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"Gonfio di gioia ho il core (piange): Verdi's Deception Scenes"¹

David B. Rosen

Orestes, in the Iphigenia in Tauris, says, "serenity is restored to my soul," and the air which he sings expresses the sentiment, but its accompaniment is mournful and agitated. The musicians, astonished at this contrast, endeavoured in playing it, to soften the accompaniment, when Gluck angrily cried out: "You must not hearken to Orestes, he tells you he is calm, but he lies."²

The celebrated scene from Gluck's 1779 opera described by Madame de Staël (see Example 1, p. 22) is one of the earliest and most celebrated examples of what I will call "deception scenes," a somewhat misleading term, as the actual deception may last but a moment. In these scenes characters deceive—or attempt to deceive—other characters, or, by misjudging their own emotions, deceive themselves. Their words and behavior are at variance with their real emotions, thoughts, or, in the case of disguise, their very identity. The dramatic situation in these scenes invites—and indeed challenges—the composer to make a dramatic point with the music. They force the composer to ask what stance the music should assume. Should it "lie" along with the character's words, or should it reveal the deception—to the audience, if not to the other characters on stage?³ We need not enter into philosophical disquisitions about the nature of musical representation here; for example, what, in the absence of text and context, the music might be able to express, to be expressive of, to depict, to represent, etc., etc. I think—I hope—that we would all agree that Gluck's music here is more appropriate to feelings of agitation or anguish than to rest and repose. (It is, after all, as clear an example as we will see in this essay, as music can distinguish between agitation and calm far more decisively than it can distinguish between more complex binary oppositions, such as happiness vs. sadness or love vs. hate.) And so, the key question that recurs continually in this essay is whether or not the music aligns itself with the false state of affairs; that is, whether or not

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1 This essay is a revised and expanded version of "Mentir cantando: Verdi's Deception Scenes," my contribution to Pensieri per un maestro: Studi in onore di Pierluigi Petrobelli, ed. Stefano La Via and Roger Parker (Turin: EDT, 2002), 313-333, which was in turn a revision of a paper first delivered at the Sixth International Verdi Conference at the University of California, Irvine, in April 1980, the proceedings of which were never published. I am grateful to EDT for permission to reprint it in this revised version here. In its earlier published incarnation I wrote, "I want to thank Andrew Porter for his comments on a very old version of this essay and Ralph Locke for his on a recent version of it. And thanks to Pierluigi Petrobelli for his kind words about my discussion of the Forza duet (i.e., at the Irvine Verdi conference) in his article cited in note 40—I hope that the publication of this essay does not give him cause to regret them." I now add my thanks to Tekla Babayak, Carol Rosen, and the anonymous Verdi Forum reviewer for their comments.


3 Perhaps locations like "reveal" and "unmask" should appear in scare quotes: as I note below, the audience rarely needs musical clues to realize that one character is deceiving, or attempting to deceive, another. Furthermore, the characters are usually disconcertingly unaware of the clues generously proferred to the audience.
we would accept the music as appropriate to the deceptive words or actions if they were in fact sincere—if Orestes really were calm, as he claims to be.

At this point in my text, the anonymous reviewer suggested an “alternative view of this scene: Orestes is not claiming to be calm, but rather trying to calm himself.” Perhaps. While I prefer Gluck’s view, we have long since learned not to grant an interpretative monopoly to the composer (or author). Especially in soliloquies—this is the only example of one in this essay—we might well interpret some scenes in which a character claims to be calm or happy as an attempt to become calm or happy. (Indeed, I take this approach in dealing with a passage in the final act of *Ernani* [Example 8b, p. 30].) However, it would be easier to make a case for such an interpretation if the attempt to calm oneself were successful, as in Act IV, scene 2, of *I masnadieri* (#12, Sogno di Francesco, mm. 28-36), where Arminio notes that Francesco is trembling (“Che! voi tremate!”), and the orchestra duly depicts the trembling. The orchestral trembling continues as Francesco answers, “Io? no!...”; but ceases when he steels himself by an act of will and with the words “non tremo...” calms himself. But if Orestes was trying to calm himself (the reviewer’s reading), the music shows that, unlike Francesco, he failed to do so. The difference between our positions is therefore slight: in both readings the music denies the truth value of his words or denies that those words have had their desired effect.

And in both readings the music reveals Orestes’s emotional state, but in another alternative reading, the orchestral accompaniment represents the omniscient narrator/composer, who tells us that while Orestes may actually be calm, he should not be, for the furies are right around the corner, ready to return to the assault—if only in his dreams. Aside from the obstacle that the vocal line collaborates with the accompaniment in giving the lie to his words (see below), I prefer to press this highly marked interpretative strategy into service only sparingly, adopting as a default the position that both vocal and orchestral parts reflect the emotions of the character(s). Sometimes, however, the model of the omniscient narrator/composer is necessary—for example, in the celebrated passage in *Die Walküre* (Act I, scene 2), where the Valhalla motive tells the audience what the characters could not possibly know, never having heard that motive before: that Siegmund’s dad is Wotan, who has returned to Valhalla and the Valhalla girls, who shop for their armor and accessories at Valmart, naturally. Moreover, later in the essay I will suggest that certain musical gestures, among them obsessive repetition, may signal deception, even when the repetition may not reflect the emotional state of the character.

Unlike the deception scenes in Verdi’s operas that I shall discuss, in the Gluck example the libretto by itself does not provide sufficient evidence of Orestes’s (self-)deception (or, in the alternative reading, his futile attempt to calm himself); only the music accomplishes that. With a different musical setting we might well believe that Orestes is calm. But Gluck’s setting forces us to set aside our normal interpretative strategy of believing what characters tell us. (Of course, the interpretation that Orestes is actually troubled must make sense in the context of the entire libretto, or we would regard the passage not as a subtle treatment of deception but simply as a dramatically inappropriate musical setting, or more generous, as well as more up to date, a puzzling aporia.)

Before we leave the celebrated Gluck scene, there is another issue to be considered: according to de Staël, Orestes’s vocal line is in accord with his words, and it is only the orchestral accompaniment that belies them. Most writers since have agreed with her, but to make the

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music sound calm the Parisian orchestra would have needed to do much more than eliminate the syncopated figure, which is probably all they had done to “adoucir l’accompagnement.” Much of the tension is caused by the pedal point and the dissonances over it, the obsessively repeated rhythmic pattern, the chromaticism and minor-mode inflections, and the fact that the entire passage is a dominant prolongation. But, pace de Staël, the lugubrious vocal line, the augmented second (in mm. 27-28), and the lack of “periodic phrasing” also give the lie to Orestes’s words.5

In only a few of the examples from Verdi operas cited in this essay does the vocal line support the deception while the orchestra unmasks it, as has so often been asserted about the Gluck aria.6 As we shall see, in the parlante passages in Example 14 (pp. 38-39, the Act II Quartet in Luisa Miller) and in Examples 18a-18b (pp. 46 & 47, the scena of the Act III duet of Alvaro and Carlo in La forza del destino), the vocal parts are neutral; Luisa’s and Carlo’s deceptions are indicated by the orchestral repetitions. And in most of Iago’s “Era la notte” (Example 11, pp. 33-35) the orchestra, not the voice, provides the tell-tale chromaticism.

Verdi was familiar with de Staël’s De l’Allemagne as early as 1845;7 one wonders whether he had read and underlined this passage in his copy.8 But it does not really matter: with precedents for deception scenes like the Act I trio “Della Duchessa ai prieghi” in Donizetti’s Lucrezia Borgia, he hardly needed to read de Staël about Gluck.

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5 An anonymous commentator in the Mercure de France of 15 June 1779 recognized that the vocal part contributes to the effect, though curiously suggesting that Orestes remains aware of his troubles but lacks “the strength to give them voice.” “Indeed,” he or she continues, “his melody is more admirable, the more true, in that it extends over a very small range of harmonies, and has no periodic phrasing.” Then there is the usual observation about the accompaniment, “his melody is accompanied by the violas, which lash the subdued, remorseful voice [or better: which depict the muted, menacing voice of remorse—“qui peignent la voix sourde & mênçante des remords”—DR], while the violins express a profound agitation, mingled with sighs and tears....” Patricia Howard, Gluck: An Eighteenth-Century Portrait in Letters and Documents (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 199-200. For the original “Lettre sur Iphigénie en Tauride, de M. le Chevalier Gluck,” see Querelle des Gluckistes et des Piccinnistes: Texte des pamphlets avec introduction, commentaires et index, ed. François Lesure, 2 vols. (Geneva: Minkoff, 1984), 1: 432-435, here 434.

