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# Studi musicali

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Sources, literature and dramaturgy in Metastasio's and Leo's *Demofonte* (1741)\*  
Francesca Menchelli-Buttini

*Introduction and performance aspects*

Pietro Metastasio's *Demofonte*, staged at the Habsburg court theatre in 1733 for the name day of the Emperor Charles VI, develops within the framework of an unresolved enigma a theme of paternal and conjugal love, embodied in a forbidden secret marriage that appears briefly to be incestuous. The enigma 'Heaven will be reconciled with you when the innocent usurper of a realm knows himself' is linked to the annual sacrifice of a Thracian virgin, and to Prince Timante's secret marriage to the commoner Dircea, which is punishable with Dircea's death. For political reasons *Demofonte* imposes on Timante the wedding with the Phrygian Princess Creusa and then offers Dircea as a sacrifice to the gods, feeling he has been insulted by her father Matusio. In the second act, when

\* Some parts of this article were originally, in different form, a chapter of my D.Phil dissertation, discussed at the University of Oxford in 1999, under the supervision of prof. Reinhard Strohm. A preliminary version has been presented as a paper at the 13<sup>th</sup> *Baroque Conference* in Leeds (2-6 July 2008), with the title *Pietro Metastasio's Demofonte (1733) and Leonardo Leo's music for the 1735-1741 Neapolitan stagings*. I am grateful to Sylvia Greenup (Pisa) for her revision of my English. Other debts of gratitude are to the Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino and to p. Maurizio Brioli of the *Archivio Generalizio Chierici Regolari Somaschi* (AGCRS) in Rome, for having aided my research.

Timante resists the imposed marriage and affirms his love, Demofonte condemns Dircea to die immediately. In the third act Timante in prison discovers that Demofonte has been persuaded to grant a pardon and that Dircea is a princess, apparently not only his spouse but also his sister. Another document is finally found which reveals that he himself is the son of Matusio, and therefore a commoner and the innocent usurper of the enigma.

My article begins by examining the circumstances and conditions of the 1741 performance of *Demofonte* (with regard to the singers and the composer). It proceeds to discuss the points in common between Metastasio's *Demofonte* and its principal sources in order to address problems of reading and interpretation across texts, modes and genres.<sup>1</sup> I then explore in greater detail the major scenes containing the duet *La destra ti chiedo* (11,11) and Timante's last exit aria *Misero pargoletto* (111,5), which I believe are especially relevant in the way they bring to the foreground aspects that are central to both plot and meanings. This offers an excellent opportunity to direct attention towards the role of music in expressing and representing a drama.

Since the late 1970s, in no small measure through the studies of Reinhard Strohm, the discussion of Metastasio's librettos in relation to their sources has been a helpful approach to appreciating the author's output, as well as a historiographical prerequisite. The assessment of how themes or strategies employed by spoken (French) theatre were translated into Metastasio's librettos and, generally, into eighteenth-century librettos and their settings has resulted in a definition of musical dramaturgy which provides insight into the dialectic relationship between opera, contemporary theatrical practice and literary genres. The recourse to music and the question of its expressive force were discussed thoroughly in relation to rhetoric over two centuries, from the late seventeenth- to the eighteenth-century. The examples and comments show that the rhetorical category of visual intensity was united with the word and the music: verbal and musical figures were reputed to have the quality of vivid illustration and the power to make the hearers to 'see' things.<sup>2</sup>

1 This part of my study is also indebted to the interesting investigations of PETER BROOKS, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, 2nd ed., New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995 and TERENCE CAVE, *Recognitions: A study in Poetics*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002.

2 With reference to music and rhetoric see GEORGE J. BUELOW, *The Loci topici and Affect in Late Baroque Music: Heinichen's Practical Demonstration*, «The Music Review», XXVII, 1966, pp. 161-176;



The related issues of the dramatic role of music and the interplay between word, music and gesture is exemplified through the music of Leonardo Leo (1694-1744), author of very popular operas and *maestro di cappella* in Naples, who, along with his older colleagues Francesco Mancini (1672-1737) and Domenico Sarro (1679-1744), composed some arias for the 1735 staging of *Demofonte*, and who revised the music for a subsequent performance of 1741 (both in Naples). The extant scores which reflect these productions are held in Naples, Montecassino and London (respectively I-Nc, Rari 7.3.5 [1-11] and Rari 7.7.21 [111], I-MC, 3-d-17 and GB-Lbl, Add. 16043-16044). The former manuscripts coincide with the libretto printed in Naples in 1735. They all present changes to Metastasio's text and need a cast of four sopranos and one tenor: Maria Teresa Monticelli (*Demofonte*), Giustina Turcotti (*Dircea*), Gaetano Majorano detto Caffarelli (*Timante*), Caterina Fumagalli (*Creusa*), Margherita Chimenti (*Cherinto*), Francesco Tolve (*Matusio*). The attribution of the music in the Neapolitan libretto states that:

Le arie sono poste in note dalli Signori Francesco Mancini Maestro della R[eal] Cap[pella], Domenico Sarro Vice-Maestro della R[eal] C[appella], Leonardo Leo Pro-Vice Maestro della R[eal] C[appella]. Ed ognuna di essa sarà segnata colla lettera iniziale del cognome del Maestro che l'ha composta. La musica de' recitativi dell'opera e degl'Intermezzi è del Sig. Giuseppe Sellitti Maestro di Cappella Napolitano [...].<sup>3</sup>

Id., *Rhetoric and Music*, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, xv, London, Macmillan, 1980, pp. 793-803; BRIAN VICKERS, *Figures of Rhetoric / Figures of Music?*, «Rhetorica», II, 1984, n. 1, pp. 1-44; REINHARD STROHM, *Arianna in Creta: Musical Dramaturgy*, in *Dramma per musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 220-236; MELANIA BUCCIARELLI, *Italian Opera and European Theatre, 1680-1720: Plots, Performers, Dramaturgies*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000, pp. 8-10, 21-31; JOHN MCLELLAND, *Music with Words: Semiotic / Rhetoric*, «Rhetorica», VIII, 1990, n. 3, pp. 187-211.

3 DEMOFOONTE / DRAMA / Per Musica / Da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di S. Bar- / tolemeo il di 20. Gennaro 1735. / PER SOLLENNIZZARE / IL COMPLEANNOS / DELLA / MAESTA' DI / D. CARLO / BORBONE / RE di Napoli, di Sicilia, e di Gerusalemme, &c. / Infante di Spagna, Duca di Parma, Piacenza, / e Castro, &c, E Gran Principe Ere- / ditario di Toscana, &c. / *Presentato alla medesima M. S. / che Dio guardi. / IN NAPOLI MDCC.XXXV. / Con Licenza de' Superiori* (I-Mb, Racc. dramm. 653, p. 8, available online: <http://www.braidense.it/rd/00653.pdf>). Next to the text of each aria there is the initial of the composer who set it to music: the list is given in ANGELA ROMAGNOLI, *Una gara per il compleanno del re Carlo: il Demofonte di Leo, Mancini, Sarro e Sellitto (Napoli, 1735) e i suoi rapporti con la partitura di Leonardo Leo del 1741*, in *Responsabilità d'autore e collaborazione nell'opera dell'Età barocca: il pasticcio*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Reggio Calabria, 2-3 ottobre 2009), a c. di Gaetano Pitarresi, Reggio Calabria, Laruffa, 2011, pp. 221-256: 231. Romagnoli also describes the above cited manuscript scores.

In 1741 *Demofonte* had to be adapted for a cast including two altos and a sixth singer playing Adrasto's part, the cast we find in the score held by the British Library: Agostino Fontana, «virtuoso di musica soprano» (*Demofonte*), Giovanna Astrua (*Dircea*), Gaetano Majorano detto Caffarelli (*Timante*), Costanza Celli (*Creusa*), Teresa di Palma (*Cherinto*), Gaetano Pompeo Basteris, «virtuoso tenore» (*Matusio*), Francesco Signorile (*Adrasto*). In particular, Teresa di Palma replaced Costanza Celli in Sarro's *Ezio*, the first opera of the season, and sang in the other two operas, Leo's *Demofonte* and *Il Ciro riconosciuto*.<sup>4</sup> The same cast is indeed listed in the libretto of *Ezio* and the manuscript score of *Il Ciro riconosciuto* held in Milan, which thus probably refers to the 1742 staging and not to the 1739 Turin version by Leo.<sup>5</sup> Both these sources do not name the singer Vito Romito, whom recent studies include in *Demofonte*'s list of singers instead of Teresa di Palma: he appeared in the *Serenata* staged in Naples in October 1741, but there is no record with his name for the following season.<sup>6</sup> The performance dates of *Demofonte* fell within Tuesday 19th December 1741 and Wednesday 10th January 1742 (December: 26th, 27th, 28th, 30th, 31st; January: 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th).<sup>7</sup>

4 Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Dipendenze della Regia Camera della Sommaria*, 1,463, ff. 1-15, which contain the letters of payment and receipt of the singers, except that Caffarelli appears in Ivi, 464/2, f. 42 and in Napoli, Banco di Napoli, Archivio Storico, *Banco di S. Giacomo, Giornale di cassa* 1742, Matr. 971, 11th September, [p. 318], bank account number 2541. See also Ivi, *Banco di S. Giacomo, Giornale di cassa* 1742, Matr. 961, 28th April, [pp. 889, 923], bank account number 3861, and Matr. 964, 13th July, [p. 384], bank account number 4562, with relation to Teresa di Palma. No record of the 1741 libretto of *Demofonte* is in CLAUDIO SARTORI, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, II, Cuneo, Bertola & Locatelli, 1990-1995, p. 316.

