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“L’interna che tu provi pugna d’affetti”: Love, virtue and other affetti in “Il voto di Jefte” by Vincenzo Benatti, Luigi Gatti and Luigi Carusio

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Abstract

The biblical subject of Jephthah lends itself very well to translating into music some strong and contrasting ‘Affetti’, first that between the virtue of Jephthah, who must honour the vow made to God, and the love that binds him to his daughter, destined to die. The essay focuses on an unknown score, composed in 1794 for the Mantuan academic milieu by V. Benatti and L. Gatti, based on a libretto by A. Scarpelli and an earlier score by L. Carusio. The work presents an interesting situation from a philological point of view, only hinted at, however, in the essay. The constellation of affections is complicated by the presence of added characters, such as Azael, betrothed of Seila (the Daughter), and Bersheba, Jephthah’s sister. We thus have different shades of love and virtue, depending on the relationships between the characters; the score reflects well the multiple contrasts of the poetic text.

Key words

affections, Jephthah, Jephthah’s Daughter, Seila, Italian oratorio of the 18th century, Mantua, Accademia di Scienze e Belle Lettere [Accademia Virgiliana], Colonia Filarmonica, Luigi Gatti, Vincenzo Benatti, Luigi Carusio, Antonio Scarpelli

Among the numerous biblical subjects that provided the topic in the 17th and 18th centuries for the writing of librettos for oratorios, the story of Jephthah is well suited to providing material for constructing a story full of strong sentiments, of contrasting 'affetti', a premise for music of great effect, an indispensable accomplice of a religious and moral pedagogy that also passed through musical works. The well-known narration from the book of Judges (chapter 11) is rather dry: much more space is left to the presentation of Jephthah, the conflict with the Ammonites and then the victorious Israelite expedition, but the tragic story of the vow is resolved in a few lines, in which the only characters present are the Father and the Daughter. Their dialogue is essential: Jephthah "tears his clothes" at the sight of his daughter, whom he must offer as a holocaust to the Lord; the Daughter submits totally to the Father's will for the good of the community. The story has two moments very apt to be set to music: the arrival of the Daughter, who presents herself "with tambourines and dancing" (*Judges* 11:34), and the final lament. The earliest librettos (in Latin) and the oratorios of the 17th century tend to adhere more closely to the biblical dictate, perhaps even giving some space to Amonn, who is very useful musically for the contrasts he can bring about; the later ones often construct a constellation that envisages a broadening of the spectrum of affections in other directions, also following the traces marked by the revisiting of the tale by ancient commentators such as Flavius Josephus or Philo Alexandrinus. The daughter's name, Seila, is taken from the latter's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*,¹ as already pointed out in Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti's *Jefte* with music by Carlo Francesco Pollarolo;² Frigimelica also proposes the theme, already present in the ancient commentators, of the possible interpretation of Seila's sacrifice not as a material holocaust but as a permanent consecration to God. An impetus for the revival of the subject in the late 1760s was probably the publication of a tragedy by the Jesuit Giovanni Granelli, *Seila figlia di Jefte*.³ The story of Jephthah is found with different titles depending on the perspective taken, from the simple name of the protagonist, to the mention of the vow, as in our case, or of the sacrifice, or of the daughter, with or without her own name; some librettos, especially from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, are entitled *Seila*.⁴

The object examined here is a hitherto little-known score, preserved in the Greggiati library in Ostiglia (I-OS Musiche RARI B 9)⁵ and referable to the activity of the *Classe Filarmonica* of the Mantuan Accademia Virgiliana in 1794.⁶ In the previous year, the

1 More precisely PSEUDO-PHILO. *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 39f., who in recounting the story of Jephthah gives the name Seila to his daughter and greatly amplifies its role, making it exemplary: on the subject see GROSSI, Marco. *La storia di Jefte (Jdc 10,6–12,7). Studi sul testo biblico e sulla sua ricezione nell'Antichità*, PhD Diss., Università di Bologna – Sorbonne Université, 2020, particularly pp. 263–284.

2 FRIGIMELICA ROBERTI, Girolamo. *Tragedie sacre per musica*, Venezia: Rossetti, 1702, pp. 9–54.

3 GRANELLI, Giovanni. *Seila figlia di Jefte*, edition consulted: Parma: Monti, 1765, p. 3 (copy in I-MOe).

4 For a quick and effective comparison, see the *Corago* database, *ad vocem*. URL: <http://corago.unibo.it/libretti> (last accessed 1.3.2024).

5 I would like to thank Dr Elisa Superbi for the great competence, courtesy and helpfulness with which she accompanied my research.

6 On the activities of the Mantuan *Filarmonici* see: BERNARDI, Gian Giuseppe. *La musica nella Reale Accademia Virgiliana di Mantova*, Mantova: Mondovi 1925 (Pubblicazioni della R. Accademia Virgiliana, serie II:

academy's *Filarmonici* had received new impetus after a period of fatigue: 1793 saw the accession of many professional and amateur musicians, a marked improvement in relations with the academy's music school, and a new regulation; the custom of producing a great sacred performance in Lent, repeated several times, was established, for which, depending on the resources in the treasury, it was also possible to recruit professional singers of a certain weight.⁷ The first great work to be ascribed to this new course was *La madre de' Maccabei* by Luigi Gatti (1740–1817)⁸ in 1793; the second was our *Voto di Jefte*, of which the *Gazzetta di Mantova* reported: "*Volendo i Socj della Classe Filarmonica, uno de' rami di questa R. Accademia, esibire al pubblico, secondo la pratica, un saggio de' loro privati esercizi di tutto l'anno, si avvisa, che nel decorso della presente Quaresima, incominciando dalla sera di questo giorno, verrà eseguito a tal uopo nel Teatro Scientifico della stessa R. Accademia il Dramma sacro per musica intitolato: Il voto di Jefte. Si proseguirà esso anche nelle sere de' 23., 25., 28., e 30. del corrente mese, come pure in quelle de' 4., 6., 9., 11., 13., 20., e 25. del prossimo Aprile, e sarà libero l'ingresso nella platea del predetto Teatro, oltre agli Accademici Scientifici, e ai Socj Filarmonici, a tutti quelli soltanto, che saranno stati antecedentemente muniti del conveniente viglietto*".⁹ Twelve performances, then: no mean feat for the Philharmonic Class.

