Virgil's Words and Willaert's Music:
Humanistic Case Studies

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Abstract

Netherlandish composer Adrian Willaert (c.1490–1562), who held the *maestro di cappella* post at St. Mark's Basilica in Venice for much of the mid-16th century, composed three motets that set excerpts from the Latin text of Virgil's epic *Aeneid* (c.19 BCE). While motets are generally defined as sacred works, these three secular Latin-texted pieces provide a series of examples of musical humanism in practice. Willaert's *O socii, Dulces exuviae* a 3, and *Dulces exuviae* a 4 are case studies both for the ways that Renaissance-era composers engaged directly with humanism through their compositions, and for the varied motives that could lead a composer at this time to set this ancient Roman text.

Humanism as an intellectual trend is most closely associated with the rediscovery and revival of Greek and Roman written works during the Renaissance. Because of the lack of information about Greek and Roman music during the Renaissance, humanism's effect on Renaissance music has often been characterized as indirect, or partial—especially given the lack of direct models for emulation.

One rarely studied humanistic musical trend of the Renaissance is the practice of composers setting texts from ancient Greece or Rome. Sixteenth-century composer Adrian Willaert's three settings of excerpts from Virgil's *Aeneid* (*O socii, Dulces exuviae* a 4, and *Dulces exuviae* a 3) are splendid examples of this trend, and an examination of these pieces and their context can illuminate and enrich our understanding of Renaissance musical culture.

Setting the scene: Willaert, humanism, and the Aeneid

Willaert at a glance

Adrian Willaert was one of the central musical figures of mid-sixteenth-century Europe. As the *maestro di cappella* at the Basilica of St. Mark in Venice from 1527 until 1562, Willaert presided over an extensive musical organization and also built a reputation as a master teacher. His students, who studied with him at various levels

of formality, included many of the most prominent musicians of the next generation, such as Cipriano de Rore, Perissone Cambio, Baldassare Donato, Nicola Vicentino, Girolamo Parabosco, Costanzo Porta, Jacques Buus, and Gioseffo Zarlino.[1]

While most of Willaert's career was spent in Venice, he was probably born in Bruges around 1490. The little that is known of his early career comes to us through the writings of his pupil Zarlino, particularly the *Dimostrationi harmoniche* of 1571. In that work, Zarlino wrote that as a young man Willaert went to France to study law at the University of Paris. Such study usually began at around fourteen years of age but Willaert may have started later, after serving as a choirboy. As a student at the University Willaert would have studied the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), and engaged with the contemporary intellectual movement of humanism; several of the civil law faculty at the University of Paris were prominent humanists.[2] Although he started studying law, Willaert quickly turned his attention to music and studied privately with Jean Mouton, a musician in the French royal chapel.[3]

Aeneid *and humanism*

The humanist educational philosophy that developed in Italy in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and spread to many other parts of Europe used Virgil's *Aeneid* as a foundational text because of its connections to Greece and to Rome. The Greek connection derives from the influence of Homer's work upon Virgil. In Homer's *Iliad*, Aeneas was a minor character associated with the founding of Rome, and Virgil took the disconnected stories of that character as the basis for an epic glorifying the roots of the new Roman Empire.

The structure of the *Aeneid* is also influenced by Homer: the *Iliad* is a battle epic, the *Odyssey* is a travel epic, and Virgil brought both of those narrative archetypes into a single work. He devoted the first six books of the *Aeneid* to Aeneas's wandering journey from Troy to Latium (a travel epic), and the last six books to the war in Latium, where Aeneas's forces were ultimately victorious (a battle epic).[4] The *Aeneid's* connection to Rome is clear: Virgil began work on the poem from 26 to 19 BCE, probably as a tribute to Augustus, his patron and the new Emperor of Rome.

These connections to both Greek and Roman antiquity meant that the *Aeneid* was particularly appealing to Renaissance humanist scholars. Five of the most influential Italian Renaissance humanist educational treatises[5] treat the *Aeneid* as a guidebook for good and moral behavior, with Aeneas as the ultimate role model.[6] This behavior modeling even crossed gender lines: Isabella Sforza, a patron of Willaert's, strongly identified with the character of Aeneas.[7]

[1] Lewis Lockwood, Giulio Ongaro, Michele Fromson, and Jessie Ann Owens, "Willaert, Adrian," Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, (http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40122).

[2] Tim Shephard, "Finding fame: Fashioning Adrian Willaert ca. 1518," *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 4, no. 1 (2012): 19.

