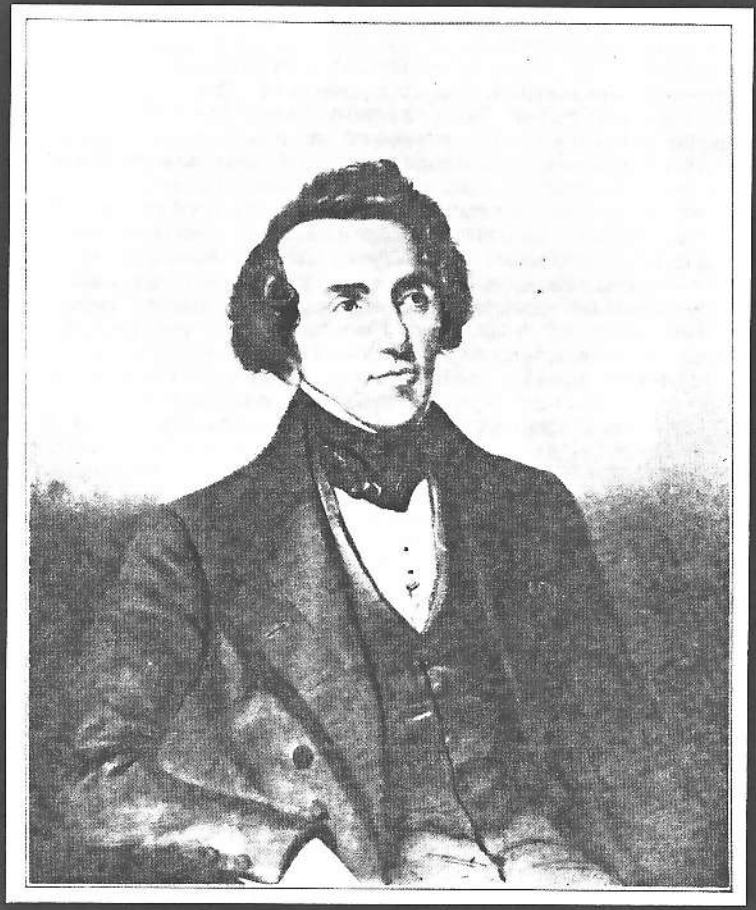


"BEWITCHED IN A MAGIC GARDEN"

Giacomo Meyerbeer in Italy

Andrew Everett

Antonio Salieri (1750-1825), the composer to the Austrian Court, was the one who advised Meyerbeer in 1814 to think of leaving Vienna and going to Italy; to seek the success that had so far eluded him in Germany and Austria. Poor Salieri has been much maligned both as composer and man. He was sympathetic to the potential shown by the younger man; like Beethoven and Schubert, Meyerbeer studied counterpoint and Italian prosody with Salieri. (1)

It is possible, therefore, that Salieri - or even more likely the Abbé Georg Vogler (1759-1814), Meyerbeer's former musical mentor at Darmstadt during 1810-11 - provided him with the text of *Quinto Fabio*, an opera seria previously set by Ferdinando Gasparo Bertoni (1725-1813) the Venetian composer, and premiered in Milan in 1776. A castrato lead in it had been taken by a pupil of Bertoni's, the most admired Italian male soprano of his day - Gasparo Pacchiarotti (1740-1821) - who was in retirement at Padua. There are several more links with Padua. Vogler had studied there from 1773-5 with the great musical theorist Padre Francesco Antonio Valotti (1697-1780), whose works were then still current. (The young Verdi indeed studied them, turning back to them in old age when composing his *Quattro pezzi sacri*). Valotti's successor, Antonio Calegari (1757-1828) and Pacchiarotti were great friends and together writing a treatise on singing. In 1817 they both gave Meyerbeer's first Italian stage-work a warm reception at its premiere in Padua.

After the comparative failure of Meyerbeer's comic fantasy opera *Alimelek* at its Viennese premiere at the Kärntnertor theatre on Wednesday 26th October 1814, Salieri shrewdly discerned that airy humour was not going to be Meyerbeer's strong-point: *"You are too earnest in your method"* Salieri counselled him, *"with you, art is still in its virginal state. You need to embrace the Muse. You will find her in Italy, in the shade of the citron trees in flower. Italy alone will provide you with appropriate opportunities."* It is likely that he furnished Meyerbeer with letters of introduction to Cherubini (1760-1842) in Paris, and to Giacomo Tritto (1733-1824) at the Naples Conservatory, and possibly to Gasparo Pacchiarotti in Padua.

Therefore, in mid-November 1814 Meyerbeer left Vienna, not to go immediately to Italy, but to appear in Munich as solo-

pianist for what appears to be the last time. It is likely that he re-established contact with the great clarinet virtuoso Joseph Bärmann (1784-1847) and his mistress, the prima donna soprano Hélène Harlas (1782-1816), both residents at the Bavarian Court.

From there he travelled to Paris in order to study French opera and seems to have been there during the upheavals of Napoleon's return and defeat. (2) At the end of the year he crossed the English Channel to see John Baptist Cramer (1771-1858) and Frédéric Kalkbrenner (1785-1849), both celebrated pianists and composers to seek advice on whether he should continue his career as a virtuoso pianist or concentrate on composing. After this time he seems to have given-up all thoughts of a career as a pianist. He also consulted the Estonian-born clarinettist Iwan Muller (1786-1854) in London. Possibly at Bärmann's request. Muller was well-known for his work on perfecting the mechanics of the clarinet.

Travelling south to Italy subsequently, overland via France, he notes 15 years later that he composed a song *"Le Meilleur"* between Paris and Lyons. It is not clear whether he is refering here to its title or the quality of the song. (3)

By March he was in Genoa, where he had agreed to join up with Bärmann and Hélène Harlas to give a further performance of a 'monodrama' he had composed for them both in Vienna in 1813. It is likely that he had sought Salieri's advice with setting the Italian text of this *Gli amori di Teolinda* while in Vienna. The concert was given thanks to the patronage of a certain Baron Brioli, a member of the newly-refurbished and expanded Court of Victor Emmanuele I of Savoy, recently created King of Piedmont by the Congress of Vienna; Genoa then being part of the Kingdom of Piedmont. (4) Meyerbeer, in common with Weber and Spohr - and indeed Barmann himself -had written notably for the clarinet, a clarinet quintet is one of several unpublished works composed especially for Barmann. This 'monodrama' is a genuine musical oddity, featuring a solo clarinet and solo soprano, both in virtuoso display, accompanied by a male voice chorus and chamber orchestra. The text was by Gaetano Rossi (1774-1855), possibly based upon some eighteenth century model. (Rossi was a long-serving librettist who provided Mayr, as early as 1798 with the comic text of *Che originali!*; Rossini with *Tancredi* in 1813 and *Semiramide* in 1823; and, twenty years later, Donizetti with both those of *Maria Padilla* and *Linda di Chamounix*) (5.6.7) Meyerbeer may have already been in contact with Rossi via Salieri.

The title *Gli amori di Teolinda* is reminiscent of pastorales by Scarlatti and Handel while in its eight-part structure it is a cross between a Mozart concert-aria with its virtuoso obbligato and a typical sinfonia concertante. It represents an amorous dialogue between Theodolinda (soprano) and her swain Amidoro (clarinet), with choral interjections from attendant shepherds. The soprano part is derived from turn-of-the-century models like Cimarosa; the clarinet solo is akin to Weber's and Spohr's clarinet works but without the personal stamp of either. Disconcertingly, the shepherds in chorus have Rossinian flourishes in both accompaniment and vocal line. While it is unlikely that Meyerbeer could have heard any of Rossini's scores in 1813 he could have examined some of his scores. In summary, while the

orchestration and structure of the piece are innovative, the juxtaposition of the various elements registers as quaint.