The music is attributed to Vincenzo Benatti (1767–1797),¹⁰ Luigi Gatti and Luigi Carusio (1754–1823);¹¹ the text is derived from Antonio Scarpelli's *Jefte*.¹² The libretto enjoyed a certain amount of success and well demonstrates how the subject was continually re-proposed with the intention of highlighting certain aspects related to the concepts of love, faith, virtue and other concordant and contrasting affections. The present essay

Miscellanea, n. 4), and BESUTTI, Paola. La Colonia Filarmonica di Mantova e l'Europa musicale (1679–1775): Luigi Gatti e i Mozart, in *La Reale Accademia di Mantova nell'Europa del Settecento (1768–2018)*, Roberto Navarini (ed. by), Mantova: Accademia Virgiliana di Scienze, Lettere e Arti, 2020 (Quaderni dell'Accademia 17), pp. 357–405.

7 See BERNARDI, op. cit., ch. V, pp. 59–69.

8 Gatti played an important role in the Mantuan *Colonia Filarmonica* before moving to Salzburg and remained in contact with the Mantuan Academy and institutions even in the years that interest us, as his commitment to *Jefte's Vow* also demonstrates; cf. BERNARDI, op. cit., pp. 23–31, BESUTTI, op. cit.; in general on the composer and the Mantuan environment see *Luigi Gatti (1740–1817): la musica a Mantova e a Salisburgo tra Sette e Ottocento*, Alessandro Lattanzi (ed. by), Lucca: LIM, 2017.

9 *Gazzetta di Mantova*, 21.3.1794, correspondence from Mantua: "*Wishing the Members of the Philharmonic Class, one of the branches of this R. Academy, to perform to the public, according to practice, a sample of their private exercises throughout the year, it is hereby announced that during the course of the present Lent, beginning on the evening of this day, the Sacred Drama for Music will be performed for this purpose in the Teatro Scientifico of the same R. Academy, the sacred drama for music entitled: Il voto di Jefte. It will also be continued on the evenings of the 23rd, 25th, 28th and 30th of this month, as well as on the evenings of the 4th, 6th, 9th, 11th, 13th, 20th and 25th of next April, and admission to the stalls of the aforesaid theatre will be free, in addition to the Scientific Academicians and Philharmonic Society members, only to those who have previously been provided with the appropriate ticket.*"

10 About Vincenzo Benatti (or Benati) the information is extremely scarce; organist and composer, he was certainly from Mantua. In I-OS there is the manuscript *Notizie Biografiche del Maestro di Cappella Mant[ova]no Vincenzo Benati* (Manoscritti Teoria A 5) by archpriest Luigi Freschini. There are, however, to my knowledge no biographical entries in any of the musicological dictionaries.

11 On Carusio see Galliano Ciliberti – Marita P. McClymonds, Carusio [Carusio], Luigi, in *New Grove online*. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43163> (last accessed 25.2.2024).

12 Roman abbot, 'sub-custodian of Arcadia', as the librettos define him. Metastasio praised his *Sagrifizio di Jefte* in a letter to him from Vienna on 8 November 1773.

deals mainly with the latter perspective; only a few references will be made to the numerous problems of a different nature, especially philological, that the Ostiglia manuscripts propose.¹³

Antonio Scarpelli's *Jefte* and the Mantuan version of 1794

Scarpelli's text was set to music for the first time by Abbot Angelo Passeri in Rome in the Oratorio di San Girolamo della Carità on 5 April 1772,¹⁴ and reprised in 1787 in Petritoli (Fermo, in the Marche region) and in Chieti. The tradition that interests us most, however, is that of Carusio's set on music, based on the same text (with the usual adaptations); and performed in Bologna in 1785, 1786 and 1788, and again in Perugia in 1788, in Mantua in 1789 and in Ferrara in 1790; of the Mantuan pasticcio of 1794 the libretto is lost, and any comparison must be conducted starting from the text of the score.¹⁵

The tradition of the libretto is fairly homogeneous, on the whole, and the text appears rather stable, except for a few substitutions of arias in some later versions and in some cases the omission of choruses.¹⁶ The original set on music by Carusio (Bologna 1785) is based on a text that is essentially identical to the 1772 Roman libretto. There are four characters: Jefte, Seila his daughter, Azaele prince of the Gileadites and Onia, captain; Seila is betrothed to Azaele, which allows the spectrum of affections and conflicts developed in the text to be broadened. The plot is the usual one, with a few insertions due, precisely, to the presence of a small love nucleus provided by the Seila-Azaele couple:

Jefte returns victorious from the war against the Ammonites and confides to Azaele that he has promised God to offer him as a sacrifice the first person who would come to meet him. Azaele advises him to reflect on his oath, because that person could also be someone dear to him; in fact, the first person Jefte meets is Seila, his daughter, who has come to celebrate his victory. Jefte is desperate and remains silent in front of his daughter's joy; Seila is in turn distraught at her father's strange reaction. When she learns of the vow, however, she abides completely by Jefte's wishes, for the good of the community, for her father's honour and out of filial loyalty. Onia even attempts with theological arguments to convince Jefte that his vow contradicts God's will; Azaele instead tries to resolve the situation by force of arms but is then persuaded to retrace his steps. In the end, therefore, Jefte's will prevails, to which his daughter fully sub-

13 It is my intention to return in a future essay to these aspects more related to the tradition of the Mantuan *Jefte* and the constellation of manuscripts in the libraries of Mantua and Ostiglia. An excellent starting point is the entry *Il Voto di Jefte* in LATTANZI, Alessandro. *Catalogo tematico delle opere di Luigi Gatti (1740–1816)*, Lucca: LIM, forthcoming; I sincerely thank the author for generously giving me access to the drafts.

14 CHRACAS, *Diario ordinario*, 11 April 1772; no. 8360, p. 9. A copy of the libretto is preserved in I-Vc, Fondo Torre Franca, LIB 213.

15 Greggiati was in possession of a specimen, which, however, does not appear in the collection of the Ostiglia library; a search in the other Mantuan libraries and in all available repertories yielded negative results.

