

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE *ETERNAL-FEMININE* IN ROSSINI'S *L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI*: ISABELLA AS THE ITALIAN SUPER-WOMAN

EL PRINCIPIO DEL ETERNO FEMENINO EN LA ITALIANA EN ARGEL DE ROSSINI: *ISABELLA COMO LA SUPER-MUJER ITALIANA*

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Abstract:

The term *Eternal-Feminine*, or *Das Ewig-Weibliche*, first appeared in the last verses of the second part of Goethe's *Faust* (completed 1832). It, subsequently, became the subject of speculation and a riddle which scholars have been trying to solve ever since. The term gradually came to represent a cultural principle regarding the image of femininity and it reached its Romantic apex, in the 19th Century, when various female archetypes were fused into a single heroine. The present article aims to explore Isabella's character in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri* in the light of the principle of the *Eternal-Feminine*. Although Goethe was still in the process of writing the second part of *Faust* when *L'Italiana* premiered (1813) in Italy, the cultural principle of the *Eternal-Feminine* can be used retrospectively in the analysis of Isabella as the central female protagonist of the opera. A thorough reading of her character suggests an aesthetic approach that makes use of certain Romantic aspects of the *Eternal-Feminine* principle. The present article focuses specifically on the *Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!* scene and briefly refers to other scenes as well.

Keywords:

Rossini; Culture-related analysis; *L'Italiana in Algeri*; *Eternal-Feminine*; Orientalism; Italian history; Risorgimento.

Resumen:

La expresión *Eterno Femenino* (*Eternal-Feminine*, o *Das Ewig-Weibliche*), apareció por primera vez en los últimos versos de la segunda parte del *Fausto* de Goethe (acabado en 1832). Posteriormente, se convirtió en tema de especulación, y en un enigma que los estudiosos han estado intentando resolver desde entonces. La expresión vino a identificar, con el paso del tiempo, un principio cultural relacionado con la imagen de la feminidad y alcanzó su extremo romántico, en el siglo XIX, cuando diversos arquetipos femeninos se fundieron en una sola heroína. El presente artículo pretende explorar el personaje de Isabella en *La italiana en Argel* de Rossini, a la luz del principio del *Eterno Femenino*. Aunque Goethe se encontraba todavía escribiendo la segunda parte de su *Fausto* cuando se estrenó *La italiana* (1813) en Italia, el principio cultural del *Eterno Femenino* puede utilizarse retrospectivamente en el análisis de Isabella como protagonista femenino central de la ópera. La lectura minuciosa de su personaje sugiere una aproximación estética que hace uso de ciertos aspectos románticos del principio del *Eterno Femenino*. El presente artículo se centra específicamente en la escena del *Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!* y se refiere brevemente, también, a otras escenas.

Palabras Clave:

Rossini; Análisis cultural; *La Italiana en Argel*; *Eterno Femenino*; Orientalismo; Historia italiana; Risorgimento.

INTRODUCTION

The term *Eternal-Feminine*, or *Das Ewig-Weibliche*, first appeared in the last verses of the second part of Goethe's *Faust* (completed 1832). It, subsequently, became a subject of speculation and a riddle which scholars have been trying to solve ever since. Ellis Dye recently stated that the term *Eternal-Feminine* raises more than one question and opens a horizon of interpretations¹. The term gradually came to represent a cultural principle regarding the image of femininity and it reached its romantic apex during the 19th century, when various female archetypes were fused into a single heroine².

Victor Hugo's poem, *Le Sacre de la Femme* (1858) marked a milestone in the development of this principle³. Hugo's poem revolutionized the fundamental principles underlying the concept of womanhood, which had already shifted as a result of the developments which had taken place in the 18th and 19th Centuries. In *Le Sacre de la Femme*, we find a felicitous union and cordial intermingling of all the portrayals of woman and the feminine from Biblical times and the period of ancient Greece, through early Christianity, to the Romantic era⁴. This cultural development of an accumulative character also found expression in the music of the 19th Century, when the *Eternal-Feminine* became a formative principle in compositional choices⁵.

The present article aims to explore the character of Isabella in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri* in light of the *Eternal-Feminine* principle. Goethe was still writing the second part of *Faust* when *L'Italiana in Algeri* premiered in Italy in 1813, so the term had not yet been coined. However, we believe it is pertinent to a retrospective analysis of Isabella as the heroine of the opera. A thorough reading of her character suggests an aesthetical approach which uses certain Romantic elements of the principle of the *Eternal-Feminine* regarding its accumulation of personality building and the re-definition of femininity.

Forty-five years before the publication of Hugo's poem, Rossini found the theme of an "Oriental" abduction opera (which was popular during the 18th and early 19th Centuries) appropriate for the valorization of an Italian heroine. The original libretto was first written by Angelo Anelli for Luigi Mosca's *L'Italiana in Algeri* (premiered in 1808, Milan), then re-written by Rossini (it is not known with whose help). The changes made by Rossini reflected, among other things, his desire to strengthen the character of Isabella⁶.

1 DYE, Ellis: "Figuration of the Feminine in Goethe's *Faust*", in *A Companion to Goethe's Faust*. (BISHOP, Paul, ed.). New York, Camden House, 2001, p.95. "The last words of Goethe's *Faust*, sung by a Chorus Mysticus, are: "Das Ewig-Weibliche/Zieht uns Hinan". These words raise many questions: Is there such an essence as "Das Ewig-Weibliche"? If so, what is it? Who can apprehend it, and in what way – a man through observation or a woman through self-reflection, or perhaps someone of either sex, by any of a variety of imaginative or introspective techniques? Must it be made visible by some example? Does the Eternal Womanly necessarily, as a manifestation of its essence, draw us "hinan" (and does "hinan" imply "onward" as well as "upward")? Or does it merely attract or "pull" accidentally from time to time, depending on circumstances?"