From Genoa, Meyerbeer set out for Rome, going on from there to reach Naples in June, possibly to meet Giacomo Tritto. While there he provided an aria for mezzo-soprano dated 20th July 1816 - which it appears may well have been a re-orchestrated version of an aria from Handel's *Rinaldo* - as well as another aria, dated 3rd October, for Thérèse Grünbaum, a Viennese soprano who was conjecturally on an Italian tour. Either intended as an *aria di baule*, or perhaps simply to please her father Wenzel Muller (1767-1835) a Viennese operetta composer of the time. She was destined to be the first Eglantine, villainess in Weber's *Euryanthe* in 1823. These arias seem to mark a continuity in Italian settings over the next 8 years.

From Naples he went to Palermo to gather folk-songs in Sicily. A transcription of vocal music that he heard in the Cathedral, at the shrine of the Madonna della lettera in Messina, is to be found included amongst unpublished papers. (8) Collecting folk-songs was also an interest that his teacher, the Abbé Vogler had pursued. August 15th, the feast day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, is a great Sicilian national religious festival, especially in Palermo where the Cathedral is dedicated to that event and must have provided him with much of interest.

Leaving Sicily, he went on to Venice to meet his parents and family who had not seen him for five years. Ludwig Spohr was also there with his wife Dorette and their two daughters. Spohr had met the Beer family when on tour in Berlin in 1804-1805 as a twenty-year-old travelling violin virtuoso. He had spoken words of encouragement to their thirteen-year-old son Jacob, at that time a child prodigy on the piano.Their friendship had been renewed at Vienna in 1813 and Spohr sought Meyerbeer's opinion on the operatic version of the 'Faust' legend he was in the middle of composing.

Spohr was in Venice eager to hear Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) without actually managing to do so. The two met on Sunday morning 20th October. Later that morning Spohr met the rest of the Beer family to his great delight. Soon Meyerbeer was on his way south again, via Florence and Rome to Naples so as to be present at the re-opening of the Teatro San Carlo after its interior had been destroyed by fire. This Venice meeting enabled Spohr to obtain news about the rehearsal of his *Faust* in Prague which one of the Beer brothers had attended. (9) It would also seem likely that Meyerbeer succeeded in meeting Paganini in Venice - indeed, Meyerbeer seems to have been beguiled by Paganini's playing and followed him through Florence and Tuscany, not moving on to Rome until he had heard him play 18 times. (9) Paganini seems to have toured towns like Arezzo, Pistoia and Siena at this time. (10)

Meyerbeer's brothers, Heinrich (who seems to have been known as Hans), Wilhelm (to be the family banker like his father) and Michael (an aspiring dramatist who would receive much encouragement from the aged Goethe) had preceded him to Rome. These three met up with Spohr, not minding greatly having to 'slum' with the latter; money in the Spohr household was in short supply. After dark, the theatres being closed for Advent, the three Beer brothers went to Spohr's lodgings to while away the long

cold winter evenings, playing whist. As there was no heating in the room, they all sat on a large bed, huddled together for warmth around a table-leaf, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. It is not quite clear whether Spohr's wife and children were with them at this stage, Meyerbeer and his mother Amalie arrived in Rome on Sunday 22nd December. Spohr gleefully remarks that, *en route* for Rome, in Florence, Meyerbeer had received a letter from Carl Maria von Weber. Meyerbeer read out to Spohr the news that his opera *Faust* had been put on twice in Prague with some success. (11) Weber himself had prepared and conducted its premiere on 1st September.

Rossini, fresh from his triumphant *Otello* (prima 4th December) at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples, arrived in Rome about 23rd December. He had come to prepare *La cenerentola* in the rationalised version of Charles Perrault's fairy-tale prepared by Jacopo Ferretti, the well-read future librettist of Donizetti's *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* and *Torquato Tasso*.

The premiere was due to take place at the Teatro Valle on Saturday 25th January 1817. (12) It is most probable that Meyerbeer met Rossini here for the very first time. Meyerbeer would remain lastingly influenced by both Italy and Rossini. Forty years later he could still spin lyrical words about them (in the oft-quoted letter, written in 1856, to a Doctor Jean F. Schucht (1822-1894), a German writer on music and an early biographer (1869) of Meyerbeer)(13):

> *"At that time, all Italy was feasting in a sweet ecstasy. The whole nation had found at last, so it seemed, its long hoped-for Paradise. All that was needed to complete its happiness was the music of Rossini. In spite of myself, I, like all the rest, was caught up in this fine web of sound. I was as one bewitched in a magic garden. I did not want to go into it, but I could not avoid it. All my feelings, all my thoughts, became Italian. After having lived there for a year, I felt like a real Italian. I had become so completely acclimatised to the magnificent splendour of nature, through Italian art and cheery friendly living that I could, as a consequence, think like an Italian, feel and experience like an Italian. It is understandable that such a complete transformation of my inner life would have to have a basic effect upon my style of music. I did not want, as is commonly supposed, to imitate Rossini or to write in the Italian manner, but I had to compose in the syle which I had adopted under the compulsion of my state of mind".* (14)

There is an undercurrent of competition with Rossini here that may explain Meyerbeer's tremendous efforts to succeed. He certainly went on to achieve fame, and to a greater extent

even than Rossini himself, especially after 1830. Posterity, however, would appear to have awarded the ultimate palm to his rival.Meyerbeer even Italianised his name,changing it from Jacob (Jakob) to Giacomo, a name which has stuck to this day.

Tancredi was being given a Roman revival at this time, but he and Spohr attended another opera at the Teatro Valle on Friday 27th December; it was of a comic opera *Il qui pro quo* by Pietro Romani, a composer, conductor and teacher, and Meyerbeer had allowed himself to be persuaded by Spohr to attend this rather than *Tancredi* as this was a premiere rather than a revival. Alas *Il qui pro quo* was not a success, but Dorette Spohr, her daughters and Meyerbeer's mother had gone off to see *Tancredi*, following their own tastes; as a result on Sunday 29th December the two composers followed suit. Meyerbeer spoke feelingly about Rossini's music enthusing over its decoration, Spohr was not so enthusiastic, prefering the blander tones of Mayr. Spohr's visit was not the happiest occasion, he found it hard to make ends meet and was obliged to remain in Rome due to the illness of his daughters. He felt unable to approach the kindly Beer family for cash or kind, yet kept them frequent company, possibly in return for meals. (15)

Meyerbeer was not to remain for *Cenerentola*, in the first days of the New Year he travelled on to Naples for the opening of the Teatro San Carlo.This enterprise was the major achievement to date of that shrewd business man of the theatre, the great impresario Domenico Barbaja (1778-1841) who had secured the contract for the rebuilding of the theatre to designs by the Royal architect, Antonio Niccolini. Mayr was to provide the music for the opening with a *melodramma allegorico* entitled appropriately *Il sogno di Partenope*. This work was duly performed on Friday 12th January 1817, the 66th birthday of Ferdinando I, King of the Two Sicilies, who had much to celebrate besides, being still sovereign of lands inherited as a 6 year-old boy, surviving the Napoleonic upheavals and returning to an apparently secure throne.

