

University of Bristol

Department of Historical Studies

Best undergraduate dissertations of
2013

Aaron Taylor

**The Reception of the Castrati in Early
Eighteenth-Century London**

The Department of Historical Studies at the University of Bristol is committed to the advancement of historical knowledge and understanding, and to research of the highest order. We believe that our undergraduates are part of that endeavour.

In June 2009, the Department voted to begin to publish the best of the annual dissertations produced by the department's final year undergraduates (deemed to be those receiving a mark of 75 or above) in recognition of the excellent research work being undertaken by our students.

This was one of the best of this year's final year undergraduate dissertations.

Please note: this dissertation is published in the state it was submitted for examination. Thus the author has not been able to correct errors and/or departures from departmental guidelines for the presentation of dissertations (e.g. in the formatting of its footnotes and bibliography).

© The author, 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the prior permission in writing of the author, or as expressly permitted by law.

All citations of this work must be properly acknowledged.

The Reception of the Castrati in Early Eighteenth-Century London



Anon, *The Most Illustrious Signor Senesino's Landing in England, 1737-8*, ©Gerald Coke Handel Collection, Foundling Museum, accession no. 5636

*Undergraduate Dissertation, 2013
Department of Historical Studies, University of Bristol*

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	3
<i>Abbreviations</i>	4
Introduction	5
1) ‘All the Polite World Will Flock There’: Italian Opera and London’s <i>Beau Monde</i>	12
2) ‘The Greatest Appearance that has been Known’: The Castrati and ‘Celebrity’	18
3) ‘Those Ruiners of England’: Wealth and Foreignness as Satirical Tropes	25
4) ‘This Charming Demi-Man’: Gender, Sexuality, and the Castrati	31
Conclusion	38
<i>Appendix I: A list of notable castrati and the dates of their stay in London</i>	40
<i>Appendix II: ‘Al lampo dell’armi quest’alma guerriera,’ from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Haym, <i>Giulio Cesare in Egitto</i>, HWV 17, 1724</i>	41
<i>Bibliography</i>	46

List of Illustrations

<i>Frontispiece: Anon, The Most Illustrious Signor Senesino's Landing in England, 1737-8</i>	1
<i>Fig. 1: Anon [attrib. Hubert-François Gravelot or Michael Vandegrucht], The Opera House or the Italian Eunuch's Glory, 1735</i>	6
<i>Fig. 2: Alexander van Haeken [after Charles Lucy], Carlo Broschi Farinelli, 1735</i>	10
<i>Fig. 3: Anon, The Man of Taste, 1733</i>	14
<i>Fig. 4: William Hogarth, Masquerades and Operas, 1724</i>	16
<i>Fig. 5: Anon, Senesino, Cuzzoni and Berenstadt [probably a scene from Handel's Flavio] 1723</i>	17
<i>Fig. 6: 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera,' from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Francesco Haym, Giulio Cesare in Egitto, HWV 17, 1724, bars 15-20</i>	19
<i>Fig. 7: William Hogarth, Marriage A-La-Mode, Plate IV, 1745</i>	21
<i>Fig. 8: Joseph Wagner [after Jacobo Amigoni], Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli, 1734-9</i>	23
<i>Fig. 9: William Hogarth, A Rake's Progress, Plate II, 1735</i>	27
<i>Fig. 10: Anon, Satire of a Castrato Singer, 1742</i>	28
<i>Fig 11: Anton Maria Zanetti, Caricature of Farinelli, 1694-1757</i>	32
<i>Fig. 12: 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera,' from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Francesco Haym, Giulio Cesare in Egitto, HWV 17, 1724, bars 39-47</i>	34
<i>Endpiece: Anon, The Ladies Lamentation for y^e Loss of Senesino, 1737-8</i>	51

Abbreviations

<i>BJECS</i>	British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies
<i>COJ</i>	Cambridge Opera Journal
Deutsch	Otto Erich Deutsch, <i>Handel: A Documentary Biography</i> , (London, 1955)
<i>THJ</i>	The Historical Journal

The Reception of the Castrati in Early Eighteenth-Century London

Introduction

The Opera House or the Italian Eunuch's Glory (fig. 1), a satirical print after William Hogarth, appeared in London in 1735. The image depicts a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, inscribed 'Brittains [sic.] attend- view this harmonious stage/ And listen to those notes which charm the age.' The principal performer, adored by the audience in the pit, is a castrato. The image merges high culture with low— the fashionable women in the boxes, and the two gentlemen below them, defecating against a wall— just as it merges the serious with the farcical— the castrato singer, and the lute player, who has dropped his instrument to elope with a female admirer below the stage. It is 'humbly inscribed to those generous encouragers of Foreigners and ruiners of England,' and contains— with undisguised bitterness— 'a list of the rich presents Segnor Farinello [the castrato Farinelli] condescended to accept of the English nobility and gentry for one night's performance in [Handel's] Opera *Artaxerses*.' In this print is contained the full range of the reactions of English society to the Italian castrati. It shows the crowd's delight, but pours scorn on the 'brutish noise, [which] offend[s] our Ears'; it details gifts from the nobility, but calls them 'ruiners of England'; it shows opera's popularity, but laments that 'Shakespeare to the Italian Eunuchs yield.' It is an image of great contradiction, and one which illuminates the culture of its age.

The tradition of castrating talented boy-sopranos to preserve the quality of their unbroken voice originated in Italy, probably in the sixteenth century, where the castrati provided the higher parts for church choirs.¹ From the seventeenth century the better of these singers began to move from the church to secular operas, and from Italy across Europe, sometimes with extraordinary success.² The first castrato to visit London was probably Siface, who performed only private concerts, in 1687. The first to gain fame and wealth in London was Nicolini, who arrived in 1708, and three years later premiered Handel's *Rinaldo*.³ From then until the departure of the most famous castrato, Farinelli (fig. 2), in 1737, the castrati were a cultural phenomenon of

I am very grateful to Katherine Hogg of the Foundling Museum, London, and Martin Wyatt of Handel House Museum, London, for their generous help in locating primary documents for this essay.

¹ Patrick Barbier (trans. Margaret Crosland), *The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon*, (London, 1996), 19-34

² *Ibid*, 173-208; Piotr Scholz (trans. John Broadwin and Shelley Frisch), *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History*, (New Jersey, 2001/1999), 271-90

³ Angus Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, (London, 1956), 129-35

unprecedented celebrity.⁴ Their talent and popularity supported two opera companies, and they became established in the highest echelons of society.⁵



Fig. 1: Anon [attrib. Hubert-François Gravelot or Michael Vandegrucht], *The Opera House or the Italian Eunuch's Glory*, 1735. ©Trustees of the British Museum

Yet the contemporary perception of the castrati remained problematic; their subversion of gender norms— both on and off the stage— and their centrality to the developing notion of

⁴ A list of notable castrati, and dates of their stay in London, is provided in Appendix I.

For 'celebrity,' see footnote 8. For the castrati's fame, see McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress,' Berta Joncus, 'One God, so many Farinellis: Mythologising the Star Castrato,' *BJECS*, 28:3, (2005) and Joseph Roach, 'Cavaliere Nicolini: London's First Opera Star,' *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28:2, (1976)

⁵ The rivalry between the Royal Academy of Music and the 'Opera of the Nobility,' and between their star performers, is well documented. See Daniel Heartz, 'Farinelli and Metastasio: Rival Twins of Public Favour,' *Early Music*, 12:3, (1984); Suzanne Aspden, "'An Infinity of Factions': Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain and the Undoing of Society,' *COJ*, 9:1, (1997); Elizabeth Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music, 1719-1728: The Institution and its Directors*, (New York, 1989)

‘taste’– particularly *English* taste– was the cause of resentment, mocking and confusion.⁶ A reception study of the castrati in London is therefore historically interesting for two reasons. First, it can inform our understanding of the castrato phenomenon, providing a context for the musical developments they inspired, notably the popularity of Italian Opera in London. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the castrati provide a case study for our understanding of the culture of early eighteenth century: the rise of ‘taste’ and the *beau monde*, the development of gender norms, and the new culture of ‘celebrity.’

The relevant historiography for such a study is, to a great extent, divided between the work of cultural historians studying eighteenth-century society, and the specific studies of castrati by musicologists. The former body of literature follows various themes. Most notably, the notions of ‘taste,’ and ‘politeness,’ central to any exploration of the role of Italian opera in London, have been the subject of study in several works of Langford and Klein, and are prominent concerns of Black and Brewer in their studies of eighteenth-century culture.⁷ ‘Fashion’ is also a central concept in the literature on the emergence of ‘celebrity.’⁸ I will argue that the chronology set out in this literature should be amended to include the castrati, an earlier phenomenon than those usually explored. Finally, the issue of gender in the eighteenth century has a large and varied historiography. Aside from the work of Stephanson and Harvey on the understanding of gender and sexuality in eighteenth-century England and its relation to ‘taste,’⁹ I have drawn especially from Vic Gatrell’s study of sexual satire, the understanding of which is a key methodological concern in this essay.¹⁰ The theoretical concerns of some postmodernist and feminist scholarship concerning the social construction of gender and sexuality are outside the parameters of this study, though they inform much of the historical literature on which I draw.¹¹

⁶ Character gendering is explored in Claudia Wier, ‘A Nest of Nightingales: Cuzzoni and Senesino at Handel’s Royal Academy of Music,’ *Theatre Survey*, 51:2, (2010) and Dorothy Keyser, ‘Cross-Sexual Casting in Baroque Opera: Musical and Theatrical Conventions,’ *Opera Quarterly*, 5:4, (1987).

⁷ See Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, (Oxford, 1989), 61-96; Lawrence Klein, ‘Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England,’ *THJ*, 32:3, (1989); Jeremy Black, *A Subject for Taste: Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, (London, 2005), 1-16, 193-8; John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Chicago, 2000), 325-426

⁸ Felicity Nussbaum, ‘Actresses and the Economics of Celebrity, 1700-1800,’ in Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (Eds.), *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, (Hampshire, 2005), 148-68; Cheryl Wanko, ‘Patron or Patronised?: ‘Fans’ and the Eighteenth-Century English Stage,’ in Tom Mole (Ed.), *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge, 2009), 209-26

⁹ Raymond Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit: Male Creativity and Sexuality, 1650-1750*, (Philadelphia, 2004); Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture*, (Cambridge, 2004), 124-45

¹⁰ Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteen-Century London*, (London, 2006), 21-109, 178-229

¹¹ See Joke Dame, ‘Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato,’ in Brett, *et al*, (Eds.), *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, (New York, 1994), and Freitas, ‘Confronting’

The historiography of the castrati specifically has largely been the work of musicologists. The two seminal accounts of castrati remain Barbier's *World of the Castrati* and Heriot's *The Castrati in Opera*.¹² Two more recent monographs, by Somerset-Ward and Rosselli, consider individual castrati in detail.¹³ This essay draws heavily on the numerous detailed studies of castrati published as journal articles, especially by Thomas McGeary, Xavier Cervantes and Daniel Hertz.¹⁴ Of particular value is a special 2005 volume of the *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* devoted to the castrati.¹⁵ This volume, which included several articles on the reception of Farinelli in London, coincided with an exhibition at the Handel House museum entitled *Handel and the Castrati*, the catalogue of which includes previously unpublished material relating to Senesino.¹⁶ I hope herein to draw together the fruits of this research, which has been little commented-upon since 2005.

