

IV. A new source for Classical opera: Goldoni's drammi giocosi

Being the first author to venture into a new field did not always bring Goldoni the credit that posterity has bestowed. Navigating a complex theatrical and printing economy towards an uncertain future that ultimately made it impossible for him to remain in Venice, his was by no means a path of linear ascension. Goldoni's writings testify that the burden of innovation at times made writing opera texts an ungrateful task, even an "esercizio sì disgustoso" (disgusting practice). These are the terms he uses in the polemical preface to one of his early *drammi giocosi*, *De gustibus non est disputandum* (1754), an 'author's confession' that has often been cited in Goldoni studies as the seal of the author's scarce interest in his musical texts; proof, in other words, of their general irrelevance to his 'real' (prose) comedies and to our approach to him as a literary source.

Yet, a less hasty reading of even this most bitter text yields a different, and much more nuanced, scenario. On the interplay between *buffo* and *serio*, for example, Goldoni comments: "Il popolo decide, a seconda dell'esito, se l'opera è a terra, il libro è pessimo. Se è un poco serio, è cattivo perché non fa ridere; se è troppo ridicolo, è cattivo perché non vi è nobiltà."⁶⁶ An opera cannot be too weighty nor too comical; it should create laughter or smiles but without sacrificing its center of "nobiltà." In other words, Goldoni is letting on that the equilibrium between comic and tragic elements in opera, in the mid 18th century, hangs by a delicate thread, and moreover that public taste and sensibility is now seeking a theatre that is neither fully comic nor tragic, but a balanced combination of the two.

Clearly this is easier said than done, especially as *no models yet exist* for this new type of hybrid work: "Volea pure imparare il modo

66 Carlo Goldoni, *De gustibus non est disputandum*, Forward. The people decide, according to the success, that if an opera falls, its text is terrible. If it is somewhat serious, it is a bad text because it has no humor; if it's too comic, it's bad because it lacks nobility.

di contentare l'universale, anche in questo genere di composizioni, ma in sei anni, che la necessità e gl'impegni mi costringono a doverne fare, non ho veduto alcun libro straniero che abbia avuto fortuna e che potesse insegnarmi."⁶⁷ Goldoni clearly kept up to date on the latest theatre, both local and imported, yet in years of 'research' he was not able to find an adequate model to direct him. His own account, which for him obviously had a polemical purpose, for us holds confirmation that he was one of the first dramatists to create, through much experimentation and toil, the foundation of what would become an incredibly successful new genre.

With no promising examples to follow, Goldoni was left to define his own principles on which to create works that could please an exacting audience. Instinctively he turned to comedy, and here is the second important revelation of *De gustibus*:

Lettor carissimo, se uno tu sei di quegli a' quali abbia io protestato di non volere quest'anno e forse mai più comporre de' simili drammi buffi, voglio anche comunicarti la ragione che ad astenermene mi obbligava ed i motivi che mi hanno fatto dal mio proponimento discendere. Il dramma serio per musica, come tu saprai, è un genere di teatrale componimento di sua natura imperfetto, non potendosi osservare in esso veruna di quelle regole che sono alla tragedia prescritte. Molto più imperfetto il dramma buffo esser dee perché, cercandosi dagli scrittori di tai barzellette servire più alla musica che a sé medesime fondando o nel ridicolo o nello spettacolo la speranza della riuscita, non badano seriamente alla condotta, ai caratteri, all'intreccio, alla verità, come in una commedia buona dovrebbe farsi.⁶⁸

67 ibid. I wanted to learn a way of pleasing the universal taste in this type of composition as well, but in the six years that necessity and obligations had forced me to write them, I never saw any foreign example that was well received, that I could learn from.

68 ibid. Dearest reader, if you are one of those to whom I have expressed the desire to not compose anymore comic *drammi* this year, or perhaps ever again, I want you to know the reasons which compelled me to abstain from them, and the motives that led me to abandon my resolution. Tragic opera, as you probably know, is a theatrical genre imperfect by nature, because it is impossible to uphold any of the rules prescribed to tragedy in it. Comic opera must then be even more imperfect because the authors of these jokes, always seeking to serve the music instead of the comedy itself, and placing their hopes of success in blunt comedy or in spectacle, don't apply themselves seriously to the pacing, to the characters, to plot, nor to truth, as one should do in a good comedy.

Goldoni was never one to spare criticism, and he certainly doesn't withhold any on the current state of comic opera, which, in his view, invests in the music at the expense of plot and in show at the expense of intrigue. Again, this passage has been read as the author's dismissal of opera in favor of recited comedy, but the distinction to be made is that Goldoni is not referring to his own output, but rather to the "scrittori di barzellette" (writers of jokes) who place the rules of spectacle above those of logic, as he himself never would. Goldoni is in fact denouncing the need for a new vision of comic opera and advocating respect for character development, plot, and truth, in sum all the elements essential to good comedy.

Naturally, no one will deny that, based on his terms, Goldoni at the moment of *De gustibus* would have preferred to turn his back on opera theatre. Yet, biographical evidence would suggest that other issues too had played a part in ruining Goldoni's optimism. The shadow of external circumstances is actually made explicit in his *Prefazione*: "circondato mi trovo dalle più pesanti faccende, al mondo bastantemente palesi."⁶⁹ The date of this text if fact coincides with the closure of his contract with Girolamo Medebach- a contract Goldoni would not renew due to a fierce dispute regarding the printing rights and royalties of the Bettinelli edition (his first major appearance in press), which also saw the disastrous end of their friendship. While Goldoni signed a more advantageous ten-year contract (extended to carnival of 1763) with Antonio Vendramin, proprietor of the *Teatro San Luca* (today *Teatro Goldoni*), Medebach hired Pietro Chiari (1712–1785), one of Goldoni's fiercest competitors. The arduous relationship between these two authors was such that it eventually led to a division between supporters of one and the other, *chiaristi* and *goldonisti*.

For a time Goldoni was forced, therefore, to put aside his project for realistic Venetian comedy and imitate the styles of his competitors in works of historical or exotic flavor such as *Terenzio* (Terence), *La dalmatina* (The Dalmatian Girl), *La bella selvaggia* (The Savage Beauty), *La peruviana* (The Peruvian), *La sposa persiana* (The Persian Bride), etc. The resentment that pervades the preface to *De gustibus*, an important document in his career as a librettist, is a clear symptom of a greater

69 *ibid.* I find myself in the most unpleasant circumstances, sufficiently known to all.

dissatisfaction not only with opera theatre, but with comic theatre in general. Goldoni had clear ideas about the future of comedy, but was plagued by obstacles in realizing his intentions.

In sum, whether curse or blessing, Goldoni was one of the first to begin writing *drammi giocosi*. And with no direct models for his original operas, he became a true pioneer in the history of the genre.

i. The real world

Following *La scuola moderna*, Goldoni authored nearly thirty *drammi giocosi* alongside his major prose comedies before moving Paris in 1762. Many, if not all, have something to say about contemporary society, customs, or mores, or not rarely a whole list of issues relating to these themes. An eloquent example of Goldoni's 'outspoken' brand of new opera texts is his 1754 *Il filosofo di campagna* (The Country Philosopher), which calls into question the principles of authority in its portrayal of an intimate relationship between a Countess and her maid. In particular, the interactions of *serva* Lesbina (*parte buffa*) and *padrona* Eugenia (*parte seria*) progressively consolidate a delicate dynamic of role reversal that is evident from the opening scene:

LESBINA. Io vi offerisco quel che so, quel che posso. È ver che sono in una età da non prometter molto; ma posso, se m'impegno, par valere per voi l'arte e l'ingegno.

EUGENIA. Cara di te mi fido. Amor, pietade per la padrona tua serba nel seno; se non felice appieno, almen fa' ch'io non sia sì sventurata.

LESBINA. Meglio sola che male accompagnata. Così volete dir; sì sì, v'intendo.

EUGENIA. Dunque da te qualche soccorso attendo.⁷⁰

70 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Filosofo di Campagna*, Act I, i. Lesbina: I'll do for you what I can, what I know how. Perhaps I can't promise too much at my age, but I can, if I set my mind to it, make good use of art and wit. Eugenia: My dear, I trust in you. Keep love and mercy for your mistress in your heart. If I cannot be truly happy, at least let me not be so unfortunate. L: Better alone than in bad company, you mean. Yes, yes, I understand. E: Then I will await your assistance.

In the manner of his prose comedies, Goldoni develops numerous realistic characters, among them Lesbina and the Countess. The *buffa* Lesbina is, or course, materially impoverished and of humble state, but capitalizes on the resources of her mind, “arte” and “ingegno”. By contrast, while Eugenia’s blue blood bestows social dominance, she is powerless in her own home; her obligations as a daughter subject her to paternal authority and require conventional obedience. She is, consequently, inhibited from taking direct action to establish the future she envisions for herself (i.e. marrying her secret lover and not the country philosopher, as her father intends). Eugenia appears more powerful than Lesbina, but is impotent as concerns what truly matters, and so too is Rinaldo, her aristocratic lover. The musical score by Venetian Baldassarre Galuppi clearly places the two women on the same footing, and from the very beginning. The opera opens with a duet that they share as equal partners; in the musical material assigned to them throughout, they appear more as two friends of equal stature than anything else.

Lesbina, who becomes the *serio* parts’ only means of sidestepping their inhibitions, soon imposes a will of her own. Her authority grows through Acts I and II culminating in complete role reversal, marking *Il filosofo di campagna* as an ideological precursor of Da Ponte’s *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786). As matters become more complex, her language intensifies notably, as for example:

LESBINA. Se de’ consigli miei vi volete servir, per voi qui sono. Quando no, vel protesto, io v’abbandono.

EUGENIA. Deh non mi abbandonare, ordina, imponi; senza cercar ragioni lo farò ciecamente; ti sarò non temer, tutta obbediente.⁷¹

The Countess’s helplessness translates to submission, and Goldoni’s choice language (“ordina, imponi, lo farò ciecamente”) emphasizes a total inversion of roles. Instead of a servant seeking her mistress’s

71 *ibid.*, Act II, i. Lesbina: If you want to make use of my advice, I’m here for you. But if not, excuse me, I’m going to leave. Eugenia: Pray don’t leave me, command, impose your will. Without asking your reasons I will do it blindly; don’t worry, I will be obedient.

benevolence, we see the exact opposite. Lesbina's decisions alone will ultimately determine the Countess's fate, and not the other way around.

Naturally, the reversed master-servant relationship is a very old *topos* of comic theatre. Without expatiating upon antecedents of previous centuries, even closer to Goldoni's time 'big hits' such as Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (1733) make this clear. In a tradition of theatre that, historically, maintained a marked distance from reality, the overturning of the social ladder within a fictional plot created laughter, not uproar, and while *Il filosofo di campagna* is closer to a realistic style thanks to Goldoni, we may still relate it partially to that preceding tradition.

Yet, this does not exclude the fact that at the same time (like many of Goldoni's comedies), it reflects the early symptoms of a historical transition. Only one generation later, on the cusp of the French revolution, a servant directing his master would no longer appear quite so laughable. By no coincidence Da Ponte's *Le nozze di Figaro* caused raised eyebrows in Vienna even after the author had sidestepped censure by purging it of Beaumarchais' radical political content.

Clearly struggles of power and societal influence are ever under the lens of Goldoni's theatre. Yet considering *Il filosofo di campagna* as a whole, a more positive facet of Enlightenment thought comes to the forefront: human reason. Lesbina's stratagems showcase the power of the mind, and the opera's merry conclusion underlines the happy outcomes of good thinking. Above all the hijinks of Goldoni's work explore and promote intelligence as each individual's most precious possession, and the source of all subsequent material gain.

These notions are instilled within the very title of the opera: *Il filosofo di campagna* is also the surname of a character within the work (but not the protagonist) known for his reason and thinking. In reality, this 'country philosopher' is only a rustic farmer, Nardo: "ricco riccone, un villano, egli è ver, ma sapientone."⁷² Despite, or perhaps because of his regressive occupation, Nardo ennobles himself on the basis of the only resource available to him: his own judgment.

72 *ibid.*, Act I, iii. Rich, filthy rich, and a boor, it's true, but a wiseacre too.

