

MARIA THERESIA AND THE ‘CHINESE’ VOICING OF IMPERIAL SELF: THE AUSTRIAN CONTEXTS OF METASTASIO’S CHINA OPERAS

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ABSTRACT

*Pietro Metastasio’s two librettos featuring ostensibly Chinese subject matter, *Le cinesi* (1735, revised 1749) and *L’eroe cinese* (1752), came into being during a period of crisis in the Holy Roman Empire, as the reigning Habsburg dynasty confronted a war of succession motivated by resistance to the Empress Maria Theresia’s accession to the throne. This article investigates how Austria envisioned China and how this was used to voice notions of rightful political legitimacy at a time of grave threat to the continuance of a long-standing ruling house. It argues that idealized traits of the Chinese other such as loyalty, deference and wisdom furnished the basis for a reflexive critique that helped to bolster and renew a native imperial self. This stance of ‘dialogic monologism’ towards a foreign culture emerges in a detailed examination of the textual style of the two librettos, the musical characteristics of the settings performed in or near Vienna around the middle of the eighteenth century and the conditions of sponsorship of these performances.*

Pietro Metastasio’s output of twenty-seven *drammi per musica* and over one hundred texts in various other genres includes two works that feature ostensibly Chinese subject matter: *Le cinesi* (The Chinese Ladies) of 1735, revised in 1749, and *L’eroe cinese* (The Chinese Hero) of 1752. Linked by their shared geographical focus but highly contrasting in structure and narrative premise, the two librettos diversely embodied Austrian images of China during an era in which the ruling Habsburg monarchy faced an urgent crisis involving the accession to the throne of Empress Maria Theresia, eldest daughter of Charles VI, who died in 1740 without leaving a male heir. This article argues that the broad challenge to Maria Theresia’s political legitimacy, which took shape in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), represents a significant context for interpreting the settings of *Le cinesi* and *L’eroe cinese* performed in or near Vienna around the middle of the century. More specifically, it examines the discursive function of the China that Metastasio envisioned: as mouthpiece for expressing notions of imperial sovereignty and longevity, thereby bolstering a threatened dynasty’s sense of its inviolable self at a precarious stage of its history. However, this usage of a foreign culture also raises the question of what was to be gained by such a circuitous manner of expressing native concerns. In the following discussion I shall elaborate upon a thesis that idealized Chinese traits of loyalty, deference and wisdom formed part of a ventriloquistic strategy that facilitated discussion within the conformist and authoritarian Habsburg context, by assigning to fantasized others responsibility for the expression of critique. Furthermore, this strategy finds its concrete analogue in the notably self-referential character of both the text of the librettos and the music of settings of *Le cinesi* by Antonio Caldara (1735) and Christoph Gluck (1754) and of *L’eroe cinese* by Giuseppe (Joseph) Bonno (1752), as detailed analyses below will aim to demonstrate.

The case study presented here seeks to illuminate a distinctive set of problems surrounding the interchange between Europe and China during the early modern period, especially the discursive phenomenon of a monologic stance posing as a dialogic one. The conceptual framework I adopt draws its inspiration chiefly

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from the postcolonial critiques of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Robert J. C. Young and others who have extensively theorized the complex dynamics of intercultural encounters.¹ Among the many useful viewpoints offered by their work, an emphasis on alterity as an inevitable dimension of human experience particularly informs my arguments. Since no mode or paradigm of understanding possesses an unbounded capacity to interpret all reality, any culture or individual necessarily confronts what Said calls ‘the assault on it of untreated strangeness’ – that is, the existence of domains of unaccountable otherness that expose the limits of the self’s familiar world.² Acknowledging the tension engendered by the incompatibility of other and self – two entities that resist integration – is fundamental to any investigation of an increasingly globalized world.³

Within the realm of musicological research concerned with the eighteenth century, studies of alterity have frequently relied upon Said’s analysis of the ideological underpinnings of the East–West binarism, whereby the division of humanity into two unequal halves serves as a technique of confronting a foreign threat, through implied assertion of Europe’s civilization vis-à-vis a rival such as the Ottoman Empire.⁴ Such a conceptual model less successfully clarifies the West’s reception of China during this period, however, because of the latter’s status as a powerful yet extremely distant kingdom with little immediate presence (at least before the nineteenth century) and thus a ready subject for fanciful imagination. The particular form of cross-cultural interaction exemplified by the ‘vision of Cathay’ entailed fantasized interchange with others, manifesting a practice of ‘dialogic monologism’ whose true orientation pointed inwards.⁵ This merely apparent outreach beyond the confines of self represents a problem of voicing that Spivak analysed with trenchant insight in her celebrated essay of 1988, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’. Regarding the habit of inner discourse among multiple fictive identities as a defining trait of elite consciousness in recent centuries, Spivak questioned whether decentring necessarily occurs as a result of reflexive self-displacement by proposing their essential contribution to an opposite process: ‘The much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject.’⁶ Taking this remark as its point of departure, the following discussion posits that the seemingly laudatory depiction of the Chinese in Metastasio’s *Le cinesi* and *L’eroe cinese* is in fact more concerned with constructing the ideal Austrian subject as embodied by Maria Theresia. The two librettos and their settings by Caldara, Gluck and Bonno illustrate a kind of interrelationship with foreign peoples different from the antagonistic duality of Orient and Occident; rather, they highlight the modern problem of a dialogue which aggressively transforms its interlocutors into covert mouthpieces for a dominant self

1 Of particular relevance to the present article are Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313; and Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

2 Said, *Orientalism*, 67.

3 To emphasize this division in no way proposes that it is static and not susceptible to modification. Thus, for example, the essential fluidity of the space between other and self forms the hallmark of Homi Bhabha’s theory of cultural hybridity, as elaborated in his chapter ‘The Commitment to Theory’, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 28–56.

4 Said, *Orientalism*, 3. A representative selection of the critical literature on janissary music of the eighteenth century includes Nasser Al-Tae, *Representations of the Orient in Western Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 123–160; Thomas Betzwieser, *Exotismus und ‘Türkenoper’ in der französischen Musik des Ancien Régime* (Laaber: Laaber, 1993); Margaret Griffel, ‘“Turkish” Opera from Mozart to Cornelius’ (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1957); Matthew Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart’s Turkish Music* (London: Royal Musical Association, 2000); Mary Hunter, ‘The Alla Turca Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio’, in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 43–73; Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 110–126; and Eric Rice, ‘Representations of Janissary Music (*Mehter*) as Musical Exoticism in Western Compositions, 1670–1824’, *Journal of Musicological Research* 19/1 (1999), 41–88.

5 See Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961).

6 Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, 272.



and redirects the potential centrifugal force of intercultural exchange into a strengthening of the monologic temperament.⁷



Maria Theresia's personal involvement with Metastasio's China operas began when she sang one of the principal roles in a performance on 21 February 1735 of the setting by the imperial Vice-Kapellmeister Antonio Caldara (1671–1736) of *Le cinesi*, a one-act entertainment that at the time was entitled only *Componimento drammatico che introduce ad un ballo cinese*.⁸ According to the *Zeremonialprotokolle* of the court – which provide descriptive accounts of diplomatic, religious and festive occasions deemed worthy of preservation in an official written record – this performance took place in the 'Stiegl=Zimmer' (possibly a Spiegel-Zimmer or mirror room) of the reigning Empress Elisabeth Christine's private chambers in the imperial palace or Hofburg. The protocols further note the adornment of the space with 'Lackierten Indian[ischen] Wänden' (lacquered Indian walls).⁹ The art historian Michael Yonan has clarified that the eighteenth-century Austrian usage of 'indianisch' as well as of 'japanisch' and 'chinesisch' referred to Asia in general, and the mention of lacquer makes a Chinese décor a certainty, as naturally fits the subject matter of Metastasio and Caldara's chamber opera.¹⁰ Lacquer would make a reappearance in 1754, when a new setting by Christoph Gluck (1714–1787) of the revised version of the libretto, now entitled *Le cinesi*, formed a part of four days of opulent festivities sponsored by the Austrian imperial field marshal Prince Joseph Friedrich von Sachsen-Hildburghausen in honour of the imperial family and held at his palace of Schloss Hof, some thirty kilometres to the east of Vienna.¹¹ With regard to the *ballo cinese* that followed the 1735 performance at the Hofburg, the ceremonial protocols record that this consisted specifically of a 'Masquirter Tanz' (masked dance).¹² The exotic aspect of the evening as a whole thus came particularly to the forefront in this ball, whose participants evidently wore Chinese masks. In 1752, the performances at Schönbrunn Palace of *L'eroe cinese* in the setting by Giuseppe Bonno (1711–1788) also featured exotic dance in the form of two entr'actes, the first 'Chinese' and the second 'Tartar'.¹³ Hence the various Austrian incarnations of Metastasio's China librettos over a period of nearly two

7 I do not intend to suggest that this more assimilationist model of intercultural interaction is wholly inapplicable to the Turkish example. Thus, for instance, Matthew Head discusses the element of reflexive critique in the third movement of Mozart's Violin Concerto in A major, K219, according to such a conceptual framework; see his *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music*, 11–14.

