

L'ALTA NAIKENÇA DEL REI EN JAUME
BY ROBERT GERHARD.
AN APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT OF CANTATA

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ABSTRACT

In 1932 Robert Gerhard composed *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*, based on a poem written by Josep Carner. Designated as a *cantata* by Gerhard himself, the work is set for soprano, baritone, chorus, and orchestra and narrates how King Peter II of Aragon, by means of deception, engendered his son, who was to become King James I the Conqueror.

This paper focuses on the term *cantata* and why Gerhard's work may or may not be suitably designated by that word. Throughout history, the terms *cantata* and *oratorio* have often been used as synonyms, but they are not the same.

Twentieth-century composers were not very strict in the use of this word to identify their works and many cantatas of the period were, in fact, oratorios. An analysis of the text and of how the poem is set to music will eventually show the extent to which the term *cantata* may be appropriately applied to Gerhard's composition.

KEYWORDS: cantata, oratorio, opera, twentieth century, Robert Gerhard, *La malvestat d'Oriana* (Oriana's Wickedness), Josep Carner, Antoni Ros-Marbà, *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* (*The Noble Birth of the Sovereign Lord King James*), medieval Catalan chronicles.

L'ALTA NAIKENÇA DEL REI EN JAUME, DE ROBERT GERHARD.
UNA APROXIMACIÓ AL CONCEPTE DE CANTATA

RESUM

Basat en un poema escrit per Josep Carner, Robert Gerhard va compondre el 1932 *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*. Titulada pel mateix Gerhard com a cantata, l'obra és per a soprano, baríton, cor i orquestra i narra la història de com Pere II d'Aragó, enganyat, va concebre el seu fill, Jaume I el Conqueridor.

Aquest article se centra en el terme *cantata* i per què l'obra de Gerhard pot (o no?) ser designada amb aquest nom. Al llarg de la història, les expressions *cantata* i *oratori* sovint han estat utilitzades com a sinònims, tot i que no són exactament el mateix.

Els compositors del segle XX no van ser gaire estrictes en l'ús del terme exacte per identificar les seves obres, i moltes cantates del moment eren, de fet, oratoris. L'anàlisi del text i de com el poema ha estat posat en música han de mostrar fins a quin punt el terme *cantata* és apropiat a la composició de Gerhard.

PARAULES CLAU: cantata, oratori, òpera, segle XX, Robert Gerhard, *La malvestat d'Oriana*, Josep Carner, Antoni Ros-Marbà, *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*, cròniques medievals catalanes.

INTRODUCTION

Robert Gerhard composed in 1932 a cantata based on a poem by Josep Carner, *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* (*The Noble Birth of the Sovereign Lord King James*), in which the story of the conception of King James I the Conqueror is related. The episode is not an invention and can be read in three of the four great chronicles of Catalan medieval historiography.¹ The first of them, *Llibre dels feits*, was written by the king himself and although it contains the earliest recorded mention of the incident, the author does not indulge in details and offers only a very brief account of the matter.² In the other two chronicles, those by Bernat Desclot³ and Ramon Muntaner,⁴ the story is told in much greater detail

1. Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, I: *Llibre dels feits del rei En Jaume*, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2008; Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, II: *Crònica de Bernat Desclot*, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2008; Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, III: *Crònica de Ramon Muntaner*, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2011; Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, IV: *Crònica de Pere III el Cerimoniós*, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2014; Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, V: *Apèndix i índex*, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2016. The fourth chronicle, by King Peter III, does not report the story of the birth of James I; it begins around the late thirteenth century and the early fourteenth, i. e., a hundred years after his birth.

2. Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, I: *Llibre dels feits...*, pp. 52-54. In this first chronicle the facts are recounted briefly. James I explains only that his parents, who were not living together at the time, met near Montpellier and as a consequence and without giving any further details of the encounter the queen became pregnant.

3. Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, II: *Crònica de Bernat Desclot*, pp. 42-47. According to Desclot's account, it was the queen's idea (and not the counselors') to contrive a plan to hoax her husband, King Peter II. It was also she (and not the notaries) who finally unveiled the deception.

4. Josep MASSOT I MUNTANER (ed.), *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, III: *Crònica de Ramon Muntaner*, pp. 25-30. The beginning of Ramon Muntaner's chronicle focuses on the facts of the conception and birth of King James I. Chapter III presents the counselors' concerns for Peter's separation from the queen, leaving her without an heir, therefore they devise a plan to secure the royal succession. In Chapter IV the people of Montpellier gather in the church and pray together for seven days, from Monday

and, especially in the case of the latter, they clearly became the sources used by Carner to compose his poem on the subject.

The story can be summarized as follows: the Council of the city of Montpellier, seeking to create a regular royal line of succession, decided that Peter II, King of Aragon and Count of Barcelona (referred to as the Catholic), should marry Mary of Montpellier, the daughter of William VIII of Montpellier and Eudokia Komnene, grandniece of Emperor Manuel I of Constantinople. Despite her youth, Peter II was not to be Maria's first husband: two others had preceded him. Maria's stepmother, wishing to prevent her from becoming the queen, endeavored to find her as many husbands as would be necessary to keep the crown from her head. The first one, Barral, Viscount of Marseille, married Mary in 1194, when she was only 12 years old. He died, however, shortly after the wedding. The second spouse was Bernard IV, Count of Comminges. This time, once again, Mary was not to enjoy an enduring and happy marriage: the count divorced her a few years later and he died in 1201. With Mary once again free, the Council proposed Peter II as her third husband. The King of Aragon liked the idea as he saw in it a very good chance to keep the County of Roussillon and the Occitan lands. They married on June 15, 1204 and, during the first months of their marriage, they lived fairly happily both as a couple and as monarchs. They reigned together and all the decisions concerning the kingdom were taken by mutual consent. This situation did not last, however, and the king began to act on his own, without taking his wife's views into consideration. What's more, he was a man who easily became enamored of young women, so he soon lost interest in his spouse. Peter II finally became estranged from Mary, leaving her without a male heir (she had, however, two previous daughters, Mathilde and Petronille, with Bernard IV). The Council of Montpellier, with Maria's assent, then contrived a plan to secure, by way of deception, a royal successor. A romantic tryst was arranged for the king with a pretty maiden who was said to have fallen in love with him. But unknown to him, the woman whom the monarch was actually to find in the royal bed would be none other than his wife herself. In order to preserve the contrivance, the sovereign was told that his lover wished the room to remain in complete darkness while the encounter took place. Peter II accepted this request and did not realize that he had been hoaxed until the next morning when, unfortunately for him, the deed had been done. Nine months later, on February 2, 1208, Mary gave birth to her son, who was to become King James I the Conqueror.

