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Suzanne Aspden

The Rival Sirens

Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage

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THE RIVAL SIRENS

The tale of the onstage fight between *prime donne* Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni is notorious, appearing in music histories to this day, but it is a fiction. Starting from this misunderstanding, *The Rival Sirens* suggests that the rivalry fostered between the singers in 1720s London was in large part a social construction, one conditioned by local theatrical context and audience expectations, and heightened by manipulations of plot and music. This book offers readings of operas by Handel and Bononcini as performance events, inflected by the audience's perceptions of singer persona and contemporary theatrical and cultural contexts. Through examining the case of these two women, Suzanne Aspden demonstrates that the personae of star performers, as well as their voices, were of crucial importance in determining the shape of an opera during the early part of the eighteenth century.

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For my parents

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Introduction

Among opera's grand narratives, the discourse of excess is perhaps most persistent. Indeed, one of the genre's enduring myths is that emblem of superfluity, competing *prime donne*. This curious phenomenon, the leaven of so many pop-opera volumes, can be found even in *commedia dell'arte* precursors to the genre, and continues among opera (and other) divas to the present day.[1] Neither has it eluded musical representation. We might think of the 'Duetto buffo di due gatti', that recital bonbon spuriously but tenaciously attributed to Rossini, which metonymically reduces female singers to cats who sing not sense but pure cattiness. This duet (and our reaction to it), which defines the singers by their competition, is emblematic of the function of sparring divas within the stories surrounding opera. These narratives have generally portrayed such rivalries as mere self-serving narcissism and accordingly have treated them to superficial assessment at best, often viewing them with amused contempt. Such responses hardly shed much light on this long-lived phenomenon, working (one presumes) on the assumption that these shallow competitions offer little worth exploring. By contrast, I think that these rivalries have much to tell us, not just about the circumstances of singers' antagonism, but about how we approach opera. In this study I hope to demonstrate the potential for insight offered by such rivalries by focussing on one in particular – perhaps the prototype for the popular theme and critical idea.

The sopranos Francesca Cuzzoni (1696–1778) and Faustina Bordoni (1697–1781), who rose to fame in the 1720s, became notorious as rivals in London between 1726 and 1728. Indeed, their notoriety turned them into that cliché, legends in their own lifetimes, which suggests not only the spotlight of fame but also the selective blindness of fiction. These singers of extraordinary and diverse abilities were, despite their diversity, inseparable in the public imagination; satirists and scholars alike

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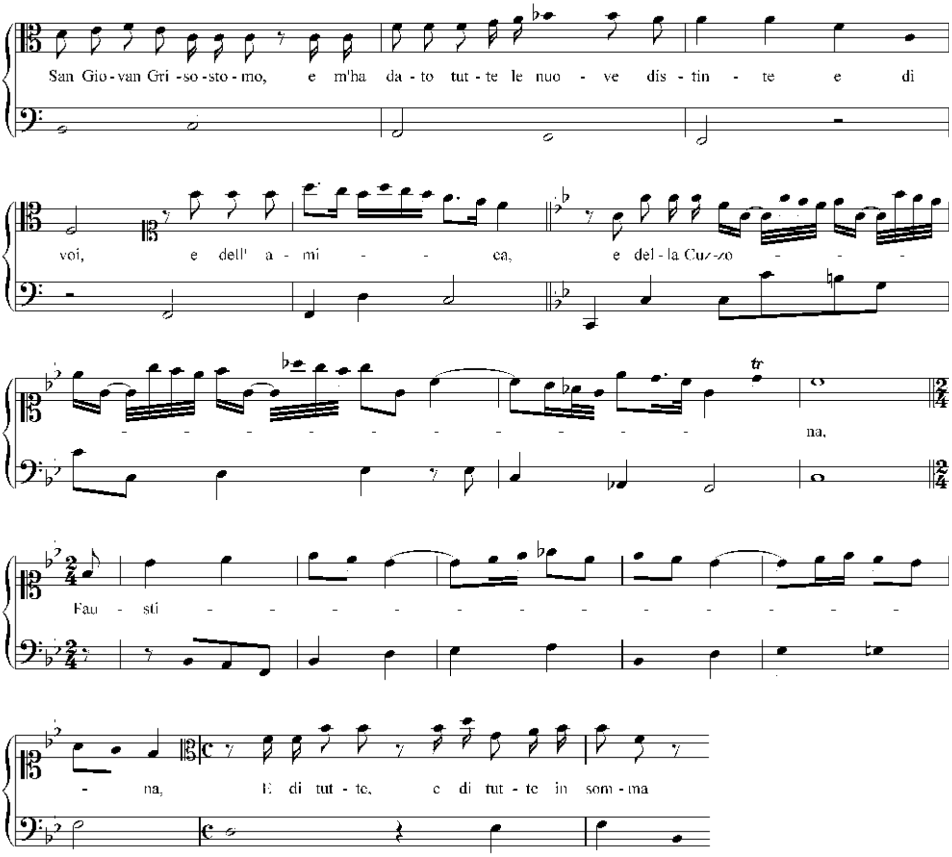
[1] Anne MacNeil notes that the Gelosi company 'made a practice of pitting actress against actress' in the sixteenth century, and discusses in particular the contest of Vittoria Piisimi and Isabella Andreini for the Medici wedding of 1589; see *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte*, 32–76 (at 33). At the same time as the Bordoni–Cuzzoni rivalry, there was antagonism in Paris between Marie Pélissier and Cathérine-Nicole Le Maure and their supporters, 'mauriens' and 'pélissiens'; see Sadler, 'Pélissier, Marie'. Spats between singers and actresses were legion in eighteenth-century London, including Kitty Clive and Susannah Cibber over the part of Polly in *The Beggar's Opera* in the 1730s, and Peg Woffington and George Anne Bellamy over dresses in *The Rival Queens* in 1756. Rupert Christiansen describes 'a great line of rival *prime donne* which includes Grisi and Viardot, Lehmann and Jeritza, Tebaldi and Callas'; *Prima Donna*, 13–14.


San Gio - van Gri - so - sto - mo, e m'ha da - to tut - te le nuo - ve dis - tin - te e di
voi, e dell' a - mi - ca, e del - la Cuz - zo - na,
tr
Fau - sti - na,
E di tut - te, e di tut - te in som - ma

Ex. I An extract from Benedetto Marcello's satirical recitative, 'Lettera del Sig^{r}. Carlo Antonio Benati Scritta alla Sig^{ra}. Vittoria Tesi à Venezia' (1718), naming Faustina and Cuzzoni and employing their respective vocal styles.

represented theirs as complementary talents. From their earliest appearance together, in Antonio Salvi's and Carlo Francesco Pollarolo's *Ariodante* in Venice (1718), the opposition between Faustina and Cuzzoni (as they were known) could be represented in musical terms alone, their names apparently sufficient guarantee of meaning.[2] That year, Benedetto Marcello wrote the satirical recitative 'Lettera del Sig^{r}. Carlo Antonio Benati Scritta alla Sig^{ra}. Vittoria Tesi à Venezia', which suggested Benati's smug self-importance by dropping the names 'Cuzzona [and] Faustina' into his list of Venice's newsworthy figures (Example I).[3] Here, their appropriate musical styles – Cuzzoni's filigree and Faustina's rhythmic assertiveness – are presented as sufficient evidence of Benati's *au courant* knowledge to ensure that no further comment is needed.[4]

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[2] See further discussion of the singers' Italian roles, below pp. 3, 28–9. As this study is focussed on the singers' reception, I will use their popular, stage names throughout.

[3] There are two slightly different versions in La Biblioteca Comunale, Liceo Musicale di Bologna, MSS GG.144 and GG.146; this extract comes from GG.146. On the manuscripts, see: Ferand,

Faustina was already a known quantity in Venice: having been born a Venetian (the child of a 'camarier', or chamber servant), she had made her debut there in Salvi's and Pollarolo's *Ariodante* in 1716, and continued to sing for a number of leading composers in the city until 1725.[5] In the early 1720s she extended her sphere of activity, performing in other Italian cities, in Munich, and eventually in Vienna, in 1725–6.[6] Faustina's early career was not without incident: archival documents refer to her release from a Venetian prison in 1714 when a mere seventeen-year-old (the crime is not specified), and to abduction by a patron.[7] She also probably first encountered Francesca Cuzzoni in Venice. Cuzzoni, the daughter of a violinist, made her debut in her native Parma in 1714, and then in Bologna in 1716. Her appointment as 'virtuosa da camera' to Grand Princess Violante Beatrice of Tuscany in 1717 appears to have extended her performing opportunities in the north, and after her Venetian debut with Faustina in *Ariodante* (1718), she continued to sing in northern Italian cities until her departure for London in 1722.[8] Faustina and Cuzzoni appeared together in five operas in Venice and one in Milan between 1718 and 1721.[9] Each went on to have significant careers, not only in England but on the Continent, where Faustina in particular maintained her standing (in part through a mutually astute marriage to famed composer J. A. Hasse).

As Marcello's 'Lettera' suggests, the singers' vocal styles were consistently subject to scrutiny, often in comparative terms. From the outset of her career, it would seem that Faustina established a distinctive 'modo Faustinare' based on her extraordinary, 'instrumental' vocal agility, which other singers were quick to copy and critics as

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'Embellished "Parody Cantatas"'; Selfridge-Field, *The Music of Benedetto and Alessandro Marcello*, 73–4 (Item A.51).

[4] Ferand suggests that the embellished passages assigned to the names of singers in this letter represent their characteristic modes of ornamentation in 'Embellished "Parody Cantatas"', 45.

[5] Woyke, 'Faustina Bordoni-Hasse', 220.

[6] Dean, 'Bordoni, Faustina'.

[7] The patron who kidnapped Faustina was Isabella Renier Lombria; see Woyke, 'Faustina Bordoni-Hasse', 222.

[8] Dean and Vitali, 'Cuzzoni, Francesca'.

[9] The operas were: A. Salvi and C. F. Pollarolo, *Ariodante* (Venice, 1718), in which Faustina was the princess Ginevra and Cuzzoni her waiting woman Dalinda; B. Pasqualigo and G. M. Orlandini, *Ifigenia in Tauride* (Venice, 1719) with Faustina as Ifigenia and Cuzzoni as Teonoe; D. Lalli and M. Gasparini, *Il Lamano* (Venice, 1719), with Faustina as Altile and Cuzzoni as Tamira; A. Zeno, P. Pariati, G. Vignati, C. Baliani and G. Cozzi, *Ambleto* (Milan, 1719), with Faustina as Veremonda and Cuzzoni as Gerilda; A. Zeno and A. Pollarollo, *Lucio Papirio dittatore* (Venice, 1721) with Faustina as Papiria and Cuzzoni as Rutilia; A. Piovene and G. M. Orlandini, *Nerone* (Venice, 1721), with Faustina as Ottavia and Cuzzoni as Poppea. See Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, VII, 106, 219. For discussion of the women's appearances in *Ariodante*, see Termini, 'From Ariodante to Ariodante', xxxiv, lxxvii.

quick to censure.[10] The first detailed description of the women's talents was provided in 1723 by the famous singing teacher Pier Francesco Tosi, in his *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni*. Tosi's account demonstrates the process of definition (and deification) by opposition:

> The one [Bordoni] is inimitable for a privileged Gift of Singing, and for enchanting the World with a prodigious Felicity in executing, and with a singular Brillant [i.e. coloratura] … which pleases to Excess. The delightful soothing *Cantabile* of the other [Cuzzoni], [joins] with the sweetness of a fine Voice, a perfect Intonation, Strictness of Time, and the rarest Productions of a Genius … The *Pathetick* of the one [Cuzzoni] and the *Allegro* of the other, are the Qualities the most to be admired respectively in each of them. What a beautiful Mixture would it be, if the Excellence of these two angelick Creatures could be united in one single Person![11]

Within the context of the *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni* as a whole, there is an implicit distinction in Tosi's description between Cuzzoni as representative of the older, 'pathetic' style (which Tosi evidently preferred), and Faustina as marking out the technical virtuosity of the new.[12] While Tosi expresses a desire to see these singers 'united in one single Person', as a paragon of vocal beauty, he also warns that they 'make us sensible, that two Women would not be equally eminent if the one copy'd the other'.[13] This tension between a Pygmalion-like vocal ideal and the limitations of (female) corporeal reality continued to inform appreciation of the singers. Following Tosi, J. J. Quantz, Vincenzo Martinelli, Giambattista Mancini, John Hawkins and Charles Burney also talked about the divas as a pair, and specifically as a pair of opposites.[14]

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[10] See Durante, 'Alcune considerazioni', 454. Vincenzo Martinelli described the 'modo Faustinare' under which, despite lack of appropriate capacity and talent, foolish singers chose to imitate Faustina, rather than the 'più naturale' style of Cuzzoni; see also Luigi Riccoboni's similar critique in *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 79–80. Both are discussed in Durante, 'Alcune considerazioni', 455–6.

[11] Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni*, trans. Galliard, 171–2; ed. Pilkington, 79. It is Galliard who identifies the singers to whom Tosi alludes.

[12] Tosi's commentary is often pointed in its attack on the 'new' style (in both singers and composers), though not in this particular comparison of Faustina's and Cuzzoni's vocal characteristics. Durante notes that Tosi was diplomatic in his published accounts, but in private was not in favour of Faustina's vocal style; see 'Alcune considerazioni', 456. Riccoboni also distinguishes Faustina as instigating the Italian fashion in which the 'bizarre' 'is sought instead of *beautiful Simplicity*', and complains 'that it is unreasonable to force a Voice to execute what is too much even for a *Violin* or a *Hautboy*'; *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 78.

[13] Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni*, trans. Galliard, 172, 154, ed. Pilkington, 79, 69.

[14] Quantz, 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', trans. Nettl, 312–13. Quantz's comments on the women are quoted in Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 745–6. Martinelli, *Lettere familiari e critiche*, 359–61; cited in Durante, 'Alcune considerazioni', 455. Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto*

The repeated pairing, which for Tosi (and presumably Marcello) was based on grounds of vocal style and talent, and formed during their repeated appearances together in Venice, subsequently gained the tincture of rivalry only after the women's appearances together in London, singing for the Royal Academy of Music between 1726 and 1728.[15] There, it is generally maintained, the battle for supremacy between Faustina and Cuzzoni precipitated a social furore that, on 6 June 1727, abruptly halted the performance of Giovanni Bononcini's *Astianatte* and thence the season, and may even have hastened the demise of the Royal Academy of Music in 1728.[16] Responding to and inflaming popular perception of the rivalry, contemporary pamphleteers represented the singers as warring protagonists, who (in stereotypically 'catty' female fashion) descended from insults to hairpulling and scratching during the performance.[17] Somewhat surprisingly, given the obviously fictional nature of the satirical pamphlets, opera historians have been happy to follow the satirists' lead, spicing their narratives by repeating such tales of the singers' onstage misbehaviour as fact. In these later re-tellings, the women's London encounter has frequently been related less for its historical importance than for its moral value: these female 'petty jealousies' have both served as a lesson in the dangers of self-aggrandising divas, and provided piquant illustration of the difficulties with which the 'great' Handel had to contend.[18] As the women have been co-opted to

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figurato, 29–35; Hawkins, *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 873; Burney's own description draws particularly on Mancini; see Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 736–9. Burney prefaces both accounts with a description of the women as 'rival singers' (745) and 'rival sirens' (736) respectively.

[15] It has been suggested that in Italy it was accepted practice to have two equal (or nearly equal) leading women in a cast; the rivalry thus appears to have been peculiarly a London phenomenon; see Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 28–70. On the widespread practice of pairing or balancing operas (and elements within them), see Strohm, 'Dramatic Dualities'. The singers' Italian appearances together will be discussed further below.

[16] The Royal Academy of Music continued subsequently in a different managerial guise. According to Quantz, Tosi himself was present in London at this time; 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', trans. Nettl, 314.

[17] *The Devil to pay at St. James's*; *The Contre Temps; or the Rival Queans*. For further discussion of these pamphlets see chapter 2. pp. 68–70, below.

[18] Otto Erich Deutsch says that there was 'a scuffle between the two singers themselves', but does not cite his sources; *Handel*, 209. Winton Dean says there was a 'scuffle on stage' and 'an exchange of blows' in the *New Grove* entries on the singers: 'Bordoni, Faustina' and 'Cuzzoni, Francesca'. More recently, James Wierzbicki has claimed that 'Cuzzoni and Faustina actually came to blows', but again provides no evidence for this assertion; 'Dethroning the Divas', 181. On the 'petty jealousies', see Hogarth, *Memoirs of the Opera*, I, 362. Hogarth does attribute the 'foolish violence' to the 'leaders of fashion', and suggests that the singers' 'petty jealousies … never would have been indulged in, had they not been so absurdly instigated and abetted'. Nonetheless, his discussion also condemns the singers for carrying the 'spirit of rivalry … to an extravagant pitch' (297), and highlights stories of their bad behaviour, such as Cuzzoni's 'pertinacious' refusal to sing one of

serve ideological ends, they have suffered what Roland Barthes has identified as an essential feature of the process of mythologisation: they have disappeared into their role as signs of operatic excess.[19]

Despite recent scholarly interest in the operas written for this pair of singers, it would seem that to many modern operaphiles the 'rival sirens' are redundant, and therefore ridiculous.[20] Yet their joint signification of musical surfeit, in effacing their individuality, registers the problematic relationship between identity and meaning that appears in opera of this period on many levels. In my exploration of the nature of the women's rivalry, issues of identity are central: who were these women and how did they come to be seen as they were through the mechanisms of performance on and off stage? My study of the representation of the women's London encounter between 1726 and 1728 begins with the hypothesis that they were not – or at least not entirely – authors of their own reputations. Even a cursory examination of sources describing the 1727 *Astianatte* debacle reveals that audience factions, not the singers, were responsible for the melee halting the performance; the singers themselves seem to have had no part in the fighting.[21] This being the case, we might ask to what extent their antagonism may have been manufactured by others. In answering these questions, I will look to local cultural background, contemporary report and the operas themselves to assess how and why the women gained the identities they did, speculating that the operas written for them were shaped by the exigencies of the rivalry.[22]

In the process of examining the creation of the singers' rivalry, we will see the paradoxes of performer identity – the link between superfluity and lack – multiplied and compounded, as a complex of social negotiations comes into play.[23] Indeed, problems of identity and meaning will be as much my subject as the intricacies of the

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Handel's arias (301). A similar focus on gossip is found in discussions of actresses; see Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 30.

[19] Barthes, 'Myth Today'.

[20] Consideration of the women's rivalry often forms part of the study of particular operas; more infrequently, it is treated as the subject in itself. The most significant studies are: Baselt, 'Zur Gestaltung des Alcestes-Stoffes in Händels Opera "Admeto"'; Knapp, 'Die Opern *Alessandro* und *Admeto*: Händels dramatischer Balanceakt zwischen drei Starsängern'; King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"'; LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 144–81; Clausen, 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*: Antike Tragödie an der Royal Academy of Music'; Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)'. On the women's earlier roles together, see Termini, 'From Ariodante to Ariodante'.

[21] See the newspaper and other accounts cited in chapter 1, pp. 47–50, below, where this topic is further discussed.

[22] Reinhard Strohm notes that 'Not only individual roles, but whole works were conceived for individual singers'; 'Towards an Understanding of the *opera seria*', 98.

[23] In this respect the singers conformed to what Berta Joncus identifies as the eighteenth-century manufacture of a 'star' persona; see 'Producing Stars in *Dramma per musica*'.

rivalry between Cuzzoni and Faustina. As the following chapter suggests, this was a period when performers' on- and offstage behaviour was closely connected, yet the modern (psychological) idea of the self was only just developing and was cause for much debate.[24] It was, as subsequent chapters will show, a century in which gender roles in society at large were increasingly sharply defined (and strictly policed) and thus one in which individual identity was often (not entirely paradoxically) either subsumed to gender or evaporated altogether.[25] The dominant operatic genre, *opera seria*, provoked abiding audience fascination with gender and sexual identity through its convention of employing castrati (and powerful women); yet, while its plots emphasised archetypal male heroism, men could take women's roles and women (particularly in London) men's, leading satirists to characterise the genre as 'Music, without Distinction of Sexes'.[26] Then too, as we will see, the ornamentation that most strongly reflected the talents peculiar to individual singers also created a disjunction between sound and sense that was profoundly troubling for an age in which the philosophy of self was rooted in rational, moral consciousness.[27]

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[24] Locke's theory of personal identity, propounded in the chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity' in the second edition of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694), has been described as the 'earliest systematic treatment of the problem of personal identity in the history of modern philosophy', and was the particular cause of early eighteenth-century debate; see Allison, 'Locke's Theory of Personal Identity', 105; Fox, *Locke and the Scriblerians*; Fox, 'Defining Eighteenth-Century Psychology'. The eighteenth century's invention of the modern 'subject' has been treated in particular depth in studies of the novel, following Ian Watt's seminal *The Rise of the Novel*. Deidre Shauna Lynch suggests that the distinction between 'round' and 'flat' characters (or a version thereof) 'first became available to readers' in the 1780s; see *The Economy of Character*, 3. The extent to which a psychological conception of the self applies to the eighteenth-century stage is questioned; see, for example, Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 12–17; Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting', 376.

[25] Michel Foucault propounds the idea of the period as one of bodily surveillance and submission in both *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*. Increasing distinction of gender roles is discussed in Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*; Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*; Brown, 'The Defenseless Woman and the Development of English Tragedy', 437–41. Character 'types' also became more sharply distinguished; see Smeed, *The Theophrastan 'Character'*. Still more radically than Locke, David Hume undermined the idea of the self in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), 259: 'The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies.'

[26] Welsted, *The Dissembled Wanton*, I.i. On the socially problematic nature of the role of castrati and powerful women in opera, see my 'An Infinity of Factions'.

[27] The sound/sense dichotomy is one frequently invoked in contemporary criticism of opera. The dissolution of identity when the rational mind ceases to function was already addressed by Locke in the first edition of his *Essay* (1690): 'if we take wholly away all Consciousness of our Actions and Sensations, especially of Pleasure and Pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal Identity'; *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 110; cited in Fox, *Locke and the Scriblerians*, 28.

Contemporaries were well aware of the paradoxes entailed in notions of identity (as the abiding popularity of the masquerade in this period indicates). They looked, perhaps, to the theatre and the theatrical (in entertainments such as the masquerade) more than anywhere else to explore identity's hinterland.[28] Opera also participated in these explorations. In the works prepared for the 'rival sirens' during the period 1726–8, when distinctions between performers became particularly pressing, we might expect especially to trace such concerns. Seeing this altercation through the lens of wider contemporary concerns will wrest significance from the (apparently) inconsequential realm of thespian bickering, and may also aid in revitalising our appreciation of a musical genre which many, while admiring individual works, nonetheless also find trivial.

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My exploration of Cuzzoni's and Faustina's appearance together in London necessarily focusses on works for which the music survives substantially intact, namely those operas prepared by Handel and his (sometimes anonymous) librettists: *Alessandro* (1726), *Admeto* (1727), *Riccardo primo* (1727), *Siroe* (1728) and *Tolomeo* (1728). These were also the most successful of the works staged in these years of the Royal Academy of Music (1719–28), as Table I indicates. Indeed, Handel's general popularity is attested by the fact that his operas, and his alone, were revived during this period.

However, some discussion of London's other composers is also necessary, for they played a significant role in structuring the women's competition. It was in Giovanni Bononcini's *Astianatte* (1727) that the audience factionalism came to a head; an exploration of the libretto and surviving music in chapter 2 suggests why it might have provoked such disputes. Attilio Ariosti's *Lucio Vero* (1727) suggests, in turn, the problematic view of the operatic hero which, in a different way (as we will see in chapter 5), was further explored in Handel's *Siroe* and *Tolomeo*. Then too, the libretti and collections of 'favourite songs' from other operas by Bononcini and Ariosti contribute to our understanding of Cuzzoni's and Faustina's dramatic and vocal characteristics.

The first chapter explores the nature of persona and identity construction on the early eighteenth-century London stage, and in particular the contradictions

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[28] The assumption of such an awareness lies behind Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization*; the 'theatricalisation of social relations' through the period's economic exigencies is examined in Agnew, *Worlds Apart*; and the central thesis of Lisa Freeman's *Character's Theater* is that play with the nature of the self and personal character was at the heart of the eighteenth-century English theatrical enterprise. Contemporary philosophical discussions of identity make significant use of theatrical reference: David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* used the theatre as the metaphor for the mind's operations: 'The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations …'; cited in Burns, *Character*, 196.

Table I: *Operas in which Faustina and Cuzzoni appeared, London 1726–8*

Librettist/composer	Work	Premiere	No. of performances*
Rolli/Handel	*Alessandro*	May 1726	13
Haym/Ariosti	*Lucio Vero*	January 1727	7
Anon./Handel	*Admeto*	January 1727	19
rev. Handel	*Ottone*	*April 1727*	2
rev. Handel	*Floridante*	*April 1727*	2
Haym?/Bononcini	*Astianatte*	May 1727	9
rev. Handel	*Admeto*	*October 1727*	6
Anon./Ariosti	*Teuzzone*	October 1727	3/4
rev. Handel	*Admeto*	*November 1727*	1
Rolli/Handel	*Riccardo primo*	November 1727	11
rev. Handel	*Alessandro*	*December 1727*	4
rev. Handel	*Radamisto*	*January 1728*	c.7
Haym/Handel	*Siroe*	February 1728	18
Haym/Handel	*Tolomeo*	April 1728	7
rev. Handel	*Admeto*	*May 1728*	3

* The source for performance information is *The London Stage, 1660–1800. Part 2: 1700–1729*, with the exception of the revival of *Radamisto* in 1728; this information and performance figures for Handel are drawn from: Burrows, *Handel*, 388–9.

contained within the rival singers' oppositional characterisation. Although Italian opera was by this time an international genre, local theatrical context could inflect its meaning and hence influence its structure in fundamental ways, as this chapter will demonstrate. Thereafter, I will pursue the negotiation of the performers' identities through a close examination of different aspects of several operas. In coming to understand how *Astianatte* ignited factional hostilities, chapter 2 looks first to Cuzzoni's earlier London roles, considering how characterisation strategies might have differed before and after Faustina's arrival. In particular, examination of alterations Handel made to the title role in *Rodelinda* (1725) suggests that the operatic tradition for variety of affect in representation of character could at times be used to focus on certain antitheses within Cuzzoni's roles, antitheses which held wider social significance. Such focus recalls the 'point' or 'hit' that constituted a primary semiotic mechanism of contemporaneous spoken theatre, designed to highlight key moments in the action and at the same time foreground the actor as didactic envoy. The 'pointing' deployed after Faustina's arrival, however, emphasised antithesis between rather than within characters. No work demonstrates this better than *Astianatte*, in which the dramatic catastrophe deploys a tableau that heightens and distills Cuzzoni's and Faustina's conflict, in their portrayal as the epitomes of good and bad womanhood respectively.

'Pointing' as a device underscores the fragmentary multivalence which twentieth-century theorists have rediscovered as central to the theatrical event, but which eighteenth-century audiences simply took for granted. The third chapter further pursues the combinative power of the fragment, examining the means by which both singers' alienation from fixed, self-sufficient identities was explored and exploited in their joint operas. Starting with a consideration of Handel's *Alessandro*, but taking his *Admeto* as its principal subject, the chapter will show that the opera management's artful manipulation of the women's appearance on stage encouraged the atomising and thus the commodifying of their attributes. In employing the miniature portrait and female disguise as its two central plot devices, *Admeto* explicitly plays with notions of authenticity and identity, with female mutability, and with anxiety and disavowal. The deliberate visual and musical muddling of the two women leads me to suggest that we might see this opera as itself a disavowal of the individuality of each singer and of her power as an autonomous professional woman.

If my third chapter seems to portray the opera management as manipulating the trope of female rivalry to the women's detriment, the fourth suggests an alternative view. Exploring the impact on the company's plans of the factionalism as it spun out of control, the chapter examines the rationale behind the substantial changes made to Handel's *Riccardo primo* between May and November 1727. Handel completed the first version of this opera just a few weeks before the season collapsed so spectacularly over *Astianatte*, and thus had to defer the opera's premiere. It seems logical to assume that this collapse would have had some impact on subsequent works; indeed, in order to alleviate factional hostilities, it seems that the next operas were structured not on a principle of provocation but on one of equality. The numerous alterations made to *Riccardo primo* between May and November then suggest the power of a singer (or at least of her supporters) to affect the course of an opera, but at the same time, as we will see, they also return us disquietingly to the realisation that the singers' equality too easily becomes interdependence.

As the women's relationship was emphasised and their actions took precedence in the audience's minds, so they attained precedence in the plots as well, where the key indicator of prestige was a woman's relationship to the *primo uomo*. In the triangular dynamic established between Faustina, Cuzzoni and the company's *primo uomo*, Senesino, librettists initially (as we will see) used the issue of relationship primacy to maintain suspense for as long as possible. Thus, chapter 5 will suggest, the love interest often became a central issue, while, at the same time, the *primo uomo* was denied the option of making a quick, decisive choice: forthright heroism was not necessarily rescinded, but the plot's ultimate goal (and the audience's key point of interest) was the resolution of romantic attachment. Curiously, the company appears to have thematised this difficulty, casting Senesino as weak or ineffective in more than one work. This chapter focusses on perhaps the clearest dramatic enunciation of heroic redundancy, Handel's *Siroe*. In a country already hostile to Italian opera for its putative effeminacy, the effect of undermining the masculinity of the 'hero' could only have been negative: it is scarcely surprising that, during his time in London, Senesino bore the brunt of satirical attack on Italian opera.

There was, though, a further and perhaps more important philosophical problem for opera in London during this period, one centring on the musical device at the heart of *bel canto* opera's structural design. In the conclusion I turn to the business of ornamentation, *opera seria*'s most characteristic but ephemeral feature, and the point on which Cuzzoni and Faustina were most frequently distinguished. It was ornamentation that most strongly reflected the talents peculiar to individual singers, but it also served both to render them something more (or less) than human – wondrous, specialised machines – and, through its putative separation of sound from sense, to separate the listeners from their rational selves.

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My exploration of this brief period in operatic history highlights the contested and contradictory nature of performer identity and its importance for traditional operatic communication. But I must also acknowledge the tensions present in my reading, with twenty-first-century modes of understanding identity overlayering eighteenth-century ones, the local theatrical practice often overlayering a set of international musical conventions: such tensions stimulate our awareness of the constructed nature of identity, of its continuities as well as its historical variety. They also serve to emphasise the essential physicality and embodiedness of eighteenth-century opera in ways that position the genre as strongly in the significative economy of local theatrical (and thence cultural) life – in this case, that of London – as in the conventions of *opera seria*, or indeed of the musical world that has been the dominant focus of Handel scholarship.[29] This contextual approach seems only logical: operas, after all, are as much events as they are objects, and as ritual practices they share much with and affect other forms of social ritual.[30] Nonetheless, this approach diverges markedly from some assumptions commonly underpinning work on Handel's operas, by which the operas (like their composer) are depicted as culturally isolated but musically part of a continuum of great works, on a par with those of

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[29] There is, of course, already much excellent work that seeks appropriate contextualisation for *opera seria* (or *dramma per musica*), of which I gratefully acknowledge particularly the influence of Reinhard Strohm. For oratorio, Ruth Smith's groundbreaking study, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, is of signal importance.

[30] In describing opera as ritual I am of course invoking the (relatively young) discipline of performance studies, and particularly the work of Turner and Schechner; see Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 16–19. For demonstration of the relevance of aspects of performance studies for opera of this period, see Feldman, 'Magic Mirrors and the Seria Stage'; and Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*.

Mozart or Verdi. It is understandable, of course, given the incomprehension with which *opera seria* was commonly greeted until relatively recently, that music historians should seek to build bridges to the past by casting the genre in terms readily comprehensible to a modern appreciation. We wanted (and still want) to see Handel's characters as rounded psychological presentations in order to make of his operas satisfying, understandable dramatic wholes, comparable to those of the nineteenth century. While such an approach may assert the value of *opera seria* in modern terms, it fails to do justice to the historical distance and (troubling) difference of the genre – distinctions which, as so many have demonstrated for music and the arts of other centuries, may themselves hold some value for us.

The enthusiasm for seeing Handel's operas as narratives of complexly developed, 'rounded' characters is one produced not only by a post-romantic psychologised understanding of 'personality',[31] but also by the (associated) idealist critical drive to divorce text from performance.[32] There is a long history of attempts at such segregation in the spoken theatre: already in the early nineteenth century, literary scholars such as Coleridge and Charles Lamb were set on separating Shakespeare from the sullying presence of the stage. Lamb asserted: 'What we see upon the stage is body and bodily action; what we are conscious of in reading is almost exclusively the mind, and its movements.'[33] Lamb's contrast clearly implies that subtle intellectual appreciation of character is achieved more fully by readers (especially critics) than by actors and theatregoers, engaged primarily by the physical.[34] Such criticism of the superficiality of performance achieved particular vigour where opera was concerned in the twentieth century, with the advent of recordings.[35] Something of this belief remains in critical appreciations of Handel's operas that privilege his (and sometimes his librettist's) unifying conception over the supposedly transient influence of the singer.[36] (Unity of character might thus be seen as the operatic substitute for the unity of tonal design praised in later works, and sometimes in Handel.) Yet, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the very notion of 'unity of character' was formed only in the wake of actor David Garrick's apparently revolutionary impact on the mid-eighteenth-century stage – in other words, subsequent to Handel's operatic work and in response to the performer rather than the author.[37] Thus Samuel Foote, in his *Treatise on the Passions, so far as they regard the Stage* (1747), suggested the novelty and national uniqueness of this conception when he opined that there had recently been added to Aristotle's triumvirate of unities 'another, disregarded by the writers of other Countries, Unity of Character'.[38]

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[31] Such terms were only coming into their modern philosophical use in the eighteenth century, particularly around and following Locke's *Essay*: see the *OED*; Anthony Collins and Samuel Clarke debated 'personality' in 1706–8, while the author of *An Essay on Consciousness* (1728) asserted that he was exploring a 'wholly new' subject; cited in Fox, *Locke and the Scriblerians*, 10, 11. Deidre Lynch's analysis of the concept of 'character' is illuminating in this regard; see note 24 above. Melania Bucciarelli observes that Corneille's emphasis on the fixity of a character's *moeurs* (or ethos) invalidates our search for 'development' of characters in drama of this period; *Italian Opera and European Theatre, 1680–1720*, 8. See also Brown, *English Dramatic Form, 1660–1760*, 4, on Restoration heroic drama: 'As a rule, characterization is simple rather than complex, character development minimal or absent, and depth or interiority are rare.'

[32] On the longstanding antitheatricalism of philosophical idealism, see Puchner, *Drama of Ideas*, 6–7.

[33] Charles Lamb, *Works*; cited in Burns, *Character*, 199.

[34] In the seventeenth century, Pierre Corneille spoke up for the reader: 'Aristotle veut que la tragédie bien faite soit belle et capable de plaire sans le secours des comédiens, et hors de la représentation.' (Aristotle wants the well-made tragedy to be beautiful and able to please without the help of actors, and without representation.) But Corneille did not see the reader as better than the spectator, rather he sought practical means to compensate the former for the loss of performance; see 'Discours des trois unités d'action, de jour, et de lieu', in Corneille, *Oeuvres complètes*, 843.

[35] For perhaps the most famous example of such critique, see: Adorno, '"Die Oper Überwintert auf der Langspielplatte"'.

As Foote's appropriation of both classical lineage and national patrimony might suggest, there is more than a little political grandstanding in any appeal to the critical high ground. My aim is not to replace the shibboleth of authorially determined unity with a postmodern, 'democratic' aesthetic of performer-centred disunity. But I would suggest that the radical, fundamental multivalence of the operatic event is simply unavoidable if we look at it as an event, as a piece of theatre rather than as a work.[39] London audiences were certainly keenly aware of the polysemous nature of theatre, and of the theatricality of their own lives.[40] The eighteenth-century theatre and its

[36] For an incisive and still relevant critique of a score-centred approach to the genre, see Reinhard Strohm, 'Towards an Understanding of the *opera seria*'.

[37] Burns notes that 'it is from the mid-century onwards that ideas of identity and unity replace discussion of distinct "passions" in the criticism of acting and drama'; even then, the concept of identity was, as Burns puts it, 'externalised', constructed more around 'imaginary biographies' than psychological analysis; *Character*, 193. Michael R. Booth observes Sarah Siddons's innovation in attempting to establish 'unity of design' in character depiction in the late eighteenth century; 'Sarah Siddons', in Booth, Stokes and Bassnett, *Three Tragic Actresses*, 43.

[38] Foote, *The Roman and English Comedy Consider'd and Compar'd* (1747); cited in Burns, *Character*, 192. Richard Cumberland's comparison of Garrick to James Quin, in which 'it seemed as if a whole century had been swept over in the transition of a single scene', is the most famous account of the former's 'revolution' in style, but how 'revolutionary' Garrick was is still a matter of debate; for discussion see Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting'. As E. H. Gombrich, most famously, has observed with regard to the visual arts (in *Art and Illusion*), what is 'natural' is always culturally determined and historically contingent.

[39] See Feldman's *Opera and Sovereignty* for an examination of *opera seria* as a site of ritual 'cultural subjunctivity' (18), which encourages a broader examination than is intended here of the interlinked development of the genre's formal structures and meaning in the eighteenth century.

[40] Kristina Straub notes that the boundaries between spectator and spectacle were continuously contested in *Sexual Suspects*, 4. Joseph Roach has observed: '[A] principal instrument for the aestheticization of daily social life, for the micropolitical inculcation of the ideology of the aesthetic in the eighteenth century, was the theatre'; 'Theatre History and the Ideology of the Aesthetic', 157.

drama thus provided opportunity for a diverse and fluid epistemology of self and society, at once reflecting and testing the boundaries of social structure, gender and individuality.[41] As we will see, what is special about the operatic events of London 1726–8 is the way in which they threw into relief not only the communicative strategies of *opera seria*, but also the construction of identity – particularly female identity – in and through the theatre, at a time when much was at stake. That they might also give us pause to consider the construction and function of operatic historiography is attested by the continued potency of the 'rival divas' myth.

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[41] Studies of the eighteenth-century theatre frequently make this point; see, for example, Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 4; Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 81. On a broader anthropological plane, the role of cultural performance as the root of identity formation was central to Victor Turner's work on ritual and theatre; see Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 19. The importance of an epistemological approach to self-understanding in the eighteenth century is emphasised by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel*, especially 9–34.

1 | The character of the actress

> It struck him abruptly that a woman whose only being was to 'make believe', to make believe she had any and every being you might like and that would serve a purpose and produce a certain effect, and whose identity resided in the continuity of her personations, so that she had no moral privacy, as he phrased it to himself, but lived in a high wind of exhibition, of figuration – such a woman was a kind of monster in whom of necessity there would be nothing to 'be fond' of because there would be nothing to take hold of. He felt for a moment how simple he had been not to have achieved before this analysis of the actress.[1]

While theatre semioticians have long focussed on the multivalence of actors on stage, Henry James's analysis in *The Tragic Muse* (1890) seems instead to assert that the actress's own awareness of the means by which she constructs onstage roles informs the theatricality of her offstage persona.[2] For modern theorists and for James, however, there is a sense that on- and offstage roles are contaminated not only by each other, but also by social expectations (both general and particular) – and thus a sense of the concomitant complexity of the act of performance, wherever it occurs. The appreciation of such complexity has of late been turned to good account in assessing the meaning (and thus the validity) of eighteenth-century English drama, historically much maligned for its apparent lack of integrity as literature, but for that reason all the more interesting as a socio-cultural phenomenon.[3] In this light, the role of the actor and actress on the British stage in this period has been recuperated as a means to explore the construction of identity in the eighteenth century.[4]

The prospect that the (female) singer's role in London's opera house might be understood in a similar vein is an intriguing one, and may, as suggested in the Introduction, be particularly important for explaining the existence and nature of the Faustina–Cuzzoni rivalry. In order to assess the viability of that prospect, it will be helpful to see the peculiarities of characterisation on the operatic stage at this time as part of a broader theatrical context – in particular, that of Britain. While it may seem odd to judge Italian singers against the standards of the British theatre, the commentary on London audience expectations by men such as Paolo Rolli, Giuseppe Riva and Owen Swiney, concerned with the opera company's success, suggests that that was precisely what the audiences were doing.[5] Although the satirical image of opera virtuosi in this period generated by reformist critics has encouraged us to believe they paid no heed to acting at all, there is much evidence to refute this in the commentaries of opera-goers and directorial musings of librettists (particularly Pietro Metastasio).[6] Indeed, there appears to have been – even in the age of *bel canto* – a reciprocity of technique between the best singing actors and those in the spoken theatre: the castrato Nicolini evidently influenced his contemporaries in London, as David Garrick was later to influence Gaetano Guadagni.[7] Putting evidence about acting on the operatic stage alongside that from the spoken theatre therefore seems a fruitful path to pursue.

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[1] James, *The Tragic Muse*, 126.

[2] '"*Persona*", related to "*prosopon*", carries with it the implication of a role one plays as agent within a community'; Behan, 'Locke on Persons and Personal Identity', 68.

[3] An early exploration of drama's and the theatre's social function in London is found in Loftis's *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England*.

[4] See, in particular, Freeman, *Character's Theater*.

In early eighteenth-century *dramma per musica*, as Reinhard Strohm's observations have shown, characterisation was not undertaken in a way that is now familiar: the passions and virtues were opera's subjects, which characters articulated or represented emblematically (as the importance of simile arias underscores). Musically, too, serious opera's structural design around discrete scenic units building to a da capo aria suggests that characterisation, while to some extent concerned with staging interiority, was not thought of in terms of modern, psychological continuity and coherence.[8] Recent studies of contemporaneous spoken theatre support this reading: while a distinguished succession of scholars (from Ian Watt onwards) have shown that the contemporary novel was particularly concerned with manufacturing and sustaining the illusion of a unified, knowable subject, theatre scholarship has suggested that the very nature of the early eighteenth-century theatre precluded it from participating in such a discourse.[9] As Bernard Beckerman has noted, 'in a highly traditional and articulate theater … audiences tend to be more cognizant of the performing features or surface'.[10] Samuel Johnson confirmed this approach for the neoclassical British theatre in his 'Preface to Shakespeare':

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[5] For examples, see the correspondence of Rolli and Riva in *Händel-Handbuch 4*, and for Swiney see Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 348–82.

[6] As noted in chapter 2, below, Joseph Addison advised actors to take deportment lessons from Nicolini in *The Spectator* no. 13 (15 March 1711); on Metastasio's interest in acting see Cotticelli and Maione, 'Metastasio', 79–81. For comment on general misunderstanding of the importance of acting to the virtuoso's performance see Durante, 'The Opera Singer', 369.

[7] Roach, 'Cavaliere Nicolini', 200–5; Heartz, 'From Garrick to Gluck'. Of course, in opera's early days, its singers were often primarily performers in the spoken theatre; see Durante, 'The Opera Singer'.

[8] Strohm, however, does point out that 'the growing tendency towards heroic-historical subjects (as opposed to mythological ones) helped to make characters appear more human, more "psychologically" motivated'; Strohm, *Dramma per Musica:* 18. On the aesthetics of character creation in *opera seria* see also Neville, 'Moral Philosophy in Metastasian Dramas'.

[9] Deidre Lynch, however, points out that the modern understanding of 'character' as 'a person regarded as the possessor of specified qualities' (*OED*) only 'emerges tardily' in the eighteenth-century novel, and that we should rather understand 'character' in such writings in terms of the social legibility that already governed the meaning of 'numismatic, typographic, and physiognomic characters'; *The Economy of Character*, 35. See also Kraft, *Character and Consciousness*. The novel's

> The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place.[11]

In accordance with that mode of perception, the theatre's focus on 'character' invoked traditional ideas of legible behaviour and brought the contradictions inherent in the idea of the subject to the fore.[12] Indeed, the idea of 'character' in general and its expression in the theatre only changed in the mid-eighteenth century from classical ideals of social legibility to something closer to our sense of an 'individual moral essence'.[13]

The relevance for opera of this enquiry into the nature of 'character' might be seen in Edward Burns's description of character portrayal in acting prior to actor David Garrick's revolutionary mid-century innovations: 'For a seventeenth-century actor a role was a sequence of loci, a series of places in the progress of a plot where the decision to act, a choice or action or the consequence of action were articulated.'[14] Not surprisingly, several theatre scholars have employed the idea of the aria as a metaphor to describe the function of spoken theatre's 'episodic set pieces'.[15]

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notion of the subject is commonly thought to have been upheld against the onslaught of philosophers who questioned the very idea of continuous personal identity, and the commercial social mobility that undermined it.

[10] Beckerman, 'Theatrical Perception', 162; cited in Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 71. William O. Beeman observes that opera in general is a 'marked' form of theatre (in the linguistic sense), and as such 'draws attention … to itself as a theatrical form'; 'The Anthropology of Theater and Spectacle', 377.

[11] Johnson, 'Preface to Shakespeare'; cited in Burns, *Character*, 189.

[12] Lisa Freeman's study of character in eighteenth-century theatre highlights the differences between the novel and the stage in portrayal of individual identity; see *Character's Theater*, 7, 11–46.

[13] Burns, *Character*, 6. This shift is defined by Laura Brown as influencing the trajectory of dramatic form in the century, moving from the 'social standard of assessment' governing the dominant late seventeenth-century genres of heroic drama and comedic social satire to its 'antithesis' in late eighteenth-century drama that 'defines merit in terms of inner moral worth'; *English Dramatic Form*, xv–xvi.

[14] Burns suggests that this style is in contrast to Garrick's 'creation of a distinct coherent persona which replaced the actor's own'; he observes that 'Such a shift is more than a matter of technique. It redefines the objectives of acting'; *Character*, 185–6; for contrasting views on Garrick's significance, see p. 76, below. See also Robinson, 'How to Demonstrate Virtue', 49; Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 42.

[15] Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 32; Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 72.

Downing Thomas has shown that this sense of the aria as a phenomenal articulation of structural points within an opera was also particularly apparent in contemporaneous *opéra comique*, so that in certain *ariettes* 'the self-awareness and reflexivity of the staged moment appear central to its effect, as if the represented scene is all the more emotionally charged for being staged *en abîme*'.[16]

A self-consciously articulated conception of character was based not only on the exigencies of the eighteenth-century theatre, but also on broader dramatic aesthetics and theories of persona, both on and off stage. As Burns's description might imply, characterisation in general was highly taxonomic, most commonly conforming to that of the Theophrastan character, portraying an individual as representative of a generalised class of people, always exhibiting the same, telling behavioural traits.[17] This approach is most recognisable in the comic theatre, including *opera buffa*, which drew strongly on *commedia dell'arte*, but it is also important in serious or tragic drama.[18] Thus John Dryden, in his influential 'Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy' (1679), encapsulated the neoclassical view in forming the connection between the 'manners' (or *ethos*, or *mores/moeurs*) and 'character':

> The manners in a Poem, are understood to be those inclinations, whether natural or acquir'd, which move and carry us to actions, good, bad, or indifferent in a Play; or which incline the persons to such, or such actions … From the manners, the Characters of persons are deriv'd, for indeed the characters are no other than the inclinations, as they appear in the several persons of the Poem; a character being thus defin'd, that which distinguishes one man from another.[19]

He underscored the Theophrastan legibility of manners and character 'type', noting that '[t]he last property of manners is, that they must be constant, and equal, that is, maintain'd the same through the whole design'.[20] Such a conception of 'character' in its practical expression on the stage requires it to be understood by behaviour – by what a person does.[21]

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[16] Thomas, 'Je vous répondrez au troisième couplet', 26.

[17] Smeed, *The Theophrastan 'Character'*. Lisa Freeman notes with regard to English theatre that 'the plays themselves exhibit a curious lack of depth in characterization … if there is any sense of coherence … it derives more from the conventional imperatives of genre than from the persistence or growth of individual consciousness across time'; *Character's Theater*, 7. On the use of 'classification systems' see also Kraft, *Character and Consciousness*, 16. The symbolic nature of theatrical and literary characterisation is emphasised in that other common means of depicting individuals, the type: Paul Korshin explains that 'The *type* is Christian, prefigurative, a structural unit relating closely to the great drama of the promise of Christian salvation'; *Typologies in England,* 112–13. Korshin caution that 'the term, "character type" … is a nineteenth-century invention' (113).

[18] For an overview of characterisation in *opera buffa*, see Cicali, 'Roles and Acting', who however maintains that 'serious opera roles reflected primarily the virtuosic qualities of the singers' (85).

[19] Dryden, 'Grounds of Criticism', 234, 236.

[20] Dryden, 'Grounds of Criticism', 236.

[21] Burns, *Character*, 191–2.

This is not to say that individual performers were reduced to symbolic ciphers for abstract ideas of pre-determined 'character'; what we know of the period's performance style, with its emphasis on the ownership of parts on the operatic and the spoken stage alike, and the concomitant moulding of roles to the individual (in both writing and performance), suggests a much more dynamic interplay of dramatic and theatrical meaning.[22] The shift from a neoclassical focus on the *praxis* of plot (in which characters were seen as subsidiary to the drama's moral message) to a later eighteenth-century aesthetic in which the drama was chiefly about the development of individual characters, was achieved in large part through interest in the actor.[23] The figure at the centre of that shift, David Garrick, himself articulated this most clearly with a clever piece of self-publicity, the 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee celebration in Stratford, in which not the plays, but a procession of Shakespeare's characters was the centre of attention. Portraiture of actors supports this reading: eighteenth-century depiction of British actors is dominated by the single- and double-figure portrait, showing figures in typical poses – in alignment with the century's growing interest in individual performance rather than the dramatic whole.[24] A disgruntled German visitor to London complained late in the century that 'no attention is paid any more to good dialogue; effect is all that is demanded. One goes to the theater to see, scarcely any longer to hear.'[25]

A version of this complaint had long been made about opera in its apparent focus on the individual singer's voice over narrative sense; the prevalence of the individual in the spoken theatre, which encouraged an acting style emphasising striking poses and stylised presentation of roles, certainly had parallels with the singer's role in opera dominated by the aria. An exceptional singing actor – such as the castrato Nicolini, who performed in London in the early eighteenth century – would be at pains to put his talent at the service of dramatic propriety, but his stylised and (literally) statuesque mode of acting ensured he remained the focus, as Richard Steele's praise of Nicolini's 1710 performance in *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* makes clear:

> For my own part I was fully satisfied with the sight of an actor, who, by the grace and propriety of his action and gesture, does honour to the human figure … Signior Nicolini …

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[22] On ownership of roles on the operatic stage, see, for example, Strohm, 'Metastastio's *Alessandro nell'Indie*'. William Worthen and Lisa Freeman, among others, demonstrate the interconnectedness of audience expectations and dramatic and theatrical structures for the British theatre; see Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 71–2; Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 28–32.

[23] Burns, *Character*, 174–202.

[24] West, *The Image of the Actor*, 5, 7–25, esp. 18–21. See also Burnim, *David Garrick*, 57. For an analysis of the dominance of the actor in Restoration drama, see Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, 55–98, and *passim*. On the relationship between portraiture and stagecraft, see also Asleson (ed.), *A Passion for Performance*.

[25] Georg Forster, writing in 1790, and quoted in Kelly, *German Visitors to English Theaters in the Eighteenth Century*, 140; cited in West, *Image of the Actor*, 65.

> sets off the character he bears in an opera by his action, as much as he does the words of it by his voice. Every limb and every finger contributes to the part he acts, inasmuch that a deaf man may go along with him in the sense of it. There is scarce a beautiful posture in an old statue which he does not plant himself in, as the different circumstances of the story give occasion for it. He performs the most ordinary action in a manner suitable to the greatness of his character, and shows the prince even in the giving of a letter, or despatching of a messenger. Our best actors are somewhat at a loss to support themselves with proper gesture, as they move from any considerable distance to the front of the stage; but I have seen the person of whom I am now speaking enter alone at the remotest part of it, and advance from it with such greatness of air and mien as seemed to fill the stage, and, at the same time, commanded the attention of the audience with the majesty of his appearance.[26]

If the structure of *opera seria* allowed a performer such as Nicolini to retain the audience's attention, it made equal allowance for less dramatically committed (or distinguished) singers. Such behaviour was satirised by critics like Benedetto Marcello:

> In an ensemble scene, when addressed by another character or while the latter might have to sing an arietta, he should wave greeting to some masked lady-friend in one of the boxes, or smile sweetly to someone in the orchestra or to one of the supers. In that way it will be made quite clear to the audience that he is Alipio Forconi, the famous singer, and not the Prince Zoroastro whose part he is playing.[27]

Sought-after singers could also assert their individual dominance over the illusion of dramatic narrative by insisting upon the insertion of an *aria di baule*, often as a 'signature tune' upon their entrance.[28]

In itself, as the description of Nicolini demonstrates, this style encouraged a focus on the physical presence of the performer (on the spoken stage just as much as on the operatic). The author of the treatise *The Actor* quipped of artists new to the stage:

> The person of a new performer is more talked of than his action; and if they are solicitous to see him out of the introductory Othello, it is not to examine what variety there is in his manner, but to see how he will look when the black is off his face.[29]

Furthermore, as common use of the 'Protean' metaphor in descriptions of actors implied, older humoural theories about the causal link between physique, physiognomy, behaviour and state of mind were still current, and meant that the boundaries between actor and character were thought easily crossed.[30] While the individual actor generated much audience attention, it was in part because a mutual influence was assumed between offstage behaviour (character) and the roles (characters) performed on stage. In the early part of the century in Britain, popular essays such as the *Tatler*'s on actress Anne Oldfield confirmed these associations: Oldfield was praised for her good looks and attire, but only because 'the make of her mind very much contributes to the ornament of her body … there is so immediate a relation between our thoughts and gestures, that a woman must think well to look well'.[31] Such assumptions continued to obtain – about women in particular – throughout the century.[32] This was not only a matter of theatrical convention, but was also an epistemological necessity: Deidre Lynch notes the importance placed on the significative transparency of the face in the early eighteenth century, observing that well-drawn characters and faces 'materialize the presuppositions about language's operation [that is, its proximity to truth] that commentators … tend to deem vital to commerce and to a well-run society'.[33]

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[26] *Tatler*, 3 January 1710. For further discussion of Nicolini's impact in London, see Roach, 'Cavaliere Nicolini'.

[27] Marcello, *Il teatro alla moda*, 1, 389.

[28] See Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 14; Freeman, 'An 18th-Century Singer's Commission of "Baggage" Arias'; Robert Freeman suggests Farinelli may have been unusual in his relatively limited use of re-used arias, perhaps because he had greater verbal and musical literacy than most of his peers; 'Farinello and His Repertory', 322–3.

[29] John Hill, *The Actor*, 141; cited in Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 13.

But this perceived transparency (or enacted permeability) had negative as well as positive implications for actor as well as for society. Within the theatre, it is hardly surprising that audiences were notorious for rejecting – sometimes spectacularly – an actor considered inappropriate to a part, or who had already made his or her name in another type of role.[34] Outside it, an individual's character would be judged – even in a court of law – by his or her onstage predilections and nature as an actor: when theatre manager Theophilus Cibber sued William Sloper for adultery with his wife, the actress and singer Susannah Maria Cibber, one Serjeant Eyre explained on behalf of the defendant that as actors 'are made to fall in love with each other, this day with one, tomorrow with another', they must therefore have 'an uncommon propensity to love without any confinement of the passion to a particular subject', and thus ''tis very likely that this enters into their common course of life'.[35]

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[30] Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 47–52. Charles Gildon explained that 'Every Passion or Emotion of the Mind has from Nature its proper and peculiar Countenance, Sound, and Gesture; and the whole body of Man, all his looks, and every Sound of his voice, like the strings of an instrument, receive their sounds from the various impulse of the Passions'; Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton,* 43.

[31] *Tatler*, 212 (17 August 1710).

[32] Asleson, '"She was Tragedy Personified"', 43: 'Letters of the period reveal a particular interest in comparing Siddons's appearance on the stage with that in normal life. In her reminiscences, she attested to her indignation at finding her private home transformed into a public theater by those who felt they had as much right to see her off the stage as on.'

[33] Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 30–1. Perhaps partly for this reason the eighteenth century developed an increasingly complex and sophisticated iconic (as opposed to rhetorical) acting style; see Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting'. By contrast, the social reformer Addison, in his discussion of physiognomy in *The Spectator* 86 (8 June 1711), notes that while 'every one is in some degree a master of that art which is generally distinguished by the name of physiognomy; and naturally forms to himself the character or fortune of a stranger, from the features and lineaments of his face', 'nothing can be more glorious than for a man to give the lie to his face, and to be an honest, just, good-natured man, in spite of all those marks and signatures which nature seems to have set upon him for the contrary'.

[34] Colley Cibber discusses the case of the unfortunate Samuel Sandford in *An Apology*, 76–82, esp. 77–8; see also Ross, 'Samuel Sandford'; Holland, *Ornament of Action*, 59, 79–81; Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production*, 102–3; West, *Image of the Actor*, 23–4.

Because performers' on- and offstage lives were conflated in the popular response (and critical assessments), actors were often careful in their choice of roles. In his colourful *Apology*, the actor-manager and playwright Colley Cibber reminisced:

> [T]he private Character of an Actor, will always, more or less, affect his Publick Performance … I have seen the most tender Sentiment of Love, in Tragedy, create Laughter, instead of Compassion, when it has been applicable to the real Engagements of the Person, that utter'd it. I have known good Parts thrown up, from an humble Consciousness, that something in them, might put an Audience in mind of – what was rather wish'd might be forgotten.[36]

Cibber himself seems to have been at pains to shape an attractive persona through his dramatic roles and other writings, despite (or rather, because of) his foppish identity.[37] Such ideas were not quickly shaken off; Charles Macklin, who inspired Garrick in the depiction of characters as unified entities drawn from life through his performance of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, achieved such fame that, in conformity with traditional associations of actor with role, he effectively became 'a one-role actor'.[38]

The personalisation of parts was, of course, not confined to the English spoken theatre; indeed, it was common practice for singers to specialise in particular roles in any given opera libretto, even though the composer (and the music) changed.[39] Roles were created around certain singers: Carlo Goldoni explained that Giuseppe Imer, the *capocomico* of the Venetian Grimani troupe in the 1730s–1740s, made up for his lack of musical expertise in part 'colla cognizione dei caratteri che sapeva ben sostenere' ('by his understanding of characters which he knew how to sustain well').[40]

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[35] *The Tryals of Two Causes*; cited in Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 31.

[36] Cibber, *An Apology*, 138; cited in Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 103. In 1749 William Chetwood looked back to the Restoration theatre and contrasted the audience's reception of Anne Bracegirdle (apparently chaste) and Elizabeth Barry (sexually promiscuous) at Cordelia's line 'Arm'd in my Virgin Innocence' (*King Lear*): the first was applauded while the second 'created a Horse-laugh'; Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage*, 28; cited in Maus, 'Playhouse Flesh and Blood', 599.

[37] Potter, 'Colley Cibber: The Fop as Hero'.

[38] Burns, *Character*, 188.

[39] Strohm, 'Metastasio's *Alessandro nell'Indie*', 239.

[40] Goldoni; cited in Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 36. Similarly, the Florentine impresario Marchese Luca Casimiro degli Albizzi wrote to one of his singers in June 1734 insisting

Later in the century, Saverio Mattei praised Jommelli's *Armida abbandonata* (1770) because the composer followed his advice and chose 'the characters that would best suit Signora De Amicis and Signor Aprile', the principals at the Real Teatro di San Carlo, Naples that year.[41]

The physical association between actor and character had something of a revival under the guise of new 'science' in the physiognomic studies of J. C. Lavater in the 1770s and even appeared in prescriptions for composers.[42] As late as 1785, Richard Cumberland felt it necessary to expostulate to actors unwilling to play 'characters of an unamiable sort' that

> it is a narrow notion to suppose that there can be any adhesion either of vice or virtue to the real character; or that revenge, cruelty, perfidiousness, or cowardice, can be transported into a man's nature, because he professionally represents these evil qualities.[43]

As such character associations continued to obtain throughout the century, however, stage roles in both comedy and tragedy had to some extent to fit the individual performer.[44]

The potential perils of performance also presented opportunities for authors: given the propensity of audience and actors alike to look for links between personal behaviour and theatrical character, it comes as no surprise that playwrights and librettists took advantage of these associative processes. In 1711, the playwright and critic John Dennis observed that 'Most of the Writers for the Stage in my time, have not only adapted their Characters to their Actors, but those Actors have as it were sate for them.'[45] Carlo Goldoni, again, in his *Memoirs* described modelling characters on actors as a 'rule', which he said he 'grew so accustomed to … that, the topic of a play contrived, I did not first project the personages for which the actors were then

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on the impresario's right to choose libretti, in order to please the public by selecting parts that suited the singers; cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 68–9.

[41] Mattei, 'Elogio del Jommelli o sia Il progresso della poesia e musica teatrale' (1785); cited in Di Benedetto, 'Poetics and Polemics', 37.

[42] Johann Caspar Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1775–8) was popular in Britain; see Graham, 'Lavater's *Physiognomy* in England'; Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, 171–4. See Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, for discussion of the way in which evolving medical and scientific thought accommodated itself to older concepts like the 'humours'. Johann Georg Sulzer wrote: 'It is important that the artist know himself, and whenever possible decline undertaking anything contrary to his character'; he illustrated his point with the contrasting examples of the 'gentle' Graun and the 'bold' Hasse; see *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 51.

[43] Richard Cumberland; cited in Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama*, 2–3.

[44] West, *Image of the Actor*, 90–122. The symbiotic relationship between an actor and his or her parts has been widely remarked; see, for instance, Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production*, 32–8 and *passim*; Holland, *Ornament of Action*, 65–98 and *passim*; Maus, 'Playhouse Flesh and Blood'. See also Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 32; John Hill, *The Actor*, 115; discussed in West, *Image of the Actor*, 60–1.

[45] Dennis, *Critical Works*, I, 418; cited in Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 103.

to be sought, but I began with an examination of the actors so that then the characters of the interlocutors could be imagined'.[46] Echoing this paradigm, Steven LaRue, in his study *Handel and His Singers*, has made the suggestion that some singers were cast in terms of specific 'character types' on musical grounds.[47] There is piecemeal reception evidence for this theory in the London opera world, though there is much in the spoken theatre. In contemporary opera and oratorio (initially treated by many as a sort of sacred opera), two incidents stand out. At the first performance of *Messiah* in Dublin in 1742, Susannah Cibber's moving rendition of 'He was despised' prompted the Reverend Dr Delany to rise to his feet and pronounce, 'Woman, for this all thy sins be forgiven thee' (she having been caught in adultery, as noted above).[48] The connection between public image and private persona so governed Anastasia Robinson's understanding of characterisation that she petitioned for changes to her role in *Ottone* in 1723, complaining that as 'the greatest part of my Life has shew'd me to be a Patient Grisell by Nature, how then can I ever pretend to act the Termagant[?]'[49] Robinson's reference to 'Patient Grisell' – the peasant who married a Lord and underwent much hardship to prove her faithfulness – alludes to her previous appearance in Bononcini's opera *Griselda*, but perhaps also to her secret marriage to the Earl of Peterborough.[50]

As these instances (and many more from the spoken theatre) might suggest, women perhaps more than men had to be careful of the public image they created through their roles. Elizabeth Howe observes that, from the advent of women's appearance on the London stage, an actress's sexuality was central to her professional identity, and thus her private life was viewed as an extension of her life on stage.[51] This concern about the elision of private life with stage persona is particularly clear in the warning that actor and theatre manager R. B. Sheridan penned to his father-in-law, Thomas Linley, in 1775, about the hazards of putting his daughters on the stage. Sheridan was not hostile to their appearance on the concert platform:

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[46] Goldoni; cited in Hill, 'Vivaldi's *Griselda*'.

[47] LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*. I have expressed reservations elsewhere about the notion of 'character type': see my 'Singers' Blueprints'.

[48] Nash, *The Provoked Wife*, 176. Nash notes that the anecdote is attributed to Thomas Sheridan, but that the earliest reference to it she can find is in Davies's *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (1780); see Nash, *Provoked Wife*, 342.

[49] Anastasia Robinson to Giuseppe Riva (undated), in *Händel-Handbuch* 4, 112–13. LaRue discusses alterations to Robinson's role of Matilda in *Ottone*, though he sees her concerns as essentially musico-dramatic, and does not note the importance of the relationship between public and private persona; LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 125–37. See also the letter by 'Musidorus' on the castrato Benedetti's concern about his part in Handel's *Radamisto* in *The Theatre* 21 (8–12 March 1720); cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 101.

[50] For a succinct account of Robinson's marriage, see Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 691–3, who is quoting from Mrs Delany. Pat Rogers has questioned the reliability of Mrs Delany's story with regard to its detail in 'The Last Days of Lord Peterborough'. On Robinson's suitability for the role of Griselda, see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 266–9. Catherine Tofts was similarly associated with the role of Camilla in Bononcini's opera of that name, such that it was used to comment on her personal life in the *Tatler*, and herself complained of being forced to sing songs 'that were not proper for her'; see Baldwin and Wilson, 'The Harmonious Unfortunate', 229, 236. Apparently, no actress could be persuaded to sing 'Swains I scorn who're nice and fair' in John Dalton's adaptation of *Comus* in 1740, due to moral scruples; see Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama*, 3.

> The Daughter of a Musician, having Talents to benefit her Father in the same Profession, treads only in the Path in which she was born. Her apperance [*sic*] in Public is natural and not unexpected, it argues no *Choice*, no Passion for becoming a Spectacle, no low Vanity of being the unblushing Object of a Licentious gaping Croud – if she be in herself good, modest, and well bred – *there* is her Character – and the Part she may always appear in…

In acting, however,

> every thing is reversed: it is her evident Inclination and Passion to obtrude herself into a conspicuous Scene of all that's *indelicate*, *immodest*, *immoral* … What is the *modesty* of any Women whose trade it is eternally to represent all the different modifications of Love before a mix'd Assembly of Rakes, Whores, Lords and Blackguards in Succession! – to play the Coquet, the Wanton, to retail loose innuendos in Comedy, or glow with warm Descriptions in Tragedy; and in both to be haul'd about, squeez'd and kiss'd by beastly pimping Actors![52]

This damning representation of the personal character of actresses seems to leave little room for doubt that what they were on stage, before the public gaze, was who they were in daily life.

As in Henry James's assertion of monstrosity, there is an opprobrium in Brinsley's comments that seems qualitatively different from the regular observation of a connection between actor and character that also applied to men. There is a sense here almost of women's inability to act, in comparison to men – a sense perhaps heightened during the course of the eighteenth century by Garrick's and others' attempts to professionalise their work in order to gainsay those critics who devalued the theatre, and particularly men's role in it.[53] Diderot's 1773 analysis of the 'paradox' of the actor, penned in response to Garrick's apparently revolutionary contribution to the stage, implicitly underscores the actor's professionalisation: 'they say an actor is all the better for being excited, for being angry. I deny it. He is best when he imitates anger. Actors impress the public not when they are furious, but when they play fury well.'[54] By Diderot's estimation, it was better to think one's part than to feel it.

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[51] Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 34. See also Maus, 'Playhouse Flesh and Blood', 601; Crouch, 'The Public Life of Actresses', 60, 63; Smallwood, 'Women and the Theatre', 242–58; Payne, 'Reified Object or Emergent Professional?'. For a perspective emphasising appreciation of the actress's histrionic skill, see Fisk, 'The Restoration Actress', 86–9. The supreme eighteenth-century example of public–private career management is Sarah Siddons, who began her meteoric London career in 1782 playing the sentimental role of Isabella in Thomas Southerne's play of the same name, with her young son appearing as her child, in a move designed to appeal to audience sensibilities. See Asleson, 'She was Tragedy Personified', 52–3; also West, 'The Public and Private Roles of Sarah Siddons'. On problems of image for women in the public eye (writers and actresses), see Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 6–14, 26–7, *passim*.

[52] Sheridan, *Letters*, III, 295–7. Though Sheridan cavilled at male actors, he had no qualms about the stage's inherent threat to their personal integrity; as he explained to Linley: 'my *Father* is *certainly* to be on Covent-Garden Stage next-winter – and I am glad that He is to be – but God forbid his *Daughters* should be there!' (III, 301).

For women, however, the technical art of performance became increasingly difficult: from being Nature's arch dissemblers, with their increasing idealisation during the eighteenth century, women lost their ability to perform.[55] As their presence as performers was, in any case, likely to lead to the corruption of masculine virtue, eighteenth-century theorists such as Scipione Maffei opined that it was best for the theatre to remove them from the stage altogether.[56] So Goethe approved of an all-male performance of Goldoni's *La locandiera* in Rome in 1787 because 'We come to know this nature [woman] even better because someone else has observed it, reflected on it, and presents us not with the thing itself but with the result of the thing.'[57] Goethe made it clear that he found the ending of Goldoni's play particularly offensive when a woman took the part of the man-cheating

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[53] Straub notes that the 'discourse of professionalism … intensified the contradiction between femininity as a public spectacle and emergent definitions of the middle-class woman as domestic and private'; *Sexual Suspects*, 89; see also 36–46; Michael S. Wilson argues that 'Garrick's "revolution" in acting brought a new authority to the actor's art of nonverbal expression with a careful appeal to the growing visual literacy of his audience'; 'Garrick, Iconic Acting', 369.

[54] Diderot, 'Le Paradoxe sur le comedien' (1773), cited in Davis, 'Theatricality and Civil Society', 147. While Diderot's initial report – 'they say' – may suggest that it was the norm to expect identification of actor with character at the time, this comment can be seen as a response to the particular problem created by Garrick's apparently 'naturalistic' acting style – an issue Diderot addresses earlier. The professionalisation of acting was also seen as problematic: Joshua Reynolds's report of Samuel Johnson's observation that 'Garrick's trade was to represent passion, not to feel it' is not nearly so positive as Diderot's – for him, Garrick's representation is mechanical, not intellectual – and Thomas Davies's comment that 'Shakespeare wrote from his heart; Garrick played from his head', still less so; see Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting', 392.

[55] Laura Brown ties the brief fashion for 'she-tragedy' of the 1670s to 1710s to the economic, social and ideological transformation of middle-class women into the 'new female prototype – passive, pathetic, but not yet chaste or sexless'. Brown sees the latter characteristics, along with 'innocence and moral purity', as belonging to 'the fully developed cult of womanhood … whose hegemony extends over more than two hundred years'; 'The Defenseless Woman', 441. For a complementary view of female subjugation in Restoration drama, see J. Douglas Canfield, 'Shifting Tropes of Ideology in English Serious Drama'. See also Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture*, 93–145. On the late eighteenth century's simultaneous glorification of the abstract muse or deity and denigration of real women, see Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses*, 252–84.

[56] Scipione Maffei, *Dei teatri antichi e moderni* (1753); cited in Heller, 'Reforming Achilles', 571–2.

[57] Cited and discussed in Ferris, *Acting Women*, 58.

Mirandolina because, he assumed, as she revels in her triumph over the men around her, she is not acting, but simply 'being'.[58]

In the epiphany of Henry James's character, with which the chapter began, it is the realisation that the actress as a woman is always acting, is nothing more than a concatenation of performative facets, that elicits his distaste: she is either a poor actress (of questionable 'histrionic nature') or, in being competent in that sphere, a worse woman. But, in the novel, it is his ability both to direct and to dissect her performance – and, in so doing, her being – that is particularly significant. In the time-honoured gendering of the Art/Nature dichotomy, woman's role as Nature assumed a new aspect as the self was theorised and subjected to growing scientific scrutiny: a capacity for self-awareness itself became an art, and particularly an expression of masculine control.[59] Ann Bermingham notes that, in the late eighteenth century, 'the accomplished woman and the [male] connoisseur appear as complementary rather than identical subjectivities', and that female 'accomplishment', as a form of amateur consumption of art, was always to be distinguished from male professionalism and artistry.[60] Both the impartial spectator, who in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) is able to withhold sympathy in the interests of rational enquiry, and the later eighteenth-century man of sentiment counterbalanced the woman who, unable to form a rational overview or abstract herself (with propriety) from the position of object to that of subject, was at the mercy of her sympathetic impulses and the male gaze.[61] In life as in art, women were held to lack the critical distance and technical control required to act convincingly unless they first experienced emotional involvement in the role.[62] As scholars, philosophers and politicians asserted women's inability for self-analysis, so they took it upon themselves – as critiques such as Goethe's demonstrate – to define women.[63] This articulation is nowhere more taxonomic than in the descriptions of performers, where the merits of one were often pitted against those of another. There is a sense in such comparisons not merely of definition, but of creation: women animated and unified from the quality of a list by virtue of their contrast with others – but animated chiefly into the type on which that contrast is predicated.

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[58] Starting from a similar understanding, Wagner demanded that the actress who performed Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* must not so much act as 'empathise', so demonstrating her 'truly feminine sensibility'; the 'juggling tricks' of an actress belonged to the role of Venus; Wagner, 'Über der Aufführung des *Tannhäuser*', translated and discussed in Kramer, 'Wagner's Gold Standard', 156.

[59] Straub, *Sexual Suspects*.

[60] Bermingham, 'Elegant Females and Gentleman Connoisseurs', 488, 492–4.

[61] For the 1790s, Claudia Johnson observes that while male sentiment was celebrated (or contested) the 'affectivity' of 'the women whose distress occasions their affective displays' was represented as 'inferior, unconscious, unruly, or even criminal'; *Equivocal Beings*, 14. See also Bermingham, 'Elegant Females and Gentlemen Connoisseurs', 491, 500. In Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Marianne Dashwood is 'without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself' (chapter 15).

[62] Tracy C. Davis suggests that Carlyle's frequent use of a woman as his 'sympathetic viewer' may imply a segregation along these lines, and that the nineteenth-century debates on acting theory which centred on the concept of 'masks or faces' 'dichotomizes emotional truth and technical impersonation, the first of which is culturally feminized and the second of which is a characteristic of virtuous masculinity'; 'Theatricality and Civil Society', 146.

THE DEFINITION OF THE 'RIVAL QUEENS'

In light of the preceding discussion, the London characterisation of Faustina and Cuzzoni as 'rivals' presents some interesting questions: was their antithesis the result of a fortuitous juxtaposition of contrasting attributes? Did rivalry come from the women themselves or derive from the circumstances of their encounter? Was the concept of rivalry more powerful as a means of definition than the subtleties of their individual characteristics? It is particularly difficult to look beneath the veneer of the 'rival singers' because – curiously, given the reputed intensity of their animosity – no word of dispute or dissent survives from the women themselves.[64] They seem, in this sense, to be the quiet centre of a maelstrom of report, the lasting impact of their reputations appearing in no small part to have been created by the narrative verve of a succession of satirists and historians. However, as we will see, the satirists themselves were working in an environment not only structured around the expectations of characterisation delineated above, but also permeated with ideas of female antithesis. The relationship between these different elements in the make-up of the rivalry can best be elucidated through a detailed examination of the circumstances of the women's 1726–8 London encounter, considering both the potential sources of the rivalry and the nature of the women's characterisations.

The exceptional nature of the women's joint London engagement is thrown into relief by their Italian backgrounds, discussed in the Introduction. Whatever opportunity for rivalry their six joint appearances in Venice and Milan might have presented (for example, in the 1721 *Nerone*, Faustina played Ottavia and Cuzzoni Poppea), none seems to have been taken.[65] The relative position of the singers in the

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[63] Ferris, *Acting Women*, 61.

[64] This is not, of course, to deny the significance of references to the women's involvement in hostilities, such as the refusal by Riccoboni's wife, Bononcini's sister-in-law, to receive Faustina in Paris in July 1728, 'car je ne saurais payer tous les témoignages de courtoisie et de cordialité donnés à mon mari par Mme Francesca qu'en traitant Mme Faustina comme elle mérite de l'être par tous les bons amis de Mme Francesca'; cited in de Courville, *Un apôtre de l'art du théâtre au XVIIIe siècle*, II, 306. I am grateful to John Roberts for bringing this reference to my attention.

[65] *Nerone* was greeted with 'deafening applause' (*indecibile applauso*), perhaps partly due to its spectacular stage design; see Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera*, 358–9.

Venetian company hierarchy is also difficult to judge: although Suzana Ograjenšek has suggested that the pair illustrated the Venetian practice of employing two 'prima donnas', nonetheless in most of their Italian operas Faustina had more arias than Cuzzoni – if only by one or two.[66] Faustina may have held a slight advantage in Venice because she was a local, and because of her apparently distinctive 'modo Faustinare', which seems to have emphasised her technical virtuosity;[67] but the role assignments might also imply that Cuzzoni's musical status was marginally lower than that of Faustina.[68]

Differentiation of the women's vocal abilities is itself hedged about with definitional difficulties and stylistic clichés: as Saskia Maria Woyke has observed in her study *Faustina Bordoni: Biographie, Vokalprofil, Rezeption*, the distinction between Cuzzoni as representative of the 'stile antico' and Faustina as standing for the 'stile nuovo', made as a matter of course following Tosi's example, was at least as much about the literary representation of singers as about this duo's actual vocal attributes.[69] In particular, caution must be exercised in applying the polemical term (and ideologically nebulous concept) of the 'new' or 'modern' style to Faustina, who might with the benefit of hindsight be seen as uniting the best of new styles of ornamentation with an old-fashioned attention to expression, and whose style doubtless changed over time and in different performing contexts.[70] Thus, even while we can find some useful elucidation of the women's differences in vocal style and technique by examining the descriptions left by eighteenth-century musicians following Tosi, these descriptions also highlight the difficulty of capturing sound in words. Johann Joachim Quantz's oft-cited account of Faustina's singing style

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[66] Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 38. Ograjenšek compares the Faustina–Cuzzoni pairing to the earlier pairing of Faustina and Maria Anna Benti-Bulgarelli; however, it is worth observing that there Faustina also generally had a slight predominance in number of arias. In *Ariodante*, while Faustina and Cuzzoni had the same number of arias (six), Faustina received a duet and two accompanied recitatives; in *Ifigenia in Tauride* Faustina had eight arias and Cuzzoni five; in *Il Lamano* they both had six arias; in *Ambleto* Faustina had nine and a duet and Cuzzoni eight; in both *Lucio Papirio dittatore* and *Nerone* Faustina had six arias and Cuzzoni five.

[67] Reinhard Strohm has observed that local circumstance is important in mutating traditional singer hierarchies, noting that Anna Maria Fabbri (*fl.* 1708–23), while never the *prima donna* in Vivaldi's operas, often had more arias or acting opportunities than the *prima donna* (personal communication).

[68] *Il Lamano*, the one opera in which they had an equal number of arias, was, interestingly, by Faustina's teacher, Michelangelo Gasparini. Saskia Maria Woyke notes, however, that Cuzzoni was also ascribed a distinctive style, 'cuzzoneggiare'; *Faustina Bordoni*, 140.

[69] Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 149.

[70] Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 138–51 (esp. 147). See also Sergio Durante's caveats about a good singer's ability to vary his or her style according to changing or varying tastes (his examples are the castrati Bernacchi and Farinelli) in 'The Opera Singer', 379–80.

(in Charles Burney's translation) serves as an example of the auditor's fascinated attempts to itemise the voice:

> Faustina had a *mezzo-soprano* voice, that was less clear than penetrating. Her compass was only from B flat to G in alt; but after this time [1727], she extended its limits downwards. She possessed what the Italians call *un cantar granito*: her execution was articulate and brilliant. She had a fluent tongue for pronouncing words rapidly and distinctly, and a flexible throat for divisions, with so beautiful and quick a shake that she could put it in motion upon short notice, just when she would. The passages might be smooth, or by leaps or consisting of iterations of the same tone, their execution was equally easy to her as to any instrument whatever. She was doubtless the first who introduced, with success, a swift repetition of the same tone.[71] She sung *adagios* with great passion and expression, but was not equally successful, if such deep sorrow were to be impressed on the hearer, as might require dragging, sliding, or notes of syncopation, and *tempo rubato*.
>
> She had a very happy memory in arbitrary changes and embellishments, and a clear and quick judgment in giving to words their full power and expression. In her action she was very happy; and as she perfectly possessed that flexibility of muscles and features, which constitutes face-playing, she succeeded equally well in furious, amorous, and tender parts: in short, she was born for singing and for acting.[72]

Quantz's appraisal has served recently as the starting point for Woyke's assessment of the singer's voice. Drawing on examination of Hasse's music for Faustina, as well as Handel's, Woyke offers clarification of some aspects of eighteenth-century reports. She suggests, for instance, that Faustina's tone may have darkened with age, rather than her range extending downwards (as Quantz suggested), and that Hasse (in particular) may have enhanced the dark qualities of her voice by favouring flat keys in arias written for her.[73] Hasse's compositions for Faustina also appear to confirm a marked preference on her part for faster arias.[74]

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[71] Giambattista Mancini, on the other hand, said that Faustina was one of the last singers to use the *martellato* figure or style ('hammering' a note repeatedly; as a figure it was seemingly performed in groups of four notes, with the first of each group at a higher pitch); it required an 'extraordinarily agile voice'; *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, 201. Interestingly, Faustina was not associated with the *martellato* in Mancini's first edition of 1774 (139); indeed, the 1777 edition was extensively revised, and the illustrative figures added.

[72] Cited in Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 745–6. A modern – though less elegant – translation of Quantz's assessment can be found in Paul Nettl's translation of 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', as 'The Life of Herr Johann Joachim Quantz, as Sketched by Himself', 312–13.

[73] Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 116. She suggests Handel also favoured flat keys, though to a lesser extent; however, Steven LaRue found that Handel favoured sharp keys for Faustina in his London operas (he counts nineteen arias in sharp keys, thirteen in flat); *Handel and His Singers*, 164–5.

[74] Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 117. See also n. 146 below.

Quantz's elegant description (made still more elegant in Burney's translation) demonstrates that Faustina's skill encompassed more than just the virtuoso technician's art: her attention to the text and to dramatic propriety in both action and choice of ornamentation are of especial note for Quantz.[75] But her technical abilities evoked particular fascination – deservedly so, Woyke suggests, as, in a version of *Artaserse* reworked for her in 1740, Hasse's writing for her shows a marked increase in vocal virtuosity over parts written for other famous singers.[76]

Following Quantz, Giovanni Battista Mancini attempted to categorise Faustina's 'genere d'agilità'. However, Mancini's evident familiarity with 'our' Faustina – presumably deriving from their time together in Vienna – unfortunately did not facilitate an easy description of the voice, and he flounders in lists and awkward prose, often resorting to metaphor to convey the qualities of her singing: cookery is invoked for the 'consistency' (*impasto*) of her *passaggi*; the hardness of stone (*ben granito*) for her *trillo*.

> Our Faustina, well guided by him [her teacher, Michelangelo Gasparini], formed a rare method, consisting in a distinguished and refined vocal agility, which she used with a facility without equal, which brought her approval from her first appearances in public.
>
> Her type of agility was so much more valuable, because [characterised by] the right degree of vibrato, and in a very new motion, and able to sustain equally difficult *passaggi* of six or three notes, and these conveyed with due proportion, without ever languishing, however much ascending or descending, giving them those proportionate colours that are so necessary for the correct consistency [*impasto*] of every *passaggio*. The perfection and happy execution of this agility is beyond the ordinary, and gives the character of a great professor to whoever possesses it perfectly. Our Faustina sang, uniting all such virtues, so that she could never be imitated by others. Apart from this truly natural gift, she possessed all other types of agility, coupling with all these a ready and diamantine [*ben granito*] *trillo* and mordent. She had a perfect intonation, a sure possession of unadorned singing and sustaining the voice, and the superlative art of conserving and retaking the breath. All these were her sublime gifts, acquired and maintained by assiduous study, with which she cultivated and further developed her natural vocal disposition in such a way that she made it easy for herself to execute anything with the perfection required by the precepts of the art.[77]

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[75] For detailed consideration of this aspect of Faustina's art in context, see Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 126–38.

[76] Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 122.

[77] Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, 31–2: 'La nostra *Faustina*, ben guidata da lui, si formò un raro metodo, consistente in una distinta e purgata agilità di voce, la quale da essa usata con una facilità senza pari, gliene portò plauso fin dai primi anni, che si presentò al Pubblico. // Il suo genere d'agilità su tanto più pregevole, perchè vibrato a quel giusto termine, e in un moto assai nuovo, ed altrettanto difficile per sostenere un passaggio con note a sei, oppure a tre, e queste condurle con la dovuta proporzione, senza mai languire tanto salendo, quanto nel discendere,

It is striking that the epithet 'granito' is used both by Quantz in his autobiography, published by Marpurg in 1754–5, and by Mancini some twenty years later, in 1774. Its suggestion of a crystalline hardness,[78] coupled with Quantz's observation (in an elaboration not fully translated by Burney) that Faustina 'knew how to thrust [her ornaments] out … with the greatest possible rapidity, as they can be performed only on an instrument', may indicate that the singer could produce ornaments supported at full volume from the diaphragm rather than having to adopt the lighter tone necessary for clear throat articulation.[79] In 1757 J. F. Agricola commented on the quality and volume of her articulation in just these terms: 'this much I do know: the sound of her voice when executing these passages was almost as full and strong, if possible, as the sound of the natural chest voice in others'.[80]

This quality, along with her instrumental flexibility of articulation, does seem to distinguish the style of singing for which she was famed from the 'sweet and gentle' manner previously expected of women, and explains her place as a representative of the 'new' style.[81] This association was perhaps particularly strong because, Quantz says, she was not successful in the expression of deep sorrow, and in that sense was part of a modern trend (greatly lamented by Tosi) which 'banish[ed] the delightful, soothing *Pathetick*' in favour of allegro arias packed with divisions.[82] Luigi Riccoboni's account of the displacement of the older style of Italian singing (represented by

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dandovi quei proporzionati colori, che sono tanto necessari per l'impasto d'ogni passaggio. La perfetta e felice esecuzione di questa agilità esce dall'ordinario, e dà il carattere di gran professore a chi con perfezione la possiede. La nostra *Faustina* cantò riunendo tutti quei pregi, cosicchè non potè mai da altri essere imitata. Oltre di questo suo veramente natural dono, possedeva qualunque altro genere d'agilità, accoppiando a tutto ciò un pronto, e [32] ben granito trillo, e mordente. Aveva una intonazione perfetta, un sicuro possesso di spianare e sostenere la voce, e l'arte sopraffina di conservare e ripigliare il fiato. Tutti questi furono in lei doni sublimi, acquistati e posseduti mediante un assiduo studio, con cui coltivò ed andò sviluppando le naturali sue disposizioni, in modo, che si rese poi facile l'eseguir qualunque cosa colla perfezion voluta dai precetti dell'arte.' For both this and the following extended description of Cuzzoni's voice, the 1777 edition demonstrates considerable rewriting when compared to the 1774 original, but the substance is largely the same.

[78] I am grateful to Alberto Sanna for the following information: 'Granito' or 'granato' is an adjective deriving from the intransitive verb 'granire', and was used figuratively for 'duro' or 'forte' in the sense of 'perfect' and 'hard'. The *Vocabolario della Crusca* says: 'Diciamo, granito, da cosa che abbia perfezione, e sodezza [=durezza].'

[79] Quantz, 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', trans. Nettl, 313.

[80] Agricola, *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, § 125: 'so viel aber weis ich, dass bey diesen Passaggien der Klang ihrer Stimme fast eben so völlig und kräftig war, als er bey anderen, wenn es möglich gewesen wäre, mit der ungekünstelten Bruststimme würde heraus gekommen seyn'. Cited in Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 120. See also the English translation by Baird: *Introduction to the Art of Singing*, 153.

[81] On earlier singing style, see Wistreich, 'Reconstructing Pre-Romantic Singing Technique', 183.

[82] Tosi, ed. Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 107–25. Tosi also seems to suggest that the characteristic ornamentation for such arias, described above by Quantz, was in decline, in that it was less frequently used than 'mark'd' divisions (53).

Cuzzoni) by the new (associated with Faustina) in *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les differens theâtres de l'Europe* (1740) confirms that it was precisely those qualities of 'hardness' and 'strength' singled out above in Faustina's vocal style that were markers of the new, and that he deplored:

> these twenty Years past, the great Reputation [Italian music] had acquired among Foreigners is a good deal diminished, because the *Italian* Taste of Music is now changed. In short at present it is all a Whim; *Strength* is sought instead of *beautiful Simplicity*; and *Harshness* and *Singularity* is [*sic*] substituted instead of the *Expression* and *Truth* which distinguished the former Manner. The surprizing Capacity of their Singers, it is true, begets *Admiration* but moves no *Passion*; and Judges say justly, that it is unreasonable to force a Voice to execute what is too much even for a *Violin* or a *Hautboy*.[83]

Such 'instrumental' execution lends itself to notation, and we can see how composers exploited Faustina's vocal abilities in, for example, Handel's 'Gelosia, spietata Aletto' from *Admeto* (Example 1.1) ; Burney describes its 'divisions more long and rapid than I have met with of the same period', though also noting 'yet they are such as would not now establish the reputation of a singer for great execution'; he says much the same for her 'Là dove gli occhi io giro' in the third act (Example 1.2).[84] Handel's arias for Faustina give a fair indication of the style of singing she favoured, with much emphasis on vocal agility, demonstrated through the conjunction of different rhythmic patterns (including the use of rests within chains of figuration), disjunct or arpeggiated and highly complex *passaggi*, leaps onto and from trills, and imitation of instrumental lines.

While this assessment of Faustina's style of singing is based on Handel's composition, it is rare good fortune that two embellished arias which reputedly represent Faustina's style survive. One aria from Giuseppe Vignati's *Ambleto* (Milan, 1719) is recorded with the ornamentation sung by Faustina. It demonstrates the key attributes described by Quantz and noted above: the 'fluent tongue', 'flexible throat', the 'shake' (trill), juxtaposition of smooth and leaping lines, and use of the repeated iteration of a single note (or what we might, adopting older terms, call the *trillo*) are all present. The deployment of accompanimental themes in the vocal embellishment (something that became common practice in the eighteenth century)[85] indicates Faustina's willingness to display her talents as a technician – as an instrument – although such moments never run the risk of enfolding her into the orchestral texture.[86]

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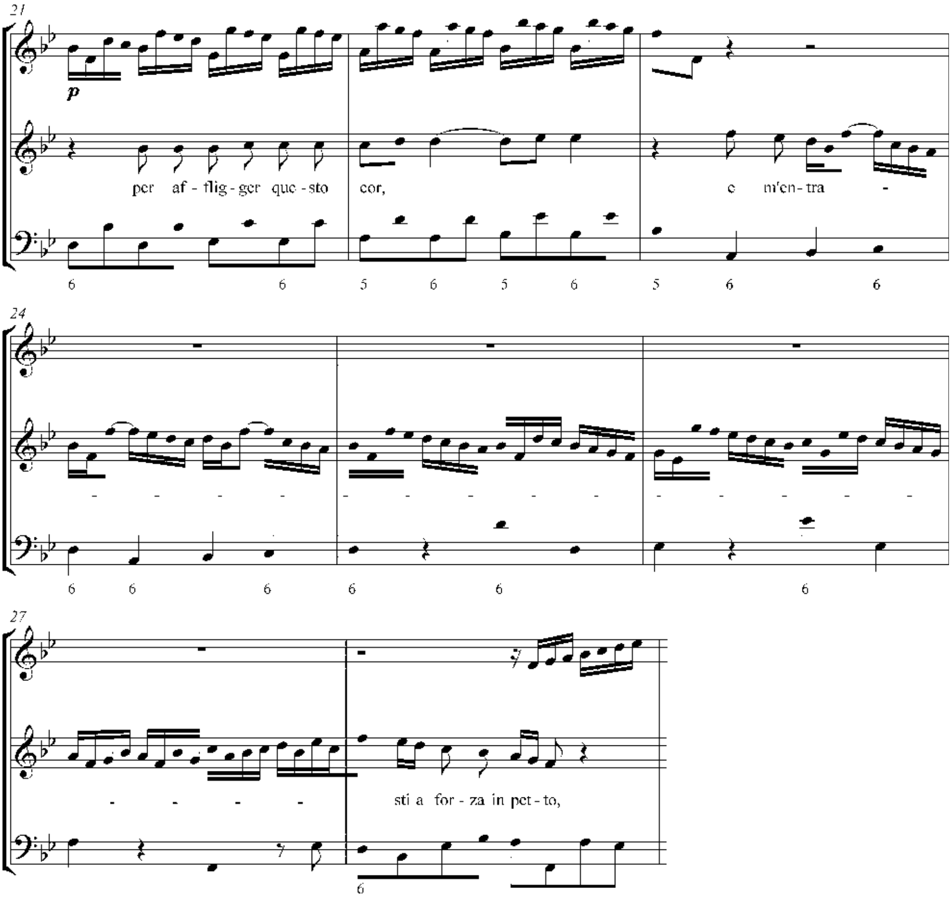
[83] Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 78.

[84] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 744–5.

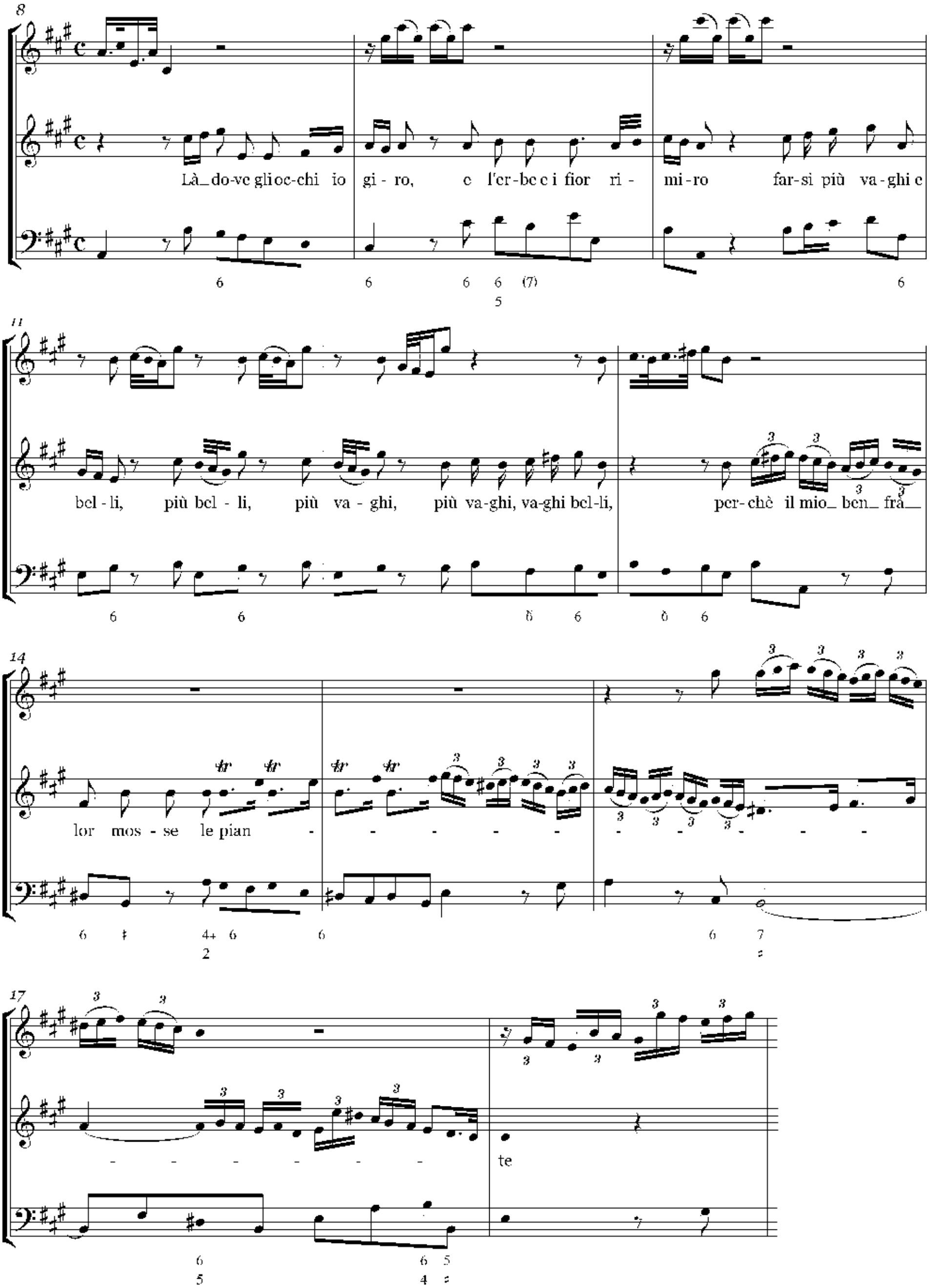
[85] On the context for Gertrude Mara's studied embellishment of a Handel aria in 1801, and the oboist William Parke's imitation of her, see Spitzer, 'Improvized Ornamentation in a Handel Aria'.