6 My thanks to Tekla Babyak for suggesting that I pursue this issue.

7 In a letter of 12 April 1845 Verdi urged Piave to read “l’Alemania della Staël” to help the poet to understand Werner’s Attila; see I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi, ed. Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio (Milan: Commissione Esecutiva per le Onoranze a Giuseppe Verdi nel primo centenario della nascita, 1913), 437-438; and Marcello Conati, La bottega della musica: Verdi e la Fenice (Milan: Saggiatore, 1983), 142-144. Conati convincingly refutes the 1844 date assigned by the Copialettere.

8 Abramo Basevi certainly had read it. He quotes de Staël in his discussion of the parlante conversation of Macbeth and the assassin in the Act II Finale of Macbeth but, disappointingly, seems to miss her main point, as he cites the Gluck passage as the first example of a “contrapposto tra un motto ed il suo accompagnamento” (“contrast between a theme and its accompaniment”); see his Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi (Florence: Tofani, 1859), 106; or, in Ugo Piovano’s critical edition of the Studio (Milan, Rugginenti, 2001), 196. In de Staël’s account there is indeed a contrast between a theme and its accompaniment, but her crucial point concerns the conflict between the sense of the words and the music. In the Macbeth passage the contrast does not involve the vocal part or its text—it is rather between two strands in the orchestral texture—the brindisi tune and the chromatic, minor-mode inflected inner voice. This is not a deception scene.
Deception scenes are a subset of Verdi's treatment of deception in general. Verdi's characters so often have improper, unfriendly, or even violent plans for one another that deception, disguise, and secrecy loom large in his operas. Yet relatively few of these situations are embodied in "deception scenes"—where the music has the opportunity to make a dramatic point. There are several reasons for this.

First, not all kinds of deception lend themselves to musical treatment. Verdi can assign a priestly whine to Corrado (Il corsaro), a seafaring idiom ("musica marinesca") to Riccardo (Un ballo in maschera), and a light-hearted style to Carlo (La forza del destino) when they impersonate a dervish, a sailor, and a student; for those disguises can be characterized musically. But there is no musical costume with which Verdi can clothe Amonasro (Aida, Act II, Finale) or Don Carlos (Don Carlos, Fontainebleau Act) when they conceal their royal status—a kind of negative disguise.

Second, a further constraint is that a musical treatment of deception is, generally, possible only when the deception concerns not only a matter of fact but the character's emotional state as well. For example, since Amonasro is indeed the Ethiopian King, he is lying when he asserts "Al mio pie... nella polve disteso/black male I Giacque il Re... da più colpi traitto" ("At my feet in the dust lay the King, wounded many times")10. What matters, however, is Amonasro's sincere expression of his ardor, heroism, and defiance epitomized in ringing phrases about "de' forti l'ardir" ("the courage of the strong") and "l'amor della patria" ("love of the fatherland"). These emotions "pre-empt" the musical setting, making it irrelevant for the composer that Amonasro is simultaneously lying about a matter of fact. Since there is no misrepresentation of emotions, it is hard to see how the composer could have found a way, had he wished, to treat Amonasro's deception musically, at least without ignoring the more important sincerely expressed emotions.

Third, even when the nature of the deception is susceptible to musical treatment, the composer and the librettist may choose to keep the deception off stage, as it were, to make the deception occur through the character's silence.11 Attila is a case in point. Like Judith with Holofernes, Odabella, bent on vengeance, conceals her hatred of Attila, becomes his fiancée, and eventually assassinates him. Deception is at the core of the plot, and Odabella must give Attila some encouragement, but if she ever sings "Oh Attila, you handsome brute" or the equivalent of Delilah's "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix" to him, she does so off stage. Verdi could easily have included a duet of deception; instead he seems to go out of his way to avoid one. Not only is there no Odabella/Attila duet of any kind, but the two are seldom even on stage together. For most of the opera, Odabella cannot express her true feelings to Attila, and so any extended exchange between them on a topic other than the weather or the high price of swords would have made it necessary to make her deception explicit, that is, to have her tell him outright lies. When she does appear on stage with him and must sing, as in the Act II Finale, she speaks her true feelings, but secretly, in

10 Here and elsewhere I have availed myself of the excellent translations in William Weaver, Seven Verdi Librettos (New York: Norton, 1975).
11 Sometimes deception achieved through silence is emphasized dramatically, as when a character stops himself or (usually) herself just before revealing a secret; for example, Lida, in the scena preceding her cavatina (La battaglia di Legnano, Act I, scene 4); Eboli, immediately before the trio (Act III of the five-act versions of Don Carlos); and Aida, in her duet with Amneris (Aida, Act II, scene 1).
asides or in sotto voce comments to her friend the tenor. In a sense this is deception—she continues to conceal her true feelings and plans from Attila—but it is not a deception that admits of musical treatment; for here she speaks the truth to appropriate music. This is, of course, standard procedure in ensembles. For example, in the Andante of the Act I Introduzione of I Lombardi, Pagano mutters his evil plans sotto voce to his henchman Pirro, while in the corresponding ensemble in Jérusalem his counterpart Roger has asides, unheard by those around him. In both cases the characters reveal their true thoughts, and so the deception is not explicit and thus resists musical treatment.13

Finally, even when there is explicit, on-stage deception, the composer and librettist may choose to undercut it by relegating it to recitative, leaving to the performers the responsibility of projecting the deception: for example, Abigaille’s feigned reticence at condemning Fenena (Nabucco, Act III, scene 1) and Alvaro’s and Carlo’s exchange of false names in the scene preceding the battle (La forza del destino, Act III, scene 2). In Rossini’s Otello almost all the explicit deception occurs in recitative, a significant difference from Verdi’s Otello. Even when deception is an important element in the plot, then, it need not result in a “deception scene.”

“Deception scenes,” especially those that unmask the deception, present a challenge to the composer of dramatic music, and perhaps it is not surprising that there are few examples in Verdi’s operas until 1847, when he had nine operas behind him. From 1847 alone there are five deception scenes from Macbeth and I masnadieri, two from Il corsaro the following year, and two from Luisa Miller the year after that—all will be mentioned in the course of this essay. It is noteworthy that irony, which is related to deception,14 also receives musical treatment more frequently from 1847 on—consider, for example, Francesco Moor, Pasha Seid, Barbarossa, Wurm, and Rigoletto. Before 1847, Verdi had sometimes included ironic comments but had usually limited himself to writing the stage direction “ironico,” for example, the Doge’s comment to Loredano, “Degno di te è il messaggio” (“The message is worthy of you”), in the tempo di mezzo of the Act II Terzetto of I due Foscari (Act II, scene 4).

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One strand in recent operatic criticism has been to examine the relationships among the various systems that constitute opera (verbal, musical, and visual), first recognizing that rather than marching together in lockstep, there may be a conflict—or counterpoint—among them and then attempting to tease out a meaning from that conflict.15 When characters lie—to others or to

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13 But see the discussion of the Act I Finale of Macbeth below. Edward T. Cone notes the contrast between “overheard soliloquies,” which other characters on stage can hear and understand (for example, Donna Elvira’s entrance aria in Don Giovanni) and the opposite convention governing ensembles, where the asides are not heard by the other characters (as with Roger’s asides). See Cone’s “The World of Opera and Its Inhabitants,” in Music: A View from Delft, ed. Robert P. Morgan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1989), 125-138, here 134-135.

14 With both irony and deception the speaker’s words are insincere, but an ironic or sarcastic speaker generally intends that his listeners recognize the irony, that is, recognize the discrepancy between the speaker’s real meaning and the meaning of the words. Therefore, there is no intention to deceive. As for the ironic treatment of characters by the controlling composer, the parodistic elements in Ford’s monologue or in Fiordiligi’s “Come scoglio,” for example, since the characters are perfectly sincere, deception does not come into question.

