

## Lavinia's erotic reversal in 1641 lost opera *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (Monteverdi, librettist unknown)

*A 20-minute talk given at the December 2023 conference The Afterlives of the Aeneid's Women organised by Durham University's Centre for Classical Reception and Department of Classics and Ancient History (slides included here). The topic is drawn from the research paper of a University of Pennsylvania music graduate course about the birth of opera (footnotes and bibliography included here too).*



The *Aeneid* was heavily reproduced by early modern Italian printing presses, in Latin and vernacular translation. Engagement with the first-century BCE epic poem occurred across a variety of genres. However, it was particularly vital for the early development of opera: a late-sixteenth-century art form that would undergo dramatic innovation in mid-seventeenth-century Venice.

Many of the individuals behind Venetian operas—librettists, composers, singers, stage engineers, printing presses, theatre managers, and other collaborators—were affiliated in one way or another with the notoriously libertine intellectual circles of the *Accademia degli Incogniti* (which ran between 1630 and 1661). The collective was heavily involved in innovations unfolding within the new genre across the Venetian mid-seventeenth century, and their experimentations grappled with contemporary discourses about power, gender, love, violence, and the relation of physical passion to the state of the soul.

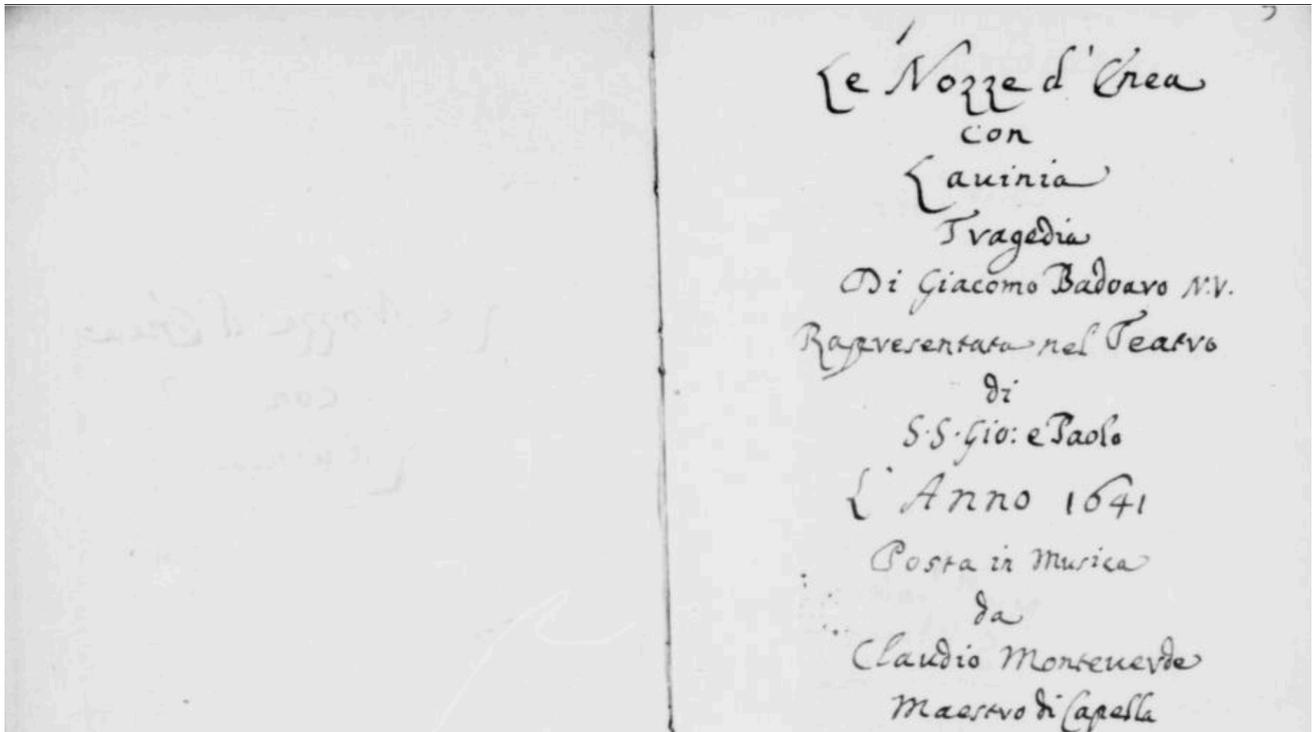


Their adaptations of female figures moved beyond the Ovidian myths favoured outside of Venice, to rewrite epic poems, tragic plays, and historical accounts. These ranged from reconfigured Penelopes and Medeas to a suite of transgressive ancient empresses. The *Aeneid* was central to this Venetian update, and in 1641 two of the four debuting operas were drawn from Virgil’s classic: Francesco Cavalli’s *La Didone* (with a libretto by Giovan Francesco Busenello) and Claudio Monteverdi’s *Le nozze d’Enea con Lavinia* (“Aeneas’ marriage to Lavinia”), on which I’m focusing today.