[3] Lockwood et al, "Willaert, Adrian."

[4] E.G. Knauer, "Vergil's *Aeneid* and Homer," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 5 (1964): 61–84.

[5] Pier Paolo Vergerio's *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus studiis* (*On the Noble Character and the Liberal Studies*, c.1393), Leonardo Bruni's *De studiis et litteris* (*On Literary Studies*, c.1405), Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *De liberorum educatione* (*On the Education of Children*, c.1445), Battista Guarino's *De ordine docendi et studendi* (*On the Order of Teaching and Studying*, 1459), and Maffeo Vegio's *De educatione liberorum clarisque eorum moribus* (*On Education and Distinction of Character in Children*, c.1460).

[6] Craig Kallendorf, *Vergil and the Myth of Venice: Books and Readers in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 50.

[7] Ibid., 194.

In 1518, another of Willaert's patrons, Pope Leo X, commissioned the poet Marco Girolamo Vida to write an epic poem *Christias* on the life of Christ that would imitate the form of the *Aeneid*.[8] In medieval and Renaissance commentaries on the *Aeneid*, Aeneas's devotion to his father Anchises[9] is one of the dominant themes, and in an attempt to create a Christianized moral allegory out of Virgil's epic, many scholars of the time linked Jesus's devotion to God with Aeneas's devotion to Anchises. It is these educational and spiritual commentaries that informed most medieval and Renaissance readers' approaches to the *Aeneid*. They would have come to know the work through a wide variety of textual sources such as anthologies, school texts, glosses (annotations written into margins or texts), and reworkings in the vernacular. These different modes of access had significant effects on how much of the work readers knew and the ways they attached meaning to it.[10]

Virgil in music

Most trained musicians would have had some familiarity with the *Aeneid* through their schooling, and their wealthy and educated patrons certainly did. Because of Virgil's importance to the intellectual life of Renaissance Italy, many composers set excerpts of his work to music. In fact, Virgil's words had been set to music ever since music was first notated: several ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts of the *Aeneid* have neumes written in, usually at especially dramatic moments.[11]

During the Renaissance, composers set excerpts from texts across Virgil's oeuvre, including the *Eclogues* (Obrecht,[12] Lassus, and Rossetti[13]) and the *Georgics* (from Nicolas Faber's collection *Melodiae Prudentianae et in Virgilium*,[14] a collection of odes set in simple homophony in a German Renaissance imitation of the style of ancient Roman music as it was then understood). However, it was the *Aeneid*, for the reasons mentioned above—Greek and Roman connections, humanistic educational curriculum, Christianized allegory—that was the most popular Virgilian text source for Renaissance composers.

There was some variety in the excerpts chosen from the *Aeneid*, but one passage, "Dulces exuviae," Dido's last words from Book IV, was the most commonly set. This passage is the culmination of Dido and Aeneas's tragic love story. After the god Mercury has instructed Aeneas that he must continue his journey to Italy rather than linger at Carthage with Dido, Aeneas follows the directions of fate and the gods and leaves Dido behind. Dido, distraught at his departure, responds by taking her own life. At least seventeen Renaissance musical settings of this speech have come down to us, including those by composers such as Josquin, Lassus, Arcadelt, Mouton, de Orto, Ghiselin, Vaet, Gerarde, Handl, and Willaert.[15] The text begins as follows:

> 651 Dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebant,
> 652 accipite hanc animam meque his exolvite curis
> 653 vixi et, quem dederat cursum fortuna, peregi,
> 654 et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago.

[8] Ibid., 119.

[9] Sean Gallagher, "*Pater optime*: Vergilian Allusion in Obrecht's *Mille quingentis*," *The Journal of Musicology* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 406.

[10] Ibid., 410.

[11] Oliver Strunk, "Vergil in Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 16, no 4 (October 1930): 483.

[12] Gallagher, "*Pater optime*," 408.

[13] Strunk, "Vergil," 488.

[14] Ibid., 489.

[15] Allen B. Skei, "Dulces exuviae: Renaissance settings of Dido's last words," *Music Review* 37, no. 2 (1976): 77.

