

## Chapter 8

# Ovid's Ironic Gaze: Voyeurism, Rape, and Male Desire in Cavalli's *La Calisto*

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Pieter Paul Rubens's 1613 painting of Jupiter and Callisto provides us with an intriguing glimpse of a prelude to a rape (see Figure 8.1). Inspired by the tale told in book 2 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the painting captures the moment in which Jupiter, having assumed the outward appearance of his sister Diana, advances on the nymph Callisto.<sup>1</sup> The picture is as appealing as it is disturbing. On the one hand it is deceptively innocent. Jupiter leans almost protectively over the object of his desire, tenderly lifting Callisto's chin and gazing into her eyes, seemingly with no further ambition than to steal a kiss. Their nudity, of course, invites the viewer to imagine a more vigorous encounter, as do other details in the painting. Note, for instance, Jupiter's physical dominance of Callisto, the unmistakable strength in his left arm and highly developed musculature in his back, not to mention her seemingly futile efforts to hold onto the diaphanous white cloth with her left hand and reach behind to grasp her quiver with her right. At the same time, the glimpse of the full left breast peeking out beneath Jupiter's purple drapery—far more voluptuous than Callisto's presumably more natural female endowments—disrupts our expectations of sexual violence, at least from a heteronormative point of view. In Rubens's rendering, Jupiter goes beyond mere transvestism: he has succeeded as only a god might in turning himself into a woman, to be sure, but one who is somewhat too strong and insufficiently pale to qualify as an early modern beauty. Moreover, the viewer might well be left wondering about the parts remaining under the royal robes. Does Jupiter's body mirror Callisto's own feminine form in all the details? Is this a prelude to actual intercourse, or is the whole notion of rape—that is to say penetration—all but impossible if the perpetrator has a body that so closely simulates that of a woman?

Rubens offers other clues that heighten the tensions ostensibly subdued by Jupiter's soothingly feminine presence. This is not the innocent, sylvan bucolic world associated with the Golden Age described by Virgil and Theocritus. Instead, the two bodies—the one golden, the other pale—are set on the left side of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Vlieghe, *Flemish Art and Architecture, 1585–1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), considers this painting in the context of Rubens's change of style after 1612, noting in particular the sculptural quality of the figures, closely modeled on Hellenistic statues that Rubens would have studied in Rome (p. 30).



Figure 8.1

Pieter Paul Rubens, *Jupiter and Callisto* (1613), Berlin / Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Kassel, Germany / Ute Brunzel / Art Resource, NY

canvas against a dark, almost indistinguishable tangle of branches; the sky is a swirl of ominous clouds suggesting an impending storm, with only a hint of the sunbeams visible over the hills in the distance. Rubens thus engages what Charles Segal has described as the symbolic role of landscape, particularly in tales involving rape, whereby the transformation “from apparent purity and peace to the opposite” parallels metaphorically the violation of the main character’s virginity.<sup>2</sup> Stephen Hinds, too, notes the “characteristic tension in the landscapes between the beautiful setting and the sufferings which befall most of the characters who inhabit or enter it.”<sup>3</sup> In Ovid’s landscapes, Hinds observes, the violence is “most often sexual, perpetuated within plots of courtship perverted or gone wrong” in which one can see “a kind of transformation of the gentle songs of erotic competition to which the pastoral landscape characteristically plays host.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, this transformation is so complete that Callisto’s experience with Jupiter causes her to hate the forest that she had once so loved (Ovid, *Met.* 2. 438–40).

But the care with which Rubens has structured this scene is particularly apparent in his use of the eagle, standing in the light in a clearing just behind the two protagonists. Both companion to and signifier of the god, the eagle, with its alert gaze, prominent beak, and raised wing, seems to testify to the god’s unrelenting male potency, even as he relinquishes the appearance of masculinity to pursue another conquest. What is particularly fascinating, however, is the way in which the eagle becomes yet another attentive viewer, albeit one with a somewhat different perspective. After all, the eagle is in on the joke: how can he help but look approvingly and with considerable pride at the antics of his doppelgänger, anticipating with pleasure the inevitable outcome of the trick played on the unsuspecting nymph? The viewer of the painting thus has a variety of perspectives from which to choose. Is this an instance of same-sex desire between two women, in which the viewer—with full knowledge of the tale—nonetheless assumes that this feminized Jupiter would never perpetrate a violent rape? Or might she also assume the position of the omniscient eagle, who with full masculine vigor looks on with more than a touch of irony at a sexual act that will ultimately impregnate the nymph, cause her banishment from the forest, her transformation into a bear, and eventual ascension to the heavens? Or could the eagle even represent the Ovidian narrator—who has access to all the backstories and outcomes, and whose sense of morality is in constant flux?

This chapter considers Francesco Cavalli’s opera *La Calisto* (1651) from the eagle’s point of view. It examines the way in which this particular opera reflects Ovid’s unmatched sense of irony as an expression of masculine desire

<sup>2</sup> Charles Segal, *Landscape in Ovid’s Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*, Hermes, Einzelschriften, 23 (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1969), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Hinds, “Landscape with Figures: Aesthetics of Place in the *Metamorphoses* and its Tradition,” in *The Cambridge Guide to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 130.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 131.

and frustration. Since its revival in Glyndebourne in the 1960s in the edition by Raymond Leppard, *La Calisto* has gone on to become one of Cavalli's most often performed operas, although it was not a success in its own time.<sup>5</sup> This is perhaps not difficult to understand. The appeal of *La Calisto* to modern audiences may well be a result of the work's inherent eroticism, that—while central to the Ovidian myth on which it is based—was exploited still further in Giovanni Faustini's libretto and Francesco Cavalli's score.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, given the failure in its day, it is possible that these elements were too daring, even for the carnivalesque world of seicento Venice.