15 This formulation of the three systems comes from Fabrizio Della Seta’s friendly amendment to the pioneering account of the three systems Pierluigi Petrobelli advanced more than a quarter-century ago. In his “Music in the Theater (apropos of Aida, Act III),” Petrobelli had discussed “the interaction of three main systems—dramatic action, verbal organization, and music”; first published in 1981 but delivered a few years earlier, the essay is now most accessible as Chapter 6 in his Music in the Theater: Essays on Verdi and Other Composers, with translations
themselves—a further source of tension is introduced: the verbal system itself splits in two. First, there is the local, literal sense of the words uttered: Iago recounting a false narrative about Cassio’s dream, for example. Second, there is the meaning produced by the libretto as a whole, a meaning available to the audience, which knows more than the individual characters because it has been watching the show continuously ever since the curtain went up. And in the world of nineteenth-century Italian opera, unlike those of Agatha Christie mysteries, The Crying Game, The Usual Suspects, or any Hollywood film where filmgoers are admonished not to reveal the ending, the audience is generally told everything it needs to know to recognize the deception, even without musical clues. Long before Iago “recounts” Cassio’s dream, he has told Roderigo (and therefore us) that he hates Otello; in the Inn scene of La forza del destino we know that the “student” is really Leonora’s brother in disguise, for he obligingly tells us so in his very first line—an aside, naturally.16 (It is so unusual in opera to lead the audience temporarily astray—as Die Zauberflöte does with respect to the Queen of the Night and Sarastro—that some have rushed in with theories positing radical revision of the opera’s scenario before the premiere.) So far as the plot is concerned, therefore, the audience usually does not need the music to reveal the deception—which is not to underestimate the importance of the music’s role in these scenes; for if plot were all that mattered in opera one could dispense with the music altogether, not a cost-cutting solution many of us would accept. The characters in the opera, however, having only partial knowledge of what has transpired on stage, need all the help they can get in evaluating the motives and truthfulness of the other characters. But unfortunately for them, the clues that the music offers to the audience are usually unavailable to them. We hear the chromaticism in Iago’s “dream monologue,” but Otello, alas, does not.

In Verdi’s operas, then, the libretto—this dual-faceted, or better, two-faced textual system—almost always suffices to reveal deceptive practices to the audience and to the analyst/critic. That is, if there are any examples in Verdi’s operas where the music, unaided by the libretto, unambiguously establishes the deception—like the Gluck scene—they are rare indeed. In any case, I shall use the librettos as the final arbiter of whether deception is present and consider only those cases where the libretto establishes the deception.17

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16 In his treatment of this point, Marco Beghelli suggests, “La forza del destino would perhaps gain in dramatic interest if for the entire second act [the audience] were unaware of the true identity of that boaster who pretends to be a student.” See his “Atti performativi nella drammaturgia verdiana” (tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Bologna, 1985-86), 304. Beghelli deals with “Bugie, inganni” (“Lies, deceptions”) on pp. 299-304, including brief consideration of several of the examples included in my essay.

17 Two brief points should be made about the critical move I have just surreptitiously made. First, the librettos are not transparent; they require interpretation, just as the music does. Second, the judgment of whether the music can establish deception without the aid of the libretto—as in the Orestes scene—depends on one’s view of the semantic power of the music. To be sure, there are certainly moments in Verdi’s operas where the music transcends the words—my favorite example remains Elizabeth Hudson’s take on Gilda’s “Tutte le feste al tempio”—but I am hard pressed to come up with a clear example in a deception scene (as opposed to a withheld-truth scene); see Elizabeth Hudson, “Gilda Seduced: A Tale Untold,” Cambridge Opera Journal 4 (1992-93): 229-251. Some interpreters of Verdi’s operas may be more confident than I that particular musical figures (whether a trill, a particular rhythm, texture, melodic shape, key, etc.) are so strongly associated with a particular dramatic meaning (e.g., death, jealousy, love, etc.) that their mere presence can cause the dramatic meaning to kick in, even without support from the libretto. Such readers will doubtless be able to find many more instances than I have of cases where the music alone suffices to establish deception, and they would therefore probably find my claims overly cautious.
What stance will the music take toward deception, then? Carolyn Abbate writes, “we generally assume that the message conveyed by [operatic] music—whatever form it takes—possesses absolute moral authority, that whatever falsehoods are spoken by a character, the music will speak across and thus expose the lies.” In the following paragraph she qualifies this: “Later Wagnerian opera—the Ring in particular—nonetheless confutes the moral authority of music by giving us music that may ring false,” and she devotes a brilliant chapter to Wotan’s monologue in Act II of Die Walküre, an example that, she writes, “asks us to distrust music’s voice: that voice may ring false.”

I prefer to distance myself from that supposed general assumption about the “absolute moral authority” of operatic music. Even before late Wagner, operatic composers exercised choice, now letting the music expose those falsehoods, now letting the music leave them unchallenged. I prefer a model closer to that proposed by Edward T. Cone in The Composer’s Voice, though I would delete the words “consciously” and “subconsciously”: “In depicting a character consciously playing a deceptive role, the composer may choose to emphasize either his real subconscious nature or that of his assumed role.”

As we shall see, Cone provides examples of both strategies in Verdi’s treatment of Iago.

Therefore, the music might play along with the deception, that is, might align itself with the sense of the local, literal sense of the words, just as if the character were speaking the same lines sincerely. This is the easier course of action for the composer, but it can be a legitimate strategy, not merely the result of laziness. By depriving the audience of musical clues that would normally be unavailable to the characters on stage, this approach tends to place the perceptions of the audience closer to those of the characters on stage, depicting the character as a more skilled liar than he or she would otherwise appear. Citing its “straightforward diatonicism,” Cone offers the oath duet that ends Act II of Otello as an example where the music emphasizes Iago’s assumed role: Iago “appears to be as honest as Otello himself.”

Like Iago, in the Act I Finale of Macbeth the Macbeths deceive by appropriating music proposed sincerely by another character. Everyone on stage, including the guilty Macbeths, lays a curse upon the still unidentified assassin of King Duncan. In his 1847 review Luigi Ferdinando Casamorata suggested that it could be effective “that those two should speak thus, dissembling astutely lest they betray themselves.” In a stage play the two actors playing Macbeth and his wife should evince their hidden motivation with those lines, with [...] a jeu wholly different from that of the rest, who pray and imprecate sincerely, not out of design. And the composer, whose notes should correspond to the tone of the declamation, ought in that case to have assigned to those two characters a melody

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20 Ibid. I cannot agree with what Cone writes next: “Here the deceit penetrates to a much deeper level, for with magnificent cynicism Iago’s subconscious apes Otello’s own.” But why “subconscious”?—surely Iago is consciously aping Otello’s utterance in order to deceive him. Furthermore, by taking up Otello’s tune (for it is associated with Otello, even though, as more than one commentator has noted, he initially sang a counterpoint to the “real tune” presented by the orchestra), Iago maneuvers him into an anachronistic cabaletta, ironically evoking sincere oath duets from days gone by (e.g., that of Don Carlos and Posa). Indeed, it might even be argued that in this sense, the music reveals the deception after all, at least to those in the audience who know both the repertory and the rules of the game.
that, though it affected to agree with that of the others, differed from it in proportion as their
dramatic intention was different. But this Verdi has not done; on the contrary, he has fused their
voices into the undifferentiated mass of all the other voices.21

And so Casamorata has, in our terms, criticized Verdi for failing to unmask the deceptive words of
Macbeth and Lady Macbeth through their music. This, then, is a deception scene where the music
does not resist the lie but supports it. (Other examples where the music supports the deception
would include the disguises assumed by Corrado, Riccardo, and Carlo; see above.)

A more complex strategy is available to the composer, however: the music may instead
align itself not with the local literal sense of the words, but with the libretto as a whole; that is,
it may work to unmask the deception, at least for the audience, if not for the characters on stage.
A working hypothesis: in Verdi’s operas, as in most operas, the words sung represent the words
that the characters actually utter (speak or, in the case of stage songs, sing), or, when we take their
words to be silent ruminations, their conscious, verbalized thoughts. The music might support that
meaning, either because the words are sincere or, if they are deceptive, because the composer has
chosen to leave the deception unchallenged. But if we are faced with a deception scene in which
the music works to unmask the deception, the music shows the more fundamental, real emotions
lurking behind the false words, or in the case of silent thoughts, their more “real” subconscious
apprehensions and feelings of which the character may be unaware. That is, in such cases the sung
words of the libretto generally represent the false or more superficial level, the music the deeper
level.22 In such cases, believe the music. And, although this advice may be less relevant for Verdi
than for Wagner, when the voice and orchestra are at cross purposes, believe the orchestra.

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For the remainder of this essay I focus on those deception scenes in which the music works
to emphasize, to reveal the deceptive nature of the message. In theory there are at least three
different ways of doing this.

(1) Most obviously, the music may align itself with the character’s real thoughts,
conflicting with his or her deceptive words. For example, Leonora tells Alvaro that she is
happy, but she is sad, and the music reveals her sadness (see the discussion of Examples
20a-20b below). Many years ago, when I started thinking about this issue, I thought that this
was the only way that the music could indicate deception.

