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Musicologists und Theorists at the
University of North Texas

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Recontextualization of Tinctoris's Expression *Suavitudinem Redolent* in His Treatise *The Art of Counterpoint*

YIYI GAO

It is a matter of great surprise that there is no composition written over forty years ago which is thought by the learned as worthy of performance. At this very time, whether it be due to the virtue of some heavenly influence or to a zeal of constant application I do not know, there flourish, in addition to many singers who performed most beautifully, an infinite number of composers such as Johannes Ockeghem, Johannes Regis, Anthonius Busnois, Firminus Caron, and Guillermus Faugues, who glory that they had as teachers in this divine art Johannes Dunstable, Egidius Binchois and Guillermus Dufay, [all] recently passed from life. Almost all these men's works exhale such sweetness [*tantam suavitudinem redolent*], that, in my opinion, they should be considered most worthy, not only for men and heroes, but even for the immortal gods.¹

— Johannes Tinctoris, *The Art of Counterpoint*, Prologue

In his 1477 treatise *The Art of Counterpoint*, Tinctoris brought the notion of *sweetness* to the forefront. He claims that only music written after the 1430s could be regarded as models worth imitating and hearing. He declares that music has changed, and that the new spirit in music made its appearance around 1437.² In the famous prologue, quoted above, Tinctoris gives credit to several composers such as Johannes Dunstable, Binchois, Dufay, Ockeghem, and Busnois, and states that they should be considered the most worthy because their works are *perfumed with sweetness (suavitudinem redolent)*.³ In the same prologue, Tinctoris explained that concords possess the quality of *sweetness*. *Sweetness (suavitas)* seems to be the very quality Tinctoris and his contemporaries value most; however, Tinctoris does not explicitly conceptualize this expression in his writing, and the few instances where he does use it are too vague to extract its actual meaning.

Previous scholarship has focused on the cultural background of the expression for Tinctoris, such as the work of Professors Rob Wegman and Christopher Page, but has not thoroughly explained the concept of *sweetness* as a compositional directive in musical works of

¹ Johannes Tinctoris, *The Art of Counterpoint*, trans. and ed., Albert Seay (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1961), 15.

² Tinctoris, 3.

³ Tinctoris, 15.

Tinctoris's contemporaries.⁴ In this paper, I will bring together the cultural and musical perspectives of the concept of *sweetness*. The first part of the study focuses on the cultural background of *sweetness*, and the second part investigates the expression from a musical perspective through an examination of the contemporary treatises of the fifteenth century, mainly Johannes Tinctoris's *The Art of Counterpoint* and Franchinus Gaffurius's *Practica musicae* (1496). Italian theorist Gaffurius used *sweetness* as a compositional aesthetic by demonstrating relevant musical aspects in his writing.⁵ These musical aspects that render *sweetness* include, among others, predominance of consonant intervals; frequent usage of thirds and sixths (especially parallel six-three chords) and "triadic" sonorities; vertical three-pitch sonorities in harmonic instead of arithmetic division; the fourth in the style of *Fauxbourdon*; and *Varietas* or variety of musical styles, textures, rhythms, and intervals. Gaffurius also points out musical aspects that undermine *sweetness*: improper arrangement of dissonances; dissonances other than dissonant minims and passing tones; and imperfect consonances in long values at low registers. Gaffurius mainly strives to cultivate the most pleasing sonorities and tone color in counterpoint—mainly associated with appropriate arrangement of three-pitch vertical sonorities (triadic harmonies) and good voice-leading in writing counterpoint. Based on Gaffurius's applicable instructions in his treatise, *sweetness* acts as a compositional aesthetic. Eventually, with the demonstration of its both two perspectives—cultural and technical—we are able to achieve a further understanding of the expression and the musical practice in the late fifteenth century.

Cultural Background of the Expression "Perfumed with Sweetness"

Before getting into details of the musical perspectives of the expression of *sweetness*, I will investigate its culture aspects: 1) its connotations under religious context (including the earlier writer St. Ambrose's writing) and 2) the aesthetics behind the expression in the medieval era.

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the expression was already rooted in a long Christian tradition. This expression can be found throughout Christian literature. It is likely that Tinctoris cites the particular expression *suavitudinem redolent* from St. Ambrose's

⁴ Christopher Page, "Reading and Reminiscence: Tinctoris on the Beauty of Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 1 (1996): 1–31; and Rob Wegman, "Sense and Sensibility in Late-Medieval Music: Thoughts on Aesthetics and 'Authenticity,'" *Early Music* 23, no. 2 (1995): 298–312.

⁵ The Eight Mandates or Rules of Counterpoint in Gaffurius's *Practica musicae* (1496) presents some differences in comparison to Tinctoris's "Eight Rules of Counterpoint" in book III of *The Art of Counterpoint*. However, the basic points are similar.

work “Hexameron.”⁶ St. Ambrose relates fragrance to prayer in his writing: aromatic clouds of incense rise heavenward like prayer. On the fragrance of prayer, in his account of the six days of Creation, *Hexameron*, St. Ambrose writes:

The soul...will cling to the Word of God, and will have ascended like the increase of the vine, drawing itself upward, like smoke born of flame, and seeking higher things, as it would burn thereafter with good works, for the fragrance of devout prayer exhales a sweet odor [*redolet suavitatem*] which is led, like incense, into the sight of God.⁷

Besides the religious background of *sweetness* and its association to the incense in Catholic tradition, I should also explain the usage of the term in the Middle Ages and why medieval writers used this word to invoke the beauty of music. In her recently published book, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (2013), Mary Carruthers clearly describes *sweetness* as a sensory experience and offers relevant points to further explain its background in the Middle Ages.

Carruthers explains that modern readers might think that it is very curious that medieval writers use *suavis/dulcis*, which describe *taste* or *smell*, to express an experience when listening to music. Carruthers explains that it is a linguistic method for the metaphoric transfer between senses.⁸ The medieval aesthetic is very different from a modern aesthetic because all five senses—taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound—often can cross what modern scholars take to be “sensory borders.” That is to say, the medieval aesthetic is *not* stimulated by simple and pure causes. Therefore, medieval writers did *not* address just one but multiple senses at a time when discussing the beauty of artifacts, including music.⁹

Carruthers argues that the concept of *suavitas* or *sweetness* also denotes “*sapientia*,” meaning wisdom, which is a higher form of knowing (including philosophy and divinity). *Sapientia* is a term derived from *sapida scientia*—“flavourful knowledge.”¹⁰ In this sense, “sweetness” also conveys the pleasing feeling of “knowing” and connotes “learning” and “wisdom.” Therefore, at this point, one can safely say that *sweetness* has multiple connotations of piety, the sense of pleasing, holiness, being agreeable to the ears, and maybe even more.

⁶ *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1845), vol. 14, col. 208.

⁷ *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 14, col. 208.

⁸ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48.

⁹ Carruthers, 48.

¹⁰ Carruthers, 95.

Finally, Carruthers notes that *sweetness* or *suavitas* is among the trickiest of concepts in Latin: it is difficult to translate this term into English because “sweetness” is not just one particular thing but it has multiple connotations. *Suavis/dulcis* are synonyms in Latin, which are used to “articulate modes of perception by means of describing effects on the perceiver.”¹¹ Most of the time, people translate this term *dulcis/suavis* as “agreeable” or “beautiful.”¹²

Johannes Tinctoris’s Observations on *Sweetness* of ConCORDS

What kind of “sweet” musical works convey the pleasing feeling of knowing and connote learning and wisdom, to Tinctoris and his contemporaries? Building on the cultural background of *sweetness* or *suavitas*, I will facilitate a search of the compositional aspects of the expression through a close reading of treatises by Johannes Tinctoris and Franchinus Gaffurius. I believe that Tinctoris’s statements on consonances and *sweetness* of consonances in his *The Art of Counterpoint* are relevant to my research on the musical aspects of *sweetness* as well.¹³ Tinctoris’s recontextualization of St. Ambrose’s phrase *redolet suavitatem* in a musical environment communicates the suitability of consonances for sacred music.

