AMEDEO FERA

BETWEEN CYPRUS AND VENICE: GIANDOMENICO MARTORETTA'S GREEK MADRIGAL AS A SYMBOL OF DOUBLE CULTURAL AFFILIATION*

ABSTRACT

Nel 1554 il compositore calabrese Giandomenico Martoretta pubblicò a Venezia il suo terzo libro di madrigali. Questo era dedicato a Pietro Singlitico, membro di una delle più importanti famiglie aristocratiche greche di Cipro, allora controllata da Venezia. Un particolare madrigale della collezione, intitolato *O pothos isdjio/in mezz'a due vermigl'e fresche rose* attira subito l'attenzione del lettore per il suo doppio testo greco e italiano e per la doppia chiave associata alla musica, provocando la domanda relativa alla sua presenza all'interno del libro. Attraverso un'attenta analisi letteraria e musicale, l'articolo propone un'interpretazione di questo madrigale come simbolo della doppia affiliazione culturale della famiglia, divisa tra la fedeltà ai dominatori veneziani e la necessità di affermare la propria identità greca.

PAROLE CHIAVE Madrigali, trasposizione, petrarchismo, Martoretta, Cipro

SUMMARY

In 1554 the Calabrian composer Giandomenico Martoretta published in Venice his third book of madrigals. It was dedicated to Pietro Singlitico, a member of one of the most important and wealthiest Greek aristocratic families of Venetian-dominated Cyprus. One particular madrigal in this collection catches the attention of the reader: *O pothos isdjio/in mezz'a due vermigl'e fresche rose*. This madrigal, containing a double Greek and Italian text and a double clef for the music, provokes the question of its presence in the book. By means of a thorough literary and musical analysis of the madrigal, this article interprets it as a symbol of the double cultural affiliation of the family, torn between the loyalty to the Venetian rulers and the necessity of affirming its Greek identity.

KEYWORDS Madrigals, transposition, petrarchism, Martoretta, Cyprus

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AMEDEO FERA

Introduction

In 1554 the Calabrian composer Giandomenico Martoretta signed the dedicatory letter of his third book of madrigals in Venice. The letter was addressed to Pietro Singlitico, 'nobile cavaliero dell'isola di Cipro' (noble knight of the island of Cyprus).[1] At the time, Cyprus was under Venetian rule and Pietro was a member of one of the island's most important and wealthiest Greek aristocratic families. The collection of madrigals to which the letter was attached offers a unique glimpse into the cultural habits of one of the few aristocratic Greek households of Cyprus during the 'Venetokratia' (i.e., the rule of Venice) shortly before the Ottoman conquest.

One particular madrigal in this collection catches the attention of the casual reader browsing through the pages for its double Greek and Italian text and the double clef on the staff: *O pothos isdjio/in mezz'a due vermigl'e fresche rose.* The choice of inserting this double-texted composition into an otherwise standard collection of Italian madrigals raises several questions. What is the reason for juxtaposing a Greek and an Italian text on the same page? How can we interpret the double clef on the staff? How does this particular composition fit into the context of the collection? And finally, do these choices have social or political implications, considering the proximity of the Singlitico household to the Venetian rulers?

To investigate these points, I will begin by presenting the composer, the dedicatee's family, and the general features of the madrigal. I will then consider the Greek/Italian text by closely reading its content, analysing its transmission across sources, and contextualising the text in the literary debate of the time.

Subsequently, I will analyse the use of the double clef in this composition by comparing this madrigal with other instances in Martoretta's earlier works and in works by other composers. Finally, I will link these textual and musical aspects to the social and political implications they might have had in the context of the Singliticos' relationship to Venice.

Contextualization of the madrigal

Giandomenico Martoretta is one of the most important composers of the 16th century in Southern Italy. As Maria Antonella Balsano has shown, he can be considered the musician who introduced the madrigal in Sicily.[2]

1.   Dedicatory letter in MARTORETTA, *Il terzo libro di madrigali.*
2.   See introductory essay to MARTORETTA, *Secondo libro dei madrigali cromatici.*

'La Martoretta di Calabria', as the composer nicknamed himself in his first book of madrigals,[3] was born in Mileto, a town in the central area of Calabria. Unfortunately, we do not possess much information about his life. We know, however, that he worked for Francesco Moncada in Caltanissetta probably during the 1540s, as his first book of madrigals is dedicated to him. The Moncadas were among the most prominent families of Sicily and Francesco obtained the title of prince in 1565 from King Philip II of Spain.

Subsequently, Martoretta published two more madrigal collections and, at the end of his career, a book of motets. From this last publication, we know that he finally returned to his hometown of Mileto and became the treasurer of the cathedral.

Albeit little-known today, Martoretta must have had a certain status in the musical landscape of the 16th-century Italian peninsula. His books were published in Venice by the most important printer-booksellers of the time (Scotto and Gardane) and his compositions appear in important collections such as Arcadelt's fifth book of madrigals (1539) and Costanzo Festa's first book of madrigals (1541).[4]

Martoretta's third book of madrigals, printed in 1554, was published after the composer returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Cyprus was an important hub for people traveling to and from the Middle East. The composer stayed on the island for an extended time during his return journey to Italy; there, he was hosted by Pietro Singlitico, although the composer dedicated the individual madrigals in the collection to different people. The letter and the dedications contained in the collection allow us to place this book into a precise cultural environment: the aristocratic milieu of the Venetian-dominated Mediterranean.[5]

The collection contains 24 compositions (four of them are divided into two parts thus bringing the total number to 28) including five madrigals already published in Martoretta's first book (1548).

The dedicatees of Giandomenico Martoretta's *Terzo libro de' madrigali* (Venice, 1554) reveal a social constellation largely centered around Pietro Singlitico, Martoretta's host and principal patron in Cyprus. Around this central figure gravitates a closely knit circle of Cypriot aristocrats, many of them bound to Pietro through kinship or feudal and marital alliances. These include Eugenio Singlitico, Count of Rochas, a paternal cousin of Pietro; Giovanni and Mutio Singlitico, also members of the family; Elena de Nores, wife

3.　In Martoretta's first book of madrigals (1548) each page bears «La Martoretta» in the upper left corner while the index has «Martoretta di Calabria». The composer was seemingly quite attached to his nickname (Martoretta in fact means «little marten») and to his place of origin. See MARTORETTA, *Primo libro dei madrigali a quattro voci.*

4.　The scarce biographical and bibliographical information that we possess regarding Martoretta are contained in the introductory essay to the modern edition of the second book of madrigals edited by Maria Antonella Balsano. See MARTORETTA, *Secondo libro dei madrigali cromatici*, ed. Balsano, and BALSANO, *Martoretta (La Martoretta), Giandomenico.*

5.　See PAPACOSTAS, *Music as Aristocratic Pastime,* for an analysis of the social and cultural context of Martoretta's book.

of Pietro, and Iacomo de Nores, Count of Tripoli and her brother. Additional figures connected to this milieu are Ettore Podocataro, tied to the Singlitico through marital bonds and territorial proximity in the region of Kiti; Gasparo Palol, Zacco Gimel, and Tuzio Costanzo. These individuals form what Papacostas describes as a generationally and socially cohesive aristocratic group at the apex of Venetian Cypriot society.