(2) It may present a caricature of the character’s false words (or of the emotion that
would obtain if the words were true). That is, the music “targets” the false message but
does so unsuccessfully, as though an untalented actor botched an attempt to demonstrate
his happiness or grief by an unconvincing, exaggerated performance. How does one
differentiate this from a case where the music successfully targets the false emotion? With
difficulty (see below).

22 That this is a convention rather than a protocol hard-wired into the operatic system is demonstrated by Siegfried,
Act II, scene 3, where the words sung by the singer portraying Mime represent not the actual words that the
character Mime speaks to Siegfried, but rather his (unsuccessfully hidden) thoughts. Unusually, we are not given
Mime’s actual words, but his mincing music conveys their feigned friendliness. This is the exception that confirms
the rule, of course, for Siegfried is momentarily rendered clairvoyant, having ingested a controlled substance
(dragon’s blood), and can therefore understand thoughts just as though they were spoken aloud.
"Gonfio di gioia ho il core" (piange)

(3) It may signal deception without specifying the precise nature of the lie or the underlying emotions, rather as a polygraph does, or is supposed to do.

Caveat lector: before proceeding let me set out some of the reasons why readers should be wary, as should authors.

It is dangerous to assert that any musical gesture has sufficient semantic clout to force us to read deception into a situation even when the libretto—and I, of course, mean the entire libretto—does not invite such a reading (see note 17). When the libretto does offer independent evidence for deception, such musical features as chromaticism, obsessively repeated rhythmic and melodic patterns, and exaggerated extended fioritura reinforce our perception of the deceptive practices: we inevitably call into play the musical codes we have internalized, seeking markers of deception. In a different context, however, these features might carry an entirely different semantic burden or perhaps none at all. It would, therefore, be invalid to object, “Aha! The opening of the Lux aeterna of Verdi’s Messa da Requiem is an example of chromaticism that does not involve deception, and that invalidates your claim that chromaticism can function as a marker of deception.” That would be like citing a pentatonic passage in some non-orientalizing work (e.g., Liszt’s “Sposalizio”) as evidence that pentatonicism does not connote the Orient in “Pagodes,” Das Lied von der Erde, or Turandot.

In the following section of this essay I will deal very quickly, embarrassingly quickly, with a number of excerpts that exemplify the three main strategies. There is not space to pursue the excerpts in depth, nor even to try to persuade readers of my classification of them. I would myself be staging a (self-)deception scene if I believed that every reader will accept my treatment and categorization of every example. Each of the moments discussed in this essay is, of course, unique, and one might offer ad hoc reasons why each is treated as it is—for example, that it is Violetta’s consumption that forces her into short, breathless phrases in Example 15 (pp. 40–42, perhaps a point worth making, though when she is being truthful she manages some gorgeously long legato lines, even when she is in extremis in Act III). But in this essay I am seeking valid generalizations that cover a variety of individual moments, rather than focusing on their individuality (e.g., that Violetta suffers from consumption), and I would claim that Verdi’s use of similar techniques—here obsessive repetition—for the aggregate of these moments provides cumulative evidence that reinforces the claims about individual moments (e.g., that Violetta’s repeated phrases reveal her deception).

The most difficult distinction to make is between moments in which the music convincingly depicts the false message and associated emotions (showing a skillful liar) on the one hand, from moments where the liar (or self-deceiver) bungles an attempt to depict the false message convincingly, falling into caricature (an unskilled actor overplaying his part) on the other. Indeed, we may even have a built-in bias toward the caricature interpretation, simply because that strategy is more complex than the other one, and, after all, hypotheses that are more interesting and more fun to talk about will exert a strong attraction.

In any event, we need to remember that opera involves collaboration between the composer and many hands, including the singers and the stage director. After examining Verdi’s score and attempting to categorize the strategies in a particular passage, we may declare the decision too close to call, but opera singers and directors must decide how to play the scene, just as their counterparts in spoken theater must. For example, in the tempo di mezzo of the Act II Amalia/Francesco duet in
I masnadieri (see Example 2, p. 23), Amalia begs for forgiveness for having offended Francesco, then, “finge d’abbracciarlo e gli strappa la spada” (“she pretends to embrace him and grabs his sword away from him”). Her line “Io t’offesi, a me perdona” (“I offended you—pardon me”), with its repetition of “a me perdona” consists of fully six appearances of the descending-second “lamento motive.” Her ruse is effective; she does end up with the sword, after all. But does the music go along with her deception, making her a good choice for an undercover agent, or does it expose her as a liar—to us, if not to Francesco? I prefer the caricature reading, but here the choice is ultimately up to the singing actress portraying Amalia. I do not find that troubling.

The first strategy may be exemplified by a passage in the tempo d’attacco of the Gulnara/Seid duet (II corsaro, Act III, scene 4; Example 3, p. 24). The Pasha, having surmised that Gulnara is in love with the corsair, is generally successful at appearing cool and collected as he plays cat and mouse with her (an example of the music generally supporting the deception). As Julian Budden writes, “The sinuous line conveys the slyness, the bland scoring for violins and clarinets the Pasha’s false suavity; while the sinister thud of horns, bassoons and cimbasso tells of the mailed fist behind the velvet glove.” I would add, however, that on two occasions an off-beat fortissimo chord coupled with a leap to a high note on a misaccentuated syllable unmasks his repressed rage (m. 12 and, not shown here, m. 37).

In a rare case of a deceptive “stage song,” Rigoletto, in search of his abducted daughter, enters “affettando indifferenza” (“affecting indifference or nonchalance”—the stage direction in the autograph score) and “canterellando con represso dolore” (“singing to himself with repressed sadness”—the direction in the printed libretto)—see Example 4 (p. 25). There are different ways

23 The examples from Ernani, I masnadieri, II corsaro, Luisa Miller, Rigoletto, and La traviata are drawn from the piano-vocal scores based on the editions in The Works of Giuseppe Verdi (henceforth WGV). Since both orchestral and piano-vocal scores in WGV indicate measure numbers, passages in these examples are identified by musical number and measure numbers. This system is also used for the two examples from Macbeth, although another source had to be used for the example, since the WGV piano-vocal score is not yet available. For the other operas, where scores with measure numbers are not readily available, passages are identified by page number(s) and, where necessary, system(s)/measure numbers in the cited score, usually a Ricordi score. These numbers are often the same in Schirmer and Kalmus scores, drawn from the Ricordi scores.

24 I did not discuss the “lamento motive” (or “lamento topos”) in the original version of this essay; my treatment of it here and in the earlier published version is indebted to the work of Marco Beghelli: to conversations and exchanges about our work during the academic year 1985-86 in Bologna and, later, Chapter 5 (“Pianti e lamenti”) of his “Attì performativi,” 45-81. More accessible are the much abbreviated treatment in “Per un nuovo approccio al teatro musicale: l’atto performativo come luogo dell’imitazione gestuale nella drammaturgia verdianna,” Italica 64 (1987): 632-653, especially the section on “Il pianto-lamento,” 634-637, and the more recent “L’emblema melodrammatico del lamento: il semitono dolente,” in Verdi 2001: Proceedings of the International Conference Parma—New York—New Haven, 24 January-1 February 2001, ed. Fabrizio della Seta, Roberta Montemorra Marvin, and Marco Marica, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2003), 1:240-280. The “semitono dolente” receives only passing mention in Beghelli’s more recent book, La retorica del rituale nel melodramma ottocentesco (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdianni, 2003). In the later writings, Beghelli seems to view the semitone interval, whether ascending or descending, as defining characteristic of the lament motive, and I prefer the formulation in his thesis: “l’intervallo di seconda, preferibilmente minore” (“the interval of a second, preferably minor”), p. 46. In the passage leading to “Amami, Alfredo” (Example 15, pp. 40-42), for example, major-second appoggiature are found alongside those with the minor second, surely with similar expressive connotation.

25 Budden, 1:381.

26 That is, the other characters on stage would recognize that the character Rigoletto is singing a song; in other words, his music is “diegetic” or “phenomenal.”

27 Martin Chusid suggests that “Having Rigoletto pretend nonchalance by singing meaningless syllables ... may have been a late thought of V[erdi], for in the sketch the part is assigned only to the orchestra.” Furthermore,
to view this moment, but I suggest that the relatively slow tempo (Allegro assai moderato, quarter note = 76) and minor mode underline his real, sad feelings rather than nonchalance (try singing his tune a bit faster and in the major mode). He fools no one.

