Games of Venus:
Secular Vocal Music
in the Late Quattrocento
and Early Cinquecento*

WILLIAM F. PRIZER

In early 1460, on his way back to Rome from the Council of Mantua, Pope Pius II and his entourage stopped in Florence. While there, he and his party were given various entertainments, one of which was to hear Bianca de' Medici, daughter of Piero di Cosimo and wife of Guglielmo de' Pazzi, sing and play the organ. The Apostolic Protonotary Teodoro da Montefeltro described the party's stay in Florence to the Marchesa Barbara of Brandenburg, wife of Marchese Ludovico Gonzaga of Mantua (1412–1478). On the morning after their entry, the pope and his entourage rested.

Then, after eating, Bianca, the married daughter of Piero di Cosimo [de' Medici], went with other ladies of Piero and Jacopo de' Pazzi to visit the Cardinal of Rohan, and their relatives wanted his Lordship to greet them in French fashion, and so he kissed all ten of them, who were as lovely as angels in paradise. Then he took them into a hall and had Bianca play the organ; she plays it very well with fine

* This study was first presented at an interdisciplinary conference on “The Sensual Venice” at California State University, Long Beach, in April 1990. I should like to thank Professor Kristine K. Forney and the University Collegium Musicum for performing several of the works discussed here as illustrations to that paper.

1 Claudio, dedico questo studio a te, che hai avuto le ricerche intorno alla poesia popolare per musica come passione per così tanti anni. E’ vero che questo studio si occupa di testi che quasi non si traducono, e che è scritto in parte per gli stranieri che non sanno leggere queste poesie in versione originale; nondimanco, spero che tu ci trovi qualcosa che ti diverta.
phrases and proportions and impressive rhythm. . . . When he returned to his lodgings, Monsignor the Vice-Chancellor [Rodrigo Borgia], because he was housed nearby, sent for me to have the ladies who had gone to see the Cardinal of Rohan visit him, and this was because the Pazzi, who are very friendly with him, said that they wanted to hear Bianca, who is married to Guglielmo de' Pazzi, play. And when she arrived, he touched her hand, not in French fashion but in the Italian style, that is, without kissing her, even though her relatives begged him to do so. Then Bianca tuned the pipes of the organ that King Alfonso [of Naples] had given to maestro Antonio [Squarcialupi, 1416–1480], the organist, saying that he was giving him this instrument because he was the best [organist] he had ever, or would ever, hear. 2 Once the organ was tuned, [Bianca's] sister [Lucrezia, called “Nannina”], who is about eleven years old, began to pump the bellows of the organ, and not knowing what would please Monsignor [Borgia], I had [Bianca] perform two songs for him: “Fortuna” and “Duogl'angoseus” and then she did another, highly unusual one.

And so that your Ladyship will know what kind of lady she is, for the fame she enjoys, I shall tell you briefly, then return to my description. She is a lady of fourteen years, about as large as Ursolina your servant. She is a well-formed person, about like her, lively in the face and truly blonde; she dances well but not in comparison to your Ursolina, and is called for these reasons “la bella Bianca.” Now, returning to the first discussion, when she had finished playing in camera, Monsignore and the ladies went into the hall and danced until about 7:30, first balletti, then saltarelli, and finally the ballata. . . . When the dance was finished, everyone ate something and then Bianca played an angelic song on the organ, then she sang a cansonetta with her sister, and then, in addition, another young girl began one that says “Moum cuer chiantes ioussement.” When this was done, Bianca thanked Monsignore on the part of the other ladies there and touched his hand. The other ladies did the same and then left, and the festa seems to have revived Monsignore, who was truly tired from his trip. . . . 3

Much can be drawn from this letter about music making in later Quattrocento Italy. First, it adds to the evidence for the widespread

2 It is not clear exactly what this organ was or how Squarcialupi acquired it. He was in Naples in 1450 and wrote to Giovanni de’ Medici on 26 November of that year describing briefly his visit. There he speaks of an “horgano di canna” and of another that was given to Antonio di Migliorino. The letter is published in Giovanni Gaye, Carteggio inedito d’artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI (Florence 1899; reprint Turin, 1968) I, 160–61, and in Bianca Becherini, “Antonio Squarcialupi e il Cod. Mediceo-Palatino 87,” Ars Nova italiana del Trecento I (1962), 195.

3 The seven letters quoted here at length are included in the Appendix. Document 1 of the Appendix is a transcription of this letter. In both the documents and the poetic texts, I have added punctuation, diacritical marks, and capitalization; I have also resolved all abbreviations.
musical literacy of the elite: the children of the Sforza, the Estensi, and the Gonzaga, to name but three noble families, were taught music; too, Bianca’s mother Lucrezia Tornabuoni sang and her brother Lorenzo was an accomplished musician. Second, it tells us something about the musical literacy of women in particular, for Bianca, although to judge from this letter a particularly fine keyboard player, was hardly alone among her sex in musical training.  

Too, the letter allows a glimpse at the kind of repertory that a woman might perform. Some of the works, of course, are not identifiable: what the “angelic song,” the “highly unusual” work, and the “canzonetta” were, we cannot know for sure. Two of the pieces, however, can be specified with some certainty: Bianca herself performed “Dueil engoisseeux,” and another young woman sang “Mon cuer chante joyeusement.” These are French works squarely in the courtly tradition. Indeed, both are by one of the masters of the fifteenth-century chanson, Binchois (ca. 1400–1460). This is particularly intriguing because “Mon cuer chante,” a rondeau, is in the masculine voice, and may thus indicate a wide-spread performance of such works.


5 Montefeltro’s wording is not clear: “più” may be intended to say that a third girl was added to the ensemble of Bianca and Nannina (in which case they sang the chanson a3), or it may simply mean “and also,” meaning perhaps that Bianca accompanied her on Squarcialupi’s organ. I pass over the significance of this document for fifteenth-century performance practice and the dance.

6 Modern editions of the chansons are in Wolfgang Rehm, ed., Die Chansons von Gilles Binchois (1400–1460), Musikalische Denkmäler II (Mainz, 1957), 25–26 and 45–47. It is suggestive that both these chansons were included in Rome, Vatican, MS Urb. lat. 1411, copied between 1440 and 1450, which Bianca’s father Piero di Cosimo gave to Piero di Arcangelo de’ Bonaventuri of Urbino (See Francis Ames-Lewis, “The Inventories of Piero di Cosimo de’ Medici’s Library,” La bibliofilia LXXXIV [1989], 128, and Herbert Kellman, ed., Census-Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music, 1400–1550 IV [American Institute of Musicology, 1988], 68). If the 1460 performance is a guide, it may well be that the pieces in Vatican 1411 represent a repertory current among the Florentine elite. The manuscript contains nineteen works: fifteen chansons (twelve ascribed to Binchois, two to Dufay, and one anonymous) and four Italian-texted works (both the Ciconia and the Bedyngham/Dunstaple “O rosa bella,” “La dolce vista” ascribed to Dufay, and the anonymous “Con dolia me ne vo”).
works by women. The third named work is less clear, since “Fortuna” may have been one of several pieces. The most likely candidate, however, is Johannes Bedyngham’s “Fortune, helas,” which also circulated as “Gentil madonna.” Significantly too, both “Fortune, helas” and “Duel engoisieux” exist in instrumental entabulations, in the Buxheim Organ Book; it may thus be that Bianca was playing organ arrangements without singing at all, although it is also possible that she was singing while accompanying herself on the instrument.

What then of the unnamed works, the “angelic song,” the “canzonetta” and the “highly unusual” work? I would suggest, very tentatively, that they might represent three of the standard Italian repertoires of the time: the angelic song, if Montefeltro meant this technically, could have been a lauda; “canzonetta” was a standard name for the giustiniane or viniziane that were in vogue at this time; and the other might possibly be an arrangement of one of the Neapolitan works that circulated in Tuscany during the 1460s and 1470s. She and her companions could then be seen as performing examples from each of the repertoires available to an amateur in the later Quattrocento: courtly works in French and perhaps also courtly works in the Italian tongue like the viniziane, and devotional pieces, as well as popular settings.

7 “Deuil engoisieux,” one of Christine de Pisan’s Cent balades, is neutral in voice, i.e., there is no indication of the gender of the singer. The complete text is published in Maurice Roy, ed., Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan (Paris, 1886; reprint New York, 1965) I. 7–8. I am grateful to my colleague Cynthia Brown for her help with this text. Howard M. Brown has discussed chansons in feminine voice in “Women Singers and Women’s Songs,” pp. 74–79.

8 Modern edition in, among other places, Leeman Perkins and Howard Garey, eds., The Mellon Chansonnier (New Haven and London, 1979) I, 161–63. I am grateful to Professor David Fallows for this identification and for several other helpful suggestions.

9 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Cim. 352b, copied in Munich in the mid-1460s. “Fortune” is edited by Bertha A. Wallner, Das Buxheim Orgelbuch II (Das Erbe deutscher Musik XXXVIII), 162. “Dulongesux” is present there in two separate entabulations; edited in ibid. I (Das Erbe deutscher Musik XXXVII), 72–75.

10 The Neapolitan works are discussed below. On the canzonette of Giustinian and his imitators, see Walter Rubsam, “The Giustiniane or Viniziane of the 15th Century,” Acta Musicologica XXIX (1957), 172–84. This should be read in conjunction with Nino Pirrotta, “Ricercare e variazioni su ‘O Rosa Bella,’” Studi musicali I (1972), 59–77 (now translated into English in Pirrotta, Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque [Cambridge, Mass., 1984], pp. 145–58); also important is Pirrotta’s “On Text Forms from Ciconia to Dufay,” in Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese, ed. Jan LaRue (New York, 1966), pp. 675–82.

11 I do not claim, of course, that these identifications are necessarily accurate, although I do believe that the young women were performing a fairly encyclopedic repertory; this kind of repertory is not unknown from other descriptions of actual music making. In 1448, for example, Gianozzo Manetti, Florentine ambassador to Venice, reported that Florentine exiles performed “gallicas cantilenas et melodias,”
One later document can establish additional points about these repertories and their performers. In about 1518, the most prolific composer of Italian secular music of his generation, Bartolomeo Tromboncino (ca. 1470–after 1535), moved to Venice. Tromboncino had spent the earlier years of his life, from about 1490, in service to two noblewomen at north-Italian courts, both amateur musicians: Isabella d’Este (1474–1539) of Mantua and Lucrezia Borgia (1480–1519) of Ferrara.\textsuperscript{12}

At the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century, however, Tromboncino left the services of the Borgia duchess. In 1521 he applied to the Venetian Senate for repatriation and a composer’s patent for all the works he had written or would write, asking them to ensure that printers would have to pay him to publish his works.\textsuperscript{13} It is clear that Tromboncino, in moving from the court societies of Mantua and Ferrara to the more nearly republican Venice, had changed the method through which he planned to make his living: as long as he was a court composer, he was paid by his patronesses to furnish whatever works they required. For this he received a fairly generous salary, but could expect no further payment for the songs he composed.

This view of Tromboncino’s change in status is confirmed by a letter from Giacomo de’ Tebaldi, the Ferrarese ambassador in Venice, to Lucrezia Borgia herself. Written in July 1518, or shortly after Tromboncino arrived in the city on the lagoon, the letter also suggests the extent to which musical literacy was a necessity there among the urban elite.

Most illustrious and excellent Lady and most worthy patron. No earlier than last Saturday did I receive the letters of your Excellency of the seventh of this month, in which you ask me to inform Trom-
boncino on your behalf to come to your Excellency for reasons that you would tell him. I have done as you asked with Tromboncino, who told me that he does not know how he can satisfy your Excellency because he has rented a house here and has already begun to teach gentlewomen, so that he makes more money every day and that if he were now to absent himself for six or eight days, he would lose all he has begun. Through [his teaching] he hopes to get out of debt and out of the hands of the Jews, who have, according to what he tells me, a lien on everything he owns. He affirms with great oaths that this is true and that he hopes in a few days to be able to breathe a little and to be able to go for his wife and family, swearing to me that, because of the service that he bears for your Excellency, he would travel to India to satisfy you, much less to Ferrara, but that, in the end, his most urgent poverty does not allow him to leave here, and he has asked me to make his excuses to your Excellency and to beg you, as I am doing, that you be pleased to write to him about what you wish from him because if he can serve you from here, he says that he will force himself with all his ability to satisfy you, since it was and will be his greatest desire to do what he could and to be able to do whatever he can as long as he shall live. And the said Tromboncino and I ask to be remembered in the good graces of your Excellency.14

Tromboncino was assuredly teaching lute and voice to the gentlewomen of Venice. If he could tell Tebaldi that he was earning “more money every day” and if he believed that his earnings would be sufficient not only to support him but also to allow him to bring his family to Venice and pay his old debts, then there must have been a fairly substantial market among the Venetian ladies for the skills he could teach them. This document therefore furnishes additional proof of the wide diffusion of musical literacy, and also demonstrates an added function for the works Tromboncino had composed and had seen printed during his long career in Mantua and Ferrara. His compositions (and those of other frottolists) served at least three purposes: they were written for himself and other professional court musicians to perform; some must also have been written for his patrons Isabella d’Este and Lucrezia Borgia to execute; and through their dissemination in prints and manuscripts, they also furnished repertory for other elite amateurs.15

14 Appendix, Document 2. I am extremely grateful to Professor Richard Agee who discovered this document and who kindly furnished me a photocopy of it. The letter offers confirmation of my hypothesis (“Isabella d’Este and Lucrezia Borgia,” p. 9) that Tromboncino returned to Lucrezia’s service in 1513, after a period with Ippolito I d’Este. The termination for his service to the Borgia duchess should now be seen as late 1517 or early 1518.