The specialisation of such journal articles, however, has led to a fragmentation of castrato scholarship. The tendency to focus on individuals or particular sources— for example McGeary's various studies of Farinelli,¹⁷ Milhouse and Hume's of opera house accounts,¹⁸ or Aspden's of operatic rivalries¹⁹— can distort a general view of the castrati's reception. The same criticism can be made of Offret's otherwise excellent reception study of Farinelli, and of the various articles devoted to the concerns about gender and sexuality relating to the castrati.²⁰ Moreover, specific studies can provide only a partial interpretation. Articles on verse satire, for example, necessarily overstate the extent of resentment of castrati, and the role of sexual humour.²¹

¹² See footnotes 1 and 3

¹³ Richard Somerset-Ward, *Angels and Monsters: Male and Female Sopranos in the Story of Opera*, (New Haven, 2004); John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*, (Cambridge, 1992)

¹⁴ Thomas McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress to Albion: The Recruitment and Reception of Opera's 'Blazing Star,' *BJECS*, 28:3, (2005); Thomas McGeary, "Warbling Eunuchs": Opera, Gender, and Sexuality on the London Stage,' *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 7, (1992); Xavier Cervantes, "'Let 'em Deck Their Verses with Farinelli's Name': Farinelli as a Satirical Trope in English Poetry and Verse of the 1730s,' *BJECS*, 28:3, (2005); Xavier Cervantes, "'Tuneful Monsters": The Castrati and the London Operatic Public, 1667-1737,' *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 13:1, (1998); Daniel Hertz, 'Farinelli Revisited,' *Early Music*, 18:3, (1990);

¹⁵ See those in Footnote 14 and: Wendy Heller, 'Varieties of Masculinity: Trajectories of the Castrato from the Seventeenth Century,' *BJECS*, 28:3, (2005); Joncus, 'One God'; Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, 'Construing and Misconstruing Farinelli in London,' *BJECS*, 28:3, (2005)

¹⁶ Elizabeth Avanzati (Ed.), *Handel and the Castrati: The Story Behind the 18th Century Superstar Singers*, Exhibition Catalogue, London: Handel House Museum, (2006)

¹⁷ For example, 'Farinelli's Progress'; 'Farinelli in Madrid'

¹⁸ Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, 'Box Office Reports for Five Operas Mounted by Handel in London, 1732-1734,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26:3, (1978)

¹⁹ 'Infinity of Factions'

²⁰ Ashley Offret, *A Dozen Little Farinellos: A Reception History of Farinelli in London, 1734-37*, MPhil Thesis, University of Cincinnati, (2009); Todd Gilman, 'The Italian (Castrato) in London,' in Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin (Eds.), *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference*, (New York, 1997); Roger Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato,' *The Journal of Musicology*, 20:2, (2003)

²¹ McGeary, 'Verse Epistles'; Cervantes, "'Let 'em Deck their Verses'"

Conversely, studies of Farinelli exaggerate the extent of the castrati's popularity, and neglect the more revealing attitudes towards the earlier castrati, whose appearance in London was more of a shock than was Farinelli's two decades later. One need only compare the overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards Senesino explored by Patricia Howard with the hugely positive response to Farinelli set out by Thomas McGeary to appreciate the value of combining their insights for a more nuanced and complete explanation.²² I hope therefore to provide a more general interpretation of the reception of castrati than can be found in the specialist literature, by drawing upon the insights of both historical and musicological scholarship, and, I hope, by drawing together the partial academic divide that exists between them.

One such divide is in the types of primary source chosen for examination. This essay uses textual, visual and musical sources in conjunction, to seek a more complete understanding of the reception of the castrati. The textual sources on the castrati have received the most historiographical attention. Most notable are various series of lewd satirical letters, explored in chapters three and four. Such satires are rich as historical evidence, though the challenge for the historian remains in judging their representativity, and the purpose of their humour. Evidence of the castrati's popularity is also available from the opera company accounts explored by Milhouse and Hume,²³ and in several documents relating to Handel's operas in Deutsch's seminal volume *Handel: a Documentary Biography*.²⁴

Visual sources are also of great value, especially given the layers of detail and commentary in eighteenth-century caricature.²⁵ In addition to *The Opera House*, several satirical prints reflect contemporary critical– and humourous– responses to the castrati, particularly regarding their wealth, foreignness, and gender ambiguity. Non-satirical images of castrati also give an insight into their wealth and status, and provide a point of comparison for understanding the extent of the caricatures' distortion of, for example, their height, or the behaviour of those in the boxes.

Finally, this essay places emphasis on the use of musical sources– usually absent from the work of historians, but utilised by some musicologists to explore the use of musical 'norms' for constructing characters' gender and status. The historian must be certain to base such analysis on historical context rather than musical interpretation. Nonetheless, such an approach usefully

²² Patricia Howard, 'Perceptions of the castrati in eighteenth-century London,' in Avanzati, *Handel*; McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress'

²³ See footnote 18

²⁴ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography*, (London, 1955) esp. 91-2, 374

²⁵ Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*, *The English Satirical Print 1600-1832*, (Cambridge, 1986)

allows for consideration of issues of musical range, tonality and vocal dexterity. By way of example, I shall make reference to the militaristic aria ‘Al lampo dell’armi quest’alma guerriera’ (reproduced in Appendix II), from Handel’s opera *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, throughout this essay.



Fig. 2: Alexander van Haeken [after Charles Lucy], Carlo Broschi Farinelli, 1735, ©Trustees of the British Museum

My aims herein perhaps require some justification. Though my approach follows the shift in historical interest in recent decades from cultural ‘production’ to ‘consumption,’²⁶ its focus is predominantly on elite culture, sometimes seen as an outdated concern.²⁷ However, the methodological insights of the recent historiography of popular culture— notably the adoption of anthropological methods in studying cultural phenomena, the development of gender history, and the focus on visual culture—²⁸ have created invaluable tools that can be applied to the study of elite culture, providing an insight into the zeitgeist and culture of contemporary society.

²⁶ White, ‘A World of Goods?’

²⁷ Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 1-25

²⁸ See, for example, Lynn Hunt (Ed.), *The New Cultural History*, (Berkeley, 1989)

This essay is structured around four themes recurrent in contemporary responses to the castrati. Chapter one sets out the cultural importance of Italian opera to ‘fashionable’ society, exploring the historiographical concepts of ‘politeness’ and ‘taste.’ Chapter two considers the castrati’s success, noting the praise elicited by their talent, and their closeness with members of elite society. Chapter three focuses on two prominent criticisms of the castrati– their wealth and their foreignness– in particular through satirical sources. Chapter four addresses the questions of gender and sexuality, which pervaded many of the contemporary reactions to the castrati.

Just like the image of *The Opera House* with which we began, this essay will ultimately suggest an age of great contradiction, cultural change, and social insecurity. The concerns of contemporary society– changing gender norms, the luxury of the *beau monde*, and the perceived threat of foreign culture to English identity– created myriad responses to the castrati, from praise and adoration to ridicule and fear. Within that complex web of reception lies the castrati’s value as a window onto the age that they enthralled.

Chapter 1: ‘All the Polite World Will Flock There’:²⁹ Italian Opera and London’s *Beau Monde*

The importance and reception of the castrati can only properly be understood in the context of the rise of Italian *opera seria*. This operatic style—literally ‘serious opera’ sung in Italian, in contrast to the comic *opera buffa*—spread across Europe to great acclaim in the eighteenth century. This chapter will explain the cultural importance of Italian opera in early eighteenth-century London, the praise and criticism leveled at it, and its place within the historiography of ‘taste’ and ‘politeness’ in elite society.

It is useful to begin with a narrative outline of Italian opera during the period with which we are concerned.³⁰ The Queen’s Theatre, Haymarket [called the King’s Theatre from 1714] was made the country’s first Italian opera house in 1707.³¹ The importance of the castrato as *primo uomo* in the operas staged therein was immediately established.³² The castrati Valentini and Nicolini performed in Scarlatti’s *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* in December 1708, and the latter starred as the eponymous character in *Rinaldo*, Handel’s first London opera, in February 1711.³³ In 1719, Handel founded the Royal Academy of Music, with promised investment from 62 noble subscribers amounting to £15,600, and an annual gift of £1,000 from the King.³⁴ The directors of the Royal Academy, demonstrating their willingness to pay for any singer capable of recreating Nicolini’s popularity, sought to bring the famous contralto castrato Senesino to England;³⁵ their directions ask ‘that Mr Hendel [sic] engage Senesino [sic] as soon as possible to serve the said Company and for as many Years as may be.’³⁶ This Handel did, by promising Senesino the staggering salary of £2,000 plus benefit concerts (which I discuss in chapter three).³⁷

Opera was beset by continual financial problems during the early eighteenth century, partly the result of the fees demanded by the leading singers.³⁸ After the Academy’s collapse in 1728,

²⁹ Avery and Scouten, *London Stage*, Part 3, I, 469

³⁰ Valuable background on the years 1705-10 is provided in Winton Dean and John Knapp, *Handel’s Operas: 1704-26*, (Oxford, 1987), 140-50

³¹ Nalbach, *King’s Theatre*, 18-28; Roach, 193

³² See the list of notable castrati, and the dates of their stay in London, in Appendix I

³³ Nalbach, *King’s Theatre*, 1-17; Roach, 194; Dean and Knapp, *Handel’s Operas*, 144, 155, 168-205; Barbier, *World of the Castrati*, 181; Emmett Avery and Arthur Scouten (Eds.), *The London Stage 1660-1800*, Part 2, I, 180-1, 243

³⁴ Dean and Knapp, *Handel’s Operas*, 298-323; Deutsch, 67; Nalbach, *King’s Theatre*, 36-7

³⁵ LaRue, *Handel and his Singers*, 105

³⁶ Deutsch, 90

³⁷ Elizabeth Avanzati, ‘The Unpublished Senesino,’ in Avanzati, *Handel*; Milhouse and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 366

³⁸ Dean and Knapp, *Handel’s Operas*, 152-4; Milhouse and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 375-80

Handel re-formed it in 1729 alongside the impresario John James Heidegger, re-recruiting Senesino, and in 1732 moving his company into the newly-built Italian opera house at Covent Garden.³⁹ In 1730, however, the composer Nicola Porpora set up the rival company 'The Opera of the Nobility,' under the patronage of the Prince of Wales, at Lincoln's Inn Fields and then the King's Theatre.⁴⁰ The Nobility company was instantly fashionable, and Porpora managed to persuade his former pupil, the much-admired castrato Farinelli, to become his *primo oumo*.⁴¹ Porpora also recruited Senesino, whom Handel had dismissed in June 1733 following a dispute, to sing alongside Farinelli.⁴² Farinelli was an extraordinary success in London, but financial problems plagued both companies, and they joined for a final season after Farinelli's departure in 1737.⁴³ Nonetheless, as Heriot argues in his seminal study, 'Italian opera was, till the late eighteenth century, almost synonymous with the castrati, and... Italian opera was the only opera that really mattered.'⁴⁴

London's developing 'public sphere,' its wealth, and its entertainments made it the centre of fashionable society, and Italian opera stood at the pinnacle of London culture.⁴⁵ Henrik Knif argues that 'Italian opera seems to have arrived opportunely enough to satisfy an urge among the elite for the expression of a cultural and social distinctness. Gentlemen needed gentle pursuits and a gentle milieu to express their gentility... [since] the fashionable glow of the court was languishing.'⁴⁶ The social status of the opera audience can be seen from a list of box-holders at the King's Theatre, which includes the King and Queen, two princes, four princesses, an Ambassador, a General, and three Duchesses.⁴⁷ The opera season coincided with the period in which the aristocracy were in London to sit in the House of Lords, and the opera house was a crucial venue in which not only to enjoy the entertainment, but 'to see and be seen,' and engage

³⁹ Nalbach, *King's Theatre*, 18-28; Robert Hume, 'Covent Garden Theatre in 1732,' *The Musical Times*, 123:1678 (1982); Avery and Scouten, *London Stage*, Part 3, I, 229, 252ff.

