WHOSE VOICE IS IT ANYWAY? JACOPO PERI AND THE SUBJECTIVITIES OF FLORENTINE SOLO SONG C. 1600

by TIM CARTER

When the protagonist of Monteverdi's second opera *Arianna* took to the stage on 28 May 1608, there was not one lady in the audience who failed to shed some little tear as Ariadne, abandoned by her lover Theseus, lamented her sad fate. The *Lamento d'Arianna* was at the center of the opera; it became a favorite party-piece of early seventeenth-century singers; and it is the only part of the work to survive today.[1]

Many of us have asked why those ladies were weeping, and how Monteverdi's music could have provoked so moving a response. In part, it was the notion of a single operatic character speaking/singing for herself, creating the illusion of our seeing and hearing some kind of „real" Ariadne in the flesh. This identification of musical voice with dramatic character was made possible by the development in Florence in the 1590s of the new style of recitative. But such musical declamation – whether speech-like or song-like – could be found not just in the theatre but also in the chamber. When Giulio Caccini published his *Le nuove musiche* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti) in mid 1602, he contributed to a burgeoning repertory of songs for solo voice and continuo accompaniment that deliberately, even polemically, set itself apart from the traditional vehicle of secular art-music in the Renaissance, the five-voice madrigal. These songs may have embodied the art of the virtuoso singer, but they also permitted the musical articulation of new forms of poetic subjectivity. The Petrarchan lyric „I" now found a one-to-one correspondence with the voice that pronounced it. When both Caccini and his chief competitor in Florence, Jacopo Peri, set Petrarch's sonnet „Tutto 'l dì piango, e poi la notte quando" as a solo song – if in quite different musical ways – it was a single singer, and not five voices, spending his days and nights in tears.[2]

Of course, my opening gambit contains three obvious problems. First, solo song was not new, either in the musical Renaissance or as part of the broader Western art tradition; this is particularly true of the Renaissance if we take into account performance practices, and also various song-types generated by improvisation. Second, we can usefully argue over the poetic and musical subjectivities articulated even by the multiple voices of the polyphonic madrigal. Third, there is a debate to be had over what, or who, is being represented by all that weeping: in the case of „Tutto 'l dì piango", who is the „I" that forms the subject of the verb „piango"? Is it the poet, the composer, the singer, or just an

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[1]   The literature is large: one might usefully start with Tim Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2002, 202–211.

[2]   See the discussion in Tim Carter, „*Tutto 'l dì piango* ...: Petrarch and the ‚New Music' in Early Seventeenth-Century Italy", in: Loredana Chines (ed.), *Il Petrarchismo: un modello di poesia per l'Europa*, 2 vols., Rome: Bulzoni 2006, 1:391–404.

abstract representation of some generic lover? Do we as listeners detach that „I" from its immediate envoicing – contemplating it at a distance – or do we assimilate it as our own internal voice, such that we shed some little tear not so much for sympathy as out of experience? These are the classic dilemmas of any form of lyric song. My point, however, is that they come to a head in intriguing ways precisely around 1600 given the possibilities offered by the so-called „new music" of Caccini, Peri, and their contemporaries.

Jacopo Peri (1561–1633)

Peri is well known as the composer of the first *favole in musica*, i.e., what we now call operas.[3] His *Dafne* and *Euridice*, which had their premieres in Florence in 1598 and 1600 respectively, may have had a mixed reception at their time, but they certainly have become landmarks in our music histories. Thanks to the rich documentation surviving in the Florentine archives, we also know a great deal about his musical and other careers in Florence, and still more is coming to light given the recent discovery by the economic historian Richard Goldthwaite of a cache of financial account-books created and managed by Peri and by members of his family.[4] They offer unparalleled insights into the economic, social, professional, and private lives of a musician who was also an accountant, a civil servant, an active participant in Florence's cloth industries, a devout church-goer, and the husband of three wives and father to some twenty children. We know how much money he earned and something of what he spent it on; how he invested and saved for the future; what properties he owned or rented in the city and in the countryside; and what furniture and other possessions he put in them. We can construct something of his social networks encompassing his relatives, friends, and neighbors. We can add to them his business associates, and, if as a fairly minor part of the equation, the connections and opportunities made possible by Peri's musical activities. Indeed, music figures hardly at all in Peri's financial accounts; this is in part due to their function, but it also raises questions about music's economic utility, as distinct from any cultural value it might have held. Certainly Peri was a musician, and as such he gained a regular stipend from