The German composer may well have had another reason for going to Naples, and could have been trying to find a theatre willing to mount his first opera in the Italian style. Meyerbeer spent some time with Giacomo Tritto, composer to the Royal Chapel, himself a theatre composer, possibly to investigate a suitable opportunity. This may account for the occasional description of him as Tritto's pupil. (16) But Barbaja's determined championship of Rossini, added to the conservative attitude of the Director of Naples Conservatory, Niccolò Zingarelli (1752-1837) could have made Naples a difficult place for a German maestro, especially as he had had only a limited success back home. In any case he went back to Venice and negociated with an impresario - probably Mazzucato - for the staging of his first Italian opera, *Romilda e Costanza*, at the Teatro San Benedetto (now Teatro Rossini). Its libretto was by Gaetano Rossi, with a plot set in the wars of succession to the throne of Provence. Venice may have been an especially sympathetic site for his debut and indeed a way of contacting fellow Jews, some of whom still lived on the *Giudecca*, the old island ghetto. While not strictly Orthodox, but a 'Reform' Jew he remained true to the

faith of his parents and grandparents, pledging himself to his mother to that effect after the death of his grandfather. He was approached to write canticles both for Hamburg and Leipzig, possibly through the wide banking connections of his father. In 1818, a commission to supply songs for a textbook, edited by Rabbi Kley in Hamburg was not yet fulfilled but they seem to have been sent later. (17) In October 1820 he was to write the music for the consecration of the 'Reform' Temple 'Beth-Jacob Betschule'. (18)

Initially, for the projected Venetian premiere of *Romilda*, Meyerbeer had agreed to write the work for nothing, paying Rossi himself. However, the impresario's demand for 100 louis towards production costs made Meyerbeer determine to withdraw completely. He took the score back and went to Padua, (19) obtaining a production at the Teatro Nuovo, perhaps using Vogler to do so. It is possible that some of the projected Venetian cast came as well. Even then, things did not quite run as expected as the composer himself recounts:

"The prima donna, whom I had coached in the role, before the performance had got it into her head that she might possibly marry me although I had given her no encouragement by any action of mine. As her clearly signalled aim came to my attention, I held back but had no forewarning that it would result in such a vicious outcome for the opera, especially as the dress rehearsal went altogether so well and boded favourably for the work's success.

The evening arrived; despite being one of the warmest days in June and with an oppressive heat that lasted into the night, the Paduan public hurried to the theatre to get to know the new opera by the young 'Tedesco'.

Up went the curtain, but oh! horror! the singers sang as if weary to death, as if they were ill. Then misfortune stopped the trombonist, timpanist and drummer. Just as the trumpeter took a break and shook his instrument during the aria, he disappeared from sight and sound; the trombonist settled into the wrong time - the horns entered too early and blew on through the whole measure before they noticed their mistake - then, the drummer and timpanist took the beat unsteadily as if musket-shot was falling, all at an incorrect tempo. The audience could not stop laughing, but they became weary of the pranks and showed their displeasure throughout the various antics. It was obvious that the singer and the members of the orchestra had conspired against me, but why I could not fathom as I had friendly contact with almost everyone and so many had shown warm friendship for me.

Not until later did I find out from the players in the orchestra that the prima donna, who completely dominated the whole company, had stirred up this ill-feeling against me, and had threatened some with dismissal should they not sing or play as she directed.

Then I understood that unrequited love had exacted its revenge."

The lady in question was Benedetta Pisaroni (1793-1872). Once a soprano she had become a contralto after an attack of smallpox which left her facially disfigured. She may have mistaken Meyerbeer's exquisite manners for more amorous intentions, the more so, possibly, as he seems to have written the role of Romilda especially for her.

The cast was as follows:

TEOBALDO]]	Twin brothers, Counts of Provence	Luigi Campitelli	(tenor)
RETELLO		Luciano Bianchi	(bass)
ROMILDA	Daughter of the Duke of Brittany	Benedetta Pisaroni	(contralto)
LOTARIO	Count of Sisteron	Agostino Trentanove	(tenor)
COSTANZA	His daughter	Caterina Liparini	(soprano)
ALBERTONE	Chatelain of Senanque	Giovanni Liparini	(bass)
ANNINA	His niece	Annetta Liparini	(mezzo-soprano)
PIEROTTO	Foster-brother of Teobaldo	Carolina Bassi	(contralto)
UGO	Teobaldo's groom	Antonio Desirò	(bass)

The opera begins when Teobaldo returns victorious from campaigning in Brittany, on the very day that the will of his late father is read out. This bequeaths the throne of Provence to Teobaldo leaving only a portion of land to his twin brother who reacts angrily. The brothers fight and Teobaldo is beaten and captured.

Before leaving for Brittany, Teobaldo had won the heart of Costanza, daughter of the Count of Sisteron, returning her love at this time: in Brittany however he had fallen in love with Romilda, daughter of the vanquished Duke. She followed him back to Provence disguised as a page and with the aid of Pierotto, succeeds in obtaining his release from prison. But is recognised by Costanza who attempts to stab her and Teobaldo is returned to prison.

Retello persuades Albertone to end Teobaldo's life, but just in time the nearby townsfolk riot, and Ugo makes an attempt to assassinate Retello. Romilda prevents this, and she goes on to effect the reconciliation of the twin brothers.

The premiere of *Romilda e Costanza* took place on Saturday 19th July 1817. The tantrums of the prima donna do not, however, appear to have blighted its reception unduly, the overture (composed one day earlier) was applauded, Meyerbeer was called on stage at the end of Act I. In the second act the audience shouted *"Bravo maestro"* after every number: the second and third nights provoked the same response. Pacchiarotti and Calegari both approved *"the loveliest song, allied to excellent German conducting and instrumentation"* as the contemporary *Wiener Sammler* put it. (20)

With this Paduan debut behind him, Meyerbeer was soon negotiating on his own and Rossi's behalf a closely worked-out contract with the Venetian impresario Mazzucato for a staging at the Teatro San Benedetto, but on rather different terms. His success at Padua emboldened him to lay down rules in the contract that Mazzucato would be obliged to follow - a precedent not then readily open to native (and less rich) composers as can be seen later in the careers of Donizetti and Pacini. It is an early indication of Meyerbeer's meticulous approach both to the musical and dramatic values in the performance of his work as well as to his determination to get the results he wanted. Clauses 3 and 4 of this contract laid down that Mazzucato could not give performances of the opera unless both Meyerbeer and Rossi were satisfied with the rehearsals of the music and the action. Similarly, the sets, properties and costumes had to be deemed suitable by the poet and composer. Meyerbeer was determined to keep control in his own hands. (21) It was under these strict conditions that the delayed Venetian performance took place beginning on Monday 8th October 1817.

It is surprising how Meyerbeer's career took flight from this time onwards. Travel between Italian states seems to have presented no problem, possibly because he was a citizen of a power allied to Austria. Everywhere he earned respect, indeed, he is addressed in the early Ricordi score of *Il crociato in Egitto* (23) as 'Barone'. His money and refined manners not infrequently caused him to be mistaken for an aristocrat. Not for him were the "galley" years of a Donizetti or a Verdi, who, sometimes to get works performed, were obliged to write in ways that ran contrary to their better musical and dramatic instincts. He even seems to have convened a group of librettists in order to obtain novel material but as they invariably trotted-out the same old themes, he gave-up, wondering how any genuine artist could create in such circumstances. (24) His operas even made money.

Italian opera, throughout this period, tended to turn to German instrumentation and harmony while remaining vulnerable to facile vocal melody. In some respects these rather conflicting tendencies were typified by Italian residents like Mayr, and visitors like Peter von Winter, both providing strong links with the outside. From Gluck and Cherubini, Spontini, Mehul

and Lesueur they learned a variety of Frenchified ingredients including the increased use of woodwind and brass and the effective use of the chorus as an integral dramatic force.

