

Theology and Theatre in the Poems of Orlando di Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*

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Peter Bergquist's identification of a source for the Latin poems of Orlando di Lasso's enigmatic motet cycle *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* remains a landmark contribution to the literature.² On the ambiguous genesis of the Sibyl cycle he notes that "external evidence about the provenance of the poems should of course be taken into account in any attempt to resolve such questions."³ Bergquist's discussion of the transmission of the poems, the limited sketch of Sibylline tradition he provides, and his ultimate conclusions regarding the source of the poems have all had significant influence upon the direction and underlying assumptions of Sibyl cycle research since his report first appeared in 1979. The present study carries Bergquist's work forward, drawing from more recent interdisciplinary scholarship on Sibylline tradition and the prominent role it played in Renaissance culture.⁴ In this essay our primary goal is to elucidate the constellation of prophetic utterances originating in Italian humanist culture that stands directly behind

1 Text by Marjorie Roth. English translation of the Italian poems by Amerigo Fabbri. An abridged version of these translations first appeared in Marjorie Roth, "The Voice of Prophecy: Orlando di Lasso's Sibyls and Italian Humanism" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 2005), 386–98.

2 See Peter Bergquist, "The Poems of Orlando di Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* and Their Sources," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32 (1979): 516–38. The twelve six-line Latin poems with a three-line prologue are unique in music history to Lasso's cycle. No other musical settings are known.

3 Bergquist, "The Poems," 529.

4 A general summary of Sibylline prophecy from antiquity through the Renaissance can be found in Roth, "The Voice of Prophecy," 40–238. Appendix 2 of this study summarizes some of the most complete and influential lists of Sibyls available during the Renaissance. For a special focus on the early Renaissance see Robin Raybould, *The Sibyl Series of the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

the Latin poems of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*.⁵ Secondary considerations include reassessing some long-standing assumptions regarding the origin, genre, and performance context of the Sibyl cycle in light of new information about the poems and their history.

Appendix 1 provides a set of tables designed to facilitate comparison of the Latin poems Bergquist discovered to the earlier Italian sources from which they evolved. Presented in this Appendix, arranged by Sibyl and in chronological order, are the original texts and English translations of the following:

1. The earliest known set of prophetic epigrams, in Latin, that accompanied images of the twelve Renaissance Sibyls as they appeared on the walls of Cardinal Giordano Orsini's *camera paramenti* at Palazzo Monte Giordano in Rome, c.1420s or early 1430s. Orsini's epigrams in appendix 1 are taken from Baccio Baldini's set of engravings (see number 4, below).⁶ The version of each Orsini epigram that appears in Filippo de Barbieri's treatise on the Sibyls from the 1480s follows.⁷

5 The clear connection between all twelve of Lasso's Latin poems and an earlier Italian theatrical source was established in 2005 (see Roth, "Voice of Prophecy," 133–47, and 389–98) and presented in a paper read at the national meeting of the American Musicological Society in Washington, D. C. that same year. An expanded version of the AMS paper can be found in Marjorie Roth, "Prophecy, Harmony, and the Alchemical Transformation of the Soul: The Key to Lasso's Chromatic Sibyls," in *Music and Esotericism*, ed. Laurence Wuidar (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 50–58. Robin Raybould came to the same conclusion in *The Sibyl Series*, although without appearing to be aware of my earlier research and publication (see Raybould, *The Sibyl Series*, 133–35).

6 Orsini was one of Rome's earliest humanists. The *camera paramenti* was an entrance hall in his palace, in which he displayed his liturgical vestments and related items. Orsini is responsible for expanding the traditional number of Sibyls first mentioned by Varro (first century BC) and later transmitted by Lactantius (*Divine Institutions*, fourth century AD) from ten to twelve. To the ancient list—including Persica, Libyca, Delphica, Cimmeria, Erythraea, Samia, Cumaea, Hellespontica, Phrygia, and Tiburtina—Orsini added Sibylla Europaea and Sibylla Agrippa (possibly Sibylla Aegyptia; see Emile Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France* [Paris: Librairie A. Colin, 1925], 261, fn. 2). Each Sibyl was provided with a unique oracle, a detailed description of her costume, her age, the place of her birth, and the historical sources that mention her. The section of the palace at Monte Giordano that contained the *camera paramenti* was destroyed in the 1480s, but detailed manuscript descriptions of the Sibylline images, as well as the prophecy of each Sibyl, survive in Liège, Tongerlo, Olmütz, Brussels, Munich, Stuttgart, and Florence. These summary descriptions of the *camera paramenti* were probably offered by the Cardinal as diplomatic gifts when he traveled as part of a papal legation. For more, see Charles Dempsey, *The Early Renaissance and Vernacular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 122–35, and 210, fn. 2; and Raybould, *The Sibyl Series*.

7 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 220–25 and 270–316. Many thanks to professor Timothy Thibodeau for capturing the spirit of these Latin epigrams in English.

2. Art historian Charles Dempsey's reconstruction of a presumed "master list" of twelve Italian Sibylline prophecies in *ottava rima*, all of which are in fact enhanced poetic paraphrases of Orsini's Latin epigrams. These octaves, most likely written by Feo Belcari (1410–1484), served as a resource for dramatic representations and religious festivities in Florence and elsewhere as early as the 1440s and 1450s.⁸

3. The Italian Sibylline prophecies used in the prologue section of Feo Belcari's *La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunciata dall'Angelo Gabrielo*, c.1460s.⁹ Most of the Sibylline prophecies appear in full, eight-line form (some are abbreviated).

4. Engravings of the twelve Sibyls, which include both Belcari's Italian theatrical octaves in complete form and abridged versions of Orsini's Latin epigrams, executed by Baccio Baldini in the 1470s in the fine manner, and copied by Francesco Rosselli in the 1480s in the broad manner.¹⁰ [See appendix 3].

5. The Latin poems of Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, the earliest source of which is a posthumous Venetian edition of Filippo de Barbieri's theological treatise *Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Hieronymi et Augustini* (c.1495–1520). The poems are scattered throughout the sub-section of the treatise devoted to Sibylline prophecy with one chapter, one poem, and one image per Sibyl. They are Latinized hexametric paraphrases of Belcari's Italian octaves and are placed in Barbieri's treatise facing the Sibyl's image.¹¹ [See figure 1].

8 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 270–316.

9 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 117–206. The edition of Belcari's play used for this study is in Nerida Newbigin, *Feste D'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth Century Florence* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996), vol. 1, 1–44 and vol. 2, 240–53.

10 See Arthur Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* (London: B. Quaritch, Ltd., 1938). Baldini's Sibyls are discussed at length in Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 117–206 and Raybould, *The Sibyl Series*. In all these illustrations the Sibyl's name and her Orsini Latin epigram appear in the upper part of the illustration, on a banner, a book, or simply floating in the air beside her image. Belcari's Italian octave is beneath the image.

11 The date of this edition cannot be established exactly. Peter Bergquist gives a date of 1505, but various print catalogs suggest it may be as early as 1495 or as late as 1525. (See Bergquist, "The Poems," and Roth, "Lasso's Chromatic Sibyls"). The *Discordantiae* was written by the Dominican Inquisitor Filippo de Barbieri (c.1426–1487) and first published in Rome during the early 1480s, in two significantly different versions. The work originally comprised four separate treatises, one of them being devoted entirely to the Sibyls (or, in the second version, to both Sibyls and Prophets). Both were produced

The Source of Lasso's Latin Poems Revisited

Having established the Venetian edition of Barbieri's *Discordantiae* as the earliest source of Lasso's Latin poems, Bergquist goes on to trace the sixteenth-century sources in which they continue to appear up to and including the manuscript partbooks of Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*. Since each motet in the partbooks begins with an illuminated miniature of a Sibyl paired with a Christological attribute (e.g., the Hellespontic Sibyl has a cross, the Delphic Sibyl a crown of thorns) he also surveyed, briefly, the background of these iconographical pairings.¹² Bergquist's conclusion that Bavarian court artist Hans Mielich followed a northern illustrative tradition when matching Sibyls with attributes appears to be sound; Italian iconography of the Sibyls is for the most part quite different. His conclusion, however, that Lasso must have come across Barbieri's Latin Sibyl poems in a mid-sixteenth century northern source—and therefore could only have composed the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* at some point after that date—is less convincing.¹³ Example 1 summarizes the transmission of the Latin poems as outlined by Bergquist:

Example 1

- c.1495–1525: Filippo Barbieri, *Quattour hic compressa opuscula* (Venice: Bernardinum Benalium; first appearance of the poems)
- 1510: Filippo Barbieri, *Quattour hic compressa opuscula* (Oppenheim; reprint of the Venice edition)
- 1514: Filippo Barbieri, *Opusculum de vaticiniis sibillarum* (Oppenheim; separate printing of the Sibyl section of the treatise, *Sibyllarum de Christo vaticinia*, including the poems)

during the author's lifetime and neither include the Latin poems of the Venetian edition published after his death.

12 Bergquist, "The Poems," 523–26. The author cites here a German block-book based upon a lost model from Holland or Flanders. See Paul Heitz, ed., *Oracula Sibyllina*, facsimile ed. (Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1903). Studies of specific occurrences of the Sibyls in the visual arts since 1979 are too numerous to list here (see Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 317–64). A well illustrated overview, organized geographically, can be found in Hans de Greeve, *In de schaduw van profeten: Iconographie van de sibille* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2011). A digitized version of the manuscript partbooks of Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* ([Mus. Hs. 18.744](#)) is available on the website of the Austrian National Library. Scans 1 through 4 show the physical characteristics of the binding. The Sibyl cycle is the second work in the manuscript, beginning on scan 51.

13 Bergquist, "The Poems," 531.

- 1545: Xystus Betuleius (Sixt Birkin), ed. *Oracula Sibyllina* (Basel: Oporinus; Greek edition, the Latin poems appearing here appended at the end of the text under the title *Sibyllarum de Christo vaticinia*)
- 1555: Xystus Betuleius (d. 1554) and Sébastien Castellion, *Oracula Sibyllina* (Basel: Oporinus; bilingual Greek/Latin edition, the Latin poems appended as in 1545, under the title *Sibyllarum de Christo vaticinia*)

It is important to keep in mind that the text Bergquist favors ultimately as Lasso's most likely source is not an edition of Barbieri's theological treatise, in which Orsini's famous twelve Sibyls figure so prominently and in which their six-line Latin poems first appear. Bergquist's favored text is instead a scholarly edition of a sixth-century collection of Greek oracles first published in the West in 1545 under the title *Oracula Sibyllina*. These Greek oracles comprise eight books, each one a long-winded summary of world history reflecting the political and religious concerns of the time during which it was written (approximately the second century BC to the fifth century CE).¹⁴ Only a small portion of these oracles are Christian in origin. More importantly, they bear no similarity whatsoever in terms of length, form, or content to Lasso's Latin poems. Orsini's twelve Renaissance Sibyls do not appear together as a group in the *Oracula Sibyllina*, and the clearly Marian orientation of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*'s poems is absent from the Greek texts. In short, the relationship of Lasso's decidedly un scholarly texts to the sixteenth-century edition of the *Oracula Sibyllina* that Bergquist names as the composer's most probable source rests entirely upon the fact that the poems were appended to the *Oracula Sibyllina* by the printer, rather as an afterthought, following the main text of the 1545 edition. After the editor's epilogue, printer Johannes Oporinus provided this explanation for his decision to add the twelve poems to the publication:

14 For an excellent summary of the content, manuscript tradition, and history of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, see David Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). The distinction between the authentic (and mostly lost) Greek Sibylline Oracles of antiquity, the somewhat later but still ancient *Libri Sibyllini* consulted at Rome, and the sixth-century AD *Oracula Sibyllina* is discussed in Herbert William Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1988). Over time the number of books in the *Oracula Sibyllina* was expanded from eight to twelve (or fourteen).

Now when this little work was so far complete, some songs of various Sibyls, transcribed from a very old codex and now properly presented in Latin, were furnished to us by D. Gilbertus Cognatus, a learned man and a particular friend, which songs we thought worthwhile to include here.¹⁵

It seems clear that the editor of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, Xystus Betuleius, never intended these “songs” to be part of his publication. Perhaps he was unaware of their existence. Or, if he did know of them, he may have found the short poetic verses, so overtly Marian in tone, to be irrelevant to the historical/political orientation of his ancient (and presumed genuine) collection of Sibylline oracles.¹⁶ Interesting, too, is printer Oporinus’s remark that the poems he added were now being “properly presented in Latin.” Bergquist acknowledges that this remark suggests the poems are translations; but as he is unaware of any other source for them in any other language, he assumes they must be related to the Greek oracles of Betuleius’s edition. Comparison of Lasso’s poems with the *Oracula* shows, however, that this is not the case.

