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Grimani and Handel's Responses to Arcadian Reform in the Opera *Agrippina*

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The opera *Agrippina* (1709) of Vincenzo Grimani (1655?-1710) and George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) contains some aspects that, on the surface, contradict Arcadian aesthetics. These elements include the comical portrayal of the Emperor, the two powerful women—the Emperor's second wife Agrippina and Poppea—and their deceptions, the sleep scene, and the comic subplots. A number of scholars have considered the elements a reflection of the antiquated qualities of Grimani's libretto, which relied on the seventeenth-century Venetian operatic tradition.[1] Yet Grimani and Handel reinvigorate the historical characters and incidents by combining mock-heroic and gender-reversal elements. The mock-heroic is evident in the Emperor Claudio's

1) Among others, Harris Sheridan Saunders, "Handel's Agrippina: The Venetian Perspective," *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 3 (1989), 90, argues that Grimani was banished from the Venetian republic in 1690, which led him to be exposed to a limited scope of contemporary Venetian tastes, and this may explain some of the outdated aspects of his libretto; also noted in Ayana O. Smith, "Opera in Arcadia: Rome, Florence and Venice in the Primo Settecento" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2001), 183.

comic portrayal as weak and indecisive, while simultaneously the gender-reversal is illustrated by the characterization of Agrippina and Poppea as strong, active figures. This article investigates the development of these three characters over the course of the opera. Before we discuss musical examples of the character development, an overview of the Arcadian reform movement will help us to understand Grimani and Handel's attempts both to conform to the Arcadian ideals and to broaden the notion of reform by providing other possible ways to modernize drama. The analyses will then reveal that first, Claudio's comic portrayal is not merely in opposition to the ideals of Arcadian opera but serves as an integral part of the plot. Second, Poppea and Agrippina's deceptions fulfill the demands of characterization and dramatic narrative. Finally, the portrayals of the two womens invite further inquiries into the historical characterizations of them from Tacitus's writings to Grimani/Handel's: the meaning of their deceptions in the context of the ongoing polemics about women; how the characters were perceived by the audience in seventeenth-century Venice; and ultimately, how Grimani and Handel underscored the two women's deception, particularly Agrippina's "masking."

Arcadian Reform and Discourse on Music for Arias

The primary concern of the members of the Arcadian Academy (founded in 1690) was to revitalize Italian poetry, in keeping with the idea of *buon gusto* ("good taste") in Italian literature.[2)]

2) The founding of the Accademia degli Arcadi in 1690 was prompted by the death the previous year of Queen Christina of Sweden, one of

Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) was one of the significant literary critics to promote the concept of "good taste."[3] In his treatise *Delle perfetta poesia italiana* ("On Perfect Italian Poetry," 1706), he sets out the dichotomy between good and bad taste in Italian culture: for Muratori, good taste refers to elite culture relying on the intellect, whereas bad taste embraces popular entertainments that lack rationality.[4] As we

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Rome's leading patrons of the arts. Susan M. Dixon, "The Accademia degli Arcadi," in *Between the Real and the Ideal: the Accademia degli Arcadi and its Garden in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 19-20. The original members of the Arcadian Academy were figures in Queen Christina's intellectual circle, including the critics Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni, Ludovico Antonio Muratori, and Gian Vincenzo Gravina; Crescimbeni, who became one of the leading figures. For further information on Queen Christina and her involvement in the operatic and literary reform movement, see Per Bjurström, *Feast and Theatre in Queen Christina's Rome* (Stockholm: Bengtsons Litografiska, 1966) and Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle: the Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden & New York: E. J. Brill, 1991).

For an insightful, comprehensive study of Arcadian criticisms of Italian opera, see Robert S. Freeman, *Opera Without Drama: Currents of Change in Italian Opera, 1675 to 1725* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981) and Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 1-45. For another constructive overview of the Arcadian writings on reform, see Helen Elizabeth Baker, "The Oratorios of Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739) as a Reflection of His Musical Thought and Milieu" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1982). Although this book focuses on the reform movement in the oratorio, it is also useful for the subject of operatic reform.

3) Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 29-37.

4) Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 31-32; Mary Macklem, "Reforming Opera and its Public in Early Modern Venice" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 20.

Although the term "good taste" had already appears in Italian writings of the 1690s, Muratori's two treatises (1706 and 1708) contribute to the dissemination of the concept, which was promulgated by the Arcadians and embedded in their reform operas between 1690 and 1710. Macklem, "Reforming Opera," 7, 20. The two treatises are *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (1706) and *Delle riflessioni sopra il buon*

will discuss, the Arcadians also used the concept of *buon gusto,* based on rationality, to condemn the music of arias, which merely delight the senses.

The Arcadians criticized what they considered to be abuses perpetrated in late seventeenth-century Italian poetry and the Venetian operatic tradition. Their objections include the mixture of comic with serious elements and characters, supernatural elements, disguised identity and conceit, excessive scene changes and stage machinery, arias irrelevant to the dramatic content, and the disconnection between the musical settings and texts.[5] Such elements that do not represent reality were contradictory to their emphasis on "verisimilitude," the truthful representation of nature and human behavior through words and actions on stage, as a crucial facet of *buon gusto* in the theater.[6] For Arcadians, comic elements conflict with the idea of "decorum," given that Aristotle describes comedy as a genre of "contemporary and ordinary" personages.[7] Moreover, the

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gusto nelle scienze e nelle arti ("Some Reflections on Good Taste in the Sciences and Arts," 1708). Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 31, emphasizes that Arcadian criticism is a reform movement of not only Italian literature but also Italian culture, which in turn advocated Italian nationalism.

5) For further discussions of the Arcadian criticisms, see Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 25-45, particularly 27.

6) The Arcadians focused on the principle of verisimilitude in the treatment of both text and music. In the choice of poetic style, for example, the Arcadians avoided the disjointed, excessively ornamental style of Giambattista Marino, idealizing the simplicity and purity associated with the works of Petrarch, Tasso, and Dante. Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 201.

7) Piero Weiss, "Opera and Neoclassical Dramatic Criticism in the Seventeenth Century," in *Music and Drama* (New York: Broude Bros., 1988), 5.

mingling of comic and tragic elements was contradictory to not only the idea of verisimilitude but also "the purity of genre and formal regularity" in classical tragedies.[8)]

The conflict between Arcadian ideals and contemporary operas reflects the tension between opera and tragedy, which in turn represents the tension between music and speech.[9)] This tension is clearly evident in the Arcadians' distinction between recitative and aria. For Arcadians such as Muratori and Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni (1663-1728), the recitatives were central to a drama, whereas arias were not integrally connected to the action because their extensive repetition and lengthy, florid vocal melodies ultimately cause incomprehensibility.[10)] Arcadian critics such as Muratori and Gian Vincenzo Gravina (1664-1718) frequently attacked music that delights the ear,

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The Arcadians found their solutions in the simplicity of classical models. They advocated Aristotle's definition of tragedy from his *Poetics* and promoted the structure of French classical tragedy associated with Racine's works. Strohm, "Apostolo Zeno's Teuzzone and its French Models," in *Dramma per musica,* 121-33.

They also believed that tragedy, in particular, should conform to the Aristotelian rules and models formulated by seventeenth-century French tragedy. Strohm, "Six Potential Conflicts of Opera with the Rules of Tragedy," in *Dramma per musica*, 201; "Tolomeo: Handel's Opera," in *Dramma per musica,* 202-10.

8) Strohm, *Dramma per musica*, 208.

9) Strohm, *Dramma per musica*, 202-4.

10) Enrico Fubini, "The First Polemics on Opera in Italy," in *Music and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Sourcebook,* ed. and trans. Bonnie Blackburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 39-47; Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 37-41. Macklem "Reforming Opera," 114, discusses the impact of such "excessive delights" on spectators.

In their views, arias also corrupted the ethical function of true drama, according to the norms of Aristotle, and thus were contrary to the principle of verisimilitude. Aristotle considered the ethical function of the tragedy to be one of the main purposes of theatre. Strohm, *Dramma per musica,* 210.

because it is threatening to *buon gusto,* which is designed to strengthen the rational powers of the mind. Muratori believed that opera merely pleased the audience and he criticized its danger to the senses:

> But herein [delighting us with song] they [modern operas] are also defective. . . [A]lthough music is an extremely sweet thing, it nevertheless shares the liability of other sweet things, which having been born to delight the senses, soon engender satiety. . . [T]he ear, to the satisfaction of which the sweetness of music is itself directed, is rapidly filled with it. Then, little by little, that same sweetness begins to turn sour as, by continuing to taste the same flavor, our appetite or taste is no longer inclined to receive it.[11]

For Gravina, the pleasure in the sound of opera lacks verisimilitude, because it is not founded on reason, the highest faculty of human beings, and thus fails to signify anything to the intellect and create a true image: "Because it delights the ear is no reason to consider it suited to tragedy, as the delight proper to dramatic music is that born of imitation. Pleasure today, however, is produced first of all from the lack of the true idea.[12]

In his *Delle perfetta poesia italiana,* Muratori considers

11) Quoted in Fubini, "First Polemics," 46-47; also cited in Macklem, "Reforming Opera," 89.