Rossini would put all these influences into the melting pot of his genius. Using forms basically of the eighteenth-century he added a romantic flavour of horn, harp and woodwind despite the fact that his vocal line sometimes expresses little more than a generalised emotion. It was left to Bellini and Donizetti to mould the vocal line to suit the emotion of the situation aptly.

In Meyerbeer's earliest phases, plots are often set around actual historical events, but although characters react appropriately enough, they are not clearly motivated (just like in any Agatha Christie novel!). As can be divined from its plot synopsis, *Romilda* is related to many serious and semi-serious plots set by Mayr and others. While the setting is precise historically, the names and status of the characters historically plausible or actual, the interactions between them are motivated by fanciful invention more than by psychological truth. This notwithstanding, Meyerbeer's Italian operas display several characteristics which appear over and over again. The plot usually requires both a scenic back-drop - however improbable or inaccurate in detail - and a reason for military music played by one or more on-stage 'bandas'. Transvestism (women dressed as men) abounds in these stories; not invariably there is a Rescue element included, ultimately derived from Cherubini *et al.* Unlike Mayr's *opera semi-seria,* only one of Meyerbeer's Italian operas has a buffo character ie in *Margherita d'Anjou.* Nowhere is there a tragic ending, despite the tragic tone of these operas.

Meyerbeer seems to have stayed in Venice until after the Easter of 1818. He was able to attend some concerts during Holy Week, provided out of his own pocket by a certain *cavaliere* Grizzo in the Teatro San Benedetto on behalf of the poor. Handel's *Messiah,* Haydn's *Stabat Mater* were performed; Meyerbeer was rather scathing about the bored looks the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen wore, despite reasonable, if not excellent, performances. (25) He spent much of the spring and summer travelling throughout Italy, visiting Trieste, and then Naples again. He seems to have heard both *Otello* and *La gazza ladra,* possibly attending the premiere at La Scala on 31st May 1817 where it was a resounding success. He also found time to attend revivals of Goldoni comedies, and perhaps more significantly in the light of the use he was later to make of ballet in his Parisian operas, he was able to see many of the works of Salvatore Viganò (1769-1821), the celebrated choreographer who together with his son provided a whole series of different ballets at La Scala that same year. (26)

On Thursday 17th September 1818 he wrote to his brother Michael - then in Berlin - after he had attended the Venetian premiere of Rossini's *Otello.* He makes a series of perceptive comments still valid today about Rossini's music. He details the self borrowings and the carelessness in the first two acts, yet carefully annotates the worthwhile material, such as the fine *adagio* in the finale of Act I; a trio, borrowed from *La gazza ladra;* and twelve bars from the soprano cabaletta in the Act II finale. He melts completely, however, at the whole of Act III. (27)

It is also clear from his letters to his family that at this time he was contemplating writing an opera *Phädra*. It was no doubt to have been based on Racine's great tragedy, but both Ferdinando Orlandi and Mayr were occupied with a similar project and it is, perhaps, for this reason, that the project was shortly abandoned. Indeed, a number of composers were providing food for thought, in Milan he would certainly have attended one of the 47 performances of Giovanni Pacini's wildly successful *Il barone di Dolsheim* (prima 23rd September 1818); it may be a co-incidence but this opera was variously revived under such titles as *Federico II, re di Prussia*, and as *Il barone di Felcheim* and *La colpa emendata dal valore*, all somewhat curiously presaging his own festival work of 1844, *Ein Feldlager in Schlesien*.

Rossini remained uppermost in his mind however. On Sunday 27th September he wrote again to his brother discussing Rossini's negotiations with the Paris Opéra. Rossini's proposals at this stage were deemed to be very extravagant. The letter is strangely prophetic of that which both Meyerbeer and Rossini would seek to accomplish within less than a decade. (28)

About this time Meyerbeer also gives notice that he has been commissioned to write for the Teatro Regio in Turin; his absence in Milan certainly ensured that he missed the operatic debut of Gaetano Donizetti whose *Enrico di Borgogna* had its modest premiere at the Teatro San Luca in Venice on November 14th. It seems unlikely that they met each other during Meyerbeer's stay in Italy as they never seem to have been in the same place at the same time. Nor is there any extant correspondence between them. (29) For Turin, Gaetano Rossi adapted for him one of the most set subjects in Italian opera; the story of Semiramide which seems to have been current as early as 1648, and had been reset by a legion of composers basing their text on a famous poem by Metastasio. There is a certain confusion over the exact title of Meyerbeer's opera, it was given at the Teatro Regio as follows:

> *Semiramide, Dramma per musica. Da Rappresentarsi nel Regio Teatro di Torino nel Carnovale dell'Anno, 1819.*

The opera, indeed, was given as *Semiramide* tout-court at its prima and only, apparently, renamed *Semiramide riconosciuta* for a revival at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna in 1820 (not in any way to distinguish Meyerbeer's opera from Rossini's celebrated score).

The first cast was a distinguished one:

SEMIRAMIDE	Queen of Babylon	Carolina Bassi (contralto)
IRCANO	Prince of the Scythians	Claudio Bonoldi (tenor)
SCITALCE	Prince of India, former lover of Semiramide	Adelina Dalman-Naldi (soprano)

MIRTEO	Prince of Egypt and Semiramide's brother	Raimondi Onesti (bass)
TAMIRI	Daughter of the King of Bactria	Teresa Cantarelli (soprano)
SIBARI	Semiramide's treacherous advisor, in love with her	Ludovico Bonoldi (tenor)

The opera is set in legendary Babylon. Queen Semiramide returns to her capital after many adventures, disguised as her own weak and effeminate son, Nino, who is King of Assyria.

Princes have assembled to win the hand of Tamiri on the day ordained for the choice to be made. Amongst them, Semiramide encounters her brother Mirteo, as well as Scitalce, her former lover. The latter, deceived by Sibari, had earlier ordered Semiramide to be thrown into the Nile, but she escaped. He is the suitor Tamiri prefers but Sibari recognises Semiramide and her identity is revealed. She justifies her disguise, pleading her son's ineptitude, proceeds to pardon Scitalce upon whom her hand is bestowed, while Tamari has to be content with Mirteo.

The score of Meyerbeer's *Semiramide* opera would appear to have been influenced by both *Tancredi* and *Armida* of Rossini but was otherwise unexceptional (with the notable exception of a cavatina with violin obbligato and a divided 'cello accompaniment); there is also some self-borrowing (a Rossinian mode he could well have avoided) taking material *("Che barbaro tormento")* from *Romilda e Costanza*. There seems to be scant record of further revivals save that at Bologna, which also starred Carolina Bassi. (30)

Venice saw his next production. This was *Emma di Resburgo* (*Resburgo*, possibly surprisingly, is an Italianisation of Roxburgh), at the Teatro San Benedetto late in June the same year of 1819. The poem was once more supplied by the faithful Gaetano Rossi and Meyerbeer's opera was staged one day after Rossini's pastiche opera *Eduardo e Cristina* whose reception has been subject to conflicting reports, sometimes triumphant, sometimes highly critical. (33) *Emma di Resburgo*, on the other hand, was an undoubted success being praised for its meticulous workmanship, but was found 'overprecious and much too close an imitation of Rossini' according to Herbert Weinstock. On November 1st, the Venetian correspondent of *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* noted that the anti-Rossinians were hoping that Meyerbeer would remain in Italy for some time, so that 'he would succeed in obscuring the fame of the lucky composer'. (31)

Emma again uses a previously set text and was derived from a Rescue-opera text by Bouilly with some details reworked by Rossi. Mayr had set this plot as *Elena* as recently as 1814, an opera-semiseria which had been re-adapted for La Scala in the autumn of 1816 where Meyerbeer could well have heard it. The plot's transfer of location from Provence to Scotland in

fact predates by three months the premiere at the San Carlo (24th September) of Rossini's *La donna del lago*, set in the Scottish Highlands.

