on these Pulcinella comedies. Capece's Pulcinella, as part of a Plautine lineage of food-obsessed parasites, consistently fumbles foreign words and recasts them in culinary terms. I argue that Capece deploys the Neapolitan zanni as a marker of linguistic difference, pointing to the misunderstandings and language barriers that, in Arcadian terms, defined the city and its vulgar populace. By exploring the role of a commedia dell'arte character in academic circles in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, I tease out the connectivity between popular and elite traditions during the Baroque period, and locate strangeness in the language between them.

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Abstract: Carlo Sigismondo Capece, a member of the classicizing Arcadian Academy in Rome, was among the most influential librettists of 'Arcadian' opera in the 1710s and 1720s. He also wrote dozens of *pulcinellate*, or 'Pulcinella plays.' My article centers on these Pulcinella comedies. Capece's Pulcinella, as part of a Plautine lineage of food-obsessed parasites, consistently fumbles foreign words and recasts them in culinary terms. I argue that Capece deploys the Neapolitan *zanni* as a marker of linguistic difference, pointing to the misunderstandings and language barriers that, in Arcadian terms, defined the city and its vulgar populace. By exploring the role of a commedia dell'arte character in academic circles in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, I tease out the connectivity between popular and elite traditions during the Baroque period, and locate strangeness in the language between them.

Pulcinella, after two years as a slave in Algeria, arrives on the shore of Livorno. A Turkish sailor takes him on his shoulders (Pulcinella does not care for water) and carries him from ship to dry land. There is a brief exchange, some talk of payment. The Turkish sailor thanks Pulcinella in Ottoman Turkish. "Baracallà" (*baracallà* being an approximation of the greeting "barak 'Allah"), he says, and Pulcinella finds himself in a linguistic pickle. "Volite lo baccalà?" ("You want salted cod?") he responds in his native Neapolitan, and the sailor replies with more Ottoman Turkish, or pseudo-Ottoman: "Ciribiridì, iurgadamusì, ciribiridà, carabacalà." Pulcinella concludes that this particular sailor has a fixation with salted cod.[1]

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[1] *Baccalà* came up often in Pulcinella's improvised scenes, as evidenced by the *lazzo del baccalà* documented in Placido Adriani's *Selva*. See Bragaglia 168; Garfein et al. 12. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

The sailor, on departing, again offers Ottoman greetings: "Ciribirdà, baraccallà, salamileca" (*salamileca* as an approximation of "As-Salaam-Alaikum," the standard Ottoman greeting meaning "peace be unto you"), to which Pulcinella replies, "Salamilèca, leccamisalama" (*leccamisalama* turning the greeting into something that sounds like a definitive "lick my sausage").[2] Pulcinella's arrival in Livorno signals the very essence of urban coexistence—inclusivity, cultural exchange, linguistic pluralism—and at the same time demonstrates its failure. The bustling city, with all it has to offer, is reduced to a desire for salted cod and suggestive salami gestures; language, as processed through Pulcinella, presents infinite—and insurmountable—obstacles of otherness.[3]

The scene opens Carlo Sigismondo Capece's comedy *Pulcinella testimonio per semplicità*, a *pulcinellata* (Pulcinella play) written for the carnival season of 1722 and dedicated to Roman nobility. It is one of many similar scenes in the approximately dozen *pulcinellate* written by Capece in the 1710s and 1720s: Pulcinella, insistent with his Neapolitan dialect, engages a foreigner in dialogue and confusion ensues.[4] Most often these scenes rely on the presence of a French

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[2] I am indebted to Omar Cheta for his help with these passages.

[3] Livorno was a hub of slave trade in the early modern Mediterranean world: particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the northern Italian city rivaled Malta and Naples in the trade of Muslim captives, and as much as a quarter of its population may have been comprised of slaves. On Livorno and the Mediterranean slave trade, see Davis 65–66. On slavery in the early modern Mediterranean more broadly, see Bono; Ferrone; Weiss, ch. 1. On enslavement in *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, see Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte*, chs. 2–3. On theatrical representations of piracy and the Mediterranean in Italian theatre of the seventeenth century, see Snyder; see also Fogu, ch. 3; Lezra.

[4] Bragaglia lists Capece's *pulcinellate* as: *Li Pulcinelli fratelli*; *Gli equivoci dei due Pulcinelli*; *Pulcinella testimonio per semplicità*; *Il marito di Pimpa*; *Il testamento di Pulcinella*; *Amore ferisce e sana*; *Pulcinella negromante*; *Creder morto chi si vede*, also named *Pulcinella postiglione d'amore*; *Il filosofo innamorato*; *La schiava combattuta*; *Li rigiri di Pimpa*; *Pulcinella podestà*; *La locanda di Pimpa e Pulcinella*; *Pulcinella finto giocatore*; *Pulcinella in giostra*; and *La finta pazza*. He notes, however, that this list is not definitive, as some of Capece's oeuvre is maintained in private collections such as the Doria Pamphili library. Additionally, some of the plays he lists are just different names for the same play: Bragaglia writes that *Li rigiri di Pimpa*, for example, held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, has the same characters as *Pulcinella testimonio per semplicità*—but upon examination of the print, it actually *is* the play *Pulcinella testimonio per semplicità*, but with a different title. Meanwhile, he lists the play *Amore ferisce, e sana* as a *pulcinellata*, but Mezzettino, not Pulcinella, is its servant character. Thus, between the unknowable shelves of aged princesses, the complexities and inaccuracies of the prints

man or woman, or a Spaniard; Arabs and Turks also occasionally find their way into the fold. Venetians come and go, as do Tuscans, Ligurians, Lombards, Romans, Sicilians, and undifferentiated Italians, but Pulcinella has no trouble understanding them, just as they have no trouble understanding him.

The linguistic missteps are fleeting—comical in the way they reorder consonants or seek familiarity in foreign sounds, but never significant in their impact on the economy of the play. Grand-scale confusion in Capece's *pulcinellate* is always left to the realm of the unspoken, paradigmatic *commedia dell'arte* tropes of cross-dressing or somatic othering: Pulcinella dresses like a woman, speaks like a necromancer, or believes himself to be his own ghost. In this regard, Capece's *pulcinellate* are *commedia dell'arte* bread and butter—standard presentations of *lazzi* with standard punchlines.[5] Capece also obeys the laws of *commedia dell'arte* in his use of characters with regional identities. *Commedia dell'arte*, since its birth in the sixteenth century, was defined by difference: Pantalone was Venetian; Arlecchino, Bergamasco; Capitano Matamoros, Spanish; and Pulcinella, always Neapolitan. And a *commedia dell'arte* play was not complete without a setting—often Venice, Naples, or Genoa, sometimes Milan or Siena, sometimes a far-off city like Copenhagen or London. The characters of Capece's *pulcinellate*, in following this *commedia dell'arte* law of identity, are always from somewhere, and most often find themselves in a specified urban setting. His *pulcinellate* also follow in the footsteps of mimetic, transnational theatre traditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly through the multilingual and multicultural gestures of the *commedia dell'arte*. An "intentional dialogical hybrid," as Bakhtin writes, *commedia dell'arte* offered a particular blend of diverse languages and dialects, and paved the way for future literary explorations of hybridity and polyglossia (82).

The form also served as a linguistic sounding board in elite and popular circles alike so that, even if audiences could not make sense of foreign speech, they could recognize it as part of the cultural fabric of their city.[6] In Capece's comedies,

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themselves, and the scholarly confusion over names and characters, we do not know the exact number of *pulcinellate* that Capece wrote. "About a dozen" will have to suffice for now, with the understanding that this is an extraordinarily large body of work dedicated to the popular Neapolitan *zanni*. See Bragaglia, 217, 557–59. Bragaglia's study draws from Benedetto Croce's original findings of Capece's *pulcinellate* (*Teatri di Napoli* 690–91).

[5] See Henke, "Form and Freedom"; on *lazzi*, see Gordon; Garfein et al.

[6] Andrea Perrucci, in his 1699 treatise *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata ed all'improvviso*, is one of the few theorists of the seventeenth century to thoroughly address the multilingualism of

French characters sound French, Spanish sound Spanish, and there are always jokes to be made in the spirit of exclusion. Foreign phonemes float from mouth to mouth, tracing Mediterranean trade routes and foreign occupations through the malleable world of theatregrams.[7] His staged *urbs*, with its transcribed sounds of *commedia dell'arte*–branded otherness, is funny but functional, showing that Turkish merchants and Spanish dons and French ladies can and do coexist and can and do effectively engage in trade, whether of physical or linguistic products. At least, it would be functional if it were not for Capece's Pulcinella—the parasite, the fool, the verbal terrorist and provocative focal point. Pulcinella throws endless funnyman wrenches into communication and marks transcribed otherness as incomprehensible. Difference of speech, when processed through Pulcinella, signals micro-crises of urban failure, indicating that these characters—and, by theatrical synecdoche, the characters of the city—have no hope of reconciling difference. Pulcinella, in Capece's *pulcinellate*, radiates incongruity, disseminates the pangs of cultural doubt, and turns the city—locus of cultural exchange—on its linguistic head.