The version of this story written by Josep Carner appeared in two different publications, the first of which was the Catalan periodical *La Veu de Catalunya*⁵

to Sunday (the day of the appointed encounter of the king and the queen). Chapter V relates how the king passes the night with the queen and how, in the morning, the notaries enter the royal chamber to certify that the monarchs have been in the same bed. Peter II then leaves the city. In Chapter VI the queen, now pregnant, remains in Montpellier and nine months later she gives birth to her son.

5. Josep CARNER, "Balada de l'alta naixença del rei En Jaume", *La Veu de Catalunya*, XVIII, 3152 (February 1st, 1908), morning edition, p. 3.

on February 1, 1908. James I had been born on February 2, 1208 and the newspaper celebrated the seven-hundredth anniversary of the sovereign's birth with a two-page report on the king⁶ the day before Candlemas. The second version was published as an independent chapter in Carner's medievalizing poem *La malvestat d'Oriana* (Oriana's Wickedness), issued in 1910.⁷ There is also a revised third version dated 1920. Slight differences may be observed between the editions of 1908 and 1910 and this will permit us to determine which version was used, for each number, to compile the libretto used by Gerhard. However, the revised version of 1920 must likewise be taken into account as it is significantly different from the other two. It contains an added part, not to be found in the previous editions of 1908 and 1910, in which the scene of the substitution is included. This demonstrates that the origin of Gerhard's libretto is, indeed, the revised poem. The scene in which the maiden is changed for the queen is the central part of the cantata so it must be assumed that when Gerhard started to think about composing his work, he somehow had in mind the last version of Carner's poem.

According to some sources, in the early 1930s Carner suggested to Gerhard that the latter should create a work based on one of his poems. These are Geoffrey J. Walker's words, concerning the genesis of the cantata:

Roberto Gerhard's widow tells of how at some time in the early 1930's, when the Gerhards were still living in Barcelona, their friend Josep Carner — perhaps the foremost poet of the Catalan language in the twentieth century and dubbed by his contemporaries "the prince of poets" — complained to the composer that Gerhard had no yet honored him by setting any of his verses to music. Gerhard readily accepted this invitation, couched as it was in the form of a mild reproach! It was Carner himself who suggested the text to be used, a specially reworked version of a poem which had first appeared in a sort of pastiche medieval novel entitled *La malvestat d'Oriana*, written by Carner in 1910. The redrafted poem and the new Gerhard cantata received the title *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* (*The Noble Birth of the Sovereign Lord King James*).⁸

Recent research, however, seems to contradict this idea. There are no extant records that can confirm that Carner urged Gerhard in any way to compose something based on one of his poems, and less still that it was the writer himself who prepared and handed over the version that was to be used as a libretto. Sánchez de Andrés⁹ clearly shows that when Gerhard began to compose his can-

6. "A la Glòria del rey Jaume I", *La Veu de Catalunya*, XVIII, 3152 (February 1st, 1908), morning edition, pp. 3-4.

7. Josep CARNER, *La malvestat d'Oriana*, Barcelona, Bartomeu Baxarias, collection "De Tots Colors", 1910.

8. Geoffrey J. WALKER and David DREW, "Gerhard's Cantata", *Tempo*, 139 (1981), p. 12. See also Joaquim HOMS, *Robert Gerhard and His Music*, edited by Meirion Bowen, Trowbridge, The Anglo-Catalan Society, 2000, p. 36.

9. Leticia SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura: El compositor Robert Gerhard*, Madrid, Antonio Machado Libros, 2013, pp. 356-363.

tata, Carner did not know anything about it. The musician, in a letter addressed to the poet in April 1933, explained that he was setting to music the story he had read in *La malvestat d'Oriana* concerning the birth of King James I, and that although it was not yet finished, the work had already been awarded a prize in the Hertzka competition in Vienna.¹⁰ He also told the poet that the premiere of the last two movements was to take place on June 10, 1933 in Amsterdam, and that he would be very pleased if Carner could attend the concert. To continue working on his cantata, however, Gerhard needed some changes to be made in the original poem, so in a new letter sent in April 1935 he asked Carner whether he would agree to introduce some modifications in his version of the story. Another interesting point about the content of this letter is that the cantata, as conceived by Gerhard, was to be much longer than the composition we know today. The musician states that his work, as he had conceived it, was to consist of fourteen different numbers, and that the first nine were already finished. He even reported in his letter the titles of the completed sections.¹¹ Surprisingly, only the first five numbers are extant today.

The cantata, as the composer himself designated his work, is for soprano, baritone, chorus, and orchestra.¹² The present study aims to understand the meaning of the term *cantata* and to consider the appropriateness of this term as applied to this particular work. Many of Gerhard's contemporaries wrote vocal compositions that were also designated by their composers with terms such as *cantata*, *oratorio* or *opera*. Concerning the terminology employed, some questions may be raised: do all those words mean exactly the same? Are there any significant differences between all these genres? Is Gerhard's work actually a cantata? Did those expressions have clear-cut meanings in the early twentieth century? To answer all these questions, it will be necessary in the first place to consider the libretto, its parts, its characters, and how the personages involved interact with one another. The study of the music will show how Gerhard conceived his work. An analysis of all these elements will make it possible to eventually assess whether the term *cantata* is applicable or not to *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*.

10. Leticia SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura...*, pp. 358-359. See also "Noticiari. Els nostres músics a l'estranger", *Revista Musical Catalana. Butlletí de l'Orfeó Català*, 354, 30th year (June 1933), p. 271, and Joaquim HOMS, *Robert Gerhard and His Music*, p. 36.

11. As quoted in Leticia SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura...*, pp. 359-361, the titles of the first five sections are as we know them today, except for the second number in which the composer doubts between "Canticle" or "Divino" (he finally opted for the latter). Sections six to nine are reported as follows: "Nocturne and Scene", "Aria", "Recitative", and "Hymn".

12. At least this is what Gerhard asks for in the existing score containing only the first five numbers. The sixth section, "Nocturne and Scene", and according to what the composer tells Carner in his letter of April 1935, is for "Alto solo, later, chorus, final soprano solo" (see Leticia SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura...*, p. 359). It seems that Gerhard was thinking of more than two soloists for his complete cantata, at least a soprano, an alto, and a baritone.

