

ORIENTAL TYRANNY IN THE EXTREME WEST: REFLECTIONS ON *AMITI E ONTARIO* AND *LE GARE GENEROSE*

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of eighteenth-century operatic representations of slavery in America, focusing primarily on two Italian comic works: Ranieri de' Calzabigi's libretto for Amiti e Ontario (1772) and its adaptation, Le gare generose, or 'The Contests in Generosity' (1786), set by Giovanni Paisiello. Significant changes between the two are interpreted in relation to these works' original cultural and political contexts, reconstructed through the examination of contemporary dramatic, journalistic and other non-fictional literature. As an operatic theme, in the late eighteenth century, slavery challenges the long established assumption of the westward migration of progress and civilization.

The geographical and political entity identifiable with the United States of America began to inspire operatic subjects during the second half of the eighteenth century, considerably later than did other non-European territories. South America, for example, had been providing material for opera plots and settings since the previous century, and in the course of the eighteenth century inspired countless *opere serie* and *balli eroici* predominantly based on Voltaire's *Alzire*, on the tragic story of Montezuma or on Columbus's enterprise.¹

I have read different shorter versions of this article at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society (Washington, D. C., 2005), at the Program of Liberal Studies of the University of Notre Dame and at the Biannual Meeting of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music (Williamsburg, VA, 2006). I am grateful for the feedback I received from my colleagues on each of these occasions, especially from Anthony DelDonna and Steven Fallon. An expanded version of this article will appear as a chapter in my forthcoming book, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution*. The most recent research behind this article is partially sponsored by the American National Endowment for the Humanities.

1 For a preliminary study on eighteenth-century European operas based on South American subjects see Donatella Ferri, *L'America nei libretti italiani del settecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1992), and Enrique Alberto Arias, 'New Worlds to Conquer: Operatic Depictions of the Age of Discovery', *The Music Review* 54/1 (1993), 14–23 (mostly concerned with Columbus's discovery and Spanish colonization of South America). The Pacific islands started to attract the attention of European musicians later than South America and the Middle or Far East, but earlier than North America: see David Irving, 'The Pacific in the Minds and Music of Enlightenment Europe', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2/2 (2005), 205–229. Ranieri de' Calzabigi contributed to this genre with his libretto *Cook o sia Gli inglesi in Othaiti* (1785), discussed by Irving (223) and by Maria Irene Maffei, 'Alcune osservazioni sul Cook o sia Gli inglesi in Othaiti', in *Ranieri Calzabigi tra Vienna e Napoli: atti del convegno di studi (Livorno, 23–24 settembre 1996)*, ed. Federico Marri and Francesco Paolo Russo (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997), 209–238. On Africa and the Middle East see especially Timothy Taylor, 'Peopling the Stage: Opera, Otherness, and New Musical Representations in the Eighteenth Century', *Cultural Critique* 36 (1997), 65–88; Miriam Whaples, 'Early Exoticism Revisited', and Mary Hunter, 'The Alla Turca Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio', both in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 3–25 and 43–73 respectively; for the Far East see Vom Takt, 'Chinoiserien in der Musik- und Tanzgeschichte bis 1800', *Festschrift Christoph-Hellmut Mahling zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling and others (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1997), 1171–1186. A general overview of orientalism in opera (including the eighteenth century) is offered by Ralph Locke, 'Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theater', *The Opera Quarterly* 10/1 (1993), 48–64. The only comprehensive study of representations of North American subjects in eighteenth-century Italian opera remains my 'Opera Buffa and the American Revolution'



If South American dethroned kings and defeated civilizations found their perfect theatrical locus of representation on the seria stage, which already favoured ancient history and mythology, North America provided fashionable subjects to the comic genre. This is not because North Americans were perceived as funnier than their Southern neighbours, but because the appeal of North American subjects, typical of the revolutionary era, was justified by the increasing interest of Europeans in alternative configurations of society; and so opera buffa was the logical home for these new subjects, considering the leaning of the genre towards the representation of contemporary socio-political reality. The introduction of American subjects in Italian comic opera coincides in fact with the first episodes of unrest in the English colonies against the British central government and with the first dissemination in Europe of American political ideas, immediately perceived in the entire Western world as the cutting-edge of Enlightened political thought. Although scarcely documented in historical and musicological accounts, opera buffa responded to the American Revolution with considerable promptness, resulting in a group of works reflecting the interest of the European public in the first great revolution of the century, a strong interest that manifested itself also in gazettes, pamphlets and other fictional and non-fictional genres of literature.² As early as 1768 the Italian *Gazzetta di Firenze* (which became *Notizie del mondo* later that year) informed its readers about the British military occupation of Boston in response to the recent American uprising against the Townshend Acts. The gazette added a pronouncement to the citizens of Boston. This document paraphrases Samuel Adams's inflammatory 'circular letter', stating the Bostonians' opposition to foreign laws and the principle of no taxation without representation ('che nessun uomo sarà governato da leggi straniere, né tassato che da sé medesimo, o dal suo Rappresentante legalmente e liberamente eletto').³ By the end of the summer Niccolò Piccinni had set a comic libretto by Francesco Cerlone, *I napoletani in America*, which can be considered the first opera based on a North American subject. This *commedia per musica* represents an Italian woman of humble origins who becomes the governor of a remote province of North America, where she brings civilization and freedom, introduces appropriate clothing and food, and spreads enlightened philosophy among the natives (before her reforms they were living in a state of uncivilized and immoral savageness, which included nudity, horrible food and a tyrannical social organization). Starting with Piccinni's second Americanist opera, *L'americano* (Rome 1772), and during the whole decade, Native Americans started to be represented less as uncouth barbarians and more as free individuals living in a form of natural anarchy free from constricting socio-cultural norms.⁴ At the same time American characters of European

(PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2003), currently under revision. Relevant contributions to the theme of exoticism in eighteenth-century theatre (both spoken and musical) can be found in *Le arti della scena e l'esotismo in età moderna*, ed. Paolo Giovanai Maione and Francesco Cotticelli (Naples: Centro di Musica Antica Pietà de' Turchini, 2006). Additional literature will be cited later in this article.

- 2 In Italy a boom in the gazette industry coincided with the earliest stages of the American Revolution in the late 1760s. The newly founded *Gazzetta estera*, *Notizie del mondo*, *Gazzetta Universale* and other journals were generally published twice a week and disseminated in all the important urban centres of the peninsula. See Paola Urbani and Alfredo Donati, *I periodici dell' Ancien Régime e del periodo rivoluzionario nelle biblioteche italiane* (Rome: Biblioteca Casanatense, 1992); on the dissemination of news concerning the American Revolution see Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1768–1776: The First Crisis*, trans. Burr Litchfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 377–438.
- 3 *Gazzetta di Firenze* 2 (27 August 1768), 10–11; other news items published from February 1768 concerning the American uprising are documented and discussed by Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe*, 377–438.
- 4 Francesco Cerlone, *I napoletani in America: commedia per musica di Francesco Cerlone da rappresentarsi nel Teatro de' Fiorentini l'està di quest'anno 1768* (Naples: Flauto, 1768). The second Americanist opera by Piccinni is *L'americano, intermezzi per musica a Quattro voci da rappresentarsi nel teatro alla Valle degl' Illustrissimi Sig[nori] Capranica* (Rome: Lorenzo Corradi, 1772). On these two works see Pierpaolo Polzonetti, 'L'America nelle opere di Piccinni', in *Niccolò Piccinni musicista europeo*, ed. Alessandro Di Profio and Mariagrazia Melucci (Bari: Adda, 2004), 173–192. On *I napoletani* see also Francesco Cotticelli, 'Problemi della drammaturgia di Francesco Cerlone. Appunti sui drammi esotici' in *Le arti della scena e l'esotismo in età moderna*, 363–369. The term 'noble savage' is historically incorrect for the



descent – usually Quakers – made their entrance onto the buffa stage. The Quaker was taken as a champion of the American revolutionary elite, based on the assumption that Quakers had already established, since William Penn's foundation of Pennsylvania, an alternative model of society liberated from feudal (religious or political) hierarchies based on birth privileges of either class or gender. By the 1760s Voltaire had in fact already redirected his and his readers' attention from the English Quaker (about whom he wrote earlier in the century), who was typically portrayed as an extravagant sectarian, to the Pennsylvanian Quaker, now presented as an enlightened citizen of an egalitarian republic. In contemporary French literature (which means in mainstream and internationally disseminated European literature) the good American Quaker was often portrayed as a philosophical equivalent to the *bon sauvage* or good savage, but with a difference. In her seminal work *The Good Quaker in French Legend* Edith Philips in fact documents how during the decade preceding the French Revolution, when the Quaker fad was at its peak, Friends were praised as living proof that the 'return to a state of comparative simplicity' was possible 'without going back to barbarism'.⁵

Pennsylvania at first and soon the rest of the uprising American colonies were seen by many European intellectuals as the most admirable example of an advanced society that was about to put into practice what until then were unattained utopian ideals. The result was a revival of the symbolic opposition of Orient versus Occident. This dualistic spatio-temporal concept, prevalent at least since the Roman conquest of Greece, was conceptualized by Horace, Horosius, Polybius and Saint Augustine as a sign of the migration of human civilization from East to West, a migration of power and enlightenment that appeared to be following the natural course of sunlight. Harold Jantz has observed that 'the concept of the westward movement of civilization is about as old as the concept of golden-age primitivism and is at its point of origin closely related to it. The trend westward is simply the course of the sun as it moves towards its rest beyond the Pillars of Hercules and the ultimate bound of the Ocean Sea.'⁶ The West was and still is a movable concept, not only in space, but also in time. It is interesting to observe that in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) we are told that the character Raphael Hythloday, who reports to More on his journey to Utopia, went to America with Amerigo Vespucci, but instead of going back to Europe with his commander, proceeded westwards towards India until he discovered the island of Utopia. By the same token, in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (first published in 1627, one year after the author's death) the utopian and futuristic state of New Atlantis is located

eighteenth century (and also ideologically biased), as convincingly demonstrated by Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001). Ellingson does not take into account primary or secondary Italian sources, which nevertheless confirm his argument. For this reason the more historically correct term *buon selvaggio* or *bon sauvage* is preferred in this article and is anglicized as 'good savage'.

5 Edith Philips, *The Good Quaker in French Legend* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), viii, 119–126. This still unsurpassed study of Quaker typology and mythology in non-Quaker literature considerably expands intuitions and observations by Gilbert Chinard, *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au xvii^e et au xviii^e siècle* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1913). For the dissemination of the Quaker legend in Italy see Stefania Buccini, *The Americas in Italian Literature and Culture: 1700–1825*, trans. Rosanna Giammarco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 107–117. On the conflation of the good-Quaker myth with the good-savage myth see Antonello Gerbi, *La disputa del nuovo mondo* (Milan: Adelphi, 2000), 821–823, and Conti, 'Amiti e Ontario', 149. Voltaire, *Traité sur la Tolérance* (1760), the *Essay sur les Moeurs* (completed in 1765) and the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1765), together with Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, 6 volumes (Geneva: Libraires Associés, 1775), are discussed in Philips, *The Good Quaker*, 96–113. Raynal praised American Enlightenment even more in his equally influential *La Révolution de l'Amérique* (London: Locker Davis, 1781). His positive account of Quakers was confirmed, reinforced and also widely disseminated by Hector Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain écrites à W. S., ecuyer, depuis l'année 1779, jusqu'à 1781* (Paris: Cuchet, 1784), and by Jean-Baptiste Mailhe, *Discours . . . sur la grandeur et l'importance de la révolution qui vient de s'opérer dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Toulouse: D. Desclassan, 1785). On the influence of French literature on opera buffa as practised in Austria (which is of primary importance in this article) see Bruce Alan Brown, 'Viennese Opera Buffa and the Legacy of French Theatre', in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 50–81.

