CRITICISM OF ITALIAN OPERA IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

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CONTENTS

I IMMORAL

II IRRATIONAL

III UNPATRIOTIC

IV EXOTIC

Page

1

18

44

69
The Italian opera introduced into eighteenth-century England was very unlike opera today. The most striking result of the secular movement in music in the sixteenth century had been the invention of opera in Italy. Scarlatti (1659-1725) was the propounder of the Italian opera form which lasted down to the nineteenth century. He distinguished between aria and recitative; aria assumed its "ternary" form which endured throughout the eighteenth century. His mode was followed slavishly for one hundred years and blasted all hope of a musical drama. The opera was a set form with six characters: three men and three women, each assigned a set number of arias. As a result supreme emphasis was laid upon vocalism to the neglect of plot and character portrayal. It became a mere display ground for the voice with great stress on power and flexibility.

Cultural contacts had been close between Italy and Renaissance England. In the latter part of the seventeenth century there were Italian singers in London and many of the Restoration dramas employed music in one connection or another. Joseph Armstrong's Operatic Performances in England before Handel traces this development quite carefully. Pure Italian opera was an importation of the eighteenth century. First there were English translations of Italian opera, such as Arsinoe in 1705.
With the importation of Italian vocalists the performances became bi-lingual and in 1710 with the production of Almahide, pure Italian opera was established; it was made popular in 1711 by the great success of Handel's Rinaldo. The existence of opera in England occasioned much comment and criticism. Four well-defined attitudes may be discerned in attacks on opera; it was regarded by some as immoral, by some as irrational, by others as unpatriotic, and by still others as exotic.

Italian opera provoked much criticism because of its alleged immoral influence. The attack falls into three divisions. First the critics called it sensual, for they feared opera with its sensual pleasures which might result in effeminate taste and a demoralization of the spirit of the nation. The second criticism has to do with the importation and popularity of the Italian castrati, because of the dangerous effect on English society likely to occur. In the third place, because opera was fashionable, it incurred the criticism of the satirist. In the early part of the century it was the fad of the nobility and upper classes. As the years passed the rage spread to the middle classes who wished to imitate the taste of the nobility, and by the end of the century it was supported by those who love music rather than those of any particular class. The early mad enthusiasm for the opera waned during this time as the support of fashionable society was withdrawn.

An early attack is John Dennis' Essay on the Operas after the Italian Manner, which are about to be established on the English stage; with some reflections on the damage which they may bring to the public. This pamphlet, published in 1706, may have
been called forth by the successful presentation of Motteux's *Arsinoe* in 1705. In the Preface to the essay he says that the Italian opera is a diversion of more pernicious consequences than the most licentious play that has ever appeared on the stage. In the light of the attack Jeremy Collier had been making for the last decade, this is a strong denunciation. He cites Boileau as an authority who discusses the ill-effect of Italian opera in his Tenth Satire. The French critic says of opera that its content and entertainment is so dangerous as to divert an innocent wife, for it chiefly depends on love, and the melting sounds may lead her to indiscretions. Dennis cites modern Italy as a sufficient warning to the English. Its degeneracy from the glory that was ancient Rome is a result of the influence of the soft and effeminate measures of the Italian opera which vitally affect the minds and manners of men.

In the body of the essay Dennis points out that while England is fighting with her enemies for her very being and liberty, the people are aping foreign luxuries and vices, as if they had a premonition of defeat, and were preparing for slavery, and thus endeavoring to make themselves agreeable to new masters. Many people of quality were encouraging opera which would lead ultimately to the degeneration of public spirit and the arts. Dennis asserts that he does not have a grudge against music but feels its place must be defined. When it grows independent as in the opera, it becomes a mere sensual delight, incapable of informing the understanding or reforming the will and therefore is unfit for a public diversion because the more charming it grows, the more pernicious it becomes. If the taste for opera should
become habitual it would so far debauch the minds of men as to make them incapable of appreciating reasonable entertainments.

In the last few years the writers and audiences have changed for the worse and Dennis declares this alteration is to be ascribed to the progress of Italian opera rather than any other cause. Really great writers are being lost because they become too discouraged when the inferior artists such as singers and dancers receive more applause and commendation than they.

The audience prefers the opera because entertainments of sense do not require any effort either in preparation or attention. Dennis points out that poetry is able to augment public spirit but opera diminishes it; thus if one is to be dismissed, opera should be banished with a bon voyage. The mere sensual pleasure derived from opera can neither incline the mind to correct understanding nor inspire public spirit, virtue or liberty as poetry always does. Soft and delicious music soothes the senses and makes a man in love with himself and too little fond of public issues. It emasculates the mind, thus shaking the foundation of fortitude and destroying public morality. The weakness of operatic expression and sentiment cannot make enough impression to change the soul of the audience, for the listeners become wholly lost in the "softness of luscious sounds" and are "dissolved in the wantoness of effeminate airs." He appeals to the patriot to expel opera from England which, as it corrupts mankind, has a tendency to enslave. As the country is contending for liberty there is need of the spirit which effeminate music debases. Dennis goes so far as to say that the decline of poetry portends the fall of the kingdom, because it brings a slackening of morals and thus an increase in corruption.
Italian opera in any country is pernicious and absurd, for there is something in Italian opera which is barbarous and gothic and thus can be advanced only as the taste of the public is spoiled for enjoyment of more generous arts. In any country opera is a monster; however it is beautiful and harmonious in Italy, while ugly and howling in England. Lastly he appeals to national pride. What must other people think of a whole nation which fosters an art that makes it contemptible?

Addison in his prologue to Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolitus* in 1707, considers the influence Italian music will have on the audience. He believes as Dennis has asserted, that it has a pernicious effect on spirit. Addison sees England gradually numbed and paralyzed by opera. The public, "lulled by sound and undisturbed by wit," is freed from the dull fatigue of thinking. The emphasis in the prologue is both on the unmeaning content of opera and the degenerating effect of nonsense on the audience. The public is pictured as falling into a general coma of inertia.

The *Tatler* no. 4 describes John Dennis' reaction to the Italian opera *Pyrrhus and Demetrius*, which had been running since December, a matter of five months. In the essay of 1706 he attacked operas as immoral. Now the Tatler reports that at *Pyrrhus* his spleen was so extremely moved that he said he intended to publish another treatise against operas. He gave as his reason that the operas had already inclined the nation to thoughts of peace and if they were tolerated they would dispirit the English morale to such an extent that the war would not be carried on.

Dennis continues his attack in the *Essay Upon Public Spirit* published in 1711. He informs us that he has omitted the greater part of his censure of opera for fear of offending some
of his estimable friends. Their love for novelty and pride of showing their power at too great an expense diverted them from considering the harm they were doing both to themselves and the public. These nobles forsook their serious affairs for a wanton and sensual trifle not worthy of their dignity. The pleasure that effeminate music gives is merely sensual, and is unmanly alike for him who gives or him who receives it. In its short stay opera has made British wit a jest, and if it remains, in the next few years it may make British courage a jest also, for it has already had that effect in Italy and to a certain extent in France. These people should take Italian music away from the Haymarket to their homes and hug it there like their secret sins. He asks why they abuse the Queen's authority, to enervate and debauch her people, so contrary to her Royal intention and the express words of her license. They seem willing to sacrifice even the honor and interest of their country for their own pleasure. He calls Italy the most profligate part of the globe, whose luxury and effeminacy has a very detrimental effect on British virtue.

In the "Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris, concerning the strange and deplorable frenzy of Mr. John Dennis," Pope makes reference to Dennis' views concerning the harmful influence of Italian opera on public spirit. He pictures Dennis in a distressed state repeating, "Opera! Opera! Must our reputation be lost to all foreign countries! O destruction! perdition!" This does not mean that Pope approved opera; it was merely an opportune point upon which to attack Dennis.

Gray in a letter to Walpole in 1734 tells of an amusing encounter he had with an opera fan who had become more than slightly inebriated. This chap said that opera was the ruin of the na-
tion; no honest people attended them and those who did were ashamed of themselves. Gray does not agree with this and it does not interfere with his opera attendance. This attitude may be traced back to the Spectator which was virtually a handbook for polite society to use in its criticisms of current customs and entertainments.

Henry Carey in "A Satire on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age" objects to the softening and demoralizing influence of the operas. People no longer talk of the army and the fleet but of the sweet warble of Cuzzoni and the delicious pipe of Senesino and he adds that were she English she would be hissed off the stage. He objects to the fact that all they can talk about is opera, for they have lost interest in matters of national import. This is obvious exaggeration, but perhaps Carey hoped to point out the folly of such an attitude with the hope that it might effect a reformation.

Chesterfield's essay in Common Sense No. 89 (1738) considers in what manner the cessation of opera might possibly effect the public and whether it would be a national loss or a national advantage. He points to the recent Licensing Act as a recognition of the importance of public diversions in influencing the moral attitude of the people. His dismissal of the opera as trivial in influence is a radical change from Dennis' views. We must consider, however, Chesterfield's style of criticism: he regarded belittlement as more effective than denunciation.

An attack on the opera prefaced by an attack on the present state of music is found in the Gazetteer for November 1754. The author declares it, in spite of its great vogue, most manifestly an effeminate and therefore a dangerous art in a free
nation. We have seen that one of the favorite criticisms of the Italian nation as a whole was its effeminacy, which was diametrically opposed to the rugged Britons who wanted to be left "rough and free." This author appeals to the criticism Addison has voiced and says he has adequately pointed out the absurdities of Italian operas. He closes with a challenge to his reader to dismiss opera to the lands of effeminacy and slavery, and to glory in the manly productions of Shakespeare and Garrick.

The second phase of the attack on opera as immoral centers about the Italian castrati, with many veiled allusions about them and the effect they might produce in English society. As early as 1700 Dennis in the prologue to Iphigenia attacks the Italian musicians on this score. He reminds the reader that soft Italian music has made slaves of those in southern climes and wonders what the soul of Henry and Edward would say if they should return and see a bearded rather than a female audience dissolved and dying by an eunuch's song. It was bad enough for the women to be softened by music, but when men capitulated the probable result was alarming.

Farquhar's prologue to the Inconstant pictures the audience as a hungry guest and the prologue as the bill of fare. He satirizes the Italian castrati thus,

"Your rarity for the fair guest to gape on,
Is your nice squeaker, an Italian capon." 26

In this prologue is found the oft quoted line, "An opera, like an oglio, nicks the age," which belittles opera by a comparison with an oglio (a song patched together from many different sources; technically called a pasticcio) as suiting the age exactly. The virile British critic had a great scorn for the effeminate Italian singers who were sweeping all before them with their incredible popularity.
Steele in the epilogue to the *Tender Husband* speaks of the danger when he warns husbands that the "women say their eunuch is a friar." In Dennis' prologue to the *Subscribers for Julius Caesar* he describes the ancient time when,

"No eunuch's yet had come, with their melting strains T'emasculate the generous English vein."28

Dennis wrote a letter to a Mr. Richard Norton in August, 1708, commending him for his efforts in the behalf of drama when the great majority of people of quality were vigorously supporting the importation of Italian singers. He fears that effeminate music will emasculate the mind of men, metamorphose the British nation, and with songs like those of the sirens, change our very natures. This is his fear-inspired attack against the effect that the immigration of castrati from Italy will have on society in general.

The *Tatler* No. 20 contains an account of a visit paid to Bickerstaff by a distressed wife, who says her husband is "no more a husband than an Italian singer." This remark shows the general contempt among critics for the condition of the Italian singers. Most of the great Italian singers were listed as soprano or contralto, the same as female singers.

Dennis, writing in 1711 in the *Essay on Public Spirit*, points out that a musical voice is natural only to some species of birds, but only accidental with men. It is thus against nature for a man to have a musical voice. A cock nightingale, therefore, sings better than Nicolini; in fact, in Dennis' opinion there is a better opera in Kentish Grove in April than ever was in Rome or Venice. In concluding his essay Dennis warns the ladies that they mistake their interest when they
encourage operas. The more men are enervated and emasculated by the softness of Italian music, the less will they care for women and the more for one another. There are certain pleasures which are contrary to the women's best interests that passed the Alps about the same time as operas. If the frantic rate of subscription is continued Dennis believes we shall come to see one beau take another for better or for worse.

The epilogue to Love and a Bottle refers to the popularity of Italian castrati. When the public tired of male throats

"We got you an eunuch's pipe, Signior Pomponi, That beardless songster we could ne'er make much on Because the women discovered a blotch in his 'scotch-eon.'"

The directors have ordered another Italian castrate to satisfy popular demand.

James Ralph in discussing opera and the singers in Taste of the Town says that it is absurd for people to object to Italian singers because, he says ironically, "we can never have singers as good as the Italians, as long as our laws in relation to emasculation confine that small ceremony to the bodies of our beasts." This is one of the strong points of attack on Italian singers...their voices are unnatural. Some few, as a result of emasculation, did have beautiful voices, but the large majority seem to have obtained only a shrill squeak.

In the epilogue to The Captives Gay brings the attack of irrationality against the opera, saying that he has known some women who confessed only a tear when touched by sense alone, but languish for three hours on hearing the soft voice of an Italian wether.
Intelligencer No. 3, written by Swift, attempts to show and illustrate the purpose and character of Gay's Beggars Opera. He says that Beggars Opera quite justly expresses the unnatural taste for Italian music which developed in England. He recalls an old gentleman's prophecy "concerning an unnatural vice which grew so frequent several years ago, that many were prosecuted for it." The old fellow said he was sure that it would be the fore-runner of Italian operas and singers, and then we should want nothing but stabbing and poisoning to make us perfect Italians.

