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Jack Hanlon

Fatalism, Tragedy, and Morality: A Study of the Men in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*

Il trovatore often finds itself regarded as an anomaly among Verdi's repertoire.

Critics have long held it as one of Verdi's crudest efforts, but due to its immense popularity among audiences, this middle-period work has retained its status as a staple of operatic canon. Not until the 1970s, with the work of Gabriele Baldini and later Pierluigi Petrobelli, did this view of *Il trovatore* as a "crude" opera start to dissolve, as the formal structural and motivic underpinnings of the work became clearer. But despite a meticulous approach to form, this opera has been faulted repeatedly for the lack of transitions between scenes and the outrageous plot devices present in the libretto. Philip Friedheim in his *Formal Patterns in Verdi's "Il trovatore"* demonstrates how crucial the strict form of the opera is in counteracting the libretto's often disjunct quality, which leaves large, unexplained—even quasi-nonsensical—gaps between scenes. Verdi and his librettist, Salvatore Cammarano, clearly relied on a great deal of action taking place between scenes and acts. In some respects, more of the storyline of the opera takes place off-stage than before the audience.

To summarize briefly the opera, Verdi's *Il trovatore* adapts Antonio Garcia Gutierrez's 1836 Spanish play *El Trovador* to the opera stage. Set in the early fifteenth century, *Il trovatore* tells the story of two men, Manrico and the Count di Luna, who both love the beautiful Leonora, but Leonora loves only the former in return. Presented in a brief *racconto* at the outset of the opera is the story of Garzia, the Count's brother who was abducted and supposedly murdered by Azucena, a gypsy woman and mother of Manrico (the Troubadour), as an act of revenge for her mother's persecution. Yet

Azucena reveals in the second act that in a moment of great passion she accidentally killed her own son and adopted Garzia, now Manrico, as her own. She tries to take back her revelation to Manrico, and he at least superficially seems to accept. Soon thereafter, the Count captures Azucena, and Manrico tries unsuccessfully to save her and soon finds himself sharing a prison cell with his “mother.” Leonora feigns giving herself to the Count in return for Manrico’s freedom, but secretly poisons herself. When the Count discovers her betrayal, he orders Manrico to the block and Azucena to the stake. After seeing her “son” die, Azucena reveals in her dying breaths that the Count has in fact murdered his own brother. In doing so, she has avenged her mother, and the Count is left as the only survivor, alone and devastated.

As the opera unfolds, the criticism remains that the plot requires a herculean effort to suspend disbelief. Yet what this study aims to examine is not where faults lay in the libretto or in the superficial structural characteristics, but how certain musical and dramatic qualities—particularly as portrayed through the male characters—impact the overall *tinta*, that is to say, tone or color of the opera. Virtually all who write about this opera, from Baldini to Budden, have mentioned Verdi’s famed letter of 9 April, 1851 to Cammarano in which he stresses how key a figure Azucena is to the plot and discusses in detail how to best develop her character (Werfel and Stefan, 164). Indeed, Azucena perhaps stands as the central character in regards to moving the plot forward, but it remains the two men—Manrico and the Count di Luna—who ultimately carry the artistic weight of the opera on their shoulders. Verdi arguably understates the importance of the men in one line of that same letter as he writes, “there is so little to this poor Troubadour,” although there exists here a dissonance between his words and his music.

The philosophical color of the opera is one of dire fatalism: Verdi constructs a world out of Guttierrez's play wherein the two male characters struggle to stand by their senses of honor, love, and duty. But despite their choices either to retain or abandon these values, the outcome for all is unbearably tragic, and at the core of this cynical worldview are the two men rather than Azucena. In order to demonstrate that this is the case, one must analyze each of the characters individually, both in relation to each other, and in relation to the overarching drama; such an analysis will yield the conclusion that Verdi—despite the care he put into Azucena-centered this opera around the two men.

Verdi imbues the music with specific musical gestures to add an extra layer of complexity, drive, and symbolism to *Il trovatore*, and these gestures further demonstrate the fatalistic quality surrounding the opera. To recapitulate briefly just some of the work done by Petrobelli, William Drabkin and Roger Parker regarding tonal and motivic associations in the opera, Manrico is typically associated with the key of C major – which more specifically represents “the hardiness and courageous spirit of the gypsies;” Leonora with Ab major (Drabkin, 147); and Azucena with the “sonority” (that is pitch class) of B (Petrobelli, 133). Furthermore, Azucena's *amor filiale* (for her mother) and *amor materno* (for Manrico) are represented by the keys of E minor and G major respectively (Petrobelli, 134), each of which include “the sonority of B,” presenting a tonal ambivalence that Verdi plays upon heavily.

Of course these are not the only ways in which the characters are represented musically. Petrobelli noted that Manrico's character is represented via a rhythmic motive (Ex. 1) (137). And Drabkin made the keen discovery that when Azucena's E minor and Leonora's Ab major are combined, they form a complete chromatic scale, as if to say

Manrico is only complete as a character when he has both of them in his life. More importantly, Drabkin notes that Verdi often reinterprets the Ab as a G# and amalgamates the keys to E major to represent Manrico's combined love for both women (147).

What Drabkin does not mention, though, is that E major is where the opera starts. In fact, the entirety of Manrico's struggle throughout the opera is encapsulated in the overture. The orchestra's arpeggiation of E major represents the two women Manrico is pulled between and the trumpets' response to the horns in m 21 (ex. 2) is a simple variation of Manrico's motive to signal that he is in fact at the center of this crisis. This motive sounds on the sonority of B, foreshadowing which of the two women will ultimately have the greater influence on his fate. So while Azucena's presence is indeed felt in the overture (and even more so in Ferrando's *racconto*), Verdi begins the opera by outlining in the overture the overall trajectory of Manrico's character, reaffirming that *Il trovatore* does in fact revolve around the Troubadour. The overture thus establishes whom the audience should be truly keyed in on throughout the drama (if the title had not already indicated such).

To emphasize the idea that choices make no difference upon the characters' destinies, Verdi depicts two men who are in fact quite similar. Manrico and the Count di Luna are brothers, albeit unknowingly, and they share a number of personality traits, as many brothers do. They display similar passions for Leonora, similar potentials for jealousy, a mutual need for competition, and more. Verdi uses a specific formula for establishing the characters, which accentuates these similarities, so much so that their identities might initially be mistaken entirely.

Soon after establishing key character distinctions, Verdi and Cammarano develop

roles in which the two men function and then establish the means and principles the characters use to succeed as best as they are able in each capacity. The roles that they possess, however, are not entirely dissimilar: they are both soldiers; they are both sons; and they are (or want to be) Leonora's lover. Given the differences in the social classes inhabited by each, they execute their responsibilities in a way that generates inverse character trajectories between the two of them. As the one moves up from his gypsy upbringing and finds more and more success with each challenge he is presented, the nobleman gradually falls from grace. Yet despite these inverse trajectories, the men paradoxically both end up suffering. The question remains: "How does Verdi manage this?"

Their paths differ largely due to their ability to confront their problems. The Count eschews his responsibilities to his father's dying wishes to find his lost brother (his father supposedly refused to believe Garzia died), and instead selfishly diverts his attention to the pursuit of Leonora, a quest that clearly will never bear any fruit for him. Manrico, on the other hand, confronts his challenges directly, almost too boldly at times, as he finds himself constantly torn between his love for Leonora and his devotion to his mother, the gypsy Azucena who supposedly murdered the Count's brother. Manrico frantically tries to keep up with and overcome an array of obstacles, which try as he might, will simply never end. He is always reacting to a situation he cannot define. As a foil to the Troubadour, the Count constantly exerts an influence over the course of the story that allows him to dictate much of the drama, though his fear, anger, lust, and jealousy blind him from ever seeing this. In essence, Manrico becomes the victim of circumstance and the Count the victim of his own myopic selfishness. Both lose, and that is what

contributes to this opera's particularly bitter flavor.

