



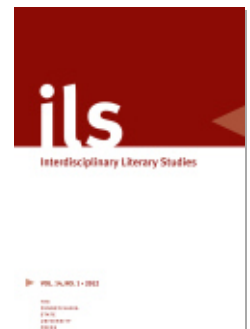
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Dramatic Text, Music Text: Competing Nationalist Styles in Restoration Opera

JAMES GIFFORD

Even in the midst of their dubious claim that “philosophers did not go to the opera very often,” Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar cannot escape acknowledging the combination of “the splendor of court spectacles, the pomp of national myths, and the sentimental melodramas” that have traditionally driven opera in its social contexts (1).¹ Discussions of the Restoration dramatic stage follow the same tripartite preoccupations—they also typically focus on the return of theater to London after the Interregnum, the appearance of women on stage in drama, and the increasing importance of music to theater life before the full arrival of *opera seria* in the eighteenth century with Georg Friedrich Handel’s appearance in London. However, the specifically interactive relationship between English nationalism, literature, theater, and music is often overlooked. In particular, the role of musical *form* in these displays of nationalism, especially in conjunction with patriotic libretti, is largely ignored, despite its ability to bridge the divisions between each disciplinary field. Textual studies of libretti rapidly recognize the pro-Imperial feeling that followed the restoration of the monarchy with Charles II in 1660, the Exclusion Crisis’s attempts to prevent the Catholic James II from ascending to the throne in 1685, and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when James (the last Catholic monarch of England) was displaced by the Hanoverian Protestant William III and Mary II (formalized in 1689). This is readily seen in the histories of John Dryden, Nahum Tate, John Crowne, and many others. Moreover, anti-Papist sentiments frequently appear in an only vaguely coded form as resistance to tensions based on the French and Italian influences via Catholicism on James II and Charles II.

Within this complex interaction between stage practices, politics, literary production, and musical composition, this article traces the relationship between Restoration libretti and musical scores by emphasizing their nationalist interests, leading to the proposition that musical *form* can reflect or resist the allegorical political interests of libretti, even to the point of subverting the dramatic text. By moving across these materials, I argue for a necessarily interdisciplinary approach to musical theater of this period, one that emphasizes the combination of the musical and dramatic texts to form the operatic work as a whole.

John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* is the first piece of English musical theater that is sung throughout with the intention of creating a combined literary, dramatic, and musical work, which qualifies it as the first English opera, although its subtitle, *A Mask for the Entertainment of the King*, places it more firmly in the masque tradition.² This is for many scholars a convenient marker for the instantiation of the English operatic tradition in approximately 1683 and also of the interaction between text and music in pursuit of nationalist aims. Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*, from no more than six years later, is the first such work to be overtly conceived as an opera per se and apparently intended for performance outside the court; all this is debatable, but *Dido and Aeneas* is in any case the first English opera to become standard in the repertoire.³ However, the subtitle of Blow's work draws attention to the mingling of its erotic titular reference to a political context: a mask for the *entertainment* of the *King*. This was also the beginning of a trend. As Grzegorzewska notes, "The sophisticated audience of the Restoration . . . must have appreciated the licentious agenda of the libretto," but just as important, "the King's illegitimate daughter sang the role of Cupid during the first performance . . . [and] Mary Moll Davies, . . . once a royal mistress . . . [,] took the part of Venus" (320), a woman who brings about the downfall of her lover. With Charles II on the throne of England for the first performance of the work (composed by an Anglican and not long before the succession of James II), likely in 1683, its allegorical content is richly intermingled with this erotic material. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Blow was both the composer and librettist, so a collaborative interaction between text and music is to be expected (whether this conjecture is accurate or not).⁴ The crucial point is that early in the English operatic tradition, politics and performance were contiguous.

In this masque-cum-opera, Venus (the royal mistress) specifically sends Adonis to the hunt that would take his life. Adonis claims, "Adonis

will not hunt today. / I have already caught the noblest prey,” and in answer he is told:

No, my shepherd, haste away,
Absence kindles new desire,
I would not have my lover tire. . . .
I give him freely all delights
With pleasant days and easy nights. (38–41)

In this overtly sexual vein, the allegorical content presses forward, although the audience would have been within the court. The hero, who is frequently associated with the king in such masques, is gored by the boar his foreign lover sent him to face. In the standard allegorical reading, this sexualized female Other stands in for the papal influence over the king, who is frequently represented in criticisms of the time as not overtly disloyal to the Church of England but rather as under the sway of Papist plots.