Although Bergquist is careful to say that no firm conclusion regarding the specific source of the Sibyl cycle’s poems can be drawn from the texts discussed in his essay, he was apparently convinced enough by Horst Leuchtman’s presumption that the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* would certainly have been published had it existed in 1555 to choose the latest edition of the *Oracula Sibyllina* as the most viable source of Lasso’s texts.¹⁷ Bergquist’s decision must have been influenced further by the fact that the publication of the 1555 *Oracula Sibyllina* was closest, chronologically and geographically, to the production of the Sibyl cycle manuscript at the Bavarian court

15 Oporinus, as quoted in Bergquist, “The Poems,” 529–30, fn. 32. “Absoluto iam hucusque opusculo, oblatis nobis sunt a D. Gilberto Cognato, viro et erudito, et amico singulari, diversarum Sibyllarum carmina aliquot, Latinitate iam olim donata, et ex vetustissimo codice descripta, qua hic subiicere operae precium duximus.” Many thanks to professor Charles Natoli for the English translation of Oporinus. Cognatus (1506–1572) was a humanist theologian, writer, and educator who served for a time as private secretary to Erasmus of Rotterdam. He died in prison under charge of heresy.

16 Certainly if Betuleius had been aware of their theatrical provenance, discussed below, that fact alone would have kept them out of his scholarly edition. It is perhaps significant that these poems also fail to appear in any edition of the *Discordantiae* published during the Barbieri’s lifetime.

17 Bergquist, “The Poems,” 521 and 531.

of Albrecht V in Munich.¹⁸ It must be mentioned, too, that at the time of Bergquist's essay the manuscript partbooks were believed to be in Lasso's hand. That assumption has since been disproved, raising questions about where the exemplar from which court copyist Jan Pollet worked might have originated.¹⁹ In any case, although Bergquist does concede that his choice is speculative, his clear preference for a northern source of the poems has dominated the literature since his report appeared. The result has been a general neglect of any serious investigation into possible Italian influences on the genesis and reception history of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, as well as a tacit agreement among scholars that the cycle—without doubt copied and illuminated in Munich—must also have been conceived and composed there.²⁰

Background to Lasso's Poems: Latin Epigrams and Theatrical Verses

In 2005 an Italian version of Lasso's Sibyl poems was identified, this being a set of theatrical engravings by Baccio Baldini produced at least twenty five years prior to the edition of Barbieri's *Discordantiae* in which the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*'s Latin poems first appear.²¹ Proceeding from Bergquist's assertion that the provenance of the poems must certainly shed light upon the cycle as a whole, the discovery that they stem from a long-standing tradition of Italian vernacular theatre suggests that Lasso's Sibyl cycle, too, might have been created for an Italian patron and a dramatic occasion. Accordingly, we must revisit some of Bergquist's observations about the background of the poems with respect to future investigation into

18 That the elaborately illuminated and beautifully bound manuscript partbooks were copied at the Munich court soon after Lasso's arrival there is certain. Whether the cycle itself originated there is still open to question.

19 Bergquist, "The Poems," 516; Helmut Hell, "Ist der Wiener Sibyllen-codex wirklich ein Lasso-Autograph?" *Musik in Bayern* 28 (1984): 51–64. If, as Hell asserts, Lasso's hand is not evident in the manuscript, then the exemplar Lasso provided for Pollet's use could have come from Italy, Antwerp, or some other as yet unknown location, since details of Lasso's whereabouts and activities prior to his arrival at Munich are scarce. See Roth, "Chromatic Sibyls," 46–49.

20 Many thanks to professor Donna Cardamone, who provided early encouragement to investigate Italian influences on the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*. Other scholars who have at least mentioned the possibility of an Italian influence and/or provenance include Boetticher, Therstappen, Leuchtman, Lowinsky, Cardamone, Haar, and Bergquist.

21 Roth, "Voice of Prophecy."

questions of origin, patronage, genre and contemporary performance possibilities.

On the authorship and first appearance of the Latin Sibyl poems in the posthumous edition of Barbieri's treatise, Bergquist has this to say:

The Venetian publication contains no indication of the source of the poems; they simply appear without further comment as a new portion of the pre-existing treatise. Any statement about their presumed author or date of composition is necessarily speculative, but it seems probable that they were written for this edition of Barbieri's treatise by an Italian humanist, most likely in Venice near the time of publication. They are not likely to predate the first edition of Barbieri some twenty years before, since the tradition of twelve rather than ten Sibyls was not very widespread in Italy earlier than that.²²

Research since 1979 indicates that the tradition of twelve Sibyls rather than ten was actually well-established by the 1480s; indeed it was widespread in Italy already by mid-century. Within ten or twenty years of their Roman debut in the late 1420s or early 1430s, Cardinal Giordano Orsini's dozen Sibyls turn up with increasing frequency in Italian art, theology, and theatre. Their unique set of epigrammatic prose prophecies appear in Italian sacred drama as early as the 1440s, albeit in the form of *ottava rima* verses (exactly those verses eventually converted into Latin for the Venetian Barbieri edition). By the 1470s Orsini's Sibyls and various versions of their prose epigrams had begun to spread to the north as well.²³ Barbieri's *Discordantiae*, then, does not so much introduce an obscure new configuration of Sibyls as it does instead reinforce an established Sibylline convention that infused popular and intellectual levels of Renaissance culture. That tradition continued to be especially lively in Italy throughout the sixteenth century, extending through the years Lasso lived and worked there.²⁴

We now know that Barbieri's unidentified Venetian editor was not,

22 Bergquist, "The Poems," 528.

23 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 132.

24 Lasso entered the service of Ferrante Gonzaga in 1542 and lived in Mantua, Palermo, and Naples while still a youth. In 1551 he moved to Rome and remained there until the summer of 1554.

as Bergquist believed, the “author” of the Latin poems; that is, he did not create them himself. He may, however, have been the one to convert them from Italian octaves to Latin hexameters. He was certainly responsible for inserting them into the posthumous edition of Barbieri’s *Discordantiae*, and although we cannot be sure of it, Bergquist’s conjecture that the editor had decidedly humanistic leanings seems likely. The obvious care taken to convert the Italian octaves into hexametric verse, the hexameter being the meter associated with genuine ancient Sibylline prophecy, hints at the historical tastes and tendencies of a humanist. Moreover, Barbieri’s treatise was from its inception infused with Italian humanism’s penchant for harmonizing pagan antiquity with contemporary Christianity.²⁵ Whether Barbieri would have approved the addition of the Latinized theatre verses can never be known. But by inserting them into a later print of the *Discordantiae*, the Venetian editor achieved an elegant fusion of antiquity with modernity, and of secular with the sacred. He brought Orsini’s Christianized Sibyls full circle, retrieving them from the sphere of popular drama and returning them to their roots in humanist theology, alluding simultaneously to ancient prophecy via the hexametric verse structure and to contemporary drama via the unique and recognizable content of the oracles.

The blend of theatre and theology we find inherent in the Italian Sibylline octaves echoes Orsini’s personal fusion of modern humanistic religious ideology with an old-fashioned tradition of prophetic drama; an echo still audible in the Latin poems of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*. Earlier Sibyllines were typically short oracular fragments in prose form, predicting a variety of gloomy events and assigned, with imperfect consistency by various medieval authorities, to random Sibyls.²⁶ Charles Dempsey has shown, however, that Orsini’s Sibyls, each paired with a newly-minted oracle unique to his series, embody perfectly the Incarnationist theology popular among the humanist churchmen of the Renaissance in Rome.²⁷ Orsini’s epigrams focus entirely on the Virgin; her beauty, her purity, her joy

25 The opening section of the *Discordantiae* is framed as a debate on the validity of prophecy from outside Christian tradition. The texts differ substantially from edition to edition but all reproduce Orsini’s Sibyls and epigrams, and all cite ancient pagan wise men like Plato, Virgil, and Hermes Trismegistus alongside Hebrew Prophets, Saints, and Church Fathers.

26 The only exceptions to this were the Erythraean and the Tiburtine Sibyls, around whom a substantial body of literature and legend had evolved prior to the Renaissance.

27 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 130–31, see especially fn. 19.

in motherhood, and her essential role in the incarnation of God on earth. Barbieri's treatise, which quotes these epigrams, is practically a recreation of the Cardinal's lost *camera paramenti* in book form.²⁸ The entrance hall at Monte Giordano served as a private *Ordo Prophetarum* for the Cardinal; that is, it extended a long-standing medieval musical-dramatic tradition involving Prophets and Sibyls into the decorative aspects of his private space. As such it provided a counterbalance to his equally famous *sala theatri*, the walls of which celebrated the human drama of world history in a frescoed cycle of *uomini famosi*.²⁹ The *camera paramenti*, with its cycle of Sibyls, provided a parallel glimpse into the spiritual drama of salvation history.

The web of Sibylline drama and theology leading up to and including the first appearance of Lasso's poems is compelling. Because the documentary evidence surrounding the genesis and contemporary performance of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* is virtually nil, the Italian theatrical background of the poems, with roots deep in humanist theology, must be welcomed as a significant contribution to the Sibyl cycle's reception history. Our new-found awareness of the dramatic provenance of the poems opens up new and fruitful possibilities for future research on the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum's* unconfirmed genesis and contemporary use. Until further documentary evidence emerges we must confine ourselves to informed speculation when probing these questions.³⁰ But the length of time Lasso lived in Italy, his

28 The treatise first appeared in the 1480s, coincident with the destruction of the *camera*.

29 Louis Mode, "The Monte Giordano Famous Men Cycle of Cardinal Giordano Orsini and the Uomini Famosi Tradition in Fifteenth-Century Art" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1970); Mode, "The Orsini sala theatri at Monte Giordano in Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly* 26 (1973): 167–172; Annelies Amberger, *Giordano Orsinis Uomini Famosi in Rom: Helden der Weltgeschichte im Frühhumanismus* (München & Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003).

30 Horst Leuchtman has suggested that the Platonic overtones inherent in a Sibylline topic can be connected to Albrecht V's interest in antiquity. See Horst Leuchtman, "Orlando di Lasso oder Die beseelte Verrücktheit. Zeit und Unzeit einer humanistische Musik," in *Orlando di Lasso: Musik der Renaissance an Münchner Fürstenhof*, ed. Horst Leuchtman and Helmut Hell (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert Verlag, 1982), 11–12. Reinhold Schlötterer has proposed that the motets of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* might have had some place in the lay Offices at Munich. See Reinhold Schlötterer, ed., "Prophetiae Sibyllarum," vol. 21 of *Orlando di Lasso, Neue Reihe* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1990), vii. I have connected the Neoplatonism, the prophetic topic, and the chromaticism of the Sibyl cycle to Italian Renaissance humanism (see Roth, "Chromatic Sibyls," 60–71). Further speculations on possibilities for Italian patronage can be found in Marjorie Roth, "Opportunity Lost: Christian Prophecy, Musical Magic, and the Road Not Taken in Counter-Reformation Rome," in *Early Modern Rome: 1341–1667. Proceedings of a Conference held in Rome, May 13–15, 2010*, ed. Portia Prebys (Rome: Edesai, 2012), 156–175.

documented interest in the theatre, and the significant ties we now know the texts of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* have to sacred drama, suggest that a reinvigorated search for southern influences and source material would be worth pursuing.³¹ The remainder of this essay will be confined to questions raised by our recently expanded awareness of the context from which Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* emerged.

The *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* and Its Prologue as Drama

Although the religious plays in which the Italian octaves first appear pre-date Lasso's Sibyl cycle by roughly 100 years, those dramas and their famous Sibylline verses were still popular during his youth in Italy and remained so throughout his lifetime. Beginning in 1528 Belcari's Annunciation play saw ten Italian editions during the sixteenth century, and another two in the seventeenth century.³² Barbieri's *Discordantiae* continued to appear into the sixteenth century as well. It is of course possible that Lasso was completely unaware of the sources and cultural associations of his texts when he first encountered them. It is much more likely, though, that wherever, whenever, and however he came across them, the young composer—no stranger to Italian theatre—would have recognized the dramatic essence as well as the specific text imagery of Baldini's dramatic octaves behind the Latin poems he eventually set to music in the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*.³³ The texts were easily identifiable as transformations of popular theatrical Sibylline prophecies, assigned to sacred "characters" that were as well known to audiences of the Renaissance as those of the secular *commedia dell'arte*.

The presence of a prologue, too, suggests that Lasso was thinking in terms of the theatre, and if so there are at least two viable possibilities as to how the Sibyl cycle might have been used within the context of sixteenth-century performance practice. First, it may have served as an *Ordo*

31 Lasso's use of chromaticism in the cycle may also have its roots in Italy. It is possible that the composer was present in Rome at the time of the famous chromatic debates, which were held in June of 1551 at the Palazzo Monte Giordano, the original home of Orsini's Sibyls. The debates were opened by Ippolito II d'Este, Vicentino's patron and himself a devotee of Sibyls and Sibylline prophecy. See Roth, "Opportunity Lost," 156–75.

32 See Alessandro D'Ancona, *Sacre Rappresentazione*, vol. 1 (Florence: Successori le Monnier, 1872), 167–89.

33 Lasso's interest in and exposure to the theatre during his years in Italy are discussed in Philip Weller, "Lasso, Man of the Theatre," in *Orlandus Lassus and His Time*, ed. Ignace Bossuyt, et al. (Belgium: Alamire, 1995), 89–128.

