

A NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH TO A BAROQUE OPERA

by
Henrik Jørgensen

Introduction

In the fall of 1651, the composer Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676) prepared an opera entitled *La Calisto* for performance at the Venetian Opera House of San Apollinare (locally known as 'San Aponal'). The libretto was provided by the director of the theatre, Giovanni Faustini (1615-1651), who was a respected poet and opera manager. The production was haunted with trouble; two weeks before the first night, one of the main singers died and had to be replaced hastily (Glixon & Glixon 1992: 57). The opera was a failure; it attracted very few spectators, and the show came to an early end (Glixon & Glixon 1992: 55). Faustini's death right before Christmas 1651 (Glixon 2008: 3) did its share to cast ill fortunes on the opera. Cavalli put the score on the shelf and probably never took it down again. After his death, his collection of opera scores (including, besides the ominous *Calisto* score, one of the two preserved scores of his teacher Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*) ended up in the library of the collector Contarini, and from there it was donated to the Biblioteca Marciana, where it still is (Glover 1978: 65-68).

When practical interest in early opera began in the 1960s, Monteverdi could provide only the three well-known titles (*L'Orfeo* (1607), *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (1640?) and *Poppea* (1641)), but Cavalli offered a much more impressive picture: 27 complete operas¹ were preserved in manuscript form (Glover 1978: 158-9). One of

the earliest of his operas to attract present-day stage attention was in fact *La Calisto*. It was staged for the second time, i.e. the first time in recent years, in 1970; today, it is by far the most often played of Cavalli's operas, and indeed regularly a huge success (Rosand 2008: 4). Its witty and frivolous libretto, with its sparkling, direct suggestions about erotic matters, definitely contributes to its popularity. If Cavalli only had known what a success he had fostered when he packed his score away back then...

One could almost yield to the temptation to see this work as a contemporary opera, yet written quite long ago. Of course, it is in many ways typical of the early baroque era, by its intertwining of several plots, accompanied by buffo scenes. Yet, it also seems sparklingly modern. It is definitely not a show to be taken seriously, although the tragedy, like in many of Shakespeare's comedies, lurks behind the obvious laughs accompanying the show. It is really shocking to realize that a text of this age actually takes a woman's love for another woman as its point of departure and treats this love with respect. But why is this text lined up to celebrate Per Aage Brandt's 70th birthday?

La Calisto actually raises both a practical problem and a theoretical question. The practical problem is what narratological studies can do with a text so far removed from our times, also in what concerns genre. The theoretical question is the interplay at the level of utterances in a dramatic text. What makes some of the characters of the play be superior to others? How can the different narrative projects of the individual characters find the right orientation, i.e. who is actually the subject in the narration, and who is the opponent? In the present paper, I want to pursue the problems raised in this connection.

The Plot

The opera combines two antique myths: the primary one being the story of the nymph Kallisto ('the beautiful one') as related by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, the other being the story of Endymion and the goddess of the moon, Selene, as related by Apollodoros in his well-known collection of antique myths.

According to the second Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Kallisto² is one of the nymphs of Artemis, a huntress who has sworn chastity and adoration of her mistress. After the great fire of the world following the fall of Phaëthon, Zeus goes on an inspection tour of Arcadia. Here, he observes the beautiful Kallisto, one of Artemis' virgin followers, and tries to persuade her to make love to him. She refuses; but Zeus changes himself into the likeness of Artemis and seduces her in this way. The seduction has its consequences: Kallisto becomes pregnant, she is chased out of the troupe of followers of Artemis and haunted by Hera, desiring to have her revenge on Zeus' infidelity. Kallisto gives birth to a son, Arcas, whereupon Hera changes her into a bear. Many years later, in a situation when the son is just about to kill the bear which is Kallisto, Zeus removes both of them to the stars in order to prevent the son from killing the mother. Hera is not at all pleased by this ending of the story, but is unable to do anything about it.

The story of Endymion is just a brief passage in Greek mythology, relating how the goddess of the moon, Selene, falls in love with the beautiful young shepherd Endymion. Zeus offers him eternal life, but no real divine status. Endymion decides that he will sleep eternally and stay young. Each night Selene comes to the cave where he sleeps and embraces him.