A second group of dedicatees is associated with Venetian territories, particularly those in the eastern Mediterranean and the Adriatic. These include messer Filippo Venier, *primicerio* of Candia (Crete); messer Giulio Tetrico and Simone Budineo, both from Zara (modern-day Zadar); and Giovann'Antonio Panthera, born in Cittanova d'Istria and serving as archpriest in Parenzo (Poreč). Francesco Silvio from Venice and Marc'Antonio Gandini of Brescia, are also mentioned among the dedicatees. These figures reflect Martoretta's integration into wider ecclesiastical and humanist networks across the Venetian empire in the Eastern Mediterranean.

A final group of dedicatees can be traced back to Martoretta's earlier circle in southern Italy, particularly Calabria and Sicily, as many of them are associated to madrigals reprinted from Martoretta's *Primo libro de' madrigali* (Venice, 1548). These include Niccolao Rossillo and the *Baron di Marcennari*, both from Catanzaro; Giangiacomo Mezzatesta of Tropea; Alfonso Caraffa of Filogaso; and Cristofaro La Rocca of Messina.[6]

Before turning to a detailed discussion of the Singlitico family, it is necessary to problematize any assumption of a fixed identity grounded in ethnicity or religious affiliation. As Arbel has demonstrated, households such as the Singlitico participated in a predominantly Greek cultural milieu while simultaneously exhibiting significant religious and linguistic diversity – features that reflect the pragmatic and relatively inclusive character of Venetian colonial governance.[7]

The economic and political ascent of the family culminated with the acquisition of the title of Count of Rochas by Zegno (Eugenio) I in 1521, the first Greek-Cypriot nobleman to acquire a baronial title.[8] Zegno was also one of the wealthiest men in Cyprus, probably through his activities of estate management, tax farming, and international trade.[9] He regularly visited Venice for his businesses although from a document of 1536, we know that he still had some troubles with the Italian language.[10] Antonio Singlitico, Zegno's nephew, was elected in 1544 as Greek bishop of Famagusta; and his brother Franzino, who was accused of heresy while he was in Venice, declared that all his ancestors were Greek and that they never belonged to the Catholic Church. Conversely, it seems that the members of the family that appear in Martoretta's collection, all in their twenties when the composer visited the island, were

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6. For a detailed discussion of the dedicatees of Martoretta's book, see PAPACOSTAS, *Music as Aristocratic Pastime* (2020), p. 225 and ff. and PECORARO, *Martoretta a Cipro* (2012).

7. ARBEL, *Greek Magnates,* p.334

8. *Ibid.*, p. 330

9. *Ibid.*, p. 331

10. *Ibid.* p. 335

undergoing latinization or «at least found a modus vivendi combining their Greek identity with devotion to the dominant Venetian culture».[11]

The following table lists all the Cypriot dedicatees along with the madrigals associated with them:

Table 1. *Cypriot dedicatees of Martoretta's third book of madrigals*

	DEDICATEE	MADRIGAL TITLE
1	Eugenio II Singlitico	no. 1 *Ultimi miei sospiri* (Martelli)
2	Iacomo di Nores	no. 2 *O messaggi del cor sospiri ardenti* (Ariosto)
3	Piero Singlitico	no. 3 *La rete fu di queste fila d'oro* (Ariosto - 2 parts)
4	Helena Singlitico	no. 4 *Nova di Leda figlia* (Anonymous - 2 parts)
5	Zacco Gimel	no. 7 *Donna beltà sopr'ogni maraviglia* (Aretino)
6	Giovanne Singlitico	no. 9 *O pothos isdio/in mezzo a due vermigl'e fresche rose* (Anonymous - Greek version in the Cypriot Canzoniere)
7	Mutio Singlitico	no. 10 *Deh morte tarda il tuo veloce corso* (Cassola)
8	Ettore Podocataro	no. 12 *Seguimmi pur nel mond'e nell'inferno* (Tansillo)
9	Gasparo Palol	no. 15 *Dorati capelli donna mi dest'assai* (Anonymous)
10	Tutio Costanzo	no. 18 *Quei rubin quelle perl'e quelle note* (Tansillo)

The majority of these poems have been attributed to the foremost poets of the time, seemingly reflecting an Italian fashion imported to Cyprus. The anonymous poems can in two instances (no. 4 and 9) be connected to a local environment: madrigal no. 4 seems to have been explicitly written for Helena and Pietro Singlitico's wedding, since the text contains references to their marriage; while the Greek text of madrigal no. 9 is contained in a manuscript from roughly the same period, a collection of poetry in Greek known as the *Cypriot canzoniere*.[12]

The main features of this unusual madrigal are immediately visible when we observe the original print (Figure 1). In the case of the tenor, for example, the incipit shows two clefs (C4 with ♭ and C3 with ♭♭ signature) and the Greek text above the Italian. When one wants to perform the madrigal, one must choose between one of the two clefs and one of the two textual versions of the poem. Martoretta does not give any indication about how to perform the ma-

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11. *Ibid.*
12. The manuscript, containing over 150 poems largely influenced by Italian petrarchism, is held in Venice at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Gr. IX, 32 (=1287). The digitized version of the manuscript can be read at the following link: https://www.internetcul-turale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3A193.206.197.121%3A18%3AVE0049%3AC-STOR.241.10937 (last retrieved on Feb. 5, 2024). See also CARBONARO, *Liriche d'amore petrarchesche* (2012).

Figure 1. Incipit of the madrigal *O pothos isdjio/In mezzo due vermiglie e fresche rose* in the original print

drigal; it is not explicitly declared whether or not a specific clef and signature are associated univocally with a version of the text. Observing the relative positions of the verbal texts and the clefs, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that the first text (Greek, placed above the Italian) is associated with the first clef (from left to right). The second clef and signature contained in the partbooks transpose the polyphony a third higher. This alters the mode from Dorian transposed (♭) to Lydian transposed (♭♭).