5 The references are to the libretto in D-Mbs (<http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10578683.html>) and the manuscript score in I-Mc, Nosedà F 66, ff. 8v-9r. The 1739 Turin libretto (I-Tn F.VII.353) lists the following interpreters: Francesco Tolve (*Astiage*), Santa Santini (*Mandane*), Gioacchino Conti (*Ciro*), Costanza Mancinelli (*Arpago*), Giovanna Astrua (*Arpalice*), Gaetano Pompeo Basteris (*Mitridate*), Alessandro Veroni (*Cambise*). In ms. Nosedà F 66, however, *Mitridate* is notated in treble clef and *Arpago* in tenor or alto clef. There could be a mistake in the attribution of these parts on f. 9r (to Basteris and Signorile), or they might well have been sung at the octave. It was frequent practice at the time for soprano parts to be sung by tenors: cfr. DANIEL HEARTZ, *Raaf's last Aria: A Mozartian Idyll in the Spirit of Hasse*, «The Musical Quarterly», LX, 1974, pp. 517-543: 535.

6 Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Dipendenze* cit., 1,464/2, ff. 48-53.

7 Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Dipendenze* cit., 1,463, ff. 493-505, which also indicate the detailed incomes; see also GIACOMO LEO, *Leonardo Leo musicista del secolo XVIII e le sue opere musicali*,

For Leo the different vocal range of the singers and the form of the original score as a composite and joint authorship work were perhaps a stimulus to rewrite the music almost completely. The documents that can still be found in Naples suggest further confirmation of this possibility. Leo received the standard fee of 200 ducats for *Il Ciro riconosciuto* (the third opera of the 1741-1742 season) and 180 ducats (inclusive of the costs for the harpsichordist) for the revision and composing of *Demofonte*:

180 ducati per l'accomodamento dell'opera del Demofonte in considerazione d'averla quasi per intiera composta in musica, con che però resti esso Maestro Leo tenuto di pagare il suonatore del cembalo nelle sere che si rappresentò, ed anche ne' concerti.<sup>8</sup>

Metastasio's original libretto, except for a few recitative lines, was restored with the result that coherence and climactic sequences were improved: the scenes I,9-12 reappeared, including the character of Dircea and her aria *Padre, perdona... oh pene!*; Demofonte's *Perfidi, già che in vita* (II,10); the scene III,1, including Adrasto's aria, *Non odi consiglio*; the original arias *Tu sai chi son, tu sai* (II,1, Creusa) and *Ah che nel mal verace* (III,3, Matusio). The *sinfonia* and recitatives were newly composed. And so were the arias, otherwise heavily re-worked when the music originally belonged to Leo, including the ones written for the famous

Napoli, Tipografia Melfi & Joele, 1905, p. 58 and *Il Teatro di S. Carlo di Napoli. Cronologia degli spettacoli (1737-1799)*, a c. di Paologiovanni Maione e Francesca Seller, I, Napoli, Altrastampa, 2005, pp. 36-37. During Charles of Bourbon's reign, a typical S. Carlo opera season started on 4th November, the King's name-day; the second opera used to be premiered on 19th December, the birthday of the King's father, Philip V of Spain, and the third on 20th January, the King's birthday: see *Musica e spettacolo nel Regno di Napoli attraverso lo spoglio della «Gazzetta» (1675-1768)*, a c. di Ausilia Magaudda e Danilo Costantini, Roma, Ismez, 2011, p. 97.

8 Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Dipendenze cit.*, I,463, ff. 66-67 and Napoli, Banco di Napoli, Archivio storico, *Banco di S. Giacomo 1742*, Matr. 959, 13th March, [p. 431], bank account number 3481 (quoted in *Dal Teatro San Bartolomeo al Teatro San Carlo. Documenti*, a c. di Francesco Cotticelli e Paologiovanni Maione, Napoli, Istituto Banco di Napoli – Fondazione, 2009, pp. 30-31) and Matr. 960, 5th March, [p. 420], bank account number 3481. See also the *Avvisi dei teatri*, 25 November 1741, quoted in GIUSEPPE A. PASTORE, *Don Lionardo. Vita e opere di Leonardo Leo*, Cuneo, Bertola & Locatelli, 1994, p. 86. The received amount was definitely higher than what Leo earned for the 'slighter' revisions of *Artaserse* (1737-1738, 90 ducats) and *Issipile* (1742-1743, 100 ducats): see Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Dipendenze cit.*, I,464/2 and I,465/1.

castrato Caffarelli, who on both occasions played Timante's role.<sup>9</sup> The duet *La destra ti chiedo* and *Misero pargoletto*, however, were preserved almost unchanged, probably in homage to their enduring popularity, and indeed they were often singled out for praise and included in aria collections well past the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century.<sup>10</sup>

*Verbal, visual and musical representation: the plot structure*

In the *Argomento* to *Demofonte* Metastasio only quoted Hyginus's *De Astronomia* as a source. Yet, what had not escaped contemporary commentators,<sup>11</sup> and now demands more precise explication, is that Houdar de La Motte's *Inès de Castro* (1723) and Torquato Tasso's *Il re Torrismondo* (1587) are extremely pertinent models, the function of the former being the definition of the plot structure, that of the latter the creation of a memorable *coup de théâtre* which contributes to a satisfactory denouement.

*Inès de Castro* begins at the moment when Alphonse, king of Portugal, decides to marry his son Dom Pèdre to Constance, the daughter of the Queen

9 The differences between the 1735 and 1741 scores are discussed by ROMAGNOLI, *Una gara per il compleanno del re Carlo* cit., pp. 243-256, but the fact that in GB-Lbl, Add. 16044 the name of Matusio appears on the aria *Non odi consiglio* (III,1) is probably a mistake: the aria is for soprano; moreover, Timante and Adrasto sing the precedent recitative of III,1.

10 See, for instance, FRANÇOIS AUGUSTE GEVAERT, *Les gloires de l'Italie*, Paris, Heugel, 1868, n. 34 and *Air de Timante pour ténor avec clavecin ou piano*, ed. Charles Bouvet, Paris, Demets, 1908. A list of works by Leo published in the last three centuries is found in PASTORE, *Don Leonardo: Vita e opere di Leonardo Leo* cit., pp. 227-230.

11 See CHARLES DE BROSSES, *Viaggio in Italia. Lettere familiari*, trans. Bruno Schacherl, Bari, Laterza, 1973 (*Lettres familières écrites d'Italie en 1730 et 1740*, Paris, 1799), p. 592 and GIOVANNI COLOMÉS, *Paragone fra il Demofonte di Metastasio e l'Inès di La Motte*, in *Osservazioni di vari letterati sopra i drammi dell'abate Pietro Metastasio*, I, Nice, Società Tipografica, 1785, pp. 174-202. *Inès de Castro* has then been acknowledged as a source, among others, by CHARLES DEJOB, *Études sur la tragédie*, Paris, Armand Coline, 1896, p. 144: «mais la pièce italienne est très différente de la pièce française et plus curieuse»; EMILIO TEZA, *Demofonte del Metastasio*, «Atti e memorie della Regia Accademia di Scienze e di Lettere di Padova», XVIII, 1902, pp. 235-241, who however concentrates on the literary tradition concerning *Inès de Castro*; WALTER BINNI, *L'Arcadia e il Metastasio*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1963, p. 387 fn: «Anche nel Demofonte possono ritrovarsi elementi di fatto ripresi dall'*Inès de Castro* dell'Houdar de la Motte, dal *Torrismondo*, dal *Pastor fido*»; PIERO WEISS, *Teorie drammatiche e infranciosamento: motivi della 'riforma' melodrammatica nel primo Settecento*, in *Antonio Vivaldi: Teatro musicale, cultura, società*, a c. di Lorenzo Bianconi e Giovanni Morelli, II, Firenze, Olschki, 1982, pp. 273-296: 294.