1640	
S. Cassiano	<i>Gli amori d’Apollo</i> , Busenello/Cavalli
SS. Giovanni e Paolo	<i>L’Adone</i> , Vendramin/Manelli
	<i>Il ritorno d’Ulisse</i> , Badoaro/Monteverdi
S. Moisè	<i>L’Arianna</i> , Rinuccini/Monteverdi
	<i>Il pastor regio</i> , Ferrari/Ferrari
1641	
S. Cassiano	<i>La Didone</i> , Busenello/Cavalli ←
SS. Giovanni e Paolo	<i>Il ritorno d’Ulisse</i> , Badoaro/Monteverdi
	<i>Le nozze d’Enea e Lavinia</i> , Torcigliani/Monteverdi ←
S. Moisè	<i>La ninfa avara</i> , Ferrari/Ferrari
Novissimo	<i>La finta pazza</i> , Strozzi/Sacراتي
1642	
S. Cassiano	<i>La virtù de’ strali d’amore</i> , Faustini/Cavalli
SS. Giovanni e Paolo	<i>Il Narciso ed Ecco immortalati</i> , Persiani/Marazzoli
	<i>Gli amori di Giasone</i> , Persiani/Marazzoli
S. Moisè	<i>L’amore innamorato</i> , Fusconi/Cavalli
	<i>Il Sidonio e Dorisbe</i> , Melosio/Fontei
Novissimo	<i>Il Bellerofonte</i> , Nolli/Sacراتي
	<i>L’Alcate</i> , Tirabosco/Manelli
1643	
S. Cassiano	<i>L’Egisto</i> , Faustini/Cavalli
SS. Giovanni e Paolo	<i>L’incoronazione di Poppea</i> , Busenello/Monteverdi
	<i>La finta savia</i> , Strozzi/Various
Novissimo	<i>La Venere gelosa</i> , Bartolini/Sacراتي

My talk considers startling, significant modifications made to Lavinia's romantic storyline, and their direct acknowledgement—and justification—in the accompanying paratextual discussion: the *Argomento et Scenario delle Nozze d'Enea in Lavinia*.



These updates to Lavinia's affective responses in her erotic rapport with both Aeneas and Turnus occur in a decade critical for the development of opera in Venice, shedding light not only on the city's artistic networks at this time but on how they twisted myth to suit a nascent genre's evolving preoccupations around gender, desire, love, and marriage.

I'll start with what we know about Monteverdi's *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia*. The opera was first performed at the beginning of 1641.<sup>1</sup> We no longer have the music, and no individual or group name is attached to the libretto. After initial belief that its author was Giacomo Badoaro, librettist to Monteverdi's 1640 opera *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, scholars such as Nicola Michelassi and Ellen Rosand have now compellingly attributed the libretto to Michelangelo Torcigliani (who lived between 1618 and 1679).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the Teatro Grimani dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo during Venice's Carnival (over the pre-Easter period and a new year began 1<sup>st</sup> March). *Le nozze* was Monteverdi's 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 operas created in Venice.

<sup>2</sup> Michelassi argues for Torcigliani's authorship in "Michelangelo Torcigliani e l'incognito autore delle *Nozze di Enea con Lavinia*." He begins with fellow *Incognito* Giacomo Badoaro, librettist of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (debuted in 1640 in the same theatre as *Le nozze*, and replayed the following season in alternation). Badoaro's 1644 *l'Ulisse errante* (music by Francesco Saccati) is prefaced by a letter to Torcigliani responding directly to many points made by *Le nozze*'s librettist (Venice: Pinelli, 1644). Exhorting Torcigliani to rework ancient material more freely, Badoaro references "quel suo dramma" of which he had shared "alquante scene," just as *Le nozze*'s librettist mentioned previewing "l'argomento" and then "alcune scene" with friends (384–86). Fabbri reproduces the letter in *Il secolo cantante* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 137–41.



## Michelangelo Torcigliani

1618, born in Lucca

Finishes education in Rome

End 1636/start 1637 moves to Venice

1641 *Le nozze* performed

1679, dies

1680–83 brother publishes three volumes of letters and work



Torcigliani moved from Rome to Venice in his late teens—around the beginning of 1637—in time for opera’s most important decade in Venice.<sup>3</sup> He soon garnered the attention of the city’s leading intellectuals, hailed as a young prodigy by celebrated authors from Maiolino Bisaccioni to Giovan Francesco Loredan.<sup>4</sup> Although most of Torcigliani’s work was not published (at all or under his own name) during his lifetime, letters and other paratexts show that he was very active during the 1640s. By 1647, he had openly taken up membership with the *Accademia degli Incogniti*.<sup>5</sup>

Such membership was one of many ways that seventeenth-century writers consolidated networks, along with patronage, correspondence, and forms of intellectual exchange such as (credited or uncredited) editorial contributions.<sup>6</sup> Leading poet Giambattista Marino died in 1625 but remained a central lyric model for many *Incogniti*,<sup>7</sup> who were invested in the representation and stimulation of emotional extremes, in line with his precept that “the poet’s aim is to stun the reader.”<sup>8</sup> Torcigliani’s prolific writing displays strong Marinist tendencies and he was labelled “Marino’s sovereign

<sup>3</sup> On Torcigliani, see Francesco Rossini, “Torcigliani, Michelangelo,” *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 96 (2019); Clizia Carminati, “Le corrispondenze letterarie del Cinquecento e del Seicento: metodi e iniziative di studio: con osservazioni sull’«Echo cortese» di Michelangelo Torcigliani,” in *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome* 132, 2 (2020): 339–53.

<sup>4</sup> Taddeo offers synthesis in “La cetra e l’arpa: studio su Michelangelo Torcigliani,” *Studi secenteschi* 34 (1993): 3–5.

<sup>5</sup> On the *Incogniti*’s strong links to musical theatre, see Nicola Michelassi, “Michelangelo Torcigliani e l’incognito autore delle *Nozze di Enea con Lavinia*,” *Studi secenteschi* 48 (2007): 382; Rosand, *Monteverdi’s Last Operas*; Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women’s Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley, U of California Press, 2003), 48–81; and Jonathan and Beth Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (New York: Oxford U Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Simone Testa, *Italian Academies and Their Networks, 1525–1700: From Local to Global* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 175.