In the prologue in *The Art of Counterpoint*, Tinctoris explicitly connects the concept of *sweetness* to conCORDS which are agreeable to the ears. He thinks that consonances convey the sensation of pleasure since they “rule all the delight of music” and have sweet sonorities.¹⁴ Second, Tinctoris refers to the Book of Psalms that the counterpoint should be made a “joyful and fitting praise.”¹⁵ Overall, one can assume that the expression “perfumed with *sweetness*” and Tinctoris’s musical aesthetics are rooted in a long tradition in the Middle Ages. *Sweetness* most likely acted as an aesthetic expression which carried deep connotations and was directly associated with consonances.¹⁶

In the prologue, Tinctoris demonstrates his positions on delightful effect of consonances in writing musical compositions. He considers that consonances “rule all the delight of music.”¹⁷ Tinctoris notes:

Now, therefore, among other things, I have decided to write out at length for the glory and honor of His Eternal Majesty, to whom by this counterpoint, as is ordered in the Psalm, is made

¹¹ Carruthers, 45.

¹² Carruthers, 96–97.

¹³ Tinctoris, 14. Tinctoris dedicated this book to his patron, Ferdinand I of Naples, when he worked in the royal court in Naples.

¹⁴ Tinctoris, 14.

¹⁵ Tinctoris, 14.

¹⁶ Page, 28–29.

¹⁷ Tinctoris, 13–14.

a joyful and fitting praise, and for the benefit of all students of this noble art, those few things I have learned from careful study about the art of counterpoint, which is brought about *through consonances that according to Boethius, rule all the delight of music.*¹⁸

In addition, Tinctoris suggests that concords convey the sensation of *sweetness*, and the pleasure of the ears comes from the *sweetness* of consonances produced by instruments on earth.¹⁹ He writes:

Concords of sounds and melodies, therefore, from whose sweetness, as Lactantius says, the pleasure of the ears is derived, are brought out, not by heavenly bodies, but by earthly instruments with the cooperation of nature. To these concords, also, the older musicians, such as Plato, Pythagoras, Nicomachus, Aristoxenus, Philolaus, Archytas, Ptolemy and many others, even including Boethius, most applied themselves, but how they were accustomed to arrange and put together is only slightly understood at our time.²⁰

Above all, Tinctoris is describing his own musical sensations, that consonances are sweet-sounding and bring a sense of pleasing to the ear;²¹ however, he does not give a clear explanation what he exactly means by *sweetness* of consonances. He does not clarify how composers should arrange concords and create agreeableness to the ear and what specific musical elements create *sweetness* in his treatise. We may wonder the following questions: What compositional principles would create the sense of *sweetness* in their time? How did Tinctoris and his contemporaries treat sweet-sounding consonances as proper devices to compose music? In the next section, I will investigate specific compositional procedures that render the effect of *sweetness*, based on Gaffurius's *Practica musicae*. Through Gaffurius's writing, we are able to see how he views *sweetness* as a compositional aesthetic and what musical elements he advocates to create the effect.

Compositional Aspects on the Concept of *Sweetness* in Franchinus Gaffurius's *Practica musicae*

Franchinus Gaffurius's *Practica musicae* was first printed in Milan in 1496, nineteen years after Tinctoris's *The Art of Counterpoint*. *Practice musicae* is a significant instructional manual for musical

¹⁸ Tinctoris, 13–14. Emphasis added.

¹⁹ Tinctoris, 14.

²⁰ Tinctoris, 14.

²¹ Wegman, 308. Rob Wegman points out that Tinctoris is describing his own musical sensation by saying that *sweet* consonances give a pleasing feeling to the ear.

composition.²² Gaffurius not only offers specific instructions on writing five-three and six-three vertical sonorities to create musical sounds to create *sweetness*, but also discusses compositional directives to create harsh sonorities which undermine the effect.²³ Gaffurius acts as a spearheading advocate of the notion of *sweetness* and connects specific compositional principles to the effect, as opposed to other authors in the fifteenth century.

Gaffurius effectively relates the pleasing sonorities of intervals to the concept of *sweetness*.²⁴ Whereas Tinctoris does not clarify what types of concords are agreeable, Gaffurius lists three types of intervals which “are agreeable to the ear.”²⁵ The first kind of concord is the imperfect consonance of the third and the sixth. The second kind includes the fifth and twelfth, and the third kind includes the “imperfect octave and disdiapason (double octave).”²⁶ Gaffurius views thirds and sixths as irrational because they are not derived from superparticular ratios like octaves and fifths in Pythagorean tuning. However, Gaffurius believes that they are still suitable intervals because of their *sweet* sonorities to the ear and provides no further explanation.²⁷ Furthermore, Gaffurius considers using thirds and sixths successively is particularly effective to create sweet-sounding music.

Gaffurius implicitly describes triadic sonorities and their *sweetness*, although he and his contemporary composers did not use the term of the “triad.” Richard Crocker points out that the only theorist before Zarlino who expressed this opinion about triadic sonorities was Gaffurius.²⁸ Gaffurius devotes an additional whole chapter to “contrapuntal species” to three-pitch sonorities including five-three (what he calls mediated fifth chords) and six-three chords.²⁹

Gaffurius is not only concerned with how to build three-pitch chords but also with why some chords sound better. Gaffurius explains that concords, which are formed in harmonic division (rather

²² Irwin Young, “Franchinus Gaffurius, Renaissance Theorist and Composer (1451–1522)” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1954), 84.

According to Young, Gaffurius was an acquaintance to Tinctoris.

²³ The manuscript sources of the treatises that eventually formed the four books of the *Practica musicae* (that for book III, on counterpoint, does not survive) reveal that Gaffurius was heavily indebted to Tinctoris.

²⁴ Prosdocimo de Beldomandi, *Contrapunctus*, trans. Jan Herlinger (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 65–67.

²⁵ Franchinus Gaffurius, *Practica musicae*, trans. Clement A Miller (Dallas: American Institute of Musicology, 1968), 117.

²⁶ Gaffurius, 117.

²⁷ Gaffurius, 117.

²⁸ Richard Crocker, “Discant, Counterpoint, and Harmony,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 15 (1962): 18.

²⁹ Gaffurius, 117.

than arithmetic division), create an effect of *sweetness*.³⁰ Gaffurius emphasizes that “an octave harmonically divided is the primary and simple harmony through which every musical concord shines forth with a more pleasing and appealing sound.”³¹ For instance, when three pitches C1 - G1 - C2 are played together, it creates *sweetness*, whereas when C1 - F1 - C2 sound together it does not sound sweet. Also, in the same chapter on natural of contrapuntal species, Gaffurius makes a clear distinction between consonances mediated by a harmonic division (octave comprised of fifth and fourth), and consonances mediated by other divisions.³² These other divisions include the mediated fifth (five-three chord) and the mediated sixth (six-three chord).

Gaffurius notes that the five-three chord creates sweet harmony because it imitates harmonic division (a five-three chord that includes a major third and a minor third bottom up mirrors a fifth at the bottom plus a fourth on top). Gaffurius literally lists out wordy instructions, step by step, to compose vertical five-three sonorities: a *contratenor acutus* and *tenor* should always be consonant with the *baritonans*, so that when the *contratenor acutus* is an octave above the *baritonans* the *tenor* will be a fifth or a third above the *baritonans*. Gaffurius provides an example (see example 1) that adapts the principles mentioned above and contains pervasive “triadic” sonorities.³³

Example 1. Gaffurius, *Practice musicae* (1496). Example containing several five-three sonorites.³⁴

The musical score consists of four staves: Cantus (top), Contratenor, Tenor, and Baritone (bottom). The music is in a single system with a common time signature. The notes are as follows:

- Cantus:** G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4.
- Contratenor:** G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3.
- Tenor:** G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3.
- Baritone:** G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2.