6 Harold Jantz, 'The Myths about America: Origins and Extensions', *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 7 (1962), 6–18.



west of Peru, from where the fictional narrator sailed for China and Japan. The governor of the New Atlantis refers to America as a less advanced old 'Atlantis', whose great civilization disappeared after a deluge that left only 'simple and savage people . . . not able to leave letters, arts, civility to their posterity'.⁷ Bacon presents a diachronic teleological narrative that left its traces in a geopolitical atlas where, synchronically, fallen civilizations are located east of rising civilizations. This is important in order to understand why – after the ancient American cultures (represented in opera seria) had been wiped out from the New World and after the first major revolution presented the American English colonies as the avant-garde of the Enlightenment – the United States began to be universally viewed as the Extreme West (designated as America *tout court* in obvious disregard of non-revolutionary, hence non-advanced, countries on the same continent). At the same time, the classical geopolitical opposition was reasserted in the usual terms of Eastern obscurantism versus Western enlightenment and progress. Thus if the Muslim Middle East still represented a past civilization of harems, slaves and masters, Europe was now diagnosed by enlightened intellectuals as a decadent present at the brink of a crisis, and so America came to represent the Occident's brighter future – a hyper-Occident located in the westernmost part of the world, beyond which there was no need to fantasize about a 'further west'. What Abbé Ferdinando Galliani (one of Niccolò Piccinni's protectors) wrote in 1776 to Mme d'Épinay suffices to get a sense of how powerful the idea of westward cultural migration was during these years: 'the time has come of the total collapse of Europe and of transmigration to America. Everything is decaying here – religion, laws, arts, sciences – and everything will be rebuilt in America'.⁸ Almost at the same time Abbé Raynal, in his best-selling history of America (1775), wrote of Pennsylvania: 'This Republic, without wars, without conquests, without effort became a spectacle for the whole universe . . . All nations rejoiced to see renewed the heroic times of antiquity, which the customs and laws of Europe had made to seem like a fable. They saw at last that people could be happy without masters and without priests'.⁹

The American Revolution reinvigorated the concept of the westward movement of enlightenment, but at the same time it challenged it, because the persistence of the legal condition of slavery (as typically practised by Oriental potentates) in the post-revolutionary decade was gradually perceived as a paradox that transcended the narrow contingency of colonial politics and economics.¹⁰ The problem of

7 Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. and ed. Robert E. Adams (New York: Norton, 1992), part one. Francis Bacon, *Selected Philosophical Works*, ed. and introduced by Rose-Mary Sargent (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1999), 241, 250–251. Bacon acknowledges More's *Utopia* as his model (259), but, interestingly, in More's island slavery plays an important role in the economy and social configuration of the Utopians, while it doesn't in the New Atlantis. I am grateful to Phillip Sloan for calling my attention to the relevance of Bacon's text.

8 Ferdinando Galliani, *Correspondance inédite de l'abbé Ferdinand Galliani, conseiller du roi, pendant les années 1765 à 1783* (Paris: Dentu, 1818), volume 2, 280. Quoted and translated by Antonio Pace, *Benjamin Franklin and Italy* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1958), 120–121, who also points out that 'Polybius may have been the first to observe that civilization has a way of following the sun, arising in the east and lowing toward the west. This idea of *ab oriente lux*, which subsequently fascinated thinkers from Machiavelli to Spengler ultimately assumed the proportions of a myth . . . While much study needs yet to be made on the evolution of this idea in Italy between the date of the discovery of America and the time of the European Enlightenment, it is certain that by the 1770s many Italians were convinced that civilization, after a final stand in Paris and London, was moving inexorably across the Atlantic.' Note that 'ab oriente lux' means 'light away from the East', while 'ex oriente lux' means 'light from the East'. For similar remarks see also Gerbi, *La disputa del nuovo mondo*, 343–346.

9 Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique*, quoted by Philips, *The Good Quaker*, 100.

10 The presence of slavery in North America had been the subject of vehement attacks in Italy since at least 1785, when Alberto Fortis published a series of articles on this subject in the *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico*, in which he casts serious doubts on the success of the Revolution beyond the achievement of independence, as documented by Piero Del Negro, *Il mito americano nella Venezia del settecento* (Padua: Liviana, 1986), 166–168, and by Carlo Mangio, 'Illuministi italiani e Rivoluzione Americana', in *Italia e America dal settecento all'età dell'imperialismo*, ed. Giorgio Spini and others (Padua: Marsilio, 1976), 39–66. Buccini, *The Americas in Italian Literature*, 115, documents the presence of abolitionist Italian journalism since 1769, namely in the *Gazzetta di Milano*, although in the late 1760s slavery – as I will show – was perceived as a vice of pre-revolutionary European colonialism that the revolution was going to eliminate.



ideologically linking America to the East on the basis of the presence of slavery involved the potential crisis of an entire *Weltanschauung*, according to which the world and its historical course were conceived in terms of a spatial revolution from east to west together with a political revolution from tyranny to democracy, from obscurantism to enlightenment, from slavery to freedom, and ultimately from past to future. The comic works that I shall discuss end happily, with freedom granted to slaves, albeit only to certain slaves, providing a rapid but imperfect solution to a problem that was destined to reach epic and epochal proportions.

During the years separating Raynal's impression of America as a 'Republic without wars and without masters' and Fortis's denunciation of slavery after the War of Independence, both the American nation and her image abroad went through a rapid transformation. This explains, at least in part, the striking differences among the works I am going to examine. While a Neapolitan play entitled *Pulcinella da Quacchero* (1770) presents slavery as an almost obsolete European feudal practice that the American Enlightenment is about to eradicate, Ranieri de' Calzabigi's comic libretto *Amiti e Ontario* (1772) represents the internal conflict of a Pennsylvanian Quaker who believes in equality and yet exploits Native American slaves on his farm. A later Neapolitan revision of *Amiti e Ontario*, Palomba and Paisiello's *Le gare generose*, or 'The Contests in Generosity' (1786), is no longer set in rural Pennsylvania, but in urban Boston, and this change of location reflects a recontextualization of slavery within the emerging modern economy based on capitalism and trade. A Viennese revision of *Le gare* undertaken six months later ennobles this new ideology by elevating the musical style of a crucial dramatic point in the opera. Changes in the perception and interpretation of slavery from *Amiti e Ontario* to the two versions of *Le gare generose* can be explained by looking at these works' original cultural and political contexts and the way they react to news and debates published in contemporary gazettes and legal memoirs.

It is not surprising that a cosmopolitan and fashionable intellectual like Ranieri de' Calzabigi was the first to introduce an American Quaker character and to address the issue of American slavery in North America in his *Amiti e Ontario*, a libretto set by Giuseppe Scarlatti (the score is unfortunately lost), written for a private performance in the country residence of the Austrian Princess of Auersperg.¹¹ Calzabigi's decision to write a libretto about Native Americans enslaved by a Pennsylvanian Quaker of English descent may seem peculiar to the modern observer, aware that other and different groups were in fact more deeply involved as victims and offenders of the slave trade. By choosing these particular stereotypes Calzabigi in all likelihood never intended to provide a realistic representation of American society, and preferred instead to stage American types charged with a familiar allegorical value brought into play in recent fictional and philosophical writings. Against the backdrop of these widely circulating cultural and literary models, Calzabigi needs only a few strokes of his pen to recall the analogy between the good-Quaker legend and the good-savage legend. In the first act of his libretto Amiti observes that the personality and ideas of Mr Dull, the Pennsylvanian Quaker, are kindred to her own sense of natural morality:

11 Ranieri de' Calzabigi, *Amiti e Ontario: dramma per musica* (Vienna: Giuseppe Kurtzboeck Stampatore Orientale di SMIRA, 1772); this libretto was later reprinted in Calzabigi, *Poesie* (Livorno: Stamperia dell'Enciclopedia, 1774), volume 1, 125–170 (the edition consulted). This text attracted the attention of several modern commentators owing to its eminent librettist. Although none of them focuses on the issue of slavery or discusses the literary and journalistic sources examined in the present article, I am nonetheless indebted to each of the following contributions: Luigi Chinatti, 'Calzabigi's Vision of an Enlightened America', *Comparative Literature Studies* 14/2 (1977), 135–142; Francesca Romana Conti, 'Amiti e Ontario di Ranieri Calzabigi: l'esotismo 'borghese' di un intellettuale classicista', in *Opera e libretto*, volume 2, ed. Gianfranco Folena, Maria Teresa Muraro and Giovanni Morelli (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 127–156; Rosy Candiani, 'Amiti e Ontario di Ranieri de' Calzabigi: il mito del buon selvaggio nella Vienna asburgica', in *Il teatro musicale italiano nel Sacro Romano Impero nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, ed. Alberto Colzani and others (Como: AMIS, 1999), 509–549; Francesco Paolo Russo, 'Una "parodia" napoletana di *Amiti e Ontario*', in *Ranieri Calzabigi tra Vienna e Napoli*, 227–238.



Amiti:

. . . Di là da' mari	[. . .] beyond the seas
Ei nacque, è ver, ma sembra	he was born – that's true – but it is as if he had been
Educato fra noi. Le altrui sventure	educated among us. He sympathizes with other people's
Addolcisce, e compiangè, odia l'orgoglio:	misfortunes and eases them, hates pride, despises luxury
Disprezza il fasto e la ragione ascolta:	and listens to reason;
L'ingiustizia ha in orrore;	injustice horrifies him;
E concorde col labbro ha sempre il core. ¹²	and his mouth and heart are always in agreement.

