Music Faculty Publications

Music

2014

Composing after the Italian Manner: The English Cantata 1700-1710

Jennifer Cable
University of Richmond, jcable@richmond.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.richmond.edu/music-faculty-publications

Part of the Composition Commons

Recommended Citation

Composing after the Italian Manner: The English Cantata 1700–1710

Jennifer Cable

Charles Gildon, in addressing the state of the arts in his 1710 publication *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, the Late Eminent Tragedian*, offered the following observation concerning contemporary music and, in particular, the music of Henry Purcell:

> Music, as well as Verse, is subject to that Rule of Horace;
> *He that would have Spectators share his Grief,*
> Must write not only well, but movingly.[1]

According to Gildon, the best judges of music were the 'Masters of Composition', and he called on them to be the arbiters of whether the taste in music had been improved since Purcell's day.[2] However, Gildon's English 'masters of composition' were otherwise occupied, as they were just beginning to come to terms with what was surely a concerning, if not outright frustrating, situation. At

---

[1]   Charles Gildon, *The Life of Thomas Betterton, The Late Eminent Tragedian. With the Judgement of the Late Ingenious Monsieur de St. Evremond, upon the Italian and French Music and Opera's; in a Letter to the Duke of Buckingham* (London, 1710; reprint New York, 1970), pp. 168–9. The complete quotation follows: 'This was Henry Purcel's Talent; and his Music, as known as it is, and as often repeated as it has been, has to this Day the very same Effect. But all the Airs of these [recent] Opera's, as they touch nothing but the Ear, so they vanish as soon, as that is tyr'd with the Repetition; that is, they live but a Year at most; so that Purcel's being compos'd to penetrate the Soul, and make the Blood thrill through the Veins, live for ever; but those foreign Whims, which have cost us above twenty thousand Pounds, are lost before the Castratos have spent the Money they brought them in … in Vindication of our English Music, to the Absurdities of Opera's; I think the Degeneracy of the Age is but too apparent, in the setting up and encouraging so paltry a Diversion, that has nothing in it either manly or noble.'

[2]   Gildon, *Betterton*, pp. 168–9. After stating that he finds 'the best Judges of Music, those who are the Masters of the Composition, as well as Performance … ' Gildon later adds: 'The Masters must decide, you reply perhaps—That indeed would bring it into a small Compass, to the Decision of a very few, and yet not to be determin'd; for the *English* Masters have still a Veneration for *Purcel*; and the foreign Masters have too visible an Interest to be the Deciders', p. 169.

the beginning of the eighteenth century, English audiences were losing interest in the style of composition that had developed in their native land. Influential audience members were exhibiting a preference for Italian vocal music, thus bringing to prominence numerous Italian composers and performers. Notable English composers sought to confront this increasing passion for Italian music by creating a musical hybrid, a new compositional form that borrowed elements from the Italian cantata and added some decidedly English components. The resulting genre was the English cantata.

In this chapter, I will examine examples from several of the earliest eighteenth-century English cantatas written after the Italian style and in direct response to the growing popularity of Italian vocal music in England.[3] The early English cantatas of three composers—John Eccles, Daniel Purcell, and Johann Christoph Pepusch—portend how each would fare in the new musical century, when the compositional ideals of an earlier era were foresaken as the focus on Italian vocal music, the 'talk of the town', broadened in scope and sharpened in intensity.

Cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti, Alessandro Stradella and Giovanni Bononcini served as models for the development of the early English cantata. In the preface to his set of cantatas, published in 1716, Johann Ernst Galliard mentions Carissimi as an important early Italian cantata composer and also cites Bononcini and Scarlatti for having brought cantatas to 'what they are at present.'[4] In particular, Galliard highlights Bononcini's 'agreeable and easie Style' along with his fine bass lines; Scarlatti is mentioned for his 'noble and masterly Turns.'[5]

In his 1776 history of music, Sir John Hawkins briefly outlines the genesis of the two volumes of English cantatas by Pepusch, providing a general background to the origins of the English cantata:

> Nevertheless there were so many who affected to discover charms in the Italian music, particularly that novel species of it, Recitative, as gave great encouragement to the composers of the time to study it: trusting to this disposition in its favour, Mr. Pepusch set to music six Cantatas for a voice and instruments, the words whereof were written by Mr. John Hughes; and afterwards six others by different authors. The several compositions contained in these two collections are evidently in the style of the Italian opera, as consisting of airs intermixed with recitative; and he must be but very moderately skilled in music who cannot discover between them and the cantatas of Alessandro Scarlatti a very near

---

[3]   Primary sources referenced in this chapter can be found in the British Library (Printed Music collection) and the Bodleian Library (Harding Collection).

[4]   Johann Ernst Galliard, *Six English Cantatas after the Italian Manner* (London, 1716), p. 2.

[5]   Galliard, *Six English Cantatas*, p. 2.

resemblance. They were received with as much applause as the novelty of this kind of music could well entitle them to ... [6]

Charles Burney added one more Italian cantata composer to the list of those who had influenced the early English cantata. When discussing the English cantatas of Pepusch, Burney suggests that the cantatas of Gasparini served as the model rather than those of Scarlatti.[7]

Many elements of the early English cantatas followed those of their Italian models quite closely, including compositional traits.[8] The overall format was typically recitative–aria–recitative–aria (RARA) or aria–recitative–aria (ARA). During the prelude, the continuo line would often forecast the vocal melody, either through a direct melodic quotation or through the use of rhythmic cells which were then repeated in the initial vocal statement. In instrumental cantatas, obbligato instruments such as flute, oboe or violin could also take this role. The vocal melody was often developed through the use of what Hugo Riemann termed *devisenarie* or 'motto' aria.[9] In this case, the voice would present the opening half of the melody (perhaps already stated by the continuo or an obbligato instrument), followed by an instrumental ritornello, after which the voice repeats the same fragment and continues with the melody line, thus completing the melodic phrase in its entirety.