This article explores the tradition of scripted *pulcinellate* on Roman stages in the early eighteenth century. Instead of detailing the *pulcinellata* variants of the time, I focus mainly on Capece's particular breed of Neapolitan character and his insistence on multilingual wordplay. A cluster of authors in Rome during the carnival seasons of the late 1710s and early 1720s, including Giovanni Domenico Buonmattei Pioli and Filippo Ferretti, delved into the genre of the scripted *pulcinellata*, often adhering to the same patterns of linguistic skirmishes with foreigners. The Roman milieu also transmitted into text other *commedia dell'arte* characters like Pandolfo and the Doctor—yet Pulcinella emerged as a dominant force, fumbling through language traps and cultural miscommunications.[8] Capece, in

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the *commedia dell'arte*, though he does not make the distinction between language and dialect. See Clivio 212–15, 233n23; Schmitt 26–28. For a broader discussion of multilingualism in the *commedia dell'arte*, see Clivio; see also Henke "Border-Crossing"; Jaffe-Berg, *Multilingual Art* 17–24; Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte* 116; Wilbourne 50, 20–7. On Pulcinella more generally, see Bragaglia; Croce, *Pulcinella*; Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani, *Pulcinella*; Agamben; Greco; Sand. This article is a version of a chapter from my book manuscript on Pulcinella, *Pulcinella's Brood*, currently under review.

[7] Clubb 5, qtd. in Lezra 162; see also Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte* 108.

[8] These comedies are listed in various eighteenth-century prints as "Comedie nove che si trovano per vendere in Bottega di Giuseppe Vaccari Libraro in Piazza Colonna" ("New comedies, for

particular, evidences a remarkable dedication to Pulcinella and his linguistic mis-steps, and his jokes are consistently richer and more fully expounded than in similar *pulcinellate* by other authors of his milieu.

Capece's investment in Pulcinella and his exposition on language as urban crisis take on particular significance when considered alongside his own literary persona. An active member of the Accademia degli Arcadi in Rome, Capece moved in circles that promoted the re-evaluation of literary and cultural norms, and the overhaul of popular tastes. Comedy was, for Arcadians, problematic, as it rested primarily in the hands of popular tastes, reflecting what they perceived as the im-prudent mores of the baroque theatre. Capece's dive into the comic mode—and in particular his linguistic spin on the genre of the *pulcinellata*—constitutes an academic reworking of the popular, and a shuffling of the Neapolitan *zanni* char-acter into an elevated theatrical emblem. Understood as expositions of elevated chuckles, his *pulcinellate*, with their linguistic punchlines, proffer a dynamic game positioned between popular and elevated culture, the somatic and the metaphysi-cal, *urbs* and utopia. Language, in the form of transliterated otherness and fleeting misunderstandings, is the crux by which his comedies operate and the device that activates popular tropes for the literary elite.

Parasitic jokes

Parasites, from ancient to modern, have been hungry, to comic effect. Their bulging bellies and insatiability cast them as emblems of somatic need, in contrast to noble heroes that grapple with lofty ideals and metaphysical exigencies.[9] The term *parasite* is itself a reference to food: the Greek word *parasitos* means "food beside," referring to a person who eats at the table of another. Originally a staple of Greek comedy, the parasite figure landed on Roman stages and from there became ubiquitous in Western comedic representations.[10] Plautus's parasites were insistent about their meals, and, unlike upper-class characters, rooted entire value systems in food: this kind of social distinction was often also a cultural one, separating

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sale in the shop of Giuseppe Vaccari, bookseller, in Piazza Colonna"). The compilations and groupings of these kinds of comedies evidence that they were understood as part of the same sub-genre of scripted, *commedia dell'arte*–themed comedies written for literate audiences.

[9] On the juxtaposition of somatic needs versus sustenance of the mind, see, for example, Plutarch, *Moralia* 1094c, 686c–d, qtd. in Gowers 3.

[10] On the Greek parasite, see Ribbeck.

Greek servants from their cultivated Roman masters. Emily Gowers writes that food in Plautus's plays "is not only part of the riotous world of comedy, but is also a focus for many of the Romans' anxieties about their whole culture: how to separate it from the Greeks', how to be tough and civilized at the same time" (Gowers 51).[11] The insatiable characters' language was also couched in food-based wordplay. Gowers discusses the parasite Ergasilus's language in *Captivi*, noting that he uses food words to refer to the very serious topics of the military, the law, and religion: the word *pendere*, for example, can mean either "to hang" (from a meat rack) or "to await trial" (76–78).[12] This kind of wordplay, too, became a staple of parasitic speech.

In early modern theatre, Ruzante (pen name of Angelo Beolco) followed suit with his own food-obsessed Plautine parasites.[13] The Paduan playwright steeped his comedies in raucous language and farcical miscommunication between classes. His early comedy the *Pastoral*, likely staged in 1517 (Padoan), features communication missteps between Arcadian shepherds (speaking in proper Tuscan) and rustic peasants (speaking Paduan dialect). Food, a central focus of the peasant Ruzante, plays a crucial role in the play. An exchange between the shepherd Arpino and Ruzante overlays the god Pan with a desire for bread:

> ARPINO. O sacro Pan, pietà d'i servi toi!
> RUZANTE. Tu me vuò dar del pan? Mo su, anagun. (11)

> ARPINO. Oh sacred Pan, have mercy on your servant!
> RUZANTE. You wanna give me some bread? Okay, let's go.[14]

Ruzante later plans to eat all of Arpino's food and then go home and eat once more. In his plays *L'Anconitana*, *La Piovana*, *La Vaccaria, Il Reduce*, the *Bilora*, and even in the *Prima oratione*, a similar pattern emerges of miscommunication between aristocratic characters and peasants due to linguistic difference. In *L'Anconitana*, Sier Tomao and his servant Ruzante have trouble understanding one another. Part

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[11] On the parasite in Roman theatre, see Lowe; D'Agostino; Damon.

[12] On food wordplay in Plautus's comedies, see also Fontaine, ch. 3.

[13] On Plautus in Ruzante, see Carroll, *Angelo Beolco*, ch. 6; Fido; Tylus.

[14] On this passage, see Fido 207. On Ruzante and Paduan dialect, see Carroll, *Language and Dialect*, ch. 3; see also Fantazzi.

of the miscommunication is circumstantial, in the vein of *commedia dell'arte*–style *lazzi*, but much of it is linguistic: Ruzante consistently confounds his master with dialect, and the resulting humour is either scatological or food-centred. Their discussions veer off into strange descriptions of hemorrhoids, shrimp, wolves eating people, and urine. Even Doralice's name is subject to distortion in the mouth of the servant: Ruzante calls her "Rarize" ("spicy") instead of Doralice (34).

Linda Carroll discusses Ruzante's multilingual comedies in social terms. The confrontation of literary Italian with peasant dialect, together with the confrontation of the lofty with the somatic, points to Venetian anxiety about foreign invasion and occupation: the Venetian aristocracy, after the devastating wars of Cambrai, attempted to reassert supremacy by distancing themselves—linguistically and economically—from the peasants. Ruzante's comedies critique precisely this dynamic. In *L'Anconitana*, as Mario Baratto and Carroll have both noted, Ruzante willfully generates miscommunication when he is under pressure by an aristocratic character, thereby crafting a linguistic defense by way of equivocation and humour.[15]

Capece likely would not have known Ruzante's comedies: the Paduan playwright's work largely fell out of favour after his death and was only revived on a global scale in the twentieth century. Still, Capece may have absorbed Ruzante's topoi indirectly through other sources: Ruzantine style, in both language and theatre, spread through northern Italy and found expression in works like Piccolomini's *Amor Costante* and Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue*—texts that would have been known to Arcadian readers in the eighteenth century.[16] Venetian theatre of the mid-sixteenth century was also a breeding ground for multilingual comedy, with frequent invocations of food-based miscommunication (Kahane and Kahane). Beyond the page, there were doubtless unspoken avenues of influence that brought parasites and their foodie jokes to popular stages across Italy. *Commedia dell'arte lazzi* feasted on a mélange of ancient and modern sources, from Ergasilus's meat hooks to Ruzante's breaded retorts; such scenes would have entered into the cultural sphere of eighteenth-century Rome and offered Capece

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[15] Baratto 11–15; Carroll, "Peasant as Imperialist" 203. Robert Henke explores the ways sixteenth-century economics shaped the characterizations of the *commedia dell'arte*; see Henke, "Poor."

