The reflections of memory : an account of a cognitive approach to historically informed staging

Blin, G.R.

5 Opera of Mirrors in Munich in 1688: *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*

« These benefits from Poets we receiv'd,
From whence are rais'd those Fictions since believ'd,
That Orpheus, by his soft Harmonious strains
Tam'd the fierce Tigers of the Thracian Plains;
Amphion's Notes, by their melodious pow'rs,
Drew Rocks & Woods, and rais'd the Theban Tow'rs:
These Miracles from numbers did arise… »

Boileau. *Art poétique,* 1674[1].

The libretto of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* by Luigi Orlandi was published in Munich to support the performance of the opera of Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) in 1688. The booklet did not solely present the text of the opera which is sung but also contained some information about the original performance[2]. At the beginning of the libretto, before the text of the opera, after a lengthy dedication which sets the allegorical style of his poetry, Orlandi provides a series of lists giving the principal roles, the ballets, and the necessary supernumeraries, that can be found through the dramatic developments. Sets and machinery are also described in both the libretto and the score, which demonstrates their original importance. All these components, human and technical, must be understood in relation with the drama, but also in the frame of its context—the libretto and score therefore can and should be complemented with data on and from the time, the 1680s, and the place, the opera house of Munich. Just as the manuscript score was the ultimate reference for musical directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, the

[1] « Cet ordre fut, dit-on, le fruit des premiers vers. / De là sont nés ces bruits reçus dans l'univers, / Qu'aux accents dont Orphée emplit les monts de Thrace, / Les tigres amollis dépouillaient leur audace; / Qu'aux accords d'Amphion, les pierres se mouvaient /Et sur les murs thébains en ordre s'élevaient. /L'harmonie en naissant produisit ces miracles… » in Boileau. *Art poétique.* Paris: Denys Thierry, 1674, Chant IV. I use the English translation of 1683: *The art of poetry written in French by the Sieur de Boileau ; made English.* [Translated by Sir William Soames, revised by John Dryden]. London: Printed by R. Bentley, and S. Magnes ..., 1683, p. 62. Although I could not locate a German translation ca 1688, the book was widely available in Europe. For a Dutch example of 1678, see: http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/Dutch/Ceneton/Boileau17221768.html

[2] [Orlandi, Luigi; Steffani, Agostino; Ardespin, Melchior d']. *Niobe, Regina di Tebe, Drama per Musica Da rappresentarsi All' Altezze serenissime elettorali Di Massimiliano Emanuele… e della serenissima Elettrice Maria Antonia… L'Anno 1688. Composto da Luigi Orlandi Segretario di S.A.E. E Posto in Musica dal Sigr. D. Agostino Steffani Direttore della Musica di Camera di S.A.E. Con l'Arie per i Balli del Sigr. Melchior d'Ardespin Maestro de Concerti, & Aiurante di Camera di S.A.E.* Monaco [Munich] : Per Giovanni Jecklino, Stampatore Elettorale, 1688.

libretto of the first performance was for me the primary source of inspiration for the staging to be[3].

A rigorous analysis of the letter of this libretto was therefore essential to establish the spectacle to be. It allowed me first to identify the essential elements, but it also suggested their relation to each other. But then again, the spirit of the period—this more elusive context— is as important as the letter. Combining the strong influences from Venice and France with the culture of the Bavarian court gave in the seventeenth century rise to operas written for Munich that were rich with cultural references. It appeared quickly that these various references were unified under the auspices of the classical custom of allegory, a figurative mode of representation that conveys meanings other than the literal one. Favored by the Jesuit culture, which dominated education and culture in Bavaria in the seventeenth century, this rhetorical device is present in *Niobe*'s libretto, and was object and subject of the artistic process[4].

Allegory was generally treated as a figure of rhetoric, but since an allegory does not have to be expressed in language and can be entirely visual, it was a style particularly suitable to the representative art of opera. Aristotle considered *Rhetoric* a counterpart of both logic and politics and defines it as « the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. »[5]. The art of discourse, wherein one strives to edify, persuade or motivate a particular audience in a specific situation has found in Steffani's opera an unprecedented tribune, when combined with Aristotle's *Poetics*.[6] A performance in the 1680s in Munich was like a representational room of mirrors, where reality and fiction were intertwined through the power of allegory, both visual and verbal.

In the case-study section, at the end of this dissertation, I present two internal documents made for my staged production of *Niobe* for the Boston Early Music Festival 2011, based on the libretto of 1688. First, by trying to give a short technical account on what makes the piece work, I hoped to help to define what is needed to stage today *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* not only in terms of human resources, soloists, chorus, dancers, and supernumeraries, but also in terms of sets, costumes and machines. To end this case about the French and Venetian influences in Munich, an internal document dedicated to the flying effects, in form of a document listing all effects, offers an example of an application[7].

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[3] The libretto available online, was printed as a facsimile for direct relationship with the original material: http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00002357/images/

[4] Sabatier, Gérard. *Claude-François Ménestrier, Les jésuites et le monde des images. La pierre et l'écrit*. Grenoble : Presses universitaires de Grenoble , 2009. For the important impact Jesuit culture had in Bavaria, see: Fisher, Alexander J. *Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscape of Counter-Reformation Bavaria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. For education, see: Scaglione, Aldo. *The Liberal Arts and the Jesuit College System*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1986. For architecture, see; Smith, Jeffrey Chipps. *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.

[5] See: Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. trans. W. Rhys Roberts. Vol 2. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton Univversity Press, 1984, I:4:1359.

[6] « La notion clé qui gouverne tout le corps de l'art de bien dire, son plexus solaire, c'est, je l'ai dit, le *prepon* grec, le *decorum*, la *decentia*, la *convenientia* des Romains. C'est une notion d'essence harmonique, que Nicolas Poussin au XVIIe siècle, antique dans l'âme, faisait comprendre à ses correspondants en invoquant la théorie des modes musicaux ». See: Fumaroli, Marc. *L'Age de l'éloquence*. Genève: Droz, 2002 p. XIV.

[7] Research for this chapter, presented during a lecture (Juilliard School of Music, New York, Wednesday, April 15, 2015), has been initially carried out in the frame of the Boston Early Music Festival for my staged production of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* (Musical Direction: Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, Boston 2011). A

Seven gates, according to Ovid, stood at the entrances to the city of Thebes, and this number is used here as an allegorical pathway through seven gates when I offer seven poetic keys to the construction of the staging of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. It is an attempt to write down all the major elements which my staging of Niobe took in consideration. To these symbolic keys are associated some pictures, all coming from my own little *museo* but for one, which created in turn visual directions. They service to curate a small « memory palace», a Jesuit mnemotechnic device based on mental visualization of image useful to comprehend the complexity of the piece[8]. This section presents the fundamentals of a Historically Informed dramaturgy of the piece, dramaturgy which not only reflects on its components but, by its presentation, on its conception of style.

5.1 One Patron

The history of opera in Munich begins and develops under the monarchic power of the Prince Electors, rulers of Bavaria. Ferdinand Maria (1636–1679), who was crowned in 1654, inaugurated the same year the *Salvatortheater*, a grain storehouse that the Venetian architect Francesco Santurini (1627?–1688?) had converted into the first freestanding theater in Germany[9]. The birth in 1662 of Ferdinand's son and heir, Maximilian Emanuel, was the occasion for a magnificent festival of operas, tournaments, and dramatized fireworks[10]. The popularity of opera in Munich continued unabated during the eventful reign of Maximilian II Emanuel (1662–1726)[11]. The young Prince Elector had big political ambitions for his dukedom, which involved him in many wars, and his court life, although the one of a generous patron, reflects this military passion. On a portrait of 1698, he is shown wearing the metal armor worn during battles (Figure 1). Typical of his time, Elector Maximilian II Emanuel had all of the qualities that were associated with a Baroque prince: the quest for military glory, the desire for glorious self-representation, the pursuit of dynastic prestige, and an insatiable appetite for courtly entertainment. Not surprisingly, being raised by a Francophile mother, Henriette Adélaïde of Savoy (1636–1676) who hired French tutors for him, Louis XIV was held up to the young prince as a model to emulate[12]; like his French cousin, Max Emanuel was

summary has been published in the 2011 BEMF program book but not included in the booklet of the recording (Erato-Warner Classics 0825646343546, 2015); this booklet shows photographs of my staged production. I am grateful for Dr. Colin Timms' interest in my interpretation and indebted to his works on Steffani's life and music.

[8] See: Spence, Jonathan D. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. See also: Haskell, Francis. *History and its Images, Art and the interpretation of the past*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1995. Because its equivalancy to the city of Thebes, see also: Herrera, John Philip. "Towards the Memory Theater: The Re-presentation of the city in Literature and Architecture", thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Architecture. Houston (TX): Rice University, 1991.

[9] The Salvatortheater, was commissioned by Maximilian I but not open until three years after his death. See: Münster, Robert. "Court and Monasteries in Bavaria" in *The Late Baroque Era: Vol 4. From The 1680s to 1740, edited by George J Buelow (Man & Music Series; Vol. 4)*. London: Macmillan Press, 1993, pp. 297–298.

[10] Schone, Günter. "Les grandes fêtes de Munich en 1662" in *Baroque [En ligne], 5 | 1972, mis en ligne le 04 octobre 2012*. Accessed 4 April 2018. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/baroque/391 ;
DOI : 10.4000/baroque.391

[11] See: Zenger, Max. *Geschichte der Münchener Oper*. München: F.X. Weizinger, 1923, pp. 16–34.

[12] Klingensmith, Samuel John. *The Utility of Splendor, Ceremony, Social Life and Architecture at the Court of Bavaria, 1600-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993, p. 40.

a genuine music lover who was able to play several instruments, and his liberal patronage supported the flourishing musical life of Munich[13]. The Venetian composer Agostino Steffani started his career as an opera composer there in 1681, and the union in 1685 of the Prince Elector with a young Austrian princess, Maria Antonia, heralded a particularly prosperous time for opera and festivities in Munich[14]. The opera house, both house and stage, was modernized on this occasion by the Venetian brothers Gasparo Mauro (1657–1719) and Domenico Mauro (1669–1707)[15], and for four consecutive years Steffani composed a new opera in Italian that was premiered on the Munich stage. *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, dedicated to Max Emanuel, was created with a new Italian libretto by Luigi Orlandi, a diplomatic secretary at the court of Bavaria[16]. On January 5, 1688, the curtain opened on what seems to have been a lavish spectacle, and from his central box of the ducal opera house, Max Emanuel could relish the display of illusionistic stage.

Figure 1: *Maximilian II of Bavaria* (1662–1726)
« Maximilian Emanuel D[ei] G[ratia] El[ector] Bav[ariae]».
Portrait as « Gubernator Generalis », Governor of Spanish Belgium.
German Etching from *Theatrum Europaeum* by Matthäus Jr. Merian and Caspar Merian
under the name Merian Erben (i.e. Merian Heirs), Frankfurt, 1698.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

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[13] Münster, Robert. "Die Musik am Hofe Max Emanuels" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I : Zur Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte der Max-Emanuel-Zeit, herausgegeben von Hubert Glaser*. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 295–316.