12) "and then incidentally from any movement of voice capable of enticing and appeasing man's animal nature, which is sense alone, without the participation of reason, just like the singing of any goldfinch or nightingale, or like the liveliness and variety of color of Chinese paintings, which delight without imitating truth." Fubini, "First Polemics," 38.

contemporaneous operatic music as a reflection of effeminacy and social corruption:

> Present theater music has become unduly effeminate, and thus more apt to corrupt the souls of those in the audience than to purge and improve them.[13]

> We all know and feel what emotions are sparked within us when we listen to skillful musicians in the theater. Their singing always inspires a certain softness and sweetness, which secretly contributes to further debasing the common people, turning them toward lowly vices, as they drink in the affected languor of the singing voices, and savor the vilest passions, seasoned with unwholesome melodies.[14]

For Muratori and the Arcadians, such "soft" and "sweet" music transported the spectators to an undesirable realm of delight, making them lose rational control. In their views, opera often had ruined proper tragedy, contaminated the theaters, and corrupted both the common people and the elite by enticing them with sensuous sounds. Claudio's "effeminate" aria will be discussed below in relation to these Arcadian aesthetics.

The Arcadian Pier Jacopo Martello (1665-1727), however, provides a completely different view of the ability of operatic music. For Gravina and Muratori, the problem of the music in the theater stems from its moral value of music, whereas Martello appreciates operatic music for its own values. In his *Della tragedia antica e moderna* ("On Ancient and Modern

13) Fubini, "First Polemics," 39; cited in Macklem, "Reforming Opera," 90.
14) Fubini, "First Polemics," 39; cited in Macklem, "Reforming Opera," 90-91.

Tragedy," 1714), Martello asserts that "musical composition is the essence of opera; all other components are incidental."[15] He further praises music that instigates the positive affects of joy and happiness.[16] Martello believes that pleasurable music, through which the audience is "transported," is the goal of the opera, reinforcing "social welfare."[17] His notion of the music of arias in turn provides one way to broaden the notion of the reform opera.

Although it is not certain that Martello's ideas had successfully convinced the librettists, composers, and public, the prevalent condemnations of arias had a more decisive impact on contemporary librettists. For instance, libretto reformers such as Apostolo Zeno and Pietro Metastasio attempted to reduce the number of arias in favor of recitatives in emulation of tragedy.[18] Grimani was also concerned about the recitatives, which dominated many scenes to convey the narrative and move it forward, advocating that arias should not interrupt the narrative

15) Fubini, "First Polemics," 36, 58.

16) "I believe that a moderate and lovely style befits any opera more than a style that is serious and magnificent, for the art of music, having been invented to delight and uplift the soul, needs to be accompanied by words and emotions expressing all that is delightful. . . [S]uch sounds dispose the mind to gaiety and restore the soul; and as these are all beautiful things, so are the words that recall and recreate them in our imagination." Fubini, "First Polemics," 56. Martello also states that "it lets us live ecstatically in delightful and contented peace, with our senses wide awake and truly happy." Fubini, "First Polemics," 59; cited in Macklem, "Reforming Operas," 97.

17) Macklem, "Reforming Operas," 99.

18) For the opera reforms associated with Zeno and Metastasio, see Nino Pirrotta, "Metastasio and the Demands of his Literary Environment," *Studies in Music* 7, no. 1 (1982), 10-27; Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp, *Handel's Italian Operas 1704-1726* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Strohm, *Dramma per musica*, 203.

fluency of the opera.[19] Paradoxically, a greater emphasis on arias and the *prima donna* remained in reform operas.[20] Considering that the Arcadian critics were not musicians but theorists, the nature of their proposals was inevitably idealistic.[21] This idealistic predisposition created the potential problem of the disparity between theory and practice in aesthetics. It was the composer who revitalized operatic music, enabling it to fulfill the dual purpose of entertaining the audience and embodying the reform ideals through his musical representation, which brings to life the librettist's characterization and dramatization. As will be discussed below, while Grimani provides an updated scene structure and portrayals of three characters (Claudio, Agrippina, and Poppea), Handel's musical representation reinforces their characterizations, makes the aria integral and essential to the drama, and ultimately provides one solution to the conflict between Arcadian aesthetics and contemporary opera.

The Comic Portrayal of Claudio and its Essential Role

Grimani portrays the Emperor Claudio as both ridiculous and heroic. Such a contradictory portrayal resembles one of the rhetorical devices common in mock-heroic genres, namely, a paradoxical depiction of a hero, in which two irreconcilable concepts are juxtaposed in order to subvert the concept of the hero.[22] Grimani could have been aware of this rhetorical

19) Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 188-89.
20) From a conversation with Ayana Smith.
21) Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 20.
22) Ayana O. Smith, "The Mock Heroic, an Intruder in Arcadia: Girolamo Gigli, Antonio Caldara and *L'Anagilda* (Rome, 1711)," *Eighteenth-*

strategy and have made use of it in *Agrippina.* His comic treatment of Claudio serves as an integral part of the plot for several reasons. First, Claudio's comic portrayal not only boosts Agrippina's power over her husband but also facilitates her deception and makes it plausible. Second, Grimani uses Claudio's action to reflect the progress of Agrippina's plan, maintaining the primary focus of the drama. Third, the Emperor's comic portrayal reflects Grimani's concern with pleasing the audience, fulfilling the demands for entertainment. Finally, Grimani's structural organization juxtaposes Claudio's comic and Agrippina's authoritative images, not only heightening the contrast between husband and wife but also illuminating Agrippina's main action.

From the outset, in Claudio's first appearance on stage (I, 21), Grimani establishes Claudio's comic portrayal in stark contrast with Agrippina's authoritative image. This scene begins with Claudio's entrance aria, a shallow love aria addressed to Poppea ("Pur ritorno"). Instead of being in a place that reflects his rank, Claudio appears in Poppea's room. In addition, Claudio's romantic pursuit in his first entrance aria is highly contrasted with Agrippina's first aria, which is full of triumph and confidence ("L'alma mia," I, 6).

Pur ritorno a rimirarvi,	Once again I behold you in wonder,
Vaghe luci, stelle d'amor;	My pretty eyes, my stars of love;
Né mai stanco d'adorarvi	Never tired of worshipping you
Offro in voto e l'alma e'l cor	I offer in tribute my soul and my heart.[23]

Century Music 7, no. 1 (2010), 7.

23) The English translations of the texts throughout this article were rendered by George Hall, as found in the program notes to Handel,

Agrippina's first aria (I, 6)

L'alma mia fra le tempeste	Amidst the tempest
Ritrovar spera il suo porto.	my soul hopes to reach its port.
Di costanza armato ho il petto,	So well have I armed my breast with constancy,
Che d'un regno al dolce aspetto	that with fair land in sight,
Le procelle più funeste	even the most baleful storms
Son oggetti di conforto.	seem objects of comfort.

Handel's musical setting reinforces the contrast between husband and wife. As illustrated in Example 1, Agrippina's aria is composed of majestic unison writing in octaves between oboe and voice, incorporating a highly virtuosic vocal line on the words "l'alma" (mm. 13-15, not shown in the example) and "ritrovar"(mm. 18-20) suitable for a heroic figure. In contrast, as shown in Example 2, Claudio's aria is accompanied by the basso continuo alone. In addition to the light musical texture, the aria presents a "lumbering" quality because of the wide leaps and contrast between dotted and triplet figures. He seems the epitome of the "ungraceful lover" or "unsophisticated"—certainly "comic" in relation to his noble stature.

Moreover, the stepwise melodic contour in conjunction with a gentle dotted rhythmic pattern is pleasing to the ear and also