O relics dear, while fate and god allowed,
receive my spirit and free me from these cares;
for I have lived and journeyed through the
course assigned by fortune.
And now my Shade will pass, illustrious,
beneath the earth.[16]

August Wilhelm Ambros suggested a reason that "Dulces exuviae" was such a popular text with composers: "not only that it, taken out of the epic, is complete in itself like a motet text but also that the solemn pathos of the words—the situation itself, the poetic figure of the dying queen—attracted them."[17] However, Renaissance composers rarely wrote from a sense of independent inspiration; the motivation to write was much more likely to be a specific patron or performance context. In this instance, where we find many composers setting the same text with no liturgical motivation, it is also possible that emulation and imitation of other musicians could have been a motive, whether out of a sense of competition or homage.[18]

Why set the Aeneid to music?

A pair of "Dulces exuviae" settings by Josquin and Mouton has attracted significant attention from modern musicologists, and the compositional genesis of Josquin's work in particular can give us a glimpse into the specific context of why a composer might set a Virgil excerpt. Both Josquin's and Mouton's works first appear in a manuscript copied for Henry VIII of England between 1519 and 1533 (GB-Lbl Royal 8 G. vii), which was probably prepared to commemorate the wedding of Henry and Catherine of Aragon.[19]

Josquin's four-voice setting follows the poetic structure of the text, with cadences at the ends of lines. It is mostly imitative but draws attention to key words like "vixi" ("I have lived") through homophony, and is marked by a change of mode from Dorian to Phrygian in the last poetic line.

Mouton's four-voice setting seems to be a direct homage to Josquin's. Mouton takes the *superius* voice of Josquin's setting, raises it by a fourth, and uses it as a cantus firmus in his own *superius* line. The modal identity of Josquin's work is preserved (albeit a fourth higher, accomplished with the addition of a B-flat to the key signature), but all of the counterpoint is new. Mouton's three lower voices contain shorter note values than Josquin's, and there is more textural variety. Mouton incorporates antiphonal effects, a canon between the *superius* and tenor voices at times, and generally weaves a more complex contrapuntal fabric than that of Josquin's setting.

It is the quotation of Josquin by Mouton that drew initial musicological attention to these two settings of "Dulces exuviae," but there has also been ongoing debate about the patron(s) for whom these pieces were composed. In 1954, Helmuth Osthoff argued that the group of *Aeneid* settings appearing in the Henry VIII manuscript (including Josquin and Mouton's settings) probably originated from a single complex of commissioned Virgil-based works. According to Osthoff, the most probable patron for this theoretical set would have been Isabella d'Este (1474–1539). In 1499, she

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[16] Allen Mandelbaum, *The Aeneid of Virgil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 103.

[17] Skei, "Dulces exuviae," 89.

[18] For explorations of this phenomenon of *imitatio*, see: Lewis Lockwood, "On 'Parody' as Term and Concept in 16th-Century Music," in *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese*, ed. Jan La Rue (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 560–75; Howard Mayer Brown, "Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1–48; Honey Meconi, "Does *imitatio* exist?" *The Journal of Musicology* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 152–178; John Milsom, "'Imitatio,' 'intertextuality,' and early music," in *Citation and authority in Medieval and Renaissance music: Learning from the learned*, ed. Suzannah Clark and Elizabeth Eva Leach (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 141–151; etc.

[19] Skei, "Dulces exuviae," 78.

commissioned the sculptor Andrea Mantegna to design a monument to Virgil in Mantua, and there was some suggestion that music was part of the project as well.[20]

In 1965, Martin Picker noted that two of the Virgil settings that appear in the Henry VIII manuscript (an anonymous setting and one by de Orto) also appear in a *chansonnier* prepared for Marguerite of Austria at around the same time. He argued that because both of these manuscripts originated in the Netherlands, Osthoff's proposal of an Italian origin seemed less likely.[21]

Decades later, in 2004, Michael Zywietz proposed that Josquin's Virgil settings, including this *Dulces exuviae*, might well have been composed specifically for Marguerite of Austria's court in Mechlin. Zywietz points out that members of the Mechlin court built a mythology around the city centered on similarities with Troy, and that Marguerite herself deeply identified with the character of Dido.[22]

This review of theories about the genesis of these pieces is not presented to suggest a concrete answer. Instead, the fact of multiple plausible patrons indicates the widespread interest in Virgil at this time, especially among highly educated members of the nobility, and the range of composers who catered to this interest by setting excerpts from his works. Willaert was no exception, and his three Virgil settings are clear examples of these musical and intellectual trends.