Prophetarum of sorts, a stand-alone work very much in the tradition of the old medieval prophecy plays. These dramas comprised a series of prophecies offered by a succession of familiar male prophets, usually those mentioned in the Bible but occasionally including a pagan or two who were sanctioned by the Church.³⁴ The last character to speak, however, was almost invariably a Sibyl. If Lasso did intend the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* to be a modernized version of the *Ordo Prophetarum*, then its chief innovations would have been the avant-garde style of his extended chromatic harmony and the fact that the named prophets in the cycle were exclusively female.

A second contemporary performance option would have been to use the entire cycle as the introduction to a larger dramatic representation, the prologue to a work very much like the Annunciation play by Feo Belcari from which the Sibyl cycle's poems were adapted. Theatrical works of this type consisted of two distinct elements, the most important of these being the dramatic "representation" itself; that is, the re-enactment of a sacred event such as the Annunciation or the Purification. In many cases, however, these re-enactments were preceded by a series of prophecies derived directly from the tradition of the old-style *Ordo Prophetarum*. The number of prophecies used, and the prophets chosen to speak, were variable, decided upon according to the needs of each individual performance.³⁵ If the Sibyl cycle was ever put to practical use in this manner, then any number of Lasso's consistently chromatic Sibylline oracles could have been sung as part of the introduction to any dramatic representation that required a series of prophecies to set up the story.³⁶ All twelve could have been performed or only just a few.³⁷

34 Virgil was always a favorite, in part due to his established connection to the Cumaean Sibyl who, in the poet's famous *Eclogue IV*, delivers an oracle that was understood during the Middle Ages to be a prophecy of Jesus. The number of sanctioned pagan prophets increased during the humanistic Renaissance, when "Plato Philosophus" was added to the list and assigned, in one edition of Barbieri's *Discordantiae*, a rather surprising prophecy. Beneath his image the text reads "Plato dicit: In principio erat verbum & verbum erat apud deum & deus erat verbum, usque ibi & verbum caro factum est."

35 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 143–44; and Newbigin, *Feste D'Oltrarno*, 1–30. Many thanks to Professor Charles Dempsey for sharing his expertise on the relationship of the prologues to the plays, and also for his observation that music was probably an important part of these prophetic prologues.

36 The feasts of the Nativity and the Annunciation were probably the most likely occasions for such plays.

37 Jessie Ann Owens has noted that the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* belongs to a time when composers were concerned with bringing out large-scale cycles that illustrated all or most

In either of the performance possibilities discussed above it is likely that the short, three-line poem that opens the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* in the manuscript partbooks would have been included. Although the name of the speaker does not appear, we can tell from the text that he is an authority on the subject of Sibyls and Sibylline prophecy; this group of Sibyls in particular, since in addition to confirming their traditional role in salvation history he also mentions their unique chromatic harmony.³⁸ In any case, since every prophetess in the cycle is carefully named and illustrated in the partbooks, it is impossible not to wonder why the speaker of the initial poem is unidentified, and easy to posit a few likely candidates. If we think of the Sibyl cycle in isolation, confining it to the scope of the Munich court at which the partbooks were produced, then it is logical to conclude that the speaker is Lasso himself, addressing his new patron Albrecht V. But if we think more broadly and consider the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* as part of a powerful Sibylline tradition that was celebrated in the art, theatre, theology, and folklore of Lasso's time—and most vigorously so in Italy—then the intended speaker of the prologue might instead be a figure of some importance within the theatrical and theological threads of Italian humanist culture, someone with well established ties to prophecy and to the Sibyls.

In earlier studies I have suggested Hermes Trismegistus as a likely candidate for the role, and have supported this speculation with theological and artistic precedent. Musical elements of the prologue hint at an unspoken understanding of Hermes as a likely speaker³⁹ and Barbieri's *Discor-*

of the eight modes. It may be that Lasso was aware of this trend when he composed the individual prophecies in the work, but given that he omitted modes three and five we need not assume that representation of the full range of modes was a serious consideration for him. Jessie Ann Owens, ed., "Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung, Mus. Hs. 18.744," in *Renaissance Music in Facsimile* (New York: Garland, 1986).

38 *Carmina chromatico quae audis modulata tenore/Haec sunt illa quibus nostrae olim arcana salutis/Bis senae intrepido cecinerunt ore Sibyllae.* (Prophetic songs that you now hear sung polyphonically to a chromatic tenor/they are [the songs] in which the twice-six Sibyls once sang with intrepid mouths/the mystery of our salvation). It was standard practice for the speaker in a Prologue to be an expert on the topic of the drama to follow and in most cases the identity was provided. Why the first character to speak in Lasso's Sibyl cycle is unnamed, and whether we should assume that only a single identity was intended, is a subject worthy of much discussion. For now it is sufficient to point out that in the single copy of the manuscript partbooks, and in the surviving remnants of the only print, no character is specified.

39 See Roth, "Chromatic Sibyls," 58–69; and Roth, "The Song of the Prophets: A Musical Model for Lasso's *Carmina Chromatico*," unpublished paper read at the joint National Meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory,

dantiae quotes Lactantius on Hermes and the Sibyls immediately prior to the series of Sibylline dossiers, prophecies, and images.⁴⁰ Hermes himself is cited elsewhere in Barbieri's commentary on pagan and Christian prophets, along with a wide variety of additional philosophers and magi accepted as credible by humanist Churchmen. There is theatrical precedent for the connection between Hermes and the Sibyls as well. Charles Dempsey has noted that in the San Giovanni celebrations of 1454, the *edifici* (parade floats) from which various characters delivered their lines included "many Prophets and Sibyls (*piu profeti e sibille*), together with Hermes Trismegistus and other Prophets of the Incarnation of Christ."⁴¹

Finally, the presence of a prologue in the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, and all we now know that presence to imply, gives us cause to re-evaluate the generic assignment of the Sibyl cycle. Prologues are common to dramatic and literary works, but not to motet cycles. Interestingly, Lasso's sons did not include the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* in the collected edition of their father's motets published under the title *Magnum opus musicum*; a telling omission, given the prestige bestowed upon the work by the opulence of the illustrated partbooks into which it was copied. The Sibyl cycle was published separately in 1604, six years after the composer's death (Nicolaï Henrici, 1600). The title page of the print mentions the composer and the chromatic style of the music, but it does not indicate a genre.⁴² It is worth considering that

November 4–7, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2010. My analysis explores the possibility of the speaker's identity being encoded in the harmonic language and in a borrowed musical model. An abbreviated version of this analysis appears as Marjorie Roth, "The Magic in the Music: Chromaticism in Context," in vol. 2 of *Music: Function and Value. Proceedings of the 11th International Congress on Musical Signification*, ed. Teresa Malecka and Malgorzata Pawlowska (Krakow: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie and Musica Iagellonica, 2013), 156–67. It is interesting to speculate that the speaker in the Prologue might be a fusion of Hermes and Lasso. In esoteric circles during the Renaissance the role of the alchemist and that of the composer would have been understood as similar in many respects. Both the composer of sacred music and the creator of gold would have had as their goal a tangible representation of spiritual transformation. Lasso's famous melancholy, too, would also have linked him to alchemy, which requires an excess of that humor in the practitioner. See Roth, "Chromatic Sibyls," 45–76.

40 Directly preceding the Sibyl section in the 1481 edition of the treatise is the title, "On the Testimony of the Holy Priest [Hermes] Trismegistus and the Ten Sibyls," taken from Lactantius.

41 Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 141–42 (quoting from Newbiggin).

42 The title pages of the cantus and bassus partbooks are reproduced in Schlötterer, "Prophetiae Sibyllarum", xxxv. The bass page reads: *Prophetiae Sibyllarum. Ab Orlando de Lasso, piae memoriae, musico exelentissimo, quatuor vocibus chromatico more,*

the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* does not appear in the *Magnum opus musicum* because Lasso's sons knew their father had conceived it as something else; as music for the theatre, composed in the long-standing tradition of prophetic drama from which the poems originally came.

Conclusion

The speculations offered here are intended to inspire new directions in research on Lasso's Sibyl cycle. There has been a recent surge of interest in the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* among performers. Several new recordings have appeared and ensembles are beginning to experiment with the possibilities inherent in the work's contextual ambiguity and harmonic oddity.⁴³ Scholarship, however, has been less adventurous. It is true that music theorists persist in probing the chromaticism of the Prologue; new and creative analytical strategies appear in the literature with heartening regularity. But in terms of exploring the Sibyl cycle's roots in Italian humanist culture, the shadow of the magnificent Munich partbooks and Peter Bergquist's determination of a northern source for the texts continue to loom large, stifling alternative speculation and investigation. The discovery of an Italian theatrical provenance for Lasso's Latin poems, however, and the myriad possibilities raised by that connection, should help to initiate a broader approach to the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, extending our reach into an ever-expanding range of contextual possibilities, resources, and geographies.

The most productive question to guide us into the future is not whether the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* "belongs" to Italy or Antwerp or Munich. We

singulari confectae industria. Et per Rudolphum, eius filium, ac serenissimi utriusq; Bavariae ducis Organistam, diligenti adhabita castigatione, Typus data. Bassus. Monachii superiorumpermissu. Ex officina Musica. Nicolai Henrici, Anno 1600. The publication was dedicated to Abbot Paul Widmann of Tegernsee, who became abbot in 1594, the year Lasso died.

43 When I began my research on the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* there were few recordings of the complete cycle, available only as LPs: one by Miroslav Venhoda and the Prague Madrigal choir (1964) was unavailable in the States, and one by Hans Ludwig Hirsch and the Münchner Vokalisten (1975) was problematic in terms of the performance. Since then, many excellent ensembles have recorded the cycle, with an interesting array of translations for the prologue in the liner notes. These include, but are certainly not limited to: Konrad Junghänel and Cantus Cölln (1994); The Hilliard Ensemble (1998); Roberto Festa and the ensemble Daedalus (2005); Walter Testolin and De Labyrintho (2006); Manfred Cordes and Weser-Renaissance Bremen (2009); Stephen Rice and the Brabant Ensemble (2011); and Daniel Reuss and the Vokalconsort Berlin (2015).

should instead ask what kind of patron and performance context would have been best suited to a work that combines sacred drama, Incarnationist theology, salvation history, pagan prophecy, avant-garde chromatic harmony, and a humanistic passion for antiquity? How might such a work be used in contemporary performance contexts? And what might it mean that in the only known sources of the cycle, the name of the first speaker is intentionally left to the imagination? The dearth of archival resources on the genesis and performance of an oddly chromatic motet cycle with a unique set of non-liturgical Latin poems that was composed specifically for the Munich court has persisted for just over 150 years. It may persist for many more. Or it may be that we have simply been looking for the wrong thing, in the wrong place. In any case, the poems Orlando di Lasso eventually set to music—now “properly presented in Latin,” as Oporinus observed—testify to the incredible power of Sibylline prophecy to transcend generic, linguistic, cultural, social, and intellectual boundaries during the composer’s lifetime. As scholarship on the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* moves forward in our own era, we should strive to continue in the ecumenical spirit of the cycle’s past.

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nes in antiquis annalibus famioe reperisse scriptum. Septima Cumana nomine Amalthea: que ab alio Erophile ne/ Demophile nominatur. Eam que noxem li-
beos suprafcriptos Tarquinio regi attulit. Odaa elepontica in agro Troiano na-
ta Vico Manello circa oppidum Gergetheum quam scripsit Heraclides ponti-
cus Solonis & Cuij fuisse temporibus. Nona Phrigia: que natiuita est Anoye.
Decima Tybura que & Tyburina dicta Enonime Alimeaeque Tyburi ut dea
colitur in xtrapiam Aniens. Caius in gurgite memorant simulacrum eius inuē-
tum fuisse teuens libum in manu.

Caput. iiii.

Sibylla persica. Quo tempore fuit nō
inuenitas. Eam tamen aurea ueste indutam & candi-
do uelo coopertam incessisse legitimus. Que de christo
hec prenunciavit: p̄nibus simul quinq; & duobus piscibus: ho-
minum milia in heremo quinq; satiabit: & reliquas tollens duo/
decim cophinos impleūt in spem multorum. Alio quoque in lo-
co sic ait. Ecce bestia concubaberis & gignetur dominus in orbē
terrarum: & gremium uirginis erit salus gentium: & pedes eius
inualitudine hominum: & inuisibile uerbum palpabitur.
Huius sibylle mentionem facit Nicanor: qui res gestas Alexan-
dri Macedonis scripsit.

Irgine matre satus: pandoresidebit
asello.

Lucundus princeps: unus qui ferre salutem
Rit e queat lapsis: tamen illis forte diebus
Multi multa ferent immensi fata laboris
Solo sed satis est oracula prode re uerbo
Ille deus casta nascetur uirgine magnus

Sequitur Schema.



Figure 1. Sibylla Persica from Filippo de Barbieri, *Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Hieronymi et Augustini* (c. 1495–1525). Reproduced with the permission of the National Gallery of Art Library, David K. E. Bruce Fund.