Tracking each of these character trajectories from the beginning, the title character of the opera strangely enough is one of the last to be introduced to the listener. Ferrando, the Count's soldiers, Leonora, Inez, and the Count di Luna are all revealed to the audience before Manrico. The audience hears about Manrico from some of these other characters, although he is not referred to by name until he personally introduces himself near the end of Act I; in a fashion similar to Antonio Garcia Gutierrez's, Verdi denies Manrico the opportunity to fairly define his character to the audience.

This notion becomes a central theme to the opera: Manrico perpetually finds himself the victim of circumstance. This ironically contrasts with his own desire to be a man of action, the captain of his own destiny. Instead what he must ultimately settle on being is a man of great honor and passion due to his lack of control over his situation. Long before Manrico was an adult, Azucena set into motion a chain of events that simply prove to be irreversible; she separated Manrico and the Count when they were but children, she actively fostered their hatred in conversations, she burned the child that caused the Di Luna family to seek their vengeance against her, and her close relation to Manrico brought him into the circle of violence as "collateral damage." As her son, he frequently finds himself fighting her battles, trying to work past obstacles that he would not have encountered or generated on his own, most notably, he attempts to save her after her capture by the Count in Act III.

The first description of Manrico presents him in a curious light. At the beginning of the opera, Ferrando, the Count's right-hand man, addresses a group of soldiers and so begins the exposition of the story. Given the character's association to the Di Lunas,

Ferrando naturally tries to paint the Count in a positive light. Ferrando states that the Count waits each night for his love, and the Troubadour is someone the Count “rightly fears.” (Weaver, 71) The fear directed towards Manrico implies that it could be Manrico who is actually the antagonist with the Count posited as hero (Lewsey, 297). The only indication the audience receives to the contrary is the chorus’ first line “Gelosia le fiere serpi gli avventa in petto” [The serpents of jealousy are in (the Count’s) breast] (Weaver, 71). Verdi presents this early in the opera so as to avoid outright confusion, but he does succeed in obfuscating—at least initially—the representatives of good and evil. When the Count makes his first appearance before the audience with *Tace la notte!*, he sings a tender, largely conjunct melody (Ex. 3) in the key of C major, a key that is reserved almost exclusively for Manrico! For the Count to assume Manrico’s key in his first entrance indicates that the issue of mistaken identity is not limited to the libretto. Verdi wants the audience to *hear* the two men as similar through the music.

Helping to facilitate this conflation is the fact that the Count has yet to be named as such; he is simply a man singing Leonora from beneath her balcony. A troubadour would, and of course does, do just that same thing, so there is nothing to say the man singing is not the title character? Not until the audience hears the real troubadour singing from off-stage, and the Count indirectly gives away his identity in his jealous exclamations of “Il Trovator!” does the audience know who is who.

Manrico’s first entrance contrast sharply against the Count’s gentle serenade for Leonora: he curses the woman he loves for what he perceives as infidelity. Now the chorus’s opening line from the beginning of the act—“Jealousy’s fierce serpents are writhing in his breast”—would seem to apply to the Troubadour. The role reversal helps

exemplify how similar the brothers in fact are: the described qualities of one are the observed qualities of the other. Ferrando's opening narrative paints the Count as a jealous aristocrat, but when the Count appears on stage to sing *Tace la notte*, he appears to be truly in love with Leonora consequently; he seems briefly to be the protagonist of the work. Manrico, on the other hand, benefits from Leonora's kind words of *Tacea la notte placida*, which describe him as a brave man who loves wholly and shamelessly. When Manrico arrives, however, he brashly calls Leonora "Infida!" [faithless!]. The men's paths will soon diverge though, as the audience will see. Manrico may possess the same demons as his brother, but by adhering to his sense of honor and his love for the women in his life, he is able temporarily to overcome these foibles—an ability the Count conspicuously lacks. Manrico repeatedly fights for the women in his life because his passions for each of them run so high; he feels a duty to serve them, to protect and care for them. The tragedy of his situation comes in the fact that serving them so faithfully becomes exactly the source of his downfall.

Manrico's second description arrives in Leonora's conversation with Ines and begins to establish him as the hero of the opera. Leonora's recitative and aria inform the audience of his success at the jousting tournaments and that she crowned him champion after the competition. Curiously though, she never learned his name there, and the audience's inability to identify the characters in their first appearances is not affected by this discourse. At the tournaments, he was simply a knight in black armor without a crest. He did not belong to any country or city-state; he was not representing anyone else. Manrico presents himself as a self-made man, which, when combined later with his gypsy background, accentuates his story of upwards social mobility. Rising from the

lowest caste of this society, a group of vagabonds that live in the mountains, the Troubadour has since championed a jousting tournament, won over the love of an aristocratic woman, and defeated the Count di Luna in a duel. He quite literally has had to fight for his status as a man of honor and thus represents a sort of “rugged individualism” through his success in moving upward through social classes. Despite that some of this action has not occurred by this point in the story, the seeds have been planted in the minds of the audience to watch for the fast rising star of the underdog Troubadour, and subsequently the incredible fall from such heights in the end.

Furthermore, a tripartite sense of duty dictates all of Manrico’s actions, and consequently, he finds three proverbial sets of shoes he must fill: rebel soldier, lover, and son. These three roles he fulfills by maintaining his core principles: his strict sense of honor and fervent love for both the women in his life. Yet these roles frequently stand at odds to each other, developing a dissonance within Manrico’s character that is difficult to resolve. When Manrico finally learns to reconcile his roles, he does so only briefly and in a painfully temporary manner. The fatalistic nature of the opera derives in large part from these conflicting roles because these roles function as the main vehicles through which Manrico can express his senses of honor, duty, and love. It is exactly these values’ lack of impact on the conclusion of the opera that precipitates the fatalism present in the story.

The first role is the least important to the overarching drama of the opera. Manrico’s responsibility to his nation, to the cause of the rebel leader Urgel (presumably Prince Jaime II of Urgel, who is only mentioned, never seen on stage), is noted largely in passing comments. Leonora complains that “civil strife” flared up after the tournaments,

so she never saw him again. Manrico's fighting for the rebel leader also further dichotomizes his relationship with the Count. Their respective honors and egos are both endangered by how they fare in battle against each other, and in the opera, it is usually the Count whose pride must recover after their encounters. Before his attempt to prevent Leonora from taking her vows, Di Luna even takes note in Act II that "furious love and provoked pride" have pushed him to such extremes (Weaver, 95). Inversely, Manrico's honor grows with each accomplishment he enjoys at the Count's expense. Consequently, Manrico's role as a soldier serves largely to contrast him against the Count, further establishing the Troubadour as the protagonist, which in turn will accentuate the tragedy of the ending by increasing the heights from which he falls.

Manrico—given his aforementioned values of honor, duty, and love—strives to maintain a moral compass amongst his encounters with the Count, and he recalls in Act II Scene 1 that, despite the Count's defeating him in battle (presumably in between the acts, after their duel), he fell with integrity. Just prior to *Mal reggendo all'aspro assalto*, Manrico explains that while the Count may have defeated him at the battle of Pelilla, he fell "as a strong man," and stood firm while the rest of his men formed the "retreating thousand." *Mal reggendo* gives the audience further opportunity to see the deep-seated pride that Manrico possesses. The ever-rising nature of the melody accentuates the proud, noble nature of the man singing and mimics his ever growing honor and respect throughout the opera. By dint of these qualities combined with the slow harmonic rhythm, *Mal reggendo* helps develop Manrico into a sort of folk hero in the opera. The largely conservative harmonies—almost entirely dominant-tonic motions—serve to emphasize that he truly is a simple man, a hero of steadfast principles and few demons,

not to mention a brave, yet merciful warrior.