My earlier study of *La Calisto* focused primarily on the issue of female desire, and on the surface this is what seems to be expressed in Rubens's painting.<sup>7</sup> However, in this chapter I am interested in exploring how Cavalli and Faustini used the tale of Callisto to represent masculine desire and sexual aggression by expanding the role of the voyeur both within and outside the opera, creating moments of erotic representation in which a complicit audience is left to imagine the details of the potential sexual encounter. Notably, the emphasis on voyeurism is not only characteristic of the important rape/seduction scene between Jupiter and Callisto, but also in the opera's use of what we might term Dionysian elements: that is, by exploiting myths about Pan and his satyrs, who in fact have no business at all appearing in Callisto's story.<sup>8</sup> Such mixing of characters and plots is by no

<sup>5</sup> For instance, *La Calisto* was presented at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden in September of 2008. On the failure of *La Calisto*, see Beth and Jonathan Glixon, *Marco Faustini and Opera Production in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, American Musicological Society Studies in Music (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 311. There are now two excellent critical editions of the opera: one edited by Jennifer Williams Brown (*La Calisto*, Collegium Musicum Yale University, series 2, vol. 16 [Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 2007]) and the other by Álvaro Torrente and Nicolo Badolato (*La Calisto* [Kassel: Barenreiter, 2012]).

<sup>6</sup> For the complete myth, see Ovid, *Met.* 2. 401–531. Ovid's version recounts how Jupiter, enamored by the nymph, takes on the physical appearance of the goddess Diana in order to rape the unsuspecting girl. Her pregnancy is discovered by the real Diana, who forces her to leave her beloved forest, and Juno (Jupiter's wife) transforms her into a bear. Just as a hunter is about to shoot the mother and son in their bear forms, Jupiter intervenes and raises them to the heavens as the Great and Little Bear constellations, respectively. Faustini's libretto, which also introduces secondary plot lines involving other myths, follows the basic outline of the story, although Calisto responds to Giove's advances far more willingly. For a detailed consideration of the opera in relation to the myth, see Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 181–94. See also Susan McClary, "Gender Ambiguities and Erotic Excess in Seventeenth-Century Music," in *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance across the Disciplines*, ed. Mark Franko and Annette Richards (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), 177–200.

<sup>7</sup> Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 191–219.

<sup>8</sup> The opera's secondary plot involves the erotic triangle between the goat-god Pan, the goddess Diana, and the shepherd moon-gazer Endymion. For a detailed consideration of

means unusual in Venetian opera. Yet, what is novel here is the special use of the more violent, less innocent elements borrowed from pastoral plays—we might cite in particular Tasso's *Aminta* (1573)—in which the perennially frustrated desires of satyrs for chaste nymphs acquire ritual status.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the invocation of the dark side of the pastoral provides us with a key to understanding one of the unique musical features of the opera: the rhythmic intensity gained through librettist Faustini's constant use of *verso sdrucciolo* (dactylic) rhythm for all the utterances of the bestial creatures, which creates a unique aural landscape for the rustic scenes.<sup>10</sup> With *La Calisto*, we thus have the opportunity not merely to see masculine desire, but to hear it as well.

### Rape, Pleasure, and the Voyeur

*La Calisto* is not the only early seventeenth-century opera to be predicated on a rape or attempted rape. In the early decades of the genre, librettists, composers, patrons, and their audiences were happily complicit in the dramatization of a host of Ovidian tales involving reluctant nymphs, including not only Rinuccini's *Dafne*, but also a host of other unfortunate nymphs—Europa, Proserpina, Arethusa, and, of course, Callisto.<sup>11</sup> Visual artists were also fascinated by the combination of sensuality and violence invoked by these narratives, as is apparent in such works as Bernini's sculptures of the *Rape of Proserpina* (1621–22) and *Apollo and Dafne* (1620–21) or Titian's *Rape of Europa* (1559).<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the messages suggested by these works are by no means self-evident.<sup>13</sup> Part of Ovid's appeal in

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the background of these myths and their relationship to one another in the opera, see Heller, *ibid.*, 181–94.

<sup>9</sup> On *Aminta* and its rejection of the kind of innocence and purity deemed appropriate for court audiences, see Jané Tylus, "Veiling the Stage: The Politics of Innocence in Renaissance Drama," *Theatre Journal* 41 (Mar. 1989): 16–29.

<sup>10</sup> On the use of *sdrucciolo* in Venetian opera, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 341. See also the excellent preface by Jennifer Williams Brown to her edition of *La Calisto*, xxxiii. On the significance of the use of *versi sdruccioli* in *La Calisto*, see also Wendy Heller, "Dancing Desire on the Venetian Stage," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15 (2003): 281–95.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Ovidian rapes in opera, see Wendy Heller, *Animating Ovid: Opera and the Metamorphosis of Antiquity in Early Modern Italy*, in preparation. Among the many early operas that treat these Ovidian rapes are Filippo Vitali's *Aretusa* (1620) and Claudio Monteverdi's *Proserpina rapita* (1630); Gabriello Chiabrera's *Il ratto di Europa* was presented as the second intermedio in the performance of Guarini's *Idropica* in 1608 for the wedding of Francesco Gonzaga and Margherita of Savoy in Mantua.

<sup>12</sup> See Philipp P. Fehl, "The Rape of Europa and Related Ovidian Pictures by Titian (I and II)," *Fenway Court* (1980): 2–19.