by a previous marriage. But Dom Pèdre is secretly married to Inès, a lady of the Queen's house. In the second act Dom Pèdre resists the marriage to Constance and affirms his forbidden love for Inès, who is therefore arrested. In the third act a vain attempt is made to free Inès. This causes the imprisonment of Dom Pèdre and his accusation of betrayal. The fourth act centres on the scene of the Council, where Alphonse pronounces a verdict of guilty and sentences Dom Pèdre to death. In the fifth act, following the appearance of Inès and her sons, Alphonse grants pardon to all. But Inès dies poisoned on the orders of the Queen.<sup>12</sup> In *Il re Torrismondo* Araldo, king of Norway, consents to the marriage of his daughter Alvida to Torrismondo, king of the Goths, who has secretly proposed on behalf of his friend Germondo, king of Sweden. Torrismondo falls in love with Alvida and possesses her during the return journey to the Gothic capital, where the wedding is to be celebrated. When Alvida is discovered to be Torrismondo's sister, he decides to marry her off to Germondo. But Alvida, disbelieving Torrismondo, and certain of having lost his love, commits suicide. Torrismondo follows her to the grave.<sup>13</sup>

Numerous examples prove the connection between *Demofoonte* and *Inès de Castro*. The list of the identified poetic reminiscences can be completed with the following additions:<sup>14</sup>

12 On this plot and its literary sources see HOUDAR DE LA MOTTE, *Inès de Castro*, in *Théâtre du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Jacques Truchet, 1, Paris, Gallimard, 1972, pp. 1393-1400 and PAOLO MECHELLI, *Inès de Castro: un tema iberico nell'opera italiana degli anni Novanta del Settecento*, in *Le arti della scena e l'esotismo in età moderna*, a c. di Francesco Cotticelli e Paologiovanni Maione, Napoli, Turchini, 2006, pp. 623-667: 623-625. All references in this article to *Inès de Castro* are to Truchet's edition and indicate the title, the act, the scene and the line numbers, which are given in the text. In Italy the tragedy was also known through a translation in prose by Giovanni Francesco Baldini, staged and printed in Rome in 1728 and reprinted in 1730: see LUIGI FERRARI, *Le traduzioni del teatro tragico francese nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, Paris, Librairie ancienne Édouard Champion, 1925, pp. 128-129. Metastasio may have known this translation but did not use it. The changes to La Motte's plot, the choice of words and the syntax are his own.

13 On the close intertwining of classical and Scandinavian sources in *Il re Torrismondo* see, for instance, LOUISE GEORGE CLUBB, *The Arts of Genre: Torrismondo and Hamlet*, «English Literary History», XLVII, 1980, n. 4, pp. 657-669 and Guglielminetti's preface to TORQUATO TASSO, *Teatro*, a c. di Marziano Guglielminetti, Milano, Garzanti, 1983, pp. VII-XLIII: XXX-XXXI. The Scandinavian sources are the works of the Swedish brothers Olaus and Johannes Magnus, who had moved to Rome after the triumph of the Lutheran Reform in Sweden.

14 The following reminiscences are listed in PIETRO METASTASIO, *Drammi per musica*, a c. di Anna Laura Bellina, II, *Il regno di Carlo VI, 1730-1740*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2003, pp. 764-769: *Inès de*

*Inès de Castro*, II,2, ll. 464-465

*Alphonse*

En un mot je le veux.

*Dom Pèdre*

Seigneur, ce que je suis

Ne me permet aussi qu'un mot: je ne le puis.

*Demofonte*, II,2, l. 680

*Demofonte*

Io così voglio.

*Timante*

Ed io non posso. [...]

*Inès de Castro*, III,4, ll. 649-656

*Alphonse*

Que sais-je même encor si, plus impatient,

Au mépris de la loi, peut-être l'oubliant,

Votre amour n'aurait point réglé sa destinée,

Et bravé les dangers d'un secret hyménée?

*Inès*

Ô ciel! que pensez-vous?

*Alphonse*

Si jamais vous l'osiez,

Si d'un nœud criminel je vous savais liés,

Téméraire, tremblez, n'espérez point de grâce;

L'opprobre et le supplice expieraient votre audace.

*Demofonte*, II,2, ll. 641-646

*Demofonte*

[...] E che pretendi

da questo amor? Che per tua sposa forse

una vassalla io ti conceda? O pensi

che un imeneo nascosto... Ah, se potessi

immaginarli sol...

*Timante*

Qual dubbio mai

ti cade in mente! [...]

A comparison of the dramatic plans further bears out the connection:

*Inès de Castro*

I Decision concerning the marriage, which places Dom Pèdre and Inès in danger

II Resistance to the marriage and confession of the love for Inès; Inès arrested

III Dom Pèdre's revolt and arrest

IV Council and verdict of guilty

V Image of Inès with her sons

*Demofonte*

Ia Oracle and decision concerning the marriage, which places Timante and Dircea in danger

Ib Dircea arrested

*Castro*, I,3 (ll. 80-85) / *Demofonte*, II,1 (ll. 546-555); *Inès de Castro*, I,3 (ll. 91-104) / *Demofonte*, II,1 (ll. 556-563); *Inès de Castro*, I,6 (ll. 193-198) / *Demofonte*, II,10 (ll. 949-955); *Inès de Castro*, II,2 (ll. 369-376) / *Demofonte*, II,2 (ll. 674-677); *Inès de Castro*, III,6 (ll. 705-714) / *Demofonte*, II,9 (ll. 856-863). References in this article are to the 1733 first edition of Metastasio's *Demofonte*, which is available online ([www.progettometastasio.it](http://www.progettometastasio.it)); the title, the act, the scene and the line numbers are given in the text.

- IIa Resistance to the marriage; Dircea conducted to the temple
- IIb Timante's revolt and arrest
- III Recognition

Yet the overall vision of the subject and characters and the means through which motifs and incidents are realised remain, notwithstanding all the important resemblances, profoundly dissimilar in the two works. This is perceivable from the very beginning. As in tragedy, *Inès de Castro* and *Demofonte* start at the point of crisis, that is, the decision in favour of the political marriage and the lottery of virgins, the moment when the dramatic machine is set into motion immediately placing husband and wife in a situation of extreme peril. The French play opens with King Alphonse and political contents. It is only in the last scene of the first act that we first see Inès and Dom Pèdre alone on stage, and they are overwhelmed by frightful premonitions: the verb 'to fear' recurs insistently. The word 'hope', on the other hand, echoes throughout the libretto:

Non temer, mia *speranza*. Alcun non ode (1,2, l. 57, Timante)  
 In te *spero*, o sposo amato (1,2, l. 133, Dircea)  
*Sperai* vicino il lido (1,4, l. 238, Timante)  
 Per me non v'è più *speme*. [...] (1,10, l. 430, Dircea)  
 Se ardire e *speranza* (1,13, l. 495, Timante)  
 [...] Conosco assai / quel che potrei *sperar*. [...] (11,1, ll. 515-516, Creusa)  
 [...] Ma non *sperai* / tale ingiuria da te. [...] (11,1, ll. 532-533, Demofonte)  
 E l'unica *speranza*... (11,4, l. 726, Matusio)  
 Crede acquisto una dubbiezza / ch'è principio allo *sperar* (11,7, ll. 833-834, Cherinto)  
 Parte è di *speme* il non averne alcuna (111,8, l. 1333, Creusa)  
 Principio è di *speranza* (111,8, l. 1336, Creusa)

Timante, moreover, meets Dircea as early as the second scene. Whether artistic considerations or operatic conventions prompted this change, it contributes to establish a situation that is more undetermined, private and domestic. The relationship between Timante and Dircea comes to be treated with the warmest emotion, especially when Dircea mentions their son Olinto, thus evidencing the overlapping of maternal and conjugal love, while in Leo's simple recitative the key-word «genitor» is highlighted by the sole repetition (see Mus. Ex. 1).<sup>15</sup>

15 The musical examples have been transcribed from the ms. score in London (GB-Lbl, Add. 16043-16044). I have modernised as is customary clefs, key signatures, the use of accidentals, spelling and punctuation. Page numbers are indicated within square brackets.

*Demofonte*, 1, 2, ll. 72-80

*Dircea*

[...] Egli incomincia  
già col tenero piede  
orme incerte a segnar. Tutta ha nel volto  
quella dolce fierezza  
che tanto in te mi piacque. Allor che ride,  
par l'immagine tua. Lui rimirando,  
te rimirar mi sembra. Oh quante volte,  
credula troppo al dolce error del ciglio,  
mi strinsi al petto il genitor nel figlio.

La Motte was called a modernist by his contemporaries. In the preliminary Discours to his tragedies (*Machabées*, *Romulus*, *Inès de Castro*) he attacks the unities of time and place, the higher status of the word, the exclusive use of verse and rhyme; he proposes a theatre that values instead action and visual elements, and states the superiority of prose and *verso sciolto*.<sup>16</sup> I shall here concentrate on the question of verbal and visual representation in relation to certain climactic episodes, which I shall examine in both *Inès de Castro* and *Demofonte*.

