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### **Title**

Taste, Gender, and Nation in the Material Culture of Domestic Musical Performance: The Pocket Opera Anthology in England, 1724-6

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**Taste, Gender, and Nation in the Material Culture of Domestic Musical Performance: The Pocket Opera Anthology in England, 1724-6**  
**Mark Allen Rodgers**

Between 1724 and 1726 a series of innovative anthologies, printed in a size designed to be portable in the pockets of “Gentlemen and Ladies,” circulated a corpus of arias primarily drawn from the Italian operas produced for the Royal Academy of Musick, London’s short-lived public opera company of the 1720s. These four anthologies (listed in detail below, in Table 1) were published at the height of the Royal Academy’s success following the arrival in 1723 of its first star singer, Barbara Cuzzoni, whom the eager directors—led by the composer George Frideric Handel—had persuaded to leave Venice, where opera had already flourished in public theaters for much of the preceding century. Anthologies of vocal music such as these were regularly published in early eighteenth-century London, but they rarely included Italian arias. Music from Italian operas was regularly printed in London—individual Italian or Italianate operas circulated in large folio publications, sometimes as commemorative editions celebrating the event of the staged opera but more often they were intended for amateur musicians as aids to domestic performances—but not in this format.<sup>1</sup> As collections of Italian arias from multiple operas—operas composed specifically for the London stage, moreover—the pocket opera anthologies of the mid-1720s were more or less unprecedented.

The inventive printer John Cluer and his associate the bookseller Bezaleel Creak produced the first of these pocket opera anthologies, *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies: Being a collection Of the finest Opera Songs & Airs, In English and Italian*, which was made available on 2 May, 1724. The publication was shrewdly timed, since the majority of the Royal Academy audience—members of the gentry and the aristocracy—left for the country in

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<sup>1</sup> A complete inventory of printed opera and song books published in early eighteenth-century London must be assembled by collating a series of separate catalogues. The first, by Cyrus L. Day and Eleanore B. Murrie, includes volumes printed between 1651-1702, as well as later reprints of titles first issued in those years. Cyrus L. Day and Eleanore B. Murrie, *English Song Books 1651-1702* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1940). The second, by David Hunter, and takes us through 1726. David Hunter, *Opera and Song Books Published in England 1703-1726: a descriptive bibliography* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1997). Hunter omits editions of Handel’s operas, however, since they are thoroughly catalogued variously elsewhere by Deutsch, Smith, Dean and Knapp, and the editors of the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe*. Otto E. Deutsch, *Handel: a Documentary Bibliography* (New York: Norton, 1955). William C. Smith, *Handel: a Descriptive Catalogue of the Early Editions* (London: Cassell, 1960; 2d ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1970). Winton Dean and J. Merrill Knapp, *Handel’s Operas 1704-1726* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1957-). While the *Repertoire international des sources musicales* (RISM) can also be mined for trends in early eighteenth-century music printing, it is notoriously incomplete. *Repertoire international des sources musicales*, Series A/I, Einzeldrucke vor 1800 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1971-); Series B/II, Recueils imprimés XVIIIe siècle (München-Duisburg: G. Henle Verlag, 1964).

late spring, and would be in need of entertainment through the summer months.<sup>2</sup> *A Pocket Companion* proved so successful that within a year and a half, two other printers had introduced competing volumes. John Browne's *The Opera Miscellany* was published in April 1725 (also timed for the end of the season). Pre-empting a second competitor, Peter Fraser, and his accusations that *A Pocket Companion* was too small (thereby inhibiting its performability), Cluer and Creak released a second volume in December 1725.<sup>3</sup> Fraser's own production seems to have been significantly delayed, but in January 1726 his *The Delightfull Musical Companion* was finally published, bookending a circumscribed genre of pocket opera anthologies closely associated with the Royal Academy.

**Table 1: pocket opera anthologies published in London, 1724-1626**

| Title                                                                                                                                        | Undertaker(s)/<br>Publisher(s) <sup>4</sup>                | Date of first<br>edition | Price                                          | Subscriptions |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies: Being a collection Of the finest Opera Songs &amp; Airs, In English and Italian</i> [vol. I] | John Cluer<br>(printer),<br>Bezaleel Creak<br>(bookseller) | May 2, 1724              | 12s                                            | 989           |
| <i>The Opera Miscellany. Being a Pocket Collection of Songs, Chiefly Composed for the Royal Academy of Musick</i>                            | John Browne<br>(printer,<br>instrument<br>maker)           | April 17, 1725           | -                                              | 178           |
| <i>A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies being A Collection of Favourite Songs, out of the most Celebrated Opera's...vol. II</i>       | Cluer, Creak                                               | December 23,<br>1725     | -                                              | 937           |
| <i>The Delightfull Musical Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies being A Choice Collection out of All the latest Operas</i>                     | Peter Fraser<br>(publisher)                                | January 8, 1726          | 15s<br>(including ½<br>guinea<br>subscription) | 239           |

Drawing upon a shared repertoire of Royal Academy arias, the pocket opera anthologies were united by their unique presentation of Italianate music and Italian texts in the small pocket book, or *octavo*, format. Printing music in *octavo* was scarcely a novelty, but in London such editions had typically cultivated a very different set of consumers, combining humorous, political,

<sup>2</sup> *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies: Being a collection Of the finest Opera Songs & Airs, In English and Italian* (London: John Cluer and Bezaleel Creak, 1724). Hereafter, the title will be given as *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1) in order to distinguish it from the sequel.

<sup>3</sup> David Hunter offers further analysis of the competition between the three sets of publishers. David Hunter, "The Publishing of Opera and Song Books in England, 1703-1726," *Notes*, Second Series, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Mar., 1991), p. 659-660. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/941854> (Accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> *N.b.* Following Adrian Johns and others in employing eighteenth-century bibliographic terminology, I will consistently refer to those responsible for bringing a printed volume to fruition as "undertakers," well aware of the morbid resonances that word has in contemporary usage. For a detailed discussion see Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book*. Cluer and Creak in fact refer to themselves as the volume's undertakers: see *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1), p. xv. Fraser, meanwhile, is given role of "publisher" on the title page of *The Delightfull Musical Companion*.

or didactic texts with easy melodies (though with surprising frequency these cannot be made to fit with the words). With titles like *The Bottle Companions or Bacchanalian Club* (1709) or *The Jovial Companions* (1709), these were popular in dance halls, catch clubs, taverns, and coffeehouses.<sup>5</sup> Others, like the much-reprinted *Wit and Mirth, or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1705-1720), were peddled as medicinal products.<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly—they often trade in jingoistic sentiments—the texts of such pocket music books were almost always in English. The opera anthologies, on the other hand, contain a significant number of untranslated Italian arias: indeed Fraser, in *The Delightfull Musical Companion*, provides no translations at all:<sup>7</sup>

It was first proposed to have been in Italian and English but finding it would Croud [sic] the work, that it would be acceptable only to a few, and that the Majority of [the] greatest Lovers & Judges were very willing to dispense with it, It being besides very difficult to adapt English words to these Airs, I thought it was better to omit it, rather then [sic] trouble [you] with fresh, or former nonsense.

Not only had Fraser presented the Italian texts untranslated, he also had done away with the miscellaneous English songs interspersed throughout *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1) and *The Opera Miscellany*, which were used as placeholders between arias.<sup>8</sup>

The Italian arias in the pocket opera anthologies were their primary attraction, and (if Fraser's claims are to be believed) subscribers were much more interested in Italian arias from the Royal Academy than miscellaneous English songs. Cluer and Creak must have shared Fraser's impulses, presumably following the reception of their first volume of *A Pocket Companion*, for the second volume anthologizes only the evidently much-desired arias from Royal Academy operas. Moreover, in the second volume Cluer and Creak made a more concerted effort to provide high-quality English translations, which they attached to 20 of its 36

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<sup>5</sup> *The Jovial Companions or Merry Club* (London: [John] Walsh and [Peter] Randall, 1709). *The Bottle Companions or Bacchanalian Club*, (London: John Walsh and Peter Randall, 1709). Most of these, unlike the lavishly engraved pocket opera anthologies, were cheap letterpress productions.

<sup>6</sup> *Wit and Mirth, or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* appeared in many editions between 1705 and 1720. For further information, see Day and Murrie, *ibid.* C.f. with *The Merry Musician; or, a Cure for the Spleen: being A Collection of the most diverting Songs and pleasant Ballads, set to Musick; adapted to every Taste and Humour* (London: H. Meere and [John] Walsh, 1716).

<sup>7</sup> *The Delightfull Musical Companion* (London: Peter Fraser, 1726), p. [iv]. Please note that here and throughout the body of the text, I have attempted to preserve the orthography of sources cited, except where I have replaced y-thorns with editorial brackets.

<sup>8</sup> Inserting miscellaneous pieces where a single leaf would otherwise go unused was a common practice among early music printers. The layout demands of scores are an important part of the readability and performability of musical texts: for example, it is preferable to have a piece of music that requires two pages to occupy an opening, eliminating the need to turn the page. Hence the beginning of *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1), in which a short,

arias. For these translations the undertakers (as they called themselves) turned to Henry Carey, who was a successful playwright, poet, and composer in his own right, and therefore among those best qualified for the task.<sup>9</sup> Translation of texts set to music—especially where the music has been composed to suit the particulars of the text—offers a unique challenge, since the alignment of notes and particular syllables often has semantic significance. Under normal circumstances, word order cannot always be preserved in translation; musical requirements, meanwhile, amplify the difficulty. In this light, Fraser’s comments on translation are unsurprising, but Cluer and Creake trusted Carey to avoid producing “nonsense.” Though silent on the problem, John Browne included only two English versions of arias originally in Italian in *The Opera Miscellany*.<sup>10</sup>

The clear preference for Italian texts (and, when provided, adequate translations of them) among the consumers of the pocket opera anthologies does not necessarily imply that they were fluent in Italian. Nevertheless, the proliferation of untranslated Italian in all four volumes demonstrates a significant interest—widespread, among a diverse demographic group, judging from the evidence of the subscription lists—in singing the language. The consumers of the pocket opera anthologies seem also to have had a good sense of what might constitute a good translation, as Fraser’s complaints and Cluer and Creake’s subtle changes make clear. This interest—intimately connected, I will argue, to the theatrical origins of the musical material and the rituals of opera-going—is bound into two surviving copies of *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 2), in the form of an eight-page letterpress guide to Italian. This brief tutorial, “A succinct method for the right reading and pronouncing the Italian tongue,” confirms English amateur singers’ desire to have linguistic access to Italian arias, while simultaneously betraying, in its “succinctness,” the novelty of the language.<sup>11</sup>

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anonymous song opens the book on page 1, so that the book’s significantly longer first aria, “Ritorno o dolce amore” (pp. 2-3) requires no page-turn.