<sup>13</sup> Amy Richlin notes that there are over fifty tales involving rape in the *Metamorphoses*, with at least nineteen told in some detail. See Richlin, "Reading Ovid's



the early modern period—and the charm of a work such as *La Calisto*—had to do with the impossibility of reducing these narratives and the art works inspired by them to simple ideological statements. Ovid deftly shifts the reader's perspective so as to engender a broad spectrum of emotions: from sorrow to empathy to desire, mockery, and even celebration. In the tale of Apollo and Dafne (Ovid, *Met.* 1. 451–567), for example, the reader's initial inclination to empathize with the nymph is quickly counteracted by the narrator, who tells the story almost entirely through the eyes of the desiring male. Apollo ruminates on Daphne's beauty, the enticing disarray of her hair, contemplating how much more beautiful she might look were her hair better groomed; he cannot help observing how fear and flight make her that much more desirable.<sup>14</sup> Yet, by the end of the tale, as Daphne's laurel branches become the symbol not only of Apollo's artistry, but are also used to laud Roman victories, the erotic impetus of the myth is all but lost in the glorification of Rome. Subtle mockery is also a feature of Ovid's most important portraits of female heroines, the *Heroides*, a point that is often missed by opera historians. Musicologists have invested a great deal in Arianna's heroic stature as a lamenting woman, taking quite seriously the way in which her desperate plight brought tears to the eyes of the Mantuan audience.<sup>15</sup> But in Ovid's *Heroides* 10, when she clings to a rock writing a passionate letter to Theseus that has no possibility of ever reaching the intended recipient, she would also have been wet and scantily clad—an appealing vision for the masculine imagination.<sup>16</sup> This might well have been what made her such a desirable bride for Bacchus, who must have gazed longingly upon her before his noisy arrival on the island. The irony here is that extreme female emotions—the despair of death,

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Rapes,” in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. Richlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 158–79 at 158. See also W. R. Johnson, “The Rapes of Callisto: Readings of Ovid's Versions in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*,” *Classical Journal* 92 (1996): 9–24; Barbara Stirrup, “Techniques of Rape: Variety of Wit in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,” *Greece and Rome* 24 (1977): 170–84; and Kathleen Wall, *The Callisto Myth from Ovid to Atwood: Initiation and Rape in Literature* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> On Apollo and Dafne, see Wendy Heller, “A Musical Metamorphosis: Ovid, Bernini, and Handel's *Apollo e Dafne*,” *Handel Jahrbuch* (2008): 35–63; and “Daphne's Dilemma: Desire as Metamorphosis in Early Modern Opera,” in *Structures of Feeling in Seventeenth-Century Expressive Culture*, ed. Susan McClary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 175–208. Richlin (“Ovid's Rapes,” 162) points out other instances in which Ovid calls attention to the beauty of the terrified victim.

<sup>15</sup> Suzanne G. Cusick, “‘There was not one lady who failed to shed a tear’: Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood,” *Early Music* 22 (1994): 21–41; Tim Carter, “Lamenting Ariadne?,” *Early Music* 27 (1999): 395–405; also Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 82–85. See also Heller, *Animating Ovid*.

<sup>16</sup> These elements in the Ariadne tale are evident not only in the *Heroides*, but also in the other primary source to which both Ovid and Rinuccini were indebted, namely Catullus' *Carmina* 64, in which Ariadne's lament is accompanied by a kind of striptease that creates an evocative picture for the reader.

abandonment, and rape—were more than mere triggers for the lengthy and moving monologues that so inspired composers and librettists. Lamenting women were sources of pleasurable arousal for the viewers and listeners.

The role of the voyeur is particularly critical to Ovid's rendering of the Callisto episode in book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*. Consider his description of the moment in which the Arcadian virgin first attracts Jupiter's attention. Ovid begins by focusing on her physical attributes and on the apparent distance between Callisto and the attire and activities of more civilized women:

As he busily came and went, an Arcadian virgin suddenly caught his fancy and fired his heart with a deep-felt passion. Callisto was not in the habit of spinning wool at the distaff or stylishly dressing her hair; her garment was clasped by a simple brooch, while a plain white band kept her loose-flowing tresses in order. Armed with her smooth-polished javelin or bow, she served as a soldier in Phoebe's troop; of maidens who hunted on Maenalus' slopes Diana cherished her best—but no one's favour is lasting. (Ovid, *Met.* 2. 409–16)<sup>17</sup>

Ovid emphasizes her vulnerability. The forest that Callisto enters, one bathed in pure sunlight, is as virginal as she is. Moreover, she leaves herself open to attack by removing the quiver and loosening her bow, and laying herself on the ground:

The sun had climbed to the height of the sky; it was soon after midday. Callisto entered a forest whose trees no axe had deflowered, and here she removed the quiver she wore on her shoulder and loosened the string of her supple bow; then she laid herself down on the greensward, resting her pure white neck on her painted quiver for pillow. When Jupiter spied her lying exhausted and unprotected he reckoned: "My wife will never discover this tiny betrayal; or else, if she does, oh yes, the joy will make up for the scolding!" (*Met.* 2. 417–24)

Her exhaustion and defenselessness are what attract the god, who then, as we know, takes on Diana's appearance and plies Callisto with kisses. Only at this juncture does the narrator call our attention to Callisto's reaction to these events; however, his irony is unmistakable. Callisto fights back, as hard as a woman can ("quidem contra, quantum modo femina posset," Ovid, *Met.* 2. 434). Here, as several commentators have noted, Ovid calls our attention to the visual realm by emphasizing the fact that if Juno were the voyeur here, she surely would have recognized Callisto's innocence!<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Translations taken from Ovid, *Metamorphoses: A New Verse Translation*, trans. David Raeburn with introduction by Denis Feeney (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell notes that Jupiter here is "again concerned with Juno seeing and knowing about his adventures. What Jupiter does is something the goddess