The paradox of Calzabigi's libretto is that notwithstanding his natural morality and enlightened visions ('la ragione ascolta'), Mr Dull is a slaveholder, which means that his own acts are in blunt disagreement with his mouth and heart. The Quaker, and hence the white American enlightened elite that this character allegorically represents, is caught up in a conflict between ideology and interest that proved to be a powerful source of irony. On the one hand the business-oriented American society appeared as a modern, in fact almost futuristic, society, showing the possibility of a democratic alternative to the predetermined and rigid social hierarchies regulating the European ancien régime. On the other hand, by perpetuating slavery (already considered the most primitive form of tyranny), the same white American elite appeared not too dissimilar from Oriental potentates. This paradox is a source of tragic irony, rather than farce, whatever the immediate affect of Dull's name, considering that in opera buffa names are often chosen to give an immediate glimpse of the personality of the character. Although the name Dull seems to encourage a preconceived idea of the stupidity of this character, reflected in the inconsistency of his ideals with his actions, Mr Dull is far from being portrayed as the stereotypical old fool, as are Uberto in Federico's *La serva padrona*, Buonafede in Goldoni's *Il mondo della luna*, Don Tammario in Lorenzi's *Socrate immaginario* and other gullible ageing guardian figures populating the world of opera buffa. The term *dull* seems to be used in two denotations that were also common in eighteenth-century English and that coincide with two stereotypical characteristics of the Quaker as presented in European literature of the time: 'phlegmatic' or 'slow in motion or action', and 'having the natural vivacity or cheerfulness blunted'. As we shall see, in the Neapolitan adaptation of *Amiti e Ontario*, *Le gare generose*, Mr Dull calls himself 'flemmatico', diagnosing in so doing his constitutional indolence or apathy.¹³ A third connotation of the Quaker's name can be added when one considers that this opera was written for a German-speaking audience: 'Dull' sounds close enough to the German *dulden*, meaning 'to tolerate' and to the related *duldsam*, meaning 'tolerant', both of which anticipate Mr Dull's final act of forgiveness and mercy. This characterization emerges in the vaudeville finale, which concludes the opera with a triumphal declaration of Quaker ethics:

Io son giusto, umano, e schietto:	I am righteous, human and frank;
Amo il prossimo, e rispetto	I love my fellow man and I obey
E le leggi, e la virtù.	both laws and virtue.
Ma non giuro: vesto semplice:	But I never swear, I dress modestly,

12 Ranieri de' Calzabigi, *Amiti e Ontario*, Act 1 Scene 7, 146. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. In Nunziato Porta's comic libretto *L'americana in Olanda* (Venice: Fenzo, 1778), Act 1 Scene 10, 18, the American Quaker Naimur who is visiting Europe with the beautiful savage Zemira instructs her that 'tutti qui son scaltri, e maliziosi, / E con il labbro il cuor non corrisponde' (Everybody here (in Europe) is cunning and malicious / and the mouth is never in agreement with the heart), establishing in so doing a kinship between him and the Native American girl by pointing at what distinguishes them from Europeans.

13 'Dull, a., definitions 3a and 4', *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50070704>>, accessed 24 January 2007. Definition 3a is attested also in Benjamin Franklin's autobiography of 1788, and definition 4 in Sir Richard Steele's *The Tatler* (1709). Conti, 'Amiti e Ontario', 135, also points out that in Calzabigi's libretto there is an 'ironic usage of self-explanatory personal names' and concludes that the name 'Dull' is 'prognostic of pedantic phlegm'.



non corteggio – non guerreggio:	I do not flirt, I do not wage war.
Non saluto; e do del tu:	I do not salute and I say 'thou'.
E per questo son ridicolo?	And for this I am ridiculous?
Oh miseria! O cecità. ¹⁴	Oh misery! Oh blindness!

That Mr Dull finally and openly points out that it would be 'blindness' to consider him ridiculous is another clue in support of the fact that Calzabigi's *dramma giocoso* avoids farce. But there are more important reasons to interpret this opera as belonging to the subgenre of sentimental opera rather than slapstick musical comedy. Not only the seria parts of Amiti and Ontario, but also the part of Mr Dull (which, as an old guardian of young lovers, should be typically comic), present a consistently elevated style of language, albeit never to the point of being lofty. In line with the general sentimental tone of the opera, the paradoxical relationship between enlightened master and Native American slaves is problematized with tact rather than with pungent irony. One might object that in opera buffa parody or sarcasm is always skulking behind any manifestation of elevated style. Even when the style of the lines is not exaggeratedly grand, the composer first and the interpreter second can swing the rhetorical level in the direction of parody; therefore any interpretation of comic opera based exclusively on the libretto is destined to be partial and potentially erroneous.¹⁵ We can assume, though, that this risk is fairly limited in *Amiti e Ontario*, considering Calzabigi's awareness of the interplay between text and other expressive operatic domains during his Viennese years (1761–1773), when in the so-called 'reformed operas' he and his collaborators reached more coherent artistic results by working in close partnership. If we are not dealing with a case of parody or comic irony, as his libretto indicates, then rather than demystifying a legend *Amiti e Ontario* reveals the same modern approach to myth shown in Calzabigi's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, set by Gluck ten years earlier. In both cases, mythological characters cease to be fixed and distant allegories and, once infused with human breath, engage in dialectical relationships with the archetypal associations that they embody, reaching out to contemporary reality. In *Amiti e Ontario* the noble savage, allegory of freedom, is enslaved by the Quaker, allegory of equality: both are dissociated from their characteristic mythological associations and strive to regain them on a different, more human dimension. Through a process of self-questioning the Quaker decides to grant freedom to his slaves, but reacquires their possession at a more human level: his slaves are not lost after all, since they decide to accept their master's invitation to become members of his own family and be subject to him not as slaves but as his own children.

This solution makes sense in the context of the early 1770s, when European intellectuals (together with many enlightened Americans) believed, or hoped, that America was about to put an end to slavery and convert former slaves into fellow citizens. At this time, slavery was still perceived as a remnant institution

14 Calzabigi, *Amiti e Ontario*, Act 2 Last Scene (9), 170.

15 A discussion of parody in opera buffa has proliferated especially in efforts to understand Mozart and Da Ponte's most controversial and ambiguous opera, *Così fan tutte*: see Dolores Jerde Keahey, 'Cosi fan tutte: Parody or Irony?', in *Paul Pisk: Essays in His Honor*, ed. John Glowacki (Austin: College of Fine Arts, University of Texas Press, 1966), 116–130; Rodney Farnsworth, 'Cosi fan tutte as Parody and Burlesque', *The Opera Quarterly* 6 (1988–1989), 50–68; Frits Noske, 'Cosi fan tutte: Dramatic Irony', in *The Signifier and the Signified* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 93–120. For a perspective beyond *Così fan tutte* see Andrew Steptoe, 'Parody: The Mozartean Method', in *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 221–230, and the recent essay by Michele Calella, 'Entblößte Natur: transformierter Ernst in Mozarts *La finta giardiniera*', presented at the 2005 Mozart Conference in Salzburg (proceedings in print), which offers a useful comparative analysis of opera buffa and seria libretti and shows Mozart's musical and dramatic treatment of parody in *La finta giardiniera*. The essay also discusses German and French literature on parody not taken into account in the previous essays mentioned above. On the often disregarded power of the singer-actors to add or subtract meaning through their performance see Alessandra Campana, 'The Performance of Opera Buffa: *Le Nozze di Figaro* and the Act IV Finale', in *Pensieri per un maestro: studi in onore di Pierluigi Petrobelli*, ed. Stefano La Via and Roger Parker (Turin: EDT, 2002), 125–134. See also Jessica Waldoff, *Recognition in Mozart's Operas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 211–217.



from the 'East'; Calzabigi is one of the first to question the ability of the Americans to get rid of such an Oriental practice. The relevance of this context becomes clearer when *Amiti e Ontario* is set next to what I believe is one of its literary sources: *Pulcinella da Quacquero*, a 1770 comic play by Father Jerocades, a teacher in a Catholic college in the town of Sora, at that time part of the Kingdom of Naples.¹⁶ In this comedy slavery is presented as an evil introduced and practised by corrupted Europeans, an evil which the more 'advanced' and more Western American Quakers are fighting against. The plot is simple: two European aristocrats enslave the children of a rich Quaker merchant from Pennsylvania. While the two aristocrats are duelling for possession of the American slaves, explaining to the perplexed servant Pulcinella that 'this is the knightly way to acquire power over people' ('ecco il modo di acquistare il dominio delle persone all'uso de' Cavalieri'), Pulcinella swiftly approaches the American girl and proposes marriage. At this point her father makes his entrance. Learning that his daughter has promised her hand to Pulcinella, he is ready to welcome him as his son-in-law upon his conversion to Quakerism and manages to persuade him by explaining that Quakers believe in perfect equality, that they do not believe in empty words and rituals but only in good deeds, and finally that since all human beings are children of God, they reject the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Easily persuaded, Pulcinella finally appears transformed into the typical Quaker: he greets everybody using the informal *tu* (thou) instead of the formal *voi* or *lei* (you), does not bow to the aristocrats and does not remove his Quaker hat in the presence of his former master, explaining to him, 'I'm a free man now: I have no master' ('Io son libero, non ho Signiò'). The other characters try to stop Pulcinella from following his new American family by reminding him that he will not see Naples again, which makes this most traditional Neapolitan *commedia dell'arte* figure hesitate until the Quaker removes his last-minute doubts by saying that 'Pennsylvania is worth a thousand Italies: Philadelphia is richer than Naples' ('La Pensilvania vale per mille Italie: Filadelfia è più ricca di Napoli').¹⁷

Not surprisingly, the play was censored by local authorities, but the ensuing trial, in which the author was accused of heresy and disrespect for the Church and the Kingdom of Naples, granted this text unexpected public resonance.¹⁸ This can explain some subtle but inescapable similarities between *Amiti e Ontario* and *Pulcinella da Quacquero* in the general conception of the drama, outlined in a letter by Calzabigi, dated 22 August 1772, to his friend Paolo Frisi, a Milanese scientist who had been corresponding with Benjamin Franklin for about twenty years; the young enslaved pair of siblings in *Pulcinella* becomes a young enslaved pair of lovers who pretend to be siblings:

I had already abandoned the Lyre four years ago when my duty towards a beautiful Lady persuaded me to take it up again. . . . I imagined a Quaker colonist living in a rural area of Pennsylvania, in North America. I gave him a sister-in-law and a niece [her daughter], and I imagined the sister-in-law as a widow. *Amiti* and *Ontario*, both savages, are enslaved to him for reasons of war,

16 (Father) Antonio Jerocades, *Pulcinella da Quacquero*, unpublished comedy for the Real Collegio Tuziano in Sora (Naples, 1770). A century ago F. De Simone Brower unearthed the manuscript text of this spoken intermezzo and meticulously reconstructed the whole episode concerning its repression in his 'Un intermezzo indiatolato', *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei. Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 5/13 (June 1904), 345–365. The original manuscript has been removed from Naples National Library, folder XIV.B.5, containing most of the documentation on the legal and religious investigation in the case and on the ensuing public scandal. This latter is documented indirectly by an article on the *Mercurio d'Olanda* (June 1770). In his article Brower reproduces the unabridged manuscript copy he found in a legal memoir by Jerocades's defence attorney (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, XV. C. 42).

17 Jerocades, *Pulcinella*, Scene 9 and Scene 10 (final scene).

18 Brower, 'Un intermezzo indiatolato', 351–354. It is likely that Ranieri de' Calzabigi, at that time in Vienna, was informed about the scandal, at least via his connections with the Freemasons of Naples. Among them was the singer Antonia Bernasconi (protagonist of Gluck's *Alceste*): see Mariangela Donà, 'Dagli Archivi Milanesi: lettere di Ranieri de' Calzabigi e di Antonia Bernasconi', *Analecta musicologica* 14 (1974), 294–295. An episode of Masonic greeting to Signora Bernasconi occurred before one of her performances at the San Carlo theatre of Naples, and her presence in feminine lodges is reported by Harold Acton, *The Bourbons of Naples* (London: Methuen, 1956), 134, 151.



and they are lovers, but they are pretending to be brother and sister for their own good and so as not to appear suspicious. The Quaker would like to marry Amity because he sees in her some inclination to passion. His sister-in-law wants Ontario, because he is a beautiful young man; and so does her daughter. To avoid this entanglement, the two [Native] Americans flee, but Amity is caught, and Ontario goes back to share the destiny of his beloved. The Quaker decides what to do according to his principles: he forgives the two savages and adopts them as his own children.¹⁹

The differences between *Amity e Ontario* and its possible model are no less evident. Most notably, in Calzabigi's text the Quaker is transformed from a victim of European slave-dealers to a slaveholder himself. That the libretto took such a different view of slavery from the play and in such a short time (from 1770 to 1772) can be explained on the basis of historical evidence that indicates that the comic stage was reacting very quickly to contemporary political events. In the Italian gazettes we find a relatively long period of silence on the state of affairs in America – from the autumn of 1768 to the spring of 1772 – following a period of intensive coverage during the first half of 1768; remarkably, no opera buffa based on American subjects was composed during these years of news blackout.