Nato son contadino, non ho studiato niente ma però colla mente talor filosofando a discrezione trovo di molte cose la ragione. E vedo chiaramente che interesse, superbia, invidia e amore hanno la fonte lor nel nostro cuore.⁷³

With no education, he capitalizes on reason to draw knowledge from within himself in a facetious Cartesian approach, and benefit from others. It is thanks to his ‘philosophizing’ that Nardo gains the respect of Eugenia’s aristocratic father, and given his assets- mental and material- he will rise so far as to become the father’s preferred candidate for his daughter, despite their disparity of rank. Nardo’s principal function is to provide comedy, no doubt, and this he does generously through his eccentric nature and laughable erudite mannerisms. Yet it is often said that no joke comes without a basis in truth, and Nardo’s new philosophy of life is indisputably an honest one:

Nelle città famose ogni generazione si cambia stato. Se il padre ha accumulato con fatica, con arte e con periglio, distrugge i beni suoi prodigo il figlio. Qui, dove non ci tiene il lusso, l’ambizion, la gola oppressi, son gl’uomini ognor sempre gli stessi.⁷⁴

Goldoni, an author of the Enlightenment, commonly uses country life as a foil for the materiality and corruption of the city, and Nardo’s philosophy is no exception. The divergence between the big city and “qui,” the surrounding bucolic frame in which the plot unfolds, is largely fueled by issues of material wealth and of appearance. Through Nardo, Goldoni issues yet another condemnation of the profligate (“distrugge i beni suoi prodigo il figlio”), a new ‘mask’ of bourgeois society that, unlike *Arlecchino* or *Pantalone*, bears many different faces. The prodigal son, who recklessly lives beyond his means in the effort to simulate opulence, becomes a recurring target of Goldoni’s libretti and comedies alike not

73 *ibid.*, Act III, ix. I was born a farmer, and I haven’t studied anything, yet with my mind, philosophizing well enough, I find the reason behind a great many things. And I see clearly that personal interest, pride, envy, and love, have their source in our very hearts.

74 *ibid.*, Act I, vi. In the big cities, every generation changes status. If a father has accumulated some savings, with toil, with art, and risk, the prodigal son destroys his riches. Here [in the country] neither luxury, ambition, nor gluttony oppress us, and men are instead always them same.

because of his generosity, an inevitably by-product of his spending philosophy, but for the consuming desire to appear something other than what he is. “Il lusso, l’ambizion, la gola,” denounced by Nardo are all inherent vices. And the country philosopher continues along the same lines to target the luxury life more specifically:

Per lo più i cittadini hanno pochi quattrini e troppe voglie e non usano molto amar la moglie. Per pratica commune nelle cittadi usata, è maggiore l’uscita dell’entrata.⁷⁵

Nardo’s pert opinions ultimately link material wealth to moral poverty (“non usano molto amar la moglie”), an affliction that erodes the foundations of any truly prosperous society. In conclusion, with *Il filosofo di campagna* Goldoni not only continues to reflect contemporary life through his targeted critique of materiality and superficiality, but moreover claims reason as an antidote for unawareness or narcissistic illusion. Nardo and Lesbina alike use internal resources to overcome the traditional limits of their lower class standing, and Goldoni’s recoup of reason places clear thinking above social condition; mind and will alone enable one to determine his fate, or undergo it.

Il filosofo di campagna, being so developed and multifaceted, is clearly a mature work, yet Goldoni’s early texts too were already sufficiently well-crafted as to enjoy a certain enduring success. *Il mondo della luna* (The World of the Moon, 1750), for instance, was set to music not only by the Venetian Galuppi- one of the highest paid composers of his time (and who set a large portion of Goldoni’s texts)- but later by Haydn as well. In regards to this text, along with its chronological neighbors *Il paese della cuccagna* (The Land of Plenty) and *Arcifanfano re dei matti* (Arcifanfano King of Madmen), Emery has argued that in his early phase of production Goldoni “abandons realism for an entirely different approach.”⁷⁶ And yet, the utopian realms of these jesting musical comedies are dismantled by the conclusion of

75 ibid., Act I, vi. Most city dwellers have too few means and too many desires, and they are not in the habit of loving their wives very much. As a common practice in cities, the outflow far exceeds the income.

76 Ted Emery, *Goldoni as Librettist: Theatrical Reform and the Drammi Giocosi per Musica* (New York: Peter Lang Press, 1991); 125.

each *dramma*, and total disenchantment occurs among the characters and audience. If ‘the land of plenty’ is a worldly Eden of food, drink and lovemaking, where both and jealousy are against the law, after two acts these illusions crumble: “voi che in bagordi/ male il tempo spendete,/ se vorrete mangiar, lavorerete.”⁷⁷ The work concludes with an admonition that is quite *down to earth*: “...vedrà il mondo/ ch’è bella la cuccagna in ogni loco/ ma per proprio destin suol durar poco,” with a final chorale “finita è la cuccagna, andiamo a lavorar” that carries a *double entendre* for the audience, who, at the of a lighthearted evening, must return to their lives, worries, and occupations.

Il mondo della luna is even further from fantasy in that the ‘world of the moon’ is presented from the very beginning as a man-made illusion, while the plot remains remaining anchored in Venice. Contemporary society is examined and criticized by analogy if not directly, to great satiric effect as the alternative ‘lunatic’ world, seasoned with the irony of self-recognition, becomes an unforgiving mirror of earthly spectacle. The fake astronomer (Eclittico) makes a great impression on a rich patron (Buonafede) to gain wealth and favors, but discloses his true expertise to the omniscient audience:

Oh le gran belle cose
 che a intendere si danno
 a quei che poco sanno per natura!
 Oh che gran bel mestier ch’è l’impostura!
 Chi finge di saper accrescer l’oro
 chi cavar un Tesoro,
 chi dispensa segreti,
 chi parla dei pianeti,
 chi vende mercanzia
 di falsa ipocrisia
 chi finge nome, titolo, e figura,
 oh che gran bel mestier è l’impostura!⁷⁸

77 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Paese della Cuccagna*, Act III , xiv. All of you, who invest your time so poorly in revelry, if you intend to eat, will have to work. The world will see that free-loading is wonderful, but by its own destiny, never lasts long. Our revelries are over, let’s all go to work.

78 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Mondo della Luna*, Act I, i. Oh what wonderful things we can make fools believe! Imposture is a marvelous trade! Some pretend to know how to

Buonafede's subsequent journey to the moon is nothing more than a false 'ascension' facilitated by sedatives, and a reawakening in an 'alternative world' that is only Eclittico's own garden, where various contraptions have been installed to lend credit to his lie. Heavy irony comes into play as Buonafede's manservant Cecco plays the role of emperor of the moon, and sees his master reverently bow at his feet. The reversal continues as Lisetta the *cameriera* is made his partner and receives homage from Buonafede's daughters, whom she used to serve. Noteworthy is the rapidity with which Lisetta takes to her new, ennobled state, a transformation underscored by the fact that, contrary to Cecco, she is unaware of the imposture and believes herself to truly be on the moon. The bestowal of power appears to unlock something already within, "Sento nel core un certo vapore/ che m'empie tutta di nobiltà,"⁷⁹ and quickly grows into overbearing assertiveness:

Olà paggi, staffieri
 camerieri, braccieri,
 datemi da sedere.
 Arricordatevi ch'io son la monarchessa.
 Vogl'esser obbedita e rispettata
 e se farete ben, vi sarò grata.
 Sopra tutto avvertite di nulla riportarmi
 di quel che fa il mio sposo.
 E null'a lui mai riportar di me,
 mentre ognuno di noi pensa per se.
 Avete a dormir poco; avete a mangiar freddo
 e nell'ore dell'ozio vuò che l'astrologia tutti studiate,
 acciò saper possiate quello che far vi tocca,
 senza che a comandarvi apra la bocca....
 Son io la maestà;
 mi metterò in contegno e in gravità.⁸⁰

multiply gold, some to find treasure, others dispense secrets, some talk of the planets, some make merchandise of their own false hypocrisy, others still feign names, titles, and position. Oh, imposture is a wonderful trade!

79 *ibid.*, Act II, x. I feel in my heart certain vapors/ that fill me with noble spirit.

80 *ibid.*, Act III, i. Ho' there pages, stable hands, manservants, workers, give me a seat. Remember that I am the queen monarch. I want to be obeyed and respected, and if you do your job well, you'll have my gratitude. Above all, make sure not to inform me of what my husband does, and never tell him of my doings, for each of

‘Composure and gravity’ are all she needs to become a proper noblewoman of the highest order in the eyes of her former superiors. This *rovesciamento* reconnects to Eclittico’s mention of false titles at the opening of the work, and creates an ironic commentary that undermines the connection of haughty mannerisms to any true superiority of intellect or lineage, a signature of Goldonian theatre. The credulity of Buonafede and his daughters, while exaggerated for comic effect, appears to reflect a societal superficiality that judges of an individual from his bearing and on previous assumption, rather than from discernment of his true identity. This problem is hardly a fantastical one, and clearly responds to its own time.

At that, the familiar question of power and social order is by no means the only element of critique in *Il mondo della luna*; widespread social habits are literally put under observation as Buonafede gazes towards the moon through Eclittico’s telescope. What he sees in reality are images projected by a machine, and these become vignettes ripe with implications:

Ho veduto una ragazza
far carezze ad un vecchietto.
Oh che gusto che diletto
che quel vecchio proverà[...]
Ho veduto un buon marito
bastonar la propria moglie
per correggere il prorito
di una certa infedeltà.
Oh che mondo ben compito
oh che gusto che mi dà[...]
Oh che mondo benedetto
Oh che gran felicità!⁸¹

us can think for ourselves. You must sleep little, eat cold food, and in your hours of rest, I want you all to study astrology, so as to be able to divine what your next task will be without me having to open my mouth... I am the majesty, let me assume composure and gravity.

- 81 *ibid*, I saw a young girl flirting with an old man. Oh what pleasure and delight he must be feeling... I saw a good husband beating his wife, to stamp out the ‘itch’ of a certain infidelity. Oh what a wonderful world, what pleasure it gives me! What a blessed place, what happiness!

Buonafede marvels at these actions on the moon as if never before seen, yet the irony of the situation is that these customs are not at all foreign to Earth, and furthermore are hardly to be admired. *Il mondo della luna* is, literally and figuratively, a jesting comic mirror of the earthly world and of universal weakness, and in these elements above all constitutes an exemplary *dramma giocoso*. It does not, however, contain *serio* character types or plot lines in the manner of *La scuola moderna*. Differentiated *serio* roles instead reappear in *Il Conte Caramella* of the following year, which Goldoni nonetheless labels a *dramma comico*, a type we would readily align with the standard tradition of *opera buffa*. But if *serio* and *buffo* together are the hallmark of the *dramma giocoso*, how do we account for their appearance in a *dramma comico*?

The interchangeability or occasional ambiguity of terms- which has characterized new musical forms throughout history- is in fact only the natural product of an evolutionary process. We categorize art or theorize music to better describe and understand it, but this becomes possible only after a substantial corpus has been produced. Clearly there was no standardization and little precedent in Venice for the type of comic theatre Goldoni desired. Rather, the author was guided by a gradual change in aesthetic preference, but on the other hand also played a substantial role in shaping that preference, as testified by the challenges he faced in convincing audiences to accept his new approach. The conclusions we can draw from Goldoni's output are thus founded on the characteristics of the overwhelming majority of *drammi giocosi*, but this is not to say these elements are always exclusive to one genre alone.

Seen in the context of the works that precede and follow, *Il Conte Caramella* is in fact the exception that confirms the rule; all future works that contain explicit division of *parti serie* and *parti buffe* are consistently labeled by Goldoni as *drammi giocosi*. *Il Conte Caramella* is exceptional for a more significant reason as well: it is the first of Goldoni's libretti to combine *parti buffe*, *parti serie*, and the first-seen *mezzi caratteri*, an all-important contribution to modern opera theatre. As such, it also serves as an important indicator of the author's creative process.

ii. The mezzo carattere

La scuola moderna and *Il Teatro Comico* teach important lessons about balance between comic and tragic in theatre, yet this is not to imply that the coexistence of *buffo* and *serio* is a Goldonian invention, or even an invention of the 18th century for that matter. Clearly it was foreseen, in some measure, by the older tradition of improvised comedy, which in fact drew some of its juiciest skits from the interactions of *amorosi* (titled roles, i.e. prototypical *parti serie*) and masked characters (as for instance *Arlecchino servant of two masters*). The true novelty at hand in Goldoni's time is not their mere existence, but their transformation as these become an integral part of his *new* comic theatre, and new musical theatre by extension.

At a time of transitions in Goldoni's life, just as he is severing his bonds from Medebach and transitioning to the *Teatro S. Luca*, and- for his musical texts- to the *Teatro S. Samuele* under the direction of Grimani (one of the many advantages of his new contract with Vendramin was that it was no longer exclusive), Goldoni creates his first *mezzo carattere* for opera theatre, a figure which, in some way, his very first *dramma giocoso* already defined. *Il Conte Caramella* will in fact give spectators "materia buffa... intrecciata colla seria," no longer just in parallel plot lines, but now within a single character.