[86] George J. Buelow notes the connection between the accompaniment and Faustina's use of a triplet motif in 'A Lesson in Operatic Performance Practice', 91. There is a facsimile of this



Ex. 1.1 A representative sample of the ornamentation Handel wrote for Faustina in 'Gelosia, spietata Aletto' from *Admeto* (London, 1727), bb.21–28.

ornamented aria (from the Library of Congress M1500.S28G5) in Steffani, *Miscellaneous Manuscript Sources*, 239–57. As Buelow, Howard Mayer Brown and Woyke variously observe – much in the tone of Burney – this sample of embellishment is surprisingly modest in scope given her reputation. This modesty may be because of the manuscript's early date, but it may also be worth considering that, although Buelow points out that a manuscript rubric says these are Faustina's ornaments (82), their preservation in a manuscript – surely not necessary for Faustina herself, who would have varied her embellishment for every performance – suggests they may have been preserved as a student's model; as such, we might expect a relatively simple version to be notated. Buelow, 'A Lesson in Operatic Performance Practice'; Brown, 'Embellishing Eighteenth-Century Arias'. Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 138–50, gives broader consideration to Faustina's place in mid-century changes in the degree of virtuosity expected of 'modern'-style singers.


8
Là_do-ve gli oc-chi io gi - ro, e l'er-be e i fior ri - mi-ro far-si più va-ghi e
11
bel - li, più bel - li, più va - ghi, più va-ghi, va-ghi bel-li, per-chè il mio_ ben_ frà_
14
lor mos - se le pian - - - - - - te
17

Ex. 1.2 A sample of Handel's ornamentation for Faustina in 'Là dove gli occhi io giro', *Admeto* (London, 1727), bb.8–18.

Further confirmation that Faustina was associated with 'modern' singing comes from an anonymous English satirical print with accompanying French verse, entitled 'Le Triomphe du goût moderne dédie alla Signora Faustina Bordoni', which shows Faustina sailing the Thames on a cello. The verse compares Faustina's migraine-inducing efforts to win audience approval through her 'noisy arpeggiation' (*bruyant harpégement*) with the 'accords nouveaux' of a howling wind.[87] John H. Roberts has recently discovered a copy of the print accompanied by an aria that caricatures the singer's style, complete with wide leaps, chains of trills, runs spanning over an octave, passages in triplets and other awkward figuration.[88] The energetic and (in its juxtaposition with instrumental parts) competitive style of virtuosity displayed here and in other writing for Faustina was more often associated with castrati, particularly Farinelli. Indeed, Tosi and Riccoboni perhaps particularly denigrated this new style when its exponent was a woman because it departed so far from the previous female vocal ideal. Compared with his praise for Cuzzoni, Riccoboni's comment on Faustina is grudging: 'It was owing to her extraordinary Capacity and her surprising Command of Voice, that *Faustina* was obliged to invent a new manner of Singing.'[89] By contrast, he is much more positive about Farinelli: 'He sings in the Manner of *Faustina*; but it is owned by the best Judges that he infinitely outdoes her, having brought his Art to the last Degree of Perfection.'[90] Faustina's *granito* tone and athletic ornamentation may then have helped foster an association in London with more 'masculine', active or assertive roles, and with cross-dressing.

However we might speculate on the qualities of Faustina's voice based on descriptions and notated traces of her vocal style, it leaves us little closer to understanding the extraordinary power this singer had over her audiences. And this is still more the case for Cuzzoni, who, in epitomising what some saw as an older style of singing, was noted particularly for her *messa di voce* and *portamento*, for adding brief graces to what was notated, and for her subtle expressive inflections.[91] Mancini's prose is still more tortuous for Cuzzoni than in his description of Faustina's voice; his long lists of attributes suggest his difficulty in adequately describing her style, while his invocation of angels and little flights, ravishment and the sublime, nonetheless endows the singer with an aura quite different from the *ben granito* style of Faustina.

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[87] 'Semblable au vent en furie / Qui souflant dant les Roseaux / Produit des accords nouveaux / Inconnus a l'Harmonie, / Le bruyant Harpégement / De cette docte Sirene / Souvent donne la migraine / Par un effort d'Agrement.' (Like the wind in fury that, blowing through the reeds, produces new chords unknown to harmony, the noisy arpeggiation of this learned siren often gives [one] a migraine through her efforts to win approval.)

[88] John H. Roberts, 'The Cortot Collection', 267–88. The print and aria will be reproduced in Professor Roberts' essay; I am grateful to him for bringing both to my attention prior to the publication of his essay.

[89] Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 80.

[90] Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 80.

[91] Paola Lunetta Franco sums up Cuzzoni's style as belonging to an earlier generation: 'Francesca Cuzzoni (1696–1778): Lo stile antico nella musica moderna' (doctoral thesis, Pavia, 2000–1); cited in Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni*, 148.

> Francesca Cuzzoni, born in Parma, was the pupil of the good professor Francesco Lanzi, under the direction of whom she became a most highly regarded singer because she was endowed with an angelic voice, [noted] as much for its clarity and sweetness, as for its ultimate style. This woman sang the unadorned style and legato at the same time; she had acquired such a perfect *portamento di voce*, and had coupled it to such an equality of register, that the ravishment of the souls of whoever heard her included both veneration and esteem. This lady was not lacking in anything necessary to be truly great, because she possessed sufficient agility, [and] the art of conducting the voice, sustaining, reinforcing, and diminishing it with those gradations due to such perfection that earned her the deserved name of *maestra*. If singing a cantabile aria she did not neglect, in the right places, to ornament and enliven the cantilena with a method (without prejudice to the expression) composed of choice and varied *gruppetti*; *passi* and *passaggi* performed in varied manner, now legato, now vibrato with trills and mordents; now staccato, now marked, now sprinkled with runs of over an octave [*volatina raddoppiata*];[92] now with some legato leaps from low to high. Eventually she brought to completion what she had undertaken with the perfect execution; [and] all with a remarkable finesse.
>
> Her voice was so accustomed to an exact execution, that it did not find any obstacle it did not effortlessly surpass; she hit the top notes with peerless exactitude. Perfect intonation resided in her; she had the gift of a creative mind and a correct discernment in knowing to select things particular and new, leaving aside the everyday and common, and thereby her singing became sublime and rare.[93]

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[92] Mancini defines the *volatina raddoppiata* as a run 'exceeding an octave', in contrast to the *volatina semplice* ('si deve sapere … quando non passa i limiti dell' ottava, si chiama volatina semplice: si chiama poi raddoppiata l'altra, perchè esce dal primo limite'), but his example (figure 24) shows two successive runs of an octave each, which only together exceed the octave; *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, 195, and *esemplare*, n.p.

[93] Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, 33–4: 'Francesca *Cuzzoni*, nata in Parma, fu allevata da Francesco *Lanzi* buon professore, sotto la direzione del quale riuscì una cantante riguardevolissima, perchè dotata era di una voce angelica, sì per la chiarezza e soavità, che per l'ottimo suo stile. Questa cantava spianato e legato nel medesimo tempo; aveva acquistato un sì perfetto portamento di voce, e questo unito ad una equaglianza di registro, che nel rapire gli animi di chi l'ascoltava, in certo modo conciliavasi anche venerazione e stima. Questa donna non mancava in nulla di ciò ch'è necessario per esser veramente grande, perchè possedeva sufficiente agilità; l'arte di condur la voce, di sostenerla, rinforzarla, e ritirarla con quei gradi dovuti ad una perfezion tale, che le dava il meritato nome di maestra. Se cantava un' aria cantabile, non trascurava ne' luoghi convenevoli di ornare, e ravvivare la cantilena con un metodo (senza pregiudizio dell' espressione) ricompartito di scelti e variati gruppetti; passi e passaggi eseguiti in varie maniere, ora legati, ora vibrati con trilli e mordenti; ora staccati, ora trattenuti, [34] ora sciolti con qualche volatina raddoppiata; ora con qualche sbalzo legato dal grave all'acuto; e

Charles Burney's paraphrase of Mancini added the particular emphasis on the pathetic which characterised his assessment of the singer, and mentions the use of *rubato*:

> A native warble enabled her to execute divisions with such facility as to conceal every appearance of difficulty; and so grateful and touching was the natural tone of her voice, that she rendered pathetic whatever she sung, in which she had leisure to unfold its whole volume. The art of conducting, sustaining, increasing, and diminishing her tones by minute degrees, acquired her, among professors, the title of complete mistress of her art. In a cantabile air, though the notes she added were few, she never lost a favourable opportunity of enriching the cantilena with all the refinements and embellishments of the time. Her shake was perfect, she had a creative fancy, and the power of occasionally accelerating and retarding the measure in the most artificial and able manner, by what the Italians call *tempo rubato*.[94]

Mancini's assessment, in particular, is a roll call of the elements in the art of good embellishment that had been praised since the early seventeenth century (with *rubato* and *messe di voce* most notably propounded in Giulio Caccini's *Nuove musiche* of 1601 and 1614), in which taste and intelligence in decorating the text 'without prejudice to the expression' were as important as producing a nice sound. Although an appeal to good taste in ornamentation was universal, it seems to have been a particular watchword amongst those (such as Tosi) complaining of the excesses of the 'new' style in the 1720s and beyond. Thus Giuseppe Riva, friend to Bononcini and Cuzzoni, wrote a brief for good singing in his 1727 *Advice to the Composers and P[e]rformers of Vocal Musick* which might have served as the model for Mancini's description of Cuzzoni: 'It is not the great number of Notes that moves the Passions, but a few, disposed in due Time and Place, and modulated with Art and Judgment.'[95] In this

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finalmente con la perfetta esecuzione dava fine all' intrappreso impegno; il tutto con una sorprendente finezza. // La sua voce era talmente avvezza ad una esatta esecuzione, che non trovava mai ostacolo, ch'ella felicemente non superasse; trattava le corde acute d'una aggiustatezza senza pari. L'intonazione perfetta risiedeva in lei; aveva il dono di una mente creativa, ed un retto discernimento in saper scegliere cose particolari e nuove, lasciando le usuali e comuni, e perciò il suo cantare divenne sublime e raro.'

[94] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 736–7. Quantz's assessment of Cuzzoni in his *Lebenslauf* was much shorter and less favourable than that for Faustina: 'Cuzzoni had a very agreeable and clear soprano voice, a pure intonation and a beautiful *trillo*. Her range extended from middle "c" to the "c" above the staff. Her ornamentation did not seem to be artificial due to her nice, pleasant, and light style of delivery, and with its tenderness she won the hearts of her listeners. The *passagien* in the allegros were not done with the greatest facility, but she sang them very fully and pleasantly. Her acting was somewhat cold, and her figure was not too favorable for the theatre.' Translated in Quantz, 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', trans. Nettl, 312.

[95] Riva, *Advice to the Composers and P[e]rformers of Vocal Musick*, 7. Faustina evidently took Riva's *Advice* as a critique of her singing, as two lost responses to the *Advice* were attributed by one A. C.,

regard it is significant that her contemporary, the castrato Gaetano Berenstadt, praised Cuzzoni's 'simplicity' of style and 'refined manner' in Bononcini's *Calfurnia* (London, 1724), in a letter siding with Tosi in berating practitioners of the 'perfidious and infected new taste'.[96] Tosi himself, according to Galliard, had been a singer of 'Expression and Passion; chiefly in the Stile of Chamber-Musick' and had also composed cantatas 'excel[ing] in the *Pathetick*'; he had demonstrated the practice of *tempo rubato* in the service of the text to Roger North, when he visited London in 1693, and had described it to North as 'the cheif [*sic*] art of a performer'.[97] The good singer was thus, as one later tutor put it, 'like an orator': he (or she) 'will form to himself a peculiar distinguishing manner, but the command of good style can only result from taste, aided by judgement and experience, which will teach you to introduce embellishments with propriety'.[98]

It is little wonder that, with her mastery of these oratorical skills, Cuzzoni was noted for her performance of 'pathetic' or tragic arias (a species whose modern decline Tosi regretted), where judicious use of *rubato, messa di voce* and carefully chosen ornamentation was of primary importance.[99] Burney's singling out of Cuzzoni's cantabile arias also accords with these characteristics. His contemporary, John Brown, described the cantabile aria as 'the highest species of Song' in that, in its simple framework, dominated by long, sustained notes, it 'affords the singer an opportunity of displaying, in the execution of it, all his powers and skill; – if he has voice, if he has feeling, if he has taste, if he has fancy, if he has science'.[100]

Vocal quality, musical understanding and ornamentation were, it seems, inextricably linked in the oratorical approach to singing. Quantz, like Mancini, noted particularly Cuzzoni's taste in determining appropriate ornamentation: 'her graces did not seem artificial, from the easy and neat manner in which she executed

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who published a letter to Faustina on 9 February 1728, to people acting under her auspices; see Högg, 'Die Gesangskunst der Faustina Hasse', 58–9, n. 249; Deutsch, *Handel*, 220–1.

[96] On Cuzzoni, Berenstadt said: 'L'Opera di Bononcino è un Chef d'Oeuvre, la Cuzzoni fa meraviglia; ne mai l'ho sentita cantar con più simplicità, ne con più finita maniera.' On Tosi and the new style: 'Piaccia al Cielo possa servire per disingannare chi corre dietro al nuovo perfido, ed infettato gusto, e nel medesimo serva di norma a chi senza averne pratica si dà aria d'insegnare.' Berenstadt's letter of 19 May 1724 is given in full and discussed in Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 314–18. Riccoboni likewise associated Cuzzoni with the 'Simplicity and Greatness' of the old style; *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 79.

[97] Tosi, ed. Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, viii–ix; North, *Roger North on Music*, 151.

[98] Domenico Corri, *The Singer's Preceptor* (1810); cited in Wistreich, 'Reconstructing Pre-Romantic Singing Technique', 191.

[99] Tosi, ed. Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 107–25; Tosi's regret at the decline of this style of aria is noted above, n.82. Tosi seems to suggest that composers and singers are equally at fault for 'banish[ing]' the pathetic aria.

[100] John Brown, *Letters upon the Poetry and Music of the Italian Opera*, 43.

them'.[101] Because Cuzzoni possessed only 'sufficient agility' (according to Mancini), and evidently specialised in gracing her music with the kind of *accenti* derived from a good understanding of the text and affect of the music, indication of her style of embellishment in Handel's writing for her is limited: leaps to and from sustained or suspended notes and a liking for leaping to the top of her register, and frequent trills and leaps to them, are the primary markers of Cuzzoni's approach (though some other means of demonstrating her range, via arpeggios and runs, are also used). We perhaps come close to Cuzzoni's style of ornamentation in 'Sen vola lo sparvier' in *Admeto*, which Burney says was 'calculated to display [her] seeming natural warble' (Example 1.3).[102]

Some decades later, Gluck was at pains to emphasise the importance of thoughtful performance expression, observing that his own aria 'Che farò senza Euridice' could end up sounding like a puppet's *saltarello* 'just by changing certain aspects of the manner of expression'. He continued: 'A note held too long or too little, an accelerando ignored or a crescendo in the vocal part missed, an appoggiatura out of place, a trill, an embellishment or run, can ruin a complete scene in such an opera.'[103] Cuzzoni's reputation for judicious ornamentation renders the lack of evidence of her performance style still more tantalising for that style's potential to illuminate the communication of musical meaning in an aria. Nonetheless, her association with an older mode of performance seems to have differentiated her from singers such as Faustina and Farinelli.

A perception of Faustina's superiority – or at least of the attractive novelty of her vocal style for Londoners – might be supported by two budget projections for the second season of the Royal Academy of Music in 1720–1. In the first, Cuzzoni's fee of £800 ranks well behind those of the castrati Francesco Bernardi *detto* Senesino (£1,680) and Matteo Berselli (£1,155), the reigning *prima donna* Margherita Durastanti (£1,100), and Maria Anna Benti, La Romanina (£1,090); in the second, Faustina and Senesino are both allocated £1,500, while Durastanti again gets £1,100.[104] In the end, it was Cuzzoni whom the Academy hired: she made her acclaimed London debut in January 1723, and became the Royal Academy's *prima donna*

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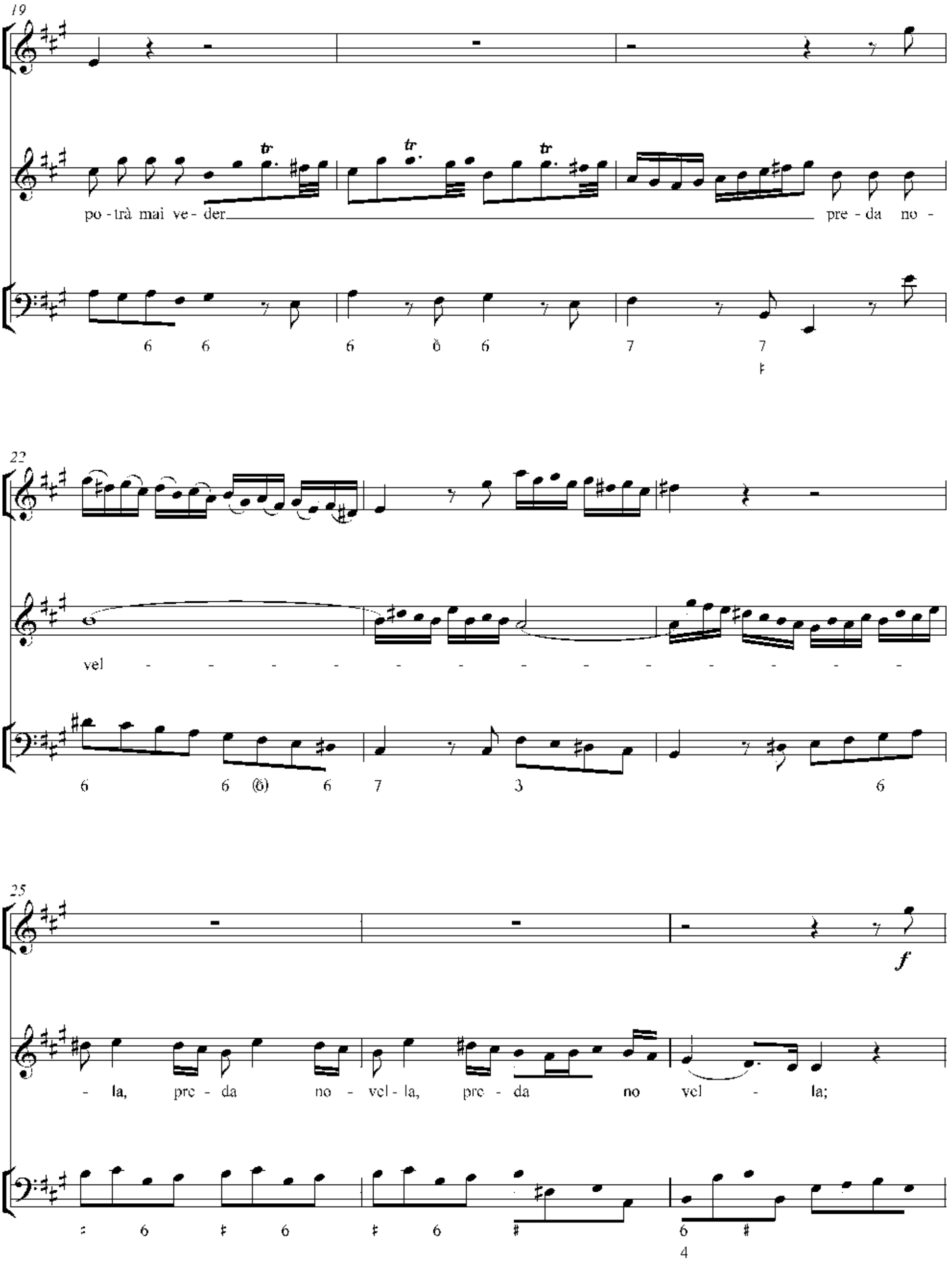
[101] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 745.

[102] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 743.

[103] Gluck, ['Preface'], *Paride ed Elena* (1770); cited in Robinson, 'The Ancient and the Modern', 144. Gluck's invocation of the 'puppet's saltarello' might also suggest that judicious choice of tempo was important to a singer's successful performance of an aria or a role – something about which, unfortunately, we know all too little, though Woyke's observation of Faustina's preference for faster arias (cited above, n.74) should be noted.

[104] See Milhous and Hume, 'New Light on Handel', 161–3; they date these documents as, respectively, December 1719 and March 1720. The size of the discrepancy in salary and the recognised differences in their vocal styles force me to disagree with Milhous and Hume's suggestion that Faustina's and Cuzzoni's names were confused, and their implication either that Cuzzoni was meant in both instances or that the two were thought of as interchangeable.


19
po - trà mai ve - der
pre - da no -
22
vel
25
f
- la, pre - da no - vel - la, pre - da no vel - la;

Ex. 1.3 A sample of Handel's ornamentation for Cuzzoni from 'Sen vola' in *Admeto* (London, 1727), bb.19–27.

(replacing Durastanti) in fifteen new operas.[105] But the two different projections for the first season might suggest that there was already some disagreement as to which of the women should be invited – a disagreement that evidently continued.[106] The *Daily Journal* of 23 January 1723 had wind of difficulties, claiming that 'very great Debates, and warm Speeches have lately happened in the Academy of Musick, concerning another famous Italian singer, who proposes to excel [Cuzzoni]'.[107]

Indeed, the press – undoubtedly informed by those with links to the Academy – continued to tout Faustina's appearance: prior to her arrival, she was more than once hailed as a pretender to Cuzzoni's throne.[108] At the same time, in May 1725 Owen Swiney referred in a letter to Charles Lennox, second Duke of Richmond and Deputy Governor of the Royal Academy, to the 'opposition made to [Faustina's] going for England', which he described as 'very unjust and very unnatural', and in September 1725 Faustina herself alluded to 'miei nemici' in another letter to Richmond.[109] John Hawkins later suggested that Handel himself was a principal actor in the decision to hire Faustina, as 'a means of quieting this rebellious spirit [Cuzzoni]'.[110]

After protracted negotiations, Faustina's contract was agreed in mid-1725.[111] When she arrived in 1726, her first performance was with Cuzzoni and Senesino in Paolo Rolli and Handel's *Alessandro*. This choice of subject for Faustina's London debut – and for the women's first appearance there together – has occasioned some discussion: Elizabeth Gibson and Richard King have both observed that many Londoners would have recognised the theme of female rivalry in the story of Alexander the Great from the play by Nathaniel Lee, entitled *Alexander the Great: or, The Rival Queens* (1677).[112] (Some may even have known that this play was reported to have provoked a fight between its leading ladies when first staged).[113] The 'rivals' topos had become sufficiently popular to spawn a succession of 'rivals' plays in the Restoration and early eighteenth century, the most recent of which in 1726 was the pasticcio *L'Elpidia, overo li rivali generosi*, imported from Venice in May 1725 (where, John Roberts proposes, Apostolo Zeno's 1697 libretto had been specially re-set for London to music by Leonardo Vinci and Giuseppe Orlandini), in which two men had contested the hand of Cuzzoni's character.[114]

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[105] Handel's *Ottone* (January 1723), *Flavio* (May 1723), *Giulio Cesare* (February 1724), *Tamerlano* (October 1724), *Rodelinda* (February 1725), *Scipione* (March 1726); Bononcini's *Erminia* (March 1723), *Farnace* (November 1723), *Calfurnia* (April 1724); Ariosti's *Caio Marzio Coriolano* (February 1723), *Il Vespasiano* (January 1724), *Aquilio consolo* (May 1724), *Artaserse* (December 1724), *Dario* (April 1725); and two pasticcios, *Elpidia* (May 1725) and *Elisa* (January 1726).

[106] Reinhard Strohm notes the importance of 'intrigues and compromises of various sorts between the most powerful patrons' in choosing the repertory and personnel of the company, and that such divisiveness was common in European courts; 'Italian Operisti North of the Alps (c.1700–c.1750)', 12, 7.

[107] Cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 174.

[108] *London Journal*, 30 March 1723: 'as soon as Cuzzoni's Time is out, we are to have another over; for we are well assured *Faustina*, the fine songstress at Venice, is invited, whose Voice, they say, exceeds that we have already here'; *London Journal*, 4 September 1725: 'Signiora *Faustina*, a famous Italian Lady, is coming over this Winter to rival Signiora Cuzzoni'; *Parker's Penny Post*, 8 September 1725: Faustina's 'Voice (as it is pretended) has not yet been equall'd in the World'; cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 151, 185, 187.

[109] Letters of 20/31 May 1725 and 1 September 1725; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 223. Perhaps in opting for the slightly more limited costs of the second of their two 1719/1720 projections (with salary preeminence given to Faustina and Senesino), the directors realised that maintaining fees of several near-equal singers was not sustainable; see Milhous and Hume, 'New Light on Handel', 162. Encouraging a competition to select just one *prima donna* would be consistent with this realisation.

[110] Hawkins, *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, II, 873.

[111] Owen Swiney noted that the contract had been sent 'last week' in his letter to the Duke of Richmond of 29 June/6 July 1725; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 220–1.

Confirmation of the popular connection between play and opera comes in the simple and pervasive application of the title 'rival queens' to the two singers, in sources as diverse as an opera prologue (at a lower-end theatre), newspapers, and satirical pamphlets.[115] The link between play and opera may have been strong enough to prompt Colley Cibber to later suggest, in recalling Thomas Betterton's portrayal of Alexander in Lee's play, that 'When these flowing Numbers came from the Mouth of a *Betterton*, the Multitude no more desired Sense to them, than our musical *Connoisseurs* think it essential in the celebrate[d] Airs of an *Italian* Opera.'[116] Certainly, there were other reasons for choosing the source libretto, Ortensio Mauro's *La superbia d'Alessandro* (1690), for adaptation – particularly its Hanoverian origins.[117] But Rolli and Handel's choice of this theme at this juncture seems pointed, to say the least. Indeed, Rolli's arrangement of Mauro's original libretto is notable for an apparent strategy of comparison and contrast between the two women's parts, and for the tactical postponement to the final act both of Alessandro's choice between the aspiring ladies, and of their reconciliation to one another.[118]

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[112] Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 233; King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 111–16. Laura Brown singles out Lee's play (March 1677), along with Dryden's *All for Love* (December 1677), as an early work in the 'pathetic or affective mode' of the later 'she-tragedy', which nonetheless retained elements of the heroic drama: 'legendary and exotic characters typical of heroic drama' remain, but are treated 'not as active heroines but as passive victims'; 'The Defenseless Woman', 432.

[113] Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 233. In 1756, the revival of the play saw a fight between Peg Woffington and George Anne Bellamy over their dresses, which in turn inspired a satirical piece by Samuel Foote entitled 'The Green Room Squabble, or a Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius' in 1756. Peg Woffington was already noted for her rivalry with Kitty Clive; another 'Green-Room Scuffle' had been published in 1748 about the pair, complete with engraving, and the women were described by Thomas Davies in terms recalling the traditional contrast between female rivals; see Highfill, Burnim and Langhans, 'Woffington, Margaret' in *Biographical Dictionary*, 214–15, 199, 206, 209.

[114] The 'rivals' topos was already established when Lee wrote his play in 1677: Dryden's *The Rival Ladies* and Davenant's *The Rivals* both dated from 1664; Lee's successful play was swiftly followed by John Banks's *The Rival Kings* (1677); the theme continued to inspire 'rivals' plays and satires throughout the eighteenth century, including Colley Cibber's parody of Lee, *The Rival Queans* (1704); see King, 'Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 111–12. On *L'Elpidia* see John H. Roberts, '*L'Elpidia, ovvero Li rivali generosi*'.

[115] Aside from the two satirical pamphlets of July 1727, *The Contre Temps; or, the Rival Queans*, and *The Devil to Pay at St. James's* (to be discussed below), earlier mention of the 'rival queens' comes in, for instance, the prologue to Bononcini's *Camilla* (performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, November 1726), and *Mist's Weekly Journal* (10 December 1726); see Deutsch, *Handel*, 198; Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 249–50.

If the opera directors had wanted a safe debut – one suitable, say, for re-creating the singers' 'double-diva' Venetian success – they might have followed the common practice of reviving one of those earlier works, suitably edited of course.[119] But this choice seems to have had a different purpose – to heighten the appetite for rivalry. We might find evidence for this hypothesis in the company's decision to stage *L'Elpidia, overo li rivali generosi* just prior to Faustina's arrival; *L'Elpidia* featured male rivalry for the hand of Cuzzoni's character, and Cuzzoni herself sang five arias written for Faustina, taken from what Reinhard Strohm describes as 'the latest and best-known operas' of the Venetian 1724/5 season.[120] Strohm highlights the unusual nature of this pasticcio for London in its inclusion of very recent music by Leonardo Vinci, a composer then unknown outside Italy; he also observes that for the revival of the work for the opening of the 1725/6 season, Cuzzoni added another new aria from Faustina's repertory.[121] John H. Roberts has further noted that letters from the erstwhile theatre manager, Owen Swiney, demonstrate that *L'Elpidia* was assembled especially for London in Venice, perhaps at the behest of Royal Academy directors seeking additional material after Bononcini's withdrawal from the Academy in 1724.[122] Roberts suggests the libretto was probably chosen by Swiney himself to suit the projected London cast, while the music (assembled from recent operas by Vinci and Orlandini) was prepared by Vinci. Whoever chose the libretto – Swiney (an agitator for Faustina's cause, when it suited him) or the directors – one can infer from the selection of musical material that provocative vocal comparison was envisaged, regardless of whether it was designed for general consumption or merely to settle (or provoke) dispute within the Academy, and whether to Cuzzoni's cost or to Faustina's.

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[116] Cibber, *An Apology*, 63.

[117] Mauro's libretto and Agostino Steffani's music were written for the Hanoverian Elector, Ernst August, George I's father; see Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera*, 53–4. It is also worth noting that the two women contesting Alexander's hand do not have the same names as their counterparts in Lee's original: while Lee's rivals were the historical figures Statira and Roxana (from Plutarch), the operatic rivals were Roxana and Lisaura, the latter of whom was entirely fictional, with a role in the opera that was in any case quite different from (or rather, not as developed as) that of Statira in the play. Names in opera and spoken theatre were readily and easily changed.

[118] King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 23–5, 29, 35, 54–5. Although the theme of rivalry also played a significant part in the source libretto, Mauro's *La superbia d'Alessandro* (set by Agostino Steffani in 1690), King demonstrates that Rolli and Handel enhanced and promoted this theme, arranging successive contrasting scenes and rewriting music (King mentions particularly II.ii) to highlight the women's opposition (21–45). Hans Dieter Clausen also notes the care taken in structuring the opera round the women, though he does not see it as working to exploit the rivalry; 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 154–5.

[119] It is noteworthy that none of these operas was revived for the women in London. However, Bononcini's *Astianatte* was derived from a libretto by Antonio Salvi which had also been adapted for performance in Venice in 1718, with Faustina in the role of Ermione, which role she also took in London. Importation of opera libretti from Italy was standard practice; it was also common for singers to carry not just arias but entire operas with them. A notable instance of the practice of reviving an opera around a singer occurred with the tenor Francesco Borosini as Bajazet in Handel's *Tamerlano* (1724); see Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726*, 534–5. In 1716, Nicola Haym's adaptation of *Lucio Vero* from Albinoni's setting (Ferrara, 1713) featured the castrato Nicolini, who had also sung the title role in 1713; see Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, IV, 41, 45.

[120] Strohm, 'Handel's Pasticci', 168.

That *L'Elpidia* and then *Alessandro* were thought of by some as opening salvos in a contest between the singers finds support in letters by figures involved in London's operatic activities, which imply that at least some of the Academy directors were ready to encourage and exploit competition between the women.[123] In March 1726 Swiney petitioned Lennox, in his capacity as Deputy Governor of the Royal Academy, with regard to *Alessandro*:

> I beg your Grace now that you have got the Faustina, never to consent to any thing that can put the academy into disorder, as it must, certainly, be put into, if what I hear (to have been projected by Messrs. Haym & Handel) is put in Execution: I mean the opera of Alexander the great: where there is to be a Struggle between the Rival Queen's, for a Superiority.
>
> The interest of the academy is (most certainly) to keep this Superiority, in suspense, if possible: if Messrs. de l'academie are of another opinion, then tis plain, they mean to have but one of 'em: and I think I can give a shrew'd guesse, at the person who is to make a speedy visit to Italy.[124]

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[121] Strohm, 'Handel's Pasticci', 168–9, and 'Handel's Ezio', 225. *L'Elpidia* seems to have been something of a special commission: Owen Swiney complained that he had had to pay £50 for it in March 1726 (presumably, for the copying of the music), and returned to the theme again two years later; see Swiney's letters to the Duke of Richmond of 15 March 1726 and 14 May 1728; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 362–4, 378–80.

[122] John H. Roberts, '*L'Elpidia, ovvero Li rivali generosi*'.

[123] Ograjenšek is right to point out that the various Academy directors who had visited Venice would have seen these and other women working amicably together, and not necessarily have intended a competition in London ('From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 68); however, we cannot therefore assert, with James Wierzbicki, that 'A personal rivalry between the singers was neither anticipated nor welcomed'; see 'Dethroning the Divas', 179.

[124] Swiney, letter of 4–15 March 1726, cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 364; also noted by King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 112. Although it was Rolli, not

A year later, in a letter to Agostino Steffani on 10 July 1727, Giuseppe Riva expressed his concern about the tensions that had recently reached fever pitch, claiming that 'each singer had equal and strong weapons with which to destroy her rival'. While he felt Cuzzoni was winning, 'however the directors, who are mainly for Faustina, have thought to distinguish [*distinggere*] operas, but the new rulers [George II and Queen Caroline] and the nation will not let them do so'.[125] Mary, Countess Pembroke's letter of apology on behalf of Cuzzoni, written to Charlotte Clayton at around the same time, appears to provide support for Riva's claim that most of the directors were 'for' Faustina, but that Cuzzoni still had powerful allies; she states that 'the Directors … had also a message from the King [apparently in favour of Cuzzoni], in a letter from Mr. Fabrice, which they have the insolence to dispute, except the Duke of Rutland, Lord Albermarle, and Sir Thomas Pendergrass'.[126] Cuzzoni was apparently dismissed from the Academy in May 1727 (perhaps due to illness or vocal problems, or due to her reputedly difficult temperament), and Swiney asked to find another singer, but evidently her departure was not permanent.[127]

Haym, who adapted *Alessandro* for London, Swiney may have assumed Haym's involvement based on his role as Academy poet (Swiney opens the letter complaining at being forced to correspond with Haym); see Riva's letter to Muratori of 3 October 1726; cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 197. Swiney also had his own agenda: the promotion of Faustina (no doubt it is she he suggests would unfairly be returned to Italy) and of his pasticcio, *Venceslao*, which he hoped the Academy would accept as the first opera in which Faustina would perform; see Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 362–7.

[125] The whole passage reads: 'I partiti della Cuzzoni e della Faustina si sono sfidati colla pericolosa pruova de' fischi e degli applausi, ogn'uno per la loro … L'opera era di Bononcino, onde l'una e l'altra avevano armi eguali e vigorose per abbattere la rivale. Chi [Cuzzoni] ha saputo meglio maneggiarle ha avuta la vittoria. I direttori però, che sono la maggior parte per la Faustina, pensavano di distinggere le opere, ma i nuovi regnanti e la nazione nol vogliono permettere, e se la Faustina vorrà andarsene le daranno il buon viaggio'; Lindgren and Timms, *The Correspondence of Agostino Steffani*, 118–19. Lindgren and Timms translate 'distinggere' as 'censoring' ('have thought of censoring operas'), but the term's meaning is unclear. Woyke notes Riva's partisanship for Cuzzoni, perhaps based on 'campanilismo' (loyalty to one's region); *Faustina Bordoni*, 142, 144.

[126] See Deutsch, *Handel*, 207–8, who dates the letter 'Spring 1727'. Lowell Lindgren suggests the letter referred to the performance of *Admeto* on 4 April ('A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', 1, 360). Most recently, however, John H. Roberts has proposed that the letter refers to the performance of *Astianatte* on 6 June; see 'The Riddle of *Riccardo primo*', 473–4, n.2. The influence of directorial politics on the structure of operas was evidently accepted. In 1723 Giovanni Giacomo Zamboni wrote to Riva that in his *Vespasiano* Ariosti 'had played his cards well, because forseeing Mylord Peterborough will succeed Stairs [the Earl of Stair, as ambassador to France], he has treated Stesi [Anastasia Robinson, his mistress] very well, indeed extremely well'; letter of 26 October 1723, cited in Lindgren, 'Ariosti's London Years', 343.

[127] Cuzzoni experienced serious vocal problems at this time, her voice being described as 'prodigiously out of order' in May 1727; see Robert Hassell to Robert Cotesworth, letter of 10 May 1727, in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 252, and also 251–4. Swiney complained that, having found a replacement, he was then kept in suspense a further three months; see his letter to the

If factions among the opera directors, librettists and composers were attempting to manage the rivalry in favour of one or other singer, they did so at great cost to the company. Five days after Riva's letter, a report in *The Craftsman* (15 July 1727) observed that: 'It is also said, that let either *Cuzzoni* or *Faustina* prevail in the Dispute, the *Academy* will be a great sufferer by the Bustle, which hath already been made about it.'[128] At the end of that year, Mrs Pendarves noted the desperate state to which the company had been reduced by internal bickering:

> I doubt operas will not survive longer than this winter, they are now at their last gasp; the subscription is expired and nobody will renew it. The directors are always squabbling, and they have so many divisions among themselves that I wonder they have not broke up before.[129]

Any directorial or artistic manipulation was not practised in a vacuum: the keen interest of the wider public and (presumably) newspaper hacks was reflected in the most infamous moment of the rivalry. On 6 June 1727, a performance of their fourth joint opera, Bononcini's *Astianatte*, was halted by choruses of catcalls and whistles from the singers' factions in the audience, despite the presence of Princess Caroline. Two contemporary pamphlets portrayed the singers as the instigators of the debacle: the combination of colourful reportage and dramatic 'reenactment' of *The Devil to pay at St. James's: or, A full and true Account of a most horrid and bloody Battle between Madam Faustina and Madam Cuzzoni* [June 1727] and *The Contre Temps; or the Rival Queans* [July 1727] no doubt contributed to the longevity of this myth, as the next chapter will suggest.

More neutral contemporaries, however, made no mention of brawling between the women. Given the persistence of the myth attributing the fracas to the singers, these reports are worth citing in full. The *Whitehall Evening-Post* for 6–8 June 1727 noted:

> On Tuesday Night last [6 June], a great Disturbance happen'd at the Opera, occasioned by the Partizans of the two celebrated Rival Ladies, *Cuzzoni* and *Faustina*. The Contention at first, was only carried on by Hissing on one Side, and Clapping on the other; but proceeded, at length, to the delightful Exercise of Catcalls, and other Decencies, which demonstrated the inimitable Zeal and Politeness of that Illustrious Assembly. *N.B.* The

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Duke of Richmond, 14 May 1728; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 378–80, and discussed by Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 254–5.

[128] *Country Journal; or, The Craftsman* (15 July 1727); cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 396–8 (397). As *The Craftsman* was primarily an oppositional political journal, which communicated many of its attacks on the government via allegorical allusion (and was not above using the opera to this end), its reports should not always be taken at face value; this section, however, seems to have no potential for political application which might invalidate a straightforward reading.

[129] Mrs Pendarves to her sister, Ann Granville (25 November 1727); cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 218.

> Princess Carolina was present; but no Regards were of Force to restrain the glorious Ardour of the fierce Opponents.[130]

On 10 June *Mist's Weekly Journal* reported that

> Tuesday night there was a great Uproar at the Opera House; a new and great Quarrel being a[r]isen between the Allies of Cuzzoni and Faustina; but, we hope, for the Good of the Nation, it will be soon amicably composed, or, at least, a Cessation agreed on for seven Months.

John, Lord Hervey, an infamous gossip in his own right, wrote to his friend Stephen Fox on 13 June:

> I suppose you have heard already that both Cuzzoni and Faustina were so hissed and cat-called last Tuesday that the Opera was not finished that night: nor have the Directors dared to venture the representation of another since. They both threaten to go, but after a little bullying will infallibly stay. 1500 guineas are mediators whose interposition they'll never be able to resist … I was t'other night upon the water, and heard nothing till three a clock in the morning but invocations of one and execrations upon the other. The next night I went again, and heard the same ceremony performed by another company, with the names reversed; so that these transient deities, like the Egyptian ones, are alternately sacrificed to one another. I can't applaud the taste of my countrymen, who stop the mouths of these women upon the stage, give them £3000 a year [i.e. £1,500 each] to come there to have the pleasure of hissing them off when they are there, and prefer their conversation in a barge to their voices in a theatre.[131]

Hervey's representation of the singers as sacrificial deities whose mouths have been stopped by their fractious factional admirers neatly suggests the performers' relative powerlessness in this process. Even the *Craftsman* newspaper, always happy to make politico-satirical capital out of the opera, makes it clear that it was the audience, not the singers, who disrupted the performance:

> I was last night at the *Opera*, and, in the middle of one of the finest Songs, was surprized at an Instrument, I had never heard before. As it was new to me, it was likewise disagreeable; I looked upon it as an awkward Design to improve and fill up *Bononcini*'s

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[130] This report was also published in *Applebee's Original Weekly Journal* and the *London Journal* on the same date; see also the less satirical version of this account in the *British Journal* for 10 June 1727, cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 210. That this was noted as a singular breach of etiquette because of the Princess's presence demonstrates that Britons might normally have expected to follow the Continental practice of listening with respect in the presence of royalty – hearing 'through the king's ear'; see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 23. Their level of involvement in contesting the women's rivalry in any case ties the opera house audience to those of the spoken theatres, and the conventions of engagement practised there; see Worthen, *Idea of the Actor*, 81–3.

[131] *Lord Hervey and His Friends*, ed. Earl of Ilchester, 18–19. See also Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 252–3.

> Musick, which is condemn'd by some of our very fine Gentlemen for its too great *Simplicity*; I observed that it was intended to accompany *Cuzzoni*'s Voice; but thought it very ill judged to single out hers, which has too much sweetness in it, to want so untuneful and harsh a Pipe: Besides, the Performers on it were wretched ones, being as much out of time, as they were out of tune. Indeed they were only some of the Gentry of the upper Gallery or the Pit …[132]

Thus, although the two singers may have felt the strain of the rivalry acutely (both had been ill in the preceding months),[133] it is difficult to say what part they played in initiating and sustaining it.

Where, then, did the rivalry come from? No doubt the arrival of Faustina on Cuzzoni's territory inspired some animosity between the two, especially if Cuzzoni was now the home favourite (perhaps reversing the Venetian situation). Certainly, despite Cuzzoni's reputation for being difficult (infamously, Handel had apparently threatened to throw her out the window after she refused to perform an aria in *Ottone*), it was Faustina who was consistently seen as the troublemaker in the published assessments from the 1720s. After her arrival, Faustina was singled out for attack in satirical pamphlets in a way that Cuzzoni had never been; these pamphlets, though not directly concerning the rivalry, depicted Faustina as predatory and aggressive.[134] An article in *The Craftsman* for 31 August 1728, reviewing the fortunes of the opera company, similarly presented Faustina in a negative light, explaining that 'Madam *Faustina* was pleased, upon her coming over hither, to set up a Claim to the *first part in the Opera*, against her Competitor *Seigniora Cuzzoni* … by virtue of a *former, secret Promise*'. Cuzzoni 'would have willingly enough fulfilled her Promise, rather than occasion so much Disturbance in the Academy', but was persuaded to renege, whereupon Faustina,

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[132] *Country Journal; or, The Craftsman* (10 June 1727); cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 394–6 (395); see also the letter in the same journal of 15 July 1727; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 396–8.

[133] Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 251. Senesino had also been taken ill in June 1726, during the run of *Alessandro* – or had claimed so; Owen Swiney's letter of 13 August 1726 casts some doubt on his illness; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 368. Satirists and other commentators suggested Senesino was piqued at having no part in the dispute himself; Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 250, 252–3; see also chapter 5, below.

[134] To name the most substantial and best known of the attacks on the opera at this time will provide adequate indication of a focus on Faustina: Henry Carey, *Faustina: or the Roman Songstress, a Satyr, on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age* [1726]; *An Epistle from S——r S——o to S——a F——a* [8 March 1727]; *F-NAs Answer to S-NO's Epistle* [17 March 1727]; *An Answer from S——a F——a to S——r S——o* [18 March 1727]; *An Epistle from Signora F-a to a Lady* [10 June 1727]. The rash of mock-epistles in 1727 had a 1724 precedent in the *Epistle from S——o to A——a R——n*, advertised in the *Daily Post* for 3 July 1724; see Deutsch, *Handel*, 171. Cuzzoni received no such treatment. Opprobrium for assertive or dominant behaviour in actresses was expressed through sexual satire at least as far back as attacks on Elizabeth Barry from the 1670s to 1700s; see Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 30.

'acknowledged to be a Lady of … much *Art*, *Spirit* and *Intrigue* … made such *powerful Alliances* amongst the chief Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom, and engaged them so zealously in her Interest, that *Cuzzoni* began to think herself in imminent Danger'. Nonetheless, in this essay at least, Cuzzoni's role in the troubles (or that of her supporters) was also acknowledged, in that her 'high Spirit' led her to '*talk big, menace*, and *defy*', but 'she found her Hands tied up from *Revenge*' by the backtracking of her allies.[135]

If audience perception of Faustina's invasion of the London operatic scene played a part in hostile depictions, it might also have intersected with musical characterisation. It is conventional wisdom that the women's characterisations in London were derived from the diverse vocal talents described by Tosi and others, which were examined above: 'the pathetic of the one [Cuzzoni] and the allegro of the other [are] the qualities the most to be admired respectively in each of them', as Tosi put it. Faustina's penchant for instrumental-style virtuosity, featuring runs, arpeggios, and leaping and syncopated lines may well have recalled a 'military' musical style associated with the expression of masculinity since the late Renaissance.[136] In discussing Handel's character 'typecasting', Steven C. LaRue observes that usually 'Cuzzoni is given the pathetic heroine roles', while Faustina's 'are generally much more optimistic and active'.[137] Such 'typecasting' has also been demonstrated for other singers at this time, notably Vivaldi's protégé Anna Giraud in Venice and the famous castrato Farinelli in London.[138] LaRue's assessment is just: in their joint London operas Cuzzoni was frequently cast as the lamenting, wronged woman, sometimes bordering on the hysterical, while Faustina was often so active as to overstep the bounds of feminine decorum, and specialised in 'breeches' roles (in *Admeto* and *Siroe*).[139] A brief, plot-based summary of the roles they created in their joint London operas (Table 1.1) might illustrate the way in which roles align with

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[135] *The Country Journal; or, The Craftsman*, 31 August 1728; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 401–4 (402, 403).

[136] Wistreich, 'Of Mars I Sing', 69, 92; Kate van Orden, *Music, Discipline, and Arms in Early Modern France*, 20–9.

[137] LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 158. Hans Dieter Clausen, however, suggests that the women shared the 'active roles', citing Cuzzoni's Antigona (*Admeto*), Lucilla (Ariosti's *Teuzzone*), and Seleuce (*Tolomeo*) as examples; 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*' 155. While elements of the plot (particularly in *Admeto*) do make Cuzzoni's character appear more 'active', I would argue that aria affects still tend to present Cuzzoni as passive. On 'distressed womanhood' in the theatre, see Reid, 'Burke's Tragic Muse'.

[138] Hill, 'Vivaldi's *Griselda*'.

[139] Most notably, as Berenice in *Lucio Vero*, she 'throws her self' into the amphitheatre to join her beloved Vologeso in the lion-fighting scene (1.x, pp.22–3), refusing to let him die alone. Faustina had played a cross-dressing role in Italy too, in P. M. Suarez's and Pollarolo's *Leucippe e Teonoe* (Venice, 1719); see Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera*, 348. However, she only once in her career took a male role according to Saskia Maria Woyke, that role being Alessandro in *Alessandro Severo* (1717); *Faustina Bordoni*, 110. Arnold Niggli apparently said Faustina was suited to

Table 1.1: *Operatic roles taken by Faustina, Cuzzoni and Senesino, London 1726–8*

Librettist/composer: opera	Faustina	Cuzzoni	Senesino
1. Rolli/Handel: *Alessandro* (May 1726)	Rossane*	Lisaura	Alessandro
2. Haym/Ariosti: *Lucio Vero* (January 1727)	Berenice	Lucilla*	Lucio Vero
3. Anon./Handel: *Admeto* (January 1727)	Alceste*	Antigona	Admeto
4. Haym?/Bononcini: *Astianatte* (May 1727)	Ermione	Andromaca*	Pirro
5. Anon./Ariosti: *Teuzzone* (October 1727)	Zidiana	Zelinda*	Teuzzone
6. Rolli/Handel: *Riccardo primo* (November 1727)	Pulcheria	Costanza*	Riccardo primo
7. Haym/Handel: *Siroe* (February 1728)	Emira*	Laodice	Siroe
8. Haym/Handel: *Tolomeo* (April 1728)	Elisa	Seleuce*	Tolomeo

* *Character who wins the* primo uomo

supposed voice type (while also showing that they were reasonably balanced within Handel's operas in terms of precedence with the *primo uomo*, Senesino).[140]

1. In *Alessandro* (May 1726), Faustina's Rossane (the historical Roxana, and also the character who stabs her rival to death in Lee's play) is a slave beloved of Alessandro (Senesino), while his interest in the fictional princess Lisaura (Cuzzoni) is less clear (in the source libretto it was politically motivated); neither woman has much to do with the action, which revolves around issues of monarchical divine right and the loyalty of (male) subjects.[141]
2. In *Lucio Vero* (January 1727), Lucilla (Cuzzoni) is betrothed to Lucio Vero (Senesino), but is forced to watch while he pursues Berenice (Faustina), who defiantly rejects him in favour of Vologeso, for whom she demonstrates her willingness to die by leaping into the gladiatorial arena with him.
3. In *Admeto* (January 1727), Alceste (Faustina) gives her life for her husband and then returns from Hades disguised as a soldier to reclaim him, while Antigona (Cuzzoni) expresses anger that Admeto (Senesino), originally her betrothed, rejected her, and fears that she will never regain him, even as she works her way into his affections, disguised as a shepherdess.
4. In *Astianatte* (May 1727), Andromaca (Cuzzoni) is in a constant state of anguish, forced to choose between marrying a man she loathes or sacrificing her child, while the scorned Ermione (Faustina) plots a revenge that involves an attempted murder of her betrothed and the kidnapping of Andromaca's son.

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heroic roles 'such as princesses of proud and imperious personality'; Termini, 'From Ariodante to Ariodante', xlix.

[140] On the latter point, see also Knapp, 'Die Opern *Alessandro* und *Admeto*', 66.

[141] See discussion in n.173 below.

5. In *Teuzzone* (October 1727), the scheming Zidiana (Faustina) plots to win the throne by promising her hand to both Sivenio and Cino, while in fact aiming to steal the rightful heir, Teuzzone (Senesino), from his long-suffering bride, Zelinda (Cuzzoni).
6. In *Riccardo primo* (November 1727), Costanza (Cuzzoni) is held hostage by the tyrant Isacio and despairs of being returned to her betrothed, Riccardo (Senesino), while Isacio's daugher Pulcheria (Faustina) initially participates in her father's attempt to deceive Riccardo and then works to assist the hero and Costanza.
7. In *Siroe* (February 1728), Emira (Faustina), disguised as a warrior, blackmails her lover, Siroe (Senesino), into silence while attempting to kill his father; Laodice (Cuzzoni) languishes for and conspires against Siroe without knowing he has given his heart to another.
8. In *Tolomeo* (April 1728), Seleuce (Cuzzoni) and Tolomeo (Senesino) are refugees, oppressed by their respective royal admirers, Elisa (Faustina) and Araspe.[142]

Although characterisation seems straightforward, vocal style cannot so easily be aligned with character type. While an aesthetic of contrast seems to have been an important principle in librettists' designs, LaRue's distinction between active and passive was not the only conjunction available to the women: Olga Termini describes a complementary pairing in the women's first outing together, Pollarolo's 1718 setting of *Ariodante*, in which Faustina played the 'proud heroine' Ginevra, and Cuzzoni took the 'frivolous but good-hearted' part of her maid Dalinda.[143] 'Frivolous but good-hearted' might also describe significant elements in other roles created for Cuzzoni prior to Faustina's arrival, such as (most notably) that of Cleopatra in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (1724).[144] Tosi's description of their vocal talents (and still more so those of later commentators, such as Quantz) could also be read to align with this characterisation: while Faustina demonstrated 'a prodigious felicity in executing, and … a singular brilliant', Cuzzoni had a 'delightful soothing cantabile' and 'the sweetness of a fine voice'.[145]

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[142] *Radamisto* was also revived as a vehicle for the women (January 1728); in it Polissena (Cuzzoni) is spurned by her husband, the tyrant Tiridate, while he attempts to kill her brother Radamisto (Senesino) and seduce his defiant wife Zenobia (Faustina).

[143] Termini, 'From Ariodante to Ariodante', xlix–l.

[144] Other roles with elements of frivolity include Arricida in *Il Vespasiano* (1724; [Haym] and Ariosti), whose initial defiance of her would-be seducer, Domiziano, is almost playful ('Prima vedrai', I.ii); and Statira in *Il Dario* (1725; [Anon.] and Ariosti), who spends half the opera toying with abandoning her lover, Dario, in favour of the pretender to the throne, Siderme.

[145] Tosi, ed. Galliard, *Observations on the Florid Song*, 171. Johann Friedrich Agricola's translation of Tosi may hint at Cuzzoni's more aristocratic characteristics: he begins not with praise of Cuzzoni's 'delightful soothing cantabile', but her 'nobly flattering and gentle disposition' ('schmeichelhafte und zärtliche Wesen der andern'); Agricola, *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, trans. Baird, 230.

LaRue's analysis of the singers' music also hints at the potential for variety implicit in Tosi's and others' descriptions: assessing the differences between the two women in Handel's operas through key, mode and metre, he has concluded that Handel showed greater consistency in his choice of all three for Faustina, favouring sharp major keys and duple or triple time.[146] Although Cuzzoni's arias are more varied, there is also a notable emphasis (in the operas after Faustina's arrival) on compound metre and flat key, which LaRue associates with an emphasis on 'the expression of sorrows and laments' in her parts.[147]

We can see the way in which Cuzzoni's pathetic role was distinguished musically as well as in terms of plot if we turn, for example, to *Riccardo primo*, Handel's third opera for the pair. As the long-suffering Costanza, Cuzzoni's *ethos*, as we will see in chapter 4, is one of virtue in distress; this is reflected in the dominance of minor-key, slow, lamenting arias. Only one of her arias is wholeheartedly positive ('Il volo così fido', in G major; III.viii), in which she offers succour to Faustina's character. Most of the other arias are largely negative; she expresses: fear for the life of her betrothed, Riccardo, and in turn for her own ('Se perì l'amato bene'; I.i); a plea to be left alone by the tyrant Isacio ('Lascia la pace all'alma'; I.v); a complaint that heaven is against her ('Se m'è contrario il Cielo'; II.i); an apostrophe to Death ('Morte, vieni'; III.ii); an envoy to Riccardo couched in terms of her grief and death ('Bacia per me la mano'; III.iv). Even anticipation of meeting Riccardo is framed negatively, the A-section of 'Di notte il pellegrino' (II.ii) deploying the metaphor of a pilgrim who loses his way, while her subsequent apostrophe to Riccardo, 'Caro, vieni a me' (II.iv), rhymes 'caro' with 'amaro', and speaks not only of her faithfulness, but also of martyrdom and sighing.

We might ask why a sharply drawn contrast rather than the gentler pairing noted by Termini should have been the norm in London. Indeed, examination of Cuzzoni's earlier roles in London demonstrates her capacity for a much broader range of characterisation, including types and musical styles that would subsequently be associated with Faustina (or which already had been, in the case of the arias from *L'Elpidia*).[148] The defiant, regal Rodelinda in Handel's opera of that name (1725) is only the best-known example, a widow-queen who holds her ground against her oppressors; as Tomiri in Bononcini's *Farnace* (1723) and Asteria in Handel's *Tamerlano* (1724), Cuzzoni's character is similarly regal, though torn (in different ways in each opera) between love and pride, desire for revenge, and jealousy. In Haym and Bononcini's *Calfurnia* (1724), Cuzzoni's eponymous heroine is driven by patriotism, and readily assents to the oracular command that she must die to ensure Roman victory. Thus she is actuated by her (explicitly masculine) sense of patrician honour and duty (her lover by contrast displaying a 'feminine' willingness to sacrifice duty for love). Her response to the urgings of her mother and lover (the latter played by Senesino) to escape, in II.viii, gives a flavour:

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[146] Such consistency has been found elsewhere: Frederick L. Millner notes that when Faustina sang the title role in *Semiramide* in 1747, all her arias were fast, 'ignoring the eighteenth-century convention that each singer be given a selection of different aria-types'; *The Operas of Johann Adolf Hasse*, 124. For another view on Faustina's key preferences, see p. 30, above.

[147] LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 164, 158, and the table of the singers' keys on p.165.

[148] Ograjenšek similarly notes the predominance of 'complex, rather than black and white' characters in Faustina's earlier Venetian roles; Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 43.

> Più Madre io non conosco,
> Nè Sposo più; sol vedo
> Il ferreo carro, e la servil catena,
> Onde in trionfo avvinta
> Roma ne andria de' suoi nemici in preda.
> … Mi pesa
> La sciagura di Roma; ella è in periglio,
> Sol io salvar la posso; Io vuò morire.[149]

She then makes her identification with masculine Roman virtues explicit in her address to her father:

> Signor: Son del tuo sangue; e cor men forte
> Benché in più debil sesso,
> Del tuo core io non serbo;
> Vedo mia gloria, e questo sol desio.[150]

There were also less heroic roles: in Ariosti's *Il Vespasiano* (1724) Arricida, like Rodelinda, first defies a lustful tyrant, but is then witness to the indignity of her husband's unfaithfulness; in the same composer's *Il Dario* (1725) the vacillating Statira eventually decides in favour of loyalty to Dario, rather than aspiring to the throne.

The diversity of characterisation in Cuzzoni's earlier London roles has consistently been underplayed, however. Burney seems to suggest that Cuzzoni's 'type' was determined by the audience from her first London aria, in Handel's *Ottone*: '*Falsa imagine*, the first which Cuzzoni sung in this country, fixed her reputation as an expressive and pathetic singer.'[151] However, Burney's own emphasis on such 'pathetic' arias in his discussion of Cuzzoni's roles in subsequent operas, and his comparison of other of her arias with those subsequently sung by Faustina, might suggest retrospective stereotyping, fitting Cuzzoni into the type she later came to inhabit.[152]

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[149] Nicolà Haym, *Calfurnia*, 42. 'I know you now no more. / I only see Great Rome to Slavery brought, / And all her captive Sons, in Fetters led, / To grace the Triumph of th'insulting Foe … Since I alone can save my sinking Country, / Its Glory I'll consult, and bravely dye' (43). Texts and translations are provided from the original libretti where available and unless otherwise noted, as we must assume most audience members would have followed the libretto 'translations' (however bowdlerised) for the plot of the London operas, rather than the Italian, at least during the performance itself.

[150] Haym, *Calfurnia*, 45; 'Your Daughter, Sir, tho' of the weaker Sex, / Can boast a Heart as great and brave as yours; / And ever will, to Life, prefer her Glory' (44).

The variety of which Cuzzoni was capable is particularly evident in Haym's and Ariosti's *Il Vespasiano*. It is worth giving some examples from the score published by John Walsh (the publication being a mark of Ariosti's favour in London at the time).[153] Arricida's role in the dramatic narrative is subsidiary, but her arias cover the gamut of emotional response and musical expression, by turns fearful ('Aure voi che m'ascoltate', I.iv) and defiant ('Dal mio sen costante e forte', I.ix) towards her captor, and vengeful ('S'io son schernita', II.viii) and hopeful ('La tortorella fida e costante', II.x) about her husband, Tito.[154] Indeed, it is clear from the juxtaposition of arias that Cuzzoni's versatility was primarily on display: Arricida's desire for revenge on the unfaithful Tito, expressed in 'S'io son schernita', is followed almost immediately by her reappearance and recantation in 'La tortorella', for example. And while her particular, delicate style was made much of in 'Aure voi che m'ascoltate' (Example 1.4) and 'La tortorella', 'Dal mio sen costante e forte' (Example 1.5) and 'S'io son schernita' also demonstrate her ability to sing the kind of forceful, motoric aria subsequently associated with Faustina.[155] Even those roles with a strong ethos, such as Calfurnia, express a range of affects in their arias. Delimitation of Cuzzoni's opportunities for characterisation really seems to have begun only with Faustina's arrival in London.

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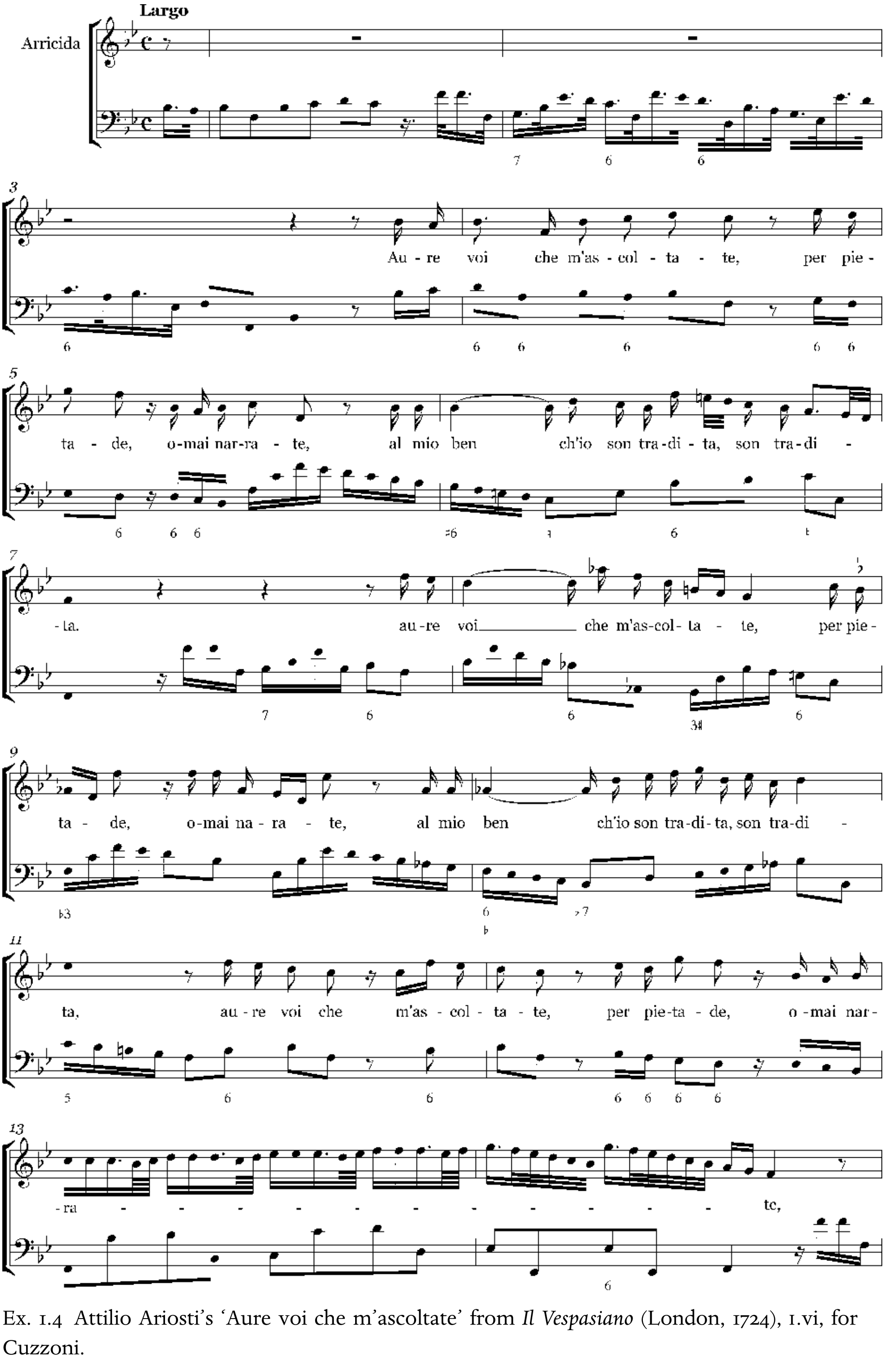
[151] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 722.

[152] In *Giulio Cesare*, Burney notes that '*Da tempeste*, for Cuzzoni, till the arrival of Faustina, [was] admired as a very extraordinary bravura'; *General History of Music*, II, 728.

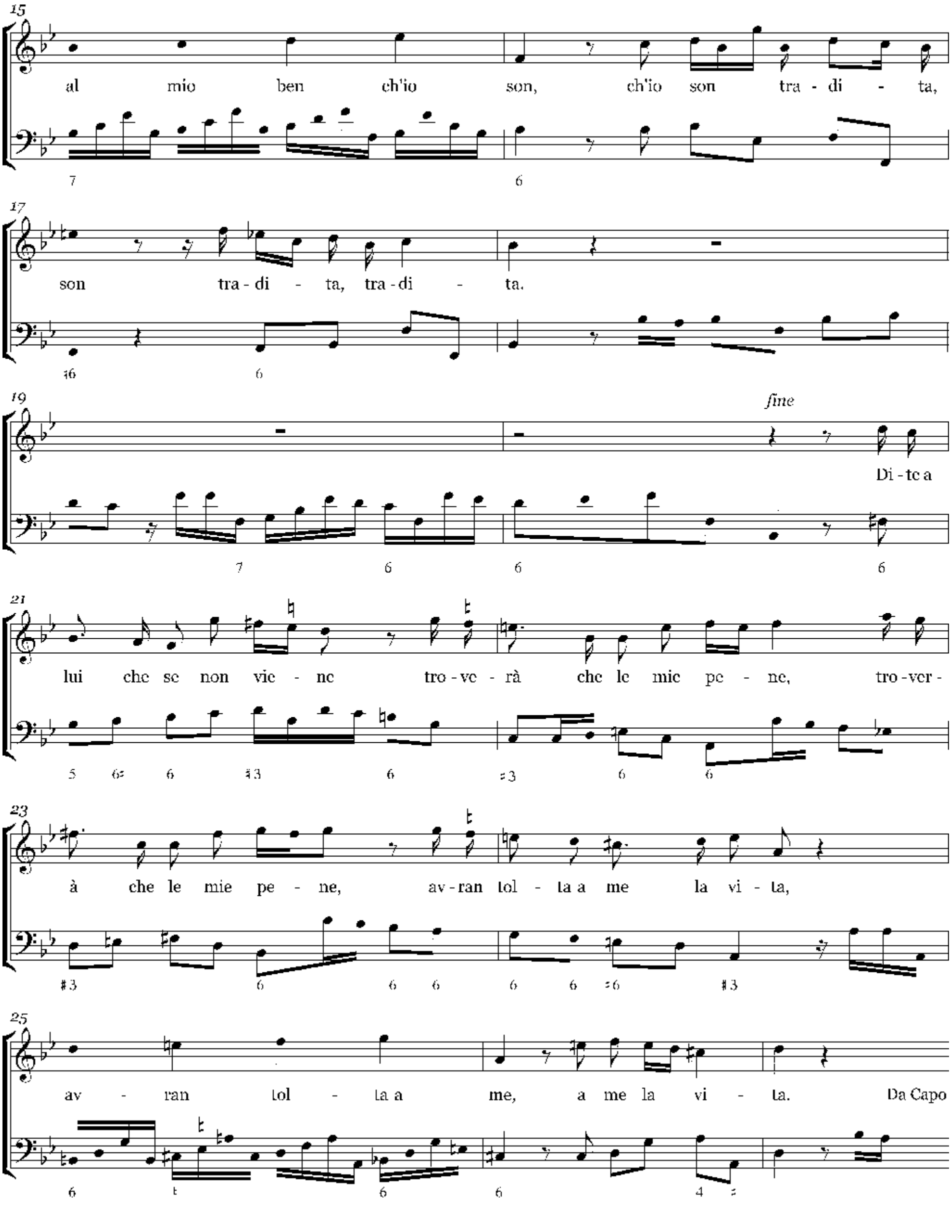
[153] The anonymous author of the *Session of Musicians*, however, suggested in 1724 that *Il Vespasiano* was not as popular as previous works had been: 'Of *Ti[tu]s Ma[nli]us* you may justly boast, / But dull *Ves[pasi]an* all that Honour lost' (7). Walsh's score includes the overture but lacks recitatives. A set of 'Favourite Songs' was also published; both are reproduced in Ariosti, *Vespasian*.

[154] *Il Vespasiano* was not a popular opera, perhaps in part because it portrays the male aristocracy as largely either vicious or foolish; see Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 199.

[155] The light, playful style was already a feature of Cuzzoni's role in the Venetian *Ariodante*, but so too was the principle of variety; see Termini, 'From Ariodante to Ariodante', l. Faustina's forceful style was also already on display in her early career and her first outing with Cuzzoni, in the production of *Ariodante* of 1716 and then 1718, as her 1718 arias 'Orrida agli occhi miei' (I.ii) and 'Dalla sua fronte severa' (V.iii) demonstrate; see Salvi and Pollarolo, *Ariodante*, ed. Termini, xlix–l; Termini particularly notes the variety in her role, however (xlix). Cuzzoni retained some forceful arias in later roles; see, for example, 'L'aura non sempre' in act three of *Siroe* (1727), which (interestingly) is followed by a larghetto aria for Faustina.

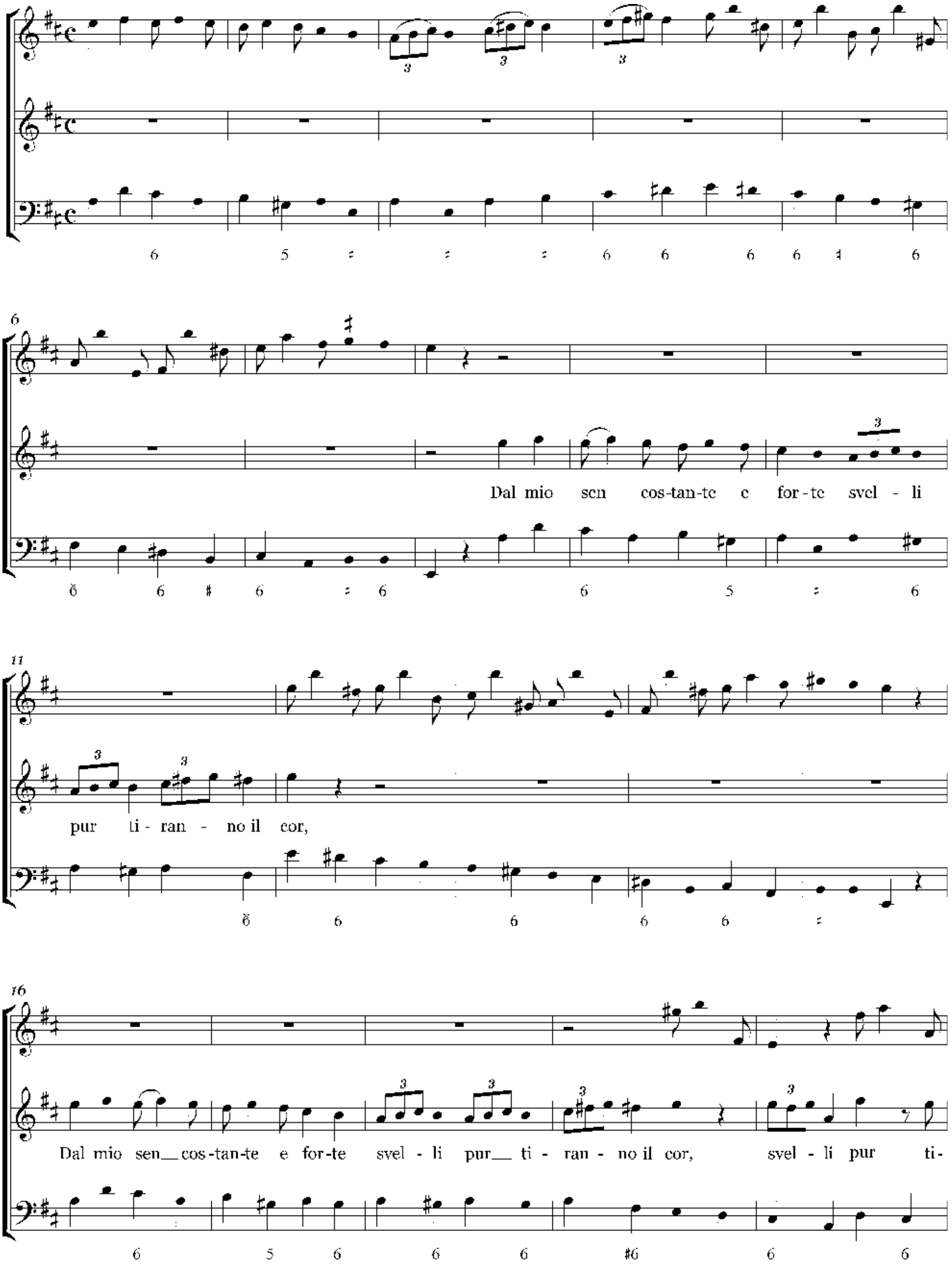

Largo
Arricida
Au - re voi che m'as - col - ta - te, per pie -
ta - de, o-mai nar-ra - te, al mio ben ch'io son tra-di - ta, son tra-di -
- ta. au-re voi che m'as-col- ta - te, per pie -
ta - de, o-mai na - ra - te, al mio ben ch'io son tra-di- ta, son tra-di -
ta, au - re voi che m'as - col - ta - te, per pie-ta - de, o -mai nar-
-ra - - - - - - - - - - - - te,

Ex. 1.4 Attilio Ariosti's 'Aure voi che m'ascoltate' from *Il Vespasiano* (London, 1724), I.vi, for Cuzzoni.

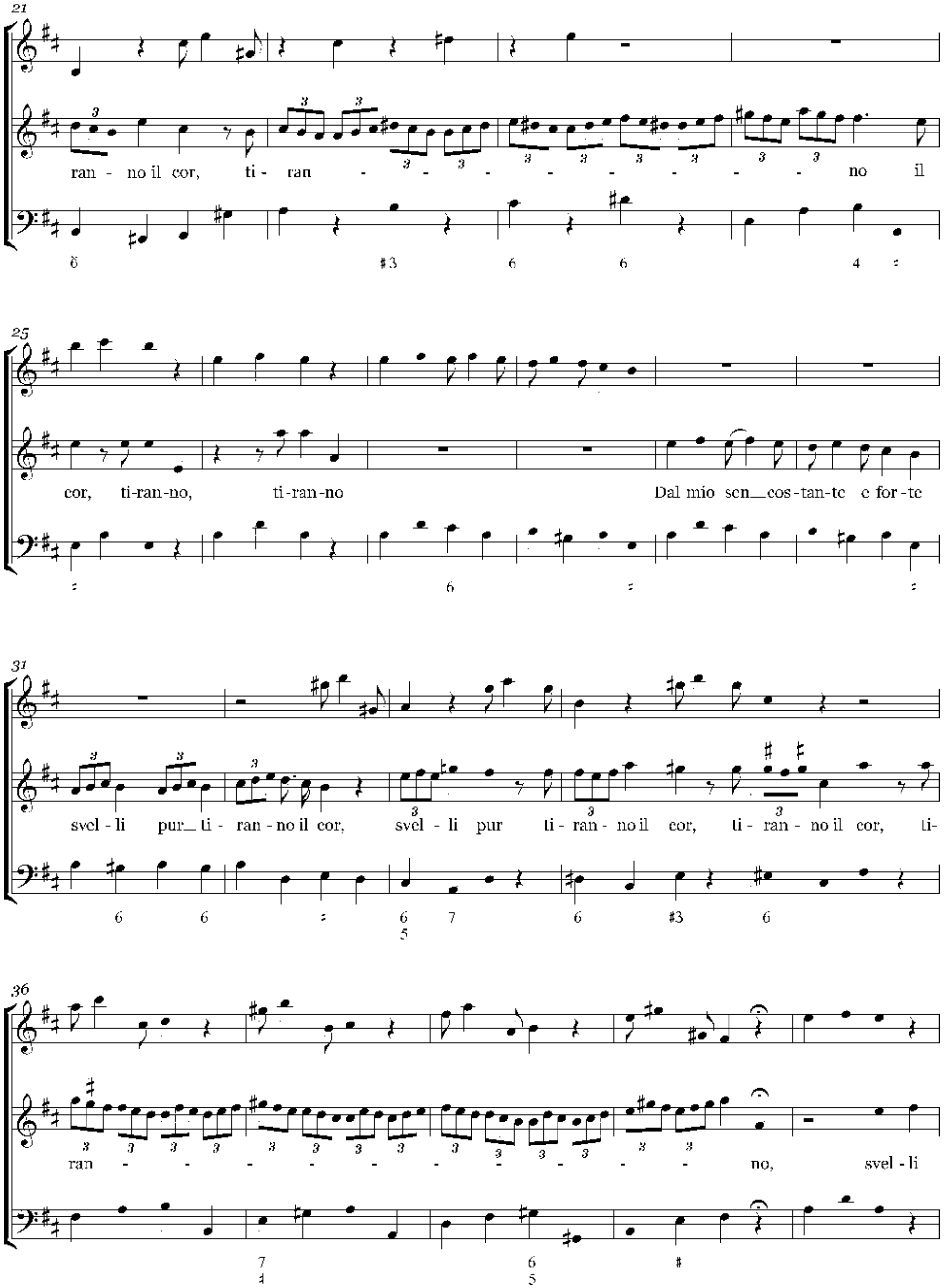

15
al mio ben ch'io son, ch'io son tra - di - ta,
17
son tra - di - ta, tra - di - ta.
19
fine
Di - te a
21
lui che se non vie - ne tro - ve - rà che le mie pe - ne, tro - ver -
23
à che le mie pe - ne, av - ran tol - ta a me la vi - ta,
25
av - ran tol - ta a me, a me la vi - ta.
Da Capo

Ex. 1.4 (cont.)

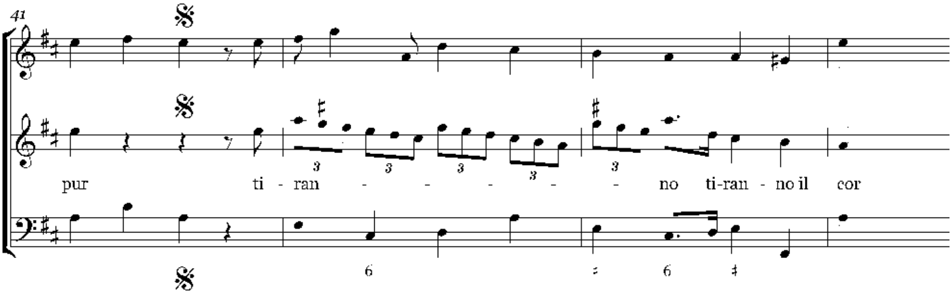
If the music offers us no easy rationale for the contrasting characterisations assumed by Cuzzoni and Faustina in their appearances together in London, it seems appropriate to return to the wider theatrical context. Based on the characterisation strategies for contemporaneous actors, it might be reasonable to see the depiction


6
Dal mio sen cos-tan-te e for-te svel - li
11
pur ti - ran - no il cor,
16
Dal mio sen__cos-tan-te e for-te svel - li pur__ ti - ran - no il cor, svel - li pur ti-

Ex. 1.5 Attilio Ariosti's 'Dal mio sen costante e forte', *Il Vespasiano* (London, 1724), I.ix, for Cuzzoni, is in a style that would subsequently become associated with her rival, Faustina.


21
ran - no il cor, ti - ran - - - - - - - - - - no il
6 ♯3 6 6 4
25
cor, ti-ran-no, ti-ran-no Dal mio sen cos-tan-te e for-te
6
31
svel - li pur ti - ran - no il cor, svel - li pur ti - ran - no il cor, ti - ran - no il cor, ti-
6 6 6 7 6 ♯3 6
5
36
ran - - - - - - - - - - - - - no, svel - li
7 6 ♯
4 5

Ex. 1.5 (cont.)



Ex. 1.5 (cont.)

of Faustina, at least, as a reflection of popular perception of the singer and the apparent aggressiveness of her invasion of Cuzzoni's theatrical domain. Faustina, as mentioned above, was singled out for satirical attack, in jibes such as Henry Carey's *Faustina: or the Roman Songstress, a Satyr, on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age* [1726] or the various mock epistles between 'Faustina' and 'Senesino' of 1727. The latter, in particular, exploited notions of sexual ambiguity on Senesino's part and predatoriness on Faustina's, suggesting that her London trademarks of masculine disguise (in *Admeto* and *Siroe*) and behaviour aligned her with real-life transvestites such as the actress Charlotte Charke (1713–60) and soldier-turned-stage-act Hannah Snell (1723–92).[156] Because of their penchant for self-publicity, these women drew opprobrium as dangerous subversives threatening the established gender hierarchy.[157] Cross-dressing women on the stage, such as Charke and Faustina, were regarded both with prurience and, increasingly, with official disapprobation.[158] Faustina was certainly no stranger to controversy, but hostility based on her occasional masculine disguisings cannot have been the full picture.[159] According to a variety of reports, Cuzzoni was apparently a difficult, temperamental and profligate *prima donna*, while Faustina was later reported to be a genteel and pleasant woman.[160]

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[156] Woyke notes that the use of disguise and masculine behaviour characterised Faustina's London roles, but those Hasse wrote for her instead demonstrated her characters' intelligence and fortitude; *Faustina Bordoni*, 110–11. For further discussion of the epistles, see pp. 154, 207–8 and 218–20, below.

[157] On the animosity aroused by transvestites, see Rogers, 'The Breeches Part'. See also Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, 71–91; Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject*, 178–200.

[158] Women were particularly chosen for *da uomo* roles in Italy because of their appearance; see Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 60. Kristina Straub says that, while cross-dressing actresses attracted a lecherous following in Restoration England, by the mid-eighteenth century they were 'seen as threatening to the construction of a stable oppositional relationship between male and female gender and sexuality'; 'The Guilty Pleasures of Female Theatrical Cross-Dressing', 146. Perhaps this is why Vincenzio Martinelli praised Regina Mingotti's performance as the cross-dressing Emira in *Siroe* in London in 1755–6 as 'the perfect imitation of a man, with the addition of all the grace that Signora Mingotti possesses as a woman'; 'A Milady Newdigate', *Lettere familiari*, 135; cited in Di Benedetto, 'Poetics and Polemics', 36. For similar reasons, during the course of the eighteenth century male actors' cross-dressing became 'more a travesty of femininity than an imitation', with the actor's masculinity clearly maintained; Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 34.

More important than the singers' roles in creating the idea of rivalry was the topos of rivalry's role in shaping the idea of the singers. The contrast between the women was determined not only by the circumstances surrounding their particular encounter. After all, the sense of impending competition fostered by the newspapers prior to Faustina's arrival was already a familiar strategy: in the first decade of the century, Catherine Tofts and Margherita de L'Epine were portrayed as rivals on political grounds;[161] Cuzzoni too had been touted as superior to 'any of her Country Women who had performed on the English stage', particularly Margherita Durastanti, and after her arrival one spectator suggested there were factions established for Handel or Bononcini, and Senesino or Cuzzoni.[162] Indeed, the rivalry between cliques for Handel and Bononcini (if not between the composers themselves) had reached a peak in 1724 with a succession of satirical pamphlets particularly comparing Bononcini unfavourably with Handel.[163] The differentiation of their musical styles, with Bononcini particularly associated with pathos and tenderness, might in part have played itself out in the contrast in characterisation between Cuzzoni and Faustina. One might also speculate that Bononcini's retirement from the public stage in 1724 left opera-goers hungry for new intrigue and rivalry (and directors keen to whet that appetite) just at the time Faustina's appointment was being arranged.[164] Thus the discourse of rivalry in the press even before Faustina's arrival might lead us to suspect not only that the singers' stage presentation was linked to popular perception of their public personae, but also that this perception in turn was peculiarly orientated to the idea of competitive antithesis.

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[159] In 1714 Faustina was sent to prison for some unspecified crime, and on release was kidnapped by her former patron, Isabella Renier Lombria; see Woyke, 'Faustina Bordoni-Hasse', 222. Faustina evidently later (in her late 40s or early 50s) engaged in rivalry with the young Regina Mingotti in *Demofoonte* in Vienna, when her role as a princess disguised as a servant forced her to give precedence to Mingotti as an undisguised princess, albeit of lower rank; see Millner, *The Operas of Johann Adolf Hasse*; 23. Arnold Niggli reported that Faustina only consented to marry Hasse after he had played for her 'one of the most difficult sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti'; A. Niggli, *Faustina Bordoni-Hasse* (1880); cited in Jane Black, '"His Own Worst Enemy"', 544. I am grateful to Dean Sutcliffe for bringing this anecdote to my attention.

[160] On Cuzzoni, Burney notes that 'many stories are related of her extravagance and caprice'; *General History of Music*, II, 737. Hogarth said 'She squandered her earnings with the most reckless profusion, and quarrelled with her best friends from the ungovernable petulance of her temper'; Hogarth, *Memoirs of the Opera,* I, 301. On Faustina, see Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany*, I, 278, 315, 320. In his letter dated 29 August 1739, Charles de Brosses says that Faustina is 'without contradiction the most pleasant and the best woman in the world, but she is no longer the best singer'; *Lettres d'Italie*; cited in Millner, *The Operas of Johann Adolf Hasse*, 257.

[161] Baldwin and Wilson, 'The Harmonious Unfortunate', 220.

[162] See Deutsch, *Handel*, 136, 139, 148, 160. Steven LaRue notes that the press comparison of Faustina and Cuzzoni was prefigured by that of Cuzzoni and Durastanti, while Reinhard Strohm suggests a similar competition between Strada and Celeste Gismondi in the early 1730s; see LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 144; Strohm, 'Comic Traditions in Handel's *Orlando*', 250.

[163] For detailed discussion of the circumstances surrounding Bononcini's retirement from the stage, and for the satirical attacks on him, see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 296–328. Lindgren suggests 'there is no reason to suspect that either of the two [composers] did not respect the other's compositions and performance abilities' (320); however, Bononcini's friends (Rolli, Riva and others) expressed clear dislike for Handel.

Such contrasts were by no means uncommon in the theatre at this time, which was articulated around neoclassical principles of equilibrium on many levels. Thus Antonio Salvi, author of the Venetian *Ariodante*, explained his strategy for characterisation in that opera in terms of sharp distinctions of ethos:

> I have taken the licence of purifying Dalinda's behaviour to make her a person more worthy of regard, and because in the present age she [in her former character] would not appear on stage without censure. I have somewhat intensified the wickedness of Polinesso, duke of Albania, having made him operate for interest and ambition, not for love, as formerly, because the audience will feel less horror at his death, and because the virtue of the other characters will stand out more strongly. I have made Ginevra the only daughter of the king of Scotland, while Ariosto makes her sister to Zerbino, so that all the passions might have more force in the actors: the tenderness of the father, ambition in Polinesso, love in Ariodante.[165]

For women in particular these contrasts in characterisation became a 'theatrical commonplace'.[166] While the factionalism that accompanied Handel throughout his career was often cast in terms of such antithesis (whether musical, religious or temperamental), this approach seems to have been particularly characteristic of leading female performers (and to have marked public interest in them) from women's first appearances on the English stage in 1660. In her discussion of the (now widely observed) dramatic tendency to portray woman as angel or devil, Elizabeth Howe notes that the particular strength of this tradition in the

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[164] Suggested by John H. Roberts in a personal communication.

[165] 'Io mi son preso licenza di purgare il costume di Dalinda per farla un personaggio più riguardevole, e perché nel nostro secolo non sarebbe comparso in scena senza biasimo. Ho caricato alquanto il carattere scellerato di Polinesso, duca d'Albania, facendolo operare per interesse e per ambizione, non già per amore, perché nella di lui morte senta meno di orrore l'audienza, e perché maggiormente spicchi la virtù degli altri personaggi. Ho finto Ginevra figlia unica del re di Scozia, benche l'Ariosto la faccia sorella di Zerbino, perché tutte le passioni abbiano più forza negli attori, come la tenerezza nel padro, l'ambizione in Polinesso, l'amore in Ariodante.' Cited in Giuntini, *I drammi per musica di Antonio Salvi*, 13–14.

[166] See Canfield, 'Shifting Tropes of Ideology', 208, on the 'theatrical commonplace to juxtapose against this essentially submissible woman a termagant antagonist'.

Restoration was due to two pairs of actresses: in the 1670s the pairing was of Rebecca Marshall and Elizabeth Boutell, for whom tragedies were written with two dissimilar female leads who competed for the attentions of a man; 'One would be chaste and gentle, the other wild and passionate.'[167] The 1680s established the most influential and long-lived thespian pairing of the Restoration, that of Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle.[168] Howe observes that the pattern instituted by them in *The Injur'd Lovers* (1688) was maintained throughout their careers – which lasted until 1706 – with Bracegirdle always the 'innocent virgin', and Barry demonstrating strength, whether for evil or for good. Howe also remarks that in this balance of 'suffering and chaste' versus 'bold and passionate', offstage personae as well as histrionic skills played a part.[169] Links between individual behaviour and theatrical casting may be convincing taken in isolation; but, when such an antithetical pairing is seen as a part of a pattern, we might question the likelihood of the repeated appearance of such dyads. We might ask how many such famous dichotomous pairings were simply fortuitous, the result of the chance encounter on stage of two great actresses who were also very different people, and how many of them were manufactured to fill a need – actresses, perhaps, less than stellar, who achieved stardom as a duo for their opposing qualities, or women of great talent, whose on- and offstage personae were shaped to fit the expected bifurcation?[170] The latter option certainly seems a possibility where Faustina and Cuzzoni were concerned.

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[167] Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 147.

[168] 'So great was the effect of these two actresses playing together that two-thirds of the new tragedies produced by their company between 1695 and 1706 contain a pair of contrasting leading roles for them'; Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 147. See also Rothstein, *Restoration Tragedy*, 141–4.

[169] Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 156, 157.

[170] A sense of the different ways of construing female singers' rivalry can be found in several authors; for example, Da Ponte's relation of his time in London in his picaresque *Memoirs*: 'The opera season [of 1794] was almost half over when two famous rivals came to London: the Banti woman, at the time one of the most celebrated singers in Europe in serious parts, and *la* Morichelli, equally celebrated in comedy … the one was much sought after and exorbitantly paid for the splendors of a glorious voice, the single gift she had received from Nature: the other, for her acting … Which of them was the more dangerous and the more to be feared, is a question not easy to decide. Equal in their vices, their passions, their iniquities, their wickedness of heart, they were women of totally different, even contrary, dispositions, proceeding along different routes to the fulfillment of their designs … The moment they arrived in London, they joined battle for the possession of the manager's heart.' Da Ponte, *Memoirs*, 251–3. The trustworthiness of Da Ponte's account is questionable on many levels, not least that of character portrayal: while Da Ponte found that Banti's voice 'only had elevated her' to the opera (252), Mount Edgcumbe also praised her acting; see Carr, 'Banti, Brigida Giorgi'.

The characterisation of the women in their joint London operas then seems to reflect not so much the diverse possibilities presented by their voices, or even the complexities of their personalities, but the dualism created by earlier English theatrical stars. The ancestry of one particular moment illustrates this point: in *Astianatte* the climactic moment involves one of the leading women (Ermione, played by Faustina) threatening to stab the other's child (Astianatte). While the structural significance of this scene will be discussed in the next chapter, the drawn dagger aligns it with one of the stock scene types in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century spoken as well as sung theatre.[171] Such scenes were not just convenient redeployments of existing sets; they also implied a set of themes important to dramatic narratives (the wilderness, the garden, the throne room, the prison) and provided a connective tissue of meaning that was meta-dramatic. The stabbing scene is important in this regard, for there was a line of precedent in the English spoken theatre – of which audience members would undoubtedly have been aware – stretching back to the first appearances of women on the stage and, significantly, to the first appearance of the aggressive woman competing for a lover with a more docile rival. William Davenant's second version of *The Siege of Rhodes* (1661) brought to the stage the scheming Roxolana, who sought to kill the sleeping Ianthe, 'a Turkish Embroidered Handkerchief in her left hand, And a naked Ponyard in her right'.[172] Elizabeth Howe notes that the 'dagger motif' was to be a repeated feature of confrontations between rival women, reaching its most elaborate form in Lee's *Alexander the Great: or, The Rival Queens* (1677).[173] Unsurprisingly, perhaps, art and life intermingled here as in other elements of characterisation, with Elizabeth Barry's eighteenth-century biographer, Edmund Curll, claiming that she had injured Boutell on stage because of a prior argument about a veil:

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[171] See Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production*; Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, 44–54; Giuntini, *I drammi per musica di Antonio Salvi*, 44–52.

[172] Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 148.

[173] Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 148, 153. In this light it is doubtless significant that neither of the two women in *Alessandro* attempt a stabbing, but that at the climax of Act II (II.vi) Alessandro himself wields a sword against one of his followers who refuses to worship him as a god. This moment (and its precursor in Act I) would have held a different kind of significance for contemporaries, concerned as they were with questions of monarchical absolutism and hereditary divine right; see, for example, Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State*; J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832*, 119–98; Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*; Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People*, 15–44. The importance of Alessandro's self-restraint is thematised here, for Tassile, who stops Alessandro from killing Clito, urges 'e tu, che il tutto vinci, te stesso vinci ancor!' (*Alessandro*, 43; 'Now shew what you can do, / And having all subdu'd, yourself subdue' [42]), just as, in the previous scene, Lisaura had praised Alessandro for releasing the captive Rossane because he has a heart 'Che vince altrui, mà vince più se stesso' (*Alessandro*, 39; 'That others much, but more itself commands' [38]).

> which spirited the Rivals with such a natural Resentment to each other, they were so violent in performing their Parts, and acted with such Vivacity, that *Statira* on hearing the King was nigh, *begs the Gods to help her for that Moment*; on which *Roxana* hastening the designed Blow, struck with such Force, that tho' the Point of the Dagger was blunted, it made way through Mrs. *Boutel*'s Stayes, and entered about a Quarter of an Inch in the Flesh.[174]

The confrontation in *Astianatte*, resonating back through more than sixty years of such scenes, must surely give us pause in assessing the nature and meaning of the rivalry between Faustina and Cuzzoni.

More than a mere theatrical gambit or the chance encounter of two hostile *prime donne*, the repeatedly staged symbolic polarisation of the women adumbrates the perceived problematic reality of extremes of female behaviour. The dynamic contrast between the virtuous heroine and the virago was a repeated theme of Restoration tragedy, fixated with the virgin/whore dyad.[175] In demonstrating a similar fixation, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women's autobiography and fiction engaged both in an obsessive, masochistic reinforcement of accepted behavioural codes and in a subtle critique of those same standards.[176] Women's writing and men's dramatisation of women's lives alike bore witness to and reinforced what Patricia Spacks has called 'a state of internal conflict' enforced upon women by society, which created an unhappy 'dichotomy between public passivity and private energy'.[177] The self-repression required of women has thus repeatedly been expressed in literature through the presence of a 'Shadow identity': 'The woman possessed by an unacknowledged Shadow often will project her monstrous image of the repressed attribute onto another woman.'[178] Such projections have something of the uncanny about them – a gendered, oppositional version of the *Doppelgänger*, whom all are reputed to have, but whose challenge to the stability of identity makes him or her dangerous to encounter.[179]

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[174] Betterton, *The History of the English Stage*, 21.

[175] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 42–9. Handel's earlier London operas, *Rinaldo* (1711), *Teseo* (1713) and *Amadigi* (1715), which catered to the English taste for spectacle and magic, allowed even more opportunity for this contrast in their use of villainous sorceresses, but this mode was largely considered outdated by the 1720s. Of course, the virgin/whore contrast was a misogynist trope; for example, the infamous Joseph Swetnam, in his *Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* (1615) asserted that 'Many women are in shape angels but in qualities devils, painted coffins with rotten bones'; cited in Ferris, *Acting Women*, 11. De Beauvoir notes the essential nature of this contrast in men's view of 'woman' in *The Second Sex*, 196.

[176] For an insightful reading of the conflict inherent in women's writing in this period, see Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, 57–91; see also Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject*, 178–200. Such conflict often manifested itself in the use of female disguise; see Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*; Schofield, *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind*.

[177] Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, 89.

[178] Pearson and Pope, *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*, 20. In such projections, we see perhaps the standard mechanics of scapegoating, which Lisa Freeman finds in presentations of women in early eighteenth-century domestic tragedy, whereby 'the proximate comes to be

In the psychic sense, then, the presentation of these two singers on stage appears to dramatise an uneasy truth of eighteenth-century female life, for, as the contention between the singers' parties implies, competition between opposed characters suggested that each was somehow lacking as an individual.[180] The women's role as representatives of a pattern of bifurcation was thus part of a broader interest in the relationship between individual and 'type'. This relationship is evident when we scratch beneath the surface of even the most widely used and earliest description of the rivalry: Tosi's commentary – and John Ernest Galliard's translation of it.

