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THOUGHTS ON DIEGETIC MUSIC IN THE EARLY OPERAS OF ZANDONAI¹

Diegetic music – «music that (apparently) issues from a source within the narrative» (Gorbman, 23)² – plays an important role in Zandonai's early operas: not only does it appear frequently, but it often pushes the action forward, eliciting responses from the characters who hear it. And some of its uses are unusual, if not unprecedented. In this essay I focus on *Il grillo del focolare* but make cross-references to diegetic music in *L'uccellino d'oro*, *Conchita*, and *Melenis* as well. Readers unfamiliar with these operas may want to consult plot summaries, for example, in Dryden (469-79). Table 1 lists the passages referred to in this essay.

¹ I want to express my thanks to the Centro internazionale di studi «Riccardo Zandonai», especially to Diego Cescotti, Irene Comisso, and Federica Fortunato for assistance of all sorts before, during, and after the conference. Thanks go also to Gary Mouldsdale for his comments on an earlier version of this text, to Ann Beckman and other friends on WM-L (my favorite online opera discussion group) for answering some questions about precedents for certain uses of diegetic music, and to Carol Rosen for having translated into Italian the version of this essay that I delivered at the conference.

² Citations refer to the Selective Bibliography at the end of this essay. The category 'diegetic music' thus includes both 'musica in scena' and 'musica di scena' (for the distinction see, for example, Girardi, 101-102). That is, it may include music emanating from offstage (whether in the wings or from the orchestra pit) or on-stage in full view of the audience. The defining characteristic is not the location of the source or whether it is visible, but whether the music is part of the world depicted in the narrative, whether it would be heard *as music* by the characters on stage.

Eucellino d'oro

Chorus of wood doves (*colombelle*), imitating their cry: “Ub Ub Ub”
 The lullaby (*ninna-nanna*) that put the cook to sleep

Il grillo del focolare

Sounds (or representations of motion)

The cricket’s chirps
 The “sonagliera di un cavallo che arriva” before John’s first entrance
 Tackleton’s knocking at the door as he first arrives
 The footsteps of John and Caleb as they return
 The bells of Devonshire
 The cuckoo clock that sounds nine, and later, ten
 John enters, imitating the cuckoo clock, echoed by the orchestra
 Tackleton enters, breathless from having run

Music

Dot’s “canzone dei fanciulli perduti in mare” (with various reprises)
 Dot’s aria, “Sì, è l’anima canora della casa silente”
 Berta’s aria, “Lungi, lungi sull’ali del vento” (with reprise)
 John’s song as he lights the pudding, “Questa fiamma gioconda”, and Dot’s
 reply
 Dot’s brindisi: “E bevo anch’io”; “Forse qualcun sospinto”
 Religious choms, “Nato è Gesù”

Conchita

Sounds (or representations of motion)

Mateo rings the bell at the gate
 Mateo beats Conchita

Music

Rufina’s lullaby
 Dolores’s “canzone amara e beffarda”
 Rufina’s reply
 Conchita’s *racconto*, “Ier dalla fabbrica a Triana”
 Estella’s imitation of the cry of the water vendors (*acquaio*)
 The cry of a vendor of fruit within the “Intermezzo nella strada”

Conchita “teaches” a *canzone* to Mateo (passage abbreviated in the second version, omitted in the third)
 Jota in $\frac{3}{8}$ with dialogue of Conchita and Mateo in $\frac{2}{4}$
 Preludio Act 3 (with reprise at the end of the opera)
 Scene with Enrichetta and the boy
 Conchita’s “canzone mordace” that pushes Mateo to violence

Melenis

Cleandro’s *canzone bizzarra*, “Per i borghi tiberini”
 Melenis’s “canzon del [suo] paese”, “Salii su un pesco con la scala d’oro” (with reprises of parts of it)
 Isi’s “triste ritornello” (with reprise)
 “Canto nuziale” and other festive music

Table 1 - Passages in Zandonai’s Operas Cited.

DIEGETIC SOUND: A BRIEF EXCURSUS

Diegetic music is a subcategory of the larger category of diegetic sound, including sounds that are not heard as music. There are trivial cases where the sound is produced as it would be in a spoken play, for example, where knocking at the door is produced by striking a piece of wood – a ‘sound effect’. When Tackleton makes his entrance in Act 1 of *Il grillo*, «Si sente battere la porta», and the knocks are indicated in the score with asterisks (**pv** 60)³, as in the knocking at Sparafucile’s door in the last act of *Rigoletto*. More interesting are cases where the noise is brought about through music, as with the knocking at the door in the Act 1 Finale of Verdi’s *Macbeth*. When «Mateo suona alla cancellata» in the *Quadro quarto* of *Conchita*, the ringing is depicted by a harp and paired flutes, oboes, and clarinets (**os** 435).

The case of bells is more complex. They might appear simply as an instrument within the orchestral texture, with no more ‘extra-musical’ connotations than, say, the oboe or viola. But if they are presented diegetically – if we perceive them as church bells, for example – they certainly function as diegetic *sound*, but are they also diegetic *music*? If a church bell simply rings the hour on a single pitch, it would be hard to

³ **pv** = piano-vocal score; **os** = orchestral score.

view it as music rather than as mere sound, or, if it wakes you up at five in the morning, as noise. But it can be effectively combined with extradiegetic music – music that issues from *outside* the narrative: for example, the orchestra’s twelve (extradiegetic) harmonizations of the (diegetic) Fs sounded by the bells in the last scene of Verdi’s *Falstaff*. Bells can also produce more elaborate patterns that should be classified as music, as in *Il grillo*, where the *campane* – «quelle lontane di Devonshire che annunziano il Natale prime dell’altre» – sound a long ostinato on a 4-note pattern (pv 131-35). Granted, this is less complex music than, for example, the change-ringing in the Bells scene of Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* (Act 2, scene 2).

Sometimes the music seems to depict the actual sound of motion, like the «calpestio di cavalli» heard as Alvaro approaches in the Act 1 duet of Verdi’s *La forza del destino*. But how are we to analyze passages like these from *Il grillo*: «si sentono i passi di John e Caleb che ritornano» (pv 58) and «Entra Tackleton affannato per aver corso» (pv 204 and Example 1).

38 Allegro agitato e con fuoco ♩ = 152

Example 1 - *Il grillo del focolare*, Act 3: Tackleton’s entrance, pv 204.