The centrality of character identity to Goldoni's theatre is difficult to overstate. Clearly, much unlike those of some of his contemporaries, his comedies are not about action or distraction, nor spectacle or play; we don't approach his texts to travel away from reality, or to put a damper on what's on our mind. A spectator or reader will choose a Goldonian comedy because they want to get to know, gradually but intimately, real individuals; Mirandolina, Lelio, Sior Todaro, Anzoletto and many others are characters so complete in their depiction, so life-like in their originality, as to almost transcend the – in retrospect almost circumstantial- plot scenarios in which they are made known.

The diligent reader of *Il Teatro Comico*, Goldoni's meta-theatrical commentary on his own approach to theatre, will recall the appearance of two new figures that don't quite fit in with the rest of the troupe: an author who previously scraped by writing skits for the *Commedia*

dell'Arte, and a singer of dubious skill who performed *intermezzi* and *farces* (this we gather from the *Didone in bernesco* cited repeatedly as her only 'success'). Both arrive penniless and hungry, unemployed because times have changed and their trades are being replaced. These two figures lie outside the traditional roles of the theatre company, and are neither mask nor leading role.

As we trace the *mezzo carattere* through Goldoni's texts for music, then, it is useful to keep in mind that, just as he begins to sketch these new musical characters, he is also building his *commedie di carattere* from the central idea of character identity, which, exactly like the *mezzo carattere* is miles away from jest or declamation, and testifies the search for a calibrated *medietas* which will affirm itself ever more markedly in his theatre, hand in hand with sentimentalism.

In *Il Conte Caramella* the *mezzi caratteri* are in fact two, though the role of the protagonist is, predictably, more developed. They are listed explicitly in the frontespiece situated between *serio* and *buffo* characters.

SERI

LA CONTESSA OLIMPIA moglie del conte Caramella

IL MARCHESE RIPOLI di lei amante

MEZI CARATERI

DORINA giardiniera della contessa

IL CONTE CAMELLA creduto morto, in abito di pellegrino

BUFFI

GHITTA serva rustica della contessa

CECCO contadino di lei amante

BRUNORO contadino e tamburino di truppe suburbane

This work, set to music by the celebrated 'Buranello' (this was how Galuppi was affectionately known in Venice, being that he came from the island of Burano), is structured on different plot lines that converge, as usual, at the conclusion. The main plot appears to shadow the Homeric *Odyssey* in comic and cosmopolitan garb: Count Caramella, rumored to have been killed in battle, returns to his estate disguised as a soothsayer and discovers a Marquis relentlessly courting his wife. The Contessa, like a modern Penelope, hopes against all odds in her

husband's return and remains faithful, but is surrounded by lies and put under pressure by her suitor. Interestingly, Goldoni's source of inspiration in this case was actually a much more modern text, Joseph Addison's 1714 comedy *The Drummer, or the Haunted House*. Goldoni's libretto is openly imprinted on Addison's original preserving the signature trait of its title: the Marquis, in the hopes of leading the Contessa to accept him as a second husband, has a servant pound a war drum at night, which everyone takes to be the ghost of the deceased Count.

The linguistic differentiation of *serio* and *buffo* roles in this work is not unexpected, but Goldoni does create novelty in developing a personal, psychological dimension entirely absent from *Il mondo della luna* and other preceding works. The deepening of his characterization is most evident in the role of the Contessa, whose character and circumstances are complex. Continually suspended between rumors of her husband's death and hope of their falsehood, her doubt and confusion are realistically portrayed by Goldoni in a scene with the insistent Marquis:

Ah marchese, non so ...
Che risolvo? che fo? [...]
Ah non so dir se amore,
necessità o timore a credere mi spinga;
e una nuova speranza or mi lusinga.⁸²

The spontaneous quality of these fragmented lines realistically portrays a state of emotional confusion. The 'new hope' to which the Countess refers is also ambiguous; while the Marquis interprets it as the first signal of a change of heart in his favor, the Contessa later denies any intention of accepting a new companion:

Ah, ch'io d'errar pavento
e non ho core d'abbandonarmi
a nuovi affetti in preda;
par ch'estinto il consorte ancora non creda.⁸³

82 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Conte Caramella*, Act II, ii. Ah Marquis, I don't know... what should I decide? what should I do? ... Ah I don't know if it be love, or need, or fear that spurs me to believe; and a new hope now flatters me.

83 *ibid.*, Act II, iii. Ah, that I am afraid to commit error and have no heart to give myself over to new affections; it would seem that I don't yet believe my husband dead.

Especially noteworthy is Goldoni's detail, "par ch'io creda," a small nuance in wording but one that shows a character surprised by her own instincts, and who, in her confusion, is looking in on her own feelings almost as an outsider.

Along with newly-honed psychological elaboration, the true groundbreaking element of *Il Conte Caramella* is of course the first appearance of two *mezzi caratteri*, the Count himself and a servant-girl, Dorina. An absolute novelty, therefore, is the adaptability of this character type to figures of any social extraction. But in what way, then, do these roles distinguish themselves from the others? Dorina, who in origin would fulfill a *parte buffa*, does not elevate her character through refined language or honorable conduct, but, as an accomplice to the Marquis, atypically assumes a leadership role amongst her fellow servants. The difference between her and her peers is thus not a question of style but rather of influence, an aspect of her character promptly highlighted by Galuppi, who assigns her surprisingly virtuosic arias, duets, and ensemble pieces. Just as Dorina's role is invested with greater responsibility, the Count's is lightened with comedy, largely afforded by his disguise (but – between the lines- likely also deriving from that excess of jealousy that pushes him to such lengths to spy on his wife).

The new flexibility of the *mezzo carattere* is a far cry from its *serio* male counterpart, the role of the Marquis. The latter is characterized, not surprisingly, by markedly elevated language ("Ma, se ardirai cotanto, ignorante, impostore, proverai tu il mio sdegno e il mio furore. Cessa di provocarmi, trema dall'ira mia,"⁸⁴etc.) that is actually caricaturized in music through exaggeratedly long melismas, high notes, and dotted rhythms- a parody corroborated by the fact the Marquis' part is written in the soprano register. At its Venetian première it was performed by a *castrato* of a certain fame, Salvatore Consorti- and indeed the part is so virtuosic as to require a professional, certainly beyond the reach of the actors who sang *intermezzi*. In subsequent premières in Trieste (1753, *Teatro di S. Pietro*) and Milan (1756, *Teatro Regio Ducale*) the role was taken by women in

84 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Conte Caramella*, Act III, ii.

cross-dress, which must have inevitably further accentuated the affectation of this dandy figure.

Caramella instead at times takes on the semblance of the *parte seria*, sharing linguistic and musical elements with the Marchese, but at other times becomes the principal source of comedy. The musical score reflects this in the reduction of his solo arias in favor of shorter pieces and ensembles, one of Goldoni's strategies for realism that will have a long legacy through opera history. A particular novelty in this sense is the following scene (II, iv) between the Count in disguise, his wife, and the second *mezzo carattere* Dorina:

CONTE. Orsù perché crediate
ch'esser possa il futuro a me svelato
qualche cosa dirovvi del passato.

Pria d'essere sposata,
il conte capitano
vi prese per la mano una mattina.

Fuggiste modestina,
vi vergognaste un poco
ma vi ridusse in loco solitario.

Diceste: «Temerario,
andate via di qui»,
movendo in dir così la bocca al riso.

Ed ei con un sorriso
amante pronto e scaltro...

CONTESSA. Basta così, non voglio sentir altro.

DORINA. (Come è venuta rossa). (*Da sé*)

CONTESSA. (Io non so come ei possa queste cose sapere per minuto). (*Da sé*)

DORINA. (Questo brutto barbone è molto astuto). (*Da sé*)

CONTE. E ben, vi contentate
che contro questo spirito
usi il poter sovrano?

DORINA. Non gli badate, ch'egli è un ciarlatano.

CONTE. Io sono un ciarlatano? Sfacciatella,
io ti farò cambiar sensi e favella.

Rammenta quella borsa
che tu dal conte avesti
allora che facesti la mezzana.

E cosa non è strana,
se tu procuri adesso
di fare ancor lo stesso col marchese.

Il tutto mi è palese
e so che un regaletto...

DORINA. Basta così... (Che tu sia maledetto). (*Da sé*)⁸⁵

No longer isolated like a traditional aria, the Count's solo part is embedded within a course of action that never stops progressing. Goldoni achieves something truly novel: a hybrid piece, part solo aria, part ensemble (the other voices carry only recitative), built on a text without a single repetition or refrain, and inserted right in the middle of the act, not towards the end. To this we add, of course, the interweaving of various levels of conversation: the women speak amongst each other, the Count to each of them separately, and each has lines "a sé" (to themselves) for the audience. Strategies like these are targeted towards diversifying the content of opera scenes, and testify how *Il Conte Caramella* constitutes a definite step forward in the direction of a new, modern, and realistic equilibrium between *buffo* and *serio*, and in fact their total fusion in the *mezzo carattere*.

Not surprisingly, the Count's playful part- and the music that accompanies it- gives way to an entirely different style and bearing once he reclaims his rightful place as husband: "Vattene, scellerato, il piacer di trovare/ una sposa fedele a questo segno/ tutta mi fa depor l'ira e lo

85 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Conte Caramella*, II, iv. Conte: Alright then, to prove that I can foretell the future, I shall tell you something of the past. Before you were married/ the Count, a captain/ took you by the hand/ one morning. You fled in modesty/ you were a bit ashamed/ but he led you/ to a solitary place. You said "You are too bold/ go away at once"/ but while speaking, moved your lips/ to laughter. And he, with a smile,/ as a quick and artful lover... Contessa: That's enough, I want to hear any more! Dorina: (Oh look how she's turned red) (*aside*).

sdegno.”⁸⁶ With his authority returned to him, he not only changes tone and expression, but also displays the clemency of a true noble spirit. His elevation from beggar to ruler takes him from *mezzo carattere* to full *parte seria*. In this light, the particular connection of dramatic role to social status appears fully consolidated: in other words, *serio* and *buffo* roles are, at this early stage, unequivocally tied to characters of high and low extraction. Yet even with the idiosyncrasies of opera theatre, *Il Conte Caramella* testifies that realism is the primary concern of our author, who doses comic and *serio* with nuanced moderation, and promotes their coexistence in the transformative *mezzo carattere*.

Looking ahead, we find other important milestones in the evolution of the *mezzo carattere* in Goldoni’s later *drammi giocosi*. It was, in fact, precisely the delicate balance between tragedy and comedy, gravity and lightness, that sealed the international and enduring success of Goldoni’s most famous *mezzo carattere*, Cecchina from *La buona figliuola* (“The good girl”, 1758). Goldoni drew this text from his comedy of eight years prior, *La Pamela*, a re-creative process examined later in more detail. This comedy, together with its first actress Teodoro Medebach, had already attained inordinate success, and largely thanks to the sentimental coloring of the script. Records attest that when first introduced it was immediately replicated for 18 consecutive nights, a number that is truly extraordinary for the rich and competitive Venetian circuit that generally sought new works daily. Outside of Venice its success was by no means inferior, drawing audiences for many nights at the Roman *Teatro Capranica* and other venues, such that in his *Mémoires* a proud Goldoni writes, “da sola [Pamela] sostenne il teatro dall’apertura sino a martedì grasso.”⁸⁷ When deriving his *dramma giocoso* (set to music by Fischietti in 1758 and by Piccinni in 1760) from this ‘character comedy,’ Goldoni attentively preserved, and even enhanced, the sentimental dimension of his *mezzo carattere*. Paolo Gallarati has viewed this opera as the precursor to *opera semiseria*⁸⁸ for these reasons, and

86 *ibid.*, Act III scena ultima. Begone, wicked man, the pleasure of finding/ a wife so faithful/ brings me to set aside my rage and scorn.

87 Carlo Goldoni, *Mémoires*, vol. II Ch. 38.

88 “... [La buona figliuola] inaugurava il filone dell’opera semiseria destinata a rappresentare in seguito, praticamente sino a Rossini, una valida alternativa

whether or not this be true, it certainly embodies a significant step forward in the direction of realism and psychological depth.

