

FORMAL CONVENTION IN VERDI'S *FALSTAFF*

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Joseph Salvatore La Rosa
BMus, University of the Pacific (1999)
MMus, University of Michigan (2001)
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Abstract

Falstaff (premiered in 1893) draws more explicitly on *primo ottocento* formal conventions for duets, arias, and central finales than scholars have previously argued. A description of those conventions (generally referred to as the *solita forma*) is followed by the analytical application of those conventions to selected passages from *Falstaff*.

A general description of the *solita forma* for duets and arias is followed by a pertinent example from Rossini's *Semiramide*. Three passages from *Falstaff* are then shown to have strong grounding in the *solita forma*. These passages include Falstaff's "Honor" monologue in act I, part 1; the scene for Mrs. Quickly, Alice, Meg and Nannetta at the beginning of act I, part 2; and the scene for Mrs. Quickly, Alice, Meg and Nannetta at the beginning of act II, part 2.

A general description of formal conventions for central finales is followed by a pertinent example from Rossini (the act I finale of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*). The *Falstaff* act II finale is then analyzed with reference to those conventions. The form of the *Falstaff* act II finale is also shown to bear a resemblance to forms encountered in the central finales of middle and late nineteenth-century French composers.

In addition to revealing a stylistic continuity between *Falstaff* and earlier operas, an awareness of the reliance of certain passages in *Falstaff* on formal conventions from earlier in the nineteenth century allows for a more precise understanding of the dramaturgy of *Falstaff*.

Introduction

When Abramo Basevi, in his 1859 *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi*, pointed to a *solita forma* (common form) of operatic duets, he laid the foundation for a series of studies that began to change our understanding of Italian operatic dramaturgy.¹ Relating Basevi's concept to a system of versification, form, and drama, these studies have made it possible to combine several key aspects of nineteenth-century Italian opera into a powerful analytical tool applicable to a repertoire ranging from Rossini (who had established the conventions in the 1810s) to later Verdi.² By the end of his career, Verdi seemed to have largely abandoned these formal conventions, and scholarship, as a consequence, has paid little attention to their remnants in his last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. This study will focus on *Falstaff*, investigating its foundation in *primo ottocento* formal conventions.

The concept of the *solita forma* draws on musical, poetic, and dramatic parameters to distinguish an introduction and up to four movements within an individual "number" (an aria, duet, or larger ensemble). *Falstaff* at first seems doubly removed from this dramaturgical concept. As a comic opera, it is not as tightly bound to formal

¹Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tofani, 1859). The major studies include Philip Gossett, "Verdi, Ghislanzoni, and *Aida*: The Uses of Convention," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (December 1974): 291–334; Robert Moreen, "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms in Verdi's Early Operas" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1975); Harold S. Powers, "La *Solita forma* and 'The Uses of Convention,'" *Acta Musicologica* 59 (1987): 65–90; and, arguing for caution in the application of this formal concept, Roger Parker, "'Insolite forme,' or Basevi's Garden Path," in *Verdi's Middle Period 1849–1859: Source Studies, Analysis, and Performance Practice*, ed. Martin Chusid (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 129–46.

²Scott Balthazar ("Mayr, Rossini, and the Development of the Opera Seria Duet: Some Preliminary Conclusions," in *I vicini di Mozart*, vol. 1, *Il teatro musicale tra sette e ottocento*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro, Studi di musica veneta [Florence: Olschki, 1989], 377–98) has traced the roots of the *solita forma* back to Giovanni Simone Mayr.

conventions as the serious ones, and as Verdi's last opera, it is more continuous in texture and thus less clearly structured by the conventions of the *solita forma* than are his earlier ones.³ Boito's libretto in part accounts for the continuity, because it keeps to a minimum any extended reflective, static moments and distinct stanzas that might be set as distinct movements. The orchestra in *Falstaff* also contributes to the greater structural continuity: its independence in the presentation of melodic material allows the protagonists to sing less lyrically and thus to propel the drama in a variety of non-lyrical vocal textures.

Falstaff does include lyrical numbers that have little relevance to the *solita forma*. Fenton's act III sonnet, Nannetta's "Sul fil d'un soffio etesio," and the ensemble love music for Fenton and Nannetta in acts I and II, for example, all include characteristics of the slow movement in a duet or an aria, but none fall within the sequence of movements typical of a duet or an aria.⁴ On the other hand, several lyrical passages in *Falstaff* are simply too brief to be considered separate movements, as Falstaff's defense of his girth, "Se Falstaff s'assotiglia/ Non è più lui" (act I, part 1), and the lyrical effusions in his soliloquy at the beginning of act III attest.

A more integrated type of lyricism involves the introduction of short, vocal melodies, which, while they may be explained by the structure or content of a verse alone, are better understood as belonging to sequences of lyrical and non-lyrical passages

³See Jay Nicolaisen, *Italian Opera in Transition, 1871–1893*, Studies in Musicology, vol. 31 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 27. Francesco Izzo ("Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Opera Buffa," *Studi musicali* 33 [2005]: 387-432) has shown that nineteenth-century comic opera has its own conventions (which Izzo cleverly calls the *comica forma*). He suggests that in a comic duet, the *tempo d'attacco* and the slow movement are replaced by a coherent but dramaturgically more ambiguous *primo tempo* leading to the *cabaletta*.

⁴Verdi and Boito agreed quite early in the planning of *Falstaff*, in fact, to avoid a self-contained love duet for Fenton and Nannetta, preferring instead, "as sugar is sprinkled on a cake, to sprinkle the whole comedy with that love without accumulating it at any one point." Arrigo Boito, letter to Verdi, July 12, 1889, quoted in Hans Busch, ed., *Verdi's Falstaff in Contemporary Letters and Reviews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 11.

that function as sections of the *solita forma*. These sequences, the focus of this study, include three analogues to the conventional duet and the act II finale. They are by no means the only passages of lyrical vocal writing in *Falstaff*, nor are they necessarily the most notable in and of themselves; they are, however, the sections of lyrical vocal writing that refer most clearly to *primo ottocento* formal conventions.

Chapter 1 will provide a detailed formal exposition of the *primo ottocento* duet, from which all other forms can be derived. A textbook example by Rossini, the act II duet between Semiramide and Assur from *Semiramide* (1823) will set the context for the investigation of the first three examples from *Falstaff*. Chapter 2 will follow the same concept, beginning with a detailed formal exposition of the *primo ottocento* ensemble finale. A pertinent example by Rossini, the act I finale from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816) will set the context for an analysis of the act II finale from *Falstaff*. The analyses will primarily draw on such parameters as versification, phrasing, the distinction between types of vocal textures, harmony and key, tempo changes, and the dramaturgical distinction between static and kinetic moments.

This study attempts to make a twofold contribution. On an analytical and interpretive level, it will show how the concept of the *solita forma* may be effectively used to understand the dramaturgy of *Falstaff*; and on a historical level, it will show that *Falstaff*, despite its chronological distance from Verdi's other operas, is grounded in the formal conventions of the early nineteenth century.

Chapter 1:
A General Description of the *Solita forma* for Duets,
Followed by an Analysis of Three Passages from Verdi's *Falstaff*

The *Solita forma* for Duets

The term *solita forma* (“common form”) first appeared in Abramo Basevi’s 1859 *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi*. In his review of *Rigoletto*, Basevi observes that the act I duet between Rigoletto and Sparafucile does not follow the *solita forma* for duets, noting specifically that it does not contain the typical sequence of four distinct sections: *tempo d’attacco*, *adagio*, *tempo di mezzo*, and *cabaletta*.⁵ Since the 1970s, scholars have used Basevi’s *solita forma* as a general label for that sequence and thus as a formal descriptor of the typical “number” (aria, duet, or ensemble) in nineteenth century Italian operas ranging from Rossini through most of Verdi.⁶

The four-part division of the *solita forma* is based on dramatic and prosodic distinctions in the libretto. Regarding drama, we may distinguish active passages (in which the characters take action) from reflective passages (in which the characters react to that action).⁷ Regarding prosody, we may distinguish distinct types of verse: *versi lirici* (“lyric verse”—rhymed and with a regular metric structure) and *versi sciolti* (“loose verse”—unrhymed and with an irregular metric structure).⁸ While *versi lirici* may consist of any meter, *versi sciolti* usually consist of a combination of seven and eleven syllable lines. Among *versi lirici*, we may further distinguish between those that are arranged in

⁵Basevi, *Studio*, 191. Translated in Moreen, “Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms,” 31.

⁶Central finales follow the same basic form as duets, with some notable distinctions. The central finale will be treated in a separate chapter.

⁷In describing the structure of central finales, Philip Gossett uses the terms “kinetic” and “static” to describe phases of action and reflection, respectively. Since then, those terms have come into wide use in analyses of arias and duets, as well. See Philip Gossett, “The *Candeur Virginale* of *Tancredi*,” *Musical Times* 121 (1971): 326–29.

separate stanzas for each of the characters and those that are distributed irregularly among the various characters (in which case the length of a line does not necessarily coincide with the length of the verse).⁹

A competent librettist would use distinct types of verse and distinct arrangements of the verse to divide a duet into periods of action and reflection, expecting that the composer would set each of the resultant sections in a dramatically appropriate way. A duet begins with what Basevi calls the *tempo d'attacco*, typically a confrontation between two characters, cast in *versi lirici*. The verses may be distributed irregularly, in parallel stanzas, or as a combination of the two. Because it is primarily a confrontation, we consider this section dramatically kinetic, even though it may include subordinate reflective elements. During the next section, the dramatically static *adagio* (or the duet's central slow movement), the characters pause to reflect on their confrontation.¹⁰ The *adagio* is cast in *versi lirici* and usually arranged in parallel stanzas. In the ensuing section, the *tempo di mezzo*, the characters take new action. This dramatically kinetic passage may be cast in either *versi lirici* (in Rossini) or *versi sciolti* (in much of Verdi) and arranged in any manner between the characters.¹¹ A concluding section, the

⁸Rhymed verse with an irregular metric structure is known as *versi misti*, properly considered a sub-category of *versi lirici*. For a general description of the scansion of Italian verse, see appendix.

⁹I will use “verse” to describe a full count of the poetic meter and “line” to describe a single row of words said by a single character. Even if the verses are completed irregularly among the characters, they are still arranged in stanzas. The end of a stanza is most often marked by a *tronco* verse (see appendix). The first verse of a stanza should be flush-left in the libretto, with the following verses indented, a visual aid that modern publishers tend to neglect. For a description of what constitutes a stanza in Italian verse and of how the stanzaic arrangement of Italian librettos has been obscured by librettists and publishers, see Andreas Giger, “The Role of Giuseppe Verdi’s French Operas in the Transformation of His Melodic Style” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1999), 59–67.

¹⁰The *adagio* has also been called the *cantabile* or *primo tempo*. The former is confusing because sections other than the slow movement might well be described as *cantabile*; the latter is confusing because the *primo tempo*, i.e., the first metrically regular section in the duet, can be the *tempo d'attacco* rather than the slow movement. For a discussion of these semantics, see Powers, “*La Solita Forma*,” 68–69.

¹¹For a list of Verdi’s operas through *La traviata* that contain a *tempo di mezzo* in *versi sciolti*, see Moreen, “Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms,” 291–93.

cabaletta, allows the characters to vent their emotions in light of all that has transpired during the duet so far. This dramatically static passage consists of *versi lirici*, usually arranged in parallel stanzas. The sequence of *tempo d'attacco*, *adagio*, *tempo di mezzo*, and *cabaletta* is preceded by an expository *scena* (scene) in *versi sciolti*. Arias follow the same sequence of movements, but because arias include only one primary character, they present no need for the confrontational *tempo d'attacco*.

The musical structure of the *solita forma* is broadly based on the alternation of lyrical and non-lyrical sections: the static sections (the *adagio* and the livelier *cabaletta*) are more lyrical than the kinetic sections (the *tempo d'attacco* and the *tempo di mezzo*). To a large extent, the level of lyricism is associated with texture, that is, the relationship of the voice to the orchestra in the presentation of melodic material. Basevi recognizes five textures: simple recitative, *obbligato* recitative, *parlante armonico*, *parlante melodico*, and aria.¹² Taking melodic continuity as an attribute of lyricism, we will see that Basevi's five textures imply varied degrees of lyrical vocal writing. In both types of recitative, the vocal part is speech-like: in simple recitative, the orchestra part consists mostly of punctuating chords; in *obbligato* recitative, the orchestra offers more complex figuration.¹³ In *parlante* the orchestra goes beyond figuration to carry actual melodic interest: in *parlante armonico*, the voice, often hovering on a single repeated pitch, is merely harmonically consistent with the orchestral melody, while in *parlante melodico*

¹²Quoted in *ibid.*, 28–31. My description of Basevi's five textures and their relevance to lyricism is adapted from Moreen.

¹³Basevi's reference to simple recitative is somewhat problematic. As applied to eighteenth century Italian opera, simple recitative describes a speech-like vocal part given sparse harmonic support by *basso continuo*. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, however, *basso continuo* had been supplanted by the orchestra. According to Basevi, simple recitative includes the type of accompaniment that would have been played by the *basso continuo* in the previous generation but is now played by the orchestra. See Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 1:20; and Moreen, "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms," 29.

the voice doubles that melody. Recitative lacks the melodic continuity often found in the orchestral part in *parlante*, but because the vocal line in recitative is continuous, it often comes closer to sustained melody, and thus closer to lyrical vocal writing, than the fragmented and frequently monotone vocal line in *parlante armonico*. *Parlante melodico* allows for more lyrical vocal writing than either recitative or *parlante armonico*, because in *parlante melodico* the voice often doubles a continuous orchestral melody (although it is still the orchestra, not the voice, that is responsible for sustaining that melody from beginning to end). The most lyrical vocal writing is found in aria texture, in which the voice sustains a melody, while the orchestra plays an accompanimental role.

The texture of a particular passage is partly determined by dramatic characteristics. Dramatically kinetic passages (*scena*, *tempo d'attacco*, and *tempo di mezzo*) tend to be set as recitative or *parlante*, because these textures allow the singer to communicate dramatic information as expediently as possible and without the obligation, implicit in aria texture, to regular harmonic and melodic unfolding. Dramatically static passages (*adagio* and *cabaletta*) on the other hand, are usually set as aria texture, because the slower musical pace dictated by the melodic continuity in an aria texture is compatible with a slower dramatic pace. Texture is also influenced by the metric characteristics of the libretto. *Versi lirici*, with their regular poetic meter, are suited to rhythmically regular melodies, and by extension to coherent phrasing and melodic continuity. Thus, aria textures tend to be settings of *versi lirici*.

Apart from texture, the *adagio* and the *cabaletta* are often characterized by a tonally closed, four-part melodic structure, the so-called mid-century lyric form (either *a*,

a', b, a'' or as *a, a', b, c*), in which each of the four segments tends to cover two verses.¹⁴

The *adagio* and the *cabaletta* also include a passage in which the protagonists join in ensemble singing. While other sections of the *solita forma* for duets may include aria textures and lyric forms (particularly the *tempo d'attacco*), only in the *adagio* and the *cabaletta* include extended *a due* singing, and it is ultimately by the *a due* singing that an *adagio* or a *cabaletta* is identified.¹⁵

The relationship between the prosodic and dramatic elements of the libretto on the one hand and textural and formal elements on the other may be summarized as follows:

<i>scena</i>	verse: <i>versi sciolti</i> (irregular and non-rhyming verse of seven and eleven syllables) music: recitative drama: kinetic
<i>tempo d'attacco</i>	verse: <i>versi lirici</i> (regular and rhyming verse) music: lyrical, <i>parlante</i> , or a mixture of the two drama: kinetic, static, or a mixture of the two
<i>adagio</i>	verse: <i>versi lirici</i> music: lyrical, slow, and often based on mid-century lyric form (<i>a, a', b, a''/c</i>); in ensembles, this section culminates in ensemble singing drama: static
<i>tempo di mezzo</i>	verse: <i>versi lirici</i> or <i>versi sciolti</i> music: mostly <i>parlante</i> or recitative, but may also include aria textures drama: kinetic
<i>cabaletta</i>	verse: <i>versi lirici</i> music: lyrical, fast, and often based on mid-century lyric form; usually repeated; in ensembles, this section culminates in ensemble singing drama: static

Figure 1: The Conventional Structure of an *Ottocento* Operatic Number

¹⁴Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 1:14–16. A passage of text arranged in two quatrains is suited to be set in mid-century lyric form, with one half of each quatrain covered by one melodic segment. A sextain and a couplet, also comprising eight verses, might also be set in mid-century lyric form.

¹⁵For clarification of this point, we may turn to the duet between Violetta and Germont in act II of *La traviata*. The opening of this duet contains a long passage of lyrical music in aria textures and lyric forms, all of which should be considered a multi-movement *tempo d'attacco* because it includes no extended *a due* singing. The *adagio* begins only with Violetta's "Dite alla giovine," a lyrical passage that culminates in extended *a due* singing. For a discussion of this particular duet, see Powers, "La Solita forma," 77–81.

The use of this formal scheme reached its apogee in the first decades of the nineteenth century in the serious operas of Rossini. Verdi uses the form most obviously in his operas through *La traviata* (1853), less obviously in the subsequent operas through *Aida* (1871), and, it has been generally assumed, hardly at all in his last two operas, *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893).

Formal Example: Rossini, *Semiramide*, Act II Duet Semiramide-Assur

Semiramide (1823), Rossini's last opera for the Italian stage, contains four duets, all of which closely follow the *solita forma*. The duet between Semiramide and Assur, a particularly clear example of the form, comes at the beginning of act II.¹⁶ During act I, it has been made known that Semiramide, Queen of Babylon, must name a successor to her throne. As nobody except the high priest Oroe knows, Semiramide and her former lover, the prince Assur, conspired many years ago to poison Semiramide's husband, King Nino. Assur feels himself entitled to the throne, but Semiramide would prefer to pass her scepter through marriage to the young soldier Arsace, the current object of her infatuation. Arsace, towards whom Assur is understandably hostile, is not only uninterested in Semiramide; he is also, as only Oroe knows, the long lost son of Semiramide and Nino. At the end of act I, as Semiramide announces her intention to marry Arsace, Nino's ghost appears, cryptically demanding that Arsace attain vengeance

¹⁶In his early study of the *solita forma*, Philip Gossett uses the act II duet for Semiramide and Arsace as a formal example. As Harold Powers notes, however, the act II duet for Semiramide and Assur is perhaps a better example because it contains a more substantial *tempo di mezzo*. Powers further notes that Budden, in the introductory pages of his three volume study of Verdi's operas, uses the act II duet for Semiramide and Assur as an example of what Budden considers to be a *three*-movement form for duets. Budden's analysis ultimately falls short in that it presents the *tempo di mezzo* as a mere transitional episode rather than as a separate, kinetic movement. See Gossett, "Verdi, Ghislanzoni, and *Aida*," 302–5; and Powers, "*La Solita forma*," 76–77.

for past crimes. The duet between Semiramide and Assur allows the two characters to take stock of their shadowy past and to expose contrasting visions of their future.

After a brief dialogue between Semiramide and her guard, she and Assur are left alone on the stage. The two offer a summary account of their crime: Semiramide emphasizes her grief over her lost son, while Assur emphasizes his bitterness over Semiramide's refusal to grant him Nino's throne. This expository passage in *versi sciolti*, most of it dialogue, constitutes the *scena*:¹⁷

Semiramide
Assur, i cenni miei
Fur sacri, irrevocabili.

Assur
E sinora
Regina, io li adorai:
Di me più fido non avesti... il sai. —
Ed altra alle mie cure, alla mia fede
Sperai da Semiramide mercede...
E me ne lusingavi in que' momenti...

Semiramide
Ah, tu! Che mai ricordi!—e non paventi!
Tu la vedesti pur... l'udisti, l'ombra
Irritata di Nino... a noi d'intorno.
Forse adesso invisibile... e tu ardisci!...
Tu, che al tuo Re nel seno
Morte versasti?

