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Don Carlos as *Bildungsoper*: Carlos's last act

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. . . the goal that the artist has worked toward must certainly prove to be fulfilled at the end of the artistic work. What the tragedy is concluded with must be what it was concerned with, and now listen how Carlos parts from us and from his Queen:

> I have
> Been living in a long, oppressive dream.
> I was *in love* – but now I am awake.
> Forget what's past! Now finally I see
> There is a greater good, more to be wished
> For, than possessing you – Here are your letters.
> You must destroy the ones I wrote. You need
> Fear no more fits of passion from me. That
> Is past. A purifying fire has purged
> My being. I will build a monument
> For him, the like of which no king has had –
> And over where his ashes rest will bloom
> A paradise!
> QUEEN: I hoped to find you thus!
> That was the noble meaning of his death.
>
> Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on Don Carlos*, ninth letter[1]

The scene upon which I focus here – the final duet – was a late addition to the list of primal scenes for this conference. The *Don Carlos* scenes on the original list were the Posa–Philippe duet and the Quartet, and thus we almost had a session on *Don Carlos* without the Prince of Spain. Perhaps this is not surprising. Carlos has not fared well in recent writing about the opera.

An 'indecisive' hero whose end is 'death or terminal despair'.[2] A hero with 'a kind of inner paralysis that condemns him to inaction. . . the Infante can only waver between self-destructive rage and empty threats'. Or, alternatively, he acts but with fatal effects: 'Sooner or later the surfacing of this inmost self leads the hero to make a false step, for which he will pay with his life'.[3] (But do not nearly all Verdian tenors commit acts which lead to their deaths, or those of the people they love? It comes

[1] Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on Don Carlos*, trans. Jeanne R. Willson, in *Plays: 'Intrigue and Love' and 'Don Carlos'*, ed. Walter Hinderer, German Library 15 (New York, 1983), 305–46, here 336–7.

[2] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago and London, 1998), 104.

[3] This and the preceding sentence are from Gilles de Van, *Verdi's Theater: Creating Drama through Music*, trans. Gilda Roberts (Chicago and London, 1998), 181. De Van gives as examples of *faux-pas* 'Radames's betrayal, Riccardo's fatal rendezvous with Amelia on the execution field outside Boston, or the last, imprudent meeting of Carlos with his [stepmother], Elisabeth'. It should be noted, however, that both in the play (Act V, scene 6) and in the opera (IV, first scene of the second set), the meeting was arranged by the Queen and/or Posa, not by Carlos.

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with the territory.) '[Schiller and Verdi] are both in accord with history in attributing to Carlos an uncertain appearance, short on virility, given over to doubts, to bursts of enthusiasm, and to sudden fits of depression'.[4]

Paul Robinson has been especially hard on Carlos: 'a creature of sensibility, living in an inward world of dreams and romantic hyperbole, a figure no more suited to politics than Goethe's Werther'.[5] He is 'incapable of a coherent political thought. In the course of the opera, admittedly, he gets deeply involved in affairs of state . . . But we are never in doubt that it is all *pretend politics*, and that he understands virtually nothing of the Flemish cause or the ideological principles that all but define Rodrigo's existence'.[6] And 'Verdi heightens our sense of [Posa's] impracticality by showing Carlos to be such an utterly inadequate vessel for the cause of Flemish liberty'.[7]

So has Posa misjudged Carlos? Would this strange creature be able to save Flanders, to govern Spain? even to govern himself?

*

Character development is unusual in Verdi's operas, perhaps especially in his tenors. Manrico is more typical than Otello. Otello begins at the pinnacle of his glory and descends to the dissolution of his very personality. Carlos's trajectory depends, of course, on whether the four-act version of 1884 or one of the five-act versions with the Fontainebleau act is performed (for an overview of the different versions see Fig. 1). If the latter, we first meet Carlos as a sensitive but apparently normal young man who no sooner attains the height of joy than he is emotionally crippled – his beloved Elisabeth is destined not to marry him, but rather his father, King Philippe. Alternatively, in the four-act version, he is already in a state of despair and paralysis when we first encounter him. In either case, the crucial question is whether he remains in that state or grows out of it. In my view, the death of Posa brings about a reintegration of Carlo's mental condition. He sublimates his love of Elisabeth towards the political ideals embraced by Posa – like Carlo V in *Ernani*, he has earned the right to say, 'Mie brame ho dome' [I have conquered my desires].[8] To be sure,

[4] Aldo Nicastro, 'Carlos, Infante di Spagna, ovvero il mito dell'antieroe nella drammaturgia verdiana', in *Atti del II° Congresso internazionale di studi verdiani: Verona, Castelvecchio; Parma, Istituto di studi verdiani; Busseto, Villa Pallavicino 30 luglio–4 agosto 1969*, ed. Marcello Pavarani (Parma, 1971), 440–8, here 441.

[5] Robinson, '*Realpolitik*: Giuseppe Verdi's *Don Carlo*', in *Opera & Ideas from Mozart to Strauss* (Ithaca, 1985), 155–209, here 192.

[6] Robinson, 188 (emphasis mine).

[7] Robinson, 192–3.

[8] In a reading of the opera quite different from mine, Heather Wiebe cites these words of Carlo V as a reproach to Don Carlos, who, in her view, did *not* master his desires, or did so only through his death. See her 'Conquering Desire: *Don Carlos* and the Problem of Interiority', in *Verdi 2001. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Parma, New York, New Haven, 24 gennaio–1° febbraio 2001*, ed. Fabrizio Della Seta, Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Marco Marica (Florence, forthcoming). Wiebe cites Paul Robinson, 195, for the quotation.

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Table 1

An Overview of the Principal Versions of Verdi's *Don Carlos*

1867 Cuts made before the 11 March 1867 première at the Paris Opéra: even before being placed into orchestral rehearsal an Elisabeth/Eboli duet (IV, i) and Carlos/Philippe duet (IV, ii) were cut. An extended Introduction (I) was cut after being rehearsed but before the première. There are also five shorter cuts in numbers that survived.

Immediately after the première Verdi authorized cutting the finale of Act IV (the insurrection scene), thus ending the act with the death of Posa.