Verdi emphasizes these qualities through harmonic regions in this short aria (as well as several of Manrico's other solos). The song's initial harmonies are all diatonic in the key of C, which as Drabkin points out is the key Verdi uses to indicate great courage in a character (Drabkin, 147), but when Manrico sings that a "mysterious feeling stay[ed] my hand," (Weaver, 91) the harmony modulates via E major to A minor, two particularly interesting chord choices (Ex. 4). Here the function of the harmonies are obviously quite simple: E major is the chromatic mediant of C major and dominant to A minor, while A minor functions as the relative minor to C major. Yet as Petrobelli has pointed out in his analysis of Ferrando's *racconto*, it is not unusual for Verdi to word paint with as little as the appearance of one chord amidst a large array of others (Petrobelli, 134), and the presence of E major triads serves both a functional (as the dominant to A minor) and symbolic purpose (as the sign of the conjoining of Manrico's two loves) (Drabkin, 147). Verdi built an aria almost entirely around dominant-tonic relationships, as if to exemplify the idea that Manrico is still a simple man at heart. The only complexity about him is the situation in which finds himself. But this still has not addressed the key choice of this aria. On several occasions throughout the opera, Verdi uses A minor to indicate the darker side of gypsy life, to show that these mountain people have more to them than simply the "anvil" chorus, and here the key choice exemplifies that something is amiss. The E major chords, which Drabkin notes symbolize Manrico's joint love for both Leonora and Azucena (Drabkin, 147), might imply that perhaps the "moto arcano" that kept him from slaying the Count came from the great potential for love inherent in Manrico. To kill the Count in his duel—presumably in front of Leonora—would have been

to scar his lover irreparably.

Curiously, this particular choice of key, common time signature, and the folk-nature of the melody makes a connection between *Mal Reggendo* and the Count's initial entrance on stage with *Tace la notte!*, which shares each of those qualities. The simplicity of the key of C helps establish them as similar folk heroes, and Verdi perhaps was trying to draw a stronger connection between the two brothers. As discussed before, Verdi draws numerous connections between the Count and the Troubadour. In these two arias for example, both characters make an effort to present themselves as noble, honorable men. But Verdi has a fairly large gap to bridge in the audience's mind if he truly wants the audience to understand that these rivals are not that different. The viewers see two men of different social classes, different upbringings, fighting for different armies, and battling over the love of the same woman. Verdi emphasizes here through the music that they are not so different, and that they still share some commonalities: a simple longing to be something greater, a desire for success presented in the simplest of manners.

To accentuate the similarities, Verdi must do much musically to improve the audience's opinion of the Count. Knowing that the libretto casts the Count quite simply as the antagonist, Verdi makes several notable efforts in the music to demonstrate that di Luna is not entirely evil. The use of over-dotted rhythms in *Per me ora fatale*, for example (Ex. 5), remind the audience that the man in question is in fact a nobleman; Verdi makes strong harmonic connections between the Count and Leonora as well. These two techniques help to remind the listener that the two men are two sides of the same coin, which returns to the idea of fatalism: with similar personalities, Verdi

develops markedly different means of expressing personal values, and both avenues yield the painful results witnessed at the conclusion.

The social gap between gypsy and established aristocrat arguably divides these men the most in the audience's eyes. Perhaps the reason Manrico is so comfortable living outside of the society he was technically born into is that his principles—honor and love—guide him much more than any sense of national identity. In that regard, it makes perfect sense that he is aligned with a rebel army, rather than with an established government. He feels no need for such formalities, as he has chosen to abide by a higher set of laws and principles. As stated initially, Manrico does not exert great influence on how the events around him unfold, but he does maintain control of his own character. Azucena, her mother, and the Count's father triggered the initial action of the opera; Leonora, by not accepting the Count's love, helps perpetuate it, and Manrico remains tangled in everyone else's affairs. As previously shown, he frequently fights his mother's battles; he duels the Count over Leonora and rushes to the convent to keep her from taking her vows. He loves both women—albeit admittedly in different capacities—and he feels a responsibility to help both, but he is always responding to an urgent call. He always finds himself one-step behind, trying to make something right rather than prevent something from going wrong. He stands in contrast to nearly every other character in the opera as a reactive rather than a proactive personality, yet, considering the opera's title, Manrico is purportedly the hero of *Il trovatore*. Why, then, is he always struggling to keep up with the fast-paced drama? This question returns to the issue of fatalism as well. Gutierrez and Verdi both very purposefully center their respective stories around an essentially strong man, yet in neither story is the man's strength enough to redirect fate away from

his demise. There exists a cold inevitability around Manrico's situation focused on his incapacity to express authority over his dilemma despite his values.

The audience sees next his second role as lover, along with the responsibilities with which that role entails. The audience can observe, along with Ines, that Leonora has apparently fallen in love with a total stranger. Hers and Manrico's only interaction, prior to Leonora's singing of *Tacea la notte placida*, was her crowning him after the tournaments, and she did not even learn his name there! But despite the fact that the two lovers barely know each other, and that their romance seems more of an infatuation, they push themselves to great lengths to maintain their love. Their love-sick blindness makes their inevitable demise that much more tragic - much like the death of Shakespeare's most famous star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet. It remains, however, a counter-intuitive tragedy. While some may argue that a tragedy is most poignant when a couple caught deeply in the willful bonds of true love perishes, that dynamic is predicated upon the belief that the couple enjoyed something truly meaningful while alive: they would have known true happiness before dying. Given the brevity of their introduction to each other and the short-lived romance that followed, the lovers in question for *Il trovatore* do not enjoy that same sensation. The tragedy in their circumstances lies in the fact that they threw away their lives for something less than true love. They gave themselves over to each other fully but ignorantly and enjoy a brief euphoric relationship, but it is simultaneously a shallow, empty one. Perhaps their infatuation could grow into something greater, but its potential has been denied the opportunity due to their premature demises. Their tragedy only further defines the fatalistic quality of the opera. Not only can Manrico not define his own circumstances, but his honor and passion for the

woman he loves fails to make any sort of impact against the inevitability of his execution. Try as he might, his principles cannot overcome his situation.

Their infatuation makes much more sense when one tries to decipher the ages of the characters. The greatest tragedy in this last scene, and the one that is most easily overlooked, is that these characters cannot be much older than their late teens or early twenties. Given that most opera singers do not reach the peaks of their careers in their twenties, and that men in their thirties, forties, and beyond frequently portray these characters, the effect is often lost on audiences, but the Count and Manrico are not much older than perhaps twenty. When the Count interrogates Azucena after her capture, he asks her if she remembers the “son of a count, stolen from his castle, fifteen years ago...” (Weaver, 105) For Manrico to not remember being kidnapped, to not recall any aspect of his former life, he would have had to be very young at the time that he was stolen. For the sake of argument, if one assumes that he was five at the oldest (an age when he probably would have been old enough to remember his former life anyway) he would be at most only twenty at the time the action of this play. Given that in all likelihood he was younger than five when he was kidnapped (Ferrando’s opening dialogue implies that he was young enough to still be nursing when he was visited by Azucena’s mother and shortly thereafter kidnapped), he would only be in his mid- to late-teens. In that light, his impetuous romance with Leonora makes much more sense. The two young lovers experience love-at-first-sight. It becomes even more reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet when one considers this point, and perhaps Verdi, an outspoken admirer of Shakespeare’s works, added this detail to Gutierrez’s story to echo the great British playwright.