Early modern translations and commentators on Ovid were apparently no less taken with the voyeuristic quality of this scene. Notably, the two most widely read translators of Ovid in the sixteenth century, Lodovico Dolce and Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara, both expand upon Ovid's version of this portion of the episode.<sup>19</sup> Anguillara pays little heed to the portion of the story that begins book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*, where Jupiter descends to earth to survey the damage done by the fire caused by Phaethon's fatal attempt to fly to the sun. Instead, he directs the readers' attention immediately to the erotic encounter. Jupiter, Anguillara tells us, "finds in Arcadia a beautiful virgin, with lascivious appearance and a chaste breast"—the perfect target for the god.<sup>20</sup> Anguillara then describes with leisure and in far more detail than Ovid not only Callisto's clothing, but also her beautiful eyes and seductive body, interpolating an element that may well have inspired Faustini: the nymph satisfies her thirst at a fountain, splashing water into her parched throat, her thirsty jaws ready and open, removing her stockings and washing, "fin al ginocchio il suo candido piede"—from her white feet to her knees—a sight, Anguillara tells us parenthetically, that was not to be believed.<sup>21</sup> The edition prepared by the prolific sixteenth-century humanist Lodovico Dolce likewise provides a bit more detail than Ovid about the actual sexual encounter. Whereas Ovid merely tells us that Jupiter gave her "a passionate kiss, not the kiss that a virgin goddess would give" (Ovid, *Met.* 2. 428–29), Dolce is more explicit: "He kisses her and now touches this part and that; the kisses could reveal the deception, which were not modest and from a maiden."<sup>22</sup> With the addition of just a few words, Dolce provides us with a presentation that all but compels the reader to fantasize about the details of a sexual encounter that is only implicit in Rubens's painting.

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cannot see. But what would happen if she were actually allowed to see? The text assumes that she would align with the rape victim. If this were the case, then Jupiter is here presenting sisterhood and asserting the power of the phallus over female alliances." The impossibility of female alliances is made explicit when the "real" Diana expels Callisto from the forest. See Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image, and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2005), 27.

<sup>19</sup> See *Le Metamorfosi di Ovidio, ridotte da Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara in ottava rima, al cristianissimo re di Francia Enrico II, di nuovo dal proprio autore rivedute e corrette, con le annotazioni di messer Giosepe Orologgi* (Venice: Francesco de' Franceschi, 1563) and Lodovico Dolce, *Le trasformazioni* (Venice: Ferrari, 1553), both reprinted numerous times.

<sup>20</sup> Anguillara, *Le Metamorfosi*, fol. 21<sup>r</sup>. "Trova in Arcadia una vergine bella, c'ha il sembiante lascivo, e 'l petto casto."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. "Indi si china a la gelata fonte, / E spesso l'acqua in su con la man balza. / Le sitibonde fauci apette e pronte, / Quella parte n'inghiotton, che più s'alza. / Beve, e poi lava la sudata fronte, / Indi s'asside in terra, e si discalza: / Lava poi (che veduta esser non crede) / Fin' al ginocchio il suo candido piede."

<sup>22</sup> Dolce, *Le trasformazioni*, 43. "La bacia, e tocca hor questa parte, hor quella. / Poteano i baci dimostrar la frode, / Che non eran modesti e da Donzella ..."



### Voyeurism in *La Calisto*

Voyeurism, irony, and sexual fantasy also play a vital role in the encounter between Jupiter and the unsuspecting nymph in Francesco Cavalli and Giovanni Faustini's opera *La Calisto* (1651). The opera in fact begins with an act of voyeurism: the first three scenes stage the moment in which Jupiter, descending to earth after the fire, initially sees the young nymph and prepares his plan of seduction. Accompanied by his companion Mercury, Jupiter is immediately struck by the beauty of the nymph.

Ma Mercurio, chi viene?	But Mercury, who is coming?
Qual ninfa arciera in queste parti arriva?	What nymph approaches this place with bow and arrow?
Oh, che luci serene, più luminose non le vidi mai:	Oh, what serene eyes, I have never seen any more luminous:
il caduto Fetonte,	the fallen Phaethon
e i saettati rai	and the sun's shooting rays
ricoverò negl'occhi, e nella fronte. <sup>23</sup>	have found shelter in her eyes and brow.

Jupiter is captivated at once; the fires that had consumed Arcadia are now reduced to a mere metaphor for his own burning passion, ignited by the fire of Callisto's eyes. Faustini does not relinquish the standard *versi sciolti* of recitative here; however, it is likely that the inherent erotic content and the more regular rhyme scheme of the final quatrain inspired Cavalli to set this passage as expansive triple-meter arioso that tells us a good deal about the god's capacity for sensual pleasure, making explicit both his immediate arousal and readiness to sustain that desire until the appropriate moment (see Example 8.1). Ascending into the upper register, Jupiter luxuriates on the "oh" with an a pair of interlocking thirds that rise to *d'* through the *b<sub>2</sub>* and *c<sub>3</sub>*, only to fall back with a *mollis* inflection as he contemplates the "luci serene," extolling the luminosity of Callisto's eyes with the playful series of offbeat repeated quarter notes. Lost in his musing on Callisto's beauty, Jupiter is then provided with a second, even more expansive ascent, just shy of an octave to a climactic *c'*; still aroused, but perhaps momentarily resigned to the role of the voyeur, Jupiter concludes his praise of Callisto with an abbreviated variation on the earlier syncopated passage (mm. 99–100), followed by the threefold repetition of the word "mai" as the vocal line falls a full octave and a third to the low A that underscores both his delight and momentary vulnerability to Callisto's special charms.