On March 1772, five months before Calzabigi's letter to Frisi, the Somerset case called new attention to the American colonies and inaugurated a new period of press coverage of America. Somerset was an American slave of African descent who ran away from his master during their sojourn in England. Shortly after his attempted escape he was captured and put in chains in the hold of a ship headed for Jamaica, where he was destined to be sold to a new master. Somerset, however, never left England: an appeal to the King's Bench against this abduction prevented Captain Knowles from sailing with the recaptured fugitive and immediately started a debate over the legitimacy of slavery in general, questioned now from a legal as well as moral standpoint. Two recently published monographs on this judicial affair, Alfred and Ruth Blumrosen's *Slave Nation* and Steven Wise's *Though the Heavens May Fall*, give unprecedented prominence to the Somerset case, the former pointing out that Lord Mansfield's deliberation 'would have monumental consequences in the American colonies, leading up to the American Revolution, the Civil War, and beyond'.²⁰ The *cause célèbre* was rapidly disseminated in the rest of Europe. Here, as an example, is how an Italian gazette, *Notizie del mondo*, recounted the news:

Londra, 18 febbraio. Si è cominciata a trattare al Banco del Re la causa d'un Negro, il quale da un abitante della Giamaica si vuole obbligare a seguirlo in detta Colonia. Il Sig. Davy, che parlò il primo per quest'infelice, prese il suo discorso dall'origine della schiavitù in Inghilterra. Fece vedere non esser questa stata tollerata, che ne' primi tempi; ma che a' giorni nostri nessuno può esser schiavo nella Gran Bretagna; che il potere di far degli schiavi è puramente locale, e dipendente dalle Leggi di alcuni luoghi; che l'assoluta necessità ha potuto autorizzare la schiavitù nelle Colonie, ma subito che uno Schiavo ha avuta la sorte di scendere in Inghilterra, l'aria che vi

19 Letter of Ranieri Calzabigi to Paolo Frisi, Vienna, 24 August 1772; the original text can be read in Donà, 'Dagli archivi milanesi', 294–295. Most probably Frisi was also a Freemason, and as such or as a scientist had been in contact with Benjamin Franklin since at least 1756: see Antonio Pace, *Benjamin Franklin and Italy*, 34–35, 82–83. Candiani, 'Amity e Ontario', 515–516, supposes that the Princess might be either Maria Wilhelmine Countess von Neipperg, wife of Johann Adam Joseph Auersperg, or Maria Josepha Rosalie, the wife of Prince Joseph Anton Auersperg. The location of the first and only performance is no better identified than as 'Sleppè', as Calzabigi wrote to Frisi; Candiani hypothesizes that this is a bad spelling of Schlefßen. I am grateful to James Webster for suggesting me that the location could be Schlesien, or Silesia. I believe Webster's intuition to be the correct one, since a lineage of the Princes von Auersperg were also Dukes of Schlesien, as one can see at <<http://genealogy.euweb.cz/auersperg/auersperg5.html>>, accessed 24 January 2007.

20 Alfred Blumrosen and Ruth Blumrosen, *Slave Nation: How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005); Steven M. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial that Led to the End of Human Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2005). The quotation is from Blumrosen, *Slave Nation*, 1.



respira lo rende libero; che egli ha diritto di esser governato dalle leggi del Paese, e di vivere in esso sotto la loro protezione, come qualunque altro Cittadino; che in assicurando la libertà agli Schiavi, i quali passavano in Europa, si faceva uso dell'unico mezzo di impedire al loro padrone il condurveli; che se vi fossero stati soggetti alla schiavitù, si vedrebbero insensibilmente alcuni orgogliosi coloni, i quali hanno dei beni in Inghilterra, condur seco i loro schiavi per attaccarli alle loro carrozze, e calessi per fare affronto all'umanità. . . . I risultati della causa si attendono.

London, 18 February. The King's Bench has begun to address the cause of a negro who has been compelled to follow his kidnapper to Jamaica [the plaintiff's name was Somerset; the defendant was his master, Charles Stewart, a slave trader from Norfolk, Virginia, who delivered Somerset to Captain Knowles to be sold in Jamaica]. Mr Davy [William Davy was Somerset's attorney] spoke first in defence of this unhappy man, and started his speech by addressing the origins of slavery in England. He pointed out that slavery had been tolerated only at the beginning, but today nobody can possibly be a slave in Great Britain. The power of enslaving people is purely local, and depends on local laws of certain places. It is absolute necessity that can authorize slavery in the colonies, but as soon as slaves have chance to land in England, the air they breathe makes them free, and here they have the right to be governed and protected by English law like any other citizen. Mr Davy also pointed out that granting freedom to slaves travelling to Europe is the only means to discourage their masters to bring them here. This will avoid having arrogant colonists with possessions in England bringing slaves with them, attaching them to their carriages and cabriolets, so as to offend [the whole of] humankind. . . . We await the verdict.²¹

Judge Lord Mansfield delivered the verdict on 22 June, declaring that 'the state of slavery is of such a nature, that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political', and finally that 'whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged'.²² This verdict granted Somerset freedom, but more notably it also created a judicial precedent that led to the release of many other American slaves accompanying their masters in England. According to the Blumrosens the verdict caused in fact a chain reaction in the American colonies starting from the summer of 1772, when the news spread among the slaves, many of whom ran away; understandably, this alarmed the Southern landlords, igniting their quest for independence from a motherland that was putting in jeopardy one of the backbones of their productive system. As a result they made the perpetuation of slavery in America a precondition for their contribution first to the War of Independence and, thereafter, to the commonwealth of the newly founded Republic. As Steven Wise points out,

the Somerset case was exceptional . . . not just because it provided a platform for airing the stirring issue of the legality of English slavery, but because it catalyzed what was, for late eighteenth-century London, an unusually prolonged and public struggle, one that echoed not just through cavernous Westminster Hall, but in the pages of monographs, newspapers and magazines, in extraordinary letters to the editor and in pubs and drawing rooms throughout England and the Americas. Everyone began talking about black slavery and the African slave trade, and they didn't stop until both had been abolished.²³

Because of its public and global resonance, after the Somerset episode it became difficult to see slavery as an evil introduced and perpetuated by the European old regime. Nonetheless, there is not yet a perception of

21 *Notizie del mondo*, 10 March 1772. I have made corrections and added information in square brackets based on Blumrosen, *Slave Nation*.

22 *Howell's State Trials*, volumes 20, 82 (1771–1777), quoted in Blumrosen, *Slave Nation*, 11; see also Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall*, 182.

23 Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall*, xvi.



America as an entity entirely separated from England, and, in fact, *Amiti e Ontario* presents slavery as an internal paradox of English-American enlightened society (Mr Dull is designated as ‘uomo inglese’ while his American Quaker identity, as we have seen, was associated with enlightened trans-Atlantic ideals). Unlike Somerset’s master, Mr Dull is tragically aware of the conflict between his Quaker and enlightened ethics and his role as a domestic tyrant. In Act 1 the Quaker disagrees with his Anglican sister-in-law Mrs Bubble, who opposes his intention to free his slaves, and offers to buy one from him to keep all for herself (not coincidentally the handsome Ontario). At this point the Quaker delivers the most powerful abolitionist speech to be found in Italian opera, in which he calls slavery an ‘iniquitous Commerce of men who are also created by High Providence’ and ‘a commerce that is a sinful abuse and our eternal shame’:

Mr Dull:

Tu vuoi comprarlo, ed io
Penso di farlo libero. L’iniquo
Commercio che facciam per coltivare
Il zucchero e il tabacco
D’uomini come noi; creati anch’essi
Dall’Alta Provvidenza che nel mondo
Tutti muove e governa:
È un empio abuso, e nostra infamia eterna.

Miss Bubble: Ma non troppo diversi
Son costoro dai bruti.

Mr D.: E che ti sembra
Che noi tutti siam Angeli! . . .

Miss B.: Ma il diritto dell’armi
Ontario ed Amiti a servitù condanna

Mr D.: Un altro eccesso è questo
D’immensa ferocia. Oltre la guerra,
Odio, forza, vendetta
Il prostrarre è delitto.

. . .

Ascolta:

Non son mercante d’uomini;
Schiavi non ho.²⁴

Mr Dull

You want to buy him and I
Think I should set him free. The iniquitous
Commerce of men that we practise for the
farming of sugar and tobacco,
of men like us, who are also created by High
Providence, which in the world moves and rules
all of us, this commerce is a sinful abuse and
our eternal shame.

Miss Bubble: But they are not too different from
animals.

Mr D.: And do you think
that we are all angels? . . .

Miss B.: But Ontario and Amiti are condemned
to servitude by the law of war.

Mr D.: This is another excess
of great ferocity. Prolonging hate, the use of
force and vengeance after the war is over is a
crime.

. . .

Listen:

I am not a merchant of men;
I do not hold slaves.

Towards the end of the second act Mr Dull has not yet freed his slaves. Now he appears alone, coming to grips, probably in an obbligato recitative, with his internal struggle. As Mr Dull hears noises from offstage, he fears a revolt of his black slaves and ponders the injustice of slavery, calling it ‘an excessively inhuman traffic that is turning us into executioners and tyrants’:

Sento rumori . . .
Esser dovrebbe
De’ neri schiavi miei qualche congiura.
In servitù sì dura,
Sotto sferza crudel, qual meraviglia
Se meditan vendetta,
Se bramano libertà; miseri! . . . e noi
Più miseri di loro! Abbiamo sconvolto

I hear noises . . .
it might be
some plot of my black slaves.
Oppressed under such a harsh servitude,
and by the cruel whip, it is not surprising
if they think of revenge,
if they are longing for freedom; wretched
people! . . . and we are even more wretched than

24 Calzabigi, *Amiti e Ontario*, Act 1 Scene 3, 136.



Del giusto e dell'ingiusto
Tutte le idee. La natural difesa,
La sicurezza; ecco, ci vuole in questo,
D'un traffico inuman fino all'eccesso,
Carnefici e tiranni a un tempo istesso.²⁵

they! We have overturned every idea of
good and evil. Our natural protection,
our need for security in dealing with this
excessively inhuman traffic, are making
of us executioners and tyrants at once.

