

ANTONIO CASCELLI

L'ORFEO: MEMORY, RECOLLECTION, AND THE TRAGEDY OF CHOOSING BETWEEN SEEING AND HEARING*

ABSTRACT

Nel contrasto fra vedere e sentire, al centro del mito di Orfeo, emerge la duplicità di memoria e ricordo, in termini aristotelici, consentendoci di riconsiderare il ruolo di Euridice ne *L'Orfeo* di Monteverdi. Quando Orfeo, in un momento di follia e di mancanza di memoria, si volge verso Euridice, sceglie la visibilità del vedere invece dell'audibilità del sentire. Il processo di recupero dei ricordi e della memoria, sollecitato dalla canzonetta *Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi*, si conclude con l'incapacità di Orfeo di trattenere l'oggetto del proprio amore e con il fallimento della musica. Al contrario, le parole di Euridice – *Ahi, vista troppo dolce* – allo sguardo di Orfeo, rivelano una connessione musicale a momenti passati. In questo modo, il suo canto diventa l'espressione del potere della musica, sperimentando una memoria musicale alla quale Orfeo non ha accesso.

PAROLE CHIAVE Monteverdi, Orfeo, Euridice, Dramma, Analisi.

SUMMARY

In the contrast between seeing and hearing at the centre of the myth of Orpheus, the duality of memory and recollection, in Aristotelian terms, emerges, allowing us to reconsider the role of Eurydice in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. When Orpheus, in a moment of frenzy and forgetfulness, turns back towards Eurydice he chooses the visibility of the eye over the audibility of the ear. The process of active recollection of the past, which he had initiated with the canzonetta *Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi*, ends with the failure of music and the inability to retain the object of his love. Conversely, Eurydice's words – *Ahi, vista troppo dolce* – after Orpheus looks at her, reveals a musical connection to past moments. In this way, her singing is the embodiment of the power of music and it creates a musical memory to which Orpheus does not have access.

KEYWORDS Monteverdi, Orfeo, Euridice, Drama, Analysis.



The contrast between seeing and hearing is at the centre of the Orpheus myth: by turning back towards Eurydice before leaving the underworld, Orpheus chooses the visibility of the eye over the audibility of the ear.¹ What starts as a celebration of the power of music and hearing succumbs to the power of the visual and seeing. However, no sooner does Orpheus surrender to the visual than Eurydice disappears. Seeing ultimately fails. For Peter Burian, «the tragic fate of Orpheus himself [in the version with the tragic ending] constitutes the source of continued discomfort for operatic versions, and that discomfort in turn leads to a series of fascinating innovations and variations».²

For Christine Buci-Glucksmann:

In returning to the Greek prephilosophical myths for his musical *Orfeo*, [...] Monteverdi located the music and the voices at the very border of the visible and the invisible, as a 'language' passageway toward the land of the non-seen. And unquestionably, one can discern from this the actual genealogy of vision that characterizes this hybrid genre, *drama in musica*. It is hybrid because the Voice must actually represent the text, 'make it visible' by hearing it, staging it, and embodying it.³

But if Orpheus's own turning back suggests the failure of music, the ending reveals a different scenario. Apollo's descent and consequent apotheosis of Orpheus in Monteverdi's 1609 score suggest:

His final redemption, his eyes opening to reality and its true significance [...] are translated in a highly spectacular and unreal heavenly apotheosis: a Platonic and Christian ascension rather than Aristotelian, maybe 'necessary' to eliminate every doubt about the 'moral' of the entire fable, and 'verisimilarly' conducted by Orpheus's father, who would have not been able to realise it without being a god, as great and influential as Apollo'.⁴

In this view, Eurydice's function is quite marginal, realising an anti-rhetoric appropriate to a virgin maid.⁵ For Ståle Wikshåland,⁶ *L'Orfeo* represents «the emergence of subjectivity on stage» and whereas a considerable part of his article focuses on Ariadne's and the Nymph's laments, there is no mention of the role of Eurydice. Other scholars, such as Mauro Calcagno,⁷ Bonnie Gordon⁸ and Joel Schwindt,⁹ do not discuss Eurydice's musical entries. Joachim

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their extremely helpful suggestions, though of course I am fully responsible for the way I developed them.

¹ BUCI-GLUCKSMANN, *The Madness of Vision* e-book version, location 144.

² BURIAN, *The Fate of Orpheus*, p. 52.

³ BUCI-GLUCKSMANN, *The Madness of Vision* e-book version, location 152.

⁴ LA VIA, *L'espressione dei contrasti fra madrigali e opera*, p. 57. Unless stated otherwise, translations into English are by the author of this article.

⁵ MCCLARY, *Costructions of Gender*, p. 215.

⁶ WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 231.

⁷ CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*.

⁸ GORDON, *Orfeo's Machines*.

⁹ SCHWINDT, *All that Glitters': Orpheus's Failure*.

Steinheuer¹⁰ mentions her very briefly. Stefano La Via states that Orpheus's apotheosis represents «the detachment from human passions, the conquest of harmony, of the real truthful virtue, of eternal life, of Eurydice herself».¹¹ For Karol Berger,

If Orpheus-Apollo is the creative artist, the nymph he pursues must be more than just an object of erotic desire; she must be the figure of artistic vision herself. This reading conceives the tragedy of Orpheus-Apollo as more than an amorous misadventure, framing it as the tragedy of an artist who comes close to capturing the vision he pursues, only to see it slip through his fingers at the instant of realization.¹²

The partial focus on Eurydice is certainly determined by the fact that the music assigned to her is minimal; however, in my view, she also contributes, like Orpheus, to «the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process»,¹³ in which «the ability to act and react, consciously and adequately, in a self-reflective manner, and thus become one's self» occupies the central role.¹⁴ It is in the contrast between seeing and hearing that one can reconsider Eurydice's role. She is not just the «figure of artistic vision itself»,¹⁵ she becomes a vital part of the body of the artist at work¹⁶ as her response to Orpheus's turning back – *Ahi, vista troppo dolce* – whilst making connections to previous sections, enacts a musical memory which Orpheus could not experience.

Among the major texts retelling the story of Orpheus, both Ovid's and Virgil's display a language rich in visual descriptions, entrusting the written words with the power to conjure up images in front of the reader's eyes; even the evocation of sounds filters through the words. The contrast between seeing and hearing is present, but the absence of music limits its significance. Orpheus's own singing and playing are not qualified with adjectives to the same extent as the other components of the scene. In Poliziano's, Rinuccini's and Striggio's texts, the descriptive language may be less pervasive, but the presence of music brings hearing to the foreground; sound does not need to be evoked by words, and the contrast between seeing and hearing becomes more significant.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Hymen is first «summoned by the voice of Orpheus, though all in vain» (*Orphea nequiquam voce vocatur*);¹⁷ «[S]inging [then] to the music of his lyre» (*ad carmina nervis / sic ait*)¹⁸ he addresses the gods of the underworld, depicted as «vast and silent realms».

¹⁰ STEINHEUER, *Orfeo*, pp. 367 and 372.

¹¹ LA VIA, *L'espressione dei contrasti fra madrigali e opera*, p. 55.

¹² BERGER, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow*, p. 29.

¹³ GREENBLATT, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 2; cited in WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, pp. 231-232.

¹⁴ WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 231.

¹⁵ BERGER, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow*, p. 29.

¹⁶ HALLENSLEBEN, *Performative Body Spaces*, p. 10.

¹⁷ OVID, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, line 3. English translation is by J.F. Miller.

¹⁸ OVID, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, lines 16.

[...] causa viae est coniunx, in quam calcata venenum
vipera diffudit crescentesque abstulit annos.
posse pati volui nec me temptasse negabo:
vicit Amor. supera deus hic bene notus in ora est;
an sit et hic, dubito; sed et hic tamen auguror esse,
famaque si veteris non est mentita rapinae,
vos quoque iunxit Amor. per ego haec loca plena timoris,
per Chaos hoc ingens vastique silentia regni,
Eurydices, oro, properata retexite fata!

[...] the cause of my journey is my wife, into whose body a trodden serpent shot his poison and so snatched away her budding years. I have desired strength to endure, and I will not deny that I have tried to bear it. But Love has overcome me, a god well known in the upper world, but whether here or not I do not know; and yet I surmise that he is known here as well, and if the story of that old-time ravishment is not false, you, too, were joined by Love. By these fearsome places, by this huge void and these vast and silent realms, I beg of you, unravel the fates of my Eurydice, too quickly run.¹⁹

The power of Orpheus's own speaking and singing is revealed through its effects, without any qualifier used specifically to refer to Orpheus's voice: «As he spoke thus, accompanying his words with the music of his lyre, the bloodless spirits wept» (*Talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem / exsanguis flebant animae*²⁰) and «Then first, tradition says, conquered by the song, the cheeks of the Eumenides were wet with tears» (*tunc primum lacrimis victarum carmine fama est / Eumenidum maduisse genas*).²¹

There is a stark contrast between Orpheus, accompanying himself with the lyre, and the «vast and silent realms»; Orpheus's powerful prayer touches the hearts of those who hear him, including the gods of the underworld who decide to summon Eurydice. Silence, associated with obscurity and difficulty, accompanies Eurydice and Orpheus towards the upper world. As he turns towards his bride, it is inevitable for Ovid to mention Orpheus's eyes; but when Eurydice disappears, she hardly says farewell, lost in a tentative hug.

Carpitur adclivis per muta silentia trames,
arduus, obscurus, caligine densus opaca,
nec procul afuerunt telluris margine summae:
hic, ne deficeret, metuens avidusque videndi
flexit amans oculos, et protinus illa relapsa est.
bracchiaque intendens prendique et prendere certans
nil nisi cedentes infelix arripit auras,
iamque iterum moriens non est de coniuge quicquam
questa suo (quid enim nisi se quereretur amatam?)
supremumque 'vale', quod iam vix auribus ille
acciperet, dixit revolutaque rursus eodem est.

¹⁹ OVID, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, lines 23-31.

²⁰ OVID, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, line 40.

²¹ OVID, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, 45-46.

They took the up-sloping path through places of utter silence, a steep path, indistinct and clouded in pitchy darkness. And now they were nearing the margin of the upper earth, when he, afraid that she might fail him, eager for sight of her, turned back his longing eyes; and instantly she slipped into the depths. He stretched out his arms, eager to catch her or to feel her clasp; but, unhappy one, he clasped nothing but the yielding air. And now, dying a second time, she made no complaint against her husband; for of what could she complain save that she was beloved? She spoke one last 'farewell' which scarcely reached her husband's ears, and fell back again to the place whence she had come.²²

In Virgil's version, Orpheus

ipse cava solans aegrum testudine amorem
te, dulcis coniunx, te solo in litore secum,
te veniente die, te decedente canebat.

But he, solacing an aching heart with music from his hollow shell, sang of you, dear wife, sang of you to himself on the lonely shore, of you as day drew nigh, of you as day departed.²³

The description of the underworld and the scene that Orpheus encounters are then conjured up rather vividly:

Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis,
et caligantem nigra formidine lucum
ingressus, Manisque adiit regemque tremendum
nesciaque humanis precibus mansuescere corda.

