

A Look at Ambition in Carlo Goldoni's, *La famiglia dell'antiquario*

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My thesis looks at and examines ambition in the play *La famiglia dell'antiquario* by 18<sup>th</sup> century Venetian playwright Carlo Goldoni. I will categorize ambition found in the play into two types: material and immaterial. By examining ambition in all its facets, my goal is to highlight the different strains of ambition Goldoni showcases in this particular work. My overall analysis of ambition suggests that Goldoni believed there to be right and wrong ways to have ambition. Overall, through this technique one is able to glean a remarkable critique and depiction of life in 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice through a Goldonian lens.

Criticism of Carlo Goldoni's play *La famiglia dell'antiquario* has traditionally focused on family and gender as one sees in the works of Michele Bordin, Stephen Kolsky and Maggie Günsberg. A strong focus lies on the tumultuous relationship between the mother-in-law, Isabella, and daughter-in-law, Doralice. Bordin focuses his attention on the play's conclusion in his article, *Sul Lieto Fine Goldoniano Come "Imperfetta" Conclusione. Preliminari e Due Analisi (La Famiglia Dell'Antiquario e Il Geloso Avaro)*. Bordin's focus on the play's conclusion, as well as the relationship between Isabella and Doralice, lends itself to an analysis of the play via the context of the family. Kolsky examines gender and politics in his essay titled, *Gender and Politics in La famiglia dell'antiquario*. Kolsky believes that class and gender play defining roles within the play's plot. Scholar Maggie Günsberg notably examines *La famiglia dell'antiquario* in her book Playing with Gender, The Comedies of Goldoni. Specifically Günsberg focuses her attention largely on class ambition of the bourgeois, a ubiquitous theme in the play. However, she does not devote thought to the idea that ambition is seen throughout the various classes. Rather, all classes in the play, whether private or public, pursue ambition. Ambition should not be limited to the bourgeois class or considered solely by way of class. Instead *La famiglia dell'antiquario* offers a study of multifaceted ambition.

Merriam-Webster defines ambition both as the desire for something (e.g. power or money) and the object of that desire (e.g. power or money itself). I will define and look at ambition according to both modern day definitions. Interestingly, both the noble and the bourgeois classes possess ambition within *La famiglia dell'antiquario*. Furthermore, ambition is not age-bound or gender specific, as previously categorized by Günsberg. Rather, it appears across all ages, classes and genders. Ambition can be divided into two categories: material and immaterial. The focus of material ambition is on tangible objects and luxuries often associated with a noble, decadent and frivolous lifestyle. Immaterial ambition will be addressed as the desire for intangibles such as recognition, visibility, status and legacy. I will examine the desires and objects of desire of the characters, dividing ambition into these two categories. Conclusively, one will see that Goldoni favors immaterial ambition. However it is not solely immaterial ambition that Goldoni favors. Instead he suggests that there is a right and wrong type of immaterial ambition. Bad immaterial ambition is self centered. Immaterial ambition that seeks stability, economically and within the family, along with hard work and prosperity is championed. Ultimately, these traits are found within Pantalone, a wealthy and hard working member of the bourgeois class. Immaterial ambition by way of the morally sound bourgeois Pantalone represents the right kind of ambition, according to Goldoni.

Dissecting ambition by way of desire for material and immaterial goods allows one to examine Goldoni's characters more thoroughly than has been done by previous critics and scholars. Factors such as age, class and gender are initially eliminated. Firstly, I will examine each character in regards to their ambitions, classifying them as material or immaterial in nature. This criterion allows for an in-depth analysis of the character and what Goldoni suggests through each of them. Later in my analysis, when applicable, I will introduce variables such as class and

gender that undoubtedly figure in the plot. From this holistic analysis, one can see the underlying critique of 18<sup>th</sup> century Venetian society that Goldoni suggests through this work. The play advocates prudent bourgeois values, over those of a frivolous and spendthrift life engaged in by many of the patrician class.

*La famiglia dell'antiquario* follows a noble family in disrepair. The recent marriage of the son Giacinto was intended to solve the family's impoverished economic state via the dowry of Doralice, a woman with wealthy bourgeois roots. However, by the time the play begins the head of the family, Anselmo, is already squandering away the dowry just as he has the rest of the family's fortune. An unhappy Doralice and her mother-in-law Isabella dominate the plot, as their bickering over pride and status get the best of them. Ultimately Doralice's father, Pantalone rescues his daughter's new family by taking over the management of the household, controlling the purse strings and enforcing stability among the family members.

To begin I will look at material ambition. Materialistic drives will be examined in three main characters in the plot: Anselmo, Doralice and Colombina. These characters are constantly aspiring and desiring new objects. From this we see that material ambition is not solely restricted to male or female characters, to the young or old, or to the noble, bourgeois or plebian class. These characters all succumb to their longings for tangible items.

From the title *La famiglia dell'antiquario* one may already surmise that antiques and collecting is the focus of the head of the household. The play opens with Anselmo in the midst of admiring and desiring more medals, objects and antiques for his collection. This is how Anselmo spends his days, unless he is required to intervene in matters of the home. From the start of the play the audience is made aware of Anselmo's obsession with antiques. At the beginning of the play Anselmo and his wife argue over the recent match made between their son, Giacinto, and

Doralice. Isabella, his wife, complains to him about Doralice's lack of noble blood and how this marriage has ruined their noble status. Anselmo, who ultimately made the decision to okay the marriage, explains his reasoning to his wife Isabella, "Eh via, che l'oro non prende macchia. Siamo nati nobili, siamo nobili, e una donna venuta in casa per accomodare i nostri interessi non guasta il sangue delle nostre vene" (Act I, Scene III). In this scene Isabella is preoccupied with the idea of a noble bloodline and Anselmo instead is most concerned with accommodating his "interests," which are antiques and their subsequent acquisition. According to Anselmo something immaterial, like nobility or a bloodline, cannot be ruined. They were born noble therefore they are noble. On the other hand, Anselmo's collection of material goods may be put into jeopardy. For Anselmo accommodating and satisfying his interests is of a higher concern than the concerns of Isabella, in this case a noble bloodline. As the play will reveal more and more, Anselmo is entirely driven by his yearning for more and more antiques.