Since the goddess of the moon (already in Antiquity) is regularly identified with Artemis, Faustini is able to build a serial plot from the two myths: Giove (Zeus) is pursuing Calisto, who on her part is in love with Diana (Artemis). However, the true love of Diana is

Endimione (Endymion), who on his part is also infatuated with love for the goddess; but a love affair is a very tricky matter for a goddess who has sworn chastity. On stage, we also meet the legal consort of Giove, Giunone (Hera/Juno) and her little helpers, the furies. In order to make matters more complicated, Diana is also pursued by Pane (Pan), the god of shepherds and woodlands, who is assisted by some lesser woodland gods. In the plot, their part is introduced in order to have somebody on the stage to whom Diana's chastity is an issue. The plot may be visualized like this (single arrows $X \rightarrow Y$ indicating the love of X for Y, and double arrows $X \leftrightarrow Y$ indicating mutual love):



When arranged this way, Diana appears to be the key person of the action, but in the actual libretto, her part is much less central, the main focus being on the troubles of Calisto. However, this is in many ways a matter that depends on the staging of the opera.

In Venetian operas, parallel love plots among persons of lesser status were introduced to achieve comic relief. The inspiration for this dramatic technique (also well-known from Shakespeare) comes from Spanish drama: Calderón and Lope de Vega (Glover 1978: 41). In this case, one of the silvan gods (Il Satirino, 'the small satyr') pursues the only nymph of Diana's retinue who is presented on stage (Linfea). Linfea is bound by the same vows of chastity as Diana herself, but secretly she is definitely interested in a legal marriage (I, 12). Poor Satirino, a young boy, half god, half goat, is definitely not what the mature woman desires, and he is treated accordingly.

The prologue of the opera normally provides a clue to the actual narrative that is to follow, but in this case the prologue is extremely

enigmatic: two allegoric figures, Nature (Natura) and Eternity (Eternità) praise the beauties of the celestial sphere as a place to which 'pure winged souls' return when they have lived a life on earth while controlling their senses. Then Fortune (Destino) enters and demands that Calisto shall receive a position in Heaven. Nature and Eternity agree, since Calisto's beauty and good nature is obvious to them, but when they ask why she is called to the spheres, what her merits are, Destino answers:

Il mio volere. / Non si chiede ragione /di ciò che'l Fato termino
e dispone./ Sono i decreti miei / arcani anco a gli dei. (Prologue)
('By my will. / What Fate decrees and decides /requires no
reason. /My decrees are secret, / even to the gods.')

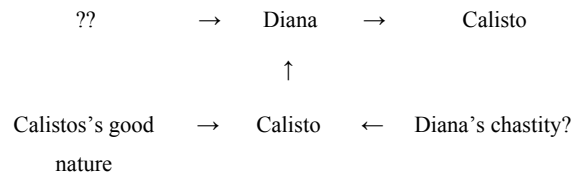
Since Destino is a god of high status, but at the same time a permanently young boy and older than the other gods (according to Nature: "Immutabil' garzone /più vecchio di Saturno e più di me"), this very uninformative answer is treated with respect, and Nature and Eternity join in the demand that Calisto be raised to heaven.

Thus we are left with an expectation as to what Calisto's fate will be, but without a clue as to in what way she will reach heaven, nor which qualities will justify her ascent. Despite the obvious (and explicit) lack of good reasons why, the clear assumption is that she will deserve her position in heaven, and that she will be the pivot of the whole plot.

The plot's projects

With the exception of three characters, Mercurio (Hermes), who accompanies Giove and provides him with ribald ideas, Silvano, the older one of the two silvan gods, and the furies that assist Giunone, all persons in the play are pursuing their feelings of love: Calisto for

Diana, Giove for Calisto, Giunone for Giove (if this is not merely due to her wish to maintain social privileges), Pane for Diana, Satirino for Linfea, and Endimione and Diana for one another. It is easy enough to draw up rudimentary actant models (cp. Greimas & Courtés 1979, 1986) for all persons; the main problem is that many of these models remain fragmentary or unclear.



Calisto obviously desires Diana very much in the flesh³, but what will license this love? What instances will help her achieve it, and what forces prevent her from receiving it? Diana's chastity is an obvious choice as opponent, but apart from this, Calisto seems utterly left on her own in the narrative. She possesses obvious qualities, demonstrated through the text: she is beautiful, and she is constant, all of it qualities that might act as supporting factors. However, the absence of a licensing instance is interesting. The text does not address the problem anywhere, neither in a positive nor in a negative way, indicating the presence of forces that would either allow a connection between Calisto the would-be lover and her love-object, or keep the two apart. The closest approximation seems to be the scene where Calisto, after her love scene with the apparent Diana, i.e. Giove, meets the real Diana, who of course has no memory of physical love at all and characterizes Calisto's ardent account of her experiences in the arms of the person she believes to be Diana as impudicious and vile. Thus, Calisto's project is deemed to be out of the question. Or is it? In an interesting twist, the text depicts Diana's behaviour as blunt and insensitive. If a member of her

retinue seems to behave contrary to the regulations, she is instantly treated roughly and without respect to previous merits and possible excuses. In turning down Calisto's love, Diana's character seems to lose its merits in the eyes of the spectators (though not in Calisto's).