As I have already suggested with regard to representations of female rivalry within the English theatre, it was not unusual for authors to build texts with multiple layers of signification. In preparing his translation of Tosi, Galliard (as Burney noted) chose to 'apply' to the description of the differing abilities of the women Baldassare Castiglione's discussion of 'the variety and power of contrast in the arts'. Indeed, Tosi's account bears striking similarity to Castiglione's comparison of two contemporary singers, Antonio Bidon and Marchetto Cara:

> Consider music, the harmonies of which are now solemn and slow, now very fast and novel in mood and manner. And yet all give pleasure, although for different reasons, as is seen in Bidon's manner of singing which is so skilled, quick, vehement, impassioned, and has such various melodies that the spirits of his listeners are stirred and take fire, and are so entranced that they seem to be uplifted to heaven. Nor does our Marchetto Cara move us less by his singing, but only with a softer harmony. For in a manner serene and full of plaintive sweetness, he touches and penetrates our souls, gently impressing a delightful sentiment upon them.[181]

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reinscribed as the opposite', a point she extracts from Jonathan Dollimore's work in *Sexual Dissidence*; see *Character's Theater*, 120.

[179] The folk tradition of the unknown double emphasised the danger of encountering the double face-to-face; as Peter Pesic explains: 'These stories of doubled or merged identities ask whether, when distinguishability is utterly lost, individuality might not also disappear. Passing the borders of identity leads to a strange and disquieting realm that may contain both truth and madness'; *Seeing Double*, 48.

[180] This is precisely the case in Aphra Behn's *The Dumb Virgin; or, The Force of Imagination* (1700); see Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*, 25–34.

[181] Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Bk.1, ch.37, pp.44–5. Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 128–9. More accurately, in this chapter Castiglione is discussing the need for invention as well as imitation, just as Tosi is.

In invoking for the women a larger pattern of significance, Galliard and Tosi exploited emblem over individuality, and thus seem to confirm Lisa Freeman's observation that in this period identity was understood 'not as an emanation of a stable interiority, but as the unstable product of staged contests between interpretable surfaces'.[182] That production of identity is the subject of the following chapters.

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[182] Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 27.

The image that epitomises the traditional view of the 'rival sirens', and that remains in circulation today, is of the two women at the height of their hostilities pulling one another's hair on stage in Bononcini's *Astianatte*.[1] This image, as we have seen, originated in the pamphlets *The Devil to Pay at St. James's: or, A Full and True Account of a Most Horrid and Bloody Battle between Madam Faustina and Madam Cuzzoni*, of June 1727, and *The Contre Temps; or, the Rival Queans: A Small Farce. As it was lately Acted, with great Applause, at H—d—r's private Th—re near the H—y M—t*, which came out some time in July 1727, a month after the *Astianatte* debacle had terminated the season. The brief description of 'Two Singing Ladies' who 'pull each others Coiffs' in *The Devil to Pay* is imaginatively enlarged in the later pamphlet. The battle scene depicted in *The Contre Temps* has as its target not only Faustina and Cuzzoni, but also Senesino (for cowardice and hypocrisy), Handel (for incitement), and opera itself, with its incongruous conventions:

> *The Queen* [Faustina] *and Princess* [Cuzzoni] *again engage; Both factions play all their warlike Instruments; Cat-calls, Serpents and Cuckoos make a dreadful din:* F—s—na *lays flat* C—z—ni's *nose with a Sceptre;* — C—z—ni *breaks her head with a gilt-leather crown:* H—l *desirous to see an end of the battle, animates them with a kettle-drum…. The Queen looses* [*sic*] *her head of hair, and the Princess her nose in the skirmish: At last the goddess discord inspires* C—z—ni *with more than mortal bravery, she plys her Antagonist so warmly, the Queen is obliged to fly – the Princess follows;* S—s—no *creeps from under the Altar where he lay hid, and moralizes in the following simile …*[2]

The 'factions' mentioned are the 'Chorus of P[ee]rs and Tupees, with Cat-calls' listed in the *dramatis personae*, whose role in the drama is structurally significant, if verbally minimal, and who of course were the real source of disruption in the performance of *Astianatte* itself.[3] Thus, although the satirical verve of this account clearly marks it out as fiction, its seeming half-truths (the Chorus's actions, Senesino's umbrage, Handel's agitation) cause us to ask what else it might reveal, and in particular what it was about *Astianatte* that might have been thought to spur on such hostilities.

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[1] See, for example, the *New Grove* entries on the singers: Dean, 'Bordoni, Faustina'; Dean and Vitali, 'Cuzzoni, Francesca'.

[2] *The Contre Temps*, 15–16.

[3] They are discovered 'rang'd on each side the Stage according to their Factions; Cat-calls in their Hands, and Whistles, with Bells about their Necks', and 'play their instruments' at regular intervals'; *The Contre Temps*, [5], 7.

A closer look at the satire is revealing, not for any new factual details, but for its thematisation of the relationship between public and private. Most obviously, this is displayed in the basic narrative, relaying the women's enmity through an imaginatively exaggerated collision of theatrical role and projected persona. The encounter culminates in their knock-about fight, but also determines the success of the satire as a whole, as strands of publicly available 'fact' are woven into the satirical characters' hostilities, in a manner that might have made their exchanges appear more believable. So 'Faustina' asserts her superiority based on her Italian pre-eminence ('What were you, thing, — to whom did you belong, / When I charm'd *Italy* by force of song[?]'),[4] while 'Cuzzoni' responds by suggesting that Faustina's physical appearance (and her 'action') have won her favour: 'To do you justice tho'; – I think – 'tis known, / That you to please, imploy more pipes than one.'[5] The appeal by 'Cuzzoni' to the 'Chorus of P[ee]rs and Tupees', reinforces the sense of popular mediation of the assessment of the women's voices – and the stereotyped distinctions that assessment entailed:

Before those judges let our plea be try'd,
Whose ears unbyass'd can what's just decide;
Such who dare own, they're pleas'd with notes in tune,
And musick's too luxuriant branches prune:
Such who your wild chromatick rants despise;
And to my sweet pathetick yield the prize:
Such who distinguish nicely in each note,
The *gargle* from the *warble* of a throat.

Here, in the contrast drawn between the 'luxuriant' and the 'pathetick', we can discern the differentiation of the women found in Tosi's stylistic discrimination between 'modern' (Faustina) and 'ancient' (Cuzzoni) singing. When the impresario John Jacob Heidegger is introduced to plead with the women another stereotype of contrast is introduced, invoking nature's bifurcation between the grand and the gentle:

O spare your lungs, and close this strange contest;
In equal merits neither is the best:
But now the bold cascade delights our eyes,
Its falling cataracts give wild surprize;
Anon we chuse the solitary grove,
Where gentle streams in softest murmurs move;
There down the precipice loud torrents roll,
Here sweet meanders wind into the soul.[6]

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[4] *The Contre Temps*, 9.

[5] *The Contre Temps*, 10, 11.

[6] *The Contre Temps*, 12. This common natural contrast of course reached its aesthetic culmination in Edmund Burke's differentiation between the sublime and the beautiful in *A Philosophical Enquiry*

The Contre Temps is thus variously inflected by the interplay between discourses of the communal and the personal: in its articulation of the dispute between 'Faustina' and 'Cuzzoni' (and their supporters); in its narrative conclusion with the singers' brawling breach of theatrical decorum; and in its generic play between dramatic script and scurrilous pamphlet. It marks the performer's identity as a nexus of interrelated (sometimes competing) aesthetic, socio-political, musical and personal factors, always determined in the public gaze and, in the case of Faustina and Cuzzoni, always articulated through comparison each with the other. Although the narrative should not be taken to reflect historical events, its underlying assumptions do contribute to our understanding of the mode by which the singers were perceived. In particular, it marks as both vital and problematic the interrelation of public and private in forming the singer's persona.

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The link between public and private was, of course, particularly charged for women in this period. It is now a commonplace that in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women's socio-economic role became increasingly circumscribed, as they were excluded from the world of work (even in family businesses) and limited to the domestic sphere.[7] As is also widely noted, this created particular difficulties for stage performers, women very much in the public eye. In turn, Kristina Straub suggests, 'the actresses' inherent challenge to the gendered, opposing spheres of public and private becomes increasingly the object of rhetorical containment and even erasure'.[8] That is to say, the move to domesticate actresses' sexuality, which, according to Straub, takes on an 'almost hysterical urgency' in the latter part

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into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1759); for Burke's context, see Ashfield and de Bolla (eds.), *The Sublime*.

[7] Lawrence Stone in his highly influential *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* notes the reinforcement of the patriarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that even improved education in the following centuries carried the corollary of 'withdrawal from the world of work' (109–46, 228–33, 243–5). On the legal principles regarding women's property rights in marriage see MacFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England, 1300–1840*, 286–90. Women's increasing role restriction has been broached in a wide range of texts, from material histories to literary analyses; see, for example, Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture*, 93–145; Armstrong, 'The Rise of the Domestic Woman'; Rose, *Gender and Heroism*. Contemporaries themselves noted women's restricted activity; for example, Jeremy Collier observed that '[Women] are by custom made incapable of those employments by which honour is usually gained. They are shut out from the pulpit and the bar, from embassies, and state negotiations, so that notwithstanding (as I believe it often happens) their inclinations are generous, and their abilities great to serve the public; yet they have not an opportunity of showing it', *Essays Upon Moral Subjects*; cited in Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity*, 126. Collier suggested women take up fashion as compensation for this lack of opportunity to display their moral and intellectual worth.

[8] Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 89.

of the century, inevitably idealises their complete removal from public discourse.[9] Straub quotes James Boaden's 1827 *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, in which he opines about that great actress:

> What is there, then, in the private life of the *most* excellent wife, mother, sister, friend, the *detail* of which could be interesting to the public? The duties of such a character are unobtrusive, unostentatious, and avoid the pen of history … They shun all record and reward, save the internal consciousness, which renders every other, in this life, of little moment.[10]

By such reasoning, there is no need to write about women's lives; indeed, until recently they have avoided – or rather, been avoided by – the 'pen of history'.

While Straub's account focusses on writings about performers – narratives that, in their strategies for authentication of the individual, often bear explicit relation to the contemporary novel[11] – women internalised this abnegation of a public life and expressed it in practical terms too. They avoided the inappropriate before they were themselves avoided. Thus we can see the tension between domestic idealisation and public performance in women's circumspection in the choice of their stage roles. What, after all, is Anastasia Robinson's invocation of 'Patient Grisell' in her refusal to act a less genteel role in *Ottone* (see p. 24, above) if not an engineering of such a restriction? Of course, such ideas are exclusive neither to female roles nor to eighteenth-century London. (And in opera and the offstage lives of opera singers they were honoured as much in the breach as in the observance: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the genre was sufficiently famous for portrayals of wayward and excessive women that it was itself under constant threat of containment.[12]) But gender conformity through the stylisation and restriction of roles perhaps attained a particular focus for women who were placed in competitive antithesis to one another. For such women, relative gender-role propriety might have become one means of asserting their superiority to their rival, audience favour depending on a woman's demonstration through her role of greater female virtue.

In this chapter we will see that, with the arrival of Faustina and advent of the 'double-diva' operas, the practice of gender stylisation (and ultimately containment) of women's roles could move from an occasion-based, subtle management of the individual performer's presence on stage to (at times) a more strategic expression of binarism between the two women, whereby a role of exemplary domesticity in itself could offer implicit commentary on and inhibition for its alter ego's apparent extroversion. The contrast between the starring female roles in *Rodelinda* and *Astianatte* demonstrate this distinction: in Rodelinda, Cuzzoni (with Haym and Handel) negotiated a character who had to be both retiring widow and imperious queen. In *Astianatte*'s Andromaca and Ermione, Cuzzoni and Faustina were presented as epitomes of unhappy motherhood on the one hand and of vengeful, scorned womanhood on the other.

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[9] Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 94.

[10] Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, I, xv; cited in Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 95.

[11] Straub makes regular comparison to the contemporary novel, as do the authors she discusses (see, for example, George Anne Bellamy's appropriation of Defoe and Sterne); Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, pp. 122, 125–6.

[12] Heller's *Emblems of Eloquence* deals with this topic in most thoroughgoing and insightful fashion for the seventeenth century.

Examination of *Rodelinda* and *Astianatte* suggests that the moral judgement implicit in gender containment was delineated by means of a device commonly deployed in the highly stylised, self-conscious neoclassical theatre: through the rhetorical articulation provided by the 'point' – the line or gesture detached from surrounding speech in order to highlight a particular passion. In opera, the 'point' manifested itself not only in the aria's intersticial commentary on the narrative but also in other ways, particularly accompanying moments of scenic reflection, deploying the generic, the gestural, and the *tableau vivant*. In *Astianatte* such pointing devices come to provide a meta-narrative on the women's roles.

Viewed as itself a kind of cultural 'point' on the rivalry, we could see *The Contre Temps* as congruent with the restriction of female self-expression – not just as an illumination of the factional strife inspired by (and expressed through) that work, but also, in its hyperbolic vision of what might happen when unruly women overreach themselves, as much an act of containment as the contrasted roles for the singers within the opera itself. How such containment was engineered is the subject of this chapter.

NEGOTIATING CUZZONI'S VARIETY IN *RODELINDA*

Investigating a shift in focus within the rival singers' roles in London inevitably centres on Cuzzoni. Prior to Faustina's arrival, as already noted, she played a range of leading women exhibiting a diversity of primary motivation or *ethos*.[13] To take a few examples from her non-Handelian operas: in Bononcini's *Farnace* (1723) the queen Tomiri holds absolute sway over her subjects, but has more difficulty ruling her emotions; in Haym's and Bononcini's *Calfurnia* (1724) the title character is more masculine in her commitment to Roman honour than her lover or mother; in

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[13] In Aristotelian terms, *ethos* is simply what one is, and takes second place to *praxis* (what one does) in the creation and performance of a drama; nonetheless, *ethos* is fundamental to the presentation of conscious choice (*proairesis*) within the drama, and is revealed by that means; see Burns, *Character*, 18–21; Burns is also clear that Aristotelian *ethos* is not simply 'character' in the modern sense.

Haym and Ariosti's *Il Vespasiano* (1724) she has to be both indignant and despairing, rejecting the tyrant's advances on the one hand and her husband's infidelity on the other. Aside from the differences between the roles, as we have seen, there was also an expected diversity of affect and musical styles within each part – a convention important enough to be satirised repeatedly.[14]

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, however, after Faustina's arrival the *ethos* of their respective roles was more sharply drawn, and was often determined through the stylisation of their arias. In *Riccardo primo*, we recall, five of Cuzzoni's eight arias are in a minor key; of these, four are marked 'largo' or 'larghetto', and three 'andante'. Cuzzoni's role could surely only have appeared in quite such limited affective guise if she were counterbalanced by another singer.[15] As I will suggest below with regard to *Astianatte* (and explore further in chapter 4 on *Riccardo primo*), this compensatory process could assume a structural significance within a given opera's narrative, which might suggest that it was, itself, part of the point.

What may have occurred in some of Cuzzoni's earlier London operas was not simply an allowance for character (and musical) versatility, but also an exploration of the boundaries of female behaviour within her roles that was later to be played out instead between the two women. The testing of boundaries in this sense was not opera's ubiquitous contest between love and honour (the domain of male at least as much as of female characters). It was rather found in moments when the situation of female characters on stage mirrored and so magnified the difficulties of the women portraying them – when, in other words, the theatrical work had particularly to negotiate the actress's 'inherent challenge to the gendered, opposing spheres of public and private'.[16] The exploration of this dissonance was, Lisa Freeman suggests, the principal 'tension' in performances of she-tragedies, which contrasted 'the spectacle of women in emotionally compelling roles and the narratives that were devoted to taming the characters they portrayed'. It may be useful, then, to look for awareness of such tensions in opera too.[17]

Before examining *Astianatte*, we might turn first to another work derived from the oeuvre of the great French classicists by the librettist Antonio Salvi, and to a character who was one of Cuzzoni's (and Handel's) most famous creations, the queen and (supposed) widow, Rodelinda.[18] The role seems to have elevated Cuzzoni to a new level of fame: according to Burney, Horace Walpole sourly reported that young women adopted Cuzzoni's 'vulgar' attire of a brown silk gown 'so universally, that it seemed a national uniform for youth and beauty'.[19] The opera also caused the composer a good deal of trouble: unusually, given the cast was one whose capabilities Handel already knew well, he rewrote *Rodelinda* extensively before its first performance, in February 1725.[20] Handel's reworkings were particularly concentrated around Rodelinda herself: neither of her first two arias was present in Handel's initial version, nor in Salvi's 1710 Florentine source libretto, adapted by Nicola Haym for London.[21] Bertarido's famous 'Dove sei, amato bene?' was another addition, while Rodelinda's following aria, 'Ombre, piante, urne funeste' exists in two versions, with a B-section added to the latter. Her opening act two aria, the arresting 'Spietati, io vi giurai', was an early substitution for an innocuous simile aria. All in all, the addition or alteration of four of Rodelinda's eight arias clearly demonstrates substantial rethinking of the part during the course of the opera's composition.

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[14] *Il Vespasiano* has already been discussed on p. 55, above, but examples could be drawn from numerous operas. For satires on role diversity, see the descriptions published in the second half of the century by Carlo Goldoni (allegedly relating to a libretto of 1735) and Giuseppe Baretti, discussed in Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 9–10.

[15] Faustina's role in *Riccardo primo*, made slightly more complicated by changes to the libretto which altered her *ethos* from that of willing accomplice to deceit to that of proud upholder of moral integrity (first her own, then that of Costanza and Riccardo), will be discussed in chapter 4.

[16] Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 89.

[17] Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 124–5.

Why should so many alterations have been necessary? Undoubtedly, Handel's careful attention to Cuzzoni's role reflected her 'star' quality and his desire to show off her abilities to the full, but Rodelinda's dual status as queen and widow (complicated still further by her role as a mother) may also have been partly responsible.[22] This status was no mere fictional conceit, as public performers in particular knew.[23] Rodelinda as queen and widow faced much the same dilemma as her executrix,

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[18] On the libretto's background, see Dahnk-Baroffio, 'Nicola Hayms Anteil an Händels Rodelinde-Libretto'.

[19] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 731. This anecdote does not appear in Walpole's published correspondence; see *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*.

[20] The revisions are visible in the autograph manuscript of the opera, GB-Lbl RM.20.c.4. Andrew Jones has discussed the revision process in his 'Preface' to Händel, *Rodelinda*, xvi–xvii; Jones, 'The Composer as Dramatist'.

[21] [Salvi,] *Rodelinda* (1710).

[22] The widow occupied an unusual space in early modern society, and was therefore the subject of particular anxiety: while most women were legally subject to their father or their husband, the widow was legally and financially independent. Anxiety at the challenge to social hierarchies brought by this female freedom manifested itself both in the repeated portrayal of widows as figures of fun in literature, plays and prints, and in the repeated portrayal of their opposite – women whose attempts at independence (and concomitant rejection of male advances) led to suffering rather than success. In Handel's day the latter type was realised most notably by Samuel Richardson in his novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. Clarissa in particular demonstrates that passivity, not activity, was essential to female virtue, for her final proof of her virtuousness is her emphatic negativity: a repeated 'no' not only to the advances of Lovelace and to the demands of her family, but ultimately to sustenance, speech and life.

[23] Benjamin Victor praised the actress Mrs Booth for choosing to lead 'a long and exemplary Life of Widowhood' away from 'the public Eye' when her husband died in 1733. Equally, Mrs Barry's continued performance of Garrick's monody on her husband's death in 1774 was considered 'very

Cuzzoni – how was one to be both a virtuous, retiring woman and a virtuosic public figure at the same time? In that sense, she epitomised the oxymoronic role of the 'female hero' in this period, a role that Mary Beth Rose describes as 'conflicted and problematic, constituted as constrained and compromised agency', as women themselves were all too aware.[24] The prominence Haym and Handel gave to Rodelinda's status as a mother, ensuring via speech, song and action that she showed continual awareness of her son, was perhaps designed to soften that difficult role.[25] Thus Handel inserted a stage direction for Rodelinda to 'kneel and embrace her son' (comforting him on his father's apparent death) just before her performance of the aria 'Se'l mio duol', in which she speaks of her desire to die. Her reason for living – Cuzzoni's justification for singing – is the presence of her silent son. She sings so movingly of death because it is impossible.

As this example suggests, the complication of Rodelinda's *ethos* through the public–private tension informing the role of widow-queen is reflected in her arias – both words and music – in ways that suggest it would also have been highlighted in Cuzzoni's stage performance by virtue of the conventional connection between verbal, musical and physical gesture.[26] The association of physical and verbal gestures was most clearly theorised for the spoken theatre, and it is worth briefly exploring that hermeneutic background before turning to exempla from Rodelinda's arias, in order better to appreciate the significance of the musical 'point'.

Plutarchian, Aristotelian and even Shakespearean 'character' was a matter of 'readable signs', and in that sense, Edward Burns explains, Aristotelian drama was more the *mimesis* of *praxis* than of *ethos* – more about what one does than about what one is.[27] It is therefore quite logical that acting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at least prior to David Garrick's innovations, was the 'presentation of a series of choices, decisions to act and reactions discrete in themselves but adding up

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ill advised in her circumstances', for the same reasons of propriety. Victor, *The History of the Theatres*, III.xi; Cooke, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin*, 191; both cited in Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 93, 94.

[24] Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 116. Rose discusses the conflicted analyses found in the autobiographies of seventeenth-century women torn between private and public self-definition (55–84).

[25] Rodelinda's final line of recitative instructs Bertarido: 'Abbraccia il figlio' ('Embrace your son'). There was, again, a real-life parallel: the famous late eighteenth-century actress Sarah Siddons, wishing to reinforce her personal virtue as well as to elicit emotional reactions from her audience, took her own son on stage with her for the tragic role of Isabella from Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage*, in which the widowed Isabella marries again, only to have her first husband reappear, upon which she kills herself.

[26] The connection between verbal rhetoric and gesture has been explored in detail in Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*. Reinhard Strohm explores the influence of theories of musical rhetoric and the possibilities for operatic connection of musical, verbal and physical gestural devices in '*Arianna in Creta*'.

[27] Burns, *Character*, 2–20 (at 7 and 18–19).

to a recognizable moral profile – character in a neo-classical sense'.[28] Indeed, Garrick's continued reliance on the 'point' (the isolated, highlighted gesture) and his audiences' ongoing delight in these 'claptraps' (as critics called them), rather suggests continuity with older practice, as does a similar reliance on such rhetorical devices in late eighteenth-century Italy.[29] That the realist theatre's presentation of a dramatic character as the 'gradual unfolding of a personality'[30] was still a distant prospect is underlined by Diderot's famous observations on Garrick's facility in the quick transition from one facial expression to the next:

> Garrick will put his head between two folding-doors, and in the course of five or six seconds his expression will change successively from wild delight to temperate pleasure, from this to tranquillity, from tranquillity to surprise, from surprise to blank astonishment, from that to sorrow, from sorrow to the air of one overwhelmed, from that to fright, from fright to horror, from horror to despair, and thence he will go up again to the point from which he started. Can his soul have experienced all these feelings, and played this kind of scale in concert with his face? I don't believe it; nor do you.[31]

Though this vignette does not itself illustrate the 'point', it shows much of its mechanistic methodology, the kind of approach that allowed Garrick to use a mechanical 'fright' wig to lift his hair on end when Hamlet saw the ghost – one of his classic 'points'. The 'pointing' of passions meant that, even though the ultimate goal was to stir the emotions, they were still articulated primarily on an intellectual level and thus registered as physical changes.[32]

Sensory registration of the transitions between the passions through sight and sound was particularly important to the influential author on acting (and sometime opera librettist), Aaron Hill.[33] As early as 1716, in the dedication to his tragedy *The Fatal Vision, or The Fall of Siam*, Hill had chastised actors for their rolling 'theatric way of speaking', and lamented the general lack of 'those thrilling *breaks*, and *changes* of the voice … which so sensibly alarm the soul'.[34] As Lise-Lone Marker and Frederick J. Marker explain, this focus on 'breaks and changes' brought a pantomimic quality to Hill's advocated acting style: 'Intense emotionalism remains uppermost by means of pauses and transitions designed to cast the passions in bold relief, and the result becomes a style of playing characterized by its almost convulsive expressiveness.'[35] This performance style of course seems strikingly operatic: in Hill's approach, pointing breaks famous speeches into emotional pieces to present them directly to (and sometimes repeat them for) a vocally appreciative audience.[36] It seems likely, then, that audiences saw and sought continuities between the sung and spoken theatres in terms of performance technique (indeed, in the heady early days of opera in London, the *Spectator* advised actors to take deportment lessons from Nicolini).[37] Understanding the importance of the 'point' as a device for underscoring a message within a dramatic work, rhetorically articulated through time, will help us perceive the hermeneutic potential of the text in performance as we return to Rodelinda's dilemma.

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[28] Burns, *Character*, 186.

[29] On Garrick's interplay with his audience, see Samuel Foote's critique of Garrick in his *Treatise on the Passions* (n.d.): 'The Transition from one Passion to another by the suddenness of the Contrast, throws a stronger Light on the Execution of the Actor; and thus the Groundlings, who are caught more by the Harmony and Power of the Voice than Propriety, are easily drawn in to applaud what must grieve the Judicious.' On Italian practice see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 55. Use of pointing continued into the nineteenth century; see 'Introduction', in Booth, Stokes and Bassnett, *Three Tragic Actresses*, 6.

[30] George Taylor, 'The Just Delineation of the Passions', 60.

[31] Denis Diderot, *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1778); cited in Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 70; see also Davis, 'Theatricality and Civil Society', 139.

[32] See Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 74–6; Taylor observes that the passions were at the time thought of as a 'mental state, not necessarily an emotional motive'; see 'The Just Delineation of the Passions', 60. The general legibility of the passions is emphasised by McKenzie in 'The Countenance You Show Me'.

[33] Hill's most significant discussion of acting is *Essay on the Art of Acting*.

The tension inhering in the role of royal widow is particularly strong in 'Spietati, io vi giurai', the act two aria in which Rodelinda angrily rejects the advances of the usurper, Grimoaldo, which was (as mentioned earlier) a substitution for the simile aria 'Ben spesso in vago prato'. The latter aria was itself a replacement for Salvi's bloody (and rather obscure) original 'Non amor, non Imeneo', in which Rodelinda compared herself to the mythological figure of Atreus, who had killed his brothers' sons and served them to him in a banquet.[38] The text of 'Non amor, non Imeneo' was perhaps generally acknowledged to be problematic: in the 1724 Lucca performance this aria was also changed for the more direct 'Vendetta sì vogl'io'.[39] This text, perhaps made available to the Royal Academy through one of the singers, may have served as a point of departure for 'Spietati'.[40]

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[34] Cited in Marker and Marker, 'Aaron Hill', 418–19. On Hill's theories see also West, *Image of the Actor*, 76–89, 104–22.

[35] Marker and Marker, 'Aaron Hill', 423.

[36] Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 71–2. Of course, one might expect an overtly operatic style from Aaron Hill.

[37] Addison, *The Spectator* no. 13 (15 March 1711); ed. Bond, I, 59.

[38] [Salvi,] *Rodelinda* (1710), I.iii (p.27). For further discussion and the full aria text for 'Ben spesso in vago prato', see Jones, 'The Composer as Dramatist', 68. For Salvi's original text see Bianconi (ed.), *I libretti italiani … Note ai testi e fonti*, 397–437 ('Non amor, non Imeneo': 415–16).

[39] *Rodelinda* (Lucca, 1724), 37; seen at GB-Lbl 905.h.2.

[40] Winton Dean and J. Merrill Knapp note that the Lucca libretto was set by Giovanni Antonio Canuti, and that Antonio Pacini sang Bertarido there, and then sang Unulfo in London a year later – thus making him a likely source for the libretto; *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726*, 574.

Anon. (**Lucca, 1724**)	**Haym** (**1725**)
Vendetta sì vogl'io:	Spietati, io vi giurai
Vendetta, Amore, e Fe	Se al mio figlio il cor donai
Gridano contro te,	Di serbarvi e duolo e affanno.
Mostro spietato.	
Di là dal cieco Obblìo	Non potrebbe la mia mano
Più lieta allora andrò,	Stringer mai quell'inumano
E col Figlio vedrò	Ch'è cagion d'ogni mio danno.
Lo Sposo amato.[41]	

In the transformation from one to the other, there is a heightening of dramatic tension and personal investment. This is most noticeable in the first-stanza shift of 'spietato/spietati' from the end to the beginning.[42] But the personalisation is both more thoroughgoing and more subtle: in Haym's A-section Rodelinda promises to serve the men herself with both 'duolo e affanno' where the Lucca text confusingly follows Rodelinda's initial desire for revenge with a displacement of this desire onto personifications: 'Vendetta, Amore, e Fe' cry out against Grimoaldo. More importantly, the rather grim B-section's anticipation of mother's and son's happy death is supplanted by Rodelinda's rejection of Grimoaldo, while it is Rodelinda's love for her son (rather than thoughts of his death) that forms the basis for her anger in Haym's A-section.

The contrast within the London A-section between maternal love and righteous anger is particularly significant for Handel's setting, where it takes on a gestural dimension more commonly associated with recitative (Example 2.1).[43] This gestural construction, in turn, marks out the aria as bearing particular significance for articulating Rodelinda's character. The word 'Spietati' itself, in its isolation and textual and musical simplicity, invites physical expression. Its categorisation in eighteenth-century gestural rhetoric would have been mixed: it conforms to the first and last of the three basic types identified at the time (indicative, imitative, expressive), as an ejaculation against Grimoaldo and Garibaldo, and, in its isolation and assertive rhythmic and melodic profile, an emphatic gesture which 'mark[s] with force words opposed to or compared with each other, and more particularly the word which expresses the predominant idea'.[44] Such musical signals were widely used: Strohm observes with regard to an almost identical gesture in Handel's *Arianna* (on 'Mirami' in Tauride's aria 'Mirami altero in volto'), that the composer's 'energetic downward move surely correspond[ed] to the rule that downward pointing hand gestures can signal refusal and contempt'.[45] These musical ejaculations also appear to have been a speciality for Cuzzoni: there are nearly identical gestures in two of her arias in *Astianatte* (see Examples 2.5 and 2.6, discussed below) and in *Il Vespasiano* (see Example 1.5, above).

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[41] 'Vendetta sì vogl'io', in *Rodelinda* (Lucca, 1724), 37; (Yes, I want vengeance: Vengeance, Love, and Fate cry out against you, wicked monster. There, to dark oblivion, more happy will I go, and with my son will see my beloved spouse.). 'Spietati, io vi giurai' in *Rodelinda* (London, 1725), 37; reprinted in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas*, IV, 254; 'Cruel Men, O hear me swear, / To my Son I give my Heart, / You may raise my Grief and Fear, / But can never make me part. / Me that Husband never shall, / In his Marriage Bonds, enthrall, / That has been my greatest Foe, / Only Cause of all my Woe' (p. 36).

[42] Jones's proposal in 'The Composer as Dramatist' (69) that 'Handel could have suggested "Spietati" as Rodelinda's first word' on the basis of its sibilance and stressed open vowel is not necessarily undermined by the aria's connection to the Lucca text (not noted by Jones); the idea might in any case have been Haym's rather than Handel's. The word is changed from singular to plural because in the London opera Rodelinda addresses two men, Grimoaldo and Garibaldo, not one.

[43] Dene Barnett adduces comments from Mancini, Tosi, Boisquet and Lacépède to demonstrate that in opera singers chiefly 'acted' during the recitatives; Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 15–16. For further discussion of the dramatic potential of the much-maligned simple recitative, see Cyr, 'Declamation and Expressive Singing in Recitative'.

The expressive power of 'Spietati' seems to breach the bounds of decorous indication: set unaccompanied and in the lower part of Cuzzoni's range, if uttered with the force the word demands, it might have sounded as much like speech as song, a surprising sign of intemperate anger at the two men who have made Rodelinda's life intolerable.[46] 'Io vi giurai', though dramatically insignificant, is nonetheless articulated as a separate clause (punctuated by the orchestra's echo): it prepares us to listen attentively in 'real time' to character as well as singer for what Rodelinda is about to say. With such preparation, 'Se al mio figlio il cor donai' might at first seem a disappointment: it is a repetitively lilting phrase, in which oath-taking seems forgotten in the confined musical circularity expressing Rodelinda's inward turn to thoughts of her son. Such phrases were less likely to invite dramatic physical expression, though acting theorists saw them as all the more significant for that.[47] In fact, the rocking motion of the phrase lulls its hearers (characters and audience alike) into a false sense of security; its disruptive potential is revealed at 'di serbarvi e duolo e affanno', where the anticipated syncopation

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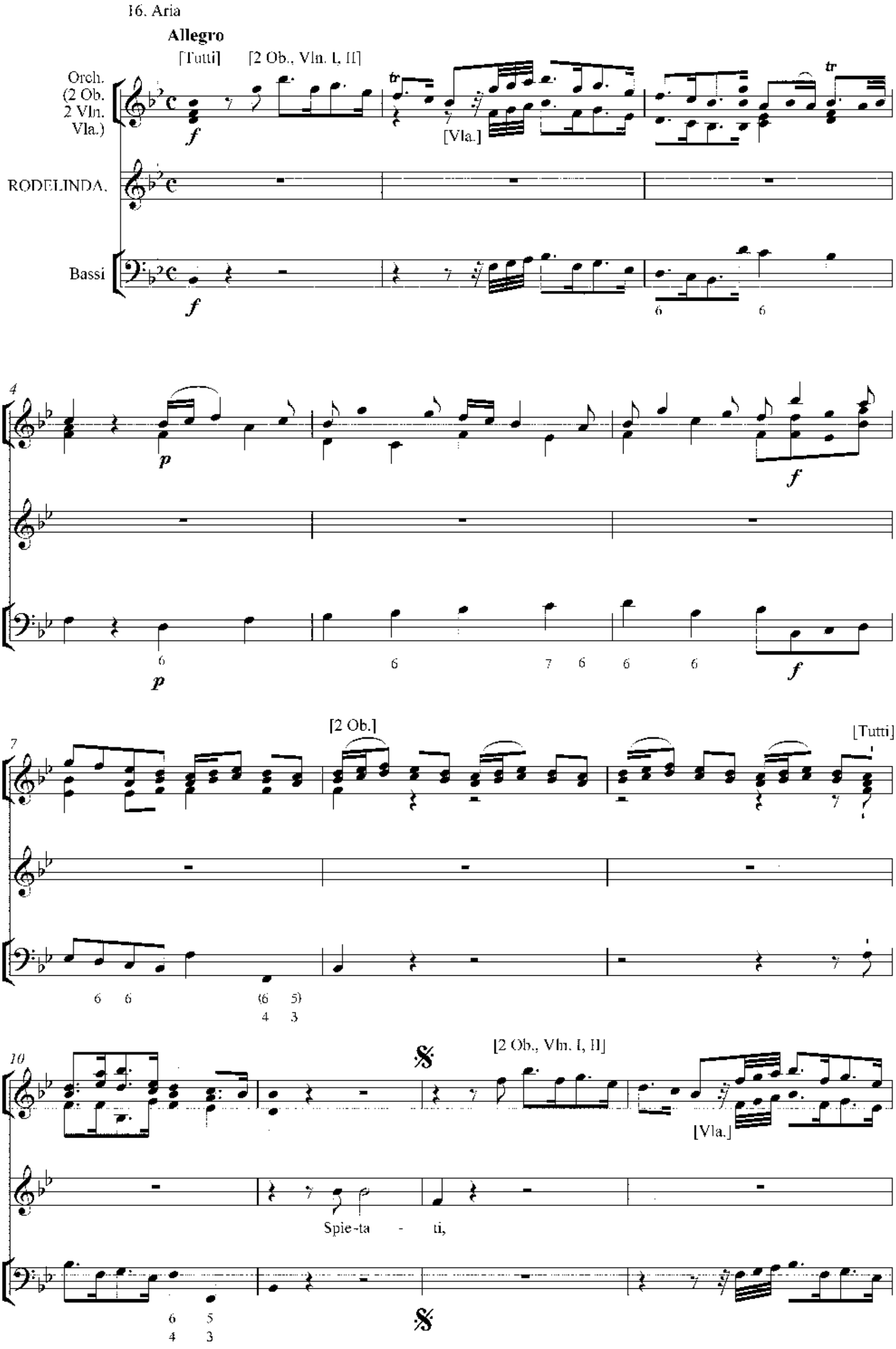
[44] For the basic gestural types, see Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 19. The quotation is from Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia; or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (1806); cited in Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 73. Melania Bucciarelli identifies 'emphasis by means of … isolation' as one of Heinichen's 'three procedures' for deploying rhetorical strategies in the context of musical invention; *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 29–30.

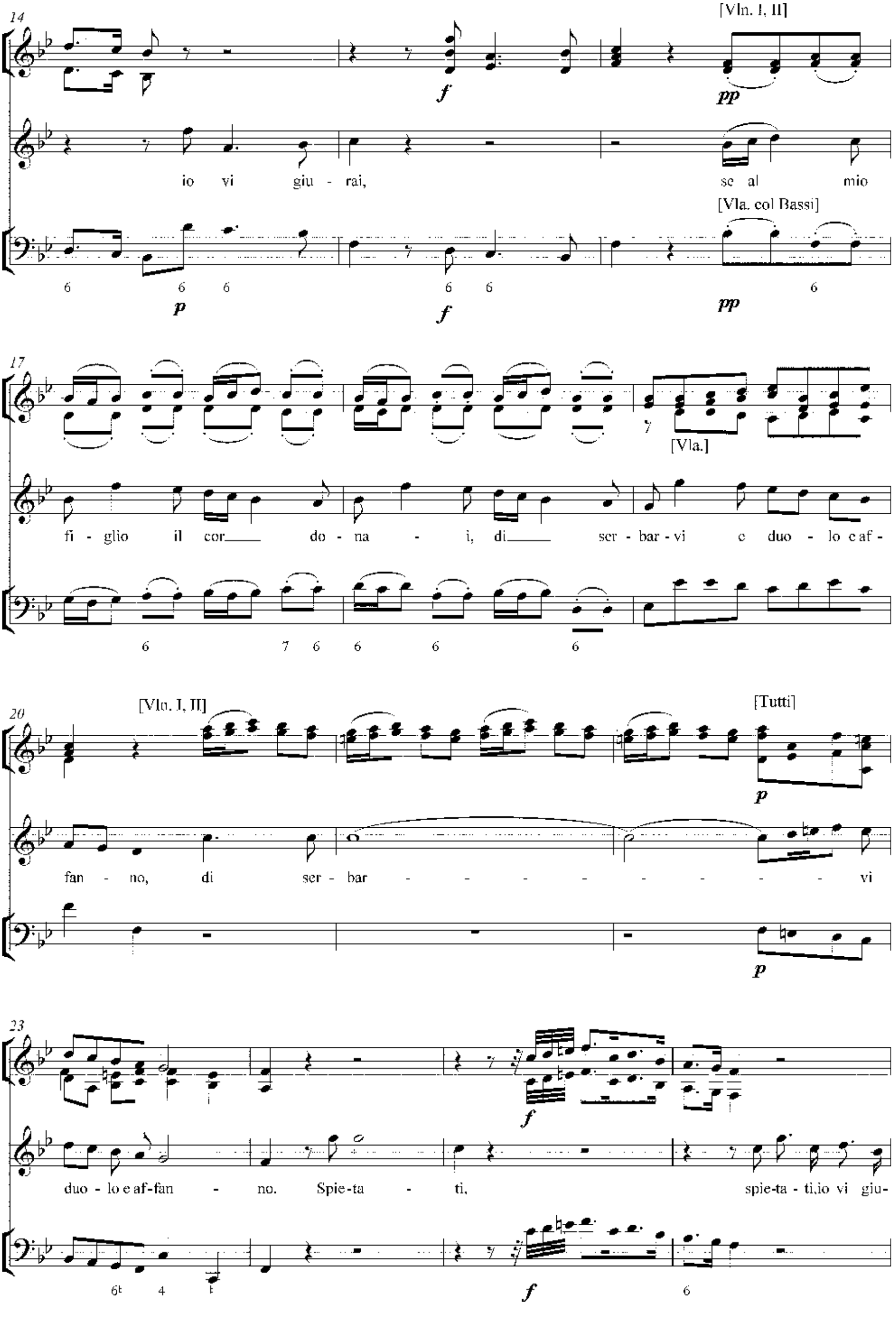
[45] Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, 236.

[46] As Rodelinda is defined by her steadfastness (particularly in her unimpeachable loyalty to her husband's memory), this outburst is all the more startling.

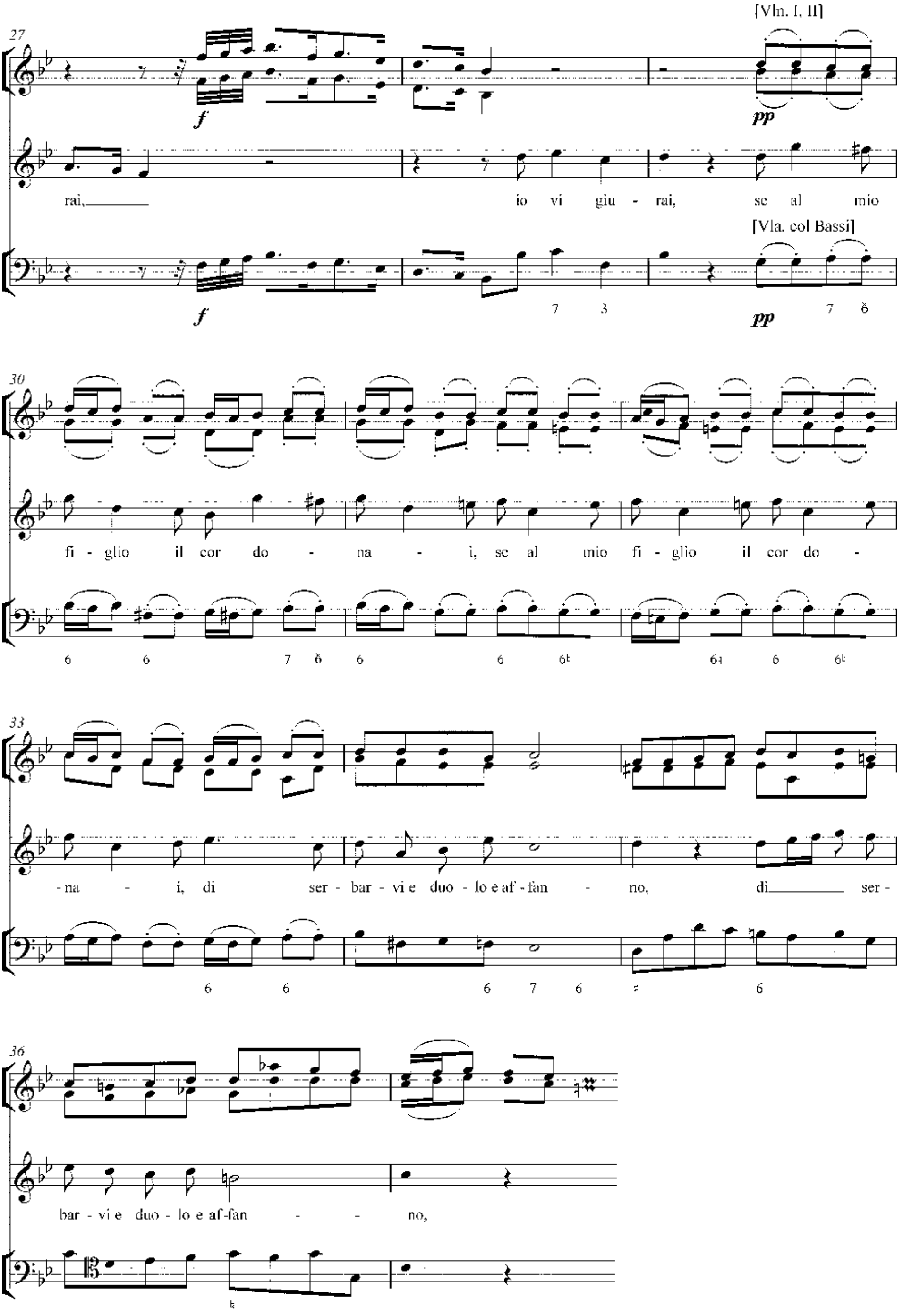
[47] Gilbert Austin said that 'These less prominent gestures give to the declamation its precision and force. A slight movement of the head, a look of the eye, a turn of hand, a judicious pause or interruption of gesture, or a change of position in the feet often illuminates the meaning of a passage, and sends it full of light and warmth into the understanding.' Cited in Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 220.


16. Aria
Allegro
[Tutti]
[2 Ob., Vln. I, II]
Orch. (2 Ob. 2 Vln. Vla.)
RODELINDA.
Bassi
[Vla.]
[2 Ob.]
[Tutti]
[2 Ob., Vln. I, II]
[Vla.]
Spie-ta - ti,

Ex. 2.1 Part of the A-section of Handel's 'Spietati, io vi giurai', from *Rodelinda* (London, 1725), bb.1–37, written for Cuzzoni.


14
[Vln. I, II]
io vi giu - rai, se al mio
[Vla. col Bassi]
17
[Vla.]
fi - glio il cor do - na - i, di ser - bar - vi e duo - lo e af -
20
[Vln. I, II]
[Tutti]
fan - no, di ser - bar - vi
23
duo - lo e af-fan - no. Spie-ta - ti, spie-ta - ti, io vi giu-

Ex. 2.1 (cont.)


[Vln. I, II]
[Vla. col Bassi]
27
30
33
36
f
pp
rai, io vi giu - rai, se al mio
fi - glio il cor do - na - i, se al mio fi - glio il cor do -
-na - i, di ser - bar - vi e duo - lo e af - fan - no, di ser -
bar - vi e duo - lo e af-fan - - no,

Ex. 2.1 (cont.)

propels Rodelinda not up the expected fifth, but up an octave on the syllables '-barvi', as her attention returns to the men. The change in focus here is underlined by similarly abrupt alteration to the accompaniment, in which the bass and viola initially mirror the octave leap and descending scale of Rodelinda's line.

In the contrast between the settings for 'Spietati' and 'Se al mio figlio…', each of which attracts our attention by its musical and dramatic difference from the surrounding texture, we find a playing out of the tension within Rodelinda's persona. Both the conflict itself and the extremes it entails are problematic: in the opening of this aria we see Rodelinda as either so wrathful a monarch that she eschews proper melody, or so doting a mother that her music turns to solipsism.

Such juxtapositions at the outset of an aria also invite resolution. Our attention is clearly directed to the play of contrasting motives as the primary topic of the aria by their exposition in the opening ritornello, which not only contrasts the ideas, one with the other, but also alerts us to the voice's subsequent telling divergences from this orchestral text. Rodelinda's initial 'Spietati' is most significant: obviously derived intervallically from the first, *unisono* theme, it deliberately refuses that theme's metrical and rhythmic confines, drawing attention to its indicative emphasis by its elongation.

The A′ section confirms Rodelinda's authority, not only because she returns to her initial 'Spietati' motive (transposed) without instrumental interruption (bb.24–25), but also because that motive now usurps the place of the first orchestral presentation of the theme (bb.1–2, 12–13); the orchestra responds to her with its second, fuller version (bb.25–26; compare bb.2–3, 13–14). Rodelinda then confirms her dominance by (at last) performing the initial orchestral motive, which the orchestra again completes (bb.26–28).

The tension contained within the music for 'se al mio figlio il cor donai / Vi serbarvi e duolo e affanno' is also only fully revealed when Rodelinda takes the theme: in the initial ritornello, Handel limited its repetitiveness and at the same time masked the change in expressive function by not using the dramatic octave leap which Rodelinda deploys on 'serbarvi'. When Rodelinda sings, however, this blurring is replaced by a knife-edge precision in delineating her attack: the speed with which she rounds on her persecutors is indicated musically by the sudden shift from the lilting melodic pattern and accompanying texture underpinning thoughts of her son at the syllables '-barvi'. In such moments, we see the care with which Handel articulated the dramatic potential latent within a poetic text, taking full advantage of the slower unfolding of meaning in its sung expression to turn a single word – 'serbarvi' – into an indication of the volatility of Rodelinda's emotions.

That Rodelinda's subsequent presentation of this material does not differentiate so strongly between the first clause ('se al mio figlio il cor donai') and its subsequent ('di serbarvi e duolo e affanno'), underpinning 'serbarvi' with the lilting first music, emphasises rather than undermining the expressive point: having mastered the men – and herself – through her co-option of the first orchestral theme, the queen has leisure to order her disordered thoughts. Her final presentation of 'di serbarvi e duolo e affanno' returns rhythmically not to its original material, but to the first orchestral theme, which Rodelinda adapted and then adopted for 'Spietati'. By this reading we might say, then, that Rodelinda achieves coherence and self-mastery in the course of the aria.

'Spietati, io vi giurai' demonstrates Handel's (and Cuzzoni's) subtle handling of the conflict of identity for Rodelinda. But of course 'Spietati' was one aria among many for Rodelinda; for indication that this question was of central importance for her character, we might better look to the opera's opening, where the issue could be – and was – addressed far more conspicuously and, it would appear, consciously.

Handel's emendations to the opening of the opera (and perhaps those of his librettist, Haym) are particularly striking, for in both the autograph and the extant performing score there are changes within changes. As we now have it, the opera's initial scenes establish a sense of balance between suffering and strength in Rodelinda's persona: she first mourns the loss of her husband in 'Ho perduto il caro sposo', and then spurns the advances of Grimoaldo in the defiant 'L'empio rigor del fato'. However, examination of the autograph manuscript would seem to suggest that Handel and/or Haym had some difficulty with the opening: Andrew Jones notes that, uniquely, there is no heading for this opera between the end of the overture and the first scene, and suggests that an opening scene between Rodelinda and the minor character of Unulfo, modelled on Salvi's first scene, may originally have been intended, but was subsequently dropped.[48] Jones shows that both Rodelinda's opening aria, 'Ho perduto il caro sposo', and 'L'empio rigor del fato' were added at some later point. 'Ho perduto' was originally a full dal segno aria: it is preserved intact in the autograph, and the libretto too has the full text, but the performing score shows that Handel deleted the B-section (in which Rodelinda rejects death because she has to live on for her son) before the first performance.[49]

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[48] Jones, 'The Composer as Dramatist', 53–4.

[49] It is clear that 'Ho perduto' was a later addition, not only because of the page numbering for the recitative, but also because the half page following the end of the aria is left blank (if the aria had been written as part of the initial process, the recitative would have followed immediately). The translation of 'Ho perduto' in the 1725 libretto runs: 'My Love, my Life, is lost, is gone; / And I the swelling Tide of Woe, / Am left to meet, and meet alone, / While Sorrows upon

Handel's superior dramatic sensibilities are often credited for alterations such as these: Jones postulates with regard to the addition of 'Ho perduto il caro sposo' that, because of the composer's instinctive focus on 'strong dramatic situations, and convincing characters', 'Handel must have felt that [Rodelinda's] subsequent rejection of Grimoaldo would make sense only if the audience had first experienced her grief at the loss (as she imagined) of her husband.'[50] We certainly should not gainsay the composer's talent for psycho-dramatic conception, but other readings are also possible, particularly in light of the way Handel and his librettist responded to Salvi's original libretto.

As the surviving autograph manuscript has it, after the overture we begin with a slightly abbreviated version of Salvi's scene two, when Grimoaldo first propositions the queen. Salvi ended this scene with an aria for Rodelinda, 'Misera, sì, non vile', which Haym and Handel may originally have intended to use, for the text bears considerable similarity both thematically and in vocabulary to 'L'empio rigor del Fato':[51]

Salvi (1710)	**Haym (1725)**
Misera, sì, non vile,	L'empio rigor del Fato
Della Sorte mi fe – l'empio rigore;	Vile non potrà farmi,
	Se misera mi fe.
Può ben laccio servile	E' tu crudo tiranno
Incatenarmi il piè – ma non il core.	In van tenti placarmi
	Se m'hai legato il piè.[52]

Why was Salvi's original text not used? The new text certainly demonstrates what Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp note as that 'constant feature of Handel's collaboration with his librettists, the ejection of vague, abstract, or neutral texts in favour of primary dramatic responses'.[53] As Jones also observes, there is a

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Sorrows grow: / What shall I do? or, whither turn? / I have a Son; and dare not die; / Look where I will, Hope looks forlorn, / And still portends new Perils nigh.'

[50] Andrew Jones, liner notes to Handel, *Rodelinda*, 14, 15.

[51] Jones, 'The Composer as Dramatist', 55.

[52] 'Misera, sì, non vile', *Rodelinda* (1710), 4. (Wretched, yes, but not dishonourable, does Fate make me in its impious harshness; One may well ensnare subservience by chaining the feet, but not the heart.) 'L'empio rigor del Fato', *Rodelinda* (1725), reprinted in *The Librettos of Handel's Operas*, IV, 7 ('The impious Rigour of my adverse Fate / May make me wretched but can't make me mean: / And, tho' you've bound me down, and rule my State, / Talk not of Love to me, base barb'rous Man, / Nor strive to please me, for you strive in vain').

[53] Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726*, 576. Andrew Jones similarly notes Handel's apparent preference for 'straightforward expressions of strong emotion in the libretto'; 'The Composer as Dramatist', 50.

fundamental shift in emphasis: whereas Salvi begins with Rodelinda's misery, Haym's new text begins with the 'harsh rigour' of her fate, and turns her misery into the final, dependent clause.[54] His second stanza is much more dramatic than Salvi's, beginning with the indicative gesture, 'E tu', as Rodelinda turns ferociously from Fate to the presumptuous Grimoaldo, and it emphasises even more strongly her anger, rather than her servile state. These rhetorical changes give a quite different complexion to Rodelinda's initial appearance in the opera, making her a much stronger character – a force to be reckoned with, rather than a mere victim of a tyrant's lustful advances.[55] And Handel's music enhances this presentation, emphasising verbal (and probably physical) gestures appropriately. Rodelinda's volatility and anger are shown in the A-section through a strong contrast between sustained notes (one of Cuzzoni's specialities, as we recall from Burney's praise of her 'art [in] conducting, sustaining, increasing, and diminishing her tones')[56] and abruptly terminated angry semiquaver runs for each of the first two lines ('L'empio rigor del fato' and 'vile non potrà farmi'). This anger is again contrasted with the more introspective music for 'se misera mi fé', though it quickly returns (prompted by the violins) on 'no, no' (Example 2.2a). In Handel's B-section the denunciation of Grimoaldo is even more strident, where sequential leaps of a 5th on 'E tu' and 'in van' lead into and highlight a return of the contrast between sustained notes and descending runs (Example 2.2b).

One can imagine, however, that with such an alteration the *prima donna* might fear – as Anastasia Robinson had – that she would appear too much the harridan. Perhaps in response to such fears, or perhaps before such fears were even voiced, Handel composed the aria we now know as Rodelinda's first, 'Ho perduto il caro sposo', to balance 'L'empio rigor del fato', for while the latter aria highlights Rodelinda's strength in defiance, 'Ho perduto' distills her sense of loss. Indeed, 'Ho perduto il caro sposo', in which Rodelinda mourns the loss of her husband, picks up on those aspects of Salvi's original aria text, 'Misera, sì', that were omitted in 'L'empio rigor'. In other words, while Salvi's aria presented a rather complex picture of the defiant victim, Haym articulated the contrast more starkly, by using two separate texts. He also made that contrast much more dramatic and personal, taking the general expression of unhappiness which Salvi had placed in 'Misera, sì' and giving it a specific focus in 'Ho perduto', in the form of a lament for Rodelinda's lost husband, Bertarido, and equally forcefully directing her anger in 'L'empio rigor' against her oppressor.

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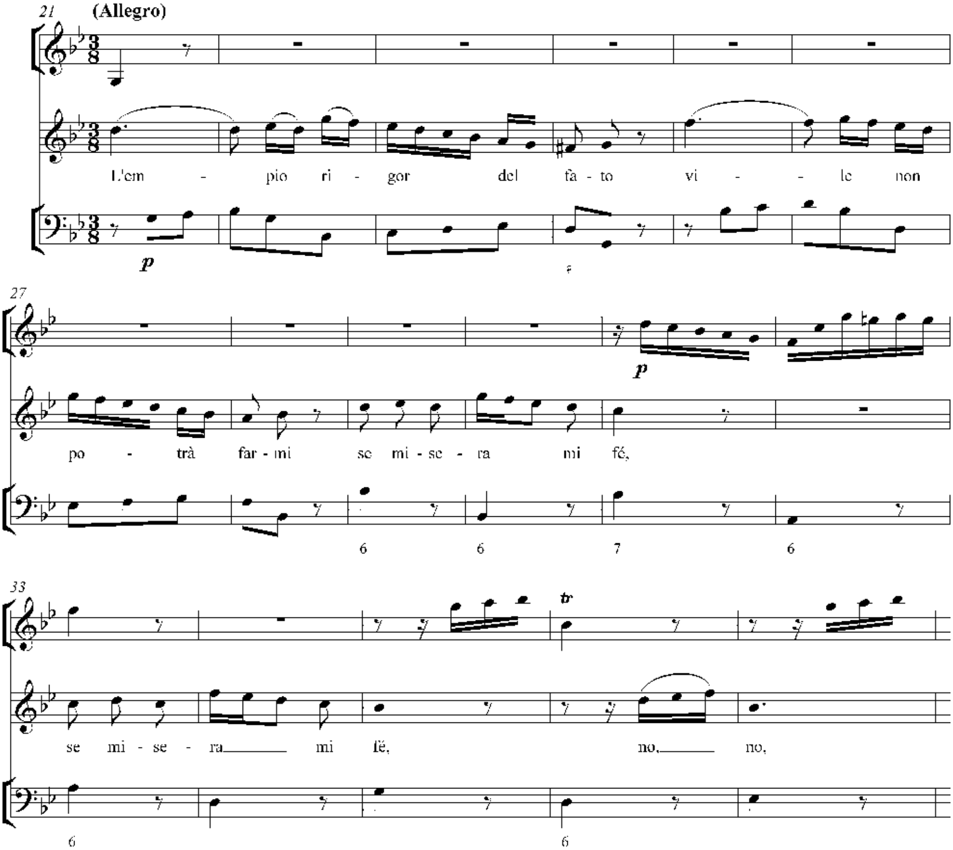
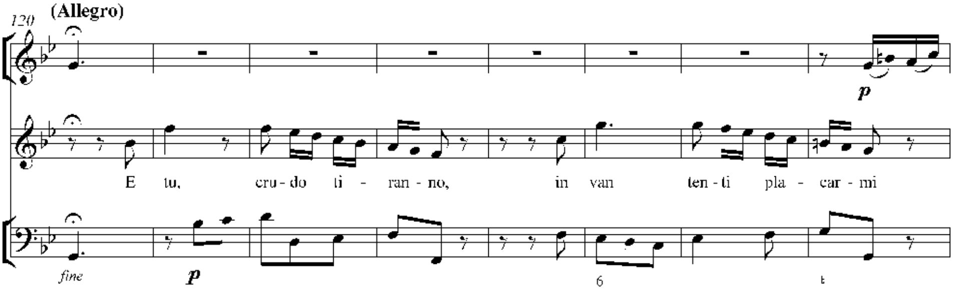
[54] Jones, 'The Composer as Dramatist', 55–6.

[55] Reinhard Strohm has pointed out that this change in rhetoric was fashionable in the revision of opera texts at this time (personal communication).

[56] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 736.


21
(Allegro)
L'em - pio ri - gor del fa - to vi - - le non
p
27
po - trà far - mi se mi - se - ra mi fé,
p
6 6 7 6
33
tr
se mi - se - ra mi fè, no, no,
6 6

Ex. 2.2a G. F. Handel, 'L'empio rigor del fato', *Rodelinda* (London, 1725), bb.21–37, illustrating Cuzzoni's versatility and some of her signature gestures.


120
(Allegro)
p
E tu, cru - do ti - ran - no, in van ten - ti pla - car - mi
fine
p
6

Ex. 2.2b G. F. Handel, 'L'empio rigor del fato', *Rodelinda* (London, 1725), bb.120–127.

The layers of alteration to Rodelinda's initial appearance seem to reflect Handel's and Haym's awareness and exploitation of the difficult conjunction of the social prominence of the queen and the social reticence necessitated by the apparent status of widow. As examination of the music would appear to imply, this conjunction was reinforced by gestural thematics, which articulated the character particularly strongly through the performer. Thus in 'Spietati, io vi giurai' and 'L'empio rigor del fato', the indicative dynamic of 'Spietati' and 'E tu' not only emphasises the character's physical address to others on the stage but also foregrounds the singer's interpretative function, in part by using one of her trademark musical gestures. The mournful angularity of 'Ho perduto', another signature style for Cuzzoni,[57] similarly emphasises the performer's role in its fragmentary phrasing and alternation between singer and orchestra, and also could be seen to reflect upon the character of the widow-queen, requiring the singer to demonstrate both technical prowess in accomplishing wide leaps, and restraint in the unadorned vocal style. Cuzzoni's role, as much as that of Rodelinda, thereby became the subject of the audience's attention.[58]

The interplay of performer and character in the 'point', particularly at moments of heightened tension such as the collision of public and private, was thus an essential enlivening and critical device in *Rodelinda*, deployed knowingly by librettist, composer and singer alike. As we turn from discrete musical exempla in *Rodelinda* to examine the complexities of the construction of an opera as a whole in *Astianatte*, we will see this device attain structural significance.

'LE AGITAZIONI DI ERMIONE, E I DISASTRI DI ANDROMACA'

While the 'point' is a technical theatrical device, it attains its value (and individual points their meaning) through wider resonances. These resonances can be sought both within the thematics and structure of the drama (a structure the point helps delineate) and through broader social dynamics. In the following discussion I will explore a range of contexts – literary, theatrical, social – to reveal the allusive complexity in *Astianatte*'s dichotomous characterisation of the women, and the strength of feeling that dichotomy engendered.[59]

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[57] Similar in style are Cuzzoni's introductory aria 'Se peri l'amato bene' in *Riccardo primo*, her opening accompanied recitative 'Admeto traditor, iniquo amante' in *Admeto*, and 'Fonti amiche, aure leggere' in *Tolomeo*, as well as her famous first aria on the London stage, 'Falsa immagine' in *Ottone*. The style may have been as much Handel's as Cuzzoni's, however: 'Sommi Dei' in *Radamisto* is also an angular and fragmented opening aria, in which singer and orchestra alternate.

[58] On the semiotic importance of this concept of foregrounding, or *aktualisace*, within the theatre see Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 17–21.

There was considerable public discussion of the 1726–7 season: in February 1727 *The Flying-Post* reported plans for a new work each from Ariosti and Bononcini 'after the Excellent Opera composed by Mr. Hendel [*Admeto*], which is now performing'.[60] The Ariosti work was *Teuzzone*, but it, like Handel's next opera, *Riccardo primo*, was not heard until the end of the year, for the work by Bononcini touted by the newspaper brought the season to a premature close.[61]

Astianatte was a story with which many London opera-goers would have been acquainted: its basis, Racine's *Andromaque* (1667, in turn from Euripides' *Andromache*), had first been translated anonymously for performance on the English stage in 1675, but it had received a far more successful airing in 1712 in Ambrose Philips's *The Distrest Mother*.[62] Philips's play was vigorously backed by Richard Steele in the *Spectator*, who opined that audiences were 'at last to see Truth and humane Life represented in the Incidents which concern Heroes and Heroines', and it remained long in the repertory.[63] Racine's drama (and thence Philips's) is built on a destructive chain of unreciprocated affection: Orestes loves Hermione, who loves and is betrothed to Pyrrhus, who loves Andromaque, who is in mourning for her dead husband Hector (killed by Pyrrhus's father, Achille) and whose chief concern is their son, Astianatte, whom the Greeks wish Pyrrhus to kill. Pyrrhus uses the Greeks' demand to blackmail Andromaque into marriage; once this outcome is determined, a proud and vengeful Hermione uses Orestes' love for her to persuade him to murder Pyrrhus, upon which she runs mad and kills herself.

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[59] I cannot agree with Lowell Lindgren's 1972 assessment of the factional hostilities expressed during *Astianatte*'s run that 'It probably made little difference to [London's opera-goers] what composer's work was to be performed, because they were not going to listen.' See Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 381.

[60] *The Flying-Post*, 4 February 1727; cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 201–2.

[61] The last performance was on Tuesday 6 June 1727. As news of George I's death at Osnabrück on 11 June eventually halted any further theatrical performances in any case, it might seem that the latter event, not the fracas, terminated the season. However, as there was apparently no performance on Saturday 10 June (or even Tuesday 13 June, by which time it seems news had not reached London), in line with the normal pattern of performances, it would seem that the events of the 6th brought at least a temporary halt to the season's proceedings, before the king's death terminated the season altogether.

[62] David Roberts notes that 'the business of borrowing' play texts from the French was 'familiar' to Restoration theatregoers, the more educated of whom were 'well qualified to discuss in detail' the merits of the adaptations; *The Ladies*, 119.

[63] [Addison and Steele,] *The Spectator* no. 290 (1 February 1712), ed. Bond, III, 31–3; see also the humorous review, attributed to Addison, in *The Spectator* no. 335 (25 March 1712), III, ed. Bond, 239–42. A number of Racine's plays were translated for the English stage in this period, and he was, of course, also read in the original; see Eccles, *Racine in England*. Dorothea Canfield named Philips's play as 'by all odds the most popular and successful translation of a French tragedy ever produced' in 1904; *Corneille and Racine in England*, 140.

Although the 1727 *Astianatte* was derived from Antonio Salvi's 1701 Florentine libretto by the same name, it seems likely that audiences were nonetheless expected to draw a connection to *The Distrest Mother*.[64] The dedications to the two works were made in similar terms to two daughters of the first duke and duchess of Marlborough, *The Distrest Mother* being dedicated to Mary Churchill (the duchess of Montagu from 1705), and *Astianatte* to Bononcini's patron, Henrietta Churchill (made second duchess of Marlborough in 1722). One anonymous annotator noted in a copy of the 1727 libretto of *Astianatte* that the opera was written 'upon the same incidents as the "Andromaque" of Racine and the "distressed mother" of Philips'.[65] Perhaps audiences were to notice in particular the sentimentalising of 'heroick Virtue' in both works, for, as Steele put it, 'the Character which gives Name to [Philips's] Play, is one who has behaved her self with heroick Virtue in the most important Circumstances of a female Life, those of a Wife, a Widow, and a Mother'.[66]

An emphasis on the tragic figure of Andromaca would have suited Bononcini's musical style, which, according to John Hawkins, was recognised as being 'adapted to the expression of tender and pathetic sentiments' – the kind of expression also associated with Cuzzoni, of course.[67] Although there is no direct evidence that Bononcini favoured Cuzzoni over Faustina, there is some suggestion that the composers allied themselves in the singers' dispute, Bononcini with Cuzzoni and Handel with Faustina.[68] The opportunity to enact distressed motherhood would certainly have been favourable to Cuzzoni, for such a role was unimpeachable (as recuperative biographies of the actress Anne Oldfield, who played the role of Andromache in Philips's play, demonstrate).[69] We will return shortly to the ramifications of sentimental drama for Cuzzoni's character.

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[64] Salvi's libretto spawned numerous adaptations; the opera appears first to have been revived in 1716 in Florence, and thereafter twice in Munich in 1716 and 1717, in Venice in 1718, Rome in 1719, Milan in 1722, and Naples in 1725; Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, I, 346–7. The authoritative study of Salvi's 1701 *Astianatte* is Giuntini, *I drammi per musica di Antonio Salvi*.

[65] *Astianatte* (London, 1727) GB-Lbl 11714.aa.20 (3), Title page. See note 78 below, on intervening versions of Salvi's libretto.

[66] [Addison and Steele,] *The Spectator* no. 290 (1 February 1712), ed. Bond, III, 32.

[67] Hawkins, *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, II, 863. This style did not find favour with all: in 1724 the satirical *Epistel to Mr. Handel* depicted Bononcini's supporters as fed on a musically 'thin Diet': 'Supine in downy indolence they doze / Whilst *Poppy-Strains* their drowsy Eye-lids close'; cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 158–60; for further consideration of Bononcini's reputation, see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 321–8.

[68] Aside from their trip to France together in 1724, some indication of Cuzzoni's friendliness with Bononcini can be found in two letters written by her husband, Pier Giuseppe Sandoni, from Venice to Giuseppe Riva in London in November and December 1728, in which Cuzzoni inserted praise of Bononcini's music and greetings to 'il Caro Bononcini' (Sandoni and

But exemplary virtue requires a foil to shine more brightly. As with *Alessandro* before it, in *Astianatte* those familiar with the sources would have expected some clash between the women. And while, in the event, *Alessandro* played as much on similarities in the women's roles as on their differences (as we will see in the next chapter), *Astianatte* offered a more distinct delineation. The Greek original explicitly concerns the fatal antagonism of Hermione, Pyrrhos' betrothed, towards Andromache, the woman he loves.[70] And as Racine also favoured the 'good/bad woman dichotomy' as a structuring device for some of his dramas, it is hardly surprising that his tragedy, too, exploits a sense of rivalry on Hermione's part.[71] Philips in turn followed Racine's depiction of Hermione as 'une inhumaine' (as Oreste describes her in the first scene); Addison called Philips's Hermione 'a notable young baggage'.[72] There was thus a considerable weight of expectation about the women's roles when the operatic version of the story came to the stage in 1727. In his prefatory dedication to the opera, Nicola Haym seemed to acknowledge this tradition when he referred to 'le agitazioni di Ermione, e i disastri di Andromaca'. The audiences apparently responded to this aspect of the story almost immediately. The flautist J. J. Quantz, who left London before the fifth performance on

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Bononcini, however, were apparently not on good terms); see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 368–9; see also 391–3. It may also be noteworthy that, in Bononcini's and Ariosti's operas, Cuzzoni eventually won Senesino's character, while in Handel's (with the exception of *Riccardo primo*) Faustina was paired with Senesino. See Clausen, 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 155; also Hawkins's comment that Handel wished to hire Faustina as 'a means of quieting' Cuzzoni; cited on p. 42, above.

[69] Straub notes that the 1730 *Authentick Memoirs of Oldfield* and Egerton's 1731 *Memoirs* of Anne Oldfield both use the theme of motherhood 'to establish the actress's personal credibility'; Egerton referred directly to the Philips role: 'THE *Distrest Mother* seemed now to be the case of Mrs OLDFIELD both on, and off, the Stage'; *Sexual Suspects*, 93.

[70] John Gould describes the characterisation of the women in Euripides' play as structured around 'the polarisation of incompatible aspects of the female role'; *Myth, Ritual, Memory, and Exchange*, 151.

[71] Desnain, 'The Good Woman/Bad Woman Dichotomy in Racine's Tragedies'. There is considerable similarity in ethos between Hermione and Vitellia, another vengeful scorned woman, in Metastasio's *La clemenza di Tito* (1734); Racine had used an aspect of this story too, in his *Bérénice* (1670).

[72] Racine, *Andromaque*, I.i; Philips, *The Distrest Mother*, 2 (I.i). [Addison,] *The Spectator* no. 335 (25 March 1712), ed. Bond, III, 242.

23 May, wrote of the disruptive factionalism of the audience, and tied this behaviour specifically to *Astianatte*:

> The second opera I heard in London was by Bononcini; it did not find as much approval as the first. Handel's bass voice outweighed Bononcini's treble. During this opera two parties gave voice, one for Faustina, the other for Cuzzoni. These parties were so enraged with each other, that the one whistled when the other applauded, and vice versa: until finally, for that reason, the operas had to be taken off the programme for a while.[73]

But how much of the hostility was generated by audience anticipation of female rivalry, based on Racine and Philips, and how much was derived from the opera itself? The London libretto – possibly arranged by Haym[74] – demonstrates a complex relationship with Salvi's 1701 original and with Racine's play, attesting to the careful planning that went into shaping the plot. While Salvi's alteration of Racine shows concern for the conventions of *opera seria*, with its requirement for a *lieto fine*, the London version may on some levels be seen as re-engaging with Racine, perhaps influenced by some of its predecessors or merely by the esteem in which the French author was held.[75] But this process involved more than neoclassical homage: there were other factors at play.

In order to understand the adaptations made to the opera for London, we need first to examine the relationship between the French play and the original Italian libretto.[76] At their most general, the differences between Racine and Salvi can be explained by differing love relationships: whereas Racine's Andromaque does not return Pyrrhus's love, and Hermione does not return Oreste's, instead loving Pyrrhus (see II.i), Salvi's Andromaca eventually comes to be reconciled to Pirro, and the vacillating Ermione to Oreste. Racine's tragic conclusion, in which Pyrrhus is murdered, Hermione commits suicide, and Oreste goes mad, stems from Hermione's overwhelming jealousy, which causes her first to demand that Oreste kill Pyrrhus (when it is clear the latter will marry Andromaque in her stead), and then destroy herself when he does so. In Salvi, Ermione's motivation for the same demand is centred on pride rather than love. Oreste's inevitable failure actually to kill Pirro (required by *bienséance*), at the end of Act II, both forces Andromaca's reconciliation to Pirro (in Racine, she intends to kill herself as soon as Pyrrhus's marriage vows have secured her child, Astianatte's, safety) and generates the need for a new catastrophe, quite extraneous to Racine. In Salvi, this occupies the third act and centres around Oreste's friend, Pilade, who takes the child Astianatte hostage in order to regain Oreste's freedom after his attempted parricide. Overall, Salvi chose to ameliorate several of the characters in his *Astianatte*, particularly Ermione (despite his fidelity to Racine), but he did not take this process as far as he might. In the Venetian 1718 version of Salvi's drama, in which Faustina appeared as Ermione, the adapter softened her character still further, while at the same time giving Faustina the most important role (she concluded Acts I and II).[77] Perhaps the profile of her character in that version had persuaded Faustina it would be a good role to reprise, but the London characterisation proved to be different again.

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[73] Quantz, 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', 242. ('Die zweyte Oper welche ich in London hörete, war [*Astianatte*] vom Bononcini; sie fand aber nicht so grossen Beyfall als die erste [*Admeto*]. Händels Grundstimme überwog Bononcinis Oberstimme. In dieser Oper äusserten sich zwo Partheyen, eine für die Faustina, die andere für die Cuzzoni. Diese Partheyen waren so wider einander aufgebracht, dass die eine pfiff, wenn die andere in die Hände klatschete, und umgekehrt: bis endlich deswegen die Opern, auf eine Zeit eingestellet werden musten.') Tensions were already present, of course: there had been trouble between audience factions during *Admeto* too, requiring a letter of apology to Princess Amelia on behalf of Cuzzoni for the performance of 4 April 1727; see Deutsch, *Handel*, 207–8.

[74] Although Haym signed the dedication for the London libretto, it is uncertain whether he actually made the (extensive) alterations to it; Bononcini apparently did not favour him as a librettist, was already considering a libretto on the story of Andromaca in 1725, and had also discussed the topic with Antonio Cocchi. See Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 370–5.

[75] Clausen, 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 157–8.

[76] For another comparison of Salvi's opera and Racine's play see Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre,* 119–40.

A comparison of the London libretto with Salvi's 1701 text (and with the various intermediary versions on which it drew) reveals the usual London propensity for paring down recitative, but also shows that the London librettist strengthened the distinction between Ermione and Andromaca, making the former still less likeable than in Salvi's libretto, and the latter still more pathetic.[78] In order to establish Ermione's *ethos*, the first scene between Oreste and Pilade makes it clear that she loves Oreste in spite of her betrothal to Pirro. Lines added for Oreste at the end of the scene put the situation succinctly: 'Ah! tu ben sai / Quant'ella pria m'amò, quanto l'amai?'[79] Indications of

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[77] For further discussion, see Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 189–91; Ograjenšek describes Ermione in this version as 'meek' (190).

[78] While the 1727 libretto generally appears to follow the 1701 libretto, it borrowed material (including structural design and aria texts) from intervening versions; Ograjenšek suggests the London librettist and/or Handel knew the 1717, 1718, and either the 1719 or the 1722 libretti; see Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 189. See also Clausen, 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 157.

[79] *Astianatte* (1727), 4; 'Well thou know'st / How first she lov'd me, / how I lov'd that fair one!' (5). The relationship between Ermione and Oreste is, nonetheless, far less important in this scene than it is in either Racine or Salvi (the main interest instead being Pirro's recalcitrance concerning Greek demands for the death of Astianatte).

Ermione's affection for Pirro are thus removed or softened in the redrafting of subsequent scenes.[80]

Removal of Pirro as a true love interest for Ermione has the effect of making the London Ermione less duplicitous than the 1701 character, but also less likeable.[81] Thus, for example, when Oreste asks whether she still loves Pirro and hates him, her reply in 1701 and 1727 is the same: 'Amo la gloria mia, Pirro non curo' (1701: I.xiii / 1727: I.viii); but its truthfulness in 1727 scarcely makes Ermione a nicer person.[82] This view of the character is reinforced in Act II, when Pirro finally agrees to sacrifice Astianatte, and when Ermione is therefore again able to marry him, as she explains to Oreste that it is enough her glory is triumphant, even if that glory contradicts her heart (1701: II.ii / 1727: II.i).[83] Then too, the London librettist retained largely intact Ermione's significant Act II encounter with Andromaca, in which Andromaca kneels before Ermione, addressing her as 'Principessa', to ask for her help in persuading Pirro to release Astianatte, and Ermione sneers at her as 'Importuna' (1701: II.iv–v / 1727: II.ii). Ermione's disingenuous response that she could neither assist with propriety (using the excuse of filial obedience), nor achieve with all her entreaty what Andromaca herself could do with one look, in Racine (and Philips) was highlighted by Andromaque's subsequent comment on her rival's contempt – another form of pointing.[84] One element not retained in the London libretto, which reinforces the sense of Ermione's misguided but consistent honour in the 1701 libretto, is her *scena ultima* refusal to receive Oreste as a husband from Andromaca's hand. Though Andromaca and Pirro express surprise at her ingratitude, Ermione's proud justification that she could only be given to Oreste by her father rings true with her earlier pronouncements and her *ethos*.

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[80] Compare 1701, I.ix with the latter half of 1727 I.iv, where reference to Ermione's 'S'ange, sospira e geme' is left out; or 1701 I.xiii with 1727 I.viii, which omits some of Ermione's original shame at being 'regina offesa e ripudiata sposa'.

[81] Clausen suggests that the London Ermione demonstrates greater consistency than Salvi's character ('Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 153). She also demonstrates greater perfidy: her *ethos* is governed by a degree of pride, ambition and cruelty that carries her and those around her into villainy.

[82] *Astianatte* (1727), 20; 'And are you still in Love with what contemns you? And still are bent to hate the Man that loves you?'; 'I love my Glory – I not value *Pyrrhus*' (21).

[83] Oreste: 'E d'un forzato e non sincero affetto può contentarsi Ermion?'; Ermione: 'Basta che sia / trionfante in amore / anche ad onta del cuor la gloria mia'; *Astianatte* (1727), 28; 'And can Hermione be tamely satisfy'd with a mere forc'd and unsincere Affection?'; 'Suffice it, that my Glory grow triumphant, Ev'n in that Love, that goes against my Heart' (29).

[84] *Astianatte*, 31. In Racine: 'Quel mépris la cruelle attache à ses refus!' (II.v), and in Philips: 'Did'st thou not mind, with what Disdain she spoke!' (29). Ermione's 1727 aria text, 'A lui vanne, piangi e prega' is also largely retained from Salvi's 'Vanne a Pirro, e piangi, e prega'.

If much of the London libretto derives from Salvi's 1701 text, it also develops his ideas considerably in several directions. In particular, extensive revisions to the ends of Acts II and III have the effect of heightening the sense of Ermione's wickedness. In Salvi's second act, Oreste, distraught at Ermione's determination to marry Pirro, threatens to kill himself and her husband, but Ermione restrains him, counselling revenge only if Pirro betrays his promise (II.xiv). In the London libretto, however, Pirro blatantly spurns Ermione (II.v), and she demands that Oreste prove himself worthy of her by avenging her honour (II.vi), as she did in Racine (IV.iii, though there without the provocation of first encountering Pyrrhus). Thus in the 1727 libretto, as in Racine, Oreste's attack on Pirro is a planned ambush, instigated by Ermione (who is not present), while in the 1701 libretto it is spurred on by Pirro's volte-face at the altar, and only then demanded by Ermione, watching from her hiding place with Oreste (II.xvi).

The changes to Act III are still more notable, for at this point the opera libretti depart substantially from Racine's tragic ending (although the London libretto initially follows the beginning of Racine's fifth act, in which Ermione waits for news from Oreste and then repudiates him as a parricide). The London alterations thus draw attention to the way in which the design of the drama has fundamentally shifted to create a starker contrast between the *ethos* of Ermione and that of Andromaca.[85]

In Salvi, Oreste's friend, Pilade, moves from Racine's characterisation as confidant and factotum to assume a major role; indeed, the trials and sacrifices required of this friendship form a key theme of the drama.[86] Thus it falls to Pilade in Salvi's 1701 third act to engineer Oreste's release from prison, which he does (after much soul searching) by kidnapping the child, Astianatte. Ermione is somewhat enfeebled in this act – left to wait and wonder while Pilade puts his plans into action. All the subsequent continental libretti also follow this format. In the London libretto, however, the situation is reversed: Pilade is, in any case, now a relatively minor character (sung by the low-ranking Anna Dotti), but the way in which the parts are re-written suggests more than an expedient diminution of his role.[87] Salvi's Ermione asks the secretive Pilade to share his plan with her: 'Pilade, a tanta impresa / non mi sdegnar compagna. Oprerà bene / quanto in te l'amistade, in me l'amore' (III.ix). The corresponding scene in the London libretto (III.x) has the text heavily fragmented and rearranged, but these three lines remain – in carefully reworked fashion – for Pilade, now sidelined from Ermione's grand design: 'Principessa, all'Impresa / non mi sdegnar compagno, oprerà bene / tanto in me l'amistà, che in te l'amore.'[88] Similarly, when Pilade returns from his expedition with the child in the 1701 libretto, the following exchange occurs (III.xvii):

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[85] There is no possibility here, for example, as there was in the 1742 Neapolitan *L'Andromaca*, for a conclusion in which Andromaca says to Ermione 'T'abbraccio o cara'! (60).

[86] Of course, this theme derives from the relationship between these two figures in the Greek myth of Iphigenia on Tauros.

[87] Dotti, after all, was sufficiently capable to have been the *seconda donna* from 1724 until Faustina's arrival, creating, among others, the demanding roles of Irene in *Tamerlano* and Eduige in *Rodelinda*; see Dean, 'Dotti, Anna Vincenza'. Here I must disagree with Ograjenšek that Haym (if he was the author) swapped the roles because he did not have sufficient space for Pilade in an already lengthy libretto; given his meticulous retention of the key segments of recitative (see discussion on pp. 96 and 134), he could easily have made Pilade the abductor while still giving Ermione the arias; see Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 199.

Pilade Amici, affrettiam l'opra:
Pirro ci segue; principessa, andiamo.
Ermione E dove? È questi Oreste?
Pilade Oh dio! Troppo funeste
son per noi le dimore.[89]

Again, the part of querulous concern is switched from Ermione to Pilade in the London libretto, as Ermione returns with her hostage (III.xv): the parts are swapped, but the text is identical (apart from the deletion of 'principessa'). Even for an audience unaware of the nice ironies of the rearrangement, these lines would have provided striking evidence of Ermione's masculine agency and dominance.

PERFORMING 'THE DISTRESSED MOTHER'

The process of rewriting also served to emphasise Andromaca's passivity in a way that would have aligned particularly with the period's concerns about women's stage roles and the public/private dichotomy. Andromaca was multiply the 'distressed mother': torn between loyalty to her dead husband, Hector, and to her living son, Astianatte, she has either to marry the enamoured King Pirro or sacrifice her child to satisfy the Greeks. In I.iv, her first scene, Andromaca complains to Pirro 'Ah! che Andromaca è nata a pianger sempre.'[90]

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[88] *Astianatte* (1727), 68; 'O Princess, don't disdain / To make me your Companion in this Enterprize, / For Friendship will be sure to act in me / To the same Height, that Honour will in thee' (69).

[89] Pilade: 'Friends, let us hasten to our work: Pirro follows us; princess, let us go.' Ermione: 'And where? Is this Oreste?' Pilade: 'Oh gods! Too much delay will be our ruin.'

[90] *Astianatte* (1727), 8; 'Andromache is born to mourn for ever' (9). In Racine (and Philips), Andromache refers here to 'des yeux infortunés, / Qu'à des pleurs éternels vous avez condamnés' (I.iv) (Philips: 'these unhappy Eyes, by you condemn'd / To weep for ever'; *The Distrest Mother* 11; I.iv). Salvi's line seems to have been reflected at the end of Philips's play: as Andromache's attendant Cephisa complains 'Alas, then will your Sorrows never End!' Andromache replies 'Oh, never! never – While I live, my Tears / Will never cease; for I was Born to Grieve.' *The Distrest Mother*, 56.

Andromaca was an example of the 'persecuted innocence' that had become a common theme in early eighteenth-century Italian opera libretti.[91] She also represented a type of woman that had, by this time, largely run her course in the English spoken theatre, and was making her transition to the novel – the suffering, sentimental heroine of 'she-tragedy', whose essential characteristics were passivity and stasis.[92] Philips's play gives a sense of the delight early eighteenth-century audiences took in the sentimentalisation of ideal femininity in his one significant departure from Racine, when his Andromache concludes the play mourning the death of Pyrrhus and welcoming the return of her child:

> A springing Joy, mixt with a soft Concern,
> A Pleasure, which no Language can Express,
> An Exstasie, that Mothers only feel,
> Plays round my Heart, and brightens up my Sorrow,
> Like Gleams of Sun-shine in a louring Skie.[93]

The London *Astianatte* also emphasised pathos and the maternal qualities of Andromaca by assigning a prominent though silent role to Astianatte, adding and enhancing scenes to highlight Andromaca's engagement with her child: he it is who receives her embrace (i.ix), and who prompts her to faint (ii.iv). The affective charge in the latter scene is particularly significant for the London librettist's strategic decision to incorporate Pirro behind the scenes: Pirro's inclusion allows some emotive lines for Salvi's minor character, Creonte, to be transferred to him, thus showing the singer Senesino's pathetic credentials.[94] It also makes this, rather than the act-ending temple sacrifice, the point at which Pirro recants his decisions to kill Astianatte and marry Ermione. Pirro's change of heart here occurs simply as a result of his emotional response to the mother–child farewell, rather than (as in the original temple scene) because Andromaca herself has relented: although the sacrifice scene still ends the act, Pirro now intends it merely as 'l'ultima prova' for Andromaca, 'E se allor non la muove il suo periglio, / Libera sia la Madre, e salvo il figlio' (ii.iv).[95] The effect of this change with regard to Ermione's (and Oreste's) motivation has been discussed above, but it is just as significant for its delineation of sentiment within the opera.

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[91] Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 6.

[92] Brown, 'The Defenseless Woman', 432. See also Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, for broader seventeenth-century context.

[93] Philips, *The Distrest Mother*, 57.

[94] Added scenes for Astianatte in the 1727 version exploit the vogue for pathos: Act i ends with an added scene for Pirro, in which he holds and addresses the child, comparing Andromaca's apparent readiness to sacrifice her child to her lack of love for him. Astianatte is the focus of the dramatic climax of Act iii, to be discussed below.

[95] *Astianatte* (1727), 39; 'And if, unmov'd, that Danger she can see, / Safe be the Son, and be the Mother free' (38).

Viewing the depiction of Andromaca as part of the period's ideological interest in pathos certainly assists us in understanding the significance of this opera for the Faustina/Cuzzoni rivalry. In both Italian and English examples, the sentimental heroine as a type undoubtedly spoke not only to the problematic role of women in early eighteenth-century society, but also to the particular problem of the actress as a focus for that anxiety: it represented an attempt to recuperate the domesticity and hence the social acceptability of acting, as the most public of female professions.[96] Generically as well as socially liminal, the she-tragedian served as the link between older, aristocratic heroic tragedy and the bourgeois sentimental drama of the 1710s, which replaced her with the equally put-upon middle-class, sentimental hero.[97] The victimised heroine, increasingly restricted and policed, moved from the stage to the less troublingly public realm of the novel (where she continued to have a long, if not a happy, life). The novel perhaps suited this passive type better, for it was a difficult role to act in a realm that, as Aristotle had long-since observed, depended on praxis.[98]

Of course, the sung theatre offered a more viable home for the pathetic heroine than the spoken.[99] Opera, which, through the aria, sublimated action in heightening the passions' 'moments of transition' (the actor's 'points'), could allow a high level of musical activity to women even in their passivity. The many eighteenth-century satires on the wiles of *prime donne* suggest that female vocality went hand-in-hand with usurpation of male power and disruption of social norms (confirming a contemporary perception of the dominance of singer over role, which we now might rather read as enabling). At the same time, music could also serve what was, by eighteenth-century lights, a recuperative function, restoring a feminine docility which the libretto as spoken drama might have undermined. It seems that Bononcini's *Griselda*, which Anastasia Robinson had used as a reference for her subsequent characterisation in *Ottone*, articulated this balance between action and idealised passivity particularly well, as a verse in *The Freeholder's Journal* for 14 March 1722 attests:

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[96] The she-tragedy's rise in the 1670s and 1680s has been linked to the skills of specific actresses, but also, more broadly, to economic and ideological developments which worked to exclude middle-class women from productive paid employment, while idealising the ensuing inactivity as an inability to work on the part of the constitutionally weak and passive sex. See Brown, 'The Defenseless Woman', 441; Brown, *Ends of Empire*, 64–102. On the role of actresses, see Howe, *First English Actresses*, 109. Mary Beth Rose discusses women's difficulties in addressing the public–private divide in autobiographical writings, in *Gender and Heroism*, 55–84.

[97] Brown, 'The Defenseless Woman', 430, 436. Richard Steele's discussion of Bononcini's paired operas *Griselda* (London, 1722) and *Crispo* (London, 1722) in his play *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), in which he counterpoised *Griselda*'s 'distress of an injured innocent woman' with 'that only of a man in the same condition' (II.ii) in *Crispo*, suggests that contemporaries saw the link between the spoken theatre's and opera's interest in female and male pathetic heroism. For further discussion, see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works Set by Giovanni and His Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 260–6. On the pairing of *Griselda* and *Crispo* see Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, 54–6; Strohm, 'Dramatic Dualities', 556.

[98] Burns, *Character*, 19. Véronique Desnain notes that, in Racine's dichotomous presentation of his female characters, the passive 'good' woman is inevitably more two-dimensional and 'takes less space' than the 'bad'; 'The Good Woman/Bad Woman Dichotomy in Racine's Tragedies', 43. On the pathetic heroine in the novel as successor to that of the play, see Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, 190–9; Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 127.

[99] Stefano Castelvecchi describes the emergence of sentimental opera in the latter part of the eighteenth century as essentially that of a third genre (alongside serious and *buffa* opera); see his 'Sentimental Opera'.

> Cast from her Kingdom, from her Lord exil'd,
> *Griselda* still was Lamb-like, mute and mild.
> But *Rolli*'s Verse provok'd the Saint to Roar,
> She rav'd, she madned, and her Pinners Tore.
> Till *Bononcini* smooth'd the rugged Strains,
> And Sanctify'd the miserable Scenes.
> At each soft sound, again she felt her thought,
> And all the Nonsense dy'd beneath the Note.
> Appeas'd she cry'd, it is enough good Heaven!
> Let *Gaultier*, and let *Rolli* be forgiven.[100]

Attesting to the easy link between character and actor in the last line's slide from Griselda's relationship with Gaultier to Robinson's with Rolli, this verse's humour – and certainly its point – derives from a more sophisticated and unusual juxtaposition, as the spoken word is set up as 'Nonsense' and the killing 'Note' its antithesis, which does justice to Griselda's 'mute and mild' nature by restoring feeling to thought.

We might see similar restorative practice for Andromaca's role in *Astianatte*, which maintains a remarkably consistent sense of distressed womanhood, even where the text might lead one to expect a different characterisation. In Salvi's original libretto much of this was communicated through the recitative, which details and performs the affective staging of Andromaca's pathos. The following plea to Pirro

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[100] The *Journal* provided a rubric for the verses: 'To prevent my honest Readers from being Laugh'd at, for asking any unfashionable Questions about the following Lines. I must acquaint them, that *Griselda* is the Heroine of the last new *Opera*, *Gaultier* is her Husband, *Rolli* the Fidler who made the Verses, and *Bononcini* the Master, who set them to Musick. *Griselda* was a Lady Renowned for Patience and Submission, the most noble Feminine Virtues; they who would be further acquainted with the Story of this incomparable Person, may Consult the Ballad of *Patient Grissel*, which may (I presume) be met with on any Stall in *Covent-Garden*.' Cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 156.

(II.vii) serves as an example, eschewing the prosaic manner of normal recitative and, in its religious language, coming closer to a prayer:

> Deh per queste di pianto amare stille,
> Per questi miei sospir, per questo affanno
> Che atterra a' piedi tuoi tutto il mio orgoglio,
> Concedimi, signor…[101]

While the London abbreviations to the recitative necessarily removed much of this affective description, Bononcini's music provided compensation: as Reinhard Strohm has observed, the London tendency to reduce recitative to the point of absurdity necessarily pushed the communication of narrative as well as emotional import into the arias.[102] It did so, however, in ways that heightened that emotional meaning into the 'point', for arias occur, as Strohm puts it, 'on the edges of the drama … in locations where ordinary dialogue has not yet begun or has just finished'.[103] Thus, even though little more than a third of the arias and none of the connective recitatives are extant, the opera's musical traces suggest patterns of characterisation for both women that are congruent with my binary reading of the libretto, and that indicate Bononcini's own willingness to exploit the tensions the women's dichotomous roles created.

ANDROMACA'S 'SOFT SOUNDS'

We are fortunate that (in relative terms) so much of Andromaca's music survives: five of eight arias, along with her duet with Pirro. The fragments of *Astianatte* exist in varying states, from volumes of 'favourite songs' (the most popular and common way to memorialise an opera in this period) and assorted manuscript collections, to one aria's later inclusion in Hawkins's *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*.[104] In discussing Andromaca's music, I will draw on the two contemporaneous published collections (containing the same three arias for Cuzzoni), Hawkins's single aria, and on the most significant manuscript, from the Harvard Theatre Collection,

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[101] 'Oh, for these bitter falling tears, for these my sighs, for this anguish, that abases at your feet all my pride, concede to me, my lord…'

[102] Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera*, 99–100.

[103] Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, 13.

[104] The principal song collections are contemporary: *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call'd Astyanax* (1727), and *The Most Celebrated Aires in the Opera of Astyanax* (1727), each containing the same seven arias and the minuet preceding 'Ascolta, o figlio'. Lowell Lindgren lists *The Modern Musick-Master* (London, 1730) as containing untexted treble parts for the minuet and 'Ascolta o figlio', and *Le Delizie dell'Opere* II (London, 1740) as containing the minuet (Tr-Tr-B) and the arias 'Deh, non accrescer nò' and 'Ascolta o figlio'; 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', III, 763. John Hawkins's *General History of the Science and Practice of Music* contains Andromaca's aria 'Deh lascia o core di sospirar' (II, 864–6).