15 I have discussed this point in my “North Italian Courts, 1460–1540,” pp. 145–46.
This last function is brought forcefully home in the amorous
letters between Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) and the gentlewoman
Maria Savorgnan. In July 1500 Bembo wrote to Savorgnan that
"Taddeo Toscano arrived below my windows with a lute; after hear-
ing him, I invited him to my chambers, where he sang more canzonette
most sweetly."16 Two days later, Savorgnan referred to this incident:
"Live, then, and find pleasure for yourself, since every evening you
have the songs of youths and lovely women beneath your window."17
Even more revealing is a letter from Savorgnan in August; referring
to the pain of her love for Bembo, she says "I can sing the song that
says ‘Haimé il cor, aimé la testa’ (Alas my heart, alas my head), the first
for the love of you, since every way is closed to me to see you, the
head, because of the pain I have suffered."18 As H. Colin Slim has
pointed out, Maria must be citing the setting of this text by Marchetto
Cara (ca. 1465–1525), first published by Petrucci in 1504.19 In saying
that she could sing this song and in assuming that Bembo would know
it, she points out the currency of such pieces among amateurs of the
day.

This can then be applied to the repertory that Tromboncino was
teaching the gentlewomen of Venice, which must have been parallel
to that which Bianca de’ Medici and her companions performed in
1460: laude, courtly lyrics (now in Italian in the form of frottole like
“Haimé il cor, aimé la testa”), and popular settings. All these were
available in printed versions by Petrucci, Antico, and their competi-
tors, and Tromboncino’s students and other amateurs would have
therefore had repertory readily to hand. In this study, I wish to con-
centrate on the secular Italian repertory of Petrucci and contempo-
raneous prints and manuscripts, or more precisely on their texts, to
determine what these have to say about elite society in the late Quat-
trocento and early Cinquecento. Not only can this repertory tell us
what elite amateurs (men as well as women) might have been per-
forming, it can also shed light on what appealed to courtly listeners
who heard professional musicians perform it.

16 Carlo Dionisotti, ed., Maria Savorgnan-Pietro Bembo: carteggio d’amore (1500–
1501) (Florence, 1950), pp. 79–80. Savorgnan answered peevishly, “I am ill and you are
enjoying songs and instruments” (p. 9).
17 Dionisotti, Maria Savorgnan-Pietro Bembo, p. 9.
18 Dionisotti, Maria Savorgnan-Pietro Bembo, p. 21.
19 Slim, “An Iconographical Echo of the Unwritten Tradition in a Verdelot Mad-
rigal,” Studi musicali XVII (1988), 36n. For sources and editions of the work, see Prizer,
Courtly Pastimes: The Frottole of Marchetto Cara, Studies in Musicology XXXIII (Ann
Arbor, 1980), 349. I am grateful to Professor Slim for having pointed out this corre-
spondence to me and for several other perceptive suggestions.
Leaving aside the lauda, which had obvious spiritual attractions, the lyrical poesia per musica of the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento, as in virtually all times and places, centered squarely on facets of love. It did so, however, in codified ways. There are two basic strands in this poetry and another that combines elements of both. One shows still the basic conceits of the amour courtois of the troubadours and the dolce stil nuovo of Dante, and of Petrarch: here, love is essentially ethereal and unrequited, seemingly existing in vacuo. A second thread is the popular verse, full of direct references to sex and rife with double entendre, that is in many ways the opposite of amour courtois. Since as we shall see this was intended for the same elite audiences who heard the more ethereal works, it functioned as an implicit escape from the confines of courtly love. Finally there is a body of poesia per musica that lives partly in both worlds. These poems still concern courtly love, but do so in a way that vigorously parodies its conventions: they treat it in a satirical context and represent explicit escapes from the game-like rigors of amour courtois. It must be emphasized, in fact, that all of these texts, courtly or popular, were a part of a kind of elite game. Certainly, no scholar will now argue that Renaissance women ruled their male counterparts as the poetry of l'amour courtois suggests. The secular vocal music of this period existed rather as a refined (or not so refined) entertainment, a game in Huizinga's sense, that flourished outside, or to one side of, the realities of life in elite culture.20

The two basic strands of this poetry are of course present in verse of other countries as well as in Italy. In general, however, the Italian poetry of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries has been less closely studied than that of its counterpart in, for example, France,21 perhaps because of the attacks on its quality by early twentieth-century literary scholars like Benedetto Croce.22 This situation is now

20 Johann Huizinga, Homo ludens: A Study in the Play-Element of Culture (Boston, 1955), is the classic statement of this theory. On courtly poetry as a game, see Charles S. Singleton, “Dante: Within Courtly Love and Beyond,” in Francis X. Newman, ed., The Meaning of Courtly Love (Albany, N.Y., 1968), pp. 43–54. This is not to say, of course, that there are not elements of reality in courtly verse. Professor Lauro Martines has kindly furnished me with his as yet unpublished paper, “The Politics of Love Poetry in Renaissance Italy,” in which he shows that the language of compliments in the repertory is drawn in large part from political vocabulary and that it therefore speaks of the lady in terms of political power. I am indebted to Professor Martines for several observations on this study that are adopted here.


22 See, for example, Croce's “Serafino Aquilano,” in his Poeti e scrittori del pieno e del tardo Rinascimento, 2nd ed. (Bari, 1970 [first published in 1938]) III, 72–77. Here
being remedied by a new generation of scholars, among them Barbara Bauer-Formiconi and Antonio Rossi, but they and others have tended naturally to study first the work of relatively major poets like Serafino dall’Aquila. Nonetheless, the anonymous poesia per musica is a vital element of the play of the elite culture in the Renaissance. Although courtly and popular verse are in many ways diametrically opposed in their conceits, I hope to show that both formed an integral part of this elite, often courtly, game.

II

Since the twelfth century, lyric love songs had by and large adopted the conventions of l’amour courtois. Scholars have debated the origins and meaning of this doctrine since Gaston Paris invented the term itself in 1883. Paris saw this courtly love as inherently illicit, furtive, idolatrous, and ennobling. It was illicit because in most cases the woman loved was married to someone else. It was furtive because the notion of love for a married woman ran counter to the beliefs of feudal society, which held that nothing could justify a violation of the marriage vow. It was idolatrous because the woman was viewed as virtually a goddess—an untouchable, worshipped object who was to be admired and served from afar. It was ennobling because, through his raising of the love-object to the status of a goddess, both the lover and his lady were elevated and because the man served with no expectation that his love would be consummated.

This is the standard picture of courtly love, and there is a strong element of truth in it; even though scholars in recent years have modified our view of the doctrine, it will serve here as a basic def-
inition. Paris believed that the concept arose with the troubadours of southern France and was taken over by the writers of the court of Champagne in northern France. It was in Champagne, for example, that the basic treatise of amour courtois was written: Andreas Capellanus’s De arte honeste amandi.26

In Italy, under the influence of the dolce stil nuovo, there is an emphasis on the more ethereal aspects of the doctrine of courtly love. Capellanus’s treatise was translated there several times,27 and Dante, Petrarch, and others treat courtly love seriously indeed. Too, Dante studied the Provençal poems of the troubadour Arnaud Daniel and, under their influence, produced his rime petrose (stony rhymes), so called because their central theme was the stony impassivity of the Lady to his ardent love; Dante’s poems were in turn a major influence on Petrarch. With Petrarch, in fact, the element of joy in love, present in both Provençal and French poets, all but disappears.28 Rather, he laments his pain and reflects on the happiness of the time before Venus took him captive. His love has become a trap from which he seeks to escape, but, no matter how desperately he struggles, he continues to disdain the “many virtuous paths” and to fall back into what he himself calls “the sweet error” of his love.29 In Petrarch, then, the dominant emotion has changed from joy to a kind of profound melancholy, an enervating sorrow that allows him no escape.

This strain of amour courtois is still the basic one in frottola texts; this is to be expected, since Carlo Dionisotti has shown that Petrarch’s rime were among the most widely read texts during the Quattrocento, particularly at court.30 In frottola verse, as in Petrarch, the lover burns while his beloved is ice, he cannot sleep, he cannot eat, he dies a martyr’s death from his suffering, he nonetheless pledges his eternal fealty to his lady and asks only that she recognize his existence. Poet-musicians like Serafino memorized Petrarch’s rime and devel-


26 English translation as The Art of Courtly Love, trans. John J. Parry (New York, 1959). Although elements of l’amour courtois are clearly present in musical poetry, many literary scholars have viewed Capellanus’s work itself as a parody; see, for example, Betsy Bowden, “The Art of Courtly Copulation,” Medievalia et Humanistica, n.s., IX (1979), 67–85, which interprets the treatise as an exercise in double entende.

27 Two Trecento translations of De arte honeste amandi are published in Salvatore Battaglia, ed., Andrea Capellano, Trattato d’amore (Rome, [1947]).

28 Further on this point, see Singer, The Nature of Love II, 134ff.

29 “...quante utili oneste / vie sprezzi... (from “Quel antiquo mio dolce empio signore”); “...o dolce errore, / che mi fate ir cercando piagge et monte...” (from “O passi sparsi”). See also the discussion of Petrarch’s “Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,” pp. 46–47 below.

oped styles for singing them. Even amateur poets carried their pocket petrarchini with them as inspiration, and the verse of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is teeming with Petrarchan sentiments, vocabulary, and turns of phrase.

These texts are so abundant in the frottola that it is difficult to choose a small number of examples to represent them. Typical, however, is one by Francesco di Dana, the Venetian organist and frottolist who died in late 1502 or early 1503. Petrucci, in his fourth book of frottola of 1505, publishes several of Dana's works, among them the strambotto "Se l'affanato core."

Se l'affanato core in focho iace,
se allegra nel ardor come phenice,
se in mar turbato son senza haver pace,
pur verde e di speranza la radice.

Se nel tormento la mia lingua tace,
el corpo nel martir vive felice.

Cangia pur, come vol fortuna, stato,
ché un dolce sguardo me pò far beato.

If my weary heart is amidst the fire,
If it delights in its burning like the Phoenix,
If I am tossed about on the sea without finding peace,
Yet my root is green and full of hope.

If my tongue is silent in its torment,
My body lives happily in its martyrdom.
Yet all is changed, if Fortune wishes it,
For one sweet glance can make me happy.

Dana or the anonymous poet has captured several of the characteristic themes of lyric frottola poetry. The lover is spurned by his lady and therefore burns in an eternal fire of martyrdom. He cannot speak

---


33 Strambotti, ode, frottole, sonetti et modo de cantar versi latini e capituli. Libro quarto (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, [1505]), fol. 22v. Dana's works are edited in two volumes by Pietro Verardo (Milan, 1976). "Se l'affanato core" is also edited in Rudolf Schwartz, Ottaviano Petrucci. Frottole, Buch I und IV, Publikationen alterer Musik VIII (Leipzig, 1935), 68. I have examined the formes fixes of frottola verse in detail in my Courtly Pastimes, pp. 63–104.
to his lady to remedy his pain, but if Fortune permitted it, simply a
glance from his beloved could cure him immediately. Typical too are
the metaphors drawn from nature: the wild sea tosses him about; like
the tree that seems dead in winter, his roots are yet alive with hope.
Moreover, the lover’s plaints exist in vacuo: there is nothing to hold
the poem to the real world, neither time, place, nor name.34 The lady
is, in fact, ephemeral, without distinguishing characteristics; she may
be any lady at any time.

Another work, by Tromboncino, reveals the frottolist’s delight in
the play of Petrarchan oxymorons, that is, opposites like “sweet bit-
terness” combined for poetic effect. This is an ottava rima, “Nel foco
tremo et ardo,” in which oxymoron is raised from a simple rhetorical
device to a constructive principle. The anonymous poet sings:

Nel foco tremo et ardo in
mezo el ghiaccio,
senza movermi corro et sto
correndo;
per uscir de legami cerco
il laccio,
nel pianto rido et lachrimo
ridendo;
tacendo parlo et ragionando
taccio,
tornando fugo et torno a
lei fugendo;
io dico lei, da’ cui begli
occhi sorge
ch’ogni impossibil cosa in
me si scorgie.35

Within the fire I shiver and I
burn in the midst of ice,
Without moving, I run and
continue running;
To escape from my bonds I seek
out the trap,
In weeping I laugh and I cry
laughing;
Being silent I speak, and in
speaking I am silent,
In returning I flee, and I return
to her fleeing;
I say her, from whose lovely eyes
arise
Every impossible thing that is
perceived in me.

As though making explicit the equation of the beloved with a
goddess, or even the Virgin Mary, frottola poets sometimes borrow
religious and biblical language to express their pain. One such work

34 On this feature as a characteristic of courtly poetry see Perkins and Garey, The
Mellon Chansonnier II, 70–73.
35 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS It. Cl. IV, 1795–1798, No. 50.
Another strophe follows there. Also in Canzoni, sonetti, strambotti et frottole. Libro quarto
(Rome: Antico, 1517), fol. 39v; and in Frottole de misser Bartolomio Tromboncino & de
misser Marcheto Carra con tenori & bassi tabulati et con soprano in canto figurato per cantar et
sonar col lauto ([Venice: Antico, 1520], tavola only). There is a complete modern edition
of Venice, MS 1795–1798: Francesco Luisi, ed., Apografo miscellaneo marciano: frottole,
canzoni e madrigali con alcuni alla pavana in villanesco (Venice, 1979); “Nel foco” is edited
on pp. 111–12 there. On the provenance and date of Venice, MS 1795–1798 (Venice
or its environs, ca. 1520) see Iain Fenlon and James Haar, The Italian Madrigal in the
The Frottole di misser Bartolomio Tromboncino is examined in Luisi, Frottole di B. Trombon-
cino e M. Cara “per cantar et sonar col lauto” (Rome, 1987).
is Tromboncino’s barzelletta “Gli ochi toi m’han posto in croce.” The ripresa, or introductory refrain, of this work alone makes clear the idolatrous nature of the man’s love. The poet implicitly compares himself to Christ in that his lady has crucified him, and adopts the psalmist’s phrase “De profundis ad te clamavi.” The last line of the ripresa substitutes the beloved for God himself: instead of “Domine, exaudi vocem meam,” the poet writes “Donna, exaudi la mia voce,” “Lady, hear my voice.” The ripresa of Tromboncino’s text reads as follows:

Gli ochi toi m’han posto in croce, Thine eyes have placed me on the cross,  
tanto son dolci e suavi; So sweet and exquisite are they;  
de profundis ad te clamavi: From the depths I cry unto thee:  
donna, exaudi la mia voce. Lady, hear my voice.