If we move on to Giove, his project with Calisto is just as unlicensed as Calisto's with Diana. And Calisto spares no efforts to make that clear to him:

Dunque Giove immortale / Che protegger dourebbe / Santo nell' opre, il verginal costume / Acceso à mortal lume / Di deflorar procura / I corpi casti, e render vani i voti / Di puri cori, à Cintia sua deuoti / Tù sei qualche lasciuo, e la natura / Sforzi con carmi maghi ad vbedirti. (I, 2)

('Thus the immortal Jove, / Whose divine actions should / Protect virginity, / Enkindled by the mortal flame, / Seeks to deflower / The chaste bodies consecrated to Diana [= Cintia], / To make them break their clean-hearted vows. / You are a lecher who, with magic incantations, / Forces nature to obey you.')

It is interesting to observe that this long, well-formulated criticism of Giove's attitude and behaviour (I have only quoted the beginning) doesn't change his project at all. The music does not contradict Calisto's words, so the rhetorical effect should be optimal; but it is not. When she leaves the stage, Giove is at first desperate because he cannot achieve what he desires. Mercurio has to come up with a good idea, and suggests fraud ("inganno"). Giove's power over nature, demonstrated in the beginning of I, 2 (he conjures up fresh water from the burnt soil), does not help him with human beings, since, as Giove states himself, "libero creai animo humano" ('I created the will of human beings to be free'; I, 3).

As expected, the fraud helps; Calisto cannot resist the approaches from the Diana that in reality is Giove. In several passages through the libretto, Giove and Mercurio rejoice because of their victory

over Calisto. When Giunone, Giove's legal spouse, arrives to find out what Giove is indulging in, she is also tricked by the apparent Diana, Giove; likewise with Pane, who also mistakes Giove for Diana. In this way, the course of events allows the tricksters to push their plans through. Their victims are not only the human beings, like Calisto (who up to now has no divine status), but also their fellow gods are deceived: Giunone and Pane. Still, what licenses this behaviour? There is no clear answer.

The narrative pivot, Diana, is a complex matter. Adored by several characters of the opera, she herself is only interested in the young shepherd Endimione; but due to her vow of chastity she can only visit him when he is sleeping. She declines the love of Calisto, when Calisto comes back from the rendez-vous with Giove (I, 10), and Pane is also told off in a way that cannot be misunderstood. On the other hand, she is bound by her vow, and therefore her attachment to Endimione must be a chaste one. This is displayed on stage in the love scene II,2, where Diana is discussing her conflicting interests in the sleeping Endimione, thereby almost waking up the poor sleeper (of course, that makes her problems even more acute). In III,7 an agreement is reached and they can indulge in kissing (and singing duets), but nothing else.

In the narrative context, one may wonder whether Diana is actually trying to fulfill two contrasting projects at a time: chastity and the love for Endimione. We are never told why Diana has this obligation to be chaste, but by the way she talks about it (I, 8, II, 2), the obligation seems to come from somewhere outside her. Thus it is an external project imposed upon her; the most explicit phrasing is found in I, 8: "Dura necessità / rigorosa onestà / vuol, che rigida io sia / verso l'anima mia" ('Hard necessity, / Rigorous chastity / Demands that I be inflexible / Towards myself') and in II, 2: "Così chiede il mio decoro" ('My honour demands it'). Her passion for Endimione seems to be a part of her persona; no external factors are at play, although her attitude is not always a simple one; at the

beginning of II,2, she states that she has come here, being alone, in order to burn out her passion in solitude, not to reveal herself as a lover ("E qui solinga in solitario loco / per ardere al mio foco / non per scoprirmi amante.") – although this is exactly what she almost does in the next phrase. In the brief passage in I, 8 when she is talking to Endimione in the presence of Linfea, she is relatively open towards Endimione, and when Linfea attempts to chase him away with a reference to Diana's chastity, she makes an irritated aside comment and then tries to smooth out matters. Also in this case, the licensing factor – or factors, if we assume that there are indeed two projects – is/are unclear, if not downright inscrutable.