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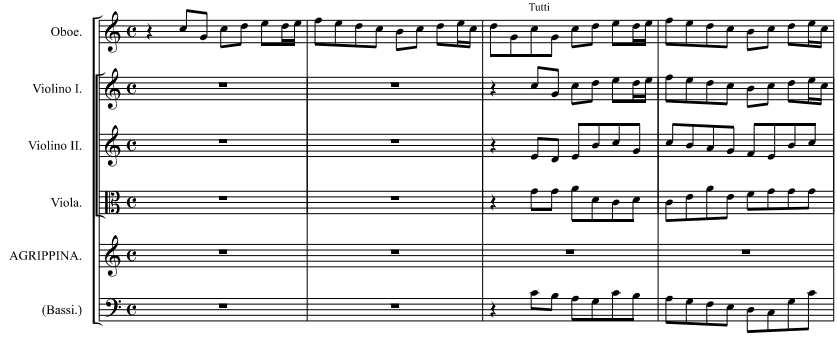
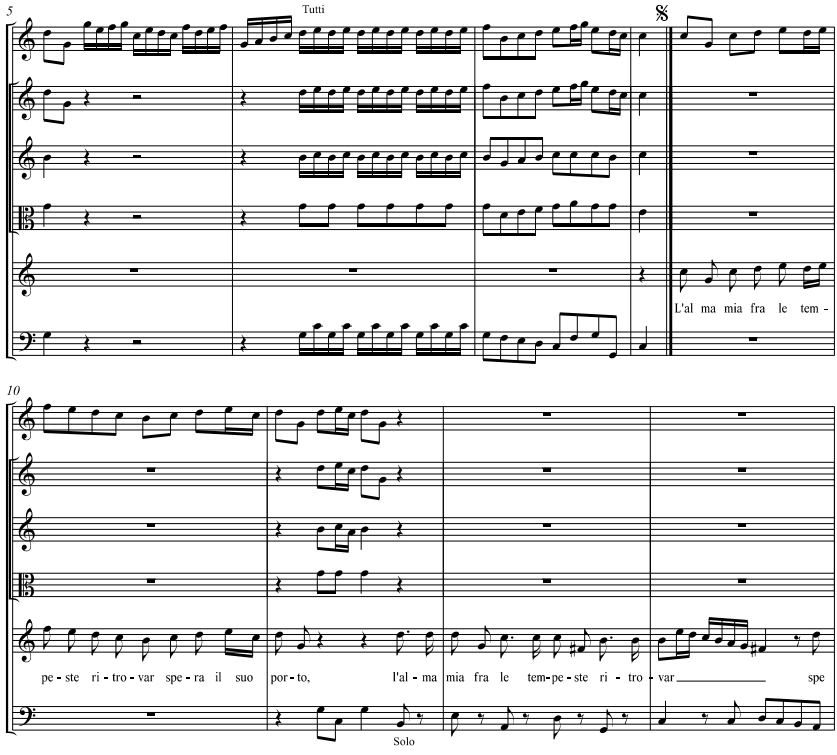
Agrippina, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner and performed by English Baroque Soloists ([Netherlands]: Philips Classics Productions, 438 010-2-438 012-2, 1997), compact disc. For references to the libretto, see *The Librettos of Handel's Operas: A Collection of Seventy-One Librettos Documenting Handel's Operatic Career,* ed. Ellen T. Harris, Vol. 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 275-334; *Handel Opera Libretti,* Vol. 1, ed. Nico Castel and Eugene Green; trans. Hemdi Kfir (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2005).

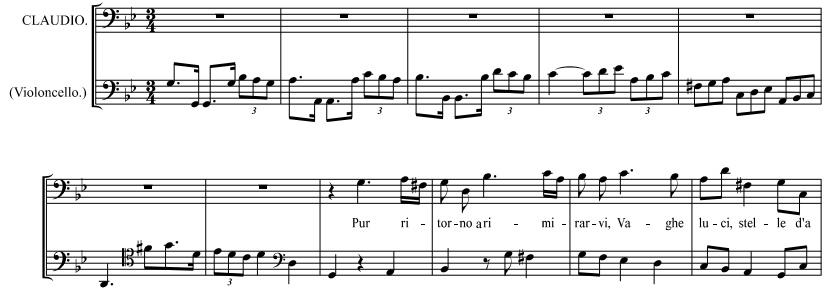
lends a seductive quality, which in turn creates a ridiculous image of the Emperor. Recalling Muratori's connection among "sweet" music, female tenderness, and its trouble for man's rational mind, Claudio's "effeminate" aria is threatening in relation to its impact on the audience, because their minds are "infected" by their senses. Claudio's "feminine" aria, however, does fulfill the dramatic necessity of his ridiculous image, which rather reinforces Agrippina's strong image. Therefore, neither the librettist's dramatic representation of Claudio nor the composer's musical representation is extraneous or contradictory to the idea of verisimilitude.

Example 1. Agrippina, "L'alma mia" (I, 6), ritornello and opening





Example 2. Agrippina, "Pur ritorno" (I, 21), ritornello and opening.



Toward the end of scene 21, Claudio sings a love song to Poppea one more time, now in a form of an arietta ("Vieni, o

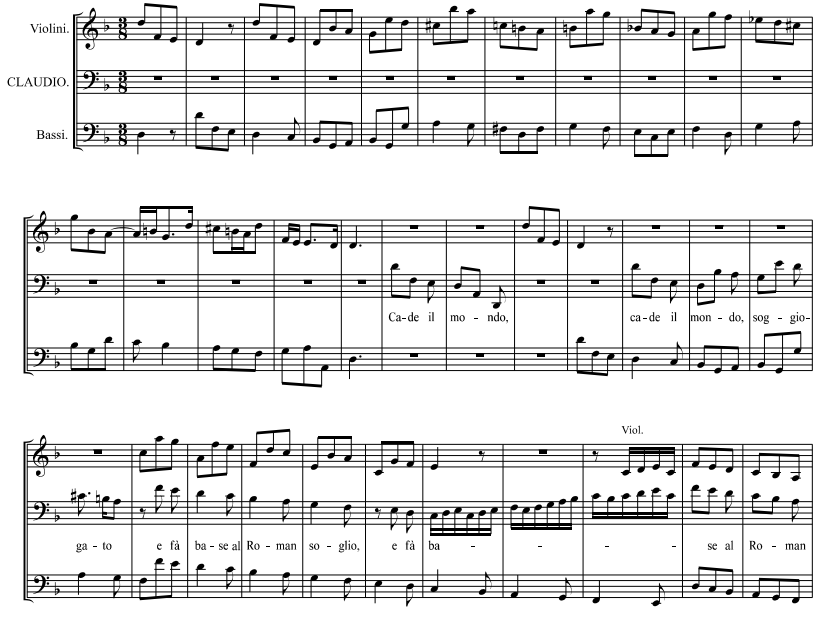
cara"). At first glance, two love arias for Claudio in the same scene seems to be redundant and thus distracting from the narrative. The two arias do not, however, obstruct the narrative flow for two reasons: first, they are brief in both text and music, and second, this scene relies on recitatives that serve to propel the narrative forward. Claudio's entrance aria is part of a consistent structural pattern of entrance or exit arias for major characters. It functions not only as a structural necessity but also as an effective device to establish Claudio's character in a light, comic manner.

Following his arietta, Claudio even comes to the conclusion that Poppea's hesitation to show her love for him represents a chaste woman's excuse. In the next scene, as expected, Claudio and Poppea are informed of Agrippina's arrival and the Emperor now flees. Here Grimani effectively uses a Trio to enhance this crisis, overlapping three statements by Claudio, Poppea, and Lesbo to highlight the urgency. Grimani again imbues Claudio's portrayal with a comical element: Claudio, as he flees, laments his unfulfilled love, "When, my lovely, shall I enjoy your love?" Moreover, Grimani thwarted the convention of an exit aria for Claudio, instead making his exit look hasty and ridiculous. The librettist thus allows the narrative to proceed without interruption until the next scene, where Agrippina is dominant and sings her deceptive exit aria with confidence. Grimani successfully achieves dramatic tension and continuity between the scenes by cutting out an exit aria for the Emperor. But instead he lends gravity to Agrippina's exit aria in the following scene, just as a composer commonly undermines a cadence to achieve musical continuity.

In Act 2, scene 4, Claudio appears on a triumphal chariot, acclaimed by the crowd as well as by all the main and minor characters. In his recitative and aria, he declares his authoritative position in Rome and the dignity of the Empire. His previous comical portrayal is seemingly transformed into such a dignified image. Yet it is not hard to imagine that all the characters are pretending to acclaim the weak Emperor, and are probably scorning him inwardly as the Emperor attempts to declare his authority. Perhaps contemporary audiences also shared a similar attitude toward the Emperor. Claudio, indeed, never loses his shallow romantic preoccupation in this public, official sphere, as he responds to Poppea's acclaim: "I'm grateful for your words. (Aside, to Poppea) You know how I adore you." Grimani thus makes Claudio's comic portrayal consistent even in his supposedly dignified realm.

Handel also captures Grimani's double layer of meaning in Claudio's aria, "Cade il mondo soggiogato" (II, 4). From the outset, as illustrated in Example 3, the constantly angular melodic contour in the violin and bassi of the ritornello seems to mock the Emperor, reminding us of the scorn of the people surrounding him. The initial statement, "Cade il mondo," attracts our attention by a strikingly falling melodic line encompassing two octaves.

Example 3. Agrippina, "Cade il mondo" (II, 4), ritornello and opening



At first glance, this passage suggests the Emperor's dignified image, exploring a serious tone in a low range. Yet it is likely that Handel is intending to push the limit of the range for the bass, exaggerating the Emperor's clumsy declaration of dignity. The composer uses extreme musical elements to mock the Emperor. Moreover, his singing style shifts constantly and abruptly as well as proceeding in a series of different musical figures: as shown in Example 3, an angular and leaping motive, followed by a descending line doubled at the octave, and then ascending florid passage work. These disconnected musical figures help decrease the sense of authority of the Emperor, again contributing to his ridiculous image. In the same scene, Claudio's portrayal also reflects Agrippina's progress in her

plan. Claudio's jealousy, triggered by Poppea, now leads him to reject Otho as a traitor (behind everything lies Agrippina's conspiracy, thus again confirming her triumph). Scene 4, discussed above, thus illustrates how Grimani and Handel subvert a potentially authoritative image of the Emperor to mock him; and how they continue using Claudio's comic portrayal to reflect Agrippina's progress in her plan.