[14] Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003.

[15] The activities in set designs and architecture of the Venetian family Mauro were connected with Munich for a long time: Francesco Mauro the father was active in Bavaria since 1662, with Santurini, and so was his elder son Gasparo, thanks to the recommendation of Grimani, who kept on employing them in SS Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. (1665, Gasparo for *Tito* and *Doriclea)*. Other sons named Pietro and Domenico were also active. See: Povoledo, Elena. Article "Mauro" in *Enciclopedia dello Spectacolo*, Volume VII. Roma: Unione Editoriale, 1954-1977, pp. 310–322.

[16] Luigi Orlandi, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was a court poet of Bavaria with the title of secretary from 1684 to 1697, a post certainly making use of his language and diplomatic skills. His wife Angela Orlandi joined the court of Munich in 1686 as a vocalist, received the honorary title as *Kammersängerin* and died in the first quarter of the year 1697 in Munich: Orlandi then resigned and returned to Italy. See: Kägler, Britta. "Competiton at the Catholic Court of Munich" in Nieden, Gesa zur & Over, Berthold. *Musicians' Mobilities and Music Migrations in Early Modern Europe: Biographical Patterns and Cultural Exchanges.* Bielefeld: transcript, 2016, p. 84.

The lengthy and complex libretto, whose length and intricacy is reminiscent of the Venetian librettos of the time, gives indeed a great place to the sets and machinery. A list presents no less than thirteen sets that were changed under the eyes of the audience, after the curtain was drawn once for all at the beginning of the performance. Some of them are, by then, typical of baroque scenery, like Royal Rooms, a Grove, some Hills' landscape, and the interior of a Temple and may have come from the stock made of sets from *Servio Tullio,* the opera presented the previous year. To this group, some "special" sceneries are added that are more directly linked with the plot, including a royal Study, the planet Mars, and an Amphitheater. This last one is an animated set: The Amphitheater contains a dynamic element, which is not listed in the « Machine » section, although it has clearly a mechanical component described in the course of the action: a « Globe » which after opening forms a « Heavenly Body ». This mysterious shrine, of which the description evocates alchemy, welcomes Anfione in ecstasy. In opposition to this paradise, the under stage is also used for the appearance of the Hell set. A second list, this time for Machines, complements the list of the sets which were changed under the eyes of the audience. Among the machines specifically described, there are some rolling devices: a magic chariot, a monster, and two dragons, but these are more means of pageantry than necessary to the plot. This is not the case of the depiction of « Tebe », announced by the title: as the Ovidian myth establishes, we see in *Niobe* the rising of the famous walls of Thebes from the ground and their subsequent destruction in a terrible earthquake, the vengeance of the gods. Other machines are clearly identifiable as flying machines: there is no free flying in *Niobe*, but several « Nube » or cloud wagons that bring characters, mortal and gods, down from and up to heaven. Most notable is the flying «gloire » that carries Latone, Apollo and Diana as the end of the opera: this element is essential to the dramaturgy as linked to the plot. These characters do not sing or dance, they are merely an image, and their identity is purely visual.

In classical mythology, both Apollo and Diana were travelling through the heavens, thanks to their chariots. While the carriage of Diana drawn by deer was following the movement of the moon, the sun chariot of Apollo was a chariot drawn by four horses abreast. On the Munich stage Apollo's quadriga must have took the shape a flying chariot covered with a flat painted representation, the narrowness of the volume imposed by the intensive use of the fly area. A dynamic illustration by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686–1755) for La Fontaine's fable *Phaebus et Borée* offers a good example of Apollo's chariot (Figure 2), as seen from under, the perspective which would have been adopted for the stage in Munich. The tale of the North Wind and the Sun, found in Aesop (c. 620–564 BC), was popularized when La Fontaine gave his version in his fables of 1668[17]. It depicts a competition between the North Wind and the Sun to decide which is the stronger of the two by making a traveler remove his cloak. However hard the North Wind blew, the traveler only wrapped his cloak tighter, but when the Sun shone, the traveler was overcome with heat and took his cloak off. The sixteenth century publisher already Gilles Corrozet featured the contest between the sun and the wind in his emblem book *Hecatomgraphie* (1540)[18], the story is accompanied by a woodcut in which a man holds close a fur cloak under the wintry blast while on the other side he strips naked beneath the sun's rays. It is titled with the moral « Plus par doulceur que par force», more by gentleness than strength. While La Fontaine's conclusion was almost the same as Corrozet's (Fables VI.3) and gives the moral that persuasion is better than force; in the London edition of Aesop's

[17] Dandrey, Patrick. *Dans La Fabrique des fables. Poétique de La Fontaine.* Paris: PUF, 1996.

[18] [Corrozet, Gilles.] *Hecatomgraphie.* Paris: Denis Janot, 1540. See:
http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FCGa027

Fables of 1687, Aphra Behn (1640–1689) taught the moral that there should be moderation in everything: « In every passion moderation chuse, /For all extreames doe bad effects produce ». The French moral explanation in the same book preaches humility: « Who would not laugh of the vanity of this Wind, who all crawling and in turmoil he is, dare nevertheless to compare himself to the Sun […] we are warned by this fable to submit ourselves to our Superiors, and to have no trouble with the ones who could make us piteous objects of their power, and of our infirmity »[19]. This lesson could also be applied to Niobe, whose hubris was the reason of her downfall.

Figure 2: *Phoebus et Borée,* etching by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686–1755) for the edition of La Fontaine's *Fables*, Paris: 1735. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Though influenced by Italy—and especially by the dramaturgy and the scenery of Venetian opera—the spectacles of Munich for Max Emanuel also contained some French elements, such as archetypal costumes, instrumentalists, and dance. The variety of nature of these resources: material, human and style, is expressive of the fame the entertainments and culture of the French court life had achieved around these years[20]. Paris was, for Europe, the

[19] « Qui ne rira de la vanité de ce Vent, qui tout rampant et turbulent qu'il est, ose néanmoins se comparer au Soleil. […] nous sommes advertis par cette Fable à nous soumettre à nos Superieurs, & à ne point avoir de démelé avec ceux qui seroient capables de nous render de pitoiables objects de leur puissance, & de notre infirmité. » in *Aesop's Fables : with his life, in English, French and Latin : newly translated : illustrated with one hundred and twelve sculptures: […] by Francis Barlow.* London: H. Hills jun. for Francis Barlow, 1687, pp. 68 & 69. See: Note 39 and : https://hollar.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/hollar%3AHollar_a_3009

[20] Vanuxem, Jacques. « Des fêtes de Louis XIV au baroque allemand. » in *Les divertissements de cour au XVIIe siècle. Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises Juin 1957, N°9. publiés avec le concours de l'Unesco*. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1957, pp. 91–102

place where clothes for special occasions had to be purchased, and we know that for Steffani's *Servio Tullio* in 1686, all the costumes, were ordered in Paris and so were the wigs, of the latest fashion, in 1688[21]. The ballets in the French manner were integrated within the operas, tournaments and other pageants and danced by members of the court and by the numerous extras likely recruited from the ranks of the army or the benches of the Jesuit schools. Ballet music was considered such a specialized art that it was, as often before and after, composed by a different musician from the one who wrote the rest of the opera; instead of the Italian Steffani, the ballets for *Niobe* were composed by the director of the court orchestra, Melchior d'Ardespin (c.1643–1717) a cornetist from French origin who has been one of the music teachers of the young Maximilian Emanuel[22].

For the ballets required by the lavish staging of Niobe, the French born and trained choreographer François Rodier (?-?) was a guarantee that the dance would include the latest developments in style[23]. There is scant biographical information about the Rodier dancing dynasty which started when Jacques Rodier the father was hired in 1666 to teach dancing to the royal children, including Max Emanuel, and to create new court ballets danced by both occupational and recreational performers. His name appears in the illustrious cast of *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit* of 1653[24], indicating the new allegorical French royal style was constitutive of his years of apprenticeship. Jacques Rodier passed away sometime in 1680, and his son François was sent to Paris to study the new trends with French dancing masters, including the principal choreograph of the Paris Opera Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729), in preparation for taking over his father's appointment at court[25]. Returning to the Bavarian capital in 1683, likely with a load of penned choreographies, as the French system of notation was spreading quickly at the time[26], the younger François Rodier began preparing for the festivities surrounding the 1685 royal wedding of Maximilian Emanuel to the Austrian Princess, Maria Antonia. A royal wedding was a key element of the stability of the monarchic system and of the continuation of dynasty. These fundamental reasons/causes for a marital union and the perspective/effects of future offspring was to be signified by allegorical signs. Defined by the status of the aristocratic body, influenced by royal mythology coming from Versailles, the representative style dominating at the time, the Bavarian spectacle renewed its visual rhetoric.

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[21] Seelig, Lorenz. "Aspekte des Herrscherlobs – Max Emanuel in Bildnis und Allegorie" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I : Zur Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte der Max-Emanuel-Zeit, herausgegeben von Hubert Glaser*. München : Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 1–29.

[22] Münster, Robert. "Die Musik am Hofe Max Emanuels" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I*. München : Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 295–296.

[23] Vanuxem, Jacques. " Des fêtes de Louis XIV au baroque allemand " in *Les divertissements de cour au XVIIe siècle*. Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises Juin 1957, N°9 publiés avec le concours de l'Unesco. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1957, pp. 91–102.

[24] Rodier was dancing « Une Marchande » (a woman seller), one of the « Parques », and an « Ardent» (next to king Louis). See: *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series N°15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009, p. 31.

[25] See: Mlakar, Pia et Mlakar, Pino. "Notizen über Max Emanuels Beziehung zum Ballet" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I*. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 317–320.

[26] For a presentation of the Feuillet system of notation, see: Harris-Warrick, Rebecca and Marsh, Carol G. *Musical Theatre at the Court of Louis XIV "Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos"*. Cambridge and New York : Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 82–122. For an introduction about its diffusion in Europe, see: Winter, Marian Hannah. *The Pre-Romantic Ballet*. London: Pitman Publishing, 1974, pp. 45–48.

5.2 Twins

The libretto of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, which was the second opera written for Munich by Luigi Orlandi, but different from the historical display of the previous year, is based on Greek mythology[27]. Niobe and Anfione are the central characters of the plot. Amphion, Anfione in the Italian text, was rightly famous as a king of Thebes, but also as an incomparable musician, whose abilities built the walls of Thebes from the rocks his twin brother Zethus brought. Niobe was his wife, and together they had many children. So proud was Niobe of her offspring that they were called the Niobids, a notable exception to the rule that a Greek family is usually named after the Father. Niobe boasted of her superiority to Latona (Leto), the mother of Apollo and Diana, because the goddess had only two children, while she had given birth to many offspring. For her hubris, Apollo killed her sons, and Diana, her daughters. Amphion, at the sight of his dead children, killed himself. The devastated Niobe turned to stone as she could not weep no more[28].

