

CARLO GOLDONI AS MUSICAL REFORMER

IN SEARCH OF REALISM IN THE *DRAMMA GIOCO*

La vraisemblance doit toujours être la principale règle, et sans laquelle toutes les autres deviennent déréglées.

-l'Abbé d'Aubignac, *La Pratique du Théâtre*

by

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Abstract

Venetian playwright Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), who is best remembered in literary history for his realist 'reform' of comic theatre, was also a prolific librettist. In particular, his texts for music written from 1748 onwards remain understudied but warrant significant reappraisal, for Goldoni was one of the first to give shape to the *dramma giocoso*, an innovative and realistic new genre of opera that went on to have a lasting legacy all the way to W. A. Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte. Through an interdisciplinary, historical approach and intertextual analysis, the present study reevaluates Goldoni's *drammi giocosi*, largely overlooked by scholarship, to uncover the lasting innovations in form and content introduced by the Venetian playwright. Analysis of these texts also reveals clear affinity between Goldoni's contributions to the *dramma giocoso* and his reform of prose theatre. Most importantly, unlike other types of comic opera, the *dramma giocoso* has the particularity of combining *buffo* with *serio*, a dynamic that, through Goldoni's mature output, continually evolves to bring new realism and social relevance to opera theatre. Goldoni's influence on this type of musical representation has not been fully considered, but the realism in music that he achieves through the *dramma giocoso* must be acknowledged as a lasting contribution to modern literature, and to operatic history.

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CHAPTER I.

Setting the Stage for Goldoni Librettist

Introduction

Carlo Goldoni is highly regarded for his innovative contributions to the evolution of comic theatre, in particular for the Enlightenment ideology and realism that have made his works emblematic of a turning point in history. In light of his enduring legacy as theatrical reformer (from the *canovacci* of the *Commedia dell'Arte* Goldoni was the first to steer actors and audiences towards developed, realistic, and socially relevant comedy), it is less often remembered that Goldoni, alongside his works for the spoken theatre, composed opera libretti during the entire course of his life.

This production is as varied as it is vast, and includes short comic *intermezzi*, *melodrammi seri* in the style of Zeno and Metastasio, *drammi eroicomici*, *divertimenti per musica*, *drammi comici per musica*, and nearly 50 *drammi giocosi*. His first texts for music (*Il buon padre* (The Good Father) and *La Cantatrice* (The Singer), 1730) were written at the age of 23, his last (*Vittorina*, 1779) at 72. During his lifetime and beyond, Goldoni's texts were set to music by numerous celebrated composers, including Antonio Vivaldi, Baldassarre Galuppi, Niccolò Piccinni, Gaetano Latilla, Giuseppe Scarlatti, Giovanni Paisiello, and outside of Italy Franz Joseph Haydn among others. Operas created from his libretti were performed throughout Italy and Europe, from Modena to Moscow, London and Prague.

Thematically, the libretti present a wide range of social situations and character types largely drawn from contemporary society. While humorous realism most often predominates, some texts re-elaborate older popular works (*Bertoldo, Bertoldino, e Cacasenno*), whereas others explore fantastical settings (*Arcifanfano Re dei Matti* (Arcifanfano King of Madmen), *Il Paese della Cuccagna* (The Land of Plenty)). Among Goldoni's texts for music we can also find meta-theatrical libretti (*La Bella Verità* (The Pretty Truth)), in which the world of theatre is cast onto the stage to become the object of playful criticism. Below is a partial summary of his musical production, excluding the nearly obsolete *Cantate, Serenate*, and *Rappresentazioni Allegoriche* of his youth:

Melodrammi Seri

	Title	Date	Venue of first documented performance
1	La Generosità Politica	1736	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
2	L'Olimpiade	1738	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo
3	Farnace (dramma per musica)	1739	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo
4	Ottone (dramma per musica)	1740	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo
5	Gustavo Primo Re di Svezia (dramma per musica)	1740	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
6	Candace (dramma per musica)	1740	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo
7	Oronte Re de' Sciti	1740	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo
8	Statira	1741	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo
9	Tigrane	1741	Venice, Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo

Intermezzi

1	La Cantatrice (La Pelarina)	1730	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele (1734)
2	Il buon padre (lost)	1730	Venice
3	Il Gondoliere Veneziano	1732	Milan, Corte Ducale
4	La Pupilla	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
5	La Birba	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
6	L'Ipocondriaco	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
7	Il Filosofo	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
8	Monsieur Petiton	1736	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
9	La Bottega da Caffè	1736	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
10	L'Amante Cabala	1736	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
11	Amor Fa L'Uomo Cieco	1741	Genoa
12	La Favola dei Tre Gobbi	1749	Venice
13	La Vendemmia	1760	Venice, Teatro Capranica
14	Il Quartiere Fortunato	Unknown. printed 1794	Unknown

Other Musical Works

1	Griselda (from original text by Apostolo Zeno)	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
2	Aristide (dramma eroi-comico)	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
3	Cesare in Egitto (dramma per musica)	1735	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
4	La Fondazione di Venezia (divertimento per musica)	1736	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
5	Lugrezia Romana in Costantinopoli (dramma comico)	1737	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
6	La Contessina (commedia per musica)	1743	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele

7	L'Arcadia in Brenta (dramma comico)	1749	Venice, Teatro S. Angelo
8	Bertoldo Bertoldino e Cacasenno	1749	Venice, Teatro S. Moisè
9	Il Negligente (dramma comico)	1749	Venice, Teatro S. Moisè
10	Il Finto Principe (dramma comico)	1749	Venice, Teatro S. Cassiano
11	Arcifanfano Re dei Matti (dramma comico)	1750	Venice, Teatro S. Moisè
12	Il Paese della Cuccagna (commedia per musica)	1750	Venice, Teatro S. Moisè
13	Il Mondo alla Rovversa o sia le Donne che Comandano (dramma bernesco)	1750	Venice, Teatro Tron di S. Cassiano
14	La Mascherata (dramma comico)	1751	Venice, Teatro S. Cassiano
15	* Il Conte Caramella (dramma comico)	1751	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
16	Il matrimonio discorde (farsetta per musica)	1756	Venice, Teatro Capranica
17	La cantarina (farsetta per musica)	1756	Venice, Teatro Capranica
18	Statira (dramma per musica)	1756	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
19	Germondo ("serious opera")	1776	London, King's Theatre, Haymarket
20	Il Viaggiatore Ridicolo	1777	Parma
21	I Volponi (Dramma in tre atti per musica)	1777	Paris
22	Il Talismano (commedia per musica)	1779	Milan, Nuovo Teatro Canobiana

Drammi giocosi

1	La Scuola moderna (La Maestra di Buon Gusto)	1748	Venice
2	Il Mondo della Luna	1750	Venice
3	Le donne vendicate	1751	Venice, Teatro S. Cassiano
4	Le Pescatrici	1751	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
5	Le Virtuose Ridicole	1752	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
6	I Portentosi Effetti di Madre Natura	1752	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele

7	La Calamita dei Cuori	1753	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
8	I Bagni d'Abano	1753	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
9	Il Pazzo Glorioso	1753	Venice, Teatro S. Cassiano
10	De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum	1754	Venice, Teatro S. Cassiano
11	* Il Filosofo di Campagna	1754	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
12	* Li Matti per Amore	1754	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
13	* Lo speziale	1754	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
14	* Il Povero Superbo	1755	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
15	Le Nozze (Tra Due Litiganti il Terzo Gode)	1755	Bologna, Teatro Formagliari
16	La Diavolessa	1755	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
17	La Cascina	1756	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
18	La ritornata di Londra	1756	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
19	La Buona Figliuola (La Cecchina)	1757	Parma, Teatro Regio Ducale
20	Il Festino	1757	Parma, Teatro Regio Ducale
21	L'Isola Disabitata	1757	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
22	Il Mercante di Malmantile	1758	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
23	La Conversazione	1758	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
24	* Il Signor Dottore	1758	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
25	* Buovo d'Antona	1759	Venice, Teatro S. Moisé
26	* Gli Uccellatori	1759	Venice, Teatro S. Moisé
27	Il Conte Chicchera	1759	Milano, Teatro Regio Ducale
28	Arcifanfano Il Re Dei Matti (ultima impressione ricorretta e migliorata)	1759	Venice, Teatro Carignano
29	* Filosofia ed Amore	1760	Venice, Teatro S. Moisé
30	La Fiera di Sinigaglia	1760	Rome, Teatro delle Dame

31	Amor Contadino	1760	Venice, Teatro S. Angelo
32	L'Amore Artigiano	1761	Venice, Teatro S. Angelo
33	* Amore in Caricatura	1761	Venice, Teatro S. Angelo
34	* La Donna di Governo	1761	Rome, Teatro di Torre Argentina
35	* La Buona Figliuola Maritata	1761	Bologna, Teatro Formagliari
36	* La Bella Verità	1761	Bologna, Teatro Marsigli Rossi
37	* Il Re alla Caccia	1763	Venice, Teatro S. Samuele
38	La Finta Semplice	1764	Venice, Teatro S. Moisé
39	La Notte Critica	1766	Venice, Teatro S. Cassiano
40	* La Cameriera Spiritosa	1766	Milano, Teatro Regio Ducale
41	L'Astuzia Felice	1767	Venice, Teatro S. Moisé
42	Le Nozze in Campagna	1768	Venice, Teatro S. Moisé
43	* Vittorina ("new comic opera)	1777	London, King's Theatre

N. B. Works marked with* formally divide *buffo* and *serio* roles in the "elenco dei personaggi"

Considered alongside his comedies, Goldoni's texts for music afford a more comprehensive understanding of the author's life and work. Perhaps because of the vast scope of his output, and because the comedies and *Memoires* are considered his central achievements, not all of Goldoni's works for music have been given critical attention.

Contributions of Scholarly Research

Studies of Goldoni's libretti were produced with some frequency in the early and middle 1900s, and in recent decades the subject has returned into focus. Many

of these studies (both dated and more recent), however, appear to be mostly general in scope, while in terms of specific genres the early *intermezzi* have been considered most frequently. This is a comprehensible choice given the overwhelming output of Goldoni's mature years, and furthermore the author's own tendency, in the autobiography and other publications, to present his first libretti as an apprenticeship for his comedies¹ and minimize his later production in favor of greater focus on the spoken comedies of the reform. Most notably, with the exception of Ted Emery's *Goldoni as Librettist: Theatrical Reform and the Drammi Giocosi per Musica* (1991), no study has yet been produced on the *dramma giocoso* as a distinct operatic genre, though the majority of Goldoni's libretti, especially those written during the reform years, are of this kind.

The *dramma giocoso* occupies a very particular and innovative position among theatrical genres, and appears significant to Goldoni studies for two reasons. First, there is evidence that Goldoni contributed in a definitive manner to the evolution of this genre, which, rarely employed before his time, was brought to full form through his numerous elaborations (we can find its highest realization in the Mozart- Da Ponte collaboration one generation after Goldoni). Most importantly, the *dramma giocoso*, largely thanks to Goldoni, proves an operatic type with much greater potential for realism. In the preface to his very first *dramma giocoso*, *La Scuola moderna*, Goldoni explains that the work contains "materia buffa

¹ In the Preface to the Pasquali edition of his musical works (*Memorie Italiane*, tomo XII), Goldoni explains that his libretti were "commedie abbozzate(...)suscettibili di tutti i caratteri più comici e più originali(...)ciò potea servirmi di prova e di esercizio per trattarli un giorno più distesamente e più a fondo nelle grandi Commedie."

Sketched comedies, (...) susceptible to all the most comic and most original characters (...) this could serve me as practice and exercise to develop them more extensively and deeply one day in the great Comedies. [all translations by author]

(...)intrecciata colla seria.”² Neither fully comic nor tragic, these types of works respond to a desire for an honest yet sophisticated theatre more effectively relatable to daily life.

To better situate the present discussion with respect to earlier research, it may be helpful to briefly recapitulate the most significant interpretations published thus far. These are not always easy to reconcile, as the *libretti* in particular have provoked the most disparate critical opinions.

A founding figure of Goldoni philological studies in Italy is Giuseppe Ortolani, who considered the author’s operatic production marginal compared to the major works for spoken theatre. Ortolani affirmed that among the *drammi giocosi*, “Il commediografo veneziano non riuscì a creare nessun capolavoro, nulla di letterariamente vitale,” concluding that “invero queste vecchie farse per musica non reggono all’analisi critica, non appartengono alla storia letteraria.”³

Other early scholars expressed notably different views. Patrick Smith, for example, believed that “Goldoni’s librettistic work is everywhere a reflection of his work for the theatre,”⁴ an opinion shared in varying degrees by Luigi Falchi, who considered the libretti “sostrato del pensiero dello scrittore,”⁵ by Manilo Dazzi, and

² Carlo Goldoni, *La Scuola Moderna*, “All’amico lettore.” comic material (...) interwoven with tragic

³ *Opere di Carlo Goldoni*, edited by Giuseppe Ortolani (Verona: Mondadori, 1973) Vol. 10; 1257. The Venetian comic playwright did not succeed in creating any masterpiece, anything literarily vital. Indeed these old farces for music cannot support critical analysis, and do not pertain to literary history.

⁴ *La Missione teatrale di Carlo Goldoni* (Bari: Laterza, 1936).

⁵ *Intendimenti sociali di Carlo Goldoni* (Roma: Società ed. Dante Alighieri, 1907). Substratus of the author’s thought.

by Edmondo Rho, who argued that between libretti and plays “le linee di sviluppo psicologico ed artistico sono le medesime.”⁶

More recently Nicola Mangini, in net opposition to the views above cited, sought once more to distinguish Goldoni’s libretti from his plays. For Mangini, these works were separate from the plays in the mind of the author, and therefore should only be understood in relation to the operatic tradition that preceded their creation. He writes: “Si tratta...di adottare una metodologia di approccio che non insista (come si è sempre fatto) nel confronto e nella relazione col suo [di Goldoni] teatro comico, ma che invece prenda in esame questi drammi per sé stessi nell’ambito specifico del loro genere, avendo come eventuale termine di riferimento la librettistica precedente o coeva.”⁷

A first attempt to reconcile these disparate approaches may be Ted Emery’s *Goldoni as Librettist*, previously mentioned. In his survey of Goldoni’s texts for music, Emery identifies both structural (due to the rules of theatrical convention) and ideological differences with respect to the spoken plays, adopting Franco Fido’s notion of reform and ‘counter-reform.’ In synthesis, Fido and Emery see an initial affinity between spoken theatre and libretti, followed by the progressive abandonment of the ideological agenda of the plays in the works for music, more readily employed for less realistic, more superficial, and at times fantastical content.

⁶ See *La Missione teatrale di Carlo Goldoni* (Bari: Laterza, 1936), and *Intendimenti sociali di Carlo Goldoni* (Roma: Società ed. Dante Alighieri, 1907). The paths of psychological and artistic development are one and the same.

⁷ Nicola Mangini, “Itinerari e approdi di Goldoni librettista” in *Rassegna di cultura e di vita scolastica*, 83 (1985); 4. We must adopt an approach that does not insist (as has always been done) on the comparison to his comic theatre, but which instead examines these works in their own right, and with respect to their own field, possibly with reference to the preceding or coeval production of libretti.

In Fido's own words, "nei suoi [di Goldoni] libretti quello che la parola infeudata alla musica perdeva sul versante del referente- cioè in termini di capacità di evocare con efficacia mimetica e critica il mondo reale: mercanti, donne di casa, servitori, ecc.- essa guadagnava dalla parte del significante- scherzi e giochi di parole, paradossi e calembours, onomatopée e iperboli, equivoci e cacofonie plurilingui."⁸ Emery appears to agree as he states, "On the whole, the operas are, as Fido suggests, the artistic and ideological opposite of the *commedie*: less realistic than the plays, they often have fantastic or fanciful plots and a playful, punning style; lacking the reform's didactic intentions, they seek to entertain more than to instruct; rejecting middle-class morality, they give freer rein to disorder and incorporate a more negative vision of the world."⁹

While Emery's work offers valuable information on the varied nature of Goldoni's production, despite the title the author does not assess the *dramma giocoso* as an operatic type distinct from Goldoni's *intermezzi* and other musical works. There is no textual analysis that investigates differences between *buffo* and *serio* characters, and which identifies the *mezzi caratteri* that will become emblematic of the more mature and sophisticated *dramma giocoso*.

Furthermore, Emery's interpretation is conditioned by his definition of Goldoni's reform as almost exclusively the exaltation of the industrious merchant

⁸ Franco Fido, "Riforma e controriforma del teatro. I libretti per musica di Goldoni fra il 1748 e il 1753," in *Studi Goldoniani*, vol. 7 (1985); 63. In his libretti what the text enslaved to music lost on the side of the referent- that is in terms of the capacity to evoke the real world with imitative and critical efficacy: merchants, housewives, servants, etc.- it gained on the side of the signifier- jokes and word games, paradoxes and puns, onomatopée and hyperbole, misunderstandings and multi-lingual cacophonies.

⁹ Ted Emery, *Goldoni As Librettist: Theatrical Reform and the Drammi Giocosi per Musica* (New York: Peter Lang Press, 1991); 77.

class. Consequently, he suggests that the author abandons his reformist ideals in those works that appear more fantastical in nature (*Il Mondo della Luna*), or that criticize exponents of the *borghesia* alongside other social groups (even in the spoken theatre, with masterpieces such as *Sior Todero Brontolon*). Emery concludes, “when the *commedie* and comic operas are considered together as inseparable parts of an organic whole, the tension between reform and ‘counter-reform’ underscores a surprising sense of ideological fragility in an author who has traditionally been regarded as a bard of the bourgeoisie.”¹⁰

If, in Goldoni’s more mature works, the “middle-class morality” of the principal characters is no longer idealized but criticized, this does not however imply “ideological fragility.” If anything, the representation and criticism of all social classes demonstrates ideological fiber of notable resiliency. The limit of Emery’s interpretation is that his narrow concept of reform excludes from consideration a number of works that instead have much to reveal with regards to Goldoni’s reform and his strategies for realistic opera theatre.

Goldoni’s theatrical reform, echoes of which can be found in his musical production, must instead be understood as a much broader undertaking. The idealization of the hard-working middle class, symptomatic of Goldoni’s historical circumstances, should be interpreted not as an exclusive goal, but as the product of his criticism of the aristocracy, the target of the largest number of his works, and more than anything, of his desire for original characters. Merit, industriousness, and

¹⁰ *ibid.*; 75.

ingenuity are the virtues of Goldoni's present, in contrast to bloodline and inheritance. These inevitably come to the forefront once the prestige of the nobility begins to fade in contemporary society.

Moreover, it must be remembered (for the libretti as well as the comedies) that Goldoni's reform targets not one social class or another, but seeks realism above all, the principal source of his theatrical innovation as of his social criticism. In fact, Goldoni's revision of comic theatre did not initiate from revolutionary choices in subject matter, but rather from technical changes that, in an effort to more realistically reflect contemporary life, gradually abandoned the *Commedia dell'Arte* masks in favor of non-improvised, more elaborate parts. The moral hue of Goldoni's works depends upon the realism of the parts that convey it. By faithfully representing the contemporary world on the stage, Goldoni is able to, in his own words "(...)far vedere sul Teatro i difetti de' particolari, per guarire i difetti del pubblico, e di correggere le persone col timore di essere posto in ridicolo."¹¹ The present discussion is most often applied to Goldoni's spoken comedies, but is a necessary foundation for understanding the author's musical texts as well.

Finally, it should be noted that the contributions of Mangini, Fido, and Emery have been followed by numerous more recent publications, including articles by Barbara Gizzi and Ilaria Crotti,¹² recent conference proceedings,¹³ and a summary of

¹¹ Carlo Goldoni, *La dama prudente*, Forward. (...)to show on the stage the flaws of particular characters, so as to cure the flaws of the general public, and redress people through the fear of exposure to ridicule.

¹² Ilaria Crotti, "Il Carattere e il Baule" in *Libro, Mondo, e Teatro: Saggi Goldoniani* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000).

¹³ *Parola, Musica, Teatro, Scena. Percorsi nel teatro di Carlo Goldoni e Carlo Gozzi*, a cura di Giulietta Bazoli e Maria Ghelfi (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009).

current research by Siro Ferrone.¹⁴ These recent studies shed new light on the economic and managerial mechanisms of theatre, on specific historical circumstances that may have impacted Goldoni's production, and other previously overlooked areas of interest. Again, however, little is said of the *dramma giocoso*. The latest critical edition of Goldoni's libretti may well offer insights on the subject, though volumes containing his mature libretti have yet to be published.¹⁵

Thesis: the *dramma giocoso* as stylistic and ideological reform in music

Emery and others have considered principally Goldoni's early musical production, and even in more recent publications it is common to find critical works that discuss as many *intermezzi* as *drammi giocosi*. There is much more work to be done, however, on the libretti of the years of Goldoni's mature reform. Moreover, Goldoni's libretti are largely considered with respect to their thematic content in a broad sense, while no study has yet been offered that considers the *dramma giocoso* as a genre distinct from the rest of Goldoni's musical production.

Goldoni's musical innovations in this field are of both structural and ideological nature, and significantly shaped the European musical tradition of the Classical period. Indeed, several characteristics of Goldoni's mature *drammi giocosi* can be easily recognized in the highest achievements of later 18th century opera, most notably in the works of the first Viennese school.

Most importantly, the *dramma giocoso* developed by Goldoni occupies a very particular and innovative position among theatrical genres. In the words of Goldoni,

¹⁴ Siro Ferrone, *La vita e il teatro di Carlo Goldoni* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2011).

¹⁵ *Edizione Nazionale delle opere di Carlo Goldoni* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009- present).

it is characterized by “*materia buffa... intrecciata colla seria.*” Mixing comic elements with more serious tones, the *dramma giocoso* creates new opportunities for realism not afforded by traditional theatrical genres, perhaps the reason for Goldoni’s clear preference for this new form. The chapters that follow will analyze the particular affinity of the *dramma giocoso* to Goldoni’s theatrical reform, considering its combination of *serio* and *buffo* as a crucial element of realism which allows the author to achieve a broader spectrum of dramatic registers, and to create an honest and sophisticated representation of all social types and situations in a relevant and memorable musical theatre.

Critical approach and method

Given the abundance and variety of Goldoni’s *drammi giocosi*, the present study does not aim to supply a comprehensive critique of the entire *corpus*. Instead, it will offer a historically contextualized analysis drawing examples from those libretti that appear most indicative of the developments of the nascent genre. Some among these, consequently, are the texts that enjoyed greatest public acclaim, as they circulated widely, reaching the theatrical and musical traditions of other European nations.

This study will also necessarily consider the composers who set Goldoni’s text to music. Some interacted closely with the librettist for years, while others never met him. Niccolò Piccinni (1728-1800), Baldassarre Galuppi (1706-1785) and other close collaborators of Goldoni are key figures in understanding the transition from earlier operatic forms to the new *dramma giocoso*. Those who had little contact

with Goldoni will be no less relevant, however, as their names brought the Venetian libretti to international fame. Among these we find Franz Joseph Haydn, and even the young W. A. Mozart, whose very first opera drew from Goldoni's *La finta semplice* (1764), revised by Marco Coltellini (1724-1777), successor to Pietro Metastasio as Imperial poet at the Viennese court.

This said, the reader will not find here within a study of musical scores, but rather of the structure of opera as dictated by text. This decision is motivated by the very nature of Goldoni's work.

The history of opera shows that the relationship between text and score in the creation of these complex theatrical works has been in constant flux. The revolutionary *stile rappresentativo* promoted by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) in the madrigals of the *seconda prattica* put music at the service of text as it had not been for decades. Conversely, it is well known how closely Mozart worked with his librettists to have their texts adjusted to his musical needs. By then and throughout the 19th century, nascent Romantic ideals fostered an ever-closer connection between text and music, culminating in the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Looking back on this tradition, as on operas by composers such as Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) and Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), we are well accustomed to supposing a text created only for (and according to) specific requirements of a single musical rendition. Returning to the early 1700s and to Goldoni, however, we must adopt a different point of view. Goldoni's texts belong to a period in history, and a concept of opera theatre, that neither sought nor required shared work on a text or a score, but

rather valued versatility and quickness of preparation to meet overwhelming demand.

No composer nor librettist in any epoch has left to posterity the impression that his works were created under leisurely circumstances. Opera had scarcely been born that Monteverdi wrote of his second work, “Io mi riduceffi quasi alla morte nel scrivere l’Arianna.”¹⁶ Even so, the age of Enlightenment consumed theatre like no other moment in history, as what was once the privilege of few and noble patrons became public domain. Venice like no other European city appreciated and cultivated theater of all types, both on the stage and in the press, which consolidated and exported novelties and entertainment at many levels. It is no coincidence that Europe’s first public theatre was Venetian, and quite ahead of the times. In addition, the *Teatro San Cassiano* to which we refer, which opened its doors to ticket-bearing spectators from all walks of society in 1636, was born as an opera house. To put things in perspective, we may also recall that 18th-century Paris, which cultivated a reputation as one of the cultural capitals of Europe, housed three principal theatres: the *Opéra Comique*, the most famous *Comédie Française* (*La maison de Molière*, as it was known), and the *Comédie Italienne*, of which Goldoni would later take charge. Venice, during the same years, housed no less than thirteen theatres, all in competition for the newest exclusive texts and largest crowds. With this in mind, it becomes evident to what extent new works were desired and demanded, by *impresari* and by general and refined audiences alike.

¹⁶ Cited in Enrico Fubini, *Musica e Pubblico dal Rinascimento al Barocco* (Torino: Einaudi, 1984); 97. I reduced myself to near death in writing *Arianna*.

To all this we must add Goldoni, who himself was not a man to refuse any challenge. Still today scholars wonder at the famous (or infamous) “anno delle sedici commedie” (the year of the sixteen comedies), that is the 1750-51 comedy season. While the *Teatro Sant’Angelo* expected to produce eight new works from late summer to *Carnevale*, in an effort to promote the theatre against raging competition and on a wager with the impresario Girolamo Medebach (the only owner of a Venetian theatre not noble by birth, and who more willingly made room for Goldoni’s ‘experimental’ new reform comedies), Goldoni supplied exactly twice as many, still managing to create more than one *dramma giocoso* on the side.

For these reasons and more, libretti were quickly composed, produced, printed, and exported, and set to music by a large number of composers throughout the whole of Europe. This is not to say that Goldoni never made adjustments based on rehearsals in the theatre when time and circumstances permitted. Most importantly, and in keeping with his realist inclinations, he fashioned his characters according to the strengths of his performers. It is important to understand, however, that the mode of work and the intention behind these texts was altogether different from what later tradition has dictated. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* confirms,

It has been questioned whether Goldoni alone was responsible for this new dramaturgy [the *dramma giocoso*], or whether the composers who set the librettos had a hand in it. All the evidence suggests that at this point in the 18th century it was the librettist who controlled the dramatic form and distributed the musical numbers according to the requirements of the opera company for whom he worked. Significantly, the Venetian journalist Gasparo Gozzi, reviewing Goldoni’s *L’amore artigiano* (music

by Latilla) in 1760, praised Goldoni, not the composer, calling his the 'foremost inventor of finales that have varied action and unfailing novelty.'¹⁷

It may be in part for the at times thin, at times overabundant, connection between librettist and composer that Goldoni's musical contributions remain understudied, and continually overshadowed by his more famous comedies. His name is only mentioned in most music history books, and the history of the *dramma giocoso* is still awaiting exhaustive research. Yet, it is the text alone that supplies form, subdivision, meter, content, and all of those elements that music can subsequently animate through harmonic discourse and color. In Goldoni's time, the text precedes the score, and it is by building on the textual foundation that musical discourse can take shape. Perhaps Goldoni's contributions to musical theatre have been overlooked precisely because one would not immediately suppose that innovations in music could come from an almost purely literary source.

The chapters that follow endeavor to fully uncover Goldoni's innovations in musical theatre in relation to the operatic tradition that preceded and followed, as well as to his efforts as a comic playwright. Instead of separating texts for music and for prose comedy as has most often been done, it is most fruitful, and philologically reasonable, to consider Goldoni's production in close comparison. Plays and libretti, after all, came from the same mind, were written contemporaneously, and not rarely for the same public. Only through a comprehensive approach can we fully grasp the lasting contributions of Carlo Goldoni to modern literature, and to the history of opera in particular.

¹⁷ James L. Jackman, "Goldoni" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 14th ed., vol. 17 (New York: Macmillan, 1995); 502.

CHAPTER II.

Towards the first *Drammi Giocosi*

Goldoni began his activity as librettist at an early age in 1730, first adapting existing texts for new musical settings, as for example *Griselda*, from a text by Apostolo Zeno, for Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). Goldoni then authored texts for short comic *intermezzi*, while the first *dramma giocoso* (*La scuola moderna*) was written in 1748, ten years after *Momolo cortesan*, the comedy that marks the beginnings of his theatrical reform. It is significant to note that before Goldoni, both the presence and popularity of the *dramma giocoso* in Venice are difficult to trace. Following his production, however, we can find examples throughout the whole of Europe, all the way to the Viennese school.

To better appreciate the scope of Goldoni's contributions to the *dramma giocoso* and its separation from *opera buffa* in mature form, it will be useful to first revisit the origins of comic opera, where we find antecedents and uncover several direct links to our author.

Tracing the genre: Neapolitan origins and arrival in Venice

i. The limits of opera seria

In the dedication of his comedy *Terenzio* (1754), the Arcadian Polisseno Fegejo bows to the greatest man of modern theatre, Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, better known as Metastasio (1698-1782):

In tutti i teatri d'Europa non si rappresentano che i
Drammi vostri. Si replicano nel teatro medesimo le

dodici, le venti volte. Non vi è compositore di Musica, che non le abbia sperimentate. Non vi è casa, non vi è persona, che non ne sia provveduta. Sono numerosissime le edizioni, e fortunati coloro che le hanno stampate. I Comici ancora se le sono appropriate per molto tempo, e con profitto notabile le hanno senza musica rappresentate. Da moltissime genti si fanno per la maggior parte a memoria, e pure si gustano sempre, piacciono ogni ora di più, e qualunque Dramma espongasi sulle scene, ha sempre un massimo disavvantaggio, se non è della felicissima penna del Metastasio.¹⁸

Fegejo, who is none other than our Carlo Goldoni, joined the *Accademia degli Arcadi* (founded in Rome in 1690, and present in “colonies” throughout Italy) as Metastasio was fast becoming one of the greatest exponents of its second generation. To judge from his works, however, Goldoni seems to have appended his Arcadian name to comedies and libretti more as a stamp of prestige and an act of homage than as a seal of fidelity to Arcadian poetic principle. As we will see in the following chapter, the social critique and quotidian reality rendered so vividly in Goldoni’s comedies and in many libretti could not be more distant from the philo-Classical and bucolic hues of Arcadian, and Metastasian, theatre.

Goldoni’s Arcadian affiliation appears even more rhetorical as we recall that comedy and comic opera, while first relegated to the accompaniment of tragic plays and *opera seria*, began to take form as independent genres once they were rejected and eradicated by the famous Arcadian reform of Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750), consolidated by Metastasio. These poets endeavored to return *opera seria* to its

¹⁸ Carlo Goldoni, *Terenzio*, Forward. In all the theatres of Europe we find none but your plays. They are given in the same theatre twelve, even twenty times. There is no composer of Music that has not tried them. There is no home, no person that does not possess them. Numerous are the editions, and lucky are those who have printed them. The actors too have made them their own, and with notable success have staged them without music. Many people know most of them by heart, and yet they are always enjoyed, they become ever more pleasing, and whatever Dramma be presented on the stage, it always suffers major disadvantage, if it does not spring from the felicitous pen of Metastasio.

original prestige and simplicity largely by purging it of all comic elements, thus restoring Classical equilibrium to structure and meter of these tragedies in music.

Didone abbandonata (1724), *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1729), *L'Olimpiade* (1733), and *La Clemenza di Tito* (1734), but few in a long list of renowned titles, render immediately apparent how Arcadian opera, or better Metastasian opera (for Trapassi's texts alone are the uncontested models of the *melodramma serio*), drew plots exclusively from ancient history and Classical mythology, the same philosophy soon replicated in the French *tragédie lyrique* (though for motivation of political rather than cultural nature, the pagan gods serving as allegorical representation of the reigning monarch and his court).

Seeking majesty rather than intrigue, Metastasian opera invested more in *arie* than in elaborate action and plot and was made up entirely of these solo pieces in alternation with *versi sciolti*, or free recitative not bound to obligations of rhyme or meter that could corrupt their 'natural' quality. The *da capo aria*, which resumed previously heard text and music at its end to create a symmetrical tripartite structure, is a central characteristic of this type of theatre. It responded perfectly to neoclassical ideals of equilibrium and proportion, it was soon adopted as a fixed form.

Yet, the very characteristics that made this musical form so desirable through an Arcadian perspective, would later render it useless for Goldoni and his successors. Quite simply, a return of opening material at the end of any piece logically negates any progression of action, thought, or emotional state that could be explored within. Goldoni, as a realist author, preferred to cultivate a more

psychologically attuned theatre both in prose and in song, and the circular nature of the *da capo* form clearly rendered it wholly ill suited to carrying plot development. Public acclaim for Metastasian theatre further enforced its limitations as we shall see, as audiences eagerly awaited the *bravura* of its opera stars, which soon became the sole principal incentive for going to theatre. Vocalists needed perhaps little encouragement to stretch the *arie* into moments of complete dramatic stasis. This was often the case, for example, with the *aria d'uscita* (exit aria), obligatory before any leading character could leave the stage, and a further hindrance to verisimilitude and fluidity of action in the eyes of our author.

Consequently, while Arcadian principles brought Metastasio to compose libretti of the highest quality and greatest fame, the larger outcome of his reform, especially in retrospect, appears perhaps the opposite of the effect intended. Finally free from the restrictions of the 'nobler' genre, comic opera grew quickly in its own right to establish a novel tradition that began to rapidly fill theatres and create demand for new ones to open. The investment of many new authors in comic rather than melodramatic works in the early 18th century was not only fueled by popular interest, but also and especially, in the case of Goldoni and others, by critical instinct. *Opera seria*, despite the noblest Arcadian intentions, once largely diffused in theatres, began a new stage of decadence determined by its very nature.

The decline of *opera seria* was gradual and by no means uniform, but already detected early in the century. *Il Teatro alla Moda* (Fashionable Theatre), an exquisite satirical pamphlet authored by the Venetian Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739), specifically targets *opera seria* and was already in print by 1720, while Metastasio

continued to produce *libretti* until 1740. As already noted, the *arie* of *opera seria*, in form and in content, were moments of abstract contemplation that risked bringing the action to a complete halt. As such, they became to an extreme extent opportunities for musical elaboration, particularly for leading singers who could fill any reprise with ornamentation. Audiences enjoyed food, drink, and conversation as operas were performed, and tuned in most unanimously during the *da capo arie*, when they could marvel at a singer's vocal ability and judge his or her daring virtuosic maneuvers. Vocal display appears by historical accounts almost as a sport for theatre-goers, and became so divorced from scruples of dramatic coherence as to give rise to the famous *aria di baule*, lending Benedetto Marcello more fuel for his pen. These "trunk arias," tailored to vocalists' individual abilities, toured with them as the name suggests, bluntly inserted within this or the other opera in substitution of an original aria, often with scarce relation to the surrounding action.

It is to this practice, incredible by today's standards, that Benedetto Marcello alludes when, with scathing sarcasm, he instructs the modern opera star to carry himself in the latest fashion:

Si lamenterà sempre della Parte, dicendo *che quello non è il suo fare*, riguardo all'Azione, che l'Arie non sono per la sua abilità, etc., cantando in tal caso qualche Arietta d'altro compositore, protestando, *che questa alla tal corte, appresso il tale Gran Personaggio* (non tocca a lui dirlo) *portava tutto l'applauso, e gli è stata fatta replicare sino a diciassette volte per sera.*¹⁹

¹⁹ Benedetto Marcello, *Il Teatro alla Moda*, "Al Musico." He will always complain of his Part, saying that *it is not his doing* with regards to the Action, and that the Arie are not for his abilities, etc., in that case singing instead an Arietta by a different composer, protesting *that this piece, at such and such court, under such and such Great Eminency* (who it is not his place to mention), *brought all the applause, and up to seventeen encores in a single evening were requested.*

The practice also logically demanded *arie* of rather generic language, so as to be more easily inserted into a plurality of contexts. Marcello underlines at once the density of virtuosic display and the thinness of dramatic content in a fashionable melodramatic *aria*:

Dovranno formarsi tutte le Canzonette delle medesime cose, cioè di Passaggi lunghissimi, di Sincope, di Semituoni, d'alterazioni di Sillabe, di repliche di parole nulla significanti, v.g. Amore Amore, Impero Impero, Europa Europa, Furori Furori, Orgoglio Orgoglio, etc.²⁰

In sum, the stasis of traditional melodramatic forms, together with the theatrical absurdities of decadent *opera seria*, while all the rage when Goldoni was but a young man, prepared fertile ground for a more rational, socially relevant comic alternative. While Metastasio continued to acquire the fame and diffusion that we read of in Goldoni's *Terenzio*, from a critical point of view, what he sought in simplicity and purity carried the risk of becoming sterile. In its development, comic opera thus turned away from the predominating theatre and drew from vastly different sources, mainly the Neapolitan tradition, as we will examine in detail in the following section.

Goldoni's own output reflects with perfect clarity the shift from a desire to emulate tragic opera theatre to an entirely opposite aesthetic and a search for new horizons. Goldoni, as any respectable student of law and of the ancient authors, commenced his theatrical career with high hopes of establishing himself as a tragedian of the purest Classical brand. His first texts were tragic operas, and his

²⁰ *ibid.*, "Al Poeta." All the little songs must be made up of the same things, that is very long Passages, Syncopations, Semitones, alterations of Syllables, repetition of meaningless words, e.g. Love Love, Empire Empire, Europe Europe, Rage Rage, Pride Pride, etc.

theatrical debut, the ill-fated *Amalásunta*, was written ‘according to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace,’ “per la quale,” Goldoni writes, “avea spogliato bastantemente la Didone e l’Issipile di Metastasio.”²¹ Despite our author’s prestigious sources, his advisors, the Milanese Conte Prata and his circle, found that Goldoni had forgotten too many good principles of tragic theatre. The author, many years later, would describe the scene in vivid tones: “Non potea più contenermi, mi levai con un movimento involontario, violento, gli chiesi scusa, lo ringraziai de’ suoi amichevoli avvertimenti, e conclusi dicendo che, scandalizzato dalla *regole* del Dramma, facea proponimento di non comporne mai più.”²² *L’Amalásunta* passed from the hands of his Milanese critics to the fireplace of Goldoni’s lodging in town, a precocious sign that his calling lay elsewhere.

ii. Older antecedents of comic opera

Having looked at the theatrical world in which comic opera was introduced, we may now trace its evolution outside of the walls of *opera seria*, so as to better understand, in turn, the new direction taken by Goldoni.

First, however, we must carefully weigh the notion that comic opera was but nascent after the Arcadian reform, for in the history of every human enterprise, and most particularly the arts, evolution has never unfolded in the linear fashion that textbooks illustrate. Purely comic musical works were written and composed, albeit in more sporadic and less consistent manner, even centuries before Enlightenment

²¹ Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane (Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali [1761-1778])*, tomo X. (...) for which I had sufficiently robbed *Dido* and *Issipile* by Metastasio.

²² *ibid.*, tomo XI. I could no longer restrain myself, I stood with an involuntary, violent motion, apologized, thanked him for his friendly warnings, and concluded by saying that, scandalized by the rules of Opera, I resolved never to write any again.

opera buffa. Some scholars date the birth of comic opera to the *Cinquecento*, with *Il Cicalamento delle Donne al Bucato* (the Chatter of Women at the Wash) by Alessandro Striggio the elder (1536-1592), principal court musician under Cosimo de' Medici, whose homonymous son would later compose the libretto of Monteverdi's famous *Orfeo*. *Il Cicalamento* has been called a 'madrigal comedy,' and does not present a unified action in the manner of later opera, but rather a series of ordered madrigals (polyphonic vocal compositions) that narrate a sequence of events.

Moving forward in time, we find several Venetian works of note in the last thirty years of the 17th century. In particular, it is worth recalling *Il Candaule* (1679), *dramma per musica* by the librettist Adriano Morselli (dates unknown) that revisits the ancient Anatolian kingdom of Lydia; *L'Alcibiade* (1680), titled after the ancient Athenian commander and fictional protagonist of a presumed early platonic dialogue, *dramma per musica* by librettist Aurelio Aureli (~1650?-1710?) of the *Accademia degli Imperfetti*, with music by Marc'Antonio Ziani (~1650?-1715), who was *maestro di cappella* under Ferdinando Gonzaga in Mantua and later under Leopold I in Vienna; and *Messalina* (1680), from a text by Francesco Maria Piccoli (dates unknown) and music by Carlo Pallavicino (1630-1688) of the *Ospedale degli Incurabili*. The latter two works are centered on courtly characters, while *La Semiramide* (1671), later to reappear in Venice as *La Schiava Fortunata* (The Lucky Slave, 1674), employs traditional comic devices such as disguise and role reversal. This originally Florentine work, commissioned by prince Leopoldo de' Medici and created by court doctor and *poeta teatrale* Giovanni Andrea Moniglia (1625-1700)

with music by Antonio Cesti (1623-1669), draws comic techniques from Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), creating intrigue from the physical resemblance of Semiramide to her son Nino, which permits character swapping and dramatic irony.

In keeping with the *Seicento* tradition launched by *L'Orfeo*, all of these works are set in remote times, and feature ancient protagonists. One could hardly suppose that enlightened comic opera should draw its roots from them. Indeed, in the same decades but far south in Naples, nobles and workers alike were already enjoying an entirely different type of musical theatre that privileged realism above exoticism. Neapolitan comic theater of the late 17th century was not of sporadic nature as that of northern cities. Rather, it grew from direct contact with popular and dialectal culture, enriched by the local traditional song in *llengua napolitana*. The *canzone napoletana*, still appreciated today and still intimately tied to its dialectal roots, from its purely lyrical origin gradually acquired a dramatic dimension.

iii. Naples and the 'commedia pe' mmusica'

In the first decade of the 1700s, (particularly 1700-1707), the vogue in Naples was all for *scherzi drammatici e scenici*, that were represented both in noble *palazzi* and in the popular *piazze*. Halfway between *melodramma* and popular tradition, they employed *buffo* and *serio* characters together, and mixed adapted operatic forms (*recitativo* and *arie*) with the use of dialect. An exemplary work of this fashion, now lost, was *Il Mondo Abbattuto* (The World Demolished), *scherzo scenico* by Nicola Sabini (~1675?-1705) and Michele de Falco (~1688-~1732?), given in Naples in 1701. As in Sabini's case (other closed pieces of his have

survived), the musicians who wrote *canzoni* in the popular fashion were the same who created these *scherzi*.

On 26 December 1707, *La Cilla* (text by Francesco Antonio Tullio (1660-1737) set to music by Michelangelo Faggiuoli (1666-1733)), the first known Neapolitan *commedia per musica*, was given at the *palazzo* of the princes of Chiusano. In the audience were the viceroy and the highest nobility, together with an assembly of laymen which included intellectuals, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and court functionaries.

It should be noted that the first authors of *scherzi* and *commedie per musica* in Naples were not all professional musicians or playwrights. The aforementioned authors, for example, were jurists. According to Roberto Zanetti,²³ this implies that they were not bound to the rigid musical customs upheld by the aristocracy, as court composers would have been, and therefore more at liberty to experiment and produce an alternative to the tradition. Together with librettists Francesco Antonio Tullio (1660-1737), Giovanni Veneziano (better known as Agasippo Mercotellis, 1683-1742), Carlo de Petris (dates unknown), Nicola Gianni (dates unknown), Bernardo Saddumene (dates unknown), and others, the composers who contributed to the new comic genres are numerous, among them Faggiuoli, Michele de Falco, Benedetto Riccio (dates unknown), Francesco Antonio Scarlatti (1666-~1741?), and Antonio Orefice (~1708?-~1734?). Orefice would become a key figure in the development of musical comedy up until the end of the 1720s, composing music not

²³ Explained in Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera, Il libretto italiano nel Settecento* (EDT Musica, 1984); 107.

only for works in dialect but also for comic operas in Italian (e.g., *Chi la dura la vince* (He Who Withstands Prevails), 1721), for *opere serie*, *opere tragicomiche*, and even the earliest *drammi giocosi* (*La Camilla*, 1709).