He even passed through the jaws of Taenarum, the lofty portals of Dis, the grove that is murky with black terror, and made his way to the land of the dead with its fearful king and hearts no human prayers can soften.²⁴

The reference then to the «insubstantial shades», «stirred by his song», is barely a suggestion of Orpheus's renowned power.

at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum,
quam multa in foliis avium se milia condunt,
Vesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber,
matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
magnanimum heroum [...]

Stirred by his song, up from the lowest realms of Erebus came the insubstantial shades, the phantoms of those who lie in darkness, as many as the myriads

²² OVID, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, lines 53-63.

²³ VIRGIL, *Georgics*, Book IV, lines 464-466. English translation is by H. Rushton

²⁴ VIRGIL, *Georgics*, Book IV, lines 467-470.

of birds that shelter among the leaves when evening or a wintry shower drives them from the hills – women and men, and figures of great-souled heroes [...].²⁵

Only when Eurydice walks behind Orpheus do we know that that is Proserpina's order; Orpheus, the incautious lover caught by a sudden moment of frenzy, unmindful, turns back and sees Eurydice disappear in the light.

Iamque pedem referens casus evaserat omnis,
redditaque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras,
pone sequens (namque hanc dederat Proserpina legem),
cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem,
ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes:
restitit, Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa
immemor heu! victusque animi respexit. ibi omnis
effusus labor atque immitis rupta tyranni
foedera, terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis.
illa 'quis et me' inquit 'miseram et te perditit, Orpheu,
quis tantus furor? en iterum crudelia retro
fata vocant conditque natantia lumina somnus.
iamque vale: feror ingenti circumdata nocte
invalidasque tibi tendens, heu! non tua, palmas.'
dixit et ex oculis subito, ceu fumus in auras
commixtus tenuis, fugit diversa, neque illum
prensantem nequiquam umbras et multa volentem
dicere praeterea vidit; nec portitor Orci
amplius obiectam passus transire paludem.

And now, as he retraced his steps, he had avoided all mischance, and the regained Eurydice was nearing the upper world, following behind – for that condition had Proserpina imposed – when a sudden frenzy seized Orpheus, unwary in his love, a frenzy meet for pardon, did Hell know how to pardon! He halted, and on the very verge of light, unmindful, alas, and vanquished in purpose, on Eurydice, now regained looked back! In that instant all his toil was spilt like water, the ruthless tyrant's pact was broken, and thrice a peal of thunder was heard amid the pools of Avernus. She cried: 'What madness, Orpheus, what dreadful madness has brought disaster alike upon you and me, poor soul? See, again the cruel Fates call me back, and sleep seals my swimming eyes. And now farewell! I am borne away, covered in night's vast pall, and stretching towards you strengthless hands, regained, alas! no more.' She spoke, and straightaway from his sight, like smoke mingling with thin air, vanished afar and saw him not again, as he vainly clutched at the shadows with so much left unsaid; nor did the ferryman of Orcus suffer him again to pass the barrier of the marsh.²⁶

In Poliziano's version, a stage direction in a printed copy from Bologna indicates that Orpheus is interrupted, while singing, by the shepherd who announces Eurydice's death («Orfeo, cantando sopra il monte in su la lyra [...]

²⁵ VIRGIL, *Georgics*, Book IV, lines 471-476.

²⁶ VIRGIL, *Georgics*, Book IV, lines 485-503.

fu interrotto da uno Pastore nunciatore della morte de Euridice»²⁷ The manuscript from Florence, after such news, has no stage direction, whereas the printed copy from Bologna indicates that Orpheus bemoans Eurydice's death («Orfeo si lamenta per la morte di Euridice»²⁸ Orpheus's opening words are *Dunque piangiamo, o sconsolata lira* (*Thus let's cry, disconsolate lyre*); even in the absence of the stage direction it is obvious that Orpheus is lamenting the loss of Eurydice. It is not clear, however, whether lamenting is part of singing or speaking. In the printed copy, two octaves later, the stage direction states that «Orpheus reaches the underworld whilst singing» («Orpheo cantando giunge allo Inferno»²⁹ followed by the octave *Pietà! Pietà! del misero amatore* (*Mercy! mercy! of the miserable lover*). The Florence manuscript, for example, does not give this stage direction. Pirrotta believes that the indication that Orpheus is singing, whilst approaching the underworld, should also refer to the «two preceding stanzas (lines 198-213) which are the first expression of Orpheus's grief. In them he turns to his lyre and asks it for a new form of song».³⁰ Orpheus indeed addresses his lyre, but he is asking the lyre to cry with him, «because the old song is not appropriate». I am not sure it is a request for a new song. It could be a sign that he has momentarily stopped singing. In this section he is talking to himself and is wondering what he should do and if maybe, together with the lyre, he will be able to «soften the harsh fate with sorrowful verses, oh sweet lyre», as they, whilst singing, already moved a stone, brought together the deer and the tiger, and changed the course of the rivers, which are clear references to past events. The sorrowful verses – indeed the appropriate new song – accompanied by the lyre, start with *Pietà! Pietà! del misero amatore* (lines 165).

Dunque piangiamo, o sconsolata lira,
ché più non si convien l'usato canto.
Piangiam mentre che 'l ciel ne' poli agira,
e Philomela ceda al nostro pianto.
O cielo, o terra, o mare! o sorte dira!
Come potrò soffrir mai dolor tanto?

Thus let's cry, disconsolate lyre
because the old song is not appropriate.
Let's cry, whilst the sky moves around
and Philomela gives up to our tears.
Oh heaven, oh earth, oh sea! Oh terrible fate!
How will I suffer so much pain?

²⁷ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 174. In the numerous extant manuscripts of Poliziano's *La fabula di Orfeo*, stage directions are among the least consistent elements. According to Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, manuscripts in Mantua (Biblioteca Comunale, A.iv.30), Florence (Biblioteca Riccardiana 2723) and London (British Library, Add. 16438) have a limited number of stage directions, often only the name of the characters. Other manuscripts, in Padua (Biblioteca del Seminario, ms.116), London (British Library, Add. 16439), Vatican City (Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, Capp.193) and the printed copy from Bologna (Platone de Benedetti, 1494) have more detailed stage directions. In preparation of the critical edition, Tissoni Benvenuti uses the manuscript from Florence as the basis for the original text. For the text of the subsequent theatrical versions, she uses the printed copy from Bologna. For a complete discussion of the stemmatic relationship between the various manuscripts, printed editions, and stage directions, see TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, pp. 11-57.

²⁸ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 176.

²⁹ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 177.

³⁰ PIRROTTA, *Music and Theatre*, p. 24.

Euridice mia bella, o vita mia,
 senza te non convien che 'n vita stia.

Andar conviemmi alle tartaree porte
 e provar se là giù merzé s'impetra.
 Forse che svolgeren la dura sorte
 co' lagrimosi versi, o dolce cetra;
 forse ne diverrà piatosa Morte,
 ché già cantando habbiam mosso una petra,
 la cervia e 'l tigre insieme habbiamo acolti
 e tirate le selve, e' fiumi svolti.

Pietà! Pietà! del misero amatore
 pietà vi prenda, o spiriti infernali!
 Qua giù m'ha scorto solamente Amore:
 volato son qua giù colle sue ali.
 Posa, Cerbero, posa il tuo furore,
 ché quando intenderai tutti e' mie' mali
 non solamente tu piangerai meco,
 ma qualunque è qua giù nel mondo cieco.

My beautiful Eurydice, oh my life,
 without you I cannot be alive any more.

I must go to the gates of Tartarus
 and see if down there it is possible to find mercy.
 Maybe we will soften the harsh fate
 with sorrowful verses, oh sweet lyre;
 maybe Death will become pitiful,
 as whilst singing we have already moved a stone,
 we brought together the deer and tiger
 we folded the woods and changed the course of the rivers.

Mercy! Mercy! of the miserable lover
 may mercy take you, oh infernal spirits!
 Down here Love alone escorted me:
 I flew down here with his wings.
 Put down, Cerberus, your furore,
 because when you will know my ill fate,
 not only you, but whoever is down here
 in the sightless world will cry with me.³¹

The printed version has a series of stage directions indicating that «Pluto, filled with wonder, speaks» («Pluto, pieno di meraviglia, dice»)³². He starts, «Who is this who with such a sweet note moves the abyss, and with the adorned lyre?» («Chi è costui che con sì dolce nota / muove l'abisso, e con l'ornata cetra?»).³³ Orpheus, kneeling, presents his case by talking («Orpheo genuflexo a Plutone dice così»)³⁴; then, convinced by Proserpina, Pluto renders Eurydice back. At the crucial moment, only the stage directions, both in the Florence manuscript and in the printed copy, mention that Orpheus is singing some happy songs by Ovid («Orpheo ritorna, redempta Euridice, cantando certi versi alegri che sono de Ovidio accommodati al proposito»);³⁵ Eurydice then complains for being pulled away («Euridice si lamenta con Orpheo per esserli tolta sforzatamente»)³⁶. The final parting happens because of too much love; like in Ovid's and Virgil's versions, the attention is towards the failed hug.

Oimè, che 'l troppo amore
 n'ha desfacti ambe dua!
 Ecco ch'ì ti son tolta a gran furore
 né sono ormai più tua.
 Ben tendo a te le braccia, ma non vale,
 ché 'ndrieto son tirata. Orpheo mio, vale!

Alas, too much love
 defeated both of us!
 You now lose me with great furore
 and I am not yours any more.
 I stretch my arms towards you, but with no use
 because I am pulled backwards. My Orpheus, farewell!³⁷

³¹ Poliziano, in TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, lines 149-172, pp. 151-152.

³² TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 177.

³³ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, lines 181-182, p. 177.

³⁴ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 178.

³⁵ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 180.

³⁶ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 180.

³⁷ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, lines 245-250, p. 180.

One very important element in Poliziano's version, is how Thyrsis describes Eurydice to Mopso and the young shepherd Aristeo. It is then, in the attempt to escape Aristeo, that Eurydice will be bitten by a snake. The reference to Eurydice's ability to speak and sing «with sweet words/so that the rivers would turn back towards their source», underlies a quality of Eurydice that makes her similar to Orpheus, with whom she shares the power of music. Orpheus himself, in fact, before starting to sing whilst approaching the underworld, remembers how his singing managed to alter the course of the rivers (see the extract *Thus let's cry, disconsolate lyre* discussed above).

Ma io ho vista una gentil donzella che va cogliendo fiori intorno al monte. I' non credo che Venere sia più bella, più dolce in acto o più superba in fronte: e parla e canta in sì dolce favella ch'è fiumi svolgerebbe inverso el fonte; di neve e rose ha il volto e d'or la testa, tutta soletta, e sotto bianca vesta	But I have seen a gentle girl who goes picking flowers around the mountain. I do not think that Venus is more beautiful, sweeter in her actions and prouder in her self-control: she speaks and sings with so sweet words so that the rivers would turn back towards their source; her face is like snow and roses; her head like gold, she is alone, and wearing a white dress. ³⁸
---	---

In Rinuccini's libretto, Venus invites Orpheus, on the threshold of the underworld, to «look around and see the sombre fields and the fatal city» («Rimira intorno, e vedi / gl'oscuri campi, e la Città fatale»)³⁹ and then she encourages him to «send forth your noble song / to the sound of your golden lyre, / all that Death seized from you dwells here, / pray, sigh and implore / perhaps it may be that those gentle tears / that moved Heaven may also sway Hell». («Sciogli il tuo nobil canto / al suon dell'aureo legno, / quanto morte t'ha tolto ivi dimora, / prega sospira, e plora / forse avverrà, che quel soave pianto / che mosso ha il Ciel pieghi l'Inferno ancora»)⁴⁰ It is almost as if seeing and hearing were part of the same spectrum of experiences, the absence of the stars and the sun is the equivalent of empty reverberation: «Baneful shores, shadowed horrible fields / that have never beheld the sparkle and fire / of the stars or of the Sun, / reverberate now in sorrow to the sounds of my anguished words, while in sad accents I lament my lost love with you» («Funeste piaggie ombrosi orridi campi, / che di Stelle, o di Sole / non vedeste giamai scintill'è lampi, / rimbombate dolente / al suon dell'angosciose mie parole, / mentre con mesti accenti / il perduto mio ben con voi sospiro»)⁴¹

Orpheus appeals to the same connection between seeing and hearing when pleading to Pluto: the serene rays, the eyes, the suffering heart, the sound of the voice and the soul, belong to the one experience of love.