The myth is clearly a moral warning to the human race to remain humble while enjoying earthly glory. Since Antiquity, Niobe and her Niobids have been the subject of many statuary groups where the theatricality of the subject is supported by the stone nature of the metamorphose, the multiple characters, and the fact that the group could be exposed under the sky where sun and moon would alternate to complete what is appropriate to call a Theater of hubris[29]. It is possible that such a group was known to Orlandi or Steffani, anyway the scene is integrated as an Aristotelian « catastrophe » in their opera[30]. But the story is also a story of vengeance of cosmic proportion. Ovid, when he tells of the goddess's revenge on Niobe in his *Metamorphoses*, notes that the two children of Latona are twins: « The goddess was deeply angered, and on the top of Mount Cynthus she spoke to her twin children. 'I am your mother and you are my pride, no one but Juno is a greater goddess, and even now someone presumes to doubt my powers and worship will be prevented at my altars, unless you help me, my children' ».[31] In mythology, Diana was associated with the Moon, as her twin brother Apollo was associated with the Sun. This twinning, although based on a sexual difference, symbolizes their complementary places in the interstellar balance.

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[27] *Alarico il Baltha cioé L'audace re de'Gothi* was performed in 18 January 1687 with music of Steffani: the libretto is around the historical figure of Alaric I (370 or 375– 410 AD) who was the first King of the Visigoths from 395–410 and is best known for his sack of Rome in 410, which marked a decisive event in the decline of the Roman Empire. See: Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 208–217.

[28] Commelin, Pierre. *Mythologie grecque et romaine*. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1961, pp. 250–252.

[29] The famous group of Niobe of the villa Medici in Florence was discovered by archaeological excavation in Roma in 1583: Ferdinando de' Medici bought it and installed it in the garden. The painter Balthus (1908–2001), director of the French Academy in Rome (from 1960 to 1977), reorganized the group. There are three other known groups: at the villa Borghese, at the Vatican and at the Villa Albani.

[30] The notion of *Catastrophe* is not originally in Aristotle, who uses the expression of *Noeud* but appears in his latin critics and translators and commentators, Evanthius and Aelius Donatus. For the relation between stage catastrophe and natural cause, as in an earthquake, see: *L'invention de la catastrophe au XVIIIe siècle: du châtiment divin au désastre naturel. Etudes publiées sous la direction de Anna-Marie Mercier-Faivre et Chantal Thomas*. Paris: Droz, 2008. But it seems that Orlandi follows more that one of Aristotle's principles of *Poetics* and the choice of the Niobe subject may even have been inspired by the recommendations of Aristotle: 1456a about the importance to choose, like Aeschylus did, only one special episode of *Niobe's* story.

[31] See : Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, 204–209.

According to Ovid, Latona was wandering the earth with her newborn twins when she attempted to drink from a pond. The peasants there refused to allow her to do so by stirring the mud at the bottom of the water. Latona turned them into frogs for their lack of hospitality, forever doomed to swim in the murky waters of ponds and rivers. This scene has been depicted by painters, notably by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), as seen on Figure 3, but its water element makes it especially suitable for a fountain and is represented in the *Bassin de Latone*, in the gardens of Versailles.

Figure 3: Latona and the Shepherds of Licya
Latona e i pastori di Licia
Italian print ca. 1620 – ca. 1650 by Cesare Fantetti (ca. 1600–16?)
after a design of Jerôme Trudon (?-?) of Annibale Carracci (1560–1609).
Painting kept at the time in Casa di Rocca Aspide in Naples[32].
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The choice of the myth of Latona for the central spot of the gardens of Versailles is an allusion to the difficult Regency for the mother of Louis XIV, to the "Fronde"—the uprising of the nobility against the queen regent—and to the ultimate victory of the French monarchy. The Parterre of Latone was designed by André Le Nôtre and built when the idea of making Versailles the center of power was still being developed; in 1686, Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708) adjusted the Latone Basin by elevating the central figure of the goddess by the brothers Marcy (figure 4) on three levels of marble, placing it so it faced in the direction of the Grand Canal, where Apollo in full adulthood emerges triumphantly from the water on his

[32] The engraving was made after a painting preserved in the palace of the Prince Rocca Aspide of Naples where in the eighteenth century two illustrious French travellers saw it (Cochin, Charles Nicolas. *Voyage d'Italie ou recueil de notes sur les ouvrages de peinture et sculpture, qu'on voit dans les principales villes d'Italie.* Paris: 1758, p. 189 and Lalande, Joseph Jérôme Le Français de. *Voyage d'un francais en Italie.* Paris: 1769, ed. 1787, V, p. 350). The painting is to be associated to the one today at the Bratislava National Gallery. It may be instead a copy after a similar, but much higher quality canvas now preserved at the Episcopal Castle of Kroměříž, Czech Republic, and coming, with every probability, from the Pamphili collection. See: Benati, Daniele and Riccòmini, Eugenio. *Annibale Carracci, Bologna 2006*. Milano: Electa, 2006, p. 208. Due to its strong colours and material qualities, the painting can be dated to the Venetian phase of Annibale Carracci, around 1590. See: Borea, Evelina and Mariani, Ginevra. *Annibale Carracci e i suoi incisori*. Roma: École française de Rome, 1986, p. 287.

chariot[33]. This new location, integrating an earlier allegory of the end of the minority of the Sun King, was helping to define a new use of the space in the garden and a renewed allegorical message. This coming of age of the king was the opportunity for one of the first association between Louis and the sun took place on stage during *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit* as early as 1653. The famous gold costume worn by the king as Le Soleil, in the last entrée, establishes a royal persona as the Apollo Phoebus and this allegory will know a huge fortune[34].

Figure 4: *Latona and her children Apollo and Diana*
French etching by Simon Thomassin (ca. 1652–1732) of the sculpture by Balthazar Marcy (1628–1674) and Gaspard Marcy (1624–1681), from *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines, Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent á present dans le Château et parc de Versailles, gravé d'après les originaux. Par Simon Thomassin*. Paris, 1694.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Although 1653 was not the first time Apollo has been associated with the sovereign, this was the first time Louis had himself embodied the image[35]. But besides the equivalancy of its dawn with the coming of age of the king, the association of Apollo Sun with the Louis XIV expanded in the 1660s: Charles Le Brun's projects for Parisian fountains of 1668 offer diverse projects related to the myth of Apollo[36]. One fountain shows him on the Mount Helicon with the muses, above the river Hippocrene, whose spring considered to be a source of poetic inspiration is figured as a river god, easily identified by his water urn. Another design displays the victory of the Apollo over the serpent python, an allegory of the victory of the king over

[33] Garrigues, Dominique. *Jardins et Jardiniers de Versailles au Grand Siècle*. Seyssel : Champ Vallon, 2001.

[34] See: *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series N°15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009, p. X (Costume design) and p. 129 (Stage design).

[35] See: Hautecoeur, Louis. *Louis XIV, Roi-Soleil*. Paris: Plon, 1953, p. 7.

[36] Projects kept by Musée du Louvre: http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/0/207832-Fontaine-dApollon-et-de-Daphne

his enemies and an expression of the god's terrible might. A third project shows Apollon pursuing Daphné and the metamorphose of the nymph in a laurel plant, by her father, the river god Ladon (named Peneus in Ovid). Although this image was inspired by the famous sculpture, dating from 1622–1625, of the Roman artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) [37], some later etchings depicting the apollonian fountains[38] demontrate that Ovidian Apollo was a symbol still approved by Louis XIV, after the allegorical program was abandoned (Figure 5)[39] by the end the seventeenth century.

Figure 5: *Fontaine d'Apollon et de Daphné*
French etching by Louis de Chastillon (1639?–1734) from a project by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690).
Plate 10 from: *Recueil De diverses Desseins de Fontaines et De Frises Maritimes Inventez et dessignez Par Monsieur Le Brun premier Peintre du Roy, Directeur et Chancelier de l'Academie Roy.le de Peinture et Sculpture / Avec Privilege du Roy. Et se vendent à Paris Chez Audran graveur du Roy à l'Hotel Royal des Gobelins.* Paris, 1680 [?].
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Niobe's tale, as a less known part of the deeds of Apollo, was also chosen to decorate the bedroom of the Sun King, in his Parisian castle of Tuileries, a space which was both private and public. The writer Félibien tries to describe how the paintings of Pierre Mignard (1612–

[37] This statue is in the collection of the Galleria Borghese in Rome. A detail study of the hand of Daphne during the metamorphoses by Tiepolo, c. 1744–45, was chosen as a poster of the 2011 Boston Early Music Festival: Change and transformation.

[38] See: Barolsky, Paul. "Ovid, Bernini, and the Art of Petrification" in *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* Third Series, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Fall, 2005), pp. 149-162. See also: Gastel, Joris J. van. "Bernini's metamorphosis: sculpture, poetry, and the embodied beholder" in *Word & Image* Vol. 28 (2), 2012, pp. 193–205. See also: Wilkins, Ann Thomas. "Bernini and Ovid: Expanding the Concept of Metamorphosis" in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 6.3 (2000), pp. 383–408.

[39] After the initials of Charles Le Brun, signature « CLB » on the bottom left, the abbreviation « CPR » (cum privilegio regis) attests of the royal privilege.

1692) and insists that the episodes « from the tale of Apollo befit the Sun, and besides, they are emblematic images of the beautiful actions of the king. […] The story of Niobe shows the inevitable downfall of those who fail to keep the respect they owe to the sacred person of such a powerful monarch ».[40] Reminding us of the possible moral of the fable of the sun and the wind, Le Brun had used this same symbol in his first project for one end of the "Grande Galerie de Versailles," known today as the Hall of Mirrors (Figure 6), which was to become ultimately a temple dedicated to the deeds of the Sun King[41], leaving out direct mythological allegory[42].

Figure 6: *Versailles Hall of Mirrors* "Coupe de la Grande Gallerie de Versailles"
Etching by Jean-Michel Chevotet (1698–1772) and Antoine Herisset (1686–1769),
from *Versailles immortalisé ou les Merveilles Parlantes des bâtimens, jardins, bosquets, parcs, statues, groupes, termes, & vases de marbre […] qui sont dans les Châteaux de Versailles, de Trianon, de la Ménagerie & de Marly ; En neuf tomes in quarto, Composé en vers libres françois par le sieur Jean-Baptiste de Monicart [...] Avec une traduction en prose latine, par le sieur Romain Le Testu […], tome II.*
Paris: E. Ganeau-J. Quillau, 1720.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

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[40] « tirées de l'Histoire d'Apollon conviennent au Soleil, & outre cela, elles sont des images emblèmatiques des belles actions du roi. (…) L'histoire de Niobe montre la perte inévitable de ceux qui manqueroient au respect qu'ils doivent à la personne sacrée d'un si puissant Monarque. » in Félibien, André. *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes. 5e partie, Neuvième entretien*. Paris : Vve S. Mabre-Cramoisy, 1688, pp. 74–75. See also: Hautecœur, Louis. *Le Louvre et les Tuileries de Louis XIV*. Paris: Libraire Nationale d'Art et d'Histoire and Bruxelles: Vanoest, 1927, pp. 130–132 & planche XXVI. See sketch for Diana by Mignard: http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/155/38759-Amour-soutenant-une-corbeille-chasseresse-bandant-son-arc-max

[41] For the Apollonian first visual program, see: Sabatier, Gérard. *Versailles ou la figure du roi*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1999, pp. 199-203. For the design of Le Brun of *Niobe* for the « Grande Gallerie », see: http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/471/207413-Dessin-darchitecture-avec-decor-max

[42] Bajou, Thierry. *La Peinture à Versailles, XVIIe siècle*. Préface de Jean-Pierre Babelon. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998, pp. 176–179.