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[3]   Tim Carter, *Jacopo Peri (1561–1633): His Life and Works*, 2 vols., PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham 1980 (repr. New York and London: Garland 1989); Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence During the Principate of the Medici, with a Reconstruction of the Artistic Establishment*, Florence: Olschki 1993 (Historiae Musicae Cultores. Biblioteca 61), 189–243.

[4]   These account books, and other new documents concerning Peri, are discussed in Tim Carter and Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace: Jacopo Peri and the Economy of Late Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2013. Readers of the present essay may be interested to know, however, that we now have a new date for the premiere of *Euridice*: its performance on 6 October 1600 (hitherto regarded as the first) during the festivities in Florence for the wedding of Maria de' Medici and King Henri IV of France was preceded by a fully staged production at court – a tryout, as it were – on 28 May; see Florence, Archivio di Stato, Guardaroba medicea 1152, fol. 148.

the Medici court from 1588 until his death. But this stipend formed only a relatively small portion of his total income from a range of sources, and it seems that Peri kept his court position more for the access it gave him to other benefits and favors than for its financial reward.

Peri styled himself a „noble Florentine" (*nobil fiorentino*) on the title-page of the printed score of *Euridice* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti 1600 [= 1601]), as he was at liberty to do by virtue of his ancestors having occupied major civic offices during the Florentine republic in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although „nobility" was only loosely defined thereafter. Clearly Peri's claim to such a double-barreled title served a purpose under the Medici grand dukes, granting him access to court circles and distinguishing him from his more artisanal musician-colleagues whether from Florence or, like Giulio Caccini, from elsewhere.[5] It also explains Peri's reticence as a composer and performer, and even the nature of his music: not for nothing did contemporaries refer to his „most noble style of recitative" (*suo nobilissimo stile recitativo*).[6] Likewise, the songs for one, two, and three voices and continuo that Peri published in his *Le varie musiche* in 1609 (Florence: Cristofano Marescotti) – a revised second edition appeared in 1619 (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni) – set themselves apart from those of his contemporaries by virtue of the literary quality of their texts and the elevated tone of their musical settings.[7] Peri adopts the manner of another „noble" composer known to have visited Florence in the first decade of the seventeenth century, Sigismondo d'India, and resists the ornamental flourishes that Caccini included in *Le nuove musiche* and in his *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni & co. 1614) to demonstrate his own manner of virtuoso singing. Indeed, so spare is Peri's music – at least as it appears on the page – that the printer of *Le varie musiche*, Cristofano Marescotti, felt it necessary to add to his prefatory note that in order to appreciate these songs in their perfection, one needed to hear them played and sung by the composer himself (*ma per quel ch'io odo sarebbe necessario sentirle sonare e cantare da lui medesimo per conoscere maggiormente la lor perfezzione*). One might read this less as an apology than as an advertizing tool, at least if one aim of the print was to encourage consumers in the local market to which Marescotti largely catered to hire Peri himself as a singer on the one hand, or a teacher on the other. But to use a slightly shopworn term, Peri performed his identity in quite precise musical ways.

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[5] Although Caccini's family was Tuscan (his father came from Montopoli in Val d'Arno and styled himself *fiorentino*), Giulio consistently used the styling „Romano" or „da Roma", where he was baptized and where he was trained before moving to Florence in 1565; see Tim Carter, „Giulio Caccini (1551–1618): New Facts, New Music", in: *Studi musicali* 16 (1987), 13–31 (reprinted in Tim Carter, *Music, Patronage and Printing in late Renaissance Florence* [Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate 2000]).