16 However, it was not possible to consult the libretto for the 1787 Chieti revival (with music by Passeri) and the one for Ferrara 1790 (with music by Carusio); for all the recorded musical settings see *Corago*, cit.

mits: as in the Bible, Seila begs her father to give her two months to retire with her companions to mourn her virginity (i.e. the fact that she can never become the mother of the Messiah).

The Mantuan score, although clearly derived from Scarpelli's text, introduces some important variants, starting with the list of characters. The entire previous tradition, at least as far as it has been possible to verify it, presents the four roles mentioned above; in Mantua in 1794 Captain Onia is replaced by Bersabea, Jefte's sister, who takes on a large part of the text originally intended for him and who, given the blood relationship with the protagonist, constitutes a further element of intensification of relations and affection. We then encounter the usual substitutions of arias; the chorus is missing, expunged at the beginning and at the end of the first part, and replaced by a completely new trio at the end of the oratorio.

The most notable difference, however, is the insertion of a large, composite scene for Seila at the beginning of the second part, totally new compared to the tradition of the libretto and entrusted for the musical setting to Gatti, the most titled Mantuan musician of the time (by then in service in Salzburg); from scene 4 we return to Scarpelli's libretto.¹⁷

In short, the derivation of *Il Voto di Jefte* from the tradition of Scarpelli's libretto is unmistakable; at the same time, the intention to give more space to the figure of the daughter is very clear. The conspicuous addition to which we have alluded is also certainly interesting with respect to the more specific theme of this essay, namely the representation of affections and virtues: Seila in fact first shows herself frightened and oppressed by the fate that awaits her, then turns to God for consolation. The conflict widens with the entrance of Azaele, who is also in despair at the idea of losing his beloved possession because of an "unjust vow". The great theme of the internal contrast between love (in its various declinations) and duty is explicitly posed by Seila and is central in our *Jefte*: it is resolved, however, by the protagonists accepting the superior reasons of loyalty to the vow and the prevalence of the common good over that of the individual.

Musical sources

The score I-OS Manoscritti Musiche Rari B 9, the Sinfonia I-OS Manoscritti Musiche B 4715 and the Parts I-MAav Cart. 28

The score Rari B 9 contains a complete and, despite everything, fairly coherent version of the Mantuan *Voto di Jefte*; it is a pasticcio written by several hands, accompanied by numerous interventions by Giuseppe Greggiati, which are useful for putting together the puzzle of attributions and for framing the occasion for which it was produced. The manuscript bears very clear traces of revisions and adaptations, which are not easy to interpret in the absence of the printed libretto and other complete sources. Also difficult to assess are any undeclared operations on the part of Greggiati who, despite an appreciable precision

¹⁷ See the section of the score for details.

in listing what he considered important for a better understanding of the scores, often intervened in the material aspects of the documents, dismembering, binding, juxtaposing or separating fascicles and papers, thus disturbing the original order of the material; his attributions, too, must be carefully verified. The current arrangement of the manuscript Rari B 9 therefore merits further investigation in the future.¹⁸

The manuscript is bound in green with gold friezes on the spine, on which we find the inscription 'BENATI E GATTI / OPERE / IL VOTO DI JEFTE / PARTITURA / QUASI TUTTA AUTOGRAFA'. The guard-leaves are occupied by a series of indications and explanations in Greggiati's own hand, some presumably copied or in any case excerpted from Libretto, others of an explanatory nature derived from his study of the manuscript.

On c. *Iir* we find, in Greggiati's hand, a frontispiece most likely created by taking data from Libretto:

Il Voto di Jefte / Dramma sacro / Poesia dell'Abate Antonio Scarpelli Vicecustode dell'Arcadia di Roma / Musica quasi tutta nuova composta / dai signori Don Luigi Gatti e Vincenzo Benati / Maestri di Cappella Mantovani / rappresentato nel Teatro Scientifico di Mantova / per servizio della R. Classe Filarmonica / nella Quaresima dell'anno 1794 / Partitura quasi tutta autografa.

The list of characters, also presumably copied from the libretto, follows on c. *Iiv*:

Jefte Principe degl'Israeliti	Jefte Prince of the Israelites
Seila Figlia di Jefte promessa sposa di Azaele	Seila Daughter of Jephthah betrothed to Azaele
Azaele Principe amante di Seila	Azaele Prince lover of Seila
Bersabea Vergine di Tob, sorella di Jefte	Bersabea Virgin of Tob, sister of Jefte
Comparsa:	Extras:
Guardie del Principe degl'Israeliti	Guards of the Prince of Israel
Vergini compagne di Seila	Virgin companions of Seila

On the next guard-leaf (c. *IIIr*) Greggiati notes in detail what he knows of the *Jefte*, listing the sources in his possession (librettos and scores) and attempting to reconstruct the history of the text and attribute the individual pieces on the basis of the handwriting. The lengthy note is dated Mantua, 20 August 1860; at the beginning, it also contains the "Avviso ai Lettori" prefixed to the libretto, printed in Mantua by Braglia in 1794: "Questo Sacro Dramma tratto dall'Originale del sig. Ab. Antonio Scarpelli Vice-Custode dell'Arcadia di Roma, ricomparisce vestito di nuova forma, e notabilmente accorciato ad oggetto di renderlo meglio a portata dell'uso a cui si destina dalla R. classe dei Filarmonici. Nella pagina seguente è detto: La Musica è quasi tutta nuova, composta dai Signori D. Luigi Gatti, e Vincenzo Benati, Maestri di Cappella Mantovani".¹⁹

¹⁸ However, the examination of the sources of the oratorio in LATTANZI, *Catalogo*, cit. is helpful.

¹⁹ "This Sacred Drama taken from the Original by Sig. Ab. Antonio Scarpelli Vice-Custodian of the Arcadia in Rome, reappears in a new form, and considerably shortened in order to make it more suitable for the use to which it is destined

The Ostiglia library also preserves the Sinfonia that was attached to the score of *Il Voto di Jefte*; Greggiati had taken it out of its original context as it was in separate parts rather than in the score. The set of fascicles has been given an independent location and shelfmark (Musiche B 4751); the set includes 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 horns, the strings with divided violas and the harpsichord. The Sinfonia is in one movement, Allegro, C, B flat major, and originally belonged to Benatti's own *Egeria* (Mantua 1793).²⁰

An anonymous set of 19 parts preserved in I-MAav Cart.28/1,2; the RISM card (no. 850002404) bears the date 1789, but the parts correspond to the 1794 score, with some inconsistencies still to be resolved.²¹

The manuscript I-OS Rari B 3059

Next to Rari B 9 we have another certainly interesting score, I-OS Rari B 3059, whose first page reads:

Jefte / Oratorio Sacro / Composto nell'anno 1795 dal Sig.r Vincenzo Benati Mantovano / ed eseguito in Mantova nella Quaresima dell'anno sudd.o dal Musico Testorini, dal Tenor Carri, e da Madama Langue insieme a Madama Laurenti.

