

Place, Performance and Identity in Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*

ANTONIO CASCELLI*

Abstract: With its combination of gestures and music, instrumental sections, a narrator who occupies most of the composition, and two characters who sing for very short sections while acting and dancing for the rest of the piece, Monteverdi's *Combattimento* defies genre definition. Starting from Tim Carter's reading of the composition as a salon entertainment and responding to Suzanne Cusick's call for the untangling of *Combattimento's* multiplicity of meanings, this article investigates *Combattimento* in its ritualisation and performance of mutually defining relations that are mediated by the social and ideological implications of its immediate performance space, the salon – or *portego*, in Venetian dialect – the main entertainment hall of Venetian palaces. Using this as a key framework, the article explores the *Combattimento's* associations with Venice itself as the broader performance space. Within that context, the choice of a particular episode from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* for Monteverdi's composition – with its mixture of love and violence, assimilation and confrontation, personal identity and agency, history of winners and history of victims¹ – proves as crucial to seventeenth-century Venice, at the crossroads between Western and Islamic civilisations, as it does for today's culture.

Introduction

Spaces are not neutral frames with four walls offering an indifferent background to the actions they incidentally host; on the contrary, they enact a cultural function for the people inhabiting them, for their everyday life performances and for those performances that reserve a time and space apart from quotidian actions, such as theatre, concert, movies and so on. As Ken Hillis states, 'Places – marketplaces, universities, family rooms, nightclubs, malls, cathedrals – make exchange between people, and between people and things, possible.'² In doing so, the participants (both material and human) interact within a particular place and emanate elements of their own nature, each with meaning determined by the social relations that constitute them. Places allow a reconciliation between ourselves and the world, which is ritualised in the theatre (both as architecture and as performance), as the tangible surface of this relationship, where, in a network of reversibilities and as an osmotic

* Antonio Cascelli, Maynooth University, Co. Kildare, Ireland; Antonio.Cascelli@mu.ie.

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¹ Giovanni Carei, *La fabbrica degli affetti. La Gerusalemme liberata dai Carracci a Tiepolo* (Milan, 2010), 15. Original French edition, *Gestes d'amour et de guerre* (Paris, 2005).

² Ken Hillis, *Digital Sensations: Space, Identity, and Embodiment in Virtual Reality* (Minneapolis, 1999), 83.

process – performers become the duplicitous other of the audience and the audience becomes the duplicitous other of the performers.³

Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* is a fascinating example of how exchange and reversibilities may be put into action by a performance, especially in its original performance place. In the *Combattimento's* scene, extracted from the twelfth canto (stanzas 52–62 and 64–8) of Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata*, the duel between Tancredi, the Christian soldier, and Clorinda, the Muslim warrior he loved, ends with the death of Clorinda. Even though she had encountered Tancredi on several occasions before this scene, she had never shown any sign of returning his love. The scene takes place in a forest, an oft-used metaphor for a moment of crisis in life; one only needs to recall the opening lines of Dante's *Divina Commedia*: 'Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita, mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ché la diritta via era smarrita' ('Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark / For the straightforward pathway had been lost').⁴ But in the middle of the forest there is also a stream, a symbol of renewal, which will be used to baptise Clorinda, and as such it is a clear reference to the River Jordan and the baptism of Christ, but also to the episode of Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well. The fight is centred on the fact that Tancredi does not recognise his opponent because of the different armour she wears on this occasion, a disguise that hints at Clorinda's complex identity. Daughter to the Christian black queen of Ethiopia, she was abandoned by her mother, who was afraid that Clorinda's white skin could raise doubts about her paternity. She was entrusted to the Muslim servant Arsete, under the vow that he would baptise her. However, he did not fulfil the oath, and raised the child as a Muslim. Just a few scenes before the episode in question, Arsete – who had been visited twice by a spectral knight to remind him of his promise to baptise the girl – tells Clorinda the truth. Yet she ignores this, and sets forth to the enemy's field for the attack; when she has to make a detour to return to her own camp, she meets Tancredi. The two start a fight, whose depiction overlaps with the portrayal of an act of sexual intercourse. Tasso's depiction of the bond as that of bitter enmity, not love (see text below), sounds like a rushed addition to what would otherwise appear as a lover's grip. It is in the stanza depicting the final wounding of Clorinda that the overlapping of war and sexual intercourse becomes still more evident with Tasso's indulgent description of the blade's thrust into her fair breast. But dying here does not reveal the customary relation between death and orgasm; it is instead the actual dying of Clorinda as a consequence of this fight scene, whose portrayal as similar to sexual intercourse ultimately reveals an even more tragic event: the violence of a rape.⁵

³ Juhani Pallasmaa talks in Merleau-Ponty's terms of an 'osmotic relation between the self and the world', see *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester, 2005), 20. Pallasmaa cites Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, 'Translators' Introduction', in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, 1964), xii. See also Sue L. Cataldi and William S. Hamrick, eds., *Merleau-Ponty and Environmental Philosophy* (New York, 2007), 5.

⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, available online through the Gutenberg project: www.gutenberg.org/files/1001/1001-h/1001-h.htm (accessed 4 May 2015). If not stated otherwise, translations are by the author.

⁵ On the overlapping of the fight with sexual intercourse and its interpretation as a rape, see Careri, *La fabbrica degli affetti*, 101–26.

Tre volte il cavalier la donna stringe
 poi da quei nodi tenaci ella si scinge
 con le robuste braccia, e altrettante
 nodi di fier nemico e non d'amante.
 [...]

 Ma ecco omai l'ora fatal è giunta
 che'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve.
 Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta
 che vi s'immerge e'l sangue avido beve;
 e la veste che d'or vago trapunta
 le mammelle stringea tenere e lieve
 l'empie d'un caldo fiume. Ella già sente
 morirsi, e'l piè le manca egro e languente.

Thrice does the knight the woman grip
 break free from those tenacious bonds,
 in his strong arms, and as oft does she
 the bonds of bitter enmity, not love
 [...]

 But lo, the fatal hour has now arrived
 that to Clorinda's life must be put an end.
 He thrusts the blade straight into her fair breast
 where, immersed, it avidly drinks her blood.
 And her tunic, exquisitely gold-embroidered,
 that clings around her dainty, tender breasts,
 fills with a tepid stream. She knows at once
 that she must die, and staggers, weak and faint.⁶

Mortally wounded, Clorinda asks to be baptised, and when Tancredi takes her helmet off he remains speechless in front of his opponent, whom he now recognises as the woman with whom he is in love.

This complex episode offers the scenario for a series of reversibilities between the various agents and elements involved, all of which engage in a process of mutual definitions: the staged action, the Mocenigo family in whose house the performance took place, Venice and her relationship with the Ottoman world, at a particular time in Venetian history, that is, during the Counter-Reformation years and in the first decades after the 1606 interdict and the 'Spanish conspiracy' in 1618.⁷ Through *Combattimento* it is possible to read an attempt to define the civic sense of the city, as reflected in the vicissitudes of the Mocenigo family, caught between loyalty to Venice and a sense of respect to Rome and the Catholic Faith. The staging of *Combattimento* in a city other than Venice would have had a completely different meaning and the references to the city and the particular patrons involved would have been lost.⁸

Although various episodes from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* have been set to music by different composers, Monteverdi's composition is the only setting of the full *Combattimento* episode, including the fight scene, which allowed him to exploit the contrast between war, prayer and death as the ingredients of a narration that greatly

⁶ All translations of the *Combattimento* episode are by Avril Bardoni, from liner note to Claudio Monteverdi/Concerto Italiano-Rinaldo Alessandrini, *Ottavo Libro dei Madrigali* (Opus 111, 1998, OPS 30–196).

⁷ The Mocenigos were one of the most prominent patrician families in Venice. Their origins are not clear; the family could have come either from Aquileia or from Lombardy. It gave Venice seven doges, the first being Tommaso (1414–23) and the last Alvise IV (1763–78). Furthermore, the family provided the city with ambassadors, captains, churchmen, scholars and administrators. See <http://mocenigo.visitmuve.it/en/il-museo/museum/the-mocenigo-family/> (accessed 30 May 2017).

⁸ I do not think it is by chance that Monteverdi's suggestion to perform *Combattimento*, among other pieces, to celebrate the accession of Duke Vincenzo II in Mantua was not considered by Striggio, who had asked Monteverdi for some theatrical music to mark the celebration. See Monteverdi's letter of 1 May 1627 to Striggio in Tim Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre* (New Haven, 2002), 200.

moves human beings.⁹ The composition, according to Monteverdi, is in the representative genre; however, with its combination of gestures and music, instrumental sections, a narrator who occupies the largest sections of the composition and two characters who sing very briefly whilst acting for the rest of the piece, the *Combattimento* seems to defy genre definition.¹⁰ Is it an opera? The dominant presence of the narrator is at odds with this possibility. Is it a madrigal? Certainly it is nothing like the traditional polyphonic madrigals for four and five voices of the first five books. Paolo Fabbri and John Whenham simply reiterate Monteverdi's definition;¹¹ Eric Chafe focuses mostly on the music styles employed in the composition and the issue of contraries;¹² for Stefano La Via, *Combattimento* 'is the first and most faithful modern realisation, within a humanist and Christian register, of the fundamental dramatic principle codified by Aristotle in his Poetics';¹³ Carter locates it 'more securely in its original environment, that of a salon entertainment "per passatempo di veglia" during Carnival', as Monteverdi himself wrote in his preface, bringing into the salon the tradition of 'the cantastorie, the itinerant ballad-singers who, for a price, would recite the heroic deeds of mythical heroes to simple poetic and musical formulas, weaving and extending their narratives for as long as the money lasted'.¹⁴ Suzanne Cusick chose to read *Combattimento* through the multifaceted figure of Clorinda in relation to concepts of love in the Eastern and Western world and in terms of performative speech.¹⁵

Without rejecting these previous investigations, a return to *Combattimento* is necessary to unravel its complex and politically charged listening and performance conditions and how the composition dramatises 'the aspirations, needs and

⁹ See the preface to the *Eighth Book of Madrigals*, translated in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era* (New York and London, 1965), 53–5. For a list of stanzas from the *Gerusalemme liberata* set to music, see Antonio Vassalli, 'Il Tasso in musica e la trasmissione dei testi: alcuni esempi', in *Tasso, la musica, i musicisti*, ed. Maria Antonella Balsano and Thomas Walker (Firenze, 1988), 45–84. The central section of the episode with Clorinda's baptism and death was set to music as five-voice madrigals by Tiburtio Massaino in 1587 and Antonio Il Verso in 1619; Sigismondo d'India composed a solo-voice setting in 1621. See also Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 181, and tassomusic.org.

¹⁰ Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 188.

¹¹ Paolo Fabbri, *Monteverdi* (Torino, 1985), 248–52; John Whenham, 'The Later Madrigals and Madrigal-books', in *The New Monteverdi Companion*, ed. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (London, 1985), 243–5.

¹² Eric Chafe, *Monteverdi's Tonal Language* (New York, 1992), 234–45.

¹³ Stefano La Via, 'Le *Combat* retrouvé: les "passions contraires" du "divin Tasse" dans la représentation musicale de Monteverdi', in *La Jérusalem délivrée' du Tasse: poésie, peinture, musique, ballet; actes du colloque, musée du Louvre, 1996*, ed. Giovanni Careri (Paris, 1999), 111–12.

¹⁴ Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 193–4. Carter also provides an extensive review of different scholars' opinions about *Combattimento*, 172–3.

¹⁵ Suzanne Cusick, "'Indarno chiedi": Clorinda and the Interpretation of Monteverdi's *Combattimento*', in *Word, Image, and Song. Volume 1: Essays on Early Modern Italy*, ed. Rebecca Cypess, Beth L. Glixon and Nathan Link (Rochester, NY, 2013), 117–44. For a discussion of *Combattimento* in the context of the relationship between Venice and the Ottoman World, see also Clemens Risi, 'Claudio Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624 or 1625). A Christian-Muslim Encounter in Music?', in *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East. Performing Cultures*, ed. Sabine Schülting et al. (Farnham, 2012), 153–66.

functional rhythms' of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venice, especially as it regards its relation with the Ottoman world.¹⁶ This will then contribute to defining how we can perform and listen to *Combattimento* today in a political climate that, by reading current events in terms of war of religions and civilisations, continues to create an opposition between the Tancredis and Clorindas of today's world. The love story between the enemies Tancredi and Clorinda is not a simple variation on the theme of star-crossed lovers, such as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. There are actually no signs that Clorinda reciprocated Tancredi's love and the two of them are not just members of different factions within a city, they represent two different worlds, cultures and religions; they epitomise a conflict that cannot pass unobserved in today's world. I would like thus to investigate *Combattimento* through a series of mutually defining relations. Starting with the immediate performance space, the salon – or *portego*, in Venetian dialect – that is, the main entertainment hall of Venetian palaces, with specific ideological and social meanings, I will move beyond the idea of a salon piece to explore the associations with the Mocenigo family and Venice itself as the broader performance space, framed within carnival and Counter-Reformation culture. Within that context, the choice of this particular episode from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* for Monteverdi's composition – with its mixture of love and violence, assimilation and confrontation, personal identity and agency, history of winners and history of victims – proves as crucial to seventeenth-century Venice, at the crossroads between Western and Islamic civilisations, as it does for today's culture.

