

‘Divine Seed of Heroes, Shining Pearl’: Margaret’s Image in Music

■
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In an essay devoted to Francesco Corteccia, Howard M. Brown advanced the hypothesis that the ‘new flower’ mentioned in the text of the madrigal *Nuovo fior è apparso al nostro cielo* might refer to the future Margaret of Parma:¹

Nuovo fior è appars'al nostro cielo
che non cura tra noi caldo né gelo,
ma vive sempre lieto il suo candore,
e ne gioisce Amore;
che di lui s'innamora
Croco, iacinto, acanto e'l bel Narciso;
da cui non mai diviso
sarò finché le rive d'Arno infiora.

A new flower has appeared under our sky, which fears neither heat nor frost, and Love rejoices in it; [a flower] with which saffron, hyacinth, and beautiful Narcissus fall in love; [a flower] from which I shall never part, as long as it blooms on the banks of the Arno.

If we assume a date of composition considerably earlier than the date of publication, then Brown’s hypothesis may be correct.² However, in the Italian language of the sixteenth century the main meaning of the Italian word ‘margherita’—for which the etymological spelling ‘margarita’ was most often adopted at the time³—was not that of ‘daisy’ but that of ‘precious stone.’⁴ That said, the meaning relating to the flower is attested at least as early as Luigi Alamanni’s *La coltivazione* (1546), which makes use of it to praise the two ‘daisies’ of France, that is, Marguerite d’Angoulême and Marguerite de Valois, respectively sister and daughter of Francis I:

Le margherite pie che invidia fanno
Al più pregiato fior del nome solo
Ch’oggi ha colmo d’onor la Sena e l’Era.

The pious daisies, which are the envy of the most precious of flowers by their name alone, a name that honours the Seine and the Loire.⁵

¹ Howard M. Brown, ‘A Typology of Francesco Corteccia’s Madrigals’, in *The Well Enchanting Skill: Music, Poetry, and Drama in the Culture of the Renaissance. Essays in Honour of F. W. Sternfeld*, ed. John Caldwell, Edward Olleson, and Susan Wollenberg (Oxford-New York, 1990), 3-28 at 20-21.

² The piece appeared in the second edition of Corteccia’s *Libro primo de madrigali a quattro voci* (Venice, 1547) [RISM C 4158]: see Iain Fenlon and James Haar, *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century. Sources and Interpretation* (Cambridge etc., 1988), 265-68 at 268.

³ Recall, among other things, that Charles V, when questioned in this regard by Francesca di Montebello, stipulated in a letter dated 18 August 1533 that Margaret sign her correspondence as ‘Margarita d’Austria’. See Gino Benzoni, ‘Margherita d’Austria, duchessa di Firenze, poi duchessa di Parma e Piacenza’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 70 (Rome, 2008), 126-31.

⁴ This, incidentally, is the only meaning of the term indicated by the first edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (Venice, 1612), which also recalls its frequent metaphorical uses in poetry. The *Vocabolario* may be consulted online at <<http://www.lessicografia.it/>> (accessed 19 March 2023).

⁵ *La coltivazione di Luigi Alamanni. Al christianissimo re Francesco Primo...* (Paris, 1546), Book V, lines 611-13.

In several texts expressly dedicated to Margaret of Parma, however, the name of the dedicatee is understood in its etymological meaning, that is, precisely, as a ‘pearl’ or ‘gemstone’. I reproduce below the lines involved, whose source texts will be discussed in more detail (the names refer to the composers).

Arcadelt, *Ecco d'oro letà pregiata e bella*, lines 2-6

Ecco di latte puro
colmo già 'l Tebrè 'l mar lieto e sicuro,
Poi che benigna stella
di perla tanto rara
al tenerell'august' il capo adorna

behold that the Tiber and the happy and safe sea are already full of pure milk, for the benign star of so rare a pearl adorns the head of the august child.

Giovanni Francesco Alcarotti, *A la man vincitrice*, lines 5-6

O dell'Austro felice unico sole,
Divin seme d'heroi, perla lucente

O unique sun of the happy South, divine seed of heroes, shining pearl.

Costanzo Porta, *Or ecco alme superbe* (from the canzone *Questo sì ch'è felice e lieto giorno*), lines 137-40

Ecco già in noi l'immagin tua scolpita,
celeste Margarita,
che 'l lucente diadema fai più bello
del marito, del padrè del fratello

In us is carved your image, gemstone of heaven, gracing the glittering diadem of your husband, your father, and your brother.

This is not to say that the meaning of ‘daisy’—already common of similar French and Spanish words (‘marguerite’, ‘margarita’)—was foreign to the Italian poetic language of the time.⁶ Bernardo Tasso, in his poem *Amadigi*, specifically employs the metaphor of the flower for Margaret of Parma, and relates it to hyacinths, which were contained at the time in the Farnese coat of arms:⁷

Ecc'una Margherita a cui le sponde
fioriran d'Arno; e transportata poi,
come pianta si suol talhor d'altronde,
dove Roma vagheggia i colli suoi,
i hiacinti ornerà di nova fronde;
e madre fia di valorosi heroi;
e col marito al fine illustre e chiaro
farà superba andar la Parma, e'l Taro.⁸

⁶ According to Ambros, Margaret had chosen the daisy as her personal symbol because of its relation to her own name: August W. Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik*, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 31891), 320.

⁷ Bernardo Tasso, *L'Amadigi del S. Bernardo Tasso. A l'invittissimo e catolico re Filippo* (Venice, 1560).

⁸ Tasso, *L'Amadigi*, 269. For the relations between Bernardo Tasso and the Farnese court, see Roberto Venturelli, *La corte farnesiana di Parma (1560-1570). Programmazione artistica e identità culturale* (Rome 1999), 67-86.

Here is a daisy that will blossom on the banks of the Arno; and, after being transported—what, after all, happens to plants sometimes—where Rome gazes lovingly at her hills, she will adorn the hyacinths with a new frond; and she will be the mother of valiant heroes; and finally, with her most illustrious husband, she will make the rivers Parma and Taro proud.

Whether it is the flower or the gemstone, the metaphorical use of Margaret's name thus always has a definite implication: she is a precious object, but one that has the task of enhancing the all-male splendour of the houses to which she belonged. The only exception is the madrigal *Giovenetta regal*, set to music by Arcadelt, which celebrates her as the pre-adolescent girl who had just arrived in Florence without making direct reference to her arranged marriage to Alessandro de' Medici. As we shall see, all the other texts dedicated to Margaret celebrate her virtues, intellectual gifts, and even the military victories she was capable of achieving, but always strictly framing her in her roles as daughter of Charles V, sister of Philip II, wife of Ottavio, and mother of Alessandro Farnese.