Common to all is a renewed emphasis on the populace and on everyday life, for the *commedia per musica*, unlike the few aforementioned comic operas of the *Seicento* produced in northern Italy, was a predominantly realistic musical theatre. Its scenes are set in different neighborhoods of Naples, not in foreign lands and distant times. Similarly, the action is not extravagant, but rather sketches daily life. Paolo Gallarati has suggested that the simplicity of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica* was motivated by the same anti-Baroque sentiments that gave rise to the Arcadian reform. “L’iperbole straniante del barocco viene quindi accantonata in quest’arte a misura d’uomo [la *commedia per musica*], nata dalla stessa esigenza di semplificazione che ispirava il movimento arcadico(...); un moto di rinnovamento che determinerà, pochi anni dopo, l’affermazione del teatro metastasiano.”²⁴ As we have seen, however, this common philosophical ground, perhaps shared in origin, does not produce any affinity of content between the two types of theatre (one representing an idealized past, the other anchored in the present), though some scholars have supposed Metastasio to have been familiar with Neapolitan comedy,

²⁴ *ibid.*; 109. The alienating hyperbole of the Baroque is thus put aside in this art of more human proportion, born from the same desire for simplification that inspired the Arcadian movement (...); an impulse of renewal that will determine, a few years later, the rise of Metastasian theatre.

and to have derived the simplicity of his language and the harmony of his verses from this model.²⁵

Furthermore, while elsewhere *opera seria*, from its Baroque heritage, was still intended principally for listeners of a certain rank, the *commedia per musica* was appreciated by the nobility as well as by the working class, as the première of *La Cilla* testifies. In those particular circumstances, changes at the governmental level may have played a key role, in particular as, in 1707, the Venetian diplomat and later cardinal Vincenzo Grimani (1652-1710) was made viceroy of Naples. An ally of the Hapsburgs, Grimani at the head of local government represented a break from the Spanish domination that had hitherto been held. Coincidentally Grimani, himself a librettist, was also the owner of the *Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo* in Venice, where his operas were performed and where, most importantly, Goldoni would later serve as director (1737-41) and present the comedy often cited as the beginning of his reform, *Momolo cortesan* (Momolo courtier).

Grimani's cultured appreciation for musical theatre may well have encouraged the proliferation of the *commedia per musica* in the court environment and to a broader audience. *La Cilla*, for example, after its first great success before a mixed audience, was repeated upon request one month later. Scholarship shows that the great and rapid development of the *commedia per musica* in its first phase, even before *impresari* began opening their theatres to the general public, was largely stimulated by the patronage of the Neapolitan nobility. Many early *commedie*

²⁵ See Alberto Basso et al., *Musica e scena. Storia dello spettacolo musicale* vol. I- III (Torino: UTET, 1998), and Roberto Zanetti, *La Musica Italiana nel Settecento*, vol. 1 (Busto Arsizio: Bramante Editrice, 1978.).

per musica, while performed not only at court as we have seen, bear the names of local noblemen in the dedication.

Yet how can we understand the eagerness of the higher class to sponsor the development of a theatre that was written outside the courts, and that was popular in content and style? The key may lie again in political context, as Paolo Gallarati explains: “L’uso del vernacolo(...)non ne prova un’origine popolare, ma va piuttosto interpretato come il rifiorire di una tradizione culturale indigena opposta a quella straniera dei dominatori, prima spagnoli e poi austriaci, a partire dal 1707; tanto che gli autori appartenevano in maggioranza al ceto forense del cosiddetto popolo civile, portatore delle nuove istanze della cultura preilluministica.”²⁶ Gallarati’s connection of *commedia* librettists to nascent Enlightenment ideals, thanks to their professional exposure as jurists, is a keen insight that constitutes another link (but by no means the last, as we shall see) between Neapolitan comedy and Goldoni.

To this we add that just as the composers of *commedie per musica* were also creators of traditional Neapolitan song, and infused one music with the style of the other, the librettists of these musical works were often authors of dialectal prose comedies (*commedie d’intreccio e di carattere*), fully imbued in the native tradition that boasted *novelle*, *poemi*, and *drammi pastorali*. Gallarati speaks of “strettissime interconnessioni tra i due generi- opera e commedia,”²⁷ as the same author wrote

²⁶ P. Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 108. The use of the vernacular (...) does not prove its popular origin, but should be interpreted as the renaissance of the local culture, in opposition to that of foreign domination, first Spanish then Austrian, beginning in 1707; so much so that the authors were in large part members of the judiciary class of civil society, harbinger of the new demands of pre-Enlightenment thought.

²⁷ *ibid.*;108. Very tight interconnections between the two genres- opera and comedy.

texts of one and the other type. A similar interconnection characterizes the entirety of Goldoni's output, and is the foundation of the present study.

The close relationship of opera texts to prose comedy is exemplified by *Patrò Calienno de la Costa* (by Mercotellis and Antonio Orefice), a *commedia per musica* drawn closely from *La Perna*, prose comedy in dialect written by the attorney Nicola Corvo. *Patrò Calienno* marks a turning point in the history of comic opera, for it launched the first season of the *Teatro dei Fiorentini*, which opened its doors to the public in 1709. This *commedia per musica* is entirely in Neapolitan dialect and features many comic scenes that draw humor from the same type of light caricature we find in many *intermezzi*. Gallarati, however, brings to light an entirely different quality and describes the piece as “lavoro se non proprio dominato dalla malinconia, certo fortemente improntato all'ombreggiatura del mezzo-carattere, e ad un tipo di ritrattistica psicologica efficacemente abbozzata.”²⁸ Mercotellis thus prefers a type of comedy that depicts quotidian scenes in realistic tones, able therefore to grasp the inner, intimate musings that accompany daily struggles. *Patrò Calienno* is the earliest known psychological comedy that puts the world of its spectators onto the stage.

From a technical point of view, too, *Patrò Calienno* foreshadows future Goldonian traits. In particular, unlike *opera seria* which, as we have seen, separated *aria* from *recitative* to the point of allowing the *arie di baule*, the *commedia per musica* refused the tendency to separate action from *aria*. The *arie* in *Patrò Calienno* are not static descriptions of abstract emotions, but are vividly connected to the

²⁸ *ibid.*, 111. A work if not exactly dominated by melancholy, certainly patterned after the hues of the mezzo-carattere, and a type of psychological portrayal that is sketched with efficacy.

events, thanks to their inclusion of names and the use of direct discourse. Furthermore, they are placed centrally within scenes (unlike the exit aria), preceded and followed by recitative, therefore better embedded within the action.

Alongside the *arie*, ensemble pieces in the *commedia per musica* also undergo significant development with respect to *opera seria*. The progressive expansion of ensembles, especially in music, but also at times in prose comedy (as we will see with Goldoni's works), derives from the imitative desire of a realistic theatre to depict social interaction with vivid color and veracity. In the early *commedia per musica*, polyphonic ensembles were most often used, for example, to evoke the bustling and chatter of crowded public spaces, such as a town *piazza*. In other words, these pieces did not affect the main action, but served a representative role. Yet, it is from this foundation that Goldoni will later develop ensembles that carry intrigue, employing up to four or more characters simultaneously who no longer serve as sonorous background but take center stage and drive the action.

The many and novel possibilities of the ensemble *aria* will also, as we shall see, bring Goldoni to reduce the solo *aria*, once the center of attention, so as to leave more room for group discourse. Mature ensemble pieces will juxtapose emotions of different kinds (rage, hope, sadness, surprise, tenderness) with the aid of melodic and harmonic differentiation, which in music can render multiple voices intelligible in the same moment. Interestingly, the so-called *ensemble finale*, a signature of Goldoni's mature *drammi giocosi* and of later Classical opera, appears in his best prose comedies as well. This is an aspect of Goldoni's theatre that has never been studied, but that constitutes further proof that his comic theatre and his operas have

more in common than scholars have claimed so far. Naturally, spoken word without the aid of music requires different strategies to maintain the intelligibility of group discourse. We will explore this element further in the following chapter.

To return to the *commedia per musica* at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini*, it is important to know that this venue, also frequented by the nobility, initially offered a mix of musical comedies and more traditional *melodrammi* (by minor authors, however, rather than by Metastasio). The same impresario (a certain Nicola Serino) would, at a later stage, decide to specialize the theatre exclusively in *commedie per musica*. The theatre therefore became the first center of what would later be *opera buffa*, and opened to an even broader audience after 1714 (following a damaging fire and rebuilding), with old and new works: by Nicola Corvo (*Patrò Calienno de la Costa*, *Lo 'mbruoglio de li nomme*, 1711, *Patrò Tonno d'Isca*, 1714), Nicola Gianni (*L'alloggiamentare*, premiered 1710), and by Francesco Antonio Tullio (*Li vecchie coffeiate*, 1710, *La Cianna*, 1711, and *Lo finto Armenejo* 1717), among others.

The success of the *commedia per musica* at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini* encouraged other theatres in Naples to present these works, and within a few years these musical comedies arrived at the *Teatro Nuovo* and the *Teatro della Pace*, ever more appreciated by audiences. An opera worthy of note that belongs to this second phase of the *commedia per musica* is *Li zite 'n galera* (The Spouses in Prison), by Bernardo Saddumene, given at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini* in 1722 with music by Leonardo Vinci (1690-1730), then modified and represented at the *Teatro della Pace* in 1724, newly opened thanks to growing public interest in comic opera. This work is particularly relevant to a study of Goldoni's musical texts because it bears

clear signs of evolution with respect to earlier musical *commedie*. In particular, in *Li zite 'n galera* we find ensemble arias both within scenes as well as at the end of acts, a dramatic technique that will soon become the signature of Goldoni's *libretti* and of fully formed *opera buffa*. To cite only one example, the second act contains a famous trio that presents pert dialogue, not in declamatory style, but in an almost conversational (and given the romantic rivalries, sparring) tone, yet not without pathetic accents:

BELLUCCIA. Fortuna cana, o Dio,
dimme che te facc'io!
CARLO. Amore tradetore,
che buò da chisto core?
CIOMMA. Destino mio teranno,
levame da st'affanno.
A TRE. Quanno la vuò scompì!
CARLO. Bellezza de sto core.
BELLUCCIA. Facce de tradetore.
CIOMMA. Tu s' la morte mia.
CARLO. Che t'aggio fatto.
CIOMMA. Abbia.
BELLUCCIA. Carlo non te partì.
CIOMMA. E lassannillo ì.
CARLO. Tu mme vuò fa' impazzì.²⁹

With *Li zite 'n galera*, we begin to perceive a measure of distinction between character types which will later evolve into *parti buffe*, *parti serie*, and *mezzi caratteri*. The differences in style and content brought by this division of roles, expanded and fully established by Goldoni, will become his single greatest contribution to comic opera.

²⁹ Bernardo Saddumene, *Li zite 'n galera*, Act II. (Belluccia: Oh Fortune, o God, tell me, what have I done to you? Carlo: Traitorous love, what do you want from this heart? Ciomma: Tyrannous destiny, release me from this torment. Tutti: How I wish I could prevail! Carlo: Beauty of this heart. B: Traitor-face. Ciomma: You are the death of me. Carlo: What have I done to you? Ciomma: Go away. B: Carlo, don't go. Ciomma: Let him go. Carlo: you want to drive me out of my mind.

Notably, Gallarati draws a parallel between the opposing registers of comic opera and those of the *Commedia dell'Arte*: "L'opposizione dei due registri [serio e buffo] era già presente nella commedia dell'arte dove accanto alle maschere dei giovani innamorati di buona famiglia convenivano i lazzi ben noti dei personaggi grotteschi."³⁰ He goes on to suggest, however, that this same dualism would render new comic operas less realistic, principally because characters would become exaggeratedly comic or tragic, and as such incapable of reflecting any credible psychological realism.

Goldoni, as is well known, first made his fame as an author of *canovacci* (schematic outlines from which the actors of the *Commedia dell'Arte* would improvise, from the French *canevas*, a fabric on which one embroiders), and was quite familiar with this tradition. In this respect, the connection of his opera characters to the mask types of this more rustic comedy may certainly afford initial comparison. However, we cannot mistake the fact that, while the tendency of the *Commedia dell'Arte* is to exaggerate differences between character types for grotesque comic effect, the *dramma giocoso* will instead progressively attenuate them, in the effort to create a comic theatre farther from stereotype and closer to reality, thus more able to move the affections. How else, otherwise, could we account for the new fashion of the *comédie larmoyante* in the later 18th century, or for the *mezzo carattere* in the works of Goldoni and other authors after him? This new role in particular, whose stamp is neither fully comic nor tragic, but shows

³⁰ Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 120. The opposition of the two registers [serio and buffo] was already present in the *Commedia dell'Arte* where assembled alongside the masks [archetypal figures] of young lovers of good family were the familiar gags and motions of the grotesque characters.

aspects of both *buffo* and *serio* in relation to changing events, is the mark of comic opera in its most sophisticated form, and the perfect antithesis to the hackneyed masks and manner of acting of the *Commedia dell'Arte* tradition.

iv. The commedia per musica towards a universal stage

As the *commedia per musica* established itself with success in the major theatres in Naples, it began to engage visiting actors from other regions of Italy (initially, professional actors also performed in musical roles, but professional vocalists reserved their talents for *opera seria*), and as musical exchanges continued, its fame began to spread north. With the arrival of Italian actors from outside of Naples, librettists such as Bernardo Saddumene, Niccolò Corvo, and Francesco Antonio Tullio were among the first to begin to soften the strong dialectal stamp of their works, alternating local speech with parts in Italian, or better, *toscano*, performed by the visiting actors.

A universal or 'standard' Italian, quite measured in comparison to the quick cadences of dialect, and untainted by local color, lent itself more credibly to roles of a certain gravity, and, drawing inspiration from Metastasian theatre, gradually became the expected mode of expression for characters of higher social status. As this tendency consolidated into common practice, the use of dialect was in turn limited to characters of popular extraction, the most spontaneous source of comic play (and the most concrete link to the *Commedia dell'Arte*). Without doubt, this linguistic division contributed significantly to the explicit distinction between *serio* and *buffo* roles, increasingly apparent in the libretti of Gennaro Antonio Federico

(birth unknown-1744), Pietro Trinchera (1707-1755), and Antonio Palomba (1705-1769).

The 'contamination' of Neapolitan dialect with Tuscan properly began in the 1718 season, with the staging of *Il gemino amore* (The Coupled Love) and of *Il trionfo dell'onore* (The Triumph of Honor; texts by Tullio, music by Orefice and Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725; *Il trionfo* is in fact his only comic opera)). Their Italianate titles alone indicate a significant change from works such as *Lo 'mbruoglio de li nomme* (The Mix-up of Names), or *Li zite 'n galera*, and are indicative of a new outlook, and a new envisioned role for the *commedia per musica*. In the words of Roberto Zanetti, the use of Tuscan "(...)è sintomo, prematuro, di una volontà evolutiva che sembra anche perseguire una diversa collocazione della commedia, per sopravvanzare quella strapaesana implicita nella sua natura dialettale"³¹ (though as we have noted, the "collocazione strapaesana," notwithstanding the universal presence of local dialect, did not imply a lower-class audience, but firstly one of nobles and intellectuals). Essentially, the Italianized *commedia per musica* opened to a broader bourgeois audience, anticipating its circulation in cities beyond Naples.

Its diffusion did not, however, come at the price of generalizing its content as well. Zanetti confirms, "della tradizione però rimane il rifiuto delle 'azioni eroiche e regali', l'avvertita necessità di differenziarsi dal dramma aulico mediante la scelta di

³¹ Roberto Zanetti, "La commedia musicale" in *La Musica Italiana nel Settecento*, vol. 1 (Busto Arsizio: Bramante Editrice, 1978.); 270. (...) is a premature symptom of the desire for evolution that seems to pursue a different collocation for comedy, in order to transcend the utterly rustic one implicit in its dialectal nature.

‘successi domestici e familiari.’”³² The same preference for “successi domestici” instead of heroic or, in the case of Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806), fantastical theatre will become the hallmark of Goldoni’s reform, earning him a lasting place in literary history, but much criticism in his own time.

Having traced the history of the *commedia per musica* from its origins to its fullest form in Naples, we can briefly recapitulate its general characteristics before following its path north to Venice and to Goldoni. Elements in common with Goldoni’s theatre will become immediately apparent, as will divergences from the older *intermezzo* tradition that continued into the early 1700s, later to be replaced by Classical *opera buffa*.

The consolidated *commedia per musica* is typically articulated in three acts, casting six to seven characters in total. The action, preserving this genre’s original intent, is fast paced and carried by tight dialogue in recitative. Dialogue as the main vehicle for action takes the place of less realistic monologue, more typical of the *intermezzi*. Extended *arie* are avoided; style and character do not draw from *opera seria*, but directly from the local tradition of Neapolitan song. In line with this preference, Goldoni, without drawing from Neapolitan song, will further reduce dramatic stasis by creating more concise and fluid *ariette*, definitively divorcing comic opera from the Metastasian model. The subject matter is amorous, but not expressed in the well-worn and inflexible terms of *opera seria* (if not for purposes of parody). The *commedia per musica* is inventive and quick, its dialogical structure

³² *ibid.*; 270. (...) of the tradition however remains the rejection of ‘heroic and regal actions,’ and the acutely felt need to differentiate this new theatre from pompous tragic drama through the choice of ‘domestic and familial triumphs.’

permitting rapid changes in action, elements of surprise, and comic intrigues all colored in local, realistic, and genuine tones. Ideas and situations drawn from daily life generate an inexhaustible variety of plots, and offer a window onto Neapolitan life at the turn of the 18th century.

A further divergence from *opera seria* was the exclusion of *castrati* and the use of performers of both sexes for greater realism. Common characters include townspeople, fishermen, farmers, servants, shop boys, and soldiers, but also middle class figures such as doctors, artisans, and deplorable old misers. The purely popular scenes of the first *commedie* gradually moved towards the representation of a bourgeois world, especially from 1718 with the introduction of Italian into these works. Towards this end, it is also relevant to note the transformation of character names especially after 1730, as remarked by Gallarati. Not only are these no longer Neapolitan, but they are typified in such a way as to imply the role a character will take, a practice already present in theater of the *Cinquecento*. Comic names (eg. Rosicca, Zeza, Prizeta, Gnasullo, Scatozza) read like an open book, but popular *serio* names too, such as Leandro, Flavia, Violante, Aurelia, Camillo, Elisa, and Lauretta, betray social standing as well as age and (to an extent) temperament.

Most importantly, beginning in the second decade of its existence, the *commedia per musica* evolves towards the inclusion of sentimental strains, the same refinement that, in greater extent, will characterize the *dramma giocoso*. Earlier precedents may be found in the *commedia sentimentale* of the *Seicento*, cultivated within the literary academies as an alternative to the *tragicommedia*. In addition, Zanetti has perceptively suggested that in the case of Neapolitan opera (but not in

later comic opera), sentimentalism is also derived from the nostalgic vein of the traditional folk song that formed other aspects of the genre: “Il nucleo originario di questa disposizione, dovuta a una naturale vena elegiaca e di soffusa malinconia, deriva alla commedia direttamente dal mondo della canzone popolare.”³³ This nostalgic hue is able to develop more freely when differences between *buffo* and *serio* roles become more affirmed. Often, in mature comic opera, the entire intrigue will develop from the social disparities between characters alone. In testimony of the dramatic potential afforded by the contrast of roles, we must recall that it was not uncommon for comic and *serio* roles of the same work to be set to music by different composers (this is the case, for example, with *Liondora*, given at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini* in 1742, with music written by both Nicola Logroscino (1698-~1763?) e Francesco Ciampi (1690- ?)).

v. The commedia per musica in Venice

In sum, the *commedia per musica*, before the mid 18th-century, consolidates into an enticing alternative to *opera seria* well beyond its hometown. Its first arrival in Venice can be precisely dated to 1711, when a visiting Neapolitan poet, Domenico Lalli (known by the pen name Sebastiano Biancardi), brings to the lagoon drafts of comic material that he will put into production. His musical comedy *L’Elisa*, based on an earlier text of 1699 and set to music by the Veronese Giovan Maria Ruggieri (~1665?-~1725?), is his first work to be given at the same *Teatro S. Angelo* where Goldoni will later stage his own comedies.

³³ *ibid.*; 283. The original nucleus of this disposition, owed to a natural elegiac vein and delicate melancholy, is derived to comedy directly from the world of popular folk song.

Authors of texts are not the only importers of Neapolitan musical comedy, however, for native musicians and visiting students of composition trained by the Neapolitan school also become conduits of this new alternative theatre. Throughout his career and especially during the years of his mature *drammi giocosi*, Goldoni collaborated with a long list of Neapolitan composers. Gioacchino Cocchi (1720-1804), with whom Goldoni wrote *La mascherata* (The Masked Lady) and *Le donne vendicate* (The Avenged Women) in 1751, for example, returned to Naples immediately following this collaboration in Venice and composed for the *Teatro Nuovo*, his operas soon an international success. Vincenzo Legrenzio Ciampi (1719-1762), who set to music Goldoni's first *dramma giocoso*, *La scuola moderna* (The Modern School, 1748), along with *Bertoldo, Bertoldino, e Cacasenno* (1748), *Il negligente* (The Negligent, 1749), and *Amore in caricatura* (Love in Caricature, 1761), was not Neapolitan by birth but pursued his studies there from a young age, and therefore was also fully formed in that tradition. Niccolò Piccinni (1728-1800), who would become one of Goldoni's principal composers after the retirement of Baldassare Galuppi (from 1766 onwards), was also from Naples. The list of Neapolitan contemporaries continues with Giuseppe Scarlatti (~1718?-1777), born and trained in Naples, who wrote music for *I portentosi effetti della Madre Natura* (The Prodigious Powers of Mother Nature) given at the *Teatro San Samuele* in 1752, and later *De gustibus non est disputandum* (No Dispute About Taste (from a Latin proverb) premiered at the *Teatro San Cassiano*, 1753), *Il mercato di Malmantile* (The Market of Malmantile, premiered at the Vienna *Burgtheatre*, 1757), and *L'isola disabitata* (The Deserted Island, *Teatro San Samuele*, 1757); with Domenico

Fischietti (1725-1810), also Neapolitan and an imitator of Galuppi's style, and first composer (now overshadowed by Franz Joseph Haydn) for *Lo speziale* (The Apothecary, 1768), *La ritornata di Londra* (The Returned from London, 1756), *Il mercato di Malmantile* (collaborator, 1757), *Il signor dottore* (The Doctor, 1758), *La fiera di Sinigaglia* (The Fair of Sinigaglia, 1760), and *La donna di governo* (The governess, 1763); and finally with Giuseppe Scolari (~1720?~1774?), collaborator from 1756- 58 for *La cascina* (The farmstead, 1756), a second rendition of *Il Conte Caramella* (Count Caramella, 1756), *Le nozze* (The Wedding, 1757), *Le donne vendicate* (1757), *Il viaggiatore ridicolo* (The Risible Traveler, 1762), *Il ciarlatano* (The charlatan, 1759), and a second production of *La buona figliuola maritata* (The Good Girl Married, 1762), originally written by Piccinni, and revised for the theatre in Murano. Composers of Neapolitan origin are important figures in the transmission of the *commedia per musica* not only because of their musical experience, but most importantly because, during their time in Naples, they partnered with Neapolitan comic librettists and worked on productions for the same theatres in which comic opera first claimed attention. The level of interaction between Goldoni and these composers is not documented, but being all contemporaries of the author, one can assume at the very least that each was familiar with the other's work.

In 1743, Venetian theaters presented two famous Neapolitan operas: *La finta cameriera* (libretto by Giovanni Barlocchi) given at the *Teatro S. Angelo* during the *Fiera dell'Ascensione*, and shortly thereafter *Madama Ciana* (libretto by the same Barlocchi). Both were set to music by the Neapolitan Gaetano Latilla (1711-1788,

uncle of Piccinni), who, interestingly, also set many Metastasian tragedies. Worthy of note is the fact that the latter comic work, *Madama Ciana*, was modified from its original setting by Baldassare Galuppi, Goldoni's first collaborator. Galuppi, affectionately known as "Il Buranello" because he was born and raised on the Venetian island of Burano, is one of few composers Goldoni interacted with to have studied in Venice and not in Naples. Notwithstanding, it is clear that Galuppi, too, was quite familiar with the styles and structures of Neapolitan opera. We may thus begin to understand how dense and numerous are the interconnections between the theatrical worlds of Naples and Venice.

As a final note, in the same year of 1743, Goldoni presents *La Contessina* at the *Teatro S. Samuele* with music by Roman composer Giacomo Maccari (~1700?-~1744), a work he subtitles *commedia per musica*. In this opera, which we will revisit, we find nobles Pancrazio, Lindoro, and la Contessina, an intrusive Conte Bacchellone Parabolano, and on the other end of the social ladder the *barcarolo* (gondolier) Gazzetta, who speaks in Venetian dialect and represents the popular, working-class sphere. It is clear that the Neapolitan *commedia per musica* has at this point been completely assimilated by our author, and is undergoing new transformation.

The *commedia per musica* did not, however, constitute the Venetian spectator's only choice. In the years following the arrival of Neapolitan works in Venice, theatres also produced a myriad of *drammi comici*, *divertimenti giocosi*, *opere bernesche*, and other ephemeral forms. Only with Goldoni are these variants compounded and canonized into a universal operatic genre, in the words of

Gallarati, “un modello unificante su scala nazionale,”³⁴ that will endure through the next generations far outside of Italy.

Furthermore, the manifold documented connections between Goldoni and Neapolitan composers, and the popularity of the *commedia per musica* in Venetian theatres, do not imply that Goldoni’s *drammi giocosi* developed from this tradition alone. As we will see in the following section, part of Goldoni’s achievements in musical context must also be understood as the product of his expansion of the *intermezzo*, a genre in origin quite opposite to the Neapolitan *commedia*, and with which Goldoni began his musical career.

Goldoni was a practical connoisseur of both the Venetian *intermezzo* and the Neapolitan *commedia* traditions. His contributions to comic opera, therefore, cannot be credited to any single influence, but to a combination of complementary trends, of which the *commedia per musica* is perhaps the least well-known (and for this reason we have traced its history in some detail). These are the premises that will push Goldoni to experiment and expand his texts for music up to the achievement of the *dramma giocoso*.

With respect to the similar currents that shaped the development of art forms in both northern and southern Italy, it is worth recalling that, by the 1730s, the two most important Italian pioneers of comic musical theatre were Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) from Iesi (then part of the papal states), author of the famous *La Serva Padrona* (The Servant Master, an *intermezzo* no less) that traveled to the corners of the world, and our Venetian Goldoni, who in the same

³⁴ Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 127. A unifying model on a national scale.

years created the *intermezzi* we will now weigh. At different ends of the peninsula, both authors were drawn to complementary ideals of realism and of bourgeois society, and each gave form to these as he knew best.

Goldoni's apprenticeship in the *intermezzi*

i. The intermezzo and its inverse itinerary: from Venice to Naples

According to Gian Giacomo Stiffoni,³⁵ *intermezzi* existed in Venice a good twenty years before Goldoni began to write them. These rather peculiar vocal divertissements began to take shape in their own right following the famous reform of Zeno and Metastasio. In the effort to restore *il buon gusto* to opera theatre by purging it of comic interpolation, comic material was exiled from tragic opera, and the *intermezzo*, presenting a separate action between acts of a tragedy, offered a breath of fresh comic relief during the intermissions.

The first official recognition of the *intermezzo* as an emancipated type of musical theatre comes in 1706, when, for the first time, a pamphlet entitled *Nuovi intermedi per musica* circulates a collection of texts without the *opera seria* libretti they would have usually accompanied. Pietro Pariati (1665-1733) is the best known author of *intermezzi* in their first Venetian season of 1706-1709, and his libretti, set to music by notable composers such as Francesco Gasparini (1668-1727), Antonio Lotti (1667-1740), and Tommaso Albinoni (1671-1751), were among the first to be printed. For Reinhard Strohm, the 1706 edition is a clear sign of "l'emancipazione

³⁵ Gian Giacomo Stiffoni, "Introduzione" in Carlo Goldoni, *Intermezzi e farsette per musica*, a cura di Anna Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008).

sociale del genere comico nell'opera."³⁶ Among Pariati's first known titles are *Erighetta e don Chilone* (1707) and *Pimpinone* (1708). Unfortunately, large part of this early production, given at the *Teatro S. Angelo* and the *Teatro S. Cassiano*, has since been lost.

General characteristics of the *intermezzi* are their structural simplicity and the economy of means they require to be performed. Each is typically formed by two acts (sometimes three), and the entire action is spun from the conflict between two characters, usually a soprano and bass, *serva* and *padrone*. From the few musical scores of early *intermezzi* that have survived, the instrumental staff was also quite restricted, a small group of string players being sufficient through the whole work. With respect to content, verisimilitude was never a primary concern of the *intermezzo*. These musical spoofs are in fact most readily associated with a caricatured type of funniness, with disguises, verbal absurdities and neologisms, bizarre foreign characters, and racy gesturing. Musically, these works were very simple in both construction and style. In each act, each character would give a solo *aria* following simple recitative, and then conclude the action in a final *duetto*. Language and terms could be quite quotidian, while the structure of the *arie* hailed back to the closed forms of *opera seria*, using the tripartite *da capo* structure (ABA') or an expanded variant (pentapartite AA'BAA').

For their simplicity, and likely for their economy, *intermezzi* were soon exported, as testified by the *Raccolta copiosa d'intermedi, parte da rappresentarsi col canto, alcuni senza musica con altri in fine lingua Milanese* (Copius Collection of

³⁶ *ibid.*; 11. The social emancipation of the comic genre in opera.

Intermezzi, in part to be performed with song, some without music, and some in fine Milanese) printed in Milan in 1723, which lists fifty-four different titles. Research has dated their arrival in Naples to around 1715, and this southern capital, notwithstanding its own comic tradition, soon became a center of diffusion and exportation in turn. As previously mentioned, the most famous *intermezzo* of all time, *La serva padrona* (1733), originally created to accompany a tragic opera, *Il prigioner superbo* (The Proud Prisoner), but soon a stand-alone piece, was composed by Pergolesi, a representative of the Neapolitan style.

ii. Goldoni and his first musical texts, the intermezzi

Looking forward in time to when Goldoni was a young man and fledgling author, *intermezzi* appeared in virtually all of Venice's fourteen opera theatres, with the exception of the *Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo* (today still working as the *Teatro Malibran*), the most prestigious of all, which, to offer more lavish spectacle, housed ballets and *opera seria*. As a side note, in the second half of the century with *opera buffa* taking the place once held by *intermezzi*, these works, by then obsolete, would be more and more often substituted by *balli* (as famously at the *Teatro San Carlo* of Naples).

Goldoni writes his first *intermezzi* in Feltre in 1729 for a local dilettante theatre company. These were naturally intended for placement between acts of an *opera seria*. The first, *Il buon vecchio* (The Good Sage), is now lost, while the second, *La cantatrice* (The Signer), is still attributed to Goldoni but was famously plagiarized by others. Goldoni writes,

Perduto ho poscia intieramente il primo intermezzo,
per la poca cura ch'io avea delle cose mie; ed avrei

perduto anche il secondo ma è stato esso da
qualchedun conservato e l'ho veduto qualch'anno
dopo rappresentare a Venezia col titolo della
Pelarina...l'intermezzo riuscì in Venezia felicemente e
altri se ne avea fatto merito e ne avea ricavato non
poco utile...³⁷

The 'other' discreetly mentioned by Goldoni is Antonio Gori, comic author and lawyer who openly asserted his own authorship of the *intermezzo* when it was given at the *Teatro Grimani di S. Samuele* in 1734 (the year of *La serva padrona*) under the direction of Giuseppe Imer (1700-1758), with music (now lost) by Giacomo Maccari. In the same year, Goldoni began his important collaboration with Imer, and recalls Gori burning all bridges with the theatre company soon thereafter. To make the matter more complicated, the ubiquitous Venetian editor Antonio Groppo, in his *Catalogo purgatissimo di tutti li drammi per musica recitatisi ne' teatri di Venezia* (Purged Catalog of all of the *drammi per musica* performed in Venetian Theatres) published in 1741, credits the work in question to a third author, the Florentine Giovanni Battista Fagiuoli (1660-1742). In any case, scholarship has widely accepted *La pelarina* (The Peeler [of Money]) to be Goldoni's first surviving *intermezzo*, and it appears in various contemporary editions of his works, among them the Tevernin and Zatta.

La pelarina (we revert to this title as the original *La cantatrice*, following Goldoni's account, no longer exists) is an exemplary *intermezzo*. The three characters, Pelarina, her mother Volpiciona ('BigFox'), and the avaricious Tascadoro

³⁷ Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane (Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali [1761-1778])*, tomo IX. I had then completely lost my first intermezzo, for the scant care I had of my things; and I would have lost the second, too, had it not been preserved by somebody, and I saw it given in Venice a few years later under the title *La Pelarina*(...)the *intermezzo* had a good success in Venice, and someone else had taken credit and had drawn from it no small profit (...).

(‘GoldPocket’) each sing two or three closed *arie* over the course of the work, and come together at the end of scenes to form a trio. Volpiciona’s *aria*, “Sento che tutto in lagrime,” strongly suggests a parody of *opera seria*, and the work employs a mix of Italian and some Venetian dialect.

In Venetian, Goldoni also wrote *I sdegni amorosi tra Bettina putta de campiolo e Buleghin barcarol venezian* (The Amorous Disputes between Bettina Venetian girl and Buleghin Venetian boatsman, 1732), later revised as *Il gondoliere veneziano* (The Venetian Gondolier), for the *Teatro Ducale* of Milan during a brief stay in the city. Of this *intermezzo*, Goldoni writes,

(...)questo è il primo mio componimento ch’io ho lavorato pe’ comici ed il primo che ho esposto al pubblico, pria sulle scene e poi sulle stampe. Picciola cosa, è vero, ma come da un picciolo ruscelletto scaturisce talvolta...Scusatemi, leggitori carissimi, ho la testa calda.”³⁸

Buleghin is a gondolier with a weakness for gambling. This *intermezzo* has only two characters as the title suggests, who feed the entire action with their disputes. Of interest in this work is the manner in which, through the use of irregular versification (*versi ottonari* interrupted by quadrisyllables), Goldoni creates rhythmic pauses and animated discourse, a technique he will continue to pursue in the *intermezzi* that follow in 1735-36.

It appears that gambling, a vice explored in more than one of Goldoni’s comedies, most famously in *La Bottega del Caffè* (The Coffee Shop, 1750), was looked upon by our author with a particularly sensitive eye. In his autobiographical

³⁸ *ibid.* tomo XI. This is the first composition I crafted for the comic actors and the first I presented to the public, first in the theatre and then in print. True, it is but a trifle, but just as from a small stream at times flows forth... forgive me, dear readers, I am hot-headed.

writings, Goldoni narrates how he was robbed at gunpoint (pistol-point, that is) by a stranger from Padua who had cheated him at cards. This memory would stay with him, such that “nelle mie Commedie non mi sono scordato del mio Padovano, e di là ebbe origine quella collera con cui mi sono scagliato contro del gioco nella mia Commedia *Il giocatore* (The Gambler), nella *Bottega del Caffè* ed in altre, nelle quali ho avuto occasion di parlarne.”³⁹ Aside from affording an amusing biographical anecdote, Goldoni’s personal experience evoked through his theatre reveals, firstly, a young author’s innate interest in representing events and issues of contemporary relevance notwithstanding the dictates of the predominating musical fashion which largely preferred other subjects, and most importantly, the implicit belief that comic theatre, however entertaining and light-hearted, is not without the ability to target and stigmatize social problems (“mi sono scagliato contro del gioco,” etc.).

As previously mentioned, following *Il gondoliere veneziano* Goldoni begins his career as an author at the Venetian *Teatro Grimani* in 1734. The theatre was home to a company of actors led by their *capocomico*, Giuseppe Imer. It was these same actors of prose tragedies or comic *canovacci* who also sang (at what level of skill, we do not know) the comic *intermezzi* that were offered. Goldoni became acquainted with Imer through a mutual friend, Casali, whom he chanced to rediscover in Verona, acting in the famous Arena. Goldoni auditioned (as an author) reading portions of his early tragedy, *Il Belisario* (1734), and this became his first

³⁹ *ibid.*; tomo IX. In my comedies I never forgot my Paduan fellow, and there was the origin of the fierceness with which I hurled myself against gambling in my Comedy *Il giocatore*, in *La Bottega del Caffè*, and others, in which I have had the chance of treating the subject.

work that Imer, the “direttore e quasi dispotico della Compagnia,”⁴⁰ put into production.

The tragedy enjoyed great success, and was much appreciated for the realism with which it was written, as Goldoni recalls,

La Tragedia è andata alle stelle. Piacque in essa l'interesse, la verità e la condotta. Io faceva parlare l'Imperatore ed il Capitano come parlano gli uomini, e non con linguaggio degli eroi favolosi, al quale siamo avvezzi dalle penne sublimi de' valorosi Poeti. Volendo io esprimere un sentimento, non ho mai cercato il termine più scelto, più elegante, o sublime; ma il più vero ed il più esprime. Veduto ho per esperienza che la semplicità non può mancar di piacere. Non intendo, quando dico *semplicità*, di far parlare un Imperatore come parlerebbe un pastore; ma intendo di non far parlare i Sovrani, uomini come noi, con un linguaggio incognito alla Natura.⁴¹

Goldoni's perception of his tragedy's success as connected to its realism is a conclusion drawn in later years, which however shows that, from early on, Goldoni abandoned the established customs of contemporary theatre and modeled his work according to his own instinct. The same instinct that refused the stiff declamatory style of tragic theatre also took issue with coeval comedy, and Goldoni, impatient and eager to prove himself in new contexts, began trying his hand at texts for music:

Correvano altresì su quelle scene d'allora alcune Commedie, dette di carattere, come il *Conte Pasticcio*, il *Don Chisciotte*, la *Maestra di Scuola*, lo *Smemorato*, il *Paroncino*, il *Prepotente*, il *Servo Sciocco* ed altre in buon numero; ma i caratteri erano falsi, fuori di

⁴⁰ *ibid.*; tomo XI. director and almost despot of the company

⁴¹ *ibid.* The tragedy went to the stars. It was liked for its suspense, its truth, and its pace. I made the Emperor and the Captain speak as men speak, and not in the language of fantastical heroes, to which we are accustomed from the sublime pens of the most valorous Poets. When I wanted to express an emotion, I never sought the most recondite, the most elegant, or sublime term; but rather the most real, and the most expressive. I have seen from experience that simplicity never fails to please. By simplicity, I don't mean that I would make an Emperor speak in the manner of a shepherd; I mean to not have Sovereigns, who are men like us, speak in a language unknown to Nature.

natura, e sacrificati al ridicolo grossolano, senza condotta, senza verità e senza ragione. Io moriva di voglia di metter mano ai caratteri veri, e di tentar la riforma ch'io divisava; ma non era ancora venuto il tempo, e ho dovuto contentarmi di lavorare passabilmente negl'Intermezzi(...)."⁴²

These words imply that, even while he was writing his first libretti, Goldoni's dramatist vein was leading him towards new ideals and a new philosophy of theatre.

What is more, Goldoni's account testifies a conscious connection between his ideas for comedy and his texts for music; he works on one thing as he thinks of the other. It may be objected that Goldoni casts his *intermezzi* as a less appealing alternative to his works of greatest import, from which one could suppose that he dedicated them less attention. Yet, we must remember that his reflections are written retrospectively, as an established playwright who has led a prolific career. In this light, it is certainly understandable that Goldoni (as he does elsewhere in his autobiographical writings) would wish to minimize his early musical production in favor of his more famous 'reformed' comedies.

We may further imagine that, if from the position of prestige and maturity from which he is writing his recollections the first *intermezzi* appear in retrospect to be of little consequence, when Goldoni was first given the opportunity to compose these texts, they were to him anything but marginal. As a young rebellious law student with great desire but no guarantee of a future career in theatre, the same

⁴² *ibid.*; tomo XIII. In theatres in those days there were certain Comedies, so-called *di carattere*, such as *Count Pasticcio*, *Don Chisciotte*, *The Schoolteacher*, *The Forgetful*, *The Little Lord*, *The Tyrant*, *The Silly Servant*, and others in good number; but the characters were fake, divorced from nature, and sacrificed to coarse humor, without action, without truth, and without reason. I was dying to try my hand at real characters, and to attempt the reform I was envisaging, but the time had not yet come, and I had to content myself by working passably at my *Intermezzi*.

intermezzi constituted his debut in a new field, and their quality and reception therefore were hardly inconsequential.

Ultimately, Goldoni himself eliminates any doubt:

Egli è vero che avrei poi volentieri composte delle commedie di carattere ma pensai che, quantunque gli intermezzi non sieno che commedie abbozzate, sono però suscettibili di tutti i caratteri più comici e più originali, e che ciò potea servirmi di prova e di esercizio, per trattarli un giorno più distesamente e più a fondo nelle grandi commedie.⁴³

The likening of *intermezzi* to 'sketched' comedies, capable of supporting original characters, makes clear that Goldoni did not divorce his work in the musical sphere from his instincts for comic prose theatre. It follows logically that what is only a nascent intuition in the *intermezzi* will take fuller form in Goldoni's *drammi giocosi*, written alongside his most mature theatrical comedies.

Goldoni's remarks are a consequence of the fact that, even with the success of *Il Belisario*, Imer preferred not to commission other tragedies from him, and instead requested texts for music. In fact, the company seemed to specialize in comic *intermezzi*, following the particular inclinations of their 'despotic' director:

La passione dunque che aveva l'Imer per gl'Intermezzi, ne' quali unicamente brillava, la fece [la Compagnia] perorare in favore di cotal genere di componimenti, e le prove che di me aveva vedute ne' due Intermezzi accennati [*La Cantatrice* and *Il Gondoliere Veneziano*], l'indussero a pregarmi a volerne per lui comporre degli altri, esibendomi con buona grazia, ed assicurandomi che mi avrebbe fatto

⁴³ *ibid.*, tomo XII. It is true that I would have later gladly written 'character comedies,' but I thought that, even though the intermezzi are but sketched comedies, they were nonetheless susceptible to all the most comic and most original characters, and this could serve me as practice and as exercise to develop them more extensively and deeply someday in the great comedies.

ringraziare e ricompensare dal Cavalier suo Padrone,
l'Eccellentissimo Signor Michele Grimani.⁴⁴

The first *intermezzi* written expressly for Imer were *La pupilla* (The Pupil) and *La birba* (The Trickster) of 1735, set to music in “stile facile e chiaro” (‘simple and clear style,’ i.e. a low level of vocal difficulty for non-professional singers) by Giacomo Maccari, whose scores have been lost. *La pupilla* was an immediate success and secured Goldoni’s standing as a theatrical author: “...fu ben ricevuta e applaudita; e scorgendovi il Pubblico uno stile nuovo, cercarono di sapere chi ne era l’Autore, e sapendo che la medesima mano aveva composto *La pupilla* ed il *Belisario*, fu allora che cominciai a vedermi onorato di partigiani, di protettori ed amici.”⁴⁵ The protagonists of this first success were Giovanna Farussi Casanova, mother of the famous Giacomo, and Imer himself, who played the role of her wooer on the stage and off. Through his Italian memoirs, Goldoni has informed generations of readers that Zanetta did not sing well. She was able to compensate for her musical shortcomings by means of her beauty and manners, which did not escape Goldoni’s pungent creative eye: “(...) aveva io composto *La pupilla* per lei e aveva colto assai bene nella sua abilità principale, ch’era di una scaltra malizia coperta da una studiata modestia.”⁴⁶ The practice of modeling his characters after real acquaintances is the secret to the veracity of Goldoni’s original characters. This is a

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, tomo XIII. The passion that Imer had for the *Intermezzi*, in which he shined like no other, made the Company an advocate in favor of this type of composition, and the proofs he had seen from me in the two *Intermezzi* I mentioned, induced him to request that I compose some others, showcasing me in good graces, and assuring me that he would have me thanked and rewarded by the Cavalier his lord, his Excellency Signor Michele Grimani.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* It was well received and applauded; and the Public, seeing in it a new style, sought to discover its Author, and discovering that the same hand had written *La pupilla* and *Il Belisario*, it was then that I began to see myself honored by supporters, protectors, and friends.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* I had written *La Pupilla* for her, and I had hit the target very well in her greatest ability, an astute malice covered by studied modesty.

practice he would cultivate throughout his career, not without disgruntlement among certain acquaintances who recognized themselves all too well in his comedies.

If *La pupilla* found realism in the characters of its two protagonists, *La birba* was no less effective. “Birbi,” as Goldoni explains, were those people who dealt with money in less than limpid ways, who sang and danced and begged for coins in Piazza San Marco, and who sing in his *intermezzo* in simple verse in evocation of street music of popular level. Again, Goldoni drew the efficacy of his text from the observation of daily scenes:

Trattenendomi di quando in quando nella Piazza San Marco, in quella parte che dicesi la *Piazzetta*, e veggendo ed attentamente osservando quella prodigiosa quantità di vagabondi, che cantando, suonando o elemosinando, vivono del soave mestier della *birba*, mi venne in mente di trar da coloro il soggetto di un Intermezzo giocoso; e mi riuscì a maraviglia.⁴⁷

The result was that *La birba* surpassed *La pupilla* in its success, confirming Goldoni’s career as librettist.