The date 1795 is problematic: there is no record of a performance of the oratorio in Mantua in that year, while the date 1794 is certain. Greggiati notes that he purchased the manuscript "*dal Maestro Francesco Comencini il 18 Ottobre 1857*".

The score is in unbound fascicles and contains only some numbers of the oratorio, whose authorship is attributed to Benatti alone. In line with this, all the numbers of Rari B 9 that are not attributable to Benatti are omitted, and most of the corrections that we find there are integrated: it would therefore appear to be a copy subsequent to the first compilation of the pasticcio, which took note of cuts and changes.

Carusio's score: I-OS Mss. Mus. B 119/1-2

Carusio's *Jefte* is in two volumes, with Greggiati's usual indications:

Jefte / Azione sacra per Musica / Poesia di Antonio Scarpellini [sic] romano, sottocustode d'Arcadia / Musica del Maestro Luigi Carusio napoletano / rappresentata nel Regio-Ducale Teatro vecchio di Mantova / la Quaresima dell'anno 1789. / Partitura

The "*Attori*" are then listed with their vocal roles (but not with the singers): Jefte is tenor, Seila and Azae sopranos, Onia bass, whereas in the printed libretto of the Mantuan performance of 1789 we find the castrato Angelo Testori in the role of the captain. Greggiati, as usual, also compiles an index of all the numbers, and notes the differences with

by the Royal class of Philharmonic musicians. On the following page it says: *The Music is almost entirely new, composed by Messrs. D. Luigi Gatti, and Vincenzo Benati, mantuan chapel masters*".

20 I-OS Rari B 6: cf. RISM no. 850605404, and LATTANZI, *Catalogo*, cit.

21 The dating goes back to the catalogue in BERNARDI, cit., part III p. 4, no. 26, which assigns it based on knowledge of the 1789 performance.

the Mantuan libretto; precisely these variants, however, leave open the possibility that Greggiati's attribution of this score to the Mantuan performance should be reconsidered in favour of its probable traceability to an earlier Bolognese performance. The manuscript is in any case a decisive complement to Rari B 9, which does not give Carusio's arias incorporated in the 1794 pasticcio in full, but refers to his complete score.

Note on singers

The singers mentioned in the manuscript I-OS Rari B 3059 can be identified as the castrato Angelo Testori (Azaele), who as we have seen had sung in the 1789 *Jefte*, the tenor Giuseppe Carri (Jefte), and the sopranos Caterina (Katharina) Lang (Seila) and Marianna Laurenti (Bersabea). On the first two we have no doubts, given the diversity of vocal roles and the good chance that the *musico* was to play the role of the prince and the two ladies the female ones. The hypothesis that Lang impersonated Seila is based on the fact that in 1793 the singer had been Anna in Gatti's *Madre de' Maccabei*; the composer had written at least two large dramatic scenes for her similar to the one of Seila placed at the beginning of the second part of *Il Voto di Jefte*. Given that in the oratorio of 1794, compared to the tradition of the libretto, that scene was added and entrusted to Gatti, I suppose that the origin of the insertion was the possibility of taking advantage of Lang's skill in this kind of scene or the need to comply with her wishes. In the carnival of 1794 Lang was in Verona to sing at the Teatro Filarmonico the role of Idalide in Giuseppe Sarti's *Enrico nel Perù*, where Carri also sang in the role of Palmoro; both were therefore easily recruited for the Lent of the same year in Mantua. Marianna Laurenti, on the other hand, was stationed in the city during the same carnival, where she sang at the Regio Ducal Teatro Vecchio in Sarti's *Le gelosie villane* (Giannina), Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio segreto* (Carolina) and Paisiello's *Nina* (Nina). *Il Voto di Jefte* was performed in stage form.²²

The score of *Il Voto di Jefte*

As mentioned above, the oratorio is a pasticcio; the only source who hands it down in a complete version is I-OS Rari B 9 accompanied by the parts in I-MAav.

The following table gives the details of the manuscript Rari B 9, supplemented by the separate parts:

22 For further information on the singers and the stage set, see LATTANZI, *Catalogo*, cit.

"L'interna che tu provi pugna d'affetti": Love, virtue and other affetti in "Il voto di Jefte" ...