Arcadelt and the Young Bride

As is well known, Margaret reached Naples on 27 May 1533, after brief stops in Florence and Rome. Margaret was born in Oudenaarde in Flanders on 5 July 1522; when she first set foot on the banks of the Arno River, she was not yet eleven years old. As Thomas W. Bridges wrote, 'it may have been for this occasion that Arcadelt composed a madrigal published in his first book: *Giovenetta regal*...' ⁹ Moreover, again according to Bridges,

[...] later occasions for a Florentine musician to honor her with such a madrigal were also numerous. At the prompting of Clement VII, she had already been promised by her father to the odious Alessandro de' Medici. Even after Clement's death in 1534, and the murder in 1535 of Ippolito de' Medici, almost universally laid at the door of Alessandro, Charles V persisted in keeping the betrothal alive. In June 1536 Margaret became the wife of the first Duke of Florence. ¹⁰

The text of *Giovenetta regal* posed problems for Bridges, and not even the advice of Nino Pirrotta, at least as it is reported by Bridges himself, yielded a convincing solution. Here is the text according to Bridges's transcription:

Giovenetta¹¹ regal, pur' innocente,
data dal ciel al mondo,
presagio di quel ben ch'èi ved' e sente,
porgi nel cor profondo
l'alto intelletto tuo, la nobil mente,
ov' etern' e giocondo,
Margarita scorgerai, che de mia fede
amor e riverenti'n mezzo siede.

⁹ Thomas W. Bridges, 'The Publishing of Arcadelt's First Book of Madrigals', 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), vol. 1, 42. The oldest surviving print of Arcadelt's first book is *Il primo libro di madrigali d'Archadelt a quatro con nuova gionta impressi* (Venice, 1539) [RISM 1539²].

¹⁰ Bridges, 'The Publishing', vol. 1, 43.

¹¹ RISM 1539² has 'giovenetta'. For the attestation of 'giovinetta' in some prints of Arcadelt's first book, see Bridges, 'The Publishing', vol. 2, 642.

This reconstruction has at least one not insignificant drawback: it does not capture that in the last line, in addition to the apheresis of the preposition ‘in’, there is also the elision of the ‘a’ of the noun ‘reverenza’ (‘reverence’), which is written with the then customary etymological spelling (‘reverentia’) but was pronounced—even at the time—without the ‘i’ and with the voiceless alveolar affricate.¹²

The penultimate line, which in Bridges’s reconstruction has twelve syllables, also deserves careful consideration. According to the metrical norms of Petrarchism, which dominated the entire life of the sixteenth-century Italian madrigal, the hendecasyllable is absolutely predominant, and in some genres (canzone, ballata, poetic madrigal) it may be joined with its major hemistich, that is, the seven-syllable line (*verso rotto*, i.e. ‘broken line’, in Bembo’s terms). The aesthetics of Petrarchism strictly eschews the rhythmic regularity of lines with an even number of syllables. By contrast, the hendecasyllable and seven-syllable line ensure maximum unpredictability in the distribution of accents, preventing the rhythm of the poem from taking on popular features. According to Pietro G. Beltrami,

Petrarch uses only hendecasyllables and seven-syllable lines in the *Canzoniere*; and from the fourteenth century until Chiabrera, the presence in a text of lines of a different measure is in itself a genre marker, distinguishing illustrious poetry from poetry of an average or humble style, generally poetry for music.¹³

According to Bridges, Nino Pirrotta, in an effort to bring the text back to the Petrarchan norm, proposed the following solution:

Scorgerai Margarita che mia fede
d’amor e riverenti’ nezzo siede.¹⁴

A few points need to be made. It is not possible that Pirrotta—a native Italian and a distinguished scholar—could have suggested to Bridges the non-existent ‘nezzo’ for the last line; this must be a typographical error on Bridges’s part. Pirrotta’s solution for the penultimate line, however, is at least plausible: it erases all traces of anisosyllabism from the text of the poem, eliminating the twelve-syllable line and revising it as a regular hendecasyllable. The intervention, however, is perhaps too creative, and it seems to me to force the original text too much.

Lines with an even number of syllables are a feature of the *laude*, and, more generally, of the devotional poetry practiced specifically in Florence in the late fifteenth century. Such poetry is characterised by the practice of *cantasi come*, which adapts religious texts to pre-existing secular music.¹⁵ Bridges’s solution for line 7 therefore might

¹² This is perfectly clear in the Marescotti print of Arcadelt’s first book (Florence, 1585) [RISM A 1337]. While preserving the etymological spelling (which was to be definitively abandoned in favour of the phonetical one by the *Vocabolario della Crusca*), Marescotti restores the elided vowel and writes ‘riverentia’. As for the oscillation between ‘riverenza’ and ‘reverenza’, it should be noted that in Italian both forms are still allowed today.

¹³ ‘Petarca usa nel Canzoniere solo endecasillabi e settenari; e dal Trecento fino a Chiabrera la presenza in un testo di versi di altra misura è di per sé un contrassegno di genere, che distingue la poesia illustre dalla poesia di stile medio o umile, generalmente poesia per musica’: Pietro G. Beltrami, *Gli strumenti della poesia* (Bologna, 2019), § 145.

¹⁴ Bridges, ‘The Publishing’, 42, footnote 98.

¹⁵ Blake Wilson, *Singing Poetry in Renaissance Florence: The cantasi come Tradition, 1375-1550* (Florence-Bridgetown, 2009). It is noteworthy in this regard that, as Anthony Cummings has pointed out, on the same occasion on which Arcadelt’s madrigal was perhaps first heard, Margaret attended a revival of Feo Belcari’s *Annunciazione*; Anthony Cummings, *The Politicized Muse. Music for Medici Festivals, 1512-1537* (Princeton, 1992), 141. Chapters 12 and 13 of Cummings’ book offer an extensive account of the spectacular events surrounding Alessandro de’ Medici and his wedding to Margaret.

not be improper. Yet I would like to propose a different one, without excluding the possibility that his reading is correct:

Giovenetta regal pur innocente,	A
data dal ciel al mondo,	b
presagio di quel ben ch'èi vede e sente;	A
porgi nel cor profondo	b
l'alt' intelletto tuo, la nobil mente,	A
ov'eternè giocondo,	b
Margarita, Margarita,	c ⁸
scorgerai che de mia fede	d ⁸
amor e riverenti[a]n mezzo siede.	D

Young maiden, regal though innocent, given by heaven to the world as an omen of that good which he sees and feels; turn your lofty intellect and your noble mind to the depths of [my] heart, in the midst of which, O Margaret, you will see that love and reverence of my faith reside.

My reconstruction is based on the following assumptions:

1. The poet wants to reserve an entire line for the dedicatee's name.
2. The dedicatee's name consists of four syllables and can give rise, when repeated, to an octosyllabic line '3-7' (i.e., with accents on the third and seventh syllables), entrusting the composer with the task of treating the whole as a musical unit.
3. In the context of hendecasyllables and settenari, an isolated octosyllabic line is a conspicuous exception.
4. In order to 'normalize' the exception, the line in question is followed by a metrically and rhythmically identical line.
5. The rhyme of the first octosyllabic line, being the name of the dedicatee, can remain unrelated.
6. The second octosyllabic line, on the other hand, must be rhymed with the next hendecasyllable, which serves as a close; this rhyme ('-ede') has no echoes in the rest of the composition, thus configuring a concluding couplet that responds well to the traditional form of the poetic madrigal.