This eloquent condemnation of slavery and the formidable analysis of the master's fear caused by the awareness of the injustice he perpetrates are among the ideologically progressive and clear-sighted aspects of this text. It is not to be excluded that in the back of Calzabigi's mind there was the desperate attempt to salvage the cherished idea of westward migration of enlightened civilization. If slavery started in the Orient and affected Europe first, and if it spread from Europe to America, it is only logical that, like a wave of flu, this social disease would end first in England and soon thereafter in America, granted that it did not become a chronic disease as in the Middle and Far East. The latter risk seems in fact to hover over the entire text. It is worth noticing that the way the whole crisis is resolved is by a sudden dramatic denouement and reversal, which resorts to power dynamics typical of pre-revolutionary Europe. If in 1772 slavery seemed to be about to end in an act of enlightened jurisdiction, Mr Dull does not change or reform the law but overrides it by freeing Amiti and Ontario in an act of mercy. The three concepts of tyranny, slavery and mercy are inextricably interrelated in pre-modern Western culture. In Slavoj Žižek's and Mladen Dolar's *Opera's Second Death*, Dolar discusses 'the logic of mercy' apropos of Mozart's *Idomeneo* and *La clemenza di Tito*, pointing out that only individuals whose position of power transcends human law (gods and tyrants) have the authority to grant mercy, which 'has to be understood . . . as an act beyond the law'.²⁶ Moreover, Dull's decision to grant freedom to his slaves is not entirely spontaneous: it is Amiti who persuades the old Quaker to grant mercy, during a long recitative and an aria ('Placato renderti') in which she no longer calls the Quaker 'padrone' (master); but 'padre' (or father):

Placato renderti	That you should calm your rage
No: non pretendo;	I dare not expect;
Padre, condannami;	Father, condemn me;
Non mi difendo:	I do not defend myself:
Ma non dividermi	but do not divide me,
Nel tuo rigore,	In your severity,
Da lui ch'è spasimo	from the one who is the desire
Di questo core;	of this heart of mine;
Da lui ch'è l'anima	from he who is the soul
Ch'io sento in sen.	that I feel in my bosom.

25 Calzabigi, *Amity and Ontario*, Act 2 Scene 6, 161–162. Similarly in Act 2 Scene 9, 166, Dull explains to Miss Bubble and Miss Nab that 'it is not a crime when the servant seeks freedom' ('Non è delitto al servo / Cercar la libertà').

26 Mladen Dolar, 'The Logic of Mercy', in Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 20. Dolar's observations are inspired by Ivan Nagel, *Autonomy and Mercy: Reflections on Mozart's Operas*, trans. Marion Faber and Ivan Nagel (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1991); originally published as *Autonomie und Gnade: über Mozarts Opern* (München: C. Hanser, 1985). By contrast, Daniel Hertz uses exclusively the word 'clemency' (instead of 'mercy') and describes it as a 'virtue ardently espoused by the Enlightenment', maintaining that 'clemency' in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito* has to be understood as a reference to Masonic enlightened values: Hertz, 'La Clemenza di Sarastro: Masonic Benefice in the Last Operas', in *Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1990), 272–275. For Dolar, however, in *Die Zauberflöte* we have 'nothing else than mercy turned upside down' (82). See also Wilhelm Seidel, 'Seneca – Corneille – Mozart. Ideen- und Gattungsgeschichtliches zu *La clemenza di Tito*', in *Musik in Antike und Neuzeit*, edited by Michael von Albrecht and Werner Schubert (Frankfurt am Main, Bern and New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 109–128.



Se un fato barbaro	If a cruel destiny
Lo guida a morte;	leads him to death,
Padre, accompagnami	Father, let me be
Col mio consorte:	with my companion:
Le nostre ceneri	our ashes at least
Confondi almen.	shall be mingled.
(<i>S'inginocchia</i>). ²⁷	(<i>kneeling down</i>).

After this aria, Mr Dull gives orders to free Amity and Ontario, the whole action being staged with simple, eloquent Metastasian gestures typical of heroic opera: Amity kneels, her Master rises:

<i>Dull</i> : Vi libero: v'assolvo; e vi perdono.	<i>Dull</i> : I free you, I absolve you and I forgive you.
<i>Bubble</i> : Come!	<i>Bubble</i> : How?
<i>Nab</i> : Perché?	<i>Nab</i> : Why?
<i>Dull</i> : (<i>s'alza</i>)	<i>Dull</i> : (<i>rising</i>)
Non è delitto al servo	It is not a crime for the servant
Cercar la libertà.	to seek freedom.

In the end, Mr Dull accepts Amity and Ontario as his own children, and restores in so doing the original hierarchy by converting his power from a public to a domestic sphere. And the final tutti celebrates the unity and harmony of the new enlarged family:

Regni l'amabile	Joyful and loving
Pace ridente:	peace shall rule:
Vera sorgente	true source
Della domestica	of domestic
Felicità. ²⁸	happiness.

This conclusion tends towards reconciliation and the re-establishment or re-formation of power relationships, albeit, as I have already suggested, at a morally higher level. At the same time Calzabigi reassures his audience of reformist aristocrats that the Quaker's mercy results in a redefinition of his authority and not in a loss of power. The centrality of the act of mercy itself shows the opera's alignment with the reformist attitude of a large part of the Austrian aristocracy, an audience accustomed to contemporary tragedy and heroic opera. Finally, the solution of the initial paradox – how to reconcile American Quakerism and slavery – is imperfectly reached in the end. After the opera several questions remain unanswered: what happens to the black slaves? From Mr Dull's speech one may infer that they are going to be freed, but that does not happen on stage, and if we trust this character's good intentions, are they going to be part of his family, like the Native Americans, or not? If not, why? Is the Quaker 'righteous, human and frank', as he claims to be in the vaudeville finale, or is he an opportunist who wants to preserve power in whatever form he is able to? By leaving these questions unanswered, Calzabigi throws seeds of doubt on the whole positivistic idea of westward progress. In the adaptation of *Amity e Ontario* for the public theatres the plot would be reworked; the question is whether those changes provided any better or clearer solution to those problems.

²⁷ Calzabigi, *Amity e Ontario*, Act 2 Scene 9, 166.

²⁸ Calzabigi, *Amity e Ontario*, Act 2 Scene 9.



Mr Dull arrived in the Kingdom of Naples in 1786, in a remake of *Amiti e Ontario* entitled *Le gare generose* a libretto probably by Giuseppe Palomba set by Giovanni Paisiello. Textual cuts and substitutions, replacement of characters and alterations to the original plot were made in order to adapt the opera to the taste and expectation of the paying audience of one of the largest maritime cities in the world.²⁹ The venues and audiences for *Amiti e Ontario* and *Le gare generose* could not have been more dissimilar, and the most relevant difference is that while the former is a court opera, the latter is a public opera. Consequently Calzabigi's libretto was updated to serve a different practical and ideological function, while the work was performed in Naples with a different cast of singers and needed to establish a dialogue with a different kind of audience. It is for this reason that this opera displays a rhetorical level that is generally lower than its source, although the hyperboles or displacement typical of parody are absent.³⁰ From an ideological standpoint this is an important factor, because – as we shall see – it contributes to the dismantling of the logic of mercy, which determines a profound change to the overall message. As *Amiti* alters *Pulcinella da Quacquero*, similarly *Le gare* alters *Amiti* by replacing and/or redefining American myths and types, and it does so in a way that reflects both American reality as perceived before and after the Revolution and the European audience for which each opera is conceived. First of all the American landscape is different. *Amiti e Ontario*, produced in an aristocratic country residence, is set in a rural Pennsylvania where the relationship between the landlord and his slaves is inscribed within feudal paradigms; on the other hand, *Le gare* is set in a modern and urban Boston, and the agrarian pre-modern economy of its source is replaced by a capitalistic economy based on trade and money exchange, which also reflects the relationship between masters and slaves.³¹ The table below summarizes the conversion of *dramatis personae* from *Amiti* to *Le gare*. In *Le gare* Mr Dull is no longer a Pennsylvanian Quaker, but a merchant from Boston with no religious connotations (even though he retains some of the basic stereotypical attributes of Quakerism, including the name). His slaves are no longer Native Americans, but middle-class Italians: Gelinda is the daughter of a French merchant who died in Naples, leaving her under the tutelage of a cruel relative who manages her finances.

29 (Giuseppe Palomba,) *Le gare generose: commedia per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro de' Fiorentini per prim'opera in quest'anno 1786, con licenza de' superiori* (Naples, 1786). A list of the many sources of this opera score is in Michael Robinson, *Giovanni Paisiello. A Thematic Catalogue of his Works*, 2 volumes (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendagon, 1991–1994), volume 1, 373–386. Francesco Paolo Russo, 'Una "parodia" napoletana di *Amiti e Ontario*', reads *Le gare generose* as a parody of *Amiti* (a useful interpretation to understand the lower rhetorical level of the former). Like Robinson, Russo casts doubts on Palomba's authorship (the name of the librettist does not appear in the numerous librettos of this opera until 1800) and supposes a direct participation of Calzabigi in the Neapolitan libretto. Unfortunately, this interesting hypothesis is supported by no other evidence than the obvious similarities between the two texts. On the reception history of *Le gare generose* see Otto Michtner, *Das alte Burgtheater als Opernbühne. Von der Einführung des deutschen Singspiels (1778) bis zum Tod Kaiser Leopolds II (1792)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1970), 404; and Christine Villinger, *Mi vuoi tu corbellar: Die Opere Buffe von Giovanni Paisiello. Analysen und Interpretationen* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2000), 312–316. On *Le gare* see Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 310, for a useful and detailed plot summary; her 'Bourgeois Values in Opera Buffa in 1780s Vienna', in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna, 170–185*, provides the most useful insights on this opera (to which I shall return). For a historical account of the economy of Naples in the eighteenth century see Biagio Salvemini, 'The Arrogance of the Market: The Economy of the Kingdom between the Mediterranean and Europe', in *Naples in the Eighteenth Century: The Birth and Death of a National State*, ed. Girolamo Imbruglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 44–69, which challenges the general assumption that the Kingdom of Naples' production system was agrarian and pre-modern (given the relative lack of manufacturing industry) by documenting the intense activity of international trading (primarily in food products). Obviously, the presence and interdependence of extensive agrarian producers and international traders of farmers' products makes the Neapolitan economy not dissimilar from the American one.

30 For this reason I disagree with Russo's interpretation of *Le gare* as parody of *Le gare* in his 'Una "parodia" napoletana di *Amiti e Ontario*'.

31 Hunter, 'Bourgeois Values'.



Calzabigi, <i>Amiti e Ontario</i>			(Palomba,) <i>Le gare generose</i>	
Mr Dull	Quaker, settler in rural Pennsylvania		Mr Dull ('primo buffo toscano') (bass)	Boston businessman
Mrs Bubble	Dull's sister-in-law, (of Anglican persuasion)		Miss Meri ('prima donna mezzo carattere') (alto)	Dull's niece
Mrs Nab	Mrs Bubble's daughter, Mr Dull's niece		Mrs Nab ('prima donna giocosa') (soprano)	Mr Dull's daughter
Amiti	young woman (<i>parte seria</i>)	Native American couple enslaved to Mr Dull for reasons of war	Gelinda, alias Deianina ('prima buffa assoluta') (soprano)	Italian couple, enslaved to Mr Dull for financial reasons
Ontario	young man (<i>parte seria</i>)		Bastiano Ammazzagatte, alias Bronton ('primo buffo napoletano') (bass)	
			Don Berlicco ('primo tenore mezzo carattere') (tenor)	Young Italian man
			Perillo ('altro primo mezzo carattere') (added in Turin and Milan, 1791)	Italian 'fashion freak', friend of Berlicco

Prior to the events occurring in the course of the opera's two acts, both set in Boston, Gelinda has escaped her evil relative, accompanied and supported by her lover Bastiano, a Neapolitan fellow 'di civile condizione', which means belonging to the middle classes. They have changed their names to Deianina and Bronton respectively and married in Cádiz – one of the major transatlantic ports – from where they have sailed for America after converting Gelinda's investments into a certified cheque (or *cambiale*), to be cashed in Halifax at the Bubble Bank ('Ragion Buble'). If Amiti and Ontario were enslaved for 'reasons of war', the Italian travellers Gelinda and Bastiano are enslaved for financial reasons resulting from two accidents, one more rocambolesque than the other. The first is that pirates assaulted and took their ship. However, a Bostonian vessel immediately attacked and burned the equipage (including Gelinda's cash) of what the American sailors believed was a buccaneer ship; they took all the crew members and travellers to be hanged in Boston according to the law, but while the pirates were immediately executed, Gelinda and Bastiano survived. This they owed to the richest man in Boston, Mr Dull, who was moved by Gelinda's supplications and, owing to his riches and power, managed to convert their death sentence into perpetual slavery and then acquired them from the captain of the ship as his personal servants. The second accident is more complex and less interesting, but dramatically equally important. We learn that Gelinda's relatives froze her assets after her disappearance, so that the Spanish banker was unable to issue the cheque to Halifax. Eventually, though, they would issue new valid cheques to the Spanish banker, allowing the transfer of Gelinda's investments to America once they learned of the cruelties perpetuated against Gelinda by her guardian in Naples. All of this information is given to the readers of the libretto in the *argomento*, or narrative preface to the opera (typical of Neapolitan productions), recounting the facts before the opera starts, providing the necessary information to understand the complex plot and the sudden denouements (such as why, in the end, Gelinda acquires the necessary financial means to buy back her freedom once the certified cheque becomes available to her).³²

32 (Giuseppe Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Naples, 1786), 1–3.