Humanistic Case Study #1: Willaert's O socii

Willaert's setting of the *Aeneid* passage "O socii" appears in only one extant source, the print *Quinto libro di madrigali à cinque voci* ("Fifth book of madrigals for five voices") published by Gardano in 1566. The print is billed as a collection of pieces by Cipriano de Rore, and while Willaert's *O socii* is the only work by Willaert in it, the print also includes works by Ippolito Sabino, Giovanni Nasco, Orlande de Lassus, and Bartomoleo Spontone. A setting of the Virgil "O socii" text by Rore is also in the print, and these two works are the only surviving settings of this text from the Renaissance.[23] Both pieces bear the inscription "Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi Cardinalis Granvellani Emblema" ("To the Illustrious and Revered Cardinal Granvelle"). So, who is this Cardinal who was so attached to the *O socii* text, and how did they become connected to Willaert?

Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517–1586), was a sixteenth-century politician, diplomat, and cleric. He held an impressive number of significant posts, such as the Bishop of Arras (1538–1550); prime minister to Charles V when the latter was King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor (1550–1555); prime minister to Charles's son Philip II (1555–1559); Cardinal and Archbishop of Malines (1561–death); and Viceroy of Naples (1571–1575).[24] Granvelle was an active patron of music and had especially extensive correspondence with Willaert and Lassus. The significance of his musical patronage is also made clear by three important publications dedicated to him: Tielman Susato's *Liber primus ecclesiasticarum cantionum* of 1553; Pierre Phalèse's print of motets by Pierre de Manchicourt, *Liber quintus cantionum sacrarum* of

[20] Helmuth Osthoff, "Vergils Aeneis in der Musik von Josquin des Prez bis Orlando di Lasso," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 11, no. 2 (1954): 99.

[21] Martin Picker, *The Chanson Albums of Marguerite of Austria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 95.

[22] Michael Zywietz, "'Dulces exuviae'—Die Vergil-Vertonunge des Josquin des Prez," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 61, no. 4 (2004): 245.

[23] Karen Atkins, "The Illusion of the *Prima Pratica* and *Seconda Pratica* in the music of Willaert and Rore," (MA thesis, UNC Chapel Hill, 2012): 66.

[24] Ignace Bossuyt, "*O socii durate*: A Musical Correspondence from the Time of Philip II," *Early Music* 26, no. 3 (August 1998): 433.

1554; and Lassus's first set of motets, *Il primo libro de motteti*, published by Johannes Laet in 1556.[25]

There is some uncertainty about precisely how Willaert and Granvelle first met, but there are three possible occasions: Granvelle's extended studies in Italy from 1532–1536; a visit by Willaert to Flanders in 1542; or the composer's second visit to Flanders in 1557.[26]

A series of letters dating from 1557 to 1559 between Granvelle, Willaert, and Giovanni Francesco Dolfino (a Venetian cleric who lived 1529–1584) illustrate the process through which Willaert's setting of "O socii" came to be. In the first letter, Willaert thanks Granvelle for the gift of a medal. This medal had the Cardinal's portrait on one side and the image of a ship in a storm on the other, accompanied by Granvelle's motto, "durate" ("endure").[27] The Cardinal took this motto from lines 198–207 of the *Aeneid*, a passage that directly follows the shipwreck of Aeneas and his crew on the coast of Carthage:

> 198   O socii—neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum—
> 199   O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem.
> 200   Vos et Scyllaem rabiem penitusque sonantis
> 201   accestis scopulos, vos et Cyclopea saxa
> 202   experti: revocate animos, maestumque timorem
> 203   mittite: forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit.
> 204   Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum
> 205   tendimus in Latium; sedes ubi fata quietas

> 206   ostendunt; illic fas regna resurgere Troiae.
> 207   durate, et vosmet rebus servate secundis.

> *O comrades—for ere this we have not been ignorant of evils—*
> *O ye who have borne a heavier lot, to this, too, God will grant an end!*
> *Ye drew near to Scylla's fury and her deep-echoing crags;*
> *ye have known, too, the rocks of the Cyclopes; recall your courage and put away sad fear.*
> *Perchance even this distress it will some day be a joy to recall.*
> *Through divers mishaps, through so many perilous chances,*
> *we fare towards Latium, where the fates point out a home of rest.*
> *There 'tis granted to Troy's realm to rise again;*
> *endure, and keep yourselves for days of happiness.[28]*

In a later letter dated 8 October 1558, Willaert mentions that he plans to send Granvelle a copy of his new motet and madrigal collection *Musica Nova*, which was just being published. Willaert also apologizes that he has not yet been able to fulfill Granvelle's request for a musical setting of "O socii," meaning that in some intervening correspondence, now lost, Granvelle had asked Willaert to set his motto passage from the *Aeneid* to music.[29]

A second letter dated the very same day, from Dolfino to Granvelle, indicates that Dolfino is serving as an intermediary between Granvelle and Willaert. In it, Dolfino writes that Willaert has given him the copy of *Musica Nova*, which Dolfino plans to forward to Granvelle immediately.[30]

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[25] Ibid., 435.

