

“*Nell’orror di mie sciagure*”

Pacini, parody and *Il pirata*

Alexander Weatherson

Rivalry takes many often-disconcerting forms. In the closed and highly competitive world of the *cartellone* it could be bitter, occasionally desperate. Only in the hands of an inveterate tease could it be amusing. Or *tragi-comic*, which might in fact be a better description.

That there was a huge gulf socially between Vincenzo Bellini and Giovanni Pacini is not in any doubt, the latter - in the wake of his highly publicised liaison with Pauline Bonaparte, sister of Napoleon - enjoyed the kind of notoriety that nowadays would earn him the constant attention of the media, he was a high-profile figure and positively revelled in this status. Musically too there was a gulf. On the stage since his sixteenth year he was also an exceptionally experienced composer who had enjoyed collaboration with, and the confidence of, Rossini. No further professional accolade would have been necessary during the early decades of the nineteenth century

On 20 November 1826 - his account in his memoirs *Le mie memorie artistiche*¹ is typically convoluted - Giovanni Pacini was escorted around the Conservatorio di S. Pietro a Majella of Naples by Niccolò Zingarelli the day after the resounding success of his *Niobe*, itself on the anniversary of the prima of his even more triumphant *L’ultimo giorno di Pompei*, both at the Real Teatro S. Carlo. In the Refettorio degli alunni he encountered Bellini for what seems to have been the first time² among a crowd of other students who threw bottles and plates in the air in his honour.³

That the meeting between the *concittadini* did not go well, this enthusiasm notwithstanding, can be taken for granted. No doubt the condescending presence of the current star composer, championed by Barbaja, was interpreted as hostile by the younger man. In fact, Pacini had come to see the new building at Zingarelli’s invitation, not to see the students. The Conservatorio had been confirmed in its new premises only a few days before.⁴

Maybe Bellini felt piqued at not receiving the compliments he believed to be his due from a fellow *catanese*? At any event, that they began on the wrong foot, and

¹ Giovanni Pacini’s *Le mie memorie artistiche* (Firenze 1865), 57. This autobiography, republished in 1875 where the account of this meeting appears on page 47, was originally serialised in “Boccherini”, the *Giornale musicale per la Società del Quartetto di Firenze*, between 1862 and 1865.

² Pacini, who had been appointed artistic director at the S. Carlo in 1823, may or may not have attended rehearsals of Bellini’s *Bianca e Gernando* in May 1826 as he later claimed in his memoirs, but there is no evidence that they actually met. A failure to offer congratulations might well have been considered damning by Bellini.

³ Among the students encountered on this occasion were Luigi Ricci and the very young Errico Petrella who was later to compose his *Jone* (1858) with a terminal eruption of Vesuvius in the manner of *L’ultimo giorno di Pompei*.

⁴ The King had approved the move from the San Sebastiano site just two months earlier.

remained on the wrong foot, until Bellini believed he had dismissed Pacini for good, is a fact of history.

For this study, two dates are essential: Bellini's *Il pirata* was first staged at La Scala on 27 October 1827; Pacini's *I cavalieri di Valenza* was first staged at La Scala on 11 June 1828.

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First some statistics: In his Bellini: *Tutti i libretti d'opera* of 1997⁵, Piero Mioli talks of the “fiasco perfetto dei *Cavalieri di Valenza* di Pacini”. It was nothing of the kind; it had 25 performances “more than any other opera that season.”⁶ Pompeo Cambiasi says “*buonissimo*”. Indeed, Bellini's wishful-thinking notwithstanding, every opera by Pacini in those years at La Scala received his accolade “*buonissimo*” or “*buono*” until after *Norma*. The review in 'I Teatri' (Milano) of 14 June began by saying “*Anche la giornata degli 11 fu una giornata di trionfo per Pacini...*” and continued in the same vein by adding “*Il secondo Atto fu quasi interamente trionfo per Pacini...*” with virtual hyperbole for the performance of Henriette Méric-Lalande.⁷

The opera sustained its impetus throughout its run, the vocal score and several of the settings [in coloured lithographs by Sanquirico] were published almost immediately and proved very popular. There was, however, a caucus of hostile critics eminently capable of unprincipled misrepresentation. Preceding Professor Mioli there were generations of earlier detractors, in London it was reported thus, syndicated from Milan:

“*The music is full of reminiscences of the most glaring kind, and even these are tacked-together in the most clumsy manner imaginable; the rest is eked out with tragi-comic cabaletti (sic), and pieces of the most whining and insipid character. But to compensate for this, we have peals of bells, dances, violin and violoncello solos; double-bands on the stage, cannon, mortars. bombs, and all the rattle and roar of a sea-fight, with an orchestra running wild the whole time. Oh, Music, thou art surely fallen upon evil days, in this thy once cherished domain! Fortunately, in spite of the applause of the galleries ... the piece survived but a few nights, and the credit of our city, is, in part, redeemed.*”⁸

[But not, it should be observed, the credit of the Milanese caucus of critics]

So much for the chorus of dismissal. It is valid to ask: Why was it never revived? Few operas that end in a full-scale sea battle of gargantuan proportions are likely to be revived. Pacini favoured operas with terminal production-problems, as exemplified by his *l'ultimo giorno di Pompei* as well as by *I cavalieri di Valenza*.

Three days after the prima of *I cavalieri di Valenza* Bellini wrote a letter to Florimo which needs to be considered in detail.⁹ The light it throws upon the conflict between these maestri has some relevance to the musical politics of their

⁵ *Bellini: Tutti i libretti d'opera* [Ed. Piero Mioli] (Roma 1997), 146

⁶ Herbert Weinstock *Vincenzo Bellini: His life and His Operas* (London 1971), 54

⁷ 'I Teatri', II, n.10 (14 June 1828). Pacini considered this review to be *ungenerous!*

⁸ 'Harmonicon', London 1828, 212

⁹ Carmelo Neri *Vincenzo Bellini: Nuovo Epistolario (1819-1835)* (Aci Sant'Antonio 2005) [Letter of 14 June 1828 No. 43], 82-84.

day:

“...quest’esito ha rovinato tanto l’opinione de’Milanesi per lui [Pacini]...Tutta l’opera è un continuo *minore*, tutto rubato; il Sig(no)r Poeta ha copiato tutte l’istessissime situazioni del *Pirata*, credo che lo vedrai negli stessi giornali, figurati, fino alle parole; già l’introduzione comincia con un Solitario e poi un coro, dopo essendogli la sortita del tenore, che comincia il p(ri)mo tempo in minore, e dopo quattro battute esce in maggiore, infine l’istesso andamento della cavatina del *Pirata*, e sino nella 2da quartina, le parole dicono *Nell’orror di mie sciagure* ec. ec.; ciò ha cominciato a mal disporre il pubblico nel sentire il cane di Vinter ¹⁰ricordare il gran Rubini; dopo poi la cavatine della donna, preceduta da un coro e Ballabile, il quale è stato fischiato, non potendo soffrire degl’intermezzi di ballo che pei Milanesi è un’interrompergli il piacere di gustare l’azione di seguito; dopo la cavatina che la Lalande ha detto benissimo ed è stata applaudita, viene il duetto tra Vinter e Lalande, e questo è nell’istessissima situazione del *Pirata*, sino v’è_ che riconoscendo il suo primo marito dice, invece di *E desso! egli stesso!* e questo’ultimo è strumentato *talis qualis* il mio; qui di più il pubblico fremé, e fini il duetto che è pessimissimo, con piccoli fischi, dopo segui la sortita dell’Ungher che fa il 2do marito; poi l’opera essendo intitolata i *Cavalieri di Valenza*, mi pare che sia l’istessa della *Moglie di due mariti*: dunque attacca il finale che è un tal porcheria inenarrabile con l’aggiunta che il Largo...è rubato dal quintetto di Meyerbeer nel *Crociato: O cielo clemente* e con l’istessa ripresa; ¹¹ quindi dopo il primo atto, che i suoi partigiani volcano applaudire, vi furono de’tremendi fischi; e dopo il ballo incominciò il 2do atto con un quartetto che i suoi soli applaudirono, e che l’anno trovato un miscuglio di tanti maestri e di nessun effetto; dopo. un coro di *bevitori* dell’istesso tempo ed andamento del *Pirata*, che viene intermezzato d’un coro di donne di dentro, simile a quello che succede nel terzetto della *Zoraide* di Rossini, ma poco fù applaudito; poi la scena dell’Ungher, ed infine quella della Lalande, che al solito dice bene assai, ma che `e d’un cattivissimo effetto, a la composizione tutta minore, è un *requiem*; alla fine s’è chiuso lo spettacolo con una battaglia navale, dopo la quale s’applaudi, e sortirono i cantanti ed il maestro”.

Many of these criticisms will be addressed below.

In the days that followed this - in fact - well-received, staged and sung *I cavalieri di Valenza* of Pacini a lively debate erupted - most notably in the Journal 'I Teatri' quoted above but also in the 'Giornale Teatrale' di Milano and the 'Gazzetta Milanese.' Several of these articles echoed Bellini. In response, Pacini launched a species of volley-and-smash-return of letters to what he clearly understood to be an orchestrated campaign against his opera. A series of rejoinders notable for his unique mixture of provocation and relish for self-advertisement. The exchange was not so much heated as rude, with in-jokes and libels to the taste of the protagonists of the musico-literary scene. Pacini certainly understood that much of this press comment came from his *catanese* rival and his supporters, hence his remark:

¹⁰ Berardo Calvari Winter

¹¹ In this context it is not unreasonable to point out that the *stretta* of the parallel Finale primo of *Il pirata* was - many years later - claimed to have been composed, or at least inspired by Carlo Conti, an assertion hotly refuted by Florimo. Cfr Francesco Florimo *Bellini. Memorie e lettere* (Firenze, Barbera 1882), 112-118

“...e quasi certo che tutte le critiche fattemi ai Cavalieri di Valenza vi sono state suggerite da maestri, che non hanno per anco dato saggio del loro sapere...”

adding, for the special benefit of his antagonist:

“Vi prego in oltre far noto a questi miei amatissimi signori colleghi, che il loro dire ha tanto potere sopra di me, quanto ne ha l’abbaiare del cane alla luna.”¹²

As a preliminary statement one can say that the plot of *I cavalieri di Valenza* has reminiscences of *Il pirata*, that the music is occasionally similar, but never the same. It is a quite different opera. But, and it is a big but, it was designed to torment Bellini, as well as to amuse its author and divert his own friends. Pacini was a talented and resourceful composer who asked different things both of his art and his audience. He was never a foolish person, there was always a reason for his behaviour: Bellini claimed to shed blood to write his operas, Pacini chose to shed the blood of others.

Vituperation apart, the nucleus of this press polemic is a fundamental comment upon his view of Bellini: that he was an untutored and unfinished beginner, unable to compete over the full spectrum of musical possibilities that was available to the Italian maestro.

This view needs some amplification - but was probably shared by Rossini at this time and even many years later. Those composers like Rossini and Pacini - literally born on the stage and fully prepared to write operas in every genre, fully finished in a traditional sense in terms of preparation, experience, musical versatility, range and scope - were not especially impressed by Bellini’s romantic propensity to focus upon a single mood. They regarded it as a posture, or a limitation. Romani’s own ambiguous attitude to romanticism certainly found an echo - less ambiguous in their case - in composers of Pacini’s upbringing - who may well have regarded it as a betrayal. Even in the face of enthusiastic applause from audiences Pacini would have challenged the credentials of a young composer with such a voluntarily restricted emotional base. While perfectly aware, irritated even, that the general response to an opera like *Il pirata* would be that of Florimo: “nuovo(a) per melodia, forma, condotta ed effetto teatrale.” Pacini, who could praise the “multiforme” Donizetti, was distinctly underwhelmed.

In these letters he enlarged upon his themes, in a somewhat foolish ragbag of denials of the *plagio e furto* claimed to have been found, in the “Giornale Teatrale”. On the face of it is surprising that no direct parody of Bellini was ever really quite imputed in these exchanges, merely of resemblances to the music of earlier composers. And these too may have had their impetus, as Pacini suspected, in the accusations of Bellini in his letter to Florimo as quoted above. A direct attack upon Pacini in the press by Bellini in person may well have been deemed imprudent. There was nothing unusual in plagiaristic slights of this kind, disquisitions about borrowings from earlier composers were perfectly traditional both in Italy and France and were nothing more-or-less than critical aerobics not too be indulged-in too strenuously. If Pacini responded to them, it was only to keep the controversy

¹² Letter of 15 June 1828 [in] Vincenzo Bellini, *Epistolario*, a cura di Lusia Cambi (Milano Mondadori 1943) 126

going.