<sup>9</sup> For my use of the term “undertakers,” see footnote 3. Carey is only indicated as translator for 12 of the arias. In the absence of further information, it seems reasonable to suppose he provided the other 8 translations. No information survives indicating the translator of texts in the first volume of *A Pocket Companion*. For further biographical information about Henry Carey, see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Henry Carey,” (by Suzanne Aspden), <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (accessed April 16, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> The two arias (for which no Italian texts are included) are “I come my fairest treasure” (originally from Handel’s *Julius Caesar*), and “Celia my dear, no longer depress me” (originally from Attilio Ariosti’s *Vespasian*).

<sup>11</sup> I am currently in the process of acquiring reproductions of the tutorial from the University of Texas. John Shepard, Head Librarian at the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library has been especially helpful in this regard, assisting me as I have tried to track down a reproduction of this curious item.

The musical implications of such a mode of circulation of Italian arias were relatively straightforward.<sup>12</sup> Unnecessary orchestral parts had to be eliminated or subsumed into the remaining musical texture, but these were often excised from printed editions anyway. Rather, the physical reduction of size had an important effect on the functions of the anthologies as music books. Unlike the bulky folio editions of single operas, the pocket opera anthologies were easily portable (the largest of which, the second volume of *A Pocket Companion*, was roughly 210 cm x 140 cm), expressly designed to fit neatly into the pockets of their consumers and thus to facilitate amateur performances in social situations. Though contemporary observers left little written documentation of such gatherings, they are sometimes depicted in artwork of the period, as in the frontispiece of *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 2).



**Image 1: frontispiece, *A Pocket Companion...vol. II* (1725)<sup>13</sup>**

<sup>12</sup> This is, presumably, the primary reason for the relative scholarly silence regarding the pocket opera anthologies.

<sup>13</sup> [Thomas Cobb], [*Frontispiece*], [1724/5], British Library, *Opera and Song Books Published in England 1703-1726: a descriptive bibliography*, by David Hunter (London: Bibliographic Society, 1997).



Eight musicians are gathered, with men and women playing the instruments that were generally considered appropriate for their respective sexes.<sup>14</sup> None of the musicians depicted are playing from pocket-sized music books, a curious detail (since this is, after all, the frontispiece to such a book). Indeed, only rarely in paintings from the period do amateur musicians appear to be performing from pocket books, in spite of the availability of evidence (in the form of subscription lists) of their tremendous popularity.



**Image 2: William Hogarth, *Marriage a-la-Mode: 4. The Toilette* (1743-1745)<sup>15</sup>**

Still, musical iconography permeates eighteenth-century paintings of household scenes and portraiture, and can provide clues about the culture of domestic musical performance, while conveying a remarkable range of affects. This is particularly apparent in the work of William Hogarth, whose cultural vocabulary in his well-known prints and paintings was deeply informed

<sup>14</sup> Richard Leppert, *Music and Image: domesticity, ideology, and socio-cultural formation in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> William Hogarth, *Marriage a-la-Mode: 4. The Toilette*. Available from <http://www.artstor.org> (Accessed April 16, 2011). ARTstor ID 39-17-02/ 9.

by musical details.<sup>16</sup> In the series *Marriage a-la-Mode* (1743-1745), musical imagery signifies both moral degeneracy, as in the second painting, “The Tête à Tête,” and (failed) aspiration to tasteful consumption, as in the fourth, “The Toilette.” Here, a castrato (judging by his exaggerated features and foppish dress) gives a private concert, for he is likely a professional Italian singer and not an English amateur. Strewn at his feet in the lower left-hand corner are playing cards, with illegible text on their backs. These may have included music, like the decks released in 1725 by John Cluer and Bezaleel Creak, ever eager to explore as many channels of musical circulation as they could imagine.<sup>17</sup>

Cluer and Creak’s musical playing cards, like the pocket opera anthologies, might have encouraged impromptu performances in domestic spaces—spaces which, as “The Toilette” illustrates, were simultaneously sites of intimacy and sociability. Furthermore, playing cards, pocket anthologies, and private concerts constituted important components of tastefulness constructed in terms of the luxury consumption of imported items: the concert takes place in a room adorned with paintings, jewelry, and other signs of luxurious habit. The castrato singer is not the only foreigner in the room, as a black servant attends the listeners (who pay attention to wildly varying degrees), and a black child—presumably kept for entertainment as was a common early eighteenth-century practice—plays in the corner. Both the servant and the child are signs of imported opulence: like the castrato and Italianate music, accessories to an Augustan cultural identity shaped by increasing imperial contact.

Not everyone felt that musical performance was appropriate behavior for gentlemen, even among the intimacy of family members: in the eyes of these critics, music was to be consumed but not produced by gentlemen of taste and respectability. In April 1749 the Earl of Chesterfield wrote to his son, then enjoying the operatic splendors of Venice:<sup>18</sup>

As you are now in a musical country, where singing, fiddling, and piping are not only the common topics of conversation, but almost the principle objects of attention; I cannot help cautioning you against giving in to those (I will call them illiberal) pleasures (though music is commonly reckoned one of the liberal arts), to the degree that most of your countrymen do when they travel in Italy. If you

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<sup>16</sup> For extensive analysis of musical imagery in Hogarth’s work, see Jeremy Barlow, *The Enraged Musician: Hogarth’s Musical Imagery* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> These decks of musical playing cards do not survive. Their existence can be inferred from the book *Diamonds Cut Diamonds*, published in 1726 by Daniel Wright, which collects them, with “50 blunders in the Cards Corrected.” Hunter, *Opera and Song Books*, pp. xii, 445-447.

<sup>18</sup> *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Chesterfield*, v. 4, edited by Bonamy Dobrée (London: Spottiswoode, 1932), 1330-1331.



love music, hear it; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play to you; but I insist upon your neither piping nor fiddling yourself. It puts a gentleman in a very frivolous, contemptible light; brings him into a great deal of bad company; and takes up a great deal of time, which might be much better employed. Few things would mortify me more, than to see you bearing part in a concert, with a fiddle under your chin, or a pipe in your mouth.

Chesterfield's zeal to prohibit his son from "bearing part in a concert" (by which he probably meant an amateur recital, and not a paid public performance), in its hyperbole, implies of course that in fact he had good reason to worry. Indeed, amateur musicianship extended to the highest levels of society, as illustrated in Philippe Mercier's *Music Party: Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his Sisters* (1733), in Image 3 (below).



**Image 3: Philippe Mercier, *Music Party: Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his Sisters* (1733)<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>19</sup> Philippe Mercier, *Music Party: Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his Sisters*. Available from <http://www.artstor.org> (Accessed April 15, 2011).

The prince, playing passionately on the cello, accompanies two of his sisters: one on the lute, the other on the harpsichord. Is the third sister preparing to sing? In the corner she coyly looks out from the painting, resting one arm on the harpsichord, while the other marks her place in a pocket book.

Such performances were largely invisible, in the sense that they rarely went documented. Even more obscure are the private, personal performances that may have taken place from the pocket opera anthologies, when their owners were alone. All four anthologies include flute arrangements of their contents, designed for solo performance.<sup>20</sup> Traces of these performances, both private and social, remain however, in the performance texts—the pocket opera anthologies—that scripted them. To understand their nature we must turn to the materials themselves and their circulation, the means by which Italianate music moved from the theater to the domestic culture of amateur performance.

Since *Music and the Cultures of Print* (2000), a collection of essays edited by Kate van Orden, studies of printed music—a primary mode of the survival of musical practices from the Renaissance onward—have increasingly accounted for the cultures formed and disseminated by the mechanisms of print itself.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Christensen's contribution to that volume, which examines piano-vocal scores of operas, follows opera out of the theater and into private homes—a trajectory which, he argues, allows them to operate “as a kind of circulatory system in human society, connecting and penetrating multiple spheres of social activity.”<sup>22</sup> In this account, the printed dissemination of opera had a transformative effect on its reception, altering the forms of musical literacy and modes of listening among its bourgeois nineteenth-century audience in the process, whose beginnings he traces to the pocket-sized *libretti* printed to accompany operas

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<sup>20</sup> In all four volumes, the flute arrangements cannot be performed simultaneously with the fuller versions of each aria. Often, the flute arrangements have been translated into new keys (usually to flat-area keys, implying that in this case, “flute” probably meant the instrument known today as the recorder).

<sup>21</sup> Kate van Orden, editor, *Music and the Cultures of Print* (New York: Garland, 2000). Daniel Haertz's 1969 catalogue and study of the sixteenth-century Parisian printer Pierre Attaignant also provides an excellent examination of the way in which cultures of print shape musical practices. Daniel Haertz, *Pierre Attaignant, Royal Printer of Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Christensen, “Public Music in Private Spaces: Piano-Vocal Scores and the Domestication of Opera,” *Music and the Cultures of Print*, ed. Kate van Orden (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 67-94. Christina Bashford addresses related problems in nineteenth-century Britain in a recent article. Christina Bashford, “Historiography and Invisible Musics: Domestic Chamber Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Summer 2010), 291-360. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2010.63.2.291> (Accessed

almost since the inception of the genre, and anthologies printed in London in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

Following the music of the pocket opera anthologies from the theatrical space to the domestic, I will trace a trajectory similar to Christensen's, paying close attention to the transformation of cultural rituals and practices the technological move engendered. The pocket opera anthologies re-contextualized individual arias, stripping them of any specific narrative or dramatic function, a feature of anthologies to which Christensen rightly draws our attention.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, if *A Pocket Companion* and its competitors fundamentally altered the music they anthologized, the format made possible important new forms of performance that staged their own dramas. By scripting performances in private or domestic settings, the pocket anthologies literally gave voice to negotiations of subjectivity, much like the early novels of Samuel Richardson and others, and like the novel helped to construct a space for intimate reading. Working through the music of the pocket anthologies, amateur musicians navigated identities first constructed for the stage, mediated by print and set in the ambiguous intimacy of their pockets.

## I. "So small a space!": pockets and pocket books in eighteenth-century London

So small a Space!—yet here we find  
 All that can ease or charm the Mind:  
 Whoever does this *Jewel* wear  
 May conquer Grief and banish Care...  
 —Anonymous prefatory poem, *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1)<sup>24</sup>

Occupying the intermediary space between humans and things, eighteenth-century pockets were important—if hidden—sites for negotiating subjectivity. Just as objects for purchase were fashioned things, so too were subjects fashioned by objects in the world of increasingly available commercial goods: not by accident did this reflexive etymology give name to fashion and fashionability.<sup>25</sup> Navigation of this world of goods and objects engendered

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16 April 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies: being a collection Of the finest Opera Songs & Airs, in English and Italian*. (London: John Cluer and Bezaleel Creak, 1724), p. [v].