2 See ZAMIR, Sara: *The Study of the Principle of the Eternal feminine as an Aesthetic Declaration*. Phil.Diss., Bar Ilan University (High Distinction), 2004.

3 HUGO, Victor: *La Légende des Siècles*. Paris, Galimard, 1962, pp.19-25.

4 ANDERSON, Bonnie; and ZINSSER, Judith: *A History of Their Own, Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*. New York, Harper & Row, 1988, vol.1, p.54.

5 ZAMIR, Sara: *The Study...*, *op. cit.*, pp.4-28.

6 OSBORNE, Richard: "L'Italiana in Algeri", in *Grove Music Online* [Accessed 13 January 2010], <<http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.htm?section=opera.005901>>. These changes might be a result of Rossini's desire to glorify the great Spanish Singer, Isabella Colbran (using that name for a powerful heroine is perhaps not a mere coincidence, rather a straightforward allusion), whom he eventually married in 1822. A thorough discussion of Colbran's biography as well as her influence and her

As a result of these changes, Isabella emerged as a more rounded, complex character and as a clever, witty, beautiful and powerful woman. She cries and laugh, loves and mocks, and seems to be the only character in the opera to control the narrative. Isabella is also courageous and unafraid of her captor, the Turkish Bey. She manipulates everyone, male and female, in order to obtain the liberation of her lover Lindoro, herself and the Italian slaves. A politician as well, she arouses a sense of patriotic aspiration when singing *Pensa alla Patria*, prior to the climatic liberation scene toward the end of the opera.

Isabella's capture unusual story also contributes to her powers, as it results from a strange, unnatural event –the sudden drowning of her boat, which miraculously occurs close to where her lover, Lindoro has been captured and enslaved. Isabella is, thus, not really abducted. She seems to infiltrate into the Bey's harem on purpose, using an almost supernatural power to liberate her lover from captivity. She actually find her captivity amusing and pleasant and enjoys many moments of it, converting the abduction-liberation narrative into a farce. Her "captivity" therefore resembles more the heroine of Hugo's *La Captive* (*Les Orientales*, 1828 see poem below) than Mozart's Constanza⁷:

[...] J'aime de ces contrées
 Les doux parfums brûlants,
 Sur les vitres dorées
 Les feuillages tremblants,
 L'eau que la source épanche
 Sous le palmier qui penche,
 Et la cigogne blanche
 Sur les minarets blancs.

J'aime en un lit de mousses
 Dire un air espagnol,
 Quand mes compagnes douces,
 Du pied rasant le sol,
 Légion vagabonde
 Où le sourire abonde,
 Font tournoyer leur ronde
 Sous un rond parasol [...] ⁸.

relations with the Spanish nobility is available in: HEILBRON FERRER, Marc: *Isabella Colbran: Un Soprano Spagnolo nella Sfera di Gioachino Rossini*. Phil.Diss., Università degli Studi di Bologna, 1999. ID.: "Isabel Colbran: una soprano española en el mundo de Gioachino Rossini", in *Anuario Musical*, 55 (2000), pp.155-197. ID.: "*Umilissimi, devotissimi servi*. Correspondencia de cantantes de ópera italiana con la Duquesa de Osuna", in *Anuario Musical*, 57 (2002), pp.199-227.

⁷ A similar happy captivity can be found as early as 1741 in the comic opera *The Happy Captive* by Lewis Theobald and John Ernest Galliard, discovered in 1996 by Richard G. King which is believed to be the earliest example of 18th Century abduction operas. For more details see KING, Richard G.:

"The first 'Abduction' Opera: Lewis Theobald's and John Ernest Galliard: 'The Happy Captive' (1741)", in *The Musical Quarterly*, 84/1 (2000), pp.137-163.

⁸ Trans. O'SULLIVAN, John L.: <http://www.fullbooks.com/Poemsx40552.html>

We suggest that the music of Isabella's arias in the opera was designed by Rossini to exhibit all aspects of her femininity, according to the dramatic situation. The variety of musical styles used in these arias thus contributes to a feminine profile which is a herald of the future Romantic Goethean concept of the *Eternal-Feminine*. To show that we will refer to Isabella's *cavatina: Cruda sorte!*, and briefly deal with *Per Lui che Adoro* and *Pensa alla Patria*.

L'Italiana in Algeri is clearly not a 19th Century Romantic opera, since German and French Romantic concepts were introduced to Italian culture at a much later period:

Romanticism, in the psychological or moral significance of the word, such as it possessed in Germany especially, did not exist in Italy in the period called Romantic. It did not exist and could not exist, not only because the Italian spirit was at that time occupied with other problems (national, political and social) but because in Italy its historical presuppositions were lacking: the religious reform, the mysticism, the philosophy, the poetic Middle-Ages, the myth and the legend. There were even lacking those weaknesses, those negative elements, that quality of turbidity, vagueness and disharmony, which afflicts the Germanic peoples. Even our national virtues prevented the flourishing of genuine Romanticism⁹.

Rossini's approach to Isabella's character is therefore not to be interpreted as Romantic, but rather as the outcome of his own aesthetics, and of certain social and political aspects which will be discussed below. There is, however, no contradiction between these contextual/contemporary parameters and the analytical approach we have chosen to apply, which belongs to the later decades of the 19th century.