Table 2.1: *Cuzzoni's arias as Andromaca in* Astianatte

Act/scene	Title	Sources
I.iv	'No che'l tenero' (to Pirro)	libretto only
I.ix	'Un tuo bacio amato figlio' (to Astianatte)	libretto only
I.ix	'Svenalo traditor'	A, B, C
II.iii	'Deh, non accrescer nò'	A, B, C, G, J
II.viii	'Deh lascia o core di sospirar'	C, G, K
III.vi	'Dolce consorto' (duet with Pirro)	C, H
III.ix	'Ascolta o figlio' (to Astianatte)	A, B, C, D, E, F, I, J
III.xi	'Non senti l'onda' (continuation of 'Ascolta')	libretto only
III.xiv	'Difese mi giurasti'	C

A: *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call'd Astyanax* (London, [1727])
B: *The Most Celebrated Aires in the Opera of Astyanax* (London, [1727])
C: US-CAt, M1505.B724 A85 1727 F
D: GB-Eu, Ms P.1425
E: GB-Lbl Add.39549, fol.10v
F: GB-Ob Mus.Sch.D.224, p.41
G: US-Wc M.1505.M.275.case, nos.1–9
H: US-Wc M.1497.H.13.case, ff.44v–46v
I: *The Modern Musick-Master* (London, 1730)
J: *Le delizie dell' opere II* (London, 1740)
K: John Hawkins's *General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London, 1776)

which contains five arias for Cuzzoni.[105] Andromaca's arias are listed in table 2.1. These arias demonstrate Bononcini's exploitation of the pathetic aspect to Cuzzoni's vocal style in the service of characterising the 'distressed mother'. Indeed, it seems significant that all three arias for Cuzzoni included in the 'favourite songs' collections

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[105] This manuscript (M1505.B724 A85 1727F) also holds five arias for Faustina and two for Senesino, as well as the Act III duet for Cuzzoni and Senesino, the minuet, and one continuo aria from *Calfurnia* for Cuzzoni. Six of the *Astianatte* items in this manuscript are not extant in any published collection; these include three arias for Faustina's character and one for Cuzzoni, Andromaca's final aria, 'Difese mi giurasti'. The items are: Ermione's 'Quando'l sol copre' (f.1r); Ermione's 'Sento che già il pensier' (f.7r); Andromaca's 'Svenalo traditor' (f.11r); Pirro's 'Render mi vuole' (f.14r); Andromaca's 'Deh, non accrescer nò' (f.18r); Ermione's 'Spera che questo cor' (f.22r); Andromaca's 'Deh lascia o core di sospirar' (f.26r); Pirro's 'Così spengo' (33r); Andromaca's and Pirro's 'Dolce consorto' (f.34r); Ermione's 'Mesto e solo l'usignolo' (f.38r); Ermione's 'Amato caro ben' (f.43r); the minuet (f.47r); Andromaca's 'Ascolta o figlio' (f.48r); Andromaca's 'Difese mi giurasti' (f.49r); and from *Calfurnia* 'Se a lui da forza il Fato' (53r–v). The other extant unpublished collections add patchily to the overall picture. Lindgren gives four manuscript aria collections: two in the UK contain 'Ascolta o figlio' (GB-Lbl Add.39549, fol.10v; GB-Ob Mus.Sch.D.224, p.41); one in the US contains Andromaca's and Pirro's Act III duet (US-Wc M.1497.H.13.case, ff.44v–46v), and the other contains nine arias, including three, for Oreste ('Al par del tuo rigor') and Pirro

('Svenalo traditor', 'Ascolta o figlio' and 'Deh, non accrescer nò') explicitly concern the mother's relationship with her son.

As the surviving sources suggest, 'Ascolta o figlio' was apparently the most popular of the arias, a piece of pastoral simplicity with a text set largely syllabically, without fragmentation or elaboration (Example 2.3). The simplicity of the aria springs from its poetic theme (the freedom of the birds) and from its intended onstage audience, the child Astianatte. Its theme of freedom gains poignancy for the audience from the knowledge that the child's abduction is shortly to follow.[106]

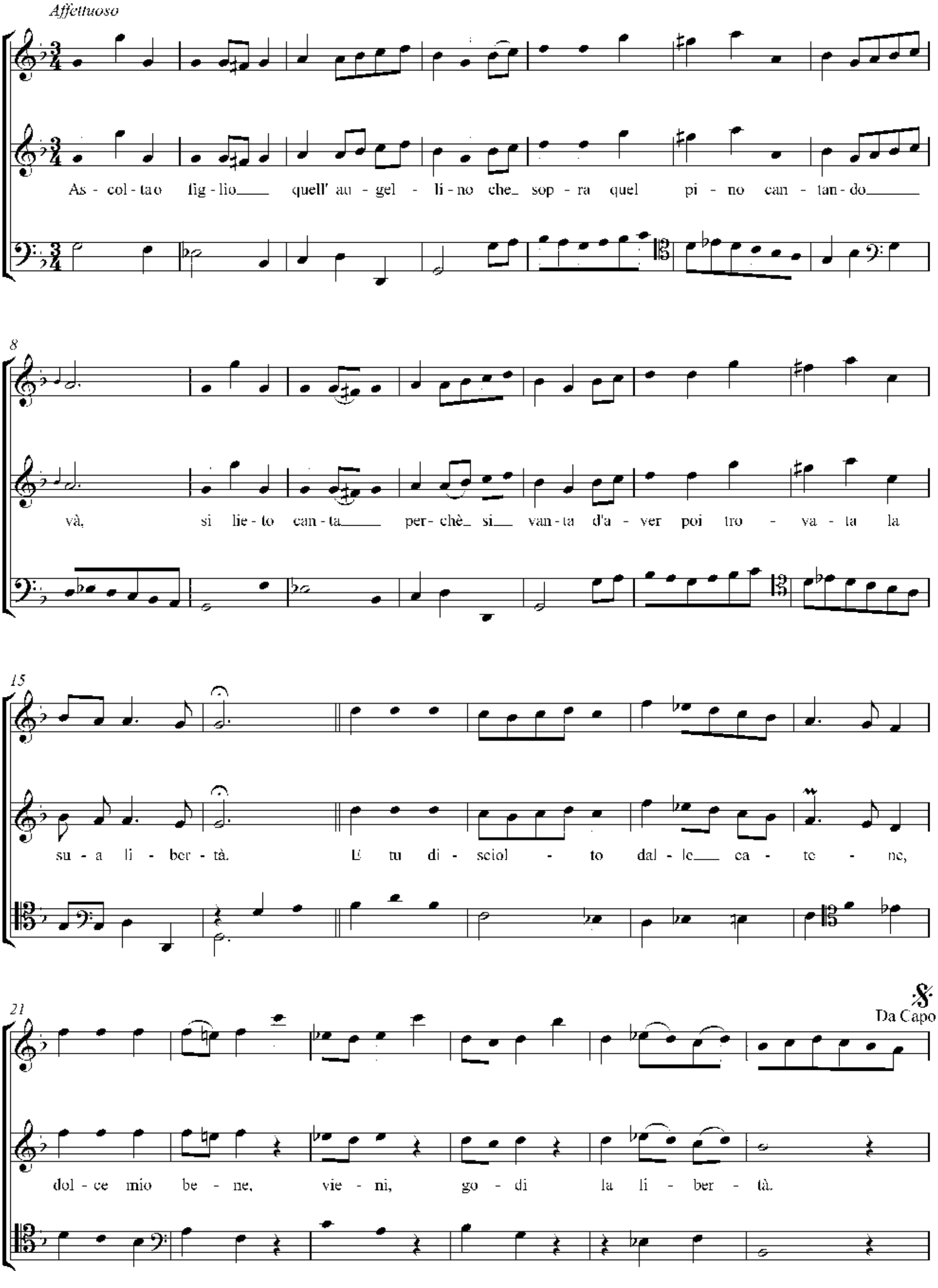
Ascolta o figlio
Quel augellino
Che sopra quel pino
Cantando va
Si lieto canta
Perchè si vanta
D'aver poi trovata
La sua libertà.
E tu disciolto
Dalle catene,
Dolce mio bene,
Vieni, godi
La libertà.[107]

The song collections also include the preceding minuet, which set the pastoral scene, suggesting that imagining the scenario formed an important part of re-creating these arias in a domestic environment. In this sense, the minuet might have provided compensation for the lack of space for characterisation in the song itself, with its continuous, flowing melodic line, and absence of text repetition or even ritornelli.

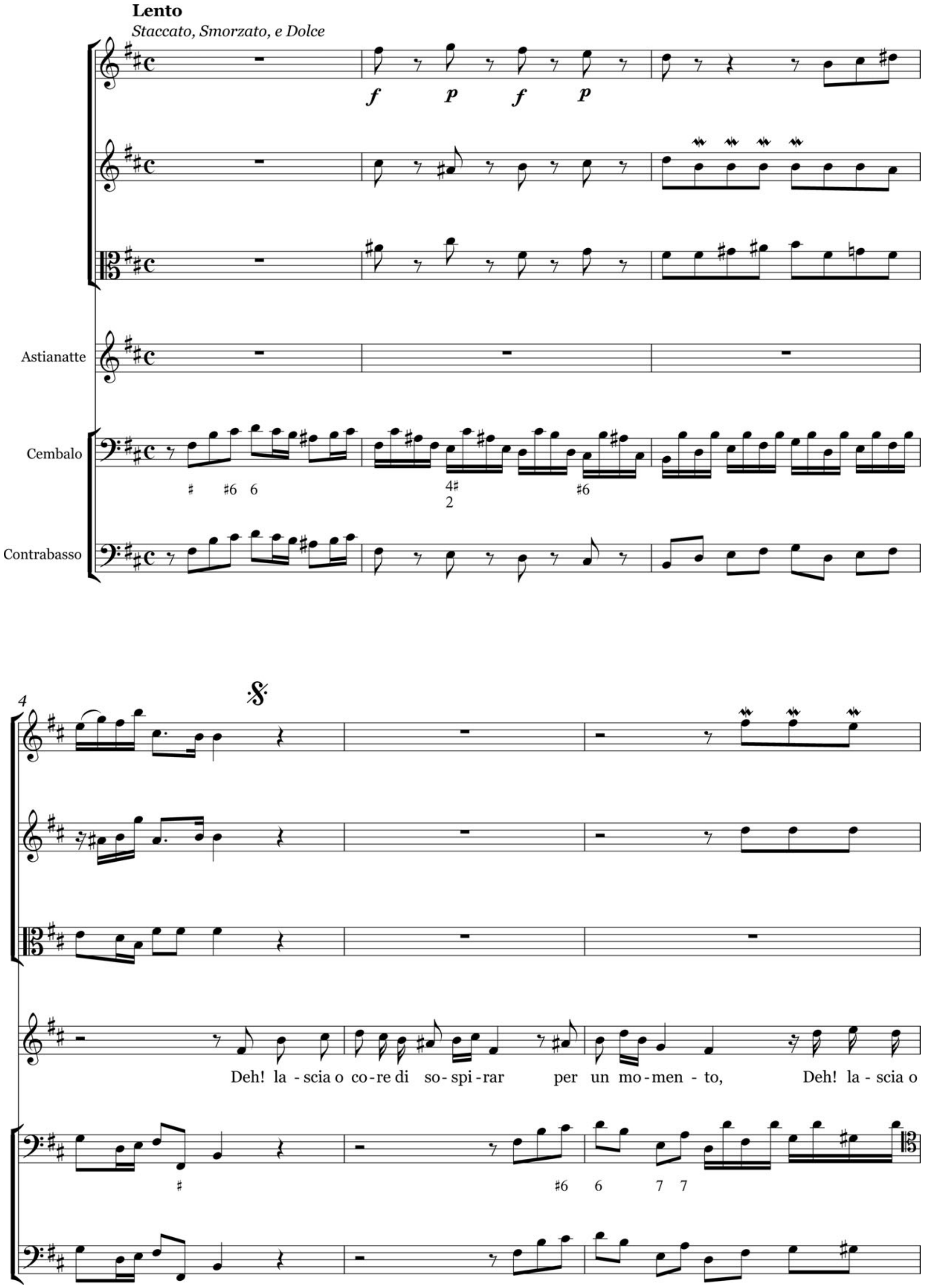
('Se meco è'l caro bene', 'È ver che mi piaceste'), not found elsewhere (US-Wc M.1505.M.275.case, nos. 1–9); see Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', 111, 762–3. In addition, Suzana Ograjenšek records a collection in GB-Eu, Ms P.1425, which contains, in addition to the duet, the minuet and 'Ascolta o figlio', Ermione's 'Quando il sol copre' and – the only item not extant elsewhere – Pirro's 'I vostri fulmini'; for facsimiles see 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 370–475.

[106] A later (post-Burney) annotator of the libretto in the British Library copy 11714 aa.20 (3) describes it as 'the favorite Air' (p.67); the annotated libretto is available on ECCO, ESTC reference T022571; see Figure 2.1. In Benjamin Cooke's edition, 'Ascolta o figlio' was given an additional English text (a 'translation' by H. Carey) – a sign of its popularity, or at least of its relative technical accessibility.

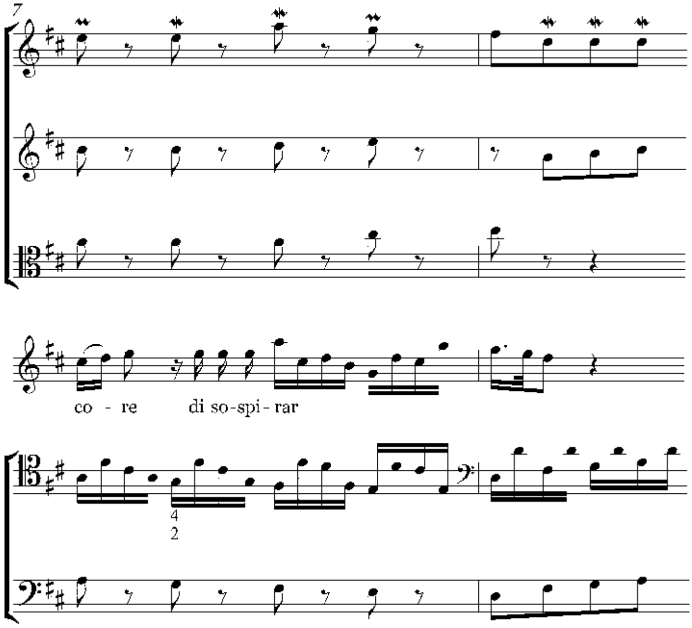
[107] *Astianatte* (1727), 67; 'List, you little Son of mine, / How that little Warbler strays, / O'er the branches of that Pine, / Chaunting its melodious Lays. / Thus it lifts its tuneful Voice, / Thus does wanton, thus rejoyce; / Because transported 'tis to see / It self restor'd to Liberty. / So then, again, / Freed from thy Chain, / Come dearest Treasure, / Take thy Pleasure; / And, O, be / O'erjoy'd with Liberty. / List, &c.' (66).


Affettuoso
As - col - ta o fig - lio___ quell' au - gel - li - no che_ sop - ra quel pi - no can - tan - do___
8
và, si lie - to can - ta___ per - chè_ si___ van - ta d'a - ver poi tro - va - ta la
15
su - a li - ber - tà. E tu di - sciol - to dal - le___ ca - te - ne,
21
Da Capo
dol - ce mio be - ne, vie - ni, go - di la li - ber - tà.

Ex. 2.3 Giovanni Bononcini's 'Ascolto o figlio', sung by Cuzzoni, was the most popular of the arias in *Astianatte* (London, 1727).


Lento
Staccato, Smorzato, e Dolce
f p f p
Astianatte
Cembalo
Contrabasso
♯ ♯6 6
4♯ 2
♯6
4
♯
♯6 6 7 7
Deh! la-scia o co-re di so-spi-rar per un mo-men-to, Deh! la-scia o

Ex. 2.4 Giovanni Bononcini, 'Deh! lascia o core', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.1–8.



Ex. 2.4 (cont.)

If musical simplicity stifled potential for dramatisation in 'Ascolta o figlio', musical elaboration perhaps did the same in the beautiful 'Deh! lascia o core di sospirar'. This aria was probably too intricate for inclusion in the published song collections, with its separate harpsichord and bass parts, and three-part upper-string writing. John Hawkins included it in his *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, however, claiming it was 'at the time when that opera was performed, greatly admired for the sweetness of the air, and the originality of the accompaniment'.[108] The aria concluded Act II in mournful mode, as Andromaca, finally acceding to Pirro's demand for marriage in order to save her son, sees Pirro stabbed before her eyes. But Andromaca grieves not so much for Pirro as for the pleasure of grieving:

Deh! lascia o core
Di sospirar
Per un momento;
E torna poi
Con più dolore
A lagrimar
Ch'io mi contento.[109]

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[108] Hawkins, *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, II, 864.

[109] *Astianatte* (1727), 51; 'Suspend, my Heart, thy bitter Cries, / For one Moment cease thy Sighs; / Then with double Strength return, / With redoubled Sighs to mourn: / Seek in Floods of Tears Relief, / Then I'll take my Fill of Grief' (50).

Bononcini's direction 'Staccato, Smorzato, e Dolce' indicates the delicacy with which this aria was to be performed: its breathless, repeated violin trills illustrate and embellish the singer's 'sospirar', while she herself prolongs her sigh melismatically (Example 2.4). If we recall Mancini's particular praise of Cuzzoni's cantabile arias, in which 'she did not neglect, in the right places, to ornament and enliven the cantilena with a method (without prejudice to the expression) composed of choice and varied *gruppetti*, *passi* and *passaggi* performed in varied manner' we can well imagine this to have been a showpiece for Cuzzoni. Yet the aria's refined, directionless pathos, only obliquely inspired by a man Andromaca had consistently spurned, seems too much a performance of *sensibilité*, as if Andromaca (like Cuzzoni) enjoys the role – 'Ah! che Andromaca è nata a pianger sempre.'[110]

If sentimental gesture seems an end in itself in these two arias (as eighteenth-century moralists worried that it did in society at large), we might ask whether Cuzzoni (and Andromaca) is given the opportunity to display more resilience elsewhere. Andromaca's final Act I aria, 'Svenalo traditor', seems to offer such potential, as she upbraids Pirro for threatening her son. This piece was chosen to begin the two contemporaneous published song collections:

Svenalo traditor;
Morir anch'io saprò.
Non mi vedrai trofeo
Del barbaro tuo amor;
Del mio solo dolor
La vittima sarò.[111]

There is a good deal in this aria reminiscent of Rodelinda's 'Spietati, io vi giurai': 'Svenalo traditor' also begins with the emphatic, 'indicative' unaccompanied opening motto (Example 2.5a). The use of this melodic and rhythmic figure in the Act III aria 'Difese mi giurasti' as well, on the words 'perfido traditor' (Example 2.6), suggests that the accusatory gesture may have become something of a trademark for Cuzzoni (albeit with rhythmic variation).[112] In 'Svenalo traditor' an aggressive intent would seem to be confirmed with ascending semiquaver runs in voice and strings on

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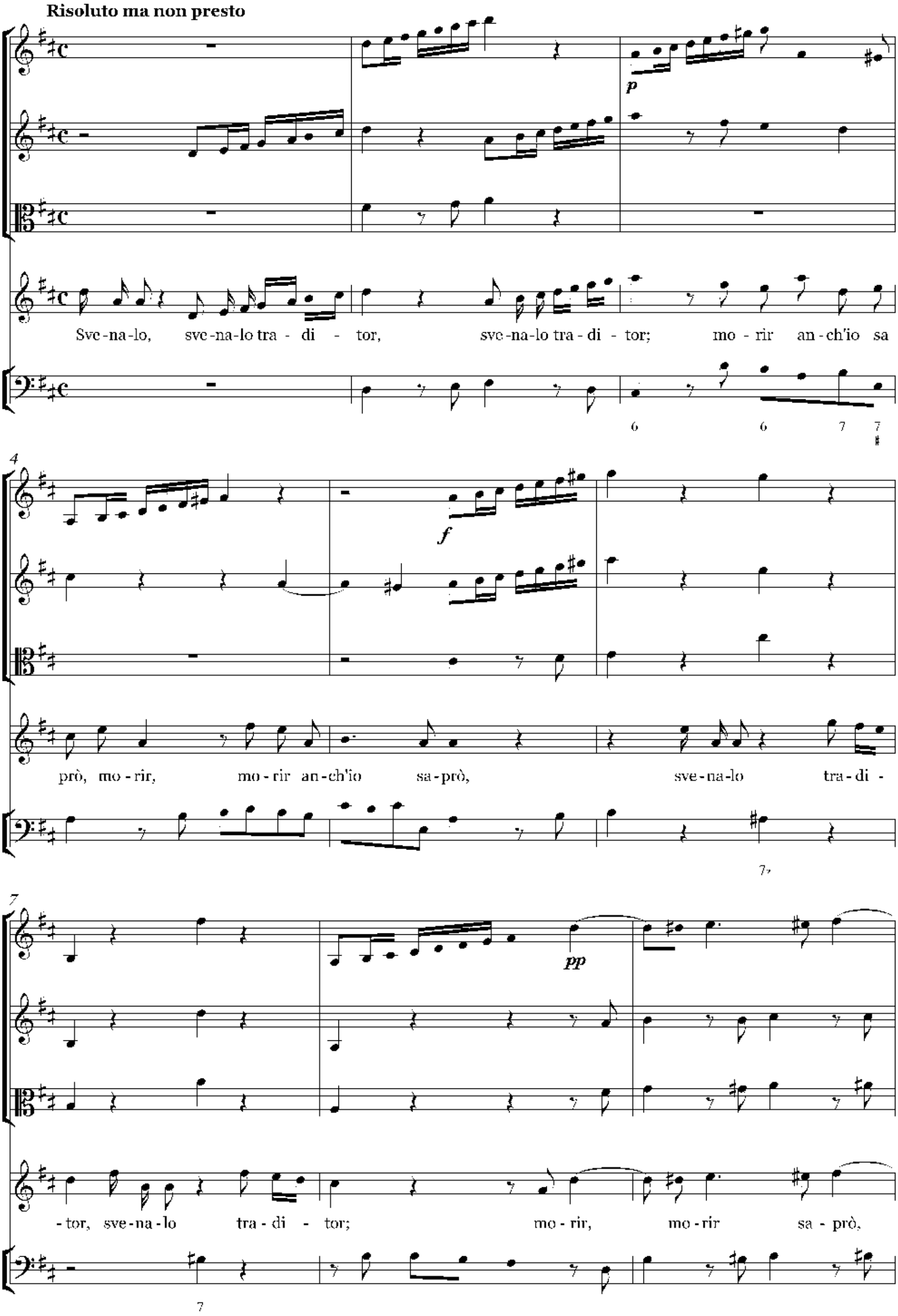
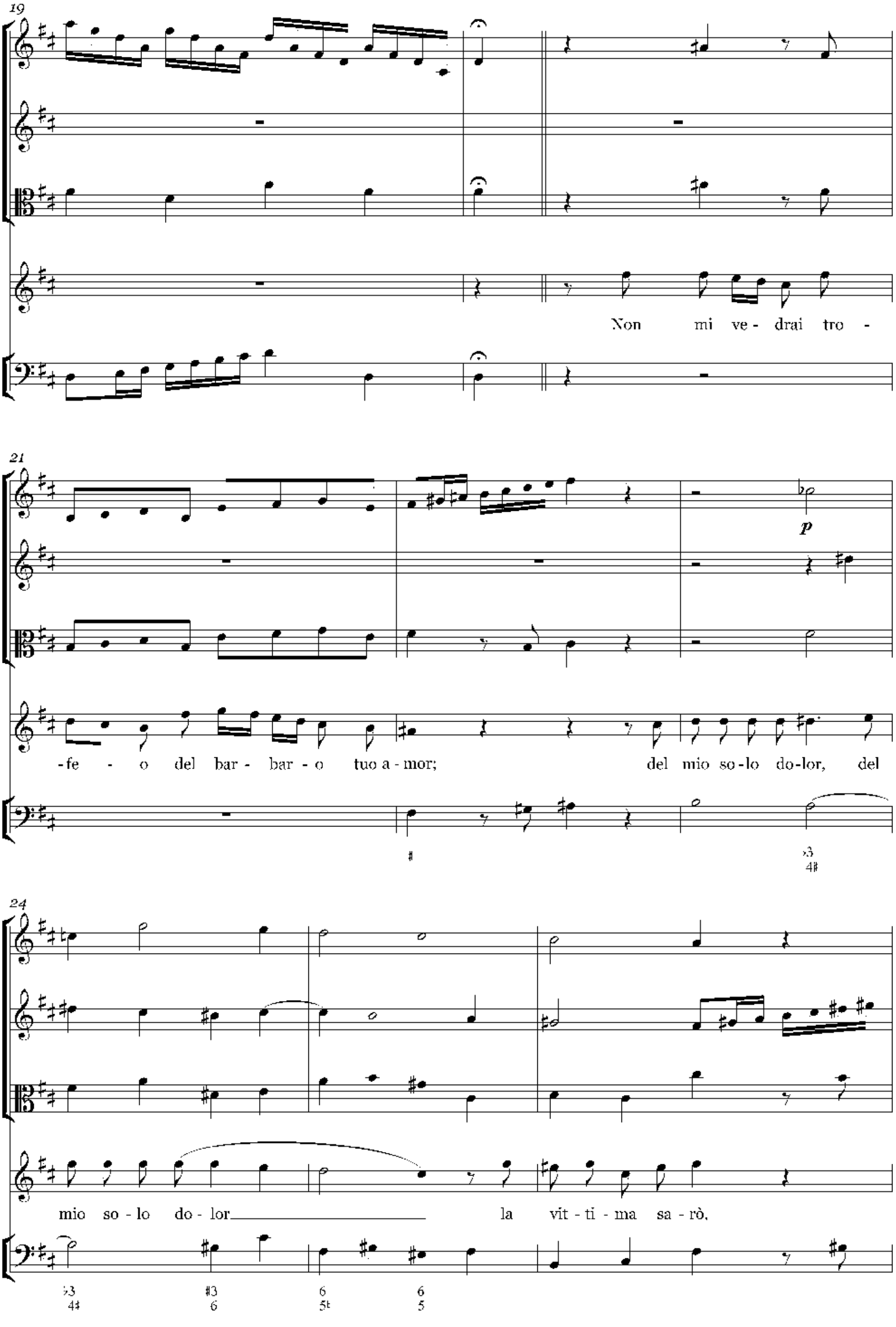
[110] Bononcini perhaps made a speciality of such arias; in his *Erminia* (1723), 'Di dolce affetto' for Senesino's character Tancredi demonstrates a similar affected breathlessness – this time in the vocal part – for no good dramatic reason. See *The Favourite Songs in the Opera call'd Erminia*, 4–5.

[111] *Astianatte* (1727), 24; 'Kill him, cruel Traytor, kill, / I can dye too, when I will: / Me never, never shalt thou prove / The Prize of thy barbarian Love; / I can give my self Relief, / And dye a Victim to my Grief' (25).

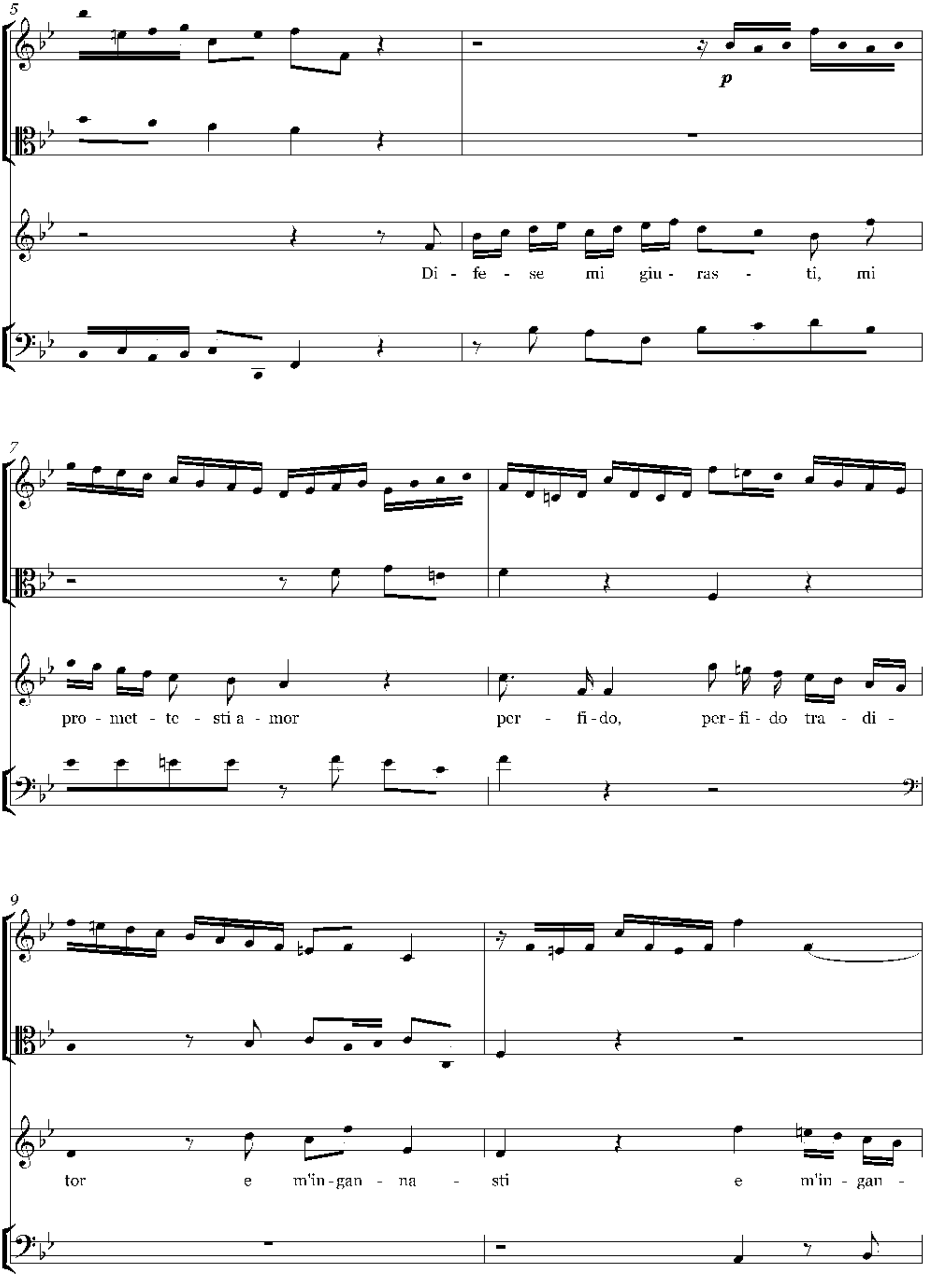
[112] A version of this motive also appears in 'Dal mio sen costante e forte' in *Vespasiano*, on 'tiranno'; see Ex. 1.5, bb.25–26 above, and Ariosti, *Vespasian*, in *Italian Opera, 1640–1770*, intr. Brown. Berta Joncus suggests that particular musical styles (or gestures) may be seen to mark the role of the 'star' in *opera seria*, much as in modern cinema; 'Producing Stars', 290.


Risoluto ma non presto
Sve-na-lo, sve-na-lo tra-di-tor, sve-na-lo tra-di-tor; mo-rir an-ch'io sa
prò, mo-rir, mo-rir an-ch'io sa-prò, sve-na-lo tra-di-
-tor, sve-na-lo tra-di-tor; mo-rir, mo-rir sa-prò,
p
f
pp
6 6 7 7
7
4
7

Ex. 2.5a Giovanni Bononcini, 'Svenalo traditor', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.1–9.


19
Non mi ve - drai tro -
21
p
-fe - o del bar - bar - o tuo a - mor;
del mio so - lo do - lor, del
24
mio so - lo do - lor
la vit - ti - ma sa - rò,

Ex. 2.5b Giovanni Bononcini, 'Svenalo traditor', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.19–26.


5
p
Di - fe - se mi giu - ras - ti, mi
7
pro - met - te - sti a - mor per - fi - do, per - fi - do tra - di -
9
tor e m'in - gan - na - sti e m'in - gan -

Ex. 2.6 Giovanni Bononcini's 'Difese mi giurasti', bb.5–10, from *Astianatte* (London, 1727), uses one of Cuzzoni's signature gestures.

'traditor'. This aggression derives from Salvi's original libretto, from which the aria text is largely taken. What is not preserved in the London adaptation, however, is Andromaca's line of recitative and the accompanying action leading into the aria: 'Prenditi il figlio. Eccoti il ferro ancora' she says to Pirro, and then '*Gli tira uno stiletto*'.[113] Without that vital context, the aggression Bononcini's aria conveys seems as much to describe Pirro as express Andromaca, and her ability to maintain her indignation is immediately cast into doubt. The aria is marked 'Risoluto ma non presto', and Andromaca's opening 'Svenalo traditor' gradually loses its force, as the self-righteous ascending run turns into less emphatic, shorter descending motifs (bb.6–8). Underpinning this gradual loss of aggression, half way through the A-section 'morir anch'io saprò' is suddenly presented in affective rising chromaticism (bb.8–9), doubled by the first violins and underpinned by lilting thirds from the second violins and bassi. The B-section text confirms the change in focus for this aria, for the one crucial difference between the London text and Salvi's original is the substitution in the penultimate verso of 'dolor' for 'furor'. Andromaca's assertion that she will die a victim of her grief, rather than of her fury, accords with the emphasis on pathos in her character's London realisation. Bononcini's B-section music supports this characterisation (Example 2.5b): it brings together the chief motifs of the A-section, alternating between a phrase ending with a descending semiquaver run on 'barbaro tuo amor', and a slow chromatic ascent (with many repeated notes) on 'del mio solo dolor', against suspensions in the strings. Here too, Andromaca ends by dwelling on her own unhappiness.

The affective alternation between anger and grief in 'Svenalo traditor', with the latter gradually winning the day, could be read as facilitating a sense of the character's vulnerability.[114] The subsiding of anger into pathos seems to have been Bononcini's aim. It is not surprising, perhaps, that of the extant arias only one, 'Difese mi giurasti', in which Andromaca upbraids Pirro over the abduction of her son, is genuinely angry. The predominance of a pathetic depiction of 'the distressed mother' conveyed in Andromaca's surviving arias seems to be supported by the poetic texts of her other arias, for which the music is not extant. Her first aria in Act 1, addressed to Pirro, is a distillation of suffering: 'No che'l tenero' states that, since her heart can suffer no more, it would be most generous to let her die. 'Un tuo bacio amato Figlio', which begins Andromaca's final scene in Act 1, is evidently only an A-section, interrupted by Pirro. It demonstrates the affective importance of the child Astianatte's physical presence, as it describes (and presumably performs) the familial intimacy called for in the stage direction: '*Andromaca in una sedia che vezzeggia Astianatte*'.[115]

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[113] 'Take the boy. Here too is the knife.' 'She draws a dagger.'

[114] Clausen also notes the tone of 'self-compassion' but finds it dramaturgically inadequate as a response to Pirro; 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 167.

Andromaca's musical presence achieves a particular focus at the end of the opera: after two-and-a-half arias in Act I, and two in Act II ('Deh, non accrescer nò' and 'Deh lascia o core di sospirar'), she has a duet with Pirro and then three successive arias in Act III. This concentration derives from Salvi, where essentially the same scenes are used, but while his arias show off contrasting affects (as Andromaca first contemplates nature with her son in 'Ride l'aura', then decides to kill herself when he is abducted in 'Finirà, barbaro Fato', and finally upbraids Pirro in 'Difese mi giurasti'), the London arias demonstrate a helplessly static quality. Bononcini and his librettist worked carefully to achieve this effect, developing 'simultaneous' action which seems strikingly cinematic in its juxtaposition of alternating scenes: as Andromaca lingers in the garden with her son, Ermione closes her net around them (see Figure 2.1). Music (as in the cinema), provides the scenic continuity, establishing an aura of bucolic bliss: thus the music for 'Ascolta o figlio', which sets the scene as mother and child walk in the garden (III.ix), returns for 'Non senti l'onda' in III.xi (as repetition of the B-section/refrain text, 'E tu disciolto', confirms).[116] This repetition would not have been expected: not only were strophic aria texts no longer common by this time, but 'Ascolta o figlio' was already complete as a da capo aria. The unnatural musical repetition thus creates a sense of foreboding, a perception that Andromaca is trapped in a physical and aural environment from which she cannot escape, even as (the libretto suggests) interjections from Ermione cut across her music. The stage directions, too, suggest a sense of entrapment, as Andromaca appears to remain in the scenic background even while Ermione takes the forestage in the brief intervening scene of recitative (III.x): at the end of 'Ascolta o figlio', after the customary '*Parte*', there is the direction for Andromaca '*Rientra per altra scena con tutto il seguito*'. And before she sings 'Non senti l'onda', Andromaca, with Astianatte '*per mano*' and attendants, '*ritornano nella scena*'.[117]

The quite unusual design of this group of scenes presents in striking terms the difference between the women: a passive Andromaca even at her happiest simply

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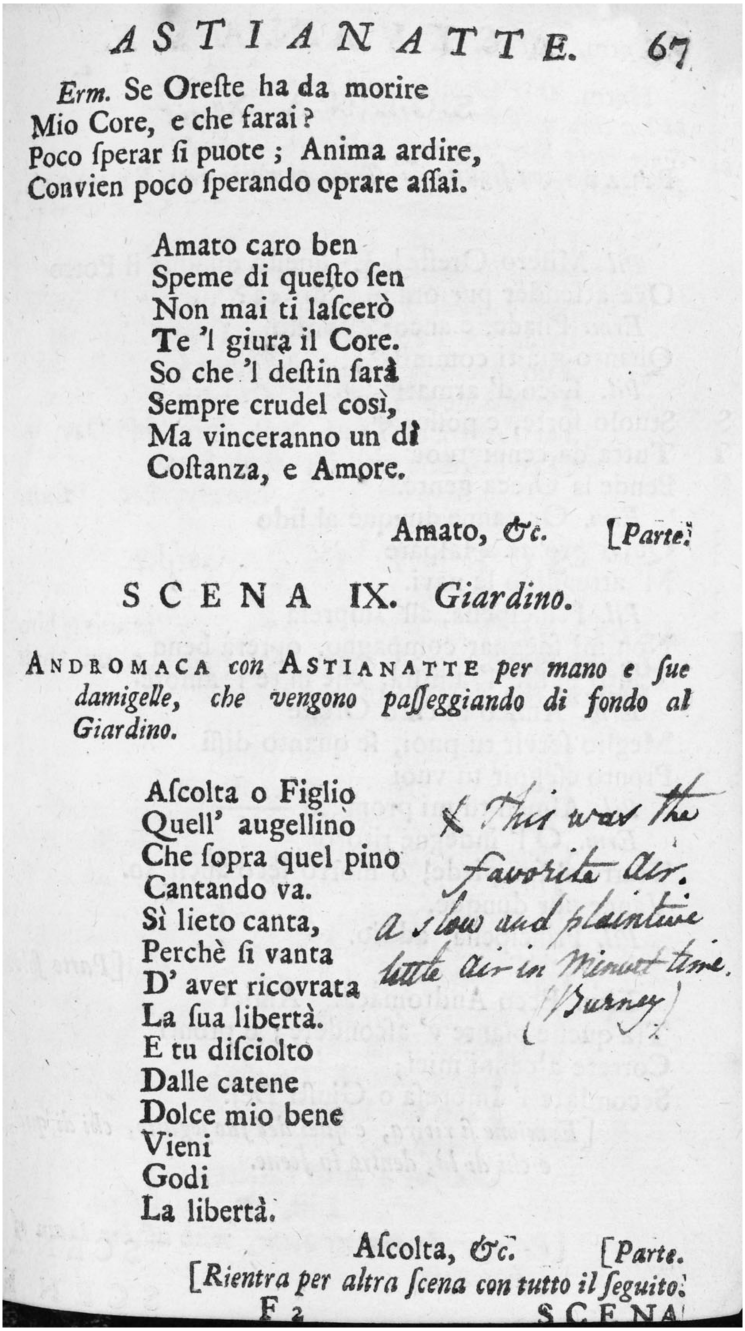
[115] *Astianatte* (1727), 23; 'Andromache on a Seat, who is embracing Astyanax' (22).

[116] The transcription in GB-Eu, Ms P.1425 also confirms this; for a facsimile see Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', II, 463–4. Such a design was employed in the 1717 Munich libretto, where Andromaca had a two-stanza aria at this point; see Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', I, 200. Ograjenšek suggests that the minuet was probably used as a ritornello to the aria (I, 204).

[117] 'Re-enters by another Scene, with all her Train of Followers'; 'Andromache leading her little Son Astyanax by the hand, and her Women return within the Scene.' *Astianatte* (1727), III.ix (67), and III.xi (71).



ASTIANATTE. 67

Erm. Se Oreſte ha da morire
Mio Core, e che farai?
Poco ſperar ſi puote; Anima ardire,
Convien poco ſperando oprare aſſai.

Amato caro ben
Speme di queſto ſen
Non mai ti laſcerò
Te 'l giura il Core.
So che 'l deſtin ſarà
Sempre crudel così,
Ma vinceranno un dì
Coſtanza, e Amore.

Amato, *&c.* [*Parte.*

SCENA IX. *Giardino.*

ANDROMACA *con* ASTIANATTE *per mano e ſue damigelle, che vengono paſſeggiando di fondo al Giardino.*

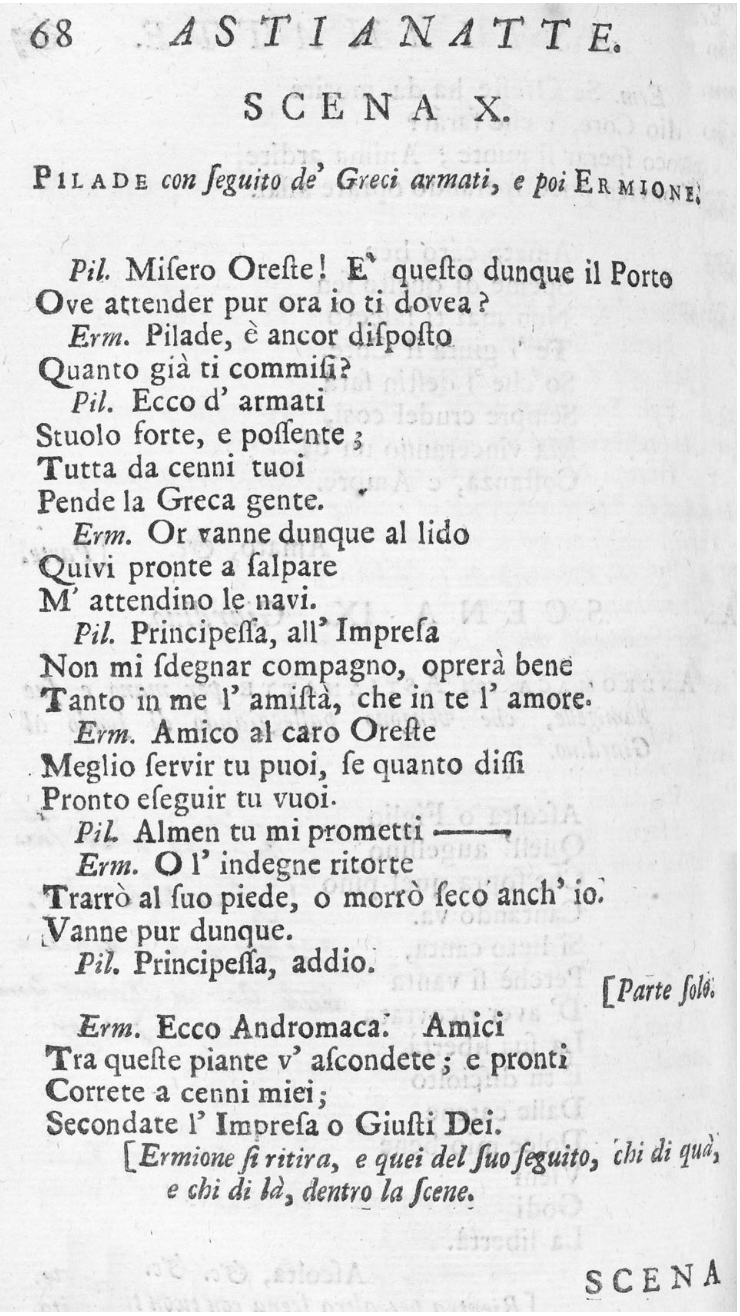
Aſcolta o Figlio
Quell' augellino
Che ſopra quel pino
Cantando va.
Sì lieto canta,
Perchè ſi vanta
D' aver ricovrata
La ſua libertà.
E tu diſciolto
Dalle catene
Dolce mio bene
Vieni
Godi
La libertà.

x This was the favorite Air.
a slow and plaintive little air in Minuet time.
(Burney)

Aſcolta, *&c.* [*Parte.*
[*Rientra per altra ſcena con tutto il ſeguito.*

F 2 SCENA

Fig. 2.1 Anon, *Astianatte* (London, 1727), iii.ix–xii, pp. 67, 68, 71. Andromaca (Cuzzoni) and Astianatte are stalked by Ermione (Faustina).



68 *ASTIANATTE.*

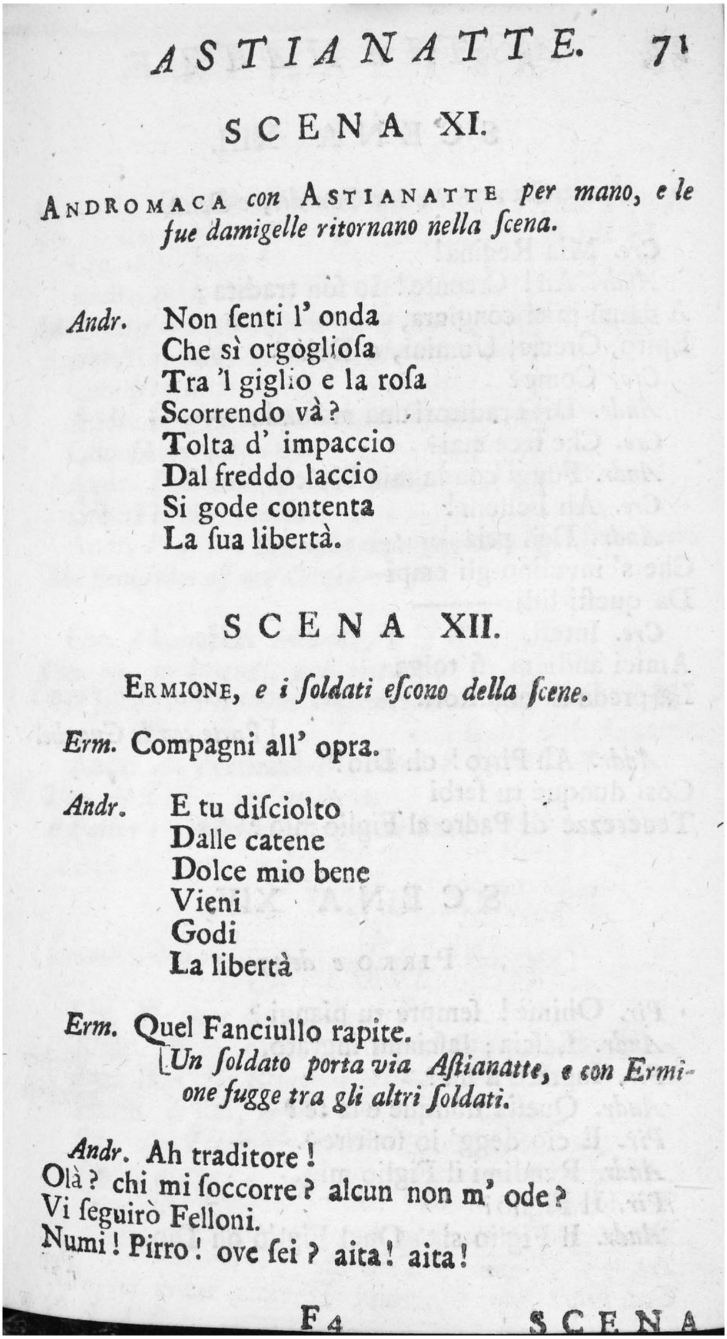
SCENA X.

PILADE *con ſeguito de' Greci armati, e poi* ERMIONE.

Pil. Miſero Oreſte! E' queſto dunque il Porto
Ove attender pur ora io ti dovea?
Erm. Pilade, è ancor diſpoſto
Quanto già ti commiſi?
Pil. Ecco d' armati
Stuolo forte, e poſſente;
Tutta da cenni tuoi
Pende la Greca gente.
Erm. Or vanne dunque al lido
Quivi pronte a ſalpare
M' attendino le navi.
Pil. Principeſſa, all' Impreſa
Non mi ſdegnar compagno, oprerà bene
Tanto in me l' amiſtà, che in te l' amore.
Erm. Amico al caro Oreſte
Meglio ſervir tu puoi, ſe quanto diſſi
Pronto eſeguir tu vuoi.
Pil. Almen tu mi prometti ——
Erm. O l' indegne ritorte
Trarrò al ſuo piede, o morrò ſeco anch' io.
Vanne pur dunque.
Pil. Principeſſa, addio.
[*Parte ſolo.*
Erm. Ecco Andromaca. Amici
Tra queſte piante v' aſcondete; e pronti
Correte a cenni miei;
Secondate l' Impreſa o Giuſti Dei.
[*Ermione ſi ritira, e quei del ſuo ſeguito, chi di quà, e chi di là, dentro la ſcene.*

SCENA

Fig. 2.1 (cont.)



ASTIANATTE. 71

SCENA XI.

ANDROMACA *con* ASTIANATTE *per mano, e le ſue damigelle ritornano nella ſcena.*

Andr. Non ſenti l' onda
Che sì orgoglioſa
Tra 'l giglio e la roſa
Scorrendo và?
Tolta d' impaccio
Dal freddo laccio
Si gode contenta
La ſua libertà.

SCENA XII.

ERMIONE, *e i ſoldati eſcono della ſcene.*

Erm. Compagni all' opra.

Andr. E tu diſciolto
Dalle catene
Dolce mio bene
Vieni
Godi
La libertà

Erm. Quel Fanciullo rapite.
[*Un ſoldato porta via Aſtianatte, e con Ermione fugge tra gli altri ſoldati.*

Andr. Ah traditore!
Olà? chi mi ſoccorre? alcun non m' ode?
Vi ſeguirò Felloni.
Numi! Pirro! ove ſei? aita! aita!

F4 SCENA

Fig. 2.1 (cont.)

sings; Ermione, now herself faced with the loss of her beloved Oreste, decides to act: 'Poco sperar si puote; anima ardire, / Convien poco sperando oprare assai'.[118] Although the audience was clearly meant to sympathise with Andromaca, her musical stasis perhaps unwittingly summons up the claustrophobic nature of such moral perfection. It was, then, possible to sustain a relatively restricted view of Andromaca only through development of her antithesis in Ermione.

ERMIONE'S MUSICAL EXCESS

While song for Andromaca seems to be the most natural form of expression, the pathetic heroine's means of withdrawing from the realm of action into pure affect, Ermione's consistently active (not to say aggressive) profile creates an interesting dynamic with regard to her arias. As opportunities for greater reflection, and as the 'points' through which the audience reaches an appreciation of some moral truth (about her persona, at least), her arias call attention to the relation between the character's *praxis* and her *ethos*, between action (or language) and intention or meaning. If Bononcini was hailed for his ability to express sad or pathetic affects, his portrayal of Ermione's more proud, forceful persona often seems uneasy. His writing certainly exploits Faustina's strengths: recalling Mancini's assessment, several arias demonstrate her ability to 'sustain equally difficult *passaggi* of six or three notes', and, in the alternation of these triplet and sextuplet groupings with other note values and leaps, they show off her prized agility.[119] But, whether because of his musical proclivities or because of a personal bias against Faustina, Bononcini's arias articulate Ermione's action–intention relationship (and therefore also the character) as problematic. They do this through a series of incongruities, and through musical gestures that contradict or exceed the requirements of the text.[120]

These problems surface in Ermione's very first aria. 'Quando'l sol copre' follows a recitative expressing outrage at Pirro's rejection of her and calling for vengeance, but the aria takes a turn to pastoral simile which in context can only seem bathetic, as its persistent use of the diminutive also suggests: when a little cloud (*nuvoletta*) hides the sun, the shepherdess (*donzelletta/pastorella*) sadly stays shut indoors, but when the sun shines again she happily runs about ('lieta e

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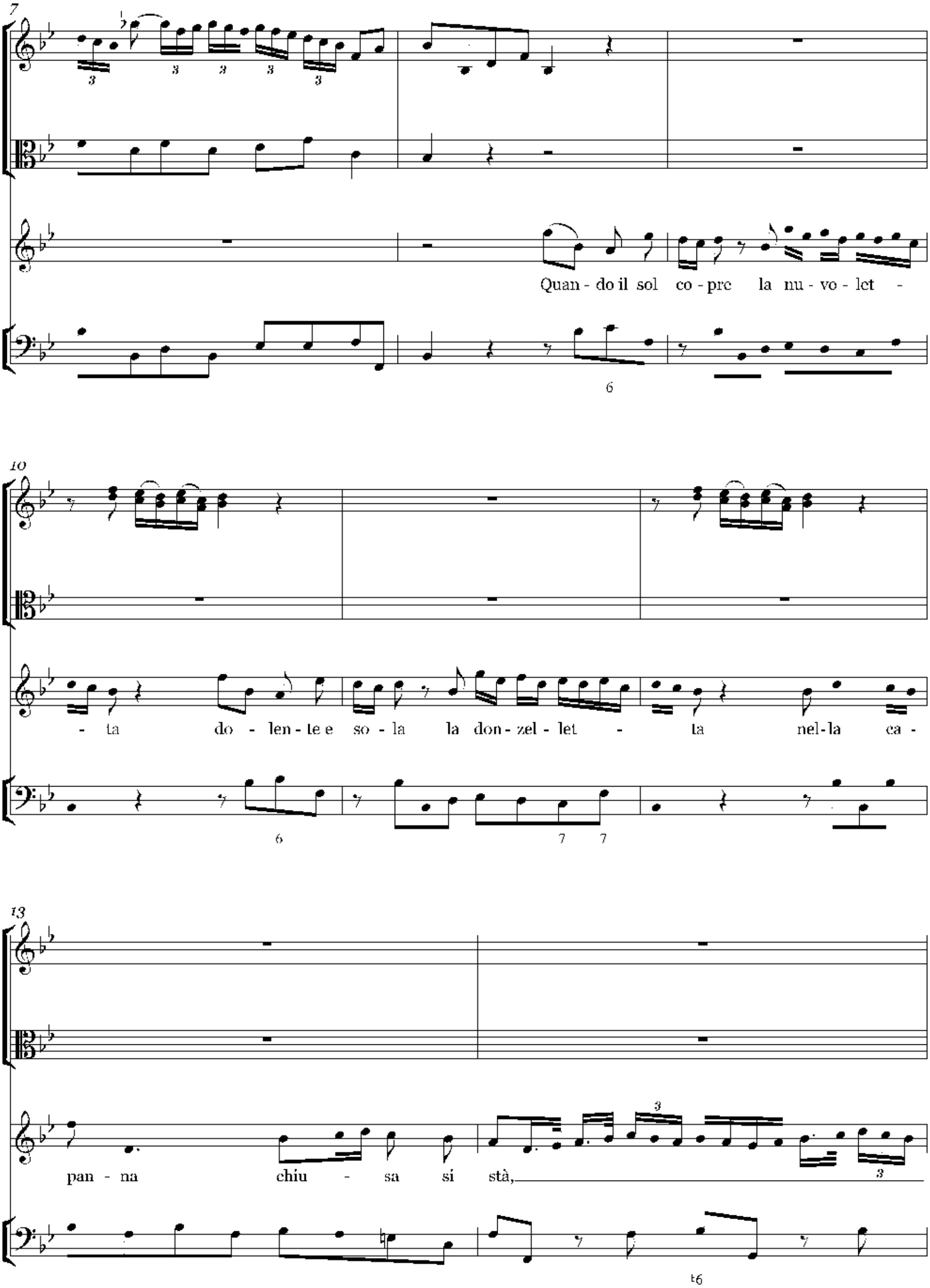
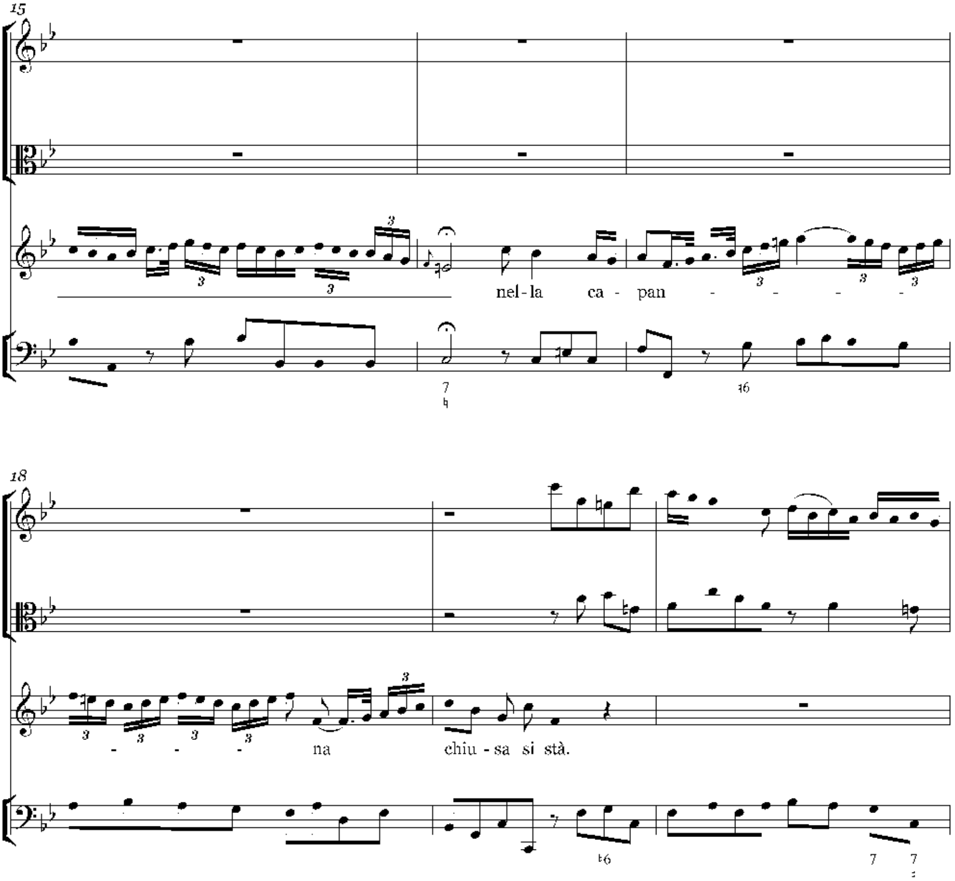
[118] *Astianatte* (1727), 67; 'Since Hope flies from me, bolder than before, My Soul, as less it hopes, shall act the more' (66).

[119] Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche*, 31–2. See discussion on p. 31ff.

[120] It was increasingly common in eighteenth-century *opera seria* for the music to go beyond text requirements; Reinhard Strohm notes in particular that 'composers … made increasing efforts to give musical representation to affections, ethos, *sujet* and setting'; *Dramma per Musica*, 17.


7
Quan - do il sol co - pre la nu - vo - let -
6
10
- ta do - len - te e so - la la don - zel - let - ta nel - la ca -
6
7 7
13
pan - na chiu - sa si stà,
3
♮6

Ex. 2.7 Giovanni Bononcini's 'Quando'l sol copre', bb.7–20, his first aria in *Astianatte* (London, 1727) for Faustina.



Ex. 2.7 (cont.)

contenta / scorrendo va'). Bononcini's music, preserved in the Harvard Theatre Collection, ignores all opportunity for pastoral allusion, instead providing Faustina with a straightforward vehicle alternating motto opening material with varied sequential figuration designed to show off her vocal flexibility, but little suited to either the immediate pastoral text or the anger of Ermione's recitative (Example 2.7). The exact repetition of the music for the first *verso*, 'Quando il sol copre la nuvoletta', for the second, 'Dolente e sola la donzelletta', undermines the emotional import of the latter, rendering its musical expression as conventional and perfunctory as the simile aria text itself. Neither is the contrast between A- and B-section texts – sad 'donzelletta' in the first, happy 'pastorella' in the second – in any way exploited, with even the keys exchanging B♭ major in the 'sad' A-section for its relative minor.

Ermione's next two arias fall on either side of her encounter with Oreste, in which she upbraids him for seeing her again and for allowing Pirro to abandon her: in both 'Vi sento sì vi sento' (I.vii) and 'Sento che già il pensier' (I.viii) Ermione sings of her feelings for Oreste, a relic of the fire with which he formerly inflamed her in the one, and pity for one who has faithfully loved an ungrateful heart in the other. However, the music for the latter aria, which survives in both the published collections and the Harvard Theatre Collection manuscript, does not suggest pity (Example 2.8). The opening ritornello and violin accompaniment are dominated by a figure combining a rapid ascending scale followed by an octave leap and arpeggiation – the sort of figuration more commonly associated with anger or aggression, and which indeed finds an answer in the words ending the A-section, 'ingrato core', as Ermione sings of the true love (Oreste's, presumably) of one who loves an ungrateful heart:

Sento che già il pensier
Caro mi dice, è ver
Ama chi t'ama solo
Ingrato core.
E sento la pietà
Che dice è crudeltà
Rendere affanno e duolo
A fede e amore.[121]

The triple repetition of 'ingrato' at the end of the first A-section not only emphasises the word, but also separates it from the rest of the text, making it unclear exactly who Ermione is berating. Although the final setting of 'ingrato core' (bb.18–19) takes its descending-scale motive from 'ama chi t'ama solo', it surely abandons that phrase's lilting presentation (indicated by the slurring in the accompanying violin part, bb.14 and 15). Indeed, use of the same musical material for both lines undercuts the sentimental intent of the aria, if that were not already clear at 'ama chi t'ama' from the rapid alternation of the violin's militant ascending scale with the gentle descending scale (with appropriately contrasted dynamics). This oscillation between love and anger is still more pronounced

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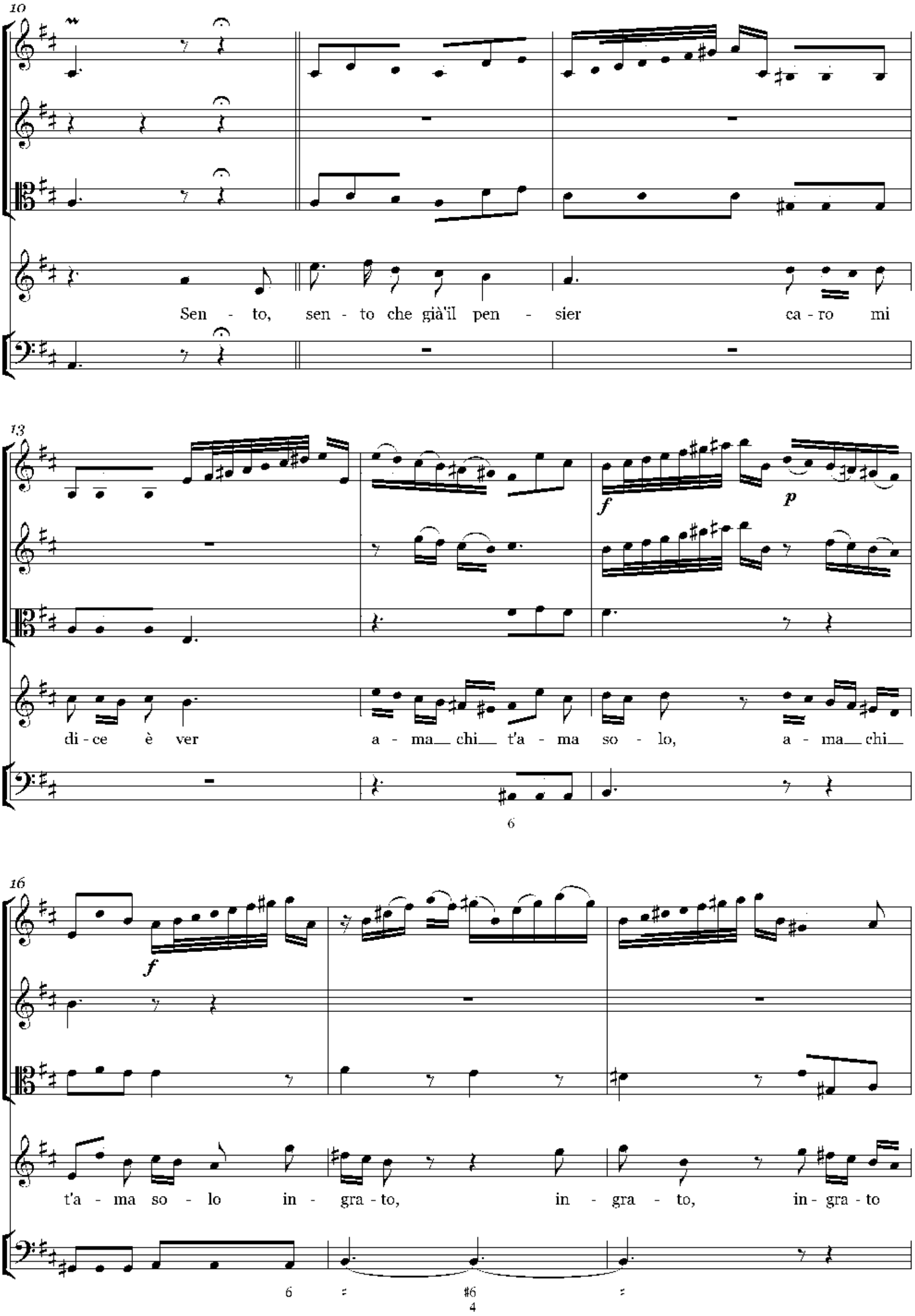
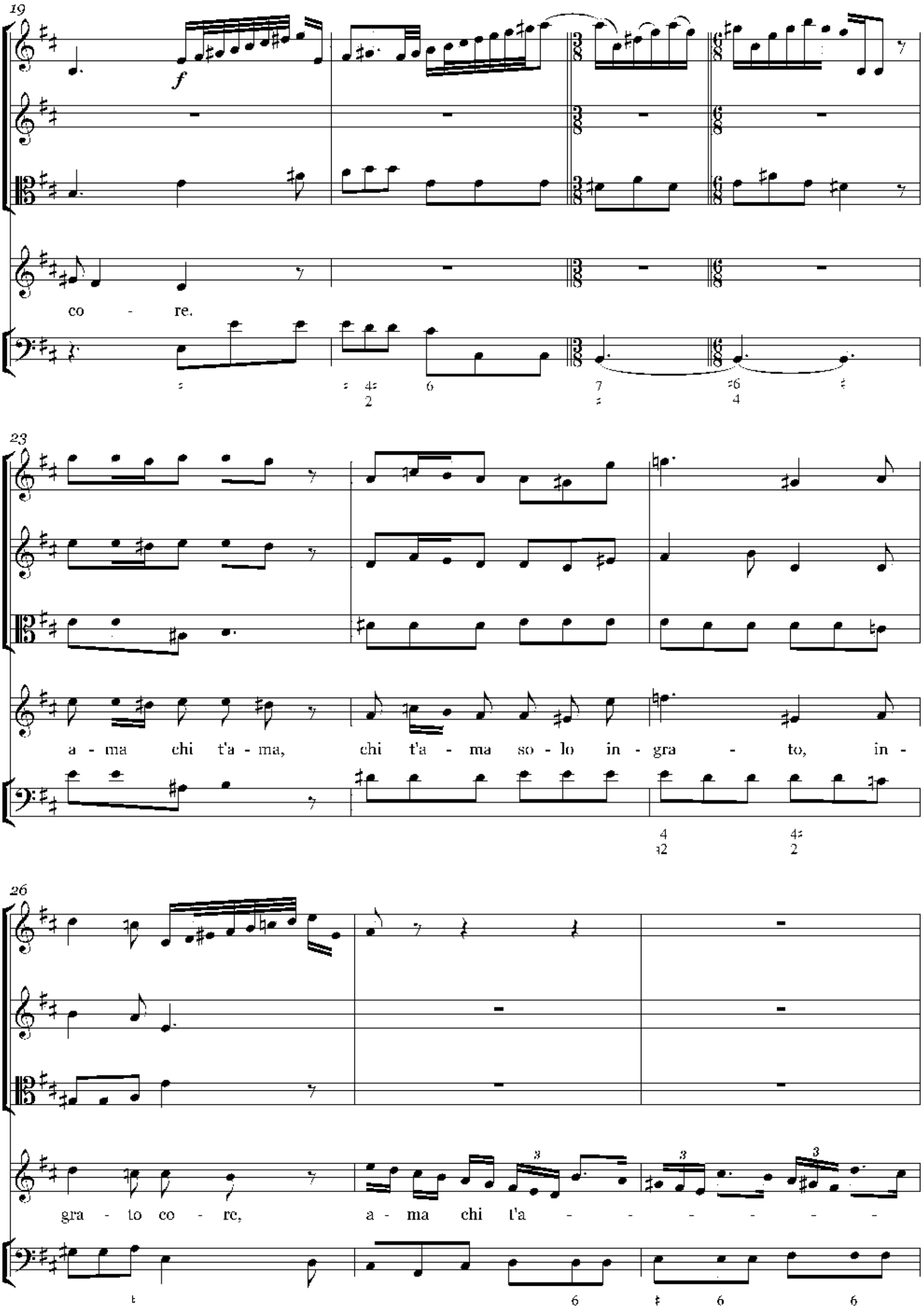
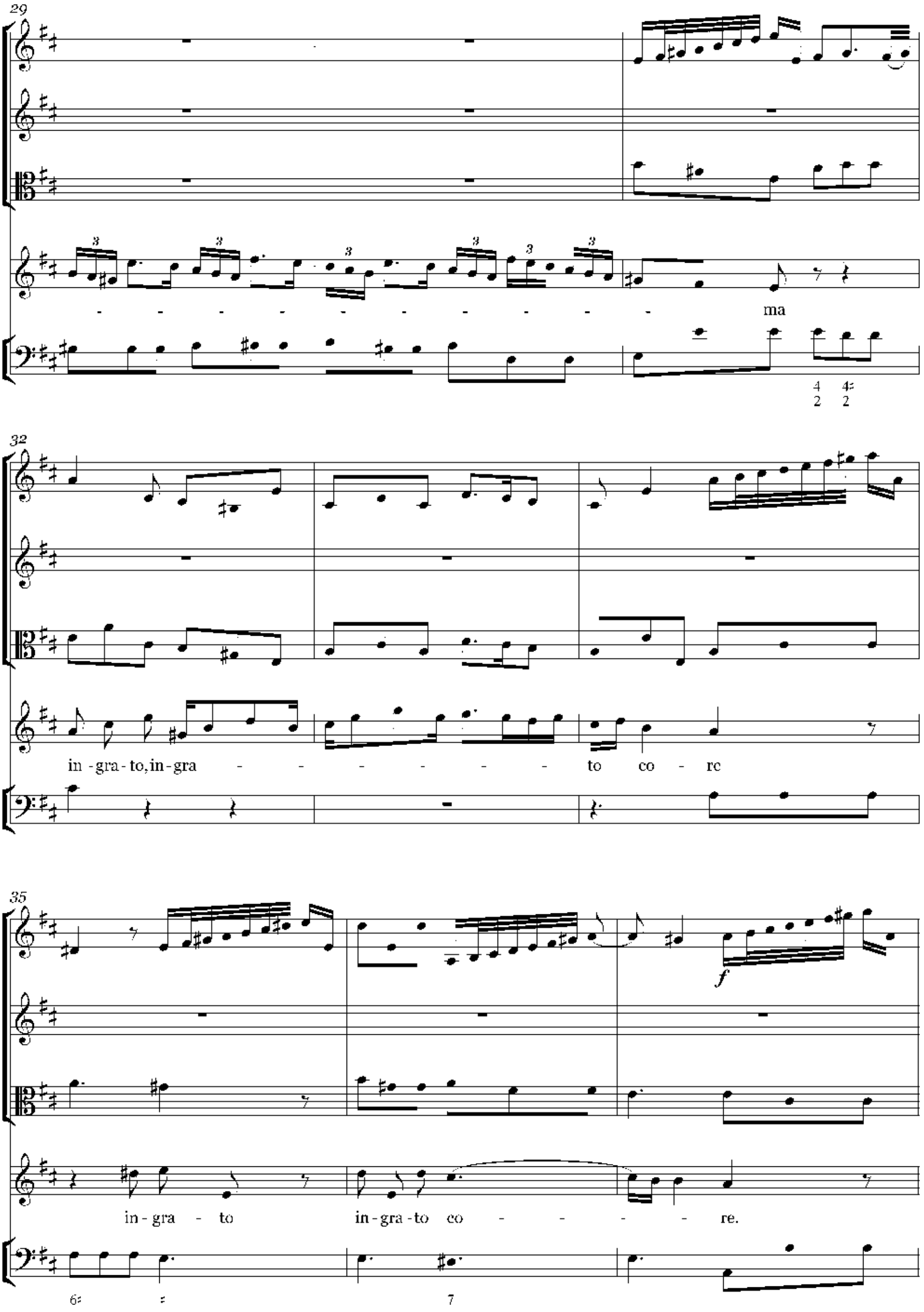
[121] *Astianatte* (1727), 20; 'I feel a Thought now rising in my Mind, / That says, I this a certain Truth shall find, / That those who love a Heart, which proves unkind, / Do most sincerely, tho' severely love: / And now I feel fond Pity take its Turn, / That fills me full of Fears, and makes me mourn / For those, that faithful and that constant prove' (21). As the Italian text of this aria is corrupt in the London libretto, missing the line 'che dice è crudeltà', the English translation is also more vague (and inaccurate) than usual. The full aria could more accurately be translated: 'I feel already the dear thought that says to me: it is true, you should love only the one who loves you in return, ungrateful heart; And I feel mercy, which says it is cruelty to repay faith and love with pain and grief.'


10
Sen - to, sen - to che già'il pen - sier ca - ro mi
13
f
p
di - ce è ver a - ma chi t'a - ma so - lo, a - ma chi
6
16
f
t'a - ma so - lo in - gra - to, in - gra - to, in - gra - to
6
#6
4

Ex. 2.8 Giovanni Bononcini, 'Sento che già il pensier', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.10–37.


19
f
co - re.
23
a - ma chi t'a - ma, chi t'a - ma so - lo in - gra - to, in -
26
gra - to co - re, a - ma chi t'a - - - - - -

Ex. 2.8 (cont.)


29
ma
32
in - gra - to, in - gra - - - - - - - to co - re
35
in - gra - to
in - gra - to co - - - - - re.
f

Ex. 2.8 (cont.)

in A′, when the first two *versi* are dropped altogether; this section makes it clear that the aggressive ascending scales are linked to 'ingrato core', sometimes emphasising the words, sometimes anticipating them. The dominance of such aggression in this section, while it might be seen to exploit an aspect of Faustina's vocal profile, associated with the *granito* quality of her voice and her technical prowess (again on display in her varied, agile melismas), makes us doubt either the sincerity of Ermione's love for Oreste, or her ability to love, or both. One wonders whether the 'ingrato core' on which she dwells and that seems to find its match in the anger of the accompaniment might not be Pirro's as much as Ermione's.

Similarly, in III.viii, Ermione's eventual romantic resolution in favour of Oreste, which follows her decision to rescue him (given in Figure 2.1, above), is set to a *giga*. Although this lighthearted genre might, superficially, seem appropriate for an expression of love, the context suggests rather that the jig is meant to accord with Ermione's fiery temper; the aria, after all, is as much concerned with Ermione's resolve to defeat cruel destiny as with her love for Oreste.

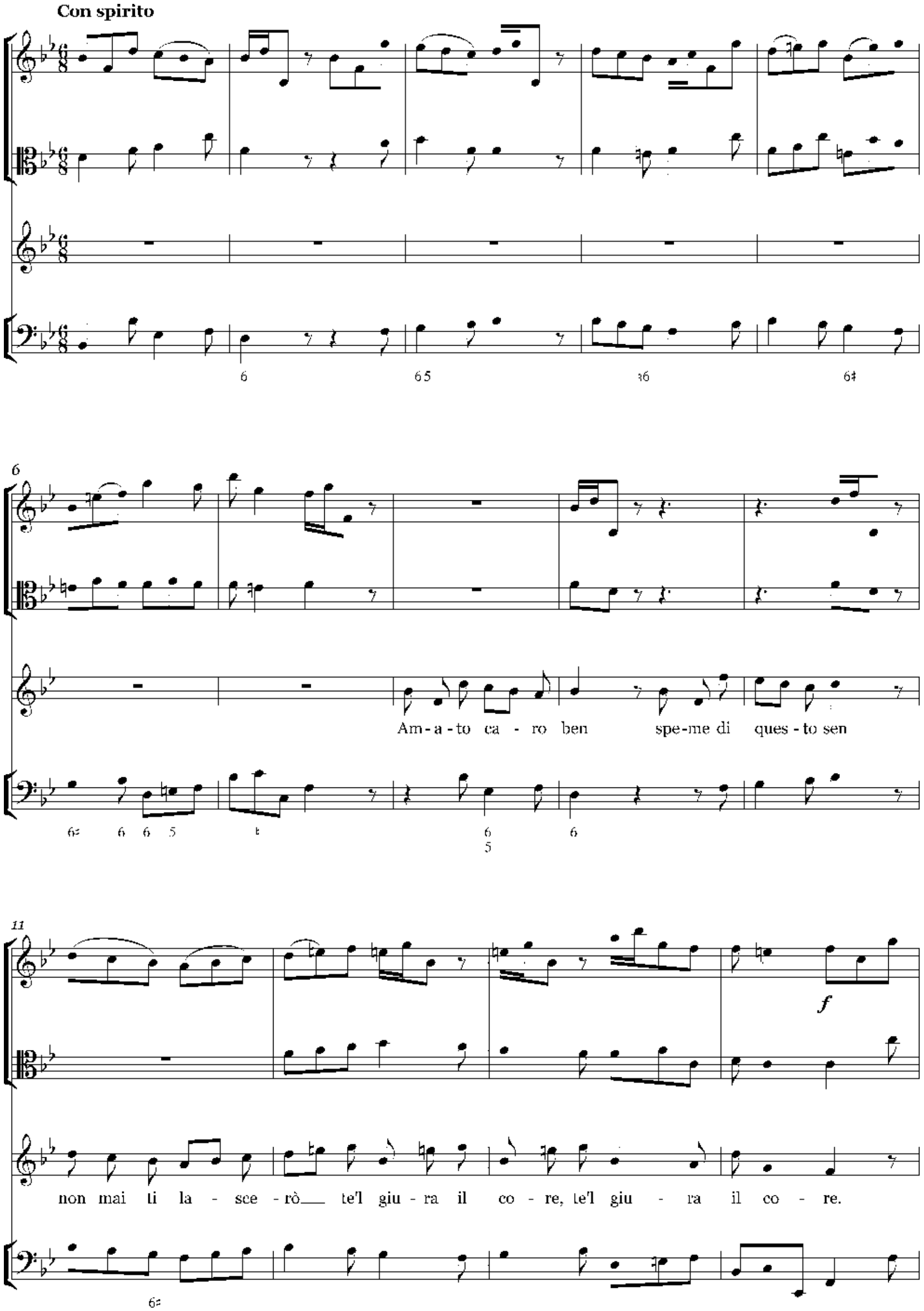
Amato caro ben,
Speme di questo sen,
Non mai ti lascerò
Te'l giura il core.
So che'l destin sarà
Sempre crudel così,
Ma vinceranno un dì
Costanza, e amore.[122]

Although the vocal line is mellifluous enough, the violin accompaniment – as in 'Sento che già' – tells a different story: the *giga*'s tendency for melodic leaps and the gigue's for irregular phrasing are exploited to the full in the opening ritornello (Example 2.9).

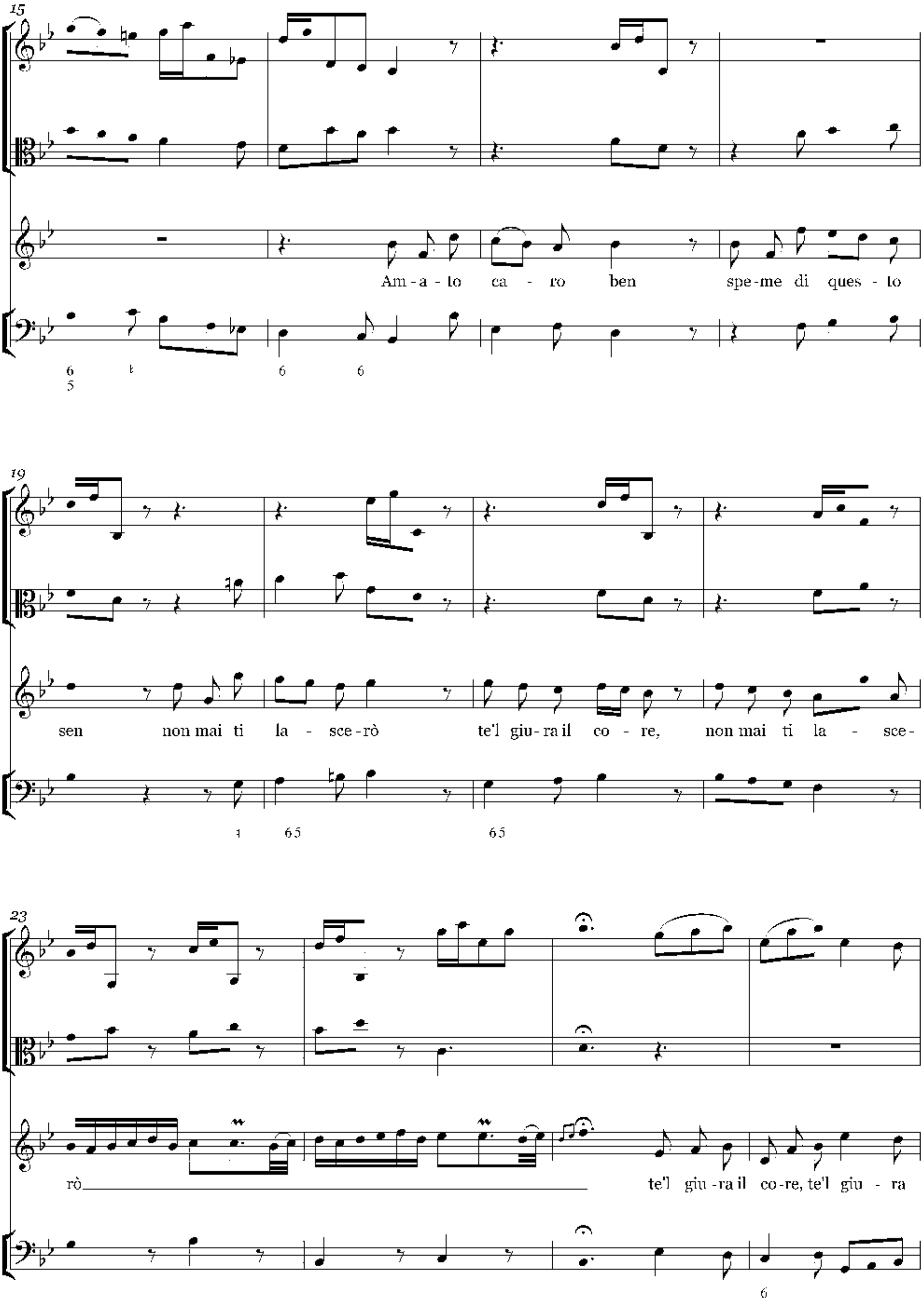
More importantly, the violin's leaping motive punctuates the end of the singer's first two phrases, and then marks the words 'giura' and 'core', making her oath-taking seem rather 'jumpy'. This effect is further heightened at the end of each A-section in the vocal part, where the words 'giura il core' are set to a hemiola against the violin and continuo (bb.13–14, 26–27, 30–31). The leaping motive occurs with increasing frequency until, by the end of the A-section, it dominates the

---

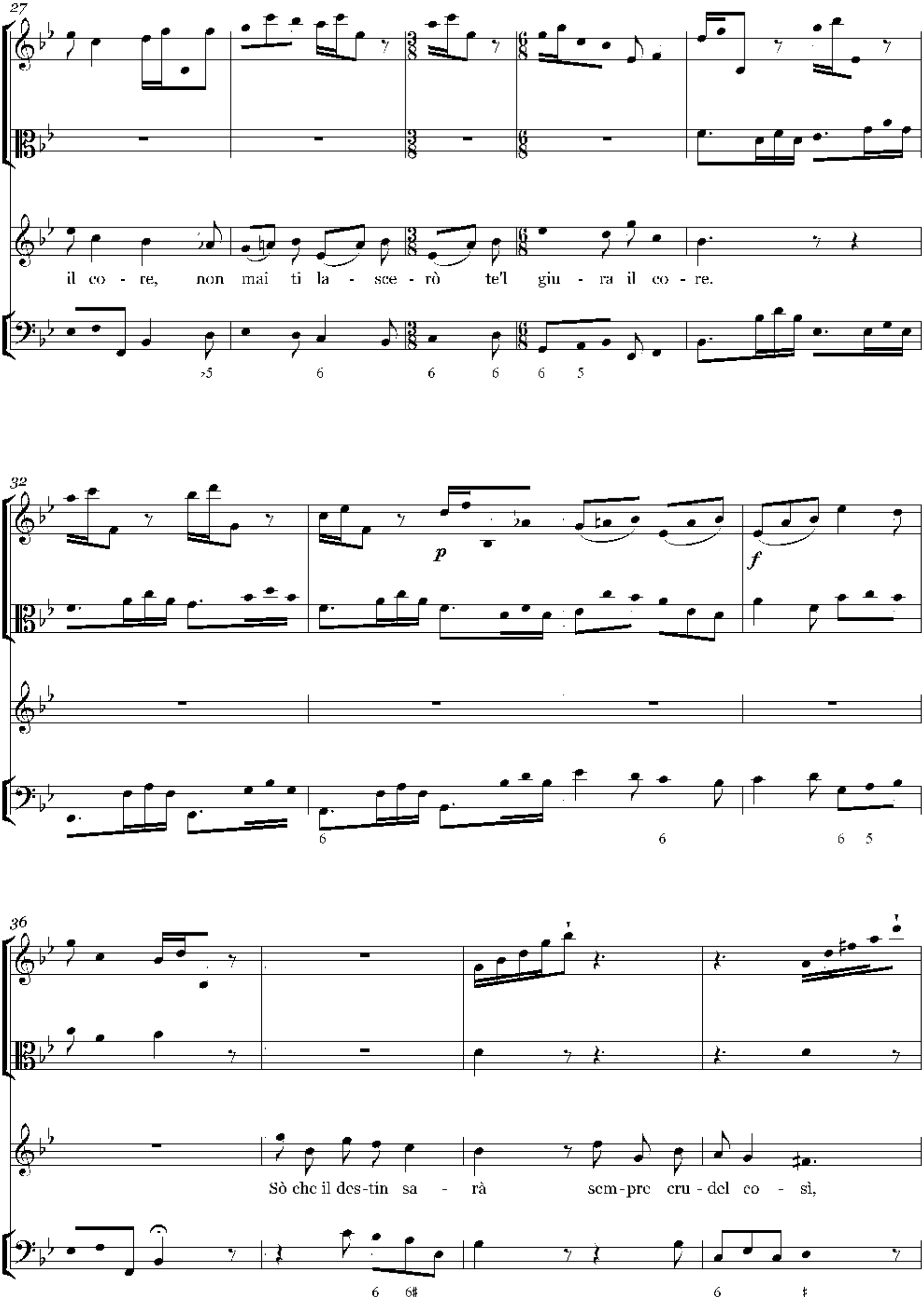
[122] *Astianatte* (1727), 67; 'Lovely Youth, in whom I'm blest, / Hope of my desiring Breast; / No, I ne'er will leave thee, no, / By all the Pow'rs of Love I vow. / Though Destiny should always try, / To use new Tricks of Cruelty; / Yet Love and Truth shall, sure, one Day, / O'er Fortune gain superiour Sway' (66).


Con spirito
6
11
Am-a-to ca-ro ben spe-me di ques-to sen
non mai ti la-sce-rò te'l giu-ra il co-re, te'l giu-ra il co-re.
f

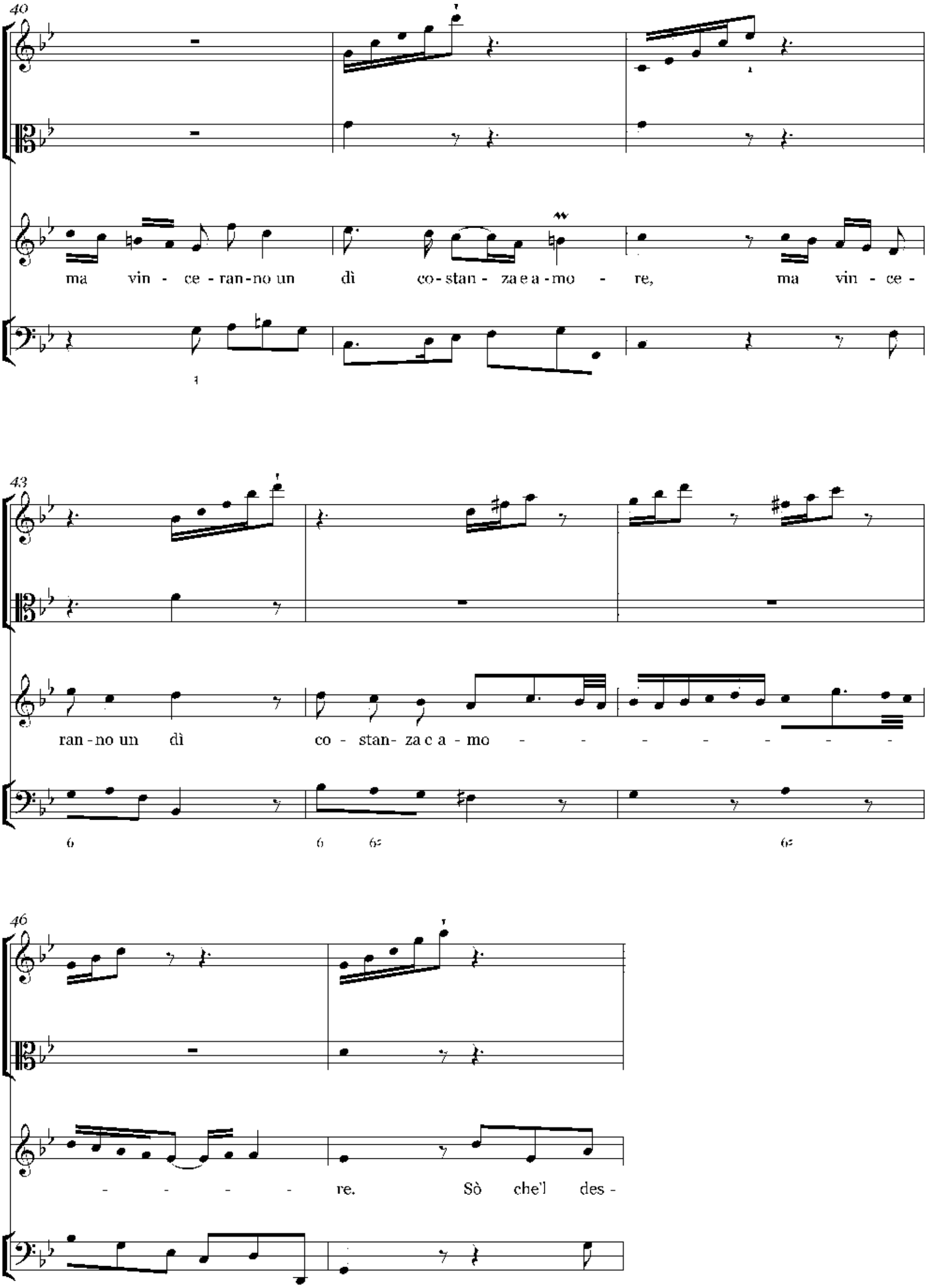
Ex. 2.9 Giovanni Bononcini, 'Amato caro ben', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.1–47.


15
Am - a - to ca - ro ben spe - me di ques - to
19
sen non mai ti la - sce - rò te'l giu - ra il co - re, non mai ti la - sce -
23
rò te'l giu - ra il co - re, te'l giu - ra

Ex. 2.9 (cont.)


27
il co - re, non mai ti la - sce - rò te'l giu - ra il co - re.
♭5 6 6 6 6 5
32
p
f
6 6 6 5
36
Sò che il des-tin sa - rà sem-pre cru - del co - sì,
6 6♯ 6 ♮

Ex. 2.9 (cont.)


40
ma vin - ce - ran - no un dì co - stan - za e a - mo - re, ma vin - ce -
43
ran - no un dì co - stan - za c a - mo - - - - - - - -
6
6 6♯
6♯
46
- - - - - re. Sò che'l des -

Ex. 2.9 (cont.)

texture. The B-section text sees a change of mood which Bononcini matched with a turn to G minor, but the violin interjections become still more strident, interrupting the vocal line with a rising arpeggio culminating in an accented final beat, which the lack of any contextual phrasing (aside from that provided by the singer) would have rendered still more abrupt. Such strangeness was surely a comment on Ermione herself, the wayward setting undercutting her declarations of 'costanza e amore' (words which again appear on a hemiola, in bar 41), and so seeming to indicate their falsity.

If the gestural codes in the settings of 'Sento che già' and 'Amato caro ben' act in apparent contradiction to the thrust of the poetic text, in other of Ermione's arias it is the way in which Bononcini works with the text to draw out certain aspects that subtly achieves an unsympathetic presentation of the character. In her act two aria, 'Spera che questo cor', in which she offers Oreste hope if he will murder Pirro, the contrast between the offer of love and the desire for revenge is forcefully drawn by Bononcini. Her demand for Pirro's death is a mere subsidiary clause to the hope she holds out to Oreste in both textual and musical terms, yet the descending scale on 'se cade il traditor' seems somewhat ghoulish wordpainting, and in emphasising Faustina's descent from f″ into her chest register, would have drawn attention to the base motivation behind Ermione's fair promises (Example 2.10).

In Act III, Ermione's 'Mesto e solo l'usignolo' centres less on her sadness at losing Pirro or her willingness to replace him with a new love than on the nightingale's warbling as it searches the countryside for its beloved.

Mesto e solo l'usignolo
Vola intorno notte e giorno
A cercar per la campagna
La compagna che smarrì.
Ma se poi mandar in obblio
Vecchio amor nuovo desio
Non più torna entro al suo petto
A destar l'antico affetto
La crudel che lo tradì.[123]

The affective first lines are heard once only in each of the A- and A′-sections, set to a ritornello motto, but are quickly usurped by the ornamented third and fourth lines, 'a cercar per la campagna, la compagna che smarrì' (Example 2.11a). In emphasising

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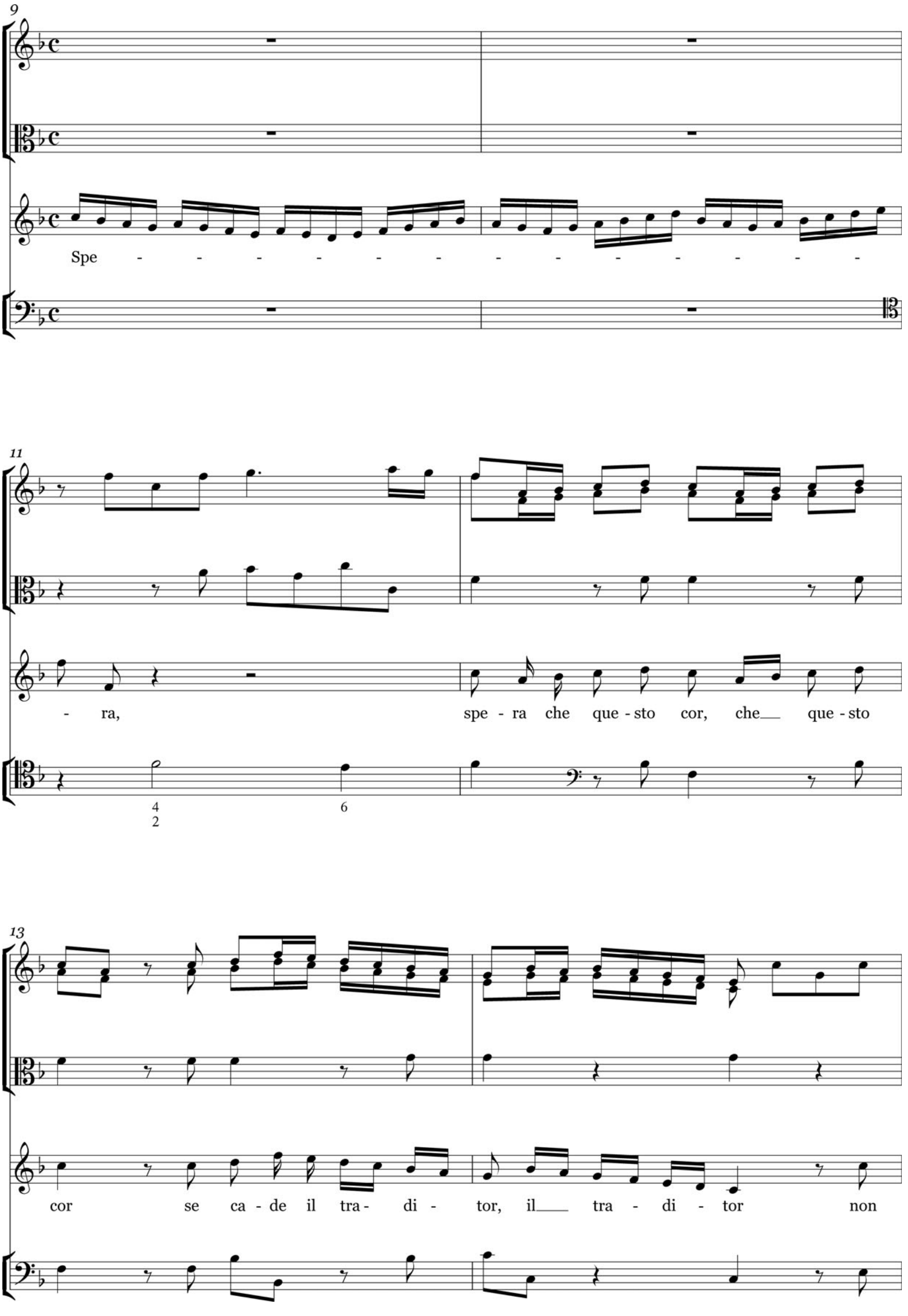
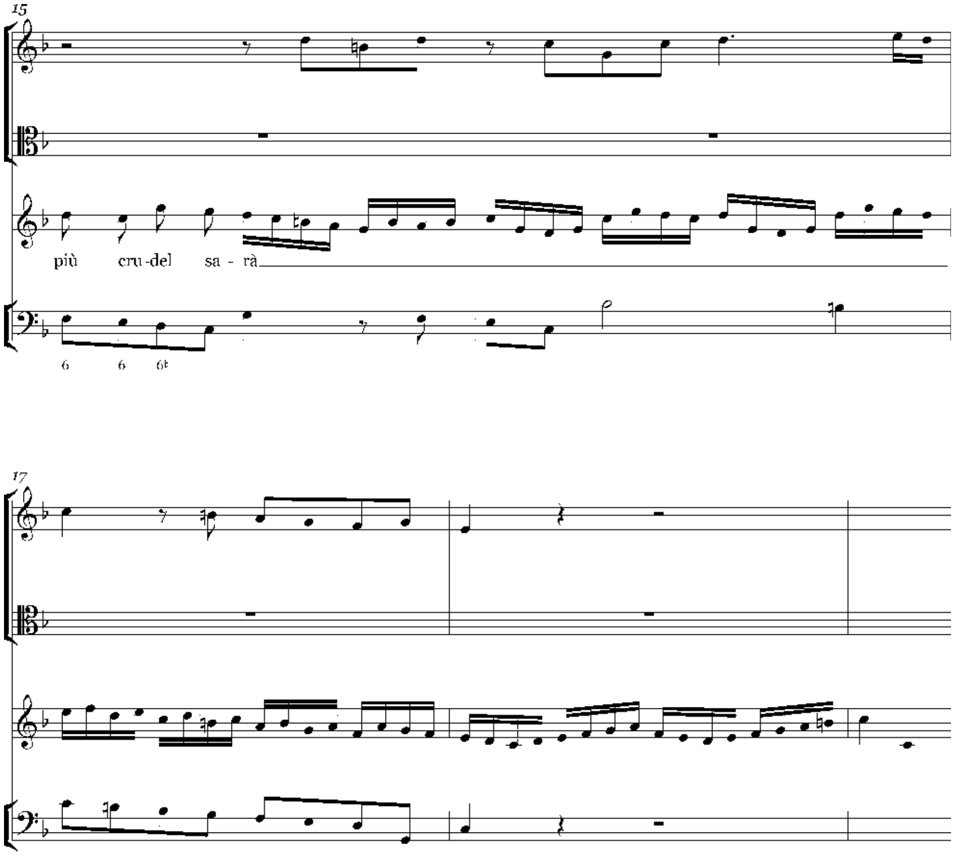
[123] *Astianatte* (1727), 59; 'With such Notes, as seem to wail, / Flying round, the Nightingale, / O'er the Fields both Day and Night, Seeks its Love, its sole Delight; / But if, for some new vain Desire, / Its old Love-Flames, forgot, expire; / No more it seeks that Breast to move, / Which, cruel, has betray'd its Love' (58).