Assur
E chi apprestò il veleno?
Di morte il nappo a me chi porse!...

Semiramide
Oh! taci!
Perfido!—L'arte tue vili e fallacy
Me seduceano incauta. Me di Nino
Dal talamo, dal soglio
Già scacciata pingevi...

Assur
E a chi allor promettevi

Semiramide
Assur, my commands
were sacred and irrevocable.

Assur
And till now,
O Queen, I have held them so.
You know you had no more loyal servant than me,
and for my services and my devotion
a different reward I had expected of Semiramide;
and at that time you flattered me with hopes.

Semiramide
Oh, wretch, to what are you alluding? Are you
not afraid? You too saw Nino's angry ghost,
you heard it in our presence; although it is now,
perhaps, invisible... and you dare!
you, who poured death
into the bosom of your king!

Assur
And who prepared the poison?
Who handed me the cup of death?

Semiramide
Be silent!
Villain! Your vile and lying arts,
persuaded me, all unsuspecting,
I was about to be banished
from Nino's bed and throne.

Assur
To whom, at that time, did you promise

¹⁷Gaetano Rossi, *Semiramide: Melo-dramma tragico in due atti*, in *Tutti i libretti di Rossini*, ed. Marco Beghelli and Nicola Gallino (Milan: Garzanti, 1991), 735–56. All quotations are taken from this edition. All translations are by Peggie Cochrane. See *Semiramide*, Ion Marin, cond., Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft DGG 437 797–2.

Quel talamo, quel soglio?

Semiramide

A me restava allora

Un figlio...dolce mia speranza, ancora:—
Egli perì.—

Assur

S'egli vivesse, il soglio
Non premeresti or forse più.

Semiramide

Felice

Al figlio mio del mondo
L'impero io cederei...
Ma quel figlio perdei! Misera!—e forse
La stessa man che uccise il genitore...

Assur

Ma tu regni.

Semiramide

E tu vivi?—Oh, qual orrore!—

that bed and that throne?

Semiramide

At that time I still had

a son, sweet repository of my hopes;
he too perished.

Assur

If he were alive, you would not perhaps
be sitting on the throne any longer.

Semiramide

I would happily

give up the empire of the world
to my son;
but I lost that son, wretch that I am! And perhaps
the same hand that killed the father...

Assur

But you are the ruler of the kingdom.

Semiramide

And you are still alive! Oh, how awful!

The *scena* (**181**) is set as *obbligato* recitative.¹⁸ The vocal part is speech-like; lacks regular melodic grouping; and tends towards figuration rather than coherent melodic design. The orchestra part consists mostly of brief chordal interjections for harmonic support, occasionally including slightly longer rhythmic and melodic cells.

The *scena* is immediately followed by a passage of regularly rhymed *ottonari*, during which Semiramide and Assur shift the dramatic emphasis from the past to the present: she commands him to remove himself from her presence, while he threatens her with blackmail. As a confrontational, mostly kinetic episode of *versi lirici* (arranged as a combination of parallel and broken stanzas), this passage stands as the *tempo d'attacco*:

¹⁸Rehearsal numbers (in boldface) refer to: Gioachino Rossini, *Semiramide*, ed. Philip Gossett and Alberto Zedda (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 2001).

Semiramide
Se la vita ancora t'è cara
Va', t'invola a'sguardi miei:
Io l'aspetto non saprei
Più soffrir d'un traditor.

Assur
Pensa almen, Regina, in pria,
Chi mi spinse al tradimento:
Che d'Assur potria un accento
Involarti e soglio e onor.

Semiramide
Dei tremarne: pria cadresti.

Assur
Solo, forse, non cadrei.

Semiramide
Meco è Arsace: degli Dei
Ei mi salva col favor.

Assur
Il favor, tu, degli Dei?
Scendi... e trema... nel tuo cor.

Semiramide
If you still hold life dear,
go, get yourself out of my sight;
I can no longer abide,
the sight of a traitor.

Assur
At least consider first, O Queen
who egged me on to treacherous deed;
a word from Assur could rob you of
both throne and reputation.

Semiramide
You would not dare: you would fall first.

Assur
I should not perhaps be the only one to fall.

Semiramide
I have Arsace by my side: he will save me
through the favor of the gods.

Assur
The favor of the gods towards you?
Look into your heart, and tremble!

The *tempo d'attacco*, marked *allegro*, in B-flat major and 4/4 time, initiates the duet proper (number 8 in the score). It is set in aria texture and features a coherent formal design. The initial parallel quatrains are set as parallel solo statements, each divided into three harmonically articulated limbs: the first and second verses span seven-measures, cadencing on the tonic; the second verse is repeated, spanning five measures and cadencing on the dominant; the third and fourth verses span six measures and return to the tonic:

Example 1: Rossini, *Semiramide*, Act II, No. 8:
Semiramide's First Solo Statement in the *Tempo d'attacco*

verses 1-2
(fiera, e dignitosa)

Sem. Se la vi - ta an -

(example continued)



- cor t'è ca - ra, va, t'in -



- vo - la a' sguar - di mie - i, va, t'in -

I

verse 2 (repeated)



- vo - la, va, t'in - vo - la, va, t'in - vo - la a' sguar - di



mie - i, a' sguar - di mie i:

V

verse 3



io l'a - spet - to non sa -

verse 4



- pre - i, no, no, più sof -



- frir d'un tra - di - tor,

I

In each of the parallel statements, the third and fourth verses of the quatrain are then repeated in an extended fifteen-measure coda, affirming the tonic harmony. The six verses that follow the parallel quatrains are set as a series of independent melodic lines, without *a due* singing, effecting a modulation to the G major of the ensuing *adagio*.

During the dramatically static *adagio*, written in parallel stanzas of *quinari*, Semiramide and Assur dwell at length on their crime, reflecting on its meaning to their present lives:

Assur
 Quella ricordati
 Notte di morte:
 L'ombra terribile
 Del tuo consorte,
 Che minaccioso,
 Infra le tenebre,
 Il tuo riposo
 Funesta ognor.—

I tuoi spaventi,
 I tuoi tormenti,
 Le angoscie, i palpiti,
 Leggier supplizio
 Sono al colpevole
 Tuo ingrato cor.

Semiramide
 Notte terribile!
 Notte di morte!
 Tre lustri corsero,
 E del consorte
 L'ombra sdegnosa
 Infra le tenebre,
 L'indegna sposa
 Minaccia ognor!—

I miei spaventi...
 I miei tormenti,
 Le angoscie, i palpiti,
 A tuo supplizio
 Gli Dei rivolgano,
 Perfido cor.

Assur
 Remember that
 night of death:
 the dread ghost
 of your husband,
 like a menace
 from out the darkness,
 now constantly disturbs
 your sleep.

Your fears,
 your suffering,
 your anguish and agitation
 are but slight punishment
 for your ungrateful,
 guilty heart

Semiramide
 Dreadful night!
 Night of death!
 Fifteen years have passed since then,
 yet my husband's
 angry ghost,
 from out the darkness,
 still menaces
 his unworthy consort!

My fears,
 my suffering,
 my anguish and my agitation—
 let the gods turn them
 into a punishment for you,
 treacherous heart.

The *adagio* is distinguished musically from the *tempo d'attacco* by a slower tempo (*andantino*), a new key (G major), and a new time signature (3/4). Like the *tempo*

d'attacco, it features aria texture and tonally closed parallel solo statements that are harmonically articulated into melodic segments. The setting of Assur's first two verses cadences on the tonic, G major; his next two verses carry us to the sub-median, E minor; his fifth through the eighth verses cadence on the dominant of E minor; and his entire second stanza re-emphasizes G major:

Example 2: Rossini, *Semiramide*, Act II, No. 8:
Assur's First Solo Statement in the *Adagio*

first stanza, verses 1–2

first stanza, verses 3–4

first stanza, verses 5–8

- cio - so, in - fra le te - ne-bre, il tuo ri -

(example continued)

second stanza, verses 1-6

- po-so fu - ne-sta o-gnor. I tuoi spa - ven - ti, i tuoi tor -
V/vi

- men - ti, le an - go - scie, i pal - pi - ti, leg - gier sup -
- pli - zio, leg - gier sup - pli - zio so - no al col -
I

- pe - vo - le, so - no al col - pe - vo - le tuo in - gra - to

cor, in - gra - to cor.
I

Semiramide's parallel statement follows in the parallel minor, and a coda of *a due* singing brings the *adagio* to a close.

The drama again moves away from reflection and back towards action, first as Semiramide invokes Arsace's protection and then as the sound of military music sounds from the palace. Upon hearing the music, Semiramide rejoices (prematurely) that Arsace has been crowned king, while Assur harbors more sinister predictions of Semiramide's downfall. Cast in *ottonari* and arranged in a combination of parallel and broken stanzas, this kinetic passage is the *tempo di mezzo*:

Semiramide
Ma implacabile di Nino
Non è l'ombra, né il destino:

Semiramide
But Nino's ghost is not
implacable, neither is Fate;

È da lor protetto Arsace;
Ei per me si placherà.

Assur

Quella vittima rammenta
Che di Nino l'ombra aspetta:
Alla giusta sua vendetta
Da me forse pria l'avrà.

Semiramide

In Arsace adora intanto
Il tuo Re...

Assur

Ma Arsace!...

Musica festevole nella reggia.

Semiramide

Senti!

Questa gioia!... que' concenti!...
Il trionfo si festeggia
Del mio sposo, del tuo Re.

Assur

Ma funesto in ciel lampeggia
Forse un astro ancor per te.

Arsace is protected by them,
yes, he will pacify them for me.

Assur

Remember that victim
awaited by Nino's ghost;
Perhaps, for just this revenge,
He'll get it first from me.

Semiramide

Meanwhile, bow down to Arsace
as your king...

Assur

But Arsace!....

Festive music is heard from the palace.

Semiramide

Listen!

What happiness! That rejoicing!
They are celebrating my consort's triumph,
the triumph of your king!

Assur

An ominous star, however, may well
shine above you in the sky.

The through-composed *tempo di mezzo* is distinguished from the *adagio* by its key (C major) and by a return to the tempo and the time signature of the *tempo d'attacco* (*allegro*, 4/4). Most of the *tempo di mezzo* is set as *parlante*, but the first part of it tends towards aria texture, with Semiramide and Assur each singing a combination of scales and short melodies. When the music from the palace sounds, however, Semiramide's vocal line falls into *parlante armonico*. The *banda* (a conventional interruptive device in the *tempo di mezzo*) sustains a martial tune while Semiramide offers only brief interjections that complement the harmony. When the *banda* stops playing, Assur re-enters with a declamatory vocal line that leads directly to the *cabaletta*.

The text of the *cabaletta* consists of parallel stanzas of *senari*, two quatrains each for Semiramide and Assur, in which the two characters vent the emotions that have flared

a'

- gi - na, e guer - rie - ra pu - nir - ti sa -

b

- prò. L'i - stan - te s'af - fret - ta fe -

a''

- li - ce, bra - ma - to: tu, tre - ma, spie -

- ta - to, ca - der - ti - ve - drò.

After Assur's parallel statement in F major, the vocal parts fall into a *parlante* texture as a massive orchestral crescendo carries the key back to B-flat major. After the conventional repeat of each solo statement, a coda, featuring the expected *a due* singing, brings the duet to its conclusion.

In the Semiramide-Assur duet, a conventional duet structure is generated by the opposition of static and kinetic dramatic periods, parallel and broken stanzas, and lyrical and non-lyrical vocal writing. I will refer to the same set of oppositions, albeit in not as pure a state, as I show that certain parts of Verdi's *Falstaff* follow the *solita forma* for duets.

Three Passages in Verdi's *Falstaff* Structured According to the *Solita forma* for Duets

Both Julian Budden and James Hepokoski have recognized remnants of the *solita forma* in *Falstaff*.¹⁹ Budden suggests a reading of Falstaff's "Honor" monologue at the end of act I, part 1 as an aria with sections resembling both a slow movement and a *stretta*,²⁰ and Hepokoski draws on the *solita forma* as a point of departure for his analysis of the Ford/Falstaff duet in act I, part 2, showing, however, how Verdi works against the *solita forma* rather than with it to create a dramatic effect.²¹ *Falstaff* includes additional passages based on the *solita forma*, though, for which a sufficiently strong case has not yet been made. The two most prominent ones are sung by Mrs. Quickly, Alice, Meg, and Nannetta, the first extending from the beginning of act I, part 2 (19) through the chorus "Quel otre! Quel tino" (26) and the second from the beginning of act II, part 2 (26) to Falstaff's entrance (38);²² the third is Falstaff's aforementioned "Honor" monologue (14 to the end of the act I, part 1). To clarify the structures of these excerpts, we will draw on versification, phrasing, the distinction between aria and *parlante* textures, the harmonic rhythm, tempo changes, and the dramaturgical distinction between static and kinetic moments.

As act I, part 2 begins, Mrs. Quickly, Alice, Meg, and Nannetta are meeting in Alice's garden. Meg and Alice have both received love letters from Falstaff, and as they read the letters aloud to one another, they realize that the two letters are identical.

Outraged, the four women plot their revenge. In Boito's libretto, as in earlier Italian

¹⁹Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3:453–57; and James Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 87, 90, 102–6.

²⁰Budden's observations will be discussed below.

²¹Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff*, 102–6. He hints at a similar tension in the Falstaff/Alice duet in act II, part 2.

²²Giuseppe Verdi, *Falstaff*, piano-vocal score (New York: International Music Company, 1949). All subsequent references are to this edition.

librettos, the metric characteristics of the verse provide important clues to the scene's formal organization. The section from the initial salutation, "Alice. Meg. Nannetta." to the beginning of Falstaff's letter, "Fulgida Alice! Amor t'offro..." consists of *versi misti* (here, the irregular combination of rhymed verses of five, seven, and eleven syllables). This introduction is followed by two interlocking dramatic strains, each in a distinct poetic meter: Falstaff's letters in *endecasillabi* with a concluding two-line salutation in *settenari* and the ladies' reactions to the letters in *quinari*. The libretto identifies the text of the letters by italics.²³

Meg
Fulgida Alice! Amor t'offro
 ... Ma come?!
 Che cosa dice?
 Salvo che il nome
 La frase è uguale.

Meg
Enchanting Alice, I offer you love
 ... But what's this?
 What's he saying?
 Except for the name,
 the wording is the same.

Alice
Fulgida Meg! Amor t'offro...

Alice
Enchanting Meg, I offer you love...

Meg
amor bramo.

Meg
And I yearn for love

Alice
 Qua Meg, là Alice.

Alice
 Here "Meg," there "Alice."

Meg
 E tal e quale
Non domandar perchè, ma dimmi:

Meg
 Word for word.
Ask not why, but say to me:

Alice
t'amo.
 Pur non gli offersi
 Cagion.

Alice
I love you.
 But yet I never gave him
 cause.

Meg
 Il nostro
 Caso è pur strano.

Meg
 Our situation
 is a strange one.

Quickly
 Guardiam con flemma

Quickly
 Let's look at the letters calmly.

²³Arrigo Boito, Falstaff: *Commedia lirica in tre atti*, in *Tutti i libretti di Verdi*, ed. Luigi Baldacci (Milan: Garzanti, 2001): 479–518. All quotations are taken from this edition. All translations are by Lionel Salter. See *Falstaff*, Carlo Maria Giulini, cond., Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft DGG 410503.

Meg
Gli stessi versi.

Meg
The same verses.

Alice
Lo stesso inchiostro.

Alice
The same ink.

Quickly
La stessa mano.

Quickly
The same writing.

Nannetta
Lo stesso stemma

Nannetta
The same crest.

Alice e Meg
Sei la gaia comare, il compar gaio
Son io, e fra noi due facciamo il paio.

Alice e Meg
You are a merry wife, I a merry
companion: Let us two make a pair.

Alice
Già

Alice
That's it!

Nannetta
Lui, lei, te.

Nannetta
He, she, and you.

Quickly
Un paio in tre.

Quickly
A pair of three.

Alice
Facciamo il paio in un amor ridente
Di donna bella e d'uomo

Alice
Let's make a pair in happy love
of a lovely woman and a man...

Tutte
appariscente

All
of distinction

Alice
E il viso tuo su me risplenderà
Come una stella sull'immensità.

Alice
And your face will shine upon me
like a star upon the vasty deep.

Tutte
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

All
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Alice
Rispondi al tuo scudiere,
John Falstaff Cavaliere.

Alice
Reply to your own true knight
Sir John Falstaff.

Disentangled, the two strands read as follows:

Falstaff's Letter:

Fulgida Meg (Alice)! Amor t'offro, amor bramo.
Non domandar perchè, ma dimmi t'amo.
Sei la gaia comare, il compar gaio
Son io, e fra noi due facciamo il paio.
Facciamo il paio in un amor ridente

Enchanting Meg (Alice), I offer you love and yearn for love.
Ask not why, but say to me "I love you."
You are a merry wife, I a merry
companion: Let us two make a pair.
Let's make a pair in happy love

Di donna bella e d'uom appariscente
 E il viso tuo su me risplenderà
 Come una stella sull'immensità.
 Rispondi al tuo scudiere,
 John Falstaff Cavaliere.

of a lovely woman and a man of distinction
 and your face will shine upon me
 like a star upon the vasty deep.
 Reply to your own true knight,
 Sir John Falstaff.

The Reactions to Falstaff's Letter.²⁴

Ma come?
 Che cosa dice?
 Salvo che il nome
 La frase è uguale.
 Qua *Meg*, là *Alice*.
 È tal e quale.
 Pur non gli offersi
 Cagion. Il nostro
 Caso è pur strano.
 Guardiam con flemma
 Gli stessi versi.
 Lo stesso inchiostro.
 La stessa mano.
 Lo stesso stemma.
 Già. Lui, lei, te.
 Un paio in tre.

But what's this?
 What's he saying?
 Except for the name
 The wording is the same.
 Here "Meg," there "Alice."
 Word for word.
 But yet I never gave him
 cause. Our situation
 is a strange one.
 Let's look at the letters calmly.
 The same verses.
 The same ink.
 The same writing.
 The same crest.
 That's it! He, she, and you.
 A pair of three.

After having read the letters, the ladies declare that they must avenge Falstaff's affront,
 now turning from *quinari* to *versi misti*:

<p>Mostro!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i> Dobbiam gabbarlo.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nannetta</i> E farne chiasso.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i> E meterlo in burletta.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nannetta</i> Oh! Oh! che spasso!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i> Che allegria.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Meg</i> Che vendetta!</p>	<p>Monster!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i> We must lead him on.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nannetta</i> And make sport of it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i> And make a fool of him.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nannetta</i> Oh! Oh! What fun!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i> What amusement!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Meg</i> What revenge!</p>
--	--

²⁴The first complete eleven-syllable verse is split between the first words of Falstaff's letter and the women's reaction to it: "*Fulgida Alice! amor t'offro ... Ma come?*"

The subsequent chorus “Quell’otre! quel tino” offers an extended affirmation of the ladies’ disgust. Consisting of *senari* (verses of six syllables), it extends until the departure of the women and the entrance of Ford, Dr. Cajus, Fenton, Bardolf, and Pistola:

Quell’otre! quel tino! Quel Re delle pance, Ci ha ancora le ciance Del bel vaghegino. ...	That wineskin! That barrel! That king of paunches, who still affaects the mien of a handsome gallant. ...
---	---

If we view the reading of and reaction to Falstaff’s letters as distinct consecutive sections, a four-part structure emerges, defined by the alternation of regular and irregular verse:

Section	Text	Poetic Meter
1. (19–21)	Alice. Meg. Nannetta.	<i>versi misti</i> (5, 7, and 11)
2a. (21–23)	<i>Fulgida Alice! Amor t’offro, amor bramo!</i>	<i>endecasillabi</i>
2b. (21–23)	Ma come? Che cosa dice?	<i>quinari</i>
3. (23–24)	Mostro! Dobbiam gabbarlo!	<i>versi misti</i> (7 and 11)
4. (24–26)	Quell’otre! Quel tino!	<i>senari</i>

Figure 2: The Structure of the Libretto in the Opening of Act I, Part 2

In this four-part structure, changes in verse coincide with changes in melodic style. After a sparkling introductory passage for winds and horns, the *versi misti* of section 1 are set mostly in *parlante*. The vocal line is occasionally doubled by the orchestra, but more often it is the orchestra’s counterpart in a lively exchange of short melodic ideas. The setting of Falstaff’s letter (section 2a) stands as a lyrical contrast to this busy texture. In a relatively slow tempo (*andante sostenuto*), aria texture, and mostly regular phrases, it is often shaped in arches and supported by clear harmonic progressions

and frequent cadences. We do not perceive it as particularly lyrical, however, because it is interrupted by the ladies' commentary (section 2b). Marked *allegro*, the commentary reflects the ladies' astonishment through a variety of styles ranging from measured recitative ("Ma come?! Che cosa dice") to spurts of lyricism ("Pur non gli offersi cagion"). Section 3 begins with a highly fragmented vocal line that, in conjunction with the quick harmonic rhythm and the rapid modulations, lends the passage a declamatory rather than lyrical quality. The first verses of section 4 initially continue, *un poco meno*, the texture of section 3 before they recur, *più moderato*, in homophony, and with periodic melodic phrases over a slow harmonic rhythm (25–26).