At this point, Goldoni’s stature as a new librettist began to grow in public notoriety, as did his own consciousness of his vocation, and at times, as the author himself admits, his ‘hot head.’ In the same year as the two *intermezzi* with Imer, Goldoni was also asked to arrange a *libretto* for Antonio Vivaldi. Even if not directly related to his comic production, this episode is worth recalling not only for the

⁴⁷ *ibid.* Lingering from time to time in Piazza San Marco, in that part called the *Piazzetta*, and seeing and attentively observing that prodigious quantity of vagabonds, who singing, playing, and begging, live by the sublime trade of the ‘birba,’ I had the idea of drawing from them the subject of an Intermezzo, and I succeeded marvelously.

memorable image of our author vexed and provoked by the 'red priest,' but also because it serves perfectly to give a sense of who Goldoni was as a man, his own comic personality just as original as that of his staged characters.

Here then is a page from the *Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali* of 1761 (Prefaces to the Seventeen Volumes of Comedies published in Venice by G.B. Pasquali), later published as *Memorie Italiane*:

Era il compositore della musica di quell'anno per l'Opera dell'Ascensione il Signor Abbate Vivaldi, detto il *Prete Rosso*, per il colore de' suoi capegli, e malamente da alcuni chiamato il Rossi, credendolo il nome della sua famiglia.

Questo famosissimo suonatore di violino, quest'uomo celebre per le sue Suonate, specialmente per quelle intitolate le *Quattro Stagioni*, componeva altresì delle Opere in musica; e quantunque dicessero i buoni conoscitori ch'egli mancava nel contrappunto, e che non metteva i *bassi* a dovere, faceva cantar bene le parti, e il più delle volte le Opere sue hanno avuto fortuna....

Premevo estremamente al Vivaldi un Poeta per accomodare o impasticciare il Dramma a suo gusto...ed io, che ero destinato a tale incombenza, mi presentai al compositore...Mi ricevette assai freddamente. Mi prese per un novizio, e non s'ingannò, e non trovandomi bene al fatto nella scienza degli stroppiatori de' Drammi, si vedea ch'egli avea gran voglia di rimandarmi.

Goldoni's first task is to adjust an *aria*, and, vexed and stricken in his honor for being treated as a 'novice' by a composer of scarce counterpoint, he demands pen and paper and a chair and begins to write there in the room with Vivaldi. In little time, the deed is done:

Gliela porto, gliela faccio vedere, tiene colla dritta il breviario, colla sinistra il mio foglio, legge piano; e finito di leggere, getta il breviario in un canto, si leva mi abbraccia, corre alla porta, chiama la Signorina Annina [la protagonista cantante]. Viene la Signorina Annina, e la Signora Paolina sorella: legge loro

l'arietta, gridando forte "l'ha fatta qui, qui l'ha fatta, l'ha fatta qui"; e nuovamente mi abbraccia, e mi dice bravo, e sono diventato il suo caro, il suo poeta, il suo confidente, e non mi ha più abbandonato. Ho poi assassinato il *Dramma del Zeno* quanto e come ha voluto."⁴⁸

Remarkable, stylistically speaking, is the way Goldoni uses the present tense to narrate events in detailed sequence. His description of every gesture allows the reader to visualize the scene as if it were performed on a stage. Indeed, the most memorable episodes of Goldoni's autobiography are always narrated in a theatrical style of prose.

In the year following his first works for Imer and *Griselda*, Goldoni continued to develop the *intermezzo* with *L'ipocondriaco* (The Hypochondriac) and *Il filosofo* (The Philosopher) in 1735, followed by *Monsieur Petiton*, *La bottega da caffè*, and *L'amante cabala* (The Lying Lover) the next year. The original music for these works has not survived, but from the texts we can spot *arie* in vivacious polymeter, and *recitativo* in a mix of Venetian dialect and Italian, along with a few foreign languages in parody. Most importantly, Goldoni continues to form his characters in the

⁴⁸ *ibid.* The composer of music in that year for the Opera of the Ascension was the Signor Abbot Antonio Vivaldi, called the *Red Priest* for the color of his hair, and erroneously by some called Rossi, believing that to be his family name.

This very famous violinist, this man so famous for his Sonate, especially those titled *The Four Seasons*, also composed musical Operas; and though the connoisseurs were saying that he was lacking in counterpoint, and that he didn't place his bass lines as he should, he made his parts sing well, and more often than not his Operas met with good success(...)

It was very pressing for Vivaldi to find a Poet to accommodate or mess up the *Dramma* to his liking...and I, the intended for this chore, introduced myself to the composer... He received me quite coldly. He took me for a novice, and he was not wrong, and finding that I was not experienced in the art of mangling *Drammi*, it was evident he had great desire to send me away.

(...)

I bring it to him, I let him see it, he holds a prayer book in his right hand, in his left my sheet of paper, he reads slowly; and, finished reading, tosses his prayer book away, springs up and hugs me, runs to the door, calls Mlle. Annina. Here comes Mlle. Annina, and Mme. Paolina her sister: he reads them the arietta, yelling loudly "he wrote it here, here he wrote it, he wrote it here;" and once again he embraces me, he says bravo, and I have become his dearest, his poet, his confidant, and he never left me after that. I then assassinated Zeno's drama as much and however he wished.

likeness of real-life acquaintances. Stiffoni has attributed the success of these works precisely to their distinct characterizations, that is to a type of “gioco scenico, appoggiato non solo alla battuta comica ma anche sulla definizione dei singoli personaggi, nella maggior parte dei casi disegnati in maniera assai efficace.”⁴⁹

This we see, for example, in *L'ipocondriaco* and *Il filosofo*, which delve more deeply into the psychological musings of their protagonists, as Goldoni will continue to do in the 1740s with his first complete comedies. The counterpart female roles remain less developed, and the action is still quite simple in its structure. In terms of content, both works are satirical, and as such offer light-hearted but scathing commentary on their respective subjects, *L'ipocondriaco* a parody of false medicine, and *Il filosofo* a parody of scholasticism and false literature. It is likely that both were loosely drawn from very early pre-existing intermezzi, *Erighetta e don Chilone* (1707), and *Pollastrella e Parpagnacco* (1708), respectively.

The three *intermezzi* of 1736 are especially significant on the path to comic opera, because they begin to display not only original content but also structural elements that will characterize the later *dramma giocoso*. *Monsieur Petiton*, whose protagonist is a narcissistic ‘dandy,’ is novel in its employment of four principal actors, brought together at the end of each act in what would later be canonized as the ensemble finale. In *La bottega da caffè* and *L'amante cabala*, Stiffoni sees the “stato embrionale del dramma giocoso.”⁵⁰ These works are expanded from the original two acts and are articulated in three. *La bottega da caffè* is decidedly more

⁴⁹ Gian Giacomo Stiffoni, “Introduzione” in Carlo Goldoni, *Intermezzi e farse per musica*, a cura di Anna Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008); 20. Stage play, supported not only by the witty line but also by the definition of each single character, in most cases portrayed with great effectiveness.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*; 26. The embryonic state of the *dramma giocoso*.

intricate in its action than previous *intermezzi*. Narciso, owner of the coffee shop, intends to marry Dorilla, his beloved. To better bring this about, both employ art and subterfuge to strip wealth from the holdings of the older, gullible Zanetto. This tale is as old as time, and will reappear in Goldoni's first *dramma giocoso*, *La scuola moderna* (1748), in which the protagonist, coincidentally, is named Drusilla. According to their strategy, Dorilla flirts with Zanetto compelling him to give her gifts, and Narciso interrupts each scene at just the right moment so that she does not have the chance to refuse or return them, as honesty would dictate. This type of plot, in which the element of surprise is key, affords rapid exchanges in dialogue, another element Goldoni will preserve in the *drammi giocosi*. The real novelty of this *intermezzo* however is the opening of the third act, which does not begin with *recitativo* but immediately with an ensemble, Dorilla and Narciso sharing the aria, "Cara man che me consola."

L'amante cabala begins similarly with a duet between principal characters Lilla and Filiberto. Filiberto is the "cabalon," or spinner of lies, who tries to court both Lilla and Catina at the same time, telling each that the other has lost her wits. Filiberto has much in common with the Don Giovanni figure, whom Goldoni certainly had fresh in his mind, for in the same year (1736) he also authored his own *Don Giovanni Tenorio*, a comedy in verse that contains interesting departures from the original by Tirso de Molina. At the end of the *intermezzo* the transgressor is defeated, and the moral of the story is announced directly to the public, "Imparino

tutti,/ da sì bell'esempio/ che l'arte d'un empio/ trionfar non può."⁵¹ Goldoni will often close his *drammi giocosi* in this sententious manner, a practice Mozart and Da Ponte will continue in their masterworks. Also worthy of note is the character Lilla, who speaks in a more elevated register than the others, almost in reminiscence of *opera seria* (Stiffoni identifies Metastasian influence in her part). Her role within the work marks the beginning of a differentiation of tone and role between characters, and the first shades of pathos in a comic plot.

iii. *A time of transitions: from intermezzo to full comic opera*

While Goldoni establishes himself as a promising librettist under Imer, he is also invited, from 1735, to create musical comedies for another Venetian theatre, the *San Samuele*, also owned by the Grimani family. These works are of sundry nature, but nonetheless merit mention as they constitute a link between Goldoni's *intermezzi*, suspended after 1736, and a different and more complete kind of musical theatre, the *dramma comico*, which in retrospect appears the final step before the *dramma giocoso*. The texts written for the *Teatro S. Samuele* testify the absence of a unifying comic opera tradition: *Aristide* (1735) is a *dramma eroi-comico*, *La Fondazione de Venezia* (The Founding of Venice, 1736) a *divertimento per musica*, *Lugrezia romana in Costantinopoli* (Lucretia of Roma in Constantinople, 1737) a *dramma per musica*, and finally, *La Contessina* (The Little Countess, 1743), *commedia per musica*. The musical scores that first accompanied these works have been lost, but were likely composed by the roman Giacomo Maccari. Anna Vencato has suggested that the scarce homogeneity of these works is also a product of the

⁵¹ Goldoni, *L'Amante Cabala*, scena ultima. May all draw a lesson from such an example, the art of a villain can never succeed.

author's efforts to provide the best comic fit for the varied company of actors of the *S. Samuele*.⁵²

While *Lugrezia Romana* is an exemplary parody of *opera seria*, other works among those listed above reveal new elements that will remain in the *dramma giocoso*. The *Prologo* to *La Fondazione di Venezia*, for example, is an allegorical dialogue between *Musica* and *Commedia* that reveals Goldoni's philosophy of comic theatre, and heralds the presence of *serio* elements in comic opera. Personified Music, who hearkens from the timeless depths of archaic opera, represents the noble sphere of tragic theatre, while Comedy draws her merits not only from her ancient past but especially from her present glory in the city of the lagoon ("Quanto l'itala scena/ Di me si pregi,/e quanto in questi lidi"⁵³).

The higher power of Comedy appears to draw from the Horatian metaphor of *utile* and *dilettevole* united in art; as a remedy against vice, she provides sweet laughter to soften the bitter medicine of self-realization:

La Commedia son io:
Quella che su le scene
Dà lode alla virtù, biasmo agli errori,
Mostrando in varie guise
"Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme e gli amori;"
Quella per cui sovente
Di sé mirando il vergognoso esempio,
Detesta il vizio, e divien giusto un empio.

A chi crede un vago volto
Posseder senza difetto,
Quel cristallo parla schietto,
E gli dice: «Mira, o stolto,
Quanti errori ha tua beltà».

⁵² "Introduzione" in Carlo Goldoni, *Dramma musicali per i comici del San Samuele*, a cura di A. Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009); 3.

⁵³ Goldoni, *La Fondazione di Venezia*, Prologo. How much the Italian stage/ is honored by me/ and how these very shores.

Così appunto a chi non crede
Reo di colpe il suo costume,
Io presento un chiaro lume
Onde poi se stesso vede,
E l'error scoprendo va.⁵⁴

The chosen metaphor of Comedy as a mirror implies a reflection of the individual made possible only through realism and honest social characterization. In these few verses, we find the essence of two of Goldoni's core convictions: first, that comedy must reflect the realities of society and its members, and second, that it has the ability to fulfill a higher calling of social commentary and moral instruction.

Where Comedy is direct, Music's verses are allusive. Her greatest power is described in these terms: "Io sol posso tener gli animi intenti/ Al dolce suon de' miei canori accenti,"⁵⁵ a clear echo of the Platonic belief in Music's power to move the affections, and a logical connection of this art to the ennobled, contemplative virtues of tragic opera. She underlines her connection to tragedy by evoking Metastasian theatre, "Ora per la virtù risorto è il zelo,/ Ed io sono virtù che vien dal cielo," the new 'zeal for virtue' a clear reference to the Arcadian reform.

In sum, Music and Comedy personified represent not only two different artistic spheres, but more subtly the interplay of comedy and tragedy (represented by Music's ancient origins) within a single work. The challenge is striking the most

⁵⁴ *ibid.* I am Comedy/she who on the stage/gives praise to virtue, and reprimands the errors/showing in different guises/"Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme e gli amori" [Note also the citation from Ariosto]/she by whom often/seeing of oneself the shameful example/the villain detests his vice, and becomes righteous.

To who believes to have a countenance/ beautiful and without flaw/ that mirror does speak plainly/ saying: 'Look, fool/ See how many flaws your beauty holds'/ In the same way, to who does not believe/ their conduct to be at fault/ I bring a bright light/so then he sees himself/ and discovers his mistake.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* I alone have the power to keep souls attentive/ With the sweet sound of my song (...) Now the zeal for virtue has risen again/ And I am that virtue that comes from the heavens.

natural equilibrium between these two elements. As both arts assert their primacy and their dispute degenerates into more and more violent tones, order is restored by the mystical *Genio dell'Adria* (who we may understand to be a local demi-god or genie, guardian of the Adriatic sea), who delivers the final sentence:

Olà donne fermate
Qual ira vi trasporta?
Qual inganno vi spinge a gara ostile?
Non vi recate a vile
Vivere in buona union, se pur può darsi,
'Ve la Commedia giace,
Che Concordia si trovi, e regni pace.
Oggi l'una di voi non è bastante
Senza l'altra piacer su queste scene.
Se non ha la Commedia
L'ornamento del canto,
Spera invan riportar applauso e vanto;
E la Musica stessa,
Se non ha ne' suoi drammi oltre ragione
Qualche comica azione,
Se conserva il rigor della Tragedia,
Anzi che dar piacer, suo canto attedia.
Eugualmente ad entrambe
La stessa sorte arride:
Cosi il Genio dell'Adria oggi decide.⁵⁶

In sum, on the modern stage one art can no longer succeed without the other; song cannot live without words, as comedy or tragedy cannot succeed without some aspects of both.

As Anna Vencato has noted, Goldoni's mediated resolution is strongly reminiscent of an earlier Venetian text published for the actors of the same theatre:

Introduzione alle recite della truppa dei comici nel teatro Grimani a S. Samuele, per

⁵⁶ *ibid*, Hold, women, cease./What fury moves you?/ What treachery spurs you to such hostile contest?/Do not disdain/ to live in happy union, if that is possible/ that where Comedy lies/ we find concord, and that peace reign./ Today, each one of you is not enough/ pleasure without the other on the stage./If Comedy does not have/ the ornament of song,/ she may hope in vain to win applause and fame/And Music herself/ if in her *drammi*, along with reason/she does not hold some comic action/if she preserves the rigor of Tragedy,/ instead of giving pleasure, her song will bore./ Equally on both/ the same fate smiles/ this I rule today.

l'Autunno di quest'anno 1726, posta in musica dal Sig. Gio. Battista Pescetti (Introduction to the Performances of the Actors' Troupe of the Grimani Theatre in S. Samuele, for the Fall of this year 1726, set to music by G. B. Pescetti) is its full title on the frontispiece. Here too a lofty prologue precedes the actors' entrance, an exchange between the familiar Adria, in this case a goddess, and Neptune. The curtain rises to give a view of the sea, populated with playful water creatures, in the midst of whom we find "Adria sopra d'una Conchiglia tirata da due Mostri Marini, poi Nettuno sopra d'un'altra."⁵⁷ Adria pronounces these words, a clear presage of a new preference:

Ma già che l'ora è presso,
 In cui debbon gl'Attori
 Far di se stessi una pomposa mostra,
 E del loro valor darne l'assaggio;
 Vanne, tutti gl'invia
 In questa spiaggia, e dille,
 Ch'io vo veder in questa prima impresa
 Misto al serio il giocoso,
 Il ridicolo al grave, e ogn'un s'adopri
 Che dall'alto mio Soglio,
 Il merito d'ogn'un pesar io voglio.⁵⁸

The auspice of a coexistence of *serio* and *giocoso*, *ridicolo* and *grave*, recaptured in Goldoni's *divertimento*, foreshadows a change in the aesthetic of theatre, fertile ground for Goldoni's first experimentation and for the *dramma giocoso*.

iv. The 1740s. Theatrical reform. From dramma comico to dramma giocoso.

⁵⁷ *Introduzione alle recite della truppa dei comici nel teatro Grimani a' S. Samuele, per l'Autunno di quest'anno 1726, posta in musica dal Sig. Gio. Battista Pescetti* (Venezia: Valvasense editore, 1726); 3. Adria atop a seashell drawn by two sea monsters, then Neptune atop another.

⁵⁸ *ibid*; 5. But since the hour is near, in which the actors must/ make of themselves a magnificent show/ and give us proof of their worth;/ Go, and send them all/ to this shore, and tell them/that I wish to see in this first work/the comic mixed with tragic/ the ridiculous mixed with the weighty, and that everyone make an effort/ for, from my high throne/ I wish to weigh the merit of each.

While opening his texts to new dramatic possibilities in the field of music, Goldoni was also making strides as a comic playwright. Just as he ameliorated the *intermezzi* into self-sufficient works, cultivating in them greater intrigue and more realistic characterizations, Goldoni soon felt constrained by the fixed traditions of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and compelled to expand and enrich his *canovacci*. The criteria that animated his innovations, the essence of his later “reform,” was the same desire for realism, originality, and novelty that he could more freely pursue in his texts for music.

Before we approach Goldoni’s first innovations in prose comedy and their rapport with his musical output, it is essential to first understand the true nature of the *Commedia dell'Arte* from which these stem, as this tradition is often misrepresented and misunderstood. The origins of the *Commedia dell'Arte* are quite ancient. Some scholars identify its direct ancestor or first manifestation in the works of the Paduan Angelo Beolco, known as Ruzzante (~1502?–~1542?), though it was also amply cultivated in the south of Italy. Ruzzante’s comedies, along with works by Bibiena, were among those performed at the first Venetian public theatres in the *Seicento*. Some of these, written in Paduan and Venetian dialect, use recurring figures and farcical action that appear to foreshadow the *Commedia* masks and character types. His comedy *L’Anconitana* (The Girl from Ancona, 1530), for example, in which Ruzzante himself performed the role of a humble farmer, features a duet between servant (Ruzzante) and master (Sior Tomà) in which we may see prototypes of the boisterous *Arlecchino* and his master *Pantalone*, old, wise, and attentive to his purse.

Ruzzante as creator and performer exemplifies the diffused custom among early modern authors to double as actors in their works. The practice is largely lost today, but it was habitual for authors including Shakespeare and Molière among others. In this respect, Goldoni appears one of the first *letterati* amidst other icons of theatre who had direct experience in recitation.

The common source of authorship and acting is particularly critical to the *Commedia dell'Arte*, which draws its name from *arte* as “artisanal,” a trade of skill. The true nature of this art form, at times misinterpreted, is essential to understanding Goldoni. While often dismissed as theatre of little wit and ‘stock comedy,’ the *Commedia* in origin was fruit of the ingenuity of men of great culture and skill. Its allowance for improvisation, later to become a hindrance to the development of plot, in origin blossomed entirely from the wit and captivating personality of its first actors, who just as Ruzzante were men of letters and authors in their own right. The original *Commedia dell'Arte*, therefore, was clearly the opposite of the repetitive, unoriginal, and economic trade it is often interpreted as from a post 18th century perspective.⁵⁹

Commedia dell'Arte continued to enjoy immense popularity into the 18th-century, and Goldoni was asked to write *canovacci* not only for Venetian theatres early on, but even much later in life for the Parisian *Comédie Italienne*, for in pre-revolutionary France these comic exercises were still much in fashion. The first generations of *Commedia* actors were respectable and prominent figures, such as Antonio Sacchi (1708-1788), born one year after Goldoni in Vienna to a Neapolitan

⁵⁹ More information on this topic has been provided by the work of Siro Ferrone and Ferdinando Taviani, among others.

family of comic actors. A true *uomo di mondo*, Sacchi ventured far and wide through Europe and Russia, and died in Marseilles. He was one of Goldoni's principal actors but also performed for Carlo Gozzi and Pietro Chiari, Goldoni's fiercest competitors. Accounts testify that Sacchi was also an excellent dancer, and he specialized in the mask of *Arlecchino* (sometimes called *Truffaldino*) enriching the role with gesture and recitation through posture, no doubt excelling in the *lazzi* (episodes of non-verbal comic action) so typical of that mask. That Sacchi was a man of high culture is testified by his correspondence with diplomats and ambassadors, and Giacomo Casanova refers to him as a model of political eloquence. Goldoni's famous *Servitore di due Padroni* (The Servant of Two Masters), which Mozart requested be sent to him shortly prior to composing *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute), was written expressly for Sacchi, and re-elaborated from a preexisting text (probably from 1718) at the actor's request, precisely because he was seeking new liberties beyond the character of his mask. From the newly uncovered papers of Carlo Gozzi, it has emerged that Sacchi, an admirer of Caldéron de la Barca, also liked to recite without a mask and in verse.

Goldoni, like Sacchi, gradually removed the masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, beginning with his comedy *Momolo cortesan* (1738). For scholarship, this comedy marks the beginning of his "reform," a veritable hybrid between *Commedia* and new, non-improvised comedy. *Momolo*, the protagonist, for the first time in the history of comic theatre, recites from a part entirely written out from beginning to end, while the actors around him continue to improvise in the traditional manner. The success of this work was such that it prompted two sequels (likewise composed with

coexisting written and improvised parts), *Il Momolo sul Brenta* (Momolo on the River Brenta, 1739), and *Momolo mercante fallito* (Momolo Bankrupt Merchant, 1740). The three works would later be purged of their masked characters and published under the new titles *L'uomo di mondo* (The Man of the World), *Il prodigo* (The Prodigal), and *La bancarotta* (Bankruptcy). From their new titles alone it is easy to infer that not unlike Goldoni's other musical or spoken theatre, these works contain a healthy dose of social critique, targeting in this case the figure of the profligate, who exceeds his income to simulate higher status.

At the turn of the 1740s, Goldoni is thus an author who has tested and proven his intuitions, and is ever more determined to pursue new, realistic, and socially relevant theatre. In this perspective, we may understand Goldoni's last musical texts of sundry nature before he turns, as a mature playwright, to the *dramma giocoso*. These include the *intermezzo Il finto pazzo* (The False Madman), or *L'amor fa l'uomo cieco* (Love Makes Man Blind, 1742), from the Neapolitan *La contadina astuta* (The Clever Countrygirl) by Tommaso Mariani, and *Il quartiere fortunato* (The Lucky Neighborhood, likely 1744). Stiffoni speaks of "contaminazione degli intermezzi con strutture appartenenti all'opera di maggiori dimensioni (...)soprattutto per i brani d'assieme,"⁶⁰ and it is clear from subsequent production that in the first half of the new decade (particularly mid-1730s to '40s) the *intermezzo* is in full decline and Goldoni is moving towards opera.

⁶⁰ Gian Giacomo Stiffoni, "Introduzione" in Carlo Goldoni, *Intermezzi e farse per musica*, a cura di Anna Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008); 36. Contamination of the intermezzi with structures pertaining to opera of greater stance(...)especially as concerns ensemble pieces.

During this period of transition Goldoni writes his first *commedia per musica*, *La contessina* (1743) previously mentioned, given at the *Teatro S. Samuele* during carnival, about which Anna Vencato has written, “...gli attori forniscono a Goldoni l’occasione di misurarsi con la satira e d’inventare un nuovo modello di pièce: il dramma giocoso, per l’appunto, di cui *La contessina* sembra il primo esempio compiuto.”⁶¹ Despite the appreciation by scholars, this work is not yet a true *dramma giocoso*, and in fact proved difficult to classify (notwithstanding the title chosen by the author); the text appeared in print under various tags including *opera buffa* or *operetta buffa*, confirming its transitional nature. Unequivocal, however, is the fact that it represents Goldoni’s closest approach to the *dramma giocoso*, and that it constitutes the fulcrum of transition from his previous work to this new genre.

Most notably, *La contessina* is anchored in Goldoni’s present and confronts possibly the greatest societal question of its time: the dynamics of a changeable rapport between declining nobility and ascending *borghesia*. The vain *Contessina*, daughter of Count Baccellone, follows the latest fashion in desiring a *cicisbeo*, and Lindoro, son of the rich merchant Pancrazio and hopelessly in love with her, must pretend to be a *Marchese* in order to win her attentions. Humor in this *commedia* stems from disguise and dramatic irony, while a good dose of social critique is present in the superficiality of the “noble” characters who remain ignorant of reality, obsessed with titles but not with their true worth. When Pancrazio requests the

⁶¹ Anna Vencato, “Introduzione” in Carlo Goldoni, *Dramma musicali per i comici del San Samuele*, a cura di A. Vencato (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009); 12. Actors supply to Goldoni the opportunity to measure himself with satire and to invent a new type of play: the *dramma giocoso*, of which *La Contessina* appears to be the first accomplished example.

hand of Baccellone's daughter for his son, the exchange that ensues clearly reveals the clash of class structure with egalitarian ideals:

CONTE. Ah prosuntuoso, ah temerario! A forza
Trattengo di lordar le scarpe mie
Nella schienaccia tua. Quest'è un affronto
che soffrir non si può. Servi, canaglia,
ove siete, venite. Io da un balcone
vorrei farti cacciar.

PANCRAZIO. Piano di grazia,
non tanta furia, signor conte mio;
si sa ben chi voi siete e chi son io.

CONTE. Tu sei un mercenario, io cavaliere.

PANCRAZIO. Cavaliere di quei da dieci al soldo,
fatto ricco facendo il manigoldo.

CONTE. Vecchio, ti compatisco; rimbambisci,
non sai ciò che ti dici.

PANCRAZIO. Io so che alfine
vi perderei del mio dando un figliuolo
si ricco e si ben fatto
ad una figlia d'un villan rifatto.⁶²

The Count as a "villan rifatto" is a powerful message of contempt, and, while the bitter exchanges between the two men are exaggerated for dramatic effect, it is also often said that every joke, however laughable, contains a basis of truth. By no coincidence, the true nobility of Baccellone is called into question repeatedly throughout the text, and he is shown to be lacking in both genealogy (he confesses his well-concealed humble origins), and acumen (he is easily charmed by a disguised Pancrazio, who totes a trunk full of false titles to his name). *La contessina*, however light-hearted, reflects the struggle and ultimate refusal of an enterprising,

⁶² Carlo Goldoni, *La Contessina*, Act I, xiii. Count: Ah, presumptuous, ah reckless man! With difficulty/ I desist to sully my shoes/ on your backside. This is an affront/ that I cannot suffer. Servants, scoundrels/ where are you, come! I would have you/ thrown out from a window. Pancrazio: Easy, if you please,/ less anger my sir Count;/ for we all know who you are, and who I am. C: You are a merchant, I a Cavalier. P: A Cavalier of ten for a dime,/ made rich by rogue dealings C: Old man, I pity you: you lose your wits/ and you don't know what you are saying P: I know that in the end/ I would have only to lose in giving a son of mine/ so rich and so well built/ to the daughter of a reinvented villain.

enlightened, and rationalistic perspective to accept that any superiority between two men be judged by titles (of dubious authenticity, at that) and not by merit or wisdom, or in the case of an ultra-pragmatic Pancrazio, even by industry: “Oh quante belle vane! I titoli, signore, non danno il pane.”⁶³

Stylistically speaking, *La contessina* is not yet a *dramma giocoso* because it does not show clear differentiation of *buffo* and *serio* roles, or much *serio* content at all for that matter, being much more invested in exploring the societal issues at hand. However, there is clear differentiation of tone and language. In the pompous assertions of Baccellone, of his daughter, and of the fake-noble Pancrazio, Goldoni echoes the bombastic circumlocutions of *opera seria* in full satirical spirit, while in episodes of greater immediacy such as the dispute of Act I, he uses quotidian (but not plebeian) language and current idiomatic expressions. In a way that is reminiscent of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica*, Goldoni also includes local dialect in a realistic portrayal of men of popular extraction. In particular, candid remarks from Baccellone’s gondolier, Gazzetta, pepper the action and supplement its critique, as for example:

Perché ghe ne xe tanti
che fa da gran signori
ma quando pò le prove
della so nobiltà se ghe domanda
i mua descorso e i va da un'altra banda.
Mi ghe n'ho servio tanti
che pareva marchesi e prenciponi
e i ho scoverti alfin birbi e drettoni.⁶⁴

⁶³ *ibid.* Oh how many pretty vanities! Titles do not yield bread.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, Act III, ii. Because there are many/who act like great lords/ but when proof/ of their nobility is asked/ they change the subject and go elsewhere/ I've served many/ who appeared as Marquis or great princes/ and in the end, I discovered them to be rascals and shrewds.

In sum, *La contessina* represents a delicate point of transition from Goldoni's early musical texts to the definitive confirmation of his philosophy of theatre and his output as an established librettist. Regarding early *intermezzi*, Paolo Gallarati rightly observes "L'atteggiamento caricaturale degli intermezzi impediva al pubblico l'immedesimazione nei personaggi ed una eventuale partecipazione affettiva ed emotiva alle loro vicende,"⁶⁵ a notion clearly confronted, resolved, and definitively surpassed by Goldoni with *La contessina*. The social critique embedded in this work is more direct and audacious than ever before, and is made possible by the realistic portrayal of a diversified class structure. Linguistic differences accentuate deeper differences in social philosophy, and unequivocally anchor this work in its own time, reason perhaps for its success.

In addition to his theatrical pursuits, in 1740 Goldoni also accepted the prestigious charge of consul of the Republic of Genoa in Venice, and at first had resolved to abandon the production of theatrical texts, *non parendomi conveniente che un ministro di una repubblica fosse stipendiato da' comici*.⁶⁶ His musical production during these years is in fact less intense, but would be suspended entirely only after *La contessina*, as financial troubles mounted and Goldoni abandoned his charge and moved away from Venice. The next few years saw him in Bologna, Modena, Rimini, Firenze, Siena, and finally Pisa, where he remained until

⁶⁵ P. Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*, (Torino, EDT, 1984); 100. The caricatural approach of the *intermezzi* prevented the public from empathizing with characters and experiencing emotional involvement in their affairs.

⁶⁶ Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane (Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali [1761-1778])*, tomo XVI. It did not seem decorous to me that a minister of a republic should be paid by comedians.

1748 and obtained inclusion in the *Accademia degli Arcadi*, taking the pseudonym Polisseno Fegejo that is occasionally appended to his later libretti. During these years, Goldoni continued to practice law and write for the theatre, mainly *scenari* (*canovacci*) but also his first comedy, *La donna di garbo* (The Well-Mannered Lady, dated 1743 but premiered some years later).

It was during these travels, and in particular thanks to a famous *Pantalone*, Cesare Arbes (1710-1778), that Goldoni was introduced to Girolamo Medebach, whose wife Teodora would play the first *donna di garbo*. Medebach was *capocomico* of the *Teatro S. Angelo* in Venice, and in 1748 offered Goldoni a four-year contract for eight new comedies and two new operas each season. Though Goldoni would not renew his contract after 1752, Medebach would still prove to be perhaps the single most important figure in his career. In particular, it was during Goldoni's span of collaboration with Medebach that he was able to write and produce the most important comedies that would launch his "reform."

The *Teatro S. Angelo* benefitted from the peculiar position of being the only theatre in Venice not owned by a noble family, therefore Medebach, who was renting it for his company after Carlo Gozzi (Goldoni's future rival) had moved out, was able to keep his troupe's playbills open to Goldoni's new ideas. In this small theatre, our author found fertile ground for experimentation that elsewhere would not have been accepted. Naturally, Goldoni continued to tailor the characters of his works to the personalities of his actors, and opened the 1748 season with *La vedova scaltra* (The Shrewd Widow), created for Teodora Medebach (for whom Goldoni's *Memorie Italiane* betray a certain fondness). Goldoni's completely original comedies,

among them masterpieces such as *Il cavaliere e la dama* (The Chevalier and the Lady), *La famiglia dell'antiquario* (The Antique Dealer's Family), *Le femmine puntigliose* (The Punctilious Ladies), *La bottega del caffè* (The Coffee Shop), *Il bugiardo* (The Liar), *I pettegolezzi delle donne* (Women's Gossip), *La moglie saggia* (The Wise Wife), *Le donne gelose* (The Jealous Women), *Le donne curiose* (The Curious Women), *La serva amorosa* (The Enamoured Servant-girl), and *La locandiera* (The Inn-Keeper), were given at the *S. Angelo*. The characteristics of these works and their relation to his theatrical reform will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.

Goldoni's demanding collaboration with Medebach did not however prevent him from supplying texts to other theatres at the same time, most notably to the *Teatro Giustinian*. This small theatre, better known as the *Teatro San Moisè* because of its vicinity to that church, was inaugurated in 1640 with Monteverdi's *Arianna*, and specialized in musical representations. It would become one of the city's leading opera houses and conclude its activity with Rossini's operas in the early 19th century.

For production at the *Teatro San Moisè*, between 1748-49 Goldoni wrote *La scuola moderna*, *Bertoldo, Bertoldino e Cacasenno*, and *La favola dei tre gobbi* (The Fable of the Three Hunchbacks), all set to music by Vincenzo Ciampi (1719-1762). The 1748-49 season marks a point of arrival for Goldoni, for *La scuola moderna* is his first *dramma giocoso*.

La Scuola Moderna: materia buffa colla seria

La scuola moderna, which also bears the sarcastic alternate title of *La maestra di buon gusto* (The Teacher of Good Taste), is not Goldoni's most sophisticated *dramma giocoso*, but it displays all of the characteristics of the genre in embryonic state. It is not a wholly original work but a *pasticcio*, the author having inserted new comic material around text from a previous work, as was quite common at the time. Antonio Groppo, a contemporary of Goldoni who kept catalog of the works performed in various Venetian theatres, identifies *La semplice spiritosa* (The Witty Naïve Girl) as the source, while recent studies suggests in addition a Neapolitan opera, *La maestra* (1747), by A. Palomba.⁶⁷

What makes this work relevant to the present analysis is stated by the author in his opening note to the "amico lettore," which reads:

Non avendo servito il tempo per mutar tutta l'opera,
come erasi divisato, si è mutata tutta la materia buffa,
la quale, se non parerà bene intrecciata colla seria, ciò
è provenuto per la necessaria brevità; e vivi felice.⁶⁸

This brief message contains explicit mention of the coexistence of *serio* and *buffo* material, a distinction well preserved throughout the work and clearly identifiable in textual analysis, as we shall see. The action revolves around two couples, one *buffa*, one *seria*, each importuned by an unwanted third party. Drusilla, the shrewd *maestra* of "good taste," is coveted by the ironically-named elderly nobleman

⁶⁷ See Anna Laura Bellina, "La 'Maestra' esaminata," introduction to G. Cocchi, *La maestra*, (Milano: Ricordi, 1987); and Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian opera and related genres*, Stanford University Press, 2007; 514.

⁶⁸ Carlo Goldoni, *La Scuola Moderna*, Forward. Not having had the time to rewrite the whole work, as was originally devised, all of the *buffo* material has been modified, which, if it should not appear well-connected to the *serio*, this is the result of necessary brevity; and may you live happily [so be it].

Belfiore ('PrettyFlower'). She is already in understanding with his nephew, but leads on the other to set hand to his purse.

In the freshly composed comic roles, Goldoni cannot help but prick and prod, albeit lightheartedly, at certain "modern" manners ("Ma la costanza poi?/ Non è all'usanza!"⁶⁹). Drusilla's first *aria* calls to mind the *cicisbeo* figure so desired by Baccellone's *Contessina*:

Io li vedo a tutte l'ore
tutti ricci e incipriati,
far la ronda alle signore
far con esse i spasimati,
ma che cavino un quattrino
dall'afflitto borsellino
lo credete? oh questo no.
Se vogliamo de' sospiri,
gran promesse e gran parole,
lor ne danno a chi ne vuole,
ma regali non si può.⁷⁰

The materiality that marks Drusilla's tone and actions within the opera is not itself without fault, but will be redressed by the end of the work as she renounces Belfiore's fortunes in the name of love. Notwithstanding the flaws of her character, however, Drusilla alludes to themes that ring true. The image of gentlemen with perfected hair and powdered complexions takes a swipe at superficiality as a rampant social illness, as does the evocation of lofty words and empty promises. Reading between the lines, we come to confront the same irony of social mores explored in *La contessina*: noble bearing and studied manners without real

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, Act I viii. But constancy? It's not in fashion!

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, Act I, iii. I see them at all hours/ their hair curled and their skin powdered/ tailing 'round the ladies/ acting so in love,/ but do they ever take a dime/ out of their afflicted purse/ would you think? no, this certainly not./ If we want sighs/ grand promises and lofty words/ these they give to whoever may desire them/ but gifts are not possible.

substance, and, more concretely, a nobility that is suffering economically and can no longer measure to its old prestige except in appearance.

Goldoni's *parti buffe* confirm deception as the central theme of this *dramma giocoso*. The *maestra di buon gusto*, in fact, instructs her pupils on how best to manipulate their parents, tutors, or guardians to their advantage. Her academy is, after all, "the modern school" (set in Venice, no less), and modernity is apparently governed by the laws of falsehood:

Tutti fingono, tutti. I mercadanti,
per mantener i vizi e le gran spese,
fingon la roba di lontan paese;
gli orefici, vendendo
la tombacca per oro,
guadagnano un tesoro. Gli avvocati
fingono che il cliente abbia ragione.
sol per mangiargli il fegato e il pulmone;
e i medici, fingendo
la malattia mortale,
traggon il proprio ben dall'altrui male;
fingon gli uomini affetto, ed è interesse;
fingon le donne anch'esse:
vedrai un bel visin, ma quello è finto,
con la biacca e il carmin coperto e tinto.⁷¹

This denunciation is so driven and direct as to almost appear detached from its context. In other words, while it is Drusilla's 'lesson' to Lindoro, it shoots out to the audience almost as if in direct address. While the scene is clearly comic, in this sweeping panorama of corruption that calls to mind Goldoni's model, Molière, humor takes second place to truth.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, Act I, vii. Everyone deceives, everyone. Merchants/ to support their vices and large expenses/ pretend that their goods come from distant lands/ goldsmiths, selling copper for gold/ rake up a fortune. Lawyers/ pretend their clients are right/ only to strip them of liver and lungs/ and doctors, feigning/ the illness to be lethal/ draw their gain from others' misfortunes;/ men feign affection, which in truth is only interest/ and women pretend too:/ you'll see a pretty little face, but that's all fake/ covered and tinted with flour paste and blush.

With respect to structure, the function of this portion of text appears ambiguous. Embedded in recitative in the middle of a scene, it is certainly not an exit aria like most others in this work, yet possesses the depth, cohesion, and length of a free-form set piece. It is possible that this *lezione* constitutes a first attempt at an *arietta* (hence the sketched rhyme scheme), a reduced form Goldoni would later use frequently. As a solo piece that can stand alone, though more concise and flowing than a full *aria*, the *arietta* advantageously preserves the flow of the action and can function within scenes (not only at the opening or conclusion), altogether conveying the action in a less static and therefore more realistic style. Ciampi's musical setting of Goldoni's *La scuola moderna* remains obscure (and further called into question as new scholarship attributes the score instead to Giovanni Fiorini⁷²), and therefore cannot be consulted to shed more light on this particular episode. In any event, Goldoni will quickly adopt the *arietta* in substitution of *arie* throughout his mature libretti, consolidating this form into common practice.

In net contrast to the tone, pacing, and broader social commentary of Goldoni's comic parts, the *serio* material of this *pasticcio*, which the author chose to preserve from its original version, is a return to the realm of Metastasian opera, notably without any shadow of parody or satirical play. Indeed the comic couple, or trio, consistently alternates scenes with a secondary pair of characters who set a very different tone, as their very names imply. Rosmira, a young noblewoman, is prevented from marrying Ergasto, whom she loves, because he is desired by her aunt. Rosmira, continually mistreated, and Ergasto, grieved by his own suffering and

⁷² Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian opera and related genres*, Stanford University Press, 2007; 514.

hers, sing in measured, elevated, and noble verse, in contrast to the rapid exchanges, puns, and gesture of the comic pair.

Their language carries echoes of classic (and generic) tragic *leitmotifs*, as Ergasto's first solo aria,

L'alma gelar mi sento
sento mancarmi il cor
oh che crudel momento!
che sfortunato amor! etc.⁷³

or his beloved's, accordingly:

Troppo è crudel tormento
questo che in cor mi sento. Un giorno intero
senza veder l'amante,
è pena da morir. Ditelo voi,
anime innamorate,
se fia tormento e duolo
star lontano dal suo bene un giorno solo.

Fanciulle semplici
che molle e tenero
avete il cor,
quel duolo barbaro
che il sen mi lacera,
potrete dir,
se il fier tormento
che in sen mi sento
può far morir.⁷⁴

This elevated tone is designated exclusively to the characters of noble birth. Both pieces are exit arias, which bring the action to a temporary halt, and in the manner of *opera seria* contain no development within them but rather expound upon a single emotion or state of mind. Goldoni will later modify *serio* parts as well,

⁷³ Goldoni, *La Scuola Moderna*, Act I, vi. I feel my soul freezing/ my heart giving way/ oh, what a cruel moment!/ what ill-fated love!

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, Act I, x. Too cruel is the torture/ that I feel in my heart. An entire day/ without seeing my love/ is a fatal pain. You be the judge/ you souls who are in love/ if it be torment and grief/ to be away from one's beloved for a whole day. Unaffected girls/ whose heart/ is sweet and tender/ the cruel pain/ that tears my breast/ you can testify/ if the fierce torment/ I feel in my breast/ can make us die.

but in this first attempt, the decision to preserve contrast of *buffo* and *serio* in tone, style, and social extraction is telling in its own right. While still underdeveloped at this stage, the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* lends the opera a much ampler spectrum of dramatic registers and greater intricacy of plot.

The final important feature of *La scuola moderna*, and part of the blueprint for future *drammi giocosi*, is Goldoni's manner of bringing together all the roles at the closure of acts, as in the *intermezzi*. This practice is by no means unique to our author, and its origins are quite ancient, stemming naturally from the logical desire to have all parts present at the conclusion of a work, in prose and musical theatre alike. Goldoni's original contribution will later consist in adapting the so-called 'ensemble finale' to the ends of internal scenes, and eventually even within scenes as part of the action.

At this primary stage, we see ensemble pieces reserved for the ends of acts only. Even within this well-worn custom, however, Goldoni introduces new life in the rapidity of the exchanges, and infuses the action with verve and realism by juxtaposing parallel conversations between couples, instead of supplying a more predictable *conversazione a quattro*. The conclusion of Act I is exemplary in this respect, and is strongly reminiscent of the lively tones of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica*:

BELFIORE. Cara, cara.
DRUSILLA. Caro, caro.
LINDORO
(a Belfiore). Senta, senta, mio padrone.
BELFIORE
(a Lindoro). Bernardone, bernardone.
BELFIORE
(a Drusilla). Mia sarete?