JOSEP CARNER'S POEMS AND THE LIBRETTO SET BY GERHARD

The story of the conception and birth of King James I appeared, as has been previously mentioned, in 1908 in *La Veu de Catalunya*; then, a short time later as a part of Josep Carner's work *La malvestat d'Oriana*, published in 1910; and lastly, in 1920, when the writer revised and extended his poem. In his second version, the author intended to create a work that resembled a medieval composition and hence he used an archaic form of the Catalan language. It is a very long narration containing fifty-one chapters in which the main character of the story, Oriana, falsely accuses a friar of having ravished her and of being the father of the son she is bearing. Consequently, the monk is banished from his religious community and retires to live in a cave. After giving birth, Oriana stealthily abandons her son in the friar's new dwelling, so that the poor man, in addition to his relegation, finds himself compelled to care for the little baby. In medieval literature it was customary for the main plot to be interspersed with secondary stories in order to embellish the narrative, and Carner did this as well in *La malvestat d'Oriana*. Indeed, one of the added chapters in his work was number thirteen, "How Ran the Story of the Noble Birth of King James" ("Com feya la historia de l'Alta Naixença del Rey En Jaume"), and it was precisely the one in which the author developed the narrative of the king's conception and birth. Compared to the version used by Gerhard, Carner's poem is much longer and takes a broader look at the subject. It begins with the prayers that the Council and the people of the city of Montpellier addressed to the Virgin Mary asking for an heir to be born to their Lady, and ends, after the birth of the future King James I on February 2, 1208, with his presentation in the church and the solemn announcement of his birth to the citizens of Montpellier.

As has been stated, while the composer's intention was to create a work divided into fourteen closed numbers (he expressly asserted that, in order to preserve the poem's original structure, his purpose was to compose a cantata with closed forms), only the first five of them have come down to us. Not even movements six to nine – which Gerhard affirms in the letter to Carner were already finished at the time – are now extant (or at least they have not been found). This is not the time or place to try to solve this enigma, and this paper will focus only on the extant parts of the cantata. The numbers, with their titles, are: 1. Introduction and Litany, 2. Divino, 3. Follia, 4. Passacaglia, and 5. Chorale. The plot is now shorter, starting with the prayers of the citizens of Montpellier and ending on the morning that Peter II realized he had spent the night not with his lover but with his wife Mary. If the title of the work, clearly alluding to the birth of the king, seems congruous with the plot developed in the version included in *La malvestat d'Oriana* (or the one published in *La Veu de Catalunya*), the same could not be said of the libretto set by Gerhard. The letter in which the composer revealed his intentions to the poet could be taken as an explanation of this inconsistency. Certainly, Gerhard was thinking of a larger composition setting the complete story and not only the first part.

Even though it is not the main object of this study, it will be interesting, before going on with the present investigation, to analyze the origin of the different parts of Gerhard's cantata. The third number, Follia, the center of the work, is taken directly from Carner's revised version of 1920. Indeed, the scene described there cannot be read in either the poem published in *La Veu de Catalunya* or the story included in *La malvestat d'Oriana*. The second part, Divino – and more precisely its last nine verses – is not included in any of the three versions; quite likely, Carner, requested by Gerhard, wrote these new verses that were to be accommodated to the plot of the cantata. The rest of the numbers are all taken from the poem included in *La malvestat d'Oriana*. Small differences, consisting of dissimilar words in some verses of each work, can be observed between the versions of 1908 and 1910. Invariably, the text of the libretto always coincides with the verses of the second version, rather than those of the first. Another difference that must be mentioned is in number 4, Passacaglia: verses 5 to 7 in Gerhard's libretto do not coincide with those of 1908 and 1910 (there, verses 5 and 6). The author of the libretto must have taken the words corresponding to these lines from another source.¹³

For the purpose of the present study, it will now be necessary to analyze the text of the work and to see up to what extent it is mainly dramatic, narrative, lyrical, or somewhere in between the three. The conclusions of this observation will be of great help to determine whether the term *cantata* is appropriate enough to be applied to Gerhard's composition. Although no characters are indicated in the libretto, a careful perusal of the text reveals that, indeed, different personages are involved and that through their interaction the story unfolds. The text of the first movement, "Introduction and Litany", is written in a narrative style in which a narrator relates how the Council and the people of the city of Montpellier gathered in the church and offered their prayers to the Virgin Mary to be given a sovereign lord. The plea did not come only from the upper class; on the contrary, it came from every member of society. The narrator goes on with a long list of types representing each of the social strata, sacred as well as secular. Without the intention of being exhaustive, some of the categories mentioned are priests, the wealthy, ladies of high birth, old men, children, the poor forced to beg in the streets, and, among others, maidens who had no idea of how the miracle would come about. They all prayed together for seven days and seven nights.

Movement number two, "Divino", is dramatic. It shows the citizens of Montpellier saying their prayers to the Mother of God. From the standpoint of the libretto, however, it is not possible to ascertain whether only one character or the whole group is involved. It will be the composer himself who will finally decide which of the two options applies. By now, and at this particular point of the discussion, it is clear that this section of the libretto is performed by a single per-

13. All the ideas in this paragraph are expressed by the Catalan philologist Jaume Coll in the round table on the cantata *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*, on YouTube, April 22, 2021, <<https://youtu.be/VIJqobtwlls>>.

son (or a group) who is different from the narrator and is one who takes part in the action. This permits us to determine that the text is dramatic. It is written in three stanzas in which the supplicants make, consecutively, three petitions: "give us one pleasure; / Virgin, hear us, if you please"¹⁴ ("doneu-nos una alegria; / Verge, exaudiu-nos, si us es grat"); "hear a word or two of us; / bring a solution to our trouble" ("escolteu-nos tres paraules; / doneu remei al nostre dol"), and "give us one joy; / make our broom bush flower" ("doneu-nos una alegria; / doneu florida al nostre born").

The "Follia" involves a knight, the king (who is silent), and the narrator. This means that this movement is partly dramatic and partly narrative. The knight informs Peter II that if he is "in search of other torrid lips" ("cercant una altra boca encesa") that same night a charming young lady who is in love with him and who until that day had been hidden will be waiting for him in his bed. After this assertion uttered by the knight, the narrator describes the scene: on hearing the words spoken by his servant, the king, highly agitated, rejoiced in what was to come and, in his thoughts, he already saw "a youthful body / and delicate hair / spread between his fingers" ("un cos d'abril / i una cabellera gentil / entre sos dits dispersa"). However, and according to the plan contrived by the citizens of Montpellier, the lady lying in the bed was none other than his wife Mary, so that in what "the king imagined to be a bed of sin / (...) / the queen should be" ("en aquell llit / que imaginava de pecat / el rei (...) / que la reina hi fos"). The queen who, as the narrator recounts, was "that innocent lady of virtue, / with her lips sealed, / and her head fair covered / in the darkness of the plot" ("la clara dona de virtut, / amb llavi mut, / i embolcallant el cap, tan ros, de tenebrós").

In the next movement, "Passacaglia", the people of Montpellier, congregated in a room next to the royal bedchamber where the king laid with the queen, patiently awaited for the "miracle" to be fulfilled. The text is narrative, so in this case it is the narrator who describes the scene. According to his account, there were twelve representatives of some of the different social strata, and among them the consuls, gentlemen, burgesses, notable members of the Council, ladies, and damsels could be counted. In addition, there were also two notaries, a member of the bishopric, two canons, and four monks.

