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AYANA O. SMITH

DREAMING WITH OPEN EYES: OPERA, AESTHETICS, AND PERCEPTION IN ARCADIAN ROME

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Ayana O. Smith's *Dreaming with Open Eyes: Opera, Aesthetics, and Perception in Arcadian Rome* is a fresh take on baroque opera that looks as much at philosophy, literature and art as it does at music to illuminate how early modern audiences might have interpreted the sounds and images of their time. Smith's main focus is how the aesthetic theories of the Arcadian Academy informed opera seria's use of both music and text in the service of visual representation. The Arcadian Academy was a group of intellectuals, patrons and practitioners of letters, arts and sciences who reformed Italian aesthetics in the late seventeenth century and, in turn, shaped the development of opera seria. The Arcadian reform movement directly influenced eighteenth-century opera composers such as Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel, yet musicologists have tended to pick out the discussions on music from Arcadian discourse without looking at the Academy's broader philosophical agenda. *Dreaming with Open Eyes* aims to reconnect 'the sister fields of literature, art, and music' and examines the Arcadian aesthetics undergirding all three disciplines as they applied to opera (10).

In chapter 1 Smith details the founding of the Arcadian Academy in Rome and defines the group's aesthetic values. Despite the Academy's reputation for being unoriginal and backwards-looking, Smith argues that the group was in many ways progressive. Although they borrowed from various intellectual traditions from antiquity to modernity – including Renaissance and ancient Greek philosophy, scientific empiricism and (albeit less proudly announced) French aesthetics – they integrated these disparate influences into a coherent new aesthetic theory. As Smith shows, their philosophy revolved around two core ideas – *immagine del vero* (image of truth, or verisimilitude) and *buon gusto* (good taste). To explain these ideas, she analyses two treatises written by the Academy's president, Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni – or, as she calls them, 'primers codifying Arcadian ideology for the uninitiated' (22). Musicologists have mainly studied Crescimbeni for his comments on opera found in dialogue six (out of eight) of *La bellezza della volgar poesia* (1700), and have overlooked the larger aesthetic framework he details in the other dialogues and in his earlier treatise *L'istoria della volgar poesia* (1698). As a result, most scholarship on Arcadian opera has focused on issues of genre, structure and form – the focus of Crescimbeni's operatic comments – rather than on the issues of truthful representation and taste that were central to his (and the Academy's) theories.

Smith argues that disciplinary priorities have also resulted in musicological neglect of Alessandro Guidi's pastoral play *L'Endimione* and Gianvincenzo Gravina's lecture on this play, *Discorso sopra l'Endimione* (both lecture and play were performed in 1691 and published in 1692), which together helped crystallize the aesthetics of the Arcadian Academy even before Crescimbeni's theories. These two sources form the central focus of Smith's next three chapters. She guides us through the performance history and reception of Guidi's *L'Endimione* in chapter 2. Despite the play's importance to seventeenth-century Arcadian reform (and eventually to the Republic of Letters), later commentators, beginning from the nineteenth century, saw it as excessive and unoriginal – a perception persisting to this day. Such a perception emerged from the following factors: popular eighteenth-century satires of Guidi's poetic style that became the foundation for nineteenth-century criticisms; changing aesthetic tastes during the romantic era; and nineteenth-century Italian university textbooks, which portrayed the Arcadians as imitators of Chiabrera and Pindar (66–74). Most striking about this play's genesis is that it was essentially co-written with Queen Christina of Sweden (a significant patron of the Academy's early members). Though Guidi is credited as author, Christina proposed the subject matter, developed the scenario of the 1688 draft and contributed verses to the final version. The first performance even occurred outdoors, in Queen Christina's former garden (39–40). Smith makes a convincing case that the play, on the basis of its genesis, dedication and publisher, was a 'monument' to Queen Christina herself and the intellectual milieu she inspired (49–54).



In chapter 3 Smith explicates the ‘complex intertextualities’ found in Gravina’s *Discorso*. Gravina combined Platonic and Aristotelian theories of mimesis with early modern optical science to create his particular brand of poetic analysis, a theory he called *immagine del vero* (image of truth). According to this theory, words carry images to the mind, affecting the senses and activating the imagination and intellect. Following Descartes, Gravina believed reason could then help judge whether images are truthful or illusory. This process was most successful when it occurred in a state of contemplation, between waking and sleeping, or ‘dreaming with open eyes’, as Gravina calls it – also the poetic pre-colon title of the book (87–88). Such contemplation was best inspired by art that evoked novelty (*novità*) and wonder (*maraviglia*), so it was the poet’s duty to use ‘clear’ and ‘vivid’ imagistic language that elicited these feelings (86, 93). In sum, Gravina promoted a style that helped the reader receive, process and judge poetic content through images, with the ultimate goal of assessing verisimilitude. For Gravina, then, the poet should also be (in a sense) a visual artist, painting vibrant images through words.