The *portego* and Mocenigo Palace and family

In the preface to the 1638 publication of *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, Monteverdi writes that the composition was first performed during the 1624 carnival in the palace of 'the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Signor Mozzenigo [Mocenigo]'.¹⁷ To discuss the political and social implications of this immediate performance space, I will draw on Monika Schmitter's important study on the *quadro da portego* in Venice, in which she unpacks how the salon of Venetian palaces, the paintings hanging on its walls and the other objects present in the salon interpenetrate and define each other.¹⁸ Situated on the main floor, the salon, or *portego*, is the most imposing and public room in a Venetian house, used to exhibit family identity and social status. The inherent ideologies of this social space imbue the events that take place within; as counterpart, the objects of material culture that are exhibited, such as paintings, racks of arms and armour, but also the events that occur there – dining banquets, dances, musical and theatrical performances – buttress the principles embedded by the place.¹⁹ As Schmitter reminds us, in the sixteenth

¹⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, 1977), 178, cited in Hillis, *Digital Sensations*, 84.

¹⁷ Cited in Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 170.

¹⁸ Monika Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego* in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Art', *Renaissance Quarterly* 64 (2011), 693–751.

¹⁹ Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 694.

century the *portego* becomes a 'charged, even a contested, room, a spatialization of anxiety over social change'.²⁰ The room that originally was the display space of racks of arms and armour 'symbolically [representing] the health of the republic and in particular its virility ... was in fact shifting from an emphasis on military masculinity, family heritage, and civic duty to the display of wealth and taste in sumptuous living and entertainment'.²¹ It is likely that arms were still displayed in the *portego* in the sixteenth century, but akin to family portraits, they were purely emblematic of the family ancestors who battled for Venice,²² and contributed to the perception of the *portego*, as suggested by Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, as 'a space of genealogical memory' in which 'temporal discontinuity was surmounted through the coexistence of the present and the absent'.²³

Among the objects on display in the salon, the so-called *quadro da portego* has a particular role in creating the social significance of the space. At the very least 'displayed in the *portego*', and most likely made specifically for it, the artefact was a painting whose horizontal format, with multiple figures and narrative subjects, could only be accommodated in the *portego*.²⁴ The following were the most commonly represented themes: the Madonna, sometimes together with other saints, and Christ dead or on the cross; dining scenes, especially those involving Christ; the prodigal son, Christ and the Samaritan woman, the Adoration of the Magi; all topics that, in relating directly to the room's entertainment functions, celebrate the themes of hospitality and charity. The dining banquets were reflected in the convivial scenes portrayed in the paintings, but the opulence and lasciviousness together with the effeminacy of the actual events were in contrast to the religious and moralising tone of the paintings, which therefore criticised the very same events hosted in the *portego* whilst simultaneously offering a justification and a religious elevation.²⁵ There are also a number of subjects that expose and confirm 'the more militaristic and civic-minded associations of the space ... representations of military forces and battles, such as "a sea armada", a "Turkish battle", and "the story of Troy"'.²⁶

We do not know which paintings were in the salon of Palazzo Mocenigo where *Combattimento* was first performed. However, the subjects discussed by Monika

²⁰ Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 703.

²¹ Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 702–3. Schmitter is referring to Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven, 2004), vii, 1–21.

²² Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 703. This aspect of the *portego* is also suggested by Francesco Sansovino in his *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare* (1581). Schmitter cites him in a translation by Patricia Fortini Brown, 'Behind the Walls: The Material Culture of Venetian Elites', in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore, 2000), 295–338.

²³ Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, 'Sopra le acque salse': *Espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rome, 1992), 406, cited in Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 703.

²⁴ Mauro Lucco states that the overall increase in the size of Venetian canvases over the course of the sixteenth century may in part be due to the growing interest in the *portego* paintings used as 'a method for semipublic self-aggrandizement'. Mauro Lucco, 'Sacred Stories', in *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting*, ed. David Alan Brown and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (New Haven, 2006), 99–146, cited in Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 700.

²⁵ Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 712.

²⁶ Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 715–18.

Schmitter were very common in the paintings hanging in the salons of Venetian palaces during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and offered a lens through which the aristocracy could identify itself. The same lens could encompass *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* as a counterpart in music to the genre of the *quadro da portego*, with which it shares a few themes. *Combattimento* ends with Clorinda's baptism, a form of hospitality connected to the theme of Christ with the Samaritan woman at the well, to whom Christ offers the water of eternal life. Like the Gospel episode, the scene from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* 'is a religious and moral tale about faith and redemption' and 'an image of a stranger requesting sustenance'.²⁷ Indeed, the role of water is important in the whole *Combattimento* episode, as it is for the whole city of Venice, connecting the fight scene with the combatants' first encounter earlier in the poem. The murmuring stream to which Tancredi runs to fill his casque with water to baptise Clorinda is in fact reminiscent of the brook both soldiers had approached in search of some solace after a battle between the two armies, when Clorinda took off her helmet, causing Tancredi to fall immediately in love with her.²⁸ But *Combattimento* is also a response to the more militaristic and civic-minded associations of the *portego*, as portrayed in paintings with military forces and battles. What is being dramatised in front of the audience is indeed a war and a murder scene that contradicts the tradition of having crime off stage, and at the same time suggests a repositioning of the gender boundaries and roles when Clorinda fully embodies her feminine self whilst embracing the Christian faith.

As a tool of genealogical memory, *Combattimento* reveals some reference to the Mocenigo family, one of the joint owners of the palace where the performance took place. Now one of the most famous and expensive hotels in Venice – the Hotel Danieli – Palazzo Mocenigo was first built in the late fourteenth century by the Dandolo family, which already counted four doges among their ancestors. The palace was renowned for its rich decoration and lavish social events, which continued throughout the seventeenth century, when it was split between the new owners, the Mocenigos and the Bernardos.²⁹

Among the members of the Mocenigo family, two should be remembered here: Tommaso Mocenigo (doge from 1414 to 1423) and Alvise I Mocenigo (doge from 1570 to 1577).

Tommaso Mocenigo commanded a crusading fleet that sacked Nicopolis [now Nikopol, Bulgaria] in 1396. Elected doge in 1414, he extended Venetian dominion over the Trentino, Friuli and Dalmatia. Yet his statesmanship was essentially pacific, and he is best remembered for a deathbed address in which he described with many details the flourishing commercial state of Venice and admonished against military adventures.³⁰

²⁷ Schmitter, 'The *Quadro da Portego*', 713.

²⁸ Torquato Tasso, *La Gerusalemme liberata*, Canto Primo, stanzas 46 and 47.

²⁹ www.danielihotelvenice.com/en/hotel-danieli-history (accessed 19 May 2014).

³⁰ www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/386882/Mocenigo-Family#ref158586 (accessed 19 May 2014).

The reign of Alvisè I was dominated 'by a new war against the Turks in which Nicosia and Famagusta were lost but in which the great naval victory of Lepanto [1571] was won'.³¹

For *Combattimento*'s patronage, however, we look to Girolamo Mocenigo, whom Monteverdi himself mentions as his special patron in the preface to the *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi*, the book that includes the score of *Combattimento*. A patron of the arts, Mocenigo climbed the ladder of civic engagements in Venice, became a member of the Senate in 1620 and adviser for inland affairs in 1624. He was also the dedicatee of a book of madrigals by the young composer Domenico Obizzi.³² We do not know if Girolamo Mocenigo expressly commissioned *Combattimento* from Monteverdi; according to Denis Stevens, it is likely that 'Monteverdi's artistic contributions to his patron's musical evenings at the time of Adriana Basile's sojourn in Venice may well have given rise to the commission'.³³ Whether this is the case or not, however, the relevance of the text for a member of an aristocratic family with several doges amongst its ancestors cannot be underestimated. As a performance in a space for genealogical memory, the involvement of Tommaso and Alvisè I Mocenigo in battles against the Turks certainly resonates within *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. In particular, the sense of charity and hospitality that emerges from the text, and common to the subjects of the *portego* paintings, is the religious framework for interpreting the politics ratified by both Tommaso and Alvisè I. In view of Girolamo's political ascent, *Combattimento* may have been a tool to present himself as fully endorsing the civic and militaristic values, and also the sense of hospitality and charity so important to Venice's identity and sanctioned by his ancestors.

As Monteverdi's patron, one cannot avoid noticing that Girolamo Mocenigo seems to have been attracted to forms of 'experimental' music. In addition to *Combattimento*, he commissioned Monteverdi's *Proserpina Rapita*, on a text by Giulio Strozzi, to be performed at the wedding of his daughter to Lorenzo Giustiniani in 1630, quite likely in the same salon as *Combattimento*. The event is now considered as the first full operatic staging in Venice, predating even the performance of *Ermione* of Pio Enea degli Obizzi in Padua in 1636, the event that traditionally has been considered as the one that contributed to create expectations towards the performance of the *Andromeda* in the Teatro San Cassiano in 1637.³⁴ The text of *Proserpina Rapita*, which retells the story of Pluto and Proserpina, belongs to the genre of works dramatising one of those 'mythical rapes associated with wedding entertainment destined to proclaim the power of love and to set proper bounds on female behaviour', already popular with courtly *intermedii*.³⁵ Even though the choice of this text

³¹ www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/386882/Mocenigo-Family#ref158586 (accessed 19 May 2014).

³² Denis Stevens, trans. and ed., *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, rev. edn (Oxford, 2008), 280.

³³ Stevens, *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, 280.

³⁴ Luca Zoppelli, 'Il rapto perfettissimo: un'inedita testimonianza sulla "Proserpina" di Monteverdi', *Rassegna Veneta di Studi Musicali* 3 (1987), 343–5 and Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 226–36.

³⁵ Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 227–8. Carter reminds us that the argument had been set to music by Salomone Rossi for the Mantuan *intermedii* in 1608 and 1622. Furthermore,

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was dependent on the particular occasion (the wedding of Girolamo's daughter), it seems there is a direct link to *Combattimento*, which also aims to set proper bounds on female behaviour, revealing a possible predilection for these kinds of texts on Girolamo's behalf.

An overview of Domenico Obizzi's madrigals from his first volume of compositions, dedicated to Girolamo Mocenigo, discloses an interest of the composer first, and of the dedicatee conversely, for the latest fashion in madrigal texts with a Marinist imprinting, a passion for concepts and contrasting images that the then young Obizzi manipulated in such a way to create almost obsessive repetitions of the same images, with nearly every verse repeated at least twice.³⁶ Among the authors of the texts in Obizzi's madrigals, Cesare Rinaldi later became a member of the Accademia degli Incogniti.³⁷ The presence of such a poet in the collection is a testimony that Girolamo was certainly not averse to the cultural climate that after the banishment of the Jesuits in 1606 from Venice 'had created opportunities for two generations of seriously playful, mostly young intellectuals, some of whom had libertine inclination' and who then later supported the development of Venetian opera through the Accademia degli Incogniti.³⁸ The performance of *Proserpina Rapita*, and likewise the performance of *Combattimento*, are both a precedent for the contribution of the academy in the development of opera in Venice. It would be possible to argue that the success of *Combattimento* prompted Mocenigo to suggest something more fully staged.

Last, as a further element to reinforce the links between *Combattimento* and the venue of its first performance, one should remember that both Torquato and Bernardo Tasso knew members of the Mocenigo family. Bernardo in fact was a good friend of Alvise Mocenigo (not the doge), who had translated into Italian Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and whom he mentions in the hundredth verse of his epic poem *L'Amadigi*: 'Il Mocenigo, che coi chiari accenti / Tragge a sè i monti, e fa arrestare i venti' (Mocenigo, who with clear accents / draws to himself the mountains and make the winds stop).³⁹ Torquato himself mentions Alvise Mocenigo in a letter to Vincenzo

Giulio Cesare Monteverdi wrote an opera on the same topic; now lost, it was performed in Casale Monferrato on 29 April 1611 under the auspices of Prince Francesco Gonzaga.