Understanding Manrico's youthfulness also enhances one's understanding of his relationship with his mother as Verdi intended. Manrico is between fifteen and twenty years of age, on his way to adulthood, but still experiencing the wild emotions of a teenager. He needs his mother for guidance and stability in a life that otherwise has little. If the character were older, Verdi may have understated Manrico's relationship with Azucena somewhat more, but in *Il trovatore*, Manrico is still a boy who needs his mother. As such, Manrico's status as a victim of circumstance becomes that much more poignant when one realizes that his own mother had the ability to redefine his entire reality, simply by revealing to the Count their relationship as brothers; yet she does not do so, and thus Manrico's deep loyalty to the wrong person guides his fate more than any other force in the opera.

Verdi also carefully frames the context of Manrico and Azucena's relationship in relation to their respective roles as son and mother, and man and woman in a gypsy society. When the curtain rises for Act II, the audience observes that the setting has radically changed to a gypsy camp in the mountains. The chorus is singing raucously, and it seems that all present are enjoying the simplicity of their lifestyle. It clearly is a male-dominated society though, as the choir demands beverages from their female counterparts. The libretto reads as follows (Weaver, 85):

*Who brightens a gypsy man's days?
The gypsy maid!
Pour me a draught; strength and courage
The body and soul draw from drinking.
(The women pour wine into crude cups)*

Verdi's opening gesture of the second act illustrates that in this particular culture, the women wait on the men. Manrico's situation then stands out as particularly peculiar

because his only visible relationship in this society with a woman is between him and his mother, and Azucena clearly stands out as the dominant personality between the two of them. Why then is a man of such strong values, who lives in an already male-dominant society, apparently subservient to a woman? This point returns to her role as mother and his as son. In many such societies, the only way a woman can have a voice of her own is by becoming a mother. Azucena adopts Manrico as her own and cares for him deeply, and Manrico in turn tends to her at least as much as she does to him, if not more. In fact, Cammarano's libretto only tells the listener in passing about times when Azucena had to care for Manrico; such moments are never shown on stage. For example, after accidentally revealing to him that he may not in fact be her real son, Azucena consoles Manrico by reminding him that it was she who "discover[ed] your fleeting breath of life? and didn't maternal love hold it in your breast? And what care I devoted to healing all those wounds" (Weaver, 89) after an unseen battle at Pelilla. But this action is still distant in the minds of the audience. The audience never sees any such battle; they do not understand the nature and the gravity of Manrico's wounds or what it took for Azucena to tend to them. Instead, the audience sees the other side of their relationship: Manrico's passion to save his mother in *Di quella pira*, his attempt to comfort her and help her rest at the beginning of Act IV Scene 2, and his last, tearful farewell when the Count's men drag him to the executioner's block. Verdi's apparent primary goal in defining their relationship was to expound on Manrico's duty to his mother—his role as son in the relationship more than her role as mother. Ultimately this duty to his mother leads only to death.

The positioning of their relationship in the context of this masculine society,

however, does serve to define Azucena more and emphasize the fatalistic nature of Manrico's position. Azucena, growing old as an apparently single woman in a male-dominated society, could have easily grown to be an outcast; by adopting a son, she earns a voice in societal affairs. Her need for such a voice directly results from her desire to seek revenge on the Count. She needs Manrico as her means for vengeance, and so she constantly works to manipulate her "son," trying to always reinforce to him that the Count is the malevolent force in the opera through such dialogues as the one found in Act II Scene 1 wherein she responds to Manrico's explanation of why he spared the Count's life (Weaver, 91):

*But to that ingrate's spirit
Heaven said not a word!
Oh if fate should drive you
to fight that cursed man again,
Then follow, my son, like a God,
Follow then what I tell you to do:
Strike, plunge that blade
Up to its hilt in the villain's heart!*

Manrico agrees to Azucena's requests to kill the Count as well because his honor drives him to fulfill his role as son completely. He has a responsibility to serve her, but in moments such as this, Azucena manipulates his honor, so that he becomes her pawn in her greater game vengeance. Manrico still does not control his fate. He tries to stay true to his values, but ultimately Azucena turns him into a puppet, the marionette of her own vengeance.

As for Manrico's relationship to the Count, Gutierrez suggests that the Count is the younger of the two brothers. Verdi makes no mention of it though, and for good reason: if Manrico were the older of the two, the Count would unlikely be old enough to lead and would require a regent in his place. With no mention of it, the audience can assume any

age relation they wish between the two characters. In several respects it would make sense for the Count to be older. If Manrico was still in the care of a wet nurse when he was kidnapped, then he was perhaps one, two, or maybe three years old, and the Count's father died shortly thereafter—"His remaining days were few and sad" according to Ferrando's opening narrative (Weaver, 73)—then the Count would have been too young to remember his father's orders to search for his older brother. If the Count were the older of the two siblings then it would make considerably more sense. It also then makes each of Manrico's blows to the Count's ego throughout the opera that much more pointed, for the Count holds the title, is the elder brother, and has enjoyed the benefits of the life of privilege, but he perpetually finds himself outdone by his younger sibling who has none of the advantages the Count possesses.

Returning to the central romance, Manrico's love—if one can call it that—for Leonora is a chivalrous love (Budden, 75), a chaste love born out of dignity and honor, and capable of surviving the tumultuous nature of their relationship. In some ways, his love flourishes in their situation because it arises more out of duty than personal connection. His love for her directly relates to his role as soldier to Urgel. In *Ah si, ben mio* in Act III Scene 2, Manrico sings that Leonora's love has a direct impact on his performance on the battlefield (Weaver, 109):

*“My spirit will be more fearless,
My arm will be stronger,
and yet, if on the page
of my destiny it is written
that I must be among the victims,
pierced by the foe's steel,
As I draw my last breath
My thoughts will come to you,
and death will seem to me
only preceding you to heaven”*

While at first these words seem to be nothing more than words of a man in love, they imply a direct link in Manrico's mind between his love for Leonora and his performance as a soldier. His love then is inextricably connected to his sense of duty as a soldier, the knightly concept of chivalry, and thus relates back to his honor. One can hopefully understand by now the strong link between duty and honor in Manrico's character. He possesses certain responsibilities in each role—soldier, lover, and son—and by staying true to his honor he completes such responsibilities to his men, his love, and his mother in each of their respective capacities.

Due to the complex nature of the story line, however, these roles can often conflict harshly with each other, especially when Manrico risks sacrificing the love of Leonora in Act III Scene 2 so that he can fulfill his responsibilities to his mother, which he does without hesitation when the time comes. When Manrico learns that Azucena has been captured by the Count, he shifts his attention sharply and completely away from Leonora so that he can take on the overwhelming task of rescuing his mother. He rationalizes this quest by claiming, "before I [Manrico] loved you [Leonora], I was her [Azucena's] son."