... I love the burning odors
 This glowing region gives;
 And, round each gilded lattice,
 The trembling, wreathing leaves;
 And, 'neath the bending palm-tree,
 The gayly gushing spring;
 And on the snow-white minaret,
 The stork with snowier wing.
 I love on mossy couch to sing
 A Spanish roundelay,
 And see my sweet companions
 Around commingling gay,--
 A roving band, light-hearted,
 In frolicsome array,--
 Who 'neath the screening parasols
 Dance down the merry day...

9 CROCE, Benedetto, as cited in KIMBELL, David: *Italian Opera*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.398.

BUFFA OR SERIA - WHO CARES?

It would, perhaps. Seem inappropriate to imply Romantic aesthetics to a *buffa* opera. Nevertheless, Rossini's diverse operatic style and his shifts between *opera buffa* and *opera seria* have been noted by scholars, both in terms of his oeuvre in general and with regard to *L'Italiana*. His renowned biographer, Giuseppe Radiciotti, identified traces of Mozart and Cimarosa *buffe* in *L'Italiana* and oddly considered it an example of Rossini's operatic immaturity¹⁰ Philip Gosset has recently suggested that Rossini's frequent and freely mixing of *buffa* and *seria* musical features enriched the final result¹¹. Stendhal, in his famous biography of Rossini, alluded to this stylistic fusion suggesting that the audience instinctively felt a wholeness made of *buffa* and *seria*: "through the gale of laughter, the audience rose unanimously to its feet and cheered: *Sublime! Divine!*"¹².

In the light of these ideas, we believe that Beethoven's famous advice to Rossini to write *opere buffe* exclusively, since *opere serie* are not suited to the Italian language, is irrelevant today¹³. Carl Dahlhaus solution seems much more convincing, when he comments that Rossini's *serie* represented a new beginning in opera style. But, says Dahlhaus, there is nothing problematic in the *buffe-serie* mélange, since Rossini, did not transfer *seria* elements into *buffa*, he simply exaggerated the comic to the point that it became demonic:

The jokes of opera *buffa* become eerie when they are taken to extremes, and Rossini's forcedness gave his comic opera a touch of demonic... It is as though he used the same colors to paint in different genres... On the surface, this switching of genres can look like a mindless confusion of styles. It becomes intelligible when, without undue psychologizing, we conceive of Rossini's music as an expression of its moment in history... Something in his comic operas conveys the impression of being forced and causes their buffoonery to turn for an instant (an instant is all it takes) into the demonic¹⁴.

The technique of stylistic intermingling and certain extra-musical elements are perhaps essential for the formulation of a multi-dimensional feminine character such as Isabella. Some of these elements are discussed by Paolo Fabbri. Fabbri considers *L'Italiana* a modern version of 18th Century abduction themes and Isabella a modern version of the classical heroine. He characterizes Isabella as a powerful figure, particularly in comparison to the male figures around her, who are either cowards (Taddeo), *gentill*

10 As cited in KENDELL, Alan: *Gioacchino Rossini the Reluctant Hero*. London, Trafalgar Square, 1992, p.49.

11 GOSSET, Philip: "Rossini Gioachino", in *Grove Music Online*, (MACY, L., ed.). [Accessed 18th Dec. 2009] <http://www.grovemusic.com>

12 STENDHAL: *Life of Rossini*. (New and Revised Edition: COE, Richard N., translation and notes). London, Calder & Boyars, 1970, p.80. My Italics- to emphasize the Romantic terminology.

13 LIPPE, Marcus Chr.: *Rossini's Opere Serie*. Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005, p.11.

14 DAHLHAUS, Carl: *Nineteenth Century Music*. (ROBINSON, J. Bradford, trans.). Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, pp.63-64.

feminine (Lindoro), stupid (Mustafa), a community of harem-eunuchs or a bunch of *pappataci*. She will liberate all the Italian slaves and thus becomes a symbol for the “beloved mother country” –an esteemed value in the Jacobin republics that were established in Italy in 1796 and, particularly, in the later Italian republics of the *Reign of Italy* (1805-1814), when military service was compulsory¹⁵. Richard Osborne, accordant with Gosset believes that the patriotic aspect of Isabella’s *Pensa alla Patria*, towards the end of the opera, is characteristic of Rossini’s innovative *seria* style¹⁶. The fusion of both operatic styles to form a multifaceted character is then a reasonable aesthetic feature.

Since opera played a major role in urban Italian life of that time, it is not surprising to see a strong figure functioning as a national symbol, or as a forerunner to the aesthetics of the *Risorgimento*¹⁷. In a recent study, Francesco Izzo found solid evidence of a *Risorgimento* spirit in *opere buffe* well before 1848, so traces of patriotism and national pride in Rossini should come as no surprise¹⁸. In the social and, quite reactionary, political climate of Italy at this time, audiences would easily sympathize with a magnetic heroine who represented national aspirations. Since, by the 1820s, opera had become more political, and was viewed as a tool for creative dialogue between art and history, the national sub-text of the opera is pertinent¹⁹. These ideas accord with the process of transformation which opera underwent following the French Revolution. The new opera-goers, the urbanites or *bourgeoisie*, demanded more exciting dramas. As a result, and with the assistance of technical improvements, costumes and large orchestras, opera became a spectacle, which sublimated stories to higher spiritual levels. The process reached its peak in the great operas of Verdi and Puccini. On the historian background described above, and in the in the context of the re-definition of femininity resulted by her dramaturgy, Isabella integrates this evolutionary process, even though she belongs to a prior era²⁰.