³⁶ For example in the madrigal *Al dolce mormorar*, with text by Cesare Rinaldi, the first verse – 'Al dolce mormorar' – is repeated twice, followed by the second verse – 'che fan d'un fonte le cadenti stille'. This structure is then repeated a second time, and so on, almost constantly until the end when the last two verses – 'E mai non scema di baciare/per baciare la voglia estrema' – are repeated five times ('At the sweet murmuring, that the falling drops of a source make ... and the desire of kissing never diminishes by kissing').

³⁷ <http://repim.muspe.unibo.it> (accessed 14 June 2016). See also *Le glorie degli Incogniti* (Venezia, 1648), 101.

³⁸ Edward Muir, 'Why Venice? Venetian Society and the Success of Early Opera', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36 (2006), 337–8.

³⁹ Bernardo Tasso, *Delle lettere di M. Bernardo Tasso, accresciute, corrette e illustrate*, ed. Anton Federigo Seghezzi and Pierantonio Serassi (Padova, 1733), 2: 144. See also Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri di Italia* ([Milan, 1819–82]), 14: table 8. Pompeo Litta published the first ten volumes (113 fascicules) from 1819 to 1852. His work was continued after his death and six extra volumes were published between 1852 and 1883, for a total of sixteen volumes (153 families distributed over 184 fascicules). The Mocenigo family is no. 134, in volume 14. See Litta, Pompeo. *Famiglie Celebri d'Italia*. A Finding Aid prepared by Paula B. Entin and Elizabeth Linder, Department of Rare

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Pinelli and was certainly emotionally involved in the offensive set by ecclesiastical authorities towards the use of vernacular in several genres of literature in Italy – such as chivalric poetry and short stories – and in philosophical and theological treatises. In this context, an important episode is constituted by the controversy of the Archbishop Filippo Mocenigo (more later), who in 1573, before leaving Venice for Rome, had written a treatise in the vernacular titled *Vie et progressi spirituali*.⁴⁰

Venice and Islam (Turks and renegades)

Relations with the Ottoman world had always been crucial for Venice, especially for commercial reasons. Even in the aftermath of the Battle of Lepanto, with the defeat of the Muslim forces, and in the conviction that the war would continue (in fact, consultations were being held to form a Holy League between Spain, the Papacy and Venice against the Turks), Venice maintained an attitude of self-protection and negotiated directly with the Turks towards a peace treaty.⁴¹ In this scenario, there is a process that needs to be considered and to which the text of *Combattimento* may allude: religious conversions to Christianity and to Islam. Contrary to how a current propagandist political view might try to portray the differences between these two cultural and religious worlds, their borders in the early modern Mediterranean area were more permeable, as Eric Dursteler has shown in retelling the story of women who crossed the political, social, geographical and cultural space between Venice and the Ottoman world.⁴² Among the stories reported, that of Maria Gozzadini, born Christian, caused a diplomatic incident because of the status of Gozzadini's husband, a high Ottoman official. She and her three daughters, raised as Muslims, left their home in Milos for Corfu (at the time part of the Venetian empire) and converted from Islam to Christianity to escape their emotionally and financially neglectful husband and father.⁴³ As Dursteler reports, the Venetians argued

‘that given the friendship [between Venice and the Ottomans] these sorts of passages of subjects from one side to the other [although officially not permitted] had been practiced by both without suspicion’ or concern, and that the case of Maria and her family ought to be considered in light of this long precedent of turning a blind eye to the border crossings between the two states.⁴⁴

Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library 2003. http://infoshare1.princeton.edu/rbse2/misc/Bib_968619.pdf (accessed 17 July 2017).

⁴⁰ Torquato Tasso, *Opere di Torquato Tasso colle controversie sulla Gerusalemme poste in miglior ordine*, ricorrette sull'edizione Fiorentina, ed. illustrate Professore Gio. Rosini, vol. 15 (Pisa, 1825), 74–5; Elena Bonora, ‘The Heresy of a Venetian Prelate: Archbishop Filippo Mocenigo’, in *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Context and Contextations*, ed. Ronald K. Delph, Michelle M. Fontain and John Jeffries Martin (Kirkville, MI, 2006), 221–4.

⁴¹ Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City* (New Haven, 2007), 189.

⁴² Eric R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, 2011).

⁴³ Dursteler, *Renegade Women*, 76–104.

⁴⁴ Dursteler, *Renegade Women*, 101. Dursteler is quoting from Senato Dispacci, Costantinopoli, b. 118, cc.648r–649v, 14 November 1637.

After lengthy discussions and debates between both parties, and between the Venetian officials in Corfu and the senate of Venice itself, the affair was settled financially, and Maria and her daughters were eventually free to settle down in Corfu and to become Christian.⁴⁵

Conversion to Christianity also had some institutional representation. Since 1557 the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni – supported by Venetian ecclesiastical authorities, Jesuits, lay patricians and colonial administrators – existed to protect, tutor and baptise its members.⁴⁶ Between 1590 and 1670 there were 1,300 catechumens; these ‘were subjected to monastic-style time discipline ... Male and female catechumens were socialised into normative gender roles, with absolute segregation between the sexes. Female catechumens were restricted to the premises and employed in cooking, spinning, and washing laundry.’⁴⁷ Most converts came from the Ottoman–Venetian frontier and from Mediterranean regions: some of them were soldiers in Venetian armies, but the ‘large majority of Muslim converts were domestic slaves in Venetian patrician and citizen households, where they might have served for years prior to their conversions’.⁴⁸

As a text with a character, *Clorinda* – who was born Christian, raised as a Muslim soldier and baptised upon her impending death – *Combattimento* is about the permeability of borders in the Mediterranean area and normative gender roles, with the final revelation to Tancredi that his opponent is a woman. Once more, as a tool of genealogical memory in the *portego*, the text may also allude to some family ties. In fact, members of the Mocenigo family were actually involved in the investigation surrounding Gozzadini’s conversion.⁴⁹ This happened in 1637, thirteen years after the performance of *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, but still one year before its official publication in the *Eighth Book of Madrigals*. Additionally, the Mocenigo family may have been involved with the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni: in 1626 a bequest of 4,000 ducats was left to the Pia Casa by the patrician Tommaso, indicated as son of Andrea Mocenigo.⁵⁰ Even if it is not confirmed whether Andrea had a son named Tommaso, significant in this record is the reference to the Mocenigo family for the support of this Venetian ecclesiastic institution dedicated to conversion.

La Gerusalemme liberata: Counter-Reformation and Carnival in Venice

Paolo Fabbri notes that, in comparison to other cities such as Rome, Ferrara and Modena, the presence of Tasso, especially *La Gerusalemme liberata*, in operas from

⁴⁵ Dursteler, *Renegade Women*, 103.

⁴⁶ E. Natalie Rothman, ‘Becoming Venetian: Conversion and Transformation in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean’, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 21 (2006), 41.

⁴⁷ Rothman, ‘Becoming Venetian’, 43.

⁴⁸ Rothman, ‘Becoming Venetian’, 44.

⁴⁹ Dursteler, *Renegade Women*, 76–104.

⁵⁰ Rothman, ‘Becoming Venetian’, 50. However, in vol. 14 of Litta, *Famiglie celebri d’Italia*, famiglia 134, no trace can be found of a Tommaso, son of Andrea Mocenigo, alive around 1620–40. Girolamo, also son of a Andrea Mocenigo, is indicated to have had three sisters, all of them nuns in various Venetian convents (Litta, table 10).

seventeenth-century Venice is quite scarce and asks whether the 'apparent ostracism of *Jerusalem* in a city like Venice, where the origin of opera is linked to the libertinism of the Accademia degli Incogniti, is maybe due to the strong connotation of the poem as post-Tridentine and Roman Catholic'.⁵¹ Although Monteverdi's *Combattimento* is dated before the flourishing of Venetian opera, the presence of such a text, entangled with politics and religion, requires an exploration that considers what strands of Venice's early seventeenth-century political and religious situation the work might refer to and how those elements are reflected in the *portego*. This will reveal an interesting scenario in which the Mocenigo family plays a remarkable role.

In the early decades of the 1600s, what would be the middle of the booming years of Counter-Reformation arts in Italy, Venice was engaged in a series of 'fights' against the Pope and the Imperial forces. The relationship with the Pope reached a low point with the interdict in 1605–07, whereas the relations with the Imperial forces were put to test with the Spanish Conspiracy in 1618.

The relationship between Venice and the papacy had always been on the brink of fracture. The interdict in 1606 'was the last in the series of major interdicts by which the papacy had attempted, since the high Middle Ages, to impose its political leadership on the Christian Republic'.⁵² The spirit of independence of Venice from Rome is a recurrent feature of the city's politics; in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, young families (including the Mocenigo) present in a growing number of institutions were increasingly more hostile to Rome than the old families.⁵³ Emitted by Pope Paul V, the interdict was caused by a series of measures that the Republic took during 1605 in order to exercise her control over the Catholic clergy; the most notable was the arrest of two clerics who bought some land without prior permission from the Venetian Senate.⁵⁴ In 1606 Leonardo Donà, an opponent to papal power, was elected doge. The Senate demanded loyalty from all the clergy in Venice and those who refused it, principally the Jesuits, were banned from the city. The situation threatened to evolve into a war. Spain tried first to mediate with the ambassador to Venice, Francesco de Castro, but the attempt failed, and it was thanks to the action of the French cardinal François de Joyeuse that in the end the interdict was lifted in 1607.⁵⁵ The two clerics were freed but the Jesuits were still banned from Venice until 1656.

The conflicts around the interdict mark a change of attitude in the city towards a more pronounced sense of liberty. Venice was among the first Italian cities to adopt the Tridentine decrees in 1564, among which were those about the veneration of images. Moreover, the apostolic visit of the nuncio Lorenzo Campeggi and the

⁵¹ Paolo Fabbri, 'Tasso e la sua fortuna musicale a Venezia', in *Formazione e fortuna del Tasso nella cultura della Serenissima*, ed. Luciana Borsetto and Bianca Maria da Rif (Venezia, 1997), 252.

⁵² William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty* (Berkeley, 1968), 340.

⁵³ On the distinction between old and young families in Venice, see David Chambers and Brian Pullan, eds., *Venice. A Documentary History 1450–1630* (Oxford, 1992; reprint Toronto, 2009), 26–7, fn. 42.

⁵⁴ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Worlds of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770* (Cambridge, 1998), 108.

⁵⁵ Gino Benzoni, *Venezia nell'età della controriforma* (Milan, 1973), 76–8.

Bishop of Verona Agostino Valier in 1581 must be read in the context of a process of post-Tridentine normalisation of Venice and attempts at disciplining the Venetian clergy.⁵⁶ The reaction against the interdict then gave strength to the more liberal energies already circulating in the city. The absence of Jesuits, for example, is very important for the development of theatre and opera in the city, because they represented ‘the most vociferous anti-theatre lobby’, which had previously heavily influenced the Council of Ten in maintaining ‘vigilance over the performance of comedies, whether in private courtyards, palaces, or public theatre’.⁵⁷ A climate of ‘relatively free-speech [and] open criticism of Counter-Reformation papal policy’ in the long term merged together with ‘libertines and religious sceptics ... from all over Italy ... wandering aristocrats, displaced priests, and speculative thinkers’ into the *Accademia degli Incogniti*.⁵⁸

The years leading to the interdict saw three members of the Mocenigo family involved in a series of rather noteworthy events, which might bare critical aspects about the relationship between the Mocenigo family and the pope. The closest event and the most directly related to the interdict is the participation of Giovanni Mocenigo, uncle of Monteverdi’s patron, Girolamo, with the selected group of senators to honour Camillo Borghese immediately after his election as Pope Paul V, in the spring of 1605. As Benzoni reminds us, even though the pope demonstrated gratefulness, it was only one of a series of diplomatic but ‘ostentatious courtesies’, which kept hidden a growing animosity between Venice and Rome.⁵⁹ A few years earlier, in 1602, a different member of the family (also named Giovanni) denounced Giordano Bruno to the Holy Office, an action that led to the final accusation of Bruno’s heresy. Further back still, Giovanni’s uncle, the Archbishop Filippo Mocenigo, also cousin of the ruling doge Alvise I Mocenigo (1570–7),⁶⁰ was subject to several trials for suspicion of heresy because of his reputation as defender of the value of philosophical knowledge and for having published a treatise on the main tenets of faith in vernacular.⁶¹ Only in 1583 the ‘Pope declared that Mocenigo was neither a heretic nor suspected of heresy’.⁶²

We can only suppose, of course, that the experience of Filippo Mocenigo, even the possibility that he may have been considered an heretic, remained imprinted in the memory of the family and that any action which followed – from Giovanni’s condemnation of Giordano Bruno to the money left to the *Pia Casa dei Catechumeni* – might be considered as an attempt to reaffirm the final absolution granted to Filippo and the general orthodoxy of the entire Mocenigo family. At the very least, the

⁵⁶ Fabrizio Biferali, *Paolo Veronese tra Riforma e Controriforma* (Roma, 2013), 92–3. Biferali reminds us that the apostolic visit was solicited by the Archbishop of Milan Carlo Borromeo, who stayed in the Venetian territories in 1580.