In the epilogue to the Faithful Shepherd (1736) spoken by Mrs. Furnival, the opera stage is described where Italian fancy had wrought wondrous scenes and music banished thought from the stage. Where heroes used to tread, now is found a beardless throng, "warblers who ravish only with a song." Charon, one of the characters in Eurydice (1737) attacks the Italian castrati. A singer has presented himself to be ferried over the Styx into the nether world and this character says it is against the law, for nobody has been admitted but men and women, and this person, Signior Quaverino, is neither the one nor the other. Henry Carey, referring to the "hateful" opera, speaks of

"........a castrate wretch of monstrous size, Who squeaks out a treble, shrill as infants' cries." Hogarth is obviously satirizing the monstrous castrate with the disproportionate size of Farinelli in the print including as well Cuzzoni and Senesino. Ireland in the "illustration" points out the inconsistency of creatures "by their smooth chins and simple simper known" portraying the majesty of Egypt and the mighty virile Caesar.
In Lord Lyttleton's *Persian Letter*, which ridicules opera, the foreigner describes the magnificence of the opera house. He observes that the ladies have no eunuchs among them, but one sang upon the stage and the "luxurious tenderness of his airs seemed fitter to make them wanton than keep them chaste." This critic playfully fears the result of operas on the morals of polite society.

Chesterfield, twenty years later than his essay in *Common Sense*, again satirically refers to the immoral effect of the Italian eunuch on society. This reference is found in a discussion of *virtuosi World* No. 98. He makes two proposals at the end of the essay. The second is of a private nature and entreats that no virtuoso whose voice is below a contralto be taken to the country seat of any family whatsoever. The implication here is obvious for he is definitely ridiculing the Italian eunuch.

In the *London Magazine* for April, 1757, appears an advertisement followed by an interesting comment. The advertisement had originally appeared in the *Public Advertiser* for April 7th and made known that Signora Mingotti desired prompt payment of the subscriptions for her appearance the next season. The author of the comment was considerably shocked that she entered such an advertisement on Good Friday, and hoped her father confessor would enjoin her to a proper penance. He is so unfavorable to operas in general and Mingotti in particular that he suggests a new vagrant act, "that after such a day all Italian singers should be forced to depart or enter a house of correction." He advocates this because they are usually the "mere dregs of
their own country and always a detriment and dishonor to ours."

Fearing, like Dennis, the immoral effect of Italian opera, he cites especially the vicious character of the singers as a danger to the welfare of the nation.

The fact that the opera was in great fashion in the early part of the century brought much criticism on this score. We may gather from *Tatler* No. 16 in a letter from Castabella that the opera is frequented by fashionable society and that there many trivial rivalries were displayed. In a letter of 1709 Swift writes to Robert Hunter from London that the town is nine times madder after operas than ever before. John Ireland in *Hogarth Illustrated* refers to Italian opera as "the grand pursuit of the fashionable world." *Spectator* No. 81 is in line with the *Tatler* extract. Here Addison stresses the point that the chief satisfaction in attending the Haymarket was not the enjoyment of music, but the opportunity to air social and political differences.

*Spectator* No. 205 contains a letter from a clergyman describing a modish new comer to his church. As a result of her passion for the opera fad she disturbs the remainder of the congregation with her Italian style of singing the Psalms. She will not sing "All people that on earth do dwell" in the old solemn time but in a different key, running divisions on the vowels in imitation of Nicolini. Another feature of her affectation is holding a note after the congregation has released it, and quavering it to some sprightly opera air.

*Spectator* No. 212 by Steele contains a letter from a hen-pecked husband, whose wife pretends to a taste for Italian music. She taunts her husband because of his lack of apprecia-
tion of Italian, for she says it grows "fascinating" when one comes to know a little of the language. These people are obviously from the middle class, perhaps newly rich, and are imitating the fad of the nobility and gentry. They have no comprehension or real appreciation of music. In Spectator No. 323 we see again that people go to opera and support the Italian importation because it is the fashionable thing to do. Clorinda's entry in her journal tells of her attendance at the opera, but she did not go to hear the music, she went because it was the smart thing to do. When she records the event she mentions people present and their actions, but nothing of the opera. From No. 38 of Mist's Journal (1715) we see that the opera is fashionable, for the author tells of the beau who practices affected airs from the operas.

Cibber's prologue to Caesar in Egypt reflects the prevailing taste of the upper classes for Italian opera when he says,

"Others, perhaps in a politer throng, might better have been pleased had Caesar sung."

It also contains an attack on the fashionable preference for Italian singers.

The Free-thinker No. 68 (1718) feels that operas are somewhat limited in their appeal in England because the people are not so well prepared to understand the language of music as they are to apprehend expressions of wit and humor. For this reason, then, operas cannot be properly considered public shows, but entertainments for a select audience. The fact, however, that the select audience was the privileged class made the lower classes imitate the fad. It seems that perhaps the author of
of this article has overlooked the great popularity of the Italian operas which followed the production of *Rinaldo*. Truly it was an elegant diversion, but one that many aspired to.

John Gay writes to Swift from London in 1723 and describes music as the reigning amusement of the town. He says no one is allowed to say 'I sing' but an eunuch or an Italian woman. Now the fashionable opera-goers, those who formerly could not distinguish one tune from another, have all become judges of music. Swift in the *Intelligencer* No. 3 repeats this when he says that he is told that there are few good judges of music and among those who crowd the operas nine out of ten go there merely out of curiosity, fashion or affectation. The opera is not being patronized by the true musicians, but by a group who deemed it fashionable to attend.

*Common Sense* for June 24, 1738, discusses fashion. When Farinelli first came to England there was not a mercer's wife who did not run to the Haymarket with the day's earnings to yawn over music she had no taste for and to listen to a language she did not understand. Such women acquired no liking for the opera but so desired to seem diverted that they felt uneasy if they did not go there at least once a week. The author notes that this "exotic and fashionable" taste has grown out of vogue and a lady may confess a preference for a good English play without seeming impolite.

Chesterfield in his attack on Italian opera in *Common Sense* No. 89 discusses very lightly and ironically its fashionableness. He was apprehensive lest the cessation of operas should be a great handicap to the young gentlemen of "wit and pleasure." He is assured by a young beau whom he approached on the subject
that the airs of the opera no longer soften and melt the softest breasts because now the composers and performers only show what tricks they can play and this has taught the ladies to play tricks. The beau confesses, however, that beaux would miss the opera book in their profession, which they could make shift to read in English, because they contained sentiments suitable for every occasion.

Cibber in his *Apology* says that the inclination of the people of quality in England led to the importation of Nicolini—probably the greatest singer of his generation. Without fashionable support, opera might not have had the success it enjoyed. Only the wealthy could afford to bring the outstanding Italian singers and composers to England. Though Cibber always spoke highly of Nicolini as an actor, we cannot fail to detect a criticism against the fashion of the hour.

In verses entitled "Spotter's Rambles" we are given an interesting picture of the fashionable congregation. This confirms the testimony in *Spectator* No. 205 concerning the fashionable parishioner who sang the ritual in an Italian manner. In this poem, however, the "maid who would die for an opera air" would not sing the anthem at all, out of scorn very likely for the old tunes and meters. Henry Carey in "Blunderella, the Impertinent" ridicules the fashionable taste for operas as well as the rudeness of Blunderella. He protests against blindness to native talents and slavish adoration of the Italian singers. Social chatter was full of references to the opera and its songs, composers and performers. In the case of Blunderella,

"T'amo tanto was a song,
Would give her pleasure all day long."
The epilogue to Samuel Foote's *Author* written by a lady and spoken by Mrs. Clive illustrates the point that attendance at the opera was a polite fad and that people did not go for the music. These people go to the plays for the same trivial reason: to be in a fashion parade. These people shun an opera when the attendance is thin because of their shallow reasons for going. It was a minor tragedy to attend when there were not enough male escorts to hand the ladies to their chairs.

*Rambler* No. 42 contains a letter describing the "misery of a modish lady in solitude." She is in the country and has no conversation to offer the society of the country community, because she and the country people have no mutual interests. They called on her from curiosity to see a "fine lady," but since they had no interest in plays, operas, or music she could not talk to them, that composing her range of knowledge. Goldsmith's epilogue to *She Stoops to Conquer* reviews the fourth act in which the madame "pretends to taste" and goes to the opera in an effort to climb socially.

"........., at operas cries caro!
And quits her Nancy Dawson for the faro."

Another epilogue written to the same play by J. Cradock also refers to the opera as a fashionable place to go, which is drawing away the audience from the plays which "an't polite."
II

IRRATIONAL

The Augustan Age, in which Italian opera made its appearance and progress in England, was an age of reason. This form of foreign art was considered irrational by a majority of critics. The defect of irrationality was one of the most commonly mentioned criticisms in the eighteenth century comments on opera. In the first place, opera made no appeal to the mind; it entertained the eyes and ears, but it had no rational purpose, and thus had no uplifting moral result. Serious drama was often regarded as an instrument by which moral truth could be taught and illustrated. A drama's artistic beauty alone, was not enough of an excuse for its being—it must teach. Opera rapidly grew to require the use of the Italian language exclusively on the operatic stage in London. This practice was considered irrational and ties in with the previous attitude that the opera could not teach, for in this case only a small minority of the audience could understand what was being related. Some critics attacked it because of the effect it had on the audience. Not only did opera cause a suspension of rational processes during the performance, but its effect often lasted afterwards causing a degeneration in taste. Lastly some critics, most notably the contributors to the Tatler and Spectator, subjected stage decorations and machinery to the test of
reason. Particularly in the early part of the century this was an issue when the public had demanded more and more elaborate effects and the opera undertook to satisfy this desire. The following extracts will serve to illustrate these points.

Thomas Tickell first gained the notice of Addison by his verses in praise of Rosamond, (1709) They contain a strong and well-founded censure of Italian opera. He refers to them as "enriched with songs, but innocent of thought," This is an unmitigated evil to the Augustan critic and he says continuing,

"Britannia's learned theatre disdains, Melodious trifles, and enervate strains; And blushes, on her injured stage to see Nonsense well tuned, and sweet stupidity."

Then he turns to a panegyric exalting Addison, and praises his opera for its poetic beauty and for its thought and sense in contrast to Italian opera.

"Yet in such charms the noble thoughts abound, That needless seem the sweets of easy sound."

Charles Gildon in his Life of Betterton emphasizes the irrationality of Italian opera. We may attribute this attack in part to jealousy because the opera was beginning to steal the audience from the stage. He proposes to say something of operas, which have been dangerous rivals of the drama, though they are clogged with so many adventitious and accidental absurdities, that they are to be excluded from the list of rational diversions. He regretfully relates that people of figure who should have supported reasonable pleasures have been the very ones who conspired to their ruin by prodigal subscriptions for squeaking Italians——an entertainment only of the eyes and ears. He laments the throwing away on the Italians of thousands of pounds
which would have provided a rational diversion, in which, in-
cidentally, he was actively engaged. Gildon gives the text of
St. Evremond's letter to the Duke of Buckingham. St. Evremond
frankly admits that the magnificence and machines of opera some-
times afford him passing pleasure but where the mind has so little
to do, then wonders soon become tedious. Recitative is so dull
and tiresome that it makes him sleepy and eager for the opera to
end. The Author in Fielding's Eurydice (1737) says that he does
not care to tire his audience too much with recitative because he
has observed that it causes them to go to sleep. Evremond goes
on to say that singing the whole of the drama is as unnatural as
if the cast had conspired to treat in music all affairs both
common and important. Then Gildon continues his own attack on the
opera whose airs "touch nothing but the ear" and thus vanish as
soon as heard. Therefore it is as scandalous to be pleased with
anything irrational and obscure as with Jack Pudding. In conclu-
sion he blames any deficiency in the domestic stage to the nobil-
ity who neglected it in favor of opera.

Nicholas Rowe in the Prologue to The Royal Convert (1707)
attacks opera, chiefly we may suppose, because it drew the audi-
ence away from the domestic stage, the source of Rowe's liveli-
hood. At this time Valentini and Margarita were the chief Ital-
iан singers. He treats opera as a vice comparable to drinking,
but drinking is to be preferred to opera because "there's some-
thing more than sound, there's sense in Claret." This is not a
serious criticism of the opera but it shows the popularity of the
idea that it was irrational.

The Prologue to Taverner's The Maid the Mistress (1708)
expresses the same attitude. He describes "neglected Drama's state" which has come to this condition through the audience's love of Italian eunuchs. In spite of this prevailing taste the author has endeavored to please without song or dance, and if he fails he will be patient. He

"Can see the gentle song-sick milksop steer,
And cry, O Lord, what barbarous stuff is here?"

Taverner proposes to offer wit and comedy to please and on failing he will call fair Tofts and heavenly Margarita to give soft music while he dies of spleen.

Congreve wrote an epilogue to be used at the opening of the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket in 1705 with an Italian pastoral. He writes that the play pleases with sound and show and perhaps in time the Theatre will entertain with sense, but that would be too expensive at present. Congreve, whose excellent plays were neglected for Italian strains with no meaning or improvement to the mind, thus ironically satirizes the expense of supporting Italian music. In the prologue to Cibber's Love in a Riddle there is a plea to "let your sounds have sense."

England seems to have dispensed with English singers for others supposedly superior. Cibber questions, "If singing is but a harmless revel of the heart why can't native tongues have a chance?" The public pants instead for airs that these "learned warblers" only chant. Foote wrote a prologue for Mr. Yates to be spoken at a new theatre built for him in Birmingham and he describes conditions in London. He is leaving all the dangers of the Italian shore and

"Where fashion and not feeling, bears the sway,
Whilst sense and nature coyly keep away."
Steale in **Tatler** No. 4 for April 19 contains comment on the opera *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* which was performed in the Haymarket with great favor and applause. This critic is displeased because he feels the stage should be an entertainment of the reason, and all the faculties. The condition of being pleased with the suspense of the intellect for three hours and being given up to the shallow satisfaction of the eyes and ears only, seems to arise rather from the degeneracy of the understanding, than an improvement of diversions. It was impossible for the understanding to have any part in the pleasure because a great part of the performance was in Italian.