Goldoni continues to flood the first scenes of the play with displays of Anselmo's insatiable desire for more and more objects. The following scene shows Anselmo speaking to himself. He recounts the reasons for his indifference towards matters of the house, the tension between his wife and daughter-in-law. The main reason for his indifference proves to be his desire to be left alone so that he can continue to collect and focus on his objects:

È pazza, è pazza la poverina. Prevedo che fra suocera e nuora vi voglia essere il solito divertimento. Ma io non ci voglio pensare. Voglio attendere alle mie medaglie, e se si vogliono rompere il capo, lo facciano, ché non m'importa. Non posso saziarmi di rimirare questo *Pescennio*! E questa tazza di diaspro orientale non è un tesoro? Io credo senz'altro sia quella in cui Cleopatra stemprò la perla alla famosa cena di Marcantonio. (Act I, Scene IV)

This monologue allows the audience to see that nothing matters more to Anselmo than his collection. Anselmo is intoxicated by his materialistic ambition, daydreaming of the histories of his antiques, in this case a cup. Goldoni here continues to reinforce, as he does throughout the play, the frivolousness of Anselmo's fixation on antiques. Anselmo appears to be the personification of a certain type of upper class individual who wastes away his or her days and money by purchasing and collecting useless items. Presented comically in the play the audience is able to laugh at Anselmo's frivolousness, as well as reflect on their own spending habits. Anselmo's behavior is frivolous, obsessive and something not to be upheld or pursued.

Anselmo's materialistic ambition continues to be fed as he makes yet another purchase. Little does Anselmo know that his trusty assistant Brighella has been capitalizing on his antiquarian obsession. Brighella knows that Anselmo will not hesitate to buy anything he believes will be a valuable addition to his collection. Disguising his friend as a seller of antiques, Brighella has been profiting as Anselmo buys trash and old household items that he believes are antiques. Brighella and his friend have been splitting the profits of Anselmo's stupidity, but Pantalone soon discovers the trick. Pantalone arrives to visit Anselmo at his home and tries to enlighten Anselmo. However, Anselmo so convinced by the lies of Brighella cannot and will not fathom Pantalone's insights:

ANSELMO. Gran fortuna è stata la mia! Questa sorta d'antichità non si trova così facilmente. Gran Brighella per trovare i mercanti d'antichità! Questo lume eterno l'ho tanto desiderato, e poi trovarlo sì raro. Di quei d'Egitto? Quello di Tolomeo? Voglio farlo legare in oro, come una gemma... Buon giorno, il mio caro amico. Voi che siete mercante, uomo di mondo, e intendente di cose rare, stimatemi questa bella antichità.

PANTALONE. La me ha ben in concetto de un bravo mercante, a farne stimar una luse da oggi!

ANSELMO. Povero signor Pantalone, non sapete niente. Questo è il lume eterno del sepolcro di Tolomeo.

PANTALONE. (*ride*).

ANSELMO. Sì, di Tolomeo, ritrovato in una delle Piramidi d'Egitto.

PANTALONE. (*ride*).

ANSELMO. Ridete, perché non ve n'intendete.

PANTALONE. Benissimo, mi son ignorante, ella xé virtuoso, e no vói catar bega su questo. (Act I, Scene XVIII).

This scene demonstrates Anselmo's deluded state. Anselmo is so engrossed in his collecting hobby, so much so that he cannot bear to hear criticism or thinking that someone is poking fun at his items. Anselmo is deluded and he assumes that because Pantalone is of a lower social class he couldn't possibly understand the value of this new acquired antique, instead of giving way to the possibility that Pantalone could be right.

Anselmo's mentality and treatment of Pantalone underlines the social structure established at this time. Many nobles, despite diminishing fortunes, placed themselves socially, morally and intellectually above lower class individuals. Goldoni's infusion of these attitudes into his characters allows for his audience to glimpse social issues occurring within the bourgeois and noble circles in 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice:

Goldoni's point of reference is invariably the society of his time. His aim in writing comedies is to bring to public attention, and to correct, defects inherent to that society.

Accordingly, his portraits are always critical, and his standpoint invariably assumes a precise perspective and a tacit judgment. (Cervato 77)

Highlighting this method, Cervato reminds Goldoni's readers of his desire to paint a social portrait of Venetian society. In regards to Anselmo, the play suggests that Goldoni is criticizing Anselmo's self-directed obsessive behavior and his lack of consideration for someone below his social rank.

The frivolousness and wastefulness of the antiquarian's hobby is later proved to the audience and Anselmo alike in the third act of the play. Pantalone, having already discovered the scam that Brighella is running, brings in an antiquarian expert who Anselmo respects, Pancrazio. Pancrazio evaluates Anselmo's collection and reports to him an estimate worth of his collection:

PANCRAZIO. Signor conte, in confidenza, che nessuno ci senta: questa è roba che non vale tremila soldi.

ANSELMO. Come non vale tremila soldi?

PANTALONE. (Bella da galantuomo!)

ANSELMO. L'avete bene osservata?

PANCRAZIO. Ho veduto quanto basta per assicurarmi di ciò.

ANSELMO. Ma i crostacei?

PANCRAZIO. Sono ostriche trovate nell'immondizie, o gettate dal mare quando è in burrasca.

PANTALONE: Trovae sui monti del poco giudizio.

ANSELMO. E i pesci pietrificati?

PANCRAZIO. Sono sassi un poco lavorati collo scarpello, per ingannare chi crede.

PANTALONE. Ghe sarà anca pietrificà e induriò el cervello de qualche antiquario.

ANSELMO. E le mummie?

