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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Tourist Gaze and Rossini's Operas about Others

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Abstract

This article reconsiders two of Rossini's exoticist farces, *L'italiana in Algeri* (1813) and *Il turco in Italia* (1814), in the light of recent theoretical studies in tourism. These operas appeared at the juncture between the eighteenth-century Grand Tour and nineteenth-century mass tourism, and they became implicated in multiple layers of tourist experience. Travellers from faraway countries went to see productions in Italy, yet the operas tell stories of journeys between Italy and the Ottoman Empire. These operas were an object of the tourist gaze even as they perpetuated that gaze through imaginary encounters with exotic others. In the article, I explain the role of Italian opera in tourism at the turn of the eighteenth century and suggest ways in which tourist theory might help us understand Stendhal's operatic encounters, which in turn form part of the documentary basis of my study. I conclude that Rossini and his librettists upended many of the established hierarchies of tourism in these works, offering a fascinating critique of the tourist gaze in the process.

Keywords: Rossini; Stendhal; Italian opera; Tourism; Exoticism

Opera serves many desires, but perhaps none so basic as the desire for experiences extravagantly different from workaday life. This yearning – and its connected appeals to novelty, fantasy and escape – was by no means restricted, in the time of Gioachino Rossini, to native-born Italians living on the opera circuit. The same longing for otherness, shared by thousands of well-to-do citizens across Britain and continental Europe, brought about the advent of mass tourism in the years after the fall of Napoleon. The object of tourist desire was more often than not Italy, a land that had already captivated generations of travel writers, novelists, poets and scholars. But the piece of Italian culture that was most immediately recognisable, most widely commercialised, was not Italy's literature, nor its classical architecture, nor its paintings and sculptures. It was Italian opera.

Italian opera has long been a world of travel and international exchange. 'Since the late seventeenth century most of the opera world [was] perpetually on the move', John Rosselli observes, 'with singers, composers, sometimes impresarios flitting from one town to another.'[1] Generations of opera scholars after Rosselli have fleshed out this insight, tracking the international travels of composers, divas, productions and hit numbers across Europe and beyond. Yet few scholars have pursued the implications of travelling audiences and their listening habits, nor has there been a serious attempt to consider

[1] John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario* (Cambridge, 1984), 135.

what the substantial and sophisticated literature on tourist theory might have to offer historical musicology in general and opera studies in particular.[2]

Many recent studies have, however, considered Rossini's operas and their stagings of transnational encounters. In one sense, opera has always courted the exotic because opera has always been about larger-than-life situations. 'Nearly all subjects for the libretti of serious opera lay outside everyday experience of composers, librettists and audiences', Mark Everist writes, and W. Anthony Sheppard agrees: 'The extraordinary has been standard fare for opera from the start.'[3] Exoticism is closely linked to opera's predilection for fantasy, and it is also closely entangled with the construction of self and other through theatre; these imagined others may serve as 'a blank screen for projecting Western concerns about itself', according to Ralph P. Locke.[4] These cultural projections entail a number of ethical and political problems, and much recent scholarship has drawn on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and later writings in order to work through these issues.[5] Sheppard defines the stakes succinctly: 'To what extent did opera participate in European imperialist projects? To what extent has opera served a didactic function in shaping its audience's understanding of various exotic cultures?'[6] One of the challenges in answering these questions of Rossini, of course, is that his operas have a rich and complex post-Napoleonic political context, as Warren Roberts and Mary Ann Smart have recently illuminated.[7] Another challenge is that it is not always clear how the cultural consumption of otherness interacts with more immediately tangible forms of oppression.[8]

Scholars of tourism have much to say about exactly these questions, but musicology has yet to incorporate their findings. Tourist theory and practice both connect with opera history in many ways. Tourism, like opera, involves the commercial articulation, staging and consumption of otherness; according to Dean MacCannell, 'tourism is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature, and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs'.[9] Furthermore, opera itself was one of the great tourist attractions in the age of Romantic travel. The memoirs of writers as diverse as William Beckford, Johann

[2] For two exceptions, see Michael Tilmouth, 'Music and British Travellers Abroad, 1600–1730', in *Source Materials and the Interpretation of Music: A Memorial Volume to Thurston Dart*, ed. Ian Bent (London, 1981), 357–82, and Ralph P. Locke, who has discussed the tourist activities of certain composers such as Camille Saint-Saëns; see Locke's article 'Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East', *19th-Century Music* 22/1 (1998), 28. Tourism is a relatively common topic in ethnomusicology, but studies are generally focused on present-day repertories and issues; the same is true of Chris Gibson's article on tourism in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2263281.

[3] Mark Everist, 'Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto*: *Mélodrame*, Opera, Orientalism', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8/3 (1996), 215–50, at 231; and W. Anthony Sheppard, 'Exoticism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford, 2014), 795–816, at 796. See also W. Anthony Sheppard's bibliography 'Exoticism' in *Oxford Bibliographies* (Oxford, 2016), https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199757824/obo-9780199757824-0123.xml.

[4] Ralph P. Locke, 'Constructing the Oriental "Other": Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/3 (1991), 261–302, at 285.

[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978); see also his *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), and *Music at the Limits* (London, 2008). Musicological work engaging with Said's postcolonial theory includes, among many others, Matthew Head, 'Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory', *Music Analysis* 22/1–2 (2003), 211–30; Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2009); and idem, *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart* (Cambridge, 2015).

[6] Sheppard, 'Exoticism', 795.

[7] See Warren Roberts, *Rossini and Post-Napoleonic Europe* (Rochester, 2015), and the first three chapters of Mary Ann Smart, *Waiting for Verdi: Italian Opera and Political Opinion, 1815–1848* (Oakland, 2018), 1–101.

[8] One critique along these lines comes from Jonathan Bellman, 'Musical Voyages and their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology', *The Musical Quarterly* 94/3 (2011), 417–38.

[9] Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (London, 1992), 1.

Wolfgang von Goethe and Stendhal all attest to the ubiquity of opera-going among eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travellers.[10]

The post-Napoleonic resurrection of a new tourist class from the ashes of the aristocratic Grand Tour accelerated the development of what John Urry calls the 'tourist gaze'. According to Urry, tourist gazes are 'constructed through difference', built in opposition to 'non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness'.[11] Tourists gaze because they anticipate 'intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered', and furthermore this anticipation is 'constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices ... which construct and reinforce that gaze'.[12] He describes the emergence of the modern tourist gaze as follows:

> Between 1600 and 1800 ... there was a visualisation of the travel experience, or the development of the 'gaze', aided and assisted by the growth of guidebooks which promoted new ways of seeing. The character of the tour itself shifted, from the earlier 'classical Grand Tour' based on the emotionally neutral observation and recording of galleries, museums, and high cultural artifacts, to the nineteenth-century 'romantic Grand Tour' which saw the emergence of 'scenic tourism' and a much more private and passionate experience of beauty and the sublime.[13]

Tourism, whether 'neutral observation' or 'private and passionate experience', does not occur in a vacuum, of course: operatic experience is about listening as well as looking, about hearing difference as well as seeing spectacle. The development of a tourist gaze – and what we might call a 'tourist ear' – required the creation of an international infrastructure to enable that gaze, that listening. This infrastructure packaged the exotic experience and taught travellers how to react, thereby creating a sense of comprehension, of cultural familiarity.

In this article, I reconsider two of Rossini's farces, *L'italiana in Algeri* (1813) and *Il turco in Italia* (1814), in the light of recent theoretical studies in tourism. These operas appeared at the juncture between the eighteenth-century Grand Tour and the dawn of nineteenth-century mass tourism, and they became implicated in multiple layers of tourist experience. Travellers from faraway countries went to see productions in Italy, yet the operas tell stories of journeys between Italy and the Ottoman Empire. These operas were at once an object of the tourist gaze even as they perpetuated that gaze through imaginary encounters with exotic others. In the article, I explain the role of Italian opera in tourism at the turn of the eighteenth century and suggest ways in which tourist theory might help us understand Stendhal's operatic encounters, which in turn form part of the documentary basis of my study. I conclude that Rossini and his librettists upended many of the

[10] William Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* [1783], ed. Robert J. Gemmett (Rutherford, NJ, 1969); Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italian Journey, 1786–1788*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (New York, 1962); and Stendhal [Marie-Henri Beyle], *Life of Rossini*, trans. Richard N. Coe (New York, 1957).

[11] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd edn (London, 2002), 1. I have chosen to rely on Urry's second edition because it is simpler and more focused than the most recent edition, John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London, 2011); the latter incorporates many of Larsen's ideas as well as responses to critiques published in the intervening decade. On the differences among the three editions, see Jonas Larsen, 'The Tourist Gaze 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism*, ed. Alan A. Lew, Michael C. Hall and Allan M. Williams (New York, 2014), 304–13; for one influential critique of Urry's original theses, see Dean MacCannell, 'Tourist Agency', *Tourist Studies* 1/1 (2001), 23–37.

[12] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 3.

[13] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 4.