8 This is the title which appears in published editions of Metastasio's works before 1754 – for example, *Opere Drammatiche Del Sig. Abate Pietro Metastasio . . . Volume Quarto* (Venice: Giuseppe Bettinelli, 1747). For convenience, I shall consistently refer to the libretto and all of its settings as *Le cinesi*. According to Michael Talbot, the term 'componimento' indicates a "composition", usually in reference to a dramatic poem to be set to music as a serenata. It occurs with particular frequency in the repertory of the Viennese court during the Baroque period. 'Componimento', in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (8 May 2015).

9 Zeremonialprotokolle, 1735–1738 (Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, OMeA ZA-Prot. 16), f. 7v.

10 Michael Yonan, 'Veneers of Authority: Chinese Lacquers in Maria Theresa's Vienna', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37/4 (2004), 657.

11 Reported by Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf in his *Lebensbeschreibung: Seinem Sohne in die Feder diktiert* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1801), 79.

12 Zeremonialprotokolle, 1735–1738, f. 8r.

13 Rudolf von Khevenhüller-Metsch and Hanns Schlitter, eds, *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias: Tagebuch des Fürsten Johann Josef Khevenhüller-Metsch, kaiserlichen Oberhofmeisters 1742–1776*, volume 3: 1752–1755 (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1910), 33. Khevenhüller-Metsch mentions these dances only in connection with the first performance of *L'eroe cinese* on 13 May and not with the three further performances, which, however, may be reasonably presumed not to have omitted the entr'actes. A special addendum to the issue of 12 October 1754 of the *Wienerisches Diarium* provides a lengthy account of the festivities at Schloss Hof Palace and reports a dance following Gluck's opera, but without details that would necessarily suggest an exotic character. The site of the ball is described as follows: 'Nach solch Chinesischer Opera verfügten Sich die Allerhöchsten Herrschaften in einen mit vielen Spiegeln auch Crystallinen Hang= und Wand=leuchtern auf das herrlichste ausgeziert= und ungemein= prächtig=beleuchteten Saal, in welchen Dieselbe



decades embodied a conspicuous visual and theatrical *chinoiserie*. However, this outward manifestation of a distancing exoticism represents only one facet of a comprehensive dialectical process whereby the foreign became assimilated within the native in Metastasio's two texts and their operatic realizations.

The story of *Le cinesi* concerns three purportedly Chinese ladies who, in order to while away some leisure time, decide to perform samples of each of three prevalent European operatic genres of the day and to judge their relative merits. The extant manuscript score of Caldara's setting in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, notes the singers who participated in the private performance of 1735. Maria Theresia, at the time eighteen years old, sang the role of Lisinga, who presents an example of serious opera, while her younger sister Maria Anna and a 'Contessa Fixin' (probably the Countess Karoline von Fuchs-Mollard) took on the roles of Sivene and Tangia, assigned pastoral and comic opera respectively.¹⁴ The evaluation leads to a preference for none of the three genres, each of which demonstrates its own particular flaw: excessive passion (serious), insufficient diversity (pastoral) and too acerbic a view of human character (comic). Instead, preference is given to dance, 'che non fa pianger, non secca e non offende' (which does not cause tears, does not bore and does not offend).

The conceit in *Le cinesi* of the characters assuming the identities of Chinese ladies in order to assess the virtues and faults of an allegedly foreign European art form underscores the dialectical phenomenon of self-othering, a figurative or actual wearing of alien masks in order to represent and explore the self in ways not possible by more conventional means.¹⁵ The question arises as to how the cross-cultural impersonation specifically enhances the meta-operatic aspect of the work, achieving a goal less easily attainable by characters openly acknowledged as Westerners. In addition to the enjoyment of striking and unusual artifice, which is not peculiar to any particular era or locale, it must have been eighteenth-century Europe's idealized view of China as a nation that deeply cultivated knowledge and learning that prompted the 'Sinicizing' of an act of self-critique within an elite Austrian context.¹⁶ The ramifications of this complex approach of one culture to another would only intensify in the coming years.

As previously noted, Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor since 1711 and Maria Theresia's father, died in 1740 without leaving a male heir. This circumstance sparked the century's second major war of succession, the first having occurred following the decease in 1700 of another Habsburg monarch, Charles II of Spain, whose extensive physical infirmities had rendered him incapable of producing children. In the earlier conflict, which eventually resulted in a favourable outcome for the House of Bourbon, the future Charles VI figured as a central participant, aspiring and ultimately failing to attain the title of Spanish king. As holder of the

Sich einige Stunden mit Tanzen unterhielten.' (Following this Chinese opera the most high nobility availed themselves of a hall which was decorated very splendidly and illuminated with exceptional magnificence by numerous mirrors as well as crystal lights hanging from the ceiling and walls, in which these noble personages entertained themselves in dance for several hours.)

14 A-Wn Mus. Hs. 17597. In the ceremonial protocols for 1735 the court lady is identified as 'die Kay:^{er} Cammer=Freyle Gräfin Füchsin' (f. 7v).

15 The notion of self-othering is one developed by Stuart Hall to describe a crucial dimension of the experience of colonization: 'They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as "Other".' See his 'Cultural Diaspora and Identity', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225. As applied in the present article to Metastasio's China operas, the concept is more aligned with a voluntary practice of masquerade for the purpose of constructing an identity of self. Studies of this phenomenon related to eighteenth-century culture include Simon During, 'Rousseau's Patrimony: Primitivism, Romance and Becoming Other', in *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 47–71, and Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music*, chapter 4, 'Turkish Music, Masquerade and Self-Othering', 90–111.

16 David E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800*, fourth edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 12: 'During the period 1500–1800, the predominant image of China was captured in the sagely Confucius (551–479 BC) . . . By contrast, one of the most common images of the period 1800–2000 was the hostile depiction of John Chinaman, a vicious-looking, pigtailed Chinese male with long nails.'



Roman imperial title in Vienna, he issued the edict known as the Pragmatic Sanction in 1713 with the aim of ensuring recognition of a daughter as his successor in case of such need and thereby of avoiding further catastrophic loss of the Habsburgs' dominions. Despite Charles's apparent success in gaining the agreement of other leading European powers to this measure, war nonetheless ensued upon his death, and Maria Theresia could not win general acceptance of her legitimate status as empress until 1748, with the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. As negotiations for the cessation of hostilities progressed, a staging of Metastasio's *Semiramide riconosciuta* in a new setting by Gluck took place on the occasion of the reopening of the imperial court theatre or Burgtheater in Vienna. Gerhard Croll has remarked on the topical character of this performance: the tale of Semiramide, Queen of Assyria, who by disguising herself as her own son has ascended to the throne previously occupied by her consort, allegorically represented the contemporary situation of a female monarch struggling for acknowledgment within a patriarchal ruling culture.¹⁷ In the immediate wake of the Austrian succession crisis, opera's appropriation of the East thus served as a means by which to explore difficult issues of political legitimation.

In late 1751 or early the following year, Maria Theresia ordered a new *dramma per musica* for festivities planned to celebrate her thirty-fifth birthday on 13 May 1752.¹⁸ This resulted in yet another Eastern-themed work and the second of Metastasio's two China librettos, *L'eroe cinese*. In a letter of 18 February to his good friend Carlo Broschi, known as Farinelli or il Farinello, the poet cheekily deplored being limited to 'storie orientali' and the consequent lack of opportunity to contrast virtue and vice, because of the propriety of Orientals with regard to dress. This in fact suited the female singers of the opera's cast, who would not have to display their limbs since they would conveniently be playing male characters: 'affinché i braconi e gli abiti talari di quelle nazioni involupino i paesi lubrici delle mie attrici, che rappresentano parti da uomo' (so that the large trousers and the priests' cassocks of those nations would cover the lubricious regions of my actresses, who play male roles).¹⁹ Elena Sala di Felice has persuasively demonstrated that *L'eroe cinese* manifests a deeply Sinophilic attitude corresponding to Metastasio's rationalist-Deist outlook, which naturally found appeal in a Confucian socio-political ethos regarded as free of the superstitions of divine revelation.²⁰ In addition, the story of a faithful Chinese minister who voluntarily sacrifices his own son in order to preserve the rightful dynastic house offered its own vividly pointed commentary in relation to the opposition faced by Maria Theresia in assuming the throne of the Habsburg monarchy. In order to construct this specific allegorical message, Metastasio drew upon the historical account of the Chinese emperor Li Vang (King Li of Zhou, reigned 857/853–842/828 BC) that appears in Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's 1735 *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*. This was a four-volume encyclopedia of then-current European knowledge of the Middle Kingdom compiled from the reports of Jesuit missionaries by a member of the order, though not one who had himself travelled to China. As related in this work, a popular uprising overthrew the cruel and tyrannical Li Vang and demanded the killing of his infant heir, Suen Vang (King Xuan of Zhou, reigned c827/825–782 BC), but Tchao Kong, a high-court official and later regent, turned over his own boy in place of the

17 See Gerhard Croll, 'Glucks Debut am Burgtheater: *Semiramide riconosciuta* als Festoper für die Wiedereröffnung des Wiener Burgtheaters 1748', in *Gerhard Croll: Gluck-Schriften. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge 1967–2002*, ed. Irene Brandenburg and Elisabeth Richter (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003), 97–103, and also Milada Jonášová, 'Semiramide riconosciuta: Eine Oper zur Prager Krönung Maria Theresias 1743', *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 56 (2009), 53–120, which discusses an earlier setting of Metastasio's libretto, by an unknown composer or composers, performed at the 1743 coronation in Prague of Maria Theresia as Queen of Bohemia.

