



Acoustemologies in Contact

Sounding Subjects and Modes of
Listening in Early Modernity

EDITED BY EMILY WILBOURNE AND SUZANNE G. CUSICK



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6. Little Black Giovanni's Dream

Black Authorship and the 'Turks, and Dwarves, the Bad Christians' of the Medici Court¹

Emily Wilbourne

The poem, 'Sogno di Giovannino Moro', survives in a single manuscript copy, undated and unattributed, in the Medicean archives in Florence; the first page is shown as Figure 6.1.² Throughout this chapter, I attribute authorship of the 'Sogno' to the enslaved Black chamber singer Giovannino Buonaccorsi, who was active at the Medici court between 1651 and his death on August 15, 1674.³ Buonaccorsi is often identified in contemporary sources by the name Giovannino Moro, Giovannino *il Moro* [Little Black Giovanni], or merely *il Moro* [the Black]⁴ and thus can

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- 1 Research for this paper was supported by a fellowship from the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at I Tatti, Florence, and by a Scholars' Incentive Award from Queens College of the City University of New York. I would like to thank Paul Kaplan, both for having introduced me to the poem explored in this chapter, and for the several wonderful conversations that we have had about Buonaccorsi and Black Africans in Italian courts. All translations in this chapter are mine unless otherwise indicated; I thank Lucia Marchi for her careful work to ensure their accuracy.
 - 2 The poem can be found at the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter, ASF), *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 6424, c.n.n.
 - 3 His death is recorded in the Archivio Storico Arcivescovile di Firenze (hereafter, ASAF), *S. Felice in Piazza*, Morti dal 1627 al 1686, RPU 0025.13, c.236v.
 - 4 In seventeenth-century sources, the descriptor *moro* is notoriously difficult to translate, as meanings range from 'brunette' to 'Muslim' to 'Black African', depending on context, or more precisely on the presumptions of a given author or

be associated with the poem by the title alone.⁵ Both previous scholars to have mentioned the poem — the art historians Alessandro Grassi and Paul Kaplan, each of whom consider the poem in relation to the Volterrano painting shown as Figure 6.2 — also attribute authorship to Buonaccorsi.⁶ They do so with a rather pleasurable naiveté — assigning authorship to the most obvious contender as if he were not Black, or a slave; as if he were an autonomous subject fully capable of artistic endeavor. They neatly sidestep the qualifications and disavowals that typically shield such assertions from the charge of overreaching. Buonaccorsi was one of a considerable number of Black African and Middle-Eastern Muslim and newly Christianized court retainers who arrived in Florence under conditions of enslavement, and his very presence in Italy testifies to an endemic practice of Italian slavery with which scholars are only recently beginning to grapple. Within academia the work of documenting the historical presence of Black Africans, slaves, and other racialized minorities within early modern Europe (as Kaplan long has done) has itself been seen as a radical and often destabilizing project. To make a further claim for Black authorship is bold, indeed.

The figure of a Black, enslaved, seventeenth-century (quite possibly castrated) Italian poet is difficult to extricate from the logic of exceptionalism, by which the scholarly authority of arguments, analysis,

scribe. In the sources I have worked with in Florence, the term is used almost exclusively to describe Black Africans who predominantly entered Italy via the Middle East or the Ottoman empire, with the diminutives *morino* or *moretto* used to describe Black children. Muslims more generally were typically described with the term *turco*. I have chosen therefore to translate the term as 'Black' in recognition of the localized Florentine usage.

- 5 Previous scholarship on Buonaccorsi has rendered several confused versions of his name. I trace and clear up this confusion in my forthcoming essay, Emily Willbourne, "'... La curiosità del personaggio': *Il Moro* on the Mid-Century Operatic Stage', in *Seachanges: Music in the Mediterranean and Colonial Worlds, 1550–1880*, ed. by Kate van Orden (Florence: I Tatti Studies, forthcoming).
- 6 The poem is referenced (though not transcribed) by Alessandro Grassi in his catalogue entry on the Volterrano painting included here as Figure 6.2, see Maria Cecilia Fabbri, Alessandro Grassi, and Riccardo Spinelli, *Volterrano: Baldassarre Franceschini (1611–1690)* (Florence: Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 2013), p. 245. I heard Paul Kaplan discuss the poem on 23 October 2015, at the conference 'Staging Africans: Race and Representation in Early Modern European Theaters', Columbia University, in his as-yet-unpublished paper, 'Giovannino Moro: A Black African Servant, Musician, Actor and Poet at the Medici Court', which he generously shared with me.

inferences, and conclusions — not to mention the historical, scholarly, and pedagogical value of the work of art — rests on the single claim of authorship.⁷ It is easy to presume that any interest in the work of art is motivated by the intersecting identity categories of author and scholar, and if it can be shown that the art was authored by someone else, even if sufficient doubt can be thrown on the attribution, the value of historical person, scholarly reputation, and published scholarship crumbles (and associated political ideologies devalued). Such pitfalls are familiar (to musicologists, at least) from the history of scholarship on female musicians: the music is good *for a girl*; we only study this because *there were no other women composers*; this specific piece attributed to her is particularly good *from which I assume her brother wrote it*.

In earlier drafts of this chapter I hedged my claims of Buonaccorsi's authorship with words like 'presumed', 'possibly', 'potential', and located my conclusions in the safely deferred linguistic fiction of the subjunctive: 'if Buonaccorsi *were* the author, *then...*'. The more time I spent with the poem, however, the more convinced I became of Buonaccorsi's authorial claim, and more importantly, the more deeply and uncomfortably I became aware that the strongest (perhaps only) counterargument against his authorship implicitly relies on the color of his skin. The purportedly neutral skepticism of academic practice requires a higher burden of proof for exceptions to the straight, white, male model, insisting on the foreignness of the enslaved Black man and presuming his incapacity. According to the traditional logics of musicological practice, the authorial attribution to Buonaccorsi would seem more convincing were I able to point to mistakes in the text: mistakes would *prove* the foreignness of the author and might illustrate a reliance on spoken dialect or foreign words. But grammatical errors can only be used as evidence for Black authorship if we presume an incapacity to write and speak correctly on the part of Black humans. Contemporary Italian authors often made such assumptions or traded in their familiarity, representing the speech of Black characters with a thick stage dialect, discussed at some length in the central part of this chapter.⁸ But we need not perpetuate such assumptions.

7 The issue of Buonaccorsi's probable castration, not developed here, is discussed in Wilbourne, "'La Curiosità'".

8 The practice of staged Black voices was not limited to Italy; the Spanish tradition is explored in Nicholas Jones, *Staging Habla De Negros: Radical Performances of the*

In this chapter I celebrate the subtlety and sophistication of Buonaccorsi's poetry. His sharp critique and witty wordplay place his Black body at the very center of Italian court life. In the poem, the narrator/singer Giovannino⁹ speaks in the first person, conjuring and impersonating a 'Zingara indovina' [a gypsy fortune teller] who mocks a motley crew of Turks, dwarves, and buffoons — a group that Buonaccorsi calls the 'mal'Cristiani' [bad Christians] of the court, most of whom I have identified with contemporary historical figures. The 'Sogno di Giovannino Moro' thus documents the way in which bodily differences — of (racially marked) slaves, freaks, and fools — were enjoyed by the court and provides a rare opportunity to exemplify the ephemeral entertainments provided by the 'cortigiani di basso servizio' [courtiers of lowly service].¹⁰ The poem resonates with other extant buffoonish texts, such as Margherita Costa's *Li buffoni* (1641), a *comedia ridicola* set at the Medici court and populated by a similar strata of courtly inhabitants.¹¹ Buonaccorsi's poem-as-artefact helps jog our historical memory, providing a point of entry into the experience of difference and its lived meanings in early modern Europe.

