PASTORAL THERAPIES FOR THE HEARTBROKEN
IN GUARINI'S *PASTOR FIDO*
AND MONTEVERDI'S *BOOK V*

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Summary: The idea of pastoral poetry as therapy against love-melancholy is well rehearsed throughout the Renaissance. Guarini's *Pastor Fido* (1589) and Monteverdi *Fifth Book of Madrigals* (1605) represent two effective responses to the therapeutic urgencies of the pastoral. Guarini's famous pastoral ushers in a new form of dramatic poetry: tragicomedy, that is, with its *tragic-in-the-comic* purging formula and its advocacy for music as a necessary catalyst for the purging effect of poetry. Monteverdi's *Book V* co-opts to a great extent Guarini's pastoral in order to issue a program for a new *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetics of musical grieving with an obvious cathartic purpose. Both efforts, then, are symptomatic signs of a culture that is not only particularly keen on the therapeutic function of the pastoral; it also pursues that therapeutic function by means of a profound reflection on aesthetics that shows a striking continuity across disciplinary lines.

In a famous episode of the *Gerusalemme liberata*, Erminia—the quintessential melancholic lover—, disguised as Clorinda, flees the besieged Jerusalem determined to cross the enemy's front-line in order to rejoin her beloved Tancredi. Tracked down and chased by a Christian patrol, she madly charges into the woods, ends up getting lost and mysteriously finds herself in the land of shepherds. Upon her encounter with one of them, her sorrows fade away and her passionate heart finally finds some rest:

Mentre ei così ragiona, Erminia pende
de la soave bocca intenta e cheta;
e quel saggio parlar ch'al cuor le scende
de sensi in parte la procella acqueta. (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, 7. 14)

(All while he spoke, Erminia hung upon / the old man's gentle words,
intent and quiet. / His wise speech sank into her heart; her senses' / turbulent waves were soothed a little by it.)¹

¹For the Italian, I am using Tasso, *Opere*, ed. Bartolo Tommaso Sozzi; for the English, Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*, trans. Anthony Esolen.

Momentarily breaking away from the world of arms to enter the realm of pastoral poetry, Tasso's text reveals with poignant words the underlying healing agenda that traditionally characterizes this particular genre.² One could say that healing the heartbroken has been a main concern for pastoral poetry since its mythical origins. According to Jacopo Sannazaro, the story goes that Pan, enamored of the beautiful nymph Syrinx, but scorned by her, resorted to the oaten flute (the "zampogna") in order to sing away his broken-hearted feelings (*Arcadia*, 10. 13).

As the countless references to the theme of *remedia amoris* clearly signal, healing love-melancholy remains a priority of the pastoral throughout the Renaissance.³ A 'mission' it becomes better equipped to address as it develops into a form of fiction that more and more capitalizes on the rhetorical strategies of theatre. As is well known, this increasing tendency towards dramatization is mainly due to the passion for allegoric representations that characterizes court culture during this time.⁴ In its gradual evolution from the merely dialogic eclogue to Alberto Lollio's "commedia pastorale," the Renaissance pastoral grows into a genre with a dramaturgic stature.⁵ With its "theatrical armature,"⁶ the pastoral becomes one of the most sophisticated forms of *remedia amoris* ever conceived.⁷ In fact, not only does it incorporate a poetic discourse on how to escape the 'slings and arrows' of bad luck in love, it also capitalizes on the purging effect that Aristotle had ascribed to dramatic poetry and that sixteenth-century Italian

²For a comprehensive study of the therapeutic powers of the pastoral since antiquity, see Walker, *A Cure of Love*.

³In the view of the rather complex "generic identity" of the Renaissance pastoral, which Gerbino's work nicely illustrates (see Gerbino, *Orpheus in Arcadia*, 12-68), the following considerations on the therapeutic function of the pastoral strictly pertain to the dramatic pastoral: that is, a particular poetic art form which combines the lofty moral aspirations of the humanist court with its strong fascination for dramatic representations, its fondness for mythological or pastoral settings, and an increasing theoretical awareness and engagement (whether or not openly declared) with Aristotle's *Poetics*; in short, the Ferrarese pastoral. For some recent attempts at tracing the history of this genre, see, besides Gerbino, *Orpheus in Arcadia*; Selmi, *Classici e Moderni nell'officina del 'Pastor Fido'*; and Sampson, *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy*.

⁴Rossi, *Battista Guarini*, 165; Carrara, *Poesia pastorale*, 206-207.

⁵Bruscagli, "Ancora sulle pastorali," 36-37.

⁶Bruscagli, "Ancora sulle pastorali," 37.

⁷Ovid himself lists pastoral life among his remedies (*Remedia amoris*, ll. 169-198).

literary criticism increasingly emphasized. Thus Arcadia becomes the place in the collective imaginary where heartbroken lovers not only are taught how to love properly,⁸ but they also purge their passions, as they sympathize with their grieving pastoral counterparts, and finally are able to rejoice at the positive outcome of their often tumultuous love-stories.⁹

Highly significant in this respect is Battista Guarini's *Pastor Fido* (*princeps* 1589). Based on the fully fledged dramaturgy presented in the two *Verati* (1588, 1593) and later summarized in the *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* (1601), Guarini's pastoral represents the moment when, at a time of great theoretical awareness,¹⁰ the dramatic pastoral reaches its pinnacle,¹¹ as it develops into a sophisticated art of purging love-melancholy that combines tragic and comic elements. In fact, the term tragicomedy—the mixed dramatic format officially instituted by Guarini himself—not only defines a genre that since the beginning has seen authors drawing in various ways from the formal elements of both tragedy and comedy;¹² it also indicates a clear willingness to capitalize fully on the respective therapeutic or purging properties of comedy and tragedy. In this respect Guarini follows a general trend of contemporary theorists who, using Aristotle's authority, vindicate the legitimacy of dramatic poetry specifically on the grounds of its purging proprieties: dramatic poetry, they argue, is no longer just entertaining, it also purges affects; thus it is no longer just pleasurable,

⁸Clubb, "The Pastoral Play," 73.

⁹Rossi notes that later pastorals, besides the diversity of their thematic material, all feature a plot in which the initial conflicts are reconciled by happy endings. A heritage of the eclogue, this particular 'happy ending' model was again made popular by Agostino Beccari's *Il Sacrificio* (1554). On this see Rossi, *Battista Guarini* 161-179. For an unconventional, yet compelling, reading of Politian's *Orfeo* as a drama with a happy ending, see Guthmüller, *Mito, poesia, arte*, 145-163.

¹⁰It is well known that the issue of dramatic *mimesis* is at the centre of a very large debate that dominates late Renaissance literary criticism and that, at the time, theoretical awareness was strictly tied to artistic activity. On this see Sampson, *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy*; Toffanin, *La fine dell'Umanesimo* 29-30; Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*; Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism*; Rivoltella, "La scena della sofferenza"; Tatarkiewicz, *History of aesthetics*, vol. 3.

¹¹See Rossi, *Battista Guarini*, 178.

¹²See Carrara, *La poesia pastorale*, 333; Bruscagli, "Ancora sulle pastorali," 30. With regard to the experimental nature of the dramatic pastoral in the second half of the sixteenth century, see: Clubb *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, 93-123.

it is also useful or ethical.¹³

Not surprisingly purgation takes centre stage in the Aristotelian dramaturgy which Guarini elaborates for his *Pastor Fido*. In his *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* he clearly states that the aesthetic goal (or, as he calls it, "il fine architetonico") of his pastoral is to purge melancholy (*Compendio*, 22), a "terrible illness, that makes people go mad and often drives them to suicide" (*Compendio*, 15). Love-melancholy is never expressly mentioned, but it is certainly hinted at in a day and age when philosophers and scientists were becoming increasingly interested in exactly that particular kind of melancholy.¹⁴ The first part of this article will show how exactly Guarini conceives his dramaturgy in order to make it an effective purging device.