The cast was as follows:

EDEMONDO	Exiled Earl of Lanark	Carolina Cortesi	(contralto)
EMMA	His wife	Rosa Morandi	(mezzo-soprano)
NORCESTO DI CUMINO	His supplanter as Earl of Lanark	Eliodoro Bianchi	(tenor)
OLFREDO DI TURA	Faithful adherent of Edemondo	Luciano Bianchi	(bass)
DONALDO DI SULIS	A Knight	Vincenzo Fracalini	(tenor)
ETELIA	Olfredo's daughter	Cecilia Gaddi	(soprano)
ELVINO	Six-year-old son of Emma	(non-singing role)	

The plot is concerned with dynastic rivalry in Lowland Scotland at a period after the Norman conquest. Edemondo, dagger in hand, has been found at the scene of his father's murder; as a result he has had to flee his patrimony, in the process becoming separated from his wife, Emma. The opera opens when Emma returns to the castle of Tura disguised as a minstrel, in order to see her son who has been protected by Olfredo. The latter duly recognises her. Edemondo also comes to Tura, disguised as a shepherd. When Norcesto comes to a local festival he attempts to carry off Elvino, Emma betrays herself in her fear for her son while Edemondo attempts to protect him but is restrained by Olfredo.

In Act II Edemondo comes forward and offers himself as a substitute for the lives of Emma and Elvino, but is condemned to be executed at the site of his father's grave. Norcesto signs the death warrant, but as the sentence is about to be carried-out, relents, admitting that his own father was the murderer of Edemondo's father. The opera ends with general rejoicing and homage to the restored dynasty.

While the Rossinian model was still much in evidence several pieces are notable in this score. There is an atmospheric introduction employing horns in soft harmony above double-basses; there is a remarkable *canon* in the *finale primo*; an impressive Judgement Chorus; while Emma's *recitativo* in the aria finale somewhat surprisingly repeats the music of the beginning of the Overture.

Emma di Resburgo was played in several Italian cities, reaching

Dresden on Saturday 29th January 1820 with Carl Maria von Weber conducting. Translated into German as *Emma von Leicester* it was played in Frankfurt, in Munich and Vienna, and under its original title in Berlin and Stuttgart.

Meyerbeer went to Germany for the winter of 1819-20, no doubt attending some of the more local performances of *Emma*. The Berlin press was hostile and Weber, an old friend, tried to persuade Meyerbeer to return to the German operatic fold. In 1815 Weber had unsuccessfully mounted Meyerbeer's early comic opera *Alimelek*; as a counter-blast to what he considered the Italianising influence in German music, especially after the appointment of Spontini to the Court Opera in Berlin, he tried to recapture Meyerbeer for German audiences. He proposed to revive *Alimelek* again, and both in performance and in print tried to show the worth of the German as opposed to the Italian model. In this context he issued a long defence in the local press (*Abendzeitung*, Dresden, 21st/22nd January 1820), shortly before his conducting of *Emma di Resburgo*:

> *Emma di Resburgo*, on the other hand, carries the aura of the land in which it was created and its ruling spirit, which does indeed dominate it. I think the composer had fixed a goal of wanting to please and thus to show that, as lord and master, he could turn to and practise all categories of composition. The digestion of Italian bellies must really be bad if the genius of Meyerbeer (which can indeed create by its own independent power) has thought it necessary, not only to serve-up sweet, swollen fruits at table, but has them sugared with all the fashionable bits and pieces...
> He has shown us in this work that his talent has many-sided facets and can be original, since it can succeed in what it wants to do. However, if the writer of this article was making a wish, it would be that - since he has studied art in all the diversity of its forms, according to the taste of a cultivated nation and has given proof of the strength as well as the suppleness of his talent - he returns to his homeland of Germany and gives back a little by truly honouring Art in the actual setting-up of a German National Opera. It could learn the lessons from abroad well. It would then remain ready to be shaped into truth and individuality. Only in this way will its standing be finally established among the artistic nations. This was the imperishable foundation that Mozart made for German opera.

Readers were encouraged to compare *Alimelek* and *Emma*, the former genuine German art, the latter mere ecclecticism. (32)

Ironically, of course, it would be French opera to which Meyerbeer would turn his sovereign skills.

Despite the foregoing, *Emma* was genuinely successful, not only with the Saxon Court but with the public, while *Alimelek* had only a luke-warm reception. In gratitude, however, for this production of Meyerbeer's operas, his parents sent Weber a fine pair of silver candlesticks which they had heard he fancied. He returned them, dubious of the morality of receiving gifts from a composer's family in this way. (33)

On his return to Italy, Meyerbeer composed *Margherita d'Anjou* for La Scala, his most ambitious effort to date. Its librettist was Felice Romani (1788-1865) and was derived from a *mélodrame-historique* in 3 acts called 'Marguerite d'Anjou' by the prolific René-Charles-Guilbert de Pixérécourt based on legends surrounding the Wars of the Roses. Given on Tuesday 14th November 1820 with great success, its cast was as follows:

MARGHERITA D'ANJOU	Widow of Henry VI of England	Carolina Pellegrini	(soprano)
EDOARDO	Her son, Prince of Wales	Gaetana Carcano	(soprano)
DUCA DI LAVARENNE	Former Senechal of Normandy	Nicola Tacchinardi	(tenor)
ISAURA	His wife, under the name of Eugenio	Rosa Mariani	(contralto)
RICCARDO	Duke of Gloucester	Michele Cavara	(bass)
CARLO BELMONTE	The Queen's former General	Nicolas-Prosper Levasseur	(bass)
MICHELE GAMAUTTE	French surgeon	Nicola Bassi	(bass)
GERTRUDE		Paola Monticelli	(mezzo-soprano)
BELLAPUNTA		Pietro Gentili	(tenor)

The action takes place around Hexham in Northumberland c.1462. Lavarenne has fallen in love with Marherita and left his wife, Isaura. In order to escape Riccardo, Margherita dons peasant clothes and pretends to be the wife of Michele Gamautte, her surgeon (a *basso-buffo)*, while Isaura puts on page's garb in order to follow her faithless husband; thus finding herself obliged to deliver *billets-doux* to the Queen. But Riccardo sees through Margherita's disguise and siezes Edoardo as a hostage.

The Queen succeeds in taking the initiative, Riccardo is overpowered, his general Belmonte returning to the Queen's camp. Lavarenne and his wife are reconciled.

There is further development in this opera. The *buffo* Gamautte, has a French *opéra-bouffe* flavour. In his duet with Isaura his light banter serves to underpin her more serious mood; elsewhere sharp rhythms and idyllic colouring are used imaginatively. (34)

Perhaps it was the Gallic heroine of *Margherita d'Anjou*, perhaps its French source, but there is indeed something of a French elegance in this score and it is not surprising that it was given a major revival in Paris in 1826 where it proved to be the first of his operas to be published in full score. (This version was, however, much diluted by music from other operas, notably from *Emma di Resburgo*).

Like this last work, *Margherita d'Anjou* soon went the rounds, being given productions at Venice, Bologna, Turin, Florence and Trieste. Translated into German it was given in Munich and Dresden.