Example 4: Verdi, Falstaff, Act I, Part 2:
 "Quell'otre! Quell tino!"

The musical score consists of five staves of music in G major, 3/4 time, marked *PIÙ MODERATO* with a tempo of 88. The lyrics are in Italian and describe a scene where a character is being scolded for not offering a drink. The lyrics are: "Quel - l'ò - tre! quel ti - no! Quel Re del - le pan - cie, Ci ha an - co - ra le cian - ce Del bel va - gheg - gi - no. E l'ò - lio gli sgoccio - la Dal - l'a - di - pe un - tic - cio E an - co - ra el ne snoccio - la La stro - fa e il bis - tic - cio!"

In order to understand the integration of text and music in this four-part structure, we need to imagine the music for Falstaff’s letters as an uninterrupted string of all of the *andante* sections between **21** and **23**, which amounts to an extended lyrical section:

Example 5: Verdi, *Falstaff*, Act I, Part 2, Composite Setting of Falstaff’s Letter

a Ful-gi-da A - li-ce! a-mor t'off-ro

a' Ful-gi-da Meg! - a-mor t'off-ro... a-mor bra-mo.

x non do-man-dar per-chè, ma dim-mi t'a - mo.

x' ...sei la ga-ia co-ma-re il com-par ga - io son i - o e fra noi

b/b' Fac-cia-mo il pa - io... in un a-mor ri-den-te di don-na bel-la e d'uom ap-pa-ri-scen-te

c *dolcissimo* *p* e il vi-so tu-o su me ri-splen-de-rà co-me u-na stel-la co-me u-na stel-la sul-l'im-men-si-tà. *dr* *senza misura parlato* Ri-spon-di al tuo scu-die-re, John Fal-staff Ca-va-lie-re.

This setting of the letter begins in a declamatory melodic style, becomes more lyrical at “Facciamo il paio,” and climaxes at “e il viso tuo.” The heightened lyricism between “Facciamo il paio” and the end of the letter is due not only to the increased self-sufficiency of the vocal line but also to a rich harmonic accompaniment consisting of a series of applied dominant seventh chords and some suspensions. Less immediately apparent than the setting’s melodic and harmonic interest is its relationship to mid-century lyric form. It begins with two expository melodic lines, *a*₂ (“Fulgida Alice!”) and

a'_3 (“Fulgida Meg”); then features a second set of expository phrases x_3 (“non domandar perché”) and x'_4 (“sei la gaia comare”); continues with transitional phrases b_2 and b'_2 (“Facciamo il paio” and “di donna bella”); and concludes with the climactic phrase c_5 (“e il viso”).²⁵ The form thus generated— $a_2, a'_3, x_3, x'_4, b_2, b'_2, c_5$ —is a variation of the mid-century lyric form (a_4, a'_4, b_4, c_4) common in the lyrical movements of a duet or an aria. The resemblance to the *solita forma* now comes to light. Sections 1 and 3, with their *versi misti*, irregular phrases, and *parlante* textures correspond to the kinetic *tempo d’attacco* and *tempo di mezzo*; section 2a, with its *versi lirici*, culminating lyricism, and resemblance to mid-century lyric form corresponds to the static slow movement; section 2b, despite its regular *quinari*, functions as the first part of the *tempo di mezzo* superimposed on the slow movement; and section 4, with its *versi lirici*, lively melody, and regular phrasing corresponds to the *cabaletta*.

Section	Text	Verse	Melodic style	Formal section
1.	Alice. Meg. Nannetta.	5,7,11	mostly <i>parlante</i>	<i>tempo d’attacco</i>
2.	<i>Fulgida Alice</i>	11	lyrical, variant of mid-century lyric form	slow movement
	Ma come / Che cosa dice.	5	irregular combination of aria texture and <i>parlante</i>	<i>tempo di mezzo</i> , part 1 (superimposed on the slow movement)
3.	Mostro! Dobbiam gabbarlo.	7,11	begins with aria texture, becomes <i>parlante</i>	<i>tempo di mezzo</i> , part 2
4.	Quell’otre (24)	6	repeated melodic fragments	<i>cabaletta</i> (introduction)
	Quell’otre (25)	6	lyrical, periodic	<i>cabaletta</i> (proper)

Figure 3: The Form of the Opening of Act I, Part 2

²⁵Subscript numbers indicate the number of measures in each phrase. The measure count includes additional measures necessary when connecting the fragments. For example, a measure must be added to the first phrase, “Fulgida Alice! amor t’offro,” to accommodate the full upbeat of the parallel phrase, “Fulgida Meg! amor t’offro ... amor bramo.” Falstaff’s final *parlato*, *senza misura* salutation, “Rispondi al tuo scudiere, John Falstaff Cavaliere” is not included in this formal outline.

Not only does this reading allow us to relate all four sections to each other on a larger structural level, but it also clarifies an important dramatic point. Falstaff intends for his letters to convey grand romantic sentiments. Boito and Verdi both acknowledge this aspiration—the former by casting the letters in regular, rhymed *endecasillabi*, the latter by setting them lyrically and in a manner resembling mid-century lyric form. Poetically and musically, then, Falstaff’s letters contains the characteristics of a lyrical slow movement, but the interruptions by the commentary of the four women prevent it from being perceived as such. In addition, the mockery of Falstaff’s letter is reinforced by the poetic meter chosen for the ladies’ interruptions: *quinari*, as John Black has pointed out, generally connote a more comical character than the *endecasillabi* chosen for Falstaff’s letter.²⁶ This dramaturgy neatly encapsulates the comic germ of the entire opera, namely the female characters’ sabotage of Falstaff’s romantic aspirations.

When considering aspects of the *solita forma* in *Falstaff*, we need to dispense with the assumption that the slow movement and the *cabaletta* movements necessarily have to be sung by the same character or characters. In the ensemble just discussed, for instance, the slow movement is sung by Alice and Meg (or, better, through them by Falstaff himself) and the *cabaletta* by a “chorus” of all four women.²⁷ Acceptance of this anomaly is important as we proceed to the next excerpt, the section from the beginning of act II, part 2 (26–38).

As act II, part 2 begins, Mrs. Quickly has already visited Falstaff at the Garter Inn, where, playing on his romantic aspirations, she has set him up for a bogus

²⁶See John Black, *The Italian Romantic Libretto: A Study of Salvatore Cammarano* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), 264.

rendezvous with Alice later that day. Unbeknownst to the women, Ford (Alice’s husband) also plans to make an appearance. But while the women simply intend to teach Falstaff a lesson through public humiliation, Ford intends to expose the ostensible infidelity of his wife. After having rejoined the other women, Mrs. Quickly reports the details of her visit and Falstaff’s imminent arrival. Again taking the structure of the verse as our point of departure, we may divide the passage into four sections. Section 1 extends from Alice’s “Presenteremo un *bill* per una tassa” to Mrs. Quickly’s “Giunta all’Albergo della Giarrettiera.” Written in *endecasillabi*, it consists of fragmented dialogue between the three women as they greet each other:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Presenteremo un <i>bill</i>, per una tassa Al parlamento, sulla gente grassa.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Let us present a bill In Parliament on fat men.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>Comari!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>Friends!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Ebben?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Well?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Meg</i></p> <p>Che c’è?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Meg</i></p> <p>What news?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>Sarà sconfitto!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>He’ll be routed!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Brava!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Hurrah!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>Fra poco gli farem la festa!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>We’ll soon have a party for him.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice, Meg</i></p> <p>Bene!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice, Meg</i></p> <p>Good!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>Piombò nel laccio a capofitto.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Quickly</i></p> <p>He fell headlong into the trap.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Narrami tutto, lesta.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alice</i></p> <p>Tell us everything at once.</p>

²⁷An example from an earlier Verdi opera appears in act I, scene 2 of *Ernani*, where a *tempo d’attacco* and *slow movement* for Carlo and Elvira is followed by a *tempo di mezzo* and a *cabaletta* for Carlo, Elvira, and Ernani.

Meg
Lesta.
Alice
Lesta.

Meg
Hurry.
Alice
Hurry.

Section 2 consists of Mrs. Quickly's extended account of her meeting with Falstaff, which contains six verses of *endecasillabi* and eight of *versi misti*, followed by two verses of *endecasillabi* dialogue completing the rhyme scheme (the letters to the right of the Italian text indicate the rhyme):

Quickly
Giunta all'Albergo della Giarretiera
Chiedo d'essere ammessa alla presenza
Del Cavalier, segreta messaggera.
Sir John si degna d'accordami udienza
M'accoglie tronfio in furfantesca posa:
"Buon giorno, buona donna."
"Reverenza."
E a lui m'inchino molto ossequiosamente,
poi passo alle notizie ghiotte.
Lui beve grosso ed ogni mia massiccia
Frottola inghiotte.
Infìn, per farla spiccia
Vi crede entrambe innamorate cotte
Delle bellezze sue.
E lo vedrete presto ai vostri piè.

Alice
Quando?

Quickly
Oggi, qui, dalle due alle tre.

Alice e Meg
Dalle due alle tre.

Alice
Son già le due.

Quickly
A When I arrived at the "Garter" Inn
B I asked to be admitted as a secret messenger
A to the knight's presence.
B Sir John deigned to grant me audience
C and received me condescendingly like a low-born knave:
"Good morrow, good woman."
B "Your humble servant."
C I curtseyed most obsequiously to him,
D Then passed on to my delicious news.
E He gulped it down and swallowed
D all my extravagant fables.
E Finally, to cut it short,
D he believes you both to be
F madly in love with his charms.
G And soon you'll see him at your feet.

Alice
When?

Quickly
G Today, here, from two until three.

Alice and Meg
From two until three.

Alice
F It's already two o'clock.

Alice's "Olà! Ned! Will!" initiates the kinetic section 3, during which the women make frantic last-minute plans for Falstaff's arrival and then comfort Nannetta, who conveys the news of her father's intention to marry her to Dr. Cajus. The verse consists of *versi misti*:

Alice
Olà! Ned! Will! Già tutto ho preparato.
Portate qui le cesta del bucato.

Quickly
Sarà un affare gaio!

Alice
Nannetta, e tu non ridi? Che cos'hai?
Tu piangi? Che cos'hai? Dillo a tua madre.

Nannetta
Mio padre...

Alice
Ebben?

Nannetta
Mio padre...

Alice
Ebben?

Nannetta
Mio padre...
Vuole ch'io mi mariti al Dottor Cajo!!
...

Alice
Ho there! Ned! Will! Everything is arranged.
Bring in the laundry basket.

Quickly
This will be fun!

Alice
Nannetta, you're not laughing. What's the matter?
Are you crying? What is it? Tell your mother?

Nannetta
Father...

Alice
Well?

Nannetta
Father...

Alice
Well?

Nannetta
Father....
Father wants me to marry Dr. Caius!
...

Finally, in section 4, Alice delivers an extended affirmation of the ladies' resolve to expose Falstaff. Like section 2, section 4 begins with *endecasillabi* (the first four verses), follows with *versi misti* (the next twelve verses), and concludes with some verses of dialogue completing the rhyme scheme:

<i>Alice</i>		<i>Alice</i>
Bravissime! Così.—Più aperto ancora.	A	Splendid! That's right. A little wider.
Fra poco s'incomincia la commedia. ²⁸	X	The play will soon be starting.
Gaie comari di Windsor! è l'ora!	A	Merry wives of Windsor, the time has come!
L'ora d'alzar la risata sonora!	A	The time to give way to hearty laughter,
L'alta risata che scoppia, che scherza,	B	Loud laughter that explodes, that ridicules,
Che sfolgora, armata	C	that blazes forth, armed
Di dardi e di sferza!	B	with barbs and lashes!
Gaie comari, festosa brigata!	C	Merry wives, joyous band,
Sul lieto viso	D	let a smile break out
Spunti il sorriso,	D	on your happy faces,
Splenda del riso—l'acuto fulgor!	E	let the bright gleam of laughter shine,
Favilla incendiaria	F	the spark that kindles

²⁸“Commedia” rhymes with “sedia,” from the penultimate verse of the previous section.

Di gioia nell'aria, Di gioia nel cor. A noi!—Tu la parte Farai che ti spetta.	F E G H	joy in the air, joy in the heart. It's up to us. You must do your part.
<i>Meg</i> Tu corri il tuo rischio Col grosso compar.	I J	<i>Meg</i> You are running a risk with our fat friend.
<i>Quickly</i> Io sto alla vendetta.	H	<i>Quickly</i> I'll be on the lookout.
<i>Alice</i> Se sbagli ti fischio.	I	<i>Alice</i> If things go wrong I'll whistle for you.
<i>Nannetta</i> Io resto in disparte Sull'uscio a spiar.	G J	<i>Nannetta</i> I'll stay here by the door and watch
<i>Alice</i> E mostreremo all'uom che l'allegria D'oneste donne ogni onestà comporta. Fra le femine quella è la più ria. Che fa la gattamorta.	L M L M	<i>Alice</i> We'll show the men that the gaiety of honest women is quite proper. Among women the worst is the one who acts the hypocrite.

Like section 2, section 4 includes an extended block of unbroken verses delivered by a single character, and both sections are, in contrast to sections 1 and 3, dramatically static—Quickly recounting a past event and Alice anticipating the fun of what is to come. The prosodic and dramatic distinctions across the four sections of the scene may be summarized as follows:

Section	Text	Verse	Dramatic motion
1.	Presenteremo un bill (26)	<i>endecasillabi lirici</i>	kinetic: women's greetings
2.	Giunta all'Albergo (27)	<i>endecasillabi lirici</i> , then <i>versi misti</i>	static: Quickly's recollections
3.	Olà! Ned! Will! (6 after 29)	<i>versi misti/sciolti</i>	kinetic: reactions to Quickly/Nannetta's news
4.	Bravissime! Così! (14 before 33)	<i>endecasillabi lirici</i> , then <i>versi misti</i>	static: Alice's call to stay united against Falstaff

Figure 4: The Structure of the Libretto in the Opening of Act II, Part 2

The structure of the libretto is largely supported by musical parameters. The kinetic sections (1 and 3) feature either *parlante* or recitative textures, while the static sections (2 and 4) feature lyrical vocal lines with the orchestra in a basically accompanimental role. Mrs. Quickly’s “Giunta all’Albergo” (section 2) consists of a series of brief, relatively independent melodies of 5 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 6 + 6 measures followed by six measures of cadential reinforcements in which the other ladies participate. The melodic groupings are somewhat irregular and the harmonic rhythm not particularly slow, but the passage appears lyrical due to measured, chorale-like accompaniment, the clear cadences, and a phrase structure that is determined by the vocal part rather than the orchestra.

Example 6: Verdi, *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2 (27),
 “Giunta all’Albergo” (Mrs. Quickly)

ANDANTE ♩ = 66

Giunta all’Albergo della Giarrettie - - ra Chiedo d’esser am-
 Stepping in - side the Garter Inn to greet - him I con-veyed my re-

ANDANTE ♩ = 66

(27) *p*

poco più animato

- messa alla presen-za del Cava - lier, se - gre - ta mes - sag - ge - ra. Sir John si
 -spects, on - ly to men - tion That I was sent by some - one else to greet him. Sir John at

mf poco più animato

(example continued)

(in a ponderous tone)

de-gna d'accordarmi u-dien-za, M'acco-glie tron-fio in fur-fante-sca
 once lent me his kind at-ten-tion. His wel-come tru-ly-be-spoke his vast di-

po-sa:
 -men-sion:

Alice's "Gaie comari di Windsor" (section 4), in aria texture, and with a conjunct vocal line that falls into clear four-measure phrases, is particularly lyrical:

Example 7: Verdi, *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2, "Gaie comari di Windsor"

Ga-je co-ma-ri di Wind-sar! è

l'o - - - ral E'o - - - ra d'al-sar la ri-

(example continued)



At the beginning of section 4, textual and musical form may not at first seem to correspond. The layout of the libretto suggests that this section begins with “Bravissime! Così!” i.e., Alice’s rejoicing and the first verse of the unbroken block of text. But the fragmented first verse, “Bravissime! Così.—Più aperto ancora.” and the rhyme scheme (“commedia” in the following verse rhyming with “sedia,” from two lines earlier) make it clear that the first distich belongs to the preceding, kinetic section and that “Gaie comari di Windsor” marks the more logical musical beginning of section 4.²⁹

This entire scene complex reflects numerous characteristics of the *solita forma*. Section 1, an active *parlante*, prepares a more lyrical passage, thus functioning as a *tempo d’attacco*; section 2, a measured narrative marked *andante* functions as the slow movement; section 3, set in motion by Quickly’s announcement that Falstaff will arrive between two and three, sparks some last-minute preparations, interrupted only by Nannetta’s heartache, thus functioning as a *tempo di mezzo*; and section 4, with its fast tempo, lyricism, and purely reflective character releasing the accumulated tension, resembles a *cabaletta*. Verdi strengthened the reference to the *cabaletta* by drawing on

²⁹ Such minor discrepancies were by no means unusual in operas of the *primo ottocento*; see, for instance, the aforementioned number from act I of Verdi’s *Ernani*, where “Tu se’ Ernani!...,” the textual beginning of the *cabaletta*, is marked *declamato* and is slower and less lyrical than “No, crudeli, d’amor non m’è pegno,” the musical beginning of the *cabaletta*. Harold Powers describes a similar disalignment between the *tempo d’attacco* and the *slow movement* of the Amonasro/Aida duet in act III of *Aida*. See Powers, “*La Solita forma*,” 84–85.

the concluding dialogue for a transition to a partial repetition sung by all except Quickly. Relating the entire passage to the *solita forma* does not afford us the sort of specific dramatic insight that we found in the previous example, but it does offer us a general framework for understanding the passage's largely conventional dramaturgy.

The final excerpt to be considered here is Falstaff's monologue "L'onore! Ladri" from act I, part 1 (14 to the end of part 1). Bardolfo and Pistola, Falstaff's lackeys, have just refused to deliver Falstaff's love-letters to Alice and Meg. Frustrated with Bardolfo and Pistola's somewhat disingenuous claims to "honor" in their contempt for his vulgar ambitions, Falstaff offers an extended commentary on the general uselessness of honor. The excerpt comes earlier in the opera than the two described above, but we turn to it last because its relationship to the *solita forma* is somewhat special. Most importantly, the text of the monologue consists entirely of *settenari doppi* in rhymed couplets, making it difficult to structure the monologue according to poetic meter and rhyme.