Deh se la bella diva, che per l'accesso monte mosse a fuggirti in van ritrosa, e schiva sempre ti scopra, e giri	Ah, if that fair goddess, Stubborn and untamed, who tried to escape from you through the volcano, if she still unveils and turns upon you
---	--

³⁸ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, lines 104-111, pp. 172.

³⁹ RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice*, p. 9. English translation in RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice* (Lockwood trans.), p. 77.

⁴⁰ RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice*, p. 9; RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice* (Lockwood trans.), p. 77.

⁴¹ RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice*, p. 9; RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice* (Lockwood trans.), p. 77.

<p>sereni i rai de la celeste fronte, vagliami il dolce canto di questa nobil cetra, ch'io ricovri da te la Donna mia; l'alma deh rendi a questo sen dolente, rendi a quest'occhi il desiato Sole, a queste orecchie il suono rendi delle dolcissime parole; o me raccogli ancora tra l'ombre spente, ov'il mio ben dimora.⁴²</p>	<p>the serene rays of her heavenly eyes, then maybe the sweet song of this noble lyre cause you to return my Lady to me. Ah surrender her soul to this suffering heart, grant these eyes the sun that they so desire, grant these ears the sound of her words so sweet; or receive me as well amongst the dead shades where my beloved dwells.⁴³</p>
---	--

When Orpheus rejoices because he can bring Eurydice back, the resounding joy of the forests and the hill replaces the empty resonance of the underworld, because «my fair sun has risen again, decked with rays, and her fair eyes, Delos' shame, they double the soul's ardour and the daylight, making earth and heaven the slaves of Love» («Risorto è il mio bel Sol di raggi adorno, / e co begl'occhi onde fa scorno a Delo, / raddoppia foco all'alme, e luce al giorno / e fa servi d'amor la terra, e 'l Cielo»).⁴⁴ The absence of the sun/eye and the stars causes empty reverberation; the risen sun and eyes instil a booming joy. Rinuccini, however, does not make an issue of the joint venture of the eyes and the ears because the gods of the underworld did not forbid Orpheus to look back; the straightforward happy ending is in fact the appropriate solution, considering the wedding festivities that occasioned the performance of the opera.⁴⁵

It is in Striggio and Monteverdi's version of the myth that the confrontation between the eyes and the ears is clearly presented as a theme. There are two moments that mark this aspect: *Rosa del ciel* and Eurydice's second disappearance.

Rosa del ciel contains several references to seeing, and the appeal to Apollo as the sun, expression of maximum light, coincides with Orpheus's happiness when he first sees Eurydice.⁴⁶ There is no reference to singing and music-making; though the aria was solicited by the Shepherd, who asked Orpheus to sing some happy song, dictated by Love. The moment when a verb gains a strong active role is with Orpheus inviting the sun to say («dimmi») if he has seen anyone as happy as him. Throughout *Rosa del ciel* there is a full alignment between the eye and singing, which emerges through a very emotional progression from the more recitative/arioso sections, in which Orpheus addresses

⁴² RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice*, p. 10.

⁴³ RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice* (Lockwood trans.), p. 81.

⁴⁴ RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice*, p. 14; RINUCCINI, *L'Euridice* (Lockwood trans.), p. 99.

⁴⁵ See also RUSSANO-HANNING, *Of Poetry and Music's Power*, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁶ In Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's staging of the scene with Nikolaus Harnoncourt as conductor (1978), for example, Orpheus looks at Eurydice's face when he is addressing the «Rosa del ciel», though the shepherd holds the lyre between the two characters. Only at the words «Sol, che'l tutto circondi» does he move his eyes away from Eurydice and with his arm's gesture indicates the vastness of «gli stellanti giri».
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3MsbVIVvHs>>, accessed 26 October 2018.

the sun and then Eurydice, to the final song-like section, which gives full expression to the demigod's happiness. Regardless of the adjectives we could use to describe Orpheus at this stage (sexy and confident as McClary and Kurtzman write),⁴⁷ his singing shows rhetorical and musical power.

Rosa del ciel, vita del mondo e degna
prole di lui che l'universo affrena,
Sol che 'l tutto circondi e 'l tutto miri,
da gli stellanti giri
dimmi vedesti mai
di me più lieto e fortunato Amante?
Fu ben felice il giorno
mio ben, che pria ti vidi,
e più felice l'ora
che per te sospirai,
poi ch'al mio sospirar tu sospirasti.
Felicissimo il punto
che la candida mano,
pegno di pura fede à me porgete.
Se tanti cori havessi
quantocch'ha il ciel eterno, e quante chiome
han questi colli ameni il verde maggio,
tutti colmi sarieno e traboccanti
di quel piacer ch'oggi mi fa contento.⁴⁸

Rose of heaven, life of the world and worthy
offspring of him, who governs the universe,
Sol, you who encompass all, behold all,
from the star-strewn orbits of the sky,
tell me, have you ever seen
a happier and more fortunate lover than I?
Most happy was the day,
my love, when I first beheld you,
and even happier the hour
when I first sighed for you,
for to my sighing, you, too, sighed.
Happiest of all the moment
when your white hand
in pledge of pure faith you stretch out to me.
Had I as many hearts
as the eternal sky has eyes and as many fronds
of leaves these hills in the verdant month of May,
all of them would now be full and overflowing
with the joy that today renders me so happy.⁴⁹

At the other extreme, Eurydice's second disappearance reveals Orpheus's mistrust of his own singing. Wrapped up in doubt, he asks himself: «But as I sing, alas! Who assures me that she follows me?».⁵⁰ Of the various versions of the story we have considered, this is the only one in which Orpheus explicitly expresses his doubts.

ORFEO
Ma mentre io canto (oimè) chi m'assicura
ch'ella mi segua? Oimè chi mi nasconde
de l'amate pupille il dolce lume?
Forse d'invidia punte
le deità d'Averno
perch'io non sia qua giù felice a pieno,
mi tolgono il mirarvi
luci beate e liete
che sol col sguardo altrui bear potete?
Ma che temi mio core?
Ciò che vieta Plutone comanda Amore.
[...]
O dolcissimi lumi, io pur vi veggio,
io pur: ma qual ecliss oimè v'oscura?
[...]

ORPHEUS
But as I sing, alas! Who assures me
that she follows me? Alas, who conceals from me
the sweet light of her adored eyes?
Perchance, stung by envy,
the divinities of Avernus,
to ensure that I be not entirely happy on earth,
deprive me of your sight,
blessed and joyous lights,
that with a single glance may bring bliss to anyone?
But what do you fear, my heart?
What Pluto forbids, Love commands.
[...]
Oh, sweetest looks, indeed I behold you,
indeed I: but what eclipse, alas, enshrouds you?
[...]

⁴⁷ MCCLARY, *Costructions of Gender*, p. 208, and Kurtzman in KURTZMAN, *Deconstructing Gender*, section 7.1 respectively depict it.

⁴⁸ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, pp. 117-119. English translation of the libretto is by D. Yeld.

⁵⁰ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 137.

EURIDICE

Ahi, vista troppo dolce e troppo amara:
così per troppo amor dunque mi perdi?⁵¹

EURYDICE

Ah, vision at once too sweet and too bitter:
thus, out of excess of love must you lose me?⁵²

No one can give Orpheus any reassurance. Believing love is more powerful than Pluto, he chooses the visibility of love over the invisibility of hearing. But we know the result, and Eurydice's verse sums up the failure: «Ah, vision at once too sweet and too bitter: thus out of excess of love must you lose me?».⁵³ After this, the daylight, metaphor for vision, becomes loathsome to Orpheus who is dragged towards the exit against his will.

To understand the transition from *Rosa del ciel* to «Chi m'assicura / ch'ella mi segua» and before discussing Eurydice's role and music, we need to return to *Possente spirto* as the section in which the misalignment between seeing and hearing, between Orpheus's own identity and power, starts. *Possente spirto*'s placing in the opera is ambiguous, either as a «'musical argument' in reply to Giovanni Artusi's criticism of modern music» or a suggestion «that the work itself serves as a 'hymn' to music's greatness».⁵⁴ The moment, which should display Orpheus's rhetorical power, is successful only because Charon, unmoved by Orpheus's plea, falls asleep. For Schwindt:

As an oration that fails as a result of the speaker's attempt to substitute stylistic brilliance for argumentative substance, the musical exhibition of Monteverdi's setting becomes an illustration par excellence of the protagonist's attempt to sway his judge with a barrage of musical 'delights', rather than a triumphant display of music's expressive power.⁵⁵

That is, in the framework of the Ciceronian aims of rhetoric – *docere, movere, delectare* – *Possente spirto* fails because there is a misalignment of the three goals: the excessive attention to the musical 'delight' hides the moral value of the speech, which does not teach properly and causes a problem of communication.⁵⁶ In line therefore with the *Accademia degli Invaghiti*, Orpheus is the foolish orator who cannot control his youthful enthusiasm⁵⁷ and only through the intervention of his «spiritual father, [who] reminds him of his excesses» can he be rewarded with the eternal image of his beloved: «Nel sole e nelle stelle / vagheggerai le sue sembianze belle».⁵⁸

Considering the distinction between the deictic and the symbolic fields in theatrical language, Orpheus does make a rather unique use, and non-use, of the pronoun 'io', the principal deictic word which points to the body of the

⁵¹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, pp. 28-29.

⁵² MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 137.

⁵³ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 137.

⁵⁴ SCHWINDT, 'All that Glisters': *Orpheus's Failure*, pp. 242-243.

⁵⁵ SCHWINDT, 'All that Glisters': *Orpheus's Failure*, p. 244.

⁵⁶ SCHWINDT, 'All that Glisters': *Orpheus's Failure*, pp. 240-241.

⁵⁷ SCHWINDT, 'All that Glisters': *Orpheus's Failure*, p. 268.