1872 For this Naples production (with Italian text) Verdi reworked the Posa/Philippe duet; the Elisabeth/Carlos duet in Act V is abbreviated (cut of the allegro marziale section).

1883 Four-act version revised in 1882–83 (French text) and first performed at La Scala (in Italian translation) in January 1884.

Large-scale cuts: Act I removed (including Introduction, Romance, Duet, and Finale); the Ballet and the preceding scene with chorus (in the original Act III, ii) were replaced by a newly composed Prelude (this change was optional, but apparently generally followed). See also Finales below.

Solo pieces:[1] Carlos's Romance was revised and placed early in the new Act I (from here I number the acts according to the four-act version).

Duets: Carlos/Posa (I, i), Posa/Philippe (I, ii), Elisabeth/Carlos (IV) all underwent revision; the first two duets moving further away from the 'solita forma dei duetti'.

Kinetic scenes between two characters: Elisabeth/Philippe before the Quartet (III, i) and Elisabeth/Eboli before Eboli's aria (III, i)

Larger ensembles: the music of the Quartet (III, i) was revised, but the text remained the same.

Finales: A short revised finale restored to Act III, ii (the insurrection scene); the finale of Act IV (with Philippe, the Grand Inquisitor, and a chorus of Dominican monks and inquisition officials hurling accusations at Carlos – a foreshadowing of the judgment scene in *Aida*) was replaced by a short scene following the duet of Elisabeth and Carlos.

1886 Five-act version without ballet, first performed at the Teatro comunale of Modena, presumably with Verdi's permission. This was a scissors-and-paste job: the 1867 Act I was reattached to the 4-act version (to avoid duplication, Carlos's romance was removed from the following act).

[1] Not included here are solo passages within larger numbers, such as the suppression of Elisabeth's 'stupid' sixteen-bar cantabile within the scene with Philippe preceding the Quartet (III, i).

rather than going off to save Flanders, Carlos instead soon meets his mysterious end.[9]

I take seriously Carlos's eventual rejection of the private sphere and his espousal of political action and the public sphere and indeed, I view it as positive, even though it leads to his undoing – and without even the military victories and apotheoses that Giovanna d'Arco and Arrigo (in *La battaglia di Legnano*) achieve before *their* deaths. Like Goethe's Egmont, Don Carlos will not succeed in his

[9] That end may or may not be his death: according to the contemporary staging manual (see note 15), 'Elisabetta ringrazia il cielo' [Elisabeth thanks heaven], suggesting that at least she – and we have no reason to doubt her – viewed the ghostly appearance of the monk as a rescue operation that saved Carlos. But alive or dead, he is assuredly *hors de combat*.

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lifetime, but we know that their great cause will eventually prevail.[10] Don Carlos triumphs, at least over himself, through his political, public involvement.

'Pretend politics'? To be sure, at the end of the opera Carlos would be no more able to write the treatise *On Liberty* than he was at the beginning, and his 'conversion' to the political cause is obviously inspired by personal loyalty and personal loss: the death of Posa. But that is no reason for us to adopt a patronizing attitude towards that conversion: many political movements are fuelled by personal losses and injustices, rather than by abstract concepts learned from treatises. Sarah Brady probably would never have become a passionate advocate of handgun control if her husband had not been shot by a handgun (*pace* the National Rifle Association, guns *do* shoot people), but we take her political commitment seriously nonetheless. The weekly demonstrations of the mothers and wives of the *desaparacidos* in Argentina are another powerful example.

In this essay, therefore, I argue that the libretto, music and staging establish that Posa's death instils in Carlos a new sense of control and self-discipline, that his love for Elisabeth is thereby sublimated towards political aims, that Carlos, unlike Manrico, does learn something over the course of the opera.

*

A few words before we proceed: in considering the openness of the text of *Don Carlos*, Roger Parker observes that 'The mere act of choosing the text [to be performed] becomes, in other words, an inescapably interpretative gesture'.[11] Since I am writing about *Don Carlos* here – not staging it – I can avoid these tough interpretative gestures; I can keep all of the versions of the opera in play, rather than privileging any one *Fassung – letzter Hand* or otherwise.[12] And so I am not troubled that the earlier version may at times support my central thesis even better than the revised one. So far as sources are concerned, besides the various versions of the opera,[13] I will also refer to Schiller's play, Méry and Du Locle's early prose scenario,[14] excerpts from the correspondence

[10] Our perception might be different if we were attending one of the many eighteenth-century Montezuma operas, where the hapless hero's attempts to drive out the Spanish invaders are doomed to fail.

[11] 'There can be no "correct" choice in decisions such as this [whether or not to include the Woodcutters' chorus, which Verdi removed before the 1867 première of the opera], even when a conception of the entire operatic message might be at stake. The mere act of choosing the text becomes, in other words, an inescapably interpretative gesture'. 'On Reaching the Beguiled Shore', in *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, 1997), 3–19, here 13.

[12] Listeners familiar with the various versions will of course do the same: they will bring to a performance of the four-act version remembrances of performances with the Fontainebleau act, perhaps even including the *Introduction* suppressed before the première.

[13] Until the appearance of the *Don Carlos* volume in the critical edition, *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi*, the most useful edition is that prepared by Ursula Günther and Luciano Petazzoni: *Giuseppe Verdi: 'Don Carlos', Edizione integrale delle varie versioni in cinque e in quattro atti*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1974–80).

[14] The scenario, edited by Ursula Günther, is reproduced in *L'Avant-scène Opéra*, 90/91 (1986), 28–35.

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between Verdi and his librettists, and the Ricordi *disposizione scenica* (staging manual).[15]

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By hypothesis, then, one cannot understand Carlos solely by considering examples of his instability *before* Posa's death in the second set of Act IV, and, far from defending his behaviour before that point, I welcome the Carlos-bashing of his critics. I readily concede that there is something strange about Carlos between the moment in which he loses Elisabeth and the moment in which he loses Posa. He is constantly terrified and trembling; he becomes delirious and even faints.[16] It might be perfectly natural for me and perhaps for you as well to be terrified by the shot of an arquebus, but that is not the point: other Verdian tenors would not be. Carlos is no Manrico.