Appendix 1:
Brief observations of
linguistic, stylistic and metric nature

The poetic texts of the entire Sibyls cycle,⁴⁴ as illustrated in both Baldini's and Rosselli's engravings, present us with a peculiar use of the Florentine vernacular, the illustrious Tuscan Vulgar, the quality of which, for the most part, portrays a strong tendency towards a *modum loquendi* to be understood as humble, simple and reflective of the way in which ordinary people would express themselves.⁴⁵ This lowly style elicits a problematic linguistic stability throughout the Sibyls cycle, one that affects both the orthographic and grammatical structures of the texts, and it suggests that these texts have their origin in a widespread tradition of vernacular poetry diffused among ordinary and mostly uncultivated people, far removed from the sophisticated poetic exercises typical of intellectual circles and cenacles of the time. In fact, with the exception perhaps of the twelfth and last prophecy of the cycle—the Sibylla Agrippa—the language adopted to render the Sibyls' prophecies is surprisingly inelegant, not intrinsically lyrical, unsophisticated. The imagery is canonical but uneven, fundamentally doing away with the high poetic style, *sermo sublimis*, that, at this time, saw in the Latin works of Petrarch its undisputed champion. Among possible speculations that could justify this apparent conscious choice and voluntary use of a low poetic style, *sermo humilis*, the author's possible modest education does not provide sufficient literary exegesis. To be sure, there is no evident effort on the part of the author to implement what the linguist Roman Jakobson would define as "poetic function," where the beauty of a given text would entirely depend upon the elaboration of its linguistic form. On the contrary,

44 In order to avoid any possible confusion and, more importantly, to clarify a fundamental element in the scholarship on the subject of Sybils, readers should keep in mind that the expression "Sibyls cycle" refers to the particular set of theatrical writings and engravings from the fifteenth century, as discussed throughout Appendix I. The expression "Sibyl Cycle" adopted in Roth's preceding essay, instead, refers specifically to the sixteenth century musical cycle by Lasso.

45 This effort is consistent with Dante's understanding of a style of expression such as he described in his letter to Cangrande, *Epistole*, XIII, 10: "Ad modum loquendi, remissus est modus et humilis, quia locutio vulgaris in qua et muliercule communicant." ("With regard to the style, it is a gentle and humble style, because it is the vulgar language with which women communicate." My translation).

the Sibyls cycle offers its readers a language treated as a pure representational vehicle devoid of much intrinsic poetic and artistic value.

This should not be surprising, though, if we put this question in the context of mid-fifteenth-century Florence and its linguistic hybridism, the interplay between the Latin and Vulgar traditions. While the humanistic thrust towards the glory of Latin flourished in other parts of Italy (Ferrara, for instance), in Florence the situation was uniquely different, mainly due to the glorious literary experience of the so-called Three Crowns, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Humanist-Chancellors such as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni; humanist-professors such as Cristoforo Landino and Poliziano as well as Leon Battista Alberti: all were forced to maintain an open dialogue with the Vulgar tradition, one that could not be intellectually and socio-politically dismissed as it was elsewhere. In addition to this, it is essential to keep in mind that on the margins of lofty and academic discussions, merchants, preachers, theologians and writers of religious matters, in their sermons or in their writings, generally disregarded those intellectual disputes over the *latine loqui*, and they in fact demonstrated a linguistic sensitivity that was far more attuned to that *modum loquendi* mentioned by Dante, one that was closer to the everyday people. It should also be observed that, from the point of view of the history of the Italian language, Latin, being a highly receptive language in nature, allowed for creative opportunities of interchangeability of rhetorical and expressive registers between itself and the Vulgar in such a way to make it possible for the two languages to be organically grafted one onto the other. It was precisely within this socio-linguistic space that preaching found its fertile ground (or, for that matter, in the composition of sacred representations, which is the case in point here), which allowed those preachers and writers to reach effectively the lower classes of the population in Florence and elsewhere. It is in fact clearly documented in sermons of the period that there was a widespread tendency toward this linguistic hybridism, where Latin was often introduced as a tool for irony rather than distinction. And ultimately, this space can be understood as a matter of style: *humilitas* and *sublimitas*, where their organic interplay would bring together the low and the high, a hybrid that would permit the larger population to enjoy and understand the evolving rituals and their sacred representations. Again, Dante enlightens this discussion reminding us that the beauty of language and the height of its significance might shy away from the *sublimitas* and still be appreciated in its simplicity: “Lucevan li occhi suoi più che la stella;

/ e cominciommi a dir soave e piana, / con angelica voce, in sua favella.”⁴⁶ It is Virgil who tells Dante of his encounter with Beatrice whom God had sent to him so that he could lead Dante through the three realms of the afterlife. And yet, her style, although being the Godly ambassador of a divine message to Virgil, is “soft” and “gentle” with no affectation or arrogance, suitable to be understood by anyone and directly speak to the heart.

To return to the Sybils cycle, if the language of the poetic text, in the entire cycle, is characteristically subordinated to its message, then we shall have to find proof of its narrative quality in its metric structure. It is indeed emblematic that all the twelve texts of the cycle are composed in *ottava rima*, the meter of narrative, epic or religious poetry (but, *nota bene*, not of lyrical poetry), because of its superlative evocative power to tell a story and graft it to people’s memory and their collective imagination. Such narrative force is found in works by Boccaccio, Pulci, Poliziano, Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso, Tassoni, and many others, who had all used the *ottava rima* in their epic poems and ignited the popular imagination with their stories. All across the Sibyls cycle, the rhyming structure of the *ottava rima* is in line with its tradition, each stanza presenting alternate rhyming hendecasyllables and a final couplet, as follows: ABABABCC. The only exceptions, however, are observed: a) in the text of the Sibilla Delficha in the Baldini fine manner (see footnote 52), where the engraver must have accidentally inverted the third with the fourth lines, forcing him to indicate such error on the left hand side by posting a capital letter A on the fourth line and a regular letter B on the third line to suggest the restoration of the rhyming structure; b) in the text of the Sibylla Tiburtina where the stanza is dramatically organized in rhymed couplets, as follows: AABBAACC; c) and in the text of the Sibylla Eritrea, where the stanza introduces unconventional verses in dodecasyllables. Finally, it should be noted that the *ottava rima* elicits declamation or recitation as a likely extension of its evocative power. In other words, with its overarching theme of the Virgin Mary who begot the son of God and with its narrative poetic style, the Sibyls cycle might have consciously aspired to tap into the collective imagery and be therefore conceived to carry performative qualities that would make such texts eligible to be recited on occasion of particular festivities and other public gatherings.

46 “Her eyes surpassed the splendor of the star’s; / and she began to speak to me—so gently / and softly—with angelic voice.” Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Books, 2004), “Inferno,” II, 55–57. All subsequent references to *The Divine Comedy* are from Mandelbaum’s translation.

Comparison of Texts and Translations⁴⁷

1. Sibilla Persicha

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Ecce filius Dei belluam equitans Dominus universi cuius quias gentium salutis in Virgine erit et fiet nobis hoc verbum palpabile.

Behold the Son of God—equal to the beast—the Lord of all the universe, because the salvation of all nations shall be in the Virgin, and this word shall be palpable for us.

Barbieri Version:

Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur Dominus in orbem terrarum: et gremiu Virginis erit salus gentium: et pedes eius in valitudine hominum: et invisibile verbum palpabitur.

Behold the beast that will be trampled under foot, and the Lord shall arise throughout the world, and the lap of the virgin shall be the salvation of the nations, and her feet, the health of men, and the word shall be invisibly made palpable.

47 The Latin Orsini epigrams and speculative reconstructions of the original Italian Sibylline octaves are taken from Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 271–316. Many thanks to Dr. Timothy Thibodeau for capturing the spirit of these epigrams in English. The Baldini and Rosselli Italian octaves are taken from A. M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* (London: B. Quartich, Ltd., 1938). The Italian texts of Belcari's *Rappresentazione* are from Newbigin, *Feste d'Oltrarno*, 240–42. The Barbieri/Lasso Latin poems and English translations are taken from Bergquist, "The Poems," 532–37. English translations of, and commentary to, the Italian texts are by Amerigo Fabbri (M. Roth).

*Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings*⁴⁸

Eccho per chui la bestia chonchulchata	<i>Behold Him by whom the beast trampled upon</i>
sara e fia concepto el sir gochondo	<i>shall be, and the serene Lord shall be conceived.</i>
el grenbo della vergine beata salute fia della gente del mondo	<i>The womb of the Blessed Virgin shall be the salvation of the people of the world.</i>
saranno e piedi suo di questa nata fortezza da sostenere ogni pondo	<i>The feet of He who was born of her shall have the strength to support any burden.</i>
vanticinare una parola basta Christo Gesu nascera della chasta.	<i>To prophesize one word is enough: Jesus Christ shall be born of such a chaste Virgin.</i>

48 It should be noted here that the texts in vernacular Italian of the twelve Sibyls are interpreted and copied from the texts in both the Baldini fine manner engravings and the Rosselli broad manner copies of Baldini (Rosselli was also a Florentine engraver and a cartographer). When available, texts from the Florentine poet Feo Belcari are also included. These texts, although very similar, present, at times, some variations. The purpose of this translation is not to offer a critical edition of the above-mentioned texts; therefore, the reader will be spared from reading a flurry of footnotes documenting subtle, although often meaningful, discrepancies. Rather, and more importantly, I believe, these texts present us with a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the consistency of the overarching cultural background at a given moment in time, especially with regard to sacred representations and/or religious/theological matters. However, in matters of transliteration, I deem it critically important that it be paleographically accurate in order to determine at once both the language, style, and the poetic message conveyed by the engravings. It is with this in mind that I wish to make reference to a recent book by Robin Raybould, *The Sibyl Series of the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), in which the author studies the “change that occurred in the representation of the sibyls throughout Europe during the early Renaissance.” In Appendix I, Raybould systematically and authoritatively analyzes one by one all the sibyls and their texts. Unfortunately, he offers only one translation for both Baldini’s fine manner and Belcari’s texts claiming that they “are similar and require only one translation [...]” And what is most concerning is that the transliteration of the texts in the entire cycle appears to be inaccurate in many of its parts, and in some cases patently erroneous (in which case it will be documented in a footnote), even though it should be conceded that only rarely does the general sense of his translations suffer from the author’s faulty transliteration or incorrect reading of the Italian.

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Persica

Ecco per cui la bestia chonchulchata sara e fia concepto el sir gocondo	<i>Behold Him by whom the beast trampled upon shall be, and the serene Lord shall be conceived.</i>
el grenbo della vergine beata salute fia della gente del mondo	<i>The womb of the Blessed Virgin shall be the salvation of the people of the world.</i>
saranno e piedi suo di questa nata forteza a sostenere ongni gran pondo	<i>The feet of He who was born of her shall have the strength to support any great burden.</i>
vaticinare una parola basta Christo iesu nascera della casta.	<i>To prophesize one word is enough: Jesus Christ shall be born of such a chaste Virgin.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Ecco per cui la bestia conculcata	<i>Behold Him by whom the beast trampled upon</i>
sarà, e fia concetto el Sir giocondo:	<i>shall be, and the serene Lord shall be conceived.</i>
il grembo della Vergine beata salute fia della gente del mondo:	<i>The womb of the Blessed Virgin shall be the salvation of the people of the world.</i>
saranno i piedi suoi, di questa nata, forteza da sostenere ogni pondo.	<i>The feet of He who was born of her shall have the strength to support any burden.</i>
E mostrerà in quel tempo segni assai:	<i>And in that time, He shall show many signs:</i>
simil la terra e 'l ciel non ebbe mai.	<i>Heaven and Earth never had anyone equal to Him.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunciata
dall'angelo Gabriello

*The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation
from Angel Gabriel*

Sibilla Persica (Newbiggin, 1996)

Ecco la bestia sarà conculcata

e fia concetto il gran Signor
giocondo.

Il grembo della Vergine beata
salute fia della gente del mondo.

Saranno i piedi suoi, di questa nata,
fortezza a sostenere ogni gran
pondo.

*Behold Him by whom the beast
trampled upon*

*shall be, and the serene Lord shall
be conceived.*

*The womb of the Blessed Virgin
shall be the salvation of the people
of the world.*

*The feet of He who was born of her
shall have the strength to support
any great burden.*

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Persica

Virgine matre satus, pando
residebit asello,

Iucundus princeps, unus qui ferre
salutem

Ritè queat lapsis: tamen illis fortè
diebus

Multi multa ferent, immensi fata
laboris.

Solo sed satis est oracula prodere
verbo:

Ille Deus casta nascetur virgine
magnus.

*The son of a virgin mother shall sit
on a crook-backed ass,*

*the joyful prince, the only one who
can rightly bring*

*salvation to the fallen: but it will
happen in those days that*

*many shall tell many prophecies of
great labor.*

*But it is enough for the oracles to
bring forth with a single word:*

*That great God shall be born of a
chaste virgin.*

2. Sibilla Libica

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Ecce venientum diem et latentia aperientum tenebit gremio gentium regina.

Behold the day that is coming and the rejoicing that will be maintained from the lap of the queen of nations.

Barbieri version:

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit Dominus condensa tenebrarum: et solventur nexus Sinagoge: et desinent labia hominum cum viderint regem viventium: et tenebit illum in grembo virgo domina gentium: et regnabit in misericordia: et uterus matris eius erit statera cunctorum: inde in minibus [manibus] iniquias veniet et dabunt Deo alapas minibus [manibus] incestis miserabilis et ignominiosus erit miserabilisque spem prebebit.