⁵⁸ BURIAN, *The Fate of Orpheus*, pp. 56-57. «In the sun and in the stars / You will look lovingly upon their fair images», MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 141.

performer onstage, «who transforms the empty sign from a virtual into a concrete entity, generating what I term a *presence effect*».⁵⁹ In the fourth stanza, Orpheus states: «Orfeo son io che d'Euridice i passi / seguio per queste tenebrose arene» («It is I, Orpheus, who Eurydice's steps am following through these dark deserts»⁶⁰). For Calcagno this is Orpheus's «most powerful assertion of subjectivity».⁶¹ Indeed, the use of the pronoun 'io' reveals a considerable deictic power, but how does this compare to other moments in the opera when the pronoun 'io' is used?⁶² The first example is from the prologue, of which «Orfeo son io» is clearly an echo.⁶³ In the prologue's second and third stanzas, both starting with the pronoun 'io', La Musica presents herself by describing and commenting on her own power («Io la Musica son ch'ai dolci accenti / so far tranquillo ogni turbato core» and «Io su Cetera d'or cantando soglio»,⁶⁴; «I am Music, who, with sweet accents, / can appease all troubled hearts,» and «Singing to a golden lyre, it is my wont»,⁶⁵). The next instance is Eurydice's response to Orpheus's *Rosa del ciel*. Whereas Orpheus does not explicitly use the pronoun 'io', Eurydice starts with «Io non dirò».⁶⁶ The negative form of the verb initially contradicts and lessens the presence effect established by the pronoun, but it is only a rhetorical strategy to say that she is indeed very happy; she finds a way to present herself quite assertively within society's expectations for such a young girl.

Returning to *Possente spirto*, there is a vivid balance between what Bühler terms *deixis am phantasma* – when the deictic words indicate someone who is physically absent – and *demonstratio ad oculos* – when 'you' and 'I' are in front of each other.⁶⁷ On the one hand, Orpheus stages the absence of his own material self and, on the other, he tries to conjure up Eurydice's body notwithstanding her physical absence. Likewise, the balance between seeing, not seeing, and music is very fragile.

Possente spirto e formidabil nume,
senza cui far passaggio a l'altra riva
alma da corpo sciolta in van presume;

Mighty spirit and formidable god,
without whom a soul shorn of its body
to gain passage to the other shore presumes in vain

⁵⁹ CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 41. Calcagno takes the distinction between deictic and symbolic fields from BÜHLER, *Theory of Language*. The deictic field includes those words that point towards the speaker and that highlight the temporal and spatial dimensions of any of his/her utterances, such as personal pronouns, temporal and spatial adverbs ('I', 'today', and 'there'). The symbolic field includes words (names and adjectives) that qualify the world as the object of the speaker's utterances. CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, pp. 42-44.

⁶⁰ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p.131.

⁶¹ CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 40.

⁶² As Calcagno also reminds us, since in Italian 'io' could be omitted without compromising the verb, its specific use acquires strong significance in relation to the presence effect, as the word pointing to the body of the speaker. CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 43.

⁶³ CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 40.

⁶⁴ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 115.

⁶⁶ See also SEGELL, *Striggio-Monteverdi's L'Orfeo*, e-book, location 718.

⁶⁷ See CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 48.

Non viv' io nò che poi di vita è priva
mia cara sposa il cor non è piu' meco,
e senza cor com'essere può ch'io viva?

I no longer live, for, since my dear spouse
has been deprived of life, my heart is no longer with me
and without a heart, how can I be alive?

A lei volt'ho'l camin per l'aer cieco
al inferno non già ch'ovunque stassi
tanta bellezza il Paradiso ha seco.

To her I have made my way through the sightless air,
and not to Hell, for wherever there is
such beauty as hers, there is Paradise

Orfeo son io, che d'Euridice i passi
seguo per queste tenebrose arene,
dove giamai per huom mortal non vassi.

It is I, Orpheus, who Eurydice's steps
am following through these dark deserts,
where no mortal has ever set foot.

O de le luci mie luci serene,
s'un vostro sguardo può tornarmi in vita,
ahi chi niega il conforto a le mie pene.

O, serene light, the light of my eyes,
if a single glance from you can restore life to me,
ah, who would deny me comfort to my pain?

Sol tu nobile Dio puoi darmi aita,
nè temer dei, che sopra un'aurea Cetra
sol di corde soave armo le dita,
contra cui rigid'alma in van s'impetra.⁶⁸

You alone, noble god, can grant me succour,
nor should you fear, for, upon a golden lyre
my fingers are armed only with soft sounding strings
against which an inflexible heart hardens itself in vain.⁶⁹

In the first tercet, «alma da corpo sciolta in van presume» is almost more important than Orpheus's flattering address towards Charon as «possente spirto e formidabil nume». Orpheus knows only a bodiless soul can get Charon's permission to pass to the other shore, so in pleading his case, he is pretending to have no body. He is able to say 'io' in the second tercet, not to express his power as La Musica did in the prologue, but to suggest that he is dead (using the same trope of the heart in possession of the lover that Eurydice used in her response to *Rosa del ciel*). The third tercet is suspended between the sightless air, questioning the possibility of seeing, and Paradiso, which is the place for eternal vision and beauty. In the fourth tercet, he reveals his identity, «Orfeo son io», to explain that he is following his wife's steps through the dark deserts of the underworld. Once more there is no statement about his own power, apart from the reference that he is stepping into a world «ove già mai per huom mortal non vassi». The fifth tercet references to the power of seeing, but the question «Ahi, chi niega il conforto a le mie pene?», repeated twice, is rather striking, because in that fictional moment, the answer is that Charon is the one who denies Orpheus his comfort, but we know that ultimately Orpheus is his own obstacle and will experience the failure of the eyes. The last tercet and the concluding verse are the only moment when the idea of the power of music emerges, but, since it is not connected to the pronoun 'io', it lacks the assertive power of «Io la Musica son».

For Gary Tomlinson, *Possente spirto* is a «concerting showpiece»;⁷⁰ Wikshåland⁷¹ describes it as «embellished to the limits of the capacity of human

⁶⁸ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 131.

⁷⁰ TOMLINSON, *Madrigal, Monody*, p. 66.

⁷¹ WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 227.

voice». It certainly requires significant vocal skills, what I would call external performance level; but how does it relate to the internal and fictional levels of performance? Wikshåland states that in *L'Orfeo*,

the rhetoric does not (necessarily) make the plot more transparent: it seems to make it more opaque, because it draws attention to itself as song, not as plot. In *L'Orfeo*, however, the quality of the singing is just the point of the plot. The fascination exerted by the singing voices thus turns out to work together with the fascination exerted by the drama, both of them serving the opera's end. [...] We are invited to indulge in Orpheus's pathos, admire his rhetorical skills, and grasp the plot's dramatic points, all simultaneously.⁷²

'We', as the audience, can indulge in Orpheus's pathos from the outside; we react to the external level of performance. What about the other characters onstage, particularly Charon? In its ornamented version, *Possente spirto* is an example of the passionate singing described by Caccini in the preface to *Le nuove musiche*.⁷³ The similarity between *Possente spirto*'s individual passages and Caccini's examples is evident (Examples 1 and 2).⁷⁴ The difference lies in the extent to which Monteverdi applies these melodic flourishes. Caccini never compromises the intelligibility of the spoken lines; if we look at his *Ardi, cor mio* from *Le nuove musiche* and compare it to the simplified version (from Brussels, Ms. 704:77; Example 3), he limits the most elaborate diminutions to one word and within that word ('ardi') just on one syllable.

Example 1. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act III, *Possente spirto*⁷⁵

The image shows two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The first system's vocal line begins with the lyrics 'A lei' and features a highly ornamented melody with many sixteenth notes. The bass line has a single long note. The second system's vocal line begins with the lyrics 'vol - t'ho - il - ca - min' and also features a highly ornamented melody. The bass line has a single long note.

⁷² WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 230.

⁷³ CACCINI, *Le nuove musiche*, pp. 4-12.

⁷⁴ All examples from Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* are taken from the Bärenreiter Urtext – Vocal Score: MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini. I omitted, however, the realisation of the harmonies.

⁷⁵ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 133-136, p. 60.

Example 2. Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*⁷⁶

Par

to

Example 3. Caccini, *Ardi cor mio*, from *Le nuove musiche* print edition (1601/2) and from Brussels, Ms.704:77⁷⁷

Caccini, 1602

Ar di ar - di cor mi o che

Simplified version - Brussel, Ms. 704:77

non fu vi - sta ma - i flam - ma di piu bei - ra

i ar

di ar - di cor mi - o che'l fo - co che t'in

⁷⁶ CACCINI, *Le nuove musiche*, p. 9; cited in TOFT, *With Passionate Voice*, p. 235.

⁷⁷ CACCINI, *Le nuove musiche*, p. 28; in TOFT, *With Passionate Voice*, p. 239.

Instead, Monteverdi treats the text in a more extreme manner. Ornaments occur equally on tonic and non-tonic syllables, main nouns ('alma', 'corpo'), adjectives ('tanta'), prepositions ('da'), on a single syllable in one word ('alma') and on two syllables of the same word as in 'formidabil', 'nume', 'corpo', 'altra', 'Orfeo' and others. In theatrical terms, here we have foregrounding and de-familiarisation: «An unexpected usage suddenly forces the listener or reader to take note of the utterance itself, rather than continue his automatic concern with its 'content'». ⁷⁸ There is a distancing of the semantic content of the words, which are «made 'strange' rather than automatic, the spectator is encouraged to take note of the semiotic means, to become aware of the sign-vehicle and its operations. [...] 'From something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking and unexpected'». ⁷⁹ Does this alter the linearity and intelligibility of the text in the fictional framework? Is Charon able to understand what Orpheus is saying? We do know that he is unmoved.

<p>Ben mi lusinga alquanto dilettandomi il core sconsolato cantore il tuo piant'el tuo canto. Ma lunge, ah lunge sia da questo petto, pietà di mio valor non degno affetto.⁸⁰</p>	<p>I am indeed rather charmed, my heart delighted, disconsolate singer, by your plaints and your song. but far, ah far from this breast be pity, a sentiment unworthy of my status.⁸¹</p>
--	--

What Charon hears is therefore 'pianto' and 'canto', crying and singing.⁸² Already Poliziano had distinguished between 'lamento' and 'canto': the former in relation to when Orpheus bemoans Eurydice's death and refers to the old song as inappropriate; the latter, immediately after the lament, when Orpheus approaches the underworld. How do we understand them in the context of the Striggio-Monteverdi rendering of the story? Do they suggest that Orpheus was crying whilst singing? Is his singing a representation of crying? If we step outside the action, 'pianto' and 'canto' indicate two different vocal expressions from the physical point of view, to the extent that one excludes the other: if I am crying, I cannot meaningfully talk, let alone sing; if I am singing, I need to push the tears back and exert a strong physical control over my vocal cords. Of course, in music, it is common to understand 'canto' as a representation of 'pianto'; there are many examples of this throughout music history. But is that the case here? In the context like that of early operas where librettists are very careful in using verbs to show the differences between song and recitative (the former indicated with 'to sing', the latter with 'to speak', or verbs in similar semantic fields),⁸³ maybe 'pianto' and 'canto' signal two distinctive moments in Orpheus's arioso as perceived by Charon and, consequently, by the audience. I would suggest that 'pianto' refers to the highly embellished part and

⁷⁸ ELAM, *The Semiotics of Theatre*, p. 15.

⁷⁹ ELAM, *The Semiotics of Theatre*, pp. 15-16, quoting BRECHT, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 143.

⁸⁰ MONTEVERDI *L'Orfeo*, p. 21.

⁸¹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 131.

⁸² On what Charon hears, see also STEINHEUER, *Orfeo*, p. 396.