<sup>7</sup> On ways that many *Incogniti* admired Marino’s imaginative eroticism despite censorship, see Jean-François Lattarico, “*Lo Scherno Degli Dei*,” 23; Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> “è del poeta il fin la meraviglia.” Marino, *La Murtoleide* (Venice: Stamphier, 1619).

imitator” towards the end of his life.<sup>9</sup> The myriad erotic storylines underpinning the *Aeneid* appealed to Marinist writers’ more overt aesthetics of sensuality, influenced by Marino’s seminal 1602 *Rime*, in which poetic lovers engaged more in external sensorial encounters than inner sensations.<sup>10</sup> Marinist poetry tended more towards explicit representing of physical acts such as kissing, acts which held additional metaphoric reach in order to incite deeper reactions from their audiences.<sup>11</sup> A concern animating many *Incogniti* experiments involved in the effect of sound, beautiful or terrible, upon the senses of the physical body, and from there upon the state of the soul. This issue was being enacted upon Venice’s stages, and is grappled with in *Le nozze*’s theorising about music’s relation to artistry and its power to convey, and influence, audience emotions.

The *Incogniti* were interested in disrupting delineations between poetry and music, and one way they did this was through interpolating ancient forms in current debates. The author of *Le nozze* refers to the libretto as “my poem” while discussing how best to adapt ancient material—and arguing for Virgil’s intrusion into a multitude of discrete seventeenth-century genres.<sup>12</sup>

*Or voi, signori miei, tollerando l'imperfezione della mia poesia, godete allegramente la soavità della musica del non mai abbastanza lodato Monteverde, nato al mondo per la patronia sopra gli altrui affetti; non essendo sì duro animo ch'egli non volga e commova a talento suo, adattando in tal modo le note musicali alle parole ed alle passioni che chi canta convien che rida, pianga, s'adiri e s'impietisca e faccia tutto il resto ch'esse comandano, essendo non meno l'uditore dal medesimo impeto portato nella varietà e forza delle stesse perturbazioni.*

Now you, sirs, as you tolerate my poem’s imperfection, enjoy with cheer the sweetness of Monteverdi’s music. He is never praised enough, and was born into this world for power over other people’s emotions. Since there is no soul too hard to be turned and moved by his talent, the way he adapts musical notes so well to words and passions that whoever is singing makes [the soul] want to laugh, cry, get angry, feel sympathy and do anything else commanded, since listeners are no less swept up by his heat into the force and variance of their own upheavals.

---

<sup>9</sup> Aprosio: “sovrano imitatore del cavalier Marino.” Gregorio Leti, *L’Italia Regnante*, part 4 (Geneva: Guglielmo & de la Pietra, 1676), 427. During Torcigliani’s time in Rome, he defended Marino through a satire of Tommaso Stigliani (1573–1651) and a never-published *L’Adone Ridotto in Otto Canti*. The texts he produced in his first decade in Venice (1636–46) display strong Marinist qualities, “muovendosi entro il genere dell’idillio mitologico, marcato da uno stile concettoso e sensuale” (Rossini, “Torcigliani, Michelangelo”). For more on Aprosio (1607–81) and his connections to many *Incogniti*, cf. Simona Bortot’s critical edition of Loredan’s *Vita del Cavalier Marino*; Riga, “Sulle lettere di Pietro Michiele ad Angelico Aprosio, 1637–1650 (Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova, ms. E.V.21),” 500–20.

<sup>10</sup> The stylistic turning point associated with the *Rime* is some extent anticipated in late-sixteenth-century lyric, Calcagno, *Monteverdi’s Staging of the Self* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 2012) 245–6; Roseen Giles, “Monteverdi, Marino, and the Aesthetic of *Meraviglia*,” *Early Music* 45, 3 (2017): 419; Giorgio Fulco, *studi sul Barocco tra letteratura ed arte*. (Rome: Salerno, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi’s Unruly Women*: (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 128–9.

<sup>12</sup> *Lettera dell’autore ad alcuni suoi Amici in the argomento et scenario*.

This panegyric to Monteverdi foregrounds the power of his musical *impeto* over “other people’s emotions.” The technical elements that generate this *impeto* are divided into three: instrumental production (le note musicali), words with rhyme and meter (le parole) and singing skill (chi canta). The librettist argues that, as with audiences experiencing the sounds of ancient poems like the *Aeneid*, the three could be united if deployed by a *poet-maestro* who understood words’ potential to harness the effect of instrument and voice—and affect emotions intensely enough to provoke reactions.

Opera was and is a collaborative, multidisciplinary medium, and interaction with other masters, authors, texts, and traditions can also be gleaned across the pages of *Le Nozze*. Torcigliani, however, seems to have been unwilling to put his name to public work despite acclaim from other writers and artists. One example is a 1639 letter from Angelico Aprosio, telling him about an unpublished poem of his that Aprosio had been shown by Torcigliani’s collaborator on a series of erotic Ovid re-enactments, Pietro Michiel. “Your work is so great,” he writes, “and you could go so far in this trade. But if you delay publishing at least some of your work I’d call it an injustice not only to your worth but to the republic of letters, which desires it so much.”<sup>13</sup>

*Da una canzone che mi fece vedere l’illustrissimo Sig. Pietro Michiele, conobbi quant’Ella vaglia, e quanto possa avanzarsi in tal mestiere, per tanto se V.S. tarda a pubblicare qualche volume di tali materie, dirò che fa torto al suo valore, ed alla Republica de’ letterati, che molto lo desidera.*