The ‘de-Quakerization’ of Mr Dull may reflect the new attention being paid to a predominantly secular business-oriented society. More likely, however, the loss of the master’s Quaker identity could be related to the change in European public opinion concerning slavery in America. First, Quakers had regained their reputation as the strongest abolitionist group in America, which made their representation as slaveholders implausible. Abbé Raynal, in a public reply to the *Faculté de théologie* (1781), written to defend himself against the censorship of his *Philosophical and Political History of America* (in which he had previously praised the ‘heretic’ sect), admits that one of the few things Friends should be ashamed of is that they have been keeping slaves for a long time, ‘but in 1769’, he informs his readers, ‘they abolished the evil. Now all the other colonies are imitating their tolerance.’ A few years before, in 1777, François La Combe stated that ‘In Pennsylvania Quakerism has made rapid progress and has become the admiration of all because of the generous liberty it has granted to the black slaves. A numerous, peaceful, laborious sect gives liberty to two hundred thousand blacks and makes them a society of brothers. What a lesson for monarchs!’.³³ Second, the Italian *Gazzetta Universale* tried to inhibit the increasing emigration to North America by propagandistic reports claiming that ‘the larger part of those who go to settle in Pennsylvania are sold as slaves and treated as animals’.³⁴ Third, and most importantly, as the Blumrosens document, in the discourse on slavery during the War of Independence and thereafter, the main concern became more economic than moral, focusing on issues of property and the value of labour.³⁵ Even Quaker abolitionism was deeply affected by this economic approach, which replaced or combined purely moral issues with financial considerations: the 1779 Quaker Yearly Meeting encouraged the Friends not only to free slaves but also to pay them for their past services, ‘as a matter of justice’ – they declared – ‘and not of charity’.³⁶

Mary Hunter, who focused on the Viennese version of *Le gare generose*, has already noticed that descriptions of financial transactions are pervasive in and essential to the plot, pointing out that ‘*Le gare generose* is . . . unusual in its positive attitude to trade and investment’ and that ‘financial competence and honesty’ play a central role in this opera with these qualities being presented as ‘hallmarks of virtue’.³⁷ If this is true for the Viennese version, in the Neapolitan version, the attitude towards the world of money exchange and business is more ambiguous. Here the traditional aristocratic mistrust of trade is not completely abandoned. When compared to that of the landlord Mr Dull of the more Arcadian rural Pennsylvania of Calzabigi, the psychological characterization of the merchant Mr Dull of Boston regresses to a lower comic level, resembling the less complex psychological characterization of *commedia dell’arte* masks. The

33 Raynal is quoted by Philips, *The Good Quaker*, 102; and so is La Combe, *Observations sur Londres [sic] et ses environs* (Paris, 1777). The year before, Vincenzo Martinelli also reported that in Pennsylvania Quakers were questioning the ‘peculiar institution’ in his *Istoria del governo d’Inghilterra e delle sue colonie in India e nell’America settentrionale* (Florence: Gaetano Cambiagi, 1776), 34, 36, 40. On these and similar reports see Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, 391–392, and Del Negro, *Il mito americano*, 246–247.

34 *Gazzetta Universale* 48 (14 June 1774), 226 (report written in London, 18 March). A year before *Le gare* was performed, a booklet by Benjamin Franklin was published in Italian translation: *Osservazione a chiunque desidera passare in America e Riflessioni circa i selvaggi dell’America Settentrionale del Dottor Franklin*, Italian trans. by Pietro Antoniutti (Padua: Conzatti, 1785); this book warned prospective immigrants that North America was not Eden, that the country needed hard workers and specialized artisans rather than adventurers and that new settlers were valued solely on the basis of their work and not for prestige based on family lineage.

35 Blumrosen, *Slave Nation*, especially 134–138, 159, 235.

36 Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania*, 83–84, documents the reimbursement of a Negro woman for her many years of unpaid work. On Quaker abolitionism see also Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 145–149, and Jane E. Calvert, ‘Dissenters in Our Own Country: Eighteenth-Century Quakerism and the Origins of American Civil Disobedience’ (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003). Isaac Sharpless, *The Quakers in the Revolution*, volume 2 of *A History of Quaker Government in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Leach, 1899), 137–138, 234–251 also brings a wealth of documentary evidence from the minutes of the American Quaker meetings to show how during the Revolutionary War the Society of Friends required its members to free all their slaves.

37 Hunter, ‘Bourgeois Values’, 170–173.



Bostonian character is not too different from the Pantalone-derived tutor figure of the most stereotypical buffa plots, combined with the contradictory and multifaceted nature typical of buffa characterizations of American Quakers.

Mr Dull is not the only character to become funnier (and therefore to have his status lowered). With good reason, Hunter also writes apropos of the Viennese version of this opera that ‘for much of the libretto, the characters and the action seem to follow the commedia-dell-arte-derived plot archetype of the *innamorati* escaping the clutches of the lustful guardian’.³⁸ In fact, in the Neapolitan version, the enslaved couple is even less serious than in the Viennese one, resembling more a couple of cunning servants (buffa parts) than a couple of *innamorati* (typically seria parts). Accordingly, Mr Dull’s dispensation of freedom in the Neapolitan version is no longer to be cunningly extorted and therefore is presented more as a mistake than as a deliberate act of mercy.

Gelinda uses her aria ‘Deh Padron’ to seduce Mr Dull just as the servant Serpina fools the old Uberto in Pergolesi’s *La serva padrona*, which Paisiello had reset successfully in 1781. In the simple recitative preceding the aria (present in both the Neapolitan and Viennese versions), Gelinda, like Amiti, informs Mr Dull that she is already married to Bastiano; but unlike the naive savage girl, she embarks on a report on her and her husband’s financial troubles (a story that a stockbroker might find more moving than the average spectator). During this recitative Mr Dull is hardly moved to pity, in fact he tends towards rage, asking about her debts (‘ma i debiti?’), to which Gelinda answers that she could pay them off if the Bostonians had not burned a ship containing her money and other valuables and if she had a chance to cash a bill of exchange worth 3,000 guineas in Halifax. Mr Dull is just about to explode as Gelinda reveals that she and Bastiano are not siblings, but wife and husband: ‘Tu maritata?’ asks Dull in shock and disbelief, ‘Che sento! . . . dunque. . . maritata già sei!’ (‘Married? What do I hear! So you are already married!’).³⁹ After this recitative Gelinda’s ensuing aria serves the purpose of calming her master down and extorting mercy from him:

Deh Padron, non mi guardate
Con quel viso brutto brutto,
Ch’io son tenera, e mi fate
Quasi gelida restar.

Vo’ baciarmi quella mano,
Che ogni misero accarezza,
Quella man, ch’è solo avvezza
Gl’altri falli a perdonar.

(Il mio pianto par lo mova,
Vacillar lo veggo già.)

Perdonatemi, signore,
Riflettete a’ casi miei
All’eccesso del dolore,
Alla mia fatalità.

Ah d’un guardo omai pietoso
La mia sorte il Ciel consoli,
Goda il core almen riposo
Nella mia cattività.⁴⁰

Please, oh master, do not look at me
with that scary scary face,
because I am so tender that you make
me almost freeze with fear.

I want to kiss that hand,
which pets every poor creature.
That hand which is used only
to forgive others’ faults.

[aside] (It seems that my weeping is moving
him, I can see that he is already yielding.)

Forgive me, sir,
consider my condition
of unbearable suffering,
consider my misfortune.

May heaven alleviate my fate
with your finally merciful eyes,
may the heart find at least
some peace in my captivity.

38 Hunter, ‘Bourgeois Values’, 173–175.

39 (Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Naples, 1786), Act 2 Scene 13, 56–57; same as in (Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Vienna, 1786), Act 2 Scene 12, 55–57.

40 (Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Naples, 1786), Act 2 Scene 13, 57–58.



The image displays a musical score for Example 1, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system includes parts for Gelinda (soprano), Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Double Bass. The second system includes parts for Gelinda (soprano), Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Double Bass. The third system includes parts for Gelinda (soprano), Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Double Bass. The score is in 2/4 time and features a prominent circular hypnotic figuration in the strings. The vocal line is in Italian, with lyrics: "Deh pa - dron non mi guar - da - te con quel vi - - - so brut - - - to brut - - - to,". The score includes dynamic markings such as *con sordino* and *p*.

Example 1 Paisiello, Gelinda's aria 'Deh Padron', Neapolitan version of *Le gare generose*, bars 1–12 (manuscript score A-Wn, 17807)

This piece is a quiet and monotonous through-composed aria, pervaded (almost uninterrupted) by a circular hypnotic figuration played mostly by the second violins *con sordino* (see Example 1).⁴¹ This pattern, usually a gesture of emotional uneasiness, acquires here a subtle mechanical quality, with the first violin staccato quaver ticks on the upbeats inserted as a gear in the rhythmic mechanism regulated by the inexorable

41 For this example I used a Genoa copy that reflects the Neapolitan original: Paisiello, *Le gare generose*, manuscript score in 2 volumes, I-Gl, 5b. 29/30 -L8 3/4. I compared it with A-Wn, 17807, to which I will return. This number has been removed from the autograph score, I-Nc, Rari 3.2.14/15, as pointed out by Robinson, *Giovanni Paisiello*, 378.



pizzicato quaver *tocks* in the bass. Gelinda, through a fragmented vocal line and her baby talk ('brutto brutto'), exposes her vulnerability and docility, but it soon becomes clear that it is rather a passive-aggressive dissimulation in order seductively to soften Mr Dull's temper. In fact, in the two lines of aside, she appears pleased with herself for being able to trick the old man. Similarly, in both Pergolesi's and Paisiello's versions of *La serva padrona*, Serpina sings an aria ('A Serpina penserete') alternating between a Largo in duple meter, in which she moves the old master to compassion, and an Allegro section (triple meter in Pergolesi), in which she merrily and derisively observes that little by little Uberto is yielding to her tears.⁴² After Gelinda's aria, when Mr Dull announces his intention to free her and her husband, we cannot help laughing at his stupid generosity.