In Munich the choice of Niobe as a subject for the entertainment of Maximilian Emanuel can also be read in the same allegorical way. In his dedication, printed at the beginning of his libretto of 1688, Orlandi reworks the Apollonian emblems and compares Maximilian Emanuel and his wife to « two living suns in the great Firmament of Bavaria » who dispense their beneficial « Rays » on the whole world. The poet makes his point by attributing the sun « the greater Light today, like a symbol of your supreme Attributes »[43]—to the Prince Elector, anchoring the allegory of his libretto in the Apollonian tradition of opera, as established by the Florentine first attempt to define poetically the genre[44]. Orlandi's full dedication reads like the draft for a possible prologue, which is indeed missing from *Niobe*: it gives the allegorical style as a main rhetorical device to understand the tale which follows.

5.3 Three Princes

Orlandi's dedication offers some keys to the allegory but, in his drama, the poet creates more allusive references to the Prince Elector. Although the sons and daughters of Niobe and Anfione are an essential part of their story, the source of Niobe's pride, and the cause of her downfall, Orlandi added three subplots to the original story of Niobe and her children as told by Ovid. Orlandi justifies these additions by stating « It was a great specialty of the fable from Greece to allow some variation in poetic telling of such events […] The following likelihoods are added. »[45].These subplots depict the characters of three princes—Anfione, Tiberino, and Creonte—and their royal destinies.

The figure of king Anfione is represented as a disturbed character wishing for a life of contemplation and willing to renounce the throne in favor of his wife Niobe. Although he is a great musician, he is shown to be a bad ruler who wants to flee from his duties. Orlandi changes the episode of the erection of the walls of Thebes: far from being due to the musical excellence of Amphion, their building is mostly due to Jupiter answering the prayer Anfione addresses him as his father: the miracle is the reward of orthodoxy. The suicide of the king at the end of the opera is not a heroic act but shows rather a man who puts his personal grief above his responsibilities, a tragic figure common in Venetian operas. Amphion is a counterexample to that of a good ruler, lacking two of the qualities—modesty and courage—that Orlandi attributes to Max Emanuel in his dedication[46].

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[43] « e parmi, che per degno Applauso di Virtù così rara, e rara Dote de vostri generosissimi Cuori, vadi hoggi di Voi decantando il Mondo ciò, che del Sole fù detto: Quæ omnes in ipso mirantur, ipse solus non videt. Et ecco il maggior Luminare hoggi come simbolo de vostri supremi Attributi abbattere con fulminante destra la Tebana Alterezza, rappresentando non meno all'ombre atterrite dell'Asiana superbia i Lampi vittoriosi della Vostra acclamata Possanza. Ma dove à fronte di Voi, che siete i due vivi Soli del gran Cielo della Baviera, ardisco con Ali d'Icaro seguire il Volo, che spiega trionfante la Vostra Fama? » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688. [I underlined].

[44] Donington, Robert. *The Rise of Opera*. London and Boston : Faber and Faber, 1981, pp. 120–125.

[45] « Gran Campo hebbe la favolosa Grecia di finger Menzogne nel Poetica Racconto di tali successi, […] Si aggiungono li seguenti verisimili » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Argomento" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

[46] « Ecco per ciò dalla famosa Reggia di Tebe risorto sù la Scena il gran Mostro della superbia à provocare i Fulmini nelle tremende Destre de Numi, perche servano di Faci luminose nel sacro Tempio de vostri Regi Lari, dove il Nume d'una eccelsa Humiltà magnanimamente si adora. All'immutabil Gloria di cosí potente domatrice

A Pastoral intrigue balances the tragedy: under the protection of Diana, chaste goddess of the Hunt, the foreign prince Tiberino, a descendant of the river god Tiber is on a quest for glory but falls in love with Manto, daughter of the high priest Tiresia. The prince courts her during the course of the opera, marries her, and at the end leaves with her to go back to his native Italian country. That the couple will create a new dynasty who will found the city of Mantova was implied in the name of Manto[47]. Like the forest of the Temple of Latona where they meet, these characters are shown as pure, devoted, and true to their faith, and Tiberino himself as courageous and courteous, two princely qualities.

Figure 7: *Victory*
German etching from 1670 by Melchior Küsel (1626–1683),
after Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607–1642).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

But it is the third subplot that reveals a precise link between Maximilian Emanuel and *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. Having some blood rights to the Theban throne, Creonte, crown prince of Thessaly, is on a quest to conquer Thebes. Creonte is first seen under the spell of his ally, the magician Poliferno, who sends him an enchanted dream causing him to fall in love with Niobe. While his armies are approaching Thebes, Creonte appears to Niobe as the god Mars, flattering the high opinion Niobe has of herself. The intervention of the real gods over the city of Thebes gives victory to his army, as the gods have destroyed the new walls of the city: Creonte enters Thebes victorious, to the sound of trumpets[48], surrounded by palm branches, as a symbol of his triumph, and laurels, a plant associated with Apollo, which is used to crown

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del vano Fasto, che nel Serenissimo Cielo del vostro Soglio bella più del Sole risplende, innalza Colossi di sestesso l'Orgoglio nella memorabile peripetia di quella infelice Regnante…. » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

[47] Following Virgil's *Aeneid* Book VI, Manto went to Italy and gave birth to Ocnus, who founded Mantova and named it after his mother. In Dante's *Inferno* Canto XX has a long digression on the founding of Mantova. See: *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition translated and edited by Mark Musa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis (IN): Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 273–275.

[48] In 1688, they were 14 permanent trumpeters in the court orchestra. See: Münster, Robert. "Die Musik am Hofe Max Emanuels" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I*… München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, p. 295.

the victorious (Figure 7). His first actions as a good ruler are to banish the bad magician, to bless the union of lovers, and to forgive the intrigant nurse.

With the character of Creonte, Orlandi gives a new twist to the allegory in his libretto: In the 1680s, keeping in mind that the entire Bavarian court was aware of the well-established symbolic relationship between Apollo/sun and Louis XIV, he creates in his drama a more vivid parallel between Creonte and Maximilian Emanuel; indeed, in his dedication, he alludes to the military exploits of the Prince Elector and praises also the modesty of Max Emanuel in his glorious victories, « That which all admire in him, he alone does not see himself, »[49] which he conveniently opposes to the pride of Niobe. In his praises to his patron and his portrayal of the character of Creonte, Orlandi articulates what seems to be the official propaganda for the persona of Max Emanuel with an allegorical character.

Figure 8: *Max Emanuel*
Marble statuette by Wilhelm de Groff (1676-1742) after Giuseppe Volpini (1670–1729).
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

All representations show the Prince Elector in military apparel, in an attitude of both command and energy. Statues by two of his favorite artists, the sculptor Wilhelm de Groff (1676–1742) or Giuseppe Volpini (1670–1729), portrays him in full armor and long cloak,

[49] « vadi hoggi di Voi decantando il Mondo ciò, che del Sole fû detto: "Quæ omnes in ipso mirantur, ipse solus non videt." Et ecco il maggior Luminare hoggi come simbolo de vostri supremi Attributi abbattere con fulminante destra la Tebana Alterezza, rappresentando non meno all'ombre atterrite dell'Asiana superbia i Lampi vittoriosi della Vostra acclamata Possanza. Ma dove à fronte di Voi, che siete i due vivi Soli del gran Cielo della Baviera, ardisco con Ali d'Icaro seguire il Volo, che spiega trionfante la Vostra Fama? Intraprendano l' Aquile sí eccelsa Meta, & alla tarpata mia Penna solo sia Meta fortunata il publicarmi con profonda veneratione… » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe,* … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

standing at ease, left foot forward in what on stage would have been the position of the victorious Creonte[50]. His left hand is on the hilt of his sword, and the right holds the Marshal's baton of commander in chief as if giving an order[51]. This is a picture of a victorious military chief whose clear attributes are courage and control, two qualities to which a noble soldier should add clemency, or magnanimity, toward the vanquished (Figure 8)[52].

MAXIMILIANUS II.
Der
Großmüthige/
Weyland Durchleuchtigister und Großmächtigister
Fürst und HErr / HErr
In Ober- und Nidern Bayrn / auch der Obern
Pfalz Hertzog / Pfalz-Graf bey Rhein / deß Heil. Römischen Reichs Erz-Truchseß / und Chur-Fürst / Land-Graf zu Leuchtenberg ꝛc. ꝛc.
In einer Lob- und Leich-Predig
Vorgestellet
Von P. ALBERTO WEINPERGER,
der Gesellschafft JEsu Priestern / Sr. Chur-Fürstlichen Durchleucht Ordinari Hof-Predigern /
In der Hof-Kirchen
Der H. H. CAJETANI und ADELAIDIS,
Der Wohl-Ehrwürdigen Patrum Theatinorum,
Bey Anfang der Drey-Tägigen
Leich-Begängnuß
Den 12. Martij 1726.
Mit Genehmhaltung der Oberen.
München / gedruckt bey Heinrich Theodor von Cölln / Chur-Fürstlichen Hof-Buchdrucker / und Buchhandler.

Figure 9: *Title page of the funeral oration for Maximilian Emmanuel II*
Munich, 1726.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Maximilian Emanuel's fame grew and spread in these years; later, in the oration, given by a Jesuit after his death in 1726, the Elector of Bavaria was called « Der Großmüthige » (The

[50] Bouffard-Veilleux, Mickaël. "Restituer la composition du corps aristocratique sur scène à l'aide du portrait: un cas où l'histoire de l'art peut contribuer à valider, nuancer ou enrichir les traités anciens" in *Restitution et création dans la remise en spectacle des oeuvres des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Actes du colloque international Versailles, 29 mai 2008, Nantes, 30-31 mai 2008. Annales de l'Association pour un Centre de Recherche sur les Arts du Spectacle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s. En partenariat avec Le Printemps des Arts & Centre de recherche du Château de Versailles, éd. Jean-Noël Laurenti.* Villereau : ACRAS, juin 2010, pp. 221–232.

[51] This statuette is attributed to Wilhelm de Groff alone by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and is on view in the Angelica Lloyd Russell Gallery (Europe, 1700–1800), N° 142.

[52] For Wilhelm de Groff (1676–1742), see: Volk, Peter. *Guillielmus de Grof (1676–1742). Studien zur Plastik am Kurbayrischen Hof im 18. Jahrhundert.* Frankfurt: Saggio, 1966. See also: Wolf, Friedrich. "Wilhelm de Groff (1676–1742). Der Dekorkünstler des Kurfürsten Max Emanuel", in *Oberbayerisches Archiv*, 90, 1968, pp. 52–56. For Giuseppe Volpini (1670–1729), see also: *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band II : Katalog der Ausstellung im Alten und Neuen Schloß Schleißheim, 2. Juli bis 3. Oktober 1976. Ausstellungsleitung von Hubert Glaser.* München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, p. 220.