⁵⁷ Muir, ‘Why Venice?’, 337 and 348.

⁵⁸ Muir, ‘Why Venice?’, 332.

⁵⁹ Benzoni, *Venezia nell’età della controriforma*, 67.

⁶⁰ In addition to this, Archbishop Filippo Mocenigo’s uncle, Andrea, was Girolamo’s own great-grandfather. See Litta, *Famiglie celebri d’Italia*, tables 9, 10 and 11.

⁶¹ Bonora, ‘The Heresy of a Venetian Prelate’, 215–16.

⁶² Bonora, ‘The Heresy of a Venetian Prelate’, 225.

Mocenigos emerge as a young family, fully loyal to Venice's civic conscience, but also fully aware of the responsibility towards Catholicism.⁶³

Within the walls of the *portego* thus *Combattimento* may indeed be read as a heavily imprinted post-Tridentine text which reaffirms the Mocenigo family's 'loyalty', at least at face value, to the papacy, exactly like a few years earlier, Giovanni took part to the diplomatic envoy to honour Pope Paul V. Beyond the border of the *portego*, Monteverdi's composition acts in two ways. From the textual point of view, that of Tasso is a post-Tridentine, more conservative, pre-interdict text – though it ultimately highlights the contradictions of the Counter-Reformation scenario. From the musical point of view, however, it contains progressive potential. Together with the text of *Proserpina Rapita* in 1630 (whose author, Giovanni Strozzi, was a member of the Accademia degli Incogniti), *Combattimento* provides the exploratory and carnivalesque territory of what later will become Venetian opera. Furthermore, the work marks what Muir describes as '[t]he shift from comic drama [popular in the years pre-Interdict] to serious drama with music' and consequently 'a shift in the taste of the theater-going public'.⁶⁴ Once the Accademia degli Incogniti was established, the more traditional texts lost their appeal, leading the way to more progressive and Incogniti-inspired librettos and adaptations.

But to complete the scenario, one more incident should be considered: the supposed attempt of Spain, through the viceroy of Naples and the Spanish Ambassador to Venice, to take complete control of the Republic. The episode, known as the Spanish Conspiracy in 1618, is a convoluted series of events. It is in fact difficult to untangle the facts and the characters involved, and to get a clear idea of who did what and on behalf of whom through the numerous and contradicting sources.⁶⁵ For Richard Mackenney 'there is no single decisive piece of evidence to link [any of the characters supposedly involved] to what is known as the "Spanish" conspiracy, but there is evidence of a conspiracy against Venice, and of a conspiracy to ensure that the Spaniards were made to look responsible for'.⁶⁶ However confusing, the episode does mark a significant development in the history of Venice's self-fashioning, in which Venetian historian Paolo Sarpi played a major role.⁶⁷ During and after the interdict, Venice's image was that of a city defending the Republic's independence and religious autonomy against

⁶³ Indeed Venetian's anti-papal politics was not anti-Catholic.

⁶⁴ Muir, 'Why Venice?', 348. It was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* would become a much more popular subject in opera librettos when the libertine ethos and tones of the genre softened with the Accademia degli Imperturbabili in 1657 (see Muir, 'Why Venice?', 350) and the operatic genre stabilised its rules and conventions. In this context, composers and librettists focus on comic and heroic/martial aspects, particularly after the failed siege of Vienna in 1683; these episodes are enriched with further love intrigues, sometime unknown to the original story, and with the most important of all the conventions, the happy ending. See Fabbri, 'Tasso e la sua fortuna musicale a Venezia', 251–8.

⁶⁵ Richard Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" Myth, Legend, and the "Spanish" Conspiracy against Venice in 1618', in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore, 2000), 197. See also John Jeffries Martin, 'The Venetian Territorial State: Constructing Boundaries in the Shadow of Spain', in *Spain in Italy. Politics, Society, and Religion. 1500–1700*, ed. Thomas James Dandeleet and John A. Marino (Leiden, 2007), 227–48.

⁶⁶ Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" , 208–9.

⁶⁷ Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" , 187.

Rome's Counter-Reformation dogmatism. At the same time, in the rest of Europe a Machiavellian attitude towards power triumphed; simulation and dissimulation were ordinary politics everywhere. Reason of state, the possibility to act in every possible way to reinforce the dominion of the state, became part of monarchies' lives throughout Europe.⁶⁸ In this political scenario, the Spanish had always mistrusted the republic since Venice's withdrawal from the Holy League against the Turks.⁶⁹ It was by placing leverage on this mistrust that Sarpi manipulated the sources to be sure that the Spaniards (the Spanish Ambassador in Venice, the marquis of Bedmar, and the viceroy of Naples) would be considered the instigators of the conspiracy, even though, as Mackenney argues, there is no smoking gun to tell us without doubt that this is the truth. In order to defend the myth of Venice, the free republic, against the rest of Europe, Sarpi does not hesitate to behave in a manner appropriate to the idea of the reason of state.⁷⁰ But this, for Mackenney, should be read against a 'process of redefinition of the public and private spheres in the years around 1600', leading us to reconsider the myth of the city itself. In Venice, in fact, there was never a clear, definite distinction between public and private which were unified by the strong presence of the sacred dimension⁷¹ – of which the *Quadro da Portego* and *Combattimento* are clear examples with their representation of sacred rituals in a space of secular entertainments. There were furthermore numerous institutions – confraternities, parishes, guilds – which functioned in the semi-public sphere and acted as intermediaries between the state and the private, allowing an identification with the state rather than a subjugation. This process of reinforcing the free republic against the pope and then Spain in the years leading to the interdict thus brought Venetian officials to 'a sort of sacrifice of the private to the public', reducing the space of the semi-public and asking for people to be subjected to the state. To preserve the identity of the republic, the private was totally absorbed into the myth of the free state. This in turn mirrored the same secretive ways common to absolutist monarchies in the rest of Europe, as exemplified by Sarpi, who did not hesitate to manipulate facts to suit the political agenda.⁷²

The episode of Tancredi and Clorinda has no immediate connections with the Spanish Conspiracy (although the dedication in 1638 of the *Eighth Book of Madrigals* to

⁶⁸ Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" 186.

⁶⁹ Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" 188.

⁷⁰ In a report to the state, still today attributed to Sarpi, he clearly presents the Viceroy of Naples as the main instigator of the conspiracy. In a later account, which he published anonymously, he sustained that the viceroy Ossuna had been vocal about his intention to attack the republic. But all this is based on rumours as the language used in the account indicates: 'it was known for certain', 'more likely to be true', these are in fact very common expressions used by Sarpi, indicating once more that he had no proof to corroborate his statements. But he did not have any problem in recognising as false rumours the possibility that the conspiracy might have been organised by 'Frenchmen and Dutchmen acting as private individuals'. Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" 202–6. For Sarpi's report to the state, see Mackenney's reference to Eugenia Levi, 'Per la congiura contro Venezia nel 1618: una "relazione" di Fra Paolo Sarpi', *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 17 (1899), 5–65. For Sarpi's anonymous publication, see Paolo Sarpi, *La repubblica di Venezia, la casa d'Austria e gli Usocochi aggiunta e supplemento all'istoria degli Usocochi, trattato di pace ed accomodamento*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi and Lusia Cozzi (Bari, 1965), 139–415.

⁷¹ Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" 190.

⁷² Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?'" 191.

the Habsburg emperor indicates the willingness to confirm strong ties with his political power);⁷³ however, if considered in this context, the depicted fight in the work is the epitome of the dilemma between 'dovere' and 'desiderio', between reason of state and the sacrifice it requires of the private reason exemplified by Tancredi baptising Clorinda, between war and love (to echo Monteverdi's title to his collection of madrigals). But the contamination with each other's boundary leads to catastrophic consequences, which get staged in the middle of the carnival season.

Several scholars have investigated the centrality of carnival to the development of opera in Venice. For Eleanor Selfridge-Field carnival was 'a state of mind ... commonly portrayed as a period of wild and wanton abandon' particularly during the last day of the period.⁷⁴ In Wendy Heller's words, 'Carnival is the link between the theatricalization of Venice on the streets and the management of her mythology on the stage ... In some respects, carnival made possible the dynamic tension between Venetian liberty and conservatism.'⁷⁵ As a performance in the midst of carnival, precisely in the week of greatest frenzy,⁷⁶ *Combattimento* is inevitably entangled with those aspects of carnival culture described by Victor Turner, for whom carnival is a liminoid activity 'with a stamp of liminality ... cultural debris of some forgotten liminal ritual'.⁷⁷ Liminality is the main component of 'tribal societies', where it forms an integral and required performance of a specific activity (such as rites of passage), when the dissolution of order creates a more fluid and transformable situation, to the point it is hardly possible to distinguish the difference between work and play.⁷⁸ It is through this moment of liminal suspension and uncertainty that an individual can forge a passage to a new status and solve their crisis. Liminoid is, on the contrary, a component of industrial societies where the rite of passage is no longer able to fulfil its original role to resolve a crisis, and where play and

⁷³ It is worth noting that Sarpi's anonymous account (see footnote 69) is also part of a text about a peace treaty with the Austrian Habsburg empire.

⁷⁴ Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season. Science, Culture, and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice* (Stanford, 2007), 106.

⁷⁵ Wendy Heller, *Emblem of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley, 2003), 7.

⁷⁶ In 1624 the height of carnival began on Quinquagesima Sunday (18 February) and continued until Shrove Tuesday (20 February). See Stevens, *The Letters of Monteverdi*, 279–80.

⁷⁷ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York, 1982), 55.

⁷⁸ Work and play are core concepts in Victor Turner's anthropological investigations. Their difference and division are at the centre of the definition of modern societies, where rituals are relegated to decisions of the individuals. Work is the result of the social contract that keep a society together; play and leisure occupy a different time and place from work and are dominated by free choice. See Sharon Rowe, 'Modern Sports: Liminal Ritual or Liminoid Leisure?', in *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. Graham St John (New York, 2008), 141. 'For "work" is held to be the realm of the rational adaptation of means to ends, of "objectivity," while "play" is thought of as divorced from this essentially "objective" realm and, in so far as it is its inverse, it is "subjective," free from external constraints, where any and every combination of variable can be "played" with.' See Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 30–4. An example of this could be the development of theatre in Western societies. The initial status of religious rituals, like the dramatisation of the passion of Christ within Easter liturgical celebration, make them an integral part of the society built around the ritual that only later will release those aspects of play and pleasure, which develop into independent forms of spectacles.

performances are completely separated from work, providing the platform for a series of liminoid genres that create a break in the continuous dynamic of society – such as literature, drama, sport and so on.⁷⁹

Combattimento itself is a performance on the borders between the liminal and liminoid. As a liminal experience, it allows a ‘ludic’ re-construction of the constituent elements of Venetian culture.⁸⁰ However, it distances itself from the liminal and liminality because it does not represent what Turner calls ‘anti-structure’ – that is, rites of passage that in their anti-structural function stand against the pre-existing structure.⁸¹ Clorinda’s baptism, as a represented rite of passage, only suggests an anti-structure that is not brought to its conclusion with the disbanding of normative social structure.⁸² As a liminoid experience, it is a play that, like opera, is generated ‘in times and places apart from work’, it is ‘experimental in character’, it is ‘more like a commodity’, it is ‘an individual product’, ‘a ludic offering placed for sale on the “free market”’,⁸³ and as such ‘was seen and heard alongside fireworks, games, mock battles, street dances, and improvisatory theatre’, to which *Combattimento* does refer in several ways.⁸⁴

As such, the episode of *Combattimento* is a plot that exists between the levels of signification expressed so far whilst reconstructing them in a ludic way in a dialogue with the social dimension of the *portego*: tension between private reason, ‘desiderio’ and liberty on the one hand (Tancredi’s unrequited love for Clorinda) and reason of state, ‘dovere’ and conservatism (Tancredi forced to fight whom he believes to be his enemy) on the other hand. So, *Combattimento* is not only connected to what was hanging on the walls of the *portego*, but also reflects and forecasts a series of elements outside Mocenigo’s palace, including the interdict, the Spanish Conspiracy, the early flourishing of Venetian opera and its connection to carnival.