⁴⁰ Nalbach, *King's Theatre*, 18-28; Milhouse and Hume, 'Construing,' 367, 371-80

⁴¹ Heriot, *Castrati*, 98-9; McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress,' 345-6

⁴² Heriot, *Castrati*, 91-110; Barbier, *World of the Castrati*, 183

⁴³ Nalbach, *King's Theatre*, 18-28; Milhouse and Hume, 'Construing,' 375-81, and Box Office Reports'; Avery and Scouten, *London Stage*, Part 3, II, 679-727

⁴⁴ Heriot, *Castrati*, 13

⁴⁵ Tim Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789*, (Oxford, 2002), 1-25, 266-356; Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present*, (London, 2008), 82-8; Black, *Subject for Taste*, 193-8

⁴⁶ Henrik Knif, *Gentleman and Spectators: Studies in Journals, Opera, and the Social Scene in Late Stuart London*, (Helsinki, 1995), 195

⁴⁷ Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, 'Box Office Reports for Five Operas Mounted by Handel in London, 1732-1734,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26:3, (1978), 265-6. The independence of noble women from their husbands as box-holders is notable.

in conspicuous consumption.⁴⁸ The importance of ‘being seen’ varied with the social importance of individual performances; For Farinelli’s showcase ‘benefit’ concert in March 1736, the announcement advertised that ‘Room will be made upon the stage’– the ideal vantage point from which the fashionable elite could be seen by their peers.⁴⁹



Fig. 3: Anon. The Man of Taste, 1733. ©Trustees of the British Museum

In understanding the reason for opera’s importance, the related historiographical concepts of ‘politeness’ and ‘taste’ are very useful. Lawrence Klein, the foremost historian of the former concept, sees it as a set of rules governing social discourse created by the landed class to ensure its hegemony.⁵⁰ ‘Politeness,’ he argues, ‘constituted an oligarchical structure for a post-courtly and post-godly society with a growing metropolis.’⁵¹ It defined itself against ‘vulgarity,’ but also ‘usefulness’; attaining it required both social position and leisure time.⁵² As a polite space, the

⁴⁸ Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London*, (London, 2002), 104-25; Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing*, (London, 2012), 308; Jennifer Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880*, (New Hampshire, 2007), 17-18; William Weber, ‘Did People Listen in the 18th Century?’, *Early Music*, 25:4, (1997)

⁴⁹ Milhouse and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 364; Avery and Scouten, *London Stage*, Part 3, I, 365

⁵⁰ Klein, ‘Third Earl of Shaftesbury,’ 186

⁵¹ Klein, ‘Politeness for Plebes,’ 362

⁵² Klein, ‘Politeness for Plebes,’ 365-6; ‘Liberty, Manners, and Politeness,’ 584-8; ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,’ *THJ*, 45:4, (2002)

opera house represents what John Brewer considers the new sense of ‘culture as commodity’ of the eighteenth century.⁵³ Opera houses survived by marketing their singers and the opportunity they provide for the elite to socialise and observe. It was a polite culture ‘steeped in hedonism and social intrigue.’⁵⁴

The related concept of ‘taste’ in the newly commercialising society has been explored by Jeremy Black, who argues that the middle- and upper- classes created a set of social values, with an implicit moral and social superiority, which were publicly enacted and collectively enforced.⁵⁵ It was this collective desire to be seen as ‘tasteful,’ that, he argues, fueled the popularity of music, literature, and the fine arts. The components of ‘taste’ were satirised in a 1762 *Letter from Taste to the Trister*: ‘I always chuse such as have no meaning, to avoid the possibility of improvement: – I preside at the opera, because I do not understand a single syllable of Italian; and fall asleep at the play-house, to shew the necessity of listening to the entertainment.’⁵⁶ Such a character is also parodied in the image *The Man of Taste* (fig. 3), showing a man in absurdly fashionable dress on a stage, with music labelled ‘Lully Opera’ on the right. The concept of taste has been used by historians to explain eighteenth-century attitudes to gender and politics, as well as to consumption and entertainment, and it thus forms a useful basis from which to consider many aspects of the castrato phenomenon.⁵⁷

As the epitome of taste and politeness, *opera seria* was especially vulnerable to satirical attacks. The cost and foreignness of opera, explored in chapter three below, were common points of criticism. John Dennis, in his 1706 *Essay on the Opera’s* [sic] *after the Italian Manner*, warned of ‘a People so lofty, so fierce, and formerly so famous for their Contempt of Foreign Manners, forgetting their old Pride to so strange a degree... to imitate the prodigious Luxury of *Italy*.’⁵⁸ The 1735 *Account of the famous Signor Farinelli* saw the gifts given to him as ‘the Great... indulging their private passions, [to] set an Example of Extravagance to a whole Nation.’⁵⁹ For

⁵³ John Brewer, “‘The Most Polite Age and the Most Vicious’”: Attitudes Towards Culture as a Commodity, 1660-1800,’ in Anne Bermingham, and John Brewer (Eds.), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, (London, 1995)

⁵⁴ Brewer, *Most Polite Age*, 346-8; Langford, *Polite and Commercial*, 406

⁵⁵ Black, *Subject for Taste*, 5

⁵⁶ ‘A Letter from Taste to the Trister,’ *Edinburgh Magazine*, [July, 1762], 349, Quoted in Harriet Lowson, “‘The Poor Prostituted Word’”: The Taste Debate in Britain 1750-1800,’ *Undergraduate Dissertation, University of Bristol*, (2009), 23

⁵⁷ See Black, *Subject for Taste*, 1-16; Hannah Greig, ‘Leading the Fashion: The Material Culture of London’s *Beau Monde*,’ in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (Eds.), *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, (New Haven, 2006); R. W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty*, (Cambridge, 1997), 1-36

⁵⁸ Dennis, *An Essay on the Opera’s After the Italian Manner*, (London, 1727), 12

⁵⁹ Anon, ‘Account of the Famous Signor Farinelli,’ in *A trip through the town*, (London, c.1735), 34

those opposed to the luxury of the elite, opera was seen as ‘gaining a stranglehold on British society,’ disguised by obsession with ‘taste’ and ‘politeness.’⁶⁰



Fig. 4: William Hogarth, Masquerades and Operas, 1724, ©Trustees of the British Museum. The image on the flag is a copy of Senesino, Cuzzoni and Berenstadt, fig. 5

Italian opera, then, can be seen as the apogee of the lifestyle of London’s *beau monde*,⁶¹ satirised effectively by William Hogarth in his *Masquerades and Operas* (fig. 4). In this satire, texts of Shakespeare and Dryden are thrown away whilst Heidegger gleefully advertises operas such as Handel’s *Flavio*, a scene from which is depicted on the flag. The original image from which this is adapted is shown in fig. 5. The accompanying text mocks ‘Oh how refin’d, how elegant we’re grown!’⁶²

⁶⁰ Aspden, ‘Infinity of Factions,’ 13; See also Dean and Knapp, *Handel’s Operas*, 147-8

⁶¹ Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, 13-41

⁶² ‘Masquerades and Operas,’ *British Museum Online Collection*, <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research>, [accessed 20/11/12]



Fig. 5: Anon, *Senesino, Cuzzoni and Berenstadt* [probably a scene from Handel's *Flavio*] 1723, ©Gerald Coke Handel Collection, Foundling Museum, accession no. 5641.

Just as Senesino, in this scene from *Flavio*, is at the centre of Hogarth's satire, so the castrati were central to the debates about taste and politeness, as well as debates about gender, luxury, and foreignness, that occurred in eighteenth-century London. They were the *most* famous, the *most* luxurious, and certainly the *most unusual* of all singers, and so, as I shall argue throughout the rest of this essay, they served as a magnifier for the concerns of the age. In this context, our attention must turn to the castrati's talent and 'celebrity.'

Chapter 2: ‘The Greatest Appearance that has been Known’:⁶³ The Castrati and ‘Celebrity’

This chapter aims to account for the castrato phenomenon. It considers the reception of the castrati *as performers*, the acclaim that they received, and their closeness to members of elite society. Such praise takes second priority to criticism in almost all scholarship on the castrati, though it was overwhelmingly the more prominent response of contemporaries.⁶⁴ The positioning of this chapter is a deliberate attempt to emphasise this praise, and to situate it within the developing historiography on ‘celebrity’ in eighteenth-century England.

The most famous castrati were, by all accounts, exemplary singers. Charles Burney, who met Farinelli in Madrid, noted in his *Musical Tours*:

In the year 1734, he came to England, where every one knows who heard, or has heard of him, what an effect his surprising talent had upon the audience: it was extacy! [sic] rapture! enchantment! In the famous air *Son qual Nave*, which was composed by his brother, the first note he sung was taken with such delicacy, swelled by minute degrees to an amazing volume, and afterwards diminished in the same manner to a mere point, that it was applauded for full five minutes. After this he set off with such brilliancy and rapidity of execution, that it was difficult for the violins of those days to keep pace with him... He had now every excellence of every great singer united.⁶⁵

As Nicholas Clapton notes, the sustained *crescendo* and *decrescendo* to which Burney refers is the difficult technique *messa di voce* (literally ‘playing the voice’), ‘mastery of which was long regarded as the singer’s ultimate accomplishment,’ since maintaining a quality of pitch whilst reducing the air flow to diminish volume takes considerable skill and practice.⁶⁶ The technical proficiency of the castrati can also be seen in the music composed for them.

By way of an example, the aria ‘al lampo dell’armi,’ reproduced in full in Appendix II, was written for Senesino as the eponymous character in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*.⁶⁷ As was typical for *opera seria*, ‘al lampo’ is a *da capo* aria; after the first two sections, the singer returns to the sign at bar 8, repeating the first section (to bar 27), adding virtuosic embellishment and ornamentation. The passage shown in *fig. 6* requires enormous breath control and vocal

⁶³ *The Daily Advertiser*, [13th March, 1735], quoted in Milhous and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 363

⁶⁴ Even, for example, in Cervantes’ excellent study “‘Tuneful Monsters’”

⁶⁵ Percy Scholes (Ed.), *Dr. Burney’s Musical Tours in Europe*, (London, 1959/1771), I, 154. Farinelli’s acting, however, was more criticised. Roger Pickering wrote in 1755 ‘What Extasy to the Ear! But, Heavens! What Clumsiness! What stupidity! What Offense to the Eye!’ [*Reflections*, 63]

⁶⁶ Nicolas Clapton, ‘Carlo Broschi Farinelli: Aspects of his Technique and Performance,’ *BJECS*, 28, (2005), 331.

⁶⁷ On *Giulio*, see Dean and Knapp, 483-526

dexterity, as a long sustained note is followed by a complex and fast *melisma*— many notes on a single syllable.