In **Tatler** No. 20 Steele voices the usual criticism of the too frequent use of the Italian language. We are told of Camilla whose mind broke before her voice and for fear of being overheard and her quality known she usually sang in Italian. Camilla is the title role in an opera and the name has reference to Mrs. Tofts who became famous in this part. The report came back to London from Italy, where she had gone seeking new triumphs, that she had become partially deranged. This rumor has never been substantiated and we may take the above remark of Steele's as more playful than serious.

In **Spectator** No. 18 Addison gives a "Faithful Account" of the Italian opera. He satirizes the poetasters and fiddlers of the town whose motto has been "that nothing is capable of being set to music, that is not nonsense." This admonition was obeyed by translating the Italian operas into English, but there was no danger of injuring the sense of them and the translators made up any words they wished. Soon the audience grew tired of understand-
ing part of the opera and therefore to ease themselves entirely of the fatigue of thinking, so ordered it, that the whole opera was performed in an unknown tongue. This reduced the purpose of the theatre to the purely trivial basis of entertainment. Addison scarcely knows how to confute so patent an absurdity which is made more astonishing by the fact that it is the taste of the persons of greatest politeness who have established opera. Addison admits the place of music as an agreeable entertainment; but he, like Plato, would banish it if it would make the audience incapable of hearing sense and thus exclude arts that have a much greater tendency to the refinement of human nature.

In *Spectator* No. 29 Addison discusses the recitative. It was introduced with the Italian operas and at first the English audience were quite startled and regarded it as unnatural and absurd. They were not ready to grant the conventions of the stage to opera. They were surprised to hear generals singing the word of command, and ladies delivering messages in music; they could not forbear laughing when they heard a lover chanting out a billet-doux, and even the superscription of a letter set to a tune. Addison, however, does not find it as illogical as the old method pursued by Purcell, a mixture of aria and speech. The audience condemned the convention of recitative as absurd, though they were certainly willing to grant the convention of soliloquy to the legitimate stage.

In *Spectator* No. 31 Addison ridicules the use of the Italian language on the English stage in describing his encounter with a "Projector." This gentleman had a scheme for a new opera to be called "The Expedition of Alexander the Great" which would
be a composite of all the amusements and entertainments in the town. He gave a synopsis of the opera and then added that it would be entirely in Greek, which was a tongue he was sure would wonderfully please the ladies and the whole audience because there were fewer of them who were familiar with Greek than with Italian. Addison, like most critics, failed to realize the true reason for the use of the Italian language. At this time the best singers were Italians who did not care to take the time to learn English. They lived before the day of correspondence courses whereby one can learn a language in ten easy lessons. Because of their superior training and talent Italian came to be used exclusively for the opera by 1710. Addison and many others were willing to grant that Italian was admirably fitted for vocal expression with its pure vowels and lack of harsh consonants and gutturals, and yet they attack the use of the language in England as irrational.

John Byrom mentions opera unfavorably for its lack of rationality thus, in "Remarks on Epistles from Aristippus in Retirement," (1728) "opera in one sense is but superfluous expense." He compares the composers, Handel and Bononcini, to Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee as in his famous and oft quoted epigram. He had a hearty contempt which grew into something stronger, for things theatrical in general and for things operatic in particular.

In the Guardian No. 124, (1713) Addison satirizes and attacks the senselessness and inanity of the Italian opera with reference to its text. He inserts a nonsensical poem which repeats one line four times. He feels sure it will be highly ac-
ceptable to all those who admire the translation of the Italian opera. This charming bit will make the "Lion" roar like a nightingale.

In 1719 Dennis wrote a letter to Steele "Declaring the reasons for which he published the two volumes of Select Works," which is contained in Original Letters Familiar, Moral, and Critical. He feels that there has been a "conspiracy among the fools of all sorts in the commonwealth of learning to exalt folly at the expense of common sense, and make stupidity triumph over merit." As a result the British Parnassus has come to an impoverished condition, for it has been abandoned by Apollo and the Muses, who refused to honor a place where common sense had fled and eunuch's songs met with applause.

Francis Gentleman as he expresses himself in the Dramatic Censor considers the serious Italian operas entirely undesirable though he confesses a partiality for music. Opera carries "absurdity in its front and absolutely puts nature out of countenance." He says that it is needless to prove this point, for it is obvious to all readers and to go into detail would insult their intelligence and knowledge.

In the Templer No. 2 (1731) is described a "club" modeled after the one developed in the Spectator. One of the group, Manfario, is opposed to operas, the chief diversion and delight of another member. He says nothing is so absurd or unnatural as a drama to set to music. He adds that it sickens him "to see a Caesar, Scipio, or Alexander intent upon Crotchets, to keep in with the fiddles and come well off at a close." To his attack the opera patron responds: that sense has nothing to do at an opera--
music is the business and nothing more is expected there.

For him music is as expressive as words, and to support this he quotes Dryden, who had said that a musician by his harmony could command every passion of the mind. The Templer attempts to modify the quarrel by granting some place to each side. He says if notes by themselves have great force of expression, might they not receive an additional power from a set of well-chosen words.

When the singer Durastanti left England Pope, at the request of the Earl of Peterborough, composed for her a few hasty verses of no great merit. Dr. Arbuthnot in turn burlesqued these few lines in the form of a hail and farewell, in which he attacks, not so much the opera, as the irrationality which it had brought out in the audience. "Puppies whom I now am leaving, merry sometimes, always mad, who lavish most when debts are craving." Then he continues,

"Happy foil, and simple crew!
Let old sharpers yield to new;
All your tastes be still refining;
All your nonsense still more shining."

He attacks the ignorance of the public who are entertained by such nonsense and he makes the satire more keen by having Durastanti, an Italian, recognize it. He also attacks their irrational extravagance in lavish gifts to the opera and, in short, makes out the English public as little more than dupes.

The Author's Farce by Fielding, produced in 1729, includes a puppet show entitled The Pleasures of the Town, and as would be expected the puppet show attacks opera in a very effective manner. One of the characters in the play, Witmore, advises the young poet to write nonsense. He says "when fools lead the
town, would a man think to thrive by his wit? Write operas, write Hurlothrumbos, and you will get encouragement." Signior Opera is one of the characters in the puppet show, and on his entrance he sings a little ditty relating the applause he is accustomed to, but mentions some hissing. Later we see the Court of the Goddess of Nonsense where Orator, Don Tragedio, and Sir Farcical Comic compete for her prize, but she awards the treasure to Signior Opera though he did not even enter the competition. One of the characters of the Farce comments on the Goddess of Nonsense's love of recitative and music and she proves this by falling in love with Opera. Mrs. Novel, formerly married to him, renews her claim and the Goddess says she cannot be charmed except by music. Soon the Goddess of Nonsense chooses the absent Opera for her arch poet. Tragedio is jealous, for he wants the chaplet and challenges Opera to fight for it, but Signior Opera sings so beautifully and movingly that his opponent sheathes his sword, not having the heart to kill him. Count Ugly, from the Opera House in the Haymarket, is announced by the Messenger of the Goddess of Nonsense, as one who,

"Long in the world your noble cause he fought, Your laureat there, your precepts still he taught."

The prize has already been awarded and the Count is content for Opera to wear the laurel, but he requests the Masquerades. Thus Fielding bitterly denounces the dominion of Nonsense and the favor accorded it by the audience.

John Gay wrote a very interesting letter to Swift on February 15, 1728, following the successful debut of the Beggars Opera. He speaks of the printed score of the opera and ridicules
the present popularity of opera scores printed in Italian for use at the performances. Lord Cobham had suggested that he print the opera in Italian over against the English that the ladies might understand what they read. As we have noted above, one of the common criticisms of opera was because it was sung in Italian and thus was rendered unintelligible to the greater part of the audience. Gay however has descended to the level of satire.

James Ralph in his "Essay on Dramatic Music" in Taste of the Town, discusses fully the Italian opera. He begins with a history of the type and says that in the beginning the Italians attempted to restore the grandeur of the classical theatres and in so doing revived the chorus, sans the magnificence of the old tragedy, believing it to be more generally entertaining. Italy was at that time "infected with Gothic whims, licences, and trifling ornaments in everything polite" and thus they developed an entertainment consisting wholly of music, dancing, and machinery. He notes sarcastically that "as an Italian opera can never touch above one part in four of a British audience, it is very probable their theatre will be crowded as long as England is a nation." He next proceeds to list objections to the Italian opera, and then attempts to answer them, concluding with suggestions for improvement. Three of the four objections may be traced back to the frequent criticism on the basis of irrationality. Ralph's method of attack is extremely subtle. When he explains the objections he apparently refutes them, but when he suggests improvements we are aware that he has his tongue in his cheek. The first objection is on the score that the operas are performed in a language little understood, a thing its enemies call highly unnatural. Ralph as-
serts that Italian is without a doubt the most proper language to be sung and cites Dryden as an authority to support him. He reminds the public that the English page always leads in the Opera book and thus national honor is brought off safe. Also England cannot have native performers of the mother tongue who will equal the excellent singers from Italy; thus English opera is defeated before it begins. Ralph suggests that opera plots employ characters from middle and lower rather than the upper class. This device would forestall quarrels among the Italian singers, especially those of the fair sex, who were causing dissension by their ambition to have the most noble part. And he feels this expediency will also solve the problem of conflicts between the composers. The second objection is made by those who are pleased with the music, but are violently opposed to recitative. He says this is a rather ill-formed criticism and adds that if you take this away you will have no opera—however he does not attempt to prove this point. As a solution he would suggest that all the singers be sufficiently skilled in dancing to dance the whole recitative. Here again he is satirizing both recitative and dancing in the opera as irrational. The last and fourth objection to opera is that it does not conform to the rules laid down by Aristotle and Rapin. This objection is suggested by stiff pedants, who forget that opera is the tyrant of the stage and is subject to no rules nor limitations. He can offer no suggestion, for he says ironically that the objection is groundless. He mentions a fifth objection raised not by the opponents, but by the admirers of opera. They complain that the operas have too great simplicity! He criticizes their "too great sameness" which
attack probably was justified for they were all alike in their extravagant machinery and costume. In conclusion he asserts that by this time he is sure all the thinking readers are convinced that opera is a perfect entertainment—with some disorders perhaps, but none that are incurable.

In the *Prompter* No. 12 (1734) the opera is again berated for its nonsense. The author shows that the opera is the happy medium between the extremes of Tragedy and Comedy. Some feel that there is sorrow enough in the world without attending tragedy to see more of it—they want light entertainment. Others object to the farces and comic amusements because they are too light and indecent and give hints to attentive wives how to cuckold their husbands politely. Since opera professes no sense at all it becomes the mean between two extremes. This author regrets that men of quality and all distinctions have learned to live with this kind of entertainment in a kind of lulled sensibility. He compares the introducers of Italian opera to a politic, small coal-man who gained patrons by stupidity. In these last two sentences the author's real opinion is expressed.

The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1734 contains an article from *Prompter* No. 13, entitled "Common-sense strayed from the Theatres." The author attacks the opera because there is no plot, meaning nor connection in the opera story. The audience cannot understand one thing of what is sung, and even those who do are not a jot better. The noblemen are supporting opera and it is permissible for them to do what they please, but the author fears for the day when the tradesman may catch the infection and grow
foreign-tasted, for then there will be no one with common-
sense. Opera is regarded as a violation of common sense and
an unreasonable fad pursued by the nobility and gentry.

Henry Carey, in the dedication to The Dragon of Want-
ly (1737) addressed to his composer John Lampe, voices the usual
criticism on the ground of irrationality. He recalls their en-
joyable work together, "the purpose being to display in English
the beauty of nonsense so prevailing in Italian operas." This
pleasure has been transmitted to the good-natured part of mankind
who have taken the joke and enjoyed the laugh. The morose and
disgruntled however were angered by it! The epilogue to Dodsley's
Toy-Shop sarcastically asserts that "good sense and honest satire
now offend" because of the late madness for "divinely soft" Ital-
ian music. If a playwright expects to find favor with plain truth,
it is an indication that he knows little of mankind.

"But hope to please with sense? Alas!
How vain is the pretence?" 111

The Bee or Universal Weekly Intelligencer No. 113 (1734)
contains an extract from Fog's Journal directed against the reign-
ing passion for operas and other entertainments. It points out
the utter uselessness of an opera and how absurd it is to go to
an entertainment and return no wiser than before. The only possi-
ble good result would be that the person might laugh at his own
folly for giving so much for a song. Farinelli with his sweet
pipe has inspired no mercenaries with more honorable and patriotic
sentiments than they possessed before attending. No opera, how-
ever, great, can make a man ashamed of his follies or teach him to
avoid silly habits; instead, great numbers of people have become
extremely ridiculous because of it.
Fielding's play *Pasquin* (1736) is a very cogent attack on Italian opera. Its sub-title is "A Dramatic Satire on the Times; being a rehearsal of two plays—the second of which is a tragedy called the Life and Death of Commonsense." In the early part of the play an officer enters and says that the "Queen of Ignorance has landed in this realm with a vast power from Italy and France of singers, fiddlers and dancers." Queen Commonsense orders preparation for defense, but some of her subjects turn traitor. Fielding employs three ghosts vaguely reminiscent of the three witches in *Macbeth*. The second ghost bids Commonsense arise and not suffer eunuchs to be hired at a vast price to be impertinent to the audience. In the second act Law brings the news that Ignorance with her train of foreigners (all foes to Commonsense) have arrived at Covent-Garden and he suggests that all join their forces with hers. Now the stage is set for the entrance of Queen Ignorance, who makes a triumphant entry attended by her singers, fiddlers and dancers. She is informed that the place she has chosen to fix her standard is Covent-Garden. Queen Ignorance expresses apprehension lest she has ventured too close to those theatres where Commonsense maintains her garrison of mighty force. She need have no fear however, for they come over to the side of Ignorance and Commonsense is left alone to enter a hostile group. Commonsense inquires her crime, and Ignorance says her subjects complain that "she imposes a tax of thought upon their minds, which they are too weak to bear." Commonsense is killed and the play concludes with her ghost which says it will haunt all those who murder her. The epilogue to the play is spoken by the ghost of Commonsense who pleads that the
audience indicate their favor of sense with applause. Then she attacks the Italians who with their soft music indulge the ear but are so rude in their manners that they treat as beggars those who give the feast.