Magnanimous) Maximilianus II (Figure 9)[53]. This noble quality, attributed to Creonte, has been already associated with the Prince elector by Steffani in his collection of motets in 1685 [54], but was still important to display in front of Max Emanuel at the very beginning of 1688.

5.4 Four Cities

A new key is given by the full title of the opera: *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. As there is no other famous character called Niobe in history or myth, the full title is not needed to help to identify the individual. Rather, the royal status immediately links the title character with the place of the action, Thebes. This precision speaks to the collective imagination and the memory as the city of Oedipus was since the beginning of time a city of maledictions. The first king of Thebes was Cadmus, after whom the city was originally called Cadmeia. Juno cursed the city after her husband Jove consorted with Europa, the sister of Cadmus. Actaeon, the great son of Cadmus, would be a victim of this curse: while hunting, he surprised Diana at her bath and was transformed into a stag by the goddess, and gruesomely torn to pieces by his own hounds (Figure 10)[55].

Figure 10: *Actéon petit fils de Cadmus et d'Hermione, metamorphosé en Cerf.*
Etching by Nicolas Larmessin (1645–1725) after a painting of Balthazar Van Lemens (1637–1704).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

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[53] Weinperger, Albert. *Maximilianus II. Der Großmüthige, Weyland Durchleuchtigister und Großmächtigister Fürst und Herr, Herr In Ober- und Nidern Bayrn, auch der Obern Pfaltz Hertzog, Pfaltz-Graf bey Rhein,[...] In einer Lob- und Leich-Predig Vorgestellet: Don P. Alberto Weinperger […] In der Hof-Kirchen Der H.H. Cajetani und Adelaidis, Der Wohl-Erwürdigen Patrum Theatinorum, Bey Anfang der Drey-Tägigen Leich-Begängnuß, Den 12. Martij 1726*…. Cologne: Heinrich Theodor, 1726.

[54] Some of these motets celebrate Max-Emanuel war successes against the Turks. See: Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 28.

[55] Actaeon was the subject of short opera by Charpentier around 1684. See Chapter 3 of this present dissertation.

But the story of Thebes, as a city, started when its king Nycteus had a daughter named Antiope who fled Thebes to evade her father's wrath after finding herself pregnant with twins by the god Zeus (Jove)[56]. A nearby king welcomed Antiope, and Nycteus declared war against his neighbor, but was defeated; his brother, Lycus, took the Theban throne. The new king of Thebes waged war to avenge his brother and was victorious; Lycus and his wife Dirce took their niece Antiope captive, and proceeded to treat her cruelly. Antiope later managed to escape, and was reunited with her grown twin sons, Amphion and Zethus. The twins then marched on Thebes, slew King Lycus and his wife Dirce, seized power and ruled as joint kings of Thebes. Amphion married Niobe and Zethus married Thebe, after whom the city of Thebes was named. Zethus, Thebe, and their only son died soon thereafter. As an episode of this chronicle, the story of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* starts a few years later: The libretto gives to the audience a certain knowledge of the past episodes of Theban dynasty to capture its epic nature: in the description of the «Argomento» and in the list of characters. Part erudite display, part actuality background, these informations have a broader educational aspect: Thebes was not a lost city in time for the 1688 audience of *Niobe*.

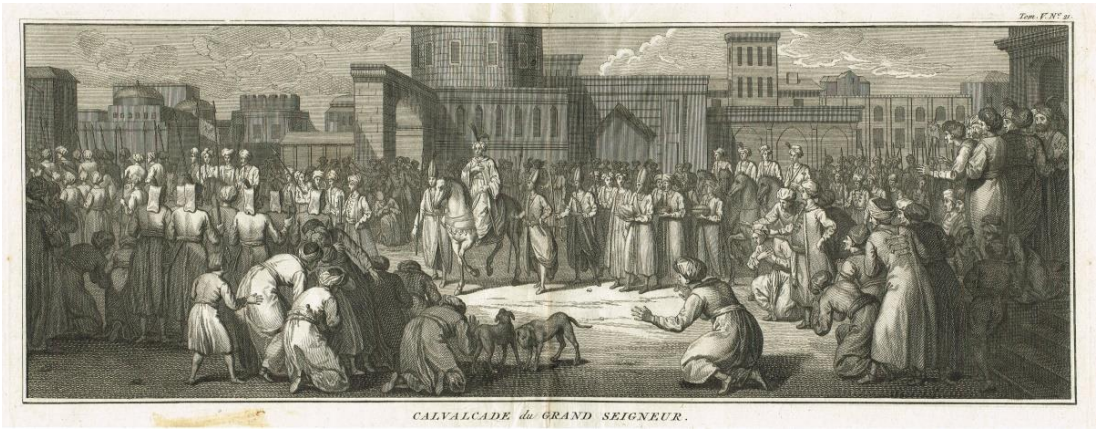

Figure 11: *Cavalcade du grand Seigneur*
French etching by Bernard Picart (1673–1733) from *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde representées par des figures dessinées de la main de Bernard Picard: avec une explication historique, & quelques dissertations curieuses*. Volume VII.
Amsterdam: J.F. Bernard, 1723–1737.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The city of Thebes did not disappear during ancient times; Latin hegemony in Thebes lasted until 1458, when the Turks captured it. The Ottomans renamed Thebes « İstefe» and controlled it like they did most of the Greek peninsula. If the Ottoman power was to be an object of fascination for years to come (Figure 11) Orlandi refers to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the contemporary situation when, after describing Niobe as a « gran Mostro della superbia»—great monster/display of pride—he compares the haughty queen to « l'Asiana Superbia,»[57] the haughty Asia. The qualificative « Superbia »which can be translated by proud with the negative connotation of arrogance is clearly a reference to the Ottoman empire which dominated the middle east but extended to Asia on the east and to Greece and the Balkans to the west. The expansion was seen not only as a territorial expansion, challenging

[56] Berman, Daniel W. *Myth, Literature, and the Creation of the Topography of Thebes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

[57] See libretto *Niobe, Regina di Tebe,* … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

the dynastic status quo of Europe, but also a dangerous religious one[58] and Orlandi's wishes, that Maximilian Emanuel powerful arm will defeat Asia, was keeping the line of the Bavarian war propaganda.

The Great Turkish War had started in 1683 and would not end until 1699 and *Niobe* is a war opera. When the Turks besieged Vienna in 1683, the Bavarian elector came to the aid of the Austrian emperor, his future father-in-law. With Bavarian assistance, they succeeded in taking Vienna from the Turks[59]. Through his great courage, Maximilian Emanuel earned a reputation as an outstanding commander[60]. The Holy League was initiated in 1684 by Pope Innocent XI (1611–1689), and by 1686 it consisted of the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Venetian Republic, and the Russian Tsardom. The Holy League and the Ottoman Empire were fighting for territory in the east of Europe, and Max Emanuel was one of the leading figures among the military commanders. The Prince Elector took a big part in the campaign of 1686 and was notably distinguished for his success in the siege of Buda (now Budapest).

In 1687, a year before *Niobe* opened, Venetian forces took Thebes[61], one of the Ottoman army's strongholds, and although Maximilian Emanuel did not take an active part in this encounter, he was himself planning a new campaign toward another important ottoman city. After the recent events at Vienna and Buda, the city of Thebes past and present served as examples to inspire Max Emanuel: Belgrade was to be the theater of the Prince Elector's most famous military exploit. The Siege of Belgrade took place in 1688, few months after *Niobe* was first performed. Belgrade was at that time a part of the Ottoman Empire and had been the Ottoman's chief fortress in Europe for just over a century. The forces of Holy League commanded by Maximilian Emanuel laid siege to the city on July 30, 1688 and subjected it to cannon fire for nearly a month. His offer to allow the Turkish garrison to surrender gained him the title of "Magnanimous". When it was refused, Maximilian ordered an assault on September 6. Maximilian, like Creonte in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, drove the garrison from the walls and entered the city, victorious. The occupation of Belgrade by the League forces was the turning point of the Great Turkish War, which was mainly a religious war between Christian and Muslim forces.[62]

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[58] It is only in the early eighteenth century with the works of Picart and Bernard that Islam will be to the same treatment as the other religions. See: *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion.* Edited by Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010. For more information see also: Hunt, Lynn; Jacob, Margaret; Mijnhardt, Wijnand. *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World.* Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2010. See: https://web.archive.org/web/20100612090437/http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/picart/

[59] The Austrian composer Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741) commemorated the battle in his *Partita Turcaria*, which bore the sub-title, "Musical portrait of the Siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683". For Fux's impact on dramatic music, see: Van der Meer, John Henry. *Johann Josef Fux als Opernkomponist, Proefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van Doctor in de Letteren*. Utrecht : Rijksuniversiteit, 1961.

[60] Setton, Kenneth Meyer. *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991, pp. 266, 269, 277, 367, 390, 392, 401, 406 and 437.

[61] For the campaign of 1687, see: Finlay, George. *The History of Greece under Othoman and Venetian Domination*. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1856, pp. 218–226 and particularly pp. 223 & 224.

[62] For a comparable situation with the history of Athens, see: Chatziaslani, Kornilia. "Morosini in Athens" on the website "Archaeology of the city of Athens", particularly from 7th paragraph: « In August of 1687… »: http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/En/chapter_more_8.aspx

5.5 Five Religions

With its mix of mythology, allegory, and history, *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* is rich with possible interpretations, but it remains a drama where the action revolves around a religious conflict, between Niobe and Tiresias. The story of Tiresias is told by Ovid: in a forest near Thebes, Tiresias stumbled upon a pair of mating snakes; he hit the pair with his stick and was changed into a woman. Being a woman, Tiresias became a priestess, married, and had three daughters: Manto, Historis, and Daphne. After seven years as a woman, Tiresias again found mating snakes; by hitting them once more, he was permitted to regain his masculinity[63]. Tiresias, being the only person who had lived in both a man's and a woman's body, was the best arbiter of a dispute between Juno and Jupiter, the latter of whom stated that « In Venus deeds, The Female's pleasure far the Male's, exceeds »" [64]. Tiresias confirmed Jupiter's words and Juno, it is said, was so upset that she damned the one who had made the judgment to endure eternal night. As no god has the right to void what another god has done, Jupiter could not restore the priest's sight; instead, he gave Tiresias knowledge of the future, in exchange for his loss[65].

Figure 12: *Decoration de Theatre representant le Palais d'Œdipe à Thèbes.*
Optical view ca 1740 by Jacques Chereau (1688 –1776),
based on a set design by Ferdinando Galli Bibiena (1656–1743).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

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[63] Loraux, Nicole. *The Experiences of Tiresias. The feminine and the Greek Man.* Translated by Paula Wissing. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1995.

[64] Sandys, George. *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, mythologiz'd, and represented in figures: An essay to the translation of Virgil's Aeneis*. Oxford: Iohn Lichfield and Amboise, 1632.