Arias were primarily da capo. Among Italian cantatas, the da capo aria was ubiquitous by 1700,[10] and the da capo aria, along with recitative, was considered essential for the early English cantata. Of the early English cantata composers, only Eccles used other forms in addition to the standard da capo, dal segno or ABA.[11] Similarly, *secco* recitative was considered a critical component for an English cantata composed in the Italian style. Early English cantata *secco* recitative length averaged 7 to 11 bars, whilst the cantata *secco* recitatives of Scarlatti and Bononcini averaged 12 to 17 bars in length.

---

[6]   Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London, 1776; reprinted in 2 vols, New York, 1963), p. 831.

[7]   Charles Burney, *A General History of Music* (London, 1789; reprinted in 2 vols, New York, 1957), p. 988.

[8]   My conclusions result from a study of mid-to-late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Italian cantatas, drawn from *The Italian Cantata in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Carolyn Gianturco (16 vols, New York, 1985–87; particularly volumes 10, 13 and 14) and Alessandro Scarlatti, *Quattro cantate*, ed. G. Tintori (Milan, 1958).

[9]   Jack Westrup, 'Devisenarie,' *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy [accessed: 11 July 2007], http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.07690.

[10]   *Cantatas by Giovanni Bononcini 1670–1747*, ed. Lowell Lindgren, in *The Italian Cantata*, vol. 10 (New York, 1986), p. xi.

[11]   The Eccles cantata *The Rich Rivall* retains multi-sectional song forms. In later English cantatas, binary and strophic forms returned, often appearing in the place of the second aria. The Italian cantata used the binary form also, as well as the through-composed form.

In both Italian and English cantatas, keys were closely related between movements; most often dominant to tonic or mediant to tonic. Submediant to tonic and tonic to tonic also appeared. Modulation between keys was often similarly circumscribed; adventuresome modulations, if they occurred at all, were present within the B section of the da capo aria form. The B section of the da capo aria could develop melodic or rhythmic material from the A section, thus linking the two together in either outright or subtle ways.

Italian cantata texts usually revolved around love (and the host of issues that accompany that emotion), placed in a pastoral setting. The majority of the texts that Scarlatti used dealt with Arcadian scenes, often with love as the driving emotional force. Other Italian cantata texts were inspired by Classical mythology, Roman history, and contemporary events, while still others considered humorous and sacred subjects.[12]

Several of the initial composers of the eighteenth-century English cantata found the Italian dramatic musical style very appealing although the language barrier presented a point of contention. English poet John Hughes (1677–1720) observed: 'Those who are affectedly partial to the Italian tongue, will scarce allow Musick to speak any other; but if reason may be admitted to have any Share in these Entertainments, nothing is more necessary than that the words should be understood, without which the End of Vocal Musick is lost.'[13] A contributor to *The Spectator*, *The Tatler* and *The Guardian*, Hughes was a driving force during the early stages of the English cantata. An advocate of the Italian musical style, Hughes further notes in his preface to Pepusch's 1710 cantata collection that the 'best works of Scarlatti and other Italians, except those perform'd in operas, are generally but little known or regarded here' a situation surely due, in part, to the inability of the English public to understand the words.[14]

Hughes's texts were set more often than those of any other poet during the early years of the English cantata; this fact might explain the consistency of content found in these cantatas. Broadly speaking, the texts used for the English cantata during the opening decade of the eighteenth century shared two common themes: love and courtship in a pastoral setting, and some reference to, or contact with, familiar mythological figures. In addition, many texts (particularly those by

---

[12]   Malcolm Boyd (ed.), *Cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti*, in *The Italian Cantata*, vol. 13 (New York, 1986), introduction (n.p.).

[13]   Johann Christoph Pepusch, *Six English Cantatas Humbly Inscrib'd to the Most Noble the Marchioness of Kent* (London, 1710). Pepusch's volume of English cantatas for voice, continuo and obbligato instruments (also with texts by John Hughes), set out to achieve a 'better correspondence ... between the two Sister Arts': those of music and poetry, specifically poetry in the English language. Quotation from Hughes's preface 'To the Lovers of Musick'. For more on Pepusch's role in 'reconciling sister arts,' see the chapter by Sean M. Parr in this volume.

[14]   Pepusch, *Six English Cantatas*, p. 1.

Hughes) included a moral, which would usually appear in the second recitative-aria coupling.[15]

When considering the musical elements of the English cantata, the da capo aria, the through-composed ABA form, and the binary song form were familiar to English audiences—it was the recitative which was the least enthusiastically received of the Italian traditions, even though that element of the English cantata would ultimately be retained throughout the eighteenth century. Gildon quotes French expatriate St. Evremond's colorful description of Italian recitative:

> But who can support the dull Tediousness of the *Recitativo*, which has neither the Charm of Song, nor the agreeable Force of good Speaking? The Soul tir'd out with a long Attention to that, in which it can find nothing affecting, retires into it self to find some secret Emotion, by which it may be touch'd; and the Mind, having in vain expected Impressions from without, has Recourse to empty Musings, or grows dissatisfy'd with it self for being so useless to its own Satisfaction. In a Word, the Fatigue is so great and so universal, that we only think how to get out; and all the Pleasure the tir'd Spectator can propose to himself, is the Hopes of a speedy End to the Show.[16]

In an attempt to clarify the role of the recitative in the English cantata, Hughes takes a more positive view, writing in his preface to the first volume of Pepusch cantatas (1710):