Fig. 6: 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera,' from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Francesco Haym, Giulio Cesare in Egitto, HWV 17, 1724, bars 15-20

Senesino's popularity can be seen in the two satirical prints of his arrival and departure from London, which form the *frontispiece* and *endpiece* to this essay. The frenzied adoration shown in these images is reflected in Roger Pickering's 1755 recollection that 'Senesino won the *Eyes* of the House,'⁶⁸ and a newspaper report of 1733, after Senesino's argument with Handel, that 'all true Lovers of Musick Grieve to see so fine a singer dismissed, in so critical a Conjunction.'⁶⁹

Though Senesino was admired as a singer but much criticised for his awkward movement on the stage, the earlier castrato Nicolini was renowned for his ability as an actor. Colley Cibber noted in 1740 that 'by pleasing the Eye, as well as the Ear, [Nicolini] fill'd us with a more various, and *rational* Delight [than Farinelli].'⁷⁰ *The Spectator*, which had ridiculed Nicolini in its satires during his time in London, changed its approach upon his departure in 1712:

I am very sorry to find, by the Opera Bills for this Day, that we are likely to lose the greatest Performer in Dramatick Musick that is now living, or that perhaps

⁶⁸ *Reflections upon Theatrical Expression in Tragedy*, (London, 1755), 64

⁶⁹ Deutsch, 315-16

⁷⁰ Roach, 'Nicolini,' 203

ever appeared upon a Stage... The Town is highly obliged to that Excellent Artist, for having shewn [sic] us the *Italian* Musick in its perfection.⁷¹

As a consequence of their acclaim, the most famous castrati gained strong links with individuals at the heart of the *beau monde*. Their popularity was well established even before Nicolini's arrival in 1708. The castrato Siface sang at Samuel Pepys' house in 1687, and even then was criticised for his social exclusiveness. One member of the audience, the diarist John Evelyn, noted '[Siface is] a mere wanton, effeminate child, very coy and proudly conceited... much disdain[ing] to show [sic] his talent to any but princes.'⁷² Others had heard the castrati abroad, especially in Italy on the 'Grand Tour' of Europe, an almost ubiquitous practice amongst aristocratic young gentlemen.⁷³

Thomas McGeary has explored in great detail the attempts of English nobles, who had either heard Farinelli personally or been told of his skill, to woo him to London in the early 1730s.⁷⁴ On his arrival, he was instantly popular within elite society. Lord Hervey noted that 'no place is full but the Opera; and Farinelli is so universally liked that the crowds there are immense.'⁷⁵ The Dowager Duchess of Leeds wrote to her son, the Duke, who had arranged for Farinelli to perform a private concert for her in London:

Hes so civile & well bred too y^t makes one like him more, he ask^d me if I had heard from y^u lately, & often says how much hes oblige^d to y^u, I dont know a word of news for nothing but Farinelli is talk^d off, I think him handsome too,...⁷⁶

Paolo Rolli, a friend of Senesino, concurred, writing in 1734:

Farinello was a revelation to me, for I realised that till then I had heard only a small part of what human song can achieve, whereas I now conceive I have heard all there is to hear. He has, besides, the most agreeable and clever manners, hence I take the greatest pleasure in this company and acquaintance.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Addison and Steele, III, 513-4. Though it is not always easy to discern whether such praise is serious or satirical in *The Spectator*, it is likely from the tone adopted here, as well as the rest of the article— which uses this praise as the basis to criticise the music of the Church— that this is meant seriously.

⁷² Somerset-Ward, *Angels*, 68. See also Barbier, *World of the Castrati*, 180; Cervantes, "'Tuneful Monsters'", 2-3

⁷³ Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*, (Gloucestershire, 1992), esp. 277-84; McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress,' 341-45; Joncus, 'One God,' 444; Duffy, *Englishman*, 11; Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas*, 141

⁷⁴ McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress,' 341-45; Thomas McGeary, 'Farinelli and the Duke of Leeds: "tanto mio amico e patrone particolare," *Early Music*, 30, (2002)

⁷⁵ Cervantes, "'Tuneful Monsters'", 11

⁷⁶ McGeary, 'Farinelli and the Duke of Leeds,' 205

⁷⁷ Deutsch, 374

That the castrati could have prospered in an elite society in which the strict rules of performative ‘politeness’ were given great weight is no small achievement. Farinelli’s personal links extended even to the royal family.⁷⁸ The *London Evening-Post* reported in October 1734 that ‘the famous Signor Farinelli was introduc’d to their Majesties at Kensington... [H]e had the honour to sing before their Majesties, and the rest of the Royal Family, in the Queen’s Anti-chamber, with vast applause.’⁷⁹ Milhouse and Hume have noted Farinelli’s closeness with the Prince of Wales, who sent him lavish gifts.⁸⁰ Horace Walpole, meanwhile, noted in 1741 that the castrato Monticelli dined frequently with his father, the Prime Minister.⁸¹ So important were castrati to elite culture that William Hogarth included the castrato Carestini in his satirical image of a Countess holding a morning levée, *Marriage A-la-Mode* (fig. 7).⁸²



Fig. 7: William Hogarth, *Marriage A-La-Mode*, Plate IV, 1745, ©Trustees of the British Museum

⁷⁸ Farinelli’s international political links are explored in Thomas McGeary, ‘Farinelli in Madrid: Opera, Politics, and the War of Jenkins’ Ear,’ *Musical Quarterly*, 82, (1998); Edward Corp, ‘Farinelli and the Circle of Sicinio Pepoli: A Link with the Stuart Court in Exile,’ *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 2, (2005)

⁷⁹ *London Evening-Post*, no. 1076, [10-12 October, 1734]

⁸⁰ Milhouse and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 367-8

⁸¹ Cheryll Duncan, ‘Castrati and Impresarios in London: Two Mid-Eighteenth-Century Lawsuits,’ *COJ*, 24:1, (2012), 46

⁸² McGeary, “‘Warbling Eunuchs”,’ 13

As a result of the castrati's popularity, and the competition between the opera companies to recruit the most famous singers, the two companies were financially reliant upon the ticket sales that the castrati generated.⁸³ Though the majority of secondary literature focuses on Farinelli's success performing with the Opera of the Nobility, in fact it was the original Royal Academy, during Nicolini's ascendancy, that survived the longest uninterrupted period of success of any opera company. Nicolini's unprecedented salary of £1000 plus benefits was offered solely on the strength of his international reputation, but was soon justified by full houses and increased subscriptions.⁸⁴

Given this context, it is unsurprising that the concepts of 'stardom' and 'celebrity' have frequently been applied to the castrati, especially in popular accounts, such as the Handel House Museum's 2005 exhibition catalogue, subtitled 'the superstar singers.'⁸⁵ Thomas McGeary argues that 'it is no exaggeration to say that London turned Farinelli into opera's first international superstar'.⁸⁶ Though I agree with this argument, no contemporary concept of 'stardom' or 'celebrity' is articulated. I shall consider two recent studies on the subject in order to support his conclusion.

One notable account is Cheryl Wanko's study of patronage. She argues for a 'fan-celebrity relationship' on the late eighteenth-century stage, in which audience members felt a personal attachment to the star performers.⁸⁷ Before then, she argues, audience members asserted their collective will over performers, enforced through economic domination. However, I would argue, even in the early eighteenth century, the peculiar combination of commercial pressure and aristocratic patronage that drove Italian opera shifted this balance of authority, making the performers the predominant force.⁸⁸ Star performers were economically crucial to their companies, well known across the city, and personally friendly with their aristocratic patrons.⁸⁹ For Wanko, celebrity culture requires the 'products of artistic activity... [to] become valuable commodities on the market.' This criterion is surely met by the castrati.

⁸³ Milhouse and Hume, 'Box-Office Reports'; Milhouse and Hume, 'Construing,' 366-71

⁸⁴ Ibid; Roach, 'Nicolini, 189-91; Heriot, *Castrati*, 48-51

⁸⁵ Avanzati, *Handel*

⁸⁶ McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress,' 347; Cervantes, "'Tuneful Monsters",' 2

⁸⁷ Cheryl Wanko, 'Patron or Patronised?: 'Fans' and the Eighteenth-Century English Stage,' in Tom Mole (Ed.), *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge, 2009), 209-12

⁸⁸ Wanko, 'Patron,' 212

⁸⁹ See Milhouse and Hume, 'Box-Office Reports,' and McGeary, 'Farinelli's Progress,' 348-54



Fig. 8: Joseph Wagner [after Jacobo Amigoni], *Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli*, 1734-9, ©Trustees of the British Museum

Felicity Nussbaum has explored how attraction to female performers, who gave spectators hints of their private lives, led to a persona of perceived intimacy with the audience that fuelled actresses' fame.⁹⁰ Whilst reserving detailed discussion of sexuality for chapter four, such a comment can certainly be made of the castrati, whose ambiguous gender was publicly discussed, and in some cases apparently much-admired.⁹¹ Berta Joncus, who adopts the vocabulary of 'stardom,' has explored how Farinelli built his own fame through commissioning portraits such as that in *fig. 8*– which shows him crowned with an olive wreath, below Fame and cherubs–, and ensuring that they were made into affordable popular prints.⁹² As a consequence, it is my argument that the historiographical discussion of celebrity ought to be extended to this

⁹⁰ Nussbaum, 'Actresses,' 148-54

⁹¹ Offret, 'Dozen Little Farinellos,' 26-8

⁹² Joncus, 'One God,' 347-9

earlier period to cover the castrati, whose peculiarly fashionable status made them perhaps the first celebrities in British theatre.

This chapter, then, has attempted to account for the castrato phenomenon, through considering their talent— as revealed by both textual and musical sources— and contemporary accounts of their popularity. This praise, and the closeness of the castrati to members of elite society, have together been applied to the emerging historiography of celebrity, in which, I believe, the castrati belong.

Chapter 3: 'Those Ruiners of England':⁹³ Wealth and Foreignness as Satirical Tropes

As the first two chapters have suggested, the castrati were not always received positively. The following two chapters explore the criticisms leveled at castrati, and seek to expand an argument proposed in an excellent article on Farinelli by Xavier Cervantes: 'The castrato was rarely under personal attack. Instead, he was used as a convenient trope to denounce various cultural and social threats... far removed from musical and aesthetic issues.'⁹⁴ In this respect, the value of the castrati as a case-study for social historians of the eighteenth-century is especially apparent. The concerns reflected in criticism of the castrati fall broadly into three areas: their wealth, their foreignness, and their gender and sexuality. The third of these has a complex historiography, and is explored in chapter four; this chapter considers the first two. These themes are best explored through the satirical pamphlets, letters, and images that preponderated in the early eighteenth century.⁹⁵

It is useful to begin with some methodological reflections on using satirical sources. The crucial question of whether a source is intended to be serious or merely humorous is not always easy to answer, given the different senses of humour that separate the historian from the subject. As Vic Gatrell notes in his seminal study, 'satirical prints were often deliberately ambiguous.'⁹⁶ Images, in particular, were often detailed, with different layers of meaning; those who viewed them in a crowd around a shop window would perhaps take a different message from one who bought the print and studied it at home.⁹⁷ Once the historian has made a decision about the satirical nature of a source, two questions arise: how representative it was, and how influential the view it espouses.

On the question of representativity, Berta Joncus argues that the fact of a satire's existence proves that its subject was familiar. Caricature, she argues, involves an element of recognisable likeness juxtaposed with one of deformation, the humour resulting from the resultant tension.⁹⁸ On the second question, Gatrell suggests that judging the influence of a satire is often impossible, but argues that 'In any case, the historian of mentalities is concerned with what was

⁹³ *Fig. 1*, subtitle

⁹⁴ Cervantes, "'Let 'em Deck their Verses'", 421-2. See also "'Tuneful Monsters'", 6

⁹⁵ Two excellent articles have explored this satire, though not in the context of wider reception: Cervantes, "'Let 'em Deck Their Verses'",; Thomas McGeary, 'Verse Epistles on Italian Opera Singers, 1724-1736,' *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 33, (2000)

⁹⁶ Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, 11

⁹⁷ See Duffy, *Englishman*, 11-46; M. Dorothy George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire*, (London, 1967), 11-17

⁹⁸ Joncus, 'One God,' 440

thinkable and doable in the past, regardless of the assumed numbers of people involved or its assumed normative standing.’⁹⁹ With regard to both these questions, therefore, satirical texts and images present historians with methodological challenges. Nonetheless, they remain a valuable—and often under-explored—source for historians of the eighteenth century.