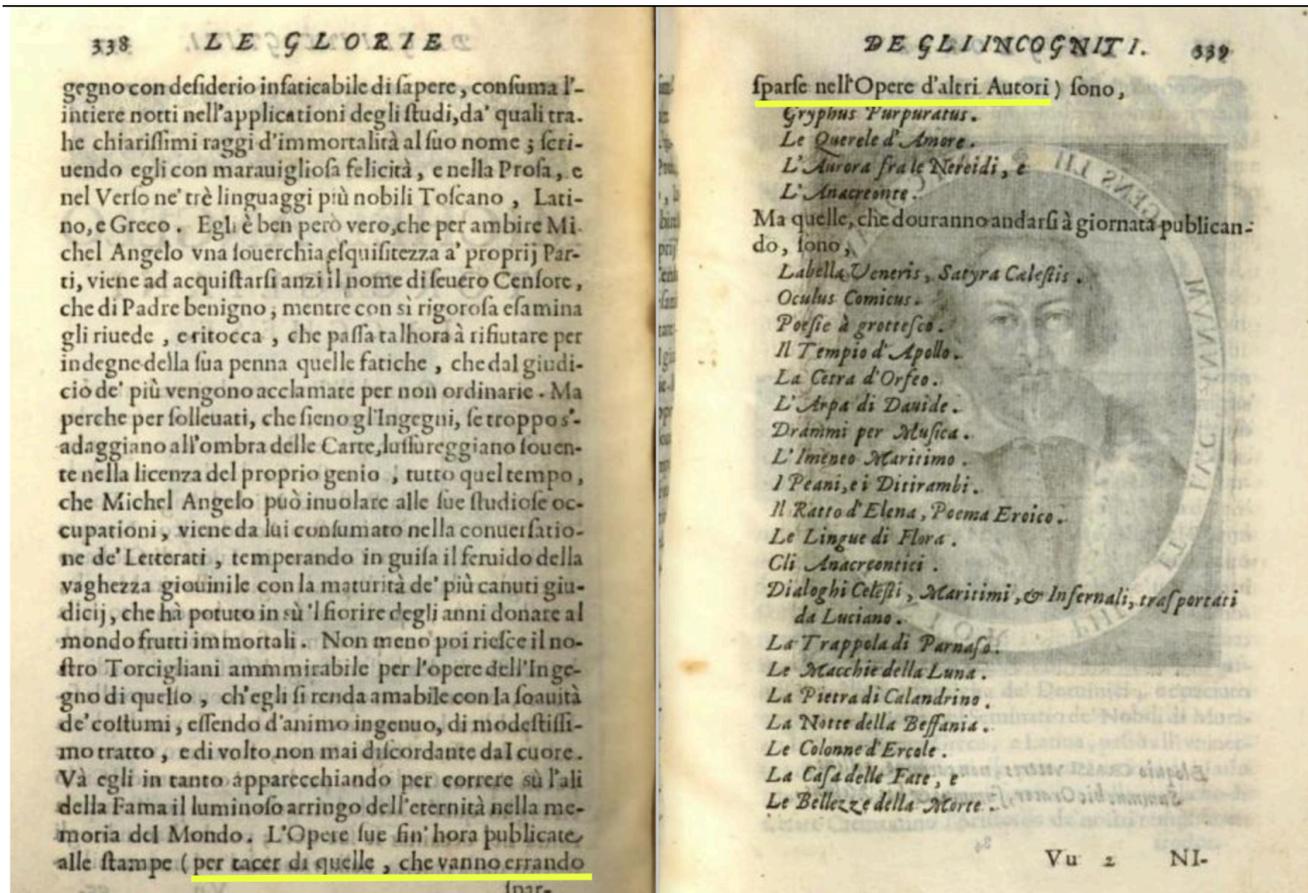
From a poem of yours that Pietro Michiel showed me, I could tell how great your work is, and how far you could go in this trade, but if you delay publishing at least some of your work I’d call it an injustice only to your worth but to the Republic of Letters, who desire it so much.

Such an aversion to sharing work—and thus, in Aprosio’s words, passing over opportunities as a writer and intellectual—is testified in *Le Glorie degli Incogniti* (1647), an *accademia*-wide member directory replete with engraved images, panegyric biographies, and bibliographies of published and

---

<sup>13</sup> “Ricevei il saggio, e fu tale il gusto, che io ricevei in leggerlo la prima volta, che m’ unanimi a leggerlo la quinta, e la sesta. Giuro a V.S. che è un gran pezzo, che non ho letto compositione con tanto gusto, e mi pare un hora mill’anni di vederla stampata, come anco le sue compositioni Toscane, che superan di gran lunga quelle di qualche saccette della nostra età, che stima non essere huomo al mondo, che l’agguagli in poetare.” Salvestro Torcigliani, *Echo cortese o vero risposte date da più, e diversi signori a Michel’Angelo Torcigliani con altre lettere nelle quali vien’ fatta mentione dell’istesso* (Lucca: Marescandoli, 1680), 21–22. See Carminati, “Le corrispondenze letterarie del Cinquecento e del Seicento,” 339–53.

forthcoming work.<sup>14</sup> Under works listed beneath Torcigliani's name is a curious ambiguity: I quote "we are silent about those works that wander spread throughout works of other authors."<sup>15</sup>



This resonates with the fact that hardly any of what we understand today to be by Torcigliani was published in his own lifetime, by his express desire.<sup>16</sup>

As Michelassi observes, such sentiments and approach seem to some extent shared by the author of *Le nozze*, who claims more interest in the reactions of his friends than in the wider audiences of the opera itself.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Le Glorie degli Incogniti ovvero gli Huomini Illustri dell'Accademia de' Signori Incogniti di Venetia* (compiled by Girolamo Brusoni, Venice: Valvasense, 1647). See Anna Langiano, "L'Accademia rappresenta se stessa," 195–208, and Monica Miato, "Accademia e autoprofilo: *Le glorie degli Incogniti*," 154–61.

<sup>15</sup> *Le Glorie*, 338–9, lists multiple works of musical theatre. Torcigliani's collaborative projects include *Le Glorie della signora Anna Renzi romana* (1644, Venice: Surian), an encomium to the opera singer organised by Giulio Strozzi. See Taddeo, "La cetra e l'arpa," 3–60.

<sup>16</sup> In at least one instance, Torcigliani obstructed the publication of his own work. Rossini describes how, in 1642, Maiolino Bisaccioni covertly sent Torcigliani's first full translation into Italian of Anacreon's entire known corpus to publisher Combi. When Torcigliani realised, he halted production and destroyed what had been printed. The work was published only after his death, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (1681) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (1683) volumes of the *Echo cortese*, critically edited by Taddeo and Federica Ciccolella: *Anacreonte e altre versioni poetiche* (Bologna: Commissione Testi di Lingua, 1996), 1–110.