Below the staves, the intervals are indicated as follows:

- Measure 1: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 3 (Contratenor to Tenor)
- Measure 2: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 3 (Contratenor to Tenor)
- Measure 3: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 5 (Contratenor to Tenor)
- Measure 4: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 3 (Contratenor to Tenor)
- Measure 5: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 3 (Contratenor to Tenor)
- Measure 6: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 3 (Contratenor to Tenor)
- Measure 7: 5 (Cantus to Baritone), 3 (Contratenor to Tenor)

³⁰ Gaffurius, 121–22. Gaffurius does not explicitly says chords that formed in arithmetic division do not sound agreeable, but he clearly instructs how to form a harmony in harmonic division and chords in harmonic division create sweet sonorities.

³¹ Gaffurius, 122.

³² Gaffurius, 121.

³³ Gaffurius, 142.

³⁴ Gaffurius, 142.

In the special context of *fauxbourdon*, Gaffurius relates the concept of “sweetness” to the parallel fourths, not on their own but together with thirds and sixths (example 2). Gaffurius did not explicitly state that the *fauxbourdon* sounds sweet, but it is implied by the title of Chapter V of Book III, “Agreeable Sweetness of the Fourth [*De consentanea suavitate quarta*].” In this style, the fourth is below the cantus (highest voice) and a third above the tenor (lowest voice). The result is creating parallel six-three sonorities. According to Gaffurius, the ending of a *fauxbourdon* should feature a fifth between the lowest voice and the middle voice, and a fourth between the middle and the highest part. This typical ending features harmonically-divided vertical sonority, and thus Gaffurius considers *fauxbourdon* style as a “concordant song”:³⁵

[It] happens in this harmony that all contratenor notes are a fourth below those of the cantus, and a third above the closing notes of the tenor, which is a sixth from the cantus; the contratenor resolves to a fifth above the tenor, which is a sixth from the cantus; the contratenor resolves to a fifth above the tenor which ends with the cantus on an octave or diapason concord harmonically divided. In this way such a concordant song can be recognized.³⁶

Example 2. Gaffurius, *Practica musicae* (1496). Example of *fauxbourdon*.³⁷

Gaffurius even extends his concept of *sweetness* to proper voice-leading, arguing that it produces *sweetness* as well, especially when contrary motion is employed. He claims that a perfect consonance approached in contrary motion from an imperfect interval is “smoother and more agreeable than one approached in oblique motion,” because “each of the divergent sounds proceeding in contrary motion hastens to meet another and to be mingled in a sweet concord.”³⁸ The same rule applies to cadences. Gaffurius states, “when we approach a perfect consonance from an imperfect consonance, as

³⁵ Gaffurius, 131.

³⁶ Gaffurius, 131.

³⁷ Gaffurius, 131.

³⁸ Gaffurius, 138.

at a final cadence or any other cadence, it is necessary to progress to the perfect interval by contrary motion of the closest imperfect consonance.”³⁹ Therefore, it is necessary “for a major sixth to resolve to an octave in [contrary motion] and a minor sixth frequently moves to a fifth in oblique motion.”⁴⁰

Finally, according to Gaffurius, the well-known musical aesthetic *varietas*—diversity of compositional techniques/styles, intervals, rhythms, and texture—in the Middle Ages and Renaissance relates to the concept of *sweetness*.⁴¹ *Varietas* is a central topic in both treatises of Gaffurius and Tinctoris.⁴² Gaffurius introduces the concept of using different species of intervals and alternate numbers of parts (texture alternations) to create a pleasant feeling to the ear.⁴³ Therefore, identical perfect consonances of the same size sound immobile and should be avoided—thus no parallel fifths and octaves.⁴⁴ Gaffurius notes that modes and other musical elements—intervals, note values, and textures—can be varied even though rules are universal and definite, and melodic lines should be smooth. Here is another Gaffurius’s statement in relation to *varietas*:

Even though modes and other musical elements can be varied *ad infinitum*, and yet the art of counterpoint is no different than that of other disciplines which have definite, universal principles that are few in number, although they may proceed *ad infinitum* in special and diverse ways.⁴⁵

Overall, the diversity of musical techniques, texture, and rhythms, which induces a sense of pleasure, is one of the central topics in Gaffurius’s treatise.⁴⁶

When explaining that *varietas* produces a sense of pleasure, Gaffurius gives credit to certain composers, such as Tinctoris, Obrecht, and Issac, as “pleasing composers” and offers praise for their

³⁹ Gaffurius, 128.

⁴⁰ Gaffurius, 128.

⁴¹ Alexis Luko, in his article “Tinctoris on *Varietas*,” states that variety in music, art and poetry had been a celebrated virtue during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Period. Alexis Luko, “Tinctoris on *Varietas*,” *Early Music History* 27 (2008): 101.

⁴² Luko, 99–136. Luko claims *Varietas* relates to all the compositional principles that Tinctoris mentions in *The Art of Counterpoint*.

⁴³ Gaffurius, 142–44.

⁴⁴ Tinctoris also talks about the avoidance of consecutive identical perfect intervals in his “eight mandates” in *The Art of Counterpoint*.

⁴⁵ Gaffurius, 118.

⁴⁶ Luko, 100. Note that Gaffurius’s proposition on the pleasing sensation of *varietas* is very similar to Tinctoris’s writing. *Varietas* is the last rule of his eight mandates in Tinctoris’s *The Art of Counterpoint*.

Example 3. Gaffurius, *Practica Musicae* (1496). A famous procedure.⁴⁷

compositions.⁴⁸ Gaffurius provides a specific example, written by himself, which includes parallel tenth progressions and a variety of different compositional techniques that he thinks renders pleasing sonorities (shown in example 3). Through this important example, we achieve a thorough understanding of what a pleasing composition sounds like, and what kinds of techniques make a “pleasing” work. This piece employs a change of textures, rhythms, intervals, note values, syncopations, suspensions (e.g. 9-8 suspension in mm. 5-6),

⁴⁷ Gaffurius, 144. The examples in *Practica musicae* were composed by Gaffurius himself. Brackets are from Miller’s transcription of the example.

⁴⁸ Here Josquin despret mentioned by Gaffurius is not the same composer Josquin des Prez we know. The rest mentioned in this chapter are composers who were active after 1437—they were mostly active as composers at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although they were not the same generation of composers that Tinctoris extols.

predominance of five-three and six-three sonorities with minimal presence of parallel fifths or octaves; consonant intervals are on strong beats in each measure. The motions of parallel tenths in the outer two voices (in mm. 3–4, mm. 8–11, and mm. 13–15) convey a vivid and pleasing feeling. All these musical aspects give a rich and pleasing quality of sound. Additionally, the cadence features a major sixth to octave motion. Overall, this musical example adapts *varietas*, and it indeed conveys extremely consonant, charming, suave, and pleasing sensations that are extremely agreeable to our ears.

Compositional Aspects that Undermine *Sweetness*

Besides writing about compositional aspects that render *sweetness*, Gaffurius also discusses that certain elements that corrupt *sweetness*—sometimes it relates to vibration rate that create harsh sounds. He focuses on two main aspects here. First, a low-register imperfect interval such as the major sixth should be regarded as dissonant unless it immediately resolves to an octave in contrary motion, because its vibration rate is too slow and thus offends the ears. Second, dissonant intervals in full metrical value (breve-note values) sound harsh to the ears. Gaffurius connects the concept of *sweetness* to a sound effect from an acoustic perspective, although he does not know the concept of sound wave.