In both these cases it is the affect of the music that alerts the audience to the deception, but in other cases the music may take on a specific semantic meaning because of its association with text. In the scena of the Act 4 Trio in Ernani, orchestral music depicts Emanuelli’s agitation and despair upon hearing Silva’s horn, the signal for his own death (Example 5, p. 26). At first the music matches Ernani’s words: “Egli mi vuole!” (“He wants me!”) is followed by a jagged fortissimo figure in the orchestra (Example 5, mm. 54-56). But then, as Budden writes, “Ernani seems to recover his self-possession, though the orchestra here and there betrays his hysteria.” That is, music at first appropriate to the character’s state of mind becomes inappropriate—and shows deception—when it continues or reappears as the character tries to deny that state of mind, here where Ernani reassures Elvira that he is merely suffering from an old wound and sends her off to fetch “un farmaco” (some aspirin, perhaps).

A similar example is the coda of Giovanna’s cavatina (Giovanna d’Arco, Act I, according to Verdi’s autograph, or Prologue, according to other sources; see Example 6, p. 27). Martial music that appropriately accompanies Giovanna’s prayer for a sword continues in the coda as, in Budden’s words, “Joan falls asleep beneath the oak tree, her mind still full of the battle that she cannot join. This is, in its naive way, Wagnerianism avant la lettre. Her words merely beg forgiveness for having uttered so bold a prayer, but her innermost thoughts are unashamedly militant.”

The second strategy—caricature—can be exemplified by the absurd breast-beating contrition of Bardolfo and Pistola near the beginning of Act II of Falstaff (Example 7, p. 28), “battendosi con gran colpi il petto, in atto di pentimento” (“striking their chests with great blows, in a gesture of repentance”) on the accented notes preceded by grace notes—here the visual element is part of the caricature. They are over-acting shamelessly, “rozzi artisti” (“crude artists”) in this as well as in the art of thievery. The indication in the libretto begins “cantando insieme” (“singing together”), suggesting that, like Rigoletto’s “La ra, la ra” and their own “antifona” (“antiphon”) sung in the first scene of the opera, this is stage music, here a parody, a caricature, of church music. Indeed, because of the emphasis on the 3-2-1 descent and the offbeat accents, the passage may be heard as an ironic allusion to Verdi’s own “O tu che sei d’Osiride” chorus (Aida, near the beginning of Act III), “Hostias” and Agnus Dei in the Messa da Requiem, and the “Domine fallo casto” (“Lord, make him chaste,” or in my somewhat mischievous alternative translation, “Lord, chaste

Chusid notes that the syllables are absent in the printed libretto as well (critical commentary volume in Chusid’s edition of Rigoletto, The Works of Giuseppe Verdi [Chicago: University of Chicago Press / Milan: Ricordi, 1983], series 1, vol. 17, p. 63 (see comment on mm. 5-9 etc.). That Rigoletto sings the theme establishes it as his theme, and therefore his attempt at deception, a point that would have been ambiguous had it been presented by the orchestra alone.

28 Budden, 1:166. I assume that this is the figure to which Budden refers, since another more extended figure, beginning at m. 40 and reappraring at m. 64, could just as well be interpreted as referring to Elvira’s anguish.

29 See Martin Chusid, A Catalog of Verdi’s Operas, Music Indexes and Bibliographies #5 (Hackensack: Joseph Boonin, 1974), 88.

30 Budden, 1:212. In a footnote, Budden cites the Orestes scene as a “locus classicus” of “this kind of counterpoint of thought and speech.”

13
passage in Falstaff (Act III, part 2), although there the characteristic offbeat accents are absent. Three more examples follow, all involving what I take to be an exaggerated use of ornament.

When in the last act of Ernani, Silva’s horn sounds for the first time, Ernani realizes that Silva has come to claim his life and exclaims in an aside “Maledizion di Dio!” (“The curse of God!”). Elvira, unaware of the situation, follows with five measures of fioritura, which, even by the standards of this opera, seem excessive (Example 8a, p. 29). Deception is not involved, but irony is—not Elvira’s but Verdi’s. Then, after the horn calls cease, Ernani thinks/hopes “Forse fu vana illusion la mia!... / Il cor non uso ad essere beato / Sognò forse le angoscie del passato” (“Perhaps mine was a vain illusion!... / My heart, not used to being happy / Perhaps dreamed the anguish of the past”). The fioritura on the last line, while a pale echo of Elvira’s, seems exaggerated, giving the sense that he is trying to convince himself of what he knows, at a deeper level, to be false (Example 8b, p. 30).

In the tempo di mezzo of her cavatina, Lady Macbeth learns that King Duncan will come to spend the night, his last night on earth as it turns out (Example 9, p. 31). Her exaggerated, overly sweet delivery of the phrase “Trovi accoglienza quale un re si merta” (“May he find such welcome as a king deserves”)—note the leap of a seventh and the ingratiating ornament—shows that she is acting. She has quite a different view of the King’s welcome from that which she conveys to the servant. Four bars later the hammered diminished-seventh chords indicate that the servant is safely out of view and Lady Macbeth has removed her mask.

After Macbeth first witnesses the apparition of Banco’s ghost, he eventually recovers his composure, calls for a repetition of the drinking song, and pretending that nothing is amiss, even asks that the absent Banco be included in the toast (Example 10, p. 32). He twice uses a saccharine turn figure that is distant from his vocal style in the remainder of the opera: it appears only once elsewhere—in his sentimental, self-pitying Act IV aria. (I will comment later on another aspect of this passage, the obsessive repetitions of a melodic and especially rhythmic pattern.)

The third approach is exemplified by Iago’s “dream monologue”—“Era la notte” (Example 11, pp. 33-35). Here the music neither depicts nor caricatures the feigned emotion, nor does it depict his real emotions—the “Credo,” sung when Iago is alone on stage, is perhaps the only passage in the opera that does the latter. Cone sets this passage against the oath duet (where, in his view, Iago appears to “as honest as Otello himself”). About the dream monologue, he writes, “Iago’s basic untrustworthiness is symbolized by the side-slipping harmonic progressions” (my emphasis). Since many Verdian characters (especially sopranos) are forced to become deceivers against their will—it is not part of their basic nature—I would rather spin this another way, away from the “basic” nature of the character toward the act of deception itself. Something rings false; the music seems to depict or symbolize deception itself, independent of the character’s emotions, real or feigned, although, as we shall see, sometimes obsessive repetitions might also show a character’s unease about lying. As noted above, Iago’s vocal line is generally diatonic, except for the over-the-top ecstatic chromatic slide at the “quotation” of Cassio’s sleep-talking: “Cauti

31 “Some Thoughts on Confessions and Repentance Suggested by Peter Brook’s ‘The Grand Inquisitor,’” Verdi 2001, 2:651-662; here 661.
32 Beghelli (“Atti performativi,” 328-329) also views this as “a true caricature of the act of submission” and compares the sounds emitted by Bardolfo and Pistola to the braying of donkeys.
33 Cone, The Composer’s Voice, 39.
vegliamo! L'estasi del ciel tutto m’innonda” (“We must keep careful watch! Heavenly ecstasy engulfs me wholly”). The slippery, “would-you-buy-a-used-car-from-this-man?” chromaticism is otherwise confined to the orchestra.

But let us consider a set of examples that use not chromaticism but another musical technique to signal deception: obsessive repetition, already encountered in the Gluck example (Example 1, p. 22) and in the banquet scene in Macbeth (Example 10, p. 32).

An example from the Act I Duetto e Quartetto finale of I masnadieri (Example 12, p. 36) allows (read: forces) us to try to disentangle some strands of this third and most complex approach.

(1) The obsessive repetition might be interpreted as the actual sound of the characters’ utterances. Here, the fragmentation of Arminio’s rhymed endecasillabi into obsessively repeated rhythmic motives separated by unnatural pauses imparts a halting quality to his “exaggerated report” (as Mark Twain would put it) of Carlo’s death: “Compagno fu meco—fra le—colonne—dire Federico—che lo—raccolse—fuggiasco—mendico [etc.].” An audible representation of the character’s anguish and the performance of that anguish, then. Here, since the repetition involves the vocal line and the declamation, it is as if the act of lying brought on a speech impediment, one audible at least to the audience; however, even if Arminio’s halting delivery is audible to Amalia and Massimiliano, they apparently cannot interpret it, for they are taken in by his lies. As usual, we in the audience are much smarter than the characters on stage.