⁸³ In this regard see CARTER, «*In questo lieto e fortunato giorno*», pp. 29-42.

‘canto’ refers to the section where Orpheus sings in the more traditional way; in the ‘pianto’ the words are ‘defamiliarised’ and the perlocutionary act⁸⁴ fails completely. For this reason, singers who are not well versed in Italian articulation tend not to have pronunciation problems here (where the unity of many words is lost). However, a section like *Rosa del ciel*, the aria in which Orpheus shows his rhetorical power at his best in both its illocutionary⁸⁵ and perlocutionary acts, the articulation of Italian words in their full linear sequences becomes problematic.⁸⁶ Hence, in the pianto section, on the one hand, highly embellished words become easy-to-pronounce syllables, but they reduce the level of communication with Charon to a minimum; on the other hand, a few words, more clearly intelligible, emerge almost like ‘parole sceniche’, words able to attract the dramatic weight of the scene by creating a space, like the word ‘riva’ (shore), or suggesting that Orpheus’s soul is ‘sciolta’ from his body, and so on, so we have ‘priva’, ‘sposa’, ‘meco’, ‘viva’, ‘cieco’, ‘stassi’, ‘bellezza’ and so on. Yet Charon may not be able to catch their significance in their full discursive structure and, confused or not convinced by the ‘pianto’ and the ‘canto’, he falls asleep.

As Schwindt notices,⁸⁷ this oratorical moment shows a misalignment between the barrage of embellishment details and the expected moral teaching. There is therefore a sense of disconnection and disembodiment that further highlights Orpheus’s attempt to present himself as without body. The way he pronounces his own name is indicative of this (Example 4): lost in the rich diminution in addition to the rhetorical mistake, as Schwindt writes, of «placing his self-aggrandising statements, beginning with ‘I am Orpheus’, at the climactic centre of his speech, rather than the moral instruction that should have served as the justifications of his plea».⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Perlocutionary is the act «performed by means of saying something, such as persuading someone to do something, convincing one’s interlocutor, moving him to anger or to compassion». ELAM, *The Semiotics of Theatre*, p. 142; referring to John L. Austin’s theory of language.

⁸⁵ Illocutionary is «the act performed in saying something, such as asking a question, ordering someone to do something, promising, asserting the truth of a proposition, etc. (It is the ‘illocution’ which constitutes the speech act proper)». ELAM, *The Semiotics of Theatre*, p. 142.

⁸⁶ Two examples of the difficulty of fully articulating Italian words in this section are: Charles Daniels in the latest Andrew Parrot recording of *L’Orfeo* (MONTEVERDI, *L’Orfeo*, dir. Parrot), and Ian Bostridge with Emmanuele Haïm (MONTEVERDI, *L’Orfeo*, dir. Haïm).

⁸⁷ SCHWINDT, *All that Glisters’: Orpheus’s Failure*, p. 244.

⁸⁸ SCHWINDT, *All that Glisters’: Orpheus’s Failure*, p. 267.

Example 4. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act III, *Possente spirto*⁸⁹

The disembodiment of Orpheus as a character allows a contrast with the composer and the body of the performer to emerge. The physical demands of these diminutions might render the plot opaque, but, as Cusick says, they make the

performers [...] receivers of meaning. To deny musical meaning to things only the performers of a work will know [I would say experience] implicitly denies that performers are knowers, knowers whose knowledge comes from their bodies and their minds (knowers whose pleasures come from their bodies and their minds). To deny musical meaning to the purely physical, performative things is in effect to transform the performers into machines for the transmission of mind-mind messages between members of a metaphorically disembodied class, and, because disembodied, elite.⁹⁰

When Orpheus's body 'disappears' because of his inability to 'speak' properly, it is replaced by the body of the performer. The embellishments he performs are known by the term 'gorgia', from which the terms 'gorgheggiare' and 'gorgheggiando' derive,⁹¹ indicating the ability of singing with agility and virtuoso self-control quick passages on the same syllable, by «starting and stopping vocal sound by the split-second, infinitesimal opening and closing of the vocal folds as the air stream passed through».⁹² In mastering these vocally challenging passages, the performer experiences a sense of pleasure and provides a bodily extension to the 'disembodied' Orpheus. The extension is further stretched by the instrumental ritornellos, which, Gordon says, «supplement [Orpheus's] voice» with their own melodic flourishes.⁹³

⁸⁹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 156-161, p. 63.

⁹⁰ CUSICK, *Feminist Theory*, p. 20.

⁹¹ ZACCONI, *Prattica di Musica*, chapter 58.

⁹² CUSICK, *Francesca Caccini*, p. 13. See also, GORDON, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women*, pp. 30-31.

⁹³ GORDON, *Orfeo's Machines*, p. 216.

Behind the body of the performer lurks the composer, who wrote two versions of *Possente spirto*, one with no embellishment and a second one, richly adorned. As Calcagno points out, singing the first version would establish a clear communication between Orpheus and Charon, but since it «would represent for Orpheus a failure, in mimetic terms», because it does not show his singing ability, the second version is the one always performed. It is, however, a double-edged sword: by letting his vocal skills materialise, Orpheus allows the body of the performer to emerge through Monteverdi's elaborate version. In singing to the audience more than to Charon then, he inevitably fails in his communication with him.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the performer's pleasure is doubled when the vocal challenge terminates and a more relaxed vocality is restored.⁹⁵ After the short instrumental intermission, which brings back the soundscape of the prologue, it is only at the reference to Eurydice that the music becomes 'canto', more similar to Caccini's moderate use of embellishments, and Orpheus's body re-surfaces (Example 5).

Example 5. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act III, *Possente spirto*⁹⁶

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a basso continuo line (bass clef). The lyrics are: che d'Eu-ri-di - ce, i pas - si se - guo per que-ste te - ne - bro - se, a re - ne o - ve già mai - per huom - mor - tal - non vas - si.

⁹⁴ CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 39.

⁹⁵ See Cusick's description of a challenging passage for the organist playing Bach's *Aus tiefer not* from *Clavierübung*, Part III, BWV 686, in CUSICK, *Feminist Theory*, p. 18.

⁹⁶ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 160-169, p. 64.

The previous stanzas firmly alternated between G minor and G major; now Eurydice's name channels both a cadence in D major then a cadence in G minor, on the way to F major (on the word 'passi'), then eventually back to G (on the word 'vassi'). The D sonority is only a short altered memory – Eurydice had sung her response to *Rosa del ciel* in D minor – that Orpheus is not able to maintain.⁹⁷ At the words «O de le luci mie, luci serene» (Example 6) the embellished version stops completely, allowing the instruments that previously represented a bodily extension to the disembodied Orpheus to be now at one with Orpheus's body and voice. The contrast between Orpheus, the performer, and the composer is eventually resolved.

Example 6. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act III, *Possente Spirto*⁹⁸

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a vocal piece. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The lyrics are in Italian and are written below the vocal line. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The lyrics are: "O de le lu - ci mie lu - ci se - re - ne, s'un vo-stro sguar - do può tor-nar-mi in". The second system continues the melody and lyrics: "vi - ta, ahi, chi nie - ga il con-for-to a le mie pe - ne ?". The third system concludes the phrase: "Ahi, chi nie - ga il con for - to a le mie pe - ne ?". The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, with a final cadence in B-flat major.

The starting cadence of this section is B flat major, at the word 'serene'. It is the first time that appears in *Possente spirto*, and as such has the significant role of drawing attention with its novel sound to the «luci serene».⁹⁹ This is

⁹⁷ See CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, pp. 36-37, for a stimulating discussion of Monteverdi's use of keys in relation to the narratological presentational mode (sections in which the main channel of communication is between the on-stage characters on the one hand and the audience on the other) and the representational mode (sections where communication is only between characters on stage).

⁹⁸ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 169-178, pp. 64-65.

⁹⁹ The cadence in B flat is not very common throughout *L'Orfeo*. Other points where it is employed include: «Qui miri il sole» (MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bar 59, p. 10); «Lieta e fortunato amante» (bar 92, p. 12); «hor che'n focati raggi» (bar 25, p. 26); «non puo

followed by a short transition through D (at the word 'vita'), but the entire moment is undermined by the question «Ahi, chi nega il conforto», returning to the key of G, emphasised strongly by the rich chromatic bass line when the question is repeated.

So far Eurydice has remained in the background. Discussions of her role are quite limited compared to the analyses of Orpheus's role and music.¹⁰⁰ As a starting point for reconsidering her position, the response – *Ahi, vista troppo dolce* – to Orpheus's failure on their way back to the pastoral world of the opening scene is telling. The music (Example 7) presents a descent from d^2 to g^1 , raised immediately to g^1 sharp: the idea of the descending diminished fifth seems to be Eurydice's signature in her short and limited singing.

Example 7. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act IV, *Ahi, vista troppo dolce*

The musical score for Example 7 consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line in G major, 4/4 time, with lyrics: "Ahi vi - sta trop-po dol - ce e trop-po, ama - ra". The lower staff is a bass line in G major, 4/4 time, featuring a chromatic descent from D² to G¹, which is then raised to G¹ sharp.

In *Io non dirò qual sia* (Example 8), her response to *Rosa del ciel*, we already had d^2 down to g^1 sharp.

Example 8. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act II, *Io non dirò qual sia*¹⁰¹

The musical score for Example 8 consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line in G major, 4/4 time, with lyrics: "Io non di-rò qual si - a nel tuo gio-ir Or - feo la gio - ia mi - a che". The lower staff is a bass line in G major, 4/4 time, featuring a chromatic descent from D² to G¹ sharp.

For McClary, Monteverdi created an anti-rhetoric to portray Eurydice's as a virgin maid, who is not allowed to talk unless questioned. For Kurtzman, McClary's view is too politically charged; musical representation is determined by the drama unfolding between Orpheus and Eurydice, not by their gender identity. Following allegorical interpretations of the myth for which Eurydice is a symbol of Orpheus's attachment to earthly things and to the

dolersi», (bar 222, p. 39); «l'usato soggiorno» (bar 63, p. 54); «Approdar su l'altra sponda» (bar 231, p.68); «fragile legno» (bar 290, p.73); «Tu bella fusti e saggia» (bar 59, p. 94).

¹⁰⁰ Apart from MCCLARY, *Costructions of Gender* and KURTZMAN, *Deconstructing Gender*.

¹⁰¹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 107-109, p. 14.

flesh, Kurtzman interprets the diminished fifth/augmented fourth, the *diabolus in musica*, as a symbol of the flesh.¹⁰² It is the attachment to the flesh that causes the demise of Orpheus, whose «psychological disintegration at [Eurydice's] second death is fraught with this interval».¹⁰³ Therefore, in considering Eurydice as a representation of the flesh, unintentionally, he ends up supporting McClary's view of gender and music and a representation of women traditionally associated with sensuality.

However, these two passages can be read in connection with two more sections which do not belong to Eurydice. The diminished fifth expands to a minor sixth with Messaggera ('Messenger') (*Ahi caso acerbo*, Example 9), who starts on *e*² and descends to *g*¹ sharp. The minor sixth is repeated a tone lower, *d*²-*f*^{sharp}, but immediately rising to *g*¹ sharp. La Musica, in the opening prologue, starts on *d*² too and does not descend to *g*¹ sharp, instead stops on *a*¹, which is approached via the upper semitone (Examples 10a and 10b).