The addition of Mercury to the scene—a typical Venetian opera gesture—only heightens the erotic potential of the situation. More than a mere dramatic convenience, a companion to whom Jupiter can address his remarks, Mercury is the eagle in this scene: he is the co-conspirator, accustomed to managing Jupiter's complex sex life; he seems to take almost as much pleasure

<sup>23</sup> All translations from Faustini's libretto, *La Calisto* (Venice: Giuliani, 1651), are based on those provided in Brown's edition of *La Calisto*.

Example 8.1 Francesco Cavalli, *La Calisto*, Jupiter, Act I, scene 2, mm. 83–104

83 Giove

Oh che lu-ci se-

87 re - ne: più lu-mi-no - se, più lu-mi-no - se non le vi -

91 di ma - i; oh, oh

96 — che lu - ci se - re - ne: più lu-mi-no - se, più lu-mi-no -

101 se non le vi - di ma - i, ma - i, mai;

in the prospective sexual encounter as Jupiter himself. Mercury's confidence in Jupiter's powers—and perhaps his own desire for Callisto—is apparent throughout, and is even suggested musically at the end of the scene as Mercury explains that—like the chaste Diana—Callisto “abhors the light of love's torch.” With an expected burst of melismatic singing on the word “aborre,” imitated in the continuo, Mercury seems to imply that her resistance is futile—the power of the gods, expressed here through vocal virtuosity—will necessarily win (see Example 8.2). In fact, in Act I, scene 2, Mercury will initiate a lively triple-meter duet with Jupiter in which they both urge the pretty huntress (the “arciera vezzosa”) to run and enjoy the god's heavenly embraces. Mercury is thus not only willing to share in Jupiter's pleasures, but eggs him on with unabashed enthusiasm. These are men who have hunted together many times in the past.

Example 8.2 *La Calisto*, Mercury, Act I, scene 2, mm. 121–27

121 Mercurio

bel - la, non men del ca - sto e ri - ve - ri - to nu - me de la fa - ce a - mo -

124

ro - sa ab - or - - - re, ab - or - - -

126

- - - - re il lu - me.

In opera, however, voyeurs are also eavesdroppers. Thus, Callisto's first aria, “Piante ombrose” (Act I, scene 2), in which she laments the loss of her beautiful forest to the fire and bemoans her thirst, is both *seen and heard* by the two *lascivi*, as Callisto will later call them in Act I, scene 4. I have noted elsewhere the musical consequences of Jupiter's eavesdropping: Cavalli contrives for the false Diana to seduce Callisto with a motive from her own aria, here transformed from triple into duple.<sup>24</sup> But the point here is that both the sounds and the sight of her suffering—in

<sup>24</sup> Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 201–02.

particular the thirst that is used as a metaphor for sexual desire—enhances her sexual vulnerability and thus her appeal to Mercury and Jupiter. The link between the refreshing water and sexual fulfillment is also made explicit in Act I, scene 2 (see Example 8.3). After magically producing a fountain, Jupiter goes so far as to

Example 8.3 *La Calisto*, Jupiter, Act I, scene 4, mm. 123–36

123 Giove

Ve-di, ve-di de la sor-gen-te in co-pia sca-tu-rir

126

fred-di j cri-stal-li. De la tua dol-ce boc-ca a-mo-ro-

129

set-ta, va-ga mia lan-gui-det-ta, nel-l'on-da u-

6 7 6 #

132

sci-ta im-mer-gi, im-mer-gi, im-mer-gi i

b

134

bei co-ral-li.

#

ask Callisto to “immerse her coral lips” in the jets of water. Once again, Cavalli sets his text in triple meter, with the sets of syncopated quarter notes in groups of three (m. 127 and m. 131) that recall Example 8.1 and seem to be part of the god's musical vocabulary of desire.<sup>25</sup>

Voyeurism is no less a factor in the critical sexual union between Jupiter and Callisto (Act I, scene 4), transformed in Faustini's libretto from the rape described by Ovid to an apparent seduction. Here, the voyeur's experience depends almost entirely on how the role of “Jupiter in Diana” is cast and staged: to what extent the transformed Jupiter embodies entirely female or male characteristics.<sup>26</sup> Written in soprano clef, the role could have been played by the singer who played Diana, or—as in some recent performances (most notably the performance by René Jacobs, directed by Jacques Bourton) and argued by Álvaro Torrente—it could also be sung by Jupiter himself in falsetto, with or without a comic voice or staging.<sup>27</sup>

While there is no definitive evidence for how the role was cast for the Venetian premiere, some clues as to how this episode might have been envisioned by early moderns might be found in the early modern iconographical traditions. Part of the fascination of the subject had to do with its inherent ambiguity: how masculine or feminine was Jupiter? How resistant was Callisto? Like most other illustrated versions of Ovid, Antonio Tempesta's engraving, published in 1606, avoids nudity: Jupiter as Diana is dressed in female clothing that covers his body, and he betrays no masculine traits (see Figure 8.2).<sup>28</sup> In fact, he is arguably more feminine than the huntress Callisto, who doesn't seem all that eager to avoid his embrace. Escape also seems the last thing on the mind of Callisto in the painting by the mid-seventeenth-century Venetian artist Pietro Liberi, who—given his connections in the Venetian literary and artistic world—would certainly have had the occasion to go to the opera (see Figure 8.3).<sup>29</sup> While this work might be seen to betray a

<sup>25</sup> Act I, scene 2: “Della tua dolce bocca amorosetta, / Vaga mia languidetta, / Nell'onda uscita immergi i bei coralli.”