The character of Pane is, as mentioned, mainly there in order to form a counterpoint for Calisto's love for Diana. Pane himself has made a gift to Diana long ago and received kisses as a reward; his passion is acted out verbally in a dialogue with the silvan gods, but he is stuck and makes no progress, even when he resorts to physical action and makes Endimione his prisoner. Towards the end, he seems to give up Diana as a project when he discovers that she really is in love with Endimione, but not before he and Silvano, taking advantage of the situation, scream out loud: "Cintia la casta dea tutta è lussuria" ('Cynthia (=Diana), the chaste goddess, is nothing but pure lust'; III, 6).

This persistent absence of licensing factors seems to be symptomatic of the text. All persons alike are driven by their affections, and there is no master subject anywhere that controls the actions; these happen through the coincidence of the several impulses driving the persons through their courses.

Auditive and visual body signs

An early Venetian opera has its peculiar scenic aspects, some of which may be extremely foreign to a more realistic, modern way

of thinking. Above all, the gender aspect is at stake in relation to almost all aspects of the stage show. A brief introduction will be useful, since some of it may influence the level of utterances towards which we are moving slowly.⁴

Early opera relied heavily on *castrato* singers, i.e. male singers moving in the soprano and alto registers, but obviously with male body signs.⁵ *Castrati* used to sing heroes and other main male characters in early opera; in Monteverdi's *Incoronazione de Poppea*, it is obvious from the musical notation that both Nero the emperor coveting the beautiful Poppea, and Ottone, Poppea's former lover, were sung by castrates⁶, and no joke was intended in that respect. Well-trained virtuoso *castrato* singers were easy to find in those days on account of their use in church music, whereas especially female singers were rarities, due to the fact that women only on the rarest occasions received the formal musical training necessary to carry a part in an opera (Keyser 1987: 47-48; 51). For these reasons, many female characters, especially goddesses, were instead sung by castrates, or by falsettists who could achieve the same tone levels, but almost never had the same full voice (Keyser 1987: 49). This is what Keyser (1987: 46) calls a convention: "discrepant elements that the audience is expected to ignore".

Another remarkable feature was the widespread use of male singers (tenors) in female servants' parts, as nurses or the like. This may have been a sheer consequence of the absence of qualified female singers, but as pointed out by Keyser (1987: 48), it may also have had to do with the role of women in society in those days: women could not be cast in roles that were either undignified or unattractive, or both. The use of men in such roles did only contribute to the gender mix already established by the *castratos*. When Raymond Leppard first revived *La Calisto*, the role of Linfea was taken to be such a part, in spite of the fact that it is written in the soprano clef (C1); cp. Glixon (2008: 4). From what we know about the singers employed at the theatre, however, it is more likely that in the first

production, Linfea was sung by a woman (cp. Glixon & Glixon 1992: 59). The use of men in such roles is what Keyser (1987: 46) calls a 'device', "discrepant elements introduced deliberately to draw the audience's attention to some aspect of the production". Yet another aspect, also relevant, was the question whether bass singers were supposed to be falsettists as well. Álvaro Torrente (2008) has found evidence that may be interpreted in such a way that good bass singers were supposed to be good falsettists as well, and in fact, the part of the Devil in Sigmunt Theophil Staden's *Seelewig* (Nürnberg 1645, probably never staged) does switch between bass and (falsetto) mezzosoprano. In *La Calisto*, Giove is a bass (written in bass clef), but 'Giove in Diana' (as this part is always termed) is a soprano (written in the C1 clef). On stage, it does matter whether 'Giove in Diana' is a bass singer using his falsetto, or whether it is the woman singing the true Diana, who also carries the sections where the apparent Diana is the seductive Giove.⁷ This is also what Keyser calls a device. At any rate, gender is a many-faceted matter, especially here.

Although not directly a gender issue, it should be pointed out that in the past, boys also were used frequently on the opera stage. Boys in those days were usually able to sing soprano and alto parts until their 17th year, and there is a strong likelihood that Satirino was actually sung by a boy; otherwise, his self-representation to Linfea in I, 13 is difficult to understand. Qualified boy singers of this age cannot be found in our days, causing parts like Satirino to be a real headache for a modern opera director. Either the part must be sung by a woman (involving yet some more gender crossing) or by a falsettist.