Example 9. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act II, *Ahi caso acerbo*¹⁰⁴

Ahi ca - so, a - cer - bo, ahi fa - t'em - pio, e cru - de - le ahi

Example 10a. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Prologue, *Dal mio permesso amato*¹⁰⁵

Dal mio per - mes - so, a - ma - to a voi ne ve - gno,

¹⁰² KURTZMAN, *Deconstructing Gender*, section 8.9.

¹⁰³ KURTZMAN, *Deconstructing Gender*, section 8.9. As Kurtzman also reminds us, Donington discusses the use of tritone in *L'Orfeo* (DONINGTON, *Opera & Its Symbols*, pp. 30-37). Although he uses few of the examples I refer to, my interpretation differs for the role of memory and recollection. See also KURTZMAN, *Psychic Disintegration*, pp. 351-370.

¹⁰⁴ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 142-145, p. 34.

¹⁰⁵ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 14-16, p. 1.

Example 10b. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Prologue, *Io la Musica son*¹⁰⁶

Io la Mu-si-ca son, ch'ai dol-ci-ac-cen-ti so far tran-quil-lo

The five extracts are not each other's verbatim quotations; they share, nevertheless, melodic spaces and effective musical gestures that, although supported by different harmonisations, are very recognisable in their repetitions and endorsement of music and hearing with the power of memory. Before exploring the significance of this, it is necessary to look at the way the descending intervals are used in the extracts sung by Eurydice, *La Musica*, *Messaggera* on the one side and if and how they appear in Orpheus's own sections on the other side.

In *Ahi, vista troppo dolce*, the descent through the diatessaron d^2 - a^1 to g^{sharp} suggests the possibility of a cadence on A, the upper boundary of the lower diapente. Instead of A minor, there is a D minor triad, which anticipates the cadence in bars 144-145 (on the words «il poter più godere / e di luce e di vita»; «the right to enjoy/light and life for ever»¹⁰⁷). From D minor, the music is redirected then to a cadence on G in bar 148. A cadence to A minor, through g^{sharp} , took place in Eurydice's response to *Rosa del ciel* (Example 8), though in modal terms could be considered a *cadenza fuggita* because of the rest between g^{sharp} and a^1 in the voice, and because the text does not mark any syntactic closure.¹⁰⁸ For McClary,

Whereas Orfeo's speech is intensely teleological [in *Rosa del ciel*], Eurydice finds it difficult to move directly towards a goal without apologising. Her very first, forthright move from d^2 to a^1 is immediately qualified by a move to g^{sharp} . She makes her linear descent (a^1 to d^1) seem erratic by establishing tiny unexpected tonics here and there – on a^1 , c^2 and g^1 , yet she does finally reach out and match Orfeo's pledge on d^1 .¹⁰⁹

I am not convinced the move to g^{sharp} reveals any apologetic nature; instead, it is the opposite, it stresses even more the descent to a^1 through what is the leading note of a cadence (albeit *fuggita*) to A minor. This should also be read in conjunction with Eurydice's use of the pronoun 'io', which evokes the presence effect of *La Musica* in the prologue. Linguistically, Eurydice's gesture is as strong as *La Musica*'s. Furthermore, the cadence in A minor, like in *Ahi caso acerbo*, would only set the boundary between the upper diatessaron and the diapente. There is nothing erratic in this; and likewise, the cadences on C

¹⁰⁶ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 27-29, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 137.

¹⁰⁸ See MEIER, *I Modi della Polifonia*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁹ MCCLARY, *Costructions of Gender*, p. 302.

and G, part of the D Dorian scenario in Eurydice's emotionally balanced response,¹¹⁰ are used to highlight words such as 'mia' (a strong deictic word) and 'core', rightly rhyming with 'Amore', where there is a cadence on D. The final cadence then on D (on the words «e quanto t'ami») does not have a strong closing effect because Eurydice remains on the fifth above the final. Yet I do not think there is any indecision in this;¹¹¹ the suspense is only a skilful rhetorical gesture on Eurydice's part, who is seducing Orpheus in the way that the expectations of her gender allow her in seventeenth-century Italy. Melodically she concludes on the same pitch as La Musica, i.e. a^1 , remaining firmly in the D minor-D major scenario, which gives the way to G, for *Lasciate i monti*.

In the prologue, the opening descent d^2-a^1 marks unequivocally the diatessaron, within what in tonal terms would be defined as a plagal cadence on D. This, throughout the prologue, alternates with a perfect cadence in A major at the end of each stanza, apart the last one, which remains suspended over an E major triad. According to La Via's reading of Vincenzo Galilei's affective nature of cadences, the first cadential point, with the descending semitone b^1 flat- a^1 in the voice, would be a half-cadence.¹¹² Its affective nature would be *mesta* and it should be used in the middle of the oration. The descending semitone is then replaced by the whole tone, b^1-a^1 , when the authentic cadence takes place at the end of the oration.

The descent to a^1 , through g^1 sharp for an authentic cadence in *Ahi caso acerbo*, starts from e^2 instead of d^2 ; yet, the second 'ahi' reaches back to d^2 and sets a descent to g^1 sharp, sustained by E major, which resolves to A major, only to support the final descent from e^2 to a^1 for the final authentic perfect cadence.

The resolute driving harmonic force in these passages is reinforced by the alignment between the prosodic accents and the descending interval. In *Ahi, vista troppo dolce*, the accent on the sixth syllable, corresponding to g^1 sharp, divides the verse in two parts, the first one of which counts seven syllables (within a hendecasyllable *a maggiore*) and stretches through the descending interval. The opening 'Ahi', staggered in relation to the bass, is metrically weaker, but it serves as the sustained springboard to the descent to g^1 sharp. In Eurydice's response to *Rosa del ciel*, the septenary *Io non dirò qual sia* runs across the descent to g^1 sharp, exactly like *Ahi, vista*. Here too the g^1 sharp emphasises the sixth syllable, but the deictic 'io' comes in a strong position as well. In *Ahi, caso acerbo, ahi fat'empio e crudele*, the hendecasyllable is divided into two segments of five and seven syllables, disrupting the elision between 'acerbo' and 'ahi'. In the first segment, the g^1 sharp emphasises the accent on the fourth syllable (first mobile accent), whereas 'Ahi', staggered with the bass, works exactly like in *Ahi, vista*. In the second fragment the words are distributed again across d^2-g^1 sharp, with the last note enhancing the sixth syllable of the segment (the tenth syllable of the entire hendecasyllable).

¹¹⁰ See SEGELL, *Striggio-Monteverdi's L'Orfeo*, location 707.

¹¹¹ As McClary suggests, see MCCLARY, *Costructions of Gender*, p. 212.

¹¹² LA VIA, *Natura delle cadenze*, p. 29 and LA VIA, *Alfonso Fontanelli's Cadences*, p. 51.

When Orpheus employs the same gesture, the driving element is weakened. Whilst walking back to the upper world and expressing his doubts about the situation, he sings the descending diminished fifth in its bare simplicity twice, an emotional sigh, on the words 'Oimè': c^2-f^{sharp} over D major, (Example 11) and d^2-g^{sharp} over E major (Example 11). It does not traverse the full verse nor a significant portion of it. The supporting harmony, in both cases, works as dominant to a cadence provided at the end of each textual segment, where there is a clear reference to Eurydice: «Oimè, chi m'assicura / ch'ella mi segua?» with a cadence on G, and «Oimè, / chi mi nasconde de l'amate pupille il dolce lume?» with a cadence on A («alas!, what assures me / that she follows me» and «Alas, what conceals from me/the sweet light of her adored eyes?»).¹¹³ The cadential pitches g^{sharp} and a^{sharp} are reached, from the melodic point of view, after quite some contortions in conjunction with the enjambments in the verse, and lack that forward driving character we have seen in the other extracts. In there the descending interval, with its melodic identity, controls the harmony, whereas now the harmony, firmly provided by the bass, grounds the melody which wanders freely after the descending interval itself.

Example 11. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act IV, *Ma mentre io canto*¹¹⁴

Ma men-tre io can-to, oi - mè chi m'as-si-cu-ra ch'el-la mi se-gua Oi - mè,
 chi mi na-scon-de de l'a - ma te pu - pil-le il dol-ce lu - me?

In *Questi i campi di Tracia*, every time the diminished fifth/augmented fourth appears, it is a local event: it does not project its action over more than one bar nor over major portions of the verse. Moreover, there is a misalignment between the descending interval and the accents of the words. Whereas with Eurydice and the other female characters the outer notes of the interval fall on the first syllable and then the main accented syllable of the relevant portion of the verse, in Orfeo's extracts very often the interval does not fall on accented syllables. For example, at the words «mio dolore», (bar 5, p. 91), 'mio'

¹¹³ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 137. Derek Yeld translates as «what assures me» and «what conceals from me», but the Italian «chi» is best rendered as «who».

¹¹⁴ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 113-117, p. 82.

falls on c^2 but the unaccented first syllable of 'dolore' falls on f sharp.¹¹⁵ Orpheus has also sung the descending minor sixth d^2 - f sharp (analogous to the minor sixth, e^2 - g^1 , in *Ahi, caso acerbo*), at the words «Tu se' da me partita» (Example 12, «You have left me»),¹¹⁶ in the middle of his lament after Eurydice's first death.

Example 12. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act II, *Tu se' da me partita*¹¹⁷



Here too, even if it covers a full septenary, it is a local event supported by one single harmony, G minor; the f sharp, furthermore, does not fall on the sixth accented syllable. In this way, the descending gesture becomes more and more a fragmented memory, not aligned with Orpheus's subjectivity the way it is with Eurydice's. The only time the descending diminished fifth has a more stretched role is when Orpheus asks Apollo: «Si non vedrò più de l'amata Euridice i dolci rai?» (Example 13, «Shall I never see again/the sweet eyes of my beloved Eurydice»).¹¹⁸ Stressing sight's failure, the descending interval does not cover the full septenary, with d^2 on the fourth syllable and the arrival to g^1 sharp on the sixth, sustained by the E major harmony. The voice then climbs back to e^2 without the contortions explored when on his way back to the upper world (see Example 11). The 'dominant' chord and g^1 sharp are clearly prolonged until the final perfect cadence in A. At the thought of Eurydice and of her final loss, the descending gesture represents a farewell to the past. It is an implicit confession that he has failed, a negation of his own self, and that he is saved only because of his father's intervention. Seeing too has failed, but only in its earthly dimension, because Orpheus «in the sun and in the stars [will be able] to look lovingly upon their fair images».¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Other cases with the accents and the dissonances not aligned are: «già per lagrimar» (Monteverdi, 2012, bar 28/29, p. 92); «ogni altra de suoi don» (bar 63, p. 94); «a te conviensi» (bar 66, bar 95). Examples of alignments include «un mar di pianto» (bar 35, p. 93); «di estreme» (bar 51, p. 94).

¹¹⁶ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 124.

¹¹⁷ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 233-234, p. 40.

¹¹⁸ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 141.

¹¹⁹ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, p. 141.

Example 13. Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act V, *Si non vedrò*¹²⁰

Si non ve-drò più ma-i de l'a-ma-ta Eu-ri-di-ce, i dol-ci ra-i?