> There is only one thing in Compositions of this sort which seems a little to want explaining, and that is the *Recitative* Musick, which many People hear without Pleasure, the Reason of which is, perhaps, that they have a mistaken Notion of it. They are accustom'd to think that all Musick shou'd be Air, and being disappointed of what they expect, they lost the Beauty that is in it of a different kind. It may be proper to observe therefore, that the *Recitative* Stile in Composition is founded on that Variety of Accent which pleases in the Pronunciation of a good Orator, with as little Deviation from it as possible. The different Tones of the Voice in Astonishment, Joy, Rage, ... make a sort of natural Musick which is very agreeable; and this is what is intended to be imitated, with some Helps, by the Composer, but without approaching to what we call a *Tune* or *Air*; so that it is but a kind of improv'd Elocution, or pronouncing of the Words in Musical Cadences, and is indeed wholly at the Mercy of the performer to make it agreeable or not, according to his Skill or Ignorance, like reading of Verse, which is not every ones Talent. This short Account may possibly suffice to show how properly the *Recitative* has

---

[15]   The identities of many English cantata poets have been lost to time; however, we can be certain of a few in addition to Hughes: Abraham Cowley, William Davenant and Henry Carey were clearly identified as the poets for a number of early English cantatas.

[16]   Gildon, *Thomas Betterton*, pp. 161–2.

a Place in Compositions of any Length, to relieve the Ear with a Variety, and to introduce the *Airs* with the greater Advantage.[17]

The Early English Cantata

In November 1708, an advertisement appeared in John Walsh's *Monthly Mask*, announcing the publication of three cantatas:

A Cantata by Mr Purcell
A Cantata by Mr Eccles
A Cantata by Mr Pepusch

No titles were included, though some assumptions can be safely made: sources place Daniel Purcell's *Love I defy thee* in the September 1708 *Monthly Mask*, so it is likely that this is the same cantata referred to in the 1708 advertisement.[18] A second, though remote, possibility for the identity of the Purcell cantata would be his work *By silvery Thames's Flow'ry side*, which was published slightly later, in 1710. The Eccles cantata was probably either *The Rich Rivall* as it appeared in the March 1709 *Monthly Mask*, or Eccles's other partial- or semi-cantata composed in the Italian style, *Love kindled in a breast too young*. There is a high probability that Pepusch's cantata was one of the six that made up his first volume of cantatas, the aforementioned *Six English Cantatas, Humbly Inscrib'd to the Most Noble, the Marchioness of Kent* (1710), when one considers Hughes's assertion in the preface that these cantatas were the first of their kind composed by Pepusch.

John Eccles and Daniel Purcell were already well-known composers by the time the passion for Italian vocal music began to intrude upon the London theatre scene. Johann Christoph Pepusch, a German expatriate, had arrived in London by 1700 and though not an inexperienced composer, he nevertheless had yet to build a reputation in the lucrative London theatres. This is important to note, for when Eccles and Purcell turned their hands to the English cantata with the Italian cantata as the model, they were experimenting with the Italian style from the position of seasoned, established English composers who sought to stay current with regard to public musical taste. Pepusch approached the form from a different vantage point—not yet professionally secure in England to the degree of Eccles or Purcell, Pepusch found in this new form an opportunity to accumulate compositional capital and gain a notable reputation by working with the popular Italian musical form, set to an English text.

---

[17] Pepusch, *Six Cantatas*, p. 2.

[18] My thanks to Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson for generously sharing their extensive research on the *Monthly Mask of Vocal Musick* publications.

Cantatas by Daniel Purcell

Daniel Purcell's (1660–1717) cantata *Love I defy thee*, with the text by John Hughes, is believed to have the earliest composition date of the cantatas discussed here: September 1708.[19] Though earlier publication dates are given, this date can be reliably documented given its *Monthly Mask* publication. With *Love I defy thee*, Daniel Purcell holds the distinction of being the composer of the first extant English cantata specifically labeled as composed 'after the Italian stile.'[20] Specific details of the cantata, such as format, keys, and so on, can be found in Table 4.1.

The vocal line is, for the most part, set syllabically, with exceptions in the *fioriture* sections where Purcell employs word painting. In the first aria Purcell highlights the word 'fly' with triplet passages (see Musical Example 4.1), and in the second aria, he again uses triplets to highlight the word 'joy.' Also noteworthy, each aria begins with an unaccompanied vocal entrance and has a significant amount of step-wise motion throughout.

---

[19]   When considering the earliest English cantatas, it is necessary to mention that the honor for the earliest published English cantata might go to Richard Leveridge. Though the music has been lost, Leveridge set Charles Davenant's (1656–1714) 'The lark now leaves his watery nest' in 1707, possibly earlier than Purcell's *Love I defy thee*. The Davenent text was printed in the December *Muses Mercury* and described as 'A Cantata' set by Mr. Leveridge. Again, thanks to Thelma Wilson and Olive Baldwin for sharing their Leveridge research. Other early efforts by Leveridge include a probable cantata entitled *Love mighty love* (1710) and the cantata *Mighty Love* (1711), which faithfully follows the English cantata scheme and was published in Leveridge's *New Book of Aongs*. Set in ARA format, it is scored for voice and continuo with violin obbligato added in the second aria. Leveridge uses a triple meter for the first aria, and duple-compound (12/8) for the second, reminiscent of the siciliana-type arias of Scarlatti. Leveridge, like Daniel Purcell, uses rhythmic cell motives as structural elements. In the second aria Leveridge presents the vocal melody in the prelude and sets the vocal entrance in the *devisenarie* or 'motto' aria format. In the following bars, the violin and voice engage in a dialogue of sorts, often sequential. The key structure moves from B minor in the first aria to B major in the second. The text is consistent with other English cantatas; it addresses, within a pastoral landscape, the power of love, stating that those who obey its rules are rewarded, but the rebellious heart feels only pain.