As has been argued by previous criticism, Guarini's dramaturgy remains firmly grounded in the aesthetic realm of comedy;¹⁵ a reasonable claim indeed, also supported by the poet's own words:

Dico per tanto che la Tragicommedia, si come l'altre anch'essa ha due fini, lo strumentale, ch'è forma risultante dell'imitazione di cose Tragiche et Comiche miste insieme: et l'architetonico, ch'è il purgar gli animi del male affetto della maninconia. Il qual fine è tutto Comico, et tutto semplice, ne può comunicare in cosa alcuna col Tragico, perciocche gli effetti del purgare son veramente oppositi infra loro. l'un rallegra, et l'altro contrista. l'un rilascia et l'altro restringe, moti dell'anima ripugnanti: conciosia cosa che l'uno va dal centro alla circonferenza, l'altro camina tutto all'opposito, et questi sono quei fini che nel drammatico si possono chiamare contraddittori. (*Compendio*, 22-23)

¹³See Rivoltella, "La scena della sofferenza," 142-143.

¹⁴It suffices to mention that the third book of Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1632) – a summa of all the work written on this topic since ancient times – is devoted to the study of "Love-melancholy" and that among the authorities cited by Burton one finds renowned Italian scholars in the field, such as Marsilio Ficino, Girolamo Cardano, and Tommaso Campanella (the latter two are contemporaries of Guarini). For the close relationship between melancholia and love among both moralists and doctors, see Lorenzetti, "La bellezza e l'amore nei trattati del Cinquecento."

¹⁵Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism*, 272. This view is also shared by Weinberg, who holds that the architectonic end of Guarini's tragicomedy is "exclusively comic" (*A History of Literary Criticism*, 2:660) and Sampson (*Pastoral Drama*, 140). For a critical perspective that particularly emphasizes the comic aspects in Guarini's tragicomedy, see Bulega, "La 'fabula' tragicomica attraverso le polemiche sul *Pastor Fido*," 53; Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, 1-26, and 92-123.

(Thus I say that Tragicomedy, like the others [Comedy and Tragedy] also has two purposes: the instrumental, which is the form resulting from the imitation of tragic and comic things mixed together; and the architectonic, which consists in purging the soul of the evil affect of melancholy. The latter end is all comic and all simple, nor is it in anyway akin to the tragic end, for the reason that the effects of [tragic and comic] purging are truly the opposite of one another: one relaxes, while the other constricts. These are opposite movements of the soul, as one were to move from the center to the circumference and the other in the opposite direction, and such ends, in drama, we may call contradictory.)¹⁶

There could not be a clearer refutation of the aesthetics of tragedy; and yet, there are also revealing signs that in Guarini's aesthetics the boundaries between tragedy and tragicomedy are not as clearly defined as they seem to be at first glance. This is particularly true if we consider not so much what he indicates as the aesthetic ends of tragicomedy—the purging of melancholy—, but the means through which he intends to achieve it. What are these means? Laughter, he holds, thereby apparently reinforcing his claim to comedy and disclaimer of tragedy. But the laughter that Guarini aims at achieving is not any laughter: it is rather a tempered form of laughter or “*riso temperato*”, as he calls it;¹⁷ and the word “*temperamento*” (temperament), which “*temperato*” immediately recalls, implies a strategic alignment with the neo-Aristotelian side of the ongoing debate on tragedy; the side of Francesco Riccoboni's moderate tragic purgation.¹⁸ Significant, in this respect, is the fact that one full third of the *Compendio* is devoted to thoroughly addressing the issue of catharsis, not only challenging current theories, but also engaging with Aristotle's own definition of tragedy: the famous “*passo difficile*” of the *Poetics* (Poeth., 6, 1449b, 25), which Guarini expressly mentions.¹⁹ In this light it is safe to entertain the idea that tempered laughter and tragic purgation may not be mutually exclusive in Guarini's aesthetics, but rather complimentary. This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that his general idea of purgation is indeed a comic one, yet,

¹⁶Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the *Compendio* are mine.

¹⁷Guarini, *Compendio*, 38.

¹⁸Following in Pietro Vettori and Alessandro Piccolomini's footsteps, Francesco Riccoboni's *Poetica* (1583) marks another critical point in the debate on purgation taking place between neo-Platonists and neo-Aristotelians. On Riccoboni, see Toffanin, *La fine dell'umanesimo*, 126-140. For the connection between Guarini and Riccoboni, see Mazzacurati, *La crisi della retorica umanistica*, 11-22.

¹⁹Guarini, *Compendio*, 17.

contrary to what he openly professes, it does not necessarily exclude catharsis proper.²⁰

How is catharsis achieved? In other words, how are the tragic affects elicited in Guarini's tragicomedy? Specifically through a masterful use of the fashionable *peripetia*. As is well known, *peripetia* (or *peripeteia*, as Aristotle calls it in the *Poetics*) consists in a sudden reversal of fortune purposefully devised in order to arouse pity and fear.²¹ Malatesta Porta mentions *peripetia* among the things that determine "l'illustre" ("the illustrious nature") of tragedy: "venendo quello [l'illustre] della tragedia dall'avvenimento di cose grandi, e dalle subite peripetie, che misericordia nuovo[no], e recano spavento" ("in that it [the illustrious nature of tragedy] comes from the great things, and unforeseen turns of fortune that take place therein and that move to pity, and arouse fear").²² In Sperone Speroni's controversial and influential tragedy, *Canace* (1542), *peripetia* is used twice and becomes one of the staples of late Renaissance dramaturgy. Handed down to Tasso and to Guarini, *peripetia* becomes a device of primary importance in Mannerist dramaturgy where, as Cavazzini argues, it serves primarily to elicit marvel as a potentially tragic fate turns into a happy ending.²³ This, however, does not mean that Mannerist dramaturgy had become oblivious to the traditional use of *peripetia*; it simply means that Mannerist dramaturgy was seeking for new ways to expand on its traditional affective impact. To be sure, it is the traditional *peripetia* Guarini is referring to, when he lists the "new and unforeseen accidents" among the essential elements that tragicomedy inherits from tragedy and that are primarily responsible for the particular kind of tragicomic delight he is after; a delight which, as he explains, comes also from the tragic potentiality of the plot:

Quale è il diletto Tragico? l'imitare azione grave di persona illustre con accidenti nuovi et non aspettati. Or lievisi il terrore, et riducasi al pericolo solo, fingasi nuova favola, et nuovi nomi, et tutto sia temperato col riso, refleterà il diletto dell'imitazione, che farà Tragico in potenza, ma non in atto e rimarranne la forza sola ma non l'affetto [...]. (*Compendio*, 23)

(What is tragic delight? Imitating grave actions of illustrious people, with new and unforeseen accidents. Well, remove terror, and reduce it to mere

²⁰For a more thorough discussion of Guarini's concept of purgation, see Schneider, *The Healing Agenda in Battista Guarini's Pastor Fido*, 18-53.

²¹For a general overview on the subject of *peripetia*, see Toffanin, *La fine dell'umanesimo* 65-81; Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 2:912-953.

²²See Porta, *Il Rossi*, 4, cited in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 2:1046.

²³Cavazzini, "Padova e Guarini," 142.

danger; feign a new tale, with new names; and temper everything with laughter: this will effect the ensuing delight of the imitation, which will be potentially Tragic, but not actually Tragic, as only the Tragic force will have remained, but not the affect [...].)

A classically-minded modernist,²⁴ Guarini still contemplates the use of a traditional *peripetia*, where the tragic affects of pity and fear are aroused by “new and unforeseen events,” provided that everything be eventually tempered by the laughter that ensues the marvellous, comic resolution. What he clearly rules out is horror, which arises from actual deadly events. Horror is to be avoided at all costs, since it overwhelms the audience and hampers catharsis altogether. Fear, however, notably that which arises from sudden, unforeseen turns of fortune that might lead to potentially tragic events, is welcome: “Questo è finalmente tutto quello, che si può fare di tragico nella Poesia tragicomica; conducendo gli accidenti miserabili non alla morte; ma solamente al pericolo.” (“This is ultimately the extent that tragedy may be featured in tragicomic poetry: staging miserable accidents leading only to peril, not to death”).²⁵ Thus Guarini’s Mannerist dramaturgy does indeed feature a catharsis; but one that is based on a modern elaboration of the traditional *peripetia*.

