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MUSIC 711
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12/24/2011

Playing with Fire: Courtship and Bravado at the Expense of Helios (in the Day of Copernicus)

Verdelot's early madrigal 'Divini occhi serini' can be shown to utilize basic principles of Bembo's principles of Petrarchan syntax to bring out subtle meaning in text which a single voice, spoken or sung in monodic song form (as frottola) is incapable. Verdelot achieves this through employing *variazione*--contrasts in sound and texture. While 'Divine' is largely structured around verse form and predates the period madrigal writing more typically associated with the exploitation of Bembo's ideas, it nevertheless demonstrates early and effective use of *variazione*.

As listed in *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and Interpretation*. New York: Cambridge, (Ian Fenlan and James Haar, 1988) Verdelot's four-voice madrigal 'Divini occhi serini' was first printed in his *Primo libro de' madrigal*, published by Ottavio Scotto in Venice, 1533.¹ It is a setting of the following text.

*Divini occhi sereni,
occhi sempre di gratia e d'amor pieni
perdonin gli altri occhi
vostro sol e splendore.*

*E se questa parola par che tocchi
al sol il vero honore,
facci egli chiaro a noi
giorno la notte, come fate voi.*

¹ Ian Fenlon and James Haar. *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and Interpretation*, (New York: Cambridge, 1988), 55. Scotto commissioned Andrea Antico to prepare the woodblock engraving. The *Primo* was the first of six Verdelot madrigal volumes produced by Antico/Scotto between 1533 and 1538.

Eyes serene, divine
 eyes ever full of grace and love,
 if other eyes will pardon me.
 the splendor is yours alone:
 and if this saying seems to offend
 the true honour of the sun
 let him light up for us
 the night like day, as you do.²

This is an ode to an object, a pair of eyes, presumably belonging to a person whose favor is desired by the ode's speaker. The speaker speaks of these eyes, saying they're full of love, grace, and radiance. He then claims these eyes are brilliant above all others, and he's sorry if this bothers anyone, even the sun. To prove his point, he states that if the Sun could do better, let him show us by lighting up the night as day. The speaker addresses his object throughout, but as soon as "other eyes" are brought up, a second audience is involved. The remainder of the overture, still directed to his object of affection, is meant to be overheard and becomes a direct challenge to the Sun, in an absurd affront made by a mortal man to the most powerful known source of light and heat energy, rumored by Copernicus to be the center of the universe, and whose power it is to ignite the atmosphere and incinerate the planet in order to light the night sky as day.³

² Paul Hillier, "Fortuna Desperata." 4 Voice Programmes. The Hilliard Ensemble, 2011. Programmes .

The recording I for reference is also by The Hilliard Ensemble . Hillier, Paul. "Divini Occhi Serini." *Madrigals*. Hilliard Ensemble. EMI (Virgin Classics) 0724356167124. 2000, 2005.

³ Johann Albrecht Widmannstetter delivered lectures in Rome on Copernicus' theory of Heliocentrism the same year *Primo libro de' madrigal* was published. Windmannstetter helped stoke what must have already been a lively public dialog, and garnering the interest of Pope Clement VII et al. (Copernicus did not publish until 1543, but Copernicus discussed the idea with associates as early as 1514). We cannot discount the significance of mentioning the sun in a poem from this period, any more than we can ignore the significance of a monkey reference during a socio-political debate of the 1920s.

The text is attributed by Fenlon and Haar to Pietro Arentino⁴, which brought the promise of tantalizing innuendo layered into the poem, but a quick Google translation left me in doubt of this possibility.⁵ Disappointed, I dug in a little deeper to discover a possible explanation for this discrepancy. It seems, as David Nutter suggests, Alfred Einstein also attributed the poem to Arentino.⁶ Nutter quotes Einstein's *The Italian Madrigal*,

...the author of the notorious Ragionamenti, who though a declared enemy of the sentimental untruth of the Petrarchists, had himself provided contemporary musicians with one of the most famous sentimental madrigals, *Divini occhi sereni*.⁷