Let us look at a few moments in which Carlos's political resolve is deflected by personal concerns (whether love or friendship), most of which will also involve musical representations of Carlos's instability and tendency to hysteria.[17]

As Roger Parker has noted, after the young lovers learn that Elisabeth is destined to marry Philippe, Verdi stages a 'battle' between their 'private' triplet 'resistance motive' introduced with the text 'L'heure fatale est sonnée!' and the 'public' jaunty, repetitious theme assigned to the chorus.[18] (See Ex. 1a, where the usually minor-mode triplet motive has been assimilated to the major mode of the chorus theme.) As soon as the chorus leaves the stage and falls silent, Carlos, 'solo e disperato, ed affranto dal dolore' [alone, desperate, and disheartened by sadness, the *disposizione scenica* indicates], 'over a coda-like orchestral elaboration of the chorus's theme', abandons the triplet figure. His line 'disintegrates, becoming breathless and

[15] The *disposizione scenica* was issued by Ricordi soon after the 1867 première and again, in revised form, in 1886: 'Disposizione scenica per l'opera *Don Carlo* di G. Verdi compilata e regolata secondo la mise en scène del Teatro Imperiale dell'Opéra di Parigi' (Milano Napoli [etc.], Regio Stabilimento Tito di Gio. Ricordi, 1867 (plate number 40699; copies in the Museo teatrale alla Scala and the Biblioteca braidense, both in Milan). The 1886 version has the same title, but with the addition of 'terza edizione' at its end; the publisher is now styled 'Regio stabilimento musicale Ricordi' (plate number 51142; copy in the Milan Conservatory). In the scene considered here – the Elisabeth/Carlos duet (Act V, scene 2) – the two versions are identical.

[16] Some examples: he trembles when he sees the monk at the beginning of Act II, he is 'épouvanté' twice in his duet with Eboli and again with the shot that kills Posa. The delirium and fainting occur in the Act II duet with Elisabeth (see below).

[17] There is no need to provide an operational definition of what counts as a lack of musical control, as there is general agreement about these much-discussed passages. But, to state the case informally, some of the markers of ineptitude or the lack of control are a *tendency towards* such features as tonal instability (including rapid modulatory activity, deceptive cadences, and, in authentic cadences, the habit of ending on $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$ rather than $\hat{1}$), towards irregularity of phrasing, towards declamatory rather than lyrical lines in contexts where we would expect the latter, towards obsessive repetition or sequential presentation of motives, etc. However, Carlos cannot be diagnosed with the 'Gilda syndrome': he is not prevented from making 'independent and sustained musical statements' by others and he certainly is not governed by 'strict formal constraints [or] generally limited range of expression' – quite the opposite. See Elizabeth Hudson's 'Gilda seduced: A tale untold', *this journal*, 4 (1992), 229–51, here, 235.

[18] Parker, 'Elisabeth's Last Act', in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton, 2000), 93–117, here 97–100.

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Ex. 1a: Act I (the 'Fontainebleau' act) – the conflict between the lovers and society.

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Ex. 1b: Act I, ending – Carlos alone.

fragmented', and he eventually assimilates the rhythm and even a characteristic chromatic lower neighbour motive from the chorus (see Ex. 1b). (His vocal line, I would add, initially shadows the new chromatic bass line of the 'orchestral elaboration' and eventually collapses on scale-degree $\hat{5}$, rather than closing on $\hat{1}$.) Parker concludes that by adopting the motivic material of the chorus Carlos has 'despaired and capitulated' to the demands of the public sphere. Perhaps, but 'capitulation' might suggest an act of will, a conscious surrender. I want to supplement Parker's reading with one that emphasizes the irrational aspects of that despair and capitulation, by focusing on what Carlos 'hears', rather than what he sings. The upper voices of the anguished 'orchestral elaboration' are built upon a sequential re-rhythmicized presentation of the first four notes of the original theme, chromatic and minor-mode inflected. It is perhaps best heard as a representation of what Carlos 'hears' and feels: a distorted, embittered rehearing of the chorus's utterances, given free rein once the chorus and its 'regular' version are no longer

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seen or heard. Carlos has not chosen this music – it comes involuntarily to him in his state of desperation.[19]

I want now to reconsider the notorious 'friendship cabaletta', often represented as at least a momentary triumph of Carlos's political will. There is no question that Posa brings Carlos into a musical style marked by stability here,[20] but the text may undercut the strength of Carlos's political resolve. After its confident initial statement, Carlos, assailed by the vision of Elisabeth together with Philippe and by the sound of the chanting of the monks, loses that resolve and starts trembling once more ('Je frémis!') The expected reprise is much abbreviated, with the tune whispered by the orchestra before Carlos and Posa, after stammering on repeated notes, finally rejoin the melody before a purely orchestral *fortissimo* restatement. What is more, rather than the usual restatement of the text of the original statement, the text of this reprise focuses solely on their oath to 'mourir en nous aimant' [to die while loving each other]; the closing words are 'Soyons unis! pour la vie et la mort' [Let us be united for life and death]. The public love of liberty so prominent in the original statement ('L'amour de la liberté!') now goes unmentioned, crushed by the presence of Elisabeth and replaced by the theme of camaraderie.[21]

In his remarkable duet with Elisabeth in Act II, too, private concerns soon break apart the tenuously constructed public face. Carlos starts out well, with great control and formality – perhaps the orchestral rehearsal of his theme shows him mentally choosing his words – asking the Queen for the favour of intervening on his behalf with the King to leave for Flanders – a political goal – but then swerves to the private sphere and almost immediately disintegrates. In the course of the duet he falls into a delirium, he faints, he declares his love for Elisabeth, twice throws his arms around her[22] – all this with a stunning musical representation of disorder and sorrow.[23] Robinson did well to choose this duet to demonstrate Carlos's instability.