DRUSILLA. Se vorrete.
LINDORO
(a Belfiore). domandato è in verità.
BELFIORE. Va in malora, via di qua.
DRUSILLA. Zitto, zitto, taci la.
BELFIORE. Per te cara, io vivo in pene.
DRUSILLA. Io vi voglio tanto bene.
LINDORO
(verso la scena). Si signore, viene, viene.
BELFIORE. Con chi parli?
DRUSILLA. E' domandato.
LINDORO
(a Drusilla). Traditora!
DRUSILLA
(a Lindoro). Sconsigliato!
BELFIORE. Bernardone, mi hai beffato.
LINDORO. No, davvero, ve lo giuro.
DRUSILLA. È innocente, v'assicuro.
LINDORO. La mia fede a voi prometto.
DRUSILLA. Io vi tengo stretto stretto.
BELFIORE. Oh che gioia, oh che diletto!
DRUSILLA, BELFIORE
e LINDORO. Che piacere amor mi da!
Viva viva la bontà! ⁷⁵

This comic *concertato* features quick shifts in meaning and in the humor of the characters involved. Drusilla is obviously sarcastic in her addresses to Belfiore, but immediately earnest in her reproof to Lindoro. The two young lovers travel from complicity through mistrust to final reconciliation in the span of a few rapid exchanges, and Belfiore, one minute denouncing trickery, in the next is newly blinded by amorous illusion. Gullible and continually misled, the role of Belfiore creates ample dramatic irony, and the entire discourse is traversed by double meanings in constant variation that testify Goldoni's particular comic talent.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, Act I Finale. Belfiore: My dear!/ Drusilla: My dear/ Lindoro: Listen, sir, listen/B: dimwit! [to Drusilla]: Will you be mine?/ D: If you so wish/ L: Sir, they are asking for you/ B: Go to hell, get out of here./ D: Oh, hush, quiet now/ B: For you, my sweet, I live in pain/ D: and I love you very much/ Lindoro (looking out): Yes sir, he's on his way! He'll be right there!/B: Whom are you speaking to?/ D: They are asking for you/ L: Traitor!/ D: Imprudent!/ B: Dimwit, you've tricked me./ L: No, in truth, I swear./ D: He is innocent, I assure you./ L: I promise you my faithfulness/ D: And I will keep you close to me./ B: Oh what joy! what bliss!/ ALL: What joys love gives me! Long live goodness!

In sum, *La scuola moderna* represents the beginning of Goldoni's work in the *dramma giocoso* genre, and, however hastily compiled, demonstrates significant dramatic potential that will find fuller development in later works. Thanks to the clear coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* in this *dramma giocoso*, this work, while of simple design, is able to provide an ample spectrum of dramatic registers and a variety of scenarios, supplemented in their efficacy by the realism and fluidity of action that are a universal priority for our author. From its roots in the *intermezzi* and the influences of the Neapolitan *commedia per musica*, the *dramma giocoso* can now begin to evolve in new directions, guided by the dramatic instinct and reformist convictions of Carlo Goldoni in mid-century Venice.

CHAPTER III.

New Perspectives on the Reform in Music

Defining “dramma giocoso”

The *New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians* defines *dramma giocoso* in the following way: “A term used on Italian librettos in the second half of the 18th century to designate a comic opera of a particular type. It was used, from 1748 onwards, by Carlo Goldoni for libretti in which character-types from serious opera (‘parti serie’) appeared alongside the standard peasants and servants of comic opera (‘parti buffe’), sometimes also with intermediate characters (‘in mezzo carattere’).”⁷⁶ The allusion, of course, is to *La scuola moderna*. Along the same lines, in his article “Goldoni, the Dramma Giocoso, and Don Giovanni,” Daniel Hertz defines *dramma giocoso* as “a particular kind of Opera Buffa,” and also credits Goldoni as the first to create this new dramaturgy, “his greatest contribution to opera.”⁷⁷ The primacy of Goldoni in the history of this new genre is thus certainly acknowledged, but understudied as yet.

For Goldoni, however, being the first author to venture into a new field did not always bring the consciousness of merit we invest him with today. Navigating a complex theatrical and printing economy towards an uncertain future that ultimately made it impossible for him to remain in Venice, Goldoni’s path was by no means one of linear ascension. His writings testify that the burden of innovation at

⁷⁶ Grove, vol. 5, 14th edition, edited by Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan, 1995); 610.

⁷⁷ Daniel Hertz, “Goldoni, Don Giovanni, and the Dramma Giocoso” in *The Musical Times* vol. 120 n. 1642, 1979.

times made the creation of his libretti an even ungrateful task. His preface to the *dramma giocoso De gustibus non est disputandum* (1754), for example, is full of reluctance towards the “esercizio sì disgustoso” (such a disgusting practice) of composing libretti to which he had been “forced” to apply himself. In fact, this text is often cited in scholarship as the seal of Goldoni’s lack of regard for his musical texts, thereby proof of their having no relation to his prose theatre and little relevance to our understanding of the author’s accomplishments.

Careful reading of even this outspoken text, however, reveals much that has been overlooked. On the interplay between *buffo* and *serio*, for example, Goldoni comments, “Il popolo decide, a seconda dell’esito, se l’opera è a terra, il libro è pessimo. Se è un poco serio, è cattivo perché non fa ridere; se è troppo ridicolo, è cattivo perché non vi è nobiltà.”⁷⁸ We sense that the equilibrium between comic and tragic elements in opera hangs by a delicate thread, but moreover that public taste and sensibility is seeking a theatre that is neither fully comic nor tragic, but a balanced combination of the two.

The author’s task of pleasing all becomes next to impossible, as no rules yet exist for this new type of hybrid work: “Volea pure imparare il modo di contentare l’universale, anche in questo genere di composizioni, ma in sei anni, che la necessità e gl’impegni mi costringono a doverne fare, non ho veduto alcun libro straniero che

⁷⁸ Goldoni, *De gustibus non est disputandum*, Forward. The people decide, according to the success, that if an opera falls, its text is terrible. If it is somewhat serious, it is a bad text because it has no humor; if it’s too comic, it’s bad because it lacks nobility.

abbia avuto fortuna e che potesse insegnarmi.”⁷⁹ A bitter, disenchanted tone covers the essential point: Goldoni had no model for his *drammi giocosi*. Goldoni’s own account, which for him held a polemical purpose, to us confirms he was one of the first dramatists to create, through much experimentation, the foundation of this successful genre.

With no direct antecedents from which to draw, Goldoni had to find new principles on which to create his works. Instinctively, he turned to comedy, as explained in the preface to *De gustibus*:

Letter carissimo,
se uno tu sei di quegli a’ quali abbia io protestato di non volere quest’anno e forse mai più comporre de’ simili drammi buffi, voglio anche comunicarti la ragione che ad astenermene mi obbligava ed i motivi che mi hanno fatto dal mio proponimento discendere. Il dramma serio per musica, come tu saprai, è un genere di teatrale componimento di sua natura imperfetto, non potendosi osservare in esso veruna di quelle regole che sono alla tragedia prescritte. Molto più imperfetto il dramma buffo esser dee perché, cercandosi dagli scrittori di tai barzellette servire più alla musica che a sé medesime fondando o nel ridicolo o nello spettacolo la speranza della riuscita, non badano seriamente alla condotta, ai caratteri, all’intreccio, alla verità, come in una commedia buona dovrebbe farsi.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *ibid.* I wanted to learn a way of pleasing the universal taste in this type of composition as well, but in the six years that necessity and obligations had forced me to write them, I never saw any foreign example that was well received, that I could learn from.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* Dearest reader, if you are one of those to whom I have expressed the desire to not compose anymore comic *drammi* this year, or perhaps ever again, I want you to know the reasons which compelled me to abstain from them, and the motives that led me to abandon my resolution. Tragic opera, as you probably know, is a theatrical genre imperfect in its nature, because it is impossible to uphold in it any of the rules prescribed to tragedy. Comic opera must then be even more imperfect because the authors of these jokes, always seeking to serve the music instead of the jokes themselves, and placing their hopes of success in blunt comedy or in spectacle, don’t apply themselves seriously to the action, to the characters, to plot, nor to truth, as one should do in a good comedy.

The author's caustic tone does not spare criticism of the current state of comic opera, which bends plot to the music and invests in show rather than intrigue. Again, this passage is most often read as the author's dismissal of opera in favor of 'real' comedy, yet Goldoni here does not refer to his own output, but rather to the "scrittori di barzellette" who place the rules of spectacle above those of logic, as he himself never would. If anything, Goldoni appears to denounce the need for a new vision of comic opera and advocates respect for action, character development, plot, and truth (that is, the realism we are quite familiar with), in sum all those elements essential to good comedy, in musical context as well. Naturally, no one will deny that, based on his terms, Goldoni at the moment of *De gustibus* would have preferred to turn his back on opera theatre. Yet, biographical evidence would suggest that, more than the arts themselves, it was the dynamics of theatre, copyright, and *impresari* that had ruined Goldoni's optimism.

The shadow of external circumstances is made explicit in his *Prefazione*: "circondato mi trovo dalle più pesanti faccende, al mondo bastantemente palesi."⁸¹ In particular, Goldoni likely alludes to the termination of his contract with Girolamo Medebach due to issues of profit and printing rights with the Bettinelli edition, which also saw the disastrous end of their amicable relationship. While Goldoni signed a new and advantageous ten-year contract (extended to carnival of 1763) with Antonio Vendramin, the noble proprietor of the *Teatro San Luca* (still standing as the *Teatro Goldoni*), Medebach promptly hired Pietro Chiari (1712-1785), one of Goldoni's greatest rivals. It is alleged that Chiari stole ideas from Goldoni, and their

⁸¹ *ibid.* I find myself in the most unpleasant circumstances, sufficiently known to all.

mutual contempt led to a division between supporters of one and the other author, *chiaristi* and *goldonisti*. To maintain public interest in his prose theatre, Goldoni was therefore for a time forced to put aside his ideals for realistic Venetian comedy and imitate the styles of his competitors who were attracting the largest audiences, producing works of historical or exotic flavor such as *Terenzio* (Terence), *La dalmatina* (The Dalmatian Girl), *La bella selvaggia* (The Savage Beauty), *La peruviana* (The Peruvian), *La sposa persiana* (The Persian Bride), etc.

The resentment that so pervades the preface of *De gustibus*, an important document in his career as librettist, can thus be understood as symptomatic of a greater dissatisfaction not only with opera theatre, but with comic theatre in general. Goldoni had clear ideas about the future of comedy, but was plagued by obstacles in realizing his intentions. To his comedies after Medebach we will return later in this chapter. At present, we must acknowledge, on the basis of the textual evidence cited above, that whether curse or blessing, Goldoni was one of the first to begin writing *drammi giocosi*. With no direct models for his original operas, he became a true pioneer in the history of the genre.

***Drammi giocosi* 1748-1760: stages of production and elements of reform**

While scholarship has offered different interpretations of Goldoni's libretti and their relationship to his project of reform for the spoken theatre, the *drammi giocosi* have not yet been considered as a properly distinct genre. Both from an ideological (in the social criticism and Enlightenment philosophy that transpires) and a technical (in the combination of *serio* and *buffo* elements) point of view,

however, these works suggest significant points of contact with Goldoni's major production for the spoken theatre. An analysis of the *drammi giocosi* of the years of the reform has not yet been offered, and this project aims to bridge this gap.

The period from 1748 to 1762 is generally regarded as the most vital and groundbreaking as regards Goldoni's realist reform of spoken comedy, thus it will be most fruitful to consider the more salient libretti that are contemporary to his great works. Following *La scuola moderna*, Goldoni wrote nearly thirty *drammi giocosi* alongside his principal theatrical production and other musical *intermezzi* before moving Paris in 1762. A detailed analysis of this entire *corpus* would exceed the scope of the present study, which will aim therefore to highlight those works that are most representative of Goldoni's innovations in form, style, and content.

i. Realism or fantasy?

The first *drammi giocosi* already confront modern society and its vices, as exemplified by *Il mondo della luna* of 1750. This work, immensely successful and set to music by a myriad of composers throughout Europe including Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), is often grouped with its chronological neighbors *Il paese della cuccagna* (the Land of Plenty) and *Arcifanfano re dei matti* (Arcifanfano King of Madmen), which are however *drammi comici*. As their titles suggest, the latter two operas are set in fantastical alternative worlds, reason for which Emery has argued that in this phase of production, Goldoni "abandons realism for an entirely different approach."⁸² This is not entirely the case, however, especially in view of the fact that

⁸² Ted Emery, *Goldoni as Librettist: Theatrical Reform and the Drammi Giocosi per Musica* (New York: Peter Lang Press, 1991); 125.

the utopian realms created within are dismantled by the end of each *dramma*, and total disenchantment occurs among the characters and audience.

Briefly, *Il paese della cuccagna* is cast as a worldly Eden or *paradiso terrestre*, in which all enjoy food, drink, and lovemaking, while labor and jealousy are expressly prohibited. After two acts, these illusions crumble as foreign invaders instate a new, familiar law: “voi che in bagordi/ male il tempo spendete,/ se vorrete mangiar, lavorerete”⁸³ The conclusion rings like an admonition, “...vedrà il mondo/ ch’è bella la cuccagna in ogni loco/ ma per proprio destin suol durar poco,” and the final chorale “finita è la cuccagna, andiamo a lavorar” carries a *double entendre* for the audience, who, having come to the end of the piece and of a lighthearted evening at the theatre, must return to their lives and occupations.

Emery’s judgment of these works as unrealistic is further called into question by *Il mondo della luna* (The World of the Moon), which unlike the other works it is grouped with presents the “world of the moon” as a man-made illusion, all the while remaining anchored in Venice and in its own time. Contemporary society is examined and criticized by analogy if not directly, and to great effect as the alternative ‘lunatic’ world, seasoned with the irony of self-recognition, becomes an unforgiving mirror of earthly reality. Buonafede (‘GoodFaith,’ *in nomine omen*) is quickly impressed by the simulated erudition of a fake astronomer, Ecclitico.

⁸³ Goldoni, *Il Paese della Cuccagna*, Act III, xiv. All of you, who invest your time so poorly in revelry, if you intend to eat, will have to work.
The world will see that free-loading is wonderful in any place, but by its own destiny, it never lasts long.
Our revelries are finished, let’s all go to work.

Ecclitico charms Buonafede to gain wealth and favors, but openly discloses his philosophy to the omniscient audience:

Oh le gran belle cose
che a intendere si danno
a quei che poco sanno per natura!
Oh che gran bel mestier ch'è l'impostura!
Chi finge di saper accrescer l'oro
chi cavar un Tesoro,
chi dispensa segreti,
chi parla dei pianeti,
chi vende mercanzia
di falsa ipocrisia
chi finge nome, titolo, e figura,
oh che gran bel mestier è l'impostura! ... etc.⁸⁴

Buonafede's subsequent journey to the moon at the end of the first Act is nothing more than a false 'ascension' facilitated by sedatives, and a reawakening in an 'alternative world' that is only Ecclitico's own garden, where various contraptions have been installed to lend credit to his lie. Heavy irony comes into play as Buonafede's manservant Cecco plays the role of emperor of the moon, and sees his master reverently bow at his feet. The reversal continues as Lisetta the *cameriera* is made his partner and receives homage from Buonafede's daughters, whom she used to serve.

Noteworthy is the rapidity with which Lisetta takes to her new, ennobled state, a transformation underscored by the fact that, contrary to Cecco, she is unaware of the imposture and believes herself to truly be on the moon. The bestowal of power appears to unlock something already within, "Sento nel core

⁸⁴ Goldoni, *Il Mondo della Luna*, Act I, i. Oh what wonderful things/ we can make fools believe! Imposture is a marvelous trade! Some pretend to know how to multiply gold, some to find treasure, others dispense secrets, some talk of the planets, some make merchandise of their own false hypocrisy, others still feign names, titles, and position. Oh, what a wonderful trade is imposture!

certo vapore/ che m'empie tutta di nobiltà,"⁸⁵ and quickly grows into overbearing assertiveness:

Olà paggi, staffieri
camerieri, braccieri,
datemi da sedere. Arricordatevi
ch'io son la monarchessa.
Vogl'esser obbedita e rispettata
e se farete ben, vi sarò grata.
Sopra tutto avvertite
di nulla riportarmi
di quel che fa il mio sposo.
E null'a lui mai riportar di me,
mentre ognuno di noi pensa per se.
Avete a dormir poco;
avete a mangiar freddo
e nell'ore dell'ozio
vuò che l'astrologia tutti studiate,
acciò saper possiate
quello che far vi tocca,
senza che a comandarvi apra la bocca....
Son io la maestà;
mi metterò in contegno e in gravità.⁸⁶

The "composure and gravity" adopted by Lisetta are all she needs to become a credible noblewoman of the highest order in the eyes of her former superiors. This *rovesciamento* reconnects to Eclittico's mention of false titles at the opening of the work, and creates an ironic commentary that undermines the connection of haughty mannerisms to any true superiority of intellect or lineage. The credulity of Buonafede and his daughters, while exaggerated for comic effect, appears in this light symptomatic of a societal superficiality that judges of an individual from his bearing and on previous assumption, rather than from discernment of his true

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, Act II, x. I feel in my heart certain vapors/ that fill me with noble spirit.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, Act III, i. Ho' there pages, stable hands, manservants, workers, give me a seat. Remember that I am the lady monarch. I want to be obeyed and respected, and if you will do your job well, you'll have my gratitude. Above all, make sure to not inform me of what my husband does. And never tell him of my doings, for each of us will act for ourselves. You must sleep little, eat cold food, and in your hours of rest, I want you all to study astrology, so as to be able to divine what your next task will be, without my having to open my mouth... I am the majesty, let me assume composure and gravity.

identity. This problem is hardly ‘fantastical,’ and, reappearing in many of Goldoni’s works as we have seen, clearly responds to its own time.

Furthermore, the familiar question of power and social order is by no means the only element of timely critique in *Il mondo della luna*. Widespread habits of all social levels are literally put under observation as Buonafede gazes towards the moon through Eclittico’s telescope. What he sees in reality are images projected by a machine the astronomer has prepared, for,

Quanti sciocchi mortali
con falsi canocchiali
credono di veder la verità
e non sanno scoprir le falsità.
Quanti van scrutinando
quello che gli altri fanno
e se stessi conoscere non sanno. ⁸⁷

The scenes Buonafede observes become vignettes ripe with implications:

Ho veduto una ragazza
far carezze ad un vecchietto.
Oh che gusto che diletto
che quel vecchio proverà.
...
Ho veduto un buon marito
bastonar la propria moglie
per correggere il prorito
di una certa infedeltà.
Oh che mondo ben compito
oh che gusto che mi dà.
...
Oh che mondo benedetto
Oh che gran felicità! etc. ⁸⁸

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, Act I, iii. How many simpletons with false telescopes believe they see the truth, and are unable to uncover falsehood. How many can scrutinize the actions of others, but are unable to know themselves.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, I saw a young girl flirting with an old man. Oh what pleasure and delight he must be feeling... I saw a good husband beating his wife, to correct the itch of a certain infidelity. Oh what a wonderful world, what pleasure it gives me! What a blessed place, what happiness!

Buonafede marvels at these and other actions on the moon as if never before seen, yet the irony of the situation is that these customs are not at all foreign to Earth, and furthermore are hardly to be admired. *Il mondo della luna* is, literally and figuratively, a jesting comic mirror of the earthly world and of universal weakness, and in these elements above all constitutes an exemplary *dramma giocoso*.

ii. The rule and the exception

This opera does not however contain *serio* character types or action in the manner of *La scuola moderna*. Explicitly differentiated *serio* roles instead reappear in *Il Conte Caramella* of the following year. Nonetheless, Goldoni labels this opera a *dramma comico*, a type we would readily align with the standard tradition of *opera buffa*. If *serio* and *buffo* together are to be considered the hallmark of the *dramma giocoso*, how do we account for their appearance in a *dramma comico*?

The interchangeability and occasional ambiguity of terms, which has characterized new musical forms throughout history, can be understood as the natural product of an evolutionary process. Historians and theorists in every age have categorized art to better describe and understand it, but this type of undertaking becomes possible only after a substantial corpus has been produced. As we know, there was no standardization and little precedent in Venice for the type of comic theatre Goldoni desired. Rather, the author was guided by a gradual change in aesthetic preference, but on the other hand also played a substantial role in shaping that preference, as testified by the challenges he faced in convincing audiences to accept novelty. The conclusions we draw from Goldoni's *corpus* are thus founded on

the characteristics of the overwhelming majority of *drammi giocosi*, but these elements are not always exclusive to one genre alone.

Seen in the context of the works that precede and follow, *Il Conte Caramella* is in fact the exception that confirms the rule, for all future works that contain explicit division of *parti serie* and *parti buffe* are consistently labeled by Goldoni as *drammi giocosi*. *Il Conte Caramella* is thus the sole *dramma comico* to combine *parti buffe*, *parti serie*, and the first-seen *mezzi caratteri*. As such, it serves as an important indicator of the author's creative process.

Unlike *Il mondo della luna*, in which class differentiation is only one part of a more general portrait of human folly, title and entitlement are the central motifs of *Il Conte Caramella*. The main action shadows the Homeric *Odyssey* in comic and almost cosmopolitan garb: the Count Caramella, rumored to have been killed in battle, returns to his estate disguised as a beggar and discovers a Marquis relentlessly courting his wife. The Contessa, like a modern Penelope, hopes in her husband's return and remains faithful, but is surrounded by lies and put under pressure by her suitor. In the manner of a *dramma giocoso*, the opera also includes several sub-plots carried out by comic characters, which all proceed in parallel throughout the work and converge at its conclusion.

The linguistic differentiation of *serio* and *buffo* roles is not unexpected, but Goldoni does create novelty in developing a personal, psychological dimension entirely absent in *Il mondo della luna*. The depth of his characterization is most evident in the role of the Contessa, whose character and circumstances are complex. Continually suspended between rumors of her husband's death and hope of their

falsity, the Contessa's doubt and confusion are realistically portrayed by Goldoni in a scene where she contemplates the insistence of the Marchese:

Ah marchese, non so...
Che risolvo? che fo?
(...)
Ah non so dir se amore,
necessità o timore
a credere mi spinga;
e una nuova speranza or mi lusinga.⁸⁹

The Contessa reveals contrasting emotions, and the spontaneous quality of her fragmented lines realistically portrays her emotional confusion. The 'new hope' to which she refers is also ambiguous, for, though the Marchese interprets it as the first signal of a change of heart in his favor, the Contessa later denies any intention of accepting a new companion:

Ah, ch'io d'errar pavento e non ho core
d'abbandonarmi a nuovi affetti in preda;
par ch'estinto il consorte ancora non creda.⁹⁰

Especially noteworthy is the detail, "par ch'io creda," which further underlines the Contessa's incapacity to comprehend her own sentiments. Through this small detail of wording, Goldoni shows a character surprised by her instincts, who, in her confusion, looks in on her own feelings almost as an outsider.

Along with the newly-honed psychological characterization here shown, the true groundbreaking element of *Il Conte Caramella* is the first appearance of a *mezzo carattere*, a hallmark of later opera theatre that will reappear often in Goldoni's subsequent *drammi giocosi*. The *mezzo-carattere* is characterized by a peculiar

⁸⁹ Goldoni, *Il Conte Caramella*, Act II, ii. Ah Marchese I don't know...what should I resolve? what should I do? ... Ah I don't know if it be love/ or need, or fear/ that spurs me to believe;/ and a new hope now flatters me.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, Act II, iii. Ah, that I am afraid to commit error and have no heart/ to give myself over to new affections;/ it would seem that I don't yet believe my husband dead.

suspension between tragic and comic. It occupies the space between *buffo* and *serio* by displaying moderated elements of each in a flexible equilibrium that realistically responds to every turn of events.

In *Il Conte Caramella*, the author classifies both the Count and his servant Dorina as *mezzi caratteri*. This implies that, unlike the *parte seria* or *parte buffa*, the *mezzo carattere* is uniquely adjustable to characters of disparate social extraction, both popular and aristocratic. In what way, then, do these roles distinguish themselves from the others? Dorina, for example, who in origin would fulfill a *parte buffa*, does not elevate her character through refined linguistic expression or honorable conduct, but atypically assumes a directional role amongst her fellow servants. The difference between her and her peers is thus not a question of style but rather of influence.

Just as Dorina's role is invested with greater responsibility, the Count's is lightened with comic elements, largely afforded by his disguise. The unburdening of his part is even reflected structurally in the reduction of his solo *arie* in favor of shorter pieces internally situated within scenes. In fact, in Act II of *Il Conte Caramella*, as the disguised protagonist presents himself as a necromancer, we find Goldoni's first *arietta*:

CONTE. Orsù perché crediate
ch'esser possa il futuro da me svelato
qualche cosa dirovvi del passato.

Pria d'essere sposata,
il conte capitano
vi prese per la mano
una mattina.

Fuggiste modestina,

vi vergognaste un poco
ma vi ridusse in loco
solitario.

Diceste: “Temerario,
andate via di qui,”
movendo in dir così
la bocca al riso.

Ed ei con un sorriso
amante pronto e scaltro...

CONTESSA. Basta così, non voglio sentir altro.

DORINA. (Com'è venuta rossa) (*da sé*) etc.⁹¹

The playful structure and flirtatious details of this text further contribute to the lightness and quickness of this piece. While it could hardly stand alone as a full *aria* with ornamentation, as an *arietta* the Count's interlude does not interrupt the flow of the action, as further testified by the Countess's abrupt objection and the continuation of a three-part discourse that includes Dorina. The entire structure is then repeated as the Count commences a second *arietta*, this time directed to Dorina, who like the Countess soon interrupts him as sensitive information is brought to light.

As we may evince, this *arietta* is also part of an ensemble scene, which for the first time is situated in the middle of an Act, and no longer only at its conclusion. In the manner of a true ensemble piece, the scene is animated by varying dynamics of communication: the Count and the two women speak together, the two women speak amongst themselves, the Count speaks to each individually, and each has lines

⁹¹ *ibid.*, Act II, iv. Conte: Alright then, so you believe that I can foretell the future, I shall tell you something of the past. Before you were married/ the Count, also captain/ took you by the hand/ one morning. You fled in modesty/ you were a bit ashamed/ but he brought you/ to a solitary place. You said “You are too bold/ go away at once”/ while speaking, moving your lips/ to laughter. And he with a smile/ as a quick and artful lover... Contessa: That's enough, I want to hear no more. Dorina: (Oh look how she's turned red) (*aside*)

“da sé” that speak only to the audience. Altogether, these combinations create a realistic discourse and a fluidity of action that are essential traits of Goldonian comedy.

Notably, the comic hue of the Count’s *ariette*, which we can easily imagine to have been seasoned with a certain manner of acting, gives way to an entirely different style and bearing once the Count reclaims his rightful place as husband (“Vattene, scellerato, il piacer di trovare/ una sposa fedele a questo segno/ tutta mi fa depor l’ira e lo sdegno”⁹²). With his authority returned to him, the Count not only changes tone and expression, but also displays the clemency of a true noble spirit. His elevation from beggar to ruler takes him from *mezzo carattere* to full *parte seria*.

In this light, the particular connection of dramatic role to social situation appears fully consolidated. Just as *serio* and *buffo* roles are, at this early stage, unequivocally tied to characters of high and low extraction, the *mezzo carattere* is applied in this first case to a countryman of commanding influence and a nobleman fallen from his rightful place. The choice of role and style therefore ultimately hinges upon the realistic portrayal of each character, reason for which some *drammi giocosi*, if they do not contain noble characters, do not always designate *parti serie*. In other words, these do not appear by rule, but only when mandated by plot. Even with the idiosyncrasies of opera theatre, *Il Conte Caramella* testifies that realism is the primary concern of our author, who doses comic and *serio* with nuanced moderation, and promotes their coexistence in the transformative *mezzo carattere*.

⁹² *ibid.*, Act III scena ultima. Begone, wicked man, the pleasure of finding/ a wife so faithful/ brings me to set aside my rage and scorn.

As we shall see later, the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* is by no means unique to Goldoni's libretti. Its centrality to our author's dramatic style is unequivocally confirmed by the combination of *buffo* and *serio* roles in his comic prose theatre as well.

iii. Buffo and serio in 'reformed' prose theatre

In 1750, Goldoni entered into his famous wager with Medebach promising sixteen new *commedie di carattere* (original, fully written works) for the *Teatro S. Angelo*. Of this vast undertaking, the first product listed in print editions is *Il teatro comico* (The Comic Theatre). Goldoni explains the importance of this work in these terms:

Questa, ch'io intitulo *Il Teatro Comico*, piuttosto che una *Commedia*, prefazione può dirsi alle mie *Commedie*. In questa qualunque siasi composizione, ho inteso di palesemente notare una gran parte di que' difetti che ho procurato sfuggire, e tutti que' fondamenti su' quali il metodo mio ho stabilito, nel comporre le mie *Commedie*, né altra evvi diversità fra un proemio e questo mio componimento, se non che nel primo si annoierebbero forse i leggitori più facilmente, e nel secondo vado in parte schivando il tedio col movimento di qualche azione.⁹³

Il teatro comico, in accordance with the author's expressed intent, has long been considered the *commedia-manifesto* of Goldoni's reform, the herald work of a realistic and historically relevant theatre here launched explicitly for the first time. Goldoni's reasons for openly declaring the foundations of his "new method" are

⁹³ Goldoni, *Il teatro comico*, Forward. This, which I title the Comic Theatre, more than a Comedy, could be deemed a Preface to my Comedies. In this work of whatever type, I resolved to openly make known a large part of those defects that I have procured to avoid, and all of the foundations on which I have established my method of composing Comedies, nor is there any other difference between a Prologue and this work of mine, other than that the first might bore the reader more easily, while in the second I can partly avoid tedium with the stirring of some action.

twofold. First, he does not waste an opportunity to reignite his polemic against the current state of comic theatre, with the auspice that someone may rescue it from its present decadence (“...rendere lo smarrito onore alle nostre scene con le buone Commedie, che sieno veramente Commedie, e non scene insieme accozzate senz’ordine e senza regola”⁹⁴). Secondly, now over a decade after the introduction of his first unmasked character in *Momolo cortesan*, Goldoni’s new theatre has received positive attention (as Medebach’s investment in his work testifies) and has built a foundation of support for his convictions, so as to allow him to formally launch his vision for theatre in specific terms.

The result is a courageous and clever meta-theatrical work in which Goldoni lays bare the ‘backstage’ of theatre and, even within his cast of characters, places supporters of ‘real comedy’ and skeptics at odds. The entire work is made up of frank discussion between actors preparing to rehearse a fictitious work (*Il padre rivale del figlio* (The Father Rival of his Son), of which Goldoni supplies one Act over the course of the play), therefore the entire troupe is out of costume, and each plays the part of his ordinary self. As was his custom, Goldoni tailored each role to reflect the innate personality of each member of the company. The comedy also includes an explicitly autobiographical character, Lelio (*poeta*).

Il teatro comico abounds with observations on the current state of theatre and voices the author’s impatience to move forward to a new style. Almost every scene is revealing of some aspect of his ideology, as the meta-theatrical nature of this work creates manifold levels of implications. A detailed analysis of *Il teatro*

⁹⁴ *ibid.* (...) to return long-lost honor to our stages with good Comedies, that be real Comedies, and not scenes thrown together and mashed without any order or principle.

comico (which Goldoni scholars have already undertaken) is outside of the focus of the present study, but certain connections to opera theatre are worth noting.

A dialogue between the *capocomico* Orazio (Medebach himself) and the *prima donna* Placida (his wife Teodora, alias Rosaura, the famous *donna di garbo*) touches several important points:

EUGENIO. Sedici commedie in un anno? Pare impossibile.

ORAZIO. Si certamente, egli le ha fatte. Si è impegnato di farle, e le ha fatte.

(...)

PLACIDA. Perché dunque vogliamo fare una farsa, e non più tosto una delle migliori commedie?

ORAZIO. Cara signora, sapete pure, che ci mancano due parti serie, un uomo, ed una donna. Questi si aspettano, e se non giungono, non si potranno fare commedie di carattere.

PLACIDA. Se facciamo le Commedie dell'Arte, vogliamo star bene. Il mondo si è annoiato di veder sempre le cose istesse, di sentir sempre le parole medesime, e gli uditori sanno cosa deve dir l'Arlecchino, prima ch'egli apra la bocca. Per me, vi protesto signor Orazio, che in pochissime commedie antiche reciterò; sono invaghita del nuovo stile, e questo sol mi piace: dimani a sera reciterò, perché, se la commedia non è di carattere, è almeno condotta bene, e si sentono maneggiati gli affetti, etc.⁹⁵

This passage is remarkable for a number of reasons. Its most obvious feature is the outspoken critique of the *Commedia dell'Arte* voiced by Teodora Medebach's character. Her motives for protest are the same notions that pepper many pages of

⁹⁵ *ibid*, Act I, ii. Eugenio: Sixteen comedies in a year? That seems impossible. Orazio: Yes, he sure wrote them. He promised he would, and he did. Placida: Why then do we want to perform a farce, instead of one of the best comedies? Orazio: My dear lady, you do know that we are missing two *parti serie*, one man and one woman. They are awaited, but if they don't come, we won't be able to put on any *commedia di carattere*. Placida: Well, if we perform Commedie dell'Arte, we'll do well. The world is tired of always watching the same things, of hearing the same words, and listeners know what Arlecchino will say before he opens his mouth. As for me, I declare, signor Orazio, that I will recite only a very few of these antique comedies; I'm quite taken with the new style, and I enjoy that alone: tomorrow night I will perform because, even if the farce is not a full character comedy, at least it is conducted well, and the emotions are handled well, etc.

Goldoni's commentaries on his theatre, including his Italian and French *Memoires*. These must not be discounted, however, for we must keep in mind that her words constitute Goldoni's first public declaration of these views, given before an audience still relatively unaccustomed to his new comic style and for whom the *Commedia dell'Arte* continued to represent a competitive entertainment option. Especially relevant in this light are the continued references to "gli uditori" and their preferences as justification for change.

Most importantly as concerns opera theatre, this passage declares that the *commedia di carattere* needs *parti serie* in order to function successfully ("se non giungono, non si potranno fare commedie di carattere"). Again, realism hinges upon the intermingling of comedy with *serio* elements. Goldoni's prose theatre being the *corpus* in which he achieves realism to the greatest extent, the connection of *buffo* and *serio* to this body of work appears especially significant. In this light, we can understand the *parti serie* often included in the *dramma giocoso* not only as the heritage of Metastasian *opera seria*, but as a consciously motivated choice on the part of the author in his effort to bring comedy, whether recited or sung, to new levels of complexity and efficacy. This is further evidenced by Placida's description of the farce that is to be rehearsed, less desirable because it is not a full Goldonian comedy, but which possesses redeeming qualities in its plot because "si sentono maneggiati gli affetti."

As it so happens, historical accounts relate that the real Placida, Teodora Medebach, had a natural gift for *serio* parts. Ginette Henry has written of her, "(...) non ha eguali nelle parti patetiche con le quali, come nessun'altra, riesce a rendere

umidi gli occhi degli spettatori (...) diventa quindi la colonna della riforma.”⁹⁶ At the premier of *Il teatro comico*, Teodora was thus not only reciting a script, but also sharing her personal opinions. In his effective manner, Goldoni created a role for her that reflected her own self, and, in the fiction of theatre, deployed her real-life opinions in support of his reform.

A partial division of *buffo* and *serio* is furthermore implicit in the order of Goldoni’s cast listing. After Orazio (“capo della compagnia de’ comici”) and Placida (“prima donna”), we find Beatrice (“seconda donna”) and Eugenio (“secondo amoroso”). “Amoroso” is an ennobling title that does not exclude a *serio* role, therefore this second pair could easily function as *mezzi caratteri*, unlike the subsequently listed characters Lelio (“poeta”) and Eleonora (“cantatrice”), whose titles are characterized by their respective trades. *Commedia dell’Arte* actors bring up the rear, presented first by fictional first names, and then by mask (“Vittoria servetta di teatro, detta Colombina, Anselmo che fa il Brighella, Gianni che fa l’Arlecchino,” etc.; Vittoria, theatrical servant-girl, called Colombina, Anselmo acts as Brighella, Gianni does the part of Arlecchino, etc.). As noted by the author, the *buffo* parts speak in “linguaggio veneziano.” The use of Venetian dialect is a further realistic device that, especially for a Venetian audience, adds immediacy to the work.

As a final note before returning to Goldoni’s texts for music, we may consider the other face of Goldoni’s reform represented by Tonino, a *buffo* character who usually wears the *Commedia* mask of Pantalone. If on one hand Placida, in the

⁹⁶ Ginette Henry, “Goldoni e la Marliani ossia l’impossibile romanzo” in *Studi Goldoniani quaderno 8*, (Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1988); 141. She has no equals in the pathetic parts with which, like no other, she is able to wet the eyes of the spectators(...)she becomes therefore a pillar of the reform.

elevated tones befitting her role, sung high praises of Goldoni's new comedies, Tonino admits his doubts with candid language:

TONINO. Caro sior Orazio, buttemo le burle da banda, e parlemo sul sodo. Le commedie de carattere le ha butà sottossora el nostro mistier. Un povero commediante, che ha fatto el so studio secondo l'arte, e cha ha fatto l'uso de dir all'improvviso ben o mal quel che vien, trovandose in necessità de studiar, e de dover dir el premedità, se el gh'ha reputazion, bisogna, che el ghe pensa, bisogna, che el se sfadiga a studiar, e che el trema sempre ogni volta, che se fa una commedia, dubitando, o de no saverla quanto basta, o de no sostegnir el carattere come xé necessario.⁹⁷

This excerpt is especially significant as it alludes, at the moment lightheartedly, to matters that would soon become of overbearing concern for our author. During Goldoni's lifetime his reform was as much a battle as it was a victory, and the single greatest obstacle he faced was the reluctance of actors to abandon the old manner of improvised recitation, precisely the protest voiced in Tonino's part.

Goldoni's new comedies have "thrown the trade upside down," and notwithstanding the humor afforded by Goldoni's use of dialectal terms, Tonino's part gives some sense of a genuine struggle. The linguistic realism here employed is only the surface patina of a deeper psychological realism that externalizes interior concerns. Goldoni's approach underlines two conspicuous elements. First, Tonino reveals he is concerned with maintaining a reputation and risks ruining his name with a poorly performed *commedia di carattere*. More intimately, he confesses

⁹⁷ Goldoni, *Il teatro comico*, Act I, iv. Dear sir Orazio, let's put aside all bagatelles and get straight to the point. The *commedie di carattere* have thrown our trade upside down. A poor actor, who has learned following the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and who has made a habit of improvising, for better or worse, with what comes to him, now finding that he has to study, and to recite something already prepared, if he has any reputation, he has to think about it, and to toil away at learning the part, and he trembles every time he recites a comedy, always in fear, either of not knowing it well enough, or not representing the character as required.

constant fear (“el trema sempre ogni volta”) and self-doubt (“dubitando de no saverla quanto basta”). Just as Placida’s part reflects her interpreter’s opinions, we can easily infer that in Tonino’s lines Goldoni mimics the tangible reluctance he senses from some of the actors, perhaps not without a covert sideswipe of reproach. Here at the beginning of his career, Goldoni frames his adversaries comically, yet the obstacles exposed by Tonino resurface throughout his Venetian comedies and are the same problems that, about a decade after *Il teatro comico*, will definitively convince Goldoni to abandon Venice to seek better fortune on the other side of the Alps. We will consider his later production in Paris in the subsequent chapter.

In sum, as we continue to analyze Goldoni’s libretti, it will be beneficial to bear in mind the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* in prose comedy as well as opera theatre testified by *Il teatro comico* and subsequent reform comedies. The novel *serio* and *buffo* roles seen previously in *Il Conte Caramella* appear in conjunction with Goldoni’s first declared intentions of reform in this *commedia-manifesto*. The correspondences between them evidence a further link between his realist reform for comedy and his developing operatic style. More explicit connections between the two types of theatre, including prose comedies adapted to music or vice-versa, will be considered later in the present chapter.

iv. The dramma giocoso takes shape

To recapitulate, after the experimental *Il mondo della luna* and the singular *dramma comico*, *Il Conte Caramella*, from 1751 Goldoni proceeded to write exclusively *drammi giocosi* until his move to Paris eleven years later. The demand for prose comedies during this period was high, and the sheer volume of Goldoni’s

output for Venetian theatres is daunting. Excluding the sixteen new comedies of the famous (or infamous) 1750-51 season, Goldoni authored nearly 80 original works for the prose theatre, among them masterpieces such as *La locandiera*, *I rusteghi* (The Rustic [unsociable] Men), *Sior Todaro Brontolon* (Sir Todaro the Grumbler), etc., yet still managed to create more than 30 *drammi giocosi* at the same time. The pages that follow highlight those works most indicative of innovation and most relevant to the discourse of *buffo* and *serio*.

While *Il Conte Caramella* formally separated *buffi*, *seri*, and *mezzi caratteri*, this practice is not taken up again by Goldoni before 1754, after which it is applied with some consistency. The first *dramma giocoso* to display this practice is *Il filosofo di campagna* (The Country Philosopher) of that year, which returns to the theme of authority in its portrayal of an intimate relationship between a Countess and her servant. In particular, the interactions of *serva* Lesbina (*parte buffa*) and *padrona* Eugenia (*parte seria*) progressively consolidate a delicate dynamic of role reversal that is evident from the opening scene:

LESBINA. Io vi offerisco
quel che so, quel che posso. È ver che sono
in una età da non prometter molto;
ma posso, se m'impegno,
par valere per voi l'arte e l'ingegno.
EUGENIA. Cara di te mi fido. Amor, pietade
per la padrona tua serba nel seno;
se non felice appieno,
almen fa' ch'io non sia sì sventurata.
LESBINA. Meglio sola che male accompagnata.
Così volete dir; si sì, v'intendo.
EUGENIA. Dunque da te qualche soccorso attendo. ⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Goldoni, *Il Filosofo di Campagna*, Act I, i. Lesbina: I offer you what I know, what I can do. It's true that I can't promise too much at my age, but I can, if I set my mind to it, make good use of art and wit. Eugenia: My dear, I trust in you. Keep love and mercy for your mistress in your heart. If I cannot be

In the manner of his prose comedies, Goldoni develops numerous realistic characters, among them Lesbina and the Countess. If materially impoverished because of her humble state, Lesbina capitalizes on the resources of her mind (“arte” and “ingegno”) to influence the action. By contrast, Eugenia’s state bestows social dominance, yet she is powerless in her own home. Eugenia’s obligations as a daughter subject her to paternal authority and require conventional obedience, which inhibits her from acting to bring about her own wishes (namely, marrying her secret lover and not the country philosopher, as her father intends). Eugenia is more powerful than Lesbina, yet impotent, and so too is Rinaldo, her noble lover.

Lesbina is their only means of sidestepping these inhibitions, but she imposes a will of her own. Her power grows through Acts I and II to create a complete role reversal, marking *Il filosofo di campagna* as an ideological precursor of Da Ponte’s *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786). As the intrigue becomes more complex, the characters’ language intensifies notably, as for example:

LESBINA. Se de’ consigli miei
vi volete servir, per voi qui sono.
Quando no, vel protesto, io v’abbandono.
EUGENIA. Deh non mi abbandonare, ordina, imponi;
senza cercar ragioni
lo farò ciecamente;
ti sarò non temer, tutta obbediente.⁹⁹

The Countess’s helplessness translates to submission, and Goldoni’s choice language (“ordina, imponi, lo farò ciecamente”) emphasizes a total *rovesciamento* of roles.

truly happy, at least let me not be so unfortunate. L: Better alone than in bad company, you mean. Yes, yes, I understand. E: Well then, I will await your assistance.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, Act II, i. Lesbina: If you want to make use of my advice, I’m here for you. But if not, you’ll excuse me, I will leave you. Eugenia: Pray don’t leave me, command, impose your will. Without seeking reasons I will do it blindly; don’t worry, I will be all obedient.

Instead of a servant seeking her mistress's benevolence, we see the exact opposite. Lesbina's decisions alone will ultimately determine the Countess's fate.

Naturally, the reversed master-servant relationship is a very old *topos* of comic theatre. Without expatiating upon antecedents of previous centuries, even closer to Goldoni's time 'big hits' such as Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (1733) make this clear. In a tradition of theatre that, historically, maintained a marked distance from reality, the overturning of the social ladder within a fictional plot created laughter, not uproar. While *Il filosofo di campagna* is closer to a realistic style thanks to Goldoni, we may still relate it partially to the preceding tradition.

Yet, this does not exclude the fact that at the same time (like many Goldonian comedies), it reflects the early symptoms of a historical transition. Only one generation later, on the cusp of the French revolution, a servant commanding his master would no longer appear quite so laughable. Da Ponte's *Le nozze di Figaro* caused raised eyebrows in Vienna even after the author had sidestepped censure by purging it of Beaumarchais' radical political content.

While questions of power and societal influence are ever-present in Goldoni's theatre, considering *Il filosofo di campagna* as a whole, a more positive facet of Enlightenment thought comes to the forefront: human reason. Lesbina's stratagems showcase the power of the mind, and the opera's merry conclusion underlines the happy outcomes of good thinking. The hijinks of Goldoni's work explore and promote intelligence as man's most precious possession, and the source of all subsequent material gain.

These considerations are present even in the opera's title, for *Il filosofo di campagna* is also the surname of a character within the work (who however is not the protagonist) known for his reason and thinking. In reality, the "country philosopher" is only a rustic farmer, Nardo: "ricco riccone, un villano, egli è ver, ma sapientone."¹⁰⁰ Despite, or perhaps because of his regressive occupation, Nardo ennobles himself on the basis of his judgment, deploying his peculiar *sapienza* at every turn:

Nato son contadino,
non ho studiato niente
ma però colla mente
talor filosofando a discrezione
trovo di molte cose la ragione.
E vedo chiaramente
che interesse, superbia, invidia e amore
hanno la fonte lor nel nostro cuore.¹⁰¹

With no education, he capitalizes on reason to draw knowledge from within himself in a facetious Cartesian approach. Partly thanks to his 'philosophizing,' Nardo gains the attentions of the aristocratic Don Tritemo (Eugenia's father), and, with material wealth and *sapienza*, becomes the father's preferred candidate for his daughter.