Cecchina and her *Marchese*, the two *mezzi caratteri* of this work (*serva* and *padrone* just as in *Il Conte Caramella*), are immediately distinguishable the rest of the cast through their intermediate position within the character list on the frontespiece, but also by their conduct. The two parts, and the role of the protagonist in particular, are miles away from the *parti serie* who continue in an older Metastasian vein. In *Pamela*, Count Ernold objects to Bonfil: «Se andate a teatro, ove si fanno le opere musicali, vi andate solo per piangere, e vi alletta solo il canto patetico, che da solletico all'ipocondria».⁸⁹ This decidedly modern disposition is clearly discernable in the tearful yet calibrated mannerisms of the operatic protagonist Cecchina, not without hints of *comédie larmoyante*, such that for Anna Maria Finetto, “proprio da Cecchina inizia, sotto certi aspetti, la moda del canto patetico che si svilupperà nell'opera seria romantica.”⁹⁰ While the delicacy and changeability of Goldoni's *mezzo carattere* appears wholly antithetical to the tragic roles of Romantic opera, it is true that later musical tradition will continue in the direction of psychological realism. In this light, and as we will see in the following chapters, Goldoni's contributions reach far beyond his time.

The product of an experienced hand, it comes as no surprise that in *La buona figliuola* the process of linguistic simplification essayed in *Il Conte Caramella* is applied much more markedly. Cecchina's concise phrases and unornamented language are in complete harmony with her simplicity and naiveté:

Vo cercando e non ritrovo
la mia pace e il mio conforto,

alla radicale opposizione dei due generi principali.” Paolo Gallarati, *Musica e Maschera*, Torino, EDT, 1984, 135.

89 Carlo Goldoni, *La Pamela*, I, xvi. If you go to theatres where they perform opera, you go only to weep, and you draw pleasure only from pathetic song, which feeds your imaginary illnesses.

90 “Cecchina marks the beginning, in some ways, of the fashion for sentimental song that would later develop into Romantic opera.” A. Finetto, *La Pamela e La Buona Figliuola: Il Linguaggio Patetico di Goldoni*, «Studi Goldoniani», VIII, Pisa-Roma, Fabrizio Serra, 1988, p. 107.

che per tutto meco porto
una spina in mezzo al cor.⁹¹

Strangely enough, by comparison it is Pamela who appears more formal and less realistic, notwithstanding the greater liberties afforded by her prose part in comparison to the added complications and constraints of the musical role:

Oh Dio! Che è mai questo nuovo tremor, che mi assale le membra! Ahi che vuol dir questo gelo, che mi circonda le vene! Oimè, come dal gelo si passa al fuoco? Io mi sento ardere, mi sento morire.⁹²

Even when she invokes death, Cecchina is more moderate, more tender:

Almen fra queste piante
avrò un po' di riposo.
Ah son sì stanca di sofferir
gl'insulti della nemica sorte
che son costretta a desiar la morte.⁹³

Piccinni's musical setting certainly indulges in the sentimental potential of her role. Her aria "Una povera ragazza" (I, xi) is an excellent example of how, even when the text could suggest stronger feelings, such as anger ("Una povera ragazza/padre e madre che non ha/ si maltratta si strapazza/ questa è troppa crudeltà"⁹⁴), he chooses instead to underscore at once her admirable stateliness and tender vulnerability. While the text is rhythmic enough to suggest a lively setting in dotted rhythms, Piccinni's aria is instead an *Andante* marked *piano assai*, and in addition to the slow tempo and linear melody (with a few expressive

91 Carlo Goldoni, *La buona figliuola*, I, xvi. I seek but I can't find/ neither peace nor comfort/ and everywhere, I carry/ a thorn within my heart.

92 Carlo Goldoni, *La Pamela*, III, xi. Oh God! What is this new tremor that seizes me! What is the meaning of this chill that surrounds my veins! Ah, how is it that from such cold I pass to fire? I feel myself burning, I feel myself dying.

93 Carlo Goldoni, *La buona figliuola*, II, xii. At least amid these plants I may find some respite. Ah I am so weary of suffering the blows of my enemy fate, that I am forced to desire death.

94 *ibid.*, I, xi. A poor girl/without mother or father/ is mistreated and vexed.../it is too cruel.

leaps) the composer also meanders in and out of the minor mode at key moments (“Partirò... me ne andrò”, etc.), and lingers through repetition.

The pathetic nature of Cecchina’s role is not only evident through her language (self-pitying adjectives- “povera”, “poverina,” etc.- are everywhere), but more broadly in the irony of the events that befall her. Goldoni- and Piccinni- make extensive use of the ensemble finale in this *dramma giocoso*, using expansive group pieces as a vehicle for plot development. Elements of *larmoyant* often surface in these scenes, as for example the finale of Act I, in which Cecchina is portrayed as an innocent victim. Banished by her Bonfil because he believes her indifferent to him, and by her faithful friend Mengotto because of jealousy, Cecchina is also attacked in spite by servants Sandrina and Paoluccia, who, envious of the attentions she receives, plot to undermine her reputation. Cecchina’s repeated interjections, “Chi mi aiuta, per pietà?” create a sense of pleading urgency and enhance the pitiable tenderness of the scene. Further *pathos* in Goldoni’s *dramma giocoso* is afforded by an original scene of abduction, absent from *La Pamela*, in which Cecchina is put under arrest by a *parte seria*, the Cavaliere Armidoro (Act II). Franco Fido’s observation, “il dramma per musica può accogliere una dimensione romanzesca e avventurosa negata alla commedia,” appears relevant in this respect.

Notably, the tender moderation of this *mezzo carattere* does not falter even in light of happy deliverance at the work’s conclusion. Through a *coup de scène* Cecchina is revealed to be of noble birth, receiving both aristocratic status and the hand of her beloved. And yet, her reaction is one of interior conflict:

Ah signori, vorrei
far i doveri miei;
ma ho ancora il cuore
fra la gioia confuso
e fra il timore.⁹⁵

Not exaltation nor triumph, but realistic incredulity and self-consciousness color this ‘good girl’s’ apotheosis. Goldoni chooses to underscore her modesty and sensibility through to the end, which Piccinni supports through a lyrical ending. *La buona figliuola* is a gem of neoclassical

95 *ibid.*, III, xi.

sentimentalism, reason for which, in the words of Daniel Hertz, it was an opera “destined to surpass all his other librettos in the influence it yielded.”⁹⁶ Above all, Cecchina exemplifies the versatile dramatic potential of the *mezzo carattere*, which, expressing even the strongest emotions with simplicity, preserves their purity and power.

The two examples examined thus far bear testimony to the way in which, when they are present, *mezzi caratteri* readily take on a protagonist’s role. The expansive expressive range and changeability of this figure certainly could not be equaled by a traditional *parte seria* or *buffa*. The *mezzi caratteri* clearly facilitate, if not guarantee, interest within the plot, reason for which, when they are present, they are placed right at the center of events.

Beyond Caramella and Cecchina, many others still color the pages of Goldoni’s *drammi giocosi*. The careful reader may glean their presence from their conduct and expression, as for example in *Le nozze in campagna* (1768), or find them again explicitly set apart in the character lists, as is the case for *Il Re alla caccia* (1763, Galuppi’s almost 100th opera). This later work in particular testifies how the role of the *mezzo carattere* takes on wider dimensions at every new appearance; the two *mezzi* in this case are no longer servant and master, but two men divorced from any romantic intention: one a courtier, the other King Henry IV himself. Clearly a great disparity of status still stands, yet, in the dark of night in the woodlands, where the plot begins, their status is, if not equaled, certainly leveled significantly- especially when the King, having lost track of his hunting party and lost his horse as well, loses his habitual superiority as well:

Ah in sì fatal momento
veggio quanto si accosta
al più vil de’ mortali un re possente.
Non va un monarca esente
dal timor, dal dolor; finché sul trono
siede il sovrano, ai sudditi prevale;
quando è solo in un bosco, agli altri è eguale.⁹⁷

96 Daniel Hertz, Goldoni, *Don Giovanni and the Dramma Giocoso*, “The Musical Times” 120–1642, (London: Musical Times Ltd., 1979); 994.

97 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Re alla caccia*, II, i. Ah, in such fatal moment I see how close a powerful King is to the lowest of men. No monarch is spared fear, nor pain; on the throne he may sit above his subjects, but alone in the woods, he is equal to all the others.

He will be led to shelter by local farmers, who, ignorant of his true identity, will treat him with directness and sincerity, gaining his goodwill and benevolence in so doing. The events that befall the King, who, if not explicitly disguised like Count Caramella still does lose his identity for a time, denote how, in addition to the advantages to plot and to sentimental depth it brings, the *mezzo carattere* lends itself particularly well to the treatment of the most important contemporary social issues- among these the struggle of rationalistic, Enlightened thought to reconcile ideas of individual merit with the hereditary mechanisms of a still aristocratic class structure. Merit and title, blood and conduct, appearance and substance are difficult dichotomies that Goldoni's libretti thrive on. The King's words, in fact, repeat the same messages written time and again by our Venetian author, as for example,

Signor, vi parlo schietto
Tutti nudi siam nati,
Tutti nudi morremo;
Levatevi il vestito inargentato
E vedrete che pari è il nostro stato⁹⁸

or

Per me sostengo e dico
Ed ho la mia ragione
Che sia la condizione un accidente.
Sposare una servente
Che cosa importa a me se è bella e buona?
Peggio è assai, se è cattiva, una padrona.⁹⁹

among many others. The conclusion of *Il Re alla caccia* is one further installment of Goldoni's systematic scrutiny of 'virtue,' given that the

98 Carlo Goldoni, *Bertoldo, Bertoldino e Cacasenno*, I, iv. Sir, I will speak frankly. We were all born naked, and naked we shall all die; if remove your silvered robe, you'll see that we are equal.

99 idem, *Il Filosofo di Campagna*, II, xiv. I believe and proclaim- and I am right to do so- that class is nothing but luck. Why should I care if the girl I marry is a maid, if she is beautiful and good? A mean Lady would be much worse.

simple woodsman who rescued the King will be rewarded with a title of nobility, but just as soon as he receives it “la stessa virtù diventa orgoglio”¹⁰⁰ (virtue turns to pride); ambition and desires poison his happiness. His natural well-being is restored only renouncing the illusion of social ascension to reembrace the simple life, a cardinal lesson of Goldoni’s theatre.

Without meandering further into a comprehensive catalog of Goldoni’s *mezzi caratteri* in opera, it is important instead to understand the kind of impact this new figure went on to have on the state of the art. Mozart’s operas, as we will see more specifically later on, are one witness to how the broad spectrum of character types and dramatic strategies developed and consolidated by Goldoni had become, two generations later, common practice. Goldoni’s principles were, to use Da Ponte’s term, “domma teatrale” (theatrical dogma), and the *mezzo carattere* was part of this inheritance- proven not only by the content and structure of Mozart’s operas, but also, and explicitly, by his correspondence. In 1783 Mozart was searching for a new opera libretto, and laid out the following criteria to his father Leopold:

(...) das nothwendigste dabey aber ist recht Comisch im ganzen – und wen es dan möglich wäre 2 gleich gute frauenzimer Rollen hinein zu bringen. – die eine müsste Seria, die andere aber Mezzo Carattere seyn – aber an güte – müssten beyde Rollen ganz gleich seyn. – das dritte frauenzimer kan aber ganz Buffa seyn.¹⁰¹

Within the span of a few decades, clearly, the *mezzo carattere* becomes an integral part of comic opera theatre, internationally. Beyond this, we can also observe how, if the first *mezzi caratteri*, like Count Caramella, were decidedly more comic than tragic, through its evolution this figure progressively gains prominence and depth, such that Mozart places it

100 idem, *Il Re alla caccia*, I, ix.

101 W. A. Mozart, letter to Leopold Mozart (Vienna, 7 may 1783), Siftung Mozarteum Salzburg, Digital Mozart Edition [www.mozarteum.at]. The most important thing is that the story, on the whole, be truly comic, and, if possible, the author ought to introduce two equally good female parts; one must be Seria, the other Mezzo Carattere, but both roles must be entirely equal in quality. The third female character, however, may be buffa.

on the same plane as the *parti serie*, while the *parti buffe* by comparison appear ancillary, and not indispensable.

The changeability of the *mezzo carattere*, who can move seamlessly from light comedy to deep sentiment, is no doubt its most important realistic advantage, one destined to become ever more dominant in the second half of the century, in correspondence with growing appreciation for the psychological dimension of theatre, along with the growing fashion of sentimentalism and *larmoyant*. The *mezzo carattere* is one of many ways in which the general aesthetic preference for ‘truth’ of the age of Enlightenment gives rise to creative artistic solutions. Goldoni’s particular contribution to the creation and consolidation of this figure, and its centrality to the development of his ‘character comedies’ as well as to his musical works, is a topic of research that can supply a missing piece of the puzzle- not only as regards his own theatre- but more broadly in the frame of opera history.