Nutter notes 'Divini' is attributed to Bonifazio Dragonetto in Vogel's *Bibliografia Della Musica Italiana Vocale Profana: Pubblicata dal 1500 al 170*,⁸ but Nutter fails to cite Einstein as the second listed author of this work.⁹ It is unclear, then, who Einstein believed wrote the text. Certainly Arentino must have written clean poetry in addition to his other societal contributions¹⁰. Part of this confusion rests with the fact that Arentino wrote in his *Sei Giornate* (Book One, First Day),

...and thus while engaged in endearments, music's virtue appeared which, to the bottom of my soul, brought me to my senses; there were four [singers] looking over a book [of music], and one, with a silvery lute in tune with their voices, sang *Divini occhi sereni*.¹¹

Sei Giornate was published in 1534, the year after 'Divini' was published.¹² H. Colin Slim alludes to this quote in his article for *Grove Music Online*, "In 1534 Pietro Aretino wrote approvingly of a

⁴ Fenlon and Haar, 297 [14].

⁵ At this point I had not found the Hilliard translation and was uncertain about the poem's nature.

⁶ David Nutter, "Ippolito Tromoncino, Cantore al Liuto," *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, Vol. 3, (1989) 162.

⁷ Alfred Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, (New Jersey: Princeton, 1949) 173

⁸ Emil Vogel, Alfred Einstein, Francois Lesure, and Claudio Satori. *Bibliografia Della Musica Italiana Vocale Profana: Pubblicata dal 1500 al 1700*. (Pomezia: Staderini spa, 1977). 1785-85.

⁹ Nutter, 162.

¹⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Pietro Aretino"-- which also included prose, drama and literary criticism.

¹¹ Pietro Aretino, *Sei Giornate*, ed. G Aquilecchia, (Bari: 1969) 45-46 "E stando in sui vezzi, arrivò la virtù della musica che mi fece risentire fino alla anima: erano quattro che guardavano sopra un libro, e uno, con un liuto argentino accordato con le voci loro, cantava "Divini occhi sereni..."

performance of four singers and a lutenist of *Divini occhi sereni...*¹³ To this, Nutter opines that the mention of 'Divini' in Aretino's work in this instance is "hardly flattering" to a composer,¹⁴ as the passage from *Sei Giornate* is a spoof on music's therapeutic qualities, made in the context of a dialogue between the prostitute Nanna and her protégée Antonia, in what might be properly called a sex manual.¹⁵

But I digress, and unfortunately the question of authorship in part establishes my purpose, to analyze Verdelot's madrigal with the assumption that the text is at least characteristic of the poetic style popularized by the Petrarchan revivalist Pietro Bembo in his 1525 work *Prosa della vulgar lingua*.¹⁶ While Martha Feldman suggests Petrarchan syntax isn't as relevant to early madrigals as it is to works from 1540 onward (esp exemplified in the madrigals of Adrian Willaert), Dean T. Mace demonstrates Bembo's principles can be applied to the madrigals of Verdelot.^{17 18}

The musical form of 'Divini' reflects the verse structure of the poem demonstrating early madrigal composer's preference for a balanced formal return characteristic of the still-popular song forms.¹⁹ Don Harran, in his essay *Verse Types in the Early Madrigal*, points out that while 16th century Italian madrigals are generally studied for how a composer's setting brings out the meaning the words, and less for the form of prosody involved, many early madrigals are

¹² Nutter, 162 This quote is interesting as it mentions lute, but predates the publication of Willaert's lute entabulation by two years.

¹³ H. Colin Slim and Stefano La Via. "Verdelot, Philippe." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (italics mine)

¹⁴ Nutter 162. I suppose it depends on what one means by "wrote approvingly" and "hardly flattering."

¹⁵ *Sei Giornate* has recently been published in a new translation by Rosa Maria Falvo under the title *The School of Whoredom*, and in his review, Nicholas Lezard writes "At last, a work of real pornography...being as much a satire as it is a sex manual..." Nicholas Lezard. "Feeding Gammon to the Gullible." *The Guardian*, (Review: *The School of Whoredom by Pietro Aretino, trans Rosa Maria Falvo*). August 22, 2003.

¹⁶ I will move forward, despite the possibility of the poet being Aretino, established by Einstein to be anti-Petrarchan.