<sup>25</sup> The English word "fashion" is ultimately derived from the Latin *facere*, "to make." "fashion, n." OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/68389> (accessed April 14, 2011).

material self-fashionings and prompted investigations of interiority that were materially mediated, as exemplified in many early novels. Julie Park has recently argued that the novel marked the development of “a genre of self-hood” that was largely generated by “the reciprocal activity between made things and invented identities.”<sup>26</sup> Many early novels, like Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), took special delight in penetrating interior spaces, titillating voyeuristic readers while constructing intimate spaces around them through the sort of private reading the novel encouraged. Moreover, fictional constructions of interiority were analogized by the materials of their conveyance, the mechanisms of print that placed the physical books back into the pockets of readers. As accessories to fictions of interiority and as spaces constructing them, pockets could provide the illusion of privacy on the person even in the most public of spaces. Reading in the intimacy of the home could be its own form of theater.

Furthermore, dress had enormous political significance in early eighteenth-century London. Fashion was a visible sign of consumption, investing it with central importance in the nexus of polite culture and proto-capitalism, a moving piece in shifting constructions of power. The sartorial revolution of the late seventeenth-century was largely shaped by a new aristocratic aesthetic of masculinist renunciation of luxurious and decadent dress, marked most strikingly by the adoption by Charles II of that ultimately became the three-piece suit on 7 October 1666.<sup>27</sup> As part of the performance of subjectivity, the pocket was a crucial complement, an appendage to the body of a garment variously responsible for conveying, concealing, storing, and sometimes displaying the material accessories of sartorial performance. Despite highly profitable scholarly interest throughout the last two decades in material culture, the luxury debates, and domestic life in England’s “long eighteenth century,” the pocket has received little attention.<sup>28</sup> This neglect is surprising, for the pocket is a fundamental site of the circulation of the most intimate objects, and thus aids negotiations of subjectivity in important, if often hidden, ways.

Pockets provide the means of contact between bodies and the material objects they bear. The pocket has the potential, therefore, to participate in the social constitution of the subject.

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<sup>26</sup> Julie Park, *The self and it: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Such renunciation has a long and dynamic political history, which is the thread that runs through Kuchta’s book: by the nineteenth century, it had become the rhetorical domain of those seeking to promote international trade.

<sup>28</sup> To my knowledge, the AHRC project “Pockets of History,” led by Barbara Burman, is the only attempt to compile a comprehensive history of the pocket.

Simultaneously, in the eighteenth century the pocket itself was gradually undergoing physical transformation. Pockets (from the Anglo-Norman *poket* or *pokete*; c.f. the modern French *pochette*) were originally pouches carried on the arm, by hand, or tied around the waist.<sup>29</sup> These “pocket bags” continued to be the primary style worn by women, of which many eighteenth-century examples survive, like that in Image 5 (below).<sup>30</sup>



**Image 5: Pocket (embroidered, tie-pocket style), early eighteenth-century<sup>31</sup>**

Eighteenth-century pockets were designed in varying sizes, corresponding to what they might be used to carry. They could be as large as 30 to 40 cm (more than twice as large as a standard *octavo* book).<sup>32</sup> They were regularly sewn directly into men’s garments, which in the eighteenth-century began to be much closer-fitting, forcing tailors to experiment with a variety of shapes and sizes. Pocket flaps (which occasionally had a decorative function only, since pockets and

<sup>29</sup> "pocket, n." OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146402> (accessed April 14, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> I use the term “pocket bag” following Avril Hart and Susan North, *Seventeenth and eighteenth-century Fashion in detail* (London: V&A Publishing, 2009). See their Glossary on p. 220 for a detailed description.

<sup>31</sup> “Pocket.” Available from <http://www.artstor.org> (Accessed 15 April, 2011). ARTstor ID BMFA.53.521.

their contents wore quickly through linings) were often important sites of a tailor's skill, since matching the embroidery with the rest of the garment required a close attention to detail [image time permitting]. Women meanwhile continued on the whole to carry their pockets beneath their outer garments, often accessible through conveniently situated vertical openings called pocket holes. In such configurations, the pocket occupied an ambiguous intermediate space between the outer and undergarments: that is, between the intimate site of the body and the public nature of the gown or coat.

Pocket bags were also the subject of a well-known nursery rhyme with likely eighteenth-century origins (sung to the tune known as "Yankee Doodle"):<sup>33</sup>

Lucy Locket lost her pocket,  
Kitty Fisher found it;  
Not a penny was there in it,  
Only ribbon round it.

Part of the humor of the nursery rhyme depends of course upon the familiar trope of female consumption: Lucy Locket seems to have spent all of her money on the decoration of the object meant to convey that money. In this sense she is like the woman Bernard Mandeville imagines in a much-cited passage:<sup>34</sup>

The poorest Laborer's Wife in the Parish, who scorns to wear a strong wholesome Frize, as she might, will half starve herself and her Husband to purchase a second hand Gown and Petticoat, that cannot do half the service, because, forsooth, it is more genteel.

The mistake made by Mandeville's "laborer's wife" and Lucy's error (before losing the pocket entirely), were identical: both focus upon fashionability, rather than functionality. Lucy's mistake was doubly grave, since she had decorated an item that, in keeping with decorum, ought to have been kept private.

What were the objects with which the pocket opera anthologies were competing for space? Because pockets—then as now—were utilitarian, their function was remarkably

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<sup>32</sup> Hart and North, *ibid.*, p. 96. These dimensions are given in Barbara Burman and Jonathan White, "Fanny's Pockets: Cotton, Consumption, and Domestic Economy, 1780-1850," *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 31.

<sup>33</sup> Iona and Peter Opie, editors, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; first published 1951). The musical associations of this nursery rhyme may run deeper: as the editors note, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) features a character named Lucy Lockit. This connection warrants further investigation.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *The fable of the bees: or, private vices publick benefits* (London: [John] Roberts, 1714), p. 105. Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

adaptable. Contemporary witnesses report a wide range of the contents of pockets: books (especially pocket manuals or guides for amateurs like the pocket opera anthologies), letters, pens, standishes, scissors, spectacle cases, bottle-screws, watches, and keys were among the many objects regularly to be found residing in men's pockets. Barbara Burman and Jonathan White have examined the records of the trials of pickpockets, identifying an extensive catalogue of purloined items, a list of small objects that demonstrates the tremendous variety of pockets' contents.<sup>35</sup> Occasionally more outlandish objects found their way in. The indefatigable Isaac Bickerstaff (fictitious editor of *The Tatler* and pseudonymous mouthpiece of Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele) recounts his discovery of a squirrel in his pocket:<sup>36</sup>

In the middle of her Harangue, I felt something scratching near my Knee, and feeling what it should be, found the Squirrel had got into my Coat-Pocket. As I endeavoured to remove him from his Burrow, he made his Teeth meet through the Fleishy Part of my Fore-Finger.

This slapstick scenario directly follows a catalogue of medicinal objects lying about the room; herbal sachets like those Bickerstaff lists were frequently to be found—unlike the squirrel—occupying pockets. One treatise describes the proper method for the use of Irish Mackenboy Root, which “may be carried in the Pocket three days without purging.”<sup>37</sup> Herbal remedies like lavender were often advertised as having powerful medicinal effects when used this way, sold in specially designed pocket vials at a premium.<sup>38</sup>

Equally, pockets could contain dangerous objects, and consequently were often regarded with a significant degree of suspicion. Because of its proximity to the possessor's body, the pocket provided a concealed but readily accessible space: it was the ideal place to carry a weapon. Pockets could hide rods, knives, or most sinisterly, pistols. After reportedly spending

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<sup>35</sup> Burman and White, *ibid.*, p. 31. Their list is long, and therefore will be omitted here. My own methodology involved casting a wide net, searching two major online databases of printed eighteenth-century English literature (Early English Books Online and Eighteenth-Century Collection Online) for various terms relevant to pockets. Future and more systematic study of these references might reveal interesting trends of interest to students of material culture, political economy, and the circulation of objects.

<sup>36</sup> *The Tatler: Volume III*, edited by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) pp. 347-8.

<sup>37</sup> William King, *The Transactioneer, with some of his philosophical fancies in two dialogues* (London: Printed for the booksellers of London and Westminster, 1700), p. 39. Available from <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>.

<sup>38</sup> Bickerstaff describes the marvelous effects of lavender upon the spirits in *The Tatler, Volume III*, *ibid.*, p. 169. According to *The Tatler*, 3s 6d could purchase a “Flint Bottle” of lavender with directions for use.



hours of drinking and dancing at the Musick-House in St. George's Field, the notorious criminal Edward Burnworth demonstrated the danger of the pocket's concealment:<sup>39</sup>

When he enter'd, *Blewet* took him by the Hand, asking him how he did, and bid him sit down, which he being not willing to do, saying he hoped they meant him no Harm: *Damn ye, Tom*, says *Burnworth*, *you shall sit down and drink*; and then taking a Pistol out of his Pocket, he shot him at the left Pap thro' the Heart...

The anecdote recounted here stages the shooting in the "Musick-House," drawing upon the perceived nefarious elements of one musical subculture.<sup>40</sup>



**Image 7: William Hogarth, *The Rake's Progress 2. The Rake's Levee* (1735)<sup>41</sup>**

<sup>39</sup> *An account of the lives of the most notorious murderers and robbers, Edward Burnworth alias Frazier, William Blewet, Emanuel Dickenson, Thomas Berry alias Teague, John Higgs, and John Legee* (London: J. Roberts, 1726 [Second Edition]), p. 10. Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

<sup>40</sup> I have been unsuccessful thus far in attempting to identify this Musick-House.

<sup>41</sup> William Hogarth, *The Rake's Progress: 2. The Rake's Levee*. Available from <http://www.artstor.org> (Accessed April 15, 2011). Note that the music-master at the harpsichord strongly resembles Handel.

If the participants in the revelry described were playing from notated music (not necessarily the case), they may have been using one of the many *octavo* or oblong books available, suitable for carrying in the pocket. Henry Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1650) was one such book, so popular that it was regularly reprinted through the 1720s. *The Dancing-Master* (as it was titled in later editions), was designed to fit into the pocket, a space it shared with the miniature fiddle known as the "kit," prominently depicted in the second painting of Hogarth's famous series *The Rake's Progress* (above).<sup>42</sup> The French name for such instruments, *poche* (i.e. "pocket"), demonstrates the extent to which the instrument was connected to the pocket.<sup>43</sup>

For centuries—if not for much longer—books had ranked among the largest and most important objects to be found in pockets. Long before the advent of the printing press in the fifteenth century, miniature books of hours served as focal points of lay devotional practice and literacy. Much like the pocket opera anthologies, books of hours adapted the performance texts of public rituals (liturgical texts, for example) for private, intimate use. Following the *octavo* Greek editions produced in Venice by the printer Aldus Manutius beginning in 1501, Humanists adopted the format, which was particularly suited to casual consumption and portable study by gentlemen-scholars.<sup>44</sup> Portability and intimacy remained the most important aspects of the pocket book, rendering it adaptable to a multiplicity of contexts.

