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A Tale of Two Jubas: Metastasian Opera and Racialized Difference

JESSICA GABRIEL PERITZ

Abstract Pietro Metastasio's opera *Catone in Utica* (Rome, 1727) represents ancient Roman imperial politics through the recurring trope of 'enslavement'. Reading *Catone* alongside Metastasio's sources, from Lucan to Addison, reveals how the poet's de-particularizing representational code converted historical modes of racialization into a generalizing Cartesian moral framework, and thereby demonstrates how the continuing influence of post-Enlightenment constructs of biological race has obscured the multiplicity of racialisms in earlier contexts. Turning from a physiological episteme to an earlier, 'unassimilated space' limned by poetics, sentimentality, and song, this article takes Metastasian *opera seria* as a window onto historically contingent conceptions of racialized difference.

A Venetian caricature from 1730 shows two famous singers in costume for an unnamed opera. The artist, Anton Maria Zanetti, gave soprano Francesca Cuzzoni an elongated nose, a chin both doubled and weak, and piggishly small eyes. The other figure, Nicola 'Nicolino' Grimaldi, is sketched in typical castrato form with a round face and protruding stomach. But there is one detail that makes this drawing quite unusual among caricatures of *opera seria* stars. Nicolino's skin is filled in with black ink (Figure 1).

For anyone accustomed to nineteenth-century operatic norms, this iconography would not seem amiss. Nicolino wears a stereotypically 'ethnic' costume, replete with feathered turban, pearl earring, and scimitar, so why wouldn't he also be wearing dark makeup? But when it comes to eighteenth-century Italian serious opera, there are few if any other sources that describe or depict similar practices. Presumably Zanetti used the ink here because the singers had just appeared in Riccardo Broschi's *Idaspe*, where Nicolino played the titular role of a 'finto Moro' (fake Moor); perhaps the artist was actually indicating the falseness of Idaspe's Moorish costume.[1] Still, whether Nicolino's blackened skin merely references Idaspe's fake identity or implies that dark cosmetics were in fact widely used in staging this repertory, the caricature shows that

1 Giovanni Pietro Candi, *Idaspe* (Carlo Buonarigo, 1730); music by Riccardo Broschi.

Figure 1. Anton Maria Zanetti di Girolamo, caricature of Francesca Cuzzoni and Nicola 'Nicolino' Grimaldi, 1730. The two singers are shown in costume for *L'Idaspe* (Venice, 1730). © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice. Used with permission.

opera seria has something to tell us about early modern representations of racialized difference.

   And what *opera seria* tells us, I suggest, is different from what we can learn from studying other musical, theatrical, and literary genres. It was the main form of serious (i.e., non-comic) theatre in eighteenth-century Italy, and by the first decade of the century had already proved central to social and political life across the peninsula and beyond.[2] Significantly, Settecento Italy lacked prominent traditions of either spoken drama or narrative literature, but *opera seria* stood in for those genres as Italy's most prestigious cultural form. Indeed, *opera seria* was typically referred to as *dramma per musica*, 'drama for music,' because many libretti were intended as heroic dramas of high literary merit that could be set to music — but, like other literary forms, they were also read at home in printed collections.[3] Featuring recurring scenarios of encounter between Greco-Roman figures and their others, these operas offer

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[2]   Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[3]   Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per Musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* (Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 1, 5–6.

abundant case studies for reading pre-Enlightenment cultural politics through emerging racial discourses. Yet few have done so with *opere serie*, since those discourses are ambiguous when compared with the ones studied in the contexts of early modern Britain, France, and Spain, as well as in earlier periods in Italy. Foundational work by Olivia Bloechl, Emily Wilbourne, and Noémie Ndiaye has analysed some of the multiplicitous strategies — from the cosmetic to the acoustic to the kinaesthetic — through which racialized difference was prescribed and performed on early modern European stages.[4] *Opera seria*, however, largely avoided such strategies in its own modes of representation.[5] Zanetti's caricature is instantly recognizable to twenty-first-century readers as a (problematic) representation of 'race', but, as I will argue, the dominant representations of racialized difference in *opera seria* were rarely visual, or even acoustic, in nature. Instead, notions of racialized alterity were embedded into the genre's dramaturgical and poetic conventions in ways that now seem unmarked.

Opera seria adds this other dimension to accounts of early modern race-making because it was the preeminent literary-dramatic form of a culture that did not have a colonial empire from which to extract its fantasies, and on which to impose its fictions, about racialized difference. Rather, the vast majority of the Italian peninsula was itself parcelled out to various other Old World empires, locating its denizens in an increasingly fraught position between potential colonizers and virtual colonized.[6] Within this interstitial space, the legacy of ancient Rome served as a warrant of Italy's

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[4] On 'performative blackness' as a tool for 'colonial aspirations' in early modern England, France, and Spain, see Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), p. 15 and passim; on 'cosmetic blackness' in particular, see pp. 35–136. On changes in the use of dark makeup in French ballet over the course of the eighteenth century, see Olivia Bloechl, 'Race, Empire, and Early Music', in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 77–107. On bodily and sonic representations of racialized and ethnic difference in seventeenth-century *commedia dell'arte*, see Emily Wilbourne, '*Lo Schiavetto* (1612): Travestied Sound, Ethnic Performance, and the Eloquence of the Body', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 63.1 (Spring 2010), pp. 1–43, doi:10.1525/jams.2010.63.1.1. Here and throughout this essay I follow Ndiaye's distinction between lower-case 'blackness' as an 'artificial prescriptive category' and capitalized 'Blackness' as agential self-identification; see *Scripts of Blackness*, pp. 28–29.

[5] Within the general context of pre-Enlightenment European art music, Ralph P. Locke dubs such representations as 'exotic characterizations without exotic style.' While 'exoticism' is not the same framework I take up here, Locke's discussion of Handelian opera in London makes several points that resonate with those in the present study (keeping in mind that Handelian opera has both affinities to, and significant differences from, Metastasian *opera seria*); Locke, *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 6, 18–23, 37–38, 76–88, 239–42 (quotation on p. 23).

[6] Though large swaths of the Italian peninsula were then under the rule of the Spanish Bourbon and Austrian Habsburg empires, the situation in Italy was nothing like that in the colonial Americas, however much certain Italian literati later in the century feared it could become so. For some of the later eighteenth-century Italian discourses of colonization, see Jessica Gabriel Peritz, *The Lyric Myth of Voice: Civilizing Song in Enlightenment Italy* (University of California Press, 2022), pp. 83–117. On northern Europeans' exoticizing views of early modern Italy, including Rome, as an extension of the Torrid Zone, see Bonnie Gordon, *Voice Machines: The Castrato, the Cat Piano, and Other Strange Sounds* (University of Chicago Press, 2023), pp. 176–204.

(however latent) imperial-colonizing potential.[7] While imperial-colonial powers like Britain, France, and Spain performatively constructed race to serve as a system of control over their growing empires, Settecento Italy drew on comparatively abstract racializing discourses of difference to support recursive imaginings of its own glorious imperial past.

It was therefore through the historical-classical fantasies promulgated by *opera seria* that Italy established a kind of empire of its own. Organized around the ubiquitous libretti of poet Pietro Metastasio, animated by the vocal stylings of castrati like Nicolino, and staged in service to a broadly absolutist politics, the lyric imperium of *opera seria* stretched from Rome, Venice, and Naples all the way to St Petersburg, Mexico City, and northern California.[8] Yet, as I'll show, the peculiarities of *opera seria*'s Arcadian-reformist code of conventions meant that the ideologies of racialized difference that spread along with this repertoire rarely manifested through the strategies familiar from ballets, masques, comic operas, and spoken plays (Italian and otherwise). Instead, constructs of difference were remediated through *opera seria*'s own internal logics both political and stylistic, and are for that reason now hidden from view and from hearing — along with most of *opera seria*'s cultural capital.

The present study thus has two mutually imbricated purposes. The first is to uncover some of the frameworks that undergirded *opera seria*'s particular mode of representing racialized difference. The second is to trace how the techniques through which such difference was re-presented were subsumed into the poetics

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[7] On the Roman Empire as the model for the early modern European imperial-colonial systems of Spain, Britain, and France, see Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500–c.1800* (Yale University Press, 1995), p. 11. On Virgil's *Aeneid*, the foundational epic of the Roman Empire, as the literary model for the 'secular entity of the West' in humanist early modernity, see Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3 (Fall 2003), pp. 257–337 (p. 281), doi:10.1353/ncr.2004.0015. Barbara Fuchs argues that early modern literary invocations of the ancient Roman concept of empire, 'imperium', indexed both 'domestic sovereignty' (on the order of the incipient nation-state) and outward expansion, and were not merely metaphorical but also materially influential; see Fuchs, 'Another Turn for Transnationalism: Empire, Nation, and Imperium in Early Modern Studies', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 130.2 (2015), pp. 412–18 (pp. 415–16), doi:10.1632/pmla.2015.130.2.412.

[8] The relations between *opera seria* and early modern empire are discussed in depth in my essay 'Metastasio's Lyric Imperium' (unpublished paper given at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, 2024). The astonishing geographical spread of *opera seria* is now well established, but for details on the specific locations listed above, see: on Metastasian opera in imperial Russia, David J. Welsh, 'Metastasio's Reception in 18-th-Century [*sic*] Poland and Russia', *Italica*, 41.1 (1964), pp. 41–46, doi:10.2307/477437; on Metastasian opera (generally in the form of contrafacts) in eighteenth-century Mexico, Drew Edward Davies, 'Arranging Music for the Liturgy. Contrafacts and Opera Sources from New Spain', *Early Music*, 47.2 (2019), pp. 147–60, doi:10.1093/em/caz020; on Metastasian opera sources in California, William J. Summers, 'Opera Seria in Spanish California: A Newly-Identified Manuscript Source', in *Music in Performance and Society: Essays in Honor of Roland Jackson*, ed. by Malcolm Cole and John Koegel (Harmonie Park Press, 1997), pp. 269–90.

of Metastasian *opera seria* writ large. By interrogating an array of conventions and tropes in one specific libretto, I aim to unpack how certain aspects of Metastasian poetics were in reality shaped by social and political ideologies of difference and, in turn, co-constitutive of them. At first glance these parameters seem unrelated to processes of racialization because *opera seria* by design avoided the localizing particularities that connoted difference in coeval genres. *Opera seria* dealt instead in generalities and abstractions, universalizing the personal and the individual into larger-than-life dramas of the political and the moral. The universalizing tendencies of Metastasian opera therefore require us to peer into the deeper structural levels of poetics and dramaturgy instead of halting at the surface lack of visual and/or musical exoticisms. Uncovering that structural level is what allows a study of *opera seria* to contribute to genealogies of the concept of 'race', in that the constructions of difference that were abstracted into *opera seria* forms are both related to, yet in important ways distinct from, twenty-first-century discourses about race. All told, approaching Metastasian opera through this lens reveals how racialized difference was de-particularized into poetics in order to strengthen *opera seria*'s efficacy as a cultural proxy for the empire Italy no longer possessed.

My analysis centres on the libretto *Catone in Utica*, one of Metastasio's first major works. Written in 1727, and originally performed in 1728 in Rome with music by Leonardo Vinci, *Catone* demonstrates not only how racialized difference was represented in *opera seria*, but also how such representations provided an organizing structure for Metastasio's developing poetics and dramaturgy. I begin by laying out my approach to the issue of what constituted 'race' in this period. From there I delve into Metastasio's sources for *Catone*, tracing how they encoded certain historical constructions of racialized difference which then inflected Metastasio's own. Most importantly, I then turn to Metastasio's libretto itself, drawing out in detail how the poet adapted his sources to fit his own purposes. While I focus here on Metastasio's poetry instead of examining *Catone*'s many musical settings, I read the libretto as both literary text and template for performance. With an eye to the latter, I also consider key moments from Vinci's setting for the Roman premiere, taking them as salient (but not the sole) examples of how that template worked with musical-vocal sound. Ultimately I argue that, through *Catone*, Metastasio created a paradigm for representing racialized difference — one that would soon become a foundational convention of his poetics, and thereby facilitated the efflorescence of the decades-long reign of *opera seria.*

Racialisms, from Greco-Roman Antiquity to Global Capitalist Modernity

The main problem with unpacking constructions and representations of racialized difference from the early eighteenth century is that what people now tend to think of as 'race' is not an inherent, transhistorical physiological property of bodies, but rather a historically and culturally contingent concept with roots in specific Enlightenment ideologies. As Ndiaye puts it: 'Race is not a form of human difference but a system of power falsely packaged as a system of knowledge', one that 'mobiliz[es] the dominant

epistemic fields at any given point in time.'[9] The dominant epistemic field of the late eighteenth century, which still haunts the present, privileged naturalizing and tax-onomizing configurations of knowledge. The resulting Enlightenment ideologies of racial difference, such as those promulgated by the likes of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Jefferson, (d)evolved into the scientistic racial theories of the nineteenth century that positioned difference as biological and essential, at once inscribed on the surface of bodies and inextricably embedded within them.[10] Twenty-first-century discussions of race tend to be strongly influenced by the anthropological and physiological epistemes inherited from the nineteenth century, whether critiquing their premises or reifying them. The enduring shadow cast by Enlightenment thought has therefore obscured many formulations of difference from previous eras.[11]

In the context I focus on here, the first third of the eighteenth century, European notions of difference were far less beholden to any single ideology than they would be after the Enlightenment. 'Human variety', as it was then often called, was more fluid than later taxonomies would permit, since the human body was not yet regarded as a self-enclosed system but rather as a porous, malleable one. As Greta LaFleur and Roxann Wheeler have each persuasively argued, it was only after mid-century that differences were taxonomized according to increasingly rigid categories of race, gender, and sexuality and, from there, theorized as immanent structural properties of bodies. But in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, human variety was largely attributed to perceptible manifestations of bodies' susceptibility to external factors, from the environmental to the cultural.[12] To a certain extent, difference was imagined as potentially flexible, multiple, and mutable.