In the following paragraphs these features, both textual and musical, will be thoroughly scrutinised in order to ascertain the implications of these compositional and editorial choices.

Textual features: general characteristics

O Pothos isdjo/In mezz'a due vermigl'e fresche rose is a 'strambotto,' a short poem made of two quatrains of hendecasyllabic verses. The metric structure as well as the rhyme scheme remain the same in both versions: they follow the standard Italian 'ottava toscana' form of eight verses in alternate rhyme with a final distich (ABABABCC).

Unlike the Cypriot manuscript, Martoretta used the Latin alphabet to transliterate the Greek words. This way of writing Greek was not uncommon in places where Greek and Latin people cohabited, such as the Cyclades archipelago, and was especially used to transcribe spoken vernacular.[13]

The textual content deals with the dual nature of the beauty of a woman. Her lips can attract lovers but at the same time she can petrify them through her gaze. The poetic style is clearly inspired by Petrarch. This is particularly evident in the Italian text, employing a tasteful vocabulary with some formulas taken from the *canzoniere* (such as *perle orïental* in RVF CLXVI or the *rose vermiglie* in RVF CI). The Greek text also shows the stylistic and thematic influences of Petrarchism. The poet uses refined terms associated with the *topoi* of Petrarchist poetry. To date, this is the only example known in which actual Greek is used in a madrigal. Macaronic forms of Greek instead characterized the *Greghesca* and *Iustiniana* genre, a typically Venetian musical form akin to the *villanella* in which the language of Greek immigrants is often ridiculed.[14]

13.　See PSYCHOYOU, *Latin Musical Practices,* p. 80 and ff.
14.　See EINSTEIN, *The Greghesca and the Giustiniana,* pp. 19-32.

The language employed is the Cypriot dialect, a local variety of Greek. It is not clear which of the Greek and Italian versions precedes the other. Several hypotheses have been made but to date, there is not a definitive answer regarding the genesis of this text. I will not delve into the discussion of whether the Italian text preceded the Greek or vice-versa, since this aspect is tangential to this discussion. Nevertheless, the fact that the Greek poem is present in the above-mentioned *Cypriot canzoniere*, allows us to consider Martoretta's text within a wider cultural context.

Table 2. *Cypriot/Greek/Italian poems compared*

Cypriot manuscript	Martoretta Greek	Martoretta Italian
Ὁ πόθος εἰς δυὸ χείλη κουρελλένα μαργαριτάρια κάποσα φυτεύγει, δείχνει μὲ τέχνην κ' ἔχει τα χωσμένα κάθα ποὺ θέλει κάποιον νὰ δοξεύγη· ἀποὺ δυὸ μμάτια στέκουν βλεπημένα καὶ μ' ἔναν τίτοιον μόδον τὰ κηβεύγει κι ὅτις γιὰ κεῖνα νὰ σκαλέψη χνάριν βουργὰ τὰ μμάτια κάμνουν τὸ λιθάριν.	O Pothos isdio chijli curellena Margaritaria capos' affendevgi Dichni me techni chi echij ta crimena Catha na theli capius na doxevgi Apu dio matia stecun vlepimena Che m'enan tition nomon ta chivevgi Chi otis ia china na scalepsi chnari Vurga ta matia camnun to lithari	In mezzo due vermiglie e fresche rose Più Per l'oriental' Amor possiede E con tal' arte hor mostr' hor tien ascose Che spesso coglie tal chi non s' avede Alla cui guardia doi begli occhi pose & dura legge al bel thesoro diede Che chi per coglier Perle muov' il passo Da gli occhi è convertit' in duro sasso

The three poems are substantially the same, although minor differences between them can be noticed: some discrepancies in wording between the two Greek versions (e.g χωσμένα of the Cypriot manuscript becomes crimena or μόδον becoming nomon). Martoretta's Greek version also shows some phenomena that could be connected to the transcription from an oral source: the final -n of some words such as τέχνην or χνάριν of the Greek written version are elided in Martoretta's transliteration, which corresponds to the actual pronunciation. Also, some words are fused in Martoretta's Greek version. For example, the opening line O Pothos isdio should be transliterated as O Pothos eis dio or is dio. In this case, Martoretta fused the preposition εἰς (in) with the numeral δυὸ (two).

Concerning the content, I will firstly present an English translation of the Greek text and subsequently compare it to the Italian version.

(The god of) Desire has[15] some pearls,
On two coral lips.
He artfully hides them and shows them,
Whenever he wants to strike someone.

Two eyes stand and watch,
And he gave them this law:
If someone comes near,
The eyes transform him into stone.[16]

15. «To plant» is the literal translation of φυτεύγει used in the Cypriot canzoniere. The word «affendevgi» used by Martoretta can be related to αφέντης meaning boss or ruler, therefore Αφεντεύγει could also be interpreted as «rules» or «governs».

16. Translation by Gerasimos Papadopoulos.

The content of this poem corresponds to the '*descriptio puellae*', a current literary topos in Petrarchist poetry, in which the beauties of a woman are described with standardized metaphors (for example, in this case pearls stand for teeth, roses and corals stand for lips) and colors (red, white gold and black).[17]

The main difference between the Italian and the Greek versions lies in the opening couplet. While the Greek text says that Desire (O Pothos) has his pearls among two coral lips, the Italian version says that Love has them among two red and fresh roses (vermigl'e fresche rose). Another interesting passage is the verse Catha na theli capius na doxevgi which in Italian becomes Che spesso coglie tal chi non s' avede. The Greek version uses the verb θέλω, meaning «to want» to indicate the active role of the god of love in choosing who is going to be attracted to the petrifying gaze of the beautiful woman, while the Italian version is more vague in defining the subject of the verb cogliere (to hit or to grasp). The rest of the poem does not show substantial differences among the two versions.

Medusa's myth in *O pothos isdio/In mezz'a due vermigli'e fresche rose*: the politics of desire

We have seen how the Greek and the Italian texts are substantially the same both in terms of style and content. Although never explicitly mentioned in the poems, the woman with a petrifying gaze is unquestionably tied to Medusa's myth.