The element of impending peril, that Guarini dubs “pericolo” in the passage cited above, becomes crucial in this respect. A powerful emotional trigger, it is by itself able to elicit fear and pity; and by remaining such – just a peril of imminent death that never turns into a deadly occurrence – it safeguards its efficacy as a cathartic device. A similar strategic use of impending peril had already been defended by Lorenzo Giacomini, in a famous lecture on tragic purgation delivered at the Accademia degli Alterati in 1586:

Quel dubbio piuttosto è da rimuoversi, come possa quella tragedia, di cui fine farà lieto da miseria a felicità, compire questa purgazione, non rappresentando caso doloroso, onde la compassione si tragga; e la risposta non è malagevole a darsi, e dopo essa sarà giunto a riva il ragionamento, perciocché diciamo anche in tragedia tale aver luogo il compatimento e lo spavento, poiché il male vicino, che senza speranza di scampo è per accadere, dall’anima è considerato come presente, e come tale muove

²⁴For Selmi’s extensive and erudite discussion of Guarini’s conservative modernism, see Selmi, *Classici e Moderni*, 32-74.

²⁵Guarini, *Annotazioni*, 107, cited in Gareffi, *La questione del ‘Pastor Fido’* 107 (my translation).

compassione; perché Ifigenia pronta, secondo la barbara legge, ad uccidere il fratello non conosciuto, è attissima a muovere pietà poco minore, che se lo avesse ucciso, e l'apparecchio degl'instrumenti di miserabile morte vicina in azione vera, o imitata, così muove compassione, quanto l'aspetto di morte seguita, la quale si può talora appresentare così terribile, e dolorosa con tanto ritiramento di spiriti al principio della vita, che proibendo la compassione, ed il pianto induca stupore, e quella insensatezza, della quale disse Dante: 'T'non piangeva, sì dentro inpietrai.'²⁶

(Instead what needs to be removed is any doubt as to whether a tragedy with a happy ending, that turns misery into felicity, may indeed be able to achieve this kind of purgation, without representing the kind of painful events that arouse compassion; and the answer is not difficult, and with it we shall bring this argument to a close: for compassion and fear can also occur in such tragedy—in that the imminent evil, which is about to happen, without any possibility to escape it, is considered by the soul as a present one, and as such moves compassion. For this reason when Iphigenia is preparing to kill her brother, whom she does not recognize, she is able to move to a pity that is only slightly weaker than the one it would have occurred, had she actually killed him; and the preparation of the instruments of a miserable death in an action that is real, as well as imitated, moves to as much compassion as the death that follows does, which can sometimes be so terrible and painful, with such retraction of the spirits to the principle of life that, inhibiting compassion and tears, it may induce the stupor and to that lack of sensitivity that Dante described when he said: 'I could not cry, so much was I turned into stone inside'.)

In the light of Giacomini's defence of impending peril as a legitimate cathartic device, Guarini's own vindication of "pericolo" leaves little doubt that he intends to make purgation of pity and fear an integral part of tragicomedy. To a plot that purges too much ("Tragichissimo"), Guarini simply prefers one that "purges less":

Non può essere già difetto ne di giudizio, ne d'arte, l'amar più tosto di vedere una favola men purgante, che una, per così dire, Tragichissima, tutta piena di lagrime percióche egli ci son degli animi nobilissimi, i quali

²⁶Giacomini Tebalducci Malespini, "Lezione," 249-250. With regard to the relevance of Giacomini's theoretical thought, see Hathaway, *The Age*, 251-261; Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 1:523-528; Rivoltella, "La scena della sofferenza," 114-119. With regard to Giacomini's fundamental contribution to the aesthetics of melodrama, see Palisca, "The Alterati of Florence, Pioneers in the Theory of Dramatic Music" in his *Studies in the History of Italian Music*, 408-429; Russano Hanning, "Pathos, Homeopathy and Theories of the Affection" in her *On Poetry and Music's Power*, 21-42.

l'arte ottimamente intendono della Scena, e pure non han vaghezza delle favole tanto Tragiche, e come quelli, che di sì fatte purgazioni non han bisogno, sommamente le fuggono, e aborriscono. (Guarini, *Il Verato secondo*, 119)

(It can't be a defect either of judgment or of art to prefer to watch a tale that is less purging, instead of one that is, in a manner of speaking, utterly tragic, filled with tears, because there are some very noble spirits, who perfectly understand the art of the stage, and yet are not fond of tales that are so tragic; and, just as those who don't need such forms of purgation, they shun and abhor them.)²⁷

Guarini is distancing himself only from “utterly tragic” forms of purgation; not from *any* tragic form of purgation.

This is significant, in that it helps to put into perspective what may at first appear as elements of incongruity in his dramaturgy: namely his reiterated denial of any purging effect of tragicomedy (other than the comic one) which characterizes the *Compendio*, and even his unwillingness to use the word “purgare” with respect to the affects of fear and pity.²⁸ If appropriately framed within the debate on *via remotionis* and *via moderationis* which dominates literary criticism in the second half of the sixteenth century,²⁹ Guarini's very cautious stance on purgation clearly signals a willingness to distance himself not necessarily from the idea of tragic purgation *per se*, to which he in fact subscribes, but from his rival Giason De Nores' idea of tragic purgation.³⁰

Thus, while tactically dismissing tragedy, Guarini undeniably adopts a purging methodology which capitalizes on the affective trigger of danger and thereby directly recalls the frame of reference of tragedy. This shows

²⁷Cited in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 2: 1086 (translation by Weinberg).

²⁸The following statement is emblematic in this respect: “La tragicommedia nulla purga.” (“Tragicomedy purges nothing”) (Guarini, *Compendio*, 38).

²⁹The reference here is to the well known debate taking place between neo-Platonists and neo-Aristotelians. The former – represented by Vincenzo Maggi, Agnolo Segni, as well as Guarini's ‘arch-rival’ Giason De Nores – argued for an understanding of purgation in terms of obliteration of negative passions and their replacement with positive ones (*via remotionis*). The latter, spearheaded by Pietro Vettori, instead argued in favour of a moderate form of purgation or *temperamento* that only aimed at restoring balance (*via moderationis*). On this see Rivoltella, “La scena della sofferenza,” 126-133.

³⁰Rivoltella, “La scena della sofferenza,” 146.

that the particular process of purgation that pertains to tragicomedy is not only achieved through laughter, but also through the controlled arousal of the tragic affects of pity and fear. Tragicomedy is, then, a dramaturgy based on a *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetic formula. In this respect it is safe to conclude that in Guarini's Mannerist dramaturgy the element of marvel is cleverly inscribed within a general dynamics of danger (not of terror), where probable death—a death that remains a real possibility without ever actually occurring—substitutes actual death. The result is a tempered affective state, where the ensuing comic happy ending elicits a form of laughter guaranteed to be decorous: a “tempered laughter,” that is, which, as Guarini explains in his *Verato Secondo*, complies with the laws of modesty and decorum of a well-behaved man;³¹ a kind of laughter that is the end result of a psychological process that fully capitalizes on the purging effect of a ‘domesticated,’ but by no means less effective, catharsis. Using a medical analogy, one could say that, as analgesia is the effect that results from the impact of a drug's active ingredients on the organism—it is a medically-induced effect³²—, the “tempered laughter” of tragicomedy is in part a catharsis-induced effect, by the ‘active ingredients’ of fear and pity; such laughter eliminates melancholy just like analgesia eliminates pain.

Guarini's dramaturgy, then, is indeed a complex therapy designed to purge the heartbroken through a *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetic formula. However, every poet since Lucretius knew that a poetic therapy necessarily must come with a little ‘spoonful of sugar’ which lures the patient to take the medicine.³³ So, if tragicomedy is the medicine, then what is the ‘spoonful of sugar’ that goes along with it? This is a complex question indeed, and there might be more than one ‘spoonful of sugar’ for Guarini's therapy. It is however safe to say that music is the one more closely linked to his poetic practice.³⁴

³¹“Whence there results a poem of most excellent temperament, not only very fitting to the human complexion [...] but much more noble than simple tragedy and comedy, as a poem which does not bring us the atrocity of misfortune, blood and deaths, which are horrible and inhuman sights, and on the other hand does not make us so dissolute in laughter that we sin against modesty and against the decorum of a well-behaved man.” See Guarini, *Il Verato secondo* 156, cited in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 2: 1087 (translation by Weinberg).