But just because difference was less rigidly defined does not mean that the systems of power that operated through these pre-Enlightenment discourse domains were less materially harmful than those that operated via later biological-phenotypical constructs of race. Although difference was understood more flexibly than it would be later, it was nevertheless externally imposed by those in power onto people whose own sense of self-determination was mostly excluded from the historical archive, and it was used as both

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9   This is not to claim that 'race' as a term was invented by the Enlightenment — the word's roots reach back through early modern Spain and beyond — but rather to emphasize that vernacular discourses of race *as phenotype* in the twenty-first-century Anglophone world, along with many scholarly investigations of race, are indebted to Enlightenment thought, and thus (as Ndiaye points out) less useful in earlier contexts. Quotation from Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, p. 5, and extended as in Ndiaye, 'Rewriting the *Grand Siècle*: Blackface in Early Modern France and the Historiography of Race', in *Race Before Race: Premodern Critical Race Studies*, ed. by Dorothy Kim, special issue of *Literature Compass*, 18.10 (2021), pp. 1–11 (p. 3), doi:10.1111/lic3.12603.

10   For a summary of this shift in the second half of the eighteenth century see Nicholas Hudson, 'Introduction: "Race" and the Contradictions of Western Ideology, 1550–1750', *A Cultural History of Race*, ed. by Marius Turda, 6 vols (Bloomsbury, 2021), IV, *A Cultural History of Race in the Reformation and Enlightenment*, ed. by Nicholas Hudson, pp. 6–12; for more detailed discussion, see the other chapters in the volume.

11   Ndiaye, 'Rewriting the *Grand Siècle*', p. 3.

12   Greta LaFleur, *The Natural History of Sexuality in Early America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), pp. 20–21; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), passim, but see esp. 26–32, 91–92.

justification and technology for enslavement, colonization, and other very real forms of violence. Racism was rampant, even if some of its terms, principles, and justifications differed from those of later periods. In other words, approaching race as a historically contingent concept does not invalidate individuals' experiences of moving through the world in a body that has been racialized. As performance studies scholar Tavia Nyong'o explains, race itself may be a 'fiction,' but racism, as a result of that fiction and the 'historical memory' attendant on it, is unquestionably real as 'collectively experienced and enacted'.[13] One way of critiquing that fiction, then, is through examining aspects of its (pre-)history in performance culture.

The pre-Enlightenment potential for flexibility, fluidity, and multiplicity in differentiating processes was amplified by the generalizing poetics of Metastasian opera, which is why I use the phrase 'racialized difference' throughout this study rather than 'race'. With 'racialized difference', I mean to avoid reifying the familiar phenotypical-biological construction of 'race' and projecting it backwards as though it were a transhistorical concept. I am working within an earlier and less defined epistemic field in which some modes of difference were racialized, but not yet equated with biological essentialism or physiological destiny. I thus follow LaFleur's and Simone Browne's definitions of 'racialization' as the 'strategic production of human difference'.[14] At the same time, the phrase 'racialized difference' acknowledges that there are also continuities between different historical moments and their respective epistemes. I account for those continuities here by drawing on Cedric Robinson's foundational 1983 study *Black Marxism*, where he deploys 'racialism' as an umbrella term for ideological processes of differentiation across the history of Western civilization. As Robinson suggests, such processes were already at work in Greco-Roman antiquity and persisted in various guises throughout the medieval and early modern periods, but they were invested with new power when the advent of modern capitalism solidified racialisms into 'race'.[15] Metastasio wrote his major libretti between the mid-1720s and 1740, a critical phase in the emergence of the intertwined systems of capitalism and plantation slavery, yet his texts and their many reinventions have traditionally been treated as cordoned off from these emerging global power dynamics.

To continue ignoring that broader context is to miss something crucial about both *opera seria* and the pre-history of race. After all, race is first and foremost a system of power, as Ndiaye has established, and the genre of *opera seria* was devoted to explorations of power, as Martha Feldman has categorically shown. In Metastasio's libretti in particular, those explorations took place almost entirely within imperial and colonial scenarios borrowed from ancient history, ratifying the tenets of good sovereignty in the present by re-staging past conflicts between Greek or Roman figures and

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13   Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 6.

14   Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Duke University Press, 2015), p. 16; LaFleur, *Natural History of Sexuality*, pp. 17–20.

15   Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 3rd ed. (University of North Carolina Press, 2020), passim, but see esp. pp. 2, 26.

their African or Asian counterparts. This is not to say that Metastasio's operas portrayed every European authority figure as 'good' and every non-European character as 'bad' — far from it — but rather that racializing difference provided one important mode through which the poet dramatized power dynamics in his operatic corpus.[16]

For a basic example of how Metastasio drew on racialism to characterise such relations, take the early libretto *Didone abbandonata* (Naples, 1724), which effectively made his reputation and became one of his best-loved works. The opera's eponymous queen, Dido, founded Carthage (in what is now Tunis) after fleeing Tyre (in what is now Lebanon), and has been variously associated with both Africa and Asia (as the Levant or 'Orient') depending on the situation. Metastasio's rendition of Virgil's well-known tale centres on a love triangle. Didone loves the Trojan exile Enea, whom eighteenth-century audiences would have recognized from the *Aeneid* as the eventual founder of Rome; she is also pursued by the treacherous African king Iarba, hiding his identity under the pseudonym 'Arbace'. The African king is not a viable suitor in this version but serves primarily to set off Enea's political and moral virtue. For instance, Iarba's first stage appearance has the disguised king enter accompanied by a troop of Moors parading leashed tigers and lions as gifts for the queen, the exotic and dangerous pets alluding to the potential for violence that attends his marriage proposal.[17] In the end, Enea, the figure of good sovereignty, abandons Didone and his own desires in order to accept his divine duty of founding Rome. Iarba, the bad king, makes good on his threat of destruction, punishing Didone for rejecting him by setting fire to Carthage. Didone, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, and without a claim to either Enea's Rome or Iarba's Africa, dies in the flames of her burning city.

None of this indexes race in any post-Enlightenment sense, as *Didone*'s categories of 'Trojan/Roman' and 'Moorish/African' are not presented as biological or even physiological, but rather portrayed as cultural and geographical. Yet Metastasio was clearly using them as shorthand for a process of differentiation — in this case, to distinguish between the types of government associated with the two male figures in the libretto. Although such 'national' categories were more flexible and less particularized than later biological taxonomies of race, they had been leveraged as strategies of differentiation since antiquity; by the early modern period, as Ndiaye argues, those national categories had become one of the most significant progenitors to Enlightenment racial thinking.[18] Of course, 'African' is not a nationality, nor is 'Moorish', but their function as

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[16] Another such mode was gender, about which see Wendy Heller, 'Reforming Achilles: Gender, 'Opera Seria' and the Rhetoric of the Enlightened Hero', *Early Music*, 26.4 (1998), pp. 562–81, doi:10.1093/earlyj/XXVI.4.562.

[17] Pietro Metastasio, *Didone abbandonata* (Ricciardo, 1724), Act I, Scene 5: 'Iarba sotto nome d'Arbace ed Araspe con seguito de' mori, comparse, che conducono tigri, leoni e portano altri doni per presentare alla regina.' On the relationships between pets (as domesticated animals), enslavement, and discourses of racialization in the early eighteenth century, see Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Duke University Press, 1999), p. 39.

[18] Noémie Ndiaye, 'Race and Ethnicity', in *Cultural History of Race in the Reformation and Enlightenment*, pp. 111–25.

such in Metastasian libretti exemplifies the generic tendency of *opera seria* to privilege broad strokes over particularities.

In Metastasio's next major effort, the comparatively under-studied *Catone in Utica*, such longstanding racialisms were reconfigured and modernized in ways that provide important insights into pre-Enlightenment strategies of racialization. This is because *Catone*'s drama revolves around the very issue of marking differences between imperial subjects in a colonial context — namely, by defining who does and does not count as a 'Roman'. The scene is set in 46 BCE, in the Roman colony of Utica in North Africa, where two famous Roman political leaders are waging a civil war over Rome's future. Can an empire be run by a republican government 'at home', as stoic senator Catone insists, or does empire require absolutist rule, as would-be dictator Giulio Cesare believes? (Note that Rome had long been both a republic and an empire, having held colonies in North Africa dating back centuries to the Second Punic War; at issue in *Catone* is not the ethics of imperialism in general, but rather which type of government is best *for the Romans* who benefit from that empire.) The colonized African soil on which the two leaders fight is a proxy for Rome itself — as is the body of Marzia, Catone's daughter, who is caught between her filial duty and her illicit love for Cesare. The requisite love triangle is filled out by Arbace, a Numidian (North African) prince who is in love with Marzia and allies himself with Catone against Cesare. As he is constantly reminded by the other characters, Arbace is an African, not a Roman. Still, while he shares his name with the pseudonym of *Didone*'s African king, the loyal and sentimental Arbace is utterly unlike the nefarious Iarba. His Africanness was written for a different purpose.

The opera ends when Catone commits suicide rather than submit to Cesare's rule, a prospect he equates with nothing less than enslavement. 'I am teaching the world, and all of you, how to escape slavery', the dying senator proclaims, invoking one of the opera's recurring tropes.[19] Catone's last command is that Marzia renounce her beloved Cesare and marry the faithful Arbace. Lying in his daughter's arms, Catone says to her, 'Ah, I didn't think I'd leave you in Africa like this!'[20] He dies (offstage), while Cesare is filled with remorse and throws his victor's laurels on the ground. Despite Catone's accusations, Cesare has expressed an inner conflict about his divinely ordained duty to take over Rome, so he is effectively absolved of charges of tyranny.

In *Catone*, as in *Didone* and most of his later libretti, Metastasio elided political dilemmas about the management of empire with the emotional dilemmas of the subjects under that empire's dominion. This is exemplified in *Catone* by the obvious parallel between Marzia and Rome, in which both woman and state are caught between a desire for Cesare (or the absolutism he represents) and duty to Catone (or the republicanism he represents). Metastasio wrote *Catone* for the Teatro Argentina in Rome, where he was hoping to gain a foothold, so it makes sense that the libretto would

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[19] Metastasio, *Catone in Utica* (Rome: Bernabò, 1728), Act III, scene 12: 'Al mondo, a voi / ad evitar la servitude insegno.'
[20] Ibid.: 'Ah, non credea lasciarti / in Africa così!'

be preoccupied with delineating what it means to be a good Roman.[21] What is important about *Catone*'s delineations of Romanness, though, is how they served the poet's broader dramaturgical aim of blurring political designations into moral ones. Essentially, this early libretto shows Metastasio in the process of developing his major dramaturgical modus operandi: he gave operagoers the romantic intrigues they desired, but invested those intrigues with monumental political implications in order to elevate them to the register of historical tragedy.[22] The result was that individual emotional conflicts took on the stakes of much bigger power struggles, while grand historical events became more immediate and affecting because they were played out through characters' interpersonal relationships. As we'll see, this all relates back to the issue of racialized difference because, in *Catone*, the political-emotional conflicts of Romanness were undergirded by a racialism that was not only ancient but also, significantly, inflected by Metastasio's contemporaneous context of European colonization of the New World and plantation slavery.