Scene	Form	Role	Incipit	Scoring	p.	Author
Prima parte						
	Sinfonia		Allegro	2fl, 2ob, 2 cor, strings, cemb		Benatti
I/1	Rec. acc.	Jefte	Sorgi Israele. Il temerario Ammone	T, strings, b	1	Benatti
	Aria	Jefte	Ah deponi in sì bel giorno	T, 2fl, 2cor, strings, b	8	Benatti
I/2	Rec	Az, J	Signor, sorgono ancora	S, T, bc	24	Benatti
	Aria	Azaele	Si stende in ogni riva	S, 2fl, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	32	Benatti
I/3	Rec.	J, S	E pur non son contento	T, S, bc	65	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	Seila	Ma tu non parli?	S, strings, b	66	Benatti
	Aria	Seila	Sventurata in tale istante	S, [2ob], 2cor, strings, vc solo, b	71	Benatti
	Rec.	Jefte	Figlia, lasciami in pace	T, bc	101	Benatti
I/4	Rec.	Bersabea	Jefte di tua vittoria	S, bc	101	Benatti
	Aria	Bersabea	Cruda belva che d'ira feroce	S, 2fl, 2cor, strings, b	103	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	J, B, S	Seguimi Bersabea	T,S, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	133	Benatti
	Aria	Jefte	Deh non cercar l'affanno	T, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b ²³	150	Carusio
I/5	Rec.	Seila	Chi per pietà sa dirmi	S, bc	151	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	Az, S	Oh Dio! Che chiedi mai	S, S, strings, b	152	Benatti
	Duetto	Az/ Se	Non accrescermi il tormento	S,S, 2ob, 2 cor, strings, b ²⁴	157	Carusio
Seconda parte						
II/1	Rec. acc.	Seila	Misera, che m'avvenne?	S, Fl, cl, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	173	Gatti
	Cavata	Seila	Deh Signor, Nume pietoso	S, Fl, cor_ingl, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	184	Gatti
II/2	Rec. acc.	Az, S	Ah Seila... ah sposa!	Fl, 2ob, cor_ingl, 2cor, strings, b	197	Gatti
	Rec.	Az, S	Ah Seila, ah sposa!,	S,S, bc	213	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	Azaele	Ch'io parta? E tu lo vuoi?	S, strings, bc	217	Benatti
	Minuetto	Azaele	Se perdo l'oggetto	S, 2fl, 2cor, arcs, b²⁵	219	?
II/3	Rec. acc.	Seila	Dunque ricusi ancora	S,S, strings, bc	221	Benatti
	Rondo	Seila	Vado a morir ben mio	S, fl, ob, cl, 2cor, strings, b	233	Gatti
	Rec.	Azaele	No non fia ver	S, bc	265	Benatti
II/4	Rec.	Jefte	Credimi Bersabea; mi sento anch'io	T, S, bc	267	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	Bersabea	Germano, ah, meglio pensa	S, strings, bc	272	Benatti

23 I-OS Rari B 9: compressed score (i.e. a score with only basso continuo and voice, omitting other instruments)

24 I-OS Rari B 9: compressed score.

25 I-OS Rari B 9: compressed score.

Scene	Form	Role	Incipit	Scoring	p.	Author
Seconda parte						
	Aria	Bersabea	Ah no, non cada esangue	S, 2ob, 2cor, strings, bc	277	?
II/5	Rec.	Jefte	Qual amaro contrasto	T, bc	337	Benatti
II/6	Rec. acc.	Seila	Ecco gli ultimi amplessi	S, 2ob, 2cor, strings, bc	339	Benatti
II/7	Rec.	Azaele	T'arresta e vivi	S, S, T, bc	359	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	Azaele	Seila! Mio ben! Tu impallidisci? Oh Dio!	S, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	364	Benatti
	Rondo	Azaele	Se ti perdo, o mia speranza	S, 2fl, 2cor, strings, b	371	Benatti
	Rec. acc.	Jefte	Prence, Figlia, compagni, in odio al Cielo	T, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	407	Benatti
	Aria	Jefte	Nell'agitato seno	T, vl solo, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	427	Benatti
	Rec.	Seila	Padre, non più, vincesti	S, S, T, bc	467	Benatti
	Terzetto	S/A/J	Padre, Prence, or v'abbandono	S, S, T, 2fl, 2ob, 2cor, strings, b	469	Benatti

As has already been pointed out, the manuscript Rari B 9 bears many signs of intervention; in particular, the second scene of the second part presents an alternative variant (in bold in the table) with respect to Gatti's music, which provided for Azaele's accompanied recitative "Ah Seila, ah sposa" (which continues Seila's previous recitative) followed by a Rondò indicated (p. 212) but not present. From p. 213 in fact the text is resumed, but intoned in simple recitative and in Benatti's hand, and then continues with accompanied recitative and aria, i.e. Azaele's Minuetto, given in compressed score and without a match in Carusio's score preserved in Ostiglia.

After this insertion, the text should continue, but we have another unclear situation: on p. 221 we find an accompanied recitative, in Benatti's hand, which is evidently the end of an earlier recitative. The Rondò di Seila that follows on p. 233, "Vado a morir ben mio", is by Gatti's hand, and is the one announced and not present on p. 212. In fact it follows a block of music by Gatti; it is in Eb major, perfectly compatible with the cadence of the preceding recitative; it is a rondo, as the caption inserted in the score states; it is in ideal continuity with the recitative. The block inserted between p. 212 and p. 233 is therefore a variant by Benatti that has modified the probable original layout of the scene. Gatti's complete version would maintain a strong emphasis on the character of Seila; Benatti's version would instead favour Azaele. It is impossible, at the moment, to establish whether the manuscript bears variants that correspond to different performances of our *Jefte*, or whether it merely bears witness to a pasticcio practice that has left somewhat more evident traces than usual. Nor is it unlikely that there was a change in progress due to some accident relating to the singers: could the rondo have been too challenging for Lang? Or was it not successful in one of the first performances? We do not have an answer as yet.

The "pugna d'affetti" in poetry and music

We have already seen how Jephthah's story contains within it certain elements that lend themselves well to dramatisation, with an extension of the range of affections and conflicts given by the constellation of characters in Scarpelli's libretto. Let us now see how these materialise in the literary and musical text.