PANCRAZIO. Sono cadaveri di piccoli cani, e di gatti, e di sorci sventrati e seccati.

ANSELMO. Ma il basilisco?

PANCRAZIO. È un pesce marino che i ciarlatani sogliono accomodare in figura di basilisco, e se ne servono per trattenere i contadini in piazza, quando vogliono vendere il loro balsamo. (Act III, Scene III)

This scene signals Anselmo's downfall. Upon evaluation of his collection Anselmo is hoping for praise and validation from a respected antiquarian. As seen here, in fact, Pancrazio states that his items are worthless. Comically presented numerous social criticisms come to light in this scene. It is proven that the trusty assistant Brighella has fooled Anselmo. This suggests that in fact noble stature does not ensure knowledge or knowhow. This is a true turning point in the plot when Anselmo is forced to acknowledge his true lack of understanding, in regards to antiques. Anselmo ignored the advice of Pantalone, and ultimately a nobleman that both men trust, Pancrazio, validates Pantalone's previously ignored claims.

Gullible, Anselmo was eager to believe that trash was, in fact, an antique treasure. Goldoni is suggesting, by way of Anselmo and Pancrazio, that there is a right and wrong type of material ambition. Without any real knowledge of antiques and having made many purchases impulsively, Anselmo is an uninformed and foolish antiquarian. As pointed out by Pancrazio, he has in fact wasted his money. Any peddler does not easily fool Pancrazio, who possesses knowledge of antiques and street smarts. Pancrazio's material ambition is regulated and he possesses self-control. Goldoni suggests that with the right knowledge, one can possess a keen eye for antiques and not over indulge in regards to material desires. In regards to Pantalone, it is proven that Anselmo should have put more faith in Pantalone's claims. Pantalone, though a

member of the bourgeois, is indeed more clever and intelligent. Pantalone's suggestions and offers of help should not be so easily ignored.

Material ambition comes to grip another character, Doralice the wealthy bourgeois bride, at the beginning of the play. Marrying into a noble family, Doralice is struck by the desire to now act and look the part of a noblewoman. Doralice is in pursuit of a new dress, a goal that dominates her storyline throughout the play. Günsberg reminds us that:

Fashion is a social construct operating at the highly mobile surface level of physical appearance. In Goldoni's plays fashion is a signifier of status particularly in hierarchies pertaining to gender, wealth and class. At issue is the public face of identity, which can be adjusted and manipulated to a significant degree through the individual choice of personal appearance in matters of clothing. (146)

Therefore one can see that a new dress, the object of Doralice's desire, is not an unusual request. Goldoni utilizes the desire for a new dress to represent an immaterial longing to gain status and attain visibility in higher social circles as Günsberg further explains:

Together with jewelry (real rather than fake), dresses made of costly material and cut to the latest style are the main fashion items with which the plays concern themselves. They are also the most expensive, often constituting the dowry a woman brings to her future husband. Jewelry and dresses remained in the wife's possession, with jewelry often inherited matrilineally..... However, expensive dresses and jewelry were also intended to be worn and shown off, particularly by wives. (151)

In *La famiglia dell'antiquario* one sees that appearance and more importantly appearance in public is of the utmost concern. Doralice's material ambition is rooted in her desire to visually flaunt her wealth and newly acquired social standing. The following scene between Anselmo and

Doralice reveals both characters preoccupations with materialistic desires. Doralice pleads with Anselmo for a new frock, listing all the reasons as to why she deserves such. Anselmo instead is preoccupied, as one can see:

DORALICE. Non è vostro decoro ch'io vada vestita come una serva.

ANSELMO. (Non darei questa medaglia per cento scudi).

DORALICE. Finalmente ho portato in casa ventimila scudi.

ANSELMO. (A compir la collana mi mancano ancora sette medaglie).

DORALICE. Avete voluto fare il matrimonio in privato, ed io non ho detto niente.

ANSELMO. (Queste sette medaglie; le troverò).

DORALICE. Non avete invitato nessuno de' miei parenti; pazienza.

ANSELMO. (Vi sono ancora duemila scudi; le troverò).

DORALICE. Ma ch'io debba star confinata in casa, perché non ho vestito da comparire, è un' indiscretezza. (Act I, Scene V)

A one sided conversation takes place here. Both characters are preoccupied with their own materialistic ambitions; Anselmo with his antiques and Doralice a new dress. Here Doralice's immaterial yearning to be presented and visible in society is matched by her desire for the noble lifestyle, which in this case is a dress. In order to participate in her new noble lifestyle she must play the part and therefore to be dressed accordingly.

Receiving little support from her father-in-law, financial or moral, Doralice continues on her quest for a dress and addresses the problem to her husband, Giacinto. After much persuasion and reasoning Giacinto agrees to have a dress made for his bride, but not any dress will satisfy Doralice's desire:

DORALICE. Dite: che abito avete intenzione di farmi?

GIACINTO. Vi farò un abito buono.

DORALICE. M'immagino vi sarà dell'oro o dell'argento.

GIACINTO. E se fosse di seta schietta, non sarebbe a proposito?

DORALICE. Mi pare che ventimila scudi di dote possano meritarne un abito con un poco d'oro.

GIACINTO. Via, vi sarà dell'oro. (Act I, Scene VII)

Doralice here uses a very tangible asset, her dowry, as influence. Now that she has obtained the title of a noble woman, she expects to be kept like one, and that includes a dress with gold or silver. Even silk seems to be beneath her.

In order to contextualize the implications of Goldoni's text and the symbolism behind the dress it is useful to look at scholarship on how clothes served a specific function in this period and their implications. Daniela Hacke writes in reference to fashion in the early modern setting of this play that:

In the early modern period, clothes had a distinctive social function. These items played an increasingly important role as indicators of status in the context of urban societies.

They were important for the fostering of individual identities – not only of the patrician elite – and might have functioned as a means of collective identification as well. When the head of the household wasted the dowry he put at risk the resources designated for his wife's clothes and other items (135).