Carlos engages with the political sphere again in the Act III Finale, after his fashion. There is nothing remarkable about his taking the part of the Flemish deputies in the *largo concertato*, for so does everyone except Philippe and the six monks. But then Carlos confronts the King. That he begins his 'Sire, il est temps que je vive!' speech on a close variant of his and Elisabeth's 'resistance' triplet figure on the text 'L'heure

[19] The closest example of this dramaturgical manoeuvre in Verdi's operas may be the moment in Ford's monologue (*Falstaff*, II, first set), in which Falstaff's motive (words and music) 'Te lo cornifico' [I'll cuckold him for you] whirls about in Ford's fevered brain as he 'hears' the whistles and name-calling behind his back ('Già dietro di me nomi d'infame conio / Fischian passando; mormora lo scherno) and later the ugly word 'horns' returns to haunt his heart (and ears?): 'Quella brutta parola in cor mi torna'.

[20] Because of the consensus that the theme is 'banal', however, it has rarely been noted that it opens with an asymmetrical phrase structure, a four-bar antecedent followed by a seven-bar consequent, with a harmonic deflection to iii before the return to the tonic.

[21] This point is lost – or a different (less interesting?) point is made – in the Italian translation, which ends with Carlo and Rodrigo shouting about shouting about liberty: 'Grido estremo sarà: Libertà' ['Our final shout will be: Liberty'].

[22] It is only in the *disposizione scenica* that he encircles her with his arms after the line 'Elisabeth, c'est toi!', some twenty bars before pressing her into his arms after his avowal of love ('Je t'aime, Elisabeth! Le monde est oublié').

[23] See the discussion in Robinson (see n. 5), 188–93.

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Ex. 2: Act III finale – Carlos defies his father.

fatale est sonnée' from Act I (compare Ex. 2 and Ex. 1a) may resonate with Robinson's suggestion that 'Carlo's political acts are thinly disguised sublimations: Flanders is an excuse for expressing his hatred of his father'; however, it is necessary to be circumspect, for not every appearance of that motive can bear such an interpretation.[24] His ranting and raving and drawing his sword against his father is an

[24] Robinson, 188. Péter Pál Várnai cites ten examples of the motive, which he interprets as belonging to Elisabeth, Don Carlos and their tragic fate as individuals. Some of these musical connections are more convincing than others. See his 'Unità musicale e drammaturgica nel *Don Carlo*', in *Atti del II° Congresso* (see n. 4), 402–11. To Várnai's sample could be added Carlos's outburst 'Malheureux! Mon Rodrigue lui même' shortly after his confession in the Act I duet with Posa (1884 version), the F# minor triplet figure that emerges in the Prelude to Elisabeth's aria, and Carlos's first interventions in the 'Oui, voilà l'héroïsme' passage in the following duet.

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act of stereotypical male madness that complements his feminized swooning during the Act II duet with Elisabeth (not to mention his constant trembling and other manifestations of fear). And just as in the duet, he loses control of the musical discourse, lapsing into incoherence with irregular phrasing, deceptive cadences, harmonic non-sequiturs, and obsessively repeated motives. His political action in the finale, then, is also incoherent and Infantile; even his supporters – Elisabeth, Thibault and Posa – join the crowd and the monks in crying out: 'L'Infant est en délire'.

We next come upon Carlos in Act IV, second set. He is despondent once more, and even before a word is spoken, the orchestra plays a tormented, diminished-seventh-inflected version of the Fontainebleau duet motive, telling us that he is thinking about Elisabeth as ever.[25] And, sure enough, he very soon tells Posa, 'L'amour d'Elisabeth me torture et me tue . . . / Non! je ne puis plus rien pour les hommes!' [My love for Elisabeth tortures and kills me . . . / No! I can do no more for mankind!]. So he has gone full circle back to the debilitating despair he felt at the beginning of Act II. At this point it certainly seems that, in Robinson's phrase, Carlos is 'an utterly inadequate vessel for the cause of Flemish liberty'.

But Posa's death brings about a change. We first see it in the Carlos/Philippe duet that was cut before the dress rehearsals for the 1867 première but which is now frequently introduced into performances. Here Carlos apostrophizes his dead friend:

> O mon ami, donne moi ta grande âme,
> Fais de moi le héros de ton monde nouveau!
> Remplis mon coeur de la divine flamme
> Ou fais moi près de toi place dans le tombeau!

[O my friend, give me your great soul / Make me the hero of your new world / Fill my soul with the divine flame / Or make a place for me near you in your tomb.]

After the turn to the tonic major, Carlos harps on the third line: 'Remplis mon coeur de la divine flamme', ending with a tombless abridgement of the last line: 'Ou fais moi place près de toi'. With all the text repetition, he utters the word 'tombeau' only three times. Far from viewing Carlos as *ein Todgeweihter*, seeking death or destined to it, I take his speech to be an affirmation of political engagement, foreshadowing his 'Vous chantez mon triomphe ou pleurez sur ma mort' in the Act V duet. To be sure, perhaps his efforts will end in death, but when orators unfurl and wave the 'Give me liberty or give me death!' flag, they probably hope that the outcome will be the former and not the latter.

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As early as the prose scenario of the opera, Act V was divided into four stages. Although the entire act is spun from the brief final scene (Act V, scene 3) in Schiller's play, Verdi's opera introduces one episode – Don Carlos and Elisabeth's fond recollections of their love – that has no counterpart in Schiller. The other three

[25] It tells us that even if the Fontainebleau act is omitted. When the motive is first heard at the beginning of Act I of the four-act version, it is quite clearly associated with the 'jeune fiancée', the 'doux pays de France', and the 'bois de Fontainebleau! . . .' Perhaps it is best heard as the 'recurrence' of a musical idea whose initial presentation we were not privileged to hear, like Ferrando's famous couplet in the Act II Finale of *Così fan tutte* that precedes two recurring themes but has not itself been heard earlier ('A voi s'inchina, bella damina, / Il cavaliere dell'Albania').

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main segments of the final act are drawn from Schiller: a decisive sublimation of that love to political engagement; a farewell during which the ex-lovers transform their passion into maternal and filial love; and the violent interruption of that farewell by Philippe, the Grand Inquisitor, and their entourage.