Criticism of the castrati’s Italian-ness and Catholicism should be seen in the context of the contemporary criticism of ‘taste’ and elite luxury explored in chapter one; for the author of *The Happy Courtezan*, ‘tis the reigning Passion of this Land,/ To follow what we do not understand.’ The insecurities of the post-revolutionary, war-prone age were often reflected in xenophobia in writings on the castrati, which fit well with Linda Colley’s influential argument that British identity formed itself around opposition to Catholic foreigners.¹⁰⁰ The most extreme example of alarmist xenophobia is the pamphlet *Do you know what you are about?, Or, a Protestant Alarm to Great Britain*, which purports to show that Senesino is ‘as cunning as the Devil, and no more an Eunuch than Sir Robert Walpole... but a Jesuit in Disguise.’¹⁰¹ The castrati, it claims, use their fame to promote Catholicism, secretly celebrating Mass under the cover of Italian libretto. Judging the balance of satire and seriousness here is difficult—Smith’s 1964 article on the pamphlet offers no comment—,¹⁰² but if we adopt Gatrell’s comment on mentalities, the key point is that these views were ‘thinkable,’ and must at least partially have reflected popular opinion, in order to have been considered humorous.

A related concern of the satirists was the wealth accumulated by foreign stars. As John Sekora argues, ‘throughout English history the disturbance of any kind of equilibrium was likely to be followed by fresh condemnations of luxury.’¹⁰³ Some castrati certainly amassed great wealth. As we have seen, Nicolini’s initially salary was £1000; Senesino’s at the Royal Academy is estimated at £1500, a salary replicated for both Senesino and Farinelli at the Opera of the Nobility.¹⁰⁴ These large salaries, however, were only one aspect of the singers’ wealth. The star singers placed great importance on the right to hold a ‘benefit’ concert— a showcase evening in which all profits went to the soloist— every season.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, 14-15

¹⁰⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (London, 1992), 1-54. See also Gilman, ‘Italian,’ 49-50, 58; Offret, ‘Dozen Little Farinellos,’ 45-70

¹⁰¹ Anon, *Do you know what you are about? Or, a Protestant alarm to Great Britain...*, (London, 1733), preface, 16

¹⁰² William Smith, “‘Do you know what you are about?’ A Rare Handelian Pamphlet,” *The Music Review*, 25:2, (1964). See also Cervantes, “‘Tuneful Monsters,’” 7-8

¹⁰³ Quoted in Gilman, ‘Italian,’ 58

¹⁰⁴ Roach, 189; Milhouse and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 366-71

¹⁰⁵ Milhouse and Hume, ‘Construing,’ 366-80; Cervantes, “‘Let ‘em Deck their Verses,’” 425



Fig. 9: William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress, Plate II*, 1735. ©Trustees of the British Museum

Farinelli's March 1735 benefit, for example, was a grand affair, taking place at six o'clock on a Saturday evening, with doors opening a full three hours before the opening to allow for socialising.¹⁰⁶ The advertisement for the concert notes that extra seating in the most socially visible parts of the auditorium was provided: 'Pit and Boxes to be put together, also Places on the Stage... with a great Number of Benches.'¹⁰⁷ Most important, the fashionable elite engaged in conspicuous consumption: the advertisement adds 'Signor Farinello humbly hopes, that the Subscribers will not make use of their Tickets on this Occasion,' but instead re-pay for the boxes to which they already subscribed.¹⁰⁸ Wealthier patrons used the benefit as an opportunity publicly to shower the singers in gifts.¹⁰⁹ The 'list of rich presents' seen in *Fig. 1* first appeared in William Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress* (*fig.9*), and was taken from the *Grub-Street*

¹⁰⁶ Avery and Scouten, *London Stage*, Part 3, I, 469. See Cervantes, "Tuneful Monsters", 4, 15-16

¹⁰⁷ *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, London, 113, [14 March, 1735]

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁹ See especially Milhouse and Hume, 'Construing,' 366-71

Journal;¹¹⁰ such gifts as it includes– rings, snuff-boxes, and money– were not unusual for benefit nights.¹¹¹



Fig. 10: Anon, Satire of a Castrato Singer [probably Angelo Maria Monticelli] 1742, ©Trustees of the British Museum

For the critics of luxury, such extravagance was a cause for consternation, or even anger.¹¹² An anonymous 1735 essay ‘Farinelli’ bemoaned:

Whilst Britain, destitute of aid,
Weeps taxes and decaying trade; [...] Charm’s by the sweet *Italian’s* tongue,
In show’rs of gold she pays each song.
Say, politicians, how agree
Such *bounty*, and such *poverty*?
Each cit for thee, dear *Farinelli*,
To feed the ear, neglects the belly.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ See George, *Hogarth*, 21-5

¹¹¹ The figure is, nonetheless, wildly exaggerated in *Some memoirs of Farinelli*, [Anon, 1739, 144]: ‘[H]e had, at least, received One Hundred Thousand Pounds since his first arrival in *England*.’

¹¹² Cervantes, “‘Let ‘em Deck their Verses’,” 425-30

¹¹³ ‘Farinelli,’ in *Poetical Essays in June 1735*, *The London Magazine*, (London, 1732-55)

These dual concerns of luxury and foreignness are both apparent in the anonymous 1742 *Satire of a Castrato Singer*, fig. 10. This image, probably of Angelo Monticelli, contains a peacock— a symbol of vanity—, a pig— symbol of greed—, and watches and gold spilling from the cornucopia, against the background of a mysterious foreign idyll.¹¹⁴

Most historiographical attention, however, has been reserved for the series of satirical *epistles* published between 1723 and 1736, which mock the letters of adoration sent from many fans to the castrati.¹¹⁵ As McGeary explains, they fell into the tradition of misogynist or pornographic satire that was common in London in the eighteenth century. Though their predominant focus is sexuality, explored in the next chapter,¹¹⁶ the wealth of the castrati is also a recurring theme. In the dithyrambic *Epistle from the Celebrated C- P-* [notorious courtesan Constantia Philips] *to the Angelic Signor Far-n--li*, this extravagance is blamed on physical attraction:

Had I the Treasure of Earth's spacious Ball,
On F-----lli, I would spend it all...
No Matter, let the Tradesman go unpaid;
Let Children starve, let Fathers, Husbands break,
'Tis all well done, if done for thy dear sake.¹¹⁷

This letter also criticises the reversal of the social structure created by the castrati's fame and reputed arrogance:

Directors and Composers should Beware,
How they approach you with familiar Air:
The first should humbly speak, with Cap in Hand,
The latter, learn at distance due to stand;
While you such daily Acquisitions gain,
And clear each Night, what wou'd whole Troops maintain.¹¹⁸

The issues of foreignness and wealth were combined in criticism of the singers' taking their money out of England upon their departure. Sir Lyonell Pilkington reported in a letter of 1729: 'I'm told Senesino is playing an ungrateful part to his friends in England, by abusing 'em behind their backs, and saying he'll come no more upon 'em... [and] that Senesino had built a fine house with an inscription over the door to let the world know 'twas the folly of the English had

¹¹⁴ Thomas McGeary and Xavier Cervantes, 'From Farinelli to Monticelli: An Opera Satire of 1742 Re-Examined,' *The Burlington Magazine*, 141:1154, (1999), 289

¹¹⁵ A thorough exploration can be found in McGeary, 'Verse Epistles'

¹¹⁶ McGeary, 'Verse Epistles,' 29-31

¹¹⁷ Teresia Constantia Muilman, *The happy courtesan: or, the prude demolish'd. An epistle from the celebrated Mrs. C- P-, to the angelick Signior Far-n--li*, (London, 1735), 2, 8

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 12; Milhouse and Hume, 'Construing,' 362-6; Cervantes, "'Let 'em Deck their Verses'," 424-5

laid the foundation of it.¹¹⁹ Such criticism abounded upon Farinelli's departure to Spain in 1737, coinciding with a wave of broader patriotic anti-Spanish propaganda. As Cervantes argues, such criticism is a 'good illustration of how opera could be pulled into the whirlwind of politics and diplomacy.'¹²⁰ One satire claimed:

Tho' to an *Eunuch's* Voice such Charms belong,
That families are ruined for a song...
Perhaps our Trade some Benefit may boast,
To recompense the loss of such a Toast.¹²¹

Bringing all these concerns together, the author of *Do you know what you are about?*, worried that the castrati's amassed wealth would go back to Italy to fund 'Mass Houses and Monasteries.'¹²²

The two themes of foreignness and wealth were thus prominent tropes in criticism of the castrati. For all the methodological limitations outlined above, satirical sources can offer genuine insights into the reception of the castrati. The fact of their existence suggests the spread of the ideas they represent, and their humour derives from the public recognition of their concerns about national identity and elite culture. The complex relationship of these criticisms to the praise outlined in chapter two is a problem to which I return in my conclusion.

¹¹⁹ Deutsch, 242

¹²⁰ Cervantes, "'Tuneful Monsters",' 8

¹²¹ McGeary, 'Farinelli in Madrid,' 403

¹²² Anon, 1733, 18

Chapter 4: 'This Charming Demi-Man':¹²³ Gender, Sexuality, and the Castrati

The question of the castrati's gender and sexuality has been implicit throughout the first three chapters of this essay, just as it underlies most contemporary discussions of castrati. Its prevalence has led some historians to focus exclusively on sexuality, at the expense of other important reactions explored above. Nonetheless, concerns about the castrati's ambiguous gender, infertility, and potential eroticism were important in shaping their reception. This chapter brings these issues to the fore, to examine how the castrati were *understood* by their contemporaries, and what effect this had on the responses—both serious and satirical—of English society.

Enid and Richard Peschel have provided a medical explanation of the effects of prepubertal castration.¹²⁴ The resultant unnatural balance of hormones stunts the development of the sexual organs, preserving the high pitch of the voice, preventing bodily hair growth, causing female body-fat dispersal, and leading many castrati to grow very tall. This hormonal balance, combined with frequent and sustained singing, produced a barrel chest, noticeable against often small heads. These physical characteristics are mocked in many contemporary caricatures, such as *Fig. II*. The question of the sexual capabilities of the castrati is much-debated, given its frequent discussion in satirical texts. Medical opinion seems tentatively to agree that castrati, depending on the precise operation performed, would have been potent but infertile.¹²⁵

Before examining this issue of sexuality, we must consider the question of gender. Thomas Laqueur's influential exposition of a pre-modern 'one-sex' model of gender, by which people understood gender on a vertical plane from femininity to manhood, is useful.¹²⁶ According to this theory, the castrato was 'frozen' in the middle-ground of boyhood; he was 'effeminate,' potentially attractive to both sexes.¹²⁷ It is worth placing our observation of the ambiguity— or perhaps 'boyishness'— of the castrati's gender within a wider historiography on gender in the eighteenth century. Raymond Stephanson, for example, sees the castrati as wholly emasculated in the contemporary understanding of gender formation. He has explored the notion of 'masculinity as male genitalia,' arguing for the importance of genitalia in contemporary

¹²³ *frontispiece*

¹²⁴ What follows is from Enid Peschel and Richard Peschel, 'Medicine and Music: The Castrati in Opera,' *Opera Quarterly*, 4:4, (1987). See also Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 89-98; Freitas, 'Eroticism'; Stephanson, *Yard of Wit*, 25-93

¹²⁵ Freitas, 'Eroticism,' 226-9

¹²⁶ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (1990), 149-92; Freitas, 'Eroticism,' 202-14

¹²⁷ Freitas, 'Eroticism,' 202-14; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, (London, 2001), 124-62

discourse on identity: 'In considering the nature of the castrato's loss, the satirists at times assume the phallus to be the guarantor of everything from moral discourse to English currency or English-ness.'¹²⁸ For Karen Harvey, however, a study of contemporary erotica suggests that gender was a more flexible concept, with different texts showing 'male bodies [as] violent and powerful, but also soft and vulnerable, [whilst] female bodies were both passive and devouring.'¹²⁹



Fig 11: Anton Maria Zanetti, Caricature of Farinelli, 1694-1757, ©Trustees of the British Museum

What is certain is that the perception of the castrati's masculinity was ambiguous, and not universal.¹³⁰ One satirical poem noted that Farinelli was 'A Paradox, a Thing uncommon,/ And sung of neither Man nor Woman.'¹³¹ Another relied on this ambiguity for humour, claiming that Farinelli was in fact pregnant.¹³² A sense of a Laqueurian middle-gender is apparent in the 1723 *Epistle to Senzini*, which suggested 'it was not unreasonable to suppose you of a middle Nature

¹²⁸ Stephanson, *Yard of Wit*, 47-9; On identity, see Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 89-98, and Gilman, 'Italian,' 58.