Despite his eccentric nature and the drollery of his erudite mannerisms, however, Nardo shares a new philosophy of life that is not without truth:

Nelle città famose
ogni generazion si cambia stato.
Se il padre ha accumulato
con fatica, con arte e con periglio,
distrugge i beni suoi prodigo il figlio.
Qui, dove non ci tiene
il lusso, l'ambizion, la gola oppressi,

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, Act I, iii. Rich, filthy rich, and he's a boor, it's true, but a wiseacre too.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, Act III, ix. I was born a farmer, and I haven't studied anything, yet with my mind, philosophizing at discretion, I find the reason behind a great many things. And I see clearly that personal interest, pride, envy, and love, have their source in our very hearts.

son gl'uomini ognor sempre gli stessi.¹⁰²

In a number of texts for music, Goldoni uses country life as a foil for the materiality and corruption of the city, and Nardo's philosophy is no exception. The contrast between the big city and "qui," the countryside outside in which the action takes place, is largely fueled by issues of material wealth and of appearance. Through Nardo, Goldoni issues yet another condemnation of the profligate ("distrugge i beni suoi prodigo il figlio"), a new 'mask' of bourgeois society that, unlike Arlecchino or Pantalone, bears many different faces. This recurring figure is frequently targeted in Goldoni's libretti and prose comedies alike, not because of his generosity, but rather for his consuming desire to appear something other than what he is in recklessly living beyond his means to create the illusion of opulence. "Il lusso, l'ambizion," and "la gola," denounced by Nardo are all inherent vices.

The country philosopher continues along the same lines to target the life of luxury more specifically:

Per lo più i cittadini
hanno pochi quattrini e troppe voglie
e non usano molto amar la moglie.
Per pratica commune
nelle cittadi usata,
è maggiore l'uscita dell'entrata.¹⁰³

Nardo's pert opinions ultimately link material wealth to moral poverty ("non usano molto amar la moglie"), an affliction that erodes the foundations of any prosperous society.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, Act I, vi. In the famous cities, every generation changes state. If a father has saved a bit with toil, with art, and risk, the prodigal son destroys his riches. Here [in the country], luxury ambition, or gluttony do not oppress us, and men are instead always the same.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, Act I, vi. Most city dwellers have too few means and too many desires, and they are not in the habit of loving their wives very much. As a common practice in cities, the outflow far exceeds the income.

In conclusion, in *Il filosofo di campagna* Goldoni not only continues to reflect contemporary life through his targeted critique of materiality and superficiality, but moreover claims reason as an antidote for unawareness or narcissistic illusion. Nardo and Lesbina alike use internal resources to overcome the traditional limits of their lower class standing. Goldoni's recoup of reason places clear thinking above social condition, as mind and will alone enable one to determine his fate or to undergo it.

As a final note, Goldoni presents another small innovation in his treatment of the character Don Tritemio. While Eugenia's heart is naïve but pure, her father is plagued by flaws. Avarice and a weak mind spur him to give Eugenia in marriage to a man he considers a "villano," for example. Corrupt and unable to sustain a *parte seria* with rectitude, the final surprise of *Il filosofo di campagna* is that this character, while an aristocrat, is relegated to *parte buffa*. Goldoni thus commences eroding the boundary between *buffo* and *serio* relatively early in his career.

In structural terms, furthermore, the most noteworthy element of this opera is the author's continued expansion of ensembles. To cite just one example, the conclusion of Act I features an extended ensemble finale with the peculiarity of rapid action interpolated throughout. While several characters are continually present, Goldoni creates a circular chase between Lesbina and Don Tritemio, who enter and exit continually. A masterfully entangled situation intensifies as Lesbina, in the guise of Eugenia, accepts attentions and ultimately a wedding ring from Nardo, but at each advance feigns modesty and flees when Don Tritemio

approaches. Don Tritemio in turn, who believes the fleeing figure to be his daughter, fruitlessly searches for her while becoming ever more disoriented.

Questions of social *rovesciamento* continue in *Li pazzi per amore* (The Mad for Love, 1754, set in Livorno) and *Il povero superbo* (The Proud Poor Man) 1755, set in Bologna), both premiered at the *Teatro San Samuele*, in which Goldoni continued to formally separate *buffo* and *serio* roles. These *drammi giocosi* do not present significant innovations in the author's treatment of comic and *serio* parts, but, while not set in Venice, do nonetheless continue to pursue relevant themes in their content. Without entering into textual detail, therefore, it may suffice to recall that in the first opera, the *serio* prima donna (again named Eugenia) is from the start disguised as a servant girl, while by contrast *Il povero superbo* targets a protagonist of lowly origin made wealthy by inheritance. Aptly named, Il Cavaliere dal Zero is "reso miserabile dal fumo della nobiltà."¹⁰⁴ Goldoni thereby adds yet another facet to his playful critique of nobility with weak foundations.

We find a more significant step forward in *Le nozze* (The Wedding) of the same year, written for the *Teatro Formagliari* in Bologna. Unlike its predecessors, this work does not separate *parti buffe* from *parti serie* in the character list. In fact, Goldoni will suspend this practice until 1758, though divisions remain implicit through class differences and mode of expression, as later works will demonstrate. In the case of *Le nozze* in particular, however, the lack of definition of the parts is a commentary in itself, as the boundaries between *buffo* and *serio* are progressively attenuated. In this work, for example, aristocratic characters do not suffer from the

¹⁰⁴ Goldoni, *Il Povero Superbo*, elenco dei personaggi. (...) rendered miserable by the smoke [illusion] of nobility.

want of power that Goldoni elsewhere has shown, but do not preserve the mannerisms of a *parte seria*. Rather, the author injects a significant dose of realism in their frankness as they often lose their composure. In the same way, their servants and attendants take on the leading roles, and display some elements of *serio in mezzo carattere* as we shall see.

The opera opens with a Count and Countess in vehement argument. Their exchanges have replaced Metastasian grace with pragmatism, and the rapidity of the discourse is rather typical of a *buffo* scene:

CONTE. La voglio così.
CONTESSA. Così non sarà.
CONTE. Prevale il mio sì.
CONTESSA. Stavolta non già.¹⁰⁵ (etc.)

Goldoni thus enters immediately into the quotidian reality of marriage in its least gracious aspect, marking the work from the beginning as an exercise in realism. Most unusually, the dispute between the two noble characters is carried to a point of extreme aggravation that culminates in the drastic and mutual resolve to end their union. While preparations are made to summon the notary, the tone remains dry and practical:

CONTE. Come dissi,
d'ogni effetto dotale
che portò la contessa in questa casa,
preparatemi i conti.
(...)
CONTESSA. Badate; nel contratto
vi ha da essere un patto,
per cui nel caso di restituzione,
s'han da considerare i frutti ancora.
(...)
CONTE. Poi penseremo a sciorre il matrimonio.

¹⁰⁵ Goldoni, *Le Nozze*, Act I, i. Count: I want it this way. Countess: It won't be this way. Count: My 'yes' will prevail. Countess: Not so quickly, this time.

CONTESSA. Liberata sarò da un tal demonio.¹⁰⁶

Only away from her husband does the prideful Contessa transform her rigid expression into a softer poetic language that reflects tones of melancholy and tenderness. Her first solo aria is one of reflection on surpassed and ephemeral love, through which Goldoni creates a scene of pathos dramatically different from the action that precedes and follows:

Per una serva
il marito di me fa poca stima?
Ah dove, dove andò l'amor di prima?

Ah dove è andato
quel primo affetto?
Ah che l'ingrato
mio sposo in petto
cangiato ha il cor.

Duran per poco
quei primi istanti;
si spegne il foco,
cessa l'ardor.¹⁰⁷

The character's subdued reflections suspend her intimate musings within a moment of stillness and respite from the hurried external events. Her text is colored by the nostalgic hues of recollection and longing for the affection now lost. All these elements, together with the fact that the source the Countess's grief is her husband's interest in a lively, intelligent servant girl, cannot but remind us once again of Da Ponte and Mozart's masterful *Le nozze di Figaro*. The above text in particular rings as a clear precedent for the famous "Dove sono i bei momenti" aria of that opera,

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, Act II, scene iii. Count: As I said, I wish that accounts be prepared for everything the Countess brought in dowry to this house. Countess: Be careful; in the contract there must be an agreement, that in the case of restitution, interest accrued must also be considered. C: Then we shall see to dissolving this marriage. C.ss: I will be freed from such a demon.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, Act I, ii. For a servant girl, my husband esteems me so little? Ah where, where is the love we first had? Ah, where has that first affection gone? Ah, my ungrateful husband has changed his heart. Those first moments are fleeting; then the flame burns out, the ardor ceases.

written forty years later. Comparison of the two texts does not suggest direct transposition, but attests that Goldoni's tendency towards psychologically-attuned and realistic *serio* content within comedy was, as yet, ahead of his time and had a lasting continuation in the operatic tradition.

Not unlike what occurs in *Le nozze di Figaro* but also in Goldoni's preceding *Il filosofo di campagna*, when the aristocracy becomes ill-adept at conflict resolution, an intelligent and tactful servant takes charge of the action. In the case of *Le nozze*, the Count and Countess are hindered by their own pride, thereby requiring the aid of Goldoni's proto-Figaro character, Masotto, who steps in to (quite literally) bend the unyielding Count and Countess towards reconciliation:

MASOTTO. Via, s'accostino un poco.

CONTESSA. Oh questo no;
la prima non sarò.

MASOTTO. Da bravo, padron mio.

CONTE. Non voglio essere il primo ne' men io.

MASOTTO. Un pochino alla volta.

Un pochino per uno.

Vi è un po' di ritrosia;
con licenza, signor, anderò via.

Servo umilissimo,
ossequiosissimo,
quando mi chiamino
sarò prontissimo,
verrò a server.

Faccia un passo in là; (*all'uno*)
volti quel viso in qua (*all'altro*)
Ah che contento amabile,
quando due sposi s'amano,
il cuor che d'ira è torbido
in pace ritornar.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, Act II, iii. Masotto: Come along, move a bit closer. Contessa: Oh, no, I shall not be the first. M: Be good, my master. Count: I'd don't want to be the first either. M: Just a little at a time. A little from each. I see there is some reluctance; with permission, sir, I think I'll go. Humble servant, very obsequious, whenever you call me, I will be ready, I'll come to serve. Step over that way (*to one*), turn

Masotto displays a willingness and respectfulness that differentiates him completely from Lesbina of *Il filosofo di campagna*. Even without her imposing manners, however, he rises to a central role within the plot to facilitate many of the events. Also of note in his aria is the progression of action that it implies. The aria does not create a moment of stasis; rather, we understand that while Masotto is singing, not only does action occur but more importantly, emotions and dispositions are changing as a result. This dramatic strategy keeps a further distance from the declamatory style of traditional *melodramma*.

Only when harmony is restored do the Count and Countess regain their composure. As this occurs, their language changes dramatically:

CONTESSA. Perché confesso
la debolezza mia,
v'amo e figlia d'amore è gelosia.

Chi può nel nostro petto
l'affetto regolar?
Io non lo posso no.
E sempre v'amerò
penando ognora. etc.

CONTE (solo). Per dir la verità,
la contessa è amorosa,
compatirla convien s'ella è gelosa.
(...)
non vuò più Guerra con la sposa mia.

Dolce amor che m'accendesti
delle nozze il dì primiero,
deh ritorna, nume arciero,
questo core a consolar.

La discordia i dì funesti
più non renda fra due sposi;
ed i spasimi cruciosi

that face this way (*to the other*). Ah, what amiable gladness, when two spouses love each other, to see a heart clouded by rage return to peace.

non ci tornino a turbar.¹⁰⁹

Here in the final Act, these aristocratic characters express themselves in true *serio* terms for the first time, regaining Metastasian turns of phrase (“penando ognora,” “nume arciero”) typical of *opera seria*. Overall, however (and notwithstanding a few classicizing exceptions), even within a melodramatic style Goldoni achieves balance, maintaining the language elevated without sacrificing flow, nor stalling the action with digressive and generic metaphors. On a psychological level, noteworthy is Goldoni’s realistic use of veiled, non-explicit terms to create the tender sadness that permeates the Countess’s wistful recitative and aria. The Count’s aria too, in its plaintive invocation of Cupid’s arrows, resounds almost as a prayer to the archaic god of love.

In synthesis, these two characters journey from one stylistic boundary to the other over the course of the work, providing comedy and gravity at different times. Their transformative roles exemplify the way in which, through a realistic portrayal of his characters, Goldoni continues to erode the boundaries between traditional *buffo* and *serio* roles.

We witness this not only in the traditional *serio* parts, but also at times in characters of lower extraction, who manifest a broad spectrum of dramatic registers through the changing action. If at first the Count and Countess take on aspects of *buffo* in their quotidian language, rapid exchanges, and comic obstinacy, later we

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, Act III, ii- iii. Countess: Because I confess my weakness. I love you, and jealousy is the daughter of love. Who is able to command the affections of our own heart? I cannot, no. And I shall always love you, and always suffer. (...) Count: To tell the truth, the Countess is in love, and if she is jealous, it would be better to understand her pains. I no longer want war with my wife. Sweet love, who ignited me on our first day of marriage, oh return, arrowed god, to console this heart. Let discord no longer render the days of two lovers so baleful; and spams of distress never upset us again.

find the comic sense of these traditionally *buffo* figures is darkened by more serious language.

Unlike the melancholy of Eugenia in *Il filosofo di campagna*, most of the *serio* material in *Le nozze* is prompted by rage, and notwithstanding their nearly insurmountable divisions, the Count and Countess are not the only characters to express themselves with intensity in this respect. Even a humble gardener (Mingone), when faced with rivalry, uses no uncertain terms:

...lo voglio sbudellare,
se fosse in mezzo alle più forti squadre,
se fosse ancora in braccio di sua madre.

Mi par di ridere
con quel ragazzo,
lo voglio uccidere
con le mie man.

Poi per il mondo
da pellegrino
miglior destino
cercando andrò.¹¹⁰ etc.

Choice words (e.g. “sbudellare”) evidence that Goldoni deliberately preserves the comic element in this aria, unequivocally exposing Mingone’s coarseness and lowly state. The gardener’s piece therefore would not be considered a *serio* aria. However, the length of the piece, its pivotal structural function as an exit aria, and most importantly the intensity of Goldoni’s terms (“fosse anche in braccio di sua madre...lo voglio uccidere con le mie man”), all contribute a novel sense of gravity to the scene, casting a cloud over the underlying comic diversion.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, Act II, scene xii. I want to eviscerate him, even if he were protected by the strongest troops, or if he were still a baby in his mother’s arms. I could almost laugh with that young man, I want to kill him with my own hands. Then, as a wanderer, I’ll travel to world seeking better fortune.

The attenuation of rigid boundaries between roles continues in later operas such as *La diavolessa* (1755, given at the *S. Samuele* but set in Naples). Again, no explicit division of roles is made, yet implicitly the cast of characters is listed in descending order of prominence, from *serio* to *buffo* with many nuances in between. Textual analysis suggests the presence of two *mezzi caratteri* of different social standing, the gentleman Don Poppone (likely bourgeois, as his title is never made explicit), and the “avventuriera” Dorina, who abandons her family to marry her lover, Giannino.

La diavolessa does not warrant a comprehensive analysis, but it does contribute a few elements of note to the present discussion, all connected to Goldoni’s treatment of boundaries between the well-to-do and the plebeian. In this opera, our author returns to the familiar device of role exchange to undermine the foundations of class division. When Don Poppone mistakes Dorina for a noblewoman, for example, she transforms into one:

Eh, che l’amore
più candido, più puro
vuole il suo chiaroscuro.
E poi convien distinguere
della plebe l’amor, come si sa,
da quello della nostra nobiltà.
Voglio che civilmente ci trattiamo.
O che siamo, cospetto! o che non siamo.

Si distingue dal nobile il vile
anch’in questo, mio caro signor.
Una donna ch’è nata civile
non si lascia avvilir dall’amor.¹¹¹ etc.

¹¹¹ Goldoni, *La diavolessa*, Act I, vii. Oh, that even the most candid, the purest love desires its ups and downs. It would be better to distinguish the love of commoners from that of our nobility. I want us to deal with civility. Whether we be, or not. The noble will distinguish himself from the commoner in this too, my dear sir. A woman born noble does not let herself be disheartened by love.

As seen in previous operas, Goldoni creates an external projection of social standing through the realistic imitation of mannerisms and language, and the reiteration of common ideas. He carries this technique to a level of parody a short while later, when Giannino too improvises the manners of a modern aristocrat:

Vo' provar con bassa gente;
e vo' far il prepotente.
"Insolente, non do niente...
Pagherò, quando vorrò.
Ne ho bisogno, via di qua."
Ah ah ah. (*ridendo*) Bene va.
L'ho trovata in verità.¹¹²

This jesting imitation is purely comic, but pricks at familiar contemporary themes of corruption and moral degradation. The likening of a nobleman to a "prepotente," together with allusions to disregard for debt and for the needs of others again connect this work to modernity and its vices. Notwithstanding the Neapolitan setting, this opera remains relevant to the Venetian audience through its social commentary and even includes an aria in Venetian dialect (sung by Dorina, who has travelled the world).

More parody of *serio* elements ensues in *La cascina* (The Farmstead, 1756), but of different nature. Rather than targeting the paradoxes of city life and profit, this bucolic, pastoral opera retreats once more to simple country life, in which pagan gods resurface to create a place away from time. Notably, however, classicizing references are exaggerated to such a degree that the Arcadian stamp of the work becomes jesting, not truthful.

¹¹² *ibid.*, Act I, ix. I want to try my hand with the common people, I want to act assertive. "Insolent, I'll give you nothing.... I'll pay, when I want. I need that, get out of here." Ah ah ah (*laughing*), It's good. I've really found it.

The character of Il Conte Ripoli, for instance, is a *serio* part in caricature; indeed he is called “l’affettato.” Ripoli speaks in Arcadian metaphors but with none of the Arcadian gravity. The *cascina* (farmstead) is allegorized as Carthage, ladies crossed in love become Virgilian heroines (“ecco un’altra Didone abbandonata”), and constant references to Alceste, Demetrio, Celonice, and others saturate his recitative to exquisite comic effect. When the Count takes up a rage aria, also full of Classical references and intense language, the exaggeration therein thwarts the gravity of a true *serio* piece, and the number is downgraded to an *arietta*, preceded and followed by the dialogue of others:

Furie del cieco Averno,
mostri del nero abisso
orsi, tigri, leoni,
della barbarità crudel deposito,
su, venite, vuò fare uno sproposito.
Dov’è quel moro infido?
Vuò svenarlo sugli occhi alla mia Dido.¹¹³

While signing this work under the name of “Polisseno Fegeio, pastor arcade,” Goldoni does not hesitate to revisit the Classical world and the *serio* style in a satirical key, further distancing himself from the traditional treatment of these roles. His characterization of “l’affettato” in *La cascina* is another clear example of how our author progressively dismantles common practices in his libretti.

Goldoni’s unconventional portrayal of traditionally *serio* characters returns markedly in *La ritornata di Londra* (The Returned from London, 1756), a peculiar work in which all of the characters are of noble extraction, as will recur in *Il festino*

¹¹³ Goldoni, *La Cascina*, Act III, iv. Furies of the blind Hades, monsters of the black abyss, bears, tigers, lions, repositories of barbarous cruelty, up, come, I want to commit a crime. Where is that infamous moor? I want to slash his veins before the eyes of my Dido.

(The Banquet, 1777, written in Paris but set in Venice). The only figures of contrast in a panorama of Counts, Barons, and Marquis are Madama Petronilla, a virtuosic opera star, and her chambermaid. With many rivals for the attentions of Petronilla, the male characters cannot escape becoming the comic source of the work. Their forward, haughty mannerisms, and high-sounding circumlocutions go hand in hand with the vanity of each believing himself to be the favorite.

The entangled relationships result in a good number of rage *arie* but create none of the gravity or tragic undertones of *serio* material. The entire opera, in a way, becomes a play between outward appearance and inner truth, in which elaborate formalities and ceremonious ritual expand to occupy the entire dramatic space. Introspection or pathetic elements are simply rendered obsolete by the frivolity that dominates.

La ritornata di Londra demonstrates once again that, in the realistic *dramma giocoso*, *serio* does not appear by definition but only when mandated by plot. Earlier works of Goldoni, if without figures of nobility, were also without *parti serie*. To this, we now must add that, even in the presence of aristocratic figures, *serio* is not guaranteed. By this point in Goldoni's experience with libretti, the author's distance from previous traditions is more and more consolidated; the distinction between *serio* and *buffo* is no longer dependent only on station, but, in a more realistic approach, is also regulated by conduct.

Furthermore, what *La ritornata di Londra* lacks in depth of characterization it gains in structure and ensemble pieces. These excel in invention and complexity, animating the triangular (and quadrangular) relationships between *prima donna*

and suitors. Notably, Goldoni places an intricate ensemble as early as the second scene of the work, in which the Marquis and Baron each search for a pretext to remain alone with Petronilla, much to the chagrin of her secret lover, Carpofero. In an extended and dynamic scene, the men speak to Petronilla, to each other, and to the audience in asides, all in rapid alternation. The innovation resides in Goldoni's placement of such a developed ensemble well before the closure of the first Act, yet after the opening of the work. Goldoni then replicates the scenario, with even more characters tied in, at the closure of each Act.

v. *La buona figliuola* (prelude)

In the year following *La ritornata di Londra*, Goldoni creates one of the most successful libretti of his entire production, *La buona figliuola* (The Good Girl, 1757). This *dramma giocoso* is revealing of many forward-looking tendencies, including elements of *romanzesco* from the new fashion of novels spreading throughout Europe, and most notably, established *mezzi caratteri* and new elements of *semiserio* and *larmoyant* that significantly inform our discussion of *buffo* and *serio* in combination. Furthermore, Goldoni derived the work from his largely successful reform comedy, *La Pamela*, premiered with Medebach in 1750. *La buona figliuola*, or *La Cecchina* as it is alternatively titled, therefore constitutes a valuable example of direct translation from prose comedy to opera theatre, tangible evidence that, for Goldoni, the two theatrical mediums were not as divaricated as some scholars have thought. For these reasons and more, we will examine this opera in detail in the following section.

vi. *Goldoni after La buona figliuola*

After *La buona figliuola* and before Goldoni's departure for Paris, our author continued to create *drammi giocosi* for numerous Venetian theatres (*San Samuele, S. Angelo, S. Moisè*), even while his comedies were suffering the growing antagonism of opponents Carlo Gozzi and Pietro Chiari. By 1758, the challenges and hardships of the theatrical world in Venice had already brought Goldoni to consider moving elsewhere. In fact, during that year he was prompted to accept an invitation to collaborate with the *Teatro di Tordinona* in Rome. The experience was short lived, and the author returned to Venice in disappointment less than a year later.

Before departing, Goldoni presented *Il mercato di Malmantile* (The Market of Malmantile) among other works at the *Teatro S. Samuele*. It is his first text for music in which the protagonists (the *governatore* Lampridio and his daughter Brigida) are members of the *borghesia*. In fact, the mercantile world of middle-class commerce constitutes the broader universe of the work, as the title suggests. The shared space of the marketplace piazza, in which all buy and sell, functions as an element of cohesion between characters of varying social extraction.

While *buffo* and *serio* characters are not explicitly divided, this opera is also noteworthy for its treatment of *serio* material, moderated in a realistic key. When Brigida, desirous of ascending the social ladder, sets her sights on the Conte della Rocca, his lover, the widowed Marchesa Giacinta expresses her grief in a short aria:

Ah purtroppo m'inganna il traditore.

Non vi è costanza al mondo,
non vi è più fedeltà.
Misera mi confondo,
tutto penar mi fa.

Ma se il crudel ritrovo

lo sdegno mio saprà.
O l'amor suo rinova
o il fio mi pagherà.¹¹⁴ (*parte*)

This piece, which in some measure resonates with Donna Elvira's debut aria ("Ah, chi mi dice mai") in Mozart and Da Ponte's later *Don Giovanni*, is measured in tone, and does not use the generic language or poetic hyperbole of the traditional melodramatic style. Instead, it is realistic in its moderation, also thanks to the psychological progression it contains. In the span of hardly two strophes, Goldoni changes the emotional content from grief to rage, lending the action a sense of propulsion, not static reflection.

As a further realistic and forward-looking element, Goldoni makes clear that Brigida's attractiveness is not solely the result of her uncommon beauty, but rather the merit of her intelligence: "Il suo vanto fu sempre il saper." The idea of interior beauty is in fact pursued quite explicitly (though to some comic effect), here expounded upon by the *governatore* her father (Lampridio), and the *buffo* Rubicone:

RUBICONE. Si conosce, si vede, si sa
di quel volto la rara beltà
ma del bello si apprezza ancor più
la famosa stupenda virtù.
LAMPRIDIO. Ma del bello si apprezza ancor più
la famosa stupenda virtù.
BRIGIDA. Quel ch'io sono, signore, lo so
ma di questo vantarmi non vuò.
Non è facil trovar oggidì
una donna che parli così.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Goldoni, *Il Mercato di Malmantile*. Act I, x. Alas, sadly the traitor is deceiving me. There is no constancy in this world, fidelity is no more. I am wretched and confused, everything makes me suffer. But if I find the cruel traitor, he will know my anger. Either he renews his love to me, or he will pay me retribution.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, Act I, xii (ensemble finale) Rubicone: We recognize, we see, we know the rare beauty of that face, but even more than beauty, we esteem famous, stupendous virtue. Lampridio: Even more than beauty, we esteem famous, stupendous virtue. Brigida: I know what I am, sir, but I don't want to brag about it. It's not easy these days to find a woman who can speak like this.

While Brigida's false modesty is derisible and calls her "stupenda virtù" into question, the conversation does reflect a changing ideal and seals its closeness to modernity and to the real world with "oggidi" (nowadays).

Nor is Brigida the only character in the comedy to seek social change; the doctor Rubicone also wishes to improve his condition in marrying her, and Lena the *contadina*, a secondary *buffo*, also tries to enter society by securing the governor Lampridio. The contrast between aspiration and reality becomes an excellent source of comedy, as Rubicone asserts, "Di nobiltade in casa mia si sguazza. (Son tutti i miei feudi un banco in piazza)."¹¹⁶ In the end, however, all are paired with their 'equals': the Marchesa with the Count, Lena with Berto, another farmer, and Brigida with the charlatan doctor Rubicone.

Similar strategies for realism, and analogous moderation of tragic and comic extremes, can be found in *La conversazione* (The Conversation) of the same year (1758), in which we easily discern *parti serie*, *parti buffe*, and *mezzi caratteri*. The space between *buffo* and *serio* is occupied by a *borghese* who has traveled the world (Giacinto), and a nobleman reduced to poverty (Don Fabio). The first is noteworthy for the changeability of his character:

In quattordici lingue
parlo, scrivo, e traduco.
So i riti, so i costumi
dei popoli remoti
e gl'incogniti ancora a me son noti.
Coi vili son asiatico (*fa il grave*)
coi grandi sono italico (*fa l'umile*)
Nel spender sono inglese.
Son colle dame un paladin francese

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, Act III, vii. At my house, we are dripping with nobility. (All my holdings are a stand at the market).

(fa riverenze e parte). ¹¹⁷

Giacinto is not a nobleman, but his knowledge of the world gives him extra assets and contributes to his appeal in society.

More importantly, thanks to his travels, Giacinto is also able to stay connected to the latest trends:

Questo, signora mia,
splin si chiama in inglese,
che in Italia vuol dir malinconia. ¹¹⁸

Splin (spleen) of which we read even in Shakespeare, is especially relevant and in vogue as a poetic concept beginning in the 18th century. Goldoni's reference to it connects the opera closely to the contemporary world and its fashions.

What is more, the particular emphasis brought upon melancholy and the nostalgic humors represents Goldoni's direct acknowledgement of new tendencies that have slowly become part of his theatre. *Serio* appears no longer as a mere question of Metastasian style, but now is more intimately connected to sadness or melancholy. This same new trend contributes to the increasing production of novels, and in theatre leads to new hybrid genres such as the French *comédie larmoyante*, defined by P. Larthomas as "(...)genre intermédiaire entre la comédie et la tragédie, qui introduit des gens de condition privée, vertueux ou presque, dans une action sérieuse, grave, parfois pathétique, qui nous excite à la vertu en attendrissant sur

¹¹⁷ Goldoni, *La Conversazione*, Act I, i. I can speak, write, and translate in fourteen languages. I know the customs and rituals of the most distant peoples, and I know what is unknown. With the lowly, I am Asian (*with gravity*), with the powerful, I am Italian (*with humility*). In expenses, I am English. With the ladies, I am a French paladin (*bows and exits*).

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, Act I, vii. This, my lady, is called *spleen* in English, which in Italy means melancholy.

ses infortunes et en nous faisant applaudir son triomphe.”¹¹⁹ Goldoni thus connects himself to a contemporary literary trend through which he can also create greater realism.

In the character of Giacinto, Goldoni looks ahead to modernity. By contrast, his Don Fabio, an impoverished nobleman, represents the shadow of a past regime fading into oblivion. Yet, while his desire remains that of acting as a gallant protector of ladies in need, he too has been led to accept new, enlightened perspectives:

Non stimo l'esser bella,
stimo la cognizione
di distinguere il merto e le persone.¹²⁰

The character of Don Fabio is balanced by a foil, Sandrino, of common origins but extremely wealthy. The opposite social and financial situations of the two men earn them the nicknames “Il Conte del Fumo” (the Count of Smoke) and “l’Asino d’Oro” (the Golden Ass), and the contrast between them affords ample pretext for comic action.

As concerns *serio* material, however, Goldoni yet again demonstrates a new, moderated approach that trades a recondite poetic language for realistic tones of greater immediacy. A love aria sung by Don Filiberto, a full *serio* character of noble birth and of good standing, exemplifies Goldoni’s by now affirmed new style:

¹¹⁹ P. Larthomas, cited in A. M. Finetto, “La Pamela e La Buona Figliuola: Il Linguaggio Patetico di Goldoni”, in *Studi Goldoniani quaderno 8* (Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1988); 107. (...) an intermediary genre between comedy and tragedy, that introduces ordinary people, virtuous or almost, into serious, grave, and at times pathetic circumstances, exciting us to virtue in moving us by their misfortunes, and leading us to applaud their triumph.

¹²⁰ Goldoni, *La conversazione*, Act I, i. I don’t value beauty, I rather treasure the capacity to distinguish merit and people.

Via resterò per compiacermi ancora.
Troppo questo mio cuor v'ama e v'adora.

Lo so che il sospetto
fa torto al mio bene
ma soffro nel petto
gli affanni, le pene
di un timido amor.

Conosco l'error,
confesso l'inganno;
Me stesso condanno.
Ma palpito ancora. (*parte*)¹²¹

The lightness and simplicity of this piece could hardly have been conceivable in the traditional melodramatic style. It is thus clear that Goldoni has left the preceding tradition entirely behind, and in the name of realistic portrayal, is accomplishing a gradual attenuation of the rigid divisions between *buffo* and *serio* roles, his works not seeking pure comedy but rather a balanced representation of modern life and styles.

As a final note, *La conversazione*, true to its title, is also an exercise in linguistic variety. This type of realism, unlike the personal reflections of Don Filiberto, is used instead to enhance *buffo* roles. While a noblewoman (Lindora) sings an *arietta* in Venetian dialect, Lucrezia the serving-girl offers another in Bolognese, and others follow in a parade of linguistic sketches from all parts of Italy. Later in the work, Goldoni even inserts a Calabrian aria, which denotes strong affinities to the *llengua napolitana* native to the original *commedia per musica* (note also the typical melancholic tone):

¹²¹ *ibid.*, Act II, ii. Alright I'll remain, to appease you once more. My heart loves and adores you too much. I know that suspicion is an injustice to my beloved, but I suffer in my breast the anxieties and the torments of a timid love. I know my mistake, I confess I was wrong; I condemn myself. And yet, my heart beats still. (*exits*)

La notte quanno dormo penzu tanto
e quanno penso a buie mm'adormento.
Po me resveglio co no core schianto,
vado ppe tte parlare e non te siento.¹²²

The linguistic virtuosity of *La conversazione* perhaps brings to mind the observations of Franco Fido, who once affirmed “nei suoi [di Goldoni] libretti quello che la parola infeudata alla musica perdeva sul versante del referente- cioè in termini di capacità di evocare con efficacia mimetica e critica il mondo reale: mercanti, donne di casa, servitori, ecc.- essa guadagnava dalla parte del significante- scherzi e giochi di parole, paradossi e calembours, onomatopée e iperboli, equivoci e cacofonie plurilingui.”¹²³ Goldoni’s inclusion of regional dialects is quite removed, however, from the “cacofonie plurilingui” here described. Rather, a textual approach demonstrates that, within an opera whose central theme is travel and exploration, linguistic variety instead directly supports the very “efficacia mimetica” that Goldoni was thought to lack.

In a long list of successful *drammi giocosi*, only three more will be considered within the limits of the present chapter. The first to follow *La conversazione* is *La fiera di Sinigaglia* (The Fair of Sinigaglia, 1760), a special commission by the *Teatro delle Dame* in Rome. Goldoni’s presentation of the work outside the familiar context of his own Venetian audiences by no means tempers his critical agenda. In fact, *La fiera di Sinigaglia* features two aristocrats in full decline, the Conte Ernesto and Lisaura, “nobile discaduta.”

¹²² *ibid.*, Act III, iv. At night, when I sleep, I think a lot, and when I think in the dark I fall asleep. Then I awake with my heart in pieces, I go to speak to you, and yet hear nothing.

¹²³ Franco Fido, “Riforma e controriforma del teatro. I libretti per musica di Goldoni fra il 1748 e il 1753 in *Studi Goldoniani*, vol. 7 (Venezia: Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1985); 65. [previously translated]

Il Conte Ernesto displays gentlemanly composure (though with evident affectation) and expresses himself in the language of a *parte seria*:

Se si desta al rumor delle schiere
stringe il ferro il guerriero più ardito;
e all'invito dell'armi già parmi
che feroce sen corra a pugnar.

Io non sono mia bella così.
Perché' ho il cor di pietade ripieno
e vien meno se chiedigli aita
la bellezza che sa lagrimar.¹²⁴

Notwithstanding, he has long-running debts with every vendor in the market of Sinigaglia. His aristocratic self-image compels him to take the “discaduta” Lisaura under his protection, yet he must bend over backwards to assure her a living, for, as his middleman Griffo explains, “è un protettore senza monete, di quei che si usano ai nostri dì.”¹²⁵

While a destitute nobleman at this stage of Goldoni’s production is no longer a surprise, an absolute novelty of this work is the appearance of a *borghese* just as ill-equipped. Orazio, a merchant of Sinigaglia, is, much like the Count, drowning in debt. Ted Emery, who deemed Goldoni “the bard of the bourgeoisie,” has seen what he terms “ideological fragility” in the author’s less adulatory representation of exponents the middle class (though he does not analyze *La fiera di Sinigaglia* explicitly). Emery concludes that, in targeting the middle class once emblematic of

¹²⁴ Goldoni, *La Fiera di Sinigaglia*, Act I, i. If he awakes to the noise of troops, the bravest warrior will grasp his sword, and at the call to arms, I can already see him, fierce, running towards combat. I, my beauty, am not like that. Because my heart is full of tenderness, and it nearly faints if a tearful beauty asks for help.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, Act I, ii. He’s a penniless protector, one of those in vogue nowadays.

his 'reform' comedies, the author abandons his efforts for realism and commences an inverse process (what Franco Fido called "counter-reform").¹²⁶

Textual analysis, however, reveals a different reality. If the working-class, in social ascension for decades, now also begins to feel the pricks of corruption as the result of past affluence, Goldoni's indication of this new societal risk can only be understood as a courageous step towards even greater realism and objectivity, not a change in belief. In concrete terms, this translates to the use of a rich lexicon of technical terms from the world of commerce, including *denari*, *ipoteche*, *creditori*, *cambiali* (cash, mortgages, creditors, promissory notes), etc.

In the same way, rather than "ideological fragility," the author's newly targeted critique demonstrates a willingness to confront even the most paradoxical of problems, and reiterates his implicit belief in the moral utility of comedy. Orazio, like the Count, pretends to be who he is not, boasting economic success. Once more, the pragmatic Griffio checks his imbalance with truth "Superbia e povertà stan male insieme,"¹²⁷ and eventually Orazio admits his own responsibilities, "per far di più di quello che comportava il mio stato, da me stesso mi son precipitato."¹²⁸

Ultimately, poverty neutralizes disparities of rank:

ORAZIO. Son servitor di lei
la venero e la stimo;
ma se non ha denari,
signor conte padron, noi siam del pari.

Cosa val la nobiltà
senza il lustro del contante?
Il signore ed il mercante

¹²⁶ Ted Emery, *Goldoni as Librettist*; 77.

¹²⁷ Goldoni, *La Fiera di Sinigaglia*, Act I, vi. Pride and poverty don't go well together.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, Act II, vi. In seeking to move beyond my state, I brought about my own downfall.

non si stima, se non ha.
Non ho il capo cincinnato,
non vo' liscio ne staccato
ma mi faccio rispettar,
se la quaglia fo cantar.

Mi fanno ridere
questi zerbini,
senza quattrini,
quando pretendono
farsi stimar.
Non se n'avvedono,
si fan burlar.¹²⁹

Other contemporary figures, both male and female, also offer timely critique. Griffo, a practical and prudent proto-Figaro, becomes the voice of truth. With direct language, he reveals the true state of the more changeable characters, including the Count, Orazio, and the trinket-seller Prospero, who lends money at high rates of interest: “costui che finge l'uom dabben.”¹³⁰

With realism and practicality, Griffo explains his trade in the following terms:

Non voglio che l'onesto.
Anch'io vivo di questo e se m'ingegno
col mio cervello e coll'industria mia,
è di dover ricompensato io sia.

Nel mio mestiere
suole accadere
dei casi brutti;
non è per tutti
fare il sensal.

Saper non basta
pesi e misure
ma le imposture
convien saper.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, Act II, vi. I am your humble servant, and respect and esteem you; yet, if you have no money, then, sir Count and Lord, we are equals. Of what value is nobility without the sparkle of gold? Neither the lord nor the merchant are esteemed if they lack it. I'm not a Cincinnatus [statesman and Roman consul], I don't go about smoothly, nor aloof, but I too can make others respect me, if I tell what I know. They make me laugh, these doormats without a dime, when they have the pretention of being esteemed. They don't realize they expose themselves to ridicule.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, Act I, vi. (...) he who pretends to be an upright man.

Saper conoscere
chi può pagare,
saper distinguere
che vuol gabbare,
darla ad intendere
all'uno e all'altro,
e pronto e scaltro
per profittar
saper discorrere,
saper trattar.¹³¹

The direct language and short phrases here employed clearly designate this aria as a *buffo* piece, though its comic effect is sensibly outweighed by its practical bent. The illustration of the struggles and deceits encountered in daily life connect this piece so completely to the real world that it would appear (if not for the musical rhythm), almost drawn out of a prose comedy. Griffo evokes a world governed by commerce, in which every sort of man tries to draw his own profit. Again, we note the insistence on wit and readiness as one's best assets, indispensable for survival in an increasingly complex world of simulation and deceit.

Griffo's good sense is known by women as well. In particular, we find his feminine counterpart in Giacinta, a *locandiera* not without the perspicacity of Goldoni's heroine Mirandolina (from the widely famous *La locandiera*, prose comedy of 1753). Giacinta, who earns her profit through honest labor, also speaks with candor and denounces the vanity of both the *borgnese* Orazio, who aspires to gentlemanly state while greatly indebted, and of Lisaura, the noblewoman who has

¹³¹ *ibid.*, Act II, v. I want nothing except what is honest. This is my living too and if I set my mind to it, and apply my wit and my hard work, it's only fair that I should be rewarded. In my trade/ unpleasant cases/ often arise; being a broker/ is not for everyone./ It's not enough/ to know weights and measures/ but one must know/ impostures too./ Know how to tell/ who can make payment/ and to distinguish/ who wants to cheat/ and drop hints/ to one and the other/ and quick and ready/ to make a profit/ know how to converse/ and how to negotiate.

dissipated her holdings so completely as to be reduced to panhandling (but not any wiser for it) and entirely dependent on the generosity (or pomposity) of any *protettore* she can find. Unlike Griffo, who speaks in asides or alone, Giacinta does not shy from direct confrontation:

Non mi seccate.
(...)
Sulla fiera in questo stato
non si viene a civettar. (*a Lisaura*)

Voglio dir quel che mi pare. (*ad Orazio*)
Vi dovrete vergognare,
questa vita non si fa. (*a Lisaura*)
Siete ben accompagnati,
due falliti, due spiantati, (*a tutti due*)
e la vostra falsità,
no, non merita pietà. (*parte seguita da Orazio*)¹³²

In conclusion, *La fiera di Sinigaglia* is a markedly modern work both in realistic style and content, which offers a continual critique of contemporary and widespread social issues. The ancient class divisions appear by this point completely dismantled, and Goldoni's portrayal of corruption and vanity within the *borghesia* signals a new phase in his society and in his theatre. Much like *Il mercato di Malmantile*, the very setting of *La fiera di Sinigaglia*, anchored within the world of commerce, provides a fertile shared space for the manifestation of a large array of social types. The truthfulness and intelligence of those who are honest in their trade, thrown into direct comparison with those who, as Goldoni writes "...non se n'avvedono, si fan burlar" (don't realize that they expose themselves to ridicule),

¹³² *ibid.*, Act II, xiii. Don't bother me. You shouldn't be flirting like this at the market (*to Lisaura*). I want to tell you what I really think (*to Orazio*). You should be ashamed of yourself, this is no life to live (*to Lisaura*). You go very well together, two failures, and penniless (*to both*), and your falsehood, no, it merits no pity.

allows for new, forward-looking ideals of integrity and social equality to surface, all the while taking Goldoni's realist agenda to a higher level of efficacy.

The above-cited operas also exemplify how the artisanal world, since the 1750-51 season a central element of Goldoni's prose comedies, appears with increasing frequency in Goldoni's *drammi giocosi*. The realism inherent to this subject matter prompts Goldoni to revisit the merchant world in *L'amore artigiano* (Artisan Love, 1761), part of a trilogy with *L'amor contadino* (Country Love, 1760, in which again the simplicity of rural life is praised as an antidote to moral corruption) and *L'amore in caricatura* (Love in Caricature, 1761, another attack on the ceremonial, superficial pretenses of aristocratic protagonists). *L'amore artigiano* too revolves around a shared common space or *piazza*, in which different *botteghe* or ateliers are shown open and working concurrently:

Piazzetta come nelle scene antecedenti, colle botteghe aperte del fabro e del calzolaio e di più in mezzo la bottega aperta di legnaiuolo col banco fuori e varie tavole ed instrumenti di cotal arte. Fuori della bottega del fabro una picciola incudine e fuori di quella del calzolaio una pietra, su cui tali artisti sogliono battere il cuoio; di qua e di là le case come prima, etc.¹³³

Perhaps it is no coincidence that this same realistic strategy, using a shared work space that permits the interaction of many, will be used by Goldoni for the signature opening of *Le baruffe chiozzotte* (The Quarrels in Chioggia, 1762), a famous prose comedy written just a few years later.

¹³³ Goldoni, *L'Amore artigiano*, Act I, xvii. Small piazza as in the previous scenes, with the smith and the cobbler shops open, and in addition the carpenter's house between them, with a working table outside and various other tables with instruments of such trade. Outside the smith's shop, a small anvil, and outside of the cobblers, a stone, on which these artists beat and soften the leather; here and there houses as before.