Gaffurius claims that the sixth is considered as dissonance in the lower register on a long, stable tone. Gaffurius believes that the reason for this is the “vibration rate” [*multitudinem temporis*] of lower tones, of which “the harshness and dissonance of an imperfect interval” offends the ears.

Gaffurius explicitly articulates that one should not permit a discord as long as the metrical value of the measure because such a discord “corrupts the nature and the sweetness” of the melody.⁴⁹ However, he permits a dissonant minim as when “it is concealed as a suspension (*sincopa*) or as a quick passing tone,”⁵⁰ and when it moves rapidly in a passage (example 4). He writes:

We decided to discuss briefly dissonances which are admissible in counterpoint. For a semibreve, equal to a complete measurement of time [a *tactus*], like the pulse of a man breathing evenly, cannot be given to a dissonance, just as teachers of the art state. They also do not allow a dissonance breve, for a discord corrupts the nature and smoothness of the harmony when it is heard. But a dissonance is admitted a counterpoint if it is concealed as a suspension or as a quick passing tone.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Gaffurius, 129.

⁵⁰ Gaffurius, 129.

⁵¹ Gaffurius, 129.

Example 4. Gaffurius, Example which contains dissonant minims, *Practica musicae* (1496).

The image shows a musical score for three voices: Cantus, Contra-Tenor, and Tenor. The Cantus part is in the upper staff, Contra-Tenor in the middle, and Tenor in the lower. The music is in a common time signature. The Cantus part consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Contra-Tenor part has a long note followed by a dissonant interval marked with an asterisk (*). The Tenor part has a long note followed by a dissonant interval marked with a bracket.

Gaffurius maintains that when two voices proceed at the same time on the dissonant intervals (an instance of note-against-note counterpoint), it produces “false counterpoint” which does not have sonorities of sweetness at all. He also lists all of the dissonant intervals. Here is his instruction on “false counterpoint”:

We call counterpoint false when two singers, one on each part, produce a series of dissonance intervals, such as a major and minor second, perfect and augmented fourth, major and minor seventh, and major and minor ninth, all of which are entirely lacking in any semblance of pleasant sound [*suavis harmoniae*].⁵²

Above all, according to Gaffurius, the notion of *sweetness* acts as an important compositional directive—the goal of good compositions is to create the pleasing sonorities in music. The compositional aspects that create the aesthetic include: 1) predominance of consonant intervals; frequent usage of thirds and sixths (especially in parallel motion); vertical three-note sonorities in harmonic instead of arithmetic division; and a variety of musical styles, textures, rhythms, and intervals. Additionally, Gaffurius points out aspects which can undermine *sweetness*: improper arrangement of dissonances; dissonances other than dissonant minims and passing tones in small values; and imperfect consonances in long values (i.e., the breve) at low registers. Overall, with Gaffurius’s *Practica musicae*, we have a better understanding of what kinds of music induce pleasing sonorities and thus create *sweetness*.

Conclusion

Currently we do not know how composers cultivated the sensation of *sweetness* in the late fifteenth century, and few extant sources can inform us about their scholastic conventions and musical aesthetics. However, I have brought together both the cultural and

⁵² Gaffurius, 147. Emphasis added.

musical aspects of *sweetness* in this paper to further comprehend their musical culture. With a close reading of the previous literature by St. Ambrose and other older texts, I wish to achieve a proficient understanding of the medieval aesthetic and how medieval thinkers wrote about music using metaphorical transfer between senses. Also, we have connected the expression to compositional techniques through examinations of well-known treatises by Tinctoris and Gaffurius. While Tinctoris brought the expression *perfumed with sweetness* to the forefront and did not clarify its meaning, Gaffurius was a significant writer who expressed an insightful view of the expression from the musical perspective of the Renaissance. For Gaffurius, *sweetness* acted as a compositional aesthetic especially for building three-pitch sonorities in counterpoint, more than just a sensory experience of listeners. In Gaffurius's *Practica musicae*, contrapuntal rules exist in relation to *sweetness* as the guiding principles of composing music. Relying on the compositional principles that Gaffurius and Tinctoris demonstrates in their writings, the music after 1437 continued to sound different than the music of the past. Their aesthetics and the compositional principles in relation to the notion of *sweetness* became the basis of Renaissance counterpoint.

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Deities and Demigods: The Role of Allegory in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*

DOUG DONLEY

Allegorical characters are by no means strangers to the Baroque Opera; from Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di anima et di corpo* to Cavalli's *L'Ormino*, operas of the seventeenth century often personify abstract concepts such as Destiny, Love, Prudence, Harmony, Reason, Time, Fortune, and many others. In most of these settings, the allegories act with deific (or at least quasi-deific) power, directly or indirectly affecting the plot itself; some allegories even seem to function in lieu of an actual deity. As a result, scholars tend to either explicitly identify these characters as deities or discuss them in terms that make them indistinguishable from deities.¹ How then should we interpret allegorical characters that appear in a drama already populated by specifically named gods? Such a case is evident in Claudio Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*; the characters Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo are ascribed god-like power, speak with god-like authority, and mock "Human Frailty" with god-like contempt. But are they deities? As this study shows, Monteverdi and his librettist, Giacomo Badoaro, carefully distinguish between the allegories and gods in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* through both the poetic text and musical setting. In the end, the gods Giove, Nettuno, Minerva, and Giunone seem to overcome the formidable powers of Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo; however, in doing so, they invoke the sovereignty of yet another nebulous allegory: Fato. It is, therefore, not only possible to separate allegory and deity in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*; rather, such differentiation is necessary to understand the opera's cosmic power struggle.

I. Conflation of Allegories and Deities

Allegorical characters are common in many dramatic traditions, Baroque opera among them. In fact, the presence of these characters is so common in the seventeenth century that, in his introduction to the libretto for *Xerse*, Nicolò Minato, while defending himself from being criticized by the church and Venetian civil authorities, states:

¹ For examples of writers who directly conflate these terms, see Christopher John Mossey, "'Human After All': Character and Self-understanding in Operas by Giovanni Faustini and Francesco Cavalli, 1644–1652," (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1999), 12–14; and Mark Ringer, *Opera's First Master: The Musical Dramas of Claudio Monteverdi*, (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2006), 146.

You will frequently find the words “Fate,” “Gods,” “Stars,” and the like. I declare, however, that *I have used them because it is custom*; after all I am a Christian: I write as one does and believe as one should.²

Specific examples of dramatic allegory could be taken from a number of operas. Emilio de’ Cavallieri and Agostino Manni’s *Rappresentazione di Anima et di Corpo* gives voice to the various virtues and vices of the human spirit, including Intellect, Counsel, Pleasure, and others. Francesco Cavalli and Giovanni Faustini employ Destiny, Harmony, Fortune, Love, and “the Winds” to bring about the resolution of the love intrigue in *L’Ormindo*. Cavalli and Faustini also use allegories in *La Calisto*: namely Destiny, Eternity and Nature. Many more examples could be cited.