Cibber in *An Apology for His Life* discusses the Italian opera. He gives a brief account of its origin and progress on the English stage, in relation to the history of the domestic stage. He has been explaining why the opera had lost favor in the early thirties, and says that this kind of entertainment was so entirely sensual that it could not possibly get the better of reason, except by its novelty, which could only be supported by an annual change of singers. Cibber thus vindicates the reason of the audience who at this time had turned back to the native English stage.

In *Eurydice*, (1737) Fielding gets off some very pointed attacks on the Italian opera. An author and a critic sit between the scenes and comment on the play which is a burlesque of current fashions. The critic notes that Orpheus has returned to recitative and the author says, "Yes sir, just as he lost his senses. I wish your opera composers could give as good a reason for their recitative." Then the author points out how irrational an Italian opera is in England, "for an English people to support extravagant Italian operas of which they understand nor relish, neither the sense nor the sound, is as heartily ridiculous and much of a piece as a eunuch's keeping a mistress; nor do I know whether this ability is more despised by his mistress, or our taste by our singers." Fielding's criticism is not unexpected because as a playwright for the English stage he naturally is opposed to the
opera which at times caused the audience to neglect their
domestic stage.

At the close of Book III of the Dunciad a prophecy
is made that farces, operas, and shows shall overrun the
stage as the forerunners of Dulness's "gentle sway." In
Book IV the prophecy of Book III is fulfilled. The Sciences
are captured and then the successors to them are described.
A phantom, identified as Italian opera, prepares for the
opening of the grand Sessions. She scorns the muses and
wishes to silence them all. She advocates a reign/division
or the trills taught exclusively in Italian singing schools.
In fact, the editor thinks this is a specific allusion to
Senesino. Italian music shall soon "fritter all the sense"
of the Muses. Rebellion will be entailed, however, if "Music
meanly borrows aid from sense." Then Pope compliments Hand-
el who is arrested by the "harlot form" and banished to Ire-
land lest he disturb her reign. The editors point out that
Pope's reason for supporting Handel was purely political, as
he was backed at that time by Tory nobles and Pope could thus
make an attack on the Whigs.

A visit to the Opera is described by the heroine in
the fourth book of Pamela. She admits that her want of fashion-
able taste and a knowledge of the language limits her apprecia-
tion of the opera. She regards it unfavorably because it seems
to be an utterly useless diversion. "If one were lost to every
sense but that of harmony, surely the Italian opera would be a
transporting thing! But when one finds good sense, instruction,
and propriety, sacrificed to the charms of sound, what an unedi-
fying, what a mere temporary delight does it afford!" She describes opera as nothing more than vibration of air. Then she repeats some of Mr. B's opinions on the subject and concludes against opera because it has no instructive value or purpose.

Perhaps Lord Chesterfield's attack is the most finely satirical of all. In a letter to his son, January 23, 1752, he describes the merits of various forms of entertainment. When he comes to operas he says they are essentially too absurd and extravagant to mention. He regards them as a magic scene contrived to please the eyes and ears, at the expense of the understanding. He concludes that when he goes to an opera, he leaves his sense and reason at the door with his half guinea and delivers himself up to his eyes and ears. It is too trivial, harmless, and irrational for further comment.

Nevertheless Chesterfield wrote an "Essay on the Italian Opera" which may be found in the World No. 98. This essay is occasioned by the successful production of Ipermestra, starring Mingotti, which took place November 9, 1754. This was the first actual operatic success since 1746, so naturally it would bring comment from the critics. Chesterfield congratulates the audience upon the revival of "that most rational entertainment, an Italian opera." He says they are totally lacking in any influence because their content is nothing (pure nonsense) and in addition since they are in Italian no one can understand them. He describes a recent dangerous innovation by Metastasio when he tried to throw some sense into his operas. Very fortunately it did not take and the operas remained innocent of sense.
An attack on the use of Italian may be found in The Old Maid No. 26. (1756) The author has described Mrs. Clive's humorous imitation of the current female favorite at the Haymarket. Some persons, not deficient in understanding had been so over-lavish in their praise of the Italian opera that this writer was astonished. The writer doubts that they can be adequate judges of the opera when they do not understand the language. This is a logical and practical criticism which was obvious to the majority of serious thinkers.

John Armstrong's Miscellany contains an "Essay on Music." Among other things he treats Italian music and opera. He says that the majority of Italian compositions were distinguished by harmonious sound and nothing more. Italian music is therefore inferior to what is truly pathetic in music—that which arouses the emotions. He observes his countrymen who run mad about imported music. This music only trifles with the ears and as a result Italian music is thrummed over for a season when it is new and then forgotten because it is too insipid to appeal permanently.

In the Gentleman's Magazine for February 1762 is an account of Artaxerxes, an Italian opera by Metastasio, which was translated into English and performed at Covent-Garden. The critic points out that it, like other operas, is full of glaring absurdities which are never remedied. The only importance of the words is as a vehicle for the sound. This grew out of the commonly accepted belief that the English language as a whole was not musical enough for opera; therefore the English opera vocabulary was limited to a few words. Chesterfield in his essay on the Italian opera in the World
No. 98 regards the English librettist's task as a game consisting of juggling the few eligible words into the musical pattern.

Paul Whitehead, writing in 1767, criticizes the opera as irrational in an "Occasional Prologue" spoken at the fall opening of the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden.

"For you, ye fair, who sprightlier scenes may chuse, Where music decks in all her airs the Muse, Gay opera shall all its charms dispense, Yet boast no tuneful triumph over sense; The nobler bard shall still assert his right; Nor Handel rob a Shakespeare of his night." 134

This, though a little more serious, is reminiscent of Nicholas Rowe's prologue mentioned above. He, like the critic-playwright in the early part of the century, did not want to see an opera steal the audience away from the domestic stage. By the time he is writing opera has lost some of its popularity and except for sporadic outbursts did not threaten the popularity of the domestic stage.

In 1790 M. LeTexier wrote *Idées sur l'Opera* which was translated that same year into English because of its wide popularity. In the *Monthly Review* of 1791 we find a brief review of this paper. Le Texier points out the absurdities which were all too conspicuous in the operas as they were conducted at that time and he endeavors to make suggestions which will bring about improvement. The reviewer says that the alterations while quite commendable, are so numerous that he despairs of seeing them put into effect anytime in the immediate future.

Burgoyne's Preface to his *Lord of the Manor* points out that inconsistencies in the operas are often applauded.
He grants that music is the very soul of opera, but feels this no excuse for allowing fable, character, and conduct to be neglected. Opera is very popular in every country, but in none is it subject to the regular rules of drama. Here Burgoyne reveals himself as a critic who believed that arbitrary rules for judging existed.

The fantastic stage decorations were also attacked on the basis of their irrationality. In addition to serious attacks they were ridiculed in a light manner to contribute to the humor of essays. In *Tatler* No. 137 there is an advertisement concerning the benefit for Nicolini followed by a notation about the commercial thunder and lightning which might be purchased. The tone of the advertisement is definitely satirical. "In all operas for the future, where it thunders and lightens in proper time and in tune, the matters of the said lightning are to be of the finest resin, and for the sake of harmony the same which is used to the best cremona fiddles." The advertisement concludes with the height of the ridiculous fad--"the true perfumed lightning is only prepared and sold by Mr. Charles Lille, at the corner of Beaufort Building."

The *British Apollo* No. 115, December, 1710, contains a poem in question and answer form which mildly attacks opera and its absurdities which please only the eye and ear. It describes the new voices brought from foreign parts that grace the theatre and then describes extravagant "machines." The author remarks that it is strange that the arts progress more than ever though surrounded with wars. He refers to Italian opera rather than the other dramatic arts. The implication is
obvious; he feels that something is wrong when the arts progress at a time of war, because at such a time all efforts should be directed to benefiting the country and inspiring the soldiers rather than allowing the progress of irrational and foreign arts. He concludes with a satirical description of Aaron Hill and his promises of extravagant machines which we know were fulfilled in *Rinaldo*.

One of the most famous essays in the *Spectator* is No. 5, written by Addison, and entitled "The Absurdities of the Modern Opera." A line from *Ars Poetica* heads the essay---"Admitted to the sight would you not laugh?"

Addison ridicules the extravagant stage setting employed in *Rinaldo*, Handel's first opera after he arrived in England. He grants that opera may be extravagantly lavish in its decoration because it is only designed to gratify the senses, but he feels that when it descends to the level of the absurd and childish the condition should be pointed out to the admirers as well as the directors of the opera. Such absurdities as a sea of pasteboard, painted dragons spitting fire, and real cascades in artificial landscapes seem utterly ridiculous. "A little skill in criticism would inform us, that shadows and realities ought not to be mixed together in the same piece; and that the scenes which are designed as representations of nature should be filled with resemblances, and not with the things themselves."

Addison tells of meeting a man carrying a cage full of little birds which, he discovered, were to be used in the opera to convey a sense of reality; but their singing was not depended on, for the music proceeded from a consort of flageolets.
and bird calls planted behind the scenes. His subsequent description of the opera would lead us to believe that it was but scarcely more than a display of fireworks (thunder and lightning.)

In Spectator No. 13 the attack on the absurdities of the modern opera is continued in an essay entitled "Conduct of the Lions at the Opera." The text for this essay is from Martial, "Were you a lion, would you behave?" Addison describes the great popularity of the action in Hydaspes in which Nicolini engages in combat with a lion. An early report had been circulated (a publicity stunt on the part of the opera managers quite likely) that a tame lion would be sent from the Tower every night to be killed by Hydaspes. Addison wants to find out the true situation and discovers that the lion is impersonated by a man, and that he has been changed three times during the run of this opera. He gives us the qualifications, merits, and failings of the "lions." He also hints at Nicolini and the lion's friendship which seemed unethical to the eighteenth century audience. They disliked the idea of the two smoking together behind the scenes during the opera. Addison says this never occurs until after the combat has taken place and then the lion is technically dead according to the accepted rules for the drama. Steele gives a letter from the lion in Spectator No. 14. The lion is insulted by insinuations of the preceding number that a more friendly relationship existed between him and Signior Nicolini than is consistent with the valor of the singer's character, or the fierceness of his. He resents that Addison should esteem the foreigner and make fun of a lion who is his own countryman.
Another letter contains a comparison of the puppet show and the opera. Here again Steele assails the absurdities of stage decoration. He expresses disappointment when the promises of the printed opera *Rinaldo* are not fulfilled at the performance. He adds that the animals at the puppet show are far more skillfully trained than sparrows at the Haymarket. Such elaborate machinery as that employed in the opera was likely to be mis-handled by the stage hands so that sometimes a very ludicrous prospect was presented to the audience. Once they forgot to change the side scenes which resulted in a view of the ocean in the midst of a delightful grove. The rougher element in the audience probably considered this the high point of the evening's entertainment.

In *Spectator* No. 22 Steele illustrates the absurdities of the Italian opera. He says "the understanding is now dismissed from our entertainments. Our mirth is the laughter of fools, and our admiration the wonder of idiots; else such improbable, monstrous, and incoherent dreams could not go off as they do, not only with the utmost scorn and contempt, but even with the loudest applause and approbation." Then Steele produces letters from property men and players to prove his point.

In No. 29 Addison pokes fun at the absurdities of the dresses which he observed in French operas based on Italian models. The costumes were modern even for operas whose plot was taken from classical drama. In the *Rape of Proserpine* Pluto put himself in a French equipage and brought Ascalaphus along with him as a valet de chambre. The French consider this gay.
and polite, but Addison calls it folly and impertinence. As a result of these and former reflections the critic concludes that "the arts (music, architecture, painting, poetry, and oratory) are to deduce their laws and rules from the general sense and taste of mankind, and not from the principles of these arts themselves; or, in other words, the taste is not to conform to the art, but the art to the taste."

In Spectator No. 314 we find Steele again using a letter to attack the stage conventions. A letter from Toby Rentfree enters a complaint because Nicolini will not "encore" the part of the opera which was most interesting to him, the killing of the lion. Nicolini does not hesitate to repeat an aria when applauded and Toby, lacking an ear for music, had entertainment only from his eye during the long dispute between the singer and the lion. He concludes with a question directed against the nonsense of the opera, "Why then have not I as much right to have a graceful action repeated as another has a pleasing sound, since he only hears, as I only see, and we neither of us know that there is any reasonable thing doing?"

Another attack on opera shows that the critic felt uneasy when he could not understand the language of the piece. He felt something was being "put over" on him and while they were singing blasphemies and insults in Italian he was unwittingly applauding them. Steele has this feeling as reflected in his epilogue to the Tender Husband. He exhorts the public to admit no longer the Italian "squeaking tribe" to sing in unfamiliar tongues for "'tis popery in wit." They confess that they bring their songs from Rome and for aught the public knows they sing high
mass. Henry Carey echoes almost the same words in his "Satire on the Luxury and Effeminacy of the Age." He hates this singing in an unknown language because it wrongs the reason and senses. He curses the Italian eunuch who may for all he knows be singing mass.

Almost the same reaction is recorded in "Harmony in an Uproar" dated February 1733. In the Miscellaneous Works of Arbuthnot published in 1751 this essay is included, but modern scholars say it is not a true attribution, and probably got in by mistake because of Arbuthnot's friendship with Handel. The article accuses Handel of enchanting the audience for the past twenty years. It expresses uneasiness at his ability to control them through music and goes so far as to say he was becoming a tyrant in musical circles. The author, whoever he may be, rates opera on general principles as a source of "expense, luxury, idleness, sloth, effeminacy, and a damned set of Italian squeakers and fiddlers." Handel is excluded from this general attack.
UNPATRIOTIC

Opera aroused and challenged the growing consciousness of national patriotism, which is evident in many different fields. Englishmen borrowed freely from the continent everything from abstract philosophy to prosaic commodities, but still they were proud of their own country and native genius. With this prevailing tendency we can see how the Italian opera would inevitably be subjected to severe criticism. The opponents ridiculed the Italian singers who were brought to England, in spite of the fact that they surpassed native talent. The critics assert the superiority of native products and particularly berate the Italian opera when it causes a decline in the popularity of the English domestic stage.