Indeed, in matters involving Azucena, Manrico seems completely irrational. It is virtually impossible for him not to understand the fallacy of his relationship to Azucena when she explains it in Act II Scene 1, but there is such a desire to believe her inherent to his character that he allows himself to be swept up in her preposterous explanations to obscure the truth. Yet Manrico shows several signs of understanding the truth regarding him and the Count. First and foremost, he questions Azucena immediately upon the completion her story. While he tacitly believes her, or at least appeases her by not asking any further questions, one can see that she in no way makes explicit any sort of blood-

relationship between Manrico and herself. Rather she appeals to his sense of duty, the responsibility he has to a woman who has cared for him on so many occasions. It is a purely emotional appeal that fits perfectly in the context of the wildly emotional *tinta* this opera exhibits, but the appeal fails to convince any audience member's sense of reason about what remains a simple fact. Equally importantly, Manrico explains his reason for sparing the Count in their duel immediately after hearing all of Azucena's rationalizations. As he says, "un moto arcano" [a mysterious feeling] kept his hand from killing his rival—not the hand of God or some higher power, but a mysterious feeling. The force that stopped him from finishing the Count came from *within* Manrico. He is somehow aware of his connection to the Count, if only on some deeply subconscious level.

He chooses, however, to keep that thought suppressed. In fact, Manrico's dedication to his "mother" drives him so completely that it usurps even his own will to live. After his capture, he does not lack the opportunity to try to explain to the Count that they are in fact brothers. Perhaps he feels that di Luna would not believe him even if he tried to explain, but it seems more likely that his restraint is due more to his perceived responsibility to his mother. After all, she has cared for him growing up and tended to his wounds after battles, and as he explains at the end of Act III, he was Azucena's son before anything else—except for a brief time, now forgotten, when he was the son of the Count's father, making him and di Luna brothers, but the brothers have no shared memories apart from their more recent rivalry. To confront the Count with the truth could save Manrico from execution, but it would also directly undermine his relationship with his mother, who is sharply possessive of him and abhors the Count, despite the fact

that she knows they are brothers. In one of Manrico's rare opportunities to change the course of events in his favor, he is bound by a deep loyalty to his mother, and so yet again, his values have proven only to lead to his despair.

The impetus behind the conflict traces back a generation to the elder Count di Luna and Azucena's mother. Both of these characters have passed before *Il trovatore* takes place, but their ghosts still haunt their progeny. Azucena quite clearly represents her mother's ghost, and her dedication to ruin the di Luna family continues much farther than her initial crime of kidnapping Manrico when he was but a young child. She makes deliberate and obvious attempts to turn her "son" against his real brother. When Manrico recounts to her the story of the battle at Pelilla, she quite clearly chastises him for having spared di Luna's life in their duel at the end of Act I. She cries out to him "That was the thanks for his life, which in that single combat the monster was given by you! What strange pity for him blinded you?" (Weaver, 89).

This statement alone not only faults Manrico for sparing the Count, but it also personally lashes out at the Count, portraying him as ungrateful, unmerciful, and of much lower stature than that of Manrico. To Azucena, the Count is not worthy of even the least amount of respect. The fact that he possesses any authority at all, in her mind, is simply the result of the position into which he was born. He in no way compares to her son, who has so consistently been an icon of bravery, strength, and respect. The melodic and harmonic structure of this passage only further articulates her opinions of the Count. The modulation towards F minor - out of the Eb major in which Manrico had been so proudly singing in (a key which is also important to Leonora) - brings a darker tone to the phrase and opens up the possibility for greater chromaticism in the line. Each line

Azucena sings has a steady downward motion as it works its way down a descending F melodic minor scale. More importantly, f melodic minor represents for Azucena a key/scale more closely related to the Count's Db major, and the minor modality provides her with the perfect harmonic language with which to slander the Count. (Ex. 6)

Arguably, Azucena's need to diminish the authority and respectability of the Count may stem from her guilt for robbing Manrico of that same position. In Gutierrez's original play, Manrico is clearly indicated as being the older of the two brothers, and so he should have rightfully been the count, and according to custom of the time, the Count that the audience knows would have likely ended up in the clergy, adding a subtle bit of irony to his attempt to steal Leonora away from the convent. In light of his repeatedly turning his back on faith, the Count's actions and the resources he utilizes for many of them—e.g., his calling upon his army for personal feuds—undercut his morality to an even greater extent, making all the more poignant his exclamation at the beginning of Act IV that "Perhaps I'm abusing the power that the Prince gave me fully!" (Weaver, 115) This thus further establishes the stark polarity of the different moral routes that each character chooses to take in defining his destiny.

The fact that Manrico manages to resist killing the Count in their duel only further proves how good a man he has become. His mother's vitriolic language has not corrupted his heart to the point that he would kill his own brother. That single action represents one of the few moments in the opera where Manrico exercises some control of the situation, and ironically, all it succeeds in doing is allow the Count to survive to kill Manrico in the finale. Manrico, even at his very best, when he has more control over events than at any other time in the story, still fails to derail the train of events that will

lead to his death.

Manrico finds himself in a particularly difficult position when it comes to his women. Serving one seems to come always at the expense of the other, and yet he sincerely desires the best for both. The first time he is visibly presented with such a crisis comes at the end of Act II Scene 1. A messenger enters with the news that Leonora is about to take the veil, and Manrico is thrust into a state of distress. *Inoltra il pie* begins with Manrico's failing to register even a word his mother utters. Even her pensive "Mi vendica!" uttered hauntingly on a repeated C just before the entrance of the messenger seems to go unnoticed by Manrico, as he calls out on a horn in response to some of his men in the distance. Then, in a violent fervor emphasized by the driving staccato eighth notes in the violins, Manrico loses any sense of his surroundings as he takes in the news that Leonora, thinking he is dead, is about to swear herself over to God for the rest of her life. The repeated notes in the violins and the soft downbeats on one and three in the woodwinds and basses each add to the sense of urgency prevalent here (Ex. 7). The largely chromatic rise of whole and half notes in the cellos continues to augment the intensity until the heat of the moment expresses itself fully in a series of four D major arpeggios across the orchestra just before the fermata and Azucena's starting of *Perigliarti ancor languente*.

Azucena's entrance (Ex. 8) then marks an important switch in both key and meter, and Verdi defines Azucena and Manrico's relationship to Azucena by use of both of these devices. Manrico, torn between his mother and Leonora, is frequently pulled between the triple and quadruple meters respectively as well as several different tonal areas. Up to this point, Manrico's focus has been on his relationship to Leonora, as he had ignored his

mother's pleas if but briefly, hence the quadruple meter thus far. When Azucena captures his attention again, however, it is now in a driving 3/8. Verdi for the first 16 measures of *Periglianti* writes only for the strings to play on the second and third eighth notes of each measure, making the time somewhat less stable and drawing out of the music a greater sense of desperation in Azucena. She falsely tells him that "Your blood is my blood" in a shameless attempt to keep him close to her (Weaver, 93). She does not yet realize that no matter how much he loves Leonora, he will always feel indebted to his adoptive mother and care for her more. It is in his character; he cannot leave her, for as he insists to Leonora in Act III "before I [Manrico] loved you [Leonora], I was her [Azucena's] son" (Weaver, 111).

This issue of Manrico being pulled between the two women in his life pervades the entire the opera. Yet in Gutierrez's story and Cammarano's libretto, there is only one scene in which Manrico shares the stage with both Leonora and Azucena at the same time, and when this happens, Azucena sleeps, unaware of Leonora's presence. In general, the two authors seek to emphasize Manrico's desperate situation by showing that he always must leave one woman to see the other. He has to leave Leonora at the end of the Act I to return to the mountains to see Azucena, who he then abandons to prevent Leonora from becoming a nun, and then he must leave Leonora in the Act III to save Azucena from the Count. However, Verdi and Cammarano make a slight adjustment to Act IV Scene 2. Verdi still preserves each of the decisions Manrico faces previously in having to leave one woman to see the other, but when Leonora comes into the prison in which Manrico and Azucena are held in the Act IV finale, Verdi allows Azucena to sing, if not necessarily wake, in Leonora's presence. This marks the first time in the opera that

the two women have shared the stage, and Manrico is thus forced to divide his attention between the two in some manner. Guttierrez avoids this problem altogether by allowing Azucena to sleep through the part of the scene when Leonora is present (and alive). Verdi opts to involve Azucena, and he does this for perhaps strictly musical reasons, considering that doing so allows him to add another voice in an attempt to build the texture and subsequently the drama all the way to the very end.