A direct, if extremely summary, comparison of the two scores is as follows:

IL PIRATA

SINFONIA D Major 3/4 FF
allegro con fuoco
andante maestoso
allegro agitato D minor
Atto Io

INTRODUZIONE opens with a view of the sea, a storm, with Goffredo (basso) 'solitario' ex-tutor of Gualtiero - and coro invoking peace from heaven

GUALTIERO (tenor) disembarks, after a ten-year 'exile', beginning his recitative:
'Io vivo ancor! A me nemici io trovo'
SCENA E CAVATINA G minor/B flat minor *allegro moderato* 3/4

'Nel furor delle tempeste' whose initial quatrain concludes with the cadence
'Si presenta al mio pensier'
This is succeeded by a tempo di mezzo, con coro, with Goffredo leading to a

CABALETTA
'Per te di vane lagrime'

Sc.IV

IMOGENE [Henriette Méric-Lalande]
CAVATINA andante E Flat Major
Cabaletta *moderato* [elegiac]
'Tu sarai del mio dolor'

I CAVALIERI DI VALENZA

PRELUDIO D Major 3/4 FF
maestoso [with a rhythmic profile similar to the Bellini SINFONIA]
andante

Atto Io

INTRODUZIONE opens with a view of the sea, a calm sea, with Giuliano (basso) 'solitario' brother of Gusmano - invoking peace from heaven

GUSMANO (tenor) disembarks, after a seven-year 'exile', beginning his recitative:
'Ti premo - sì, ti riconosco, o terra'
SCENA E CAVATINA F minor
allegro agitato 9/8

'Nell'orror di mie sciagure' whose initial quatrain concludes with the cadence
'Qui volava al mio pensier'
(joyously reiterating this phrase, several times over, as if to make the point clear)
This is succeeded by a tempo di mezzo, con coro, with Giuliano leading to a STRETTA Gusmano/Giuliano
'Da tant anni ch'io non sento'
(emulating some of Bellini's *fiortiture*, his syncopations, inverting his figuration etc)
[Sc. IV is a ballabile in this opera, an inevitable Pacinian feature]
ISABELLA [Henriette Méric-Lalande]
CAVATINA *allegro con brio* A Major
Cabaletta maestoso **'Rimorso barbaro - mi strazia il cor'**

Sc.V

Gualtiero: ‘**Cielo! é dessa!**’

Sc.VI

Imogene: ‘**È desso, è desso!**’

DUETTO Imogene/Gualtiero
allegro C Major 4/4
andante sostenuto E Flat Major 2/4
[‘È figlio mio...Pietà!’]

allegro moderato C Major 4/4

Sc.VII

CORO DI GUERRIERI
moderato F Major 4/4 [FF]
‘**Più temuto, più splendido nome**’

ERNESTO (basso)
CAVATINA *andante molto sostenuto*
F Major 2/4 [florid intro]
‘**Ma che vostra è la mia gloria**’
(Coro) *allegro*
allegro marziale
[full reprise con forza]

RECIT C Major 4/4

Sc.VIII

BRIEF DUETTO Ernesto/Imogene

Sc.IX

FINALE
QUINTETTO
Gualtiero/Imogene/Ernesto/
Italbo e Goffredo/Adele e Dame
largo agitato A minor 4/4

Sc.V

Gusmano: ‘**E dessa**
Perfida! - e sola!’

Isabella: ‘**È stesso! – l’ombra!**’

DUETTO Isabella/Gusmano
allegro F Major 4/4 [same melodic
contour] *andante* F minor 2/4
[‘È il nostro figlio!...’]

allegro F Major 4/4

Sc.VII

CORO DI CAVALIERI
allegro C Major 4/4 [F]
‘**Il gran Cid, il terrore de’Mori**’
[Pacini uses the same phrasing, the same
syllabic pointing of the words as Bellini]

RAMIRO (mezzo-soprano)
CAVATINA cantabile
A Flat Major 4/4 [florid intro]
‘**Nobil premio lusinghiero**’
(Coro) *allegro vivace*
Cabaletta *con espressione*
‘**Ah, qual piacer confondere**’
[Pacini’s aria generally tracks the shape
of Bellini’s aria, however, his structure is
far less bold and is divided predictably
into a traditional cantabile and cabaletta]

RECIT C Major 4/4

BRIEF DUETTO Ramiro/Isabella
[mood totally the reverse of that of
Bellini]

Sc.VIII

(Gusmano attacks Ramiro with a dagger)

Sc.IX

FINALE
QUINTETTO
Isabella/Ramiro/Gusmano/
Giuliano/Alfonso, Elvira e Coro
andante sostenuto E Major 3/4

[Bellini claims that this '*largo*' is stolen from Meyerbeer's quintet in *Il crociato in Egitto* 'O ciel (o) clemente' and indeed it has the same key, triple time and a similar melodic contour - even the same repetitions of 'oh ciel' - but the resemblance is generic, rather than specific]

STRETTA tutti
allegro molto agitato B Flat Major 4/4

STRETTA tutti
allegro giusto G Major/E Major 4/4
[with Isabella's *preghiera* appearing and disappearing like a mirage in all this tumult]

For the first time, in this *concertato*, Pacini emerges with his own idiosyncratic invention, music full of atmosphere and well sustained. It shows this composer at his most ingenious and inventive - in this instance, distinctly unlike Bellini whose stretta is rather conventional.

Atto 2o

Atto 2o

INTRODUZIONE
Coro *allegro moderato* C Major 6/8

INTRODUZIONE
No coro but opens with a recitative, leading to an orchestral prelude followed by a quartet

ScIII

ScIII

SCENA E DUETTO Ernesto/Imogene
allegro /allegro moderato C Major/A Major 4/4
'Tu m'apristi in cor ferito'

QUARTETTO
Isabella/Ramiro/Gusmano/Giuliano
andante/allegro/larghetto
espressivo/allegro vivace in a long series of minor keys but concluding in F Major. In terms of plot it represents the same kind of 'show-down' which emerges in Sc VII of Bellini's opera. 'Se mi vuoi supplice' followed by the STRETTA '**Trionfo crudele**' reaching a climax with an *allegro con moto* of extravagant scale passages for the two donne and a hectic coda.

larghetto F Major 6/8 (unisone)
TEMPO DI MEZZO *allegro moderato*
C Major

STRETTA *allegro assai*
A Major 4/4

ScVI/VII

DUETTO Imogene/Gualtiero
allegro moderato C Major 4/4
‘Vieni: cerchiam pe’ mari’
duetto which becomes a trio with the
arrival of Ernesto
Q in Sc VIII, centred upon a
TERZETTO **‘Cedo al destin orribile’**
andante sostenuto D Major 6/8
STRETTA **‘Me ferite, me soltanto...’**
allegro più mosso C Major 4/4

ScVIII

MARCIA LUGUBRE C Major 4/4

Sc IX

SCENA ED ARIA Gualtiero
largo maestoso C Major 4/4
‘Tu vedrai la sventurata’
(trumpets are heard from Council
Chamber)

ScX

GRAN SCENA Imogene
(delirante)
andante maestoso F Major 4/4
cantabile , andantino
andante sostenuto F Major 4/4
allegro giusto, con forza F Major 4/4

ScVI

RECITATIVO E CORO Fernandez
allegro grazioso G Major 6/8
cheerful and syncopated soldier’s
drinking chorus, interrupted by a lilting
orchestral prelude [*andante sostenuto* Sc
VII] before a *coro di donne*.