[6] I quote from the poet Jacopo Cicognini's report of Peri's contribution to a *mascherata* performed at court on 14 February 1610/11; Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence* (see n. 3), 220.

[7] Jacopo Peri, „*Le varie musiche*" and *Other Songs*, ed. Tim Carter, Madison, Wisc.: A-R Editions 1985 (Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era 50).

The death of the author?

This introduces what some might consider to be a rather dangerous critical strategy. The post-structuralist slogan proclaiming „the death of the author" has found a hearty welcome in some musicological circles – especially those celebrating the end of the „great man" approach to music history. But the obituaries now appear premature. Biography continues to play a role in the music-historical enterprise, and one does not need to be an advocate of gender or sexuality studies – although it helps – to work on the basis that a composer's life and art must somehow be intertwined, even if we are never quite clear on the impact of that intertwining on the music itself.

Roland Barthes may have thought he had jauntily nailed down the lid of the authorial coffin with his 1967 essay „La mort de l'auteur", but just two years later, in 1969, Michel Foucault prised it open again with his lecture „Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?"[8] For Barthes, to give a text an author was to impose limits on something that needed to be liberated from interpretative tyranny. Foucault, however, deemed the „author-function" (*la fonction-auteur*) useful not just for mechanical reasons – to locate and classify texts – or legalistic ones (to enable intellectual property-rights). The author-function also aids interpretation by allowing us to perceive texts working within, or against, specific cultural fields and discourse networks. Foucault's author-function does not necessarily impose interpretative tyranny, as Barthes would have it; nor does it overrule interpretations not sanctioned explicitly or implicitly by the author. Foucault also left himself room for maneuver by allowing, plausibly enough, that authors can have multiple purposes, and even multiple personalities. He located historically the emergence of the author-function somewhere between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – precisely the period under present discussion. This was because texts were starting to gain authority by their authoriality rather than by their appeal to prior authority; so-called print culture also has its part to play here. Foucault further argued that it is the author's position both outside and inside the text that at once permits but renders insoluble the dilemma of „Who is speaking?" – the question that art asks but never answers, and one I have posed already in the case of solo song.

8   Barthes's essay „La mort de l'auteur" was first published in 1968 and reprinted in his *Le Bruissement de la langue*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1984, 61–67; it was translated as „The Death of the Author" in Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana 1977, 142–148. Michel Foucault's „Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" is in: Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds.), *Dits et écrits 1954–1988 par Michel Foucault*, 4 vols., Paris: Gallimard 1994, 1:789–812; for an English translation, see „What is an Author?" in: Donald F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1997, 113–138. The issues have generated a large literature: see, for example, the overview in Adrian Wilson, „Foucault on the ‚Question of the Author': A Critical Exegesis", in: *Modern Language Review* 99 (2004), 339–363.

Accepting the Foucauldian resurrection of the author, if in the more general guise of the author-function, may or may not prompt renewed interest in „real" authors as a legitimate subject of historical inquiry. But it certainly forces some prioritization within critical endeavor of how authors construct themselves in, and are constructed by, their texts. Two songs in Peri's *Le varie musiche* provide intriguing case-studies that might seem to pull in quite different directions.

„Se tu parti da me, Fillide amata"

The „new music" prided itself on, and claimed its origins within, an intimate relationship between music and poetry, and one far closer than was thought possible within the polyphonic madrigal. This was the fundamental premise lying behind the musings of the so-called Florentine Camerata. While that relationship could be perceived as strong in the recitative, in solo madrigals, and in through-composed sonnet settings, etc., it was weaker when strophic repetition came into play, with the second and subsequent stanzas of a text applied to the music of the first (or the second quatrain of a sonnet, or the second pair of lines of an *ottava rima* stanza, etc.), although the technique of strophic variation could mitigate the problem. And one might argue that this relationship ran the risk of fracturing more or less completely in the cases where the musical setting was given a text different from that for which it was originally composed.