Behold the day is coming, and the Lord will illumine the thick darkness, and the bonds of the Synagogue will be dissolved, and the lips of men will cease speaking when they see the living King, and the Virgin Lord of the nations shall hold him in her lap, and he shall reign in mercy, and the uterus of his mother shall be the standard of equity for all things: thence he shall come to the unjust hands and they shall give to God slaps with their incestuous hands, and it shall be miserable and disgraceful, and the miserable one shall give hope.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Il di verra chell'eterno Signore	<i>The day shall come in which the eternal Lord</i>
lume dara alle chose naschose ⁴⁹ e legami iscora ⁵⁰ del nostri eppure	<i>shall cast light on all hidden things as well as a shadow on all ties to our sin.</i>
fara le sinagoge luminose e solvera le lab[bra] al pechatore	<i>He shall give light to the synagogues, and shall loosen the lips of the sinners,</i>
e fie stadera di tutte le chose	<i>and He shall be measure of everything.</i>
en grenbo alla r[eg]ina delle giente	<i>In the lap of the Queen of Nations</i>
sedra questo re santo e vivente. ⁵¹	<i>Such a holy living king shall sit.</i>

49 It is almost certain that the author of this cycle has Dante's *Commedia* in mind as he adopts the two rhymed words *chose* and *naschosc* in the same hendecasyllable. Dante, in fact, had used these two words to construct the rhyming chain of his *terza rima* in this same succession in "Purgatorio" XXII, 28–30; XXXI, 34–36; XXXIII, 121–123, and "Paradiso" XV, 38–40. It should also be noted that in "Purgatorio" XIV, 25–27, they appear in reversed order, where *naschosc* rhymes with its subsequent *cose*, while in "Paradiso" XVII, 94–96, the word *chiosc* (which means "commentary" and it is entirely a different word from the nouns *chosc* or *cosc*) rhymes with *naschosc*.

50 *Ischora* should be interpreted as third singular person of the present indicative of the verb *scurare* in its obvious archaic form. In the Tuscan vernacular, still to this day, clusters such as *sco-* and *scu-* are interchangeable, and the addition of *i-* at the beginning of consonant clusters of the type *s+consonant* is not infrequent, and it is meant to add emphasis.

51 The omissions of parts of the words *lab[bra]* and *r[eg]ina* in the Baldini fine manner does not invalidate the syllabic count of the two hendecasyllables where they occur. Because the structure of two verses is perfectly preserved in spite of the truncations, it could be claimed that the engraver was not copying from a text, and that he knew the text from memory.

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Libica

Il di verra chell'eterno Signore	<i>The day shall come in which the eternal Lord</i>
lume dara alle cose nascose	<i>shall cast light on all hidden things</i>
e legami iscora del nostro errore	<i>and a shadow on all ties to our sin.</i>
fara le sinagoge luminose	<i>He shall give light to the synagogues,</i>
e solvera le labra al pechatore	<i>and shall loosen the lips of the sinners,</i>
e fie stadera di tutte le chose	<i>and He shall be measure of everything.</i>
en grenbo alla reina delle gente	<i>In the lap of the Queen of Nations</i>
sedra questo re santo e vivente.	<i>Such a holy living king shall sit.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Ecco che presto ne verrà quel die che lucerà le tenebre serrate,	<i>Behold the day shall soon come that shall cast light on the deep darkness,</i>
e scioglieransi nodi e profezie della gran sinagoga, e rilasciate	<i>and bonds and prophecies of the great synagogue shall be undone, and loosened</i>
saran le labbra delle gente pie: vedrassi il Re de' viventi, e palpate	<i>shall be the lips of the pious people: the King of the living shall appear, and caressed</i>
saran sue membra in grembo a Vergin vera,	<i>shall be his limbs in the lap of the true Virgin,</i>
e 'l ventre suo fia di tutti stadera.	<i>and her womb shall be measure of all things.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunciata
dall'angelo Gabriello

*The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation
from Angel Gabriel.*

Sibilla Libica (Newbiggin, 1996)

Ecco che presto ne verrà quel die
che lucerà le tenebre serrate,

e scioglieransi nodi e profezie
della gran sinagoga, e rilasciate

saran le labbra delle gente pie.

Vedrassi il Re de' viventi, e
palpate

saran sue membra in grembo a

Vergin vera,

e 'l ventre suo fia di tutti stadera.

*Behold the day shall soon come
that shall cast light on the deep
darkness,*

*and bonds and prophecies
of the great synagogue shall be
undone, and loosened*

*shall be the lips of the pious people:
the King of the living shall appear,
and caressed*

*shall be his limbs in the lap of the
true Virgin,
and her womb shall be measure of
all things.*

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Libyca

Ecce dies venient, quo aeternus
tempore princeps,
Irradians sata laeta, viris sua
crimina tollet,
Lumine clarescet cuius synagoga
recenti:
Sordida qui solus reserabit labra
reorum,
Aequus erit cunctis, gremio rex
membra reclinet
Reginae mundi, sanctus, per
saecula vivus.

*Behold the days will come, at which
time the immortal prince,
sowing abundant crops, shall take
away their crimes from men,
whose synagogue will shine with
new light;
he alone shall open the soiled lips of
the accused,
he shall be just to all; let the king,
holy, living for all ages,
recline his limbs in the bosom of the
queen of the world.*

3. Sibilla Delficha

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Nascetur propheta e virgine absque humana corruptione.

A Prophet shall be born of a virgin, without human corruption.

Barbieri version:

Nascetur propheta absque matris coitu ex virgine eius.

A Prophet shall be born of a virgin, without human corruption.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Non e da eser lenta ma tranquilla aver tal opera e chonsiderare	<i>One should not be slow but calm in fulfilling such a mission and in considering</i>
B dove 'l profeta grande a incharnare	<i>the event that the high city shall deliver,</i>
A l'avenimento che alta villa ⁵²	<i>where the great prophet shall become incarnate</i>
nel ventre verginal d'uman ancilla	<i>in the virginal womb of a human handmaid:</i>
sanza congiunto d'uom mortal sa fare	<i>without union with mortal man this shall be accomplished.</i>
eccho tal chosa fie sopra natura	<i>Behold this shall be a thing above nature,</i>
fatta per chuel che puo che Idio dara ⁵³	<i>done by the one who shall be able to give birth to God.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Delphica

Non e da eser lenta ma tranquilla havendo un tanto effecto a contenplare a cui pensando el cor lieto sfavilla	<i>One should not be slow but calm in having to contemplate such an effect, thinking of which, the heart happily rejoices</i>
nel gran propheta el qu[a]l debbe incarnare	<i>in the great prophet who shall become incarnate</i>
nel ventre virginal di humana ancilla	<i>in the virginal womb of a human handmaid.</i>
senza congiunto d'uomo mortal sa fare	<i>She shall accomplish this without union with mortal man.</i>
ecco tal cosa fia sopra natura	<i>Behold this shall be a thing above nature,</i>
facta per quel che l'universo ha in cura.	<i>done by the one who reigns over the universe.</i>

52 In the introduction to these translations, I had observed that the third and fourth hendecasyllables should be inverted, as suggested by the engraver with the letters *A* and *B* on the left hand side. This reversal was not informed by stylistic considerations, but it became necessary (and was clearly felt as such) to reestablish the rhyming structure of the *ottava rima* in its traditional pattern ABABABCC.

53 This final hendecasyllable is another example of how vigorously the language of poetry was influenced by Dante. Suffice it to mention three verses from the "Divine Comedy," three among many other examples, where the syntactic structure used by Dante serves as model in both the fine and broad manners of the *Sibylla Delphica*: "La mente, che qui luce, in terra fumma; / onde riguarda come può là giùe / *quel che non pote perché 'l ciel l'assumma,*" emphasis added. ("The mind, bright here, on earth is dulled and smoky. / Think: how, below, can mind see that which hides / even when mind is raised to Heaven's height?") "Paradiso" XXI, 100–102.

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Non è da esser lenta, ma tranquilla.	<i>One should not be slow but calm</i>
Averta l'opera e considerare	<i>in fulfilling such a mission and in considering</i>
l'avenimento, che <è> alta villa	<i>the event that the high city shall deliver,</i>
dove 'l profeta grande ha incarnare	<i>where the great prophet shall become incarnate</i>
nel ventre verginal d'uman ancilla,	<i>in the virginal womb of a human handmaid:</i>
senza congiunzio d'uom mortal s'<ha> fare.	<i>without union with mortal man this shall be accomplished.</i>
Nascer debbe il profeta senza coito	<i>The prophet is to be born with no maternal coitus:</i>
di madre: d'una Vergine è 'l suo introito.	<i>He shall be the fruit of a Virgin's womb.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata
dall'angelo Gabriello

*The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation
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Sibylla Delphica (Newbiggin, 1996)

Nascer debba il profeta senza coito	<i>The prophet is to be born with no maternal coitus:</i>
di madre: d'una Vergine è 'l suo introito.	<i>He shall be the fruit of a Virgin's womb.</i>

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Delphica

Non tarde veniet, tacita sed
 mente tenendum
Hoc opus. hoc memori semper
 qui corde reponet,
Huius pertentant cur gaudia
 magna prophetae
Eximii, qui virginea conceptus ab
 alvo
Prodibit, sine contactu maris.
 omnia vivit
Hoc naturae opera: ad fecit, qui
 cuncta gubernat.

*Behold the days will come, at which
 time the immortal prince,
sowing abundant crops, shall take
 away their crimes from men,
whose synagogue will shine with
 new light;
he alone shall open the soiled lips of
 the accused,
he shall be just to all; let the king,
 holy, living for all ages,
recline his limbs in the bosom of the
 queen of the world.*

4. *Sibilla Chimicha*

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

In pueritia sua cum facie pulcherrima puerum nutrit suo lacte id est lacte celitus misso.

In his boyhood, with the most beautiful face, she will nourish the boy with her milk: that is, with the milk sent from heaven.

Barbieri version:

In prima facie virginis ascendit puella pulchra facie, prolixa capillis: sedens super sedem stratam: nutrit puerum, dans ei ad comedendum ius proprium: id est, lac de caelo missum.

In the first appearance of the virgin, a girl with a beautiful face shall arise, with broad hair, sitting on the solid seat, she nourishes the boy, giving him what is properly his to eat: that is, milk sent from heaven.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Una vergine santa in puerizia	<i>A holy virgin in her youth</i>
cholla sua faccia groriosa e bella	<i>with her glorious and beautiful face</i>
notrira re dell'eterna milizia	<i>shall nourish the king of the eternal</i>
	<i>army</i>
e ber del latte suo gli dara quella	<i>and her milk to drink she shall give</i>
	<i>him,</i>
per la chui si vedra l'alta letizia	<i>she by whom the great delight shall</i>
	<i>be delivered.</i>
sopra a vittoria l'e la santa istella	<i>Above, as a sign of victory, there</i>
	<i>shines the holy star,</i>
e sara visitata da choloro	<i>and she shall be visited by those</i>
che gli offerranno incienso mira	<i>who shall offer him incense, myrrh,</i>
e oro	<i>and gold.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copies of Baldini

Sibylla Chimicha

Una vergine santa in pueritia	<i>A holy virgin in her youth</i>
colla sua faccia gloriosa e bella	<i>with her glorious and beautiful face</i>
nutrirà el re dell'eterna militia	<i>shall nourish the king of the eternal</i>
	<i>army</i>
et ber del lacte suo gli dara quella	<i>and her milk to drink she shall give</i>
	<i>him.</i>
per lui sol si vedra l'alta letitia	<i>Because of him alone the great</i>
	<i>delight shall be delivered,</i>
per lui risplendera la nuova stella	<i>Because of him the new star shall</i>
	<i>shine.</i>
et sara vicitata da choloro	<i>And she shall be visited by those</i>
che gli offerranno incenso mirra	<i>who shall offer him incense, myrrh,</i>
et oro	<i>and gold.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Una Vergine Santa in puèrizia,	<i>A holy virgin in her youth</i>
colla sua faccia gloriosa e bella,	<i>with her glorious and beautiful face</i>
nutrirà il Re dell'eterna milizia,	<i>shall nourish the king of the eternal</i>
	<i>army</i>
et ber del latte suo gli darà quella	<i>and her milk to drink she shall give</i>
	<i>him,</i>
per la cui si vedrà l'alta letizia:	<i>she by whom the great delight shall</i>
	<i>be delivered.</i>
sopra, <a> vittoria l'è la santa	<i>Above, as a sign of victory, there</i>
stella,	<i>shines the holy star,</i>
e sara vicitata da coloro	<i>and she shall be visited by those</i>
che gli offerano incenso, mira,	<i>who shall offer him incense, myrrh,</i>
e oro.	<i>and gold.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunciata dall'angelo Gabriello

The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation from Angel Gabriel.

Sibilla Chimicha is not represented in Belcari's play.