¹⁷ Martha Feldman, "The Composer as Exegete: Interpretations of Petrarchan Syntax in the Venetian Madrigal," *Studi musicali*, 18:2 (1989) 204.

¹⁸ Dean T. Mace "Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal," *The Musical Quarterly* 55:1 (1969) 83.

¹⁹ Martha Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: U of California Press: 1995), 204.

nevertheless clearly based in verse type on the *ballata* and *canzone*.²⁰ Harran distinguishes the *ballata* from the *canzone*, the latter better suited to stand alone as a poem, independent of music, while the former relies more on the performer and his audience to pull off a convincing realization.²¹ Harran's models lead me to classify 'Divini' might be as a ballata-madrigal. The *ballata* consists of a single strophe divided into three sections: the *ripresa*, an introduction of two to four lines (verses); the *mutazioni* (or *piedi*), consisting of two sections with an equal number of lines; and the concluding *volta*, which may compliment the *ripresa* in terms of rhyme scheme and number of syllables per line (those with seven, *versi rotti*, and those with eleven, *versi interi*). Owing to its brevity, 'Divini' would subclassified as a *ballata minore*.²² The eight lines of 'Divini' is structured according to the following scheme (fig 1.)

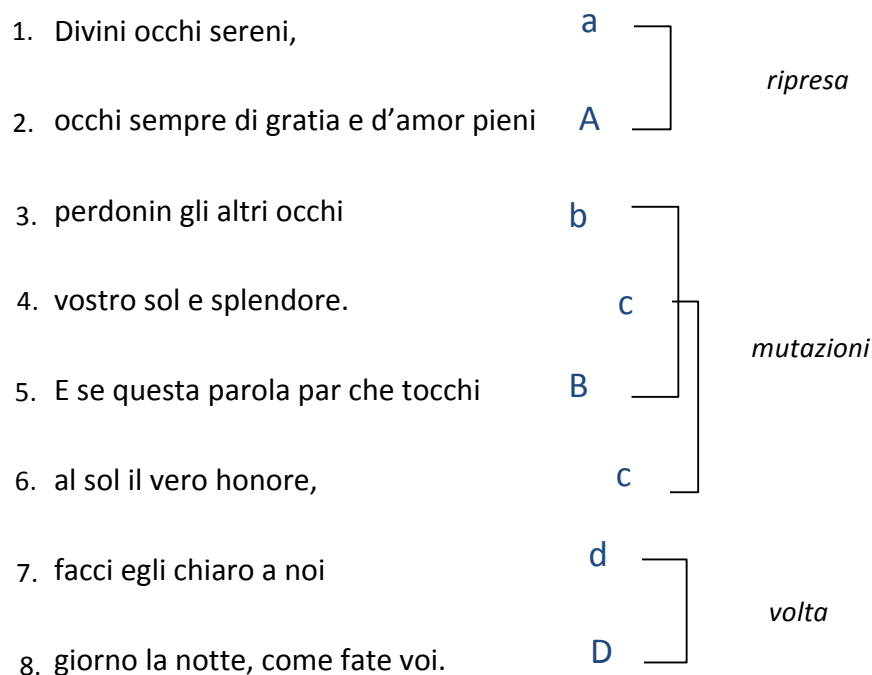


Fig 1. 'Divini' as ballata-madrigal (letter = rhyme; lower case = *versi rotti*, upper case = *versi interi*)

²⁰ Don Harran, "Verse Types in the Early Madrigal" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 22, 1 (1969): 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²² *Ibid.*, 30. In contrast to the *ballata mezzana* and *ballata grande*.

We shall look at Verdelot's music in terms of Bembo's principals for achieving Petrarchan syntax , so let us turn to them now. Bembo's purpose was to establish Italian as an appropriate poetic language, a *lingua volgare*, basing his principles not in the usage of common Tuscan , but in the language of Petrarch and Boccaccio.²³ Italian poetry of the 1520s provided the way for music to absorb the meaning of words, with a shift in emphasis away from the formal patterns of rhyme and meter characteristic of the frottola, and toward the affective qualities in rhythm and sounds of words and speech, which were now given much of the task of conveying poetic effect, even over the intellectual meaning of the words themselves.²⁴ Bembo described these affective qualities in terms of *piacevolezza* and *gravità*.²⁵ Bembo emphasized the need for *variazione* (contrast) at every level of writing, from syllable, to word, to phrase, to verse. *Variazione* was achieved through contrasting the elements of *numero* and *suono*. *Numero* refers to the number of syllables in a verse (those with seven, *versi rotti* or *settenari*, and those with eleven, *versi interi* or *endecasillabi*) and involves the accent placement with a group of three syllables. Combinations of accents create variety—each combination has its own *valore sentimentale*. *Suono* (rhymes) could also indicate *piacevolezza* and *gravità* depending on their proximity. I've summarized (and over-simplified) a few of these principles in the table below (fig 2)²⁶.