One of the earliest patriotic outbursts against importing foreign entertainment may be found in the prologue to Dennis's *Iphigenia* (1700). The Genius of England is the speaker, and laments that she is all forsaken and that Britain has fallen so low that she is abandoned for effeminate arts. She regrets that song and dance are ever popular and leave no place for her exalted strains. This was written before Italian opera had seized the fancy of the English public, but we realize from this comment that the fad for foreign music grew by degrees and did not make a sudden appearance. These verses could
have been written just as pertinently after Italian opera became established.

Some of the patriotic sentiments are in the form of artistic criticism. Dennis in his Reflections On the Essay on Criticism (1713) attacks Pope and, incidentally, the Italian opera. In the Preface he states that much to his sorrow, but true to his prophecy, Italian opera had driven out poetry from the nation as well as the taste for good poetry. Dennis goes on to say that a most "notorious" example of this degeneration in taste is Pope's Essay On Criticism itself and the approbation with which it met. In the body of his paper Dennis admits that some persons of quality have been kind to some particular poet, but at the very same time the nobility have introduced and encouraged Italian opera, which will eliminate the very art of poetry from the kingdom as it has done in every other nation. He wishes for a minister to represent to her Majesty the mischief that these Italians cause both to her subjects and to the arts, and so expel these melodious ballad singers from the nation. Dennis continues the attack on opera in his Remarks on Cato (1713), in which he says that general ill-taste, causing the sinking of the native tragic stage, is traceable to the effect of Italian opera.

Dennis very patriotically declares himself against and condemns those who support opera in his "Essay Upon Public Spirit" (1711). He says that of all the fashions introduced from abroad none show so deplorable a lack of public spirit as the Italian opera. The great encouragement given it is at the expense of all that is good and great in the nation, which is
given away to worthless fools, who pretend to no merit but sound. England has ever been famous for her wisdom, but in¬judicious folly will cause neighbors to call it in question. He appeals to the nobility and says," if they love their country why do they sacrifice its reputation for a song, and sacrifice their noble arts for ones which can only bring dang¬er and infamy? This is no patriotism!" Then he accuses them of the appearance of treachery. One would think they had placed their liberty, property, and religion under the protection of the Italians. How else can their preference be explained for Italian sound to British sense, Italian nonsense to British reason, the blockheads of Italy to their own countrymen who have wit. The nobility generously supported these "exotic worthless wretches" while native experts in arts, who could worthily celebrate the nation's glories and the triumphs of the Queen's reign, were allowed to experience dire want.

As early as 1705, when the Italian invasion, which rapidly gathered momentum, had just begun, we find in the epi¬logue to Steele's Tender Husband an appeal to the audience's patriotism to save the English stage from "foreign insult." He commands, "Arise, ye conquering Britons, rise" and rather than admiring Italian songs, study what the Romans wrote. Then he concludes by challenging all to exalt the language and the English talents,

"Let those derision meet, who would advance Manners of speech, from Italy or France. Let them learn you, who would your favor find, And English, be the language of mankind."164

He points out that since the Britons constantly wage war for liberty they should save the native stage from this foreign in¬
dignity. The fad for Italian music cast aspersions on the superiority of the English stage. A milder attack on this basis may be found in Addison's prologue to *Phaedra and Hippolytus* (1707), a play by Smith. First he describes the condition of the stage flooded with foreign singers and then concludes pessimistically,

> "Our homespun authors must forsake the field,  
> And Shakespeare to the soft Scarlatti yield." 165

Cibber in his epilogue to *The Double Gallant* (1707) pleads with the audience to "speak in claps as loud for sense, as sound." If this play is not successful he swears he will write his next to music and "then he's sure even nonsense will go down." The applause of the audience would demonstrate to the world that the stage was not yet entirely forsaken in "this airy age."

In *Tatler* No. 37 we find a rather bourgeois criticism of the upper class craze for Italian music in Jenny Distaff's account of Tom Belfry. He is a very accomplished man in all gentleman-like activities, but has a healthy dislike for the Italian singers. He bestows more pleasure than they though they sing to full theatres, "for what is a theatrical voice to that of a fox-hunter?" Addison says that native manner, according to customs and known usages, is much more laudable and pleasing than foreign innovations. Pope, in his prologue to *Cato* (1713) raises objections to foreign borrowing in an entirely different and more dignified manner. Cato viewed with scorn "Rome learning arts from Greece, whom she subdued" and likewise Pope indicts the present age for subsisting on French translation and Italian song. Hughes in No. 37 of the *Guardian* patriotic-
ally exalts the musical talent of Mr. Henry Laws, who composed before the Italian opera was introduced into England, and he indicates his preference for native achievements.

In *Tatler* No. 167 there are some reflections on the state of the theatre occasioned by Betterton's death. He was one of the best known actors of the Restoration stage. Steele laments the little relish the gentry and nobility have for the noble representations of tragedy. They are sadly neglected in favor of the operas, which are of no profit beyond the present moment of enjoyment. This was not Steele's only reason for dislike of the opera, but it was a strong one when we recall that he was actively engaged in the domestic theatre. His hostility is evinced by an extract from a letter in the Rundle-Sandys correspondence, which records a rumor that one of Steele's most excellent comedies is to be prohibited from production, lest it should "draw away good company and spoil the relish for Opera, by seducing them with sense, wit and humor." Since the operas were under the direction of the Royal Academy, sponsored by nobility, it was likely that enough pressure could be brought to bear to prevent the performance of Steele's play.

Dennis in the epilogue to his play *The Invader of his Country* (1719), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, says "Eunuchs shall engage to damn the muses, and destroy the stage." As we have noted in many of his works, he patriotically decrying opera because of its harmful influence on the audience. Neglecting the native stage and muse, they devote themselves wholly to this fad.
The poem by Ambrose Philips dedicated to Signora Cuzzoni (1724) visualizes the influence of Italian music as unpatriotic, and exhorts her to depart,

"Leave us as we ought to be, Leave the Britons rough and free." 173

The poem was reprinted in the *Grub Street Journal* for June, 1733, as being yet of popular appeal. Philips argues that because Italy excels in music the English should not attempt imitation, but should encourage native genius which may develop along other lines. He is proud of the British characteristics and wants them emphasized in contrast to the effeminate traits of Italians. Along the same line is John Byrom's "Letter to R. L. Esquire," written on February 20, 1725, berating him for his share in "Opermania."

"And if those ravished ears of thine
Can quit the shrill celestial whine
Of gentle eunuchs, and sustain
Thy native English without pain...."

In the first stanza Byrom is sharp in his attack on Italian singing. His whole poem is an assault on opera and he employs the method of overdrawing the situation to the point of the ridiculous.

David Lewis' *Miscellany* for 1726 contains a very amusing declaration of English patriotism. The poem is an English translation of a "Latin prologue spoke before one of Terence's plays at Westminster; on occasion of a late Boxing Match, between an Englishman and an Italian." The author relates that "Italian strollers" have been lauded and praised in England, because "We've recognized their vocal empire long."
They have even been allowed to "fleece our Isle:"

"" "But when our arms they dare,
And clench the fist, and tempt the boxing war,
Indignant rage our warm plebians fires,
(To sing's Italian, but to fight is theirs!)"

Then follows a description of the combat in which the Italian was overwhelmingly vanquished. In conclusion the writer proudly points out that England now is famous for its "arms," once the glory of Rome, and the Romans are content with the "arts," a degeneration from their former pride.

John Ireland in discussing Hogarth's *Beggars Opera* comments on the Italian influence which Gay stemmed with the ballad opera. Ireland calls opera "that absurd exotic" which was unduly popular and praises Gay on patriotic grounds for opposing soft Italian airs with the old ballads of three kingdoms. Nichols, in his description of this print includes a few verses obviously indebted to Addison's prologue to *Phaedra and Hippolitus*. The concluding couplet is taken directly from Addison with but a minor change in the last line,

"Our homespun authors must forsake the field,
And Shakespeare to the Italian Eunuch's yield."

Ireland also comments on the parties evolved from the quarrels of the singers which he says "to the dishonor of true taste, and to the disgrace of common sense" were entered into with as great zeal as political questions of party. Ireland quotes a poem by Anthony Pasquin in which the "Italian furor" is well ridiculed. He calls the opera at best a national jest" and also berates it because it insults the wit while it flatters the sight.

The epilogue to Fielding's *Intriguing Chambermaid*
(1734) is a sarcastic and bitter attack on the foreign operas which have caused the decreasing popularity of comedy and tragedy. He says there is little fear of his play being damned because there are not enough present to hear it and judge. The Italian warblers are in danger of disapproval, however, because the likelihood of being condemned is in proportion to the size of the audience. Fielding is obviously another disgruntled dramatist who would rather have his plays condemned than ignored. He notes the extension of the fad among the shop-keeping class and then points out that neighboring countries must necessarily have a low opinion of the English, who permit opera to flourish at the expense of the native stage. He attributes the current passion for operas and the neglect of his plays to the fact that people do not like to pay to see themselves truly revealed in all their weaknesses. He says "satire gives the wounded hearer pain;" thus the frequenter of Italian opera runs no such risk of unpleasantness. In Prompter No. 13 (1734) mentioned above we find the criticism that the Italian singers have so prejudiced the public against native singers that while the Italians grow fat on their opera monopoly and the largess of the nobility, their own countrymen who likewise have talent are excluded even from concerts and consequently are starving. The grasping Italians, not content with their monstrous salaries, even cut in more on the native singers' livelihood and perform at the clubs.

Henry Carey was very bitter against the Italian opera and its singers. He wrote a poem, "A Satire on the Luxury and Effeminity of the Age," in which he attacks opera. Much of his criticism may be attributed to national loyalty however, he has
a selfish purpose because he, like many other dramatists, saw his productions die in neglect while the audience crowded to the operas. In spite of his attitude he wrote two moderately successful operas after the Italian manner, *Amelia* and *Teresa*. In the poem he notes the tendency of the public to "Cry the English down." Also we may gather from this poem that occasionally a beau introduced foreign expressions into English, derived from the operas, or spoiled Italian with an English touch. Carey says this has grown to be quite a fad but we recognize that Carey exaggerates for the sake of emphasis. He seems to be alarmed, whether altruistically or not we cannot determine, because Englishmen despise their own products and thus make it impossible for native merit to live and grow. He recalls that England has always been renowned for both arts and arms, but now it seems that she has declined to such a degree that Britain can boast no genius in the realms of art. He does not relish the obvious implication that England has become so impoverished that it is necessary to import foreign minstrels. Personally, he finds that English female singers are as beautiful as any others but in the eyes of the public they seem to have become ravens for the opera-goers speak only of the Italians as blessed with beauty. Like Steele, he comments on the popular disparagement of the language.

"Is then our language grown a joke,
Not fit by human creatures to be spoke?
Are we so barbarous, so unpolite?
We but usurp superior merit's right." 183

His sarcastic suggestion is that all Englishmen learn to squeak Italian and then return to their land, relinquished to the Italians until they master the language. Carey wrote an epilogue
intended for Cibber's *Love in a Riddle* (1729). Here he satirizes the various popular entertainments of the town and attacks opera because it weakens the domestic stage. He recognizes the audience's preference for the "voice and gift of charming Senesini" so wishes to suggest that they make shift with "Signior Cibberini."

In *Pamela* (1740) Mr. B, expresses sentiments about the borrowing of opera from the Italians. He says that each modern nation has a particular excellency, and since opera is an Italian achievement and not an English one, the British should not pretend to another nation's excellence, but retain and cultivate its own. When once sound is preferred to sense all worthiness shall be forfeited and the public become but the "apes and dupes" of those whom they may strive to imitate. Young men travelling on the continent bring home this taste and as a result the English nation is much ridiculed by the very persons who are benefitted by the "depravity." As we have noted before, English critics dreaded the ridicule and scorn of the other nations.

The *London Magazine* for October, 1765, contains an occasional prologue spoken at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre. It is interesting to note that this attack is not as bitter as the earlier ones because actually the Italian tide had been stemmed, or assimilated to such an extent that after the middle of the century deep resentment was no longer found. There was no valid reason for jealousy because the audiences at the opera were not large and did not interfere with the domestic stage to any appreciable degree, and no longer were the singers' salaries
so great that they aroused the envy of the critic. In this prologue the author makes the accusation that opera has reached the hearts of the public and as a result comedy weeps and tragedy is mad. This author seems to indicate that there is a wide divergence of opinion concerning the opera.

One interesting character has the following opinion, "Music's a harlot—(thus Tom Surly spoke)
Whose charms will bend our honest hearts of oak!
What are the Romans now, once brave and free?
Nothing but tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee!"
This prologue may be termed pseudo-patriotic for we do not feel that opera was a burning issue at the moment.

Beattie in his Essays (1779) has a passage that frankly avows patriotic reasons in his preference for English music. He says, "It is an amiable prejudice that people generally entertain in favor of their national music. This lowest degree of patriotism is not without its merit:....what though they (strains) be inferior to the Italian? What though they be even irregular and rude? It is not their merit, which in the case supposed would interest a native, but the charming ideas they would recall to his mind." This comes late in the century but is certainly a healthy declaration of preference for English talents at the expense of Italian beauties.

William Hogarth was very fond of satirizing the fad for Italian opera and one of his prints is a picture of Farinelli, Cuzzoni, and Heidegger. The date of the plate is uncertain, but it is later than such prints as the Rake's Progress. At the bottom of the print eight lines are engraved which John Nichols repeats in his "description" of Hogarth. The poet disrespectfully and scornfully calls the singers a
tuneful scarecrow (Cuzzoni) and warbling bird (Farinelli) and
says they are no longer sheltered in England because now the
vacillating popular taste has turned in favor of balls and
masquerades. We may presume that Hogarth was glad for pat-
riotic reasons that the Italians were out of favor, but he
still attacks the taste of the town which continues to neglect
the domestic stage.