18 Metastasio mentions the new libretto for the first time in letters of 9 January 1752 to his elder brother Leopold Trapassi and to Antonio Tolomeo Trivulzio.

19 Text cited from Bruno Brunelli, ed., *Tutte le opere di Pietro Metastasio*, volume 3 (Milan: Mondadori, 1951), 714. I am indebted to Professor Giorgio Biancorosso of the University of Hong Kong for his assistance in the translation of this passage.

20 Elena di Sala Felice, 'Delizie e saggezza dell'antica Cina secondo Metastasio', in *Opera e libretto II*, ed. Gianfranco Folena, Maria Teresa Muraro and Giovanni Morelli (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 85–106, especially 105.



dauphin to a murderous crowd who were unaware of the substitution, and witnessed the child's slaughter with his own eyes.²¹ While serving as interim ruler, he took on the role of surrogate father to Suen Vang, biding time until that point when he could finally secure recognition of the latter as the authentic Son of Heaven.²² To this narrative of extraordinary loyalty, Metastasio added the refusal of the minister, whom he renamed Leango, to accept the position of emperor for himself though the populace clamours for him to do so, following years of his successful governance as regent.²³ Thus the heroism referred to in the libretto's title consists not in any martial or military feats, but in an unequivocal fidelity to a divinely ordained ruling house. Few spectators of the opera in 1752 could have missed the particular relevance of such a tale to an empress who had recently confronted the emphatic denial of her right to hold the Austrian monarchical title.

The primary documentary sources that provide accounts of the first performance of *L'eroe cinese* report the presence of three foreign ambassadors among the audience members: Fabrizio Serbelloni, Emmanuel Dieudonné (Marquis de Hautefort) and Pietro Beccadelli (Prince of Camporeale), representing the Papal States, France and Naples respectively (see Figure 1, which reproduces the description in the court protocols of the event, including a diagram of the seating placement of the empress, emperor and principal guests).²⁴ The opera's imperative to its viewers to adopt a proper stance of deference towards a now acknowledged monarch, transmitted in the guise of a matchless instance of 'Chinese' fealty, therefore reached beyond Maria Theresia's own subjects to include a noteworthy set of eminent international guests.²⁵ The location of the performance may have contributed as well to fulfilling the ideological aims underlying the celebration of the empress's thirty-fifth birthday. Schönbrunn Palace, situated outside Vienna's central city walls and remodelled during the mid-eighteenth century from an imperial hunting lodge into the resplendent new summer residence of the Habsburg family, functioned as a powerful visual emblem of Maria Theresia's secure position upon the Austrian throne following years of conflict and uncertainty. Its interior space features a

21 The estimated years of King Li's and King Xuan's reigns are taken from Edward L. Shaughnessy, 'Calendar and Chronology', in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25.

22 Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* . . . (Paris: P. G. Lemercier, 1735), volume 1, 316–318. Metastasio mentions his debt to this account in the *argomento* of the libretto of *L'eroe cinese*. In China as in Europe, imperial rule was legitimated through the concept of divine right.

23 Du Halde's *Description* also contains a translation by the Jesuit father Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare of an alternative version of the story, the *Zhaoshi gu'er* or 'Orphan of Zhao' attributed to the thirteenth-century playwright Ji Junxiang. This translation is entitled 'Tchao chi cou ell, ou le petit orphelin de la maison Tchao. Tragédie chinoise' and appears in the third volume of the compendium. In Ji's telling, the narrative becomes a tale of vengeance involving two rival families, the Zhao and the Tu, the latter of which attempts to seize the imperial throne through murder of the former but is eventually met with a violent retribution. Adrienne Ward has noted that Metastasio probably knew Ji's version yet avoided the element of revenge in his own libretto because it did not suit his aim of depicting heroic fidelity and deference. See Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 103 and also 111–114, which compares *L'eroe cinese* with Voltaire's *L'orphelin de la Chine*, first performed in Paris in 1755.

24 Zeremonialprotokolle, 1751–1752 (Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, OMeA ZA-Prot. 23), f. 557v–558r; *Wienerisches Diarium*, 17 May 1752; Khevenhüller-Metsch and Schlitter, *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias*, 32.

25 On the supposed Chinese inclination towards submissiveness and obedience for the sake of greater social harmony, Du Halde writes, 'Leur anciens sages ont été convaincus, que ce profond respect qu'on inspire aux enfans pour leur parens, les rend parfaitement soumis: que cette soumission entretient la paix dans les familles: que cette paix qui régné dans les familles particulieres, produit le calme & le tranquillité dans les villes: que ce calme empêche les révoltes dans les provinces, & met l'ordre dans tout l'Empire.' (Their ancient sages were convinced that this deep respect which is inculcated in children for their parents renders them perfectly submissive, that this submission maintains peace in the family, that this peace which reigns in individual families produces calm and tranquillity in the cities and that this calm prevents rebellion in the provinces and promotes order throughout the empire.) *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, volume 2, 146.

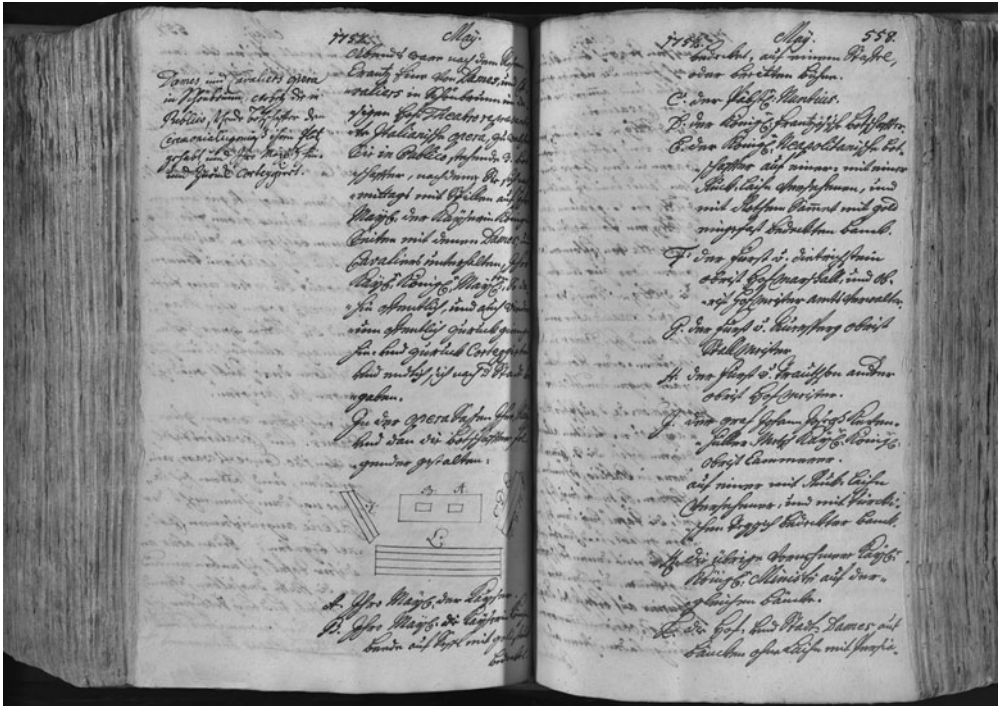


Figure 1 Description of the first performance on 13 May 1752 of Giuseppe (Joseph) Bonno, *L'eroe cinese* (Zeremonialprotokolle, 1751–1752, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, OMeA ZA-Prot. 23, fols 557v–558r), with seating diagram and listing of principal audience members: A. Emperor Franz Stephan, B. Empress Maria Theresia, C. Fabrizio Serbelloni, papal nuncio, D. Emmanuel Dieudonné (Marquis de Hautefort), ambassador of France, E. Pietro Beccadelli (Prince of Camporeale), ambassador of Naples, F. Prince Dietrichstein, G. Prince Auersperg, H. Prince Trautson, J. Count Johann Joseph Khevenhüller-Metsch, K. other ministers ('die übrige Vornehmere Kayl:^r Königl:^r Ministri'), L. court and city ladies ('die Hof- und Stadt: Dames'). Used by permission

number of rooms decorated in an exotic manner, among them the celebrated Vieux-Laque-Zimmer, which served as a reception chamber for distinguished foreign personages awaiting an audience with the empress and on whose walls hung numerous lacquered Chinese panels surrounding portraits in Western style of members of the imperial family. In a letter to Prince Joseph Wenzel Liechtenstein, Maria Theresia remarked that 'All the diamonds in the world are nothing to me. Objects made in India, especially lacquered woods . . . are the only things that give me pleasure.' ('Rien au monde tous les diamants ne me sont rien, mais ce qui vient des Indes, surtout le laque et même la tapisserie, sont les seules choses qui me font plaisir.'²⁶) Michael Yonan has argued that lacquer held a particular attraction for the empress because its durability and transformation of wood into a permanent material, incapable of decay, lent it an essential symbolic value in an ideological programme of dynastic longevity. The international visitors thus gazed at artworks not only of exotic character but also of profound local significance, an experience not dissimilar to that of the ambassadors who attended the performance of *L'eroe cinese*, though in the instance of the Vieux-Laque-Zimmer the European dimension is 'unmasked' by the inclusion of the portraits. Yonan summarizes his analysis as follows: 'If we take as a starting point the claim that this room is a statement about Habsburg

²⁶ This passage from the letter is cited and translated in Yonan, 'Veneers of Authority', 653 and 668, note 2.



dynastic vigor, then that statement relies partially upon the Far East in order to convey its message.²⁷ At Schönbrunn, theatrical and visual media employed in an orientalist manner reflected an inward-looking orientation as much as a facing outwards towards the world at large; or, rather, they fully assimilated otherness within their original cultural paradigms. This monologism also characterized the performance in 1735 of *Le cinesi* in the Hofburg's Mirror Room and that of 1754 at Schloss Hof Palace.