9
Spe - - - - - - - - - - - - -
11
- ra,
spe - ra che que - sto cor, che que - sto
4
2
6
13
cor se ca - de il tra - di - tor, il tra - di - tor non

Ex. 2.10 Giovanni Bononcini, 'Spera che questo cor', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.9–19.



Ex. 2.10 (cont.)

Faustina's famed virtuosity, Bononcini denied her the opportunity to inhabit the pathetic domain so strongly associated with Cuzzoni.[124] The fluttering descending motive in the violins which punctuates the singer's line in the B-section suggests an alighting bird, but perhaps also, in the very repetition which fragments the meaning of the text, one unable to choose between 'vecchio amor' and 'nuovo desio' (Example 2.11b).

Of course, Bononcini's musical design presents subtleties that are open to varied interpretation – what is from one vantage point evidence of a negative portrayal of Faustina's character might from another simply be conformity to the tastes of the

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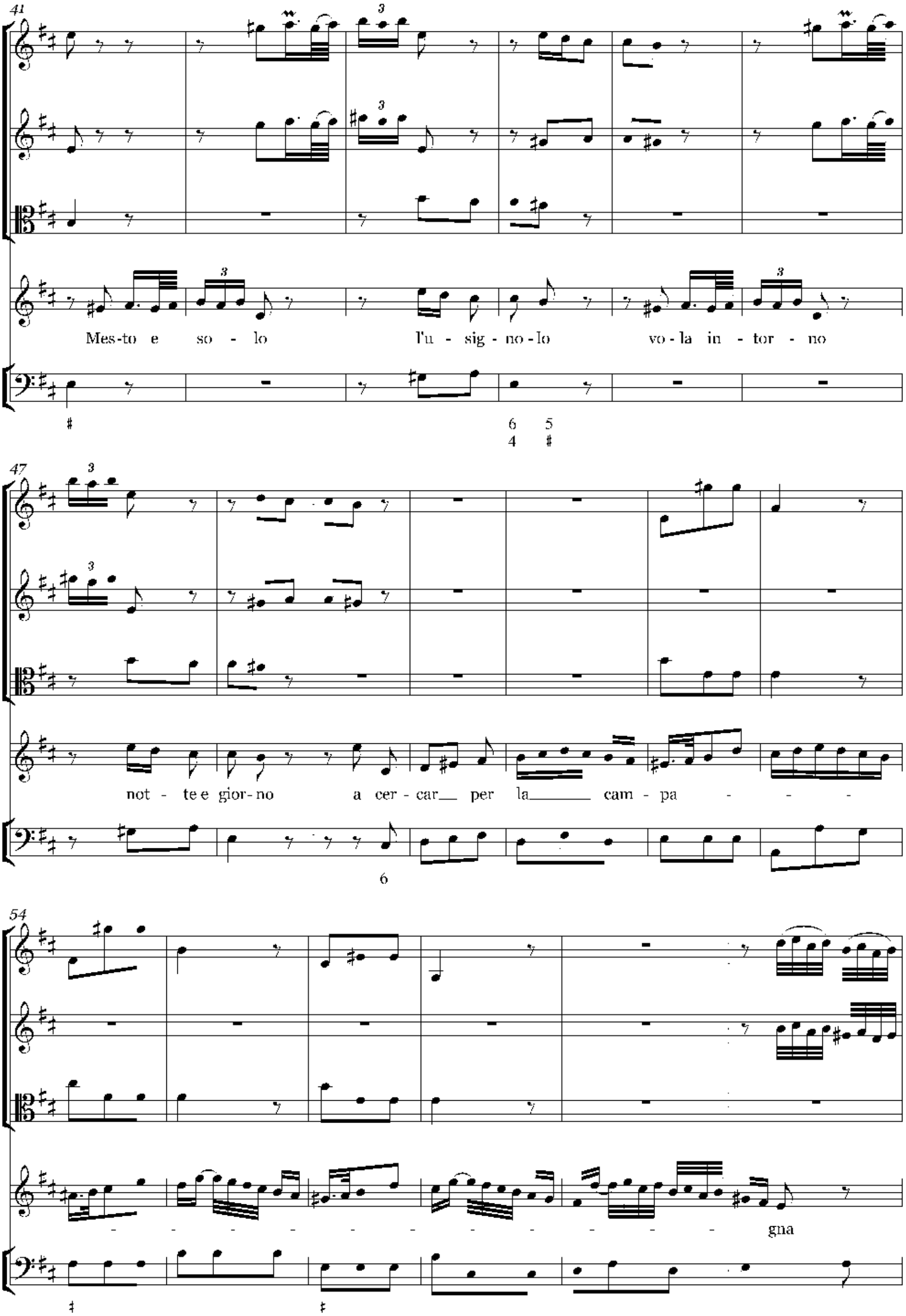
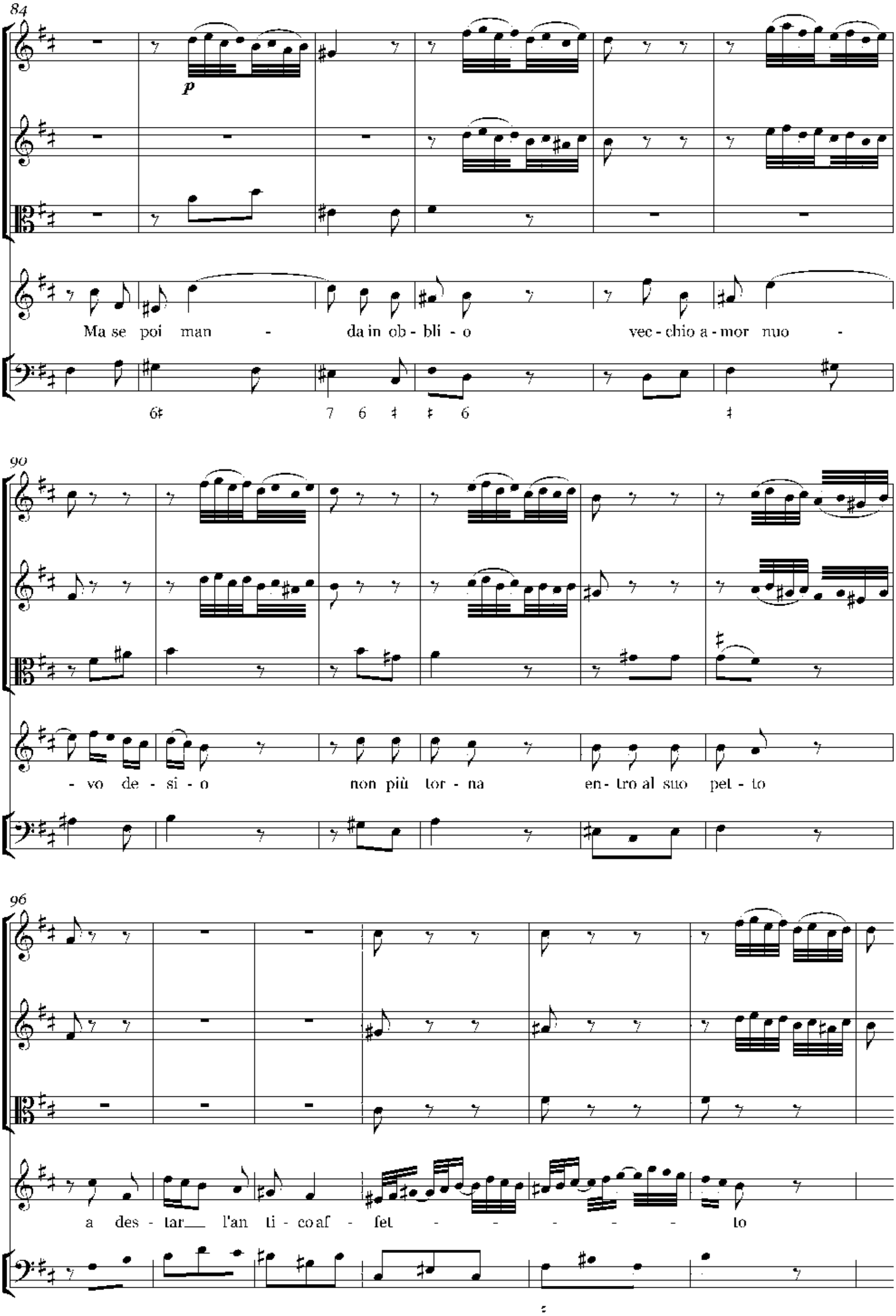
[124] The lack of any truly 'pathetic' aria for Faustina might possibly have significance in the context of Carlo Goldoni's wry observation (supposedly dating from 1732) that 'The seconds aspire to have pathetic arias too, but the lead singers forbid it, so if the scene is pathetic the aria can't be more than mezzo carattere'; cited in Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 9.


41
47
54
Mes-to e so - lo l'u - sig - no-lo vo-la in - tor - no
not - te e gior-no a cer - car per la cam - pa - - -
gna

Ex. 2.11a Giovanni Bononcini, 'Mesto e solo l'usignolo', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.41–59.


84
p
Ma se poi man - da in ob - bli - o vec - chio a - mor nuo -
6♮ 7 6 ♮ ♮ 6 ♮
90
- vo de - si - o non più tor - na en - tro al suo pet - to
96
a des - tar l'an ti - co af - fet - - - - - - to

Ex. 2.11b Giovanni Bononcini, 'Mesto e solo l'usignolo', *Astianatte* (London, 1727), bb.84–102.

time or the talents of the singer or, on occasion, lacklustre writing.[125] When we recall that J. J. Quantz said Handel's 'bass voice' in *Admeto* 'outweighed Bononcini's treble' and 'found more favour' than *Astianatte*, we might imagine that the less successful aspects of Bononcini's portrayal of Ermione, like the emphasis on Andromaca's pathos, may have signalled the composer's musical limitations.[126] In any case, it does not seem likely that the music played a great role in actually inciting audience hostilities, whatever its contribution to the cumulative effect. The aria's interstitial role, which placed it beyond the boundaries of dramatic narrative in service of the 'point', also separated it from the dynamic trajectory of that narrative to operate on its own terms: perhaps the reason why 'Ascolta o figlio' and 'Non senti l'onda' were so simple musically, while so much stage business intruded in the background, was to ensure re-integration of the musical 'point' into the course of the drama. The dramatic design provided a clearer demonstration of the hostile presentation of Faustina. We will return to it one more time – this time scenically – to pursue the logic of the 'point' in *Astianatte*.

The climax of the action in the antepenultimate scene (III.xvi) casts into relief the opposition between Ermione and Andromaca. The plethora of stage directions in the libretto suggests how carefully this scene was written and managed, especially when one compares it with the general expectation that stage positions would follow well-established custom, and stage movement would be minimal (Figure 2.2).[127] In line with the influential recommendation of Pierre Corneille, it also ensures that the reader could re-enact it in his or her mind's eye.[128] In Salvi, first Pilade (in III.xviii) and then Ermione (in III.xix) threaten to kill the child, Astianatte. Ermione's violent behaviour was evidently deemed a difficult topic, for the Florentine (1716), Munich (1716, 1717) and Venetian (1718) libretti had all dropped her involvement, it being retained only in the 1719 libretto, prior to London.[129] In the London libretto, by

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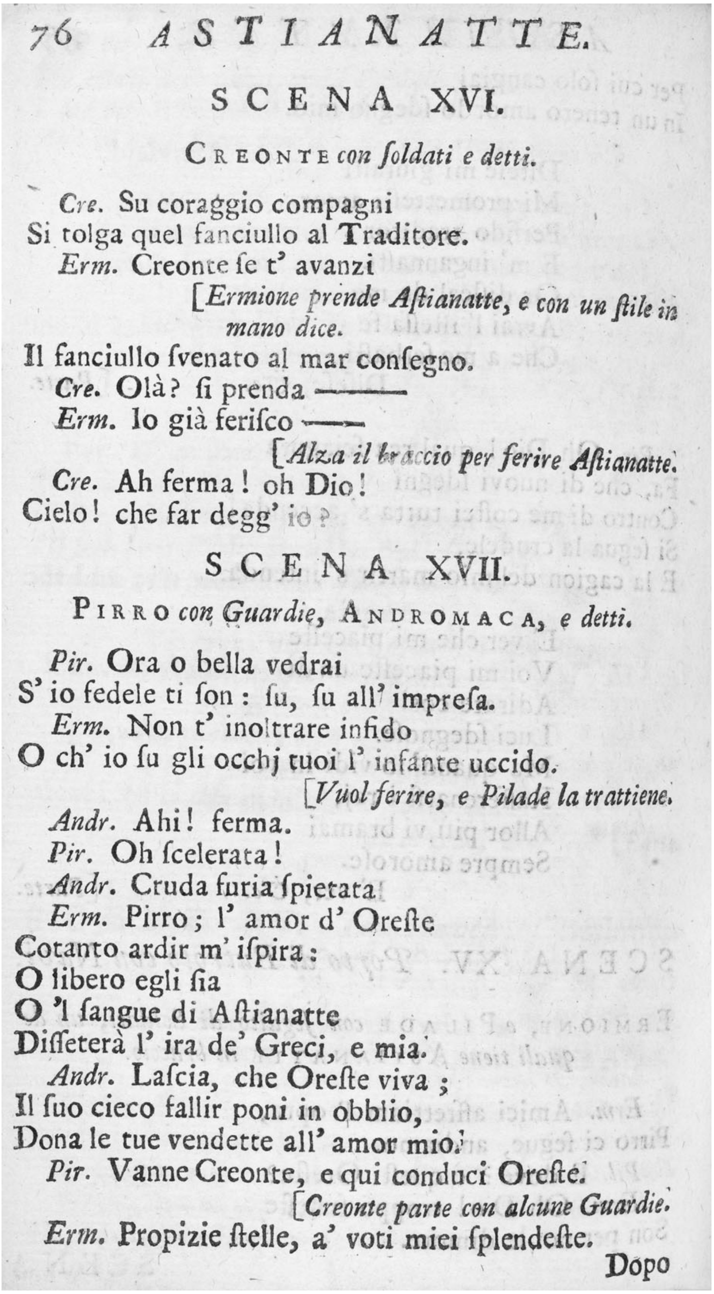
[125] See Clausen's discussion of the published songs from *Astianatte* in 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 166–70.

[126] Bononcini's characterisation is not always convincing for Andromaca either: in 'Deh, non accrescer', the choice between dead husband and living son seems perfunctorily set, with 'figlio diletto', the last *verso* of the A-section, almost always given a simple cadential figure.

[127] Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 388, 426; see also Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 14–19.

[128] Corneille stresses the importance of marginal stage directions, both to avoid straining the reader's imagination in guessing at the action (perhaps incorrectly) and thus diminishing his or her pleasure, and to ensure that provincial actors, preparing a performance without the author's assistance, would not misinterpret a scene; see Corneille, 'Discours des trois unités d'action, de jour, et de lieu', in *Oeuvres complètes*, 843.

[129] This distinction was first noted by Ograjenšek, in 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', I, 192. In the 1719 libretto, Ermione's interventions are very clearly focussed around her desire for Oreste's safe return; in III.xviii she takes over negotiations from Pilade in order to baldly state their terms: 'Io voglio Oreste in libertà'; see *Astianatte* (Rome, 1719), 69.



76 *ASTIANATTE.*

SCENA XVI.

CREONTE *con ſoldati e detti.*

Cre. Su coraggio compagni
Si tolga quel fanciullo al Traditore.
Erm. Creonte ſe t' avanzi
[*Ermione prende Aſtianatte, e con un ſtile in mano dice.*
Il fanciullo ſvenato al mar conſegno.
Cre. Olà? ſi prenda ——
Erm. Io già feriſco ——
[*Alza il braccio per ferire Aſtianatte.*
Cre. Ah ferma! oh Dio!
Cielo! che far degg' io?

SCENA XVII.

PIRRO *con Guardie,* ANDROMACA, *e detti.*

Pir. Ora o bella vedrai
S' io fedele ti ſon: ſu, ſu all' impreſa.
Erm. Non t' inoltrare infido
O ch' io ſu gli occhj tuoi l' infante uccido.
[*Vuol ferire, e Pilade la trattiene.*
Andr. Ahi! ferma.
Pir. Oh ſcelerata!
Andr. Cruda furia ſpietata!
Erm. Pirro; l' amor d' Oreſte
Cotanto ardir m' iſpira:
O libero egli ſia
O 'l ſangue di Aſtianatte
Diſſeterà l' ira de' Greci, e mia.
Andr. Laſcia, che Oreſte viva;
Il ſuo cieco fallir poni in obblio,
Dona le tue vendette all' amor mio.
Pir. Vanne Creonte, e qui conduci Oreſte.
[*Creonte parte con alcune Guardie.*
Erm. Propizie ſtelle, a' voti miei ſplendeſte.
Dopo

Fig. 2.2 Anon, *Astianatte* (London, 1727), III.xvi, p. 76. Abundant stage directions mark this scene as an important point in the opera.

contrast, Pilade's aggression was transferred to Ermione. The scene is clearly drawn: Ermione is at bay, stalked by Pirro's men, but near her ship and ready to kill Astianatte if they advance any closer. In Salvi's preceding scene, Pilade threatens to throw the child into the sea:

> Creonte, se t'avanzi,
> se t'avvinci al legno,
> il fanciullo svenato al mar consegno.

The London librettist instead gave an abbreviated version of these lines to Ermione:

> Creonte se t'avanzi
> Il fanciullo svenato al mar consegno.

The librettist substituted scenic direction for poetic elaboration by inserting the rubric, '*Ermione prende Astianatte, e con un stile in mano dice*', and adding another instruction after Ermione's next borrowing from Pilade ('Io già ferisco'), '*Alza il braccio per ferire Astianatte*' (although, interestingly, the latter lines were not translated in the libretto, perhaps suggesting the scene was curtailed in performance).[130] In the next scene, too, the London librettist took over Salvi's dramatic core: as Pirro and Andromaca arrive, Ermione is again ready to strike – declaring 'Non t'inoltrare infido o ch'io su gli occhi tuoi l'infante uccido'[131] – when Pilade stays her hand. The exclamations against her at this point – Pirro's 'Oh scelerata!' (*sic*) and Andromaca's 'Cruda furia spietata' – emphasise her unnatural, unwomanly behaviour, and by implication contrast it with the exemplary virtue exhibited throughout by the 'distressed mother'.[132]

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The stage directions in these two concluding scenes, Ermione's pose with dagger in hand, and Pirro's and Andromaca's outbursts, emphasise the carefully arranged tableau effect of the drama. Audiences undoubtedly recognised the significance of this moment. Framing a scene through emblematic behaviour and rhetorical device had long been an important part of the English theatre: since the Restoration, playwrights had exploited the physical space of the raked perspective stage to create a pronounced division between scenic and forestage action.[133] The Abbé Dubos and Voltaire both advocated a stronger sense of the gestural, mimic and spectacular in the French theatre, and Voltaire, of course, was able to put his theories into effect.[134] The conceit that actors had almost stepped out from books or down from history paintings was part of theatrical reality throughout the eighteenth century.[135] Many eighteenth-century acting theorists advocated examination of the canonical exempla of classical statuary and history paintings for budding actors.[136] The promptbook scenic plans of the famous actor-director John Philip Kemble amply illustrate the symbolic importance visual balance continued to have in the theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[137]

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[130] *Astianatte* (1727), 76; 'Hermione speaks this, taking Astyanax in one Hand and a Dagger in the other' (77). The latter line and stage direction might be translated as: '(I'm ready to strike)' and 'She raises her arm to strike Astianatte'.

[131] *Astianatte* (1727), 76; 'Proceed no further, thou perfidious Man, / Or here before thy Eyes I stab the Infant' (77).

[132] *Astianatte* (1727), 76; 'Thou wickedest of Women'; 'Fury without the Bowels of Compassion!' (77). There were even more hostile reactions to powerful women in English tragedies: 'women incapable of compulsory female softness are monsters'; Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 43.

Descriptions of tableaux or striking scenic moments, and of individual performers' static 'attitudes' or held 'points', emphasise the way in which these events were separated from the rest of the action, used to heighten particular dramatic or affective moments, or contribute to meta-theatrical gesture.[138] Aaron Hill proposed in 1735 that:

> Upon occasion of some striking scene, we should, as in a finished history-piece, the work of a great master, behold the stage *one living group* of figures, each placed properly, and touching and alarming the audience with his peculiar share in those contrasted yet adapted attitudes which would charm and animate the world by their force of passion and propriety.[139]

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[133] Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production*, 55–61, 127–44, and *passim*.

[134] Abbé Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1732), and Voltaire, *Dissertation sur la tragédie ancienne et moderne* (1750); both discussed in Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants*, 15–27. Holmström points out the importance for both of their encounters with English theatre (pantomime in Dubos's case, Garrick in Voltaire's, though his tragedies were written before this encounter), and to the lessons they drew for staging spoken drama from the operatic stage.

[135] Daniel Heartz notes that 'stage works in many cases derived inspiration from famous paintings'; 'Opéra-Comique and the Théâtre Italien from Watteau to Fragonard', 69. The late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century vogue for 'attitudes' and *tableaux vivants* in France, Germany and England was explicitly an enthusiasm for representing classical statuary and famous paintings, as Holmström shows in *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants*.

[136] Theophilus Cibber went so far as to claim that one of his predecessors, Barton Booth, used this method as the basis of his technique: 'he frequently studied, and sometimes borrowed Attitudes from' the Masters; 'Mr. *Booth's* Attitudes were all picturesque'. On the various treatises discussing this subject, see Downer, 'Nature to Advantage Dressed', 1028.

[137] See, for example, in volume I of *John Philip Kemble Promptbooks*: *All's Well that Ends Well*, 14, 24 (beginnings of Acts I and II); *As You Like It*, 66, 70 (V.iii); *The Comedy of Errors*, 46, 49, 52, 54 (V.i).

[138] West, 'The Public and Private Roles of Sarah Siddons', 16.

[139] Hill, *The Prompter* 56, 23 May 1735; cited in Marker and Marker, 'Aaron Hill and Eighteenth-Century Acting Theory', 421.

As Hill's praise for the tableau suggests, such dramatic moments served particular moral and ideological purposes. Laura Brown proposes that tableaux in particular were used as a schematic embodiment of the 'aristocratic standards' of Restoration heroic drama, representing 'both the balanced discrimination and the distance essential to an elite and hierarchical form'.[140] Inasmuch as tableaux allowed playwrights and actors to segment the drama and highlight certain moments, in order to encourage the audience's articulation of meaning, they were the theatre's scenic equivalent of the rhetorical 'point'. Thus Michael Wilson suggests that in the visual representation of a 'hit' or 'point'

> the larger moral import of the dramatic action … is prophetically underscored by its very interruption with a pictorial effect, appearing to subsume in a general illustration of self-mastery the cumulative import of the play's entire arc of action.… the hit may privilege the spatial mode of painting in order to accommodate the kinetic imperative of theatre to an ideal of moral and ontological stasis.[141]

This 'accommodation' operated on other levels too. Tableaux and 'pointing' alike drew attention to layers of meaning or interpretation in the drama, and to the mediating role, person, and persona of the actor.

Of course, such discrimination within an actor's performance and a concomitant self-referentiality had long been a part of the operatic aesthetic, even (or perhaps especially) at its emotional climaxes.[142] As Martha Feldman observes, 'operas could more easily articulate messages at a generalized structural level by disarticulating the process by which viewers might test them'.[143] Although music might have provided the typical means of such disarticulation in *Astianatte*, the artificiality of the climactic tableau in the antepenultimate scene (III.xvi) would also have directed audience attention outward, to larger ideas and issues. The 'daggers drawn' confrontation alone would have recalled the pattern of 'rival queen' dramas – beginning with Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes* (1661) – in which the conflict between two heroines, one 'chaste and gentle, the other wild and passionate', reached its climax with the drawing of a knife (see pp. 64–5, above).[144] Or it may, for some, have recalled operas of the previous decade: *Rinaldo* (1711), in which Armida makes to stab her rival, Almirena; or *Amadigi di Gaula* (1715), in which the sorceress Melissa also 'offers to stab Oriana', her rival in love.[145] Not surprisingly, it was a theme in the 'rivals' operas, too, recurring in different ways: for example, in *Riccardo primo*, as we shall see in chapter 4, the climactic scene in Act III features both women with swords to their breasts, while in Ariosti's *Lucio Vero* the *scena ultima* has the intended suicide of Berenice (Faustina) thwarted by Lucilla (Cuzzoni), who '*toglie il pugnale a Berenice*'.[146] Certainly, the aspect of tableau in the climactic scene of *Astianatte*, and its concomitant temporary disruption of pure narrative, would inevitably have given the scene symbolic weight, or a distillation of the dramatic conflict to its essence: the contrast between the good mother and the 'scellerata'.

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[140] Brown, 'The Defenseless Woman', 431. Brown singles out Dryden's use of the technique in *The Indian Queen* (IV.i) and *The Indian Emperor* (V.i).

[141] Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting', 383.

[142] Ellen Rosand notes that the Venetian Teatro Novissimo's first work, *La finta pazza* (1641), is 'permeated by a profound self-consciousness, a thorough-going awareness of its own various aspects'; see *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice,* 112.

[143] Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 24–5.

[144] Elizabeth Howe traces the pattern of contrasting, conflicting heroines, and comments on the 'dagger motif' which 'was to be used again and again in future colourful battles between female rivals' in *The First English Actresses*, 147–60. This theme had clearly lost none of its resonance in the early eighteenth century: in Henry Carey's 1737 burlesque opera *The Dragon of Wantley*, the

But such meta-theatrical referencing was not necessarily a distancing device. In the *Spectator* in 1712, Richard Steele had proposed that 'there is no one living who is not interested that *Andromache* should be an imitable Character'.[147] The force of such publicly marshalled moral expectation (exempting 'no one living') must, even fifteen years later, have rendered both Andromaca's role and that of her antagonist particularly taxing to inhabit. Little wonder, then, if the weight of this moral idealisation (and demonisation) of womanhood collapsed the aristocratic audience's conventional critical distance, and helped to fuel a riot. In its disruption of the dramatic narrative, such behaviour for us ironically calls into question the sustainability of Steele's idealisation, for it attests, I think, to the period's own unease at the tensions contained within the performance of that female ideal, both on and off the stage.

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climactic confrontation between Margery and Mauxalinda sees the latter draw her blade and threaten: 'Come, Bodkin, come! take *Mauxalinda*'s Part, / And stab her hated Rival to the Heart' (p. 14).

[145] Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726*, 170, 274.

[146] For further discussion of the scene (III.vi) in *Riccardo primo* see p. 189, below; Haym, *Lucio Vero* (London, 1727), 68; '(Snatches the ponyard from Ber[enice])' (69).

[147] [Steele,] *The Spectator* no. 290 (1 February 1712), ed. Bond, III, 31–3.

3 | Identification and illusion in *Alessandro* and *Admeto*

It is a fundamental irony of the rivalry between Cuzzoni and Faustina that the antagonism expressed in and through *Astianatte* ensured they remained inextricably linked, as the later commentaries of Mancini, Quantz, Burney and Hawkins all show – not to mention the satirical topos of duelling divas engendered in works as diverse as John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and Carlo Goldoni's *L'impresario delle Smirne* (1761), the wedding masque *Virtue and Beauty Reconciled* (1762) and the unpublished 'interlude' 'The Rival Queens, or, Drury Lane and Covent Garden'.[1] This contradiction itself points to a defining, productive tension inhering in representations of the women, however – a symbiosis between antithesis and likeness. The degree to which the opera creators were aware of and exploited this instability is the principal subject of this chapter, to be explored using the examples of Handel's *Alessandro* and, particularly, *Admeto*. But the meaning of this symbiotic tension extends beyond its influence on the singers' posthumous reputations, for it encompasses also the theatre's role in exploring female identity in the eighteenth century.

On the most obvious level, one can say that the Faustina–Cuzzoni dichotomy, evident at its most extreme in *Astianatte*, aligns with the general early eighteenth-century (and operatic) obsession with balance and proportion.[2] The contrast between the women that Tosi made in his *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni* (1723) can be seen as part of a larger interest in antithesis. Of course, the battle between 'ancients' and 'moderns' was long-running, and waged on many fronts; thus Sergio Durante has observed that the balancing of 'old' and 'new' in the analyses of Tosi and his contemporaries was part of a 'general aesthetic … based on a widespread rationalistic attitude of mind'.[3]

Such a conception of the singers certainly suited the tenor of British theatrical criticism in the eighteenth century, still in its nascence. Shearer West has found that acting generally seems to have been thought of in these rationalistic terms: actors were often reduced to a checklist of physical attributes, vocal quality, performing ability and dress, precisely because 'rivalry between individual actors and actresses … allowed a great deal of critical consideration of their relative merits'.[4] To the eighteenth century, this focus on individual characteristics seemed a necessary means of establishing the quality of a performance – one player set against another. But the compartmentalising, rationalist turn of mind in such theatrical appraisals reflected more general concern with issues of identity, particularly for actresses. In the deliberate play of contrasts between the singers' characters, we might also see an expression of the eighteenth century's empiricist interest in testing and defining notions of 'womanhood'.[5]

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[1] The historical commentaries are cited in the Introduction, n.14; on the satires and occasional pieces on rival women, see King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 23–4. 'The Rival Queens, or, Drury Lane and Covent Garden' is held in the Larpent Collection (LA 1039), The Huntington Library, Los Angeles.

[2] On the importance of balance in staging practice, see Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production*, 101–2.

[3] 'Die allgemeine Ästhetik … auf einer weitverbreiteten rationalistischen Geisteshaltung beruhte'; Durante, 'Theorie und Praxis der Gesangsschulen zur Zeit Händels', 68. On the significance of the argument between ancients and moderns, see Black, 'Ancients and Moderns in the Renaissance'; Levine, *The Battle of the Books*.

The process of listing could bring not only definition, however, but also dissolution. The splitting and quantifying of parts from whole seen everywhere in eighteenth-century discussions of women in the theatre recalls the alienation of product from producer that Marx described as commodity fetishism; indeed, John Berger proposes that women were the first commodities in capitalist society.[6] Women in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were themselves well aware that they were 'to be accounted but as Movable Goods or Furnitures that wear out', and they – like the men who aimed to shape them – articulated this not only in critical essays and pamphlets, but also on the stage.[7] By the end of the eighteenth century, the 'accomplished' woman had reified the performance of her commodity status through her definition of ideal femininity as genteelly cultured – expressed through modest achievement in music and art – but that reification of course occurred chiefly to mask the artifice at the heart of 'feminine' subjectivity, uneasily acknowledged by men and women alike.[8]

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[4] West, *The Image of the Actor*, 20. One might think, too, of Charles Burney's infamous, checklist-style discussion of Handel's operas in the *General History of Music*.

[5] See Marlene LeGates: 'In attempting to vindicate the human passions, Enlightenment writers were optimistic, but Lester Crocker is correct in describing their optimism as "for the most part, not about human nature, but about what could be done with human beings … ." The image of chaste Womanhood represents a fantasy about what could be done with women in terms of social conditioning, testifying to the faith in the infinite malleability of human nature'; 'The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought', 32–3. See also Ferris, *Acting Women*, 62–4, on patriarchal control over women achieved through 'listing' them.

[6] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 46. Subsequent commodity developments such as fashion thus served simply to cement their position by further fragmenting perception of their persons: 'The objectification of women's appearance is now so central in Western culture that the relationship of women to fashion appears itself to be fetishistic, or at least fixated on certain parts of the female body.' Gamman and Makinen, *Female Fetishism,* 61.

[7] Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, commenting on the relative status of sons and daughters; cited in Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis,* 63. Diamond also discusses Aphra Behn's critique of women's role in the exchange economy.

[8] Bermingham, 'Elegant Females and Gentleman Connoisseurs', 491.

The penchant for identity analysis and its concomitant self-policing, which Berger (among others) defines as a universal condition of femininity, also aligns with Foucault's grand narrative of the eighteenth century as the time at which power, disseminated through new 'technologies' and through a new discourse about sex, pervaded life, leading to the internalisation of hegemonic control and effective mechanisation of the body.[9] Foucault's own checklist emphasises the self-consciously taxonomic nature of this process: 'Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, there emerged a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex. And not so much in the form of a general theory of sexuality as in the form of analysis, stocktaking, classification, and specification, of quantitative or causal studies.'[10] Such deliberate articulation of self-analysis and of the inter-penetration of individual and corporate identities is at the heart of this chapter's interpretation of the structuring of meaning in the 'rivals' operas in general and *Admeto* in particular.

Taxonomy, as Foucault's listing suggests, facilitated a fetishistic, atomising tendency: as one could create oppositional types through enumeration, one could also tease apart performance attributes to break down that antithesis. In the rival operas, opposition between the women could play out in moments of similarity as well as in demonstrations of difference, for the singers' roles in Handel's operas often manifested a tendency towards a curious sort of echo effect, where each woman (perhaps under a patina of admiration) strove to outdo the other. So, *Admeto* – the opera to which we will shortly turn – opens and closes with selfless gestures from each woman, as Alceste's (Faustina's) ultimate sign of devotion to her husband, killing herself to save his life, is echoed at the end by her rival Antigona's (Cuzzoni's) generous relinquishing of Admeto to his wife when she returns from the dead.[11]

In part, this consanguinity reflected the exigencies of the competition: Henry Carey mockingly suggested that 'The Deuce a Bit will either Sing / Unless they're each a QUEEN-a'. But their supremacy was not only demonstrated through rank.[12] No matter how different their characters, each had to prove herself the better woman in a manner that sometimes seemed to sacrifice individual integrity to a general ideal, and sometimes seemed to deny integrity altogether.[13] The persistent theatricalisation (and thus destabilising) of identity achieved through performance of the rivalry seems in this sense to recall Jacques Lacan's famous 'mirror stage': the infant's fascination with the mirror – his or her repeated delight in the mirror's deceptions, which undermines rather than reinforcing the self-sufficiency of the ego – is evoked in our examination of the women's juxtaposition in *Alessandro* and *Admeto*, the two operas which this chapter will now explore.[14] As we will see, the illusion of visual doubling that Lacan's 'mirror stage' describes is particularly apt. Like the child with the mirror, these operas' relentless return to the play of identity through the conceits deployed to present the women serves to subvert rather than strengthen the singers' identities.

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[9] John Berger: '[f]rom earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually'; *Ways of Seeing*, 46. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; cited in Roach, 'Power's Body', 101–2.

[10] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 23–4.

[11] As Hans Dieter Clausen notes, Rolli (whom he takes to be the librettist) strengthened Antigona's role in the opera, and gave the final decision not to Admeto, but to her; 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 148.

[12] Carey, 'The Beau Monde', 222. His description of the women reinforces the contrast between them already described: 'There's little Lady CUZZONI, / And bouncing Dame FAUSTINA, / The Deuce a Bit will either Sing / Unless they're each a QUEEN-a.'

ALESSANDRO

A toying with identity was already a noticeable feature of *Alessandro*, the first opera in which the women appeared together in London. Suzana Ograjenšek has suggested that the London directors may have chosen to commence the women's joint appearance with *Alessandro* because the source libretto, Ortensio Mauro's *La superbia d'Alessandro* (1690, revised as *Il zelo di Leonato*, 1691), placed particular emphasis on the two female characters' joint presence on stage: in the first act, in particular, they share four numbers, each part of a joint emotional reaction to Alessandro himself.[15] Certainly, Rolli's and Handel's envisioning of the opera highlighted the women's mutuality, playing back and forth between identification and contrast. Thus the opening arioso duet of Agostino Steffani's *La superbia* was transformed by Handel into an accompanied recitative in which the women share a musical range, as they exchange mirroring ideas which conclude by pointing up both 'accord' and 'discord':

Lisaura: Che vidi!
Rossane: Che mirai!
Lisaura: Gloria precipitosa!
Rossane: Ambizion perversa!
A due: Se *Alessandro* perì
Lisaura/Rossane è persa.

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[13] The (competitive) quality of goodness was not a given even for principal singers: when Margherita Durastanti took the role of Domiziano in *Il Vespasiano* (1724), despite her status within the company, her character was given no redeeming features; Senesino in the title role in *Lucio Vero* (1727) was similarly villainous.

[14] Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', in *Écrits*. See also Bowie, *Lacan*, 21–3.

[15] Ograjenšek, 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 86–7.

Lisaura: *Rossane* sen' afflige,
Rossane: La mia Rival si duole,
A due: Così l'alme discordi
Ne' temuti infortuni
Amor' accordi.[16]

Comparison between the women was thus not only a large-scale structural strategy, whereby a scene for one led into a scene for the other, but was also played out within numbers, and between text and music.[17]

As examination of the other arias in Act I illustrates, this comparison would sometimes accentuate difference, sometimes tease out parallels. For example, while Steffani set Lisaura's and Rossane's next appearances as two very similar arias, in 'Dell' amor il lieto aspetto' and 'Di cupido un sol favore' (I.v), Handel created quite distinct presentations of the women in 'Quanto dolce amor saria' for Cuzzoni's Lisaura and 'Lusinghe più care' for Faustina's Rossane.[18] But if these arias might be seen to confirm Tosi's contrasting presentation of the women, in their next juxtaposed appearances – Lisaura's 'No, più soffrir non voglio' (I.vi) and Rossane's accompagnato, 'Vilipese bellezze' (I.vii) – the 'active' and 'pathetic' roles seem to be reversed. Indeed, interchangeability seems to be alluded to even between contrasting arias: both 'Quanto dolce amor saria' and 'Lusinghe più care' examine jealousy ('gelosia');[19] 'No, più soffrir non voglio' and 'Vilipese bellezze' both refer to Alexander as 'inconstant'. Equally, while 'No, più soffrir non voglio' and 'Un lusinghiero' (Rossane's aria following 'Vilipese bellezze') also seem quite distinct (as Steven LaRue points out), their texts share significant ideas: both centre on the conceit of instability – in Lisaura's case, Alexander's; in Rossane's case, her own. Both also use nature similes to illustrate this theme – waves and leaves for Lisaura, branches for Rossane. These textual parallels were finely honed, and may have been intended to be still more pointed, for in an earlier version Rossane's aria began with the line 'Qual' onda è quest'alma', echoing Lisaura's 'Instabile qual'onda'.[20]

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[16] [Paolo Rolli,] *Alessandro* (London, 1726), 4, 7; '*Lisaura*: What have I seen! / *Roxana*: Oh, what have I beheld! / *Lisaura*: Precipitate State of Glory! / *Roxana*: O perverse Ambition! / *For 2*: If Alexander fell Lisaura / Roxana is undone. / *Lisaura*: Roxana seems afflicted. / *Roxana*: And my fair Rival too appears to mourn. / *For 2*: Thus Souls discording, if in Love they be, / Dread like Misfortunes, and in Fears agree' (5–6).

[17] King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 23–5, 29, 35, 54–5. See also chapter 1, n.118.

[18] For comparison of the music, see LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 146–50.

[19] The thematisation of jealousy is reinforced by Tassile who, immediately following Rossane's 'Lusinghe più care', laments his jealousy of Alessandro for being beloved by Lisaura.

[20] Although only the first page of 'Qual' onda è quest' alma' survives, Richard King observes that the fascicle structure of the autograph suggests Handel may have written more (perhaps all) of this aria

Such correspondences occur less frequently in the following acts, as Alexander's preference for Rossane becomes apparent. But the juxtaposition of simile arias in Act II – Rossane as a bird in 'Alla sua gabbia d'oro' (II.iv) and Lisaura a doe in 'La cervetta ne i lacci avvolta' (II.v) – like the shared conceit of Alexander/love as the sun in their Act III, scene iii arias, 'Si m'è caro imitar quel bel fiore' (Lisaura) and 'Brilla nel alma' (Rossane), was surely designed to draw the audience's attention to similarities between the women.

The importance of artifice in the women's balanced roles may have been designed to compensate for their lack of involvement in the plot: its focus on the despotic and hubristic aspects of Alexander's kingship, expressed through his relationships with the servile Cleone and the valiant Clito, who refuses to worship Alexander, would have focussed attention on one of the most contentious issues of the period, the question of the divine right of monarchs and the passive obedience of their subjects.[21] For audiences of the time, with British rejection of the religious absolutism of James II still fresh in the political memory, these issues might justifiably have absorbed as much attention as the relative merits of Faustina's and Cuzzoni's voices.[22] The women's decorative role in the plot is thus emphasised by the repeated conceit of shared imagery, as it is by the frequent use of similes within their arias (something which Handel is often noted for avoiding).

The artificiality of this mode of representation is highlighted by moments where the textual or musical mirroring that is the women's signature device enters the diegesis. In the temple scene in Act I (I.ix), Tassile (Clito's ally) co-opts the role of imitator when he borrows the initial arpeggiated vocal line as well as tone of Cleone's sycophantic obeisance to Alexander.[23] The self-conscious theatricality of such points of comparison is highlighted at the beginning of Act II, in a moment of ostensibly humorous voyeurism in which each woman in turn secretly watches the other being admired and serenaded by Alessandro, then rebuffs his duplicitous advances, not by upbraiding him, but by sarcastically repeating his song for the other woman (Example 3.1). First

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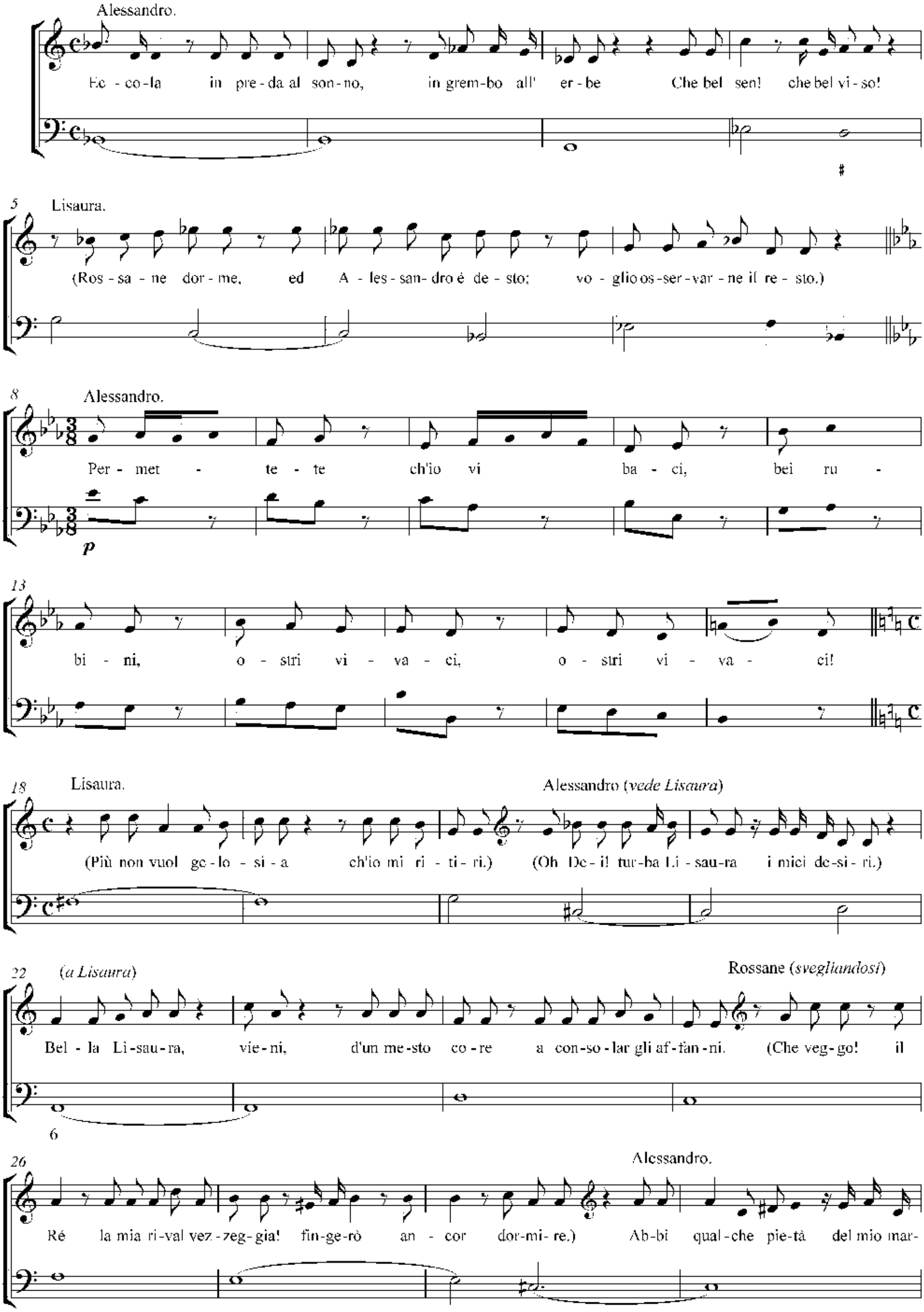
before recomposing it as 'Un lusinghiero'; 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 57.

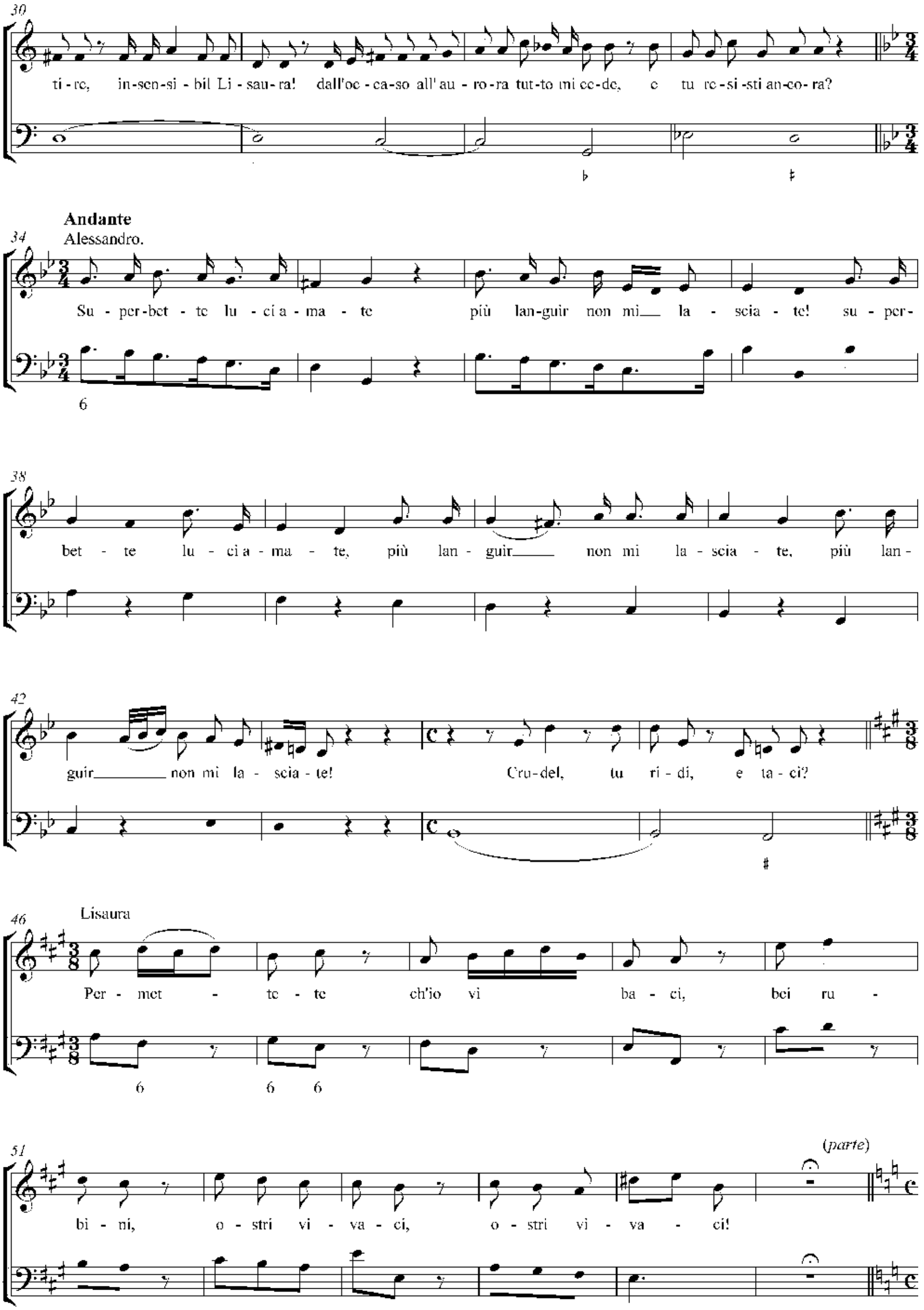
[21] King notes the increased focus on Alexander's relationships with Cleone and Clito; 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 159–60, 163–5, 178–9. While the 1690 source libretto has love as a motivating factor for both Cleone's adulation and Clito's defiance, Rolli eliminates such motives from his plot. Compared to the source libretto, Rolli's reworking heightens Clito's nobility by adding lines and by making him the sole object of Alexander's persecution, so that he becomes 'a symbol of injustice'; Rolli's text similarly enhances Cleone's adulation of Alexander. On Alexander as a much-discussed and contentious figure in the first half of the eighteenth century, see Smith, 'The Argument and Context of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*'.

[22] See chapter 1, n.173 for further discussion of this issue, and some of the literature discussing the political climate of the time.

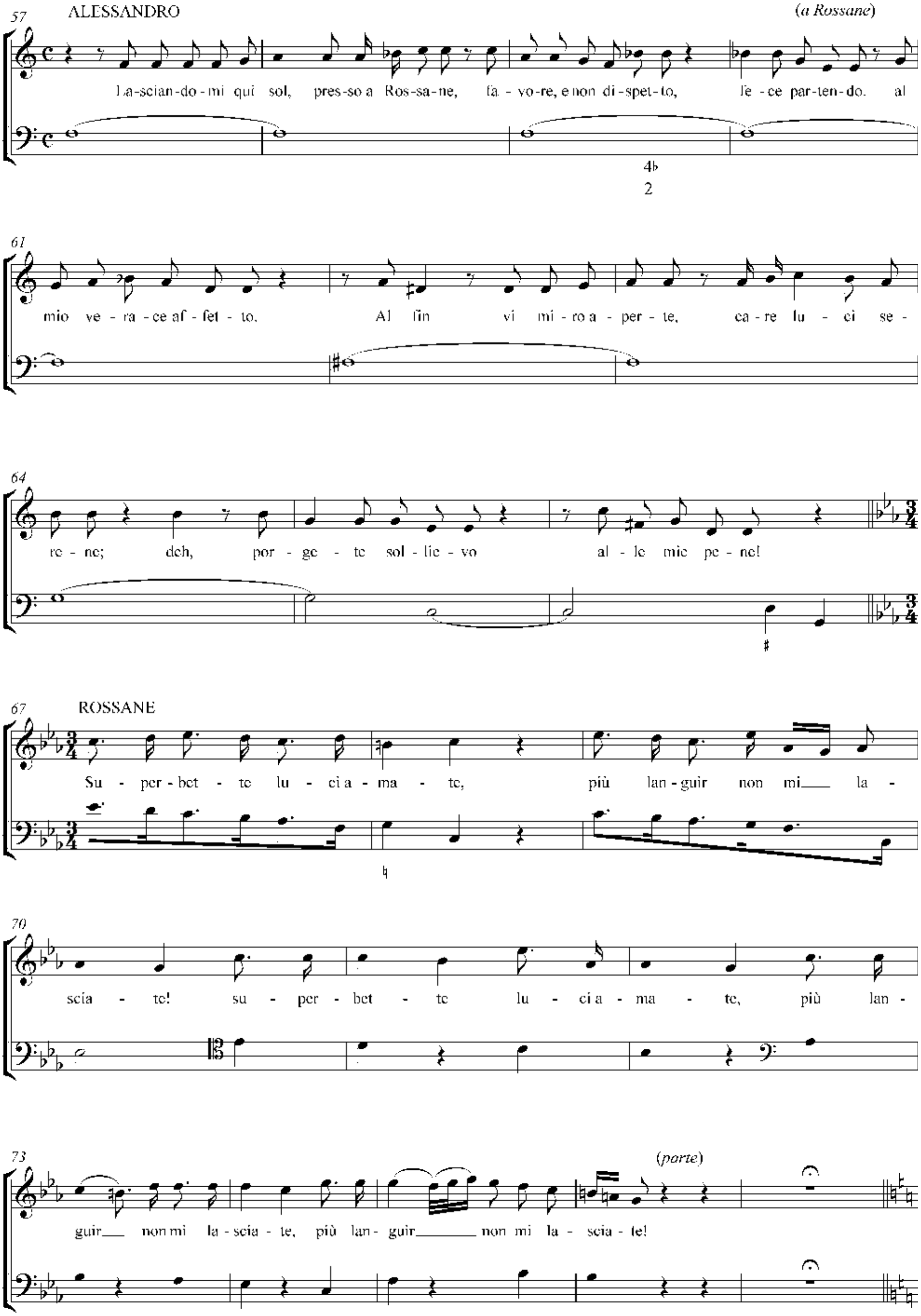
[23] King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 12.


Alessandro.
Ec - co - la in pre - da al son - no, in grem - bo all' er - be Che bel sen! che bel vi - so!
5
Lisaura.
(Ros - sa - ne dor - me, ed A - les - san - dro è de - sto; vo - glio os - ser - var - ne il re - sto.)
8
Alessandro.
p
Per - met - te - te ch'io vi ba - ci, bei ru -
13
bi - ni, o - stri vi - va - ci, o - stri vi - va - ci!
18
Lisaura.
Alessandro (*vede Lisaura*)
(Più non vuol ge - lo - si - a ch'io mi ri - ti - ri.) (Oh De - i! tur - ba Li - sau - ra i miei de - si - ri.)
22
(*a Lisaura*)
Rossane (*svegliandosi*)
Bel - la Li - sau - ra, vie - ni, d'un me - sto co - re a con - so - lar gli af - fan - ni. (Che veg - go! il
6
26
Alessandro.
Ré la mia ri - val vez - zeg - gia! fin - ge - rò an - cor dor - mi - re.) Ab - bi qual - che pie - tà del mio mar -

Ex. 3.1 Recitative opening Act II for Alessandro (Senesino), Lisaura (Cuzzoni) and Rossane (Faustina) in Handel's *Alessandro* (London, 1726), II.i.


30
ti - re, in-sen-si - bil Li - sau - ra! dall'oc - ca-so all' au - ro-ra tut-to mi ce-de, e tu re-si-sti an-co- ra?
♭ ♮
Andante
34
Alessandro.
Su - per-bet - te lu - ci a - ma - te più lan-guir non mi la - scia - te! su - per-
6
38
bet - te lu - ci a - ma - te, più lan - guir non mi la - scia - te, più lan -
42
guir non mi la - scia - te! Cru-del, tu ri - di, e ta - ci?
♯
46
Lisaura
Per - met - te - te ch'io vi ba - ci, bei ru -
6 6 6
51
(parte)
bi - ni, o - stri vi - va - ci, o - stri vi - va - ci!

Ex. 3.1 (cont.)


57
ALESSANDRO
(a Rossane)
La-scian-do-mi qui sol, pres-so a Ros-sa-ne, fa - vo-re, e non di-spet-to, fe - ce par-ten-do. al
4♭
2
61
mio ve - ra - ce af - fet - to. Al fin vi mi - ro a - per - te, ca - re lu - ci se -
64
re - ne; deh, por - ge - te sol - lie - vo al - le mie pe - ne!
♯
67
ROSSANE
Su - per - bet - te lu - ci a - ma - te, più lan - guir non mi la -
♮
70
scia - te! su - per - bet - te lu - ci a - ma - te, più lan -
73
(parte)
guir non mi la - scia - te, più lan - guir non mi la - scia - te!

Ex. 3.1 (cont.)

Alessandro discovers the sleeping Rossane and in a brief arioso sings of kissing her, 'Permettete ch'io vi baci'. As he makes his move, Lisaura, who has been watching all the while, challenges him, but when he turns his attention to her, singing 'Superbette luci amate', she rebuffs him with his own 'Permettete'. Finally Rossane, now awake, also mocks him with his lines for Lisaura. Handel 'improved' the design of this scene in the source libretto and setting by Steffani, in that he gave Alessandro an arietta for both women, and so gave each the opportunity to sing one back to him.[24] The point here is not just one of musical 'balance', however: as (admittedly very simple) music 'for' one is appropriated and sung by the other – each in turn – their potential interchangeability is foregrounded.[25] Also highlighted is the theatre's participation in that process: here, as Downing Thomas has observed with regard to contemporary *opéra comique*, the transition between speech (recitative) and song has a knowing reflexivity, an emphasis on its formal constructedness, which is not only vital to the scene's effect, but underscores more generally the theatricality of the women's identities in these operas.[26] Thus, the fact that the women have little to do with advancing the plot in this opera serves precisely to emphasise their meta-dramatic presence: in *Alessandro* the 'rival queens' are 'Cuzzoni' and 'Faustina' as much as they are 'Lisaura' and 'Rossane'.[27]

STAGING THE SELF IN *ADMETO*

Too close an examination of identity, as many philosophers and writers of the period were keenly aware, exacerbated the sense of the self's contingent and constructed nature. Such concerns were particularly acute in the theatre and with regard to women, who were both believed and made to be more image than substance. As we have already seen, a variety of theatrical conventions lent themselves to play with subjective coherence. Opera too was open to these strategies, and the rivalry made the contingency of selfhood especially prominent. Indeed, the concentration on the symbolic balance between the women reinforces the notion that opera plots were designed to be appreciated not only for their emotional impact (reified in the aria), but also for their intellectual and even allegorical qualities.[28] This appreciation was fostered particularly by the rhetorical acting techniques described in the previous chapter, in which the relationship between actor, character and spectator was constantly at play, and by the concomitant visual structuring of the drama, which emphasised its relationship to the symbolic and through that to an intellectual understanding of the opera.

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[24] Steffani had Alessandro sing in recitative to Lisaura. See King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro"', 41–2. Suzana Ograjenšek points out, however, that it was appropriate that Alessandro only sing to Lisaura in recitative in Steffani's setting, as by this stage in Mauro's libretto he had already revealed his preference for Rossane; 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 106–9.

[25] Of course, both songs are also (perhaps primarily) for Senesino, in the role of Alessandro. The sharing of musical material between characters was not uncommon; see for example Paolo Rolli and Giovanni Bononcini's *Erminia* (1723) and Paolo Rolli and Nicola Porpora's *Arianna in Nasso* (1734). The music shared between Arianna and Anthione in the latter opera is particularly carefully reworked to stage Arianna's discovery of Teseo's deceit; see my 'Opera and Nationalism in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain', 114–21.

[26] Thomas, 'Je vous répondrez au troisième couplet', 22, 26.

[27] Ograjenšek also notes the women's functional irrelevance to the plot's development, but does so in order to assert *Alessandro*'s distance from Lee's *Rival Queens*; see 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 85, 101.

If the technologies of the theatre – not only musical and verbal language, but disguises, props and other accoutrements of characterisation – particularly facilitated awareness of the contingency of persona, Handel's *Admeto* (January 1727), perhaps more than any other of the operas in which the two women sang, was the vehicle for staging the play of identities. This, the second of Handel's operas for the pair and the last work before *Astianatte*, demonstrates most clearly the company's engagement with the breakdown of identity into performance, unencumbered by the considerations of factional appeasement which seem later to have coloured the restructuring of *Riccardo primo*. Although the work has been praised for its music, its contemporary success – nineteen performances in its initial run – might also have derived from interest in the performance of identity, or so the spate of satires it inspired (see p. 154) would suggest.

Indeed, the opera's non-musical focus has drawn sustained critical fire: Charles Burney cavilled at 'the introduction of a counterplot, in order to introduce two heroines on the stage at once', and in more recent times Hans Dieter Clausen found it 'difficult to understand why a poet of Rolli's rank did not eliminate these weaknesses'.[29] The devices of which these and other critics complain – the appearance of two women, the use of disguises and miniature portraits – were relics of an earlier age. They derive from the 1660 Venetian source libretto, which was replete with what J. M. Knapp has called the 'added paraphernalia favored by the Italian audiences of the day'.[30]

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[28] It seems to be precisely the continued interaction between audience and singers that prompted intellectual distance; the later eighteenth-century insistence on the 'fourth wall' (the idea of verisimilar acting, which fosters the illusion that there is no audience) promoted a stronger emotional involvement on the part of the audience. Stefano Castelvecchi observes the sentimental promotion of the 'fourth wall', and the visceral nature of audience response to later operas in the vein of domestic tragedy, citing in particular a Neapolitan production of Paisiello's *Nina* in which the 'spectators screamed at the protagonist on stage in the vain attempt to console her'; 'From *Nina* to *Nina*', 97–102, 101.

[29] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 746–7; Clausen, 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 148–9; see also Dean, 'Introduction' in liner notes to Handel, *Admeto,* 12. Wendy Heller discusses criticism of *Admeto*'s plot at more length in 'The Beloved's Image', 561–4.

[30] Knapp, 'Handel's Later Operas: A Working Manuscript', 7; cited in Heller, 'The Beloved's Image', 563.

But the London librettist's decision to retain these features suggests that they were not seen at the time as mere 'weaknesses' or 'paraphernalia'; instead, as Wendy Heller has noted in her analysis of the opera's debt to its antecedents, Handel and his librettist willingly 'embraced and refined the *seicento* dramatic legacy', using that legacy as a means to engage with contemporaneous concerns.[31] From the perspective of contemporary theatrical preoccupation with identity, these devices open up space for other historically and culturally grounded interpretations.

In what follows I will use precisely those theatrical conceits that have caused greatest critical unease to explore the ways in which the articulation of identity – specifically, that of the two women – was played out in the opera. If portrait and costume suggest a certain 'staginess', a distraction from the opera's musical essence which might well trouble some music historians, the music too will at times be seen to engage with the visual and with theatrical self-referentiality to the point where it seems almost to undermine itself. In the process, the intensity of Faustina's and Cuzzoni's respective 'images', which rely so heavily on the strategic opposition fostered through their voices, musical styles and character type, might also be seen to fragment and break apart under scrutiny, threatening the integrity of their apparently polarised identities.

THE 'BELLA EFFIGIE ANIMATA'

Admeto's seemingly problematic articulation of stagecraft reminds us that, if drama's ontological impact is determined by its nature as a performance art, the mutability of those performance conventions has always drawn artistic exploitation and critical attention in equal measure. In the seventeenth century, the introduction of one of the modern theatre's most important gambits for 'realism', perspective scenery, gave this artistic and critical awareness new impetus. Painters perhaps already acknowledged the metaphysical implications of perspective: Erwin Panofsky has spoken of the 'emphatic subjectivity' favoured by northern European artists beginning with Jan van Eyck, whose paintings gave only a partial view in order to facilitate the viewer's sense of participation in the picture. John D. Lyons similarly describes a fascination with anamorphic painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, designed so that the viewer would take an active part by choosing the correct position from which to view and understand a painting.[32] Implicit by the seventeenth century in these artistic conceits on the apparent 'truthfulness' of perspective is the realisation that art's 'scientific' verity is only achieved through the subjective collusion of artist and viewer – it is no truth, in other words.

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[31] Heller, 'The Beloved's Image', 564.

[32] Erwin Panofsky, *La Perspective comme forme symbolique*; cited in Lyons, 'Speaking in Pictures, Speaking of Pictures', 177; see also 167.

Artists and viewers alike were certainly intensely aware of the privilege 'perspective' brought to the person viewing the object from the right point. What for an artist was a fine way to amuse held more troubling implications for contemporary philosophers. Blaise Pascal, himself a key contributor to the theory of perspective, warned: 'there is only a single indivisible point which is the true place. The others are too near, too far, too high or too low. Perspective assigns it in the art of painting, but in truth and in morality who will assign it?'[33] The possibility that one might get the perspective wrong was also the possibility that the image itself might lie, might not give one the truth for which one hoped.[34] Perspective's manipulation of the conventions of theatrical viewing – quickly understood and exploited by audiences – thus reinforced the theatre's contrivance, even as it played on the conceit of 'Nature revealed'. The artifice that went into achieving the 'natural' thus turned the theatre's visual aspect into the arena of symbolism in ways redolent (for the modern understanding) of the compensatory promise of the mirror image's *imago* (a semi-conscious idealisation of self): the theatre's stylised illusion of completeness only retained its allure at a prescribed distance and within self-consciously articulated conventions.[35] *Admeto*'s stagecraft games with disguise and portraits cause unease in part because they draw attention to those conventions.

Of course, a sense of the symbolic weight of the visual allied to the presentation of the two women on stage is evident in all the double-diva operas, in the use of disguise, in plot construction, and in theatricalisation of the narrative. An emphasis on the visual is particularly apparent in Handel's operas for the pair. Indeed, his musical greatness has tended (at least until the recent revival of interest in staging his operas and oratorios) to make us forget that he was pre-eminently a man of the theatre at this time. However, opera's visual element was particularly important to Handel, and bore fruit in productions generally more elaborate than those of his peers.[36]

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[33] Lyons, 'Speaking in Pictures, Speaking of Pictures', 171.

[34] Lyons reveals Madame de Lafayette's exploration of this problem in her novels *Zayde, histoire espagnole* (1670–1) and *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) in 'Speaking in Pictures, Speaking of Pictures'.

[35] As a genre, the masque might best illustrate this point; see Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*. In musical terms, Reinhard Strohm has suggested, the fashion for the echo at this time is analogous in function (personal communication). For Lacan, the mirror image is an early concretisation of the *imago*, and is 'a particular case of the function of imagos, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality'; Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', 78.

[36] Where other composers may have left scenographic concerns to the house specialists, Handel wrote (or at least copied) relatively detailed scenic descriptions into his manuscripts, and manifested this interest musically as well. His librettists (particularly Haym) were scrupulous in presenting the correct scenic description in the libretto, altering the descriptions from one production to the next. Lindgren, 'The Staging of Handel's Operas in London', 94–5. For instantiation of this concern see, e.g., Jones, 'The Composer as Dramatist', 73–4, 77.

If *Alessandro* provides the most striking instance of the opera company's play with the visual mechanics of identity, the thematic significance of that play is particularly evident in *Admeto*. This stems in part from its sources, Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 BC) and Aurelio Aureli's *L'Antigona delusa da Alceste* (Venice, 1660), which apparently came to the London libretto via Ortensio Mauro's *L'Alceste*, written for Hamburg in 1679 and revived in 1681.[37] Exploration of the visual symbolism of the story has a notable pedigree.[38] In his famous consideration of the Dionysian–Apollinian balance in Greek tragedy, Nietzsche defined the 'origin of drama' achieved through the 'surrender of individuality and … entering into another character' via the moment of recognition in Euripides' play: while the focus is Alcestis' self-sacrifice for her husband Admetus (her decision to die in his stead, her slow wasting, her death), the climactic moment is Hercules' return from Hades with the veiled Alcestis, Admetus' refusal to take charge of this strange woman, his eventual capitulation, and his joy at her final unveiling. Employing this example, Nietzsche shows that the recognition scene is a particular distillation of the theatre's power to embody the spectator's imaginings:

> Consider Admetus as he is brooding over the memory of his recently departed wife Alcestis, consuming himself in her spiritual contemplation, when suddenly a similarly formed, similarly walking woman's figure is led toward him, heavily veiled; let us imagine his sudden trembling unrest, his tempestuous comparisons, his instinctive conviction – and we have an analogy with what the spectator felt in his Dionysian excitement when he saw the approach on the stage of the god with whose sufferings he had already identified himself. Involuntarily, he transferred the whole magic image of the god that was trembling before his soul to that masked figure and, as it were, dissolved its reality into the unreality of spirits.[39]

At moments like these, as theatre scholar Michael Goldman puts it, 'The actor assumes an identity that has the uncanny force of one of our identifications.'[40] That uncanniness derives not only from our sense of the formidable generative power of our imaginations, but also – as Lacan might observe – from our delight in that imaginative fecundity, from our willingness to displace our idealisations onto the fictitious being. But it also arises from the distance which perspective theatre, in particular, insists upon, and the propensity for our idealisations to take on a life of their own, turning into Frankensteinian monsters: here, as in psychoanalytic terms, our *imagos* always have 'veiled faces', whose unveiling only ever reaches the 'threshold of the visible world' in the distorted, disquieting forms of hallucinations, dreams, and mirrors.[41] Admetus' moment of epiphany is thus also inevitably disturbing, for through the creative force of the imagination it signals the instability of identity, and the potential destructiveness of that flux if not kept in check, or held at tantalising critical distance.[42] Such disquiet, Goldman suggests, might underpin the kind of 'antitheatrical prejudice' that figured large in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the satirical attacks on the two women, with their emphasis on deformity of all kinds, would align with this view.

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[37] Hans Dieter Clausen discusses attribution for the London arrangement, and comes down in Rolli's favour, in 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 147–8, while Winton Dean favours Haym, in *Handel's Operas, 1726–1741*, 39–40. John Roberts, however, suggests that Giovanni Sebastiano Brillandi may have arranged *Admeto* for London; see 'The Riddle of *Riccardo primo*', 491–2, n.44.

[38] Heller, 'The Beloved's Image', 585ff.

[39] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 66; cited in Goldman, *On Drama*, 23–4.

[40] Goldman, *On Drama*, 24.

The transmutability of identity was certainly a central conceit of Aurelio Aureli's play – its specular idealisation, as Wendy Heller has shown, that of perfectible femininity. In the Venetian work, the curious symbiosis between the Alceste statue (commissioned by Admeto as a memorial to his dead wife) and the silent, shrouded woman herself is replaced by that between Alceste and Antigona, a rival for Admeto's love, who is also promoted to the role of disguised woman seeking the king's protection. Heller observes that Aureli's introduction of Antigona not only allows a convenient theatrical doubling of vocal womanhood, but also reinforces a sense of the symbolic unity of the female ideal: at the end of the opera, in Admeto's final lines embracing both women, the two symbolically '[dissolve] back into a single object of desire', the dominance of their disguisings allowing them to seem, individually, strangely insubstantial.[43]

While disguise in Aureli's opera apparently allowed the characters to appear as a doubled manifestation of a single woman, the London reworking of this same plot device added another layer of complication by emphasising an element of difference. Disguise is a particular feature of the 'rival' operas: of Handel's earlier works for the Royal Academy, only two had featured any sort of disguise for leading female characters. In the title role of *Cleopatra*, for example, Cuzzoni briefly disguises herself as Lydia, in order to seduce Caesar, but this lasts for a mere two scenes, and her arias occur *in propria persona*, after the other characters have left.[44] By contrast, in her performances opposite Faustina, she adopted the disguise of a shepherdess or servant for significant parts of three of Handel's five operas (*Admeto, Riccardo primo, Tolomeo*), while Faustina was disguised as a man in *Admeto* and *Siroe*, and, briefly, as her rival in *Riccardo primo*.

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[41] Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', 3.

[42] Goldman, *On Drama*, 22–3: 'It reactivates a buried volatility that we normally keep tightly controlled. Not I-am-becoming-somebody-else but I-am-becoming-somebody-else-*yet again*.'

[43] Heller, 'The Beloved's Image', 628. I am grateful to Wendy Heller for sharing her article with me prior to publication.

[44] Similarly, in *Tamerlano* (1724), the slighted Irene (sung by Anna Dotti), poses once as her own servant to assess the lie of the land with her betrothed, Tamerlano (Cuzzoni's character in this opera was Asteria). Act one of *Muzio Scevola* (1721) also featured brief female disguising (Clelia wears male armour to fight Porsena), but this act was not set by Handel. On male disguisings see pp. 235–6, below. Sorcery is used in the early London operas to change characters' appearance momentarily: in *Rinaldo* (1711) Armida briefly changes herself 'into the likeness of Almirena', to

The use of disguise as a device within the opera suggests not only a dynamic of contrast between the women but also a concentration on issues of identity and gender.[45] Certainly, the sustained adoption of disguise in *Admeto* alters our perception of the women's portrayals. Faustina's active character, Alceste, takes the fearless, masculine step of killing herself for her husband, and when she returns from the dead (brought back from Hades by Hercules), this 'masculinity' is reinforced by her decision to disguise herself as a soldier.[46] Cuzzoni's Antigona, who arrives at the court pretending to be a shepherdess, and who is then given charge of the royal gardens, also persists in her disguise for as long as she can. The contrast in disguise between the women suggests the kind of symbolic antithesis Terry Castle describes as an important element of the eighteenth-century masquerade: 'Costume', she suggests, 'ideally represented an inversion of one's nature'.[47] But while masqueraders manifested the paradox themselves (in the contrast between costume and reality), here the costumes – assumed unselfconsciously, as part of the diegesis – revealed a fundamental 'truth' about the binary relationship between the women. Castle explains that masquerade served 'as a kind of exemplary disorder – [its] hallucinatory reversals both a voluptuous release from ordinary cultural prescriptions and a stylized comment upon them', confirming that eighteenth-century commonplace that to 'masque the face' was 't'unmasque the mind'.[48] Inevitably, the comment on 'cultural prescriptions' in the disguisings of this opera was effected through reinforcing awareness of the persons of the singers themselves: while their characters masqueraded as someone else, extra-diegetically – for the audience viewing the play within the play – they called attention to who they were as actors, and particularly to what they were as women – the knowing object of the hegemonic gaze.[49]

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confuse the hero; in *Amadigi* Melissa changes Dardano to look like his rival, in order to fool Oriana. For plot details, see Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726*, 169, 274, 326, 368, 418, 528, 604.

[45] Disguisings within an opera were of course quite distinct from cross-gender casting, where a woman played a male role (as happened relatively frequently in London) or vice versa (as happened, for example, in Rome); cross-casting raised issues about performer persona distinct from those invoked within a drama by the use of disguise.

[46] On the vogue for cross-dressing actresses and cross-dressing (female to male) characters in the Restoration and eighteenth century, see Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 28–30, 100–18. On the trope of the female soldier, see Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650–1850*.

[47] Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 5, 75–8.

[48] Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 6; 'Lemuel Gulliver' [Henry Fielding,] *The Masquerade*.

[49] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 47–51: 'Women watch themselves being looked at … the subject (a woman) is aware of being seen by a spectator … the woman connive[s] in treating herself as, first and

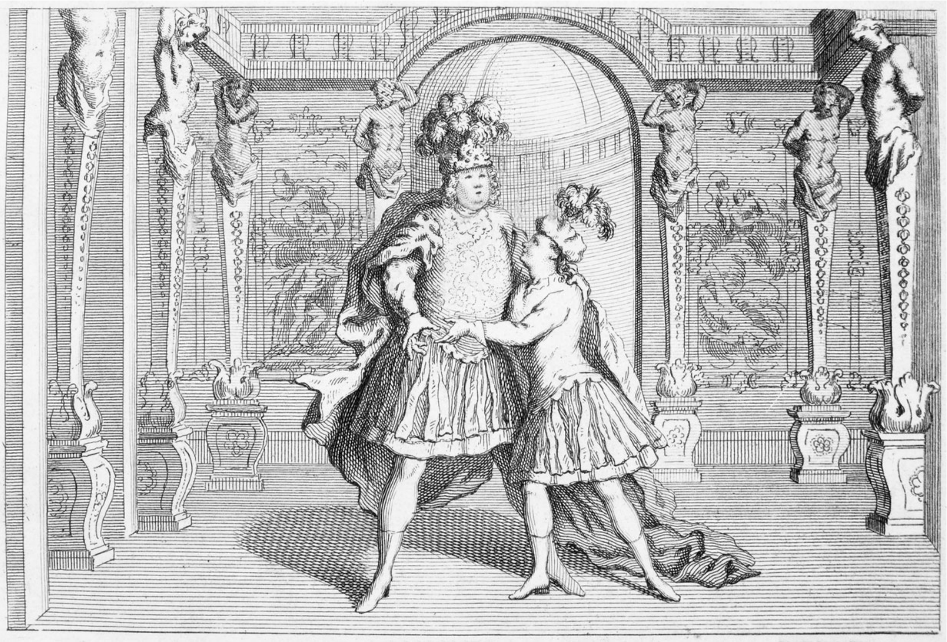

Fig. 3.1 Frontispiece, *Epistle from S—r S—o to S—a F—a* [8 March 1727]. Alceste (Faustina) in disguise is united with Admeto (Senesino) at the close of the opera.

A contemporary visual satire, though chiefly making fun of Senesino's 'incompleteness', makes it clear that Faustina's disguise in *Admeto* operated to reinforce awareness of her person (Figure 3.1): the accompanying satirical *Epistle from S—r S—o to S—a F—a* [8 March 1727] suggests that her masculine dress was of a piece with her predatory sexual behaviour. Two further mock epistles quickly followed, elaborating still further.[50] But while it was Faustina's characteristic drag act that attracted satirical censure, Cuzzoni's shepherdess was scarcely less 'perverse'. Here we should not only consider the tension between the operatic diva cast as a princess and her disguising as a humble peasant. Although the powerful woman's attempts to deflect

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foremost, a sight.' According to Luce Irigaray's famous formulations, '"femininity" is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself … by playing on her femininity'; 'the masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own'; *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 84, 133. See also Pearson and Pope, *The Female Hero*, 23–5. The voyeurism involved in masquerading was widely acknowledged in the Restoration and eighteenth century; see, for example, Pinchwife's comment in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675): 'A Woman mask'd, like a cover'd Dish, gives a Man curiosity, and appetite' (III.i); cited in Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 39.

[50] *F—NAs Answer to S—NO's Epistle* [17 March 1727]; *An Answer from S—a F—a to S—r S—o* [March 1727]. For further discussion of this engraving and scene, see pp. 219–20, below.

patriarchal hostility by 'masquerading' femininity have been recognised analytically only in the twentieth century, I suspect we might also see something of this logic in Cuzzoni's persistent Arcadian disguisings. Louise Kaplan has suggested the importance of 'homeovestism' in female culture generally: a woman who disguises herself as female or seeks an exaggerated 'femininity' is afraid to admit openly to her 'masculine strivings'.[51] The compensations of conformity to stereotype are evident in Cuzzoni's case: her pastoral disguise not only played into the politics of her 'rivalry' with Faustina, but also countered her own – apparently somewhat shrewish – offstage reputation by marrying appearance with vocal specialism.[52]

Such disguises have both costs and benefits. The image of a guileless 'pastorella' projected by Cuzzoni both in this opera and in *Tolomeo* (and, for a short time, as a servant in *Riccardo primo*) might have benefitted her personal image while also restricting her ability to vary her character.[53] In *Admeto*, while Antigona's narrative may suggest a princess wresting control of her destiny, the scopic economy of the theatre ensures that, as Elin Diamond puts it, '[t]his is mastery's masquerade, not to demonstrate freedom, but to flaunt the charms that reflect (back) male power'.[54] The structure of the opera emphasises the dramatic irony – and (masculine) authorial control – of their disguisings still further, for while the two women do not meet one another until the last scene of Act II, and in fact do not meet each other *as* 'Alceste' and 'Antigona' until the final scene of the opera, the design of the libretto repeatedly juxtaposes the pair, as scenes for the one almost always follow scenes for the other (a point to which we will return).[55]

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[51] Kaplan, *Female Perversions*, 251. Seeing such acts as part of the general Western female condition, Gamman and Makinen propose not only Dolly Parton and Barbara Cartland as homeovestites, but 'any bride on the day of her "white wedding"'; Gamman and Makinen, *Female Fetishism*, 70.

[52] On Cuzzoni's reputation, see chapter 1, n. 160.

[53] The latter point is particularly evident in *Tolomeo*, an opera with a pastoral setting, which thus required Handel to write arias on the themes of breezes and streams, trees and flowers for both women. The difficulty this presented him with in terms of the equal but competing imperative for musical variation is evident from the autograph manuscript. In II.iii Handel included a scene for Cuzzoni (Seleuce), but he then abandoned the untexted music he had written, later using it instead for Faustina's (Eliza's) angry confrontation with Tolomeo (and then his brother, Alessandro), in II.v, 'Il mio core'. At II.iii Handel instead composed for Cuzzoni a conventional pastoral number, 'Aure, portate al core bene' (Breezes, carry to my beloved the pains I have in my heart).

[54] Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, 77; Diamond is describing the titillating appearance of the courtesan Angellica Bianca in Aphra Behn's play *The Rover* (1677).

[55] Juxtaposition of scenes for the women is clearly a tactic of the London libretto: comparison with the Hanover source libretto of 1681 shows that, aside from cutting the comic and minor characters, the London librettist reordered the remaining material to focus attention on the two women. So, for example, the Hanover libretto has Trasimede's scene with Antigona's portrait (I.vii) as early as it could reasonably appear after Admeto's and Orindo's discussion of his lovesickness (I.ii) – in other words, immediately after Alceste's decision to sacrifice herself for her husband. In the

There is a further point to make about the use of such stereotyped costuming: as Kaplan observes, a fundamental anxiety 'about bodily fragmentation and nothingness – [a] dread of annhilation' underpins women's participation in the fetishisation of their bodies.[56] The polarisation of Faustina's and Cuzzoni's repeated disguisings may suggest a similar anxiety about erasure. Such persistent testing of female behaviour was, after all, not only based on the orthodoxy that women's characters (like those of children) could be formed by men, but also underpinned by the prevailing anxiety that mutable women had no characters at all. They had something of the fascination of the Lacanian mirror image, both representative of the potential perfectibility of the ego, and dangerously beyond complete understanding or – even in their apparent mirroring – mastery. The binary logic – like the child's return to the mirror – was so repeatedly enacted in dramatisations of female behaviour because it could at any moment be undercut, as the façade of control slipped away.[57]

As if to reinforce the precariousness of women's characters, and their social dependency, the play of identities in *Admeto* is adumbrated not only through the use of disguises, but also through elements that may seem yet more trivial, the props and accoutrements of characters' manifestation to others. These include two portrait miniatures, images of Antigona and Admeto, which circulate throughout the opera to stimulate the theme of misprision. Their inclusion has been heavily criticised by most modern scholars, who consider them structural flaws, a hangover from the 1660 Venetian libretto inexplicably retained by the London librettist.[58] For these critics, such devices should have been shunned for their contrivance. Wendy Heller, by contrast, makes the case for their importance to contemporaries in filling 'the void between absence and presence'.[59] In complement to Heller, I would like to argue that the portraits' very artificiality was part of the point: these plot machinations were deliberately creaky, designed to encourage awareness of the contrivance of the dramatic narrative, and thus the equally contrived nature of persona. Contextualised within contemporary understandings of the miniature, the confusion generated by these images could heighten the audience's sense of the fragile and curious relationship between actor and character.

London libretto, by contrast, Trasimede has to wait till both Alceste and Antigona have appeared and Alceste's death has been discovered by Admeto and Ercole before he arrives on the scene (1.ix).

[56] Kaplan, *Female Perversions*, 258.

[57] Angela Smallwood points out that 'female social imitation' was a matter of general concern in the second half of the eighteenth century, and she observes that this concern was highlighted and exploited in the frequent use of the 'masquerade' as a ploy of female theatrical characterisation; Smallwood, 'Women and the Theatre', 248–58.

[58] Clausen, 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 148–9; Dean, 'Introduction', in liner notes to Handel, *Admeto,* 12. The Handel operas *Floridante* (1721) and *Ottone* (1722) contain miniature portraits, but they are not as central to the plot as they are here.

[59] Heller, 'The Beloved's Image', 585.

The disruptiveness of these images is established early by mention that Admeto's brother, Trasimede, is pining over the portrait of an unknown lady.[60] This portrait is of Antigona, formerly betrothed to Admeto, but rejected by him after the duplicitous, lovestruck Trasimede passed off as her portrait that of a lesser beauty. Admeto's subsequent marriage to Alceste and her self-sacrifice leaves him singularly vulnerable, bound in different ways to both women – by a debt of gratitude and loyalty to his dead wife, and a debt of honour for his unjust renunciation of her to his former betrothed. Antigona's 'real' portrait thus comes to play an important role in the opera, not only acting as the focus of Trasimede's pangs of unrequited love – and thus a sign of his physical and emotional distance from the object of his affections – but also serving to introduce Antigona herself, first to Trasimede, and then to Admeto. Its revelation to the latter, followed by that of Antigona in the flesh, prompts precisely the love Trasimede fears, and precipitates Admeto's own confusion between divided love, loyalty and the obligations of honour.[61] The disruptive circulation of the miniature of Antigona is balanced by the similarly unauthorised movement of Admeto's own portrait, which brings the two women together at the end of Act II, and provokes a tussle between them in Act III.

Within the symbolic economy of the opera, the miniature seems no mere plot contrivance: the genre's established cultural history inflected its role in *Admeto*, and for contemporary audiences would have enhanced awareness of the opera's play with the meaning of image.[62] The social function of the portrait miniature, as Patricia Fumerton observes, was that of a highly ritualised interface between private and public aspects of courtly life.[63] In its heyday, during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the miniature was primarily associated with royalty.[64] Its practitioners' avowed aim to 'catch at and steale' in their sitters 'what conduces most to the Likenes' no doubt derived from the function of these tiny works in royal marriage negotiations.[65] Thus Admeto, having been told of Antigona's beauty but having received from his brother and envoy the portrait of a less attractive woman, is within his rights to call off negotiations, relying on the authenticity of the portrait's physiognomic narrative. Equally, Antigona, having sent her true likeness, is within her rights to complain at her first appearance: 'Admeto traditor, iniquo amante' (I.iv).[66]

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[60] In the 1681 source libretto the comparison between Admeto and Trasimede is reinforced (though not on visual grounds) by Orindo, who begins that Trasimede's sufferings are 'Al par di te Signore' ('Equal to yours, Sir'; retained in the London libretto), and continues 'Sol una diferenza, / Trà'l tuo male, el suo ardore, / V'è a quel foco, ch'in seno à lui rinforza; Ch'ei pena per Amore, e tù per forza.' ('The only difference between your illness and his ardour concerns the fire burning in his breast; his is the pain of love, yours is imposed on you'; the final couplet refers to the Italian saying 'per amore o per forza', meaning 'whether one likes it or not'); Mauro, *L'Alceste*, 10–11.

[61] Of course, this process also echoes Euripides' transition from the statue of Alcestis to her veiled (disguised) form to her final unveiling, and in so doing perhaps undermines Alceste's role in that transformative, revelatory journey in this opera.

[62] As Keir Elam notes, 'the spectator's very ability to apprehend important second-order meanings in his decoding of the performance depends upon the extra-theatrical and general cultural values which certain objects, modes of discourse or forms of behaviour bear'; *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 11–12. For an analysis of the portrait's role in mediating identity in seventeenth-century French literature, see Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis*, 135–6.

[63] Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, 27. The portrait miniature, though deriving from Dutch traditions of manuscript illumination, was evidently peculiarly English; see Murrell, 'The Craft of the Miniaturist'.

The importance of the miniature's function in brokering the paradox of intimate partnerships between states – political matches inevitably forged in the public eye, and yet projected as the ideal of courtly love – also engendered a fetishistic response to their creation, housing and political viewing. The miniature was more than just a portrait, in other words, but – in a way that has particular resonance with the actor's function in the theatre – came to stand for the sitter and the negotiation between his or her private and public selves.[67] Although the miniature's use in *Admeto* is not wholly authentic to its historical treatment, the principal characters also manifest the traditional protectiveness and obsessiveness about these objects, which in turn creates a peculiar tension around the relation between image and reality.[68] In understanding this relationship the concept of the fetish (as well as the Lacanian mirror) seems particularly useful – not the fetish in its Freudian sexual sense, but rather in the sense of Marx's commodity fetishism and in its older, ethnological meaning: an object standing for and somehow containing the essence of a being or godlike force.[69] Trasimede's (and later Antigona's and Alceste's) possessiveness of the miniatures might thus be seen as a response to the absence of and desire for the beloved.

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[64] Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, 8.

[65] Norgate, *Miniatura or the Art of Limning*, 80. In their note to this paragraph, the editors observe how important exact, 'warts and all' (153), likeness was to Norgate – following Gabriele Paleotti of 1582 – while Nicholas Hilliard placed 'emphasis on a canon of beauty' (152). The importance of accurate likeness to monarchs themselves is emphasised in the earl of Sussex's 1567 account to Elizabeth I that he had had to explain to the Regent of the Netherlands, Margaret of Parma, 'that the picture commonly made to be solde did nothing resemble Your Majestie'; see Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, 66. Manipulation of visual iconography became increasingly vital in maintaining the aging Elizabeth's reign, as Strong goes on to explain. Of course, the history of reading the 'character' from a face, discussed in chapter 1, was also important here.

[66] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 11; 'Treach'rous *Admetus*, false, forsworn to Love' (10).

[67] Most striking was the code of behaviour for viewing the portrait: however utilitarian their formal role, their place in marriage negotiations ensured that they were treated as more-than-material representations of the 'beloved'. Fumerton relates Sir James Melville's story of his 1564 discussion with Elizabeth I, in his role as ambassador from Mary Queen of Scots, about plans to marry Mary to the earl of Leicester. Elizabeth eventually 'took me to her bed-chamber, and opened a little cabinet, wherein were divers little pictures wrapt within paper'; the first she picked up 'She appeared loath to let me see', but eventually revealed it to be Leicester's; she then 'took out the Queen's [Mary's] picture, and kissed it; and I adventured to kiss her hand, for the great love therein evidenced to my mistress'. *Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill, 1535–1617*, 92–94; cited in Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, 67.

[68] The plot at times entails curious carelessness with regard to the portraits; for example, the servant entrusted with the King's portrait by Trasimede manages to drop it as he leaves the stage in II.x.

The degree to which an image can take the place of reality becomes evident in Trasimede's first appearance with Antigona's portrait and his subsequent encounter with the woman herself: despite her disguise as the shepherdess Rosilda, Trasimede recognises Antigona immediately, and has difficulty believing her when she denies her identity.[70] Antigona, in turn, recognises the primacy of the image in Trasimede's mind, observing 'Il ritratto ei vagheggia, e somiglianza in me più l'innamora'.[71] It is the portrait Trasimede loves; Antigona herself only by extension.[72] In Act II, Admeto's response mirrors Trasimede's – desire for the portrait is only echoed for the woman herself. Thus the miniature prescribes Antigona's relationship with Trasimede and Admeto; it introduces her to both and facilitates her entry to the court: Trasimede offers the disguised Antigona a position as court gardener on the strength of her resemblance to her portrait. But it also encourages objectification of her: in Act II, scene iii, Trasimede throws aside the portrait ('Vanne Antigona al suolo!'), only to re-christen 'Rosilda' by that name ('A te, a te mi volgo … cara Antigona amata'), as he claims her, Pygmalion-like, as his 'bella effigie animata'.[73] In scene ix Trasimede attempts to abduct 'Rosilda', explaining 'incolpa in te la somiglianza, che d'Antigona porti, e non l'offese mie, non i miei torti' – the archetypal justification for male lack of self control, because the woman looks 'like that'.[74] Significantly, 'Rosilda' is only able to deter his abduction attempt by questioning whether it demonstrates his 'love and constancy' for 'Antigona' ('Quest'è l'amor, la fede che ad Antigona serbi?').[75] Of course, Antigona has attempted (like all 'good girls') not to provoke attack – not to be herself – by dressing as a humble 'pastorella'. But her disguise merely heightens her vulnerability (who, after all, would protect a mere shepherdess from the advances of a prince?), and reinforces the objectification already fostered by the precedence given to the miniature.

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[69] Gamman and Makinen have defined the latter as 'anthropological fetishism' in *Female Fetishism*, 15, 18. Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, propounded in volume one of *Das Kapital*, essentially sees the displacement of value in an exchange market from labourers who produce objects to the objects themselves, thereby endowing those objects with a mystical 'life' of their own; Gamman and Makinen provide a succinct overview of the theory of the commodity fetish from Marx through Veblen to Lukacs and Baudrillard; see Gamman and Makinen, *Female Fetishism*, 28–34. They see this as a general and current phenomenon: modern fans and people mourning loved ones often fetishise in this way (pp.18–27).

[70] His description of her as 'Diana' in his parting aria (I.ix) reinforces our sense of his confusion.

[71] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 24; 'The Portrait works upon him like Inchantment; / And the Resemblance, that I bear, still more / Works on his am'rous Soul' (25).

[72] This confusion is again present in II.vi where Trasimede, observing his brother comparing the woman 'Rosilda' standing before him and the portrait of Antigona now in his hands, comments 'Che vedo! tra le braccia del Re la bella mia!' [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 36 ('What is't I see, my Beauty, and my Charmer, / Lodg'd in the Circle of the Monarch's Arms!', 37).

[73] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 32; 'Down to the Earth, thou Shadow of *Antigona*: … To you alone I turn my Eyes, / Your living Picture, that attracts my Sight, / My real, dearest, Lov'd *Antigona*' (33).

[74] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 47; 'Blame, Beauty Blame / The Charms, the dear resembling Charms / You bear to my Antigona, for they're to blame, / And not these Insults owing to my Flame' (46).

Framing this in broadly psychoanalytic terms, in Trasimede's and Admeto's various reactions to Antigona's appearance we might see something of Lacan's assertion that 'when one is a man, one sees in one's partner what can serve, narcissistically, to act as one's own support': the woman is merely a substitute for the ideal of desire.[76] Thus Admeto's final line of the opera – 'ambe impresse vi avrò sempre nel core'[77] – not only satisfies in one blow the character's sense of honour, a central conceit of the drama, and the theatrical need for equality between the two female singers. In its emphasis on the women's effect on Admeto's heart it also recalls the Lacanian imperative of the self-referentiality of male desire.