Evidence to support the hypothesis of two octosyllabic lines can be found in Arcadelt's setting of the text. The piece is written in the low clefs, has no flat in the key signature and ends on a D sonority: it thus belongs, in Powers' terms, to the \natural -c1-D tonal type:¹⁶ its tenor, whose ambitus (*d-f'*) is authentic, and its cadential plan, centred entirely on D and A, allow it to be ascribed to the first mode. A conspicuous exception to this cadential plan occurs precisely at the name of the dedicatee, whose double invocation is treated as a single polyphonic phrase ending on the plagal *repercussa*, F (Example 1).¹⁷

If we imagine that the sphere of reference for this Arcadelt madrigal is thus the world of devotional poetry, with its intentional popularising (which does not mean 'popular')

¹⁶ See Harold S. Powers, 'Tonal Types and Modal Categories in Renaissance Polyphony', in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34 (1981), 428-70.

¹⁷ The only other exception to the cadential plan of the piece is the stop on the G sonority at the word 'profondo' ('deep', bb. 18-19): In this case, the descent of all voices into the lower register has an overt word-painting function. For a modern edition of the piece, see Jacobus Arcadelt, *Madrigali, Libro Primo*, ed. Albert Seay, *Corpus Mensuralis Musicae* 31/2 (s.l., 1970), 36-37.

Example 1. Arcadelt, *Giovenetta regal*, bb. 27-31

27

C
- do, Mar - ga - ri - ta, Mar - ga - ri - ta,

A
- do, Mar - ga - ri - ta, Mar - ga - ri - ta,

T
Mar - ga - ri - ta, Mar - ga - ri - ta,

B
- do, Mar - ga - ri - ta, Mar - ga - ri - ta,

gestures, it is possible to explain the ‘blocklike phrasing’ and the mismatches in accent between the text and the music that James Haar has pointed out.¹⁸ In terms of content, this is the only surviving madrigal dedicated to Margaret that celebrates her for her own sake—and for her ‘high intellect’—rather than extolling her role as a complement to a male figure.¹⁹

The case of Arcadelt’s later madrigal dedicated to Margaret is very different. *Ecco d’oro letà leggiadra e bella* appeared in Arcadelt’s fifth book of madrigals, published in Venice by Antonio Gardano in 1544 and ‘reprinted and corrected’ by the same publisher in 1550, with the addition of several pieces by other authors. The text of this madrigal clearly refers to Margaret’s wedding to Ottavio Farnese, decided by Charles V shortly after the assassination of Alessandro de’ Medici in 1537 and celebrated in Rome on 4 November 1538.²⁰ In this madrigal, closely connected with Farnese patronage, the metaphorical use of Margaret’s name is inaugurated: she is identified with the ‘pearl’ destined to adorn her husband’s head:

Ecco d’oro letà pregiata e bella,
Ecco di latte²¹ puro
colmo già ’l Tebrè ’l mar lieto e sicuro.
Poi che benigna stella
di perla tanto rara
al tenerell’august’il capo adorna,
l’antica pace homai doppia ritorna
et in voce alta e chiara
Per ogni clima già suon’il romore
d’Ottavio, Margarita, pacè amore.

¹⁸ According to Haar, ‘[i]n its schematic design, blocklike phrasing, and less than perfect attention to verbal accents when the latter cross the iambic pattern of the verse, [this madrigal] could well qualify as an early effort since these are among the features that I think are indicative of the first stage of Arcadelt’s work as madrigalist’. Haar himself, however, admits that his judgment does not rest on ‘a very solid edifice of analysis based on fact’. James Haar, ‘Towards a Chronology of the Madrigals of Arcadelt’, in *The Journal of Musicology*, 5 (1987), 28–54 at 34.

¹⁹ As Bridges points out, ‘since Margaret is described as having been headstrong even as a child, she was not too young in 1533 to have had an *alto intelletto*’. Bridges, ‘The Publishing’, vol. 1, 42–43.

²⁰ This, according to Bridges, would suggest that Arcadelt was in Rome at the time, perhaps following the capture and imprisonment of Filippo Strozzi. Bridges, ‘The Publishing’, vol. 1, 43–44 n. 100.

²¹ Both printings of the fifth book bear the reading ‘late’ instead of ‘latte’ (‘milk’, from the Latin ‘lac, lactis’). This is probably a purely orthographic trait, due to the uncertainty still prevailing in those years about the spelling to be adopted for the double ‘t’ derived by assimilation from the Latin nexus ‘ct’.

Behold the beautiful and precious golden age; behold that the Tiber and the happy and safe sea are already full of pure milk. Since the benign star of so rare a pearl adorns the head of the august child, at last the ancient peace returns redoubled, and in every latitude already resounds the fame of Ottavio, Margaret, peace and love.

In both its sources, the madrigal has a double bar at the end of the setting of the third line: this could therefore be a case of ballata-madrigal in which the first three lines occupy the position of the *ripresa*, while the rest of the verse does not conform to the distinction between *mutazioni* and *volta* typical of the ballata proper. Musically, the ballata-madrigal generally lacks the perfect correspondence between *ripresa* and *volta* typical of the ballata: instead, as in this case, there may be a repetition of part of the initial music towards the end of the piece (Example 2).²²

Example 2. Arcadelt, *Ecco d'oro l'età pregiata e bella*>

a. bb. 4-6

b. bb. 34-36

The image displays two musical excerpts from Arcadelt's madrigal 'Ecco d'oro l'età pregiata e bella'. The first excerpt, labeled 'a. bb. 4-6', shows the vocal parts (C, A, T, B) for measures 4-6. The lyrics are: - tà pre - gia - ta_e bel - la,. The second excerpt, labeled 'b. bb. 34-36', shows the vocal parts for measures 34-36. The lyrics are: già suo - n' il ro - mo - re. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a common time signature, and various note values and rests.

²² On this subject, see among others the following essays: Franco Piperno, 'Ballate in musica, madrigali "a ballata" e gli ariosi di Antonio Barrè: predilezioni metriche e formali del madrigale a Roma a metà Cinquecento', in *Et facciam dolci canti. Studi in onore di Agostino Ziino in occasione del suo 65° compleanno*, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini et al. (Lucca, 2004), 459-85; Anthony Newcomb, 'The Ballata and the "Free" Madrigal in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63 (2010), 427-97; Marco Mangani, 'La forma ballata nel Madrigale delle origini', in Mangani, *O felice eloquenza. Poesia e musica nel Rinascimento (e oltre)* (Padua, 2023), 89-115.