[20]   Daniel Purcell's cantata *Love I defy thee* was one of the first to include 'after the Italian stile' in the title; this phrase or the similar 'composed after the Italian manner' referred to the use *secco* recitative and da capo aria. The phrase continued to be used in English vocal music until the 1760s. The latest reference to 'the Italian manner' that I have located is Isaac Bickerstaff's (1735–1812) *The Ephesian Matron. A comic serenata after the manner of the Italian*, with music by Charles Didbin, dated 1769.

Example 4.1   D. Purcell, *Love I defy thee*, bars 15–18

In considering the continuo line, motivic sequence plays an important structural role in each aria. Octave leaps also function as defining elements in the bass line for both arias, as can be seen in Musical Example 4.2 below.

Example 4.2   D. Purcell, *Love I defy thee*, bars 1–8

Rhythmic patterns are used as structural elements throughout the cantata in both the vocal and the continuo lines. A dotted crotchet, crotchet, quaver (Mus. Ex. 4.2) and a triplet turn (Mus. Ex. 4.1) are defining musical elements in the first aria. For the second aria, a dotted quaver, sixteenth, dotted quaver, sixteenth are featured structural elements. Structural definition through rhythmic patterns was a typical compositional element in Purcell's early English cantatas.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, key movement is quite simple: moving from the tonic (B flat) to the relative minor and returning to the tonic for each aria.[21] The recitative moves from the dominant to tonic; it is not unusual for Purcell to end his recitatives in the key of the aria to follow. Hughes's text possesses commonalities with other early English cantata texts, including the appearance of mythological characters as well as the addition of a moral toward the conclusion of the cantata.

Table 4.1   Daniel Purcell's Early English cantatas compared

Cantata	Pub. date	Scoring	Format	Aria form	Aria length	Meter	Recit. length	Keys
Love I defy thee Poet: John Hughes	Sept. 1708	Soprano & continuo	A–R–A					B flat
			A	A1: Da capo	39 bars	12/8		I–vi (abrupt transition)–I
			R				8 bars	V–I
			A	A2: Da capo	45 bars	4/4		I–vi–I
By silver Thames's Flow'ry side Poet: unknown	Mar. 1710	Soprano & continuo	R–A– R–A					E minor
			R				9 bars	i
			A	A1: Da capo	27 bars	4/4		i–v–i
			R				10 bars	v–III/v– VI/v–v
			A	A2: Da capo	31 bars	4/4		i (B section: G, a, D, f#)

The cantata *By silver Thames's Flow'ry side*, published in March 1710 (see Table 4.1), introduces sad Clorinda in the opening recitative; she is sitting by the Thames, weeping that the tide has borne her love away. The following aria recounts cruel Damon's departure. The vocal line consists of short, motivically generated phrases with similar rhythmic elements between both the A and the B sections of the aria (two sixteenth notes followed by two quavers). The text of the second recitative is highly descriptive in setting the pastoral scene: meads are smiling, flowers adorn the ground, turtles are happy and lambs are sporting.

The second and final aria, in which winter will become spring when Damon returns, retains several elements from the first: da capo form, 4/4 meter, shared key (E minor), and similar length. In addition, repeated rhythmic elements between the A and the B sections join them in a unified whole.[22] However, the B section of

---

[21]   In the first aria there is an unexpectedly abrupt transition from B flat major (A section) to G minor (B section).

[22]   Developing da capo aria A section material in the B section was not unique to the English cantata—examples exist in the late seventeenth-century cantatas of Bononcini.

this aria contains a dramatic harmonic departure from the first aria by exploring a wider variety of key areas: E minor–G major–A minor–D major–F# minor.

There are several similarities between this cantata and *Love I defy thee*. Both have very short phrases for the vocal melody, while other cantatas by Purcell, such as *Far from the Nymph whom I adore*, are more lyric. The vocal and the continuo lines for *Love I defy thee* and *By silver Thames's Flow'ry shore* are motivically generated through the use of repeated short rhythmic cells, often in melodic sequence. Both cantatas are in da capo form and have fairly simple key relationships, with the B section of the second aria the most adventuresome with regard to key exploration. Though Purcell employs word painting sparingly (mainly through *fioriture* passages), it is efficient and convincing, lending appropriate emphasis to the text as well as creating musical definition of the phrase. Purcell's vocal range, expanding to a tenth, is moderately larger than the vocal ranges of Bononcini or Purcell's English contemporaries.

Cantatas by Eccles

John Eccles's (*c.*1668–1735) *The Rich Rivall* appeared in the March 1709 *Monthly Mask* and represents a departure of sorts from the English cantatas of Eccles's contemporaries and their Italian models (see Table 4.2).[23] First, Eccles does not utilize the expected *devisenarie* opening by stating the vocal melody first in the instruments. A second noteworthy difference is that Eccles sets the first aria in a manner reminiscent of an earlier (Restoration period) form: the multi-sectional song, rather than the standard ABA of the Italian da capo aria so heavily utilized by Purcell and Pepusch. Though the first aria does have a da capo element, it is only the A section that is repeated, not the B or the C. The second aria is set as a song, without repeats, which is atypical of English cantatas of this period.

Eccles's text choice is equally interesting, electing to use 'The Rich Rivall', a section from Abraham Cowley's (1618–1667) *The Mistress*, published in 1647, rather than a contemporary text.[24] *The Mistress* totals nearly 100 pages, detailing the glory and despair encountered during the poet's search for love. The rich rival himself appears approximately half-way through the text. The final poem of *The Mistress* suggests a stronger and wiser lover. Stanzas one, four, five and six transcribed below, summarize his thoughts:

> It is *enough*; enough of time and pain
> Hast thou consum'd in vain;
> Leave, wretched *Cowley*, leave

---

[23]   An alternative title for *The Rich Rivall* is *They say you're angry.*

[24]   Publishing information for *The Rich Rivall* can be found at 'Cowley, Abraham.' *Encyclopædia Britannica.* 2007. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* 27 July 2007 <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9026680>.