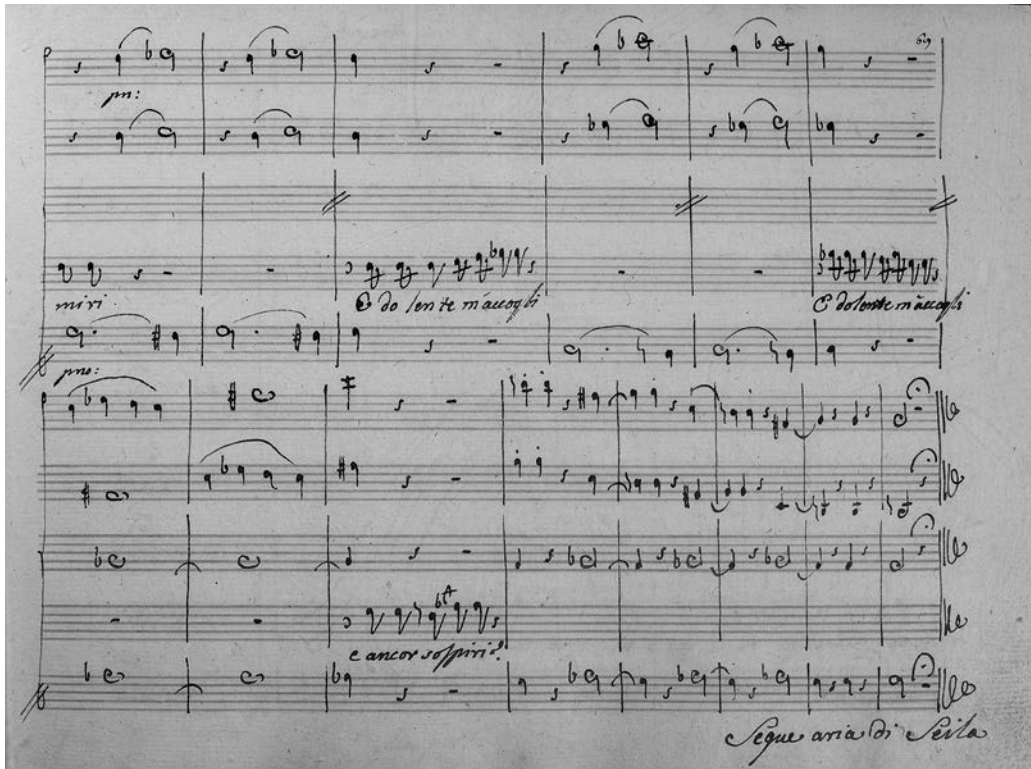
The relationships between the characters are ambivalent. Jefte has a familiar and intensely affective relationship with his daughter Seila and his sister Bersabea, reciprocated in different ways: Seila with a manifestation of absolute obedience fully embraces her father's position, sharing the sense of honour and the promise made to God; Bersabea opposes her brother and denounces the meaninglessness of his vow. The other strong relationship is between Azaele and Seila, betrothed, in the middle of a dramatic situation due to Seila's decision to submit to her father's will, which Azaele does not understand. At the beginning of the second part, all the characters oppose Jefte's will, each in their own way: Seila, as the Daughter, triggers in Jefte that "fistfight of affection" that gives this paper its title; Azaele, Jefte's faithful companion in battle and son-in-law *in pectore*, physically turns against him as a last attempt to save Seila; his sister Bersabea does not understand and does not share his rigid loyalty to the vow he made in battle. The antinomy arising from the situation is very common in the genre and at the time: the contrast between love and virtue, here understood as fidelity to the vow.

The 1794 text thus proposes a range of affections that fits perfectly into the dramaturgical lines of the time: love in all its forms, filial – paternal – fraternal – conjugal; virtue, or rather fidelity, to the vow for Jefte, to the father for Seila; sorrow, which all the characters experience with different nuances. Feelings are expressed with a certain force both in the recitatives (often *accompagnati*) and in the arias, giving the composers the opportunity to set on music many passages of the text with pathetic vigour.

A few examples will help to better focus the work of poets and musicians.

The beginning of the oratorio is festive: Jefte, with Azaele, is preparing to celebrate his triumph in homeland after the victory. His meeting with the daughter generates the first conflict: his vow to God obliges him to sacrifice her, and thus his emotional response to her joy is highly contradictory. We therefore have a first major change of atmosphere in the recitative of Seila (I/3), astonished at her father's coldness: after five verses in which she declares that she has run ahead, leaving her companions who were following her, the simple recitative gives way to the *accompagnato*, a nervous Allegro with the strings punctuating the verses with figures interrupted by pauses and, at the end, with the semitones typical of the idea of lament and sigh:

<p>Ma tu non parli? Ma attonito tu resti e volgi altrove la generosa fronte? Il tuo silenzio che mai vuol dir? Sconfitto è pur l’empio nemico; al fin risorto Israele tu miri e dolente m’accogli, e ancor sospiri?</p>	<p>But do you not speak? Do you remain astonished and turn your generous brow elsewhere? What does your silence mean? Defeated Is the impious enemy; finally you see Israel resurrected, and do you welcome me with sorrow, and do you still sigh?</p>
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Ex. 1 Part 1, scene 3, Seila, Accompagnato “Ma tu non parli?”, end.

This is followed by Seila’s aria “Sventurata in tale istante”, with strings and woodwinds and concertante violoncello in the middle part; a big aria in G major, in three contrasting sections, centred on the daughter’s grief at seeing her father’s distress. Scenes 3 and 4 are suspenseful: Jefte reveals neither to Seila nor to Bersabea (who enters in scene 4) the reason for his “misfortunes”, and at the end, far from sharing his happiness at the victory, he bursts into a dramatic aria:

<p>Deh non cercar l'affanno che mi divide il cuore un gelido terrore istupidir mi fa.</p> <p>In sì crudel momento sol nel mirarti, o figlia il pianto sulle ciglia largo scorrendo va.</p>	<p>Ah, do not seek the affliction that divides my heart an icy terror stuns me.</p> <p>At such a cruel moment only in looking at you, O daughter, the tears on my eyelashes run wide.</p>
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The first part continues to play out mainly the theme of the anguish of Jefte and the other characters who perceive the tragic climate; Azaele is the only one who is fully aware of the situation, but he cannot reveal the truth to Seila, and in a dramatic accompanato he merely hints at the vow without making it fully explicit:

<p>SEI: Ah vieni, o caro sposo, e non celarmi</p> <p>Tu almeno del padre mio l'occulto affanno.</p> <p>AZ: Oh Dio! Che chiedi mai Che dirò?... Deh, se m'ami deh lasciami tacer.</p> <p>SEI: Ah no</p> <p>AZ: Tu devi...</p> <p>Jefte... il Padre... giurò...</p> <p>SEI: Segui.</p> <p>AZ: Ma un folle, un temerario, un disumano voto, che ti farà tremar, che il cor[e] m'agghiacciò, che inorridir mi fa,</p> <p>SEI: Che dir vorresti? ed or perché di nuovo Confuso il suon fra i labri tuoi s'arresta?</p> <p>AZ: Più non ti posso dir.</p> <p>SER: Che pena è questa.</p>	<p>SEI: Ah come, O dear bridegroom, and do not conceal from me You at least of my father's occult affliction.</p> <p>AZ: Oh God! What do you ask? What shall I say? Oh, if you love me, let me be silent.</p> <p>SEI: Ah no</p> <p>AZ: You must...</p> <p>Jephthah... the Father... swore....</p> <p>SEI: Follow.</p> <p>AZ: But a madman, a daredevil, an inhuman vow, that will make you tremble, That chills my heart, that horrifies me,</p> <p>SEI: What do you wish to say? And now why again Confused the sound between your lips stops?</p> <p>AZ: More I cannot tell you.</p> <p>SEI: What a pain this is.</p>
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The recitative abounds with expedients that mimic the text: the broken progression of Azaele's first verses is precisely reproduced by the music, the "tremar" is rendered with the tremolo of the strings, there are some agogic changes, and the profile of the accompaniment is quite varied. This is followed by the duet "Non accrescermi il tormento" at

the conclusion of the first part (Larghetto in 3/4 and in B flat major), again taken from Carusio's score.