[65] The causes of Tiresias' blindness are unclear, but the most interesting variant tells how he was blinded by Pallas Athena after stumbling onto her bathing naked. His mother, Chariclo, a nymph of Athena, begged Athena to undo her curse, but the goddess could not; instead, she « cleaned » his ears, giving him the ability to understand birdsong, thus giving him the gift of augury. This version of the myth of Tiresias is the subject of a painting of 1688, *Minerve surprise au bain par Tirésias, le frappe de cécité et lui donne le don de prophétie,* by René Antoine Houasse (1645–1710), as part of his cycle dedicated to Minerve for the castle of Trianon in Versailles.

The destiny of Tiresias is clearly presented as a series of initiations making him the custodian of a special gift and therefore, as a blind seer, his character appears in several Greek stories and tragedies based on the legendary history of Thebes, including the one of king Oedipus (figure 12), whose self-inflicted blindness echoes the one of Tiresias. Literal and metaphorical references to eyesight appear throughout the various Greek dramas featuring *Oedipus Rex*. Clear vision serves as a metaphor for insight and knowledge, but the clear-eyed Oedipus is blind to the truth about his origins and inadvertent crimes. The prophet Tiresias, on the other hand, although literally blind, "sees" the truth and relays what is revealed to him[66] and this is the role, following the examples of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus[67], that Orlandi gives to Tiresias in his « drama per musica ».

In *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, although Tiresias retains his power of prophecy, he is also the high priest of Latona. His daughter is also devoted to the goddess and to her children Apollo and Diana. Orlandi inventively opposes the paganism of Niobe, who orders her people to revere her family as gods, to the orthodoxy of Tiresias and Manto, who both reject her blasphemy. This religious debate is not just an exchange of theory; it precipitates some of the most violent scenes, bringing the opera to the proportions of a biblical drama: curse of the Prophet, sack of the Temple, and slaughter of the unfaithful. This opposition by those adhering to the old faith to the reformed religion desired by Niobe has clear parallels to the determination with which the Catholic faith opposed the newer Protestant one.

Figure 13: *Templis Calivinianorum eversis*. « Les Temples des Calvinistes démolis » and *Haeresis extincta*. « L'hérésie éteinte par le fameux Edit du 22 Octobre 1685, qui révoque l'Edit de Nantes. »
Etching of two 1685 French medals from *Recueil des Portraits des Hommes illustres, dont il est fait mention dans l'Histoire de France, commence par MM. Velly & Villaret, & continue par M. L'Abbé Garnier. Tome VI, Contenant la suite du Regne de Louis IX & un supplement pour differens Regnes*. Paris: Nyon, 1786, p. 50.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In the years leading up to *Niobe*, religious tensions in Europe rose to extreme levels. In France, Louis XIV issued the edict of Fontainebleau in 1685, putting an end to the tolerance

[66] « Though Oedipus' future is predicted by the gods, even after being warned by Tiresias, he cannot see the truth or reality beforehand because his excessive pride has blinded his vision…» in Haque, Ziaula and Kabir Chowdhury, Fahmida. "The Concept of Blindness in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*" in *Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, vol. 2, no. 3*, 2013, p. 118.

[67] Tiresias appears in Euripides, *The Bacchae*; in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and in his *Antigone*; and in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*.

of Protestants that his grandfather had established in 1598 (Figure 13). The beginning of the persecution of the Protestants in France, notably with destruction of their temples, led to an exodus of Huguenots to the north of Europe. In England, the Catholic king James II loses his throne in 1687 and is replaced by Protestants William III and Mary II. Bavaria, a stronghold of Catholicism, aimed to stop Protestantism from spreading and became one of the centers of the Counter-Reformation[68].

Figure 14: *Clerc Regulier Theatin*
Etching by Nicolas de Poilly le jeune (1675–1747),
from *Histoire des ordres monastiques*…Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1715.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Even though busy opposing the Ottoman Empire, the countries of central Europe also needed to consider domestic affairs, especially spiritual movements, as religious unrest could also come from inside. The stage, as was customary in Jesuit Theater[69], could offer a moral lesson and the terrible effect of Niobe's religious reform was an expression of growing European tensions that Max Emanuel was part of. The five principal religions in the Occident at the time—Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, Islam, and Reformed (Protestant)—were all struggling for expansion and the right to practice their faiths. But while the struggle against the

[68] See the entry "Bavaria" in *Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation*, edited by Mark A. Lamport. Maryland (MD): Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, Volume 2, pp. 59–61.

[69] Blanchard, Jean Vincent. *L'optique du discours au XVIIe siècle : de la rhétorique des jésuites au style de la raison moderne (Descartes, Pascal*). Laval : Les Presses Université de Laval, 2005. For the theatre art of the Jesuits, see : Knapp, Eva and Kiliàn, Istvàn. *The Sopron Collection of Jesuit Stage Designs*. Budapest : Enciklopédia Publishing House, 1999.

Turks had united Christianity for a while, the Protestants themselves had gained a foothold in Switzerland, Germany, England, Holland, and France. New Catholic orders were created by the Church of Rome to zealously combat the influence of the Reformed religion.

Agostino Steffani, the composer of *Niobe*, was a member of one of the religious orders of the Counter-Reformation. A priest himself since 1680, he belonged to the order of the Theatins, and his missionary work in the North of Germany was later to become his principal pastoral activity. On the portrait by Gerhard Kappers (16??–1750) showing him aged sixty, in 1714[70], Steffani, then a bishop, is still wearing the simple black frock of the Theatin order, as shown on Figure 14. Founded in Rome in 1524, the main object of the Theatin order was to recall the clergy to an edifying and frugal life, which would serve as an example for the laity, and soon became a way to balance the Reformation. Supported by Pope Innocent XI, the Theatins founded oratories and hospitals, and devoted themselves to preach the Gospel and reform lax morals[71]. In Bavaria, the Theatine Church St. Kajetan was founded by Elector Ferdinand Maria and his wife, Henriette Adélaïde of Savoy, as a gift of thanks for the birth of the long-awaited heir to the Bavarian crown, Maximilian Emanuel, in 1662. The dynastic continuity was seen as a divine gift for the monarchy, and Orlandi makes this obsession an important part of Niobe's character.

5.6 Six Daughters and six Sons

The children of Niobe were so numerous they were called the Niobids, and the exact number differs in the many ancient sources available to us. In Homer's *Iliad*, like in Orlandi's libretto, they are twelve (six boys and six girls): « For even the fair-haired Niobe bethought her of meat, albeit twelve children perished in her halls, six daughters and six lusty sons. The sons Apollo slew with shafts from his silver bow, being wroth against Niobe, and the daughters the archer Artemis [Diana], for that Niobe had matched herself with fair-cheeked Leto [Latona], saying that the goddess had borne but twain, while herself was mother to many; wherefore they, for all they were but twain, destroyed them all. » [72]According to Sophocles's *Antigone*, Apollodorus's *Library*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, they are fourteen children, seven boys and seven girls (figure 15). In Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, they are eighteen. In all variations, an even number results in an equal quantity of boys and girls, as the number of Niobe's children needs to speak to the imagination. Seneca, in his tragedy about Oedipus, gives another beautiful

[70] See:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1714_circa_Gerhard_Kappers,_Agostino_Steffani,_oil_on_canvas,_89_x_69_cm.jpg

[71] For the history and the characteristics of the order of the Theatins, see: [Palazzi, Giovanni; Hélyot, Pierre; Bullot, Maximilien]. *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, Religieux et Miliaires, et des congregations séculières de l'un & de l'autre sexe, qui ont esté estables jusqu'à present; Conteant leur origine, leur foundation, leurs progrès, les évenemens les plus considerables qui sont arrivés, La décadencedes uns et leur suppression, l'agrandissement des autres, par le moïen des differences Reformes qui y ont esté introduites. Les vie de leurs fondateurs & de leurs Reformateurs: Avec des figures qui représentent tous les differens habillemens de ces Ordres & de ces Congregations: Suite de la troisiéme Partie, qui comprend toutes les differentes Congregations, & les Ordres Militaires qui ont été soumis á la Regle de saint Augustin. Tome Quatrième, Volume 4*. Paris: Jean-Batipte Coignard, 1721, pp. 78–85.

[72] Homer. *Iliad*. Book XXIV, 605–612.

poetic twist to the number by saying that Niobe flattered her vanity over her children by also counting their shadows[73].

Figure 15: *Superba Niobe cum filiis interimitur a Phaebo et Diana*
German etching by Johann Whilhelm Baur (1607?–1641?),
from *Bellissimum Ovidii theatrum* Nuremberg, 1685.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

This emphasis on a large number of offspring is not only the material of myth, but it was also the measure in the 1680s. France was a prime example: Louis XIV had numerous offspring – the account above twenty, and was very proud of it, while in England, Charles II bred fifteen, all illegitimate, children. By tradition a large quantity of children was a clear expression of virility and fertility, which was appealing to the imagination of the people. While in the Ottoman Empire, the number of sons, accentuated by the quantity of wives, would create many crisis of succession, from a West European dynastic perspective, after producing an legitime heir, many offspring, legitimized when they reach adulthood, allowed for the opportunity to create a large network of alliances through unions between children of royal families. Indeed, in 1680, the French crown prince, The Grand Dauphin, married Maria Anna Christina Victoria (1660–1690), Max Emanuel's sister—the link between France and Bavaria was strong[74]. Louis XIV was hoping Max Emanuel would return the diplomatic gesture and marry a French princess, but the Prince Elector was keen to keep a kind of independence and decided to balance the French union of his sister by marrying himself to an Austrian Princess. As Maria Antonia was also a niece of the Spanish king, the offspring of this union could give

[73] See: Seneca. *Œdipu*s, Act III Scene I. Many thanks to Dave Cook, a Boston Early Music Festival patron, who, at an early stage of my research, has directed my attention to the various amounts of children of Niobe in classical literature and the possible relevance of their even number.

[74] Charpentier wrote *Epithalamio in lode dell'Altezza Serenissima Elettorale di Massimiliano Emanuel Duca di Baviera* (H473) in honor of the wedding. See: Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de/The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Catalogue raisonné*. Paris : Picard, 1982, pp. 343 & 344.

the Bavarian house a claim to the throne of Spain[75]. The expansion of family by marriage and progeny has been at the center of Europe politics since them middle ages and an important descendance was a possibility of an expansion of dominium. In Munich *Niobe*'s display of a full royal progeny slaughtered by the divine powers, a scene often chosen by illustrators of Ovid, was a display full of pathos for the audience of 1688 (Figure 16).

Figure 16: *The death of the Niobids*
Dutch etching by Bernard Picart (1673–1733)
from *Temple of the Muses* (*Neu-Erofneer Musen-Tempel*). Amsterdam and Leipzig: Chatelain, 1733.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

When Steffani and his brother, the poet Ventura Terzago (1648–1693)[76], created the ballets for *Servio Tullio* for the Carnival of 1686, the first one to be celebrated in Munich by the newlywed couple, they showed their sense of allegory: in the first Ballet several deities, each more flattering to the couple than the one before, appear on a cloud machine. The gods announce a wondrous horoscope for the royal couple including the prediction of twelve

[75] This plan was put to a stop in 1699 at the death of Joseph Ferdinand, the son of Max Emanuel: the Bavarian dream of the Spanish inheritance was over and in 1701 the Elector choose to support France in its claim to the Spanish throne, dissociating with his father in law, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I.