The original plan was to open the act not with Elisabeth's aria 'Toi qui sus le néant', but with an extended solo for Don Carlos.[26] In the scenario 'he remembers Fontainebleau and the enchanting time in the gardens of Spain, where at each moment he believed he saw Elisabeth appear;[27] he especially remembers his friend' (clearly Posa – the masculine form 'ami' is used). Du Locle provided text for a substantial aria, but Verdi rejected that, settling for a monologue, for which we have his skeleton score. In that skeleton score there are recollections of the monks' music in Act II, of the theme of the Fontainebleau cabaletta – set up by the words 'France' and 'Fontainebleau' – and a recollection of Carlos's Act II duet with Elisabeth.[28] That duet is set not in 'gardens' but amidst the orange and pine trees in the convent of St Just – close enough. This is a double recollection, for the passage in the duet quoted includes Carlos's delirious recollection of Elisabeth seated at his side in Fontainebleau: 'Elisabeth, c'est toi, assise à mes côtés, comme aux jours d'autrefois' [Elisabeth, it is you, seated at my side, as in the days gone by]. The image of 'les bois' [the woods] may have spurred Carlos to remember this moment: in the duet the passage ends with the line 'Ah! le printemps vermeil a reverdi les bois! . . .' [Ah! blushing spring has rendered the woods verdant again!] – and 'bois' is set off by a striking deceptive cadence to a diminished-third chord. In Carlos's Act V monologue the text is 'Beaux jardins espagnols . . . / Que vos gazons, vos fontaines, vos bois / Chantent mon amour avec toutes leurs voix!' [Beautiful Spanish gardens . . ., may your flowers, your lawns, your fountains, your *woods* sing my love with all their voices], and 'bois' is again set off: it is the highest note in the passage.[29]

And what of 'his friend', Posa? In the opening recitative Carlos vows to complete the work that Posa had begun, but there is no reappearance of the tune of the friendship cabaletta, which fortunately died with Posa himself.

[26] See Andrew Porter's 'A Sketch for *Don Carlos*', *Musical Times*, 111 (1970), 882–5; Parker, 'Elisabeth's Last Act', 105–6, and 267, n. 24. As Porter notes, this is not really a sketch but rather an uncompleted skeleton score; the article includes a transcription of that score.

[27] As Porter points out (883, n. 9), this seems to refer not to the Act II duet of Carlos and Elisabeth, but rather to the first set of Act III, where Carlos, having received a note, 'waits, trembling with happiness at the idea of seeing the Queen appear' (scenario, III, i). It is a curious memory for him to treasure, since that happiness was shattered when the masked woman who appeared was revealed to be Eboli.

[28] The reprises of 'le motif de la prière des moines autour du tombeau de Charles-Quint' and 'la scène d'amour du 2ème Acte' were suggested by Du Locle in the first version of the libretto. There the monks' music was triggered not only by the return to the tomb of Charles V in the cloister of St Just but also by the text: Carlos apostrophizes the cloister and Charles himself ('O portiques muets, tombeaux, voûtes glacées', etc.). In the monologue the alternation of the monks' theme and the Fontainebleau theme before Carlos begins his recitative reveals the contents of his 'méditation profonde'.

[29] The Italian translation preserves the textual reprise, but basing it on 'fiori' [flowers] rather than 'bois': 'Che le zolle, i ruscelli, i fonti, i boschi, i *fior*, / Con le lor armonie cantino il nostro amor' is the text of the Act V duet, while that of the Act II duet is 'Ah! il ciel s'illuminò, la selva ri*fiorì*'.

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Andrew Porter suggests a number of possible reasons for Verdi's decision to give the solo to Elisabeth rather than Carlos, including doubts about the tenor's ability, the ineffectiveness of starting '*two* consecutive scenes with a brooding hero', and Elisabeth's need for a substantial aria. The decision may have been over-determined. Perhaps the most compelling reason offered by Porter – at least the most useful one for my argument about *Carlos*'s last act – is 'Verdi had asked his librettist to keep closer to the spirit of Schiller's final scene, in which Carlos is all noble resolution, at last unweakened by love . . . So let Elisabeth, with a pang, first recall past happiness; let Carlos's thoughts be fixed on the liberation of Flanders'.[30] It is indeed safer that Carlos's moments of nostalgia be suppressed – nostalgia can dangerously breed hope and desire that would threaten his political role. And Elisabeth's pang is important for her as well. It is high time that she relaxed her stiff upper lip a bit, that she lose her Metastasian control of her passions. As Julian Budden has noted, in the heroism solo in the duet she takes on something of Posa's spirit.[31] I would go further, suggesting that in her last act Elisabeth regains the passion that she forsook at the end of Act I, taking on not only Posa's engagement but also the *vague des passions* of Carlos, just as Carlos regains a measure of control over himself.[32]

*

As my epigraph makes clear, Schiller considered Carlos's rejection of the private domain and his acceptance of the mantle of political responsibility handed down from Posa crucial to the play's concluding scene and thus to the play as a whole. It is no less important to the opera.

To understand the importance that Verdi gave to this transformation of Carlos's character, it is useful to consider the superficially 'stageworthy' solution he was offered and his reaction to it. In a striking departure from both Schiller and the prose scenario, in an early draft of the libretto Du Locle followed Carlos's solo with what Budden terms 'a duet of Tristanesque fervour'.[33] Carlos declares his love to be dead and his virtue unbent, but then, pressing Elisabeth to his heart, bursts out, 'Mes os, dans le tombeau, tressailleront pour toi Elisabeth! . . . Ah! Je t'aime! . . . Je t'aime! . . .' [My bones, in the tomb, will quiver for you![34] Elisabeth, I love you!]. Together the

[30] Porter (see n. 26), 883. Verdi's request that the librettist hew to Schiller is discussed in the following two paragraphs. Not surprisingly, Parker, emphasizing *Elisabeth*'s Last Act, prefers to view the aria as part of the plan of 'bolstering her part, broadening and deepening her character' (106).

[31] Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3 vols., rev. edn. (Oxford, 1992), III, 4–157, here 148.