The second part opens with the great scene of Seila who has realised that she is the object of a tragic fate: as we have said, this is the great novelty of this *Voto di Jefte* compared to its entire tradition, entrusted to the capable hands of Gatti. The sequence of the scene is as follows:²⁶

Part 2, Scene 1			
Seila	Rec. acc.	Misera! che m'avvenne? E quale, oh Dio	Adagio maestoso, C minor, C, fl, ob1,2, cl, cor1,2, strings, b
Seila	Cavata	Deh Signor, Nume pietoso	Expressive adagio, C major, 2/4, fl, ob1,2, cor1,2, strings, b
Seila	Rec. acc.	Ma che veggo?... Azaele?... O me infelice	Continued
Scene 2			
Az, Six	conti-nued	Ah Seila, ah sposa! / Fermati, ascolta...	Same scoring with short solos for English horn
Seila	Rondò	Vado a morir ben mio	Adagio sostenuto, 3/4, E flat major, fl, ob1, cl, cor1,2, strings, b

The opening is an imposing *accompagnato* recitative, with full orchestra and the introduction of the clarinet.

<i>Adagio Maestoso – Allegro assai</i>	<i>Adagio Maestoso – Allegro assai</i>
[<i>Adagio</i>] Misera! Che m'avvenne? E quale, oh Dio folla d'idee funeste il mio pensier confonde?	[<i>Adagio</i>] Poor me! What happened? And what, oh God crowd of fatal ideas Confuses my thoughts?
<i>Tempo primo</i> Ah già decisa dunque è la sorte mia?	<i>Tempo primo</i> Ah, already decided so is my fate?
<i>Allegro assai</i> Su l'ara esangue dovrò dunque fra poco...	<i>Allegro assai</i> On the altar, bloodless I shall soon have to...
<i>Tempo primo</i> Ah sì ch'io sento a sì tremendo passo un palpito improvviso, un freddo gelo... che mi piomba sul cor. Gran Dio! Son pronta	<i>Tempo primo</i> Ah yes, that I feel At so tremendous step A sudden throb, a cold chill... That falls upon my heart. Great God! I am ready

26 The second scene is very troubled from the point of view of the musical text, and several aspects would deserve an in-depth study that we cannot do here. The score is riddled with deletions, second thoughts, flaws, inconsistencies. Here we examine for our purposes the scene as it was probably conceived by Gatti, leaving out the variant with Azaele's Minuetto, even though it is attested by the separate parts in I-MAav.

<p>l'olocausto a compir. Ma il padre amato, l'infelice mio sposo... Ah dolci oggetti del mio tener [sic] amore... Ah! Nel lasciarvi.... Ah! Mi si spezza il core.</p> <p>[segue la Cavata]</p>	<p>to make the holocaust. But my beloved father, my unhappy husband... Ah, sweet objects of my tender love...Ah! in leaving you.... Ah! my heart is broken.</p> <p>[follows Cavata].</p>
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The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for 'Parte 2.ª Scena I.' from an opera. The score is for an instrumental introduction and includes parts for Flauto (Flute), Violino I (Violin I), Violino II (Violin II), Viola, Clavicembalo (Cembalo/Cembalo), and Fagotto (Bassoon). The notation is in G major and common time (C). There are various dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The score is signed 'G. M. G.' in the top left and 'Originale 1713' in the top right. The name 'Seila' is written on the staff for the Clavicembalo part.

Ex. 2 Part 2, scene 1, Seila, Accompagnato: Instrumental introduction, p. 173.

To evoke the tension that agitates Seila, Gatti works extensively with instrumental figures and dynamic nuances, as is very clear from example 2 but especially from example 3:



Ex. 3 Part 2, scene 1, Seila, Accompagnato: Instrumental introduction, p. 174.

The Cavata that follows is a prayer, sung in an expressive Adagio in C major with full orchestra and the addition of the English horn:

Deh Signor Nume pietoso calma in sen gli affetti miei mio sostegno, oh Dio, tu sei altra speme il cor non ha.	Oh Lord, merciful God calms in my heart my affections, O God, you are my support the heart has no other hope.
---	---

Seila is therefore very upset by the situation: only God can help her to serenely accept her fate, and thus ‘calm her affections’. From the musical point of view, the voice intones the text with a melodic profile that is substantially syllabic but refined by a considerable amount of grace ornamentation (simple and double appoggiaturas, dotted rhythms, in rare cases small groups of biscromes); the idea of Seila’s agitation remains in the continuous work of the instruments, all of which have rather flourished lines (so much so that they have to resort to *p* and *pp* to avoid suffocating the voice), and in the breathless and broken repetition of some text elements in the second part.

In the recitative of scene 2, the theme of fidelity is explicitly introduced, a virtue that for Seila coincides with obedience to the father, which matches with observance of the will of the 'God of Abraham' and even surpasses love for Azaele, also a considerable element of inner conflict; a duty towards the people of Israel also clearly emerges. An obedience to the point of death, a cruel destiny but accepted without nuance in the name of loyalty and duty to higher demands. This is how Seila replies to Azaele who asks her about her love for him:

<p>SEI: Dio lo com[m]ise lo vuole il genitor; de tuoi trionfi è prezzo il morir mio. Deh meglio apprendi d'una figlia il dover. Pensa che al fine pria di giurarti fede al Padre mio d'esser fida giurari, che il Dio d'Abramo, il debellato Ammone, il popol tutto chiede il mio sangue, e ch'io negarlo non potrei senza sentirmi da più fieri rimorsi l'anima lacerar. La gloria tua d'Israele la sorte, il mio destino vuol ch'io debba lasciarti. Prence ah non più... prendi un abbraccio, e parti.</p>	<p>SEI: God commanded it, the father wills it; of your triumphs my death is the price. Better learn a daughter's duty. Think that in the end, before I swore faith to you, to my Father I swore to be faithful, that the God of Abraham, the vanquished Ammon, the whole people asks for my blood, and that I could not deny it without feeling by fiercer remorse my soul torn. Your glory, the fate of Israel, my destiny wants me to leave you. Prince ah no more... take an embrace and leave.</p>
--	---

The theme of duty, dominates; Seila's fate is linked to that of the other protagonists of the story and to that of the people of Israel, and it is therefore not possible to think of a different outcome to the story.