(2) Obsessive repetition might indicate the characters’ inner turmoil occasioned by their lies, even if there is no reason to associate the repetition with the characters’ actual speech—a representation of the character’s silent anguish. So, in the Gluck example, the obsessive repetition is confined to the orchestra and, therefore, cannot be interpreted as the way that Orestes actually delivers his lines. 34

Now the question becomes yet more complicated. In both (1) and (2), the obsessive repetition can be ascribed to the character, either as actual sounds emanating from his or her body (Arminio’s speech), and/or as a representation of the character’s emotional state—Arminio’s speech would do both, while Orestes’s agitated accompaniment would show only his inner turmoil, but not his speech patterns. But I want to go one step further.

(3) I would suggest that even when the obsessive repetitions resist being interpreted as representing the characters’ emotions, they may signal deception in a more abstract way, yes, perhaps a signal sent by the omniscient narrator/composer. 35 For example, Ulrica (Example 17, pp. 44-45) and Carlo (Examples 18a and 18b, pp. 46 & 47) seem so exuberantly confident in their deception that I would be hard pressed to claim that the repetitions represent inner turmoil—unless, of course, one adopts the tautological position that all lying brings about inner turmoil and all instances of obsessive repetition in deception scenes, therefore, must represent that inner turmoil.

There are two examples in Luisa Miller. In the recitative following his aria, Count Walter pretends to believe that his son Rodolfo would welcome marriage with Federica, knowing full well that Rodolfo loves Luisa. The music shows the exuberance and enthusiasm that Walter wants to
convey, but there is something unsettling as a result of the dominant pedal that dissolves without a proper cadence, just as the melodic line dissolves into recitative, and, more important, to the constrained, “pinched” quality of the melody—the way the melody “gets stuck” on the same two notes and, unable to continue freely, repeats itself (Example 13, p. 37).

In the tempo d’attacco of the Act II quartet Luisa is forced to claim that she loves a comprimario, Wurm, rather than the primo uomo, the tenor Rodolfo (a fate that also befalls Violetta in the Act II Finale of La traviata). (This dramatic situation has no counterpart in Schiller’s Kabale und Liebe, the source for the libretto.) When Luisa names Wurm as her lover, the first two measures of the principal orchestral theme repeat themselves hysterically (Example 14, mm. 64-70, pp. 38-39). The close repetitions at the same pitch of the incomplete, opening unit of the theme give a frustrating, treadmill-like effect—there is rapid activity but no movement, no escape. When she must then deny her love for Rodolfo, the effect is similar but more intense, as the motive now is compressed from two measures to one (mm. 74-78). Again, while the music signals the deception, it does not directly contradict her words or show us a real emotion in conflict with those words, though it may show her agitation and unease.

The passage leading up to Violetta’s outburst “Amami Alfredo” (La traviata, Act II; Example 15, pp. 40-42) reveals deception through three musical features: the lamento motive, obsessively repeated rhythmic and melodic patterns and, less important, trills. The lamento motive permeates the passage. It is most obvious when presented in eighth notes (as on the downbeats of mm. 39-41 and, now more frantic, on both the first and third beats of mm. 48 and 53-54), quarter notes (as in mm. 49-52 and 63ff., here in voice and orchestra), or even in re-rhythmicized patterns where the first note is prolonged for at least two beats and the resolution falls on the downbeat of the following measure (mm. 72ff.). More subtly, mm. 42-47 present three two-measure statements of an elaboration of the f-e lamento motive, and it reappears at mm. 77-79, again on f-e, in the orchestra’s abbreviated and diminished statement of the preceding chromatic line. The lamento motive reveals Violetta’s sadness36—her real feelings, as opposed to the optimism she tries to project—so this is best viewed as an example of the first of the three strategies.

The lamento motive—a specific melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic entity—and obsessive repetition—a musical procedure—are conceptually distinct and independent: one may be present without the other. This particular passage is complex because the two overlap; that is, it is usually, though not exclusively, the lamento motive that is repeated. I want to argue that independent of the content of the repeated material, the repetitions themselves signal the deception, though without specifying her emotion (the third strategy). First, there are six appearances of the ascending four-note motive anchored over a dominant pedal and thus, as in Example 13 (p. 37), lacking forward movement. (As I noted above, this is an elaboration of the f-e lamento motive.) Similarly, her repetitions of “tu m’ami” on a three-note motive with lamento appoggiatura seem “stuck,” despite the harmonic movement (Ex. 15, mm. 48-54). Note, however, that in mm. 51-55 the orchestra simultaneously presents a repeated pattern unrelated to the lamento motive, first in half notes (mm. 51-52) then intensified by two repetitions in quarter notes. In mm. 63-71—after her weeping—she assures Alfredo “...or son tranquilla... / (sforzandosi) Lo vedi?... ti sorrido” (“...now I’m calm ... (forcing herself) You see?... I’m smiling at you”); both the orchestra’s frantic but aimless motion

36 Its association with grief is made explicit by its appearance on Alfredo’s “[perchê] piangi?” (“Why are you crying?”), where, however, it is primarily conventional word-painting, a reaction to the word “crying” rather than an expression of his or even Violetta’s feelings.
over a local tonic pedal and the renewal of the *lamento* motive directly contradicts her words, showing her real emotions, her agitation, much as the orchestra showed Orestes’s real emotions in *Iphigénie en Tauride* (type 1 above). Since smiling is one of the available connotations of trills, the trills in the orchestra simultaneously produce a hysterical caricature of her forced smiles (type 2). This passage, with its forced smiles, is echoed in the *tempo di mezzo* of the Act III Violetta/Alfredo duet: “ora son forte... / Vedi! (sforzandosi) Sorrido....” (now I’m strong...you see? [making an effort] I’m smiling) with a return of the trills in the orchestra and (only in some performances) in the vocal part as well (Example 16, p. 43).

Shortly before the Act I trio of *Un ballo in maschera*, Ulrica dismisses the credulous townsfolk with a ruse in order to confer with a client. Her text, “Pechè possa rispondere a voi / È d’uopo che innanzi m’abbocchi a Satana” (“In order that I may answer you, it is first necessary that I confer with Satan”), is set to three only slightly varied statements of a “stuck” one-measure figure (Example 17, pp. 44-45). She completes her text with a line set to several statements of the same rhythmic motive, rather like Arminio, although at least her pauses fall at logical stopping points in the text. To suggest that the repetitions in Ulrica’s vocal line reveal her uneasiness about her deception seems psychologically wrong; I prefer to read them as the composer’s signal of deception.

In the *scena* of the Act III Alvaro/Carlo duet in *La forza del destino*, Carlo, having discovered Alvaro’s identity, expresses false solicitude for his health before revealing his own identity and challenging him to a duel. The orchestral music does not “belong” exclusively to one of the characters, but its repetitions and hesitations warn the audience, though not Alvaro, that Carlo is engaged in deceptive practices. The vocal lines, however, are neutral; this is one of the few examples in this essay where the orchestra signals the deception unaided by the voices. In the 1862 version (Example 18a, p. 46) the obsessive repetition is already present. The third measure is a varied repetition of the first, and the second four-measure phrase is built on a sequence. After the repetition of the eighth-measure period, now with voices added, there are three statements in the orchestra of a motive based on the first two measures of the opening theme, moving $ii - V^4/ii, ii - V^7, i - V^4$. Although the passage is about the same length in the 1869 revised version (Example 18b, p. 47), there the repetitions become yet more obsessive. The leisurely opening sixteen measures of the original are condensed to twelve, but the repetitions in the original material are preserved.

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37 Péter Pál Vámári rightly notes that the most vile, the most scheming characters have passages with “a fortissimo trill, usually scored for brass instruments; Francesco Moor, Wurm, Paolo Albiani, Ramfis and the priests in Act 4 of *Aida*, and naturally Iago”; see his “Contributi per uno studio della tipizzazione negativa nelle opere verdiane: personaggi e situazioni,” in *Atti del 4º congresso internazionale di studi verdiiani*, ed. Marcello Pavarrani and Pierluigi Petrobelli (Parma: Istituto di Studi Verdiani, 1969), 268-275; here 269. In many of these cases, as well as Rigoletto’s trill in the passage where he mocks Monterone, also cited by Vámári, the trill seems to suggest irony, a sneer, or sardonic smiling. This connection of the trill with these affects—malevolent or not—is rarely made explicit, but there are some instances where it is; e.g., the trill that accompanies Wurm’s “sorriso diabolico” (“diabolic smile”) in *Luisa Miller* (Act 2, scene 2, N. 8, mm. 224-226); Violetta’s deceptive, forced smiling in the *tempo di mezzo* of her Act III duet with Alfredo (see below); the laughter in the “handkerchief trio” in *Otello* (Act 3, scene 5; figure S + 11); the harem girls mocking “la bellastraniera” (“the beautiful foreign woman”) “con ironia” in *I Lombardi* (Act 2, scene 6); and a non-malevolent smiling if there ever was one, the smile that “la Pia” (aka “the Madonna”) bestows upon the dying Giovanna d’Arco. See also Chapter 6 (“Risate e sorrisi”) of Beghelli, “*Atti performativi*,” 83-92, especially 88-89 (specifically on smiling), and his discussion of this scene in *La traviata*, 77-78, 88-89, and 301.