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Operatic tourism to the Napoleonic era

The Italian peninsula was an essential destination for European travellers in the late eighteenth century. Britain had the most developed culture of tourism among Western societies at that time, commonly sending its wealthiest young men on a 'Grand Tour' through Italy, though many travellers also came from across continental Europe.[14] The Grand Tour was an opportunity to put the finishing touches to one's cultural education, taking in the architecture, paintings and sculptures of Italy while practising one's languages and mastering the graceful manners necessary for navigating foreign courts. 'A man who has not been in Italy', as Dr Johnson observed in 1776, 'is always conscious of an inferiority from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see.'[15] Many wished to winter in a healthier climate and wander the Arcadian landscapes; others busied themselves with the collection of antiquities, artworks, rare books and musical scores, which would lend an air of distinction to the family library back home.[16] On the other hand, gambling, heavy drinking and carousing were common, and there is considerable evidence that many tourists wandered Italy in search of sexual adventure, using the opportunities of travel to evade the supervision of their guardians and their home society.[17] (Indeed, the opera house was a key centre for all of these unsavoury activities.) But in the evenings, when the cathedrals and galleries had grown dim and the shops had closed, tourists went – together with upper-class Italians – to the opera.

It is difficult to overstate the centrality of opera to eighteenth-century tourism in Italy. According to Jeremy Black, the opera 'dominated the cultural consciousness of British tourists'; it was 'the leading glory of modern, as opposed to ancient, Italy'.[18] For the musically inclined, the opera could even be the most urgent tourist attraction. One British visitor, Robert Wharton, went to the opera directly on his arrival in Florence: 'I arrived about four in the afternoon. I immediately got myself Frized [i.e. did his hair] and went to the opera.'[19] Even those who disdained the opera could hardly keep away: 'I was frequently at the Opera but 'twas detestable in every respect', one J. H. Jacob complained from his writing-desk in Lucca.[20] For the British upper classes, operatic tourism in Italy was particularly crucial because London's musical elites were so thoroughly Italianised – a state of affairs that was freshly reinscribed with each new generation of tourists. The appeal of musical tourism reached beyond British travellers, of course, but the British Empire's gathering power in the eighteenth century enabled the wealth, mobility and diplomatic infrastructure necessary for widespread tourism.

[14] According to historian Jeremy Black, the eighteenth-century increase in tourism was a 'general European development' which involved numerous German, French, Russian and Polish travellers in addition to the British; see his article 'On the Grand Tour in 1771–1773', *Yale University Library Gazette* 66/1–2 (1991), 33–46.

[15] Cited in Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1992), 41.

[16] On the connections between the Grand Tour and collecting, see Jonathan Scott, *The Pleasures of Antiquity: British Collectors of Greece and Rome* (New Haven, 2003).

[17] See the chapter on 'Activities' in Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Haven, 2003), 118–41; and Ian Littlewood, *Sultry Climates: Travel & Sex* (London, 2001).

[18] Black, *The British Abroad*, 253; Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, 175.

[19] Letter of 27 October 1775 to his aunt, Mrs Jonathan Wharton, WHA.168/8. This letter, along with those cited in notes 20, 33 and 34, is part of the Wharton Papers collection at the Palace Green Library of Durham University; see Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections, Wharton Papers, GB-0033-WHA.

[20] Letter of 27 October 1781 to Robert Wharton, WHA.556.

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Despite opera's centrality in tourism, there were many who derided it as utterly trivial. In one of the most popular travelogues of the early nineteenth century, the Rev. John Chetwode Eustace suggested that opera-going was one of the marks of shallow tourists eager to dramatise their experiences:

> Many drive through the country with the rapidity of couriers, content themselves with a hasty inspection of what they term its *curiosities;* confine their conversation to the innkeepers and the *Ciceroni;* visit the Opera-house, perhaps intrigue with an actress; then return home, and write a Tour through Italy.[21]

Opera was an essential site for tourist pleasure and psychological escape, yet it was controversial both at home and abroad. More conservative British critics denounced Italian opera's flamboyance, its extraordinary expense and its reliance on castrati.[22] Opera was the glory of musical Italy, but some saw it as a sign of tourist decadence.

Goethe provides an important counterpoint to this British perspective. He embarked on his travels in Italy (1786–8) in search of a kind of Romantic epiphany, as suggested by his celebrated epigram 'We are all pilgrims, we who seek Italy.'[23] But despite the canonisation of his *Italienische Reise* among later tourists, Goethe's private feelings about Italy were deeply conflicted.[24] Two years after his return to Weimar, Goethe told a visitor: 'For a year one is submerged in sensuous enjoyment [in Italy], but eventually one feels that we need something more, and that spiritual enjoyment is not possible surrounded by *that* nation.'[25] Goethe's attitudes towards opera bear out this ambivalence:

> [In Rome] I again felt that I am too old for anything but truth. Rites, operas, processions, ballets, they all run off me like water off a duck's back. But an operation of Nature, like the sunset seen from the Villa Madama, or a work of art, like my revered Juno, leaves a deep and lasting impression.

And later in the same entry, he further scorns opera and its listeners:

[21] John Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour through Italy*, 2 vols. (London, 1813), II: 563; this book was reprinted in many editions over the next several decades. Eustace was one of the few British tourists to make a successful tour of Italy in the short window facilitated by the Treaty of Amiens (draft negotiated autumn 1801; treaty signed March 1802), which temporarily ceased hostilities between France and Britain.

[22] As one writer put it in a 1770 issue of the *London Museum*: 'Will not the soft transporting voice of our beauteous countrywomen captivate the soul, without raking amongst the nerveless sons of Italy for eunuchs! Shall all the advantages of a tour be centred in a catamite, a fiddler, and a voice! … Shall the highest of our highest nobles devote their time to private consorts and strum a guittar, instead of firing at the sound of a cannon!' Cited in Frederick C. Petty, *Italian Opera in London, 1760–1800* (Ann Arbor, 1980), 3–4. For more on Italian opera in London and its reception, see Theodore Fenner, *Opera in London: Views of the Press, 1785–1830* (Carbondale, IL, 1994); Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, vol. 1: *The King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1778–1791* (Oxford, 1995); and Thomas McGeary, 'Gendering Opera: Italian Opera as the Feminine Other in Britain, 1700–42', *Journal of Musicological Research* 14/1 (1994), 17–34.

[23] Cited and translated in Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1991), 655; it is important to note that the context of this epigram renders it far more ambiguous than is generally understood.

[24] For more on Goethe's influence and reception among later tourists and travel writers, see Karin Baumgartner, 'Travel, Tourism, and Cultural Identity in Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy* (1800) and Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (1816–17)', *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 83/3 (2014), 177–95; and idem, 'Packaging the Grand Tour: German Women Authors Write Italy, 1791–1874', *Women in German Yearbook* 31 (2015), 1–27.

[25] Cited and translated in Boyle, *Goethe*, 655; italics in Boyle. The visitor was the distinguished philologist Christian Gottlieb Heyne, who was about twenty years older than Goethe himself.

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> I am already beginning to shudder at the thought of the forthcoming theatre season. Next week seven theatres will open. Anfossi himself is here and will perform *Alexander in India*. *Cyrus* will also be given and a ballet, *The Conquest of Troy*. This would be something for the children.[26]

Goethe's apparent contempt for opera is more complex than it seems. First of all, it seems that Goethe went to the opera constantly while in Italy; his travel writing is peppered with references to his habit. Furthermore, his *Italienische Reise* was compiled years after the fact and published in 1816 and 1817, by which time he was quite a different man: he had directed the court theatre at Weimar for some years, published his second novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and completed the first part of *Faust*, his most celebrated literary achievement.[27] It is therefore an open question whether such an opinion as 'The operas are no entertainment for me, the inwardly and everlastingly true can alone give me joy' is representative of Goethe's feelings during his Italian tours, or whether it is the interleaved comment of a sixty-something grand man constructing his legacy.[28] Whatever the case may be, Goethe's correspondence clearly speaks to the ubiquity of opera-going among travellers despite its supposed triviality. For eighteenth-century tourists, opera was paradoxically both frivolous and absolutely essential.

The Napoleonic crisis: enter Rossini and Stendhal

The French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802) and Napoleon's subsequent invasion of Europe severely disrupted the transnational networks underpinning operatic tourism. Most of continental Europe remained in a state of war, rendering travel for pleasure utterly impractical. The flood of British tourists who would ordinarily have trekked across Italy instead turned their wanderlust inward from 1793 to 1814, becoming avid tourists of their own country.[29] Others retreated into Gothic fantasies of faraway places as their prospects for international travel were taken away; indeed, James Buzard suggests that the Gothic turn in British letters was closely connected to the sudden cessation of travel to Italy.[30]

The wars that halted tourist travel to Italy were vastly more traumatising to the patchwork of Italian states, of course: they suffered wholesale defeat and occupation by French powers. Italian culture was drawn increasingly towards the psychological distancing of theatrical spectacle, to less-threatening encounters with imaginary others. Emanuele Senici argues that, for Italians, modernity arrived alongside Napoleon's armies. Opera was a way of coping with this new militarised order. 'Theatricality became the defining feature of modern Italian society', he claims, 'and one of the clearest symptoms of its

[26] Letter of 6 January 1787, in Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italian Journey, 1786–1788*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (New York, 1962), 145.