Musically, this can be seen in the overture to *Venus and Adonis*, which follows the French style, and the frequent da capo form of the arias, a structure that is also reflected in the French overture itself. This is added to Adonis’s destruction through his decadence and lustful submission to a seductive foreign woman who overtly schools her child in the way “By which thou may’st set ableeding / A-thousand tender hearts” in order to have mastery over them (n.p.). The erotic content of the masque thereby acts as an allegory of restraint for the Catholic involvements of the king and his overturning of parliamentary laws forbidding Catholics from holding office. Of course, this is advice Charles II did not follow after having dissolved the English Parliament from 1681 until his death. Nor did his brother, James II, heed the allegory before December 1688 when he was driven from England and subsequently deemed by Parliament to have abdicated his throne. Yet this is a superficial rendering of the musical and poetic texts, and Blow’s use of the prevalent French form and idiosyncratic rhythms for his overture and arias is in line with previous operas: French and Italian operas. To suggest that his anti-Papist concerns are reflected in his choice of musical form in relation to his king is highly speculative. This instance of musical politics, while conveying the cultural terrain of the period, is not in itself sufficient for a discussion of the interaction between music and poetry in the political arena.

In a review, James Peck summarizes the relationship between Restoration politics and the period's dramatic theater succinctly, and in the context that he provides, subsequent developments in English opera begin to invite a more overtly politicized and formally innovative analysis:

Politicians and theatre folk alike used performance to advance partisan positions. . . . From 1678 to 1682, a Whiggish Parliament endeavored to alter the succession away from James Duke of York, the Catholic brother of the reigning Charles II. Though Exclusion failed and James became King in 1685, his rule was brief and troubled. In 1688, leading members of the House of Lords invited the King's son-in-law William of Orange to invade England in support of Protestantism and liberty. James fled for France and Parliament ruled that he had abdicated, settling the throne on William and Mary. Performance actively contributed to these events.

The Royalist leanings of the Restoration patent houses are well known. Johnson acknowledges the dominance of Tory ideology, offering contextualized readings of such loyalist plays as John Crowne's *City Politiques* and Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved*. But he also examines ways performance provided modes of symbolic resistance. . . . Plays like Elkanah Settle's *Pope Joan* and Nahum Tate's adaptations of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Richard II* articulated opposition positions in coded, allusive language calibrated to foil the censor. (318)

Even within Park's purely dramatic list of works, the thematic issues at stake on the Restoration stage are clear, as are the tactics: Pope Joan, a pregnant female pope, effectively discredits papal authority and publicly subverts Catholic sympathies. Also, Nahum Tate was a significant Irish Protestant author (later poet laureate after Dryden and Shadwell) and collaborator with the Anglican composer Henry Purcell. Tate's "happy ending" for *King Lear* is often ridiculed, but its contemporary circumstances and its popularity resist simple dismissal. Furthermore, Tate and Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*, with libretto by Tate and score by Purcell, notably adds witches to replace Virgil's Roman gods, allegorically warning of Catholic influences that could destroy the monarchy while recalling the Roman "interregnum" as a symbolic parallel to Britain's rebirth and London's role as the new Eternal City. In this instance, Tate's literary work begins to suggest a bridge between dramatic and musical political expressions that Blow's *Venus and Adonis* cannot sustain.

This emphasis on anti-Papist sentiment in Tate's libretto is reflected in his other works, and Johnson is not surprised that

a classic abdication play like Tate's *History of King Lear* appeared when it did. What is surprising is how frequently Tate returned to the theme. At the peak of the Exclusion Crisis—from late 1679 to March 1681—Tate produced three plays, *The Loyal General*, his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, and his adaptation of *King Lear*, all of which centrally display the abdication of a monarch. The frequency and the dramatic weight with which Tate suggests abdication—not only as a dramaturgical solution, but a resolution to the immediate impasse of succession—leads the curious to consider why a self-proclaimed Royalist like Tate was so attracted to the idea of abdication as dramatic material in a Royal theatre. (89–90)

The response, quite naturally, derives from recognizing the anti-Catholic sentiment that runs through Tate's later works. Most notable are his three adaptations of the story of Dido and Aeneas from Virgil's *Aeneid*, a work that was preternaturally popular in new translations and adaptations during the Restoration period. Tate's politics may have been admittedly Royalist, but only insofar as succession was certain to avoid Papist influence.