¹²⁹ Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 8

¹³⁰ Cervantes, "'Tuneful Monsters",' 9

¹³¹ *F---s Labour*, quoted in Cervantes, "'Let 'em Deck their Verses",' 430

¹³² Anon, *Epistle to John James H--dd--g--r*, (London, 1736), 3

betwixt us and Angels: which I was inclined to believe from the Sweetness and Melody of your Voice'¹³³

To add to our understanding of the contemporary perception of the castrati's gender, it is revealing to explore the gender-status of the roles they performed. Musicology has provided insights into how music itself might be used for such an investigation, though often without sufficient historical context, and without the deserved historiographical attention.¹³⁴ The intersection between the two disciplines is a fruitful ground for such analysis as I shall now seek to provide through considering the aria *Al Lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera*.

Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* starred Senesino in the eponymous role, alongside the famous soprano Cuzzoni as Cleopatra, and included two further alto castrati—Berenstadt and Bigonzi—as Tolomeo, King of Egypt, and his servant.¹³⁵ These roles are perhaps surprising; the castrati are not cast as effeminate young men, but as leading military heroes. Though we see Caesar more in his role as statesman than military leader,¹³⁶ there are some militaristic arias, including *Al Lampo dell'armi*, in which he sings:

In the shimmering of arms, this my warring soul will take revenge.
Let not that which gives this warrior's hand strength now disarm it.

This militarism is reflected in the hard consonants and the aggressively detached string playing in the contrasting 'B' section of the aria, *fig. 12*. Caesar, just like other leading characters played by castrati, is also a romantic character pursuing a love affair.¹³⁷ This has some musical benefits, notably 'the potential for love duets with cadential unisons symbolising the union of the lovers,' but the awkward fact of the lover-hero's infertility remains.¹³⁸

Ultimately, the problem of gender construction was solved gradually and not always consciously; one contemporary suggested the Senesino played heroic roles simply because 'the role of the hero suited him better than that of the lover.'¹³⁹ However, Handel increasingly recruited alto rather than soprano castrati, thus pairing male alto with female soprano to echo the

¹³³ *Epistle to Senzini*, quoted in Gibson, *Royal Academy*, 411. See McGeary, "'Warbling Eunuchs,'" 8-10

¹³⁴ Wier, 'Nest,' 257-69; Dorothy Keyser, 'Cross-Sexual Casting in Baroque Opera: Musical and Theatrical Conventions,' *Opera Quarterly*, 5:4, (1987), 52-3; LaRue, *Handel and his Singers*, 108-24. The 'feminization' of *opera seria* as a genre is explored in McGeary, "'Warbling Eunuchs'"

¹³⁵ Wier, 'Nest,' 257-8

¹³⁶ Keyser, 'Cross-Sexual Casting,' 52-3

¹³⁷ Wier, 'Nest,' 261

¹³⁸ Keyser, 'Cross-Sexual Casting,' 51

¹³⁹ Johann Joachim Quantz, quoted in Wier, 'Nest,' 260; LaRue, *Handel and his Singers*, 108-24

high-low relationship expected of male and female lovers.¹⁴⁰ The gendering of individual castrati was also created through small musical devices. Dean and Knapp argue, for example, that Senesino's heroic role in *Floridante* was weakened by the use of *triple-meter* (beats subdivided into three, creating a dance-like rhythm), in comparison to the militaristic *double-meter* (beats sub-divided into two) used in *Al lampo*.¹⁴¹



Fig. 12: 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera,' from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Francesco Haym, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, HWV 17, 1724, bars 39-47

Though it is impossible to prove historically that such an effect was perceived by Handel's audience in any measurable way, such analysis can be informative. For example, Wier suggests that whilst soprano *prima donnas* were consistently given weaker, passionate roles, 'Senesino's characters... skated across the boundaries of masculinity and femininity.'¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Wier, 'Nest,' 258-61

¹⁴¹ Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas*, 390-400; Wier, 'Nest,' 260

¹⁴² Wier, 'Nest,' 264

The second issue to consider is the castrati's sexuality and sexual ability. Sexual relationships are frequent in the satirical *epistles* introduced in chapter three.¹⁴³ In the 1727 *Answer from Senora Faustina to Segnior Senesino*, the author addresses 'my Impotent, my warbling Dear.'¹⁴⁴ The 1724 *Epistle from Senesino to Anna Robinson*,¹⁴⁵ purporting to be the castrato's rejection of the latter's propositions, includes graphic lines on his sexual inability:

My Lips expres'd what never touch'd my Heart,
My Flames and Darts are nothing all but Art;
Love I may feign;– but can't go thro' the Part:
'Tis but a Blaze, which does to Nothing turn,
It Glow-Worm-like may shine,– but cannot burn [...]
If something more expressive you expect,
And think I treat you with a cold Neglect,
*I can't advance one Inch– beyond Respect.*¹⁴⁶

[*italics added*]

Despite these suggestions of impotence, many satirists feared that the castrati were in fact potent, and being potent but infertile, might have affairs with English women. Such satires reflect the wider concerns of male polite society for sexual stability and dominance.¹⁴⁷ The author of *Faustina's Answer to Senesino's Epistle*, mocks Senesino's ability to have intercourse without causing pregnancy: 'Thou common laughing stock! thou standing jest,/ Thou'rt but a living *D[ild]o* at the best.'¹⁴⁸ *The Happy Courtezan* explains:

They [women] know, that safe with thee they may remain;
Enjoy Love's Pleasures, yet avoid the Pain; [...]
This, by Experience, know the Prudes full well,
Who're always virtuous, if they never swell. [...]
Eunuchs can give uninterrupted Joys,
Without the shameful Curse of Girls and Boys:
The violated Prude her Shape retains,
A Vestal in the publick Eye remains.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, the satires noted, the castrati's impotence might make them desirable sexual partners, in contrast to other men:

¹⁴³ Again, McGeary 'Verse Epistles,' and Cervantes "'Let 'em Deck their Verses'" provide a thorough explanation.

¹⁴⁴ Gibson, *Royal Academy*, 425

¹⁴⁵ For details on Robinson, see Wier, 'Nest,' 256-7

¹⁴⁶ Anon, *An Epistle from S-----o, To A-----a R-----n*, (London, 1724), 2

¹⁴⁷ McGeary, "'Warbling Eunuchs",' 16; Kowaleski-Wallace, "'Shunning",' 154-62

¹⁴⁸ Anon, *Faustina's Answer*, 8

¹⁴⁹ Muilman, *Happy Courtezan*, 5-6

whose Power to please expires so very fast;
They find too soon the happy Moment past,
While *Senesino* stands it to the last.’¹⁵⁰

For these reasons, the satirists feared that some castrati were in fact very promiscuous, undetectably subverting the sexual order by engaging in intercourse with many noble women. *The Happy Courtezan* continues ‘Did not fat *Nicolini*, tho’ a Clown,/ Enjoy the greatest Beauties of the Town?’¹⁵¹

The second– contradictory– concern was the castrati’s suspected sodomy, an accusation that carries with it a stereotyped characterisation of Italians’ behaviour more widely.¹⁵² Historians have noted that the early eighteenth century saw a change in social attitudes to liminal sexual behaviours such as sodomy and prostitution.¹⁵³ The castrati provided a trope for reflecting these wider social concerns. A pamphlet from the late 1720s even included the popularity of castrati as one of the *Plain Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy in England*.¹⁵⁴ A 1749 letter from Horace Walpole to Horace Mann contains the following anecdote: Francis Delaval, who employed a soprano, discovered her in bed with the castrato Guadagni. After whipping the soprano as punishment, he turned to Guadagni, shouting:

“I have another sort of punishment for you,” and immediately turned up that part, which in England is accustomed to be flogged too, but in its own country has a different entertainment– which he accordingly gave it.¹⁵⁵

Such sentiment had been set out as early as 1706, in Dennis’ *Essay upon Public Spirit*, written at the very beginning of the castrato phenomenon: ‘The more the Men are enervated and emasculated by the Softness of *Italian* music, the less will they care for [women]... I make no doubt but we shall come to see one Beau take another for Better for Worse.’¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Anon, *F-----na’s Answer to S-----no’s Epistle*, (London, 1727), 5

¹⁵¹ Muilman, *Happy Courtezan*, 7. See Cervantes, “‘Tuneful Monsters’,” 10. The castrato Tenducci, later in the century, famously married an English woman. [Helen Berry, *The Castrato and His Wife*, (Oxford, 2011)]

¹⁵² Gilman, ‘Italian,’ 50. I have chosen to use ‘sodomy’ over ‘homosexuality,’ following the debate about the origins of sexual identity inspired by Michel Foucault [see especially *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, (1978/76), esp. 43]. The questions inspired by Foucault’s work are of great interest, but lie outside this essay.

¹⁵³ See Randolph Trumbach, ‘Sex, Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London,’ *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2, (1991)

¹⁵⁴ Anon, c.1728-31, quoted in McGeary, “‘Warbling Eunuchs’,” 6-7

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Patricia Howard, ‘Perceptions of the Castrati in Eighteenth-Century London,’ in *Avanzati, Handel*, 12

¹⁵⁶ Gilman, ‘Italian,’ 51

The satirical *epistle to John James Heidegger*, which jokes that Farinelli has been discovered to be a pregnant woman, plays on both the castrati's ambiguous gender and their supposed engagement in sodomy. It adopts the character Epicoene, who in Ben Johnson's play pretends to be a woman before revealing he is a boy. On 'revealing' that Farinelli is in fact a woman, the *epistle* asks:

How does Lord *Epicoene* his Loss lament!
His sighs, his Pray'rs, and all his Jew'ls mispent?
"Have I, crys he, 'for Swine been casting Pearl:
And lavished so much Treasure on a Girl?
Kneel'd like a Slave, forgetting all my Pomp,
At the splay Feet of this ungainly Romp?"¹⁵⁷

This fictional Epicoene believes himself to be engaging in sodomy with Farinelli, though in this satire is disappointed to discover that he has in fact been having intercourse with a woman.¹⁵⁸

As Gilman explains, these sexual ambiguities and uncertainties were at the heart of early eighteenth-century concerns about the very nature of British identity. 'If [the] castrato was simultaneously a sodomitical failure, a sodomitical success, and the ultimate British-woman pleaser, the supremacy, even the viability, of the British manly British man becomes doubtful.'¹⁵⁹ We have, therefore, a picture of contradiction and confusion in the eighteenth-century understanding of the castrati's gender and sexuality. These issues pervaded much of the contemporary discussion of the singers, as a result of their unusual physiology and the uncertainties of elite society. The castrati were ambiguously gendered, and potential suspects for both promiscuity with women and sodomy, and were thus a target for much and varied criticism.