²³ Mace, 68. Bembo's principals were laid out in his *Prose della vulgare linguai* (1525)

²⁴ Ibid., 68.

²⁵ Ibid., 69 Sir Phillip Sidney's translations: "sweetness" and "majesty"

²⁶ There's much more to Bembo's principles of Petrarchan syntax, esp with regard to word sounds (letter combinations, lengthening/shortening, etc).

| | <i>piacevolezza</i> | <i>gravità</i> ²⁷ |
|---|--|---|
| location of accents within three-syllable groupings: | | |
| final syllable | <i>piacevole</i> | |
| apenultimate syllable (the “tempered”) | “vowels and consonants serve the mood” | “when words are filled with appropriate vowels and consonants” also—when clusters of consonants lengthen a syllable |
| antepenultimate syllable | | <i>ponderosa, grave</i> |
| <i>numero</i> | <i>versi rotti (7)</i> | <i>versi interi (11)</i> ²⁸ |
| <i>suono</i> | rhymes placed close together | rhymes spaced further apart |
| other descriptors | <i>la grazia, la soavità, la vaghezza, la dolcezza, gli scherzo, i giuochi</i> | <i>l’ onestà, la dignità, la maestà, la magnificenza, la grandezza</i> |

Fig 2. Bembo for Dummies: a Primer.

Mace sees madrigal as having developed from musicians’ desire to achieve Bembo’s poetic affects in their music, referring to the madrigal as a “deployment of sound and rhythm in a manner exactly analogous to that urged by Bembo for poetry.” He notes how the monodic frottola, with its emphasis on repetitive rhythm, rhyme scheme, and the harmonic necessity to support the melody could not facilitate the alternation between *piacevolezza* and *gravità* necessary for good *variazione*, while the polyphonic madrigal could employ simultaneously sounding voices to create complex rhythmic and harmonic effects necessary to bring out the additional layers of meaning created in by *numero*, *suono* and *variazione* found in the source poem.

In setting this text to music, Verdelot follows the form of the poem, but he adds a repeat of second and eighth verses and joins verses 3 & 4 and 5 & 6, essentially reducing the *mutazioni* into two verses (*piacevolezza*) while elongating the *reprise* and *volta* (*gravità*). (Fig 3.) This creates

²⁷ Sir Phillip Sidney’s translations: “sweetness” vs “majesty”

²⁸ Slowness = *gravità*, and 11 takes longer than 7

a rounded form, indicating a preference for a song-form-type return (a la ballata or canzone).²⁹

For the sake of clarity and brevity, I will use “homophony” to denote passages in homorhythmic

texture and “polyphony” to denote non-homorhythmic counterpoint . Polyphonic texture

(typically with relatively augmented note values) alternates with sections of homophony,

another example of *variozine* at the formal level.³⁰ The majority of cadences resolve from an A

triad to Dm via a 4 – 3 suspension formula (which invariably involves a little turn lower neighbor

tone before resolving (as in m2).³¹ In terms of modal octave species this establishes D as the

finalis.³² Although Tenor I often lingers on F, the reciting tone of Hypodorian. The upper range of

the Alto and the lower limit of the Bass are both A (with two brief exceptions).³³ This, along with

the pervasive A to Dm cadences, points to the Dorian mode.³⁴ The following analysis will

describe ‘Divini’ on a verse-by-verse basis in terms of text accent, texture, melody, harmony, etc.

²⁹ Martha Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1995). 204

³⁰ Mace, 76.