Manutius' pocket classics for humanists presaged a popular genre in eighteenth-century London: connoisseurial guides for gentlemen and ladies, across a wide range of subjects, in the pocket size.<sup>45</sup> Many of these even bear the title "*A pocket companion for gentlemen and ladies*" (or a similar variation), like William Ayloff's 1703 epitome of British history, *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies. being A True and Faithful Epitomy of the most Exact and Ample Historians of England; containing all the material Particulars in every Reign of the English Monarchs, from Egbert to her present Majesty, being 884 Years*.<sup>46</sup> How-to manuals

<sup>42</sup> *The Dancing Master* (London: W. Pearson, 1728; first published by Henry Playford in 1650).

<sup>43</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Kit," (by Mary Remnant), <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed April 16, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Manutius claimed to have conceived of the idea upon having observed the library of Pietro Bembo. See Harry George Fletcher III, *New Aldine Studies: documentary essays on the life and work of Aldus Manutius* (San Francisco: Bernard M. Rosenthal, Inc., 1988), pp. 88-89.

<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately a complete survey of this literature is beyond the limitations of this project. I hope to continue to explore this genre in further research.

<sup>46</sup> William Ayloff, *A Pocket Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies. being A True and Faithful Epitomy of the most Exact and Ample Historians of England; containing all the material Particulars in every Reign of the English Monarchs, from Egbert to her present Majesty, being 884 Years* (London: J. Nutt, 1723).

covering the basics of various arts were also published on a regular basis. The *Arts companion, or a new assistant for the ingenious* (1749), for example, claimed to offer Italian secrets for mixing pigments, reducing the cost of the “diversion” for the amateur painter.<sup>47</sup> This “revelation” was not unlike the move made by the pocket opera anthologies, which transported the Italianate arias from the theater to the pocket.

## II. Putting arias in the pockets of “Persons of Quality, Gentry, and others”



**Image 8: Thomas Cobb, frontispiece, *A Pocket Companion* [vol. I] (1724)**

By the time Cluer and Creak made *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1) available for public consumption, extraordinary effort had gone into its production. Promising a book of high quality, containing arias and miscellaneous songs primarily drawn from Royal Academy operas—many from the current season—they had managed to assemble an astonishing 465 subscribers for a

<sup>47</sup> *Arts companion, or a new assistant for the ingenious* ([Dublin]: I. Jackson, 1749; first printed in London). Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

total of 989 subscriptions to the volume.<sup>48</sup> The number of subscriptions constituted a monumental success, so great that on 1 February the undertakers had taken out an advertisement in the *London Journal* to report that they “must be obliged to print treble [triple] the Number they at first intended.”<sup>49</sup> The volume was compact in size (roughly 175 x 125 mm) and carefully engraved by Thomas Cobb on both sides of every leaf, a novelty in a market in which individual pieces were usually printed separately and bound together at a later stage. By contrast, John Walsh, the primary music publisher in London, usually printed with stamped—rather than engraved—pewter. Cluer and Creak commissioned Cobb to engrave an elaborate frontispiece specially intended for the volume, in which Minerva directs a female scribe writing (or composing) music as Apollo looks on (Image 8, above).<sup>50</sup> Richard Neale, organist at St. James’s Garlick-hith (Garlickhythe) in the City, provided continuo figures (barebones indications for the keyboard accompaniment, showing how to create a full musical texture) and adapted the musical texts, a fact proudly announced on the title page. The undertakers fully expected that purchasers would want to be able to play from their books. Their extensive effort, however, had its price: at 12s, the first volume of *A Pocket Companion* was in the pricier end of the market for printed music.<sup>51</sup> For a book of its size, *A Pocket Companion* was an item of considerable luxury.

Indeed, among those paying the subscription were many from the ranks of the aristocracy, and the undertakers shrewdly dedicated the volume to John Brydges, Marquis of Carnarvon, who was the son of James Brydges, Duke of Chandos. In 1724 Carnarvon was only 21, but had recently returned from Italy and was about to embark upon a political career that was cut short only by his death from smallpox a few years later.<sup>52</sup> From 1726, the same year he began to represent Steyning in the House of Commons, Carnarvon can be identified as a director of the

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<sup>48</sup> 66 of the subscribers acquired multiple copies. The largest single purchase was for 48 copies, made by Mr. Combes, Bookseller in Oxford.

<sup>49</sup> *The London Journal*, Feb. 1. Even at the initial quantity, the book would have been enormously successful by contemporary standards.

<sup>50</sup> This frontispiece appears to have been adapted from a Peter Paul Rubens’ “Education of the Princess” (1622-5) from the *Marie de’ Medici Cycle*, though it may also be discovered to bear some relationship to Hogarth’s *Print*, and perhaps together they form a standard genre. For further discussion, see below. Kate van Orden—who has assisted this project in many other ways—first noticed the connection to the Rubens painting.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Hume has analyzed in tremendous detail the relative affordability of various cultural items in London after the Restoration. See Robert D. Hume, “The Economics of Culture in London, 1660-1740,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (2006), pp. 487-533. Hume shows us that 5s—approximately the price of a gallery ticket at the Royal Academy—was a tremendous expense for the overwhelming majority of the population. 12s, in this light, was very expensive.

<sup>52</sup> George E. Cokayne, *Complete peerage, of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom; extant, extinct, or dormant*, S.v. “Brydges, John, Marquis of Carnarvon” (London: St. Catherine Press 1910-59).



Royal Academy. His father, meanwhile, was an important patron and friend to Handel (and also a subscriber to *A Pocket Companion*), who surrounded himself with an impressive musical community at Cannons, his expansive London estate.<sup>53</sup> Some of the other subscribers were connected to this community, but the music at Cannons was private and exclusive in nature.<sup>54</sup>

[Chandos] has a chorus of his own, the Musick is made for himself and sung by his own servants, besides which there is a Little opera now a making for his diversion whereof the music will not be made publick.

In contrast, *A Pocket Companion* and its competitors made music for “diversion” easily available (at a price). Herein, perhaps, lay the logic of the dedication to Carnarvon: by connecting the anthology to a family known for their interest in domestic performance, the undertakers “made publick,” the ability to perform operatic music at home, if on a significantly less grand scale.

The list of subscribers reached far beyond Carnarvon, Chandos and their milieu, and indeed beyond the nobility, as Cluer and Creake laconically acknowledged, calling it “A List of the Persons of Quality, Gentry, and *others*.”<sup>55</sup> Interest in the book among the gentry and aristocracy was unsurprising, for they were the patrons of the Royal Academy and formed its primary—and most visible—audience. A few aristocratic subscribers, like Dr. Arbuthnot and Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, were among the Royal Academy’s directors, and may have recognized some financial stake in the promotion of printed music associated with it.<sup>56</sup> Though the list was organized loosely alphabetically, rank was also important: peers (and their wives and daughters) were prominently presented at the top of the names under each letter. The upper ranks of the aristocracy were well represented but constituted only a small percentage of the subscribers. Many other subscribers were listed with honorifics, degrees, or indicators of rank and status, but for many more—including most of the women—only surnames were given. A large number lived outside of London: many claimed affiliations with colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, and subscriptions seem to have poured in from far-flung provincial towns and cities

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<sup>53</sup> The nature of this community and of the relationship between Handel and Chandos has of course become controversial following Ellen T. Harris’s *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Letter of 27 May 1718 from Sir David Dalrymple to Hugh Campbell, quoted by Harris, *ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>55</sup> *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1), p. i. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>56</sup> I have cross-referenced this list with the informational about subscribers and directors to the academy compiled in Elizabeth Gibson’s study of the Academy, the studies of Handel’s subscription lists undertaken by David Hunter and Rose M. Mason, as well as further information about the academy gathered by Carole Taylor. See Elizabeth Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music 1719-1728* (Garland: London, 1989); David Hunter and Rose M. Mason, “Supporting Handel Through Subscription: The Lists of Rodelinda and Faramondo Compared,” *Notes*, 56(1), pp. 27-93; and

as far away as Dublin. Some of the subscribers—musicians, printers, and booksellers—had obvious professional interests in subscribing. However, the majority were amateur musicians (the same was true of the subscribers to Browne and Fraser’s competing anthologies). Furthermore, such a diverse group of subscribers marked a departure from the motivating force behind the Royal Academy.

From its inception, the Royal Academy was driven and dominated by the aristocracy. Consequently, it was subject to frequent criticisms of luxurious excess. Its primary aim—to import talented Italian singers whose voices were well suited for the musically demanding aesthetic requirements of *opera seria*—played directly into the hands of these criticisms. English writers on political economy had largely supported a protectionist program of international trade for over a century. Anxiety about trade usually had a morally charged character, and the consumption of foreign luxury items was almost always equated with effeminacy. As such, luxury was antithetical to increasingly influential constructions of English identity—which is to say, English aristocratic masculine identity—that rejected the excesses widely associated with the Stuart monarchs.<sup>57</sup> Accusations of the effeminizing effect of the consumption of *opera seria* were doubly easy to make, since the genre was dominated by heroic roles for castrated men and powerful women, each category a threatening force to this unstable identity.

Throughout the early eighteenth century many of the loudest criticisms of the importation of *opera seria* came from Whiggish and mercantilist writers worried about the ill effects of its consumption on English spaces ranging from the bedroom to Parliament.<sup>58</sup> One trope of such criticism held that the Italians were agents of Rome, come to corrupt or (more often) to bankrupt English audiences: opposition to Italian opera in London was often constructed in the language of trade. Combining an old English stereotype of Italian bankers with religious prejudices, one satirical writer suggests the nefarious intentions of the imported singers:<sup>59</sup>

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Carole Taylor, *Italian Operagoing in London, 1700-1745*, unpublished dissertation, Syracuse University, 1991.

<sup>57</sup> Here I am indebted to two recent studies of the construction and performances of English male identity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Thomas King, *The Gendering of Men 1600-1750* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); and Kuchta, *ibid.* Both King and Kuchta move impressively between materials and performances, and the cultural situations in which they circulated.

<sup>58</sup> See Suzanne Aspden’s discussion of this literature in “‘An Infinity of Factions’: Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain and the Undoing of Society,” *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9(1), March 1997: 1-19.

<sup>59</sup> *The English Stage Italianiz’d* (London: A. Moore, 1727), p. [i]. A. Moore probably did not exist. The work is a brief farce, and claims to be the work of Thomas D’Urfey, though this is clearly impossible (D’Urfey had died four years prior). This, in conjunction with the fictitious bookseller’s name in the imprint and the mock advertisement at the back of the book, is part of the piece’s satirical posturing.