[32] From a different perspective, Aldo Nicastro ventures that Elisabeth's music, through its contact with Carlos's, undergoes a 'stylistic and expressive contamination'. 'Carlos, Infante di Spagna' (see n. 4), 446.

[33] Budden, II, 18–19. The libretto draft is reproduced in Ursula Günther, 'La Genèse de *Don Carlos*, opéra en cinq actes de Giuseppe Verdi, représenté pour la première fois à Paris le 11 mars 1867', *Revue de musicologie, 58* (1972), 16–64, and 60 (1974), 87–158, here 60: 90–4.

[34] An unfortunate line that hilariously suggests the clacking of bones, whether solitary or in passionate union.

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pair ask that God's sacred justice unite them forever in Hell or Heaven. So much for Posa and Flanders and all that public, political nonsense about liberty and all! Carlos might as well have shouted 'To hell with Posa and Flanders, I love you, I love you'.

This mindless rush into the vortex of passion was enthusiastically recommended by Emile Perrin, director of the Opéra, who wrote that 'this explosion of a passion held so forcibly in check up to that point seems to me necessary to conclude the drama'.[35] But Verdi's distaste for that ending could hardly have been more virulent: 'By bringing back the love you *depoeticize* (or whatever the word should be) the situation which is so lofty and sublime in Schiller's conception. At a moment like this ''Je t'aime, je t'aime'' – je ne l'aime pas du tout'.[36]

*

The solution that Verdi and Du Locle finally arrived at for the final scene emphasizes the balance of love and duty above all: the love must be acknowledged, but it must at the same time be sublimated into political action. Embraces are quickly abandoned; the 'vous' form is maintained (except for one 'slip' from Elisabeth). In the opera Carlos even foregoes the kiss that he gives her in Schiller's play. And with this gradual assertion of duty and the public sphere over unruly passion comes *musical* control: just as Carlos in Act V no longer continually trembles with fear, so does he gain control over his musical discourse, avoiding extended lapses into incoherence that marked his vocal ventures in the past.

*

In the opening recitative Carlos has a momentary (col)lapse into self-pity ('mais quand l'amour se brise, il tue avant la mort') but this verbal weakening is given little musical emphasis in either the 1867 or 1884 version. He soon recovers, shifting his attention to Flanders, resolving to erect a tomb for Posa (the passage cited by Schiller in the epigraph). In the 1867 version, however, the thought of this magnificent tomb fails to inspire Carlos to find music matching his lofty sentiments: his phrase is sung largely on repeated notes, ending inconclusively on a V_2^4 of F minor harmony. Despite the support suggested by her words, Elisabeth's music then 'contradicts' Carlos, lurching to A♭ for her lyrical phrase ending the section (see Ex. 3a).

In the 1884 version, in contrast, Carlos gains not only enthusiasm but also control as his attention shifts from his broken love to Posa's tomb (see Ex. 3b). Here he

[35] For the text of Perrin's letter (14 June 1866), see Günther, 'La Genèse', 60, 90–4.

[36] Letter to Perrin, 21 June 1866; translation from Budden, III, 19. For the original French, see Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi*, 4 vols. (Milan, 1959), III, 91–2. Giuseppina's draft had offered 'me choque' as an alternative to 'je ne l'aime pas du tout'; see Alessandro Luzio, *Carteggi Verdiani*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1935–47), II, 25.

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Ex. 3a: Act V, recitative of Elisabeth/Carlos duet, 1867 version.

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Ex. 3b: Act V, recitative of Elisabeth/Carlos duet, 1884 version.

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pronounces his resolve *avec enthousiasme*, and the line develops into an arioso phrase reaching his highest notes in the section and aiming towards an authentic cadence, although that is postponed with a deceptive cadence.[37] Elisabeth now supports him musically, completing the cadence in A♭ that he had attempted. In general the 1884 version reveals greater musical control: note the purposefully descending bass line leading to the deceptive cadence, the greater harmonic stability of Carlos's speech, now in the same key as Elisabeth's glorious phrase that concludes the section.

In the next section of the duet, however, it is the 1867 version that arms Carlos with a greater resolve than he would possess in 1884. In the earlier version, according to Julian Budden, 'Carlos tells how his fair dream of love has faded before a vision of a land laid waste':

J'avais fait un beau rêve . . . il fuit . . . et le jour sombre
me montre un incendie illuminant les airs . . .

[I dreamed a beautiful dream . . . it faded . . . and the dark daylight shows me a fire lighting up the air . . .]

In setting this text, Budden suggests, 'Verdi took his cue from the word 'incendie' and portrayed a spreading fire through a developing motive which, as it gathers force, produces some bold combinations of horizontal patterns'.[38] An apt characterization, although I would want to add that the phrase structure, with its repetitions of four-bar blocks themselves divided into two-bar segments, and the long pauses Carlos places on every caesura, somewhat mitigates the impulsiveness of the flame-motive, endowing Carlos with some measure of musical control.

In the 1884 version Carlos re-experiences his dream of love for Elisabeth, then rejects it. The orchestra brings the dream back to him with the phrase he sang in the Act II duet with Elisabeth that began 'O bien perdu . . . Trésor sans prix!' and ended 'Parlez, parlez, enivrée et ravie, mon âme, à votre voix, rêve du paradis!' Immediately after 'il fuit' the motive's cadential formula twists itself into a triplet rhythm, transforming itself into a different melody – that of the final stanza of the 'Ingemisco' of the *Messa da Requiem* – and careers wildly through chromatic sequences.

It might seem that the intensity of this passage, especially but not exclusively in the 1884 version, contradicts my argument that Carlos is now completely changed, capable of meaningful political action and coherent musical discourse. But this would be to overlook the crucial fact that here Carlos acts as a narrator, and his

[37] The cadence lands on a passing augmented triad before moving to vi; I doubt that this cadential progression, found in the first song and epilogue of Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*, appears elsewhere in Verdi's oeuvre. Indeed, Verdi rarely uses augmented triads at all (the best-known example occurs at Ford's question, 'È sogno?' [is it a dream?] in Ford's monologue [*Falstaff*, II, first set]).