The way Verdi structures the scene seems to imply that Manrico has for the first time in the entire opera chosen one woman (Leonora) over the other. Despite the fact that Azucena is singing, she is only half conscious of her surroundings. She sings simply of returning to the mountains and imagines Manrico lulling her to sleep with his dulcet songs. She sings completely detached from the drama happening beside her on stage: Leonora's breathing her last sighs in the arms of her lover as the Count enters to see he has been tricked. Azucena seems oblivious to the fact that she sits trapped in a prison, and her son is no longer actively assuaging her fears. Instead, he grasps onto the dying body of his lover. It is another moment when Manrico has tried living by his code of honor by striving boldly to protect the women in his life, but he cannot do anything to change the situation in which he finds himself. Leonora's lifeless body finally collapses to the floor of the prison, and the Count orders Manrico to the chopping block, at which point Manrico calls out his last farewell to his mother, who seems surprised by the situation as she awakens from her trance-like reverie. The Count lets her see Manrico dead before he sends her to the stake at which point she points out to him with the intense last words of the work, that in an attempt to seek vengeance for his own family, the Count has fulfilled her dreams of revenge and must live now with all the guilt. The

curtain falls to a close with the orchestra holding an Eb minor chord, a shocking distance away from the E major chord that began the opera.

Why did Verdi choose Eb minor as his final chord in *Il trovatore*? Numerous musicologists have struggled with this question, some—such as Siegmund Levarie—attempt to make some connection between the E major opening of the overture being an enharmonic equivalent to Eb minor's Neapolitan chord—Fb major (Levarie, 143), but the theoretical relationship is insignificant here. Rather, there are apparent dramatic reasons behind the conclusion, and these motivations tie back to the issue of fatalism at the heart of the opera. Leonora, as Drabkin observes, is generally associated with the key of Ab major, but taking Drabkin's tonal work one step further will show that in times of distress—see for example her Act IV duet with the Count, *Qual Voce* (Ex. 9), Leonora frequently moves to the Ab's dominant key of Eb major—a tonal move that takes her farther from the Count's Db major and marginally closer to Manrico's C major. Most importantly, it signals in her—like any dominant-tonic relationship—a state of dissonance, a need for some sort of emotional resolution. Verdi's opting for Eb's parallel minor (a relationship to Ab major that is simple enough to realize with the use of some mode mixture) symbolizes the mourning of her death, in addition to Manrico's and Azucena's.

The progressive tonality from beginning to end of the opera ultimately relates to Manrico as well. Jonathan Lewsey has optimistically made the claim in his *Who's Who in Verdi* that Leonora and Manrico are perhaps reunited in heaven (312), but this is speculative. Given the earlier Catholic overtones in the opera (i.e. Leonora's desire to become a nun), one must assume that Gutierrez had Catholic doctrine in mind when he wrote the final scene. In the strictest interpretation of such a case, Leonora's committing

suicide would not allow the character often referred to as an angel to pass through the pearly gates. Despite Manrico's and Leonora's best efforts, all the characters meet tragic fates. Eb minor simply stands as one last effort for Verdi to tonally demonstrate the ever-present fatalism.

Manrico's most important moment in terms of character development, especially in relation to the two women, arrives during the *Miserere* in Act IV (Ex. 10). He interrupts Leonora (although he presumably cannot hear her singing from outside the walls of the Count's prison tower) and shifts the music to "her" key of Ab major. This also marks an abrupt transition from simple to compound meter, which a review of Azucena's Act II arias – the 3/8 *canzone*, *Stride la vampa* and the 6/8 *cavatina*, *Condotta ell'era in ceppi* – demonstrate the correlation between triple meter and the gypsy woman. As the Troubadour sings his farewells to Leonora, the text indicates he has finally come to terms with the inevitability of his situation and he displays a new understanding of the combined love he has for both women—that is, he tonally displays a pure love for Leonora and Azucena's maternal love has been subtly absorbed into his character metrically—all as he is mentally preparing himself for his execution.

Even despite this moment of acceptance, his death comes not in any peaceful or redemptive fashion; it instead crashes in with all the clangor, fury, and cynicism one ought to expect from this work. Manrico's final moments arrive at the hands of a brother whose life he spared. Death tastes only bitter to Manrico, who witnesses his lover poison herself and then is torn from his half-conscious mother as he calls out a haphazard goodbye on his way to the block, to meet a sentence dealt to him by his own brother.

By the time this finale arrives, the audience has likely lost any sense of Manrico's

and the Count's parallel personalities, but one must remember that the ill-fated brothers initially were presented as similar characters. In recalling their common lineage, one can observe a number of similar characteristics. Both are leaders of their respective armies, although neither is the highest ranking. In fact, both are subservient to unseen generals—the Count to the Prince and Manrico to the rebel leader Urgel. Both fall in love with the same woman, and both try to woo her by singing outside her window each evening. The Count and Manrico also each endure a conflicted relationship with a parent figure: the Count tries to elude his father's instructions to find his brother by focusing his effort on Leonora, and Manrico finds himself torn between loyalty to his mother and to his lover. Both even present themselves with jealous hearts, proud egos, and a lack of patience that will lead to their inevitable downfalls. Yet the Count's fall from grace must be attributed to the Count himself (and partially to Azucena), and an in-depth analysis of his character will reveal toxins in his personality that ultimately lead to the outcome. What must be remembered is that the Count's Machiavellian actions are intended to further his own agenda. The fatalism that pervades the opera though dictates that his best efforts will fail similarly to Manrico's, and the ending is undoubtedly as tragic for the Count as it is for any other character.

At the root of the tension remains the matter of honor, and this becomes the greatest difference between the two characters. As previously demonstrated, Manrico's membership in a lower caste of society allows only upward social mobility. The Count, on the other hand, starts at the top of the social hierarchy and so only stands to lose. His honor is his reputation and his pride, and to him, honor must be *maintained* at all costs. This yields a superficial quality to many of his actions, a criticism not leveled at Manrico,

whose every action seems to ring with dignity. The Count cannot risk losing his social standing or damaging his image, particularly not in a time of civil war. The worry of losing power haunts him relentlessly, which explains his jealousy of his rival's winning Leonora's love, his need to prove himself in a duel and in battle, and his hasty, thoughtless actions throughout the opera. He should succeed in all of these endeavors—the battles, duels, and rivalries—as well; after all, the Count has the advantage of his social standing, wealth, and military power, but he consistently finds himself overshadowed by his younger sibling, Manrico. Di Luna's selfishness leads him to commit acts of sheer lunacy, e.g., storming the cloisters, insisting on a duel despite its antagonizing the woman he claims to love, and so on. Only at one point does he show any remorse for his Machiavellian leadership style, when in Act IV Scene 1, he ponders "Perhaps I'm abusing the power that the Prince gave me fully," but then he refuses to take accountability for it since "that's what you [Leonora] drive me to do!"