Hacke's words inadvertently highlight a number of issues within the plot of *La famiglia dell'antiquario*. Clothes, or in this case a dress, represents more than just a material want. Instead it speaks of one's advancing social status, a desire of Doralice's. Scholar Michele Bordin comments on Doralice's standing within the family stating, "Doralice sembra così non esistere

(nemmeno nella coscienza del marito) se non come << vettore>> di quei soldi, come la portatrice – solo perciò tollerata...” (224). This assertion supports Doralice’s fear that she is no more than a material asset the family and husband has acquired. Fighting against this Dorliace or the “portatrice” in the eyes of this noble family, seeks material retribution.

The third character to be examined in regards to material ambition is Colombina, Isabella’s longtime house servant. Colombina is an outsider in terms of social status. She is neither noble or bourgeois and therefore an interesting character to examine in regards to her own ambitions, those of the true working class. Colombina’s presence in the play provides a holistic view of every rung in the Venetian social ladder. The audience comes to see that she is not immune to the drama and conflict that come along in the Terrazani household. In the following scene, one sees a conversation between Doralice and Isabella. The discussion showcases how each woman views her social ranking. Interestingly, there is a contrast in the women’s opinions. Doralice, now noble by marriage, thinks of herself as a noble and wishes to be treated like one. Colombina on the other hand views Doralice as just another merchant. These differing views ignite a power struggle between the women:

COLOMBINA. Il signor Contino mi ha detto che la padrona mi domanda; ma non la vedo. È forse andata via?

DORALICE. Io sono la padrona che ti domanda.

COLOMBINA. Oh! mi perdoni, la mia padrona è l’illustrissima signora contessa.

DORALICE. Io in questa casa non son padrona?

COLOMBINA. Io servo la signora contessa.

DORALICE. Per domani mi farai una cuffia.

COLOMBINA. Davvero che non posso servirla.

DORALICE. Perché?

COLOMBINA. Perché ho da fare per la padrona.

DORALICE. Padrona sono anch'io, e voglio esser servita, o ti farò cacciar via.

COLOMBINA. Son dieci anni ch'io sono in questa casa.

DORALICE. E che vuoi dire per questo?

COLOMBINA. Voglio dire che forse non le riuscirà di farmi andar via.

DORALICE. Villana! Malcreata!

COLOMBINA. Io villana? La non mi conosce bene, signora.

DORALICE. Oh, chi è vossignoria? Me lo dica, acciò non manchi al mio debito.

COLOMBINA. Mio padre vendeva nastri e spille per le strade. Siamo tutti mercanti. (Act I, Scene VIII)

This dialogue juxtaposes Doralice's desire for noble treatment against the lower class background shared by both Colombina and Doralice. Doralice wishes to be treated and respected the same as her mother-in-law. Colombina, loyal to Isabella, reminds Doralice that she is no more privileged than her, also being the daughter of a merchant. This conversation demonstrates the divide between the nobles and lower classes. Pantalone, Doralice's father, is a wealthy bourgeois merchant who has prospered in business and has pursued a noble marriage for his daughter. However Pantalone is still only a merchant, therefore Doralice is as well. Colombina highlights this difference to Doralice, stating that they are both merchants. This places Colombina and Doralice on the same lower class level, an idea that Doralice spends the entire play attempting to distance herself from.

After the initial exchange that Colombina has with Doralice, Doralice is even more committed to securing her noble station within the house. Doralice turns to Colombina, seeing



Any excessive display of female initiative meets Goldoni's disapproval. He appears as a strong supporter of the *status quo*, and any attempts by women to challenge the established order is quickly thwarted. Such an attitude firmly establishes Goldoni as a conservative figure, opposed to the new-found power which Venetian women began to enjoy in the eighteenth century. (Cervato 89)

This critique of women at this period in 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice by Goldoni is validated within the context of the play. Both women come to challenge the "established order." Doralice utilizes money and a poor servant to claw her way to the top, while Colombina uses Doralice and Isabella, telling them what they want to hear. Their enthusiasm is focused towards material gain, considered a petty behavior by Goldoni.

Through the second act Colombina continues to use Doralice's money and Isabella's trust to maintain her place as the servant of two mistresses. Both Doralice and Isabella ask Colombina for information as to what the other has said about them. Desiring to maintain her place in the house and money Colombina always complies, whether the results are truthful or not. The following scene presents an example of this type of behavior. Colombina recounts for Isabella what she has "heard" while in the presence of Doralice:

ISABELLA. Bene, bene, sentiremo le novità. Dimmi un poco, hai veduto quando il

Cavaliere è andato nelle camere di Doralice?

COLOMBINA. L'ho veduto benissimo.

ISABELLA. Quanto vi è stato?

COLOMBINA. Più di due ore; e poi poco fa vi è tornato.

ISABELLA. Vi è tornato?

COLOMBINA. Sì, signora, vi è tornato.

ISABELLA. Sei punto stata in camera? Hai sentito nulla?

COLOMBINA. Oh! io in quella camera non ci vado. Servo la mia padrona, e non servo altri.

ISABELLA. Che balorda! né anche andar in camera a sentir qualche cosa, per sapermeo dire; va, che sei una scimunita.

COLOMBINA. Balorda! scimunita! Non volevo dirvelo; ma ci sono state.

ISABELLA. Sì? còntami, che cosa facevano?

COLOMBINA. Parlavano segretamente.

ISABELLA. Discorrevano forse di me?

COLOMBINA. Sicuro.

ISABELLA. Che cosa dicevano?

COLOMBINA. Che siete fastidiosa, sofisticata, e che so io.

ISABELLA. Cavaliere malnato! (Act II, Scene XIV)

This pattern of offering up information and gossip is repeated numerous times. Goldoni here continues to showcase negative and deceitful traits of women. One may deduce from this that Goldoni himself was critical towards malicious personal ambitions, particularly those pursued by women. When in the presence of Colombina, both Doralice and Isabella are presented at their worst. Commenting on women, their treatment of one another and towards one another are elements carefully placed within the plot. From this one sees how *La famiglia dell'antiquario* becomes more and more a social critique of Goldoni's time.