Towards the end of the first decade of the Cinquecento, there is a basic change in frottola poetry: no longer are the poets and composers content to borrow Petrarch’s sentiments and words within their own simple forms like the strambotto and barzelletta, they now begin to adopt the poetry of Petrarch himself to express the sentiments of courtly love and to imitate his metrical forms, like the canzone, sonnet, and poetic madrigal. Seemingly the earliest frottolist to do this is Tromboncino himself, in a setting of Petrarch’s canzone “Si è debile il filo.” This event, which took place in 1504, is particularly telling for three reasons: first, it was the noble musician Isabella d’Este who searched for a canzone by Petrarch to have set, perhaps for herself to sing; second, Isabella asked the poet Niccolò da Correggio (1450–1508), whom Rossi and Dionisotti view as crucial to the transition from strambotto to canzone in courtly poetry, to choose the canzone; third, Niccolò also furnished a canzone of his own written in imitation of “Si è debile” that could be sung to the same music, “Quando uno effecto.” From this beginning, the trend toward more subtle text forms intensified throughout the teens of the century and resulted in a large number of settings of poems by Petrarch himself and of poems written in direct imitation of his art.

38 The correspondence between Niccolò and Isabella of 1504 is published in Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, pp. 58–59. The trend itself, and Isabella d’Este’s place in it, is
One such work is Tromboncino's "Movesi'l vecchiarel canuto et bianco," which seems to stem from the composer's time in Venice. This is a sonnet by Petrarch that contains the same idolatrous sentiments seen in the barzelletta just discussed. The basic, sentimental conceit of the sonnet is the picture of an old man who, just before dying, drags himself to Rome to gaze on the so-called "Veronica," the handkerchief with which St. Veronica was said to have wiped the face of Christ on his way to Calvary and which retained the image of his features. In the last tercet of the sonnet, however, Petrarch turns the metaphor to his beloved, Laura, and says that, like the old man searching for the image of Christ, Petrarch himself is searching for the image of Laura:

Così, lasso, talhor vo cercand'io, Donna, quant'e possibile, in altrui la desierta vostra forma vera. Thus, alas, at times I go searching Lady, as much as possible, in others Your longed-for true form.

These few works, then, can represent what is the major thread in the poesia per musica of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: the torments of Petrarchan amour courtois. That such verse was still esteemed in Italian society into the sixteenth century should not surprise us. The composers and poets of these works were most often in service to the Italian nobility, who were anxious to legitimize their all-too-recent status by indulging in pursuits that they viewed as ennobling in themselves. In the second half of the fifteenth century, for example, there was virtually a mania for French medieval romances among the Italian nobility. The courts of the Estensi, Sforza, and Gonzaga had these romances in their libraries and lent them to each other for copying and reading. The same interest in these French romances is seen in Italian epics that took them as their partial models, romances like Boiardo's Orlando inamorato and Ariosto's Orlando furioso, both written for the Estense court at Ferrara. Furthermore, we should not forget the importance of the French chanson in fifteenth-century Italy, exemplified in the performances of 1460 discussed in idem, "Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia," pp. 17 and 20–22, and in idem, "The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition," Studi musicali XV (1986), 30.

First published in Frottole de misser Bartolomio Tromboncino & de misser Marcheto Carra, fols. 28v–29; also in Venice, MS 1795–1798, No. 27. Modern edition in Luisi, Apograpfo miscellaneo marciano, pp. 63–65. There is a different, anonymous setting of the same sonnet in Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q 21, No. 27. On this source see Claudio Gallico, Un canzoniere musicale del Cinquecento (Bologna, 1961).

The texts of these chansons have much in common with frottola verse: they are in the French fixed poetic forms and treat principally the theme of courtly love.

III

But the strictures of Amour courtois were not the only framework for the poetry of the frottola and its allied genres: poets and composers often wrote works that stand wholly outside its concepts. Here one encounters more popular notions of love that explicitly include the consummation of the lover's obvious wish and that treat both the lover and the woman as solid flesh and blood. There are several methods that poets and composers adopted to accomplish this; one is analogous to the French *chanson rustique*: the citation of popular texts and tunes in their works.

In these works, the performer and listener have left entirely the world of the court, and the poems represent an implicit escape from it. This is true in both a literal and a metaphorical sense: the poem takes place outside what has been called "the sacred precinct" of court life, in the countryside, and the courtier is accompanied or replaced by the country maid, villager, or rustic. Even in relatively innocent works, this difference is clear: although one of the characters in the poem could be a member of the elite, the setting is physically removed from the court itself and other characters are not of the elite. One such work is by Francesco Santa Croce of Padua (ca. 1487-ca. 1556): "Un cavalier di Spagna," in which a noble knight rides out into the countryside and meets a rustic maid:

Un cavalier di Spagna  
A Spanish cavalier  
cavalca per la via,  
Rode on his way,  
da piè de la montagna,  
From the foot of the mountain;  
cantando per amor d'una fantina:  
Singing for the love of a maid:

---

44 Francesco, also called Francesco Patavino, was active at the Cathedral of Padua, at the convent of San Francesco in Treviso, and at the Cathedral in the latter city between 1511 and 1528. For Santa Croce rather than Fra Pietro da Hostia as the composer of this and other popularizing works, see Jeppesen, *La Frottola* I, 66, and Prizer, ed., *Libro primo de la croce* (Rome: Pasotti and Dorico, 1526): *Canzoni, Frottolo, and Capitoli*, Collegium Musicum, Yale University, 2nd series, VIII (Madison, 1978), viii.
“Voltate in qua, do bella donzellina
voltate un poco a me, per cortesia,
dolce speranza mia,
ché moro per tuo amor;
bella fantina, i’ t’ho donato el cor.”

Apresso una fontana
vidi sentar la bella
soletta in terra piana,
con una girlanda di fresca herbecina:
“Voltate in qua...”

"Turn to me, O lovely damsel,
Kindly turn to me for a while,
My sweet hope,
I die for your love;
Lovely maid, I have given you my heart."

Near a spring
He saw a lovely woman sitting
Alone in the meadow
Wearing a garland of fresh herbs.

"Turn to me..."

This narrative work, poetically a free structure with no trace of the *formes fixes*, seems to cite not one but two popular tunes: “Un cavalier di Spagna” and “Voltate in qua.” The first is also found in a quodlibet from Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q 21; the latter is fairly widespread. Aside from these citations, the rest of the text is not, strictly speaking, “popular”; rather, it should perhaps be called “popularizing,” that is, it is written to provide a context for the popular citations in a conscious imitation of the popular manner. Texts like this, which place a courtly character outside his natural framework, derive ultimately from the troubadour *pastorela* and were already present in Italian poetry of the Duecento. Guido Cavalcanti (ca. 1260–1300), for example, wrote a ballata, “In un boschetto trova’ pasturella,” which is similar to “Un cavalier di Spagna” in setting, sentiment, and tone.

The elite interest in popular (and popularizing) texts was a constant in Italian poetry from the time of Cavalcanti, and one can trace

---

45 *Canzoni, frottole et capitoli... Libro primo de la croce* (Rome: Pasotti and Dorico, 1526), ascribed to F[rancesco] P[atavino] (lacking second stanza); also anonymous in Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio, MS Basevi 2440, pp. 174–75; Florence Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magl. XIX 164–167, No. 43; and Venice, MS 1795–1798, No. 96, from which the second stanza here is taken. Modern editions in Fausto Torrefranca, *Il segreto del Quattrocento* (Turin, 1939) pp. 235 (text) and 525–26 (music); Prizer, *Libro primo della croce*, pp. 28–29; and Luisi, *Apografo miscellaneo marciano*, p. 209.


citations of this repertory straight through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the *Decameron*, for example, Boccaccio has one character cite the beginnings of several seemingly popular songs, among them “Levate la coda, Monna Aldruda, ché buone novelle vi reco (Lift up your tail, Madonna Aldruda, for wonderful news I bring), “Alzatevi i panni, Monna Lapa,” (Skirts up, Madonna Lapa), and “Deh, fa’ pian, marito mio” (Oh, go slowly, husband).48 Even Petrarch himself was not immune to popular influences in his verse. In 1356 he added a rubric to his copy of the ballata “Amor, quando fioria”: “This is the beginning of a plebian song.” Petrarch has taken the *ripresa* of his ballata from a popular poem.49

Songs like these must have been among those Antonio da Tempo included in 1332 among the “frottole” (“the words of rustics and of other persons who have no perfect maxims”) and that Ghidino da Sommacampagna described in about 1350 as “composed of gross and unfruitful words.”50 They must represent, in fact, the “frottole” whose rise Francesco Landini lamented in his madrigal “Musica son”: “I am Music, who grieve, weeping, / To see my sweet and perfect delights / deserted by intelligent spirits for frottole.”51 Although they do not mention frottole specifically, other poems of about the same time show an awareness of a change to a more popular tone. In about 1370 Franco Sacchetti remarked in a madrigal that “The world is full of those who want to be poets / They know not how to write them out, but make ballate / Wanting them set to music. / Thus the song is done; [though they are] without art / I see a thousand Marchettus [de Padua]’s everywhere.”52 The madrigal “Oselleto salvazo,” set by Jacopo da

51 “Musica son che mi dolgo piangendo, / veder gli effecti mie dolce e perfetti / lasciar per frotto’ i vaghi intelletti.” Cited from Giuseppe Corsi, ed., *Poesie musicali del Trecento*, Collezione di opere inedite o rare CXXXI (Bologna, 1970), 129. The Squarcialupi Codex (Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, MS Palat. 87), fol. 121v, accompanies this work with a miniature of Music herself weeping as she plays the organetto.
Bologna (fl. 1340–?1360), complains that “Everyone pretends to be Floriano [da Rimini], Philippe [de Vitry], and Marchettus [de Padua]. / So full is the world of petty masters / That there is no room left for students.”

The fears expressed were real ones, for poets, even court poets, soon embarked on conscious imitations of more popular verse that adopted the language of street and countryside. Benvenuto Disertori identified musical settings of several of these works from the late Trecento and early Quattrocento: “De, tristo mi topinello” (Oh, my unhappy stomach), “De mia farina fo le mie lasagne” (From my flour I make my lasagne), and “Donna, posso io sperare.” The last, ascribed to Niccolò del Preposito da Perugia (fl. last half of Trecento) in its unique source, is particularly characteristic: it is a disperata in dialogo, that is, a dialogue between a desperate lover and an uncaring woman. This scene, of course, could well take place in a courtly sphere, but “Donna posso io sperare” is clearly more popular in inspiration: although the lover himself speaks almost purely in a courtly vocabulary, the woman answers him in a considerably more direct and rustic fashion; it may thus serve as a forerunner of works like “Un cavaliere di Spagna,” discussed above, in which one character is a courtly one and the other is not. In fact, this dichotomy seems emphasized through musical means in the present ballata, for the roles are reversed: the man sings the ornate, melismatic upper line, while the woman sings the less florid, simpler lower part. (Throughout this text the words of the lover are italicized; those of the woman are in roman.)

53 “tut’en Fioran, Filipoti e Marcheti. / Si è piena la terra de magistroli / che loco più no trovano i discipuli.” Corsi, Poesie musicali, p. 42; see also Paolo Tenorista’s “Se non ti piacque,” in ibid., p. 271. I am grateful to Professor John Nádas for calling these works to my attention and for his many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this study.

54 There is a wide literature on this movement. See, for example, Ettore LiGotti, “Il Petrarchismo della poesia musicale e il gusto del popolaresco in Italia agli inizi del secolo XV,” Siculorum Gymnasium (1955), 249–60; Armando Balduino, Boccaccio, Petrarca e altri poeti del Trecento (Florence, 1984); Antonio Lanza, Polemiche e berte letterarie nella Firenze del primo Rinascimento (1375–1449), 2nd ed. (Rome, 1989); and the contributions to Atti del convegno sul tema: la poesia rusticana nel Rinascimento (Rome, 1969), particularly Ghino Ghinassi, “Esperimenti di linguaggio rusticale a Firenze tra Quattro e Cinquecento,” pp. 57–72; and Umberto Bosco, “Rinascimento non classicistico,” pp. 11–27.


56 See Nádas and Ziino, The Lucca Codex, p. 33, where the ballata is viewed as possibly a late addition to the MS and the general doubts as to Niccolò’s authorship are expressed; the authors suggest (p. 46) that the setting may be by Antonio Zacara da Teramo.
Donna! Dici a me?
Donna, posso io sperare?
Meriti de mia fé?
Messe' non so per che;
deh va' in bona ora, va',
lassame stare.

Andoncha vòi che mora?
Se mori, a me che fa?
El te ne dorrà ancora.
Certo non dolerà.
De, pensa a quel che fa'!
De, pensace pur tu!
Io me despererà!
Se te desperi et io che
n'agio affare?

[Donna! Dici a me? . . .]

Adonqua zappo in acqua?
A me par ben cosi.
Tu m'ai per ben cosi.
Se Dio m'aiuta, si.
Deh, pensa a quel che di'!
De, pensa[c]i pur tu!
E non t'il dirò più.
Taci, per Dio, e pii non me
seccare!