In the score, the scenes just described are followed by 'Scene 4', which corresponds to the beginning of the second part in the tradition of Scarpelli's libretto, except for the replacement of Onia by Bersabea. Here Jefte makes his feelings very clear, and Bersabea interprets his agitation as a sign that his vow was careless and against nature, and therefore cannot even be pleasing to God:

<p>JEF. Credimi Bersabea; mi sento anch'io l'anima sveller dal sen, tutti in tumulto tra la pietà, e il dolore corròn gli affetti a lacerarmi il core. Ma il dolor, la pietade cedono al mio dover. Si renda a Dio Un dono ch'ei mi diè, ch'io gli promisi, ch'Egli grato accettò.</p>	<p>JEF. Believe me, Bersabea; I too feel my soul draining from breast; all in tumult between pity, and grief the affections run to tear my heart. But sorrow and pity yield to my duty. Give back to God a gift that he gave me, that I promised him, that he gratefully accepted.</p>
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BER. Jefte t'inganni. L'interna che tu provi pugna d'affetti , è il naturale istinto, che al tuo voto ripugna; è forse pena dell'incauta promessa, è certa prova che il tuo rigido gelo se alla terra fa orror, non piace al Cielo.	BER. Jefte you deceive yourself. The internal strife of affection that you feel is the natural instinct that repulses your vow; and is perhaps the penalty of your incautious promise, is certain proof that if your rigid frost horrifies the earth, does not please Heaven.
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The expression of the conflict between love and duty, especially in those who hold a position of responsibility towards a community, is certainly nothing new in 18th century dramatic texts: librettos abound with recitatives and arias in which characters are torn by the opposition between duty and feelings ("Io son padre e son regnante", "Son regina e sono amante"...). However, unlike most protagonists of other dramatic genres, who usually succumb to sentiment in the end, Jefte cannot but show himself faithful to the biblical dictate and therefore tetragonous in his resistance to the call of blood. In the next scene, after Bersabea has futilely expended a series of sharp theological remarks, he once again expresses his steadfastness while fighting against 'the motions of nature':

Qual amaro contrasto svegliano in questo petto i moti di natura, i mesti sensi dell'afflitta germana! E dovrò dunque cedere a' suoi consigli? Ah no, non fia ch'io manchi al dover mio. Si serbi intatta La fé che a Dio giurai... Ma già s'appressa La vittima infelice. Affetti miei resistete costanti in faccia a lei.	What bitter contrast wakes in this bosom the motions of nature, the sad senses Of the afflicted sister! Shall I then yield to her advice? Ah no, let me not fail in my duty . May be kept intact the faith I swore to God... But is already approaching the unhappy victim. My affections remain constant in front of her.
--	---

Tenderness towards his sister and love for his daughter are not enough to overcome the supreme sense of duty and the strength of the oath made to God: constancy must dominate feeling and govern affections.

A dramatic climax of the oratorio is represented by the scene numbered as 6 in the score. In all previous librettos there is a caption: "Preceded by mournful symphony Seila is seen dressed in the sacred bandages, prescribed for the sacrifices". Indeed, the long introduction to the recitative that we find on p. 339 of Rari B 9 has all the characteristics of a funeral march: in C minor, in C, with accompaniment of dotted repeated notes or interspersed with pauses.

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for an instrumental introduction. At the top left, it is labeled "Scena VI". The instruments listed on the left are Violini (Violins), Oboe, Corni C (Horns C), Fiale (Clarinets), and Seila. The tempo is marked "Largo" at the bottom left. The key signature is two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The score consists of several staves with musical notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as "p" (piano) and "pp" (pianissimo). There are also some performance instructions like "poco" and "pp".

Ex. 4 Seila, "Ecco agli ultimi amplessi", Instrumental Introduction, p. 339.

Rhythmic cells of the same kind also punctuate the recitative of Seila, set to die. The last section is a *Largo*, in which Seila once again pronounces the key word of her sacrifice, "fé = faith", which is to be understood as trust, faith in the religious sense, but also fidelity to the given word and the bonds established through it. As the tragic destiny is about to be fulfilled, and the score emphasises this with long pauses between the repetitions of the text that follow the first utterance ("Padre - s'avvivi - s'avvivi..."), armed Azaele bursts in and tries to prevent the sacrifice. In the dialogue that follows, Azaele points out that Seila was his wife before being chosen as a sacrificial victim by Jefe, and condemns the vow as inhuman and unjust. Not even Azaele's love, however, can shake Jefe's determination and Seila's conviction that she must submit to her father's and God's will, and in the end all accept the inevitability of fate. Azaele renders Seila to Jefe and makes amends: "lost virtue" triumphs over love.

The conclusion of the oratorio returns to follow the lines of the biblical story: Seila asks her father for permission to mourn her virginity with her companions, Jefe grants it as a just reward for her virtue, and the three main characters of this finale intone a sorrowful trio that closes the score, converging at the end in a sung strophe in *Allegro*

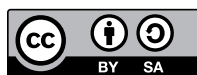
in which the characters share the motivic material and often sing homorhythmically, to emphasise the rediscovered unity of intent:

<p>S, A, J: Quanto è fral, quanto è fallace de' mortali il van desio; stabil gioia e vera pace solo in Dio si può trovar.</p>	<p>S, A, J: How frail, how fallacious is the vain desire of mortals; stable joy and true peace can only be found in God.</p>
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The turbulence of human feelings, their desires and contrasts are thus recomposed in the name of the Most High, the only dispenser of peace and inner happiness. The *affetti*, without which there would be no drama, however sacred, have now exhausted their function.

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