Does the music depict the *sound* of John and Caleb’s footsteps and of Tackleton’s breathless entrance, or is it a rough analogue of their *motion*? In Britten’s *Death in Venice* does the music depict the sounds of the oars in the water and the «indolent lapping waves», or does it provide a rough analogue to the silent rowing of the gondolier, performing a «funzione mimetica» (Surian, *passim*)⁴. And what of the six-

⁴ My thanks to Dr. Mark Ferraguto, whose unpublished seminar paper about diegetic music in Britten’s operas used the example from *Death in Venice*. Moreover, music can depict motion in even more remote ways: for example, the *disposizione scenica* of *Un ballo in maschera* refers to the «movimento d’orchestra ch’indica il sopraggiungere di qualcuno» when Sam and Tom enter in Act 3, scene 1. The orchestra, however, does not imitate the sound of footsteps or even present an analogous gesture, but instead presents the musical motive associated with them (Rosen, 77-79).

teen syncopated descending octave leaps that depict Mateo's beating of Conchita (os 544-47, and Example 2)⁵.

The musical score for Example 2 is a page from a score for the opera 'Conchita'. It covers measures 544-45. The score is in 4/4 time and features a variety of instruments. The vocal line for Mateo is written in a soprano clef and includes the lyrics 'Soffri a tua volta! Sil Sof...'. The instrumental parts include Oboe (Ott.), Flute (1.2. Fl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. in La), Bassoon (Cl. b. sso), Bassoon (1.2. Fag.), Trumpet (4 Cor.), Trombone (3 Tr.), Timpani (Timp.), Violin (VI.), Viola (Vie.), and Cello/Double Bass (Vcl.+ Ctb.). The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, *p*, and *sf*, and performance instructions like 'f press.' and 'I. Solo'. The score also includes a section for the 4th string (4.a Corda) and a section for the Cello/Double Bass (Vcl.+ Ctb.) playing pizzicato.

Example 2. *Conchita*, Final *quadro*: Mateo beats Conchita, os 544-45.

⁵ The depiction of Mateo's blows is not shown in the piano-vocal reduction. In the 1921 Ricordi orchestral score the mezzo forte octave leaps in bassoon 1 and cellos playing pizzicato that depict the blows start at the beginning of Mateo's line «Soffri a tua volta», six bars before Figure 13, and, now forte and with the addi-

I would suggest that in all four of these examples the music is an analogue of motion, not a phonographic representation of its sound. Incidentally, the rhythmic regularity of the blows in Zandonai's score comes directly from the libretto's literary source, Pierre Louÿs's novel *La femme et le pantin*: «Je me souviens seulement que je la frappais avec la régularité d'un paysan qui bat au fléau [...]». (ch. 13).

Even aside from the crucial chirps of the cricket, in *Il grillo* perceived sound is important. We hear the «sonagliera di un cavallo che arriva» marking John's first entrance (pv 15) and the cuckoo clock striking nine (ibid.), and the clock's striking ten is the signal for Dot to reveal the secret and to prove her innocence (pv 193). And at one point John enters imitating the cuckoo cry, echoed by the orchestra (pv 114). Let us turn now to the diegetic music in *Il grillo del focolare*.

Il grillo del focolare

In Dickens's novel *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), the cricket's Chirps, sometimes referred to metaphorically as the 'music' of the cricket, play a central role – the three sections of the book are even rather preciously designated «Chirps» rather than chapters – but the music performed by humans is of slight importance. Yes, Caleb has a «Bacchanalian song, something about a Sparkling Bowl» that he hums or sings as an «infallible resource» to change the subject and to feign good spirits (Ch. 2), though we assume that when he sings it at the *lieto fine* it is with genuine happiness. At one point Dot «played an air or two on a rude kind of harp, which Caleb had contrived for Bertha, and played them very well» (Ch. 2), but it is a solitary activity, unlike Bertha's playing «her liveliest tune» to accompany the dancing of the wedding party (Ch. 3).

In the opera, on the other hand, diegetic music both depicts character and brings about action in ways not found in Dickens's book. However, as we shall see, many of the instances of diegetic music found in the opera but not in the novel *are* to be found in Ludovic de Francmes-

tion of violin 1, clarinets, and bassoon 2, they continue in the first and second measures of Fig. 13 at the end of Mateo's line «soffri anche tu!». (The leaps also appear in the fourth, sixth, and seventh bars of Fig. 13, now only in violin 2, *ff* but *pizzicato* and therefore probably inaudible in the tutti scoring.) However, the long stage direction («Si getta su Conchita e la tempesta di colpi, poi, corre al fondo, apre violentemente la porta della vetrata come per fuggire nel giardino ...») does not begin until Figure 13, six bars after the octave leaps have begun. Where does the beating start? The *disposizione scenica* does not clear up the ambiguity.

nil's three-act play *Le Grillon du foyer*, première at the *Théâtre national de l'Odéon* on 1 October 1904, with incidental music by Jules Massenet⁶. The similarities between the play and libretto are unmistakable, and the most likely hypothesis is that the play influenced the libretto, which Cesare Hanau, who lived in Paris and probably saw the play, wrote in time for Zandonai to have started work on the opera by October of the following year⁷.

The diegetic chirping of the cricket plays a central role in the opera, as it must in any presentation of the story, whether novel, play, or opera. In *L'uccellino d'oro* the chorus of wood doves makes «ub ub» sounds as well as singing in normal styles (both diegetically and extradiegetically), but in *Il grillo* the chirps of the cricket are entrusted to the orchestra. The closest we come to hearing a vocal rendition of the cricket's 'voice' is Dot's aria «Sì, è l'anima canora della casa silente», where she 'quotes' what the cricket told her, and the quotation is set off musically in a 26-measure passage featuring tremolo upper pedals alternating between E and F and a more static vocal line with many repeated notes (pv 21). This is not diegetic music, but it is a use of music to depict a diegetic sound, the voice of the cricket.

At the opening of the opera Dot interprets the cricket's chirping as the request for a song, which she duly sings, the *canzone dei* «*Fanciulli perduti in mar*». A number of principal characters in Zandonai's early operas sing a diegetic song upon their first entrance or soon after it: both Dot and Berta in *Il grillo*, and the eponymous Conchita and Melenis. Minor characters so introduced include Rufina in *Conchita* and Cleandro and Isi in *Melenis*, that *Fatal Attraction all'antica*.