With Orpheus's memory crumbling, as evinced in the use of the descending interval, his subjectivity emerges too in a rather fragmented way. What happens to Eurydice's subjectivity? Is hers as fragmented as that of Orpheus? Let's consider the implications in the difference between the use of the intervals in Eurydice, *La Musica* and *Messaggera* on the one hand and in Orpheus on the other. In order to do so, I would like to follow two possible interpretive paths: one through Wikshåland's use of Roland Barthes's concept of *figure*, the other through Aby Warburg's idea of *pathosformel*.

Barthes discusses the concept of *figure* in his *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Figures are the components of the lovers' discourse, «which exists only in outburst of language», as fragments, to be understood as

[T]he body's gesture caught in action and not contemplated in repose: the body of athletes, orators, statues, what in the straining body can be immobilized. [...] The figure is the lover at work. [...] [t]he figure is a kind of opera aria; just as this aria is identified, memorized, and manipulated through its *incipit* ("When I am laid," "Pleurez, mes yeux," "E lucevan le stelle," "Piangerò la mia sorte"), so the figure takes its departure from a turn of phrase, a kind of verse, refrain, or cantillation which articulates it in the darkness.¹²¹

The figures, giving the imprint to entire pieces, do not constitute a complete message; they are a matrix for events to come and become sentence-arias: «[T]hey remain suspended: they utter the affect, then break off, their role is filled».¹²² In Ariadne's lament, for Wikshåland, there are two such figures: the exclamations *Lasciatemi morire* and *O Teseo*. «Ariadne repeats [them] as formulas in the construction of the lament's musical syntax, each part successively echoing the tone of the opening gesture».¹²³

As in Ariadne's lament, the descending intervals in *La Musica*, Eurydice, and *Messaggera* work exactly like sentence-arias. They are «outlined (like a sign) and memorable (like an image or a tale)»;¹²⁴ they fulfil the initial function to impress the audience with their affect, and their echo remains in the listener's ears even when they are not sung. The role of sentence-aria, however, is lost in Orpheus, who uses the interval always in the middle of a discourse. It

¹²⁰ MONTEVERDI, *L'Orfeo*, ed. Alessandrini, bars 124-126, p. 98.

¹²¹ BARTHES, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 5.

¹²² BARTHES, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 6.

¹²³ WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 235.

¹²⁴ BARTHES, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 4.

does not correspond to the opening gesture, like in *La Musica*, *Eurydice*, and *Messaggera*, with whom the interval emerges as an icon of their own subjectivity and affect. It should be noted that Ariadne's opening gesture could be considered as a variation of the descending gesture in *L'Orfeo*. The leap from *b^{flat}* to *e¹* in Ariadne is another diminished fifth; like the one in the female characters from *Orfeo* it shows a strong driving energy, traversing the full septenary and stopping at an A major harmony (clearly indicated in the polyphonic version), which anticipates the dominant A major for the final perfect cadence.¹²⁵ As a solo vocal piece, it is therefore through the body and voice of the performer that we hear as a coherent whole the «displaced and disrupted repetition of Ariadne's emphatic address to the absent Theseus».¹²⁶ In *Orfeo* this role is covered by different voices. But how different are they really? In the first performance of *L'Orfeo*, *La Musica*, *Eurydice* and *Messaggera* were sung by castratos;¹²⁷ sometimes, in modern performances, the singer interpreting *La Musica* is the same as for *Eurydice*. Gordon writes that «Orfeo stops short of actually possessing the magic of *La Musica*; instead he needs *La Musica* to do his work ... She is in the most literal sense a muse, at once inspiring and embodying his creative process».¹²⁸ Yet, *Messaggera* and *Eurydice*, whom Thyrasis had described as capable to change the course of the rivers with her singing in Poliziano's *Fabula*, take over this creative process through the sentence-arias. The homogeneity of the sound they create (in the case of the first performance with castratos or with one singer taking at least two characters) generates the illusion that one modified voice, almost one instrument, gives expression to the performative power of *La Musica*'s opening gesture.¹²⁹ We could say that with Ariadne, Monteverdi brings into one body what in *L'Orfeo* was distributed (but still with some physical continuity) through the three female characters, which enact a process of musical memory.

They exercise their power like pathos-formula (*Pathosformeln*) in a Warburgian sense, that is as the «emotionally charged visual tropes» that are recurrent among images in Western Europe.¹³⁰ They present a binding knot between the effect they utter and the formulaic interval to the extent that it is not possible to separate them.¹³¹ As Agamben states, by using formula rather than form Warburg emphasises «the stereotypical and repetitive aspect of the imaginal theme with which the artist had to grapple in order to give expression

¹²⁵ For Chafe, «“Ahi, caso acerbo” rivals the “Lamento d'Arianna” as the most famous passage of lamentation». CHAFE, *Monteverdi's Tonal Language*, p. 140.

¹²⁶ WIKSHÄLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 235.

¹²⁷ See FENLON, *The Mantuan Orfeo*, p. 16, and GORDON, *Orfeo's Machines*, pp. 203.

¹²⁸ GORDON, *Orfeo's Machines*, p. 208.

¹²⁹ Gordon argues that in *L'Orfeo* the castratos are akin to instruments, as they both «reflect the early modern fascination with using technology to modify nature, a practice that fell under the rubric of natural magic» (GORDON, *Orfeo's Machines*, p. 202).

¹³⁰ BECKER, *Aby Warburg's Pathosformel*, p. 1.

¹³¹ See AGAMBEN, *Aby Warburg*, p. 90.

to 'life in movement' (*bewegtes Leben*)». ¹³² Of the passages mentioned above, none of them makes up the original, the archetype; being the first, *Io la Musica son*, does not implicate that the fragment is the original one; but none of the other fragments is a copy either, thus each one of them «is an indiscernible blend of originariness and repetition, of form and matter. But a being whose form punctually coincides with its matter and whose origin is indissoluble from its becoming is what we call time [...] *Pathosformeln* are made of time: they are crystals of historical memory». ¹³³ Therefore, what these musical passages do, all together, is to give expression to life in movement, through the various moments of pathos in the continuous process of 'becoming'.

In his brief treatise *On Memory and Recollection*, Aristotle links time to memory and imagination; the act of remembering is possible only to those who sense time, and they can do so through imagination, which is the same faculty that gives them access to time. Thus, as Agamben says, «memory is impossible without an image (*phantasma*)». ¹³⁴ Aristotle further distinguishes between memory and recollection. Memory is a passive condition and pertains to the sensing soul, whereas recollection is an active and deductive hunt. ¹³⁵ «We recollect by searching through images towards a goal, and when, or if, we reach this goal, we are no longer recollecting. If we retain the object (image) reached, it may become the state of memory, if not, we will lose it and will have to recollect it again or relearn it, if it is later needed». ¹³⁶

After *Rosa del ciel* in the first act, Orpheus's canzonetta in the second act, *Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi*, is an invitation to recollect his «long and bitter torments». Orpheus himself, experiencing memory, invites everybody else to recollect the past and transform it into the state of memory and joy. Thus his musical power is connected to the power of memory, the ability to experience both memory and recollection. Eurydice's death annihilates Orpheus's power and state of memory; he has to reach his goal again, but as he is not able to retain the 'object', he loses her a second time. As Aristotle says:

That recollection is a search for an image in something of a corporeal type, is proved by the fact that some people are bothered when they cannot recollect, even though they focus their thought extremely hard, and are still bothered even when they are no longer trying to recollect; this is the case especially with melancholics, since they are particularly moved by images. Now, the reason why they are not capable of recollecting is that, just as those who throw a stone are no longer capable of stopping it, so also the man who is recollecting and hunting an item moves something corporeal in which the affection is found. ¹³⁷

¹³² AGAMBEN, *Nimphs*, p. 64.

¹³³ AGAMBEN, *Nimphs*, pp. 64-65.

¹³⁴ AGAMBEN, *Nimphs*, p. 62.

¹³⁵ BLOCH, *Aristotle on Memory*, p. 72.

¹³⁶ BLOCH, *Aristotle on Memory*, p. 90.

¹³⁷ BLOCH, *Aristotle on Memory*, p. 49.

By beginning to recollect the past, Orpheus triggers the movement of the stone but cannot stop it and Eurydice, the corporeal something 'in which the affection is found', fades away. In *Tu se' morta*, as Calcagno reminds us, there is a case of intertextuality, which can certainly be understood in terms of memory and recollection.¹³⁸ «The protagonist also echoes, thus relating himself to, at least three passages from previous dramatic works. He shares with two of them a similar dramatic situation».¹³⁹ Calcagno prefers to use the Renaissance term of imitation to express this relationship with the past, because it clearly involves the confrontation of two subjects in dialogue with each other. Nevertheless, the dialogue that Orpheus instigates takes place at the textual level, with other texts. What about the music? When, upon hearing the instruments recreating the pastoral soundscape of the beginning – a memory trace –¹⁴⁰ he starts thinking and singing about Eurydice. However, he has lost the ability to transform the recollection into a state of musical memory and in the end he cannot retain her. Eurydice, instead, through the musical examples that act as figures repeating the pathos-formula, perceives time and remembers. At the moment of Orpheus's gaze failure, music expresses its power through an evocation of past moments: the idyllic prologue, Eurydice's response to Orpheus, and the announcement of her death. It is Eurydice's singing the verse *Ahi, vista troppo dolce e troppo amara* that, like an experience of both memory and recollection, brings back all these moments; it is the expression of her ability to alter the course of the river, as mentioned by Thyrsis in Poliziano's version of the story.¹⁴¹

In the context of Ficinian philosophy, for which «the human subject occupies the medial point of the cosmos»,¹⁴² Orpheus marks the incipient decentredness of the human body and the loss of its integrity. He places a fundamental scepticism at the core of the subject formation across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, asking the question 'what do we trust?' However, he fails to answer. Concerned with the immediate present, Orpheus, like the melancholics in the citation above from Aristotle, ultimately does not manage to retain the object of his recollection. Eurydice, on the contrary, breaks this impasse by suggesting a performative experience that overcomes the loss of memory as a consequence of her second death.¹⁴³ John L. Austin's description

¹³⁸ CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, p. 50.

¹³⁹ The three works are Ottavio Rinuccini's *Euridice*, Guarini's *Il pastor fido*, and Sperone Speroni's tragedy *La Canace*. CALCAGNO, *From Madrigal to Opera*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁴⁰ BLOCH, *Aristotle on Memory*, p. 77.

¹⁴¹ TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, p. 172.

¹⁴² TOMLINSON *Il canto magico*, p. 62.

¹⁴³ Opera is thus built around this contrast, between seeing and hearing, and Monteverdi explores the performative solution in both *Ulisse* and *Poppea*. In *Ulisse*, Penelope recognises her husband when he describes the blanket on their bed located in a different room. The final denouement can only happen when Ulysses makes visible with his saying/singing what cannot be seen. But one could ask: if up to a few moments before he was a magician in Penelope's eyes – the reason she adduces for not recognising Ulysses in the beggar – why is he no longer a magician when he mentions the nuptial blanket that nobody can see? Is this

of performative utterances – «*by saying or in saying something we are doing something*»¹⁴⁴ – could be rephrased in the following way: by singing or in singing something Eurydice is doing something. That something is the *Ahi, vista troppo dolce e troppo amara*; by singing that, Eurydice does that too, in the sense that she brings it to life through these musical gestures (every time reinterpreted with different pathos and harmonies).¹⁴⁵ Rather than reinstating centredness in an essentialist way, Eurydice realises that the only option available is performative, one that takes on board the temporality of the human body.