L'onore!

Ladri! Voi state ligi all'onor vostro, voi!
 Cloache d'ignominia, quando, non sempre, noi
 Possiam star ligi al nostro. Io stesso, sì, io, io,
 Devo talor da un lato porre il timor di Dio
 E, per necessità, sviar l'onore e usare
 Stratagemmi ed equivoci, destreggiar, bordeggiare.
 E voi, coi vostri cenci e coll'occhiata tórta
 Da gatto-pardo e i fetidi sgnazzzi avete a scrota
 Il vostro onor! Che onore? che onor?! Che onor?! Che ciancia!
 Che baia! Può l'onore riempirvi la pancia?
 No. Può l'onore rimettervi uno stinco? Non può.
 Nè un piede? No. Nè un ditto? No. Nè un capello? No.
 L'onor non è chirurgo. Ch'è dunque? Una parola.
 Che c'è in questa parola? C'è dell'aria che vola.
 Bel costrutto! L'onore lo può sentir chi è morto?
 No. Vive sol coi vivi?... Neppure: perchè a torto
 Lo gonfian le lusinghe, lo corrompe l'orgoglio,
 L'ammorban le calunnie; e per me non ne voglio, no!
 Ma, per tornare a voi, furfanti, ho atteso troppo,
 E vi discaccio. Olà! Lesti! Lesti! al galoppo!
 Al galoppo! Il capestro assai bene vi sta!
 Ladri! Via! Via di qua! Via di qua! Via di qua!

Honor!

You rogues! You are bound by your honor,
 you sewers of baseness, when not even we can always
 be true to ours. I myself, yes, even I
 must sometimes put aside the fear of God
 and, hiding my honor in my necessity, use
 Stratagems and deceptions, hedge and tack.
 and you, with your rags and shifty mountain-cat looks
 and stinking sniggers, keep company with honor!
 What honor? What honor? Honor? What rubbish!
 What a joke! Can honor fill your belly?
 No. Can honor mend a broken leg? It cannot.
 Or a foot? No. Or a finger? No. Or a hair? No.
 Honor is no surgeon. What is it then? A word.
 What is in that word? Air, that flies away.
 A fine benefit! Can a dead man feel honor?
 No. Does it exist only with the living?... Not even that,
 For flattery falsely inflates it, pride corrupts it,
 slanders taint it: as for me, I want none of it:
 But to return to you, you scoundrels, I've been patient too long
 And now I'm throwing you out. Ho there! Quick! At the gallop!
 At the gallop! The noose will suit you well.
 Thieves! Out of here! Get out of here! Get out of here!

We will thus focus on the music and the sense of the text, distinguishing lyrical from non-lyrical sections, and distinguishing Falstaff's moments of reflection from those of active engagement with his lackeys.

The first fourteen measures (through "Io stesso, si, io, io") are relatively chromatic and feature abrupt stops and starts. They consist of a succession of distinct melodic styles proceeding from a declamatory opening in long note values to a sprightly staccato passage ("Voi state ligi"), then to a more sustained passage of wide leaps ("voi! Cloache d'ignominia"), and finally to a few short-breathed, pompous self-references ("Io stesso, si, io, io"). This disjointed, decidedly non-lyrical writing corresponds to a text in which Falstaff hurls insults at Bardolfo and Pistola.

At "Devo talor da un lato," the vocal line becomes more lyrical: chromaticism gives way to harmonic stability in F major, the compass narrows, the orchestra becomes accompanimental, and the phrases become more regular. The first two subsections ("Devo talor" and "E, per necessità") are parallel, each consisting of two phrases beginning and ending on the dominant. The third subsection ("usare stratagemmi"), still encompassing four measures but introducing new material, outlines a stepwise descending harmonic sequence and comes to a halt on an E pedal. This E serves as a dominant preparation of A minor, the opening key of the fourth and final subsection ("E voi, coi vostri cenci"), which in the course of its six measures loses harmonic focus and breaks down into ever shorter melodic fragments before landing on two enormous trills and coming to a full stop on a first-inversion dominant seventh chord of G major. The four subsections yield the form a, a', b, c , a fairly clear version of mid-century lyric form, thus reflecting with greater formal clarity and lyrical stability the change of the text from

hostile ranting to more coherent reasoning. And just like Falstaff's thoughts at the end of this formal section, so the melody and harmony propel themselves out of control and eventually collapse; only the two mocking trills remain.

Example 8: Act I, Part 1 (15 mm. after 14), "Devo talor da un lato"

a

MENO MOSSO ♩=100

FAL

li - gial nostro. Io stesso, sì, i.o, i.o, De.vo talor da un
 own in per-il? Yes, I, Sirs. I. . .listen: I— have had to hide my

MENO MOSSO ♩=100

mf *p* *pp*

F major: V

a'

FAL

la - to porre il timor di Di - o E, per neces - si -
 glanc - es, ask - ing the grace of Heav - en, as in the throes of

V V

FAL

-tà,..... svi - ar l'o - no -
 need I pawned my hon -

leggeriss.

(example continued)

b

FAL

- - - re, u - sa - re stra - ta - gem - mi ed e -
- - - or, sought ref - uge - in - some - guile - or - some de -

p

V

(descending bass line)

FAL

- quivo - ci, destreggiar, bordeg - gia - re. E
- cep - tion, in a ruse or a false - hood. And

V/ a minor

c

FAL

pp

voi,..... coi vo - stri
you, de - crep - it

pp *f*

(example continued)

FAL

cen - ci e col'l'oc - chia - ta
wretch - es, you stink - ing, vile hy -

fp e molto stacc.

a minor

FAL

tòr - ta da gat - to par - do e i
- e - nas, who feed on car - rion, you

FAL

fe - ti di sghi - gnaz - zi a - ve - te a
pu - tre - fied rap - scal - lions, You speak of

FAL

scor - ta il vo - stro Onor! Che o - no - re?! che o -
hon - or... and this to me? What hon - or? Speak

(example continued)

FAL

- nor? up! che o-nor! Come on, che cian_cia! you id - iots, che ba - ja! you ass - es!

FAL

FAL

(15)
MENO MOSSO

In the monologue's central section, "Può l'onore riempirvi la pancia?" (15), Falstaff offers an extended meditation on the concept of honor, abandoning the earlier insults in favor of specific reasons why honor is useless ("Can honor fill your belly? No. Can it mend a broken leg? It cannot."). While some of the melodic leaps are quite wide, the often parallel phrase structure and the coherent development of the melodic material convey a sense of lyricism and unity. Firmly in G major, the three-measure phrase at "Può l'onore riempirvi la pancia" is freely developed, returning to the dominant D on "no" as the rest of the line rises sequentially. This exposition and development provides the *a* and *a'* subsections of what seems to evolve into mid-century lyric form. At "L'onore non è chirurgo," the *b* subsection ensues in which the orchestra develops the main motive

from the *a* subsection while the melody becomes fragmented and the key unstable. Only with “bel costruito,” at the end of the *b* subsection, does the melody return to G major. At this point, the conventions of mid-century lyric form would require either a modified return of *a* or a culminating *c* affirming the home key of G major. Instead, the formal process begins anew: “L’onore lo può sentir chi è morto?” and “Vive sol coi vivi” make up *a* and *a'* and “Perchè a torto” the modulatory *b*, with the orchestra once again developing *a* material. This time, though, a *c* subsection does follow when, at “e per me non ne voglio, no!,” Falstaff cadences strongly in G major and the full orchestra blasts out the main theme.

A three-measure transition, “Ma, per tornare a voi, furfanti,” carries us into the monologue’s agitated final section (17), during which Falstaff kicks Bardolfo and Pistola out of the Garter Inn. The vocal line is not sustained long enough to qualify as truly lyrical, but it is relatively diatonic and not as jerky or filled with leaps as elsewhere in the monologue. In addition, the rhythmic and melodic two-measure groupings in the orchestra and the bipartite structure (marked by rehearsal numbers 17 and 18) lend this section a relatively high degree of stability.

Section	Text	Lyricism	Form	Dramatic Motion	Formal Section
1.	L’onore! Ladri!	non-lyrical	through-composed	Falstaff insults Bardolfo and Pistola—kinetic	<i>scena</i>
2.	Devo talor	lyrical, periodic	<i>a, a', b, c</i> (mid-century lyric form)	Falstaff begins to assert his view of honor, continuing to insult Bardolfo and Pistola; combination of static and kinetic elements	<i>tempo d’attacco</i>

(table continued)

3.	Può l'onore riempirvi la pancia	lyrical	<i>a,a',b;</i> <i>a,a',b,c</i>	Falstaff meditates on the nature of honor; static	slow movement
4.	Ma, per tornare a voi	non-lyrical	through- composed	Falstaff turns his attention back to Bardolfo and Pistola; kinetic	<i>tempo di mezzo</i>
5.	Olà! Lesti!	mixture of lyrical and non-lyrical passages; regular melodic groupings in the orchestra	bipartite (AA')	Falstaff kicks his lackeys out of the Garter Inn; kinetic	<i>cabaletta</i>

Figure 5: The Structure of the Conclusion of Act I, Part 1

Julian Budden divides the monologue into similar formal sections, including an opening “recitativo accompagnato” (which implies a *scena*), the *adagio* at “Può l'onore riempirvi la pancia,” and the “stretta substitute” (a term he prefers over *cabaletta*) at “Olà! Lesti!”³⁰ Regarding the opening “recitativo accompagnato,” he suggests that “[the] total effect would be amorphous were it not for the tiny melodic germ (“Devo talor da un lato”) which yields a clear eight bars of periodicity of the kind that has held together so many a Verdian declamatory scene, like chainmail in a slab of reinforced concrete.”³¹ Budden accurately detects a structural articulation at “Devo talor da un lato” but subsumes this more “periodic” passage within his “recitative accompagnato” section. But the passage beginning at “Devo talor da un lato,” as we have seen, is based on mid-century lyric form, a structure that does not normally appear in the *scena*. It appears quite commonly in the *tempo d'attacco*, however, and the combination of static and kinetic elements—Falstaff’s initial reflection on his personal relationship with honor and subsequent lashing out at his two lackeys—seems to provide dramaturgical confirmation. One might object, of course, that the *tempo d'attacco* is usually missing in solo scenes.

³⁰Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3:457.

But then, by the late nineteenth-century, the formal conventions of the *solita forma* had broken down to a degree that borrowing of a formal ensemble section for a solo monologue would no longer be surprising.

The monologue's concluding section, "Olà! Lesti!" features characteristics reminiscent of a *cabaletta*. After condescending to turn his attention back to his useless lackeys, Falstaff picks up a broom and chases them out of the inn. Instead of singing the *cabaletta* after the chase, though, he sings it to the chase; the orchestra even provides part of the conventional repeat, and the fragmented vocal style resulting from Falstaff's agitation is balanced by the regular melodic grouping in the orchestra.

An interpretation according to the dramaturgy of the *solita forma* yields analytic insights not necessarily apparent in Budden's more descriptive account. And even though Falstaff's "Honor" monologue does not strictly adhere to the conventions of the *solita forma* (the poetic meter does not change and the sections are insufficiently self-contained), it is clearly rooted in them. Wittingly or not, Verdi seems to have put these conventions towards subtly tracing the progression of Falstaff's thought across the course of the monologue.

³¹Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3:454.

Chapter 2:
A General Description of Ensemble Finales,
Followed by an Analysis of the Act II Finale of *Falstaff*

The Ensemble Finale

In the comic operas of Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi (in his early *Un giorno di regno* and, more vaguely, in *Falstaff*), and many less well-known composers, the central finale generally follows the *solita forma dei duetti*. The *largo concertato* (also called *pezzo concertato*) and the *stretta* are equivalent to the *adagio* and the *cabaletta*, respectively, of a duet or aria. As in duets and arias, these lyrical movements are dramatically static, in contrast to the less consistently lyrical, dramatically kinetic *tempo d'attacco* and *tempo di mezzo*.

Many of the musical and dramatic elements Rossini eventually worked into a four-part form originated in mid-eighteenth century Venetian operas on librettos by Carlo Goldoni (1707–93).³² Before Goldoni, the individual acts of an opera ended with dramatically static reactions to events earlier in the act. These short, reflective finales were set as two- or three-part ensembles or, at the end of the third act, as choruses of the main characters, usually stating the moral of the opera. Goldoni's finales also include such periods of static reflection, but they go further by including additional phases of action with staggered entrances of the various characters, thus establishing a chain of action and reflection that is crucial to the design of Rossini's finales. Also anticipating Rossini, Goldoni's finales include frequent changes of verse, usually at moments of

³²The information on the finales of Goldoni and Galuppi in this and the following paragraphs is taken from Daniel Hertz, "The Creation of the *Buffa* Finale in Italian Opera," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 104 (1977–78): 67–78.

particular dramatic interest. Finally, Goldoni's finales are end-oriented, compiling dramatic complications until the end of the act.

Goldoni's fellow Venetian Baldassare Galuppi was the first composer to respond to the playwright's dramatically and poetically varied finales with correspondingly varied music. The earliest example of such a response appears in Galuppi's setting of the act II finale of *L'Arcadia in Brenta* (1749), in which changes of time signature, key, and tempo correspond to the dramatic flux of Goldoni's libretto. The subsequent Goldoni-Galuppi opera, *Il Conte Caramella* (1749) includes no less than six tempo changes in its act II finale. The remaining fourteen operas on which Goldoni and Galuppi collaborated during the 1750s all include such multi-section finales, and as these operas were met with continued success, so the demand for this type of finale in comic operas spread throughout Northern Italy and eventually south to Naples.

By the mid-1780s, the extended-action finale was flourishing in Vienna, in the hands of composers such as Vicente Martín y Soler, Giovanni Paisiello, Antonio Salieri, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In addition to the Galuppi chain of separate movements, Viennese *buffa* finales contain what John Platoff calls "*self-contained* expressive passages."³³ Such passages may simply be lyrical pieces, often settings of amorous texts, which could stand on their own if they were extracted from the finale as a whole.³⁴ More significantly to Rossini's finales, though, self-contained expressive passages may include what Platoff calls the "*shock-tutti*" and the *stretta*. In contrast to the lyrical interpolations just mentioned, these two types of pieces are intrinsic to the finale's dramatic sense. The *shock-tutti* is a vehicle for the expression of universal

³³John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the *Opera Buffa* Finale," *Journal of Musicology* 7 (1989): 215.

bewilderment following a highly dramatic, shocking event. It tends towards slow tempos, slow harmonic rhythm, and quiet, even *sotto voce* dynamic levels. A famous example occurs in the act II finale of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, the shock having been generated by Susanna's emergence from the Countess's closet when Cherubino's emergence had been expected:³⁵

Example 9: Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Act II, Scenes 6–7: Transition to the Shock-Tutti

The image displays a musical score for Example 9 from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. It consists of two systems of music. The first system features two vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal line for the Count (marked *astonished*) has the lyrics "Su - san-na! Su - san-na!". The vocal line for the Countess (also marked *astonished*) has the lyrics "Su - san-na! Su - san-na!". The piano accompaniment is marked *p*. The second system features a vocal line for Susanna and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Andante con moto". The vocal line for Susanna has the lyrics "Si - gno-re! Your lord-ship!". The piano accompaniment is marked *p*.

(example continued)

³⁴Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure," 216–18.

³⁵Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, piano-vocal score (New York: Schirmer, 1951): 199. For a detailed discussion of the central finales of Mozart's Da Ponte operas, and their influence on the genre as a whole, see: John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure," 191–230; and "Tonal Organization in *Buffa* Finales and the Act II Finale of *Le Nozze di Figaro*," *Music and Letters* 72 (1991): 387–403.

(ironically)

Cos' è quel stu-po-re? Il bran-do pren-de-te, il
You seem so be-wild-ered! The wick-ed of-fend-er has

pag-gio uc-ci-de-te! Quel pag-gio mal-na-to ve-de-te-lo_
come to sur-ren-der, your treach-er-ous_ ri-val is stand-ing_ right

Susanna begins alone, but she is soon joined by the Count and the Countess (the only other two characters onstage at this point), which accounts for the “*tutti*” of Platoff’s term. As an expression of bewilderment after a shocking event, as a self-contained lyrical oasis within the context of a sequence of lively active movements, and on the basis of its musical attributes (very quiet, with slow harmonic rhythm and a slow tempo), this ensemble qualifies as a typical Viennese *buffa* shock-*tutti* and as such anticipates the Rossinian *largo concertato*. Its structural and dramatic complement is the *stretta*, which occurs at the end of a finale and offers an emotionally charged, usually frantic commentary on all that has happened up to that point. Because central finales are tonally closed and because their highly varied constituent movements can traverse a wide range of keys, an important musical function of the *stretta* is the firm re-establishment of the finale’s initial tonic. Therefore, in Viennese *buffa* finales, as in Rossini’s, the *stretta*

contains long repeated passages, is tonally stable, and includes frequent cadences. It often includes, particularly in Mozart's Da Ponte operas, antiphonal singing between groups of characters.³⁶

In Viennese *buffa* finales, the *stretta* is usually separated from the shock-*tutti* by a number of intervening sections, making it difficult for the listener to perceive the two framing movements as a dramatic pair. In Rossini's finales, however, only a relatively brief *tempo di mezzo* separates the *largo concertato* from the *stretta*. The consequent proximity of the *largo concertato* to the *stretta* is crucial to the articulation of a four-part form in Rossini's central finales: the amassment of characters and complications preceding the *largo concertato* functions as a diverse *tempo d'attacco*, a highly dramatic event sets off the *largo concertato* (the descendant of the shock-*tutti*), the spell of the *largo concertato* is broken by the *tempo di mezzo*, and the exuberant *stretta* concludes the act.³⁷

While the broad formal outline of central finales is the same as that of duets, certain musical attributes are particular to central finales. The *tempo d'attacco* of central finales, for instance, is distinguished from the *tempo d'attacco* of duets by three more or less consistent musical characteristics. First, the music tends to be quite varied, reflecting the entrances of various characters and the gradual embroilment of their emotions. (As we have seen, this diversity of musical parts extends as far back as the mid-eighteenth century and the finales of Goldoni-Galuppi.) In the act I finale of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, for example, the *tempo d'attacco* consists of a substantial orchestral

³⁶Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure," 224–25.

introduction (30 mm. before **63**, “Number 7: Finale primo”); a section for the chorus (“Conciosiacosachè/Trenta botti già gusto!”); a monologue for Don Magnifico with choral accompaniment (“Intendente! Direttore!”); an duo for Dandini and Don Ramiro (“Zitto zitto, piano piano”); a quartet for Dandini, Ramiro, Clorinda, and Tisbe (“Principino dove state”); a section building into a quintet for Dandini, Ramiro, Clorinda, Tisbe, and Alidoro (“Sapientissimo Alidoro”); and a section of solo vocal flourishes for Cenerentola, Ramiro, and Dandini (“Sprezzo quei don che versa”).³⁸ (The chorus offers brief statements throughout the six sections.) Such diversity within a single “movement” raises questions about the legitimacy of a four-part form for central finales in the first place,³⁹ but the designation of the entire complex as the *tempo d’attacco* remains useful in helping the listener to understand a sequence of a sequence of short, lyrical and non-lyrical passages, sung by only smaller groups of characters, as a preparation of the *largo concertato*, which stands as an extended, purely lyrical tutti movement.

The second characteristic common to *tempi d’attacco* in central finales is the primacy of the orchestra in the presentation and development of thematic ideas. As the action onstage unfolds, the orchestra usually develops one or more important thematic ideas, providing coherence even as the texture alternates between aria and *parlante*. The importance of the orchestra in central finales is evident as early as Galuppi’s *Arcadia in*

³⁷Helpful studies of the form of central finales include: Scott Balthazar, “The Forms of Set Pieces,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi*, ed. Scott Balthazar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 56–69; Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 1:18–19; Gossett, “The ‘Candeur Virginale’ of *Tancredi*”; and John Black, *The Italian Romantic Libretto*, 183, 199–205.