The reconstruction of the elements constituent of Venice’s carnival culture starts already with *Combattimento*’s performance, all of a sudden, after a few madrigals without gestures and the music coming from other rooms.⁸⁵ It recreates the effect of street performances in the salon: like someone walking among the alleys of Venice during carnival could turn a corner and find unexpectedly a street performance,

⁷⁹ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 34. In his distinction between liminal and liminoid, Turner states that the latter is typical of ‘societies with “organic solidarity,” bonded reciprocally by “contractual” relations, and generated by and following the industrial revolution, though they perhaps begin to appear on the scene in city-states on their way to become empires ... and in feudal societies ... But they first begin to develop in Western Europe in nascent capitalists societies’ (p. 53). As such, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venice is a society halfway through its trajectory towards capitalism, a society in which play and work start being differentiated. In particular the development of opera as a form of ‘mass’ entertainment points to the modern idea of play as an activity that occupies a different time and place from work.

⁸⁰ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 28.

⁸¹ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 27–8.

⁸² Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 28.

⁸³ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 53–4.

⁸⁴ Heller, *Emblem of Eloquence*, 7.

⁸⁵ See Monteverdi’s Preface to the *Eighth Book of Madrigals*, cited in Carter, *Monteverdi’s Musical Theatre*, 170.

Mocenigo's guests would experience a sudden performance, the acting itself of the singers and musicians, from the other room. Therefore, not only does the *Combattimento* refer to the *cantastorie*, but it also does actually bring carnival inside Mocenigo's palace. It is a private staging of carnival within carnival season.⁸⁶

The reconstruction continues with the fight between Clorinda and Tancredi, which is a direct but at the same time highly problematised representation of what in the street is a more straightforward contest of Virtue vs Vice, characterised as Christian virtue and Heathen vice.⁸⁷ But the rivalry between Tancredi and Clorinda refers also to those 'popular entertainments, featuring ritualized rivalries between inhabitants of different districts of the city and of the Veneto, which were public, and noble ones which were private'.⁸⁸ Tasso's description of the two combatants who were getting closer and closer to each other 'a passi tardi e lenti, come duo tori gelosi e d'ira ardenti' ('with slow steps / like two rival bulls inflamed with fury'), might even evoke a visual assonance with the tradition of the decapitation of three bulls in the courtyard of the ducal palace. Last, the two protagonists' fight evokes the tradition of the 'war of fists'.⁸⁹ Not to mention that Clorinda in disguise as a man reminds us of the fact that during carnival 'Noblewomen sometimes disguised themselves as men (sometimes in fact as priests) and gained access to otherwise forbidden venues.'⁹⁰

In the end, however, the liminoid aspects of *Combattimento* seem to return to liminality because the performance does 'elicit loyalty and is bound up with one's

⁸⁶ See Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 193–4. In her association of *Combattimento* with carnival, Cusick suggests the possibility that, by adopting Jean Toscan's lexicon of erotic double entendres, the text might be translated in a carnivalesque way so that 'some passages emerge perilously close to the border between the ribald and the obscene'. According to this, Clorinda's last words would be translated as: 's/he seemed to say: "The vulva opens, I go the normal way"'. See Cusick, "'Indarno chiedi'", 137–8. Cusick is drawing here on Jean Toscan, 'Le carnaval du langage: Le lexique érotique des poètes de l'équivoque de Burchiello à Marino (XVe–XVIIe siècle)', PhD thesis, Université de Paris III (1987). This is indeed a fascinating reading, and though I understand the possibility of turning upside down traditional interpretations of a text during carnival, the time indeed when social constraints are ridiculed and loosened, I am not fully convinced by Cusick's interpretation. When filtered through such a specific and detailed erotic interpretative grid, like that suggested by Toscan, the reading of any text risks becoming too schematic and artificial. If we start applying it without any clear criteria, almost every text then is susceptible to an 'obscene' interpretation. For a discussion about what criteria should be considered when applying Toscan's lexicon, see Federico Della Corte, 'Ventanni dopo. Appunti in margine a "Le carnaval du langage"', *Lingua e Stile* 3 (2004), 227–48; the criteria are listed on 248.

⁸⁷ As Selfridge-Field observes, 'The theme of Christian conquest – the *raison d'être* of the Crusades – was the fundamental one in Venetian culture. Its symbolical representation atop the Orologio justified the temporal existence of the Venetian Republic. It figured in the background of many Venetian operas.' Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season*, 106. See also, in the same book, the section on civic clocks, 56–7.

⁸⁸ Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season*, 134.

⁸⁹ The war of fists was an annual event during which teams from different areas of Venice, the *sestiere* and the *arsenale*, fought with pointed canes to establish their dominance over the Ponte San Barnaba. An annually ritualized form of violence, which, in its liminal aspect, served to strengthen local identity. See Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 38, 211–13. Though Tancredi and Clorinda fight with their swords, there is at least one moment when Tancredi grips Clorinda with his own arms and hands.

⁹⁰ Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season*, 135–7, fn 35.

membership or desired membership in some highly corporate group', which is one of the main features of liminality.⁹¹ That is, it creates a sense of community for the aristocratic families attending the event in Mocenigo's palace; on a pair with the *quadri da portego*, it lets transpire aspects of the relationship of the Mocenigo to Venice, and by reflection, to Rome. Ultimately, Monteverdi's dedication of the *Eighth Book of Madrigals* to Ferdinand III indicates allegiance to the highest 'corporate' group of the time.

'Amico hai vinto'

The question at this point is what story does *Combattimento* tell within this social, cultural, political and geographical web? Published in 1581, Tasso's text, even in its celebration of the first crusade (1096–9), does not show those propagandist traits of texts and performances put in place in the years after the victory at Lepanto (1571) when, for example, during the processions through Venice, Turkish people were portrayed in the shape of slaves, prisoners in chains, or in allegorical figuration where 'two young men representing Hope and Charity were then followed by the figure of Faith trampling on the Turkish serpent'.⁹² As Paolo Preto reminds us, quite likely Tasso was aware of the ambiguous relation between Venice and the Turks, with Venice always interested in defusing possible contrasts. In his poem 'he uses a terminology – "empi, gran tiranno, iniqua setta" – that he had derived almost verbatim from medieval and modern Christian literature ... that incited a crusade against the *infedeli*'.⁹³ The Muslim 'other' in the poem, and particularly in *Combattimento*, is not ridiculed.⁹⁴ Sometimes the Muslim forces are depicted with accents of 'negative heroism that still assign to them some grandiose quality'.⁹⁵ Clorinda is the object of Tancredi's fascination, and Monteverdi's music invites the audience to respond in a very emotional way to her death. The tears at the end of the performance, which Monteverdi mentioned in the preface, are in their empathic impact an amplification of Venice's own sense of charity and hospitality.⁹⁶

The episode becomes in the end an exposure of the Crusade's contradictions in the contrast between the 'tremendum fascinosum, the history of winners with its ideological weight and its opposite, the tremendum horrendum which testifies the tragic fate of victims (Christians and Muslims) of the violence of history, of war and

⁹¹ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 55.

⁹² Fenlon states that 'the "high art" that celebrates the battle, even in the 1570s, often exploits an iconography that largely excludes the satirical caricatures of the popular woodcuts and verses'. *The Ceremonial City*, 188.

⁹³ Paolo Preto, 'Tasso, Venezia e i Turchi?', in *Formazione e fortuna del Tasso nella cultura della Serenissima*, ed. Luciana Borsetto and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Venice, 1997), 249.

⁹⁴ Although written much later than *La Gerusalemme liberata*, we should not forget that Doge Nicolò Contarini in his *Historie Venetiane* was impressed with the relationship between the sense of state and the sense of religion in the Islamic world and viewed it with sympathy. See Benzoni, *Venezia nell'età della controriforma*, 135–7.

⁹⁵ Franco Cardini, 'Torquato Tasso e la crociata', in *Torquato Tasso e la cultura estense*, ed. Gianni Venturi (Firenze, 1999), 623.

⁹⁶ See Monteverdi's Preface in Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 170.

of love'.⁹⁷ To place Clorinda and Tancredi as victim and winner does not consider Tancredi's own reaction (speechless, incapable of forgiving himself for what he has done); it would perpetuate through violence a conflicting relationship. If, instead, we regard both of them as victims of history, we need to examine the discourses through which they can be understood as such. In doing so, the performance of the *Combattimento* becomes the site 'which probe[s] a community's weaknesses, call[s] its leaders to account, desacralize[s] its most cherished values and beliefs, portray[s] its characteristic conflicts and suggest[s] remedies for them, and generally take[s] stock of its current situation in the known "world"'.⁹⁸

As a performance on the threshold between liminality and liminoid, in which Tasso and Monteverdi were able to present the structural values of their societies thorough a carnivalesque eye, *Combattimento* becomes the site of a critical history in which, citing Ricœur's discussion of Nietzsche, the 'present is not the last instance of a complete history. On the contrary it is the performance, whose energy inaugurates a history that still needs to be done,'⁹⁹ a history that interrogates not only Monteverdi's contemporaries but also the current Western civilisation whose cultural values are grounded in artistic enterprises such as Monteverdi's composition.

The section that grants us access to the site of critical history is Clorinda's third intervention, 'Amico hai vinto', the pivotal moment of the entire composition from both the narrative and the musical points of view, and also the tangible surface that reveals the reversibilities between Clorinda, Tancredi, the Testo and the audience, all performing their roles in the *portego*. Fatally wounded, Clorinda asks Tancredi, still unaware of her identity, to baptise her.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Amico hai vinto: io ti perdon ... perdona tu ancora, al corpo no, che nulla pave, a l'alma sí: deh, per lei prega, e dona battesmo a me ch'ogni mia colpa lave.</p> | <p>Friend, you have won. I forgive you. You forgive as well, not my body, which is fearless, but for my soul; oh pray for her, and give baptism to me that cleanses all my sins.</p> |
|--|--|

Clorinda's main concern for her soul and not for her body realises a split between body and soul and reflects the history of winners at work in what Judith Butler would describe as a 'normative heterosexuality which shapes a bodily contour that oscillates between materiality and the imaginary'.¹⁰⁰ Clorinda's body, which showed the coherence of a centred and whole body as a soldier and a Muslim, is now a body in pieces and parts.¹⁰¹ The past of the Muslim male body cannot be reached and sustained any longer; thus a sense of the whole can only be projected into the

⁹⁷ Careri, *La fabbrica degli affetti*, 15.

⁹⁸ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 11.

⁹⁹ Paul Ricœur, *Temps et Récit*, III: *Le temps raconté* (Paris, 1985), 340.

¹⁰⁰ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York, 1993), xxv.

¹⁰¹ For Cusick, the parts at stake here are as follows: Clorinda represents the immasculate, *ingrata* female and a black knight. 'Thus the converging logics behind the narrative compulsion for Tancredi to penetrate, convert, and kill the immasculate, *ingrata*, female-identified Clorinda resembled the logic behind the narrative compulsion for him to penetrate, convert and kill the black knight Clorinda. In both male and female forms, "Clorinda" could figure the challenge

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imaginary future as the Christian soul that leaves behind the materiality of the body, symbolically castrated. In its exclusion from the body, the phallus becomes the external ‘privileged signifier’, the ‘site of control’ from which Clorinda’s body, though in the background, can now be constituted in its alterity.¹⁰² It is the soul that, while shaping the body, works as the image in the mirror. It allows her to move from the imaginary and ideal identification of the past to the symbolic phase, where eventually her feminine and Christian self, purified of all masculinity and Muslim aspects, is brought into existence and then into a painful death ‘through a set of violations’, the mortal wounds inflicted by Tancredi, that in the description of the text could also be understood as the wounds of a rape, obliterating completely the female body.¹⁰³ Clorinda’s body (and with this, her being the other in cultural and religious terms) is domesticated within the normative heterosexuality and faith that claim to be self-sufficient: a soul that can do without a body, a Christianity that cancels or appropriates the other.