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Cimmerica

In teneris annis facie praesignis, honore	<i>In her tender years, distinguished with beauty, in honor</i>
Militiae aeternae regem sacra virgo cibabit	<i>the holy virgin will feed the king of the eternal host</i>
Lacte suo: per quem gaudebunt pectore summo	<i>with her milk; through whom all things will rejoice</i>
Omnia, ex Eoo lucebit sidus ab orbe	<i>with uplifted heart, and in the east will shine</i>
Mirificum: sua dona Magi cum laude ferentes,	<i>a marvelous star: Magi bringing their gifts with praise</i>
Obiicient puero myrrham, aurum, thura Sabaea.	<i>shall present to the child, myrrh, gold, and Sabaeian.</i>

5. Sibilla Samia

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Ecce veniet dives et e paupere nascetur et bellve eum adorabunt.

Behold a rich man shall come and he will be born in poverty, and the beasts shall adore him.

Barbieri version:

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula: et bestiae terrarum adorabunt eum: et dicent, Laudate eum in atriis coelorum.

Behold, a rich man shall come and he shall be born in poverty, and the beasts of the earth shall adore him, and they shall say: Praise him in the entrance-ways of the heavens.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

O echo che presto ne verra quel die	<i>Behold that day shall soon come</i>
che lucera le tenebre serrate	<i>that shall enlighten the deep darkness</i>
e scoglerassi nodi e profezie	<i>and shall undo bonds and prophecies</i>
della gras sinaghoga. rilascate saran le labbra delle gente pie	<i>of the great synagogue. Released shall be the lips of the pious people.</i>
vedrassi e re di viventi e palpatate	<i>The King of the living shall appear, and you shall discern</i>
el venir suo in grenbo a vergin vera	<i>His coming to the womb of a true virgin,</i>
che cosi mostra el cielo e ogni spera ⁵⁴	<i>thus showing heaven and each of its spheres.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibilla Samia

Echo che presto ne verra quel die che lucera le tenebre serrate	<i>Behold that day shall soon come that shall enlighten the deep darkness</i>
e scoglerassi nodi e profetie	<i>and shall undo bonds and prophecies</i>
della gran sinaghoga. rilascate saran le labbra delle gente pie vedrassi e re de viventi e palpate	<i>of the great synagogue. Released shall be the lips of the pious people. The King of the living shall appear, and you shall discern</i>
el venir suo in grenbo a vergin vera	<i>His coming to the womb of a true virgin,</i>
che cosi mostra el cielo e ogni spera	<i>thus showing heaven and each of its spheres.</i>

54 I have observed several times that Dante's poetry is the *exemplum* that is on the author's mind while writing these verses. The following lines from "Paradiso" will clearly illustrate how powerful the experience of the *Divine Comedy* still is in the mid-fifteenth-century Florence: "Quando la rota che tu sempiterni / desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso / con l'armonia che temperi e discerni, / parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso / della fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume / lago non fece mai tanto disteso." ("When that wheel which You make eternal through / the heavens' longing for You drew me with / the harmony You temper and distinguish, / the fire of the sun then seemed to me / to kindle so much of the sky, that rain / or river never formed so broad a lake." "Paradiso" I, 76–81). This is Dante's acceptance of the famous Platonic (and Pythagorean) idea of the celestial spheres, which was repudiated by Aristotle and the entire Aristotelian tradition throughout the Middle Ages until Albertus Magnus and Aquinas.

It is fundamental to make note of this because the word *spera* is a normal variant of the current Italian *sfera* ("sphere"), and it is widely documented in the entire tradition of Italian literature up until the nineteenth century. In the light of these observations, then, Raybould's translation will have to be rejected when he claims that: "The last line can be translated: *as heaven thus shows with all hope.*" Raybould, *The Sibyl Series*, 196.

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

El magno Dio la Potenza pia	<i>The great God, the pious Might</i>
per fiato manderà suo figlio santo,	<i>triumphantly shall send his holy</i>
	<i>son,</i>
qual fie Gesù, e lui concerto fia	<i>who shall be Jesus, and he shall</i>
	<i>bring harmony</i>
per salute del mondo tutto	<i>for the salvation of the whole world.</i>
quanto.	
Costui ogni potenze avrà in balia,	<i>He shall have every nation in his</i>
	<i>power,</i>
e pover nascerà e senz'amanto.	<i>and poor he shall be born and with</i>
	<i>no opulence.</i>
Di poverella il ricco essendo nato,	<i>Of a poor young maiden the Rich</i>
	<i>was born,</i>
dalle bestie di terra fia adorato.	<i>and he shall be adored by the</i>
	<i>animals of the earth.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'angelo Gabriello

The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation from Angel Gabriel

Sibilla Samia (Newbiggin, 1996)

Di poverella il ricco essendo nato,	<i>Of a poor young maiden the Rich</i>
	<i>was born,</i>
della bestie di terra fia adorato.	<i>He shall be adored by the animals of</i>
	<i>the earth.</i>

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Samia

Ecce dies, nigras quae tollet laeta
tenebras,
Mox veniet, solvens nodosa
volumina vatū
Gentis Judaeae, referent ut
carmina plebis.
Hunc poterunt clarum vivorum
tangere regem,
Humano quem virgo sinu
inviolata fovebit.
Annuit hoc coelum, rutilantia
sidera monstrant.

*Behold, the joyful day which shall
lift the black darkness
will soon come and unravel the
knotty writings of the prophets
of the Judean tribe, as the people's
songs tell.
They shall be able to touch this
glorious ruler of the living,
whom an unstained virgin will
nurture at a human breast.
This the heavens promise, this the
glowing stars show.*

6. Sibilla Cumana

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Iam redit et virgo redeunt Saturnia regna/iam nova progenies celo demittitur alto.

Now the Virgin returns, and Saturn's reign returns.

Barbieri version:

Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas:/ Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo/ Iam redit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;/ Iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto./ Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum/ Desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,/ casta fave Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo.

Now comes the last age of the Cumaean song;/ The great order of the ages arises anew/ Now the Virgin returns, and Saturn's reign returns/ Now a new generation is sent down from high heaven./ Only, chaste Lucina, favor the child at his birth/ by whom, first of all, the iron age will end/ And a golden race arise in all the world;/ Now your Apollo reigns. (Virgil's Fourth Eclogue)

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

L'ultimo mie parlar fie si veracie	<i>My last prophecy shall absolutely be true,</i>
pero che giunti son gli utimi canti del venimento dello re di pacie	<i>now that the last songs are upon us about the advent of that king of peace,</i>
di chi cci salvera noi tutti quanti e prendera carn umana si gli piacie	<i>and about he who shall save us all and who shall take human flesh as he wishes.</i>
e mosterrassi umil a ttutti chuant	<i>And he shall show himself humble to all</i>
per madre prende l'umil verginella	<i>as he chooses as his mother the humble young virgin,</i>
la chual sara soprogni donna bella.	<i>who shall be beautiful above all women.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Cumana

L'ultimo mio parlar fia si verace	<i>My last prophecy shall absolutely be true,</i>
pero che giunti son gli utimi canti del venimento di quel re che in pace	<i>now that the last songs are upon us about the advent of that king, who, coming in peace,</i>
venendo e gusti porra tutti quanti en carne humana si come a lui piace	<i>shall save all the just people in human flesh as he wishes.</i>
humil fia in tutti e suo effecti sancti	<i>He shall be humble in all of his holy effects</i>
per madre prende l'umil verginella	<i>as he chooses as his mother the humble young virgin,</i>
la qual sara soprogni donna bella.	<i>who shall be beautiful above all women.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

L'ultimo mie parlar fia sì verace,	<i>My last prophecy shall absolutely be true,</i>
però che giunti son gli ultimi canti	<i>now that the last songs are upon us</i>
del venimento dello Re di pace,	<i>about the advent of that king of peace,</i>
di chi ci salverà noi tutti quanti;	<i>about he who shall save us all</i>
e prender carne umana sì gli piace,	<i>and who shall take human flesh as he wishes.</i>
e mosterrassi umil a tutti quanti.	<i>And he shall show himself humble to all.</i>
Per madre prende l'umil verginella,	<i>As his mother, he chooses the humble young virgin,</i>
la qual sarà sopra ogni donna bella.	<i>who shall be beautiful above all women.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'angelo Gabrielo

The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation from Angel Gabriel

Sibilla Cumana is not represented in Belcari's play.

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Cumaea

Iam mea certa manent, et vera,
novissima verba,
Ultima venturi quòd erant
oracula regis,
Qui toti veniens mundo cum
pace, placebit,
Ut voluit, nostra vestitus carne
decenter,
In cunctis humilis. castam pro
matre puellam
Deliget, haec alias forma
praecesserit omnes.

Now my most recent words shall
remain certain and true,
because they were the last oracles
of the king to come.
Who, coming for the whole world
with peace, shall be pleased,
as he intended, to be clothed fitly
in our flesh,
humble in all things. He shall
choose a chaste maiden for his
mother; she shall exceed all
others in beauty.

7. Sibilla Elispontica

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Ex eccelso habitaculo respexit Deus humiles et in terris novissimis diebus
ex hebrea virgine nascetur.

*From the heights of his dwelling place, God looked upon the humble, and in the
final days, he shall be born on earth from a Hebrew virgin.*

Barbieri version:

De excelsis coelorum habitaculo prospexit Deus humiles suos. Et nascetur
in diebus novissimis de vitgine hebrea in cunabulis terrae.

*From the heights of the heavens, God looked providentially on his humble ones. And
in the final days, he shall be born from a Hebrew virgin in the cradle of the earth.*

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Nella mie scola stando vidi fare
tanto 'n una fantina grand'onore

quale 'n verginita si vuol salvare
e per divina grazia e ssuo valore

discend'in lei e vien a 'ncarnare

figluol che ffa di tanto splendore
e ffe d'Iddio suo figluol veracie
che ttutto 'l secol nostro porra 'n
pacie.

*While attending to my studies, I saw
such great honor made to a young
maiden*

*who in virginity wishes to be saved.
And by divine grace and by her own
virtue,*

*a son descends into her and she
shall incarnate*

*He who shall be of great splendor,
and shall be the true son of God,
and peace he shall bring to all our
time.*

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copies of Baldini

Sibilla Elispontica

Nella mie scola stando vidi fare tanto 'n una fantina grande onore	<i>While attending to my studies, I saw such great honor made to a young maiden</i>
quale in verginita si vuol salvare e per divina gratia e suo valore	<i>who in virginity wishes to be saved. And by divine grace and by her own virtue,</i>
discende in lei e viene a incarnare	<i>a son descends into her and she shall incarnate</i>
figluolo che fia di tanto splendore e fie d'Iddio suo figluolo veracie che ttutto el secol nostro porra in pace.	<i>He who shall be of great splendor, and shall be the true son of God, and peace he shall bring to all our time.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Nella mia scuola stando, vidi fare tanto 'n una fantina grand'onore,	<i>While attending to my studies, I saw such great honor made to a young maiden</i>
quale 'n verginità si vuol salvare; e per divina grazia e suo valore,	<i>who in virginity wishes to be saved. And by divine grace and by her own virtue,</i>
discende in lei e viene <a> incarnare	<i>a son descends into her and she shall incarnate</i>
figliuol che fia di tanto splendore. Vaticinare una parola basta: Cristo Gesù nascerà della casta.	<i>He who shall be of great splendor. It suffices to prophesize one word: Jesus Christ shall be born of such a chaste Virgin.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'angelo Gabrielo

The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation from Angel Gabriel

Sibilla Elispontia (Newbiggin, 1996)

Vaticinare una parola basta:
Christo Gesù nascerà della casta.

*It suffices to prophesize one word:
Jesus Christ shall be born of such a
chaste Virgin.*

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Hellespontica

Dum meditor quondam vidi
decorare puellam,
Eximio (castam quod se servaret)
honore,
Munere digna suo, et divino
numine visa,
Quae sobolem multo pareret
splendore micantem:
Progenies summi, speciosa et vera
Tonantis,
Pacifica mundum qui sub ditione
gubernet.

*Once while I was reflecting, I saw
him adorn a maiden
with great honor (because she kept
herself chaste);
She seemed worthy through his gift
and divine authority
to give birth to a glorious offspring
with great splendor;
the beautiful and true child of the
highest Thunderer,
who would rule the world with
peaceful authority.*

8. Sibilla Frigia

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Veniet desuper filius Dei et firmabitur in celo consilium et virgo annunciabitur.

The Son of God shall come from on high, and this plan shall be finalized in heaven and shall be announced to a virgin.

Barbieri version:

Flagellabit Deus potentes terrae, et Olympo excelso veniet: et firmabitur consilium in coelo, et annunciabitur virgo in vallis desertorum.