[26] Ibid., 442.

[27] Ibid., 436.

[28] H. Rushton Fairclough, trans. *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 254.

[29] Bossuyt, "*O socii durate*," 437

[30] Ibid., 439.

In the next relevant letter, from Dolfino to Granvelle dated 8 April 1559, Dolfino assures Granvelle that Willaert has indeed begun work on the "O socii" setting. According to Dolfino, the composer was afraid that the piece would not meet Granvelle's expectations, but Dolfino was working to assure him that Granvelle would love it.[31] For many years, musicologists had thought that Willaert was asked to write the piece on the occasion of Granvelle's appointment as archbishop in 1561. These letters indicate that he began the piece years before, in early 1559.

The text that Willaert ultimately set was not a direct quotation of the *Aeneid*. Instead, it was altered as follows:

> O socii, durate.
> O socii, neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum;
> O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem,
> Experti, revocate animos moestumque timorem
> Mittite; forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit,
> Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,
> Tendimus, ostendunt sedes ubi fata secundas.
> Durate, et vosmet rebus servate secundis.

The changes include the addition of the opening line ("O socii, durate," which does not appear in Virgil), the removal of references to mythology (Scylla, Cyclops), and the removal of references to specific places (Latium, Troy). An equivalent alteration of H. Rushton Fairclough's *Aeneid* translation would read as follows:

> *O comrades, endure.*
> *O comrades, for ere this we have not been ignorant of evils;*
> *O ye who have borne a heavier lot, to this, too,*

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[31] Ibid., 440.

> *God will grant an end,*
> *recall your courage and put away sad fear.*
> *Perchance even this distress it will some day be a joy to recall.*
> *Through divers mishaps, through so many perilous chances,*
> *we move forward, where the fates point out another home.*
> *Endure, and keep yourselves for days of happiness.*

Willaert's setting uses a *soggetto cavato*, a compositional process by which a passage of text is directly translated into a musical line, usually then used as a cantus firmus. First, the text in question is rendered into the solmization syllables *ut, re, mi, fa, sol*, based on the vowels present in the text. Any syllable of the text with "u" as its vowel would be represented by the solmization syllable *ut*, a syllable containing "e" would be represented by *re*, "i" by *mi*, etc. In different tonal areas, called *hexachords*, these solmization syllables then correspond to different specific pitches—*ut* was F in the *soft hexachord*, C in the *natural hexachord*, and G in the *hard hexachord*. A passage of text could thus be translated into specific pitches, creating a kind of hidden musical message.

The text source for this particular piece's *soggetto* is the word "durate": Granvelle's motto. The word is translated into the solmization syllables "ut, fa, re," and all three hexachords are used, translating into the pitch motives seen in Table 1 (page 50).

The *soggetto* occurs in the *quintus* and *sextus* voices, which are the second highest and second lowest, respectively, in the six-voice texture. The *quintus* voice states the *soggetto* on all three hexachords in the following symmetrical order: natural, soft, hard, hard, soft, natural. The *sextus* voice states the *soggetto* in an inverted version

Table 1

| text	du-	ra-	te
solmization	ut	fa	re
hard hexachord	G	C	A
natural hexachord	C	F	D
soft hexachord	F	B-flat	G