Immaterial ambition can be seen in every character in *La famiglia dell'antiquario*. Whether it be for class, power or visibility every character is ambitious. I have chosen to examine three characters: Isabella, Doralice and Pantalone, through the lens of immaterial

ambition in this paper. These characters are at the center of the conflict and final resolution of the play.

Crucial to the multifaceted way in which this paper examines ambition is the mother-in-law Isabella. As the matriarch, she is a grand force to be reckoned with. Immaterial ambition captures Isabella most in her desire for a purely noble bloodline. This ambition of Isabella drives her story line and controls her behavior throughout the play. She confronts her issue notably at the beginning of the play in this conversation with her husband, Anselmo. The following scene showcases Isabella's distaste:

ANSELMO. Oh, contessa mia, ho fatto il bell'acquisto! Ho ritrovato un *Pescennio*.

ISABELLA. Voi, colla vostra gran mente, fate sempre de' buoni acquisti.

ANSELMO. Direste, forse, che non è vero?

ISABELLA. Sì, è verissimo. Avete fatto anche l'acquisto d'una nobilissima nuora.

ANSELMO. Che! sono stati cattivi ventimila scudi?

ISABELLA. Per il vilissimo prezzo di ventimila scudi avete sacrificato il tesoro della nobiltà.

ANSELMO. Eh via, che l'oro non prende macchia. Siam nati nobili, e siamo nobili, e una donna venuta in casa per accomodare i nostri interessi, non guasta il sangue delle nostre vene. (Act I, Scene III)

Isabella expresses her disapproval for Doralice's bourgeois origins to her husband, who she believes has sold off and sacrificed their nobility. For Isabella, to remain noble is of the utmost importance. Isabella desires status and a purely noble one at that. This strain of ambition is certainly class ambition. Günsberg's explains "Class ambition on the part of the nobility in Goldoni's plays consequently manifests itself in two, often interlinking ways, namely the desire

to acquire wealth, and/or a display of pretentiousness or inflated self-importance...” (203).

Isabella’s self-denoted superiority is an example of class ambition.

Isabella continues to flaunt an air of superiority throughout the play. Her son Giacinto experiences first hand just how class ambitious she can be. In the following scene Isabella and Giacinto discuss his marriage to the bourgeois Doralice:

ISABELLA. Povero figlio! tu sei sacrificato!

GIACINTO. Io sacrificato? Perchè?

ISABELLA. Tuo padre, tuo padre ti ha assassinato!

GIACINTO. Mio padre? Che cosa mi ha fatto?

ISABELLA. Ti ha dato una moglie che non è degna di te.

GIACINTO. In quanto a mia moglie, ne sono contentissimo; l’amo teneramente e ringrazio il cielo d’averla avuta.

ISABELLA. E la tua nobiltà?

GIACINTO. La nostra nobiltà era in pericolo, senza la dote di Doralice.

ISABELLA. Si poteva trovare una ricca che fosse nobile.

GIACINTO. Era difficile, nel disordine in cui era la nostra casa. (Act I, Scene X)

This excerpt juxtaposes Isabella’s class ambition with that of her son’s Giacinto. Giacinto represents an immaterial ambition of a different kind, that of survival. Giacinto knows that without his marriage to Doralice and the subsequent dowry acquisition, the family would have no means or nobility by which they could continue to survive. Here Isabella and her son discuss the irresolvable issue she has with her daughter-in-law, the issue of Doralice’s social standing. I regard the issue as irresolvable since nothing can be changed. Doralice has bought her way into patrician society and the marriage is in place. Isabella is consumed with a desire to maintain her

family and her own noble standing, despite Giacinto's apparent happiness with Doralice. From this passage, both mother and son demonstrate class ambition or rather class preservation. Isabella's motivation is one sided and self-consuming, as she is the only one troubled with Doralice's non-noble birth. Giacinto can clearly see the distraught economic condition of his family and the benefit his family has gained as a result of his marriage to Doralice. Isabella, instead, demonstrates a desire to maintain a pure noble bloodline. Isabella's insistence that Doralice is not a worthy woman to be the wife of her son depicts class ambition from the feminine perspective, "Class ambition is depicted as a feminine trait that threatens the welfare of a family..." (Günsberg 195). The desire to preserve her noble bloodline would ultimately lead to Isabella's family's demise if the marriage between Giacinto and Doralice were to be dissolved.

In *La famiglia dell'antiquario*, the audience sees the bourgeois and noble clash and then come to a settlement that both are able to tolerate. Before this, Isabella's dislike of Doralice and her bourgeois father grows throughout the play. Isabella grasps for power within the familial and household sphere by whatever means possible. The following scene showcases a conversation between Isabella and her trusted friend the Dottore. Looking for someone to support her opinions towards Doralice, Isabella's feathers are ruffled when the Dottore does not agree with her:

DOTTORE. ... ma ella ha sentito che cosa ha detto il signor Pantalone?

ISABELLA. Come c'entra quel vecchio in casa mia? Qui camando io, e poi mio marito.

DOTTORE. Benissimo, non pretende già di voler far da padrone; egli mostra dell'amore per questa casa, e desidera di vedere in tutti la concordia e la pace.

ISABELLA. Se vuol che vi sia la pace, faccia che sua figlia abbia giudizio.

DOTTORE. Egli protesta ch'ella è innocente.