Several references to Medusa are contained in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*.[18] Among them, one in particular clarifies how the poet adapted the classical myth to the love story narrated in his lyric collection. It is contained in no. 366, the closing poem of the *Fragmenta*:

> Medusa et l'error mio m'àn fatto un sasso
> d'umor vano stillante
> (*Canzoniere*, 366 vv. 111-117)

In this brief excerpt from the lengthy *Canzone alla Vergine*, Petrarch compares Laura to Medusa: she is responsible for the error that led him to perdition. Compared to the classical myth, in which Medusa is a terrifying creature, Petrarch highlights instead the deceptive nature of love, capable of distracting him from the righteous path and transforming him into a lifeless object like a stone. The strambotto included in Martoretta's print recalls Petrarch's adaptation of the classical myth, even though it highlights different

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17. For a comprehensive treatment of this *topos* in Renaissance literature see POZZI, *Temi,* pp. 391-436.
18. PETRARCA, *Canzoniere*, ed. Santagata, n. 51, 179, and 197.

details in the story. In the first place, it posits the narrated event before the effect of Medusa's gaze. While Petrarch used the past tense (m'han fatto un sasso) to describe something that already happened, here the present tense is used to describe something that could happen but still did not. In this sense, Martoretta's poem sounds like a warning to the listener/reader to prevent them from getting too close to the woman, since the text explicitly states that the petrifying gaze is, so to speak, activated by the very fact of approaching her lips.

Another striking difference is the role of *O Pothos/Amor* in directly controlling the woman. This fact transforms the dyadic relationship between Petrarch and Laura/Medusa into a triad involving the lover and the beautiful woman mediated by the action of the god.[19] In this case, the Greek text seems more precise in defining the nature of Love as Pothos, which is a more specific term than the Italian Amor. Pothos is used in classical mythology but also in a larger philosophical literature dedicated to the speculation on the nature of love. Examples include ancient authors like Plato and Andronikos of Rhodes as well as Italian Renaissance writers such as Mario Equicola and Marsilio Ficino. Equicola, in his *Libro di natura d'amore*, clarifies that:

> Luciano Pothos nomina il dio del disiderio: (...) Disiderio (...) è volere di quello che non se ha o possiede (...). Se pone nella diffinitione di amore como natura commune, per la qual amore conviene con tutti i disiderij como animale è commune con li huomini et fiere.[20]

Equicola's mention of Pothos testifies that the term was known in Italy and often translated with desiderio. The term used in the Greek version of the madrigal is thus extremely poignant and it is particularly suited to express the desire for something distant or unattainable. The term Pothos clarifies what pulls the lover to the beloved: he longs for something perceived as unreachable but at the same time exuding a compelling attraction on the protagonist of the story.

What is then the meaning of this myth in the context of the collection, and why did Martoretta choose this poem for his double-texted experiment?

The first thing to notice is that Martoretta's strambotto highlights the dual nature of Medusa who is at once beautiful and attractive as well as deceptive and dangerous. He does that through textual allusions to dual objects (such as two lips and two eyes, explicitly mentioned in the poem) as well as through the bipartition of the octave into two quatrains. This bipartition corresponds

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19. It is important to notice at this point that none of the Petrarchan references mentioned above alludes to a third personification in the relationship between Petrarch and Laura-Medusa.

20. EQUICOLA, *Libro de natura di Amore,* p. 72. The translation of this excerpt is the following: «Lucian names the god of desire *Pothos:* (...) Desire (...) is to be wanting something that one does not possess or have (...). This term has a common nature as love, because love is connected to all kinds of desires as the term animal is common both to men and beasts».

to the attractive and destructive power of the woman. This insistence on duality is indeed reflected in the double language and the double cleffing used in the madrigal.

A second aspect to consider is that Martoretta chose to portray the woman exclusively through her eyes and mouth. The role of lips and teeth is a seductive one while eyes punish those who come too close to the object of their desire.

We have seen how the description of a woman in the renaissance was a highly codified literary *topos.* The 'canone breve' in these topoi limited the description of the woman to her face and more specifically to her hair, forehead, cheeks, and mouth (often divided, as in the present case, into lips and teeth).[21] Although the strambotto is inspired by this topos (it uses the standard metaphors of roses and pearls for lips and teeth respectively and the standard white and red colors), it is further restricted to two elements. This means that the poet deliberately wanted to focus the reader's attention to those two specific objects. If eyes materialize the danger of being petrified, what do lips represent?

According to Vincenzo Cartari, a mythographer and diplomat of the 16th century, the image of Medusa on Athena's shield signified the force of knowledge. As he wrote in *Le imagini degli dei degli antichi*, first published in Venice in 1556:

> Le quali cose mostrano la forza del sapere, e della prudenza: perché questa con l'opere maravigliose e co' saggi consigli fa stupire altrui, e restare quasi sasso immobile di maraviglia, si che facilmente ottiene poi ciò che vuole, pure che lo sappi acconciamente esporre, che per questo horribile capo mostra la lingua.[22]

Cartari associates Medusa's image showing her tongue with rhetoric, an art through which it is possible to amaze listeners and leave them motionless like stones.

Along with the capacity of distracting from the true, spiritual love, the figure of Medusa is also associated with the power of rhetoric, as the capacity of controlling someone with the power of words. Aileen Feng, in her article dedicated to the «volto di Medusa» in Petrarch, highlights the political dimension of this myth that can be traced back to the Ovidian account of Perseus transforming Phineus into a marble statue by showing Medusa's severed head. In Feng's reading, this specific episode must be read as a way to show how «military power (Phineus) confronts and loses to the power of art (Perseus with Medusa's head)».[23]Also, Coluccio Salutati used this metaphor in

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21.　See POZZI, *Il ritratto della donna,* pp. 3-30.

22.　CARTARI, *Imagini degli dei degli antichi*, p. 384. The excerpt can be translated as follows: «these things clearly show the power of knowledge and prudence: because it can amaze anyone with wonderful works and wise words, and it leaves people as still as stones, so that it can obtain anything, as long as it is duly expressed: that is why its horrible head shows the tongue».

23.　FENG, '*Volto di Medusa,*' p. 504.

his *De laboribus Herculis* to signify the «power of rhetoric to both illuminate and control».[24]

The emphasis that the strambotto places on the lips of the woman might thus allude to the power of words to subjugate and dominate the audience. In this sense, Medusa's myth can also be translated on a political level as it is strongly related to the power of controlling or conquering enemies. Benvenuto Cellini's *Perseus with the head of Medusa*, made between 1545 and 1554, testifies to this political use of the myth as it represented Cosimo De Medici's control over the Florentine Republic.[25]

In this sense, the Greek poem and its coexistence with an Italian counterpart could be interpreted as a way to acquire Medusa's power by adopting elements coming from Italy such as the meter and the poetic style while at the same time maintaining the Greek language as the element of a distinctive Hellenic identity of the family. In this way, it is possible to exploit its rhetorical power without the risk of being subdued by it.