Meyerbeer's circle of friends was expanding, in Italy Bellini's longtime friend Giuseppe Pollini (1762-1846) dedicated his 'Trentadue esercizi' for piano to him, Pollini was an influential musical figure in Venice and *La sonnambula* would be dedicated to him a decade later.(35) In Germany, by mid-December 1820, he had renewed his friendship with Bärmann and Weber, being privileged enough to hear a pre-view performance of the overture to *Der Freischütz* at a public concert. (36) For the *carnevale* he was back in Rome. This was the time of the celebrated prank when Paganini, Rossini, Meyerbeer and the distinguished statesman-to-be Massimo D'Azeglio dressed-up in rags (Rossini and Paganini as women of vastly different contours) and serenaded passers-by with music and songs. Paganini made speeches in a falsetto voice, Meyerbeer passed the hat. It was remarked that they did not play badly. (37)(38) Paganini later conducted the prima of Rossini's *Matilde di Shabran* (24th February 1821) substituting for the leader of the orchestra who was ill. (39) At this time Meyerbeer was working upon the score of a new opera to be called *L'Almanzore* intended for the Teatro Argentina. This opera, whose poem is variously ascribed both to Romani and Rossi, was based on a very familiar source, an eighteenth-century play by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian which had already been utilised for Cherubini's *Les Abencerages,* and would be re-employed later for Donizetti's *Alahor di Granata* (Palermo 1825). Although much of the score may well have been composed, work on *L'Almanzore* does not seem to have progressed much beyond the rehearsal stage; Carolina Bassi, the prima donna, became indisposed as did the composer. He did not complete the orchestration and no new date was set for the premiere. Bartolommeo Merelli, the librettist of Donizetti's similarly-plotted *Zoraide di Granata* (Rome 1822), may well have been asked to adapt the scenario of Meyerbeer's abortive opera in order to save on the costs of scenery and costumes as Meyerbeer's work was not forthcoming. (40)(41)

While *Der Freischütz* was having its triumphant premiere in Berlin, enthusiatically supported by the Beer family, E.T.A. Hoffman, Ludwig Rellstab and the like (42), Meyerbeer was recovering from a further operatic venture. *L'Almanzore* had been reworked by Rossi (the libretto was principally the work of Romani) as *L'esule di Granata* for La Scala and had been given a mediocre reception there despite Meyerbeer's presence.
Its cast was most impressive:

ALMANZORE	King of Granada	Benedetta Pisaroni	(contralto)

AZEMA	Daughter of Sulemano	Adelaide Tosi	(soprano)
SULEMANO	Exiled King of Granada	Luigi Lablache	(bass)
ALAMAR	Chief of the Zegridi	Berardo Calvari Winter	(tenor)
ALI	Official of Alamar	Carlo Siber	
OMAR	Chief of the Abencerages	Lorenzo Biondi	(bass)
FATIMA	Azema's maid	Carolina Sivelli	(mezzo-soprano)

The plot, with by-now familiar ingredients, concerns the conflict between two factions in the Moorish kingdom of Granada towards the end of the fifteenth century. The Zegridi and the Abencerages are sworn enemies. The present King of Granada, a Zegrid, Almanzore, has driven the former king, Sulemanno, an Abencerage, from the throne and captured his daughter, Azema. Wishing to marry her, Almanzore recalls her father from exile. This latter, however, decides to stop the marriage by murdering Almanzore. This is abortive, Azema pleads for the life of her father, obtains forgiveness, and the opera ends in amity and praise for the power of love.

The music for *L'esule di Granata* shows some improvement in Meyerbeer's command of musical continuity. There is a mood-setting overture leading to a noctural *Introduzione* with the composer's familiar martial music. A flowing use of recitaive and chorus uses a recurrent motif. Some exotic 'Moorish' intrumentation is employed, combined with an increase in the range and scope of the orchestra, and including *a cappella* as well as contrapuntal ensemble effects. (43) Sadly, there would seem to have been some malicious intrigues and a vicious 'claque' which disrupted the evening; a second-act duet was favourably received notwithstanding. (44)

Recuperation at Spa followed this misfortune, this was the beginning of a pattern of retreat for the composer, invariably to a fashionable watering-place in order to recover from prolongued attacks of anxiety. An increasing disillusion with Italy seems to have begun at this time; a letter to Levasseur on 5th July 1822 reveals the way he is thinking:

> *I have really been flattered by your letter. You tell me of the good opinion the Director of the French Opéra wishes to have of my weak talents. You asked me if it would be unattractive to work for the French stage. I assure you that it would be even more glorious to have the honour to write for the French Opéra than*

> *for all the Italian theatres. (I have, indeed, given my works in all the major Italian houses). Where else, therefore, but in Paris can the vast resources be found which the French offer to an artist who wants to write truly dramatic music? Here, there is a lack of good libretti, and I know your unbiased public welcome of all types of music, if allied to genius.*
>
> *There is a wider range than in Italy. Perhaps you will ask me why, with this attitude, I have not tried to write for Paris. It is because the French Opéra is portrayed as a field hedged round with difficulties, where one usually has to wait for long years before getting things staged, and this creates fear. I must say that I have perhaps been pampered on this point in Italy, where I have been sought-after until now, though I admit it is more through excessive indulgence of the public towards me, than any value I have.*

His comments about lack of libretti seem to derive from his abortive meeting earlier as well as from his recent failure, yet they set his already long collaboration with Gaetano Rossi at nought. During 1823 their correspondence about his next opera *Il crociato in Egitto* (44) will repeat this very concern with the effectiveness of opera as drama. A common theme he has with so many composers especially of Donizetti and Verdi.

After his recuperation in Spa he travelled to Berlin to see his family, re-encountering Weber. Meyerbeer and Weber spent a whole day and a good part of the night reminiscing about past friends and events. Meyerbeer promised his friend to try German opera once again when he returned to Berlin, perhaps in a year's time. (45) During this stay, probably attempting to follow Weber's wishes, he tried to obtain a performance of his *Das Brandenburger Tor* at the theatre in Königstadt, the capital of East Prussia. This was the work he had written to celebrate the end of the Franco-Prussian hostilities in 1814, but it came to nothing like the earlier attempt.

On return to Italy he seems to have travelled to Trieste. There he made friends with Antonio d'Antoni (1800-1889), a young composer resident there, encouraging him to put on a first opera *Amina, ossia L'orfanella di Ginevra* which took place at the Teatro Comunale in 1825. However, this city was not to be the venue of *Il crociato in Egitto* but its sister-city of Venice, where, at La Fenice on Sunday 7th March 1824 it gave Meyerbeer his first truly international success.

This opera has a niche in operatic history being the last really celebrated work to have a *castrato* hero in the heroic eighteenth-century mode, Armando d'Orville, written for Giambattista Velluti (1781-1861) popularly regarded as being the last real example of his line and renowned for his power of ornamentation.

Once again, the cast was exceptional:

ALADINO	Sultan of Egypt and Syria	Luciano Bianchi	(bass)
PALMIDE	His daughter	Henriette Méric-Lalande	(soprano)
OSMIN	Vizier	Boccaino	(tenor)
ALMA	Palmide's confidante	Marietta Bramati	(soprano)
ADRIANO DI MONTFORT	Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, uncle of Armando	Gaetano Crivelli	(tenor)
FELICIA	Adriano's cousin and Armando's fiancée	Brigida Lorenzani	(contralto)
ARMANDO D'ORVILLE	Initiate Knight of Rhodes, disguised as Elmireno	Giambattista Velluti	(contraltist) *

The plot, borrowed from an unidentified play by Pixérécourt, is like its predecessors, blessed with a complicated plot, this time set either during or after the Fourth Crusade in the Saracen Sultanate of Egypt between 1200-1218, when Aladino, the brother of Saladin, reigned. [The synopsis below describes the order of the New York revival of 1979 which used some of the changes made for the Paris 1825 version, while alternatives are noted within brackets [], especially from the manuscript score which has been published by Garland Publishing]. (46)
Armando, a Crusader from Provence, is the sole survivor of a battle with the Saracens. He manages to exchange clothing with a fallen Egyptian warrior and now known as 'Elmireno' arrives in Damietta where he saves the life of the Sultan Aladino. At the latter's Court he falls in love with Palmide, and their secret liaison results in a son who is concealed in the harem, while 'Elmireno enters the Sultan's service.