In some of these stories, discerning the identities of the allegorical characters presents a challenge. For example, in Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, the characters Amore, Fortuna, and Virtù may, at first, seem purely allegorical. Yet, on many occasions, such as Act II, Scene 11, Amore refers to himself as a god.³ Furthermore, in Act II, Scene 12, he defends Poppea with arrows.⁴ Finally, in Act III, Scene 8, Amore compares Poppea to his heavenly mother:

<i>Madre, madre, sia con tua pace</i>	Mother, if, with your consent
<i>In ciel tu sei Poppea,</i>	you are Poppea in heaven,
<i>Questa è Venere in terra.</i>	then this one is Venus on earth. ⁵

Thus, the Amore present in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* is almost assuredly the Roman version of Eros, his mother being Aphrodite (or Venus in the Roman pantheon). In a sense, Amore’s identity becomes clearer as the opera progresses, but Fortuna and Virtù receive no such clarification. Herein lies the problem: why is it necessary to make Amore’s identity clear, but not that of Fortuna and Virtù? Is it simply because Amore proves his superiority? Are Fortuna and Virtù inferior because they are mere allegories while Amore eventually reveals his godhood? Are Fortuna and Virtù gods themselves, left unidentified because they only serve to display Amore’s power? It is beyond the scope of the present study to assess how these questions play out in

² Nicolò Minato, “Lettore,” in *Xerse* (Venice: Matteo Leni, 1654): “Troverai le solite parole di Fato, Dei, Stelle, e simili; dichiaro però averle adoperate per essere tale il costume; nel rimanente sono Cristiano, scrivo come s’usa e credo come si deve.” Translation by Hendrik Schulze. Italics added.

³ “Sul vostro sonno è vigilante dio” (A vigilant god watches over your sleep). Claudio Monteverdi and Giovanni Francesco Busenello, *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, ed. Hendrik Schulze (Basel: Bärenreiter, 2017), 245.

⁴ “Illeso va da questi strali acuti” (Go unscathed by these sharp arrows). Monteverdi and Busenello, *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, 246.

⁵ Monteverdi and Busenello, 256.

L'incoronazione di Poppea, but that fact that such questions are not simple to answer reveals the ambiguity in the treatment of deities and allegories in this repertoire.

If allegories inherently present an interpretive challenge, the matter is further complicated by inexact language on the part of many modern scholars in the area of seventeenth-century opera. Among these writers, it is common to conflate allegories and deities. Sometimes, this is due to the ambiguity in the characters themselves, as in the previous discussion concerning Amore, Fortuna, and Virtù. Yet, in other situations, the confusion is rooted in academia itself. Consider how this issue is treated in Christopher John Mossey's doctoral dissertation. Chapter 1, entitled "The Love Intrigue and Allegory in *Ormindo* (1644)," contains the two following quotes:

The appearances of Harmony, Destiny, Love, Fortune and the Winds provide evidence of allegorical intent in *Ormindo*.⁶

During the course of *Ormindo*, however, both the deities and the lovers make frequent references to each other, implying a covert connection. On one hand, the deities make direct statements about their control over mortals, as in the monologue of Destiny.⁷

In the first quote, Mossey references all of *L'Ormindo's* non-human characters, stressing their allegorical qualities. In the second, he grants deific status to all said non-human characters, particularly Destiny. In short, Harmony, Destiny, Love, Fortune, and the Winds are identified as belonging to both categories: that is, they are both allegory and deity.

In a similar vein, Mark Ringer specifically discusses the prologue characters in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. He writes:

L'Humana Fragilita's [*sic*] sings her arioso again, closing her refrain with a florid run on "fugace": "To the tyrant Love is sacrificed my flowing green and fleeting [fugace] years." This vocal ornament marks the appearance of the third and final of humankind's *abstract opponents*. Amore enters with an even more elaborately contrived ritornello than Fortuna. It serves as a jaunty rephrasing of L'Humana Fragilita's sinfonia. This musical similarity suggests a spiritual connection between L'Humana Fragilita and Amore. The "*deities*" have control over L'Humana Fragilita now, just as they have power over the accompanimental instrumentalists to punctuate their solos and not hers.⁸

⁶ Mossey, 12.

⁷ Mossey, 14.

⁸ Ringer, 146. Italics added.

Significantly, Ringer places the word “deities” in quotation marks, suggesting an understanding that something is not as it seems to be in this situation. Yet, he also grants his “abstract opponents” great agency over *L’Humana fragilita* and dubiously aligns them with the more traditional deific powers of the story. These two case studies (Mossey’s interpretation of *Ormindò* and Ringer’s assessment of *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*), by conflating allegories and deities, pose a logical contradiction unless one holds the problematic stance that all deities are inherently allegorical or vice versa.

Carefully defining the difference between an allegory and a deity provides a possible solution to this dilemma. In its most general sense, an allegory is simply a semiotic icon that represents something else.⁹ For the representation to be comprehensible, the allegory must express qualities like unto whatever is being represented, preferably to the greatest extent possible. Thus, an allegorical character named “Destiny” should possess the power to determine (or at least foreknow) the eventuality of a person or situation. In contrast, a deity does not represent anything; a god or goddess may be represented (through art, etc.), but he or she exists without reference to an outside force. Across the many religions of the world, deities are either omnipotent or claim absolute sovereignty over their allotted domains. The domains over which non-omnipotent deities reign are often similar to the subjects of allegories as in Athena, the Greek goddess of Wisdom; Anubis, the Egyptian god of Death; or Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of Prosperity. In short, a god or goddess may rule over the subject of an allegory, but, presumably, the allegory has no power over a deity.

II. Meaning in the Libretto

With the above concepts in mind, the various allegories and deities of *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria* can now be compared and assessed. To this end, a close reading of the libretto is necessary. The first step in separating the allegories and deities of *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*, is to realize that the characters’ very names suggest that such action is necessary. The allegories’ names, though rooted in long-standing dramatic convention, are rather general, while the deities’ names are very specific:

⁹ For a summary of semiotic representation, see Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5–16; Thomas Turino, “Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircean Semiotic Theory for Music,” *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 221–55; and Thomas Turino, “Peircean Thought as Core Theory for a Phenomenological Ethnomusicology,” *Ethnomusicology* 58, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2014): 185–221.

Table 1: A potential division of Allegories and Gods in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*

<u>Allegory</u>	<u>God</u>
Amore (Love)	Giove (Jove/Zeus)
Fortuna (Fortune)	Giunone (Juno/Hera)
Tempo (Time)	Minerva (Athena)
	Nettuno (Neptune/Poseidon)

An inspection of Amore's text potentially problematizes this seemingly obvious assignment:

<i>Dio, de' Dei feritor</i>	God, harmer of gods
<i>mi dice il mondo Amor</i>	the world calls me Love
<i>cieco saettator</i>	blind archer
<i>alato, ignudo</i>	winged, nude
<i>contro il mio stral</i>	against my arrow
<i>non val difesa o scudo.</i> ¹⁰	there is no defense or shield.

In many ways, this portrayal mirrors that of Amore in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. This character speaks of himself as a god, has wings, and threatens the use of arrows. Perhaps this character is, as before, the deity Eros. If this is so, it also suggests that the other characters of the prologue could be deities despite their missing names. Browsing the various Greek/Roman gods and goddess, rough equivalences can be found:

Table 2: Potential Deific Identities for Fortuna and Tempo¹¹

<u>Allegory</u>	<u>Potentially Equivalent Deity</u>
Fortuna	Tyche (Fortuna) – Goddess of luck, fortune, chance, and prosperity. In the Greek and Roman traditions, she is a fickle goddess; as such, any strange occurrence (good or bad) that could not be explained otherwise, was attributed to her whimsy. She is usually depicted as holding a cornucopia, rudder, the wheel of fate, or a combination of these.

¹⁰ Claudio Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, ed. Alan Curtis (London: Novello & Company Limited, 2002): Prologue. All translations are by the present author unless otherwise noted.

¹¹ See the entries for "Amor," "Cupid," "Cronos," "Eros," "Fortuna," "Saturnus," and "Tyche" in David Kravitz, *Who's Who in Greek and Roman Mythology* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1975); and Sabine G. Oswalt, *Concise Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1965).