The opera furthermore contains an *arietta* in Venetian dialect (Act II), and furthers Goldoni's newly moderated, disenchanted approach to the characterization of both *serio* and *buffo* roles. The artisans are humble people who serve the resident nobility, yet enter into discourse with the higher class in a new, unabashed and direct manner, claiming the rights and dignity of their work over the capricious pretenses of their patrons. Rosina, a seamstress, speaks to a noblewoman in terms that hitherto would have been inconceivable:

Così mi tratta?
Una sarta par mio tratta così?
Sono stata una pazza a venir qui.
Servo le prime dame,
servo le cittadine
ed ho piena la casa
d'abiti di velluto e di broccato.
Altro che questo straccio rivoltato! (*strapazza il vestito*)
(...)
Ragazza, fanciulla
qual ella mi vede,
la testa mi frulla
più ch'ella non crede.
Si tenga signora
la sua nobiltà,
Rosina sartora
qui più non verrà. (*parte*)¹³⁴

At the same time, part of this working class is by no means immune to fallacy, as Goldoni also includes characters who suffer from the familiar temptation of wine and gambling (Titta), and who behave with presumption. In a scene unlike any other in opera, newlyweds Rosina and Giannino, after a long, trying odyssey towards marriage and much poetic *vagheggiamento*, begin to vehemently argue over

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, Act I, xiv. This is how you treat me? A seamstress of my caliber you treat like this? I was mad to come here. I serve the first ladies, and all the noblewomen, and my house is full of velvet and brocade gowns. Far from these pitiful rags! (*she crumples the gown*) (...) Missy or maiden, whatever you see me as, my head is spinning more than you think. Keep your nobility, Madam, Rosina the seamstress will never come here again. (*exits*)

expenses as soon as they are pronounced man and wife, partially calling into question the traditional *lieto fine*.

A secondary surprise in this regard is the elegant *serio* language used by Giannino, a carpenter (note the archaic allusions to death and to the burning of love):

Non posso riposar, non trovo loco,
cerco qualche ristoro alla frescura.
Ma dove i' vado porto meco il foco
ed è il mantice mio fra quelle mura.
(...)
Oh s'io potessi rinfrescarmi un poco
non morirei dall'amorosa arsura,
amore il tuo Giannin si raccomanda,
fagli vedere il sol da questa banda.¹³⁵

These lines are almost indistinguishable from those uttered by the true *parte seria*, Fabrizio. Again, Goldoni demonstrates that the distinction between *serio* and *buffo* has now moved beyond simple distinctions of class (ever more called into question), and has come to hinge instead upon the interior equilibrium and quality of conduct of the individual.

Finally, we come to the last noteworthy opera of Goldoni's Venetian years, the peculiar *La donna di governo* (The Governess, 1761, premiered in Rome, at the *Teatro Argentina*). Corallina, the *donna di governo* is labeled as a *parte buffa*, though her condition is hardly laughable. She is bound to a lover (Ridolfo) who spends his money and hers on the gambling table, and, unaccustomed to working, harbors

¹³⁵ *ibid*, Act I, i. I cannot rest, I find no place, I search in vain for cool relief. Instead, wherever I go I bring with me the burning fire, and my bellows are behind those walls. (...) Oh, if only I could find refreshment, I would not die from the burning of love, love, Giannino entrusts himself to you, let him see the sun [the face of his beloved] before him.

other vices too: “Ha il giochetto e l’osteria, va la notte in compagnia,”¹³⁶ etc. Corallina is blind to his true nature, yet with the same lies and deceptions takes advantage of the elderly and wealthy Fabrizio. Fabrizio, for his foolishness, is also listed as a *parte buffa*, while his virtuous niece is instead a *seria*, though they share the same social condition. From Fabrizio, Corallina obtains gifts and attentions, but not yet satisfied also steals from his cellar, thereby providing for her lover Ridolfo, her widowed sister Lindora, and Moschino, a servant and accomplice. *La donna di governo* thus features a negative heroine, who creates grief for the *parti serie* yet remains unpunished thanks to the protection procured by her arts.

Attention to profit permeates the work. It is manifest in the actions of almost every character, and dispositions change in relation to circumstance, not to moral regulation. Even Lindora, who at first tries in good faith to alert her sister to Ridolfo’s true nature, in little time transforms thanks to the promise of payment in exchange for her silence. Goldoni thereby creates a desolate panorama of superficiality and moral emptiness in which each maneuvers the affections of others to his own gain, such that even his social critique appears flattened by saturation.

Amidst the monotony of such corruption, some relief and stylistic variety is provided by the *parti serie*, who in this work display renewed adherence to their rightful moral foundation. Interestingly, it is not made explicit whether the *serio* characters have any claim to aristocratic heritage. All we know is that Rosalba’s uncle is a *benestante* (a wealthy man). This, together with the fact that they are

¹³⁶ Goldoni, *La Donna di Governo*, Act I, iii. He’s got gambling, and the pubs, and spends the night in company...

never addressed nor announced by any title within the work, would instead suggest their pertaining to the *borghesia* and not to the nobility.

We may therefore consider the *serio* pair as the final tile in Goldoni's vast mosaic of social types. Having idealized and criticized commoners, nobles, and *borghesi* alike, Goldoni now assigns *serio* content to figures of realistic moral, social, and financial condition, and he does this in the measure not of verses or single pieces as before, but over the entirety of their roles. The consistent characterization and reliable behavior of the *parti serie* is in fact even more exalted in its contrast to the changeability and inconstancy demonstrated by the others.

On the textual level, the most noteworthy characteristic of these *parti serie* is the inclusion of elements of *larmoyant*, present in the *arie* of both Rosalba and Fulgenzio (her lover). To cite just one example, the following aria by Rosalba evokes true sympathy:

Sconsolata quest'alma dolente
solitaria fra taciti orrori
va spiegando coll'erbe e coi fiori
quell'affanno che strugge il mio cor.

Fuggo l'odioso aspetto
dell'ingrata famiglia. Ogniun m'insulta,
mi tradisce ciascun. Il zio medesmo
frutto del vile inganno
mio nemico si è reso e mio tiranno.¹³⁷

This *serio* piece combines elements of tragedy and despair with the dignity of a virtuous woman, and the bitter awareness of being the victim of deceit. It is a delicately balanced example of the new brand of *serio* that Goldoni has established

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, Act III, i. Desolate, my sorrowful soul, solitary amongst tacit horrors, can confide to the meadows and flowers the torment that consumes my heart. I wish to flee the odious image of my ungrateful family. Each insults me, all betray me. My uncle himself, as a result of the vile deception, now has become my enemy, and my tyrant.

through the course of his production, a style realistically moderated in tone and enhanced in its psychological immediacy.

Looking back over the production of his Venetian *drammi giocosi*, it is clear that Goldoni's mature style as manifest in Rosalba's aria has traveled a great distance from the Metastasian *serio* of *La scuola moderna*. At the end of more than a decade's work, he is able to create a nuanced, intimate illustration of emotional complexity hardly conceivable fifteen years earlier, the product of a lengthy and gradual process of creative experimentation. The attenuated contrast between *buffo* and *serio* and the new, realistic qualities of both dramatic types have now matured in the *dramma giocoso* to form the foundation of a decidedly modern and newly relevant opera theatre.

From speech to song

Having witnessed the evolution of Goldoni's texts for music within the opera theatre tradition, the final, most important element that confirms the novelty and innovation of his *drammi giocosi* resides in the direct connections between the libretti and his groundbreaking works of prose comedy.

Common ground in comedies and libretti can be found in both content and style. The sheer volume of Goldoni's comedies (well over 100) does not permit consideration of them all, or even a portion, in the detail they merit, therefore we limit the discussion to only a reference of the most representative points of contact in this respect.

i. Common themes

Thematically, affinity between libretti and comedies is widely apparent in the character types, situations, and social mores exposed in both. As early as 1748, the same year as *La scuola moderna*, Goldoni's prose theatre is already occupied with contemporary custom in the extraordinarily famous *La putta onorata* (followed by the sequel, *La buona moglie*), which also displays precocious elements of *larmoyant*. Only a short while later, we find hallmark original characters in works such as *L'avventuriero onorato* (The Honored Adventurer, 1751), a partially autobiographical comedy that presents a false lawyer and a failed merchant, and *La moglie saggia* (The Wise Wife, 1752), an *unicum* even for Goldoni, in which the heroine Rosaura, a virtuous wife betrayed by her husband Ottavio (naturally, Medebach) pays an unprecedented visit to her rival (the Marchesa Beatrice) to ask advice on how to win him back.¹³⁸ Other works of note for their complexity of characterization include *La figlia obbediente*, (The Obedient Daughter, 1752), and *Gli innamorati* (The Beloveds, 1759).

I mercatanti (The Merchants, 1753, originally *I due Pantaloni*, though masks and dialect were eliminated when Goldoni sent the work to print) launches a positive image of the merchant class and targets familiar themes of prodigality and dissipation, as Pantalone, on the edge of ruin thanks to his son's unchecked spending, is saved by a merchant from Holland. *Il festino* (1754) attacks another relevant phenomenon, *cicisbeismo*, and so too does *La sposa sagace* (The Sagacious Bride, 1758), set in Palermo. Curiously, this work presents a female character,

¹³⁸ Goldoni, *La Moglie Saggia*, see in particular Act II, vii.

Petronilla, homonymous to the protagonist of the libretto *La ritornata da Londra*. The two women not only share their name, but moreover their circumstances and character traits: both are surrounded by *cicisbei*, and both seek and enjoy their attentions. There is no textual evidence to suggest a direct adaptation from one work to the other in this case, but similarities are such that a common inspiration for both characters should not be excluded.

Naturally, we cannot forget the elevated realism of Goldoni's comedies in Venetian dialect, including *Le donne de casa soa* (The Women of Their Own Home, 1755, given at the *Teatro S. Luca*), *Il campiello* (The Venetian Piazza, 1756), and the later *Le baruffe chiozzote* (1762). The first two in particular, which present the popular life of Goldoni's city in a genuine, quotidian style, met with overwhelming success, and not only in Venice despite their strong dialectal ties. The higher echelons of Venetian society are instead central to *Le morbinose* (The Spirited Girls, 1758).

While we recall Goldoni's most famous accomplishments in the direction of realistic theatre, however, we should not overlook the fact that the author's process in prose theatre, much like for his libretti, does not always follow a comfortable linear trajectory. In particular, just as Goldoni often but not always illustrates modernity or contemporary life in his libretti, some of his comedies, or the styles employed in them, also take steps away from the current reality.

We cannot forget that his mature production includes works such as *Terenzio* (1754) and *Torquato Tasso* (1755), for example, attempts in the field of historical comedy. In these works, Goldoni abandoned his own preferences in the effort to

emulate a different style very much in vogue, and thereby match or contrast the great success of Pietro Chiari, who specialized in this type of theatre.

Other comedies parody or draw from the generic imagery of older comic currents (e.g. *La pupilla* (The Pupil, 1757), *Il padre per amore* (The Father for Love, 1757)), and most importantly, become grounds for linguistic experimentation. In fact, a surprising number of Goldoni's comedies are not written in the realistic prose he is best remembered for, but in *versi martelliani* (Alexandrian verse) and endecasyllable. *La scuola di ballo* (The Dance School, 1759) is even a rare excursion in difficult *terzine* (tercets), an effort to gain back audiences after Goldoni's period of absence in Rome (which however did not meet with much success). We also find a singular return of the *Commedia dell'Arte* masks in a very late comedy, *Il buon compatriotto* (The Good Compatriot, 1762), written just before the author's departure for Paris. Goldoni's theatre once in Paris will also more consistently slip back towards the *Commedia dell'Arte*, but for specific reasons concerning his appointment at the *Comédie Italienne*, as we shall see in the following chapter.

Ultimately, the variation of content and language in his prose comedies testifies that, much like his libretti, Goldoni's 'principal' theatre too does not always follow a clean line of progress in the direction of the reform agenda. Rather, it is subject to experimentation and, in some cases, external stylistic demands. Goldoni's deviations or 'experiments' do not however undermine the success or integrity of his larger project, but are instead an important aid to understanding the multi-faceted nature of a *corpus* often considered homogeneous.

ii. Common dramatic techniques: ensemble

Beyond linguistic experimentation, a more significant point of contact between comedies and *drammi giocosi* resides in Goldoni's improvements of structure in both theatrical genres. In opera, this is particularly manifest in the expanded use and complexity of ensembles, as we have seen. While the layering of independent voices is by nature a musical technique, notably, elements of textual polyphony also become noticeably present in Goldoni's mature prose comedy, and moreover acquire increasing prominence.

His Venetian masterpiece *I rusteghi* (1760) can be considered an exemplary end result in this respect. This comedy in dialect boasts the particularity of featuring four protagonists, all of similar character and belief, yet each clearly individual; not an easy task, as Goldoni reminds us:

Si scorge dal titolo della Commedia non essere un solo il Protagonista, ma varii insieme, e in fatti sono eglino quattro, tutti dello stesso carattere, ma con varie tinte delineati, cosa per dire il vero difficilissima, sembrando che più caratteri eguali in una stessa Commedia possano più annoiare che dilettere.¹³⁹

The four *rusteghi* (a Count, a *cittadino*, and two *mercanti*) most often appear together, creating symmetry of discourse in a polyphonic style. To the quartet of protagonists Goldoni also adds the coalition of their respective spouses, who counterweigh their husbands' strictness and conservatism ("El xè un orso, fia mia; nol se diverte élo, e nol vol che se divertimo gnanca nu"¹⁴⁰) with liveliness and a

¹³⁹ Goldoni, *I Rusteghi*, "The Author to his Readers." From the title you will see that the Comedy does not have one single protagonist, but different ones together, and in fact they are four, all of the same character, but delineated in a variety of tones, something to tell the truth very difficult to do, because it seems that multiple similar characters in a Comedy would appear to be boresome, rather than entertaining.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Act I, i. He's a bear, my child. He never enjoys himself, and he's determined that we shouldn't either.

desire to experience the world (“Via donca, che el ne mena un pocheto in maschera”¹⁴¹). The interactions of the two quartets thus create multiple level of symmetry, not only within each group but moreover between them, as the conservative men and progressive women challenge each other in a battle of the sexes.

Midway through the first act, Goldoni creates a duet that reveals more than a few affinities with the choral quality of his *drammi giocosi*. A musical progression is carried through the entire scene (therefore a larger excerpt is required):

LUNARDO. Gh'aveu dito, che el volè maridar?
MAURIZIO. Ghe l'ho dito.
LUNARDO. Cossa diselo?
MAURIZIO. El dise, che el xè contento, ma el gh'averave gusto de véderla.
LUNARDO. Sior no, questi no xè i nostri pati. (*con isdegno*)
MAURIZIO. Via, via, no andè in colera, che el puto farà tuto quello che voggio mi.
LUNARDO. Co volè, vegnimo a dir el merito, la dota xè parecchiada.
(...)
MAURIZIO. No stè a spender in abiti, che no voggio.
LUNARDO. Mi ve la dago, come che la xè.
MAURIZIO. Gh'àla roba de séa?
LUNARDO. La gh'ha qualche strazzeto.
MAURIZIO. In casa mia no voggio séa. Fin che son vivo mi, l'ha da andar co la vesta de lana, e no vòl né tabarini, né scuffie, né cerchi, né toppè, né cartoline sul fronte.
LUNARDO. Bravo, sieu benedeto. Cusì me piase anca mi.
(...)
LUNARDO. Ghe xè pochi, che pensa come che pensemo nu.
MAURIZIO. E ghe xè pochi, che gh'abbia dei bezzi, come che gh'avemo nu.
LUNARDO. I dise mo, che nu no savemo gòder.
MAURIZIO. Poverazzi! ghe vèdeli drento del nostro cuor? Crèdeli, che no ghe sia altro mondo, che quello,

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, Act I, i. Come, take us out in costume for a bit.

che i gode lori? Oh compare, el xè un bel gusto el poder dir: gh'ho el mio bisogno, no me manca gnente, e in t'una ocorenza posso meter le man su cento zecchini!

LUNARDO. Sior sì, e magnar ben, dei boni caponi, delle bone polastre, e dei boni straculi de vedèlo.

MAURIZIO. E tutto bon, e a bon marcà, perché se paga de volta in volta.

LUNARDO. E a casa soa; senza strepiti, senza sussuri.

MAURIZIO. E senza nissun, che v'intriga i bisi.

LUNARDO. E nissun sa i fati nostri.

MAURIZIO. E semo paroni nu.

LUNARDO. E la muggier no comanda.

MAURIZIO. E i fioi sta da fioi.

LUNARDO. E mia fia xè arlevada cusì.

MAURIZIO. Anca mio fio xè una perla. No gh'è pericolo che el buta via un bagatin.

LUNARDO. La mia puta sa far de tuto. In casa ho volesto, che la faza de tuto. Fin a lavar i piati.

MAURIZIO. E a mio fio, perché no voggio, che co le serve el se ne impazza, gh'ho insegnà a tirar suso i busi delle calze, e metter i fondèli alle braghesse.

LUNARDO. Bravo. (*ridendo*)

MAURIZIO. Sì dasseno. (*ridendo*)

LUNARDO. Via fémolo sto sposalizio; destrighemose. (*fregandosi le mani, e ridendo*)

MAURIZIO. Co volè, compare.

LUNARDO. Ancuo v'aspetto a disnar con mi. Za savè, che ve l'ho dito. Gh'ho quatro latesini, vegnimo a dir el merito, ma tanto fati.

MAURIZIO. I magneremo.

LUNARDO. Se goderemo.

MAURIZIO. Staremo aliegri.

LUNARDO. E po i dirà, che semo salvadeghi!

MAURIZIO. Puffe!

LUNARDO. Martuffi! (*partono*)¹⁴²

¹⁴² *ibid.*, Act I, v. Lunardo: Have you told him that you want to marry him off? Maurizio: I've told him. L: And what does he say? M: He says he's happy, but he'd like to see her. L: No sir, this was not our agreement (*angrily*) M: Oh come come, don't get angry, the boy will do everything I want him to do. L: Well then, whenever you like, we can get down to business. The dowry has been prepared. (...) M: Don't spend in fancy dresses, I don't want that. L: No, I'll send her to you just as she is. M: Does she have silk gowns? L: She's just got a couple strips of it. M: I don't want silk in my house. As long as I'm alive, she's going to have to wear a plain wool dress, and I don't want cloaks, or bonnets, or hoops, nor decorations, nor bows nor frills in the front. L: Good for you, God bless. I like it so myself. (...) L: There are few, who share our opinions. M: And there are few who have the money that we have. L: And they say we don't know how to enjoy life. M: Poor fools! Can they see inside our hearts? Do they really think that there is no other world but theirs, which they enjoy? Oh friend, what pleasure it is to be able to say: I have all I require, I lack nothing, and if I ever had the need, I could draw up a hundred *zecchini*. L: Yes indeed, and to eat well, good *capons* and hens, and veal hanks. M: And all delicious, and a good deal, because we pay as we acquire. L: And in our houses, without scenes or mutterings.

Apart from the comic yet realistic characterization of the two men, who embody the “onesto ridicolo” that Goldoni so often shows on the stage to expose certain universal flaws, this scene displays a keen attention to pacing. From initially unmeasured prose discourse, Goldoni gradually transitions into shorter and symmetrical exchanges (“E nissun sa i fati nostri/ E semo paroni nu/ E la muggier.../ E i fioi... “etc.), and ultimately ends the scene in a triumphant chorale style (“I magneremo/ se goderemo”) that utilizes both rhyme and meter, two highly musical elements.

We must also note the musical *stringendo* created by his progressive shortening and *rapprochement* of entrances, almost as a fugal diminution. Such is the affinity to operatic style by the end of this scene, that its final verses could function perfectly in a musical ensemble finale, accompanied by a progressive *crescendo* and culminating in the hasty exit of the characters with enthusiastic impetus.

To cite just one further example, we find the same complexity, but on a much larger scale, in the nostalgic masterpiece *Una delle ultime sere di Carnovale* (One of the Last Evenings of Carnival, 1762). This work is especially significant for its

M: And without anyone to poke around in my money. L: And nobody knows our business. M: And we are the boss. L: And the wife can't tell me what to do. M: And the children behave as children should. L: And I've brought my daughter up this way. M: And my son is a pearl. There's no chance of him wasting a penny. L: And my daughter knows how to do everything. At home, I decided she should do all sorts of jobs. She even washes the dishes. M: And my son, since I don't want him to be interested in servant girls, I've taught him how to mend his own socks, and hem his own trousers. L: Bravo (*laughing*) M: Yes indeed (*laughing*) L: Quick then, let's make this marriage happen (*rubbing his hands together and laughing*) M: Whenever you like. L: Then I'll expect you to dine with me tonight. You already know, I've told you. I've got four sweetbreads at home, and they'll be cooked as they should be. M: And we'll eat them. L: And we'll have a good time. M: And we'll be merry. L: Let people say that we are savage! M: Puff (*expressing marvel and disdain*) L: Dimwits! (*both leave*)

allegorical design, through which Goldoni, representing himself in one of the characters, metaphorically took his leave from his Venetian public on the eve of his journey to France. Another realistic, Venetian comedy in dialect, *Una delle ultime sere* is situated within the domestic world of a textile merchant, and pays homage to the industry and honest profit of that trade. It is, in Goldoni's own words, "la pittura del sistema e del costume di quel ceto di persone."¹⁴³

The entire action takes place within one evening during *Carnevale*, as the title suggests. The central event being a convivial dinner followed by festivities and games, this comedy like few others thrives on the interaction of groups and exploits the close interconnection of parallel sub-plots. Perhaps the largest, and most prolonged ensemble of Goldoni's entire output can be found in the second Act. Marked *Tutti*, it is a theatrical feat of gigantic proportions, employing virtually all characters uninterruptedly for all of seven scenes. In particular, the central frame is a game of cards that brings all together around the same table. Characters are strategically distributed by couple so that each pair may continue their own sub-plot while the broader action progresses with the game.

In the comedy, Goldoni is allegorically represented by Anzoletto, a young fabric designer of great skill, the source of ideas from which others weave together the final product. Goldoni draws the parallel to play-writing explicitly: "I Comici eseguiscono le opere degli Autori, ed i Tessitori lavorano sul modello de' loro Disegnatori."¹⁴⁴ Such is the skill of Anzoletto (though covered by modesty), that he

¹⁴³ Goldoni, *Una delle ultime sere di carnevale*. "The Author to his Readers." (...) the portrait of the system and customs of that class of people.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* Actors perform the works of Authors, and Weavers work on the models of their Designers.

has been called to “Moscovia” to take up his trade in that place, where, as in Parisian theatres, demand for Italian artistry is high.

Many things still tie Anzoletto to Venice, however, including the love of Domenica, an authentic *putta de campielo*. A central component of the action, seasoned by secondary plot threads between other characters, remains the predicament of separation that threatens the young lovers. The card tournament, an open game that nonetheless affords privacy as each team strategizes in secret, becomes a pretext ripe with possibilities for the advancement of their relationship. The brief excerpt below illustrates the manner in which Goldoni embeds important progress of action (a resolution between two lovers) within an exteriorly fixed scene:

MARTA. Tocca a far le carte a sior'Elenetta. (dà le carte ad Elena) Via, chi manca a metter su?
ANZOLETTO. Mancheremo nualtri. (prende i quattro soldi)
MARTA. (Mo i compatisso, poverazzi!)
ANZOLETTO. (Se la sapesse, quanto che me despiase).(a Domenica)
DOMENICA. (De cossa?)
ANZOLETTO. (De doverla lassar). (mettendo i soldi nel piatto)
DOMENICA. (Busiaro!) (ad Anzoletto)
ELENETTA. Che la leva. (a Polonia, dandole le carte perché alzi)
MARTA. (Siora Domenica, come vàla?) (a Domenica)
DOMENICA. (Qua no se sente altro, che de le busie). (a Marta)
MARTA. (Se sè un putto civil, tratè almanco con sincerità). (ad Anzoletto)
ANZOLETTO. (Per farghe véder, che no son busiaro, ghe farà una proposizion). (a Domenica, che senta anche Marta)
DOMENICA. (Che xè?)
ANZOLETTO. (Vorla vegnir in Moscovia con mi?) (come sopra)
MARTA. (Sì ben, che l'accetta. Nol dise mal). (a Domenica)

DOMENICA. (Come?) (*ad Anzoletto*)
 ANZOLETTO. (Col consenso de so sior padre). (*come sopra*)
 MARTA. (Se gh'intende). (*a Domenica*)
 DOMENICA. (Sposai?) (*ad Anzoletto*)
 ANZOLETTO. (No vorla?) (*come sopra*)
 MARTA. (Bravo, bravo dasseno). (*ad Anzoletto, rimettendosi al giuoco*)
 AGUSTIN. Spade, che la vegna. (*giuocando*)
 DOMENICA. Spade? Chi zoga spade? (*con allegria*)
 AGUSTIN. Mi; el cinque de spade.
 DOMENICA. E mi el cavalo. (*allegra butta giù la carta*)
 MARTA. L'aspetta, che no tocca a ela. (*a Domenica*)
 (Adesso la se confonde per l'allegrezza). Via a lori. (*a Bastian e ad Alba*) etc.¹⁴⁵

The sheer quantity of parenthesis in this excerpt denotes the author's constant use of asides, a dramatic strategy often found in opera, which enlivens and quickens the pace of the discourse. Of note is the equilibrium of roles within the three-part conversation and the juxtaposition of the trio to the ongoing game. The occasional intrusion of other characters thereby creates the illusion of simultaneity. Here we witness an ensemble technique altogether different from the verbal *crescendo* of *I rusteghi*, but no less effective. While vocal overlap can be easily created in musical ensembles, the illusion of simultaneous discourse is still effectively rendered in prose, a tangible link between opera theatre and comedy. So

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, Act II, iii. Marta: It's my turn to give the cards, Ms. Elena. Now, who's missing them? Anzoletto: We are (*takes four coins*). M: (I feel for them, poor things!) A: (If only you knew how sorry I am) (*to Domenica*). Domenica: (What for?) A: (For having to leave you) (*putting the coins in the dish*) D: Liar! (*to Anzoletto*) E: Pick it up (*to Polonia, giving her a card to pick up*) M: Ms. Domenica, how is it going? (*to Domenica*) D: (I'm hearing nothing but lies) (*to Marta*) A: (So you see that I'm not a liar, let me make you a proposal) (*to Domenica, but so that Marta hears too*) D: What is it? A: Would you like to come to Moscow with me? (*as above*) M: (Oh yes, you should accept. It's not a bad idea) (*to Domenica*) D: What? (*to Anzoletto*) A: With the consent of your father, of course (*as above*) M: Now you get it (*to Domenica*) D: Married? (*to Anzoletto*) A: Don't you want to? (*as above*) M: Good, good for you, in earnest (*to Anzoletto, going back to the game*) Ag: Spades, bring it on (*playing*) D: Spades? Who's playing spades? (*happily*) Agustin: I am, the five of spades. D: Then I'll play the horse (*happily throws down her card*) M: Wait, it's not your turn (*to Domenica*) (Now she's so happy, she's confused). Over to you (*to Bastian and Alba*) etc.

rich are the possibilities afforded by this polyphonic design, that Goldoni adheres to this strategy for the entire Act.

iii. Common dramatic techniques: buffo and serio

Connections between comedy and opera theatre are not only present in Goldoni's use of ensembles. *Una delle ultime sere di carnevale* also reflects his modernized *serio* style in the detectable presence of melancholic tones; and this work is not the only comedy in which *serio* is prominent, as we shall see.

Serio elements are no longer of Metastasian stamp, by this point long abandoned, but rather are characterized by heightened intimacy, introspection, often self-doubt and confusion ("no so cossa dir"¹⁴⁶), and they evoke *pathos* in response to candid emotion. The monologue is a typical device in these cases, as for example:

MARTA e DOMENICA

MARTA. Siora Domenica, cossa gh'ala intenzion de far?

DOMENICA. No so gnanca mi.

MARTA. Ma pur?

DOMENICA. Vorla, che andémo dessus anca nu?

MARTA. Quel che la comanda.

DOMENICA. La resta servida, che adessadesso vegno anca mi.

MARTA. Vorla restar qua?

DOMENICA. Un pochetto. Se la me permette?

MARTA. La se comoda. (Ho capio; la se vol consegnar da so posta. Che la varda de no far pezo. Ho sempre sentio a dir, che amor xè orbo; e chi se lassa menar da un orbo, va a pericolo de cascar in t'un fosso). (*parte*)

DOMENICA *sola*

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, Act I, xv. "I don't know what to say," spoken by Anzoletto, unsure whether to remain for love or leave for honor.

DOMENICA. No so quala far. No voria, che l'andasse; ma no vorave gnanca esser causa mi, che 'l perdesse la so fortuna. Certo, za che se vede, che sta recamadora gh'ha corrispondenza in Moscovia, se poderia farghe parlar per qualchedun, e obligarla a scriver de là, che nol sa, che no l'è bon, che ghe n'è de meglio... E mi, che a Anzoletto ghe voggio ben; mi saria capace de farghe perder el so conceto? No, no sarà mai vero. Che 'l vaga, se l'ha d'andar; patirò, me despiaserà; ma pazzenzia. No faria sto torto né a lu, né a nissun, se credesse de deventar principessa. No, no certo; patir, crear; ma rassegnarse al Cielo, e perder tutto, più tosto che far una mala azion. *(parte)*¹⁴⁷

In these brief scenes, the opening dialogue functions almost as an introductory recitative duet, and Domenica's monologue as a solo aria.

Our grieving heroine of noble resolve is no longer an aristocratic *prima donna*, but a humble seamstress within a guild of artisans in a dialectal world. Yet, her piece reflects the same interior conflict, sadness, longing, and ultimately the same resolution of self-sacrifice that are emblematic of the true *serio* part; nor should the use of Venetian be seen as a detraction from the weight of her words. While elsewhere Goldoni mixes dialects with standard Italian for comic contrast or caricature, this comedy, as his other Venetian works, shares no affinity to that purpose. Rather, it is simply the realistic representation of the world of the author and his audience (not to mention the fact that Venetian was once an international

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, Act I, xviii. Marta: Ms. Domenica, what do you resolve to do? Domenica: I don't know M: and yet? D: Would you like to go upstairs to join the others? M: Whatever you prefer. D: Alright then, I'll be up shortly. M: Do you prefer to stay here? D: Just a little bit. Do you mind? M: As you wish. (I understand, she wants to counsel herself. Let's hope she doesn't make matters worse. I've always heard it said, that love is blind; and who is led blindly risks falling into a ditch) *(exits)*. D *(alone)*: I don't know what to do. I don't want him to go; but I wouldn't want to be the cause, if he were to lose his fortune. Of course, there is this embroiderer who has contacts in Moscow, and we could make her speak to somebody, and write over there that he doesn't know anything, that he's not capable, that they could find someone better...But I, who love Anzoletto, would I be capable of ruining his prospects? No, this will never be. Let him go, if he must; I'll suffer, I'll be sorry; but so be it. I cannot betray him nor anyone, even if I thought it would make me a princess. No, no indeed, to suffer, to die, but to resign myself to the Heavens, and lose everything, rather than commit a crime. *(exits)*

language in Europe, and that, as also testified by Neapolitan comedy, dialect did not pertain only to popular sphere at the time). Thus, Domenica's resolve, "patir, crepar; ma rassegnarse al Cielo, e perder tutto" (to suffer, to die, but to resign myself to the Heavens, and lose everything) carries the full weight of a dramatic *serio* and creates an aura of pathos typical of the new *larmoyant* fashion.

The shadow of impending departure that looms over *Una delle ultime sere di carnevale* provides ample opportunity for similar empathic episodes throughout the work, such that an overarching hue of nostalgia can be said to characterize the autobiographical comedy as a whole. Notably, elements of *serio* or *larmoyant* as we find in *Una delle ultime sere* do not appear exclusively in later comedies. As in opera theatre, precocious symptoms of Goldoni's mature style can be traced to relatively early works. The prose comedies, like *drammi giocosi*, that reap benefit from the inclusion of *serio* are many.

Among these, an example of particular strength is *Le avventure della villeggiatura* (The Adventures of Vacationing, 1761, part two of the famous trilogy that includes *Le smanie per la villeggiatura* (The Yearning for Vacation) and *Il ritorno dalla villeggiatura* (The Return from Vacation)), in particular for the *serio* character Giacinta. Portrayed as a comic flirt in the first comedy, in *Le avventure* Giacinta undergoes radical transformation. Her role becomes tragic as, torn between her love for Guglielmo and her promise of marriage to Leonardo, she is forced to renounce her feelings in order uphold her engagement. To her predicament Goldoni adds the additional pain of witnessing her lover ultimately promised to another

woman. The author portrays her as “incantata, oppressa, avvilita” (in the words of her servant, “ella è così melanconica”¹⁴⁸).

In an extended dialogue, Goldoni colors Giacinta’s role with a strong language of suffering:

GIACINTA. (...) Uso ogni arte perché egli non se ne accorga, ma ti giuro ch'io patisco pene di morte. Quel dover usar al signor Leonardo le distinzioni che sono da una sposa ad uno sposo dovute, e vedere dall'altra parte a languire, a patire colui che mi ha saputo vincere il cuore, è un tale inferno, che non lo saprei spiegare volendo.

BRIGIDA. Ma come ha da finire, signora mia?

GIACINTA. Questo è quello ch'io non so dire, e che mi fa continuamente tremare.

BRIGIDA. Finalmente ella non è ancora sposata.

GIACINTA. E che vorresti tu ch'io facessi? Che mancassi alla mia parola? Che si lacerasse un contratto? L'ho io sottoscritto. L'ha sottoscritto mio padre. È noto ai parenti, è pubblico per la città. Che direbbe il mondo di me?¹⁴⁹ etc.

In addition to familiar manifestations of trembling and anguish, we find once again the pathetic element of doubt and indecision carried throughout the work (“sono così confusa”), aggravated in this dialogue by a feeling of powerlessness beneath the oppression of the passions and the confines of social contracts that cannot be breached. Giacinta’s internal illness even becomes manifest in physical symptoms as she refuses food and experiences headaches in the manner of a tragic lover.

¹⁴⁸ Goldoni, *Le avventure della villeggiatura*, Act II, i. Transfixed, oppressed, mortified.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* Act II, i. Giacinta: I use every art so that he [her betrothed Leonardo] doesn't notice, but I swear to you, I am suffering the pains of death. To have to give Leonardo the distinctions owed to a husband by his wife, and to see the other languish, to see suffer the man who has conquered my heart, is such great torment, that I could describe it even if I wanted to. Brigida: But how will it end, my lady? G: This is what I don't know, and what makes me tremble constantly. B: In the end, you are not yet married. G: And what would you have me do? Should I betray my word? Should I break a contract? I've signed it. My father has signed it. It's known by to our family, it's public in town. What would the world say of me? etc.

To use Goldoni's own words, the role of Giacinta in *Le avventure della villeggiatura* is "una lunga disperazione, un combattimento di affetti, un misto d'eroismo e di tenerezza,"¹⁵⁰ precisely the elements of a modern, realistic *serio*. The psychological realism of her lines contributes to the dramatic impact of her role and unequivocally seals the comedy as an exquisite mixture of *buffo* and *serio*, as we have often encountered in the *drammi giocosi*. The comedy also makes ample use of ensembles, with typical theatrical feats such as asides and parallel conversations, as well as the convergence of all characters at the conclusion of Acts in operatic chorale style.

As a side note, we recall that the idea of *villeggiatura*, vacation in the countryside much in vogue among well-to-do Venetian families, is persistently made the object of comic critique in Goldoni, who in particular denounces the excesses of this fashion. The tradition is targeted not only in the other comedies of the *villeggiatura* trilogy (*Le smanie* and *Il ritorno*) but in numerous other comedies as well, including *La castalda* (The Gastald, 1751), *I malcontenti* (The Dissatisfied, 1755), and *La villeggiatura* (a distinct work, 1756). Goldoni also tackles the issue in music, beginning with the *dramma comico L'Arcadia in Brenta* (Arcadia on the River Brenta, 1749).

Looking back further, prototypical antecedents of *serio* and *larmoyant* can be found as early as *La putta onorata* (The Honorable Venetian Girl), written in the same year as Goldoni's first *dramma giocoso*, *La scuola moderna*. A largely successful Venetian comedy that mixes Italian with dialect and masks with original characters,

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, Act III, xvi. (...) a long desperation, a contrast of affections, a mixture of heroism and tenderness.

La putta onorata was premiered at the *Teatro S. Angelo* in 1749 and given for 22 consecutive nights. Giuseppe Ortolani has seen in the work “la rivendicazione della virtù del popolo nostro [veneziano] offesa, con triste tradizione, dalla leggerezza e dalla maldicenza dei viaggiatori stranieri,”¹⁵¹ and the protagonist embodies Goldoni’s attempt to create a positive image of Venetian women.

In a letter to his publisher Bettinelli, Goldoni clearly delineates the high level of realism of the work, “avendo io in più luoghi imitato le azioni e i ragionamenti della minuta gente.” As in the early *intermezzo*, *La Birba*, Goldoni again explicitly derives his characters from the direct, ‘natural’ imitation of real-life models: “i Gondolieri di Venezia...furono da me nella presente Commedia imitati con tanta attenzione che più volte mi posi ad ascoltarli, quando quistionavano, sollazzavansi o altre funzioni facevano, per poterli ricopiare nella mia Commedia naturalmente.”¹⁵²

Bettina, Goldoni’s heroine (originally Teodora Medebach), earns the title of *putta onorata* as she defends her honor when, like Lucia of Manzoni’s *Promessi Sposi*, she is abducted by a man who desires her, in this case the Marchese Ottavio di Ripaverde (already married, at that). Much of the *serio* or *larmoyant* of the work arises from Bettina’s pitiable circumstances during this episode, particularly from her confusion, as from her innocence:

Oh povereta mi! Cossa mai sarà de mi? Dove songio?
In che casa songio? Chi mai xe stà che m’ha menà via?

¹⁵¹ Giuseppe Ortolani, “Introduzione” to *La Putta onorata* in *Tutte le opere di Carlo Goldoni*, a cura di Giuseppe Ortolani, vol. II. (Milano: Mondadori, 1936). (...) the vindication of the virtue of our people, offended, in a sad tradition, by the carelessness and malicious gossip of foreign travelers.

¹⁵² Goldoni, *La Putta onorata*, “Lettera dell’Autore al Bettinelli.” I have in several places imitated the manners and discourse of the common people. (...)the Gondoliers, in the present work imitated with such great attention that many times I set myself to observing them, listening to their conversations when they argued, when they played, and when they did other things, to be able to recopy them in my Comedy naturally.

(...) Povero Pasqualin, dove xestu, anema mia? Perché no viestu a agiutar la to povera Betina, che te vol tanto ben?¹⁵³ etc.

In her Venetian spirit, Bettina has little of the fearfulness or timidity of Manzoni's Lucia. As a true heroine, she is quick to act in adverse circumstances, and her stricken monologue (cited above) soon transforms grief into rage, even resolving to inflict physical punishment on her oppressor ("ghe darò...tante sgrafignaure, che ghe farò plover el sangue"¹⁵⁴). The changeability of her role not only adds complexity to an original character but moreover contributes to an overarching sense of continual propulsion. In this comedy, in which action is dense and events are often hurried, characters change disposition within the span of a few lines. *La putta onorata* is in essence a sequence of *rovesciamenti*, as also testified by Goldoni's resolution of the work with a fantastic *peripezia*. The third Act uncovers two mistaken paternities: Pasqualino, Bettina's lover, while believed to be the son of a gondolier, in reality is the heir of the rich merchant Pantalone; conversely, the alleged son of Pantalone (Lelio) is in fact the real son of the gondolier.

More than Goldoni's inventiveness alone, the dramatic nature of these events and of *La putta onorata* as a whole reflects a growing appreciation for *romanzesco* elements. The combative heroine, the continual flow of action, and events such as infants swapped in the cradle or the abduction of a maiden, all point towards the adventurous, almost incredible, brand of action characteristic of new 18th-century novels.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, Act II, iii. Oh wretched me! What will become of me? Where am I? In whose house am I? Who's taken me here? (...) Poor Pasqualino, where are you, my soul? Why don't you come to the aid of poor Bettina, who loves you so? etc.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, Act II, iii. I'll scratch and swipe at him so much, that his blood will pour.

We must remember that *La putta onorata* is still an early work and in more mature comedies and *drammi giocosi* Goldoni will often prefer more realistic solutions. However, elements of *romanzesco* will continue to inform some of the author's dramatic choices, particularly in new strains of sentimentalism. The influence of *romanzesco* elements on Goldoni's realistic *serio* style are not to be overlooked, and will particularly inform our analysis of Goldoni's *Pamela* (1750) and *La buona figliuola* (the *dramma giocoso* drawn from it, 1757) among other examples in the following section.

Direct translation

The close relationship between Goldoni's comedies and libretti is not only detectable in the shared realism, *buffo* and *serio*, and dramatic techniques that we have seen, but is further confirmed by several cases of direct translation from one genre to the other. Most often, Goldoni drew *drammi giocosi* from his comedies, though some themes first explored in his libretti also served as the foundation for later works of prose theatre. Seen within the larger context of the author's entire output, occurrences of direct translation are not numerous, yet they can be traced from his early years through his mature production.

Naturally, not all instances of adaptation reflect the same degree of adherence to their original. The early *intermezzo* *Il quartiere fortunato* (The Lucky Neighborhood, 1744), for example, cannot be considered a direct source but rather the precedent for *L'amante militare* (The Military Lover, a reform comedy dated

1751). In the same way, other comedies do not explicitly testify the use of a libretto as a model, yet reveal a high degree of thematic affinity.

The previously examined *La ritornata di Londra* (1756), for example, exploits the comic yet critical *topos* of a woman pursued by an entourage of suitors taken up in several later prose works. The larger outline of the plot is faithfully recovered in *L'apatista* (The Indifferent, 1758), in which the countess Lavinia, like her musical *controfigura* Petronilla, is encircled by gentlemen of diverse yet complementary nature. By no coincidence, the typified character traits of the men, one an impetuous captain, another the antithetical, apathetic philosopher, allow comedy and character study (particularly of the calibrated indifference of the latter) at the same time. Also akin to the peculiarity of *La ritornata di Londra*, all characters are of noble extraction; their tone is thus consistently elevated, though the high level of linguistic propriety is not always maintained in their actions. A final element of affinity between the two works resides in their reduced cast: Goldoni's libretto is scored for seven characters, and the comedy contains six. While a restrained number of characters is necessary in opera, where every plot element is dilated by music, a small cast is rather atypical in Goldoni's prose theatre, especially at this mature stage. The relative simplicity of *L'apatista* is clearly intended to facilitate performance, particularly as the comedy, commissioned by the Marquis Francesco Albergati, was written for the semi-professional troupe of actors that performed in the private theatre of his villa at Zola.

A looser resemblance with *La ritornata di Londra* can also be found in *La donna stravagante* (The Bizarre Woman), a comedy in verse given during the same

carnival season as the *dramma giocoso* (1756). Notwithstanding metrical constraints, this comedy appears particularly well developed in its characterizations and gained a positive reception at the *Teatro San Luca*. Its protagonist Livia is complex and original, but as an orphaned girl under the guardianship of her uncle, however strong willed, she has little in common with the emancipated diva Petronilla. More noteworthy is the fact that from *La donna stravagante*, Goldoni derived a second comedy, *La donna bizzarra*, given in the same season as *L'apatista* (1758). *La donna bizzarra*, also written for the Marchese Albergati, again presents a noblewoman (this time widowed) amid an entourage of suitors. The number of gentlemen has now grown to four, none of whom are ultimately desirable. As Goldoni himself admits, the comedy was written in undue haste, therefore recycles choice scenes from the earlier *La donna stravagante*. Poetically put, “qualche volta gli autori sono costretti a valersi del loro *baule*, come fanno i Maestri di musica.”¹⁵⁵ For this reason, the comedy preserves the *versi martelliani* of its source, though the characters have been modified and the plot somewhat reworked, so that Goldoni may assure, “senza scrupolo ho potuto dargliela per cosa nuova, e per tale posso ora darla alle stampe.”¹⁵⁶

The most prominent point of distinction between the two works is the declared critical intent of the second, which sheds a cautionary light on the protagonist, as on her suitors:

La bizzarria di questa mia Donna non dipende né da
iracondia, né da vivezza di spirito, ma da capriccio,

¹⁵⁵ Goldoni, *La donna bizzarra*, “The Author to his Readers.” Sometimes, authors have to dip into their *trunk* just like musicians do.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* Without scruple, I can deliver it as a new work, and as such send it to print.

che vale a dire da una testa mal regolata. Vi sono delle Donne e degli Uomini di tal carattere; meritano di esser corretti, ed io ho avuto animo di far del bene a chi n'ha bisogno, e di far ridere chi è esente da tal difetto. Ma chi sa che non rida degli altri chi è più attaccato da una simile malattia? Raro è lo specchio che disinganni, l'amor proprio vi mette un velo, e l'abitudine fa che si sente l'odore degli altri, e non si fa caso del nostro.¹⁵⁷

We find in this introduction an exquisite reprise of Goldoni's Horatian belief in the moral potential of comic theatre. Of particular note is the absence of differentiation between flawed women and men. In a spirit close to *La ritornata di Londra*, the panorama of flaw is of universal scope.