[76] The fact the two brothers do not wear the same patronym can be explained by the fact that Ventura Terzago was adopted by a brother of their mother. See: Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 4–6.

children, which then, as in a vision of the future, are performed by twelve dancers—six men and six women—on the stage. The horoscope was not at all farfetched, as Max Emanuel, over the course of his life, went on to have, not twelve but fourteen children with his two wives and his mistress. Of the fourteen children, seven died at an early age. In 1688, infant high mortality was still common in Europe, even in the leading class of society. The killing of the Niobids by Apollo the sun and Diana the moon may also been a cruel allegory of the death of children in one day and in one night. The passing of children although common was still a subject of enormous grief. A seventeenth century commentator remind us that Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), reflecting on the passing of his daughter[77], wrote that the metamorphosis of Niobe into a rock was nothing but an allegory of a woman whose mourning and grief have made her insensitive as a stone (see Figure 17). [78]

Figure 17: *La mort de Niobé et des ses enfants*
French etching from 1651 by Michel Dorigny (1616–1665) after the painting of Simon Vouet (1590–1649)
for the « Galerie de l'Hôtel Séguier à Paris ».
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Becoming insensitive due to much grief at losing children was what happened to Maria Anna Victoria of Bavaria. The sister of Max Emanuel was expected, as Grande Dauphine of France, to give birth to many offspring. Despite multiple pregnancies only three descendants survived. After numerous miscarriages, including a first in 1681, three in 1685 and two in 1687,

[77] Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Cicero's tusculan disputations; Also, treatises on The nature of the gods, And on The commonwealth. Literally translated, chiefly by C. D. Yonge*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877, p. 118.

[78] « Ciceron dans la 3. Tusculante, dit que la fiction de Niobe changée en rocher, n'est à son avis autre chose qu'une femme que le deüil & l'ennuy ont rendu presque insensible. » in Marolles, Michel de. *Tableaux du temple des muses tirez du cabinet de feu Mr Favereau... et gravez en tailles-douces par les meilleurs maistres de son temps pour représenter les vertus et les vices, sur les plus illustres fables de l'antiquité, avec les descriptions, remarques et annotations composées par Mre Michel de Marolles....* Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1655, p. 351.

the year before *Niobe*, the health of the Dauphine was deteriorating rapidly. When she died in 1690, it was said that she was convinced that « that her last birth had killed her »[79] and when giving her blessing to her last son, the duke of Berry born in 1686, she murmured the verse of Racine's *Andromaque*: « Ah! my son, how pricy your life costs your mother »[80]. Specified in her wedding contract by her mother in law[81], the pressure put on the Dauphine to provide children finds a bitter echo on an etching of the eighteenth century: with verses attributed to her voice, the Dauphine is still remembered as a productive mother, with her three sons presented as her only title of glory (see Figure 18). In his own version to depict a mother's grief, Orlandi gives Niobe, who arrived to discover her children corpses, the most beautiful verses: «But what do I see? Are not These Children also dead? /Are these not my progeny? And are these not, / Painted with grisly palor, / These of my womb, dead wombs? »[82].

Figure 18: *Marie Christine Victoire de Baviere Dauphine de France*
Etching by Étienne Jehandier Desrochers (1668–1741).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

[79] « Elle mourut persaudée que sa derniere couche lui avait donné la mort » in *Les Souvenirs de Madame De Caylus, pour server de Supplément aux Mémoires Et Lettres De Madame De Maintenon. Avec des Notes de M. de Voltaire. Nouvelle Edition.* Maestricht: Dufour et Roux, 1789, p. 105.

[80] « O mon fils, que tes jours coûtent cher à ta mère! » in Racine, *Andromaque*, Act III, Scene 8.

[81] « Le marriage de notre Fils le Dauphin avec une Princesse qui puisse donner des Successeurs à cette Couronne capables de continuer le bonheur et la felicité » in "Contrat de Mariage de Louïs Dauphin de France avec la Princesse Electorale Marie Anna Christine de Baviere. Fait & passé à Munich le 30. Decembre 1679" N° CCXI in Dumont, Jean. *Corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens; contenant un recueil des traitez d'alliance, de paix, de Treve, de Neutralité, de commerce, d'echange,...* Amsterdam: P. Brunel, 1731, pp. 449–451.

[82] « Mà che veggio? E non sono / Questi i Figli anco uccisi?/ Non é questa la prole, e non son queste/ D'atro palor dipinte/ Delle Viscere mie, Viscere estinte? » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688, Act III, Scene XII.

5.7 Seven Strings

If Niobe's reason for ambition to godliness is her fertility, her husband Anfione is, through his musical skills, also close to the gods, as at the beginning of time the first musicians were the gods. Hermes created the lyre with three strings, which he gave to Apollo, who added four more. The god of the arts extracted such harmonious sounds from it that the gods forgot their quarrels on Olympus. Hermes made for himself the Shepherd's pipe, and Pan invented the reed flute with its enchanting music. Only a small number of mortals, whose art was outstanding, could measure themselves with those divine practitioners[83]. After Orpheus, the most renowned, comes the name of Amphion. Like his half-brother Apollo, he also received his lyre from Hermes. And like Apollo, when Amphion married Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, the Lydian king, he learned to play in the Lydian mode, a particular tuning of the diatonic scale, by adding four strings to his lyre.

Figure 19: Amphion
Dutch Etching by Bernard Picart (1673–1733)
from *Temple of the Muses* (*Neu-Erofneer Musen-Tempel*). Amsterdam and Leipzig: Chatelain, 1733.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Anfione's abilities as a musician surpass his fame as a king: it is said that his singing raised the walls to protect the city of Thebes. Stones were affected by the beauty of the music

[83] See: *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies compiled by Yves Bonnefoy. Translated under the direction of Wendy Doniger.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

and got moved by its power of attraction, and this (e)motion was ordered: buildings were taking shape. The construction of various buildings under the power of harmony was chosen by painters and illustrators to depict Amphion (Figure 19). To show an ideal city as a backdrop was certainly also the decorative style chosen in 1688 for the sets depicting the city of Thebes of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* in Munich. Some commentators who were trying to explain the meaning of the fable of Amphion said that in truth he was an excellent musician, but there was not much magic involved, only art: having a plan to build a town, he employed all those who came from very far to hear him, and they all obeyed him gladly, if only he would touch the strings of his stringed instrument[84]. Lyre or lute, magic or talent—in any case, the power of his music was architectural, and the seven gates of Thebes corresponded to the seven strings of his lyre.

Figure 19: *Amphion and Zethos*
Dutch etching by Hubertus Quellinus (1619–1687) after a design by Jacob Vennekool (c.1630–1680) of a model by Jacob van Campen (1596–1657) for the Amsterdam Town Hall, Amsterdam, 1661,
From *Secunda pars Praecipuarum effigierum ac ornamentorum amplissime Curiae Amstelrodamensis maiori ex parte in cadmium marmore effectorum per Artum Quellinium eiusdem Civitatis Statuarium.*
Amsterdam: Artus Quellinus (I), 1663 or Amsterdam: Frederik de Wit, 1668.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

[84] « Quelques uns voulant expliquer le sens de la Fable d'Amphion qui bastît les murailles de Thebes au son de sa lyre, ont dit qu'à la vérité il estait un excellent musicien : mais qu'il y avait beaucoup de magie meslée parmy: de sorte qu'ayant dessein de bastir une ville, il y employa tous ceux qui le venoient chercher de fort loin pour l'ouïr, & lui obeissoient avec plaisir, à condition qu'il voulut toucher les cordes de son luth. » in Marolles, Michel de. *Tableaux du temple des muses tirez du cabinet de feu Mr Favereau... et gravez en tailles-douces par les meilleurs maistres de son temps pour représenter les vertus et les vices, sur les plus illustres fables de l'antiquité, avec les descriptions, remarques et annotations composées par Mre Michel de Marolles...*. Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1655, p. 345.

The association of Amphion with a civic duty and showing him building a powerful city is one of the themes chosen to decorate the City Hall of Amsterdam by Jacob van Campen (1596–1657) in the 1660s[85]. A relief above the door of the Chamber of Justice on the east side of the Burgerzaal shows Amphion and Zethos (see Figure 20). On the front of the composition, Amphion appears, playing his lyre, with his brother Zethus behind him. According to the myth, the stones collected by Zethos piled up automatically thanks to the playing of Amphion to form the city wall of Thebes. In the background, however, it is not the walls around Thebes but the city hall of Amsterdam which is being built. This association symbolizes on the one hand how harmony, arising here from music, promotes the growth of the building. On the other hand, it carries a message for the regents: harmony within the city government will lead to a peaceful concord among the inhabitants. The concord between them will make the city flourish and the brotherly policy, is here supported by the presence of Zethus, twin of Amphion, who had allowed the erection of the new city hall of Amsterdam. All in all, in the seventeenth century, Amphion's unfortunate fate, as depicted by Steffani's opera, does not seem to have a negative impact on the posterity of the poetic figure, the famous musician is more associated with his artistic achievements than the downfall of his dynasty.

It may be for this reason, that Orlandi and Steffani clearly chose to modify the building part of the musical myth in *Niobe*: although the creation of the walls of Thebes is initiated by Anfione, they appear during his prayer to Jupiter, his father, and are mostly due to the paternal protection of the supreme god. Steffani reserves the depiction of the ultimate musical talents of Anfione for another scene, a contemplative moment where the king is studying the harmony of the spheres. In this scene of Act II Anfione is looking for the complex order which controls the universe to inspire his singing. « Musica universalis », or music of the spheres, is a philosophical concept that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies—the sun, the moon, and the planets—as a form of music[86]. This music was not usually thought to be literally audible, but of a mathematical nature. The fact that mathematics and music are related was clear to the Greeks, and the laws of the cosmos and of music have been compared by Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.)[87]. Music was included in the « quadrivium » of subjects that are driven by logic: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. This concept of a number theory would also have been present in the education of Max Emanuel, which was essentially entrusted to the Jesuits, who have always included astronomy and music in their curriculum[88]. Contemporary of the famous polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680)[89], the Father Michael Pexenfelder (1613–1685), another Jesuit, dedicated in 1670 to the eight-year-old prince more than a thousand pages of *Apparatus eruditionis*, an educational compendium that offered, along

[85] For some insights about the allegorical program of Van Campen, see: De Vries, Lyckle. *Gerard de Lairesse, An Artist between Stage and Studio*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998, pp. 42−48.

[86] The concept of the music of the spheres is difficult to trace historically. For an introduction, see: Viltanioti, Irini-Fotini. *L'harmonie des Sirènes du pythagorisme ancien à Platon.* Boston and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 1–10.