In accordance with the rules of French classical tragedy, the third act of *Inès de Castro* does not show us the actual insurrection led by Dom Pèdre; this significant message is conveyed by a speech. Yet the scene in which Dom Pèdre arrives to free Inès (III, 6) turns dramatically on his blood-stained sword, which concentrates the visual impact of the situation: the sword itself is a considerable dramatic device and act of performing, as it exteriorises a latent suspicion that Dom Pèdre may have killed Alphonse.

*Inès de Castro*, III, 6, ll. 705-714

*Dom Pèdre, l'épée à la main.*

Venez...

*Inès*

Qu'avez-vous fait, prince, et faut-il vous voir

[...]

Mais qu'aperçois-je. Ô ciel! quel sang teint cette épée?

J'en frémis; dans quel sein l'auriez-vous donc trempée?

16 See LA MOTTE, *Les paradoxes littéraires ou Discours écrite par cet académicien sur les principaux genres de poèmes*, éd. par Bernard Jullien, Paris, Hachette, 1859, pp. 449-453, 457-459, 501-503, 529-536.



*Dom Pèdre*

Par ces doutes affreux vous me glacez d'horreur.

Non, j'ai de ce péril affranchi ma fureur.

*Demofonte*, while retaining this episode at the end of the second act, exploits spectacular effects more in line with operatic conventions. The stage set employs a temple and a grand staircase, on which the fighting spreads out. It is strewn with overturned props, following the combat that has taken place in a vain attempt to free Dircea.

Atrio del tempio d'Apollò. Magnifica ma breve scala per cui si ascende al tempio medesimo, la parte interna del quale è tutta scoperta agli spettatori, se non quanto ne interrompono la vista le colonne che sostengono la gran tribuna. Veggonsi l'are cadute, il fuoco estinto, i sacri vasi roversciati, i fiori, le bende, le scuri e gli altri stromenti del sacrificio sparsi per le scale e sul piano, i sacerdoti in fuga, i custodi reali inseguiti dagli amici di Timante e per tutto confusione e tumulto.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore the blood-stained sword becomes a less impressive sign, while Dircea displays a tender feeling of conjugal love, through exclamations and verbal repetitions to which the music attaches further emphasis (see Mus. Ex. 2).

Within a few exchanges all possibility of escape for Dom Pèdre and Timante is thwarted, a matter that leads, in the fourth act of *Inès de Castro*, to an actual death sentence. The staging of the council scene should be seen as instrumental in bringing to a climax the conflict that has been building up so far within Alphonse. The inner clash of two competing roles, the father and the king, suggests in a sense the device of two opposing advocates (Dom Rodrigue and Dom Henrique) that deploy all their rhetorical weapons to support the alternatives of pardon and punishment. Their long and clearly argued speeches provide scope for the intellectual engagement of the audience, but imply – as La Motte himself admits – an emotional detachment.<sup>18</sup> Thus, at the moment of greatest intensity,

17 In the 1741 *Demofonte* the only new stage setting was that of the «Portici» (Act II): see Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Dipendenze* cit., I,464/1A, f. 41v, which briefly describes the kind of scenery used in the 1741-1742 operas. Particular attention is paid to the most sensational effects: «E nell'opera *Demofonte* vi fu la scena con veduta di armata navale [the «Porto di mare» in Act I], e con sparo d'Artiglieria che si finge a colpi di due gran tamburi di cuoio di somari».

18 LA MOTTE, *Discours a l'occasion de la tragédie d'Inès*, in *Les paradoxes littéraires* cit., p. 528.

just before Alphonse pronounces the verdict, the councillors enter into the dialogue with the mute language of silence and tears, thus forcefully contributing to the impassioned climax.

*Inès de Castro*, IV,4, ll. 983-987

*Alphonse*

Oui, oui, de ta vertu l'autorité suprême  
L'emporte dans mon cœur sur la nature même.

*Aux autres conseillers.*

Je vois trop vos conseils. Ce silence, ces pleurs  
M'annoncent mon devoir, en plaignant mes malheurs.  
Je condamne mon fils; il va perdre la vie.

In *Demofonte*, the thwarted escape leads to the final thunderous confrontation between father and son, the moment in which Timante confesses his secret marriage and is arrested. After *Demofonte*'s exit, Timante and Dircea twice rehearse a 'farewell scene', re-starting *da capo* at line 987, as the symmetry of the inverted repetitions seems to prove, with an increase in emotion leading towards the delayed duet, *La destra ti chiedo*.

*Demofonte*, II,11, ll. 974-986

*Dircea*

Sposo.

*Timante*

Consorte.

*Dircea*

E tu per me ti perdi!

*Timante*

E tu mori per me!

*Dircea*

Chi avrà più cura  
del nostro Olinto?

*Timante*

Ah qual momento!

*Dircea*

Ah quale...

Ma che? Vogliamo, o prence,  
così vilmente indebolirci? Eh sia  
di noi degno il dolore. Un colpo solo

*Demofonte*, II,11, ll. 987-995

*Timante*

Sposa.

*Dircea*

Timante.

*A due*

Oh dei!

*Dircea*

Perché non parti?

*Timante*

Perché torni a mirarmi?

*Dircea*

Io volli solo

veder come resisti a' tuoi martiri.

*Timante*

Ma tu piangi fra tanto.

*Dircea*

E tu sospiri.

*Timante*

questo nodo crudel divide e franga.  
Separiamci da forti; e non si *pianga*.

*Timante*

Sì, generosa. Approvo  
l'intrepido pensier. Più non si sparga  
un *sospiro* fra noi.

*Dircea*

Disposta io sono.

*Timante*

Risoluto son io.

*Dircea*

Coraggio.

*Timante*

Addio, *Dircea*.

*Dircea*

Principe, addio.

(*Si dividono con intrepidezza, ma giunti alla scena tornano a riguardarsi*)

Oh dio, quanto è diverso  
l'immaginar dall'eseguire!

*Dircea*

Oh quanto  
più forte mi credei! S'asconda almeno  
questa mia debolezza agli occhi tuoi.

*Timante*

Ah fermati, ben mio. Senti.

*Dircea*

Che vuoi?

*Timante*

La destra ti chiedo,

[...]

The text of the duet was quoted as undisputed example of the genre in the article on *Poème lyrique* written by Grimm for the *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772).<sup>19</sup> Its incipit is probably singular in the way it addresses *Dircea*, *La destra ti chiedo*, which suggests a gesture, and reminds the audience of the visual element of the chains that from the previous scene have bound *Timante*'s hands:

*Demofoonte*, II, 10, ll. 907-912

*Demofoonte*

[...] A' lacci

quella destra ribelle

porgi, o fellon.

*Timante*

Custodi,

(*S'alza e va a farsi incatenare egli stesso*)

dove son le catene?

Ecco la man. Non la ricusa il figlio

del giusto padre al venerato impero.

19 MELCHIOR GRIMM, *Poème lyrique*, in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, XII, Paris, Briasson, 1751-1772, pp. 823-836: 825-826.

It is possible to place Leo's musical setting (see here its transcription in Appendix 1) in a well-established canon of cantabile duets written in a sharp key, binary metre, moderate tempo and light motion, which it is unlikely modern audiences would associate with the theme of separation.<sup>20</sup> Dircea's question, «Che vuoi?», suggests a solo opening, without orchestral ritornello or accompaniment. The vocal line employs appoggiaturas and rests, through which the *senario* divides as usual into two *trisillabi*.<sup>21</sup> When the instruments enter, they play delicate triplets of broken chords that are in the – perhaps more pleasing – position of the first and second inversion (bb. 1-4). The harmonic series is I-V-V-I, tonic and dominant, to which the seventh is added in bar 3, at the moment when a slight expansion on «dolce» is found and the vocal line runs on without pauses. A major change occurs on the third line, after the crotchet rest in bar 4. The violins start playing in unison and *colla parte*, the subdominant chord (C-major) appears in bar 5 and the melody has a touching ascending sixth interval. In particular, we can perceive a slight tension between the placement of the rhythmic groups and the succession of the pitches. The highest note and the strongest beat come into conflict; moreover, the second weak beat is expanded through syncopation, with further emphasis resulting from the dynamic signs and the entrances of bass and viola.

Dircea answers with the same motif, but moves from the tonic (b. 12) to the dominant (b. 20) and sings effectively in the minor, as if the gesture of holding one another's hand reminded her, in contrast with the present misery, nostalgically of the past happiness, when she gave Timante her promise of love.<sup>22</sup> Other variants are significant. The opening upbeat now enlarges (b. 12) and actually

<sup>20</sup> These characteristics are found, for instance, in Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's duets *L'estremo pegno almeno* (*Adriano in Siria*, Naples, 1734) e *Ne' giorni tuoi felici* (*Olimpiade*, Rome, 1735): see STROHM, *L'opera italiana nel Settecento*, trans. Lorenzo Bianconi and Leonardo Cavari, Venezia, Marsilio, 1991 (*Die italienische Oper in 18. Jahrhundert*, Wilhelmshaven, 1979), p. 221.