<sup>26</sup> On this topic, see Brown, “Introduction” to Cavalli, *La Calisto*, xv. For a different perspective, see Álvaro Torrente, “The Twenty-Two Steps: Clef Anomalies or ‘basso all bastarda’ in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera,” in *Word, Image, and Song*, vol. 1: *Essays on Early Modern Italy*, ed. Rebecca Cypess, Beth L. Glixon, and Nathan Link (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> See Cavalli, *La Calisto*, stage direction by Jacques Bourton and musical direction by René Jacobs, recorded from the telecast on March 20, 1996 from the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Harmonia Mundi, 2006. A 1996 production of *La Calisto* at Glimmerglass opera theater used Diana for both roles.

<sup>28</sup> Antonio Tempesta, *Metamorphoseon sive transformationum Ovidianarum libri quindecim aeneis formis ab Antonio Tempesta Florentino incisi, et in pictorum, antiquitatisque studiosorum gratiam nunc primum exquisitissimis sumptibus a Petro de Iode Antuerpiano in lucem editi* (Antwerp, 1606; repr. New York: Garland, 1976).

<sup>29</sup> It is in fact quite likely that Pietro Liberi (1605–87) would have seen Cavalli's *La Calisto* and might even have had Faustini's variations on Ovid in mind when painting a Callisto who seemed disinclined to resist her seducer. Liberi was closely connected





Figure 8.2 Antonio Tempesta, *Jupiter Disguised as Diana, Raping Callisto*. Publius Ovidius Naso, *Metamorphoseon sive transformationum Ovidianarum libri quindecim* (Antwerp, 1606)

debt to the Rubens painting pictured in Figure 8.1, Liberi's vision is far more explicit: there is nothing gentle about Jupiter's grasp on Callisto's chin, nor does

with many figures associated with Venetian public opera and was likely a member of the Venetian Accademia degli Incogniti. A former student of the Incogniti's favorite artist Alessandro Varotari (known as Padovanino), Liberi was apparently a close friend of the poet Giovanni Francesco Busenello, best known for having written the libretto for *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Busenello even addressed his *Prospettiva del navale trionfo riportato dalla Repubblica Serenissima contro il Turco* (1656) to Liberi, requesting that he paint a picture depicting the battle at sea between the Turks and the Venetians in 1656. Liberi was particularly known for his mythological subjects and drawings and paintings of nudes, which were prized by Venetian collectors. On him, see Alberti Crispo, "Liberi, Pietro," *Dizionario bibliografico degli italiani*, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-liberi> (accessed April 4, 2014); Chiara Accornero, *Pietro Liberi cavaliere e fenice dei pittori: Dalle avventure di spade alle lusinghe dell'accademia* (Zel: Trevison, 2013), esp. 61–70 on the Accademia degli Incogniti; and also Catherine Whistler, "Life Drawings in Venice from Titian to Tiepolo," *Master Drawings* 42 (2004): 370–96.



Figure 8.3 Pietro Liberi, *Jupiter in the Guise of Diana and the Nymph Callisto* (ca. 1675). © Christie's Images Limited 2008



Figure 8.4 Caesar van Everdingen, *Jupiter and Callisto* (1655). Photo © Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

this Callisto close her legs in an attempt to hide her nakedness. We might imagine that Liberi's painting shows the next stage in Jupiter's seduction: the god throws off the dress, while the bulging, knotted fabric is perfectly positioned to hide the signs of his desire, which Callisto seems to welcome. Moreover, Liberi heightens still further the voyeuristic element in the Rubens painting by adding an inquisitive cupid who compels the eagle to gaze at the couple.

The possibility that the transformed Jupiter might retain some masculine features is also suggested in Caesar Van Everdingen's painting of *Jupiter and Callisto* (1655) at the Swedish National Museum, in which Jupiter is shown wearing Diana's crown, albeit with the smooth, flat, and hairless body of a boy and just a hint of moustache over his lip (see Figure 8.4). Here, Callisto seems more surprised than threatened, while the *amorini*, holding a theatrical mask, look on playfully. The subtle presence of testosterone, I would suggest, reminds us that in early modern Europe, Jupiter's assumption of Diana's body was very likely considered in the context of Galenic anatomy and its fluid notions of biological sex, whereby the possibility of changing from male into female was treated less as a broadly comedic gag, but rather was understood as a genuine possibility—even

more plausible in opera, where a castrato might play a man, a woman, or a character *en travesti*.<sup>30</sup>

In *La Calisto*, however, the metamorphosis also happens in the aural realm. In the duet in Act I, scene 4, Jupiter must present himself as a woman not only by his costume and dress, but also by singing Callisto's melody in her register. Thus, his vocal style and manner of performance control the viewer's response. If sung in a way that suggests either a woman or an adolescent boy, then the voyeur has the potential of being aroused by the ambiguity of the imagined sex act: in the blending of the two treble voices, rape and violence are transformed into apparent pleasure for the participants and delight for the listener. However, if played for laughs as a kind of comic burlesque—as a “drag scene”—eroticism is replaced by broad comedy, short-circuiting the kind of sensuality that seems so characteristic of the early modern treatments of Ovid noted above.

Some details in the libretto also argue against a comic interpretation, for in fact for both Jupiter and Callisto, the result of their encounter is such intense pleasure that the two feel compelled to confide their experiences to a third party—creating what we might regard as voyeurs after the fact. Callisto's error, of course, is that she chooses the wrong confidante: In Act I, scene 6, after being rejected by the real Diana, she describes to Juno the kisses that the false Diana gave “se stato fosse il vago, il sposo”—as if she were my lover, my husband—implying that the false Diana was in fact endowed with the requisite equipment.