[Donna! Dici a me? . . .]57

Pieces based on popular and popularizing texts continue throughout the Quattrocento, the period of a basically unwritten tradition. The Ferrarese lutenist Pietrobono, for example, taught the popular “Vivi lieto e non temere” and two different versions of “Scararamella” to a Mantuan student.58 Upon occasion, these texts and their music were recorded in manuscripts essentially dedicated to other genres, often the chanson. One such work is the popular barzelletta “Ora mai che fora son,” which appears in a Neapolitan chansonnier from the 1460s and which represents the plaint of a young woman

57 MS Mancini 184, fol. LV r; an additional stanza follows there. Modern editions in Nino Pirrotta and Ettore Li Gotti, “Il codice di Lucca II: testi letterari,” Musica Disciplinata IV (1950), 122–23 (text) and 150 (music); in Cesari, Le frottola, p. XIII; and in W. Thomas Marocco, ed. Italian Secular Music, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century VII (Monaco, 1972), 128–29. In general, I have followed the versification of this ballata in Corsi, Poesì musicali, p. 104, although I have restored the woman’s “Dici a me?,” which, as Corsi points out, destroys the rhyme scheme; nevertheless, it is necessary for the sense of the dialogue.

who has escaped from a nunnery and wants a husband. This text was being sung in northern Italy by 1465: Ippolita Sforza heard it in Siena on her way to Naples in this year, and it was in the repertory of Filippo Scarlatti, a Florentine singer, in the 1470s.59

Another Neapolitan work included in Scarlatti’s repertory is even more telling: “Fate darera e no t’acostar in zà,” the music for which, like “Ora mai,” is included in the southern manuscript Escorial IV.a.24. In its musical source, this ballata includes only the ripresa and a partial version of one stanza. In Scarlatti’s version, however, it is called a “ballata calavrese” and is revealed as a dialogue between a man and a woman. Neither character is a courtly one: the woman was born “gentile,” but not so much that her parents could not marry her to a “villano.”60

Fate darera e no t’acostar in zà!
Fate de là, vilano,
non destender la mano!
Parlame da luntano, va de là!

Get away, and don’t touch me there!
Get away, ruffian,
Don’t reach out your hand!
Speak to me from a distance, get away!

[Gioa mie bella, deh non ti crucciare,
ch’io non ti t’acosterò!
Non mi poressi tanto comandare,
quant’io t’ubidirò;
e s’io son nato per esser servo tia,
non mi dar villania,
acostati con mia,
fame ’sta cortesia, famela, fa’.
Fati darera . . . ]

[My joy, my lovely one, ah, don’t torment yourself,
I won’t touch you!
Don’t give me so many commands
For I shall obey you.
And, if I was born to be your servant,
Don’t curse me,
Come closer,
Do me this courtesy, do it, do.

Lassame star ch’io so’ desperata;
non t’ascostar a me.
Sia maledeta chi m’a maritata
chon un’ omo chomo a te;

Get away . . . ]

Leave me alone, for I am desperate;
Don’t get near me.
Cursed be him who married me
To a man like you;


60 MS IV.a.24, fol. 137v. Modern edition in Martha K. Hanen, The Chansonnier El Escorial IV.a.24, Musicological Studies XXXV (Henryville, 1983) III, 477–78. The complete text is found in Volpi, “Poesie popolari,” pp. 39–40. The added text from the latter source is included in brackets here. As in “Donna, posso io sperare,” the words of the man are italicized. The work is also discussed in Nino Pirrotta, “Su alcuni testi italiani di composizioni polifoniche quattrocentesche,” Quadrivium XIV/2 (1973), 133–57. According to Pirrotta, “Fate darera” is also published in F. Novati and F. C. Pelligrini, Quattro canzoni popolari del sec. decimoquinto (Ancona, 1884), which I have not been able to see.
[And I, who consented to say yes
To those old fools,
I said it for my mother
And my father, who forced me to do it.

Get away.

Have mercy, how cruel you are!
You give no quarter, nor anything like it;
And, if I was born a country boy and you a gentlewoman
It's not my fault,
But if you were the daughter of the king,
We are all Adam's children,
So don't pull away,
Rather come close and give me a kiss.

Get away.

Get away and speak to me respectfully,
For if you get nearer,
I'll take a knife and pass you my heart
And then say you did it:
I'll never submit to you again;
I'll say that you killed me
And you will be strung up
With your fat mug; don't get near me.

Get away.

What seems in its musical source to be a simple disperata is revealed in Scarlatti's text to be one of a whole group of songs of malmaritate, songs of women and sometimes men who have been forced to marry badly, the women generally to older men, the men, to shrews.

Popular and popularizing texts are also found in the frottola from its inception. One early example, found in the Mantuan manuscript Paris 676, from 1502, is the barzelletta "L'altra notte m'insomniava" by a certain Fra Gerardo. It represents a young man's dream of love; the opening lines are consciously popularizing in tone, and the
restrain may be an echo of the popular “Tutta la notte dondina don-
don,” the entire text of which is not known:62

L'altra notte m'insomniava
de tre hore inance di
che la magie e ti tocava
nel to lecto essendo mi.
E cusi svegliandomi
mi trovai senza de ti:
Ti cum mi e mi cum ti
e faremo nani nani;
ti cum mi e mi cum ti
e faremo la ninani!63

The other night I had a dream
About three hours before dawn
That by magic I was in your bed
And touching you.
And then, awaking,
I found myself without you.
Thee with me and me with thee
We will play the sweet game;
Thee with me and me with thee
We will do the wanton’s trick!

Although there are other kinds of works that set Italian popular
texts or that are consciously rustic in tone and vocabulary, music
historians have associated this popularizing trend principally with the
villotta. Villotte differ from the works of the courtly tradition in both
poetic and musical ways. Poetically, they are much freer than courtly
works: they eschew the fixed forms of frottola verse and have popu-
larizing texts in free rhyme schemes and shifting line lengths, al-
though they often open with alternating rhymes and sometimes fea-
ture internal rhyme as well. They also differ in content: they tend to
be narrative; names, places, and times are routinely included; they are
frequently direct in their language about love; and they often include
traces of dialect. The characters are no longer the anguished lover
and his anonymous haughty lady, they are the man in the street, the
hen-pecked husband, the simple peasant girl.

Musically, villotte also differ from the typical settings of courtly
verse: they routinely include citations of popular tunes, either
throughout or in substantial portions of their length. These tunes are
most often in the tenor, although they are also found in other voices
upon occasion. Unlike the frottola, which usually proceeds with all
four voices sounding at the same time, they often begin with the tenor
alone, announcing the popular tune, and feature sections in which the
voices alternate in a kind of dialogue. They are generally intended to

62 This text is found only in an ottava rima that consists of citations from popular
poems, the Opera nuova nel quale se ritrova essere tutti li principi delle canzoni antiche e
moderne poste in ottava rima, cosa piacevole et ridiculosa (Venice, n.d., but middle of the
sixteenth century); published in Severino Ferrari, “Documenti per servire all’istoria
della poesia semipopolare cittadina in Italia pei secoli XVI e XVII,” Il propugnatore XIII
(1890), 434–45. “Tutta la notte” is found on p. 443 there.
63 Paris, MS 676, fols. 97v–98; four further stanzas follow there.
be sung in all parts, rather than the solo voice and lute or other instruments of the frottola.64

Villotte were native to Venice and its territory, but they appeared quickly in neighboring Lombardy and are even included in Tuscan and Roman sources. There is a fairly substantial repertory of these pieces: Venice, MS 1795–1798, for example, includes a separate table of contents for twelve “villote,” at the end, and other, similar pieces are scattered throughout the manuscript. Too, a Roman print of about 152665 includes works labeled “villote,” and others are found in printed books of the 1520s without a specific label.

Although the majority of the villotte appear in prints and manuscripts from the period 1520–1530, there are similar works that stem from much earlier. Both Josquin and Compère set versions of the popular “Scaramella” tune that are essentially chansons rustiques on Italian texts and that share a good deal with the later villotta.66 These works must both have been written during the 1470s, when Josquin and Compère were together at the court of Milan.67 Furthermore, Josquin later composed another work that is also similar to the villotta, “El grillo è bon cantore.” In its formal anomalies, its all-vocal texture, its imitation of animal sounds, and its ribald overtones, “El grillo” could easily be called a “proto-villotta.”68

There are also proto-villotte from the first decade of the Cinquecento. Two works by Michele Pesenti (ca. 1470–1528), who worked in Ferrara, Rome, and Mantua, can serve as examples; both appear already in Petrucci’s first book of frottole of 1504. “Dal lecto me levava” resembles “El grillo” rather closely in its imitations of the sound of the stork, its all-vocal scoring, and the bawdy undercurrent

64 On the villotta, Fausto Torrefranca’s Il segreto del Quattrocento remains essential despite its basic flaws. Also important is Walter Rubsamen, “Villotta,” in Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart XIII (Kassel, 1966), cols. 1645–51. See also Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, pp. 81–85 and 126–28, and the literature cited there. The conceptual framework of the polyphonic villotta is discussed in Gallico, Damon pastor gentil: idilli cortesi e voci popolari nelle “Villotte mantovane” (1583) (Mantua, 1980), pp. 13–14.
65 Libro primo de la fortuna ([Rome: Judici, 1526?]).
68 “El grillo” is in Frottole. Libro tertio (Venice: Petrucci, 1505 [n.s.]), fols. 61v–62, where all voices have text underlaid. It is edited in Josquin, Werken, Wereldijke Werken, Bundel V, No. 53. For a probable date for this work, see Prizer, “Music at the Court of the Sforza,” pp. 210–11. The term “proto-villotta” is Rubsamen’s; see his “Villotta,” col. 1646.
to its text. The simple “Passando per una rezzola,” although without text for the lower voices, is almost completely homorhythmic and could well have been intended for all-vocal performance. Francesco Novati, the author of one of the more important early studies of popular poesia per musica, believed strongly that the text was of south-Italian origin.

“La mi fa solfare,” a villotta by Ruffino Bartolucci (ca. 1490–ca. 1532), is in some ways typical of the genre, particularly in its treatment of love. It opens with a musical pun: the meaning of the first line is literally, “She makes me burn like sulphur,” but the Italian for this phrase consists entirely of solmization syllables, and Bartolucci takes advantage of this by using these pitches for the opening, imitative passage (a-e-f-g-b -a), just as he does in the phrase “la mi fa sonare” and at “lassa fare a mi.”

La mi fa solfare  
la falsa Reconchina,  
la mi fa sonare  
la borsa ogni matina,  
et vol che la Rosina  
contenti el suo Zanolo.

O che piacer, andar senz’alle a volo!  
Da poi, con baglie et zanzie,  
in su le guanzie  
But then with jeering and chattering,  
She holds me

The line is also a play on words, since “solfeggiare” means to sing using the solmization syllables. The entire popularizing repertory is an exercise in double entendre. It is thus difficult, if not impossible, to produce a translation that carries with it the subtleties of the original verse. It should be understood that my translations produce one interpretation of the verse, but that there are often other possibilities. In notes, I point to only some of the more crucial of these.

The last of these is, of course, a pre-existent tune; it may have been this that originally suggested the soggetto cavato to Bartolucci. On the other hand, word painting seems to be a basic technique throughout the piece: see for example, the repetitions of “tira” in mm. 53–58 and the setting of the word “breve” with breves in all voices at mm. 67–68.

Although I have translated “borsa” as “purse” here, the word also meant “scrotum” (Sir John Florio, Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues [London: Bradwood, 1611; reprint Menston, England, 1968], p. 95, s.v. “borsa”). “Reconchina” may also derive from the word “conca,” meaning a hollow or cavity. If this were the case, “bezzi” would have a rather different meaning and the translation would yield an even bawdier text.
me tien una mano;  
con l’altra, pian piano,

tira i bezzi a sì;  
et dice: “lassa fare a mi,
hor lassa fare a mi,
ch’in breve et pochi di
t’andaré col boccalon.”

By the cheeks with one hand  
While with the other, slowly, oh so slowly,

She takes the coins for herself  
And says, “Let me do it
Now let me do it,
Because soon, for a few days,
You will limp about like a beggar.”

Several points arise from this text. In the first place, the performers/listeners have clearly left behind the world of amour courtis. Second, names are included abundantly and specific times are given, “every morning” and “for a few days.” Third, there are at least three citations of popular texts and tunes: “et vol che Rosina contenti el suo Zanolo,” “Lassa fare a mi,” and “t’andaré col boccalon.” Fourth, aside from these citations, the rest of the text is not, strictly speaking, “popular.” Rather, it is what I have called “popularizing”: the poet has written it in a conscious imitation of the popular manner to frame the popular citations themselves. In fact, there are strong traces of Venetian dialect and spellings in both popular and popularizing sections: “Zanolo” for “Gianollo,” “zanzie” for ciancie,” “guanzie” for “guancie,” and “t’andaré” for “tu andrai.” There is also a reference to the small Venetian coin, the “bezzo.”

Most important is the direct and lewd reference in the lines “And she wants Rosina / To content her Zanolo: / Oh what pleasure to fly without wings!” Rosina and Zanolo are a standard pair of rustic lovers in popular verse. An earlier reference occurs in Petrucci’s seventh book of frottole of 1507:

Ah, come back for a moment, lovely Rosina,  
For Gianollo wants to talk to you.

75 Venice, MS 1795–1798, No. 103; also in Venice, Biblioteca del Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello, Fondo Torrefranca, MS B 32, No. 42. Modern editions in Torrefranca, Il segreto, pp. 258–59 (text) and 471–75 (music); and Luisi, Apogrofo miscellaneo marciano, pp. 218–21.

76 The last line is not amenable to a clear translation. It is an allusion to a popular barzelletta, printed in an undated sixteenth-century chapbook, Frottola nova “Tu n’andaré col boccalon,” con altri sonetti a la bergamasca (n.p., n.d.), reported in Vittorio Rossi, Le lettere di Messer Andrea Calmo, Biblioteca di testi inediti o rari III (Turin, 1888), 449–44. The ripresa reads as follows: “Tu n’andaré col boccalon, / zopegando col baston / cer-cando el vin per li bastion / o del pan qualche bocon” (You will go with the [beggar’s] pot, / limping about with a staff / looking for wine around the castles / or a bit of bread). Reconchina is threatening to injure the man (presumably in his groin), so that he will be limping for days. The stanzas of the popular barzelletta add another element: they are actually threats to a woman who is being cast out to roam the streets; in “La mi fa solfare,” however, the reference is to the man: Reconchina will throw him out of the house to wander as a beggar if he does not allow her her way.