Table 4.2   Structure of Eccles's cantata *The Rich Rivall*

Section	Key	Length	Form and meter	Comments
Recitative: *They say you're angry*	A major	8 bars		Combination of Italian *secco* style with traces of Purcellian (Henry) arioso style
Aria: *When next I see my fair one*				
A section	A major	21 bars	Da capo (following C, A section repeats) Set in 3/2	Though set da capo, also has elements of multi-sectional song
B section	F# minor–B minor	21 bars		
C section	A major–E major – C# minor	15 bars		
Recitative: *Curse o' your friends*	F# minor–E major– A major–E major	6 bars		Very broad key movement, ending in V of A
Aria: *'Tis that which bids me this bright Maid adore*	A major–E major– F# minor–D major– E major–A major	32 bars	Song, vocal statements strung together either as 2 + 2 or 1 + 1 + 2 phrases Set in 12/8	Harmonic movement travels through several keys; use of melodic sequence

Thy self with *shadows* to deceive;
Think that *already lost* which thou must *never gain.*
If er'e I clear my *Heart* from this desire,
If er'e it home to its breast retire,
It ne're shall wander more about,
Though thousand beauties call'd it out;
A *Lover Burnt* like me for ever *dreads the fire.*
The *Pox*, the *Plague*, and ev'ry *small disease*,
May come as oft as *ill Fate* please;
But *Death* and *Love* are never found
To give a *Second Wound*,
We're by those *Serpents bit*, but we're *devour'd by these.*
Alas, what comfort is't that I am grown
Secure of be'ing *again* o're thrown?
Since such an *Enemy* needs not fear

Lest any else should quarter there,
Who has not only *Sack't*, but quite *burnt down the Town*.[25]

Why would Eccles have chosen his cantata verse from Cowley's poem—one that had been written years before—instead of one that was intended for use in an English cantata, such as the texts of John Hughes, chosen by his colleagues Purcell and Pepusch? I believe there are two reasons. First, Eccles's text selection was identical to that in Henry Purcell's 1684 song of the same name. There are a few similarities between the two settings: both introduce the first metered section (aria) at the same place in the text, both begin and end in the same key (B flat major in the Purcell, A major in the Eccles) and both repeat the final statement ('Ah, simple soul, what will become of thee') though in slightly different ways. Eccles even set the text 'You've lands and money, let that serve', found in the first recitative, quite similarly to Purcell. In choosing this text, Eccles was able to create a direct connection with a highly respected English composer and former colleague.[26] Secondly, if one reads between the lines of the text, one can see that Eccles may be using the text as a metaphor in order to express his thoughts regarding the state of music in England. To expand upon the metaphor, the 'rich rivall' is Italian music, which has become a competitor for the affection of Eccles's 'mistress': the English public. A closer look at the text with accompanying explanation will enable one to consider how Eccles may be revealing himself on this subject:

They say you're [Italian music] angry and rant mightilie
Because I [Eccles] love the same as you [Eccles too loves the English audience];
You're very rich tis true [Eccles adds 'Alas' at the beginning of this line]
But prithee fool, what's that to Love and Me?
You have Land and Money [Italian music has a country of origin, as well as national sentiment and fame], let that serve
And know you have more by that than you deserve.
When next I see my fair One [English audience], she shall know,
How worthless thou art her bed; [Italian music is not worthy of the English audience]
And wretch, I'll strike thee dumb and dead,
With noble *verse* not understood by you; [Eccles will render Italian music or composers mute and dead with English words not understood by Italian speakers]
Whilst thy sole *Rhetorick* shall be
Joynture, and *Jewels*, and *Our Friends agree.*

[25]   Abraham Cowley, *Poems: Miscellanies, The Mistress, Pindarique Odes, Davideis, Verses Written on Several Occasions*, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 151–2.

[26]   Both Eccles and Henry Purcell composed theatre music for the United Company during the early 1690s.

Purcell has the words 'Joynture' and 'Jewels' and 'Our friends agree' in quotation marks, lending a tone of scorn. Eccles is mocking the tone implied by 'joynture' and 'jewels' (the first term refers to the holding of property and, when coupled with the second term, implies wealth and a possible marriage contract), along with the statement 'our friends agree', as though that would lend meaning to any disagreement. Here, for Eccles, 'our friends agree' means that those members of the English audience who have defected to the side of Italian music over that of their native composers are all of a single mind. Though Eccles did not add the quotation marks that Purcell did, the tone of derision remains:

> Pox o' your friends [Englishmen who support Italian music over English], that dote and Domineere: [Eccles deletes 'pox' and adds 'curse.' Purcell kept 'pox.']
> *Lovers* are better *Friends* than they:
> Let's those in other things obey;
> The *Fates*, and *Stars*, and *Gods* must govern here. [English or Italian music? Only the Fates, Stars and Gods will determine which will prevail over the other.]
> Vain names of *Blood*! in *Love* let none
> Advise with any *Blood*, but with their [Eccles substitutes 'your' instead of 'their']
> *own*. ['Tis the tie of blood which bonds Eccles to the English musical cause.]
> 'Tis that which bids me this bright *Maid* [the English public and English music] adore;
> No other thought has had access!
> Did she now *beg* I'd love no *less*,
> And were she an *Empress*, I should love no *more*;
> Were she as just and true to Me,
> Ah, simple soul, what would become of *Thee*![27]

The final line invites the listener to imagine the alternative scenario should the English public be as just and true to Eccles as he was to them.