There is one such example in *Le varie musiche*, „Se tu parti da me, Fillide amata", which also brings other issues into play by taking a piece originally written, and one assumes used, for theatrical performance and then reworked for the chamber.[9] The music was originally intended for the final (poetic) chorus of Act III of the play *Il giudizio di Paride* by Michelangelo Buonarroti *il giovane*, performed in Florence during the celebrations of the wedding of Prince Cosimo de' Medici and Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria in October 1608. That chorus, „Poiché la notte con l'oscure piume" (three stanzas), typically marked the passing of time in the play as night shifted to dawn; the 1609 text (also by Buonarroti) is, instead, a conventional male complaint against a recalcitrant lover. The music shifts from a declamatory recitative to (for the last three lines of the nine-line stanza) a more songful triple time, although it seems an odd gesture whichever text one uses.

Buonarroti also provided another poem for Peri to adapt to the music for the chorus from *Il giudizio di Paride* so that it might be sung to Archduchess Maria Magdalena, although in the end it was not used (*Per Jacopo Peri per*

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[9] There is another case in *Le varie musiche* where a text survives in variant versions: „Tra le donne onde s'onora"; see Carter, *Jacopo Peri* (see n. 3), 1:237. But this is more a case of the beginning of the poem (by Ottavio Rinuccini) changing in subsequent drafts.

porvi su l'aria fatta sopra il Coro de Giudizio del Giudizio [sic] di Paride che comincia quando la notte con l'oscure piume per cantarsi all'Arciduchessa – non servì):[10]

> Poiché de' Toschi al fortunato impero
> sortì 'l cielo ed Amor l'eccelsa sposa,
> a lei fregiar di sì nobil corona
> ecco già l'Austro altero,
> già l'Adria gloriosa;
> già Maddalena l'Appenin risuona,
> già regina incorona;
> e regina saluta e umil l'onora
> d'Orsino eroe del bel regno di Flora.

> Since to the fortunate empire of the Tuscans / did heaven and Love send forth the most high bride, / here to adorn her with so noble a crown / is proud Austro, / here glorious Adria. / Already do the Appenines resound Maddelena, / already do they crown her queen; / and saluting as queen and humbly honoring her / is a hero of the Orsini family from the fair kingdom of Flora.

The clue of the occasion for which this text was intended is given by the last line of this first stanza (of three) of the text, with its reference to a heroic member of the Orsini family coming from Flora's kingdom, i.e., Florence. Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici sent to Graz Paolo Giordano Orsini, the eldest son and heir of Virgilio Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, to act as proxy for Prince Cosimo at the wedding ceremony held there, and to accompany Archduchess Maria Magdalena back to Florence. Buonarroti's new text would have served well for that first encounter; indeed, it could hardly have been used anywhere else. As for who might have sung it, a possible candidate is the young Florentine nobleman in Orsini's entourage, Sinolfo Ottieri (born around 1578), the son-in-law of the grand duke's chief secretary, Belisario

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[10] Florence, Casa Buonarroti, Archivio Buonarroti 84, fols. 180v–181r. There follows (fols. 181r–181v) the text of „Se tu parti da me, Nisilla [sic] amata" with the heading that it is for the same person and the same purpose, i.e., the same aria (*Per il medesimo nel medesimo proposto cioè per la medesima aria*). For these texts (including the one from *Il giudizio di Paride*), see Carter, *Jacopo Peri* (see n. 3), 1:251; Janie Cole, *Music, Spectacle and Cultural Brokerage in Early Modern Italy: Michelangelo Buonarroti il giovane*, 2 vols., Florence: Olschki 2011 (Fondazione Carlo Marchi. Quaderni 44), 1:229 n. 37, 2:702–703. In terms of the „Nisilla" reading, the name appears quite frequently in Buonarroti's poetry. In his autograph copy of „Se tu parti da me", Buonarroti notes in the margin several, but not all, of the variants created for, or at least adopted in, Peri's setting (*per il canto*), suggesting that he also saw the poem as having some kind of separate life. But while one can attribute the annotations to Buonarroti (so Peri's words are the poet's), it is not clear when they were made.