From the musical point of view, the section ‘Amico hai vinto’ is harmonically fluid (see Ex. 1).¹⁰⁴ In modal terms, I suggest it is in G Hypodorian/plagal (i.e. D Hypodorian transposed from the *durus* to the *mollis* system, with a B flat). It occupies the D scale, with the final G placing the mode-defining *diapente* in the upper part from D down to G, and the *diatessaron*, G to D, in the lower part.¹⁰⁵ For Pontio the principal cadences would then take place on D and G; an almost principal cadence would take place on B flat, whereas inimical cadences would be placed on E and A.¹⁰⁶ Following Zarlino, the proper cadences would be on the final G, its upper fifth D and on their mediating third, B flat, whereas any other cadence can be done on any other pitch and would be an irregular cadence.¹⁰⁷ It is around these pitches (D, G) that Monteverdi composes the music for the section ‘Amico hai vinto’, and exploits to a great effect the ambiguity they can create, raising the question as to whether the main cadences lead to G or D.

that “sodomy” posed to the gender-sex system that many Europeans equated with a social order ordained by the Christian God’ (“Indarno chiedi”, 124).

¹⁰² Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 49–50.

¹⁰³ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 5. On the interpretation of the fight scene as a rape, see Careri, *La fabbrica degli affetti*, 111.

¹⁰⁴ The harmonic fluidity and fragmentation of this section has indeed been considered by several scholars; in my analysis, however, I aim to connect more fully the text, harmonic details, melodic writing and vocal registers in Clorinda’s part. See Massimo Ossi, *Divining the Oracle: Monteverdi’s Seconda Pratica* (Chicago, 2003), 222; La Via, ‘Le *Combat retrouvé*’, 123; Chafe, *Monteverdi’s Tonal Language*, 244–5; Cusick, “‘Indarno chiedi’”, 132.

¹⁰⁵ On the difficulty of assigning modes to the entire *Combattimento*, see Carter, *Monteverdi’s Musical Theatre*, 167–96. With regards to the transposition of the second mode a fourth up, Aaron already writes about this practice in his *Trattato della natura et cognitione di tutti gli tuoni di canto figurato non da altrui più scritti* (Venezia, 1521, ch. IV). See Bernhard Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According to the Source* (New York, 1988). I consulted the Italian translation, *I modi della polifonia vocale classica. Descritti secondo le fonti* (Lucca, 2015), 32, fn. 11. If we consider the entire composition in terms of D tonal-type, this allows Monteverdi to move with extreme flexibility from D Dorian in the *durus* system to Hypodorian in G in the *mollis* system and eventually back to D in the *durus* system at the end.

¹⁰⁶ See Frans Wiering, *The Language of the Modes. Studies in the History of Polyphonic Modality* (New York, 2001), 24.

¹⁰⁷ Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1573) 4: 18.

365

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

Clorinda

b. c.

A - mi - co hai vin - to Io ti per - don per-do-na tu/an-

372

co - ra al cor-po no che nul - la pa - ve al - l'al - ma si

378

Deh per lei pre-ga e do-na ba-tismo /a me ch-ogni mia col-pa la - ve

Ex. 1: Monteverdi, *Combattimento*, 'Amico hai vinto', bb. 365–83 (*Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi*, *Libro ottavo*. Venice, Alessandro Vincenti, 1638).

The section starts with the G minor triad, setting a pattern that starts again in bar 377 approached through its 'dominant' D (bar 375), but which does not move through G major (as in b. 368) and stops on an A major 'dominant' triad (on the

word 'lave') suggesting a possible final cadence on D, which would repeat the cadence in D from bar 375. All the cadential moments, however, are highly undermined by rests breaking cadential formulas. When the Testo resumes his narration, he does so with a C minor harmony, in stark contrast with the previous A major colour. But indeed the contrast C minor/A major was already exploited in the middle of the section, and a final cadence in D major is reached in bar 394 in the Testo section.¹⁰⁸

This final cadence in D is reached within the *durus* system, with a shift to a Dorian environment within the D tonal type. The brief moment with Hypodorian was thus never fully confirmed though it provided the soundscape for the moment of crisis in Clorinda's life, fully explored in the vocal part, where it is possible to single out two patterns. One is moving upward from d^2 through e^2 flat to e^2 natural (Ex. 1, bb. 365, 370, 373); the other moves downward and circles around g^1 , with its upper and lower-neighbour notes a^1 and f^1 sharp (bb. 366–7, 373, 375). These two registers establish a split that reflects the polarity in the text between body and soul, Clorinda and Tancredi, Muslim and Christian. When she addresses Tancredi – 'Amico hai vinto' – Clorinda drops into the lower register. She then moves up to the higher register to express her forgiveness – 'Io ti perdon' – but when she asks for his forgiveness, she returns to the lower register. She then makes a sudden leap into the higher register on the word 'corpo' (b. 373), but it is almost as if she does not allow herself to hit that register with her body, and she retreats immediately to the lower register, to descend even deeper to e^1 and f^1 sharp, without resolving directly to g^1 and masking the cadence on G in bar 377 (by moving thorough a^1 to b^1 flat), which marks the return of the opening pattern rather than its ending. The exploration of the lower part of the modal scale requires then 'an increase of energy and the reconquest of the upper region'.¹⁰⁹ The voice climbs from the lower register – while referring to her soul, for which Tancredi has to pray (with the lower register again expressing Tancredi's action) – to shoot into the high register on the top e^2 flat – 'e dona batesmo a me' – which stretches the upper border of the modal scale before finishing in the middle–low register on the words 'ch'ogni mia colpa lave' (which cleanses all my sins), without continuing onto the D and G harmonies, as in bars 375–7.

The high register thus represents the new Clorinda, the one asking to be baptised and who worries about her soul and not about her body; however, it cannot be associated with her femininity, since at this stage it has not yet been revealed. There is a modal centre that disappears as soon as Clorinda's own body and identity get closer. All is left suspended at the end, when the music stops on A major; the quick change of system, from *mollis* to *durus*, with C minor in the Testo, emphasises this even further, as Clorinda's fate and identity have not yet been resolved.

To contextualise Monteverdi's music, it is useful to consider the other two settings of sections of *Combattimento* by Sigismondo d'India and Antonio Il Verso, both of

¹⁰⁸ See Chafe, *Monteverdi's Tonal Language*, 244.

¹⁰⁹ Susan McClary, *Modal Subjectivities: Self-fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley, 2004), 205–6.

which Monteverdi may have been familiar with, particularly d'India's version as the paths of the two composers crossed several times: first in Mantua, around 1608, during d'India's travelling in north Italy, then in Venice when he was made Knight of St Mark's in 1621, exactly the year of the publication of his fourth book of compositions for one and two voices, which included his version of *Combattimento*.¹¹⁰ As for Antonio Il Verso's version, it was published with his *Fifteenth Book of Madrigals* for five voices in 1619 in Palermo, where he had returned several years earlier after a brief sojourn in north Italy.¹¹¹

According to Carter, Monteverdi's and d'India's settings bear some similarities, particularly in the narrator's realisation of Tancredi's shock at discovering the identity of Clorinda and in her 'final words, where the tonic in the voice grinds against the dominant harmony in the continuo'.¹¹² Carter then continues and says that 'No less revealing, however, are d'India's and Monteverdi's settings of Clorinda's speech, which are in the same tonal-type, and where Monteverdi adapts and at times changes the sequence of d'India's affective gestures, even if there are significant differences'.¹¹³ Indeed, the similarities are there (the 'ahi conoscenza' section ending with a cadence on A, the same tonal-type, some melodic gestures in Clorinda's speech) but to me they seem rather circumstantial and in crucial moments the differences are marked quite strongly.

Sigismondo d'India's setting starts *in medias res*, directly with the section 'Amico hai vinto' (see Ex. 2). The main feature of d'India's setting is the alternation of moments of chromaticism resolving in moments of sparse and clearer sounds.¹¹⁴ Intensely illuminating is the descending seventh, d² to e¹, on the words 'hai vint'io', clashing with the d in the bass.¹¹⁵ By avoiding the fight scene, d'India creates a strong dissonant opening to suggest Clorinda's wounding. We should also notice the upward perfect fifth followed by the downward diminished fifth on the words 'deh per lei prega' (pray for her, which reveals almost a sense of discomfort in Clorinda's request) is initiating the pattern leading to the final cadence in G.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 181–2. D'India published his setting of *Combattimento* in 1621 with Alessandro Vincenti, later the same publisher of Monteverdi's *Eighth Book of Madrigals*. In 1626 Monteverdi and d'India competed for the commission of the music for the wedding festivities for Odoardo Farnese and Margherita de' Medici (1628).

¹¹¹ Lorenzo Bianconi, 'Madrigali per la "Gerusalemme"', in Antonio Il Verso, *Madrigali a tre (libro II, 1605) e a cinque voci (libro XV – opera XXXVI, 1619)*, transcrib. and ed. Lorenzo Bianconi, *Musiche Rinascimentali Siciliane* (Firenze, 1978), xvi.

¹¹² Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 182–3.

¹¹³ Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 185.

¹¹⁴ In the introduction to his First book of *Musiche* published in 1609, Sigismondo d'India writes that 'I discovered it was possible to compose in the true manner with non ordinary intervals, moving with as many novelties as possible from one consonance to another, according to the variety of the meaning of the words.' *Le Musiche di Sigismondo d'India* (Milano, 1609).

¹¹⁵ Although not exactly a quotation, these bars seem a strong reminder of the opening gestures of Monteverdi's 'Lamento di Arianna', where two ascending patterns in stepwise motions are followed respectively by a descending fourth and a descending major sixth.

¹¹⁶ In editing the composition, it would be possible to maintain the a flat, which of course would clash quite strongly against the d in the bass.

A - mi - co hai/vint'io ti per-don Per-do - na tu/ anco-ra

Al cor-po no che nul - la pa - ve al Al - ma si deh

Deh per lei pre-ga_e do - na bat - te-smo_a me ch'-ogni mia col-pa la - ve

Ex. 2: Sigismondo d'India, 'Amico hai vint'io ti perdon, perdona', bb. 1–18 (*Le musiche a 1 e 2 voci, Libro quarto*. Venice, Alessandro Vincenti, 1621).

What mostly differentiates Monteverdi's setting from d'India's is the definition of the tonal focus. Whereas Monteverdi keeps it ambiguous, d'India sets up clear trajectories that lead to well defined cadences: on D at the words 'io ti perdono', on F major/minor at the words 'al Alma si' and on G at the end of the section, 'ogni mia colpa lave'. This clearly exploits the boundaries of the Hypodorian mode with an irregular cadence on F. Furthermore, even though d'India's setting did not realise such a clear distinction between the two registers, he still explores the lower register for the reference to the body (notice the descent to d^1 in bb. 7–8).

In *Il Verso*'s polyphonic setting too, there is a clear modal trajectory, with two cadences taking place in Clorinda's dying speech: on D at the words 'che nulla pave', and on G at the words 'ch'ogni mia colpa lave' (see Ex. 3), with the latter cadence reconfirmed at the end of the first stanza (ending 'gli invoglia e sforza') and again at the end of each madrigal of the cycle, till the last one on Clorinda's final words 'S'apre il cielo, io vado in pace'.¹¹⁷ As in d'India, the distinction of the two registers is not explored to the same extent as in Monteverdi: the D cadence, in the lower/plagal

¹¹⁷ *Il Verso* set to music the last four stanzas of *Combattimento* – from 'Amico hai vinto' to 'S'apre il cielo' – each stanza forming one madrigal.

The image shows a musical score for five vocal parts: Canto, Alto, Quinto, Tenore, and Basso. The score is divided into two systems, starting at measures 4 and 10. The lyrics are: 'che nul-la pa - ve', 'o - gni mia col - pa la - ve', 'A l'al -', 'col - pa la - ve', 'pa - ve', 'ogni mia col - pa la - ve', 'col - pa la - ve'.

Ex. 3: Antonio Il Verso, 'Amico hai vint'io ti perdon, perdona', bb. 4 and 10 (*Madrigali a cinque voci, Libro XV*. Palermo, Giovan Battista Maringo, 1619).¹¹⁸

register, refers to the body, whereas the cadence on G refers to the baptism, but beyond this it does not seem to suggest any further dualism.