¹⁵⁷ Anon, 5

¹⁵⁸ Gilman, 'Italian,' 58; McGeary, "'Warbling Eunuchs",' 6-7

¹⁵⁹ Gilman, 'Italian,' 58

Conclusion

Understanding the castrato phenomenon remains a fascinating challenge in the cultural history of early eighteenth-century London. The castrati were certainly adored and praised, and— at a time when ‘politeness’ and ‘taste’ were so important— the Italian operas they led were the height of London’s social life and the epitome of luxury. I have sought to apply the historical tools developed in the recent historiography of popular culture to elite society, exploring visual culture, social ritual, and gender history. I have sought also to bring together the insights of recent work by historians and musicologists, drawing upon valuable work published in 2005, and using music itself as a primary source alongside text and images to inform our discussion of the castrati’s talent and the gendering of the roles they performed.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this investigation, though, have some notable limitations. Most notably, the demands of space have limited my chronological parameters. Comparison of my conclusions with research on the reception of the earlier, less well-known castrati, would be interesting. Moreover, further study of the effect of the ‘Grand Tour’ in shaping the reception of early castrati would be valuable. A focused study of those who wrote about castrati from abroad— such as Thomas McGeary’s article specifically devoted to Farinelli— would suggest the expectations and fears that reached England ahead of the castrati themselves.¹⁶⁰ Finally, the constraints of space prevented further discussion herein of the politics of the opera-house, the social maneuvering that took place therein, and the political messages of opera librettos. Some idea of the role of the castrati within this is certain to be provided in McGeary’s forthcoming monograph *The Politics of Opera in Handel’s Britain*, which will surely add to our understanding of the castrato phenomenon.¹⁶¹

Notwithstanding these limitations, this essay has provided some arguments concerning the reception of the castrati in early eighteenth-century London. As well as setting the castrato phenomenon within the context of elite society, ‘taste,’ and ‘politeness,’ chapter two argued that the castrati should be included in the developing historiography of ‘celebrity,’ as an earlier example of the phenomena discussed in that literature. Chapters three and four sought to expand Xavier Cervantes’ argument that the castrati represented a trope— not merely in satirical literature but in all aspects of their reception— for the insecurities of contemporary society. It is

¹⁶⁰ McGeary, ‘Farinelli’s Progress,’ 341-54. Valuable, but very brief, mention is made of Farinelli in Black, *British Abroad*, 277-84

¹⁶¹ Thomas McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in Handel’s Britain*, (Cambridge, 2013- forthcoming)

in this argument that the value of this study as a window into eighteenth-century culture is most apparent. The early eighteenth century was a period of upheaval; the *beau monde* began to be criticised– in the expanding print industry– for its luxury, the established norms of gender and sexuality were challenged and subverted, and the context of war and urban development led to the perception of a threat from foreign cultures to English identity. The castrati were at the very heart of all such concerns, as celebrity foreigners who entertained the fashionable elite, and grew wealthy from their unnatural voices. They were truly a phenomenon, and one that reveals so much about the culture of their age.

Appendix I: A list of notable castrati and the dates of their stay in London

Berenstadt, Gaetano	1717-c.19; 1722-4
Bernacchi, Angelantonio Maria	1729-31
Bernardi, Francesco (<i>Senesino</i>)	1720-8; 1730-6
Broschi, Carlo (<i>Farinelli</i>)	1734-1737
Carestini, Giovanni (<i>Cusanino</i>)	1733-5
Crescentini, Girolamo	1784
Grimaldi, Nicolo (<i>Nicolini</i>)	1708-12; 1715-17
Grossi, Giovanni Francesco (<i>Siface</i>)	1687
Guadagni, Gaetano	1748-56; 1769-71
Guarducci, Tomasso	1767-9
Majorano, Gaetano (<i>Carfarelli</i>)	1738-9
Manzuoli, Giovanni	1764-5
Marchesi, Luigi	1788-90
Millico, Guiseppe	1773-4
Monticelli, Angelo Maria	1741-c.2
Pacchierotti, Gasparo	1778-90
Rauzzini, Venanzio	1774-1810
Roncaglia, Francesco	1777-9
Rubinelli, Giovanni Maria	1786-7
Tenducci, Giusto Ferdinando	1758-65; 1768-91
Urbani, Valentino (<i>Valentini</i>)	1706-c.16
Velluti, Giovanni Battista	1825-9

The information in this table is taken from various sources. Most notably, Heriot, *Castrati*, provides invaluable details of the lives of many castrati. I have also made use of Roselli, *Singers*, and several pages from Grove Music Online (www.oxfordmusiconline.com, [accessed 12/11/12]).

Appendix II: 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera,' from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Francesco Haym, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, HWV 17, 1724

This *da capo* aria is sung by Julius Caesar, initially played by Senesino, in Act II of *Giulio Cesare*. The text translates as:

*In the shimmering of arms, this my warring soul will take revenge.
Let not that which gives this warrior's hand strength now disarm it.*

An excellent recording of this aria, and many other arias relevant to this essay, by the countertenor Andreas Scholl, can be found on his disc *Arias for Senesino*. [Andreas Scholl, Accademia Bizantina, & Ottavio Dantone, *Arias for Senesino*, Decca, 2005].

2-24 CESARE. *Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera*

Allegro.

CESARE.

Al lampo dell' ar-mi quest' al-ma guerrie-ra vendet-ta fa-

The image shows a musical score for the aria 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera' from the opera Giulio Cesare in Egitto. The score is for the character Cesare and is in the key of B-flat major (two flats) and common time (C). It is marked 'Allegro.' and consists of three systems of music. The first system shows the vocal line and the beginning of the piano accompaniment. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line with the lyrics 'Al lampo dell' ar-mi quest' al-ma guerrie-ra vendet-ta fa-' and the piano accompaniment. The score is enclosed in a rectangular border.

9
rà, al lam-po dell' ar-mi quest' al-ma guerrie-ra vendet-ta farà, vendet-ta fa-

12
rà, quest' alma guerrie-ra, al lam-po dell' ar-mi quest' alma guerrie-ra vendetta fa-

15
rà, al lam-po dell' ar-

18
mi quest' al-ma guer-

21
rie-ra vendet-ta farà, vendet-ta fa-rà;

104

GIULIO CESARE, REDUCTION

24

al lam-po dell'ar - mi quest' al-ma guerrie - ra ven-det-ta fa-rà,

27

30

al lam-po dell'ar-mi quest' al-ma guerrie-ra ven-det-ta fa - rà,

33

quest al - ma guer-

36

rie - ra ven-det - ta fa - rà.

39

Non fia che disar-mi la destra guer-

42

rie-ra chi for-za le dà, non fia che dis-ar

45

- mi la-des-tra guerrie-ra chi for-za le dà,

48

Adagio.
la-des - tra guer - rie - ra chi for - za le

51

dà.

54

Al lam - po dell

Dal Segno.

56

2
(parte con Curio)

-rà. Mo - rà, mo - rà, Ce - sare
Mo - rà, mo - rà, Ce - sare
Mo - rà, mo - rà, Ce - sare

59

mo - rà! mo - rà, Ce - sare mo - rà, mo - rà, mo - rà, mo - rà!
mo - rà! mo - rà, Ce - sare mo - rà, mo - rà, mo - rà, mo - rà!
mo - rà! mo - rà, Ce - sare mo - rà, mo - rà, mo - rà, mo - rà!

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Textual Sources

Pamphlets and Books

- Anon, *A Comi-Farci-Operatical humorous and political burlesque scene between the King and Queen of Spain, an English sailor, and Farinelli, on the Present Posture of affairs*, (Dublin, 1741)
- _____, *A list of the subscribers to the boxes, at the King's-Theatre, 1788*, King's Theatre, Haymarket, London, (London, 1788)
- _____, 'An Account of the Famous Signor Farinelli,' in *A trip through the town. Containing observations on the customs and manners of the age. ... Together with sundry other curious and diverting particulars*, (London, c.1735)
- _____, 'An Answer from Mrs. Robinson to Senesino,' in Aaron Hill (Ed.), *The Plain Dealer: being select essays on several curious subjects*, Vol. 1, (London, 1724/ 1730)
- _____, *An Epistle from S-----o, To A-----a R-----n*, (London, 1724)
- _____, *An epistle to John James H--dd--g--r; esq; on the report of Signior F-r-n-Lli's being with child*, (London, 1736)
- _____, *Do you know what you are about? Or, a Protestant alarm to Great Britain...*, (London, 1733)
- _____, *F-----na's Answer to S-----no's Epistle*, (London, 1727)
- _____, 'Farinelli,' in *Poetical Essays in June 1735*, *The London Magazine: or, the Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, (London, 1732-55)
- _____, *The Lady of Taste: Or, F-'s Levee*, (1735)
- _____, *The secrets of a woman's heart. An epistle from a friend, to Signior F-----lli. Occasion'd by the epistle of Mrs. C--- P-----ps, to the angelick Signior F-----lli*, (London, 1735)
- Ancillon, C., *Eunuchism display'd. Describing all the different sorts of eunuchs; The Esteem they have met with in the World, and how they came to be made so...*, (London, 1718)
- Burney, C., *The present state of music in France and Italy: or, the journal of a tour through those countries, undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music*, (London, 1771), available as Scholes, P. (Ed.), *Dr Burney's Music Tours in Europe*, 2 Vols., (London, 1959)
- Dennis, *An Essay on the Opera's After the Italian Manner, Which are about to be Establish'd on the English Stage: With Some reflections on the damage which they may bring to the publick*, (London, 1727)
- Dorman, J., 'Some Memoirs of Farinelli,' in *The curiosity: or, gentleman and lady's library*, (London, 1739)
- Gerard, A., *An Essay on Taste*, (London, 1759)
- Pickering, R., *Reflections upon Theatrical Expression in Tragedy*, (London, 1755)
- Muilman, T. C., *The happy courtezán: or, the prude demolish'd. An epistle from the celebrated Mrs. C-P-, to the angelick Signior Far--n--li*, (London, 1735)
- Wilkes, T., *A General View of the Stage*, (London, 1759)

Newspapers and Journals

- A Letter from Taste to the Trister,' *Edinburgh Magazine*, [July, 1762], 349
- Addison and Steele (Ed. Donald Bond), *The Spectator*, 5 Vols., (Oxford, 1965). Vol I pp. 55-9; Vol II pp. 305-6, 413-16; Vol III pp. 138-9, 513-15
- London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, London, 111-13, [12-14 March, 1735]
- London Evening-Post*, no. 1076, [10-12 October, 1734]
- London Evening-Post*, no. 1085, [31 October- 2 November, 1734]
- Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, 327, London, [January 11, 1735]

Images

- Alexander van Haeken [after Charles Lucy], *Carlo Broschi Farinelli*, 1735, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- Anon, *Satire of a Castrato Singer* [probably Angelo Maria Monticelli] 1742, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- _____, *Senesino, Cuzzoni and Berenstadt* [probably a scene from Handel's *Flavio*] 1723, ©Gerald Coke Handel Collection, Foundling Museum, accession no. 5641
- _____, *The Ladies Lamentation for y^e Loss of Senesino*, 1737-8, ©Gerald Coke Handel Foundation, Foundling Museum, accession no. 2140
- _____, *The Man of Taste*, 1733, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- _____, *The Most Illustrious Signor Senesino's landing in England*, 1737-8 ©Gerald Coke Handel Collection, Foundling Museum, accession no. 5636
- Anon [attrib. Hubert-François Gravelot or Michael Vandegrucht], *The Opera House or the Italian Eunuch's Glory*, 1735, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- Anton Maria Zanetti, *Caricature of Farinelli*, 1694-1757, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress, Plate II*, 1735, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- _____, *Marriage A-La-Mode, Plate IV*, 1745, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- _____, *Masquerades and Operas*, 1724, ©Trustees of the British Museum
- Joseph Wagner [after Jacobo Amigoni], *Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli*, 1734-9, ©Trustees of the British Museum

Musical Sources

- 'Al lampo dell'armi quest'alma guerriera,' from George Frideric Handel and Nicola Haym, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, HWV. 17, 1724, *International Music Score Library Project*, <http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/8/89/IMSLP30670-PMLP35138-GiulioCesare-reduction.pdf> [accessed 18/01/13], 102-6