1. The Text

The 'Sogno di Giovannino Moro' is bound into the unpaginated volume ASE, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 6424, where an unhelpful if well-intentioned archivist saw fit to extract and collate poetic material from disparate archival sources, thus separating the poems from any accompanying

African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv14gp309>

- 9 Throughout this chapter I use the name 'Giovannino' when I refer to the speaking subject of the poem and 'Buonaccorsi' when I refer to the historical person.
- 10 The quote comes from the catalogue entry describing the image that appears in this chapter as Figure 6.3, the *Ritratto di quattro servitori della corte medicea* (c. 1684), and is cited there from an early eighteenth-century description of the painting, see Anna Bisceglia, Matteo Ceriana, and Simona Mammana, *Buffoni, villani e giocatori alla corte dei Medici* (Livorno: Sillabe, 2016), p. 92.
- 11 Margherita Costa, *Li buffoni* (Florence: Massi and Landi, 1641). An excellent translation of the Costa has just been published, see Margherita Costa, *The Buffoons, a Ridiculous Comedy: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. and ed. by Sara Díaz and Jessica Goethals (Toronto: Iter Press, 2018). A facsimile of the 1641 print is also available online, at https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SNnzCooz258C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

letters or documentation that might date or contextualize them.¹² This particular volume (one of eight such *filze* held in the archive) includes an important early version of Ottavio Rinuccini's *La Dafne*, recently brought to light by Francesca Fantappiè.¹³ It also includes a number of texts for singing associated with the circle of Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici (in whose household Buonaccorsi belonged until the Cardinal's death in 1663), and at least one other racially-charged text: a poem by Ciro di Pers (1599–1663) entitled, 'Al Signore Bali Alessandro Orso Cavaliere vecchio che s'innamora di una schiava mora mentre viene a pigliar del foco alla sua casa' [For old Sir Alessandro Orso, the Bailiff, who fell in love with a Black slave when she came to his house to collect the fire].¹⁴ Di Pers's text provides a useful foil for that of Buonaccorsi precisely because di Pers fails to engage with racial difference or slavery, despite their structural centrality. The di Pers poem pokes fun at the old (white) man's foolishness and constructs an elaborate conceit about the color of the young Black woman's skin, the blackening effects of (literal) fire, the (metaphorical) fire of passion, and the purity (and thus 'whiteness') of love. As such, the Blackness and servitude of the young woman are quickly shifted from the realm of physical fact to metaphorical witticism. While di Pers's poem testifies to the presence of Black slaves and to the exposure of enslaved women to the sexual advances of the men around them, it provides no commentary on the circumstances thus described and no hint of the young woman's thoughts about her situation. Her color operates primarily as a poetic figure rather than as a material feature of her existence in Florence — one which would have had significant consequences for her life and her treatment at the hands of others.

The hand that copied the 'Sogno' is clear, neat, and practiced. A single error (omitting two words) was made on the second page, and corrected seemingly immediately. This is a clean copy, not a draft. The text consists of seven strophes, the first and last of which are composed in *versi sciolti* (mixed lines of seven or eleven syllables), providing both a structural and narrative frame to the poem. These two strophes are spoken in

12 The series *Poesie e Pasquinate* runs from 6420–6427, see *Archivio Mediceo del Principato. Inventario sommario*, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, 1) (Rome: [n.p.], 1951), p. 240ff.

13 Francesca Fantappiè, 'Una primizia rinucciniana: *La Dafne* prima della "miglior forma"', *Il saggiatore musicale*, 24 (2018), 189–228.

14 ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 6424, c.n.n.

the poetic voice of Giovannino Moro himself; they explain (in the first instance) the dream that he had and (in the second) the moment in which he woke up. The five central strophes, in contrast, are enunciated in the voice of the gypsy who appears in his dream; they are highly rhythmic, with a tightly controlled rhyme scheme: AaBCcBDD. Here capitalization refers to metric form, with lowercase letters indicating shorter *quaternario* lines (four syllables long) and capital letters *ottonari* (eight syllables long). The first four of the central five strophes treat individual members of the court, addressing each figure in turn using the second person singular ('tu'), while the fifth discusses the group as a whole.

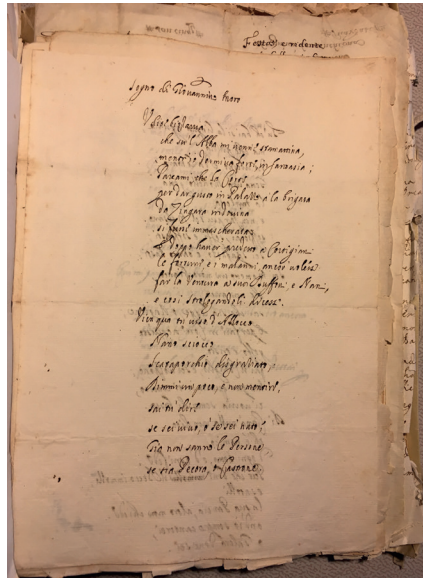


Fig. 6.1 First page of the poem, ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 6424, c.n.n.

Both the textual content and the poetic structure invoke performance. We can imagine the interpellative force of the second-person-indicative text, with the body of the performer (of Buonaccorsi) turning with the start of each new strophe in order to mock his companions one after another. We also need to consider that the poem was almost certainly sung. By mid-century, *versi sciolti* (such as those used in the first and last strophes) were tightly linked to recitative, while full strophes of *versi pari* (lines of verse in even meters, as used in the central five

strophes) were rarely seen outside of musical performance. Strophic poetry is easily paired with a repeating musical unit (that is, each strophe sung to the same music or a lightly altered variant thereof).

Buonaccorsi was described as a 'musico da camera' [chamber musician] in a list of the members of the household of Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici, prepared in early 1663.¹⁵ He is depicted in the act of song in his one known surviving portrait (see Figure 6.2); we can also note that he is shown singing from a sheet of paper, from which the viewer can directly infer his literacy, musical and/or textual. Furthermore, he is known to have sung in an entire series of operas in Florence in mid-century, as well as at least one season at SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice,¹⁶ circumstances which testify to a high level of musical training and thus several years of instruction (the musician and composer Jacopo Melani trained at least one young castrato in Giovan Carlo's household).¹⁷ Interestingly, twenty years earlier, when the Grand Duchess wanted 'her Moretto Abissino [little Black Ethiopian¹⁸ boy] of around fourteen years of age' instructed and catechized with an eye to his eventual conversion to Christianity, she assigned the task to the priest Giuliano Guglielmi, who testified not only that he instructed the boy directly, but that he assigned him to 'join the lessons of the children of Signore Agostino Sacchetti, who were being educated under the discipline of Messer Vettorino Pennini'.¹⁹ (These details are reminiscent

15 See ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 5358, c.657v.

16 For a discussion of these Black characters, see Wilbourne, "'La Curiosità'".

17 A 'castratino' who sang in *Ercole in Tebe* (in 1661) attracted the attention of the Queen of France, who requested that he be sent — along with Antonio Rivani and Leonora Ballerini — to the French court to sing; Cardinal Giovan Carlo refused, citing the castratino's weak state and his need to remain longer with his teacher, Jacopo Melani. The castrato in question was probably Giovanni Francesco Grossi, later detto Siface, who was then only eight or nine and reputedly sang the part of Nettuno. See Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari: Notizie di spettacolo nei carteggi Medicei. Carteggi di Giovan Carlo de' Medici e di Desiderio Montemagni suo segretario (1628–1664)* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2003), letters 803 and 813.

18 In such contexts, the adjective 'Abissino' or 'Etiopie' is more likely to refer to black skin rather than a specific geographical origin in modern or early modern Ethiopia. Indeed, since Ethiopians were largely understood to be Christian at the time, the conversion of this young boy plausibly suggests that he was not literally from Ethiopia.