Table 2 continued

<u>Allegory</u>	<u>Potentially Equivalent Deity</u>
Tempo	Cronos (Chronos, Kronus, Saturnus, etc.) – A combination of two different personalities: 1) The Greek god of the world and time; always shown with the sickle given to him by his mother Gaea, and 2) The Titan father of Zeus (Giove), depicted as an older man sometimes possessing wings. He usually holds a sickle or scythe due to his role as god of the harvest and the Earth.

If one does not accept Monteverdi's careful assignment of names as proof enough, then another key detail still militates against accepting these allegory/deity equivalences: Fortuna and Tempo are not presented with the telling iconography that graces Amore. Tempo has wings (*ho l'ali*) which are consistent with the Roman representation of Cronos. Tempo's tooth (*mio dente*) might be understood as a metaphor for Cronos's sickle, but this symbolism is not clear in the libretto. Moreover, Tempo references no duties to the harvest or Earth, nor does he mention his relationship with Giove. Fortuna clearly expresses the whimsy of Tyche:

<i>Mia vita son voglie, le gioie, le doglie; son cieca, son sorda non vedo, non odo Ricchezza, grandezze dispenso a mio modo</i> ¹²	My lives are desires, the joys, the pains; I am blind, I am deaf do not see, do not hear Riches, grandeur I dispense in my way.
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Yet, she does not carry a cornucopia, rudder, or wheel of fate.¹³

The actual deities of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* are far more carefully portrayed. Giove is described as possessing "idle lightning" (*fulmine ozioso*)¹⁴ and Giunone addresses him:

<i>Gran Giove, alma de'Dei Dio d'elementi, mente dell'Universo</i> ¹⁵	Great Jove, spirit of the gods God of the elements, mind of the universe
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Nettuno is hailed as the "great god of the salty waves" (*Gran Dio de'salsi flutti*)¹⁶ and "god of the sea" (*Dio del mar*)¹⁷. Minerva speaks of

¹² Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Prologue.

¹³ This absence of iconography in the libretto could, of course, be "corrected" through staging if desired by the director.

¹⁴ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act I, Scene 3.

¹⁵ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act III, Scene 6.

¹⁶ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act I, Scene 3.

¹⁷ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. Act III, Scene 6.

her own wisdom and demands that *Ulisse* show obedience to her divine will:

<i>È ben accorto Ulisse, ma più saggia è Minerva. Tu dunque, Ulisse, i mei precetti osserva!</i> ¹⁸	Ulisse is quite cunning, but wiser is Minerva. Therefore, Ulisse must observe my precepts.
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Even Giunone, who has an extremely small role in the opera, is heralded as Giove's sister and consort (*dell sommo Giove e sorella e consorte*).¹⁹ The deities' great clarity of character, and Fortuna and Tempo's general lack of clarity, forces a conclusion: rather than insist that Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo are gods in disguise, a simpler, more likely explanation is that, even in the seventeenth century, the imagery of Eros was so entwined with the concept of love, that Monteverdi's use of the arrows, wings, etc. arose out of custom rather than intentional reference to the Roman pantheon.

Finally, it should be noted that Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo only appear in the prologue alongside another allegory: L'umana fragilità. The entire prologue stands outside the plot itself, as is typical in Venetian opera of the seventeenth century.²⁰ As a result, the characters of the prologue represent, rather than perform, the actions of sentient beings (human or god). Thus, from the perspective of the libretto, Amore and his companions are more allegorical than deific.

III. Meaning in the Music

Just as the libretto distinguishes between allegory and god, so too does Monteverdi's musical setting. In this study, I will concentrate on just two items that help accomplish this separation: the use of recitative and sequences.

The case concerning the use of recitative in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* is a simple, but compelling one. Ellen Rosand points out that, in the opera, music acts as an analog for emotional outpouring; only those characters who possess strength of spirit can express themselves through singing (as opposed to reciting). Thus, she argues that heartbroken Penelope rarely sings and the "gluttonous parasitic" Iro cannot.²¹ They confine themselves to recitative, except at the end of the opera when Penelope sings for the first time after being

¹⁸ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act I, Scene 7.

¹⁹ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act III, Scene 5.

²⁰ Reba Wissner, "To Sleep Perchance to Sing: The Suspension of Disbelief in the Prologue of Francesco Cavalli's *Gli amori d'Apollo e di Dafne* (1640)," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 4, no. 1 (January 2010): 5–13.

²¹ Ellen Rosand, "Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and the Power of 'Music,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7, no. 3 (November, 1995): 180–82.

reunited with Ulisse. Concerning the deities of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Rosand says:

A whole other group of characters finds music a natural vehicle of expression—or at least as natural as a heavenly chariot: the gods, Minerva, Neptune, Jove, Juno and Mercury. But for them song is merely equivalent to flight, a supernatural attribute. They use it easily, not as an expression of feeling but for its extravagance, its opulent effect: roulades, elaborate passage-work and trills decorate their every word, displaying their natural superiority to mere mortal singers.²²

In short, Rosand associates the ability to sing with the expression of not only emotion, but power; a character that sings with great skill, does so, in part, to display their superiority over others who are not so skilled (and thereby not as powerful).²³ Rosand makes no mention, however, of the allegories in the Prologue. Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo also take to song naturally, and their music is equally rife with “roulades, elaborate passage-work and trills.” Furthermore, they never employ recitative; the allegories always have the strength to keep singing. The gods, on the other hand frequently employ recitative, especially Minerva. Are the allegories somehow superior? The sequences of the opera will aid in answering this question.

Sequences are extremely common in the music of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. Allegories and gods both use them, but the two do not use them in the same manner. Moreover, as will be seen shortly, these sequences not only make it possible to distinguish allegory from deity, but even differentiate, to an extent, between specific characters. For reasons which will become clear as this analysis proceeds, I will hereafter associate descending harmonic motion with confidence while ascending harmonic motion will denote uncertainty. Likewise, descending melodic motion will indicate negative emotions (fear, anger, despair, etc.) while ascending melodic motion will signify positive emotions (joy, love, enthusiasm, etc.). Consider this sequence which recurs (with varying embellishment) in each of L'umana fragilità's refrains:

²² Rosand, “Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*,” 182.

²³ Some authors have also associated Monteverdi's aria/recitative duality with the mind/body duality, arguing that a character's ability to sing is not only a means of emotional expression, but also a sign of mental activity beyond recitative. For a summary of this issue, see Kristen Duerhammer, “Cartesian Mind-Body Separation in the Characters of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*,” *Nota Bene: Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology* 3, no. 1: 34–46.

Example 1: Sequence in the role of L'umana fragilità²⁴

The musical score for Example 1 consists of two systems. The first system features the vocal line for L'umana and the Continuo line. The vocal line is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The lyrics are: "quel, quel mi com-bat - te, quel mi com-bat -". The Continuo line is in bass clef with a common time signature (C). Chord symbols are placed below the Continuo line: a, C, g, Bb, F, a, c. The second system shows the vocal line continuing with the word "te." and the Continuo line with chord symbols g, d, F.

This sequence displays three important attributes. First, it is generated through the process of melodic imitation between the two outer voices. Second, the overall melodic contour is descending. Finally, due to the aforementioned imitation, the harmonic motion also descends. Employing the taxonomy just mentioned, L'umana fragilità's descending melody indicates despair, and the descending harmonies symbolize confidence in her claims. Thus, L'umana fragilità is absolutely convinced of her doomed state.