ISABELLA. È innocente? È innocente? E voi ancora lo dite? Sia maledetto, quando il diavolo vi porta qui! (Act II, Scene XIII)

From this dialogue one can see the irreverence with which Isabella regards the bourgeois class. She considers herself the head of the household. During this period in early modern Venice this type of thinking was certainly relevant, “The informal power that wives had within the household and in the relationship with their husbands is not to be underestimated” (Hacke 99). The power that Hacke describes is something that Isabella has grown accustomed to pursuing. From this we can garner that Isabella does hold a certain level of power and is in fact trying to obtain more. In this context, Isabella represents the inside of the noble circle that Doralice is fighting to obtain entry into. Isabella is within the family and the patrician class. Pantalone and Doralice, in Isabella’s eyes, represent the outside. Pantalone is outside the family and outside of the noble system.

Lust for power grips Doralice in *La famiglia dell’antiquario*. While Isabella attempts to dominate the family with her power and influence, Doralice fights to acquire her own power and place within the household. Class ambition is present within this context, as Doralice is fighting to obtain her place within the noble class. Günsberg explains socially upward class ambition stating, “A degree of social permeability ...exists, in the sense that money provides a route to a higher-class belonging. Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, class ambition actually reinforces class differences in the plays” (184). Courtesy of a large dowry, Doralice has been given access to noble status. In truth, she has advanced in society. However as highlighted by Günsberg, Doralice’s dowry does not erase her bourgeois roots. Isabella consistently confronts Doralice’s status within the house and family recalling her bourgeois origins. Doralice’s class ambition and separation from the noble class therefore is reinforced and exacerbated.

Doralice is confronted daily with differences in treatment and comparisons, courtesy of Isabella, that reminds and reinforces the fact that though she is noble by marriage, she will forever be bourgeois by birth. Doralice's immaterial class ambition rises from her desire to be treated just like Isabella, "Padrona sono anch'io, e voglio esser servita." (19). She wishes to be served just like Isabella is by her servant. Now a wife, she desires to be treated and regarded as the lady of the house. This means dressing like one and being served like one by Colombina.

The idea of household peace and desiring respect is a continual theme. A recurrence within the Goldonian universe, "The ultimate responsibility for maintaining family harmony, however, lies with wives..." (Günsberg 72). This sense of responsibility or expectation to keep the peace can be seen particularly with Doralice. Doralice's father and husband expect her to rise above the pettiness she and people around her, mainly Isabella, are showing. In this scene her husband, Giacinto, chastises her for her behavior:

GIACINTO. Gran disgrazia! Gran disgrazia! In questa nostra casa non si può vivere un giorno in pace.

DORALICE. Lo dite a me? Io non do fastidio a nessuno.

GIACINTO. Eh, Doralice mia, se mi voleste bene, non vi regolereste così.

DORALICE. Ma di che mai vi potete dolere?

GIACINTO. Voi non volete rispettare mia madre.

DORALICE. Che cosa pretendete ch'io faccia per darle un segno del mio rispetto?

Volete che vada a darle l'acqua da lavare le mani? Che vada a tirarle le calze, quando va a letto?

GIACINTO. Oh! non la vogliamo finir bene.

DORALICE. Dite, non lo sapete ch'io sono stata stamattina la prima a salutarla?

GIACINTO. Sì, nel salutarla l'avete strapazzata.

DORALICE. L'ho strapazzata? Non è vero.

GIACINTO. Le avete detto vecchia.

DORALICE. Oh, oh, oh! Mi fate ridere. Perché le ho detto vecchia, s'intende ch'io abbia strapazzata? Pretende forse di essere giovane? (Act II, Scene I)

Always going back to the idea of respect, Doralice persists in her stubbornness. Respect in Doralice and Isabella's eyes is tied to ambition of class and status. Doralice believes she deserves respect due to the dowry she brought with her into the marriage. Since Doralice has yet to receive the respect that is due to her, she provokes Isabella by calling her old. Isabella believes she warrants respect due to her nobility and certainly does not consider herself old. With no clear lines being drawn in the conflict, the unsavory behavior between Isabella and Doralice continues until the final scenes of the play.

The treatment of Isabella and Doralice in the play in regards to their ambitions allows Goldoni to comment through *La famiglia dell'antiquario* on different social classes of women:

Goldoni presents us with women from widely different backgrounds (a *popolana* – girl of the common people – an aristocrat, a *bourgeoise* and a *petit-bourgeoise*) with their different roles in society, and he highlights the changes (economic changes and the changing attitudes of women) occurring in that society, together with his disapproval of those changes. (Cervato 78)

Goldoni's ultimate disapproval of Doralice's and Isabella's desires is tied to Pantalone and the play's conclusion. The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law dominate the plot and conflict of the play, which directly showcase Goldoni's disapproval of conflicts such as these.

Unlike Anselmo or Doralice, Pantalone is not in pursuit of antiques or dresses. Pantalone's ambitions arise from his desire for a higher social standing for his daughter, Doralice. He is "...a *nouveau riche* who, from an impoverished beginning, has acquired considerable wealth with his mercantile activities" (Günsberg 200). Newfound wealth presents Pantalone with an opportunity to improve his station in life, and most importantly his daughter's. Obtaining a noble title is something now within Pantalone's reach and purse strings. Patrician status in Goldoni's day granted access to a society that a majority of the population was excluded from. A noble title allowed one to participate in social circles and influence political powers. Having humble beginnings, Pantalone wishes for his daughter to benefit from all that he has gained up to this point and more. Increased social status and potential for political gain insures success for his daughter and the generations to come. A noble title buys access, recognition, influence and power that money alone cannot reach. With the promise of a noble legacy and the deep affection he feels for his daughter, Pantalone is motivated to aid the family of the antiquarian.