[87] For a presentation of Pythagoras' views on music, see: Levin, Flora R. *Greek Reflections on the Nature of Music*. Cambride: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 5–17.

[88] For some perspective on the Jesuit curriculum, see: Blanchard, Jean Vincent. *L'optique du discours au XVIIe siècle : de la rhétorique des jésuites au style de la raison moderne (Descartes, Pascal)*. Laval: Les Presses Universtité de Laval, 2005.

[89] See: Godwin, Joscelyn. *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2015.

with *Arithmetica*, *Geometria* and *Astronomia* in concise form, the basic concepts of *Musica* and its notation[90].

In Steffani's opera, after Anfione gives the regency of Thebes to Niobe, the king retreats in his « solitaria Soglia » a solitary abode, made of a series of rooms that he qualifies as « Asili di Pace », sanctuaries of Peace. Orlandi, in the list of sets, describes the space as a « Royal Museo, che ostenta la Reggia dell'Armonia ». The word « Museo » clearly refers to the *Temple of the Muses* and was the expression used for a location displaying knowledge, a place where collections of things of artistic, scientific or historic interest were available. Like the famous Musaeum at Alexandria, which included the famous Library, the royal studio of Anfione is propitious to a contemplative life retreat. But Orlandi specifies that Anfione's Royal study displays the Kingdom of Harmony. Is the « Reggia dell'Armonia » a description of the studio as a whole or is this an object in the room? The fact that in his aria Anfione calls for the Friendly Spheres, to give his lips the Harmony of their rotations[91] offers some perspectives. The king clearly mentions the « Armonia delle Sfere »[92], but, by referring to their rotations, their « giri », Orlandi may allude to the Works of Johannes Kepler (1571– 1630) who, in his *Harmonices mundi* (1619), founded celestial music, no longer on the distances between planets, but on the speed of the planets in their movements. All in all, the text suggests not only a contemplative attitude but the investigating research of an astronomer. Anfione's Museo is likely to be furnished with books and tools to study the movements of the planets and stars, and to create music. As Orlandi explains in his "Argomento", Anfione « with a broad Vein of Genius and preeminent Judgment, had thus bound the Intelligence of the Spheres in his Music »[93].

Astronomy knew fast developments at the end of the seventeenth century[94] and this scene may also be a reference to the actualities of the 1680s: in these years, Saturn's rings were discovered, the elliptical movements of the orbit of Mars had been clarified and so were orbits of comets. In his popular science book *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*[95], writer Bernard le

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[90] Pexenfelder, Michael. *Apparatus Eruditionis tam Rerum quam Verborum per Omnes Artes et Scientias.* Nuremberg : Sumptibus Michaelis & Joh, 1670, pp. 410−421. See : https://www2.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenaref/pexenfelder.html

[91] « Sfere amiche hor date al Labro / L'Armonia de vostri giri. » in Orlandi, Luigi. *Niobe, Regina di Tebe,* … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688, Act II, Scene 13.

[92] The « Armonia delle Sfere » was an opera topic since the Renaissance and has already been the subject of the first of the intermezzi of Girolamo Bargagli's *La Pelllegrina* (1589, Firenze).

[93] « Quello per havere con larga Vena d'Ingegno, e prerogative di Senno cosi legate l'Intelligenze delle Sfere nella sua Musica» in Orlandi, Luigi. "Argomento" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe,* … Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

[94] For overviews of the developments of Astronomy at the end of the seventeenth century, see: Hoskin, Michael. *The Cambridge Concise History of Astronomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, and Taton, René and Wilson, Curtis. *Planetary Astronomy from the Renaissance to the Rise of Astrophysics, Part A, Tycho Brahe to Newton (The General History if Astronomy, edited by Michale Hoskin, Volume 2).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[95] Fontenelle, Bernard le Bovier de. *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. Paris: Vve C. Blageart, 1686. This first edition contains only the first 5 evenings: « Premier soir. Que la Terre est une Planète qui tourne sur elle-même, & autour du Soleil. Second soir. Que la Lune est une Terre habitée. Troisième soir. Particularités du Monde de la Lune. Que les autres Planètes sont habitées aussi. Quatrième soir. Particularités des Mondes de Vénus, de Mercure, de Mars, de Jupiter, & de Saturne. Cinquième soir. Que les Étoiles Fixes sont autant de Soleils dont

Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757) had renewed in 1686 the conception of cosmos. In 1687, a year before *Niobe*, a second edition was published with the addition of « the latest discoveries which have been made in the sky ». These « Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds » offered a simple explanation of the heliocentric model of the Universe, suggested by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) in his seminal work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium,* concerning the Revolutions of the Heavenly Orbs, published in 1543. While his system was centered on the Sun, with Earth and other planets moving around it, Copernicus retained from Ptolemy of Alexandria, although in somewhat altered form, the imaginary clockwork of epicycles and deferents (orbital circles upon circles), to explain the seemingly irregular movements of the planets in terms of circular motion at uniform speeds. Although the Ptolemaic system of the Antiquity has been replaced by the Copernican system, most Jesuits did not accept the Copernican theory of a sun-centered universe but still adhered to the Ptolemaic system, which was placing earth at the center of the universe[96]. The libretto of *Niobe* is not decisive about which system the « giri » of the spheres take place in, but the ideal of visual representation of the cosmos is clearly suggested.

Figure 21: *Jean Gerson in his "museo"*
Etching by Guillaume van der Gouwen (ca. 1640–1720) after Bernard Picart, (1673–1733)
from *Joannis Gersonii. Opera Omnia.* Antverpen: Sumptibus Societatis, 1706.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In 1683, the Venetian scholar Vincenzo Maria Coronelli (1650–1718) had delivered his famous globes to Louis XIV, one of the earth and one of the heavens. These globes were famous for their size and their splendid topographical illustrations, which also recorded the newest geographical discoveries and latest astronomical observations. In 1688 Coronelli issued a smaller terrestrial globe, followed shortly afterwards by a celestial globe, and sold them to several European princes. Max Emanuel ordered a comparable pair in 1693 and acquired it in Brussels in 1696, perhaps because the terrestrial globe showed his most recent triumphs in the Turkish Wars.[97] It is this type of Globe that Bernard Picart choose to represent on an

chacun éclaire un Monde ». In the edition of 1687, a 6th evening was added: «Sixième soir: Nouvelles pensées qui confirment celles des Entretiens précédents. Dernières découvertes qui ont été faites dans le Ciel ».

[96] Pexenfelder, Michael. *Apparatus Eruditionis tam Rerum quam Verborum per Omnes Artes et Scientias.* Nuremberg : Sumptibus Michaelis & Joh, 1670, pp. 410–421.

[97] For Louis' globes, of 382 cm of diameter, see: *Les Globes de Louis XIV. Étude artistique, historique et matérielle (Catherine Hofmann et Hélène Richard dir).* Paris: BnF, 2012. For Max Emanuel's globes, 108 cm of diameter, see: *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band II : Katalog der Ausstellung im Alten und Neuen Schloß*

illustration showing the French theologian, Jean Charlier de Gerson (1363–1429)[98]. Gerson was one of the most prominent catholic scholars, Chancellor of the University of Paris. The illustration by Picart (Figure 21), recalling Vermeer's *Astronomer*, shows a scholar contemplative in his *museo* full of books, facing a window, whose glass oculus echoes the massive globe on the other side. A setting which could be the one Orlandi had in mind for his scene of Anfione as Astronomer/Musician.

Figure 22: *Amphion*
German etching by Johann Ulrich Kraus (1655–1719)
from *Die Verwandlungen des Ovidii: in zweyhundert und sechs- und zwantzig Kupffern*. Augsburg, n. d. [1690],
after the engraving by François Chauveau (1613–1676) and Sébastien Le Clerc (1637–1714)
for Isaac de Benserade's *Métamorphoses en rondeaux*. Paris, 1676.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

By placing the Music of Anfione in relation to Astronomy instead of Architecture, Orlandi expands the allegory. Steffani refines this moment further by writing a complex musical number where the singing of Anfione is accompanied by the sound of four viols hidden on stage. In creating such a spatial effect, Steffani seems to indicate that Anfione is "playing" his lyre and that the music we hear (played by the hidden viols) is his doing. The path between the lyre with seven strings and the Renaissance stringed instrument is mostly a matter of time, and in much of the pictorial legacy of the myth, Amphion is shown playing a stringed instrument with a bow. Since the sixteenth century, it was quite characteristic for figures like Orpheus and Amphion to be depicted with a modern equivalent of the ancient lyre, either a lira or a lute (Figure 22). Although a seventeenth century French etching by Léonard Gaultier (1561–1635) after Antoine Caron (1520 ou 1521–1599) seems to have Amphion playing a *vihuela de arco*, the artist was likely attempting to describe a *lira da braccio*, the Renaissance instrument closely associated with Orpheus and with recitations of poetry by humanists[99] (Figure 23). This type of lira, a seven-string chordal instrument played with a bow,

Schleißheim, 2. Juli bis 3. Oktober 1976. Ausstellungsleitung von Hubert Glaser. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, p. 235. See: http://www.bayerisches-nationalmuseum.de/index.php?id=547

[98] Vial, Marc. *Jean Gerson: théoricien de la théologie mystique*. Paris: Vrin, 2006.

[99] Many thanks to my colleague Robert Mealy for his helpul information in these matters.

died out in the early seventeenth century, and in 1688, when Steffani chose to evoke its sound to depict Anfione's lira, it was an attempt, supported by the illusion of the music from the hidden viols, to reconstruct the mythical sound of the antique lyre.

Figure 23: *Amphion*
French etching by Léonard Gaultier (1561-1635) after Antoine Caron (1520 ou 1521–1599),
from *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte-Peinture des deux Philostrates Sophistes mis en français par Blaise de Vigenere bourbonnois enrichis d'arguments et d'annotation…et représentez en taille douce en cette nouvelle edition avec des épigrammes sur chacun d'iceux par Thomas Artus sieur d'Embry.* Paris: Guillemot, 1637.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

This scene of Amphion and the harmony of spheres was, in the context of *Niobe*, an expression of the intellectual ambition of Amphion, and it made a great impression on Pietro Torri (1650–1737), a composer who arrived in Munich in 1687[100]. Later, in 1716, Torri presented Max Emanuel with the cantata in which Anfione's solo aria with its quartet of hidden viols is interpolated completely and without modification. To make his cantata that he titled *La Reggia dell'Armonia*, a clear reference to the set element mentioned in the libretto of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, Torri added the character of Il Tempo (Father Time) and wrote a dialogue about Harmony, between Anfione and the allegorical figure. More than twenty years after *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, Torri was paying homage to its timeless expression of the Harmony of the Spheres, associating the fame of Amphion, the mythic musician of antiquity, with the art of Steffani, the influential composer of the reign of Maximilian Emanuel. This new context, created by extracting this extraordinary piece of music from its original dramatic setting, was freed from the tragic ends of the Theban rulers, bringing it back instead to its original allegory of the eternal power of music.

[100] Groote, Inga Mai. *Pietro Torri, un musicista veronese alla corte di Baviera*. Verona: Della Scala, 2003.