ScVIII/ScIX

SCENA ED ARIA Ramiro
Introduced by long prelude with
woodwind obbligato *largo giusto*
C Major/*cantabile grazioso* E Major 3/8
‘Sorgerà il sol’
elaborate vocalism with a TEMPO DI
MEZZO C Major 4/4 of trumpet calls
and chorus, followed by a violently
energetic CABALETTA underpinned by
a rapid ostinato **‘Alla voce di vendetta’**

ScXI

CORO DEL FINALE 2o
maestoso E flat Major 2/4
‘Addio, bel Sol di Lara’ (donne)

Scena ultima

RECITATIVE Cavalieri/Gualtieri/Pirati
(Caval.) 'La tua sentenza udisti'
(voci lontani) 'Viva Gualtier!'
(Gualtierio ai Pirati) '**Scostatevi,
L'impone il vostro Duce,
Una abborita luce
Fuggo cosi'**
(*si precipita dal ponte*)

Scena ultima

SCENA ED ARIA Isabella
(fuori di se)
allegro agitato B flat Major 4/4
'**Partir!...Lasciarli!...Oh affanno'**
'**Ah!, che squarciarsi l'anima'**
andante affetuoso E minor 3/4 *dolce*
'Ah! meco i figli' aria and extremely
unconventional cabaletta which returns
to the original text and key in a series of
fluctuating moods and minor and major
modulations.
'**Attendi. Non tua...non sua...Ciel'**
(*cava rapidamente un pugnale, alza gli
occhi al cielo, si ferisce, e cade nel
mare*)

[This leads, after a brief pause, to a renewed outbreak of hostilities [DMajor] on the part of both husbands, cannon shots and a violent sea-battle which brings down the curtain with the maximum cacophony]

1. Textual and scenic parallels between the two operas

The willingness of Giovanni Pacini to take part in the discomfiture of a famous poet on an earlier occasion is amply documented. In 1817, together with Angelo Anelli, he staged three ribald *farse* at the Teatro Re in Milan with the unconcealed intention of poking fun at Vincenzo Monti.¹³ That in his *I cavalieri di Valenza* he had the eager collusion of Gaetano Rossi, not only in tormenting Bellini but also in aping the poem of *Il pirata* by Felice Romani, is indisputable. The issue was not simply one of two rival maestri but also of two

¹³ *Dalla beffa il disinganno* (2 January 1817); *Il matrimonio per procura* (11 January 1817); and *Il carnevale di Milano* (23 February 1817), each one with a pseudonymous poet "Gaspare Scopabirbe", "Giordano Scannamuse" and "Paolo Lattanzio", were staged one after the other at the Teatro Re with the intention of parodying the pretensions of Monti and his "Egeria" (as Anelli insisted) Madame de Staël, often very rudely. As each opera was banned in turn by the police, another took its place. The joke being that Pacini had set each of these texts to (more or less) the same music!

antagonistic poets, there was no love lost between Felice Romani and Gaetano Rossi.¹⁴ Rossi supplied verses and an argument which not only replicated the earlier opera but exaggerated and enhanced it almost to frank derision. Every character in *Il pirata* has its counterpart in Pacini's opera with a similar name and role; the sequence of events is the same in both operas - sometimes echoing but also sometimes openly contradicting Romani's *sceneggiature* [a stormy sea becomes a calm sea; a chorus of dismay becomes a chorus of joy] more often, however, up-rating them or redoubling them so that the prima donna has two husbands; a duetto is confronted by a *quartetto* in exactly the same place, mimicking painstakingly the emotions or intentions of the earlier plot so that arie are twice as long and expanded to laughable proportions.

There is a very considerable amount of deliberate verbal sophistry as Bellini complained. This feature in fact is more extensive than his letter (above) conveys, Pacini often applies himself to underlining the textual parallels with joyful repetitions and reprises. The matching of '*Nel furor delle tempeste*' with '*Nell'orror di mie sciagure*' is only - as Pacini obviously intends his antagonist to understand - a beginning. In the same cavatina he echoes Bellini's '*Si presenta al mio pensier*' with '*Qui volava il mio pensier*' at precisely the same juncture in the strophe, mimics his terminal '*consigliar*' with '*lusinghier*'; and later, in subsequent cantabile statements, redoubles Gualtiero's '*Ma l'orror de'miei pensieri*' with a whole series of verbal puns ('*Nel tenebre del cor*' becomes '*Già s'abbandona il cor*' and '*Da Imogene e dall'amor*' becomes '*Fra i palpiti d'amor*'). The comedy contributed by Rossi is sometimes overt, but more often sly or playful. It witnesses Pacini's lifelong relish for jokes. There is, in fact - behind the obvious imitation implicit in the confrontation of the two texts - real evidence of a delight in self-mockery, of mock-tragedy on the composer's part at being obliged to be compared with the triumphantly received but unworthy Bellini, the '*Nell'orror di mie sciagure*' being in fact a scarcely disguised reference to his feigned dismay intended to amuse his intimates. That Bellini was completely devoid of any sense of humour certainly added to the entertainment.

Pacini's general intention, however, was not merely parodistic, he intended no doubt to demonstrate his ability to write an opera with the same kind of plot that was not self-indulgently gloomy, not monothematic in musical terms, not manifestly introverted, not eternally elegiac as certainly he judged Bellini's music to be - but wide-ranging and extrovertedly dramatic in the tradition of Rossini's and Meyerbeer's serious offerings to the stage. That he succeeded with *I cavalieri di Valenza* is dubious, despite the energy and invention he conferred upon it, but in the short term, whatever the protests and exaggerations of Bellini and his unscrupulous partisans, entertainment carried the day.

¹⁴ They had earlier fought over Giacomo Meyerbeer, the richest trophy on offer to Italian librettists, a tussle in which Rossi had triumphed (with *Il crociato in Egitto* of 1824). Romani, an acrimonious loser, especially where his pocket was concerned, had been carrying on a war of attrition ever since.