They come not with the selfish Views of their Ancestors, to carry our Consciences and our Purses to *Rome* to convert us, but with a view of enriching the Papal See. No, they are now upon quite another Footing: for whereas we formerly were forced to carry our Money to *Rome*, these good natured Souls take the trouble off our Hands, and carry it for us.

The basic logic of protectionism also informed better-reasoned critics of Italian opera like Daniel Defoe. In *Augusta Triumphans: or, the way to make London The most Flourishing City in the Universe* (1728), Defoe was ready to acknowledge that the “Quality, Gentry, and better sort of Traders must have diversions,” and happy to admit that the Italian opera had its charms. Nevertheless, he objected to the Royal Academy of Musick on the ground that it failed to be a proper academy:<sup>60</sup>

Our Nobility and Gentry have shown their Love to the Science, by supporting at such prodigious Expence, the *Italian Opera* improperly call’d an Academy; but they have at the same time shown no small Partiality in discouraging any thing *English*, and over-loading the Town with such heaps of foreign Musicians.

Defoe carefully constructs his argument in commercial language, noting especially the “prodigious Expence” of paying “heaps of foreign Musicians” to do specialized labor (the central feature of luxury consumption, and the most heavily criticized).

Opera-going and patronage of the Royal Academy constituted a valuable form of social capital among wealthy Londoners and those involved in Court and political life. The secondary market for tickets after the arrival of Cuzzoni—the leading soprano in the company from 1722 until the arrival of Faustina Bordoni gave rise to a fateful rivalry between the two—illustrates vividly the economic analogy.<sup>61</sup>

The new Opera Tickets are very high, and like to continue so as long as Mrs. Cotzani [i.e. Cuzzoni] is so much admired. They are traded in at the other End of the Town, as much as Lottery Tickets are in Exchange-Alley.

As this report demonstrates—in the process suggesting fluidity between the morally ambiguous opera and the unambiguously immoral lottery—the very real value attached to the Italian singers and the rivals Cuzzoni and Faustina in particular was tremendous. Imported, highly skilled

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Defoe, *August Triumphans: or, the way to make London The most Flourishing City in the Universe*, (London: John Roberts, 1728), p.

<sup>61</sup> *The London Journal*, 2 March 1723, quoted in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955), p. 150.



Italian singers were simultaneously one of the Academy's most important and most controversial features.

Ticket prices were never standardized by the Academy's directors, but rather fluctuated with the successes and failures of its operas, leading inevitably to comparisons with the speculation of the South Sea Bubble that had shaken the London mercantile economy in 1720. Many of those involved in the Academy had invested in the South Sea Company (including Handel). Friedrich Ernst von Fabrice, who became one of the directors in 1726, described the rising ticket prices of the 1722-3 season in response to the heralded arrival of Cuzzoni as yet another speculative market bubble:<sup>62</sup>

Today is the second performance [of Handel's *Ottone*] and there is such a run on it that tickets are already being sold at 2 or 3 guineas which are ordinarily half a guineas, so that it is like another Mississippi or South Sea Bubble. Over and above that, there exist two factions, the one supporting Hendell, the other Bononcini, the one for [Senesino, the company's leading castrato singer] and the other for Cossuna. They are as much at loggerheads as the Whigs and Tories...

Fabrice's worry that the "run on it" might be "like another Mississippi or South Sea Bubble" was not merely a hyperbolic analogy: the Royal Academy was formed as a joint-stock company, and run as a business operation, if one whose primary purpose was not to turn a profit.<sup>63</sup> His turn to the factional tastes of the audience highlights the remarkable continuum between the city's political and cultural life. The King's Theatre in the Haymarket—where the Academy operas were performed—formed a staging ground that was simultaneously political and cultural.<sup>64</sup> The premiere of Handel's *Radamisto* (his first opera for the Royal Academy) on 27 April, 1720, for example, also marked the first joint public appearance by George I and his son following their reconciliation after a long period of equally public disagreement.<sup>65</sup> To be seen in the theaters was often as much of an objective as to witness the staged performances, and remarkable though it was, Cuzzoni's voice was not the Royal Academy's only attraction.

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<sup>62</sup> Excerpt of a letter from Fabrice to Count Flemming dated 15 January 1723, translated by Deutsch, *ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>63</sup> The quality of its direction and operational management has been the subject of some disagreement. Some, led by Milhous and Hume, have tended to see it as the "amateurish" pet project of gentlemen who knew little of business. See Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, "New Light on Handel and the Royal Academy of Music in 1720," *Theatre Journal* 35 (1983), pp. 149-167. Gibson disagrees, arguing that they "placed too much weight on [early records] in coming to such a negative conclusion about the affairs of the Academy before it had even opened its first season." Gibson, *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> As Deutsch observes, Whigs tended to support Bononcini, and Tories Handel. Deutsch, *ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>65</sup> Gibson, *ibid.*, p. 10.

In fact, the sociable and musical elements of opera-going were inseparable. Together, the musical aesthetic of *opera seria* and the sociability encouraged by the space of the theater formed a coherent framework within which to understand the “event” of putting on and attending a Royal Academy opera, a dramatic social ritual in which music was the central focus around which the other elements coalesced.<sup>66</sup> In the physical space of the theater, the locus of the drama was fluid, extending beyond the proscenium and into the audience, whose members could even be seated on stage if they wished and could afford the privilege. Successful dramatists exploited this, to the extent that dramatic content often played directly to political or social circumstances that would have been felt acutely by members of the audience. Among early eighteenth-century London audiences, social experimentation and contestation could react to and inform the staged drama in a space whose only requirement for admission was the ability to purchase a ticket. In contrast, most operatic establishments on the continent were Court institutions; following the incorporation of the Royal Academy, London became, with Venice, Rome, and Hamburg, one of only four European cities with a public opera company giving regular annual seasons.<sup>67</sup>

However, the Royal Academy was not a democratizing institution. The impetus behind its formation was thoroughly aristocratic, as was its direction. Many Royal Academy subscribers were—like Carnarvon—Parliamentarians, and the King’s Theatre was an important space for political dramas enacted not only by the male politicians but by their wives as well, the gatekeepers of High Society. For many spectators, attending the Royal Academy operas constituted a ritual of aristocratic affirmation, an extension of the influence and power of the members of the aristocracy, able to pay others (including foreigners) to produce music for them, a ritual reinforced by the heroic thematic material of the operas themselves.

Nevertheless, the Royal Academy audiences were by no means wholly uniform, and probably included members of the so-called “middling sort,” or those whose means set them in the ambiguous social realm between laborers and the landed aristocracy.<sup>68</sup> This group was

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<sup>66</sup> Here I borrow from Jennifer Hall-Witt’s articulation of late Georgian opera. See Jennifer Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007). My understanding of opera as ritual is also informed by Martha Feldman’s *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Prior to 1720 this list included Leipzig, the city where Johann Sebastian Bach spent the final decades of his life. *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Leipzig,” (by George B. Stauffer), <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed April 14, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> I avoid using the term “middle class,” with its peculiar and historically contingent connotations (even today it connotes subtly different groups of people in North America than it does in the United Kingdom). To speak of class in the early half of the eighteenth-century is in any case largely anachronistic; moreover to do so would be to

affected profoundly by what has sometimes been called the consumer revolution of the early eighteenth century.<sup>69</sup> The easier availability of luxury items helped to redefine the boundaries of the aristocracy, rendering them more permeable (if only to a limited degree) through the new economy of politeness and taste. Sociability became the dominant mode of the circulation of power, and the importation of commodities and skilled foreign laborers provided necessary fuel and support to this economy.<sup>70</sup> Emulation was an important aspect of this sociability, since taste was a currency that might be acquired by the discerning through observation of behavior and habits of consumption. The British peerage was not a wholly stable category: of the peers who were opera subscribers in the period 1719-1745, for example, a number had been elevated from commoners prior to their subscriptions.<sup>71</sup> The middling sort was diverse in constitution and spending power, comprised of “shopkeepers, manufacturers, better-off independent artisans, civil servants, professionals, lesser merchants,” and those engaged in similar professional pursuits.<sup>72</sup> These were, presumably, the “others” who subscribed first to the pocket anthologies, who had enough disposable income to pay the 12s price (or more) for the book (roughly twice the standard cost of a gallery seat at the King’s Theatre), but not enough to leave visible or documented traces of their attendance in the theater. The pocket opera anthologies, in this sense,

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maneuver political and academic debates that are beyond the scope of this project. Where I refer to a particular location in the English socio-economic hierarchy, I will use the words “rank” and “status,” found far more frequently in early eighteenth-century literature. For surveys of the middling sort, see Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and Family in England, 1680-1780*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994; and Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1660-1730*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. The exact constitution of Royal Academy audiences remains unresolved. The most reliable information that survives consists of subscription lists, and the high cost of subscription (£200) of course excluded members of the middling sort. But single-performance tickets were sold as well, and the much larger number of the middling sort who subscribed to *A Pocket Companion* and its competitors indicates substantial interest in the Royal Academy operas that extended solidly beyond the aristocracy.

<sup>69</sup> This is the influential thesis advanced by Neil McKendrick, most notably in John Brewer, Neil McKendrick, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Hutchinson, 1983). More recent assessments have distanced themselves from McKendrick, suggesting that the evolution of the English economy through the first decades of the eighteenth century was perhaps not quite as radical as McKendrick’s model suggests. John Styles (among others) has outlined the problems of this historiographic field, which has often failed to identify specific and quantifiable changes in consumer choice and the quality of life of the working classes (let alone the possibility of social mobility). See John Styles, *The Dress of the People*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

<sup>71</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*, p. Theories of emulation following Thorstein Veblen’s articulation of the idea of “conspicuous consumption” have come under criticism by scholars who have demonstrated that mobility among the ranks was far more limited than has sometimes been suggested, and has cautioned us not to assume that ascent to the landed elite was a realistic ambition for most members of the middling sort. See Kuchta, *ibid.*, pp. for example.

<sup>72</sup> Hunt, *ibid.*, p. 15.

could elevate “others” with an interest in opera to the status of subscriber, for other subscribers and purchasers to witness on the printed page.

One prominent example of such an elevation was Alexander Chocke, the dedicatee of *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 2). Having subscribed to the first volume for 28 copies, Chocke was apparently sufficiently satisfied with its quality to subscribe for an incredible 48 copies of the second, an order on the magnitude of those placed by booksellers. As a mid-ranking government official, the Clerk of Debentures in His Majesty’s Exchequer, Choke made an unorthodox dedicatee. Cluer and Creake explained the logic of their choice in the dedication:<sup>73</sup>

This Second Collection of Opera Songs presumes to be [the] Favour of [your] Patronage. The Encouragement you have always given to useful Performances in Musick (particularly our first Volume and [your] large Subscription to this) has emboldened us to make this Address; being assured that the prefixing of [your] Name, will be the best Means of recommending [sic] it to the Ingenious, & preventing the Cavils of those whose Interest it is to be angry, & have no other way of procuring any Regard to their own, but be depretiating [sic] [the] Performances of others.