Overall, the predominantly homorhythmic texture and the euphonious brevity of the musical phrases nicely emphasize the celebratory character of the piece. Similar considerations apply to the tonal arrangement. The piece is written in the tonal type \sharp_1 -g₂-G (high clefs, no flats, and final G sonority), with a strong presence of C cadences and the total absence of D cadences, which clearly reflects the eighth mode. The only deviation occurs precisely when the text refers to the political role of the pearl that, by adorning the head of the very young Farnese, can restore the ancient peace (Example 3).²³

Example 3. Arcadelt, *Ecco d'oro l'età pregiata e bella*, bb. 20-30

20

C
te - ne - rel - l'au - gu - st'il ca - po_a - dor - na, l'an - ti - ca pa - ce_o -

A
te - ne - rel - l'au - gu - st'il ca - po_a - dor - na, l'an - ti - ca pa - ce_o -

T
te - ne - rel - l'au - gu - st'il ca - po_a - dor - na, l'an - ti - ca pa - ce_o -

B
te - ne - rel - l'au - gu - st'il ca - po_a - dor - na, l'an - ti - ca pa - ce_o -

25

C
mai dop - pia ri - tor - na, dop - pia ri - tor - na

A
mai dop - pia ri - tor - na, dop - pia ri - tor - na

T
mai dop - pia ri - tor - na, dop - pia ri - tor - na, ed in vo - ce_al - ta_e

B
mai dop - pia ri - tor - na, dop - pia ri - tor - na, ed in vo -

Alcarotti, the Farnese, and Flanders

As far as we know, Alcarotti's second book of madrigals for five voices, published in Venice by Antonio Gardano in 1569, is the only musical collection expressly dedicated to Margaret of Parma.

²³ Recall that Ottavio, at the time of the wedding, had recently turned fourteen.

Born in Novara (between Milan and Turin) around 1535, Giovanni Francesco Alcarotti was an Italian composer and organist. From a wealthy family, he travelled widely in his youth. He spent some years in Rome, where he probably completed his theological studies. He was a parish priest first in Novara and later in Milan. After serving from 1570 to 1577 as organist at Como cathedral, he was appointed prior of Novara cathedral. He also wrote an account of his journey to the Holy Land, showing attention to the musical practices there: the text was published in Novara in 1596, the year of his death, and bears a dedication to Ranuccio Farnese, son of Alessandro and grandson of Ottavio and Margaret.²⁴

The book's lengthy dedicatory letter shows, once again, the highest regard for Margaret's 'alto intelletto': indeed, it is a learned encomium to music with references to Byzantine philosophy, the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse (Figure 1):

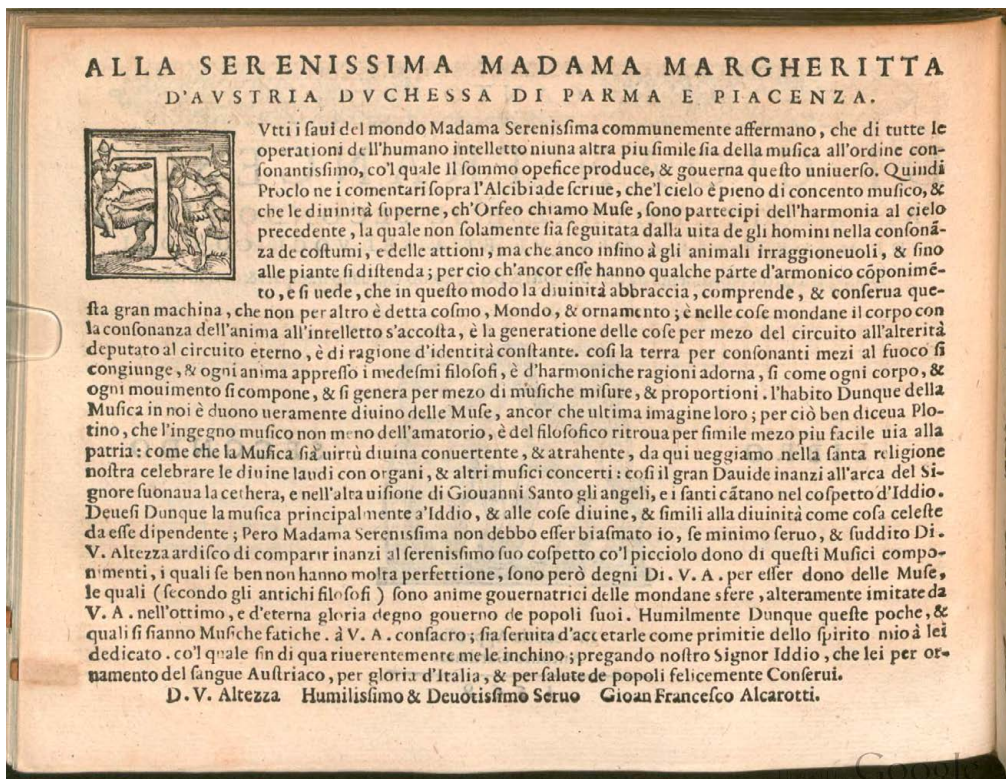


Figure 1. Giovanni Francesco Alcarotti, *Il secondo libro di madrigali a cinque voci*, dedicatory letter to Margaret of Parma

All the sages of the world, Most Serene Lady, commonly affirm that, of all the activities of the human intellect, none is more similar to the extremely consonant order with which the supreme artificer creates and governs this universe than music. Hence Proclus, in the commentaries about *Alcibiades*, writes that the heavens are full of musical concerts, and that the supernal deities, whom Orpheus called Muses, are partakers of the harmony that

²⁴ Glenn Watkins and Serena dal Belin Peruffo, 'Alcarotto [Alcarotti, Algarotti], Giovanni Francesco', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell (London, 2001), vol. 1, 329; Giuliana Gialdroni, 'Alcarotti, Alcharotto, Algarotti, Giovanni Francesco', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel etc., 2001), Personenteil 1, col. 403-4.

superintends the heavens; which is not only present in the consonance of customs and actions that characterize the lives of men, but also extends as far as animals devoid of reason, and even plants, since they too have harmoniously composed parts. And it is seen that in this way the divinity embraces, encloses, and preserves this great machine, which is not by chance called cosmos, world, and ornament. And in worldly things the body approaches the intellect with the consonance of the soul; and the generation of things by means of the circuit responsible for multiplicity [approaches] the eternal and rational circuit, which is instead of constant identity. Thus, the earth is joined to fire by means of consonances; and every soul, according to the same philosophers, is adorned with harmonic relations, just as every body and every movement is composed and generated by means of musical measures and proportions. Our musical nature, then, is truly a divine gift from the Muses, as well as their highest image. Therefore, Plotinus aptly said that the musical intellect, no less than that of love and that of philosophy, finds more easily the way to heaven,²⁵ since music is a divine virtue that converts and attracts. And that is why in our holy religion we see the divine praises celebrated with organs and with music of various kinds. Thus, the great David played the zither before the ark of the Lord; and in the high vision of St. John the angels and saints sing before God. Thus, music is primarily owed to God and to divine and godlike things, since it is a heavenly thing that depends on them. Therefore, Most Serene Lady, I am not to be blamed if, although I am a lowly servant and subject of your Highness, I dare to appear before your most serene presence with the small gift of these musical compositions, which, although they may not have much perfection, are nevertheless worthy of your Highness, because they are a gift of the Muses, who, according to the ancient philosophers, are governing souls of the spheres of the world, and are in this perfectly imitated by your Highness in the excellent government of her people, which is worthy of eternal glory. Humbly, therefore, I consecrate to Your Highness these few musical labours as they are: deign to accept them as the first fruits of my spirit dedicated to you, with which from here I reverently bow to you, praying to God our Lord to preserve you happily, for the ornament of the Austrian blood, for the glory of Italy, and for the health of the peoples.