2. Musical parallels between the two operas

Simple emulation is marked from the start of *I cavalieri di Valenza*. The *Preludio* - though shorter than the *Sinfonia* of *Il pirata* - has the same key and tempo as well as a similar rhythmic profile without actually following the same programme of development. In total contrast, Pacini's *Introduzione* - the epigone of that of *Pirata* - is exaggeratedly calm and placid, overtly devotional, in direct contrast with Bellini's tempest and agonised choral commentary. Pacini's soldiers and fishermen - it is true - also contemplate the imminent arrival of the vessel approaching the shore but reflectively rather than fearfully. In place of Bellini's vivid interchange between the Solitario and his alarmed companions *I cavalieri di Valenza* opens with a *preghiera* - a melodically impressive two-strophe aria for Giuliano, endorsed by a bipartite quasi-canonic chorus with the *pertichini* of a group of Gusmano's henchmen hoping for his arrival.

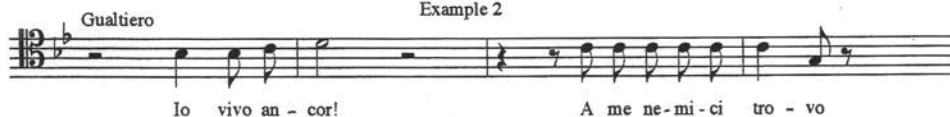
From the entry of the tenor, however, there are striking parallels. The recitatives here (Examples 1 & 2]

Example 1



Musical notation for Example 1, featuring Gusmano's recitative. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/8 time signature. The lyrics are: Ti pre - mo si, ti ri - con - osco, o ter - ra

Example 2



Musical notation for Example 2, featuring Gualtiero's recitative. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/8 time signature. The lyrics are: Io vivo an - cor! A me ne - mi - ci tro - vo

flaunt an identical note-pattern from the start - clearly intended to be deliberately provocative.

Even more provocative, however, especially in view the text supplied by Gaetano Rossi, are the twin *scene e cavatine* of Gualtiero and Gusmano: that of Gusmano [Example 3] is instantly recognisable as a florid elaboration of that of Gualtiero [Example 4].

Both *cavatine*, at the outset at least, in minor keys - just as Bellini complains - both in triple time, but Gusmano's entrata is more elaborate, indulging in syncopations, a brisker pace, and underpinning the flagrantly imitative text, for added emphasis, with a kind of mocking codicil

Gusmano Example 3

Nell' orr or di mie scia gu - re di mie scia gu - re

gu - re

Gualtiero Example 4

Nel fu - ror del - le tem - pe - ste, nel - le stra - gi del pi - ra ta

ta

Any satisfaction Pacini may have derived from such willful tormenting was limited, however as far as audiences were concerned, the emulation was not well-timed. As his victim was quick to point-out, the routine tenor “Vinter” [Berardo Calvari Winter] was no equal to Rubini¹⁵ and much of this wicked emulation passed without comment except by Pacini’s supporters. To this extent at least, the parody was confined to himself and his unhappy rival. But Bellini - like the musical press - found something to praise in the music Pacini composed for Henriette Méric-Lalande - the hyper-emotional French soprano who created the roles both of Imogene and Isabella. Paradoxically, in view of the possibilities this offered for mimicry Pacini exhibited considerable restraint, but it may have been simply because this particular prima donna would have refused to sing anything that might have made her a figure of fun.¹⁶ Imogene had been one of her most striking creations. For this reason - if for no other - a greater discretion was mandatory in her music than in other places in the score.

¹⁵ Though 'I Teatri' praises his “*bella robustissima voce*” (review of 14 June 1828). Rubini’s high tenor has always been published in a downwards-transposition to avoid discouraging later rivals

¹⁶ Henriette Méric-Lalande (1798-1867) had a famously agile larynx but in character was rigid and sanctimonious, to such an extent that she would later indignantly refuse to sing a “*Saffo*” proposed for *Mercadante* on the grounds of its “immorality”. As a “*grand’agitata*” at once delicate and trembling with emotion, her assumption of the role of Imogene had been sensational - a factor Pacini certainly attempted to equal. She remained Bellini’s favourite soprano until the shipwreck of his *Zaira* some two years later which débâcle he may well have attributed to her inflexibility; she was promptly replaced in his good books by the more compliant Giuditta Pasta.

Indeed, Isabella's music in *I cavalieri di Valenza* is distinguished. Pacini's high-spirits and ebullience were not in themselves "romantic" and his music has not the characteristic ethereal flair of Bellini but he was far-from deficient in sensitivity, nor, of course, of outstanding fluency in writing for the voice. The *cavatine* for Imogene and Isabella thus are highly contrasting, that for Isabella is less challenging in structure, making little or no attempt to repeat the prolonged expressive anguish of Bellini's heroine, but it is very effective and memorable music. Pacini borrows a heavily rhythmic tempo from the preceding *ballabile* ("I Teatri" describes it as a *fandango*) to colour both the recitative and the aria itself, thus supplying an Iberian *tinta* which is far from conventional. This *fandango* rhythm¹⁷ irradiates both the recitative and much of the music surrounding it with a consequent injection of local colour which is both unexpected and piquant. The *cabalette* of both maestri are diverse [Examples 5 and 6]

Isabella Example 5

Imogene Example 6

that of Isabella vivid and arresting, shapely but less evocative, and far more obviously angled at audience participation than that of Bellini's movingly empathic heroine.

Isabella's duet with Gusmano does not in any way rival that of Imogene and Gualtiero, though well-paced and passingly striking, the parodistic factors are more outrageously verbal than musical just as the dramatic situation is completely the

¹⁷ Pacini's *ballabile* consisted originally of three *divertissements* of which the *fandango* was the centerpiece, in the course of the long run, however, the dances were cut as the audience (predictably) was impatient to hear the singers. As a compromise the *fandango* - extracted from the ballet and somewhat abbreviated - was used instead as a species of orchestral "*tempo di mezzo*" between Isabella's *cavatina* and the ensuing duet. This considerably reduced the effectiveness of the *cavatina* and did very little in fact for the duet at the same time.

reverse. Pacini's teasing references are touched-in rather than underpinned by any actual borrowing.

The cori in Sc.7 of both operas have a syllabic pointing in common and very similar phrasing [Examples 7 & 8]

Example 7

Coro di uomini

Example 8

Coro di Guerrieri

but both owe as much to the choral conventions of the day as to any spirit of imitation. Pacini's chorus is more lilting and slightly less pompous, the principal difference being one of colouring – Pacini's music being less claustrophobic in accordance with his evident desire to admit light-and-shade to his score as an antidote to the persistently shadowy tints of *Il pirata*.