[16] On Ruzante's legacy, see Carroll, *Angelo Beolco*, ch. 8.

an aesthetic palate.[17] In the spirit of these bawdy ancestors, I offer a serving of Capece's culinary humour, spoken by the parasite Pulcinella.[18]

In *La finta pazza* (1719), Diana, a French woman, calls after Pulcinella.[19] When he fails to respond, she laments, "Tu ne me repon chan sge t'appelle" ("You don't respond when I call you"). Pulcinella hears the French word *appelle* as *capello*: "Vuoi, che me leve lo Cappiello, haie racione" ("You want me to take off my hat? You're right"). He removes his hat, and Diana replies, "No no puin de zeremonie; mete ton sciapò" ("No no don't stand on ceremony, put your hat back on"). Pulcinella understands the French *sciapò* (*chapeau*) as *capone*: "Vorrisse no capone!" he exclaims, "creo ca nce sta in ncucina" ("You want a capon!? I think that it's in the kitchen"). Diana, at this point, gives up, stating, "Tù non intendi mie linguasge" ("You don't understand my language"; 39).

Riscard, a Frenchman in *Pulcinella testimonio per semplicità* (1722), summons Pulcinella. He commands the servant, "Bisogne servira de Ecuier a Madame Sulpisce" ("You need to serve as an escort to Sulpizia"). Pulcinella is puzzled at the request. "Haggio da servir de scudielle a Madama Sulpizia! E che mi vuò magnà le maccarune n'capo!" ("I have to serve as a bowl for Sulpizia?! What, she wants to eat macaroni out of my head or something?!"). Lisetta, an Italian servant, jumps in to save the day. "Dice, che l'hai da servire di scudiero, non di scudella, che l'hai da accompagnare" ("He says that you need to serve as an escort, not a bowl—that you need to accompany her"; 74).

In *Il testamento di Pulcinella* (1720), Leonora, a Spanish woman, commands Pulcinella, "Cheria, che veniesses co migo à ensegnarme las caglies" ("I would like for you to come with me to show me the way"). Pulcinella understands *caglies* (*calles*) as "quails" (*quaglie*): "Eh le quaglie, mò no se trovano" ("Hmm quails,

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[17] On hunger as representative of the poor, particularly in early modern theatre, see Henke, "Poor." See also Henke, *Performance and Literature*; Apollonio.

[18] I provide translations of these jokes, as meaning is often obscured by Capece's transcriptions and attempts at dialect. Since the wordplay is inevitably lost in translation, I tease out the sound resonances and explain the logic of the jokes.

[19] Capece's evocation of feigned madness evidences his indebtedness both to *commedia dell'arte* and early opera. Early operatic productions rooted specifically in the feigned madness of a principal female character include *La finta pazza Licori* (Giulio Strozzi and Claudio Monteverdi, 1627), *La finta pazza* (Strozzi and Francesco Sacrati, 1641), and *La finta savia* (Strozzi and Filiberto Laurenzi). On feigned madness in baroque opera, see Tàmmaro; see also Raizen, "Furious Trilogy."

there aren't any more").[20] Later, Leonora states that she is looking for "la casa d'un Pariente mio, che me pesara se no la aglio" ("my relative's house; I'll be in trouble if I don't find it"). Pulcinella hears *aglio* (*hallo*) as "garlic" (*aglio*): "Hai no Pariente cà pesa l'aglio? E quà l'aglio non se venne à peso bene mio" ("You have a relative that weighs garlic? Well, here we don't sell garlic by the pound, my dear"). Leonora eventually loses patience and exclaims that she's wasting time—which in the end is the only phrase that Pulcinella understands. He concludes the scene by stating, "E' sicuro, chà pierdi lo tiempo, pecchè se si forastera, e non parli meglio nò sarai caputa, vì!" ("Of course you're wasting time, because if you're a foreigner and you can't speak better than this you won't be understood!"; 15–16). Later in the play, Leonora once again loses her patience with Pulcinella. "Tu ezes un infame" ("You are a villain"), she declaims, to which he responds, "E io nò haggio fame, cà me sogno mangiato nò chiatto de Maccarune a colazione" ("No I'm not hungry, since I ate a plate of macaroni at breakfast"; 58).

La schiava combattuta (1724) features Giafer, the Arab owner of a café in Livorno. Pulcinella, whose master is in love with Giafer's servant girl Celia, is sent to the café and finds himself having to distract Giafer.

> PULCINELLA. …ca tenisse no poco de meglio tabacco, cha chisto, e na porcaria.
> GIAFER. Ti non canuscir, chista star fuglia de Tripula.
> PULCINELLA. De Trippa? hai raggione, ca sape de capezzale, ch'ammuerba.
> GIAFER. Chi boler dir capizzala?
> PULCINELLA. E' chilla trippa, ch'a Napole se cuoce pe le strade.
> GIAFER. Ti haber truppa bevuta.
> PULCINELLA. Ma tu non hai ditto, che e Tavacco de Trippa.
> GIAFER. De Tribupla haber dittu, chi star Barbaria.
> PULCINELLA. E' si e de Varvaria, e peo, ca saperà de saponitte, e nce saranno mescate le pile di varve.
> GIAFER. Non dar udienza, perche ti barlar sproposita; si haber finita, bagar, e andar a far tua servitia.

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[20] The mistake of *calles* or *calla* for *quaglie* was a popular trope in the *pulcinellate* of the period. In Pioli's *Le gare della virtù* (1720), a similar exchange takes place between Don Sancio and Pulcinella (18).

PULCINELLA. …Io no haggio da fa niente. voglio sta no poco a trascorrere.

GIAFER. E' che boler barlar?

PULCINELLA. Che nova, nce pe lo munno? Che se fa a chille Paise toje la, de castagne, e Niespole.

GIAFER. Chi Castagna, chi Nespola? boler dir Constantinopola.

[Celia comes onto the scene, and Pulcinella fumbles with a letter for her.]

GIAFER. Tua haber truppa pirola: mi dittu buler vedir, chi mecetupp. chi papira star chilla.

PULCINELLA. Ma che dici io no haggio ne toppa ne papera, ne oca: bade a le fatte toje, che ssa carta, tu non l'ai da vedè.

…

GIAFER. Ah si mi pigliar bastuna, giurar per Baruca, e Alà, che romper braccia gamba, e tua bassin, si tua testa.

PULCINELLA. E se tu giare pe lo Baccalà, io giuro pe lo caviale, chè la lettera, no l'ai d'aè m'entienni. (3–8)

PULCINELLA. …You've gotta have better tobacco than this, this is some nasty-ass tobacco.

GIAFER. You not know it, this tobacco leaf of Tripoli.

PULCINELLA. It's tripe? You're right, it tastes like rotten *capezzale*.

GIAFER. What mean *capezzale*?

PULCINELLA. It's a kind of tripe that they cook on the streets in Naples.

GIAFER. You drink too much.

PULCINELLA. But didn't you tell me that this is tripe tobacco?

GIAFER. I say from Tripoli, is in *Barbaria*.

PULCINELLA. So, if it's from *Barbaria* it should taste like soap, and have little beard hairs mixed in.

GIAFER. I no listen because you talk stupid; if you finish, pay, and go work.

PULCINELLA. …I've got nothing to do. I wanna stay and talk a bit.

GIAFER. And what you want to say?

PULCINELLA. What's the news in the world? What's going on in your country, land of chestnuts and loquats?

GIAFER. What chestnut, what loquat? You want say Constantinople.

[Celia comes onto the scene, and Pulcinella fumbles with a letter for her.]

GIAFER. You talk too much: I say I want see what there. What is paper?
PULCINELLA. What are you talking about? I don't have a mouse or duck
or goose: mind your own business, this paper isn't for your eyes.
…
GIAFER. Oh if you touch me, I swear to *Barakah* and *Allah* I break you
arm, leg, ass, and head.
PULCINELLA. Well if you swear by Salted Cod, I swear by caviar that the
letter is not for you, got it?

The transcription of foreign languages and dialects (or mock-languages
and mock-dialects) into Italian is not unique to the *pulcinellate* of the eighteenth
century: already in the seventeenth century, transcribed French, Spanish, Arabic,
and even Hebrew—usually in bastardized or mock-form—found their way into
Italian texts. Giovan Battista Andreini's 1612 comedy *Lo schiavetto* features a cadre
of Jewish merchants that code-switch between Italian and Hebrew. Andreini tran-
scribes Hebrew words like *baruchaba* ("welcome") and *nezech* ("damage"). He
also finds space for a cheeky metalinguistic discourse about Hebrew sounds: non-
Jewish characters imitate Hebrew through nonsense iterations like *bà be bu* and
bif bif bif, and the Jewish merchants themselves trip over gibberish, grammelot
syllables.[21] Dialectal speech also found its way into written texts. The *commedie
ridicolose*—comedies written by literati and intellectuals, always scripted, often
commedia dell'arte–inspired, often performed by amateurs—relished dialectal
variation. Venetian characters spoke with bountiful *z*'s and *x*'s, and Neapolitans
used words like *cchiù* ("più") and *-aggio* endings for first person singular future
tense (*faraggio, diraggio*). These *commedie ridicolose* provided a genealogical open-
ing to all the elevated, scripted comedies that would follow in the seventeenth
century, canonizing topoi and characters and even dialects themselves into written
theatrical fodder.[22]

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[21] On grammelot, see Fo 57–58; Jaffe-Berg, "Forays into *Grammelot*." On Andreini and the
Mediterranean, see Snyder.