This gender mix is an important part of Venetian opera. Different authors have pointed out that the opera season coincided with the carnival, an excellent occasion for an intermingling otherwise removed as far from social life as possible. A troublesome aspect of the gender mix is that modern productions have great difficulty in

achieving the effects that were customary in those days; to mention only the most brutal aspect, modern audiences would find it disgusting to find that the boys with those good voices had been castrated. But whereas the castrates as heroes were taken at face value, the male singers as elderly women were obviously there to be laughed at. The basses moving into the falsetto register seem to move in yet another, ambiguous and probably dangerous, direction. To many modern opera visitors, these default values are difficult to imagine and demand some work from the director in order for the audience not to get lost.

The level of utterances

In order to find out what is going on at the level of utterances (fr. *énonciation*) between the characters of the opera we need some yardsticks. A simple, but effective one is the observation to what extent a speaker conforms with the Gricean maxims (Grice (1975) 2001). Taken at face value, the maxims look like rules of good behaviour, typical of a bourgeois society; but their real impact lies somewhere else. They should rather be seen as schematizations of what a hearer may expect from a speaker. As we all know, the real point of the maxims is that we actually in most everyday situations act against them and achieve meaning through the breaks and twists intertwined in the discourse.

Underlying the Gricean maxims is the expectation that speakers collaborate (Grice (1975) 2001: 207); but exactly this cooperation is very much at stake in the libretto. Actually, the text raises this question quite explicitly, through the character of Mercurio: he is the origin of most of the fraud in the opera, especially the one of turning Giove into Diana. Moreover, Mercurio will frequently refer with delight to his own successes, both solo (e.g. I, 6, at a time when Calisto and Giove-in-Diana have left the stage together) and with

Giove (e.g. II, 9, the duet on the fate of husbands who let their wives control them). In many ways, his actions make sure that nothing is really safe to believe. When Calisto in Act III is returned briefly into her human shape, and taken on a tourist trip to her future home among the stars, all of this seems convincing enough; after all, this is what Destiny called for in the prologue. Still, some insecurity on her part resonates in the audience: What is Giove's interest in her, now that he has seduced her? Why is Mercurio suddenly so positive to her? Will she eventually really reach the stars, or will she remain a bear? We shall return to this below.

Non-cooperation is also very much an aspect of Diana. Actually, she is lying to everybody on the stage, but in contrast to Mercurio, who always gets away with his plots, poor Diana is caught out frequently, as the apparently so chaste goddess who is carrying on with her secret lover, Endimione. As Wendy Heller (2003: 187) remarks: "Unlike Calisto, the chaste Diana is not a victim of rape, but of her own desire and greed." Finally, Giunone is also using tricks, luring Calisto to tell her story while she very much takes the attitude of the comforting fellow woman ("Le tue noie funesti / À me scopri, che posso / Moglie del gran motore / Sanarti ogni dolore" ('Reveal to me / Your woes, that I may, / The spouse of the great Creator, / Wipe away all you trouble'; II,5)), until she enters the stage with the furies in order to achieve her revenge on Calisto, now that Giove is safely away (III, 2).

A marginal case, one could say, is Linfea, who, believing herself to be alone on the stage, expresses her secret desire to get a proper husband, only to be caught in the act by the little, lustful Satirino. There is a real paradox at play here: Linfea has sworn chastity, yet she feels attracted to young men ("Mi sento intenerire, / quando c'hò per oggetto / qualche bel giouanetto" ('I feel myself growing tender / When I have as an object / Some beautiful young man'; I, 12)⁸. Finally, when she is absolutely alone (or rather convinces herself that she is...), her expressed wish is marriage: she may feel

some attraction to love, but if she is going to test the phenomenon, she wants to go all the way with the law on her side: "In legittimo letto / forse prouar lo vò" ('In a legal bed / Maybe I'll try it out'; I, 12). Still, this lovely little comical scene reveals a lot about the mechanisms of how to trick the inhabitants of Arcadia. If you reveal yourself, as Linfea does, you may get caught; Satirino's part of the play is actually to be the peeping Tom who knows almost everything worth knowing about the Arcadians. Still, this does not promote his cause in any way. Even though he does his best to sell his semi-goat exterior as a rare delicacy to Linfea, she turns him down. His conclusion is embodied in another, male chauvinist comment (II, 4), where he describes the behaviour of women in a very derogatory fashion and concludes in an aria: "Chi crede à femina / Mai sempre instabile / ne l'acque semina" (He who believes in women / always unstable / sows in water). Maybe Mercurio is right after all: love is essentially a game of fraud. At least, the Gricean idea of cooperation seems to be in trouble throughout the text.