³¹ I understand that “chords” are not necessarily relevant in the conception of linear counterpoint, but throughout my analysis I will use **chord symbols** to describe vertical pitch groups. This is largely for my own benefit as a quicker way of organizing and evaluating tonal information, as opposed to describing each pitch in terms of its interval above the bass, as Zarlino might.

³² Robert Gauldin. *A Practical Approach to Sixteenth-Century Counterpoint*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1985.) 6.

³³ The alto goes up to a B flat (m 15-16) and the bass down to G (m 8). Both instances point to the importance of the G minor sonority in this work.

³⁴ Gauldin, 6.

| | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|---|-----------|
| 1. | Di- vi- ni oc-chi se-re-ni, | A Dm | a | ripresa |
| 2. | oc-chi sem-pre di gra-tia e d'amor pie-ni | A Dm | A | |
| | oc-chi sem-pre di gra-tia e d'amor pie-ni | A Dm | A | |
| 3. 4. | { per-do-nin gli al-tri occhi vo-stro sol e splen-do-re. | A Dm | b | mutazioni |
| | | | c | |
| 5. 6. | { E se que-sta pa-ro-la par che toc-chi al sol il ve-ro ho-no-re, | A → (Em) | B | |
| | | | c | |
| 7. | fac-ci eg-li chi-ar-o a no-i | A Em | d | volta |
| 8. | gior-no la not-te, co-me fa-te vo-i. | A Dm | D | |
| | gior-no la not-te, co-me fa-te vo-i. | Gm D | D | |

Fig. 3 Summary of altered form, cadences, and the location of homophony and polyphony (red box).

Divini occhi serini,

Divine eyes serene

Eyes serene, divine

First verse is divided in half: Di-**vi**-ni | oc-**chi**³⁵ ser-**i**-ni

Alto

Tenor I

Tenor II

Bass

6 5 -
4 3 -

Dm A Dm G C Dm

texture: polyphonic

accented syllable: penultimate; ornamented with double suspension; elongated rhythm (*gravità*)

melody: all but Alto leap upward at onset; contour of Alto held then descends to finalis.

syllable alignment:

Di- - **vi**- - ni oc - **chi** se- re- ni

Di- **vi**- - - ni oc - **chi** se- re- ni

Di- **vi**- - - ni oc - **chi** se- re- ni

Di- **vi**- - ni oc - **chi** se- re- ni

6 5 -

4 3 -

Dm A Dm G C Dm

texture: homophonic, declamatory—quicker rhythmic pace (*piacevolezza*)

accented syllables: final, penultimate (*piacevolezza?*); placed on strong beat (follows speech pattern—not so Petrarchan)

melody: mostly stepwise movement.

Summary: Emphasis on the devine nature of the eyes (grabs our attention if we're being wooed).

³⁵ I thought the accent was on the first syllable of *occhi*, but Verdello places it on strong beats, so I'm going the final syllable.

Verse 2, m 6-10 and repeated m 9-14 (overlap occurs in m9)

occhi sempre di gratia e d'amor pieni

Eyes always of grace and love full

eyes ever full of grace and love

occhi sem- -pre di gra - tia e d'a- mor.....pie-ni, oc

occhi sem- -pre di gra - tia e d'a- mor pie - - ni, oc - - chi

occhi sem- -pre di gra - tia e d'a- mor pie - - ni,.....

occhi sem- -pre di gra - tia e d'a- mor pie - - ni, oc -

4 3 4 3 -

Dm Am Dm Em Am Dm Gm A Dm

The texture shifts from homophony to polyphony on the word d'amore.

m 6-7

oc- **chi** sem- pre di

Dm Am Dm Em

texture: homophonic, harmonic rhythm doubled (*piacevolezza*)

accented syllables: final, penultimate (*piacevolezza?*)

m 7-9

| | | | | | | |
|------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|
| gra- | tia e | d'a- | mor | - | pie- | ni |
| gra- | tia e | d'a- | mor | pie- | ni | - |
| gra- | tia e | d'a- | mor | pie- | - | - ni |
| gra- | tia e | d'a- | mor | pie- | ni | |
| | | 4 | 3 | 4 3 | - | |
| Am | Dm | Gm | A | | | Dm |

texture: elongated note values, homophonic turning to polyphonic to emphasise “d’amor pieni”³⁶

accented syllables: antepenultimate, final, penultimate (*gravità?* → *piacevolezza?*)

harmony: **shift in tonality** (introduction of Bb in T1, m 8) on the word “d’amor”³⁷

melody: “mor” slight rhythmic stagger in T2 (m8) “pie” 4-3 sus with LNT, “ni” resolves to D octave; overlaps with onset of phrase repetition.