The final number, the "Chorale", is mainly dramatic but with three lines uttered by the narrator. In this movement, a canon urges the assembly to say a prayer to entreat forgiveness for the sin they have committed, "So let us pray now / (...) / for the intercourse we have contrived / may be pardoned" ("Fem ara, doncs, oració / (...) / que la folgança que hem parada / ens sigui causa de perdó"). The "Chorale" ends with an enigmatic biblical quotation taken from Judges 6:36-37, with the words "Let us pray, for the hour is come, / as the Lord's Book says, / 'The dew falls / upon the whiteness of the fleece'. / Amen" ("Preguem, que l'hora

14. For a translation of the original text in Catalan of the cantata, and the one used in this study, see Geoffrey J. WALKER and David DREW, "Gerhard's Cantata", *Tempo*, 139 (1981), pp. 14-16.

és arribada, / com diu el llibre del Senyor: / 'Cau la rosada / en la blancura del velló'. / Amen"). Chapter 6 of Judges recounts how Gideon was chosen among his people to fight the Midianites who had vanquished and subdued for seven years the Israelites. Gideon, a peasant who had no military knowledge or resources, could not understand why God had chosen him to carry out the mission of the salvation of his people, and at each of God's demands, he asked for a sign that he could take as a guaranty that God would remain beside him all the way through. Carner's citation refers to the penultimate of Gideon's signs.¹⁵

The reason why Carner inserted this quotation in this part of his work is not clear. In fact, the citation is not present in the medieval chronicles that narrate the story. Very likely, this may be a contribution of the poet himself. A couple of questions arise concerning the meaning of the biblical quotation in the context of the work: did the poet understand these words as a signal that God, as He had been with Gideon, was willing to remain beside the people of Montpellier and to grant their aspirations? Or, instead, did they simply intend to be a conspicuous image of the queen being made pregnant? As of yet, these questions have no clear answer.

Table 1 may be useful as a summary of what has been analyzed in the preceding paragraphs:

TABLE 1
Literary characteristics of the libretto

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Characters involved</i>
1. Introduction and Litany	Narrative	Narrator
2. Divino	Dramatic	The Council and the People of Montpellier
3. Follia	Dramatic / Narrative	A Knight Peter II (silent) Narrator
4. Passacaglia	Narrative	Narrator
5. Chorale	Narrative / Dramatic	Narrator A Canon

SOURCE: Prepared by the author.

At this point, after the analysis of the text of the cantata, it is possible to affirm that the libretto used by Gerhard to compose *L'alta naixença del rei En*

15. After many others, the last two signs Gideon asks for are described in the *Vulgata* as follows: "Dixitque Gedeon ad Deum: si saluum facis per manu meam Israel, sicut locutus es, ponam hoc vellus lanae in area: si ros in solo vellere fueret, et in omni terra siccitas, sciam quod per manum meam, sicut locutus es, liberabis Israel. Factumque est ita. Et de nocte consurgens expresso vellere, concham rore implevit. Dixitque rursus ad Deum: ne irascatur furor tuus contra me si adhuc semel tentavero, signum quaerens in vellere. Oro ut solum vellus siccum sit, et omnis terra rore madens. Fecitque Deus nocte illa ut postulaverat: et fuit siccitas in solo vellere, et ros in omni terra." (Judg, 6: 36-40)

Jaume is clearly dramatic and narrative, and by no means lyrical. In the next section, the meaning of these concepts as well as their implications with the dramatic genres will be discussed. An analytical and historical survey of the meaning of cantata, opera, and oratorio must be undertaken in order to infer how these vocal genres were understood and used throughout history, and since there are some differences between them, these disparities should be clearly pointed out. It will be evinced that even though cantata, opera, and oratorio might have some elements in common, significantly dissimilar traits are also to be observed.

OPERA, ORATORIO, AND CANTATA. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Although not an easy task, it is necessary to determine whether there are or are not any common elements between opera, oratorio, and cantata. In fact, the composers themselves were not consistent in the use of these terms when applying them to their works, and the same stands for the theorists. At the time these genres first appeared and developed, there were no clear names to be used to designate and differentiate each of them. Furthermore, after the lapse of three centuries (from the time they were created up to Gerhard's cantata), the meanings given to the words have constantly changed. Therefore, not every oratorio or every cantata has been consistently so designated throughout history. Somewhat different is the case of opera, which, except for its first period, has generally been designated by the same word. Since it is not possible to accurately ascertain what is a cantata or what is an oratorio by only taking into consideration the term their composers assigned them, other means will be needed to approach this issue. The analysis of the characteristics of these vocal genres will be of help to get a plausible definition for each of them.

Opera should be understood as a staged musical setting of a dramatic text based on a secular plot for soloists, chorus, and orchestra. In this brief definition, a significant characteristic stands out: the fact that, in an opera, a performance on stage is always indispensable. This is not so in the case of the cantata and the oratorio, which, on the contrary, are never staged. Therefore, within the dramatic genres, opera clearly stands apart. In his monumental *History of the Oratorio*, Howard E. Smither¹⁶ reflects on this terminological issue. In the mid-seventeenth

16. Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 1: *The Oratorio in the Baroque Era. Italy, Vienna, Paris*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1987; Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 2: *The Oratorio in the Baroque Era. Protestant Germany and England*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1988; Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 3: *The Oratorio in the Classical Era*, Chapel Hill and London, The University of North Carolina Press, 1987; Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 4: *The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Chapel Hill and London, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

century, the term *oratorio* was generally used to refer to a musical setting of a sacred dramatic text based on a passage of the Old or New Testaments, hagiography, or some other spiritual subject. Its text, conceived as an edifying entertainment, was written entirely in poetry and with some characteristics of the opera (in the sense that they are both dramatic and include recitatives, arias, ensembles, and choruses). Besides *oratorio*, a term which is very seldom found in seventeenth-century sources, other expressions were used to refer to this type of compositions: *cantata*, *dialogo*, *dramma sacro*, or *componimento sacro*, only to mention a few.¹⁷ According to Smither, two types of *dialogo* were common in the mid-seventeenth century, one involving characters in dialogue, with a dramatic or dramatic-narrative text, and another based on reflecting texts without personages. After an accurate analysis, Smither concludes that the works of the first type, even though not so termed, are oratorios, whereas those in the second group, if not so termed, are not to be considered oratorios.¹⁸ Here is something to be retained: works with a dramatic-narrative text are oratorios while, generally, works setting a reflective text are not oratorios. We will return to this idea in this same section.