77 “De, voltate in qua e do, bella Rosina, / ché ‘Nol te vol parlare. / De, voltate in qua e do, bella Rosina, / ché Gianol te vol parlare.” Anonymous barzelletta, “Poiché l
The same couple appears in the Zanitonella of the Mantuan poet Teofilo Folengo (1491–1544) in a context that clearly represents a parody of the rustic. Tonello, enflamed by his love for Zannina, is driven to behave like a villano: he confesses, “I get up in the middle of the night, I play the bagpipe, I sing ‘Rosina,’ and I sing ‘Put the goats out, handsome Gianollo.’”78 The latter reference is to a separate popular tune, in which Gianollo appears alone: “O Zano, bello Zano, caza fora le capre.”79 Gianollo also appears separately in a context that tacitly indicates Rosina’s presence. In the villotta “La mi fa falare,” someone (presumably Rosina), “Asks her companion / Gianol in his little doublet / to play a bit of / the dance of the matterel.”80 Both also appear without name in Niccolò Piffaro's “Per amor fata solinga”:

E voltat'in qua, do bella fantina,  
Che'l tuo amor ti vol parlare.81

These citations assure us that the reference to the lovers in “La mi fa solfare” is anything but a courtly one: the popular text is included to suggest that Reconchina demands sex each morning and then takes her husband’s coins from his purse.

Another villotta, although not as explicit in its sexual references, is informative in that it clearly represents a rustic setting in the Veneto: the text mentions both a “badia,” in this context a village, and a house “across the water,” or canal. This is “Dillà da l’acqua sta,” by Francesco Santa Croce. Like many villotte, “Dillà da l’acqua sta” begins with the tenor alone, the other voices joining in on the second half of the phrase. Too, it features alternating rhymes at the begin-

---


80 Frottole, Libro octavo (Venice: Petrucci, 1507), fols. 21v–23. For other references, see n. 46 above and Ferrari, “Documenti per servire all'istoria della poesia semipopolare,” pp. 436–37.
ning, rhymed couplets at the end, and internal rhymes in lines 5–7 ("rancagnata . . . mata / siagurata . . . sporcha / . . . d’orcha"), all typical of villotta poetry.

There across the water is my beloved,  
And I can never see her even once  
Because an envious, scornful old woman  
Keeps her always under lock and key.  
O flat-faced, O mad old woman,  
Wicked, foul, dirty.  
Shark-faced, rabid ogress,  
You keep my beloved hidden away.

If you will or if you won’t,  
I’ll have her and she’ll have me.

If I could see her just once,  
I wouldn’t mind waiting for her;  
But this damned old woman has torn her from me  
So that I can no longer see my hope.  
Oh, what madness in this village.  
Old tyrant, hard as bronze,  
Deserted by everyone, twisted fool,  
For she hears me and doesn’t listen.  
If you will . . .

Each strophe of the poem divides into three sections. The first part, lines 1–4, describes the situation: the young man’s love is not allowed to see him, and her mother is to blame. The middle part of the stanza (set in dialogue among the voices to emphasize the internal rhymes) consists solely of the young man’s curses against the mother. The final couplet, set homorhythmically, contains the lover’s threat: “If you will or if you won’t, / I’ll have her and she’ll have me.”

This text forms a part of a complex of poems that mock jealous old men and women. Closely tied to it is another villotta by Santa Croce, “Questo vechio maladetto,” in which a young man, enamored of an older man’s wife, curses him and threatens to cuckold him:

Questo vechio maladetto,  
tanto è pien di gelosia  
che gli crepa il cor nel pecto

This damned old man  
Is so full of jealousy [of me]  
That his heart bursts in his chest

82 Libro primo de la croce, fols. 11v–12; Venice, MS 1795–1798, No. 95; St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek MS 463, p. 151. Modern editions in Torrefranca, Il segreto, pp. 290–32 (text), and 443–45 (music); Prizer, Libro primo de la croce, pp. 20–22; and Luisi, Apografo miscellaneo marciano, pp. 207–08.
quando passo de la via.  When I pass by on the street.
Col mal anche Dio gli dia  For his evil [ways] may God grant
che mai più non scaldi il lecto.  That his bed never be warmed again.
Senza intelecto, al tuo dispecto,  Brainless one, to spite you
ghe anderò, ghe vegnerò, ghe  I'll go to her, I'll come to her, I'll
tornerò.  return to her,
Si ben che credo che non  So well that I don't think you'll
starai più  stand there
a cantar dolcemente: "Coquu  Singing so sweetly: "Cucu,
cou!”

“Questo vechio maladetto” shares several traits with “Dillà da l’acqua
sta.” Musically, it opens with the tenor alone, the other voices entering
in the middle of the third word of text, the curses are set in dialogue,
and the conclusion is set homophonically. Poetically, it begins with
alternating rhymes, moves to internal rhymes for the curses them-

There are also popular pieces that ridicule old people and that
are written from the woman’s point of view. One of the most charac-
teristic of these works has received little attention from music histo-
rians, perhaps because its sets no identifiable popular tune. Never-
theless, the anonymous “I’ son piú malmaritata” is significant precisely
for this reason and because it thus represents an antidote to musicol-
ogists’ preoccupation with the villotta. “I’ son piú’ malmaritata” is a
popular barzelletta about a young woman unhappily married to a rich
old man. It is an unicum in the Florentine manuscript Banco Rari
230, copied after 1513. The text, however, is found in two other
sources, where there are eleven stanzas rather than the six included in
MS 230: a Mantuan collection of poesia per musica, MS 4, which dates
from the first decade of the Cinquecento, and an anonymous,
printed chapbook from about 1530. The piece itself, for three voices

83 Canzoni, frottole et capitoli. . . . Libro secondo de la croce (Rome: Pasoti and Dorico,
1531), fols. 22v–24; modern edition in Torrefranca, Il segreto, pp. 265 (text), and
517–19 (music).
84 Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Banco Rari 230, fols. 145v–46. For
the date of the manuscript, see Bonnie J. Blackburn, “Two ‘Carnival Songs’ Unmasked:
A Commentary on MS Florence Magl. XIX.121,” Musica Disciplina XXXV (1981), 149.
Frank A. D’Accone, in his introduction to the facsimile of the manuscript, suggests that
the MS was copied about 1525. Renaissance Music in Facsimile IV (New York, 1986), vi.
85 Mantua, MS 4, fols. 188v–gov. MS 4 includes another barzelletta della malmari-
tata, “Me mari non vol che balla / che l’e morta la cavalla” (fol. 204); the text is tran-
86 Questa sie la historia della mal maritada. Con certe altre canzone (n.p., n.d.). Pub-
lished in Guido Vitaletti, “Le stampe popolari della Miscellanea Malfatti nella Riccar-
diana di Firenze,” La bibliofilia XXII (1921), 309–10. MS 4 and the chapbook agree in
the order of stanzas; taking their sequence, MS 230 includes only stanzas 1, 4, 5, 3, 6,
and 10. I transcribe the text from MS 230 and include in notes only the major variants
in a simple homorhythmic style, must date from the late fifteenth century: it was already known in Florence by 1508 at the latest, when it was cited as the musical model for the lauda “Peccorelle pien d’er- rore.”

I’ son più malmaritata
che ma’ fusi donna alchuna;
maladetta mie fortuna,
che si mal m’a accompagniata.

Fussi morta nelle fasce
per non esser si dolente;
la mia vita sol si pasce
di sospir, di piani et stente
quando mi ritorna a mente
che a un vechio fu’ donata.

[I’ son più mal maritata. . . .]

Quando sto di mala voglia
e mi dice “cara dama,”
poi me compra qualche gioia
o la vesta mi ricama.
La mia voglia altro si brama,
che la vesta richamata.

[I’ son più malmaritata. . . .]

Quando andiamo a riposare
e dice di questa cosa,
poi commincia a predicare
lo stare casta è sancta cosa.
Homé, trista et dolorosa,
peggio me ch’una guanciata.

[I’ son più mal maritata. . . .]

among the sources. Since Vitaletti’s transcription is readily available, I do not transcribe the stanzas absent from MS 230.


88 MS 4 and chapbook: “pur.”
89 MS 4 and chapbook: “quel tristo.”
90 This stanza is actually the fourth in MS 230. Following MS 4 and the chapbook, I have transferred it to this position for the sense of the text.
91 MS 4 and chapbook: “mama.”
93 MS 4: “O vita mia dolorosa.”
Quando i' entro nello letto, bella et fresca e colorita, io vorrei stare in diletto quando Amore el cor m’invita. Che mi val sì son vestita et dal resto mal trattata?

[I’ son più malmaritata. . . .]

Qualche volta per piacere metto mano alla sua tasca, chavo fuora el mio messire; par mi dica "ben ti nasca, poi col capo in terra cascha col cappuccio coperchiata."

[I’ son più malmaritata. . . .]

Fanciulette, vaghe et belle, imparate alle mie spese: pocho val lisci alla pelle chi ha un vechio alle contese, ma un giovane cortese sempre tiene la testa alzata.

[I’ son più malmaritata. . . .]

When I climb into the bed, Pretty and fresh and all made up, I would like to have some delight When Cupid begs my heart to do it. What’s the use if I’m [well] dressed If otherwise I’m treated badly?

[I’m more unhappily married. . . .]

Sometimes for the pleasure of it I put my hand in his pouch And pull out my little lord; It seems he might say "well should you hide, Since you fall toward the ground with your head [Still] covered with its hood."

[I’m more unhappily married. . . .]

O you lasses, fair and pretty, Learn at my expense: It’s worth little to paint yourself up If you have an old man to deal with, But a fine, gentle young man, Always holds his head up high.

[I’m more unhappily married. . . .]

In all these texts, rustic or merely urban, we are far removed from any contact with courtly love. The poems give clear indications of geographical settings, their ribald language is hardly that of court society, and their texts are sexually explicit. The basic conceits of the villotta and other popular texts are therefore exactly opposed to the doctrine of amour courtois. This may mean, of course, that they are intended for a different stratum of society, although this seems improbable. After all, these works are contained in the same sources that feature texts dealing with courtly love. Moreover, the composers are by and large those of the elite culture. Both Bartolucci and Santa Croce were clerics working at major churches in the Veneto, and other composers of the genre, Tromboncino, Marchetto Cara, and Sebastiano Festa, worked for noble employers.

94 MS 4 and chapbook: “giovene.”
95 MS 4: “che mi val essere ben vestita.”
96 MS 4: “testa.”
97 MS 4 and chapbook: “Giovenete.”
98 MS 4 and chapbook: “bel giovone.”
99 MS 4 and the chapbook are more explicit here: “tien la cauda (chapbook: ‘coda’) sempre alzata” (Always holds his pecker up high).
Rather, we see here a different strain in the music for the elite, which shows an interest in play with the popular culture, perhaps as an antidote to the overly precious conceits of courtly love. Popular Italian verse thus lives side by side with courtly verse, just as its northern counterpart, the *chanson rustique*, lives side by side in refined society with the courtly chanson. Indeed, the Italian elite themselves lived side by side with representatives of the popular culture: they were surrounded by small legions of rustic retainers, they moved comfortably back and forth between city and countryside, they loved hunting and thus they understood and were fond of horses, dogs, and other animals; they were interested in popular culture in many ways and adopted it for their own purposes and even took part in it upon occasion.

That there were, in fact, numerous occasions on which the two cultures interacted musically can be shown through a brief excursus into documents concerning the court of Mantua, in Lombardy just miles south of Verona and the Veneto. The court, one of the most refined and brilliant of the entire Renaissance, was ruled by the Gonzaga family from the Trecento. Several documents here attest to the Gonzaga's involvement with and interest in popular culture as represented by its music. Some of these interactions were both unwitting and unfortunate. In August 1481, for example, the young Francesco II Gonzaga (1466-1519), wrote to his father, the Marchese Federico I (1441-1484):

_Last night, a little after 10:00 P.M., from the information I have received, [several young men were] going about the contrada of San Francesco for recreation: the son of Francesco della Fiera, one of Crescimbene di Grossi, a son of Pietrofrancesco, head of the [guard's] company, and Gerolamo da Mozanica, shoemaker. They were singing certain dishonest songs, and Bartolomeo Garzotto da Fontanella came out of his house in his nightshirt. They grabbed him and one of them hit and cut him near the heart with a stone; he died shortly after this blow._

This is hardly a felicitous meeting of the two cultures, but it is of interest because the young men must have been singing (presumably monophonic) versions of popular, bawdy tunes. In fact, their songs must have been _mattinate_, lewd, satiric serenades sung to women (often widows) from the streets, with or without the accompaniment of instruments; they were illegal in many Italian towns, including Mantua. In 1473 the chronicler Andrea Schivenoglia records what seems
to be the essence of an edict: “In Mantua one cannot go birding nor hunt nor fish nor wager nor carry arms nor do mattinate nor sing tortelli at Christmas for a hundred years.”

Other occasions, however, show a direct interest in popular music on the part of members of the elite. One such instance, in December 1515, concerns both Francesco II Gonzaga and the gentlewomen of the court: Amico della Torre writes to the absent Federico II Gonzaga (1500–1540):

For perhaps two months a little old man has been in our territory; while dancing and doing acrobatics, he sings certain rustic songs (“aeri de piva”), and he happily goes up to carriages of our gentlewomen, so that, when they hear him sing and dance, they stop their carriage and stay for more than an hour, watching him dance and sing, and he will not leave until they have filled his hand with money. The most Illustrious Lord your father enjoys him very much, too, chiefly at dinner and supper times, and he gives him expenses plus a half a ducat a month, and he has to do nothing but present himself to your father at the said hour.

The “vechietto” seems to have been one of the species of lower-class cantari, itinerant musicians who earned their temporary keep through their skills in singing and dancing. Dances, in fact, were particularly frequent occasions for the meeting of the two cultures. Castiglione, in his Book of the Courtier, has Marchese Gasparo Pallavicino say that

In Lombard country . . . there are many young gentlemen who, on festive occasions, dance all day in the sun with the peasants and play with them at throwing the bar, wrestling, running, and jumping. I do not think this amiss, because then the contest is not one of nobility, but one of strength and agility, at which villagers are quite as good as nobles; and such familiarity would seem to have about it a certain charming liberality.
One particularly piquant instance of this practice is furnished in a letter describing a rural festa in the Mantuan contado. In June 1511 Amico della Torre writes from Mantua to the young Federico II that his parents Francesco Gonzaga and Isabella d’Este attended a dance in Pietole, one of the villages in the Mantuan countryside. The noble dancer here was not merely a “young gentleman,” he was the forty-seven-year-old ruler himself, and his partner for the ballo was an aged villana.