19 '[I]l suo Moretto Abissino d'età 14 in circa'; 'Io fin ora l'ho esercitato in simili operationi, e per mio aiuto l'ho accompagnato con i figlioli del già S. Agostino Sacchetti educati sotto la disciplina del M. Vettorino Pennini'. ASF, *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni*, f. 1, c.n.n. [ins. 91], 28 August 1630. The 'Moretto Abissino' was

of the early education of the late sixteenth-century Black poet, Juan Latino, who was enslaved in Granada, Spain, and accompanied his master's son to lessons.)²⁰ While the evidence concerning Buonaccorsi's education is circumstantial, a trained musician at his level would have been more than capable of improvising an accompaniment or singing a text *contrafactum* to an extant tune.

The musical implications of the 'Sogno' text are further strengthened when we consider the long association between buffoonery and musical performance. In Costa's *Li buffoni*, for example, when Marmotta (the princess of Fessa) and Tedeschino (a buffoon) discuss the requirements of buffoonery, music is the first item on the princess's list:

Marmotta	A tal sorte di gente	For that class of people [buffoons]
	Convien saper cantare,	it's best to know how to sing,
	Sonare, motteggiare,	to play music, to banter,
	Aver frasi galante,	to have smooth sayings,
	Botte ridicolose,	ridiculous retorts,
	Bei motti all'improvviso,	smart offhand quips,
	Saper tacere a tempo,	to know when to keep silent,
	Non parlar fuor di tempo.	to not speak out of turn. ²¹

The 'Sogno di Giovannino Moro' epitomizes the impromptu courtly entertainments produced by buffoons, jesters, dwarves and enslaved court retainers — a type of music-making known to have occurred at

renamed Giovambattista when he was baptized (see L'Archivio storico dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore (hereafter, ASOF, *Battesimali maschi*, reg. 38, f. 55). Though both Buonaccorsi and this young boy were called variants of the name Giovanni, I do not mean to imply that they were the same individual. Many baptized slaves were renamed Giovanni, particularly in Florence, where John the Baptist is the patron saint of the city.

20 J. Mira Seo, 'Identifying Authority: Juan Latino, an African Ex-Slave, Professor, and Poet in Sixteenth-Century Granada', in *African Athena: New Agendas*, ed. by Daniel Orrells, Gurinder K. Bhambra, and Tessa Roynon (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011), pp. 258–276, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199595006.003.0016>

21 Costa, *The Buffoons*, trans. and ed. Díaz and Goethals, I, 10, pp. 178–179.

Court with some regularity but which was infrequently documented or recorded. The various subjects of Buonaccorsi's verses implicate an interesting cross section of courtly life as present at and (perhaps unwillingly) participant in Buonaccorsi's performance of the poem, excavating a community of 'Turks, and dwarves, the bad Christians' (lines 44–45) who were, in Buonaccorsi's prescient formulation, 'of the Court' (44). These individuals were too familiar to their more evidently European interlocutors (the Princes, patrons, nobles, clerics, and artisans with whom history has largely been concerned) to be truly strangers or truly strange, even while it was their physical, racial, and religious differences that brought them (and bought them) into the court.

2. The Translation

The poem begins with an invocation, calling the attention of onlookers and setting the scene with a gradual layering of information that then permits the direct address and individualized punchlines of the central verses. Though Buonaccorsi himself plays the Gypsy, he cleverly displaces the responsibility for the insults he dishes out: he himself is not telling their fortunes, the Court is, in disguise, and anyway, it was just a dream. The barbed humor of the following verses is remarkably individualized, rendering discernible physical and behavioral traits of the personalities in question.

In the first instance, Giovannino mocks the dwarf Scatapocchio, familiar to scholars as one of the characters in Costa's *Li buffoni*, and identified by Teresa Megale as a *nano* [dwarf] in the service of Prince Leopoldo de' Medici from at least 1640;²² I have seen his name in the accounts as late as 1656.²³ Costa explained for her readers that Scatapocchio was a 'nanetto piccolissimo', that is a particularly small dwarf, and his diminutive stature is emphasized in her play where he serves as a 'bravo' [henchman] to another dwarf.²⁴ In the 'Sogno', the

22 Teresa Megale, 'La commedia decifrata: Metamorfosi e rispecchianti in *Li buffoni* di Margherita Costa', *Il castello di Elsinore*, 2 (1988), 64–76 (p. 70).

23 ASF, *Camera del Granduca*, f. 28b, c.22r.

24 The quote, 'nanetto piccolissimo' comes from the advice 'A' lettori', Costa, *The Buffoons*, trans. and ed. Díaz and Goethals, p. 76.

joke about whether or not Scatapocchio is a newborn implies a similar reference to his size, and the *battuta* [joke] about whether he is to be understood as a female sheep or a *castrone* [a gelded male sheep] suggests that Scatapocchio had a high-pitched or squeaky voice, a common side-effect of primordial dwarfism.

The Spanish dwarf referenced in the following verse is almost certainly Gabriello Martinez, ‘famed in his own time for his ability to “soffiare” [lit. to blow], that is to be a spy’,²⁵ and who regularly appears in the account books of Ferdinando II.²⁶ The poem accuses Martinez of being smelly, and also of using a crutch when it wasn’t necessary. The word that Giovannino uses for cane is ‘muleta’, a Spanish term for a short wooden stick with a red cloth tied to one end, used in the closing stages of a bullfight. He thus cleverly implicates the spectacularized death of a powerful animal and a thoroughly Spanish pastime in his roasting of Martinez.

The subject of the third verse, Maometto Turco [Mohammad the Turk], appears in the account books of the Camera del Granduca several times during 1653.²⁷ He is referred to in the poem as a ‘moro bianco’ [a white Moor], a term I have found repeatedly in contemporary Florentine sources, and which seems to have indicated Ottoman Muslims, frequently dressed in recognizably foreign style, including turbans. This particular verse of the poem gave me the greatest difficulty in translation, though each word taken individually is easily parsed. The poet makes a euphemistic pun based on woodland animals and the natural environment. The reference, I believe, is to sodomitic behavior, which Giovannino accuses Maometto of exchanging for financial and social rewards at Court; Ottoman Turks were widely held to be sodomites by early modern European commentators.²⁸

25 Bisceglia, Ceriana, and Mammana, *Buffoni*, p. 80.

26 For example, in September of 1667, Gabriello nano and Giovannino moro are both mentioned in the accounts in relatively quick succession, see ASF, *Camera del Granduca*, f. 39b, c.4r.

27 See ASF, *Camera del Granduca*, ff. 24 and 25.

28 See Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822385905>; and Mustafa Avci, ‘Köçek: A Genealogy of Cross-Dressed Male Belly Dancers (Dancing Boys) from Ottoman Empire to Contemporary Turkey’ (PhD thesis, New York University,

I have not identified the addressee of the fourth verse: Canà, possibly nicknamed 'Becco' (Beak, though the capitalization may just emphasize a euphemistic reference to male genitalia). The poem describes him not only as a non-Christian, but as the enemy of every sect and religion, and as a bottomless pit of gluttony. It also suggests that Canà — like many of the Medici court slaves and like the many hundreds of Medici slaves held in Livorno — was once on the galleys.²⁹ The Florentine galleys procured a steady stream of slaves for the state, while only a select few made it into the more-rarified arena of the court. Carali, for example, a young Black man who in 1653 was brought to the Medici court under conditions of enslavement, described his capture and arrival in document held at the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni. Written in 1657, the document 'explains how it was four years ago that he was taken by Captain Flaminio of Livorno and brought to Florence and into the service of his most serene highness, Prince Mattias'.³⁰ In his own words (though transcribed by a priest), Carali attested: 'My name is Carali, I do not know the name of my father, and I was born in Barbary, in Zeila [a coastal city in present-day Somalia] of the race of Granada; [I claim] to be sixteen years old, to live in Florence, and being on the sea, the boat in which I found myself was captured'.³¹

From a musicological perspective, Buonaccorsi's reference to the galleys and to song is particularly fascinating. Here song itself is presented as a medium through which a colleague or companion can be subtly teased, and a past existence — in which presumably much less food was available — can be brought back to mind; the text suggests that 'O Galera dove sei' ['Oh, galley where are you?']