At the end of Act II, Claudio's indecisiveness culminates when Agrippina keeps asking him to grant the succession of his throne to Nero (scenes 18-19). His impetuous quality leads him to acquiesce to his wife because he is in a hurry to meet Poppea. His exit aria ("Basta, che sol tù chieda," II, 19), a love song to Agrippina, is contrasted with her exit aria in the following scene, which is full of resilience, confidence, and hope ("Ogni vento"). The unit of scenes 18-20 has a parallel with that of scenes 21-23 in Act I. As shown in Table 1, both units begin an action or entrance aria for Claudio and conclude with an exit aria for Agrippina. The first two scenes of each unit portray Claudio's character in a comic manner and show how he is deceived by Agrippina's plan, whereas the last scene concentrates on Agrippina's triumph, menace, and power.

Table 1. Claudio's appearances in Act I and II

	Structure	Key Phrases from Libretto
I, 21	Aria: "Pur ritorno a rimirarvi" (Claudio);	Once again I behold you in wonder, my pretty eyes, my stars of love; never tired of worshipping you I offer in tribute my soul and my heart.

	Structure	Key Phrases from Libretto
	Recit;	
	Arietta: "Vieni, o cara" (Claudio);	Come, my dear, so that in a tight embrace love may prepare our sweet delight!
I, 22	Recit;	
	Trio;	And when, my lovely, shall I enjoy your love? (Claudio) Whenever you wish! (Poppea) Let's go, my lord! (Lesbo)
	Recit	
I, 23	Recit; Aria: "Non hò cor che per amarti" (Agrippna)	
II, 4	Recit;	I am grateful for your words. (Aside, to Poppea) You know how I adore you. (Claudio)
	Aria: "Cade il Mondo soggiogato" (Claudio);	Let the subject world itself become the foundation of the Roman throne. For what a happy realm is that subject to the Capitol!
	Series of exit arias for Agrippina, Poppea, and Nero	
II, 18	Recit	
II, 19	Recit;	
	Aria: "Basta, che sol tù chieda" (Claudio)	It is enough for you to ask / for me to give, / my pretty lips, / As soon as I see you, / my heart is lost, / my pretty cheeks.
II, 20	Recit;	
	Aria: "Ogni vento" (Agrippina)	

Grimani's comic portrayal of Claudio primarily stems from his political and diplomatic views in opposition to Pope Clement XI, using them as a way to mock the Pope.[24] It also reflects his concern to please the audience as well as share with his contemporaries the idea of comic elements being necessary for drama. The presence of comic elements, indispensable for intensifying the mock-heroic quality, is also evident in a contemporaneous reform opera, *L'Anagilda* of Girolamo Gigli and Antonio Caldara (Rome, 1711).[25] Gigli believes that the libretto demands comic elements because of its lively characterization and entertainment value, and as Ayana Smith argues, his belief was indeed sympathetic to his contemporaries.[26]

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24) Reinhard Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-70; Saunders, "Handel's Agrippina," 89.

25) Substantial discussion of this opera is found in Smith, "Mock-heroic," 51-84.

As in Grimani's *Agrippina, L'Angilda* contains the comic portrayal of a heroic figure and his feminization, in conjunction with two active women who usurp male authority: both elements, at first glance, are contradictory to Arcadian ideals but they provide another way to reinvigorate Arcadian aesthetics. Although Gigli's opera was performed in a different city, Rome, his concern about comic elements in the context of Venetian tradition may link to Grimani's use.

Gigli explains his new insertion of comic elements into the original version, prompted by the request of his patron, Francesco Maria Ruspoli, as well as his attempts to entertain the audience by analogy with Venetian operatic practices: "The author, by request of the generous personage who is bringing it to the stage, and whom it is a privilege to serve, has inserted two comic characters pulled from the narrative thread (as now is done on the Venetian stages and elsewhere), around whom the intermezzos themselves, composed of delightful dance inventions and apparitions for greater entertainment, are woven." Cited in Smith, "Mock-heroic," 4-5.

26) Smith, "Mock-heroic," 4, observes that "at least five subsequent versions of the libretto (the Florentine, both Mantua, and the Veronese and the Venetian productions) each added two comic characters, with

In the case of Grimani, as discussed in the scenes above, he regarded comic elements as essential both to the narrative and to the audience's demand for entertainment. His comic representations are heightened by his astute sense of structural organization for dramatic coherence and his exploitation of operatic conventions, particularly the use of an exit aria that facilitates the narrative fluency.

Representations of Agrippina and Poppea from Tacitus to Grimani/Handel

Grimani's *Agrippina,* despite its fictional story, is based on historical characters and events surrounding the succession of the Roman Emperor Claudius and his wife Agrippina's conspiracy to place her son, Nerone, on the throne. Agrippina, throughout the opera, is portrayed as a deceptive, manipulative, self-confident, and resilient character. Grimani's portrayal of Agrippina, in fact, remains faithful to that in the writings of Tacitus.[27] In his *Annals,* Tacitus explores the virtues and vices

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each version representing new material."

27) Tacitus' writings provided the primary historical source for seventeenth-century operas and theatrical works, beginning with Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643) and developed in other operas during the second half of the century, including *Claudio Cesare* (1672) by Giovanni Boretti. Wendy Heller, "Poppea's Legacy: The Julio-Claudians on the Venetian Stage," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no. 3 (2006), 379-99. It is likely that Grimani was also familiar with other historical accounts of the incidents surrounding Agrippina, as illustrated in Dio Cassius's *Roman History* and Suetonius's *Life of the Caesars*. Despite the different points that each author emphasized, most scholars believe that the conformity and similarities in the writings by Tacitus, Dio Cassius, and Suetonius suggest they relied on common sources. Ronald Meller, *Tacitus* (London: Routledge, 1993), 33; Wendy Heller, "Chastity, Heroism, and Allure: Women in the Opera of

of the historical characters in the Roman Empire, including the emperors Claudius and Nero. When it comes to the imperial women, Tacitus has a tendency to describe their ambitions, desires, excesses, and power; to condemn them because they often indulged in sexual license; and to use them as examples of the danger of female power. In what follows I discuss Tacitus' descriptions of Agrippina to contextualize the image and perception of the powerful imperial women. Then musical analyses of Agrippina's arias focus on the idea of female deception and its musical representation.

According to Tacitus, Agrippina represents the lust for power. Tacitus condemned not only Agrippina's political use of her sexuality but also the rampant sexual license of the imperial women, in keeping with his desire to improve the morals of the reader.[28] Tacitus also identifies Agrippina's rule as masculine,

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Seventeenth-Century Venice" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1995), 230, n.11.

28) Tacitus wrote that Agrippina's marriage with Claudio already represented her ambition and deception, because of her seduction of Claudio and her ploy to marry him: "[I]t was by Agrippina's charms. On the pretext of her relationship, she paid frequent visits to her uncle [Claudius], and so won his heart, that she was preferred to the others [other candidates], and, though not yet his wife, already possessed a wife's power." Tacitus, *Annals,* 12. 3, in *The Complete Works of Tacitus,* trans. Alfred Church and William Jackson Brodribb, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: Modern Library, 1942), 251. Also noted in Leonard E. Hardy, "The Imperial Women in Tacitus' *Annales*" (Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, 1976), 160; and Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 184. Agrippina came from the Roman aristocracy and was educated in a conservative spirit, as was expected of the daughters of that social group.

Agrippina seduced her uncle Claudius into marriage, while also having sexual relations with his freedmen. Furthermore, she was rumored to have had a sexual relationship with her son to maintain her control over him. Mellor, *Tacitus,* 53; Heller, "Chastity, Heroism," 235, n. 20.

emphasizing a greater firmness and consistency of policy under her control.[29] He describes how Agrippina "knew no feminine weakness. Intolerant of rivalry, thirsting for power, she had a man's preoccupations."[30] Tacitus' descriptions of her reflect his negative view of female rulers, a phenomenon he found abhorrent to Roman society. Poppea, according to Tacitus, was a beautiful woman possessing "every asset except goodness" and the ultimate husband-stealing seductress.[31] Tacitus also described her "clever speech," which in *Agrippina* plays a significant role in conveying her ability to persuade the men who surround her.[32] Poppea was also as ambitious as

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Tacitus also observes that she destroyed her competitor and manipulated the Emperor into preferring Nero to his own son, Britannicus. For one example, Agrippina held a grudge against her rivalry, Lollia, and arranged for charges against her: "Agrippina, who was terrible in her hatred and detested Lollia, for having competed with her for the emperor's hand, planned an accusation." Tacitus, *Annals,* 12. 22 (pp. 259-60); 12. 3 (p. 251). Yet there is An alternative way to view Agrippina's ambition. Guglielmo Ferrero believes that her marriage to Claudius could have been an "act of supreme self-sacrifice," because an educated, aristocratic Roman woman was expected to serve towards the political advancement of her relatives. Ferrero, "Agrippina, the Mother of Nero," in *The Women of the Caesars* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 202. In addition, her desire to see her son on the throne, despite her cruelty in the process, could be seen as her attempt to bring her son into the royal family precisely for the purpose of giving it strength. Ferrero, "Agrippina, the Mother of Nero," 214.

29) "[E]verything was under the control of a woman. . . . It was a stringent, and, so to say, masculine despotism; there was sternness and generally arrogance in public, no sort of immodesty at home, unless it conduced to power." *Complete Works of Tacitus,* 253. Agrippina also became the first empress to bear the honorable title Augusta. Ibid., 261.

30) Tacitus, *Annals,* 11. 31; also cited in Heller, "Chastity, Heroism," 239.