In 1749 Metastasio revised the libretto of *Le cinesi* in fulfilment of a request from Farinelli, who intended to present the work for the name-day celebrations of King Ferdinand VI of Spain.²⁸ The principal modification to the text consisted of the addition of Silango, brother of Lisinga and lover of Sivene, who has just returned from travels in Europe. This new character introduced a disruptive element into the scenario which undercut not only the plot's conceit of a superior Chinese vantage point but also the very premise of the theatrical situation – namely, the assumption of fictive identities. During the opening recitative, following the ladies' decision to carry out an examination of the different operatic genres, which would itself entail role-playing and thus the figurative wearing of masks, Silango's unexpected intrusion sparks a protest against the impropriety of his male presence, to which he responds with a mordant comment upon Chinese social mores: 'Ma è una follia cinese' (But it is a Chinese folly).²⁹ Shortly afterwards he offers a comparably trenchant opinion of the planned evaluation by alleging that China lacks the operatic form, which only Europe could claim to possess.³⁰ The subverting effect of Metastasio's revision extended into the presentation of samples of each genre: the segment devoted to the pastoral category expanded into a pair of arias, one each for Silango (as the shepherd Tirsi) and Sivene (as the shepherdess Licori), thereby implicating these 'Chinese' lovers themselves in the Arcadian evocation of idealized amorous sentiment; while the comic aria next performed by Tangia, who is jealous of Sivene, became a parody of Silango as Parisian dandy, the latter having specifically visited the French capital.³¹ Hence the extreme artifice of Westerners impersonating Asians who in turn impersonate characters from European opera seems almost to display a reflexive awareness of its unprecedented constructedness, in a kind of violation of the convention of the fourth wall. In the 1735 version of the libretto, the suspension of disbelief necessary for theatrical performance received no challenge; in the revision, however, the suspension begins to dissolve under the force of a keen self-consciousness, as certain remarks within the text itself seem to demonstrate awareness of the characters' actual, non-Chinese identity at the meta-theatrical level – that is, in a world lying outside of the dramatic scenario. In all, Metastasio's enrichment of his libretto resulted in a far greater discursive complexity and a more deeply problematized interrelationship of self and other.

27 Yonan, 'Veneers of Authority', 665. See also the same author's *Empress Maria Theresia and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2011). The documentary reports note the attendance of the three ambassadors at mass and a banquet before the opera, but do not mention a visit by them specifically to the Vieux-Laque-Zimmer, though they may well have seen the room on other occasions. In any case, the palace in its entirety served as an expression of imperial triumphalism and did so loosely by means of diverse symbolic elements, not all of which were China-themed (such as the Gloriette, the arch standing atop a hill behind the palace). The site transmitted an ideological totality without its individual components necessarily reinforcing one another in a systematic fashion.

28 In a letter of 27 December 1749 to Farinelli, Metastasio writes, 'Eccovi il componimento che desiderate' (Here is the composition you desire) (Brunelli, *Tutte le opere*, volume 3, 450). The first performance of this revised version took place in 1751 at Aranjuez Palace outside Madrid, in a setting by Nicola Conforto.

29 All citations from the libretto are taken from Brunelli's edition (*Tutte le opere*, volume 2, 341–354).

30 Kii-Ming Lo, 'China-Mythen im italienischen Opernlibretto des Settecento', in *Politische Mythen und nationale Identitäten im (Musik-)Theater: Vorträge und Gespräche des Salzburger Symposions 2001*, ed. Peter Csobádi, Gernot Gruber, Jürgen Kühnel, Ulrich Müller, Oswald Panagl and Franz Viktor Spechtler (Anif/Salzburg: Müller-Speiser, 2003), volume 1, 189; Ward, *Pagodas in Play*, 170; Angela Kang, 'Musical Chinoiserie' (PhD dissertation, University of Nottingham, 2011), 96.

31 That the aria's satirical self-portrait unquestionably targets Silango is confirmed in the preceding recitative, during which Lisinga suggests 'an affected young man returned from abroad' ('Un giovane affettato tornato da' paesi') as Tangia's subject and Silango remarks in an aside, 'They are referring to me' ('Qui ci anderà del mio').



When Prince Sachsen-Hildburghausen hosted the visit of the imperial family at Schloss Hof in September 1754, his programme included the first performance of *Le cinesi* in Gluck's setting.³² However, the choice of this work may well have come from Maria Theresa herself, for Metastasio remarked in a letter of 19 November 1753 to the prince that 'our most august lady, I do not know for what project, has requested it most impatiently' ('per l'augustissima padrona, che lo ha, non so per quel disegno, frettolosamente richiesto').³³ The empress's consciousness of having sung the part of Lisinga in 1735 can hardly have represented a trivial circumstance as she looked forward to an expanded version of the opera, this time with the famed contralto Vittoria Tesi in the role she herself had taken nearly two decades earlier. Croll has suggestively noted that the 1748 performance of *Semiramide riconosciuta* had also featured Tesi, so that her reappearance six years later in *Le cinesi* imparted to the latter work a subtle hint of the issues of dynastic legitimation surrounding Maria Theresa, especially given that both women had played the same vocal-dramatic character.³⁴ Further, a character named Lisinga also appears among the cast of *L'eroe cinese* as the imperial heir's love interest and eventual consort, thereby supplying a further element interlinking the Austrian empress and Metastasio's two China librettos. Finally, the décor at Schloss Hof reprised the exoticizing spaces of the Hofburg and Schönbrunn. Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739–1799), who held a position as violinist in the orchestra maintained by Prince Joseph during the 1750s, left an account of the performance of *Le cinesi* at Schloss Hof which describes the striking visual effect of a theatre arrayed in brilliant fields of azure lacquer, shimmering gold-coated foliage and bars of prismatic glass from which emanated rainbow-like colours.³⁵



The foregoing discussion has sought to illuminate the significant contexts and associations which drew together *Le cinesi* and *L'eroe cinese* within a specific political discourse. Metastasio's representation of China evidently served two purposes in relation to the Habsburg monarchy's striving for both preservation and recognition. First, the projection of native concerns through the voices of fantasized outsiders may well have facilitated the kind of critical discussion less easily carried out by imperial subjects openly acknowledging themselves as such, given the authoritarian nature of Austrian society in this period. Second, the selection of the Chinese as these outsiders may have reflected the status of the Middle Kingdom within Europe as a markedly distant other with little concrete immediacy. Despite the substantial knowledge disseminated through works such as Du Halde's encyclopedia, China possessed little of the tangible presence of nearer foreign lands such as Turkey and so represented a most pliable resource for the wide-ranging construction of self. In particular, its purported exemplary traits of social harmony and cultivated wisdom lent it a special usefulness.

Silke Leopold has emphasized the unique character of *Le cinesi*, which results from the juxtaposition of three different genres of opera.³⁶ Her observation takes no account, however, of the cross-cultural aspect of Metastasio's scenario, illustrating a common (though by no means universal) tendency in musicological writings to regard the Chinese element as an incidental curiosity or as simple exotic colour. As we have seen, though, the pretence of transcending local boundaries helped to open up a space for critical reflection. Though the original specific impetus for the presentation of so idiosyncratic a work at the Viennese imperial court in 1735 may well remain unknown, the critical exploration carried out in *Le cinesi* of opera – a medium

32 Writing on 9 March 1754 to Ranieri Calzabigi, at a time when the planning for the Schloss Hof festivities may have already begun, Metastasio evidently referred for the first time to the libretto by the title *Le cinesi* (in a letter of 26 July 1753 to Tommaso Filippini, he still used the original title, though abbreviated to *Ballo cinese*). For the Spanish performances of 1751, the work was called *La festa cinese*.

33 Brunelli, *Tutte le opere*, volume 3, 867.

34 Gerhard Croll, "'Le Cinesi,'" eine Opernserenade von Christoph Willibald Gluck, in *Gerhard Croll: Gluck-Schriften*, ed. Brandenburg and Richter, 125.

35 Dittersdorf, *Lebensbeschreibung*, 79–80.

36 Silke Leopold, 'Glucks Chinesinnen', in *Geschichte und Dramaturgie des Operneinaktors*, ed. Winfried Kirsch and Sieghart Döhring (Laaber: Laaber, 1991), 77.



long exploited by the Habsburgs to express their worldview – suggests at least a sense of need for renewal in the face of pressing challenges, whether anticipated or actual. Fittingly, in all of its diverse generic, narrative, textual and musical facets, *Le cinesi* vividly realized the meta-operatic essence of its theme.