Returning now to Monteverdi's setting, it is Clorinda's last intervention that ultimately unravels the story and her identity. Tancredi has now discovered that his enemy is Clorinda, and Monteverdi limits her vocal range to the higher register, the register of the soul, of the baptism and of the Christian faith, and now the register of her femininity. She is dying, and the narrator states that she seems to say 'S'apre il cielo; io vado in pace', that is, she does not actually say anything, and the words are a male interpretation of her dying body language.

| | |
|--|--|
| Mentre egli il suon de' sacri detti sciolse | While he uttered the words of the holy rite |
| colei di gioia trasmutossi e rise | she transfigured with joy and smiled |
| e in atto di morir lieta e vivace | and while dying happy and vivacious |
| dir pareo: 'S'apre il ciel; io vado in pace' | she seemed to say: 'Heaven opens; I go in peace' |

It is, however, in the act of performance that Clorinda is kept alive, when Monteverdi assigns the words to the singer. If the text makes clear that those words are about the poet's gaze, a male's gaze appropriated by the audience who cannot refrain from shedding tears,¹¹⁹ Clorinda's actual singing offers a resistance against that gaze and against Tancredi, who is completely silent and later verges on madness, alive but performatively dead in a reversal of Clorinda's situation.¹²⁰ Disavowed and violated,

¹¹⁸ Il Verso, *Madrigali a tre (Libro II, 1605) e a cinque voci (libro XV – opera XXXVI, 1619)*, 42–3.

¹¹⁹ See Monteverdi's Preface to *Combattimento*, cited in Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 170.

¹²⁰ In order to understand the role of the final words assigned to Clorinda, one might ask whether Monteverdi could have done something else here. Certainly, assigning the concluding words to

footnote continued on next page

439

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

Clorinda

b.c.

S'a - pre/il ciel io va - do in pa - ce

Ex. 4: Monteverdi, *Combattimento*, 'S'apre il ciel', bb. 439–45 (*Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi*, *Libro ottavo*. Venice, Alessandro Vincenti, 1638).

the remnant of Clorinda's body is the performative matter brought back to us onto the stage. It is through those final words of a dead but still alive, performatively speaking, Clorinda that the normative heterosexuality projects onto Tancredi what is revealed as a false reflection and a false guarantee of this self-sufficiency. His madness and incapacity to forgive himself for what he has done are consequences of the materialisation and exclusion of Clorinda's body. In the end, the liminoid representation, as theatre, of a liminal moment, the baptism of Clorinda, reveals Tancredi as a victim of the same heterosexual matrix and power discourse of self-sufficiency of which he was the main agent just beforehand.

As in the section 'Amico hai vinto', here too the cadence is the interpretative key (see Ex. 4). For Cusick,

Clorinda's final speech in the *Combattimento* ... satisfies that tonal desire [left suspended in the 'Amico hai vinto' section]. Still speaking haltingly, three syllables at a time,

Clorinda is at first a consequence of the distribution of characters to different singers as opposed to have one singer for the entire composition, like in d'India's version or a mixed choir as in Il Verso's version. But then, this decision was taken already with theatrical effects in mind; that is, Monteverdi knew from the very beginning that this choice would create a revealing incoherence between text and performance. If he had wanted to avoid it, one could speculate that two options were available to him: to let the narrator sing the final words or to change the words. Considering Monteverdi's attitude to text-editing in coordination with his dramatic viewpoint, this last option does not seem too improbable. An alternative solution to 'dir para: "S'apre il ciel; io vado in pace"' could be: 'disse: "S'Appe il cielo; io vado in pace"'. The use of the straightforward past tense 'disse' would make it clear that these are Clorinda's words; furthermore, the addition of the vowel 'o' to the word 'cielo', just before the semicolon, which neutralises the sinalepha in the act of performance, would contribute to maintain the integrity of the hendecasyllable in the performance. These are of course only suggestions to indicate the possibility that Monteverdi might have been aware of the incongruity between text and performance and that he probably wanted to maintain it. With regards to Monteverdi's attitude to text-editing, particularly in relation to the dramatic impact of a given text, see Ellen Rosand, *Monteverdi's Last Operas. A Venetian Trilogy* (Berkeley, 2007), in particular chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Clorinda sings of a vision of heaven that reaches the desired goal of D via an ornamental circle-of-fifths drop from E, a tonal place incommensurate with the G in which s/he had fought Tancredi for so long.¹²¹

However, the scenario is not as straightforward as Cusick suggests, and there is no complete satisfaction for the tonal desire. To start with, though a series of V–I relationships is exploited, there is not a single unidirectional circle: E–A, G–C, B flat, G, A–D. The cadence in D (bb. 444–5), then, completely avoids or undermines at the very least the leading note (which would normally be altered in the final cadence), in what would be the cantizans formula.¹²²

The lack of C sharp requires some attention. The 1638 printed edition of Monteverdi's *Eighth Book of Madrigals* has a sharp above the A in the bass, which is then included in Carter's reproduction of the example and in the latest Cremona edition. The Malipiero edition does not include the sharp sign in the basso continuo, and nor does Suzanne Cusick include it in her article.¹²³ Help to solve the issue whether there should be a C sharp or not might come from the fact that, as Tim Carter says, 'Monteverdi may also be quoting himself; Clorinda's cadence appears (in the same key and in much the same local context) in the fifth stanza of "Possente spirito e formidabil nume" in Act III of *Orfeo*, on – perhaps significantly – the word "vita"' (see Ex. 5).¹²⁴ However, although the melodic similarities of the cadences are unequivocal, there are few noteworthy differences. In *Orfeo* the cadence in question, D major, is on a pitch in a flow of cadential moments from a B flat triad through G, D major, to end on G.

Though on a very important word, 'vita', it is not the arrival point of the section. In *Combattimento* (see Ex. 4), even if a B flat triad is used to approach the dominant of D, the entire trajectory of the final section shows cadential-like approaches to A and C (contradicted by the word setting, in fact there are no textual conclusions, furthermore the G to C passage is broken by a rest and C is clearly played to approach B flat) leading to D, the arrival point of the entire composition.¹²⁵ The two cadences have therefore completely different values. Indeed, they are performed in different ways: the cadence in *Orfeo* could be sung quite quickly, because the conclusive melodic and textual elements arrive a few bars later, whereas the cadence in *Combattimento* supports in slow singing motion the expressive weight of the whole piece.¹²⁶ From the melodic point of view there is then a subtle but very relevant difference. In *Orfeo* the voice returns to d² together with the cadential D chord, whereas in *Combattimento* the voice anticipates the resolution to the tonic against dominant chord in the strings and the basso continuo. Monteverdi then does not

¹²¹ Cusick, "Indarno chiedi", 132.

¹²² The cantizans formula captures the motion 7–1.

¹²³ Cusick, "Indarno chiedi", 133.

¹²⁴ Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, 185.

¹²⁵ The fact that the text does not have any closure coinciding with the cadential-like progressions E major–A major and G major–C major makes them very unstable.

¹²⁶ Listen, for example, to Claudio Monteverdi/Concerto Italiano, *L'Orfeo* (Naïve, 2007, OP30439) and to Claudio Monteverdi/Concerto Italiano-Rinaldo Alessandrini, *Ottavo Libro dei Madrigali* (Opus 111, 1998, OPS 30–196).

169

O de le lu - ci mie lu - ci se - re - ne, s'un vo-stro

sguar - do puo' tor-nar-mi/in vi - ta, ahi, chi nie - ga/il con - for-to/a le

mie pe-ne? Ahi, chi niega/il con - for - to/a le mie pe - ne?

Ex. 5: Monteverdi, 'Possente spirito', bb. 169–78 (*Orfeo*. Venice, Ricciardo Amadino, 1609).

include the sharp symbol in the basso continuo both in this specific cadence and in any cadence in the entire 'Possente Spirto', yet he does include it in *Combattimento*. The practice of writing basso continuo figuration in the seventeenth century was not consistent, but the question arises, why did Monteverdi include the sharp symbol in Clorinda's final cadence, whilst in another extremely poignant composition, such as 'Possente Spirto', he did not feel it necessary to do so?

Another obvious difference is the absence of set instruments in *Orfeo*, which would provide a clear harmonisation as in *Combattimento*, where the strings above the basso continuo do exactly this, by omitting C sharp. But what do performers do when they realise the basso continuo? A very illuminating example comes from Rinaldo Alessandrini. In his edition of *Orfeo*, he does realise the basso continuo with the C sharp, which can also be heard very clearly in his own recording of the opera, because of the limited instrumentation in that particular passage. In his recording of *Combattimento*, however, there is no C sharp, or if it is played only by the basso continuo instruments (harpsichord and/or theorbo), it hardly can be heard against the sustained strings and the typical sense of closure provided by the leading note's resolution is heavily undermined.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Rinaldo Alessandrini (Bärenreiter, 2012), 65. Claudio Monteverdi/Concerto Italiano, *L'Orfeo* (Naïve, 2007, OP30439). Claudio Monteverdi/Concerto Italiano – Rinaldo Alessandrini, *Ottavo Libro dei Madrigali* (Opus 111, 1998, OPS 30–196). Another example of performers not playing the leading note in the realisation of the basso

footnote continued on next page

One last point in this regard is made by Anna Maria Vacchelli. In her introduction to the Cremona edition, she states that ‘The accidental [in general in the basso continuo] can refer to the third, the fifth, or both notes and, exceptionally, to the sixth.’¹²⁸ The case of the sharp placed above the A in the bass line in the *Combattimento* is considered to be one of those exceptions, indicating F sharp, which is indeed sung by Clorinda, and not the leading note, C sharp. So, Vacchelli states, ‘in the present edition, the chord [in the basso continuo] has been realised and modelled on the notes of the strings, to maintain the magical effect of a suspension determined by the part of Clorinda, who resolves on the tonic whilst the other instruments hesitate on the dominant chord’.¹²⁹ Vacchelli, therefore, draws attention to the significance of the sharp sign indicated in Monteverdi’s score, whereas Carter and Cusick do not problematise it at all; the former including it in his example, assuming that it refers to C sharp and without considering other options, the latter omitting it probably as a mistake.

A comparison between this final cadence and the beginning of the composition will show very clearly the extent of the changes that have occurred, from the initial cadences to the end.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Tancredi, che Clorinda un homo stima vol ne l’armi provarla al paragone. Va girando coleli l’alpestre cima ver altra porta, ove d’entrar dispone</p> | <p>Tancredi, who believes Clorinda to be a man wishes to test her in an army competition. She moves around the mountain peak towards a different gate, where she decides to enter</p> |
|---|---|

Example 6 presents a cadence on d descending through a fifth (bars 1–9), a cadence on a through a descending fourth from d¹ (bars 10–16), and a further cadence on d also through a descending fifth from a (bars 16–18). All these cadences have at least two modal cadential formulas in the written parts: stepwise descending motion to the root of the triad, enriched by the bass line that ascends by a fourth or descends by a fifth, whereas the cantizans formula with the leading note – whether it is clearly indicated as in bars 15 and 18 or not as in bar 8 – does not create any clash with the vocal part.

In dividing the opening four verses into three units, the cadences shape Tancredi and Clorinda in their materiality and desires for fighting in a battle that draws them dangerously and erotically close to each other. All these plain and direct elements are missing at the end, as the cadence is achieved at the expense of a strong musical exclusion (the lack or undermining of the leading note), certainly with the aim of representing Clorinda’s transformation and assumption into Heaven. This transformation had already started in the section ‘Amico, hai vinto’, when Clorinda stopped short of a D cadence. Looking back at Example 1, it is clear that ‘Amico, hai

continuo is found in Claudio Monteverdi/Le Concert d’Astrée – Emmanuelle Haïm, *Combattimento* (EMI Records/Virgin Classics, 2006, 0946 3 63403 2 6).

¹²⁸ Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigali Guerrieri, et Amorosì, Libro Ottavo*, ed. Anna Maria Vacchelli (Cremona, 2004), 51.

¹²⁹ Monteverdi, *Madrigali Guerrieri*, 51. The original 1638 score of *Combattimento* is included in the Cremona edition; Carter, *Monteverdi’s Musical Theatre*, 183; Cusick, “‘Indarno chiedi’”, 133.

1

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

Testo

b.c.

Tan-cre - di Che Clo - rin - da/un ho - mo sti - ma vol ne l'ar - mi pro -

7

var - la al pa - ra - go - ne Va gi - ran - do co -

13

lei l'al - pe - stre ci - ma ver al - tra por - ta o - ve d'en - trar di - spo - ne.

b #

Ex. 6: Monteverdi, 'Tancredi, che Clorinda un homo stima', bb. 1–18 (*Madrigali guerrieri, et amoroși, Libro ottavo*. Venice, Alessandro Vincenti, 1638).

vinto' had the role to start detaching the leading note from the cadence in D for Clorinda, who can now conclude on D, at the very end, without the leading note, in the high register. A cadence almost deprived of its own body but at the same time with the body of Clorinda resurfacing in the actual performance.