Musically, *The Rich Rivall* is diverse in form and rich in melodic development. The first aria, 'When next I see my fair one', is indicated as 'da capo', yet it also has elements of the restoration period multi-sectional song form (see Table 4.2). Section A begins with a fairly long prelude, the contents of which feature prominently throughout the section yet do not forecast the vocal melody in any way. Interestingly, the aria's B section has nearly the same prelude as that of the A section. These two sections do not share the same key changes, however; and though the vocal line in the B section retains rhythms from the A section, there is a distinct change in the continuo. Section C is the shortest, and does not have the dotted rhythms prominent in the vocal line of sections A and B, yet C also has an independent continuo 'introduction, though shorter than the other two. The appearance of a crotchet–two quavers–crotchet figure just prior to the vocal

---

[27] Cowley, *Poems*, pp. 108–9. The poetic verse of *The Rich Rivall* is in an abbacc rhyme scheme, known as a heroic sestet. This type of verse is also known as the Venus and Adonis Stanza.

entrance serves to unite section C with the previous sections. The vocal themes of sections A, B and C can be compared in Musical Example 4.3a–c, where one can also see the linking crotchet–two quavers–crotchet rhythm which mirrors that of the opening of A and also occurs in the first vocal entrance of section B.

Note how the dotted rhythm is mirrored in the opening bars of the A and B melodies, which contrasts with the even rhythms of the C melody. The key movement is A major–E major–C# minor, after which the da capo returns us to A major.[28] The second aria, in a duple-compound meter (12/8), is set as a single page song. It appears charming, with a delightful and energetic arpeggiated figure for the continuo line, yet the text transmits more serious sentiments. Eccles uses short melodic figures (four in all), each identified with specific text, with the first and last figures repeated: the first similar to other English cantatas by which the vocal melody is stated, followed by instrumental material, then a return to the initial vocal statement, while the last is repeated immediately, with a slightly altered vocal line, emphasizing the final statement 'Ah, simple soul, what would become of Thee!' Henry Purcell, in his setting of this text, also repeats this final statement.

The second possibility for the Eccles cantata in the 1708 *Monthly Mask* is *Love kindled in a breast too young*.[29] Although undated, it was probably composed prior to 1710. Scored for voice and continuo, and set in a recitative–aria format, it presents a standard subject: young love in an Arcadian setting. The first line of the recitative reveals the moral of the tale.

Similarities to *The Rich Rivall* are evident in the opening recitative, for Eccles introduces a rhythmic cell which recurs throughout the cantata: three quavers followed by a note of longer duration. Frequently this defining rhythmic figure

---

[28]   Eccles's opening aria in *The Rich Rivall* may have served as a model for another English composer who was trying his hand at the English cantata. It is difficult to determine when Henry Symonds (d.c.1740) composed *When Paris bore away the Grecian prize*, setting Henry Carey's poem. I include it here, for though Carey published the poem in 1713, it is likely that it appeared earlier. In his *Poems* Carey writes 'The Six following Cantatas (after the Italian Manner) are Imitated and Contracted from as many Stories of OVID, and set to Musick by several Eminent Masters'. The cantata is set for voice and continuo in RARA format. Both arias are da capo and though the first follows the typical use of *devisenarie*, in the second the vocal entrances add new text with each vocal phrase: a, ab, abc. The melodic treatment of the 'a' text is the same in the first and second entrances, but not in the third. The 'b' text melodic treatments are different each time, and the sections are clearly differentiated. Thus Symonds's second aria is somewhat akin to the first aria in *The Rich Rivall*. Both use a developed melodic-motivated form within a da capo framework, and move between the major and relative minor. Symonds liberally uses sixteenth-note figures in the continuo line throughout, though he does not often use such passages for the vocal line, unless word painting is called for. The text refers to the judgment of Paris, possibly another connection with the early cantata composers as Eccles and Daniel Purcell set Congreve's *The Judgment of Paris* in 1700–01.

[29]   John Eccles, *Love kindled in a breast too young*, from *XII Cantatas in English for a Voice and a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord Being a Curious Collection of the Compositions of Several Authors* (London, 1723), pp. 12–13.

Example 4.3 J. Eccles, *The Rich Rivall*, first aria themes A, B, and C

crosses the bar line, with the note of longer duration arriving on the downbeat of the new bar. The aria opens happily enough, until the swain's abrupt shift of affection from one young woman to another. Eccles again resists beginning the aria with a direct quotation of the opening vocal melody; yet he includes a sixteenth note figure in the prelude, which is the defining musical element of the second half of the vocal phrase in this instance, as throughout the aria, the voice and continuo exchange melodic and rhythmic motives between the two lines. The semi-cantata is standard with regard to harmonic conventions: the recitative begins in the key of A major and ends in the dominant (E major) preparing us for the return of A major for the following aria. The B section is in the relative minor, a harmonic movement used often by other early English cantata composers, Pepusch in particular. The A section is significantly longer than the B section–in fact, nearly three times longer. Word painting is used sparingly throughout: at times suggesting something quite contrary to the expected meaning. For example, in the A section, a *fioriture* sequence of dotted rhythms sets the word 'tender' where the preceding melody line was quite smooth, leaving the impression that the use of a dotted rhythm in the setting of 'tender' is anything but. Additional

examples of word painting through the use of *fioriture* include 'charming' in the A section, and 'milder' and 'preserved' in the B section. Consistent with other cantatas of the period, the vocal range for *The Rich Rivall* and *Love kindled* generally remains within an octave, only occasionally stretching to a tenth should the drama of the situation warrant.