Men are from Mars, and so are women

Wendy Beth Heller (2003), in an analysis of the gender aspects of early opera, has observed a peculiar detail in Calisto's account to Giunone concerning what happened between Diana ("Diana") and herself:

Mi condusse
 In antro diletto
 E mi baciò più fiato
 Come se stata fosse il vago, il sposo.
 Le mie labra bacciate
 Le sue bacciaro à gara,
 Stretta da le sue braccia.
 (II, 6)

('She took me / to a pleasant cave / and kissed me several times / as if I were her lover, her spouse. / She kissed my lips, / I kissed hers often, / stretched out in her arms.')

The point here is that Calisto uses masculine vocabulary to describe her own part in the act: *il vago, il sposo*. And if she really is stretched out in the arms of Diana, Calisto seems to be on top, i.e. Calisto is holding the masculine missionary position in the love scene with a man transformed into a woman. Calisto does get pregnant following this course of actions, but the fact that she depicts herself in the masculine position is important, because it points to some open questions concerning female sexuality. Wendy Heller has a clear point in her remark (2003: 184): "For the male spectator, there could be no more compelling way to celebrate male sexual prowess than by representing this feast of *faux* female homosexual delights in which attention is necessarily drawn to the absent male organ."

Heller's point here is that the female sexuality is working on its own, alongside with the masculine sexuality. This pertains not only to Calisto, but also to Linfea when she has to do with young men, as we saw above. This sexuality seems not to have any privileged object; rather, it may attach to almost anything. In fact, almost anything *is* offered during the opera: men, women, children and animals (or at least semi-animals, Pane and Satirino). And the desire for all this is common to both sexes, as we have seen. Making the other your object is possible for both sexes, and the spectators will observe that this happens. As Heller suggests, the further course of Diana and Linfea is actually implicitly instigated through their encounters with Calisto and her openly positive sexual experience (Heller 2003: 203; 205).

In the 3rd act, a striking change in the whole opera occurs, when Calisto accepts Giove as her great creator and lover. Actually, the opera has prepared this all the way through; in Heller's words (2003: 194; Heller's italics):

It is his sexual prowess that actually *caused* Calisto's pleasure, regardless of her mistaken impression or his actual anatomical makeup while in disguise. The result is a series of tantalizing erotic images that play on the dangerous possibility of women pleasuring each other, but at the same time reaffirm the supremacy of Jove's potency and his power over all creation.

Heller has interpreted this change from sceneries of fleshly lust to a more spiritual kind of love as a turn towards Neoplatonism and ultimately Christianity (Heller 2003: 185; 218); but the interesting question is whether some kind of irony lurks here, too. At a central place in the opera, when submitting to Giove's superiority, Calisto says "Eccomi Ancella tua, / Disponi à tuo piacere" ('See, I am your handmaid, do with me what you will'; III, 4), a passage which closely corresponds to Mary's response to Gabriel during the Annunciation, when she accepts her fate: "Ecce ancilla domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum" (Luke I, 38). On the surface, this seems pretty convincing; Calisto is established as a parallel to the obedient mother-to-be of Christ in the Bible. But the metaphor is actually somewhat more complex. Mary utters her remark as a response to the Annunciation and accepts to become the mother of God's son; incidentally, Calisto, too, has been made pregnant by the great creator. Using Mary as a source domain to explain Calisto's situation seems innocent in itself; but if we (in a Max Black-like approach) turn the metaphor around, and let Calisto's situation be the source domain that explains Mary's situation, a certain frivolous note enters the passage in question: this 'annunciation' suddenly becomes a very physical love affair. Since Kallisto belongs to pagan times, she would seem to have the copyright of the words; but since Calisto is part of a text from 1651, it is rather the opera that quotes the Bible than the other way around. And this is the factor that makes the direction of the metaphor swing around.

What does the audience feel?

The task of the audience in any theatrical show will be to know how to place their empathy with the characters on stage. Their empathy decides who is actually the protagonist, and who is the antagonist when several subjects are engaged in parallel projects. The distribution of these roles seems to be a matter of polarisation; the text stages some possibilities, but the audience will have to make decisions guided by the clues hidden in the text. But which clues is the audience supposed to pick up?