The vernacular as natural language

This position resonates with the contemporary Italian discourse on the status of the literary language codified by Bembo, particularly in its relationship to regional vernaculars.

As a preliminary to the discussion that follows, it is important to recognize that any interpretation – this one included – offers only a partial perspective within the complex and fluid multicultural environment of Renaissance Cyprus. Local households often embodied significant religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity, resisting rigid classification. Although the analysis may suggest a strong binary opposition – e.g. Greek vs. Latin, Italian vs. Cypriot – such categories should be understood as metaphorical and symbolic rather than literal, as the realities of identity were undoubtedly more fluid and nuanced, even within the same family. Indeed, the *Terzo libro de' madrigali* reflects this diversity: it moves between examples of high Italian poetry, texts in Italian composed in honor of Cypriot figures – such as the madrigal dedicated to Elena Singlitico – and the use of the Cypriot vernacular, as in the case under analysis. Such heterogeneity suggests that the collection was designed for a multilingual, cosmopolitan milieu, and should be read as a layered cultural artifact rather than a unified expression of identity.[26]

Turning more specifically to the Greek poem included by Martoretta in the

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24. *Ibid.*, p. 517.
25. For the political meaning of Cellini's statue see CORRETTI, *Cellini's Perseus and Medusa*. Chapter 2 in particular contains a detailed discussion of Cellini's sculpture as a symbol of Cosimo De Medici's political power.
26. For further discussion of the cultural dynamics of Venetian Cyprus and its broader Eastern Mediterranean context, see McKEE, *Uncommon Dominion*, 2000; MALTEZOU, *I Greci durante la venetocrazia*, 2009; CHRIST and MORCHE (eds.), *Cultures of Empire*, 2020.

collection, its presence within the Cypriot *canzoniere* attests to the emergence of a vernacular literary culture on the island. According to Evangelia Skoufari, the poems contained in the manuscript indicate the beginning of a distinctive Cypriot poetic tradition which is closely connected to the growing awareness of the value of the local culture. Furthermore, as Skoufari notices, the scribes that assembled the canzoniere were very likely aware of the ongoing debate on literary language that was happening on the Peninsula.[27] Following the Bembian reform and the definitive affirmation of the Tuscan literary language as the sole model for prose and poetry in Italian, several scholars and poets tried to contrast its hegemony by using local vernaculars. In many cases these intellectuals associated the literary language with artifice and the vernacular with spontaneity.

Already at the beginning of the century Antonio de Ferraris claimed that «Io parlarò con quella medesima lengua che ho imparata da la mia nutrice».[28] Also the Sicilian writer Claudio Mario Arezzo accused the 'tuscanizing' poets of «cadiri in lo visco di l'affettationi».[29] This is, according to Paolo Trovato, a generalised phenomenon in Italy.[30] Alfredo Stussi explains this fact as follows: «Per una elementare polarizzazione che è nelle cose, la lingua letteraria viene spesso presentata come straniera e di casta, laddove il dialetto è nativo e popolare».[31] According to Stussi, Bembo's literary reform created a gap between the literary language, modeled after Petrarch and Boccaccio, and the common Italian vernaculars. This polarization created almost automatically an association between the artificiality of the literary language and the naturality of the vernacular.

The fact that the Singliticos were aware of this literary debate and very likely interested in supporting the value of the vernacular as a natural way of expression is suggested by a passage of the second book of the *Satire alla Carlona* written by Pietro Nelli and dedicated to Eugenio II Singlitico, one of Martoretta's dedicatees.[32]

In the satira II, titled *La dipintura di se stesso*, the author talks about his poetic style declaring that he likes «Usar vocaboli sanesi/ Non tirati con argani, o con ruote/ Per ch'io vo che i miei versi siano intesi» and, a little further, «Non vuol forza, o sudor la lingua nostra/ Onde chiunque s'affanna in parlar fosco/ Haverla in presto, e non di suo dimostra».[33] These passages highlight several aspects of the common rhetoric connected to the vernacular languages as op-

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27. See SKOUFARI, *La Serenissima a Cipro,* p. 146
28. «I will speak with the same tongue I learnt from my nurse» cited in TROVATO, *Storia della lingua italiana*, p. 100
29. «Falling in the vice of showing off».
30. TROVATO, *Storia della lingua Italiana*, p. 31.
31. STUSSI, *Lingua, dialetto e letteratura*, p. 26 «due to a basic tendency to polarization, the literary language is often referred to as stranger and elitist whereas dialects are perceived as natural and popular».
32. NELLI, *Il primo e secondo libro delle satire alla Carlona.*
33. «Our language does not require effort or sweat/ therefore those who strive in talking an an obscure language/ demonstrate that they lent it and that it is not their own» (*ibid.*, p. 8).

posed to literary Tuscan: in the first place, using the vernacular (that of Siena in Nelli's case) means to be understood; secondly, Nelli defines the literary language as 'parlar fosco' (obscure talk), labelling it as a 'borrowed' form of expression (presa in presto), thus not the natural way of speaking which does not require sudor (sweat) or sforzo (effort). Nelli's Satira stresses the idea of the vernacular as an effortless and transparent tongue in contrast to the obscurity and artificiality of the literary language.

Martoretta too was seemingly interested in this debate. In his second book he used the same poetic form, the strambotto, for another linguistic experiment in the form of two madrigals in Sicilian vernacular. The texts were written by Gian Nicola Rizzari (nos. 20 and 21 of the collection). The metric structure is in this case the Ottava Siciliana (i.e., an octave without the distich at the end of the stanza).

Rizzari's verses are stylistically very close to those of Antonio Veneziano, another very influential Sicilian poet, as they employ only Sicilian or Sicilianized words in the context of a refined literary language.[34] Veneziano is perhaps the clearest in explaining what pushed him to use Sicilian for his verses (although, as he affirms, he was able to write both in Italian and in Latin). It was the spontaneity that the mother tongue can grant, since he «sucked it along with his mother's milk».[35] He in fact compares the Sicilian vernacular to the true face of a person and Italian to a mask that one can wear:

> Forsi lu munnu aspittiria autri primizi di l'ingegnu miu; ma in quali lingua putia megghiu fari principiu, ch'in chidda, chi primu non sulamenti 'mparai, ma sucai cu lu latti? Starria friscu [...] Oraziu, chi fu d'unni si parlava latinu, e scrissi latinu, lu Petrarca, chi fu Tuscanu, e scrissi tuscanu, s'a mia chi sú Sicilianu non mi convenissi comporri Sicilianu [...] benchì iu per grazia di Diu, saccia autramenti scriviri, per ora m'è placiutu mustarimi ne lu miu propriu visaggiu, quannu vorrò farmi mascara, mustrirò chi cussì beni fazzu la mia parti.[36]

Although not directly connected with our strambotto, Veneziano's declaration contained in the preface of *Celia*, his collection of love poems, seems to correspond to a possible reading of the presence of a Greek vernacular poem in Martoretta's collection. In fact, it seems reasonable to conclude that the mo-

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34. There were several positions, at least in the Sicilian cultural environment, regarding the use of Sicilian in relationship to Italian, ranging from a mild use of Sicilian expressions or specific words (e.g. Claudio Mario Arezzo) to the research of an archaic language in contraposition to Tuscan (e.g. Veneziano).