The figure of Pantalone plays an important role within the plot of the play. He frequently gives advice not just to his daughter but Anselmo as well. Pantalone represents the voice of reason not solely in the below passage, but as the audience will see, throughout the play. The following passage demonstrates the way of thinking that steers Pantalone's actions. He speaks with Doralice after household conflicts over a new dress and money. Pantalone urges his daughter to behave and stop acting foolishly:

PANTALONE. E me lo conté a mi? E me lo disé con sta bella disinvoltura? Quattro zorni che sé in sta casa, scomenzé subito a menar le man, e po pretendé che i ve vòggia ben, che i ve tratta ben, e che i ve sodisfa? Me maraveggio dei fatti vostri; se saveva sta

cosa, no ve vegniva gnanca a trovar. Se el fumo della nobilità che avè acquistà in sta casa, ve va alla testa, consideré un poco meglio quel che sé, quel che sè stada, e quel che poderessi esser, se mi no ve avesse volesto ben. Sé muggier de un conte, sé diventada contessa, ma el titolo no basta per farve portar rispetto, quando no ve acquistè l'amor della zente colla dolcezza e coll'umiltà... Ringraziè el cielo del ben che gh'avè. Portè rispetto ai vostri maggiori; siè umile, siè paziente, siè bona, e allora sarè nobile, sarè ricca, sarè rispettada.

(Act I, Scene XIX)

In this scene one sees a heart to heart between Pantalone and his daughter. Pantalone chastises Doralice for her entitled behavior. She has only been married, and therefore noble, for a short while and she has let it go to her head. Doralice has been fighting with her mother-in-law and causing disarray throughout the house. Notably in this passage Pantalone distinguishes what qualities Doralice must have in order to be noble. Doralice has been acting foolishly and expecting everyone to treat her like a queen. Instead Pantalone reminds her that her newly acquired status alone does not merit noble treatment. Rather, Pantalone advises, “Portè rispetto ai vostri maggiori; siè umile, siè paziente, siè bona, e allora sarè nobile, sarè ricca, sarè rispettada.” Humility, patience and goodness are the qualities that Doralice needs to possess in order to be noble, rich and respected. However the nobleness and richness Pantalone mentions are that of moral character, not of material wealth. This statement by Pantalone is showcasing the positive bourgeois values that Goldoni is wishing to promote through Pantalone. One should be evaluated not according to material wealth or status, but rather moral soundness and goodness.

Pantalone's attitude toward Doralice suggests societal gender roles at this time that Goldoni notably inserted into his works. Pantalone stresses not only bourgeois values upon

Doralice, but also a desired behavior that he wants her to conform to. Within the context of Goldoni's works, this can be an interesting aspect to examine as Hacke points out that "To enforce female subordination husbands and fathers had to prove their 'natural' superiority through a modest use of authority, the expression of their greater rationality" (10). Within the plot of the play, and the latest cited passage, one can see Pantalone exercising his influence over Doralice. Within the Pantalone and Doralice relationship, I disagree with Hacke that Pantalone is working to subordinate Doralice. Instead, I believe that Pantalone is teaching Doralice how she can liberate herself by way and use of positive moral behavior. Pantalone wishes for Doralice to thrive and advises her in a way no other character in the plot can. As her father, Pantalone carries a certain amount of respect. The wisdom he imparts is heartfelt and meant to guide Doralice's ambitions in the right direction.

Scholar Kolsky adds to Hacke's argument and states that, "Pantalone's instructions to his daughter consist in emphasizing the subordinate, submissive female role. In order to be accepted Doralice needs to be passive" (66). Pantalone does in fact want Doralice to assume a less aggressive role in the house. However, disagreeing with Kolsky, I believe that rather Pantalone wants Doralice to curb her material desires and presumptuous behavior. Pantalone's treatment toward Doralice as that of a father disciplining his child, which is not necessarily gender specific. Doralice has been motivated by the wrong things i.e. clothes, visibility and status. Pantalone is reminding Doralice that a title is not enough to earn respect. Goodness, humility and showing respect to others will warrant her noble treatment from others. These qualities will, more importantly, render her noble of heart.

The conversation between Pantalone and Doralice continues. Pantalone listens to Doralice's grievances while jointly administering bourgeois and fatherly advice. The end of the

their conversation reveals the motivation and sentiment behind Pantalone's actions as a father. Comforting her, he offers one last plea for her to curb her newly acquired behavior and impart his last bit of wisdom:

PANTALONE. Via, cara fia, dame un puoco de consolazion. No gh'ho altri a sto mondo che ti. Dopo la mia morte, ti sarà parona de tutto. Tutte le mie strussie, tutte le mie fadighe le ho fatte per ti. Co te vedo, me consolo. Co so che ti sta bene, vegno tanto fatto, e co sento criori, pettegolezzi, me casca el cuor, me vien la morte, pianzo co fa un putello. (piangendo, parte) (Act I, Scene XIX)

Pantalone's emotional words leave the audience and Doralice with an appreciation for his efforts as a merchant and father. Pantalone desires the best for his daughter and her future. Entering into the latter part of his life, Pantalone wants to know that his daughter's future is secure for her and future generations to come. This speech is given to his daughter after he has reprimanded her for her newly acquired snobby behavior that is causing problems within her married home.

Pantalone reminds Doralice of her roots and that she is fortunate to have the marriage and social station that she currently possesses. After forceful words, Pantalone becomes emotional as seen here. His life's work has been in the best interest of his daughter. Other characters in the play do not express the same intent that we see in Pantalone here. Pantalone is not focused on only his needs, but rather the needs of another, in this case Doralice. This intent and overall good will displayed by Pantalone here and in the remainder of the play suggests that there is a right and wrong way to behave. Selfishly seeking goods for oneself is not championed by the play. Rather Pantalone's unconditional concern for Doralice and his newly acquired in-laws is behavior to be upheld and imitated. Goldoni, by way of Pantalone, champions the positive and revered aspects of the bourgeois.

The conclusion of the play sets up Pantalone and his bourgeois values as the victor, as he comes to solve all the conflicts of the play in the final scene. Ironically, Pantalone is not driven by material ambition though he possesses the most wealth and holds a lower social status than his noble in-laws. The audience sees that wealth is not necessarily a side effect of social status. Responsible behavior, work ethic and not indulging in spendthrift activities can lead to financial gain, as it has for Pantalone.