Tempo does not use any solo sequences, but Fortuna and Amore do. Compare Fortuna's recurring sequence to that of L'umana fragilità, above:

Example 2: Sequence in the role of Fortuna. "X" indicates the location of a harmony that breaks the preceding sequence²⁵

The musical score for Example 2 consists of two systems. The first system features the vocal line for Fortuna and the Continuo line. The vocal line is in treble clef with a 6/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "Mia vi-ta son vo-glie, le gio-ic, le do-glic, le gio-ic, le do-glic, le do - glic;". The Continuo line is in bass clef with a 6/4 time signature. Chord symbols are placed below the Continuo line: d, G, C, F, X/d, G, C. The 'X' is positioned above the 'd' in the chord symbol 'X/d'.

The melody in this excerpt ascends, showing the amused caprice of Fortuna's character. Meanwhile the harmony descends, asserting that

²⁴ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Prologue. Strictly speaking, the bass pitch (E) in the fourth measure of this excerpt would have been harmonized as a C major triad due to the constriction that a sixth should harmonize any pitch functioning as "mi" in solfege. My intention in this circumstance is to highlight the bass motion.

²⁵ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Prologue.

Fortuna’s desires will be fulfilled, no matter how bizarre or random they seem. Amore uses two different sequences in conjunction:

Example 3: Double Sequence in the Role of Amore²⁶

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system is for Amore (voice) and Continuo (lute). Amore's part is in 6/8 time, with lyrics: "do, con - tro, con - tro, con - tro, con - tro_ il mio stral non val di -". The Continuo part is in 6/8 time with figured bass: "C a D b e C F d X c". The second system is for Amore (voice) and Continuo (lute). Amore's part is in 4/4 time, with lyrics: "fe - sa, non val, non val, non val di - fe - sa, non val, non val, non val di -". The Continuo part is in 4/4 time with figured bass: "A D G C". The third system is for Amore (voice) and Continuo (lute). Amore's part is in 4/4 time, with lyrics: "fe - sa_o scu - do.". The Continuo part is in 4/4 time with figured bass: "F".

Amore’s first sequence (on “contro il mio stral,”) carries both the melody and harmony upward, however, both melody and harmony in the second sequence (on “non val difesa”) fall two steps further than the initial sequence rose. Amore hints that L’umana fragilità can try to fight against her, but all effort is in vain; mankind will fall in love and will suffer for it.

In the final section of the prologue, Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo produce a sequence together, which they repeat several times. Here is one instance of it:

²⁶ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*: Prologue.

Example 4: Group Sequence for Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo²⁷

The musical score consists of eight staves. The first three staves are for Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo, each with a vocal line and lyrics. The fourth staff is for Continuo, showing chord symbols: E, A, D, G, C, X, A, D, G. The next four staves are for voices A, F, T, and Cont., with lyrics: 'mi-se-ro, tor-bi-do que - st'uom sa - rà - que - st'uom sa - rà.' and 'tor - bi - do que - st'uom sa - rà, que - st'uom sa - rà.'

The melody of this pair of sequences does not follow any consistent pattern of ascent or descent, though each voice takes a turn in its upper and lower registers. Meanwhile, the harmonies are very clearly descending. Thus, Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo might not agree on which one is the most important or powerful, but they are all certain that mankind is fragile, miserable, and turbid. The overall pattern is obvious: despite Amore's deception through an initial ascent, the sequences of the allegories, almost without exception, descend, as if their will was as inescapable as gravity.

The actual gods in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* have very few sequences compared to the allegories, especially when one takes into account their much greater stage time. More importantly, the god's sequences are of a very different nature from those of the allegories. The gods use both ascending and descending sequences, depending on what they are singing about. Take, for example this excerpt from Giove's response to Nettuno in Act I, Scene 4:

²⁷ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Prologue.

Example 5: Sequence in the role of Giove²⁸

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Giove and Continuo. Giove's part is in treble clef, and the Continuo part is in bass clef. Both parts are in common time (C). The Giove part has lyrics: "puoi da te stes - so ca - sti-gar, ca - sti-gar, ca - sti-gar l'ar - di - ti." The Continuo part has figured bass notation: "d G c a F". The notes in both parts ascend from left to right, illustrating an ascending sequence.

Both melody and harmony ascend in Giove's decree to "punish the brash." The melodic ascent, as discussed above, suggests that Giove feels righteous in his command. Yet, as also previously mentioned, an ascending harmonic sequence indicates uncertainty. Is Giove worried his order will not be followed? Or, is it an order at all? Concerning this excerpt, Mark Ringer writes:

Giove closes the scene with aggressively punctuated pronouncements that allow him to regain the musical semblance of omniscience, even though all that has really transpired is that he has acquiesced to Nettuno after the latter has played upon his insecurities.²⁹

In short, Giove is not as confident as he seems. Moreover, in spite of Giove's permission, Nettuno does not get the opportunity to complete the punishment he threatens. The Phaeacian ship does sink, taking all of its passengers to a watery grave, but Nettuno eventually concedes, allowing Ulisse to reclaim his throne. Thus, Giove's call to justice is not actually inevitable.

Another striking sequence is sung by Minerva while Ulisse is being transformed into an old man (Example 6). This sequence features a rather erratic melody, revealing Minerva's "outraged" (*oltraggiata*) state. It is supported by descending harmonies which, as before, speak of certainty. Minerva is most assuredly irate. One might also argue that the sequence begins one chord earlier on the harmony E minor. Such association with the word *regno* could imply that Ulisse's return home is inevitable, which indeed turns out to be the case. Notice that Minerva says "it remains to me to return Ulisse home" (*mi resta Ulisse ricondur in patria*). Yet, Minerva does not possess the authority to return him home on her own. To explain this claim, another look at the libretto is necessary.

²⁸ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act I, Scene IV.

²⁹ Ringer, 161–62.

Example 6: Sequence in the role of Minerva³⁰

Minerva
o - ra, o - ra, o - ra mi re - sta U - lis - se ri - con - dur in pa - tria, in re - gno; d'un ol - trag - gia - ta

Continuo

M
De - a, d'un ol - trag - gia - ta De - a, d'un ol - trag - gia - ta De - a que - sto, que - sto,

Cont.
6 # # # 6 # #
D - A D - G - D G

M
que - sto, que - sto_è le sde - gno, que - sto, que - sto, que - sto, que - sto_è lo sde - gno.

Cont.
6 # 6 #

IV. A Small Change with Significant Consequences

The final piece of this puzzle is the fact that there is a different version of the libretto for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* prepared by Badoaro but never set to music. This unset libretto is mostly identical to that used by Monteverdi, but there are exceptions, the most significant of which is the content of the prologue. As previously discussed, Monteverdi employs the characters Amore, Fortuna, Tempo and L'umana fragilità; the unset libretto instead contains Fato, Fortezza, and Prudenza, who present completely different dialogue than their Monteverdian counterparts.³¹ This issue will be explored shortly.

As of yet, no scholar has shown definitively which version of the libretto came first. It is possible that the unset libretto is the original, in which case, Monteverdi chose to completely rewrite the prologue for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. This would not be out of character for Monteverdi who was rather particular about the content of the librettos he set, as evidenced by his frequently quoted letter to Alessandro Striggio:

³⁰ Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*: Act I, Scene 7.

³¹ Ellen Rosand, *Monteverdi's Last Operas: A Venetian Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 139.