At the same time, delegates from the Knights of Rhodes (which should, strictly speaking, be described as the Knights Hospitaler of St. John of Jerusalem) are due to arrive to open peace negociations with Aladino.

ACT 1 Sc.I. The Sultan's Palace courtyard.

Christian slaves act out the consequences of their fate in mime during the overture which leads straight into the chorus (*'Patria amata'*) of Verdian intensity rounded off with some Weberian flourishes at its close. Palmide enters and the slaves receive gifts from 'Elmireno', she expresses her compassion with the charmingly decorated *'I doni d'Elmireno'* whose woodwind writing is more noteworthy than its melody. The Sultan enters, awaiting the triumphant return of 'Elmireno', he promises her

* *Elsewhere in this Journal Piero Mioli dubs him a "mezzosoprano"*

- in a complex duet - that the hero shall have her hand as a reward. The crowd approves but Osmin is jealous. 'Elmireno' enters in triumph (*'Popol d'Egitto'*) and after an embrace from the Sultan sings his bravura aria *'Caro mano dell'amore'*.
[The Venice manuscript score published by Garland is differently ordered at this point, with Armando appearing in Sc.III in the Palace Gardens. The slaves dance a ballet with chorus *'Urridi vezzose'* while tending the infant son. Armando enters and sings a different *aria di sortita ('O figlio dell'amore')*, followed by a duet with Palmide in which he reveals his identity (*'Ah! non ti son più cara'*) all of which makes rather better sense].

Sc.II. On the banks of the river Nile.

The Knights sing of peace and France. Adriano laments the loss of Armando and reflects on the coming peace-talks in a totally inappropriate and difficult aria spanning more than two octaves with a clattering drim accompaniment. [This replaces two arias in the other version - one for Felicia *('Pace io reco, a noi più grata')*, the other for Adriano *('Sarebbe a me si caro')* expressing the same sense of loss for his nephew].

'Elmireno' and Palmide enter with their son (*'Non v'è per noi più speme ancor'*). Armando, alone, is suddenly faced with his uncle, who promptly reproaches him with betraying his vows; Armando, in shame, hands over his sword and renews his allegiance in a vigorous duet *'Il brando invitto'*.

Sc.III. The Palace Gardens.

Felicia has arrived in Damietta in search of Armando's tomb. She is struck by the boy's resemblance to Armando, in a duet with Palmide the childs paternity is revealed, also hinting that he is still alive. Felicia sings the serenade with which he wooed her (*'Giovinetto cavalier'*)the opening phrases of which presage Donizetti's entrance-aria for Maria Stuarda, both in its woodwind texture and in its gently nostalgic longing for France. Armando arrives and in a ravishing trio Palmide and Armando declare their love while Felicia nobly surrenders her claim for his hand.

Sc.IV. The Palace.

The Knights offer peace, despite the discontent of the Court. Aladino accepts Adriano's terms, frees the Christian slaves and announces the wedding of Palmide and 'Elmireno'. The latter, however, enters in the dress of a Knight of Rhodes, a quartet of conflicting emotions follows (*'Cavalier conosci omai'*), in fury the Sultan tries to kill Armando but Felicia comes between them; the Sultan re-declares war, his followers overwhelm the Knights and they are all consigned to the dungeons.

ACT II Sc.I. The Palace Gardens.

Alma reveals to Osmin that Palmide and Armando have a son - he goes to inform Aladino. [The Venice score has an aria for Felicia at this point(*'Ah! ch'io l'adoro ancor'*)]. Palmide enters and sings of her desire for death (*'O solinghi recessi'*) [the Venice score having a different aria (*'Tutto qui parla ognor'*)]. Her father, seeing her embrace her son, orders the child's murder. But Palmide confronts him (*'D'una madre disperata'*)and he relents, forgiving Armando and freeing the Knights. Adriano, however, curses Armando.

Sc.II. A ruined temple on the banks of the Nile.

The Sultan's courtiers sing of their plans to overthrow Aladino (*'Nel silenzio fra l'orror'*) in a chorus that seems to combine similar choruses in *Lucrezia Borgia*, with those of *Rigoletto* and *The Pirates of Penzance*. Palmide joins Felicia, Armando and Adriano in a confession of faith in the Christian divinity (*'O ciel clemente'*) during which the Sultan's daughter embraces Christian faith. As a result Aladino rages, Osmin whips up his fury, and the Knights are imprisoned once more.

Sc.III. The Palace prison.

In a wonderfully evocative 'Inno di morte' with its 'cello threnody and brass chorale (*'Tutto è finito'*), Adriano sings of heavenly glory (*'La gloria celeste'*) as the Knights prepare for death.

Sc.IV. The Great Square at Damietta.

Armando is led into the square and sings of his son in a poignant aria *'Ah! come rapida fuggi la speme'* [replacing an earlier *'Il di rinascerà'*)]. Osmin promises the Knights freedom if they rise against Aladino and returns to them their arms.

When the Sultan orders the execution of the Knights, Osmin rushes to kill Aladino but is intercepted by Armando who calls upon the Knights to defend 'a betrayed monarch'[a dispensation from Rome, freeing him from his duty to the order, is given him by Adriano in some later versions]. Osmin and the treacherous courtiers are imprisoned. Palmide and Armando, with punctuation for the ensemble, sing a rapturous duet of love (*'Ravvisa quell' anima'*). [This last finale is a much more effective ending than the more-usual rondò originally written for Velluti *'Ah! che fate! v'arrestate!'*].

Il crociato in Egitto seems to be a strange amalgam of largely superceded practices of the eighteenth-century and experimental features that prefigure later operatic developments. The high-voiced hero, *secco* recitatives, and the unadorned cadenzas left for the singer to embellish, are all retained, yet other features, the increased size of the orchestra, and the use of its spacial potential in its dividing-up into *bande* in four sections, on and off-stage, are innovatory. He makes use of the chorus as an essential dramatic element, not only in the background, employing various contrapuntal and *a cappella* effects, while employing only male voices to off-set the predominantly high-pitched distribution of voices amongst the principals: Aladino being the only bass.

Plot is much more important than characterisation. Meyerbeer admits that the

> *text of the poem, which despite the endless complications of the plot, is so monotonous and wearying, so unmotivated and fragmented ... particularly in the case of the role of Felicia*

but that

> *... in musical purpose, especially in the ensemble pieces, it becomes so important.*
>
> (Letter to Count Bruhl, Director of the Berlin Opera, 11th December 1825).

Thus, at best, the music provides an evocative means of setting individual scenes, by breaking-up set aria patterns to achieve a more unified dramatic flow, or by establishing a flow of moods - all features which point to developments to come in *Grand-Opéra*. (47)

Its success was instantaneous and it travelled across Italy, Meyerbeer himself attending its Florence premiere at the Teatro alla Pergola on Friday 7th May 1824. For this performance he reduced the *secco* recitatives, some being replaced by accompanied ones, thus speeding-up the musical sequence. Trieste saw *Crociato* in the autumn and winter of 1824-5. In the early summer of 1825 he presided over a Paduan staging, the scene of his first success in Italy and an appropriate place to end his Italian career.(48)

Rossini, to avoid further pirating (a garbled version of *Il crociato in Egitto* had already been given in Paris on Wednesday 19th January 1825), had agreed to supervise a new performance at the Thêâtre-Italien in Paris;this took place on 25th September with a cast including Donzelli and Levasseur, Ester Mombelli, and with Giuditta Pasta singing the role originally created by Velluti. For almost every revival Meyerbeer was to compose new music. London heard it at The King's Theatre on 30th June 1825; it travelled through Germany and Austria, where Schubert heard it in Graz, for instance, on 5th September 1827, without liking it. Chopin heard it in Vienna in 1830 and was enthusiastic.