Vinta.[11] Ottieri was obsessed with music: he had taken singing lessons with Giulio Caccini and keyboard lessons with Alberigo Malvezzi, organist of the Duomo. He was also associated with Jacopo Peri, acting as godfather to his son Niccolò in August 1610, and giving Peri an organ worth 300 *scudi* in the mid-1610s, supposedly in return for having been allowed to attend the singing lessons that Peri gave to his pupil, Angelica Furini. Ottieri's infatuation with female singers was not uncommon at the time, but it brought him to a sticky end when on 2 July 1620 he was found in the convent cell of Florence's famous singing nun Suor Maria Vittoria Frescobaldi (Lucrezia Frescobaldi). He went on trial in early 1621 – at the time Jacopo Peri was one of the Otto di Guardia e Balìa, the official body handling the case – and despite the support of leading Florentine musicians and poets summoned as witnesses in his defense to attest to his musical passions (which, Ottieri claimed, were all that laid behind his actions), he was fined and sentenced to life imprisonment in Volterra, where he died.[12]

Buonarroti's wording of the heading above his autograph copy of „Poiché de' Toschi" suggests that it was Peri who asked for it, presumably in response to a request from Paolo Giordano Orsini or Sinolfo Ottieri. Even if the piece was not used (so Buonarroti says), it might still say something for the cultural capital invested in the Florentine „new music" that one or other of them should have had the idea – extraordinary, it would seem – that the official Medici delegation to Graz could in some sense be introduced to Archduchess Maria Magdalena by way of song, and in a musical style that she is unlikely to have experienced before. Poems of self-introduction, often set to music, were not unusual within Florentine court entertainments (operatic prologues, *mascherate*, tournaments, etc.). But they were usually formal sonnets or *ottava rima* stanzas. Peri's song, had it been performed, would have been quite different.

Maria Magdalena certainly heard the version of Peri's music used in the performance of *Il giudizio di Paride* on 25 October 1608. One assumes that she also came know „Se tu parti da me". In early 1609, Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga tried to encourage Peri to come to Mantua to be of some service for

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[11] Paolo Giordano Orsini's trip to Graz and the proxy wedding (on 14 September 1608) is described in the official printed account of the 1608 festivities: Camillo Rinuccini, *Descrizione delle feste fatte nelle reali nozze de' Serenissimi Principi di Toscana D. Cosimo de' Medici e Maria Maddalena Arciduchessa d'Austria*, Florence: I Giunti 1608, 2–3. Orsini's entourage is listed on ibid., 73 (Ottieri is styled „Sinolfo Otterio").

[12] For the Ottieri affair, see Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians* (see n. 3), 314–316; and also, Suzanne Cusick, „He Said, She Said? Men Hearing Women in Medicean Florence", in: Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe and Jeffrey Kallberg (eds.), *Rethinking Difference in Musical Scholarship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, 53–76.

Carnival, but the Medici court denied permission for him to go there because he was needed for entertainments in Florence, because the archduchess wanted to hear him sing every evening, and because he taught music to her and to the Medici princesses.[13] It seems highly likely that at least some of the contents of *Le varie musiche*, issued later that year, reflect this regular service in the chambers of the principal women at court.

„*O miei giorni fugaci, o breve vita*"

Peri's first musical appointment was at the age of twelve, in September 1573, when he was employed to sing *laude* – devotional songs – to the organ in the Servite monastery of SS. Annunziata in Florence. He was there until the end of September 1577 (presumably around the time his voice broke), by which time he was a pupil of Cristofano Malvezzi, *maestro di cappella* at the Florentine cathedral and baptistery. Very shortly thereafter, Malvezzi seems to have introduced Peri to the court as some kind of music teacher to the young princesses in the grand-ducal household. He maintained this position – without any recorded payment it seems (save perhaps via Malvezzi) – as he took up the posts of organist at the Badia Fiorentina (from 1579 to 1605) and singer in the choir of the Duomo and S. Giovanni Battista (1586–90) before officially joining the court musicians probably in September 1588. He continued to teach successive generations of Medici children in addition to his other musical duties at court.