From chapter 4 on, *Dreaming with Open Eyes* applies the theories of the first few chapters to concrete case studies. Smith begins the interpretative second half of her book by examining Gravina’s own application of his theory to Guidi’s *L’Endimione*. She identifies three main components of his theory – *icon* (images), *mythos* (ancient fables) and *tipus* (commonly held beliefs) – and converts them into the modern-day methodologies of iconography, mythography and typology (12). Together, these form the basis of Gravina’s (and Smith’s) analytical method and reveal the common imagistic symbols that seventeenth-century audiences would have recognized in the literary and dramatic arts. For example, there are at least four different ‘typologies’ of the Endymion myth, a story about the love between the moon goddess Cynthia and the mortal Endymion. In one typology, Endymion is a shepherd while in another he is an astronomer; in one typology, Cynthia is sexually aggressive while in another she is sexually passive. Smith sifts through numerous striking representations of this myth in early modern visual art, including the fresco *Diana and Endymion* (1597–1604) in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, and Guercino’s *Sleeping Endymion / Endimione col telescopio* (1647) that highlights Endymion’s astronomical (and very phallic) telescope. She shows how these visual references appear in Guidi’s play and would have activated one or more of these typologies, or ‘commonly held beliefs’, among Arcadian audiences.

Smith’s analyses of Alessandro Scarlatti’s *La Statira* (1690) in chapter 5 and Carlo Francesco Pollarolo’s *La forza della virtù* (1693) in chapter 6 make visible a new way of hearing, with Gravina’s ideas echoing in the background. She interprets the central images of these operas, especially portraits and mirrors, as icons that held symbolic meanings for audiences. Deftly interweaving musical, mythological and iconographical analysis, Smith reveals how music enhances image and vice versa to affect the senses and activate the intellect. This process of painting images through music and text helps the audience detect the ‘truth’ of each character and their place in the larger operatic narrative. We learn, for example, that Anagilda from *La forza della virtù* should not be trusted despite her external beauty, because of a scene where she gazes at her reflection in a mirror. Smith shows us how this same image appears in representations of the goddess Venus in visual art, most famously Titian’s *Venus with a Mirror* (1555), and was associated with courtesans and vanity, among other traits. What is more, Anagilda’s aria during her mirror trance is a virtuosic *tour de force*, complete with coloratura and ornamentation. On the surface, both music and image are beautiful and enticing, but it is up to the viewer to discern their illusory quality using reason. Various images of Anagilda accumulate throughout the opera, enabling the audience to form judgments about her true character. This example is only one of many ‘moving portraits’ that Smith dissects in these two operas, showing us not only how early modern audiences might have heard opera, but also how they would have seen it.

Smith’s examination of Arcadian opera is especially welcome for the breadth of scholarship she draws upon from outside musicology, including works from art history, the history of science, philosophy and literary studies. Readers of *Eighteenth-Century Music*, however, might appreciate more direct engagement with musicological scholarship of a similar methodological orientation that falls outside the chronological and geographic scope of her project. Scholars such as Richard Leppert, Annette Richards, Deirdre Loughridge



and, most recently, Ellen Lockhart have explored similar themes as Smith, including the relationship among music, the sciences of perception and visual culture. *Dreaming with Open Eyes* leaves unclear how its methodology builds on or departs from these earlier lines of enquiry. This minor reservation aside, Smith's illumination of the aesthetic concerns in Arcadian Rome provides an exhilarating way to experience an operatic repertory that modern audiences have often dismissed as opaque. It is sure to inspire new ways of both seeing and hearing this music for years to come.

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DAVID YEARSLEY

SEX, DEATH, AND MINUETS: ANNA MAGDALENA BACH AND HER MUSICAL NOTEBOOKS

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In *Sex, Death, and Minuets* David Yearsley seeks greater understanding of the cultural significance of Anna Magdalena's Notebooks during her lifetime and in generations following. In doing so, he aims to uncover 'previously neglected ethical, professional, familial, and musical values and practices not only of the Bach family, but also of the period's female musicians in general' (xxxiii). In addition to revealing aspects of musical life and the lives of the Bach family, Yearsley brings the attitudes and experiences of contemporary Lutheran women to light through his study of various cultural themes present within the Notebooks: eroticism, marriage, motherhood, bereavement, domesticity and public life. He begins the book with a Prologue about the life of Anna Magdalena Bach (née Wilcke), including her prestigious two-year tenure as a Cöthen court singer in her early twenties, which began shortly before she became Johann Sebastian's second wife in 1721, and introduces the two Notebooks given to her by her husband in 1722 and 1725. Although pieces from these Notebooks have appeared in numerous anthologies and in studies of Johann Sebastian and the Bach family, Yearsley's book provides the most in-depth cultural study of the Notebooks to date and is the first to seriously consider Anna Magdalena's own 'agency in the assembling of, or one might even say, "authoring" of the 1725 Notebook' (xxiii).

The first chapter traces the eighteenth- to twentieth-century reception of Anna Magdalena and her Notebooks in historical encyclopaedias, musical editions and biographies of her husband Johann Sebastian, as well as fictional plays, films and novels about the Bach family. These sources predominantly portray her as a paragon of faith and domesticity, demonstrating that 'the figure of Anna Magdalena remains almost without exception unchanged since her reanimation more than a century ago' (42). Yearsley highlights her historical utility as a symbol of German nationalism, especially during the Second World War: he notes that though not all German wartime consumers of such literature were Nazi sympathizers, 'it is no coincidence that the values embodied in these volumes accorded with Nazi notions of German regeneration through the family' (27). Importantly, Yearsley's examples show that, throughout history, fictional and factual accounts of Anna Magdalena typically focus on her peripheral role as 'the sustenance of male genius' (12–13), specifically that of her husband. This chapter serves as a springboard for the remainder of the book, for Yearsley believes that closer analysis of the Notebooks, and interpretation of them through their historical context, is essential to a more meaningful, nuanced understanding of the music within them and of the lives and experiences of Anna Magdalena and her female contemporaries.