Secondary Literature

- Aspden, S., “‘An Infinity of Factions’”: Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain and the Undoing of Society,’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9:1, (1997)
- _____, ‘The “Rival Queens” and the Play of Identity in Handel’s Admeto,’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 18:3, (2006)
- Avanzati, E. (Ed.), *Handel and the Castrati: The Story Behind the 18th Century Superstar Singers*, Exhibition Catalogue, London: Handel House Museum, (2006)
- Avery, E. L. and Scouten, A. (Eds.), *The London Stage, 1660-1800, Parts 2 & 3: 1729-1747*, (4 Vols.), (Carbondale, IL, 1961)
- Barbier, P. (trans. Crosland, M.), *The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon*, (London, 1996)
- Barker-Benfield, G. J., *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Chicago, 1992)
- Bergeron, K., ‘The Castrato as History,’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 8:2, (1996)
- Berry, H., *The Castrato and His Wife*, (Oxford, 2011)
- Black, J., *A Subject for Taste: Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, (London, 2005)
- _____, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*, (Gloucestershire, 1992)
- Blanning, T., *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789*, (Oxford, 2002)
- _____, *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present*, (London, 2008)
- Brewer, J., “‘The Most Polite Age and the Most Vicious’”: Attitudes Towards Culture as a Commodity, 1660-1800,’ in Bermingham, A. and Brewer, J. (Eds.), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, (London, 1995)
- _____, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Chicago, 2000)
- Carter, P., *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800*, (Harlow, 2001)
- Cervantes, X., “‘Let ‘em Deck Their Verses with Farinelli’s Name’: Farinelli as a Satirical Trope in English Poetry and Verse of the 1730s,’ *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28:3, (2005)
- _____, “‘Tuneful Monsters’”: The Castrati and the London Operatic Public, 1667-1737’, *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 13, (1998)
- Clapton, N., ‘Carlo Broschi Farinelli: Aspects of his Technique and Performance,’ *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28:3, (2005)
- Clark, J., ‘Farinelli as Queen of the Night,’ *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 2, (2005)
- Colley, L., *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (London, 1992)
- Corp, E., ‘Farinelli and the Circle of Sicinio Pepoli: A Link with the Stuart Court in Exile,’ *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 2, (2005)
- Dame, J., ‘Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato,’ in Brett, P., Wood, E., and Thomas, G., (Eds.), *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, (New York, 1994)
- Davies, J. Q., “‘Veluti in Speculum’”: The Twilight of the Castrato,’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 17:3, (2005)
- Dean, W. and Knapp, J. M., *Handel’s Operas 1704-1726*, (Oxford, 1987)
- Deutsch, O. E., *Handel: A Documentary Biography*, (London, 1955)
- Duffy, M., *The Englishman and the Foreigner*, The English Satirical Print 1600-1832, (Cambridge, 1986)
- Duncan, C., ‘Castrati and Impresarios in London: Two Mid-Eighteenth-Century Lawsuits,’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 24:1, (2012)
- Feldman, M., ‘Denaturing the Castrato,’ *The Opera Quarterly*, 24:3-4, (2009)
- Foucault, M., *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, (London, 1978/ 76)
- Freitas, R., ‘The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato,’ *The Journal of Musicology*, 20:2, (2003)
- Gatrell, V., *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteen-Century London*, (London, 2006)
- George, M. D., *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire*, (London, 1967)

- Gibson, E., *The Royal Academy of Music, 1719-1728: The Institution and its Directors*, (New York, 1989)
- Gilman, T., 'The Italian (Castrato) in London,' in Dellamora, R. and Fischlin, D. (Eds.), *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference*, (New York, 1997)
- Greig, H., 'Leading the Fashion: The Material Culture of London's *Beau Monde*,' in Styles, J. and Vickery, A. (Eds.) *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, (New Haven, 2006)
- Grove Music Online, www.oxfordmusiconline.com, [accessed 12/11/12], for each of the singers listed in Appendix I
- Hall-Witt, J., *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880*, (New Hampshire, 2007)
- Harvey, K., *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture*, (Cambridge, 2004)
- _____, 'The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century,' *THJ*, 45:4, (2002)
- Heartz, D., *From Garrick to Gluck: Essays on Opera in the Age of Enlightenment*, (New York, 2004)
- Heller, W., 'Varieties of Masculinity: Trajectories of the Castrato from the Seventeenth Century,' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28:3, (2005)
- Heriot, A., *The Castrati in Opera*, (London, 1956)
- Hume, R. D., 'Covent Garden Theatre in 1732,' *The Musical Times*, 123;1678 (1982)
- Hunt, L. (Ed.), *The New Cultural History*, (Berkeley, 1989)
- Jones, R. W., *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty*, (Cambridge, 1997)
- Joncus, B., 'One God, so many Farinellis: Mythologising the Star Castrato,' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28:3, (2005)
- Keyser, D., 'Cross-Sexual Casting in Baroque Opera: Musical and Theatrical Conventions,' *Opera Quarterly*, 5:4, (1987)
- Klein, L., 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England,' *The Historical Journal*, 32:3, (1989)
- _____, 'Politeness for Plebes: Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England,' in Bermingham, A. and Brewer, J. (Eds.), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, (London, 1995)
- _____, 'The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 18:2, (1984-5)
- _____, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,' *The Historical Journal*, 45:4, (2002)
- Knif, H., *Gentleman and Spectators: Studies in Journals, Opera, and the Social Scene in Late Stuart London*, (Helsinki, 1995)
- Kowaleski-Wallace, B., "'Shunning the Bearded Kiss": Castrati and the Definition of Female Sexuality,' *Prose Studies*, 15:2, (1992)
- Laqueur, T., *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (1990)
- Langford, P., *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, (Oxford, 1989)
- _____, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650-1850*, (Oxford, 2001)
- LaRue, C. S., *Handel and his Singers: The Creation of the Royal Academy Operas, 1720-1728*, (Oxford, 1995)
- Lowson, H., "'The Poor Prostituted Word": The Taste Debate in Britain 1750-1800,' *Undergraduate Dissertation, University of Bristol*, (2009), <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/ug/ugdissertations/2009lowson.pdf> [accessed 09/10/12]
- Leppert, R., 'Imagery, Musical Confrontation and Cultural Difference in Early 18th-Century London,' *Early Music*, 14:3, (1986)
- McGeary, T. and Cervantes, X., 'From Farinelli to Monticelli: An Opera Satire of 1742 Re-Examined,' *The Burlington Magazine*, 141:1154, (1999)
- McGeary, T., 'Gendering Opera: Italian Opera as the Feminine Other in England, 1700-42,' *Journal of Musicological Research*, 14, (1994)

- _____, 'Farinelli and the Duke of Leeds: "tanto mio amico e patrone particolare",' *Early Music*, 30, (2002)
- _____, 'Farinelli in Madrid: Opera, Politics, and the War of Jenkins' Ear,' *Musical Quarterly*, 82, (1998)
- _____, 'Farinelli's Progress to Albion: The Recruitment and Reception of Opera's 'Blazing Star,' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28:3, (2005)
- _____, *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain*, (Cambridge, 2013- forthcoming)
- _____, 'Verse Epistles on Italian Opera Singers, 1724-1736,' *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 33, (2000)
- _____, "'Warbling Eunuchs": Opera, Gender, and Sexuality on the London Stage,' *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 7, (1992)
- Milhous, J. and Hume, R. D., 'Box Office Reports for Five Operas Mounted by Handel in London, 1732-1734,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26:3, (1978)
- _____, 'Construing and Misconstruing Farinelli in London,' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28:3, (2005)
- Nalbach, D., *The King's Theatre 1704-1867: London's First Italian Opera House*, (London, 1972)
- Nussbaum, F., 'Actresses and the Economics of Celebrity, 1700-1800,' in Luckhurst, M. and Moody, J. (Eds.), *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, (Hampshire, 2005)
- Offret, A., *A Dozen Little Farinellos: A Reception History of Farinelli in London, 1734-37*, MPhil Thesis, University of Cincinnati, (2009)
- Pedicord, H. W., *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*, (New York, 1954)
- Peschel, E. and Peschel, R., 'Medicine and Music: The Castrati in Opera,' *Opera Quarterly*, 4:4, (1987)
- Plumb, J. H., 'The Commercialization of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century England,' in McKendrick, N., Brewer, J. and Plumb, J. H., *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, (London, 1982)
- Price, C., 'The Critical Decade for English Music Drama, 1700-1710,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26:1, (1976)
- Rendell, J., *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London*, (London, 2002)
- Roach, J., 'Cavaliere Nicolini: London's First Opera Star,' *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28:2, (1976)
- Rosselli, J., *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*, (Cambridge, 1992)
- _____, 'The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850,' *Acta Musicologica*, 60:2, (1988)
- Scholz, P., (trans. Broadwin, J. and Frisch, S.), *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History*, (New Jersey, 2001/1999)
- Smith, W., "'Do you know what you are about?'" A Rare Handelian Pamphlet,' *The Music Review*, 25:2, (1964)
- Somerset-Ward, R., *Angels and Monsters: Male and Female Sopranos in the Story of Opera*, (New Haven, 2004)
- Stephanson, R., *The Yard of Wit: Male Creativity and Sexuality, 1650-1750*, (Philadelphia, 2004)
- Trevor, C., 'Vocal Virtuosi of the Eighteenth Century,' *The Musical Times*, 61:298, (1920)
- Trumbach, R., 'Sex, Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2, (1991)
- Wanko, C., 'Patron or Patronised?: 'Fans' and the Eighteenth-Century English Stage,' in Mole, T. (Ed.), *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge, 2009)
- Weber, W., 'Did People Listen in the 18th Century?,' *Early Music*, 25:4, (1997)
- White, J., 'A World of Goods? The "Consumption Turn" and Eighteenth-Century British History,' *Cultural and Social History*, 3:1, (2006)
- White, J., *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing*, (London, 2012)
- Wier, C., 'A Nest of Nightingales: Cuzzoni and Senesino at Handel's Royal Academy of Music,' *Theatre Survey*, 51:2, (2010)
- Wilson, G., 'One God! One Farinelli! Amigoni's Portraits of a Famous *Castrato*,' *Apollo*, 140, (1994)



The Ladies Lamentation for y^e Loss of Senesino. G. Bickham junr. sc.

Set for y^e German Flute & c.

As musing I rang'd in the Meads all alone, A beautifull Creature was making her Moan,
 Oh! the Tears they did trickle full fast from her Eyes, And she pour'd both the Air and my
 Heart with her Cries, Oh! the Tears they did trickle full fast from her Eyes, And she pour'd both y^e
 Air and my Heart with her Cries.

Rit.

I gently requested the Cause of her moan,
 She told me her sweet Senesino was stown,
 And in that sad Posture sh^ed ever remain,
 Unless the dear Charmer wou'd come back again.

Why who is this Mortal so Cruel said I,
 That draws such a stream from so Lovely an Eye,
 To Beauty so blooming, what Man can be blind,
 To Passion so tender, what Monster unkind.

'Tis neither for Man, nor for Woman, said she,
 That thus in Lamenting I water the lee,
 My Warbler Celestial sweet Darling of fame,
 Is a Shadow of something, a Sex without Name.

Perhaps 'tis some Linnet, some Blackbird, said I,
 Perhaps 'tis your Lark, that has soared to the sky,
 Come dry up your Tears, and abandon your grief,
 I'll bring you another, to give you relief.

No Linnet, no Blackbird, no Skylark, said she,
 But one much more tunefull, by far than all three,
 My sweet Senesino for whom thus I cry,
 Is sweeter than all the wing'd Songsters that fly.

Adieu Farinelli, Cuzzoni, Lichowise,
 Whom stars, and whom Garters, extol to the skies,
 Adieu to the Opera, adieu to the Ball,
 My darling is gone, and a fig for them all.

FOR THE FLUTE.