A common theme in the utterances in the text is *inconsistency*, both in words and in deeds; in Goffman's wording, the characters are not able to keep a line (Goffman 1955: 213). With the exception of Calisto and Endimione, all the characters in the opera contradict themselves up to several times. Some of them, like Mercurio, find nothing wrong in this, and even instigate others to use fraud. From the handbooks of mythology we know (and the early baroque spectators probably knew it without consulting any dictionaries) that Hermes is the father of Pan; yet, paternal feelings towards Pane seem completely foreign to Mercurio. Other characters (like Giove, Diana, Giunone or Linfea) lie in public, but appear to be more upright when only the opera house spectators are paying attention. Yet others, like Pane, contradict themselves, not because they pursue a manipulatory line, but because they doubt the line they are pursuing; Pane's problem with Diana is, as we know, that he (rightly) suspects she has another love and therefore turns him down. These inconsistencies on the part of the fictitious characters are important for the understanding of the whole text. My assumption is that the 'ideal audience' will notice such inconsistencies and use them to bar their empathetic identification with these characters.

Other characters may not display inconsistency in keeping their lines, but still display a behaviour which seems hostile or competitive to those characters on whom focus is centering. Pane and his

band of followers are such a group. Their attempt to disturb Diana is one such moment in the narrative, and their taking Endimione as prisoner (and in a rather rough way, at that) another.

Finally, each opera composer has his (or her) own ways of distributing light and dark in the score. A character like Endimione could appear to be just a helpless victim of his own passions, bound to be outdone by rivals like Pane, and even by the beloved herself, as in the first scene with Diana (I, 8), where she fails to acknowledge her feelings towards him. However, Cavalli and Faustini each seem to display this differently, and an important sign of this is how they organise the orchestral parts in relation to the singers. Endimione has some very long soliloquies, containing some of the weightiest music in the opera; one further sign that this character is to be taken absolutely seriously is the constant use of string accompaniment in his arias, a device not used in other parts of the opera, but present (or least indicated) in almost all of Endimione's solo sections.⁹ Since from the score, we can observe that the string players were normally not called on in the arias, this extra effect, whenever Endimione has a long aria-like passage, is all the more striking. Against all Gricean odds, it seems to be the surplus of aria time allotted to this character that collects the sympathy surrounding him (if this opera were an action movie, Endimione's part would probably be reduced, and maybe be taken out entirely). In this way, Endimione becomes the musical epicentre of the opera, and this definitely changes the narrative perspective around this Pierrot Lunaire-like figure.¹⁰

In general, the music is a strong indicating factor in the orientation of positive vs. negative values. A dramatic composer finds ways of expressing the forces driving the characters throughout the play. All the major goddesses and gods make their entries with impressive and majestic music. Giunone excels in coloraturas when depicting the depths of her jealousy and anger; Diana likewise sweeps across the scene with music full of power and movement (thereby contrasting strongly with the more contemplative melodies allotted to Endimi-

one). Finally, the two male chauvinist gods, Giove and Mercurio, sing happily along in festive notes. Cavalli was always a fecund composer finding elegant ways to characterize his fictitious persons.

Using musical effects, Cavalli achieves additional ways of positioning the narrative, as when his concern is to typify Mercurio's destructive ways of communicating. Cavalli underlines this musically in the final trio (III, 8), where Calisto and Giove are taking their leave, Calisto in order to live out her time as a bear on earth, Giove in order to wait for her in heaven. The music is moving slowly in 3/2, but on the two occasions when Mercurio intrudes with his apparently comforting remark "Presto il fato v'unirà" ('Soon fortune will unite you'), the measure changes into 4/4. Setting these apparently comforting words to music in this way opens the question whether the words are actually to be taken seriously, or whether they are as much out of the context as far as the content is concerned, as they are musically. For, when the last note of the final love duet dies away, we still need to have it confirmed that Calisto actually was placed among the stars...¹¹

Conclusion

My analysis of this text shows how open-ended it actually is, full of self-contradictions and ironic details. The self-contradiction is not only centered around how the characters interact; the whole construction of the text sometimes seems to waver considerably. Take one detail: in the prologue we learn that "pure winged souls" shall return to heaven when they have made their run through life on earth. This applies first and foremost to Calisto; but as we have seen, Calisto is made of the same stuff as all the other inhabitants of this love-stricken Arcadia, all driven around by their *ids*. If she seems more pure than the rest, then it is only because she never undertakes any kind of fraud and always says exactly what she thinks.