Wikshåland writes that in Ariadne's steps, «The lament [of the Nymph] reaches out not only to an absent interlocutor but to someone who is impossible to reach, thus leaving the singing/speaking subject stretched – one might say distended – within the framework of a threefold present, in the Augustinian sense of the term “present time”. The lamenting woman at once remembers who she was, bewails the intense and momentary pain of loss, and grieves for the future».¹⁴⁶ With one short segment/sentence-aria, Eurydice represents the living utterance of the interaction of presence and absence of the past (a past of which she is fully a protagonist, appropriating also what does not immediately belong to her, like the prologue). At the exact instant when she mourns for the definitive loss of her husband, stretched in a tentative hug, she remembers who she was (*Io non dirò*) and the moment when she was bitten by the snake (*Ahi, caso acerbo*). All this is channelled through the power of *La Musica* (*Io la Musica son*). Eurydice, not anymore the object of male artistic vision, is integral to «the artist's body [that] has become part of the artwork

not what magicians do? Penelope seems to surrender to the magical power of sound, of hearing, which is able to conjure up the image of the blanket. In *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, the Nero/Lucano duet is a celebration of the beauty of Poppea. Sound is used to represent Poppea's beauty, but the love and passion for Poppea absent from the scene in that moment, once mediated through the power of hearing, is transformed in the power of a passion between Nero and Lucano, in a duet which, according to Wendy Heller, creates a clear musical representation of an orgasm. See HELLER, *Tacito Incognito*.

¹⁴⁴ AUSTIN, *How to Do*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁵ Regarding the performative power of sound, we should mention that in the world of female power in Florence, during the regency of Christine of Lorraine, Francesca Caccini was involved in the composition of the music for a spectacle during the 1607 Carnival, known as *La stiava*, designed by Michelangelo Buonarroti the younger. Cusick has reported in detail how Christine of Lorraine was involved in this production. From the documents available it is clear that she was interested more in the sound effect than in the visual element of the spectacle. The theme of the show is about a Persian slave woman, who is «the object of desire of a group of Tuscan knights. However, when she then reveals herself to be the daughter of the King of Persia, she transforms from an object of desire, competition and exchanges to a sovereign subject, a transformation wrought by the intervention of her own self-defining voice». It was the Duchess that requested the change of perspective in which sound becomes «the privileged means by which these men (and by extension the audience) might know the truth about the woman among them. [...] with the implication that hearing was the most reliable way to know, and music the most reliable representation of stable, orderly reality». CUSICK, *Francesca Caccini*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁶ WIKSHÅLAND, *Monteverdi's Voices*, p. 237.

and thus part of the public space». ¹⁴⁷ While Orpheus finds himself «caught between the tragedy of seeing and the tragedy of music», ¹⁴⁸ between his lost memory, as Virgil suggests, and his voice, Eurydice explores the inextricable, performative and ephemeral link between seeing and hearing, tightly bound to memory and recollection, revealing that what is absent, the past, maintains a shadowy presence that can be sensed through a memory that is experienced in an ever-changing shape.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AGAMBEN, G., *Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science*, in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, transl. and ed. Heller-Roazen, D., Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, pp. 89-103.
- AGAMBEN, G., *Nymphs*, in *Releasing the Image. From Literature to New Media*, eds. J. Khalip, and R. Mitchell, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2011, pp. 60-82.
- AUSTIN, J.L., *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1962.
- BARTHES, R., *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, New York, 1978.
- BECKER, C., *Aby Warburg's Pathosformel as Methodological Paradigm*, «Journal of Art Historiography», 9 (2013), pp. 1-25.
- BERGER, K., *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow. An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2007.
- BLOCH, D., *Aristotle on Memory and Recollection. Text, Translation, Interpretation, and Reception in Western Scholasticism*, Brill, Leiden 2007.
- BRECHT, B., *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. by J. Willett, Eyre Methuen, London 1964.
- BUCCI-GLUCKSMANN, C., *The Madness of Vision. On Baroque Aesthetics*, trans. Baker, D. Z., Ohio University Press, Athens 2013 (Series in Continental Thought, 44).
- BURIAN, P., *The Fate of Orpheus on the Operatic Stage: Death and Transfiguration*, «Syllecta Classica», 23 (2012), pp. 51-75.
- BÜHLER, K., *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language*, Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1990.
- CACCINI, G., *Le nuove musiche*, Giorgio Marescotti, Florence 1601/2.

¹⁴⁷ HALLENSLEBEN, *Performative Body Spaces*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ BUCCI-GLUCKSMANN, *The Madness of Vision* e-book version, location 141.

- CALCAGNO, M., *From Madrigal to Opera. Monteverdi's Staging of the Self*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2012.
- CARTER, T., «*In questo lieto e fortunato giorno*»: “parlare” e “cantare” nell’*Orfeo* di Monteverdi, in *In questi ameni luoghi. Intorno a Orfeo*, Associazione Arianna, Torino 2018, pp. 29-42.
- CHAFE, E.T., *Monteverdi's Tonal Language*, Schirmer, New York 1992.
- CUSICK, S.G., *Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem*, «*Perspectives of New Music*», 32/1 (1994), pp. 8-27.
- CUSICK, S.G., *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court. Music and the Circulation of Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2008.
- DONINGTON, R., *Opera & Its Symbols. The Unity of Words, Music, & Staging*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 1990.
- ELAM, K., *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Routledge, London and New York 1980 (1st published; 2nd edition: 2002).
- FENLON, I., *The Mantuan Orfeo*, in *Orfeo*, ed. Whenham, J., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.
- GREENBLATT, S., *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 1980.
- GORDON, B., *Monteverdi's Unruly Women. The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004.
- GORDON, B., *Orfeo's Machines*, «*The Opera Quarterly*», 24/3-4 (2008), pp. 200-222.
- HALLENSLEBEN, M., *Performative Body Spaces*, in *Performative Body Spaces. Corporeal Topographies in Literature, Theatre, Dance, and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Hallensleben, M., Rodopi, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 9-30.
- HELLER, W., *Tacito Incognito: Opera as History in L'incoronazione di Poppea*, «*Journal of the American Musicological Society*», 52 (1999), pp. 135-155.
- KURTZMAN, J., *Deconstructing Gender in Monteverdi's L'Orfeo*, «*Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*», 9/1 (2003), <<https://sscm-jscm.org/v9/no1/kurtzman.html#ch7>>.
- KURTZMAN, J., *The Psychic Disintegration of a Demi-God: Conscious and Unconscious in Striggio and Monteverdi's L'Orfeo*, in *Music and Consciousness. Philosophical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Clarke, D. and Clarke, E., Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011.
- LA VIA, S., *Natura delle cadenze e Natura contraria delli modi: Punti di convergenza fra teoria e prassi nel madrigale cinquecentesco*, «*Il Saggiatore musicale*», 4 (1997), pp. 5-51.

- LA VIA, S., *L'espressione dei contrasti fra madrigali e opera*, in *Storia dei concetti musicali. Espression, forma, opera*, eds. Borio, G. and Gentili, C., Carocci editore, Roma 2007, pp. 31-64.
- LA VIA, S., *Alfonso Fontanelli's Cadences and the Second Pratica*, «The Journal of Musicology», 30/1 (2013), pp. 49-102.
- MCCLARY, S., *Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music*, «Cambridge Opera Journal», 1/3 (1989), pp. 203-223.
- MEIER, B., *I Modi della Polifonia Vocale Classica*, Italian Edition, ed. by Magnolfi, A., LIM, Lucca 2015.
- MONTEVERDI, C., *L'Orfeo. Favola in Musica*, Ricciardo Amadino, Venice 1609.
- MONTEVERDI, C., *L'Orfeo*, Ian Bostridge (Orfeo), Patrizia Ciofi (Euridice), Le Concert d'Astrée, European Voices, dir. Emmanuelle Haïm, CD, Virgin Veritas 2004 [7243 5 45642 2 2].
- MONTEVERDI, C., *L'Orfeo*, Vocal Score, ed. by R. Alessandrini, with libretto trans. by D. Yeld, Bärenreiter – Urtext, Kassel 2012.
- MONTEVERDI, C., *L'Orfeo*, Charles Daniels (Orfeo), Faye Newton (Euridice), Taverner Consort & Players – Andrew Parrott (dir), CD, Avie 2013. [AV2278].
- OVID, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by F.J. Miller, Harvard University Press, Cambridge. (reprint 1946),
- PIRROTTA, N., *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982.
- RINUCCINI, O., *L'Euridice*, Cosimo Giunti, Florence 1600.
- RINUCCINI, O., *L'Euridice*, engl. trans. by P. Lockwood, in CACCINI, G., *L'Euridice*, CD, Ricercar 269 [5 400439 002692] 2008.
- RUSSANO-HANNING, B., *Of Poetry and Music's Power. Humanism and the Creation of Opera*, Umi Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1980.
- SEGELL, G., *Striggio-Monteverdi's L'Orfeo – An Excursion into its Neoplatonic Layers*, Segell, London 1997.
- SCHWINDT, J., 'All that Glisters': *Orpheus's Failure as an Orator and the Academy Philosophy of the Accademia degli Invaghiti*, «Cambridge University Press», 26/3 (2014), pp. 239-270.
- STEINHEUER, J., *Orfeo (1607)*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, ed. by. Whenham, J., and Wistreich, R., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007.
- TISSONI BENVENUTI, A., *L'Orfeo del Poliziano, con il testo critico dell'originale e delle successive forme teatrali*, Editrice Antenore, Rome 2000.

- TOFT, R., *With Passionate Voice. Re-creative Singing in Sixteenth-Century England and Italy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014.
- TOMLINSON, G., *Madrigal, Monody, and Monteverdi's* via naturale alla imitazione, «Journal of the American Musicological Society», 34 (1981), pp. 60-108.
- TOMLINSON, G., *Il canto magico dell'Euridice*, in «*Lo stupor dell'invenzione. Firenze e la nascita dell'opera*», ed. by P. Gargiulo, Olschki, Firenze 2001, pp. 61-72.
- VIRGIL, *Georgics*, Eng. trans. by H. Rushton, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1999.
- WIKSHÅLAND, S. *Monteverdi's Voices: The Construction of Subjectivity*, 24/3-4 (2008), pp. 223-245.
- ZACCONI, L., *Prattica di Musica*, Bartolomeo Carampello, Venice 1596.



NOTA BIOGRAFICA Antonio Cascelli è docente in Musica presso la Maynooth University, Irlanda. I suoi ambiti di ricerca spaziano dalla storia della teoria musicale, arte e musica nel '500 e '600 in Italia, musica per pianoforte dell'800, all'analisi musicale e l'opera italiana. Pubblicazioni recenti includono un articolo sul *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* («Cambridge Opera Journal», 29/2, 2017) e un libro su Schenker e Chopin nei materiali della Oster Collection (LIM, 2018).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE Antonio Cascelli is Lecturer in Music at Maynooth University, Ireland. His main research interests are in history of music theory, arts and music in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, nineteenth-century piano music, music analysis, and Italian opera. Recent publications include an article on Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* («Cambridge Opera Journal», 29/2, 2017) and a book on Schenker and Chopin in the Oster Collection (LIM, 2018).