Several months after the Neapolitan premiere, *Le gare generose* was readapted for the Burgtheater in Vienna, most probably by Lorenzo Da Ponte, who made several changes that restored some of the original seriousness of Calzabigi's *Amisti e Ontario*.⁴³ For the Viennese production, Bastiano's part was translated, as customary, from Neapolitan to standard Italian; in addition, Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf wrote a new setting for Meri's 'Cosi destino e voglio', while Gelinda had two arias replaced. One is her buffa aria 'Or vedete in che imbarazzi', replaced by a sentimental aria, 'Infelice, sventurata'; the other is 'Deh Padron', replaced by 'Perché volgi altrove il guardo' and preceded by a new accompanied recitative following (not replacing) the previous simple recitative.⁴⁴ Most of the changes were intended to give more prominence to Gelinda, a role well suited to the singer Nancy Storace, whose role in *Le gare generose* Count Zinzendorf described as 'grand' in his diary entry.⁴⁵ The prominent status of buffa stars in late eighteenth-century Vienna was often what generated many of the revisions, including the composition of substitute arias, but the replacements were also the product of changing aesthetic and ideological trends. As a case in point, one should consider that when in April 1787 Nancy Storace moved to London, she chose for her English debut to interpret the role of Gelinda again, although she did not use the Viennese version that was already tailored for her role, but a new, extensively revised version of *Le gare* under the title *Gli schiavi per amore*, in which Anglo-American characters were cautiously replaced by French ones, and the whole opera was no longer set in revolutionary Boston, but in royalist Canada.⁴⁶

42 Reinhard Strohm, *Die Italianische Oper im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1979), 138, rightly observes that 'A Serpina penserete', in the second intermezzo, 'is not a sentimental aria, but rather an aria that is supposed to drive Uberto to sentimentality'.

43 (Lorenzo Da Ponte (ed.), after (Palomba,)) *Le gare generose: commedia per musica in due atti da rappresentarsi al teatro di corte l'anno 1786* (Vienna: Giuseppe Nob. de Kurzbek [, 1786]), Act 2 Scene 12, 57–58. There is no certainty that Da Ponte made the revisions, but it is likely given his official position, at the time, as Poet of Viennese Imperial Theatres.

44 Robinson, *Giovanni Paisiello*, 378–379, records several other minor changes, such as the transposition of a couple of numbers. Of the four scores reflecting the Viennese performance, and labelled as 'variant 2' by Robinson, I have used US-Wc, M1500 P23 G3. In the first page of the manuscript one can read 'Rappresentata nel Teatro di Corte a Vienna l'Anno 1786'. Although housed in the Austrian National Library, A-Wn, 17807 (like other four sources) maintains the part of Bastiano in Neapolitan idiom and therefore reflects the Neapolitan premiere (Robinson, *Giovanni Paisiello*, 377–378). This is because copies of Neapolitan operas were usually made in Naples and sent abroad, where more or less extensive revisions were made. The revised copies probably left with the singers, while the unrevised original from Naples was left behind. It is worth pointing out that one of Dittersdorf's first compositions for the theatre was a two-act musical farce entitled *Il viaggiatore americano in Joannesberg*, premiered in Joannesberg on 1 May 1771 (the literary and musical sources are unfortunately lost), according to the catalogue in Margaret Grave and Jay Lane, 'Dittersdorf, Carl Ditters von', *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>, accessed 29 October 2006.

45 Dorothea Link, *The National Court Theatre in Mozart's Vienna: Sources and Documents 1783–1792* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 278: Zinzendorf wrote, 'Au Theater. Le gare generose [jolie musique de Paisiello]. La Storace en esclave Gelinda a un grand rôle, dont elle s'acquitte bien'.

46 Nancy Storace reached the peak of her career in Vienna, starting in April 1783 as the Countess in Salieri's *La scola de' gelosi* and playing thereafter many other important and very different roles in more than twenty, mostly buffa operas. During



A good example of how revisions were informed by local trends is the Viennese replacement of Gelinda's 'Deh Padron' with 'Perché volgi altrove il guardo'. The new aria avoids ambiguity or dissimulation and does not present the stylistic concoction of Paisiello's replaced buffa aria, featuring instead a consistently earnest rhetorical mode. The choice of the aria form, a rondò aria, is significant in itself: this two-tempo aria form is emblematic in operatic aesthetics in late eighteenth-century Vienna, where it became popular, being characterized by earnestness of expression and an elevated stylistic level.⁴⁷ The rondò can be seen as a prototype of the Romantic grand multi-tempo aria, anticipating both its form and function: the accompanied recitative preceding the rondò corresponding to the scena, the first tempo of the rondò to the adagio and the faster second tempo to the cabaletta.

The text of the Viennese rondò aria shows also that the librettist was aware of Calzabigi's original aria for Amiti and wished to restore its dramatic function. Like Amiti, Gelinda shifts from the formal *voi* to the informal *tu* and calls Mr Dull 'amico' ('friend' – as Quakers were called and called each other) and 'father' rather than 'master', asking him for a redefinition of his role from tyrant to *paterfamilias*.

[Larghetto]

Perché volgi altrove il guardo,
E non odi il pianto mio?
In chi mai sperar poss'io
Se tu sei crudele ancor?

Tu che sai della mia sorte
Quanto è barbaro il tenor,
non mi dare ahimè la morte
Cogli sdegni, e col rigor.

Padre, amico, o caro oggetto
Di speranza, e di timor;
Ah non regge al fiero aspetto,
Già si perde il mio valor.

Why are you turning your eyes away
and do not listen to my weeping?
Who else could I rely on
if even you are cruel to me?

At least you, who understand
how awful is the nature of my fate,
do not bring me death
by being disdainful and harsh.

Father, friend, dear source
of hope and fear,
Ah, before such a fierce look
my courage fails and weakens.

the years 1785 and 1786 her roles included Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Ofelia in Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio*, Eleonora in his *Prima la musica poi le parole*, Angelica in Martin y Soler's *Il burbero di buon cuore*, Lilla in *Una cosa rara*, Rosina in Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Serpina in Paisiello's new version of *La serva padrona*. See Dorothea Link, *Arias for Nancy Storage: Mozart's First Susanna* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2002), xiv-xvi. The libretto of the English version of *Le gare generose* is *Gli schiavi per amore: A New Comic Opera in Two Acts as Performed at the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market; the Music by the Celebrated Signor Paisiello Under the Direction of Mr Storage* (London, 1787). A later Italian production of *Le gare generose* under the latter title does not specify where in the world the action takes place: *Gli schiavi per amore: dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro di S. A. A. il Signor di Carignano nell'autunno dell'anno 1791* (Turin: Derossi, 1791); in this case the characters' names do not change and the references to America are kept intact in the text (as in Gelinda's recount of her story and travels in Act 2 Scene 13, 47–48).

⁴⁷ Don Neville, 'The 'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas', *Mozart Jahrbuch* 1994, 141, writes that the rondò 'always identifies with a sincerity of expression' and 'a moment of truth'. On rondò aria form see Stefano Arteaga, *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano dalla sua origine al presente* (Venice: Palese, 1785). Among the modern studies of this aria form see Helga Lüning, 'Die Rondò-Arie im späten 18. Jahrhundert: dramatischer Gehalt und musikalischer Bau', *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 5 (1981), 219–246; John A. Rice, 'Emperor and Impresario: Leopold II and the Transformation of Viennese Musical Theater, 1790–92' (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1987), 92–110; James Webster, 'The Analysis of Mozart's Arias', in *Mozart Studies*, ed. Cliff Eisen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 108, 149–151, 170–174.



[Allegro]

Che più resta o numi ingrati
 Alla vostra crudeltà?
 Dite, amanti sventurati
 S'io son degna di pietà.⁴⁸

O cruel gods, of what other cruelties
 could you be capable?
 Tell me, unfortunate lovers,
 if I don't deserve some mercy.

The particular treatment of form in this piece (see Table 1, outlining the formal plan of the aria) could not accommodate better its dramatic function. The syntactical units of the text are coherently matched to different structural units in the music, and the orchestra's accompanying patterns do not contradict, but rather underscore the concepts and emotions expressed by the character. This total lack of displacement or mismatch among the textual and musical signifiers prevents ambiguity and in final analysis avoids comedy (which is not always the case in Mozart's own *rondò* arias).⁴⁹ The key moment of the aria, when Gelinda calls her master 'father' and 'friend' (see Example 2), is supported by an accompanying pattern that at first glance may resemble Paisiello's pervading figuration in 'Deh Padron'. Its zigzag, more geometrically defined melodic contour and staccato phrasing, however, do not confer the hypnotic quality of Paisiello's smooth legato and arc-shaped figuration. Further, the accompaniment figuration is not inserted as a gear in a rhythmically uninterrupted mechanism (absent here are Paisiello's pizzicato bass notes and the staccato upbeat strokes in the violins). Rather, this segment appears as an isolated and relatively short moment, inserted in an aria that articulates different sections using different accompaniment patterns – each one appropriate to the meaning of the text. In contrast, Paisiello's never-changing orchestral accompaniment appears like a hypnotic pendulum, seductive rather than persuasive, indifferent to the concepts expressed by the singing character. The shift to the faster tempo in the Viennese aria, typical of the *rondò* form, is used to bring the emotional temperature to a boiling point, as happens in nineteenth-century cabalettas. The persuasive power of the *rondò* aria form, granted by its potential for dramatic and musical intensification and implemented by an excellent performer like Nancy Stora, certainly persuaded not only Gelinda's on-stage addressee (Mr Dull) but also the Viennese audience. To them Mr Dull's act of mercy did not appear to be sneakily extorted (as it did in Naples), but fairly conceded. 'Perché volgi', in fact, redefines not only Gelinda's direct addressee but also her role; her more serious characterization gives new coherence even to the second and last act of mercy (Act 2, last scene). Inspired by the generosity of her former master and present 'friend', having regained her financial security, Gelinda decides to save the character Berlicco from jail (where he is headed, having defrauded Mr Dull of a considerable sum of money destined for investments in the European market). The meaning of her final act of generosity goes beyond the usual dispensation of happiness and forgiveness in the last-act finale and signifies that not only has she regained her lost freedom, but also that she has acquired a position of brotherly equality with Mr Dull (by means of the acquisition of financial independence), which entitles her too to perform the dispensation of mercy:

Ah Signor, se generoso	Ah, Sir, since you have been generous
Meco foste, anch'io tal sono;	with me, now I will do the same;
A Berlicco io già perdono,	I forgive Berlicco,
Al suo debito sto avanti,	I will clear his debt,
E in riscatto anche il contante	and I will ensure that he will also
Per dover rimborsarà. ⁵⁰	reimburse the cash he owes you.

48 This is a replacement aria in the Viennese production of *Le gare generose* (1786), (Da Ponte after Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Vienna, 1786), Act 2 Scene 12, 57–58.

49 For a discussion of the independence of various operatic parameters in opera buffa (or 'multivalence') in Mozart's set pieces see James Webster, 'Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2/2 (1990), 198.

50 (Da Ponte after Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Vienna: Kurzbek, 1786), Act 2, last scene, 68.