In the first place, the genre of *Le cinesi*, though most often identified by Metastasio as *componimento drammatico*, belongs within a larger group of ‘sub-operatic’ types which also includes the *fiesta teatrale*, the *azione teatrale* and the serenata and which stood outside the mainstream of the *dramma per musica* in fostering the reform tendencies epitomized by Gluck’s later work.³⁷ At a more detailed level, a study by Bruno Brizi of the linguistic style of *Le cinesi* notes the remarkable device of ‘un esotismo nell’esotismo’, or of Orientalism turned on its head to become Occidentalism, with all things European transformed from the normative into the alien. Reflecting this exceptionally high degree of artifice, the libretto features a vocabulary replete with terms such as ‘fingere’, ‘rappresentare’, ‘figurare’ and ‘inventare’, the numerous occurrences of which manifest an acute consciousness of the powerful tensions between truth and appearance contained in the scenario.³⁸ Tangia’s cautionary assertion ‘Ma l’inventare è men facile assai di quel che pare’ (but invention is much less easy than it seems), which follows the ladies’ resolution to carry out their evaluation of the operatic genres, would seem therefore to emphasize the fragility of maintaining the pretence of Chinese identity, particularly in the revised version of the text, with its complicating presence of Silango, and in Gluck’s musical setting of 1754. (Further, Tangia’s remark represents Metastasio’s subtle gesture of praise at his own ingenuity in recasting the libretto.)

In 1735, Antonio Caldara had adopted the strategy of exaggerating the conventions of each operatic type, a sensible and perhaps unsurprising way of realizing the text’s parodistic aim. As imperial Vice-Kapellmeister since 1716 and a prolific creator to that point of approximately forty operas for the Viennese court, including the first settings of six of Metastasio’s librettos, he could accomplish the task called for by the reflexive premise of *Le cinesi* with a fluent efficiency and comfortable mastery of the requisite stylistic vocabulary.³⁹ Lisinga’s demonstration of serious opera, which dramatizes the predicament faced by Andromache – Trojan princess and widow of Hector, who must either submit to the threatening amorous demands of the Epiroean king Pyrrhus or sacrifice the life of her son Astyanax – appropriately consists of an accompanied recitative followed by a da capo aria. The recitative sets the tone for a charged piece of theatre by means of commonplace yet vivid devices such as aggressive interjections by the violins and tremolos in the violins and continuo at ‘per quella mano che fa l’Asia tremar’ (by that hand which made Asia tremble). The aria ‘Prenditi il figlio’ (Take the child) then depicts Andromache’s heroic yet wavering resolve either to preserve marital honour or to save her child through a mannered and frequent shifting of tempo between allegro and adagio as well as the employment of characteristic traits of ‘high’ baroque style (Example 1): elaborate melismas highlighting significant words such as ‘crudeltà’ and ‘pietà’ (bars 5–6 and 12–13), sequential patterning (likewise bars 5–6 and 12–13) and a

37 In a letter of 16 June 1736 to Mattia Damiani, Metastasio categorized *Le cinesi* as a *fiesta teatrale*: ‘Dopo il *Gioas re di Giuda* ho scritto tre piccole feste teatrali . . . La prima di esse feste non ha altro titolo che *Componimento drammatico che serve d’introduzione ad un ballo cinese*, la seconda *Le Grazie vendicate*, e l’ultima *Il Palladio conservato*.’ (Following *Gioas re di Giuda* [Joash, King of Judah] I have written three small *feste teatrali* . . . The first of these *feste* has no title other than *Componimento drammatico che serve d’introduzione ad un ballo cinese* [Dramatic Composition which Serves as the Introduction to a Chinese Dance], the second *Le Grazie vendicate* [The Graces Avenged], and the last *Il Palladio conservato* [The Palladium Safeguarded].) Brunelli, *Tutte le opere*, volume 3, 143. On the ‘sub-operatic’ genres and their contribution to the development of reform opera see Raymond Monelle, ‘Gluck and the “Festa Teatrale”’, *Music & Letters* 54/3 (1973), 308–325, and Jacques Joly, *Les fêtes théâtrales de Métastase à la cour de Vienne (1731–1767)* (Clermont-Ferrand: Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l’Université de Clermont-Ferrand II, 1978).

38 Bruno Brizi, ‘Le componenti del linguaggio melodrammatico nelle *Cinesi* di P. Metastasio’, in *Venezia e il melodramma nel Settecento*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro, volume 2 (Florence: Olschki, 1981), 396–397.

39 The first settings were of five *drammi per musica*, *Il Demetrio* (1731), *Adriano in Siria* (1732), *L’olimpiade* (1733), *Demofonte* (1733) and *La clemenza di Tito* (1734), and of a *fiesta teatrale*, *L’asilo d’amore* (1732). Following *Le cinesi*, three more first settings of Metastasio’s *drammi per musica* would follow before Caldara’s death in December 1736: *Achille in Sciro*, *Ciro riconosciuto* and *Il Temistocle* (all from 1736).



Violini

Allegro

Adagio

tr

tr

p

LISINGA

Pren - di-ti il fi - glio, il fi - glio... Ah... no, no, no! È trop - pa cru - del -

Basso

5

tr

f

tà, e trop - pa - cru - del - tà.

8

tr

Allegro

Adagio

tr

tr

Ec-co - mi, ec-co-mi... Oh dei che fo? che fo? Pie-tà, pie-tà, con -

12

tr

Allegro

f

si-glio, pie-tà... pie - tà, con-si - glio, con - si - glio, pie-tà, con-si - glio.

Example 1 Antonio Caldara, 'Prenditi il figlio', *Componimento drammatico che introduce ad un ballo cinese*, bars 1–16, transcribed from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Mus. Hs. 17597. Used by permission

quasi-polyphonic texture achieved by overlapping, antiphonal exchanges between the violin and voice parts (bars 1–2 in particular). Sivene's exemplar of pastoral opera, 'Non sperar, non lusingarti' (Do not hope, do not flatter yourself), also presents an abundance of the relevant stylistic formulas, in this instance in order to evoke a world of idealized amorous sentiment in which Licori responds to Tirsi's impulsive wooing with a call for temperate love (Example 2). Within the framework of an expansive 12/8 metre and continuous *siciliano* rhythm, first and second violins in unvarying pizzicato sonority initially proceed in 'sweet' parallel thirds and sixths above a tonic pedal point (bars 1–2), then gently exchange ornamental trills conceivably intended to mimic sounds of the natural realm (bar 3), and finally produce a slight but unthreatening increase of



The image shows a musical score for Example 2. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Violini piccicati (Violins), SIVENE (Soprano), and Basso (Bass). The second system includes a vocal line with piano accompaniment. The lyrics 'Non spe - rar, non' are written below the vocal line. The score is in G major and 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some trills and slurs. The vocal line is marked with a '5' at the beginning of the second system.

Example 2 Caldara, 'Non sperar, non lusingarti', *Componimento drammatico*, bars 1–8, transcribed from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Mus. Hs. 17597

tension through a chain of 2–3 suspensions (bars 4–7), leading to the entry of the voice part, which joins fully in the stock language of an assumed rusticism. Lastly, Tangia's comic parody 'Ad un riso, ad un'occhiata' (At a smile, at a glance) depicts a Parisian dandy readying himself before the mirror in preparation for his latest round of social engagements. The music he sings accordingly features a galant manner that reflects a worldly consciousness of position, with meticulous and even fussy rhythmic detail providing a sonic equivalent to physical-social grooming (Example 3). The clipped prosody of the melodic material, a quality augmented by the 2/4 metre and allegro tempo, especially comes to the fore in this da capo aria's *seconda parte*, during which insistent repeated notes underscore an anxious preoccupation with winning recognition as a 'uom di qualità' (man of quality) (bars 69–73). Furthermore, the pitch repetition finds its analogue at a higher structural level in the tendency to restate motives immediately, as at 'passeggiar in questo stile', 'che non dicesse' and the melisma on the last syllable of 'qualità'. In the last of these examples, the precisely matched rhythm of each of the four bars produces an effect of one beat per bar, while the melodic contour generates a pulsation twice as slow (note the sequential repetition of bars 75–76 down a step at 77–78); Caldara thus builds a vocal line from articulated, balanced phrase units, illustrating a formal procedure that would begin to predominate during the middle of the century. On the whole, then, by means of what one might describe as overt, straightforward parody, Caldara gave musical substance to the meta-operatic principle of *Le cinesi* in a fashion that keeps separate the agent and target of caricature, maintaining the privileged status of the former. This separation becomes clear in a comparison with Gluck's setting of 1754.