Nothing else occurs to me to write your Lordship except that the most Illustrious Lord your father often goes to Pietole to see his horses. Last Sunday a lovely festa was done there, to which both your father and mother came. And to bring more honor to the festa, your father danced a ballo with an old woman, with whom, as I understand it, he did not want to dance any longer, either because of the heat or because he was tired. But the woman did not want to stop, so that his Excellency had to finish the ballo with her.\textsuperscript{104}

Another occasion when such music was heard at court was during banquets. The Ferrarese steward Cristoforo da Messisbugo, for example, reports two banquets in 1529 during which rustic works were heard. On 20 May Ippolito II d’Este gave a banquet for his brother Ercole II: “For entertainment, there were five who sang certain songs in Paduan country style that were wonderful to hear.” Earlier, on 24 January, Don Ercole himself had given a banquet for his father Alfonso and his aunt Isabella d’Este: here “Ruzzante [the Paduan playwright and actor Angelo Beolco] with five companions and two women sang most beautiful songs and madrigals in Paduan style, and wandered around the table arguing together about peasant things in that dialect.”\textsuperscript{105} I would take these works to be villotte. In fact, H. Colin Slim has recently discussed a painting by Lorenzo Zacchia (?), a Musical Group with Four Figures, which he suggests may be “a kind of visual parallel to musical activities by Ruzzante’s group” and that one figure “might be Ruzzante himself.” Slim discovered that the painting

\textsuperscript{104} Appendix, Document 5.

\textsuperscript{105} Cristoforo da Messisbugo, Banchetti, composizioni di vivandi e apparecchio generale, ed. Fernando Bandini (Venice, 1960; originally published in 1549). “Per intertenimento vi furono cinque, che cantarono certe canzoni alla pavana in villanesco, che fu maravigliosa cosa ad udire” (p. 39). “Cantarano Ruzzante e cinque compagni e due femmine canzoni e madrigali alla pavana bellissimi, e andavano intorno la tavola contendendo insieme di cose contadinesche, in quella lingua, molto piacevoli” (p. 50). On these banquets and their entertainments, see Howard M. Brown, “A Cook’s Tour of Ferrara in 1529,” Rivista italiana di musicologia X (1975), 216–41. Ruzzante’s use of popular song is documented in Emilio Lavarini, Studi sul Ruzzante e la letteratura pavana, (Padua, 1965), pp. 165–232.
includes a representation of an extant music book, the Motetti e canzone, libro primo of 1520, which is open to two works: significantly, the first of these is Ruffino Bartolucci’s villotta, “Venite donne belle.”

Other documents suggest how widespread was the knowledge of the popular pieces themselves within the highest court circles. In July 1494 the Mantuan courtier and poet Teofilo Collenuccio wrote to his master Francesco II Gonzaga describing his amusements at the court, while most members of the noble family were at country villas to escape the heat and humidity of Mantua.

I am here [in Mantua], idle, and find only one remedy in so much monotony: your most Illustrious little daughter [Eleonora, b. 31 December 1493], who is so pleasing and charming to everyone that I am becoming crazy about her. I see her three or four times a day, and advise you that I have taught her to dance la mazza chrocca and il matterello, so that I believe that she will become a good and gallant dancer. ..

Both these dances are based on popular tunes, and must be similar to the kind of ballo that Francesco himself danced with the old woman in Pietole.

Even more telling is a final document. In July 1511 Luigi Cassola, Ferrarese envoy to Mantua, went with Cardinal Matthias Lang, Archbishop of Gurk, to visit that paragon of Renaissance purity whom Niccolò da Correggio called “la prima donna del mondo,” Isabella d’Este. He reports to Cardinal Ippolito I d’Este, Isabella’s brother, the following:

The other day, the aforementioned Gurk went to visit the most illustrious Marchesa. I acted as interpreter and we had great fun. My interpretation was to say only silliness and lies. We sang a song that says “Tolle in mane” (“Take them in your hand”), and I said to the Marchesa that the Cardinal begged her to do what the song commanded. ..

Once again, this is a documentable popular tune, the canto or ballo del matterel also referred to by Collenuccio in 1494. Isabella would

---


108 Appendix, Document 7. The letter is badly burned around the edges.
have known the tune through the ripresa of a barzelletta set by her court composer Marchetto Cara, “Poich’io vedo,” and the tune also appears in two quodlibets: “E quando andaratu al monte” and “L’ultimo di di maggio.” In the last of these the text reads as follows:

Tol in man, tol in man,  
tol in man, el matterel,  
tol in man che l’è bon e bel! 

Take it in your hand,  
Take the little rod in your hand,  
For it is good and pretty!

Because of its unquestionably lewd text, it is extremely doubtful that Isabella herself would have ever sung this work in public. Nonetheless, she did sing it in private and obviously knew the piece well enough to do so. In this as in the other cases just documented, then, the members of the court were taking part in elements of the popular musical culture. These documents help to assure their familiarity with the popular repertory, as do the numerous settings by court composers like Cara, Tromboncino, and Pesenti.

IV

If the villotte represent a kind of play of the elite with the popular culture through a distancing from the notions of amour courtois, a third group of works confronts these notions directly by treating them in a parodic context. Here, instead of a text that stands outside the formes fixes, the popular poem is inserted into a courtly poem that is itself in the formes fixes. By far the majority of these works are barzellette, although there are strambotti, canzonette, and even canzoni that follow this pattern. Whatever the form, the popular citation acts as a kind of refrain that recurs in each strophe. In the barzelletta, for example, a composer often adopted a popular text and tune as the ripresa of a barzelletta. In these cases, however, the poetic form is generally inverted: instead of beginning with the ripresa and continuing with the stanza, the poet/composer begins with the stanza, thus delaying the entrance of the popular citation. The purpose of this inversion seems to have been a dramatic one: often the stanza contains the standard conceits of amour courtois, and the


110 This is an obvious sexual reference, although it is also a play on words: “materello” is a little cudgel or a rolling pin; “mattarello,” a fool or madman. Both meanings are present in each occurrence of the word and serve to personify the male sexual organ, much like “Feragù” discussed below.
sudden appearance of the popular tune shocks the listeners in the inverted ripresa.

Although there are exceptions, the poems with these inverted riprese fall generally into three thematic categories. The first is that just described: the singer delights the listener with the sudden, almost nonsensical insertion of the popular song into the essentially courtly poem. In essence, these function as parodies of the courtly repertory, since the popular tune is textually dissonant with the courtly stanza that precedes it. In Niccolò Piffaro’s “Per memoria di quel giorno,” the poet sings in three stanzas of his love and the day he first met her. Then, there was a song being sung; nonsensically, however, this was the popular tune “Famene un poco de quella mazacrocca.”

It seems hardly possible that Niccolò could have chosen better from among the popular repertory of his time: “la mazacrocca” has absolutely nothing to do with courtly love. Although scholars are not agreed as to exactly what a “mazacrocca” was, most do agree that it was some type of food. Torrefranca favored its definition as a focaccia, a kind of bread or tart. Jeppesen, on the other hand, believed that it was derived from the Yiddish “matzechuchen.” Liliana Panella, the author of the most complete study of this text, favors a derivation from the Arabic (by way of the Spanish “mazorca” and Portuguese “maçaroca”) meaning of a kind of bread stick with a knob at the end, an obviously bawdy connotation. Whatever its definition, the reference to the song here is obviously intended humorously, indeed, parodistically:

**Stanza 1**

Per memoria di quel giorno che esser servo me fe’ Amore

di quel volto vago e adorno On which Love made me the slave

che scolpito ho sempre in core, Of that lovely, fair face

That I have chiseled in my heart,

In memory of that day

**For example, the anonymous “Pien d'affani e gelosia” from Canzoni . . . libro secondo** (Rome: Mazzochio, 1518; reprint Venice: Antico and Giunta, 1520), fols. 33v–34, is a parody of the pastoral tradition already seen in “Un cavalier di Spagna.” “L'altra notte m'insommiava,” discussed above, is entirely popularizing. A modern edition of “Pien d'affani” is included in Luisi, ed., II secondo libro difrottole di Andrea Antico [Rome, 1976] I, 168 (text), and II, 87–90 (music).


**Il segreto,** p. 1401; Jeppesen, La Frottola III, 25.

**L'incatenatura 'Donna di dentro dalla tua casa,' di H. Ysaac,** Lares XIV (1958), pp. 25–38; the previous literature is cited copiously there. A more recent discussion, which reveals several different meanings, among them “tadpole” in Modenese dialect, is Attilio Neri, “Il giallo della mazzacrocca,” Studi e problemi di critica testuale XVIII (1979), 204–8. Without wishing to enter into the etymological debate, I would point out that Sir John Florio in 1611 defined “maza” as “a kind of meate, grewel, or haste pudding that country people were wont to eate, made of milke, water, oyle, meale, and salt” (Queen Anna's New World of Words, p. 304).
A slightly different work in the same category is Cara’s “Mentre io vo per questi boschi.” This text can be read on two levels. On the surface, in the stanza of this barzelletta, the anonymous poet describes the courtly lover wandering in a rustic setting, bemoaning the cruelty of his lady, and then interrupts this with the inverted ripresa that quotes the popular song “Ucelin, bel’ucelino.”

Stanza 1
Mentre io vo per questi boschi sospirando il mio bel sole 
et di duri, amari toschi formo crude, aspre parole, spesso dir la lingua sole tu che seguì el mio camino: While I wander these woods Sighing because of my beautiful sun [= lady] And with harsh, bitter poisons I form cruel, sour words, Often my tongue is wont to say You who follow my path:

Stanza 2
Horsù non più, che più ad ognora dir potria né mai cessare, si mandar volesse fora quel che in cor vengo a portare a quel dolce e bel cantare quando udi’ la maza crocha: Hey, no more, for always I should be able to say without cease, To want to send out That which I carry in my heart, That sweet and lovely singing When the maza chrocha is heard:

Stanza 3
I am minded, at all hours, To sing the maza chrocha:

Ripresa
This is called the beautiful maza chrocha;
This is called the beautiful maza chrocha.

Ripresa
This is called the beautiful maza chrocha;
This is called the beautiful maza chrocha.

Stanza 2
This is that lovely song That was the cause, means, and way In which my heart was bent To serve my goddess. Thus, hey ho, be blessed When I hear the maza chrocha:

Stanza 3
This is called....
"Ucelin, bel'ucelino, come sa' tu ben cantar?
Falalilo, falilola falilolalé
falilola lilalé.”

The contrast between the anguished lover of the courtly verse and the carefree bird of the popular tune is made explicit in the fifth and final stanza:

Ben a te, ben si convene, ucelin, il dolce canto;
et a me, chi'io son in pene,
l'angoscioso e amaro pianto,
onde io son condotto a tanto che chi mor mi par divino.

"Ucelin..."  

On another level, however, this whole text is parodic, even risqué. Who is this “pretty little bird” and what is its “sweet song”? “L’ultimo di di maggio,” a quodlibet from Bologna, MS Q 21, suggests an answer. There, towards the end of the text, falls the following:

Li è un bel ausel
et fa sgonfiar la panza
a chi non sta in servel.
Torrela mo’ villan
la putta del guarnel
la ti farà stentare
la ti darà el martel,
là ti farà imparare
el verso dal ausel:
“Cucu, cucu, cucu...”116

40

If we accept the bird in Cara’s citation as the cuckoo, that symbol of the cuckolded husband,117 then the ripresa must have come as a double shock to the listeners: not only is there the sudden appearance of

116 See n. 109 for the source of this piece. This and the whole complex of works involving “Torela mo villan” is discussed in Gallico, “Una probabile fonte della canzone ‘Torela mo vilan,” Lares XXVII (1961), 15–21; Gallico demonstrates that the song is of Mantuan origin.

117 See, for example, “Questo vechio maladecto,” above, and the quodlibet “Je sum suis” from Bologna, MS Q 21, No. 47, where the tenor intones the following: “La ti farà la corna / per manco d’un quattrin: ‘Cu cu ru cu, cu cu ru cu’ ” (Modern edition in Torrefranca, Il segreto, pp. 141–44 [text], 503–06 [music]).
a popular tune, but this particular text gives a more immediate motive for the lover’s wandering the woods and forming bitter words; his “beautiful sun” has not been impervious to his love, as she might in the courtly repertory, she has cuckolded him and the song of the cuckoo does indeed suit him well.

The second category of these works that set a popular refrain within a courtly context consists of those poems in which the lover actually has escaped the ravages of his unrequited love and sings the popular tune as a paean to his release. Typically, the stanza depicts the poet’s escape; in the volta, he states that henceforth he will do nothing but sing a certain popular tune; this is followed by the citation of the tune itself.

Such works are frequent in the literature; indeed, they stretch from the very beginnings of the repertory to near its end. A clear example of an early occurrence of this theme is found in Tromboncino’s “Or che son di pregion fora,” already present in Paris, MS 676.118 Here, as is sometimes the case, the opening stanza is incomplete. Important, however, is the musical contrast Tromboncino constructs to mirror the textual contrast: the stanza (both piedi and volta) are in the standard animated texture and duple mensuration of the courtly barzelletta; at the beginning of the popular tune, the composer shifts to homorhythm and triplet coloration.

### Incomplete Stanza

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Or che son di pregion fora,</th>
<th>Now that I am out of prison,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lamentare non mi vo’ più.</td>
<td>I don’t want to lament any longer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantare voglio il turlurù:</td>
<td>I want to sing the turlurù:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ripresa**

| “Turlurù, turlurù, | “Turlurù, turlurù, |
| lamentare non mi vo’ più.” | I don’t want to weep over you.” |

### Stanza 2

| Vise un tempo in gran tormento | I lived a long time in torment, |
| di speranza al tuto privo | Completely deprived of hope |
| tra suspiri e gran lamento | Between sighs and great laments |
| facto som del mio mal schivo; | My pain has made me averse [to it]; |
| hor ch’al mondo sciolto io | Now that I have escaped alive into the |
| vivo, | world, |

---

118 Anonymous in Paris, MS 676, fols. 69v–70; ascribed to “B. T.” in Frottiole. Libro quinto (Venice: Petrucci, 1505), fol. 55v; together, the two sources present four additional stanzas. Modern edition in Luisi, La musica vocale nel Rinascimento (Turin, 1977), p. 239 (after Petrucci). I follow here the textual reading of Paris, MS 676, except in the first line of the second stanza, where the line reads “Vise un gran tempo in tormento”; for the sake of the meter, I have emended this according to the reading in Petrucci.
lamentare non mi vo’ più. I don’t want to lament any longer.
[Cantare voglio il turlurù:] [I want to sing the turlurù:]
“Turlurù...” “Turlurù...”