Table 1 Outline of the rondò aria 'Perché volgi', substitute aria in *Le gare generose* (Vienna, 1786), replacing the original 'Deh padron' (Naples, 1786)

LARGHETTO 2/4		M ¹	E	T	M ¹	E	T									
Form:		M ¹	E	T	M ¹	E	T									
Bars		1-10 (intr.1)	17-21 a	25- b	30	31- c; (a+b)+c	37	42- x fragmented	46- x fragmented	49	50- 2 ⁱⁱ	55	57	58- d	65	
Thematic material	orchestra	1	2	2' fragmented	3	1	2	2 ⁱⁱ	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	closing material
Text																
Tonal plan: G major	I	A ¹⁻²	A ³⁻⁴	B ¹	B ²⁻³	A ¹⁻²	A ³⁻⁴	A ¹⁻²	A ³⁻⁴	C ¹	C ²	C ³⁻⁴	C ³⁻⁴	C ⁴	C ⁴	
				V/V	V	I	I	I	I		V/V	V	V			

ALLEGRO 4/4

ALLEGRO 4/4		M ²	T	E	(m ¹)	(e)	M ²	T	C	
Form:		M ²	T	E	(m ¹)	(e)	M ²	T	C	
Bars		66- orchestra	70- light	75- intens.	84- 2	91- f x fragm	95-99 b	100- 5	104- light coloratura	109-127 closing material
Thematic material	orchestra	5	light	4'	2	4'	5	5	light coloratura	closing material
Text		D ¹⁻²	D ³⁻⁴	C ³⁻⁴	A ³⁻⁴	C ¹	C ¹⁻²	D ¹⁻²	D ³⁻⁴	D ¹⁻⁴
Tonal plan	I	I	IV	IV	ii- V	i	V	I	I	

M¹ = main theme of the first tempoM² = main theme of the second tempo

E = Episodes, or contrasting sections

T = transition

C = Closing section



The musical score consists of ten staves. The top staff is for the vocal part, Gelinda, with the lyrics: "in chi mai spe-rar poss' i - o se - tu - se - i cru-de - le an - cor". Below the vocal line are two staves for Horn in G 1 and Horn in G 2. The next two staves are for Flute 1 and Flute 2. The bottom four staves are for Violin I, Violin II, Viola I, and Viola 2. The final staff is for the Double Bass. The score is in G major and 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Example 2 Anonymous (possibly Dittersdorf), Gelinda's aria 'Perché vogli altrove il guardo?', Viennese pasticcio version of *Le gare generose*, bars 1–24 (manuscript score US-Wc, M1500 P23 G3)

The financial security that is a guarantee of freedom in America now blesses the social microcosm on stage and the final tutti rejoices in everyone's ability to be equally generous. In *Amiti e Ontario*, the act of mercy, as we have seen, converts the initial power relationship of master/servant into an equally bonding and hierarchically structured (albeit morally higher and more human) relationship of father/daughter, which duplicates at a sublimated level gender and social roles (the father figure as allegory of the ruling male, hence – at the highest hierarchical level – the King; the daughter as allegory of the subjected woman, hence the faithful subject). In *Le gare generose*, instead, the daughter cuts herself loose from the father figure, leaves her master's house and – what is truly revolutionary – acquires the power to grant mercy herself, but chooses to extend the power to others by freeing them rather than punishing or subjecting them. The Viennese version of the opera, by elevating the tone of the drama and of the music, presents this not as a victory snatched by a shrewd servant, but as a well deserved and almost heroic achievement by an honourable middle-class woman.

Because the Viennese production of *Le gare* dates from only months after the Neapolitan premiere, the changes were more likely determined by the different local aesthetic and political orientation than by any particular development in the political situation in America or Europe. The aesthetics of Viennese opera buffa during these years is deeply affected by a trend towards the sentimental and the *mezzo carattere* modes,



Example 2 *continued*

as well as towards a more thoughtful, almost philosophical function for this genre.⁵¹ The politics of Viennese opera buffa in the mid-1780s, as Hunter has pointed out, need to be understood in the context of the recent alliance of the court and the bank, of aristocracy and commerce, and the ensuing pride of the middle classes in quintessential bourgeois values such as honest entrepreneurship. These differences explain the uplifting of rhetorical level in the Viennese version of *Le gare generose*, an opera that, as we have seen, is centred on financial transactions and represents the business-oriented middle classes.⁵² It is also important to add and to stress that this pride in honest, generous and free commerce was perceived at the time as one of the virtues of the new American nation. As Gordon Wood maintains, honest and free commerce was one of the highest values in post-colonial America. Eighteenth-century comedies about American Quakers are indeed centred on similar honest, generous transactions, such as L. F. Faur's *Le Veur anglais*, or Chamfort's *La jeune indienne*, played in Vienna under the title *Die Quäkerin*.⁵³ Compared to these different plays revolving

51 This trend is engagingly discussed by Edmund Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in 'Così fan tutte'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Stefano Castelvocchi, 'Sentimental Opera: The Emergence of a Genre, 1760–1790' (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1996).

52 Hunter, 'Bourgeois Values', 166–167, 170.

53 On the emphasis that the new American nation put on business see Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 325–346. On *Le vrai anglais* see Philips, *The Good Quaker*, 129–130; the play was premiered in November 1786 at the Théâtre Italien, and the show included a ballet of Quakers. Another domestic drama based on



Example 2 *continued*

around the theme of Quaker generosity, the situation in *Le gare generose* is complicated by the issue of slavery and the usage of financial resources to trade human freedom. There is little attempt in the opera to provide a unilateral perspective; if money buys the two Italian travellers Gelinda and Bastiano as slaves, money also buys their freedom. In this particular opera, the view of America as a plutocratic democracy, in which freedom can be negotiated through monetary transactions, explains the representation of slavery as a condition determined not by ethnicity, but by social status, the latter determined by finances and not by rights of birth.

Moreover, many of the open questions in *Amiti e Ontario* are still unanswered in *Le gare*. Most notably they concern slaves of African descent, who are represented in these two operas together with Native American and Italian slaves. In *Le gare* Bastiano, Gelinda's husband, appears tied to a black slave and – significantly – the Italian slave is 'deprived of his own clothes' and therefore (since we can assume that he is

North American subjects in which money plays an important role is Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas Chamfort, *La jeune Indienne*, reprinted with an introduction by Gilbert Chinard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946). Chinard indicates as a proto-source of this story Richard Ligon's *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (1657), containing the story of Inkle and Yariko. *Yariko* was performed in Vienna in the early 1770s. Elaine R. Sisman, 'Haydn's Theater Symphonies', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43/2 (1990), 332–333, hypothesizes that Haydn's Symphony No. 49 in F minor (1768) was written expressly for *Die Quäker*, or *Die junge Indianerin*, on the basis that in a Viennese source its title is 'Il Quakuo [sic!] di bell'humore [sic]' ('The good-humoured (or good-natured) Quaker).



13
S ah — non reg - ge al fie - ro as - pet - to già si per - de il mio va - lor

13
Hn. 1

13
Hn. 2

13
Fl. 1

13
Fl. 2

13
Vln. I

13
Vln. II

13
Vla. 1

13
Vla. 2

13
D.B.

Example 2 *continued*

not naked) probably dressed in the same fashion as the slave of African descent.⁵⁴ Though the two men appear similarly dressed, there is no hint of equality; like the mute part of Vespone in *La serva padrona*, Bastiano's companion does not utter a word, nor a single note. Black slaves are denied the most powerful operatic resource of expression: the singing voice. And in *Amiti e Ontario* only noises of black slaves are heard from off stage: here the Africans in America are denied not only the operatic voice, but also a presence on stage. In both cases Mr Dull does not free them in the end. Even Gelinda, once she acquires the power to dispense mercy, does not do anything to change the condition of the innocent slaves, preferring instead to free her deceitful countryman Don Berlicco.

At the time when *Le gare generose* was still playing around Europe, Benjamin Franklin, the most widely read and highly respected American thinker in Europe, was serving as the president of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery. With his usual formidable ability to combine common sense and ideals, he expressed the need to provide previously enslaved people with the necessary skills to exercise freedom and maintain it with dignity:

Slavery is such an atrocious debasement of human nature that its very extirpation, if not performed with solicitous care, may sometimes open a source of serious evils. . . . To instruct, to

54 (Da Ponte after Palomba,) *Le gare generose* (Vienna: Kurzbek (, 1786)), Act 2 Scene 3, 41: 'Bastiano spogliato dell'abito proprio e incatenato con un Africano' (Bastiano, deprived of his own clothes and chained to an African).



advise, to qualify those who have been restored to freedom, for the exercise and enjoyment of civil liberty, to promote in them habits of industry, to furnish them with employment suited to their age, sex, talents, and other circumstances, and to procure their children an education calculated for their future situation in life; these are the great outlines of the annexed plan.⁵⁵

As we all know, it took much longer than a last-act buffa finale to carry out Franklin's plan, and it is still not clear whether there has ever been a happy ending. To late eighteenth-century people the future looked brighter because present institutions seemed to be under the constant pressure of radical impending reforms. This emerges from the tone of journalistic accounts about revolutionary events in America, a country that was still a new world and in rapid transformation. The way the operas examined in this article reflect those journalistic accounts is oblique, because actual political events or situations are never directly represented in eighteenth-century opera buffa, notwithstanding the important role contemporary reality played in shaping its dramatic subjects. And yet metaphorical transpositions often result in a remarkably lucid analysis of contemporary reality.⁵⁶ In *Amiti e Ontario* that happens by means of a necessary mediation of stereotypes and myths (the good Quaker and the good savage) that were able to stimulate a debate over slavery and freedom framed within familiar cultural and philosophical paradigms. In *Le gare generose* those stereotypes are not entirely abandoned, but they are radically modified in order to produce a more up-to-date image of America, a country that to European gazette readers of the mid-1780s was no longer an Arcadian garden, a projection of a European utopian dream, but rather a modern revolutionary society in which skills in trading and business replaced power structures based on birthrights and congenital privileges (determined by cast and gender). The main question asked by the operas' authors seems to be whether capitalism was actually able to produce a better or more just social system. The Eurocentric *Weltanschauung* linking Asia (or the East) to the past (agrarian economy and tyranny), Europe to the present (mixed economy and reformed absolutism) and America to the future (free trade and democracy) is still a powerful paradigm for *Le gare*. As represented in this opera, the presence of slavery in America does not invert the natural and cosmic movement of Earth's history because American slavery is of a very different kind from the one practised in Oriental harems: unlike in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, in Paisiello's *Le gare* there is no need for an abduction, since in Boston freedom can be acquired by monetary transactions. But the fact that people could be enslaved for debts or remain in slavery for not being able to pay them off carries the symbolic movement westward to the dangerous point where extreme West seems to collide with the extreme East, as if Columbus's idea of reaching Asia through a transatlantic journey by virtue of the rotundity of Earth was not so foolish after all.

55 Benjamin Franklin, 'A Plan for Improving the Condition of Free Blacks', Philadelphia, 26 October 1789, quoted in Blumrosen, *Slave Nation*, 253.

56 I have already adopted this research and interpretative methodology in my article 'Mesmerizing Adultery: *Così fan tutte* and the Kornman Scandal', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 14/3 (2002), 263–296. For the use of metaphors (sometimes derived from highly conventional domestic drama) during a more turbulent revolutionary era see George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789–1805* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). The theoretical framework for this kind of hermeneutics is akin to Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).