Much later, Peri said that his work in this capacity had begun during the time of Grand Duchess Johanna of Austria (who died on 11 April 1578),[14] meaning that his first such pupil was the young Eleonora de' Medici, born to Grand Duke Francesco and Johanna in February 1567 (Eleonora became the second wife of Prince Vincenzo Gonzaga in 1584 and hence Duchess of Mantua). Francesco and Johanna's next daughters – Anna (b. 1569) and Maria (b. 1575) – also studied with Peri, as did Virginia (b. 1569), the daughter of Grand Duke Cosimo I and Camilla Martelli. In early 1577 (so, probably just before Peri started teaching her), the court bought for Eleonora's use a number of printed music books: an anthology of three- and four-voice *villanelle alla napolitana*, Philippe de Monte's First and Third books of four-voice madrigals,

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[13] The relevant documents are transcribed and discussed in Tim Carter, „The Power of the Patron? A Case from the Life of Jacopo Peri (1561–1633)", in: *Miscellanea Ruspoli: studi sulla musica dell'età barocca* 2 (2012), 3–20.

[14] So he noted in support of a petition to the court of 29 January 1617/18 for some civic office in Florence or nearby that would enable him to support his large family; Florence, Archivio di Stato, Mediceo del Principato 1370. This and all of Peri's other letters are included in Carter and Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace* (see n. 4), Appendix B, 387–426.

and four-voice motets by Adriano Willaert.[15] This is a reasonable spread of safe, relatively conservative repertory: devotional texts, simple strophic settings in a popular vein, and more serious poetic madrigals (Monte's two books are full of Petrarch). A similar mixture is apparent – if in a very different musical guise – in Peri's *Le varie musiche* with its four Petrarch sonnets (an unusual number for such songbooks) and other madrigals, strophic arias, and at the end, two spiritual madrigals (i.e., settings of devotional texts in the vernacular). The poetry is decorous, and the music, restrained (which is not to say that it is easy to sing): further, two of the more tuneful settings – „Al fonte, al prato" (an aria) and „Con sorrisi cortesi" (a madrigal) – have text laid under the continuo line and thus are soprano–bass duets, which would also be suitable for a teacher and his female pupil.[16]

The two spiritual madrigals, „O miei giorni fugaci" and „Anima, oimé che pensi, oimé che fai", express sentiments common enough during the period of the Counter-Reformation: they have pious texts (both by Ottavio Rinuccini) and the music is appropriately somber and restrained. Somewhat unusually, „O miei giorni fugaci" also survives in a simple arrangement for keyboard (by an unknown hand), which does not make much sense absent the words – or at least, absent knowledge of the words – although again it could serve as a teaching tool.[17] But there is no reason why these spiritual madrigals could not have been sung by a Medici princess, or by Archduchess Maria Magdalena: they were entirely appropriate for female members of the grand-ducal household.[18] In early 1609, they might also have served a broader function, given that Grand Duke Ferdinando I was lying on his deathbed (he died in February), no doubt contemplating the brevity of life.

[15] Tim Carter, „Music-selling in Late Sixteenth-century Florence: The Bookshop of Piero di Giuliano Morosi", *Music and Letters* 70 (1989), 483–504, at 493 n. 17 (reprinted in Carter, *Music, Patronage and Printing* [see n. 5]). The anthology of *villanelle* was the *Corona delle napolitane* (Venice: Girolamo Scotto 1570). Monte's *Il primo libro de madregali a quatro voci* was first published in 1562 (Venice: Antonio Gardano); his *Il terzo libro de madrigali a quattro voci* survives only a second or subsequent edition from 1585 (Venice: heirs of Girolamo Scotto). Willaert's First and Second books of four-voice motets date back to 1539 (Venice: Girolamo Scotto), although there were subsequent editions.