³⁶ chicks love that

³⁷ Mace, 77. Makes the point that altering chord quality to suit a given word is uniquely to 16th c polyphonic writing → independent of a tonal imperative to support melody (frottola) or tonal center (common practice).

Verse 3, m14-16

Mutizoni, and the first indication of the duality in poem's address.

perdonin gli altri occhi

forgive the other eyes

if other eyes will pardon ("other" directed to the eavesdropping sun, perhaps?)

per - do-nin gli al - triocchi

per - do-nin gli al - triocchi

per - do-nin gli al - triocchi

per - do-nin gli al - triocchi

per- **don-** nin gli al- **tri'oc**-chi

Dm (Bb) Dm F G Dm

Texture: homophony; in quick succession, (*piacevolezza*)

Melody: Mostly stepwise motion

Accented syllables: penultimate, penultimate (tempered-lots of consonants, not sure)

Harmony: The Bb in the Alto emphasizes accent of "do". B natural three beats later creates an aural twitch—perhaps for the attention of the "other" eyes, in case they're listening.

Absence of cadence—proceeds directly to verse 4.

(*piacevolezza*)

Verse 4

vostro sol e splendore.

yours only and splendor

(sun) brilliance/shine

the splendor is yours alone (or is it?)

vo - - stro sol e splendo - - re.

vo - - stro sol e splen - do - - re.

vo - - stro sol e splen - do - - re.

vo - - stre sol e splendo - - re.

4 3

vo - - stre sol e splend-do- re

4 3

Gm Dm Gm C Dm A Dm

Texture: polyphonic

Harmony: Vostro ("yours") returns full attention to the owner of the divine eyes with a sustained Gm triad, the Bb in the Alto having been hinted at in the previous verse, now comes to full fruition.

suspension-cadencial formula emphasizing "splendore".

Accented syllables: penultimate, penultimate—accent is obscured by placement on weak beat.

Duality: Double meaning in the use of the word sol (sole/only or sun) and splendore (splendor, but also brilliance or shining). Sol occurs on a weak beat, adding to the ambiguity, while splendore is drawn out and ornamented. (*gravità*)

Verse 5

The Summons

E se questa parola par che tocchi

And if these words seem that/to touch

and if this saying seems to offend

20

E se questa pa - - ro - la par che toc - - - chi

E se questa pa - - ro - la par che toc - - - chi

E se questa pa - - ro - la par che toc - - - chi

E se questa pa - - ro - la par che toc - - - chi

Dm Dm G F G F G F

E se ques-ta pa- ro- la par che toc- chi

Dm Dm G F G F G F

Verse 5 begins with a solomn ivocation or summon (but reveals itself a challenge in verse 6), to a very powerful celestial body/being, the sun.

Texture: Homophonic

Accented syllables: not sure—ques? penultimate, weak placement; penultimate, penultimate

Melody/Harmony: The back-and-forth shift in tonality without dissonance between full G and F triads brings out the iambic meter, but also creates anticipation leading to “toc-chi”, is slightly elongated and embellished with a single ascending passing tone in T1, before “chi” is lingered upon. The total effect is to establish a colon at the end of this verse—a dramatic pause before the challenge is articulated.

Mixed message: (*gravità* disguised as *piacevolezza*)

Verse 6

al sol il vero honore,

to the sun the true honor

the true honor of the sun (or the honor of the true/actual sun)

The musical score for Verse 6 consists of five vocal staves and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are: "al sol il ver' .. ho - no - re, fac-ci e-gli .. ho-no - re, .. ver' ho-no - re, .. -no - re, .. fac -". The basso continuo line includes figured bass notation: 6, 4, 3, 5, and a dash. Below the staves, the chords are indicated as F, Gm, F, Gm, and A.