³⁸Rossini, *La Cenerentola ossia, la bontà in trionfo*, ed. Alberto Zedda (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1998).

³⁹Scott Balthazar, “Mayr, Rossini, and the Development of the Early *Concertato* Finale,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 116 (1991): 265–66.

Brenta but becomes especially apparent in the Viennese *buffa* finales of the 1780s.⁴⁰

Particularly in the Viennese *buffa* finales and in the works of Neapolitan composers such as Paisiello and Piccinni, the orchestra is entrusted with short motives that, whatever harmonic or melodic variation they may undergo, keep a distinctive rhythmic profile.⁴¹ The orchestral development of short, rhythmically distinctive motives is important not only in the finales of Rossini, but, as we will see, also in the act II finale of Verdi's *Falstaff*.

The third distinctive characteristic of the *tempo d'attacco* is the inexorable accumulation of intensity, either by way of harmony, tempo, density of texture, or all three, as the movement approaches the *largo concertato*. This forward thrust helps communicate the embroilment of the dramatic situation and is usually cut off abruptly by the onset of the *largo concertato*.

The *largo concertato* itself, as Philip Gossett points out, might be constructed as a uniform ensemble from beginning to end, but might also take the form of a "pseudo-canon," in which one character begins to sing alone, and the others enter one by one until the entire ensemble is singing together.⁴² In either case, the section begins quietly, expressing hushed amazement. It gradually becomes more overtly lyrical, until it is cut off by the interruption of the *tempo di mezzo*. The *tempo di mezzo* may be so brief that it is labeled in the score as part of the *stretta*, as is the case in both Rossini's *La gazza ladra* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. On the other hand, it may tend more towards musical self-containment, as in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and *L'italiana in Algeri*. Again, then, we

⁴⁰Heartz, "The Creation of the *Buffa* Finale," 70–72; Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure," 199–201.

⁴¹Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure," 200.

⁴²Gossett, "The 'Candeur Virginale' of *Tancredi*," 328.

observe the variability of the formal components within the underlying common structure of central finales and the difficulties involved in generalizing beyond that structure.

Formal Example: Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I Finale

The act I finale of *Il barbiere* marks the culmination of the intrigues and emotions that have intensified during the course of the act. Count Almaviva, disguised as the student Lindoro, has secretly professed his love to Rosina. She is eager to speak with Almaviva, but fears recrimination from her suspicious ward, Doctor Bartolo, who would like to marry Rosina himself. Almaviva wishes to hand deliver a *billet-doux* to Rosina, and, to gain entry to her home, he follows the advice of Figaro (the only one aware of Almaviva's true identity) to present himself at Doctor Bartolo's doorstep as a drunken soldier in search of lodging. Versification and the dramatic meaning of these events give the finale the traditional structure of *scena*, multi-sectional *tempo d'attacco*, *tempo di mezzo*, and *stretta*.

The *scena* introducing the finale consists of scenes 11 and 12 and follows Doctor Bartolo's aria "A un dottor della mia sorte." Rosina and Berta, the maid, are each briefly alone on the stage, commenting in *versi sciolti* on Bartolo's rant and Rosina's hatred of him. Almaviva calls from outside the front door. These scenes prepare the *tempo d'attacco* in the same manner that a passage of simple recitative prepares an aria or duet.

Between scene 13 and the middle of scene 16 the libretto consists of *versi lirici*, most of it dialogue, with a degree of metric variety that recalls Goldoni. The entire complex is clearly cast to be set as a *tempo d'attacco*: the verse is lyrical and forms occasional unbroken quatrains (at the end of scene 13) but not in the parallel stanzas typically set as ensemble singing. Scene 13 begins with *ottonari* dialogue between Doctor

Bartolo and Almaviva. Bartolo grows increasingly frustrated with Almaviva's intrusion, while Almaviva attempts to give Rosina his letter undetected by Bartolo. Figaro's surprise entrance at the beginning of scene 15 is marked by a switch to *quinari*:⁴³

<i>Figaro</i>	<i>Figaro</i>
Che cosa accade	What's happening,
Signori miei?	good sirs?
Che chiasso è questo?	What's this uproar?
Eterni Dei!	Eternal gods!

The tension mounts further still at the entrance of a police officer and his guardsmen, the verse now returning to *ottonari*:

<i>Coro</i>	<i>Chorus</i>
Fermi tutti. Niun si muova.	Everyone stop. No one move.
Miei signori, che si fa?	Gentlemen, what is going on?
Questo chiasso donde è nato?	What's the cause of this uproar?
La cagione presto qua.	Quickly now, the reason.

Finally, a new section of *quinari* begins with Doctor Bartolo's "Questo soldato/M'ha maltrattato" and ends with Almaviva's shocking display of immunity from arrest:

<i>Almaviva</i>	<i>Almaviva</i>
Io in arresto?	Under arrest?
Io?...fermi, olà.	Me? ... Hey there, stop!
(<i>Con gesto autorevole trattiene I soldati che si arrestano. Egli chiama a sé l'Uffiziale, gli dà a leggere un foglio: l'Uffiziale resta sorpreso, vuol fargli un inchino; il Conte lo trattiene. L'Uffiziale fa cenno ai soldati che si ritirino indietro, e anch'egli fa lo stesso. Quadro di stupore.</i>)	(<i>With a commanding gesture, he makes the soldiers stand back. He takes the officer aside and shows him a paper. The officer reads it, showing surprise. He orders the soldiers to move back. All stand frozen in amazement.</i>)

This is the event that stuns everyone onstage. To express their bewilderment, Berta, Rosina, Bartolo, Basilio, Almaviva, and Figaro are given three quatrains of *quinari*. This lyrical verse in parallel stanzas makes up the *largo concertato*:

⁴³Cesare Sterbini, *Almaviva o sia L'inutile precauzione [Il barbiere di Siviglia]: Dramma comico in due atti*, in *Tutti i libretti di Rossini*, ed. Marco Beghelli and Nicola Gallino (Milan: Garzanti, 1991): 347–81. All quotations are taken from this edition. All translations are by Perle Abbruggiati. See Gioachino Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Sir Neville Marriner, cond., Philips compact disc 422 058–2.

Berta, Rosina, Bartolo e Basilio

Freddo/a ed immobile
Come una statua,
Fiato non restami
Da respirar

Conte

Freddo ed immobile
Come una statua!
Fiato non restagli
Da respirar.

Figaro

Guarda Don Bartolo!
Sembra una statua!
Ah ah, del ridere
Sto per crear.

Berta, Rosina, Bartolo and Basilio

Frozen and immobile
like a statue,
I can hardly,
draw a breath.

Count

Frozen and immobile
like a statue!
He can hardly,
draw a breath.

Figaro

Look at Don Bartolo!
He resembles a statue!
Ha ha, I shall split
my sides laughing.

Beginning with Doctor Bartolo's "Ma signor... Zitto tu!" a brief passage of dialogue

follows, all in *quadrisillabi doppi* except the last two verses, which are *ottonari*:

Ma signor...	<i>Bartolo</i>	But sir...	<i>Bartolo</i>
	<i>Coro</i>		<i>Coro</i>
Zitto tu!	<i>Bartolo</i>	You be quiet!	<i>Bartolo</i>
Ma un dottor...	<i>Coro</i>	But a doctor...	<i>Coro</i>
Oh non più!	<i>Bartolo</i>	Oh no more!	<i>Bartolo</i>
Ma se lei...	<i>Coro</i>	But if she...	<i>Coro</i>
Non parlar.	<i>Bartolo</i>	Don't talk!	<i>Bartolo</i>
Ma vorrei...	<i>Coro</i>	But I would like....	<i>Coro</i>
Non gridar.	<i>Berta, Bartolo e Basilio</i>	Don't shout.	<i>Berta, Bartolo e Basilio</i>
Ma se noi...	<i>Coro</i>	But if we...	<i>Coro</i>
Zitti voi.	<i>Berta, Bartolo e Basilio</i>	You be quiet.	<i>Berta, Bartolo e Basilio</i>
Ma se poi...	<i>Coro</i>	But if then...	<i>Coro</i>
Pensiam noi.		We'll judge that.	
Vada ognun pe'fatti suoi, Si finisca d'altercar.		Everyone go about his own business, so stop quarrelling.	

The passage breaks the spell of the *largo concertato* as the reanimated characters vainly try to make sense of the chaos at hand. Because of its transitional dramatic role, and

because it stands as a section of dialogue in between two sections of parallel stanzas, the passage functions as a *tempo di mezzo*.

The finale ends with a *stretta*: in dramatically static stanzas of four and five verses of *ottonari*, the entire ensemble reflects on the prevailing sense of confusion and frustration:

<i>Tutti</i>	<i>All</i>
Mi par d'esser con la testa In un'orrida fucina, Dove cresce e mai non resta Delle incudini sonore L'importuno strepitar.	My head seems to me to be in a frightful forge where the persistent din of the ringing anvils grows louder and never ceases.
Alternando questo e quello Pesantissimo Martello Fra con Barbara armonia Mura e volte rimbombar.	Alternately this and that gigantic hammer, with barbaric harmony, makes the walls and arches resound.
E il cervello, poverello, Già stordito, sbalordito, Non ragiona, si confonde, Si reduce ad impazzar.	And the brain, poor little thing, already stunned, stupefied, cannot reason, is confounded, is reduced to madness.

Rossini's music for the act I finale conforms to the formal expectations established by the verse and the drama and is consistent with the conventions of central finales outlined above. Following a setting of the broken verse in scenes 11 and 12 as simple recitative, the lyrical verse in scenes 13 through 16 is set as a long, varied *tempo d'attacco*. All three traditional musical features of the *tempo d'attacco* in a central finale are evident: the orchestra presents and develops the main thematic material, the section is a composite of varied movements, and musical tension is generated as the dramatic situation escalates.

The orchestra introduces and develops three main themes and several secondary ones. Sometimes the vocal parts double the orchestra in stating these themes, but it is always in the orchestra that both the exposition and the development of the themes

occurs. The first main theme is marked *marziale*, offering a musical reflection of Almaviva’s military disguise (example 10a). Initially stated in C major at the outset of scene 13, it recurs in E-flat major and G major during the course of scenes 13 and 14. The second main theme is a light, nervous sixteenth-note theme in G major (example 10b) stated early in scene 14 (75) as Rosina realizes that the drunken soldier is, in fact, her beloved Lindoro. Finally, a jovial triadic theme in E-flat major (example 10c) initiates and dominates scene 15. The appearance of this new theme and the abrupt shift to E-flat major from C major help communicate the abrupt entrance of Figaro:

Example 10: Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, Scenes 13–15:
Primary Themes of the *Tempo d’attacco*

a) Beginning of Scene 13 (18 before 72)

Marziale

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system begins with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble staff contains a melodic line with a trill (tr) and a triplet (3). The bass staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment with triplets (3) and a forte (ff) dynamic. The second system continues the piece, featuring a piano (pp) dynamic and a 'sottovoce' (softly) instruction. It includes a 'leggero' (light) instruction and a trill (tr) in the treble staff. The piece concludes with a final chord in the bass staff.

(example continued)

b) Scene 14 (75)

(si avanza pian piano)
(She comes forward slowly.)

R. qua?)
do?)

[vedendo Rosina]
[seeing Rosina]

(Ei mi guarda... s'avvi-
He's approaching, he's ad-

C. già.)
do!)

(È Ro-si-na, or son con-ten-to.)
(It's Ro-si-na, now I am hap-py!)

(legge il biglietto)
(He reads the note.)

...tà!...)
do!)

75

ff [*pp*]

R. -ci - na.)
vanc - ing!)

(piano a Rosina)
(softly to Rosina)

Son Lin-do - ro.
I'm Lin-do - ro.

Oh ciel! che sen - to!
Oh my Lin - do - ro!

ah giu - di - zio, ah giu - di - zio per pie -
Oh, my goodness, Oh, my dar'ling, Oh, my

(example continued)

c) Beginning of Scene 15 (20 after 81)

Allegro

Allegro

-cadde, trouble! si - gno - ri mie - i? What's all the ri - ot!

The concision and rhythmic distinctiveness of these themes recalls late eighteenth century Viennese and Neapolitan *buffa* finales, while the tonal variety (in this instance ranging from C major to G major to E-flat major) recalls a tradition extending as far back as the Goldoni-Galuppi finales of the 1750s. Both features are common in Rossini's own style.

Because such prosodic, musical, and dramatic variety is generically typical of the scenes leading up to the *largo concertato*, it is difficult to accept Marco Beghelli's subdivision of our *tempo d'attacco* into an initial *tempo di preparazione* (scenes 13–14) followed by a *tempo d'attacco* proper (scenes 15–16).⁴⁴ Beghelli recognizes a new formal section at the beginning of scene 15 because at that point the verse changes to *quinari*, all

⁴⁴Marco Beghelli, preface to *Tutti i libretti di Rossini*, xviii–xiv.

of the main characters are onstage, the key is further removed from C major than it was in scene 14, and the motives from scenes 13 and 14 are abandoned. While all of these things do make the beginning of scene 15 a musical and dramatic turning point, it is arbitrary to use them as grounds for recognizing a separate formal section between the *scena* and the *largo concertato*. Doing so obscures one of the major structural oppositions of central finales, i.e., the opposition of a group of varied movements on varied lyrical verse advancing the drama on the one hand and the self-contained, reflective *largo concertato* and *stretta* on the other. Finally, Beghelli's *tempo di preparazione* is a somewhat eccentric term, which I have not encountered in other operatic scholarship.

The unaccompanied chorus of offstage police introduces yet another theme, in B-flat major, adding further musical diversity to the movement. It is echoed by the characters onstage and then abandoned without further development. The tension generated by the arrival of the police is marked by a modulatory passage (85–5 before 86) that carries us to C major at the outset of scene 16. Bartolo, trying to explain himself to the police, launches a passage of agitated patter in G major, marked *vivace* (4 after 86). With the orchestra now reduced to sparse accompaniment, the other vocal parts enter canonically, the ensemble gaining in density and motoric excitement until all six characters (Rosina, Berta, Almaviva, Figaro, Bartolo, and Basilio) are singing at once. Just at this peak of nervous energy (18 before 88), the music changes dramatically, drawing attention to the shocking event that will launch the *largo concertato*: the patter suddenly ceases, and only the officer sings, his declamatory style punctuated by long chords in the orchestra. The officer's declaration that Almaviva must be arrested returns

the music to the C major with which the finale began, but Almaviva's declaration of immunity twists the music to A-flat major:

Example 11: Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, Scene 16:
Transition to the *Largo concertato*

[al Conte]
[to the Count]

(I soldati si muovono per circondare il Conte.)
(The soldiers move to surround the Count.)

U. O. -te-so. Ga-lan-tuom, sie-te in ar-re-sto. Fuo-ri presto, via di
get it. my good man, I must ar-rest you. Let's be going... off to

col canto [f]

CONTE-THE COUNT

U. O. In ar-re-sto? in ar-re-sto? i-o? fer-mi-o-
me, ar-rested! Just a moment! Stand back! Stop where you

qua. jail! [422] riten.

(Con gesto autorevole trattiene i soldati, che si arrestano. Egli chiama a sè l'Ufficiale, gli dà a leggere un foglio; l'Ufficiale resta sorpreso, vuol fargli un'inchino, il Conte lo trattiene. L'Ufficiale fa cenno ai soldati che si ritirino indietro, e anch'egli fa lo stesso. Quadro di stupore.)

Andante

C. -ià!
are!

Andante

ff p p

This striking harmonic shift conveys the shock provoked by Almaviva's words, while structurally, it points out the end of the *tempo d'attacco* and the beginning of the *largo*

concertato. The sudden thinning-out of the texture, with sparse descending figures (in octaves) played by the orchestra, recalls the aforementioned transition to the shock-*tutti* in the finale to act II of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*.

The *largo concertato* is formally and tonally simple, especially compared to the diverse *tempo d'attacco*. Formed as a "pseudo-canon," to use Gossett's term, it is made of two themes. The first one (example 12a, 4 before **88**) is stated by Rosina and imitated by the five other main characters, with Don Basilio limiting his imitation to rhythm. Figaro then offers a new theme (example 12b, **89**), imitated in turn by all except Bartolo and Basilio. Their abstinence is dramatically fitting, since the theme is first stated with words that mock Bartolo.

Example 12: Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, Scene 16:
Principal Themes of the *Largo concertato*

a) First theme: "Freddo ed immobile"

ROSINA

Fred - da ed im - mo - bi - le co - me u - na
Fro - zen with fright and - fear, Still - as a

(example continued)

R.
sta-tu - a, fia - to non re - sta - mi da re - spi -
stat - ue, Look at me stand - ing here, All out of

- rar, fia - to non re - sta - mi da - re - spi - rar, fia - to non
breath! Look at me standing here, All - out of breath! Look at me
CONTE-THE COUNT

Fred - do ed im - mo - bi - le co - me u - na sta - tu - a, fia - to non
Fro - zen with fright and fear, Still.. as a stat - ue, Look at them

88
mp [P]

b) Second theme: “Guarda Don Bartolo”

FIGARO

Guarda don Bar - to - lo, guarda don Bar - to - lo! sembra una sta - tu - a, sembra una
Look at Don Bar - to - lo, look at Don Bar - to - lo! Still as a stat - ue, still as a

Regularly phrased and never straying from A-flat major, this static set-piece offers the sustained, lyrical ensemble singing absent from the *tempo d'attacco*. Its slow harmonic rhythm, its consistently low dynamic level, and its tonal and affective isolation from the rest of the finale place it within the tradition of the Viennese shock-*tutti*.⁴⁵

⁴⁵In this particular example, the key of the *largo concertato* (A-flat major) helps to isolate the movement from the rest of the finale (which ends in C major), but this is more a feature of Rossini's own style than a feature of central finales in general. For a better understanding of the genre's historical continuity, the third-relation between C major and A-flat major is best regarded as Rossini's particular means of isolating the movement from the music that surrounds it rather than as an end in itself.

In his critical edition, Alberto Zedda identifies the music immediately following the *largo concertato* (10 after 90) as the beginning of the *stretta*. The return to C major, the quick tempo, and the *forte* marking all do indicate a clear departure from the hushed A-flat major of the *largo concertato*, but it makes more musical sense to think of the passage as a *tempo di mezzo*.⁴⁶ Both the *largo concertato* and the following *stretta* contain sustained ensemble singing with well-defined melodic material. The section between them, however (10 after 90–10 after 91), consists of short motives exchanged between the vocal parts and of scales and tremolos in the orchestra. It functions as a non-lyrical disruption of the strange calm of the *largo concertato* and a preparation for the vigorous *stretta*.

The stable, concluding *stretta* stays almost entirely in C major. Its primary theme is an energetic triadic melody, first sung in unison:

Example 13: Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, Scene 16:
 “Mi par d’esser con la testa”

sottovoce assai

Mi par d'esser con la testa
 As the hammer strikes the

te sta in u'n'orrida fucina,
 anvil, So these sounds beat down upon me.

⁴⁶The non-musical sense behind this distinction—regarding drama and verse—is noted above. The usefulness of identifying a separate movement between *largo concertato* and *stretta* is advanced by Powers in “*La Solita forma*,” 87–91.