If this might suggest a sexual element to Trasimede's fetishisation of Antigona's portrait, we should not entirely lose sight of the Freudian conception of the sexual fetish, for the idea of using an object as a screen to allow the disavowal of (potentially) traumatic or worrying knowledge of the person about whom one fantasises is central to my reading of these miniatures, Antigona's in particular.[78] In this sense, the fetish is not only a means to recall the absent beloved, to summon her presence, but also allows one to keep the person at bay and in some ways confine her. It is little wonder that Trasimede is so disoriented by the actual appearance of Antigona, which forces him to confront not only a lack of mutuality in love, but also the probability that his duplicity with his brother will be revealed.

More important, however, is the idea that in this regard the fetish – like the mirror – operates meta-dramatically. That is to say, it is not simply the characters but also the actors, the opera's creators and the audience who experience disavowal and a form of anxiety – as well as a hypnotic attraction – this time for the two singers, Cuzzoni and Faustina. The phantasmagoric ability to turn the image to reality, which Nietzsche identified and which Trasimede certainly experiences, is constantly at issue: there is a sense in which, no matter how one tries to keep what one fears at bay, it will always resurface – indeed, sensing one's own lack, one looks for its return.[79] The alignment of portrait with woman, or the structural juxtaposition of one woman with the other, until they eventually, explosively come together, thus suggests a fascination with the dangers of desire on the part of opera's creators and audience alike. This simultaneous anxiety and fascination is projected through a range of part-for-whole substitutions – the miniature, certainly, but more importantly the consistent deployment of disguise by both singers in their paired operas; the 'typecasting' and symbolic balance of the women (a splitting of 'woman'); and, of course, the singers' ornamenting, ornamental voices, with which the audience was so enthralled. All these substitutions served as means to objectify and ostensibly control the singers themselves. What is being 'disavowed' through this process is the individuality of each singer, her power as a professional woman to control her own image.

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[75] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 47; 'Is this the Love, this the Fidelity / Profess'd for fair *Antigona*, by thee?' (46).

[76] Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 157.

[77] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 76; 'And both your Forms shall deep engraven lie / Within this Heart, for all Eternity' (77).

[78] Freud's founding of this fetishism on castration anxiety established in early childhood clearly cannot be related to opera characters, however. Elin Diamond similarly finds the conflation of Freudian and Marxist 'fetishism' productive in her discussion of the Restoration actress; *Unmaking Mimesis*, 59.

AUDIBLE IDENTITY

That this process of control, of play with the performers' identities, was consciously and strategically articulated in the operas can be illustrated on a musical level in *Admeto*. It seems that, from the outset, Handel intended his music to participate in the exploration of identity. *Admeto* is one of those rare Handel operas in which the overture might be said to prefigure what is to come, not via dramatic synopsis, but through a discrete articulation of the particular problem of representing identity in music. The first movement, while typical of Handel, also foreshadows the first scene of the act, which, the scenic description in the Chrysander edition shows, had been intended as an atmospheric opening ballet ('*Admeto indisposto nel letto, che dorme … Ballo di Larve con stili sanguinosi in mano*').[80] Aside from the Ballo's retention of the overture's key (D minor), it also adopts motifs from the first movement – the dotted

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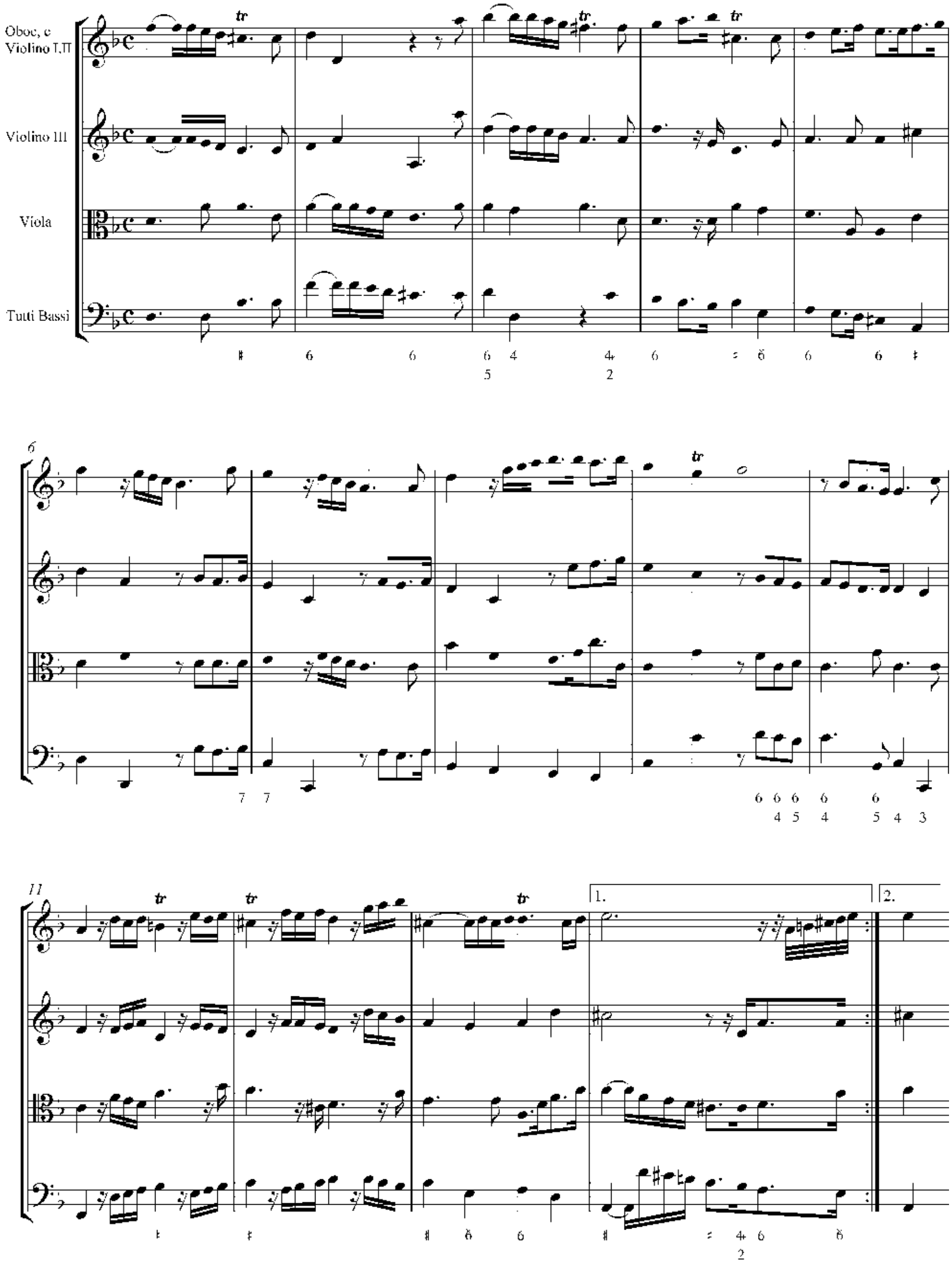
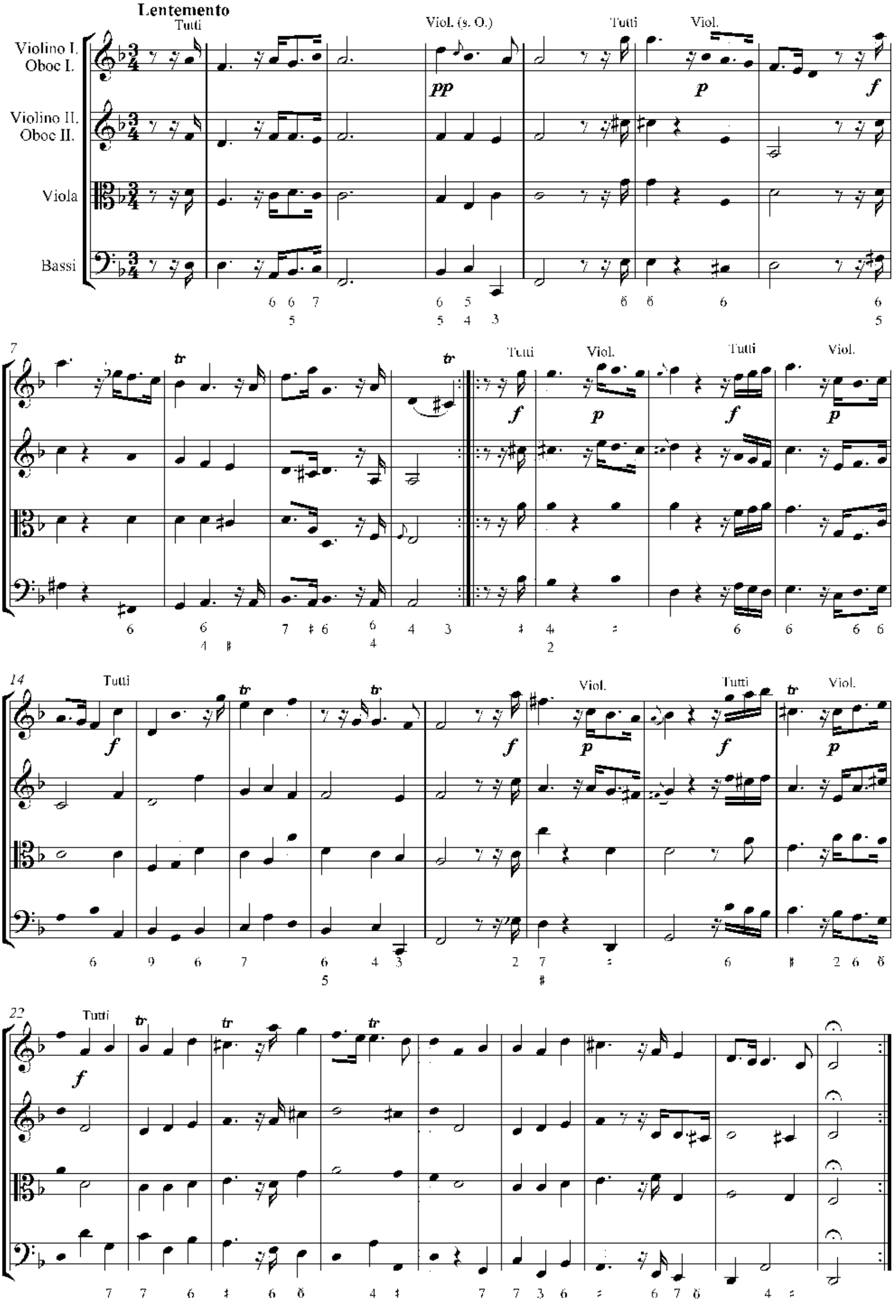
[79] One might continue the Lacanian analogy here, with reference to the physically incapacitated infant in the 'mirror stage', who desires the return of its (seemingly) more capable *imago*; Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', 78.

[80] 'Admeto ill in bed, asleep … A dance of spirits with bloody knives in their hands.' Chrysander's source for this description is unclear: neither the autograph nor the conducting score survives for *Admeto*, and the 1727 vocal score of the arias (*Admetus; an opera*, published by John Cluer), includes the overture and act two sinfonia, but not the Ballo. There were a number of copies made of the opera – at least one was made for the king after Charles Burney's inventory of his collection. Chrysander evidently had access to sources which gave scenic descriptions other than those found in the 1727 libretto, as his directions do not always match the libretto's. On supplements to the King's Collection, see Roberts, 'The Aylesford Collection', 50–1. Richard King confirms that the conducting score was missing by the time Victor Schoelcher bought the collection that he would eventually sell to Chrysander for Hamburg; 'New Light on Handel's Music Library', 116–17. Sarah McCleave discusses some alterations and additions in other manuscripts of the opera; 'Handel's Unpublished Dance Music', 131.


Oboe, e Violino I,II
Violino III
Viola
Tutti Bassi
6
11
1.
2.

Ex. 3.2a G. F. Handel, *Admeto* (London, 1727), Overture, bb.1–14.

quaver–semiquaver pattern and the offbeat semiquaver scalic figure (Examples 3.2a, 3.2b). These echoes may or may not have been accidental; they may perhaps have been designed to highlight the plight of King Admeto by drawing the audience's ear to the connection between the unsettling Ballo and the traditionally regal opening of the


Lentemento
Tutti
Viol. (s. O.)
Tutti
Viol.
Violino I.
Oboe I.
Violino II.
Oboe II.
Viola
Bassi
pp
p
f
7
14
22

Ex. 3.2b Opening Ballo from Handel's *Admeto* (London, 1727), I.i, bb.1–30.

overture. The one segment of reused material (overture: bb.4–5 [and see also bb.12–14]; Ballo: bb.20–21), makes the transformation clear in its rhythmic and structural alteration:[81] while this passage in the overture is part of the first line's continuation to the tonic cadence, presented in a smooth sequence of varied dotted-notes, the Ballo reworks the material in disjunct form, in which an ascending *forte* spurt of semiquavers (violin/oboe 1) is phrased with a drop to a trilled dotted crotchet, and then followed, *piano*, by a more measured ascent reminiscent of the overture, though without the assurance of the perfect cadence.

Such dynamic contrasts and frequent rests feature throughout the second section of this Ballo, and signal 'a mimic scene', an effect which was highly unusual in Handel's ballet music until his work with Marie Sallé in 1734–5.[82] Although the omission of the 'Ballo' in the published libretto would seem to indicate that no dancers appeared, the music suggests Handel still had them in mind.[83] With or without the visual instantiation of the monarch's distress, however, the music paints a vivid picture: the contrasts of the opening ballet – heightened by comparison with the overture – and the abrupt shifts of key and tempo in Admeto's ensuing *accompagnato* would have been recognised as markers of the king's ill health, for it was operatic convention for such swings and formal haphazardness to signal mental disturbance.[84] The character's struggle to maintain coherence (and perhaps, by extension, the actor's to maintain character) is at issue here.[85] The *Largo arioso*'s return to stability of key and tempo – introduced by a distillation of the overture's dotted rhythms and scalic echoes – comes only as Admeto submits to death: 'Chiudetevi miei lumi' ('Close my eyes'), he calls.

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[81] Handel's reuse of this material may not have been conscious, of course: instead, the stylistic similarities between the overture and the Ballo may have prompted this more discrete 'borrowing'.

[82] McCleave, 'Marie Sallé as Muse', 19, 13. McCleave observes that 'Most of Handel's earlier opera dances [up until 1734–5] conformed to generic types, such as the menuet or rigadoun, and assumed the traditional dramaturgical functions of homage, display, seduction and rejoicing' (13).

[83] McCleave states that, despite the evidence of the libretto and Cluer's edition, the *ballo di larve* was featured in the first staged version of *Admeto* (though only there), as 'the indications for dance are unique to manuscript sources reflecting the first version of this work'; 'Marie Sallé as Muse', 19 (n.15).

[84] Silke Leopold traces Handel's links to the Restoration mad scenes of Purcell, Blow and Eccles; see Leopold, 'Wahnsinn mit Methode'. On older conventions of madness, see Rosand, 'Operatic Madness'.

[85] We might say, in psychoanalytic terms, that it represents the challenge of disruption to 'flow' in the mind–action continuum; see Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 55–6; cited in Goldman, *On Drama*, 63–4. Goldman observes: 'Both our impression of a coherent self-identity and our conviction that we can find and convey meaning in our exchanges with the world depend on the phenomenon of flow. In ordinary life serious disruptions of flow are accompanied by breakdowns of psychic and linguistic coherence.' This analysis has striking parallels to Monteverdi's instructions on creating text for the mad character Licori: 'perchè la immitatione di tal finta pazzia dovendo haver la consideratione solo che nel presente et non nel passato et nel futuro[,] per conseguenza la imitatione dovendo haver il suo appoggiamento sopra alla parola et non sopra al senso de la clausula' ['since the imitation of such … madness must take into account only the present and not

Whether dancers appeared or not, these balletic visions, emanations of Admeto's pained imagination, seem so real that he rises from his bed to fight them off. From the outset, then, the opera presents the visible as a troublingly contested realm: what is real and what imagined? How can one maintain a stable self between the two? The aural reinforces this sense of confusion, and thereby imposes it on the audience too. Appropriately perhaps, the orchestra seems sometimes to act against Admeto – as in the initial G minor section of the recitative, where his statements are punctuated by orchestral outbursts recalling the previous Ballo – and sometimes to speak with him, as with the succession of sustained chromatic chords that follow. As the king wrestles with his demons, he struggles for supremacy over the orchestra: his cry of 'Crude!' on the abrupt move to F major in bar 9 seems defiant of more than just the dancing *larve*. And later it is the orchestra's wall of sound – a barrier of semiquavers erected between singer and audience – not metaphorical thunder or earthquake, that threatens to crush Admeto and sweeps him up in a fantasy of obliteration, the climax of which he articulates and reiterates on his highest note of the movement, 'La!'. While the inconsistency of the music represents Admeto's incoherence and his struggle, the ballet externalises his pangs, his deictic 'La!' seemingly summoning the ghostly world of his imaginings into being.[86] The moment reinforces the sense that the visual is not only a site of struggle over identity but at the same time is theatrically encoded, always freighted with the sense of social performance that establishes the 'I'. The aural similarly both generates confusion at a local level and guarantees a symbolic order in its broader patterns: musical convention marks out the king's mental turmoil, while the connection to the overture suggests some larger narrative.

The appearance of Ercole (Hercules) in scene ii, a character as active as the king is passive, makes this structure manifest.[87] If Admeto's music is a twisting of the

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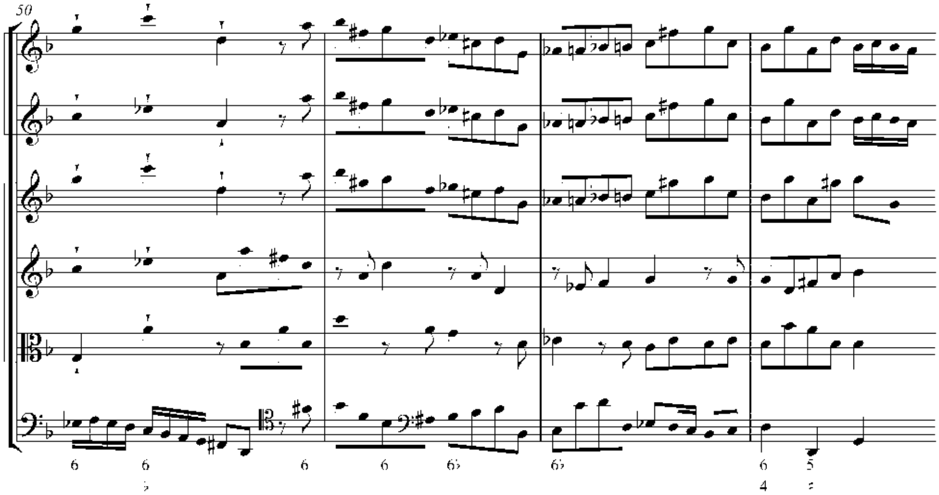
the past or future, therefore it must be based on the single word and not on the sense of the phrase']; letter of 7 May 1627, cited in Rosand, 'Operatic Madness', 244.

[86] On the importance of deictics in early opera, see Calcagno, 'Monteverdi's *parole sceniche*'.

[87] The literalisation of Admeto's mental world sets the stage, as it were, for the importance of visual symbolism and its connection to the aural domain: aside from the oft-noted graphic imagery of the second act's opening scene in Hades (barking Cerberus and all), the score is permeated with markers of the scenic, from Ercole's comically literalistic leaps when describing his course 'Fra mostri e orrori' (i.ii), to Antigona's pastoral debut (i.iv), to Trasimede's hunting scene (i.ix), to take just the first act.



Ex. 3.3a G. F. Handel, *Admeto* (London, 1727), Overture, 'Allegro', bb.50–53.

overture's slow movement, Ercole's paean to glory ('La gloria sola') subtly adopts the stance of the overture's Allegro (Example 3.3a). Ercole's aria (Example 3.3b) makes much of an ascending chromatic scale used once only, but very obviously, at the point of maximum harmonic instability in the Allegro (b.52) to bring the movement to a cadence on the subdominant before the transition back to the tonic. This motive suffuses Ercole's aria, its connection to the Allegro reinforced by its repeated appearance on the same pitch as in that movement.[88] Although it perhaps gives a lascivious cast to Ercole's perpetual thirst for glory ('La gloria sola che ogn'or bramai'),[89] its association with a punchy arpeggiated figure, which also precedes it in the Allegro, sketches a convincing picture of the bluff but sensual hero so well known from classical myth. The B-section's amusingly physical depiction of Ercole's bumpy path 'Fra mostri e orrori' ('amongst monsters and horrors'), exaggerated by the continuo, does nothing to lessen this characterisation. The hero who charges at his demons like the proverbial bull at the gate is thus distinguished from the sensitive monarch, tortured by his imaginings.

If we read the overture retrospectively as a reflection on the contrast between the two male principals, how, we might ask, do the women figure? One could perhaps also find in the contrasts of Admeto's opening ballet a foreboding

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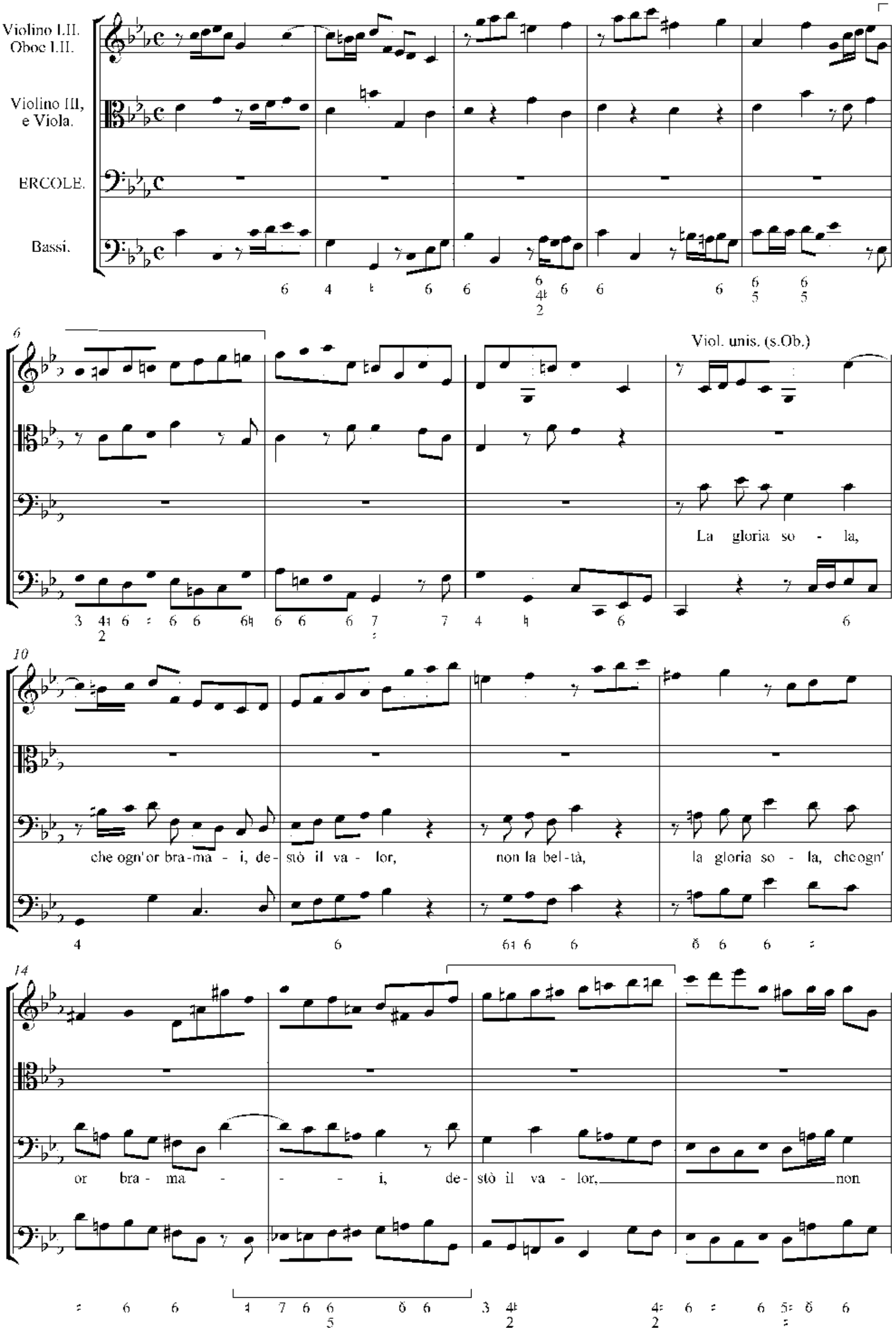
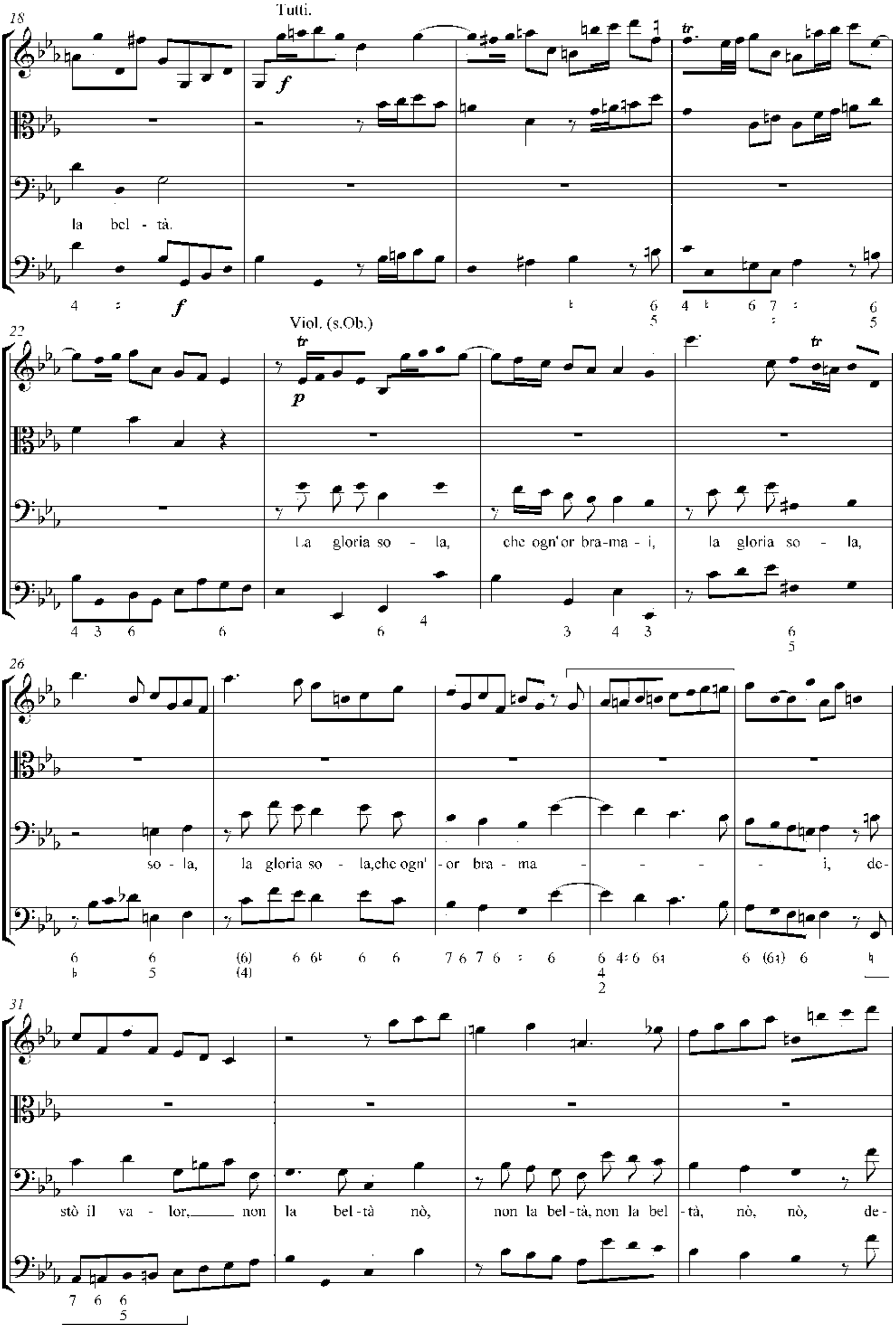
[88] It appears in bb.5–7, 14–15, 15–17, 28–30, 30–31, 44–46, 45–47; only the second and third of these begin on anything other than G.

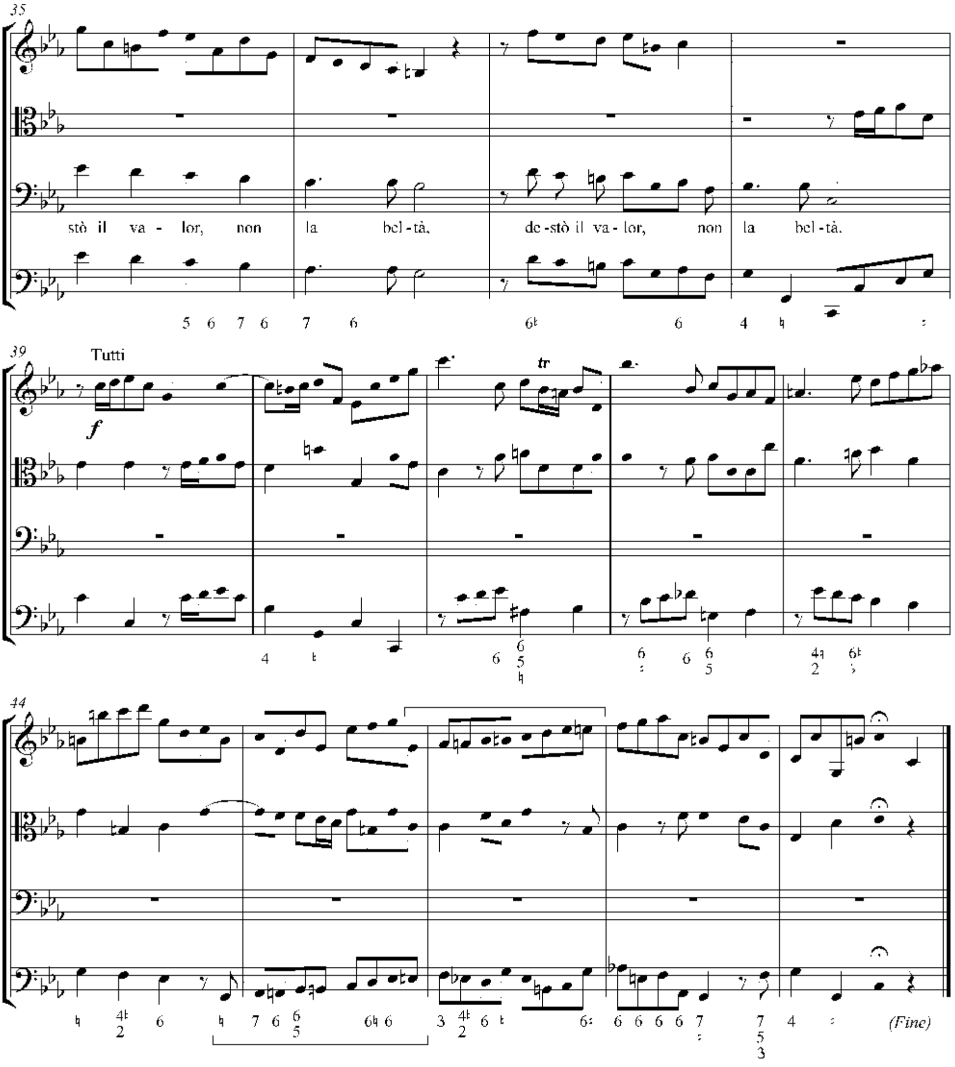
[89] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 7; 'It is Glory alone, / Which I always desir'd' (6).


Violino I.II.
Oboe I.II.
Violino III, e Viola.
ERCOLE.
Bassi.
6
Viol. unis. (s.Ob.)
La gloria so - la,
10
che ogn'or bra-ma - i, de- stò il va - lor,
non la bel-tà,
la gloria so - la, cheogn'
14
or bra - ma - - - i, de- stò il va - lor, non

Ex. 3.3b G. F. Handel, ‘La gloria sola’, *Admeto* (London, 1727), bb.1–48. Brackets denote the theme borrowed from the overture, b.52, given in example 3.3a.


18
Tutti.
la bel - tà.
f
22
Viol. (s.Ob.)
tr
p
La gloria so - la, che ogn'or bra-ma - i, la gloria so - la,
26
so - la, la gloria so - la,che ogn' - or bra - ma - - - - i, de-
31
stò il va - lor, non la bel-tà nò, non la bel-tà, non la bel - tà, nò, nò, de-

Ex. 3.3b (cont.)


35
stò il va - lor, non la bel - tà, de - stò il va - lor, non la bel - tà.
39
Tutti
f
tr
44
(Fine)

Ex. 3.3b (cont.)

of his later emotional dilemma between Antigona and Alceste; Admeto's battle for self-realisation thus finds in the women actuations of his mental state – this, after all, is what Nietzsche suggests of the recognition scene. Admeto's initial Act II appearance gives some confirmation to this reading: the octave leaps, fragmented dotted phrases and dynamic contrasts of his *larghetto e staccato* aria recall the opening to Act I; so too do his words, complaining of further torments. Here, however, it is the king's thoughts rather than substantial furies that he seeks to dispel, thoughts of Antigona, whose portrait he has just seen for the first time: 'Sparite, o pensieri, se solo volete, tiranni e severi, ch'io peni così.'[90] If the women are in some sense an extension of Admeto's mental struggles,[91] this is consistent with the larger (Lacanian) point that the atomisation of the women also made them potential projections or fulfilments of any number of imaginings.

The women's contingency is demonstrated in their initial appearances, moments of particular importance for establishing a character's place within an opera. While the men's sound world appears designed to maintain the integrity of their different roles, the women's music initially refers inwards, mirror-like, to each other. The visual–aural confusion invoked and then generated in Admeto's opening scene is reinforced in the women's Act 1 juxtaposition. Of the two women, Alceste (played by Faustina) appears first, in 1.iii. Arriving to comfort her sick husband, she discovers that she can save him only by sacrificing herself. Her F minor aria unfolding her resolution to die for Admeto is not a *da capo*, but begins and ends with the apostrophe 'Luci care, addio, posate' ('Lovely Eyes, adieu, repose'), which thus serves to unite the whole (Example 3.4a). As Alceste leaves, Antigona arrives, disguised as the shepherdess, Rosilda. An appropriately bucolic sinfonia introduces her, with a change of scene to the wild woods. Her first words, too, are wild: 'Admeto traditor, iniquo amante' ('Treach'rous Admetus, false, forsworn to Love') she sings, of the man she believes has jilted her (Example 3.4b). This line is diametrically opposed to Alceste's in sentiment, but it is also somewhat reminiscent of Alceste's in assonance ('addio, posate' and 'iniquo amante'), in its structural role – it too begins and ends a musical unit, here an F major accompanied recitative – and in its music. The musical lines are treated in remarkably similar fashion – broken into short, disjunct statements, spanning the same range and frequently employing the same intervals, with a mid-point vocal pause on scale degree 3, before retracing the vocal line in a concluding gesture that drops from f″ to a final 3–2–1 (assuming the conventional cadential appoggiatura in 'Admeto, traditor').

The fleeting similarities between Handel's music for the two women emphasise their differences still further, but they also tease us into recognising their

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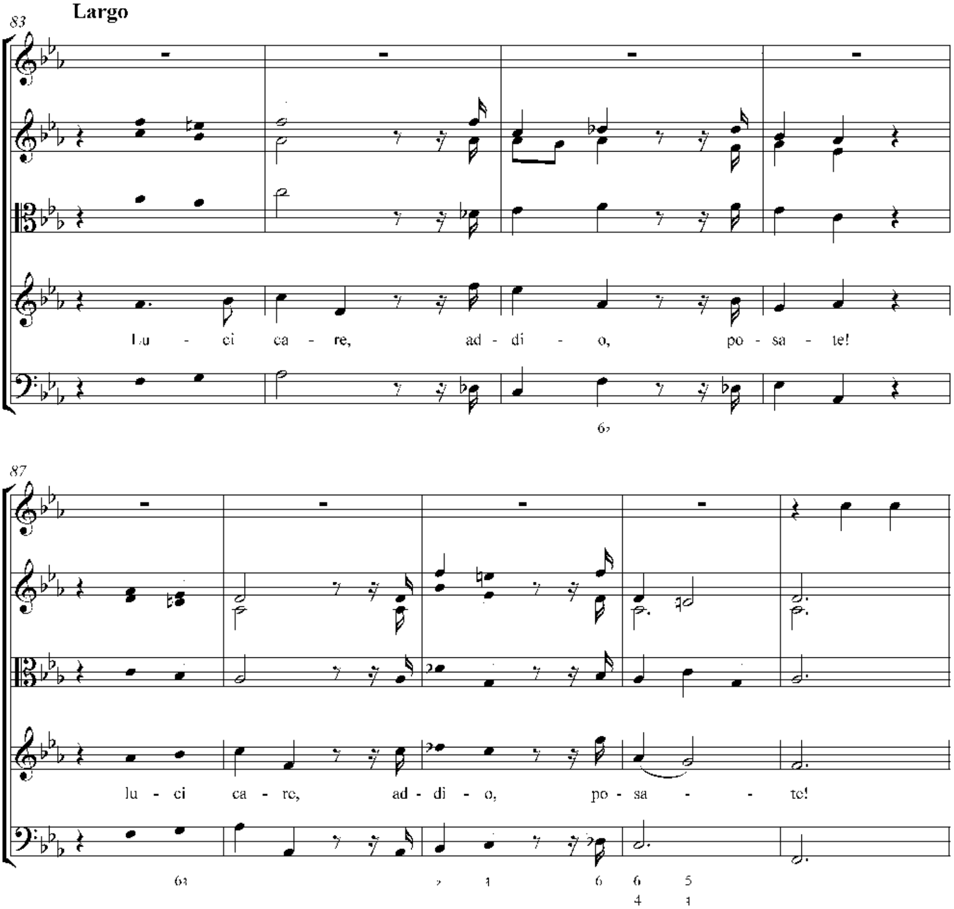
[90] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 36; 'Idle Fancy disappear, / If you only mean to bring, / On your cruel Tyrant Wing / Thoughts, that wrack my Soul with Fear' (37).

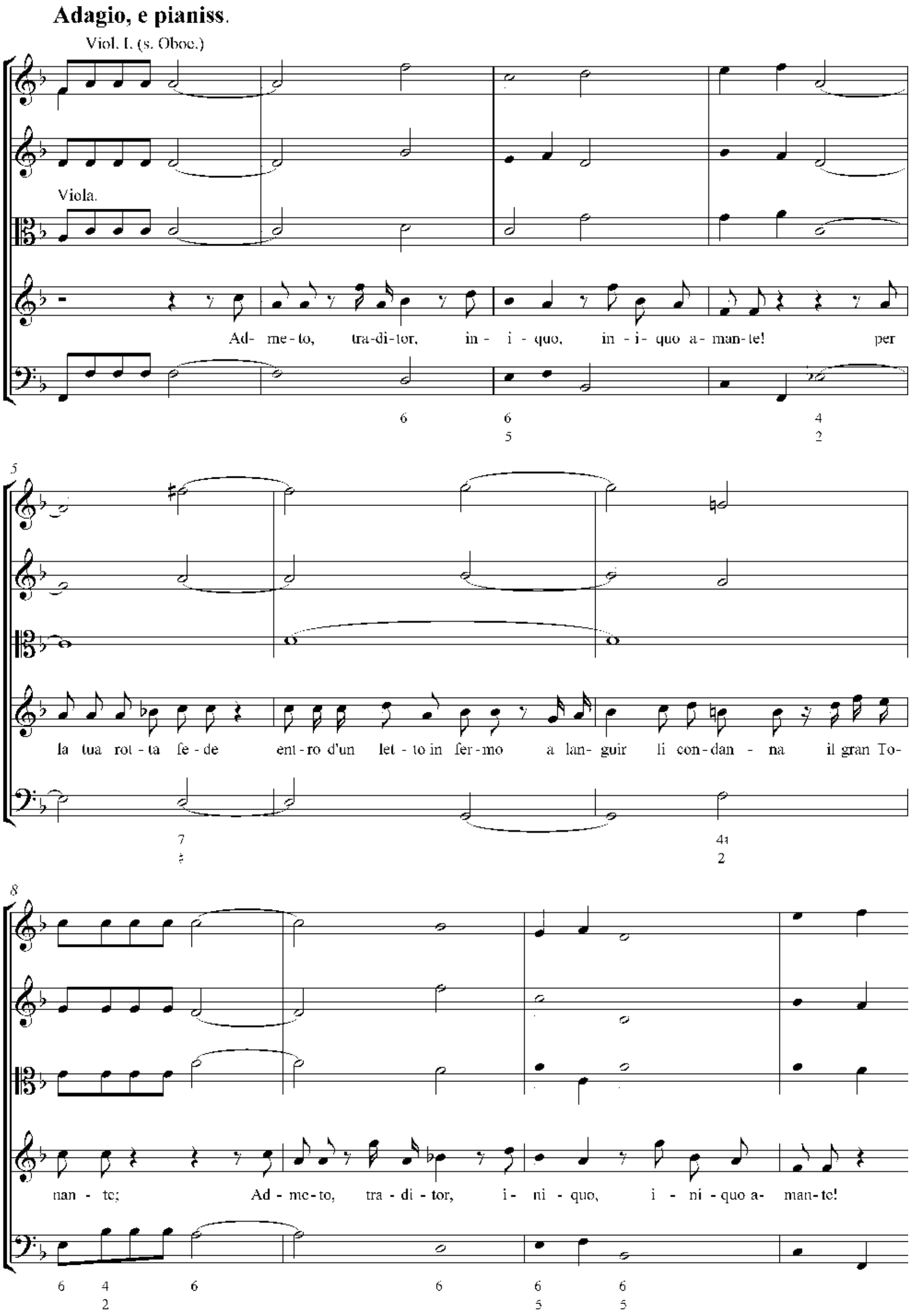
[91] They also bear some similarity to the female personifications of virtues or vices which accompany the toiling soul or individual, and which are both internal and external to that person; see Warner, *Monuments and Maidens*.


Largo
83
Lu - ci ca - re, ad - di - o, po - sa - te!
6♭
87
lu - ci ca - re, ad - di - o, po - sa - - te!
6♮
♭ ♮ 6 6 5
4 ♮

Ex. 3.4a The final version of the refrain that opens and closes Handel's brief aria, 'Luci care, addio, posate', for Faustina in *Admeto* (London, 1727), bb.83–91.

consanguinity. Though this moment of comparison may be brief, its very brevity – the hesitancy of the lines, the lack of embellishment – heightens the sense of the singers' presence within the music, and heightens the audience's awareness of what we might call Nietzschean liminality as the women hover between being identified with their character and identified with each other.

That this musical juxtaposition was deliberate is underscored by a comparison of Handel's libretto with its probable source: while the 1681 libretto provides almost all of the text for Antigona's opening London soliloquy, it begins the recitative with 'Per la tua rotta fede', while 'Admeto traditor' simply appears as part of the recitative, at the fourth line:


Adagio, e pianiss.
Viol. I. (s. Oboe.)
Viola.
Ad- me-to, tra-di-tor, in - i - quo, in - i- quo a- man-te! per
la tua rot - ta fe - de ent - ro d'un let - to in fer-mo a lan- guir li con-dan - na il gran To-
nan - te; Ad - me-to, tra - di - tor, i - ni - quo, i - ni - quo a- man-te!
5
8

Ex. 3.4b G. F. Handel, 'Admeto traditor, iniquo amante', *Admeto* (London, 1727), bb.1–11, the accompagnato for Cuzzoni's character that follows Faustina's aria, shown in example 3.4a.

***Admeto* (London, 1727)**	***L'Alceste* (Hanover, 1681)**
Admeto traditor, iniquo amante.	
Per la tua rotta fede	Per la tua rotta fede
Entro d'un letto infermo	Entro d'un letto infermo
A languir ti condanna il gran Tonante,	A languir ti condanna il gran Tonante,
Admeto traditor, iniquo amante.	Admeto traditor, iniquo amante!
A che chiedermi al padre	A che chiedermi al padre
In tua sposa reale,	In tua sposa reale,
se ingannar mi volevi,	se ingannar mi volevi,
perfidissimo Rege, e disleale?…[92]	perfidissimo Rege, e disleale?…
[etc.]	

The London librettist's decision to emphasise 'Admeto, traditor' by beginning with it obviously provides a rounded unit for the composer to draw out in an *accompagnato*, but it also highlights the contrast between the women's attitudes towards Admeto.[93]

The interest in comparison is also evident at a structural level: whereas the 1681 Hanover libretto did not bring Antigona on stage until some eleven scenes after Alceste – indeed, after the latter's death – the London librettist juxtaposes the two, adding another scene for Alceste, set in the 'Parte interiore del Giardino', immediately following Antigona's appearance in the wood. While Antigona fulminates against her wretched state – she is an exile, with her father dead, and the man to whom she had been betrothed (Admeto) married to another – Alceste is calm, her love for Admeto reconciling her to the necessity of her death. This locational contrast was clearly meant to be symbolic, the wild woods and the ordered garden representing the two women's different states of mind, as well as their relative social status: Alceste an acknowledged queen, sacrificing herself for her husband; Antigona an exiled and abandoned princess, disguised as a humble peasant.[94]

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[92] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 11; 'Treach'rous *Admetus*, false, forsworn to Love; / And for thy broken violated Faith / Languishing on thy sickly Bed, / Thou'rt doom'd to groan by the great Thund'rer Jove, / Treach'rous *Admetus*, false forsworn to Love. / Why should'st thou e'er have claim'd me of my Sire / To be thy Royal Bride, / If to deceive thou only didst desire? / Perfidious Prince, that set'st all Truth aside' (10).

[93] The accompagnato prompt may have served as an appropriate substitute for the aria with which the Hanover scene begins. The London librettist's desire to juxtapose the women is further emphasised in our comparison of the 1727 *Admeto* with the 1681 libretto: here, this scene for Antigona (I.xvi) runs straight on into a scene with Meraspe (as per the London libretto), which includes the news of Alceste's death – text not used in the London libretto until a later scene between the two (I.viii).

[94] Francesco Giuntini comments on the generic significance and unifying quality of certain stock scenes, particularly garden scenes, in *I drammi per musica di Antonio Salvai*, 44–52. On the history of the re-use of scenes, known as *dotazione*, see Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera*, 274–6. The symbolic juxtaposition of the disordered wilderness and the cultivated garden in London went back at least as far as the Dryden–Davenant *Tempest* (1674); see Powell, *Restoration Theatre*

This visual symbolism is reinforced two scenes later (I.vii), when a servant brings the dreadful news to Admeto, telling him that, because the sorrow is too great for the tongue to recount, instead Admeto must look, and 'let tears open the fountains of his eyes' ('Mira; e del pianto apri le fonti a gli occhi'). Meanwhile the back of the stage opens and the 'fountains' of Admeto's eyes are matched by the scene, which reveals Alceste lying beside a fountain, a dagger in her breast (*'si vede presso una fonte Alceste svenata col ferro nel petto'*).[95] The inclusion of 'una fonte' or spring in this tableau is designed to represent not only Admeto's tears but also Alceste's chastity – a device for which there was venerable precedent. Such generic scenes were particularly important in eighteenth-century theatre; like the tableau or the actor's aside, the scene served as a structural frame, an encrypted commentary on the narrative. And the potential for such commentary was particularly strong in *Admeto*, as we have seen, because the diegesis itself was so fragmented where the women were concerned.

The London opera continues to juxtapose the two women in moments of dramatic irony, of echo and counterbalance. As Alceste melts into the scene, individual replaced by ideal, it is fitting that the symbolic accoutrements of her demise are co-opted by a woman who attempts to appropriate her idealised femininity and social identity (wife to the king): Antigona's entry to the court from the forest is achieved via the ordered space of the garden; as she tends and regulates the plants in her role as gardener, so she also regulates her own behaviour, taming the abandoned and wrathful princess into a subservient Arcadian nymph, thereby gaining access to the male systems of exchange that regulate social life. In Act II, her echoing of Alceste assumes a recuperative function, one that gradually incorporates her into Admeto's interest and affection. These echoes are sometimes fleeting – textual moments which, unlike the Act I comparison, the composer did not choose to take up. At the beginning of Act II, as Ercole rescues Alceste from the Underworld, she anticipates Admeto's delighted first words to her, his loving embrace of his 'idolo del cor mio', in the B-section of her aria, while Antigona's following recitative complains, by contrast, that she has nothing left to hope for if her 'bel idolo mio' flees her embrace.[96] Two

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Production, 77, 59, and *passim*; Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, 44–54. Chaste womanhood was often represented by the enclosed garden; see Pearson and Pope, *The Female Hero*, 22.

[95] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 16; 'Here all the back Part of the Theatre opens, and near a Fountain's Side is presented to View *Alceste* slain, with the Sword in her Bosom' (17). The metaphorical association between the purity of the state and the fountain or spring derives from the reading of the state as a body with the ruler at its head (*corpus politicum* as *corpus mysticum*); see Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 193–272. Orindo's line and the scene direction derive from the 1681 libretto.

[96] Here, the English text heightens the parallel: as Alceste rises from death to life, Antigona asks 'What have I left me in this World to hope for[?]', and while Alceste's final (B-section) line is translated as 'O fly to my Breast', Antigona's reads 'From this poor Breast (ye Gods) flies far away?' In each

scenes later, the despairing Antigona declares herself ready to die for the man she loves if he will not have her. Of course, this is a clichéd sentiment, but for that reason its appositeness is still more ironic. Antigona unwittingly adopts her rival's attitude, and is symbolically rewarded in the next scene, when Admeto is given her picture, to which he is immediately attracted. But it is only when Antigona fears that Admeto, even having seen her, will still reject her, that she again recalls her rival's music: her *larghetto siciliana*, like Alceste's in Act I, is in E minor, the bass echoing the poignant melodic line, and like Alceste's it tells of preparation for death.[97]

As this brief account suggests, through continued juxtaposition the women become not more but less firmly rooted in the plot, their varied textual, musical and scenic co-dependence ensuring that the symbolic narrative takes precedence over the dramatic one.[98] Their eventual appearance together on stage, at the end of Act II, is replete with meaning beyond the immediate narrative. Fittingly, their encounter occurs over another portrait, that of Admeto himself. The confusion generated by the circulation of images, which must have heightened the London audience's sense of the fragile and curious relationship between actor and character, is emphasised in this scene. So too is the women's mutability as signifiers, for the hostility between them, channelled through their reactions to the portrait, cannot have any focus within the narrative as neither character reveals herself for who she truly is. Alceste is outraged at Antigona's fondling of Admeto's likeness, but can make only veiled threats, as she is still playing the role of a soldier. When she asks who Antigona is, the nettled princess responds 'Dell'esser mio non posso darti notizia alcuna; sol ti dirò, ch'io sono uno scherzo del fato, e di fortuna' ('I can tell you nothing of myself; I will only say that I am the sport of fate and of fortune'). Given the weight of this as their first encounter, two-thirds of the way through the opera, their mutual deception and roles as 'scherzi del fato, e di fortuna' attain particular significance. As they confront one another over the picture of their beloved, their respective 'images' – the impressions they present to each other, to other characters, and to the audience – are as fluid and as much subject to negotiation as is the portrait itself.

As for the infant newly discovering a mirror, these operas suggest a dangerous fascination with the surplus of meaning generated by the over-engineered symmetry

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instance, in other words, the English translation strengthens the parallel latent in the Italian text. In the first, the English more directly suggests thoughts of death on Antigona's part by inclusion of 'in this World' (the Italian lines are: Alceste: 'Dalla morte alla vita io son rinata'; Antigona: 'E che sperar poss'io'). In the second, the contrast between Alceste's 'ti stringo al sen' and Antigona's 'lungi da questo seno … sen' fugge' is heightened by deploying the idea of 'flying' to or from the 'breast' in both.

[97] To add a further layer here, while within this opera Cuzzoni appears to be co-opting Faustina's key, metre and style, looked at across their operas together, it is notable that the siciliana 'belongs' to Cuzzoni (she has four against Faustina's one); see LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 164.

[98] See n.55, above.

of the singers: the omniscience the audience experiences in the dramatic irony of the women's juxtaposition also carries with it the intoxicating anticipation that their eventual encounter will reveal the new magic of a *mise en abîme*. But since, as the child finds with the mirror, magic is always tantalisingly out of reach, always veiled, we are left instead with a heightened awareness not of mystery but of contrivance. It is suggestive in this regard that both the pivotal Act II encounter between the women and the final moment of revelation – when Alceste unveils herself to Admeto and Antigona – are conducted entirely in simple recitative. Even Admeto's recognition of his wife is visual, not aural: 'che miro!' he says.

These key dramatic moments that withhold opera's defining force, the virtuosic voice, may seem curious to modern sensibilities: why did Handel not, as he had in *Alessandro*, 'improve' the text by converting recitative into aria? To see the substitution of aria for recitative as an improvement, however, is to misrepresent the composer's understanding of the genre (indeed, even in the women's joking exchanges with Alessandro in that opera, it is not the power of the voice that is uppermost). In *Admeto*, as in the earlier opera, the avoidance of the visceral power of music is deliberate, for instead it forcefully brings the theatrical into play, reminding the audience both of the singer's presence within the role and of their own engagement with (and perceived control over) the dramatic event. Thus *Admeto*'s Act II encounter begins with obviously 'stagey' references from both women – Alceste is first alerted to Antigona by her voice ('che è costei, che ascolto?') while Antigona becomes aware of being watched ('Che m'osserva?' she asks).

Obvious theatricality is not sufficient, however; and, if the singer's voice does not offer us otherworldly compensation, instead the scenic moment so layers hermeneutic possibilities that, in the shifting spectrum of meanings presented to view, we feel again the comfort of the intangible. In the final scene, Antigona makes her renunciation of Admeto with another staged moment which looks beyond the diegesis, this time a reference to the marriage rite, as she takes Alceste by the hand and gives her back to her husband ('*Prende Alceste per mano, e la presenta ad Admeto*'). Her words reinforce the connection between the pair: 'ad Alceste devi la vita; ad ella io devo ancora la vita tua, che preservò due volte … Alceste, cede a un fervido amor, l'amor di gloria'.[99] But they also delineate not just symmetry and closure, but a slightly unnerving sense of potential repetition (Admeto, saved once, is now rescued again; Alceste is remarried …). The Nietzschean epiphany, without its climactic fanfare, shades into a Dionysian intoxication with the game of mirrors. A sense of confusing perpetual generation is present too in Admeto's galant final line, returning to the conceit of the miniature: as he declares his heart to be the housing for the women's images – female form impressed on male matter (a confusing generative reversal) – we glimpse again the *mise en abîme*, image nested within image.

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[99] [Rolli?] *Admeto* (London, 1727), 75; 'you owe to your *Alceste* your very Life; your Life I owe to her too; Which she has doubly sav'd … Alcestes, thus I prove, The Love of Glory yields to fervent love' (74).

Admeto's line reminds us that, while the miniature was prized for its lifelike depiction of the sitter, it was also significant for an accompanying sense of ownership and control. Indeed, the portrait's value as accurate representation derived particularly from performance of that control, the challenging execution of exactitude in form small enough to enclose and carry. But inevitably, of course, the smaller the portrait, the less likely was it to bear similarity to anything but a cliché of the ideal (two eyes, nose, mouth…). So, as these operas veer between playful exploitation of Cuzzoni's and Faustina's images and desire to contain and control, *Admeto* seems to suggest that the more hermetically controlled our vision of the women is, the more readily it fragments, our idealisation a literal as well as logical *reductio ad absurdum*.

The patterns of control and disintegration in *Admeto* may frustrate our desire to 'know' the singers' characters. But, like Nietzsche's recognition scene, reanimating Alceste *as* Alceste through the force of Admeto's spectatorial imagination, the staged rivalry of two stellar artists jolts us into awareness of the theatricality of the star singer's identity formation. While, in eighteenth-century society, the analytic fragmentation and comparison of women's attributes (physical and otherwise) was a recognised corollary of their status as commodities, in the twenty-first century such acts, like a type of Brechtian *gestus*, give us pause for revaluation and historicisation of the cultural assumptions underpinning these moves.

Equally, they should encourage us to question our own assumptions about our cherished aesthetic responses to opera. If elements in opera such as the miniatures in *Admeto* have been labelled in the past as weaknesses, what is particularly disconcerting about them, I suspect, is the way they detract from the music's pre-eminence, suggesting that opera might have concerns beyond that of the voice – beyond even that of the drama. Even today, our focus on the music brings us perhaps a little too much comfort, for if it was the distinctive qualities of the voice that allowed the singers to be formed into a compelling but ultimately reductive binary and cemented into myth, it is also the power of the voice that has recently allowed us to recuperate the agency of the singer, placing her anew at the centre of the drama. In neither instance do we do full justice to the complexity of the performer's identities or of the operatic experience in which he or she participated. Paying some attention to the apparent superfluities and ornaments of the dramatic structure – the fleeting moments of musical parallel or theatrical aside – might serve to awaken us not just to the richness but also to the sometimes disturbing contingency of the operatic event.

4 | Balancing power in *Riccardo primo*

At the end of 1727 Handel had two monarchs on his mind: his music played an important role in the civic and religious ceremonial of George II's coronation in October, while in the theatre *Riccardo primo* was premiered in November. In an international context in which opera was often as much about representations of the state as it was about the personal, it is not surprising that the opera directors saw this story about a heroic British monarch as an opportunity to pay tribute to the young king; librettist Paolo Rolli dedicated the libretto to George II accordingly. But the politics of state were hardly those of the opera, concerned primarily with Riccardo as thwarted lover. Indeed, whether the tribute to the successor to the throne was originally intended is unclear.

Riccardo primo had been written some months earlier, in April–May 1727 (completed by Handel on 16 May) – rather late in the 1726–7 season but well before George I's unexpected demise on 11 June. Although Reinhard Strohm has suggested the opera had first been designed for the young George, as Prince of Wales, it may in fact have been his father who was initially intended to be so honoured, as will be discussed further below.[1] The existence of a performing score of this first version suggests that staging late in the 1726–7 season was intended.[2] Perhaps, because the season had started very late, due to Senesino's late return to London, it was thought necessary to run on into June to give patrons their money's worth. Or perhaps Handel had anticipated his opera might be required if Bononcini's only opera for Cuzzoni and Faustina, *Astianatte*, did not succeed. As it was, the premiere of *Astianatte* had already been delayed to 6 May, due to the illness of first Faustina and then Cuzzoni, and however one might judge Bononcini's success (*Astianatte* achieved nine performances), the disastrous reception of his opera, along with George I's death at Osnabrück, ensured that Handel's opera was not needed that season.[3]

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[1] Reinhard Strohm suggests it was designed as a tribute to the Prince of Wales, to counterbalance *Admeto* as an opera apparently composed for George I; see *Essays*, 55–6. See also his 'Darstellung, Aktion und Interesse in der Höfischen Opernkunst' (22–6), in which he makes a further case for the opera's dynastic homage based on similarities between *Riccardo primo* and the opera *Enrico Leone*, performed in Hanover in 1689 in homage to (and perhaps chosen by) Duke Ernst August, George I's father and George II's grandfather.

[2] Strohm, *Essays*, 55; Terence Best, 'Preface', xviii.

[3] The overheated factionalism surrounding *Astianatte* created the need at least for a cooling-off period after 6 June. As noted in chapter 2 n.61, above, after the termination of that performance there were

When *Riccardo primo* was brought to the stage on 11 November 1727 nearly six months had elapsed since its completion, and in that time Handel and Rolli had made substantial alterations to the opera – particularly in the second and third acts – creating what was in many ways a different work. The reasons for these changes have only partially been explained. The dedication of the work to the newly crowned George II, though seemingly important, would have had little practical impact.[4] Terence Best, in his recent critical edition of the opera, points out that the departure of the contralto Anna Dotti before the 1727–8 season necessitated the removal of the minor part of Corrado, which was originally written for her in May. But, as he subsequently observes, this part had already been considerably reduced for the May version of the opera when compared to the source libretto, Francesco Briani's *Isacio tiranno* (1710).[5] Rolli's subsequent excision of Corrado as message-bearer served to strengthen the plot further, and led to alterations to the end of the second act and beginning of the third, but it certainly did not account for all of Rolli's changes.[6]

Following Winton Dean, Best's principal explanation for the rejection of the first version as it stood is that it 'shows signs of haste in composition, in which the weaknesses of Briani's libretto were only minimally dealt with'.[7] Best's 'weaknesses' encompass chiefly 'the violence and ferocity of the behaviour of the main characters' and the fact that Riccardo and Costanza are in love although they do not meet until near the end of the opera. But while such elements might indeed have been frowned on by the reformers of the Italian *accademie*, and nominally by British patrons, vicious characters (or vicious behaviour) had hardly been absent from London's operatic

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no further performances, although two might have been expected (on Saturday 10 June and Tuesday 13 June), prior to news of the King's death (which occurred on 11 June) reaching the public domain.

[4] Strohm observes that the 'political, ideological element' honouring the monarch was already present in the earlier libretto; Strohm, *Essays*, 55. Winton Dean, however, notes the addition of a number of 'gratuitous references to British valour, justice and power', *Handel's Operas, 1726–1741*, 67.

[5] The character has the name 'Corado' in the source libretto, but 'Corrado' in the May adaptation; the different spellings are used here according to the libretto described. The libretto for *Isacio tiranno* is usually attributed to Briani as his name is given as author of the dedication, but John H. Roberts has pointed out that Briani's name was pasted over that of Matteo Noris, and Briani may have written only the scenario, with Noris responsible for the versification, but not the production; see 'The Riddle of *Riccardo primo*'.

[6] Best, 'Preface', xv, xvii. Most importantly, in *Isacio tiranno* Corado had served as ambassador, delivering Riccardo's demands for the return of his bride, Costanza, and Pulcheria's letter to her father, as well as relaying Isacio's messages and reactions; the May librettist immediately made Riccardo his own messenger (1.vii; compare 1.x). In the November version the librettist decided to send Pulcheria to her father instead of using Corrado to convey a letter.

[7] Dean, *Handel's Operas, 1726–1741*, 67. Best, 'Preface', xv. This explanation is not dissimilar to J. Merrill Knapp's argument, in his study of Handel's autograph, that the heavy alterations to both libretto and score were the result of Rolli's perfectionism: the changes 'probably would not have taken place if Rolli had been a different person'; 'The Autograph of Handel's "Riccardo primo"', 335.

stage before this, nor was the expression of love prior to the characters' actual encounter a novelty either in operatic terms (*Admeto* was the most recent example) or in the theatre generally.[8] Indeed, unjust persecution, on the one hand, and delaying the encounter of two principal characters, on the other (as we saw with Alceste and Antigona in *Admeto*), were standard catalysts for the dramatic narrative in this period.[9]

Most recently, John H. Roberts has proposed that the extensive changes to the libretto (which also required considerable musical alteration) might in part have been due to a change in librettist: while Rolli signed the November dedication, and the libretto included the claim 'Il Drama è quasi tutto del Sig. Paolo Rolli', Roberts suggests the only reasonable explanation for the level of alteration to the libretto is that Rolli was revising and (as he would have seen it) improving the work of another librettist.[10] This theory (and Roberts's proposal of Giovanni Sebastiano Brillandi as that librettist) is plausible on stylistic grounds,[11] but it does not explain Rolli's decision to re-shape the plot as he did.

There is another explanation for the changes made to *Riccardo primo* between May and November 1727, one to be found in the opera company's circumstances at this time. Handel was composing *Riccardo primo* while the *Astianatte* problem was unfolding: *Astianatte* was premiered on 6 May, just ten days before Handel completed the first version of *Riccardo primo*, and it was on 6 June that audience misbehaviour led to that opera's (and the season's) discontinuation. It would have been a foolish director who did not take notice of such problems; even with the intervention of the summer months as a cooling-off period, neither Handel nor the company could rely on audience tensions having died at the start of the following season. Instead, they must surely have realised they would have to act to ensure that factional antagonism did not reoccur, or at least not with the intensity that had caused *Astianatte*'s collapse. Not surprisingly, many of the alterations to *Riccardo primo* make particular sense when viewed in this light, as this chapter will show. As we examine these changes, we will see that the way in which this opera was reconfigured between May and November 1727 also suggests a broader point: that the opera creators manipulated the symbolic balance between Faustina and Cuzzoni according to changing extra-dramatic conditions.

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[8] On the British audiences' supposed interest in characters' propriety, see Rolli's letter to Riva of October 1720 and Riva's October 1726 letter to Muratori, both cited in *Händel Handbuch 4*, 93–4, 143–4, and Owen Swiney's letters of 28 December 1725 and 13 August 1726; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 361, 369. Opera (like all drama) nonetheless inevitably featured vicious characters: Oronte in Handel's *Floridante* (1721) or Tamerlano in the opera by the same name (1724) might represent the archetypal male operatic villain, though a variety of sorceresses in earlier operas had filled the same 'blocking' role; Apostolo Zeno's *Griselda* (1701), which centred on the persecution of the heroine by her husband and his courtier, was one of the most popular libretti of the eighteenth century. In London even Senesino, as the operatic hero, had played less-than-noble roles in *Il Vespasiano* (1724), discussed on pp. 234–5, below, and *Calfurnia* (1724). As shown in the previous chapter, it was common courtly etiquette to 'fall in love' with a portrait of the beloved long before meeting; in *Tamerlano* (1724), Tamerlano and Irene had not seen one another when they were betrothed.

[9] Delaying the meeting of lovers was used equally in eighteenth-century fiction; two novels as diverse as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1748) are structured around the protagonist's separation from (and reunion with) his or her beloved.

[10] Roberts, 'The Riddle of *Riccardo primo*'. I am grateful to John H. Roberts for sharing his article with me in advance of publication.

[11] Roberts points out that in stylistic terms Rolli's 'operatic arias, always smooth and neatly formed, tend toward a conventional blandness of imagery and diction'; 'The Riddle of *Riccardo primo*', 480–1.

ISACIO TIRANNO TO *RICCARDO PRIMO*

Unlike other ancient monarchs around whom patriotic writers of the eighteenth century busily constructed a new British identity (kings such as the mythical Arthur and the mytho-historical Alfred), Richard I appears to have been little exploited.[12] The novelty of the opera company's choice is indicated by a copycat publication: in 1728, George Sewell's play *The Tragedy of King Richard the First* was published on the basis that 'the Opera of Richard the *First* [is] the present Entertainment of the Court'.[13] Because this was an unusual subject, Sewell felt the need to include a sixteen-page prefatory 'Life' of the monarch (drawn from Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England*), 'To illustrate, in some Measure, the Scenes now submitted to the Publick'.[14]

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[12] On British patriotic mythography, see Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*. When repeated searches for 'Richard I' and 'Richard the First' were run, the catalogues *Early English Books Online* and *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* listed only five publications alongside Sewell's *Tragedy of Richard I* and his *Posthumous Works* that contain the monarch's name in the full title. These are (with short title only given here for all but the last): William Prynne's *The first-[third] tome of an exact chronological vindication and historical demonstration of our British, Roman, Saxon, Danish, Norman, English kings supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction* (1660); the anonymous *Turbulent conspiracies, or, The Roman Catholiques enormities against the metropolitans of England* (1672); *A true tale of Robin Hood* (1686); M. Rapin de Thoyras, *The History of England, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil* (1728); and *The True and Ancient Hereditary Right Consider'd and Explain'd: Being a Demonstration that His present Majesty King GEORGE the Second receives from his Royal Father the best Hereditary Right to the Crown of England and Ireland of any Monarch that hath sat upon the Throne since Richard the First* (1729).

[13] Sewell, *The Tragedy of King Richard the First*, in *The Posthumous Works of Dr George Sewell*, [v]. This posthumous publication was put out by the author's brother.

[14] Sewell, *Tragedy of King Richard the First*, [ix]. Rapin's enormously popular *History of England* was published in fifteen volumes, translated by Nicholas Tindal, between 1725 and 1731. It served as the source for other didactic dramatic works, such as James Thomson's and David Mallet's masque *Alfred* [1740]; see my 'Ballads and Britons'.

Why, then, would either Sewell or the opera company have chosen to dramatise this little-known figure of British history? One possible explanation for the choice of subject lies in Sewell's dedication of the play to the duke of Newcastle. This dedication includes a eulogistic verse, drawn from an earlier collection of Sewell's poetry (from 1720), which makes clear Newcastle's own admiration of Richard I, as well as the link the poet wished to promote with George I:

> O! had You liv'd to fan the kindled Rage,
> E'en I the least, the lowest of the Stage,
> To *Your Own* fav'rite Theme the Lyre had strung;
> And Great *Plantagenet* triumphant sung,
> *First of His Line*, which mighty in Extent
> Shines forth in *George*, and brightens by Descent.
> Then had you heard the *Poet-Monarch*'s Strains,
> And view'd Your *Garter* first on Jewry's Plains.[15]

It seems reasonable to imagine that Newcastle, as governor of the Royal Academy of Music from 1717 to 1724, might have wished to have his 'fav'rite Theme' honoured in an opera where the first in the Plantagenet line was compared to the first in the Hanoverian.[16] A source libretto may even have come to hand through Newcastle's family connections: despite the unpromising title, Francesco Briani's *Isacio tiranno* (1710), dedicated to Newcastle's wife's grandfather (John Churchill, first duke of Marlborough), offered a cleverly embellished but apparently authentic piece of Richard I's history.[17] It had been set by Antonio Lotti for Venice in 1710, and had been used again in 1725, for the Teatro di San Sebastiano in Livorno, prior to Paolo Rolli's reworking of it as *Riccardo primo* for London.[18]

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[15] Sewell, *Tragedy of King Richard the First*, vi. The earlier volume was *A New Collection of Original Poems* (London, 1720); in it, Sewell provides a footnote to this passage indicating that Joseph Addison had recommended Richard I as the subject for a tragedy (n.p.).

[16] Newcastle was governor of the Royal Academy by virtue of his office as the Lord Chamberlain from 1717 to 1724, but evidently had a personal interest in the opera, as he is also listed as a subscriber for 1728; see Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 23, 31. The opportunity to honour the king in the opera was one perhaps only fully realised with the second version: Best (like Dean) notes the addition of 'flattering references' in the November version, although see Strohm's comment that the flattery was largely already present, cited in note 4, above.

[17] *Isacio tiranno* was dedicated to the duke of Marlborough (Newcastle and his wife, Lady Henrietta Godolphin, had married in 1717). Another route for the libretto's journey to London is suggested by Eleanor Selfridge-Field, who points out John Brownlow, first Viscount Tyrconnel's presence in Venice in December 1710; *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres*, 299–300. Although, as noted above (n.5), Matteo Noris may have versified the libretto, since his precise role is unknown and Briani signed the dedication, for convenience I will continue to use Briani's name in the following discussion.

[18] Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, III, 496–7. Sartori does not name a composer for the Livorno performances. According to Reinhard Strohm, the opera later achieved popularity at Braunschweig between 1730 and 1740 (personal communication).

Briani's libretto was not, then, one of those popular works which found their way to all corners of Europe, as were several of the other libretti examined here. Instead, its manifestation in London represented a response to particular local circumstances. Perhaps the original had not found wider success due to the semi-comic villainy of its title character; certainly, there was much to alter before *Isacio tiranno* was fit for London. Nonetheless, in examining the changes made between the May and November versions of *Riccardo primo*, it is important we also take the source libretto into account in order fully to appreciate the design decisions made by Rolli and Handel for the opera that was finally performed.[19] Even in the first version of *Riccardo primo*, the librettist's changes are telling, and particularly affect the roles designed for Cuzzoni, Faustina and Senesino (who of course played Riccardo). It is only as we study the accretion of alterations that the cumulative impact in terms of the women's roles will become clear.

Initially, as their hyperliterary, emblematic names suggest,[20] the roles that by now would have been expected for the women are maintained: Cuzzoni plays Costanza, the bride of Riccardo primo, who is held hostage and whose virtue is attempted by the tyrant, Isacio. Faustina is Pulcheria, Isacio's fiery, wayward daughter. But these characterisations – and particularly that of Pulcheria – were subject to change as the opera evolved. In broad plot outline, Act I remains substantially the same in all three versions, with Costanza (and her companion Berardo) cast ashore on Cyprus, despairing for her betrothed, Riccardo, who is still at sea in the storm. Under false names, Costanza and Berardo seek shelter in the court of Isacio and his daughter Pulcheria. Briani here included a scene of friendship for the two women (I.vi), which the London librettist(s), interestingly, decided to omit. Matters quickly deteriorate in both Briani's and the London librettos, however, with Pulcheria discovering her betrothed, Oronte, paying lavish compliments to the disguised Costanza. Isacio is also smitten with her, and Costanza finds herself on her knees, suing for his restraint. There is then a small but significant change: in the 1710 original, Corado is sent as Riccardo's ambassador with news that the king has landed, and seeks the return of his bride; in both 1727 versions, Riccardo acts as his own ambassador, disguised, and thus finishes the act. The immediate impact on the plot is the same, however: with the revelation that it is Riccardo's bride, not a servant, who has appeared at Isacio's court, Costanza's disguise is breached and Isacio schemes to keep her. So far, then, Cuzzoni conforms well to her traditional character type – the damsel in distress.

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[19] These changes have been discussed in great detail in Knapp, 'The Autograph of Handel's "Riccardo primo"'.

[20] Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*: 'Emblematic names, that is to say, patronymics with a meaning related to the part played by their bearers in a story…' (33); they are also referred to as 'noms parlants' or (a coinage attributed to Franklin P. Adams) 'aptronyms'.

Faustina, too, has had opportunity to show some mettle in her annoyance with Oronte – though Pulcheria is quick to assure Costanza that she bears no animosity towards her.

The second acts in the May and November 1727 libretti diverge more frequently from Briani's, particularly in the depiction of Pulcheria. In Briani this act begins with Costanza and Berardo expressing general misgivings, but in Rolli's libretto this became a particular suspicion of Isacio and Pulcheria, who had ensured that Berardo and Costanza respectively did not meet the British 'ambassador'.[21] Isacio's confrontation with Costanza (present in all versions) leads to his decision that, as Riccardo has not yet seen his bride, he will send Pulcheria to him disguised as Costanza – a nice balancing of Costanza's ruse in Act I. Briani's solo scene for Pulcheria (II.iv), in which she wrestles with herself about wreaking vengeance on Costanza and Oronte, is omitted in both versions of *Riccardo primo*. When Isacio tells Pulcheria of his plan, she remains torn between love for Oronte and desire for revenge in Briani (II.vi), but in the London libretti it is clear that Isacio commands an unwilling Pulcheria to obey, and a solo recitative after his departure clarifies her determination to reveal his deceit. In Briani, Isacio himself escorts Pulcheria to Riccardo, whereas in the later versions she is accompanied by Corrado (in May 1727) and her waiting women; the nuancing of this scene (to be discussed further below) depends on the level of blame accorded to Pulcheria for the deceit. Costanza's and Oronte's discovery of this double betrayal prompts Oronte to go himself to Riccardo, revealing the deception just as Riccardo has accepted Pulcheria. In Briani and the first London version, the act ends with Oronte and Pulcheria upbraiding each other, as she is put in chains. Rolli devised quite a different ending for the November libretto, however – one which removed the emphasis on the squabbling couple. Instead, he demonstrated both Pulcheria's and Riccardo's magnanimity, by having them return to Isacio to jointly demand Costanza's restitution. With Isacio's feigned agreement, the act could end with an aria for Pulcheria expressing pride in her loyalty to Riccardo, and a duet for the newly united couple.

In Act III of Briani's libretto, events eventually turn in Costanza's favour, while Pulcheria is thoroughly debased: Pulcheria writes to her father, explaining that she will be killed if Costanza is not returned to Riccardo, but he spurns the letter (and his daughter). Pulcheria, upset at her father's reaction, asks Oronte to kill her; he refuses. When Riccardo and his troops are about to scale the walls of the beseiged city, Isacio appears, menacing Costanza, and Riccardo again threatens to kill Pulcheria. She arrives to plead with her father on her knees, but he once again refuses to relent, retorting that he fathered her only for enslavement to Riccardo. Oronte rescues Costanza and defeats Isacio, who is then chained and subject to Costanza's vengeful ire. Pulcheria's abasement is complete when, with Riccardo's predictable triumph, Costanza is given a sword with which to kill Isacio, and Pulcheria again has to throw herself to her knees to beg Costanza for clemency, this time with success.

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[21] The opening of Act II does not survive in the first London version, but, given the general practice of basing the second, November, version on the first, it is reasonable to imagine that the extant recitative was present in some form in the earlier version.

Little of this act changes in essence in the first version of *Riccardo primo* until near the end, where it is Riccardo, not Oronte, who defeats Isacio (III.x); this in turn allows another dramatic opportunity for the enchained Pulcheria to plead for her father's life, acknowledging her own role in deceiving Riccardo and therefore asking for the punishment to fall on her too. Riccardo, like Isacio and Oronte, is not inclined to show pity, although he does release her from her chains on the basis that she now acknowledges him as 'sovereign'. It is only with the *scena ultima*, when Pulcheria enters with her father, carrying his chains, that her self-abasing pleas are rewarded. As Knapp says, despair seems to characterise Pulcheria's role in Acts II and III of this version; indeed, one might say that Pulcheria's degradation and despair seem the focus of the third act.

In Rolli's November version of the opera, the most significant changes to the libretto occur in the second and third acts, and while expediency provides a partial explanation (around the departing person of Anna Dotti), the recalibration of the major characters seems to owe to more than necessity. In Briani, and to some extent in the first London version, Faustina's character, Pulcheria, is oddly mixed: she is initially accomplice to her father's attempted deception, but when captured loses much of her agency and is constantly humiliated as a hostage to fortune. Following the confrontation in *Astianatte*, one can well imagine how a climactic scene in which Faustina knelt to sue for mercy from Cuzzoni would have seemed unnecessarily provocative. Rolli's second version corrects this problem with wholesale amendments to Pulcheria's behaviour in the latter two acts. Indeed, the extensive alterations to Acts II and (particularly) III have the generally felicitous effect of making Pulcheria not a victim of but an agent in Riccardo's triumph, and of emphasising both her virtue (see, for example, her recitative 'Pietoso ciel', in which she explains that heaven has always inspired her to follow virtue's path), and her and Riccardo's magnanimity.

The redrawing of Pulcheria intersects with other significant aspects of plot redesign. As we have seen, at the end of Act II Pulcheria returns from Riccardo's camp and offers comfort to Costanza before introducing Riccardo (who has gained entry to Isacio's court by masquerading as his own ambassador), giving the lovers the opportunity to meet (thus resolving a significant flaw in Best's eyes), and facilitating an act-ending duet. In the middle of the second act, she offers herself as a hostage for Costanza, and in middle of the third act, in the climactic confrontation between Isacio and Riccardo, it is Pulcheria alone who offers her life if Isacio harms Costanza;

Riccardo, far from threatening her, attempts to stop her. As this moment indicates, although changes to Pulcheria's character were most significant, Senesino's character was also made more virtuous, and so too Cuzzoni's. So, when the anxious Pulcheria asks Riccardo whether he will be merciful to her father ('Vincitor pietoso sarai[?]'), Riccardo reassures her that he will act 'Per propria gloria', and Costanza promises to support her friend and save Isacio's life.[22] These alterations then suggest the way in which the confrontations between Faustina's and Cuzzoni's characters (and indeed Faustina's and Senesino's), which were nearly as noticeable in the May *Riccardo primo* as they had been in *Isacio tiranno*, were re-negotiated to alleviate the tension caused by Bononcini's opera.

PULCHERIA'S 'SORTE PERVERSA': MANIPULATING THE LIBRETTO

A more detailed examination of a few key scenes will demonstrate the nature and importance of the changes made for November 1727.[23] Inevitably, as it was chiefly Faustina's character that appeared in a less-than-favourable light in the first version, it is her role we will particularly explore, but in the process we will see that the changes served to heighten a sense of balance already present in the libretto between the two women.

In the middle of Act II, the pivotal encounter between Riccardo and Pulcheria masquerading as Costanza went through a series of permutations. At this stage in the drama Riccardo, of course, has not seen Costanza in person, but he has had report of her; as in *Admeto*, there is an awareness of the play between reported and perceived image in all three versions. When Pulcheria arrives, Riccardo is confused by her appearance: in Briani he bluntly declares her less beautiful than fame had reported ('à noi più bella / la decantò la fame'); in *Riccardo primo* he says 'V'adorata mia Dea; (Ma pur diversa la fama a me portò le sue sembianze!)'.[24] In Briani there then ensues a carefully staged exchange between Riccardo and Pulcheria, in which Pulcheria dissembles about her ordeal. This is omitted in the London libretti, which reduces the sense of Pulcheria's participation in the deception, but in the first version the effect on Riccardo is the same: the king requires little convincing by Pulcheria's act, but on Oronte's arrival and explanation he is quick to turn his anger from Isacio to his supposed bride. The same lines appear in Briani and the first London version, as Riccardo objects to Pulcheria's duplicity of appearance and voice, as well as name: 'e tu, falsa di nome, di voce, e di sembiante, scelerata [*sic*] Pulcheria'.[25] The inclusion of 'voice' in Riccardo's list of deception underlines the way in which this disguise was meant to be read extra-diegetically, as a reference to the contrast between the singers playing Pulcheria and Costanza, as well as to their characters. The epithet 'scellerata' emphasises that real anger must originally have been intended on Riccardo's part (as does Handel's setting of the phrase to an ascending arpeggio).[26] By contrast, in the later version, Riccardo's response to Pulcheria is softened in several ways. Not only is a second arioso for Riccardo added to greet the supposed Costanza's arrival (thus allowing for a grander procession for Pulcheria), but Rolli also adds an aside for Riccardo, after he has noted that this 'Costanza' is not what he had expected, which serves somewhat to remove the sting of his subsequent rejection: '(Ma bella è pur!)'[27] The fury Riccardo had directed at Pulcheria in the original is aimed only at Isacio in the later version, as his imprecations against Pulcheria are cut back to the most nominal indication of anger: 'E tu'.[28]

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[22] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 182. The libretto for the November performance was published, and citation of translations will refer to that libretto; Best's edition also contains a facsimile of the libretto. This exchange is translated: 'Now will you be, Great Sir, a most Compassionate gen'rous Conqueror?'; 'For my own Glory', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 68.

[23] The *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* edition of *Riccardo primo* (edited by Terence Best) contains both versions of the opera (with the May version in an extensive appendix); reference to the text and music of both versions will therefore in most instances be to this edition.

[24] II. vii 'My adored goddess; (But yet her semblance differs from what fame reports!)'. In November 1727 this text changed slightly to: 'Vieni, bell'idol mio … (Ma che! diverse la fama a me portò le sue sembianze!)'; see Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 89.

The November libretto's alterations continue to place Pulcheria in a more flattering light: in the first version, although she has already made it clear she intends to act honourably by both obeying her father and revealing the deceit, her reaction to Oronte's unmasking of her is far from delighted, for she comments '(Sorte perversa!)'.[29] Subtly, this aside is delivered not immediately on Oronte's unmasking of her, but only as Riccardo finally turns from enquiring who *this* woman is to asking about the real Costanza, indicating his continued desire for his bride: Pulcheria thus apparently reacts not so much to Oronte as to Riccardo's lack of interest in her. (Musically too, Pulcheria's line seems to respond to Riccardo's question, 'Ma Costanza dov'è?', retaining his F major chord before Oronte's shift to A major for his continuing narrative.) This aside seems to suggest that, even if she had planned to reveal herself to Riccardo, she had also hoped to win him for herself. In the second version, just as Riccardo takes a more flattering interest in her, so Pulcheria takes on a more virtuous role, and this telling aside is omitted. Forestalling Riccardo's anger, it becomes Pulcheria's role to offer to act as hostage for Costanza: 'O prigioniera o serva a tua somma virtù sempre m'avrai.'[30] There is clearly still an element of flirtation in this offer of ransom, for Riccardo responds with propriety, but also with gallantry:

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[25] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 268; (and you, false in name, in voice, and in semblance, wicked Pulcheria). The lines in the May London libretto are, nonetheless, an abbreviated form of the imprecations against Pulcheria found in Briani.

[26] Riccardo's anger is confirmed as Pulcheria tries to excuse herself by saying she was following orders ('Legge paterna') and Riccardo cuts in, refusing to accept it as a valid excuse and commanding her punishment for executing her father's plans: 'Legge che non t'assolve dalla colpa … Perché d'opra esecranda esecutrice, tu prima avrai la pena.' Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 268.

[27] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 89.

[28] In May, Riccardo's anger is directed at both Isacio and Pulcheria by Oronte, who opens his revelation by speaking of 'due rei' ('two guilty ones'), and claiming the less guilty of the pair for himself; Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 267.

[29] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 267.

> Dato a *Costanza* ho il core,
> E unito ora agli affetti
> È l'impegno d'onore.
> Ma non pensar, che delle tue bellezze
> Anch' io non abbia ammiratore il guardo.
> T'onoro; e mia vendetta
> Del'armi nel furor te sol rispetta.[31]

As the rhetorical prolixity of Riccardo's reply indicates, the relationship between Pulcheria and Riccardo seems governed much more strongly by courtly decorum in the second version, with the virtue and probity of each character emphasised. Doubtless, it would have been seen as appropriate for a princess and a king to demonstrate the most highly polished manners, especially in the context of an opera now paying homage to a new British monarch. Nonetheless, the re-tuning of their parts seems inflected by an awareness of the behaviour fitting to a *primo uomo* such as Senesino and a *prima donna* such as Faustina, and also by the tricky negotiation of the three-way relationship between these two singers and Cuzzoni. To say this another way: while, as a character, Riccardo is in love with his betrothed, Costanza, as an actor it is only right that Senesino pay equal court to both divas.

THE BALANCE OF POWER

The idea of equivalence between the two divas conventionally takes a reductive aspect, the singers' competition becoming a mere tally of the number of arias composers were forced to write. But as we saw in the last chapter, that concept could take a more critical form, in which the tension between similarity and difference for the women was itself explored.[32] In *Riccardo primo*, as in *Admeto*, we see a layered and sophisticated approach to ideas of balance. As the summary of Briani's libretto suggests, balance between the women was already structured into the dramatic narrative: Costanza presents a false identity to Isacio in Act I, so he sends Pulcheria to Riccardo to do the same in the second act. Such designs were common enough in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: to take a now-notorious example from outside the operatic repertoire, in 1667 John Dryden and William D'Avenant decided that Shakespeare's *Tempest* was incomplete and added characters, balancing Miranda with Hippolito, a man who had never seen a woman, and giving her a sister, Dorinda (with whom Hippolito could fall in love).[33] *Opera seria* is replete with works structured around various kinds of relationship symmetry, from the obvious pairs of lovers or rivals (in *Tolomeo*, to be discussed in the next chapter, for example, husband and wife Tolomeo and Seleuce are both pursued by unwanted lovers), to more subtle plot mechanisms (the balance of Alceste's sacrifice with Antigona's in *Admeto*).[34]

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[30] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 91. 'You ever, Sire, shall hold me, or as Pris'ner, Or as a Slave to your consummate Virtue'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 39. Later (III.ii) Pulcheria tells Costanza that she will again offer herself as hostage to Riccardo, for him to do to her whatever her father does to Costanza ('Se il fiero *Isacio* a te sarà crudel; tale a me ancora sarà'); Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 156–7.

[31] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 91. 'I've made *Constantia* a Present of my Heart, / And our Affections are cemented now / By the strict Pledge of Honour. / But do not think, my Eyes were not Admirers / Of your bright Beauties. / I honour you: And all my swift-wing'd Vengeance / Amidst the Rage of Arms pay you alone Regard'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 39–40.

If we look more closely at *Riccardo primo*, we see that the plot's symmetrical gestures were particularly orientated around the two women. They also seem frequently to have been designed to test the relationship between the two. Thus, for instance, in Briani and the May version of *Riccardo primo*, it appears that Pulcheria may harbour some romantic feelings for her captor (expressed in the pivotal disguise scene, discussed above), as Isacio certainly does for his captive. This tension is most apparent in the climactic scene in Act III, present in both May and November versions (with variations): Isacio is revealed on the walls of the city, holding Costanza at knifepoint, while Riccardo and then Pulcheria stand together at the front, the latter holding a sword to her own breast (III.v–vi). The symmetry is multifaceted, with conflicting desire (Isacio for Costanza, and possibly Pulcheria for Riccardo) and crossing familial and matrimonial bonds. And, in Briani and the May version, the balancing act reached out beyond the bounds of this opera to another work, as Faustina's character knelt to sue for mercy from Cuzzoni's at the end of the opera, in a stunning reversal of a crucial scene in *Astianatte*. But this, of course, was overbalancing, and needed to be righted.

Nothing indicates the delicacy of the balance required between the women – and its centrality to the structuring of the operas – better than Rolli's and Handel's negotiation of the end of *Riccardo primo*, where the quite radically different versions of the denouement detail their dilemma. In the source libretto this is the scene that has Pulcheria fall at Costanza's feet to beg for clemency as she is about to kill Isacio. One might imagine that this highly effective scene would have been very difficult to stage given the already charged relations between the two women. No doubt this explains why one May version of the ending, in which Riccardo hands Isacio *and* Pulcheria over to Costanza, appears to peter out in the autograph manuscript, with the recitative text remaining unset (GB-Lbl RM.20.c.2, f.115r). In this version the scene begins with a recitative and duet between Riccardo and Costanza, united at last (ff.112–14). This love duet would have been an appropriate if conventional ending to the opera. Why was it not used? One answer is that the shifting of Riccardo's and Costanza's first encounter to the second act made it feasible (and reasonable) for the duet to end that act.[35] But one might also imagine that, in the post-*Astianatte* atmosphere, the precedence it gave Cuzzoni over Faustina at the end of the opera made it a less-than-desirable option. The deliberations the London librettist(s) and Handel went through to achieve an acceptable ending seem to support this conclusion. Another option from the May version of the opera is present which gives the text only: Pulcheria will leave with Riccardo and Costanza, and all will be peace (f.116v). Even the final solution Rolli and Handel arrived at in November exhibits continuing difficulties: the victorious Riccardo gives the kingdom to Pulcheria, telling her she may share it with whom she wishes, but her decision to give her former lover, Oronte, her hand in marriage is only added on a later page, indicated by a large 'NB' in the middle of the recitative (ff. 141r, Figure 4.1, the inserted recitative appearing at f.144r).[36] Without this added recitative, Riccardo's offer, Pulcheria's thanks and Costanza's rejoicing would have led straight into Riccardo's final recitative and aria, celebrating his equal affection for the two women: 'Diviso il cor sarà', he explains to Pulcheria and Costanza, 'per te, tutto amistà, / e tutto amor per te', giving his address to each a distinctive musical theme.

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[32] Hans Dieter Clausen points out some elements of the more sophisticated, long-range calculation involved in this need for balance in 'Händels *Admeto* und Bononcinis *Astianatte*', 154–5.

[33] For the various other doublings of the Dryden–Davenant version, see Guffey, *After the Tempest*, viii.

[34] Suzana Ograjenšek's suggestion that in Venice operas were often created around two 'prima donnas' (discussed on p. 29, above) might also indicate an interest in symmetry; see 'From *Alessandro* (1726) to *Tolomeo* (1728)', 38.

As the opera concludes with Riccardo paying compliments to the two women equally (having given Costanza and Pulcheria successive arias in previous scenes) we might be inclined to applaud Rolli and Handel for their diplomatic finesse. In the equivocating generosity of Riccardo's final aria, they managed to maintain not only

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[35] Best, 'Preface', xvii.

[36] The lack of the concluding recitative for Oronte, before the final chorus, in the autograph manuscript (it survives only in the Hamburg performing score) reinforces the possibility that he was an afterthought; see Best, 'Critical Report', in Handel, *Riccardo primo*, 386. The difficulty of negotiating Pulcheria's/Faustina's connection with a lower ranking figure than Riccardo/Senesino might also be indicated by a small adjustment to the opening of the opera: when Isacio informs Pulcheria she will marry Oronte in Briani and May 1727, she responds '(O amore)', but the more ambiguous '(O Cielo)' in November 1727; Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 218, 25.

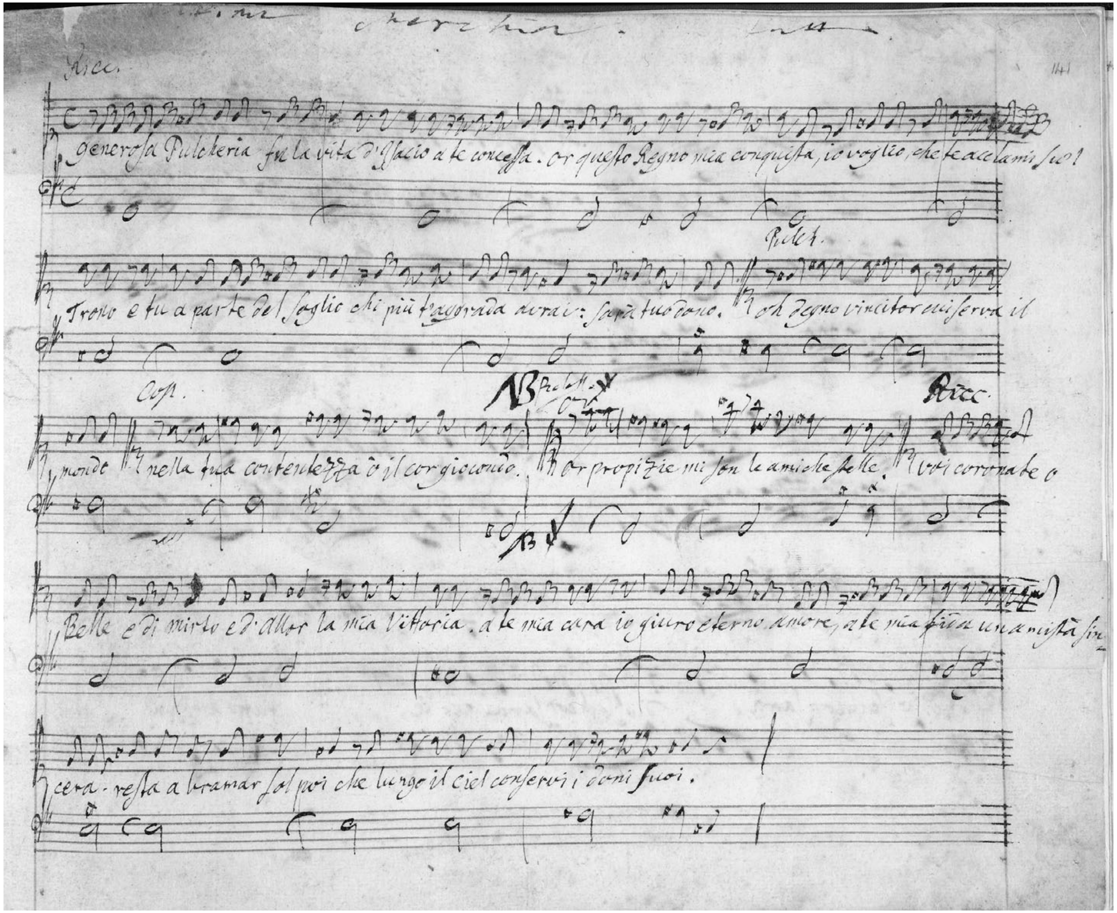
Ricc.
generosa Pulcheria fu la vita d'Isacio a te concessa. Or questo Regno mia conquista, io voglio, che te acclami suo
Trono e tu a parte del soglio chi più sfavorata aurai: senza tuo dono.
Pulch.
oh Regno vincitor ch'i serva il
Cost.
mondo nella sua contentezza è il cor giocondo.
Or propizie mi son le amiche stelle.
Ricc.
voi coronate o
Belle e di mirto e d'allor la mia Vittoria. a te mia cara io giuro eterno amore, a te mia fida un'amistà sin
cera. resta a bramar sol poi che lungo il ciel conservi i doni suoi.
141

Fig. 4.1 G. F. Handel, scena ultima, *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), f.141r.

the precarious balance between the singers, but also that between the conflicting attractions of Italian opera for London's opera-goers, who seem in part to have hungered for scandal and on the other hand to have been concerned to maintain the genre's high moral tone. The advantages to the company in such a scenario were clear. As Terry Castle has suggested (in a different context):

> When an equivalence, even a hallucinatory one, is proposed between two halves of an antithesis, when one pole can no longer be fully distinguished from the other, an ideological ranking of terms within the pair can no longer be performed.[37]

Such careful tailoring on composer's and librettist's parts, answering at once the interests of the audience and the company, seems also to demonstrate the power of the singer (or at least of her devotees) over the work. However, the opera's emphasis on balance, which reaches its apotheosis in the rhetorical felicity of Riccardo's line, should also give us pause to question such an assumption, for, as Castle's comments suggest, the dismantling of hierarchies created an instability that could be profoundly disquieting, undermining identity at various levels. Satirical attacks on opera suggested that audiences (and society at large) ought to be worried about such social disruption. But the chief problem here was for the singers: in the shift from *Astianatte*'s antithesis to *Riccardo primo*'s equivalence, it seems less that the work was being accommodated to the personae of the women, than that they were being accommodated to it.