This lack of accountability plagues the Count's personality. If Manrico represents the positive results of the medieval honor code they live by, the Count represents all the negative aspects: the hubris that masks obvious shortcomings and insecurities, the constant thirst for power and irrational thought processes that accompany such ego, and the sense of entitlement associated with the luxury of soldiers and servants who wait on aristocrats. In the first encounter between the two brothers, Manrico seems to know this already and mocks the Count, goading him to "call the guards and hand your rival over to the executioner's blade" (Weaver, 81) rather than meet him in a duel like an honorable man. Manrico effectively inverts the social scheme by calling the Count out on his reliance upon his men, his court, and his servants. The gypsy ridicules the nobleman who

cannot live up to his title.

But this pride is by no means di Luna's greatest shortcoming. The Count struggles to reconcile his goals with his deep-seated fears and the actual reality of the situation. His primary, internal antagonists—his need to seek vengeance against Azucena, and his bloated ego which is repeatedly insulted by Manrico's successes and the desire to have a respectable woman to marry—all sit deep within his own character, but he projects them onto the rest of the characters via both the music – such as through his dictating the key of the Act I Scene 1 trio - and the use of his resources as a count. This ability to express his woes outwardly is presumably a benefit unique to his position as a count. He has political and military power inherent to his position, and he uses those powers to find Azucena, seek out Urgel's army and engage them, and try to persuade or even force, as at the cloisters, Leonora to marry him.

This selfishness is born partly out of the fear that accompanies many sibling rivalries. He feels a great burden to prove himself, to measure up to an elusive, impossibly high standard which will allow him to define himself as superior to his sibling. To make the emotional complexes from which he suffers even greater, his father has charged him with the task of finding his brother who disappeared when they were just children. Thus, while his actions consistently betray the fact that he has no interest in his brother whatsoever, he has a responsibility to his father to follow through with his dad's last wishes. Yet he ignores any such quest to find his brother. In fact, Ferrando seems much more interested in finding the Count's brother, or at the very least Azucena, than the Count does.

The Count substitutes this search for his brother with his quest to win the love of

Leonora, but his desire for Leonora has very little to do with Leonora as a person. Rather, as a ruler he needs a wife, a point that Gutierrez emphasizes more strongly in the original play. Leonora represents a potential wife but also a challenge he must conquer in order to prove himself. Her refusal simply makes her that much more appealing to him. In the recitative leading to *Il balen del suo sorriso*, the Count places at least as much emphasis on the obstacles he has had to overcome to make her his as he does on his actual love for her (Weaver, 95):

*My rival killed, every obstacle
To my wishes
Seemed to have fallen;
Now she prepares a new one ...the altar...
Ah no! Leonora shall not belong to others!
Leonora is mine!*

Chasing the ghost of her love is the mission he has charged himself with in place of searching for his long lost brother, but even this assignment he pursues with only half-hearted efforts. At the slightest sight of danger or challenge, he abandons his quest to win her over, as witnessed in the Act I trio *Di geloso amor sprezzato*. Leonora tries to prevent the Count from worsening the situation, but he instead blames her for his need to kill Manrico, which envy has caused to become the *raison d'être* of the Count. Seeing Leonora go to Manrico enrages him almost instantly, and her cries for the two men to avoid confrontation go unheeded as the Count's "spurned and jealous love burns in [him] with a terrible flame!" (Weaver, 83) Jealousy is his only master, and it rules his heart with an iron grip.

The irony of *Di Geloso* is that the Count is in fact pushing Leonora away with his insistence to duel with Manrico. His need to prove himself as a man, as a warrior and leader, draws him away from what he superficially claims to need: the love of Leonora.

Verdi makes this clear throughout the trio at the end of Act I by way of writing into the score specific stage blocking: Leonora throws herself at Manrico when she realizes her mistake, and the two of them sing melodically together throughout the scene whereas the Count is physically separated from them and clearly opposes the two lovers musically (Ex. 11). The reason for the Count's isolation has little to do with Leonora. Naturally, his character would much rather be with her than see her in the arms of Manrico (a fact he makes known clearly in *In braccio al mio rival!*), but he is separated from the other two characters because of the feud with Manrico, not because of his unwillingness to be with Leonora.

Verdi does more, however, than just specify the stage blocking. When the Count is first introduced at the beginning of Act I Scene 1, he is announced by staggered entrances in the strings, building from the bottom up and all in the key of C major (Ex. 12). There is significant chromaticism in the line despite the simplicity of the rhythm, and while the orchestration is always introducing higher pitched instruments, the general motion of the line is downwards. This contrary motion in his instrumental introduction betrays many of the Count's qualities in a manner much more effective than Ferrando's opening at the beginning of the opera. The conflict between the instrumentation and the direction of line belies the natural Janus-faced nature of the Count. All that he claims to want—the love of Leonora, finding his brother, and maintaining his rule—he continuously undermines, if only subconsciously. His entrance is in C major as well, the key symbolizing “hardiness and courage” (and usually Manrico) in this opera, a fact that smacks of irony. Perhaps the Count self-consciously views himself as being a man of great courage, but his moments of bravery, if one could call them that, are driven not by a high-minded sense of

righteousness, but self-conscious pride. The chromaticism indicates something further, though, and that is that the Count's inhabiting of C major is tainted in a way that Manrico's is not. If C major represents courage the way Drabkin claims, then the Count is incapable of singing in a "pure" (that is strictly diatonic) C major for at heart, he is a coward. His storming the cloisters to make Leonora his own is an apt example of this. His rival was supposedly dead, yet he still felt the need to take a large number of soldiers with him to seize a building full of nuns. Compounding the humor of the situation, he discovered that not only was he mistaken in his belief of Manrico's death, but he failed to bring enough soldiers with him to the convent. Manrico makes off with the girl yet again in arguably the most humiliating moment of the opera for the Count.

At no point does the Count ever enjoy the blessing of the audience's admiration. If he does, it is largely because Verdi has deceived the audience into thinking he is the Troubadour. Indeed, the libretto only establishes him as the Count when Manrico introduces himself as Manrico. This gesture stands as simultaneously the most striking and most subtle definition of the brothers' relationship, for the audience only learns that the Count is the Count because he is *not* Manrico. Simply put, the Count's entire character is meant to be contrasted to Manrico, and negatively so. He cannot measure up to his brother even if they do possess a number of similarities. It is quintessential sibling rivalry: one sibling is always compared in relief to the other.

Verdi continues to depict the siblings in contrasts, but he does so following the same pattern used to introduce Manrico: description, appearance, and finally verbal identification. The first description of the Count comes in the chorus' response to Ferrando's first line of recitative in Act I Scene 1: "Jealousy's snakes are writhing in [the

count's] breast." The information taken in about the Count then goes as such - the audience discovers he is a count, then that he is in love with a woman he cannot have, and then that his heart is a jealous one. This all takes place within the span of eleven measures at the very beginning of the opera (Ex. 13). His moral weaknesses are accentuated immediately by the Chorus' first line of the opera and only degenerate further as the story progresses whereas Manrico's honor is constantly bolstered through various characters' descriptions of him and by his own actions later in the opera. The two brothers' character trajectories in regards to their honor and morality relate inversely: Manrico always is gaining steam in the audience's eyes while the Count steadily loses the listener's respect with each passing scene.

Yet, surprisingly, Verdi uses the music to alleviate some of the negative opinions of the count as well, particularly through the use of double-dotting as mentioned before. Such rhythmic gestures support the Count's social standing in a simple, if subtle, manner. Verdi also chooses to represent the Count through the key of Db major, which is markedly closer to Leonora's Ab major than Manrico's C major. Why does Verdi choose such similar keys for the two of them, when it is clear from the beginning of the story that the Count will never have Leonora? On one level, it contributes to the bitterness of the fatalism even more: the Count is so close, yet he cannot taste the forbidden fruit of her love.