Cluer and Creake’s final comment is a swipe at Peter Fraser, defending their books against his published criticisms.<sup>74</sup> Their choice of words is careful, and while “the Performances of others” refers of course to their labors in producing the anthologies, it resonates with the other layers of performance at work: the prominence of Chocke’s endorsement in the book, the “useful Performances” he apparently enjoyed giving, and the many more the anthology (and its competitors) surely inspired.

In the final section, we turn therefore to the performances the pocket opera anthologies scripted. In the pocket, these anthologies transformed the operatic event, creating a drama that could play out again on the printed page in the intimacy of the home. Lying at the intersection of the economy of polite sociability and amateur performance culture, the pocket opera anthologies encouraged performances as social activities; they were also catalysts for private musical moments. In both scenarios, I argue, the anthologies participated in the navigation of English identities, mediated by the pocket (itself an important space of subjectivity, as we saw above). In particular, I will examine the cultural dynamics of English amateurs performing in Italian.

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<sup>73</sup> *A Pocket Companion...vol. II*, *ibid.*, p. [iii].

<sup>74</sup> For more, see Hunter, “The Publishing of Opera and Song Books in England, 1703-1726,” pp. 659-660.

### III. Pocketing the difference: negotiating English identities in amateur performances of Italian music

The pocket opera anthologies exemplified the increasing commodification of music prints, literalizing their currency by positioning themselves in the pocket beside coins and other valuables. The process of commodification—illustrated by the pocket anthologies’ impressively long subscription lists—and the amateur performances the anthologies facilitated suggests that opera played a significant role in disseminating representations of Italianness through the possibility of its performance. Historiography of opera has often resorted to easy binaristic categories (i.e. English/Italian) to explain the genre’s problematic reception in eighteenth-century England, categories inherited in large part from that reception itself.<sup>75</sup> The widespread dissemination of Italianate music from the Royal Academy throughout London and the rest of Britain through the pocket opera anthologies, I contend, destabilizes those categories. The proximity of the anthologies to the body in the pockets of “Persons of Quality, Gentry, and others,” combined with their capacity simultaneously to encourage both private and sociable performances, emphasizes the degree to which those performances participated in the negotiation of subjectivities. While hidden, owing to their ephemeral nature, like all musical performances before the advent of sound recording, we can begin to hypothesize domestic performances by amateurs—and the domestic culture that fostered them—through the materials that scripted them.

Benedict Anderson’s influential account of the rise of nationalisms locates significant agency in the advent of what he calls “print-languages.” Anderson argues that “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new formed of imagined community.”<sup>76</sup> I suggest as a corrective that the “fixity” of print was largely a fiction of its rhetorical positioning, and that the linguistic boundaries of

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<sup>75</sup> In the past decade, Suzanne Aspden has repeatedly encouraged us to consider instead the extent to which English and Italian iterations of opera were informed by each other, as permeable generic categories. See Suzanne Aspden, “‘An Infinity of Factions’: Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain and the Undoing of Society,” *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9(1), March 1997: 1-19; “Arne’s Paradox: National Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Essays in honor of Steven Paul Scher and on cultural identity and the musical stage*, ed. Suzanne M. Lodato, Suzanne Aspden, and Walter Bernhart (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002); and “The Problem of Italian Opera,” Chapter 3 from unpublished dissertation, Oxford University, 1999 (obtained from the author by private communication).

<sup>76</sup> Benedict, Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: , 2006; first published 1983), pp. 44-46.

nationalism (and empire) were far more porous than this model allows.<sup>77</sup> Anderson notes that nationalism depends upon the recognition of alterity. Rather than assume the rhetorical fixity of the borders of nation and the others they construct in musical performances, however, I argue that national and ethnic differences in such performances could in fact be consumed in the form of the pocket opera anthologies with their Italian texts for an English-speaking audience, differences celebrated even as they were suppressed into the formation of a British imperial identity. Like Anderson, nevertheless, I locate significant agency in printed materials, arguing that the pocket opera anthologies could transform theatrical rituals (that is, the “event” of the operatic experience) and staged alterity by facilitating domestic musical performance.

The community of Italians in London was simultaneously at the fringe and at the center of the English body politic: at the fringe because it was figured contiguous and potentially dangerous to the English nation, and at the center because the construction of an English national character depended upon the availability of precisely such a community of outsiders.<sup>78</sup> In reality, this community was small proportionally—especially compared to the numbers of Dutch and French *émigrés* living in London—and had been since at least the beginning of the fifteenth century. As few as six Italian merchant families (five first-generation households and one second-generation) have been identified as living in London in 1665 and there is little reason to suspect that this changed until the end of the next century.<sup>79</sup> Lacking the centralized proto-national governments of the Dutch Republic and the French monarchy, the cities of the Italian peninsula experienced minimal politically necessitated emigration before 1800. Skilled Italians—particularly musicians—frequently traveled to London at the invitation of aristocratic English patrons, and the importation of Italian singers was the central project of the Royal Academy of Musick in the 1720s. Some of these musicians made London their permanent home.<sup>80</sup> However, this community—and that of singers in particular—was comprised largely of

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<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of this rhetoric, see Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), pp. 18-19.

<sup>78</sup> Other communities played a more prominent role in this process (especially the French Huguenot community). However, the Italians play the most active role in the English musical imagination.

<sup>79</sup> Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 39. Such data, based upon surname analysis, is notoriously unreliable. However, all available evidence suggests that this number, proportionally speaking, is reasonably accurate.

<sup>80</sup> Reinhard Strohm, ed. *The eighteenth-century diaspora of Italian music and musicians* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), and Graham Dixon, “Purcell’s Italianate Circle,” *The Purcell Companion*, ed. Michael Burden (London: Faber, 1995).



skilled artisans, artists, and performers. Thus its constitution was largely transient, reinforcing the existing the fears about their intentions.

One transient Italian visitor was the Bolognese puppeteer Pietro Gimonde, whose marionette “Pulcinella” or “Pulchinello” left a lasting impression upon the obsessive diarist Samuel Pepys. On 9 May 1662, Pepys recorded a performance by Gimonde at Covent Garden, describing “an Italian puppet play ... which is very pretty, the best that ever I saw.”<sup>81</sup> By way of trans-linguistic travesty, Pulcinella—the star of this puppet show, based upon a *commedia del’ arte* character—eventually became known to English audiences as “Punch.” While Pulcinella’s move from Covent Garden to more public spaces suggests the way in which aspirational consumption could transform cultural production, Punch remained a steady presence in the theaters through the early decades of the eighteenth century. In such puppet shows, Punch typically provided “comic relief, either in the form of ‘low immoral discourses’ or bawdy or roistering antics, amid the splendors of the showman’s scenic displays.”<sup>82</sup> As late as the 1730s he retained Italianate versions of his name—emphasizing one characterization of Italians on English stages as morally degenerate outsiders threatening the functionality of the body politic. A version of Punch in the English song anthology *The Musical Miscellany* (1731), also pocket-sized, gives him the larger-than-life proportions of the *castrato*:<sup>83</sup>

I’d strip and shew you my Shapes in Buff,  
But fear the Ladies wou’d flout me.

My rising Back, and distorted Breast,  
Whene’er I show ‘em become a Jest;  
And as for what is below my Waist,  
No Lady ever need doubt me.

Here, the simultaneous (and seemingly paradoxical) anxiety about the *castrato*’s malformation and his abilities in the bedroom is read onto the body of Punchinello in humorous form. The slippage from morally degenerate puppet to *castrato* was easy enough; William Hogarth thematized the association in the engraving *Southwark Fair* (1733), Image 9 (below). Amid the

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Robert Leach, *The Punch & Judy Show: History, Tradition and Meaning* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985).

<sup>82</sup> Leach, *ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>83</sup> *The Musical Miscellany: Volume the Sixth*, London, 1731, pp. 60-2. The full text of this song, titled “Punchinello” may be found in Appendix I.

chaos of the foregrounded fairgoers, Punch performs beneath a banner that reads “Punch’s Opera” (stage left).



**Image 9: William Hogarth, *Southwark Fair* (1733-1734)<sup>84</sup>**

Harping upon the alleged misnomer of the Royal Academy, Defoe confirms the association in *Augusta triumphans*:<sup>85</sup>

How then can the *Italian Opera* properly be call'd an Academy, when none are admitted but such as are, at least are thought, or ought to be, adepts in Musick? If that be an Academy...*Punch's Opera* may pass for a lower kind of Academy.

To the left of this small scene is a larger production with a sign reading “The Siege of Troy is Here,” explaining the presence of a “Popish” priest and a prostitute below: these staged foreigners are figured as an imminent threat to the community from within. In this regard, the

<sup>84</sup> William Hogarth, *Southwark Fair*. Available from <http://www.artstor.org> (Accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> Defoe, *ibid.*, p. 18.

Trojan horse depicted in the print was not unlike pockets carrying the pocket opera anthologies, with their disruptive Italian texts, threatening, as critics argued, the English stage.

Clearly however, the early-eighteenth-century stage was a significant space for the staging of alterity.<sup>86</sup> Theatrical representations of foreigners and other potentially seditious bodies were increasingly common following the restoration. Ottomans, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romans were regular inhabitants of heroic drama.<sup>87</sup> Performances of alterity could simulate or even engender the process of *translatio imperii*—perhaps for this reason above all else did Italian opera, implicitly connected to Rome (so frequently bypassed by the necessities of post-Reformation British etiology), prove simultaneously so successful and problematic in its early eighteenth-century English reception. Staging the other contained its threat, and, as in the case of travestied Italian opera, opened it to ridicule. This ridicule was ambivalent, of course, since such performances were generally played for comic effect, thereby reducing what could have been performed critique to what Amanda Eubanks Winkler has called “pure entertainment with very little menace.”<sup>88</sup> Italians were usually presented as foppish types on stage, their characters the sites of the importation of operatic luxury. They continued to be associated like Punch with moral degeneracy, considered all the more dangerous because of their currency in aristocratic circles. After the inception of ballad opera in the late 1720s, such travestied Italians became increasingly present on the stage, satirical versions of real singers who, in many cases, had appeared in the same theaters.

In such parodies, there is a profound discontinuity between the high dramatic style of the mocked *opera seria* and the satirical rendition. Suzanne Aspden has identified in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) such a “moment of endorsement of and engagement with operatic ritual,” enabling Gay “both to attack Italian opera and to capitalise on its fashionability.”<sup>89</sup> This double move marked the fascination of English audiences, at multiple levels of society, with Italian

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<sup>86</sup> See Cynthia Lowenthal, *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 2003; Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage: 1660-1714*, Cambridge, 2001; and Louise H. Marshall, *National Myth and Imperial Fantasy: Representations of Britishness on the Early Eighteenth-Century Stage*, London, 2008.