2015). Of course, sodomy was common in Florence and among Italian men, too, as were rumors and gossip about the practice, see, Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

29 See, for example, Stephanie Nadalo, 'Negotiating Slavery in a Tolerant Frontier: Livorno's Turkish *Bagno* (1547–1747)', *Mediaevalia*, 32.1 (2011), 275–324, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mdi.2011.0004>

30 ASAF, *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni*, f. 2, c.n.n. [ins. 18]. It is possible that I have mis-transcribed the name Canà and that it is supposed to read Carà, in which case this could be a reference to Carali himself. When Carali was baptized he took the name Mattia Medici (after his owner Prince Mattias de' Medici), see ASOF, *Battesimali maschi*, reg. 51, f. 236.

31 ASAF, *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni*, f. 2, c.n.n. [ins. 18].

could be a popular song that would have been recognizable to contemporary audience members. In the anonymous libretto for *Scipione in Cartagine*, performed in the Cocomero theater, Florence, in 1657, the Black galley slave character Carali sings in celebration of his imminent freedom: 'Non biscottu mansgiar, / Non corbasciù tucrar'.³² Carali's dialogue is rendered in an ungrammatical slave jargon, while the meaning, 'No more eating ship's biscuit! No longer touched by the whip!', provides a poignant contrast with Canà in the 'Sogno', who asks for nothing as long as his stomach is sated.



Fig. 6.2 Baldassarre Franceschini (1611–1690), detto il Volterrano. *Ritratto di suonatore di liuto con cantore moro* (Panbollito e Giovannino moro); 1662. Oil on canvas: 95 x 144 cm. Private collection. Photo by DEA / G. NIMATALLAH / De Agostini via Getty Images.

32 Anon., *Scipione in Cartagine*, *dramma musicale; fatto rappresentare da gli Accademici Sorgenti, nel loro teatro, sotto la protezione del Sereniss. e Reverendiss. Princ. Card. Gio: Carlo Di Toscana* (Florence: Gio: Anton Bonardi, 1657), I, 4, p. 34.



Fig. 6.3 Anton Domenico Gabbiani (1652–1726). *Ritratto di quattro servitori della corte medicea*; c. 1684. Oil on canvas: 205 x 140 cm. Florence, Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Palazzo Pitti, inventario 1890 n. 3827. Used with permission of the Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il Turismo; further reproduction or duplication of this image is not permitted.

The text of the ‘Sogno’ also mentions ‘Panbollito’, the literal meaning of which is a cheap soup made with boiled bread, common in Tuscan peasant cuisines, but perhaps more pertinently was the nickname of Pier Gio: Albizzi, a *staffiere* or footman in the employ of Giovan Carlo de’ Medici.³³ In the painting by Baldassarre Franceschini *detto* il Volterrano, shown in Figure 6.2, Albizzi appears alongside Buonaccorsi. The painting was described in 1663 as representing ‘Pan Bollito who plays the lute, and the *Moro* with a piece of music in hand, with a violin and books, in the hand of Baldassarre’.³⁴ Twenty years later, the art critic and historian Filippo Baldinucci wrote, ‘then, in a painting, [Baldassarre] represented a young footman of [Giovan Carlo’s] court, with Giovannino his *moro*, who was a very good singer, in the act of singing’.³⁵ The only other painting thought to have depicted Buonaccorsi — unfortunately lost — also belonged to Giovan Carlo, and showed ‘the *Moro*’ alongside the dwarf Petricco, holding a bowl of *ricotta*.³⁶ This shared context of *nani* and *mori* seems habitual at the Medici court, where the two often appear side by side in archival documents, in the ‘Sogno’ text under discussion here, and in paintings such as that of Figure 6.3, dated to later in the century, in which Anton Domenico Gabbiani represented a *Ritratto di quattro servitori della corte medicea* (*Portrait of Four Servants of the Medici Court*).³⁷

33 Pier Gio: Albizzi is identified as ‘P. Bollito’ in the ‘Ruolo dei Cortigiani del Ser.mo Car.le Gio: Carlo a’ quali doppo la morte di S. A. Ill.mo doveva dargli impiego’, ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 5358, cc.728–729.

34 The painting is listed among the Cardinal’s effects, as compiled after his death, in 1663: ‘Pan Bollito che suona il Liuto, et il Moro con una Carta di musica in Mano, con il Violino et libri, di mano di Baldassarre’. ASF, *Miscellanea medicea*, n. 31, ins. 10, c.133v.

35 ‘... dipoi [per il Cardinale Giovan Carlo de’ Medici, Volterrano] rappresentò in un quadro un giovanetto staffiere di sua Corte, con Giovannino suo moro, che fu assai buon musico, in atto di cantare’. The quote continues, ‘Trovasi oggi questo quadro in mano di Girolamo Gerini Senatore Fiorentino’. This part of the text describes works done by Volterrano for the Cardinal Giovan Carlo de’ Medici around 1662. Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de’ professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua* (Florence: Royal Printing House, 1682), p. 400.

36 ASF, *Miscellanea Medicea*, n. 31, ins.10, c.9v.

37 See, for example, the repeated payments documented in the accounts of Prince Mattias de’ Medici during the late 1650s and early 1660s, in which Arrigo Vinter is paid ‘per dare il Vitto di numero 6 fra Nani, e Mori’ (to give food to 6 dwarves and Moors). ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 5487; many entries from these accounts are transcribed in Sara Mamone, *Mattias De’ Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi. Notizie di spettacolo nei carteggi medicei. Carteggio di Mattias de’ Medici (1629–1667)* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2013).

The text of the poem thus makes reference to five different members of the court, four of whom can be linked to specific individuals, and all of whom are made fun of in very specific and individualized ways. These are not generic sexualized or scatological insults, but clever, rhymed references to particular traits. Interestingly, and importantly, the figure of Giovannino Moro himself is never mocked, and this, to my mind, is the strongest argument for Buonaccorsi's authorship of the poem. Not only are no jokes made at his expense, but the figure of Giovannino is not introduced as part of the exordium. Were this written by someone else, we could expect Giovannino's character to be more fully fleshed out: my name is Giovannino, I come from afar, my skin is black as night, etc. Such phrases are habitual in the opening verses of masking songs and carnivalesque texts. Indeed, not only is such material conspicuously absent from the poem's introduction, but Giovannino wakes at precisely the moment in which the Gypsy is moving towards him, about to read his fortune. He thus makes his escape from mockery the structural pivot of the poem, retaining and emphasizing his position as narrator / author: a verse-making subject, not subject of the verse.

I have chosen to translate the title of the poem, '*Sogno di Giovannino Moro*', as '*Little Black Giovanni's Dream*'. This is only one of several possible renderings. First, I should note that the use of *di* to express possession leaves it ultimately unclear whether it is the dream or the poem that belongs to Giovannino; the title could be translated either as '*The Dream of Giovannino Moro*' or as '*The Dream by Giovannino Moro*'. My use of the possessive apostrophe is intended to incorporate both possibilities. Second, it could be argued that since '*Giovannino Moro*' was a name by which Buonaccorsi was known, it ought to be retained unchanged. Importantly, however, both the *-ino* suffix and the word *moro* had literal indexical meanings implicit in their use — whether or not their use as a nickname normalized the interpolative work they did in the mouths, ears, and minds of Buonaccorsi and his contemporary interlocutors. I have chosen, therefore, to translate the (nick)name itself quite literally, in order to restore something of the shock inherent in the words: to be called (and to answer to) the name '*Little Black Giovanni*' meant something, and though we cannot know exactly what it meant, reminding ourselves of the content and context of Buonaccorsi's nickname is important.