However, in other contexts the trill might have other meanings. For some examples where “Verdi realizes the idea of the sun, or some other shining light, with a long-held trill in a high register in the violins or the flute,” see Pierluigi Petrobelli, “*Toward an Explanation of the Dramatic Structure of Il trovatore*,” trans. William Drabkin, in Petrobelli, *Music in the Theater*, 100-112, here 112 (note 19).
However, instead of three statements of the two-measure unit based on the opening theme, there are five, and rather than moving smoothly through the teleological progression sketched above, the orchestra gets stuck on the first two measures of the pattern (ii – V\(^4/3\)/ii), stammering it three times before freeing itself and moving on.

At the beginning of the Act II Aida/Amneris duet (Example 19, p. 48), the music provides several, perhaps even four, clues that Amneris is insincere. First, the effect of the obsessive five-fold statement of the cadential figure is similar to that of the repeating melodic and rhythmic patterns in Example 9 (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, p. 31). Second, the chromatic descent in the lower strings, especially the cello, in Amneris’s first phrase may qualify, although it might instead be taken as an effective representation of her (feigned) sympathy for Aida’s plight. Third, on “vivrai felice” Amneris introduces a saccharine turn figure, identical to the one sung by Macbeth noted earlier in the discussion of caricature, the second strategy, and equally atypical of her style elsewhere in the opera; indeed, this is the only instance in her entire role. Fourth, here the orchestra provides its own commentary (unusually) completely independent of the vocal part: “the death figure on the timpani is like a barely suppressed growl,” Budden writes. But whose growl? Presumably Amneris’s, in which case the situation would be analogous to Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene, where the English horn’s lamento motive takes the place of her death rattle, which, according to Verdi, the singer must not do herself. But here—contrary to my usual strategy—I prefer to hear the timpani figure, not as a sound emanating from the character or even a representation of her emotional state, but as a warning from the composer: the figure, being out of place, warns that something rings false, that Amneris’s words have an import other than what they seem (third strategy again). Incidentally, the opening note in horns and bassoons, followed by a diminuendo, may remind us of the opening of Iago’s dream monologue, although there the note returns to complete the frame.

“Gonfio di gioia ho il core” (piange)

In the final section of this essay I examine the revision of a passage from the tempo di mezzo of the Act I duet of La forza del destino (Act I, scene 3; original version 1862, final version 1869), applying some of the concepts discussed but also bringing in an important issue that has thus far been neglected, the character’s control over the musical discourse. Leonora has ambivalent feelings about leaving her father to elope with her lover Alvaro—like Zerlina, vorrebbe e non vorrebbe.

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38 Budden, 3:218. Budden’s phrase “death figure,” of course, alludes to the well-known hypothesis that a group of related rhythmic motives signifies death, a hypothesis advanced first by Várnai (“Contributi per uno studio,” 269) and much elaborated by Frits Noske (“Verdi and the Musical Figure of Death,” in his The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the Operas of Mozart and Verdi [reprint: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990], 174-214, an essay whose first incarnation was a paper at the 1972 Congresso Internazionale di Studi Verdiani in Milan). Readers with more faith in the hypothesis than I have will find yet another clue to Amneris’s deception here—not only does the rhythmic figure seem out of place but it even has a definite meaning—death, they would claim. I have already gently hinted at my skepticism about this and similar hypotheses in note 17 (though without naming names). In any case, to be legalistic, I would note that unlike all three variants of the “musical figure of death” topos spelled out by Noske—two, three, or four shorter notes leading to a longer stressed note—Amneris’s “growl” does not arrive on the downbeat and therefore does not qualify as an example.

39 See the first of two letters that Verdi wrote to Escudier on 11 March 1865; the text and English translation appear in Rosen and Porter, 110-113, here 110. Verdi’s Lady Macbeth dies of natural causes, unlike Shakespeare’s, “Who (as ‘tis thought) by self and violent hands / Took off her life ...” (Macbeth, Act V, scene 8, lines 70-71).

40 For a fine discussion of the act of which this scene is a part, see Pierluigi Petrobelli, “More on the Three ‘Systems’: The First Act of La forza del destino,” in his Music in the Theater, 127-140.
I will be concerned almost exclusively with Leonora’s solo, which is all (or virtually all) that Verdi revised in the entire act. For convenience I have numbered the lines 1-8, though they are actually only the fourth and fifth quatrains of a group of six quatrains in doppio quinario meter:

1 Anco una volta il padre mio,
2 Povero padre, veder desio
3 E tu contento, gli è ver, ne sei?
4 Si, perchè m’amì, (si confonde) nè opporti dèi...

5 Anch’io tu il sai... t’amò io tanto!
6 Ne son felice... oh cielo, quanto!
7 (piange)
Gonfio di gioia ho il cor! Restiamo...
8 Si, mio Alvaro, io t’amò!...io t’amò!...
(II pianto la soffoca)

Once more my father,
Poor father, I want to see
And that is all right with you, is it not?
Yes, because you love me (becoming confused) you cannot object.
And I too—you know it—I love you so!
And I am happy about that... oh heavens... how happy!
My heart is filled with joy! Let us stay...
Yes, my Alvaro, I love you!... I love you!...
(suffocated by weeping)

In the 1862 version—see Example 20a (pp. 49-50)—Verdi set the first six lines as a twenty-four-measure miniature set piece in C minor. The tonal closure and the single-minded emphasis on one rhythmic motive contribute to the self-contained quality. In the first four lines, the prevailing short-breathed two-measure phrases, repetitiveness, some use of the lamento motive, and the avoidance of authentic cadences may show Leonora’s agitation, although this is undercut by the strong sense of musical control, which, I would argue, is inconsistent with the dramatic situation. Even the move toward V/III in lines 3 and 4 unfolds in a teleological circle of fifths rather than through chromatic linear movement, and while her vocal line is interrupted by pauses, in conjunction with the orchestral line it forms a completely “rational” 5–4–3–2 melodic descent in the target key of Eb (III). The disposizione scenica, a contemporary staging manual issued by Verdi’s publisher Ricordi, indicates “tenerezza mista a confusione” (“tenderness mixed with confusion”), but while the tenderness may be there, the confusion is not. And the brief allusion to the minor mode is hardly enough to support the direction “si confonde” in line 4.

In the first two lines there is literally no deception: she does want to see her father again, although throughout her speech she is deceiving by putting a good face on things. Deception comes to the fore in lines 3-4 (she knows that waiting another day is not acceptable to Alvaro) and becomes even more explicit at lines 5-6. There the turn to the major mode, the long-awaited appearance of a tonic triad in root position, the more expansive four-measure phrases, the indication “con gaudio” (with joy)—all work to represent the happiness that Leonora falsely claims is hers. I discern no caricature, nor do I find the slight minor coloring or the passing dissonances over the tonic pedal sufficient to create a significant ambiguity. In short, Verdi’s strategy here is to represent the false emotion.

But is there not a problem here? That strategy might be appropriate for a Iago or an Amneris—a skilled liar in perfect control. But Leonora is wretchedly unhappy, indeed, just a few measures away from breaking down in tears. How could she feign happiness as well as she does? In any event, when she does break down on the lines “Gonfio di gioia ho il cor,” Verdi’s strategy abruptly changes. The music, complete with gasping lamento motives in both voice and
orchestra, now shows us her real emotion. It had to do so, because, unlike most deception scenes, Leonora’s attempt at deception is unsuccessful. Even the tenor is perceptive enough to discern her real emotion, one hopes not merely because of her actual tears—“Gonfio hai di gioja il core...e lagrimi!” (“Your heart is filled with joy...and you weep!”) he replies—and the music should show us at least as much as it shows the characters on stage. And in the midst of a fit of weeping, Leonora can hardly be expected to continue even an unsuccessful attempt at acting, so the strategy of depicting the real emotion is more suitable than that of caricaturing the false emotion.