³²Clayman, *The American Medical Association Encyclopedia of Medicine*.

³³Guarini himself mentions the Lucretian metaphor (Guarini, *Compendio*, 24).

³⁴Folena, “La mistione tragicomica e la metamorfosi dello stile”; Battaglin, “Il linguaggio tragicomico del Guarini.”

We know that music had become an integral part of pastoral dramaturgy since Tasso's *Aminta*.³⁵ Following in his fellow poet's footsteps, Guarini will go on to push the idea of music in pastoral poetry beyond previously established boundaries; beyond the strictly verbal musical speech, toward a new form of sung speech designed to respond to the loftier rhetorical aspirations of late Renaissance theatre.

In the *Compendio*, after having asserted the intrinsic tie between poetry and music—"musica ad un parto medesimo nata con la poesia" (*Compendio*, 9)—, Guarini calls on the historical authority of Polybius (*Book IV*) in order to prove that in Arcadia musical and poetic practice were natural to the shepherds, who were well trained in both:

Che tutti gli Arcadi eran poeti, che 'l principale esercizio loro era quel della musica: che l'apparavano da fanciulli, che le leggi a ciò fare li costringevano. che i Cori de' loro fanciulli avvezzavano a celebrare col canto le lodi dei loro Iddii. ch'n questa professione ebbero per maestri i più famosi musici della Grecia. che tutta nei canti e ne' versi la vita loro, la loro industria spendevano. (Guarini, *Compendio*, 33)

(That all the Arcadians were poets; that music was their principal artistic exercise; that they were musically trained as children; that this was mandated by their laws; that the choirs of their children were used to celebrate with songs the praise of their gods; that they had the most famous musicians of Greece teaching them this profession; that they spent all their lives, and all their energy singing and writing verses.)

From the mythical realm of Theocritus, Virgil, Sannazaro, and Politian, Guarini moves to the historical realm of Polybius, providing relevant evidence to support the *verisimilitude* of singing in a dramatic pastoral setting. In doing that, he clearly recycles many ideas of earlier music theoreticians—such as Girolamo Mei, Vincenzo Galilei, and other members of the

³⁵Luisi, "Note sul contributo musicale alla drammaturgia pastorale avanti il melodramma," 111-116.

³⁶In his *Dialogo della musica antica et moderna* (1581), Vincenzo Galilei had already mentioned that the shepherds used to cultivate the arts of music and poetry. On this see A. Carapetyan, "The Concept of *imitazione della natura* in Sixteenth Century," 64. Among other possibly relevant sources for Guarini's defence of music one should also mention Girolamo Mei's *De modis musicis antiquorum di G. Mei* (1573), a momentous study on classical tragedy and the role of music therein. The fourth book of this treatise contains an extended commentary on catharsis and its musical and medical significance (see Palisca, *Studies in the History of Italian Music*, 423).

Florentine Camerata—who advocated for melodrama.³⁶ But whereas the latter were actually vindicating the intrinsic tie between poetry and music essentially espousing the humanistic cause of reviving ancient tragedy,³⁷ Guarini does something quite different: looking at the here and now, he argues the legitimacy of a modern genre, namely pastoral tragicomedy, and defends singing in the theatre specifically on the grounds of the most sacred principle of *verisimilitude*: pastoral drama, since it imitates the actions of shepherds, necessarily has to be sung; otherwise it would not be *verisimilar*, thus it would fail to purge.³⁸ And in order to sustain his argument he resorts to Polybius' authoritative word. With this momentous move not only does he assert the sisterly bond between music and poetry; he goes much further, pointing at pastoral drama as a new artistic territory where the presence of music—the music of notes,³⁹ to be sure, with all its cathartic potential—is not only welcome, it is lawful, and even indispensable:

Chi vorrà dire che gente avvezza a non discorrere, a non pensare, a non esercitare non altro che nobilissimi canti e leggiadrissime poesie [...] non favellassero più di quello, che dir si possa altamente, e spiritosamente, ogni volta che veniva alcuna grande occasione di farlo [...] perché non farà lecito a noi di fare ornatamente parlare i Sacerdoti e gli Eroi? la cui professione e per costume e per legge non era altro che musica e poesia? (Guarini, *Compendio* 33)

(Who would want to argue that people accustomed to do nothing but speak, think, exercise the most noble songs and finest poetry would not speak more than highly and spiritedly every time a great occasion to do so came along? [...] why then shouldn't we be allowed to have these high

³⁷For a general discussion of the aesthetics of the Florentine Camerata, besides the above mentioned works of Palisca and Russano Hanninng, see also Pirrotta, "Tragédie et comédie dans la Camerata Fiorentina"; and by the same author "Temperaments and Tendencies in the Florentine Camerata," in his *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque*, 217-234; Russano Hanning, "Rinuccini and the Power of Music" in her *On Poetry and Music's Power*, 1-20; Brown, "How Opera Began: An Introduction to Jacopo Peri's *Euridice*"; Tomlinson, *Monteverdi*.

³⁸Note that since Robortello the pragmatic effectiveness of tragedy (i.e. catharsis) is strictly related to the credibility of what is represented (i.e. verisimilitude). This Aristotelian theme is recurring in all Renaissance commentators (see Rivoltella, "La scena della sofferenza," 112).

³⁹It is a fact that the *Pastor Fido* required instrumental and vocal music. See Sampson, "The Mantuan Performance of Guarini's *Pastor Fido*," 76.

priests and heroes speak in an ornate fashion, since their profession by custom and by law was nothing else but music and poetry?)

Thus pastoral poetry must be sung for the mere reason that singing is *verisimilar* in a pastoral setting: a simple yet convincing argument. Unlike the numerous advocates of music who preceded him, Guarini's innovative approach to the defence of music neither follows the Pythagorean logic of the music of the spheres, nor is it based on Ficino's metaphysics of music, nor does it espouse the classicist antiquarian agenda that sought to revive ancient tragedy by exploiting the ideal cathartic power of music. Instead, it follows the cold yet very effective logic of a neo-Aristotelian playwright. In this respect, I believe it is important to point out that Guarini manages to make music or sung speech an integral part of a comprehensive theory of modern drama, thereby reversing a general movement toward the gradual exclusion of music in the development of a classicizing literary theatre.⁴⁰ Moreover he brings to completion what music theoreticians were already working on, yet without fully succeeding at it. In fact, it is well known that the arguments of the Camerata in favour of music in theatre were only based on the aesthetic value of the musical word, not on its *verisimilitude* in a dramatic setting.

At this point it is clear that behind Guarini's skilful rhetoric in favour of sung speech there is not only the seasoned entertainer, who is trying to satisfy the growing demands of a music-loving court.⁴¹ There is also the experienced playwright, who knows how to exploit all the elements of drama, music included, in order to accomplish his aesthetic goal. His

⁴⁰Gerbino points out how the development of a classicizing literary theatre entails the expulsion of music from the dramatic action. See Gerbino, *Orpheus in Arcadia*, 167-175.

⁴¹That music is in the back of Guarini's mind as he formulates his dramaturgy is quite obvious, judging from the following passage: "sperando pur che dovesse la poesia correre una fortuna medesima con la musica sua sorella, che nella nostra corte ha pur trovato il suo premio." ("hoping at least that poetry may be as fortunate as its sister music, which in our court has found its reward."); Guarini, *Lettere*, 98. At that time, with the three ladies of Ferrara (Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio, Laura Peperara, and later Guarini's daughter Anna) and the musical direction of Luzzasco Luzzaschi and Tarquinia Molza, music had become one of the favourite forms of entertainment of Alfonso II (see Rossi *Battista Guarini* 34, and also 50-53). On the fruitful artistic relationship existing between Luzzaschi and Guarini, see Durante and Martellotti, "Il cavalier Guarini e il Concerto delle Dame."

defence of the appropriateness of singing in pastoral drama is, thus, directly linked to the pragmatic effect of the pastoral therapy: the 'spoonful of sugar' not only makes the medicine "go down," it makes it work.⁴² In this light, it is easy to see not only how Guarini could have provided the dramaturgic foundation for the development of early opera;⁴³ but also, and most importantly, how he could have provided a sound argument for the therapeutic value of musico-poetic language in a pastoral setting: an argument that, as will be pointed out, Monteverdi will be quick to capitalize on.