Table 6.1 ‘Little Black Giovanni’s Dream’, by Gio: Buonaccorsi, c. 1654.

Sogno di Giovannino Moro
ASF, Mediceo del Principato, f.6424, c.n.n.

Little Black Giovanni’s Dream

[1r]
Udite bizzarria
che su’l’Alba mi venne stamattina,
mentr’io dormiva forte, in fantasia;
Pareami, che la Corte
per dar gusto in Palazzo à la brigata³⁸
da Zingara indovina
si fusse immascherata.
E doppo haver predetto a Cortigiani
le fortune, e i malanni, ancor’ volesse
far la Ventura a suoi Buffoni, e Nani,
e cosi strologandoli dicesse.

Listen to this strange thing
which came to me this morning at dawn
while I was deep asleep, in a dream;
It seemed to me that—
to give delight to the Palace crew—the
the Court was disguised
as a Gypsy fortune teller.
And after she had predicted the fortunes
and the misfortunes of the Courtiers,
she wanted to read the destiny of the buffoons and dwarves,
and so, astrologizing, she said:

38 John Florio defines *brigata* as follows: ‘a company, a crew, a knot or rout of good fellowes’ (<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/search/0831.html>)

Vien qua tu' viso d'Allocco³⁹
 Nano sciocco
 Scataporchio⁴⁰ disgraziato;
 Dimmi un poco, e non mentir,
 sai tu' dir?
 se sei vivo, ò se sei nato;
 Gia non sanno le Persone,
 se sia Pecora, ò Castrone.

Tu' ch'hai sì la lingua aguzza,
 mà che puzza
 da vicino, e da lontano.
 Getta via monello getta
 la muletta

[Scatapocchio]
 Come here, you wide-eyed fool,
 Silly dwarf,
 Disgraceful Scatapocchio [little prick];
 Tell me a little something, and don't lie,
 Do you know how to say
 whether you're alive or if you're newborn;
 People can't even tell
 whether you're a ewe or a gelding.

[Gabiello Martinez]
 You, who has such a sharp tongue,
 but who stinks,
 from up close and from far away.
 Throw it away, tramp, throw away
 that little cane [*muletta*],

- 39 Literally the word 'Allocco' means a tawny owl, though the wide eye feathers and the resulting shocked or stunned expression that the bird has meant that in Italian the word has taken on a metaphorical meaning: the Treccani: '2. fig. persona sciocca, balorda, . . . intonito.' Diaz and Goethals translate the word as 'pimp' in their translation of Costa's *Li buffoni*, though that meaning does not seem relevant here; see p.333n28.
- 40 The word 'scatapocchio' was slang for male genitalia, traced by the Academia della Crusca to the poetry of Burchiello from the Quattrocento (see, for example, the third edition of 1691, vol. 3, p.1457), but was also the name of a dwarf in the service of Leopoldo de' Medici at mid-century, renowned for his particularly diminutive statue. The character 'Scatapocchio' appears in Costa's *Li buffoni*, see details of his identification as a historical person in Diaz and Goethals' introduction (pp.41-42), and in Megale 1988, p.70. The archive source Megale cites is from January of 1640; I have seen reference to him in the account books as late as December 1656; ASF *Camera del Gran Duca*, f.28b, c.22r.
- 41 A *muletta* is a red cloth attached to a stick, used by Matadors in the final stages of a bullfight; thus the reference here is to both Martinez's Spanish heritage and his trickster role.

e non far' più del'Malsano
soffierai, soffi, e soffiasti;⁴²
sei spagnolo, e tanto basti.

[1v]

Sei Mametto⁴³ un moro bianco,
che non anco
sai che sia legge, ò Ragione;
E per fare in Corte acquisto,
goffo, e tristo
fai il Coniglio, e sei volpone;
ma per quanto io ti conosco,
ci vorria seme di bosco.

and stop being dishonest [lit. unhealthy],
you will spy, you do spy, you have spied,
you're Spanish, and that's enough.

[Maometto Turco]

You're Mohammad, a white Moor,
who knows neither
law or reason,
And in order to make a career at Court,
clumsy, and evil,
you pretend to be a rabbit, when you are a crafty fox;
but given what I know of you,
you'd do better to sow your seeds in the bush.⁴⁴

42 '[L]o spagnolo Gabriello Martinez, uno dei nani di Ferdinando II, celebre ai suoi tempi per l'abilità nel 'soffiare' ovvero nel far da spia,' Anna Bisceglia, in her description of the painting *Ritratto del nano Gabriello Martinez*, anonymous, c.1640, olio su tela, 104 x 134 cm., Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Galleria Palatina e Appartamenti Reali, depositi, inventario 1890 n. 5244; restauro Claudia Esposito 2016, in collaborazione con Lorenzo Conti (per il restauro strutturale) e con Aviv Fürst (per la cornice): *Analisi scientifiche Art-Test di Emanuela Massa*, from the catalogue *Buffoni, villani e giocatori alla corte dei Medici*, 2016, p.80; she in turn cites Magalotti, *Scritti di corte e di mondo* (1945), pp 227, 418 for the information about Martinez and spying.

43 I have seen mention of 'Maometto' and 'Maometto Turco' in the account books of the Grandduke in several instances during 1653, see ASF *Camera del Granduca*, f.24, c.47^{rv} (July 1653), and f.25, 4r, 12v, 14v (September–December, 1653).

44 This is clearly a metaphor, though the meaning is somewhat opaque. My best guess here is that the joke puns on the woodland creatures mentioned in the *battuta* of the previous lines in order to make the underhand suggestion that Maometto is a sodomite or catamite (presumably for financial gain given the 'acquisto' that he gets in return), and that he should instead be using seeds (*seme*) in the bush (*bosco*, offered as a euphemism for vagina in the *Dizionario storico del lessico erotico italiano*, by Valter Boggione and Giovanni Casalegno). Ottoman Turks were regularly held to be sodomites by seventeenth-century Italian commentators. According to Salvatore Battaglia's *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, 'bosco' can also mean 'intrico, confusione (di cose fitte e intricate)', in which case the punchline could translate as 'the beginnings

Di Canà⁴⁵ nulla non dico
 ch'è nemico
 d'ogni setta, e d'ogni fede.
 Pur'che bene il Becco⁴⁶ immolli,
 e satolli
 la sua Pancia, altro non chiede
 ond'io sempre canterei,
 ò Galera dove sei.

[2r]

Son di Corte i Turchi, e Nani
 mal'Cristiani
 e sottile hanno l'udito
 Poi ch'infatti à tutti piace,
 con lor'pace,

[Canà or Becco. Possibly Carali?]
 Of Canà I have nothing to say,
 because he is the enemy
 of every sect and of every faith,
 As long as his Beak is kept wet,
 and his stomach
 is sated, he asks for nothing else;
 therefore I would always sing,
 'Oh, galley where are you?'

They are of the Court: the Turks, and dwarves,
 the bad Christians,
 and they have a well-developed sense of hearing,⁴⁷
 In fact, they all like—
 Peace be with them—

of some trick or plot are needed.' I thank Francesca Fantappiè for her recommendation of the Battaglia text, Jessica Goethals for the Boggione and Casalegno, Diana Presciutti for being willing to talk about this one phrase for a very long time, and all the members of the Alterities seminar, May 2018, for helping me figure out various possible significations of this phrase.

45 Kaplan keeps 'Canà' and adds 'scoundrel' in square brackets, presumably based on the Crusca's definition of Canaglia: 'gente vile, e abietta,' (1st ed., 1612, p.147). Boggione and Casalegno note that Canà is a Piedmont word for a canal or drain (and thus an occasional euphemism for female genitalia).

46 This could also be a name or nickname, and the reference to keeping the beak wet could be both a sexual euphemism and a reference to the consumption of alcohol.