'The rest is verisimilar': Metastasio's Sources

Uncovering the processes of racialization at work under the surface of *Catone* begins with investigating the poet's source material. Metastasio's rendition of the events of Julius Caesar's civil war (49–45 BCE) is more akin to fan fiction than history, even by eighteenth-century standards, for Cato and Caesar did not clash in Utica, nor did any of Cato's daughters have a secret relationship with Caesar, and 'Marcia' was not even one of Cato's daughters, but his wife. These fictions, among various others, were not owed to the poet's lack of familiarity with the historical sources. Like any Settecento man of letters, Metastasio had read the canonical representations of Caesar and Cato's African war in Lucan's *Pharsalia* (mid-first century CE) and Plutarch's *Lives* (early second century CE), as well as germane texts by Cicero, Seneca, and Sallust. Even as a teenager he knew these texts well enough to borrow phrases straight from both the *Lives* and *Pharsalia* for his elegy *La morte di Catone* (1717), where he ventriloquized the dying Cato in Dantesque *terza rima*.[23]

   Yet in his later operatic version of *Catone*, Metastasio departed so far from these ancient sources that he did not even gesture to them in his *argomento*. That alone is a sign that something unusual was afoot. In *Didone* he had been careful to spell out

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[21]   In his biography of Metastasio, Charles Burney claimed that the poet 'chose the subject purposely to please the Romans, supposing that he should gain both applause and gratitude by displaying the virtue of one of their own heroes'; while Burney's historical claims were often coloured by his own biases, he may well have been on to something here. Charles Burney, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio*, 3 vols (G. G. and J. Robinson, 1796), I, p. 40.

[22]   Metastasio's teacher and mentor, Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina, had argued in his treatise *Della ragion poetica* (1708) that political events were the domain of tragedy, while private or familial events — especially romantic love plots — pertained merely to comedy. On Metastasio's attempts to reconcile Gravina's dichotomy in his libretti, see Paolo Lago, *I personaggi classici secondo Metastasio: Catone in Utica, Olimpiade, Achille in Sciro* (Fiorini, 2010), p. 41.

[23]   Luca Mendrino, 'Metastasio da la *Morte di Catone* al *Catone in Utica*: Una revisione selettiva delle fonti classiche', *Seicento e Settecento*, 8 (2013), pp. 117–38 (pp. 119–20, 126).

precisely which elements he took from which sources: 'Everything is from Virgil', along with a few bits from the third book of Ovid's *Fasti*.[24] But with *Catone*, the poet simply noted: 'Everything is from history, the rest is verisimilar' (i.e. 'realistic').[25] But that wasn't entirely true. Metastasio was uncharacteristically evasive about his sources for *Catone* because openly acknowledging his immediate inspiration would have rankled the classicist establishment in Rome.[26]

The clue to finding his inspiration lies with the character of Arbace. The sentimental African prince does not appear in any of the classical texts on Caesar's civil war because he is not exactly a historical figure. But Metastasio did not invent Arbace himself: he borrowed him from one of the most popular English stage plays of the eighteenth century. Entitled *Cato, A Tragedy*, that play was written by Joseph Addison (of *Spectator* fame) and had premiered in London in 1713. In basic outlines, the plot of Addison's tragedy is nearly identical to that of Metastasio's libretto from fifteen years later. What is more, both dramas vary from the canonical ancient sources in many of the same ways, with Cato's daughter renamed 'Marcia' and inserted into a love story that ends with her marrying an African prince.

The similarities are unmistakable and, though this point is often overlooked, Metastasio himself admitted that he had regularly consulted modern dramas when writing his own. In a 1754 letter to none other than Ranieri de' Calzabigi, Metastasio explained his debts to the contemporary theatre:

> I have believed, writing for the theatre, in the need to read as much in this genre as has been written, not only by the Greeks, Latins [Romans] and Italians, but even the Spanish and the French; and I have compensated for my ignorance of the English language with the translations that exist, to inform myself, as much as possible without knowing the language, of the advances of the theatre in that nation. […] Sometimes one can recognise in some of my works the food which at that moment nourished me.[27]

Given the rapturous reception of Addison's tragedy, Metastasio certainly would have been interested in reading it — and he easily could have, since by 1718 there were already at least five Italian translations in circulation. In addition to lesser-known ones by Luigi Riccoboni, Nicola Saverio Valletta, and Rodolfo Aquaviva, there was Anton Maria Salvini's immensely influential literary effort and Pier Jacopo Martello's

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24 Metastasio, *Didone abbandonata*, 'Argomento': 'Tutto ciò si ha da Virgilio, il quale con un felice anacronismo unisce il tempo della fondazione di Cartagine agli errori di Enea. Da Ovidio nel terzo libro de' *Fasti* si raccoglie che Iarba s'impadronisse di Cartagine dopo la morte di Didone, e che Anna sorella della medesima, la quale chiameremo Selene, fosse occultamente anch'ella invaghita di Enea.'

25 Metastasio, *Catone in Utica*, 'Argomento': 'Tutto ciò si ha dagli storici, il resto è verisimile.'

26 On Metastasio's delicate situation in Rome due to his mentor Gravina's schism from the Arcadian Academy, see Mendrino, 'Metastasio da la *Morte di Catone* al *Catone in Utica*', p. 130.

27 Pietro Metastasio, letter to Ranieri de' Calzabigi, 16 February 1754, in Pietro Metastasio, *Tutte le opere*, 5 vols, ed. by Bruno Brunelli (A. Mondadori, 1943–54), III, p. 899: 'Io ho creduto, scrivendo pel teatro, di dover leggere quanto in questo genere hanno scritto non solo i Greci, i Latini e gl'Italiani, ma gli Spagnuoli ancora e i Francesi; e ho supplito alla mia ignoranza della lingua inglese con le traduzioni che vi sono, per informarmi, quanto è possibile senza saper la lingua, dei progressi del teatro fra quella nazione. […] Talvolta si riconosca in alcuna delle mie opere il cibo di cui attualmente mi nutriva …'

'Italianized' rewrite. The Martello was most likely Metastasio's source, for that version exonerates Addison's villainous Caesar by adding a lengthy defensive speech for a secondary character. (Caesar could not exonerate himself, as he does in Metastasio's version, because Caesar never actually appears on stage in Addison's tragedy.) Martello also changed some of Alexander Pope's prologue in order to praise Italy instead of Britain, making plain how Addison's ancient-Roman-turned-modern-British story could appeal to a Roman-imperial nostalgia in Italian audiences.[28] Metastasio may well have taken the risk of adapting a modern, rather than classical, source in hopes of activating similar resonances himself; furthermore, Addison's love story offered him the perfect opportunity for experimenting with mapping personal relationships onto political ones.[29]

The character Metastasio calls 'Arbace' was originally Addison's invention, as one half of the love plot, but in the play Marcia's African lover is named 'Juba'. He is a fictionalized composite of two historical Jubas: King Juba I of Numidia, a client king who was not directly involved in the Utica conflict, and his son Prince Juba, who in 46 BCE would have been a toddler.[30] Neither of these Jubas met, let alone married, any of Cato's daughters (although Prince Juba did grow up to marry Antony and Cleopatra's daughter, which may have been how Addison got the idea to make him into a romantic figure). There are some important differences between Addison's and Metastasio's versions, but there is no question that Metastasio's Arbace is Addison's Juba. The list of

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[28] For details on the various translations, see Lago, *I personaggi classici secondo Metastasio*, pp. 49–55; Hannibal S. Noce, 'Early Italian Translations of Addison's *Cato*', in *Petrarch to Pirandello: Studies in Italian Literature in Honour of Beatrice Corrigan*, ed. by Julius A. Molinaro (University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 111–30. On the political influence of Salvini's *Catone* in later eighteenth-century Italy, see Peritz, *The Lyric Myth of Voice*, pp. 90–93.

[29] And it was indeed a big risk: operagoers were horrified by Cato's suicide, especially because it was set in an underground tunnel (or, as they saw it, a 'sewer'). Metastasio produced several different endings in hopes of making the libretto less controversial, though he included the original one with the version published in his *Opere*. On how Addison's 'sentimental' changes to the historical sources helped Metastasio link feelings with politics in his libretto, see Alberto Beniscelli, *Felicità sognate: Il teatro di Metastasio* (Il melangolo, 2000), p. 43.

[30] The name 'Juba' will remind many readers of the famous Black minstrel performer and father of tap dance 'Master Juba' (William Henry Lane, *c.* 1825–1852), and of the later stock figure of blackface minstrelsy of the same name. The African-American 'Juba dance', from which Lane got his stage name, originated in the set of choreomusical practices known as 'patting Juba', which enslaved Africans brought to the American South and adapted for plantation life in the early eighteenth century. Addison's character thus seems unrelated to the rise and naming of the nineteenth-century figure. However, white enslavers frequently imposed names drawn from Greco-Roman antiquity onto those they enslaved and, owing to the immense popularity of Addison's play on both sides of the Atlantic, 'Juba' soon became as common as 'Caesar' and 'Cato'. This means that many white people without knowledge of patting Juba's African origins associated the Juba dance with Addison's character, despite the fact that the Black people who had actually formed and performed the tradition traced it to African Djouba, not to an English stage play. Julie Ellison links the stock figure directly to Addison's Juba, seemingly without knowledge of the patting Juba tradition; see Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 69. For an overview of patting Juba, see Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (Norton, 1983), pp. 179–81.
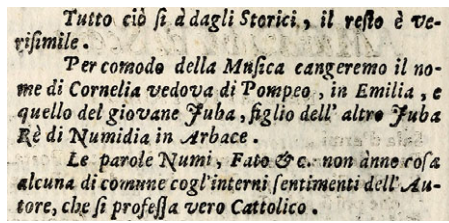
Tutto ciò si dà dagli Storici, il resto è verisimile.

Per comodo della Musica cangeremo il nome di Cornelia vedova di Pompeo, in Emilia, e quello del giovane Juba, figlio dell' altro Juba Rè di Numidia in Arbace.

Le parole Numi, Fato &c. non anno cosa alcuna di comune cogl'interni sentimenti dell'Autore, che si professa vero Cattolico.

Figure 2. Text explaining how the poet changed the name 'Juba' to 'Arbace' for the sake of musical setting. In Metastasio, *Catone in Utica* (Rome, 1728), p. 6.

roles printed in the 1727 *Catone* libretto includes a tiny note explaining that the poet changed the name Juba to Arbace to accommodate musical setting (see Figure 2).[31]

The poet's source is important because Metastasio's Arbace retains crucial aspects of Addison's Juba, and Juba's central role in Addison's play is inextricable from early-eighteenth-century British constructions of racialized difference vis-à-vis empire and coloniality.[32] Addison's play became 'the most politicized drama of the eighteenth century', famously quoted at key moments by American revolutionaries like Patrick Henry, Nathan Hale, and George Washington, but in its original version the play was not intended as a celebration of republicanism.[33] As Srinivas Aravamudan argues, Addison's characters recite clichés about liberty and virtue so as to appease a range of political factions, thereby enabling the drama to serve whatever ends its spectators required.[34] What the original *Cato* did promote, however, appealing to Whig and Tory alike, was a triumphalist narrative about colonialism. Addison's play premiered when the British were tightening their control over the Atlantic against the Spanish, expanding their plantation system in the Americas, and increasing their trafficking of Africans in the transatlantic slave trade. The central dilemma of the play as Addison presents it is therefore not about the legitimacy of a colonial empire in general, but rather about how the project of empire should be framed. Especially through the relationship between Cato and Juba, *Cato* portrays Britain's nascent empire-building as a benevolent force that could remake colonized peoples in their colonizers' mould.

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[31] Presumably the change was made because 'Arbace' was easier to set, and hence to sing, owing to its three syllables and open 'a' vowels.

[32] Literary scholars disagree on what, exactly, Addison's *Cato* was saying about race, coloniality, and empire, but they agree it was certainly saying something. I cite several studies here that have influenced my own reading, though I do not entirely follow any one of them: Ellison, *Cato's Tears*; Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Juba's Roman Soul: Addison's *Cato* and Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 32.2 (1999), pp. 63–76; Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 103–56.

[33] On American revolutionaries quoting *Cato* — in some cases, inspired by the 1778 performance of the play at Valley Forge — see Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, pp. 55, 59; Ellison, *Cato's Tears*, 68–69; Randall Fuller, 'Theaters of the American Revolution: The Valley Forge 'Cato' and the Meschianza in Their Transcultural Contexts', *Early American Literature*, 34.2 (1999), pp. 126–46 (p. 133).

[34] Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 103–04, 110–11.

This dynamic is established early in Act I in one of the play's best-known scenes. Prince Juba, the Arbace prototype, is arguing with his anti-Roman general, Syphax, about the Numidians' alliance with Cato. Syphax urges Juba to throw Cato over and unite all of Africa against the Roman colonizers, but the faithful Juba refuses, insisting that his bonds with his fellow Numidians are merely 'Bones and Nerves'. Such embodied connections mean little, Juba explains, when compared with the 'Virtues' of Rome:

> A Roman Soul is bent on higher Views:
> To civilize the rude unpolish'd World,
> And lay it under the Restraint of Laws;
> To make Man mild and sociable to Man;
> To cultivate the wild licentious Savage
> With Wisdom, Discipline, and lib'ral Arts;
> Th'Embellishments of Life: Virtues like these
> Make Human Nature shine, reform the Soul,
> And break our fierce Barbarians into Men. (Addison, *Cato*, I.4)

Envoicing a British fantasy of the willingly colonized, Juba presents the project of empire as one of civilizing, cultivating, even humanizing. Romanness, he implies, is not a quality found in one's body but a nobler state to which one should aspire. For Juba, Romanness inheres in the 'Soul', which, unlike the body, can be 'reform[ed]' by 'Virtue'.