<sup>87</sup> Orr, *ibid.*, p. 27. Bridget Orr draws a connection between performances of foreign imperial powers and the burgeoning British imperial project, locating in the modes of comparison enabled by such performances the possibility of the recognition of similitude and difference. These performances offered “peculiarly pleasurable and apparently successful ways of processing aspirations to empire and curiosities about exotic societies.”

<sup>88</sup> Amanda Eubanks Winkler, *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, the Melancholic, and the Mad on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage*, Bloomington, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>89</sup> Aspden, Suzanne, “Chapter 3: The Problem of Italian Opera,” excerpted by private communication from her unpublished dissertation: “Opera and Nationalism in mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain,” Oxford, 1999, pp. 2-3.

outsiders. In this regard ballad operas tend to demonstrate a remarkable awareness of the social importance of Italian opera for class and rank. Witness, for example, an exchange between the allegorical characters Mean (i.e. English modesty) and Mode (i.e. fashion) in the prologue to *The Fashionable Lady; or, Harlequin's Opera* (1730):<sup>90</sup>

*Mean.* Why then, to be plain with you, a modern Opera, in my Opinion, would be out a poor Entertainment at any Marriage.

*Mode.* Your *English* Operas, I grant you; but your *Italian* would do Honour to a Prince's marriage...

[A third character, Ballad, interjects.]

*Bal.* Confound your *Amphion's*, your dancing Rocks, and Italian Gimracks! I sent for you to hear my Friend *Drama's* Play; not to quarrel about squeaking Recitative, paltry Eunuchs, and Trill of insignificant out-landish Vowels.

This final remark does double work, simultaneously belittling the sound of the language and connecting it to a standard eighteenth-century musical ornament, the trill. Even so small an ornament could be rendered alien (“out-landish”), an invasive sound. Ballad continues to make the case for English, venturing that a “Country Parish-Clerk...knows more of true Musick than...all your *Senesino's* put together.”<sup>91</sup> Mode objects in the strongest terms:

*Mode.* Abominable comparison! a Parish-Clerk and *Senesino*! An *English* Opera, and *Radamistus*!

*Bal.* An *English* Opera and *Rad---dad---da*—Confound this *Italian*! it ties up a Man's Voice like the Appearance of a Ghost at Midnight.

The performed other is entertainingly contained, made to seem unpronounceable and therefore rendered—like the castrato—humorously impotent. In the case of Italian opera corporeal problems and concerns of political economy intersected at the site of the production of sound: the tongue.

Like the Latin *lingua*, “tongue” meant both the physical part of the body partially responsible for the production of sound and the concept of “language.” Seventeenth-century orthographic treatises display a tendency to translate “sensory experience into specific, graphic signs...an attempt to overcome the babble of languages.”<sup>92</sup> Distinctions between languages—and divisions of nations—were often drawn according to the manipulation of the sound-making

<sup>90</sup> Ralph, James, *The Fashionable Lady; or, Harlequin's Opera.*, London, 1730, pp. 1-2. Fascinatingly, Ralph himself seems to have been an outsider in English society, having emigrated to London from Philadelphia in 1724.

<sup>91</sup> Ralph, *ibid.*, p. 2. The failure of multiple castrati to surpass one Englishman is a knowing jab at the “incompleteness” of the castrato body.

apparatus. In *The Vocal Organ* (1665), Owen Price likens the production of the human voice to the playing of a musical instrument:<sup>93</sup>

For as the hollowness of Musicall instruments wieldeth a sound, so the breast  
yieldeeth a voice, and as by touching their various stops, their notes are changed,  
so the Harmony of the voice is made by, 1 Lips, 2 Teeth, 3 Tongue, 4 Palate, 5  
Throat.

Robert Robinson's orthographic study *Art of Pronunciation* (1617) attempts to overcome the difficulties of oral transmission by eliciting the universal signs for the proper manipulation of the instrument:<sup>94</sup>

the eye by it's [sic] quick and sharpe sight doth suddenly apprehend them, and  
thereby teach the mouth of one altogether ignorant, & unacquainted with such  
language, as aptly and truly to pronounce it, as any one to whom the same is  
naturally the speech.

Michel Foucault remarked upon this sort of orthographic enterprise in his discussion of the Classical "system of signs," insisting that they mark a universal chain of resemblance.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, if the universalizing project flattened differences, it did so in the service of mitigating the very obvious difficulties of performing them, for ethno-linguistic differences were found on the tongue itself. As the scene from *The Fashionable Lady* demonstrates, voices trained in one language were expected to have difficulty producing the necessary sounds of another.

While some of the songs in the pocket anthologies would have been easy for amateur singers to master—particularly the miscellaneous songs—many, if not most, would have been difficult to learn and to sing. The *da capo* aria of opera seria was, after all, a vehicle for the exhibition of the virtuosic voice. English amateurs seem nevertheless to have worked through even the difficult arias, as handwritten additions in surviving copies of *The Delightfull Musical Companion* and *The Pocket Companion* suggest (see Image 10, below).<sup>96</sup> One such aria, "Falsa imagine," originally sung by Cuzzoni in Handel's 1723 opera *Ottone*—the first composed

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<sup>92</sup> See Julie Stone Peters *The Theatre of the Book 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe*, Oxford, 2000, p. 161.

<sup>93</sup> Owen Price, *The Vocal Organ, or A new Art of teaching the English Orthographie* (Oxford: William Hall, 1665), pp. [i-ii]. Available from <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Robinson, *The Art of Pronunciation* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617). Available from <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>.

<sup>95</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002; first published 1966).

<sup>96</sup> One example is the copy of *The Delightfull Musical Companion* held in the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library, UC Berkeley. To my knowledge, these additions have not been recognized in print.



specifically for the Royal Academy of Musick—would have required at least a modicum of vocal training for its successful performance (see Example 1 below).<sup>97</sup> Apart from octave leaps (m. 18, for example), the aria features difficult melismas on the words “m’alletto” and “spero” (mm. 12 and 26, respectively). As amateur singers worked out how to navigate these and other ornamentations (including, potentially, ones learned at the theater through attentive listening) in the intimate spaces of private music chambers, they performed “the principle sign of opera’s luxury.”<sup>98</sup> In so doing, such performances, bearing an erotic subtext, transported the sexualized voices of Italian opera singers to domestic spaces.



**Image 10: handwritten changes in *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1)**

From the copy held in the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library (Case X, Special Collections)<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> As the first item in *The Delightfull Musical Companion* and the first aria Cuzzoni had sung on the English stage, “Falsa immagine” would almost certainly have been attempted.

<sup>98</sup> Aspden, “An Infinity of Factions,” p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> Photograph by author, for personal academic use; not for publication.

12

[Soprano] Vol-to m'al-let - to e quel vol - to e quel

[Basso Continuo] 5 6 6 5-6 6 6 6 6 5 6

14

Vol-to m'al let - to Fals'im - a-gi-ne m'ing-an-as-ti m'ing-an - as-ti mi mos-trast'un Volt'a-ma-bi-le un Volt'a

6 5 6 6 6 4 3 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 5 6 5

17

ma-bi-le e quel Vol-to m'al let - to e quel Vol-to m'al let - to

4 3 6 5 6 4 3 6 6 5 3 9 8 6 9 8 6 7 6 6 5

21

Or Ces-sato il dolce ing-an-no trovo or - ro - re trovo af - fan-no trovo or

5 7 6 4 3 6 6 4 3 6 7 6 6 6 6 6

24

ro - re trovo af-fan-no O - ve gio ie il Cor Spe ro trovo or - ro - re trovo af

7 6 7 6 6 6 5 7 6 6 7 6

**Ex. 1: mm. 12-26, "Falsa immagine," Act I, *Ottone*, George Frideric Handel**  
 From *The Delightfull Musical Companion*, pp. 1-4, edited by Mark Rodgers<sup>100</sup>

<sup>100</sup> My edition preserves Peter Fraser's orthography, and its musical quirks, rather than attempting (as one might normally do) to prepare the musical text for a modern performance. This explains the discrepancy between the spelling of the title of the aria and its incipit.



If the growing body of printed guides to instruments and music available at bookshops did not provide sufficient instruction, wealthier musical enthusiasts often hired private music teachers to help them. This was not a new practice; following the Restoration, Samuel Pepys famously employed a music teacher of Italian ancestry, Cesare Morelli.<sup>101</sup> The castrato Pier Francesco Tosi is known to have taught widely during at least two stints in London, first in the 1690s and again after 1724, coinciding with the publication of the popular pocket opera anthologies.<sup>102</sup> His vocal treatise published in 1723 and subsequently translated for London as *Observations on the Florid Song; or, sentiments on the Ancient and Modern Singers* (1743) provides interesting insight into the vocal pedagogy that London singers (both amateurs and those with professional aspirations) might have been learning in the mid-1720s. One of the features unique to the London edition is the introduction by Johann Ernest Galliard—himself a foreigner—that includes a disquisition on the voice. Galliard attempts to market the book to the set for whom the ability to perform Italian music was counted among the markers of taste and “quality”:<sup>103</sup>

But, above all, the soft and pleasing Voice of the *fair Sex* has irresistible Charms and adds considerably to their Beauty.

He then argues for the refinement of the voice:

If the Voice then has such singular Prerogatives, one must naturally wish its Perfection in musical Performances, and be inclined to forward any thing that may be conducive to that end.

The “Perfection” of the female voice, he implies, amplifies its “irresistible” quality. Again, the erotic undertones of the amateur performance are unmistakable, and it is not difficult to imagine the worry about the possible dangers of music lessons. Lessons with Tosi might have been especially worrisome, since he himself was an ordained priest as well as a castrato: on his person converged the many fears of the diverse critics of the importation of Italian opera.

In the economy of sociability, good taste had significant cachet; not all amateur musicians had the means to perform to “perfection.” Henry Carey’s poem “Blundrella: or, the

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<sup>101</sup> McDonald Emslie, “Pepys, Samuel,” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21275> (accessed December 15, 2010).

<sup>102</sup> Tosi, Pier Francesco, *Observations on the Florid Song; or, sentiments on the Ancient and Modern Singers*, London, translated by [Johann Ernest] Galliard 1743, pp. [vii]-xiii. Available from <http://books.google.com> (Accessed 10 December, 2010).

<sup>103</sup> Tosi, *ibid.*, p. v.