Dryden, much like Tate, undertook significant adaptations and translations from Virgil during the Restoration, paralleling Virgil's use of the *Aeneid* as a celebration of the return to "august" leadership and a celebration of the founding of a great empire. However, Dryden's works after his conversion to Catholicism in 1685, the year that the publicly Catholic James II became king, stand in marked contrast with Tate's, even though Dryden also significantly collaborated with the Anglican composer Purcell. I must also acknowledge, prior to beginning a politicized analysis, that there is a dispute over the dating of Purcell and Tate's most famous collaboration, *Dido and Aeneas*, making it variously interpreted as either a warning to the newly crowned William III and Mary II in 1689, the date of its first known performance, or perhaps a caution to the Catholic James II against foreign influences just prior to his flight from Britain. While several critics argue for a range of authoritative datings,⁵ none makes a satisfactory evidence-based appeal, which leaves the composition of the work uncertain and most likely falling in the midst of the greatest tensions over James's impending "abdication" and William III and Mary II's ascension to the throne. Nonetheless, as John Buttrey has pointed out, the royal

prologue to the libretto very strongly suggests a court performance prior to 1689 ("Correspondence" 289), and this almost certainly necessitates a performance for James II, which also alleviates the problem of explaining an unwed and disgraced royal couple in a work performed for the new joint monarchs William and Mary. Musicological discussions have yet to account for this. Andrew Walking concurs with Buttrey and persuasively argues that the allegorical references to James II date the work to an earlier court performance and that this solves the trouble over any readings that would cast William and Mary as the ill-fated royal couple. Moreover, given the overtly bad ending for both members of the royal couple (written by authors with seditious sentiment toward James II), a retrospective commentary on the previous monarch or a veiled critique of James II seems far more likely than a contemporary commentary on William III and Mary II. In either case, and without excluding the strong potential for an earlier first performance, as Walking puts it, "Dido and Aeneas presents a picture not merely of widespread dissatisfaction with James' policies but also of a danger far more perfidious and of far greater seriousness to the nation as a whole" (565): the influence of France and the papacy.⁶ By no later than 1689, Purcell and Tate's *Dido and Aeneas* was performed at Josias Priest's school for girls, with William and Mary arguably (though not likely) in the audience.⁷ This sets the stage for an overtly politicized context for musical composition, moving beyond Blow's politicized plot with a traditional score.

Dryden and Purcell's *King Arthur; or, The British Worthy* follows in this context in 1691, two years after James's formalized abdication in 1689 after his 1688 flight, and it further clarifies the political circumstances of such works in their dramatic text (setting aside the musical text for the moment). It is an overtly nationalist celebration created for the public theaters, and it features numerous tributes to the island nation, including the still-performed "Fairest Isle," which remains strongly patriotic three centuries after its first performance. *King Arthur* was first performed two years after William III took the throne; however, it is Dryden's own revision of his first draft from 1684 or 1685, the period of his conversion to Catholicism (formally in 1686) and of James's ascension (1685), which changes the work's framework significantly. Initially, it had been an allegory of reconciliation between James II and the duke of Monmouth, who was later executed, and this first draft was subsequently transformed to suit the new political circumstances. Dryden altered it in 1690 to correspond to the new monarch, William III, and, as he wrote in his introduction to the published libretto, "my art on this occasion

ought to be subservient to his [Purcell's]" (*King* 290)—he also notes that he was "obliged to cramp my verses, and make them rugged to the reader, that they may be harmonious to the hearer" (*King* 290). The latter is likely more stylistic than political, since a libretto suitable for singing (and Purcell was himself a noted singer) functions differently in its use of consonants, vowels, and rhythm from a simply spoken text, a fact that often causes difficulty in modern operas and librettos. As Dryden describes it, "The numbers of poetry and vocal music are sometimes so contrary" (*King* 290). Yet Dryden's complaints go further than poetic rhythm. His first version was developed into the masque *Albion and Albanus*, which is an allegory for the "restoration of the Stuarts, their victory over the Whigs, and the succession of James [II] to the throne" (Young 146), which is to be expected for his social position, and *this* theme cannot be lost in creative tension between the musical and poetic texts that developed into *King Arthur*, tensions that will lead to a retrospective reconsideration of *Dido and Aeneas*'s combined musical and dramatic text.