In the early eighteenth century, the oratorio was generally considered an unstaged, sacred, dramatic composition for soloists, ensembles, choruses, and orchestra, that is to say, it was not quite as different as it was in the previous century. However, Johann Mattheson includes something new in this definition. For the German author, the term *oratorio* could also be applied to a secular work. It is true, notwithstanding, that Mattheson himself declares that he had never heard any composition of this type setting a nonreligious libretto. Surely enough, the eighteenth century offers some examples of works called *oratorio* by their composers that do not apply accurately to the general definition. G. F. Handel, for instance, wrote at least three so-labeled *oratorios*, which are neither dramatic nor sacred: *Israel in Egypt* (1738), *Messiah* (1741), and *Occasional Oratorio* (1746). None of the three include characters in the libretto (which means that they are not dramatic), and the third, even though based on John Milton's verse translation of the Psalms, is not intended to be sacred, but patriotic.

While seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios were conceived as works mainly to be performed in an oratory, namely a room for praying, and one where spiritual exercises were conducted by the Fathers of the Oratory, the use of this type of compositions met different criteria in the nineteenth century. Although oratorios continued to be predominantly sacred, the venues where they were performed were not so and, as well as in oratories, these works could be heard in theaters, auditoriums, or private houses.

Some twentieth-century composers also showed a certain interest in the genre. Focusing on this historical period, Smither takes as oratorios works so labeled

17. Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 1: *The Oratorio in the Baroque Era*, p. 4.

18. Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 1: *The Oratorio in the Baroque Era*, pp. 5-6.

by their composers, as well as concert pieces with narrative or dramatic texts set to music for soloists, chorus, and orchestra. The fact of being staged or not is no longer a significant characteristic to consider a work as an oratorio. Some very important twentieth-century oratorios are staged. Only to mention two examples: Igor Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* (1927) and Arthur Honegger's *Jean d'Arc au bûcher* (1935). In the same way, a sacred text ceases to be the only possible option for an oratorio. Besides the traditional subjects taken from the Old and New Testaments or from the lives of saints, a great variety of other themes will be employed, as for example those based on literary works, mythology, legends, historical events, or even texts expressing religio-philosophical ideas. Some librettos will also focus on political, patriotic, or nationalistic subjects.¹⁹ Gerhard's *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* clearly falls in the historical events category.

As has been shown in the preceding paragraphs, it is not easy to establish a clear and definitive definition of the term *oratorio*. Regrettably, the same must be said of *cantata*. Composers named their works with this word in such an inconsistent manner that it becomes difficult to draw from them some common char-

19. This is not, of course, the place to present an extended list of all the oratorios composed in the twentieth century, but it will be interesting to mention a few to show the variety of subjects developed by the authors of the librettos in this historical period. In chronological order, *Die Jakobsleiter* (1917-1918, 1922, and 1944), Arnold Schönberg (religio-philosophical views found in the Bible, Theosophy, and the writings of Strindberg and Balzac); *Put' Oktiabria* (The Path of October) (1927), Alexander Alexandrovich Davidenco, Victor Arkad'yevich Beliy, Marian Viktorovich Koval', Boris Semyonovich Shekhter, Nikolai Karpovich Chemberdzhi (written by the PROCOLL, Production Collective of Student Composers, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Russian October Revolution); *Oedipus Rex* (1927), Igor Stravinsky (based on ancient Greek sources); *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931), William Walton (Old Testament); *Jean d'Arc au bûcher* (1935), Arthur Honegger (historical); *Le vin herbé* (1938-1941), Frank Martin (based on Joseph Bédier's *Roman de Tristan et Iseut*); *A Child of Our Time* (1941), Michael Tippett (based on the story of the shooting of a diplomat by Hershel Grynsplan and the following pogrom that led to the infamous *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1938); *The Plague* (1964), Robert Gerhard (based on the homonymous novel by Albert Camus); *Das Floß der Medusa* (1968), Hans Werner Henze (based on the historical event of the French frigate *Medusa* sent by Louis XVIII to Senegal to recapture from the English that French colonial territory. After a shipwreck, 154 members of the crew and passengers were abandoned on a raft which was finally rescued by a passing ship thirteen days later. Only fifteen survived, six of whom died shortly afterward. The scene of the raft adrift is depicted in the famous painting by Théodore Géricault); *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1969), Olivier Messiaen (New Testament); *The Mask of Time* (1982), Michael Tippett (according to the composer, this work is explicitly concerned with the transcendental); *Liverpool Oratorio* (1991), Paul McCartney (based on events of the author's early life in his hometown, and the universalization of these). Those are only a few examples of an extensive list of twentieth-century oratorios, which did not only flourish in Europe, but also in the United States, with composers and works such as R. Nathaniel Dett's *The Ordering of Moses* (1937), based on a passage of the Old Testament; James Furman's *I Have a Dream* (1970), a tribute to Martin Luther King; or Wynton Marsalis' *Blood on the Fields* (1994), a view of American slavery.

For a survey of the history of the oratorio in the twentieth century and its terminology, social context, subjects, composers, and works, refer to Howard E. SMITHER, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 4: *The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 2000, pp. 631-711.

acteristics that would allow it to be easily determined what a cantata could be. Moreover, in the same way as with *oratorio*, the meaning of the term has changed throughout the centuries. Besides, the differences between the two genres are not clearly established. The term *cantata* is generally applied to a wide variety of works having in common that they are for chorus and orchestra, but this definition could as well be true for *oratorio*. Some scholars, on the other hand, suggest that length could differentiate both types of compositions, the cantata usually being shorter and with reduced vocal and instrumental forces when compared to the oratorio. As regards the types of subjects, they can be secular or sacred: pastoral, amatory, historical, mythological, or satirical among the first, and moral or devotional among the second. However, neither does this make a clear distinction between the two genres, as there are many oratorios, especially those composed in the twentieth century, dealing with secular themes. There is an element, however, that can be of great help to mark the boundaries between these genres: the text. Stylistically, as has been previously stated, oratorio librettos are generally dramatic or dramatic-narrative, i.e., those explaining a story through the dialogue of some characters, and with sporadic interventions of a narrator. On the other hand, cantata texts are usually lyrical, which means that a personage, named or unnamed, expresses some kind of inner thoughts or emotions. Hence, oratorio involves dramatic action (albeit not staged), whereas cantata becomes a more introspective kind of work. Leaving aside the blurry limits that prevent a clear-cut individualization of both genres, this last characteristic concerning the text may be a handy resource to distinguish between cantata and oratorio (opera is already out of the question because of its need to be staged). In this respect, the study and analysis of the libretto will be of primary importance to determine whether a vocal work is a cantata or an oratorio. It should not be forgotten, however, that such works are, and have been throughout history, what their composers have wanted them to be, based on which word they have used to designate them.