The most humble and most devoted servant of Your Highness, Gioan Francesco Alcarotti

Only three printed musical collections by Alcarotti are known: a book of *Lamentationes Jeremiae* (Milan, 1570) and two books of madrigals (Venice, 1567 and 1569). While the sacred collection and the first book of madrigals have come down to us incomplete, the second book of madrigals is preserved in its entirety at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich.²⁶

As James Haar has rightly speculated, the second book was conceived as a tribute for Margaret upon her return from Flanders in late 1567, only to be published two years later.²⁷ In addition to the main dedication, the book contains several compositions explicitly dedicated to distinguished individuals: besides Ottavio Farnese and Margaret herself, we find the 'illustrious ladies' Chiara Marina and Barbara Centuriona and the no less illustrious signor Cesare Casale. The tone and style of these pieces, the texts of which are all expressed in the first person, make it possible to advance the very likely hypothesis that Alcarotti was both poet and composer. For the rest, apart from two texts

²⁵ 'Patria' literally means 'homeland', and is used here in the sense of 'the seat of the blessed with God and the place to which man is authentically destined', i.e. 'paradise'. See, Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, vol. 12 (Turin, 2007), 836.

²⁶ Images are available at <<https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/bsb00084727>> (accessed 4 July 2023).

²⁷ James Haar, 'The madrigal book of Jean Turnhout (1589) and its relationship to Lasso', in *Orlando di Lasso studies*, ed. Peter Bergquist (Cambridge, 1999), 183-202 at 193.

Table 1. Alcarotti's *Secondo libro*

Incipit	Dedicatee	Poet	Poetic form	Number of voices
<i>Donna in cui d'Austria il glorioso seme</i>	Margaret	[Alcarotti]	Ottava rima	5
<i>O del Tebrè del Tago alteri lumi / Leggi, fato, natura</i>	Ottavio and Margaret	[Alcarotti]	Sonnet	5
<i>Sì chiar'è l'alma luce</i>	Chiara Marina	[Alcarotti]	Madrigal	5
<i>Di bei costumi e leggiadra corona</i>	Barbara Centuriona	[Alcarotti]	Madrigal	5
<i>Cesare il cui valor ognun ammira</i>	Cesare Casale	[Alcarotti]	Ottava rima	5
<i>Esce da doi begli occhi ad hor ad hora / Ma s'avien</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	5
<i>Io non ammir'amor che tu ritrove</i>	—	?	Ottava rima	5
<i>Pellegrina gentil che quest'è quella / Gemma</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	5
<i>Sotto candido vel che ricopria / Da la bocca</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	5
<i>Fra il cerchio d'or di mille gemmaadorno / L'habit'era gentil</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	5
<i>Crin d'oro crespè d'ambra tersè pura / Cantar</i>	—	Bembo	Sonnet	5
<i>Dove son quelle chiom'aurat'è bionde / Oimè fredd'urna</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	5
<i>A la man vincitrice, a l'alte e sole / Queste</i>	Margaret	[Alcarotti]	Sonnet	6
<i>Signor del ciel quella pietà infinita / Debil</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	6
<i>Sovra le rive gloriosè sole / Amor</i>	—	B. Tasso	Sonnet	6
<i>Dolce Filida mia</i>	—	?	Dialogue	8
<i>Caron Caronte / Crudo Caronte</i>	—	Marcantonio Magno	Dialogue	8

that remain anonymous (the ottava rima *Io non ammir'amor* and the eight-voice dialogue *Dolce Filida mia*), it is possible to identify the poets of all the remaining five- and six-voice madrigals, as well as that of the other eight-voice dialogue. Taking the lion's share is Bernardo Tasso, with no fewer than seven sonnets.²⁸ There is also a sonnet by Pietro Bembo (*Crin d'oro crespè*, for five voices) and the dialogue in ottava rima *Caron Caronte*, which was previously attributed to Dragonetto Bonifacio but is now recognized as the

²⁸ Respectively: *Esce da doi begli occhi*, *Pellegrina gentil*, *Gemma dove si vede*, *Fra il cerchio d'or*, and *Dove son quelle chiome*, all for five voices; *Signor del ciel* and *Sovra le rive* for six voices. For the original texts see Bernardo Tasso, *Rime*, ed. Domenico Chiodo and Vercingetorige Martignone, 2 vols. (Turin, 1995).

work of Juan de Valdès' translator, Marcantonio Magno.²⁹ The presence of both Magno and Tasso places Alcarotti's print in the milieu of moderate-minded 'spirituali'—a milieu so dear to Margaret, and which had enjoyed protection under the Farnese pope Paul III.³⁰ Table 1 summarizes all the data concerning Alcarotti's book.

In all, Alcarotti's second book contains three pieces whose texts are expressly dedicated to Margaret. The first of these, which opens the collection, is an ottava set for five voices that celebrates the daughter of Charles V as the only one capable of renewing the splendour of the late emperor:

Donna, in cui d'Austria il glorioso seme
 Si mira, e del gran Carlo Augusto il volto,
 Di cui par che pavente e ch'ancor treme
 L'Hidaspè 'l Gange, ben ch'al ciel sia volto,
 Alto sol di virtù, ch'ogni sua speme
 Et ristoro ha da voi ripreso e tolto;
 Prendete humanamente il picciol dono
 Ch'io vostro servo humil vi porgo et dono.

Woman, in whom one admires the glorious seed of Austria, [in whom one admires] the face of the great, august Charles, whom Idaspe and Ganges still seem to tremble and fear, even though he has gone to heaven; [in whom one admires the face] of that high sun of virtue who has taken up all his hopes and drawn comfort from you: welcome graciously this small gift that I, your humble servant, offer and give you.

The text of the next madrigal, also for five voices, is a sonnet celebrating Ottavio and Margaret as a couple: the Roman nobleman (i.e., from the Tiber) and the descendant of Spanish lineage (i.e., from the Tagus) now make glorious the king of rivers, the Po, which flows through their duchy:

Prima parte
 O del Tebrè del Tago alteri lumi,
 Coppia d'amor, di fed'unica al mondo,
 Sotto il cui giust'imper'hor copr'il fondo
 d'oro, E le rive infiora il Re di fiumi;
 Voi, con l'essempio di celesti Numi,
 Per sé il don non mirate, ma secondo
 il voler, ch'apro in partè'l più nascondo:
 Il raggio vostro le mie notti allumi.

Seconda parte
 Leggi, fato, Natura e voglia mia
 Vostro mi fero, e questo sol mi duole:
 Che vostro e di valor sì poco i' sia.
 Ma se non opro quanto deggio e vole

²⁹ For the former, see Pietro Bembo, *Le rime*, ed. Andrea Donnini, 2 vols. (Rome, 2008), vol. 1, 17-21 and vol. 2, 1072-73. The latter can be found in the critical edition of Bonifacio's poems among the 'dubious rhymes': Dragonetto Bonifacio, *Rime*, ed. Raffaele Girardi (Fasano di Brindisi, 1995), 136-37. For attribution to Magno, see the website *Repertorio della Poesia Italiana in Musica, 1500-1700* (RePIM), <<https://repim.itatti.harvard.edu/resource/repim:formSearch>> (accessed 12 December 2023). See also Richard Wistreich, "'Thou & Ile sing to make these dull Shades merry": Herrick's Charon Dialogues', in *Lords of Wine and Oile: Community and Conviviality in the Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. Ruth Connolly and Tom Cain (Oxford, 2011), 153-90 at 168.