A sidebar: There are two linked questions to be posed of a diegetic song: (1) who is its composer and (2) to what extent does it represent the emotions or identity of the character who sings it. There are, I suppose, at least three possible answers to the question of authorship: (1) it might be composed on the spot by the character singing it, for example, Alfredo's brindisi in *La traviata*, (presumably) Conchita's first aria («*Jer dalla fabbrica a Triana*»), and Rufina's lullaby – more on these two pas-

⁶ Dryden notes that «The French press also drew attention to a dramatization of *Cricket on the Hearth* performed earlier with some success at the Odeon Theater in Paris», but he does not identify the play (85).

⁷ The autograph draft ('spartito') of Act 1 is dated 16 December 1905 (Cescotti, 44). Dryden is surely mistaken to claim that Zandonai received the libretto of *Il grillo* only after 10 December 1905, the date of a letter of Boito suggesting a meeting between Zandonai and Ricordi (Dryden, 60).

sages from *Conchita* later. (2) It might have been composed by the character, but beforehand, like Cherubino's «Voi che sapete» – this is probably the most unusual situation. (3) It might have been composed by someone else and learned by the character who sings it: Verdi's Desdemona learned the willow song from her mother's *ancella*; Melenis learned the «canzon del [suo] paese» («Salii su un pesco con la scala d'oro») from her slave just the day before (**pv** 40-43). Estella sprinkles water on the ground, «rifacendo il verso degli acquaioli», «Acqua fresca», in the first *Quadro* of *Conchita* (**os** 34-36; **pv** 16-17). Any performance, even a spontaneous one as in the improvised song (1), is already one step away from a transparently unselfconscious, 'sincere' presentation of the character's emotions, as in a soliloquy. The second and third categories lie even further from that state of 'sincerity'.

However, and here we come to the second question, even when the song was composed by someone else – or seems to come from an anonymous folk tradition, like the examples in *Otello* and *Melenis* cited above – the character's choice of song may seem so appropriate to his or her character or emotions that the actual authorship may become irrelevant. (I prefer this formulation to Edward T. Cone's: «In opera [...] a song [...] is so intimately connected with the character who sings it that he or she is usually to be accepted as its composer» [Cone, 129].) Desdemona's Willow song well expresses her emotions, and Melenis's song, with its modal flavor and arabesques, at least effectively stamps her as exotic and 'other'. For an example of the other extreme, where the song has nothing to do with the emotions of the character, consider the original performance of «Erlkönig», a stage song in Goethe's *Singspiel Die Fischerin* (1782). At the opening Dortchen, the eponymous fisherwoman mending her nets, sings the song through, then comically remarks: «Now I have sung practically all my songs twice through out of impatience, and it looks as though I'll have to sing them a third time» (Stein, 63-64)⁸. The melancholy song about the mother waiting in vain – her «Fanciulli perduti in mar» that Dot sings to the cricket and to her baby was apparently written by Edoardo – È la mia!» he will later exclaim – and has nothing to do with her emotional state. And this ends the sidebar and brings us back to *Il grillo*.

⁸ To be sure, Corona Schröter's setting of the grisly poem is light in tone, quite unlike the more famous settings of Schubert or Loewe. The music is sharply at odds with the poem it sets, but it matches the detached emotional state of the character, played by Schröter herself.

Dot's song has no counterpart in the Dickens novel, but in the French play Dot sings to the cricket to stimulate it to sing, the reverse of the situation in the opera: «Voyons, faut-il que je commence pour vous donner de la voix?» (pv 13). The song is «Les enfants perdus dans la forêt» – Hanau's substitution of the sea for the forest is dramatically appropriate, reflecting the general belief that Edoardo has died beyond the seas, a belief so strong, however, that his family and friends, unlike the mother in «Fanciulli perduti in mar», have ceased waiting for him. In both the play and the opera the song will bring about a recognition scene. In the novel Dot cries out when she finally recognizes that the old man that her husband has brought home with him is Edward in disguise. There is no explanation of *how* she recognizes him, and indeed the reason for Dot's outburst is left unexplained until much later, although readers with even the slightest acquaintance with conventions of fiction will understand the situation immediately. However, in both the play and the opera the recognition is effected by the singing of the song. Left alone with the old man, Dot begins to sing it again, and he completes the stanza, allowing Dot to recognize him as Édouard/Edoardo.

Later, in both play and opera, the song is chosen as the signal Dot will use to tell Édouard/Edoardo that the coast is clear and he may enter⁹, and in a separate incident Edoardo sings the song offstage. These stage songs often are reprised, as we shall see.

Another sidebar to consider the usual question: how do we determine whether a passage is diegetic – that is, that the character – not the singer portraying the character, but the actual character (e.g., Conchita, not Tarquinia Tarquini – is singing a song, rather than speaking aloud – to herself or to others – or merely thinking. There are two possible approaches. The first, more usual approach makes a determination based on certain criteria and the 'text' of the opera ('text' in the broad sense: score, libretto, and any other relevant source deemed to be 'authentic', for example, the *disposizione scenica* [staging manual] for *Conchita*). But there is also a second, more pragmatic approach, one focused on performance: what is performed as diegetic and what the public experiences in the theater on a given night as diegetic, *is* diegetic. If Figaro picks up a guitar and sings «Se vuol ballare», or the Duca di Mantova picks up a lute and sings «Questa o quella», then their solos are diegetic songs. If they don't perform these numbers as diegetic, they aren't diegetic.

⁹ Curiously, in both the play and the opera the plan to use the song as a signal is forgotten.

The first approach – examining the sources – will at least *inform* the actual staging, it is to be hoped. If he didn't have his wine glass in one hand, Verdi's Iago might well accompany himself on the lute in the Brindisi, but I would not want to see a production where he does so in the Credo monologue.