In the *mezzo carattere* we find that lifelike balance that animates Goldoni’s most successful characters and captivating scenes. In his own words,

Per me nessun personaggio è inutile. Ciascheduno ha qualche particolare, che può servire il teatro; chi più, chi meno, egli è vero, ma i mezzi caratteri son necessari ancora, come le mezze tinte ai pittori.¹⁰²

iii. Buffo, serio, and the space between

From 1751 onwards Goldoni wrote exclusively *drammi giocosi* until his move to Paris eleven years later, along with prose comedies, as ever in high demand. The sheer volume of texts produced during this ‘mature’ decade is impressive: excluding the sixteen new comedies of

102 Carlo Goldoni, *Preface to La Gastalda*. To me no character is useless. Each has some particular that can be useful to the theatre; some more, some less, it’s true, but the *mezzi caratteri* are necessary too, just as halftones are necessary to painters.

that famous- or infamous- 1750–51 season, he added nearly 80 original works for the prose theatre and more than 30 *drammi giocosi* to his repertoire, many representative of an evolving discourse between *buffo* and *serio*.

While *Il Conte Caramella* formally separated *buffi*, *seri*, and *mezzi caratteri*, this practice is not taken up again by Goldoni before 1754, after which it is applied with some consistency, beginning with Galuppi's *Il filosofo di campagna* of that year. This work brings a good dose of social commentary, as we have seen. Yet within it Goldoni also presents another small innovation in the relationship of *buffi* and *seri*, in particular through his treatment of the character Don Tritemio. Galuppi sets him as a bass-baritone no doubt because of his age, yet while Eugenia's heart is naïve but pure, her aristocratic father is plagued by flaws. Avarice and a weak mind spur him to give Eugenia in marriage to a man he considers a "villano," for example. Corrupt and unable to sustain a *parte seria* with rectitude, the final surprise of *Il filosofo di campagna* is that this character, while an aristocrat, is relegated to *parte buffa*. Goldoni thus commences eroding the boundary between *buffo* and *serio* relatively early in his career.

In structural terms, furthermore, the most noteworthy element of this opera is the continued expansion of ensembles. To cite just one example, the conclusion of Act I features an extended ensemble finale with the peculiarity of rapid action interpolated throughout. While several characters are continually present, Goldoni creates a circular chase between Lesbina and Don Tritemio, who enter and exit continually. A masterfully entangled situation intensifies as Lesbina, in the guise of Eugenia, accepts attentions and ultimately a wedding ring from Nardo, but at each advance feigns modesty and flees when Don Tritemio approaches. Don Tritemio in turn, who believes the fleeing figure to be his daughter, fruitlessly searches for her while becoming ever more disoriented, in an exiting pace the music accentuates with ease.

Questions of social *rovesciamento* continue in *Li pazzi per amore* (The Mad for Love, 1754, set in Livorno, first musical score by Cocchi) and *Il povero superbo* (The Proud Poor Man) 1755, set in Bologna, score by Galuppi but now lost). Both premiered at the *Teatro San Samuele*, both formally separate *buffo* and *serio* roles, and both, not surprisingly, continue to pursue relevant themes in their content. Without

entering into the texts, therefore, it may suffice to recall that in the first opera, the *serio* prima donna (again named Eugenia) is from the start disguised as a servant girl, while by contrast *Il povero superbo* targets a protagonist of lowly origin made wealthy by inheritance. Aptly named, *Il Cavaliere dal Zero* is “reso miserabile dal fumo della nobiltà.”¹⁰³ Goldoni thereby adds yet another facet to his playful critique of nobility with weak foundations.

We find a more significant step forward in *Le nozze* (The Wedding) of the same year, set again by Galuppi for the *Teatro Formagliari* in Bologna. Unlike its predecessors, this work does not separate *parti buffe* from *parti serie* in the character list. In fact, Goldoni will suspend this practice until 1758, though the divisions remain implicit through class differences and mode of expression, as later works will demonstrate. In the case of *Le nozze* in particular, however, the lack of definition of the parts is a commentary in itself, as the boundaries between *buffo* and *serio* are progressively attenuated. In this work, the aristocratic characters do not suffer from the want of power that Goldoni elsewhere has shown, but do not preserve the mannerisms of a *parte seria*. Rather, the author injects a significant dose of realism in their frankness as they often lose their composure. In the same way, their servants and attendants take on the leading roles, and display some elements of *serio* in *mezzo carattere* as we shall see.

The opera opens with a Count and Countess in vehement argument. Their exchanges have replaced Metastasian grace with pragmatism, and the rapidity of the discourse is rather typical of a *buffo* scene:

CONTE. La voglio così.
CONTESSA. Così non sarà.
CONTE. Prevale il mio sì.
CONTESSA. Stavolta non già.¹⁰⁴

Goldoni thus enters immediately into the quotidian reality of marriage in its least gracious aspect, marking the work from the beginning as an

103 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Povero Superbo*, elenco dei personaggi. (...) rendered miserable by the smoke [illusion] of nobility.

104 Carlo Goldoni, *Le Nozze*, Act I, i. Count: I want it this way. Countess: It won't be this way. Count: My 'yes' will prevail. Countess: Not so quickly, this time.

exercise in realism. Most unusually, the dispute between the two noble characters is carried to a point of extreme aggravation that culminates in the drastic and mutual resolve to end their union. While preparations are made to summon the notary, the tone remains dry and practical:

CONTE. Come dissi, d'ogni effetto dotale
che portò la contessa in questa casa,
preparatemi i conti. (...)
CONTESSA. Badate; nel contratto vi ha da essere un patto,
per cui nel caso di restituzione,
s'han da considerare i frutti ancora.(...)
CONTE. Poi penseremo a sciorre il matrimonio.
CONTESSA. Liberata sarò da un tal demonio.¹⁰⁵

Only away from her husband does the prideful Contessa transform her rigid expression into a softer poetic language that reflects tones of melancholy and tenderness. Her first solo aria is one of reflection on surpassed and ephemeral love, which, notwithstanding Galuppi's somewhat 'indignant' dotted rhythms also creates a scene of pathos dramatically different from the action that precedes and follows:

Per una serva il marito di me fa poca stima?
Ah dove, dove andò l'amor di prima?

Ah dove è andato
quel primo affetto?
Ah che l'ingrato
mio sposo in petto
cangiato ha il cor.
Duran per poco
quei primi istanti;
si spegne il foco,
cessa l'ardor.¹⁰⁶

105 *ibid.*, Act II, scene iii. Count: As I said, I wish that accounts be prepared for everything the Countess brought in dowry to this house. Countess: Be careful; in the contract there must be an agreement, that in the case of restitution, interest accrued must also be considered. C: Then we shall see to dissolving this marriage. C.ss: I will be freed from such a demon.

106 *ibid.*, Act I, ii. For a servant girl, my husband esteems me so little? Ah where, where is the love we first had? Ah, where has that first affection gone? Ah, my

The character's subdued reflections suspend her intimate musings within a moment of stillness and respite from the hurried external events. Her text is colored by the nostalgic hues of recollection and longing for the affection now lost. These elements, together with the fact that the source the Countess's grief is her husband's interest in a lively, intelligent servant girl, cannot but remind us once again of Da Ponte and Mozart's masterful *Le nozze di Figaro*. The above text in particular rings as a clear precedent for the famous "Dove sono i bei momenti" aria of that opera, written forty years later, though the musical penchant is undoubtedly different. Comparison of the two scores would appear to exclude any 'borrowing,' much less direct transposition, but attests that Goldoni's tendency towards psychologically-attuned and realistic *serio* content within comedy was, as yet, ahead of his time and had a lasting continuation in the operatic tradition.

Not unlike what occurs in *Le nozze di Figaro* but also in Goldoni's preceding *Il filosofo di campagna*, when the aristocracy becomes ill-adept at conflict resolution, an intelligent and tactful servant takes charge of the action. In the case of *Le nozze*, the Count and Countess are hindered by their own pride, thereby requiring the aid of Goldoni's pro-Figaro character, Masotto (also a baritone), who steps in to (quite literally) bend the unyielding Count and Countess towards reconciliation:

MASOTTO. Via, s'accostino un poco.
 CONTESSA. Oh questo no; la prima non sarò.
 MASOTTO. Da bravo, padron mio.
 CONTE. Non voglio essere il primo ne' men io.
 MASOTTO. Un pochino alla volta. Un pochino per uno.
 Vi è un po' di ritrosia; con licenza, signor, anderò via.
 Servo umilissimo, ossequiosissimo,
 quando mi chiamino sarò prontissimo,
 verrò a servir.
 Faccia un passo in là; (*all'uno*)
 volti quel viso in qua (*all'altro*)
 Ah che contento amabile, quando due sposi s'amano,
 il cuor che d'ira è torbido in pace ritornar.¹⁰⁷

ungrateful husband has changed his heart. Those first moments are fleeting; then the flame burns out, the ardor ceases.

107 *ibid.*, Act II, iii. Masotto: Come along, move a bit closer. Contessa: Oh, no, I shall not be the first. M: Be good, my master. Count: I'd don't want to be the first either.

Masotto displays a willingness and respectfulness that differentiates him completely from Lesbina of *Il filosofo di campagna*. Even without her imposing manners, however, he rises to a central role within the plot to facilitate many of the events. Also of note in his aria is the progression of action that it implies. The aria does not create a moment of stasis; rather, we understand that while Masotto is singing, not only does action occur but more importantly, emotions and dispositions are changing as a result. This dramatic strategy keeps a further distance from the declamatory style of traditional *melodramma*.

Only when harmony is restored do the Count and Countess regain their composure. As this occurs, their language changes dramatically:

CONTESSA. Perché confesso la debolezza mia,
v'amo e figlia d'amore è gelosia.
Chi può nel nostro petto l'affetto regular?
Io non lo posso no. E sempre v'amerò
penando ognora.
CONTE (*solo*). Per dir la verità,
la contessa è amorosa,
compatirla convien s'ella è gelosa.
(...) non vuò più Guerra con la sposa mia.
Dolce amor che m'accendesti
delle nozze il dì primiero,
deh ritorna, nume arciero,
questo core a consolar.

La discordia i dì funesti
più non renda fra due sposi;
ed i spasimi cruciosi
non ci tornino a turbar.¹⁰⁸

M: Just a little at a time. A little from each. I see there is some reluctance; with permission, sir, I think I'll go. Humble servant, very obsequious, whenever you call me, I will be ready, I'll come to serve. Step over that way (*to one*), turn that face this way (*to the other*). Ah, what amiable gladness, when two spouses love each other, to see a heart clouded by rage return to peace.

108 *ibid.*, Act III, ii1 iii. Countess: Because I confess my weakness. I love you, and jealousy is the daughter of love. Who is able to command the affections of our own heart? I cannot, no. And I shall always love you, and always suffer. (...) Count: To tell the truth, the Countess is in love, and if she is jealous, it would be better to understand her pains. I no longer want war with my wife. Sweet love, who ignited

Here in the final act, these aristocratic characters express themselves in true *serio* terms for the first time, regaining Metastasian turns of phrase (“penando ognora,” “nume arciero”) typical of *opera seria*. Overall, however (and notwithstanding a few classicizing exceptions), even within a melodramatic style Goldoni achieves balance, maintaining the language elevated but without stalling the action with digressive and generic metaphors, and Galuppi helps to keep it moving with a lilting minuet. On a psychological level, noteworthy is Goldoni’s realistic use of veiled, non-explicit terms to create the tender sadness that permeates the Countess’s wistful recitative and aria. The Count’s aria too, in its plaintive invocation of Cupid’s arrows, resounds almost as a prayer to the archaic god of love. In synthesis, these two characters journey from one stylistic boundary to the other over the course of the work, providing comedy and gravity at different times. Their transformative roles exemplify the way in which, through a realistic portrayal of his characters, Goldoni continues to erode the boundaries between traditional *buffo* and *serio* roles.

We witness this not only in the traditional *serio* parts, but also at times in characters of lower extraction, who manifest a broad spectrum of dramatic registers through the changing action. If at first the Count and Countess take on aspects of *buffo* in their quotidian language, rapid exchanges, and comic obstinacy, later we find the comic sense of these traditionally *buffo* figures is darkened by more serious language. Unlike the melancholy of Eugenia in *Il filosofo di campagna*, most of the *serio* material in *Le nozze* is prompted by rage, and notwithstanding their nearly insurmountable divisions, the Count and Countess are not the only characters to express themselves with intensity in this respect. Even a humble gardener (Mingone), when faced with rivalry, uses no uncertain terms:

...lo voglio sbudellare,
 se fosse in mezzo alle più forti squadre,
 se fosse ancora in braccio di sua madre.

me on our first day of marriage, oh return, arrowed god, to console this heart. Let discord no longer render the days of two lovers so baleful; and spams of distress never upset us again.