At **93** the orchestra introduces a nervous scalar motive while the vocal parts fall into a rapid patten, after which a sequential passage at **94** briefly recalls a motive from the *tempo di mezzo*:

Example 14: Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act I, Scene 16: “E il cervello poverello”



The vocal parts are divided into groups at various points in the piece, recalling the antiphonal singing noted in Mozart’s Da Ponte operas. After **100**, all parts sing together in a long stretch of cadential figuration that brings the *stretta* to its conclusion. The overall musical effect is of tremendous drive, metric regularity, and tonal stability, allowing the characters to vent the emotions and frustrations that have accumulated throughout the finale. The dramatic structure of the entire finale can be summarized thus:

scene	libretto	formal section	verse	melodic style	key	Plot	reh. #
11.	Brontola quanto vuoi	<i>scena</i>	11/7 <i>sciolti</i>	recitative	C	Berta alone	24 after 71
12.	Finola in questa camera					Rosina alone	
13.	Ehi di casa../ buona gente...	<i>tempo d'attacco</i>	8	<i>parlante</i>	C– E-flat –C	Almaviva enters, begins harassing Bartolo	18 before 72
14.					C–G–C	Rosina, Almaviva and Bartolo in confusion; entrance of Basilio, Berta	75
15.	...Alto là!/ Che cosa accade/ Signori miei?		5		E-flat	entrance of Figaro	20 after 81

(table continued)

16.	Fermi tutti. Nuin si muova.		8		C	entrance of police	5 before
	Questo soldato/ M'ha maltratto		5	patter over sparse orchestral accompaniment	G	general panic	5 after 86
	Fate silenzio		5	declamatory	C	confrontation of Almaviva and Officer; Almaviva displays his immunity to arrest	17 before 88
	Freddo ed immobile	<i>largo</i> <i>concertato</i>	5	lyrical “pseudo- canon”	A-flat	universal stunned reaction	4 before 88
	Ma signor.. Zitto tu!	<i>tempo di</i> <i>mezzo</i>	4x2	fragmented exchanges over orchestral motives	C	re-animation	12 before 91
	Mi par d'esser con la testa	<i>stretta</i>	8	lyrical ensemble piece	C- E-flat -C	animated, frenetic reaction to the entire situation	18 before 92

Figure 6: The Structure of the Act I Finale of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

The basic elements of this structure were decades old by the time Rossini used them. The gradual accumulation of characters and the accompanying increase of dramatic tension during the *tempo d'attacco*, the prosodic variety, and the diversity of themes, keys, and tempos are all traits that have been observed in the Goldoni-Galuppi finales of the 1750s. The short, rhythmically distinctive motives in the orchestra—and the self-contained lyrical pieces, the shock-*tutti*, and the *stretta*—are rooted in the practices of Viennese *buffa* finales of the 1780s. By placing the self-contained lyrical movements in greater proximity to one another as part of the sequence of *tempo d'attacco*, *largo concertato*, *tempo di mezzo*, and *stretta*, however, Rossini created a tighter, more concise dramatic structure than had his eighteenth century forbears.

The Finale to Act II of *Falstaff*

Shortly after the premiere of *Falstaff*, Verdi expressed his concerns over the act II finale in a letter to his publisher, Giulio Ricordi:

I don't know if you know that when I heard the opera at an orchestra rehearsal from the auditorium, I was so displeased with the *concertato* that I said to all the artists gathered together: "This piece doesn't work like that; either you perform it more softly, totally sotto voce, and standing apart from one another in groups, or it must be cut or changed." Nobody breathed, but these words did not make a good impression, as they can tell you. The next night they performed better and nothing more was said. But at the performances I saw that on the stage this passage is long and too much of a *concertato*.⁴⁷

These remarks reveal not only that Verdi saw the heart of the finale as a *largo concertato*, but also that he was interested in finding ways to understate the piece (i.e., in preventing it from becoming "too much of a *concertato*"). In part, Verdi understated the *concertato* by abridging it, excising ten bars shortly after the Milan premiere.⁴⁸ Furthermore, by not following the *concertato* with an obvious *stretta* he understated the large-scale formal complex typical of Rossini's central finales.

To date, structural comparisons of *Falstaff*'s act II finale to the conventional central finale have not gone beyond simply noting the presence of the *largo concertato*, which is hardly more than Verdi himself did in his letter to Ricordi.⁴⁹ The relationship of the *Falstaff* finale to *primo ottocento* conventions, however, goes further than such limited scholarly attention suggests and includes large-scale musical-dramatic organization (including heretofore neglected analogues to the *tempo d'attacco*, *tempo di mezzo*, and *stretta*) and the function of the orchestra in the presentation of thematic material. Furthermore, the reprise of thematic material and the disproportion between the *largo concertato* and the *stretta*-analogue reveal a relationship between *Falstaff*'s act II finale and contemporary French finales by composers such as Charles Gounod, Georges Bizet, and Jules Massenet.

⁴⁷Letter to Giulio Ricordi, March 7, 1893, quoted in translation in Hans Busch, ed., *Verdi's Falstaff in Contemporary Letters and Reviews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997): 367.

⁴⁸See Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3:438–39, 500; Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff*, 54–68.

As in the act II finale of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, the act II finale of *Falstaff* brings together several dramatic threads. Falstaff has been led to believe that both Alice Ford and Meg Page are in love with him, and Mistress Quickly has arranged for him to meet with Alice. Meanwhile, Ford, disguised as Signor Fontana, has already met with Falstaff and has thus been made privy to Falstaff's intended rendezvous with Alice. When Falstaff and Alice meet, they are interrupted by Mistress Quickly, announcing the approach of Meg. Falstaff, deluded, believes Meg to be a jealous rival for Alice's affections, and so he hides behind a screen. Meg in turn announces the imminent arrival of Ford and the other men, in hot pursuit of Falstaff. The crisis in store is played out during the course of the finale.

The act II finale of *Falstaff* begins with a scene between Alice and Falstaff (38). Falstaff is now convinced that Alice is in love with him, and she cunningly plays the part of whole-hearted lover. She even carries a lute with which to offer Falstaff music, and Falstaff sings to her accompaniment as he enters. Like the recitatives for Berta and Rosina in *Il barbiere*, the scene for Falstaff and Alice establishes a pair of characters who will remain onstage as the other characters arrive. It is cast in *versi misti*, consisting of *settenari*, *endecasillabi*, and *quinari* (the *quinari* at the beginning of the scene distinguish Falstaff's serenade from the rest of the text; eight more *quinari* occur during the course of the scene, for less obvious reasons):

<i>Falstaff</i>	<i>Falstaff</i>
<i>Alfin t'ho colto</i>	<i>At last I pluck you,</i>
<i>Raggiante fior,</i>	<i>Radiant flower,</i>
<i>T'ho colto. Ed or potrò morir felice.</i>	<i>I pluck you! Now I can die happy.</i>
<i>Avrò vissuto molto</i>	<i>I shall have lived long enough</i>
<i>Dopo quest'ora di beato amor.</i>	<i>after this hour of blissful love.</i>

⁴⁹See Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3:493–501

Alice

O soave Sir John!

Falstaff

Mia bella Alice!

Non so far lo svenevole,
 Nè lusingar, nè usar frase fiorita,
 Ma dirò tosto un mio pensier colpevole.

...

Alice

O sweet Sir John.

Falstaff

My lovely Alice.

I know not how to languish,
 or flatter, or employ flowery phrases,
 But I'll tell you at once a sinful thought of
 mine.

...

Unlike the *scena* in the act II finale of *Il barbiere*, this initial section of mixed verse is not set as recitative. To the contrary, the vocal line tends to be quite lyrical, although the listener may not perceive such lyricism because instead of developing one or two melodies into a recognizable form (e.g., mid-century lyric form), Verdi introduces and abandons several distinct melodies in quick succession. Falstaff's opening *quinari*, for instance, sung to Alice's lute accompaniment, are set as a four-measure phrase in A major, ending on the dominant E (4 before **39**). One might expect a consequent phrase, with an attendant resolution to the tonic, but Falstaff takes up a new, unrelated melody, in a new tempo and a new meter (**39**). After six measures, yet another melody is introduced, unrelated to either of the preceding ones. Beginning with the *allegretto* section in F major (7 after **40**), it seems as though an extended lyrical piece were at last beginning to develop: Falstaff offers three four-measure phrases, and Alice responds with two of her own (**41**). The promise of development is abruptly broken, however, as the vocal line becomes more fragmented and the harmony more chromatic, twisting the key into the A major of Falstaff's miniature aria, "Quand'ero paggio del Duca di Norfolk" (1 after **42**). From a purely musical standpoint, the scene for Falstaff and Alice is best considered *sui generis*, as a dense repository of lyrical melodies which are disjunctly presented and inconsistently developed. Regarding the development of the plot, however, the scene is

like a *scena* in that it serves as a starting point for the accumulation of characters that will occur as the finale goes on.

Mrs. Quickly, calling from offstage, interrupts the meeting between Falstaff and Alice. She briefly enters to warn Alice of Meg's approach. (Of course, Alice is not really surprised that Meg is coming; it is all part of the plan to embarrass Falstaff). When Quickly exits, Meg enters to warn Alice of the approach of Ford and the other men (which does surprise Alice). Meg's entrance is marked by a switch from *versi misti* to *settenari lirici*:

<i>Meg</i> Alice! che spavento! Che chiasso! Che discordia! Non perdere un momento. Fuggi!...	<i>Meg</i> Alice! How terrible! What an uproar! What a tumult! Don't lose a moment. Fly!
<i>Alice</i> Misericordia! Che avvenne?	<i>Alice</i> Mercy on us! What is happening?
<i>Meg</i> Il tuo consorte Vien gridando <i>accor'uomo!</i>	<i>Meg</i> Your husband is coming, shouting "Help!"

In succession, the various other characters arrive onstage, each of their entrances being marked by a change in verse. When Ford and the other men barge in, the verse changes to *senari doppi*:

<i>Ford</i> Chiudete le porte! Sbarrate le scale! Segiutemi a caccia! Scoviamo il cignale!	<i>Ford</i> Close the doors! Bar the staircases! Follow me in the hunt! We'll flush out the boar!
--	---

The men vainly search for Falstaff in a laundry basket, while Falstaff hides behind a screen. When the men run offstage to continue their pursuit elsewhere in the house, Falstaff re-emerges from behind the screen to hide in the laundry basket. Ford's exit completes the section of *senari doppi*, and his last two words ("in cantina") begin the first verse of the women's *settenari doppi*:

<p><i>Ford</i> (correndo e gridando, esce dalla porta a sinistra) Cerchiam sotto il letto, Nel forno, nel pozzo, nel bagno, sul tetto, In cantina...</p> <p><i>Meg</i> È farnetico!</p> <p><i>Quickly</i> Cogliam tempo.</p> <p><i>Alice</i> Troviamo.</p> <p>Mode com'egli fugga.</p> <p><i>Meg</i> Nel panier.</p> <p><i>Alice</i> No, là dentro</p> <p>Non c'entra, è troppo grosso.</p> <p><i>Falstaff</i> Vediam; si c'entro, c'entro.</p>	<p><i>Ford</i> (running and yelling, exiting stage left) We must look under the bed, in the oven, in the well, in the bath, on the roof, in the cellar...</p> <p><i>Meg</i> He's gone mad!</p> <p><i>Quickly</i> We must seize our opportunity.</p> <p><i>Alice</i> We must find a way for him to escape.</p> <p><i>Meg</i> In the basket.</p> <p><i>Alice</i> No he can't get in, he's too big.</p> <p><i>Falstaff</i> Let's see: yes' I'll get in, I'll get in.</p>
---	---

The focus then shifts to Fenton and Nannetta, their love still illicit in light of Ford's recently announced intention of marrying Nannetta to Dr. Caius. They hide themselves behind the screen, Falstaff's former hiding place, and the verse shifts to *quinari*:

<p><i>Nannetta</i> Vien qua.</p> <p><i>Fenton</i> Che chiasso!</p> <p><i>Nannetta</i> Quanti schiamazzi! Segui il mio passo.</p> <p><i>Fenton</i> Casa di pazzi!</p>	<p><i>Nannetta</i> Come here.</p> <p><i>Fenton</i> What a din!</p> <p><i>Nannetta</i> What an uproar! Follow me.</p> <p><i>Fenton</i> It's a madhouse!</p>
--	--

Finally, the men return to the stage, and the verse switches back to *senari doppi*:

<p><i>Cajus</i> Al ladro!</p> <p><i>Ford</i> Al pagliardo!</p> <p><i>Cajus</i> Squartatelo!</p> <p><i>Ford</i> Al ladro!</p>	<p><i>Caius</i> Stop thief!</p> <p><i>Ford</i> Catch the libertine!</p> <p><i>Caius</i> Cut him to pieces</p> <p><i>Ford</i> Find the villain!</p>
--	--

Just as all the characters have finally settled in one place and the men's search for Falstaff has reached the peak of its fervor, the sound of a single kiss between Fenton and

Nannetta resounds from behind the screen. All are taken aback, and the men respond with hushed *ottonari* exclamations (beginning with Ford’s “Se t’agguanto”), mistakenly believing themselves to have heard the sound of Falstaff kissing Alice:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cajus</i></p> <p>Non c’è! Pappalardo! Bèon! Bada a te!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>Scagnardo! Falsardo! Briccon!!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nannetta e Fenton</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(*)!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">C’è!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cajus</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">C’è!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>(sotto voce, guardando il paravento)</p> <p>Se t’agguanto!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cajus</i></p> <p>Se ti piglio!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>Se t’acceffo!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cajus</i></p> <p>Se t’acciuffo!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Caius</i></p> <p>He’s not here! Glutton! Sot! Take care!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>Cur! Forger! Villain!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nannetta and Fenton</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(*)!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>There he is.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Caius</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">There he is.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>(under his breath, looking at the screen)</p> <p>If I catch you!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Caius</i></p> <p>If I take you!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ford</i></p> <p>If I get hold of you!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Caius</i></p> <p>If I lay hands on you!</p>
--	---

The entire passage of text leading up to the kiss recalls key elements of the *primo ottocento tempo d’attacco* for central finales: the characters gradually arrive onstage (following, as in *Il barbiere*, an expository *scena*), changes in the verse mark important entrances and events,⁵⁰ most of the verse is dialogue, and the tension of the situation steadily increases until a shocking event stuns everyone. Here the shocking event is the kiss, while in *Il barbiere* it was Almaviva’s display of immunity to arrest.

The musical setting of the passage from Quickly’s interruption of Falstaff’s meeting with Alice (44) to the kiss of Fenton and Nannetta (59) is also consistent with the traditions of the *tempo d’attacco* for central finales. It includes two primary themes and

⁵⁰For a discussion of the possible meanings of the different types of verse in this section see Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff*, 31.

one secondary theme, all stated in the orchestra as part of a predominant *parlante*. As soon as Quickly arrives onstage (44), the orchestra presents a lively sixteenth-note theme (example 15a). This theme dominates until just before the arrival of the men (4 mm. after 47), whereupon the orchestra takes up a new theme, also entirely in sixteenth notes (example 15b). A third, declamatory theme in a dotted rhythm is unrelated to either of the sixteenth note themes (example 15c). The two sixteenth note themes are never sung (they hardly could be, being instrumentally conceived), leaving the singers to melodic declamation in predominant *parlante*. The declamatory theme is sung, but it is first stated by the orchestra. Either the first or the second of the sixteenth note themes pervades virtually every measure of the score between Meg's entrance (44) and the kiss (59).

Example 15: *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2, Orchestral Themes in the *Tempo d'attacco* (44–59)

a) first sixteenth-note theme (44)

The musical score for Example 15a consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with the tempo marking *ALL^o. AGITATO* and a metronome marking of 112. The lyrics are: *ignora! C'è Mistress Meg, e vuol parlarvi, lady! 'Tis Mis-tress Page who fain would see you.* The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp. It features a sixteenth-note theme starting at measure 44, marked *pp e molto stacc.* The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp, providing harmonic support for the piano part.

(example continued)

sbuffa, strepita, s'abba_ruffa... E vuol pas_
 FAL. panting, trembling, panic-stricken She's at the
 Al_la ma_lo_ra!
 The devil take her!

b) second sixteenth-note theme (4 after 47)

PIÙ MOSSO ♩ = 138
 bur_la?)
 jest?
 Das_sen.no. In earnest. E_gli sca_val_ca le
 He forced his way through the
 PIÙ MOSSO ♩ = 138
 pp f pp staccate
 sie_pi del giar_di_no... Lo se_gue u_na gran
 hedge that skirts the gar_den And bard at beel a

(example continued)

cal - ca di gen - te... è già vi - ci - no...
crowd followed af - terhe's close at hand

c) declamatory theme in dotted rhythm (45)

Dante Quickly)
 - li - ce! Che spa - ven - to! Che
A - lice! What a scan - dal! What

(45) *f*

chias - so! Che di - scordia! Non per - de - re un mo -
clamour! What con - fusion! Lose not a sin - gle

As in the act I finale of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, all three themes are of a lively character, essentially motoric rather than lyrical, and they are given primarily to the orchestra.

A sustained lyrical passage is given to Fenton and Nannetta, but even here the second sixteenth-note theme can be heard, first in the violins and later in cellos and violas:

Example 16: *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2, Lyrical Interlude for Fenton and Nannetta during the *Tempo d'attacco* (54)

(54) Allegro $\text{♩} = 138$
Lo stesso movimento

Fl. *p*

Ob. *I. p con espress.*

Clar. in Sib *I. p*

Fag.

Cor. in Mib *I. pp*

Tr. bni

Tr. b.

Timp.

(Nannetta e Fenton entrano da sinistra. Nannetta a Fenton con cautela e sottovoce) (avviandosi al paravento)

N. (Vien qua. Quan-ti schia-maz-zi! Segui il mio

Fen. (Fenton la segue) Che chias-so!

Viol. *ppp*

Vie

Vc.

Cb.

(54) Allegro $\text{♩} = 138$
Lo stesso movimento

The section that Verdi himself called the *concertato* follows the long *tempo d'attacco*. The aforementioned passage of hushed *ottonari* beginning with Ford's "Se t'agguanto" (59) opens the *concertato*. The fragmentary vocal part and the sparse orchestral accompaniment in open octaves recall the parallel spots in both *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*:

Example 17: *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2,
Opening of the *Largo concertato* (59)

subsidies into a momentary silence) *ANDANTE* ♩ = 80
vuota vuota - (cautiously approaching screen)
 D^cC
 FOR *vuota vuota* (cautiously approaching screen) Se ti piglio!
 If I seize you!
 Se t'ag - guanto! Se t'ac -
 If I catch you! If I
ANDANTE ♩ = 80
 (59) *p*
 D^cC
 FOR Se t'ac - cef - fo!
 If I squeeze you!
 - ciuf - fo! Ti scon -
 snatch you! I will

(example continued)

D.C. T'arroniglio come un can! Guai a
I will beat you like a bound! Aye! and

FOR - quasso! Ti rompo il cef-fo!
thrash you! And break and smash you!

QUIC. (close to the basket, to Mrs. Page)

D.C. Fac.cia mò le vi.ste d'atten.de.re ai
Now let us be bu - sy the lin - en ar -
(under his breath)

FOR te! Guai a
dash' you! On the

FOR Fre.ga il tuo San.to!
up - on the ground!

P e stacc.

The *largo concertato* of the act II finale of *Falstaff* shows significant dramatic and prosodic similarities to its eighteenth and early nineteenth century forbears. It will be recalled that while the traditional *tempo d'attacco* shows characters in action, the *largo concertato* shows them primarily in reflection. In the *largo concertato* of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, the characters reflect *en masse*, each singing essentially the same text, in parallel stanzas. In *Falstaff*, however, the characters express themselves in three groups, each with a distinct poetic meter, dramatic intention, and geographical location on the stage.