[22] On the debate between Goldoni and Gozzi, see Griffin; Quinn 86–87; Emery 13. On the
commedia ridicolosa, see Mariti; Cope; Caprin; Ciavolella; Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios*, "*Arte*

Capece indulged frequently in tropes of transcribed language and dialect, both in his *pulcinellate* and in his other comedies in which Pulcinella is absent. His carnival-season plays such as *Creder morto chi si vede* (1713), *Il visir discacciato* (1718), and *La schiava per amore* (1720) all feature transcriptions—whether of servants from Bergamo, Turkish ladies, or Spanish dons. He shows a particular affinity for the mockery of Arab or Turkish characters; as seen in Pulcinella's exchange with Giafer in *La schiava combattuta*, Capece often denies Turks conjugated verbs.[23] Names are also problematic for Capece's eastern characters. In *Il visir discacciato*, Amurath, the eponymous Vizier, struggles to remember a woman's name. He stumbles in an exchange with Anselmo, a local, and mispronounces the name Porzia as "Porca" ("slut").[24]

Capece's *pulcinellate* complicate the practice of linguistic transcription: Giafer's awkward constructions are indeed funny, as are the foreign sounds of French and Spanish, but the presence of Pulcinella transforms the scenes into much more than a ridicule of foreignness. Pulcinella, without fail, flounders in the different languages and different sounds, all while stubbornly producing and reproducing phrases in Neapolitan dialect.[25] Most remarkable in these exchanges is that his digestion and regurgitation of othered sounds evidence an obsessive return to food: salted cod, caviar, chestnuts, loquats, tripe, duck, goose, fish, garlic, macaroni, and more populate Pulcinella's exegetic world. All languages outside of the Italianate cluster of dialects and accents can—and seemingly must—be reduced to modular morsels that his palate recognizes. And Pulcinella's palate,

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dialogue structures" 175; Lea 2: 464–71; Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani, *Pulcinella* 421.

[23] This depiction of foreigners as speaking only with infinitives is not unique to Capece's comedies. See, for example, Placido Adriani's "Canzona d'un Turco innamorato di Caterina" ("Song of a Turk in love with Caterina"), which begins, "Per mi aver Cattina amor / mi voleri maridar / star contento insina al cuor / tic toc sentir a far / tarapatata fà – 2 volte / d'allegrezza el cuor mi fà / Tarapatatà. 2. / Che mi quanto innamorà" ("For me have Cattina love / want marry me / be happy to the heart / *tic toc* hear it go / go *tarapatata* – 2 times / the heart makes me happy / *Tarapatatà.* 2 times / How much it make me love."; "Song of a Turk", Selva 356r). See also Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte* 114–16.

[24] On the different theatrical depictions of early modern Turks, see Lezra. See also Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte* 110–11.

[25] As Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani note, the Neapolitan dialect in Capece's *pulcinellate* is not actually Neapolitan (*Pulcinella* 301).

across theatrical and metatheatrical time and space, performs an eternal return to
the realm of the mouth.

Macaronic indigestion

By the nineteenth century, Pulcinella's insatiable hunger for macaroni had
come to represent the Neapolitan underclass. Before this codification, however,
the Neapolitan *zanni* was more of a general glutton, driven by a burning,
indiscriminate desire to consume. Food was an umbrella category for all of his
desires, from literal hunger to greed to sexuality (Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani,
Pulcinella 47–48).[26] His favourite dish, by far, was macaroni.[27] Plates of macaroni
were listed as official props in a number of Pulcinella *scenari* from the seventeenth
century, and unofficially found their way into countless other *scenari* and scripted
pulcinellate. In *L'Arcadia incantata*, for example, a scenario in Placido Adriani's
Selva overo zibaldone di concetti comici collection in Perugia, Pulcinella (along
with a Neapolitan sidekick-partner-in-crime, Coviello) is so entranced with the
offering of a bowl of macaroni that he allows his hands to be bound to a plank of
wood, as if on the cross: this, his lover Rosetta convinces him, is the way locals
eat (Testaverde 752). Macaroni plays a significant role in a number of *scenari* held
in the collection *Gibaldone comico di varij suggetti* in the Biblioteca Nazionale in
Naples. In the scenario *Chi la fa, l'aspetti* ("You get what you deserve"), Pulcinella
(again with Coviello) is served a plate of macaroni, but as soon as they begin
to eat, fireworks (*tricchi tracchi*) explode from under the pasta (Cotticelli et al.
2: 121–25). In *La Lucilla costante* (1632), Silvio Fiorillo's scripted *commedia
ridicolosa*, the word "macaroni" constitutes part of Pulcinella's battle cry against
his aggressor, Capitan Matamoros (Salvi 83). Capece's *pulcinellate* are not unique
in their eternal return to the *gola* ("throat"), as the character's culinary obsessions
root him in a long tradition of the prototypically gluttonous Neapolitan *zanni*
and, more generally, of hungry parasites. What is remarkable is how Capece's
wordplay effectively synthesizes Pulcinella's obsession with macaroni (and tripe,

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[26] See also their chapter, "La fame e la gola," in the same volume; Scafoglio and Lombardi
Satriani, *Pulcinella* 91–106. See also Horvath 51–52.

[27] This is not the realm of cheesy Kraft elbows. The word "macaroni," in Pulcinella's mouth, is
an umbrella term for boiled hard wheat pasta. On the history of macaroni, see Montanari, qtd.
in Wright; on Pulcinella and macaroni, see Conforti.

cod, capon, liver, and more) and macaronic language—that is, the confrontation of different languages in a single text.

Teofilo Folengo's mock-epic *Baldus* (1516) was the gold (or fool's gold) standard of macaronic literature, with its grammatical mishmash and carnivalesque language. Food imagery suits the macaronic mechanism, as Folengo himself insists on the fluency of pasta and his own language:

> Squarzantes aliae pastam, cinquanta lavezzos
> pampardis videas, grassisque implere lasagnis.
> Atque altrae, nimio dum brontolat igne padella,
> stizzones dabanda tirant, sofiantque dedentrum,
> namque fogo multo saltat brodus extra pignattam.
> Tandem quaeque suam tendunt compire menestram,
> unde videre datur fumantes mille caminos,
> milleque barbottant caldaria picca cadenis.
> Hic macaronescam pescavi primior artem,
> hic me pancificum fecit Mafelina poëtam. (1.54–63)

> You can see some of the Muses cutting pasta and filling fifty vats with pappardelle and thick lasagne. Still others, when the kettle groans from excess flames, pull brands away and blow into it, because too much heat will make the broth jump out of the pot. In short, as each Muse endeavors to make her own chowder, one can see a thousand smoking chimneys, a thousand bubbling cauldrons hanging from chains. This is where I first caught the macaronic arts; and where Malefina made me a paunchy poet. (Mullaney 1: 5)[28]

In place of a standard invocation of the muses, Folengo locates the inspiration for his epic in the kitchen and cooks his words accordingly. The passage is tongue in cheek, lapping at coarse Italian words (*lasagne*, *brodo*, *pancia*) and tacking on endings from the elevated Latin. Folengo even wraps himself up in the operation, concluding with his own description as a paunchy (*pancificum*) poet.[29]

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[28] On Folengo and macaroni, see Agamben 14.

[29] On the conflation of macaronic verse and food, see also Burke 103. The depiction of macaronic language as related to food appears also in the Dottore character in *commedia dell'arte* scenarios; this characterization is not surprising, considering that the Dottore is himself

Pulcinella's historic macaroni obsession is thus also emblematic of linguistic amalgamation.[30] In Capece's *pulcinellate*, the multilingual jokes that the *zanni* voices are macaronic, contingent on the mix of signifiers from different languages. Latin is not part of Pulcinella's mix,[31] but his pattern is similar to Folengo's paunchy poetics: languages are mottled together in a way that imposes linguistic difference and forces code-switching. Opposition is key—the stubborn refusal of one language to meld, by means of translation, into the next. The foreigner, in his prescribed masks, cannot be translated and therefore cannot be understood; what results, instead, is a persistent hedging of separateness, a calcification of difference. Macaronic language serves precisely this function: in A. E. B. Coldiron's words, "Macaronic verse refuses to translate precisely because its meaning and point depend on a juxtaposition of differences…macaronic verse makes legible precisely what most translations negotiate or try to hide: differences between religions, classes, genders, or cultures, sometimes residual, sometimes manifest" (58). By forcing Pulcinella towards macaronic moments, Capece insistently highlights the differences of language and culture that dictate the terms of his comedies.