Another instance from the second London version of *Riccardo primo*, a structural and textual echo, might illustrate the point. At the end of Act II (II.viii), Pulcheria returns from the abortive attempt to trick Riccardo into believing she is his bride, only to encounter the lamenting Costanza. 'Mesta e pensosa è ancor Costanza?' asks Pulcheria; 'Quella tu sei', replies Costanza, 'perduto ho nome e sposo e trono'.[38] Pulcheria then performs the office of revealing Riccardo – who is disguised as his own ambassador – to Costanza, thus neatly echoing and making reparation for her own disguised introduction to Riccardo earlier in the act. This encounter between the women, which was one of the set of scenes added to the end of Act II in the November version of the opera, both reflects back to an earlier moment and looks forward to the new end of the opera: in III.viii, as fortunes are finally reversed and Costanza is brought news of Riccardo's triumph, it is now Pulcheria who fears for her title and rights. Costanza reassures her, ending with an echo of her lines in Act II: 'La tua speranza certa è del par con la vittoria. Io stessa andrò per te, fida *Pulcheria*, incontro al rè vittorioso a implorarne il perdono. Perder non devi e padre e trono e sposo.'[39] Even as the symbolic weight of these lines directs the audience's attention from the characters to the balance between the singers, so the lines' circularity, their insistence on reciprocity, curiously re-enacts their meaning, whereby name, affiliation and status become fluid, as the women themselves disappear into their role as signs.

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[37] Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 78.

[38] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 118. 'Still is Constantia sorrowful and pensive?'; 'Tis you that are Constantia: I have lost All, my Name, my Spouse, my Throne'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 48.

This delicate thematic referentiality, unifying the opera by reaching across acts, might only have been noticed by careful readers. But, like the line uttered by Cuzzoni's character to Faustina's on their first encounter in *Admeto*, 'Dell'esser mio non posso darti notizia alcuna; sol ti dirò, ch'io sono uno scherzo del fato, e di fortuna', it suggests an ongoing directorial interest in performer identity.[40] Thus the teasing equality between the two women played out in Pulcheria's impersonation of Costanza at the heart of all versions of the libretto seems to ripple outwards, becoming amplified as the London opera is refined. To give one instance: in the same Act III scene in which Costanza reassures Pulcheria that she will not have to forfeit her identity, she has an aria ('Il volo così fido') which, remarkably, compares her feelings for Pulcheria with those of a bird for its mate, just as, following Costanza's complaint of her loss of identity (II.viii), Pulcheria sings an aria comparing herself to an eagle.[41]

Despite their thematic connection, the musical styles of these two arias were suitably distinguished according to the vocal qualities of their singers: Faustina's angular and forceful, Cuzzoni's including a delicate obbligato flute and featuring the sustained notes which allowed her to show off her *messa di voce*. Indeed, as was noted in chapter 1, Cuzzoni's character's ethos of virtue in distress was particularly strongly marked in *Riccardo primo*, through the predominance of arias in mournful vein. At the same time as it fostered a sense of similarity, the November *Riccardo primo* also distinguished more clearly between Costanza's and Pulcheria's roles along the lines seen in other operas: Costanza becomes more the victim, and does not seek revenge at the end of the opera, while the passivity and distress under misfortune that characterised Pulcheria in Acts II and III of Briani and the first London version are also replaced with more noble and active qualities.

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[39] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 188. 'Thy Hopes are full as certain as the Victory. Myself, for thee, most faithful true *Pulcheria*, will go and meet the great Triumphant King, and melt him, with my Pray'rs, to give Pardon. Thou ought'st not, lose a Father, Throne, and Spouse'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 71. This conceit appears to have been worked up from less focussed ideas in Briani: in I.ii, Costanza, witnessing Pulcheria's happiness with Oronte, remarks in an aside 'Perduta di sposa, e di reina hò la speranza' (this was retained in the first London version), and she begins Act III proclaiming 'Se perduto ho il caro sposo; / Se l'onor langue penoso, / In poter d'un empia sorte, / Dammi o Ciel, dammi la morte.' The triple construction of Rolli's final version may have been inspired by Briani's liking for the form: Riccardo's accusation of Pulcheria in the first version of *Riccardo primo*, II.viii ('e tu, falsa di nome, di voce, e di sembiante'), which came from *Isacio tiranno* II.xiii, has already been mentioned; at the end of Briani's second act, Oronte tells Pulcheria: 'che in Oriente avea / Trono, Comando, e Regno'.

[40] 'I can tell you nothing of myself; I will only say, that I am the sport of fate and of fortune'; discussed on p. 175.

[41] Costanza's subsequent prayer for God's protection of Pulcheria's innocence at the end of Act II is again matched by Pulcheria's Act III assertion that: 'Pietoso Ciel, tu m'ispirasti sempre l'orme seguir della virtude invitta: questa fra gran perigli e avverse sorti a vera pace al fin l'alma conduce'; Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 196. ('Indulgent Heav'n, Thou hast still inspir'd me to tread the paths of Virtue, all-invincible. This thro' great Dangers, and thro' adverse Fortunes, does send my Soul at length to perfect Peace', 71.) This in turn reflects Costanza's constant plea for peace (and her resignation), for example, to Isacio in 'Lascia la pace all'Alma' (I.vi) and later again in 'Render a me la sospirata pace' (II.ii).

AMBIGUITY

If the tension generated between the women (and their factions) in *Astianatte* was alleviated by the manifold alteration of *Riccardo primo*, that tension was not removed: it could not be. As the Academy's Italian agent, Owen Swiney, had observed, it was in the company's interest to keep the competition for superiority between the women 'in suspense' as long as possible: such suspense was, after all, the only way to retain both singers, and it was the best way to maintain audience excitement.[42] The need for 'suspense' then created a further structural tension between the personal–political imperative that the two women should appear equally virtuous (which on its own would render the drama either insufferable or very short) and the aesthetic desire for contrast (an important principle in *Astianatte*, which made the opera insupportable for the singers' partisans). This structural dynamic then explains the importance of ambiguity in the development of *Riccardo primo*'s plot.

Ambiguity or opacity of motivation is, of course, a common enough feature in drama of the period. Opacity of characters' behaviour and motivation, however, is usually confined to relations with other characters; conventionally, the audience is omnisciently privileged (in part, the role of the aria as quasi-monologue dictates this status). At several moments in the Cuzzoni–Faustina operas, however, motivation is universally ambiguous in ways that may have left space for a subtler articulation of the relationship between the women in performance. A turning point in Act I of *Riccardo primo* is the scene (I.iv) in which Pulcheria finds her beloved, Oronte, apparently flirting with Costanza. Oronte flatters the disguised Costanza: '… ai nel sembiante un nonsoche di maestoso e grande, che sveglia in chi ti mira e rispetto ed amor'.[43] And Costanza's confused reaction may stem either from her fear of discovery or her embarrassment at a seeming declaration of love. Certainly, Pulcheria, overhearing him, understands his intentions to be amorous, and launches into a mocking echo of his words (and music). She is furious with him; he is unable to explain himself. His response – an aside – is pure guilt: '(Cieli! che degg'io dire?)'[44] Yet he shows no further romantic interest in Costanza and is adamant that Pulcheria is unnecessarily jealous.

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[42] For Swiney's letter, see p. 45, above.

[43] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 38. '…. you have in your most charming Person I know not what, so Grand and so Majestick that it awakes in all that once behold you, both a Respect and Love'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 18.

Why this ambiguity, then? Perhaps in part it derived from the source libretto. In Briani, this scene allowed an extended opportunity for humour, as Pulcheria mimicked Oronte's flowery praise, with jealous laughter ('ridente' is used twice in the description of Pulcheria's behaviour). This scene was retained in the London versions, but as Oronte's flattery of Costanza was heavily pruned or reassigned,[45] some of Pulcheria's lines of mocking imitation now appeared without indication that Oronte was the target. Assigning the following lines to Pulcheria without Oronte first uttering them would have sharpened the sense of her annoyance with Costanza; indeed, the first of these lines now mimicked Costanza herself: 'Convien la lode a chi la merta. Offende/Il lodator, tacendo, / Beltà ch'è peregrina.'[46] This seems, then, to have been a conscious decision to provide dramatic opportunity for antagonism between Costanza and Pulcheria, while ensuring that neither was strictly to blame.[47] Removing obvious conflict while maintaining tension through the characters' motivational ambiguity allowed a teasing retention of the singers' animosity, which must have been attractive to the respective factions, still eager (one imagines) to best each other. Thus the constant layering and interaction of character and singer persona that one finds in all opera gave an uneasy cast to the women's relationship in their joint London performances. In conveying this sense of unease the relationship between words and music naturally came to the fore.

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[44] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 38. '(Heav'ns, what shall I say!)'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 19.

[45] In Briani's libretto, Oronte also praised Costanza's companion, Berardo, which diluted the romantic overtones of his admiration for Costanza; all mention of Berardo is removed in the London versions.

[46] 'Praise suits who best deserves it. This fair stranger / By being silent, does offend her praiser'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 19. 'Convien la lode a chi la merta' was Oronte's line in Briani's libretto (directed to Berardo), but was given to Costanza in the May 1727 version, as a response to Oronte; Handel's autograph score for November retains this line for Costanza, but the libretto omits it; see Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 234, 38; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 18.

[47] The London librettists also began the scene by turning Costanza's general recognition of the courtesy with which she had been received into specific praise of Pulcheria (and so, unusually, expanding this section of recitative): Briani's 'Berardo, anche frà quelle / Innocenti delizie / Mio cor langue affannoso' (Berardo, even among these innocent delights my heart languishes anxiously) becomes (by November) 'Cortese a noi si mostra / L'amabile *Pulcheria*: / Ma pur – *Berardo*, Oh Dio! anche fra queste / Sì gentili accoglienze / Langue il seno affannoso' ('The sweet *Pulcheria* shews most courteous to us; / But yet, *Berardus*, yet amidst this Treatment / So kind, so courteous, my Heart pants with Fears'); *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 19.

Indeed, it may only be through the music that we can now really catch a glimpse of the competing dramatic imperatives at play.

Returning, then, to Pulcheria's discovery of Oronte and Costanza, the feature of moral competition between the two women through their characters requires Pulcheria to assure Costanza that she bears no malice towards *her*:

Bella, teco non ho
Né sdegno né rigor:
Sol vendicar mi vuo
D'amante traditor
Falso parlai per te
Che sei, cangiando fè,
Ingrato ingannator.[48]

The way in which Handel sets Pulcheria's aria, however, contradicts the generosity of her words and, in its disruption of musical form and flow, brings the singer, rather than the character, to the fore (Example 4.1). The composer initially follows the cue given him by the librettists: all texts make it clear that Pulcheria cuts Costanza off as she goes to apologise ('Deh Principessa, io…'), and Handel reinforces this by omitting the usual opening ritornello. The skeletal accompaniment for the first phrase (simply a first inversion chord of G in the bass), and the potential confusion created by Pulcheria's tonic resolution of Costanza's D major (dominant) plea blur the line between recitative and aria still further. In addition, each of the two instances of 'Bella' is separated from the rest of the text or unnaturally prolonged in enunciation (providing opportunity for embellishment which may itself have inflected the aria's meaning) in such a way that the word is emphasised and potentially undermined. So, while the aria text implies straightforward benevolence, Handel's musical manipulation preserves some sense of the rivalry for which audiences were seemingly so hungry.

This motivational ambiguity was by no means easy for even the composer to control, however, as another example might show. In Act II, having been sent by her father to trick Riccardo into thinking she is Costanza, Pulcheria's duplicity is revealed in the nick of time by Oronte. Unmasked by her erstwhile lover, she disguises herself again in an aria that seems to underscore her tumultuous emotions, as she divides her attention between Riccardo and Oronte:[49]

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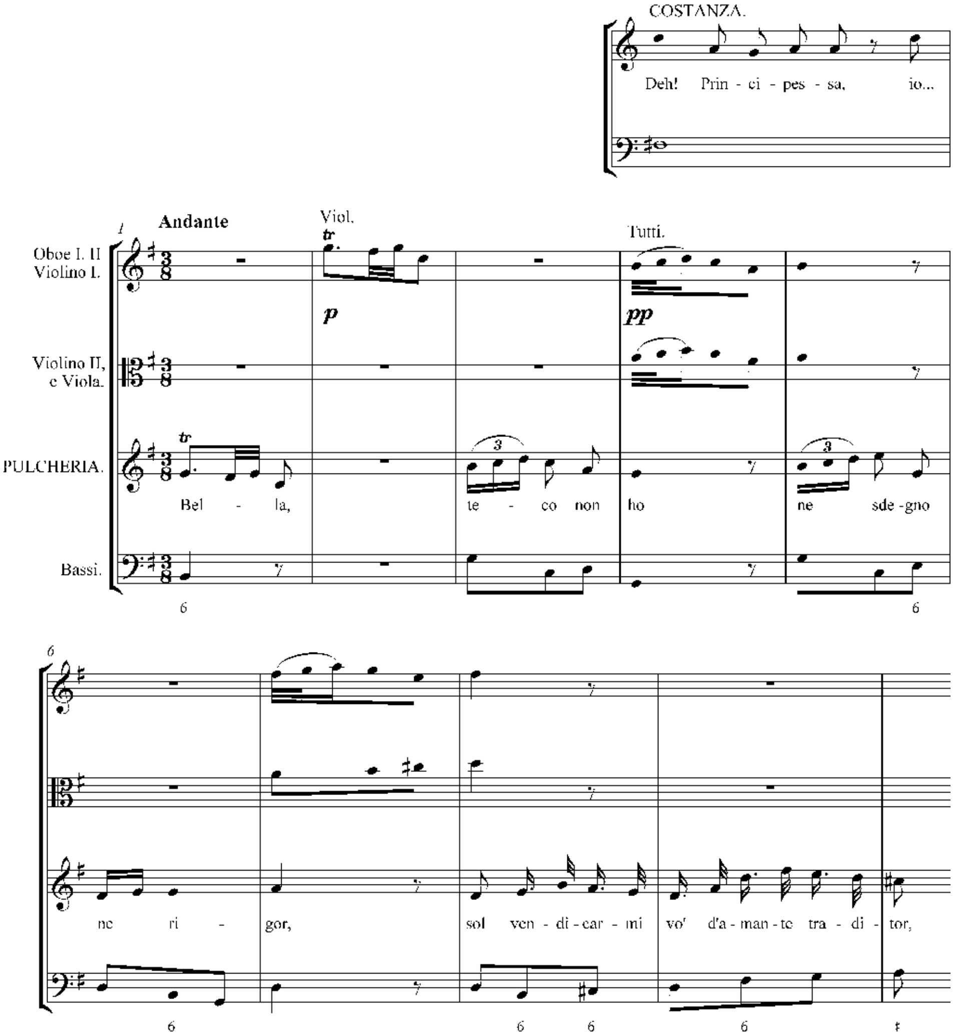
[48] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 39–42; 'Fair one, I have no Thought of Anger, / No Motion of the lowest Wrath tow'rds you. / All that I wish, is to revenge my self / On one that proves a Traitor to my Love. / False Man! I spoke of thee, / Who vilely changing thy protested Faith, / Prov'st that thou art the worst of all Deceivers'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 20.

[49] On arias directed to two listeners, see Strohm, *Italienische Opernarien*, 163.


COSTANZA.
Deh! Prin - ci - pes - sa, io...
Andante
Viol.
Tutti.
Oboe I. II Violino I.
Violino II, e Viola.
PULCHERIA.
Bassi.
p
pp
Bel - la, te - co non ho ne sde - gno
ne ri - gor, sol ven - di - car - mi vo' d'a - man - te tra - di - tor,

Ex. 4.1 The opening of Handel's 'Bella, teco non ho', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), bb.1–10, for Faustina, with Cuzzoni's preceding recitative.

Ai guardi tuoi [*a Ricc.*
Son pur vaga, son pur bella,
Ma che poi?
Non son cara, non son quella.
Questa, ingrato, è fedeltà? [*ad Oron.*
Sì fortunato
Spero te nella tua brama:

Ma chi m'ama
Non lo so quando il sarà.[50]

Pulcheria's dual address is particularly fascinating because the slippery text could apply equally to either man: each, in his different way, has been duplicitous in her eyes. Oronte has revealed her disguise, and Riccardo, having discovered that she is not Costanza, has rejected her. She thus repays them in kind in this aria, which, while in Faustina's characteristically brisk and assertive style draws confusing musical distinctions and parallels between her addressees. The sense of confusion is emphasised at the point where she should turn from one to the other: Handel's setting for 'non son cara, non son quella', with its sequence of sixth chords, leads harmonically straight into the following 'Questa, ingrato, è fedeltà'. However, a dramatic about-face is required as she switches attention from Riccardo to Oronte, and this is supplied – in a move that draws attention to the singer's switch – by a bar of general pause (Example 4.2a, bar 41). In the second half of the A-section, the link between 'non son cara…' (addressed to Riccardo) and 'Questa, ingrato' (to Oronte) is made still stronger by the shift of the pause bar to follow 'ma che poi?' (Example 4.2b, bar 78), and by use of descending runs for both 'non son cara' and 'fedeltà'. The fact that the latter line is directed to Oronte may also show some motivational confusion on Pulcheria's part: is she upbraiding Oronte for not demonstrating the same fidelity Riccardo has shown in the face of her deception, or is she taking him to task for his betrayal of her identity? If the latter, given that she was planning to reveal herself to Riccardo in any case, why should she be so angry with Oronte? The repeated appearance of unanswered questions, along with a proliferation of pauses – after 'non son quella' (bar 41) and the final 'ma che poi?' (bar 78), on 'questa' (bar 113) and after 'brama' in the B-section (Example 4.2c, bar 137) – emphasise Pulcheria's own uncertainty.

These ellipses of sense and of music may suggest to us that the character is wavering between the two men, and between anger, love and self-pity; an actor of Faustina's calibre could no doubt have suggested all or any of these emotions by this means.[51] These pauses may suggest these things, but they also make the musical page difficult to interpret: Handel, as Ellen Harris has observed, was a master of the strategic use of silence.[52] Harris suggests that his cantatas composed in England, in

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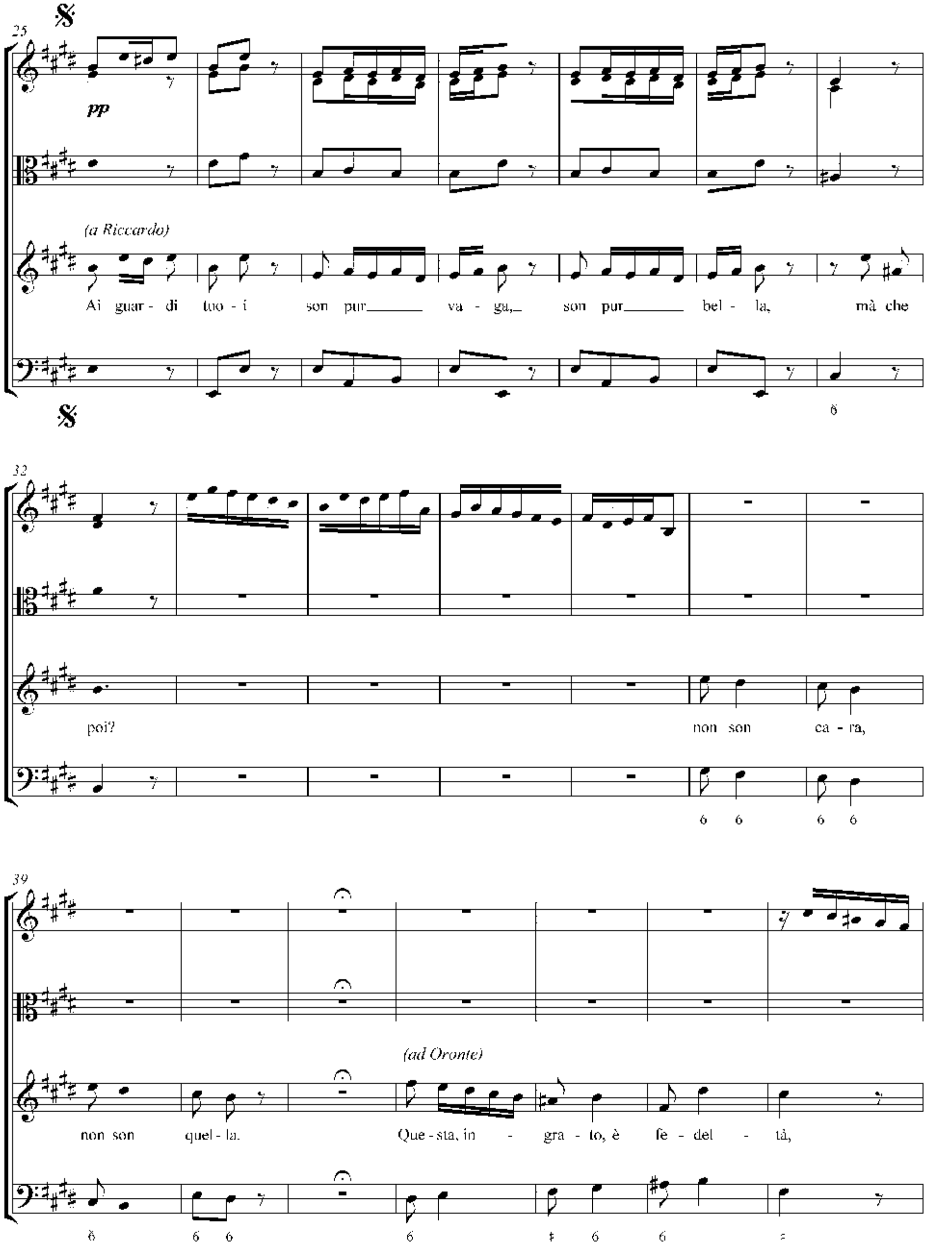
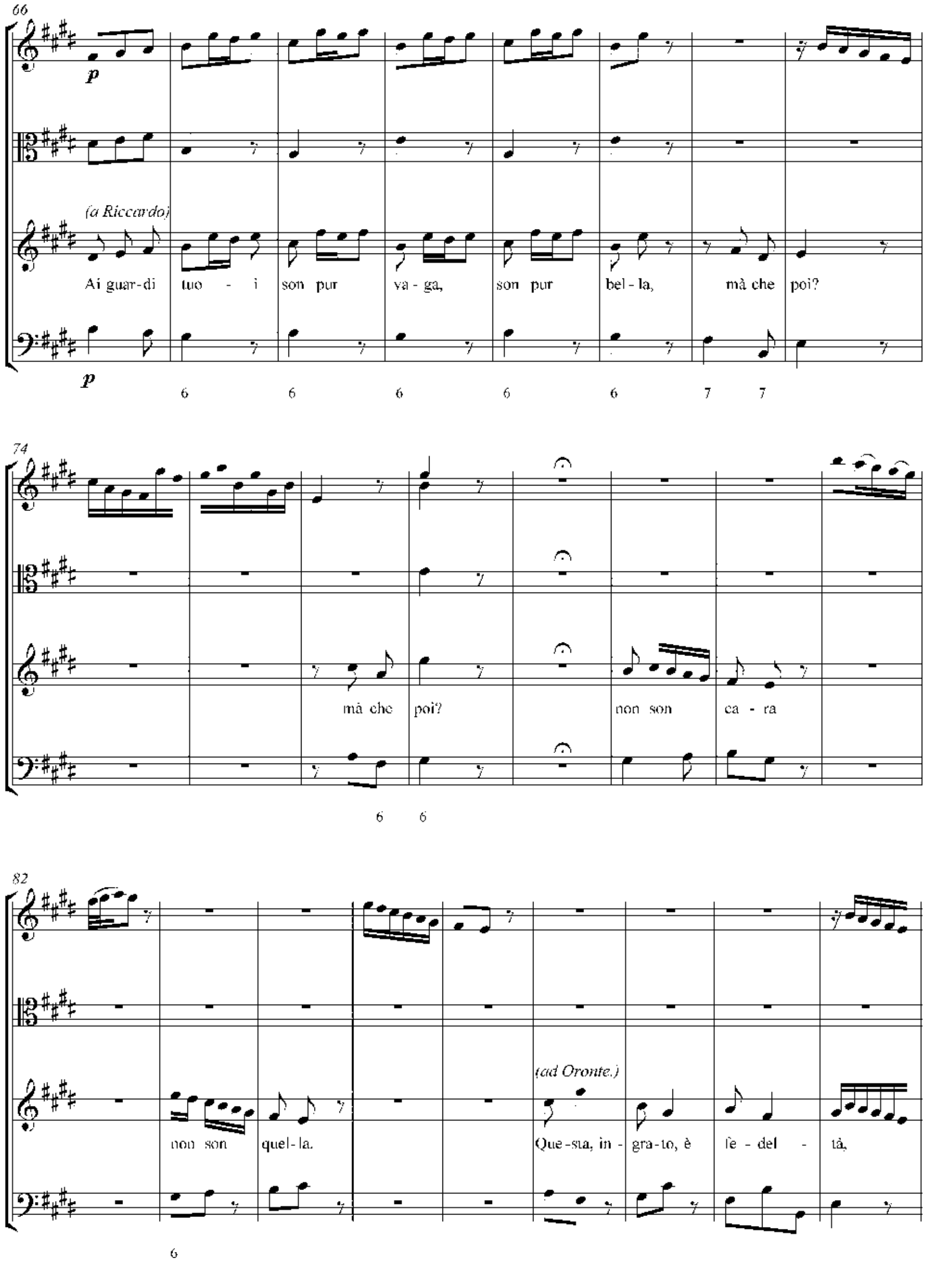
[50] Handel, *Riccardo primo*, ed. Best, 92–7. '*to Rich:* In your Eyes / I am beauteous tempting Fair, / But what next? / I'm not that very Dear, that very she, / [*to Oron.*:] Is this, ungrateful Man, thy Truth to me? / Yes, yes, with all my Soul, / I wish you happy in your soft Desires, / But as for him that is in Love with me / I know not when it e'er will be'; *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), 40. The first two B-section lines are clearly addressed to Riccardo, although not marked as such.

[51] We recall Quantz's praise of Faustina's acting, cited in the first chapter on p. 30.

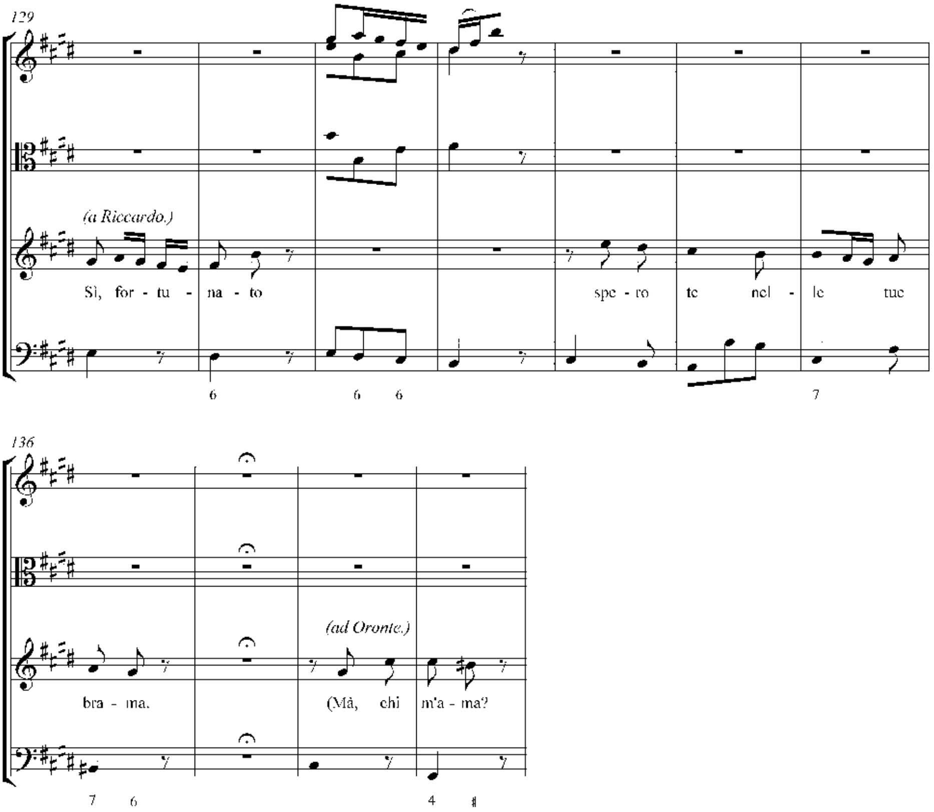
[52] She observes that the 'disruptive silence that cuts through the score and temporarily halts the flow of speech and music is a particular feature of his English set [of cantatas]'; Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*, 194.


25
pp
(a Riccardo)
Ai guar - di tuo - i son pur va - ga, son pur bel - la, mà che
32
poi? non son ca - ra,
39
non son quel - la. Que - sta, in - gra - to, è fe - del - tà,
(ad Oronte)

Ex. 4.2a The first vocal entry in Handel's 'Ai guardi tuoi', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), bb.25–45, for Faustina.


66
p
(a Riccardo)
Ai guar-di tuo - i son pur va - ga, son pur bel - la, mà che poi?
p
6 6 6 6 6 7 7
74
mà che poi? non son ca - ra
6 6
82
(ad Oronte.)
non son quel - la. Que - sta, in - gra - to, è fe - del - tà,
6

Ex. 4.2b G. F. Handel, 'Ai guardi tuoi', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), bb.66–90.



Ex. 4.2c An extract from the B-section of Handel's 'Ai guardi tuoi', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), bb.129–139.

particular, deploy silence as a protective strategy, in order to mask forbidden or unrealisable desires. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, broken utterance was increasingly associated not with intellectual games of revelation and speculation, but with the experience of overpowering emotion that was beyond words.[53] The growing vogue for sentiment and sensibility in the eighteenth century guaranteed hesitant – even incoherent – speech as a truer expression of feeling than more polished locution. Pulcheria, it seems, stands on the cusp of the intellectual/emotional divide in her use of silence: her pauses could be both strategic withholdings of information and a sign of her emotional distress. Handel's (and Pulcheria's) use of the hiatus in this aria is thus perhaps deliberately gnomic.

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[53] Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*, 171–209. On the sublime see Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759), Part Two, Section 1; cited in Ashfield and de Bolla (eds.), *The Sublime*, 132. These ideas had been in the air for some time; see, for example, Bernard Lamy's discussion of ellipsis and aposiopesis in *L'Art de parler* (1675), 229.

Handel was certainly acutely aware of the value of the musical pause in an art form relying as much on visual as on musical gesture. Autograph changes to Pulcheria's aria suggest his tightrope walk with this character's emotions. This can be observed at two points in particular. There was initially a pause over the first 'poi?' (Figure 4.2, f.65v) in all parts, which Handel then struck out, also altering the dot after the crotchet to a quaver rest. Similar indecision is visible at the end: Handel clearly added the pause bar after 'brama' as an afterthought (later deleting it, apparently when the aria was reused in *Tolomeo*; Figure 4.3, f.67r).[54] Obviously, its addition was intended to mirror the similar pause between Pulcheria's address to Riccardo and Oronte in the first half of the A-section, and its harmonic function is similar (though more abrupt), B♯$^{7-6}$ signalling a move away from the tonic to the relative minor (C♯ minor). Because this shift is effected on the cadence itself, with a plangent passing note on A for the first syllable of 'brama', it increases audience awareness of Pulcheria's mixed feelings in her congratulations to Riccardo on his good fortune, heightening our sense of suspense, and of Pulcheria's suffering.[55]

* * *

Earlier, I suggested that the Faustina–Cuzzoni polarisation demonstrated typecasting of the individual singers. For these singers, who were usually seen as an inseparable duo, the good/bad or passive/active dichotomy seems to promote both a stereotyping of the limits of possible 'feminine' behaviour and a perception of individual insufficiency: like musical Siamese twins, the women lost their raison d'être if separated. The accrued disadvantages of their London double act raise important questions about the difficulties inherent in this choice of career. As I have argued elsewhere, in their very presence on stage as professional, vocal women – as musically powerful, dramatically dominant and financially independent as their male colleagues – *prime donne* represented a challenge to a burgeoning cultural ideology which proscribed such roles for women in real life.[56] We may even postulate that the London audience's desire for rivalry between the two – a rivalry that would ultimately prove mutually destructive – was in a sense a hegemonic response to

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[54] Best, 'Critical Report', in Handel, *Riccardo primo*, 367. Evidence for Handel's finely attuned sense of the dramatic effect of the hiatus might be seen also, for example, in his rescoring of a moment in Rodelinda's 'Ho perduto il caro sposo', as noted in Andrew Jones's 'Critical Report', 258.

[55] Thus we find what Reinhard Strohm calls 'a "dramatization" of music … which was at the same time a "musicalization" of the drama, as the music transgressed the poetic borders assigned to it'; *Dramma per Musica*, 15.

[56] Aspden, 'An Infinity of Factions'.

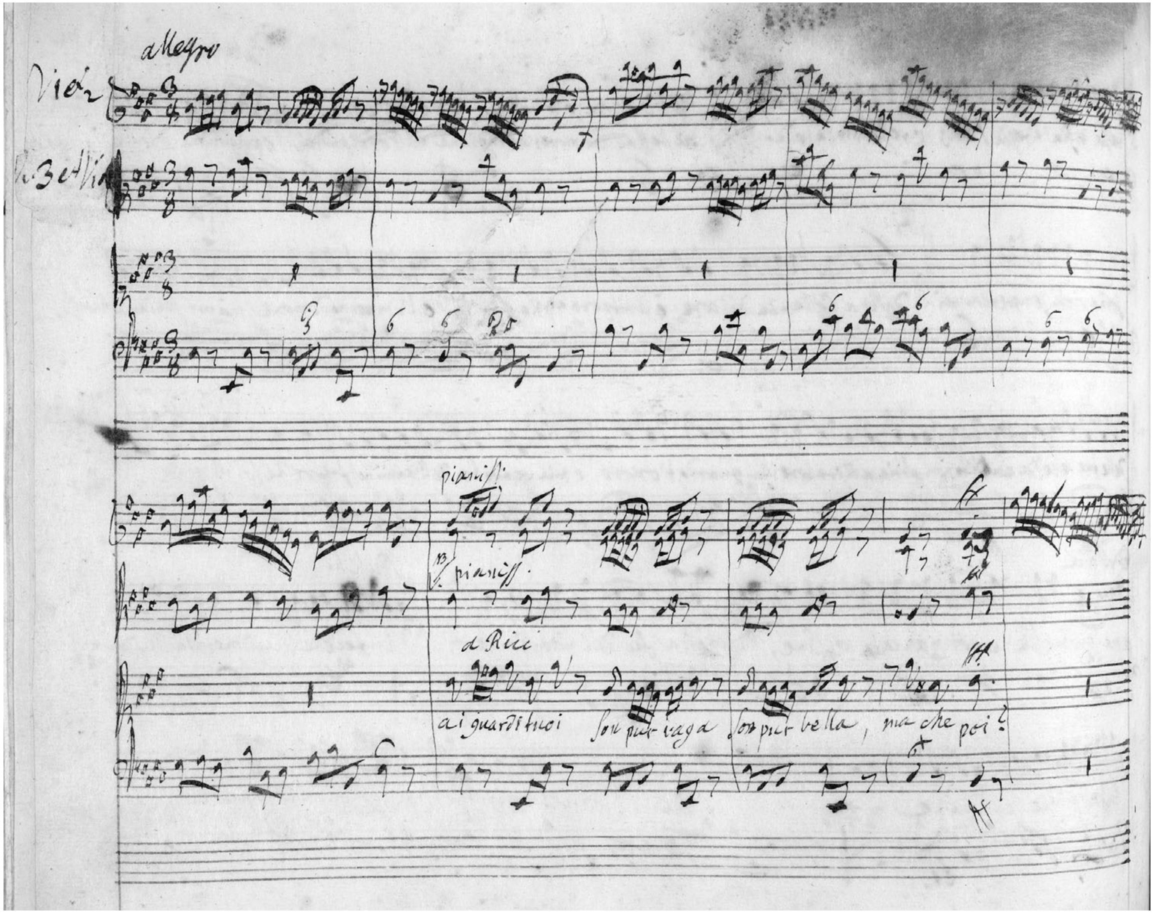
allegro
Viol 1 2
3e Viol
pianiss
pianiss.
d Ricc
ai guardi tuoi
son più vaga
son più bella, ma che poi?

Fig. 4.2 G. F. Handel, 'Ai guardi tuoi', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), f.65v.

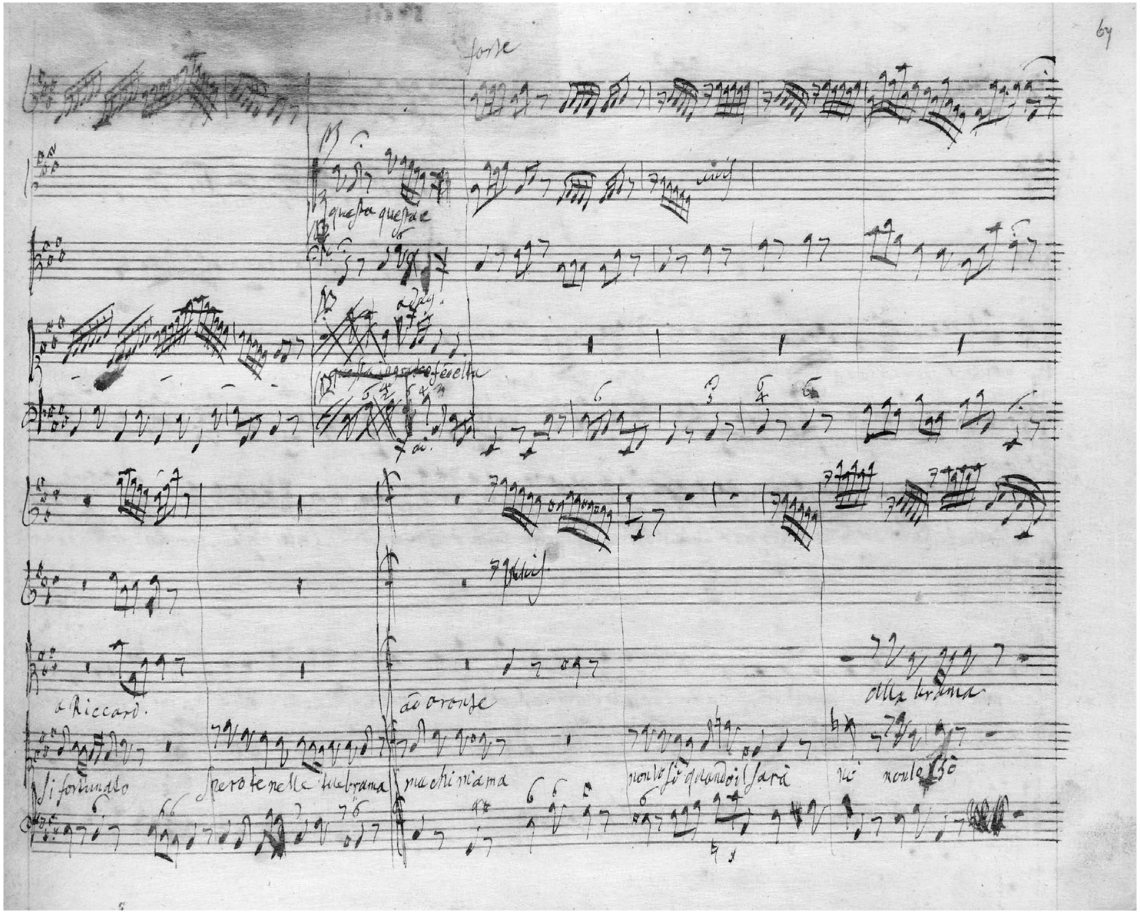
67
forte
questa questa
Adag.
e Riccard.
Si fortunato
Spero te nelle sue brama
ma chi m'ama
non so se quando sarà
non lo so
alla tiranna

Fig. 4.3 G. F. Handel, 'Ai guardi tuoi', *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727), f.67r.

the perceived threat that this transgression posed to the social order.[57] Certainly, both women suffered at the hands of the press because of their apparent enmity: they were, as has been noted, parodied in a number of salacious pamphlets, which translated the singers' onstage rapaciousness to the bedchamber, where they were said to disrupt sexual norms.[58]

The press (and historians) have portrayed Faustina and Cuzzoni as domineering harridans but my story so far seems to have been that of two singers manipulated by those around them. A revised appreciation of this ill-fated pairing should not show them simply as victims of either their (purportedly largely female) cabals or of the male-dominated operatic and public establishments, however. While the role of (female) actors on the stage, under the (male) audience gaze inevitably recalls, from a feminist perspective, the subject–object relationship between men and women in society, we should remember that the woman who chooses to 'stage' her objectification for the benefit of the male gaze is to some extent controlling her image. Similarly, on the operatic stage female and male singers alike could subvert the ostensible control of the composer and librettist, and could challenge the audience's expectations by asserting their own critical awareness of and authority over the performance itself.

We might return to the last musical example for a demonstration of this point. Having given a good deal of attention to fairly minor alterations we might ask whether a few pause bars added or subtracted are really important. Clearly Handel thought they were; and I think so too. These alterations indicate not only Handel's fine tuning of Pulcheria's characterisation; in allowing for such moments of uncertainty, Handel is also providing room for the singer's voice to re-enter the equation. What the performer does in the space that is not – indeed that cannot be – notated is, quite simply, up to her.[59] As we have been reminded so often with regard to the nineteenth century, the singer's agency was a vital element in an opera's success: the assertion of this artistic and personal independence was, after all, what audiences hoped to see when they came to these operas. Eighteenth-century opera was, if anything, even more alive to these interpretative struggles, for in the very prominence it gave to the singer's agency through the spaces left for ornamentation it engaged the listeners' attention with the deliberation required to construct identity. It is thus in the interstices of the drama and the music that, as we become aware of the careful symbolic structuring of these operas, we are also able to observe the articulation and negotiation of the complex relationship between character and actor. All this is to say that, although it is almost inevitable that we – historians and musicologists – will focus on the manipulations of librettist and composer, it is the intangible – the moments of ornamentation and interpretation – that give to opera the life we cannot narrate. It is, indeed, at each such moment of hiatus that the performer creates herself anew and in so doing challenges our view not only of the synthetic 'reality' of her theatrical character, but also of the nature of her social and historical identity.[60]

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[57] The fact that the singers' cabals were (reputedly) led by the female aristocracy makes little difference to this hypothesis; it has often been observed that women's rights are most vigorously undermined by those women who have already achieved success. Catherine Craft-Fairchild suggests that, in the eighteenth century, 'writing by women often upheld or promoted ideologies of female inferiority and subservience'; 'It is difficult to tell in [such] narratives when women are the victims of male desire and when they are prey to their own'; Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*, 5, 24. See also Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 13–14, 42–3, 49, *passim*.

[58] *An Epistle from S—r S—o to S—a F—a* [8 March 1727]; *F–NAs Answer to S—NO's Epistle* [17 March 1727]; *An Answer from S—a F—a to S—r S—o* [18 March 1727]; *An Epistle from Signora F—a to a Lady* [10 June 1727]; *The Devil to pay at St. James's* [1 July 1727]; *The Contre Temps* [July 1727].

[59] Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*, 207; Castelvecchi, 'From *Nina* to *Nina*', 103.

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[60] On the continual 'performance' of gender identity, see Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution'.

5 | Senesino and the crisis of heroic masculinity

> I suppose you have heard already that both Cuzzoni and Faustina were so hissed and cat-called last Tuesday that the Opera was not finished that night: nor have the Directors dared to venture the representation of another since . . . Senesino thinks it sounds so inglorious for him to have no share in these commotions in the State of Music, that he's resolved to make himself a party concerned, whether they will or no. I believe he takes it for a mark of contempt that he was not distinguished with a cat-call . . . Whatever his real reason may be for asking his dismission, his pretended one is this. He says, though the affront was not particular to him, yet it was such an indignity offered to the profession in general, that he thinks it inconsistent with his honour to entertain a people who pay so little deference to the merit of his society.[1]

Not surprisingly, for one himself infamous for an ambiguous sexuality, John, Lord Hervey showed particular interest in Senesino's participation in the 1727 fracas, in his letter to his friend (or lover), Stephen Fox. Hervey's barbed observation on Senesino's pique was not a peculiar insight, for the satirists who so vigorously attacked the two women also readily included a sulky Senesino in their lampoons (of course, ignoring the singer's serious complaint about the insult to his profession). The *Epistle from S—r S—o to S—a F—a* (1727) begins with 'Senesino' acknowledging his wallflower status, and punning on his sexual impotence:

> While Rival Queens disturb the peaceful Stage,
> And Discord thus divides a tuneful Age;
> While ev'ry Man declares, as Foe or Friend,
> With equal Warmth to blame, or to commend;
> Is't not enough, you boast from ev'ry Hand
> Such thund'ring Peals? – while I neglected stand!
> That at my Cost, you strive Applause to gain,
> And by feign'd Transports give me real Pain.
> Full prudently betwixt you both I steer,
> On either Side – a Gulph – I'd fain keep clear.

The satirical pamphlet *The Contre Temps* also uses sexual innuendo to suggest Senesino came off poorly from the *Astianatte* battle:

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[1] Hervey, *Lord Hervey and His Friends, 1726–38*, 18–19. See also Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 252–3.

S—S—NO
(*Aside.*) How difficult's my task betwixt these two;
Each hopes my aid, and nothing can I do;
Serenely tho' I stand th'alternate brunt,
And pocket, for my ease, a small affront;
Yet when their factions deal their vengeance round,
Hisses and cat-calls undistinguish'd wound.

The other post-*Astianatte* pamphlet makes matters still worse for the slighted singer in its title: *The Devil to Pay at St. James's: or, A full and true Account of a most horrid and bloody Battle between Madam Faustina and Madam Cuzzoni. Also of a Hot Skirmish between Signor Boschi and Palmecini. Moreover How Senesino Has Taken Snuff, is Going to Leave the Opera, and Sing Psalms at Henley's Oratory…*

Nor do the satires (for once) seem groundless: pique at the pre-eminence of the two women may have been behind Senesino's decision to abandon London early in August 1726. Owen Swiney wrote on 13 August:

> Senesino passed thro' this place [Bologna], for Florence, on Wednesday last: I never remember seeing him in better health. I mention this … because I am told that the opera of Alexander wou'd have been acted four or five times more, had not Senesino's illness prevented it.[2]

Such satirical insinuations may seem to be (and so often are) malicious gossip: modern historians use them chiefly as evidence of the opprobrium with which castrati were greeted.[3] But Senesino was noted for his difficult temperament,[4] and in this instance these critiques appear to have their basis in more fundamental problems.

For Senesino in the late 1720s, the construction of the relationship between (and with) the women caused particular difficulties. As the rivalry between Cuzzoni and Faustina was emphasised in the press, so it appears the women gained priority within the company: a French traveller reported in 1728 that Senesino's salary was £1,200, while Faustina and Cuzzoni had £1,500 each.[5] Such a distinction, if true, was not likely to escape any of the performers, given the traditional association between salary and status.[6] More importantly, in artistic terms, as the women's actions took precedence in audience's minds, so they did in the plots as well: just as, off stage, salary was an important sign of a singer's status, so on stage a key indicator of prestige for a female character was the relationship to the *primo uomo*. In the dynamic interaction established between Senesino, Faustina and Cuzzoni, it was the question of relationship primacy that maintained suspense between the women (and thus audience interest) for as long as possible.[7] Love interest often became a crucial issue in an opera, while, at the same time, the *primo uomo* was denied the option of making a quick, decisive choice. This structural device was evident from the first: we recall that in *Alessandro* Rolli altered his source libretto to postpone as late as possible the hero's choice between his two lovers. Similarly, as we have seen in the previous chapter, in *Riccardo primo*, Handel and his librettist(s) went through several different versions of the ending, before electing one which had the hero sing alternately to the two women 'Diviso il cor sarà / Per te tutto amistà, / E tutto amor per te.'

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[2] *The Contre Temps*, 8–9. Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 368.

[3] Studies of satirical interest in castrati in England include: Campbell, 'When Men Women Turn'; Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Shunning the Bearded Kiss'; McGeary, 'Warbling Eunuchs'; McGeary, 'Gendering Opera'; Cervantes, 'Tuneful Monsters'; Aspden, 'An Infinity of Factions'.

[4] Senesino was apparently free to come to London in 1720 because he had been dismissed from the Dresden opera company for insubordination; see Dean, 'Senesino'. Difficult behaviour continued to be a theme to the end of Senesino's career; see Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 131–50.

[5] De Saussure, *A Foreign View of England*, 272; cited in Milhous and Hume, 'Opera Salaries in Eighteenth-Century London', 35. These amounts are considerably less than the 'hundreds twenty-five a year' Faustina was rumoured to have demanded in 1726 – though the satirical nature of the source, Carey's *Faustina*, makes the figure less than likely.

At least in *Riccardo primo* (and *Alessandro*) Senesino could act the part of the hero. In other operas, the question of romantic interest so dominated that Senesino's character became curiously marginal and passive. We see this quite starkly at the beginning of *Admeto*, when the supposed hero languishes ill in bed, while his wife takes the initiative to sacrifice herself for him. Admeto does not even make the Orphean journey to the Underworld to resurrect Alceste himself, but sends Hercules off to play that part. All that is left for the title character to do, then, is continue languishing emotionally, dithering between his dead wife and his new love, Antigona, until the final scene. In the end, it is only the latter woman's generous propriety that reunites Admeto with his wife. Here Antigona assumes the traditional patriarchal role from the marriage ceremony for, as noted in chapter 3, she: '*Prende Alceste per mano, e la presenta ad Admeto*'. Antigona's selfless act of returning wife to husband is, as we have seen, designed to balance the noble sacrifice Alceste made at the start of the opera. In so doing, however, she deprives Admeto of all initiative.

The satirical responses to *Admeto* (to be discussed further below) suggest that the triangulation of the chief love relationship in these operas, coupled with an emphasis on the interaction of the two women, seems to have led to an emasculation of the *primo uomo*. Within the context of a genre traditionally associated with expressions of heroism, we might expect such an outcome to have been downplayed, but it seems that in some of the operas this problematic role was thematised and explored. That focus will be examined in this chapter through two operas, Nicola Haym's and Handel's *Siroe* and *Tolomeo*. But we need first to recognise both why such an unheroic role for the *primo uomo* might have been problematic for opera in this period, and why this difficulty might itself have been of sufficient interest to be highlighted thematically. To understand this, in turn, we need to see opera within the broader dramatic tradition.

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[6] According to one nineteenth-century source, the opera management sought to dispose of the vainglorious Cuzzoni by offering her one guinea less than they offered Faustina; see Hogarth, *Memoirs of the Opera*, I, 300.

[7] This was the case even for those operas where one might assume the audience's prior knowledge of the story (in whole or part) would suggest which woman would win the man (as in *Alessandro*): opera plots so frequently recast traditional narratives (even between different versions of the 'same' work) that certainty could not be guaranteed.

HEROISM?. . .

It is now well understood that the development of *opera seria* as a genre owed a great debt to French neoclassical drama, both in principle and for specific plot lines.[8] The so-called Arcadian reform of opera, begun in the late seventeenth century, was a response to neoclassical theories that had been in circulation in the spoken theatre (particularly in France and England) for much of the century, and which had been formulated in what Restoration playwrights called the 'heroic' mode. Laura Brown sums up heroic drama as 'shaped and governed by a system of precise epic, chivalric or Platonic standards, which express the ideology of self-consciously exclusive social class and which are justified aesthetically by neoclassical epic and dramatic theory'.[9] Social propriety necessitated the excision of the local, the specific and the comic in favour of supposedly universal truths of human behaviour, exemplary nature. Of course, the principle of universality was itself ideologically determined: this 'common sense' approach (as Thomas Rymer put it) affirmed existing social hierarchies and focussed on aristocratic heroism in a manner that was of a piece with its didactic aims and espousal of 'la belle nature'.[10] Thus in his dedication of *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) to the duke of York, Dryden explained that since 'the World is govern'd by precept and Example; and both these can onely have influence from those persons who are above us, that kind of Poesy which excites to vertue the greatest men, is of greatest use to humane kind'.[11]

As Dryden's words suggest, the role model this type of drama chiefly promoted was that of the heroic male, and in so doing it tapped into other contemporary ideologies which created difficulties for opera, especially when translated to Britain.

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[8] French criticism was also important as a spur to change. See Weiss, 'Teorie drammatiche e "infranciosamento"'; Weiss, 'Opera and Neoclassical Dramatic Criticism in the Seventeenth Century'; Weiss, 'Metastasio, Aristotle, and the *Opera Seria*'; Strohm, 'Apostolo Zeno's *Teuzzone* and Its French Models'; Freeman, *Opera Without Drama*, 4–54.

[9] Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, 3.

[10] Thomas Rymer, *The Tragedies of the Last Age Consider'd and Examin'd by the Practice of the Ancients, and by the Common Sense of All Ages* (1678); discussed in Burns, *Character*, 174–8.

[11] Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards*, 3.

Prominent among these was what J. G. A. Pocock has described as civic humanism, an ideal of active citizenship revived from an ancient republican pattern of thought through which male virtue was strongly articulated in the aristocratic society of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, in particular.[12] The civic-humanist ethos of public virtue required an individual to eschew unnecessary private gain or personal pleasure – both of which led to corruption – in the interests of responsibility to his country: 'only as a citizen, as [a] political animal involved in a *vivere civile* with his fellows, could [the individual] fulfill his nature, achieve virtue, and find his world rational'.[13] This concept of 'Public Spirit' (as it was called) was key to the debate between virtue and passion that dominated much of eighteenth-century social thought.[14] The language of civic humanism, E. G. Hundert has suggested, governed the ways in which the emergent capitalist society was debated in early eighteenth-century Britain, and it also dominated the heroic theatre and opera.[15] The Royal Academy of Music's patrician patrons, who claimed they wished to found the opera in order to demonstrate British financial might and good breeding, and so that 'Taste [might be] rendered more universall', were partly actuated by civic-humanist ideals.[16]

But if civic humanism influenced the language of eighteenth-century debates, it was itself increasingly the subject of criticism for its emphasis on an aristocratic elite governed by strict heroic codes of male behaviour, and this criticism also inevitably had an influence on the drama. In the early eighteenth century, traditional heroic masculinity in drama and literature was issuing its 'last gasps', under attack from what Robert Folkenflik has described as a 'strenuously mounted' and often satirical critique.[17] Such criticism derived in part from the rapidity of social change. The mock-heroic works of Swift, Pope and even the great heroic dramatist Dryden himself appear to suggest, as John Barrell and Harriet Guest put it, that 'The heroes of epic were now unimaginable', for while epic heroism had seen the hero as representative of all of society, 'the proliferation of interests and occupation identities within a commercial society meant that no individual could now fulfill that representative task'.[18] The increasing problematisation of heroic drama in the late seventeenth century meant that, by the eighteenth century, the few such dramas that were penned were 'historical anachronisms'.[19] We will return in the next section to the difficulties such a change in perception presented for an operatic form predicated on heroic ideals.

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[12] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

[13] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 114.

[14] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 462; chapters thirteen to fifteen (pp.423–552) particularly discuss this debate. Elsewhere, Pocock states that 'What we used to think of as the Age of Reason may just as well be called the Age of Virtue'; Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 66. On 'Public Spirit' see Cooper (third earl of Shaftesbury): 'To love the Publick, to study universal Good, and to promote the Interest of the whole World, as far as lies within our power, is surely the Height of Goodness, and makes that Temper which we call *Divine*.' *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, I, 37; see also James Thomson, *Liberty* (1735–6).

[15] Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable*, 8.

[16] Holles Newcastle, 'Instructions to Mr Hendel' (1719); cited in Deutsch, *Handel*, 90. For the 'Proposall for carrying on Operas by a Company and a Joynt Stock' see Milhous and Hume, 'New Light on Handel', 165. The widespread use of militaristic analogies in correspondence about opera during this period should also be seen as a reflection of the civic-humanist ethos; see Taylor, 'Italian Operagoing in London, 1700–1745', 190n., 205n.

[17] Folkenflik, 'Introduction', *The English Hero, 1660–1800*, 9–21 (esp. 14, 15).

The lack of agreement as to the qualities – even the conceptual possibility – of a hero inevitably also challenged the practice of civic-humanist virtue more generally: the notoriety (and popularity) of Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1723), which emphasised the benefits of individualistic greed at all levels of society over traditional public spiritedness, demonstrated the impact incipient capitalism was having on older belief systems.[20] The embattled nature of (heroic) masculinity in the early eighteenth century is suggested by the fundamentally negative definition given by one prominent civic humanist, the third earl of Shaftesbury, in his unpublished 'Exercises' (or 'Philosophical Regimen', c.1698–1712):

> But how then not a child? How least like woman? How far from beast? how removed and at a distance from anything of this kind? how properly *a man*? . . . A man, and not a woman: effeminate, soft, delicate, supine; impotent in pleasure, in anger, talk; pusillanimous, light, changeable, etc.; but the contrary to this in each particular. – A man, and not a beast: not gluttonous as a hog, not lecherous as a goat, not savage as a lion, but sociable as the creatures that live in society and have a public. – *A man*, and not a child: not taken with trifles, not admiring shows, not playing, crying, taken on, angry and pleased again, froward, pettish, in humour, out of humour, wanton and cross, stomach, the belly and plaything, manna [*sic*], nurse. The contraries: Manhood, manliness, humanity – manly, humane, masculine.[21]

Shaftesbury's evasively normative ideal of 'masculinity' was, it seems, constantly under threat from its 'others'.

Opera was inevitably caught in the crossfire of such debates, and indeed was often seen as representing another challenge to heroic masculinity: while its aristocratic advocates saw the content of its *plots* as civic-humanist, heroic exempla, critics pointed to its *music* (and the genre's general emphasis on lavish consumption) as undermining both civic humanism and public-spirited masculinity.[22] For London, letters by librettists and opera company agents suggest directorial concern for appropriately serious and heroic plots, ones which would instil principles of good government and decorum.[23] But, as the mounting criticism of opera in 1720s London indicates, any public-spirited objectives the directors might have had were counteracted in the popular press. For them, opera represented the opposite of heroic masculinity – it was fundamentally effeminate, particularly in its music. As early as 1698, John Dennis had articulated this criticism in his 'Essay on Operas', in a manner recalling Shaftesbury's concerns. 'Musick', Dennis writes

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[18] Barrell and Guest, 'On the Use of Contradiction', 132. See also James William Johnson, 'England, 1660–1800: An Age without a Hero?', who notes the lack of 'consensus in Stuart-Georgian England as to the attributes of the hero, the constituent elements of heroism, or even as to whether the heroic concept had any validity' (25), which resulted in heroism suffering 'a process of ideological mitosis, its component threads separating from each other' (29).

[19] Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, 4.

[20] Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable.*

[21] Cooper (third earl of Shaftesbury) *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, 216–17.

> that is not subservient to Reason, especially if it be soft and effeminate, is a mere Delight of Sense . . . since 'tis natural to Sense to bring a Man home to himself, and confine him there, as 'tis natural to Reason to expand the Soul . . . and throw it out upon the Publick. And as soft and delicious Musick, by soothing the Senses, and making a Man too much in love with himself, makes him too little fond of the Publick; so by emasculating and dissolving the Mind, it shakes the very Foundation of Fortitude, and so is destructive of both Branches of the publick Spirit.[24]

The London satires of the 1720s and beyond may have repackaged Dennis's critique, but the fundamental binary between masculine reason and feminine emotion remained.[25]

Dennis's concern was also of a piece with the criticisms made by Italian opera reformers such as Lodovico Antonio Muratori, in his *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (1706).[26] The effeminacy of music was a particular complaint, even in the home of opera. Opera librettists, too, showed an awareness of the conflict between plot content and the mode of performance. Achilles' explicit rejection of music-making in favour of militarism in Metastasio's *Achille in Sciro* (1736) is, Wendy Heller points out, just one example of the concern expressed in opera plots of this period about the difficulty of having virile heroes sing and make love.[27]

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[22] Freeman, *Opera Without Drama*; Weiss, 'Metastasio, Aristotle, and the *Opera Seria*'; Weiss, 'Teorie drammatiche e "infranciosamento"'. The source for Haym's and Handel's *Tolomeo*, Carlo Sigismondo Capece's *Tolomeo et Alessandro* (1711, set by Domenico Scarlatti) chiefly concerned the princely subordination of passion to reason; see Pacholke, 'Preface', in Handel, *Tolomeo, Re d'Egitto*, xiii.

[23] For directors' involvement in choice of libretti, see Rolli's letter to Riva of October 1720 and Riva's October 1726 letter to Muratori, both cited in *Händel Handbuch* 4: *Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen*, 93–4, 143–4. Although Owen Swiney largely dealt with the acquisition of singers for the Academy, in his letters to the duke of Richmond he does discuss libretti; they are judged partly on their suitability for the cast, and partly on aesthetic grounds; for his concern for appropriately heroic operas (and espousal of Apostolo Zeno), see letters of 28 December 1725 and 13 August 1726 in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music,* 361, 369. For further discussion, see Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music,* 286–7; Gibson, 'The Royal Academy of Music (1719–28) and Its Directors', 138, 149–51. As noted in the previous chapter (n.8), however, operatic characters were by no means universally virtuous.

[24] Dennis, 'An Essay on the Operas after the Italian Manner', 1, 457–62.

[25] For further discussion, see the following chapter.

[26] For examples, see Heller, 'Reforming Achilles', 568.

The conflict between reason and emotion – or words and music – was particularly focussed around the castrato in England, in ways that impacted on the reception of Senesino's performances. In part, this stemmed from the nature of operatic plots. *Opera seria*, Roger Freitas has suggested, was concerned with that moment of transition to manhood, when the youth (especially susceptible to the disorder of sexual desire) puts aside his quest for love in recognition of the prior claims of duty and virtue.[28] Freitas believes that the castrato took the hero's role because, philosophically and (to an extent) physically, he most closely approximated the liminal body of the effeminate youth. But in England, unaccustomed to the Italian practice of employing castrati, these figures were particularly problematic: many critics complained bitterly about castrati playing heroes because they thought appropriate portrayal of heroism important to national moral life, and because they thought castrati – and opera – were constitutionally incapable of doing justice to such roles. With the debates around the civic-humanist principle in view, one can see that the operas of 1726–8 in which one of the points – if not the chief point – of interest was the outcome of the women's tussle for the *primo uomo*'s affections, and in which they, more than he, demonstrated heroic virtue and magnanimity in attaining or relinquishing that goal, signally failed to meet neoclassical criteria for virtuous drama.

. . . OR SENTIMENTALITY?

This failure in heroic terms was addressed in an interesting way by the opera company. Surprisingly, there seems to have been a decision to emphasise the hero's romantic indecision in some of these works, suggesting that members of the company were interested in engaging with the period's complex view of heroism. Despite or perhaps because of the debates around heroic masculinity, a presentation of the *primo uomo* as indecisive might have been seen as aesthetically fashionable, for the dramatic milieu was one in which questions of emotional authenticity had for some time been of importance. In the seventeenth century, Pierre Corneille had added to Aristotle's core plot types one emphasising the inability to act, seeing it as 'peut-être plus sublime que les trois qu'Aristotle avoue'.[29] Corneille's assertion of the 'greater sublimity' of heroic inaction (though rarely put into effect in his plays) seems on one level to undermine archetypal heroic valour. Indeed it demonstrates the period's growing concern about the sincerity of formulaically articulated emotion, a response not only to highly regulated court life but to the increasingly stereotyped and (as we have seen) anachronistic heroic roles of the stage. Jean Racine perhaps also addressed this issue with his injunction that alongside traditional heroism there should be 'cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir de la tragédie'.[30] The result of such concern was a turn towards *sensibilité* which influenced drama as much as it did the novel.

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[27] Heller, 'Reforming Achilles', 567.

[28] Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation'.

[29] Corneille, 'Discours de la tragédie'; cited in Bucciarelli, *Italian Opera and European Theatre*, 8.

This concern was expressed in the English theatre shortly before the arrival of all-sung Italian opera. By the early eighteenth century, both aesthetic and socio-political factors saw the heroic drama in England displaced by sentimental and affective theatre. In some ways there was a continuum between the two, just as there was between sensibility and civic humanism: sensibility, it was later explained, 'strengthens the bond of society, and attracts individuals from their private system to exert themselves in acts of generosity and benevolence'.[31] This more democratic expression of 'public spirit' required a milder representation in the theatre than that allowed by traditional heroism; Nicholas Rowe in the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Fair Penitent* (1703) explained:

> since Terror and Pity are laid down for the Ends of Tragedy, by the great Master and Father of Criticism, I was always inclin'd to fancy . . . [the audience] should be struck with Terror in several parts of the Play, but always Conclude and go away with Pity, a sort of regret proceeding from good nature . . . this passion . . . must and will at all times affect people, who have any tenderness or humanity.

An emphasis on pity took the sentimental drama in a different direction from civic-humanist inspired heroism. Rowe's play ended with Horatio commenting on the fainting protagonist, Altamont, as he is carried from the stage:

> The Storm of Grief bears hard upon his Youth
> And bends him like a drooping Flower to Earth. (v.i)

The concluding image of the protagonist as a 'drooping Flower' is a striking – and strikingly un-heroic – one. Such effects are similar to those we will find in *Tolomeo*, in particular, and, as Eugene M. Waith points out, they are a long way from the heroic behaviour of neoclassical drama.[32] A theatrics of refined sentiment, of inaction and indecision was subtly distinct from a Cartesian or Metastasian, rationalist emphasis on drama structured by choice, which articulated the view that 'virtue was best revealed in an individual's mental and spiritual ability to control actions incited by human passion'.[33] The indecision which characterises Senesino's role in the operas we will shortly explore was not Descartes's demonstration of moral rectitude through mental and spiritual control; it signalled something closer to Rowe's sentimental hero.

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[30] *Oeuvres complètes de Racine*; cited in Waith, *Ideas of Greatness*, 246.

[31] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols (1762); cited in Manning, 'Sensibility', 83. Such a view of sensibility was of a piece with a contemporaneous ideal of masculinity which eschewed luxury in favour of simplicity and manly virtue; see Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity*, 91–132.

[32] Waith, *Ideas of Greatness*, 274.

As we will see, however, the operatic exploration of a sentimental model was often ambivalent. In part this was because, in their deployment of inaction and indecision through the vehicle of the aria, these operas participated in what William B. Worthen has described as a 'dialectic between passion and its formal expression that entirely suffused the sentimental theater'.[34] That is to say, the authenticity of passion in a forum which relied on technique for its production was a particularly thorny issue in a period more generally anxious about the location and believability of virtue. (In a highly mobile, nascent capitalist society, where image could masquerade as substance, the transparency of 'character' was, as Lisa Freeman and Deidre Lynch have shown, at the heart of community anxiety.[35]) The tension that we might find in these operas inhering in the presentation of a fallible, questioning and sentimental 'hero' within a fundamentally rationalist dramatic form was thus expressive of a broader epistemic conundrum: were the workings of reason or of the passions better to be trusted as an index of a person's identity, and thence (in the theatre) an expression of general verisimilitude? Since reason and action remained defining features of masculine identity, it is not surprising that heroic inaction was widely criticised throughout the eighteenth century for apparently encouraging emotional narcissism (tears being the end in themselves), rather than strengthening social engagement, as its proponents claimed.[36]

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[33] Neville, 'Metastasio, Pietro'. Metastasio explained in a letter to Giuseppe Bettinelli that 'dal contrasto di questi due universali principii delle operazioni umane, passione e raziocinio, nasce la diversità de' caratteri degli uomini, secondo che in ciaschedun più o meno l'una o l'altro entrambi prevalgono' ('from the contrast of these two universal principles of human operations, passion and reasoning, is born the diversity of human character, according to which in each person to a greater or lesser extent one or the other prevails'); *Tutte le opere*; cited in Desler, 'From "Oh virtù che innamora!" to "Son pastorello amante"', 122. Laura Brown's description of the essence of heroic drama underscores the mode of characterisation that also stood for much *opera seria*: 'The protagonists are static emblems of Platonic or epic virtue, and their actions typically consist of a series of episodes in which that virtue is enacted and reenacted' (Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, 4). This fits, of course, with contemporary principles of acting, which, as we saw in chapter 1, in the seventeenth century articulated the dramatic role (or character) in the plot's progression through a sequence of choices and resultant actions.

[34] Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 71. It is also found in the late seventeenth century's rejection of the epic in favour of the mock epic and (ultimately) the novel.

[35] Freeman, *Character's Theater*; Lynch, *The Economy of Character*.

[36] Keymer, 'Sentimental Fiction'.

The tension between reason and passion was further compounded for male actors, and no doubt for singers still more. The question, as Kristina Straub outlines it, brought into conflict elements of masculine identity aligned with the civic-humanist ideal – public spirited, but therefore circumspect in self-display – and the innate exhibitionism of acting: 'How does one reconcile the specularized (and sexualized) male body with emergent definitions of masculinity that increasingly stress the spectatorial, seeing-but-not-seen nature of authority?'[37] Seen from this perspective, the accommodation of sentimental drama to the masculine subject – whether in Aaron Hill's *Fatal Extravagance* (1721), in George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731) or in the operas we are shortly to explore – was immediately suspect.[38]

Perhaps only with the great mid-century actor David Garrick were the rational and the sentimental reconciled, through his intellectualisation of acting in the 'scientific' delineation of emotional expression. Michael Wilson suggests Garrick's acting style should be read within a civic-humanist context, for while audiences particularly relished the 'mad confusion' of warring passions in his performances (for example, as Jaffeir in Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, one of his most famous heroic roles), the attainment of self-mastery was always his end. Wilson observes that Garrick cultivated roles which demonstrated inner struggle to the exclusion of more single-minded characters, as the 'internal conflicts' of the former were 'better suited to his powers of moral illustration'.[39]

Garrick's clarity of illustration of both competing passions and the moral outcome was testament to his abilities, but also to the mid-century willingness to accommodate sentiment to heroism. Arthur Murphy, Garrick's biographer, described Jaffier in *Venice Preserv'd* as perfectly suited to Garrick because he was

> composed of moral qualities and the most sensible dispositions; the mild affections (public as well as private) are planted in his nature; love and friendship are his ruling passions . . . he feels the public good, and has a high sense of honour.[40]

While Murphy went on to point out that 'those affections are not upon an even balance; they take their turn and his virtues counteract one another', the synthesis of diverse elements by Garrick, to his audience's admiration, was the point: such reconciliation of heroic and sentimental was noteworthy in Garrick because it had not been easily achieved earlier. As Lisa Freeman observes of the early eighteenth-century sentimental theatre, '[w]ith the parameters of the middling classes not yet determined and the focus of their energies unclear, their correlatives in tragic representation – the character of the new tragic hero and the substance of that hero's action – could hardly avoid lapses in coherence'.[41]

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[37] Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 27.

[38] Laura Brown points out that the protagonist's 'statuslessness and passivity . . . is signified by class rather than sex', but the interchangeability of female for male passivity would have made him still less acceptable in civic-humanist terms; 'The Defenseless Woman', 436. On the way in which actors dealt with the perceived effeminacy of their role in the first part of the eighteenth century, see Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 27–45.

[39] Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting', 386. Garrick's canny manipulation of his public image through his theatrical career has been widely discussed; see, for example, Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*; Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*; Fulford, 'Britannia's Heart of Oak'; Rogers, 'David Garrick'.

[40] Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, I, 149–50.

So we find in Senesino's plight in the late 1720s a distillation of the conundrum concerning the dramatic expression of passion, virtue and heroism presented to the male actor in general up until Garrick, which was manifested in turn in the drama written for him in this period. That this problem was explored in opera at all may attest to awareness on the part of the Royal Academy's directors that *opera seria*, as a genre most closely allied to the heroic drama, adhered to principles fundamentally out of step with the (bourgeois) concerns of the contemporary British spoken theatre. The 'lapses in coherence' in these operatic roles may thus be multiply determined, as the worlds of spoken and musical theatre, gender politics and socio-political ideology, and philosophies of theatrical identity, all collide in the figure of the heroic eunuch.

THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Though the crisis of masculine authenticity in society at large may have been the product of combined politico-economic and philosophical factors, its manifestation where Senesino was concerned was recognised chiefly (as we have seen) through reference to his relationship with the two women, and perhaps particularly with the cross-dressing Faustina. The reasons for this are not difficult to discern given the public unease that such role reversals engendered (as we saw in chapter 1). Although only two of her London operas (*Admeto* and *Siroe*) actually allowed Faustina to disguise herself as a man, a sense of masculine agency was nonetheless a prominent aspect of her characterisation in other roles; the trouser roles only accentuated this.[42]

Admeto and *Siroe* particularly problematised the hero's role through the presence of Faustina as surrogate masculine agent. Where *Admeto* was concerned, the publication of a number of mock epistles between 'Senesino' and 'Faustina' in March 1727 attests to the titillating nature of gender role reversal, for in each epistle the humour revolves around the conceit that Faustina the sexual predator presses her attentions on the reticent, reluctantly impotent Senesino.[43] In the *Epistle from S—r S—O to S—a F—A*, 'Senesino' attributes 'Faustina''s 'feign'd Transports' to her desire for applause:

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[41] Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 96.

[42] For further discussion of Faustina's other roles, see pp. 50–2, above. Faustina had evidently also angled for another opera (in which she had already appeared) that would have given her a cross-dressing role, *Partenope*; the Royal Academy rejected it, perhaps on grounds of propriety as outlined by Owen Swiney; see his letter to the duke of Richmond, 13 August 1726, in which he asserts that 'Faustina is in love with herselfe in this opera'; cited in Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music*, 369–70. Handel set it, nonetheless, in 1730.

> Is't not enough, you boast from ev'ry Hand
> Such thund'ring Peals? – while I neglected stand!
> That at my Cost, you strive Applause to gain,
> And by feign'd Transports give me real Pain.

'Faustina' responds with contempt to Senesino's apparent rejection of her in *F—NA's Answer to S—NO's Epistle*: 'Shall I, who have such mighty Conquests gain'd, / Be by a Castrate Wretch at last disdain'd?' The revenge that she claims she will exact, by mustering other conquests ('Troops of Toupets') 'to hiss Thee to Disgrace', is part of a mounting hubris in which she sees herself besting not only the British aristocracy but Orpheus himself. Her parting shot cuts to the nub of the matter: 'Thou common laughing Stock! thou standing Jest, / Thou'rt but a living *D—o* at the best.' With Senesino's sexual inadequacy an ever-present reality, operatic love scenes were bound to provoke mirth in some quarters.

The lewd frontispiece to the *Epistle from S—r S—O to S—a F—A* illustrates the problem: it depicts the denouement of *Admeto*, in which the eponymous king and his disguised wife are reunited in loving embrace, but the *bienséance* of this stock conclusion is undermined by the portrayal of the two characters. Alceste's affectionate blandishments in the aria 'Si caro, caro si' for a husband still enamoured of her 'generous rival' are made pointedly perverse – addressed by a woman dressed as a man to another man (or a character and singer some might have said was also only attired as a man). In this illustration, the sense that such confusion generated libidinous impropriety is reinforced by the characters' physical proximity, by the placement of Alceste's signicative finger, and by the fictional decor of lascivious herms (see Figure 3.1). The background painting of Semele ascending underscores the lesson that female usurpation of male (sexual) authority ends in social disruption (and physical destruction). For all their potential for satirical prurience, the carnivalesque inversions of *Admeto* thus had a more powerfully negative message for contemporary audiences.

Not only the gutter press, but performers too may have amused themselves with the satirical possibilities of such moments. If the surmising of the mock epistles is to be believed, in an attempt to gain extra applause from the audience during 'Si caro, caro si', Faustina was over-enthusiastic in her portrayal of the amorous attentions

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[43] *An Epistle from S—r S—o to S—a F—a* [1727]; *An Epistle from Signora F—a to a Lady* [1727]; *F—NAs Answer to S—NO's Epistle* [1727]. See also Carey, *Faustina*, and discussion above, pp. 60 and 154.

Alceste displayed when finally reunited with Admeto.[44] Henry Carey, in his 'Blundrella: or, the Impertinent', seems to be alluding as much to potential impropriety as to the singer's musical brilliance when he mentions 'That Song . . . which the *Faustina* / Sings when she hangs on *Senesino*; / Its Name I have forgot, no matter, / 'Tis that which makes the Boxes clatter.'[45]

What for the press and the audience held titillating and sometimes disquieting potential, for the operas' creators must have posed complex challenges. Sometimes, it would seem, the Academy directors simply chose not to engage with such challenges: it may be that one reason a proposal to stage *Partenope* was rejected in 1726 was because its humorous plot was found to be 'depraved' (as Owen Swiney suggested), in part because the women's parts were too masculine and the men's not masculine enough.[46] When the company did select operas with trouser roles for Faustina, it seems they exploited the problematic nature of Senesino's role, rather than underplaying it. *Admeto* has already been discussed, but the clearest dramatic enunciation of heroic redundancy is to be found in *Siroe* (1728), Handel's chief opera of the 1727–8 season and his most popular work of the 'rivals' period after *Admeto*.[47]

Siroe was very deliberately chosen for London: distinctively, it was both Handel's first setting of a libretto by Metastasio, and it was 'hot off the press', having been written for Venice in 1726 (set there by Leonardo Vinci). Indeed, Haym and Handel apparently based their opera on a still more recent version, that for Naples in 1727 (set by Domenico Sarro).[48] It has been suggested that Metastasian libretti were used so rarely for Handel's London operas precisely because that celebrated poet focussed more on the hero's emotional turmoil than on heroic action. Indeed, so long did Metastasio maintain his heroes in a state of doubt or vacillation that he was criticised for the habit by some contemporaries.[49] And among Metastasio's vacillating heroes, *Siroe* is recognised as having pride of place.[50] Even Antonio Vivaldi's highly faithful production of 1727 appears to have acknowledged the problematic nature of the role, exchanging Siroe's most pathetic aria ('Fra' dubbi affetti miei') for one more conventionally heroic ('Vado con alma forte').[51] In London, however, far from disguising the hero's weaknesses, Haym and Handel appear if anything to have accentuated them. Nicola Haym's London text is remarkably faithful to the original, cutting far less recitative than was customary in London, and (even more unusually) retaining most of the aria texts. But while temporal proximity to the original production may have inspired fidelity, examination of some of the alterations that were made suggest there were also other issues at stake.

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[44] In *An Answer from S—a F—a to S—r S—o* (March 1727) it is Faustina who complains: 'Imagine then, what Anguish I must feel, / When in each Look my Passion I reveal; Unable longer to withhold my Charms, I trembling pant, and jump into your Arms, / Expecting Joys and Transports to receive; / Such Transports which, alas! You cannot give.'

[45] Carey, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 15.

[46] Swiney said the role of Partenope was 'only fit for . . . some He-She-thing or other' and Rosmira wears male disguise throughout; see n. 42, above.

[47] See performance figures listed in the Introduction on p. 9.

[48] Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera*, 58.

[49] Robinson, 'The Ancient and the Modern', 140.

[50] Rouvière, '"Siroe" de Vivaldi, ou Metastasio à Venise', 47. In this respect it may owe something to Rotrou's *Cosroès* (1649), which emphasises Siroè's 'coeur irrésolu' (v.6.1681), though Metastasio's plot may also be in debt to Corneille's *Nicomède* (1651), on a remarkably similar theme; see discussion of both plays in Waith, *Ideas of Greatness*, 184–6.

The attractiveness of the libretto for the company at this time may have derived from several key elements of the plot: the relationship between the two women is focussed around an undisclosed competition for the hero; Faustina's character, Emira, spends all of the opera in male disguise; and Senesino as Siroe is plagued by self-doubt. Here is the classic tragic hero's dilemma: since his father, King Cosroe, has had his beloved Emira's father killed, Siroe must choose between family (honour) and love. This choice is made all the more pressing by Emira's presence in disguise at his father's court, and her ultimatum that either Siroe must kill his father (to demonstrate his love for her), or she will perform the task herself, in her capacity as his father's loyal retainer, 'Idaspe'. On the horns of a dilemma on this front, Siroe's honour is further impugned by his brother Medarse (a rival for the throne), and by Laodice (Cuzzoni), who loves him and is in a position to make his life difficult, as she in turn is loved by Cosroe.

Although the basic elements of the plot may seem standard enough, the libretto took the heroic dilemma far further than convention required. In particular, Metastasio seemed to articulate Siroe's difficulties in a way that, for a London audience, would have resonated with Senesino's own position by thematising his subjugation through the concept of silence. Such a position, difficult in practical terms for female characters, was fundamentally undermining of social identity for men. The cognitive dissonance that this created was perhaps reflected in the *argomento*'s assertive definition of Siroe as 'valoroso e intollerante', for this description is belied by examination of the libretto. Siroe's role reveals a thematisation of silence that not only thwarts the heroic potential of the character, but infantilises him, forcing him to quite extraordinary self-abnegation and ultimately to death.

Siroe's difficulty with speech is partly an awareness of its problematic social performance: as Londoners knew well, the distance between intention and perception was dangerously susceptible of misinterpretation and manipulation.[52] For Siroe, this difficulty is highlighted from the outset. The opera opens in the throne room, with Cosroe asking his two sons to swear to abide by his decision as to his successor; Siroe, however, responds only with a timorous aside, '(Che giuri il labbro mio! Ah no!)', which indicates both his recognition of the power of speech as a performative act and his double refusal to engage with that power, either through complying or through rejecting his father's command openly.[53] The perception of Siroe's hesitancy and passivity is underlined when Emira enters (I.iii): disguised as Idaspe, it is clear she wears the trousers in more ways than one, for she upbraids him in the strongest terms, comparing his apparent lethargy to that of a child:

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[51] Rouvière, '"Siroe" de Vivaldi, ou Metastasio à Venise', 47.

[52] Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 20–2.

> . . . *Siroe* che fa? riposa
> Stupido e lento in un Letargo indegno,
> E allor che perde un Regno
> Quasi inerme Fanciullo armi non trova? (I.iv)[54]

And Siroe takes his cue by responding in simple childlike fashion: 'Che posso far?' ('What can I do?') Even when Emira demands that Siroe kill his father, he responds not with outrage, but with further questions.

Siroe's regression under Emira's pressure becomes still more pronounced in the following scene (I.v), when Emira taunts him by encouraging Laodice to believe that he loves her. Siroe is unable to say anything to refute it (not wishing to upset Laodice, who has influence with his father) and Emira also forces him to be silent: 'Taci spergiuro', she instructs.[55] Siroe's repressed rhetorical power at last bursts forth in an assertion of negativity, as he finally responds to Laodice's questioning by stating: 'Non t'amerò, non t'amo, e non t'amai' (I.vi). This piece of recitative is one of the few instances in this opera in which Haym and Handel chose to cut not the middle of a longer passage, but the end, so emphasising this powerful triple construction:

Metastasio, 1726 [**Naples, 1727**][56]	**Haym, 1727**
Dunque, m'ascolta.	Dunque, m'ascolta.
Ardo per altra fiamma, e [io] son fedele	Ardo per altra fiamma; io son fedele
A più vezzosi rai:	A più vezzosi rai:
Non t'amerò, non t'amo e non t'amai.	Non t'amerò, non t'amo e non t'amai.[57]
E se speri ch'io possa	
Cangiar voglia per te, lo speri in vano:	
Mi sei troppo importuna. Ecco l'arcano.	

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[53] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 8; '(What shall my Lips e'er Seal an oath like this! Ah no!)', 9.

[54] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 15; 'What art thou doing, *Siroes*? Thou'rt dreaming, / Stupidly easy sink'st thy Soul in Lethargies, / And whilst a Kingdom's dropping from thy Grasp, / Stand'st like some naked Boy, nor seek'st for Arms', 14.

[55] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 16; 'Be dumb, thou perjur'd Man', 17.

[56] The libretto for the Neapolitan production of 1727 is almost identical to the original at this point, with the exception that 'io' is substituted for 'e' in the second *verso* in this extract (indicated in square brackets), which substitution the London libretto retains.

[57] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 19; 'Therefore hear me: I for another fair One feel Love's Flames, / Whose mightier Charms fix firm my willing Faith: / For thee, I will not, I will never love thee, / I do not love thee, I never did love thee', 18.

The disjointed desperation which this conclusion evokes is further reinforced by the subtle change in the second line above, which Haym derived from the 1727 Neapolitan libretto, where Metastasio's continuation, 'e' ('and'), is swapped to 'io' ('I'), creating an iteration at once more vehement and less rhetorically secure. Evidently, Haym and Handel felt the rhetorical assurance and emotional coherence of Metastasio's final three lines – as well as the assertiveness of Siroe's insult to Laodice in the last line – would be out of place here.[58]

Having been allowed to voice his love only through asserting the negative, Siroe then finds himself in the same position with regard to his honour. Two scenes later, Siroe's difficulty in achieving coherence manifests itself in both written and spoken word: in I.viii we find Siroe in his father's room, with a letter he has written which reveals the danger the king is in, but which fails to say who threatens him. Siroe hides as Cosroe arrives, leading, again, to his enforced silence as a string of slanders are uttered about him by other characters: '(Che tormento è tacer!)' he says, aside.[59] Siroe finally bursts from his hiding place when his brother declares him to be the traitor, but, in answer to the torrent of questions, he is unable to do more than deny their accusations: 'Difendermi non posso, e reo non sono.'[60] In the next act (II.iii), as Cosroe accuses Siroe of attacking 'Idaspe' himself, Siroe breaks, concluding his 'confession' with another rhetorically powerful triple construction in the negative:

Tutto è vero, io son reo, tradisco il Padre
Son nemico al Germano, insulto *Idaspe*,
Mi si deve la Morte. Ingiusto sei
Se la ritardi adesso.
Non curo Uomini e Dei;
Odio il giorno, odio tutti, odio me stesso.[61]

His self-loathing is confirmed socially: although Siroe again tries to warn his father of danger, Cosroe commands silence.

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[58] Handel, typically jealous of space where recitative was concerned, consistently extended recitative passages beyond the end of the stave in this opera; in the case of this passage, leading into the aria 'Se il labbro amor ti giura', not only does Handel overshoot the end of the stave, he has to paste on some extra paper to fit the final words, 't'amai', onto the line. The paste-in is clearly visible in the British Library's microfilm of the manuscript, but has evidently been trimmed off subsequently; see Handel, *Siroe*, GB-Lbl RM.20.c.9, f.14r. For Handel's normal practice when writing recitatives, see Hurley, 'Handel's Compositional Process', 122.

[59] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 27; '(O what a Torment 'tis still to be silent!)', 26.

[60] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 28; 'It is not in my Power to make Defence, and yet I am not guilty', 29.

[61] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* London, 1728, 39; 'All's true, I'm guilty, I betray my Father, / I am my Brother's Foe, insult Hydaspes, / And Death by Right's my Lot. Thou art unjust / If for a Moment's Time thou giv'st me Respite. / For me, I care not or for Men or Gods, / I hate the Day, hate all Men, Hate Myself', 38.

Cosroe's silencing of Siroe is the unifying principle for the scene at the heart of the second act in which the king finally confronts his son with a choice between truth or death (II.vi), a scene that was relatively unusual for London in that it is both long and consists entirely of recitative. At the outset he instructs: 'infin ch'io parlo, / Taci, e mostrami in questo il tuo rispetto'.[62] Siroe responds 'Fin che vuoi tacerò, così prometto', but cannot restrain himself as his father reels off the list of false accusations, and twice Cosroe has to instruct his son: 'Serbami la promessa, ascolta, e taci'.[63] Then, when Cosroe finally invites Siroe to speak, and reveal his accomplices, Siroe can only reply: 'Parlar non posso.' As if to indicate the gendered irony of this enforced silence, the king tells 'Idaspe', on the other hand: 'Dì ciò che vuoi.'[64]

* * *

The irony of these allusions to speech and silence extends beyond the circumstances of the characters' or even the singers' relations to the conception of opera: it is perhaps appropriate that this thematic exploration of silence occurs in the recitatives, the sections of an opera London audiences were least likely to 'hear'. Is the relationship between Siroe's and Senesino's suppression then merely a literary observance, a conceit noted by careful readers but not by the generality of operagoers? After all, even though recitative was given a more substantial role in *Siroe* than in most operas for London, attention would doubtless have focussed on Siroe/Senesino's seven arias.

Particularly in London, we should observe the aria's role in giving theatrical realisation to literary design – for the 'point', in other words – even as we recognise the tendency amongst contemporaries to perceive such music as 'irrational'. And Handel did indeed find ways to incorporate silence into Siroe's music. Thus Siroe begins Act II with an aria, added specially in London, which he breaks off at the start of the B-section, as he sees Laodice approach. Although the aria's function might be the conventional one of an act-opening arioso, a brief soliloquy or apostrophe to the gods, Handel made it clear that 'Deh! voi mi dite, o Numi!' was an interrupted da capo aria by cutting Siroe off mid-sentence just as he begins the relative-minor B-section. Even the string accompaniment seems to thematise this idea, with its opening descending scale recalled as interjections which are repeatedly cut off after just a few notes as Siroe enters with his vocal version of the theme.

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[62] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 47; 'Then, when I speak, be silent, / And shew, by that, one Mark [of] filial Rev'rence', 46.

[63] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 47; 'Long, as you please, I'm dumb; that is my Promise', 46; 48; 'Observe your Promise, hearken, and be silent', 49.

[64] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 48; 'Trust me, I cannot speak it', 49; 48; 'Speak what thou wilt', 49. Significantly, it is Emira/Idaspe's powerful rhetoric that eventually persuades the king to reprieve his son from his death sentence in III.iii: 'Più non resisto' ('I can resist no more'), he exclaims.

Equally, in 'Mi credi infedele', which follows Siroe's extraordinary abnegation in II.iii, verbally inspired pauses disrupt the musical flow of the A-section. These particularly occur around the question 'Chi sa chi t'inganna?', and indicate – and provide Senesino with the opportunity to perform – Siroe's conflicting desire to speak and the need to remain silent. Handel seems again to ensure we hear these pauses as interruptions by contrasting them with the insistent, repetitive quavers of the bass, which seem to add urgency to Siroe's desire to talk. Handel further emphasises Siroe's frustration by repeatedly leaving 'Chi sa chi t'inganna?' hanging on the dominant (as one might expect for a question), to make the audience also desire closure. The tonic cadence only comes after the pause, on '(Che pena è tacer!)'. In the latter part of the A-section, Siroe's inner turmoil achieves almost comic proportions, as he sings sequentially of the pain of silence, and then teasingly draws out 't'inganna?' melismatically over a dominant pedal, before the inevitable caesura and return to sworn silence (Example 5.1, bb.23–29). Handel evidently thought carefully about the meaning such silences would have for the representation of Siroe's turmoil, because the final '(Che pena è tacer!)' is altered in the autograph from a standard, rhythmically augmented cadential phrase, using minims and dotted crotchets, to one in which the note values are as for all previous instances of the phrase, but the hiatus prior to it is extended instead.[65] Whether this alteration adds greater humour or indicates greater angst would, of course, depend on the performance.

A similar level of textual disruption of the music is present in Siroe's 'Fra dubbi affetti miei' (II.viii), with its repeated questions. As Cosroe at last decides to leave his son's fate in the hands of his faithful 'Idaspe', Siroe is finally able to turn the tables on Emira, but only by seemingly abdicating all responsibility in an aria text that shows him to be the complete opposite of a hero:

Fra dubbi affetti miei
Risolvere non so;
Tu pensaci; tu sei
L'arbitro del mio cor.
Vuoi che la morte attenda?
La morte attenderò:
Vuoi che per lei m'accenda?
Eccomi tutto amor.[66]

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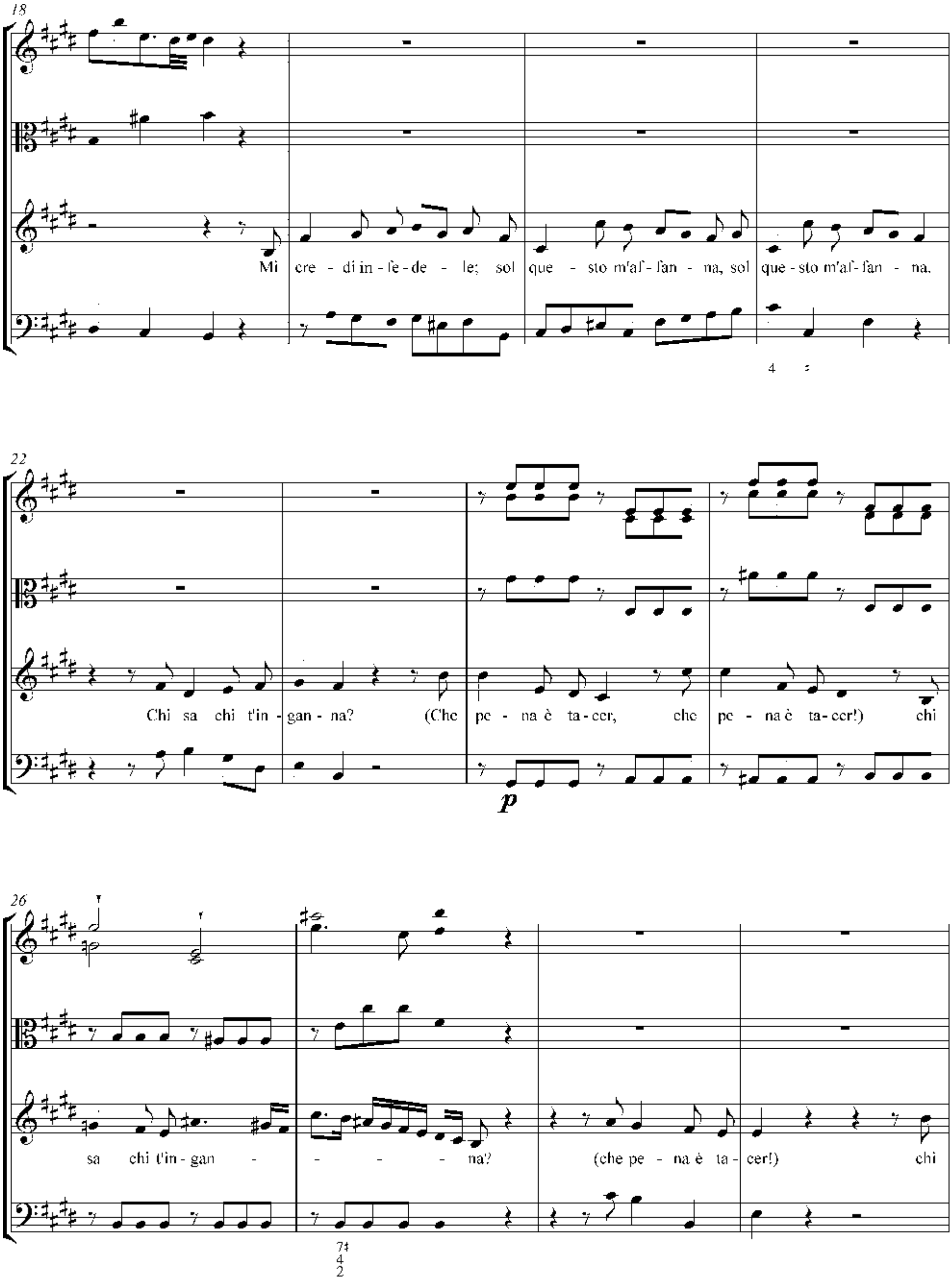
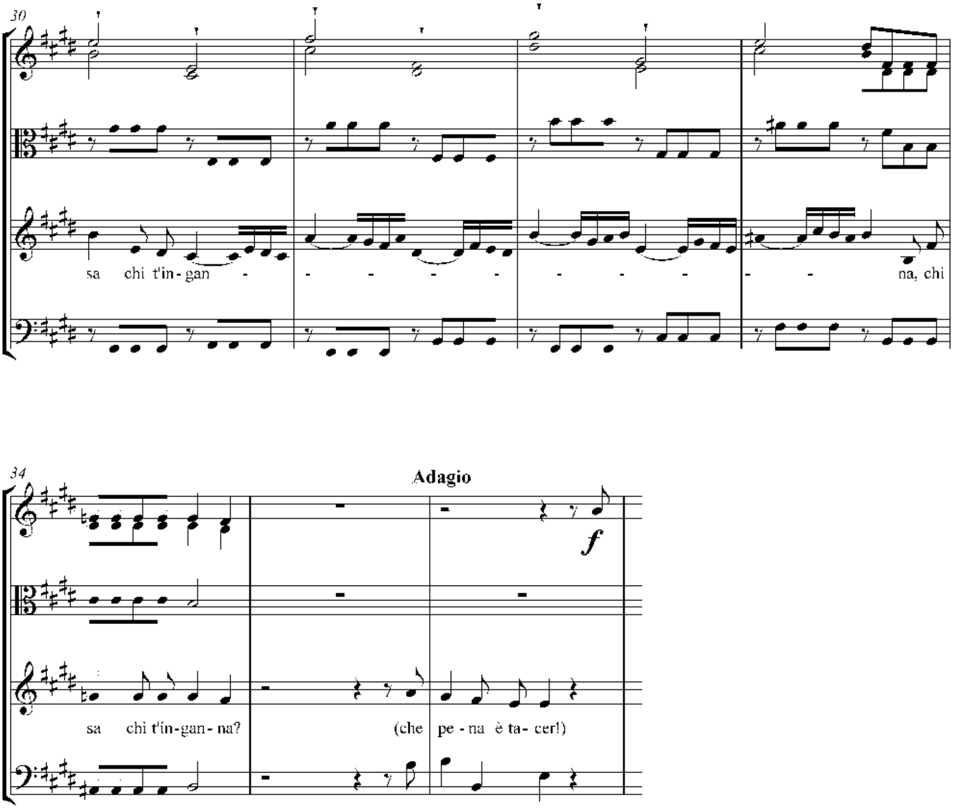
[65] With the more leisurely vocal line, the pause before it lasts a dotted crotchet; with shorter note values for the singer, the pause lasts for three-and-a-half crotchets; see Handel, *Siroe*, GB-Lbl RM.20.c.9, f.44r. It is unclear whether the original 'ad[agio].' marking is still meant to apply.