Adapting his earlier work and context to suit the wave of nationalism following on William III's coronation did not sit entirely well with Dryden. This discomfort led him to note in the same introduction: "Not to offend the present times, nor a government which has hitherto protected me, I have been obliged so much to alter the first design, and take away so many beauties from the writing, that it is now no more what it was formerly, than the present ship of the Royal Sovereign, after so often taking down and altering, is the vessel it was in the first building" (*King* 290).

Dryden refers to the ship the *Sovereign of the Seas*, which was built to reinforce the reputation of Charles I. The ship was rebuilt several times and fought its last battle in 1690, but shortly thereafter became leaky and was largely ignored until it burned in 1697. The comparison is a mild critique of William III in line with what Combe describes as "frequent clandestine protests . . . against a regime he considered repressive and usurpative" (36). More important, part of the tension in the work, then, develops out of Purcell's willingness to deride Catholic influences in his other collaborations, to publicly emphasize his Anglican faith through his compositions for the church, and to make nationally oriented distinctions in musical form at the time of English opera's creation. This stands in contrast to Dryden's Catholicism and discomfort with James II's successor, and in the spoken prologue, prior to Purcell's resistance against French form in his overture, Dryden comments, "Our bets, at last, would e'en to Rome extend, / But that the pope has proved our trusty friend" (*Poetical* 174).

A focus on narrative, allusion, and political commentary is the customary approach to Dryden's text, and indeed it is the standard reading of the dramatic texts by Dryden and Nahum Tate that Purcell set as operas and semi-operas. Yet this approach is insufficient. The musical text extends this discussion and is too frequently overlooked, especially where it complicates the combined texts' politics. Michael Alssid, for instance, boldly asserts, "Dryden's third, final and no doubt most perfectly realized opera, *King Arthur* has attracted slight critical attention" (125), which is true of the text in comparison with Dryden's other works, but is grossly untrue for musicologists, who have taken up the *semi-opera* extensively.⁸ Therefore, I address this musical text in the context of Purcell's contemporary theatrical, sacred, and church environments, all of which differ not only in content but also in pitch, instrumentation, performance practices, and voice types.

During the fertile period between James II's abdication of the throne (1688) and the arrival of *opera seria* (c. 1711), distinctly English musical forms dominated the *foreign* musical genre of opera, a French and Italian musical innovation that was, thus, already implicitly aligned with papal influence in the mind of the English theater patron, which contributed to its impression of decadence. Purcell, the Orpheus Britannicus, as he came to be known, wrote what is popularly seen as the first formal English opera, *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), and Tate's libretto derides allegorical Catholic influences in a relatively direct and expected manner.⁹ The intention for public performance in Dryden's libretto for *King Arthur* shaped the work's political position during its composition. No longer beneath the surface of the text, as in *Dido and Aeneas*'s allegory of newly united monarchs endangered by sinister witches, the nationalist sentiment in *King Arthur* is overt. Patriotism is its manifest driving force. However, Purcell's adaptation of an *Italian* and *French* genre uses distinctly *English* musical idioms in very striking ways that develop these nationalist tropes more than his earlier works, thereby contributing to the pro-English tone. Importantly, this focus on musical idiom and form stands distinct from Purcell's innovations in turning the recitative to rhythmic patterns of spoken English, something he advanced more than any previous composer—Purcell's further adaptations are such that musical form and idiom are distinctly English not only in language but also with regard to idiomatic national styles and folk traits.

