

La situazione del teatro elisabettiano in *Amleto*

Act II, Scene 2

ROSENCRANTZ

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what
lenten entertainment the players shall receive from
you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they
coming, to offer you service.

HAMLET

He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty
shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight
shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not
sigh gratis; the humourous man shall end his part
in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose
lungs are tickled o' the sere; and the lady shall
say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt
for't. What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ

Even those you were wont to take delight in, the
tragedians of the city.

HAMLET

How chances it they travel? their residence, both
in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ

I think their inhibition comes by the means of the
late innovation.

HAMLET

Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was
in the city? are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ

No, indeed, are they not.

HAMLET

How comes it? do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but
there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases,
that cry out on the top of question, and are most
tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the
fashion, and so berattle the common stages -- so they
call them -- that many wearing rapiers are afraid of
goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

ROSENCRANTZ

Ridevo al pensiero che se l'uomo non vi piace,
gli attori riceveranno un'accoglienza da quaresima,
da voi. Li abbiamo sorpassati per la strada. Vengono
a offrirvi i loro servizi.

AMLETO

Quello chef a il Re sarà il benvenuto -- pagherò il
Mio tributo a Sua Maestà; il Cavaliere Avventuroso
Potrà usare spada e scudo di scena; l'Innamorato non
sospirerà gratis; il Capriccioso finirà in pace la sua
parte; il Buffone farà ridere quelli coi polmoni che
soffrono il solletico; la Lady dirà liberamente quello
che pensa o il verso sciolto s'intopperà.
Che attori sono?

ROSENCRANTZ

Proprio quelli che un tempo vi piacevano tanto, i
tragici della città.

AMLETO

Come mai viaggiano? A essere stabili, ne avrebbero
guadagnato sia in reputazione sia in profitto.

ROSENCRANTZ

Credo che l'impedimento nasca dalle ultime
innovazioni.

AMLETO

Godono della stima che avevano quando io ero
in città? Hanno lo stesso seguito?

ROSENCRANTZ

No, non ce l'hanno.

AMLETO

E come mai? Sì sono arrugginiti?

ROSENCRANTZ

No, vanno col solito passo. Ma ora c'è, signore,
una nidiata di bambini, falchetti che urlano a
squarciagola e vengono entusiasticamente applauditi.
Sono loro la moda, adesso, e se la prendono talmente
con i teatri comuni -- così li chiamano -- che molti che
portano la spada hanno paura delle penne d'oca e non
osano più andarci.

(William Shakespeare, *Amleto*, Traduzione e a cura di
Agostino Lombardo, Feltrinelli, 2002, pp. 103, 105)

Children's company

any of a number of troupes of boy actors whose performances enjoyed great popularity in Elizabethan England. The young actors were drawn primarily from choir schools attached to the great chapels and cathedrals, where they received musical training and were taught to perform in religious dramas and classical Latin plays. By the time of Henry VIII, groups such as the Children of the Chapel and the Children of Paul's were often called upon to present plays and to take part in ceremonies and pageants at court. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, these groups were formed into highly professional companies, usually consisting of 8 to 12 boys, who gave public performances outside the court. The choirmasters of the companies functioned as managers, directors, writers of music and plays, and designers of masques and pageants, in addition to performing their regular duties of training the boys to sing and act.

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, these companies were so popular that they posed a serious threat to the professional men's companies. (Encyclopædia Britannica)