31) "[T]o her [Poppea], married or bachelor bedfellows were alike." Tacitus, *Annals,* 13. 45; Heller, "Chastity, Heroism," 231.

32) In the defense of woman into a debate about the discontented female social position, Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1652), a Venetian nun, in her

Agrippina, acting as Nero's advisor despite being considered of lesser intelligence.[33] Agrippina was not, however, a woman to give in, and continued the struggle against her son and Poppe a.[34] In Grimani's *Agrippina,* Nero's rebellion and Poppea's seductiveness are absent. As will be further demonstrated, however, Grimani's increasing interest in the role of Poppea becomes noticeable as the drama progresses, anticipating the power shift from Agrippina to Poppea. The final act represents a power struggle between the two women. Both the struggle and the shift stem from historical incidents.

In Grimani and Handel's *Agrippina,* the portrayals of the two women, Agrippina and Poppea, are understood as an extension of the Venetian operatic tradition with respect to the representation of women, reflecting a conflict between the contemporary standards for female virtue and the rhetorical power of the women in the opera.[35] Yet at the same time,

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Tirannia paterna (1654) proposes that female beauty, a gift of God, serves as a means for female self-expression. See Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 66.

33) Heller, "Chastity, Heroism," 231. In particular, Poppea's liberal ideas, which affected Nero's policies, were strongly opposed to Agrippina's aristocratic style of government, accelerating her decline, in contrast to the Nero's increasing popularity. Ferrero, "Agrippina," 235.

34) Agrippina's strong opposition to the relationship between Nero and Poppea created the main conflict between mother and son. Tacitus describes Poppea's goal of marriage to Nero, and Agrippina who stood in the way: "While Agrippina lived, Poppea saw no hope of his [Nero] divorcing Octavia and marrying her. So she nagged and mocked him incessantly. . . she said, 'why these postponements of our marriage? I suppose my looks and victorious ancestors are not good enough. Or do you distrust my capacity to bear children? Or the sincerity of my love?'" Tacitus, *Annals,* 14. 1; Heller, "Chastity, Heroism," 232.

Grimani's treatment of the two women is atypical, in that he avoids their explicitly sexual ploys. Agrippina's seductive behavior to entice male characters—Pallante and even her son Nero—are absent from his story. Poppea's trademark, her sexual power, is transformed into the image of a Roman lady who bears a pure love toward Ottone. That no overtly seductive scene appears in the portrayals of Agrippina and Poppea may indicate the project of the Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo, owned by the Grimani family: to restore and preserve "decorum."[36]

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35) Tacitus's negative views about imperial women, including Agrippina and Poppea, provided one primary source for seventeenth-century librettists and composers in Venice for the highly critical representation of female power, ambition, and sexuality. As Wendy Heller discusses at length, anxiety and ambivalence about female power were prevalent phenomena in Venetian intellectual, male-dominated societies, as represented in the activities of the Accademia degli Incogniti. Heller, "Chastity, Heroism"; Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence.*

36) For further discussion of the Grimani theater in a Venetian operatic context, see Harris Sheridan Saunders, "The Repertoire of a Venetian Opera House (1678-1714): The Teatro Grimani di San Giovanni Grisostomo" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985), particularly at 64; Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: the Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 395-98. Rosand points out that the Grimani family's attempts to preserve decorum also resulted in more highly elaborate spectacles as well as the considerably higher ticket prices, to aim for the aristocratic audience at the Grisostomo theater, compared with those at smaller theaters.

The Grimani family consciously attempted to elevate drama in the 1690s under the name of decorum and defined their theater as a noble conception. The aesthetic of decorum is closely connected with the ideal of the Accademia degli Animosi, of which Grimani himself was a member. The academy was conceived of as the Venetian branch of the Arcadian Academy, promoting operatic reform. The relationship between the Animosi and the Arcadian Academy is discussed in Saunders, "Repertoire," 28-54, particularly at 29-30.

Against this background, the Grisostomo theater introduced the first reform librettos to appear on the stage of the Venetian theater shortly after 1690, embodying the restoration of decorum in Venetian opera

Although Grimani removed explicit sexual display on stage, the collective understanding of the audience—based on the writings of Tacitus and contemporary Venetian critics—would have shaped their perceptions of the two women.[37] In the context of the ongoing polemics of female power in Venetian society, it is clear that for the Venetian audience of the time, the names of Agrippina and Poppea represented a disruptive female sexual appeal, ambition, and lust. In the portrayal of Poppea, her sincerity to Ottone in the drama would have been placed in doubt for the audience, more familiar with her as a sexual object in love entanglements with Nero and Ottone in *L'incoronazione di Poppea,* and thus likely to draw parallels with the relationships to Claudius, Ottone, and Nero in *Agrippina.* As will be illustrated in one of Poppea's arias, "Vaghe perle, eletti fiori" (I, 14), it is the composer who captures the prevailing view of the audience.

In his *Discorso sopra l'endimione* (1690, published 1692), another Arcadian, Gravina, discusses how the audience's preconceived views construct the basis of a "truthful" image. Gravina proposes and develops a theory of "image of truth" in combination with dramatic representation and the prevalent understanding of the audience.[38] Ayana Smith points out that in

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and theater. Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice,* 397.

37) *Agrppina* was indeed enthusiastically received by the Venetian public and familiar to them. For the favorable reception, see John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel,* with foreword by J. Merrill Knapp (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 52-53; Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Italian Operas*, 93.

38) Smith, "On Tupos: Iconography and Versimilitude in Early Arcadia," *Music in Art: International Journal of Music Iconography* 34 (2009), 6-10.

Gravina's theory of image, although the representation departs from the audience's average understanding, the audience "recognizes the inherent falsities of the work and thereby becomes aware of the fiction."[39] Gravina's notion of the interrelationships among the image of an object, its representation, and the audience's perception broadens the idea of verisimilitude. His notion also causes us to consider the transformed portrayal of Poppea in relation to the audience's pre-conceived notion of her character.

Then how did Grimani and Handel portray Poppea's character in response to the "collective views" of the audience? In her entrance aria, "Vaghe perle, eletti fiori" (I, 14), she simply enjoys her jewelry, her beauty, and men's feelings for her:

(davanti allo specchio)	(before the mirror)
Vaghe perle, eletti fiori,	You precious pearls, you choice flowers,
Adornatemi la fronte!	adorn my brow!
Accrescete a mia bellezza	Increase the rarity
La vaghezza,	of my beauty.
Che a svegliar nei petti amori	To awaken love in men's hearts
Ho nel cor le voglie pronte	I have in mind a ready desire.

In the following recitative, she considers how to handle the

39) Smith, "On Tupos," 10: "the poet needing to suggest the truth by means of fiction, and create belief with the similitude truth, has no doubt, that when he narrates something contrary to ancient and commonly held beliefs, the belief of others is diverted (or, distracted) and a certain bitterness of the senses is created."

Smith also argues that his notion of "commonly held belief" in relation to the image of truth reveals his focus on the audience's emotional responses, and by extension, "a holistic process involving text, representation, and audience." Smith, "On Tupos," 10.

advances of three men—Ottone, Claudio, and Nero—saying "they no longer know whether I speak the truth, or deceive" (I, 14). This statement recalls her immoral relationships with men in seventeenth-century eyes, and serves to anticipate her deceptive actions in Act III of the drama, as will be shown in Table 2 below. From the outset, despite his transformation of Poppea's portrayal, Grimani alludes to her historical and dramatic representation as the audience would have seen it. It is the composer who makes her sincerity doubtful, as if responding to the audience's notions of her true nature.

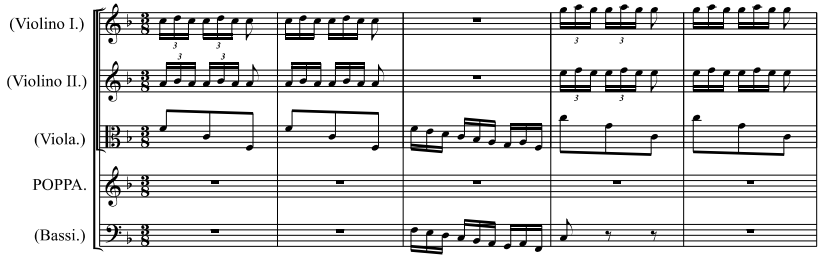
Handel's musical setting of "Vaghe perle" embodies the simultaneous representations of Poppea's ostensible innocence on the one hand and the prevailing distrust of her true nature on the other hand. As illustrated in Example 4a, the ritornello encapsulates the tension between her outward simplicity and the inherent danger she presents to the male characters. The key of F major and the murmuring motive in parallel thirds evoke pastoral associations—although the two violins take the roles of the winds typical of pastoral settings—lending an innocent quality to Poppea's sphere.