³⁰ Venturelli, *La corte farnesiana*, 87-105.

Il cor, che ben ciò deve e ciò desia,
L'accenno almen col canto e le parole.

Part One.

O majestic lights of the Tiber and Tagus, a pair unique in the world for love and faith, under whose righteous empire now the king of rivers covers his bed with gold and his banks with flowers; you, following the example of the heavenly deities, do not look at my gift for what it is, but for my intention, which I reveal in part, but mostly conceal: let your ray illuminate my nights.

Part Two

Laws, fate, nature, and my will made me yours, and only of that I grieve: that I am yours, but of so little worth. But if I cannot accomplish what I owe according to what my heart must and desires, I at least hint at it in song and words.

The most significant of the texts dedicated to Margaret is the sonnet that opens the section of the six-voice madrigals, *A la man vincitrice*:

Prima parte

A la man vincitrice, a l'alte e sole
Glorie degli occhi nostri almo oriente,
Al valor ch'affrenò l'infida gente
Che cuopr'in ciel la Licaonia prole:
O dell'Austro felice unico sole,
Divin seme d'heroi, perla lucente;
Vostri pregi immortali eccelsa mente
Scesa a dar legge a la terrena mole.

Seconda parte

Queste, de le celesti anime duono
Che cedon vinte ai vostri eterni lumi,
Humil servo, consacro humili note;
Volgete a lor quelle superne ruote
Voi, mentre inanzi a voi beati sono
Ottavio et Alessandro invitti numi.

Part one

To the victorious hand, to the unique and lofty glories of the east that gives life to our eyes, to the courage that defeated the treacherous people on whose skies stands Ursa Major: O unique sun of the happy South, divine seed of heroes, shining pearl; the lofty mind descended to give law to the earthly multitude is strongly urged to immortalize your merits.

Part two

I, your humble servant, consecrate to you these humble notes, the gift of those heavenly souls who surrender, defeated, to your immortal eyes. Turn toward them your highest orbits, while Ottavio and Alexander, invincible gods, are blessed in your sight.

This text, which in the conclusion again subordinates Margaret's glory to that of her husband and son, contains in its opening lines an explicit reference to the duchess's mission in Flanders: literally, 'Licaonia prole' ('Lychaon's offspring') refers to Callisto, the nymph transformed into a bear for lying with Jupiter and sent by him into the sky to form the

constellation, Ursa Major. The expression is used here by Alcarotti in reference to the Flemish, a people of the north, and contrasted with the happy ‘Austro’, the wind symbolizing the south.³¹ We know that the mission ended with Margaret’s return to Parma following her disagreements with her brother, King Philip II of Spain. Here, however, Margaret is celebrated on her return as victorious. To understand exactly which of Margaret’s exploits were worthy of celebration, we can turn to the last of the texts dedicated to her to be considered here.

Turturino’s *Dolci frutti* and the *Canzone de diversi*

The most extended text, among those expressly dedicated to Margaret of Parma, is the canzone of eleven stanzas (ten stanzas plus the *congedo*) *Questo sì ch’è felice e lieto giorno*, which appeared in 1570 in a collection edited by the Augustinian monk Cornelio Antonelli, called *Il Turturino*. A native of Rimini (or, according to Colussi, of Cesena), Antonelli arrived in Valvasone (Friuli) in 1571 as organist at the cathedral. The year before, in 1570, he published two anthologies, one of lute tablatures and the other of madrigals for five voices, which contains the *canzone di diversi* dedicated to Margaret.³² After 1577, all trace of Antonelli is lost.³³

The canzone *Questo sì* was conceived—probably by Antonelli himself—as a musical competition: each stanza was entrusted to a different composer (see Table 2). According to Tillman Merritt, ‘the first stanza of the canzone begins deceptively’: ‘Questo sì ch’è felice e lieto giorno’ (‘this day that is so happy and joyful’). Since the song is largely about war and destruction, its beginning must have seemed ironic to Merritt.³⁴ On the contrary, however, the locution ‘questo sì’ expresses relief and can be rendered with a phrase like ‘we were looking forward to this happening!’. This may be a nuance, but there is nothing deceptive in the opening line: the text celebrates a specific event that happened on a specific day, namely, 23 March 1567. It was a day that for the Catholic side was undoubtedly ‘happy’ and ‘joyful’.

The specific event to which this text refers is revealed in the fourth stanza, the importance of which has so far been grasped only by Mila De Santis in her critical edition of the whole text:³⁵

Le scapigliate madr’a’ crudi scempi
e di figli e di sposi e di fratelli
piene d’alto dolor volgean i terghi;
e dove, o rea Valenziana, alberghi,
sparsi di questo micidial veneno,
giacean nudi, senz’erbè senza fiori,
i lieti campi de’ lor primonori.

The mothers, dishevelled and full of grief,
turned before the cruel havoc suffered by
their children, spouses and siblings; and
where you rise, O guilty Valenciennes, the
happy fields, where [those men] had once
been honoured, lay bare, without grass or
flowers, sprinkled with this deadly poison.

³¹ The expression ‘licaonia prole’ was previously in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, XX, 82.

³² *Il primo libro delle napolitane ariose da cantare et sonare nel leuto* (Venice, 1570) [RISM 1570^o]; *I dolci frutti, primo libro de vaghi et dilettevoli madrigali* (Venice, 1570) [RISM 1570^o].

³³ For the scarce biographical information available, see Franco Colussi, ‘Antonelli Cornelio. Agostiniano, liutista, organista’, in *Dizionario Biografico dei Friulani*: <<https://www.dizionariobiograficoideifriulani.it/antonelli-cornelio/>> (accessed 19 March 2023). It is unclear, however, on what grounds the author claims that the first lines of the *canzone di diversi* recall ‘an unspecified Venetian military victory’.

³⁴ Andrea Gabrieli, *Complete Madrigals 5-6. Madrigals of the Secondo libro a 5 (conclusion); Madrigals of the Terzo libro a 5; Other Madrigals a 5*, ed. A. Tillman Merritt (Madison, 1983), xvi. Merritt identified Flemish Protestants as the polemical target of the canzone.

³⁵ I follow the reading of the text proposed in *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Andrea Gabrieli*, part 1 vol. III, *I testi poetici: edizione critica e fonti letterarie*, ed. Mila De Santis (Milan, 2001), 125-27. For De Santis’ commentary, see also 120.