Working with Metastasio's extensive transformation of his text, Gluck actively took up the heightened self-reflexive implications of the revision. Like Caldara, he prefaced Lisinga's aria with a turbulent accompanied recitative whose instrumental tremolos evoke Andromache's deeply unsettled emotional state. However, for the aria, in place of amplified cliché or over-fulfilment of expectation, he chose instead to subvert a



59 *tr*

Chi sa - ria, se mi ve - des-se pas-seg - giar in que-sto sti - le, chi sa - ria che non di -

Violoncello

67 *tr*

ces-se, che non di - ces-se: Ques - to è uom di qua - li - tà, e un uom di qua - li - tà, di qua - li -

75

tà, di qua - li - tà? Chi sa - ria che non di -

Example 3 Caldara, 'Ad un riso, ad un'occhiata', *Componimento drammatico*, bars 59–82, transcribed from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Mus. Hs. 17597

fundamental convention of the *dramma per musica* – namely, da capo form – and therefore to challenge the very terms of the scenario's critical premise. In other words, Gluck's 'Prenditi il figlio' prompts the question of whether it still belongs to the genre it aims to satirize, or whether it departs from this genre to enter into the domain of a stylistic other, in an act of 'Sinicizing' not only the opera's personages but also its composer, who did not write music in a fully normative Western style. In this regard, the discussion by Ralph Locke of the apparent lack of Asian elements in orientalist musical works of the eighteenth century as compared to those of the nineteenth century is highly relevant. Asianness in eighteenth-century Europe, an imaginative notion in any case, did not attempt ethnographic precision but rather tried to 'characteriz[e] an Elsewhere', realizing through concrete musical means an experience of alterity that depended upon subjective conceptions of normality established within a particular cultural environment.⁴⁰

40 Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 62–64. Despite the dual pretences of *Le cinesi* taking place in China and 'Prenditi il figlio' in Troy, I do not intend to suggest that Gluck's subversion of da capo form evokes the kind of specifically geographic otherness by which Locke defines the characterization of an 'Elsewhere'. In my view, the otherness in the aria and in the opera as a whole is principally mental in nature, and, as Said has argued, geography as an issue in the dynamics of intercultural encounters has little to



Gluck's subtle manipulation of da capo aria form, making clear references to its hallmarks while simultaneously undercutting them, merits a detailed scrutiny, especially with regard to the issue of textual and musical reprise and their mutual coordination.⁴¹ As in Caldara's setting, changes of tempo help to underscore the turbulent psychological drama of the quandary confronting Andromache, though they are now effectively written in through the manipulation of note values, and the effect differs greatly from that of the earlier aria. In place of a clear sectionalization, the impetuous, onrushing quality of Gluck's treatment of Metastasio's text instead fosters the sense of a near-continuous sweep. A precipitous semiquaver ascent through an octave in the violins propels the music directly into its vocal part without a ritornello and also establishes the principal tonality of B minor, as Andromache voices her determination to sacrifice Astyanax (Example 4a). When she reacts in horror at the cruelty of such a resolution, the instrumental accompaniment shifts to mostly quavers, and the first violins enrich the vocal line with an elaborated version of the appoggiaturas heard on 'Ah, no!' (bars 3–6). A recurrence of the opening semiquavers, inverted to form two rapid scalar descents which steer the tonality to the key of the relative major, signals the return of the princess's resolve (bars 10–12), this time to offer herself up to Pyrrhus, but there follows a second hesitation conveyed through music of similar quality and content to that of the first. A perfect authentic cadence then provides an audible marker of the end of the text's *prima parte* (bar 23), yet reinforces the prevailing key of D major against the convention of a caesura in the tonic at this place in the formal structure of a da capo aria. Furthermore, the impulsive forward movement of the music results in a strong elision into the *seconda parte*, an effect enhanced by almost immediate modulation to other keys (G major at bar 25, E minor at bar 29) as well as by the most intensive use of semiquavers thus far (five bars of tremolos in the violins and viola for 'che barbaro dolor' (what cruel sorrow), followed after a brief interval by an additional four bars of the same texture for a repeat of the same words). As the shifting tonality finally settles onto F sharp minor for the putative close of the *seconda parte* (bar 46; see Example 4b), Gluck then interposes what seems like the beginning of the reprise of the *prima parte* as Andromache circles back to her original intent to reject Pyrrhus's demands, forcibly suppressing all rival thoughts with a 'Ma no!' not from Metastasio's own pen and evidently added by the composer himself (bars 46–47).

The elided nature of the form continues here as an insistent repetition of the tonic F# in the violins transforms the most anchored of scale degrees into a dynamic and unstable pitch, demanding resolution to a G that acts as the seventh of a dominant chord. Hence a musical return to the relative major (D) rather than to the expected tonic minor accompanies the textual return, even as a recurrence of the ascending-semiquaver figure in the violins helps to confirm the start of a recapitulation (bars 47–48). The unsettling effect of Gluck's carefully achieved subversion of traditional formal procedures then becomes greatest in the following bars: already hinted at by the small but telling revision of text, a passage exhibiting the only conspicuous alteration of texture in the aria rearranges the linear order of Metastasio's words, placing 'che fo?' (what shall I do?) before 'Ah, no! È troppa crudeltà' (Ah, no! It is too cruel) and thereby dramatizing Andromache's inner perturbation (bars 51–57). In addition, this startling change of affect undoubtedly calls for a marked reduction of tempo, even if not explicitly indicated in the score, before the propulsive energy of the aria resumes in bar 58.⁴²

Reflecting the disruptive nature of this episode, the reprise of the *prima parte* is thrown into doubt as the text of the *seconda parte*, again accompanied by tremolos in violins and viola, resumes in bars 65–66 and

do with substantive physical reality. See his *Orientalism*, chapter 1:II, 'Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: *Orientalizing the Oriental*', 49–73.

41 In order to follow the analyses presented in the following pages of the arias from Gluck's *Le cinesi*, the scholarly critical edition of the work should be consulted: Gerhard Croll, ed., *Le cinesi*, from *Christoph Willibald Gluck: Sämtliche Werke*, series 3, volume 17 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1958). Only the opening bars and a crucial passage from the middle of 'Prenditi il figlio' are given within the body of this article's text.

42 The 1990 recording of *Le cinesi* by Rene Jacobs directing the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi GD77174) almost exactly halves the tempo, roughly from 66 to 33 minims per minute.



Example 4a shows a musical score for Christoph Gluck's 'Prenditi il figlio' from *Le cinesi*, bars 1–10. The score includes staves for Corni in D, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, LISINGA (soprano), and Basso (bass). The vocal lines are: LISINGA: Pren - di - ti, pre - di - ti il fi - glio...! Ah; Basso: (no lyrics shown). Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *f* (forte).

Example 4a Christoph Gluck, 'Prenditi il figlio', *Le cinesi*, bars 1–10 (Christoph Willibald Gluck: *Sämtliche Werke*, series 3, volume 7, ed. Gerhard Croll (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1958)). Used by permission

gradually reinstates the principal key of B minor over a span covering bars 66–77. Nevertheless, the music withholds a strong perfect authentic cadence until bars 85–87, in spite of the words of the *prima parte* having returned nine bars earlier, and the matter of whether or not the 'true' reprise has now begun also remains in doubt as Andromache omits the initial lines of this textual segment, repeating only the concluding phrases ('Oh dei che fo? Pietà, consiglio' (O gods, what shall I do? Have pity, offer counsel)) in an unpredictable order to bring the aria to its close. In summary, Gluck's setting of 'Prenditi il figlio' retains a sense of the overall tripartite structure implied by Metastasio's text and employs tonal and motivic articulations towards that end, so that the aria does not precisely exemplify through-composition. At the same time, the complex manipulation of these tonal and motivic features, refusing them the kind of coordination typical of da capo form, so subverts conventional expectations as to thrust parody and caricature, which usually gratify one's comfortable viewpoints concerning the difference between the normative and the strange, into a domain of fully fledged reflexivity, so differentiating this version of *Le cinesi* from Caldara's.



11

Ec-co-mi... Oh Dei! Che fo? — Oh Dei! Che fo? — Pie-tà, con - si - glio! Pie - tà, — con - si -

18

glio! Oh Dei! Pie - tà! Oh Dei! Pie-tà, con - si - - glio! Che

f

Example 4a (continued) Gluck, 'Prenditi il figlio', bars 11–23

The remaining arias of Gluck's opera also illustrate the same extension of parody beyond the confines of a performer's assumed role to encompass the performer him- or herself. Silango's 'Son lungi e non mi brami' (I am far away and you do not long for me) addresses its wooing not only to Licori but also to Sivene, as Arcadia and 'China' blur into one another through mutual participation in the stylized representation of unrequited love. Its ingratiating, mock-serious expression of Tirsi's amorous suffering takes form especially in a gentle alternation of duple and triplet quavers in both vocal and instrumental melodic lines, set within the framework of a relaxed triple metre and lightly pulsating accompaniment, as well as in the theatricality of a lengthy melisma on 'm'ami' corresponding to Silango's own facetious character as earlier delineated in his recitatives, with the singer and first violin reinforcing one another's 'self-importance' by proceeding *colla parte* (bars 33–44). Sivene's 'Non sperar, non lusingarti' similarly constitutes a double reply to Tirsi and Silango, the music both achieving the character of a mild rebuff and reinforcing the dialogical link between the two arias through shared features such as its sinuous quaver figures – most notably the impressive



44

cor - so il - fi - - - glio. Ma no! Pren - di - ti,

49

pren - di - ti il fi - glio...! Che fo? Che fo? È trop - pa cru - del - tà, è trop - pa

Example 4b Gluck, 'Prenditi il figlio', bars 44–55

elongation of the first violin's line between bars 5 and 18, which culminates in an unctuous chromaticism that barely hints at the pathos of the minor mode – and its melismas highlighting those words that signify resistance to an impulsive love, such as 'ma non voglio delirar' (bars 30–36, 38–39). Lastly, Tangia's 'Ad un riso, ad un'occhiata' conflates its French dandy and Silango (who, one should recall, has returned to China from Paris) in order to voice her jealousy of the latter's passion for her rival, Sivene, through a cutting and acerbic portrait of his self-preoccupation. In other words, the performer assumes the identity of the dandy for the purpose of mocking him, representing him in an intentionally exaggerated and grotesque way. This is realized through aristocratic dotted rhythms, overweening in their ceaseless insistence upon making themselves heard; high flute trills, whose abrasive timbre combined with their lack of integration within the overall texture likewise imply an egotistical temperament; and a *seconda parte* in adagio tempo, minor tonality and occasional monophony conveying the vainglorious solemnity of one who sadly wonders how others could possibly fail to recognize his excellence.