The popular song here is the rustic “Turlurù, la capra è mozza,” well known through other frottolistic compositions. Pesenti, for example, composed “Io voria esser cholù,” which uses “Turlurù” as a refrain.¹¹⁹ This text is a particularly clear representation of the escape from unrequited love, and it deserves citing in full here. “Io voria” differs in form from the majority of other barzellette that cite popular tunes; indeed, formal freedom is a hallmark of Pesenti’s works in general. In this case, the poet, who may be Pesenti himself since he wrote many of his own texts, has constructed a separate ripresa and refrain. The former begins the work and states the performer’s desire to sing the “turlurù”; the latter contains the popular text and tune themselves. The resulting pattern is as follows: ripresa-stanza 1-ripresa-popular refrain-stanza 2-ripresa-popular refrain, and so forth.

Ripresa
I want to be like him
Who has no worries
And sings the turlurù.

Stanza 1
I have been forever
In troubles, sadness, and pain:
Since I fell in love
I no longer know joy.

Ripresa
I want to be like him
Who has no worries
And sings the turlurù.

Popular Refrain
Turlurù the she-goat wench
Turlurù who did her in?¹²⁰
He who no longer worries
And who sings the turlurù.

¹²⁰ Florio, Queen Anna’s New World of Words, p. 324, defines “moza” (noun) as “a wench, a guirle, a lasse” and “mozzo” (past participle) as “curtald, cut off, stumped, maimed, shortned.”
Io credeva trovar ioco,
e non pensai del focho
che m'arde a poco a poco
e bon tempo non ho più.

Io voria esser cholù.

Turlurù la capra moza.

Chi non ha provato amore,
non sa che sia dolore;
ma io el provo a tutte l'hore
e bon tempo non ho più.

Io voria esser cholù.

Turlurù la capra moza.

Ma pur apertamente
dirote le mie stente
ch'io porto ocultamente:
e bon tempo non ho più.

Io voria esser cholù.

Turlurù la capra moza.

Ma s'io l'osasse dire,
el grave mio martire
ch'io soffro per servire,
e bon tempo non ho più.

Io voria esser cholù.

Turlurù la capra moza.

This text is of particular interest in its contrast between unrequited love and the carefree popular tune. In the refrain, there is the
implicit curse against the man’s former beloved, a curse that is con-
sciously rustic: she is a “she-goat wench.” The stanzas, however, adopt
a courtly vocabulary to speak of the singer’s unrequited love: love is a
“focho”; the lover “arde”; he suffers a “grave . . . martire”; and he has
all his troubles because of his “servire.” These are all phrases that one
could pick out of any number of purely courtly texts, and they serve
to emphasize the dichotomy between the stanzas and the popular
refrain all the more strongly.

Another inverted barzelletta, Cara’s “Poich’io vedo,” represents a
variation on the theme of escape from unrequited love. Its popular
ripresa is another occurrence of the ballo del matterel, used here prima-
arily in its connotation of “fool”; this is a particularly apt choice, since
the anonymous poet (perhaps Cara himself) has adopted musical met-
aphors in the stanza to represent the mental state of the performer
himself: he can escape from his unhappy love not through renounc-
ing it, but only through insanity.

Poich’io vedo, ahi tristo e lasso,
alla dolce mia armonia
non si move un cor di sasso,
e bisogna e forza fia
che’l tenor bassi el bordon,
et chi scorda da bufon
sù, li canti el matarel:
“Tuolo in man, tuolo in man,
dan dan dan, tuolo in man,
dan dan dan, tuolo in man,
dan dan, ché l’é balzan!”

Since I see sadly, alas,
That my sweet harmony
Does not move a heart of stone,
It must be, perforce,
That the tenor play lower than the bordon

And that he who is out of tune [i.e.,
mad] like a fool
Hey, sings the fool’s dance:
“Take him in your hand, take him in your hand,
Dan dan dan, take him in your hand,
Dan dan dan, take him in your hand,
Dan dan, for he is crazy!”

Finally, there is a third category of these works, which are sexually
more explicit: in these, having escaped from the prison of unrequited
love, the poet actually achieves his obvious physical goal, or at least
comes much closer to it than would be possible within the strictures of
courtly love. One such work is the anonymous “Per ristor del corpo
lasso.” There are two different settings of this text, one in Venice, MS

121 The three lowest strings of the lute, in ascending order, are the contrabasso, the bordone, and the tenore. The poet is thus saying, in effect, that the world must be turned upside down.

1795–1798 and another in Modena, MS L.11.8.123 This once again is an inverted barzelletta which opens with a stanza expressing the typical courtly sentiments; like Cara’s “Mentre io vo per questi boschi,” this too takes place in a rustic setting, removed from the court. Moreover, the work features what might be called a “sequential refrain”: each is slightly different, although each ends with the phrase “Stay, stay, stay, for love will help us”;124 in fact, framed by the popularizing stanzas, each must be taken from a sequential strophe of the same popular text. We can thus trace the lover’s progress as he attempts more and more amorous games with the young woman he meets in the wood.

**Stanza 1**

Per ristor del corpo lasso,  
che per forza Amor tien vivo,  
in un bosco andando a spasso,  
che del sol era già privo,  
l’incontrai il bel volto divo che col sguardo il cor m’accese.

I kissed her nicely  
and she said to me: “Ah,  
What a great passion takes you!  
Don’t go any further.”  
“Stay, stay, stay, for love will help us;  
Oh, stay, stay, stay, for love will help us.”

**Ripresa 1**

“I would be truly stupid  
If I left here  
Without getting a little comfort  
To sustain my life;  
Thus, your infinite beauty  
I’ll enjoy, but with respect.”

123 Venice, MS 1795–1798, No. 46 (modern edition in Luisi, Apografo miscellaneo marciano, p. 105); different setting in Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS gamma L.11.8, fols. 64v–65 (bassus only extant).

124 Other works that have sequential refrains, each with a another part of a popular text, are discussed in Gallico, “Alcuni canti,” pp. 247–62. In addition to “Per ristor del corpo,” Gallico gives the texts of the refrains of “Poi ch’io son in libertate” (refrain = “Scarmella fa la gatta”), “Vidi hor cogliendo rose” (refrain = “Deh, levate la stringa dallo petto”), and “El servo che te adora” (refrain = a version of “Tintinami la brocha”).

125 Modena, MS L.11.8: “quando gionse al volto divo / che col sguardo el cor m’à tocha. / E li basai la bocha,” a much more “popular” version.
In this rustic work, the man actually kisses the woman, touches her breast, and lifts her skirts. Moreover, she continues to play with his sentiments coquettishly, saying not to go on and yet encouraging him. The version in MS L.11.8 makes the popular context explicit, since there the woman is not completely anonymous, she is a fornara (baker). On the other hand, the poem is not without at least a tacit reference to courtly love. The lover is able to accomplish the aim of his desires precisely because he has physically left the circles of amour courtois: he is not within the confines of the court or even its surrounding town; rather, he is placed in a sylvan setting to which he has retired specifically to restore himself from his unrequited love.

Other works of this category mocked the courtly tradition just as strongly, and indeed one parodied the most revered of all courtly poets, Petrarch: the anonymous “Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade.” This is the first line of one of Petrarch’s canzoni, in which he looks back fondly on his youth (“la prima etade”) and his happiness before he fell in love. Then, he was without care; since love attacked him, he has known only bitterness, tears, and sighs. In short, the

---

126 This stanza in particular is full of doubles entendres.

127 “Instead of “Sta’ sta’ sta’, ch’amor ne aiutarà,” MS L.11.8 reads “e sta’, fornara, sta’, che amor ti aiuterà.”

canzone breathes the Petrarchan variety of *amour courtois*. Although the present poem begins with this citation of Petrarch, however, it continues in a much different vein.

In the sweet time of the Golden Age,  
Ladies, your beauty  
Was stolen from the high gods,  
And a girl  
Could wander free of mortal furor;  
But your cruelty  
Has made Love himself cruel  
So that you can no longer go safely  
To pick the rose,  
The rose with the flower.  
For this reason I say to you all:

“Ah, pretty girls,  
Watch out for Feragù  
For he has had his way with others  
And he’ll have his way with you.”

The character Feragù in this work is a well-known one in popular poetry of the time. From two further citations, it is clear that Feragù was from Bergamo and that he was a tireless womanizer. He was, in fact, a kind of lower-class Don Juan who came from his native town to Venice and proceeded to chase any woman he could find, pretty or not. An anonymous sixteenth-century printed collection of popular poetry includes the following:

O belle putte, guardeve dal Feragù,  
ché l’ha ingannà de l’alte,  
v’ingannerà ancho vu.”

O pretty girls, watch out, pretty girls,  
Watch out for the hands of Feragù,  
For he wears your genitals as his device, and he wants them all.  
He has trimmed the others, and he will trim you too.  
He enjoys the pretty ones and eats the ugly.

129 This and the following line form a citation from the third strophe of Marchetto Cara’s villotta “Le son tre fantinelle,” from *Libro primo de la croce*, fol. 20. See Prizer, *Libro primo della croce*, pp. xxii (text) and 38–39 (music); modern edition also in Torrefranca, *Il segreto*, pp. 294–95 (text) and 481–82 (music).

130 *Opera nova nella quale si ritrova essere tutti li principii delle canzoni antiche e moderne*. Quoted from Serverino Ferrari, “Documenti per servire all’istoria della poesia semipopolare,” p. 444.
A hybrid barzelletta-villotta by the same Francesco Santa Croce who composed “Dilla da l’acqua sta” rehearses Feragu’s “life” and “death.”

L’è pur morto Feragu!
Piangete, belle putte,
ché, se’l v’è già compiazutte,
carezar no’ ve vol più.

Feragu is finally dead!
Weep, pretty girls;
If he has already pleased you,
He no longer wants to.

L’è pur morto Feragu!
Venne già di bergamasca
per stantiar con sier Rizollo;
li fu vota la sua tasca,

Feragu is finally dead!
He came from Bergamo
To live with Sir Rizollo;
His pouch was emptied,

peggio fu ch’al figarolo.
Lui fu morto, essendo solo,
per il dar de sopto in sù.

He was worse than a fig tree;
He died all alone
From too much thrusting from below.

L’è pur morto Feragu!
Suscitar ben se potria,
de, serrebbe gran merzede
farli, putte, cortesia,
ché ve giuro, per mia fede,
piacer più ch’altri non crede
venerebbe a tutte vu.

Feragu is finally dead!
He could easily be revived,
Oh, it would be a great boon
To do him the courtesy, girls,
For I swear, on my faith,
Pleasure, more than others know
Would come to all of you!

In his use of this character and in other ways, the poet of “Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade” has not only parodied Petrarch, he has turned him directly on his ear: the first seven lines are a canzone-like poem that, except for the plural “donne,” could well be part of
the courtly tradition. But the poet will not suffer his Petrarchan martyrdom at the hands of the cruel ladies gladly, he will achieve his revenge by having his way with them all.

V

Thus far, I have concentrated on settings that adopt popular tunes or texts, but composers and poets could express many of the same sentiments without such citations. These compositions have been much less studied than the works with popular tunes, perhaps because music historians tend first to look to the music rather than the text. Nevertheless, these works that escape from the world of courtly love with original texts are an integral part of the repertory.

Three examples will suffice. First, a poet could write of the escape from unrequited love without recourse to popular material simply through the nature of his own text. Paolo Scotto, for example, wrote both the music and words to “Rotto ho al fin el duro nodo.” The work functions exactly like the barzellette already discussed, although the ripresa appears in its normal position:

\begin{quote}
Rotto ho al fin el duro nodo
che mi strinse un tempo el core,
ne piu son pregion d’amore,
tal che hor rido e non piu rodo.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I have at last broken the harsh knot
That once bound my heart,
No longer am I a prisoner of love,
So that now I laugh and I fret no more.
\end{quote}

Second, composers and poets could speak of love and its physical aspects without reference to popular tunes in ways that were very direct indeed. These works are found often among the small repertory of north-Italian carnival songs, like Cara’s “Donne, habiati voi

\begin{quote}
Servi un tempo fidelmente
ad Amor, falso e crudele,
ma mi fu discongnoscente
sempre mai et infedele
e mi detoschò per mele,
ma mi sciolsi cum bon modo.
Rotto ho al fin....
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I served faithfully for a time
Cupid, perfidious and cruel,
But he was disdainful of me
Always and unfaithful
And he poisoned me through sweetness;
I was well off to escape.
I have at last broken....
\end{quote}

\footnote{\textit{Frottole. Libro septimo}, fol. 48, where an additional stanza follows. Petrucci heads the piece with the rubric “Paoli Scotti Cantus et verba.” The text of the work is also found in Mantua, MS 4, fols. 187v–88v.}
Here the anonymous poet writes a song of galley slaves, although the waves he sings of plowing are obviously sexual:

Donne, habiati voi pietate
desti poveri galeotti;
gran bisogno ne ha condotti
a chiedervi caritate.
Sotto forza d’un
tiranno,
nui solchamo un tempo el mare,
e quel fusse el nostro affanno
seria longo il racontare
perché anchor di po’ il
stentare
deventiamo in povertate.
Donne, habiati voi....

Ladies, have pity
On us, poor galley slaves;
A great need has led us
To ask for your charity.
Under the force of a tyrant
[i.e., Cupid]
We plow, briefly, the sea,
And our anguish
Would take long to describe,
Because after a short spell of
struggling
We again become destitute.
Ladies, have pity....