[38] Budden, III, 147.

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music expresses the horrors that he narrates, not his own mental confusion as in previous acts.[39]

With Carlos's recollection of his dream of love in the 1884 version, we have traced all of the recurring themes in Act V, except the two of the dénouement. Far from being 'dishevelled', the treatment of recurring themes seems well motivated.[40] I have mentioned three in Carlos's monologue, which are preserved in Elisabeth's aria 'Toi, qui sus le néant': the monks' chant (even more appropriate in Elisabeth's aria, as she apostrophizes Charles V), the Fontainebleau cabaletta, and the passage from the Act II duet. All three recurring musical motives are set up by a textual recollection. There are no recollections in the 1867 version of the duet, but in the 1884 version the 'beau rêve' is supported by a musical theme again associated with not only the general feeling but by specific text. The two remaining recurring themes, the reprise of the 'Mon fils, les douleurs de la terre' speech of the monk/Charles V and the chorus of the monks are also a clear response to the text. If anything, I can imagine that some critics less comfortable with 'redundancy' than I might fault the thematic recurrences for being *too* well motivated.

*

Even before the decision to give Elisabeth an extended aria at the opening of the act, Verdi had expanded her role in the duet from Schiller and the prose scenario, where she says hardly anything at all. The major addition to her part is her cabaletta-like speech, 'Oui, voilà l'héroïsme'.[41] Carlos joins in but refrains from repeating the main tune in its entirety and from engaging in any but the briefest *a2* passages with Elisabeth.

More interesting for our purposes, however, is the speech that follows, Carlos's 'Hier, hier encore, aucun pouvoir humain' [Yesterday, even yesterday, no human power]. Drawn from both Schiller and from the scenario, it is crucial for its acknowledgement of the love of Elisabeth and Carlos but also of its having been tamed. Here the 1867 Carlos is less interesting musically but far more disciplined

[39] A similar (and perhaps more clear-cut) example: in both versions of the Act I finale of *Simon Boccanegra* Amelia tells of her abduction by Lorenzo. On the line 'Io ben di quell'alma sapea la viltà' [Well I knew the cowardice of that soul], she depicts his *viltà* by singing in compound octaves with the bass line, otherwise without accompaniment, a sign used by Verdi for negative characterization, and in the 1881 version the line also takes on a Jago-like twisting shape. Amelia has not herself become cowardly; rather, as a narrator she has rather adopted the appropriate musical signs to depict Lorenzo's cowardice. (For the first point, see Péter Pál Várnai, 'Contributo per uno studio della tipizzazione negativa nelle opere verdiane: personaggi e situazioni', in *Atti del I° Congresso internazionale di studi verdiani – Venezia, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 31 luglio–2 agosto 1966* ed. Marcello Pavarani and Pierluigi Petrobelli (Parma, 1969), 268–75. Várnai's article is controversial, but the topos of the unison as a marker for negative characterization seems to me well founded.)

[40] Cf. Joseph Kerman, 'Verdi's Use of Recurring Themes', in *Write All These Down: Essays on Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), 274–87, here 280–1.

[41] Verdi discusses the expansion of Elisabeth's role in his 4 September 1866 letter to Du Locle. See Abbiati (see n. 36), III, 102.

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than his 1884 counterpart. In the early version the first four lines are set to an eight-bar a a' thematic block; symmetry has overridden the contrast between his weakness *yesterday* (the first two lines), and his strength *today* (the third and fourth lines). The next couplet – he can hold her without faltering – leads to an authentic cadence, though with a turn to the parallel minor (see Ex. 4a). The *disposizione scenica* follows the sense of the text: he presses her within his arms at the line, 'Voyez, Elisabeth, je vous tiens dans mes bras' [See, Elisabeth, I hold you in my arms], and releases her on the next: 'Et ma vertu me reste et je ne fléchis pas' [And my virtue remains to me, and I do not weaken].

In the 1884 version there is a sharp contrast between the first pair of lines [yesterday] – treated now as a sequence heading towards E major but failing to cadence there – and the second pair [today], where he twice more tries unsuccessfully to cadence in that key (see Ex. 4b). First he cadences deceptively onto V^6_5 / vi and slides chromatically upwards, then, on the final attempt – on the text 'et ma vertu me reste et je ne fléchis pas' – he seems to regain control with a strong cadential gesture, but then cadences deceptively in vi (c#). And so, in this version, despite his words, Carlos does for a few moments lose control – he does weaken – although he soon enough regains his composure.[42]

As the duet's slow movement begins, we as listeners are probably eager for Carlos and Elisabeth to sing the theme together in octaves (or thirds and sixths). Their voices have not been permitted to mingle since the Fontainebleau act (if that is performed), since in their Act II duet Elisabeth, suppressing her passion, forces herself to stay musically aloof from Carlos. But not only are they denied the chance to sing the theme together, in the 1867 version they sing *a2* homorhythmically for only about five bars: the cadence at the end of the first quatrain and the cadenza-like *fortissimo* final adieu in thirds and sixths at the very end. The 1884 revision is only slightly less abstemious, but at least allows them to join in together with principal thematic material (the new theme introduced with the second quatrain of text) within the movement, if only for a couple of bars. What is more, the theme itself is unusually quiet and restrained, lacking a clear profile. It begins with repeated notes and only gradually flowers into a melody, while the orchestral accompaniment presents a triplet figure that we might hear as a pacified version of the ' "l'heure fatal est sonnée" motive' that Roger Parker has associated with Carlos's and Elisabeth's resistance to the public realm.

Why this timidity about bringing the two voices together? Because an extended passage of *a2* singing would depict them as lovers. This is a love duet, yes, but the love is chaste and sublimated. A duet about saying 'adieu': 'Lassù ci vedremo in un mondo migliore'. Especially in the Italian translation, the text recalls the death of Gilda and also the sub-genre in which it takes part, where the character dies in a

[42] In Budden's view, however, the key scheme of the revised version is 'more compatible with the previous mood of heroic resolution', and 'the revised key scheme represents an unqualified improvement'. His argument depends on the tenuous proposition that a shift to the parallel minor 'suggests a negation of what has gone before, whereas a move to the relative minor implies a mere diversion from it' (Budden, III, 150).