From the outset, Addison's play presents Romanness as a potentially fluid category, and colonization as a tool for reshaping others into Romans. Syphax asks Juba if Rome's civilizing project isn't simply forcing the colonized to 'disguise [their] passions' and 'set their looks at variance with their thoughts' — that is, to separate their bodies from their minds. He is disapproving, but Juba replies in the affirmative: 'To strike thee Dumb: turn up thy eyes to Cato!' In other words, Juba believes that he and his fellow Numidians must follow Cato's example and subjugate themselves, physically and emotionally, to Rome's 'higher Views'.

This is the lesson Cato teaches his protégé Juba throughout the play. In Act IV, the Numidians go against Juba and betray Cato's forces, leading to the death of Cato's son. Juba laments that his Africanness implicates him in their 'crime': 'I'm a Numidian', he apologizes to his mentor. But Cato absolves Juba of his embodied connections, responding: 'And a brave one too. / Thou hast a Roman soul.' Cato then continues the lesson by refusing to weep over his son's death, for the only death that requires tears, the dry-eyed Roman instructs the lachrymose African, is the impending death of the Roman Republic (IV.4). Thanks to Cato's stoic influence, Juba's sentimentality — what Aravamudan reads as a manifestation of both his racialized identity and his colonial dilemma — is gradually civilized into generic political virtue.[35] Such political virtue, dependent on subsuming one's body and

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[35] Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans,* pp. 103–04.

emotions to 'higher Views', is what ultimately confers Romanness. The final scene brings this home with Cato's suicide and his affirmation of Juba's completed transformation. The dying senator's last act is to deem the prince worthy of marrying Marcia by finally, if obliquely, granting him the status he has long desired: 'Whoe'er is brave and virtuous, is a Roman' (V.4).

While later biological-essentialist racism would maintain that behaviour was predetermined by a racialized body, Juba's character arc proposes that a racialized body matters less than one's behaviour and is thus secondary to the virtue of one's soul (or lack thereof). Nevertheless, *Cato* upholds skin colour and place of birth as external markers of racialized difference. In the same early scene (I.4), Juba is described as one of 'Numidia's tawny sons', Marcia as 'one of the pale unripen'd beauties of the north', and both as far closer on the continuum to Romanness than are the unnamed sub-Saharan African peoples whose presence is only ever alluded to by the main characters — presumably because, given the context of Addison's play, they would not have been regarded as eligible for the Romanizing project. The play thus presents skin colour and origins as racialized qualities, but ones that can potentially be overcome, and indeed *must* be overcome, as part of the successful colonizing process. Yet, unsurprisingly, the traces of difference were never fully erased in this framework. Juba's Roman soul only gets him so far; he may be a Roman among Africans, entrusted with Cato's legacy and his daughter, but he will never be enough of a Roman for Rome. In Addison's British colonialist ideology, racialized difference had to be at once clearly visible and conveniently, but never completely, mutable.[36]

'Do not say that you are a Roman, so long as you live in servitude'

On a basic level, both Addison's and Metastasio's frameworks for racialism were derived from similar ones in Roman antiquity. In the Rome of Caesar and Cato, social identities were determined by one's position amidst multiple intersecting systems of power: citizenship and legal status, social and economic class, gender, sexual practices, political affiliation, and so on. Crucially, both masculinity and Romanness, *romanitas*, were defined by an individual's capacity to exercise certain kinds of control: control over one's own body, one's own emotions, and the bodies and actions of one's subordinates (i.e. family members and servants). Being unable to wield any of these types of control meant one could not claim true *romanitas*.[37] If someone lacked *legal* control over their own body, it was because they were enslaved (*servitus*), and enslaved people were not considered Romans as they were not free citizens. A lack of *emotional* or *physical* control over one's own body correlated with

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[36]   Addison's personal attitude towards extractive colonialism was that it offered Britain an 'additional empire', while his father had celebrated ancient Rome's imperial domination of North Africa in his writings; see Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 126–27.

[37]   Robert Cowan, 'Sex and Violence: Gender in the *Civil War*', in *Reading Lucan's* Civil War*: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Paul Roche (University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), pp. 266–81 (pp. 266–67).

femininity and/or puerility, both of which precluded masculinity and hence full Roman status.[38]

A germane example of this is Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which was the main ancient source on Caesar's African war for both Addison and Metastasio. In Lucan's epic, self-control is the primary metric of *romanitas*, with Cato providing the limit case of Roman masculinity throughout the text. More specifically, Cato's famous refusal to lament his son's death has traditionally been understood as evincing the stoic senator's extreme level of self-control and, consequently, his unimpeachable (if hard-edged) *romanitas*.[39] As classicist Robert Cowan argues, the foils to this *romanitas* in Lucan include Egyptians and North Africans such as Cleopatra, Ptolemy, and others. Portrayed as effeminate, childish, or both, these non-Roman figures lack sufficient bodily and/or emotional self-control, and therefore contrast with the ideal of Roman masculinity.[40] I would also note that in many cases, their racialization as non-Romans is emphasized by their status as royalty (as opposed to republicans). If we take Lucan's characterizations as an example of what Robinson calls racialism, that ancient identity matrix shows how Romanness and its alternatives were conceived as neither static nor essential physiological qualities, but rather as socio-cultural identities that were constantly (re)produced through multiple ongoing processes of differentiation. Some of those processes, especially ones that separated Romans from Africans, do resonate with more recent constructions of race, though they are not identical because they were motivated by different power structures (especially since they pre-dated Christianity).

Metastasio's representation of Romanness and its alternatives is, like Lucan's, highly dependent on the ancient rubric of control. Yet he also drew significant inspiration from Addison's rendition of the story, and as we've seen, Addison mediated ancient Roman racialism through his own colonialist and slave-trafficking British worldview. Given what we now know about Metastasio's consultation of Addison's play, then, it is telling that the operatic *Catone* repeatedly defines the antithesis of Romanness as 'slavery'.

Initially, this might seem like a political ideology that was unrelated to racialization. The opposition invokes a metaphor from republican Rome in which 'slavery' indicated not only literal enslavement, but also subjection to any tyrannical government.[41] The most obvious use of this version of the metaphor in the opera is Catone's oft-struck contrast between republican self-sovereignty and (what he sees as) the tyranny of imperial-absolutist rule. In Act II, for instance, Catone derides the senators who have enabled Cesare's illegal seizure of power by declaring in recitative: 'The Senate is no

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[38]   Cowan, 'Sex and Violence', p. 269. On the legal status of citizens versus enslaved people in the early Roman imperial period, see Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 31.

[39]   On the resonances of this scene both in Lucan and in Addison's *Cato*, see Francesca D'Alessandro Behr, 'Lucan's Cato, Addison's *Cato*, and the Poetics of Passion', in *Brill's Companion to Lucan*, ed. by Paolo Asso (Brill, 2011), pp. 525–45 (pp. 535–37).

[40]   Cowan, 'Sex and Violence', pp. 268, 280.

[41]   Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, pp. 9–10.

longer what it was; it has become the vilest herd of slaves [*schiavi*]' (II.2).[42] He then sings an aria expanding on the metaphor, equating Cesare's tyranny with the lifetime servitude — that is, the enslavement — of his imperial subjects:

<table>
<tr><td>*Va', ritorna al tuo tiranno,*</td><td>Go, return to your tyrant,</td></tr>
<tr><td>*servi pur al tuo sovrano;*</td><td>serve your sovereign;</td></tr>
<tr><td>*ma non dir che sei romano,*</td><td>but do not say that you are a Roman,</td></tr>
<tr><td>*finché vivi in servitù.*</td><td>so long as you live in servitude.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>*Se al tuo cor non reca affanno*</td><td>If your heart is not yet tormented</td></tr>
<tr><td>*d'un vil giogo ancor lo scorno,*</td><td>by the vile yoke of humiliation,</td></tr>
<tr><td>*vergognar faratti un giorno*</td><td>you will one day be shamed</td></tr>
<tr><td>*qualche resto di virtù.*</td><td>by some last bit of virtue.</td></tr>
</table>

The rhyme scheme links 'servitù' with 'virtù', setting them in opposition to one another (though the effect would have been more visual-poetic than aural owing to the norms of musical setting). In typical *opera seria* arias from this period, the first stanza of poetry was repeated as part of the standard da capo form. This means that the second couplet of the first stanza — here, the lines 'but do not say that you are a Roman, / so long as you live in servitude' — had extra rhetorical weight, because in any musical setting those lines would have closed out the entire number as the end of the da capo, not to mention being repeated internally multiple times before then. (The poet likely used 'servitù' [servitude] instead of 'schiavitù' [slavery] here for the simple reason that the former is far easier to pronounce when singing, as well as a better rhyme with 'virtù'.)[43] Metastasio of course knew aria-setting conventions well and would have taken them into account when composing any aria text. He situated this maxim about Romanness and enslavement in these two structurally significant lines in order to bring it out as a key point. But with the second stanza, the aria hints that the opposition extends beyond the political. The issue of Roman self-sovereignty is not only governmental, but has emotional implications, too. Accepting 'the vile yoke' of tyranny ought to 'torment' one's 'heart' — if one has any shred of 'virtue', that is.

Catone's servitude aria thus reveals that the Romanness versus slavery trope was far more capacious than the simple political equation would suggest. And indeed, the

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42 'Il Senato / non è più quel di pria, di schiavi è fatto / un vilissimo gregge.'
43 While the two words, 'servitù' and 'schiavitù', are not quite synonymous in Italian, the Latin forms from which they derived had long been understood as basically interchangeable. For instance, the major Latin dictionary *Catholicon*, compiled in the late thirteenth century by a Dominican monk in Genoa, defined *servitus* by looking back to Rome, explaining that it was the term for what happened when conquered persons were forced to labour and 'turned into property' instead of being executed. I have mostly retained the distinction between the terms by translating them into their English cognates, but Metastasio likely used them as synonyms. On the etymology of these two words, including their appearance in the *Catholicon*, see Steven Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 20.

belief in the mutual exclusivity of Romanness and enslavement persisted long past the demise of the Roman Republic. Once untethered from a specific model of (self-) government, the trope enabled Romans in the imperial period to assiduously differentiate themselves from the many other peoples they conquered, colonized, and enslaved. By marking differences among the denizens of a geographically vast empire, the opposition between being Roman and being (potentially) subject to enslavement became an enduring ideological aspect of Rome's cultural self-identification.[44]

The multivalent resonances of this trope both facilitated Metastasio's dramaturgical plans and furnished a strategy for racializing difference without particularizing it. Simply, the poet mediated the ancient Roman identity matrix, together with Addison's ideological revision thereof, through the moral-philosophical precepts of Cartesian dualism. As others have discussed in detail, Metastasio studied René Descartes's *Passions of the Soul* (1649) in his youth while under the formative tutelage of Gregorio Caloprese della Scalea, and was so taken with the 'ingenious René' that he went on to infuse the major tenets of Cartesian moral philosophy into his many libretti.[45] This was a strategic move as much as an intellectual one. By importing Descartes's philosophy of the passions into his dramatic works, Metastasio put into practice the Arcadian reformist injunction to create opera not merely for entertainment, but for moral instruction (a purpose also supported by the Roman theocracy).[46]

Broadly, Metastasio oriented his dramaturgy around Cartesian moral philosophy by presenting characters' struggles between desire and duty as a negotiation between body and soul (often glossed in Metastasio scholarship as 'passions' versus 'reason'). He followed Descartes in regarding the passions as the most direct means of understanding the relationship between the two components of dualism, body and soul, but the point of negotiating between them was not to subjugate the body so thoroughly as to utterly suppress the passions. Neither Descartes nor Metastasio sought to inculcate Catonian stoicism in modern Christian subjects. Instead, the point was for one to feel the

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[44] The ancient Roman Empire enslaved people from across its vast holdings, most of whom were what we would now consider 'white', and they were thus differentiated from 'Romans' across the empire not by skin colour but by their lack of (legal) self-sovereignty; Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, pp. 10–11.