The complexity of the overlapping levels of masquerade in Gluck's *Le cinesi* endangers the stability of the pretended identities in this work, at times conspicuously widening the 'tears' in the veneer to display the original relation of native and foreign. Thus the opening sinfonia features the sounds of janissary percussion instruments such as triangles, bells and small hand-held drums; Dittersdorf's autobiography confirms the use of these instruments during the performance at Schloss Hof, though they do not appear in Gluck's score.⁴³ The addition of the same kind of Orientalizing timbres also suits the concluding dance, and, on the evidence of Dittersdorf's testimony, corresponds to an appropriate performance practice for the mid-eighteenth century, though once again the score does not require their inclusion.⁴⁴ The choice specifically of a polonaise for this closing section of *Le cinesi* contributes further to subverting the conceit of a European identification with the Chinese, the quasi-universal claims for dance by the four personages notwithstanding. A recent dissertation completed at the University of Nottingham by Angela Kang argues that the genre of polonaise functioned as a signifier of otherness in Vienna during the middle of the eighteenth century, and that its conjunction with 'Turkish style' produced an overtly exotic final segment to Gluck's opera.⁴⁵ On the whole, then, one can observe in his setting of *Le cinesi* that simultaneous approach towards and distancing from alien cultures which Robert J. C. Young has identified as an essential trait of the colonizing mindset, terming the phenomenon 'colonial desire'.⁴⁶ This paradoxical stance towards foreignness as both alluring and threatening marks an appropriative process whereby the self seizes upon the other only for those aspects that can benefit the self and refuses an acceptance of the complex human entirety of the other. The double-faceted nature of the Western engagement with China in *Le cinesi*, illustrated by the work's dialectical treatment of identity whereby diverse masks fluidly alternate between relative transparency and relative opacity, therefore epitomizes a broad problematic of trans-cultural encounters during an era of rapidly advancing globalization.

The performances of *L'eroe cinese* at Schönbrunn likewise included exotic dances, as entr'actes, and the drama similarly makes use of characters from the Middle Kingdom as surrogate voices for expressing convictions related to the political situation in central Europe following the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. Thus the earliest presentations of Metastasio's second China opera also exemplify a duality of assimilation and differentiation, though in this instance with the latter element isolated in sections lying outside the narrative frame. Generally speaking, *L'eroe cinese* pursues a dialectic between different perspectives with less intensity than *Le cinesi* and certainly does not count as a meta-operatic work; nonetheless, it too attains a referential and even self-critical stance, especially regarding the twin, complementary ideals of selfless devotion to a people's welfare (on the part of a monarch) and appropriate deference to legitimate authority (on the part of a monarch's subjects), of which Chinese society allegedly represented the exemplar. Thus Leango's enjoinders to Siveno, the concealed but soon-to-be-revealed heir whose actual name is Senvango, to serve tirelessly the good of those whom he rules and thereby to conform harmoniously with the divine, natural order of things constitutes the libretto's implicit reminder and

43 Dittersdorf, *Lebensbeschreibung*, 80: 'Es war nicht das liebliche Spiel der brillanten Sinfonie allein, die stellenweise von kleinen Glöckchen, Triangeln, kleinen Handpauken und Schellen und dergleichen bald einzeln, bald zusammen begleitet wurde, welches die Zuhörer gleich anfangs, ehe noch der Vorhang aufgezogen war, in Entzücken versetzte; die ganze Musik war durch und durch Zauberwerk.' (It was not only the delicious playfulness of the sparkling symphony, accompanied now and again by little bells, triangles, small hand-drums, etc., sometimes singly, sometimes all together, which, at the very outset, and before the raising of the curtain, transported the audience: the music was from first to last an enchantment. Translation from *The Autobiography of Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, Dictated to His Son*, trans. A. D. Coleridge (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1896), 71.)

44 The previously cited recording by Rene Jacobs illustrates the effectiveness of employing percussion instruments in the final dance.

45 Kang, 'Musical Chinoiserie', 96–103. See also Bruce Brown, *Gluck and the French Theatre in Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 304–307, which discusses Gluck's use of polonaise rhythm in his ballet *La halte des Calmouckes* (1761).

46 Young, *Colonial Desire*, especially chapter 7, 'Colonialism and the Desiring Machine', 159–182.



encouragement to Maria Theresia, herself only recently acknowledged as the true empress. The minister's recognition of his own lack of authentic imperial status and consequent refusal to occupy the throne also reflects a didactic aim, and in this connection Adrienne Ward has aptly described Leango as an Italianized Confucius, noting Du Halde's characterization of China's most famous sage as a gentle philosopher who renounced titles and privilege.⁴⁷

The construction of others as paragons of wisdom and virtuousness from whom Europeans can learn receives its clearest illustration in Scene 7 of the opera's third act, when the regent learns of Siveno's apparent death as a result of an insurrection and expresses his anguish with the words 'Abbiám perduto / Voi Cinesi il re vostro: io di tant'anni / I palpiti, i sudori' (We have lost / You Chinese your king: I the many years / Of fear, of sweat).⁴⁸ Given the theatrical situation of a direct address to the members of the audience by Leango, 'il re vostro' could refer equally to Siveno and to Maria Theresia, the loss of whom would represent a catastrophic event for those present at Schönbrunn, including the foreign ambassadors.⁴⁹ In breaking the fourth wall thus and reiterating information already given by a different character, Leango directly engages his real-life European listeners: do you truly know the horror of losing a(n authentic) king?

The music composed by Bonno makes its own important contribution to highlighting the themes of kingly devotion and heroic deference articulated by Metastasio's text, especially through affective heightening of key terms and phrases. Appointed in 1739 as court composer in Vienna, where he would eventually attain the position of imperial Kapellmeister in 1774, Bonno, like Caldara before him, collaborated frequently with Metastasio and possessed a comfortable mastery of the stylistic conventions of the *dramma per musica*. Thus, for instance, the initial sections of the opera introduce the *primo uomo*–*prima donna* pair of Siveno and Lisinga in arias characterized by elaborate, rhythmically detailed melody and extended melismas, features that indicate the exalted status of the future imperial couple; while the sentiments of love expressed in the climactic third act by Siveno and Ulania, the sister of Lisinga and beloved of Mínteo, the heir's rival for the throne, are realized in a language of overt pastoralism consisting of triple metre, flat-side tonalities and 'rustic' scoring (hunting horns and flutes for Siveno, *traverso* flutes and bassoons complemented by muted violins for Ulania). However, Bonno reserves another defining trait of opera seria, accompanied recitative, for two narrative-thematic cruxes, both of which centre on Leango: Act 1 Scene 6, in which the minister reflects upon his imminent revelation of the miraculous survival of the authentic ruling house and invokes the aid of the gods in bringing his arduous project to its long-awaited conclusion, and the seventh scene of Act 3 discussed above. These passages, concerned respectively with the two fundamental notions developed within the libretto – a divinely righteous order and proper respect for the authority that derives from such an order – thus receive a significant musical emphasis. The first proceeds to a simple recitative for Leango and Siveno in which the former advises the latter on the responsibilities of wise leadership and rejects calls from the populace to become emperor himself. Then follows an aria sung by Leango whose manifestly Dantean text reiterates humanity's need for guidance from a higher metaphysical

47 Ward, *Pagodas in Play*, 114–115. Du Halde more specifically portrays Confucius as nobly dedicated to society's ethical development and hence indifferent to the trappings of position: for example, 'On lui offrit plusieurs magistratures, qu'il n'accepta que pour avoir lieu de répandre sa doctrine, & de réformer les mœurs.' (He was offered a number of magistracies, which he accepted only with a view towards spreading his doctrine and reforming customs.) *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, volume 2, 384. Sala de Felice, 'Delizie e saggezza dell'antica Cina', 104–106, discusses the relationship between Metastasio's Deistic philosophy and his (mis)understanding of a Confucian ethos which presumed the existence of a transcendent yet natural-rational order and therefore contrasted sharply with the Christian emphasis on revelation. In accord with such an ethical system, both an emperor and his subjects fulfilled permanent, inviolate moral obligations, the one through promotion of the greater good and the other through obedience.

48 All citations from the libretto are taken from its publication for the opera's first performances at Schönbrunn: *L'eroe cinese Dramma per Musica da rappresentarsi nell'Imperial Corte. Da Dame e Cavalieri l'anno MDCCLII* (Vienna: Van Ghelen, 1752).

49 Ward, *Pagodas in Play*, 110.



Example 5 shows a musical score for Giuseppe (Joseph) Bonno's 'Nel camin di nostra vita' from *L'eroe cinese*, Act 1 Scene 7, bars 10–15. The score is transcribed from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Mus. Hs. 18265. It consists of two systems of music. The first system (bars 10–12) features a vocal line with lyrics: 'Nel ca - min di no - stra vi - ta, sen - za i rai del ciel cor - te - se, sen - za i rai del ciel - - cor -'. The piano accompaniment includes a treble clef part with a dynamic marking 'p' and a bass clef part. The second system (bars 13–15) continues the vocal line with lyrics: 'te - se si sma - ri - sce ogn' al - ma ar - di - ta tre - ma il cor, va - cil - la il piè, tre - -'. The piano accompaniment continues with a treble clef part featuring a dynamic marking 'p' and a bass clef part.