ROBERT GERHARD'S CANTATA

The complete work was heard for the first time at the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona on November 17, 1984. The composition was performed by the Orquestra Ciutat de Barcelona, along with the Coral dels Antics Escolans de Montserrat and the Cor Sant Esteve from the Conservatori de Vila-seca i Salou, and the soloists Carme Bustamente (soprano) and Enric Serra (baritone). Antoni Ros-Marbà was the conductor. Some decades earlier, however, in 1933, some parts of the cantata had been awarded the Hertzka prize in Vienna by the music publishing house Universal Edition. In that same year, on June 10, the last two movements of *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*, "Passacaglia" and "Chorale", conducted by the composer himself, premiered at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Amsterdam. All of Gerhard's achievements abroad were straightaway known and celebrated in Catalonia. The *Revista Musi-*

cal Catalana, one of the foremost musical magazines at the time in Barcelona, used to publish information on all the activities of Catalan musicians around the world and report on the success which many achieved. Consequently, the magazine promptly announced both events: the award and the performance. The prize, which was awarded for the first time that year, was of international scope. The members of the commission that was to decide on the winning composition were Clemens Heinrich Krauss, Franz Schmidt, Egon Wellesz, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Ernst Krenek, and Erwin Stein.²⁰

To celebrate the award in Vienna and the performance of the cantata's last two movements in Amsterdam, the Friends of the New Art (*Amics de l'Art Nou*, ADLAN, a group focused on contemporary art that had been recently organized)²¹ held a concert in which a selection of Gerhard's works was to be played. The second part of the recital included the harmonization of four Catalan melodies, *La calàndria*, *La mort i la donzella*, *El petit vailet*, and *L'enemic de les dones*, and four excerpts taken from *L'infantament meravellós de Scherezada*, all performed by the soprano Carme Gombau and the pianist Pere Vallribera. Gerhard's *Wind Quintet*, the main work of the concert, was played in the first part. The group ADLAN, aware of the difficulties the composition could present for audiences not familiar with that kind of music, decided to perform the piece twice. Nevertheless, and despite the efforts of the organizers to acquaint larger audiences with modern music, the public did not enjoy the work. A reviewer lamented that, even though Gerhard endeavored to create a new and quite personal expression, his work was too "German" and that no Catalan traits could be recognized in it.²²

20. "Noticiari. Els nostres músics a l'estranger", *Revista Musical Catalana. Butlletí de l'Orfeó Català*, 354, 30th year (June 1933), p. 271.

21. Leticia SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura...*, pp. 114-119.

22. The *Revista Musical Catalana* transcribes part of a review published in *La Veu de Catalunya* in which its author writes:

"It is possible that the work, which is well constructed, of course, might be written by the author with a deep emotion. It so happens, however, that this emotion, as it is now, does not reach the auditorium that listens with curiosity and at the same time bewilderment.

We do not know how the sensibility of the people of future times will react to this music that intends to radically transform the intimate structure of the fundamental laws of the art of sounds with which our faculty of musical perception has been formed.

Be it as it may, the daring effort of Maestro Gerhard to create a new and personal expression must be praised, even though, at least with respect to this *Quintet*, we have not been able to recognize it as specifically Catalan, since a Germanic influence is absolutely present. Of the whole work, the second and last movements have been especially interesting".

("És possible que l'obra, evidentment ben construïda, sia escrita per l'autor amb una profunda emoció. Succeeix, però, que aquesta emoció és un fet que, ara com ara, no arriba a l'auditori que l'escolta encuriós i a l'ensem desorientat.

No sabem la sensibilitat de la gent dels temps futurs com reaccionarà davant d'aquesta música que intenta transformar radicalment l'íntima estructura de les lleis fonamentals de l'art dels sons amb les quals s'ha format la nostra facultat de percepció musical.

Sia com sia, cal elogiar aquest esforç ardit del mestre Gerhard per a crear-se una expressió nova i ben personal, encara que, almenys en aquest *Quintet*, no la puguem reconèixer com específicament

Having considered and analyzed in the previous sections the characteristics of the libretto, it is now time to focus on the music.²³ Gerhard composed his cantata for two soloists (a soprano and a baritone), chorus, and a rather large orchestra containing flutes and piccolos, oboes, an English horn, clarinets in Bb and Eb, a bass clarinet in Bb, bassoons, a double bassoon, horns, trumpets, trombones, a tuba, timpani, a harp, a celesta, a piano, and strings. The percussion section includes a xylophone, glockenspiel, triangle, castanets, tambourine, side drum, bass drum, cymbal, and tam-tam. Indeed, this is quite a big instrumental group and one not at all intended for an introspective piece of music.²⁴

As has been shown, the libretto is dramatic and narrative. This means that some parts are uttered by individual characters (or a group of people) and some others by a narrator. It is a general rule of the *stile rappresentativo* that the parts involving particular personages should be set for soloists (or a chorus if they are a group). The passages given to the narrator, on the other hand, even though usually for soloists as well, may also be performed by a chorus, as they were in the Greek tragedy (it must not be forgotten that opera and oratorio originated in the late sixteenth century when the Camerata Fiorentina, while seeking an alternative to polyphony, tried to revive the Greek genre). Besides, there are many examples of seventeenth-century oratorios that use a great variety of vocal combinations for the narrator, such as solos, duos, trios, or choruses. The examination of the score will reveal that Gerhard, wishing to create a dramatic and narrative work, followed the rules of the *stile rappresentativo*. Indeed, individual characters are performed by soloists (or by a chorus if they represent a group of people) and the narrative passages are interpreted by the chorus. Of course, setting to music a dramatic and narrative text implies creating a dramatic and narrative musical composition. The libretto develops a plot that is deployed through the interaction of individuals or groups of personages. The letter Gerhard addressed Carner in April 1935 confirms the idea of the composer's intention to create a work based on the *stile rappresentativo*. He writes: "Up to now, you have always given me the clues to all the [musical] forms – it is as if I had forefelt the musical forms in your own composition!"²⁵ Of course, following the dramatic and narrative structure of the libretto, the music is set according to

catalana, ja que la influència tudesca hi és absoluta. De tota l'obra ens interessaren especialment els temps segon i darrer.")

"El moviment musical. Concert d'homenatge a R. Gerhard", *Revista Musical Catalana. Butlletí de l'Orfeó Català*, 355, 30th year (July 1933), pp. 299-300.

23. For an analytical survey of the cantata, refer to Julian WHITE, "Promoting and Diffusing Catalanian Musical Heritage": Roberto Gerhard and Catalan Folk Music", in M. ADKINS and M. RUSS (eds.), *The Roberto Gerhard Companion*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013; Geoffrey J. WALKER and David DREW, "Gerhard's Cantata", *Tempo*, 139 (1981), pp. 17-18; and Joaquim HOMS, *Robert Gerhard and His Music*, pp. 36-37.