In the eleventh *scheda* of his *La retorica del rituale nel melodrama ottocentesco* Marco Beghelli discusses three types of signals (*segnali*) that a passage is diegetic¹⁰: visual, verbal and musical (Beghelli, 558ff.). Certain visual and verbal signals may suffice to determine that a given passage is diegetic, even in the absence of other signs: if for example, the character accompanies his song on the guitar (a visual sign) or if another character says «Attenti al cantor» as Gaston does before Alfredo's brindisi in *La traviata*, or «Oh che pietà sentirla cantar così», as Caleb does after Berta's melancholy song at the beginning of Act 2 of *Il grillo del focolare* (pv 93) (verbal signs). As Beghelli points out, the musical signals may provide reinforcing evidence, but rarely if ever suffice to establish that a given passage is diegetic. Beghelli concludes that the Duke's «Questa o quella» is not diegetic because of the lack of comments before or after the song («Bravo, Duca: che bella voce e che interpretazione raffinata!») and the use of the orchestra in the pit rather than the stage band. But one might counter that it does have a generic text rather than one that reflects a specific situation, and has a number of musical signals of diegetic song: strophic form; a string accompaniment that, while neither staccato nor pizzicato, could nonetheless evoke the strumming of a guitar accompaniment; and a simple, folk-like vocal melody. One common diagnostic – or perhaps a definition – of 'diegetic music' is music that would be perceived as music within a spoken play. That is fine so far as it goes, but it needs to be recognized that the conventions of opera differ from those of a spoken play, and that neither genre maps neatly onto 'real life'. Characters in opera are more likely to express themselves with an improvised diegetic song than are their counterparts in spoken theater: Verdi's Duke of Mantua is more likely to answer Borsa's warning by bursting into song than is Victor Hugo's King Francis in replying Borsa's counterpart de Gordes¹¹. In situations

¹⁰ Beghelli does not use the term 'diegetic'; his formulation uses his phrase 'cantar cantando', a clever riff on Bellini's famous phrase 'morir cantando'. He asks, «cosa rende il pubblico consapevole che in certi momenti il personaggio operistico passa dal 'parlar cantando' al 'cantar cantando'»? (558).

¹¹ Of course there is one famous instance in the opera where both the King and the Duke sing a diegetic song: «Souvent femme varie» / «La donna è mobile». (I

like this, where there are conflicting signals, the decision how to perform the passage will fall to the director and the singers. And if the Duke takes up a lute and accompanies himself, the piece would indeed be a diegetic song.

These conflicts between types of signals are acute in Zandonai's early operas: there are passages that we accept as diegetic simply because the *disposizione scenica* of *Conchita* prescribes that they be performed thus, or because a character tells us that they are. For example, there is little in Berta's aria other than Caleb's comments or the stage direction «canta melanconicamente» that forces a reading of the aria as a song. The signs – musical and otherwise – of diegetic song are less obvious than in Verdi or Puccini. That is, in Zandonai the stylistic differences between a stage song and the normal unmarked style are less sharp than in those composers.

Let us return to Dot's song once more. It is set off from the *versi sciolti* preceding and following it by its *versi lirici*, but that would be true of any aria. It is marked by an unusual structure: two strophes of text with a *settenario*, two *endecasillabi*, and a final *settenario* rhyming with the first of the two *endecasillabi*.

Un giorno, tre fanciulli
andarono sul mar, sul mar lontano.
Volean toccare il cielo e veder l'onde
in preda all'uragano.

Oh, i poveri fanciulli,
sperduti in mezzo al mare, al mar lontano...
Oh, la povera mamma, che li aspetta
da tanto tempo invano!

Is it strophic? Verdi would have presented the second stanza fairly exactly, but Zandonai settles for *evoking* a strophic form: the second stanza presents the same melodic material, but begins a step higher, eventually returning to the same g^1 (as V of C minor) that ended the first stanza (pv 12-13 and Example 3, for most of the second stanza).

Similarly Rufina's brief lullaby in Act I of *Conchita* is in two stanzas,

cannot agree with Edward T. Cone's suggestion that we hear the first presentation of the song in the opera as [what I am calling] extradiegetic and only later reinterpret it as diegetic [Cone, 128-29].) My point holds, however, for unlike «Questa o quella», this is not a song used as part of a conversation (see "Songs as Provocation" below), but a song sung to oneself.

Dot

“Oh, i po-ve-ri fan - ciul - - - li, sper - du-ti in mez-zo al

Dot

ma - - re, al mar lon - ta - - no...

Dot

Oh, la po-ve-ra mam - ma che li a - spet - ta da tan - to

Example 3. *Il grillo del focolare*, Act 1: Dot's canzone, **pv** 13.

both presenting the same melodic material, but the first in C minor, the second in B minor (**os** 24-28; **pv** 3 11-13). The two two-line stanzas are not even in the same poetic meter: the first is in *endecasillabi*, the second in *ottonari*.

Let us turn now to Conchita's first aria, «Jer dalla fabbrica a Triana» (**os** 56-72; **pv** 3 28-35; measures 2-14 are shown in Example 4).

When Dolores and Rufina «son pronte ad azzuffarsi», «Conchita [...] accorre con un balzo, e saltando sul tavolo [...] giunge in tempo a separarle, mentre contemporaneamente dà principio al racconto: «Jer della fabbrica, ecc.». Ella canta con grande spigliatezza [...]» (**ds** 19). But *who* sings? The *disposizione scenica* here seems to refer to the

Allegro (in uno) $\text{♩} = 66$

Arpa

Conchita

Violini

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

Ott.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cor.

Trg.

Conch.

VI.

Vic.

Vic.

Cth.

ler dal-la fab-bri-

ca Tri-a-na m'han se-gui-ta tre ca-va-lier.

Example 4. *Conchita, Quadro primo*: Conchita's *racconto*, **os 57**.

character Conchita, not the *soprano* portraying her. Conchita's *racconto* is a good example of the complexities in determining whether a given passage is diegetic or not. With Conchita jumping on a table, it is certainly a performance, but is she singing? There is no visual signal – no

instrument on stage, no indications of «gesti pertinenti alla pratica del cantare» (Beghelli, 558). Nor are there verbal signals like «attenti alla cantatrice». The text consists of four quatrains of *doppi quinari*, except for the first stanza, which begins with two *novenario* lines, continuing the poetic meter of the previous quatrain, Rufina's «Davide nacque ad esser re». Although the (relative) regularity of the stanzas of *versi lirici* is consistent with diegetic song, it is not exclusive to it, however, and therefore doesn't provide conclusive evidence. Conchita must be improvising the words of her *racconto*, since they are too specific for a preexisting song, especially since the events related took place only on the preceding day. But is it improvised speech or improvised song¹²?