It is no wonder that that re-definition had occurred on an African terrain, ruled by a Turkish Bey. The theme of the exotic Orient was part of late 18th-century and early 19th-century aesthetical developments, functioning, at first, as a popular decor for 18th Century abduction operas and later engendering a full-fledged 19th Century Romantic fantasy. During this period, a number of historical events contributed to transforming the perception of the Eastern world, from a threatening place to one of fascination and exoticism. Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt and the *Description de L’Égypte* series of volumes, Byron’s and Hugo’s representations of the Near East and the expansion of the imperialist powers supplied a new cultural background which made the unknown rationally familiar and emotionally fascinating and magic²¹.

15 *Ibid.*, p.59.

16 OSBORNE, Richard: “L’Italiana...”, *op. cit.*

17 DAVIS, John A.: “Opera and Absolutism in Restoration Italy, 1815-1860”, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxx-vi/4 (Spring, 2006), p.569.

18 IZZO, Francesco: “Comedy Between Two Revolutions: *Opera Buffa* and the *Risorgimento*, 1831-1848”, in *The Journal of Musicology*, 21/1(2004), pp.127-174.

19 WALTON, Benjamin: “Looking for The Revolution in Rossini’s *Guillame Tell*”, in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15/2 (2003), p.127.

20 DENT, Edward J.: *The Rise of Romantic Opera*. (DEAN, Winton, ed.). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.176.

21 LINDENBERGER, Herbert: *Opera in History*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, pp.169-170.

The exotic Orient is, therefore, the perfect setting for an Italian super heroine. In an exotic land, where the rule of law differs greatly from that of Europe, a powerful European woman could succeed in transforming herself from victim into victor, turning rules upside down. She can make Turkish men fantasize about *Le femmine d'Italia* and, at the same time, imparts the message that these women are too good for them. The plight of Italian men waiting to be rescued in Turkish-occupied Algeria provides a perfect setting for a strong female protagonist who will bring glory both to the oppressed fair sex and to oppressed Italy. In a recent article, Joseph Luzzi suggests an interesting point of view regarding the self-image of Italian *writers* in the period between 1775 and 1825. He notes that, since the status of Italian culture at this time was poor, it was reasonable for Italians to wish to glorify Italy by glorifying an Italian woman²².

It is quite agreed nowadays that the “Oriental” operas were not based on thorough research of Eastern cultures. Indeed, it was not necessary to know anything about Eastern music in order to compose an Oriental opera. One should only be acquainted with the contemporary Oriental fantasy, which was based on information extracted from the tales of pilgrims and travelers²³. Edward Said in his famous *Orientalism* has sharpened this point, saying that:

We need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself...because it is not even trying to be accurate... What it is trying to do... is at the same time to characterize the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager and actors are for Europe, and only for Europe²⁴.

It is therefore understandable that all those “exotic” plots and wonders are in fact described by typical contemporary European music, enriched with so-called “Eastern” decorations in the sense of the semiotic “topics” or signifiers.

Before turning to musical analysis, we would like to briefly examine the etymology of the name Isabella, since it appears to be a willful choice on the part of Rossini. The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of First Names* tells us that the name, Isabella, is, in origin, a Spanish version of the name Elizabeth, which derives from the Hebrew Elisheva (My God is my oath), and which was imported to France in the Middle Ages and adopted in royal courts. It is still a fashionable name among European royal families²⁵. The choice, by Rossini, of a royal name (not to mention the fact that it was also the name of Rossini's first wife, Isabella Colbran, married 1822) was a way of creating musical and vocal associations which would enhance the character as eventually performed on stage²⁶.

22 LUZZI, Joseph: “Italy without Italians: Literary Origins of a Romantic Myth”, in *Modern Language Notes*, 117(2002), p. 50.

23 SCOTT, Derek B.: “Orientalism and Musical Style”, in *Critical Musicology Journal* (1997). <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/music/info.critmus/articles/1997/02/01.html>

24 SAID, Edward W.: *Orientalism*. New York, Vintage Books, 1979, pp.71-72.

25 *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of First Names Online* [Accessed 5 Feb. 2010]. <<http://www.askoxford.com/firstnames/isabel?view=uk>>

26 POIZAT, Michael: *The Angel's Cry, Beyond The Pleasure Principle in Opera*. (DENNER, Arthur, trans.). Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992, p.147.

We shall examine Isabella's *Cruda sorte* (*cavatina*, Act I), and as mentioned above, will also refer to two other scenes: *Per lui che adoro* and *Pensa alla patria* (Act II). Even though Isabella dominates the dramatic narrative of the opera, these three scenes offer a representation of her musical performance, vocal virtuosity and variety of styles. These aspects will enable us to apply the accumulative principle of the *Eternal-Feminine* to the formulation of her character.

CRUDA SORTE! AMOR TIRANNO!

Coro e Cavatina - Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno! marks the first introduction of Isabella to stage, and demonstrates more than one facet of her character within the traditional structure and features of the early 19th Century Italian *cavatina*²⁷. It is not a mere coincidence that the *cavatina* is anticipated by the choir of the eunuchs who sing Isabella's praise as a beautiful Italian woman whom the Turkish Bey, Mustafa, will soon capture, together with the Italian slaves and goods from the wrecked ship. The music of the choir forms a contrast with the first notes, that follow, of Isabella's aria. With its pure C major tonality, rhythmic regularity (despite the frantic character of the orchestra part which hints at things to come), and balanced melodic phrasing, this section alludes to the opening scene of the opera when the choir anticipates Mustafa's first performance. But while, then, the connotation was with a comic situation and character, the choir now sets the stage for an emotional display of pain by a loving woman. After hearing Isabella's first notes and the spiritual energy of her music, it is clear that we are being presented with a personality who contrasts sharply with Mustafa. The choir section and Isabella's music are musically linked by a dotted rhythmic pattern, which appears early in the overture, in the oboe part (*Sinfonia*, rehearsal mark no.3 on). The music itself stresses the idea and (sexual) power of a female character who is very different from Mustafa, and from the male members of the choir.