Cantatas by Pepusch

Of the composers under discussion here, the composer least experienced in setting English texts was one of the most active in the English cantata genre during the early part of its development. Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752) composed over 20 English cantatas, 12 of which appeared in his two published volumes (the first six, with texts by John Hughes, in 1710, the second in 1720 with texts by several poets including Hughes and Colley Cibber).

There can be no doubt that Italian cantatas were the model for the English cantatas in the 1710 volume, as each cantata contains *secco* recitatives and da capo arias, and key relationships closely follow the Italian pattern: usually dominant or mediant to tonic for the recitative to aria progression.[30] Pepusch generally does not exceed an octave for the vocal range (sometimes stretching to a tenth) and sets texts with one or two notes per syllable, using *fioriture* passages to generate effective word painting. Textual parallels are evident also, as a number of the cantatas address various facets of love within a bucolic setting. In some cases, mythological figures are encountered, silently 'in passion appearing' or offering celestial advice. Nymphs and shepherds are also in evidence, along with descriptions of fragrant breezes, nightingales, and the charms of love.

Two cantatas (*Island of Beauty* and *Alexis*) depart somewhat from the standard content, which though unusual for the time period, became more common in the English cantata by mid-century. In *Island of Beauty* Hughes writes of the glories of Britain, calling her the fairest island in the sea, emphasizing patriotic rather than romantic love, and again including mythological figures. The plot of *Alexis* reflects a typical English cantata story line, with mythological figures in an idyllic landscape, yet Hughes adds a contemporary reference by mentioning Giovanni Battista Bononcini's opera *Camilla* in the opening recitative.[31] With this unexpected allusion to the contemporary English operatic scene, we are momentarily drawn

---

[30]   On occasion, Purcell and Eccles each used the same key for both the recitative and the following aria; in fact, Purcell commonly used this type of 'single key' approach. In contrast, Pepusch placed his recitatives in related keys (relative major or minor, or the dominant, subdominant or mediant) to the following aria.

[31]   Giovanni Battista Bononcini's popular Italian opera *Il trionfo di Camilla* was first produced in London in 1706, where it was performed in English with English singers. A facsimile edition, introduction by Lowell Lindgren, appeared in *Music for London Entertainment 1660–1800*, ser. E, vol. 1 (London, 1990).

away from the pastoral setting and into early eighteenth-century London. Poets of the early English cantata rarely made such a direct reference as Hughes did here, although later cantatas referred to contemporary scenes and characters, even while retaining the elements of the pastoral.

Though all of the cantatas in the 1710 volume present delights for the scholar and performer alike, for the purposes of this chapter I will highlight a single cantata, *Alexis*, as a sample of Pepusch's early English cantata composition.

Alexis is set in RARA format and both arias are da capo. The key scheme typically moves from dominant or mediant to tonic (see Table 4.3 below). The storyline concerns young Alexis, who is seeking to ease the pain of unrequited love. He visits the opera (Bononcini's *Camilla*) to see if music will help him, asking that music, to whom every passion yields, compose his anguish. Apollo hears Alexis and, remembering his own trials of love, picks up his lyre and sings the second aria 'Sounds though charming can't relieve thee–Music is the voice of love.'

Table 4.3   Structure of Pepusch's cantata *Alexis*

Section	Key	Length	Form	Comments
Recitative: *See! from the silent Grove*	D major–B minor–A major	10 bars		Ends in the same key as aria which follows
Aria: *Charming sounds that sweetly languish*	A major (I)	17 bars	Da capo	Although short, aria shows same proportions as in later cantatas
A section	I	11 bars		
B section	vi (V/ii)–ii–(I)–(VII)–iii	6 bars		
Recitative: *Apollo heard the Foolish Swain*	E major – F# minor – C# minor – B minor – F# minor	11 bars		Contains a vocal flourish in final cadence
Aria: *Sounds tho' Charming can't releive [sic] thee*	D major	100 bars	Da capo	Contains a 16-bar prelude. Excellent example of *devisenarie*
A section	I	76 bars		
B section	vi, iii	24 bars		

In the very brief introduction to the first aria, Pepusch reveals the opening vocal melody which is presented immediately following the two-bar prelude (see Musical Example 4.4). A triplet figure then appears as the defining rhythmic element for the second part of the opening phrase. Also apparent in Example 4.4 is the continual exchange of motivic figures between the voice and continuo lines.

Example 4.4   J.C. Pepusch, *Alexis*, first aria, bars 1–11

Even in this short aria Pepusch exhibits a compositional trait which continues in his later cantatas: the length of the A sections are nearly always double that of the B sections.

When Apollo appears in the second recitative, moved by the pleas of Alexis, Pepusch sets the final bars of the recitative as a grand cadential figure, a clear example of Apollo's musical abilities, and the rapidly descending line on the word 'voice' prepares us for the following aria sung by Apollo (see Musical Example 4.5).

Example 4.5   J.C. Pepusch, *Alexis*, second recitative, bars 9–11

Once again, Pepusch introduces the primary vocal melody of the second aria in the opening bars of the prelude. In this case he doubles the harpsichord and the cello lines, making the melodic statement quite clear indeed. Immediately following he separates the two lines, moving into an octave leap for the cello and an Alberti-style figure for the harpsichord. When the voice finally enters in bar 17, the harpsichord and cello lines again are in unison, the harpsichord stepping out of the Alberti-style bass line only during the vocal statement. When the voice re-enters with the same melody four bars later, the harpsichord and cello return to a unison accompaniment. Following this point, the vocal line melody is developed while the accompanying instruments return to their distinctive musical lines: octave leaps for the cello and Alberti-figure for the harpsichord. Throughout the aria, whenever the cello and harpsichord present the opening melody, they do so in unison.