The patriotic attack on opera in the eighteenth
century often appears in the guise of an economic objection
because of the vast amount of money required to support the
enterprise. This attack may be traced both to jealousy and
national spirit; the critics disliked to see hard earned
British money lavishly bestowed on foreign singers, to build
palatial villas in Italy.

In several prologues and epilogues to British plays
we find criticisms of the opera's expenses, which resulted in
the neglect of native talent. As early as 1699 Farquhar, in
the epilogue to Love and a Bottle, ridicules the craze for
Italian singers and the cost of maintaining them:

"His voice is like the music of the spheres,
It should be heavenly for the price it bears." 189

Lansdowne in his epilogue to the Jew of Venice (1701)
attacks the great expense of including singing in a stage pre-
sentation. At this time it was customary to have singing be-
tween acts. He says,

"Shakespeare enticed the throng
Without Purcell's siren song."

His reason for objecting to the singing is economic,
"At vast expense we labor to our ruin." 190
The Muses Mercury was a monthly miscellany beginning at 1707, and published by an interesting group of men including Dennis, Dryden, Garth and others. In the issue of January 1707 are some remarks concerning the opera. The article, lightly satiric, says that as opera is the finest of entertainments, so it is the most expensive. Thousands of pounds have been subscribed by a few people of quality; the majority of the audience could not be expected to contribute enough to support foreign music.

Not only were the Italian singers grasping for money, but Pope, for one at least, thought Mrs. Tofts quite mercenary. He pays tribute to her beauty and talent which had the power to draw beasts and Orpheus after her,

"But such is thy avarice and such is thy pride,
That the beasts must have starved and the poets have died."

John Dennis in his "Essay on Public Spirit" (1711) speaks of the nobles who support the Italian opera as those who "have the Eunuch's tickle their ears with a straw, while they pick their pocket."

The Freethinker No. 68 (1718) comments on the expense of opera in connection with the cessation of their production. There were no operas produced after 1717 for several seasons and the author says this "elegant diversion" was restricted by reason of the expense required to support it. This is echoed by Dr. Rundle in a letter written in 1720 when he discusses the new plans for opera, which culminated in the founding of the Academy. He criticizes the subscription of 50,000 pounds which had been made to call over Italian singers.
Prior ironically attacks the expense of Italian performers in a prologue to *The Orphan* presented in 1720. He says actors cannot even get a subscription of 200 pounds because their voices would betray them—they are no Italian boys. He is attacking the nobility who spend lavishly for foreign music, but have no reward for their native actors and actresses.

The dedication to Theobald's *Rape of Proserpine* (1727), a musical drama, is signed by J. Rich. Since this drama partakes somewhat of the elements of the opera, the critic cannot be too severe in his condemnation; but he can attack the expense of procuring foreign singers. This expense necessarily excludes machinery, painting, dancers, and even poetry itself, which have always been considered necessary aids to music. Without these attractions the opera cannot be supported except by great subscriptions which very soon grow tiresome. His solution would be to moderate the expense and seek the popular patronage it had lacked.

John Ireland in *Hogarth Illustrated* refers to the great expense of the opera singers when he discusses one of Hogarth's earliest prints, *Burlington Gate*, or the Small Masquerade Ticket, published in 1724. Many follies of the town were satirized here, among them opera. On the show cloth is seen a kneeling figure pouring gold at the feet of a woman marked Cuzzoni. She rakes in the money from the figure who says, "Pray accept £8,000." This sum of money is quite adequate, even for a present prima donna. Hogarth also
printed a scene from the opera Ptolemeo performed in 1728, containing the figures of Farinelli, Cuzzoni, and Senesino. Ireland prefixes a poem to his "illustration" of the plate which refers to the "raptures" of the beaux and belles in their praise of the singers. In a footnote the author calls to our attention that these "raptures" were rather expensive. One can scarcely believe the lavish profusion which the people of rank displayed in their presents to this "band of quavering exotics." He adds up the contributions to Farinelli listed in the Daily Advertiser and finds that including his salary he makes 4,000 pounds a year!

One of the projects proposed and set forth by Defoe in Augusta Triumphans (1728) is a "Proposal to prevent the expensive importation of foreign musicians by forming an academy of our own." He enters no objection against the Italian opera as a form of entertainment; in fact, he fosters music as an innocent amusement which he enjoys himself, but seeks to mend the absurdity of too great expense for which the public becomes responsible. He offers a very practical suggestion. He proposes an academy in the true sense of the word, in contrast to the Royal Academy, which will train a group of boys for several years---not only to supply the opera with singers but also with an orchestra. When the graduates are able to exhibit an opera the profits will mainly go to extend the design to a greater grandeur. The practical result will be that instead of paying 1,500 pounds per annum for Italian singers, for 30 pounds yearly sixty English musicians will be afforded, regularly educated and enabled to live by their profession. It is also interesting to note in passing that Defoe states he
has no intention of disclaiming all obligations to Italy
"the mother of music and the nurse of Corelli, Handel, Bon-
202
oncini and Geminiani."

James Ralph in *Taste of the Town* (1731) presents
four objections to Italian opera; one of them the exorbi-
tant prices paid the performers, especially the foreigners.
He readily admits that the expenses are immoderate, but since
the English public demands singers of greatest excellence, they
203
must pay accordingly. He mentions the risk Italians run
when they come to England—even a north wind in July might
rob them of their means of livelihood. The great expense is
two-fold: the salaries paid the singers, and the money paid
204
the academy. The directors cannot be expected to amuse the
public at their private expense, for they run a great risk as
well as the singers. His sarcastic attitude is revealed in
his suggestion for improvement. He would allow the singers' salaries to remain as they are, but he advocates the building of a new opera house which would seat several thousand people, with seats ranging in price to accommodate all—even tinkers and cobblers. In order to raise the money he would confiscate the property of certain charity hospitals and utilize the inmates for minor parts as in mob scenes. He would train the orphan children in music from the earliest years and thus re-
lieve most of the expense. This last proposal reminds us of
Defoe, though one is serious and the other satiric.

Henry Carey in the "Beau's Lamentation for the Loss of Farinelli" satirizes the great popularity of the Italian singers and the extravagant lavishing of money upon them. Far-
inelli after his successes in England was invited to the court of Spain and he remained there for many years because he received a very competent income for soothing the king with his singing. Carey describes the great sorrow of a beau when Farinelli was "lost." The whole episode is overdrawn to emphasize the ridiculous position of the beau. Carey censures the money thrown away when the beau laments,

"A curse upon silver, a curse upon gold,
That could not my favorite songster withhold;
'Tis gold that has tempted him over to Spain,
'Tis nothing but gold can allure him again,
Let's pay seven hundred, and sev'n hundred more,
Nay, sev'n times sev'n thousand, and ten times ten score." 206

Cibber in his Apology (1740) refers to the expense of the opera several times. After he describes Swiney's successful seasons at the opera in the early years of the century, he tells how too much came to be expected of opera in the way of financial returns. This hope was raised by the prodigality of expense, at which the nobility were so willing to support them. During the several seasons before 1738 the losses had been so great that the gentlemen of quality who had undertaken the direction of them found it ridiculous to entertain the public longer at so extravagant an expense.

Walpole in a letter to Mann in 1741 discusses the situation at the opera with regard to the singers and the expenses. It is interesting to note that it was in this year that Handel abandoned opera and went to Ireland. He is concerned however because the management of the opera is in the hands of "eight thoughtless young men of fashion" who understand nothing at all about economy. They have already over-
paid the composers and they allowed Vaneschi money for an Italian tailor who has assumed a house for 30 pounds per annum. Vaneschi is the only manager who will gain remuneration, for he has contrived to get control of all the directors.

In the attack on Signora Mingotti found in the London Magazine for April, 1757, are objections based on her avarice. They sound like a modern plea for social charities. The author seeks to make clear to the reader that while the poor of the nation are perishing for want of bread, the nobility and gentry fling away their money for a song. This article was precipitated by her advertisement requesting the nobility to pay up their subscriptions. Then the author, becoming satirical, says, "the trifle she solicits for, discovers the petitioner to be as modest as she is humble. For it is only on early payment of as much money towards next winter's manly diversions, as might possibly be sufficient to keep thousands of innocent families from starving to death."

Certainly this may not be taken at face value, because very likely the author is not as much concerned about the conditions of the underprivileged as he is angered by the reflections made on English intelligence and the drain made on national wealth by this foolish extravagance whereby the Italians are enriched.

Garrick's prologue to The Fairies (1755) ironically refers to the moderate expense of supporting Italian opera. This production is a musical drama based on, as he says, "Sig-
and is written in English performed by English musicians. The prices are so low they will all be abused, because they are so unlike the operas, but if the audience choose they can mend that fault anytime.

The opposition to Italian opera took concrete form in the development of the English opera. Native opera had existed before the eighteenth century, but the efforts which resulted in its Renaissance at this time were a direct result of the belligerent attack on Italian opera. There were varying attitudes as we shall see; some wanted a hundred percent English opera following the Purcell school; others wrote English opera after the Italian manner, admitting some of the principles, but objecting to the use of that language on the English stage. Still others launched an attack against it through burlesque and ballad operas.

Colly Cibber in his *Apology* points out that the prevailing taste for Italian opera had discountenanced the English type to such an extent that even new exhibitions and added attractions could not give it any measure of popularity. This field of the influence of Italian opera deserves accurate and detailed research, but since this paper deals more with the opera in literature than in stage history, it will have to be dealt with generally.

Very early in the century, even before the Italian current had reached its greatest mark, Addison in reaction to the Italian opera, wrote an English opera *Rosamond*. The life of Addison in Anderson's *Poets* says that Halifax and other persons of taste and distinction suggested to him that he
write a musical drama in English which might combine intellect with harmony. This effort was produced in 1707, but met with no success; both Hawkins and Burney attribute this to the "villainy" of Clayton's music, though they are willing to grant that the poetry of the drama is elegant and pleasing. The failure of Rosamond clearly indicated that the music of the opera had to please the audience. The Muses Mercury for January 1707 discusses the progress of English opera and notes that recitative which would have been disdained forty years ago was accepted with delight. A case in point was the late success of Arsinoe, one of the first English operas after the Italian manner, in fact a direct translation. Clayton, who set this opera, argues for recitative in the Preface, but in the article in Muses Mercury we may detect a note of satire. The paper states that Rosamond is in rehearsal and that the beauty and harmony of the poem is excellent and the music happily imitates the poetry. We would expect praise of Addison's poem, but we may assume that the critic had not heard the music.

The popularity of Italian opera grew gradually and by 1710 with the production of Almahide, the opera is wholly in Italian with Italian singers. In 1711 with Handel's Rinaldo the popularity of Italian opera reached one of its periodic climaxes. As has been mentioned above, many critics objected to the irrationality of the use of Italian. One of these critics was John Hughes and he offered constructive criticism in his English opera Calypso and Telemachus produced in 1712. He dedicated this opera to the Duchess of Hamil...
ton and in the preface clearly states his position and purposes. He calls his opera "an essay for the improve-
ment of theatrical music in the English language, after the
mode of the Italians." Hughes acknowledges that this art
has flourished in greater perfection in Italy than elsewhere
and this is the reason the Italian opera has been imported,-
ot as an affectation for something foreign, but as the best
examples of an art. He points out that the English are
famous for their ability to learn and improve on knowledge
received from others. He maintains that the English language
is an adequate medium for musical expression. Granting the
beauty of Italian, he does not add the corollary that English
is incapable of harmony. It is of the greatest consequence
that dramatic entertainments should be performed in a lang-
ue understood by the audience. Hughes states that the suc-
cess of opera depends chiefly on the music and this involves
both poet and composer in difficulty, which can be conquered
only if they will take sufficient pains. Opera for him is
essentially a branch of poetry, compounded out of the lyric
and dramatic.

In Hughes we see a very practical reaction. He
takes the best from the Italian manner and writes an English
opera. This sounds very acceptable in theory, but actually
there were difficulties involved and production did not come
up to the ideal set forth in the preface. It did not prove a
great success, but this may be partly accounted for by the un-
fair opposition taken towards it by the group of Italian sing-
ers who seemed to fear it would cause their audience to diminish. Burney does not tell of the situation, but Johnson states that the Italian singers brought pressure to bear on the Duke of Shrewsbury, then Lord Chamberlain, who was married to an Italian, to procure an order to take off the subscription for it, and to open the house at the lowest prices or not at all. Topham Foot wrote a very flowery poem to Hughes on his opera, but though he importuned the Italian opera to quit the stage it maintained its foothold against this assault. After Hughes' death a Miss Cooper wrote a poem to his memory and celebrated this opera for its moral content which both pleased and reformed. It is interesting to note that this English opera, like many both Italian and native, employed a classical story. This is in keeping with the general spirit of the age which has been often termed neo-classical. It seems that this attempt is one of the best in point of foundation in theory, but, like the bitter attacks of the critics, it failed to overthrow opera.

Burney in accounting for the failure of this opera says that it was successful because it did not employ Nicolini in the lead, the reigning idol of the opera stage. It must be pointed out that this would have been a violation of Hughes' theories unless Nicolini could have sung in English intelligibly enough for the audience to get the meaning. He could not have done this, for he had only been in the country a relatively short time and though he may have desired to master English sufficiently well to read the Tatler and Spectator, he
could not have spoken it without an accent. Addison in Spectator No. 405 thanks him in the name of the town for the "generous approbation he recently gave to an opera of our own country, in which the composer endeavored to do justice to the beauty of the words, by following that noble example which had been set forth for him by the greatest foreign masters in that art."