Since the musical structure of the *cavatina* derives from its text, we feel it is useful to cite the full text, as follows:

Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!
 Questo é il premio di mia fé
 Non v'é orror, terror, n'affanno
 Pari a quell ch'io provo in me.
 Per te solo, o mio Lindoro,
 Io mi trovo in tal peroglio.
 Da chi spero, oh Dio, consiglio?
 Chi confort mi dara?

²⁷ "Cavatina", in *Grove Music Online* [Accessed, 5 Feb. 2010]. <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html.section=opera.00430>

Qua ci vuol disinvoltura.
 Non piu smanie, n'paura;
 Di coraggio é tempo adesso,
 Or chi sono si vedrá.

Gia so per pratica
 Qual sia l'effetto
 D'un sguardo languido,
 D'un sospiretto...
 So a domar gli uomini
 Come si fa.
 Sien dolci o ruvidi
 Sien flemma o foco,
 Son tutti simili
 Ap presso a poco...
 Tutti la chiedono
 Tutti la bramano
 Da vada femmina
 Felicita²⁸.

28 (USLU, Ates, trans.) <http://www.aria-database.com/> [Accessed Feb., 8, 2010].

Cruel Fate! Tyrannical Cupid!
 Is this the reward for my constancy?
 No horror, terror or anguish exists
 Compared to that which I now suffer.
 For you alone, my Lindoro,
 I find myself in such peril.
 From whom, oh God, can I hope for counsel?
 Who will give me comfort?

Keeping cool is what's wanted here,
 No more rages or terror:
 Now is the time for courage;
 Now they'll see who I am.
 From experience I already
 Know the effect
 Of a languishing look,
 Of a slight sigh...
 I know what to do
 To tame men.
 Be they gentle or rough,
 Cool or ardent,
 They're all alike.
 More or less...
 They all seek
 They all long for,
 From a pretty woman -
 Happiness.

The text is divided into three sections in terms of dramatic content. The first part (up to *Chi confort mi dará?*) describes Isabella suffering's due to the lengthy separation from her lover, Lindoro. The second part (starting at *Qua ci vuol disinvolata*) shows Isabella steeling herself and deciding how to proceed, while the third part (starting at *Gia so per pratica*) reveals her plan for resolving her plight. Rossini matches a different musical *affect* to each part of the aria, enabling Isabella to demonstrate different aspects of her personality, as well as her vocal abilities. We shall now examine the musical technique he uses for this purpose.

In the first part of the text, Isabella is a *donna amorata*, who is desperate to find her lover Lindoro, who was captured by the Turks, and is suffering as a result of the long separation. The captivity in which she, herself, suddenly finds herself arouses strong feelings of self pity and evokes the longing and yearning associated with stories of separated lovers. Even though we are dealing with *opera buffa*, this section does not have a sarcastic tone, nor is it comically exaggerated. On the contrary, it comes across as convincing, and seems to echo the theme of imprisonment of early 19th Century operas. As Stephen Meyer notes, the state of being imprisoned offered a setting in which "... the hero or the heroine's deepest fears and desires were most fully explored... As in so much of eighteenth and early nineteenth century literature, our attention is directed away from external action toward the internal drama within the prisoner's soul"²⁹.

The musical expression of Isabella's suffering and despair opens with an orchestral fanfare (rehearsal number 29)³⁰ which develops in the manner of a 17th Century French overture. The dotted rhythm, mentioned above, accords with the grave nature of the music and text, and is associated with royal fanfares. The pathos of the music is reinforced by Rossini's vocal choice: Isabella's role was written for a *contralto* and *Cruda Sorte* demonstrates how well the color of the voice fits her character. This first section of the aria is written for the lower part of the vocal range, with the exception of the words *oh Dio!* towards the end. The orchestral accompaniment is minimalistic, offering occasional fanfares during the vocal rests, for punctuation. It is the voice, therefore, which prevails and dominates this section. The harmony explores keys close to F major, the aria's principle key, and uses chromatic elements, such as diminished chords when dramatically required. An example of this are the words *da chi spero, oh Dio!* (from whom I hope, oh God!), where the vocal line and accompaniment create a diminished seventh chord. Another example is the rhetorical question *Questo el il premio di mia fe?* (Is this my reward?). Here, the orchestra implies D minor, but immediately resolves to Bb major and develops a diminished seventh at the word "terror".

As a result of these features, and the nature of the melodic contour, the general character of the vocal line is declamatory and the words are relatively easy to understand. This was certainly done on purpose, since Rossini's lyrics are usually more sonoric than verbal. In general, the affect conveyed by the text in the first section, and supported by the music, represents Isabella's "serious-emotional" side and demonstrates

29 MEYER, Stephen: "Terror and Transcendence in the Operatic Prison, 1790-181", in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 55/3 (2002), p.478.