* * *

His Italian career did not end here, nor as neatly as the foregoing might imply ... with an immediate move to Paris. There were other Italian projects which were abandoned mysteriously, leaving ragged edges.
In 1824 he had been writing a *Malek Adel*, libretto by Rossi of which fragments exist, but the opera was never completed. The plot for this opera, derived from a novel called 'Mathilde' (1805) by Sophie Cottin, gave rise to a dozen or so operas including examples by Pacini and Costa. Its abandonment is something of a puzzle. Even more puzzling was his *Ines de* (or *di*) *Castro*; this too was a plot which had an early start in the nineteenth-century, Zingarelli had set the story as early as 1803; Giuseppe Persiani would write his best music in its honour (1835); Pacini still found the gory plot interesting as late as 1851.
Meyerbeer's version appears to have post-dated *Il crociato in Egitto*, it too had a libretto by Gaetano Rossi, and it too was never completed, but it was completed enough to get a casting from the Teatro San Carlo at Naples for which it was intended. The prima donna should have been Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle, and she should have been supported by Giovanni David and Luigi Lablache for a staging in 1825. Meyerbeer shook the dust from his feet leaving these operas behind. Their music may well have been absorbed into later productions.

Later in 1825 he wrote to Count Moritz of Dietrichstein, a Viennese friend, that this Italian sojourn had been a *'period of seduction'* in which his *'artistic self had been unfaithful to him'*. Yet his letter to Schucht, quoted earlier, shows just how ambivalent he was about this stay in *'the magic garden'*.
It is not easy to summarise precisely what he did achieve. He had established himself as a composer of considerable power and originality, and would seem to have gained some financial benefit too. Contemporary commentators (or at least, contemporary German commentators) believed they discerned a consistency of construction and orchestration in his work that was missing in the operas of native composers like Carafa, Pacini,and Rossini himself, on occasions. His own influence is harder to discern, but the common heritage of the German schools in Rossini's and Donizetti's music was re-inforced, and a desire for more dramatic truth was set out, leading the way for the achievements of the 1830's and beyond.

A Parisian Postscript

Donizetti, like Rossini, Meyerbeer and Bellini, felt the pull of the Parisian musical scene. Yet only twice is there any recorded meeting, when both Donizetti and Meyerbeer were present.
The first was the night of the premiere of Donizetti's *Marino Faliero* at the Théâtre-Italien on 12th March 1835. (49) The second, at a Charity Concert for the impoverished and dying Paganini in November or December 1838 after Donizetti had arrived in Paris to prepare for the premiere of *Roberto Devereux*: they were both recorded as having been in the audience. (50) There is also a mention of Meyerbeer holding a dinner/Press Conference on the non-appearance of *Le Prophète* on the opening night of Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal* on 13th November 1843, though Meyerbeer could well have attended at least some of this premiere. (51) There would seem to be no extant correspondence to indicate friendship, animosity, or interest - only indifference. When Donizetti was the toast of Paris in the late 1830's, Meyerbeer had no rehearsals for new opera, only rumours about *Le Prophète*. Meyerbeer did not seem to be much in Paris at this time. Did he feel threatened by Donizetti's ubliquity? Certainly Berlioz did, and in strong and less-than impartial terms. (52)
Did they exert influence upon one another? Donizetti could well have influenced Meyerbeer's structures in *Les Huguenots*. Meyerbeer was in Milan at the turn of the years 1833-4 when *Lucrezia Borgia* was having its inaugural run and almost certainly saw it. Both *Marino Faliero* and *Lucrezia Borgia* deal with conspiracy and are male dominated with a minimal love interest. The *musico* Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia*, for instance, serves as a similar vocal foil as that of Urbain in *Les Huguenots*. A lack of female roles was one of Meyerbeer's prime concerns when developing the material in Acts III and IV of the latter opera,despite the fact that he had resolved the problem by skilful orchestration and contrasts in vocal balance in *Il crociato in Egitto*. Donizetti's opera may have provided newer and more dramatic models for solving this problem.
Conversely, Donizetti would seem not to display Meyerbeer's influence directly. What becomes apparent is his increasingly wide palette of orchestral sound plus his absorption of a French grace in vocal writing, thereby increasing the harmonic flow. These helped him diversify and make more effective his own native style - but this was as much due to Paris as to the Meyerbeerian establishment he found there on his arrival.

Appendix I

Time and Place sequence

1814	
November	Left Vienna, en route for Paris; appeared in Munich.
1815	
New Year	In Paris until December.
December	In London.
1816	
	Travelled to Italy, overland via Paris and Lyons.
March	In Genoa.
June	In Naples.
July-October	In Sicily: Palermo and Messina.
October	With Spohr in Venice, travelled via Tuscany to Rome.
December (22nd)	Arrived in Rome. Stayed until the New Year.
1817	
January	? In Naples.
Spring	Venice.
July (12th)	Padua.
October	Venice.
November	? Munich
1818	
Easter- September	Venice.
September (27th)	Milan.
1819	
March	In Turin.
Spring	? Bologna.
June	Venice.
	? travelled to local premieres in Milan, Genoa, Florence and Padua.
Winter	Travelled to Berlin.
1820	
January-February	Berlin and Dresden. ? Other German cities.
November (14th)	In Milan.
Winter	Berlin.
1821	
February	In Rome.
1822	
February	? Munich.
March (12th)	In Milan.
November	? Munich again.
Winter	Spa, then Berlin.
1823	
Autumn-Winter	Trieste.
1824	
March	Venice.
May (7th)	In Florence.
1825	
Early summer	Padua.
Late summer	In Paris.

Appendix II

List of operatic works

1813

Wirth und Gast oder Aus Scherz Ernest

Lustspiel (libretto: J.G. Wohlbrück)

Stuttgart 6th January 1813:

revised as *Alimelek* Vienna 26th October 1814.

Quinto Fabio

opera seria (libretto: Apostolo Zeno)

not completed.

Gli amori di Teolinda

Monodrama (libretto: Gaetano Rossi)

Vienna 1813, revised Genoa 1816.

1814

Das Brandenburger Tor

Singspiel (libretto: E.Veith)

unperformed.

1817

Romilda e Costanza

melodramma semiserio (libretto: Gaetano Rossi)

Padua 19th July 1817.

1819

Semiramide
(subsequently retitled: *Semiramide riconosciuta*

dramma per musica (libretto: Gaetano Rossi/Metastasio)

Turin January 1819.

Emma di Resburgo

melodramma eroico (libretto: Gaetano Rossi)

Venice 26th June 1819.

1820

Margherita d'Anjou

melodramma semiserio (libretto: Felice Romani)

Milan 14th November 1820.

1821

Almanzore

revised as:

L'esule di Granata

melodramma serio (libretto: Felice Romani rvsd. Rossi)

Milan 12th March 1822.

1824

Il crociato in Egitto

melodramma eroico (libretto: Gaetano Rossi)

Venice 7th March 1824.

Malek-Adel

(libretto: Gaetano Rossi): not completed.

Ines de Castro

(libretto: Gaetano Rossi): not completed.(1824-25)

Appendix III

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