[27] The account of Goethe's second stay in Rome, which is sometimes anthologised with the *Italienische Reise*, was not published until 1829.

[28] Letter dated 5 January 1788, in *Goethe's Travels in Italy: Together with His Second Residence in Rome and Fragments on Italy*, trans. Charles Nisbet (London, 1885), 470. W. H. Auden's translation omits this letter.

[29] Martin Anderson, 'Tourism and the Development of the Modern British Passport, 1814–1858', *Journal of British Studies* 49/2 (2010), 258–82, at 263; see also Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel, and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge, 1990).

[30] James Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After (1660–1840)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, 2002), 44–5.

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failure to work through the trauma of its encounter with modernity.'[31] This theatricality took on a particularly extravagant character in the explosive popularity of Rossini's operas, which were for Senici:

> a response to the psycho-cultural context in which these works were composed and first performed: a world that could no longer be fully known, in which human subjects had lost any sense of spatial and especially temporal dimensions, and felt stuck in the present. Rossini's dramaturgy, both comic and serious, was characterised by distance, objectification, and self-referentiality because meaning could not be found off the stage. Rather, the stage was the only site where the illusion of meaning could be entertained.[32]

Rossini's works were artificial by design, distancing Italian audiences from the traumas of current events by immersing them in theatrical displays of unprecedented power. Both British and Italian entertainment cultures confronted a crisis of distance: while some British audiences substituted Gothic fiction for travel to Italy, Italians found solace in psychologically distancing spectacles. In both cases, a lost Italy was mourned, a pre-modern Italy that rapidly receded from everyday experience and drifted into the realms of tourist fantasy.

The operatic substitution of fantasy for reality did not happen all at once, nor was Rossini unique in this regard. Tourist correspondence clearly supports Senici's psychoanalytical reading of operatic spectacle. As early as 1792 Thomas Brand juxtaposed the French menace with the pleasures of the opera house:

> The alarm of Rome about the French is prodigious. The princes are amassing what gold they can to run away – The church is afraid of plunder & indeed it has reason for the wealth of Rome in altars & treasuries of saints is beyond all belief … Here too [in Naples] we were not entirely without apprehension – but it is said that the storm is blown over … In the mean time all goes on as usual. We have a Burletta in the Teatro nuovo and a serious opera at St. Carlo. – Paesiello is the Composer – of course the music is delicious – The performers are but second-rate.[33]

And his next letter continued the theme:

> Since my last we have been in constant expectation of a Visit from French Frigates & *Philosophy* but the storm seems over … At present I believe it would be very rash in them to attempt an invasion – Batteries on Batteries are erected – Old frigates are converted into forts & a long row of Gun Boats will answer in proper language the insolence of their claims & pretensions … In the mean time we amuse ourselves as usual. We ride to Baiae, Puzzoli, & Cumae in the morning – We listen to Paesiello in the evening & we eat Roast beef & Potatoes and commit all sorts of (*sober*) Anglicisms in the intervals.[34]

[31] Emanuele Senici, *Music in the Present Tense: Rossini's Italian Operas in Their Time* (Chicago, 2019), 7. In these arguments, Senici draws extensively on the writings of nineteenth-century poet and philosopher Giacomo Leopardi.

[32] Senici, *Music in the Present Tense*, 7–8.

[33] Letter of 13 November 1792 to Robert Wharton, WHA.708.

[34] Letter of 1 December 1792 to Robert Wharton, WHA.709.

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When Rossini appeared on the scene, therefore, he fulfilled a familiar role left him by Paisiello – that of enabling escape through entertainment, of transporting audiences through song. For the last generation of Grand Tourists as for bourgeois Italians after the war, opera was as much a part of everyday routine as meals and sleep, and it helped everyone remain distracted and psychologically stable in the face of political upheaval.

Rossini's works dominated musical tourism after Napoleon. The extraordinary musical vitality, engaging plots and playful libretti of his works captured a transnational generation of listeners, and notwithstanding the best efforts of Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini, no single composer would again achieve such single-handed supremacy over the international market except perhaps Giuseppe Verdi in the second half of the century. It was not for nothing that Stendhal – a critic who remains consistently informative and entertaining, if never wholly reliable – proclaimed Rossini a second Napoleon.[35]

The Napoleonic crisis was the spur to Stendhal's own travels, and it set him up for the collision with Italy that would define his own career. Many scholars have discussed Stendhal's *Life of Rossini* and his complex critical personae at length, yet a brief reassessment – one that considers Stendhal specifically as a tourist critic – will prove rewarding.[36] In the preface to the *Life*, Stendhal introduces himself as follows:

> If the narrator of this epic may claim to deserve his reader's confidence, it is because he has lived for eight or ten years in those same towns and cities which Rossini was electrifying with his masterpieces; many a time the Author has journeyed a hundred miles and upwards to witness a first performance; and in those days it was rare indeed for him to miss even one of the countless anecdotes which ran like fire from mouth to mouth in Naples, Venice, Rome, or wherever you might find an opera by Rossini.
>
> …
>
> After the fall of Napoleon, the Author of the following pages, finding it both stupid and unprofitable to fritter away his youth in political squabbles, left home, and set out to see the world; and chancing to be in Italy during the epoch of Rossini's extraordinary triumphs, he had occasion to describe them in letters to certain Polish and English acquaintances.[37]

This somewhat airy explanation is fascinating for what it presents and conceals. Stendhal offers himself both as an experienced authority as well as a tourist amateur whose journey just happened to coincide with Rossini's meteoric rise.[38] Hidden from view is a whole

[35] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 1.

[36] See, for example, Stephen Downes, 'Musical Pleasures and Amorous Passions: Stendhal, the Crystallization Process, and Listening to Rossini and Beethoven', *19th-Century Music* 26/3 (2003), 235–57; Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge, 2007); and Melina Esse, 'Rossini's Noisy Bodies', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 21/1 (2009), 27–64. For a systematic study of Stendhal's writings about Rossini, see Stéphane Dado and Philippe Vendrix, 'Stendhal et Rossini: Une étude documentaire', *Bollettino del Centro Rossiniano di studi* 39 (1999), 21–67. For an *en passant* discussion of Stendhal as tourist critic, see Ralph P. Locke, 'Doing the Impossible: On the Musically Exotic', *Journal of Musicological Research* 27/4 (2008), 338–44.

[37] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 1. Coe's version is a notoriously free translation, but – after consulting the parallel passages in Stendhal's *Vie de Rossini*, 2nd edn, vol. 1 (Paris, 1824) – I've chosen to use his familiar renderings anyway. There is one case towards the end of this article where Coe's rendition is loose enough to affect my argumentation; I've flagged the passage and included the original French in the footnote. I am grateful to Ralph P. Locke for alerting me to this potential problem (private correspondence).

[38] For Roland Barthes, this liminal status was essential to Stendhal's aesthetic mobility, enabling his peculiar combination of intimacy and critical distance: 'Italy is the country where Stendhal, being neither entirely a traveller (a tourist) nor entirely a native, is voluptuously delivered from the responsibility of the *citizen*'; see his essay

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array of potentially compromising details. Stendhal's post-Napoleonic musical travels of 1814–21 were anything but the naïve journey of a 'youth' who 'set out to see the world'; in fact he had had three significant stays in Italy already, all of them facilitated by the Napoleonic Wars.[39]

Over the course of his life Stendhal roamed Italy as a tourist, a refugee and a minor functionary, but in the spring of 1800, he went to Italy as a seventeen-year-old conscript in Napoleon's armies. Within a few weeks of his arrival, he went incognito to a performance of Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, an excursion against the better judgement of his captain. Stendhal's response to the opera was immediate and overwhelming. Euphoria coursed through him – he was immediately infatuated with the prima donna – he felt a powerful call to devote his life to music. 'My life was renewed, and all my disappointment with Paris was buried forever', he recalled some thirty years later.[40] It would be easy to dismiss these reminiscences as Stendhalian 'hyperbole', to use Benjamin Walton's formulation, or as just another example of Stendhal's notorious susceptibility to aesthetic wonder.[41] (Psychiatric disturbance triggered by beautiful art is popularly known as Stendhal syndrome, after all.[42]) But there is a subtler and more interesting dynamic to be found here, in the collision of Romantic and tourist modes of consciousness that sparked Stendhal's epiphany.

For tourists of Stendhal's time, Italian opera was one of the essential signs of Italy, of Italian-ness. Theorists of tourism have long recognised the imbrication of semiotic procedures and the tourist gaze: Jonathan Culler claims 'the tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself, an instance of a cultural practice', and Urry agrees, further arguing that the collection of signs is itself one of the primary motivations of tourism.[43] Ruud Welten characterises this type of tourism as follows:

> Such a tourist wants to encounter that which is typical of countries: French people wearing berets and carrying baguettes, the English countryside as painted by Constable and Dutch people wearing wooden shoes and growing tulips. Such tourists do not want to face disturbing differences, on the contrary: they want to recognise those differences, realise they are part of their mental image archive and thus be reassured.[44]

To attend the opera, then, was to partake in the piece of modern Italian culture that was most widely known, experienced and commercialised beyond the Italian peninsula. For Stendhal – an avid theatre-goer since adolescence, now suddenly plunged into a bloody

'One Always Fails of Speaking of What One Loves', in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1986), 299.