Each group of characters has at least one section in parallel stanzas, although substantial passages of dialogue also occur. In the libretto, the groups are laid out in alternation with one another; in the score, as we will see, they are superimposed.⁵¹ The first group is composed of Ford, Caius, Pistol, Bardolph, and a group of neighbors, surrounding the screen (*intorno al paravento*). Initially in *ottonari* dialogue, they imagine the ways in which they would like to harm Falstaff. Later on, having switched to parallel stanzas of *ottonari*, they anticipate humiliating Falstaff, whom they still imagine to be hiding behind the screen with Alice:⁵²

<i>Ford</i>	<i>Ford</i>
Senti, accosta un po' l'orecchio!	Listen, bring your ear nearer!
Che patetici lamenti!	What pathetic cries!
Su quell nido d'usinguoli	The thunder will soon burst
Scoppierà fra poco il tuon.	upon that nest of nightingales.
<i>Bardolfo</i>	<i>Bardolph</i>
È la voce della donna	It is the voice of a lady
Che rispondi al cavalier.	answering her cavalier.
<i>Dr. Caius</i>	<i>Dr. Caius</i>
Sento, intendo e vedo chiaro	I hear, understand, and plainly see
Delle femmine gl'ignanni.	the wiles of women.
<i>Pistola</i>	<i>Pistol</i>
Ma fra poco il lieto gioco	But soon a harsh lesson
Turberà dura lezion.	will disturb their pretty game.
Egli canta, ma fra poco	He sings now, but soon
Muterà la sua canzon.	he'll change his tune

Meanwhile, Fenton and Nannetta, positioned behind the screen (*nel paravento*) reflect on the general folly surrounding them and on their love. Their verse is in *quinari*, mostly in parallel stanzas:

⁵¹As a glance at the libretto will reveal, Boito provided Verdi with more text than Verdi actually ended up setting. Because my purpose is to show the relationship of the text to the musical and dramatic structure, my analysis draws only on those portions of the text that Verdi set.

⁵²This is the type of passage that one might expect to find in the *tempo di mezzo* of a Rossini finale, containing incitement to further action rather than pure reflection. Its presence within the body of this *largo concertato* shows that while the separate sections of the *solita forma* embody general tendencies towards either stasis or kinesis, they are not airtight containers of either dramatic state, especially in operas from middle and end of the nineteenth century. See Balthazar, "Analytic Contexts and Mediated Influences: The Rossinian *Convenienze* and Verdi's Middle and Late Duets," *Journal of Musicological Research* 10 (1990): 19–46.

Fenton
Bella! ridente!
Oh! come pieghi
Verso i miei prieghi
Donnescamente!
Come ti vidi
M'innamorai,
E tu sorridi
Perchè lo sai.

Fenton
Laughing beauty!
Oh, in how sweetly feminine
a way have you yielded
to my entreaties!
The instant I saw you
I fell in love,
and you smile
because you know it.

Nanetta
Mentre quei vecchi
Corron lo giostra,
Noi di sottocchi
Corriam la nostra.
L'amor non ode
Tuon nè bufere,
Vola alle sfere
Beate e gode.

Nanetta
While our elders
are engaged in this tussle,
we, in secret,
are busy in ours.
love does not hear
thunder or squalls;
it flies up to regions
of bliss and rejoices.

The third group of characters consists of Falstaff, inside the laundry basket, and Meg and Mrs. Quickly, standing guard before the laundry basket (*intorno alla cesta*). In parallel stanzas of *senari*, Meg and Mrs. Quickly speak of the need to keep Ford in the dark as to Falstaff's whereabouts, and they revel in their trickery:

Quickly
Facciamo le viste
D'attendere ai panni;
Pur che non c'inganni
Con mosse impreviste.
Fin'or non s'accorse
Di nulla, egli può
Sorprenderci forse,
Confonderci no.

Meg
Facciamogli siepe
Fra tanto scompiglio.
Ne' giuochi il periglio
E un grano di pepe.
Il rischio è un diletto
Che accresce l'ardor,
Che stimola in petto
Gli spiriti e il cor.

Quickly
Let's keep up a show
of seeing to the washing,
so that he does not catch us out
by some unexpected move.
Up till now he's noticed
nothing: he may
perhaps surprise us,
but not confound us.

Meg
Let's hedge him off
from all this hubbub.
In games, danger
is like a dash of spice.
Risk is a pleasure
that adds to its zest,
and rouses within us
our spirits and our hearts.

Falstaff, Meg, and Mrs. Quickly are then given a passage of dialogue, followed by a concluding passage of parallel stanzas for Meg and Quickly (Alice has only a few

scattered lines during this section of the finale and no parallel stanzas). The range of expression across the three groups of characters shows that Fenton and Nannetta's kiss, like Almaviva's evasion of arrest in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, is a catalyst for reflection on the finale's entire dramatic situation. In *Falstaff*, as in *Il barbiere*, the *largo concertato* largely represents the suspension of action, although the *Falstaff concertato* also includes some meditation on past action and some preparation for future action. In both operas the verse includes substantial passages of parallel stanzas.

Turning from the libretto to the score, we also observe musical similarities between the *largo concertato* of the act II finale of *Falstaff* and the *larghi concertati* of earlier finales. First, we will note that the *Falstaff concertato* is polyphonically conceived, showing a layering and eventual integration of separate melodic strands that recalls the pseudo-canon of the parallel movement in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. As we noted above, this texture is common to the *largo concertato* in general (the other common construction being a homogeneous ensemble from beginning to end).⁵³ Whereas the *largo concertato* of *Il barbiere* contained only two themes (the first presented by Rosina, the second by Figaro), however, the *largo concertato* of *Falstaff* contains several. Each of the three groups of characters has distinct melodic material, and these parts are layered on top of one another during the course of the piece.⁵⁴ The men's part is initially fragmented and declamatory, beginning with the passage immediately following the *tempo d'attacco*, cited above (59). The men begin to have longer lines towards the middle of the

⁵³It seems that Verdi was quite concerned that the polyphonic texture of the piece should maintain its clarity when he wrote, in the letter to Ricordi quoted above: "*perform it more softly, totally sotto voce, and standing apart from one another in groups.*" A quiet performance with space between the groups would make the texture more transparent, thereby clarifying the polyphony.

⁵⁴This texture is similar to that of the *largo concertato* in Verdi's other comic opera, *Un giorno di regno*.

concertato (61), with Ford eventually presenting an extended melody at 62, but their part remains predominately non-lyrical throughout the movement. In contrast, the music for Quickly, Meg, and Falstaff tends towards coherent lyricism. Eight measures into the *concertato*, Mrs. Quickly enters with a chromatic melody in triplets. Meg joins her to complete a four-measure phrase ending on the dominant of C major. The phrase is then repeated and altered to end with an authentic cadence in G major. Falstaff soon joins Meg and Quickly in a contrasting, E-major melody (6 measures after 60). The three characters join again in a six measure phrase that carries the key from A minor to C major, followed by a reprise for Quickly and Meg of their initial triplet melody, at 63 (see example 11 for the composite melodic line for Quickly, Meg, and Falstaff). Fenton and Nannetta, constituting the *concertato*'s third melodic strand, also tend towards lyrical melodies. They enter in loose imitation of one another, in E major, at 61 (example 9).⁵⁵ At 63 (example 10), Fenton and Nannetta sing a new, highly lyrical triadic melody, in octaves. The statement of this melody coincides with the climactic integration of the *concertato*'s varied melodic strands, comparable to the point in the *largo concertato* of *Il barbiere* when all six parts have finally entered the texture: beneath Fenton and Nanetta, Mrs. Quickly and Meg reprise their initial chromatic triplet melody; Ford and Pistol offer a variant of Ford's long melody from 62; Caius and Bardolph have the same sort of fragmented declamatory part that Caius and Ford had at the beginning of the *concertato*;

⁵⁵Because it features so many triplets, Nannetta's melody might initially seem to resemble the part for Quickly and Meg more than the part for Fenton, but closer scrutiny reveals that Nannetta imitates Fenton's descending melodic figures. Fenton's initial span of a fourth ("Bella ridente"), for instance, is immediately imitated by Nannetta, in smaller note values and embellished at the opening with a minor sixth ("Mentre quei vecchi"). Likewise, Fenton's subsequent span of a minor sixth ("Oh! come pieghi") is imitated by Nannetta's stepwise descent, again in smaller note values, from e to g-sharp (the first six notes of "Noi di sottocchi corriam").

Example 18: Falstaff, Act II, Part 2,
Fenton and Nannetta's Entrance in the *Largo concertato*

FEN. *Cantabile* (to Anne)

Bel-la! ri -
Dear smi - ling

Q

sot.to.
qui - et!

B

ca_cio.
bis - sing.

FOR.

Ra - gioniam.
Let's consult. (61)

pp

NAN. (to Fenton)
leggiero

Men - tre quei vec - chi cor - ron la
While the old peo - ple make all this

EN

- den - - te! Oh! co - me
mai - - - den! Love in - ter - -

OR

Col - po non
Be - fore the

(example continued)

N
 gio - stra Noi di sot - tec - chi cor - riam la
 ri - ot We exchange his - ses in peace and in

FEN
 pie - ghi ver - so i miei
 MEG. - ce - - - ding, Thy heart has

QUIC.

FAL.

D.C.

BAR.

FOR
 vi - bro sen - z'un pia - - - no di bat -
 tus - sle, I would ask your coun - sel

PIS.

Ten!

Neighbors
 Bassi

Example 19: *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2, Polyphonic Climax of the *Largo concertato* (63)

p espressivo

N Tut - to de -
In thought and

FEN

M (covering Falstaff up with the dirty linen) Fra quel - - le dark
'Neath those dark

Q Giù! giù! giù!
Death! death! death!

FAL - li. to Giù! giù! giù!
death! death! death!

D.C. (to Ford approaching the screen) *p* Sento,
Yes, I

B

FOR (to Caius approaching the screen) *p* Senti, accosta un po' l'orecchio!
Hear their billing and their cooing *p*

P Ma fra poco il lieto
He will pipe in oib - er

pppp

S'e - - gli
If be

S'e - - gli

(63)

mf p mf p cantabile con espress.

pp stacc.

(example continued)

N
- li - - - - - ra,
ac - - - - - tion.

FEN
ci - - - - - glia
lasb - - - - - es

M
Par - liam sot - to - vo - ce guar - dan - do il Mes
Let's speak in a whis - per and rin - et our

Q
Co - stui s'è in - far - da - to di tan - ta vii -
So foul bis trans - gres - sions in word and in

FAL

D.C
sen - to,
hear them.

B
È la vo - ce
And her whis - per

FOR

P
giuo - co
fash - ion

ca - - - - - de più non
fall, be can't es - - - -

ca - - - - - de più non

and the chorus of neighbors supports the entire texture with sustained chords. The climax is brief, lasting only six measures.⁵⁶ Falstaff then complains “Ouf! Cesto molesto” in repeated notes; Alice sings a three-note response to Falstaff’s complaint; the men’s part reverts almost entirely to repeated notes as they position themselves to oust Falstaff from behind the screen; and only Fenton and Nannetta, still engrossed in each other, maintain melodic interest. This reduced texture lasts until the *allegro* marking at **65**, whereupon the orchestra’s *fortissimo* outburst in sixteenth notes abruptly cuts off the *concertato* movement.

The gradual integration of separate, mostly lyrical melodic strands is easily perceived by the attentive listener, and is thus a fairly obvious point of comparison between the *Falstaff concertato* and earlier *concertati*. Less obvious, however, but also helpful in identifying the *Falstaff concertato* as a lyrical movement, is the disguised formal plan of the part sung by Quickly, Meg, and Falstaff, a plan that can be understood if we imagine that part as an uninterrupted melodic strand:

Example 20: *Falstaff*, Act II, Part 2, Composite Melody for Mrs. Quickly, Meg, and Falstaff in the *Largo concertato*

Quickly

Fac-cia-mo le vi-ste d'at-ten-de-re ai pan-ni; Pur ch'ei non c'in-gan-ni con mos-se im-pre-vi-ste.

Meg

Fac-cia-mo-gli sie-pe fra tan-to scom-pi-glio. Ne' giuo-chi il pe-ri-glio è un gra-no di pe-pe.

(example continued)

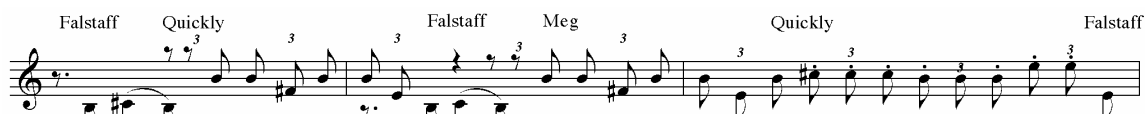
⁵⁶Originally, this six measure passage was sixteen measures long. Verdi abridged it shortly after he wrote the letter to Ricordi that is cited above. All of the original sixteen measures are reproduced in Hepokoski, Verdi: *Falstaff*, 57–65.



Fi - n' or non s'ac - cor - se di nul - la, e - gli può — Sor - pren - der - ci for - se, con - fon - der - ci



no. Il ri - schio è un di - let - to che ac - cre - sce l'ar - dor, — Che sti - mo - la in pet - to gli spi - ri - ti e il cor.



Sta sot - to, sta sot - to! Or que - sti s'in - sor - ge. Se l'al - tro ti scor - ge sei mor - to.

Af - fo - go! Af - fo - go! Son



Sta sot - to, sta sot - to! Sta sot - to, sta sot - to.

cot - to!



Che cal - do! Misquaglio! Sta sot - to! Sta sot - to! Il ri - bal - do vor - reb - be un ven - ta - glio Un bre - ve spi - ra - glio non chie - do di



più. Ti met - to il ba - va - glio se par - li Giù! Giù! giù! giù!



Par - liam sot - to vo - ce guar - dan - do il Mes - ser Che bron - to - la e cuo - ce nel no - stro pa -



nier, che — bron - to - la e cuo - ce nel no - stro pa - nier

It is divided into five melodic segments: two expository segments, a_5 (“Facciamo le viste”) and a'_4 (“Fin’or non s’accorse”); a contrasting segment, b_4 (“Affogo”); a transitional segment, x_6 (“Che caldo! Sta sotto”); and a reprise of the expository segments, a''_5 (“Parliam sotto voce”). The form thus yielded, $a_5, a'_4, b_4, x_6, a''_5$ recalls mid-century lyric form, a_4, a'_4, b_4, c'_4 (or a''_4), typical of the slow movement in a duet or

an aria. Of course, the piece at hand is the *largo concertato* of an ensemble finale, not the slow movement of a duet or an aria, but the reference to mid-century lyric form supports our understanding of the *Falstaff* concertato as a generally lyrical movement. Further, we will note that by separating the form's components with irregular rests, and by integrating its component melodies with contrasting melodies sung by other groups of characters, Verdi has disguised the reference to mid-century lyric form much as he did in the letter scene in act I, part 2. First, this formal obfuscation could suggest an aesthetic preference in *Falstaff* for the subtle diffusion, rather than the outright expression, of lyricism. Second, at a level more specific to the finale's dramaturgy, disguising or hiding the mid-century lyric form articulated by Quickly, Meg, and Falstaff might relate to the two women's attempt at disguising or hiding Falstaff within the laundry basket.

Tonal stability is another point of affinity between the *largo concertato* in *Falstaff* and the *larghi concertati* of earlier operas. Although the *Falstaff concertato* is not as tonally stable as most of Rossini's (the *largo concertato* of *Il barbiere*, it will be recalled, never leaves A-flat major), it is relatively stable within the context of *Falstaff* as a whole. The *Falstaff concertato* is 52 measures long, beginning and ending in C major. An internal section of 23 measures (60–63) explores keys other than C major, including G major, E major, E minor, and very brief arrivals at B-flat major, D major and A minor. The climactic thickening of the texture at 63, however, unambiguously affirms C major, and no more modulations occur through the end of the piece. Despite some modulations, then, the ensemble offers an underlying tonal stability comparable to that found in the *larghi concertati* of Rossini:

Rehearsal	Key	Relationship to C major	Measures in key	Measures in C major	Measures not in C major
59	C major	I	15	15	
60	G major	V	4		4
4 after 60	E major	III	13		13
62	E minor	iii	1		1
1 after 62	G major	V	1		1
2 after 62	B-flat major	flat VII	1		1
3 after 62	D major	V/V	1		1
4 after 62	A minor	vi	4		4
63	C major	I	12	12	
				27 (total)	25 (total)

Figure 7: The Tonal Structure of the Act II Finale of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the *Falstaff largo concertato* recalls its historical forebears is through its standing as the most lyrical section of the finale. As we have seen, the melodies shared during the *largo concertato* by Fenton and Nannetta on the one hand and Meg and Mrs. Quickly on the other are more developed than the fragmentary vocal lines in the *tempo d'attacco*; and the vocal part consistently rivals that of the orchestra in the presentation of melodic ideas, as opposed to the dominant *parlante* of the *tempo d'attacco*. Both qualities isolate the *largo concertato* as a self-contained expressive piece, to recall the terminology used in describing the Viennese *buffa shock-tutti*.

The *largo concertato* ends with the men finally tearing down the screen behind which they believe Falstaff and Alice are hiding. The men are irate at finding Fenton and Nannetta instead, and as they run after Fenton, Alice calls for help in lifting Falstaff, still inside the laundry basket, up towards the window. Falstaff is dumped into the Thames, the men return, and all look out the window to laugh at Falstaff's watery humiliation as the act comes to a close. The verse between the end of the *largo concertato* and the end of the act includes a couplet of *settenari doppi*, a couplet of *senari doppi*, and a single *decasillabo*, all followed by several *versi misti*:

Ford
 Ancor nuove rivolte! Tu va pe' fatti tuoi!
 L'ho detto mille volte: Costei non fa per voi.
Bardolfo
 È là! Ferma!
Ford
 Dove?
Bardolfo
 Là!
Pistola
 Là! sulle scale.
Ford
 Squartatelo!
Pistola, Bardolfo, Dr. Cajus, I Compagni
 A caccia!
Quickly
 Che caccia infernale!
Alice
 Ned! Will! Tom! Isäac! Su! Presto! Presto!
 Rovesciate quell cesto
 Dalla finestra nell'acqua del fosso...
 Là! presso alle giuncaie
 Davanti al crocchio delle lavandaie.
Nannetta, Meg, Quickly
 Sì, sì, sì, sì!
Nannetta
 C'e dentro un pezzo grosso.
Alice
 Tu chiama mio marito:
 Gli narreremo il nostro caso pazzo.
 Solo al vedere il Cavalier nel guazzo.
 D'ogni gelosia ubbia sarà guarito.
Quickly
 Pesa!
Alice, Meg
 Corragio!
Nannetta
 Il fondo ha fatto crac!
Meg, Quickly, e Nannetta
 Su!
Alice
 Trionfo!
 Ah! Ah! Che tonfo!
Nannetta, Meg
 Che tonfo!
Tutte
 Patatrac!

Ford
 You've rebelled again! You go about your business!
 I've told you a thousand times: she's not for you.
Bardolfo
 There he is! Stop him!
Ford
 Where!
Bardolfo
 There!
Pistola
 There! On the stairs!
Ford
 Cut him to pieces!
Pistola, Bardolfo, Dr. Cajus, Neighbours
 The hunt's up!
Quickly
 A devilish hunt!
Alice
 Ned! Will! Tom! Isaac! Come her, quickly!
 Empty this basket
 out of the window into the water of the brook...
 There! Near that clump of rushes
 in front of that group of washerwomen.
Nannetta, Meg, Quickly
 Yes, yes, yes, yes!
Nannetta
 There's a big load in there.
Alice
 Go and call my husband;
 we'll tell him our crazy story.
 Just to see the knight in the slush
 will cure him of all jealous fancies.
Quickly
 It's heavy!
Alice, Meg
 Courage!
Nannetta
 The bottom went 'Crack!'
Meg, Quickly, and Nannetta
 Up!
Alice
 Victory!
 Ha! Ha! What a splash!
Nannetta, Meg
 What a splash!
Tutte
 Sp-lash!