Pulcinella *defensor*

While Pulcinella's role as linguistic terrorist of Capece's theatrical world is evident, less clear is whether or not the character is conscious of his role: Is he genuinely unable to understand foreign speech, or does he actually understand all of it and simply feign misunderstanding? Capece's Pulcinella walks the line between truly ignorant servant and supremely clever puppet master, channelling the polar potentialities of the *zanni* figures *of commedia dell'arte*.[32]

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a macaronic character who mixes Latin and the vernacular. See also Henke, *Performance* 111; Andrew, *Scripts and Scenarios* 188–89.

[30] Luigi Conforti traces Pulcinella's roots back to the Roman comedic figure Maccus and links the *zanni*'s love for macaroni to his nominal predecessor. See Conforti, qtd. in Bragaglia 59–60. Michele Scherillo refutes this origin story (25–30). On the use of macaronic language among *commedia dell'arte* characters, see Henke, *Performance* 40–41. On the clowns of Atellan farce, see also Gowers 55.

[31] Although, according to Perrucci, Pulcinella, in his role as a second *zanni*, could sometimes misinterpret Latin phrases. See Perrucci 157. See also Clivio 224.

[32] The first *zanni* in *commedia dell'arte* generally fulfills the role of clever, astute servant, while the second *zanni* is the buffoon. This binary is, however, often blurred in *commedia dell'arte*

Pulcinella, in his myriad presentations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, loved to equivocate—to answer questions with other questions, and turn interrogations into verbal chaos. Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani trace this pattern back to the *zanni*'s earliest manifestation in the hands of Silvio Fiorillo: Fiorillo's Pulcinella misunderstands or pretends to misunderstand another character's speech, resulting in confusion and, ultimately, laughs. Yet, as they note, even Pulcinella's early equivocations do not specify if the *zanni* is the subject or object of ridicule (*Pulcinella*, 293). Capece's *zanni* settles comfortably into this ambiguous, equivocating duality. On the one hand, his Pulcinella is emphatically stupid: he is spooked by what he perceives as his own ghost; forgets his name; dresses up as someone else and then forgets who he actually is; is beaten. These gestures land him firmly in the realm of somatic comedy and assert his position as parasitic, stupid servant, much in the tradition of the second *zanni*. However, his linguistic guardianship and rejection of foreign speech is more ambiguous. His exchange with Giafer in *La schiava combattuta*, cited above, is clearly a calculated diversion. This deliberateness on his part throws the whole scene into doubt: perhaps Pulcinella has no trouble understanding Giafer and is intentionally spinning his words into absurd culinary parallels. He may understand perfectly that Giafer's tobacco is from Tripoli (and not made of tripe); he may know exactly how to pronounce Constantinople, and that the city's name has nothing to do with chestnuts and loquats. If this is the case, Pulcinella in *La schiava combattuta* is nothing short of a linguistic mastermind, tactically abusing the foreigner through equivocation and twisting the words that denote his very otherness.

His exchange with Don Rodrigo in *Pulcinella podestà* could perform a similarly aggressive function. Pulcinella spins Don Rodrigo in linguistic circles in order to deflect the Spaniard's unwanted amorous advances on Elisa, Pulcinella's mistress:

> DON RODRIGO. Chiero, che me digas, lo che aze tù ama.
> PULCINELLA. Che fa Mamma! Oh che boi fà tù de Mammema!
> D. RO. Tù ama, tù Padrona; Madama Elisa.
> PUL. E be, che boi sape de la Patrona mia!

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scenarios, particularly when the pair of servants is reduced to a singular character. Arlecchino, for example, frequently plays the role of the witty fool, alternately bawdy and brilliant, parasitic and all-knowing; Pulcinella, similarly, can be stupid or savvy or both. On the development of the *zanni*, see Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios* 172; Nicoll 67, 82–84; Tanase.

D. RO. Chiero saver, si estima, como deve me persona, o si chiere algun
   otro.
PUL. E che bò, che ne faccia dell'otro issa.
D. RO. Che deastino!
PUL. No vuo, ne otro, ne tino, te dico.
D. RO. Mira yo, te chiero, regalar, si me dedizes, lo che te he pedido.
PUL. Sì sì, l'haggio io l'appetito, e se me bo regalà, me farai chiacere: mà
   che me boi da!
D. RO. Chieres ciocolate!
PUL. Me boi da le Zoccolate! E tietelo pè te so regalo.
D. RO. Ole mio es del mechor, che ai y es fabricado de buen cacao.
PUL. Oh và à deavolo? Che cacao? Vi che spropositi? Che dici? (41–42)[33]

DON RODRIGO. I want you to tell me who your mistress prefers.
PULCINELLA. My mamma! Hey what do you want to do with my
   mamma!?
D. RO. Your mistress, the lady of the house; Madame Elisa.
PUL. Oh okay, what do you want to know about my mistress!?
D. RO. I want to know if she admires me as she should, or if she loves
   anyone else.
PUL. Well what do you want for her to do with a plate?
D. RO. So it's fate!
PUL. She doesn't want any plate, or any vat, I'm telling you.
D. RO. Look, if you'll allow me, I want to gift you what you lost.
PUL. Yeah yeah, I'm hungry, and if you want to give me something that's
   great—but what do you want to give me?
D. RO. Do you want chocolate?
PUL. You want to whack me!? You can keep that gift for yourself.
D. RO. Well my chocolate is the best there is; it's made from good cocoa.
PUL. Oh, go to hell! What caca? What the hell kind of idea is this? What
   are you saying?

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[33] A similar scene takes place in *La finta pazza*: Pulcinella mistakes the word *caffè* for *chiaffeo*
("stupid") and once again misinterprets chocolate as somehow being made of shit. The mistakes,
as Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani argue, are indicative of the exoticism of both coffee and
chocolate in Naples at the time (*Pulcinella* 425).

Pulcinella's role in this exchange is not to categorically reject Don Rodrigo's advances or forcefully defend his mistress, but rather to detain the Spaniard, confusing him with words.

Yet Pulcinella is not wholly altruistic, nor is he particularly servile. His verbal defenses are also deployed in service of himself and, perhaps, metonymically, in service of Neapolitan selfhood. The others against whom he builds an arsenal of language barriers are not indiscriminately global. There are no Englishmen, or German merchants, or Austrian ladies, or actually any nationality outside of French, Spanish, and Ottoman. Beyond the common use of these archetypal characters in *commedia dell'arte*, this particular triple-threat cluster of foreignness—Turkish, Spanish, and French—is especially significant for Pulcinella, the Neapolitan mouthpiece.

The history of Naples is a conglomerate of conquerors, occupiers, and cobbled reigns. From the late fifteenth century, Naples bounced back and forth between French and Spanish rule. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the city landed in the hands of the infamous Spanish viceroys, who would dominate the area for nearly two centuries. All the while, Ottoman forces, both military and mercantile, came to the region in waves. Mediterranean powers, including the Regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, posed a constant threat to the Kingdom of Naples: privateering between Ottoman and other Mediterranean forces plagued the Italian coast, and it was only in the mid-eighteenth century that peace treaties between Naples and the Turkic powers took hold.[34] Considering the pervasiveness of the French, Spanish, and Turkish in the very fabric of Neapolitan culture, it is unlikely that Pulcinella, in Capece's *pulcinellate*, would be so ignorant of their mores and, more importantly, their languages. The macaronic moments in these *pulcinellate* point strongly to Neapolitan occupation and proffer a mode of defense that eschews military violence in favour of linguistic harassment. Pulcinella here is not only a witty servant that acts stupid to protect his masters and mistresses. He may even be a national hero, Pulcinella *defensor*, protector of the Neapolitan Self (if such a self can even be untethered from its othering forces) who takes up linguistic arms against foreign occupiers.[35]

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[34] D'Amora 719. See also Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte* 53, 111. On the history of occupation in Naples and the construction of Neapolitan identity, see Marino 1–30; Snyder 6–9.