30 Score used: ROSSINI, Gioachino: *L'Italiana in Algeri*. Vocal Score. Milano, Ricordi, 1953.

her spiritual and vocal energy. Against this dramatic/musical atmosphere, the *coloraturas* should not be solely interpreted as melodic ornamentations, characteristic of Rossini's style. They are, more, a tool to emphasize and accent particular words and thoughts, such as *provo* (suffer), and *chi conforto* (who will give me comfort). In addition, because of the general, declamatory quality of the music, the *coloraturas* function as an arena for vocal virtuosity, reinforcing Isabella's authority and abilities.

However, despite the recitative quality of the music, melodic *cantabile* moments are not absent, and are used to express Isabella's passion for Lindoro. The music which supports the words *per te solo, mio Lindoro* (for you alone, my Lindoro), resembles Lindoro's aria *Languir per una bella*, with its beautiful French horn *solo*, which he sang earlier on. Now, with Isabella's aria, the tonality becomes, for a brief moment, pure F major, and the accompaniment develops in an *Alberti-bass* manner, expressing softness, balance and tranquility. But the calm does not last long, for Isabella quickly returns to reality, after a few bars, and to the pain of not knowing when her love will be fulfilled.

Thus, within a relatively short amount of time, we have been introduced to both the powerful and the feminine-emotional side of Rossini's heroine. The audience has no idea what will come next –and this will indeed be a surprise, designed to reveal further aspects of Isabella's personality, and maintain dramatic tension. Before the next part of the aria in which Isabella expresses her plan to manipulate the Bey, the male choir, surprisingly, appears again (rehearsal number 31), to function as a divider between the two sections of the aria, and reinforce the difference between them. This division is supported by the fact that the music sung by the choir is markedly different from the introduction to the *cavatina*, which was relaxed and flowing. Now it adopts the style of Isabella's recitative, including dotted rhythm, high volume, orchestral fanfares and a strong sense of dramatic tension. The thematic material sung by the choir repeats Mustafa's theme from the beginning of the opera (rehearsal mark 22 on Ex. No. 1), when he sang of women's arrogance and praised the charms of his wife Elvira in his attempt to dispense with her.

Ex. No. 1: Rehearsal mark 22 on-Mustafa sings about his wife's virtues

Musical score for Ex. No. 1, showing a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are: "tro - vi tutto in ques - ta so - - - la, tro - vi tutto in ques - ta so - la, è una".

Choir singing: "A piece of cake for Mustafa" : *Cruda Sorte*

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Tenors (Ten.) and the middle staff is for Basses (Bassi). The piano accompaniment is at the bottom. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the dynamics are 'f'. The lyrics are: 'Èun boc - con per Mu - sta - fà èun boc - con èun boc'. A rehearsal mark '31' is placed at the beginning of the piano part.

In addition, the text sung by the choir completely contradicts the *affect* created by the music, when it sings *È un boccon per Mustafa*, meaning, that Isabella is a *piece of cake* for Mustafa and will soon replace Elvira in the Bey's bed. The "dissonance" between the musical theme of the short choral section and its mocking text, expresses a challenge to Isabella and her plan to manipulate Mustafa. The music is thus posing a question: will Isabella succeed in carrying out her conspiracy? At the same time, the second part of the aria enables us to discover new facets of Isabella's personality: her sophistication, wit and resourcefulness. These facets are made even more prominent both by the preceding recitative and the choir section, just discussed. The nature of the choral music, here, can also be understood as a cynical allusion to the impotence of the male figures, a fact which sharpens Isabella's determination and predicts her victory as the invincible *Italiana*.

Rossini, here, is using the choir-aria-choir-aria format as a dramatic device. The peaceful, opening choir contrasts with the declamatory first part of the aria. The second choral section both reminds the audience of the declamatory first part and introduces the middle section of the aria, when Isabella declares that she needs to apply *disinvoltura* and *coraggio*. While she gathers her strength, her musical style combines elements from the first part of the aria, in which she spoke of her suffering and love, with a new lightness. The familiar orchestral fanfares and *parlando* melodic contour can still be heard, but the music becomes faster (*allegro* vs. *maestoso* referring both to *tempo* and to spirit), and the vocal range rises. Since this middle section is very short, it acts as a prelude to the active, final section. The second part of the aria can be viewed as a form of *tempo di mezzo* (using mid-19th Century terminology), that acts as a bridge between two different concepts: "being" and "doing".

Whatever the interpretation, by the end of the second section of the aria, it is clear that Isabella is a revolutionary character who is going to formulate a rescue plan; her plan will be witty and amusing, her

suffering will be left behind and a new Isabella will emerge. The music of the third section of the aria is written in a *buffa* style, which is reminiscent of the overture, and of Mustafa's *Delle donne l'arroganza* (rehearsal number 5). In this section, Isabella tells of her skills with men and expresses her confidence in her ability to manipulate them.

This confidence is harmonically symbolized in Rossini's treatment of F major. It should be noted that the first section of the aria features chromatic colorations of F major, which are used dramatically, while the second section is written primarily in the dominant key. This creates an aspiration for a resolution that is both tonal and emotional and the resolution is, indeed, satisfying in the final part of *Cruda Sorte*, for the tonic is established three times from rehearsal number 32 to 33, with perfect cadences. In addition, the orchestral accompaniment describes the different types of masculinity which Isabella sings about, through repetitions of ascending and descending F major figurations. This melodic movement is harmonized in I-V-I-V-I^{4/6} progressions, which reflect both the diversity of male types and Isabella's statement "they are all the same". This statement is a musical question-mark, an unresolved I^{4/6} chord, prolonged by a *fermata*, which leads to the punch line: "they all long for happiness from a pretty woman". The musical value of the punch line is great since it takes up half of the aria's final section, with constant repetitions of music and text, and special emphasis on the word, *felicità*, in the last bars.