Mi par di ridere con quel ragazzo,
lo voglio uccidere con le mie man.
Poi per il mondo da pellegrino
miglior destino cercando andrò.¹⁰⁹

Choice words (e.g. “sbudellare”) evidence that Goldoni deliberately preserves the comic element in this aria, unequivocally exposing Mingone’s coarseness, Galuppi contributes with a propulsive and playful *Allegro assai*. The gardener’s piece therefore would never be considered a *serio* aria. However, the length of the piece, its pivotal structural function as an exit aria, and most importantly the intensity of Goldoni’s terms (“fosse anche in braccio di sua madre...lo voglio uccidere con le mie man”), all contribute a novel sense of gravity to the scene, casting a cloud over the underlying comic diversion.

The attenuation of rigid boundaries between roles continues in later operas such as Galuppi’s *La diavolessa* (1755, given at the *S. Samuele* but set in Naples). Again, no explicit division of roles is made, yet implicitly the cast of characters is listed in descending order of prominence, from *serio* to *buffo* with many nuances in between. Textual analysis suggests the presence of two *mezzi caratteri* of different social standing, the gentleman Don Poppone (likely bourgeois, as his title is never made explicit), and the “avventuriera” Dorina, who abandons her family to marry her lover, Giannino. *La diavolessa* does not warrant a comprehensive analysis, but it does contribute a few elements of note, all connected to Goldoni’s treatment of boundaries between the well-to-do and the plebeian. In this opera, our author returns to the familiar device of role exchange to undermine the foundations of class division. When Don Poppone mistakes Dorina for a noblewoman, for example, she transforms into one:

Eh, che l’amore più candido, più puro
vuole il suo chiaroscuro.
E poi convien distinguere

109 *ibid.*, Act II, scene xii. I want to eviscerate him, even if he were protected by the strongest troops, or if he were still a baby in his mother’s arms. I could almost laugh with that young man, I want to kill him with my own hands. Then, as a wanderer, I’ll travel to world seeking better fortune.

della plebe l'amor, come si sa,
da quello della nostra nobiltà.
Voglio che civilmente ci trattiamo.
O che siamo, cospetto! o che non siamo.

Si distingue dal nobile il vile
anch'in questo, mio caro signor.
Una donna ch'è nata civile
non si lascia avvilir dall'amor.¹¹⁰

As seen in previous operas, Goldoni creates an external projection of social standing through the realistic imitation of mannerisms and language, and the reiteration of common ideas. He carries this technique to a level of parody a short while later, when Giannino too improvises the manners of a modern aristocrat:

Vo' provar con bassa gente;
e vo' far il prepotente.
"Insolente, non do niente...
Pagherò, quando vorrò.
Ne ho bisogno, via di qua."
Ah ah ah. (*ridendo*) Bene va.
L'ho trovata in verità.¹¹¹

This jesting imitation is purely comic, but pricks at familiar contemporary themes of corruption and moral degradation. The likening of a nobleman to a "prepotente," together with allusions to disregard for debt and for the needs of others again connect this work to modernity and its vices. Notwithstanding the Neapolitan setting, this opera remains relevant to the Venetian audience through its social commentary and even

110 Carlo Goldoni, *La diavolessa*, Act I, vii. Oh, that even the most candid, the purest love desires its ups and downs. It would be better to distinguish the love of commoners from that of our nobility. I want us to deal with civility. Whether we be, or not. The noble will distinguish himself from the commoner in this too, my dear sir. A woman born noble does not let herself be disheartened by love.

111 *ibid.*, Act I, ix. I want to try my hand with the common people, I want to act assertive. "Insolent, I'll give you nothing.... I'll pay, when I want. I need that, get out of here." Ah ah ah (*laughing*), that's good. I've really found it.

includes an aria in Venetian dialect (sung by Dorina, who has travelled the world).

More parody of *serio* elements, though of different nature, ensues in *La cascina* (The Farmstead, 1756) first set by Giuseppe Scolari (1720–1774). Rather than targeting the paradoxes of city life and modern profit, this bucolic, pastoral opera retreats once more to simple country life, in which pagan gods resurface to create a place away from time. Notably, however, classicizing references are exaggerated to such a degree that the Arcadian stamp of the work becomes jesting, not truthful. The character of Il Conte Ripoli, for instance, is a *serio* part in caricature; indeed he is called “l’affettato.” Ripoli speaks in Arcadian metaphors but with none of the Arcadian gravity. The *cascina* (farmstead) is allegorized as Carthage, ladies crossed in love become Virgilian heroines (“ecco un’altra Didone abbandonata”), and constant references to Alceste, Demetrio, Celonice, and others saturate his recitative. When the Count takes up a rage aria, also full of Classical references and intense language, the exaggeration therein thwarts the gravity of a true *serio* piece, and the number is downgraded to an *arietta*, preceded and followed by the dialogue of others:

Furie del cieco Averno, mostri del nero abisso
orsi, tigri, leoni, della barbarità crudel deposito,
su, venite, vuò fare uno sproposito.
Dov’è quel moro infido?
Vuò svenarlo sugli occhi alla mia Dido.¹¹²

While signing this work under the name of “Polisseno Fegeio, pastor arcade,” Goldoni does not hesitate to revisit the Classical world and the *serio* style in a satirical key, further distancing himself from the traditional treatment of these roles. His characterization of “l’affettato” in *La cascina* is another clear example of how our author progressively dismantles common practices in his libretti.

Goldoni’s unconventional portrayal of traditionally *serio* characters returns markedly in Fischietti’s *La ritornata di Londra* (The Returned

112 Carlo Goldoni, *La Cascina*, Act III, iv. Furies of the blind Hades, monsters of the black abyss, bears, tigers, lions, repositories of barbarous cruelty, up, come, I want to commit a crime. Where is that infamous moor? I want to slash his veins before the eyes of my Dido.

from London, 1756), a peculiar work in which all of the characters are of noble extraction, as will recur in *Il festino* (The Banquet, 1777, written in Paris but set in Venice). The only figures of contrast in a panorama of Counts, Barons, and Marquis are Madama Petronilla, a virtuosic opera star, and her chambermaid. With many rivals for the attentions of Petronilla, the male characters cannot escape becoming the comic source of the work. Their forward, haughty mannerisms, and high-sounding circumlocutions go hand in hand with the vanity of each believing himself to be the favorite. The entangled relationships result in a good number of rage *arie* but create none of the gravity or tragic undertones of *serio* material. The entire opera, in a way, becomes a play between outward appearance and inner truth, in which elaborate formalities and ceremonious ritual expand to occupy the entire dramatic space. Introspection or pathetic elements are simply rendered obsolete by the frivolity that dominates.

La ritornata di Londra demonstrates once again that, in the realistic *dramma giocoso*, *serio* does not appear by definition but only when mandated by plot. Earlier works of Goldoni, if without figures of nobility, were also without *parti serie*. To this, we now must add that, even in the presence of aristocratic figures, *serio* is not guaranteed. By this point in Goldoni's experience with libretti, the author's distance from previous traditions is more and more consolidated; the distinction between *serio* and *buffo* is no longer dependent only on station, but, in a more realistic approach, is also regulated by conduct.

Furthermore, what *La ritornata di Londra* lacks in depth of characterization it gains in structure and ensemble pieces. These excel in invention and complexity, animating the triangular (and quadrangular) relationships between *prima donna* and suitors. Notably, Goldoni places an intricate ensemble as early as the second scene of the work, in which the Marquis and Baron each search for a pretext to remain alone with Petronilla, much to the chagrin of her secret lover, Carpofero. In an extended and dynamic scene, the men speak to Petronilla, to each other, and to the audience in asides, all in rapid alternation. The innovation resides in Goldoni's placement of such a developed ensemble well before the closure of the first act, yet after

the opening of the work. Goldoni then replicates the scenario, with even more characters tied in, at the closure of each act.

Goldoni continued to create *drammi giocosi* for numerous Venetian theatres (*San Samuele*, *S. Angelo*, *S. Moisè*) even while his comedies were suffering the growing antagonism of opponents Carlo Gozzi and Pietro Chiari (they could not, however, dispute his primacy in musical theatre). By 1758, the challenges and hardships of the theatrical world in Venice had already brought him to consider moving elsewhere. In fact, during that year he was prompted to accept an invitation to collaborate with the *Teatro di Tordinona* in Rome, a first attempt to forge himself a different path. Though the author returned to Venice less than a year later, his experience in Rome laid the foundation for a more definitive departure in the future, as well as the groundwork for the continued circulation of his texts via correspondance.¹¹³

Before departing, Goldoni presented *Il mercato di Malmantile* (The Market of Malmantile), set by Fischietti (though possibly by Scarlatti as well, in a lost version) among other works at the *Teatro S. Samuele*. It is his first text for music in which the protagonists (the *governatore* Lampridio and his daughter Brigida) are members of the *borghesia*. In fact, the mercantile world of middle-class commerce constitutes the broader universe of the work, as the title suggests. The shared space of the marketplace piazza, in which all buy and sell, functions as an element of cohesion between characters of varying social extraction. While *buffo* and *serio* characters are not explicitly divided, this opera is also noteworthy for its treatment of *serio* material, moderated in a realistic key. When Brigida, desirous of ascending the social ladder, sets her sights on the Conte della Rocca, his lover, the widowed Marchesa Giacinta expresses her grief in a short aria:

Ah purtroppo m'inganna il traditore.
Non vi è costanza al mondo, non vi è più fedeltà.

Misera mi confondo, tutto penar mi fa.
Ma se il crudel ritrovo
lo sdegno mio saprà.

113 See Pier Mario Vescovo, "*Goldoni: vacanze romane*" in *Settecento romano. Reti del classicismo arcadico* (Rome: Vilella, 2017).

O l'amor suo rinnova
o il fio mi pagherà. (*parte*)¹¹⁴

This piece, which in some measure resonates with Donna Elvira's debut aria ("Ah, chi mi dice mai") in Mozart and Da Ponte's later *Don Giovanni*, is measured in tone, and does not use the generic language or poetic hyperbole of the traditional melodramatic style. Instead, it is realistic in its moderation, also thanks to the psychological progression it contains. In the span of hardly two strophes, Goldoni changes the emotional content from grief to rage, lending the action a sense of propulsion, not static reflection. Fischietti develops this piece at length, traveling between virtuosity (coloratura passages, dotted rhythms) and expressiveness (chromaticism, appoggiature, etc.). As a further realistic and forward-looking element, Goldoni makes clear that Brigida's attractiveness is not solely the result of her uncommon beauty, but rather the merit of her intelligence: "Il suo vanto fu sempre il saper." The idea of interior beauty is in fact pursued quite explicitly (though to some comic effect), here expounded upon by the *governatore* her father (Lampridio), and the *buffo* Rubicone:

RUBICONE. Si conosce, si vede, si sa
di quel volto la rara beltà
ma del bello si apprezza ancor più
la famosa stupenda virtù.

LAMPRIDIO. Ma del bello si apprezza ancor più
la famosa stupenda virtù.

BRIGIDA. Quel ch'io sono, signore, lo so
ma di questo vantarmi non vuò.
Non è facil trovar oggidi
una donna che parli così.¹¹⁵

114 Carlo Goldoni, *Il Mercato di Malmantile*. Act I, x. Alas, sadly the traitor is deceiving me. There is no constancy in this world, fidelity is no more. I am wretched and confused, everything makes me suffer. But if I find the cruel traitor, he will know my anger. Either he renews his love to me, or he will pay me retribution.

115 *ibid.*, Act I, xii (ensemble finale) Rubicone: We recognize, we see, we know the rare beauty of that face, but even more than beauty, we esteem famous, stupendous virtue. Lampridio: Even more than beauty, we esteem famous, stupendous virtue. Brigida: I know what I am, sir, but I don't want to brag about it. It's not easy these days to find a woman who can speak like this.

While Brigida's false modesty is derisible and calls her "stupenda virtù" into question, the conversation does reflect a changing ideal and seals its closeness to modernity and to the real world with "oggi" (nowadays). Nor is Brigida the only character in the comedy to seek social change; the doctor Rubicone also wishes to improve his condition in marrying her, and Lena the *contadina*, a secondary *buffo*, also tries to enter society by securing the governor Lampridio. The contrast between aspiration and reality becomes an excellent source of comedy, as Rubicone asserts, "Di nobiltade in casa mia si sguazza. (Son tutti i miei feudi un banco in piazza)."¹¹⁶ In the end, however, all are paired with their 'equals': the Marchesa with the Count, Lena with Berto, another farmer, and Brigida with the charlatan doctor Rubicone.