Example 5 Giuseppe (Joseph) Bonno, 'Nel camin di nostra vita', *L'eroe cinese*, Act 1 Scene 7, bars 10–15, transcribed from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Mus. Hs. 18265. Used by permission

domain: 'Nel camin di nostra vita, / Senza i rai del ciel cortese / Si smarrisce ogni alma ardita, / Trema il cor, vacilla il piè' (On the road of our life / Without the rays of the kindly heavens / Every earnest soul gets lost / The heart trembles, the foot hesitates).⁵⁰ Ward's literary-philosophical analysis of *L'eroe cinese* singles out 'ciel' as the crucial term here, but in fact Bonno chose rather to dramatize 'Trema il cor' with representationally appropriate tremolos as well as sudden, disruptive appearances in *forte* dynamic of a unison texture (Example 5, bar 18). Thus his music particularly enhances the psychological dimension of the situation, emotionally underscoring the ever-present danger of a tragic failure of Leango's mission. This affective function takes on the more significance in view of Ward's assertion, founded upon an exclusive concentration on textual content, that 'Leango's aria encapsulates a more expository, aphoristic sentiment, as opposed to expressing an emotional state'.⁵¹ The totality of the opera's diverse media, working together in conjunction, would surely have engendered a rather more comprehensive reception of the aria in 1752 at Schönbrunn.

The second passage of accompanied recitative opens with Lisinga imparting to the regent the news, later revealed to be false, of Siveno's death as a result of an insurrection sparked by Minteo's claim to the throne. An indication of 'Adagio e piano' then marks the beginning of a lament in which Leango expresses his sense of devastation at the waste of years of devoted effort, pronounces the loss of the heir as one for all 'Chinese' people, and questions a divine justice that would permit such an outcome to his sacrifice. The entire scene concludes with an arioso setting, marked *allegro*, of a text evidently intended by Metastasio as a truncated aria, with the interruption occurring as Ulania suddenly enters and informs the minister that Siveno has in fact not died. The fluid, shifting nature of this climactic phase of the narrative represents the furthest

50 Translation from Ward, *Pagodas in Play*, 108.

51 Ward, *Pagodas in Play*, 108.



Example 5 (continued) Bonno, 'Nel camin di nostra vita', bars 16–21

departure in Bonno's opera from the schematic alternation of recitative and aria characteristic of *dramma per musica*, and through its atypical nature it effectively foregrounds the deep unease pervading the struggle to restore the fallen dynasty.

Leango's music includes two further arias, in the second and third acts respectively. Scene 6 of Act 2 opens with a recitative in which the minister at last communicates the truth of Siveno's imperial lineage to his 'son' and then embraces him, in a final act of paternal affection. His succeeding aria then asks for pardon, since Leango must thenceforth stand in a relationship of subject and not of father to Siveno, so that the preceding gesture did not reflect a strictly proper attitude towards the now clarified hierarchy. The conjunction of 'mio figlio' (my son) and 'mio re' (my king) within the text encapsulates the reconfiguring of mutual positions, with their succession corresponding to the actual progression of events. Bonno's music affirms the thematic centrality of the pairing through its frequent repetitions of this phrase, yet curiously seems to favour Siveno's earlier identity over his current one. Against a background of gentle, continuously flowing semiquavers in the second violins which depict the profusion of feelings experienced by Leango, the vocal melody leads to a figure consisting of an expressive rising gesture for 'mio figlio' and a simple cadential rounding-off for 'mio re'; a differentiation of *forte* and *piano* dynamics, indicated for first violins which double the singer's line, reinforces the unequal emphasis (Example 6a, bars 18–19). Such a musical treatment apparently inverts the relative importance of the regent's former and present relations to Siveno, but, as Ward has pointed out, 'mio figlio' refers not only to the imperial heir but also to Leango's own murdered child.⁵² Therefore, the highlighting of 'my son' in fact conforms wholly with an appropriate deference, since Leango's sacrifice of his infant boy represents the ultimate heroic act of obedience to the State. The *seconda parte* of the aria's da capo form supports the validity of this interpretation, for here the music departs for

52 Ward, *Pagodas in Play*, 109.



10 *p*
sempre un poco forte

8 Per - do - na l'af - fet - to che l'al - ma mi pre - me, che l'al - ma mi pre - me, mia

14
8 glo - ria, mia spe - me, mio fig - lio, mio re, — mia glo - ria, mia spe - me, mio fig - lio, mio re, mio

18 *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*
forte assai

8 fig - lio, mio re, mio fig - lio, mio re. Per -

Example 6a Bonno, 'Perdona l'affetto', *L'eroe cinese*, Act 2 Scene 6, bars 10–20, transcribed from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Mus. Hs. 18265

the only time from its predominantly diatonic character to become notably dissonant at 'quel sangue, quel pianto' (that blood, those tears), explicitly conveying the horror felt by the minister as he recalls the killing of his son (Example 6b).



43 *p*
 Di strin - ger-ti al pet - to mi ot - ten - ga-no il van-to quel san-gue, quel pianto ch'io

47
 spar - si per te, quel san-que, quel pian-to che spar - si per te, che spar - si per te.
Da capo

Example 6b Bonno, 'Perdona l'affetto', bars 43–50

Leango's third-act aria occurs in Scene 4, in which Minteo declares his loyalty to Siveno after having discovered the inaccuracy of his own claim to imperial descent and the regent praises him as a king in his own right for giving way to the true monarch. Bonno fittingly employs topoi associated with nobility in the aria, which features a scoring of clarini, trumpets and timpani in addition to strings and oboes, dotted rhythm and the 'martial' key of C major. The clarini in particular link this music with the most exalted form of Viennese imperial solemnity, for their bright sonority functioned as a clear sonic marker of the highest ceremonial and religious occasions at the Habsburg court, as prescribed in official documents such as liturgical rubrics.⁵³ The fact of their exclusive appearance in the introductory sinfonia, the final chorus and Leango's aria is therefore significant, the more so as the traits of sharply defined rhythm and C major tonality shared by all three pieces underscore their fundamental structural-thematic importance. The elevation of the kingly attribute to a general and 'solemn' virtue encompassing those who recognize genuine authority manifestly applies not only to Minteo but also to Leango, and furthermore to anyone capable of practising such exemplary behaviour. In disseminating its moral, didactic and ultimately polemical argument,

53 See A. Peter Brown, 'Caldara's Trumpet Music for the Imperial Celebrations of Charles VI and Elisabeth Christine', in *Antonio Caldara: Essays on His Life and Times*, ed. Brian W. Pritchard (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1987), 3–48, and 'The Trumpet Overture and Sinfonia in Vienna (1715–1822): Rise, Decline and Reformulation', in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Austria*, ed. David Wyn Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13–69.



Metastasio's and Bonno's *L'eroe cinese* offered its eighteenth-century audiences the chance to consider their appropriate place within a divinely legitimated socio-political order.



The dialectical nature of both *Le cinesi* and *L'eroe cinese* entails a critical process which takes place entirely within an Austrian consciousness diversified by the strategic temporary assumption of foreign identity. This talking with oneself by means of a pretence of cultural difference represents a characteristic tendency of the eighteenth century and also of later eras.⁵⁴ Spivak, discussing the explicitly colonial practices of a more recent period, formulates the modern intellectual habit of dialogic monologism as 'the persistent constitution of the Other as Self's shadow'.⁵⁵ Matthew Head's *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music* expresses a similar argument: 'The fact that Orientalism in eighteenth-century culture functioned in part as a critique . . . is not evidence of an innocent openness to non-European culture, but, on the contrary, to unabashed appropriation of the Other within the paradigms and textuality of the West.'⁵⁶ Since no encounter among diverse peoples, whether between Europe and China or any other cultures, can wholly avoid grappling with the discomfiture of unfamiliarity from the subjective vantage point of oneself, Head crucially underscores his sense of a near-total asymmetry with the qualifier 'unabashed'. Hence a countering of the powerful impulse to centre upon one's native concerns forms the essential task in approaching others. With regard to Asia-themed works produced in the West, this decentring requires consideration of insider perspectives on narrative and cultural material such as the tale of a dynasty's overthrow and restoration. Careful study of both imaginative and scholarly accounts 'from within' may well result in characterizations at variance with notions of Chinese wisdom, learning and deference; at the least, it would mediate against the reduction of a people to a set of idealized stereotypes and extend to them the privilege of a full human complexity instead of reserving it exclusively for the self.⁵⁷ Insofar as *Le cinesi* and *L'eroe cinese* exemplify a discursive practice symptomatic of modernity, the challenge articulated by Spivak possesses a compelling relevance: 'how to keep the ethnocentric Subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an Other'.⁵⁸

54 Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music*, 91: 'The prevailing mode of eighteenth-century cross-cultural identification was masquerade.' See also Reinhart Koselleck, 'The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity', in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 154–169.

55 Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', 280.

56 Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music*, 14.

57 Such an examination of Chinese writings represents the next step in the investigation of the present topic. By itself, it would form its own article-length study.

58 Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' 292.