What about the musical signs? It is not strophic: the first stanza sets out her response to the three men who have followed her, then each of the following stanzas deals with her response to the men in turn. The second stanza – about the man whose mouth drives her crazy («della tua bocca pazza io vò») – keeps the same accompaniment figure but has a different melody. The third – about the man with the «due languidi occhi» who kisses her hand – changes character, but the fourth stanza – about the man she really loved – returns to the melodic line, the accompaniment, and key of the opening for two lines, before veering off for the final couplet with its 'punch line' at the end:



Ma dispettosa voltai la faccia
 quando vicina al terzo io fui:
 ci levò un grande urlo di rabbia:
 lo sciocco! quello che amo è lui!


A case might be made that the 'vamp' (here, several repetitions of a chordal pattern preceding the entrance of the melody) preceding the first, second, and fourth stanzas evokes the strumming of a guitar or other instrument traditionally used to accompany diegetic song – the way that pizzicato strings represent the guitar Susanna plays to accom-

¹² If the *character* Conchita were speaking rather than singing (but I don't believe that she is), yet another question could be asked: is she performing «diegetic poetry», to use Dr. Kristin Kane's phrase (from an unpublished seminar paper)? That is, is she improvising poetry, like Rodolfo, when he impresses Mimì by flaunting his poetic skills, or is this simply a conventional use of *versi lirici* for arias? Since Conchita is never identified as a poet (unlike Rodolfo, Andrea Chénier, etc.), there would be no reason to interpret this as spoken poetry rather than normal speech. In any event, the question is moot in this instance, since (in my view), she is indeed singing.

pany Cherubino's song «Voi che sapete» and that the harp accompaniment suggests that the character Alfredo is actually singing outside Violetta's window during her «Sempre libera». In the *Conchita* vamp the basses play pizzicato, the upper strings *col legno*, and the harp plays a guitar-like accompaniment pattern.

The principal musical characteristic that suggests diegetic song, however, is its Spanish character, its exoticism. The connection between exoticism and diegetic music can be sketched thus: even characters who *perform* for others in an exotic style tend to revert to a 'standard', unmarked Western idiom when they are 'sincere' rather than putting on a show. For example, in Bizet's opera, *Carmen* drops her exotic musical style after Act 2, when she is no longer interested in performing for anyone, especially not for Don José. Her shift to a non-exotic musical style is especially clear in the card scene and in her little duet with Escamillo before the bullfight¹³.

In *Conchita's* *racconto* the primary marker of 'Spanishness' is not the $\frac{5}{8}$ rhythm, but the  rhythmic pattern, embedded within the  pattern.

And although the $\frac{5}{8}$ meter continues beyond the song, the  pattern ends shortly thereafter. Another exotic feature is the strange omission of the third of both the tonic and dominant chords. Moreover, that *Conchita's* co-workers have learned a phrase of the song and sing it moments after the conclusion of the song – standard operating procedure with diegetic song – supports the reading of it as diegetic. Or, put another way, all these factors suggest that a performance of it *as* diegetic song would be convincing.

SONGS AS PROVOCATION

The scene of the Christmas Eve party in Act 2 of *Il grillo del focolare* provides an example of diegetic songs used as provocation, or at least as the equivalent of a speech within a conversation. As John lights the pudding, he sings what I take to be a diegetic song: a quatrain of rhymed *settenari*, with a catchy tune built on repetitions of the same rhythmic motive (p_v 120-22 and Example 5).

¹³ See *inter alia* R.P. LOCKE, 127-29; J. PARAKILIS, 163-67.

John *f* Ques-ta fiam - ma gio -

ff *p*
marcato il canto

John con - da è un pre - sa - gio ri - den - tel! O-gni cor lo as - se -

John con - da col suo vo - to più ar - den - tel!

Caleb Bra - vo

Example 5. *Il grillo del focolare*, Act 2: John's canzone, **pv** 120.

Questa fiamma gioconda
 è un presagio ridente!
 Ogni cor lo asseconda
 col suo voto più ardente!

Dot then picks up the tune (a tritone away) and paraphrases John's text in the first quatrain, but adding a second, ironic quatrain with similar music, but with the addition of insolent triplet figures on «infiamma», «augurio», and «amoroso».

Questa fiamma gioconda
 altre fiamme ridesta,
 se nell'ombra profonda
 la scintilla ne resta!
(passando un piatto col pudding fiammante a May, e con ironia)
 Per May Fiedling¹⁴ la fiamma
 e quest'altra allo sposo *(passando altro piatto a Tackleton)*
 Dell'ardor che li infiamma
 sia l'augurio amoroso!

The song has its desired effect: May is «turbata». But there is more to come.

Tackleton next offers a toast: «un brindisi portar voglio agli assenti». The declamatory style of his music does not suggest that his speech is diegetic song. Dot then offers her own brindisi, picking up on Tackleton's words, as she had with John's, but turning the toast into a pointed insult to May Fiedling:

Il brindisi mi garba. E bevo anch'io
 agli assenti, a color che un dì partirono
 lieto di speme il cor, pieno d'amore,
 lungi, lungi, a cercar la lor fortuna!...
 E bevo ai cor fedeli
 che non sanno obliare e che li attesero
 fidenti e saldi al sacro giuramento.
(deponendo il bicchiere con forza)
 Ed agli altri non bevo!
(May molto commossa si asciuga furtivamente le lagrime) (pv 124-26)

¹⁴ The play changes Dickens's «Fielding» to «Fiedling», another example of the play's influence on the libretto.

Once again, Dot recycles the thematic material of John's song, which, as I have suggested, is best viewed – and performed – as diegetic song. Despite Dot's *versi sciolti* – certainly unusual for a diegetic song – this recycling of thematic material suggests that her brindisi is a diegetic song as well. After a brief interruption – the remonstrances of John and Caleb – she continues, now with *versi lirici* (four quatrains of *settenari*), conjuring up someone sailing homewards «verso chi non l'attende», who runs to the house of his beloved «e vuota la trovò!!...»¹⁵ (pv 124-31). After the conclusion, and further remonstrances, she declares, «Il brindisi è finito e depongo il bicchier...». The musical setting is simple until the final stanza, an almost folk like tune with a relatively uncomplicated harmonization.

Dot's brindisi is a different kind of speech act from John's song: it makes a point and elicits a response, just as if it were a speech in a conversation in recitative or in real life. And the response here is that May is moved to tears, and a reconciliation with Dot ensues.