<sup>17</sup> Sevieri, *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia*, 94.

*il solo desiderio di compiacervi mi condusse a quello che per me stesso non avrei fatto e molto meno pubblicato giamai, essendo vero che, se bene rapito dal genio alla poesia, ho composte molte cose; nondimeno, atterrito dalla malagevolenza d'una tal facoltà divina e più dalla debolezza del proprio ingegno, ho in maniera occultate le mie composizioni alle viste altrui ch'altri che pochi e confidentissimi non hanno saputo ch'io abbi composto un verso*

pure desire to please you led me to what I'd never have created for myself, much less ever for the public, since it's true that, even though I was snatched from genius to poetry and composed many works, nonetheless terrified by the difficulty of such divine faculty and even more by the weakness of my own talent, I found a way to hide my compositions from the sight of others so that none except an extremely trustworthy few ever knew I'd composed even a verse.

This anxiety over sharing work sheds light on how highly social many artistic choices were. Whether or not the claims are exactly true, their formulation reveals a set of social dynamics. An author shares work with friends. These friends then discuss with others. “You ask me what my opera’s about so you can communicate this to other friends,” writes the librettist in the opera’s preface.<sup>18</sup> Some friends then publish their responses. For example, our opera receives a reply from Giacomo Badoaro, the only individual identified by name in the paratext, three years later, in 1644, pushing back on many assertions about his 1640 libretto to Monteverdi’s *Ritorno d’Ulisse* and the way that it adapts Homer. Badoaro comments on the adaptation of ancient texts for opera in general and in *Le nozze* specifically.<sup>19</sup> The librettist of *Le nozze* ascribes many of his choices adapting the *Aeneid*, however, to Monteverdi’s working exigencies and the best way in which to follow, allow, and enhance his music and its power over emotions as a poet-author.

Characterising the librettist’s approach to a new *Aeneid* is the “inviolable rule” (regola inviolabile) that well-known narratives not be altered.<sup>20</sup> Despite this approach, the paratext acknowledges—and justifies at length—two key violations to this rule: “I need to explain two things that seem transformed from what Virgil says.”<sup>21</sup> However, these infractions are then positioned as minor, because perceived to be distant from the plot’s “main events” and because not “wholly unreasonable.”<sup>22</sup> The first shift involves Aeneas and his emotional reaction to war in a specific moment of the opera. The second involves Lavinia and her emotional attachment to Aeneas and

<sup>18</sup> “or chiedendomi voi l’argomento dell’opera per comunicarlo agli altri amici.” *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> For discussion, see Michelassi, “Michelangelo Torcigliani e l’incognito autore delle *Nozze di Enea con Lavinia*.”

<sup>20</sup> “si fatte istorie o favole non s’alterino”... “Tutta l’*Eneide* è cosa notissima.” Sevieri, *Le nozze d’Enea con Lavinia*, 96. Rosand sees *Le nozze* as “in some sense a response to *Il Ritorno d’Ulisse* (1640) [...] answered [...] by *Ulisse Errante* (1644),” *Monteverdi’s Last Operas*, 9–10; 375. Annibale Caro’s 1581 translation *L’Eneide di Virgilio* (Venice: Giunti) remained the “versione standard,” Sevieri, 35.

<sup>21</sup> “io devo render conto di due cose che paiono diversificate da ciò che ne dice il medesimo poeta.” Sevieri, *ibid.*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> “tuttavia non sono l’azion principale” and “in tutto fuor di ragioni.” *Ibid.*

Turnus for the entirety of the opera. This results in significant changes to the emotions of Turnus, but I turn now to the first twist of Virgil.

The specific moment the librettist overhauls involves a single emotional transition that takes place on the banks of the Tiber, “where Virgil says a wearied Aeneas laid himself down to sleep.”<sup>23</sup> The river then, “appearing to him, consoles and encourages him so that, waking in a good mood, he sets himself to carrying out what he was told.”<sup>24</sup> Here, the librettist links temporal changes that are logistical for verisimilitude in the medium of opera (in other words, time speeding up) with increasing transformation in Aeneas’ emotive spectrum through a complex series of “emotional shifts.”<sup>25</sup>

*io più tosto figuro Enea che, [...] lieto per le novelle di pace, ma pur stanco per li stenti passati, invitato dall’amenità del luogo si ponga a riposare sul margine del sudetto Tebro, il quale, dovendo da lui esser reso famoso, come amico lo avisa de’ vicini perigli invigorendolo a sostenerli. Così, per quella inopinata novella, Enea si sveglia turbato e, dolendosi della continuazione di sì malvagia fortuna, va toccando le passate disgrazie, [...] indi com’uomo forte rinvigorisce se stesso, così passando dalla quiete al travaglio e da questo all’allegrezza per la comparsa della madre.*

I depict an Enea who, [...] happy about the news of peace, but exhausted by his recent hardships, invited by how pleasant the place is, lays himself down to rest on the banks of the abovementioned Tiber, which, needing him for its future fame, gives him a friendly warning about the nearby dangers, augmenting his ability to bear them. It’s this unexpected turn of events that wakes Enea, and, agitated and lamenting his continual bad luck, he goes about listing his recent misfortunes, [...] then, just as strong men fortify themselves, passing from calm to exertion and then to cheerfulness about the arrival of his mother.

