



Joke 5: About the stupid man who thought his wife had two pussies Facetia V: De Homine Insulso Qui Existimavit Duos Cunnos In Uxore

Text Information

Author | Poggio Bracciolini

Language | Latin

Period | 15th Century

Genre | Humor

Source | Bracciolini, Scripta in editione Basilensi anno 1538 collata

Collection | Facetiae: Jokes from the Italian Renaissance

URL | sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/bracciolini_joke_5/

Translation and introduction by Robin Wahlsten Böckerman.

Introduction to the Text

Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini (commonly referred to as simply Poggio Bracciolini) was born in Terranuova (Tuscany) in 1380. He died in Florence in 1459 at the age of seventy-nine. During his long life this early and important humanist had an equally long career at the Papal curia. In the service of a sequence of popes he lived in Rome, travelled with the papal court all across Italy and the rest of Europe.

Poggio produced a wide range of writing during his career (his collected works span four substantial volumes). He often worked in the dialogue form or wrote speeches, but he also wrote history. He was an avid book hunter and a skilled scribe.

Through his texts we also meet a very polemical man, who seems to get into fights with many of his contemporaries, the most famous of which is his conflict with another of the humanist greats, Lorenzo Valla. The collections of jokes and stories known today as the *Facetiae*, but which Poggio himself preferred to refer to as **Conversations** (*Confabulationes*), certainly contains a polemical edge. While Poggio's invectives are violently polemical and often personal, his *Facetiae* are more mildly polemical in the satirical tradition. The *Facetiae* as it is preserved consists of 273 jokes/stories ranging from just a few lines to a page in length. The collection also has an introduction and a type of conclusion. The short selection presented here contains a few rowdy jokes that poke fun at crude people and priests or monks, and another few stories with witty remarks from historical or contemporary characters. For readers interested in the obscene elements in the *Facetiae*, Poggio's work can be compared to Beccadelli's **The Hermaphrodite**, which offers another contemporary source of obscenity, but one based on very clear ancient models (among others Catullus). The selection shows that Poggio seems to have put his main focus on witticism when writing the stories; whether rude tales or short adventures of cooks, soldiers or even the famous Dante, the punchline seems almost always to be some sort of turn of phrase or wry observation (although this might not always be completely obvious to a modern reader).

This joke, probably the rudest in the collection, plays on the ancient theme of a stupid and greedy man being tricked.

Introduction to the Source

The *Facetiae* seems to have had immediate success. The collection as we now know it was composed between 1452-53, but Poggio had by then been working on versions of it (some of which had been in circulation) from as early as 1438. Over fifty manuscripts containing the text are preserved to this day. The *Facetiae* was also printed early and repeatedly, first appearing in this form around 1470. Another testimony to the popularity of the text is the fact that Poggio's jokes or 'conversations' were translated to several other languages, either the entire collection (to Italian and French at the end of the fifteenth century) or individual stories, which were mixed into the different Aesop collections circulating during this period. Herein lies somewhat of an irony, since Poggio himself in the introduction to the *Facetiae* seems to indicate that the object of writing them is to write stories in Latin that are usually told in the vernacular languages.



About this Edition

The translation is based on the text as it appears in the Basel 1538 edition of Poggio's collected work available on Google books, with a slight update to punctuation and orthography (for instance, ij is represented as ii). No emendations or other corrections have been made by the translator. Older versions of the text contain a few variants and some obvious errors, but in general the tradition seems quite stable (see for example an early print from 1471; or the fifteenth-century manuscript in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 8770A).

Further Reading

Kallendorf, Craig. "Poggio Bracciolini" in Oxford Bibliographies: DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780195399301-0095.

- Craig Kallendorf's article in Oxford Bibliographies is a good starting point for researching Poggio. The article contains information about relevant editions, translations, and research.

Pittaluga, Stefano, ed. *Facéties = Confabulationes: Édition bilingue*. Translated by Etienne Wolff. Bibliothèque italienne. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2005.

- The most recent critical edition of the *Facetiae*.

Beccadelli, Antonio. *The Hermaphrodite*. Edited and translated by Holt Parke, I Tatti Renaissance Library 42, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

- Another example of obscene elements in Renaissance Latin (also contains letters exchanged between Beccadelli and Bracciolini).

Gordon, Phyllis W. G., ed. *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggius Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.

- This letter exchange shows the scholarly side of Poggio.

Bracciolini, Poggio. *The Facetiae of Giovanni Francesco Poggio Bracciolini*. Translated by Bernhardt J. Hurwood. New York: Award Books, 1968.

- This is apparently an earlier translation of the *Facetiae* (I was not, however, able to consult this book for the present translation).



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Facetia V

Homo e nostris rusticanus, et haud multum prudens, certe in coitu mulierum rudis, sumpta uxore, cum illa aliquando in lecto renes versus (uerso) virum volvens, nates in eius gremio posuisset, erecto telo uxorem casu cognovit. Admiratusque postmodum et rogans mulierem, an duos cunnos haberet, cum illa annuisset: 'Ho, ho,' inquit, 'mihi unus (unus mihi) satis est, alter vero superfluous.'

Tum callida uxor, quae a Sacerdote parochiano diligebatur: 'Possumus,' inquit, 'ex hoc (+altero) elemosynam facere; demus eum Ecclesiae et Sacerdoti nostro, cui haec res erit gratissima, et tibi nihil oberit, cum unus sufficiat tibi.' Assentit vir uxori, et in gratiam sacerdotis, et ut se onere superfluo levaret.

Igitur, eo vocato ad cenam, causaque exposita, cum sumpto cibo lectum unum tres ingrederentur, ita ut mulier media esset, vir anteriori parte, posteriori alter ex dono uteretur, Sacerdos famelicus concupitque cibi avidus, prior aggreditur aciem sibi commissam: qua in re uxor quoque submurmurans strepitum quemdam edebat. Tunc vir timens ne partes suas aggrederetur: 'Serva,' inquit, 'amice, inter nos conventa, et tua portione utere, meam intactam relinquens.' Huic Sacerdos: 'Det mihi gratiam Deus,' inquit, 'nam tua parvi facio (facto ut vid.), ut bonis tantum Ecclesiae uti possim.' His verbis acquiescens stultus ille, quod Ecclesiae concesserat, libere uti iussit.

Joke 5

There was a man from our part of the country who had taken a wife. He was a bumpkin, not very sensible and surely very ignorant when it came to sleeping with women. One night when they were in bed, she turned her back to him placing her buttocks in his lap and he got to know his wife by chance with his spear raised. Afterwards he was amazed and asked the woman whether she had two pussies and when she confirmed this he said: "ha-ha, one is enough for me, the other one is superfluous!"

The sly wife, who was loved by a parish priest, then said: "In that case we can make alms of it and give it to the church and our priest, for whom this would be very pleasing; and this would cause you no grief, since one is enough for you." The man agreed, both to gain the priest's favour and to rid himself of a superfluous burden.

So, the priest was invited for dinner, the reason was disclosed and after they had eaten all three of them went to bed. They lay so that the woman was in the middle and the husband made use of the front part, while the other was given use of the rear part as a gift. The priest, who was starved and greedy for this longed-for food, was first to approach the battle array entrusted to him. Because of this the wife was moaning and made a little noise. The man feared that the priest was approaching his domains and said: "Friend, stick to the agreement we made and make use only of your portion, leave mine alone!" The priest replied: "God give me mercy, for I do not value your part much, as long as I can use the property of the church." The stupid man was satisfied with this and insisted that the priest freely use that which he had granted to the church.