There are several examples of songs as provocation in the first scene of *Conchita*. The *disposizione scenica* characterizes Rufina's lullaby mentioned above as 'sarcastic': «Intanto Rufina canta una sua sarcastica *ninna-nanna* al bimbo» (ds 15). The sarcasm consists in accusing the mother of promiscuity, of not knowing the identity of the father: «Il tuo caro papà, mio bel piccino, / è grazioso davver, se ti somiglia!» (Libretto 6) – or in a later version, «I diciotto papà che t'han creato / Il loro tempo, perdio, non han gettato» (os 24-25; pv 3 11-12). In both cases this leads to a «risata generale», and the infuriated mother calls Rufina «Canaglia!» and slaps her.

Later in the same scene, Dolores «comincia una specie di canzone amara e beffarda» (ds 19); if hers is a 'canzone' (a diegetic song), Rufina's immediate reply probably is as well, though it's not specifically identified as a *canzone* (os 51-56; pv 3 25-27). Their exchange nearly leads to a fight, which Conchita stops by singing *her* diegetic song, as we have seen.

In the final scene of the opera, it is Conchita's «canzone mordace» that pushes Mateo to violence. As she begins the song, «cantarellando

¹⁵ This last unrhymed line follows the final quatrain. Its departure from the poetic structure – and the musical design up to this point – is seconded by its being delivered after a rhetorical pause «quasi con un grido». On the rhetorical effect of a similar breaking of a poetic structure – «where a set of longer lines is interrupted or concluded by a shorter line» (e.g., the single *senario* line «Or tutto fini!» after five lines of *senario doppio* in Violetta's «Addio del passato») – see J. HEPOKOSKI, 258-59.

sarcasticamente» (**ds** 76), «Se un vecchio è ricco d'oro / non gli donar tua fè: / presto se'n va il tesoro / e il vecchio resta a te!», Mateo moves surreptitiously about the room closing the doors. And, «Quando Conchita accenna a concludere la canzone mordace», precisely when she begins to repeat the last line, «Mateo, che si è sempre più avvicinato a lei, improvvisamente la investe violentemente alle spalle [...], scagliandola a terra» (**ds** 76, **os** 523-26, **pv** 3 217-18).

Act 3 of *Melenis* begins with the «ritornello triste» sung by Isi, which is interrupted by her female companions (**pv** 158-60). Later in the act Isi, now offstage, takes it up again, and Melenis, «al ritornello di lei, è scossa, vinta: retrocede sino all' esedra marmorea, cadendo a sedere» (**pv** 187)¹⁶. And when «Dalla villa giunge il canto nuziale [this too, is a reprise of diegetic music heard earlier]: Melenis ne è stordita: si aggira per la scena, come folle»: «Oh, quella melodia come turbina orrenda dentro l'anima mia!» (**pv** 197-98 and Example 6).

The passage superimposes diegetic music that ignores the emotional situation – the theorist of film sound Michel Chion calls this 'anempathetic' – with 'empathetic' extra-diegetic music that *does* reflect the emotional situation (Chion, 8). That is, the offstage chorus and band provide festive music, against which the orchestra in the pit reveals Melenis's anguish, developing a motive introduced when she first approached Marzio in Act 1. At the end of the passage, Melenis cries out: «Vo' turbargli la festa! Voglio dargli di nozze un'aurora funesta!» (**pv** 201) and commits suicide shortly thereafter: «Cade sulle rose, restando a traverso il sentiero, sulla soglia del tempietto» (**pv** 203). From the score and libretto it seems that the curtain falls just before the wedding procession would come upon her corpse, which would indeed have given «un'aurora funesta» to the marriage; but according to a review of the première, «Il corteo [nuziale] *passa ignaro* del cadavere di Melenis che giace tra un mucchio di rose sulla soglia di un tempietto» (my emphasis)¹⁷.

* * *

Let us return to *Il grillo* for the last time. The opera's last example of diegetic music occurs after the defeat of Tackleton. Dot's words, «Al

¹⁶ Two other examples of reprises of diegetic music in the opera, both of Melenis's canzone, should be mentioned. When Marzio asks Melenis: «Non hai tu dunque amato mai?», she replies by singing three lines from the 'canzone', and she also sings the song's final phrase offstage at the end of Act 2 (**pv** 52-53; **pv** 143-44).

¹⁷ Review by 'Guido', «L'Illustrazione Italiana» 39, 46-47 (17-24 November 1912), reprinted in Cagnoli, 51-52.

Allegro non troppo ♩ = 112

Sop. 1. *Solenne*

Coro

Ten. 1.

(interno)

p

Melenis

Coro

(Violini)

cresc.

12 12 12 12

Example 6. *Melenis*, Act 3: *Canto nuziale* with Melenis's reaction, *pv* 197.

vostro focolare e al vostro cuore / è il Grillo che mancò!», repeated by May, Edoardo, John, and Caleb, enrage Tackleton (this final sequence begins at **pv** 211). Tackleton, «in un accesso di furore, si precipita al camino, afferra le molle, come per vendicarsi del suo nemico, il Grillo». (His attack on the cricket is drawn from the play – it is not in the novel). But «Dalla chiesa echeggia alto e solenne un coro religioso», a Christmas hymn: «Nato è Gesù. / Gloria al Signor nei cieli e pace agli uomini / sopra la terra. Osanna! / È il Natale! [...]» – chorus and orchestra, complete with *campane* and organ. The music changes everything: «Tackleton quasi riconoscendo in quel canto improvviso un intervento divino a favore del suo misterioso nemico, lascia cadere le molle e ascolta».

When the characters on stage join the offstage chorus, Tackleton laments, «Triste il Natale per chi è vinto e solo», but he is consoled by Berta: «Vigila sempre per chi è vinto e solo / un cuore amico!» The words will be inaudible in the mass of sound, so the pantomime is crucial: «Tackleton si lascia cadere su una sedia. Allora Berta lentamente si avvicina a lui e gli prende una mano fra le sue. Egli la guarda stupito commosso; non si sente più solo; lascia la mano fra quelle della fanciulla e la guarda ancora con riconoscenza profonda».