The drive by the *ids* is particularly clear if we try to observe what projects the subjects are pursuing. As we saw, there is never any explicit Addresser (fr. *Destinateur*); what drives the projects, is implicit desire, which again only Giove can make explicit, as he does in the scenes when he describes his desire for Calisto. Furthermore, this desire is only briefly and partially fulfilled. Calisto may kiss the apparent Diana for a brief moment, but no more. Giove has a similar short-lived moment of joy with her and is then forced to leave her, first on earth and then in heaven. Diana and Endimione, too, cannot be said to live happily ever after, the nature of their connection taken into account. While these observations concerning frustrated characters of the opera are due to mere analytical implication, several other characters end up explicitly frustrated, first and foremost Pane and Giunone. Arcadia is a pastoral landscape, beckoning with free time to pursue your desires, but some magic in the landscape prevents you from thoroughly fulfilling them.

It is conceivable that this lovesick, but unfulfilled atmosphere in the opera was the reason for its failure in 1651. The Venetian public may have demanded clearer closures of the plots. No contemporary reviews are preserved, but since – miraculously – the account books of the theatre have survived (kept by Marco Faustini, the elder brother of Giovanni and later an important opera impresario himself), we can determine the extent of the disaster with great accuracy (Glixon & Glixon 1992: 55-56; Glixon 2008: 2-3).

And the modern success? Maybe the open-ended character of the plot, its self-contradictions, the portraits of blind love seeking moments of pleasure in a disturbed world, simply fits our modern times. It is fascinating to see how, in different productions, much of our current lifeworld is able to project itself into an opera that was a considerable flop 350 years ago.

Department of Aesthetics and Communication
University of Aarhus
Jens Chr. Skous Vej 2
DK-8000 Aarhus C
norhj@dac.au.dk

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A) PRIMARY

The text of *La Calisto* is quoted from a facsimile of the original libretto available at <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/-db/0004/bsb00048061/images/index.html?id=00048061&fip=qrsfdrxdsydeayzstewqxdsydxdsydxdsyd&no=1&seite=3>

The original score is available in facsimile at http://imslp.org/wiki/La_Calisto_%28Cavalli,_Francesco%29

The English translations of the Italian texts are Derek Yeld's, taken from the text booklet accompanying the René Jacobs recording of the complete opera (Harmonia Mundi 901515.17, 1993), in places altered/extended in order to achieve a more literal meaning.

B) SECONDARY

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Notes

- 1 28, if *Ciro* (only partly by Cavalli) is included, cp. Glover 1978: 22.
- 2 In order to keep the mythological material apart from the text of the opera, I use the Greek name forms when dealing with the myths (in spite of the obvious fact that Ovid's original names were Latin and hence close to the Italian ones) and Italian name forms when referring to the libretto.
- 3 Ovid has it differently: When Zeus in guise as Diana starts kissing, Kallisto at once feels that this kissing is not exactly virginal and tries to back out.
- 4 A brilliant introduction to this theme is found in Keyser 1987.
- 5 It goes without saying that such singers lacked one specific male body sign, but since this sign is supposed never to be on public display, the audiences had to make educated guesses concerning this aspect.
- 6 Nerone sings from a C1 clef and Ottone from a C2, both in the soprano level.
- 7 In different productions, both possibilities have been used, including a solution where the singer playing Mercurio sings the falsetto sections,

with the singer playing Giove merely acting. In my opinion, there is no simple answer to the distribution of the singers here. Since not only Calisto, but also Pane and Giunone are tricked by Giove-in-Diana, it does not necessarily display Calisto as stupid when she is seduced by a bass singer dressed as a woman, in spite of the physical facts (clearly visible to the spectators; cp. Rosand 2008: 3). Both solutions – Giove-as-Giove singing in his falsetto, and Giove-in-Diana acting as a man – would appeal to classical comedy tricks; however, having a woman act as the lustful Giove seems to be by far the most challenging option.

- 8 Observe the phrase "c'hó per oggetto", lit. 'when I have as an object'. The wording suggests that Linfea's feelings are aroused quite actively, as a subject to an object.
- 9 Maybe for lack of time, maybe for other reasons, Cavalli sometimes leaves the string lines empty in the preserved score. From the music, however, it is obvious (due to pauses in the song line etc.) that the string players did play, even where the actual notes have not been preserved.
- 10 The impressive Herbert Wernicke-René Jacobs version (Brussels 1996) actually dresses Endimione up like a moonsick Pierrot, lets him sleepwalk, and in general act like a dreamer. Still, no matter how one represents this character, he is bound to attract sympathy due to the weight of the music.
- 11 In the Wernicke-Jacobs version, the fact that Calisto ends up among the stars is confirmed in a memorable way: after the duet, a final instrumental Chaconne (by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer) is added; while the music plays, the Great Bear, hitherto absent from the heavenly picture displayed on the scene, is lifted up and put in place.