Most strikingly, Purcell subverts the French overture form in *King Arthur* by altering its formal structure and rhythmic qualities, such as inverting its characteristic French dotted rhythms into the English or Scotch "snap," among numerous other idiomatic English forms. This rhythmic structure

is the most prominent characteristic of the French genre, and displacing it with an English folk idiom immediately draws attention. Moreover, this rhythmic reversal is also the first striking feature of the opera itself, capturing the audience before the dramatic action begins. Even if the audience remained unaware of such a significant reversal of the genre's most characteristic idiom, as a feature it could hardly have been lost on the musicians.¹⁰ The *form* of the overture also diverges greatly from the French and Italian models, with three distinct sections rather than two with repetitions, differences in meter that run contrary to the genre, differences in tempo, and differences in contrapuntal structure. Purcell's overture for *King Arthur* is, in this sense, no overture at all, according to the contemporary standards for opera as it was known, and it thereby stands in contrast to Dryden's preceding text, which was sympathetic toward Catholic (French and Italian) influences. Purcell's overture is idiomatically English and formally new, demonstrating his interest in striking new ground that moved away from or reconsidered French musical influences.

Furthermore, scholarly failures to recognize the importance of these musical features in the operatic text, the combination of the musical and dramatic texts, has led to several problems in literary readings. For instance, Earl Miner and George Guffey's edition of Dryden's *Albion and Albanus*, *Don Sebastian*, *Amphitryon* comments in its annotations on Dryden's likely pride in being the first to instantiate opera in English via *King Arthur*: "He has in mind 'opera' defined more closely along Italian and French lines rather than 'a Tragedy mix'd with Opera'" (364). Purcell's musical work is emphatically not "defined more closely along Italian and French lines," which renders the combined text, the operatic musical and dramatic text, as something quite distinct, contrary to Miner and Guffey. Also, this is false in fact as well, since Blow's *Venus and Adonis* predates the work, as does Davenport's *The Siege of Rhodes*, which was through-sung, albeit purely for the sake of avoiding Puritan censorship.¹¹ Miner and Guffey acknowledge this but attempt to retain *King Arthur*'s primacy by turning to the notion of "a Tragedy mix'd with Opera" for the sense of innovation; however, this again overlooks the fact that these previous works did not contain spoken dialogue and mistakes Dryden's obvious meaning (suggesting that he was not particularly well acquainted with previous operatic works set in English). Moreover, Dryden had no operatic setting in mind when first writing *Albion and Albanus*, and his subsequent interactions with English composers focus *precisely* on "a Tragedy mix'd with Opera," or in other words the semi-opera (spoken drama with sung scenes). The innovation Miner and Guffey accord to Dryden is

patently false, and the musical setting by Grabu is purely within the French idiom and genre. Yet the division between musical and literary criticism still remains strikingly abstruse.

The importance of the combined musical and poetic texts becomes important if we retrace the preceding overview of Purcell's works. *Dido and Aeneas* uses the same idiomatic adulterations of the French and Italian features of opera as I have outlined with regard to *King Arthur*, although it does not subvert the French overture form and rhythmic structure within the overture. Despite this, the opera dramatically opens with Belinda, Dido's servant, singing a Scotch snap for her very first notes, followed by Dido doing the same—the first sung moments in the work by its leading singers are distinctly English in style and reverse the rhythmic idiom of the French overture. This is not without significant nationalist connotations, and given Purcell's subsequent use of this musical feature, it also seems hardly coincidental. Unlike the titular reference to Virgil, Tate's Dido and Aeneas are not parted by the gods' command and Aeneas's fate to found Rome—instead, witches appear (Tate's addition to Virgil) and drive the monarchs apart through trickery and deception, as I have already noted.¹² These purely evil characters dupe Aeneas into abandoning Dido, and they then summon a storm to attempt to sink Aeneas's ship. As is customary for the theater of the period, the witches are allegorical Catholics, as in Thomas Shadwell's *The Lancashire Witches* (Booth para. 23), and we find the music exactly paralleling the nationalist tendencies I have already outlined.

For instance, the Scotch snap emphasizes the English idiom in aligning Dido and Belinda with the "fairest isle." Also, while Purcell does employ a more characteristically French structure in the overture to *Dido and Aeneas* in contrast to his later *King Arthur*, this initial agreement with the genre is outdone by his direct contrasts between Dido and Belinda's snaps against the "Catholic" Witch's opening scene, in which he duplicates the *French* overture form with a double-dotted *maestoso* section followed by a faster movement in triple meter, in this case a chorus of witches calling, "Harm's our delight and mischief all our skill." While Belinda, Dido, and Aeneas receive a significant number of snap rhythms on their downbeats, the Sorceress's appearances and the songs of her witches duplicate the French overture form and rhythmic idiom exactly in their vocal lines, the form, and the orchestra.¹³ Again, in the context of Purcell's later works, this seems hardly coincidental. This first scene with the witches is, as a whole, a formal and rhythmic replication of the French overture in miniature.¹⁴ More to the point, Purcell's idiomatically French form is tied directly to the derided

witches (Catholics) and serves to distinguish them from the musically English (Anglican/Protestant) *Dido and Belinda*. And this musical form parallels the political readings of the libretto that are already established.¹⁵ In other words, Purcell's *musical text*, for the first time in English opera, drives the political theme of the *dramatic text* to a greater intensity and degree of importance than it could maintain on its own.