One may thus conclude that Guarini's *Pastor Fido* is much more than just the product of an artistic environment highly appreciative of music. It is indeed the product of an artistic environment that, under the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics*, is becoming particularly keen on the poetic implications of a composite art form,⁴⁴ eventually developing a new vision about the theatre. Theatre is now conceived as the literary space which effectively synthesizes the research on melodrama and dramatic pastoral poetry conducted respectively by the Camerata and by Tasso,⁴⁵ and thoroughly exploits the Aristotelian theoretical apparatus in order to grant its poetic language unprecedented therapeutic power.

Monteverdi's Pastoral Experience Under the Aegis of Guarini

So far, I have shown that Guarini's engagement with the pastoral genre is characterized by a substantial commitment to the purging of love-melancholy, and that his *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetic formula as well as his strong advocacy for the cathartic function of music in drama are fundamental to that commitment. The second part of this article is going to focus on another particularly significant pastoral experience, namely that of Claudio Monteverdi's *Fifth Book of Madrigals*, and show that there is arguably a similar commitment to purging love-melancholy at work here, as well as a remarkable similarity with Guarini's aesthetics.

Published in 1605, *Book V* not only signs the first fully fledged experience with pastoral settings for the Cremonese composer; it is also one of

⁴²This discussion has been purposefully limited to the elements of poetry and music. On the relevance of the visual or scenographic element in pastoral dramaturgy – indeed a 'spoonful of sugar' in its own right –, see Cavicchi, "Immagini e forme dello spazio scenico nella pastorale ferrarese," 45-52.

⁴³Pirrota, "Inizio dell'opera e aria" in his *Li due Orfei*.

⁴⁴Cavazzini, "Padova e Guarini," 138.

⁴⁵Angelini, "Il Pastor fido," 717.

the most extensive tributes ever paid to the *Pastor Fido* by a madrigalist.⁴⁶ Of the nineteen madrigals contained in this work, sixteen set texts by Guarini; of these eleven come from the *Pastor Fido*. Monteverdi's tribute to the author of the *Pastor Fido* in *Book V*, however, even goes beyond this already rather conspicuous feature. In fact, as is well known, the *Pastor Fido* settings in *Book V* can easily be grouped into two cycles of madrigals; one for each of the two major plot lines of Guarini's pastoral. The *Mirtillo-Amarillis* cycle: *Cruda Amarilli* (act 1) / *O Mirtillo* / *Ch'io t'ami* / *Deh bella e cara* / *Ma tu più che mai* / *M'è più dolce* (act 3); and the *Silvio-Dorinda* cycle: *Ecco Silvio* / *Ma se con la Pietà* / *Dorinda ah! dirò* / *Ecco piegando* / *Ferir quel petto* (act 4). It is as if Monteverdi, while paying a great tribute to Guarini, were also attempting to provide his own synthesized yet comprehensive version of the *Pastor Fido*—an appropriation of sorts of the famous pastoral drama. At first, one might attribute this emphasis on Guarini to the most obvious of reasons: to the extraordinary popularity of Guarini's pastoral at the Mantuan court;⁴⁷ to the possible competition between composers challenging each other at setting a 'bravura' repertoire – which at that time the *Pastor Fido* is likely to have become;⁴⁸ to the prominence of Guarini's theoretical voice;⁴⁹ or to the fact that the double love plot, which he had made popular, quickly became a cliché of pastoral drama.⁵⁰ These explanations, even though certainly plausible, do not account for a number of other curious choices Monteverdi makes in *Book V*. Such choices will be the object of the ensuing discussion.

⁴⁶The number of *Pastor Fido* settings in Monteverdi's *Book V* is surpassed only by Marenzio's *Seventh Book of Madrigals* (1595), with 14 settings. See Charer, "Il *Pastor Fido* and Music."

⁴⁷Einstein, "Italian Madrigal Verse,"; also see Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle at the Gonzaga Court, c. 1580-1600." On the general musical success of the *Pastor Fido*, see Hartmann, "Battista Guarini and *Il Pastor Fido*."

⁴⁸With regard to Guarini's style and his influence on Marenzio, see Cecchi, "Modalità grande forma."

⁴⁹For an interesting take on Monteverdi's extensive use of Guarini's texts as a way to tacitly subscribe to the particular theoretical agenda outlined by the poet in his defence of the *Pastor Fido*, see Chiarelli, "Poetic Choices and Choice of Poetics."

⁵⁰It is, in fact, the double love of the nymph Celia that attracts the attention of Baldassarre Bonifacio and a number of members of his academy for Prospero Bonarelli's *Filli di Sciro* (1605). See Cavallini, "Le accademie vinte nel Rinascimento tra musica e teatro," 62.

The analysis offered in the following pages develops Gary Tomlinson's formalistic approach to Monteverdi's music, presented in his *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (1987). Tomlinson argues convincingly that Monteverdi's musical language is shaped by the stylistic elements of the texts he sets; in other words, that Monteverdi's musical language deals primarily with conveying formal and stylistic elements. This approach, I believe, extends quite naturally to the issue of genre as agent of meaning, which is the one proposed here.⁵¹ This idea is based on the fact that genre is a fundamental concern of literature, and that any combination of discourse, complex and diverse as it may be, always respects a genre, which predominates in all other discourses and maintains them subordinated to its intentions.⁵² For classical literature genre is "a means of signification incorporated in the text in order to structure discourse and to give instruction to the reader;" it is, "the horizon which profiles the extremes of meaning and delimits the real possibilities of the word within the system of literary codification."⁵³ Needless to say, such classical formal values inform much of the literary theory and practice of the Renaissance. It suffices to take a look at the very feisty debate that develops around Guarini's attempt to blur the boundaries between tragedy and comedy in his tragicomic conception of *favola pastorale*. The issue of genre, then, remains a critical concern of poetic discourse well after the classical era. Every genre not only behaves as an "invitation to form," in that "discourse receives it and is structured by it,"⁵⁴ it also carries within itself a set of issues that make up its body of meaning. The first part of this paper has shown how purging love-melancholy is indeed a relevant part of the complex body of meaning that pertains to Guarini's pastoral experience. Turning to Monteverdi, this analysis of *Book V* aims at inquiring if and how the issue of purging love-melancholy is addressed and dealt with by the composer as he enters the pastoral realm. Tomlinson convincingly argues that in *Book IV* Monteverdi assimilates Guarini's epigrammatic style;⁵⁵ and that his encounter with Marino, in *Book VII*, revitalizes an expressive style that depicts in iconic musical gesture the images of the poetry.⁵⁶ I propose that a convincing

⁵¹Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*.

⁵²Conte, "L'amore senza elegia," 45, n2

⁵³Conte, "L'amore senza elegia," 10

⁵⁴Conte, "L'amore senza elegia," 10

⁵⁵Tomlinson, *Monteverdi*, 83-98.

⁵⁶Tomlinson, *Monteverdi*, 202.

argument can be made to show that in *Book V* Monteverdi also takes on the same challenges faced by Guarini the pastoral dramatist/healer.

As already mentioned, Monteverdi makes a number of curious choices in *Book V*. One of them pertains to the opening piece, the famous *Cruda Amarilli*, the manifesto of that *seconda pratica* so vehemently criticized by his rival Giovanni Maria Artusi.⁵⁷ By the time Monteverdi's setting of *Cruda Amarilli* is published, the famous two-stanza madrigal, taken from act I of the *Pastor Fido*, already has a ten-year-old record of madrigalistic practice; which is to say that this excerpt from the *Pastor Fido* is already a favorite among composers, well before the publication of Monteverdi's *Book V*. Most settings of *Cruda Amarilli* before Monteverdi use the entire text:⁵⁸ the first twenty-two verses of Act 1 scene 2.