Many of Pepusch's English cantatas include an obbligato instrument–violoncello in *Alexis*, although a separate line for the instrument does not appear until the second aria. This is the only case in the 1710 publication where Pepusch used the cello as a single obbligato instrument. By adding the cello obbligato line in the role of the walking bass, Pepusch was free to expand upon the role of the harpsichord, setting that line in an active Alberti-style figure. In using this type of figure for the harpsichord in the second aria—an element that Pepusch uses at no other point in the first volume —he might have been motivated by the active and inventive bass lines of Bononcini, also remarked upon by Galliard.[32] In *Alexis*, Pepusch utilized musical devices found in Scarlatti's cantatas: presenting

---

[32]   Galliard, *Six English Cantatas*, p. 2. 'Of late Years, Alessandro Scarlatti and Bononcini have brought Cantata's to what they are at present; Bononcini by his agreeable and easie Style, and those fine Inventions in his Basses (to which he was led by an instrument upon which he excels;) and Scarlatti by his noble and masterly Turns.'

thematic material at the opening of the aria; consistent motivic development, such as *devisenarie* (second aria of *Alexis*); motivic development also in the continuo; and use of melodic and harmonic sequences.

Conclusion

In comparing the cantatas of Scarlatti and Bononcini with the early English cantatas, it is apparent that the Italian model was significantly more adventurous in terms of form, key relationships, and use of *fioriture*. The English cantatas of the first decade are conservative by comparison. The early English cantata composers were creating a hybrid, uniting elements of the Italian cantata format with an English text, with some aspects of the model adapting more readily than others. At the same time, early English cantata composers also sought to achieve a dramatic impact which would rival that produced by the sometimes fiery and tempestuous Italian model. In short, early English cantata composers understood the need to reconsider their compositional efforts in light of the increasing public interest in Italian vocal music models. Despite their attempts, not all of them were successful.

After 1707, the vogue for Italian music pushed Daniel Purcell aside. In 1713, four years before his death, Purcell published a volume entitled *Six Cantatas for a Voice, with a Through-Bass, Two of Which are Accompanied with a Violin; Composed (after the Italian Manner) by Mr. Daniel Purcell*. In the lengthy preface to this volume, Purcell passionately articulates what he views as the problems with the current state of music in England. This sad appeal permits a glimpse of Purcell's anguish at the state of English music, in addition to his concern regarding his diminishing opportunities (excerpted below):

> The introducing *Italian Opera's* upon the *English* stage, has so altered the Taste of the nation, as to MUSICK, that scarce any thing, but what bears some Resemblance to the *Italian* Style and Manner, is received with Favour or heard with Patience ...

> This is evident from the method our English Audience takes of giving Applause; their Approbation is shown in the wrong place, and generally runs highest upon the slightest Occasions: The Theatre shall ring with Encore's to such stuff, as an English Master would blush to own himself the Author of; when their most Solemn and Pathetick Musick, and most Masterly Compositions shall not only pass by unregarded, but to a great part of the Audience, they shall seem tedius and tiresome ...

> This is indeed a Calamity to be lamented, but hard to be redress'd unless the Composing Opera's in our own language was promoted, which would very probably answer any Encouragement that should be given to such Undertakings.

But I cannot join in Opinion with those who think, that if our English Opera's were exactly modell'd by the Italians, that is, if they were All Musick, that they would be better receiv'd on that Account. I remember the Reputation of those in my Brother's Time (which were of a different Kind) to have subsisted longer than the Italian Opera's have generally done since, though the latter have been supported by the Excellent Performances of Seignior Nicolini, and other Celebrated Italian Artists, which was wanting in the former.

Were the same kind of Opera's to be again reviv'd and encouraged, there is no doubt but our Nation would produce Genius's suitable to such Undertakings, and we should then be capable of a true Enjoyment of these Diversions, because we should understand them better, than as they are now obscured and darkned [*sic*] by a Language to which we are utterly Strangers.[33]

Anthony Partridge states that by the first decade of the eighteenth century, the theatre 'had become, in part, a stepping-stone for composers to commercial popularity rather than an end in itself.'[34] With the theatre identified as a vehicle of commercial and economic importance to the English composer, one can readily surmise what would happen to those composers who were unwilling or unable to adapt their efforts to satisfy the increasing demand for Italian music, desiring instead to compose in an older style, using an English text.

Eccles was surely disappointed with his failure to produce his opera *Semele* (with Congreve as librettist) in 1707, as English taste had already begun to turn toward Italian opera. Soon after this misfortune, Eccles left London to retire at Hampton Wick, remaining musically active as court composer until his death in 1735.

Pepusch was the only one of the three to thrive in this new musical era— he enjoyed success in the theatres and continued to compose English cantatas, producing his second volume by 1720. Remaining in active repertory, Pepusch's English cantatas were performed long after his death; *Alexis* was published in various versions until the 1950s.

The English cantata would retain a place on recitals and benefit concerts throughout the eighteenth century, performed in venues as diverse as the parlors of private homes, the stages of opera houses, and the pleasure gardens of Vauxhall, Ranelagh, and Marylebone. Composers such as Galliard, Henry Carey, John Stanley, Thomas Arne, William Boyce, Thomas Linley Jr., and James Hook would continue to compose English cantatas until the decline of the genre around 1790.

---

[33] Daniel Purcell, *Six Cantatas for a Voice with a Through Bass, Two of Which are Accompanied with a Violin; Compos'd (after the Italian Manner) by Mr. Daniel Purcell None of Which Were Ever before Publish't. By the Author's Direction Carefully Engrav'd on Copper Plates by Thomas Cross* (London, 1713), pp. 1–2.

[34] Anthony Partridge, 'Drama and Music in London, 1660–1710: The Evolution of the Restoration Musical,' Ph.D. diss., King's College, University of London, 1977, p. 334.