[35] Linguistic defense against foreigners would become a standard part of Pulcinella's arsenal, especially in the nineteenth century. See Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani, *Pulcinella* 291–329. Salvi discusses the relationship between Pulcinella and Capitan Matamoros in terms of Spanish

Language is not the only marker of political and economic worry in Capece's *pulcinellate*. Political strife and international struggle permeate the works, with frequent and explicit references to foreign domination and violence. The very premise of *Pulcinella testimonio per semplicità* problematizes the characters' relationship with Mediterranean powers: Pulcinella, at the beginning of the play, is seen returning to the shore of Livorno after a period of nearly two years of slavery in Algeria. As he recounts to Pimpa upon his arrival, he was taking leave to visit his home in Naples when he was captured by Algerians; he was only freed when the Genovese captured a ship (*Vergantino*, Pulcinella's word for *brigantino*) on which he was working as a rower, and sent him home to Livorno. The opening of the play, with Pulcinella being carried to shore on the shoulders of a Turkish sailor, mimetically remedies the aggression, with a pseudo-triumphant arrival and a pseudo-conquering of the kind of foreigner (*quelli Turcacci*, in Pimpa's words "those nasty Turks*") that had conquered and enslaved him. [36]

Spanish men in Capece's *pulcinellate* are hotheaded but impotent, and as such land comfortably in the long tradition of the *miles gloriosus*.[37] In *Pulcinella finto giocatore* (1721), the Spaniard Don Rodrigo aggressively engages a female figure. The scene hints at rape—or at least the possibility of rape—although the violence is depicted as comical because the woman, as it turns out, is Pulcinella in disguise, as in Machiavelli's *Clizia* (itself based on Plautus's *Casina*). The (failed) attack on a (fake) female figure nonetheless resonates symbolically as a violation of the body politic. Pulcinella is no Lucretia—indeed, he is not steadfast, nor

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occupation of Naples, with particular attention to the role of the tongue as "a tool to portray the relationship between rulers and ruled" (77). Horodowich, writing more generally on the servant character who uses language as defense, notes, "Social inferiors fought a wide variety of battles with the weapon of the tongue…. With the antilanguage of insults, workers and servants carved out a space of resistance for non-noble culture" (209, qtd. in Salvi 78). On the relationship between the Neapolitan people and the Spanish viceroys, see also Pirrotta 315; Beccaria.

[36] Playwrights of the time often played with variants on the word *turco*. See, for example, Verucci, *Le schiave*: "Turchi, che con la vostra turchissima turcaria andè turchescamente inturchinando le lividi…" ("Turks, who with your most Turkish Turkishness went Turkishly Turkeying bruises…"; 7, act 1, scene 1). The interchangeability of Algerians and Turks in this scene speaks to Jaffe-Berg's assertion that audiences would have understood them as fulfilling similar functions. See Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte*, ch. 2.

[37] Jaffe-Berg, *Commedia dell'Arte* 100. On the different faces of the captain figure, see Lea 1: 52; Croce, "Ricerche ispano-italiane" ii; Senigaglia. On the evolution of Spanish *comedias* in Naples, particularly in regard to the capitan character, see Salvi.

noble, nor even female—but the implied violation fulfills a similar function as in the exemplary tale and many similar stories of rape. Foreign aggression against a local (or seemingly local) woman (or woman-like figure) is a political act that grants the aggressor dominance over his conquered terrain.[38] Once again in this scene, however, Pulcinella is triumphant, or pseudo-triumphant: Don Rodrigo is left emasculated, unable to unveil or rape or seize as he pleases, and Pulcinella escapes untouched.

But there is always the possibility that he may just be stupid.[39] Lest we forget that Capece's Pulcinella forgets everything. He perennially loses track of who's who, especially when he is given directives to act as another character (an astrologer, a woman, a judge) and finds himself lost between his fictional and true self. He fumbles his very origins, and even believes himself to have been born of an egg. What kind of hero is it that cannot even remember his identity—that exists in a state of chronic slippage? How can he be a champion of the Neapolitan Self when his own self is compromised?

What is more, Capece leaves no doubt that Pulcinella is also linguistically challenged. Perhaps he possesses some savant skill in mimicking Spanish sounds, and maybe he is even conscious of the linguistic games that he plays with foreigners. Yet, when forced to confront the production of proper Italian—Tuscan dialect, the literary *lingua franca* of the peninsula—he is hopeless, as evidenced by his exchange with Pimpa in *Li due Pulcinelli fratelli*:

> PIMPA. Le mie pari, non han bisogno, che gli si dicano le cose per farle: io già ho servito il Signor Giroldo, e ho detto a D. Leonora tanto bene di lui, che già essa, lo tiene per un Satrapo.
> PULCINELLA. E' che bo dicere mo so Patraso.
> PIMPA. Sei puro ignorante! quando vuoi un po imparare il parlare Toscano? come insegna la Crusca?
> PULCINELLA. E' io nce parlo Toscanise; ma sa Brusca, che jè, ca no la canusco? (16–17)

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[38] As Salvi discusses, the depiction of the braggart Spaniard as rapist goes hand in hand with the conquest of the Italian peninsula. See her compelling discscussion of Matamoros's sexual conquests in Silvio Fiorillo's *La Lucilla costante* (78–79). On Lucretia and the body politic, see Klindienst; Joshel. On the construction of gender dynamics in Renaissance Italy, especially in relation to the threat of foreign invasion or occupation, see Carroll, "Who's on Top?"

[39] This is Croce's opinion (see *Teatri di Napoli* 692–93).

PIMPA. From what I can tell, some things don't need to be said: I already
took care of Signor Giroldo, and I spoke so highly of him to Donna
Leonora that she thinks of him as a satrap.

PULCINELLA. What's that mean, *patras*?

PIMPA. What an idiot you are! When are you going to learn to speak
Tuscan, as La Crusca teaches?

PULCINELLA. Oh, I speak Tuscanese—but that *Brusca*, what is it? I've
never heard of it.

The name of the Accademia della Crusca, protector-on-high of Italian literary
language, may as well be a foreign word to Pulcinella. His ignorance cannot be
attributed to his lack of education or his social status, as it is Pimpa, a servant herself,
who admonishes him for the lacuna in his knowledge. Rather, the invocation of
the eminent academy fashions Pulcinella as not only lexically challenged but also
unaware of the academic body that delegates the words that he should know. Also
noteworthy in this exchange is that it is a foreign word—*satrapo*—that triggers
Pulcinella's confusion. The term, which originally referred to an ancient Persian
ruler and then took on the broader significance of governor or sovereign, first
appeared in the Crusca lexicon in the mid-seventeenth century, with a citation
from the canonical *Orlando furioso*.[40] By fumbling the word, Pulcinella shows his
illiteracy and evidences that he is unable to tap into the Italian that, vis-à-vis La
Crusca, was gelling into a standardized form.

Pulcinella's blockage against "proper" Italian—made explicit in *Li due
Pulcinelli fratelli* but pervasive throughout Capece's *pulcinellate*—begs the ques-
tion of how, in Capece's world, education and linguistic learning relate to the
comprehension of other languages. It seems that the characters that employ good
Tuscan language, like Pimpa, are the ones who can understand everything and ev-
eryone. Capece's lovers, as bland and Crusca-ordained as they are in most *commedia
dell'arte* scenes, are perfectly at home in the sounds of French and Spanish: Enrico,
Isabella, Flavio, Celia, Ottavio, and Cassandra all make sense of what others say.[41]

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[40] "Anzi nuocer parea molto più forte / A Re, a signori, a principi, e a satrápi" ("Indeed it seemed
a much worse peril / to kings, sires, princes, and satraps"; Ariosto 26.32.3–4).

[41] An interesting exchange takes place between Claudio (a Frenchman) and his daughter Elisa in
Pulcinella negromante. There is no misunderstanding between the two, but Claudio urges Elisa
to speak in Italian, even when she is speaking just with him; he states that she must speak Italian
in order to find a husband in Italy (12). According to Perrucci, *commedia dell'arte* lovers are

Thus, if Pulcinella were able to code-switch into proper Italian, would he also gain the ability to understand foreigners? Or, in other words—following in the logic of Pulcinella *defensor*—if he were able to code-switch into proper Italian, would he lose his linguistic line of defense? In Capece's *pulcinellate*, Pulcinella's strength lies in his linguistic limitations: his adherence to Neapolitan dialect dictates his relationship to foreignness and sits at the core of his comedic persona. Whether his linguistic lacunae are emblematic of true ignorance or actually indicative of a willful rejection of both foreign speech and standardized Italian, the result is the same: he is himself an outsider to cultural exchange, a perpetual exile, a popular subject that serves up sloppy pasta instead of cleanly demarcated phonemes.