[39] For an older but still valuable summary of Stendhal's travels in Italy, see Richard N. Coe's foreword to Stendhal, *Rome, Naples, and Florence*, trans. Richard N. Coe (London, 1959), xiii–xxii; see also Robert Alter and Carol Cosman, *A Lion for Love: A Critical Biography of Stendhal* (Cambridge, MA, 1986).

[40] 'Ma vie fut renouvelée et tout mon désappointement de Paris enterré à jamais'; cited and translated in Alter and Cosman, *A Lion for Love*, 47. For the rest of the anecdote, see chapter 46 of Stendhal, *Vie de Henri Brulard* (Paris, 1913), 2: 187–96.

[41] See Walton's chapter '1824. Deciphering Hyperbole: Stendhal's *Vie de Rossini*', in his *Rossini in Restoration Paris*, 24–67.

[42] There are many recent medical and literary studies on Stendhal syndrome, far more than can be usefully summarised here. The condition was so named by Graziella Magherini, a doctor at a hospital near the Uffizi, and described in her book *La sindrome di Stendhal* (Florence, 1989).

[43] Jonathan Culler, 'Semiotics of Tourism', *American Journal of Semiotics* 1/1 (1981), 127–40, at 127; Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 3.

[44] Ruud Welten, 'Stendhal's Gaze: Towards an Hermeneutic Approach of the Tourist', *Tourist Studies* 14/2 (2014), 168–81, at 170.

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campaign of 'disturbing differences' and desperately needing to be 'reassured' – the theatre was where the shock of Italy's foreignness could be blunted, controlled, transfigured.[45] To briefly recapitulate Senici: 'the stage was the only site where the illusion of meaning could be entertained'.[46] In a profound irony, the same opera house staged an affirmation of meaning for both native Italians and their Napoleonic interloper.

Stendhal's influence in music history endures not because of his youthful tourist enthusiasms, of course, but because he so artfully distilled these enthusiasms into prose. Generations of readers have exulted in the imaginary journeys he offers in novels such as *The Charterhouse of Parma*, his travel writing and the category-bending cacophony that is the *Life of Rossini* – all books dependent on tourist observation animated by powerful interpretive gifts. As Welten suggests, Stendhal shows us that tourist agency and tourist consciousness presuppose interpretive action. 'We recognise this in the gaze Stendhal describes: rather than by the registration of what the tourist perceives, the tourist gaze is completed by narrativity and emotions.'[47] In the *Life of Rossini*, Stendhal provides the ultimate memoir of an operatic tourist, weaving together music criticism, biographical research and wild gossip, and amplifying everything through uninhibited emotional display. It is a vital document, for both the history of fandom and the study of the tourist gaze.

The tourist gaze that Stendhal – among innumerable others – fixed upon Italian opera found a perfect match in the exotic encounters appearing on those stages. Stendhal gives this exuberant account of his journeys following Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri* across northern Italy:

> Thus it came about that, travelling through the province of Venetia in the year 1817, I found *L'italiana* being performed simultaneously in Brescia, in Verona, in Venice itself, in Vicenza and in Treviso.
>
> ...
>
> In not a few of these towns ... there was a thrill, a *verve*, a *brio* in their performance, a sweeping excitement over all, the like of which is not encountered in any opera-house beneath our cold and reasonable skies. I used to observe how, from the very opening of the first act, at the earliest, slightest burst of applause, a kind of musical frenzy would take hold of orchestra and audience alike, sweeping one and all away in waves of uncontrollable delight. I too participated in this strange delirium, which could fire a blaze of joy in a third-rate theatre where the highest attainment was unqualified mediocrity. How it came about, I cannot explain. Yet this enchanting opera held no hint to evoke the *reality* or the *sadness* of life ... The singing, the *décor*, the liveliness of the orchestra, the perpetual improvising of the actors – there was nothing in all this to chain or fetter the spectator's imagination, which, at the slightest touch of encouragement from within, could start away into a world far removed from our own, and gay as our world is not.
>
> ...
>
> On these occasions, the music would seem to transport us bodily into its most frenzied realms of fantasy. The performers, encouraged and inspired by the uncontrolled outbursts of applause and by the cheering of the audience, would dare feats of virtuosity which, I am certain, they would never have dreamed of attempting at the next performance.[48]

[45] On Stendhal's earlier theatrical experiences, see Alter and Cosman, *A Lion for Love*, 26–7.
[46] Senici, *Music in the Present Tense*, 8.
[47] Welten, 'Stendhal's Gaze', 172.
[48] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 69–70.

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Tourist desire and theatrical spectacle joined in bliss. For Stendhal, even a third-rate opera house transported performers and audiences alike into 'frenzied realms of fantasy', spurring singers on to feats that they would not have dreamed possible under other circumstances. The scenery, the orchestra, the singing – all these were successful insofar as they did nothing to 'chain or fetter the spectator's imagination'. The 'enchanting opera' was valuable precisely because of its defiance of critical judgement, because of its distance from the 'reality or sadness of life'. The experience of comedic transport 'away into a world far removed from our own', of a virtual romp through the court of an exotic and unreal Other, was the whole point of the show.

L'immaginazione turistica in Algeri

The tourist gaze and operatic convention met onstage in Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri*. The opera is a particularly striking example of the tourist gaze precisely because of its artificiality and its lack of obviously exotic musical materials. Rossini's avoidance of local colour might seem surprising to listeners more familiar with later Romantic repertories, but his compositional strategy aligns neatly with Stephen Wearing, Deborah Stevenson and Tamara Young's understanding of tourist entertainment:

> Central to the Western tourism enterprise is the cultural power to construct the tourist space while ensuring that there is enough of the local culture present (in a sanitised form) to excite and titillate. In this way hegemony is maintained while the exotic (Other) culture is packaged and sold as a viable and valuable commodity.[49]

As Daniel J. Boorstin points out, tourism modulates local culture as a function of audience desire. 'The tourist looks for caricature', he observes, adding that 'the tourist seldom likes the authentic (to him often unintelligible) product of the foreign culture; he prefers his own provincial expectations.'[50] In opera, the music and its tonal forms act as an infrastructure that translates and controls the tourist encounter, rendering it palatable to listeners who would have been utterly bewildered by authentic musical performances from the Ottoman Empire. It is the same dynamic at play in nineteenth-century Orientalist art, in which exotic subjects are controlled by the forms and techniques of Western painting. The exotic must be packaged within the familiar to be comprehensible to the tourist subject.

This allows us to reconsider a problem that has come up repeatedly in scholarship on musical exoticism. Can we consider a musical work exotic if there is no exotic music in it? Western art music is full of examples of pieces ostensibly inspired by non-Western arts, in which foreign influences may be nearly, or even entirely, inaudible. This sits uneasily with some definitions of musical exoticism, such as that given by Jonathan Bellman: 'The idea of "musical exoticism" is almost self-explanatory: it may be defined as the borrowing or use of musical materials that evoke distant locales or alien frames of reference.'[51] But others find this approach too limiting, arguing that there can indeed be musical exoticism without any exotic music. Locke takes this position, summarising it as follows:

> We need to have a working definition of musical exoticism that does not exclude works that unquestionably evoke a foreign place or people despite using few stylistic

[49] Stephen Wearing, Deborah Stevenson and Tamara Young, *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place, and the Traveller* (London, 2010), 55.

[50] Daniel J. Boorstin, 'From Traveler to Tourist: The Lost Art of Travel', in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York, 1992), 106.

[51] Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston, 1998), ix.

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> markers of 'Otherness' or none at all – works such as Rossini's *Italiana in Algeri* … which sounds obviously Middle Eastern in just one number for chorus … In short, we need a broader approach.[52]

For Locke, *L'italiana in Algeri* is exotic by virtue of its scenery and scenario, if not its musical language.[53] Indeed, only one number clearly incorporates musical markers of otherness: 'Viva il grande Kaimakan', in which a chorus of Turks acclaims the Italian Taddeo as the newly appointed Kaimakan (Example 1). These declamatory passages stand out from the rest of the score for their stark unison writing, martial rhythms and bold outline, highlighting the moment as a collision with a cultural other. Yet the encounter is securely grounded within tonal harmony and its forms. It's a kind of musical exoticism, to be sure, but the moment is fleeting and relatively inconsequential.

In a recent book discussing Turkish depictions in opera, Larry Wolff investigates more systemically *L'italiana* and its exotic musical materials. He points to the unscored 'Banda Turca' in the overture as evidence of musical Turkishness and, furthermore, interprets the hilarious Act I finale (Example 2) as a vocal emulation of a Janissary band:

> Rossini … both engaged and subverted the Janissary style by assigning its percussive elements to different vocal parts, Elvira becoming the bell at the top of the score, singing '*din din din din*', and Mustafa becoming the bass drum at the bottom, singing '*bum bum bum bum*'.[54]

While I think Wolff's latter point could use further clarification – Rossini's tangled, ebullient counterpoint is indeed reminiscent of Janissary music, but couldn't this also be said of his other finales? – his argument neatly demonstrates the musicological anxieties surrounding Rossini's operas and their apparent lack of exotic musical detail. Contemporary scholars are increasingly willing to treat Rossini's operas seriously as landmark works within their cultural milieu, but situating them within nineteenth-century discourses of difference is fraught with intellectual and historical difficulties.