<sup>21</sup> See STROHM, *Italianische Opernarien des frühen Settecento (1720–1730)*, 1, Cologne, Volk, 1976 («Analecta Musicologica», XVI), pp. 63-65, with reference to Pergolesi's *Se cerca, se dice* (*Olimpiade*, Rome, 1735). On the ways in which the *senario* may be set into music see also FRIEDRICH LIPPMANN, *Così fan tutte, La clemenza di Tito, Die Zauberflöte: Gemeinsames und Unterschiedliches in der Versvertonung*, «Archiv für Musikwissenschaft», LXIV, 2007, n. 3, pp. 211-228.

<sup>22</sup> *La destra ti chiedo* is therefore a two-stanza duet, as it begins with one full quatrain for each of the singers: the definition is found in STROHM, *The Operas of Antonio Vivaldi*, II, Firenze, Olschki, 2008, p. 754 («Studi di Musica Veneta. Quaderni vivaldiani», XI11). Dircea's answer in the minor was per-

conveys the sorrowful sigh of the text («ah!»),<sup>23</sup> just as the descending fifth in bar 3 turns to a more emphatic rising octave leap in bar 15. The third line of the two quatrains is also accommodated to a similar pattern (bb. 5-6, 9-10, 17-18 and 21-22). However, both Timante's words and his melody are more expressive, whilst in bars 17-18 and 21-22 some effect derives from the shift of the violins to the upper octave. Bars 9-12, moreover, present a variant form of bars 5-8, whilst bars 17-20 are repeated almost exactly as bars 21-24. What follows in bars 25-28 constitutes a sort of summary that shortly combines the two different interpretations of the *senario* given in bars 1-2 and 5-6, maintaining the same kind of accompaniment and melody but changing the key to the minor super-tonic. Here the right position of the verbal accents obtains the best effect from the musical devices employed in bar 5 and indicates the prominence of the significant word «sposo». The homo-rhythmic *a 2* episode (bb. 28-32) then presents harmonic intricacies such as the augmented sixth and diminished seventh. The text is modified from «Che barbaro addio! / Che legge crudel!» to the more standard «Che barbaro fato! / Che legge crudel!», so that the word «addio» may carefully be spared for later emphasis.

A shortened repetition of the text begins in bar 36, which is the equivalent of bar 24 (thus the first two quatrains are heard again only in the *da capo*). The existing material is initially transposed to G major and then slightly extended through a shift to the minor tonic on the word «addio» (bb. 40-42), which becomes a prominent gesture. After the *a 2* episode, which also stays in the minor tonic, Dircea and Timante return without delay to the line «Mia vita, ben mio» (b. 46). Here the word «addio» (b. 50) further expands through the addition of the sigh «ah» (b. 52), which is set to the unison of the solo voices (with fermata), merely perhaps to convey the vocal cadenza. The expansion, together with the following vocal rests, slightly delays the final emphasis on the *a 2*.

ceptively noticed by FRANCESCO FLORIMO, *La scuola musicale di Napoli e i suoi conservatori*, III, Napoli, Stabilimento tipografico Morano, 1880-1883, p. 35.

23 This is a typical musical figure of address. On the relationship between music and scenic gestures in eighteenth-century opera see STROHM, *Arianna in Creta: musical dramaturgy* cit. pp. 220-236; BUCCIARELLI, *Italian Opera and European Theatre, 1680-1720* cit., pp. 11-20. Following a study of DENE BARNETT, *The Art of Gesture: the Practices and Principles of 18th Century Acting*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1987, Strohm has linked gestures to musical figures by using Barnett's classification in the categories of 'indicative', 'imitative' and 'expressive'.

In II,9-11 of *Demofonte*, therefore, the conflict between the king and the spouses comes to a climax and a conclusion. The farewell duet of Timante and Dircea, a consolidated operatic topos, is given the most prominent position (at the end of the act) and an intense emotional effect in Leo's setting. The third and last act will now place us before the questions posed by the creation of an ending that differs from La Motte.

*Verbal, visual and musical representation: the denouement and the structure of recognition*

It is generally acknowledged that visual representation is linked for eighteenth century dramatists – La Motte included – to climactic moments.<sup>24</sup> Here the visual elements can take the place of discourse in its usual form of persuasive verbal action. The most significant example from *Inès de Castro* is the scene at the end of the play in which Inès's children appear on stage with their mother. This tableau of maternal affections determines Alphonse's act of pardon, which is however shortly afterwards rendered ineffective by Inès's murder.<sup>25</sup> Metastasio recasts this powerful action as a smaller episode occurring in III,2, so that there is a change of function of the scene with the children from denouement (in the French play) to dramatic knot (in the libretto), from visual image to discourse. We are told that the king is touched by the words of Princess Creusa; that, following this, he is led to surrender to pity by the climactic appearance of Dircea and Olinto – a climax which becomes evident in the narrative through a shift to the present tense. We are told, therefore, that discourse is the necessary precondition for the king's forgiveness, but this is finally determined by sight. The tears to which the text refers are the sign that definitively establishes the conversion (in the music the word is highlighted with the high F and descending leap: see Mus. Ex. 3).

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, LA MOTTE, *Discours a l'occasion de la tragédie d'Inès* cit., p. 504.

<sup>25</sup> After the 1723 *première*, the tableau of maternal love gave rise to a lively discussion about the audacity of the tragedy. La Motte was forced to justify himself in the Preface to the 1730 second edition: «Les enfants que j'ai hasardés sur la scène et les circonstances où je les fais paraître ont paru une nouveauté sur notre théâtre. Quelques spectateurs ont douté d'abord s'ils devaient rire ou s'attendrir; mais le doute n'a pas duré et la nature a bientôt repris ses droits sur tous les cœurs. On a pleuré enfin, et s'il m'est permis de ne rien perdre de ce qui me fait honneur, quelques-uns ne m'ont critiqué qu'en pleurant» (*Inès de Castro* cit., pp. 517-518). On the strategic use of tears see JEAN-JACQUES ROUBINE, *La stratégie des larmes au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, «Littérature», IX, 1973, pp. 56-73 and ANNE VINCENT-BUFFAULT, *Histoire des larmes XVII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Marseille, Robert, 1986.

*Demofoonte*, III,2, ll. 1067-1089

*Cherinto*

[...] E che *non disse*,  
 che non fe' per salvarti? I meriti tuoi  
 come ingrandì! Come scemò l'orrore  
 del fallo tuo! Per quante strade e quante  
 il cor gli ricercò! *Parlar per voi*  
 fece l'utile, il giusto,  
 la gloria, la pietà. Sé stessa offesa  
 gli propose in esempio  
 e lo fece arrossir. Quand'io m'avvidi  
 che il genitor già vacillava, allora  
*volò*, il ciel m'inspirò, cerco Dircea;  
 con Olinto la trovo; entrambi appresso  
 frettoloso mi traggo; *e al regio ciglio*  
*presento in quello stato e madre e figlio.*  
*Questo tenero assalto*  
*terminò la vittoria.* O sia che l'ira  
 per soverchio avvampar fosse già stanca,  
 o che allor tutte in lui  
 le sue ragioni esercitasse il sangue,  
 il re cedé; si raddolcì; dal suolo  
 la nuora sollevò; si strinse al petto  
 l'innocente bambin; gli sdegni suoi  
 calmò; s'intenerì; *pianse con noi.*<sup>26</sup>

It is possible that the means of tragic resolution offered by *Inès de Castro* are incompatible with the operatic mode and the dramatic ambitions of *Demofoonte*. Besides the fact that in *dramma per musica* happy endings tend to supplant tragic deaths, there appears in *Demofoonte* a coherent effort to create a concept of retributive justice.<sup>27</sup> If the libretto ended here, with the king's decision in favour of clemency, it would present a fully realised reconciliation, including the reward of the guilty couple. The rest of the third act, in contrast, brings a more convenient happy ending.

26 Italics mine. The use of italics emphasises the lines that are discussed in the main text: the act of speaking (through verbs such as «parlò», «disse»), the appearance of Dircea and Olinto and the tears.

27 See also JACQUES JOLY, *Dagli Elisi all'Inferno. Il melodramma tra Italia e Francia dal 1730 al 1850*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1990, pp. 88-90.

These issues of genre and plot imply the design of characters. The best example might be the representation of the heroine. Dircea differs from Inès in her tendency to self-pity and in her passive acceptance of misfortune, to the degree that her experience seems to assume the contour of a nightmare. Another striking trait is, in the lines «[...] Dircea son io; / vado a morir; non ho delitto. [...]» (II,6, ll. 788-789), her act of self-nomination and the statement of ‘blamelessness’ attached to it, which is not so much a revelation of her position in the true scheme of the plot as perhaps an allusion to an absence of knowledge. But in the music, apart from the strong accent on «morir», the emphasis lies rather on pleading on behalf of Timante, for example through the tritone on the word «pietà», the following longer rest, the declamation of «salva», «proteggi» in progression on a static bass (perhaps in order to give space to the singer’s freer vocal and scenic performance: see Mus. Ex. 4). In relation to the problem of knowledge we may also consider the questions that Timante and Dircea pose: briefly, ‘what is Dircea’s sin? why does she deserve the indignation of Heaven?’, and also the apparent resolution: ‘Heaven persecuted a forbidden marriage’ (where forbidden marriage renders ‘incest’, an unspeakable word).