Verdi was generally satisfied with his treatment of Leonora’s final collapse, although in the 1869 version he shifted the pedal point from 1 to 5—compare the last five measures of Example 20b (pp. 51-52)—with the corresponding measures in Example 20a. The setting of lines 1-6, however, is entirely rewritten. As Budden remarks, “Leonora’s line is at first more continuous, more persuasive.” She is unhappy but much more in control of herself than in the earlier version. This is a result of the clear phrase structure of the opening: a four-measure phrase (line 1) ending with an authentic cadence is repeated in varied form. Although the parallelism guarantees this sense of control, a subtle emotional transition is effected by the greater intensity of the second statement (line 2)—note the appoggiatura, the cross rhythm created by the triplets, and the curtailment of the final measure brought about by the rushed entrance of line 3. (There is one loss, however; the original setting reflects that “Povero padre” is an extra-syntactical exclamation, but in the revised version this is obscured by the parallelism of the two statements.) But although Leonora’s vocal part (and declamation) projects control, the agitated orchestral part, with its syncopations and lament figures—far more emphatic than in 1862—show her anguish. As noted above, while the entire speech involves some deception, the deception begins “in earnest” at line 3, and in the 1869 version it is here that she loses control of the musical discourse. (In the earlier version, because of the continuation of the motivic material—and despite the smooth move to V/III—the music does not underline her move into deception at the onset of line 3.) Her confusion and increasing loss of control is represented by her gasping broken phrases, moving in two aimless sequences, the second (line 5) a descending chromatic slide ending on the dominant of C minor, which is in this version a new key rather than a previously established tonic. The chromaticism in this passage—unlike that in Iago’s “dream monologue” (Example 11, pp. 33-35)—results in musical incoherence, or at least a perceived incoherence, on Leonora’s part. She loses it. The first version proceeded through the entire text at a rather leisurely pace—four measures per line, whether in indivisible four-measure phrases or subdivided two-measure units. In the revised version, however, lines 3-6 are delivered at an accelerated pace—two measures per line, proceeding in a sequence with steps only one measure long.

In the revised version, then, Verdi represents Leonora’s real emotion as early as line 3, where the deception starts, and continues in this way right up to Alvaro’s entrance. He has abandoned the inappropriate strategy of representing Leonora’s feigned emotion through line 6 and then abruptly shifting at line 7.

As noted above, Verdi began to cultivate deception scenes only in 1847. Indeed, this deception scene from La forza del destino was newly invented: in the model, the Duke of Rivas’s Don Álvaro, o la fuerza del sino, Leonora asks to delay their departure, but there is no attempt at deception or self-deception—in fact, Álvaro dominates the scene and she hardly gets a word in edgewise. As in all of the examples discussed here, the libretto offers clear evidence of the deception: “Gonfio di gioia,” she sings, but the stage direction is piange, and the attempt at

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41 See the discussion of this passage in Budden, 2:453-455, here 453.
deception is unsuccessful, like Rigoletto’s feigned nonchalance, but unlike Arminio’s or Amneris’s “report” of the death of the *primo uomo*.

What stance does the music take toward the deception? This passage is intriguing, because it demonstrates a variety of approaches. In the 1862 version, as I read it, at first the music plays along with the deception, only later revealing Leonora’s true emotions, her anguish and sadness. In the 1869 revision, however, after the initial pair of lines (in which deception is not involved), the music immediately shows her emotions, enacting her mental confusion through a breakdown of the musical coherence. I suggested that that strategy might be more appropriate for an unsuccessful (self-)deceiver like Leonora. To be sure, one might propose “purely musical” reasons for this revision. The more open form of the revised version, for example, accords well with the trajectory of Verdi’s stylistic development. But I prefer to view Verdi’s primary motivation for this revision, or at any rate, the primary reason for our interest, to lie rather in a rethinking of the dramatic content of the scene—here Leonora’s deception or self-deception—and a refashioning of the music to second the new conception.
Example 1. Gluck: *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Act II, sc. 3), Air, mm. 22-45
(Bärenreiter piano-vocal score, plate number BA 2287a)
"Gonfio di gioia ho il core' (piange)"

Example 2. Verdi: I masnadieri (Act II, sc. 3), No. 7, Recitativo e Duetto, mm. 102-111 (WGV)
Example 3. Verdi: *Il corsaro* (Act III, sc. 4), No. 11, Duetto Gulnara e Seid, mm. 5-13 (*WGV*)
Example 4. Verdi: Rigoletto (Act II, sc. 3), No. 9, Scena ed Aria, mm. 1-9 (WGV)
Example 5. Verdi: *Ernani* (Act IV, sc. 4), No. 14, Scena e Terzetto Finale, mm. 52-67 (*WGV*)
"Gonfio di gioia ho il core' (piange)"

Example 6. Verdi: *Giovanna d’Arco* (Act I, sc. 4), No. 5, Scena e Cavatina Giovanna, mm. 72-82 (Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 53712, p. 60)
(Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 96342, pp. 137/4 – 138/3)
Example 8a. Verdi: *Ernani* (Act IV, sc. 4), No. 14, Scena e Terzetto Finale, mm. 28-37 (*WGV*)
Example 8b. Verdi: *Ernani* (Act IV, sc. 4), No. 14, Scena e Terzetto Finale, mm. 81-87 (*WGV*)
Example 9. Verdi: *Macbeth* (Act I, sc. 6),
No. 3, Cavatina Lady Macbeth[h], mm. 110-122 of both 1847 and 1865 versions
(Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 42311, pp. 41/5 – 42/2)
Example 10. Verdi: *Macbeth* (Act II, sc. 7), No. 9, Convito, Visione, e Finale II, mm. 257-276 of 1865 version (mm. 259a-278a of 1847 version) (Ricordi piano-vocal score of 1865 version, plate number 42311, p. 145)
Andantino. $J=112$. 

Era la notte, Cassio dormia, gli stavo accanto. Con interrotte voci tradi un intimo insieme. All of a sudden he went to matter what he was dreaming. Moving his lips then gently and slowly words of deep woman, l'amor di fatto import I heard him utter. Saying in tearful passionate

Example 11. Verdi: Otello (Act II, sc. 5), Iago’s “Era la notte, Cassio dormia” (Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 52105, pp. 186-188)
Example 11. (continued)
Example 11. (continued)
Example 12. Verdi: *I masnadieri* (Act I, sc. 3), No. 5, Duettino e Quartetto finale dell’Atto primo, mm. 68-85 (*WGV*)
Example 13. Verdi: *Luisa Miller* (Act I, sc. 6), No. 5, Recitativo e Coro, mm. 11-28 (*WGV*)
Example 14. Verdi: *Luisa Miller* (Act II, sc. 6), No. 10, Scena e Quartetto, mm. 63-80 (*WGV*)
Example 14. (continued)
Example 15. Verdi: *La traviata* (Act II, sc. 6), No. 6, Scena Violetta & Aria Germont, mm. 38-80 (*WGV*)
Example 15. (continued)
Example 15. (continued)
Example 16. Verdi: *La traviata* (Act III, sc. 6), No. 10, Duetto, mm. 190-197 (*WGV*)
Example 17. Verdi: *Un ballo in maschera* (Act I, sc. 8),
No. 2, Invocazione Ulrica / Scene diverse e Finale atto I
(Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 48160, pp. 64/2 – 65/2)
Example 17. (continued)
Example 18a. Verdi: *La forza del destino*, 1862 version (Act III, sc. 11), No. 11, Scena e Duetto Don Alvaro e Don Carlo Atto 3° (Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 34708, p. 234 [of cumulative pagination])
Example 18b. Verdi: *La forza del destino*, 1869 version (Act III, sc. 8), No. 11, Accampamento (Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 41381, pp. 222/3—223/2)
Example 19. Verdi: *Aida* (Act II, sc. 1), Introduzione/ Coro, Scena e Duetto
(Dover reprint of Ricordi orchestral score, p. 121)
Example 20a. *La forza del destino*, 1862 version (Act I, sc. 3), No. 3, Scena e Duetto [e]
Terzetto Finale (Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 34684, pp. 23/2–25/3
[of cumulative pagination])
Example 20a. (continued)
Example 20b. *La forza del destino*, 1869 version (Act I, sc. 3),
No. 3, Scena e Duetto e Terzetto Finale
(Ricordi piano-vocal score, plate number 41381, pp. 30/3-32/3)
David B. Rosen

Example 20b. (continued)