As the *cavatina* moves towards the punch line, the repetitions become increasingly energetic in typical Rossini style, the orchestration and texture become richer and harsher, and a *poco più* instruction creates greater speed, with the approach of the final *felicità*. The harsh quality of this final part of the *cavatina* is typical Rossini, but it also makes an important contribution to Isabella's character. Harshness matches the dramatic power and emotional richness introduced previously in the *cavatina*. In addition, harshness and *coloraturas* enrich Isabella's vocal profile, giving her the opportunity to use her entire vocal range, and show off the vocal virtuosity of a *prima donna*. Vocal ability can be understood as a metaphor for strength and richness of personality in this *cavatina* as well as in opera in general.

PER LUI CHE ADORO, PENSA ALLA PATRIA

By the end of *Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!*, we, the listeners know that we are dealing with an exceptional, outstanding woman. Mustafa will take time before he understands this and lets Isabella free but, for the moment, he is solely impressed by her beauty and motivated by his desire. The end of the aria thus hints at the core of the plot: an *Eternal-Feminine* figure who hypnotizes *pappatacy*. We see, from the above analysis that the function of *Cruda Sorte* is to present a portrayal of Isabella and her principal characteristics. Some of these will be expanded and elaborated on later in the opera, notably, in the arias *Per lui che adoro* and *Pensa alla Patria*. *Pensa alla Patria* also underlines the patriotic aspect of Isabella's personality, and connects her to the national aspirations of Italians.

Our interest in *Per lui che adoro* will be to see how it functions in terms of enlarging Isabella's character. In many ways, it recalls *Cruda Sorte* and previous scenes, such as *Oh! Che musso, che figura!*

(Rehearsal number 57). Thus, layers to Isabella's character are added by Rossini as the opera proceeds. This eclectic development of her character matches the principle of the *Eternal-Feminine* which, as mentioned, fuses several feminine types within the character of a single female heroine.

Per lui che adoro is a twin piece to Lindoro's *cavatina* in the first act, *Languir per una bella* (Rehearsal number 14, Eb Major), in style and in emotional content, and its F Major key harmonically links it to *Cruda sorte!* The orchestral introduction, dominated by the flute (an instrument traditionally associated with love), conceptually resembles the introduction to Lindoro's *Cavatina* and its French horn *solo*. Rhythmic regularity and *Siciliana* tranquility are, also, common to the two arias. The delicate melody sung by Isabella is well balanced and harmonically stable. It covers the entire *mezzosoprano* vocal range, and is embellished with many melodic figurations and flowing *coloraturas*. These features refine and reinforce the *affect* of softness and tenderness, which recalls Lindoro's *Languir per una bella*. The music of *Per lui che adoro* allows Isabella, for a short moment, to be the archetype of the loving woman and to exchange her painful love for a simple expression of longing and love. The beauty of the two arias is immediately evident and provides the pleasure associated with beautiful music. Stephen Downes considers that Stendhal's attitude to musical pleasure, in particular, the music of Rossini, (as in Stendhal's well-known statement that "perfect music has the same effect on the heart as the presence of the beloved") can serve as a model for analytical approach. The music of *Languir per una bella* and *Per lui che adoro* indeed accords with Stendhal's concept of perfect music³¹.

Per lui che adoro enables us to learn more about the lyrical, naive aspect of Isabella's personality. This lyrical aspect was only briefly seen in *Cruda sorte*, (*per te solo, mio Lindoro*). Then Isabella spoke of love as the root of pain and suffering, now she sees it as a source of pleasant daydreaming. The background to *Per lui che adoro* is, accordingly, a little unnatural since Isabella is dressed as a Turkish woman and Lindoro is unable to identify her. It would seem, then, that her love song is not aimed at him, but, rather, to the audience, functioning as a sort of self-observation, and sincere avowal. Isabella speaks of "lui" (him), and addresses Lindoro directly only in the second section of her song³², when she becomes active and resourceful again, moving from passivity to action. But, in view of the "super-woman" image which has been gradually built, from the beginning of the opera, a disguised situation is, perhaps necessary in order to allow Isabella to be emotional without seeming to lose her strength and control.

Her emotional state will not last long, though, for Isabella finds it hard to sustain the intrigue. The central part of the ternary *Per Lui che adoro* is thus completely different from the first and second sections with their feminine yearning, and is more of a stage for Isabella the actress, the "doing" lady. Here, she becomes sarcastic, strengthening her self-control by repeating *Guarda, guarda aspetta, aspetta, tu non sai chi sono ancor* as she addresses Lindoro through the audience, for he does not yet know her identity. As expected, the musical style is *buffa*-like, and fits Taddeo's and Mustafa's musical stereotypes.

31 DOWNES, Stephen: "Musical Pleasures and Amorous Passions: Stendhal, the Crystallization Process, and Listening to Rossini and Beethoven", in *Nineteenth Century Music*, 26/3 (2003), p.236.

32 First part: up to rehearsal number 18; second part: from rehearsal number 18 to 8 mms. Before rehearsal number 21, bridge; from the end of second part to number 21 third part; from rehearsal number 21 on.