*Demofonte*, I,4, ll. 230-232

*Timante*

Ma che vi fece, o stelle,  
la povera Dircea che tante unite  
sventure contro lei! [...]

*Demofonte*, I,12, ll. 479-482

*Dircea*

Misera, in che peccai?  
Come son giunta mai  
de’ numi a questo segno  
lo sdegno a meritar?

*Demofonte*, III,4, ll. 1208-1210

*Timante*

[...] *Tante sventure*  
comprendo alfin; perseguitava il cielo  
un vietato imeneo. [...] <sup>28</sup>

28 Italics mine.



These questions that Timante and Dircea pose and their apparent resolution constitute a kind of logical sequence, suggesting – together with the initial enigma – a hidden level which is unveiled only in the third act at the peripeteia. The consequence is a reversal of the relationships that have hitherto been supposed to exist between the characters: two letters appear proving Dircea to be a princess, Demofoonte's daughter, and Timante to be a commoner, Matusio's son, the innocent usurper of the enigma. Both recognitions may therefore be interpreted as recognitions of identity and kinship. The first recognition brings about a change from good to ill fortune, giving rise to intense emotion and a high degree of suspense; it is derived from Tasso's tragedy *Il re Torrismondo*. The second permits the final reconciliation and untying of dramatic knots, releasing the audience from the profound emotions the plot has elicited, as Metastasio prescribes in his treatise *Estratto dell'arte poetica d'Aristotile e considerazioni su la medesima*.<sup>29</sup>

Any recognition is inevitably connected to the theme of knowledge and the moral nature of the deed performed.<sup>30</sup> *Demofoonte* shows the terrible effects that may result from imprudence, which here takes the form of an unlawful marriage and of Demofoonte's impulsive decision to order the death of his daughter without knowing her true identity. Demofoonte acts out of ignorance and is temporarily overcome by unrestrained anger, whereas there seems to be an error of judgement on the part of Timante, who is in a position to recognise Dircea's origins (see below I,3, ll. 141-145). In III,9, however, it is claimed that Timante acted out of ignorance, and therefore deserves to be pitied for the deed he has unintentionally committed.

*Demofoonte*, I,11, ll. 458-461

*Timante*

Matusio, non temer. Barbaro tanto  
il re non è. Negl'impeti improvvisi  
tutti abbaglia il furor; ma la ragione  
poi ne emenda i trascorsi. [...] <sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The reference is to METASTASIO, *Tutte le opere*, a c. di Bruno Brunelli, II, Milano, Mondadori, 1947-1954, p. 1051: «le grandi passioni in primo luogo non sono effetto privativo delle riconoscenze; anzi queste appunto assai spesso, sciogliendo tutti i nodi che sospendean la catastrofe, mettono in calma le grandi passioni già mosse».

<sup>30</sup> See CAVE, *Recognitions* cit., pp. 67-72.

<sup>31</sup> The *topos* of the *voix du sang* – the impulse which, for instance, in *Olimpiade* draws Clistene to Licida despite the latter's mistaken identity – is not found in *Demofoonte*, thus allowing the possibility of a gender issue.

*Demofonte*, I,3, ll. 141-145  
*Timante*  
 Sei pur cieca, o Fortuna! Alla mia sposa  
 generosa concedi  
 beltà, virtù quasi divina e poi  
 la fai nascer vassalla. Error sì grande  
 correggerò ben io. [...]

*Demofonte*, III,9, ll. 1346-1349  
*Cherinto*  
 [...] Senza saperlo  
 errasti alfin; sei sventurato, è vero,  
 ma non sei reo. Qualunque male è lieve  
 dove colpa non è. [...] <sup>32</sup>

The significant words here are *not knowing* and *knowing*, which in III,5 express the different degree of awareness existing between Timante and the other characters. In this texture of references to the related notions of recognition, reversal and ignorance, we may detect an interest in the tragic mode founded at least on the models of *Il re Torrismondo* and *Oedipus*.<sup>33</sup>

[...] Forse non sai... / Troppo, troppo ho saputo [...] (III,5, ll. 1237-1238, *Creusa*, then *Timante*)  
 Non curate saperla. / Scordatevi di me [...] (III,5, ll. 1260-1261, *Timante*)  
 Ma taci per pietà. Tu mi trafiggi / l'anima e non lo sai [...] (III,5, ll. 1264-1265, *Timante*)  
 [...] Ah se sapessi, / infelice bambin, quel che saprai (III,5, ll. 1274-1275, *Timante*)  
 Misero pargoletto, / il tuo destin non sai (III,5, ll. 1278-1279, *Timante*)  
 [...] Almen sapessi / qual rovina sovrasta (III,6, ll. 1289-1290, *Demofonte*)  
 Corri, cerca saper... Ma tu non m'odi? (III,7, l. 1304, *Creusa*)

<sup>32</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>33</sup> On the metaphor of blinding in Timante's monologue «Misero me! Qual gelido torrente» see especially ALBERTO BENISCELLI, *Felicità sognate: il teatro di Metastasio*, Genova, Il Melangolo, 2000, pp. 89-91 and ID., *Luci della pastorale ed ombre della tragedia nel trittico viennese: Demetrio, Olimpiade, Demofonte*, in *Il melodramma di Pietro Metastasio: la poesia, la musica, la messa in scena e l'opera italiana nel Settecento*, a c. di Elena Sala Di Felice e Rossana Cairra Lumetti, Roma, Aracne, 2001, pp. 233-265.

[...] S'altro non sai, / sfoga il duol che nascondi (III,7, ll. 1308-1309, *Creusa*)  
 [...] Mancava solo / che tremar si dovesse / senza saper perché [...] (III,8, ll. 1328-1330, *Creusa*)<sup>34</sup>

It is clear from our examples that the third act of *Demofonte* does not imply a single decisive peripeteia but rather a rapid series of non-decisive peripeteias or, better, of *coups de théâtre*.<sup>35</sup> The prison in which Timante lies is the set of the dramatic changes – first Demofonte's pardon, then the recognition of Dircea's identity – that alter the whole appearance of the hero's situation and that offer the opportunity for two sweeping monologues, equivalent to Alphonse's two monologues in the fourth act of *Inès de Castro*. The comparison evidences how the trait of paternal love, characteristic of Alphonse in La Motte's tragedy, is transferred in the libretto to the young hero, in whom it mingles with conjugal love, while the father and the king confront one another within Alphonse. Therefore we have a new structure in which an outburst caused by recognition replaces a sustained emotional dilemma. The recognition of Dircea's identity produces in Timante two shifts: one into knowledge, the other into familial relationships that are now a source of torment. This second movement is first expressed by soliloquy and then made visible by the characters' physical presence on stage. As we have already seen, the interplay of verbal and visual meaning is linked to climactic scenes; when suspense is at its height, the visual representation seconds the words, giving them added effect. Yet the visual register is not in *Demofonte*, as it is in *Inès de Castro*, the vehicle for an amazing yet plausible reconciliation. What we have is an appalling experience dramatized through the image of Olinto. The use of 'mute' children may be striking in tragedy but it is quite natural in *dramma per musica*. Most librettos that deal with the story of Andromaca, for instance, introduce her little son Astianatte (sometime the titular role) as a visible indicator of plot and meaning. Thus Metastasio, in having recourse to only one 'mute' role, is following a consolidated practice. If, however, an externalized dilemma is re-enacted with each of Astianatte's repeated appearances, Olinto is spared until III,5 and this cleverly delayed use of his physical presence on stage

34 Italics mine.

35 On the plurality of peripeteia as a widespread technique see JACQUES SCHERER, *La dramaturgie classique en France*, Paris, Nizet, 1950, pp. 83-90 and CAVE, *Recognitions* cit., p. 111.

brings to a climax the audience expectation that has been building up through previous verbal reference to paternal and maternal love. The relation to the traditional pattern becomes deeper in the 1735 libretto and score, where Olinto appears hand in hand with Dircea rather than with Adrasto, since Adrasto is missing from the list of *dramatis personae*.

Considering that the purpose of the soliloquy (III,4) and the succeeding confrontation (III,5) is to rehearse the same anguish about kinship, we should note that a cohesive structure is also generated from the repetition of words and concepts (the epithet «misero» enveloping Timante's and Olinto's destiny, the metaphor of blinding, the reversal of basic relationships, the opposite interpretation of the falling in love), presented in the dual form of a more fluent self-expression and animated dialogue reaching at times the tight exchange of stichomythia.