47 Lit.: 'They have a subtle sense of hearing.'

il soffiâr' nel' Panbollito⁴⁸
han Vescica che non tiene
raspan male, e cantan' bene.

Qui mi parve, ch'allora
venisse a me Costei
per legger del morin'sul'libro ancora.
quando da gli occhi miei,
mentre manco il pensai,
fuggi la Corte, il sogno, e mi destai.

to spy on Panbollito [lit. they blow on their bread soup]
they have bladders that do not hold,
they scratch badly, and sing well.

Here it seemed to me, that at that point
She [the fortune teller] came towards me,
to read more about the little Moor in her book,
when from my eyes,
without me realizing it,
the Court, and my dream, fled; and I woke up.

48 Panbollito, which literally means 'boiled bread,' was the nickname of Pier Gio: Albizzi, a *staffiere* or footman in the employ of Cardinale Giovan Carlo de' Medici; Albizzi was known to have played the lute. See ASF *Madiceo del Principato* f.5358, c.756v for the details of his employment, and Volterrano's painting of Panbollito and Giovannino il Moro.

3. Authorial Voice

It is noteworthy that the 'Sogno' is written in idiomatic Italian, and not the slave *gergo* favored by (white) Italian authors and poets to represent the speech of both *mori* (which Gio: Buonaccorsi was) and gypsies (which the poem impersonates). This linguistic level, too, encourages an association with Buonaccorsi, who frequently sung Black roles written in proper Italian. Of the Black parts that featured on the Florentine stage at mid-century, only three used *gergo*, and only one of the three can be linked directly to Buonaccorsi — namely, the Black gypsy 'Moretta', in Giovanni Andrea Moniglia's *Il pazzo per forza* of 1659.⁴⁹

It is revealing to contrast Buonaccorsi's operatic performance as 'Moretta' with the gypsy impersonated by Giovannino in the 'Sogno'. The libretto of *Il pazzo per forza* includes a range of different Zingari. There was a chorus of gypsies, sung (according to the cast list) by Michele Mosi, Francesco Lionardi, Antonio Ruggieri, Niccola Coresi, and Giovanni Michele de Bar; a gypsy dance was also performed by various noblemen of the academy. In addition to our Moretta, played by Buonaccorsi, there was a fake gypsy, 'Muretta', impersonated by the page character Ligurino, played by the castrato Antonio Rivani, disguised using Moretta's clothes. The largest of these roles is that played by Rivani as Ligurino/'Muretta' (Rivani was well reputed and was the highest paid of the Cardinal's singers). Ligurino is given many opportunities to show off his cleverness and cunning, fulfilling the stock commedia role of the wily servant who ensures the convoluted story's happy ending.⁵⁰ Part of the joke is that Ligurino successfully pulls off his

49 The other two *gergo*-speaking characters were both called Carali and, as I have argued elsewhere, were almost certainly sung by Carali-Mattia. See Wilbourne, "'La Curiosità'". The 1659 libretto of *Il pazzo per forza* includes a cast list published on the final page which assigns the role of 'Moretta' to 'il Moro di S. A. Reverendiss'; I know of no other Moor who was owned directly by the Cardinal at this particular time. See Giovanni Andrea Moniglia, *Il pazzo per forza, dramma civile rusticale, fatto rappresentare in musica, da gl'illustriss. Sig. Accademici Immobili nel loro teatro, sotto la protezione del sereniss e reverendiss. Principe Cardinale Gio: Carlo di Toscana* (Florence: per il Bonardi, 1659), p. 124.

50 Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia Dell'arte* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226401607.001.0001>

gypsy disguise by assuming not just the clothes, but also the name, and the language of the real gypsy. He assures his dubious master:

Ligurino	Quando presi la veste	When I took the clothes
	Di Zingara, pur anco 'l nome presi	Of the Gypsy, I took also the name
	Di Moretta da lei, ch'a me la diede,	Of Moretta from she who gave them to me.
	Per Moretta mi spaccio a chi mi vede;	I pass myself off as Moretta to all who see me;
	L'abito è in tutto eguale al suo, se vengo	My outfit is equal to hers in all ways, if I am
	Scoperto, getto via	Discovered, I will throw away
	(Badi vo signoria)	(Note well, Your Lordship)
	Linguaggio, panni, e nome.	Language, clothes, and name. ⁵¹

By language, Ligurino means slave *gergo*: a mashup of Neapolitan dialect words, un-conjugated verbs, and often a substitution of *b* for *p*.⁵² Ligurino's disguised voice is itself funny, but the elevation of sound also makes a joke about visual (racial) difference, since Ligurino (Rivani) was white and Moretta (Buonaccorsi) was Black. This color-change would have made it immediately obvious to the audience which Moretta was on stage at any given time and magnified the foolishness of the onstage characters who were tricked. Indeed, Ligurino is quite explicit about this difference, telling Trottolo that (s) he has the power to change the color of her skin:

51 Moniglia, *Il pazzo per forza*, II, 12, p. 64.

52 Of the slave's *gergo* and its use by Black characters, Decroisette writes, 'questa figura di moro è abituale nei drammi di Moniglia, che gli dà un linguaggio esotico maccheronico, dominato dalla ù finale, dalla sostituzione di -p- in -b-, dall'uso degli infinitivi verbali, e dalla soppressione degli articoli'. See her editorial apparatus to Giovanni Andrea Moniglia, *Il vecchio balordo* (Venice: Lineadacqua, 2014), p. 149. Despite Decroisette's assertion, this kind of text is not typical of Buonaccorsi's roles. Gianfranco Salvatore has argued that many of the unfamiliar words in transcribed slave dialects are drawn from the African language, Kanuri, see Gianfranco Salvatore, 'Parodie realistiche: Africanismi, fraternità e sentimenti identitari nelle canzoni moresche del Cinquecento', *Kronos*, 14 (2011), 97–130.

Ligurino	Mi gran virtù tinir,	The biggest talent that I have:
	Chillu, ch'è biancu nigrù,	He who is white, black,
	Chillu, ch'è nigrù biancu far vinir.	He who is black, I make turn white. ⁵³

When later Trottolo encounters Moretta, he assumes that the two are one and the same person, placing his faith not in her skin color, but in her voice and her clothes:

Trottolo	Quanto è furba costei:	How sneaky she is!
	Ma io ben più di lei	But I — far better than she —
	Son di calca: Moretta,	Am a trickster: Moretta,
	Alle vesti, al parlar ti riconosco;	By your clothes and way of speaking I recognize you!
	E ben ch'adesso nera, e dinazi bianca,	And even if now you are black, and before were white,
	Questo a fe non ti franca,	This does not absolve you, I swear,
	Variare i colori	You told me that you know how
	Saper tu mi dicesti,	To vary your colors
	Come appunto facesti,	Just like you have done now
	per mascerar l'inganno.	To mask the trick. ⁵⁴

The Black Moretta appears only a few times, most notably at the ends of the first and second acts, emphasizing her relationship to comedy rather than narrative. Her presence serves to set up the two end-of-act dances and thus the intermedii. In Act I, Scene 37, Moretta enters to find Sgaruglia, Bellichino and a troupe of *battilani* [woolworkers] drinking. She sings a short aria in ternary form and then offers to read

⁵³ Moniglia, *Il pazzo per forza*, II, 16, p. 69.

⁵⁴ Ibid., II, 28[b, the scenes are mis-numbered], p. 82.

their palms. Sgaruglia and Bellichino make it quite clear that they are not to be so easily tricked, at which point Moretta offers each of them a piece of advice. She whispers in their ears, 'If you don't watch out, your companion will steal your purse', picking their pockets as she does so (in the process, she knocks out a letter which drops to the floor, a mishap that ultimately proves crucial to the plot). Moretta takes her leave, and only later do both men realize that they have been robbed and — misled by her earlier advice — blame each other. They thus fight (dance) along with the *battilani*, which serves to close the act.