Pulcinella from on high

Unlike the bare-bones structures of *scenari* of the *commedia dell'arte*, Capece's *pulcinellate* are meticulously scripted, leaving no room for improvisation. To borrow a phrase from Nino Pirrotta, "we are no longer dealing with the authentic *commedia dell'arte*, but with its imitation" (310–11).[42]

Capece inherited his comic sensibilities from ancient Roman comedies, the *commedia erudita* tradition, the improvised scenarios of his own time, and the *commedie ridicolose* of the early seventeenth century. He scorned those who scorned comedy and advocated for a serious appreciation for the genre. In the prologue to his play *Il trionfo d'amore* (1718), he presents both his intentions and frustrations:

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bound to impeccable literary Italian: "studino di sapere la lingua perfetta Italiana, con i vocaboli Toscani; se non perfettamente, almeno i ricevuti, ed a questo conferirà la letteratura, così de' buoni libri Toscani, come gli Onomastici, Crusca, Memoriale della lingua del Pergamino, Fabrica del Mondo, Ricchezze della lingua, ed altri Lessici Toscani…" ("They should make an effort to master perfect Italian, with a Tuscan vocabulary. If they don't know if perfectly, they should at least know [the words] they are given. Reading will help with this, including good Tuscan books such as word lists [*onomastici*], the [dictionary of the Accademia della] Crusca, the *Memoriale della lingua* [*italiana*] by [Giacomo] Pergamino, the *Fabrica del mondo*, the *Richezze della lingua* [*volgare*], and other Tuscan lexica…"); Perrucci 104. See also Clivio 215; Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios* 190; Stockton Rand.

[42] Pirrotta here is referring to an amateur performance at the Bavarian court in 1568. On Capece's scripted Pulcinella as different from the improvised character, see Bragaglia 219.

li virtuosi miei figli devono essere accarezzati e ben visti, e non
lacerati, e scherniti come par che il volgo ignorante habbia preso
per costume, poiche si trovano certi satrapi, che appena uscita fuori
qualche operetta, ò Tragica, ò Comica, ne fanno subito l'anotomia, e
vanno subito investigando se l'inventione è tolta da altri, se il suggeto
è stato inteso, e li concetti più proferiti in altre simili occasioni.[43]

My virtuous sons should be adored and well seen—not torn apart
and scorned, as it seems that the ignorant masses have taken up
as habit. Then there are those satraps, who, as soon as they leave a
theatrical work (either tragic or comic) pick it apart immediately,
and immediately investigate if the invention was derived from other
works, if the subject was understood, and if the concepts were better
expressed on other similar occasions.

Capece's defense is a biting attack against those who would pick apart his
comedies. The term *satrapi*—the same word that throws off Pulcinella in his
Crusca fumble—denotes a class of holier-and-more-Aristotelian-than-thou critics.
The critique offers a snapshot of theatrical debates of Capece's time, which had,
since the mid-sixteenth century, focused on the application of ancient theatrical
practices and decorum to modern stages.[44] The continuity of such debates is
evident from the origins of Capece's apology: the same text appears, verbatim, in
the prologue to Vergilio Verucci's 1636 comedy *La spada fatale*, which features a
number of *commedia dell'arte*–inspired masks. In Verucci's version, it is Virtue (in
the form of a female speaker) who vocalizes the defense of comedy, claiming all
virtuous theatrical creations, even comedy, as her own children (4–5).

Though they belonged to different generations, Capece and Verucci were
both tightly stitched into the network of academic academies in Rome and, more
specifically, were both members of the Accademia degli Umoristi, an institution
founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Verucci, a great enthusi-
ast of the *commedia ridicolosa*, endorsed scripted comedy as a rebirth of ancient
theatrical practices. He made wide use of variegated linguistic and dialectal tran-
scriptions, engaging with *commedia dell'arte* typologies while adhering to textual

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[43] On this prologue, see Bragaglia 220; Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani, *Pulcinella* 421–22.

[44] On literary criticism and the *commedia dell'arte*, see Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios*, ch. 6.

production. His 1609 comedy *Li diversi linguaggi* is testament to his dedication to linguistic variation. Featuring a cast of ten characters, each from a different region or country, the play self-consciously probes the gestures of multilingual theatre. In the comedy's prologue, a Roman boy provides a lengthy discourse on the form of and reasoning behind the play. The author, as he states, "ha voluto dar nome all'opera *Li diversi linguaggi* per la diversità del parlare dei recitanti; e non è maraviglia, perche essendo questa Città di Roma un commun ricetto di tutte le nationi del mondo, non è gran cosa che in essa vi sia gran diversità di linguaggi" ("he wanted to name the work *The different languages* for the linguistic diversity of the speakers—and it is no surprise. Since the city of Rome is a haven for all the nations of the world, it makes sense that it would host such a great diversity of languages"; 4).[45] Verucci, through his multilingual text, declares that comedy, historically a genre that follows the base actions of common characters, should adapt itself to the cosmopolitan scene that is Seicento Rome.[46]

While Verucci's theory cannot be artificially imposed on Capece's *pulcinellate*, the mock-French, mock-Spanish, and mock-Turkish scenes from the early eighteenth century fit comfortably into such a configuration of the comic polis. Capece's affinity with Verucci and his comedic aims appears even more substantial in light of Verucci's insistence on multilingual scripted comedy: Capece's Spanish Dons and Arab merchants, with their transcribed linguistic specificities, are later presentations—blown up to a more global scale—of a genre that took shape in the early seventeenth century through Verucci and, most likely, other like-minded *umoristi*. As Verucci was also one of the first to experiment with the Seicento-scripted *pulcinellata*, his Pulcinella-based comedies doubtless became the model for the later literary *pulcinellate*, including the plays by Capece. But Capece's dialect-monopolizing Pulcinella has little to do with Verucci's earlier figuration of the Neapolitan *zanni*. Verucci's Pulcinella is undeniably clever, dabbles

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[45] He goes on to explain that the various modes of speech are not intended to be accurate representations of dialects, but rather approximations that can be recognized as belonging to specific regions. See Lea 1: 50. On *Li diversi linguaggi*, see Andrews, "*Arte* dialogue structures."

[46] Verucci's conception of comedy offers a clear position on the notion of decorum. As Andrews discusses, decorum, for theatre critics particularly beginning in the sixteenth century, could denote both moral content and verisimilitude. Comedy that deals in dialect (instead of literary Italian) and base humour would hardly be considered decorous in the moral sense, but Verucci's invocation of the diversity of Rome shows an investment in the idea of decorum as verisimilitude. See Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios* 216–20.

in erudition, and, most importantly, knows how to code-switch into Tuscan.[47] Pulcinella punctuates Verucci's comedy *Le schiave* with self-conscious discourses on rhetorical brevity, and then concludes the play with a lengthy monologue on the subject, spoken entirely in elevated Tuscan. He cites the *tre corone* and forays into the historical realm with an exposition on Guicciardini; he launches into a "brevissimo, ma dolce saggio" ("very brief but sweet essay") on his oratory skills and is promptly cut off by another Neapolitan speaking in dialect (act 3, scene 9). Verucci's Pulcinella proves himself not only amenable to education but actually learned, and shows that he can spar linguistically and intellectually with the most skilled of rhetoricians. In fact, all of Verucci's characters, despite their multilingualism, coexist in linguistic peace, without any misunderstandings of note. Even in *Li diversi linguaggi*, whose premise is linguistic diversity, the characters manage to understand and be understood. Verucci depicts a city with full linguistic functionality. Capece's *pulcinellate*, to the contrary, are rooted in the repeated failure of urban exchange. A theoretical gulf divides Verucci's cosmopolitan comedies from the cultural pangs of Capece's *pulcinellate*.

Capece's role within the Accademia degli Arcadi may elucidate his urban pessimism. The Academy, founded in Rome in 1690 at the home of the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden, was conceived as a haven for literati who upheld the supremacy of Italian's classical heritage and sought to extirpate the perceived *cattivo gusto* ("bad taste") of the Baroque period. Arcadians convened in a pastoral grove above the city, removed from the people, and, toga-clad, recited poetry and debated the evolution and fate of Italian literature. The Arcadian mission was vague at best, reactionary at its core but multiform in its theoretical applications: some early Arcadians, such as Gianvincenzo Gravina, sustained that Italian literature and theatre should be refashioned in the model of ancient Greek theatre; others, such as Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni, the first *custode generale* of the Academy, subscribed whole-heartedly to pastoral modes and mores.[48] What Arcadians could

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[47] Pulcinella also speaks Tuscan in Giulio Cesare Cortese's *Viaggio di Parnaso* (1621); as Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani suggest, Pulcinella's use of Tuscan dialect in Cortese's prologue serves to mock academians of La Crusca (*Pulcinella* 394–95).

[48] The legacy of the Academy, as we know it today, is rooted in the reform of serious literary endeavours, particularly operatic *drammi*. However, as Robert Freeman discusses, the production and practice of Arcadian opera did not necessarily reflect the theories of its proponents: comedy, though theoretically shunned, did find its way onto Arcadian stages, evidencing the disconnect between theory and practice that Andrews points to in his analysis of theatrical decorum and

agree on, however, was the scorn of popular tastes. The city populace became for the classicizing Arcadians subjects of critique and theoretical framing, emblematic of the downfall of elevated Italian literature and lofty sentiment.