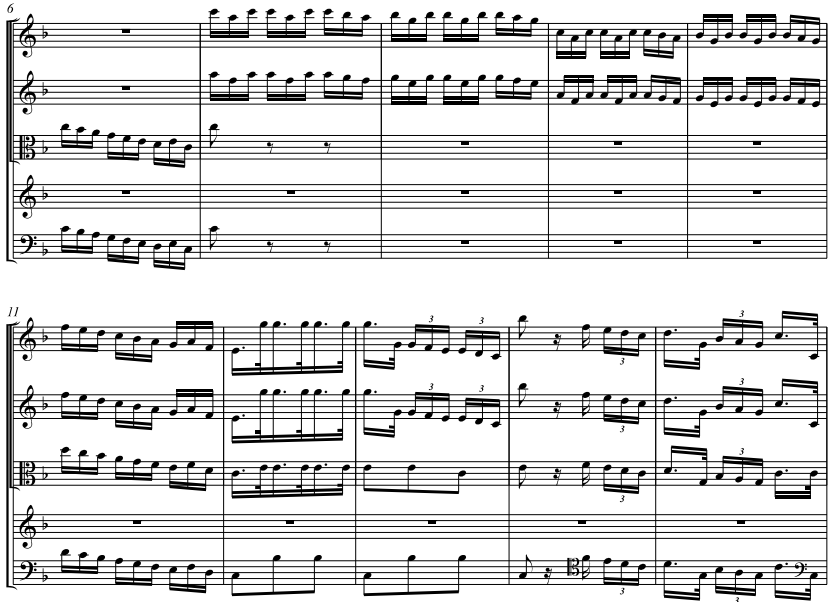
Yet the murmuring pastoral motive is answered by a descending scale motive in the viola and bassi in m. 3. The two different motives in the violins and viola/ bassi are juxtaposed, creating a contrast between high and low range that is further heightened by the contrast between *piano* and *forte* when the motives are restated (mm. 9-11). Eventually, the pastoral motive disappears. The strongly directed scale motive (m. 11) turns into a more majestic motive (from m. 12), characterized by an insistent dotted rhythm, abrupt leaps, and harmonically directed

motion. The initial vocal statement "Vaghe perle," then calls immediate attention in its isolation from the rest of the musical material. Poppea's vocal statement takes the idea not from the pervasive pastoral motive but from the straightforward motive f2 -c2-f1, pitting it against (certainly not aligning itself with) the pastoral innocence. Throughout the aria, the interjections of both the dotted motive and the scale (shown in the last measure of the example) also make her purity doubtful, as if conveying the audience's probable distrust of her.

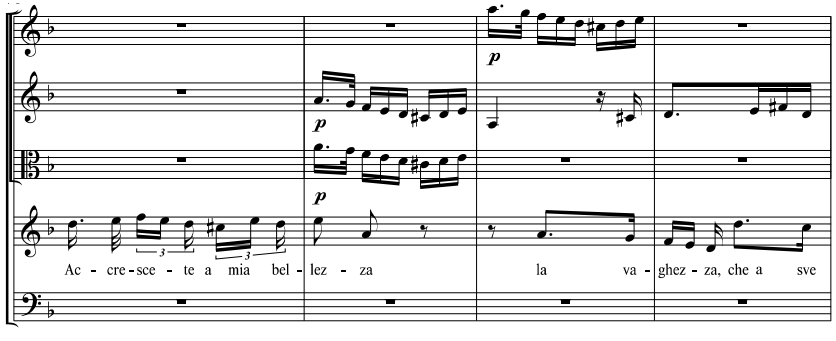
In the B section of the da capo aria form, as shown in Example 4b, the rising and falling scale motive is subject to interjection and contrast with the mostly stepwise vocal melody, as if conveying s a constant musical "doubt" about her innocence. In addition, as illustrated in Example 4c, Agrippina's highly virtuosic passages on the words "vaghe" and "adornatemi" reinforce the distrust of her sincerity in the drama, because she transforms the murmuring motive into angularly fluctuating figures on "adornate" in her own voice.

Example 4a. *Agrippina,* "Vaghe perle, eletti fiori" (I, 14), ritornello and opening

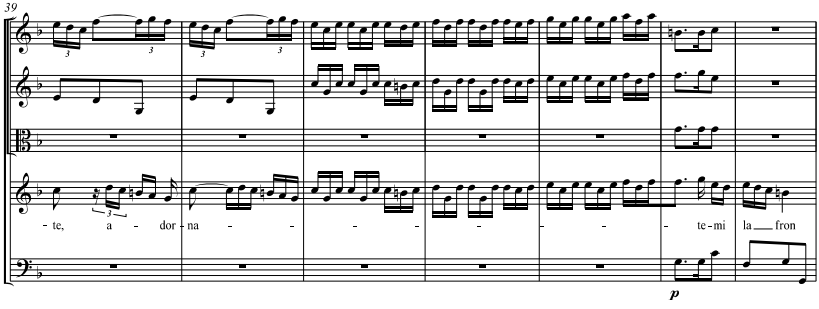




Example 4b. Agrippina, "Vaghe perle" (I, 14), opening of B section, mm. 70–73



Example 4c. Agrippina, "Vaghe perle" (I, 14), mm. 39-45



Grimani also portrays Poppea as possessing Agrippinian ambition to underscore the conflict between the two imperial women as well as the image of a powerful, active woman. In Act III, for instance, Poppea's counter-deception against Agrippina initiates other characters' actions, just as Agrippina's did in Act I. For this reason, it is no coincidence that there is a parallel scene structure between Agrippina's deception in Act I and Poppea's in Act III, as shown in Table 2.

In the first section of Act I, Agrippina's recitative (scene 1), where she devises a scheme to achieve her goal, is followed by Nero's admiration of his mother in his aria ("Col saggio tuo consiglio," I, 2), stating "your wise counsel … I will adore."[40] In

40) Act I is divided into three sections. The three different places—Agrippina's drawing rom, the Piazza of the Capital Square, and Poppea's room—correspond to those where Agrippina interacts with different characters and manipulates them in order: Pallante and Narcisso, Ottone, and Poppea. Smith, "Opera in Arcadia," 189, n. 54, discusses how the three sections portrays Agrippina's initiation of her plan, her plans discouraged by Claudio's arrival, and her deceitful request for Poppea's help. In the second section, however, I would like to focus on the people with whom Agrippina interacts, because of not only the parallel situations but also her characterization as a strategic schemer.

subsequent scenes, she manipulates Pallante and Narciso, the freedmen of her allies, and prompts their actions (scenes 3-5), concluding with her triumphant aria (scene 6). Similarly, Act III begins with Poppea's recitative, where she informs Ottone of her plot (scenes 1-3). Ottone, like Nero, is subservient to Poppea, showing his reliance on her plan—"I will be silent"— in his aria, "Tacerò, tacerò" (III, 2). In successive scenes, Claudio and Nero are deceived by Poppea, while Ottone observes her deception (scenes 4-8). Finally, Poppea achieves success (scene 9), leading Poppea and Ottone to sing their victory in alternation (scene 10). Poppea's counter-deception to Agrippina's makes her role as prominent as Agrippina's. Poppea is also given almost as many arias as Agrippina throughout the opera; the former has only one more. Moreover, her revenge against Agrippina brings out the Empress' resilience. Her manipulation of Claudio also helps to convey the Emperor's lack of intelligence. Her actions thus recall Agrippina's, capturing the image of powerful women in the opera.

Table 2.The sequence of Agrippina and Poppea's deceptions in Act I and III

Act I, 1-6 Agrippina's room			Act III, 1-10 Poppea's room		
1	Recit; Aria (N): Con saggio tuo consiglio	Agrippina, Nerone	1	Recit	Poppea
2	Recit	Agrippina	2	Recit; Aria (O): Tacerò	Poppea, Ottone
3	Recit; Aria (P): La mia sorte fortunata	**Pallante,** Agrippina	3	Recit	Poppea

Act I, 1-6 Agrippina's room			Act III, 1-10 Poppea's room		
4	Recit	Agrippina	4	Recit; Aria (N): Coll'ardor	Nerone, Poppea, Ottone
5	Recit; Aria (N): Volo pronto	**Narciso,** Agrippina	5	Recit	Poppea
			6	Recit	Lesbo, Poppea, **Claudio,** Ottone
			7	Recit	Claudio, **Nerone,** Poppea, Ottone
			8	Recit; **Aria (C):** Io di Roma	Poppea, Claudio,
6	Recit; **Aria (A):** L'alma mia	Agrippina	9	Recit	Poppea
			10	Recit; **Aria (O):** Pur ch'io ti stringa; **Aria (P):** Bel piacere	Poppea, Ottone,

Agrippina's "Masking"

Grimani and Handel's representation of Agrippina throughout her arias, as delineated in Table 3, underscores her "masculine" personality and deception, as Tacitus highlighted, but also depicts her other aspects. Her first aria, "L'alma mia sorte fortunate" (I, 6), as discussed above (Ex. 1), establishes her self-confidence and triumphant spirit, which continues in most

of her following arias. Her deception and menacing characteristics are evident in three arias where she manipulates the three characters—Ottone ("Tù ben degno," I, 12), Poppea ("Non hò cor che per amarti," I, 23), and Claudio ("Se vuoi pace," III, 14). Her resilience during her crisis culminates in "Pensieri" (II, 13). In both "Ho un non so nel cor" (I, 18) and "Ogni vento ch'al porto lo spinga" (II, 20), she enjoys relaxation, triumph, and self-confidence after she successfully deceives others people.