With this established, it is now possible to very briefly compare the musical contents of the nationalist operas *Dido and Aeneas* and *King Arthur* with Purcell's Anglican church music and his chamber works for the virginal. My question is whether or not the musical texts support the political impetus of the literary texts. Expanding the scope of discussion from theater music and the relatively explicit nationalism of the libretti to Purcell's sacred music isolates the correlation between textual nationalism and idiomatically English musical forms. A brief survey of Purcell's sacred and chamber music demonstrates the independence of these nationally specific tropes from the spoken or sung text. As one would expect, the Anglican Church music exhibits typically English characteristics, such as a series of pronounced Scotch snaps in "Unto thee will I cry" (Purcell *Unto*), and the French overture form is also largely absent, despite its cultural capital. This indicates that the presence of the form in Purcell's operas is not simply a continuation of materials in his general milieu or of forms that he was given to use more generally. The second element in this formula is the presence of characteristically French musical idioms in Purcell's music for the virginal.¹⁶ For Purcell's posthumously collected *Keyboard Works*, the eight suites (if they are all his) all contain French material, as is idiomatic to the form: preludes, minuets, courants, sarabandes, and so forth. As would be expected, such French titles reflect formally and stylistically idiomatic French contents in Purcell's writing. In contrast, the presence of the Scotch snap in such works as a "Rigadoon" (Z 653) and the "Hornpipe" (Z T685) shows the clearly national associations of form and idiom outside the politicized venue of theater music. The affiliation of these musical styles to national schools remains constant in Purcell's works, so reading their conflict in his operas, with each representing the national conflicts, is both reasonable and a natural continuation of their function in the rest of his oeuvre.

These materials lead me to conclude that the nationalist thrust of the librettos for *Dido and Aeneas* and *King Arthur* is reflected in Purcell's musical settings in ways that are specific to the theater and distinguish it from sacred and chamber works, especially given the recognized function of the theater as a political venue (Johnson 22). Furthermore, while Purcell is in

agreement with Tate in regard to anti-Catholic sentiments being tied to pro-English nationalism, this is a point of conflict with Dryden. Despite this tension, Purcell reinforces the anti-French and anti-Italian feelings through the musical form of the semi-opera. In effect, in the musical text he creates a level of political commentary that Dryden's poetic narrative avoids. This is even so when Dryden seeks to avoid potential associations with France and Italy. Dryden casts the anti-English forces in *King Arthur* as Scandinavian, with their rites to Woden, Thor, and Tanfan opening the dramatic action of the semi-opera. This distances the foe from any Papist, French, or Italian associations that one might expect in an overtly nationalist work of this period. Moreover, as I have already noted, Dryden emphasized in the work's dedication that he made revisions in order "not to offend the present times, nor a government which has hitherto protected me" (*King* 290). What remains unacknowledged in both musical and literary scholarship is that this comment follows directly on his description of his changes: "When I wrote it, seven years ago, I employed some reading about it, to inform myself out of Beda, Bochartus, and other authors, concerning the rites and customs of the heathen Saxons" (212–13). In this context, it is the Christian nature of the English that ties them to Dryden's Catholic and Papist sympathies, as well as his preference for the more directly descended monarchy of James II. The conflict becomes one between Pagans and Christians. This is the issue at hand when Dryden acknowledges that he was required by the new political times to change the text he had originally written concurrent with James's ascension and his own conversion.