*Demofonte*, III,4, ll. 1206-1209

*Timante*

Misero me! Qual gelido torrente  
mi ruina sul cor! Qual nero aspetto  
prende la sorte mia! [...]

III,4, ll. 1211-1213

*Timante*

[...] Suocero e padre  
m'è dunque il re! Figlio e nipote Olinto!  
Dircea moglie e germana! Ah qual funesta  
confusion d'opposti nomi è questa.

III,4, ll. 1215-1217, 1222-1230

*Timante*

Fuggi, fuggi, Timante. Agli occhi altrui  
non esporti mai più. Ciascuno a dito  
ti mostrerà. [...]  
[...]

*Demofonte*, III,5, ll. 1278, 1282-1283

*Timante*

Misero pargoletto  
[...]  
Come in un punto, oh dio,  
tutto cambio d'aspetto!

III,5, ll. 1256-1259

*Demofonte*

E il padre?

*Adrasto*

E il figlio?

*Dircea*

E la tua sposa?

*Timante*

Oh dio

non parlate così. Padre, consorte,  
figlio, german son dolci nomi agli altri;  
ma per me sono orrori. [...]

III,5, ll. 1247, 1250-1255, 1261-1263

*Timante*

Dove, misero me, dove m'ascondo!  
[...]  
*Demofonte*  
Ma da chi fuggi?

*Timante*

Ah non t'avessi mai  
 conosciuta, Dircea. Moti del sangue  
 eran quei ch'io credevo  
 violenze d'amor. Che infausto giorno  
 fu quel che pria ti vidi! I nostri affetti  
 che orribili memorie  
 saran per noi! Che mostruoso oggetto  
 a me stesso io divengo! Odio la luce;  
 ogn'aura mi spaventa; [...]

*Timante*

Io fuggo  
 dagli uomini, da' numi,  
 da voi tutti e da me.

*Dircea*

Ma dove andrai?

*Timante*

Ove non splenda il sole,  
 ove non sian viventi, ove sepolta  
 la memoria di me sempre rimanga.

[...]

*Dircea*

[...] Deh per quei primi  
 fortunati momenti in cui ti piacqui...

*Timante*

Taci, Dircea.

*Dircea*

Per quei soavi nodi...

The soliloquy is constructed on sharp exclamations and questions constituting an adequate vehicle for the expressive potential that may be developed through orchestral accompaniment. Only at this decisive moment does Leo's 1741 score employ the device of *recitativo accompagnato*, whereas in 1735 the recitatives were all simple. An instrumental introduction descending through the diminished seventh marks the vocal entrance and announces the emotional tone of the situation (see Mus. Ex. 5). The exclamations are supported by chords and a figure filling in the long rests in the soprano line. Next we may observe that, when Timante exclaims to himself «Fuggi, fuggi, Timante» (see Mus. Ex. 6), there appears an impressive shift from minor to major and a restless vocal design, with the same rhythmic pattern as the line «Parti, parti, Dircea» in the next scene. Another point to be observed is the moment when Timante turns in his imagination to Dircea: «Ah non t'avessi mai / conosciuta Dircea! [...]». This receives another shift (avoided cadence) that leads into F minor (and then C minor) through the diminished seventh chord (see Mus. Ex. 7). The soliloquy reaches an acme towards the end, where the text presents verbal images («piè tremante» and «cento folgori») that indeed require imitative musical gestures in illustration of the concepts, such as the repeated semiquavers of the accompaniment and the typical ascending scale of demi-semiquavers of the violins in unison (see

Mus. Ex. 8). The instruments are here a medium for conveying Timante's feelings and poetic images, as well as functional partners in the dramatisation of the performer's skill. These means of expression are rooted in the theory of accompanied recitative itself. This recommends a musical technique of interruptions and effects that show the unpredictability of the character's experience and his/her contrasting feelings.<sup>36</sup>

The monologue lacks the expected closing aria. There follows a simple recitative that conveys the encounter of Timante and the other characters who have just come onto stage. The small expansions and contractions, in particular, are used to underscore the verbal and performing devices. Through the technique of repetition, Metastasio seems to choose the words and moments to which he wants to apply additional pressure, such as «guardalo» and «osserva». Dircea speaks these fervent exhortations to Timante, at the climactic point when Timante, Dircea and Olinto are the only ones performing and the child joins in the exchange with gestures that Dircea translates into words, probably to make them 'visible', as it were, to Timante's eyes. The image of Olinto's laughter has already occurred in 1,2, but there it produced the reverse effect on Timante. At the words «le pargolette palme» there is in the music a rest unrelated to the syntax (see Mus. Ex. 9). This is less the mechanical tendency to preserve the metric unit of the line than the opportunity to create dramatic space, to mark the verbal link with the beginning of the aria, *Misero pargoletto*.

The aria occurs here, after the scene structure produces the maximum effect from its delay. The relation of the fifth scene to the fourth rests on a series of references we have noted. In this context the recourse to the adjective «misero» to open both monologue and aria takes on its full importance as a kind of frame. The situation prompts Leo to use the key of F minor (see the transcription in Appendix 11). The wide musical figure that highlights «misero» usually renders gestures of address and may carry the *messa di voce*; here it may also express anxiety. Hence it has many echoes throughout the aria (bb. 16-17, 23-24, 26-27, 33-36, 44-45, 48-51, 61-62, 66-67, 88-89, 91-92, 94-95, 97-98), independently of the main accentuation on the first or second syllable, which sometimes occurs with small adjustments. The plain version only appears towards the end of the part A (b.

<sup>36</sup> See STEFANO ARTEAGA, *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano dalla sua origine fino al presente*, 1, Bologna, Trenti, 1783-1788 (rpt. Bologna, Forni, 1969), p. 49.

64), when the order of the first two lines is inverted (bb. 61-65): the words «il tuo destin non sai» come first on a long suspended cadence employing the additional effect of the augmented sixth.

At the vocal entrance, «misero pargoletto» (bb. 16-18), the melody tends to keep an almost fixed contour alternating the fifth with the sixth, while descending motion (of an octave) and repetition work towards underlining «il tuo destin non sai» (bb. 18-22), the tragic theme, as we have noted, of *not knowing* and *knowing*. Rests then mark the change of addressee from Olinto to the other characters. Musically, however, «Ah! non gli dite mai» is related to the opening. We find the same rhythmic pattern, the (now descending) returning note, the appoggiatura and the falling motion (bb. 23-25). The rising progression shows the more poignant minor second F-G flat (b. 27) pointing towards the subdominant B flat minor, the key in which the first vocal section closes, rather than the major second E flat-F (b. 24) towards the parallel A flat major. The violins anticipate the profile of the melody, that is in particular the descending diminished seventh interval high G flat down to low A (bb. 25-26). The second vocal section takes more or less the same path, including the harmonic instability and the diminished seventh interval that bars 48-52 derive from bars 23-28, but the punctuated figure of the second violins substitutes for the instrumental interruptions of bars 22 and 25. Here attention is drawn to the last line «qual era il genitor» through a substantial delay that the violins fill in. Bars 55-56 (and 71-72), moreover, place in a better focus the device employed in bars 29-30, that is the conflict between the high note and the strongest beat.<sup>37</sup> There are also close similarities between the initial and the middle section: the persistent wide musical figure of the opening and the rising progression of bars 94-99, which the anaphora of the pronoun «voi» probably suggests. The last musical figure of bars 100-104, however, seems to paint the word «terror» (through the change of the violins to low pitches, the homo-rhythmic and homophonic texture and the punctuated rhythm).

### *Conclusion*

I have argued at length the importance of verbal and visual aspects as a complex of relations which can be seen at work differently in both *Inès de Castro*

<sup>37</sup> See above p. 140.

and *Demofonte*, here with the additional register of the music. I have considered in this light the references to the models of La Motte and Tasso, which I have used to illuminate Metastasio's dramatic choices and his definition of the plot structure.

It has seemed important that at climactic moments *Inès de Castro* employs a dialectic between the word and the eye, with a gradual increase in tension realised, through the blood-stained sword (III,6) and Alphonse's externalised dilemma (Act IV), towards the criticised appearance of children on stage, which is the vehicle for reconciliation. *Demofonte* exploits the admirable effects of spectacular scenery at the end of the second act, in line with the operatic tradition. The third act recasts *Inès*'s visual denouement to an episode that is conveyed by speech: here the vividness of the words sets the scene before the eye. The repertory of visual and rhetorical devices is however deployed to dramatisé Timante's anguish about kinship through the image of Olinto (III,5), though this is not so much a vehicle for resolution as a full representation of emotions.

Another significant point has been to note how the claim of the libretto to tragic dimension (founded at least on the models of *Il re Torrismondo* and *Oedipus*) brings a system of references to the related concepts of recognition, reversal and ignorance, within a cohesive poetic structure. The text suggests a hidden level of meanings, and these, when finally unveiled, produce a complete reversal of the relationships that have been supposed to exist at the beginning. Hence it seems accurate to say that the issues of mode, genre and plot imply the delineation of characters, for example Dircea in relation / distinction to *Inès*, *Demofonte* to Alphonse, Timante to Dom Pèdre and Alphonse.