Moretta, Sgaruglia, Bellichino, Truppe di Battilani

Moretta Ligrizza, ligrizza,
 Si nun avir billizza
 Nun vulirmi dispirar:
 Ballar,
 Cantar,
 Miu curi,
 Miu amori,
 Muritta cusì
 Star tutta pir ti:
 Per visu liggiadru
 I Mundo star ladru;
 Chi bella vidir,
 Bramusu vulir
 Cun munita d'amur cumprar
 vaghizza.
 Liggrizza, ligrizza &c.

Sgaruglia Zinganina, degnate.

Moretta Manu vustra
 Guardar, buna vintura
 Pir vui tinir sicura.

Sgaruglia Nun ch'ho fede, nun c'ho.

Bellichino Quest'é una trappolla

*Moretta, Sgaruglia, Bellichino,
 troop of woolworkers*

Happiness, happiness,
 Even if I have no beauty,
 I don't want to despair.
 To dance,
 To sing,
 My hearts,
 My loves,
 Thus, Moretta,
 Is all yours.
 For a pretty face,
 The world becomes a thief.
 Whoever sees a beautiful
 woman
 Wants, with desire,
 To buy that beauty with the
 money of love.
 Happiness, happiness
 etc.

Little gypsy, look at my
 hand.

[In] your hand,
 I see, good fortune
 Comes for you, for sure.

I have no faith in this, no I
 do not.

This is a trap

	Da quattrinni, ma io E non ci spenderei n'anc'una lappolla: Andate a[l] fatto [v]ostro.	To get our money, but I Would not even spend a red cent. Go away and mind your own business.
Moretta	Dirvi sula In uricchiu parula.	I will tell you only One word in your ear.
Sgaruglia	A ufo.	[Only if it's] for free.
Bellichino	A ufo anch'io.	For free, for me too.
Moretta	Mi star cunvinta.	You have convinced me.
<i>Moretta accostandosi all'orecchio or dell uno, or dell altro gli leva di tasca l'involto, e cadon in terra le lettere.</i>		<i>Moretta, coming close to the ear of first one and then the other, lifts the bundle out of their pockets, and the letters fall to the ground.</i>
	Se ti non ben guardar, Cumpagnu tuo tu bursa rubar.	If you don't watch out, Your companion will steal your purse. ⁵⁵

Unfortunately, the music composed by Jacopo Melani for this opera has not survived. Visually and metrically the text of Moretta's opening aria is striking, for the lines get longer as the song progresses. This Zingara offers to read palms, but is rebuffed; she picks pockets without being caught; she speaks *gergo*. She thus provides a strong contrast with the Zingara in the 'Sogno': unlike Buonaccorsi, Moretta relies on her wits, not on her witticisms. Later in the opera she is the unexpected (but delighted) recipient of money that Ligurino/'Muretta' had hoped to collect, and in the final scene of Act II delivers it to her gypsy companions. The scene is a 'field with gypsy wagons',⁵⁶ where a chorus of *zingari* sing 'Di stelle o crudità', a melancholy lullaby, which alternates between various groups of voices (one, two, and four singers) as well as the chorus as a whole.

55 Extract from Gio: Andrea Moniglia, *Il pazzo per forza* (performed 1659), I, 37.

56 'Prato con trabacche di Zingari', *ibid.*, p. 88. John Florio defines *trabacche* as 'Pavillions, Tents, that are remooved too and fro, and suddainely set up. Also booths or bowres. Also shelters or skaffolds made of boordes' (Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues* (London: Melch and Bradwood, 1611). The dictionary is searchable online at <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio>; for this entry, see <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/search/585r.html>

When Moretta arrives, she tells them not to lament because now she has lots of money; they celebrate with song and dance.⁵⁷

We can recognize familiar elements of the modern gypsy stereotype in this opera: foreign, wanderers, poor trickster fortune tellers, pickpockets, thieves, who live in wagons and camp in fields. Despite the presence in Italy of peoples identified as Romani — on 16 March 1662, for example, the Grand Duke's account books record distributing 40 lire to 'certi Zingari' [certain gypsies]⁵⁸ — the Zingara in both of these works (the poem and the opera) is most important as a figure available for impersonation: the fake gypsy is more important to the plot than the 'real' gypsies. The mask of the gypsy doubles down on the clever tricks in which Ligurino/'Muretta' delights, and it is Ligurino's craftiness that the plot ultimately celebrates. Indeed, it is this same deliberate distancing-through-disguise and yet flagging-of-trickery on which the 'Sogno' relies: Giovannino dreams of the Court disguised as a Gypsy whom he then goes on to impersonate.

It is possible that Buonaccorsi played a second Black gypsy woman in the remake of *Ciro* staged at SS Giovanni e Paolo, in Venice, in 1665.⁵⁹ Unlike *Il pazzo per forza*, this libretto was not written with Buonaccorsi (or any of the Florentine singers) in mind (an earlier Neapolitan libretto was modified for Venetian performance in 1654, and then reprised with updated music in 1665), but again we find two gypsies, one white and one Black, though this time both characters are in disguise. 'Fatama Mora, slave [to Cleopilda, an Egyptian princess], dressed as a gypsy',⁶⁰ speaks (sings) the same *gergo* as Moretta,⁶¹ like her she is repeatedly

57 Moniglia, *Il pazzo per forza*, II, 35 and 36, pp. 88–89.

58 ASF, *Camera del Granduca*, f. 31, c.116r.

59 There is no known cast list for this season or documentation indicating that Buonaccorsi was in Venice at the time. Buonaccorsi performed in the previous season for the same impresarios, and it is notable that this particular character seems so well suited to his repertoire.

60 The cast list in both the 1654 and 1665 editions actually describes the character as 'Fatama Mora, Schiava d'Elmera, vestita di Zingara', but the libretto makes clear her relationship to Cleopilda, not Elmera, and indeed, Cleopilda is also 'in habito di Zingara'. See Giulio Cesare Sorrentino, *Ciro, drama per musica. Nel teatro a SS Gio: e Paolo l'anno 1665* (Venice: Per il Giuliani, 1665).

61 Indeed, Fatama has such a slim grasp on Italian that she misunderstands Euretto: he declares that he who loves is foolish, finishing with the word 'innamora'; she repeatedly hears her own name (Mora, Black woman) in the final syllables *innamora*, and wants to know why he calls for her; see *ibid.*, II, 5, pp. 47–48.

linked to the act of fortune telling or palm reading; and like Moretta, Fatama closes out one of the acts: at the end of Act I, Fatama steals a key from Delfido (a stuttering hunchback), and when he puts his hands on her in an attempt to get it back, cries rape. A chorus of Ethiopian Moors comes running to her rescue — they call her their 'Paesana' [countrywoman] — and after Delfido flees they dance and sing.⁶² There is an interesting slippage between Fatama as Black and Fatama as gypsy, which is magnified by her servitude to an Egyptian princess (tradition had long held that European gypsies originated in Egypt).⁶³ Indeed, we might assume that Africa, black skin, and magic (such as fortune telling) were linked together in the popular imaginary.⁶⁴

The similarities between Moretta and Fatama Mora point up the familiarity of the Black gypsy on the seventeenth-century operatic stage, and thus illuminate one of the lenses through which Buonaccorsi's performances of his poem would have been received. Fascinatingly, while Moretta and Fatama fall victim to the foreignness of the gypsy stereotype — an element explicitly marked by the linguistic distortions of the *gergo* sound — Giovannino flaunts his ability to assume the gypsy disguise whilst remaining thoroughly Italianate. The 'Sogno di Giovannino Moro' is remarkable in the extent to which it frames the speaker as a canny viewer of, articulate commentator on, and consummate participant in Italian court life.