In the same way precisely, Ramiro's *cavatina* which follows, has a totally dissimilar nature to that of Ernesto in the same position in the Bellini score. Writing for Carolina Ungher-Sabatier - a mezzo-soprano with a fine reputation for brilliant vocalism, Pacini leaves nothing to chance where his audience is concerned. Where Bellini opts for an uncomplicated aria in bipartite form for Ernesto, Imogene's unwanted husband - both blustering and forceful, Pacini supplies an elegant vocal line for Ramiro – Isabella's contrastedly beloved husband, supple and infectious and with syncopated melismate designed to attract attention to a highly accomplished star singer. Indeed, in accordance with the professional mores of his generation he draws more attention to her gifts than to the character she is portraying. The "macho" guise of the *musicò* was becoming limp in these years, Pacini makes no attempt to inject realism into her role, instead he supplies a patently-frivolous pretence of virility, but no contemporary in Italy would (yet) have protested at the employment of such a voice in the role of a warlike husband, Pacini - whose resistance to the romantic novelty so clearly apparent in *Il pirata* - may well have purposefully opted for a *prima donna musicò* as Isabella's preferred spouse if only to stress the traditional strengths of Italian stage conventions he felt

to be under siege. [Example 9]

Example 9

Ramiro

Ah qu al pia cer con fon de re An i me ba ci
ard ore!

In his letter to Florimo (above) Bellini makes much of the slow centre-section (*largo*) of the *finale primo* of *I cavalieri di Valenza* claiming that it is derived from Armando's *preghiera* 'O Cielo clemente' of *Il crociato in Egitto* (also with a libretto by Gaetano Rossi).¹⁸ The opening melodic phrase bears out his statement [Examples 10 and 11]

example 10

Meyerbeer
Armando

allegretto moderato

O Cie lo cle men te

Example 11

Isabella

andante sostenuto

Com è ter ri bile la mia scia gur a

and indeed Pacini submitted to the influence of this opera by Meyerbeer here and elsewhere, but the development of the ensemble is completely dissimilar and his vocal line more generic than actually "*rubato*" in spite of the same key and a similar tempo. The pacing too is quite different. In all justice, the *finale primo* of Pacini's opera is a very fine example of the celebrated operatic *concertato* at its very best, and is full of invention. Even more to the point, for the first time in this opera it reveals a Pacini free from looking over his shoulder at Bellini or anyone else As his unhappy antagonist was obliged to concede, its reception was a "*volcano*".

From this moment in the opera, indeed, the joke shows signs of wearing thin. From the beginning of the second act *I cavalieri di Valenza* develops perfectly organically, the plot and music become more expansive, more vivid - as epitomised by the quartet which stands at the outset, while that of *Il pirata* - though certainly more indelible and concentrated - is more predictably linear to the very end. Bellini's plot is established at the start, nothing abates either its power or its tragic course, its music maintains its despairing inevitability throughout. In *I cavalieri di*

¹⁸ 'I Teatri' (14 June 1828) in fact, had also claimed to find "*reminiscences*" from Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* and *l'assedio di Corinto*; disputed the "*abuse of minor keys*", "*too much brass*" and "*too much repetition of the words tomba, ombre, morte*" etc., in the libretto. It also claimed that these resulted in the finale primo being heard in silence. This is contradicted elsewhere, most notably by Bellini.

Valenza there is considerable evolution, little by little Pacini's vaunted fantasy and high-spirits take over, parody becomes no longer pressing it would seem, Act II is comparatively free from provocation. Whatever mimetic teasing the older composer favoured earlier is now put aside in the interests of the bringing his opera to a musico-dramatic climax as violent as any in the decade to come. The music is brighter and more varied. Where Bellini concentrates attention fairly evenly on all three of his protagonists, Pacini focuses on his ill-treated heroine, marginalising both her husbands (they have the final combat in compensation). Though there is much ensemble singing in both operas Pacini has only one clearly-defined vocal divinity in his and Isabella gradually takes over the drama; she is far-less spineless than Imogene, true to form Pacini seems determined that his heroine shall experience as many emotions as possible - not simply to show off his musical versatility but to make a point à propos the much-praised limitations of his younger rival. The very brilliant *ensemble* of Atto II Sc.5 of *I cavalieri di Valenza* is a tour-de-force, arising between the swift exchanges of Ramiro, Gusmano, Isabella and Giuliano, underpinned by *ostinati* and enharmonic surprises, it reaches a vocal plateau in a very poised quartet - both violent and *sotto voce* - led by Isabella's 'Se mi vuoi supplice' [Example 12]

Example 12

Isabella [a 4]

Se mi vuoi supplice Sono a' tuoi piedi

followed by a tempo-di-mezzo of threats culminating in a stretta 'Trionfo crudele' with the kind of exultant melodic expansion in which Pacini excelled. A concertato of this kind has no parallel in Bellini's opera. Its compacted violence is in vivid contrast with the regret and remorse of *Il pirata*. And it is a portent, a preparation for further expansiveness. In general this music has a position closer to Donizetti than to Bellini, but more importantly in respect of his attitude to Bellini's opera, nearer to the Meyerbeer and Auber's highly-influential and brand-new *La Muette de Portici*¹⁹ (Pacini, as witnessed by his plot, had always an eye on Paris²⁰) There is a formidable hint of Gallic declamation in the recitatives of Ramiro as well as in the many ensembles in Act II whose string of

¹⁹ The première of *La Muette de Portici* - whose designer Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri had made a special journey to La Scala to study the mechanics of the volcanic eruption in Pacini's *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* in August 1827 - had taken place at the Opéra on 29 February 1828. During his visit Pacini took the opportunity to examine the projected *mise-en-scène* and portions of Auber's score

²⁰ Rossi derived his plot for *I cavalieri di Valenza* from the play by René-Charles-Guilbert de Pixérécourt 'La Femme à deux maris' (Paris 1801). There was no secret about this whatever the innuendos of Bellini in his letter, the information was freely available

four-square stereophonic *pièces-de-circonstance* owe their impact more to French taste than to Italian precedent.

There is no special correlation between the two operas from this point onwards. *I cavalieri di Valenza* contains two immense cori - one purely *maschile*, the other with contrasting sections for *donzelle* and *soldati* - this part of the score does include an aria for Ramiro which occupies more or less the same position of that of Gualtiero's '*Tu vedrai la sventurata*', and both feature trumpet calls, but that of Ramiro, '*Sorgerà il sol*' with its energetic cabaletta '*Alla voce di vendetta*', is as extrovert as that of Bellini is introvert. There are further cori too, including a spectacular choral introduction to the dénouement: '*Addio. bel Sol di Lara*' which takes place before the immense culminating panorama depicting the Gulf of Valencia.