Moving beyond these primary elements of contact between Goldoni's two theatres, we may now consider works that more explicitly testify direct translation from one genre to the other. Goldoni first unequivocal derivation of a *dramma giocoso* from a reform comedy is *Lo speziale* (The Apothecary, 1755), built from elements of *La finta ammalata* (The False Patient, 1751). As its opening date betrays, the comedy was one of sixteen such works famously turned out in a single season for Girolamo Medebach, while the *dramma giocoso*, first premiered at the *Teatro S. Samuele* with music by Vincenzo Pallavicini and Domenico Fischietti (it was not uncommon for different composers to set *serio* and *buffo* roles), is readily available even today thanks to the musical rendition by Franz Joseph Haydn.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* The oddity of this leading lady does not stem from temper or vivacity of spirit, but from whim, in other words from a mind that is not well governed. There are women and men of this type; they deserve to be redressed, and I have a mind to give help to who is in need, and to entertain those who are exempt from these flaws. But who can say if he who laughs the most is not afflicted by the same illness? Rare is the mirror that disenchant, for pride often veils it, and habit leads us to detect the smell of others, but does notice our own.

With the expansion of every verse in musical theatre, Goldoni's reworkings from a prose original always logically appear as reductions. In this particular case, however, the author does not condense the entire plot while maintaining its most prominent features as he will do elsewhere, but instead spins an entirely new libretto from a single element of the comedy, the character of the apothecary.

La finta ammalata revolves around a hypochondriac whose only real malady is love, and the attempts of an *équipe* of doctors (an honest one and two corrupt foils), to procure her remedy. With three doctors, an anxious father, and a surgeon in the picture, the apothecary, whose character is nevertheless well developed, necessarily remains secondary in an already male-dominated plot. He is an accomplice of the false doctors, but the more artisanal nature of his profession does not grant him their status. In synthesis, the comedy is an attack on false medicine, and those false doctors who, simulating abstruse expertise, make their fortune treating patients with invented remedies. While the apothecary seldom has the opportunity to treat patients directly, he too participates in the fraud by lobbying for a greater number of prescriptions and for remedies of greater cost.

Lo speciale takes a cue precisely from this aspect of the *La finta ammalata*, yet the comedy's polemical bent is notably softened in favor of the introduction of amorous sub-plots. While *La finta ammalata* sees all characters revolve around a single protagonist and her desires, *Lo speciale* is built upon the parallel intrigues between the apothecary's daughter, another young girl he looks after, and their respective romantic partners. Continuity between comedy and libretto is thus manifest uniquely in the transposed apothecary Sempronio, who shares with his

predecessor crucial aspects of character, namely a scarcely professional predilection for the latest gossip, and reliance upon the *gazzetta* (a sort of almanac) for his medical authority. Despite the amorous intrigues new to *Lo speziale*, however, the original theme of false medicine is preserved at least in part through a new character, the assistant pharmacist Mengone. While Mengone harbors none of the contrivance of the profit-seeking doctors of *La finta ammalata*, being illiterate and unable to decipher prescriptions, he too invents cures in like manner.

A much higher level of correspondence between comedy and opera can be detected in the *dramma giocoso La donna di governo* (The Governess, 1761), reworked from a comedy of the same title written for the *Teatro S. Luca* in 1758. Of the opera we have spoken earlier in this chapter, noting in particular its desolate panorama of moral corruption, headed by the unscrupulous protagonist Corallina. The introduction to the comedy befits the negative heroine of the *libretto* as much as its own protagonist:

Eppure anche i tristi caratteri s'hanno da far conoscere sulla Scena, per rimproverarli, per opprimerli, per isvergognarli. L'arte insegna in tal caso a moderarne l'aspetto, a estendersi fin dovella modestia il permette, e lasciar campo all'uditore di concepire il di più, che non apparisce sul palco e che l'Autore ritiene nella penna per onestà e per dovere. Si trovano delle Donne pur troppo, che costrette dallo stato loro a vivere del pane altrui, se ne abusano malamente, e guadagnando l'animo del Padrone, lo conducono dove l'ambizione o il mal costume le porta.

Ho veduto cogli occhi miei delle Famiglie in disordine, in disunione, in rumori grandissimi per causa di quelle lusinghiere serventi, che aspirano a dominare. Entrano in casa per Governanti delle Famiglie, e il loro governo tende per ordinario a fabbricare la propria fortuna sulle rovine dei Figliuoli medesimi. Succede poi bene spesso, che altri divori

alla Governante ciò ch'ella con mala arte procaccia, ma non sì spesso accade ch'ella finisca con quel rossore e con quel castigo che merita, poiché gli acciecati Padroni lasciano talora anche dopo morte la memoria della loro fatuità e debolezza, beneficandole per le loro insidie, e per le loro studiate simulazioni. Io ho avuto in vista in questa Commedia di smascherare alcune di queste false zelanti per li loro Padroni, e d'illuminare altresì que' tali che più credono ad una mercenaria adulatrice servente, anziché ai Parenti, agli Amici, ed al loro sangue medesimo.¹⁵⁸

Again, we are made aware of familiar notions: Goldoni's desire to denounce and redress moral corruption through the benefits of comic *mimesis*, and at the same time his extraction of character types from the witnessed experience of daily life ("ho veduto cogli occhi miei"). Corallina, like her prose predecessor Valentina, is one of those women who, employed by others, take advantage ("ne abusano malamente"), spurred by ambition, or worse, *mal costume*.

Differently from *Lo speciale*, Corallina is far from the only point of contact between the prose and operatic *La donna di governo*. From comedy to libretto, Goldoni maintains all of the essential characters, even allowing a direct correspondence of names in the case of Fabrizio, the *benestante* head of the house,

¹⁵⁸ Goldoni, *La donna di governo*, "The Author to his Readers." And yet, all those deplorable characters must be made known, to reproach them, to suppress them, and to give them shame. Art can in this case teach moderation, going only as far as modesty permits, and letting the listener go further in his imagination to see what does not appear on the stage, which the Author keeps closed in his pen for reasons of honor and duty. There are certain Women, unfortunately, who, forced by their condition to live off the wealth of others, take advantage savagely, and, earning their Master's soul, lead him where their ambition and dishonorable ways desire. I have seen with my own eyes Families in disorder and disunion, in great scandal for fault of those flattering servants who aspire to govern the house. They enter as Governesses for Families, and their mode of government usually tends to produce their own profit to the ruin of the children. It then occurs frequently, that another takes from the Governess what she with dubious arts has gained, though not so often does it happen that she ends up with the redness of shame and the punishment that she deserves, given that the blinded Masters leave even after death the memory of their weakness and their fatuousness, rewarding them for their schemes and their studied pretentions. In this comedy I set my sights on unmasking these actors of false zeal for their Masters, and on enlightening moreover those who give credence to such flattering mercenaries, instead of to their Families, to their Friends, and to their own blood.

and Fulgenzio, the *serio* lover of his niece Giuseppina (in opera Rosalba). Other important characters maintained from comedy into opera include the governess's sister, the servant who is Corallina's accomplice, and most importantly the governess's lover, who reaps benefit from her deception of Fabrizio.

While the lovers of Valentina and Corallina do not share a name, their characterization is in fact identical. Goldoni not only leaves their dishonesty uncovered, but more conveniently transposes excerpts from his comedy into *recitativo*, carried word for word. The procedure becomes apparent from the opening of both comedy and opera, in which the lover protests: "Non so far niente...Servire? ho i miei riguardi. Son solito dal letto levarmi un poco tardi. Sentirmi comandare avvezzo non son io. Mi piace, e mi è piaciuto, far sempre a modo mio."¹⁵⁹ The parallels continue almost identically. In comedy,

BALDISSERA. Servir non fa per me.

VALENTINA. Qualche cosa nel mondo devi pur far.

BALDISSERA. Perché? Ho vissuto finora senza far nulla, e adesso Dovrei morir di fame con una moglie appresso?

becomes,

CORALLINA. Qualche cosa dei far.

RIDOLFO. Per qual ragione?

Campai senza mestiere infino adesso
e ho da temer con una moglie appresso?¹⁶⁰

We note that just as Goldoni must reduce the plot in a larger structural sense to fit five acts of comedy into three of opera, he also operates at the minute level to

¹⁵⁹ Goldoni, Comedy, I, i; Opera, I, v. I don't know how to do anything. To serve? I have my scruples. I am used to getting out of bed late. I'm not used to taking orders. I like, and I've always liked, to do as I please.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* In comedy: B: Serving is not for me. V: Well, you'll have to do something in this world. B: Why? I've lived until now without doing anything, and now I should starve with a wife by my side? In opera: C: You must do something. R: For what reason? I've gotten by without a trade until now, and I should fear with a wife by my side?

render his text concise enough for music. Masterfully, even while Goldoni reworks his comedy in such a high degree of fidelity, he does not preclude the use of typically operatic devices, such as the aria (Baldissera's exit in comedy becomes a solo piece in opera). In this respect, the fact that Goldoni's comedy had been written in verse (*versi martelliani*, a double septenary structure) appears particularly advantageous, a further motive whereby only slight changes were required for the libretto.

Textual parallels continue to the end of the scene and beyond, traceable in the interactions of the central characters, while secondary figures that occupy stage time in the comedy, namely a second sister for Giuseppina and a maternal aunt who takes up their defense, are cut by Goldoni to streamline his libretto. Certain episodes from the comedy are therefore entirely absent from the libretto, but stretches of textual parallelism resurface with regularity, preserving all the distinct character flaws of the principal figures. Considering the length of these scenes, we may consider one example representative of others, and analyze the parallels that arise as the governess interacts directly with Fabrizio. Originally, we find:

FABRIZIO. Valentina. (come sopra)

VALENTINA. Si sfiati, se vuol, quest'animale.

Egli ha da far un giorno la fin delle cicale.

FABRIZIO. Che tu sia maladetta; possa cascarti il cuore. (escendo fuori, senza veder Valentina) Dove sei, Valenti...? (scoprendo Valentina, rimane sorpreso)

VALENTINA. Eccomi qui, signore. (facendo una riverenza caricata)

FABRIZIO. Grido, grido, e non sente. (con sdegno)

VALENTINA. Grida, grida, e si sfiata. (con arroganza)

FABRIZIO. Perché non rispondete? (come sopra)

VALENTINA. Perch'era addormentata. (come sopra)

FABRIZIO. A quest'ora?

VALENTINA. A quest'ora. Saran quattr'ore e più

Che ho fatto in questa casa levar la servitù.

Ho fatto ripulire le stanze, il suolo, il tetto,

Ho fatto spiumacciare le coltrici del letto,

Lustrar nella cucina il rame insudiciato
 E han fatto queste mani il pane ed il bucato.
 Ma qui non si fa nulla. Qui si fatica invano.
 Il padron sempre grida. Che vivere inumano!
 Casa peggior di questa non vidi in vita mia;
 L'ho detto cento volte, voglio di qui andar via.
FABRIZIO. Subito vi scaldate. (*mansueto*)
VALENTINA. Mi scaldo con ragione.
FABRIZIO. Non sapea che dormiste.
VALENTINA. No, non vi è discrezione.
 Ritrovatene un'altra che faccia quel ch'io faccio.
 Se non foss'io... ma basta, fo il mio dovere, e taccio.
 Del faticar sinora non mi ho mai lamentato;
 Spiacemi aver che fare con un padrone ingrato
FABRIZIO. No, cara Valentina, ingrato io non vi sono.
 Se ho detto quel che ho detto, vi domando perdono.
 Ho questo naturale perfido e doloroso,
 Facilmente mi accendo, ma poi sono amoroso;
 Amoroso con tutti, e più con voi, carina.
 Non so che non farei per la mia Valentina.
VALENTINA. Questa è la gratitudine che dal padron si
 aspetta:
Possa cascarti il cuore; che tu sia maladetta.
 Mi alzo per faticare, che ancor non ci si vede,
 Ed ei cogli strapazzi mi rende la mercede.
FABRIZIO. Puh, mi darei nel capo un colpo micidiale.
(dandosi da sé stesso un pugno nella testa)
VALENTINA. (Batti, accoppiati pure). (*da sé*)
FABRIZIO. Lo so ch'io son bestiale.
 E voi pure il sapete, e compatir conviene
 Qualche volta il difetto di un uom che vi vuol bene.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Goldoni, *La donna di governo* (comedy); Act I, ii. Fabrizio: Valentina. Valentina: Let him run out of breath, this animal. F: Curse you, may your heart fall out (*exiting without seeing Valentina*). Where are you, Valenti...? (*seeing her, he is surprised*). V: Here I am, sir (*with an exaggerated curtsy*) F: I yell, I scream, and you don't hear me. (*with irritation*) V: You yell, you scream, and you waste your breath (*with arrogance*). F: Why don't you answer? (*as above*) V: Because I was asleep. (*as above*) F: At this hour? V: At this hour. It's now been more than four hours since I woke up all the servants. I had them clean the rooms, the floors, the roof, I had them shake out the beds, scrub the copper in the kitchens, and with my own hands, I made the bread and did the wash. But here no work gets done, all efforts are in vain. The master always yells. What an inhuman way to live! I never saw a worse house in my life; and I've said it a hundred times, I want to leave. F: You anger so quickly (*meekly*) V: I anger with good reason. F: I didn't know you were asleep. V: No, there is no reserve. Find yourself another who does what I do. If it weren't for me... but enough, I do my duty, and hold my tongue. I never before complained of my toils; but I don't like having anything to do with an ungrateful master. F: No, dear Valentina, I'm not ungrateful. If I said what I did, I ask forgiveness. I am of an ill-spirited, distressed nature, I am quick to anger, but I can be loving too; Loving with all, but more so with you, sweet. I don't know what I'd do for my Valentina. V: This is the recognition I expect from my master: *May your heart fall out; may you be damned.* I get up to work, we've yet to cross paths in the day, that you immediately thank me with scoldings. F: Puh, I'd give myself such a blow to the head (*hitting himself*)

In opera, all the above content is preserved, only visibly condensed:

FABRIZIO. Corallina. (*Di dentro*)
CORALLINA. Animalaccio. (*Da sé*)
FABRIZIO. Corallina. Che tu sia maledede... (*Esce e s'incontra in Corallina*)
CORALLINA. Grazie, signore.
FABRIZIO. Grido, grido e non sente. (*Con sdegno*)
CORALLINA. Grida, grida e si sfiata. (*Con arroganza*)
FABRIZIO. Perché non rispondete? (*Come sopra*)
CORALLINA. Perché era addormentata. (*Come sopra*)
FABRIZIO. A quest'ora?
CORALLINA. A quest'ora. Saran quattr'ore e più che ho fatto risvegliar la servitù.
Ho fatto ripulire
le stanze infino al tetto,
spiumacciar più d'un letto,
lustrar nella cucina
il rame insudiciato
e han fatto queste man pane e bucato.
Ma qui non si fa niente;
servo un padrone ingrato.
Casa peggior non vidi in vita mia.
L'ho detto e lo farò; voglio andar via.
FABRIZIO. Uh! Mi darei nel capo
un colpo micidiale. (*Si dà nella testa*)
CORALLINA. (Datti, accopati pur). (*Da sé*)
FABRIZIO. Sì, son bestiale.
Ma voi mi conoscete
e compatir conviene
qualche volta un padron che vi vuol bene.¹⁶²

This textual evidence proves tangible contact between Goldoni's opera and prose theatre. In the transposition of scenes at a high level of fidelity, Goldoni also preserves the moral and critical intent of the comedy in his libretto.

Differences between the two works, aside from the natural reduction of the Acts and the elimination of auxiliary characters, are few. The most notable adjustment in content is the replacement of rage episodes in comedy with a

on the head) V: (Beat, go ahead and kill yourself) (*aside*) F: I know I am an animal. And you know it too, yet you must have compassion for a man who loves you.

¹⁶² Goldoni, *La donna di governo* (*dramma giocoso*); Act I, viii. Translation above.

larmoyant type of *serio* in the opera, advantageous in many respects. The choice for new tragic hues does not subtract from the realism of the *parti serie* involved, but rather enhances it as we have seen, and this ampler diversification in turn translates into greater musical variety. Furthermore, we must understand the expansion of *serio* as a logical dramatic consequence of Goldoni's other changes. In particular, in comedy the governess prevails over two sisters, who however can count on their mutual support and that of an aunt to ultimately resolve the plot in their favor. The necessary reductions for the *dramma giocoso* leave only one sister, and Goldoni removes all of her supporting characters. The tendency of Rosalba towards despair and self-pity is thus a natural consequence of her isolation, and appears a realistic reaction to her impotence.

The analogous conclusions of the two works prove that, aside from these few crucial differences, the relationship between them is one of common purpose. In particular, in opera as in comedy Goldoni preserves his commentary and condemnation of blind infatuation. Both protagonists are ultimately forgiven by a hurt but still love-struck Fabrizio, who furthermore bestows a hefty dowry upon them, as foretold: "non sì spesso accade ch'ella [the governess who takes advantage] finisca con quel rossore e con quel castigo che merita, poiché gli acciecati Padroni lasciano talora anche dopo morte la memoria della loro fatuità e debolezza, beneficandole per le loro insidie, e per le loro studiate simulazioni."¹⁶³ In sum, together with his augmentation of *serio* in the *dramma giocoso*, Goldoni does not hesitate to expose the real world in opera theatre in equal measure as in his comedy.

¹⁶³ Goldoni, *La donna di governo* (comedy), previously cited.

The two renditions of *La donna di governo* testify that Goldoni could not have seen comic theatre and opera theatre as incompatible arts, nor did he believe musical theatre to be less capable of harboring the same reformist traits and social critique at the core of his best comedies.

We come finally to Goldoni's *dramma giocoso La buona figliuola* (The Good Girl), adapted from his comedy *La Pamela*. The prose version has been extensively noted in scholarship particularly for its tragic or pathetic accents, and the opera derived from it, which preserves and augments these traits, represents a significant innovation in the direction of Goldoni's reform, and more broadly in the direction of a new, contemporary, and realistic opera theatre. Paolo Gallarati places the opera clearly between *buffo* and *serio*, "...[La buona figliuola] inaugurava il filone dell'opera semiseria destinata a rappresentare in seguito, praticamente sino a Rossini, una valida alternativa alla radicale opposizione dei due generi principali."¹⁶⁴ While it is arguable whether *La buona figliuola* can be considered a first example of *opera semiseria*, it is known that it was particularly appreciated at the premiere precisely for its pathetic accents, to which we add the presence of balanced *mezzi caratteri*.

La buona figliuola and even more so its original, *La Pamela*, are important indicators of the new influence of English novels on the European imagination, and most importantly of the new *larmoyant* style previously defined. As the author announces in his *Prefazione*, "questa è una Commedia in cui le passioni sono con

¹⁶⁴ P. Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*, (Torino, EDT, 1984); 135. [La buona figliuola] inaugurated the new strand of *opera semiseria* later destined to represent, all the way to Rossini, a valid alternative to the radical opposition of the two principal genres.

tanta forza e tanta delicatezza trattate, quanto in una Tragedia richiederestesi,”¹⁶⁵ reason for which AnnaMaria Finetto asserts, “ascrivere la *Pamela* di Goldoni al genere “commedia” è ...per certi aspetti riduttivo.”¹⁶⁶ Derived by Goldoni from Samuel Richardson’s epistolary novel, *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1741), *La Pamela* overturns all of the comic irreality of the traditional *serva padrona*. Another legacy of Goldoni’s prodigious year of the sixteen comedies, it was first given in 1750 with Medebach. A sequel of even greater success, *La Pamela maritata* (Pamela Married), followed ten years later (immediately translated into German, Spanish, and French), prompting editors Bettinelli and Paperini to subsequently list the original as *Pamela fanciulla* (Pamela Nubile) for reasons of distinction.

Before considering Goldoni’s operatic adaptation (with particular regard to its treatment of *serio*), a word must be said regarding the author’s intervention on Richardson’s original. The story of Pamela is one of contrast between internal affection and social obligation, and it confronts the potential incompatibility between 18th-century class structure and Enlightenment philosophy. The heroine, whose letters to home make up the novel, is a modern English *putta onorata*, of humble origin but noble spirit. With the protection of a noblewoman who comes to love her as a daughter, Pamela receives an excellent education and all that she needs to function in high society. Her fortune changes dramatically at the death of the Lady, as Pamela becomes victim of the violent temperament of her son, torn

¹⁶⁵ Goldoni, *La Pamela*, Forward. This is a Comedy in which the passions are treated with such force and such delicacy as would be required in a Tragedy.

¹⁶⁶ AnnaMaria Finetto, “La Pamela e La Buona Figliuola: Il Linguaggio Patetico di Goldoni”, in *Studi Goldoniani quaderno 8* (Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1988); 107. Ascribing Goldoni’s *Pamela* to the genre of comedy is in some ways reductive.

between his love and admiration for Pamela's character and contempt for her origins. Pamela's virtue never falters, and, after many tempestuous ordeals including attempted physical assaults and abduction (the hallmark of a *romanzesco* work), rewards her with a felicitous union to the son of her late mistress, transcending every social barrier and norm.

An extremely popular tale, Richardson's novel was partially reworked in Italy by Pietro Chiari and the Neapolitan Francesco Cerlone (1730-1812) among others. As a side note, Cerlone, who worked as a librettist in Rome from 1750, like Goldoni authored two comedies, *Pamela nubile* and *Pamela maritata*. It is unknown whether the authors ever interacted, but it is certain that they shared a composer, Giovanni Paisiello, who first set Goldoni's *Il mondo della luna*.

Goldoni's own rendition of *Pamela* boasts a long legacy. His comic reduction was published in England in 1756 (editor John Nourse) together with another Medebach comedy, *Il padre di famiglia* (The Family Father, 1750), within a bilingual edition interestingly advertised as *A New Method of Learning the Italian Tongue*. More importantly, scholars have identified Goldoni as a source for subsequent *Pamela* adaptations throughout Europe, including Voltaire's *L'Ecossaise* (The Scottish Girl, 1760) and *Pamela, ou la vertu récompensée* (Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded) by François de Neufchâteau (1793) in France.¹⁶⁷

Goldoni's changes are necessarily oriented towards a reduction of content. Indeed, his comedy begins long after the death of Pamela's kind mistress, almost at the eve of the union between the maiden and the heir Bonfil. Consequently, Bonfil

¹⁶⁷ T. Keymar, P. Sabor, *Pamela in the Marketplace: literary controversy and print culture in eighteenth century Britain and Ireland*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); 138.

retains some of Richardson's characterization in his rash temper, but displays none of the violent behavior of his early days. Goldoni prefers to highlight instead a mature state of respectful admiration for Pamela, intensified by an all-consuming love and dependence on her presence, and a resulting tendency towards melancholic humor. The action is entirely carried out within the walls of Bonfil's home; dramatic episodes of physical nature, such as Pamela's abduction, are wholly excluded in favor of emphasis on interior conflict, which constitutes the core of the action. These changes are by no means, however, the most noteworthy.

More than a mere reduction, Goldoni also directly alters Richardson's plot. Most notably, he removes the political undertones of the original in effacing its radical message of equality. Goldoni's Pamela, unlike her predecessor, is discovered through a *coup de scene* to be of noble blood. She does not, therefore, attain marriage directly because of her personal merits, but only thanks to a deliverance from her social status in which she plays no active role. Not only does Bonfil not transcend the constraints of his social order in acknowledgment of her moral worth, but moreover Pamela's virtuous conduct is retrospectively framed almost as a physiological consequence of her blood, therefore her free will undermined, and its merit reduced. Goldoni explains:

Il premio della virtù è l'oggetto dell'Autore Inglese; a me piacque assaissimo una tal mira, ma non vorrei che al merito della virtù si sacrificasse il decoro delle Famiglie. Pamela, benchè vile ed abbietta, merita di essere da un Cavaliere sposata; ma un Cavaliere dona troppo al merito di Pamela, se non ostante la viltà de' natali, la prende in isposa. Vero è che in Londra poco scrupolo si fanno alcuni di cotai nozze, e legge non vi è colà che le vieti; ma vero è non meno, che niuno amerà per questo che il figliuolo, il fratello, il

congiunto sposi una bassa femmina, anzichè una sua pari, quantunque sia, più di questa, virtuosa quella e gentile.¹⁶⁸

This decision may appear uncharacteristic, especially in light of the Enlightenment ideals we often associate with Goldoni's comedies. We must remember, however, that *La Pamela* is a relatively early work, written during Goldoni's first contract as a dramatist. Preservation of all aspects of Richardson's original would easily have ascribed a radical stance to a young author just beginning to gain the goodwill of Venetian spectators. The delicacy of this societal matter, and likely a certain discomfort with the issue, is betrayed by the ambiguity of the remarks that follow:

Non so, se su tal punto saranno i perspicacissimi ingegni dell'Inghilterra di me contenti. Io non intendo disapprovare ciò che da essi non si condanna; accordar voglio ancora, che coi principi della natura sia preferibile la virtù alla nobiltà e alla ricchezza, ma siccome devesi sul Teatro far valere quella morale che viene dalla pratica più comune approvata, perdoneranno a me la necessità, in cui ritrovato mi sono, di non offendere il più lodato costume.¹⁶⁹

Goldoni's language suggests a high regard for the 'great minds' of England, and his request for pardon, however rhetorical, leaves open the possibility of a

¹⁶⁸ Goldoni, *La Pamela*, "The Author to his Readers." The reward of virtue is the subject of the English author; I liked it very much, but I wouldn't want to sacrifice the dignity of Families to the merit of virtue. Pamela, while vile and abject, merits that a Gentleman should marry her; but a Gentleman would give her too much merit, if her were to marry her in spite of the lowliness of her birth. It is true that in London such a union does not raise concern, and there is no law there to forbid it; but it is no less certain that no one because of this would like for his son, brother, or other relation to marry, instead of a lady his equal, a lowly women, even if she were more virtuous and ladylike than the other.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.* I don't know if on this matter the perceptive minds of England will approve of what I've done. I do not intend to disapprove of what they do not condemn; and I further convene that following the principles of nature, virtue is always preferable to nobility and to wealth, but since in the Theatre I must reflect those customs upheld by common practice, they will forgive me for the necessity in which I found myself, to not offend the more largely approved tradition.

divarication between his personal beliefs and the constraints of his first professional debut. What is more, while Goldoni resolves the action in a less socially charged manner, he does not wholly eliminate egalitarian notions from his comedy, offered by various characters throughout the work. An unequivocal example is the following tirade spoken by Pamela's governess, which appears almost as a prose exit aria:

Che si abbia a morire per salvar l'onore, l'intendo; ma che sia disonore sposare una povera ragazza onesta, non la capisco. Io ho sentito dir tante volte che il mondo sarebbe più bello, se non l'avessero guastato gli uomini, i quali per cagione della superbia hanno sconcertato il bellissimo ordine della natura. Questa madre comune ci considera tutti eguali, e l'alterigia dei grandi non si degna dei piccoli. Ma verrà un giorno, che dei piccoli e dei grandi si farà nuovamente tutta una pasta. *(parte)*¹⁷⁰

We may also recall certain strong lines given to Bonfil (e.g. "Quanto cambierei volentieri questo gran palazzo con una delle vostre capanne!"¹⁷¹), in which we note the incompatibility of logic and rationality with imposed constraints of class division:

Tutti amano Pamela, ed io non la dovrò amare? Ma il mio grado... Che grado? Sarò nato nobile, perché la nobiltà mi abbia a rendere sventurato? Pamela val più d'un regno, e se fossi un re, amerei Pamela più della mia corona. Ma l'amo tanto, ed ho cuor di lasciarla? Mi priverò della cosa più preziosa di questa terra? La cederò a mia sorella? Partirò per non più vederla?¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*; Act III, iii. That one should die to save his honor, I understand; but that it be dishonorable to marry an honest girl because she is poor, I do not comprehend. I've heard it said many times that the world would be more beautiful if only men had not ruined it, men who, by reason of their arrogance, have upset the superb order of nature. This common mother considers us all equals, while the haughtiness of the greats disdains the common people. But there will come a day in which the great and the humble will once more become one mold. *(exits)*

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*; Act III, vi. How gladly I would exchange this great palazzo for one of your huts!

¹⁷² *ibid.*, Act I, xii. Everyone loves Pamela, and I should not love her? But my rank...what rank? Was I born a nobleman so that my nobility could make me wretched? Pamela is worth more than a kingdom, and were I a King, I would love her more than my crown. I love her so, yet I have heart to

Also of note in this excerpt is the *larmoyant* quality of *serio* that colors these lines. In particular, the sequence of questions creates a feeling of restlessness, yearning, and again, the most powerful element of *pathos*: self-doubt.

Gallarati has observed that, in opera, Goldoni further removes the more weighted monologues of his comedy (such as those above), though his conclusion, “Goldoni li considerava evidentemente incompatibili con la ‘frivolezza’ del teatro cantato”¹⁷³ is not entirely supported by Goldoni’s operatic text. In particular, while in his *dramma giocoso* Goldoni does distance himself further from the original *Pamela*, Goldoni’s libretto clearly maintains elements of moderated *serio* as above, largely responsible for the work’s success. What is more, the many *drammi giocosi* examined through the course of this chapter (not to mention the close interconnection of opera theatre to comedy in *La donna di governo*) all testify that Goldoni hardly avoided taking a stance on social issues through his musical theatre. As we have seen in numerous libretti (*Il filosofo di campagna*, etc.) the life of commoners, in its closeness to nature, is often cited as a positive foil for corruption in the city, where, in the words of M.me Jevre, “gli uomini (...) per cagione della superbia hanno sconcertato il bellissimo ordine della natura” (men, by reason of their arrogance, have upset the beautiful order of nature).

Let us now consider *La buona figliuola* in greater detail. First premiered in Parma in 1757 with music by Egidio Romualdo Duni, the opera became widely

leave her? Will I deprive myself of the most precious thing on this earth? Will I give her up to my sister? Depart to never see her again?

¹⁷³ P. Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 135. Goldoni evidently considered them incompatible with the ‘frivolity’ of opera theatre.

renowned in 1760, when it was given with a new musical setting by Niccolò Piccinni at the *Teatro delle Dame* in Rome. An instant success, the *dramma giocoso* boasts a long itinerary throughout Europe, subsequently performed in Vienna, London, Madrid, Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Paris, and even young Philadelphia.

Goldoni's derivation from *La Pamela* preserves an intermediate degree of fidelity to his source. While the author never includes close textual citation (nor any correspondence of name between characters) as we find in *La donna di governo*, he also does not create an altogether new plot as with *Lo speziale*. Instead, Goldoni maintains the same dynamics of relation between the central characters, preserving Pamela (now Cecchina, perhaps named after a character from an earlier *dramma giocoso*, *La cascina*), her Bonfil (the Marchese della Conchiglia), and his aristocratic and disapproving sister Lady Daure (the Marchesa Lucinda), yet also transposing the saga to an Italian setting, and most importantly diversifies the dramatic spectrum of the opera with new secondary characters. Entirely original additions include a lover of the Marchesa (*serio*) and an array of *parti buffe*: a maid, two farmers, and a foreign soldier.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this *dramma giocoso* is its treatment of Cecchina and the Marchese as realistic *mezzi caratteri*, immediately apparent from their central collocation in Goldoni's *elenco dei personaggi*, as from their conduct. Their parts, in particular Cecchina's role, are colored by accents of moderated *serio*, while the more traditional *parti serie* (Lucinda and her lover) continue in an older Metastasian style. In *La Pamela*, the Conte Ernold admonishes Bonfil: "Se andate a teatro, ove si fanno le opere musicali, vi andate solo per

piangere, e vi alletta solo il canto patetico, che da solletico all'ipocondria."¹⁷⁴ We find some aspects of this new, modernized *serio* in the tearful but calibrated manners of our protagonist Cecchina, such that AnnaMaria Finetto has observed, "proprio da Cecchina inizia, sotto certi aspetti, la moda del canto patetico che si svilupperà nell'opera seria romantica."¹⁷⁵

While the delicacy and changeability of Goldoni's *mezzo carattere* appears wholly antithetical to the tragic roles of Romantic opera, it is true that later musical tradition will continue in the direction of psychological realism. In this light, and as we will see in the following chapter, Goldoni's contributions reach far beyond his time.

In *La buona figliuola*, we note that the protagonist's *serio* style retains little of the Arcadian stateliness. Goldoni condenses Cecchina's lines and simplifies her language in reflection of her unaffectedness and naiveté:

Vo cercando e non ritrovo
la mia pace e il mio conforto,
che per tutto meco porto
una spina in mezzo al cor. ¹⁷⁶

By contrast, Pamela in comedy is much more Metastasian, notwithstanding the greater freedom allowed by her prose part:

Oh Dio! Che è mai questo nuovo tremor, che mi assale le
membra! Ahi che vuol dir questo gelo, che mi circonda le

¹⁷⁴ Goldoni, *La Pamela*, Act I, xvi. If you go to theatres where they perform opera, you go only to weep, and you draw pleasure only from pathetic song, which feeds your imaginary illnesses.

¹⁷⁵ AnnaMaria Finetto, "La Pamela e La Buona Figliuola: Il Linguaggio Patetico di Goldoni", in *Studi Goldoniani quaderno 8*. The fashion of pathetic song that will develop into Romantic tragic opera begins precisely from Cecchina.

¹⁷⁶ Goldoni, *La Buona Figliuola*, Act I, xvi. I seek but I can't find/ my peace nor my comfort/ and everywhere I carry/ a thorn within my heart.

vene! Oimè, come dal gelo si passa al fuoco? Io mi sento ardere, mi sento morire.¹⁷⁷

Even when Cecchina invokes death, she is more moderate:

Almen fra queste piante
avrò un po' di riposo. Ah son sì stanca
di sofferir gl'insulti
della nemica sorte
che son costretta a desiar la morte.¹⁷⁸

The pathetic nature of Cecchina's role is not only evident through her language, but more broadly in the irony of the events that befall her. Goldoni makes extensive use of the ensemble finale in this *dramma giocoso*, using expansive group pieces as a vehicle for plot development. Elements of *larmoyant* often surface in these scenes, as for example the finale of Act I, in which Cecchina is portrayed as an innocent victim. Banished by Bonfil because he believes her indifferent to him, and by her faithful friend Mengotto because of jealousy, Cecchina is also attacked in spite by servants Sandrina and Paoluccia, who, envious of the attentions she receives, plot to undermine her reputation. Cecchina's repeated interjections, "Chi mi aiuta, per pietà?" create a sense of pleading urgency and enhance the pitiable tenderness of the scene. Further *pathos* in Goldoni's *dramma giocoso* is afforded by an original scene of abduction, absent from *La Pamela*, in which Cecchina is put under arrest by the Cavaliere Armidoro (Act II). This added adventurous episode would appear to return in music some elements of *romanzesco* removed from the comedy (though of new invention). Franco Fido's observation, "il dramma per

¹⁷⁷ Goldoni, *La Pamela*; Act III, xi. Oh God! What on earth is this new tremor that seizes me! What is the meaning of this chill that surrounds my veins! Ahi, how is it that from such cold I pass to fire? I feel myself burning, I feel myself dying.

¹⁷⁸ Goldoni, *La Buona Figliuola*. Act II, xii. At least amid these plants I may find some respite. Ah I am so weary of suffering the blows of my enemy fate, that I am forced to desire death.

musica può accogliere una dimensione romanzesca e avventurosa negata alla commedia,”¹⁷⁹ appears relevant in this respect.

Notably, the tender hues of Cecchina’s role do not fade even in the felicitous resolution of the plot. Her noble origins revealed to her, Cecchina’s reaction is one of familiar stupor and emotional conflict:

Ah signori, vorrei
far i doveri miei;
ma ho ancora il cuore
fra la gioia confuso
e fra il timore.¹⁸⁰

Rather than outright joy, Goldoni colors Cecchina’s apotheosis with hints of “fear” that underline her modesty and deep sentiment.

In sum, *La buona figliuola* appears an exercise in sentimentalism, supported by Goldoni’s use of the moderated *mezzo carattere* and by his consistent use of *larmoyant* elements to characterize the heroine. These elements in particular contributed to a lasting success. In the words of Daniel Hertz, the opera was “destined to surpass all his other librettos in the influence in wielded.”¹⁸¹ While the *dramma giocoso* presents significant departures from Goldoni’s comedy, it remains an important milestone in psychological realism and moreover, in the creation of a new brand of *serio* that, attenuated, realistic, and freed from all Metastasian influence, is decidedly modern and will have a lasting influence beyond 18th-century Venice.

¹⁷⁹ F. Fido, *Nuova Guida al Goldoni*; 69. The *dramma per musica* can sustain a *romanzesco* and adventurous dimension denied to comedy.

¹⁸⁰ Goldoni, *La Buona Figliuola*; Act III, xi. Ah sirs, I would like to do my duty; but my heart is still confused between joy and fear.

¹⁸¹ D. Hertz, “Goldoni, the *Dramma Giocoso*, and *Don Giovanni*,” in *The Musical Times* vol. 120 n. 1642.

Furthermore, the examples of direct translation cited above prove varying degrees of contact between Goldoni's comic theatre and his opera texts. Most of all, they testify to the author's efforts to improve comedy through realism by the progressive attenuation of stereotypical role divisions. Thanks to the foundations laid by our author, opera after Goldoni will be able to accomplish what Gallarati has called "la trasformazione del melodramma comico in una grande commedia musicale."¹⁸²

Thematic ritornelli and ideological reform

Goldoni's realist reform, undertaken at great cost in his prose theatre and reflected in his *drammi giocosi*, can be understood from many angles. The author's autobiographical remarks are filled with testimony of a changing horizon. From an initial desire to move beyond the masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, Goldoni's new style and a new comic practice set in motion a transformation of greater scope, which comes gradually into focus:

Nel primo e secondo anno di tale mio esercizio [as a comic author] non ho azzardata Commedia alcuna senza le Maschere, ma queste bensì a poco per volta sono andato rendendo men necessarie, facendo vedere al popolo che si poteva ridere senza di loro, e che anzi quella specie di riso, che viene dal frizzo nobile e spiritoso, è quella propria degl'omini di giudizio.¹⁸³

¹⁸² P. Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*; 136. The transformation of comic opera into great musical comedy.

¹⁸³ Goldoni, *Nona Lettera dell'Autore allo Stampatore* dell'edizione Bettinelli di Venezia, 1750- 52, riportato in *Opere di Carlo Goldoni*, a cura di Gianfranco Folena e Nicola Mangini, (Tomo VII a cura di Giovanni Getto) (Milano: Mursia, 1975); 1334. During my first two years as a playwright, I did not venture any comedy without Masks, but instead little by little I made these less necessary, showing audiences that they could laugh even without them, and moreover, that laughter which is the product of noble and clever quip, is more befitting of a man of judgment.

A comic theatre for a new, enlightened audience (“uomini di giudizio”) is one capable of responding to its own times, without the abstraction of masks or stereotyped characters. Beyond a question of style, Goldoni’s realist reform necessarily acquires a higher implication, as it reflects the transformations of the social makeup, and captures the virtues and shortcomings of the modern lifestyle in all social contexts. Goldoni’s reform comedies and *drammi giocosi* must also acknowledge current trends of thought, including Enlightenment messages of equality, as for example (from two operas),

Signor, vi parlo schietto
Tutti nudi siam nati,
Tutti nudi morremo;
Levatevi il vestito inargentato
E vedrete che pari è il nostro stato.¹⁸⁴

or

Per me sostengo e dico
Ed ho la mia ragione
Che sia la condizione un accidente.
Sposare una servente
Che cosa importa a me se è bella e buona?
Peggio è assai, se è cattiva, una padrona.¹⁸⁵

Goldoni’s reform of the spoken theatre is a thus double-sided coin, aiming at the renewal of theatrical custom and of social mores. While developing comedy without the *Commedia dell’Arte* mask and beyond the limits of superficial improvisation, Goldoni also makes his theatre the mirror of everyday life to exalt or

¹⁸⁴ Goldoni, *Bertoldo, Bertoldino e Cacasenno*; Act I, iv. Sir, let me speak to you frankly. We were all born naked, and naked we will die; remove your silvered gown, and you’ll see that our condition is even.

¹⁸⁵ Goldoni, *Il Filosofo di Campagna*, Act II, xiv. For my part, I profess and have my reasons for saying that social condition is merely a matter of chance. What does it matter if I marry a servant, if she is beautiful and good? It would be much worse were she noble and mean spirited.

deprecate its characters, a choice radically detached from the fantastical theatre of Carlo Gozzi, much in fashion in his day. Goldoni's contributions to the *dramma giocoso* must be evaluated according to this double achievement of ideological and formal renewal.

The ideological continuity between the majority of the *drammi giocosi* and the reform plays becomes apparent as Goldoni, following natural inclination, confronts the most widespread societal flaws in his libretti. *Drammi giocosi* and comedies alike are filled with positive and negative examples of every social condition, derived from first-hand observation (as the author deliberately reminds us). As the rigid barriers of tradition are dismantled, commoners, *borghesi*, and aristocratic characters display honesty, dishonesty, intelligence and foolishness.

We have also traced a number of recurring themes in Goldoni's opera theatre, including the contrast between Nature and civil corruption, between nobility of name and of deed, and the critique of rampant vices including excessive vanity, materialism, and fraud. Franco Fido's affirmation that the libretti are used more as ground for theatrical experimentation and farce ("scherzi e giochi di parole, paradossi e calembours, onomatopée e iperboli, equivoci e cacofonie plurilingui"¹⁸⁶) than for real social commentary does not seem to fully correspond to the subjects and characters of the mature *drammi giocosi*. While certainly not excluding verbal or theatrical play, these works make sport of real moral problems and are able to integrate more serious tones with the prevailing comedy.

¹⁸⁶ Franco Fido, "Riforma e controriforma del teatro: I libretti per musica di Goldoni fra il 1748 e il 1753," in *Studi Goldoniani* vol. 7; 63. [Previously translated]

Ultimately, in prose comedy and opera theatre alike, even through the author's experimentation in many styles and settings, we may always reconnect his theatre to one unified intention: "Vorrei di buon cuore aver fatto e poter tuttavia fare con le Opere mie qualche frutto, indirizzando io tutti i miei pensieri non solamente a dilettere, che sarebbe piccolo pro, ma a far ancora qualche giovamento."¹⁸⁷ In countless ways, in commentary as through direct practice, from his theatrical debut to his mature works, Goldoni underlines his conviction of the higher potential of comic theatre.

It follows that the restitution of comedy's capacity of moral regulation hinges upon the level of realism attained within it. The psychological characterizations achieved in his mature libretti, therefore, unequivocally connect his *drammi giocosi* to these higher aims.

Buffo, serio, and melodramatic reform

From the Metastasian *serio* of *La scuola moderna* to the emotional moderation and *pathos* of *La buona figliuola*, and the complete social disintegration of *La donna di governo*, we can clearly trace the trajectory of Goldoni's reform in music. The psychological characterizations that have contributed to the success of Goldoni's *drammi giocosi* are the end result of a gradual process that, beginning with the integration of *serio* within prevalently comic structures, continues towards the

¹⁸⁷ Goldoni, *Ottava Lettera dell'Autore allo Stampatore* dell'edizione Bettinelli di Venezia, 1750- 52, riportato in *Opere di Carlo Goldoni*, a cura di Gianfranco Folena e Nicola Mangini, Tomo VII a cura di Giovanni Getto (Milano: Mursia, 1975); 1333. I hope that I have borne, and that I may continue to bear with my Works some fruit, as I have directed all my thoughts not only to the aim of giving pleasure, a small benefit, but indeed to being of some use.

progressive attenuation of the divisions between *buffo* and *serio*, as testified by the realistic *mezzo carattere*. Moreover, the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* roles as a realistic device is further confirmed by the inclusion of moderated *serio* elements in his prose theatre as well.

From a formal point of view, Goldoni must be considered author of a number of structural innovations that most markedly characterized Classical opera throughout Europe in the later 18th century. First, the author modified the rigid succession of *arie* and *recitativi* of Metastasian opera with the introduction of *ariette*. Unlike grand *arie*, these shorter pieces did not require the character to exit the scene, therefore creating more possibilities for plot development and musical variety. Goldoni further limited the use of static *arie* by making frequent use of ensembles. Along these lines, another major innovation of Goldoni is the canonization of the ensemble finale, a practice that can be detected already in the *intermezzi*. The conclusion of *L'amante cabala* (1736) provides an excellent blueprint for the style of collective address that characterizes so many Classical works all the way to Mozart and Da Ponte: "Imparino tutti/ da sì bell'esempio/ che l'arte d'un empio/ trionfare non può."¹⁸⁸ Importantly, in the mature *drammi giocosi*, ensemble pieces surpass the chorale function exemplified above to acquire an increasingly polyphonic dimension. No longer static, they serve as vehicles for the advancement of the action, rendering opera theatre more lifelike and dynamic.

¹⁸⁸ Carlo Goldoni, *L'Amante Cabala*; Act II, scena ultima. Let all learn/ from this example/ that the art of a villain/ can never prevail.