God shall beat down the powers of the earth, and shall come from the height of Olympus, and the plan shall be finalized in heaven, and it shall be announced to a virgin in the valleys of the desert.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Vidi l'eccelso idio che fragellare ave disposto la gente ostinata	<i>I saw the high God, who had ordered the flagellation of the obstinate people</i>
nel secolo nostro che cierto mi pare	<i>in our time, because, surely,</i>
si possa dir pelle fatte peccata	<i>of such committed sins, as anyone can say.</i>
onda disposto suo figliuol mandare	<i>So that he arranged to send his son.</i>
i' virgine per vocie anunziata	<i>In the body of a virgin by annunciation</i>
pel la sua umilta sara posato	<i>and because of his humility, he shall be placed.</i>
e questa fie cagion torvi el pechato.	<i>And this shall determine that He remove all sins.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Phrigia

Vidi lo excelso iddio che fragellare havea disposto la gente ostinata	<i>I saw the high God, who had ordered the flagellation of the obstinate people</i>
nel secol nostro che cierto mi pare si possa dir pelle fatte peccata	<i>in our time, because, surely, of such committed sins, as anyone can say.</i>
onda disposto suo figliuol mandare	<i>So that he arranged to send his son.</i>
i' virgine per voce anuntiata	<i>In the body of a virgin by annunciation</i>
pep la sua humilta sara posato	<i>and because of her humility, he shall be placed,</i>
e questa fie cagion torvi el pechato.	<i>and this shall determine that He remove all sins.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Batterà Dio i potenti di terra,	<i>God shall strike the powerful on earth,</i>
dal sommo ciel verrà lo eccelso a noi,	<i>from the summit of Heaven the high God shall come to us,</i>
e fermerà ⁵⁵ il concilio senza guerra:	<i>and he shall establish the heavenly council without war.</i>
la Vergin fia annunziata poi:	<i>And the Virgin shall then be announced,</i>
nelle deserte valli si disserra:	<i>and through desert valleys this shall resound.</i>
questo è quell ch'io ne dico a tutti voi:	<i>This is what I say to all of you,</i>
però divoto intenda ciascheduno,	<i>so that whoever is devout understands,</i>
umile e puro e di colpe digiuno.	<i>he who is humble, pure and has not committed any sin.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata
dall'angelo Gabriello

*The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation
from Angel Gabriel*

Sibilla Frigia (Newbiggin, 1996)

Batterà Dio i potenti di terra,	<i>God shall strike the powerful on earth,</i>
dal sommo ciel verrà lo eccelso a noi,	<i>from the summit of Heaven the high God shall come to us,</i>
e fermerà il concilio senza guerra:	<i>and he shall establish the heavenly council without war.</i>
La Vergin fia annunziata poi:	<i>And the Virgin shall then be announced,</i>
nelle deserte valli si dissera:	<i>And through desert valleys this shall be heard.</i>
questo è quell ch'io ne dico a tutti voi.	<i>This is what I say to all of you.</i>

55 Due to the extremely common interchange between the vowels *i* and *e* in sequences such as *-ir-* and *-er-* in vernacular texts from the fourteenth century until at least the eighteenth century, and in strong consideration of its Latin etymology, the word *fermera* should be considered as a typical rendition of the verb *firmera* ("establish," "consolidate"), which is adopted in this translation.

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Phrygia

Ipsa Deum vidi summum, punire volentem	<i>I myself saw the high God wishing to punish</i>
Mundi homines stupidos, et pectora caecae, rebellis.	<i>the stupid men of the earth and the blind heart of the rebel.</i>
Et quia sic nostram complerent crimina pellem,	<i>And because crimes shall thus fill our skin,</i>
Virginis in corpus voluit demittere coelo	<i>God himself wished to send from heaven into the body</i>
Ipse Deus prolem, quam nunciet Angelus almae	<i>of a Virgin his son, which the angel shall announce to the fostering</i>
Matri, quo miseros contracta sorde levaret.	<i>mother, so that he may raise the wretches from the uncleanness they have contracted.</i>

9. Sibilla Europa

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Veniet colles et montes transiens et in pauperate regnans eum silentio dominabitur et e i virginis vase exiliet.

He shall come, crossing over the hills and mountains, and ruling in poverty, he shall reign over them in silence, and he shall spring forth from the vessel of a virgin.

Barbieri version:

Veniet ille et transibit montes et colles, et latices sylvarum Olympi: regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silentio: et egredietur de utero virginis.

That one shall come, and he shall cross over the mountains and hills, and the waters of the woods of Olympus, and he shall reign in poverty and rule in silence, and he shall come forth from the uterus of a virgin.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Verra quel verrbo eterno inmaculato e del vergine vaso uscira fora	<i>That eternal immaculate Word shall come, and from the virginal vase He shall spring.</i>
per chui i cholli e monti fia passato chosi la sonmita d'olinpo anchora	<i>By virtue of this He will pass over hills and mountains even unto the summit of Olympus.</i>
sotto gran poverta nel mondo nato signioregiando chon silenzio omniora	<i>Born in this world in great poverty, silently ruling every hour:</i>
chosi credo e cchonfesso e chonoschio vero figlioul d'iddio ed uomo e ddio.	<i>Thus, I believe and give testimony and recognize the true son of God, both man and God.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Europa

Verra quel verbo eterno inmaculato e del vergine vaso uscira fora	<i>That eternal immaculate word shall come, and from the virginal vase he shall spring.</i>
per chui i cholli e monti fia passato chosi la sonmita d'olinpo anchora	<i>By virtue of this He will pass over hills and mountains even including the summit of Olympus.</i>
sotto gran poverta nel mondo nato signoreggiando chon silentio ogni hora	<i>Born in this world in great poverty, silently ruling every hour:</i>
chosi credo e cchonfesso e chonoschio vero figlioul d'iddio ed uomo e ddio.	<i>Thus, I believe and give testimony and recognize the true son of God, both man and God.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Verrà quel Verbo eterno, immacolato, e del Vergine vaso uscirà fora	<i>That eternal immaculate word shall come, and from the virginal vase he shall spring.</i>
per cui i colli e monti fia passato, così la sommità d'Olimpo ancora, sotto gran povertà nel mondo nato, signoreggiando con silenzio ogni ora.	<i>By virtue of this He will pass over hills and mountains even unto the summit of Olympus. Born in this world in great poverty, silently ruling every hour:</i>
Così credo e confesso e conosch'io: vero Figliol di Dio, e Uomo e Dio.	<i>Thus, I believe and give testimony and recognize the true son of God, both man and God.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'angelo Gabrielo

The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation from Angel Gabriel

Sibilla Europa is not represented in Belcari's play

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Europaea

Virginis aeternum veniet de
corpore verbum

Purum, qui valles et montes
transiet altos.

Ille volens etiam stellato missus
Olympo,

Edetur mundo pauper, qui cuncta
silenti

Rexerit imperio: sic credo, et
mente fatebor:

Humano simul ac divino semine
natus.

*From the body of a virgin shall come
forth the pure*

*word eternal, who shall cross valleys
and high mountains.*

*He, willingly sent even from starry
Olympus,*

*will be sent into the world a pauper,
who shall rule all creation*

*with silent power. Thus I believe and
shall acknowledge in my heart:*

*He is the child of both divine and
human seed.*

10. Sibilla Tiburtina

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Nascetur in Bettelem in Nazaret annuntiabitur regnante quieto tauro.

He shall be born in Bethlehem and in Nazareth, shall be announced, with the quiet bull reigning.

Barbieri version:

Nascetur Christus in Bethleem et anninciabitur in Nazareth, regente tauro pacifico, fundatore quietis: O felix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt!

Christ was born in Bethlehem and was announced in Nazareth, in the reign of the peaceful bull (Caesar Augustus) the one who establishes peace. O how happy the mother whose breasts will nurse him!

*Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings*⁵⁶

Il gusto ddo al ttal mestier m'a	<i>The just God gave me the charge</i>
dato	
chi v'abbi col mie dir manifestato	<i>that my words may be evidence</i>
d'una vergine che ffe nunziata	<i>of a virgin who shall receive the</i>
	<i>annunciation,</i>
e nazarette per lei abitata	<i>and who lived in Nazareth.</i>
en bettalem sara manifestato	<i>In Bethlehem shall be seen</i>
la carne dove dio fie humanato	<i>the flesh in which God shall be</i>
	<i>made human.</i>
e ben sara la sua mare filicie	<i>And his mother shall well be happy</i>
che di tal figlio si sara notricie.	<i>for she shall nurse such a son.</i>

56 It should be noted that this text (but not the following broad manner of the Sibylla Tiburtina) offers an interesting but irregular alteration of the expected rhyming structure of the ottava rima, proposing a transgressive stanza organized in rhymed couplets, AAB-BAACC. Charles Dempsey offered an interpretation of such phenomenon that cannot be

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibylla Tiburtina

El gusto iddio a tal mestier m'a data ⁵⁷	<i>The just God gave me the charge</i>
chi v'abbi col mio dire manifestato	<i>that my words may be evidence</i>
d'una vergine che ffie annuntiata	<i>of a virgin who shall receive the annunciation,</i>
e nazarette per lei abitato	<i>and who lived in Nazareth.</i>
et viva in bettelem sara monstrata la carne dove dio fie humanato	<i>Alive in Bethlehem shall be seen the flesh in which God shall be made human.</i>
et ben sara la sua madre felice che di tal figlo alhor sara nutrice.	<i>And his mother shall well be happy for she shall then nurse such a son.</i>

confirmed here: "Occasionally, for the sake of variety, it is permissible to introduce into a series of octaves one composed entirely of rhymed couplets." Dempsey, *Vernacular Culture*, 257.

57 Here the Sibyl exercises her strong agency by addressing directly the listener/reader. The feminine past participle *data*, unlike in the Baldini text, with the preceding indirect object pronoun *mi*, is a clear grammatical reference to this prophetic statement.

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Il giusto Dio al tal mestier m'ha dato	<i>The just God gave me the charge</i>
ch' i' v'abbi col mie dir manifestato	<i>that my words may be evidence</i>
d'una Vergine che fie nunziata	<i>of a virgin who shall receive the annunciation,</i>
e Nazarette per lei abitata.	<i>and who lived in Nazareth.</i>
In Bettalem sarà manifestato	<i>In Bethlehem shall be seen</i>
le carne dove Dio fie umanato:	<i>the flesh in which God shall be made human.</i>
e ben sarà la sua madre felice, che di tal figlio si sarà per nutrice.	<i>And his mother shall well be happy for she shall nurse such a son.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'angelo Gabrielo

The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation from Angel Gabriel

Sibilla Tiburtina is not represented in Belcari's play

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Tiburtina

Verax ipse Deus dedit haec mihi
munia fandi,
Carminè quòd sanctam potui
monstrare puellam,
Concipiet quae Nazareis in
finibus, illum
Quem sub carne Deum
Bethlemica rura videbunt.
O nimium felix, coelo dignissima
mater,
Quae tantam sacro lactabit ab
ubere prolem.

*The truthful God himself gave me
these gifts of prophecy,
that I might proclaim in song the
holy virgin
who shall conceive in Nazareth's
bounds
that God whom Bethlehem's lands
shall see in the flesh.
O most happy mother, worthy of
Heaven,
who shall nurse such a child from
her holy breast.*

11. Sibilla Eritea

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Morte morietur tribus diebus somno suscepto et mo[x] ab inferis egressu ad luce veniet primus.

Being dead, he is dead for three days and raised from sleep and immediately, exiting from the underworld, he comes at first light.

Barbieri version:

In ultima autem aetate humiliabitur Deus et humanabitur proles divina” jungetur humanitati divinitas. Jacebit in feno agnus, et officio puellari educabitur Deus et homo. Signa praecedunt apud Apellas. Mulier vetustissima puerum praestabit ad ortum.

In the final age God will be humbled and the divine offspring will become human, and the divinity will be joined to humanity. And the lamb shall be thrown into the hay, and through girlish work, God and man shall be educated. The signs precede before Appellas. The oldest woman shall show the boy to be arisen.

*Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings*⁵⁸

Risguardo iddio dello excelso abitacolo	<i>God beheld from the highest heavens</i>
gli umili suoi e nascera ne' gorni utimi dichco chon questo miracolo d'una vergine ebrea con tutti adorni chostumi el suo figliuol sanz'altro stacolo	<i>his humble people, and He shall be born shortly, I say, by this miracle of a Jewish virgin, with all adorned garments, and her son, with no other obstacle,</i>
nelle terrene chulle si sogorni nascera gram profephta alto e acorto	<i>in earthly cradles shall sojourn. He shall be born a great, high, and fair prophet</i>
di vergin madre et questo e 'l vero scorto.	<i>from a virgin mother, and this is the unveiled truth.</i>

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibilla Eritea

Risguardo iddio dello excelso abitacolo	<i>God beheld from the highest heavens</i>
gli umili suoi e nascera ne' gorni ultimi dico chon questo miracolo d'una vergine ebrea con tutti adorni costumi el suo figlol sanz'altro obstacolo	<i>his humble people, and He shall be born shortly, I say, by this miracle of a Jewish virgin, with all adorned garments, and her son, with no other obstacle,</i>
nelle terrene chulle si soggiorni nascera gran propheta alto e acorto	<i>in earthly cradles shall sojourn. He shall be born a great, high, and fair prophet</i>
di vergin madre et questo e 'l vero scorto.	<i>from a virgin mother, and this is the unveiled truth.</i>

58 Once again, the structure of the *ottava rima* is here subverted. In the poetic text of both the fine and broad manners, the first, third and fifth lines are dodecasyllables, while the remaining five verses are composed in regular hendecasyllables. This change in the verse structure of the *ottava rima*, although unusual, is documented in the very early Italian literature until Boccaccio refined it and brought it to literary elegance and artistic nobility, and it should then be considered as an anachronistic un-isosyllabic phenomenon.