The ways in which musicologists contextualise exotic works have wide-ranging implications for their interpretations. Scholars following Said often read exoticist works against the histories of the Age of Discovery and imperialist conquest, but when approaching nineteenth-century artworks that invoke well-travelled forms of otherness, tourism provides a more specific historical context as well as a clearer metaphor for the role of the audience. To borrow a simplified taxonomy from literary critic Paul Fussell, there is a difference between exploration, travel and tourism:

> Each is roughly assignable to its own age in modern history: exploration belongs to the Renaissance, travel to the bourgeois age, tourism to our proletarian moment … The explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveller that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity.[55]

[52] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 46.
[53] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 70.
[54] Larry Wolff, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford, 2016), 257 and 266.
[55] Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars* (Oxford, 1980), 38.

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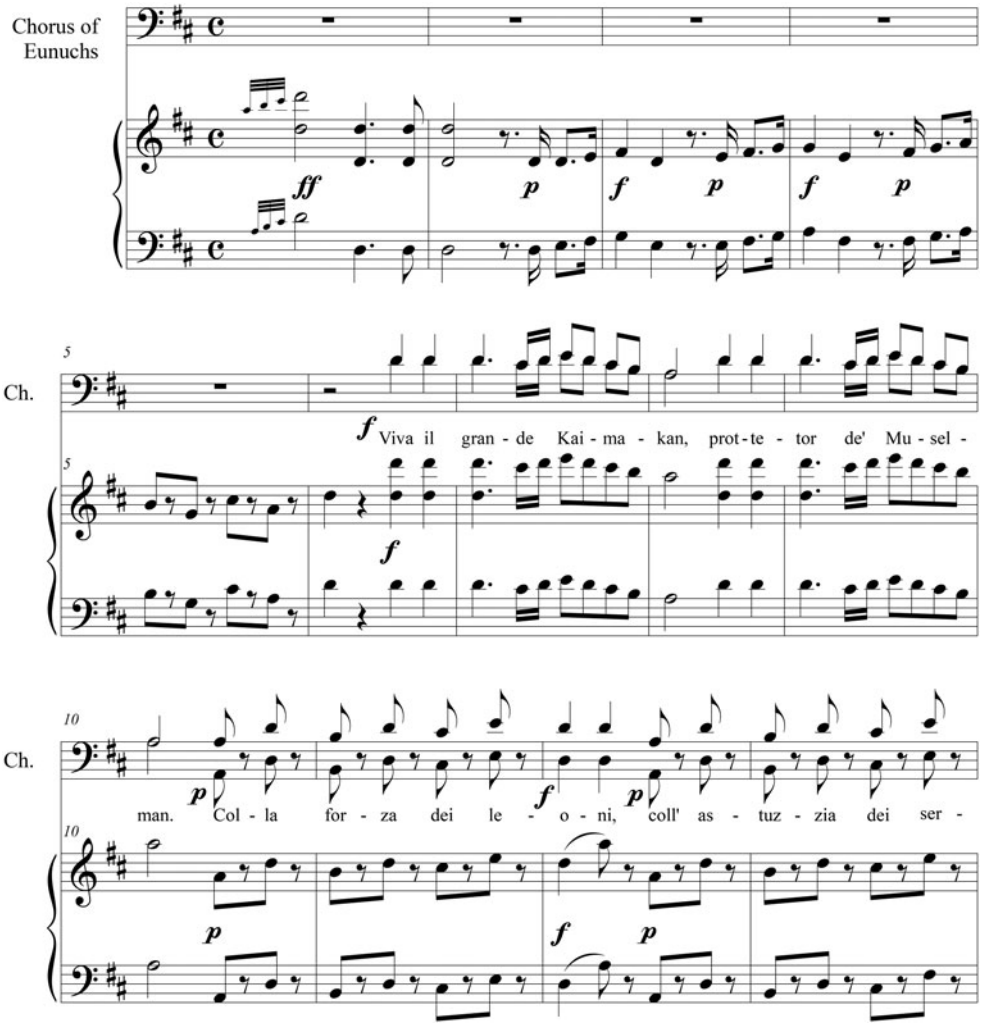

Example 1. Musical exoticism in 'Viva il grande Kaimakan'.

In other words, the range of differences between exploration, travel and tourism provides an entry point for understanding how the exoticism of Rossini's *L'italiana* differed from that of, say, Antonio Vivaldi's *Motezuma* (1733) or Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904). To make this observation more specific, the exotic gestures of Rossini's *L'italiana* – featuring farcical depictions of imaginary others, scripted for an audience of occupied Italians – had a radically different purpose, reception and moral valence from the exoticism of *Madama Butterfly*, a serious drama written for a unified Italy that had become a colonial power in its own right. (In fact, the Neapolitan situation was so fraught in 1815 that one patriotic number, 'Nella pensa patria', had to be replaced with the less charged 'Sullo stil de' viaggiatori'.[56]) Rossini's listeners were superficially familiar with the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish denizens, and the operatic depictions of these exotic

[56] Richard Osborne, *Rossini: His Life and Works*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2007), 214. In this rarely performed substitute aria, Isabella plots how their entire company will escape disguised as travellers, mixing delights and horrors

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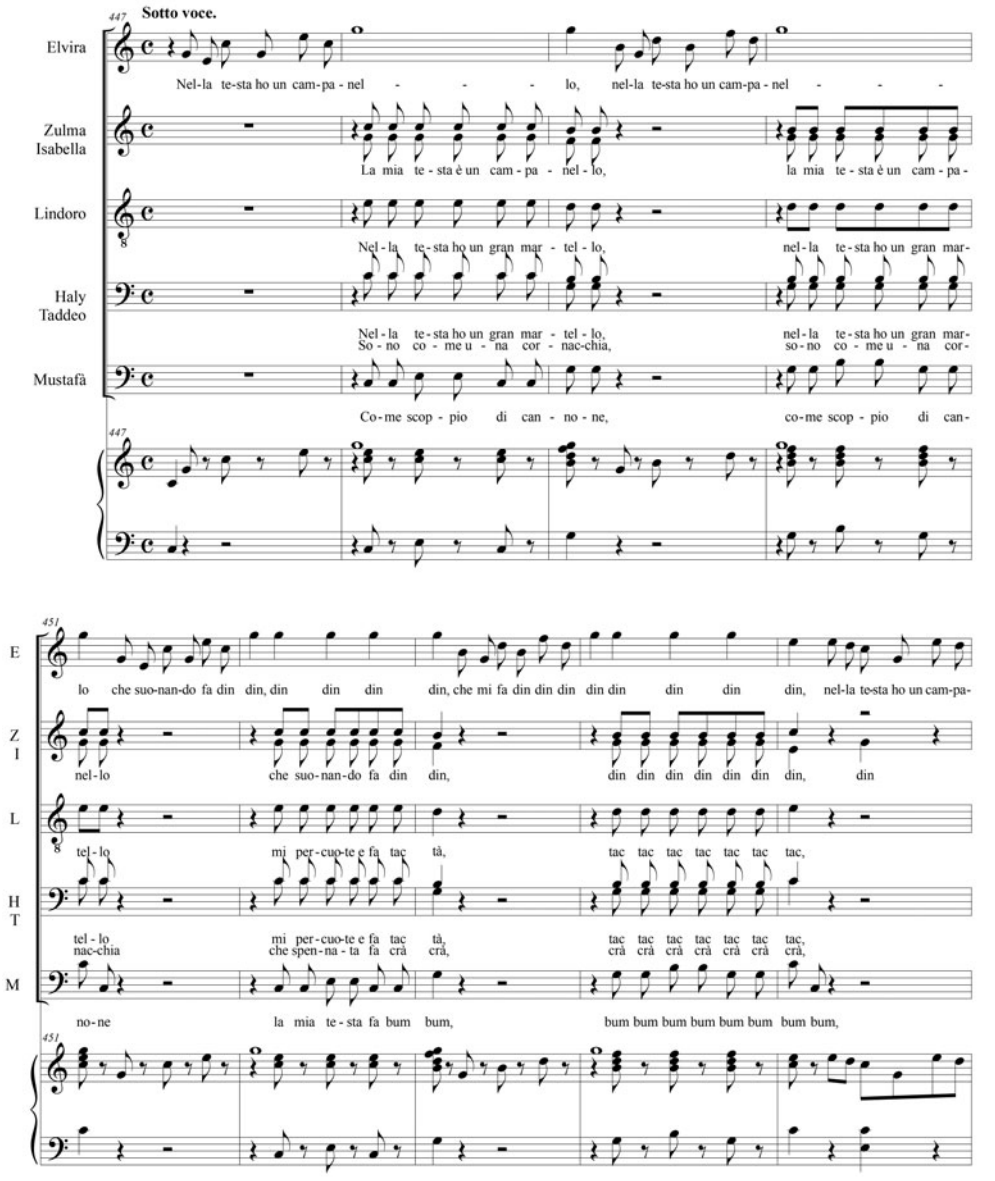

Example 2. The Act I finale of *L'italiana in Algeri* as Janissary band.

others were becoming as stable and commercialised a set of clichés as the scripts of the Grand Tour.[57]

Reading the conventions of opera as a tourist infrastructure clarifies why the scores of exotic operas such as *L'italiana* often seem to be so curiously blank, so devoid of any

among a thousand oddities and a few half-truths among many lies: 'Sullo stil de' viaggiatori / nelle piene compagnie / fra ben mille bizzarrie / mischieremo delizie, orrori; / e fra un sacco di bugie / qualche mezza verità.'