However, Purcell turns this Saxon setting to his contemporary circumstances through his conflicting musical forms, and this disallows Dryden's escape into an imagined history where discord with Rome could be effaced. Purcell musically casts the opening scenes, with their invocation to the pagan gods, using the musical figured bass pattern typical of his chaconnes and in parallel with his chaconne later in the same opera—again, the French musical idioms are tied to an enemy of the dramatic protagonist, the English, and Dryden's distancing of the allegorical enemy from Christian comrades is resisted by the music, which narrows this distance and elides the heathen, Saxon foes with Catholic influences. Dryden's text resists any potential allegorical parallel between Britain's past and present foes, yet Purcell's innovations in the musical text create such a parallel. The poetic and musical texts work against each other, leaving the *combined* operatic text slightly distinct from both.

My suggestion, then, is that during this brief period in which native English opera developed, the relationship among political histories, literary studies, and musicology offers unique ways to study Restoration arts as existing in a rich synergy. Stretching from 1682 to 1711, and having its peak during the six years from 1689 until Purcell's death in 1695, the growth of English opera indicates fertile soil for specifically interdisciplinary study. In order for such work to be done, studies of opera must move beyond the limited literary hermeneutics typically applied by musicologists to libretti and the rudimentary musical literacy employed by most literary critics. Even prior to Wagner, opera was a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and any continuingly productive interpretation of opera must employ reading skills that not only acknowledge but actively employ the multiple states in which its text exists. The musical text can and does respond to the dramatic-poetic text, leaving scholars with a combined work that cannot be effectively read through a process of separation.

NOTES

1. Discussions of opera in theory and literature are, very frequently, linked to such problems of interpretation for which musical contexts are not fully appreciated. Žižek and Dolar ridiculously assert that operas only exceptionally are related to contemporary circumstance (4); Hutcheon and Hutcheon propound interpretations devoid of what they call "theories of [music's] complexity that make sense only to composers and advanced students of musicology" (xv), or, in other words, interpretations that avoid detailed musical analysis, while contradictorily arguing, "Neither [the music nor libretto] has meaning without the other" (xvi); Hermann presents the anachronistically erroneous notion that Joyce wrote portions of *Ulysses* using Schoenberg's twelve-tone system (473–96); and Bucknell proposes creative slippage between the form of a musical canon and the confines of canon law in order to interpret portions of James Joyce's *Ulysses* as both canon and fugue and decidedly polyphonic all while being consumed in a monovocal and linear fashion by the reader (122–30). This is not to make light of the value of their contributions but rather to point to the common disjunctions between literary theory and music theory. Very notable exceptions include Theodor Adorno and Edward Said, who had literacy in both fields, and Wilfred Mellers, a musicologist who was also close friends with F. R. Leavis.
2. As I detail later, Davenport's *The Siege of Rhodes* was the first through-sung dramatic work in English, but this was intended as a pretense for presenting the dramatic text under censorship laws that allowed musical performances but forbade drama.

3. Both *Venus and Adonis* and *Dido and Aeneas* were performed at Josias Priest's school in for girls Chelsea, in 1684 and 1689, respectively.
4. Some critics suggest that Aphra Behn wrote the libretto, since she later collaborated with Blow, but like the suggestion that Blow wrote the libretto, this is purely conjectural and the text shows few literary or stylistic commonalities with her subsequent works. More merit falls to James A. Winn's hypothesis of Anne Finch (67), yet this is also conjectural. Several sources also list the work as being composed between 1680 and 1687, yet the end of Charles II's reign in 1685 would seem to give an authoritative end date to such speculation.
5. This is further complicated because of the partial and numerous states of manuscripts of the opera's score, which has led to a variety of "correct" versions of the work for performance. Specialists in early music have variously issued "correct" scores and performance standards, but these reflect musical tastes of the moment more strongly than they do any real bibliographic certainties. In the nineteenth century, it was common to date the opera to 1675–80, but we currently accept 1689 as most probable, though Bruce Wood and Andrew Pincock date it to as early as 1684. Goldie notes a letter that refers to "an opera" at Josias Priest's boarding school, which subsequent scholars have concurred must be Purcell's, but *Dido and Aeneas* was neither the first nor the last opera performed there, so this is tenuous evidence at best. The libretto is dated to 1689, but it contains more text than do any of the variants of the scores. Moreover, the most reliable score used for nearly all editions, the Tenbury manuscript (which is altered and incomplete), dates to nearly a century later—its watermark precludes the possibility of its having been written prior to 1775. Harris's book and score (the currently favored edition) are also deeply challenged by Burdess and Buttrey ("Dating" 703), though this never appears in album notes or in the performing score. Even more dramatically than the multiple variants of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, there is no definitive, complete, or reliable score for *Dido and Aeneas*, despite its canonic status—the frequent references to "original score" used to justify necessary performance choices for voice types, gender, and musical alternatives are largely meaningless though terribly convenient.
6. As Buttrey points out, Harris's work (which has become the standard musicological approach to *Dido and Aeneas* and the standard score through Oxford University Press) fails to recognize the clear role of political allegory that is fairly straightforward in a literary context, and she instead overemphasizes a theme of chastity (289–90). The latter is present, but it hardly occupies the position she accords it. Buttrey also makes the compelling point that since the royal prologue exists in the libretto manuscript of 1689, and since all other such works with a royal prologue were first performed in court, it would be challenging to suggest that the address to royalty was written for an audience of young girls. If that is granted, it is more likely that the work was first performed in court than it is for the new king and queen to have attended the performance at Josias Priest's school (290).
7. The timing is possible and there is little other way to make sense of the royal prologue in the manuscript for the libretto unless a previous court performance