MIRTILLO: Cruda Amarilli, che col nome ancora,
d'amar, ah! lasso!, amaramente insegna:
Amarilli del candido ligustro
più candida e più bella,
ma dell'aspido sordo
e più sorda e più fera e più fugace;
poi che col dir t'offendo,
i' mi morrò tacendo;

ma grideran per me le piagge e i monti
e questa selva, a cui
si spesso il tuo bel nome
di risuonare insegno.
Per me piangendo i fonti
e mormorando i venti
diranno i miei lamenti;
parlerà del mio volto

⁵⁷Artusi, *L'Artusi*, fols. 1-4v, 39-49r trans. in Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, 393-404. For a general discussion of the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy, see Palisca, "The Artusi Controversy" in his *Studies in the History of Italian Music*, 54-87.

⁵⁸*Cruda Amarilli* is set for the first time in 1595 by Marenzio (*Book VII*), and then by Wert (*Book XI*); the latter version, probably for a projected performance of the *Pastor fido* at the Mantuan court, is only slightly shortened (the last five verses are missing). The two-stanza format is maintained by Pallavicino (*Book VI*, 1600), and also by Cifra (*Book I*, 1605). On this see Chater, "Il *Pastor Fido* and Music," 160-161; also by the same author "*Cruda Amarilli*," even though there are some discrepancies between the two articles.

la pietà e 'l dolore;
e, se fia muto ogn'altra cosa, al fine
parlerà il mio morire,
e ti dirà la morte il mio martire. (*Pastor Fido*, 1, 2, 272-291)⁵⁹

(O cruel Amarillis, in whose name / The bitter pains of love are legible,
/ My Amarillis, much more bright and fair / Than the white lily, yet to
me you seem / More shy, more cruel than the deafened adder. / If words
give such offence. I'll then complain / No more, but rather choose to die
in silence. / But then the hills and mountains all around / Will cry aloud,
and tell the world my grief. / So shall this grove, which I so oft have
taught / to speak thy lovely name. / The springs shall weep, / And mur-
m'ring winds shall speak my lamentations. / Grief and compassion both
shall plead my cause / In downcast look and a distressed face. / But
should this world be mute when life is fled, / My death at last must speak
and ease my pains, / The fatal pains that caused your lover's death.)⁶⁰

In *Book V*, however, the form of the madrigal appears, for the first time, drastically reduced to a single stanza. The second stanza, the one that begins with "ma grideran per me le piagge e i monti" (l. 281), has completely disappeared. Is it just a coincidence or a choice determined by practical reasons or something else altogether? What does it mean when a composer like Monteverdi, whose poetics underscore the priority of words over music,⁶¹ decides not to set such a substantial part of a pre-existing text? I want to argue that this is a meaningful gesture or, as Pirrotta would call it, a poetic choice.

One could offer at least two possible textual readings of Monteverdi's *Cruda Amarilli*: one in the context of the *Pastor Fido*, the other extrapolated from that context. The latter will be considered first. Reading Monteverdi's text of *Cruda Amarilli* one immediately notices that the speaker is a melancholic lover, whose unrequited love leads him to long for death. Most importantly, he is a melancholic lover who, as emblematically captured in the last two verses of the madrigal, can not express his grief, because it offends his beloved ("If words give such offence. I'll then com-

⁵⁹I am purposefully dividing the text in two stanzas in order to show how this excerpt of the *Pastor Fido* was usually set by madrigalists.

⁶⁰Unless otherwise stated, for the English translation of all cited passages from the *Pastor Fido*, see Guarini, *The Faithful Shepherd*.

⁶¹Giulio Cesare Monteverdi states it quite clearly in a well known passage of his *Dichiaratione*, see Claudio Monteverdi, *Lettere, dediche e prefazioni*, 396. For the English translation of the *Dichiaratione*, see Strunk, *Source of Readings in Music History*, 405-12.

plain / No more, but rather choose to die in silence"). This statement is made even more peremptory by Monteverdi's cutting of the entire stanza that traditionally follows that statement. In fact the second stanza, with its symptomatic *incipit* "ma"—which is really a "comunque" ("however")—is supposed to provide the speaker with a typical elegiac resolution, by bringing forth nature as the recipient of the voice of the silenced lover.⁶² Such deliverance through nature is purposefully denied by the composer's rewriting of the text; hence considerably dramatizing the unrequited lover's pathologic state. The message is clear and has momentous poetic and aesthetic implications: the grieving song of the frustrated lover has become downright offensive, and therefore it can no longer cure love-melancholy. The above mentioned epigrammatic closing of *Cruda Amarilli* openly states the crisis of the pastoral song, and in turn that of the purging power of the word set to music—a quite dramatic beginning indeed.

It is not surprising that the last two climactic verses of the madrigal that actually underscore this message receive a very special musical treatment, which aims at setting them apart from the rest of the composition and, at the same time, at highlighting their meaningfulness: (1) the music setting just the last two verses ("Poiché col dir t'offendo / i' mi morrò tacendo") comprises more than one third of the whole composition (mm. 44-67), while the amount of text set only amounts to one fourth of the total length of the text;⁶³ (2) while the texture of the composition is predominantly homophonic with a declamatory rhythm, in the last two verses it becomes more polyphonic, and there is extensive use of counterpoint; (3) the use of contrapuntal writing emphasizes, among other things, the simultaneous presence of the two utterances "Poi che col dir t'offendo" and "i' mi morrò tacendo," underscoring their interrelation, and setting them apart from the rest of the composition in a sort of B section; (4) at the end of the first musical phrase of this B section (mm. 44-55), a cadence in D minor momentarily produces a shift in the tonal center—it is the only cadence in D minor in the composition. This is significant, since the entire piece hovers about a G major tonal center and the momentary shift to the minor key center provides a dominant-tonic polarity that nicely enhances the climactic moment in the text set in the B section of the composition. In the light of these textual and musical features, it is safe to say that Monteverdi's rewriting of *Cruda Amarilli* (i.e. the deletion of its comple-

⁶²Flora, "Guarino e i madrigalisti del Cinquecento," 109.

⁶³For all musical references to *Book V*, see Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigals Books IV & V*.

mentary *Ma grideran per me le piagge e i monti*) is a meaningful gesture, that immediately addresses the therapeutic agenda of the pastoral genre signalling a crisis of the purging power of song. It is also worth noticing that such concern is voiced through the one madrigal that, as is well known, is supposed to represent the manifesto of a new and indeed controversial compositional style—the *seconda pratica*—,⁶⁴ that Monteverdi is trying to defend against a very well reputed adversary.

This is, however, only the ‘front cover’ of *Book V*; and considering the extent of Monteverdi’s well known formal organization and sense of symmetry,⁶⁵ one would expect to find an equally strong statement also on the ‘back cover’ of *Book V*. Indeed *Questi vaghi concenti*, the madrigal that closes the collection, provides such an obvious answer to *Cruda Amarilli*, both in words and music, that it is almost impossible to miss it. The text of the madrigal already offers several interesting signs in this respect:

Questi vaghi concenti
che l’augellett’ intorno
vanno temprando all’apparir del giorno
sono, cred’io, d’amor desiri ardenti;
son pene e tormenti;
e pur fanno le selve ’l ciel gioire
al lor dolce languire.

Deh! se potessi anch’io
così dolce dolermi
per questi poggi solitari ed ermi,
che quell’a cui piacer sola desio
gradiss’ il pianger mio,
io bramerei sol per piacer a lei
eterni i pianti miei.

(These delightful harmonies / that the songbirds all around / are creating
as daylight appears / are, I believe, burning, amorous desires, they are
pains and torments; / and yet they make the woods and sky rejoice / with
their sweet languishing. / Ah, if I too were able / to lament so sweetly /

⁶⁴The *seconda pratica* entailed the use of ‘incorrect’ intervals, chromaticism, modal ambiguity, and recitative-like declamation. On this see Fabbri, “Monteverdi: The Dispute over the ‘Seconda Pratica,’” in his *Monteverdi*, 34-52.