[57] On these operas and the transcultural interactions that inform them, see chapters 5–8 of Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, 146–282.

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substantively exotic musical materials. The aesthetic transport, the perception of tourist difference, the excitement of fantastic scenery – all these responses are based in the consciousness of the listener, not just in the musical material itself. Exotic opera, like other forms of imaginary encounter, is a form of make-believe, and if we take Stendhal's account at face value, the obvious artificiality and equal-opportunity fakery of *L'italiana* were essential elements for its success. After all, the perception of difference, of tourist experience, is in the eye of the beholder – and in the ear as well.

Selim, the Turkish Grand Tourist

The year after his Venetian triumph with *L'italiana in Algeri*, Rossini attempted to duplicate its success in Milan. He collaborated with librettist Felice Romani, then a rising star of twenty-six, who provided him with another story featuring an Italian–Turkish culture clash. Unfortunately, *Il turco in Italia* had nowhere near the same level of success. According to Stendhal, who attended the premiere, the Milanese took the opera as 'an insult to their national pride' because Rossini had 'plagiarised his own earlier work' and 'served it' as 'something original'.[58] A reading of the Milanese critics bears out this interpretation to some degree. The *Corriere delle dame* was particularly withering: 'The Italian Girl in Algiers needed a husband; and the fecund genius of the poet and composer served as witness to her marriage with the Turk of Italy. Will children be born of his wedding? Public opinion would prefer that the nuptial bed remain sterile.'[59] Roberts notes that the period after *L'italiana* was a difficult one for Rossini, as he could not remain wholly unaffected by the complicated political situation following the downfall of Napoleon's regime.[60] Richard Osborne suggests that the opera was not so much derivative as unfinished, observing that Rossini's 1815 revision for the Teatro Valle in Rome reworked the materials that an assistant had composed; the Roman revision was 'rapturously received', as Osborne puts it.[61]

Though several scholars have leapt to Rossini's defence and shown that the music of *Il turco* is all original, the opening chorus of Gypsies (i.e. Roma) certainly did not help differentiate the work from its predecessor. In 'Nostra patria è il mondo intero', a rollicking allegro immediately brings to mind a similar passage in *L'italiana* (Example 3). The orchestral flourishes and bold unisons sound suspiciously like 'Viva il grande Kaimakan'. Unfortunately, a novel musical idea cannot remain so for long; repetition of an exotic gesture eventually hardens into cliché. As tourist theorists Louis Turner and John Ash point out, 'the pursuit of the exotic and diverse ends in uniformity'.[62] The same excessive reliance on a formula that causes aesthetic dissatisfaction is an unavoidable aspect of tourism, which depends on convention to reassure the audience. Signs work only when they signify reliably.

Another aspect of stock formulas – both musical and touristic – is that they create opportunities for satire. Beyond the question of musical borrowing in 'Nostra patria' that so exercised contemporary audiences, the lyrics suggest a more interesting reversal:

Nostra patria è il mondo intero,	Our homeland is the entire world,
E, nel sen dell' abbondanza,	And, in the bosom of abundance,

[58] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 145–6.

[59] *Corriere delle dame* (20 August 1814), cited and translated in Osborne, *Rossini*, 27.

[60] Roberts, *Rossini and Post-Napoleonic Europe*, 49.

[61] Osborne, *Rossini*, 27.

[62] Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London, 1975), 292; cited in Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 8.

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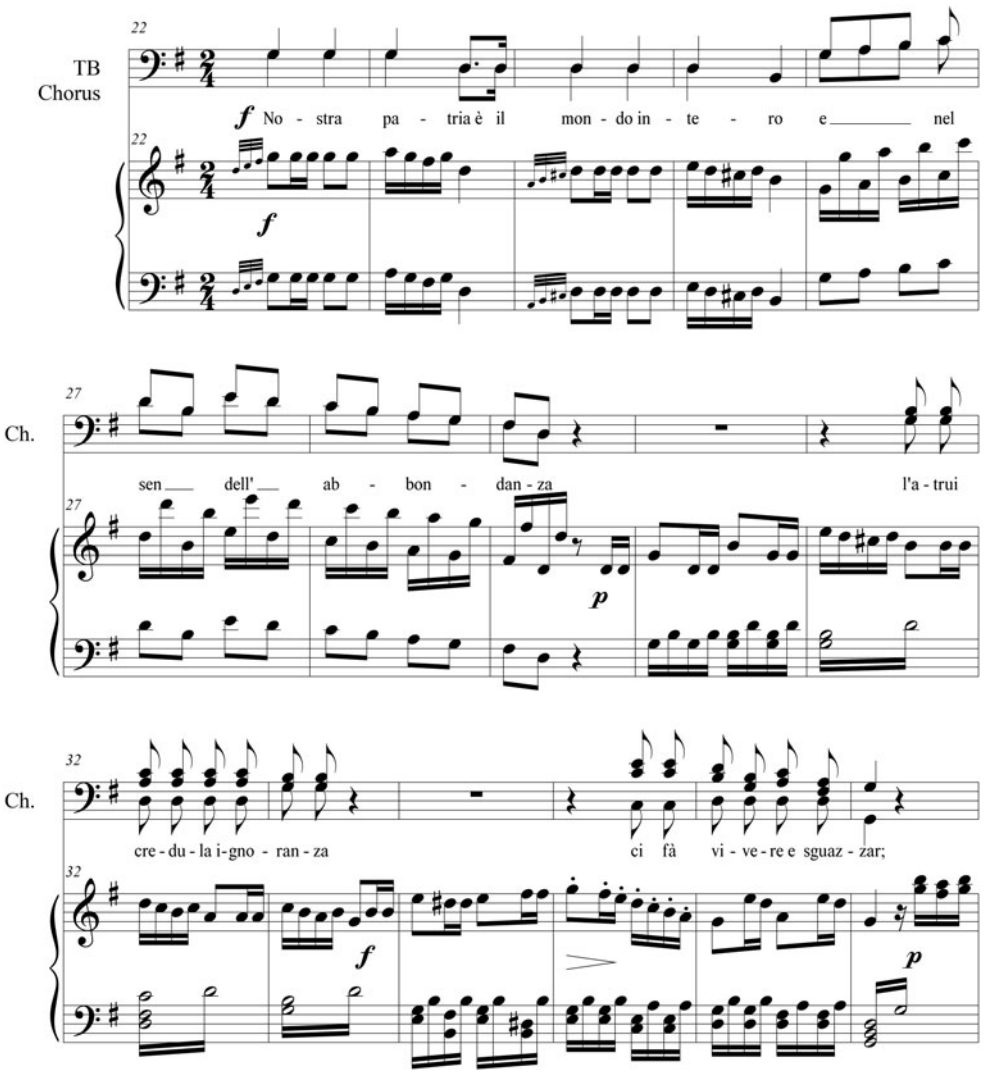

Example 3. Exotic gesture becoming cliché in 'Nostra patria è il mondo intero'.

L'altrui credula ignoranza	The credulous ignorance of others
Ci fa vivere e sguazzar.	makes us live and enjoy ourselves.[63]

To claim the entire world as a homeland refers, of course, to the nomadism (real or imagined) of Roma in nineteenth-century Italy, but these lyrics also ridicule anti-Roma prejudice as 'credulous ignorance'. The Gypsies in this narrative, far from being victimised or disempowered, make a fool of the Italian Don Geronio. The otherness of the Gypsies controls the first scene, but Romani satirises the Italian perception of otherness at every turn. The bumbling Prosdocimo (hereafter 'the Poeta') immediately seizes on the

[63] All libretto translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

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Gypsies as the subject for his next libretto; their presence, he hopes, will make a more interesting plot than the hackneyed marital squabbles of Fiorella and Don Geronio:

Ah! se di questi Zingari l'arrivo	Ah! If the arrival of these Gypsies
potesse preparar qualche accidente,	could prepare some incidents,
Che intrigo sufficiente	it would present me sufficient
mi presentasse per un Dramma intero!	intrigue for a whole drama!
Un bel quadro farei, tratto dal vero!	A good picture I'd draw from life!
Abbandonar bisogna il pensier	I must abandon all thoughts
sopra i capricci della bella Fiorella:	of the beautiful Fiorella's caprices:
hanno già messo in scena	They've already been staged
dei poeti d'ogni razza,	by poets of every sort –
sciocco marito, ed una moglie pazza.	a foolish husband, and a mad wife.