[16] Not all the music in *Le varie musiche* fits the pattern, however: the two trios (SSB), „Caro e soave legno" and „O dolce anima mia, dunque è pur vero" – which have more embellishments than the solo songs – probably reflect Peri's role as director of the court's *concerto de' castrati*; Carter, *Jacopo Peri* (see n. 3), 1: 256–260.

[17] The keyboard version is in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magl. XIX.115.

[18] These two songs each have the vocal line in the C1 clef, though one should not read too much into that. The solo songs in Peri's *Le varie musiche* (and most other songbooks of the period) variously use either C1 (soprano) or C4 (tenor) clefs, but that does not force one voice-type over another if one allows octave transposition, as was explicitly encouraged in some prefaces to early 17th-century prints. Both spiritual madrigals are in a generic poetic voice rather than a gendered one. In other cases, however, there is an interesting discussion to be had about the matching (or not) of male/female poetic voices and musical voice-types, even granting that male castratos and falsettists muddy the waters.

But the text of „O miei giorni fugaci" and its musical setting also raise other questions:

O miei giorni fugaci, o breve vita,
oimé già sei sparita.
Già sento, o sentir parmi,
la rigorosa tromba
d'avanti a te, giusto Signor, chiamarmi.
Già nel cor mi rimbomba
il formidabil suono:
miserere di me, Signor, perdono.

O my fleeting days, o short life, / alas you are already at an end. / I already hear, or seem to hear / the harsh trumpet / calling me before you, o just Lord. / Already in my heart resounds / the fearsome sound: / have mercy on me, Lord, and forgive me.

The text starts as an invocation in „you" mode (to the poet's „fleeting days"). But then it shifts to the „I" one before conflating the two as its primary voice, the „I", asks a different „you", the Lord, for mercy and forgiveness. Peri sets it in a simple style: there are only very brief ornaments on „vita" and „oimé", and slightly longer roulades on „sentir" (to hear, listen, or feel) and „chiamar" (to call or summon). He also takes advantage of the separate syntactical units within the text (lines 1–2, 3–5, 6–8): line 3 begins as if it were a variation of line 1, and lines 6–8 are repeated to produce the ABB form often found in this repertory.

The „I"-ness of this text is of course typical of one mode of lyric poetry: it both individualizes and universalizes the genre. It also invites consideration of its setting as some kind of personal statement on Peri's part. When he published the song in 1609 – we do not know when it was written – he was forty-eight years old: he could not know that he would live to the age of seventy-two. By now he had buried two wives, and five children who died at or soon after birth. He was suffering the ailments of middle age – severe headaches, catarrh, and deafness – that impeded his abilities to perform. In religious terms he was devout, pious, and even ascetic. He does not seem to have engaged in conspicuous consumption in the manner of many upwardly mobile Florentines of the period, and in his final testament, he specified that for his funeral his body was to be laid on the bare floor of the church of S. Maria Novella, or at most on some kind of rug. Given all these character traits, it is wholly plausible that in addition to all its other possible functions, „O miei giorni fugaci" was for Peri in some sense a personal poetic and musical statement. Did it remind him of his earliest time singing *laude* at SS. Annunziata? Did he play the keyboard version on the spinet that we know he had in his house (according to an inventory prepared close to his death), perhaps as a memory of former glory once his voice had passed its best?

Those questions reveal, of course, the perils of this kind of enterprise: biography is one thing, and autobiography another. Reading art through the artist's biography as determinant of context, function, and even content is not

an unusual critical strategy, despite postmodern claims to the contrary: even in the Renaissance it was considered a useful hermeneutic tool, which is one reason why Giorgio Vasari was interested in the lives of painters, sculptors, and architects. Reading art as autobiographical statement would seem, on the face of it, to be a more perilous critical strategy based on anachronistic aesthetic presumptions. In the end, too, it probably matters little whether Peri was expressing identity or just performing it, whether he was making some kind of personal statement or whether this was what he thought others might want to hear in order to further his own agendas. But whether Peri was singing for himself or for others – or both – he was singing all the same. As noted earlier, there are brief moments in „O miei giorni fugaci" where the voice takes over from the text, including the roulades on the verbs „sentir" and „chiamar". We are summoned to hear Peri's song, and we are certainly encouraged to listen to it very attentively indeed, and even to feel its effect on our hearts and minds.