The musical language then becomes harsh and noisy, until the end of *Turco caro*. It is amazing to see how Isabella changes personality so easily. Indeed, the dramatic purpose of the structural repetition seems to be to reinforce these changes. Isabella establishes her talents as an actress as she quickly shifts from a weepy *cantabile* to an insane *più mosso* (rehearsal number 21). Her natural ability to make herself part of her environment is expressed, now, not only in her clothes, but also in her music. She continues to demonstrate this ability with increased sophistication until she finally leads the Italians from captivity to their homeland, with the blessings of Mustapha, their captor.

It appears that Isabella's ability to blend into her social surroundings is the tool with which Rossini reveals her rich, colorful, eternal-like personality. In this respect, the music which Rossini wrote for Isabella, in its diversity and rapid, stylistic shifts, supports the idea of eternity. None of the other figures, male or female, in the opera are accorded such musical flexibility or strength: in contrast to Isabella, they are "flat" characters musically, and rather superficially characterized. Isabella stands out as a unique figure, and her uniqueness reaches a climax in *Pensa alla Patria*. After this aria, and close to the end of the opera, we realize that Isabella truly fulfills the Turkish vision of *Le Femmine d'Italia* as expressed by Haly and Mustafa. As they themselves remark, she is confident, smart, and a mistress in the art of love and inciting men to act according to her will. (There is a melodic allusion here to Papageno's *Ein Maedchen oder Weibchen*, which may be a sheer coincidence for, even though Rossini was acquainted with Mozart's operas, there is no evidence that he explicitly made such an allusion).

Rossini's political awareness is well known, and has been commented on by scholars, in respect of *Mosé in Egitto*, *Tancredi*, and particularly *Guillaume Tell* and *Il Viaggio a Reims*. While some scholars maintain that Rossini was first and foremost a musician, who gained enormous popularity even though he avoided personal involvement in Italian politics, one can detect traces of influence of nationalism in his operas, even in the *buffe*³³. In this context, *Pensa alla Patria* can be interpreted as a political aria, which both enriches Isabella's character and imparts to the audience the sense of collective patriotism which it desired. Stendhal commented on the shrewdness of such patriotic gestures on the part of Rossini, noting that: "Rossini knew his audience, read into its secret heart, and feasted its imagination on the delights which it carved"³⁴. *Pensa alla Patria* celebrates the triumph of a powerful woman over male nonentities, and that of an Italian over Orientals=foreigners. The political tone of the aria and its allusion to the superiority of Italians over primitive Orientals show that it was written to fulfill the lofty, patriotic feelings of the audience, by associating these feelings with Isabella³⁵. In this respect, we agree with Lucca Zoppelli and his comment that (any) "... audience, alerted by certain signals, perceives these extracts as 'products' of the characters, as events determined by them and not by the composer, who gives them voice but remains separate from them"³⁶.

33 ARBLASTER, Anthony: *Viva la Libertà! Politics in Opera*. London, Verso, 1992, p.69.

34 STENDHAL: *Life of Rossini...*, *op. cit.*, p.87.

35 In light of the complete absence of any sketches in his compositional process in general, *L'Italiana* included, it is clear that Rossini was determined to achieve this effect. GOSSET, Philip: "Gioachino Rossini and the Conventions of Composition", in *Acta Musicologica*, XLII/1-2 (1970), pp. 48-58.

36 ZOPPELLI, Lucca: "'Stage Music' in early Nineteenth Century Italian Opera", in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 2/1(1990), p. 30.

Like the first part of *Cruda sorte*, *Pensa alla Patria* is an extravagant show of power and control, pathos and patriotism, clichés and slogans. Following the declamatory introduction, and Isabella's festive declaration of faith and confidence, while rebuking foolish Taddeo who dares to laugh at such a dramatic moment, the music changes into E major (rehearsal number 61). Rossini used this key only once before, for Mustafa's *L'arroganza delle donne* in his first appearance in the opera. The key is remote from the tonal systems used for Isabella and Lindoro up to this point (F and Eb major). In addition, E major disappears immediately after *Pensa alla Patria*, when the music returns to the tonal area of Bb, after which the opera ends in D major. In our view, the striking tonal "isolation" of this aria is a sign of its importance and that it expresses universal values. The tonal reflection of Mustafa's aria, and exaggerated dramatic pathos (equal to Mustafa's *L'arroganza*), complete a circle of associations and portray Isabella as an absolute ruler like Mustafa, and as the "arrogant woman". *Pensa alla Patria* elevates Isabella from a suffering, loving woman and sarcastic manipulator of individual lives, to a national leader, equal to Mustafa in his court, and even more powerful. She does not speak only of her faith, but also of a public destiny, as the leader of the Italians who were taken into captivity by a hostile, stupid governor. As she strives to victory, she vaunts her musical virtuosity, and does not seem ridiculous even though she sings with a choir of eunuchs.

CONCLUSION

With regard to the principle of the *Eternal-Feminine*, *Pensa alla Patria* represents the final polish to Isabella's multi-dimensional personality, fusing love, courage and patriotism, with mockery and cynicism. In light of Italy's weak position following the Napoleonic wars, when the country was divided between France and Austria, the portrayal of a powerful Italian woman would have been very appealing to an Italian audience. At the end of *L'Italiana in Algeri*, the eternal woman is associated with the vision of eternal Italy, and the liberation of Italian slaves without bloodshed must have been a highly attractive image in the political context of the time.

In conclusion, we recommend further research on Rossini in the context of extra-musical modern ideas and concepts, as we believe that there is a deeper sub-text in his music than previously assumed. Rossini's stylistic flexibility, sensitivity and mastery of the art of musical drama possess a unique modern quality.

Recibido: 15/10/2010

Acceptado: 02/06/2011