In addition, I have noticed that the interlocutors are winds, Cupids, little Zephyrs and Sirens: consequently, many sopranos will be needed, and it can also be stated that the winds have to sing—that is, the Zephyrs and the Boreals. How, dear sir, can I imitate the speech of winds, if they do not speak? And how can I, by such means, move the passions? Ariadne moved us because she was a woman, and similarly Orpheus because he was a man, not a wind[...] *Arianna* led me to a just lament, and *Orfeo* to a righteous prayer, but this fable leads me I don't know to what end.³²

Thus, I speculate that, if indeed Monteverdi's version is a rewrite, he found Badoaro's prologue characters somehow disinteresting or incapable of moving the passions. Furthermore, if the unset libretto is the original, then Monteverdi's prologue would surely be one of the issues that prompted Badoaro's famous comment:

We admire with great amazement such rich concepts, not without a certain trepidation as I cannot recognize the plot ["opera"] for my own anymore.³³

On the other hand, it is also possible that the unset libretto was a late alteration made by Badoaro to an already successful story. Whatever the case, this complete change in form and function of the prologue has profound effect on the understanding of the opera's plot, particularly in the interpretation of the gods and allegories. To avoid implying a known publishing order, I will hereafter refer to the operatic libretto as Monteverdi's and the unset libretto as Badoaro's.³⁴

Badoaro's prologue and that that set by Monteverdi, if different in text and character content, share a similar theme: namely, that humanity is subject to the will of higher power(s). Compare Monteverdi's version (discussed above) to this short excerpt from Badoaro's:

<i>A trionfar s'arma Fortezza in vano,</i>	To triumph, Fortitude arms itself in vain,
<i>A trionfar Prudenza humana è frale.</i>	To triumph, human Prudence is weak.
<i>Forza, senno, valor ben poco vale,</i>	Strength, wisdom, valor are worth little,

³² Paolo Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, trans. Tim Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 149.

³³ Giacomo Badoaro, undated letter to Claudio Monteverdi (I- Vmc, Ms. Cicogna 564): "Ammiriamo con grandissima meraviglia i concetti così pieni, non senza qualche conturbatione, mentre non sò più conoscere per mia quest'opera." Translation by Hendrik Schulze.

³⁴ Obviously, if the operatic libretto came first, then the prologue with Amore, Fortuna, L'umana fragilità, and Tempo was also technically Badoaro's work; I merely make this distinction to ease the discussion.

*Che se il Fato dissente, è tutto
vano.*³⁵

For if Fate dissents, it is all in
vain.

In this text, as Ellen Rosand points out, human fortitude and prudence stand as representatives of Ulisse, who, though known for both his strength of arm and great cunning, is still subject to the power of fate.³⁶ In a sense, Badoaro's Fortezza and Prudenza perform approximately the same function as Monteverdi's L'umana fragilità; meanwhile Badoaro's Fato, clearly has the upper hand in the same way that Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo command Monteverdi's prologue. Thus, one might argue that the two versions provide essentially equivalent material, thereby relegating any observable differences between these prologues to a study in mere aesthetic choice rather than a change in plot content. Yet, Badoaro's prologue is still important to the opera because it serves to clarify the role of Fate, bringing unity to the story as a whole. To observe this, consider this excerpt from Act III, Scene 5, in which Minerva asks Giunone to appeal to Giove on Ulisse's behalf. In doing so, she says:

*Il più forte tra' greci ancor
contende
col destin, con il fato:
Ulisse addolorato.*

The strongest of the Greeks still
contends
with destiny, with fate:
pained Ulisse.

This text is directly preserved in both Monteverdi and Badoaro's prologues with one small change, Monteverdi does not capitalize Fato's name. Here is a handwritten libretto after the manner of Badoaro's version; compare the lower case "f" on *forte* to the upper case "F" on *Fato* (Example 7). This might be taken as a copyist's error. Yet, it happens again in the following scene when Giove addresses Nettuno. The opera contains the text:

*Fu ministro del fato Ulisse, il
forte
soffrì, vinse, pugnò campion
celeste,*

Ulisse, the strong, was the minister
of fate,
suffered, won, fought as celestial
champion,

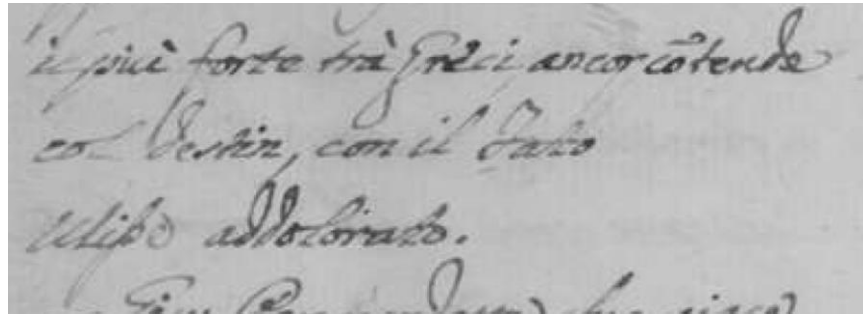
Yet, once again, Badoaro's version capitalizes Fato (Example 8). Giove's statement calls Ulisse the "minister of Fate," meaning that he acted on the authority of Fate, not the gods. Understood in this manner, Fato's authority is absolute, else Giove would not cite him as precedent, nor would Nettuno accept Giove's suggestion. Thus, in Badoaro's libretto, even the gods are subject to a greater power. Even if Monteverdi does not capitalize Fato in his opera, the gods in his plot still rationalize their actions according to the precepts set down by Fate itself. This directly contradicts the definitions of allegory and deity discussed previously: Fato must either violate the principle that

³⁵Translation by Ellen Rosand.

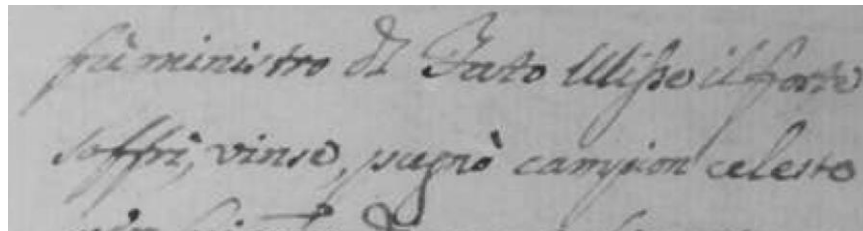
³⁶ Ellen Rosand, *Monteverdi's Last Operas*, 139.

allegories cannot rule over gods, or he must ignore the requirement that gods have more specific names than an allegory.

Example 7: From *Minerva's* plea to *Giunone*; scanned from a handwritten libretto for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* showing *Fato* with a capital "F" suggesting a name or title³⁷



Example 8: From *Giove's* appeal to *Nettuno*; scanned from a handwritten libretto for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* showing *Fato* with a capital "F" suggesting a name or title.³⁸



Conclusion

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria serves as a valuable proving ground for the differences between deities and allegorical characters in seventeenth-century Venetian opera. It is not my intention to imply that all other operas of the seventeenth century poorly portray such characters. Rather, I argue that the lines are often blurry and that some operas are more careful in such portrayals than others. *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* is interesting in this regard because, not only is the distinction between allegorical characters and deities reasonably clear, but the very plot of the opera is set in motion and directly motivated by the conflict between these two forces. Human characters are swept up in the tide as allegory and deity battle one another with the great operatic weapons of text and song. The final

³⁷ Claudio Monteverdi and Giacomo Badoardo, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, 1641, Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom, Rar. Lib. Ven. 11/16#15, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00047963/images/index.html?seite=00001&l=en>.

³⁸ Claudio Monteverdi and Giacomo Badoardo, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, 1641, Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom, Rar. Lib. Ven. 11/16#15, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00047963/images/index.html?seite=00001&l=en>.

stroke of this great clash comes from a character who does not even appear on stage: Fate itself. If we accept Badoaro's libretto, Fato is in control from the very beginning. Yet, if we prefer Monteverdi's version, fate still provides the final authority which permits the gods to send Ulisse home, overcoming the powers of Amore, Fortuna, and Tempo. It is my contention that further scholarship into the meaningful dramaturgical relationships between allegories and deities could reveal similar, hidden celestial conflicts in Monteverdi's other works as well as those of his contemporaries.

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