The last cadence in Sigismondo d'India's setting provides a fascinating comparison. First of all, the cadence is on G (not D as in Monteverdi's); second, it does not play with the avoidance of the leading note and its trajectory of desire to the same extent as Monteverdi does.¹³⁰ In fact, the entire last phrase presents very clearly the dominant D major (see Ex. 7), as the bass line resolves f sharp to g already before the final cadence on the words 'S'apre il cielo', whereas Monteverdi provides the cadence only on the words 'in pace'. D'India also places a sharp above the d in the bass line; considering that we have already heard the f sharp–g pattern, and that there is an f sharp at the beginning of the penultimate bar in the bass line, it seems obvious to say that here the sharp indicates f sharp, but Clorinda still does not provide any modal cadential formula, setting a contrast between the basso continuo and herself.

Ex. 7: Sigismondo d'India, 'S'apre il cielo' (*Le musiche a 1 e 2 voci, Libro quarto*. Venice, Alessandro Vincenti, 1621).

The approach to the final cadence in Il Verso's version (see Ex. 8) is characterised by straightforward ascending scalic patterns: the canto starts on d¹ (b. 22) and continues up to the high d² on the words 'dir para: S'apre il Ciel' (b. 24) before dropping on the words 'io vado in pace' and approaching the leading note f¹ sharp, which resolves on g¹ (in contrast, like d'India's, to Monteverdi's final cadence in D). At the opposite spectrum (b. 24), the bass starts an ascending line on G up an octave, on the words 'para: S'apre il ciel, io vado in' before jumping to d, and supporting the cadence with the final dropping fifth, with the quinto providing the other cadential formula.

Harmonically the cadence does not show anything out of the ordinary; texturally, we should notice though that after a section with very little polyphonic treatment at the phrase 'Colei di gioia trasmutossi e rise, e in atto di morir lieto e vivace' (the text is treated homophonically between Canto, Alto, Tenore and Basso, only the Quinto

¹³⁰ For the concept of trajectory of desire, see Susan McClary, 'Towards a History of Harmonic Tonality', in *Towards Tonality. Aspects of Baroque Music Theory*, ed. Peter DeJans (Ghent, 2007), 94.

21

Canto
E/in at - to di mo-rir_ lie-to, e vi-va - ce, Dir/para: S'a-pre/il Ciel_

Alto
to di mo-rir_ lie-to, e vi-va - ce, Dir/para: S'a-pre/il Ciel, io va -

Quinto
to di morir lieto, e vi-va-ce Dir pa-rea: S'a-pre/il Ciel, io va-do/in

Tenore
E/in at - to di mo-rir_ lie-to, e vi-va ce, Dir pa-rea: S'a-pre/il Ciel, io

Basso
E/in at - to di mo-rir_ lie-to, e vi-va - ce, Dir

24

dir pa - rea: S'a-pre/il ciel_ io va-do/in pa - ce.

do/in pa - ce io va - do/in pa - ce.

pa - ce, io va - do/in pa - ce.

va - do/in pa - ce, in pa - ce.

pa-rea: S'a-pre/il Ciel, io va-do/in pa - ce.

Ex. 8: Antonio Il Verso, 'S'apre il cielo', bb. 21–6 (*Madrigali a cinque voci, Libro XV*. Palermo, Giovan Battista Maringo 1619).¹³¹

provides polyphonic contrast), at the start of 'Dir para: S'apre il cielo, io vado in pace' (which is Clorinda's words in the poet's imagination), the voices break into a markedly polyphonic texture. This may be a choice to counter the possible narrative

¹³¹ Il Verso, *Madrigali a tre (Libro II, 1605) e a cinque voci (libro XV – opera XXXVI, 1619)*, 48.

assignment of the words to one single character (possibly indicated by homophonic treatment), suggesting instead an ecstatic and multiple reverberation of the subject in this particular experience. The contrast between homophonic and polyphonic treatment goes back to Il Verso's first madrigal when Clorinda's speech – 'Amico hai vinto, io ti perdon; perdona tu ancora, al corpo no' – is set homophonically before the voices break into polyphonic texture at the words 'che nulla pave' to continue until the end of her words. In Il Verso's composition, Clorinda's complex identity is thus realised by the contrast homophony/polyphony, where polyphony is used to indicate the soul and the final ascension to heaven. It is evident therefore that the composers fully embrace the complexity of Clorinda's character yet depict it in different ways.

The role of the instruments

The magical effect of which Anna Maria Vacchelli writes about, when discussing the realisation of the sharp sign, should also lead us to talk of the role of the instruments in both the sections 'Amico hai vinto' and 'S'apre il ciel' of Monteverdi's *Combattimento*. However, a few narratological preliminaries are necessary as they relate to the instrumental setting. The section 'Amico hai vinto' marks the passage from the narrator's to Clorinda's point of view. Up to this point everything has been seen through the eyes of the narrator, who, while describing the fight, lets the combatants talk for themselves through a few carefully selected very short shots; he is the one who has opened a window just to close it almost instantly. With 'Amico hai vinto', Clorinda takes full possession of the point of view and all of a sudden the implicit gazes of the previous sections, which were all overshadowed by the narrator, come to the fore: the narrator is quiet and the viewers in the *portego* are asked to suspend for a moment what they know, listen to Clorinda, and identify both with her request and with Tancredi's silence. In cinematic terms, we would have an interpellation towards Tancredi and the audience: Clorinda is gazing directly at the camera and seduces the spectator.¹³²

It is the instruments that have the power now to establish these distinctive points of view, with a rather different role from the rest of *Combattimento*. Whereas for most of the composition the instruments have a mimetic role, describing the fight and realising indeed the *genere concitato*, in the two sections in question they are completely entangled with Clorinda's voice. For Cusick, she is taking ownership and control of what the instruments can do. Fully in 'control of the music's affect, unmediated by any narrating voice, Clorinda's dying voice commands'.¹³³

In 'Sapre il cielo', the scene is initially observed through the eyes of the narrator as he remarks that 'she seems to say', but Monteverdi's instrumentation and decision to assign the last words to the singer impersonating Clorinda create an intriguing situation: all of a sudden the narrator's gaze is appropriated by Clorinda's own gaze, not as the interpellation of 'Amico hai Vinto', instead more along the lines of the

¹³² See Paolo Bertetto, *La macchina del cinema* (Bari, 2010), 135–50. On similar interpretation in cinematic terms, see also Mauro Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera. Monteverdi's Staging of the Self* (Berkeley, 2012), 228–37.

¹³³ Cusick, "Indarno chiedi", 130.

cinematic subjective point of view. It is not a close-up; Clorinda takes over the camera and everybody around her sees through her eyes. If 'Amico hai vinto,' in its interpellation, had the role to seduce with the oscillating modal soundscape, now that seduction is complete and the listeners identify completely with Clorinda, who establishes her presence over the lack of the leading note.¹³⁴

Contemporary art may offer here a historically informed analogy in what is called 'glaucous light', the 'light of dawn that saves and hits many protagonists [of Caravaggio's paintings] in the crucial moments of their existence': Matthew, Saul, Mary Magdalene, the Young Sick Bacchus and many more.¹³⁵ With its pale green and blue-grey shades the 'glaucous light' represents the moment of death and transfiguration; theatrically manufactured it seems to hit directly the skin of the protagonist, but at the same time seems to emerge from within the characters themselves. It is a light that illuminates and creates darkness all around: it is not night any more but it is not daylight yet.

Tasso's text has indeed a crucial stanza where the reference to the night and to the daylight is of primary importance; 'Notte, che nel profondo oscuro seno' (Night, in the deep dark bosom) in fact refers both to the night and to its darkness as a container of deeds that are worthy of daylight, and it is certainly the task of the narrator/Tasso to bring these deeds from darkness to light. Already in that octave, Monteverdi's music and use of instruments are different from the fight scenes. They anticipate the suspension in Clorinda's last two speeches; the light that it is not darkness anymore but not full daylight yet is embodied by the oscillation of modal direction in 'Amico hai vinto' and in the ambiguity around the final cadence. The instruments are both the intervention of the composer, in the same way as the light in Caravaggio's painting is a dramatic and artificial light built in the studio by the painter – but at the same time the instruments come from within the character of Clorinda, like the light in Caravaggio's painting comes from within the characters' skin. The instruments thus are no longer only a reflection of the character's inner feelings maintaining an external perspective, they are now both external and internal, on the edge between darkness and light, where Clorinda's final words and performance can assert her resistance.

Conclusion

Through the interpretative journey undertaken in this article, the *portego* reveals itself, in Ken Hillis's words, as the result of the interplay of a number of different places and 'gives a hint of the complexity and interpenetration of places and people in the world'.¹³⁶ It is the surface that allows the mutually defining relationships between ourselves, the world and the staged action. The *portego* and its entertainment functions reflect the various places and events depicted in the paintings and in *Combattimento*, which conversely transform and define the *portego*. The dining

¹³⁴ See Bertetto, *La macchina del cinema*, 148.

¹³⁵ Sergio Rossi, 'Il mistero della luce glauca. Verità dell'immagine e attesa del miracolo nella pittura del Seicento', in *Scienza e miracoli nell'arte del '600. Alle origini della medicina moderna*, ed. Rossi (Milan, 1998), 14.

¹³⁶ Hillis, *Digital Sensations*, 81.

banquets mirror the convivial scenes from the paintings, whose religious tone contrasts with the opulence, the lasciviousness and the effeminacy of the actual events whilst providing a religious elevation. The relationships in this osmotic process, then, expands beyond the most immediate boundary of the *portego* and its palace; as the place of display of family identity and social status, it becomes the place of display for those values that constituted Venice at the crossroads between the Western and Eastern civilisations, between private reason and state reason, 'dovere' and 'desiderio', between conservative and progressive attitudes. As such the *portego* and Venice are the forest in which the fight between Tancredi and Clorinda takes place.

In bringing together these layers, the *portego* creates a space that – as a 'container or stage for human performativity' – gives the audience in the salon an identity and offers them existential support.¹³⁷ But it provides too both identity and existential support even to today's audience, caught in the dilemma of how one can listen to *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* in a world that seems to iterate Tancredi's violence upon Clorinda all over again. Because of the stage it provided for a performance on the threshold between liminality and liminoid, the *portego* is a site through which Venetian and current audiences 'might pass, but of which [none is] never fully part',¹³⁸ like Clorinda and Tancredi themselves, who passed through the forest without fully belonging to it. The forest was their intermediary place, in which Tancredi first saw her and fell in love with her, and in which they fought their battle. It served to 'dramatize their aspirations, needs and functional rhythms' even more than the epic scenes.¹³⁹ Likewise, the *portego* served to dramatise the aspirations of the Mocenigo family *in primis*, and of the aristocratic echelons who attended the evening of the performance.

The composition, in its modern performances, brings with itself the shadow of that place and its dramatising function whilst laying it upon every place in which it is performed and on every audience that listens to it. As a place through which the audience, *Combattimento* and Venice itself passed, the salon is a space where a culture in transition is registered.¹⁴⁰ In her moment of transition between soul and body culminating in her death, Clorinda is caught between the imaginary identification with her Muslim past and the symbolic identification with a new self, symbol of a new unity, but indeed a symbol and ideal that cannot be achieved. Likewise, through *Combattimento*, Venetian society and a modern audience are caught too between the ideal of an image of a self-sufficient self and the realisation of its impossibility, revealing the faults of this self-sufficiency but remaining open to potential alternatives that will emerge anew with different and new audiences. It represents the beginning of 'a history that still needs to be done'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Hillis, *Digital Sensations*, 82–4. Hillis takes the concept of 'inbetweenness' from Nicholas Entrikin's *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (Baltimore, 1991).

¹³⁸ Hillis, *Digital Sensations*, 84.

¹³⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, 178, as quoted in Hillis, *Digital Sensations*, 84.

¹⁴⁰ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 28.

¹⁴¹ Ricœur, *Temps et Récit*, III: *Le temps raconté*, 340.

ANTONIO CASCELLI is Lecturer in Music at Maynooth University, Ireland. His main research interests are in the history of music theory, arts and music in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, nineteenth-century piano music and music analysis. He received his PhD from the University of Southampton and has published on Schenker and Chopin. A book on this last topic is forthcoming, to be published in English by LIM (Libreria Musicale Italiana). He contributed to *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture* with a chapter on 'Metaphor as experience in Vincenzo Galilei's *Dialogo della music antica e della moderna*'.