is assumed. My strong inclination is for a previous court performance, which I believe is a great deal more likely, yet in order for other critics' attachments to a 1689 dating to hold, this possibility must be acknowledged.

8. The *semi*-opera is the equivalent of the German *Singspiel*, perhaps most familiar to audiences through Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.
9. As I have previously noted, John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* holds the most likely title to being the first English opera, but it was performed in court as a masque. Moreover, Purcell's work was the first to enter the standard repertoire. Louis Grabu's operatic settings also predate Purcell's but are contested, since Grabu was not English and the music slavishly imitates the French models in which Grabu was trained. The first setting of an English text as an opera is Davenport's *The Siege of Rhodes* in 1656, but this was accomplished through the cobbling together of five different composers' music in order to render a recitative for dramatically performing the text—dramatic performance was the aim of this work, for which no music has survived, and the addition of music was purely to avoid Puritan censorship: "What Davenport really did in 1656 was try to pass off a dramatic entertainment by having the dialogue set to music as recitative. . . . He had dramatic rather than musical goals" (Protheroe 666). *Dido and Aeneas* is first neither in title nor in fact, but it is the first distinctly English work that is by definition and intention identified as an opera and has entered the repertoire as such.
10. Orchestration in *King Arthur* likewise characterizes the British elements of the opera, first appearing in the Britons' triumph over the Saxons in the first act. This point is more open to scrutiny, but as the Britons enter the stage *en tableaux*, the brass instruments (as with the rest of the opera) become associated with their victory. This casts attention back to the atypical overture that preceded the dramatic action of the opera, where the particularly unusual B section was further emphasized by a trumpet voluntary, further distancing Purcell's work musically from French and Italian models while aligning it with English tropes. This element of orchestration is somewhat speculative, but in the context of a modern performance, it could rapidly become a highly striking and politicized feature for a general audience.
11. As has already been noted, this work was made up of five composers' works cobbled together in order to present a drama that could avoid Puritan censorship under the very thin pretense of being music.
12. I must also note that Tate's version of *Dido and Aeneas* did not suffer from his commonly supposed poor translation abilities. He adapted book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid* three times and also translated the Psalms and Ovid. Even among musicians with little interest in the poet and for contemporary concertgoers, the carol "While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night" remains popular—it also uses the text of Tate's paraphrase of Luke 2:8–14. The gross restructuring of Virgil for Tate's libretto is certainly no accident or error and points to the political aims of the text, aims that are reinforced and supported by the music.
13. The Scotch snap is also known as the "Lombard rhythm": a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth—the opposite of the French dotted rhythm in *notes inégales*.

14. The scene opens with a slow A section with the typical dotted French rhythm and follows an A-B-A structure, in which there is a faster and polyphonic contrasting "movement." The witches, hence, duplicate the French form, while Belinda and Dido contrast with idiomatically English rhythms.
15. As Buttrey has pointed out, and as I have already noted, the most prominent book and score for *Dido and Aeneas*, both by Ellen Harris, do not explore this political context and instead cast the work as a morality aimed at promoting chastity. This derives from Harris's preference for a 1689 first performance at Josias Priest's school for girls in Chelsea.
16. The English equivalent of the harpsichord, though strung like a cembalo and in brass.

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