This is a far cry from Dickens's novel. First the setting: although it is one of Dickens's five Christmas books (the most famous is the first, *A Christmas Carol*), *The Cricket on the Hearth* is not connected *directly* with Christmas, The word «Christmas» is mentioned but once, as a season of the year, and the entire story is set in the last four days of January¹⁸. Nor is there any explicit reference to Christianity in the entire novel.

The Christmas setting and the offstage chorus celebrating it derive not from Dickens but from Francmesnil's play, although the chorus was treated very differently there: it appears not at the end, but at the beginning of the third act, in the scene where John contemplates murdering the man he believes to be Dot's lover. He hears the offstage chorus singing: «Jésus, l'Enfant-Roi, vient de naître. / Gloire à Dieu dans les Cieux. / Paix sur la terre aux hommes de bonne volonté. / Noël! Noël! Noël!» (in the setting of Jules Massenet). But John, far from taking «quel canto improvviso [come] un intervento divino» as Tackleton will do, he rejects it violently. «Noël! Jour d'apaisement et de pardon!... Quelle plaisanterie!... Est-ce que le pardon même me rendrait mon bon-

¹⁸ «“In three days' time. Next Thursday. The last day of the first month in the year. That's my wedding-day”, said Tackleton» (Ch. 1).

heur?... Non! Non! Je ne veux plus être dupe... Je me révolte et je me venge...» (Francmesnil 116). And then, in an episode adopted in the opera as well, he takes a rifle from the wall, but when the cricket starts to sing he sets it aside. He throws his pipe at the cricket, but when the cricket falls silent, he feels remorse and fear that he has killed it¹⁹. Then when the cricket sings again, John forgives Dot for her supposed transgression – his love returns. So, in both play and opera Christmas is made explicit, but while in the play the Christian theme is rejected with contempt, in the opera it is treated with reverence – anti-clericalism was always stronger in France than in Italy.

Rather than the consolation offered Tackleton in the opera, the play ends with the defeated Tackleton in tears. He suddenly abandons his pursuit of the cricket: «Mais Tackleton laisse tomber son arme improvisée et s'effondre sur une chaise.» Caleb's words end the play: «Ne craignez rien!... Il pleure» (148-49). The solution in the opera seems a compromise between the cruel ending of the play and the upbeat ending of the novel, with its *lieto fine* for Tackleton as well as for the others. In the Dickens original Tackleton is transformed at the end: like Scrooge he sees the error of his ways. Indeed, he ends by joining the party and dancing with Mrs. Fielding – another example of the trope of the old man who graciously resigns himself to defeat (like Don Pasquale and Falstaff, but unfortunately for Ernani and Elvira, unlike Don Ruy Gomez de Silva).

FIVE UNUSUAL USES OF DIEGETIC MUSIC

I conclude with a brief discussion of five of the unusual, if not unprecedented, uses of diegetic music in Zandonai's early operas.

1. The 'quotation' of a diegetic song not heard by the audience in its initial appearance in the drama, but later embedded in a narrative and re-enacted by the original singer. In *L'uccellino d'oro* the bird sings a lullaby that puts the cook to sleep, thus burning the roast prepared for the marriage of the witch's evil daughter Fiordispina. We do not witness this event, however, but learn of it later from the narrative of the cook (p. 49-52). In spoken dialogue over an orchestral presentation of the tune, he explains:

¹⁹ In the novel John takes up the rifle, but the cricket's chirp «moved and softened him» immediately – only in the play and the opera does he attack the cricket.

Ahimé!.. Ahimé!... Mentre preparavo l'arrosto, uno strano uccellino dalle ali dorate cantava ... Ed io mi addormentai ... e l'arrosto bruciò ... e per colmo di spavento ogni stoviglia che si prende in mano cade a terra e tutto si rompe ... [...] Quel canto strano ... quell'Uccellino d'oro...

Then, to a repetition of the last eight measures of the eighteen-bar tune just played by the orchestra, he sings the actual lullaby that had put him to sleep: «Ninna Nanna, Ninnana.... dormi ah! ah! l'arrosto brucerà!...».

The bird then re-enacts the event, repeating all the words he presumably had spoken to the cook, and ending with another performance of the lullaby: «Cuoco della cucina / ti voglio addormentar, l'arrosto Fior-dispina / non deve oggi mangiar.../ Ninna [etc.]». Finally the lullaby is repeated by the wood doves.

2. 'Teaching' a diegetic song to another character, and, furthermore, doing so to prompt the second character to ask questions, which the first then answers. In the opening scene of *Conchita*, Conchita «avrà cominciato a cantare furbescamente, senza alzar la testa dal banco»: «Chi un soldo mi darà / per una *soledad*? ed un *real* / per una seguidiglia?» (os 86-87; pv 3 41). In a later scene with Mateo at her home, in a passage removed in the final version of the score, she quotes the text and music of her first question and, since he had given her not merely a «soldo» but a «napoleone», she owes him a song, but «per castigo», she says, «me la direte voi!». She proceeds to teach him the song. Each phrase is a question, which she sings and he repeats in part to roughly the same melodic line but with a different harmonization, then she answers. The last two of the four questions are flirtatious: «Hai forse un altro amante?», he repeats the question and she replies «No.» «Vuoi ch'io sia quello?» – he repeats the question and she replies «Sì», but then breaks the spell: «Ma le risposte sono / solo della canzone!» (pv 1 89-93). Her encouraging replies were valid only in the song, not in real life. Messages sent by Conchita in her role as performer are not to be trusted, no more than her dancing nude in the *baile* can be taken as a sign of promiscuity²⁰.

²⁰ Of course in 1911 Milan (as opposed to 2014 Berlin or Stuttgart) she cannot actually appear nude on stage. In the opera, *on this particular night*, Mateo happens to interrupt her routine before she disrobes completely: she «aprirà rapidamente lo scialle come per lasciarlo cadere a terra e apparire interamente nuda agli occhi degli Inglesi», but at that point Mateo «romperà i vetri e salterà nella sala prima che Conchita abbia potuto gettare a terra lo scialle» (ds 51).