The librettist justifies these *mutationi d’affetti* on the grounds of the imagined audience tastes: writing that “they always come across well.” But the tastes of the composer are also relevant: “Monteverdi really likes them, so that he can have a varied, melancholy domain to demonstrate the wonder of his craft.”<sup>26</sup> Words are here explicitly positioned as an enabling vehicle for the powers of music, and this in itself forms a justification for further departure from Virgil. If Monteverdi’s music stuns audiences when able to express its full range in the emotive variety permitted by the script, the very structure of the opera must facilitate this by revolving around a surprise happy ending that emerges from the carnage of war and genocide: Aeneas’ marriage to Lavinia. This event was never

---

<sup>23</sup> “là dove, secondo Virgilio, Enea, intesi li rumori contro lui de’ Latini, stanco e faticato dalle cure, si pone a dormir.” *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “apparendogli, lo consola ed inanima, onde, svegliandosi allegro, si pone ad eseguire le cose raccordate.” *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> “paiano sempre bene” and “piacciono poi molto al nostro signor Monteverde, per aver egli campo con una varia patetica di mostrar li stupori dell’arte sua.” *Ibid.*

actually depicted in Virgil's *Aeneid*, as all of us here might know too well, but the librettist argues it constitutes a “very fitting end for a poem like Virgil's” as well as an improvement regarding contemporary audience expectations.<sup>27</sup> Realising this goal, however, entails reworking Lavinia's entire affective trajectory for the whole episode, as well as that of Turnus. The librettist writes:<sup>28</sup>

*La seconda alterazione è negli amori di Lavinia la quale, se bene secondo Virgilio non è apertamente innamorata di Turno, si vede tuttavia ella al medesimo molto inclinata e niente propensa ad Enea. Così, dovendo il medesimo Turno duellar col detto Enea, [...] e succedendo la general battaglia, se ne va [...] a pregar li dèi per la perdita de' Troiani. Ma Virgilio, se ben predice le nozze d'Enea, non le fa però attualmente seguire, terminando l'Eneide con la morte di Turno.*

My second alteration concerns the love-life of Lavinia. Although in Virgil she is not openly in love with Turno, you can see regardless that she's very inclined toward him and does not favour Enea at all. So, Turno had to duel with said Enea, [...] and as the general battle happens she goes off [...] to pray for the Trojans' loss. But Virgil, although he really foretells Enea's wedding, does not have it then happen, ending the *Aeneid* instead with Turno's death.

Ironically, Enea's love-switching in the Dido episode—on stage for audiences that same carnival season through Francesco Cavalli's *La Didone*—does not seem to detract from his integrity. The librettist thinks of this too: Lavinia's status as a *virginal princess* means she must protect the *integrity* and *modesty* “necessary for such a grand wedding.”<sup>29</sup>

*Là dove volend'io ch'effettivamente si veda questo maritaggio, per terminar con esso l'opera con fine molto proprio ad un tal poema, ho stimato convenevole il far preceder l'amor di Lavinia verso Enea veduto da lei nella battaglia. **Ma perché Lavinia è regia vergine, essendo che la mutazion d'amori darebbe segno di poca onestà, per serbar la convenevolezza dovuta alla persona introdotta io faccio che non badi a Turno per serbarsi col cuore intatto ad Enea, il quale, dovendole esser sposo, può bene esser amato da lei, senza che ne resti offesa la pudicizia dovuta a così gran nozze.***

---

<sup>27</sup> “fine molto proprio ad un tal poema [Virgil's epic]” *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Lavinia reinforces her “regia onore” in Scene 2 (*ibid.*, line 914) and is very direct about this throughout the libretto, with lines such as: “a chi dal Ciel fui sposa destinate, pura si serba l'anima e immacolata. Il virginal rispetto macchia solo d'amor pensiero o detto” (*Ibid.*, lines 301–304, alternative version in Scene 7: “pura si serbi l'alba immacolata”).

This is where I wanted us to actually see that marriage, for it to end the opera—an ending apt for such a poem—so it felt fitting to have Lavinia’s love for Enea come earlier, when she sees him in battle. **But, as she is royal and virginal, switching loves would indicate a lack of integrity. To retain the appropriateness owed such a person, I made her not care at all for Turno, reserving her whole heart for Enea, who has to be her husband so can well be loved by her without offending the modesty needed for such a grand wedding.**

Dido and Deidamia of the *Finta pazza* (1641) are *royal* but not *maidens* and therefore the types of marriage involved in their stories are not *grand*, nor representative indirectly of Venice’s honour as a city.<sup>30</sup> These female figures can instead satisfy seventeenth-century Italian audience cravings for depictions of women as crazy.<sup>31</sup>

Baroque depictions of mythic male figures as crazy in love, however, are similarly intriguing. A Turnus who in the *Aeneid* does not use up large amounts of dialogue professing love here has a change of heart—“I never believed my heart, full of warrior spirit, could hold love within it.”<sup>32</sup> The heights of this eroticised Turno’s passion elevate Lavinia’s absence of reciprocation. When the two are first alone on stage together, Lavinia calls him a “cunning trickster in love.”<sup>33</sup> This Lavinia is not only *not* in love with him, but passionately hateful against him, and disdainful, declaring that she laughs at him: “di lui mi rido.”<sup>34</sup> Turnus defends himself against her accusation of falsity with a profession of love, saying: “if you wish to better deceive me, beautiful eyes, just one look you turn towards a hard man like me, who’s unaccustomed to such joy, will see me die.” Lavinia responds: “Turnus, because I don’t hate you, I don’t desire your death. But I don’t want your joy either, because I don’t love you.”<sup>35</sup>

**TURNO:**        *[...] se volete meglio ingannarmi,  
begli occhi, un solo sguardo in me volgete  
che tosto, non avvezzo a tal gioire,  
mi vedrete morire.*

**LAVINIA:**      *Turno, perché non t’odio,  
il tuo morir non bramo,  
né voglio il tuo gioir, perché non t’amo.*

<sup>30</sup> *La finta pazza* (music Francesco Sacati, libretto Giulio Strozzi).