Texture: polyphonic; The drawing out of this verse, with its staggered, non-imitative counterpoint, says in no uncertain terms that in case the sun is listening (or any other omnipresent celestial body that can relay the message), that he should take heed.

Accented syllables: Final, penultimate, penultimate

Syllable alignment

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|------|-------|--------|-----|
| al | sol | il | ver' | ho- | no | -re |
| al | sol | il | ver' | ho-no | - | re |
| | al | sol | il | ver' | ho-no- | re |
| al | sol | il | ver' | ho- | no- | re |
| | | | | 6 | 5 | |
| | | | | 9-8 | 4 | 3 |
| F | Gm | F | Gm | A | | |

Melody: "sol", landing on a strong beat and coinciding with the highest pitch of the piece, is unambiguous—our suitor is now indirectly addressing the sun, who has been established by Copernicus³⁸ to be the center of the Universe (second only to the owner of the divine eyes). It is the very honor of The Sun being called into question. (*gravità*)

³⁸ Johann Albrecht Widmannstetter delivered lectures in Rome in 1533 based on Copernicus' work on Heliocentrism (not published until 1543), garnering the interest of Pope Clement VII et al.

Verse 7

Volta (The payoff)

facci egli chiaro a noi

make us him clear/light to us

let him light up for us

fac-ci e-gli chiar' a no - - - i

fac-ci e-gli chiar' a no - - - i

- re, fac-ci e-gli chiar' a no - - - i

fac - ci e-gli chiar' a no - - - i

fac- ci'e- gli chiar' a no- - - - i - - - i -
 fac- ci'e- gli chiar' a no- - - - i -
 fac- ci'e- gli chiar' a no- - - - i -
 fac- ci'e- gli chiar' a no- - - - i -

A (A7) Em G G Dm F Am Em

Texture: polyphonic

Verdelot cuts to the chase, overlapping the onset of verse 7 with the end of verse 6. Here he glibly states the challenge: If the sun is so brilliant, let the sun light up the night side of the Earth for us. The Italian “facci” surely carries some of the connotation of the Spanish “facile”(easy). Verdelot brings out the sentiment in *mocking fashion*, using the most complicated melodic device thus presented.

Melody: The cadence set up at the end of Verse 6 raises suggests a Dm vertical sonority, but instead An ascending third E-G in the Alto, followed by an ascending Dm arpeggio, This is imitated 2 beats later in the bass note-for note, while the two tenors imitate at the 5th in a duet. The Alto/Bass duet finishes the ascent with passing tone embellishments, lingering on “noi” (the first of the final rhyming couplet).

Harmony: Vertical sonority is moot—the horizontal motion through the repeating pattern dominates the aural impression. A Schenkerian reduction, I think, would show a movement from A to Em (a minor plagal cadence).

Verse 8 (with repetition)

giorno la notte, come fate voi.

day at night as make/please you

the night like day, as you do.

giorno la notte, come fate voi.

giorno la notte, come fate voi.

giorno la notte, come fate voi.

giorno la notte, come fate voi.

gior-no la not-te, co-me fa-te vo-i.

gior- no la not-te, co- me fa- te - - - vo- i

gior- no la not-te, co- me - fa- te - - - vo- i

gior- no la not-te, co- me - fa- te vo- - i -

gior- no la not-te, co- me fa- te vo- - i - - -

9 8 4 3
(5 4 3)

Am Dm Am Dm Em F Dm7 Dm Am Dm A Dm

i - - - - -

gior- no la not-te, co- me fa- te vo- - i

gior- no la not-te, co- me fa- te vo- - i

gior- no la not-te, co- me fa- te vo- - i

Dm Gm Dm Gm Dm G () Gm D Gm D

Texture: homophonic; the oxymoron “Day as night”, is clearly declaimed,

harmony: alternating between Am and Dm to emphasize the iambic speech pattern, but concluding with Em as the homophony disintegrates into a gorgeous ornamented passage.

Beginning in an F/Dm sonority, the figure in m32 is not easily described with chord symbols or figured bass, but amounts to a 9-8 suspension whose resolution in the A is accompanied by a passing tone in T1 (5-4-3). The aural impression is dominated by horizontal motion created by ascending parallel thirds in T1/T2, mostly sticking to a Dm sonority.