The irony, of course, is that the Gypsies have no role in the plot whatsoever beyond this first scene. (Romani and his Poeta evidently disagreed about what makes a strong plot.) Furthermore, the main characters who appear to be Gypsies are actually Turks; Zaida and Albazar are Selim's former lover and confidante, respectively, and both have taken refuge among the Gypsies. Just as the Gypsy chorus blurs the boundaries of cosmopolitanism and nomadism, Zaida and Albazar's successful disguise as Gypsies destabilises the ethnic and racial barriers dividing the characters, rendering difference a matter of costuming.

The mockery of operatic exoticism goes beyond just the text: Romani's libretto inspired Rossini to musical slapstick of his own. When the Turkish ship finally reaches sight of the shore, the sailors spur themselves on with yet another chorus beginning with bold, leaping unisons. The rolling accompaniment suggests waves and provides one of the few minor-key moments within the farce, suggesting difference through harmony. Yet the tune is not some exotic Janissary turn, but rather Mozart's 'Don Giovanni, a cenar teco' (Example 4), a bit of musical masquerade that foreshadows the costume confusion at the climax of Act II. Rossini puts Mozart in the mouths of his Turkish sailors; Romani places Fiorella on shore and has her captivated by the Turkish vessel approaching. 'A ship! It seems Turkish', she muses, wondering if it will bring a distraction from her boredom with her husband Don Geronio: 'We'll stay on the sidelines and observe who approaches.'[64] This encounter leads directly to the entrance of Selim, the Turkish prince whose presence drives the plot to its climax.

On his arrival, Selim sings a hymn in praise of Italy and immediately sets about attracting the attention of the local beauties. Having journeyed far in search of Italy's Arcadian landscapes, artistic treasures and theatrical pleasures, no sooner does he step onto that long-awaited shore than he bursts into a sestet:

Bella Italia! alfin ti miro;	Beautiful Italy! At last I gaze upon you;
Vi saluto amiche sponde!	I salute your friendly shores!
L'aria, il suolo, i fiori, e l'onde	The air, soil, flowers and waves –
Tutto ride e parla al cor.	Everything laughs and speaks to the heart.
Ah! Del cielo, e della terra	Ah! Of the sky, and of the earth
Bella Italia, sei l'amor.	Beautiful Italy, you are love.[65]

[64] 'Un naviglio! Turco pare. / In disparte ad osservare / noi starem chi approderà.'
[65] Translation of this passage adapted by the author from Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, 291.

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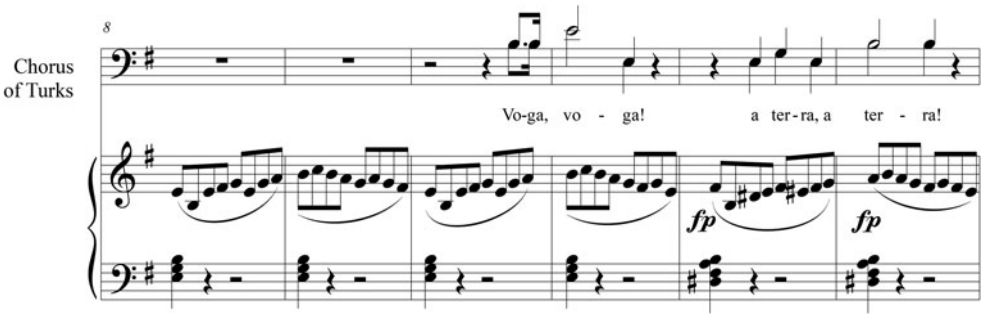

Example 4. Mozart borrowed in 'Voga, voga! a terra, a terra!'

These are extraordinary words for an Italian librettist to put into the mouth of an Ottoman prince, but – aside from their poetic form – they are not so different from the panegyrics that grace so many tourist accounts. *We are all pilgrims, we who seek Italy*. Selim is, in fact, a Rossinian parody of the eighteenth-century Grand Tourist. That this traveller should be from the Ottoman Empire rather than northern Europe is all part of the meta-humour of the opera.[66] The poet Prosdocimo, a struggling librettist in search of a comic scenario, first reveals the Turk's tourist agenda. 'A certain Turkish prince must arrive tonight, who travels to visit Italy and observe European customs', he informs Zaida, a former slave cast out from a harem.[67] 'It seems strange to me that this curiosity would leap into the head of a Turk', she muses, to which he replies, 'The case is very rare, truly.'[68] As the remainder of the opera reveals, Selim is the consummate traveller: a pleasant guest, a cosmopolitan devotee of the coffeehouse and a ladies' man. The one remaining gesture would have been to accompany Fiorella to the opera house as her *cavaliere servente* (taking the opera's meta-humour too far, perhaps). Wolff corroborates this interpretation, noting that Selim travelled 'entirely out of his own curiosity and for his own pleasure', rather than as a diplomat or military conqueror.[69] The conquests he had in mind were of an entirely different order.

The first act develops a classic Rossinian imbroglio. Selim and Fiorella fall for each other, much to the chagrin of Don Geronio as well as Zaida, who still loves Selim despite his having discarded her based on false testimony. The Poeta offers his metatheatrical commentary with each turn of the plot; his gratitude for each new twist provides Romani with opportunities to skewer the Poeta's character as well as the clichés of his own material. At one point, when the Poeta's enjoyment feels a bit rich, the other characters revolt. 'Act I – scene 1 – for this tangle, the poet will receive a beating from the husband and his friend', Don Geronio and Narciso warn him.[70]

The muddle grows murkier in Act II, when the characters meet at a masked ball. Narciso appropriates Selim's costume and mask; Fiorella then takes Narciso's arm, believing him to be Selim. Moments later, Zaida appears wearing the same outfit and mask as

[66] Meta-humour, i.e. self-referential humour, in this case of the variety that pokes fun at the conventions of its own appearance. On metatheatricality in Rossini's operas, including *Il turco*, see chapter 6, 'Dramaturgy', in Senici, *Music in the Present Tense*, 103–16.

[67] 'Debbe arrivar stasera / certo principe turco, il qual viaggia / per visitar l' Italia, ed osservare / i costumi Europei.'

[68] Zaida: 'Mi sembra strano / che salti in testa a un turco / questa curiosità'. Poeta: 'Il caso è molto raro in verità.'

[69] Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, 287.

[70] 'Atto primo, scena prima – / il poeta per l'intrico / dal marito e dall'amico / bastonate prederà'.

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Fiorella – an idea Zaida got from the Poeta, further highlighting how contrived the situation is. When Don Geronio comes to collect his wife, he finds two identical couples and is unable to discover who's who before everyone leaves. The same issue that plagued the reception of the opening chorus translates here into sartorial terms: one exotic costume marks its wearer as different, but if two wear the same exotic dress, they become shrouded in sameness. A mere change of clothing can blur identities. As Wolff puts it, the climax of *Il turco* 'suggests that Turkishness is ultimately a matter of costume, that the difference between Turks and Europeans is neither racial nor essential, and that a woman might mistake her own husband for a Turk if he wore a robe and turban'.[71] The climax's slippage between costume and identity continues the themes of reversal and musical masquerade that were so prominent in Act I, such as when the chorus of Turks sang Mozart. By deconstructing the imaginary otherness at the centre of all exotic operas, Rossini and Romani created an inspired send-up of the genre that made further comic operas on Turkish topics almost redundant.[72]

In *Il turco*, Rossini and Romani both deploy and subvert stereotypes of otherness at every turn. Where *L'italiana* is a 'straight' exotic story of faraway travel, boorish Ottoman others and the titillating menace of the seraglio (albeit as farce), *Il turco* reverses many of the genre's key elements and thereby creates a metatheatrical commentary on tourism itself. In other ways, however, *Il turco*'s attitudes towards difference are continuous with earlier, less sophisticated operas. Wolff notes that Selim himself is a figure of fantasy, one who never gets to sing an aria of his own despite being the title character. 'It is almost as if [Selim] only exists in relation to the other soloists', he writes, further explaining that 'the poet produces Selim in order to construct the drama, just as Romani and Rossini created the Turkish figure they needed to stand at the centre of their *opera buffa*'.[73] Selim's status as fantasy and his inability to sing an aria for himself bring up one of the profound ethical questions at the heart of tourism: What happens to those who become the object of the tourist gaze? What happens when one culture's tourist fantasies conflict with the other's thoughts about itself? And is it possible to connect with otherness – to look and to listen ethically – as a tourist subject, one whose mobility depends on the authority of a hegemonic power?

Towards a second tourist gaze

Theorists of tourism have long argued that travel occurs within larger frameworks of power, that the pleasures of tourist fantasy, sightseeing and objectification of the other are inextricable from the potential erosion of tourist environments as well as oppression of the people within them. Reversing the gaze troubles established hierarchies. 'Those for whom the symbolic world is congruent with their fantasies are called "privileged",' as MacCannell puts it, and this is true in opera no less than in tourism.[74] A less obvious question is what to do with these products of tourist consciousness. Is it possible to engage these artworks in a way that neither attempts to rescue them from their questionable political alignments, nor discards them through sweeping and uncritical condemnation?[75]

[71] Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, 301.
[72] Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, 304.
[73] Wolff, *The Singing Turk*, 304.
[74] Dean MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sightseeing* (Berkeley, 2011), 57.
[75] See Bellman's 'Musical Voyages and their Baggage' for a recent defence of music's ability to navigate difference ethically. Locke also discusses whether and how we might ethically perform problematic works in his *Musical Exoticism*, 38–42, 79–84 and 312–27; and in his *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart*, 11–16. For a well-known counterpoint on this issue, see Sindhumathi Revuluri's review of Ralph P. Locke's *Musical Exoticism* in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/1 (2011), 253–61.