[66] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 52; 'Amidst these dubious Passions of my Soul / Reason can no resolving Pow'r impart / 'Tis yours to think; you must my Mind controul / Be my sole Arbitress, and sway my Heart. / Would you that I Death's direful Doom should wait? / Then shalt thou see me court my Fate. / Would you, for her, Love's Fires my Breast should move? / Then shalt thou see me all o'er Love', 53.


18
Mi cre - di in - fe - de - le; sol que - sto m'af - fan - na, sol que - sto m'af - fan - na.
4 ♯
22
Chi sa chi t'in - gan - na? (Che pe - na è ta - cer, che pe - na è ta - cer!) chi
p
26
sa chi t'in - gan - - - - na? (che pe - na è ta - cer!) chi
7♮
4
2

Ex. 5.1 Second part of the A-section from Handel's 'Mi credi infedele', *Siroe* (London, 1727), bb.18–36, for Senesino.



Ex. 5.1 (cont.)

This was the text that Vivaldi rejected, preferring something more conventionally heroic. In the London libretto, the English translation makes it particularly clear that Siroe's masculine agency was at stake, by couching his dilemma in the (anti-) Cartesian terms of Reason's defeat by Passion, which would also have evoked English hostility to opera for its schism of sense from sound: 'Amidst these dubious Passions of my Soul / Reason can no resolving Pow'r impart.' Siroe, by this account, is a child for whom Emira not only thinks, but (in another instance of the London translator's poetic licence) whose mind she controls.

If the text seems the antithesis of heroism, however, Handel's setting hardly represents anguished sentimentality. Indeed, the way in which Handel seems to eschew the text's pathetic vision of Siroe at this point suggests he was as wary of the solipsism of sentiment as were contemporary critics of the mode.[67] Gone (at least initially) are the hesitations that characterised 'Mi credi infedele'; instead, the

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[67] See Keymer, 'Sentimental Fiction'.

A-section comprises an elegant minuet, with a regularly phrased, regal melodic line (Example 5.2a). The A-section music presents Siroe as completely at ease with his situation – taking his time and enjoying it. The B-section makes it clear why this is so. If Emira, in her disguise as Idaspe, is truly the arbiter of Siroe's fate, she is forced to choose between two options equally repugnant to her, but both of which she has brought upon Siroe (and thence herself): either Siroe dies or he marries her rival.

Siroe at last has Emira trapped, and makes the most of it in a setting of seeming simplicity which reveals sophisticated motivational intent. Although the A- and B-sections are stylistically and texturally dissimilar (the B-section retaining only a continuo accompaniment), Handel ties the two together with similar melismatic treatment of the final words, 'cor' for the A-section and 'amor' for the B-section – an ironic musical and textual rhyme, given that the 'amor' expressed is turned to Laodice, not Emira. This irony characterises the B-section as a whole. The disappearance of the minuet accompaniment frees Siroe's vocal line from that formal paradigm, and he threatens to divest himself even of the stability of the da capo aria structure, as his repeated questions – phrased as if recitative – and the attendant general pauses make the aria stutter almost to a halt (Example 5.2b). Without the musical context of the A-section (or the 'punch-line' of 'amor'), we might read this as an indication of paralysing self-doubt on Siroe's part, but, placed within that context, his hesitations suggest that he is mocking both Emira and the sentimental theatre's attraction to suffocating emotionalism. Siroe seems to suggest he is willing to sacrifice even the conventions of the genre should Emira command it, and in so doing he indicates his mastery of the situation. If Siroe is infantilised, he demonstrates here the child's ability to wrest control through refusing to play by the rules.

We might expect that Siroe's arias, as the chief sites for the expression of emotion, would demonstrate that the thematisation of silence was more than just the expression of a poetic (or dramatic) conceit. And on one level they do illustrate the notion of Siroe as a hero of sentiment or sensibility, in which, conventionally, 'feeling is represented as exceeding the capacity of language to express it, and is superseded by gesture'.[68] Such ideas were to reach their apogee in the later eighteenth century, when the sentimental strain had become sufficiently musically codified that, Edmund Goehring suggests, the heroine-in-distress was characterised by her 'breathless' cavatina in which excessive emotion results in the collapse of both verbal and musical line.[69] But of course the overwrought, solipsistic sensibility of the later

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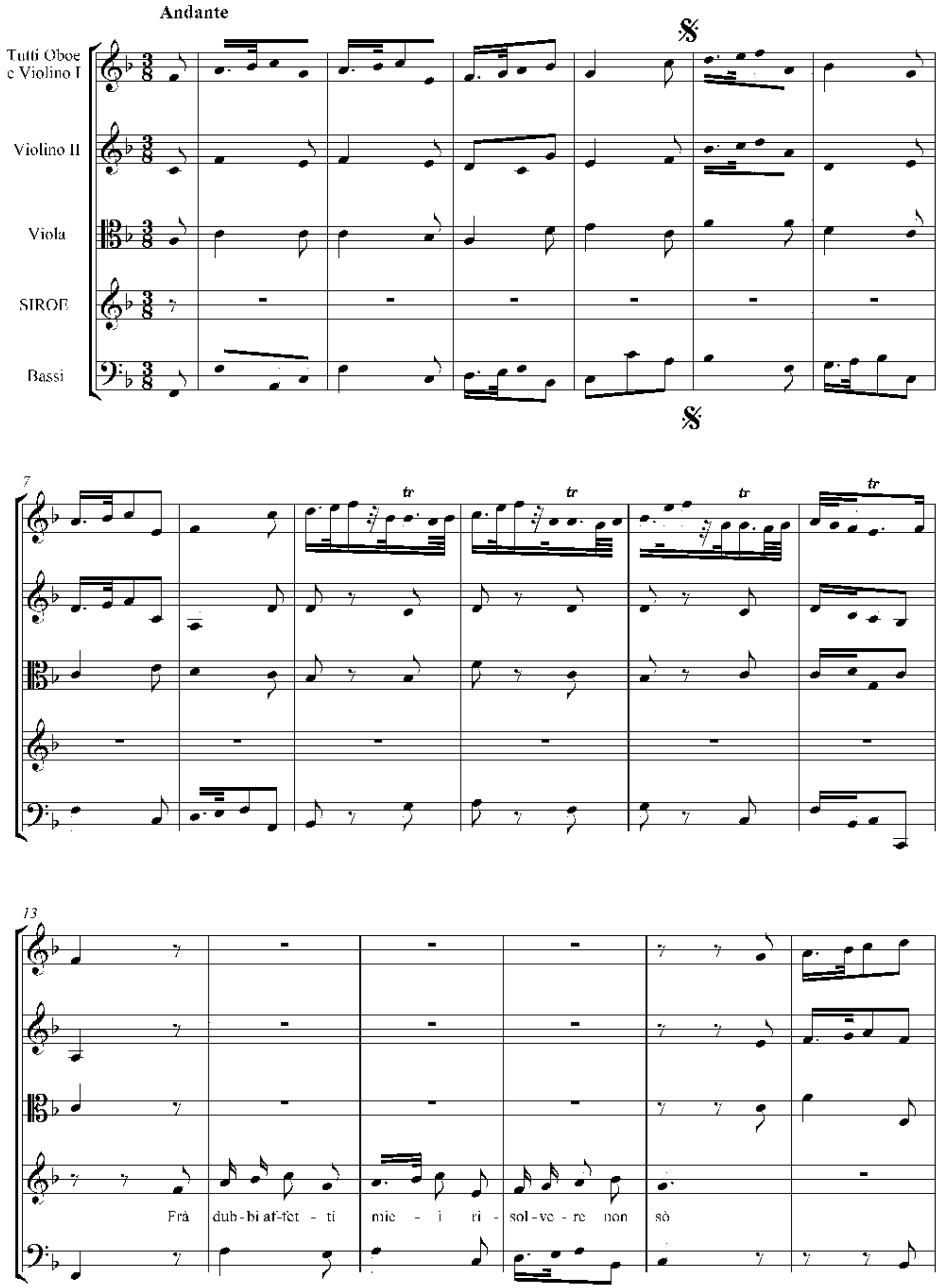
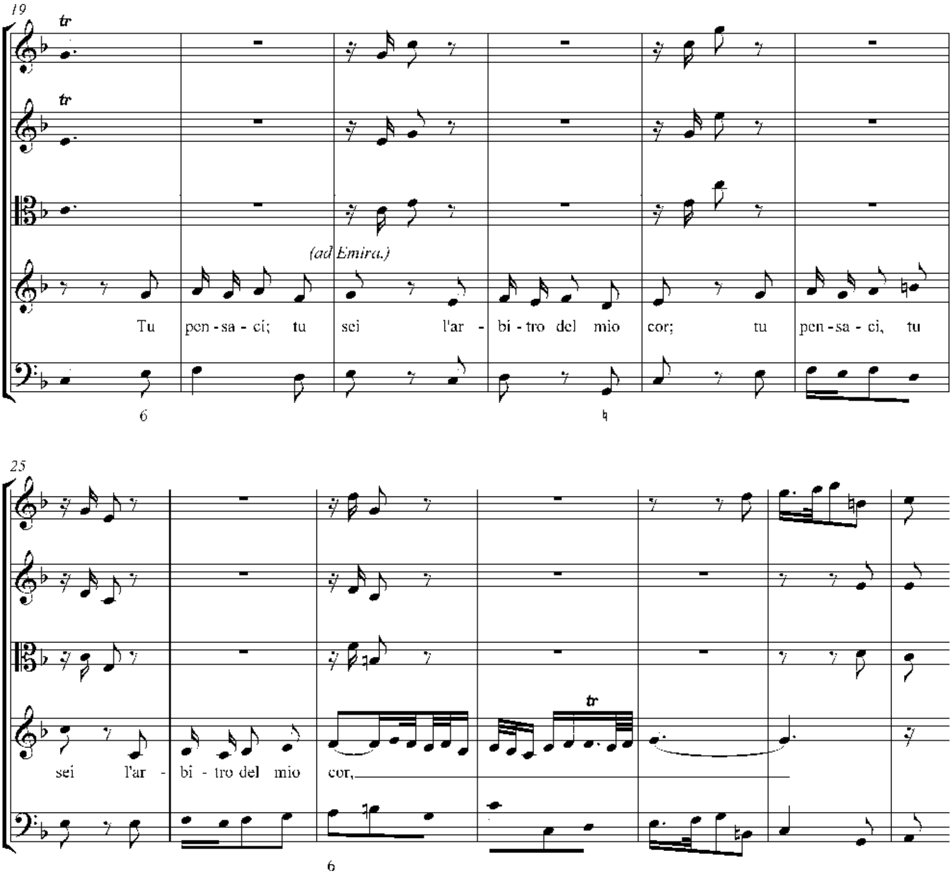
[68] Manning, 'Sensibility', 81.

[69] Goehring, 'The Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa', 129–31. See also Castelvecchi, 'From *Nina* to *Nina*', 102–12. For an auditor's stuttering, breathless response to emotionally affecting singing (that of Luigi Marchesi, in 1780), see Rice, 'Sense, Sensibility, and Opera Seria', 115.


Andante
Tutti Oboe c Violino I
Violino II
Viola
SIROE
Bassi
7
13
tr
Frà dub-bi af-fet - ti mie - i ri - sol-ve-re non sò

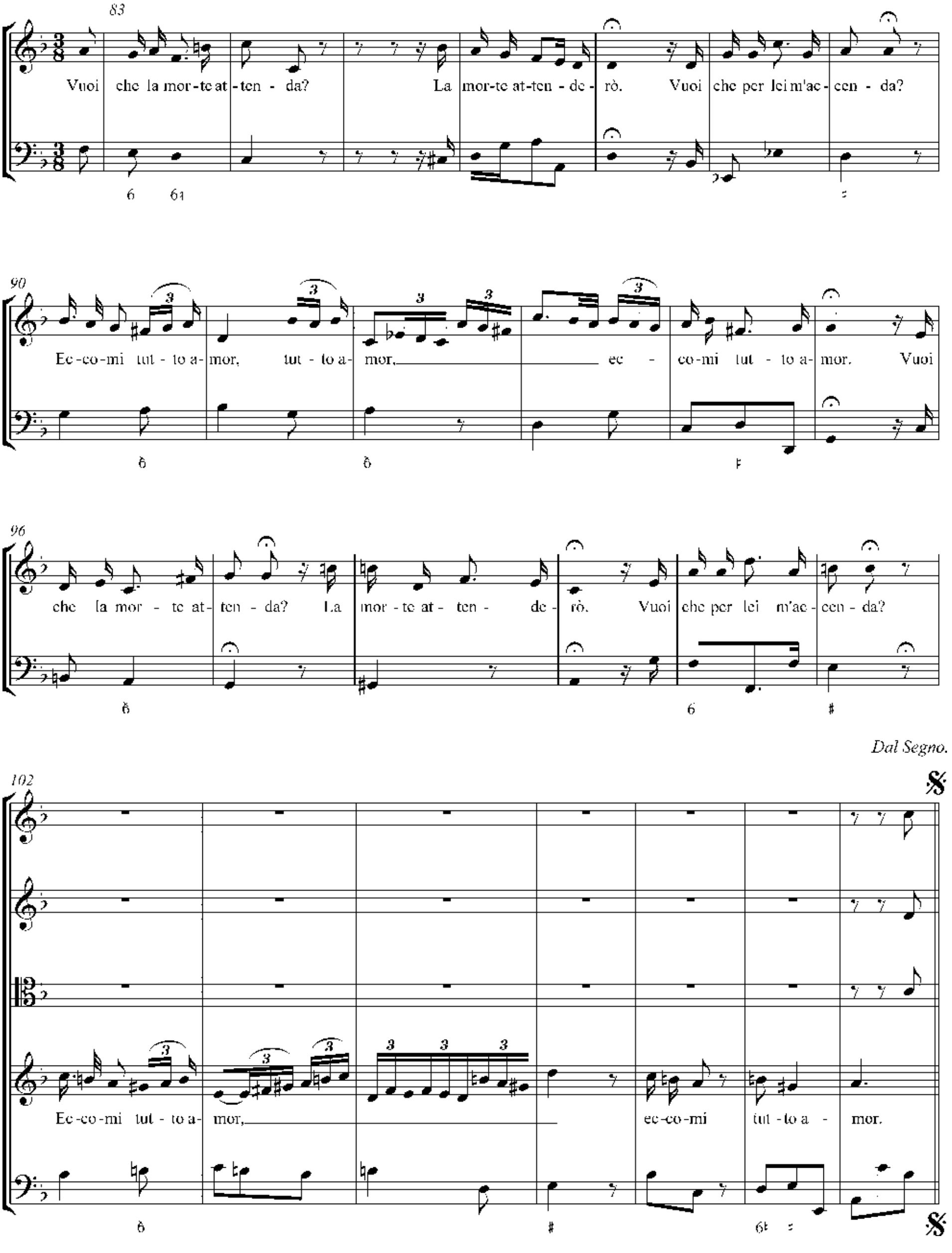
Ex. 5.2a Opening of Handel's 'Fra dubbi affetti miei', *Siroe* (London, 1727), bb.1–31, for Senesino.


19
tr
tr
(ad Emira.)
Tu pen - sa - ci; tu sei l'ar - bi - tro del mio cor; tu pen - sa - ci, tu
6
♮
25
tr
sei l'ar - bi - tro del mio cor,
6

Ex. 5.2a (cont.)

operatic heroine was not so easily accessible to the heroes of *opera seria*. In *Siroe*, Handel's greatest opportunity to reify the dramatic musical gesture as the site of sentimental authenticity is one he eschews, instead demonstrating that Siroe too is capable of exploiting the distance between speech and meaning which he has found so troubling in others. In their recollection of the distinctive hesitations of 'Mi credi infedele', Siroe's stagey pauses in the B-section of 'Fra dubbi affetti miei' suggest a degree of self-knowledge (and mockery) that indicates his mastery of his formerly volatile emotional self.

Achieving an ability to control his oscillation between silence and intemperate speech seems to be important too in Siroe's last sentimental aria, his despairing dungeon-scene, 'Deggio morire, o stelle' and its preceding accompagnato (III.vii). Here, again, silence is thematised: 'tace' is the final word of the B-section, rhyming with the A-section's 'pace'.


83
Vuoi che la mor-te at-ten - da? La mor-te at-ten - de - rò. Vuoi che per lei m'ac - cen - da?
6 6♮
90
Ec-co-mi tut - to a-mor, tut - to a-mor, ec - co-mi tut - to a-mor. Vuoi
6 6
96
che la mor - te at-ten - da? La mor - te at - ten - de - rò. Vuoi che per lei m'ac - cen - da?
6 6 ♯
Dal Segno.
102
Ec-co-mi tut - to a-mor, ec-co-mi tut - to a - mor.
6 ♯ 6♮

Ex. 5.2b B-section of Handel's 'Fra dubbi affetti miei', *Siroe* (London, 1727), bb.83–108.

Deggio morire, o stelle,
Né all'innocenza mia
V'è chi contento dia,
Né chi dia pace.
Io son vicino a morte
E ogn'un nella mia sorte,
O mostrasi ribelle,
O pur si tace.

But as Siroe sings of the impossibility of achieving peace, the leaping violin line that has characterised his musical presence throughout the opera – and been particularly forcefully characterised in the preceding accompagnato through dynamic contrasts to match its jagged line – abandons its disjunct movement to lilt in conjunct appoggiaturas (Example 5.3).[70] As this motive gradually becomes more prominent, concluding his final A-section ritornello, it seems Siroe is granted some sort of peace in his resignation, and his B-section expresses neither rebellion nor silence.

Since Siroe has realised the value of social performance, it is fitting that his eventual 'death' (announced in III.iv) is merely staged – feigned by the servant charged with the task. But as it is Siroe's social and heroic self that matters more than the physical, what ultimately restores him to court society is the admission by the other characters (Emira, Laodice and Medarse) of their guilt and his innocence. Equally important is his assertion of his heroic self, both in his vanquishing of his duplicitous brother (whom he, in delicious irony, now mimics in instructing 'Taci, o t'uccido', III.viii),[71] and the rescue of his father from death at Emira's hand (III.xiii). This final act of selfless heroism, in which Siroe offers to die again for his father, seems designed to justify the *personae* description, 'valoroso'. Like any other *lieto fine*, however, this fortuitous reversal only serves to emphasise the (sophisticated) contrivance of the plot, in which the problematic nature of heroism has been a central theme.

* * *

Neither Senesino nor his London audience was unaccustomed to flawed heroic roles, of course, but there was something qualitatively different about Siroe, a dramatic seriousness about his silencing which must have given it peculiar significance at that time. A brief examination of one of his earlier roles might demonstrate

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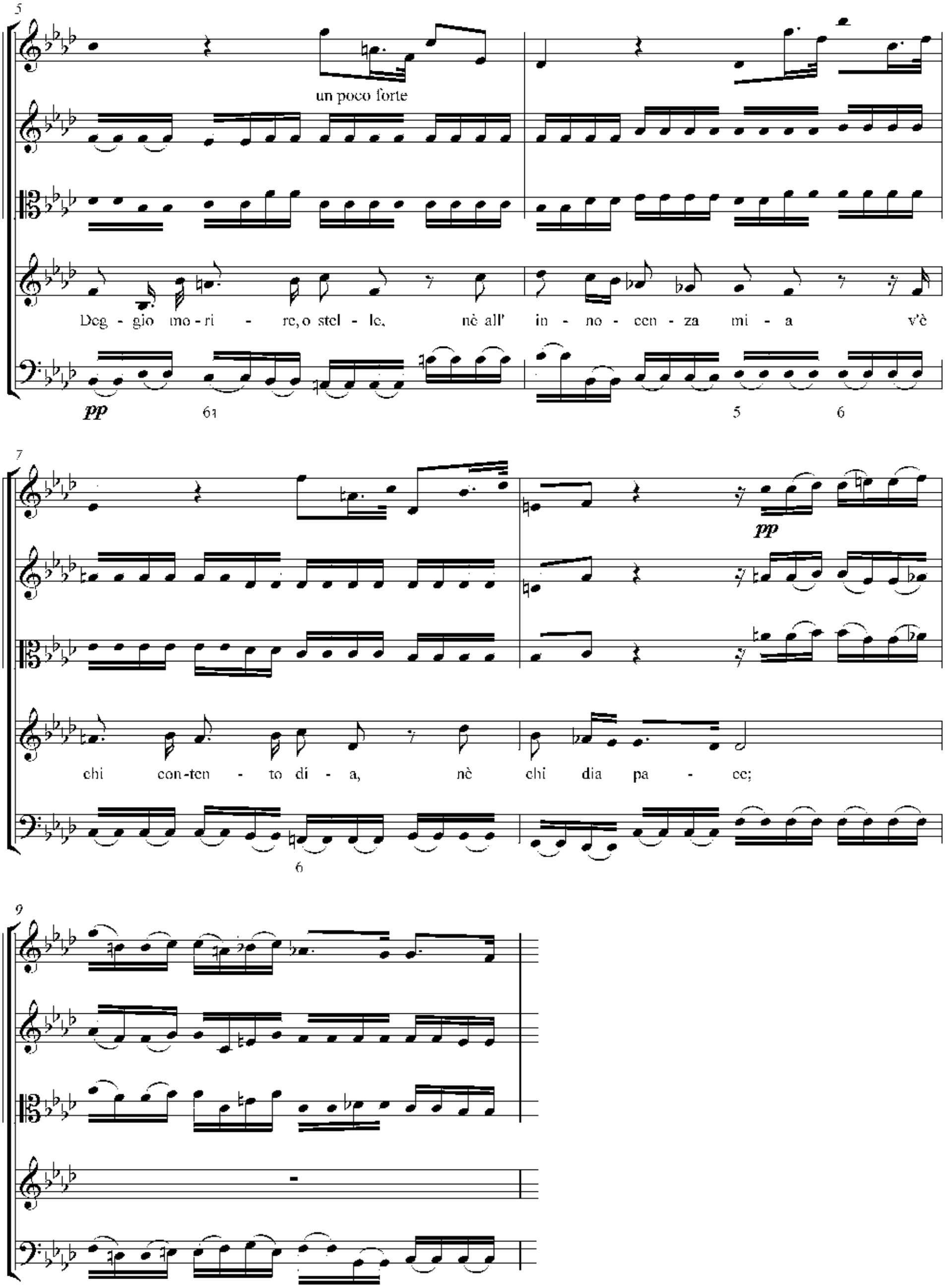
[70] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 71; 'Doomed by hard Stars to die! / Not one appears in just Defence / Of my much injur'd Innocence; / I've no Adieu from one kind pitying Eye. / Bord'ring I stand upon Death's dreadful Shade, / And each to my unhappy Lot betray'd, / Must either Rebel–Traytors grow, / Or drop in Silence to the Shades below' (70).

[71] Haym, *Siroe, Re di Persia* (London, 1728), 72; 'Be silent, or thou'rt dead', 73. Medarse begins this scene threatening the chained Siroe with a sword and uses this same line; with the reversal of fortunes, Siroe ends the scene by appropriating his brother's words, along with his sword.


5
un poco forte
Deg - gio mo - ri - re, o stel - le,
nè all' in - no - cen - za mi - a v'è
pp
6♮
5
6
7
pp
chi con - ten - to di - a,
nè chi dia pa - ce;
6
9

Ex. 5.3 First vocal entry of Handel's 'Deggio morire, o stelle', *Siroe* (London, 1727), bb.5–9, for Senesino.

the point. Prior to Faustina's arrival, Senesino had played several characters who in traditional civic-humanist terms might have been deemed rather weak. In Haym and Ariosti's *Il Vespasiano* (1724) – apparently not very popular with Londoners – he took the part of a young lover exhibiting less-than-exemplary behaviour, for whom heroism was a by-blow to his romantic entanglements.[72]

We are first introduced to Senesino's character, Tito, immediately after the impassioned soliloquy of his wife Arricida (played by Cuzzoni), in which she pleads for her husband's aid against her accoster (I.v). Tito, however, is discovered making love to Gesilla (played by Anastasia Robinson), his father's captive, and expresses a torment of doubt as to which woman he should choose in I.vii. As the dramatic irony of this scenic juxtaposition suggests, Tito's dilemma is not that of Admeto, but is played for humour. Indeed, *Il Vespasiano* provides a sense of how love rivalry might have been staged in the operas of 1726–8, had the singers' (or audience's) hostilities not been so fierce. Although Tito swears to do the right thing by his wife, he also continues to swear love to Gesilla. In the second act this reaches a comic climax when Gesilla and Arricida meet (II.viii); the two women stalk round one another, as similar female rivals were later to do in *Admeto*, with curiosity only slightly outweighing their (veiled) hostility. As Tito is also present, he tries to save the situation, but when Gesilla finally tells Arricida about Tito's promises to her, his response is a repeated forgetfulness:

Arr: Impura
Osi mentir ciò che accennasti or ora?
Ges: Mentir non so: Ei mi promise amore.
Tit: Non me'l rammento.
Ges: E mi giurò mercè.
Tit: Non me'l ricordo.
Ges: Alle mie doglie Amare
Disse voler dar pace.
Tit: A me non pare.
Ges: E di mie crude pene
Aver un dì pietà.
Tit: Non mi sovviene.[73]

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[72] Other examples of distinctly unheroic roles can be found in Haym and Bononcini's *Calfurnia* (London, 1724) or Haym and Ariosti's *Lucio Vero* (London, 1727). In the former, Senesino's character tries to persuade the heroine to evade her (apparent) duty to sacrifice herself for the good of the country; in the latter he plays the tyrant king, persecuting Berenice and her lover. The anonymous author of the *Session of Musicians* [London, 1724] suggested *Vespasiano* was not as popular as Ariosti's previous works: 'Of Ti[tu]s Ma[nli]us you may justly boast, / But dull Ves[pasi]an all that Honour lost' (7).

[73] Haym, *Vespasiano*, 28–9. The libretto does not provide a translation, but narrates: 'Gesilla in return discovers to Arricida the Declaration that Titus had sworn her of his Passion. Titus pretends

In one sense, Tito's repeated negatives remind us of Siroe's, but here they are purely comic in context, timing and content – Tito merely 'forgets', rather than renounces, and so the rhetorical power of his repeated negatives is undermined.[74] For Siroe there is much more at stake – but perhaps also, at this later stage, for Senesino.

AUTHORITY DENIED: *TOLOMEO*

The problematisation of masculinity in *Siroe* was continued in *Tolomeo*, the final opera for the trio of singers and for the Royal Academy in its original guise, and the least successful of Handel's five for these singers.[75] If *Siroe* tested Senesino's heroism through a thematic silencing, *Tolomeo* deployed other challenges to his masculinity. In particular, the exploration of identity which had assumed such prominence in Cuzzoni's and Faustina's paired roles here gained significance for Senesino too, through plot mechanisms which undermined Tolomeo's heroic selfhood and allowed comparison with Handel's earlier roles for the women.[76] In other words, there is a sense in *Tolomeo* of the accumulated weight of the encounter between Cuzzoni, Faustina and Senesino, in which echoes of past works resurface.

The use of disguise presents the first problem for Tolomeo. The eponymous hero and his wife Seleuce (Cuzzoni), Egyptian monarchs, are refugees in a foreign land, forced to assume false identities to avoid capture or death. At the opera's opening they are separated and fearing each other dead, and, to make matters worse, each is romantically pursued by one of the local rulers, Elisa (Faustina) and her brother Araspe, who plot against their rivals in love. Both Tolomeo and Seleuce spend the opera disguised as peasants – an opportunity for exploration of pastoral topics in the music, but also something of a problem for a heroic lead. While disguise for female characters in the rival operas was, as we have seen, an established theme, the leading male role did not generally assume disguises in the Royal Academy operas, and when

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not to remember what was past' (27). (*Arr*: The impure one that you pointed out now dares to lie? *Ges*: I don't know how to lie: he promised me love. *Tito*: I don't remember. *Ges*: And swore mercy. *Tito*: I don't recall. *Ges*: To my bitter grief he said he wished to give peace. *Tito*: It doesn't seem so to me. *Ges*: And on my cruel pains to have pity. *Tito*: I can't recollect it.)

[74] Tito's third-act aria to Arricida and Gesilla (III.v) also seems similar to Emira's double address to Siroe and Laodice, but again while Tito's aria is pure comedy, in its context Emira's is not. Of course, all the Academy operas employed stock scene and aria types which achieved different effects depending on the context. In another interesting similarity to scenes in *Siroe* and *Admeto*, Domiziano is overseen by his father writing a letter to the people swearing to usurp the throne (II.xi); Tito arrives and goes to stab Domiziano but is restrained by his father, emerging from hiding.

[75] *Tolomeo* achieved only seven performances in April 1728 before *Admeto* had to be revived.

[76] It may be significant in this regard that, like Siroe and (in a sense) Admeto, Tolomeo has a brother who serves as a moral foil in the opera – much as the two women's characters did.

he did (briefly in Handel's *Radamisto* [1720] and *Floridante* [1721]) the need to escape persecution was the spur to a change of identity.[77] The difference between female disguise in *Admeto* and *Siroe* and male disguise in *Tolomeo* might suggest a fundamental social distinction along gender lines: whereas for the female characters disguise serves as a means to facilitate social movement or intrigue, for male characters it represents not an opportunity for exploration but a threat to core identity.[78] The voluntary loss of social status and identity that comes with the heroic male character's disguising is always adopted as a means to avoid loss of life.

The threat disguise offers to Tolomeo's selfhood was configured particularly in terms of gender. This need not necessarily have been the case: after all, in *Radamisto* the hero is similarly forced into exile and disguise (though not pursued by another woman), but still retains the ability to act valiantly. Tolomeo, on the other hand, adopts dramatic gambits traditionally associated with female roles, especially sentimental heroines: the couch scenes, which required actresses to lie asleep within the scene, subject to the prurient gaze of male characters and, by extension, audience members; the echo song; the mad scene, which in the Restoration theatre belonged almost entirely to female characters.[79] These scenes, occurring at the end of each act, form structural points in the opera, and, emphasising the problematisation of Tolomeo's sense of self, also mark stages in the revelation of Tolomeo's identity as husband and king.

There are two sleeping scenes for Tolomeo, the climaxes of the first and third acts. In each, Tolomeo's unconscious state presages or signals a threat to his life, as well as to his understanding of events. We might say that the misunderstandings engendered by these scenes indicate a loss of the controlling perspective appropriate to the heroic male. As Tolomeo sleeps at the end of Act I, Seleuce discovers him but is witnessed by Araspe, and so cannot achieve the longed-for reunion. Tolomeo himself both fails to see his wife and then faces the angry Araspe, who only confuses the discovery by accusing him of loving 'Delia' – Seleuce's assumed identity – not Seleuce herself. In the third act, Elisa substitutes a sleeping draught for the poison Araspe asks her to give Tolomeo; as she, Araspe and Alessandro (Tolomeo's brother and supposed usurper) stand around his recumbent figure, debating his and Seleuce's fate, he awakens, presuming himself now in the afterlife. Only on Seleuce's restoration to him does he know himself to be alive.

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[77] Radamisto appears as 'Ismeno' for the last two scenes of Act II of *Radamisto*, in order to reach his wife undetected by his enemy, Tiridate (who also has designs upon her); he quickly reverts to his true identity in the third act. Floridante also disguises for the second act, as a 'moor', to escape with his lover from King Oronte's jealous wrath; he too is discovered in the third act. In Handel's Royal Academy operas (1720–8), the other male characters who take disguises are Timante in *Floridante* (1721), Adelberto in *Ottone* (1723) and Lucejo in *Scipione* (1726).

[78] On the '*serva padrona* model', in which the servant girl manipulates her way into marrying above her class, often using disguise, see Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, 82–3.

[79] Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 39, 43; Winkler, *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note*, 13–15, 134, and chapters 3 and 4.

Discovery and revelation of identity is sufficiently complex an issue to become a theme in *Tolomeo*; the king himself has little control over it, as the importance of the sleeping scenes suggests. Indeed, when he attempts to reveal his own identity and that of his wife in Act II he is foiled by each of the women in turn. Elisa denies his identity to her brother in order to foster love (II.ii), while Seleuce denies her own identity to preserve his life (II.iv). The women's control over him is rendered musically as well as through the plot. Near the end of the second act (II.vi), Seleuce and Tolomeo search for each other, but she takes the dominant role, while he sings an offstage echo; his loss of social identity thus also seems to be a failure of vocal control and coherence (important in different ways for Admeto and Siroe, as we have seen). Thus, when Tolomeo appears physically on stage in order to prevent Araspe's assault on his wife, he also identifies himself socially as the exiled king for the first time (II.vii). His establishing of identity is then confirmed as vocally appropriate: the duet that concludes the second act is, in its equal distribution of material, one befitting a pair of lovers, in contrast to the earlier echo duet.

A comparison of gender roles was also a comparison with other operas. The sense of role reversal would have been particularly clear for audiences at *Tolomeo* with regard to scenes, which recalled an important moment in *Alessandro*. The latter work would have been relatively fresh in the minds of many in the audience, as it had been revived for four performances earlier in the 1727–8 season.[80] In that opera, originally staged in February 1726, Faustina's first appearance before a London audience prompted a display of her charms not only through the arias written for her but also in the sleep scene commencing Act II, in which Alessandro discovers her slumbering in 'a shady retreat in the garden' and goes to kiss her. Inevitably, such scenes are played out on stage not merely for the interest of the audience, but also because there is a third person looking on: in *Alessandro*, Cuzzoni's character watches Senesino's character observing Faustina's character. In *Tolomeo*, Seleuce (Cuzzoni) observes Tolomeo (Senesino) asleep, while being watched by his rival, Araspe (I.vi); Tolomeo implicitly observes Seleuce being pursued by Araspe (II.vii); and in the concluding scene all other characters observe Tolomeo in a drugged sleep. As the voyeurism of the audience at these moments is redoubled not only within the drama but intertextually, so Senesino's sleep scenes in *Tolomeo* would have accrued vertiginous semantic layers.

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[80] *Alessandro* was revived in December 1727, following the initial run of *Riccardo primo*; see the Introduction, p. 9.

MASQUERADES OF MASCULINITY

Perhaps the depth of hermeneutic perspective would have been still further enhanced by recollection of Alessandro's incongruous response to the women's teasing – a rage aria, 'Vano amore', which, in the context of the preceding quasi-comic scenes, might have seemed as comically disproportionate to the London audiences as Don Bartolo's 'La vendetta' in *Figaro* or Osmin's 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen' in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* would later seem to the Viennese.[81] Alessandro's overcompensation for the women's besting of him seems to lay bare the conventions of masculinity as performance. At the other end of London's series of 'rival' operas, this idea is reinforced by Tolomeo's co-option of the 'feminine' object position in his sleeping scenes. This reversal was what critics latched onto in the *Admeto* satires: while the cross-dressed Faustina was overstepping the increasingly well-patrolled boundaries of acceptable 'femininity', Senesino was also at fault for letting her do so, for not playing the part of the man.

Such role reversals and deliberately pointed contrasts had been part of opera's carnivalistic impulse since the Venetian popularisation of the genre.[82] For an incipient capitalist Britain, however, it had a particular ideological charge, as we have seen. Kristina Straub pinpoints this problem:

> Mid-century discourse links anxieties about the masculinization of women to worries about the feminization of men . . . In this discourse of reversal, the masculinized woman is a divining rod for detecting the failure of men to live up to the demands of dominant masculinity . . . The encroachments of the cross-dressed actress upon the territory of masculine sexuality are especially threatening since they seem to imply the inability of men to hold that territory.[83]

In eighteenth-century social structure, Male and Female perhaps had to be increasingly sharply distinguished because, as male power in general became more strongly entrenched through the might of State and science, and through the intangibility of paper money and systems of credit, this very expansion of the patriarchy undermined its association with the individual man.[84] When unsuccessful, as Straub explains, men's gender was seen to be just as much a masquerade as women's.

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[81] Handel's decision to set 'Vano amore' as a rage aria came after deliberation: Richard G. King notes that the composer originally followed Agostino Steffani, who set the original 1690 libretto, in setting the original text 'Vani amori' as 'a gentle triple-time aria', a setting one might consider more appropriate to the light-hearted tone of the preceding scenes; King, 'The Composition and Reception of Handel's "Alessandro" (1726)', 42.

[82] Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 222–5; Treadwell, 'Female Operatic Cross-Dressing'.

[83] Straub, 'The Guilty Pleasures of Female Theatrical Cross-Dressing', 152–4.

[84] Kaja Silverman observes that 'over the past two centuries, the male subject has increasingly dissociated himself from the visible, attempting thereby to align himself with a symbolic order

The eighteenth-century theatre's exploration and critique of changing gender roles in an emergent capitalist society – and the cultural unease that was generated by the idea of masculinity (and femininity) as masquerade – clearly mark the origins of concerns that continue to this day and that have been given considerable psychoanalytic and philosophical attention. For Jacques Lacan, male anxiety about the fundamentally symbolic location of patriarchal authority is cause not just of a concerted campaign to re-appropriate that power as anatomically determined (and so unassailable), but also of a sleight of hand that displaces male insecurity by projecting it onto women as the ones 'lacking' phallic authority.[85] By this view, masculinity is vigorously asserted through an array of normative accoutrements of gender against a similarly clichéd femininity, in a manner that is as pertinent to the eighteenth century as it is to our own.[86] Such gender models were, as we have seen, as frequently tested in the theatre as they were reinforced: just as the she-tragedy discussed in chapter 2 addressed early cultural anxiety about the role of women in an emerging capitalist society by creating a passive feminine ideal, so cross-dressing and 'lilliputian' (child actor) performances challenged restrictive gender ideals, while the Italian opera not only deployed cross-dressing but, in the seventeenth century particularly, also juxtaposed strong female and weak male characters.[87]

In opera, of course, the prominence of the singing voice was also an important factor in determining social and gender roles. Thus what makes the sleep scene in *Alessandro* especially comic is that first Cuzzoni's character as silent observer and then Faustina's as observed object step out of their mute passivity by appropriating Alessandro's song; it is this that makes him reassert his voice so forcefully in 'Vano amore'. Equally, as we have seen, for Siroe and Tolomeo a loss of masculine agency is also configured through their lack of control of song.

The question of vocal authority and the means by which it is demonstrated might again be illuminated by theories about the semantic role of vocal expression which had their roots in eighteenth-century interest in the origins and authenticity of language. As Downing Thomas points out, philosophical engagement with the origins of language in this period was actuated by a desire to establish 'the origin

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within which power has become more and more dispersed and dematerial'; *The Acoustic Mirror*, 26. See also Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes*; cited in Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 24–5.

[85] For an insightful overview, see Rose, 'Introduction – II', 40–9.

[86] Of these accoutrements, the invention and now ubiquity of the modern suit is most telling; see Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity*.

[87] On the ideological underpinning of she-tragedies, see Brown, *Ends of Empire*, 64–102. The most famous theatrical cross-dressers of the century were Charlotte Charke and 'Peg' Woffington; on Charke see Baruth (ed.), *Introducing Charlotte Charke*. On Italian opera character juxtaposition see Heller, 'The Queen as King'; Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 222–62.

of semiosis, of meaning in general'.[88] John Locke had initiated this interest by observing the arbitrary nature of verbal sign systems, and mid-century *philosophes* such as Étienne Bonnot de Condillac and Jean-Jacques Rousseau sought the origins of society and nations in human utterance.[89] From a psychoanalytic perspective, Lacan saw such obsession with language as itself of note.[90] For Lacan, the male anxiety that leads to insistent gender performance derives from the process of entering the symbolic realm through language in early childhood. While, in the pre-linguistic phase, the voice was an emanation from the body tied to the infant's most primary impulses, the child discovers that, through the agency and discipline of language, the voice gradually enables him to impose order on the world and assert 'his' subjecthood.[91] But access to language comes at the cost of adherence to rules about its use, and to the nagging knowledge that the cohesion between word and object is largely a social construction: the child gains linguistic agency only at the cost of a pre-linguistic, maternally guaranteed wholeness.[92] The subject's accession to language (and therefore to knowledge of himself) is equally experienced as loss, and what he loses he also fears.[93]

Such analyses provide one route to understanding the commonplace gendered distinction between the semantic (masculine) and emotive (feminine) aspects of vocal expression.[94] However one configures such psychoanalytic insights in eighteenth-century terms (and it may be that discussions of and satires on opera and music were some of the most powerful ways of so doing), the creators of opera, a genre which relied upon the charged tension between verbal and more visceral modes of communication, must in their own way have been particularly aware of this gap between the rational and the sensual.[95] Certainly, Siroe's difficulties with language and his infantilisation as he fails to appropriate it to his own ends – like Tolomeo's feminisation – forcibly indicate that the authenticity of masculinity as expressed through discursive control was of real concern in the eighteenth century too.

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[88] Thomas, *Music and the Origins of Language*, 7. Thomas also observes the prominence of music in this discussion of origins.

[89] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book 3 (1690), entirely concerns language. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues* (1754–63, published 1781) are discussed by Thomas in *Music and the Origins of Language*.

[90] Rose, 'Introduction – II', 31–3.

[91] For a similar reading of the accession to selfhood as requiring renunciation of the feminine pre-linguistic, see Cavarero's discussion of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in *For More than One Voice*, 111–16.

[92] Rousseau also recognised the artificiality of language, seeing it in physiological as well as intellectual terms (*Essai sur l'origine des langues*, chapter 4), discussed in Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 136–7. The equation of the 'feminine' with the pre-verbal (and pre-symbolic) is a territorial appropriation by French feminist critics of Lacan, and, as Rose explains, Lacan refused to accept this essentialist notion that the pre-symbolic was inherently 'feminine', because 'woman' itself is simply a linguistic signifier ('there is no feminine outside language'), and a convenient mark of otherness for those designated as men; see Rose, 'Introduction – II', 55, 49. Influential feminist reappraisals of phallogocentrism include Julia Kristeva's *Revolutions in Poetic Language* and Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous's *The Newly Born Woman*; for discussion see Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 131–45.

[93] Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis': 'I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object'; cited in Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 43. The concept that a sense of loss is central to one's existence as a subject is a theme of Silverman's book, which focuses on the problematic relationship between male subject and female object in the cinema.

What might be considered an appropriate expression of manhood for an opera singer in this period was, as the list of negations by Shaftesbury cited at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, a fraught issue. The sentimental hero was, as we have seen, one new route to assertion of masculine authority, but he gained his authenticity by re-appropriating the pre-linguistic realm of apparently involuntary physical gesture – tears, shudders, fainting. It is certainly possible that some of Senesino's roles were part of the move to establish a new, non-heroic masculine 'truth' value. That there may have been a fashion among singers for such roles is suggested by Farinelli's apparent preference for the *affettuoso* style, indicated both in his performances in London in the 1730s and in his subsequent choice of musical material for his portraits.[96] The emphasis on a sentimental role for male singers famously culminated in Gluck's work with Gaetano Guadagni on *Orfeo*, but of course – in London especially – such masculine authority would always have involved a negotiation between the manifestations of sensibility and of sense.

If we can discern an interest in sentimental masculinity in the mid-eighteenth century, it is important nonetheless to remember that Guadagni reputedly had learned his acting not from any singer, but from the actor David Garrick.[97] This route to authoritative credibility was significant: it took an actor of the stature of David Garrick, with his apparently revolutionary acting style, to square the circle and turn the pre-linguistic realm of sentimental gesture into the para-linguistic. Garrick managed carefully to encompass both the intensity of emotion associated with the sentimental drama (via its studied creation of consistent, continuous character) and, through the precise delineation of expressions, a reassertion of acting as a rational profession. Garrick's overt professionalism in establishing himself as the 'thinking' (rather than 'feeling') actor clearly was intended to answer the difficulty with masculine presence on the stage that Straub outlined: the actor as visible object is thus incorporated in a rational – because unambiguously legible – discourse of signs. Indeed, Garrick's effectiveness as moral communicator was particularly delineated through his use of the 'point', as gesture and turn of phrase marked their emphasis together. The mastery exhibited in such moments came through his ability to nuance meaning by crafting a visual expression of individual phrases (in a departure from the stentorian, declamatory acting styles previously the norm). We might take as an example the account of his fellow actor and playwright Arthur Murphy of Garrick's performance as Shakespeare's Richard III:

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[94] Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 6, sees this as a commonplace distinction of the 'symbolic patriarchal order', which she sums up as 'woman sings, man thinks'.

[95] Such an awareness is implicit in the defence and criticism of the genre discussed above. Most obviously, the seventeenth-century apportioning of recitative and aria was made on grounds of verisimilitude and propriety, which in turn often had gendered ramifications in both Italian and French opera; for discussion of the gendered musical representation of women, which was particularly often negotiated in terms of codes expressing (excessive) speech and silence, see Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*. For a suggestive discussion of Handel's deployment of silence as a means to commenting on issues of sexuality, see Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*, 189–209.

[96] Heartz, 'Farinelli and Metastasio – Rival Twins of Public Favour', 364; Desler, 'From "Oh virtù che innamora!" to "Son pastorello amante"', 118.

[97] Heartz, 'From Garrick to Gluck'.

> His soliloquy in the tent scene discovered the inward man . . . When he started from his dream he was a spectacle of horror. He called out in a manly tone
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> 'Give me another horse';
> he paused and with a countenance of dismay,
> advanced, crying out in a tone of distress
> 'Bind up my wounds',
> then, falling on his knees, said in a most piteous accent
> 'Have mercy, heaven!'
> In all this the audience saw an exact imitation of nature.[98]

Here, it seems, lay the impediment for music, a much less precise and readily manipulable communicative medium than speech, in a period when delineation of a clear moral message was all-important. But of course opera singers were actors too, and while accompanied recitative seems to have been particularly prized in the mid-century precisely for its communicative potential, operatic arias sometimes also offered the space for the kind of detailed 'pointing' of the message routinely possible in spoken drama. Siroe's stuttering aria, 'Fra dubbi affetti miei', surely furnishes one such opportunity, as Siroe plays with Emira's double identity, addressing his questions both (in front of Laodice, her rival) to 'Idaspe' and to his beloved. In the way in which he managed the aria's pauses and hesitations, the role of Senesino as actor would surely have come to the fore. In turn, through foregrounding his prowess as an actor he might have demonstrated a level of dramatic manipulation worthy of Garrick on the part of both his character and himself, even as Siroe cedes command to Emira.

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[98] Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, I, 22–4; cited in Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting', 373–4. See also Booth, Southern, et al., *The Revels History of Drama in English*, vol. VI: *(1750–1880)*, 96–106.

But inevitably in such scenes (as in accompanied recitative), vocal prowess had to take a back seat, and, as such, whether these opportunities for nuanced characterisation would have satisfied Senesino is a moot point. From apparently being a poor actor early in his career,[99] Senesino had honed his craft such that John Hawkins could assert that 'in the pronunciation of recitative [he] had not his fellow in Europe'; Charles Burney and Charles de Brosses also praised his acting.[100] Certainly, at the end of his career Senesino still took a strong interest in playing varied and dynamic roles: in 1739 he objected to playing the part of Ulisse in Metastasio's *Achille in Sciro*, as the part was that of 'an authoritarian and a wily man', which did not accord with Senesino's abilities as he required 'actions on stage with different passions' ('un movimento in scena con differenti passioni').[101] But while the music Handel wrote for him suggests the kind of versatility Senesino felt himself suited to, the singer nonetheless – as we have seen – appears to have been less than enamoured of some of the roles he created, perhaps because of their signal lack of heroism. Johann Joachim Quantz later recalled of Senesino in 1719 that 'the role of a hero suited him better than that of a lover' while Burney summed up his style as 'grand and majestic'.[102] If that was the case, the 'unmanning' of Senesino's stage persona would have been difficult to stomach; thus it may have been the lack of heroism in the role of Orlando in Handel's last opera for Senesino that precipitated the singer's break with Handel in 1733. During the years with Cuzzoni and Faustina, Senesino may have felt that, as Burney said of *Alessandro*, '[Handel] tried to work better for his *rival queens*, than for the hero of the piece.'[103]

In the end, the heroic role remained the normative one for an operatic genre so strongly associated with the fundamentally conservative interests of the aristocratic elite, and that role only died with the lingering demise of *opera seria* itself. Similarly, even while the discourse of sentimentality and sensibility seemed to encourage men to adopt some aspects of un-heroic, stereotypically feminine behaviour as a means to greater social integration and assertion of integrity, ongoing resistance to such a behavioural mode seems to have restricted its performance. The satirical attacks on Senesino and other castrati, as well as on fops and other effete men, demonstrate that it was still all too easy to cast them not as men of sentiment but as the men who had since medieval times played the ritual carnivalesque role of female grotesque, symbols of a disordered, irrational society.[104] The negotiation of the relationship between heroism and sentiment must indeed have been particularly fraught for castrati: in any assertion of masculinity, they not only had to negotiate the relationship between linguistic and pre-linguistic utterance (made difficult by their fame for virtuosic ornamentation), but also found that the very nature of their unbroken voices worked against them. In a play from 1727, Leonard Welsted's *The Dissembled Wanton; or, My Son get Money*, Colonel Severne comments sarcastically: 'So far, at least, we are got towards Heaven – We have Music, without Distinction of Sexes' (1.i). In an environment where their gender was already perceived as compromised – and that compromise was deplored – castrati must have found the space for acceptable performance of a feminised sensibility to be limited indeed.

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[99] In 1715 the impresario Francesco Zambeccari reported that 'Senesino continua a muoversi sulla scena piuttosto male; sta ritto come una statua e quando per caso fa qualche gesto, sceglie proprio l'opposto a quel che ci vorrebbe' (although Zambeccari may simply have been annoyed that Senesino had not agreed to sing for him); cited in Hogwood, *Handel*, 81–2 (Senesino continues to move rather badly on stage; he stands like a statue, and when sometimes he makes a gesture, he makes one directly the opposite of what is wanted).

[100] Hawkins, *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, II, 872. Of Burney, see, for example, his report of praise for Senesino in *Rodelinda* and *Admeto*; Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 731–3, 743. De Brosses, *Lettres familières*, I, 168, 220; cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 145–6.

[101] Senesino's correspondence with Marchese Albizzi is cited and translated in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 136; the original reads: 'parte molto pericolosa per Senesino nell'Ulisse cui non è che un carattere di satrapo e lesto uomo, che a mio credere non è nulla per la mia abilità, che richiede un movimento in scena con differenti passioni'.

[102] Quantz, 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf', 213; trans. Nettl, *Forgotten Musicians*, 292; Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 839.

[103] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 741. Senesino's pride about role precedence is demonstrated in his correspondence with the impresario Marchese Albizzi; Albizzi wrote to another impresario that, even at the end of his career, Senesino 'malvolontieri si adatta alla parità di musici giovani, solamente a quella di Farinello o Carestini' (resents comparisons with younger singers, except for Farinelli and Carestini); cited in Holmes, *Opera Observed*, 230, 138.

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[104] Davis, 'Women on Top', 164–5.

Conclusion: The ornamental voice

Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.[1]

As I have pursued the creation of Faustina's and Cuzzoni's identities throughout this study, the impact of others' constructions – whether in the plots and music of the operas themselves, the narrativising of the singers' careers, or the weight of social expectations about female rivalry – has driven the analysis. In the course of my discussion the singers who were, by tradition, so sharply defined by their differing vocal qualities, have come to appear at times deliberately interchangeable. As highly trained artists, Faustina and Cuzzoni were clearly able to demonstrate both versatility and inimitability. No doubt it was such versatility that Cuzzoni (encouraged by those around her) wished to exhibit prior to Faustina's arrival when, we recall, she sang some of Faustina's arias in *L'Elpidia* (1725), with the threat of competition looming. (Perhaps a similar proof of versatility – though this time not intended to make a point – can be found in Handel's pre-performance exchange of arias between the singers in *Siroe* and *Tolomeo*.[2])

But although versatility was an important attribute for any professional singer, it was their distinctive vocal styles – the markers of their uniqueness – that immortalised the women, and that present both the greatest incentive for and the greatest challenge to understanding their identities, today as in their own time.[3] After all, the difference between their modes of performance encouraged Pier Francesco Tosi and others after him to express concern at changes in the singer's art by invoking in them the paradigmatic contest between the old and the new. And while we might see in their musical traces an equal articulation of talent, and in the libretti written for them a toying with interchangeability, contemporaries found them sufficiently different to form violently opposed factions, each declaring the other singer 'molto inferiore' to their favourite.[4]

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[1] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', 366.

[2] In *Siroe* an aria originally intended for Cuzzoni's character ('Se il caro figlio') was reassigned to Faustina's with new text ('Ch'io mai vi possa'). In *Tolomeo* the exchange went both ways, Cuzzoni's 'Aure, portate al core bene' becoming Faustina's 'Il mio core', while Faustina's 'Addio, Osmino, addio' became Cuzzoni's 'Dite, che fà?'.

[3] The 'embodied uniqueness' of the human voice is the starting point for Adriana Cavarero's philosophical investigation in *For More than One Voice*.

[4] Antonio Cocchi, diary entries for 12 and 14 May 1726, deciding in favour of Cuzzoni on first hearing Faustina; cited in Lindgren, 'A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works set by Giovanni and his Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini', I, 338.

If Tosi made the women emblematic, others attempted a more 'scientific' articulation. Eighteenth-century commentators' efforts to render the voice in verbal description (mirrored by our own), some of which we examined in the first chapter, attest to the audience's fascination with the voice as object. They also attest to the manifold problems that attend the attempt to capture (and objectify) a living, temporal art. Within such attempts, it is notable that the voice's ornamental proclivities – the most prized of *bel canto* attributes – were the particular focus. Why this aspect of the singers' identities – the aspect which is both most vital and most resistant to critical investigation – should have (and should still) excite so much interest is the subject of this concluding chapter. In considering this theme we shall look not so much at the individual vocal qualities of the singers (already discussed above), but rather return to the broader issues of identity with which we began, to assess why opera singers and their voices – and perhaps particularly these opera singers – have mattered so much to the critical mythography of the genre.

DISINTEGRATION AND REIFICATION

As we saw in the first chapter, in the descriptions of Quantz and particularly Mancini, the historian's desire to recapture the voice in words tended to be – for the reader, as, one suspects, for the author – a frustrating experience, in which the evanescence of vocal expression eluded grasp even as commentators pressed it to yield its secrets to description. But the frustrations and inadequacies that bedevil such critical dissections are telling reflections of the experience of the singer's voice as phenomenon in the eighteenth century. Indeed, in light of the limited notated traces of the singers' ornamenting voices, their popular adulation becomes still more intriguing: what was it that engendered such fervour that London audience members could blaspheme 'One God, one Farinelli!', and how did it relate to the opprobrium such audience fanaticism attracted? In fact, the problematic dynamic surrounding the power of the ornamenting voice raises interesting questions not just about Faustina's and Cuzzoni's definition as singers, but about identity more broadly in this period.[5]

To set against the widespread admiration for ornamentation, we might take the following lines from a 1735 mock epistle entitled *The Happy Courtezan*, modified and expanded from *F—NA's Answer to S—NO's Epistle* of 1727:

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[5] The ornamentation notated for singers was almost invariably the measured diminutions known as *passaggi* or (in England) divisions; there is ample evidence that singers in this period were also trained in inventing such *passaggi* for themselves, as well as in adding other, unmeasured (and therefore smaller) embellishments. Both kinds are encompassed here under the term 'ornamentation'. For a brief survey see Jones and Crutchfield, 'Ornamentation (ii)'.

> Your Voice shall cast all Mortals in a Trance,
> Ev'n Things inanimate to that shall Dance:
> The well-drest Warriour, with the Lady gay,
> At ev'ry Trill shall faint and die away.[6]

Ornamentation was a focus for animadversions against opera for a variety of reasons, particularly centring on the oft-invoked dichotomy of 'sound versus sense' (an extension of the charge against music generally, in a still mimetically based aesthetic). In its assertion of the primacy of the individual and the temporary dominance of effect over narrative, ornamentation undermined *opera seria*'s claims to didactic credibility, as writers on opera knew all too well. Critics such as Ludovico Antonio Muratori, for whom the 'excessive use of quavers, semiquavers and the smallest rhythmic values' came at the top of a list of 'effeminate' operatic vices, focussed their criticism on the vanity and caprice of singers, whose demands disrupted the moral force of the drama.[7]

Such attacks were perhaps particularly virulent where ornamentation was concerned because it threw into relief one of the larger ontological (and epistemological) debates of the century, about the nature of consciousness.[8] In a brave new world assessing the means by which consciousness could be said to have sufficient continuity to create a (moderately) stable sense of self, constant self-awareness was vital. John Locke began the debate in 1694 by asserting:

> since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity, i.e.* the sameness of a rational Being.[9]

Continuity of the self was established through affirming the principle of cause and effect in conscious thought, as well as in an increasingly epistemologically driven world.[10] Threats to consciousness were profoundly disquieting, as David Hume, the philosopher who challenged them most in the period, affirmed: better to retreat to social formalities than to confront the radical incoherence of the consciousness.[11] If music, with its orderly temporal flow of events, causally connected, might have served as a pleasing metaphor for the flow of the conscious mind (at least, when it was set to words all could understand), ornamentation provided just the sort of disruption to that logical succession which also concerned students of theories of consciousness. Indeed, patterns of performance in eighteenth-century *bel canto* opera highlighted the rational/sensual divide (examined in the last chapter), or what Kaja Silverman has called (in a different context) the 'conceptual slippage' between 'voice-as-discursive-agent' and 'voice-as-being'.[12] Ornamentation, as an expression of 'voice-as-being', encouraged a solipsistic *jouissance*, focussed on the pleasurable sensory moment in audience as much as in singer. Thus Faustina's 'feign'd Transports', invoked in the *Epistle from S—r S—O to S—a F—A* (March 1727), were matched by that standard metaphor for sexual release, death, in audience members' response to the trill in the Happy Courtezan's epistle, above.[13] Muratori similarly noted that singers' voices 'inspire undue tenderness and languor in the souls of the audience'.[14] Italianate ornamentation's decadent masking of both the meaning of the words and the progress of the music ensured that the auditor who succumbed to music's overwhelming charms halted his or her active mind, becoming a simple receiver of sound in a way that reinforced the ancient tie between passion and passivity. So, paradoxically, while the voice was an expression of human uniqueness, a marker of individuality, its virtuosic utterance could also undermine the continuity of the conscious self.[15]

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[6] *The Happy Courtezan*, 13. The original lines in *F—NA's Answer to S—NO's Epistle* (11 March 1727) were: 'My Voice shall throw all Hearers in a Trance, / The very Stones shall at my Musick dance' (8). In both, the lines of course refer to the power of Orpheus.

[7] On Muratori and other critics of opera, see Heller, 'Reforming Achilles', 567–8, and *passim*.

[8] On these debates see Fox, *Locke and the Scriblerians*. On their effects on eighteenth-century narrative, see Kraft, *Character and Consciousness*, 1–42.

[9] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694); cited in Fox, *Locke and the Scriblerians*, 32. Fox points out just how controversial Locke's theory of self as consciousness was, and how much it influenced subsequent debate; *Locke and the Scriblerians*, 8, 3.

[10] Kraft discusses the development of this epistemological view of the self; *Character and Consciousness*, 1–42.

[11] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 269; cited in Kraft, *Character and Consciousness*, 21.

The disruption with which ornamentation threatened audience members' rationality radiated outwards to society as a whole. As I have suggested elsewhere, the opera singer exemplified the sort of specialisation entailed by modern capitalism that, to civic-humanist eyes, was profoundly socially undermining.[16] In the early eighteenth century, Roger North offered a social critique of new musical fashions, noting that music oriented towards the soloist inevitably reduced the participation of others, particularly in a passage of free ornamentation which 'makes the course of the musick stay till such a trifler is pleased to come up with it'. Viol player that he was, North thought the soloist 'unsociable and malcreate', and lamented the demise of the 'respublica among the consortiers' as a social and musical evil.[17] The soloist who disregarded the government of beat or barline and disrupted the music's meaning was always going to be the 'malcreate' of society, unable and unwilling to conform to printed notes by disciplining the self. Many pamphlets describe the way in which opera had a domino effect on both social and economic levels, whereby profligate lords or ladies who heaped gifts on a favourite singer undermined their own role in society and effectively starved their more deserving financial dependants.[18] In *The Happy Courtezan*, the prostitute author-figure defines the extent of her love for the castrato, Farinelli, by her rejection of normal (patriarchal) social relations:

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[12] Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*, 44. See also Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*.

[13] See also, for example, *An Epistle from the Platonick Madam B—ier to the Celebrated Signor Car—ino* (1734): 'For me – at ev'ry Close, quite lost in Joy / I murm'ring – Sigh – *Mon chere – encore – une Fois*' (7).

[14] Muratori attributed this languor to the quality of the voices, as being 'all either naturally or artificially womanlike'; *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (1706), in Heller, 'Reforming Achilles', 568.

[15] Ecstasy after all derives from ec-stasis – being taken out of oneself.

[16] See my 'An Infinity of Factions'. Ironically perhaps, ornamentation (like performing in general) could also be criticised from the opposite perspective – as a form of non-productive labour that was not, therefore, economically valuable enough; see William Prynne's comments, cited in Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 35.

> Let Children starve, let Fathers, Husbands break,
> 'Tis all well done, if done for thy dear sake.
> …
> Your glit'ring Equipage the Ring shall grace,
> And to no Man of Quality's give place.[19]

It is, one pamphlet on 'taste' implied, only a small step for a young woman to move from preferring a castrato to a man, to preferring a lapdog to a man. The same pamphlet suggested that men had degenerated so far that it made little difference, for 'If Men are Monkies, Monkies may be Men'. Men who aped fashions and passions as singers of opera did were reduced to mere husks of humanity.[20]

As a recomposition of the 1727 letter from Faustina to Senesino, the Happy Courtezan's epistle to Farinelli commandeers sentiments and phrases from the original, transposing ideas and effects from old characters to new, regardless of sex. That both Faustina's and Farinelli's voices were represented as inducing 'a Trance' in their hearers undoubtedly reflected their virtuosity – they were, after all, recognised as the chief exponents of the new style of ornamentation. But it also indicates their interchangeability – not so much on a vocal level as in terms of their status as commodities. Indeed, the dehumanisation that critics feared for society as a whole was already apparent (moralists felt) in the case of opera singers, not only because of the effect their ornamentation had on the conscious mind, but also because of their status within a newly capitalist society. Berta Joncus has noted that 'stars are distinguished from other players by being commodified, a process that involves their objectification as product, independent of the particulars of work and performance', and that this process seems to have begun in the eighteenth century with the opera singer.[21] One confirmation of this view comes from Luigi Riccoboni, who opined in 1740 that because 'of their Method of *manufacturing* a Voice, [the Italians] have always a great Number of excellent Singers', seeming to imply something like a production line for singers.[22] No doubt singers' increasingly extravagant – and apparently increasingly prepared and studied – embellishment must have encouraged the sense of dehumanisation associated with the star singer's virtuosity.[23]

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[17] North, *Roger North on Music*, 162, 222. Late in the eighteenth century, William Jones was one of several writers to put ornamentation's disruption of social structure into a grammatical framework, describing good music on the same regulated basis as good poetry. If 'Air' was the equivalent of the subject in poetry, ornamentation disrupted its presentation, for while 'the *ad libitum* Cadence has Melody', it 'is always without the formality of Measure'. [William Jones,] *A Treatise on the Art of Music*, 42–3. See also Horne, *The Antiquity, Use & Excellence of Church Music*, 9–10; Mason, *Essays, Historical and Critical, on English Church Music*, 48. Charles Avison similarly describes music in terms of spoken or written language; *An Essay on Musical Expression*, 'advertisement', 62.

[18] For an explanation of the rationale behind appropriate communitarian behaviour by a member of the aristocracy, see Andrew, '*Noblesse oblige*'.

[19] *The Happy Courtezan*, 8, 13.

[20] *The Connoisseur*, 18, 11.

Of the range of evidence that might be adduced to illustrate the application of the principle of commodification to Faustina and Cuzzoni, none is starker in its depersonalisation of the singers than the jocular comment Horace Walpole made in the postscript to a 1774 letter, which recalled the glory days of his youth:

> Miss Davis, the Inglesina, is more admired than anything I remember of late years in operas; but though music is so much in fashion, that some of our fine gentlemen learn to sing, it holds no proportion with hazard and New-market. The Cuzzoni and Faustina would not be paid higher than a race-horse.[24]

If we might expect such a degrading comparison from an aristocrat always ready to snipe at opera singers (recall his critique of the sartorial infelicity Cuzzoni inspired, cited in chapter 2), such commodification was also an integral part of the operas themselves, expressed not only through juxtaposition of the singers (for ease of comparison), but also via performance devices such as ornamentation that kept audiences coming back for more. To give one example, in the middle of *Alessandro*, the women's first joint London opera, Cuzzoni's character Lisaura has an aria in which she hopes in the face of despair that she will retain Alessandro's affection: in 'L'amor, che per te sento' (II.iv) Handel encouraged Cuzzoni to display her vocal charms in two bar-long rests following the word 'godi' – allowing her to enact in audible terms for the audience the physical delights she was offering Alexander.

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[21] Joncus, 'Producing Stars in *Dramma per musica*', 287.

[22] Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, trans. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 79.

[23] The common practice of imitating (or being imitated by) an instrument would have enhanced this dehumanisation further; see Spitzer, 'Improvized Ornamentation in a Handel Aria'.

[24] Letter to Rev. William Cole of 1774; Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, VIII, 451. www.archive.org/stream/lettersofhoracew08walpiala/lettersofhoracew08walpiala_djvu.txt (accessed 20 November 2010). The letter exemplifies a consumerist approach to art: it primarily concerns the purchase of paintings, and concludes 'Well! we are very rich, and very quiet. I hope it will last!'

As Joncus's assessment implies, the process of commodification which gathered pace in the eighteenth century involved an essentialisation of the singer, which both reduced the individual and privileged the essence. Later theories of capitalism can offer some insight into this early manifestation of the ideology. Georg Lukács's comments on commodity fetishism carry striking resonance for this analysis of Faustina's and Cuzzoni's treatment, for in capitalism's 'continuous trend towards greater rationalisation',

> the process of labour is progressively broken down into abstract, rational, specialised operations … With the modern 'psychological' analysis of the work-process … this rational mechanisation extends right into the worker's 'soul': even his psychological attributes are separated from his total personality and placed in opposition to it so as to facilitate their integration into specialised rational systems and their reduction to statistically viable concepts.[25]

The 'system' that the singers slotted into was, on one level, that of female stereotypes, but the itemisation entailed in the contrast between the two performers reached its apogee – and found its fitting object – in the atomistic ornamenting voice.

In this light, the lovingly detailed descriptions of the singers' voices by Quantz, Mancini, Burney and others take on new resonance. I have suggested in chapter 1 that the almost obsessive particularising of performers, which perhaps achieved most force in the contrast of sparring women (actresses and singers), was a form of commodification and therefore ownership on the part of the largely male authors of these descriptions. By describing the performers in such minute detail, the authors could gain a form of authorial control – both objectivity and objectification. But of course there was more than control at stake: the process Lukács describes leads to commodity *fetishism*, a reification of the object as something with supernatural power, which in the case of the auditor fascinated with the ornamenting voice represents enthralment to the inimitable. While eighteenth-century critics hostile to the power of the singer's voice associated it with sorcery, audience members without the technical skill to analyse a singer's vocal qualities also resorted to exclamations of wonder invoking the powers of Nature or the supernatural.[26] Thus Burney describes two responses to the representative arias for Cuzzoni and Faustina in *Admeto* discussed in chapter 1: Lady Cowper penned in her libretto next to

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[25] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 84, 88. While one cannot ignore Lukács's insistence that commodity fetishism is specific to modern capitalism (and hence not a factor in pre- or early capitalist society), the gender blindness he shares with most other socialist economic and political analysts of his generation allows space to question his assertion where women (as commodities) are concerned.

[26] On criticism of the singer's art as black magic in the period, see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 26–7.

Faustina's name 'she is the d—l of a singer', while one audience member 'cried out' on hearing Cuzzoni's 'Sen vola', 'D—n her! she has got a nest of nightingales in her belly.'[27] Alternatively, audience members were reduced to clichés of admiration: in 1724 one newspaper gleefully reported that a young woman in love with a castrato was able to communicate her passion for his performance only by means of a 'Bravo!'[28]

Authors such as Quantz and Mancini described in great detail because they could not render by imitation; audience members likewise, who we know (from satires particularly) bought the 'Favourite Songs' of each opera in order to emulate the most admired singers in salon performances, and for whom music teachers would provide model embellishments, would have felt their inadequacies most acutely in their attempts to realise that which was not notated.[29] In the early part of the century, Roger North commented disparagingly that the slavish attempts to copy professional performances reduced both the music and the would-be singer:

> Ladys hear a new song, and are impatient to learne it. A master is sent for, and sings it as to a parrot, till at last with infinite difficulty the tune is gott, but with such infantine imperfect, nay broken abominable, graces, in imitation of the good, that one would splitt to hear it. Yet *this is fine*, and the ladys goe to teaching one and other … and none thinck that before they learne the practise, they must learne the principle, and be made capable.[30]

Implicit in North's critique is the absurdity of attempting to decouple a song from its professional singer: the commodity (in this instance, the aria) loses its value outside its proper context. Perhaps, indeed, the impossibility of recapturing a virtuoso's performance was part of the visceral, magical experience of attending the opera.[31] Arnie Cox has suggested that it is fundamental to the human condition for auditors to engage in 'mimetic participation' in music (as they do in all other forms of human activity), imitating what they hear – if only through muscular 'subvocalization' – in order to understand it.[32] Music which in its virtuosity defies imitation must therefore be met with an incomprehension constantly teetering between marvel and mistrust, as the audience quotations cited above suggest.

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[27] Burney, *General History of Music*, II, 745n, 743n.

[28] *The Plain Dealer*, 19 June 1724.

[29] On ornamentation provided for students, see Howard Mayer Brown, 'Embellishing Eighteenth-Century Arias', 266–70, 276. For an example of satire on audience members' musical aspirations, see Henry Carey, 'Blundrella: or, the Impertinent. A Tale'.

[30] North, *Roger North on Music*, 21.

[31] Martha Feldman describes this effect, following anthropologist Alfred Gell, as the 'enchantment of technology'; *Opera and Sovereignty*, 28.

[32] Cox, 'The Mimetic Hypothesis and Embodied Musical Meaning'.

THE SUSPICION OF DETAIL

In the obsessive, awed, opprobrious discussions of the ornamenting voice – whether critical or satirical – we sense a tension between fascination with that which cannot be reproduced and desire to own and control through enumeration. This tension about the most extravagant aspect of the singer's art gave added bite to criticism of the profession in ways that reflected broader concerns of the mid-century with regard to ideas of 'character' and artistic coherence, ideas that were particularly problematic for women, and perhaps especially for female singers.

A range of literary and graphic attempts at 'character' delineation from this period are, as Deidre Lynch has described it, 'marked by hesitation about how one might distinguish between the finishing touch and the added stroke that overcharges representations'.[33] Such self-consciousness about the need to 'wrestle with this question of the "insensible more or less"' led artists and authors to create grotesque and satirical representations of the character, and particularly the physical body – caricature, no less – of which Slawkenbergius's enormous nose in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is only one, famous example.[34] Such representations of misproportion were, Lynch suggests, a mark of unease at new ways of figuring the self generated by new socio-economic realities; the ornamenting voice was thus a perfect target. Indeed, it is no surprise that singers were favourite subjects for the caricaturist's pen.[35]

The virtuoso's voice (like Slawkenbergius's nose) could also be figured as a grotesque distortion of the natural body. In this sense there is in this period, for vocal as well as instrumental virtuosi, a fine line between the idiomatic and the idiotic, as overspecialisation defies communicability and old paradigms of community.[36] Cuzzoni, who could be commodified and reduced to the essence of voice by her admirers, could thus also be considered 'all over pipe' by satirists, who then took that idea to its logical, crude conclusion, in one of the satires on the rivalry:

> Let not one inch of merit pray be lost;
> Her pipe I think is all that she can boast;
> And poor *S[a]nd[o]ni* finds, when e'er 'tis try'd,
> That she's all over pipe, from side to side;
> Her body looks as from the fairies stole,
> Enough of carcass to make one large hole;
> Where he in love's wide Bay of *Biscay* tost,
> Hard plys the oar; but ne'er can touch the coast.[37]

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[33] Lynch, *Economy of Character*, 27.

[34] Lynch, *Economy of Character*, 27, 25–6.

[35] The caricatures were as often affectionate as satirical. For discussion, see Durante, 'The Opera Singer'.

[36] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 131–2.

[37] *The Contre Temps*, 13. The 'speaker' at this point in the fictitious dialogue is Faustina.

Unsurprisingly, given that the commodification and fetishistic objectification of the singer was part of the broader inception of capitalism, which itself induced both fascination and fear, the economic specialisation and concomitant destruction of the social fabric that the singer represented was played back onto his or her body. Just as new capitalist processes broke the economic 'chain of being' that guaranteed the reproduction and renewal of a stable, ordered society, so the singer's specialisation and reification of the voice led to perverted sexualities and problems of procreation as well as creativity, as husband Sandoni's experience with Cuzzoni's disproportionately wide 'pipe' suggests.

Such grotesqueries were a hyperbolic commentary on the suspicion of detail that was everywhere part of the period's aesthetic. Cuzzoni's pipe, like Slawkenbergius's nose (or Jonathan Swift's world of Lilliput, or Alexander Pope's kingdom of Dullness), was a satirical reflection of the danger with which the profusion and disorder of detail threatened art – and thence society. Joshua Reynolds summed up this fear of detail in 1759:

> if it has been proved that the Painter, by attending to the invariable and general ideas of Nature, produces beauty, he must, by regarding minute particularities and accidental discriminations, deviate from the universal rule, and pollute his canvass with deformity.[38]

A focus on 'minute particularities' was as troubling on aesthetic grounds in the eighteenth century as it was to those fearing that economic disintegration would be caused by the specialisation necessary to capitalism. And of course, as Naomi Schor observes in her book on the subject, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, the detail (like the ornament) was gendered feminine.[39] For Reynolds, the ability to discern the Ideal amongst the welter of detail and deformity of nature involved a level of judgement that was inherently masculine.[40] By implication – and this emerges still more strongly in the later eighteenth-century dichotomy of the sublime and the beautiful – a mere, precise imitation of nature without demonstration of that discernment Reynolds required of the artist is the preserve of the woman (or the effeminate).[41] The conjunction of the sublime and originality, which occurred with increasing frequency in the late eighteenth century, was the exclusive preserve of men.[42] Schor cites Hegel's remarks on women's creative capacity in *The Philosophy of Right*, which reinforce the denigration implicit in the comments of Reynolds and others:

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[38] *Idler* No. 82 (10 November 1759); cited in Schor, *Reading in Detail*, 16.

[39] Schor notes that the detail is 'bounded on the one side by the *ornamental*, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other, by the *everyday*, whose "prosiness" is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women'; *Reading in Detail*, 4. For my purposes, I am not distinguishing here between the detail and the ornament.

[40] See Reynolds' Third Discourse: 'it is not every eye that perceives these *blemishes*. It must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms; and which, by a long habit of observing what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, has acquired the power of discerning what each wants in particular. This long laborious comparison should be the first study of the painter, who aims at the greatest style. By this means, he acquires a just idea of beautiful forms; he corrects nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect.' Cited in Schor, *Reading in Detail*, 15.

> Women are capable of education, but they are not made for activities which demand a universal faculty such as the more advanced sciences, philosophy and certain forms of artistic production. Women may have happy ideas, taste and elegance but they cannot attain to the ideal.[43]

There was, then, a widespread belief not just that women were associated with ornament and detail, but also that, implicitly, the lack of judgement that such a focus entailed indicated an intellectual weakness which meant women could do little more than imitate others' ideas. The contrast is explicitly expressed as gendered in the complacent comments of Hannah More, which demonstrate that women themselves absorbed this view:

> Both in composition and action they [women] excel in details, but they do not so much generalize their ideas as men, nor do their minds seize a great subject with so large a

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[41] The association between women and mimesis was time-honoured, of course; see Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*. The distinction Edmund Burke makes between the sublime and the beautiful in his seminal treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759) relies on gendered attributes: the beautiful is 'small', 'smooth', 'polished', 'light and delicate' and founded 'on pleasure', all characteristics already denigrated (for example, in John Baillie's 1747 *Essay on the Sublime*) as less morally and aesthetically valuable than those inherently masculine attributes associated with the sublime; Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 113. Mark Akenside in *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744) gendered these characteristics, noting that 'the disposition of the moral powers is always similar to this of the imagination; that those who are most inclined to admire prodigious and sublime objects in the physical world, are also most inclined to applaud examples of fortitude and heroic virtue in the moral. While those who are charmed rather with the *delicacy* and *sweetness* of colours, and forms, and sounds, never fail in like manner to yield the preference to the softer scenes of virtue and the sympathies of a domestic life.' John Baillie contrasted those who 'are naturally fitted to consider things in the most enlarged views' with those who 'naturally dissect great objects themselves, and by a diminutive genius render what is truly magnificent, little, and mean'. See Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 86, 91.

[42] There is a taste of this distinction in Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759): 'The mind of a man of genius is a fertile and pleasant field, pleasant as *Elysium*, and fertile as *Tempe*; it enjoys a perpetual spring. Of that spring, *Originals* are the fairest flowers: *Imitations* are of quicker growth, but fainter bloom'; Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, 9. Burke is similarly dismissive of imitation as 'bringing our nature towards its perfection', but not its 'improvement'; *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 46. Although he does not explicitly gender imitation, its association with beauty (and originality's with the sublime) is implicit throughout.

[43] Schor, *Reading in Detail*, 25.

> grasp … A woman sees the world, as it were, from a little elevation in her own garden, where she make [*sic*] an exact survey of home scenes, but takes not in that wider range of distant prospects which he who stands on a loftier eminence commands.[44]

This representation of women as capable only of imitation and ornament – of the 'happy idea' rather than the ideal – was present in music too. Roger North, after all, focussed his animadversions on the musical nonsense created by parrot-style imitation exclusively on women. And Hegel's denigration of the creative capacity of women was matched by his concern for detail in music: 'So soon as music commits itself to the abstraction of characterization in detail, it is inevitably led almost astray into sharpness and harshness, into what is thoroughly unmelodious and unmusical.'[45] Given the ubiquity of this derogatory view of women's creative capacity, it is not surprising to find it in Tosi's treatise too. Returning to one of the quotations with which this study began and placing it in its full context reveals similar prejudices towards women's roles in creating ornamentation:

> §35. If many of the female Singers (for whom I have due Respect) would be pleased to consider, that by copying a good one, they are become very bad ones, they would not appear so ridiculous on the Stage for their Affectation in presuming to sing the *Airs* of the Person they copy, with the same Graces. In this great Error, (if it does not proceed from their Masters) they seem to be govern'd by Instinct, like the inferior Creatures, rather than by Reason; for That would shew them, that we may arrive at Applause by different ways, and past Examples, as well as one at this present [which Galliard footnotes as Cuzzoni and Faustina] make us sensible, that two Women would not be equally eminent if the one copy'd the other.[46]

Tosi makes it clear in the next paragraph that the 'instinct' that leads to copying is particularly feminine, for male singers who follow women's examples are, in his view, still worse than women because they ought to be inventive.[47] (Of course, it should be said that for many critics even those male singers who were pre-eminent in the art of ornamentation were proof of the inherent effeminacy of the art since, as castrati, they hardly counted as men.) In the contrast between natural male creativity and the female (or effeminate) predilection for imitation we find again the concern about women's inability to make coherent sense of the world around them which characterises their supposed interest in ornament in general.

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[44] More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 127.

[45] Hegel, *Aesthetics*; cited in Schor, *Reading in Detail*, 32.

[46] Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni*, trans. Galliard, 153–4.

[47] '§36. If the Complaisance, which is due to the fair Sex, does not excuse the Abuse of copying when it proves prejudicial to the Profession, what ought one then to say of those Men, who, instead of inventing, not only copy others of their own Sex, but also Women? Foolish and shameful!' Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni*, trans. Galliard, 154.

RECLAIMING IMITATION

It seems it is this reductive and inherently gendered view of ornament-dominated music (rather than concerns about consciousness or capitalism) that is the common thread in the slighting view of opera singers which runs from the eighteenth century to the present day, for singers' limited musical creativity and egotism is still the butt of criticism. But there might be another way to see such apparent (feminised) creative sterility that, at least for the 'rival sirens', offers a chance to reclaim autonomy. The sense apparent above, in discussions of the threat of 'detail', that feminine creativity tends to collapse in on itself, failing to produce meaning, might recall the dichotomy (discussed in the last chapter) between the pre-linguistic and rational, linguistic realms. The (male) subject's anxiety about the sleight of hand required to assert the (ultimately arbitrary) authority of language (and with it patriarchal power) is evident in the age-old privileging of the semantic over the purely vocal, and in the attacks on wordless, ornamented music, the visceral effects of which challenged the legitimacy of that verbal authority.[48] While Lacan balked at the idea of defining the pre-linguistic as inherently feminine – seeing 'woman' instead as just another linguistic signifier, created to define what man was not – his equation of woman with 'what [man] has had to renounce, that is, *jouissance*', encouraged others in the co-option of the Imaginary realm as inherently feminine.[49] The solipsism male authors had long criticised in women thus became for some twentieth-century feminists a mark of female authenticity, and successful mimesis – for women constantly concerned with the performance of their femininity[50] – itself could become a site of female requisition of and resistance to male authority. As Luce Irigaray, one of Lacan's most famous feminist appropriators, explains:

> To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself simply to be reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of 'perceptible', or 'matter' – to 'ideas', in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible', by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means to 'unveil' the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed into this function.[51]

The female tendency to imitation, which Tosi and others decried, could thus – at least in this formulation – also be empowering when deployed in critical or self-reflexive ways.

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[48] On the historic 'tendency to totalize … [speech] so that, outside speech, the voice is nothing but an insignificant leftover', see Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 12–13.

[49] Lacan: 'On the one hand, the woman becomes, or is produced, precisely as what he is not, that is, sexual difference, and on the other, as what he has to renounce, that is, *jouissance*', in Rose, 'Introduction – II', 49. On the feminist appropriation of the pre-verbal, and Lacan's resistance to it, see Rose, 'Introduction – II', 55, 49, discussed in the previous chapter, note 92.

[50] See Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' and chapter 3, pp. 154–5.

[51] Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 76.

Cuzzoni and Faustina, who had already demonstrated themselves to be adept at imitating each other in their stage performances, may also later have played mimetically on that defining moment in their careers. Cuzzoni returned to London in 1734, evidently trying to recapture her former success. Faustina, on the other hand, was reputed to have maintained the theme of rivalry in her subsequent career. When Hasse produced two operas for Venice in 1732, Faustina was the *prima donna* in *Demetrio* but Cuzzoni was the *prima donna* for *Euristeo*, which Frederick Millner suggests 'may explain why Faustina did not sing in this production'.[52] And in 1747, when Faustina was at the end of her career (being either 47 or 54), and the 19-year-old Regina Mingotti was hired by the Dresden opera company, rivalry was again sparked in *Demofoonte* in 1748 over the niceties of onstage precedence.[53]

From one perspective – perhaps reflecting the anxiety which permeates representations of women's attempts at self-determination – such moments seem tinged with desperation. But, following Irigaray's provocative assessment of the female condition, we might also see the women's sometime identification with their London celebrity – like their apparently 'assiduous' pursuit of the individuality and perfection of their ornamental abilities[54] – as a defiant assertion of the value of their specialisation, a paradoxical affirmation of individuality through mimetic re-creation of the most infamous moment of their careers.

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However we read the stories of the singers' subsequent careers, the adherence to their London personae reminds us of the limitations that could entail on such a theatricalisation of identity. The rival singers were granted a degree of literary and musical celebrity that led to notoriety; but their celebrity was also inevitably restricting, resting as it did on caricature, as the barbs of *The Contre Temps; or the Rival Queans* (1727) shaded into the more general satire on sparring women of *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and such subsequent operas as *The Dragon of Wantley* (1737). The rapidity with which the Faustina–Cuzzoni rivalry became a reductive topos is exemplified by the dust-jacket illustration to this book, which supposedly depicts a scene from *The Dragon of Wantley* in which the two rivals, Margery and Mauxalinda, are holding forth.[55] This engraving is very similar to another produced earlier in the same series (George Bickham's *Musical Entertainer*, 1736–9), accompanying the song 'The Ladies Lamentation for y^{e} Loss of Senesino' (Figure 6.1); the song's title and lyrics suggest that the women in this illustration were meant to be female admirers of Senesino, rather than singers themselves.[56] But both of Bickham's engravings derive from the undated satirical print *Senesino's Landing*, which names the two women as 'The Rival Queens, Signora Faustina and Signora Cuzzoni contending for this Charming Demi-Man'.[57] The transmutation of these three figures – two women vying for the attention of a man – from one spoof on female musical ardour to another, and yet another provides one final illustration both of the confusing proliferation of meaning at the (ornamental) borders of operatic discourse, and of the generic nature of female antithesis.

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[52] See Millner, *The Operas of Johann Adolf Hasse*, 15.

[53] Faustina played the higher-ranking princess, but was disguised as a servant and so required to give precedence to Mingotti. Metastasio was asked to judge the dispute and wrote several letters endeavouring to persuade composers and directors (including Hasse, but not Faustina) to give precedence; see Millner, *The Operas of Johann Adolf Hasse*, 23.

[54] As observed by Mancini and Quantz; see chapter 1, pp. 30–8, above.

[55] The associated song, 'On loosing their Toast and Butter', only appears from the seventh edition (1738) onwards, when the opera is advertised 'with additions'; in the scene related to this song, however, the women do not fight, nor is their love interest (Moore) on stage (the male character

Historians' conceptions of singers such as Faustina and Cuzzoni have in many ways conformed to the critical views of their own time – singers to varying degrees either unruly or appropriately pliant before the needs of composer and company – but in either case their stories are offered as decorative additions to the bread-and-butter of musicological narrative. However, as we have seen, there was and is space to create alternatives, in part, of course, through engaging imaginatively with the processes of constructing and performing the operas themselves. If the foregoing chapters have chiefly explored the corporate (particularly the scribal) construction of the singers' identities through individual works and their cumulative impact, the agency of the singers has also underpinned (and sometimes undercut) these narratives. Even their apparent individual insufficiency might be seen in terms which outline a truth about female performers' identities not (or not only) reducible to male authorship. The nature of women's participation in narrative is what generates this idea of identity, so it is fitting we reach it via two further eighteenth-century stories.

In Handel's *Radamisto*, revived for the two women in 1728, Zenobia, fearing abduction at the hands of her enemies, jumps into a river in order to escape her

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on stage is instead Gaffer Gubbins, Margery's father); see *The Dragon of Wantley*, 8th edn, 'with additions' (1738), 16–18.

[56] The 200-odd plates in George Bickham's *The Musical Entertainer* were first issued in fortnightly parts consisting of four folio plates (each a song with a lavish illustration) between 1736 and 1739, before being published in two 100-page volumes. 'The Ladies Lamentation for y^{e} Loss of Senesino' appears on page 38 of volume 1, while 'On loosing their Toast and Butter' appears on page 96 of that volume; their order also reflects the topical nature of the songs, as Senesino left London in 1736, while the version of *The Dragon of Wantley* featuring this song appeared in 1738.

[57] *Senesino's Landing*, a separately published print, is usually dated *c*.1737, but its reference to Faustina and Cuzzoni suggests a date between 1726 and 1728 – perhaps early 1727, as Senesino left England in June 1726 and did not return until January 1727, pushing the start of the season back by some months. The November 1726 prologue to *Camilla* noted that the 'British Fair' expected Senesino 'in vain', so this print might well have capitalised on such expectation. See Deutsch, *Handel*, 196, 198.

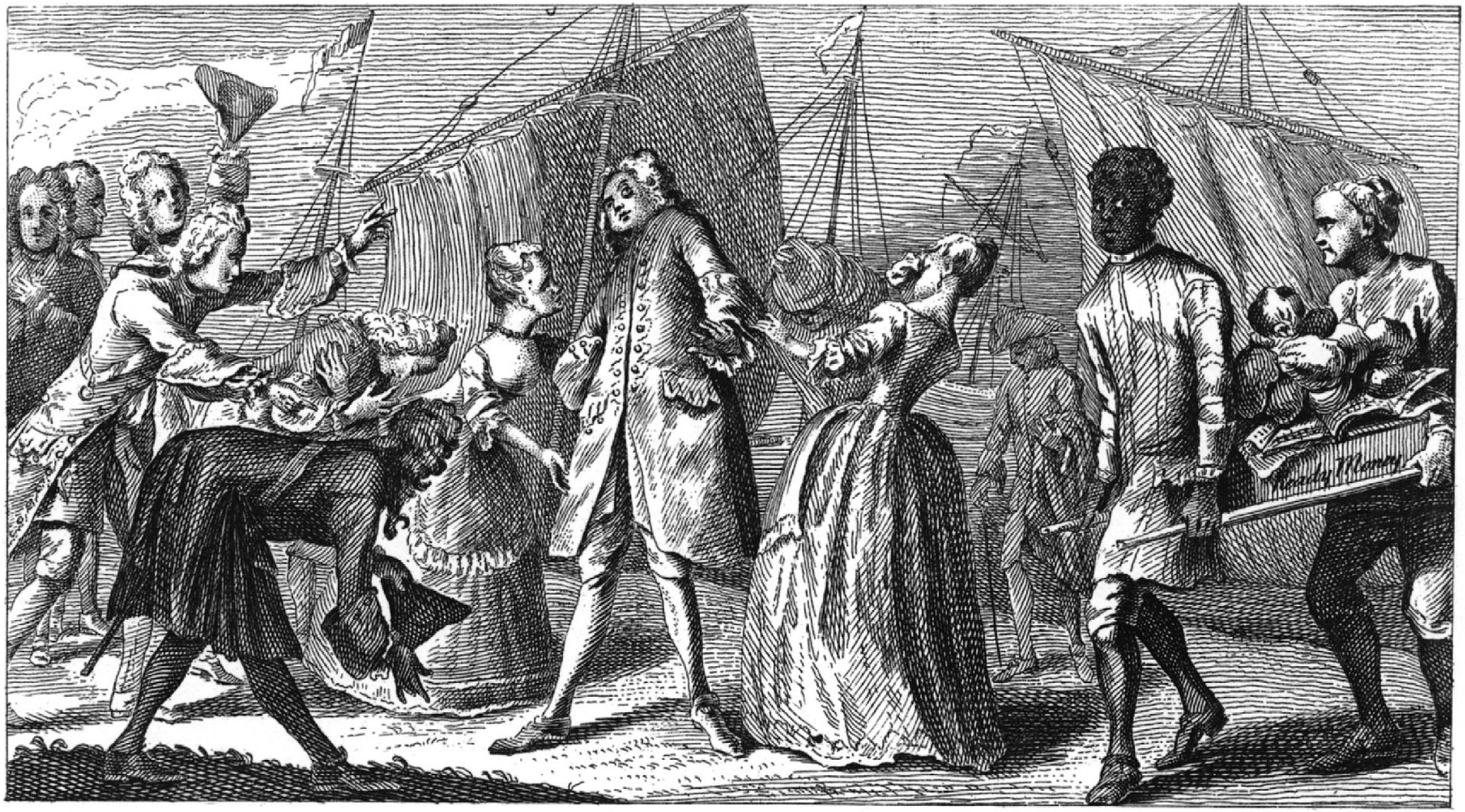

Fig. 6.1 George Bickham, 'The Ladies Lamentation for ye Loss of Senesino', *The Musical Entertainer* (London, 1736–9, facsimile reprint, Sudbrook Press [1965]). The 1736 model for the 1739 illustration used on this book's dust-jacket.

captors by drowning. The scene, complete with stage scream, is likely to raise a giggle today. Perhaps it did in the eighteenth century as well, for a similar moment is invoked at the climax of Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), in which the deluded, secluded heroine, Arabella, thinks life is (and should be) interpreted according to the rules of romantic fiction, and so throws herself into a river to escape 'ravishers'.[58] As a result of her soaking, Arabella falls ill, and while recovering is admonished by a clergyman to forsake romance for reality, which she duly and dutifully does. Arabella's problem is that she cannot tell the difference between truth and fiction (in literary terms, between history and romance); she thus reinterprets history, asserting female agency on the national and international stage.[59] Arabella's delusions could well have been based on operatic plots, of course, but her naivety is my point (as it is Lennox's), for it illustrates the period's general belief in women's readiness to succumb to the delights of fantasy.[60] As one literary scholar has pointed out, if *The Female Quixote* demonstrates the moral that nice young ladies should give up foolish fictions, 'it also emphasizes their profound appeal to women, not because of female gullibility, but because women need alternatives to their socially-defined state of meaningless and powerless activity. Romance tells the truth of female desire.'[61] Such truth telling in romantic fiction seems to us a *cri de coeur*, but the seductiveness of alterity on the stage (as in real life) implies a more active imagining, one engaging a fundamental aspect of female identity in its call for constant self-creation.[62]

The continuous performance of femininity identified by twentieth-century psychoanalysts as the lot of women suggests an awareness of self and/as other not only exploited by actresses in general, but articulated with particular force in the interplay of female theatrical rivals.[63] Thus the frequent generation of such rivalries from the eighteenth century on suggests not only that women were the first commodities, subject to what Walter Benjamin identified as the 'mechanical' age's urge to replication, but also that the mimetic facility so engendered encouraged an awareness of the diversity of selves available. As Michael Taussig proposes, such an awareness is necessarily both constant and constantly in flux, 'dancing between the very same and the very different'.[64] This fluidity of identity may, by the terms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gendered ideology, have rendered the female performer's sense of self less stable than that of the male connoisseur,[65] but that instability could also be both empowering and enlightening. For the heady conjunction of inimitable voice and fluctuating persona which, at the most fundamental level, defines opera's attraction, is itself a crystallisation of what Adriana Cavarero describes as a 'quotidian, familiar truth of life' about the voice: that it simultaneously demonstrates human beings' uniqueness, and their relationality.[66] The female singers' aptitude for engaging in the playful dance of identity, disquieting as it may have been for critics of the opera, thus also affirms the cultural value of their role – for they offer, as their eighteenth-century admirers perhaps realised, insight into the polysemous, contingent nature of identity.

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[58] Lennox, *The Female Quixote*; cited in Spacks, *Desire and Truth*, 13.

[59] Spacks, *Desire and Truth*, 23. In Saint-Évremond's *Les Opéra* (Paris, 1694) the girl at the centre of the plot has also been deluded by reading too much fiction into thinking herself an operatic heroine; her delusions are cured by a visit to the opera itself. For discussion, see Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancien Régime, 1647–1785*, 34.

[60] Michael McKeon observes that 'From Dante on, the fear that women's morals will be corrupted by reading romances is quite conventional, and its articulation [in the early eighteenth century] may provide evidence less of the rise of the reading public than of the persistence of anxiety about women'; *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740*, 52; cited in Spacks, *Desire and Truth*, 241.

[61] Spacks, *Desire and Truth*, 14. Spacks goes on to quote Arabella: 'What room, I pray you, does a Lady give for high and noble Adventures who consumes her Days in Dressing, listening to Songs, and ranging the Walks with People as thoughtless as herself? How mean and contemptible a Figure must a Life spent in such idle Amusements make in History? Or rather, Are not such Persons always buried in Oblivion, and can any Pen be found who would condescend to record such inconsiderable Actions?'

[62] On the importance of actresses' conscious agency in their self-construction, see Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*.

[63] Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', 213.

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[64] Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 129. It is Taussig who cites Benjamin's observation, from Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936).

[65] Bermingham, 'Elegant Females and Gentlemen Connoisseurs', 491.

[66] Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 7.

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