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Ex. 4a: Act V, Elisabeth/Carlos duet, 1867 version.

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Ex. 4b: Act V, Elisabeth/Carlos duet, 1884 version.

slow consolatory ensemble, in the major mode.[43] There are differences, of course: in death scenes the characters are divided into those who die and those who mourn. But the same consolatory feeling is present, and as in many death scenes, an allegro

[43] See my article 'How Verdi's Serious Operas End', in *Atti del XIV Congresso della Società internazionale di musicologia: Trasmissione e recezione delle forme di cultura musicale, Bologna 27 agosto–10 settembre 1987; Ferrara–Parma 30 agosto 1987*, 3 vols. (Turin, 1990), II, 443–50; reprinted in *The Verdi Newsletter*, 20 (1992), 9–15.

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Ex. 4b *continued.*

final section brings about the final event of the opera (e.g., Rodolfo kills Wurm; Azucena reveals the secret: 'era tuo fratello'). At least with the abbreviated version of the dénouement found in 1884 and 1886, where the musical action can be reduced to a single cadence, it is easy to subsume the final episode – with the appearance of Philippe, the Grand Inquisitor and Charles V – into this scheme.[44]

*

Two people in a hopeless love, knowing that they must part, say farewell in a duet, only to be violently interrupted by a jealous husband. This describes not only the dénouement of *Don Carlos* but also that of *Un ballo in maschera*.[45] In *Ballo*, Riccardo tells Amelia that he has decided to send her to England: 'It breaks my heart, but you will leave, but addio!' According to the *disposizione scenica*, 'At the first "Addio" Riccardo, carried away, presses Amelia's hand to his heart but, rousing himself, resolutely takes several steps to take himself away from her; except that at the word "Riccardo", which she says with anguish, he turns back and, embracing her, says with all his soul, "Amelia: one more time [addio]" '. After the embrace, he actually turns to leave . . . but too late, for at that moment Renato stabs him. The difference

[44] It would be difficult to connect the full-fledged judgement scene of the 1867 version to any Italian tradition for the endings of operas, but there are of course ample precedents for violent, spectacular closes in French *grand opéra*.

[45] Some of the elements are also present at the end of the penultimate act of *La battaglia di Legnano*.

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is that in *Ballo* love is still an active force – it has not been sublimated; it has been thwarted.

The arrangement in the *disposizione scenica* of *Don Carlos* is similar in that Carlos turns to leave (as he says 'Adieu, ma mère'), but where Amelia seems to be motionless, with Riccardo moving away, back, and away again, here Carlos and Elisabeth are equally responsible for their reuniting ('then they move together again'). More important, they move together not to embrace but to face the audience together as they sing the final *a2* cadenza-like bars of the duet. The crucial point is to avoid an embrace that could be conceived as sexual rather than one appropriate for a mother and son saying farewell.

And yet, the distancing gesture of facing the audience seems too antiseptic. It is especially so when Carlos and Elisabeth have moved apart for the final adieu, as in the 1983 Metropolitan Opera production.[46] Are there alternatives? A son's chaste kiss on his mother's forehead perhaps? – showing Carlos's control. Or let Elisabeth take the lead, as in the Châtelet production's staging of the scene, in which she embraces him at the end of her *proposta* in the slow movement; she sadly plays with his hair; and finally makes a stunning twist of her body back towards Carlos, calling into being the *fortissimo* reaction of the orchestra, and rushes into his arms for the final 'adieu' in thirds and sixths.[47]

*

If only one could end here, with the hope that Carlos will bring liberty to Flanders and erect that monument to Posa. But the finale must be faced. Schiller offers neither a mirror for princes nor assistance to librettists here: Philip enters in the midst of the antepenultimate line of the play, giving Carlos the chance only to assist the fainting Queen before the King turns him over to the Grand Inquisitor, a lamb led passively to slaughter. A fine ending for a stage play, but impossible for a French or Italian opera of the period. In the prose scenario, when the guards of the Inquisition are about to seize Carlos, 'Carlos, in despair, thrusts himself towards the tomb of Charles, invoking him'.[48] In an early draft of Du Locle's libretto – the one with the explosion of passion – Carlos turns towards the tomb of Charles V and improbably asks the 'dear and sacred' shade of Charles V for his help, and even more improbably, that help is granted.[49] In the completed opera, even though he is

[46] Metropolitan Opera, James Levine conducting, with Mirella Freni and Placido Domingo as Elisabetta and Carlo; Production, John Dexter (Pioneer Artists PA-84-075, 1983).

[47] Antonio Pappano conducting the Paris Orchestra, with Karita Mattila and Roberto Alagna as Elisabeth and Carlos; a live recording at the Châtelet Theater, Paris, 1996. Luc Bondy, stage director (West Long Branch, NJ, Kultur 2031, 1996).

[48] 'Carlos au déspoir se précipite vers le tombeau de Charles en l'invoquant'.

[49] Günther, 'La Genèse de *Don Carlos*, 60 (1974), 94. Carlos's speech begins, 'Ombre chère et sacrée / Redoutable Empereur, majesté vénérée / Ne laisse pas ton sang aux mains de ces bourreaux' [Dear and sacred shade, formidable Emperor, venerated majesty, do not leave your own flesh and blood in the hands of these executioners]. Verdi was not pleased: on 21 June 1866 he wrote to Perrin, 'Je n'aime pas la tirade de Carlos appellant l'Empereur' [I don't like the speech of Carlos summoning the Emperor]. Abbiati (see n. 36), III, 91.

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ultimately led *éperdu* into the tomb, he at least drew his sword and made an effort to defend himself, although unfortunately, unlike Cyrano de Bergerac or d'Artagnan, he did not single-handedly massacre his assailants and live to fight another day. Nothing succeeds like success: had he done so, critics would surely have recognized and valorized Carlos's development from a lovesick, neurotic adolescent to a man with a political mission, that development that justifies calling *Don Carlos* Verdi's *Bildungsoper*.

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