24. Robert GERHARD, *Cantata. L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*, London, Boosey & Hawkes, 1988.

25. Leticia SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura...*, p. 359.

the *stile rappresentativo*, and thus, in Gerhard's composition (except for the last section), every individual character is performed by a soloist, and groups by a chorus.

Concerning the text, the first number, "Introduction and Litany", is narrative. There are no characters involved and only the narrator introduces the action that is about to take place. After two bars in which a solo flute plays *quasi recitativo*, the complete orchestra precedes the chorus that, in chordal style and playing a mechanical rhythm in sixteenth and quarter notes, eventually reaches the first climax on the tenth verse of the text, with the words "Our Lady Saint Mary" ("Dona Santa Maria"). After a *crescendo* in the orchestra, the chorus proceeds with the next four verses beginning with "The bells ring in the belfry" ("Sonen les clotxes al cloquer"), this time, in a not-so-strict chordal style. In the fifteenth verse, "Priests pray, great men pray" ("Oren prelats, oren ric-homs"), the voices, divided into at least eight parts (some of them in *divisi*), simultaneously deliver their parts singing and *parlando*. The final verse, "They pray for seven days and seven nights" ("Preguen set dies i set nits"), is again in chordal style, this time rhythmically in eighth notes. The movement ends, after the voices, with the tympani, the piano, and the strings, all sounding an E and finally a G. This first part, clearly narrative, is set for chorus, and Gerhard, as shall be observed, will consistently use this group for the narrator.

The second movement, "Divino", is dramatic and consists of three stanzas representing the prayers uttered by the Council and the people of Montpellier in which, consecutively, they entreat the Virgin to grant them a favor, to provide a solution to their woe, and finally to give them joy. At the end of the petitions Gerhard resumes the first ten verses of the introduction set for the chorus with the same musical theme used in the previous movement. This repetition, however, is not in the libretto; presumably, it was the composer's decision. The three stanzas representing the prayers are sung by the solo soprano and the upper voices of the chorus, namely, sopranos and altos. The solo treble begins with the first two strophes ("For the sake of the seven joys, Oh Mary / which you have enjoyed in this world" ["Per set joies, O Maria, / que en aquest món heu gojat"] and "Our Lady of the Tables, / you who are the consolation of the world" ["Nostra Dona de les Taules, / Vós que sou del món consol"]), both sung with the same melody accompanied by the clarinet and separated by two bars of a solo flute. The female voices of the chorus then repeat the first stanza, singing the musical theme already heard. The third strophe ("You who were the Holy Mother / of a Son who was the Redeemer of the world" ["Vós que fóreu Mare pia / d'un Fill Redemptor del món"]) is again for the high voices of the choir, but this time with a slight difference, the altos singing a syncopated motif that confers a new appearance to the main theme in the sopranos. With his setting, Gerhard suggests that only the women participated actively in the prayers; or he simply considered that female voices were more suitable to represent the citizens' plea. Whatever the case may be, it is clear enough that one unique personage begins the prayer, and the rest of the assembly joins in shortly after.

In the second part of the movement, the full chorus in *divisi* repeats the first part of the introduction. In alternation, sopranos and altos, on the one hand, and tenors and basses, on the other, successively sing the text. The rhythmic motif in sixteenth notes contrasts with the religious mood just settled by the high-pitched voices in the previous section of the movement.

The text of the following number, "Follia", considered by many authors as the central part of the work around which the cantata is constructed, is dramatic and narrative: a knight announces to the king that there is a young maiden, hidden from his view up to that moment, waiting for him in his bed ("this night you will have in your bed / a lady who loves you, oo-la-la! / who until today has hidden away from you, / so demure is she, oo-la-la!" ["aquesta nit haureu al llit / la vostra enamorada, oleta! / que fins avui se us ha escondit, / de dubte embolcallada, olà"]), and the narrator immediately describes the excitement of the sovereign anticipating what was about to come ("and the king already saw a youthful body / and delicate hair / spread between his fingers" ["i el rei ja veia un cos d'abril / i una cabellera gentil / entre sos dits dispersa"]), and explains that the young woman was to be exchanged for his wife. The first part is dramatic and is performed by the baritone, while the second is narrative and is entirely sung by the chorus. The solo voice begins, after an orchestral introduction, with a recitative-like, powerful melody, punctuated here and there by the chorus. The function of the choir here is to reinforce the words "oleta" and "olà", at the end of most of the verses of this part. A short orchestral interlude marks a climax point and then follows a brief transition to the next section in which the chorus, in chordal style, sings a dance-like melody. Musically, the text is divided into two sections. Although both are based on the same thematic material, the first of them is set only for the chorus and in it the narrator relates the king's impatience, ending with the words "And that night was ordered / that in that bed, / which the king imagined to be a bed of sin, / raging and senseless with passion as he was" ("I aquella nit fou ordenat / que en aquell llit / que imaginava de pecat / el rei, roent, esmaperdut"). The second section refers to the queen and her honor: "that the queen should be, / that innocent lady of virtue" ("que la reina hi fos, / la clara dona de virtut"). The chorus starts in strict chordal style with a trochaic meter melody that will somehow continue in the second section, this time, however, in contrapuntal style and with the addition of the soloists.

The next number, "Passacaglia", is narrative. The text explains that the Council and some notable citizens of Montpellier are gathered in a room beside the royal chamber where the king is lying with the queen. Gerhard sets this passage for the chorus, and from the standpoint of the music he divides the movement in three parts. The whole text consists of thirty-one verses, but a division can be established if its content is considered. The first fourteen lines, beginning with "Twelve are the consuls in the palace / while the king is with the queen" ("Són dotze cònsuls al palau / mentre és el rei amb la regina") and ending with "Twelve burgesses and gentlemen / of powerful kinds, / eminent council members, / it is a solemn procession with grey hair" ("dotze burgesos i senyors / de

menes poderoses, / homes notables de consell, / passa solemne i gris cabell”), deal with some of the most distinguished men of Montpellier: the consuls, considered the guardians of the city’s rights and also men who never smile, and twelve selected burgesses and gentlemen chosen from surrounding castles and shops. The second part, including the next nine verses, is dedicated to the ladies of town: “There are twelve very gracious ladies / radiating serene peace; / (...) / and each of them is beautiful; even the most passionate / does not dare to raise an eyebrow” (“Hi ha dotze dames molt galans / amb una pau serena; / (...) / i cadascun és bella; / la més ardida / no gosa alçar la cella”). The passage ends with eight lines in which, again, men are involved: notaries, a member of the bishopric, canons, and monks: “There are two notaries, / (...) / the judge / of the bishop’s court / with two canons by his side, / and after them, four monks” (“Hi ha dos notaris, / (...) / l’oficial / episcopal / amb dos canonges al costat, i en següent, quatre homes d’ordre”).