Pantalone's deep affection for his daughter and her well being, leads to his interest in the management of his in-laws house. This concern and love for his daughter and her future fuels his actions at the conclusion of the play. This following scene presents an agreement made between Anselmo, Giacinto and Pantalone regarding Pantalone's ultimate takeover of the household management. This scene portrays a comedic but also more serious side of things. The state of affairs within Anselmo's house is not in order, due to his obsessive collecting and wasteful spending.

ANSELMO. Andiamo; ma ci siamo intesi: il primo patto, che non mi tocchiate le mie medaglie. (*parte*)

PANTALONE. Poverazzo! Anca questa xé una malattia: chi vol varirlo, no bisogna farlo violentemente, ma un pochetto alla volta.

GIACINTO. Caro signor suocero, vi raccomando la quiete della nostra famiglia. Mio padre non è atto per questa briga; fate voi da capo di casa, e son certo che, se il capo avrà giudizio, tutte le cose andranno bene.

PANTALONE. Questa xé la verità. El capo de casa xe quello che fa bona e cattiva la fameggia. Voi veder se me riesse de far sto ben, de drezzar sta barca, e za che co

ste donne no se pol sperar gnente colle bone, vói provarme colle cattive. (*parte*)

(Act III, Scene VIII)

A deal made to save the fate of Doralice's in-laws, Pantalone in this scene is given charge of the Terrazzani family. Anselmo, Giacinto and Pantalone all know that this decision will be in the best interest of the family. Interestingly, Anselmo is still unable to relinquish his antiquarian habits. One sees in this brief excerpt a request that his medals not be touched. The request, given the financial state of the family, is funny and absurd at the same time. The fate of Anselmo's entire family is in jeopardy and his first concern goes to his collection. Goldoni here presents the obsessive and self-centered nature that Anselmo truly possesses. Pure material ambition is something not to be held in high esteem and is a behavior that can ruin a family.

In this same scene Goldoni champions the behavior of both Giacinto and Pantalone. Giacinto, throughout the play, doesn't indulge in the stereotypical behavior of a noble, self-centered and materialistic. Instead, Giacinto is concerned with the health of his marriage and the overall state of his family. By way of Giacinto, Goldoni suggests that the ability to accept help when needed is virtuous and not a quality to forget, rich or poor. Most importantly this excerpt shows the ambition that Pantalone possesses. Positive actions directed towards the greater good of the family, or in this case family-in-law, is something to strive for. Pantalone's desire and willingness to help this broken family is a noble and notable act.

Having now examined many of the characters within *La famiglia dell'antiquario*, it is important to contextualize how the nature of the play applies to Goldoni's era and what implications its subject matter holds. In the early modern period Venice, Goldoni's hometown, was one of the "most important centres within the Mediterranean economy" (Hacke 19). This resulted in grand financial success for many in the seaside city of northern Italy. With wealth

garnered over centuries many families either inherited or were able to obtain a great level of wealth.

This environment naturally influenced Goldoni's work and characters, as we see in *Pantalone*. *Pantalone* is a merchant and an excellent example of an individual gaining great wealth as a result of the seaside trade. Having risen in wealth and stature, *Pantalone* lacks one crucial element, patrician status. Venice's society, at this time, had a very strict division between the noble class and rest of the population. Many privileges, politically and socially, were reserved for one with a noble title. Therefore acquiring a noble title was of great importance for anyone looking to advance forward in the social or political realms. Knowing this, it becomes easy to see why *Pantalone* or *Doralice* could desire such a thing.

If one desired a noble title or patrician status, how were they to go about acquiring it? One way to obtain access to the elite noble class in early modern Venice, as is seen in the play, was through marriage. Considering the rigid social gaps however, social disparity could prove to be problematic for a couple (Hacke 112). Such a social structure encouraged the ambitious types of behavior the audience sees in *La famiglia dell'antiquario*.

Seeing that a marriage across classes implicated social disparity and therefore had the potential to be problematic, class ambition is certainly an interesting topic for Goldoni to address at this time. In the play Goldoni treats a reciprocal relationship of bourgeois members seeking status, while members of the nobility seek money. He thus provides his audience with a social commentary and critique of many facets of ambition. The play utilizes the cross-class marriage of *Doralice* and *Giacinto* as its platform. Günsberg comments on Goldoni's theme of class blending within his works stating:

...merchants in the plays entertain class ambition, and provide large dowries to marry their daughters into the nobility (as in *La moglie saggia* and *La famiglia dell'antiquario*). A degree of social permeability therefore exists, in the sense that money provides a route to a higher-class belonging. Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, class ambition actually reinforces class difference in the plays (184).

Finding and securing the right families to merge with was a high stakes game, for both the nobility and those in the thriving bourgeois class. The tensions that arise from a financial and socially beneficial marriage can be seen in Giacinto and Doralice's relationship, as well as Isabella and Anselmo's. Isabella, exacerbates and highlights the social divide between Doralice and the rest of the characters. For a noble woman like Isabella, it appears, that marriage does not absolve class divisions as easily as it does for the men in the play.

This paper has given a look into what I consider to be key elements within Goldoni's play *La famiglia dell'antiquario*. Ambition proves to unlock the motives behind every character, whether they are material or immaterial. As seen with Anselmo and Doralice, material ambition is regarded negatively, especially when material ambition is fueled by frivolousness and wastefulness. Immaterial ambition can be regarded positively and negatively. With Doralice and Isabella, their immaterial ambition is rooted in power struggles and selfish wants. Pantalone embodies a positive strain of immaterial ambition. Fueled by affection for his daughter and his desire for the greater good, Pantalone's ambition is not greedy or self-centered. He represents the right kind of ambition in Goldoni's eyes. In the play's conclusion, Pantalone comes to rescue the disrupted and financially distraught household of his daughter's in-laws. Choosing to make a social inferior, a bourgeois, the hero of the play suggests that Pantalone's bourgeois values and

morals are something to be regarded with high esteem and a lesson that Goldoni's audience should take to heart.

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