The text of this madrigal was very carefully crafted, starting from its metrical scheme. The choice of the metrical scheme is certainly not accidental: indeed, it coincides perfectly with that of Petrarch's canzone *Spirto gentil che quelle membra reggi* (*Canzoniere*, 53).³⁶ Like *Questo sì*, in fact, Petrarch's text has as its object a dispute between two parties, and both texts reveal the poet's stance: for the Colonna against the other Roman families in Petrarch's case, for the Catholics against the Protestants in the case of the anonymous author of *Questo sì* (who may well have been Antonelli himself):

Petrarch's *Spirto gentil*, first stanza

Spirto gentil, che quelle membra reggi
dentro a le qua' peregrinando alberga
un signor valoroso, accorto et saggio,
poi che se' giunto a l'onorata verga
colla qual Roma et suoi erranti correggi,
et la richiami al suo antiquo viaggio,
io parlo a te, però ch'altrove un raggio
non veggio di virtù, ch' al mondo è spenta,
né trovo chi di mal far si vergogni.
Che s'aspetti non so, né che s'agogni,
Italia, che suoi guai non par che senta:
vecchia, otiosa et lenta,
dormirà sempre, et non fia chi la svegli?
Le man' l'avess' io avolto entro' capegli.

Noble spirit, you who informs those members inside of which there dwells in pilgrimage a lord of valor who is keen and wise: now that you have achieved the honored staff with which you guide Rome and its erring people and call her back to her old way of life, to you I speak for I see nowhere else that virtuous ray extinguished in the world and find no one ashamed of doing wrong. For what Italy waits or yearns I know not, for she does not appear to feel her woes—she's idle, slow, and old; will no one wake her, will she sleep forever? If only I could grab her by the hair!³⁷

Turturino's *Questo sì*, first stanza

Questo sì ch'è felice e lieto giorno.	A
di meraviglia pieno e di dolcezza,	B
ond' il mondo ne tesse eterna istoria!	C
Qual man fort'è possente or più s'apprezza,	B
cercando mar e terra d'ogn'intorno,	A
ch'aducesse giamai tanta vittoria?	C
O d'ogni laude degna e d'ogni gloria,	C
donna, pregio sovran dei tempi nostri,	D
o più d'Ercole invitta, o del ponente	E
novo sol che fa scorno a l'oriente!	E
Voi, troncati gli artigli e i ferì rostri	D
di tanti orribil' mostri,	d
con la vostra pietà, con la virtute,	F
n'apportast'immortal pace e salute.	F

Here at last is a happy and joyous day, full of wonder and sweetness, out of which the world weaves eternal history! What stronger and more mighty hand can be admired, even searching everywhere by sea and land, that has ever brought such a victory? O woman, worthy of all praise and glory, the greatest boast of our times, more invincible than Hercules, the new sun of the West that makes the East envious! You, having cut off the claws and fierce jaws of so many hideous monsters, by your mercy and virtue have brought us immortal peace and health.

The distribution of topics in Turturino's canzone is carefully worked out: an invocative first stanza is followed respectively by the description of an iconoclastic rebellion, the exaltation of the rebels' defeat, and finally the celebration of Margaret, the architect of the victory. Table 2 shows the distribution of topics in the stanzas of the song, the composer of each stanza and significant lines, topic by topic.

³⁶ For text and commentary, see Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. Marco Santagata (Milan, 2018), 272-87.

³⁷ Translation from Mark Musa (ed.), *Petrarch: The Canzoniere, or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Bloomington-Indianapolis, 1999), 121.

Here, in brief, is what had happened. Since the early 1560s, the city of Valenciennes had distinguished itself for the effectiveness of its Calvinist preaching, to the point that Margaret had placed the city under special surveillance. In 1566, the government of Valenciennes was weakened by a series of acts of rebellion; these acts were in fact inspired by the Calvinist Church, as proven by the Synod of Antwerp, held at the end of November and beginning of December of that year. Thus, on 14 December 1566, Valenciennes, now ruled by the wealthy Calvinist merchants, proclaimed a state of rebellion. After this umpteenth refusal to submit to the king, Margaret decided to send troops to the city under Philippe de Noircarmes, who finally defeated the rebels on 23 March 1567.

So far, these events correlate to those celebrated in Turturino's song, the beginning of which, as we can see, must be taken literally and has no ironic overtones. For Margaret, however, this was not the end of the story: further developments would reveal her independent spirit, which was doomed to defeat at the time, but which is revealing about the depth of her personality.

When it came to meting out punishments for the Calvinist leaders, Margaret certainly did not have a light hand. And yet, at the same time, she wanted to leave room for reconciliation. In fact, she was convinced that brutal repression would lead to massive emigration, which would severely damage the economy of the territory. However, a fundamentalist attitude prevailed in the Spanish court and Philip II sent a large army to Flanders, led by the Duke of Alba. Embittered, Margaret asked to be allowed to return to Italy. The following year, in 1568, she was outraged by the news of the execution of the Count of Egmont.³⁸

Twelve years later, Philip II, convinced by some of Margaret's arguments in favour of a more conciliatory line in Flanders, would turn to her again, but this time, almost a fulfilment of the prophecy in *Dolci frutti*, it would be the pride and obstinacy of her son, Alessandro Farnese, that would preclude Margaret from having a decisive political role.³⁹

Margaret between Reality and Poetic Image

Marriage to Ottavio Farnese was a decisive step for Margaret, which she had at first tried to resist with all her might. Apart from the possible lack of personal affinity between her and Ottavio, the young Margaret had been troubled by religious disturbances which had led her to turn to the 'spirituali'. In particular, probably thanks to her friendly relations with the Marquise of Pescara, Vittoria Colonna, Margaret had come into contact with the Carmelite Giovan Battista Pallavicino, known for his strongly heterodox preaching. Pallavicino was arrested on 27 May 1540 and interrogated under torture on the specific charge that he had used magic to keep Margaret away from Ottavio. Although we do not know the full course of the trial, the fact remains that, after Pallavicino's arrest, Margaret took a different path. As Giampiero Brunelli has written,

³⁸ For an account of the events surrounding the Valenciennes uprising and Margaret's stance, see Guido Marnet, 'The Towns and the Revolt', in *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*, ed. Graham Darby (London-New York, 2001), 84-106. See also Yves Junot, 'Valenciennes', in *The Revolt of the Netherlands. Revolution and Civil War in the Low Countries (ca. 1550 - ca. 1650)*, <<https://dutchrevolt.leiden.edu/dutch/geografie/V/Pages/valenciennes.aspx>> (accessed 30 September 2023).

³⁹ See Hugo de Schepper, 'Le voyage difficile de Marguerite de Parme en Franche-Comté et en Flandre', in *Margherita d'Austria. Costruzioni politiche e diplomazia, tra corte Farnese e Monarchia spagnola*, ed. Silvia Mantini (Rome, 2003), 127-40.