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This brings me back to the question at the start of this essay: how could an audience be moved to tears by a work such as the *Lamento d'Arianna*? While one can plausibly attempt – as I have done here – an intensely personal, and intrinsically musical (rather than just poetic), reading of a song such as „O miei giorni fugaci", the case of „Se tu parti da me" with its multiple texts should offer pause for thought in terms of any presumed relationship between poetry and music within this repertory. The act of singing „Se tu parti da me" or its predecessor, „Poiché la notte con l'oscure piume" – or of intending to sing „Poiché de' Toschi al fortunato impero" – in a particularly Florentine style may be politically, socially, and/or culturally significant, but the music itself is less important for its content, at least so far as the text is concerned, than for its opening up a space for that act of singing to occur. This certainly has consequences for how we might choose to analyze the song, where the conventional strategy of exploring word–music relations within the score would necessarily fall short: any reason one can find for the shift from the declamatory portion of the setting to the more songful triple-time (for the final three lines of each stanza) cannot apply consistently across the three texts supplied for this music.[19] Indeed, there is perhaps less point in asking how the music fits the text than in trying to determine how it allows so many different texts none of which, I dare to suggest, seems to suit the musical notes very well.

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[19] See, for example, Margaret Murata, „‚Singing', ‚Acting', and ‚Dancing' in vocal Chamber Music of the Early *Seicento*", in: *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 9/1 (2003), <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v9/no1/murata.html>, paras. 5.1–3. Murata reads the triple-time in ways specific to „Se tu parti da me": the shifts of meter reflect references to some kind of physical motion and/or an attempt to prevent it (e.g., Fillide's leaving the lover). However, this hardly works for the other two texts (both of which came earlier), and one would be hard pressed, I think, to argue that Peri only found the „right" text to match his music on the third attempt, even if, by Murata's reading, „Se tu parti da me" appears more „right" than the others.

„O miei giorni fugaci" appears more straightforward from that analytical point of view, although if we take the lesson of „Se tu parti da me" to heart, my close reading of the notes may in the end be overly determined. One might say the same of any attempt to discern musical meaning within Monteverdi's notes for the *Lamento d'Arianna* when much of its effect, and even affect, seems to have been due to the dramatic and rhetorical abilities of its first performer, Virginia Andreini. At the very least, in the case of „O miei giorni fugaci" we need to consider, as Cristofano Marescotti said we should, how Peri himself might have sung and played it in terms of phrasing, tempo, ornamentation, and so on and so forth – in short, all the many aspects of *pronuntiatio* that a performer brings to those other parts of musical rhetoric usually considered to rest in the hands of the composer: *inventio, dispositio*, and *elocutio*.

This might seem a counsel of *laissez-faire* despair – we have no audible record of Peri's singing – although it is, of course, one of liberation, at least so far as modern-day performers are concerned. But it is liberation within limits defined not just by the musical notation – although that can be limiting – but also by what one might call the discourse networks within which the musical work did its work. If we believe in historically informed performance practices, then we must be also concerned with the historical meanings lying within and beyond the materials to which those practices are applied. It matters to know who might have sung Peri's songs, who might have heard them, and what kinds of responses they might have generated.

Of course, these issues are not unique to the new musical styles emerging in Italy around 1600. However, I would argue that those styles enabled new approaches to questions of subjectivity on the one hand, and performative *pronuntiatio* on the other, even as – or better, precisely because – it problematized them. The consequences are quite profound for what we think we do as performers and scholars.