In the act II finale of *Falstaff*, the portion of the libretto following the *largo concertato* contains features typical of a *tempo di mezzo*: it is dramatically kinetic, interrupting the reflective *concertato*, and it is cast in *versi sciolti*. The absence of a

concluding reflective passage in parallel stanzas, however, seems to preclude the possibility of there being a *stretta*. We might thus be inclined towards a reading of the finale as a sequence of *tempo d'attacco*, *largo concertato*, and *tempo di mezzo* without a concluding *stretta*. Such a reading would be supported not only by dramatic and prosodic characteristics but by musical ones as well. Between the end of the *largo concertato* (65) and the end of the act, the texture is *parlante*, as is typical of the *tempo di mezzo*. The vocal parts consist almost entirely of repeated notes, with only an occasional scale or melodic interval, and the orchestra carries the melodic interest. During the *allegro* passage immediately following the *largo concertato* (65–66), the orchestra offers mostly scales, arpeggios, and tremolos. At the marking *lo stesso movimento* (66) the orchestra recalls the second sixteenth-note theme from the *tempo d'attacco* (see example 15b). The theme is first stated in its entirety, then fragmented and treated sequentially. An arpeggiated sixteenth-note figure is played first in C major, then moving towards D major (67–68), before the example 15b is restated in D major. A brief scalar passage shared by Alice and the first violins carries us into a full orchestral statement of a bold, fortissimo theme in half-notes (69):

Example 21: Falstaff, Act II, Part 2 (9 before 69 until 9 after 69)

The image shows a musical score for Example 21. It consists of two staves: a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The vocal line has lyrics: '- ri - - to.' and 'crnak - - - ing.'. The piano accompaniment features a series of chords and arpeggios. The score is marked with '(69)' and includes dynamic markings like 'ff' and 'p'. There are also some handwritten annotations in the piano part, including 'p' and 'ff'.

(example continued)

(to the servants who are close to the window)

A

NAN. Co - raggio!
To - geth - er!

MEG Il fondo ha fat.to *crac!*
I heard the bas - ket crack!

QUIC. (to the servants)
Co - raggio!
To - geth - er!

Pe - sa!
Now then!

The texture thins out and a long trill is taken up by the horns as Falstaff is lifted towards the window. When Falstaff is finally tossed into the river, the full orchestra returns *tutta forza* with figuration in C major, driving the finale to its conclusion. In sum, the music after the *largo concertato* is characterized by a highly active orchestra and inactive vocal parts (with the exception of Alice's nine-measure phrase before 69), and by quick, light, non-lyrical themes. Both of these traits help advance the action; alongside the libretto's broken verse and kinetic dramatic sense, they support a reading of the section between the end of the *largo concertato* and the end of the act as a *tempo di mezzo*.

In a different reading of the *Falstaff* finale, however, we could subdivide the music between the end of the *largo concertato* and the end of the act into sections resembling both a *tempo di mezzo* and a *stretta*. In this reading, the *tempo di mezzo* would consist only of the passage immediately following the *largo concertato* (65–66). Like the *tempo di mezzo* in the central finale of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, this passage

interrupts the *largo concertato* with loud, fast orchestral figuration including scales, tremolos, and arpeggios. Its erratic harmony (moving from C major to D-flat major, then enharmonically to the dominant of A major) and its avoidance of regular melodic groupings are also consistent with the unsettled, transitional nature of the Rossinian *tempo di mezzo*. By contrast, the music from the marking *lo stesso movimento* (66) until the end of the act features both a regular harmonic plan and regular melodic groupings. The initial reprise of example 15b constitutes an eight-measure phrase in A major. The subsequent fragmentation and sequencing of that theme involves one measure units grouped in twos, repeated three times at successively higher pitch levels to make a group of six measures:

Example 22: *Falstaff*, Act II, Part II, Fragmentation of the Second Sixteenth-Note Theme from the *Tempo d'attacco* (9 after 66)

The image displays a musical score for Example 22, consisting of two systems. The first system is for the vocal part (labeled 'ALL.' and '(ringing the bell)') and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line features the lyrics: 'Ned! Will! Tom! Isä - ac! Su! Pre - sto!' and 'Ned! Will! Tom! I - saac! Here! Hast - en!'. The piano part includes a *pp* marking and features a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth-note chords. The second system, marked with a 'A' in the left margin, shows a fragmented version of the vocal line with the lyrics 'Pre - sto!' and 'Hast - en!' and the corresponding piano accompaniment.

A two-measure arpeggiated figure follows, repeated three times at successively lower pitch levels to make another six-measure group. A chromatic ascent, again lasting six measures, carries us into a four-measure arpeggiation of the dominant of D major, leading to a second complete statement of example 15b, now transposed to D major. The passage between **66** and the end of the D-major reprise of example 15b (9 before **69**), in sum, is arranged in clear groups of four, six and eight measures (8, 6, 6, 4, and 8); it travels from A major to the closely related key of D major; and it involves the statement, development and reprise of a clearly defined theme. Because of its regular melodic groupings and its harmonic and thematic cohesiveness, the passage between **66** and 9 measures before **69** stands in contrast to the irregularly phrased, harmonically unstable, non-thematic passage between **65** and **66**, much as a *stretta* stands in contrast to a *tempo di mezzo*. The nine-measure phrase shared by Alice and the first violins (9 before **69**) and the following *fortissimo* orchestral half-note theme (**69**) could be considered secondary themes that add contrast and excitement to the proposed *stretta* (at **66**). The concluding *tutta forza* passage, consisting of repeated chords and four measures of scales, would remain simply an extended cadential passage, driving the act to closure in C major.⁵⁷

By recognizing a subdivision of the music between the end of the *largo concertato* and the end of the act into a *tempo di mezzo* at **65** and a *stretta* at **66**, we allow

⁵⁷The issue of tonality in this finale is complicated. The *tempo d'attacco* (**69**) begins in D major and the section that I am proposing as the *stretta* seems headed for tonal closure in D major until the surprise affirmation of C major at the cadential passage from (**70**) until the end of the act. It seems that Verdi's sense of tonal organization is functioning on two scales. On a small scale, that of the individual "number", the tonal center is D major, spanning from the *tempo d'attacco* through the *stretta*-analogue. On a larger scale, however, Verdi is concerned with affirming C major, the key in which the opera begins and ends. First, he does so by centering the *largo concertato*, the heart of the finale, around C major. Second, by twisting the music away from D major to C major at the end of the finale he increases the sense of tonal continuity across the entire opera: act I begins in C major, and both act II and act III end in C major. For a discussion of similarly complicated "global" and "local" tonal regions in Verdi's *La traviata*, see David Easley, "Tonality and Drama in Verdi's *La traviata*" (M.M. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2005).

for a formal context in which to understand the opposition of irregular, harmonically unsettled, figuration-based music on the one hand, and harmonically stable, thematically driven music in regular melodic groupings on the other. An essential problem with this analysis, however, is its scant allowance for an integrated understanding of the form of text and the form of the music. The musical differences between the *concertato* and the *allegro* passage at **65** are paralleled by dramatic differences, the former being essentially static, the latter kinetic. The musical changes between the *allegro* passage at **65** and the marking *lo stesso movimento* at **66**, however, are paralleled by no such differences. Rather, the drama remains kinetic at **66**, the action continuing to mount as the women, led by Alice, work towards dumping Falstaff out the window. The action continues unabated until Falstaff has finally been tossed into the river, at which point all the other characters simply stand by the window to laugh at him, or, in other words, to “reflect” on the situation. This shift towards a brief reflective period coincides musically with the sudden shift to C major at **70**, followed by the finale’s concluding twenty-three measures of cadential figuration. As a completely diatonic, concluding outburst that coincides with the only reflective passage since the end of the *largo concertato*, the passage between **70** and the end of the act presents itself as another possible analogue to a *stretta*. Three obvious problems with such a designation are 1) that the passage is extremely short; 2) that it occurs entirely in the orchestra; and 3) that it leaves us at a loss as to how to account for the passage between **66** and **70**, the musical characteristics of which differ from the passage preceding it, but the dramatic characteristics of which disqualify it from being considered an analogue to a *stretta*. An awareness of formal tendencies in a

repertoire contemporary to *Falstaff*, namely middle and late nineteenth-century French grand opera finales, may help us as we consider these problems.

As Steven Huebner has noted, the absence of an obvious *stretta* is a feature common to many French grand opera finales, including the act I finale of Charles Gounod's *Polyeucte* (1878), the act II finale of Georges Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* (1863), the act I finale of Jules Massenet's *Le roi de Lahore* (1877), and the act II finales of Massenet's *Hérodiade* (1881), *Le Cid* (1885), and *Le Mage* (1891).⁵⁸ Huebner goes on to observe that this characteristic in these and other French works does not necessarily obviate a gesture comparable to the Italian *stretta*, i.e., a gesture communicating the release of musical and dramatic tension after the finale's dramatic goal has been reached. In the act II finale of Massenet's *Le Cid*, for example, Rodrigue's climactic assumption of command in the Spanish fight against the Arabs is followed by a fifteen measure homorhythmic choral statement that brings the act to its conclusion. The passage is too short to be properly considered a *stretta*, yet its uniformity of texture and its position between the dramatic crux of the finale and the curtain invest it with a dramatic conclusiveness comparable to that of a *stretta*. In the act II finale of Massenet's *Le roi de Lahore*, a similarly conclusive gesture occurs: shortly after the climactic moment when the opera's hero, Alim, is sent to battle by the high priest, Timour, a thirteen-measure passage in a new, faster tempo and a new meter (*alla breve*) brings the act to its conclusion. The passage includes a homorhythmic choral part but is dominated by the orchestra. Again, the passage's brevity speaks against consideration as a separate formal component, yet the passage does serve a *stretta*-like function as a shock-absorber

between the finale's dramatic climax and the curtain. This absorption of tension recalls the concluding C major passage of the act II finale of *Falstaff*. As in *Le roi de Lahore*, the dramatic crux of the *Falstaff* finale (Falstaff's defenestration) is not reached until relatively late in the act, and it is followed by a brief passage of highly vigorous music in the orchestra that brings the act to a conclusion (in *Falstaff*, the passage between 70 and the end of the act). Both passages can be understood as dramaturgical substitutes for the similarly conclusive Rossinian *stretta*.

The idea of restating earlier thematic material also recalls French formal procedures. In the *Falstaff* finale, it will be remembered, the second sixteenth-note theme of the *tempo d'attacco* is reprised in its original key at 66, shortly after the end of the *largo concertato*. Neither the length nor the substance of the reprise is significant enough for us to interpret the form of the finale as ternary, yet the element of reprise does at least suggest such a form:

Relationship to ternary form	Section	Rehearsal	Keys	Musical characteristics
A	<i>tempo d'attacco</i>	44	begins in D major, ends in G major	instrumentally conceived themes, presented in the orchestra; <i>parlante</i> vocal texture
B	<i>largo concertato</i>	59	begins and ends in C major	lyrical singing; polyphonic; <i>aria</i> texture; tonal closure
	<i>tempo di mezzo</i>	65	begins in C major, ends on dominant of A major	orchestral figuration; <i>parlante</i> texture; harmonically unstable
A'	reprise of a theme from the <i>tempo d'attacco</i>	66	begins in A major, restates theme in D major (68)	instrumentally conceived themes, presented in the orchestra; <i>parlante</i> vocal texture; return of material from the <i>tempo d'attacco</i> , eventually in original key
	<i>stretta</i>	70	C major	concluding <i>tutti</i> orchestral passage in a new key (C major)

Figure 8: The Relationship of the Structure of the *Falstaff* Act II Finale to Ternary Form

⁵⁸Steven Huebner, "Configurations musico-dramatiques dans les grands operas de Jules Massenet: Reflets français de modèles italiens," in *L'Opéra en France et en Italie*, ed. Hervé Lacombe (Paris: Société Française de Musicologie, 2000), 123–33.

As Steven Huebner has noted, ternary form, called *la coupe française* by Giacomo Meyerbeer,⁵⁹ is a common feature in finales by Bizet, Meyerbeer, and Massenet, among others. Particularly in the works of Massenet, Huebner observes, passages marked by the musical and dramatic characteristics of the individual components of the *solita forma* (*tempo d'attacco*, slow movement, *tempo di mezzo*, *stretta*) may be combined to create a finale with a ternary form. Such finales do not strictly follow the *solita forma* but represent what Huebner calls a “network” (“réseau”) of the components of both the *solita forma* and the *coupe française*. In the finale of act I of *Le roi de Lahore*, for example, Huebner observes that the *concertato* movement is followed first by a transitional section much like a *tempo di mezzo* and then by a reprise of the *concertato*. The reprise in turn is followed by the reprise of a passage from the *tempo di mezzo*, followed at last by the aforementioned short *stretta*. In brief, then, he reads the act I finale as consisting of *tempo d'attacco*, *largo concertato*, *tempo di mezzo*, *largo concertato* (reprised), *tempo di mezzo* (reprised), and *stretta*. We may accordingly read the act II finale of *Falstaff* as a sequence of *tempo d'attacco*, *largo concertato*, *tempo di mezzo*, *tempo d'attacco* (reprised), and *stretta* (at 70). Of course, in *Le roi de Lahore* a static set-piece (the *largo concertato*) is reprised, while in *Falstaff* only a dynamic movement (the *tempo d'attacco*) is reprised, but the underlying suggestion of a ternary form is common to both. By reading the act II finale of *Falstaff* as a ternary form, we can account for the passage between 66 and 69 as a reprise of the *tempo d'attacco* that recalls Meyerbeer's *coupe française*. The passage between 69 and 70 serves as a transition into the concluding *stretta*-analogue in C major.

It is well known that Verdi was familiar with French operatic traditions. He revised *I Lombardi* as *Jérusalem* for Paris in 1847 and composed both *Les vêpres*

⁵⁹Huebner, 124.

siciliennes (1854–55) and *Don Carlos* (1867) on French librettos. In addition to this direct creative experience, Verdi studied scores and attended performances of French operas. In 1877 he even heard Massenet's *Le roi de Lahore* in Paris⁶⁰ and mentions the opera in a letter to Giulio Ricordi (who was so impressed with the work that he arranged for its publication and performance in Milan), but unfortunately his remarks are illegible.⁶¹

Verdi had written a central finale without a *stretta* as early as 1842, in the act II finale of *Nabucco*, as well as in later works such as *La traviata* and *Il trovatore* (both from 1853). The absence of an obvious *stretta* in the act II finale of *Falstaff*, therefore, does not in itself show a French influence on Verdi's formal sense. Nor is an awareness of French tendencies essential for us to make a coherent account of the portion of the *Falstaff* finale between the end of the *largo concertato* and the end of the act, because we could plausibly argue that the piece simply ends with the *tempo di mezzo*. By recalling the French tendency towards 1) the lack of an obvious *stretta*; 2) an extremely brief concluding passage that stands in lieu of an Italian *stretta*; and 3) the implication of ternary design, however, we may best read the latter part of the act II finale of *Falstaff* as comprising both a reprise of the *tempo d'attacco* (66–69) and a very brief *stretta* substitute at 70. Not only does this reading allow for a more precise account of the varied stretch of music between the end of the *largo concertato* and the end of the act; it also allows for a fuller understanding of the relationship between the music and the pace of the drama.

⁶⁰Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 638.

⁶¹Letter of Nov. 18, 1892, quoted in Busch, ed., *Verdi's Falstaff*, 299.

Conclusion

Most of the formal conventions I have identified in *Falstaff* are not likely to be recognized without careful scrutiny of the score and the libretto. Through such scrutiny, however, we become more aware of the course of Falstaff's thoughts during his "Honor" monologue, and of the women's subterfuge of Falstaff's romantic aspirations in the "letter scene" at the beginning of act I, part 2. In the first part of act II, part 2, such specific insight eludes us, but we are still provided with a clearer sense of the structural relationship between the music, the drama, and the verse. In the act II finale, finally, recognition of formal components other than the *largo concertato* allows us to understand the entire finale as a formally integrated movement, not simply as an unconventional ensemble with an embedded lyrical *concertato* movement.

The question remains to what extent *Otello*, Verdi's other late masterpiece, might draw on the *solita forma*. *Otello* at first seems more conventional than *Falstaff*, because it contains more separate "numbers" than *Falstaff*, including choruses in the first two acts, the act I drinking song, the act I duet for Otello and Desdemona (the sort of love duet that Verdi and Boito consciously avoided for Fenton and Nannetta), Iago's act II "Credo," the act III finale, and Desdemona's "Willow song" and "Ave Maria" at the beginning of act IV. These numbers are more easily extractable from the rest of the opera than most of the lyrical pieces in *Falstaff*, however, and they don't need to be paired with other lyrical pieces in order to make structural sense. While *Otello* contains more obvious "numbers" than *Falstaff*, then, those numbers resist being understood as part of the network of movements of the *solita forma*. It may paradoxically be the very flexibility of certain

passages in *Falstaff* that allowed Verdi to structure those passages according to the conventions established by Rossini.

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Appendix: Scansion of Italian Verse

In Italian verse, a vowel generally equals a syllable. Vowels are usually elided. Elision may occur between the end of one word and the beginning of another, as in the verse “Largo al factotum” from Figaro’s aria in act I, scene 2 of Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Here, the “o” in “largo” is elided with the “a” in “al,” and the entire verse is counted as having five syllables. Elision may also span across three words, as in “La notte e il giorno,” in which the “e” of notte” is elided with the words “e” and “il” to create a single syllable. The entire verse is thus counted as having five syllables. Elision may even span across punctuation.

Syllables within a single word may also be joined, as in the verse “che bel piacere” from the same Rossini aria. In this verse, the “i” and the “a” of “piacere” are elided, and the verse is again counted as having five syllables. The elision of vowels within a single word is called synaeresis. Diaeresis, or the counting of adjacent vowels as separate syllables, is unusual and tends to be clear from the context of a particular passage. Diaeresis always occurs if, at the end of a line, the first of the two vowels is accented. Diaeresis also occurs between “a,” “e,” or “o,” and an accented vowel (as in the name Aida).⁶²

Italian verse is counted through the syllable after the last accented syllable. Thus, we would count five syllables in each of the following verses, again from the Rossini’s “Largo al factotum”:

⁶²The information on exceptions to synaeresis and diaeresis is taken from Moreen, “Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms,” 11–12.

Qua la parucca...

Presto la barba...

Qua la sanguigna...

Presto, il biglietto...

This normative type of verse, in which the accent falls on the penultimate syllable, is called *piano*. It may also occur, however, that the accent will fall on the last syllable and that the final, unaccented syllable will simply be left out. In this case, the syllables are still counted as though a final unaccented syllable were, in fact, present. This type of verse is called *tronco*, and usually occurs at the end of a stanza. Conversely, it may also occur that two unaccented syllables, rather than one, will follow the final accented syllable. Again, the syllables are counted through the syllable after last accented syllable. This type of verse is known as *sdrucchiolo*. The following stanza from the same Rossini aria includes *piano*, *tronco*, and *sdrucchiolo* verses:

Pronto prontissimo (*sdrucchiolo*)
Son come un fulmine: (*sdrucchiolo*)
Sono il factotum (*piano*)
Della città. (*tronco*)

A single verse is counted as having as many as eleven syllables, but verses may also be coupled to form an even longer, double verse. A double verse and a single verse may have the same number of syllables, but the accents fall in different places. For example, the verse “Non! vo’ quell vecchio—non son si sciocca,” from Act I of Verdi’s *Un giorno di regno*, includes ten syllables. The accents, however, do not fall on the third, sixth, and tenth syllables, as they would in a *decasillabo*, but rather on the penultimate syllable of each pair of five syllables, which tells us that the meter is *doppio quinari*. The hemistichs in a *doppio* verse may, themselves, be *piano*, *tronco*, or *sdrucchiolo*. A single

verse of *doppio settenario* (a verse used by Boito in both *Otello* and *Falstaff*) for instance, will contain sixteen syllables if both of the *settenari* are *sdruccioli*. *Versi doppi* reduce the number of rhymes because the interior hemistichs do not need to rhyme.⁶³

⁶³Ibid., 18–19.

Vita

Joseph La Rosa was born in San Diego, California. He began piano lessons at eight years old with Zsuzsa Heilegenberg. He undertook further piano studies with Frank Wiens at the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music. At Louisiana State University he served as a graduate assistant in music theory and piano.