35. Cited in LO PIPARO, Franco, *Sicilia linguistica*, p. 745. Translation by the author.

36. «Maybe the world is expecting other fruits from my intellect: yet, which tongue should I have begun with if not that one that I firstly learnt, or better I sucked along with my mother's milk? In fact, Orace who was from where latin was spoken, wrote in latin, Petrarch, who was Tuscan, wrote in Tuscan, then why I, a Sicilian, should not compose in Sicilian? Although I, for God's grace, can also write differently, for now I chose to show myself in my true face, and when I will want to use a mask, I will demonstrate that I am also able to do my part».

tivation for using a Greek text in Martoretta's third book could respond to the same need of showing the 'true face' of the Singlitico household, a Greek one, while adhering to cultural models coming from Italy and Venice in particular. As I suggested above, choosing the literary form of a vernacular language asserts the possibility of assimilating external elements into the local culture while maintaining the original Greek identity of the household. The fact that the Greek text appears on the page along with an Italian counterpart seems to display in parallel the 'true face' and the 'mask' described by Veneziano and to assert the pre-eminence of the natural language over the «fake» language represented by the literary Italian version of the poem.

As noted above, the cultural reality of Renaissance Cyprus was likely far more nuanced than any binary model can suggest. The diversity of linguistic, religious, and social identities present on the island fostered a multiplicity of positions, even within the same household or milieu. A particularly illustrative example of such complexity can be found in Crete under Venetian rule. The case of Andrea Cornaro reveals a striking paradox: although his brother Vincenzo is widely credited with the authorship of *Erotokritos*, the most celebrated work of early modern Greek literature, Andrea vehemently rejected the contemporary Cretan vernacular, describing it as «entirely corrupt» and «full of altered Italian words». This tension reflects the coexistence of conflicting ideologies regarding the Greek language: on one side, a Latin-oriented elite that championed literary Italian as a sign of refinement; on the other, a flourishing vernacular Greek literary culture that asserted its own sophistication and expressive power. Similarly, Martoretta's 'Greek' madrigal may be interpreted not as expressing an official position of the Singlitico family, but rather as articulating one possible stance on the relationship between the Cypriot vernacular and literary Italian. As in Crete – where the case of Andrea Cornaro, who dismissed the local vernacular despite his brother Vincenzo's authorship of *Erotokritos*, illustrates the coexistence of opposing views within the same elite – Cypriot authors and patrons operated within a multilingual and multicultural context shaped by diverse, and at times conflicting, perspectives on language, identity, and cultural belonging.[37]

Musical features: transposable writing and modal system

As discussed above in relation to the coexistence of dual linguistic registers, a comparable dualism is also evident in the musical dimension: within the same madrigal, Martoretta employs two distinct sets of clefs, allowing for alternative readings of the same part and thus mirroring the structural dichotomy present in the text. From a purely musical perspective, the use of such devices can be connected to a pre-existing tradition of transposable writing. Glarean, in his *Dodecachordon*, described Ockeghem's preference for *katholika*. With

37. See VINCENT, *Language and Ideology*.

this term, Glarean refers particularly to two compositions: the canon *Prenez sur moy vostre exemple* and the *Missa cuiusvis toni*. The Swiss theorist described *katholika* as follows:

> The following song of his [*Prenez sur moy*] is considered among the foremost of such kind, in which song it is necessary to have good ears.[38]

Following these remarks, Glarean observed also that the *Missa cuiusvis toni* «should be sung to three tones only, corresponding to the three fourth-species of the hexachord: ut-re-mi-fa, re-mi-fa-sol and mi-fa-sol-la».[39]

These two works by Ockeghem have not been univocally interpreted, but the idea of transposable writing does not seem to have narrative implications. Rather, it is a way to show the composer's ability to manipulate melodic lines. The idea behind this kind of composition is to maintain modal coherence when the melody is transposed to another finalis. On the other end of the spectrum, we find what Pietro Aron labeled 'canti euphoniaci.' These can be defined as compositions that are modally undetermined because they lack a clear subdivision between the fourth and fifth species, although they work perfectly with respect to the consonances. According to Anne-Emanuelle Ceulemans:

> Dans de telles compositions, qu'Aron appelle canti euphoniaci, les notes ne se définissent plus que par leur position au sein de la gamme diatonique et se rapportent exclusivement les unes aux autres, sans passer par la finale, et sans qu'il existe de direction dans les rapports de quintes et de tierces, c'est-à-dire sans qu'une des notes 'domine' l'autre.[40]

In his madrigal, Martoretta took care of respecting the proper species of fifth and used cadences that are suitable in the two modes he chose for his composition.

The device employed to obtain the transposition, namely the use of a double clef, was already used by Martoretta in his second book for the madrigals *Se far potessi quel che far non posso* (no. 12), *Qual sventurato mai/ alma serena e bella* (no. 13), *Laura suave* (no. 16), and *Madonna, trovo ogni bellezza in voi* (no. 18). The following table shows all instances in which Martoretta used double clefs along with the details of their presentation:

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38. Cited in VAN BENTHEM, '*Prenez Sur Moy Vostre Exemple*', p. 113.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 100
40. CEULEMANS, *Dalhaus et l'origine,* p. 90.