[45] In a 1776 letter to Saverio Mattei, Metastasio mentioned living with Caloprese and studying 'the ingenious Renato' (Italian for René) with him; see Giuseppe Giarrizzo, 'L'ideologia di Metastasio tra cartesianesimo e illuminismo', in *Atti dei convegni lincei* 65: *Convegno indetto in occasione del II centenario della morte di Metastasio (Roma, 25-27 Maggio 1983)* (Accademia nazionale dei lincei, 1985), pp. 43–77 (p. 43). See also Ezio Raimondi, '"Ragione" e "sensibilità" nel teatro del Metastasio', in *Sensibilità e razionalità nel Settecento*, ed. by Vittore Branca, 2 vols (Sansoni, 1969), I, pp. 249–67; Giovanna Gronda, *Le passioni della ragione: Studi sul Settecento* (Pacini, 1984); Don Neville, 'Moral Philosophy in the Metastasian Dramas', in 'Crosscurrents and the Mainstream of Italian Serious Opera, 1730–1790: A Symposium, February 11-13, 1982', *Studies in Music from the University of Western Ontario* 7.1–2 (1982), pp. 28–46; Paul M. Sherrill, 'The Metastasian Da Capo Aria: Moral Philosophy, Characteristic Actions, and Dialogic Form' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 2016), pp. 55–70.

[46] In a 1718 edict, for example, Pope Clement XI advocated for works that would help one 'learn to rein in one's passions'; see Giorgio Petrocchi, 'Un melodramma romano del Metastasio', in *Orfeo in Arcadia: Studi sul teatro a Roma nel Settecento*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1984), pp. 39–46 (p. 22).

passions, then exercise moral judgment in regulating and interpreting them so that the mind (or soul) could direct the body along the rational, virtuous course of action.[47] Moral behaviour was the result of the mind's ability to rationalize feelings before acting on them, while improper behaviour was caused by the triumph of body over mind, the inability to moderate the passions through reason. A good Cartesian subject exercised sovereignty over his own self — over his passions, and hence his bodily actions. From the level of the aria to that of the character arc, this generic Cartesian frame supported Metastasio's move of mapping the emotional onto the political.

In the case of *Catone*, that framing enabled Metastasio to adapt Addison's tragedy, and Juba's central role within it, into an appropriately moralizing opera by generalizing the British play's particularist politics into a parable about virtue reigning sovereign over the passions. But such a Cartesian frame, with its blurring between the moral and the political, created new problems. Arbace's alterity needed a proper Cartesian foil in order to be recognizable *as* alterity. And while Addison's narrative about Juba learning to subjugate (racialized) body to (Roman) soul fit easily into a Cartesian paradigm, something crucial did not fit at all: the eponymous stoic himself as moral mentor. This was partly a political issue, in that Metastasio could not appear to promote republicanism in a Rome governed by the papacy, much less in an Italy dominated by various other European empires. Thus neither the word *repubblica* nor any of its derivatives ever appear in *Catone*, leaving the characters to rely on vague references to 'liberty' and 'virtue'. But the bigger issue was the incompatibility between ancient Roman values like Lucan's and those of Metastasio's own Christian day. If Cato's republicanism risked the ire of eighteenth-century theocratic and imperial governments, his stoicism risked the ire of eighteenth-century audiences by seeming uncompassionate, even cruel. Metastasio certainly leaned into Catone's extremism with his characterization, perhaps to link the senator's unappealing harshness to his untenable republicanism. (For example, Catone sings an aria about how he should have murdered Marzia as a baby rather than letting her grow up to love a tyrant.) Metastasio was criticized for casting such an important Roman figure in this mould, but he insisted that he had to stay true to history by not allowing Catone to sound, as he put it, like 'a French chevalier' speaking to a 'lovely lady'.[48] Since this harsh Catone was not an ideal Roman role model for Arbace, let alone for eighteenth-century Roman audiences, the poet needed someone to perform Roman masculinity according to Cartesian, rather than Catonian, moral principles of self-sovereignty.

This, then, is why Cesare implausibly appears in Metastasio's libretto, and as the requisite emblem of good sovereignty, no less, even though such a rendering went against both Addison's play and Lucan's epic.[49] (According to the historical sources,

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47   Sherrill, 'Metastasian Da Capo Aria', pp. 59–60.
48   Metastasio, n.t. (verses in defense of *Catone*), repr. in Metastasio, *Tutte le opere*, I, p. 1409. See also Lago, *Personaggi classici secondo Metastasio*, p. 28.
49   On Metastasio's sovereigns as demonstrating how to experience and manage the passions within a broadly Cartesian framework, see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, p. 273.

Caesar and Cato never encountered one another in Africa, while in Addison's drama, Caesar is not an actual speaking role but an ideological bogeyman menacing the onstage action from afar.)[50] In *Catone*, the fallible yet upright Cesare is the perfect adversary for the rigidly principled Catone: unlike the stoic senator, Cesare experiences a full range of passions, from the ugly to the tender, and in good Cartesian fashion uses his reason to moderate those passions in service to his 'higher Views'. (Or, as Cesare himself puts it, 'in service to a nobler desire'.)[51] In the early Settecento, it was the flawed but ultimately heroic father of the Roman Empire who could show both audience and African prince what it meant to be a Roman. Despite having ended the republic's self-sovereignty with his coup, Cesare could still be the opera's emblem of Roman virtue because, in Metastasio's reimagining, he puts his duty to the future glory of Rome above his love for Marzia. Metastasio's presentist retelling of ancient history thus proclaims that Cesare has been divinely chosen as sovereign over Rome because he successfully exercises sovereignty over *himself*. The self-sovereignty Cesare modelled for an eighteenth-century Roman audience was not that of republican government but the (much safer and more universalizing) Cartesian ideal of *moral* self-sovereignty.

Thanks to Metastasio's canny manoeuvring, Cesare's so-called tyranny, as his attempted 'enslavement' of Rome, is in fact forgiven because of his Cartesian moral self-sovereignty. This careful exoneration, with its insinuations about how the ideal government was imperial-absolutist instead of republican, was made possible by the political-moral affordances of the recurring trope of enslavement. Just as the lack of legal control over one's own body was tantamount to enslavement in Cato's ancient Rome, the lack of moral control over one's own body was tantamount to enslavement in Metastasio's Cartesian-*cum*-Christian Rome. If, in *Catone*, a true Roman is one who is sovereign over his passions, then the opposite of a Roman is one who is enslaved to his passions.

Aligning alterity, as un-Romanness, with emotional enslavement served Metastasio's purposes, but the poet did not invent such a solution himself. He was simply applying Cartesian terms to what had been a fundamental tenet of European thought since at least the sixteenth century. As decolonial theorist Sylvia Wynter argues, the notion of enslavement proved essential to definitions of 'Man' and 'Other' across early modernity by bridging the gap between Christian-theocratic and political-humanist constructs of subjecthood (of 'Being', as she puts it). Renaissance humanist intellectuals, Wynter notes, needed a way to define 'alternative' modes of 'being human' without relying on the Christian premise of 'mankind's enslavement' to original sin. They therefore 'secularized' that metaphorical enslaver from original sin into 'the irrational [and] particularistic desires of one's human nature'. One who was 'enslaved to one's passions' remained marked as 'Other', while 'Man' was he who

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50   Caesar was such a threatening figure in Addison's play because, as Aravamudan notes, 'Caesar' had shifted from a 'positive epithet for English monarchs' in the seventeenth century to the figure of the 'tyrannical usurper' in the wake of the Jacobite uprisings; *Tropicopolitans*, p. 111.

51   'Taci, importuno affetto. / No, fra le cure mie luogo non hai, / se a più nobil desio servir non sai.' Act III, scene 4.

could 'subdue his private interests in order to adhere to the laws of the politically absolute state, and thereby to the "common good."'[52] (Cesare is clearly the exemplar of 'Man' according to such a rubric.) Throughout her essay, Wynter pointedly and repeatedly uses the word 'enslavement' to describe this shifting moral-ethical construct — for, as she goes on to demonstrate, the metaphorical concept of emotional enslavement quickly became 'objective' justification for the colonization of the Americas, the mass enslavement of Africans, and the resultant naturalizing reformulation of human variety into 'race'.[53]

Even aside from its Cartesian-humanistic connotations, enslavement had become a widespread stand-in for racialization by the time Metastasio wrote *Catone.* Already by the 1710s, as Wheeler argues, the term 'slave' was commonly understood as referring to people of African descent, though it was not yet 'inextricably connected to skin colour' because slavery as a 'condition' was not yet totally racialized (due to the continued practice of, for one, Barbary captivity). In this transitional period between the 1720s and the 1740s, the category of enslavement had at once particular connotations and multiple real-world manifestations, as Wheeler notes. 'Slave' therefore served as shorthand for Africanness at the very same time as it encompassed non-racialized modes of enslavement both metaphorical and literal.[54]

It is no coincidence that this type of differentiation — emotional enslavement — is the one projected onto Arbace, the sentimental African prince. Metastasio used the Cartesian, secularized-yet-Christian metaphor of emotional enslavement to represent Arbace's Africanness without presenting it in any physiological way. He had to racialize Arbace if he wanted to exonerate Cesare, but he also had to ensure that the libretto would transcend the exoticisms and particularities then associated with difference in comic and other popular genres. Thus although Addison's play frequently refers to characters' skin colour, Metastasio's libretto indexes neither Romanness nor Africanness in physiologically racializing terms. True, the Italian poet did not have the same political-ideological reasons as the English playwright did for including the visual parameters of racialized difference. But beyond that, physical description would have been out of place in the representational world the Italian poet was in the process of forming — a world that could seem both historical and timeless, geographically located yet endlessly transportable. In general, then, Metastasio's libretti reference body parts or physical attributes only to use them as metonyms for Cartesian passions (e.g. pallid countenances, shaking hands).[55] And that is precisely how the poet dealt with

[52] Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality', pp. 288–89.

[53] Ibid., pp. 290, 292, and passim.

[54] Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, p. 56–57; Felicity Nussbaum, 'Between "Oriental" and "Blacks So Called," 1688–1788', in *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 137–66 (p. 143). On Barbary captivity in the eighteenth century, see Suzanne Schwarz, 'Ransoming Practices and "Barbary Coast" Slavery: Negotiations Relating to Liverpool Slave Traders in the Late Eighteenth Century', in *Ransoming, Captivity and Piracy in Africa and the Mediterranean*, ed. by Jennifer Lofkrantz and Olatunji Ojo (Africa World Press, 2016), pp. 73–100.

[55] Paul Albert Ferrara, 'Gregorio Caloprese and the Subjugation of the Body in Metastasio's drammi per musica', *Italica*, 73.1 (1996), pp. 11–23 (pp. 18–20).

Addison's racializing references to Juba's skin colour: he metonymized them. In *Catone*, Arbace's Africanness is de-particularized and then poeticized through a Cartesian conversion into the ubiquitous trope of enslavement.[56]

Unassimilated Space: The 'Royal Slave'

Arbace's potentially flexible yet clearly racialized difference becomes a major theme in the central second act of the opera, but it is established as a problem from the start. Arbace is introduced as inherently moral — quite unlike *Didone*'s Iarba — but not yet at the level of a true Roman. Early on, Catone questions Arbace's loyalty by asking: 'Arbace, are you already remembering you were born an African? […] And yet I believed you were so different [from them]' (I.12).[57] The prince is 'enslaved' to his passions, as evinced by his inability to put political duty above personal desire. This is, of course, the lesson he needs to eventually learn from Cesare in order to then ratify the dictator as a good sovereign.

The Cartesian conversion of Arbace's Africanness takes centre stage with a chain of scenes in Act II. Catone exits after his servitude aria, 'Va', ritorna al tuo tiranno', having just clarified in no uncertain terms the Roman/slave dichotomy for his listeners (those on stage and in the audience). Marzia and Arbace are left alone; Arbace begs her for 'mercy', reiterating his position of servitude and acknowledging how it humiliates him: 'Serving you makes me less worthy' (that is, because his doing so displeases her). But Marzia rejects this mistress/servant dynamic for, as a daughter of Rome, she believes in self-sovereignty instead of enslavement: 'I *set you free* to do whatever you please', she proclaims (emphasis added). She then launches into a tirade in which she accuses Arbace of enabling his own subjection by accepting her 'cruelty', and commands him to find some other woman to love from among those in 'Africa's bosom'. All told the scene's language of cruelty, mercy, servitude, and freedom would pass unnoticed in any operatic quarrel over unrequited love — but for Marzia's attendant insistence on Arbace's Africanness.

However clichéd it may seem, the metaphorical language of human bondage cannot be disentangled here from Arbace's positionality as male, royal, and African. It places him within a representational tradition of the early modern European stage, one laid out by Ndiaye through her analysis of seventeenth-century French masques in dialogue with Wilbourne's reading of the 'slave to love' trope in Seicento *commedia dell'arte*. As Ndiaye argues, Europeans without a strong foothold in the trafficking of enslaved Africans — the French, in her analysis, but also, I would add, the Italians — fantasized about obtaining such power for themselves without having to resort to

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56   Note that this is different from, though of course related to, the trope of enslavement in Italian comic genres, in which racialized characters were more likely to be portrayed as such through cosmetic means and to be represented as literally enslaved. For one important reading of this racializing matrix at work in Italian comic theatre a century earlier, see Wilbourne, 'Lo Schiavetto'.