Here Verdelot deviates from the formal structure, repeating the last verse, in part to balance his repetition of Verse 1, but also to bring out the duality. In first statement of “come fate voi” speaker is concluding his challenge to The Sun (that is, if “come fate voi” means “as you please” or “as you will,” or even “if you can”), but there is still a mocking, show-off on the syllable me (melodic duet between alto/bass over ascending arpeggio in T1/T2)

In the repetition, the speaker has turned his back on The Sun, returning his full attention to the owner of the divine eyes, sweetly saying to her “as you do,” concluding his overall statement of woo. This repetition, occurring only in T1/T2/B while the Alt sustains the finalis, alternates between Dm and Gm until the second iteration of “fate voi”, when he switches to D major before one more alternation with Gm and then cadencing on D. Finishing in a major tonality adds levity to be sure. Perhaps as a departing wink over his shoulder, a nervous “it’s a joke—we’re still good, right?” in order to smooth the feathers of The Sun, aka The Actual Center of the Universe, lest he become angry.

Conclusion

We do not know the author of the text or whether it was written with Petrarchan principles in mind. We do not know when Verdelot wrote his madrigal, or whether Verdelot was aware of Bembo or socialized within Bembo's circle of influence, but the conventions employed in the setting of 'Divini' correlate with Bembo's principals of *piacevolezza* and *gravità* which in turn correlate with Zarlino's later mandate that harmony and rhythmic arrangement appropriately express the "joyfull" or "mournful" nature of a word's meaning.³⁹ Whether in direct application of Bembo's principals or not, Verdelot's use of *variazione* paved the way for composers like Willcart to take the contrast *piacevolezza* and *gravità* to another level, beyond the capacity of spoken word alone.

³⁹ Mace 83

Second Book of Madrigals in four voices (Divini occhi sereni p 20)

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Nouamente Ristampati. / A QVATRO VOCI.

Date 1565



Canto

The image shows a musical score for the Canto part of the madrigal "Divini occhi sereni". The score is written on three staves. The first staff begins with a large, ornate initial "D". The lyrics are written below the staves. The first line of the score is: "Iuini occhi sereni Occhi sempre di gratia et d'amor pieni Occhi sempre di gratia et d'as". The second line is: "mor pie ni Perdonimi gl'altri occhi vostro sol'el splendore Et se questa parola par che tocchi Al sol". The third line is: "al uer' honore Faccia'egli chiar'ano i Giorno la notte come fate no i." The score ends with a double bar line.

Alto

D Iui ni occhi ferenti Occhi sempre di grati'et d'amor pienti Occhi sempre di grati'et d'amor
 pie ni Perdonimi gl'altr'occhi vostro sol'e'l splendore Et se questa paro la par che toc chi Al sol il uer'bos
 no re Faccia'egli chiar'ano i Giorno la notte come fate uoi i Giorno la notte come fate uoi.

Tenore

D Iui ni occhi ferenti Occhi sempre di gratia et d'amor pienti Occhi sempre di
 gratia et d'amor pienti Perdonimi gl'altri occhi vostro sol'e'l splendore Et se questa parola par che tocchi Al sol il
 uer'bonore Faccia'egli chiar'a noi Giorno la notte come fa te uoi Giorno la notte come fate uoi.

Basso

D Iui ni occhi ferenti Occhi sempre di gratia et d'amor pienti Occhi sempre di gratia et d'amor
 pie ni Perdonimi gl'altri occhi vostro sol'e'l splendore Et se questa parola par che tocchi Al sol il uer'bos
 no re Faccia'egli chiar'a no i Giorno la notte come fate uoi Giorno la notte come fate uoi.

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Date 1565

Imprint In Venetia Appresso di / Antonio Gardano. / 1565.

Format Copy at A.443.d. Canto (24 leaves) Alto (24 leaves) Tenore (24 leaves) Basso (24 leaves); original foliation: Canto: [i], 1-46, [47] Alto: [i], 1-46, [47] Tenore: [i], 1-46, [47] Basso: [i], 1-46, [47]; paper dimensions: 149 x 200 mm.

Place Venice, Italy

Subject Madrigals, Italian

Type Printed music

Source

British Library A.443.d.