But for Jupiter too, the satisfaction went beyond that to which the potent god was accustomed, as suggested in his comment to Mercury in the subsequent scene: “I cannot describe to you what pleasures I felt! Even up there in the heavens and in all my glories, I never enjoy, never experience anything like this.”<sup>31</sup> Mercury's clever response is to chide Jupiter for giving humans free will; for without liberty, Jupiter could enjoy every beauty he wished without having to resort to tricks. For Jupiter and his trusty voyeuristic companion, the problem is not male desire, but the resistance of hard-hearted females, who—as in works such as Monteverdi and Rinuccini's *Ballo delle ingrate*—are inevitably presented as the authors of their own destruction.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> For a summary of these by now well-known views, see Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 9–13. On the sexual appeal of the boyish male, see Roger Freitas, “The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato,” *Journal of Musicology* 20 (2003): 196–249.

<sup>31</sup> Act I, scene 7: “Esprimerti non posso / Il goduto piacere. / Tal lassù nelle sfere, / E nelle glorie mie / No 'l fruisco, no 'l provo ...”

<sup>32</sup> On the tradition expressed in *Ballo delle ingrate*, see Tim Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 150–53.



## Libidinous Satyrs

The pleasures of voyeurism—particularly when dealing with female resistance—are echoed in the opera's secondary plot involving the goat-god Pan, his companion Silenus, and the satyrs. In this instance, the opera engages a familiar literary and iconographical tradition in which the sexual desire of Pan and his cohorts was so often depicted as a pursuit that necessarily ended in frustration.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it may well be that sexual energy which inspired Faustini to use *versi sdrucchioli* for all of their poetry, giving their music—including the recitative—a distinctive rhythmic drive that brilliantly captures their rustic nature and pent-up desires.

While Pan—frustrated by Diana's rejection—may seem to be one of the opera's official protagonists, it is in fact the juvenile satyr—known only as Satirino—whose lust is driven by his voyeuristic experiences. We might liken him to a bestial Cherubino. First, he tries unsuccessfully to seduce another chaste nymph, Linfea (Act I, scene 13), assuring her his “mouth, heavy with the sweetest honeycombs” can give her “nectar,” even though his tail is “still growing and small.”<sup>34</sup> Linfea rejects him, invoking a homosexual or autoerotic act by referring to Narcissus, and telling him to go make love to other goats like himself. In the subsequent scene, Act I, scene 14, we hear Satirino's bitter response. After condemning all of the proud nymphs who converse with men, desire their caresses, but nonetheless reject them, he sings the following monologue:

Son pur superbe, e rigide  
queste ninfe di Trivia,  
nel conversar con gl'uomini;  
e se ben, che le bramano  
le carezze disprezzano  
più de' cervi selvatiche,  
o come state fossero  
prodotte dalle selici.  
Sforzate esser vorrebbero,

The nymphs of Trivia  
are certainly proud and stubborn  
in conversing with men;  
and although they desire  
caresses, they scorn them  
more than wild stags do,  
or as if they had been  
made out of flint.  
They really want to be forced,

<sup>33</sup> On this point, see Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 179–80 and “Daphne's Dilemma.” See also Philippe Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece*, trans. Kathleen Atlass and James Redfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 4–5.

<sup>34</sup> This is another instance in which misinformed casting can—mistakenly in my view—transform an otherwise erotic scene into broad comedy. The production by Bourton and Jacobs cited above follows the convention established in Raymond Leppard's edition of the opera and transforms Linfea into an old woman, played by a tenor *en travesti*. As Jennifer Williams Brown notes in the preface to *La Calisto* (p. xxvii) while “comic *vecchia* roles (notated in alto or tenor clef) were indeed common in seventeenth-century opera, this is not one of them: it is notated throughout in soprano clef.” Brown, appropriately in my view, compares Linfea to the Damigella in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, noting that it was originally cast as a boy but probably performed by a girl in the 1651 production.



per discolpar il fomite  
della loro lussuria  
con la sofferta ingiuria.  
S'avessi braccia indomite,  
e nerborute [ad un acero]  
vorrei legar l'ipocrita,  
e rotto, e franto, e macerto  
con un ramo di sorbolo  
l'orgoglio suo barbarico,  
e trista farla, e flebile;  
over snervata, e debole;  
render la sua lascivia  
le saria questo un gran dispetto  
amabile.<sup>35</sup>

in order to absolve the cause  
of their lust  
with the injury they have suffered.  
If I had a strong and muscular arm  
to a maple tree  
I'd like to tie this hypocrite,  
and break, crush, and soften  
with the branch of an apple tree  
her barbaric pride;  
and make her sorry and submissive  
or else render her lust  
exhausted and weak,  
to her this punishment would be quite  
agreeable.

In Venetian opera, virulent anti-female tirades sung by lower-class male characters are by no means uncommon, but Satirino's aria goes far beyond convention in its evocation of sexual violence.<sup>36</sup> In his fantasy, the refusal of sexual favors is nothing less than an invitation to rape: in his imagination, Linfea is not only to be tied to a tree and beaten, but also made submissive with an "agreeable punishment"—one that would exhaust her lust. The image invoked here bears a remarkable resemblance to Agostino Carracci's widely disseminated engraving of a satyr whipping a nymph (see Figure 8.5), and may well have reminded viewers as well of the episode in Tasso's *Amita*, in which Silvia has been tied to a tree by her own hair by a rapacious satyr. (In Act III, scene 5, Faustini provides a playful inversion of this image, as a jealous Pan and Sylvanus tie Endymion to a tree, where he is left to die, only to be rescued by Diana, further inciting the jealousy of the beastly creatures.) The fact that this entire scene featuring Satirino's monologue (Act I, scene 14) is crossed out in the manuscript is also suggestive;<sup>37</sup> it could have been cut for dramaturgical purposes, as it is not essential to the plot; but we might also imagine that its content was deemed excessively explicit.