57   'Arbace, non ti sarebbe già tornato in mente che nascesti africano? […] E pure assai diverso io ti credea.'

violence. They played out those fantasies through the musical-theatrical performance of particular courtly love tropes: for example, scenes of European performers portraying Moors or other North African men, typically aristocratic or royal ones, willingly offering themselves up as love-slaves to the pale-skinned European women in the audience.[58] Although enacted in *Catone* according to the different representational code of *opera seria* — through context, allusion, and metonymy rather than textual references to skin colour, and directed towards another character instead of at the audience — Arbace's racialized difference nevertheless fits the mould. Read through this tradition, Arbace's self-imposed emotional enslavement to Marzia provided Italian audiences with a tantalizing scenario of nonviolent domination in which the realities of partaking in the enslavement and trafficking of Africans were softened by the language of love.

More broadly, troping the prince's Africanness as emotional enslavement updated the ancient identity matrix of racialization, gender, and class in such a way as to accommodate operagoers' affective demands within the constraints of Metastasio's developing dramaturgy. Crucial to this was carving out a separate dramatic-musical space for playing with the emotions that were, at once, essential to cultivating listeners' pleasure and threatening to the project of promoting Cartesian moral self-sovereignty through opera. Arbace's liminal but racialized home terrain of North Africa offered just such a space, both by providing the colonial and peripheral setting for all of *Catone*'s action and by making Arbace himself a figure of transitivity.

The early eighteenth-century European imaginary geography of North Africa placed the prince into an emerging literary-theatrical paradigm of racialized masculinity. Arbace is the prince of Numidia, in modern-day Algeria, which in the eighteenth century was strongly associated with Ottoman (and, as Europeans saw it, 'Oriental') rule. Yet the opera's characters describe Arbace as 'African', without differentiating between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. This de-particularization was owed in part to the fact that such distinctions were largely irrelevant in the time of Cato and Caesar, which pre-dated not only Christianity but the Islamization and the Arabization of North Africa. But more importantly, subsuming Numidia into a generalized 'Africa' points to the tendency of early-eighteenth-century Europeans to assume that all of Africa was like the North Africa with which Europe had interacted for millennia.[59] While it now seems unthinkable to collapse all of Africa into one, and even more so to throw in the Levant and Middle East along with it, such sweepingly general characterizations were typical of pre-Enlightenment racialisms.[60] Metastasio's Arbace hails

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[58] Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, pp. 88–98. In writing about this tradition in the French context, Ndiaye draws on Wilbourne's analysis of Florinda in the 1612 *commedia Lo Schiavetto*, in which the heroine's disguise as an enslaved African boy externalizes her 'emotional turmoil' by rendering her as a 'slave to love'; see Wilbourne, '*Lo Schiavetto*', p. 26.

[59] Nabil I. Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 6; Nussbaum, 'Between "Orientals" and "Blacks So Called"', p. 145.

[60] As Ndiaye points out in the seventeenth-century French context, 'racial lexicons remained highly ambiguous', with North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans often grouped together as 'Moors' [*Mores*]; *Scripts of Blackness*, pp. 12–13.

from what Felicity Nussbaum calls the 'unassimilated space' between 'Blacks So Called' and 'Orientals' in the pre-Enlightenment imagination — unassimilated, because Western Europeans understood the geographical and racial boundaries between Africa and Asia as highly porous, only solidifying much later in the eighteenth century when racialized difference became conceived more (pseudo-) scientifically than culturally.[61]

Significantly, the mutability of identity categories within the unassimilated space extended to social class in ways that allowed Metastasio to write Arbace as, at once, future king, potential Roman, and present slave (if the latter only metaphorically). As we've seen, monarchy and enslavement had been conceptually intertwined since republican Rome. For ancient Roman republicans, then, Arbace's princely status would have made him an heir to tyranny, as the eventual king and hence enslaver of his subjects. As shown by Lucan's *Pharsalia*, such a characterization was also, often, a racializing one. The racializing implications of the tyranny/enslavement doubling became more pronounced in the early modern European imagination as the figure of the tyrannical non-Roman royal turned into the 'Oriental despot' stereotype who, Europeans feared, literally enslaved Christians and thirsted to take all of Christendom under the dominion of Islam. Metastasio's Iarba, from *Didone*, is of this latter type, though like Arbace he is described not as Eastern but as 'African' and 'Moorish'.

What is striking about Arbace in all of this is his precarious position on the boundary of the racialized tyranny/enslavement doubling. His paradoxical status as *both* potential tyrant and present slave is made possible by the slipperiness of the differentiating processes imposed upon the unassimilated space. As Nussbaum argues, the boundary between royalty and enslavement was regarded as especially hazy for 'Moorish prince' types: royal yet racialized, masculine yet sentimental, potential rather than actual rulers, these 'swing figures' were treated more fluidly with regard to status than were their European counterparts.[62] That surprising possibility for slippage between the categories of prince and slave, albeit only for racialized subjects, enabled Metastasio to cast Arbace's difference as transitive — as contingent on his ability to learn Cartesian moral self-sovereignty.[63] Arbace's performance of the tyranny/enslavement threat is not external and political like Iarba's, but self-reflexive and emotional. His passions are the tyrants, enslaving his potentially Roman soul to his African body. He may be a prince, but at present he is in (metaphorical) chains.

As royal figure of emotional enslavement, Arbace neither fit the stereotype of the Oriental despot nor portrayed the reality of the enslaved African, but instead animated a version of an emerging representational tradition that literary historian Laura Brown calls 'the fable of the native prince'.[64] This character type, the native prince, is generally associated with late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England. Yet from where

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[61]   Nussbaum, 'Between "Orientals" and "Blacks So Called"', p. 151.
[62]   Ibid., pp. 146–47.
[63]   On Juba's role in Addison as representing 'political transitivity', with the generalized 'African prince's role' in this period as 'that of an ideological shifter', see Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 116, 124.
[64]   Laura Brown, *Fables of Modernity: Literature and Culture in the English Eighteenth Century* (Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 179.

did Metastasio get his Arbace if not the Juba of the London stage? And, going back even further, Addison based his Juba on the most famous African prince to appear on that stage: the eponymous hero of Aphra Behn's novella *Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave* (1688), which had been adapted into a remarkably popular spoken tragedy by Thomas Southerne in 1695. Metastasio had not read either the novella or the play before writing *Catone*, as neither was translated into any languages he knew until much later, but he certainly encountered the type through other sources, including (but probably not limited to) Addison's *Cato.* Though Juba's colonial dilemma is purposefully and carefully separated from representations of enslavement in *Cato*, Oroonoko is generally recognized as a direct inspiration for Juba.[65]

The genealogy of Metastasio's Arbace thus extends beyond Juba to the explicitly racialized and enslaved African prince Oroonoko, even though the poet himself likely did not realize it. Both Behn's novella and Southerne's play recount the tragedy of the West African prince Oroonoko who is sold into New World slavery by his jealous tyrant of a father. Oroonoko has been educated in European languages and culture; he also has the features of a European man with the 'Ebony' skin of a sub-Saharan African one. He is overtly racialized by his skin colour and country of origin, yet marked as elite (by European standards) by his royalty, education, manners, and incongruously 'Roman' nose.[66] (That Oroonoko is represented as a European man with ebony skin would have been especially apparent in the stage play, where that is exactly how he was portrayed: by a white actor wearing dark cosmetics.) Oroonoko's racialization is all the more multiplicitous — operating within that unassimilated space — because his father's court in Coramantien is orientalized into a kind of harem, and the prince himself is referred to as a 'gallant Moor'.[67] After being betrayed by his despotic father, Oroonoko is transported to Surinam on the north-eastern coast of South America, where he leads an ill-fated uprising against his enslavers. Virtuous, brave, and noble, Oroonoko ultimately 'chooses' death rather than continuing to live in slavery. He is future king, internal European, and actual slave — literally, not metaphorically. Oroonoko is, in Behn's words, the paradoxical 'royal slave'.

Although set in the very different contexts of ancient Rome and late seventeenth-century Surinam, Metastasio's *Catone*, Addison's *Cato*, and Behn's and Southerne's *Oroonoko* have a surprising number of connections, largely owing to the fact that Behn linked Oroonoko to ancient Roman virtue so as to render his actions, especially his death, intelligible to her English readers. He has a 'Roman' nose; his enslavers rename him 'Caesar'; and, in Catonian fashion, he dies 'on stage', painfully and at length, for the sake of his principles.[68] Southerne retained most of these elements in his beloved

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[65] The Juba-Oroonoko link is well established in literary studies, but see Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 121–24.

[66] Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave: A True History* [1688], ed. by Joanna Lipking (Norton, 1997), p. 13.

[67] Ibid., p. 12; Nussbaum, 'Between "Orientals" and "Blacks So Called"', pp. 154–56.

[68] Behn may have chosen 'Caesar' to highlight Oroonoko's nobility, but renaming enslaved people after famous classical figures was a then common practice of domination that played on what Aravamudan calls the 'parodic doubleness of the Roman African'; see Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, p. 64. Note

stage adaptation, yet he also made a major change that influenced the plot of Addison's tragedy. Behn's Oroonoko marries an African woman named Imoinda but, taking a page from Shakespeare's *Othello*, Southerne's stage version makes Imoinda white, perhaps to encourage identification from the (white) women in the audience.[69] As others have noted, the interracial love story of Southerne's *Oroonoko* provided the model for the one in *Cato.* Juba, and hence Arbace, are descended from Oroonoko the royal slave. Yet while Oroonoko's racialization preordains his tragic ending, Juba's and Arbace's respective racializations — manifested as colonial dilemma and emotional enslavement — are swept away once they have served their authors' purpose.

That purpose was using the unassimilated space embodied by the native prince to simultaneously encourage and delimit emotion within the strictures of a political-heroic narrative. In Britain, the native prince figure helped smooth the transition in literary-theatrical styles from heroic tragedy to sentimental drama; Metastasio's version did something similar for *dramma per musica*, in that it made room for feeling within the heroic-political frame of post-Arcadian-reform opera. The juxtaposition of racialization with royalty was crucial in this. As Brown explains, the native prince was a noble, non-European male figure who was given a specific place of origin (Coramantien, Numidia, Polynesia, Tenochtitlán), yet composed of various cultural and physical markers borrowed indiscriminately from the unassimilated space and beyond (Africa, Asia, the Americas), and topped off with recognizable indicators of European 'elite' class status. The native prince's racialized difference made him susceptible to tragic circumstances (of which enslavement was a common manifestation), while his elite status and noble soul invited spectators' pity because such subjection was clearly at odds with his inherent virtue.[70] One wept for the plight of the native prince because his inherent nobility transcended, but did not prevent, his de-particularized and narratively necessary racialization.

This accounts for why it was Addison's Juba, much more so than Cato, who became a site of sentimental identification for decades of readers and spectators. Among them was none other than a young George Washington, who cast himself as the enthusiastic 'Juba' to his potential lover Sally Fairfax's 'Marcia', even expressing a desire to play the role on stage someday.[71] That an enslaver like Washington had no cognitive dissonance in identifying with the African prince Juba points to the enduring potency of the native prince trope — to its capacity to overwrite racialization with the combination of sentimentality and elitism — especially for those who were grappling with their own (albeit unracialized) colonial dilemmas.

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that although Addison's Caesar was a villainous tyrant, for the royalist Behn (writing decades earlier, before the Glorious Revolution), Caesar was still a viable figure of political virtue.

[69] At the time of Southerne's adaptation, Shakespeare's *Othello* was the prime model for representing an African man on the London stage, so Southerne whitewashed Imoinda partly to evoke Desdemona. See Joyce Greene Macdonald, 'Race, Women, and the Sentimental in Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko*', *Criticism*, 40.4 (Fall 1998), pp. 555–70; Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 49, 59.

[70] Brown, *Fables of Modernity*, pp. 180–99, esp. 181, 195.

[71] Fuller, 'Theaters of the American Revolution', p. 132; Ellison, *Cato's Tears*, p. 69.

In the case of *Catone*, reading Arbace as a native prince/royal slave figure sheds light on how a flexibly racialized difference was imagined as both invitation to, and container for, certain emotional responses. Metastasio retained Addison's Juba for his libretto, even though he was not a real historical figure, because of what his royal, male, African, and sentimental presence made possible dramaturgically. By racializing Arbace, not via brutality like Iarba, but through sentimentality, Metastasio colonized the unassimilated space as a site for representing unrestrained feeling without disrupting his overarching Cartesian frame. Generalizing Arbace's Africanness into emotional enslavement was thus not solely about mitigating the presentist, the particularized, and the political via poetics to fit a representational code. The conversion of racialized difference, via transitivity, into sentimentality also afforded a much-needed space within which emotions could be experienced at length, even enjoyed, while still cordoned off from the political business of empire. The enslaved prince could play host to the affective energy that needed a sufficiently elite object in order to be permissible, while simultaneously preventing any sentimentality from spilling over into inappropriate places — the present, the particular, the political — by containing it all within the unassimilated space of his metonymized racialization.