Nevertheless, the libretto is by no means kind to the Count's reputation. As Ferrando progresses into his *racconto*, *Di due figli vivea padre beato*, the listeners gather more information about the Count, but very little of it is positive. Ferrando mentions the story of the Count's brother and declares that the Count is driven by a need for vengeance

for his brother Garcia's death. This, coupled with his desire for Leonora, provides the character with the second of two motives that dictate all his actions. Both of these—the need for revenge and the need for a wife—can be reduced further to the Count's possessing a sense of duty similar to that of his brother Manrico. Di Luna's is a sense of duty to his social standing though. He must find a wife, as any respectable man of his position would have a wife and hope for strong sons to carry on the family name. The duty of his position requires a great loyalty to family ties as well, and to fail to avenge his father would be insulting to his father's legacy and disgraceful for him. In sum, the Count's motives for fulfilling his roles as a ruler and as a son come from external sources—social need, father's orders—whereas Manrico's motives for succeeding in his roles are internal—love, honor, duty.

The irony in the Count's motives lies in the fact that neither is in fact real. Leonora does not love him, nor does he in fact truly love Leonora. She is but a mere trophy to him, a prize he can win, and thinks he should given his aristocratic standing. He repeatedly feels that brute force can somehow win her over, that storming the cloisters before she takes her vows will somehow make her his. Even just before the end of Act I, she pleads for him to not duel with Manrico right there, and he decides to carry on because his ego usurps his "love" for her. His penchant for cruelty and his cold disregard for her opinions simply stand to objectify her in his eyes.

As for Garcia, the audience learns in Act II Scene 1 that he in fact never died. Garcia is the man we have come to know as Manrico, the foil to the Count, so the crime that the Count must avenge was never perpetrated. But the Count, like his brother, cannot exercise any sort of patience or restraint. He never held any sort of trial, nor did

his father. He never bothered seeking out what the facts were—to find out that his brother lived—just as Manrico did not initially investigate fully the details behind Leonora’s attempt to free him—he missed that crucial detail that she poisoned herself. They are true Romantics whose emotions usurp their logic. Granted, to be fair, the Count did not have any motivation to re-investigate the burning of Azucena’s son. The evidence seemed obvious to all involved. Regardless, the point remains the same: these are men of passion, not of logic, and ultimately these high-running passions will lead to their downfalls despite their expression of such emotions in either positive or negative fashions.

Regardless, the Count’s sending Manrico to the block had virtually nothing to do with the supposed death of Garcia. He ordered the execution out of pride and jealousy, vices both of them possess in abundance. Leonora still loved Manrico, and she lied to and manipulated the Count in an effort to free him. Leonora had duped him, and through this, the Count found himself outdone yet again by his rival sibling. At this point, the Count finally realized he never could have had Leonora, and never will (after all, she just poisoned herself). He realizes that he does not measure up to any of the standards Manrico has set. The Count lost the duel outside Leonora’s window, the encounter at the cloisters, the love of the woman, and if he does not act quickly, he may lose his soldier’s respect. The egocentric ruler that he remains cannot allow that. Of course, with the last words of the opera, he suffers defeat again, this time coming at his own inadvertent hand. Azucena announces that he served as the instrument of her mother’s vengeance. In executing Manrico, he committed the crime Azucena had failed to do fifteen years prior and left himself, flabbergasted, as the only survivor of the four main characters. And so

the fatalism has caught up with him. His fate typically seems more deserving, though, given his dramatic antagonism towards all the other characters. Many audiences are not sympathetic towards the Count, and surely pinning the blame on him for much of the story is not difficult by any means. But what the Count's character goes to show is that his "bad" choices make as little impact on the quest to avert the tragedy coming at the end as Manrico's "good" choices.

Verdi and Cammarano omitted a key detail from the original play, and it becomes apparent as the curtain drops. What was the Count's name? He is only ever referred to by his title in the opera, not as Don Nuno as Gutierrez called him. As the opera ends, he proclaims in horror, "And I still live!" (Weaver, 127) as he sees that his self-righteousness has led him nowhere positive. He has killed his own brother, a woman who in fact did not murder his brother, and, indirectly, the woman he adored. His title alone remains for him in this world. Yet the title had always been an obstacle for him. After all, the chain of events that preceded this revelation did so by and large because of his influence, an influence he only had because of the position he held. At this moment, he finally faces the dire responsibility of his actions. No longer can he blame the course of events on Azucena's crimes or his father's orders. He had control over sending Manrico and Azucena to their deaths; he had the choice to heed Leonora's words. He had always had that power. He simply lacked the self-control to use it justly and rationally. Ultimately, all that remains for the Count is his title, one which served as the means to this tragic end by enabling him to drown his reason in emotions and enforce rash decisions on those around him.

Standing somewhat as an anomaly to much of this is that the Count still seems a

victim of circumstance at the end of the opera, not unlike Manrico. But Verdi makes fairly clear gestures through the plot and through the music that the Count does exert the greatest control over events. In the Act I trio, the first of only two times that the entire love triangle appears on stage together, the Count leads a crucial key change despite the presence of both the lovers. As Leonora pleads for the Count not to duel with Manrico there and then, he refuses her with an adamant “No!” that serves as a common-tone modulation taking the trio from E minor to Db major. With the key change, the Count takes charge as the sole voice on stage, explaining that Leonora, by loving Manrico has condemned him to die. So while Verdi may have specified stage blocking that clearly antagonizes the Count, he does make clear that the two lovers are occupying the Count’s tonal turf by continuing the trio in the key of Db, the key the Count settled on (Ex. 14).

This moment exemplifies that paradox of the Count’s mental state. He musically takes charge and politically holds power, but his words betray a man who cannot control himself. The Count is a victim—the victim of his own “spurned and jealous love.” His inability to set aside his ego for even a moment enables the story to unfold in the manner that it does. Responsibility for the beginning of the drama belongs to Azucena, if not even her mother and the Count’s father, but the force perpetuating the tension across all the years that have passed comes in the wild emotions of the Count.

The opera ultimately serves as a moral dissertation. As Verdi cycles through themes of love, family, honor, duty, and vengeance, he displays the overwhelming power each of those principles exerts over human behavior, through the two male leads most specifically. The audience can enjoy for two hours the thrill of watching the underdog troubadour steadily undermine the Count’s pride and power through his own displays of

strength in battle, and devotion to those he loves, but in the end, as low as the Count ends in the audience's eyes, as low as he may even be in the eyes of the characters around him, he still possesses the ability to bring his brother down with him. Not only that, but he allows himself to be used by Azucena to exact her vengeance upon himself. The story ends in a dramatic scene of moral depravity: youthful infatuation has led to Leonora's suicide, a need for vengeance has allowed Azucena tacitly to send her own "son" to the chopping block at the orders of his own brother, and the Count, with no dignity left by the end, has insisted on Azucena's execution. Everyone has lost, regardless of whether they may have deserved such an end.

The poignancy of the tragedy lies in the fact that these characters fought relentlessly for their goals, but when pushed on the matters, those with the power to change the outcome of events failed to do so. For all the emphasis that Verdi put on honor, duty, and love when he sketched the Count and Manrico, his final artistic statement is a cold one: "What difference does it make?"

In sum, *Il trovatore* takes tragedy to a much more extreme and in many ways stark level by creating through both the music and the text a cold world where one's character has no impact on the outcome of his or her life. There are no comforting last words to alleviate the sorrow such as those with which Shakespeare closed *Hamlet*, and Verdi offers no apologies for the cynicism he displays here. Due to the pervasive fatalism in the opera, *Il trovatore* can only be ranked among the darkest of tragedies, and for that, it must thank its two male leads.

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