Table 3. *Martoretta's transposable madrigals*[41]

MADRIGAL TITLE	BOOK	CLEFS (CATB)	SIGNATURE	FINAL	TRANSPOSITION
1a) Se far potessi quel che far non posso	2	C1 - C3 - C4 - F4 ♮		D	-
1b) Se far potessi quel che far non posso (alt.)	2	G2 - C2 - C3 - F3 ♭		F	upper 3rd
2a) Qual sventurato mai/ alma serena e bella	2	C3 - C4 - C4 - F4 ♭		G	-
2b) Qual sventurato mai/ alma serena e bella (alt.)	2	G2 - C1 - C1 - C3 ♭		F	upper 7th
3a) Laura soave, vita di mia vita	2	C2 - C4 - C4 - F4 ♮		E	-
3b) Laura soave, vita di mia vita (alt.)	2	C1 - C3 - C3 - F3 ♮		G	upper 3rd
4a) Madonna, trovo ogni bellezza in voi	2	C1 - C3 - C4 - F4 ♮		A	-
4b) Madonna, trovo ogni bellezza in voi (alt.)	2	G2 - C2 - C3 - C4 ♮		C	upper 3rd
5a) O Pothos isdjio/ In mezzo a due vermigl'e …	3	C3 - C4 - C4 - F4 ♭		D (*confinalis*)	-
5b) O Pothos isdjio/ In mezzo a due vermigl'e… (alt.)	3	C2 - C3 - C3 - F3 ♭		F (*confinalis*)	upper 3rd

In four cases (nos. 1, 3, 4, and 5), the second set of clefs appears on the line below the first set of clefs, transposing the melodies of the parts a third higher. The mode of the madrigal thus changes in two cases (nos. 1 and 5) from Dorian to Lydian (which adds a flat in the signature as a notational convention), in one case from Phrygian to Mixolydian (no. 3), and in one case from Aeolian to Ionian (no.4).[42] All these madrigals, except for two instances (nos. 2 and 5), present just one text. In the case of no. 5, the Greek and the Italian texts, as we have seen, are almost the same in content.

In no. 2, the second set of clefs transposes the music up by a seventh; the madrigal also sets two different texts. Despite the different titles, both poems deal with unhappy love. In the first, affliction is caused by not being able to decide whether to declare one's love or not. In the second, pain is provoked by the departure of the beloved, the sole person that could grant happiness to the lover. We are thus dealing in both cases with sad and melancholic texts. In this case, the use of two alternative poems seems connected to the marked difference in range between the two versions rather than to the mode employed, as this is the only case of a transposition to the upper seventh.

It is quite difficult to understand the reasoning behind Martoretta's choice of transposing some of the madrigals to another mode. The large majority of the compositions retain the same text, making it difficult to associate univo-

41. For the definition of confinalis i.e. an alternative final a fifth above the original, see WIERING, *The Language of the Modes*.

42. From now on, I will refer to modes using their classical names (as indicated by Glarean and Zarlino) rather than their numbering; therefore Dorian (*finalis* on D); Phrygian (E); Lydian (F); Myxolidian (G); Aeolian (A); Ionian (c). Martoretta could have actually referred to Glarean's system since the first known Italian publication with explicit modal assignments dates to 1549, five years prior to Martoretta's print (Zarlino's *Musici quinque vocum*, in which the tenor partbook bears modal attributions including Aeolian and Ionian). See COLLINS-JUDD, Cristle. *Renaissance Modal Theory,* pp. 364-406.

cally the meaning of the poem to a specific modal affetto. Modes in fact were generally supposed to represent the ethos of the text: the strong connection between musical modes and passions of the soul was a common theme since antiquity that is found in many treatises of the time in association with modality.[43] In these examples, Martoretta seems instead to neglect this connection between the affective content of the text and its musical transposition into a specific mode.

As Bernhard Meier has observed, however, during the 16th century the affect representation tended to shift from the general mode of the composition to the sonic illustration of single sentences or specific words.[44] In this sense, Martoretta's use of a double key for transposition can be interpreted as an exploration of the musical properties of the modes rather than as having narrative purposes.

In fact, from a purely musical perspective, Martoretta's double-clef madrigals of the second book explore all four possible species of fifths by arranging them into groups according to the kind of third that they have. The first group is made up of the first and the second species of fifth (built on D/A and E respectively), containing a minor third; the transposed versions use the second and the third species of fifth (built on F and G/C), containing the major third. According to Zarlino, the nature of the third that divides the diapente in the middle is responsible for the happy or sad character of the mode.[45] If we follow Zarlino, Martoretta's alternative modal configurations of the same poem would appear as illogical.

From what has been said, the link between the meaning of the text and its musical rendition should be researched in other aspects than the mode. We can thus infer that the modal transposition in *O pothos isdjio/in mezz'a due vermigl'e fresche rose* should not be connected to the semantic meaning of the text.

This idea is confirmed when we consider the transposition that Martoretta used for this madrigal. It features the transposed G Dorian mode for the first set of clefs and the transposed version of the Lydian mode on Bb for the second set. This produces the same modal change as in the madrigal no. 13 of the second book, although with a different set of clefs. Martoretta in fact used the G Dorian as well although in that case the transposition happened on the original Lydian mode on F, a seventh above the original. On the contrary, the only double-cleffed madrigal of the third book uses a transposition a third above, requiring an extra b sign. This fact could indicate that Martoretta explicitly wanted to use a key with two flats instead of the common configuration of the Lydian, adding a Bb to avoid the tritone between F and B. The following transcriptions refer to the madrigals discussed in the preceding passages:

43. Aristotle and Plato, just to mention the most famous, wrote about this theme in the *Republic* and in the *Politics* respectively. For a concise description of the *affetti* associated with musical modes in early modern Italian music see DAL MASO, *Teoria e pratica,* p. 209 and ff.
44. See MEIER, *I modi*, ed. Magnolfi, p. 407.
45. ZARLINO, *Istitutioni*, part III, chapt. 10.

Example 1. Comparison between dorian and their lydian transposition in Martoretta

1. Transpositions used for the madrigal *Qual sventurato mai/Alma serena* e bella from Martoretta's 2nd book of madrigals (no. 13 – original clefs)

2. Transpositions used for the madrigal *O pothos isdjio/in mezz'a due vermigl'e fresche rose* from Martoretta's 3rd book of madrigals (no. 9 – original clefs)

When we observe the transcriptions, we can notice how the transposition that Martoretta used in the third book brings the whole composition into the musica ficta realm. In fact, the solmization syllables of the transposed version in bb are not anymore those used on the Guidonian hand. Therefore, to sing the pitches correctly one needs to use 'fake names' for the notes (e.g. the E♮ is spelled Fa and not Mi, the D is Mi and not Re or La and so on).[46]

Scipione Cerreto, a Neapolitan theorist of the beginning of the 17th century, calls the clef with one flat «Chiave di natura con Bemolle»; and the clef with two flats «Chiave accidentale overo finta o fitta», meaning 'accidental' or 'fake' clef.[47] Cerreto refers to Franchino Gaffurio's *Practica musicae* (1496) to support his view, thusly deriving his designation from an older terminology. As Gaffurio writes:

> Post insuper unusquisque tonus in introductorio concupi ubicunq; eius latere, seu species noscuntur extendi: quem extra naturalem, ac primariam dispositionem ductum possumus fictum, vel acquisitum appellari.[48]

In Gaffurio's explanation the tones that extend beyond the Guidonian system of hexachords (therefore outside the natural 'strings' of the system) are called 'fake' or 'acquired.'