There is little doubt here what the men’s “anguish” and “struggling” are or exactly how they become “destitute” immediately afterward. The song is in fact a *mattinata*, a parodic serenade.

Finally, one work happily sums up the parodistic treatment of *amour courtois*, the well-known “Lirum bililirum” by the Mantuan composer Rossino Mantovano, which Petrucci published in 1505.136 This popularizing, rustic barzelletta, probably intended for an *intermedio* of a comedy presented at carnival time,137 bears a title in Petrucci’s book, *Un sonar de piva in fachinesco*. The original meaning of the word “fachino” is a rustic of the fields or mountains, and Rossino, with this title, places the work squarely among the repertory of the rustic *mattinata*: like “Donne, habiati voi pietate,” this is a parodic serenade sung beneath a woman’s window.138

---

Un sonar de piva in fachinesco
“Lirum bililirum, lirum, lirum”
de, si soni la
sordina.

A Sound of Bagpipes From a Lout139
“Lirum bililirum, lirum, lirum”
Thus the chanter [of the bagpipe]
sounds:

139 Although I do not follow it in all details, my translation of this difficult text was made easier by the “versione italianizzata” published by Gallico in his “Primizie musicali
Tu m'intendi ben, pedrina
ma non già per el dovirum.

Les ses agn che't vo mi bè
e che't son bon servidor,
ma t'aspet che'l so bè
ch'al fin sclopi per
amor.
De non da plu tat dolor
tu sa bè che dig' il
virum.

Lirum bilirum. . .

Ta recordet quant't me des
la tua fé si alegramet,
e ch'al ivagnell ti'm giures
de voli'm per to servet.
Mi per letra incontinet
'a't respos cum suspirum.
Lirum bilirum. . .

Quant a'm pensi al temp passat
e che tò servita indaren,
a'm doni desperat
al demoni da l'infern.
Ma s'no m'ài di
q'est'inveren
e'm voi da te partirum.
Lirum bilirum. . .

Con pot m'a soffri', traditora,
che chsì vivi disperat?
Dam' audenza almac un hora,
che serò al tut pagat.
Fam' un scrit e sugilat
del mio bon fidel servirum.
Lirum bilirum. . .

You understand me well, you trull,
But not as well as you should.

For six years I've loved you
And have been your faithful servant
But you still hold back; I know well
That in the end you'll screw [me]
for love.
Now, don't weep so sadly,
You know very well I'm telling the
truth!

Lirum bilirum. . .

Do you remember when you gave me
So gladly your pledge
And that you swore it on the Gospels
To want me as your servant?
I immediately, by the book,
Answered you with a sigh.
Lirum bilirum. . .

When I think of the past
And that I have served you in vain,
I consign myself, desperate,
To the demon of hell.
But if you don't come through this
winter
I shall leave you.

Lirum bilirum. . .

How can you allow me, traitoress,
To live so completely without hope?
Let me be with you but an hour
And I'll be completely paid.
Write it for me and seal it,
For my good, faithful service.

Lirum bilirum. . .

This work opens with a first line that is a standard Italian imitation of the sounds of the bagpipe,¹⁴⁰ and includes in its third line a coarse description of the object of the lout's love, a description that imme-

¹⁴⁰ For example, the eclogue from Teofilo Folengo's Zanitonella, which to imitate the sound of the "piva" uses "lili blirum," "lili brilirum," and so forth; cited in Cattin, "Canti, canzoni a ballo e danze," p. 191. See also Adriano Banchieri, Il zabaiene musicale (Milan: heirs of Simon Tini and Filippo Lomazzo, 1604), "Danza di pastorelle in aria
diately removes any doubt that this could be a courtly text. After this ripresa there follow four six-line stanzas, which offer the listener another surprise: they are not written in clear Italian, but rather in the dialect of the north-Italian town of Bergamo, a dialect that Italians by consensus view as among the ugliest and basest of all their local dialects. Moreover, the first stanza includes a specific sexual reference; with his use of the verb “scopare,” a vulgar word for the sexual act, the poet has seemingly moved us outside the conventions of courtly love.

This removal is only apparent, however, for the whole poem is a purposeful satire of the conceits of courtly love. This is so on several levels. First, it substitutes a Bergamasque peasant for the heart-sick courtier of the typical love verse. Second, it substitutes the raucous bagpipe, the most rustic of Renaissance instruments, for the typical lute, the most refined. Third, it substitutes the crude Bergamasque dialect for the elegant, Petrarchan Italian of the courtier. Fourth, it substitutes a woman of questionable virtue (a strumpet) for the delicate, high-born lady of courtly verse. Fifth, it pointedly specifies the object of the lover’s desires: that the woman will yield physically to him.

Significant too is the poem’s conscious use of courtly vocabulary, although often within the Bergamasque dialect. The singer “sighs,” he is “in service” to the woman, he suffers “the demon of hell,” and he even uses a formal, courtly term for his wish to have his pleasure with his beloved for an hour: a literal translation of this line reads “Grant me an audience for at least an hour.” “Lirum billirum” is thus not removed from the world of amour courtois, it is rather amour courtois turned upside down, because it is being sung by an untutored rustic to his lower-class love; he has no right to such sentiments, and she has no right to be the object of them. These signals, it seems to me, would have been clear to any elite audience of the day, and the parodistic intent would have been obvious to them.

del Spagnoletto, con le riprese nella cornamusa.” The text of this piece begins as follows: “Siamo cinque pastorelle, / tutte cinque vezzose e belle, / che cerchian coll’ e pian / con la cornamusa in man. / Lirum li, lirum lirum li” (We are five shepherdesses, all lovely and pretty, / Who search hill and plain / With bagpipe in hand: Lirum li, lirum lirum li). Cited from Paola Mecarelli, “Il zabaione musicale” di Adriano Banchieri (Florence, 1987), pp. 33 (text) and 63-68 (music). Too, the bass drones and the cycling pitches of the upper parts in Rossino’s ripresa are obviously intended to imitate the sound of the bagpipe.

141 Florio, Queen Anna’s New World of Words, p. 364, defines “pedrolina” as “a trull, a flirt, a minze, a strumpet.”

142 Written “sclopi” in Rossino’s Bergamasque text. This once again is a double entendre: “scopi” may be derived from either “scopare” (to sweep or, vulgarly, to screw) or “scoppiare” (to burst).
The elite of the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento thus played at love in several guises. They indulged in the game of courtly love with its ethereal doctrines, but they also showed a strong interest in works whose texts are implicit escapes from the strictures of their courtly game, and even delighted in works that parodied its concepts. They heard these works from court musicians and could perform them themselves from printed books and manuscripts. The courtly and popularizing, rustic strands existed alongside each other in these sources, were performed by the same musicians—amateur and professional—and were enjoyed by the same elite listeners.

University of California, Santa Barbara

APPENDIX

Documents


Illusstrissima Principessa. . . La matina ognuno se ripossò. Poi disnare, la Biancha, fiola di Piero de Cosmo, la quale he sposa, cum altre done di Piero he de Jacobo di Pazi andareno ha visitare Monsignor di Roano et volsano li parenti che la sua Signoria faceze ad ogni modo ha la francessa, he le bassò tute, che erano in summa X, belle como anzeli di paradisso. Poi le menò in salla et fece sonare la dita Biancha de organi, la quale sono benissimo cum bonissimi ponti he porporcione he misura avantazata. . . .

Zonti ha cassa, Monsignor il Vicecanzelero, perché gli era allozato hapresso, mandò per mi; como fu zonto, io statim veneno quelle done che erano andate da Monsignor di Roano ha visitare la Sua Signoria, he questo fu perché quelli di Pazi perché sono molto amici di Monsignore, gli disano che voliano che la Sua Signoria audisse sonare la dita Biancha, la quale he maridata in Guglielmo di Pazi. He como fu zonto, tochò la mano non ha la francessa ma ha taliana, cioèh senza bassare, benchè li parenti il pregasono asi, et statim [. . .] se la dita Biancha ha conzare l’organo che hè di cane che diede altre volte il Re Alfonso ha mestro Antonio, sonatore di organi, dicendogli che gli dona questo instrumento per lo meglio
che lui audisse mai et como ha megliore che lui mai audisse. Aconzato lo organo, la sorella che ha circa XI anni incommenza ha dare fiato ha l’organo, et non sapiendo che cosa fusse grata a Monsignore, fecigli io fare doi canti: “Fortuna” he “Duogl’angoseus” et lei poi ne fece uno tropo singolare.

He a ciò che Vostra Signoria intenda che dona he costei per la fama che l’à, ne dirò doo parole, poi ritornarò ha fornire il viaggio. Costei hè una dona de XIIIII anni, grande quanto la Ursolina vostra servitrice. Hè doncella ben formata di persona he carnuta quanto lei, alegra in faza he biancha in vero atta he balla bene, ma non a comparatione di la Ursolina vostra, per le quale rason se pò chiamare “la bella Biancha.” Ora, ritornando al primo proposito, como costei fornì di sonare in camera, usi Monsegnore he le done in salla et li si ballò fino ha le doo hore he meza, prima baleti, poi saltareli, finalmente la balata. . . . Fornito il ballare se fece collatione, poi quella, la dita Biancha sonò un canto angelico cum li organi, poi cantò una canzoneta cum sua sorela, piu una altra zovene ne incomenzò una che disse “Moum cuer chiantes ioueament.” Finita questa, reingracì la dita Biancha Monsegnor per parte le altre done presente et tochògli la mane. Il simile fecero tute le altre done et statim se partirenò, la quale festa quasi resusitò Monsegnor, il quale al vero era affanato del camino. . . . Ex Senis, die VI februarii [1460].


[ILLUSTRISSIMA]143 et Excellentissima Signora et Patrona observandissima. Non più presto de sabato proximo [p]assato ho havuto quelle della Excellencia Vostra de 7 de questo, per le quale epsa mi commette che da parte sua io facia intendere al Tromboncino che subito si voglia transferire a prefata Vostra Excellentia per occurrence che allei accade dirli. Ho facto la commissione ad epso Tromboncino, il quale mi ha resposto ch’el non scià come potere satisfare alla Excellencia Vostra perché lli ha tolto qui casa ad affitto et già ha comminciatò ad insinare a gentildonne, et ogni qual di trova novo guadagno et ch’el scià certo che quando hura lui si absentesse de qui per sei né octo giorni, il perderia ogni suo principio che ha facto, mediante il quale spera de uscire de miseria et delle mane de’ hebri, li quali hanno, secundo ch’el me dice, ogni sua roba in pigno, affirmandomi cum grandi sacramenti che ciò è

143 Upper left hand corner of letter burned away.
vero et che in pochi giorni il spera de potere respirare et potere andare per la moglie et famiglia sua, subiungendomi ch'el portà alla Excellentia Vostra, andaria in India per satisfare a quella, non che venircia a Ferrara, me che infine la sua urgentissima povertate no'l lassa partire de qui et mi ha pregato che cum la Excellentia Vostra voglia fare questa sua excusa et supplied, come facio, che quella se degni fare scriverti che cosa lei vole da epso, perché se lui la potà servire stando qui, dice che si forzará totis viribus de satisfarli, secundo che fu sempre et serà suo summo desiderio fare in quanto ha potuto et è per potere mentre che viverà. Et epso Tromboncino et io se racomandamo in la bona gratia de Vostra prefata Excellentia. Venetiis XVIII julii 1518.


Questa nocte, pocho nanti le doe hore, per la informatione ho havuto, andando a solatio per la contrata de San Francisco uno filiolo de Francisco de la Fiera, uno de Cresimbeno di Grossi, uno figiolo de Petrofrancisco capo de compagnia et uno Hieronymo da Mozanica calzolaro, et cantando loro certe canzone inhoneste, usci fora de casa in camisa uno Bartholomeo Garzotto da Fontanella, el qual li represi, et uno de loro li trette de uno saxo et colsello dal lato del core per la qual bota in brevi spatio esso Bartholomeo expirò. . . . Mantue III augusti 1481.


Sono forsi due mesi che uno vechietto si trova in questa terra, quale, ballando e saltando, canta certi aeri de piva et si accosta volountieri alle carrette de queste nostre gentildonne in modo che como lo sentino cantare e ballare, fanno affirmare la carretta et li staranno una hora grossa ad vederlo dansare e cantare et da esse non partirà che loro li impirano il pugno de dinari. Lo Illustrissimo Signore vostro patre ne pilia anche gran spasso, maxima mente su l'hora del disnare e cena, et gli dà la spesa e mezo ducato al meso, non havendo lui altra obligatione che di presentarsi al prefato Signore vostro patre ne la dicta hora. . . . Mantuae XI decembris MDXV.


Altro non mi accadde che significar a Vostra Signoria se non che lo Illustrissimo Signore vostro patre spesso va a Pietole a vedere le
sue cavalle. Et dominica passata se gli fece una bella festa dove gli era Sua Signoria et Madama vostra matre. Et per più honorar la festa il prefato Signor vostro patre dansò un ballo, et cum una vechia, secundo ho inteso, cum la quale non volendo più ballare Sua Signoria o per il caldo o per essere stracca, essa donna non gli volse cedere in modo che fu necessario a Sua Signoria che l’avesse finito il ballo cum lei. . . . Mantue 19 junii 1511.


Sto qui in ocio e solo un ristoro trovo in tanti affani, cioè la vostra figliolina illustissima, che è tanto piacevole e grata a ogni homo ch’io li divento pazzo drieto. La vedo tre e quattro volte el di, advisandovi che io gli ho insegnato ballare “la mazza chrocca” e “il matterello,” onde io ho speranza che ella riuscira una bona e gallante ballarina. . . . Ex Mantua die 16 julii 1494.


L’altro giorno il prefato Gurgensis fu a vixitare la Illustrissima Marchexa dove io fui interprete dove si stete in grandissimi piaceri. La interpretatione mia fu di sorte che a ciascuno mai si dixe se non di facetii buzendo. Si cantava una canzon che dicea “Tolle in mane” et io [diceva] a la Marchexana che l’Gurgense la pregava volesse fare quanto che comandava la canzon et cosi de belle in belle. . . . A Vostra Illustrissima Signoria me recommando. Ex Mantuae XVI martii MDX[I].”