3. The superimposition of ‘anempathetic’ diegetic music and ‘empathetic’ extra-diegetic music, which we have already encountered with the ending of *Melenis*. In the *baile* scene in *Conchita*, the *orchestrina sulla scena* plays a jota in $\frac{3}{8}$, with the *pubblico* (chorus) at times singing a four-stanza song «sul ritmo della ‘Jota’» (**Libretto** 29). Against the diegetic music in $\frac{3}{8}$ other characters simultaneously converse in $\frac{2}{4}$, supported by the orchestra in the pit – this includes intense exchanges between Conchita and Mateo (see for example, **os** 284-90; **pv** 123-27). The procedure here recalls the Act 3 finale of *Un ballo in maschera*, where the «piccola orchestra sul palcoscenico entro le quinte», unaware that «la commedia muterà in tragedia», plays a waltz, while the orchestra in the pit *is* aware and ominously inflects the lowered submediant ($\flat \hat{6}$ and $\flat VI$), borrowing from the minor mode. Or the beginning of Scarpia’s interrogation of Cavaradossi, before Scarpia closes the window, shutting out the performance of the cantata.

4. The orchestra represents non-musical and non-verbal sounds produced by one or more characters. I have already mentioned the orchestral depiction of the cricket’s chirping in *Il grillo del focolare*. There is another example in *Conchita*. After Mateo has beaten her, Conchita «Singhiozza come un bimbo, senza prendere fiato, in un solo tono» on repeated Fs then F#s (**os** 547-49, **pv** 3 226-27, and Example 7)²¹.

According to the *disposizione scenica*, «Non appena Mateo ha pronunciato le prime parole: “Così vile son io!” , la si ode singhiozzare. E sono piccoli singhiozzi con voce assai fievola sempre sullo stesso tono, come di bambino che implori perdono. Essi si udranno sopra tutto sulle battute in cui par che gema l’orchestra, mentre la voce di Mateo si interrompe» (**ds** 80). This weeping on one tone comes from the novel: «Elle pleurait comme une petite fille, toujours du même ton» (ch. 13). Here the orchestral music depicts not diegetic music, but diegetic sound. The example recalls Verdi’s comment about the *Sonnambulismo* scene in *Macbeth*. When Ristori performed the sleepwalking scene in the Shakespeare play, «faceva un rantolo; il rantolo della morte. In musica non si deve, nè si può fare; come non si deve tossire nell’ultim’atto della *Traviata*, nè ridere nello *scherzo od è follia* del *Ballo in maschera*. Qui vi è un

²¹ I suppose that one might object that Conchita was directed to sing along with the sobbing solo violin, that it is merely a notational quirk that the vocal part is not written out in full. That seems unlikely, however: the effect would be ludicrous. In the 1969 recording with the Turin RAI Orchestra, Antonietta Stella remains silent, letting the orchestra speak for her (Opera d’Oro **ASIN**: B000ILYYSA).

14 Più largo ♩ = 46

Matteo

Co-sì vi - le son i - o! ques-to ho

Mat.

fat - to? Io... Ma - te - o!

ppp *ppp* *espress.* *pppp*

Example 7. *Conchita*, Final quadro: Conchita's *singhiozzi*, pv 3 226.

lamento del corno inglese che supplisce benissimo al rantolo, e più poeticamente»²².

5. Offstage voices of anonymous characters. Many precedents come to mind: the gondolier in Rossini's *Otello*, the *Steuersmann* in *Tristan und Isolde*, the *piccolo savoiardo* in *Fedora*, the *pastore (ragazzo)* in Act 4 of *Tosca*, and later, the 'sopranino' and 'tenorino' in *Il tabarro*. But it's hard to think of operas that place as much emphasis on this device as *Conchita*. Its «Intermezzo nella strada» (Quadro secondo) is an instrumental piece that includes, however, the disembodied «voce lontanissima», the diegetic street cry of a «venditore di frutta»: «Aranci! Banani delle Canarie!» In the first two versions of the opera there followed a dialogue between Conchita and Mateo as they proceeded to her house. The voice of the *venditore*, still *lontana*, reappeared, offering fruit for sale.

²² Verdi's first letter of 11 March 1865 to Escudier (Rosen and Porter, 110). The letter is also cited by Beghelli, who mentions two similar examples from *Oberto* and *Otello* (571-72).

In the Act 3 Prelude, again played with the curtain closed (according to the *disposizione scenica*), there are «Voci lontane dietro le scene» singing arabesques on «Ah». When the curtain rises one hears «arpa dietro le scene» and «Voce di tenore lontana». And there are more off-stage choruses singing «Ah» when the boy climbs up and kisses Enrichetta's hand. Finally, the arabesques of the offstage voice from the Act 3 Prelude return at the very end of the opera, perfuming the air with Spanish *couleur locale*, suppressing the ending of Louÿs's novel, where Conchita again reduces Mateo to 'un pantin', a puppet.

* * *

And how does Zandonai treat diegetic music in his later operas? That is a topic for another conference.

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- Ces** = sigla in Diego Cescotti's *Catalogo tematico*
ds = disposizione scenica (staging manual)
os = orchestral score
pn = plate number
pv = piano-vocal score

Eucellino d'oro, fiaba musicale in tre atti (**Ces** RZ 2)

- pv** edition by S. de Florian. **Ces:** SP [46]

Il grillo del focolare, commedia musicale in tre atti (**Ces** RZ 3)

- pv** Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & Co., 1907; **pn** 112135, 221 pp.; **Ces:** SPO7, available at <imslp.org>
Libretto Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & Co., 1907; **pn** 112136, 54 pp.; **Ces:** L07

Conchita (**Ces:** RZ 4)

- os** *Conchita*, opera in cinque quadri; Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & Co., 1921; **pn** 118460, 577 pp.; **Ces:** Partitura completa B, available at <imslp.org>
pv 1 Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & Co. 1911; **pn** 113740, 254 pp.; **Ces:** Sp 11
pv 2 Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & Co., 1912; **pn** 113740, 247 pp.; **Ces:** Sp 12/I
pv 3 Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & Co., 1912 (ripristino 1944); **pn** 113740, 239 pp.; "New edition", "Quattro atti e sei quadri", **Ces:** Sp 12/II

- Libretto** New York, etc.: Ricordi, 1912; **pn** 114461, 50 pp.; **Ces**: “libretto in lingua inglese”
- ds** *Disposizione scenica per l'opera “Conchita” Quattro atti...* compilata da Carlo Clausetti, Milan, etc.: G. Ricordi & C., 1913; **pn** 115024, 83 pp.; no entry in **Ces**

Melenis, dramma lirico in tre atti (**Ces**: RZ 5)

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