⁶⁵On the subject of formal organization in Monteverdi’s works, see Ossi, “Claudio Monteverdi’s ‘Ordine nuovo bello e gustevole’”; specifically with reference to *Book V*, see by the same author “L’ordine novo e la via naturale all’imitatione.”

on these solitary and deserted hills / that the one woman whose pleasure
I have at heart / took delight in my weeping, / I would desire—only to
give pleasure to her—that my sorrows were eternal.)

Considering this final madrigal with respect to *Cruda Amarilli*, there are three crucial things that are immediately noticeable. The first is the radical shift, at the semantic level, from the realm of cruelty, bitterness, and death of *Cruda Amarilli* to that of sweetness and delight of *Questi vaghi concenti*. The second is the formal reconciliation that takes place as the interrupted two-stanza form, which opens *Book V*, is juxtaposed to another two-stanza form, this time uninterrupted.⁶⁶ The third, and the most important one, pertains to the programmatic message conveyed by the text, particularly by the second stanza, which can be paraphrased thus: “Ah, if I were able to delight my beloved by grieving as sweetly as birds do, I would desire—only to give pleasure to her—that my sorrows were eternal.” The speaker—to be sure, another melancholic lover—this time wishes his sorrows were eternal because their musical expression, “il dolce languire” (l.7), delights his beloved, thus soothes his own pain too, purging him of melancholy. The message, once again, is clear and has momentous poetic and aesthetic implications: the pastoral song, critically suspended at the beginning of *Book V*, eventually regains its decorum and hence its original therapeutic power. By appropriating a neutral text, purposefully chosen from a less popular repertoire, thus better fitted to inscribe his poetic aspirations onto it,⁶⁷ Monteverdi suggests a possible resolution to the crisis ushered in with *Cruda Amarilli* by introducing the aesthetics of ‘sweet languishing’: from the crisis of the bitter song to the resolution through the sweet song; the song that sublimates passions instead of expressing them, and turns the bitter languishing into a sweet one, resolves the crisis caused by the overly expressive song of grief. Purgation through joyfulness substitutes purgation through grievance. The therapeutic function of the pastoral song is restored.

This final positive outcome also bears all the musical signs of an important landmark in the geography of *Book V*. First of all, the madrigal

⁶⁶The formal bipartition—“Quei vaghi concenti” (1st stanza), “Deh! se potessi anch’io” (2nd stanza)—is underscored by the instrumental interlude supplied by the *Sinfonia seconda*.

⁶⁷The author of *Quei vaghi concenti* remains unknown to this day. The possibility that it may have been written purposefully by Monteverdi himself or by somebody close to him should not be ruled out at this point.

is scored, quite unusually indeed, for a total of nine vocal parts divided in two choirs (5 and 4) and continuo. It is worth mentioning that such a setting does not occur in any of Monteverdi's previous madrigal works. Furthermore the first stanza—where the words “dolce languire” occur—is framed by a Sinfonia (*Sinfonia prima* and *Sinfonia seconda*), supplying a formal architecture that gives it even more gravity. This is another novelty in the composer's treatment of madrigals that foreshadows the use of the *Sinfonia* in the Prologue of *Orfeo*. Hence, from the perspective of the orchestration, everything seems to underscore the extraordinary nature of this piece of music. In addition there are four solos intercalated by choirs which provide an enhanced sense of subjectivity: tenor1 (mm. 27-35), tenor2 (mm. 40-8), alto1 (mm. 60-74), bass1 (mm. 104-13).⁶⁸ For a more precise discussion of the music, I would like to focus on the treatment of “Al lor dolce languire,” a crucial fragment of text that is emphasized in two different ways: 1. by a melisma on the word “cielo” (mm. 40-44) that precedes it and sharply contrasts with its inactive melody and rhythm (mm. 46-48); 2. by the imitative style used for “E pur fanno le selve gioire” (mm. 49-53) that precedes it the second time (mm. 54-57) and again contrasts with its homophonic treatment and declamatory rhythm. The first time—(1)—, the contrast is not underscored harmonically: the tonal center is A minor throughout; the second time—(2)—, the contrast is underscored by a dominant-tonic polarity (A minor-D major) with a final plagal cadence in D major, that gives the music an almost sacred tone. *Questi vaghi concetti* is thus, in all probability, a crucial composition in *Book V*, and “dolce languire” a crucial point in the music as much as in the text. Musical and textual considerations, then, seem to point in the same direction. Poetic choices at the textual level are thus supported by equally strong musical features, reminding us, once again, that construction of meaning in madrigal practice relies on the fundamental interplay between poetry and music.

While the crisis-resolution type of narrative described so far—bitterness is substituted with sweetness and delight, excessive passion is sublimated, artistic expressiveness is sacrificed for courtly decorum—is certainly corroborated by the music and the text, it is also questionable. In fact, according to this reading *Cruda Amarilli* was essentially a problem to be solved. This in turn would mean that the *seconda pratica* was a problem to be solved; a conclusion obviously false for Monteverdi, but that might have possibly been shared by a rather large part of the audience to whom this book, with its apologetic *Preface*, was addressed. Taking this into account,

⁶⁸Two solos contain the word “io” (T1, A1), in a third (B1) “io” is implied.

it is quite likely that the front and back covers of *Book V* could have provided a legitimate packaging that would have at least shielded the integrity of this work against the criticism its opponents might level against it. Packaging a catalogue of examples of a new, highly controversial compositional style, like the *seconda pratica*, with a *palinode* of that very compositional style, seems a quite smart and, by the way, very Guarinian thing to do. In fact, as has been shown, Guarini's open refutation of the aesthetics of tragedy is but the safe packaging for what is instead essentially a reinterpretation of such aesthetics. So, while the crisis-resolution type narrative described above did possibly serve an important purpose, it is also true that a book should never be judged only by its cover.

Therefore it is necessary to also offer a reading of *Book V* that thoroughly takes into account Monteverdi's exploitation of the context of the *Pastor Fido*. In this respect it is important to notice that *Cruda Amarilli* is not only the front cover of *Book V*; it is also the first of the six madrigals that make up one of the two *Pastor Fido* cycles featured in the Book: the *Mirtillo-Amarillis* cycle. As is well known, the speaking voice in *Cruda Amarilli* is that of the melancholic lover Mirtillo lamenting his frustrated love for Amarillis, by whom he is secretly loved yet publicly rejected. In the five madrigals of the *Amarillis-Mirtillo* cycle that feature Mirtillo as the speaking voice, Guarini's popular faithful shepherd surprisingly morphs into a tragic melancholic lover: his initial bashing of his cruel beloved Amarillis (*Cruda Amarilli*) is followed by his confession of love (*Ch'io t'ami*) and by his desperate plea for her last compassionate look (*Deh bella e cara*) that remain unrequited, and the cycle ends with the outburst of a grieving man longing for death (*Ma tu più che mai*) and categorically renouncing love altogether (*M'è più dolce*). Thus Monteverdi rewrites Guarini's *Pastor Fido* by staging not an heroic but a tragic figure, whose unrequited love leads him to long for death.⁶⁹ In this respect it is safe to conclude that the composer not only rewrites the traditional form of a popular madrigal, with all the already discussed implications; he also rewrites one of the most popular love plots of his day creating an interesting tragic cycle of songs that extensively deploys the *seconda pratica* compositional style for what must have undoubtedly been a cathartic purpose.

Most importantly, this tragic cycle of songs is integrated with another important *Pastor Fido* feature in *Book V*: the *Silvio-Dorinda* cycle, which Monteverdi strategically utilizes as the comic juxtaposition to the tragic

⁶⁹The word "morte" and the verb "morire" (in different tenses and modes) appear eight times in the *Amarillis-Mirtillo* cycle.

Mirtillo-Amarillis cycle. In fact, Dorinda's unrequited love for Silvio, this time in accord with the *Pastor Fido*, has a positive outcome in *Book V*. In the second madrigal of this cycle (*Ma se con la pietà*)—which actually stages Dorinda's plea for a proof of compassion from her lover Silvio (a proof that she will eventually obtain)—Monteverdi comes up with a moving musical setting, while at the same time making yet another curious choice: he adds the words “dolcissima parola” to Guarini's original text:

Ma, se con la pietà non è in te spenta
gentilezza e valor, che teco nacque,
non mi negar, ti prego,
anima cruda sì, ma però bella,
non mi negar a l'ultimo sospiro
un tuo solo sospir. Beata morte,
se l'adolcissi tu con questa sola
[dolcissima parola]
voce cortese e pia:
“va' in pace, anima mia!”