Zarlino also speaks of «modi trasposti per musica finta»[49] underscoring how this is a modern way of transposing the «figure dalla propria sede ad un'altra» and thus implying that the notes are moved from their natural place to another.[50] Nicola Vicentino in *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica*[51] also designates the key with two flats as a clef «per musica finta».

This creates a dichotomy between 'natural' music and 'fake' music which corresponds to the duality between the 'natural' language and the 'fake' language described above regarding the relationship between the Cypriot vernacular and the Italian text. This interpretation suggests that there is one 'true' text and a 'fake' one, each of them associated with a specific key signature. As I observed above, the upper position of the Greek on the page and the fact that the index includes only the Greek title of the composition are hints of the 'true' status of the Hellenic version.

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46. See COHEN, *Notes,* p. 356.
47. See CERRETO, *Della Prattica*, Book II chapt. VII.
48. Cited in CERRETO, *Della Prattica,* Book II, chapt. VII. Cerreto's quote of Gaffurio contains some errors, but it should correspond to this translation: «Furthermore, one can represent each mode in Guido's solmization system (*introduttorio*) in every place and extend it according to its species according to the common rule. We can name the new disposition, beyond the natural and ordinary one, *fake* or *acquired*».
49. ZARLINO, *Istitutioni*, p. 674.
50. See ZARLINO, *Istitutioni,* p. 320.
51. VICENTINO, *L'antica musica,* p. 73.

Conclusions

From the elements elicited above, Martoretta's madrigal *O pothos isdjio/In mezzo a due vermigl'e fresche rose* appears as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional object. The madrigal's double text, its most salient feature, makes the coexistence of Greek and Italian elements on the same page extremely clear. In this way, Martoretta alludes to the idea of a coexistence of Greek and Italian. He could have simply added a Greek madrigal to an otherwise Italian collection; instead, he chose to have both texts on the same page, a statement about the coexistence on the same space of two different – although apparently correspondent – cultural expressions. This juxtaposition is all the more strongly reinforced by the fact that the Greek and the Italian poems, in terms of contents and metrical structure, are the same. The idea that emerges from this general consideration of the page is that of a substantial equivalence between Greek and Italian elements. From the point of view of the reader, a language such as Greek, often ridiculed in Venetian musical literature (e.g., through the Greghesche and the Giustiniane) acquires the same status of a high Italian literary text.

The musical idea of transposition, which in a modal system such as that used by Martoretta is not just a reproduction on another pitch of the same melody but, on the contrary, changes the essence of the composition, reveals the danger implied in translating from one language into the other. The fact that Martoretta here uses a transposition from a 'natural' set of clefs to a 'fake' one, unlike other examples found in the second book, could signify the relationship between the Greek culture of the Singliticos to the Italian fashion which, although beautiful, is nevertheless a fake mask. Such an interpretation aligns with broader Renaissance practices involving musical riddles, which invited readers and performers to interpret notation as part of a symbolic discourse. As Katelijne Schiltz demonstrates in her comprehensive study *Music and Riddle Culture in the Renaissance*, these enigmatic compositions fulfilled multiple functions: they conveyed symbolic meanings through compositional techniques, showcased the skill of composers and offered entertainment to social circles engaged in their interpretation. Martoretta had already explored this culture of musical enigma in earlier compositions, notably in the madrigal *Lascia dolente cor la dura impresa* (1548), where the use of unusually complex mensuration signs appears to reflect the "tough enterprise" referenced in the title, establishing a deliberate correspondence between musical structure and textual meaning.

Seen in this light, the transpositional device in Martoretta's "Greek" madrigal may reflect more than mere notational experimentation: it might serve as an allegory for cultural translation, alluding to the risks of distortion and loss inherent in negotiating between Greek vernacular and Italian literary idioms, and more broadly between local identity and imposed stylistic norms.

The presence of this Greek-texted madrigal within an otherwise fully Italian-language collection serves the purpose of highlighting this particular composition in the context of the book: while in the Cypriot canzoniere the

same strambotto goes unnoticed, here it catches the attention of the historical reader (as well as the modern scholar), raising the question of its presence in the book. The musical device used by Martoretta, in connection to the position of the vernacular in the literary debate of the time, suggests the possibility of a metaphorical reading of the literary text as the representation of the dialectic between natural and artificial, true face and mask, associated with Greek and Italian respectively and the danger of assimilation. This reading adds to the madrigal a political dimension as the stance of a Greek household facing the risk of being 'Italianized' through absorption of Venetian cultural models. The history of the family supports this view as the younger members of the household, those named as dedicatees in Martoretta's book, were negotiating their cultural belonging at that moment. As previously cautioned, however, such an interpretation should be regarded as one possible facet of a far more intricate and layered reality – one in which cultural identity in the Hellenic world under Venetian dominion was shaped by ongoing processes of negotiation, hybridity, and competing allegiances, often observable even within the same family. Martoretta's madrigal is thus an extraordinary example of how a cultural artefact such as the madrigal, often considered a sublimated form of musical and poetical expression, is instead deeply tied to the historical and cultural context that generates it.

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NOTA BIOGRAFICA Amedeo Fera ha compiuto studi in Sociologia (Università di Trento; Technische Universität Dresden), Italianistica (University of Washington, Seattle) e Musica, Scienza e Tecnologia del Suono (Politecnico Internazionale Scientia et Ars, Vibo Valentia). Ha studiato viola da gamba e contrappunto storico presso la Scuola Musicale di Milano. Attualmente è dottorando di ricerca presso la Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgio), con una tesi sul *Primo libro de' madrigali* del compositore calabrese del XVI secolo Giandomenico Martoretta.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE Amedeo Fera studied Sociology (University of Trento; Technische Universität Dresden), Italian Studies (University of Washington, Seattle), and Music, Sound Science and Technology (Politecnico Internazionale Scientia et Ars, Vibo Valentia). He studied viola da gamba and historical counterpoint at the Scuola Musicale di Milano. He is currently a PhD candidate at KU Leuven, researching Giandomenico Martoretta's first madrigal book.