Many of these innovations, especially the integration of *serio* with *buffo* and the use of ensembles within scenes, are absolute and unique to Goldoni. The chapter that follows is dedicated to his musical legacy, to make clear the extent to which these features shaped comic opera throughout the century in the best European schools. In Mozart's operas and the prestigious Austrian tradition, for example, we can find in full form the entire catalog of Goldoni's dramatic effects. It is important not to overlook these relevant innovations in order to understand the stature of this playwright in his own time, and in our musical tradition.

CHAPTER IV.

Towards the European Stage

Between 1749 and 1761, Venetian theatres produced a total of 69 new comic operas.¹⁸⁹ Of these, 44 used libretti by Carlo Goldoni. After he left Venice, Goldoni's *drammi giocosi* continued to receive performance every year until 1768. Over the entire arc of the 18th century, an estimate of nearly 2000 comic operas were produced in all of Italy, of which 283 productions with our author's texts. Goldoni's texts began to circulate outside of Italy as early as the 1749, launching the *dramma giocoso* throughout the whole of Europe.

Within his own lifetime, Goldoni's publication history provides further testimony of the wide circulation of his work. In the preface to the Pasquali edition (one of the last undertaken during his life), Goldoni offers this modest summary:

Ecco dunque alla luce del mondo il primo tomo della nuova edizione delle mie Commedie, ed eccolo a fronte di altre dieci edizioni che lo hanno fin'or prevenuto, ed hanno, posso dir senza ostentazione, empito il mondo delle Opere mie (...) Cinque edizioni del Bettinelli, una del Pitteri in Venezia, la mia di Firenze, quantunque spacciata prima di terminarla; le ristampe di Pesaro, di Torino, di Napoli, di Bologna; le traduzioni in Francese, in Inglese, in Tedesco(...) etc.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ as explained by E. Dent & P. Smith, "The Italian libretto to 1800" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 14th Edition, vol. 13. (New York: Macmillan Press, 1995).

¹⁹⁰ Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane (Prefazioni ai Diciassette Tomi delle Commedie edite a Venezia da G.B. Pasquali)*, tomo I. Here then, brought to the light of the world, is the first volume of the new edition of my Comedies, at the head of ten other editions that have preceded it, and have, I can say without boasting, filled the world with my Works (...) Five editions by Bettinelli, one by Pitteri in Venice, my own in Florence, however doomed it was before I even finished it; then reprinting in Pesaro, Torino, Naples, and Bologna; not counting the translations into French, English, German, (...) etc.

Goldoni's comedies and *drammi giocosi* boast an impressive reach. The vast diffusion of these works has in large part been traced and catalogued in the latest critical edition of Goldoni's complete works (directed by Anna Laura Bellina and Anna Vencato).¹⁹¹ The present study will therefore not aim to provide complete lists of performances at foreign venues, as these are already available. Instead, we will refer to the authoritative new edition as a resource for the present discussion.

International *drammi giocosi* and diffusion of a new genre

The exportation of Goldoni's texts for music began from his *intermezzi*. While the earliest of these did not appear outside of Italy, *Il filosofo* (1735) was performed at the royal theatre in Potsdam set to music by Johann Friedrich Agricola (1720-1774), who also translated the libretto into German. Agricola's musical setting has been traced from Prague (1752) to the electoral court of Mannheim (1753), Bonn (1757), Dresden (1762), and a new appearance at Mannheim as late as 1771. Similar itineraries were made by *L'amor fa l'uomo cieco* (Hamburg 1743, Leipzig 1744, Prague 1744) and *Il finto pazzo* (Dresden 1747, Vienna 1759, Prague 1748). An even longer trail was left by the popular *La favola dei tre gobbi* (1749), which from Venice traveled to Verona and Padua (1750), Ferrara (1756), Parma (1773, performed for Duke Ferdinando di Borbone), and Naples (1783) in the original musical setting of Neapolitan-trained composer Vincenzo Ciampi. Outside of Italy, the *intermezzo* saw performances in Potsdam (1754), Munich (1758), Vienna (1759), Prague (1760),

¹⁹¹ *Edizione Nazionale delle opere di Carlo Goldoni* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009- present).

Bonn (1764), Brussels (1766), Saint Petersburg (1759), and even appearing in French (*Les trois bossus*) and Slavic (*Tri brata gorbuni*) translations.

The paths of Goldoni's early works foreshadow the diffusion of his *drammi giocosi*, which come to overwhelming numbers in their appearances throughout Europe. The first *dramma giocoso* to appear outside of Italy was *Il negligente*, given in London in 1749 and 1750. It was followed by *Il mondo della luna*, given in Barcellona (1751, 1765), Brussels (1753), Dresden (1754), Prague (1755), Hamburg (1755), Saint Petersburg (1758), Brunswick (1760), London (1760, 1761), Brno (1761), and many others. Virtually all of Goldoni's principal libretti traveled throughout Europe; even the lesser-known *La scuola moderna* appeared in Berlin and in Paris by 1754.

Beyond the original works, we must especially take into account foreign translations and the manifold musical settings undertaken by composers of many nations. The list of composers who set Goldoni's libretti (often several) to music is almost as endless as the chronology of their performances. Outside of Italy, these include Florian Gassmann (1729-1774) in Presburg, Pedro Avondano (1714-1782) in Lisbon, Venanzio Rauzzini (1746-1810) in Munich, Carl Dittersdorf (1739-1799) and Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) in Esterhaza, Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) in Vienna, and finally the young W. A. Mozart (1756-1791) among many others. The great variety of musical adaptations created implies the gradual assimilation of Goldoni's theatrical innovations within the traditions of other national schools, accounting for their reappearance in the works of Mozart and Da Ponte among others. Naturally, a great number of musical reworkings was produced in Italy as

well, and these too traveled beyond the Alps as far as Russia, particularly the scores of Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801), Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816), and Niccolò Piccinni (1728-1800).

Goldoni's works did not travel exclusively through the exportation of texts, but also thanks to a thriving network of cultural exchange that characterized the entire 18th-century, marking in this sense the beginning of the modern era. To cite a rather extreme example, we know that Lorenzo da Ponte traveled the whole of Europe, from then-Austrian Gorizia to Dresden, Vienna (where he collaborated with Salieri), Prague (where he met Giacomo Casanova, another such adventurous figure), then London, and, fleeing financial disaster, finally to New York city, where as a naturalized American he became the first professor of Italian at Columbia University.

In the same way (though for more honorable reasons), several of Goldoni's direct collaborators traveled extensively (as the author himself did, throughout Italy), becoming conduits of Goldoni's texts. Baldassarre Galuppi, for example, one of Goldoni's regular composers who first set to music *L'Arcadia in Brenta*, *Il Conte Caramella*, and *Arcifanfano re dei matti* (for the *Teatro S. Angelo*, *Accademia Vecchia* in Verona, and the *Teatro S. Moisé* respectively), and following their success *Il mondo della luna*, *Il paese della cuccagna*, *Il mondo alla rovescia ossia Le donne che comandano*, *Il filosofo di campagna* (considered his masterpiece), *Le virtuose ridicole* and *Le pescatrici* in a collaboration that lasted until 1756, acquired such fame that he was called to Saint Petersburg by Catherine II, where he served as *maestro di cappella* at her court. Goldoni's *drammi giocosi* received an additional impulse in

Russia thanks to the Florentine composer Giovanni Rutini (1723-1797), who, during a tour with Locatelli, proposed his own settings of Goldoni texts.

Goldoni on opera theatre: realism and critique

Goldoni's works were performed outside of Venice throughout his career, but began to circulate in northern Europe especially after his move to Paris in 1761. During his voyage to the city of Molière, Goldoni fell ill and was required to delay his arrival. While convalescing in Bologna, he authored the *dramma giocoso La bella verità* (The Pretty Truth), for his patron and frequent correspondent the Marchese Albergati. Clearly, Goldoni thought it not his best work: "Arrivé à Bologne, je tombai malade; on me fit faire par force une Opéra Comique; l'ouvrage sentoit le fièvre comme moi."¹⁹²

While perhaps not as poetic as others, this *dramma giocoso* is of twofold importance. First, it continues in the realist tradition that Goldoni hoped to develop with more freedom at the *Comédie Italienne*. As a metatheatrical work, *La bella verità* offers a playful critique of the absurdities of show business. Goldoni even represents himself through an autobiographical character, Loran Glodoci, a librettist subject to the demands and whim of his vocalists and actors.

As a side note, it is well known that comic criticism of theatre was rather diffused in the 18th century, and with good reason. Being the principal source of public entertainment, theatres were numerous, and privileges and hierarchies often characterized the relationship between *impresari* and artists. In opera, the

¹⁹² Goldoni, *Memoires*, vol. II, XLVI. Once I arrived in Bologna, I fell ill; they forced me to write a comic opera; the work felt the fever as much as I did.

pretentious lead roles and their efforts to dominate the scene became a stereotype, as Benedetto Marcello highlighted early on in his popular satire, *Il Teatro alla Moda* (1720).

Coincidentally, Marcello's pamphlet also took issue with the lack of realism in the content and structural patterns of traditional melodramatic theatre. Of the lavish appearance of singers, he comments,

Se il Virtuoso rappresentasse una parte di Prigioniero, di Schiavo, etc., dovrà comparire ben incipriato, con Abito ben carico di gioie, Cimiero altissimo, Spada e Catene ben lunghe, e rilucenti, battendole e ribattendole frequentemente per indurre il popolo a compassione.¹⁹³

More sweeping criticism is provided in his chapter, "Ai Poeti," to whom he sarcastically recommends:

Scriverà tutta l'opera senza formalizzarsi Azione veruna della medesima, bensì componendola verso per verso, acciocché non intendendosi mai l'Intreccio dal Popolo, stia questi con curiosità sino al fine. Avverta sopra ogni cosa, il buon Poeta *moderno*, che siano fuori ben spesso tutti li Personaggi senza proposito, quali poi ad uno ad uno dovranno partire, cantando la solita Canzonetta (...) Non lascerà partire assolutamente il Musico dalla scena senza la solita Canzonetta, e particolarmente quando per Accidente del dramma dovesse quegli andare a morire, ammazzarsi, beber veleno, etc."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Benedetto Marcello, *Il Teatro alla Moda*, "Al Musico." If the Singer should take the role of a Prisoner, a Slave, etc., he will have to appear well powdered, with a Dress well encrusted with jewels, a high helmet, Sword, and Chains that are long and shiny, that he should strike together frequently to move the Audience to compassion.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.* He [the librettist] will write the whole opera without a plot, but rather proceeding verse by verse, so that the Audience, being unable to understand the action, will listen with curiosity through to the end. Let the good *modern* poet take care, above all else, that all characters be out often, who will then have to leave one at a time, singing the usual little Song (...) He shall never let a Singer leave the stage without the usual Aria, particularly when the Plot requires he go and die, kill himself, drink poison, etc.

The later *Memorie* of Lorenzo da Ponte (published in 1823) no longer react to an unrealistic theatre, but as Goldoni does in a comic vein, bemoan the wretched condition of the opera librettist, always subject to the demands of composer, stage producer, and vocalists (“Fui dieci volte al procinto di bruciare quello che aveva fatto e di andare a chiedere il mio congedo”¹⁹⁵). One element among many that surfaces in Da Ponte’s autobiography is the consolidation of the ensemble finale as a standard practice, though this does not meet with such enthusiasm on the part of the librettist:

In questo finale devono per teatrale domma comparire in scena tutti i cantanti, se fosser trecento, a uno, a due, a tre, a sei, a dieci, a sessanta, per cantarvi dei’ soli, de’ duetti, de’ terzetti, de’ sestetti, de’ sessantetti; e se l’intreccio del dramma nol permette, bisogna che il poeta trovi la strada di farselo permettere, a dispetto del criterio, della ragione e di tutti gli Aristotili della terra; e, se trovassi poi che va male, tanto peggio per lui.¹⁹⁶

Goldoni’s *La bella verità* is thus one small tile in a longstanding tradition, but worthy of note because of the realism that constitutes its efficacy. It is also by no means Goldoni’s only metatheatrical work (though by far the most targeted in its critique). The world of prose comedy is naturally highlighted in *Il teatro comico* (1750) but also *La cameriera brillante* (The Brilliant Chambermaid, 1754), and in musical theatre in a portion of *L’Arcadia in Brenta* (1749), the farce *La cantarina*

¹⁹⁵ Lorenzo da Ponte, *Memorie*, edited by G. Gambarin & Fausto Nicolini (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 1918); I, 97. Ten times I was tempted to burn everything I’d written and take my leave.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*; 147-48. In this finale, theatrical practice dictates that all singers should appear on the stage, be they one, two, three, six, ten, or sixty, to sing soli, duets, trios, sextets, or sixtyets; and if the plot does not permit it, the poet must find a way to make it possible, despite his scruples, reason, and all the Aristotles of this Earth; and, if he were to discover that it not go well, too bad for him.

(The Singer, 1756), and through the character of Petronilla in *La ritornata di Londra* (1756).

Looking beyond the satirical realism of *La bella verità*, the second element of note in this work is the relative abstraction afforded by the subject matter. Embedded within a specific professional environment, this *dramma giocoso* looks inwards rather than to the society outside of the theatre. Goldoni thereby avoids connection to any specific city, creating a libretto that is realistic but at the same time, of general applicability. The lack of explicit setting in this transitional work is indicative of an important shift in focus from the particularities of Venetian life towards a more universal stage.

Expectations and reality in Paris

During his *séjour* in Paris, Goldoni produced eight new libretti, of which five during a period of five years, 1763-68, and the latter three between 1777-79. In keeping with Goldoni's new international perspective, the libretti of the first group were almost all derived from contemporary literary models of non-Italian authors. *Il re alla caccia* (1763, premiered at the *Teatro S. Samuele*), for example, can be tied to *La partie de chasse d'Henri IV* (The Hunting Match of King Henry IV, 1762), a French comedy by Charles Collé, as well as to the French *opéra comique* drawn from it, *Le roi et le fermier* (The King and the Farmer) libretto by Michel-Jean Sedaine), of which Goldoni recalls:

Je vus le Roi et le Fermier à sa première représentation, j'en fus extrêmement content, et je le voyois avec douleur prêt a tomber, il se releva peu-a-

peu, on lui rendit justice; il eut un nombre infini de représentations, et on le voit encore avec plaisir.¹⁹⁷

Il re alla caccia was followed by *La finta semplice* (1764, premiered at the *Teatro S. Moisè*), based on *La fausse agnès ou le poète campagnard*, prose comedy in three acts by Destouches (translated by the Marchesa Ottoboni, friend of Giuseppe Parini, with the title *I poeti in villa*). *La notte critica* (The Critical Night, 1766, for the *Teatro S. Cassiano*) is based on a French *scenario* by Goldoni, *Les rendez-vous nocturnes* (Nighttime Encounters), and the first period concludes with *L'astuzia felice* (Happy [successful] Guile) 1767, originally titled *La cameriera spiritosa* (The Spirited Maid) for its premier in Milan, 1766) and *Le nozze in campagna* (The Country Wedding, 1768, for the *Teatro S. Moisè*).

Importantly, these first Parisian *drammi giocosi* were all written for Italian audiences, and most for Venetian premieres. Goldoni's initial intent was to remain in France only for a limited period, and these collaborations were doubly important as they allowed him to maintain professional grounds for a return to Venice. The libretti therefore do not present significant departures from Goldoni's now-consolidated style, but rather continue in the new mode of realism attained at the end of the Venetian period.

La notte critica and *Le nozze di campagna* are of greatest significance to our discussion for their respective use of ensembles and of realistic *serio*. *La notte critica* appears similar to prose comedy in many respects, and while no specific setting is named, the typical serenade scene that opens the work, the familiar

¹⁹⁷ Goldoni, *Memoires*; II, xv. I saw *The King and the Farmer* at its premier, I liked it very much, and I was pained to see it on the verge of failure, but it recovered little by little, and in the end was given justice; the work received an infinite number of productions, and it is still viewed with pleasure.

familial structure of a strict father (Pandolfo) and two spirited daughters without the guidance of a maternal figure, and the staging around a palazzo of a *Borghese* family, all suggest a Venetian setting.

While it is typical of operas to commence with a collective scene, almost always in a chorale style, Goldoni's opening ensemble in this opera is distinct in its immediate polyphonic effect. Rather than with the introduction of the characters, the action begins *in medias res*: Carlotto is serenading his Marinetta at her balcony amid constant intrusions by his master Leandro. Leandro in turn negotiates the aid of both lovers in conquering the heart of Cecilia, one of the ladies of the house. The opening exchanges could not be more like a comedy:

LEANDRO. Ehi Carlotto.
CARLOTTO. Signor.
LEANDRO. Venuta è ancora?
CARLOTTO. Zitto.
LEANDRO. Venuta è ancor?
CARLOTTO. Zitto in malora.¹⁹⁸

Soon thereafter this exchange expands to a three part ensemble in the same vein, further complicated by the cover of the "notte tetra e oscura"¹⁹⁹ (gloomy and darkened night) during which the action takes place.

Simple dialogues between two characters are also scarce in *Le nozze di campagna*, yet while ensembles are used frequently, the most noteworthy element of this *dramma giocoso* is its realistic moderation of *buffo* and *serio* roles. *Le nozze in campagna* features a second Cecchina, here too a *mezzo carattere*, born a commoner (*villanella*) but desired by a Count. Unlike her predecessor in *La buona figliuola*, the

¹⁹⁸ Goldoni, *La notte critica*, Act I, i. Leandro: Ehi, Carlotto. Carlotto: Sir. L: Has she come yet? C: Be quiet. L: Has she come yet?? C: Quiet, go to hell.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*; III, scena ultima.

new Cecchina does not aspire to social ascension and is in love with Lallo, a young man of her own rank. Notwithstanding her modest origins, however, Goldoni characterizes the heroine through a *serio* language that is attenuated but direct:

CECCA. Ah sì, purtroppo
Lallo mio t'ho perduto.
(...)
LALLO. E con questa franchezza
che mi perdi confessi! Ah traditora,
ingrata, senza fede,
cagna, ladra, spergiura...
Così Lallo, crudel, da te si cura?
CECCA. Ammazzami.
LALLO. Perché?
CECCA. Perché ammazzata
sarà tutta la cosa terminata.
(...)
LALLO. E morta,
come potrò sposarti?
CECCA. Così di tormentarti,
Cecca di tormentar avrai finito
e ciascun che m'affanna e m'adolora
finito avrà di tormentarmi ancora.²⁰⁰

While simple in expression, Cecchina's role is not without gravity, and the measure of her suffering evokes compassion in a now-familiar *larmoyant* style.

In the same way, the traditional *parti serie* are also treated with realistic moderation. For example, we hear an impoverished Countess express surprising resignation to her fate:

Povera nobiltà sì vilipesa,
di una villana resa
cognata, anzi soggetta; ah mi si scuote
tutto il sangue in le vene
ma soffrire e tacer pur mi conviene.

²⁰⁰ Goldoni, *Le nozze in campagna*, Act I, xiv. Cecca: Ah yes, unfortunately I've lost you, my Lallo. Lallo: And with such frankness you confess it! Ah traitor, ingrate, faithless, tramp, thief, liar.... This is the way, oh faithless, you care for Lallo? C: Kill me. L: Why? C: Because once killed, the whole thing will be finished. L: And when you're dead, how will I marry you? C: At least you will cease tormenting me, and yourself, and everyone else who brings me anguish and pain, their torments will cease as well.

Nobiltà senza ricchezza,
ah lo vedo a mio rossore,
assomiglia ad un bel fiore
dalla pianta distaccato
che l'odor perdendo va,

son contessa ma che serve
se sol conto povertà. (*parte*)²⁰¹

As through the later Venetian libretti, the tone of this *aria* is radically softened with respect to the *serio* of Goldoni's early operas. The characters of these mature *drammi giocosi* are undoubtedly lifelike as their lines take on an ever more discursive, less declamatory style. In sum, the realism and attenuated contrast between *buffo* and *serio* in Goldoni's first Parisian libretti evidences new horizons but also important elements of continuity with the author's Venetian output.

Differences arise in Goldoni's final three libretti, no longer written for Venetian theatres. These works are of diverse name and nature: while *Vittorina* (1777) is still a *dramma giocoso* (or "new comic opera," as it was called in London for its world premiere at the King's Theatre), *I volponi* (The Old Foxes) of the same year (premiered in Paris) carries a slightly different title, *dramma per musica*, while *Il talismano* (The Talisman, 1779, premiered at the *Teatro Canobiana* in Milan) is instead a *commedia per musica*.

Notably, of the three texts, *Vittorina* is the only to retain some continuity with Goldoni's preceding realistic tradition, by no coincidence the only named *dramma giocoso* of the three. In particular, this opera betrays clear points of contact with *La buona figliuola*, a story well known to Parisian audiences. By contrast, *I volponi* is

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, I, iv. Poor scorned nobility, I'll have to become the in-law of a commoner, worse, subject to her; ah, all my blood thrashes in my veins and yet I must hold my tongue, and bear it. Nobility without wealth, ah I see it to my own shame, is like a beautiful flower picked from its plant that slowly loses its scent. I am a Countess but of what use is that, if all I can count is my poverty.

surprisingly general in content, without a definite setting (Goldoni's only indication is "nel castello del Marchese"), and even without specific names for some of the characters (the "Marchese," for example, is known only by title). In this work we find characters who, contrary to Goldoni's norm, are not well-developed originals but rather typified exponents of different trades and social spheres, as Franco Fido has observed.²⁰² In equal measure, *Il talismano* is largely occupied with exoticism rather than realism. Set in a feud in an unspecified time, this *commedia per musica* involves gypsies and draws action from the mystical elements of their world, including palm readings and a famous talisman that allows its holder to take on the appearance of others. Despite the popularity of fantastical theatre at the time, Goldoni's talisman does not detain any true supernatural power. Yet, at the same time, our author does not undertake a satirical critique of such simulations, as elsewhere he appeared ready to do (for example, the parody of false medicine in *La finta ammalata*). Rather, it appears as one among many adventurous elements, including the recovery of a daughter long-lost at sea, that focus the work on extraordinary rather than quotidian events.

To judge from his very last works, Goldoni's career appears to close in an enigmatic retrocession from the hallmark characteristics of his *drammi giocosi* and the dilution of their realistic elements. Notably, an analogous, or perhaps more burdensome surrender of the reform principles also occurs in Goldoni's prose theatre during this time. While a departure from decades of innovative work may

²⁰² F. Fido, *Nuova Guida al Goldoni* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000); 150.

appear surprising, the changes in Goldoni's late Parisian works must be understood within the context of the author's broader circumstances.

Goldoni was called to Paris to renew public interest in the *Comédie Italienne*, of which he was named director. The author's decision to accept this new charge was optimistic but, at the same time, undeniably motivated by disappointments. The theatrical reform in Venice did not come without cost, and Goldoni was tried by the envy of his rivals (Carlo Gozzi and Pietro Chiari), the demands of his *impresari*, and the continual protests of actors, who, accustomed to the greater freedom of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, were reluctant to always memorize their parts. Paris, one of the cultural capitals of Europe, held a prestigious theatrical tradition everywhere acknowledged. In particular, Goldoni was a great admirer of Molière, with whom he shared the inclination for social criticism and realism,²⁰³ and on more than one occasion had received the praises of Voltaire for his theatre.

Goldoni therefore set out for Paris not without a certain sadness, as testified by his autobiographical farewell play *Una delle ultime sere di carnevale*, but with high hopes of finding a new audience and new collaborators more open to his ideas. His experience is recounted in the *Mémoires*, but perhaps with greater candor in his personal correspondence.

Early letters testify great enthusiasm and satisfaction for the distinguished treatment received ("Che bella novità Le recherà questa lettera! Goldoni va a Parigi...

²⁰³ Giorgio Padoan has stated that "L'attenzione di Goldoni a Molière si lega concretamente all'attuazione della riforma." Giorgio Padoan, in *Carlo Goldoni, 1793- 1993. Atti del Convegno dei Bicentenario* (Venezia: Regione del Veneto, 1995); 24.

e potrà abbracciare M.r De Voltaire.”²⁰⁴), so different from what he had left behind: “Che ne dite, eh? Bella differenza! Dover faticare come un cane per guadagnare cento ducati, amareggiati ancora da rimproveri e malegrazie!”²⁰⁵ As early as 1762, however, problems began to arise as Goldoni suspected Denis Diderot of plagiarizing his *Il vero amico* (The True Friend, 1750) in the creation of *Le fils naturel* (The Natural Child, 1757). Some scholars suggest that this diatribe may have contributed to the relative indifference accorded to Goldoni’s reform project in France.²⁰⁶

Whatever the reason, it soon became apparent that Goldoni’s work in Paris presented no fewer challenges than his previous charges in Venice. Not only was the *Comédie Italienne* incorporated within the *Opéra comique*, contributing to its crisis, but moreover Goldoni soon discovered that the preferences of Parisian audiences, not to mention of his new actors, did not go beyond the *Commedia dell’Arte* he had so labored to leave behind. Roberta Turchi’s description of Goldoni’s condition as one of “disagio culturale e esistenziale,”²⁰⁷ is perhaps no understatement to judge from his later correspondence: “Questi commedianti italiani sono *des parasseux*... Il

²⁰⁴ “Al Marchese Albergati Capacelli” (Venice, Sept. 5, 1761), from *Lettere di Carlo Goldoni*, ed. by Ernesto Masi (Bologna: Zanichelli); 147. What great news this letter will bring you! Goldoni is off to Paris...and will be able to embrace M. Voltaire.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.* “Al Sig. Gabriele Cornet” (Paris, Sept. 27, 1762); 175. What do you say, eh? A nice difference! To have to work like a dog to earn a hundred ducats, and on top of that embittered by reproofs and ingratitude.

²⁰⁶ See Paola Luciani, *Drammaturgie goldoniane*, (Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2012).

²⁰⁷ Roberta Turchi, “Un’edizione ‘colta e magnifica,’ ” introduzione a Carlo Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane, III* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008); 23. cultural and existential unease.

paese sempre più mi diletta. Ma il diletto senza l'utile non è per un uomo, che ha bisogno dell'uno e dell'altro."²⁰⁸

Cultural differences became a hindrance in more ways than one, as Goldoni struggled to find original characters to inspire new comedies amid the uniformity of Parisian reality:

Vi è il buono, e vi è il ridicolo dappertutto, ma il ridicolo di Parigi non è certamente quello che si crede in Italia... O il carattere della Nazione è cangiato, o dicono il falso tutti quelli che ne hanno scritto, e parlato. Le caricature in Francia sono in oggi sì delicate, che bisogna avere tutta l'acutezza di spirito per ravvisarle. L'uniformità è quella che domina in questo Paese. Tutti cercano d'imitar gli altri, e quello, che sarebbe portato a qualche caricatura, si maschera, e si fa forza per comparire uniforme. Malgrado lo studio dell'uniformità, traspira un poco il carattere particolare, ma la caricatura divien sì leggiera, che sfugge assai facilmente agli occhi del forestiere.²⁰⁹

As a result, little more than one year after his arrival Goldoni could already declare with certainty: "Il gusto delle buone commedie in questo paese è finito. Fa pietà il Teatro moderno francese: non si bada più alla condotta, ai caratteri, alla verità."²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ *ibid* "Al Marchese Albergati Capacelli" (Paris, Dec. 13, 1762) from *Lettere di Carlo Goldoni*, ed. by Ernesto Masi (Bologna: Zanichelli); 188. These Italian actors are lazy...this country entertains me every day more. But pleasure without usefulness is not for a man, who has need of one and the other.

²⁰⁹ Carlo Goldoni, dedica a S. Guerra de *La Buona Madre* (a cura di A. Scannapieco, Venezia: Marsilio, 2001). There is the good and the derisible in every place, but the ridiculous in Paris is not at all what we believe it to be in Italy...Either the character of this Nation has changed, or all of those who have written or spoken of it have lied. Caricatures in France are nowadays so delicate that you need all the acumen of your wit to discern them. Uniformity is what dominates in this Country. All seek to imitate others, and he who would be prone to some caricature masks himself, and makes every effort to conform. Despite the studied uniformity, a bit of original character still transpires, but the caricature becomes so insubstantial, that it easily escapes the eyes of a foreigner.

²¹⁰ Lettera al Marchese Albergati Capacelli (13 June 1763) in *Tutte le opere di Carlo Goldoni*, vol. XIVa cura di G. Ortolani (Milano: Mondadori, 1935- 43); 287. The good taste in comedy of this Country is finished. Modern French theatre is pitiful: there is no attention to plot, to the characters, and to truth [realism].

Goldoni did not cease his efforts to improve the state of comic theatre in France without some experimentation. His comedy *L'éventail* (1763), for example, testifies a will to work around the obstacles:

Ora ho pensato a un nuovo genere di commedie, per vedere se da questi attori posso ricavare qualcosa di buono. Essi non imparano le scene studiate; non eseguono le scene lunghe, ben disegnate; ed io ho fatto una commedia di molte scene brevi, frizzanti, animate da una perpetua azione, da un movimento continuo, onde i comici non abbiano a far altro che eseguire più coll'azione che colle parole. Vi vorrà una quantità grande di prove sul luogo dell'azione, vi vorrà pazienza e fatica, ma vuò vedere se mi riesce di far colpo con questo metodo nuovo. Il titolo della commedia è *l'Eventail*.²¹¹

Unfortunately, even this new attempt did not prevent the greater disappointment that would prevail. A further element of disenchantment followed in the treatment given to Goldoni's comedies at court, where they were "scannate in tre quarti d'ora" because "il Re voleva andare al soupé" (slaughtered in three quarters of an hour, as the King wanted to go to supper). As Roberta Turchi rightly observes, "Il destino toccato a corte alle sue commedie segnò la fine del convincimento, legato al mito di Luigi XIV, che gli uomini di lettere godessero in Francia di favori maggiori che in Italia."²¹² Despite some modest successes in theatre, therefore, in 1765 Goldoni officially resigned his post at the *Comédie*

²¹¹ Lettera al Marchese Albergati (18 April 1763). *ibid.*; 280. I've now devised a new type of comedy, to see if these actors can make some good of it. They don't learn scenes by heart; they don't perform scenes that are long or well developed; so I've made a comedy from scenes that are short, lively, and driven by constant action and movement, so that the actors need not do anything but perform more with movement than with recitation. We'll need a good number of rehearsals on the stage, as well as patience and effort, but I want to see whether I can make an impression with this new method. The title of this comedy is *L'éventail*.

²¹² Roberta Turchi, "Un'edizione 'colta e magnifica,'" introduzione a Carlo Goldoni, *Memorie Italiane, III* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008); 25. The fate met by his comedies at court marked the end of the belief, tied to the legacy of Louis XIV, that men of letters could enjoy more favorable treatment in France than in Italy.

Italienne, and became the official Italian language tutor at the court of Louis XV (his pupils Madame Adelaide, the king's firstborn daughter, and Marie Joseph of Saxony learned Italian with the help of his texts), following the entourage from Paris to Versailles. Goldoni lived through the French revolution, during which his court stipend was, of course, suspended. Troubled by debt and outliving his fame, the author died in Paris in 1793, just as his income was being reinstated.

In northern Europe where the musical schools were in constant evolution, however, Goldoni's works lived on to make a lasting imprint.

CHAPTER V.

Goldoni's Musical Legacy

From Goldoni to Da Ponte: the *dramma giocoso* fully formed

The principal aim of this thesis is to shed greater light on Goldoni's musical legacy. As a representative of the Venetian Enlightenment and a pioneer of modern theatre, he is often overlooked as an innovator in the musical sphere. Goldoni's comic opera, and in particular his determining contributions to the *dramma giocoso*, before him only nascent, after him an international genre, cannot be overstated and warrant significant reappraisal in the study of music history. Having seen the widespread diffusion of Goldoni's texts for music, to understand the depth of his musical legacy we must also account for his influence in the work of subsequent generations.

Testimony of our author's continued presence in the field of comic opera is provided in part by direct textual citation. Generations after Goldoni, it is possible to find echoes of his celebrated texts in the works of many. *Il maestro di cappella* (1793, first performed in Berlin) of Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801, librettist in this case unknown), for example, uses verses taken directly from Goldoni's *dramma giocoso*, *Il viaggiatore ridicolo* (1757):

Ci sposteremo fra suoni e canti
Sposi brillanti, pieni d'amor.
Voglio i violini, voglio i violoni,
Voglio il fagotto, con l'oboè
[suonano corni da caccia]
questo strumento non fa per me.²¹³

²¹³ Goldoni, *Il viaggiatore ridicolo*; Act III, iii. We will be wed amidst music and song, shining newlyweds, brimming with love. I want violins, and want violas [and celli], I want bassoon with oboe. *[hunting horns are heard]*. No, this instrument doesn't suit me!

The musical use of the horn to signify “cornuto” (cuckold) is a comic device used by Mozart as well, in Figaro’s aria “Aprite un po’ quegli occhi” (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, Act IV, viii).

More famously, Da Ponte’s *Don Giovanni* appears to quote various Goldoni texts. Most notably, the character of Semplicina in *Arcifanfano re dei matti* first utters the verses “vorrei e non vorrei...son fra il si e il no,”²¹⁴ the hallmark of Zerlina’s role in Mozart’s famous duet, “Là ci darem la mano” (I, iii). Goldoni’s *Il viaggiatore ridicolo*, known throughout Europe by 1770, also contains a ‘catalogue aria’ that, while in comic key, bears notable similarities to Leporello’s analogous exploit:

A Lion la Contessa la Cra.
A Paris la Marchesa la Gru.
A Madrid la Duchessa del Bos.
In Inghilterra Miledi la Stos.
In Germania ho le mie Baronesse.
In Italia le mie Principesse. ..etc.²¹⁵

Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838), together with Giambattista Casti (1724-1803), was one of the most prominent librettists to continue in the Goldonian style, though Goldoni’s theatre was also imitated by Marco Coltellini (1719-1777), author of *opera seria* libretti for Gluck, Traetta, and others, and by Giovanni Bertati (1735-1815), best known for Cimarosa’s *Il matrimonio segreto* (The Secret Wedding, 1792).

²¹⁴ Goldoni, *Arcifanfano Re dei matti*,; Act II, viii. I’d like to and I wouldn’t...I’m between yes and no.

²¹⁵ Goldoni, *Il viaggiatore ridicolo*, Act II, iv. In Lyon the Countess of Crow. In Paris the Marchesa of Stork. In Madrid the Duchess of Bos. In England Mylady of Stos. In Germany I have my baronesses. In Italy my princesses (...).

In the case of *Don Giovanni*, notwithstanding the original Tirso de Molina, Moliere's *Le festin de pierre* (1665), and Goldoni's own *Don Giovanni Tenorio o sia il dissoluto* (1736), the direct model used by Da Ponte was most likely *Don Giovanni o sia Il convitato di pietra* (The Stone Guest), libretto in one Act dated 1787 by Bertati. Notably, Bertati became one of the most sought-after librettists in Venice after Goldoni's departure. His texts therefore drew from the same context that Goldoni had helped to create and establish before leaving to Paris. The music for Bertati's rendition was by Giuseppe Gazzaniga, and some scholars have furthermore seen direct influences in Mozart's score.²¹⁶

A further bridge of connection from Goldoni to Da Ponte is the figure of Casti, author of *Il Re Teodoro in Venezia* drawn from Voltaire's *Candide* (chapter XXVI). For Paolo Gallarati, Casti is a point of transition from the net divisions of *buffo* and *serio* of the 'rationalistic' Goldoni to the entirely realistic and psychologically-oriented Mozartian theatre,²¹⁷ though the attenuation of *buffo* and *serio* in opera clearly already commences in Goldoni's later *drammi giocosi*, especially through the *mezzo carattere* and new elements of *larmoyant* as we have seen. Casti definitively abolishes the sententious Metastasian style of arias as well as caricature or satirical humor in the comic sphere. As the following description of his own work shows, he contributes to the continuation of Goldoni's desire for realism through a different approach:

²¹⁶ D. Hertz, "Goldoni, Don Giovanni, and the dramma giocoso" (Musical Times n. 1642, 1979).

²¹⁷ P. Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*. "Tutto volge verso una *medietas* che neutralizza il divario tra personaggi seri e comici e tende a fare di ciascuno un carattere individuale." Everything turns towards a *medietas* that neutralizes the divarication between tragic and comic roles, and tends to make each an original character.

(...)dieci o dodici drammi eroicomici di genere affatto nuovo, ove trattandosi temi e soggetti seri, eroici, tragici, vi si trappongono dei tratti comici ove la circostanza della cosa o delle persone lo richiede, seguendo in ciò la natura stessa.²¹⁸

While Casti also continued Goldoni's legacy of expanding ensemble pieces and using them more frequently, he did not emulate Goldoni in every respect, as his title of "drammi eroicomici" shows. Furthermore, in a spirit of affinity with tragic theatre, he often included dramatized prologues ("esposizione dell'argomento") to his operas in the manner of Metastasio.

Notably, it was the cultivated *medietas* of Casti's theatre that assured his fame, but also brought criticism from Da Ponte, who in his colorful *Memorie* recalls:

Non vi mancava purità di lingua, non vaghezza di stile, non grazie e armonia di verso, non sali, non eleganza, non brio; le arie erano bellissime, i pezzi concertati deliziosi, i finali molto poetici; eppure il dramma non era né caldo, né interessante, né comico, né teatrale. L'azione era languida, i caratteri insipidi, la catastrofe inverisimile e quasi tragica. Le parti insomma erano ottime, ma il tutto era un mostro. Mi parve di veder un gioielliere, che guasta l'effetto di molte pietre preziose per non saper bene legarle e disporle con ordine e simmetria. (...) Non osai tuttavia dire ad alcuno il pensiero mio, certissime essendo che, se fatto l'avessi, m'avrebbero lapidato o messo come farnetico ai' pazzereelli. Casti era più infallibile a Vienna che il papa a Roma." ²¹⁹

²¹⁸ G. B. Casti, Lettera (20 July 1796) cited in Paolo Gallarati; 157. (...) ten or twelve drammi *eroicomici* of a new genre, where, dealing with subjects that are serious, heroic, and tragic, we juxtapose some comic elements where the circumstances of the action or the characters requires, following Nature herself.

²¹⁹ Lorenzo da Ponte, *Memorie*, I, ii. It was not without purity of language, nor without beauty of style, nor spirit, nor elegance, nor verve; the arias were very beautiful, the ensemble pieces delightful, and the finali very poetic; and yet the drama did not have warmth, nor was it interesting, nor comic, nor theatrical. The action was languid, the characters insipid, the action unrealistic and almost tragic. The parts were very good, yet the whole was a monster. It was like seeing a jeweler who ruins the effect of many precious gems because he does not know how to order them in symmetry. (...) I nonetheless did not dare to share my thoughts with anyone, because, had I done so, they would have stoned me or thrown me into the asylum. Casti was more infallible in Vienna than the Pope in Rome.

It is not surprising that Da Ponte, to a greater extent than Casti, in his libretti preserves Goldoni's structure of *buffi*, *seri*, and *mezzi caratteri* in psychological characterization, and inserts *serio* material within an overarching structure of comedy. Da Ponte also follows the trajectory of Goldoni and of Casti in the expansion of the ensemble finale, which in his theatre becomes "una spezie di commediola o di picciol dramma da sé, e richiede un novello intreccio ed un interesse straordinario."²²⁰

i. Mozart and Goldoni

In Mozart's collaboration with Emanuele Conegliano (better known as Lorenzo da Ponte), both structural and ideological elements of Goldoni's *drammi giocosi* are found. Even before his work with the Veneto librettist, however, Mozart had become acquainted with Goldoni's libretti through direct experience. His first opera (written at the young age of 12), *La finta semplice* (The False Simpleton, 1768), was based on a reworking of Goldoni's *dramma giocoso* of the same title (1764) by Marco Coltellini, then court poet in Vienna. Four years later, Mozart also produced *La finta giardiniera* (The False Gardener), which, despite its lack of attribution to an author, Daniel Heartz has connected to *La buona figliuola*.²²¹

By the time Mozart began setting operatic texts, the spectrum of dramatic roles developed by Goldoni through a lifetime of innovation had become common practice, or in the words of Da Ponte, "domma teatrale." This is manifest not only through the works themselves (and let us not forget the episodes of close textual

²²⁰ *ibid.*; I, ii (...) a sort of small comedy or drama unto itself, requiring a new plot and extraordinary appeal.

²²¹ D. Heartz, *Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); 199. "(...) an anonymous and clumsy offspring of *La Buona Figliuola*."

resemblance between Goldoni and Da Ponte libretti previously cited), but also confirmed explicitly in Mozart's correspondence, in which opera theatre is often the central point of discussion. In a letter to his father requesting a new text for music, for example, the composer recommends:

(...) das nothwendigste dabeÿ aber ist recht Comisch im ganzen – und wen es dan möglich wäre 2 gleich gute frauenzimer Rollen hinein zu bringen. – die eine müsste *Seria*, die andere aber *Mezzo Carattere* seÿn – aber an güte – müssten beÿde Rollen ganz gleich seÿn. – das dritte frauenzimer kan aber ganz *Buffa* seÿn.²²²

Looking ahead to Mozart's works with Da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), in its realistic representation of humble servant life, rapid exchanges of text, and collective musical numbers, appears to resonate fully with the intentions of our Venetian reformer. Of the 28 total pieces within the work, for example, only 14 are arie and the rest are ensembles of two or more characters. As a general characteristic, Mozart contributes further realism in the musical sphere not only through the use of realistic discourse in recitative, but most importantly through the dramatic acceleration of the arie that follow, such that a long page of text may be consumed in a short span of time. Da Ponte's arie for Mozart are often free form, adding to their natural, non-theatrical quality. Another realistic element of particular strength in *Le nozze di Figaro* is the fragmentation of dialogue, already manifest in Goldoni, which with Da Ponte is carried to an extreme level of concision.

²²² W. A. Mozart, letter to L. Mozart (7 May, 1783). The most important thing is that the story, on the whole, be truly comic, and, if possible, the author ought to introduce two equally good female parts; one must be *Seria*, the other *Mezzo Carattere*, but both roles must be entirely equal in quality. The third female character, however, may be *buffa*.

As regards content, the opera carries strong ideological implications in its exaltation of personal intelligence above social standing and its deprecation of the corrupt nobility. The original source text of Beaumarchais (*La folle journée* (The Crazy Day), 1778) initially met with censure for these reasons. Most importantly, the work includes *buffo* and *serio* characters, as well as *mezzi caratteri*, and exquisite moments of introspective *serio*, most notably in the role of the Contessa.

ii. The darkest dramma giocoso

We come finally to *Don Giovanni* (1787), Mozart's only opera to carry the name of *dramma giocoso* (not *opera buffa*), in which 'dramma' appears as a clear link to *opera seria* and tragedy. As requested in Mozart's letter, this opera features three *prime donne*, a full *serio* (Donna Anna), a sentimental *mezzo carattere* (Donna Elvira), and a full *buffa*, Zerlina. This work is formed from such a variety of characters and dramatic registers that it remains in part enigmatic, as modern productions of the most disparate nature make clear. While not entirely realistic because of its necessary dependence upon the picaresque legend of Don Juan, and most notably its supernatural retrieval of the Commendatore from the grave, this *dramma giocoso* is most relevant to our discussion as it demonstrates the surprising depth and darkness that this prevalently comic genre can support.

In sum, the highest achievements of Mozart and Da Ponte, still today universally known, are emblematic of Goldoni's innovations and how, perfected at the end of the 18th century, these became canonical and enduring.

Conclusions

As we have seen, Goldoni's reform in musical theatre is of both technical and ideological nature. His many structural innovations, such as the use of *ariette* instead of static exit *arie*, duets and ensembles at the beginning of and within scenes, and the collective ensemble finale, serve to diversify the means of conveying the plot and ideology of his works. In terms of content, the social types and societal customs that Goldoni examines and playfully criticizes are universal. Nobility is ridiculed but so too are servants too attached to wealth. Even the industrious bourgeoisie, when at fault, is denounced. The power of Goldoni's social commentary stems from the relevance and timeliness of his depictions, and his adherence to figures and styles (dialects, for example, and discursiveness) of daily life.

Most importantly, the combination of *serio* and *buffo* elements in the *dramma giocoso*, and the progressive attenuation of the boundaries between them, represents the highest outcome of the author's search for realism, and a significant point of contact with his reform of the prose theatre. With the lifelike representation of comic characters, tragic foils, and *mezzi caratteri* in the *dramma giocoso*, Goldoni casts *buffo* and *serio* into coexistence, creating a new, realistic opera theatre that responds to its own time and that continues to be relevant.

Ultimately, reaching well beyond his own vast production, Goldoni's musical innovations form the foundations of the fully evolved *dramma giocoso* of the Viennese school. From its complex origins to its most sophisticated, psychological forms, this theatrical genre develops in a philosophy of realism and social relevance. Goldoni's influence on this type of musical representation has not been fully

considered, and much remains to be explored, but the realism in music that he achieves through the *dramma giocoso* must be re-evaluated and acknowledged as a lasting contribution to modern literature, and to operatic history.

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