(But if the nobility and worth you were born with / have not abandoned you along with your sense of pity / do not refuse me, I beg of you / cruel but beautiful soul, / do not refuse me at the moment of my last sigh / a single sigh of yours. Happy my death / if you were to sweeten it with this one / [most sweet speech] / courteous and pious utterance: “Depart in peace, love of mine!”)⁷⁰

For the first and only time in the entire *Book* the composer adds to the text he is setting. Although minimal, this addition is not irrelevant. In fact “Dolcissima parola” disrupts the syntax of the last sentence by replacing the adverbial phrase of means “voce cortese e pia”; it also disrupts the form by replacing with a new *baciata* rhyme scheme (sola / parola) the original closing rhyme scheme (pia / mia), thereby rendering the final two verses, if not useless, at least irrelevant at the formal and semantic level. Monteverdi's rewriting of the text thus purposefully shifts the emphasis in the poetry to “most sweet speech.” The poem, which now reads “Happy my death / if you were to sweeten it with this one / most sweet speech,” anticipates a fundamental concept, that, as has been shown, Monteverdi thoroughly develops in the closing madrigal of *Book V*.

Far from being just a little whimsical poetic license, Monteverdi's rewriting represents a nodal point in the text as well as in the music. The

⁷⁰For this translation I am quoting from Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigals Books IV&V*, xx. Monteverdi's addition of text is in [bold].

reiteration of the words “beata morte”, the ascending eighth notes’ melodic pattern, and the imitative compositional technique create a strong sense of motion (mm. 30-48) that is sharply contrasted by the solemn atmosphere of “con questa sola dolcissima parola” (mm. 51-55), where the composer resorts to a slow declamatory rhythm, which provides a coherent musical emphasis to this crucial poetic choice.⁷¹

Dorinda’s ecstatic yielding to death underscores the power of the *dolce parola*, the sweet song, which overcomes even the fear of death. Her plea, differently than Mirtillo’s, will be fulfilled by her beloved, and their cycle will end on a happy note (*Ecco piegando*), thus completing the tragicomic meta-narrative that unfolds through the two *Pastor Fido* cycles; a meta-narrative that Monteverdi appropriately disguises, scattering it in a typical Petrarchan way throughout his own musical *Canzoniere*.⁷² It is through this much more concealed narrative that Monteverdi will usher in a new aesthetics that allows room for the expressive and bitter song, provided that everything may eventually be tempered by the “dolce parola” or, as mentioned in the final programmatic piece, the “dolce languire.” So, while *Cruda Amarilli* and *Questi vaghi concetti* provide the front and back covers for a politically correct packaging that suggests a crisis-resolution narrative, what really matters in *Book V* is the tragicomic meta-narrative that takes place through the juxtaposition of the two *Pastor Fido* cycles; a meta-narrative that hints at a *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetics, where bitterness is combined and integrated with sweetness and where artistic expressiveness is not sacrificed, but tempered with courtly decorum.

In conclusion, earlier in the discussion I suggested that, for Monteverdi, entering the pastoral realm could possibly entail having to address the issue of purgation of love-melancholy, which is strictly connected to this particular genre. The meta-narrative that underlies *Book V* is indeed that of a search for an effective pastoral therapy; a search for an effective *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetic formula that combines the harsher

⁷¹Note the resemblance with the musical treatment of “Al lor dolce languire” in the programmatic madrigal *Questi vaghi concetti* discussed above.

⁷²Recent musicological studies tend to read madrigal collections as organic works, modeled after Petrarch’s ‘Canzoniere form’, where single compositions might be interrelated and construed within a narrative. Cecchi describes Marenzio’s *Fifth Book of Madrigals* (1591) as “a sort of reduced but organic *Canzoniere* dedicated to the amorous encounter of Virginio and Flavia” (Cecchi, *Modalità* 35, my translation). The article also lists a series of momentous contributions in the literary field which have focused on the narrative structure underlying the *Canzoniere*.

and experimental ways of the *seconda pratica* to the sweeter ways of *dolce languire* in order to form the ultimate pastoral musical therapy. Looking at the developments about to take place in his career, it seems fitting that Monteverdi would want to take such a great opportunity to claim the healing power of that very Musica, which in a few years will boldly take the stage in his *Orfeo* (incidentally another tragicomedy), proclaiming its unlimited power over the human mind and soul. His idiosyncratic reading of the *Pastor Fido* demonstrates, once again, the extent of Monteverdi's commitment to his literary sources, as well as his fundamental freedom within that commitment. In fact, he purposefully enhances the tragic potentiality of the *Mirtillo-Amarillis* cycle in order to create a stark contrast between the 'bitter' and the 'sweet' songs; in other words, he purposefully bends the literary source in order to ultimately serve the aesthetics presented in his work. The Guarinian double-love plot is thus co-opted and partly manipulated in order to create a polarity between different forms of musical languishing that are eventually to be reconciled in one, all-encompassing tragicomic love-grievance catalogue—*Book V*, that is—with momentous therapeutic aspirations.

In this respect it is safe to say that not only is Monteverdi concerned with the same issues of purgation that are paramount for Guarini, he also skilfully uses his literary interlocutor's play as a stage for his own musical reflections on the issue, and as a springboard for the formulation of an aesthetics that is remarkably in line with that of the author of the *Pastor Fido*. In fact, just as Guarini's ostensible rejection of tragic purgation is not a rejection at all, but rather a reconception of tragic purgation within a more complex aesthetics, so Monteverdi's staged rejection of an aesthetics of bitterness in favour of a strictly decorous one is not a rejection at all, but rather serves to usher in a more complex aesthetics that combines tragic bitterness (the *Mirtillo-Amarillis* cycle) with comic sweetness (the *Dorinda-Silvio* cycle); an aesthetics that contemplates the dissonant and expressive song of the *seconda pratica* as tempered by the decorous song of "sweet languishing." By critically addressing Mirtillo's grievance policy—the 'bitter languishing', Monteverdi begins his journey into the 'land of shepherds' questioning the effectiveness of the pastoral song. This reflection eventually ends with a collection of pastoral songs that combines bitterness with sweetness and delight, passion and sublimation of passion, artistic expressiveness and courtly decorum.

Finally, in light of the literary discussion presented earlier, one may conclude that both Guarini and Monteverdi respond effectively to the urgencies of the pastoral genre as they contrive their own way to heal the heart-

broken by means of an effective therapy. For the poet this entails laying out the theoretical ground for a new form of dramatic poetry: tragicomedy, that is, with its *tragic-in-the-comic* purging formula, and its advocacy for music as a necessary catalyst for the purging effect of poetry. For the composer this entails issuing a program for a new *tragic-in-the-comic* aesthetics of musical grieving based on the most popular pastoral play of his time. Both efforts are, then, symptomatic signs of a culture that is not only particularly keen on purgation; it also pursues purgation through a profound reflection on aesthetics that shows a striking continuity across disciplinary lines.

With Guarini the pastoral is not only legitimized in its therapeutic function by its new Aristotelian theoretical apparatus; it is also enriched and strengthened by the *verisimilar* happy marriage of poetry and music in a dramatic setting; a marriage that grants music a status and a cathartic function in theatre. Monteverdi, who certainly was not oblivious to the great strides made by Guarini, co-opts the pastoral mode (significantly Guarini's pastoral) in order to reflect on the aesthetic legitimacy of song, and stages a sort of tragicomic meta-narrative that celebrates music in all its marvellous, expressive variety as a viable means of purgation from love-melancholy. At the threshold of that Baroque era which is about to witness the birth of opera, the "oaten flute"⁷³ has indeed become the ultimate musico-poetic therapy for the heartbroken.

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⁷³Of course, the reference here is to Poggioli's ground breaking study on the pastoral. See Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute*.

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