Finally, there are the further effects conferred by the music, its power to convey meanings and to determine the visual and emotional situation. Consider for example what I have called 'the thwarted escape' in *Inès*, and its translation into *Demofonte*. The French play employs a blood-stained sword to exteriorise a suspicion, a visual image that Dom Pèdre has killed his father. The affect that the scene evokes is clearly stated, «vous me glacez d'horreur». In the opera horror or, better, terror would seem to arise essentially from the 'sounds' of *Demofonte*'s aria, *Perfidi! già che in vita*, and is soon counter-balanced by its opposite, i.e. pity. In *La destra ti chiedo*, indeed, Leo employs a variety of musical figures and devices, making the listeners feel much compassion and shed tears before Timante's and Dircea's unhappy fate. Similarly, his most celebrated *Misero pargoletto* heightens



the moment of intense outburst and confrontation that occurs in 111,4-5. There are distinctions between the Neapolitan productions of 1735 and 1741, however intertwined they may have been originally by performance circumstances: in the former, the arias were assigned to Mancini, Sarro and Leo; the latter was the work of Leo, who rewrote the existing score almost completely, except for *La destra ti chiedo* and *Misero pargoletto*. It is not surprising that these were 'favourite songs' with the audience.

Dircea



Oh quan-te vol-te, Cre-du-la trop-po al dol-ce er-ror del ci-glio, Mi strin-si al petto il ge-ni - tor, il ge-ni-tor nel fi-glio!

Ex. 1: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), I,2, GB-Lbl, Add. 16043, pp. [21-22]

Dircea



San-ti nu - mi del cie - lo, Di - fen - de - te lo vo - i! Ti - man - te, a - scol - ta; Ti - man - te, ah per pie -

5 Timante Dircea Timante Dircea



tà... Vie - ni mia vi - ta, Vie - ni; sei sal - va. Ah che fa - ce - sti! lo fe - ci Quel che do - ve - a. Mi - se - ra



me! Con - sor - te, Oh dio, tu sei fe - ri - to! Oh dio, tu se - i Tut - to a - sper - so di san - guel

Ex. 2: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), II,9, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, pp. [135-136].

Cherinto



gli sde - gni suoi Cal - mò; s'in - te - ne - ri, pian - se con no - i.

Ex. 3: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), III,2, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, p. [211].

METASTASIO'S AND LEO'S *DEMOFOONTE* (1741)

Dircea

Il ca - so mio già no - to Pur - trop-po ti sa - rà; Dir-cea son i - o; Va - do a mo - rir; non ho de -  
lit - to. Im - plo - ro Pie - tà ma non per me. Sal - va, pro - teg - gi Il po - ve - ro Ti - man - te.

Ex. 4: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), 11,6, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, p. [79]

Violino I  
Violino II  
Viola  
Timante  
B.c.

Mi - se - ro me! Qual ge - li - do tor - ren - te

Ex. 5: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), 111,4, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, p. [249]

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Timante

B.c.

Ah qual fu - ne - sta Con - fu - si - on d'op - po - sti no - mi è que - sta! Fug - gi, fug - gi, Ti - man - te

Ex. 6: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), III,4, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, p. [252]

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Timante

B.c.

Le fu - rie in me tu rin - no - var ve - dra - i. Ah non t'a - ves - si ma - i Co - no - sciu - ta, Dir - ce - a!

Ex. 7: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), III,4, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, pp. [254-255]

METASTASIO'S AND LEO'S *DEMOFOONTE* (1741)

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Timante  
 O - dio la lu - ce; O - gni au - ra mi spa - ven - ta; al piè tre - man - te Par - mi che man - chi il

B.c.

suo!; stri - der mi sen - to Cen - to fol - go - ri in - tor - no;

Ex. 8: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), III,4, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, p. [257-258]

Dircea

Os - ser - va, os - ser - va Le par - go - let - te pal - me

Co - me sol - le - va a te, quan - to vuol dir - ti Con quel ri - so in - no - cen - te.

Ex. 9: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), III,5, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, p. [263]

APPENDIX I: L. Leo, *Demofoonte* (1741), II, 11, *La destra ti chiedo*, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, pp. [170-191]

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Dircea

Timante

B.c.

La de - stra ti chie - do, Mio dol - ce so - ste - gno, Per ul - ti - mo pe - gno D'a - mo - re e di fe, Per

Ah! Que - sto fu il se - gno Del no - stro con - ten - to; Ma

ul - ti - mo pe - gno D'a - mo - re e di fe.

sen - to ch'a - des - so L'i - stes - so non è, Ma sen - to ch'a - des - so L'i - stes - so non è.

Mia

METASTASIO'S AND LEO'S DEMOFOONTE (1741)

23

Ad - dio, spo - so a - ma - to. Che bar - ba - ro fa - to! Che leg - ge cru - del, Che  
vi - ta, ben mi - o. Che bar - ba - ro fa - to! Che le - ge cru - del, Che

33

leg - ge cru - del! Ben mi - o, spo - so a - ma - to. Ad -  
leg - ge cru - del! Mia vi - ta, ben mi - o. Ad -

41

di - o, ad - dio. Che bar - ba - ro fa - to! Che leg - ge cru - del! Ben mi - o, spo - so a -  
di - o, ad - dio. Che bar - ba - ro fa - to! Che leg - ge cru - del! Mia vi - ta,

FRANCESCA MENCHELLI-BUTTINI

ma - to. Ad - di - o, ad - di - o, ah! Che bar - ba - ro fa - to! Che leg - ge cru - del, Che  
 ben mi - o. Ad - di - o, ad - di - o, ah! Che bar - ba - ro fa - to! Che leg - ge cru - del, Che  
 leg - ge cru - del, Che leg - ge cru - del!  
 leg - ge cru - del, Che leg - ge cru - del!  
 Che at - ten - do - no i re - i da - gli a - stri fu - ne - sti, Se i pre - mi som que - sti Du -  
 Che at - ten - do - no i re - i da - gli a - stri fu - ne - sti, Se i pre - mi som que - sti Du -



METASTASIO'S AND LEO'S *DEMOFOONTE* (1741)

75

n'al - ma - fe - del, Se i pre - mi son que - sti Du - n'al - ma fe - del, Du - n'al - ma - fe - del, Se i pre - mi son que - sti Du - n'al - ma fe - del, fe - del, Du - n'al - ma - fe - del.

83

ma fe - del. La

*f*

Du capo

APPENDIX II: L. Leo, *Demofonte* (1741), III, 5, *Misero pargoletto*, GB-Lbl, Add. 16044, pp. [266-275]

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Timante

B.c.

8

16

*poco f*

*poco f*

Mi - se-ro par-go - let-to, Il tuo de-stin non sa - i, Il tuo de-stin non sa - i. Ah! Non gli di - te

METASTASIO'S AND LEO'S *DEMOFOONTE* (1741)

The image displays three systems of musical notation, each consisting of four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Bass) and two piano accompaniment staves (Right and Left Hand). The music is in a minor key, indicated by three flats in the key signature.

**System 1 (Measures 21-33):**  
 The vocal parts enter with the lyrics: "ma - i, Ah! Non gli di - te ma - i Qual e - ra il ge - ni - tor, Qual e - ra il ge - ni - tor. Ah!".  
 Dynamics include *f*, *poco f*, and *p*. There are also markings for *dr* (ritardando) and *tr* (trill).

**System 2 (Measures 34-41):**  
 The vocal parts continue with the lyrics: "Non gli di - te mai, Ah! Non gli di - te ma - i Qual e - ra il ge - ni - tor."  
 Dynamics include *poco f* and *f*.

**System 3 (Measures 42-49):**  
 The vocal parts conclude with the lyrics: "Mi - se-ro par - go - let - to, Il tuo de - stin non sa - i. Ah! Non gli di - te".  
 Dynamics include *poco f* and *p*.

50

ma - i, Ah! Non gli di - te ma - i, no, no, Qual e - ra il ge - ni -

55

tor, Qual e - ra il ge - ni - tor. Il tuo de - stin non sa - i. Mi - se - ro par - go - let - to

60

Ah! Non gli di - te ma - i, no, no, Qual e - ra il ge - ni -

METASTASIO'S AND LEO'S *DEMOFOONTE* (1741)

74

tor, Qual e - ra il ge - ni - tor, Qual e - ra il ge - ni - tor.

82

Co - me in un pun-to, oh di - o,

91

Tut - to cam-biò d'a - spet-to! Voi fo - ste il mio di - let - to, Voi sie - te il mio ter - tor,

FRANCESCA MENCHELLI-BUTTINI

100

*poco f*

*poco f*

*poco f*

Voi sie - te il mio ter - - - ror, il mio ter - rur.

*poco f*

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