Table 3. Agrippina's arias/arietta

	Titles	Dominant affect	Musical elements
I/ 6	L'alma mia sorte fortunata	triumph; confidence	unison writing; virtuosic passage
I/12	Tù ben degno (to Ottone)	menace; deceit	contrasting motives
I/18	Ho un non so ne cor	confidence; menace	unison writing throughout
I/23	Non hò cor (to Poppea)	deceit; menace; triumph	gavotte rhythm; parallel thirds in oboes
II/ 4	Nulla sperar da me (arietta)	arrogance; disdain	short, straightforward motives & harmony
II/13	Pensieri, voi mi tormentate!	torment; anxiety; guilt; resolution	unison writing; dotted rhythm
II/20	Ogni vento ch'al porto Io spinga	hope, confidence; resilience	dance-like rhythm
III/14	Se vuoi pace (to Claudio)	deception; confidence	triple-meter/dance-like rhythm

Agrippina's aria to Ottone (I, 12) demonstrates how both Grimani and Handel effectively capture a shift of mode from Agrippina's outward to inner deception. In the A section of the da capo aria

form, Grimani divides the four-line section in half in response to the duality of the text.[41] The librettist distinguishes Agrippina's flattering presentation of Ottone as a potential successor in the first two lines from her inner feeling of anger in parentheses in the last two lines:

Tu ben degno	Right worthy are you
Sei dell'allor.	of the laurel
(Ma disdegno	(My heart meanwhile
Arde il mio cor.)	Is aflame with anger [disdain])

The duality of the text creates tension between communication and miscommunication. Her statement in parentheses leads the audience to perceive her deceit and communicate with her, whereas Ottone is unaware of her deception, naively responds to her, and is not connected to the audience.

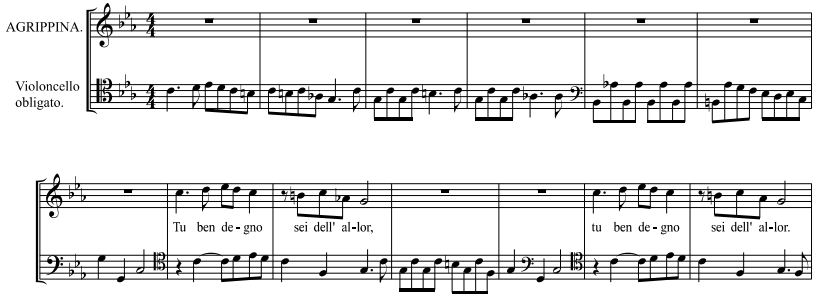
Handel's musical setting of this aria reinforces Agrippina's deception and the duality of her words. As shown in Example 5a, from the outset, the ritornello presents the conjunct motive in mm. 1-2 in contrast with the leaping motive in mm. 3-5. These contrasting musical elements depict the contrast between Agrippina's outward and inward words.[42] The vocal line (mm. 8-9) takes the conjunct line, yet is answered by and juxtaposed with the contrasting motive in the accompaniment (m. 10). A similar procedure continues over the course of the aria.

When Agrippina reveals her inner disdain (the third and

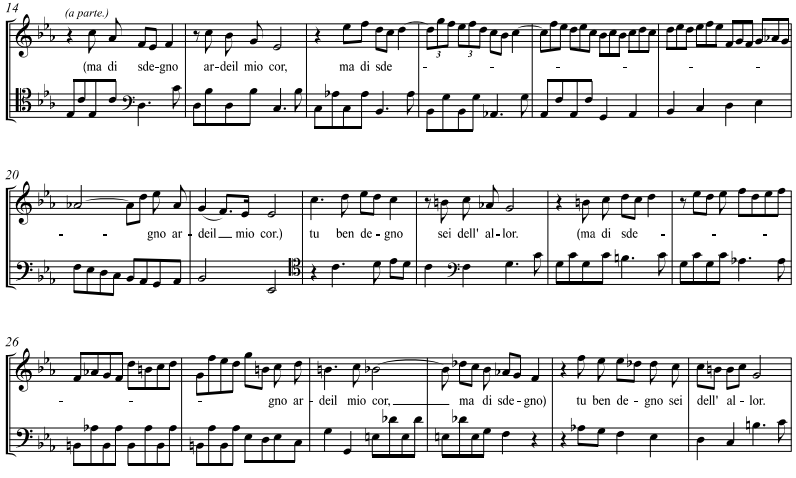
41) This is noticed in John E. Sawyer, "Irony and Borrowing in Handel's 'Agrippina,'" *Music & Letters* 80 no. 4 (1999), 534.
42) Sawyer, "Irony and Borrowing," 534-35.

fourth lines in parentheses), as illustrated in Example 5b, the "leaping" motive is combined with her angular and fragmented melodic line. This phrase leads to a virtuosic passage on the word *"disdegno"* ("disdain"), conveying a sense of her inner menacing characteristic; such a characteristic is deepened by reshaping the conventional virtuosic passage into an irregular contour in mm. 25-27.

Example 5a. *Agrippina,* "Tu ben degno" (I, 12), ritornello and opening



Example 5b. *Agrippina,* "Tu ben degno" (I, 12), mm. 14-31



Handel also highlights Agrippina's deceptive mode by exploring two more musical elements contradictory to her true nature. First, he uses the sole accompaniment of a continuo part in this aria, creating a lighter musical texture that reflects her concealment of her heroic nature. Second, F minor evokes an ominous mood in contradiction to her overt flattery. At the same time, F minor anticipates Ottone's fate, because it is also used in his lament (II, 5) after he is abandoned by Agrippina and others as a result of her manipulation. For this reason, it is hardly a coincidence that the key connects these two arias to present the cause and effect of Agrippina's deceit and thus her power.

Handel also deploys contrasting motives to reinforce the portrayal of Agrippina's deceptive mode in "Non hò cor" (I, 23), where she declares her strong sense of friendship with Poppea:

Non ho cor che per amarti	My heart exists only to love you;
Sempre amico a te sará	I shall always be your friend.
Con sincere e puro affetto	With pure and sincere affection
Io ti stringo a questo petto;	I bind myself to your breast:
Mai di frodi, inganni ed arti	may trickery, deception and cunning
Sia tra noi l'infedeltà	never come between us.

The text of this aria does not explicitly convey Agrippina's duality, in contrast with that in her aria to Ottone, "Tù ben degno," discussed above. Yet, as illustrated in Example 6, Handel captures her outwardly faithful love for Poppea and her inwardly deceptive mind, juxtaposing the emphatic dotted rhythms associated with gavotte and the winds' murmuring in parallel intervals.[43)]

The dominant affect of this aria is Agrippina's triumph, joy, self-confidence, and deception. In the previous scene, she had deceived Poppea, who successfully carried out Agrippina's plan to deceive the Emperor. Thus Agrippina's deceptive mode coexists with her victory and joy. The gavotte rhythm, according to Johann Mattheson, is associated with "triumphant joy."[44] It is thus appropriately used to convey a sense of her joy and at the same time deceives the audience into feeling pleasure. In addition, the vocal line, which takes from the accentuated dotted rhythm from the ritornello, conveys her steadfast sincerity to Poppea and thus her powerful rhetoric, while simultaneously the minor mode and the wavering figures in the winds disclose her deceptive character.[45] Moreover, the cello in mm. 19-21 has an angular melodic contour, which alternates rising and falling: its instability in a melodic and harmonic direction is contrasted with the clearly articulated, emphatic vocal line. The constant simultaneity of the two distinctive motives effectively captures

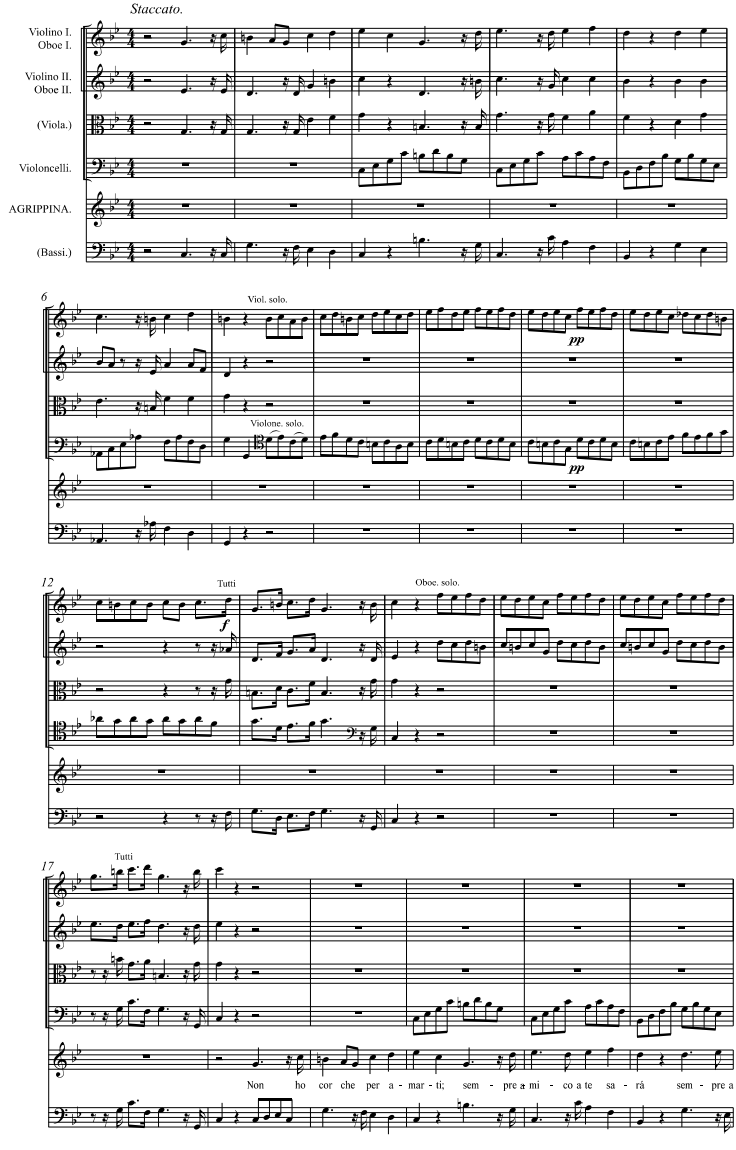
43) Sawyer, "Irony and Borrowing," 533.