Isabella, predictably, has a *scena ultima* of extraordinary length and virtuosity (it was cut even before the prima) which could be said to rival that of Imogene. It too is completely despairing, she too is '*fuori di sé*', and she too leads her child (*children*, in this instance, by both husbands) by the hand. She sings an imposing aria finale {Example 13}

Example 13

Isabella allegro agitato

Ah! che squar.ciar_si l'_____anima In mil_____le par_____ti io sen_____to

which unfolds in an arching melody with an *andante affetuoso* centre-section '*Ah! meco i figli*' of benediction for her offspring and terminates with a cabaletta of utter desolation: '*Del mio destino compiasi/Tutto l'orrore adesso/Ah! che lasciarli e vivere/possibile non è*' after which she confronts both her warring husbands from the deck of the ship which is to take her into exile and safety: she cries '*Non tua...non sua...Ciel*', looks heavenwards, and stabs herself falling into the sea.

The stage is left for battle to begin in earnest and the opera ends in the uproar of canons from the sea and shore which wreak destruction as the curtain falls.



I cavalieri di Valenza, scena ultima (A Sanquirico)

3. The confrontation of two maestri

Direct confrontation between two maestri was rare indeed in the nineteenth century. A certain realism pervaded a world where plots, libretti, poets, even musical motifs were common ground. Discretion - both public and private - was the order of the day. Where Pacini and Bellini were concerned however, as Luisa Cambi²¹ has pointed-out, a press confrontation arose almost from the start, encouraging a heated rivalry to which fuel was added by many far-from disinterested commentators. There was a fairly simple explanation for this quite apart from the spice to be added to the theatrical scene by the open struggle of two popular composers. The Bellinian hallmark, elegaic extended cantabile, had been present in several Pacinian operas of recent date staged *before* those of Bellini,²² limpid melodies followed by irresistibly varied *cabalette*, and if they had been received less memorably than those of his younger contemporary, Pacini could take heart in the fact that his music was frequently interpolated into Bellini's operas

²¹ Cambi: *Bellini Epistolario*, op cit 110 n.3

²² In *Amazilia* (1825); *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* (1825), *Niobe* (1826), and *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* (1827) for example

- the reverse being almost never the case. There was far more common ground than usual between these two composers. Both were ever-present musically in the salons of the day, and each a current focus for fashionable commentary.

This notwithstanding, there was a special pre-conditioning. As is not infrequently the case with the pathologically insecure - however talented and praised - success with *Il pirata* made Bellini *less* - rather than *more* - certain of his status. Almost every letter he wrote for some eighteen months after its prima dwells on its reception, its fortune, its fame - to a degree that is not simply obsessional but has become a way of life. Bellini, who could be credited with the invention of the style and content of the mobile phone conversation some 150 years before its discovery also perseverates breathlessly on the sins of his detractors, real and imaginary. He carried this fixation - if the letters he sent to Florimo can be believed - into his contacts with singers and opera-house functionaries whose concerns were not less partisan. If his needs, as an artist, were the motor behind the exaggerations and wishful-thinking he parades in his letters, they invite both understanding and sympathy from an altruistic reader but his efforts to recruit a sympathetic ear from a whole gamut of disinterested listeners was certainly imprudent - not to say counter-productive to his cause. From the beginning of 1828 almost every letter that has survived is thickly peppered with "*Pirata*" and "*Pacini*", the most notable of these being that of 24 March²³ invoking Felice Romani who is accredited with repeating that Adelaide Tosi (Pacini's most recent primadonna) "*mi ha detto che Pacini spaconeggiava contro di me, fulminando minaccie*"; bringing in the notable Don Gaetano Melzi a close friend of Pacini²⁴ (and an improbable sympathiser with Bellini) together with Tamburini and Giovanni David (Pacini's longtime crony) to the last of whom he confided, it seems, his theory (his "*gran coglioneria*") that the poor reception of *Il pirata* in Vienna had been masterminded by Pacini's father! This perfectly unbalanced fantasy must have been reported back to Pacini cheerfully and with amusing embroidery. Can anyone be surprised that the latter chose to respond in his own idiosyncratic manner? *I cavalieri di Valenza* was composed precisely at this time. Bellini lost his head after *Il pirata* and it went missing for several months. In a much later letter he could write to Gaetano Cantù for instance vilifying Pacini ("*cotesto antigalantuomo di M^o Pacini*") while enclosing salutations to the contessa Giulia Samoyloff - the latter being Pacini's closest confidante, admirer, and ex-mistress as well as the dedicatee of *I cavalieri di Valenza*!

In the wake of *Il pirata* in fact, Bellini was deprived of all sense of proportion and did little to endear himself to anyone other than his band of aficionadi. Pacini in later life, as a result, and smiling, invariably refers to him as "*il divino Bellini*".²⁵

²³ Neri op cit Letter No.26, p57

²⁴ To Gaetano Melzi he addressed one of his most repellently hypocritical requests scarcely a fortnight later, asking that this latter: "*Farà le mie condoglianze col M^o Pacini per la perdita della sua povera moglie*". Letter of 9 April 1828. Neri op cit Letter No. 29, p62. Pacini's wife had died in childbirth a day or two earlier

²⁵ It deceived no one, nor was intended to. As is exemplified by a letter of 1830 from

The position rival camps adopted in the musical world gave rise to much enjoyable dissent. Pacini's public response to press comment - true to his flippant nature - was unhelpful, indeed it proposed red herrings galore. The truth of the confrontation lay elsewhere. It is clear, indeed, maybe tragically, that from the outset Pacini intended to entertain himself with echoes, ridiculous associations, puns, derision and so on, with a superficial dismissal that is nearer to jeering than to any kind of genuine musical dissent. Much of this can be summed-up as infantile. Rossini, who had known him since his adolescence is certainly the best authority on this Pacinian trait, his impish resort to the kind of schoolboy antics of which there is copious evidence throughout his life. There is a letter from Rossini to Pacini of 1864 that puts the situation in a nutshell:

*"Tu hai sempre la vena giovanile; che Iddio te la conservi per lunghi anni..."*²⁶