Unassimilated Space, Dilated: Music and Petrarchan Poetics

Metastasio's poetry laid the groundwork for expropriating the unassimilated space as a container for feeling. But it was through musical setting and live performance that Arbace's sentimentality and requisite elite status became audible, and thus through such musical-vocal sound that the poet's written text was dilated into an expansive yet clearly demarcated musical-temporal space.

To give a sense of one way, among many, that Metastasio's libretto may have worked in performance, I consider several moments from the first musical setting of *Catone in Utica*: Leonardo Vinci's for Rome in 1728. Since the text being set was more or less what Metastasio had written, it is easier to see how the music worked with the poet's script, especially since the poet and composer corresponded about the setting (and indeed, they went on to collaborate on several more operas after *Catone*).[72] These excerpts are only examples, and not the full story of how *Catone* was performed throughout the century: in general, Metastasian libretti were re-performed over the decades with new music instead of being repeated in any one particular setting, and the composers who provided the new settings made all kinds of changes to the poetry to accommodate their singers and local tastes. In the case of *Catone*, such changes frequently altered Arbace's characterization, as with the swapping-in of totally different aria texts (Venice, 1729) and cutting his role to *comprimario* size (Naples, 1789). Without going into detail, I suggest that these later changes were made, not because the character was unimportant — Arbace was sung by Farinelli himself in Venice, after all — but rather the opposite. Arbace's affective function was both readily apparent and

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[72] For more details on the first setting of *Catone*, see Kurt Sven Markstrom, *The Operas of Leonardo Vinci, Napoletano* (Pendragon, 2007), pp. 216–31.

conveniently mutable such that later composers and performers could reimagine (or dampen) that function according to their own needs.

The musical idiom Vinci used for Arbace does the necessary work of establishing the prince as at once noble and sentimental, elite and emotionally enslaved, but always appealingly so. In particular, Arbace's arias in Act II — again, the central act of the opera and the one in which the Roman/slave dyad drives the action — present him as sentimental other to the two bellicose Roman politicians. The doubling of Arbace with Cesare is especially apparent in Vinci's version since they were both castrato roles, while Catone was set for a tenor, as was typical with such fatherly authority types.[73]

Arbace's function as emotional outlet is first explored in his sweetly tender aria 'So che pietà non hai' (II.3), where he responds to Marzia's setting him 'free' and commanding him to find an African woman. Atop feather-light string accompaniment, often without even the harpsichord as continuo, Arbace's vocal line is delicately pleading and eminently *cantabile.* He begins with shorter phrases, punctuated by hopeful rising figuration, then extends them into repetitive, sob-like melismas before sinking into the cadential points with plaintive appoggiaturas. It is textbook galant sentimentality, though not at the luxurious level of a true *aria patetica.*

These local musical effects are less about illustrating specific words or passions and more about painting a sonic picture of Arbace as noble, virtuous, and worthy of tender pity. It is therefore Vinci's music, in excess of Metastasio's words, that sounds out how Arbace's reference to 'burning' in the last line of the aria is not the vengeful kind that led Iarba to set Carthage aflame, but the kind associated with the Petrarchan lyric language of unrequited love.[74] While the imagery of burning and flames is a ubiquitous trope in Italian vernacular poetics, it had a double meaning when put in the mouth of a character who was male, elite, and African, especially one portrayed on stage by a European performer. As Ndiaye argues, stagings of African men offering themselves as love-slaves to pale-skinned women typically invoked the Petrarchan trope of 'burning with love' as a play on their own 'burnt,' i.e. dark, skin. When spoken or sung by white performers, this also gestured to the fact that their skin had been artificially darkened for their roles by the application of soot or burnt cork.[75] Again, Arbace's skin colour is

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[73]   Interestingly, a year later in Venice, Catone was composed for a castrato (rather than a tenor, as in Rome), thereby pitting three famous castrati against one another: Nicolino as Catone, Domenico Gizzi as Cesare, and Farinelli as Arbace. Due to the ban on women singing in the theatre, the Roman version had had to cast castrati in the female roles of Marzia and Emilia, so a tenor Catone provided a much needed vocal contrast, but in Venice the female parts were sung by women. See *Catone in Utica* (Bernabò, 1728), p. 8, and *Catone in Utica* (Carlo Buonarigo, 1729), p. 8.

[74]   Francesco Petrarch (1304–74) was still, in the eighteenth century, considered one of the four 'canonical' poets of Italian vernacular literature, if not *the* canonical poet; invoking Petrarchan tropes was a common way for writers to position themselves in that lineage, and Metastasio undoubtedly knew Petrarch's *Rime sparse* (1327) backwards and forwards. On the reception of Petrarch and others in the Settecento, see Ida Duretto, '"Imitare con senno ed emulare con lode": il canone dei quattro maggiori poeti italiani', in *Con altra voce: Echi, variazioni e dissonanze nell'espressione letteraria*, ed. by Giovanni Bassi and others (Edizioni della Normale, 2022), pp. 253–64.

[75]   Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, pp. 87–88, 93–94; Ndiaye, 'Rewriting the *Grand Siècle*', pp. 6–7. For the foundational argument about the racializing (and gendering) deployment of colour tropes in

never mentioned in the libretto, and while it is possible that the singer who played him in Vinci's setting, Giovanni Battista Minelli, was made up like Nicolino was in the *Idaspe* caricature from this article's opening, it is probable that he was not.[76] But either way, Arbace's Petrarchan 'burning', like his enslavement, draws on a common metaphor for excessive emotion that also subtly racializes its object. Vinci's setting clarifies which type of burning this African prince experiences in order to invite the audience to be moved by it. Arbace's emotional enslavement is made not only audible but *pleasurable* through delicate, tender, sentimental musical-vocal sound.

The musical pleasures afforded by Arbace's plight work as affective counterbalance to the very different kind of musical delight provided by the heroic Cesare (composed by Vinci for the castrato virtuoso Giovanni Carestini). In contrast to the simple beauty of Arbace's 'So che pietà non hai', Cesare's two arias in the same act foreground his self-sovereignty and his power — both martial and musical. The first of those arias, 'Soffre talor del vento', is a standard *aria di paragone*, in which a character elucidates his emotional situation through an extended metaphor; here, Cesare compares himself to a calm sea enduring a tempestuous wind, controlling his anger by externalizing it into metaphor.[77] For Cesare's second aria in Act II, 'Se in campo armato', he proclaims that his skill at 'arms' will vanquish Catone's 'anger'. In both, Cesare performs his moral self-sovereignty while wielding his voice like a weapon, with the dazzling, hammering fioritura affirming his heroic status to all who hear it. Arbace sweetly sings to the sound of sparse strings, but Cesare is backed up by an orchestral phalanx of strings, woodwinds, and brass, with the emphatic addition of trumpets in his battle aria. The difference in characterization between the Roman general and the African prince — from their aria texts to their musical settings and vocal styles — would have been obvious to Roman listeners in 1728, especially given the repeated references to Arbace's 'enslavement' in the recitative scenes in between these arias.

That Arbace serves as sentimental foil to the good Cartesian Cesare becomes unmistakable by the final scene of the second act. The closing number of the middle act was regarded as one of, if not *the*, emotional high points of the three-act *opera seria* format, and it is significant that the character who sings at that moment (in the 1728 *Catone*) is Arbace. What is more, the scene is set up by the most overt instance of the enslavement trope: Arbace's *scena* is directly preceded by an aria in which the secondary character Emilia scolds him for his inability to 'free [his] heart from its chains' and 'seek for liberty'. After Emilia departs, Arbace remains alone on stage to finish out the act. He launches into a lengthy accompanied recitative, which musically emphasizes his

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Petrarchan poetics, see Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 62–123.

76   Another caricature by Zanetti shows Farinelli as Arbace in the 1729 Venetian *Catone*, and there is no evidence of dark cosmetics in the sketch (though that is neither proof that Farinelli did not wear any, nor that Minelli would not have done so in Rome).

77   While the metaphor of the lyric 'I' as a ship tossed about by stormy seas also has Petrarchan origins (e.g. *Rime sparse* 189), Metastasio identified Cesare with the sea itself, representing the sovereign not as an emotionally battered Petrarchan lyric subject but rather as an elemental, natural, and absolute authority over life and death.

position as the paradoxical 'royal slave': the intensity of feeling connoted by an accompanied recitative is what marks him, fresh on the heels of Emilia's aria, as enslaved by his emotions, and yet assigning him a then-rare *accompagnato* also ratifies his elite status by casting him as someone whose emotions deserve such special musical treatment.

The aria that follows, a meditation on the nature of jealousy, invokes the same two tropes that have thus far connoted Arbace's racialized difference:

Che sia la gelosia	That jealousy may be
un gielo in mezzo al foco,	ice in the midst of fire,
è ver; ma questo è poco.	is true; but this matters little.
È il più crudel tormento	It is the cruellest torment
d'un cor che s'innamora,	of a heart that is in love,
e questo è poco ancora.	and this still matters little.
Io nel mio cor lo sento,	I feel it in my heart,
ma non lo so spiegar.	but do not know how to explain it.
Se non portasse amore	If love did not bring
affanno sì tiranno,	such tyrannous torment,
qual è quel rozzo core,	what heart would be so crude
che non vorrebbe amar?	that it would not wish to love?

By describing his jealousy of Cesare and Marzia as 'ice in the midst of fire', Arbace intensifies the Petrarchan trope of burning from his previous aria by essentially quoting *Rime sparse* 122: 'I feel ice in the midst of flames.'[78] Similarly, his reference to love as 'tyrannous' gestures back to the recurring metaphor, amplified by Catone's aria earlier in the act, of self-sovereignty as oppositional to the dyad of tyranny and enslavement. In thus drawing on Petrarch and Catone as representative Italian figures of, respectively, emotional subjectivity and political subjectivity, Arbace navigates his own dilemma of emotional and political self-subjection.

Despite his use of poetic language, Arbace insists in the last couplet of the first stanza that he 'feel[s]' all of this in his 'heart' but 'do[es] not know how to explain it'. Whereas Cesare's metaphorical language serves as proof of his rational capacity to manage his passions by imposing order upon them, Arbace's metaphors are cast as bodily and unrationalized, Petrarchan and Catonian echoes notwithstanding. The unrationality of his expressivity is exacerbated by his unusual versification form: with twelve lines and an irregular rhyme scheme, Arbace's aria is not a typical da capo (two stanzas of four lines each), and seemingly stretches toward (but does not quite achieve) the fourteen-line form of a Petrarchan sonnet. Without the intervening rationalization that would make him into a good Roman and Cartesian like Cesare, Arbace is, like the Petrarch of the *Rime sparse*, a fractured subject. But unlike Petrarch, the prince splits along a Cartesian fault line that has been mapped onto the imaginative geography of his metonymically African body and potentially Roman mind.

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[78] 'Dicesette anni à già rivolto il cielo / poi che 'mprima arsi, et già mai non mi spensi; / ma quando aven ch' al mio stato ripensi, / sento nel mezzo de le fiamme un gielo.' Francesco Petrarch, *Rime sparse* 122.

Arbace's Petrarchan quotation also points to a more fundamental, transhistorical process beneath that of Cartesian subject formation. The allusion to *Rime sparse* 122 might seem as nothing more than Metastasio's recycling foundational tropes of Italian vernacular love lyric, and that may well have been how the poet himself understood it. But whether he knew it or not, such Petrarchan tropes bore the traces of imperial-colonial politics. On one level, as Roland Greene showed twenty-five years ago, the Petrarchan lyric scenario of unrequited desire served as an early modern 'literary technology' for exploring the subject-object relations of colonial conquest in the Americas, much like Ndiaye's more recent reading of such scenarios as playacting slavery.[79] But even from their inception in the fourteenth century, these Petrarchan tropes had depended on both a colonial framework and a racialized lyric 'I'. Petrarch wrote the *Rime sparse* contemporaneously with his unfinished Latin epic *Africa*, which tells the story of the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) and Rome's establishing its first colonies in Africa. As Ayesha Ramachandran argues, much of Petrarch's metaphorical language in the *Rime sparse* was initially developed in the *Africa*, particularly through the Numidian king Masinissa expressing his excessive love for Carthaginian princess Sophonisba. Through this earlier North African royal, Petrarch experimented with the lyric love language he would more famously direct at his beloved Laura in the *Rime sparse*.[80] In similar ways, then, Petrarch and Metastasio each ventriloquized racialized royal male figures to explore scenarios of feeling within an epic-heroic framework. In so doing, they offered readers and audiences entry to an unassimilated affective space that they could also — and this is key — *exit.* After the end of the lyric moment, after the closing ritornello of the aria, readers and audiences were returned to the political temporality of epic, of heroic drama, and hence to their own real-world subject positions. At once elite and other, like Petrarch's Masinissa, Behn's and Southerne's Oroonoko, and Addison's Juba, Metastasio's Arbace was de-particularized and made into a suitable surrogate for the feelings that both menaced and motivated the ideological labour invested in the texts of empire.