William Duncombe in the Preface to Hughes' collected works says this extract from the Spectator definitely refers to Calypso and Telemachus. This would indicate that Nicolini set himself somewhat apart from the group of Italian singers, who had plotted the suppression of Hughes' opera. This is not the only instance of the Italian groups' retaliating to English attack. The Common Sense for May 27, 1738, recounts an event at the production of a new play. It was not interesting and as a result the audience resorted to cat-calling, which gradually became a concerto grosso. He says the music was not heavenly, yet he distinguished a party from the Italian opera who hoped thus to revive their sinking opera by damning play. This shows that the Italians as a group strove at times to maintain their advantage. The spring season of 1738 was one of the low points in the course of opera during the century.

The sentiments expressed above by Hughes are developed from his Preface to his six cantatas, which were set to music by Pepusch. They were composed before the pure Italian opera came to England, but were not published until afterwards and thus seem to be intended to oppose them. At this time he was formulating his principles as to the importance of the meaning
and the value of recitative, which he favors on the whole. Here again we see Hughes seriously interested in adapting the beauties of Italian music to English words and to suit the taste of the English audience.

Many excellent books and monographs have been written on Gay's delightful and ever popular *Beggars Opera*. All take into account the interpretation of it as an attack on Italian opera. This paper cannot go into the matter fully, but it cannot be complete without mention and recognition of this type of attack and reaction to Italian opera. The play itself is a burlesque and the use of native ballads for music also implies a reaction against Italian opera. Some of the critics have stated that it is not an attack on opera, but most of them favor this interpretation. Gay in a letter to Swift immediately after its phenomenal success notes the fact that it has drawn away the crowds from the Italian opera. He says the attendance has been so thin that they (Italian operas) have been called the beggars' opera and he wonders if the Royal Academy may not draw up remonstrances against him. All the critics agree that whether or not the opera in itself was an attack, it certainly caused a breach in the popularity of the Italian operas; Burney states that Italian operas were not produced from February, 1728, until the late months of 1729, because of the competition of this ballad opera. Henry Carey in his poem "Polly Peachum" likewise asserts that the *Beggars Opera* has impoverished the Italian variety. Then he gloats over the fact that Faustina, Cuzzoni, and Senesino are "tutti abbandonni."
We find this same sentiment in a poem on the success of the *Beggars Opera* called "Old England's Garland; or the Italian operas downfall." This poem came out in a *Miscellany* of 1730 published by D. Lewis. The first quatrain tells of the revolution when England grew fond of her old tunes and the ballads went up in favor and the operas went down.
Many of the eighteenth century reactions to opera use the word exotic. The Italian singers occasioned this usage and emphasized the alien aspect of the imported opera. The criticism may be divided into that which attacked the group of singers as a whole, and that which attacked individuals. Criticism was inevitable when we remember that there was an assemblage of foreign singers in London who spoke a different language, probably ate different food, and had dissimilar attitudes toward government and political issues. They were fêted and entertained as the "darlings" of fashionable society, while many who criticised them were left to starve for lack of patronage.

The singers were criticized because of the quarrels they engendered and their displays of temperament. Jonathan Swift in his "Argument Against Abolishing Christianity" (1708) ridicules the quarrels between the current opera favorites by naming his political parties after them. He is not chiefly attacking the opera, but he does use it by way of example. It is interesting to note that the use of Italian opera on the stage and the party system of government appeared about the same time. Mrs. Pendarves writes to Swift in May 1735 and tells
him that the operas are giving as violent cause for dissen-
sion as debates in the House of Commons. She says that dis-
putes over the merits of the composers and singers seem in
a fair way toward overturning the operas. True lovers of
music, whomever she may mean, certainly herself included,
feel quite apprehensive about the dangerous tendency. We
shall have occasion later to mention specific quarrels;
suffice it to say here that they were all too frequent.

In the *Theatre* for March 12, 1720, we find a sub-
tle ridicule of the temperamental opera-singer. The author
begins with an encomium of the Italian singers who are "em-
inently nice and delicate" (in contrast to the French) and
offers proof in a letter from the Haymarket. The letter con-
tains a description of Signor Benedetti with an account of
his quarrels at the Opera House over his character, his ac-
tion, and his arias in the opera. By contrast the author
has brought home the unpleasant traits of the Italians. The
letter taken alone shows the all too frequent characteristics
of the conceited singers who made life miserable, in fact al-
most unbearable, for the composer and stage director. This
singer, like the majority of others, wanted the plot "fixed"
so that this character would be the most heroic of all the
others; he demanded that his actions and position at all
times be graceful; and he desired more arias than any other
performer and required that they be more beautiful than the
rest. The early eighteenth century was the singers' heyday.
The pampering of their least whim by the composer led to the
The Introduction to Gay's *Polly* (1729) is a satire on the characteristic selfish and cantankerous traits of the Italian singers. It is a dialogue between several members of the company. The second player says that the opera cannot be performed this night because all the fine singers are out of humor with their parts. The Tenor was insulted at his role and in a rage threw his clean lamb-skin gloves into the fire and swore he could never sing but in true kid ones. The third player interrupts to say that the feminine lead, Signora Crotchetta, is vastly displeased with her part because it is so "low." The Signora enters in a fury and says she will not sing. She points out that submitting to such a disgrace would debase her reputation throughout Europe. Then she gets more excited and says she is sick, and that she has as much right as others to be allowed the privilege of illness. Then Gay satirizes the taste of the town, which he blames for her outburst, "If a singer may not be indulged in her humors, I am sure she will soon become of no consequence with the town, and so sir, I have a cold, I am hoarse. I hope you are satisfied." Such a commotion might have seemed entertaining the first time, but if such outbursts were common doubtless the town soon lost its patience and wearied of them. Garrick, in the prologue to *The Fairies*, (1755), satirizes the singers' temperamental illnesses and afflictions. As a surprise for the audience he adds, "Our singers all are well, and all will do their best." This is in con-
trast to such performers as Signora Crotchetta, who feigned illness, and to singers who did not do their best if they were incited to jealousy or anger.

Cibber speaks of the Italian singers in his Apology as possessing such an "innate fantastical pride and caprice that the government of them, here at least, is almost impracticable." He attributes their instigation of quarrels to their national character. The conventional eighteenth century idea of the Italian granted him superior musical talent but criticized him on account of his character and seeming immoralities. Cibber says they threw musical affairs into such perplexities because of this "distemper" that it has been difficult to get them adjusted. Most ridiculous of all, these "costly canary-birds" infested the whole group of dignified partisans with their "childish animosities." Cibber, in describing actions which we would denominate temperamental, refers to the circumstances that the ladies formed different musical parties and would decline their visits if they were of another party.

The party aspect of the opera quarrels is supported by the attestation of Lyttleton in Persian Letters. When the Persian attends the opera his host explains that "it is a rule with us to judge nothing by our senses and understanding, but to hear and see and think, only as we chance to be differently engaged." When a spectator makes disparaging remarks about the performer the host says the opinion is worthless because the critic is of the other party and comes only as a spy. The Persian replies that the music makes him drowsy and he does not perceive how it can incite others to a spirit of faction. His
host answers that it is a trick which anyone can learn if they will.

The quarrelsome character of the singers spread to the audience as described in the Opera-Rumpus; or the Ladies in the Wrong Box (1783), a serio-comic-operatic-burlesque poem! The poem describes a riot-provoking episode and the hostilities that raged, but relates that the peace and harmony which should reign in a theatre dedicated to music was restored at length. The poem also satirizes in general terms the expense of the opera and the immoderate fashionable devotion to certain individual singers.

Other critical remarks about singers center around their technique. The Italian opera initiated in England a new technique. It conformed to rigid classical rules with its ornate trills, runs, and "quavers" and therefore was unlike any former English music. The Muses Mercury for March 1707 comments on the style of Italian singing which is such that few of the audience can distinguish the words whether in Italian or English. The article is occasioned by Valentini singing his part in Italian while the others took theirs in English. This critic says other commentators have made themselves merry in attacking this illogical situation, but the taste of so many fine audiences cannot be questioned!

In an advertisement to the Theatre No. 20 Steele satirically describes the effect produced when an Italian singer rose a half a note above his formerly known pitch. As a result opera stock rose from $\frac{83}{2}$ when he began to 90 when he ended. This is a satire on the value placed on the
range of a singer's voice. The higher a singer could "squeak" the more highly he was esteemed and valued (financially as well as aesthetically.) The absurd evaluation of foreign voices is also illustrated by a trick Samuel Foote played at one of his comedies. In his first comedy (Knights, 1749) he satirized the shrill, high voices of the Italian opera singers with a brace of cats who performed a duet. In the advertisement it was suggested that ladies and gentlemen leave their lap-dogs and spaniels at home because of the cats. The feline duet, performed by two skillful animal imitators, delighted the audience.

The Gentleman's Magazine for 1757 contains an article, "the nature and propriety of true taste considered, either in vocal or instrumental music, with some few strictures upon singing or playing with what is generally called a proper grace," which notes the development of an effeminate taste in music. The author calls for a "proper plainness" in singing which would be more beautiful than most people realize. No longer is the opera singer or concert performer judged by true critical standards; he pleases most who can display the most tricks. This may be directly traced to the effeminate taste developed from Italian operas. By tricks the author means ornamentation in the style of singing. The singers developed great rapidity and high range, and performed many intricate trills and "shakes." Technique had come to be the sole aim and purpose of the performers.

John Armstrong in his "Essay on Music" (1758) is of
the same opinion. He says that modern masters do not aspire to mere beauty of harmony in their compositions, but difficulty of execution is the "sublime" they strive for. Armstrong goes on to state that it does not require the least genius either to compose or execute difficult music. While these are the objects of emulation, he says opera is likely to continue a most ravishing entertainment. Music seems to have grown "Ciceronian" in style, sheer beauty of the melody being lost in an intricate maze of ornate embellishments. This can be directly traced to an Italian influence through the medium of the opera. This over-adornment in music was as distasteful to the majority of critics as the heavily ornamented style of some of the contemporary Italian poets.

Addison in the prologue to Phaedra and Hippolitus comments on the technique of the singers who "rant by note, and through the gamut rage... combat in trills, and in a fugue expire." Addison considers this ridiculous when he judges opera by the standards of drama. Goldsmith in The Bee (1759) in his "Essay of Opera" discusses the false technique into which singing has fallen. He describes the selfish, egotistical performers who by insisting on inserting their favorite songs in the opera, turned it into a pasticcio, an unquestionably degenerate form. He is opposed to the tricks, not music in any sense of the word, exhibited by the Italian singers. Goldsmith is in favor of a greater simplicity in opera compositions; ornamenting a barren ground-work should be avoided by all means. He is willing to tolerate an indifferent actor if he is redeemed by an exceptional voice, though at the time he
is writing, he judges that the majority of the group are both able singers and actors.

Beattie in his *Essays* (1779) attacks the actual skill of the singers saying that it is impossible for the unnatural efforts of these vocalists ever to give permanent gratification to the hearer. He admits that though the "pre-natural screams" of an Italian singer may create surprise and momentary amusement to the hearer, they are not music; like rope-dancing and fire-eating, they arouse curiosity. Singers should be admired for pathos and propriety rather than vocal gymnastics. This eighteenth century criticism is probably rather close to the reaction which a twentieth century critic would experience if he were subjected to a night at the Italian opera at the time Beattie is writing.

John Ireland in *Hogarth Illustrated* selected a poem to illustrate the print of Farinelli, Cuzzoni and Senesino, which might be entitled the "Italian Singers Credo."

"To banish nature, and to vary art;
To fix the ear, but never reach the heart;
To mingle sense, and dress up meagre sound,
Whilst the same tasteless unison goes round;
And still the point of excellence to place
In execution, cadence and grimace;
To ravish with unnatural sounds the ear,
While beaux applaud, and belles with rapture hear,
The song we raise."  

Note the point of excellence to place, in execution, cadence and grimace. This poet has noted that opera over-stresses execution at the expense of content.

General reflections were made on the cowardly character of the Italians. This may be most aptly illustrated by Fielding's epilogue to *The Intriguing Chambermaid*. Here he accuses the sing-
ers of coming to England's peaceful shore and being fondly received while "angry cannons roar" at home. Their singing is regarded in England where no Visconti may bombard them. Such an attack cannot be regarded with seriousness, but it shows to what extent the Italians were discountenanced.

Chesterfield's attack in the World is general, but rather violent. He carefully defines the meaning of virtuoso, pointing out that it shares none of the old Roman connotation of virtu. The Italian word has no relation to the moral character of the singers but merely signifies that they are persons endowed by nature and art with good voices which they have trained since infancy. His next paragraph is almost annihilating in its vehement irony. He says that "these illustrious persons come with no sordid view of profit, but merely for the pleasure of the English nobility." They are so good as to help while away dull summer months at the country seats of noble friends for the special entertainment of the ladies and their daughters. All the great singers from Nicolini to the present have been praised more for their manners, affability, and good qualities of head and heart, than for their musical skill or execution. The protectors of the Italian performers have difficulty in rewarding such distinguished merit because of their social virtues, but benefit nights ever come around when the patrons can press expensive gifts or bills in their hands in place of tickets. Chesterfield wishes to suggest one improvement: that the singers not be permitted to leave even when called by foreign royalty. He notes that some of them, when they have earned a considerable fortune, withdraw to their
own country and there purchase great estates.

Another reason for criticism of the singers was the extravagant admiration accorded them. Lord Lytton ridicules them in one of the *Persian Letters*. He describes the ladies sitting next to him who cry out when the singer enters, "O, that dear creature! I am dying for love of him." This singer-worship and adoration is not unlike the current crazes for certain motion picture heroes. John Gay sarcastically tells Swift that Senesino is daily voted to be the greatest man that ever lived. In Henry Carey's "Blunderella" the Italian singers are mentioned in extravagant terms by that impertinent young lady. Walpole in a letter to Hertford (1764) refers to the undue esteem yielded the singers and also criticizes the uncalled for advertisement of the first woman's beauty. It was common to advertise the beauty of the Italian women, and if they totally lacked beauty, publicize their great talent as a drawing card.