That his resort to parody is not wholly, or not totally, juvenile is also true. Though not himself incapable of writing a "one-mood" opera - and certainly not unaware of the power of such music - he never saw, apparently, any pressing need to submit himself to such minimalist experiments. Even the most pessimistic of his operas has light-relief of some kind both at this time and in the long decades after Bellini's death. Bloody and sanguinary adventures, set to music, are prefaced by a jaunty overture, boast incongruously sprightly *ballate* or *barcarolle*, and are punctuated by lavishly pictorial orchestral interludes (as well as by the inevitable "un-Italian" *ballabile* he persisted in including in so many of his operas despite whistles and worse from audiences). This is not due to any deficiency - to any inadequacy of temperament or weakness - a lacking in seriousness - the sheer range of the music he wrote in some forty years of composition readily dismisses such a dismissal - but to choice. Bellini's *Il pirata* can perhaps be said to have done more to concentrate his mind than any other opera of the day, it appears to have confirmed him in his taste for the widest possible human panorama in his scores, a taste reinforced by a sophisticated exposure to audiences and their discontents. His liking for spectacle had long-preceded the arrival of Bellini, he excelled in colourful stage confrontations, processions, vast *concertati* - it was a taste which French grand-opéra was to endorse, even to emulate and he in turn was to emulate and endorse - with an enthusiasm that was too early for his compatriots. The operatic sequence from *l'ultimo giorno di Pompei* to *Margherita regina d'Inghilterra* (1827) to *I cavalieri di Valenza* to *I crociati a Tolemaide* (1828) and to *Il talismano* (1829) - all immensely dramatic scores making huge production demands - marks a

Giuditta Grisi - a noted Imogene - who says of "*Paccini* (sic) ...*nemico a morte di Bellini*" advancing this as a reason why he might agree to supply a new "*Cavatina*" (sic) to interpolate into one of Bellini's scores. Cfr Andrea Sommariva *Documenti d'archivio* [in] Felice Romani: *Melodrammi-Poesie-Documenti* (Firenze Olschki 1996), 335

²⁶ *Le mie memorie artistiche* (Firenze 1875 Ed.) p255. Letter from Rossini to Pacini of 8 April 1864

visual and thematic expansion that was to find its real apogee in the Parisian operas of Donizetti and Verdi. All these operas are creations with the widest emotional distribution of which he was capable, all feature music that is moving, empathic, and coloured by an orchestration that is vivid and memorable. Pacini was to insist upon Sax's new brass instruments before almost any other Italian contemporary, it has scarcely ever been noticed that Pacini was an innovative orchestrator (except by inference in the malicious London review printed earlier). None of this was to increase his popularity in the face of the unique melodic intensity offered by Bellini, a comparison between *Il pirata* and *I cavalieri di Valenza* was to confer a worldliness and erratic extravagance upon Pacini which was not to his advantage. But in the end it would pay dividends - and not only in respect of his own music.

It would not be true, even so, to claim that Bellini was entirely indifferent to Pacini's challenge. Both *Zaira* and *Beatrice di Tenda* attempt, if not successfully, to grasp the melodramatic form as proposed by Pacini, and as for *I puritani*, under Parisian influence Bellini made huge efforts to extend his gamut of responses to the same broad emotional spectrum that had exercised Pacini so many years before.

And in the end, and in spite of the provocation Pacini deliberately mounted with his *I cavalieri di Valenza*, Bellini could repeat what he had said earlier about the same composer's highly regarded *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* when it was staged at La Scala ²⁷ some weeks after his *Pirata* and well before this whole unfortunate confrontation had ever been projected: "*ma...sebbene applaudito, non toccó nessuno al cuore, come non lo fá tutta la musica dell'opera ...*"

He was referring to *Il pirata*²⁸ of course, and having heard only the initial version of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie*, in this instance was telling nothing but the truth.

A postscript

The antipathy directed first towards Pacini, then towards Donizetti, is more than anything a sign of Bellini's awareness of their potential for overlapping that of his own. In the case of Donizetti, if aware of this antipathy, he gave no sign. Pacini proved otherwise and did not advance his career. Bellini captured the imagination of an emotion-besotted public with almost all his operas, Pacini only succeeded in securing his place in the operatic hierarchy after Bellini's death.

It is possible, however, not more, that Bellini acceded to Pacini's challenge in a way that put the ball in his own court. An important revival of *Il pirata* took place at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in the autumn of 1830 with a cast including Giovan Battista Rubini and his wife Adelaide Comelli-Rubini [Adèle Chaumel] in which the conclusion to the opera is boldly rearranged. After Imogene's *gran*

²⁷ 26 February 1828

²⁸ Letter to Florimo of 27 February 1828. Neri op cit Letter No.20, p52

scena (of Atto II ScVII) there is a brand new²⁹ *scena ultima* consisting of scenes VIII and IX of the original libretto, linking Gualtiero's aria "Tu vedrai la sventurata" with a truncated fragment of the valedictory flourish of the 1827 *prima* famously discarded during or after the opera's opening appearance.³⁰ This variant ends thus:

Gualtiero *Ma non fia sempre odiata*
 La mia memoria, io spero;
 Se fui spietato e fiero,
 Fui sventurato ancor.
 E parlerà la tomba
 De' lunghi miei tormenti,
 Del mio tradito amor.

(Gualtiero brandisce rapidamente uno stile che tiene indosso nascosto, e con quello si ferisce e cade estinto sul suolo).

Cavalieri *Ah! parlerà la tomba*
 De' tuoi misfatti ancor
Tutti *Che orror.*

Such a provocative amendment is vastly intriguing. Who authorised this histrionic conclusion? This "Ravenswood" finale avant-la-lettre? New music must have been required or old music adapted. Possibly it was supplied by Rubini himself who thus succeeded in regaining the honours of the final curtain lost after the *prima*. But could it have been Bellini? Did he amend his *Il pirata* to turn the tables on Pacini whose *coup-de-théâtre* it echoes, even parodies? At the same time anticipating the masterpiece of another of his "nemici" who would triumph after his death? In 1830 his fear of both was at a peak. No documents seem to have survived, so we shall never know.

²⁹ The words "brand new" need some qualification: at the S. Carlo in Naples on 30 May 1828 - shortly before the *prima* of Pacini's opera *I cavalieri di Valenza* - Rubini sang a very similar *scena ultima* to that described below, but without committing suicide by stabbing himself at the end. As the libretto (in the Museo Belliniano of Catania) readily confirms, he leaves the stage "*circondato dalle guardie*". This Bologna edition may not in fact have been the actual prototype of this more sensational Pacinian-style ending but it was certainly conceived after the *prima* of Pacini's opera. It had its advocates for many years it appears, being revived, as Pastura notes, at the T. Comunale di Catania as late as 1858. Mioli *op.cit* p.141 also records that Giovanni David at Rome in 1829 sang a *finale ultimo* where "*Gualtiero cade morto per arma da punta*". [A cynic would probably comment that Méric-Lalande had succeeded in hogging the opera at the *prima rappresentazione* and that as soon as she was out of the way the great tenors of the day insisted upon the restoration of their crown]

³⁰ Not in all revivals, it was sung at the Canobbiana in Milan in the summer of 1829 in a re-staging that included most of the original cast of 1827, and with Lalande as Imogene!