4. Community

Each of the identifiable people in the 'Sogno', including the author, were present at the Medici court in 1653, several for a number of years either side of that date. Buonaccorsi represents these individuals as a specific

62 Ibid., I, 17, pp. 40–41. The second act ballet also involves Delfido, who is accused of smuggling goods into the city under his hunched back; he is then stoned by a chorus of pages with slingshots; see II, 17, p. 63.

63 The association between Egypt and European gypsies is traced in Leonardo Piasere, 'L'invenzione di una diaspora: I nubiani d'europa', in *Alle radici dell'europa: Mori, giudei e zingari nei paesi del mediterraneo occidentale, Volume I: Secoli XV–XVII*, ed. by Felice Gambin (Florence: Seid, 2008), pp. 185–199.

64 I am reminded of a letter in the Medici archives from Francesco de' Medici dated 1632, discussing a Black priest who had once worked in Florence as a fortune teller ('fa professione d'indovino'). See ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 4959, c.437; this document is also available online as part of the Medici Archive Project, doc. 10752.

community, a definable subset of the *brigata* (the ‘crew’ or ‘gang’ — here a reference to the courtiers, line 5) who inhabited the Court: ‘suoi Buffoni, e Nani’ (10); ‘Son di corte i Turchi e Nani / mal’Cristiani’ (44–45). In Buonaccorsi’s text these figures stand in ribald intimacy: Giovannino makes fun of his peers with an impunity that implies a relative degree of friendship — we can assume that (superficially at least) Giovannino’s insults were taken as good fun; there is no implication that the poet risks physical retribution. At the same time, the antagonistic structure of the poem invokes the competitiveness of the more visible layers of court culture, with the *buffoni* and *nani* engaged in competition for the resources and favors of those in power, much as the noble courtiers competed for precedence within each court, and the various courts themselves (and/or their ruling families) acted within the political arena of the Italian peninsular and European public life through military, artistic, and matrimonial displays of influence and power. The clever sidestep of the poem’s final verse — in which the ‘Zingara indovina’ evaporates precisely at the moment in which she approaches Giovannino and is expected to point out his flaws — permits Buonaccorsi a moment of literary and performative triumph over his rivals.

The historical memory of Black slavery within Italian courts has persisted primarily through the genre painting of patron-prince (or princess) and Black page, in which the enslaved, racially-marked other serves a decorative function illustrating the financial and geo-political power of the sitter. In such contexts the Black child is not just objectified but becomes a literal object (represented in paint) that is owned by the sitter and the owner of the painting. (Please note that I have chosen not to illustrate this specific form of objectification in the images accompanying this chapter. I assume that most readers will be familiar already with the genre; those who are not can easily find examples in online reproductions.) Faced with such images, it is difficult to find a vocabulary with which to discuss the Black subjects that does otherwise than merely re-inscribe their conscription into a colonialist project of white supremacy. Buonaccorsi’s poem provides an opportunity for a different approach, not only because the ‘Sogno di Giovannino Moro’ stands as a moment of articulate Black excellence in which Buonaccorsi speaks back, his voice, wit, and performative force echoing still, hundreds of years after the fact, but because of the community of *buffoni*,

nani, and *mal'Cristiani* that his text brings into focus. The 'Sogno' restores agency to each of the characters it describes, from the details of Martinez's crutch and dishonesty, to the dubious sexual activities of Mohammad. In this context, Buonaccorsi's excellent Italian and the subtle distinctions he makes between the subjunctive space of his dream (*venisse, dicesse*) and the *passato remoto* of his morning activities (*mi venne, mi destai*) suggest a long engagement with the Italian language, placing his arrival at Court (in Florence or elsewhere) at a very young age — and making this very poem and others like it the consequence or afterlife of the Black children shown in paintings.

Buonaccorsi and the community of freaks and misfits illustrated within his poem provide crucial insight into the institution of court slavery. He himself calls attention to the difference between life on the galleys and the luxurious trappings of the court when he describes Canà's gluttony. The harsh conditions, physical labor, and deprivations of the galley were far removed from the rich fabrics and abundant food of court servitude. That did not, however, equate to freedom. A list of court salaries compiled in 1663 details explicit monetary amounts for each of the household members of Cardinal Prince Giovan Carlo de' Medici, with two exceptions: 'Gio: Buonaccorsi Moro' and 'Gio: Gaetano *il Mutolo*' [the Mute], each of whom were instead provided with 'Vitto, e vestito' [food and clothes].⁶⁵ In addition, the 'wretched' exchanges made by Mohammad in return for acquisitions at court (31–35) and the di Pers poem about the enslaved woman who becomes the target of the old householder's lust underscore the ways in which enslaved bodies were appropriated for the physical pleasures of slaveholders. The distinction between galley and court slaves doesn't map precisely onto the 'field slave/house slave' model more familiar to scholars from studies of plantation chattel slavery, though the comparison is useful.

More illuminating for our understanding of the specific structure of European court slavery is the tight coupling evidenced between racial, religious, and physical differences in Buonaccorsi's poem and elsewhere, including the Gabbiani painting shown as Figure 6.3. The contiguity of these categories is one that scholars have yet to fully account for, either for what it illustrates about race and physical deformity as 'wonderous'

65 'Ruolo dei provisionati del Serenissimo Principe Cardinale Gio: Carlo di Toscana', ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, f. 5358, c.757v.

(in a Daston/Park sense of the word) exceptions to the norm, or about the ways in which the court servitude of dwarves, buffoons and fools approached slavery.⁶⁶ An expanding literature on court dwarves has noted that they were effectively owned by the court,⁶⁷ and that their opportunities for upward social mobility were simultaneously enabled and limited by their marked physical differences. The intimacy and access of the court dwarf role meant that they (like many itinerant performers) could be effective spies (cf. Martinez, line 26) and trusted confidants (a notable example is the letters between a young Prince Giovan Carlo de' Medici and the court dwarf Battistone, published by Teresa Megale).⁶⁸ The 'Mutolo' participated in a similar economy.

As Buonaccorsi insists on the importance of this group and their participation in court life ('Son di Corte'), he knows his place as entertainer. Much like Margherita Costa, cited above, who portrays this same group of *buffoni*, *nani*, and *schiavi* as knowing 'how to sing' but also 'when to keep silent / to not speak out of turn', the 'Turchi, e Nani / mal'Cristiani' of Buonaccorsi's text 'have a well-developed sense of hearing', 'they scratch badly, and sing well'. In both of these accounts of the *buffoni* knowing their place, sound is central: the protagonists speak and sing, and they listen carefully and attentively in ways that show them as aurally literate participants in the complex protocols of courtly behavior. If a focus on aurality explains the scarce resources that have survived into the present, rendering more difficult the task of historians who would think about Italian court slavery and the lives and experiences of the individuals who thus became a part of European history, it also stands as a model for how we can proceed. Appropriately, the 'Sogno' begins with an exhortation to 'Udite!' — listen up. We have to develop a subtle sense of hearing to recover voices such as that of Buonaccorsi.

In Volterrano's double portrait of Buonaccorsi and Albizzi, the generic dyad of Black slave/white master is unsettled. Both musicians

66 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), especially their introduction.

67 Thomas V. Cohen, 'Furto Di Nano: The Case of the Purloined Dwarf', Early Modern Rome Three Conference, Rome and Bracciano, 5–7 October 2017.

68 These letters are included as part of the editorial introduction to Bernardino Ricci's buffoonish text, see Teresa Megale, 'Bernardino Ricci e il mestiere di buffone tra cinque e seicento', in *Il Tedeschino ovvero Difesa Dell'arte del Cavalier del Piacere* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1995), pp. 7–75.

(Black and white) are placed into a dependent relationship with the viewer-patron, waiting for the right moment to begin. Buonaccorsi's confidence is striking — both in comparison to the canon of Black page imagery and continuing stereotypes of Blackness in European contexts. Representations of confident and professional young Black men are regrettably rare (even) today.

Listen! Buonaccorsi says. *Udite!* When you're ready to hear me, I'm going to sing.