Similar strategies for realism, and analogous moderation of tragic and comic extremes, can be found in *La conversazione* (The Conversation) of the same year (1758), set by Scolari, in which we easily discern *parti serie*, *parti buffe*, and *mezzi caratteri*. The space between *buffo* and *serio* is occupied by a *borghese* who has traveled the world (Giacinto), and a nobleman reduced to poverty (Don Fabio). The first is noteworthy for the changeability of his character:

In quattordici lingue parlo, scrivo, e traduco.
 So i riti, so i costumi dei popoli remoti
 e gl'incogniti ancora a me son noti.
 Coi vili son asiatico (*fa il grave*)
 coi grandi sono italico (*fa l'umile*)
 Nel spender sono inglese.
 Son colle dame un paladin francese (*fa riverenze e parte*).¹¹⁷

Giacinto is not a nobleman, but his knowledge of the world gives him extra assets and contributes to his appeal in society. More importantly, thanks to his travels, he is able to stay connected to the latest trends:

116 *ibid.*, Act III, vii. At my house, we are dripping with nobility. (All my holdings are a stand at the market).

117 Carlo Goldoni, *La Conversazione*, Act I, i. I can speak, write, and translate in fourteen languages. I know the customs and rituals of the most distant peoples, and I know what is unknown. With the lowly, I am Asian (*with gravity*), with the powerful, I am Italian (*with humility*). In expenses, I am English. With the ladies, I am a French paladin (*bows and exits*).

“Questo, signora mia, *splin* si chiama in inglese, che in Italia vuol dir malinconia.”¹¹⁸ *Splin* (spleen) of which we read even in Shakespeare, is especially relevant and in vogue as a poetic concept beginning in the 18th century. Goldoni’s reference to it connects the opera closely to the contemporary world and its fashions. What is more, the particular emphasis brought upon melancholy and the nostalgic humors represents Goldoni’s direct acknowledgement of new tendencies that have slowly become part of his theatre. *Serio* appears no longer as a mere question of Metastasian style, but now is more intimately connected to sadness or melancholy. This same new trend contributes to the increasing production of novels, and in theatre leads to new hybrid genres such as the French *comédie larmoyante*, defined by P. Larthomas as “(...)genre intermédiaire entre la comédie et la tragédie, qui introduit des gens de condition privée, vertueux ou presque, dans une action sérieuse, grave, parfois pathétique, qui nous excite à la vertu en attendrissant sur ses infortunes et en nous faisant applaudir son triomphe.”¹¹⁹ Goldoni thus connects himself to a contemporary literary trend through which he can also create greater realism.

In the character of Giacinto, Goldoni looks ahead to modernity. By contrast, his Don Fabio, an impoverished nobleman, represents the shadow of a past regime fading into oblivion. Yet, while his desire remains that of acting as a gallant protector of ladies in need, he too has been led to accept new, enlightened perspectives: “Non stimo l’esser bella, stimo la cognizione di distinguere il merto e le persone.”¹²⁰ The character of Don Fabio is balanced by a foil, Sandrino, of common origins but extremely wealthy. The opposite social and financial situations

118 *ibid.*, Act I, vii. This, my lady, is called *spleen* in English, which in Italy means melancholy.

119 P. Larthomas, cited in A. M. Finetto, “La Pamela e La Buona Figliuola: Il Linguaggio Patetico di Goldoni”, in *Studi Goldoniani quaderno 8* (Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1988); 107. (...) an intermediary genre between comedy and tragedy, that introduces ordinary people, virtuous or almost, into serious, grave, and at times pathetic circumstances, exciting us to virtue in moving us by their misfortunes, and leading us to applaud their triumph.

120 Carlo Goldoni, *La conversazione*, Act I, i. I don’t value beauty, I rather treasure the capacity to distinguish merit and people.

of the two men earn them the nicknames “Il Conte del Fumo” (the Count of Smoke) and “l’Asino d’Oro” (the Golden Ass), and the contrast between them affords ample comedy.

As concerns *serio* material, however, Goldoni yet again demonstrates a new, moderated approach that trades a recondite poetic language for realistic tones of greater immediacy. A love aria sung by Don Filiberto, a full *serio* character of noble birth and of good standing, exemplifies Goldoni’s by now affirmed new style:

Via resterò per compiacermi ancora.
Troppo questo mio cuor v’ama e v’adora.

Lo so che il sospetto
fa torto al mio bene
ma soffro nel petto
gli affanni, le pene
di un timido amor.
Conosco l’error,
confesso l’inganno;
Me stesso condanno.
Ma palpito ancora. (*parte*)¹²¹

The lightness and simplicity of this piece could hardly have been conceivable in the traditional melodramatic style. It is thus clear that Goldoni has left the preceding tradition entirely behind, and in the name of realistic portrayal, is accomplishing a gradual attenuation of the rigid divisions between *buffo* and *serio* roles, his works not seeking pure comedy but rather a balanced representation of modern life and styles. As a final note, *La conversazione*, true to its title, is also an exercise in linguistic variety. This type of realism, unlike the personal reflections of Don Filiberto, is used instead to enhance *buffo* roles. While a noblewoman (Lindora) sings an *arietta* in Venetian dialect, Lucrezia the servant girl offers another in Bolognese, and others follow in a parade

121 *ibid.*, Act II, ii. Alright I’ll remain, to appease you once more. My heart loves and adores you too much. I know that suspicion is an injustice to my beloved, but I suffer in my breast the anxieties and the torments of a timid love. I know my mistake, I confess I was wrong; I condemn myself. And yet, my heart beats still. (*exits*)

of linguistic sketches from all parts of Italy. Research is continuing to locate the surviving manuscript copies the musical score, which, like many of the operas on Goldoni's texts, has yet to be performed for modern times. Given the linguistic variety of the text, is it not unlikely that the music, too, could contain some allusions to popular traditions, especially when, later in the work, Goldoni inserts a Calabrian aria that denotes strong affinities to the *llengua napolitana* native to the original *commedia per musica* (note also the typical melancholic tone):

La notte quanno dormo penzu tanto
e quanno penso a buie mm'adormento.
Po me resveglio co no core schianto,
vado ppe tte parlare e non te siento.¹²²

The linguistic virtuosity of *La conversazione* perhaps brings to mind the observations of Franco Fido, who once affirmed “nei suoi [di Goldoni] libretti quello che la parola infeudata alla musica perdeva sul versante del referente- cioè in termini di capacità di evocare con efficacia mimetica e critica il mondo reale: mercanti, donne di casa, servitori, ecc.- essa guadagnava dalla parte del significante- scherzi e giochi di parole, paradossi e calembours, onomatopoeie e iperboli, equivoci e cacofonie plurilingui.”¹²³ Goldoni's inclusion of regional dialects is quite removed, however, from the “cacofonie plurilingui” here described. Rather, a textual approach demonstrates that, within an opera whose central theme is travel and exploration, linguistic variety instead directly supports the very “efficacia mimetica” that Goldoni was thought to lack.

In a long list of successful *drammi giocosi*, only three more will be considered within the limits of the present chapter. The first to follow *La conversazione* is *La fiera di Sinigaglia* (The Fair of Sinigaglia, 1760), again by Fischietti, a special commission by the *Teatro delle Dame* in

122 *ibid.*, Act III, iv. At night, when I sleep, I think a lot, and when I think in the dark I fall asleep. Then I awake with my heart in pieces, I go to speak to you, and yet hear nothing.

123 Franco Fido, “Riforma e controriforma del teatro. I libretti per musica di Goldoni fra il 1748 e il 1753 in *Studi Goldoniani*, vol. 7 (Venezia: Venezia: Casa di Goldoni e Istituto di Studi Teatrali dei Musei Civici Veneziani, 1985); 65. [previously translated]

Rome. Goldoni's presentation of the work outside the familiar context of his own Venetian audiences by no means tempers his critical agenda. In fact, *La fiera di Sinigaglia* features two aristocrats in full decline, the Conte Ernesto and Lisaura, "nobile discaduta." Il Conte Ernesto displays gentlemanly composure with evident affectation and expresses himself in the language of a *parte seria*:

Se si desta al rumor delle schiere
stringe il ferro il guerriero più ardito;
e all'invito dell'armi già parmi
che feroce sen corra a pugnar.
Io non sono mia bella così.
Perché' ho il cor di pietade ripieno
e vien meno se chiedigli aita
la bellezza che sa lagrimar.¹²⁴

Notwithstanding, he has long-running debts with every vendor in the market of Sinigaglia. His aristocratic self-image compels him to take the "discaduta" Lisaura under his protection, yet he must bend over backwards to assure her a living, for, as his middleman Griffò explains, "è un protettore senza monete, di quei che si usano ai nostri di."¹²⁵ While a destitute nobleman at this stage of Goldoni's production is no longer a surprise, an absolute novelty of this work is the appearance of a *borghese* just as ill-equipped. Orazio, a merchant of Sinigaglia, is, much like the Count, drowning in debt. Ted Emery, who deemed Goldoni "the bard of the bourgeoisie," has seen what he terms "ideological fragility" in the author's less adulatory representation of exponents the middle class (though he does not analyze *La fiera di Sinigaglia* explicitly). Emery concludes that, in targeting the middle class once emblematic of his 'reform' comedies, the author abandons his efforts for realism and commences an inverse process (what Franco Fido called "counter-reform," an interpretation now widely surpassed).¹²⁶ Textual analysis

124 Carlo Goldoni, *La Fiera di Sinigaglia*, Act I, i. If he awakes to the noise of troops, the bravest warrior will grasp his sword, and at the call to arms, I can already see him, fierce, running towards combat. I, my beauty, am not like that. Because my heart is full of tenderness, and it nearly faints if a tearful beauty asks for help.

125 *ibid.*, Act I, ii. He's a penniless protector, one of those in vogue nowadays.

126 Ted Emery, *Goldoni as Librettist*; 77.

reveals a different reality. If the working-class, in social ascension for decades, now also begins to feel the pricks of corruption as the result of past affluence, Goldoni's indication of this new societal risk can only be understood as a courageous step towards even greater realism and objectivity, not a change in belief. In concrete terms, this translates to the use of a rich lexicon of technical terms from the world of commerce, including *denari*, *ipoteche*, *creditori*, *cambiali* (cash, mortgages, creditors, promissory notes), etc. In the same way, rather than "ideological fragility," the author's newly targeted critique demonstrates a willingness to confront even the most paradoxical of problems, and reiterates his implicit belief in the moral utility of comedy. Orazio, like the Count, pretends to be who he is not, boasting economic success. Once more, the pragmatic Griffio checks his imbalance with truth "Superbia e povertà stan male insieme,"¹²⁷ and eventually Orazio admits his own responsibilities, "per far di più di quello che comportava il mio stato, da me stesso mi son precipitato."¹²⁸

Ultimately, poverty neutralizes disparities of rank:

ORAZIO. Son servitor di lei la venero e la stimo;
 ma se non ha denari, signor conte padron, noi siam del pari.
 Cosa val la nobiltà senza il lustro del contante?
 Il signore ed il mercante non si stima, se non ha.
 Non ho il capo cincinnato, non vo' liscio ne staccato
 ma mi faccio rispettar, se la quaglia fo cantar.
 Mi fanno ridere questi zerbini, senza quattrini,
 quando pretendono farsi stimar.
 Non se n'avvedono, si fan burlar.¹²⁹

127 Carlo Goldoni, *La Fiera di Sinigaglia*, Act I, vi. Pride and poverty don't go well together.

128 *ibid.*, Act II, vi. In seeking to move beyond my state, I brought about my own downfall.

129 *ibid.*, Act II, vi. I am your humble servant, and respect and esteem you; yet, if you have no money, then, sir Count and Lord, we are equals. Of what value is nobility without the sparkle of gold? Neither the lord nor the merchant are esteemed if they lack it. I'm not a Cincinnatus [statesman and Roman consul], I don't go about smoothly, nor aloof, but I too can make others respect me, if I tell what I know. They make me laugh, these doormats without a dime, when they have the pretension of being esteemed. They don't realize they expose themselves to ridicule.