<sup>31</sup> Paola Cosentino, “la natura della donna nei romanzi degli *Incogniti* (Venezia),” in *The Italian Academies 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*, eds. Jane E. Everson, Denis Reidy, and Lisa Sampson (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), 292–305; Virginia Cox, “Women and Italian Academies,” in *ibid.*, 132–69; and Patrizia Bettella, *The Ugly Woman* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> “io non credea giamai che, di spirti guerrier pieno, il mio cuore dasse albergo ad amore.” *Ibid.*, lines 239–41.

<sup>33</sup> “O qual d’ogn’altro Amore, più scaltro ingannatore?” Act 1 Scene 5. *Ibid.*, lines 282–83.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, line 288.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 294–300.

TURNUS: [...] if you wish to better deceive me,  
beautiful eyes, just one look you turn towards a  
hard man like me, who's unaccustomed to such joy,  
will see me die.

LAVINIA: Turnus, because I don't hate you  
I don't desire your death.  
I don't want your joy either, because I don't love you.

The way that Turnus' death serves to foreground love is reflected in the librettist's choice to shift his murder offstage and, as mentioned earlier, prioritise Lavinia's love for Aeneas as she watches him battle from afar.<sup>36</sup> To his lover, and the audience, Turnus communicates a passionate intent to kill himself that is directly linked to the frustration of his desire. His declarations are often rebuffed by Lavinia, who believes nothing he says, but this only accentuates his state: "Lavinia I will obey, for Lavinia I will hold my tongue, for Lavinia I will die, and, bereft of anything else, be comforted at least by how beautiful the cause is for which I lie dead."<sup>37</sup>

Depicting the fatality of unmet physical drives ties in with many *Incogniti* works that centre on a tension between soul and its physical vehicle, which can express but can also veil. In their philosophies the good of the soul hinges on pleasure, bound up in bodily sensations more than God's providence. The emotions of Turnus and Aeneas toward Lavinia can also be linked, I hope to have shown, to *Incogniti* ideas about opera as a medium for the adaptation of ancient myths, all of which circle back to the relation of music to *affetti*. The libretto's paratext centres on techniques for emotively influencing an audience that pay conscious and continuous attention to what is already contained in the mythic material being adapted.<sup>38</sup> Theories around the nature of music as it relates to the state of listeners' heart and soul interact with what is scripted in the libretto itself, enacting a two-fold adaptation of Lavinia's emotional spectrum.<sup>39</sup>

These are some preliminary considerations of how such preoccupations with histories of artistic techniques and their capabilities to render, adapt, and, in turn, control, emotion, sit behind this

---

<sup>36</sup> "tacendosi il fine d'Amata per non intorbidar funestamente una tanta allegrezza; e non vedendosi l'altre morti di Turno, d'Elmino e di Numano, com'è già noto il precetto dell'arte di bandire la rappresentazione dell'atrocità anco dalle più malinconiche tragedie bastando, per intelligenza degli uditori, siano semplicemente riferite." *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>37</sup> "Lavinia obedirò, tacerò, morirò, e, d'altro privo, almen mi fia conforto per si bella cagion rimaner morto." Lavinia believes none of these assertions, however: "oh, come agevolmente muor con la lingua un cuore! O menzogne, o bugie stolte d'Amore!"

<sup>38</sup> For example, invoking Aristotle in a discussion of the genre of tragedy, the librettist positions Aeneas as ripe for tragic fashioning (può esser soggetto di più tragedie) because, as a central protagonist, other characters' plotlines depend upon his "azioni principali" and because, as a well-known founding figure (indirectly but critically) of Venice, he is not completely imaginary (movano assai più gli affetti le cose credute vere che le stimate immaginarie, le quali meno anco si fermano nella memoria dell'altre).

<sup>39</sup> The *Lettera* is found in the *Argomento et Scenario delle Nozze d'Enea in Lavinia*, edited by Maria Paola Sevieri, *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia: dal testo alla scena dell'opera veneziana di Claudio Monteverdi* (Genoa: De Ferrari, 1997), 94–99.

opera's substantial and often startling departures from the princess as written in Virgil. Reshaping Lavinia's erotic rapport with each of the men seeking her hand in turn warps depictions of Aeneas and Turnus, and represent a key moment in the baroque Italian afterlife of one of the *Aeneid*'s less-discussed women. This moment traverses the Venetian artistic networks revolutionising theatrical expression; opera's evolution as a site for ideological performance; and early modern debates around gender, sexuality, and desire; to shed light on one of the fates of one of the women in the *Aeneid*.



### Sources:

Bettella, Patrizia. *The Ugly Woman*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Bruni, Antonio. *Epistole Heroiche*. Rome: Facciotti, 1627.

Brusoni, Girolamo, comp. *Le Glorie degli Incogniti ovvero gli Huomini Illustri dell'Accademia de' Signori Incogniti di Venetia*. Venice: Valvasense, 1647.

Carminati, Clizia. "Le corrispondenze letterarie del Cinquecento e del Seicento: metodi e iniziative di studio: con osservazioni sull'«Echo cortese» di Michelangelo Torcigliani." *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 132, 2 (2020): 339–53.