In Metastasio's framework, the labour assigned to the sentimental surrogate exceeded the textual by virtue of musical-vocal sound's power to elasticize time. The lyric space opened up by Arbace's aria is akin to that of a Petrarchan sonnet, but it is both dilated and delimited through musical setting into nearly eight minutes of sonic sentimentality. In the case of Vinci's setting, 'Che sia la gelosia' builds on the galant-sentimental musical idiom of Arbace's earlier aria, spinning it out more fully than before, though the aria never quite reaches heart-rending levels of pathos. Instead, with accented Lombard rhythms like sobs, gracefully escalating triplets, and lightly piquant appoggiaturas, Arbace's aria draws the audience into the delicacy, rather than the torments, of feeling. His *scena ed aria* is not meant to conjure reality or even

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79 Roland Greene, *Unrequited Conquests: Love and Empire in the Colonial Americas* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

80 Ayesha Ramachandran, 'Petrarch's African *Canzoniere*: Lyric Anthropology and the Question of Race' (unpublished manuscript). I offer her my deep gratitude for sharing this in-progress work with me.

verisimilitude, for it furnishes an extended but nevertheless temporary experience in which his enslavement is transumed into musical enjoyment. According to the generic musical conventions of *seria* aria setting (in which the aria is a closed-form 'number'), Vinci's music opens up a temporally demarcated but otherwise unassimilated space for feeling — one that will be definitively and necessarily closed when the music stops at the end of the aria. Within the lyric space of aria, as poetry temporalized through music, Arbace's racialized difference transforms. His transitivity is further abstracted, via musical-vocal sound, into a hollowed-out vessel for listeners' affective responses (Example 1).

Sentimental Surrogation

But the ultimate goal of metonymizing Arbace's racialized difference and corralling his sentimentality in the unassimilated space was to bolster the opera's central narrative — one that reframed the eighteenth-century present by rewriting the ancient past. Citing as his sole sources only 'history' and 'verisimilitude', Metastasio substituted for Virgil's quasi-historical Roman origin myth — in which the Trojan Aeneas was the founder of Rome — with an origin *history*, driven by Julius Caesar but rendered transhistorically relevant through its Cartesian trappings. In Metastasio's new origin history, Caesar's tragic victory over Cato marked the painful yet necessary transition from untenable republic to glorious empire — and not just any empire, but the originary Roman imperium to which all subsequent European powers feverishly aspired.[81] To that end, the third act of *Catone* focuses on resolving the dual moral-political drama of Cesare and Catone. But Arbace's purpose is not yet fulfilled, for it is his metonymically racialized difference that must exonerate Cesare — and thus rewrite history — by authenticating the tyrant as the exemplar of self-sovereignty.

If Arbace performs this labour implicitly as Cesare's foil in Act II, in Act III he does so explicitly as his student. At a crucial moment (III.3), Cesare honourably prioritizes his enemies' lives above his own, leading the astonished Arbace to tell him: 'I admire your great heart'.[82] Now for the first time, instigated by Cesare's example, the prince wrestles with his divided self — and, tellingly, he does so by adopting Cesare's poetic and musical language. In his final aria, 'Combattuta', addressed to Cesare, Arbace casts his struggle not in terms of servitude or sentiment, but as war: his 'soul' is now 'embattled'.[83] In Vinci's setting, he grapples with this Cartesian conflict amidst rhythmically driving accompaniment and woodwind flourishes, unleashing rapid-fire fioritura and heroic vocal leaps worthy of a castrato virtuoso (Example 2).

Though brief, Arbace's 'battle' aria exemplifies how Metastasio renovated Addison's strategic racialism to accommodate his own aims of legitimizing, rather than villainizing, Caesar's historical coup. In one of the most famous scenes in Addison's play, a traitorous

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[81] On Virgil's *Aeneid* and the early modern fantasy of laying claim to Roman imperium, see Fuchs, 'Another Turn', and Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 44–45.

[82] 'Ammiro il tuo gran cor.'

[83] 'Combattuta da tante vicende, / si confonde quest'alma nel sen.'

Example 1. Leonardo Vinci, *Catone in Utica* (1728), aria for Arbace, 'Che sia la gelosia', bars 9–22. Reduction by John Y. Lawrence, based on manuscript copy held at the Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica S. Pietro a Majella, Naples.

Example 1. Continued.

Roman senator, likely intended as a proxy for the absent Caesar, disguises himself as Juba and steals into Marcia's room. In order to save her, the real Juba must physically fight this blackface version of himself. Juba's ongoing struggle between his African exterior and Roman soul is externalized and literalized as he battles against an enemy who appears as his shadow self, his inverse, with a false African exterior and false Roman soul. But Metastasio dispensed with the evil Caesar stand-in, and instead translated Addison's two duelling Jubas into an internal battle between the two halves of Arbace's fractured Cartesian self — with this attempt at self-unification inspired by Cesare's 'great heart'. Here, the accused tyrant exonerates himself through Arbace's voice, for Cesare turns out to be the one who

Example 2. Vinci, *Catone in Utica*, aria for Arbace, 'Combattuta da tante vicende', bars 22–77.

Example 2. Continued.

Example 2. Continued.

finally liberates the emotionally enslaved prince by teaching him to seek moral self-sovereignty. As Arbace tells Cesare in the aria: 'You set me free' (*tu m'involi*).

The opera's central proposal — that true Romanness inheres in moral, not political, self-sovereignty — is reinforced one last time by Cesare himself in the final aria of Act III. In his 'Quell'amore che poco accende', the father of the Roman Empire proclaims that real 'tyranny' is letting one's feelings dominate one's 'reason'. The action in the scenes that follow, including Catone's suicide, plays out through recitative both *secco* and accompanied, but Cesare has the last word in song. Metastasio's tyrant is no tyrant after all, but a true Roman, a good Cartesian, and — as evinced by his effect on Arbace — the transhistorical emblem of Italy's imperial-colonizing potential.

The tidy moral espoused in Cesare's final aria would become foundational to the genre of Metastasian opera, what with its Cartesian propositions about good sovereignty both personal and political.[84] But in this early libretto based on a highly politicized play about empire, coloniality, and the expediencies of racializing difference, such a conventional moral seems inseparable from the presentist and particularizing concerns of 1720s Italy. When Metastasio wrote *Catone*, it was barely twelve years after the Peace of Utrecht had ended the War of Spanish Succession and granted Britain complete control over the transatlantic slave trade, signalling the decisive shift from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic as the global axis of economic and political power. In this context, Metastasio's re-presentation of Romanness offered his Roman audience a cross-temporal fantasy about how the Roman Empire, not the British, had been the original divinely ordained 'civilizer' of the world.

In traversing the millennia through a dramaturgical elision of sentiment and politics, Metastasio did more than appeal to a presumptive Roman longing for the past. He created a repeatable yet variable template for operatic dramaturgy, as what Joseph Roach would call a drama of 'substitution'. As Roach explains it through analysis of eighteenth-century 'circum-Atlantic' performance, certain cultural institutions continuously fashion substitutes, or 'surrogates', for that which is no longer present but nevertheless needs to be replaced.[85] *Catone*'s transhistorical Roman-imperial self-identification, with its attendant legitimation of Julius Caesar as figure of Italian sovereignty, performed that work. But significantly, after developing this approach in *Catone*, Metastasio invested the libretti that followed with similar powers of substitution and repetition, creating a metatheatrical and sociocultural process that exceeded any one libretto, musical setting, or even storyline.[86] To borrow Diana Taylor's performance studies terminology, the 'scenario' set out in Metastasio's operatic drama of Cartesian subject formation was not limited to this one narrative

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[84] On Metastasian opera as dramatizing 'myths of sovereignty', see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, esp. pp. 226–83.

[85] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, pp. 2–6 and passim.

[86] For one example from among innumerable later repetitions and variations, consider Metastasio's other Roman republican libretto, *Attilio Regolo* (written between 1738 and 1740): the poet intended the characters to serve as, in Feldman's gloss, 'symbolic members of a Roman body politic', with the titular sovereign as both 'microcosm' and 'metonym' for 'Roman nationhood'; *Opera and Sovereignty*, p. 248.

of Cesare and Catone. Rather, it furnished a 'portable framework' that could 'bear the weight of accumulative repeats', perennially proposing new substitutes for the figures and forms of power that remained, for Italians, only as spectres in collective cultural memory — and thus as reminders of their ongoing subjection to other Old World empires.[87]

And yet, as Roach notes, the residual anxiety over failures to fully replace what has been lost demands another step from processual dramas of surrogation. Invoking Toni Morrison's point that the concept of 'freedom' emerged in contradistinction to that of 'slavery', Roach argues that representations of the 'other' become a tool for producing the 'us' through performance.[88] Claims about self-formation through marking alterity are now well established, but less so is an understanding of how that process operated differently in early modern musical contexts than in, for example, American antebellum literature. For Metastasio, the transitivity, flexibility, and mutability of Arbace's racialized difference were beneficial, rather than threatening, to the surrogation process. Cesare is therefore not the only proposed substitute. At once future king and present (if not literal) slave, Arbace hails from the unassimilated space that is geographically situated between Africa, Asia, and Europe, but metaphorically located between the dual possibilities of subjection and subjectivity. His metonymized Africanness defines Cesare's Romanness not only by serving as foil to it, but also, thanks to Metastasio's reworking of Addison, by being inspired and ultimately changed by it. Thus even as Arbace's racialization renders him a safe container for the threat that unrestrained sentiment posed to the absolutist political order of *opera seria*, the transitivity of his racialized difference, via conversion into Cartesian metonymy, indicates the potential for alterity to be assimilated into and even effaced by the very order it was once meant to oppositionally define.

Put simply: while Cesare performs the fantasy of the once-and-future Roman Empire, the sentimental African prince with a Roman soul embodies the twinned precarity and potentiality of an eighteenth-century Italy that had long since lost its empire and become the colonies in Europe's own backyard. Both figures, the king and the prince, reappeared in endlessly reimagined guises across the vast geographical dominion of Metastasian *opera seria*,[89] though the sentimental surrogate was stripped of his racializing garb once his differentiating function had become structurally embedded into the scenario's portable scaffolding. Nevertheless, Arbace's inherent dyad of difference and potentiality remained present in more than just the Cartesian poetic and dramatic structures of Metastasian opera. His transitivity also resonated in the musically conventionalized yet variable sounds of operatic performance, for in practice these sentimental surrogates were nearly always voiced by castrato singers. As representatives of both Italy's proxy imperialism via opera and, increasingly throughout

87   Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 28–32.

88   Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 6; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Vintage, 1993), p. 38.

89   For an analysis of this recurring dyad in Metastasio's *Artaserse* (1730) — in which the sentimental figure is named, again, Arbace — see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, pp. 248–55.

the century, of Italy's temporal and geographical alterity vis-à-vis Enlightenment progress, castrati embodied an interstitial position not unlike that of the 'royal slave'.[90]

We already know how this scenario played itself out after all these innumerable repetitions and variations. By the end of the eighteenth century, racialisms were conceptually ossifying into 'race', and 'human variety' was geographically mapped onto the unidirectional trajectory of universal history, together foreclosing further repetitions of *opera seria*'s recursive drama of sentimental substitution.[91] And so too, then, did the once-porous geographical, temporal, and affective borders of the unassimilated space slam shut — such that, owing to the ideologies that followed, it seemed as though they had never been otherwise.

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[90] On the racialization of the castrato, see Serena Guarracino, 'Voices from the South: Music, Castration, and the Displacement of the Eye', in *Anglo-Southern Relations: From Deculturation to Transculturation*, ed. by Luigi Cazzato (Negroamaro, 2012), pp. 40–51; Emily Wilbourne, 'Little Black Giovanni's Dream: Black Authorship and the "Turks, and Dwarves, the Bad Christians" of the Medici Court', in *Acoustemologies in Contact: Sounding Subjects and Modes of Listening in Early Modernity*, ed. by Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne G. Cusick (Open Book Publishers, 2021), pp. 135–66; Peritz, *The Lyric Myth of Voice*, pp. 109–11; Gordon, *Voice Machines*, esp. ch. 7, 'On the Cusp'.

[91] On the systematic temporalizing of alterity in the Enlightenment, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (Columbia University Press, 1983).