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Risguardöe Iddio dell'eccelso abitacolo	<i>God beheld from the highest heavens</i>
gli umili suoi, e nascerà ne' giorni ultimi, dico, con questo miracolo	<i>his humble people, and He shall be born shortly, I say, by this miracle</i>
d'una Vergine ebrea, con tutti adorni	<i>of a Jewish virgin, with all adorned garments, and her son, with no other obstacle,</i>
costumi, il suo figliuol: senz'altro ostacolo	<i>in earthly cradles shall sojourn.</i>
nelle terrene culle si soggiorni; nascerà gran' profeta, alto e accorto,	<i>He shall be born a great, high, and fair prophet</i>
di Vergin madre, et questo el vero scorto.	<i>from a virgin mother, and this is the unveiled truth.</i>

Feo Belcari

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dall'angelo Gabrielo

*The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation
from Angel Gabriel*

Sibilla Eritrea (Newbiggin 1996)

Risguardo Dio dello eccelso abitacolo	<i>God beheld from the highest heavens</i>
gli umili suoi, e nascerà ne' gorni ultimi, dico, con questo miracolo:	<i>his humble people, and he shall be born shortly, I say, by this miracle</i>
d'una Vergine ebrea, con tutti adorni	<i>of a Jewish virgin, with all adorned</i>
costumi, il suo figliuol: senz'altro ostacolo	<i>garments, and her son, with no other obstacle,</i>
nelle terrene culle si soggiorni.	<i>in earthly cradles shall sojourn.</i>

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Erythraea

Cerno Dei natum, qui se dimisit ab alto,	<i>I behold the son of God, who sent himself from on high,</i>
Ultima felices referent cum tempora soles:	<i>when the joyful days shall bring the last times.</i>
Hebraea quem virgo feret de stirpe decora,	<i>He whom the comely virgin shall bear from the Hebrew lineage,</i>
In terris multum teneris passurus ab annis,	<i>he who shall suffer much on earth from his tender years on,</i>
Magnus erit tamen hic divino carmine vates,	<i>he shall nevertheless be here a great seer in godly prophecy,</i>
Virgine matre satus, prudenti pectore verax.	<i>the son of a virgin mother, truthful and of a wise heart.</i>

12. Sibilla Agrippa

Orsini Epigram Versions

Baldini version:

Hoc verbum invisibile tangi et permittet et tanquam radices germinabit.

This word can be touched invisibly and set forth, and like roots shall germinate.

Barbieri version:

Invisibile verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix: et siccabitur ut folium: et non apparebit venustas eius: et circumdabitur eum alvus materna: et flebit Deus laetitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculabitur: et nascetur ex madre ut Deus: et conversabitur ut peccator.

The word shall invisibly be made palpable and it shall germinate like a root, and it shall dry up like a leaf, and his beauty shall not appear, and the maternal belly shall encompass him, and God shall weep with eternal joy, and he shall be oppressed by men, and he shall be born of a mother as God, and he shall be turned over like a sinner.

Baccio Baldini fine manner engravings

Qundo sara questo sommo diletto	<i>When this highest delight shall be,</i>
il quale 'ntendo che ssara	<i>I gather that He shall be incarnated</i>
'ncharnato	
verbo divin gusto sant'e prefetto ⁵⁹	<i>as a holy, divine, just, and perfect</i>
	<i>Word,</i>
in prima ventre materno criato	<i>created at first in the maternal womb</i>
di spirito santo senza difetto	<i>by the Holy Spirit with no flaw.</i>
el qual fie po da molti dispregato	<i>And he shall then later be scorned</i>
	<i>by many.</i>
riprendera con dolcezza d'amore	<i>He shall reproach sinners with the</i>
	<i>sweetness of love,</i>
e rei ⁶⁰ e buoni fie lor pregio e	<i>and to the just ones He shall offer</i>
onore.	<i>tribute and honor.</i>

59 I note here the erroneous reading by Raybould (*The Sibyl Series*, 2016, 223), who translates *sant'e prefetto* as "holy prefect." The reader should be reminded that it is very common to this day to hear in the Tuscan vernacular the inversion of the sequence *er-*, as in *perfetto* > *prefetto*, especially when the sequence is introduced by the voiceless occlusive phoneme \p\.

60 The word *rei* here is directly from Latin *reus* ("guilty, culpable"), and it also occurs in Dante's *Commedia* several times. Any interpretation that has this word translated with "kings" will have to be rejected, as in the case of Raybould, *The Sibyl Series*, 2016, 223: "And be esteemed and honored by kings and good men."

Francesco Rosselli broad manner copy of Baldini

Sibilla Agrippa

Quando sara questo sommo dilecto	<i>When this highest delight shall be,</i>
il quale 'ntendo che ssara incarnato	<i>I gather that he shall be incarnated</i>
verbo sancto divino custo et perfecto	<i>as a holy, divine, just, and perfect Word,</i>
in pria nel ventre materno creato di spirito sancto senza alcun defecto	<i>created at first in the maternal womb by the Holy Spirit with no flaw.</i>
el qual fia po da molti dispregiato	<i>And he shall then later be scorned by many.</i>
riprendepa con dolceza d'amore	<i>He shall reproach sinners with the sweetness of love,</i>
e rei e a buon fia pregio et honore.	<i>and to the just ones he shall offer tribute and honor.</i>

Charles Dempsey's edited version of Baldini text

Sarà palpatò lo invisibil Verbo, e poi germinerà come radice:	<i>The invisible Word shall be discerned, And He shall germinate as a root does:</i>
secco sarà sì come il foglio acerbo	<i>He shall be as dry as an unsuitable leaf</i>
e non apparirà bello e felice: grembo materno ne farà riserbo, di poi piangerà Dio come infelice,	<i>Appearing neither beautiful nor happy: The motherly womb shall protect him, And later he shall cry to God miserably,</i>
e nascerà di madre come Dio,	<i>And He shall be born of mother as a God,</i>
poi tra gli altri userà come uom rio.	<i>Then He shall live among the people as a sinner.</i>

Feo Belcari

La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata
dall'angelo Gabrielo

*The representation when our lady, The Virgin Mary, received the annunciation
from Angel Gabriel*

Sibilla Egrippa (Newbiggin 1996)

Sarà palpato lo invisibil Verbo,
e poi germinerà come radice.

*The invisible Word shall be discerned,
And He shall germinate as a root
does.*

Secco sarà sì come il foglio acerbo

*He shall be as dry as an unsuitable
leaf*

e non apparirà bello e felice.
Grembo materno ne farà riserbo,
di poi piangerà Dio come
infelice,⁶¹

*Appearing neither beautiful nor happy.
The motherly womb shall protect him,
And later he shall cry to God
miserably,*

e nascerà di madre come Dio,

*And He shall be born of mother as
a God,*

poi tra gli altri userà come uom
rio.⁶²

*Then He shall live among the people
as a sinner.*

61 Unfortunately, Raybould (*The Sibyl Series*, 2016, 224) misinterpreted this line in his translation, thus misleading the reader: "Then God will weep with joy."

62 Raybould (*The Sibyl Series*, 2016, 224) makes a regrettable error in copying from the original text, which reads *rio* and not *pio*, as Raybould maintains. The resulting translation is thus unacceptable: "Then among the rest he will be seen as a pious man."

Barbieri-Lasso Latin Motet

Sibylla Agrippa

Summus erit sub carne status,	<i>The highest and dearest shall be</i>
charissimus atque,	<i>born in the flesh of the son</i>
Virginis et verae complebit viscera	<i>of the true virgin, and the holy word</i>
sanctum	<i>shall fill the womb</i>
Verbum, consilio, sine noxa,	<i>of the maiden through the pure</i>
spiritus almi:	<i>intention of the nurturing spirit</i>
Despectus multis tamen ille,	<i>although contemptible to many, he,</i>
salutis amore,	<i>for love of our salvation,</i>
Arguet et nostra commissa	<i>will censure the sins committed by</i>
piacula culpa:	<i>our guilt;</i>
Cuius honos constans, et gloria	<i>his honor shall remain constant and</i>
certa manebit.	<i>his glory certain.</i>

Appendix 2:
Influential Historical Lists of Sibyls

	Lactantius <i>Divine Instituites</i> (4th century)*	Orsini Palace frescoes (1470)**	St. Gallen woodcuts (1470)+	Barbieri treatise (1481/1482)#	Siena pavement (1480s)^^^	Barbieri/Baldini treatise (c. 1500–1525)##	Lasso <i>Prophetiae</i> <i>Sibyllarum</i> (c. 1550–1560)
1.	H.M.T.^	—	—	H.M.T.^	H.M.T.^^	—	Prologue (H.M.T?)
2.	Persica	Persica	Persica	Persica	Lybica (L)	Persica	Persica
3.	Libyca	Libyca	Libyca	Libyca	Delphica (R)	Libyca	Libyca
4.	Delphica	Delphica	Erythraea	Delphica	Hellespontica (L)	Delphica	Delphica
5.	Cimmeria	Cimmeria	Cumaea	Cimmeria/Chimica	Cimmeria (R)	Cimmeria/Chimica	Cimmeria
6.	Erythraea	Erythraea	Samia	Erythraea	Phrygia (L)	Samia	Samia
7.	Samia	Samia	Cimmeria	Samia	Cumana (R)	Cumaea/Cumana	Cumaea
8.	Cumaea	Cumaea	Europaea	Cumaea/Cumana	Samia (L)	Hellespontica	Hellespontica
9.	Hellespontica	Hellespontica	Tiburtina	Hellespontica	Erythraea (R)	Phrygia	Phrygia
10.	Phrygia	Phrygia	Agrippa	Phrygia	Tiburtina (L)	Europaea	Europaea
11.	Tiburtina	Tiburtina	Delphica	Europaea	Persica (R)	Tiburtina	Tiburtina
12.	—	Europaea	Hellespontica	Tiburtina	—	Erythraea	Erythraea
	—	Agrippa	Phrygia	Agrippa	—	Agrippa	Agrippa

* Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 4th century CE. (published 1465); based on Varro's list of Sibyls in the (now lost) *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, 1st century, BCE.

** From fifteenth-century manuscript descriptions of the Orsini palace frescoes at Monte Giordano in Rome: Liège ms. 6 F (Grand Séminaire de Liège, c. 1430); Tongerlo ms. HB I 16 (Abbey of Tongerlo, c. 1450); Munich Staatsbibliothek cod. Lat. Mon. 19859, fol. 187v–189v, 1478). Liège and Tongerlo are virtually identical. The Munich manuscript is an abridged version of the other two sources. In all three, the order of the Sibyls is the same.

+ See facsimile edition by Paul Heitz, ed., *Oracula Sibyllina* (Strassburg: Heitz & Mündel, 1903).

Philippus de Barberiis, *Discordantiae sanctorum Hieronymi et Augustini*, Rome: J. P. Lignamine, 1481 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Membr. IV. 29); and Barberiis, *Discordantiae*.... *Tractatus sollempnis et utilis*, Georg Herold & Sixtus Reissinger: Rome, 1482 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Inc. IV.280). A second Lignamine edition of Barberiis's treatise, also published in 1481 (*Tractatus est de discordantia inter Eusebium Heironium & Aurelium Augustinum ap-probatus Sibyllarum & prophatum*, Rome) lists the Sibyls in this same order, but pairs them with prophets (University of Michigan, Harlan Hatcher Graduate Research Library, Incun. 134). This edition also quotes Lactantius on Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus in the text before the images of the Sibyls and Prophets appear (H.M.T., above).

^Hermes Trismegistus mentioned in the text, along with the Sibyls, as a legitimate prophet of Christ.

^^Hermes Trismegistus illustrated in the pavement of the cathedral, along with ten Sibyls.

^^^ The Siena Cathedral's ten Sibyls occur in two columns on the right (R) and left (L) sides of the nave. Any sense of narrative or chronology, if indeed one was ever intended, is difficult to construct from this arrangement. The Cathedral's Cimmerian Sibyl is misnamed as *Cumaea*.

Philippus de Barberiis, *Discordantiae sanctorum Hieronymi et Augustini*, *Quattuor hic compressa opuscula*, Venice: Bernardinum Benalium, c. 1500–1525 (National Gallery of Art Library, BR50 B34 1520). The copy held by the Folger Shakespeare Library (Inc. B107) reverses the order of the last two Sibyls, and mislabels the image of Sibylla Libyca.

Appendix 3:
 Baccio Baldini's fine manner Sibyls
 and Francesco Rosselli's broad manner Sibyls⁶³

Sibilla Persicha

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



63 The images were retrieved from the British Museum, accessed September 9, 2017. Published under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. The sizes of some images have been altered for this publication, but are hyperlinked to the original files at the British Museum.

Sibilla Libica

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Delficha

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Chimicha

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Samia

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Cumana

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Elispontica

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Frigia

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Europa

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Tiburtina

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Eritea

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



Sibilla Agrippa

Baldini fine manner



Rosselli broad manner



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