Cherchi, Paolo. "Marino and the *Meraviglia*." In *Culture and Authority in the Baroque*, 63–72. Edited by

- Massimo Ciavolella and Patrick Coleman Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- Cosentino, Paola. “Dee, imperatrici, cortigiane: la natura della donna nei romanzi degli *Incogniti* (Venezia).” In *The Italian Academies 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*, edited by Jane E. Everson, Denis Reidy, and Lisa Sampson, 292–305. Cambridge: Legenda, 2016.
- Cox, Virginia. “Members, Muses, Mascots: Women and Italian Academies.” In *The Italian Academies 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*, edited by J. E. Everson, Denis Reidy and Lisa Sampson, 132–69. Cambridge: Legenda, 2016.
- Crasso, Lorenzo. *Epistole Heroiche*. Venice: Baba, 1655.
- Fabbri, Paolo. *Il secolo cantante: Per una storia del libretto d’opera in Italia nel Seicento*. Rome: Bulzoni, 2003.
- Fulco, Giorgio. *La «meravigliosa» passione: studi sul Barocco tra letteratura ed arte*. Rome: Salerno, 2001.
- Geri, Lorenzo. “L’epistola eroica in volgare: stratigrafie di un genere seicentesco: Da Giovan Battista Marino ad Antonio Bruni.” *Studi (e testi) italiani* 28, 2 (2012): 79–158.
- . “L’epistola eroica tra l’Italia e l’Europa (1590–1717).” *Studi (e testi) italiani* 37 (2016): 53–71.
- Giles, Roseen. “Monteverdi, Marino, and the Aesthetic of *Meraviglia*.” *Early Music* 45, 3 (2017): 415–27.
- Glixon, Jonathan E., and Beth L. Glixon. *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Gordon, Bonnie. *Monteverdi’s Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Heller, Wendy. *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women’s Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Lattarico, Jean-François. “*Lo Scherno Degli Dei*: Myth and Derision in the *Dramma Per Musica* of the Seventeenth Century.” In *(Dis)embodying Myths in Ancien Régime Opera: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Edited by Bruno Forment, 17–31. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012.
- Langiano, Anna. “L’Accademia rappresenta se stessa: *le Glorie degli Incogniti*.” In *Le virtuose adunanze*, edited by Clizia Gurreri and Iaria Bianchi, 195–208. Avellino: Sinestesia, 2015.
- Leti, Gregorio. *L’Italia Regnante*. Geneva: Guglielmo & de la Pietra, 1676.
- Loredan, Giovan Francesco. «*Il Marino viverà*»: edizione commentata della Vita del Cavalier Marino di Giovan Francesco Loredano. Edited by Simona Bortot. Venice: Ca’ Foscari, 2015.
- Marino, Giambattista. *La Lira: Parte seconda: Madriali, & Canzoni*. Venice: Ciotti, 1614.
- . *La Murtoleide*. Venice: Stamphier, 1619.
- . “Le promesse del Marino: a proposito di una redazione ignota della lettera Claretti.” In *Studi su Tasso e Marino*, 101–84. Edited by Emilio Russo. Rome: Antenore, 2005.
- . *Scritti vari*. Edited by Lorenzo Geri and Pietro Giulio Riga. Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2017.
- Miato, Monica. “Accademia e autoprofilo: *Le glorie degli Incogniti*.” In *Girolamo Brusoni: avventure di penna e di vita nel Seicento veneto*, edited by Gino Benzoni, 154–61. Rovigo: Associazione Culturale Minelliana, 2001.

- Michelassi, Nicola. "Michelangelo Torcigliani e l'incognito autore delle *Nozze di Enea con Lavinia*." *Studi secenteschi* 48 (2007): 381–86.
- Michiel, Pietro. *Il dispaccio di Venere*. Edited by Valeria Traversi. Bari: Palomar, 2008.
- Il Dispaccio di Venere: Epistole Heroiche & Amoroze*. Venice: Guerigli, 1640.
- Ovid. *Amores, Epistulae, Medicamina Faciei Femineae, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris*. Edited by Rudolf Merkel and Rudolf Ehwald. Leipzig: Teubner, 1907.
- Heroides—Select Epistles*. Edited by Peter Knox. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Heroides, XVI-XXI*. Edited by Edward John Kenney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Riga, Pietro Giulio. "Sulle lettere di Pietro Michiele ad Angelico Aprosio, 1637–1650 (Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova, ms. E.V.21)." In *Archilet: per uno studio delle corrispondenze letterarie di età moderna*, 497–522. Edited by Clizia Carminati, Paolo Procaccioli, Emilio Russo, and Corrado Viola. Verona: QuiEdit, 2016.
- Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's Last Operas: A Venetian Trilogy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Rossini, Francesco. "Torcigliani, Michelangelo." *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 96. Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2019.
- Sevieri, Maria Paola. *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia: dal testo alla scena dell'opera veneziana di Claudio Monteverdi*. Genoa: De Ferrari, 1997.
- Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia di Claudio Monteverdi*. Tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Bologna, 1995.
- Strozzi, Giulio. *Le Glorie della Signora Anna Renzi Romana*. Venice: Surian, 1644.
- Taddeo, Edoardo. "La cetra e l'arpa: studio su Michelangelo Torcigliani." *Studi secenteschi* 34 (1993): 3–60.
- "Torcigliani e Delfino: patriarca atomista." *Studi secenteschi* 40 (1999): 83–95.
- "Torcigliani fra gli astri e l'alchimia." *Studi secenteschi* 35 (1994): 233–72.
- Tarrant, R. J. *Ovid*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Testa, Simone. *Italian Academies and Their Networks, 1525–1700: From Local to Global*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015.
- Thorsen, Thea. *Ovid's Early Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Torcigliani, Michelangelo. *Anacreonte e altre versioni poetiche*. Edited by Edoardo Taddeo and Federica Ciccolella. Bologna: Commissione Testi di Lingua, 1996.
- Torcigliani, Salvestro. *Echo cortese o vero risposte date da più, e diversi signori a Michel' Angelo Torcigliani con altre lettere nelle quali vien' fatta mentione dell'istesso, aggiuntone in fine alcune di suo publicate da Salvestro Torcigliani suo fratello*. Lucca: Marescandoli, 1680.
- Echo cortese parte seconda con l'Iride postuma o vero varj residui di diversi componimenti di Michel' Angelo Torcigliani*. Lucca: Marescandoli, 1681.
- Echo cortese parte terza con la parte seconda dell'Iride postuma. Sono nuovi avanzi di altri componimenti di Michel' Angelo Torcigliani*. Lucca: Paci, 1683.
- Virgil. *L'Eneide di Virgilio*. Translated by Annibale Caro. Venice: Giunti, 1581.