Cavalli's setting, moreover, only heightens the graphic nature of the text. He begins the monologue in a light canzonetta style, enlivened with the dotted rhythms that underscore the *versi sdruciolli*. However, the shift to the subjunctive at the beginning of the fantasy is marked by a comparable shift to a dreamy triple meter and a luxurious melisma on the word "legar" (to tie), which abruptly breaks off as he imagines breaking her barbaric pride with the branch of the tree (see Example 8.4). The monologue concludes with a lively climax, drawing out the word "amabile"—with its distinctive antepenultimate accent with a suggestive melisma (see Example 8.5). Thus, while the operatic Callisto—unlike her

<sup>35</sup> Translation and text adapted from the edition prepared by Brown, *La Calisto*, lxxv–lxxvi.

<sup>36</sup> See Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence*, 291–92.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, *La Calisto*, xcii n. 128.

Example 8.4 *La Calisto*, Satirino, Act I, scene 14, mm. 20–37

20 Satirino

S'a - ves - si brac - cia in - do - mi - te

25

e ner - bo - ru - te, a un a - ce -

30

ro] vor - rei le - gar

35

l'i - po - cri - ta, e rot - to e fran - to

Ovidian counterpart—may have had consensual relations with Jupiter, in *La Calisto*, compensatory rape fantasies abound. This is made explicit in the *ballo* after the next encounter between Linfea and Satirino at the end of Act II, when the frustrated satyr calls out to his companions to attack the reluctant nymph.



Figure 8.5 Agostino Carracci, *Satyr Whipping a Nymph* (ca. 1590–95). Engraving. Detroit Institute of Arts, USA. Reproduced by permission of the Bridgeman Art Library International

Example 8.5 *La Calisto*, Satirino, Act I, scene 4, mm. 51–57

51 Satirino

Le sa-ria que-sto un gran di-spet-to, un gran di-

54 spet-to, un gran di-spet-to a - ma - - bi-le.

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The stage directions read as follows:

In answer to the young satyr's summons, two satyrs emerge from the forest, and at Linfea's call, four nymphs emerge armed with darts. The nymphs, in trying to wound the half-beasts, and the latter in warding off the threatening weapons, form a dance, which ends with the retreat of the satyrs.<sup>38</sup>

The nymphs successfully fight off their attackers, whose sexual aggression is then transformed into dance. The dance thus enacts one of the most important rituals of Arcadian sexual politics—namely that the lusts of the satyrs will never be satisfied.

### From the Eagle's Perspective

The satyrs, of course, are not the only creatures to feel frustration in this opera. Indeed while many operas (and dramas for that matter) might begin with desire and conclude with a heteronormative *lieto fine*, in *La Calisto* we have the reverse. With the exception of the single ambiguous sexual act between Jupiter and Callisto, the majority of the opera deals with unfulfilled desires: Callisto never regains her pleasures with the false Diana, Diana and the moon-gazing Endymion must restrict their encounters to chaste kisses, Pan will never persuade Diana to relinquish her chastity, and even the satyrs cannot seduce the nymphs. But while Pan and the satyrs are forever destined to languish with unfulfilled yearnings, for the human and gods, remarkably, frustration is transformed into sublimation and ultimate acceptance, with an unmistakable spiritual or even quasi-Neoplatonic flavor. In Act III, scene 4, after Callisto has been turned into a bear, Jupiter appears to rescue his former beloved by identifying himself as her creator (*il motore*) and entering into her heart to infuse her with his glories.<sup>39</sup> His promise of immortality inspires her complete submission and she responds with Christian humility: "Eccomi ancella tua"—"Behold me, your handmaid." Glory, however, is to be postponed, as Jupiter reminds the unfortunate nymph that her glimpse of the stars will be only temporary—she must live as a bear for a time, fulfilling the course of Juno's curse.

Yet, what is particularly striking here is the persistent role of the eagle-eyed voyeur. For even as Jupiter and Callisto sing their sumptuous penultimate duet "Mio foco fatale" (Act III, scene 4) over a descending tetrachord ground bass, thus paradoxically relinquishing their desire with the musical device used more often to signify arousal, the path to the heavens is paved for them by Mercury, who again overhears their sublimated passion and responds with a brilliantly florid

<sup>38</sup> The description in the libretto reads as follows: "Alle voci del Satirino, escono dalla foresta duo satiri, & a quelle di Linfea quattro ninfe armate di dardi, quali con attitudini di voler ferire le semibestie, e quindi di schermirsi de' ferri minacciosi, figurano un ballo, il cui fine è la ritirata de' satiri." Translation from Jennifer Williams Brown, *La Calisto*, p. lxxxii.

<sup>39</sup> Act III, scene 4: "entro del core / t'infonde le sue glorie il tuo motore."

Example 8.6 *La Calisto*, Mercury, Act III, scene 4, mm. 216–22

216

A que-sti ar-do-ri scoc - chi, ba-le - ni, scoc -

- chi, ba-le - - ni dop - pi splen-do - ri l'ar -

cier - di De - lo.

arioso (see Example 8.6). Mercury may have assisted Jupiter in his rape/seduction of Callisto, but—as we learn in the opera's final scene—he will also be charged with the task of escorting Callisto back to Earth and protecting her as she wanders Arcadia as a bear. It is perhaps here that we see most clearly the power of the male ironic gaze—and the opera's most remarkable metamorphosis: Jupiter, rapist/seducer, is transformed into a paternal, Christian god and Mercury, the procurer/voyeur, becomes Callisto's spiritual advisor and protector. By contriving for the eagle to shift his gaze so easily from the dark Arcadian forests to the starlit heavens, Cavalli and Faustini capture something of the slippery irony of the Ovidian narrator, and in so doing remind us that in the theater we are all voyeurs.