The first part begins with the basses, who sing alone, first in one voice, then in *divisi*, until the verse in which the “burgesses and gentlemen” are introduced; right then, the tenors join in. They are assigned powerful music in chordal style that contrasts with that of the following section, which will be of a lyrical vein and contrapuntal. This second part is sung by the female voices, beginning with the altos (first alone and then in *divisi*) and some bars later (on the words “Twelve damsels follow on / with eyes averted out of modesty” [“Dotze donzelles van següent / amb la mirada empegueïda”]) with the addition of the sopranos. The movement ends, once more with the lower voices, in chordal style and a reminiscence of the thematic material of the first part.

The text of the “Chorale”, as has been shown in a previous section of this paper, is dramatic except for three verses interpreted by the narrator: “They all kneel slowly down; / each one has his candle burning bright / (...) / says one of the canons with measured words” (“Tots s’agenollen lentament; / duu cadascú son ciri ardent / (...) / diu un canonge amb veu pausada”). The rest of the words in this section are uttered by the canon and read like this: “So let us pray now / (...) / for the intercourse we have contrived / may we be pardoned. / Let us pray, for the hour is come, / as the Lord’s Book says, / ‘The dew falls / upon the whiteness of the fleece’. / Amen” (“Fem ara, doncs, oració / (...) / que la folgança que hem parada / ens sigui causa de perdó. / Preguem, que l’hora és arribada, / com diu el llibre del Senyor: ‘Cau la rosada / en la blancura del velló’. / Amén”).

Up to this last movement, Gerhard has consistently used the *stile rappresentativo* to set to music his cantata. As has been observed, individual characters have been interpreted by solo voices and groups of personages by the chorus. On the other hand, and as well in a coherent manner, the narrator’s parts have been delivered by the chorus (in some instances with a variety of combination of voices). This is different for the “Chorale”; although the dramatic part of the text of this movement is clearly for only one character, a canon, Gerhard sets the whole number for the chorus. There is no explanation for this “slight inconsistency”, unless the composer might have deemed this part uttered by the narrator in direct

speech. If this were so, the fact of setting this passage for the chorus would not represent any problem at all: it would, indeed, be the narrator who would be speaking.

A chorale-like setting, with the voices singing in chordal style and doubled by clarinets, bass clarinet, horns, cellos, and double basses, is used for the first two lines in which the narrator describes the scene. Both verses are separated by a brief intervention of the brass instruments. The rest of the text is sung as well by the chorus, but now in contrapuntal style. The words of the fourth verse are again assigned to the narrator, but from the standpoint of the music Gerhard does not differentiate them from the preceding and following lines of the movement, spoken by the canon (a dramatic section).

Leaving aside the last movement, Gerhard's cantata is set in accordance with the rules of the *stile rappresentativo*: solo voices are assigned to individual characters, and choruses to groups. Selecting it from a variety of combinations, the composer chose the chorus for the narrator's sections. After the analysis of the main elements that constitute the cantata, it is possible to conclude that the libretto and the music of *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* are dramatic and narrative. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the libretto (mentioned in a previous section), with the addition of those of the music. It clearly shows that Gerhard's cantata, from the standpoint of the text and from that of the setting, is definitely dramatic and narrative (and not lyrical).

TABLE 2
Literary and musical characteristics of the cantata

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Characters involved</i>	<i>Setting</i>
1. Introduction and Litany	Narrative	Narrator	Chorus
2. Divino	Dramatic	The Council and the People of Montpellier	Soprano solo – Chorus (S-A)
3. Follia	Dramatic	A Knight Peter II	Baritone Silent
	Narrative	Narrator	Chorus
4. Passacaglia	Narrative	Narrator	Chorus (B-T)
		Narrator	Chorus (A-S)
		Narrator	Chorus (T-B)
5. Chorale	Narrative	Narrator	Chorus
	Dramatic	A Canon	Chorus

SOURCE: Prepared by the author.

CONCLUSIONS

Gerhard named his *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* a *cantata* and therefore this is what it is. Indeed, throughout the twentieth century, this term was often applied to a variety of vocal works having in common that they are for chorus and orchestra. Considering at least some of the characteristics of Gerhard's composition, it would not appear to be wrong to designate the work with this word. However, bearing in mind everything that has been stated in this paper, could this work be an oratorio? Without intending to red-pencil Robert Gerhard, the answer to this question is in the affirmative.

Since their creation, these vocal genres have not had a clear and unmistakable name to designate them, and composers, to refer to them, have used a variety of terms often devoid of straightforward meaning. In its origins, a *cantata* was simply a work to be sung, and an oratorio was a sacred composition to be performed in an oratory (namely, in the context of the congregation founded by Saint Philip Neri, a room next to the church where the faithful gathered to pray). The *cantata* could be secular or sacred, while the oratorio, at least in its early stages, was mainly sacred. Both genres were understood as concert works for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, although the *cantata* was shorter in length than the oratorio. Since no other traits apparently differentiated the two concepts, it is not surprising that composers applied quite carelessly one term or the other to their works. There are, however, definite differences between *cantata* and oratorio, and even though the terms may often be misused, it is possible to distinguish these genres from one another. While *cantatas* usually deal with introspective librettos, oratorios, like opera, are of a dramatic vein. This means that oratorios, although not staged, demand dramatic action (the plot is unfolded through the dialogue of personages), whereas *cantatas* are based on lyrical librettos in which a character reflects on some subject or inner feeling. Taking into consideration this idea, *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* is clearly an oratorio. As has been shown, its text and its music are dramatic-narrative: indeed, a story (that of the conception of King James I) is told through the dialogue of different characters. Another distinctive trait is related to the forces employed; oratorios tended to be set for larger orchestras, whereas *cantatas* were usually for smaller ensembles. In the case of *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume*, the composer asks for a large orchestra so, also from the standpoint of the instrumental group, Gerhard's composition seems more like an oratorio than a *cantata*.

Of course, this does not mean that my intention is to declare that Gerhard's work should cease, from now on, to be called a *cantata*. Simply, what has been intended in this paper is, on the one hand, to reflect on the terminological meaning of the concepts of *opera*, *cantata*, and *oratorio*, and, on the other, to analyze the characteristics of the libretto and the music of *L'alta naixença del rei En Jaume* accordingly. The conclusions show that the work is more likely to be an oratorio than a *cantata*, even though the composer named it *cantata*, and this is something to be kept in mind. After all, "What's in a name? That which we call a

rose / By any other word would smell as sweet".²⁶ Indeed, fortunately enough, Gerhard's music remains the same.

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