44) Gavotte in Baroque era is one of the most common stylized dances, used in both instrumental and vocal works, and characterized by duple meter, moderate tempo, and four-bar phrasing structure. It explores various rhythmic figures: one of the most common is dotted [quarter note]-[eighth note] figures at the beginnings of measures. Meredith Ellis Little cites Mattheson's association of "triumphant joy" with the gavotte in her article "Gavotte," *Grove Music Online,* s.v. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com, accessed 10 February 2017. "Triumphant joy," however, is not an extreme emotional expression, because most of the other affects associated with the gavotte include "pleasant, tender" qualities as well as a pastoral overtone. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1768) also claims that although the gavotte commonly refers to a "gay" dance, it could also be used for slow and tender dances.

45) Sawyer, "Irony and Borrowing," 533, uses this musical interpretation to show that the example is a case of Handel's musical irony and ambiguity.

the simultaneity of Agrippina's self-confidence and menacing quality, equally emblematic of Agrippina's image.

Example 6. *Agrippina,* "Non hò cor" (I, 23), ritornello and opening.



In the final act, Agrippina's deceptive trait leads her to capture the Emperor's inability to make decisions. In her aria "Se vuoi pace" (III, 14), she immediately responds to his words "I want peace and tranquility to reign in our heats."

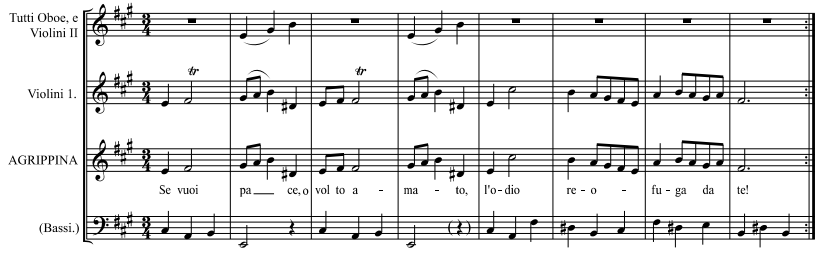
Se vuoi pace, o volto amato	If you want peace, my handsome lover,
L'odio reo fuga da te!	chase vile hatred from you!
Guarda in me, nume adorato	See in me, my worshipped and adored one,
Il mio amore e la mia fé	love and loyalty

In this scene, Agrippina directly confronts her crisis, in which the Emperor has learned of her attempt to usurp his authority. She is nothing but resilient. She persuades her husband that what she has done is to protect the Empire during his absence. Her process of manipulating her husband unfolds in a lengthy recitative between the two characters—with the addition of recitatives for Pallante and Narciso, who are observing and astonished at Agrippina's crafty and cunning quality, and finally help to confirm Agrippina's innocence of usurpation. Her rhetoric, based on her ability to deceive, convinces the two freedmen and the Emperor, who is now reliant on the two men. Her aria, which concludes this scene, demonstrates the simultaneous representation of her strength and the Emperor's weakness, as delineated earlier in Table 1. Moreover, it is indicative of her deception as a vehicle for her powers of persuasion, intensified by Handel's musical setting. As shown in Example 7, the music delights the audience by means of triple meter and dance-like rhythms, ultimately inviting them into that

deception.[46]

As observed in the representations of Agrippina above, the name of Agrippina embodies deception in both her historical characterization described by Tacitus and her portrayals by Grimani and Handel. In her arias of deception, the composer successfully captures her menacing characteristics, not only by presenting a vivid image of her character but also by using it to illustrate her eloquence as well as her power over her husband.

Example 7. *Agrippina,* "Se vuoi pace" (III, 14), opening.



In conclusion, although it is not certain whether the attempts made by the members of the Arcadian Academy for Italian literary reform were successful with the public, their reform ideas had a profound impact on operatic librettos. Contemporary librettists and composers attempted to embody the new models for operatic works promulgated by the Arcadians. At the same time they broadened the notion of

46) Handel's musical settings that capture the simultaneous representations of Agrippina's rhetorical power and "masking" should be also understood in the context of a retelling of the Agrippina story by the Accademia degli Incogniti members, whose works underscore her ability to persuade as a means of achieving her goal and power. See Heller, "Chastity, Heroism," 238.

reform by recognizing the dual demands of satisfying the audience's perception and modernizing drama. Grimani and Handel, in their *Agrippina,* provide one way to fulfill the dual purpose through their dramatic and musical representations of three characters—Claudio, Agrippina, and Poppea—responding to the prevalent view of the audience and also contributing to vivid characterization and dramatic narrative. Claudio's comic portrayal as well as the two powerful women and their deceptions are not extraneous or contradictory to the Arcadian emphasis on good taste and verisimilitude. Rather, such representations serve as necessary means for conflating mock-heroic and gender-reversal elements, ultimately revealing the librettist and composer's ideas of modern drama as one approach to reform opera.

한글검색어: 아그리피나, 헨델, 아케디아 아카데미, 타키투스

영문검색어: *Agrippina*, Handel, Academy of Arcadia, verisimilitude, Tacitus

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Abstract

Grimani and Handel's Responses to Arcadian Reform in the Opera *Agrippina*

Hyun Joo Kim

Grimani and Handel's opera *Agrippina* (1709) contains elements ostensibly contradictory to Arcadian aesthetics, including the comic scenes and deception. Although these elements are often dismissed as outdated aspects in an operatic tradition, this paper aims to reveal how the librettist and composer used these seemingly contradictory elements to adhere to, and even expand, the Arcadian ideals, ultimately suggesting a plausible way to reinvigorate the drama of the time. In order to illustrate their efforts, detailed musical analyses focus on the representations of the three main characters of the opera: Emperor Claudio, Agrippina, and Poppea. The analyses reveal, first, that Claudio's comic portrayal is not extraneous to the verisimilitude of the Arcadian ideals but serves as an effective foil to the main action of Agrippina's deception, at the same time fulfilling the demands of entertainment for the audience. Second, the representation of Poppea and Agrippina, which correspond to not only historical writings from Tacitus but also contemporary perceptions and polemics about female virtues and power, illustrate how Grimani and Handel make the two women's deception essential to the vivid characterization and cogent plot, particularly evident in the portrayal of Agrippina's masking. The representations of the three characters ultimately help to illuminate the librettist and composer's astute approach to revitalizing opera.

국문초록

아르카디아 아카데미의 오페라 혁명:
헨델의 《아그리피나》를 중심으로

김 현 주

헨델의 오페라 *Agrippina*(1709)는 표면상 아르카디아 아카데미(Academy of Arcadia)의 드라마 개혁이 추구하는 미학에 모순되는 몇 가지 요소를 보여준다. 그 대표적인 요소는 코믹 장면과 속임(deception) 장치이다. 종래의 연구가 오페라사적인 관점에서 이 요소들을 시대에 뒤떨어진 면으로 평가했으나, 본고는 그 평가를 재조명한다. 대본가 빈첸죠 그리마니(Vincenzo Grimani)와 작곡가 헨델이 어떻게 그 모순되는 요소들을 아케디아 미학을 확장하는 방향으로 이용하였는지에 본고는 초점을 맞춘다. 구체적으로 그 요소들을 세 명의 주된 캐릭터—클라우디오(Claudio), 아그리피나(Agrippina), 포페아(Poppea)—를 통해 알아본다. 그 캐릭터의 분석을 위해, 이 연구에서는 첫째, 그 미학적 근원인 아르카디아의 드라마 개혁에 대한 담론을 전반적으로 살펴본다. 둘째, 그 담론의 토대 위에 세 캐릭터의 표현과 발전을 음악적으로 면밀하게 분석한다. 그 분석이 보여 주는 것은, (1) 클라우디오의 코믹연출은 아케디아 개혁이 강조한 신빙성과 진실성(verisimilitude)에 무관하지 않다, (2) 아그리피나와 포페아의 속임은 오히려 드라마 액션과 캐릭터 발전에 주요한 역할을 한다. 특히 본고는 타키투스(Tacitus)의 두 여성 캐릭터의 역사적인 기록, 헨델 당시의 여성 파워에 대한 통념 및 관련 논쟁 등을 검토함으로써, 두 여성 캐릭터의 음악적 표현에 대한 깊이 있는 이해를 도모한다.

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