Gravina, in his treatise *De ragion poetica* (1708), states in no uncertain terms that common people are stupid and need to be tricked, by means of didactic, Hellenistic tragedy, into an education. Meditating on theatrical, corporeal manifestations of lofty poetic expressionism, he states, "Quando le contemplazioni avranno assunto sembianza corporea, allora troveranno l'entrata nelle menti volgari…ed in tal modo le scienze pasceranno de' frutti loro anche i più rozzi cervelli" ("When these contemplations will have assumed a bodily form, they will find an entry point into the minds of the masses…and in such a way even the crudest of brains will graze on the fruits of science"; *Della Ragion Poetica* 12). Ludovico Antonio Muratori, an early Arcadian focused on the evolution and diffusion of the Italian language, proposes a kind of linguistic trickle-down economic—that language changes occur first through the will of the literati, and then become diffused (and often deformed) in the mouths of the people (293). While Capece himself steered clear of explicit critique of the popular, his tragedies, in true Arcadian fashion, eschewed baroque theatrical conventions and excluded the mixing of register or comedic intercession. His 1711 text *L'Orlando ovvero la gelosa pazzia*, for example, a theatrical *dramma per musica*, adheres to an ethos of Arcadian purity: Orlando, even in his madness, exhibits a noble pastoral lyricism, as do the supporting characters, based loosely on the original cast of knights and ladies from Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. The drama is Arcadian-approved, as evidenced by the praise it received from Crescimbeni himself (352). Other Arcadian compatriots pointed to Capece's tragedies as emblematic of good contemporary theatre, like his two Iphigenia-based plays (*Ifigenia in Aulide* and *Ifigenia in Tauri*).[49]

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comedic productions. See Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios* 200–01, 216–20. On Arcadian praxis, see Freeman, *Opera without Drama* 15–16; see also Raizen, "Apostolo Zeno." On the importance of the Arcadian Academy for opera reform, see Nathaniel Burt's seminal 1959 article "Opera in Arcadia"; Freeman, *Opera without Drama*; Smith, *Dreaming* 17–38; Strohm; Tcharos; see also Raizen, *Adaptations in Arcadia*, ch. 1. On the Academy more generally, see Acquaro Graziosi; Binni; Guaita; Toffanin.

[49] See Martello, *Della Ragion Poetica* 158. Martello also turned his attention to the comedic vein and named Pulcinella among the "lodevolissimi" of comedic gesture. See his *Che bei pazzi* 159, qtd. in Bragaglia 145.

The tradition of the *commedie ridicolose*, as inherited from Verucci and like-minded *umoristi*, likely served, in part, to justify Capece's investment in Pulcinella and his comedic companions by providing an academically sanctioned precedent (Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani, *Pulcinella* 390, 421). Carnival also made comedy palatable: the yearly rite doubtless loosened Arcadian strictures and permitted the academians to dabble in a genre that generally was not part of their practice.[50] And Capece's biographical details lend credence to his knowledge of the sound and vocabulary of different languages: he was well travelled and spent a number of years in France and Spain.[51] Yet these conditions fail to account for the specificities of Capece's comedies—his insistence on multilingual jokes through the mouth of the Neapolitan *zanni*, and the food-based gaffes that ensue.

These moments, I propose, do not take place in spite of Capece's Arcadian involvement, but rather in virtue of it. His academic activities and literary persona dictate a certain relationship to language and city life: as an Arcadian, he was bound to a critique not only of popular art forms but also of the populace more broadly, and their problematic relationship with elevated speech and elevated cultural production. Like Gravina, Crescimbeni, and others, he was positioned to evidence the people's inability to communicate properly. Capece did not openly critique the urban populace, nor did he denigrate popular tastes, but the linguistic missteps forced by Pulcinella constitute an elitist nose-thumbing at the kinds of exchanges—whether genuine or mimetic—that typified the Italian polis. His *pulcinellate* view the city from on high, implicitly juxtaposing macaronic dissolutions with the idyllic linguistic constructions that formed the basis for the Arcadian Academy. Pulcinella may indeed have been a *defensor* within the comedies themselves, but, when manhandled by the academic elite, he became a ludicrous embodiment of urban communication. Capece appropriated the Plautine parasite,

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[50] On Cardinal Ottoboni and early carnival seasons in Arcadia, see Holmes 3–5.

[51] Capece was sent to French court by Cardinal Francesco Maidalchini in the 1670s; he returned to Rome around 1680 and served as the "segretario delle ambasciate" under Cardinal Girolamo Casanate. In the last years of the seventeenth century, Pope Innocent XII named him governor of the city of Terni, and then also of Cascia and Assisi. In 1695 he returned to Rome and took the post of "Agente della Provincia del Patrimonio." Between 1704 and 1714 he served as "segretario delle lettere italiane, e latine" under Maria Casimira of Poland, and in 1714 he moved with her to France and stayed there with her until her death in 1716. He then returned to Rome and took positions first under the princes of Bavaria, and ultimately served the Princess Teresa Grillo Pamphili. See Cinelli Calvoli 56; De Tipaldo 4.374–75.

mediated by Verucci and the earlier *umoristi*, and transformed him into a weapon of critique, picking at and problematizing the relationship between the Italian polis and its conglomerate of Mediterranean Others.

Chocolate: ambrosia or just "shit"?

Arcadian shepherds took a particular liking to chocolate, and they composed odes and songs in praise of its sweetness. Chocolate was deemed the perfect Arcadian product—refined, sweet, poetic in the way it sits on the tongue.[52] Arcadian shepherd Uranio Tegeo (the pseudonym of Vincenzo Leonio, a founding member of the Academy) praised another shepherd for his poem on chocolate, stating that the poem proved that "cotal bevanda era propria de' Pastori" ("such a drink was just right for the shepherds"; Leonio 1285r). Arcadian poet Marcello Malaspina, in his composition *Bacco in America: Componimento ditirambico in lode della cioccolata*, mused about an immaginary voyage of Bacchus in the Americas and the god's fascination with chocolate. Lorenzo Magalotti, an early member of the Academy, went so far as to declare that sweets—and chocolate especially—sometimes inspired him even more than literature (105).[53] And Pietro Metastasio himself, the golden boy of the gilded grove and master of pastoral lyricism, composed a *cantata* entitled "La cioccolata," addressed to the nymph Fille. Fille is hesitant to drink the sweet nectar, but Metastasio the poet convinces her with lyrical exhortations:

> Oh quanto esala
> D'odore il cinnamomo allor che all'imo
> Del cavo marmo a spessi colpi, e grave
> In polvere si cangia! E questo poi,
> Che cernendo si scelse,
> Al primo unir convien. Con mano avara
> D'altra pianta più rara
> E di più forza e odor l'ingordo suole
> Parte aggiungervi ancor. Confuso al fine
> Quel dell'indiche canne

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[52] On chocolate in eighteenth-century Italian culture, see Camporesi.

[53] On Magalotti and chocolate, see Camporesi, ch. 8.

Dolce e candido succo, a te sì caro,
Prodigamente vi s'accoppia. Insieme
Tutto adunque si mesce; e ferve intanto
Sulla cote il lavoro: onde calcata
La buona massa dalla man che sovra
Le ricorre frequente,
Si affina e ammorbidisce. (2: 729)

Oh how much exhales
The smell of cinnamon, heavy, now that at the bottom
Of the hollow marble, it turns into powder
Through regular blows! And then this,
That one chosen by sifting,
Should be united with the first substance. With a lavish hand,
One is used to adding even more
From the other, rarer plant,
Stronger, and of headier odor. Mixed in at the end
That sweet and milky white juice,
So dear to you,
Of those eastern reeds,
Couples lavishly with the rest. Together,
Therefore, everything is mixed; and, meanwhile,
The work hums on the whetstone: when the good mass,
Pressed by the hand
That passes over it often,
Is refined and softens.

Chocolate, in Metastasio's poetic universe, is delectable on the tongue and also mellifluous in its poetic resonances. Later in the poem, he even invokes Horace's *dulce et utile*, with the sweetness referring to the chocolate itself: "Mostrò di senno e d'arte / Quindi le prove estreme, / Chi seppe il dolce insieme / Coll'utile goder" ("He who knew how to appreciate / The sweet together with the useful / Showed both good judgment and artistry, / And therefore the greatest tests"; 2: 730). Pulcinella, simpleton that he is, can only understand chocolate in scatological terms; in Arcadia, to the contrary, it is a substance that both delights and inspires the poetically useful. If only Pulcinella could be coerced into taking pleasure from

the golden-age liquid—if only he could, like Metastasio's Fille, be converted to its heavenly sweetness—he might learn how to speak properly, and exchange the correct phonemes, and strive to sing a nobler, more poetically viable song. But then there would be no elitist laughs to be had, and the poetic-gustatory mechanisms that separate the wheat from the chaff would be broken, and theatrical chaos would ensue. So Capece weds Pulcinella's poetic production to rougher meals—linguistic products savory more than *dulces*, and ones that are only *utiles* inasmuch as they tickle Arcadian funny bones.

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