Impertinent” documents that economy in satirical form.<sup>104</sup> The poem is set in a domestic scene, following tea. Blundrella, as her name implies, lacks the grace of the rest of the company, “[of] the Polite, the standing Jest” and “of her own Perfections vaunted” (8, 13). She begs Belinda (her antithesis in every way) to sing a song, but she struggles to name the song she wants to hear, recalling only that it is “that which the Fustina / Sings when she hangs on Senesino” (43-44). Belinda, the paragon of taste, “a Mistress in the art” of singing, “pleaded her want of Voice and Skill,” and claimed to have lost her voice (56-57). Angered, Blundrella launches into an excited discussion of London’s operatic scene, listing singers and songs (she seems, in other words, to have followed closely the many written accounts of the theatrical gossip circulated in print by the newspapers). She even rehearses one argument in the luxury debates: “The *English* were not fit to teach, / “*Italians* were the only Men” (84-85). At last a young gentleman, Eugenio (an Italianate pseudonym?), comes to Belinda’s rescue and exposes Blundrella’s blunders:

BLUNDRELLA rear’d her Crest aloft,  
And begg’d him to play something soft:  
What think you, Madam, of *AL OMBRA*?  
That’s poor dull Stuff, do ye like *SGOMBRA*?  
*Si Caro*, if you please, said she:  
He play’d the Tune of *Children Three*.  
She was in Raptures, and intreated  
The self same Tune might be repeated. (135-142)

Blundrella’s mistake—confusing a simplistic (and English) tune for one of Faustina’s trademark arias—makes her an object of ridicule. Blundrella has clearly never been to the theaters she is so eager to discuss. The poem is centered upon the expectation that Belinda and her milieu would have been intimately acquainted with the music of the Italian opera and capable of performing it in private (if unwilling to do so in a large company for the sake of modesty). Meanwhile, Carey’s playful mocking of the blundering heroine suggests his readers’ familiarity with social climbers (and those without the means to visit the opera regularly), eager to participate in the consumption of a difficult repertoire, closely associated with London’s High Society. Carey—so closely connected with at least two of the pocket opera anthologies as translator of *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 2) and a subscriber to *The Opera Miscellany*—knew better than anyone the immense draw of the access to an elite repertoire the books provided.

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<sup>104</sup> Henry Carey, *Blunderella: or, the impertinent. A tale. To which is added The beau monde, or, the pleasures of St. James’s* (London: A. Dodd 1730 [Second Edition]). Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

Thanks to the easier availability of printed material disseminating the music of the Royal Academy in a pocketable fashion, English amateur singers could increasingly attempt to perform in small groups or in private the fetishized voices of Italian singers. In addition to the “Succinct method for the right reading and pronouncing of the Italian tongue” appended to the *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 2), several new Italian dictionaries and grammars appeared in the 1720s, indicating a real desire to perform the Italian tongue.<sup>105</sup> The performances of and resulting confrontations with alterity scripted by these texts (musical and otherwise) presumably involved simultaneous erasures and imaginings, whose greatest casualties were the essentialized ethno-linguistic borders of ethnic imagined communities. Confronted by the possibility of performing the Italian other, amateur English musicians engaged in the construction of an Augustan identity characterized by an early cosmopolitan urge to consume the materials of performance. As the identities of singers circulated in print, in opera scores, selected songs, and the pocket anthologies (as well as the pamphlet literature), they formed an imagined community of Italians in London—a community with real bodily constituents, reconfigured on the page as performable texts.

The community of amateurs the pocket anthologies marks was entirely uniform; their lengthy subscription lists confirm that it was not. For their consumers in London, performances from these books might easily have been re-performances, attempts to embody the memory of a theatrical experience. In the provinces and abroad, the books might have enabled a different sort of performance entirely. Some purchasers may not have been interested in performing the music themselves, paying others to do so, as we have seen. Following Thomas Turino, I suggest that the cosmopolitanism engendered in the pocket anthologies is “simultaneously local and translocal,” manifesting itself differently in locally contingent circumstances.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, rather than being antithetical to English national interests (as eighteenth-century critics of luxury were hasty to argue), the consumption of foreign commodities was an essential characteristic of a particular imperial strand of Augustan identity in spite of the protectionist rhetoric of the critics. Performance—on and off stage—exemplified the negotiation of that identity; music prints, and

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<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Ferdinando Altieri, *Dizionario Italiano ed Inglese. A dictionary Italian and English containing all the words of the vocabulary della Crusca and several hundred more taken from the most approved authors; with Proverbs and Familiar Phrases*, (London, 1726/1727); [Giovani] Veneroni, *The italian master: or, the easiest and best method for attaining that language*, London, 1729; and Angelo Maria Cori, *A new method for the Italian tongue: or, a short way to learn it*, London, 1723. All available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

the performative possibilities they encouraged, bridged the public/private dichotomy of Mandevillian political economy. Increasing contact with an expanded world demanded new performances that could test the dynamics of power. If the theater put identities on display, allowing them to be contained and renegotiated, and “provided both the codes and the processes for performing identities,” the home offered an equally crucial space for such stagings in the polite economy, with its many commercialized accessories, by re-reading those codes.<sup>107</sup>

In reality, the threat posed by Italian singers to the stability of the body politic was imagined (as indeed was the body politic). Gradually, professional English singers began to compete with the Italian singers for ticket sales. Their voices too were figured as their embodiment, and their bodies, like those of the Italian singers, sexualized. In a letter published under the title *See and Seem Blind: Or, A Critical Dissertation on the Publick Diversions, &c.* (1732), the anonymous Lord B— describes a rising English star, Susanna Arne (better known by her married name, Susanna Cibber):<sup>108</sup>

she is very young, and very pretty; and has made innumerable Conquests, her voice is exceeding small, but exceeding sweet; she Sings perfectly in Tune, and her manner is entirely modern; she has such a Warble, such a *je ne scay quoy*, as tickles my very soul; and yet there are some Brutes, that because she is *English*, are angry with themselves for liking her in spite of Prejudice.

In this account, Arne’s voice, “small, but exceeding sweet,” is the antithesis to the dominant Italian aesthetic, and Lord B— relishes the opposition. Elsewhere, Henry Carey could take delight in the “chopping and changing, lopping, eking out, and coining of Words, Syllables, and Jingle, to display in *English* the beauty of Nonsense, so prevailing in the *Italian Operas*.”<sup>109</sup> This was not unlike the process he undertook in translating some of the arias for the second volume of *A Pocket Companion*. Only recently however has historiography turned away from the inherited Italian/English binaries of eighteenth-century criticisms of opera seria to a recognition that “English” responses to it were in fact deeply informed by it, as Carey’s violent (and humorous) process of adaptation suggests. Rather than avoid “nonsense” entirely, as Fraser intended in *The*

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, cosmopolitans, and popular music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>107</sup> Lowenthal, *ibid.*, 34.

<sup>108</sup> *See and Seem Blind: Or, A Critical Dissertation on the Publick Diversions, &c.*, London, 1732. Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

<sup>109</sup> Henry Carey, *The Dragon of Wantley. A burlesque opera* (London: J. Shuckburgh 1738), p. [iii]. Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>.

*Delightfull Musical Companion* (see above), Carey saw fit to make it a central feature of his literary project.<sup>110</sup>

The trajectory of staged representations of Italians from theater to home by way of the pocket, a process facilitated by the commoditization and miniaturization of print, marked an adaptation of theatrical ritual suited to the economy of sociability. Luxury goods tended in the eighteenth century to be read proximate to the body, from which the analogy of their “consumption” is in any case derived; we might place Italian music in eighteenth-century London among “pepper in cuisine, silk in dress, jewels in adornment, and relics in worship,” all noteworthy for their sensual gratifications.<sup>111</sup> I have investigated the domestic consumption of Italian music by English bodies in order to understand better the ethnic identities performed by amateurs from the pocket anthologies of the 1720s and other printed sources, and the politics of power in such performances. These performances—which found expression in other modes of cultural production—were complicit in the imagining of a British Empire as a body politic: like a corporeal body capable of consuming (and subsuming), emphasizing differences even as it flattened them.

#### IV. Conclusion

The four pocket opera anthologies published in London between 1724 and 1726 circulated arias from the Royal Academy of Musick far beyond the walls of the King’s Theatre in the Haymarket (where opera was performed). While print itself was not a new mode of the dissemination of Italianate music in England, the anthology format was. As pocketable items, moreover, the anthologies encouraged both sociable and private performances. This feature—portability combined with anthologized musical material reconfigured for amateur performance—was indeed a novelty in London’s market for printed Italianate music, as Cluer and Creake indicate in the preface to *A Pocket Companion* (Vol. 1):<sup>112</sup>

As all things of this Nature that have appear’d in the World, have been generally of a Size more adapted to a Library, than to accompany one Abroad; we flatter

<sup>110</sup> For an analysis of the historiography of the period, see Suzanne Aspden, “Arne’s Paradox: National Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Essays in honor of Steven Paul Scher and on cultural identity and the musical stage*, ed. Suzanne M. Lodato, Suzanne Aspden, and Walter Bernhart (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002).

<sup>111</sup> Berg, *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>112</sup> *A Pocket Companion* [vol. I], *ibid.*, p. [iv].

our Selves with the hopes of a favourable Reception for this Collection; the manner of introducing it being entirely new, &c.

The reception of the anthologies was, judging from their impressive subscription lists, overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Though documentation of performances from them does not survive, I have begun to reconstruct the culture of domestic performance by amateur musicians, by bringing the anthologies into contact with other artifacts, by mining the materiality and performability of the anthologies themselves, and by examining their mode of circulation. Objects like the pocket opera anthologies played an important part in negotiations of identity in the material culture of eighteenth-century London.

To this extent, performances from the pocket opera anthologies may have caused the musicians to confront issues of national identity. Augustan worry about the presence of foreign communities (including communities perceived or constructed as foreign) dialectically marked a concern about domestic selves that was an immediate problem in the face of expanding empire, as one contemporary witness, Bernard Mandeville, realized in his famous allegorical poem *The Fable of the Bees* (1705/1714).<sup>113</sup> The pocket anthologies exemplified this problem, encouraging English amateur singers to attempt the performance of a language which in many cases they may not have known (as demonstrated by their attempts to learn it through the “Succinct method” Cluer and Creak seem to have offered with *A Pocket Companion...vol. II*). By examining the implications of these confrontations, I have attempted to contribute to the ongoing destabilization of English/Italian binaries that have plagued historiography of opera in England. In the pockets of “Gentlemen and Ladies” the opera anthologies sat beside a remarkably diverse array of possible objects, some imported from abroad and others fashioned in England, but together these objects participated in the construction of Augustan identities, as part of a largely invisible but ultimately traceable material culture of domestic performance.

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<sup>113</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *The fable of the bees: or, private vices publick benefits* (London: [John] Roberts, 1714), p. 105. Available from <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/basicSearch.do>. E.G. Hundert writes that Mandeville’s poem and its accompanying prose exegesis “was carefully framed in a language suited to engender in a large segment of his Augustan audience a threat to their own self-understanding.” E. G. Hundert, *The Enlightenment’s Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the discovery of society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 13.

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