Table 2. *Questo sì ch'è felice e lieto giorno*

Stanzas	Composers	Topic	Significant Lines
1	Baldassare Donato	The dedicatee is addressed to praise her for the victory achieved	O d'ogni laude degna e d'ogni gloria, donna, pregio sovran dei tempi nostri, o più d'Ercole invitta, o del ponente novo sol, che fa scorno a l'oriente!
2-4	Claudio Merulo (2) Gioseffo Zarlino (3) Paolo Animuccia (4)	The actions of the iconoclastic rebels, disturbing the peace of Flanders, are described, and condemned	ahi, che pur Neron torna e Decio orrendo, quasi con nove pene erano accensi quei che morir già nei martir intensi.
5-8	Palestrina (5) Francesco Bonardo Perissone (6) Giovanni Contino (7) Giaches de Wert (8)	Margaret's military victory is celebrated, restoring order, and ensuring the punishment of the evil rebels	Quand'ècco, donna, il vostro bracci'invitto, quasi folgor altier ch'abasso cada sopra le più minute aride spiche, dissipar col valor e con la spada il reo stuol... Gite ne gli antr'è ne l'oscure selve o ne le più solinghe arene ardenti, perfidì, lungi d'ogn'uman'usanza: quivi, d'odio nudriti e di serpenti, tra le più velenose e strane belve dispensate la vita che v'avanza.
9	Andrea Gabrieli	Only Margaret, as a Catholic and daughter of Charles V, could save the bride of the 'Fifth Pius' (Pope Ghislieri), i.e., the Catholic Church	Chi l'alma sposa del tuo quinto Pio salvar devea, se non di Carlo quinto la nobil figlia e figlia della Chiesa?
10	Costanzo Porta	Thus, all that the iconoclastic rebels achieved was to exalt Charles' daughter, sister of Philip II and wife of Ottavio Farnese	Ecco già in noi l'immagin tua scolpita, celeste Margarita, che 'l lucente diadema fai più bello del marito, del padr'è del fratello.
11 (<i>congedo</i>)	Gabriele Martinengo	The poet sends the poem to Alessandro Farnese, for him to read it to his mother, father, and uncles, foreshadowing for him a glorious future	Del chiaro sangue di Filippo altero, figlio d'Ottavio avventuroso e giusto, già Italia amira un Alessandr'augusto. A lui, canzon, con riverente ciglia t'inchina e 'l prega ch'a l'invitta madre scopra il tuo affetto, ai zii sacratì, al padre.

eliminata l'ambigua presenza del Pallavicino, recluso a vita nella rocca di Ostia a partire dall'aprile 1545, a Margherita sono affiancati i padri della compagnia di Gesù [...] mentre la corte pontificia decide di avvicinare l'inquieta Margherita attraverso la proposta di un'esperienza religiosa a lei confacente, Ignazio di Loyola comprende subito che, attraverso il difficile compito di pacificare i due giovani sposi, la compagnia può guadagnare ampio credito ed una rete di appoggi fra i membri delle *élites*.⁴⁰

after removing the ambiguous presence of Pallavicino, who had been imprisoned for life in the fortress of Ostia since April 1545, Margherita was joined by the fathers of the 'compagnia di Gesù' [...] while the papal court decided to approach the restless Margherita by proposing a religious experience that would suit her, Ignatius of Loyola immediately realised that the difficult task of pacifying the young couple could give the 'compagnia' great prestige and a network of support among the members of the elite.

It follows that the image of a pious and bigoted Margaret traced by traditional historiography was a forced reality, 'proiettando all'indietro un sentimento religioso che invece appare esito non scontato di una complessa vicenda' ('projecting backwards a religious sentiment that instead appears to be the unexpected outcome of a complex affair').⁴¹

It must also be considered that, despite the disagreements between Margaret and Paul III during the years of her stay in Rome, the political and doctrinal legacy of the Farnese pope had created, as we have seen, quite a favourable terrain in Parma for Margaret's religious anxieties.⁴²

Finally, in order to complete the picture of Margaret's personality, it is necessary to consider her artistic and cultural patronage, which has already been studied on several occasions and is the main subject of this journal issue. Of all the activities undertaken by Margaret, patronage was undoubtedly the one in which she was able to carve out the greatest space of autonomy, asserting her own tastes and inclinations with determination, to the point of surpassing Ottavio's similar activity. As Seishiro Niwa has written,

Ottavio established his status primarily as a politician and a military commander, and may have felt envious of Margaret's artistic accomplishment. He clearly saw her as a lady of greater refinement and culture than he, and it was possibly her love of music that in part motivated him to launch himself into the patronage of music.⁴³

Taken together, these aspects paint a picture of an extremely cultured, strong, and determined woman, able to create spaces of autonomy in a society firmly in the hands of male protagonists. Of all these, however, the only trait that emerges from the musical texts expressly dedicated to Margaret is that of strength, not as a self-sufficient dowry, but as a precious tool in the hands of the men in charge of political destinies. The only, partial exception, besides Arcadelt's *Giovenetta regal*, is Alcarotti's dedicatory letter, whose philosophical content concerns the woman of culture. All the other texts considered in this article celebrate Margaret's role in the context of the dynamics determined by Charles V, Philip II, and the Farnese, whose 'diadems' were 'embellished'

⁴⁰ Giampiero Brunelli, 'Tra eretici e gesuiti. I primi anni di Margherita a Roma', in *Margherita d'Austria*, ed. Mantini, 65-83 at 77-78.

⁴¹ Brunelli, 'Tra eretici e gesuiti', 83.

⁴² I refer again to Venturelli, *La corte farnesiana*.

⁴³ Seishiro Niwa, "'Madama" Margaret of Parma's Patronage of Music', in *Early Music* 33 (2005), 25-37 at 35.

by Margaret (hence the metaphor of the precious stone). In all this, of course, there is no room for the slightest hint of the contrasts that periodically arose between Margaret and her male counterparts. It is difficult, however, to imagine that things, at the time, could be otherwise.

According to Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel,

l'ingresso dell'Italia e dell'aristocrazia italiana in un sistema che aveva il suo centro a Madrid comportò [...] una riduzione delle gentildonne laiche, ma non modificò, anzi potenziò, le risorse materiali della singola donna maritata/vedova per la quale continuò a essere possibile agire nella sfera pubblica.⁴⁴

the entry of Italy and the Italian aristocracy into a system that had its centre in Madrid entailed [...] a reduction of lay gentlewomen, but it did not change, indeed it enhanced, the material resources of the individual married/widowed woman, for whom it continued to be possible to act in the public sphere.

This is true, however, in a context in which 'le gentildonne non ebbero potere e autorità ufficiali in virtù della nascita [...], ma solo come donne sposate o come madri, donne "vicino al potere" di cui erano titolari mariti e figli' ('gentlewomen did not have official power and authority by virtue of birth [...], but only as married women or as mothers, women "close to the power" held by husbands and sons').⁴⁵ This situation is perfectly reflected in the texts we have examined here.

Abstract

The article first examines the dual meaning of the Italian word 'margherita', highlighting its uses in the context of poetic texts dedicated to Margaret of Parma. It examines the two texts for Margaret set to music by Arcadelt, discussing their respective contexts and proposing for the first of them a versification different from the commonly accepted one. It analyzes the only madrigal collection entirely dedicated to Margaret of Parma, the second book of madrigals by Giovanni Francesco Alcarotti. Finally, through a careful reading of the canzone *Questo sì ch'è felice e lieto giorno*, set to music by different authors, the historical event that this canzone intends to celebrate is identified as the taking of Valenciennes by troops coordinated by Margaret.

⁴⁴ *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*, ed. Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel (Rome, 2008), 19-20.

⁴⁵ *Donne di potere*, ed. Arcangeli and Peyronel, 19.