Several tendencies noted in the general criticisms of the singers are aptly illustrated in the censure of particular singers. Before Handel came to England and the operas became purely Italian, there were contests between the English and Italian singers. Later the quarrels were staged among the Italians themselves. Margarita l'Epine came to England before operas were presented and she first entertained by giving vocal concerts. Mrs. Tofts was a native English singer who has been described very favorably by Cibber in his *Apology*. As was inevitable an unfriendly rivalry grew up which is described by
Hughes in his verses of "Tofts and Margarita." He compares their quarrels to the discords of state and makes allusion to the fact that the Whigs supported one and the Tories the other. Somerset and Devonshire laud Tofts, while Bedford, and Nottingham enthusiastically praise Margarita. When Margarita made her second appearance after her arrival in England in January 1704, there was hissing and orange-throwing at the performance by a woman in the audience. It was discovered that this woman had lived with Mrs. Tofts many years as a servant, so the native singer was suspected. She made a public statement in the Daily Courant for February 8, 1704 denying any present connection with this former servant.

The Earl of Halifax wrote a poem "On Orpheus and Margarita" comparing their abilities and their musical effects. In this poem he also mentions Nottingham's patronage of this particular Italian singer. When Orpheus sang the winds were hushed, but at the Tuscan's song,

"Rook furls his sails, and dares it on the main
Treaties unfinished in the ocean sleep,
And Shovel yawns for orders in the Deep."264

We may conjecture that Halifax was of a different musical party, the one favoring Tofts, or perhaps, he was not a partisan of any musical group.

Burney seems to think that Steele's inference in Tatler No. 20 that Mrs. Tofts has become demented throws ridicule on opera quarrels in general, and on her disputes with Margarita in particular. She went to Italy in 1709 and performed in the Venice opera, where she seems to have become a favorite. Spectator No. 443 contains comment on her in the form of a letter. This issue is written by Steele and perhaps he is trying to carry further his insinuation of her insanity.
In this letter reference is made to the quarrels between musical parties and Camilla says that the humor of hissing is unknown in Italy.

Nicholas Rowe wrote some rather trivial verses "Occasioned by Nicolini and Valentini first coming to the Haymarket." These men with Margarita and Tofts presented the early hybrid Anglo-Italian operas. Generally speaking there was a critical attitude toward Italian castrati, but Nicolini is the exception that proves the rule. Addison praises him highly although he makes a few humorous remarks about his encounter with the lion in *Hydaspes*. Rowe sarcastically hails the two as Latin heroes who come to aid in increasing the popularity of Vanbrugh's newly constructed Haymarket. In spite of Rowe's irony Nicolini's great drawing power revived the declining state of the Haymarket. Nicolini received his due praise from Addison and Steele who, as we have seen, attack the opera at many points. In *Spectator* No. 13 Addison is careful to point out that he is not attacking Nicolini, but the wretched taste of the town which delights in his combat with the lion in *Hydaspes*. Then Addison lauds him for his good acting which is worthy of real tragedy. None can forget the Trunkmaker's vigorous praise of Nicolini on his first appearance in London, when the former demolished three benches with his cane. On the singer's departure from England, Addison in *Spectator* No. 405 praises him as the "greatest performer in dramatic music that is now living, or that, perhaps, ever appeared upon any stage." Nicolini is undeniably a refreshing anomaly in the usual run of singers. He must have lacked many of the characteristics that brought down on other Italians the criticism and
ridicule of the English.

The singers thus far mentioned were famous in the early part of the eighteenth century. With the formation of the Royal Academy in 1720, we have a new group of singers who bring new quarrels and rivalries.

Before 1725 Senesino and Cuzzoni were being featured in the opera and somewhat later Faustina and Farinelli arrive. According to Burney, Cuzzoni arrived in 1723 and Senesino was present in 1720. Faustina did not make her debut in England until May, 1726. This turbulent period of the Italian opera from 1720 to 1740 aroused severe criticism of the singers and the opera itself. Matters were complicated by bitter feuds and quarrels between the composers and directors of the opera as well as the rivalries between the singers. Cuzzoni, an ugly woman, possessed of a glorious voice, became a great favorite. Ambrose Philips speaks of her influence thus:

"Little siren of the stage,
Charmer of an idle age,
Empty warbler, breathing lyre,
Wanton gale of fond desire,
Bane of every manly art,
Sweet enfeebler of the heart!" 270

Philips opposes her on points we have formerly noted. Hawkins erroneously places this poem in 1727, when Cuzzoni departed from England as a result of her bitter quarrel with Faustina. Matters rocked along rather smoothly in the singers' relations to each other until the arrival of Faustina in 1726. Immediately she and Cuzzoni were placed at swords' points by the musical factions. Cuzzoni would naturally be jealous of a new comer,
and particularly of a beautiful singer whose style was marked by several innovations of which Cuzzoni was ignorant.

Hogarth's print *Burlington Gate* mentioned above attacks Cuzzoni as both Ireland and Nichol point out. In this case her avarice is attacked as she rakes in the money poured out at her feet by the Earl of Peterborough. Ireland and Nichol discuss a print of opera singers, dated 1728 and 1725 respectively, which they call Farinelli, Cuzzoni and Senesino. Either they have dated it erroneously or all the histories are at fault. According to both Burney and Grove, Farinelli did not arrive in England until 1734. Both Senesino and Cuzzoni were in England at the time, though Hawkins intimates that Cuzzoni departed in 1727 and did not return until 1748. This is possibly a reprint made after Farinelli's arrival with his name attached to it because he was in high favor. Be that as it may, the print satirizes the ridiculous postures assumed by the singers, and especially those affected by Senesino.

We find a sneer at Senesino in *Fog's Journal* for February 3, 1733. The author makes fun of an accident that took place during a recent production of the opera *Julius Caesar*. A piece of the "machinery" tumbled down from the roof just as Senesino chanted, "Caesar does not know what fear is," and he was so frightened that he trembled, lost his voice, and fell to crying. Though it must have been a highly ludicrous accident, we should not consider this a valid point of attack. A singer, tense and nervously excited, would naturally be disconcerted at such a mishap. Justly or unjustly, performers
always have been expected to live the characters they portray.

The struggle between Faustina and Cuzzoni has been well related by both Burney and Hawkins in their histories. They may have over-dramatized the story somewhat, but records of the time furnish an ample foundation for their accounts. These singers were on the same stage for the season 1726-27. They felt a natural antipathy as noted above, and they were incited to open exhibitions of this difference by the musical parties. We may venture to suppose that the audience were more interested in this rivalry than in the music of the opera and attended to watch the quarrel and to join in it by hissing and applauding according to the group they favored.

*Mist's Journal* for June 17, 1727, contains a complaint against the disorderly persons nicknamed Faustina and Cuzzoni who disturb the upper gallery with their lewd noises. They interrupt the performances from the boxes and pit. The author of the letter hopes the directors and managers will take care of this rabble so that the "civilized" audience will not be disturbed. *Mist's Journal* for July 8 and 15, 1727 carries an announcement of a pamphlet "The Devil to pay at St. James" which reckons with the climax of the quarrel between Faustina and Cuzzoni. This is attributed to Arbuthnot in the *Miscellaneous Works* published in 1751. Contemporary students deny this however, and state positively that he did not write the paper. The author, whoever he may be, satirizes the quarrels between these two, which went so far as to provoke them to physical combat. He does not attempt to settle the blame on either (for fear of losing many noble
friendships), but pronounces them both guilty. They have had many predecessors who had rivalries, without coming to handcuffs for instance, Margarita and Tofts, Durastanti and Robinson. He playfully supposes this quarrel to be a plot against Protestant England. He suggests, with due seriousness that Cuzzoni and Faustina be allowed to fight out the matter in a popular arena and the victor be awarded the total proceeds. In conclusion he gives an insight into the vain, egotistical character of Senesino who is quite disgruntled at the neglect he has felt because of the zeal for the quarrel.

John Whaley's *Collection of Poems* (1732) includes verses "On the famous contests between Signora Cuzzoni and Signora Faustina." He satirizes the belligerent situation at the opera, first describing the situation and then concluding,

"Strange! that from harmony's all-soothing spell, Tumultuous jars, and fiercest discord came, Strange! that the breast of man enraged should swell, By notes which listening savages would tame."

Cibber in his *Apology* compares the division they created in London to that made by Caesar and Pompey in the Roman Republic. He notes that the claims to superiority made by the compatriots of the ancient Romans blew up the "common-wealth of academical music." Cibber draws a lesson from this experience and says it will never be practical to make two outstanding singers of the same sex "do as they should do" in the same opera at the same time, not even if the money should be doubled which has already been "thrown after" them. To enforce his opinion he cites a case in point which occurred at the marriage of the Duke of Parma when too many great singers were
invited. Hawkins cites an epigram brought forth by the animosities of Lady Pembroke, Cuzzoni's leader. She went to such lengths in promoting the cat-calling of Faustina that we find,

"Old poets sing that beasts did dance
Whenever Orpheus played,
So to Faustina's charming voice
Wise Pembroke's asses brayed." 282

A little collection of Miscellaneous Poems published in 1743 for a "gentleman late of Oxford" contains a few verses with the very strange title, "To Signora Cuzzoni, on a report of her being sentenced to be beheaded, for poisoning her husband." This curious bit of gossip is not recorded by either Burney or Hawkins. It was probably only a wild rumor that drifted back to England after her departure. Hawkins relates that she was imprisoned for debt in Holland in 1748, after her last appearance in England. Her keeper allowed her to be escorted to the theatre where she performed, and in this manner she was able to pay up her debts and return to Italy. Perhaps it was an earlier situation such as this which instanced these verses. The lines compare her to a Swan and feel that her beautiful voice might prevail upon,

"Justice's arm to drop the up-lifted blade." 283

Farinelli, who arrived in 1734, was reputed by some to be the greatest Italian singer, with the exception of Nicolini, ever to come to England; others asserted that he far surpassed the latter. He was praised on many sides for his beautiful voice, but he did not go uncriticized for faults common to Italian singers. John Ireland cites Reflections on
Expressions in Tragedy which was published in 1755. This author ridiculed Farinelli as awkward, stupid, and an offense to the eye. Ireland uses the quotation to apply to the grotesque posture of a figure in the print he calls Farinelli, Cuzzoni and Senesino. He compares Farinelli to a clumsy cow. In ridiculing his stationary position he attacks the paucity of action in opera performances in the second quarter of the century. Action had been quite energetic in the early part of the century, i.e. the lion in Hydaspes. In the Grub Street Journal for April 10, 1755, is a paragraph describing the present His Royal Highness the Prince made to Signor Farinelli. It was a wrought gold snuff box holding diamond knee buckles and a purse of 100 guineas.

One of the reprints of the Beggars Opera by Hogarth was captioned "The Opera House, or the Italian Eunuch's Glory, Humbly inscribed to those Generous Encouragers of Foreigners and Ruinefs of England." On the two sides of the print are scrolls which list the presents made to Farinelli, including that mentioned above. In the second plate of the Rake's Progress a picture representing Farinelli lies on the floor. He is seated on a pedestal and on the altar before him are several flaming hearts. A number of people standing near are offering him gifts from their extended hands. One woman kneels at the foot of the altar and from her mouth issues a label inscribed "One God and one Farinelli." A composer is seated at a harpsichord on one side of the room and over his shoulder falls a scroll listing the presents given Farinelli. "The Beau's Lamentation for the Loss of Farinelli" pictures the
distressed fashionable beau when Farinelli leaves England for greater wealth in Spain. The author suggests to the bereaved one that he listen to the English singers, but the beau is shocked at the suggestion of "horrible English."

The beau concludes,

"Adieu Covent Garden, adieu Drury Lane,
I never will darken a playhouse again.
Without Farinelli the opera must fall,
So I'll fling up my ticket, and not pay the call." 288

These criticisms of Farinelli show his vast popularity among a large group. If he had not been so adored by the audience, Carey would not have attacked him so forcibly. Farinelli was so popular that during his first season the houses were crowded and opera made money again.

In the epilogue to Foote's The Author, ridicule is made of the popularity of Mingotti who appears as a favorite about the middle of the century. The Annual Register for 1775 contains an account of Gabrielli, who makes her appearance after 1760. This author pays tribute to her beautiful voice, which is so attractive that she gathers all the audience to her operas; she has a great fault, however, which prevents her from performing almost the wonders of Orpheus and Timotheus. She is super-temperamental, seeking more to astonish than to please the public. This quality has made her more contemptible than her talents have made her celebrated.
Footnotes

When no place of publication is given, London is to be understood.

1 John Dennis, An Essay on the Operas after the Italian Manner, 1706.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 1.
5 Ibid., 2.
6 Ibid., 3.
7 Ibid., 5.
8 Ibid., 7.
9 Ibid., 9.
10 Ibid., 11.
11 Ibid., 14.
12 Ibid., 15.
14 British Essayists, Boston 1856, I, 113.
15 John Dennis, Select Works, 1718, I, 428.
16 Ibid., 432.
17 Ibid., 433.
18 Ibid.
20 Thomas Gray, Correspondence, ed. Toynbee and Whibley, Oxford 1935, I, 8.
23 **Ibid.**
24 *London Magazine*, XXIII, 484.
25 **A Collection and Selection of English Prologues and Epilogues, 1779, III, 4. (future references to this work will be abbreviated *English Prologues and Epilogues*)**
26 **Ibid.**, 93.
29 **Original Letters Familiar, Moral and Critical, 1721, I, 117.**
30 *British Essayists*, Boston 1856, I, 237.
31 *Select Works*, I, 429.
32 **Ibid.**, 436.
33 *English Prologues and Epilogues*, 1779, IV, 3.
34 James Ralph, *Taste of the Town*, 1731, 21.
35 *English Prologues and Epilogues*, 1779, IV, 12.
36 *The Intelligencer*, 25.
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