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Can tourist difference be meaningfully and ethically bridged? 'Tourists may escape the mundane', MacCannell writes, 'but they never escape the ethical field.'[76] The same could be said for musicians – and for music.

MacCannell's ambivalence about the ethics of tourism is instructive, as is his critique of controlling difference through the tourist imaginary. The tourist gaze can all too often obscure the gap between self and other. 'On the way to the other', MacCannell observes, 'and even in the presence of the attraction, the tourist may continue to hold onto the other's imaginary counterpart', leading to the construction of a tourist subjectivity 'entirely from imagined encounters with otherness.'[77] When fantasy supplants reality, 'no one can aspire to anything, or be inspired, because they live inside an illusion, its limits being precisely coincident with their limits, as if *this* is the way things are'.[78] This is why, for Welten, the question of whether tourism 'is beneficiary to human character' depends on the 'attitude of travellers that confront the world, and the extent to which their travels make them assess their own frames of reference'.[79] Without a certain vulnerability, facing the other can deepen one's own narcissism, whether that otherness is encountered through tourism, at an exoticist opera production or – more obliquely – as a tourist at the opera.

Despite his concerns, MacCannell still maintains a measure of optimism regarding the possibilities of tourism. While an uncritical encounter with the tourist attraction can lead to a hardening of the ego and its defences, travelling encounters can also lead to the deconstruction of the tourist subject and an opening up to new awareness. The former dynamic defines Urry's tourist gaze, but MacCannell argues for an alternative:

> The second gaze is aware that something is being concealed, that there is something missing from every picture, look, or glance. This is true on tour and in everyday life. The second gaze knows that seeing is not believing. Some things will remain hidden from it … In light of the second gaze, the human subject knows itself to be a work in progress, knows it can never fulfil the ego's demands for wholeness, completeness, and self-sufficiency. On tour, the second gaze may be more interested in the ways attractions are presented than in the attractions themselves. It looks for openings and gaps in the cultural unconscious. It looks for the unexpected, not the extraordinary, for objects and events that may open a window in structure, a chance to glimpse the symbolic in action.[80]

MacCannell's theorisation of a second tourist gaze – one that critiques the self through a knowing insufficiency in the face of the other – suggests much about how we might handle the ethical problems inherent in exoticist opera. These works today entail a doubly distanced, doubly exotic experience: not only do Rossini's operas stage encounters with others, but they also involve Anglo-American listeners as witnesses to a tradition now far removed from our everyday experience. Ethical critiques of exoticist opera often assume that we identify with the Italians against the Turks, with the West against an exoticised East, but what interpretive possibilities might we unlock if we embrace the full complexity of the contemporary situation? One could argue that today's scholars – we intellectual travellers seeking novelty, human interest, a more sophisticated sense of ourselves mirrored in the distant past – are in a position closer to that of the Napoleonic

[76] MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, 62.
[77] MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, 158.
[78] MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, 158–9.
[79] Welten, 'Stendhal's Gaze', 169.
[80] MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, 175.

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overlords occupying Rossini's Italy, or of the British tourist whose empire enabled them to continue listening in the post-Napoleonic era.

MacCannell and Welten hold Stendhal up as a model of the ethical tourist – a veteran traveller whose self-awareness led to humility in the face of the other. 'Stendhal does not claim to be a "traveller"', Welton notes, 'and does not try to distinguish himself from other tourists. On the contrary: he affirms – as we will see, he is the first ever to do so – that he is a tourist.'[81] Despite this humility – or perhaps because of it? – Stendhal actualised, in a shockingly literal way, the Romantic ideal of self-completion through Italian pilgrimage. He was also intelligent enough to understand, almost two hundred years before MacCannell theorised the same, that the tourist gaze is not unidirectional.[82] When the native unexpectedly tweaks the tourist – when the tourist suddenly becomes aware of their own narcissism and the limits of their empathy – the results can be both hilarious and humbling, as uncomfortable as it can be to have one's ego thrown off balance. In tourism as in the theatre, the performers are always gazing back at the audience, even if they don't usually disturb the illusion of otherness and psychic inaccessibility that separates the stage from the audience. And yet the players do sometimes break the fourth wall.

In homage to Stendhal, I close with his account of just such a reversal. Recalling a performance of *Il turco in Italia* that went off the rails, Stendhal narrates how Luigi Paccini (as Don Geronio) 'risked a piece of absurdity so foreign to our present code of manners that I hesitate even to describe it, for fear of shocking my readers' susceptibilities'.[83] After describing the gossip of the day – a duke had recently discovered that his wife had been unfaithful to him, and become the talk of Milan for his histrionic accounts to all and sundry – Stendhal continues with his tale:

> The boxes of *la Scala* ... were buzzing with chatter over the circumstances ... Paccini, irritated by the fact that no one seemed to be paying the slightest attention to the opera, suddenly began, right in the middle of his *cavatina*, to mimic the unmistakably individual gestures and the wild despair of the unlucky husband.[84]

Coe's translation of the following section mischievously amplifies the audience's reaction into a Rossinian crescendo, a twist that Stendhal might well have approved:

> This highly reprehensible piece of impertinence succeeded beyond all belief; the audience was seized by a spasm of merriment, which, starting *pianissimo*, grew rapidly into a reverberating *crescendo*. To begin with, only one or two persons seemed to realize that there was a remarkable similarity between Paccini's histrionic despair on the stage, and that of the Duke of *** in real life; but one by one, the entire audience came to identify the gestures of that poor cuckolded aristocrat, and in particular, his handkerchief, which he never failed to hold in his hand whenever he mentioned his wife, to wipe away the tears of distress which poured from his eyes. But how can I describe the outburst of universal hilarity which echoed through the huge building, when the luckless Duke himself entered the theatre and, in full view of the entire audience, found a seat in a friend's box scarcely above the level of the pit itself?[85]

[81] Welton, 'Stendhal's Gaze', 169.

[82] MacCannell, *The Ethics of Tourism*, 169–70.

[83] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 145.

[84] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 145.

[85] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 145. The parallel passage reads: 'Cette impertinence reprehensible eut un succès incroyable; il y eut de la progression dans les plaisirs du public. D'abord, quelques personnes seulement s'aperçurent qu'il y avait un grand rapport entre le désespoir de Paccini et celui du duc de ***. Bientôt le public

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Romani himself could not have staged the Duke's entrance with more delicious irony:

> The audience to a man screwed its neck round to the point of positive discomfort, in order to extract the last ounce of delight from his presence. However, the unhappy husband not only remained entirely oblivious to the sensation he was creating; but to crown it all, the audience was soon permitted to deduce from his gestures, and in particular from the pitiful fluttering of that abominable handkerchief, that he was indeed 'telling the tale anew' to the occupants of the box which he was visiting, and that he was being careful to omit not one of the degrading circumstances of his previous night's discovery![86]

The boundaries between stage, pit and box became blurred, and the usual patterns of attention were overturned. The Duke found himself staged before an avid audience but, like an opera character, pretended to be entirely oblivious to the situation. The performance got so out of hand that the whole production nearly fell apart:

> One needs to realize just *how* small, from the point of view of gossip, scandal, and amorous intrigue, are Italy's greatest cities, in order to appreciate the hysterical convulsions of laughter which overwhelmed the audience, sharp-tongued and cynical as it was, at the spectacle of the ill-fated husband in his box, and of Paccini on the stage, gazing at him steadily while he sang his *cavatina*, and instantly mimicking his slightest gesture with a flourish of grotesque exaggeration. The orchestra forgot to accompany, even the police grew mindless of their 'duty to quell a riot'. Fortunately in the end, some spectator less giddy than the rest made his way to the box, and succeeded – though not without some pains – in extricating the still-tearful Duke.[87]

This account may well be one of Stendhal's inspired (one might even say operatic) fictions. Stendhal, in his complex roles of writer, opera fan, tourist and guide, demonstrates that tourist and theatrical gazes always go both ways. The staging of difference, which at first glance can seem as secure in tourism as in the theatre, is never entirely reducible to subject and object, the gazer and the gazed upon. To argue otherwise is to accept theatrical illusion as reality uncritically.

To be an ethical tourist – to connect ethically with difference – is to broaden one's awareness of the other *as other*, and to develop a healthy appreciation for one's own limits as a moral subject. Historical scholarship, which necessarily entails an analogous if more abstract form of mental travel, benefits from a similar humility. To search out difference and trouble the limits of one's own narcissism is a fraught quest, to be sure, in life as in art. But never to search for anything outside of oneself at all? – that would be a tragedy.

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tout entier reconnut les gestes et le mouchoir du pauvre duc, qu'il tenait sans cesse à la main lorsqu'il parlait de sa femme, pour essuyer les larmes du désespoir'; Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini*, I: 184.

[86] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 145–6.

[87] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 146.

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