Other contemporary figures, both male and female, also offer timely critique. Griffo, a practical and prudent proto-Figaro, becomes the voice of truth. With direct language, he reveals the true state of the more changeable characters, including the Count, Orazio, and the trinket-seller Prospero, who lends money at high rates of interest: “costui che finge l’uom dabben.”¹³⁰ With realism and practicality, Griffo explains his trade in the following terms:

Non voglio che l’onesto.
 Anch’io vivo di questo
 e se m’ingegno col mio cervello
 e coll’industria mia,
 è di dover ricompensato io sia.
 Nel mio mestiere
 suole accadere dei casi brutti;
 non è per tutti fare il sensal.
 Saper non basta pesi e misure
 ma le imposture convien saper.
 Saper conoscere chi può pagare,
 saper distinguere che vuol gabbare,
 darla ad intendere all’uno e all’altro,
 e pronto e scaltro per profittar
 saper discorrere, saper trattar.¹³¹

The direct language and short phrases here employed, along with the Fischietti’s musical setting, clearly designate this aria as a *buffo* piece, though its comic effect is sensibly outweighed by its practical bent. The illustration of the struggles and deceits encountered in daily life connect this piece so completely to the real world that it would appear (if not for the musical rhythm), almost drawn out of a prose comedy. Griffo evokes a world governed by commerce, in which every sort of man tries to draw

130 *ibid.*, Act I, vi. (...) he who pretends to be an upright man.

131 *ibid.*, Act II, v. I want nothing except what is honest. This is my living too and if I set my mind to it, and apply my wit and my hard work, it’s only fair that I should be rewarded. In my trade/ unpleasant cases/ often arise; being a broker/ is not for everyone./ It’s not enough/ to know weights and measures/ but one must know/ impostures too./ Know how to tell/ who can make payment/ and to distinguish/ who wants to cheat/ and drop hints/ to one and the other/ and quick and ready/ to make a profit/ know how to converse/ and how to negotiate.

his own profit. Again, we note the insistence on wit and readiness as one's best assets, indispensable for survival in an increasingly complex world of simulation and deceit.

Griffo's good sense is known by women as well. In particular, we find his feminine counterpart in Giacinta, a *locandiera* not without the perspicacity of Goldoni's heroine Mirandolina (from the widely famous *La locandiera*, prose comedy of 1753). Giacinta, who earns her profit through honest labor, also speaks with candor and denounces the vanity of both the *borghese* Orazio, who aspires to gentlemanly state while greatly indebted, and of Lisaura, the noblewoman who has dissipated her holdings so completely as to be reduced to panhandling (but not any wiser for it) and entirely dependent on the generosity (or pomposity) of any *protettore* she can find. Unlike Griffo, who speaks in asides or alone, Giacinta does not shy from direct confrontation:

Non mi seccate. (...)
Sulla fiera in questo stato
non si viene a civettare. (*a Lisaura*)
Voglio dir quel che mi pare. (*ad Orazio*)
Vi dovrete vergognare, questa vita non si fa. (*a Lisaura*)
Siete ben accompagnati, due falliti, due spiantati, (*a tutti due*)
e la vostra falsità, no, non merita pietà. (*parte seguita da Orazio*)¹³²

In conclusion, *La fiera di Sinigaglia* is a markedly modern work both in realistic style and content, which offers a continual critique of contemporary and widespread social issues. The ancient class divisions appear by this point completely dismantled, and Goldoni's portrayal of corruption and vanity within the *borghesia* signals a new phase in his society and in his theatre. Much like *Il mercato di Malmantile*, the very setting of *La fiera di Sinigaglia*, anchored within the world of commerce, provides a fertile shared space for the manifestation of a large array of social types. The truthfulness and intelligence of those who are honest in their trade, thrown into direct comparison with those who,

132 *ibid.*, Act II, xiii. Don't bother me. You shouldn't be flirting like this at the market (*to Lisaura*). I want to tell you what I really think (*to Orazio*). You should be ashamed of yourself, this is no life to live (*to Lisaura*). You go very well together, two failures, and penniless (*to both*), and your falsehood, no, it merits no pity.

as Goldoni writes “...non se n’avvedono, si fan burlar” (don’t realize that they expose themselves to ridicule) allows for new, forward-looking ideals of integrity and social equality to surface, all the while taking Goldoni’s realist agenda to a higher level of efficacy.

The above-cited operas also exemplify how the artisanal world, since the 1750–51 season a central element of Goldoni’s prose comedies, appears with increasing frequency in Goldoni’s *drammi giocosi*. The realism inherent to this subject matter prompts Goldoni to revisit the merchant world in *L’amore artigiano* (Artisan Love, 1761, score by Gaetano Latilla), part of a trilogy with *L’amor contadino* (Country Love, 1760, score by Giovanni Battista Lampugnani in which again the simplicity of rural life is praised as an antidote to moral corruption) and *L’amore in caricatura* (Love in Caricature, 1761, score by Vincenzo Ciampi, another attack on the ceremonial, superficial pretenses of aristocratic protagonists). *L’amore artigiano* too revolves around a shared common space or *piazza*, in which different *botteghe* or ateliers are shown open and working concurrently:

Piazzetta come nelle scene antecedenti, colle botteghe aperte del fabro e del calzolaio e di più in mezzo la bottega aperta di legnaiuolo col banco fuori e varie tavole ed instrumenti di cotal arte. Fuori della bottega del fabro una picciola incudine e fuori di quella del calzolaio una pietra, su cui tali artisti sogliono battere il cuoio; di qua e di là le case come prima.¹³³

Perhaps it is no coincidence that this same realistic strategy, using a shared work space that permits the interaction of many, will be used by Goldoni for the signature opening of *Le baruffe chiozzotte* (The Quarrels in Chioggia, 1762), a famous prose comedy written just a few years later.

The opera furthermore contains an *arietta* in Venetian dialect (Act II), and furthers Goldoni’s newly moderated, disenchanted approach

133 Carlo Goldoni, *L’Amore artigiano*, Act I, xvii. Small piazza as in the previous scenes, with the smith and the cobbler shops open, and in addition the carpenter’s house between them, with a working table outside and various other tables with instruments of such trade. Outside the smith’s shop, a small anvil, and outside of the cobblers, a stone, on which these artists beat and soften the leather; here and there houses as before.

to the characterization of both *serio* and *buffo* roles. The artisans are humble people who serve the resident nobility, yet enter into discourse with the higher class in a new and direct manner, claiming the rights and dignity of their work over the capricious pretenses of their patrons. Rosina, a seamstress, speaks to a noblewoman in terms that hitherto would have been inconceivable:

Così mi tratta?
Una sarta par mio tratta così?
Sono stata una pazza a venir qui.
Servo le prime dame,
servo le cittadine
ed ho piena la casa
d'abiti di velluto e di broccato.
Altro che questo straccio rivoltato! (*strapazza il vestito*)

Ragazza, fanciulla
qual ella mi vede,
la testa mi frulla
più ch'ella non crede.
Si tenga signora
la sua nobiltà,
Rosina sartora
qui più non verrà. (*parte*)¹³⁴

At the same time, part of this working class is by no means immune to fallacy, as Goldoni also includes characters who suffer from the familiar temptation of wine and gambling and who behave with presumption. In a scene unlike any other in opera, newlyweds Rosina and Giannino, after a long, trying odyssey towards marriage and much poetic courtship, begin to vehemently argue over expenses as soon as they are pronounced man and wife, partially calling into question the traditional *lieto fine*. A secondary surprise in this regard is the elegant

134 *ibid.*, Act I, xiv. This is how you treat me? A seamstress of my caliber you treat like this? I was mad to come here. I serve the first ladies, and all the noblewomen, and my house is full of velvet and brocade gowns. Far from these pitiful rags! (*she crumples the gown*) (...) Maybe you see me as just a young girl, but my head is working more than you know. Keep your nobility, Madam, Rosina the seamstress will never come here again. (*exits*)

serio language used by Giannino, a carpenter (note the archaic allusions to death and to the burning of love):

Non posso riposar, non trovo loco,
cerco qualche ristoro alla frescura.
Ma dove i' vado porto meco il foco
ed è il mantice mio fra quelle mura.
(...)
Oh s'io potessi rinfrescarmi un poco
non morirei dall'amorosa arsura,
amore il tuo Giannin si raccomanda,
fagli vedere il sol da questa banda.¹³⁵

These lines are almost indistinguishable from those uttered by the true *parte seria*, Fabrizio. Again, Goldoni demonstrates that the distinction between *serio* and *buffo* has now moved beyond simple distinctions of class (ever more called into question), and has come to hinge instead upon the interior equilibrium and quality of conduct of the individual.

Finally, we come to the last noteworthy opera of Goldoni's Venetian years, the peculiar *La donna di governo* (The Governess, 1761, premiered in Rome, at the *Teatro Argentina*). Corallina, the *donna di governo* is labeled as a *parte buffa*, though her condition is hardly laughable. She is bound to a lover (Ridolfo) who spends his money and hers on the gambling table, and, unaccustomed to working, harbors other vices too: "Ha il giochetto e l'osteria, va la notte in compagnia,"¹³⁶ etc. Corallina is blind to his true nature, yet with the same lies and deceptions takes advantage of the elderly and wealthy Fabrizio. Fabrizio, for his foolishness, is also listed as a *parte buffa*, while his virtuous niece is instead a *seria*, though they share the same social condition. From Fabrizio, Corallina obtains gifts and attentions, but not yet satisfied

135 *ibid*, Act I, i. I cannot rest, I find no place, I search in vain for cool relief. Instead, wherever I go I bring with me the burning fire, and my bellows are behind those walls. (...) Oh, if only I could find refreshment, I would not die from the burning of love, love, Giannino entrusts himself to you, let him see the sun [the face of his beloved] before him.

136 Carlo Goldoni, *La Donna di Governo*, Act I, iii. He's got gambling, and the pubs, and spends the night in company...

also steals from his cellar, thereby providing for her lover Ridolfo, her widowed sister Lindora, and Moschino, a servant and accomplice. *La donna di governo* thus features a negative heroine, who creates grief for the *parti serie* yet remains unpunished thanks to the protection procured by her arts.

Attention to profit permeates the work. It is manifest in the actions of almost every character, and dispositions change in relation to circumstance, not to any moral compass. Even Lindora, who at first tries in good faith to alert her sister to Ridolfo's true nature, in little time transforms thanks to the promise of payment in exchange for her silence. Goldoni thereby creates a desolate panorama of superficiality and moral emptiness in which each maneuvers the affections of others to his own gain, such that even his social critique appears flattened by saturation.

Amidst the monotony of such corruption, some relief and stylistic variety is provided by the *parti serie*, who in this work display renewed adherence to their rightful moral foundation. Interestingly, it is not made explicit whether the *serio* characters have any claim to aristocratic heritage. All we know is that Rosalba's uncle is a *benestante* (a wealthy man). This, together with the fact that they are never addressed nor announced by any title within the work, would instead suggest their pertaining to the *borghesia* and not to the nobility.

This *serio* pair is the final tile in Goldoni's vast mosaic of social types. Having idealized and criticized commoners, nobles, and *borghesi* alike, Goldoni now assigns *serio* content to figures of realistic moral, social, and financial condition, and does this in the measure not of verses or single pieces as before, but over the entirety of their roles. The consistent characterization and reliable behavior of the *parti serie* is in fact even more exalted in its contrast to the changeability and inconsistency demonstrated by the others. On the textual level, the most noteworthy characteristic of these *parti serie* is the inclusion of elements of *larmoyant* and a penchant towards sentimentalism, present in the *arie* of both Rosalba and Fulgenzio her lover. To cite just one example, the following aria by Rosalba evokes true sympathy:

Sconsolata quest'alma dolente
solitaria fra taciti orrori
va spiegando coll'erbe e coi fiori

quell'affanno che strugge il mio cor.
Fuggo l'odioso aspetto
dell'ingrata famiglia.
Ogniun m'insulta,
mi tradisce ciascun.
Il zio medesimo
frutto del vile inganno
mio nemico si è reso e mio tiranno.¹³⁷

This *serio* piece combines elements of tragedy and despair with the dignity of a virtuous woman, and the bitter awareness of being the victim of deceit. It is a delicately balanced example of the new brand of *serio* that Goldoni has established through the course of his production, a style realistically moderated in tone and enhanced in its psychological immediacy.

Looking back over the production of his Venetian *drammi giocosi*, it is clear that Goldoni's mature style as manifest in Rosalba's aria has traveled a great distance from the Metastasian *serio* of *La scuola moderna*. At the end of more than a decade's work, he is able to create a nuanced, intimate illustration of emotional complexity hardly conceivable fifteen years earlier, the product of a lengthy and gradual process of creative experimentation. The attenuated contrast between *buffo* and *serio*, the new, realistic qualities of both dramatic types, and their synthesis in the *mezzo carattere*, have now matured in the *dramma giocoso* into the foundation of a decidedly modern and newly relevant opera theatre.

137 *ibid.*, Act III, i. Desolate, my sorrowful soul, solitary amongst tacit horrors, can confide to the meadows and flowers the torment that consumes my heart. I wish to flee the odious image of my ungrateful family. Each insults me, all betray me. My uncle himself, as a result of the vile deception, now has become my enemy, my tyrant.