of that same symmetrical arrangement: hard, natural, soft, soft, natural, hard (see musical examples 1-3 below). These two voices each state their respective sequence almost three times, and in each of the three repetitions, the rhythmic values are halved: in the first cycle, the rhythm of each statement consists of a *breve* followed by two *longae*, conforming to the syllabic accentuation of the word "durate"; in the second cycle, the rhythm is a *semibreve* followed by two *breves*; in the incomplete third cycle, the rhythm is a *minim* followed by two *semibreves*. The third repetition breaks from the previously rigid pattern when the *sextus* voice declaims the *soggetto* in the natural hexachord instead of the expected hard hexachord. From that point on, both voices only use the natural hexachord until the piece ends seven measures later.
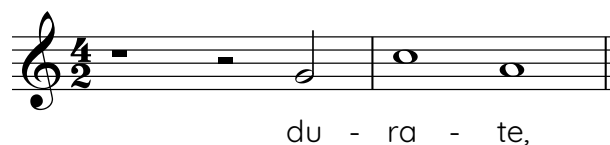
Musical example 1: Quintus, m.86–87 (natural hexachord)
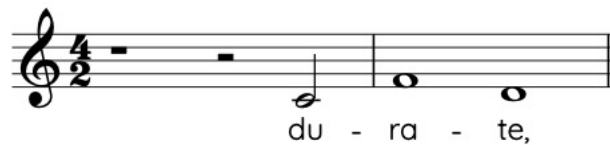
Musical example 2: Quintus, m.89–90 (soft hexachord)
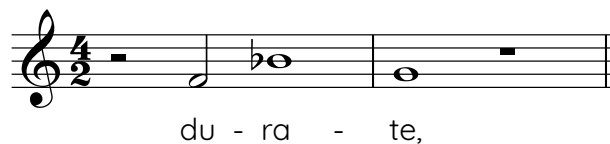
Musical example 3: Quintus, m.91–92 (hard hexachord)

The *soggetto* exhibits Willaert's love of musical games and his careful text setting, which is also exemplified by the other voices. The careful text setting can be clearly heard in the first five measures, where the opening phrase (with Granvelle's motto) "O socii, durate" is stated homophonically by the *cantus*, *altus*, and *bassus*, with careful attention paid to giving longer pitch durations to accented syllables. *O socii* is also an extreme example of Willaert's preference for continuously woven polyphony. The mode is Hypomixolydian, and all of the cadences are on G. However, in the entire 102-*breve* piece, there are only two cadences. The first, between *cantus* and *altus*, occurs at the moment when the first *soggetto* cycle concludes. The second cadence, between *altus* and tenor, occurs at the conclusion of the piece.

With very few exceptions, the four non-*soggetto* voices (*cantus*, *altus*, tenor, *bassus*) move through the poetic text at the same rate but with no homophony after the first five measures. Each line of text has a distinct rhythmic profile, which adheres to the accentuation of the syllables. However, the pitch content of these motives varies widely between statements and voices. This results in a texture that is full of rhythmic reminiscences and a continuously shifting harmonic context. With the repeating *soggetto* statements and the absence of cadences, the resulting sound is a continuous, unbroken drive toward the end of the piece.

Humanistic Case Study #2: Willaert's four-voice Dulces exuviae

Willaert's four-voice *Dulces exuviae* setting appears in seven extant sources (three manuscript, four print). In those sources, the piece is unattributed or attributed either to Willaert or Mouton. The sources all originated in northern Europe, with one Venetian exception, and they all were all produced between 1538 and 1559. As extensive as the sources are, the compositional origin and context of Willaert's four-voice *Dulces exuviae* is essentially unknown. Unlike the extensive contemporaneous documentation relating to *O socii*, this piece is not accompanied by any dedication or correspondence in any source. We have seen that many noble patrons were interested in the *Aeneid*, and Willaert was concerned with cultivating close relationships with powerful courts throughout Europe. It is possible that this setting was composed as a tribute to a noble who loved Virgil, similar to the Josquin and Mouton settings discussed above.

Willaert's four-voice *Dulces exuviae* is a setting of eight lines of Dido's tragic suicide speech, which is more text from the passage than other composers tended to use. The full text, from *Aeneid*, Book IV (lines 651–658) follows, with Allen Mandelbaum's translation:

651 Dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebant,
652 accipite hanc animam meque his exolvite curis
653 vixi et, quem dederat cursum fortuna, peregi,
654 et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago.
655 Urbem praeclaram statui, mea moenia vidi,
656 ulta virum poenas inimico a fratre recepi,
657 felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum
658 nunquam Dardaniae tetigessent nostra carinae.

O relics, dear, while fate and god allowed,
receive my spirit and free me from these cares;
for I have lived and journeyed through the
course assigned by fortune.
And now my Shade will pass, illustrious,

beneath the earth.
I have built a handsome city, have seen my
walls rise up,
avenged a husband, won satisfaction from a
hostile brother:
o fortunate, too fortunate—if only
the ships of Troy had never touched our
coasts[32]

While the first four lines that were traditionally set to music offer fairly general sentiments, the additional lines 655–658 make the original Dido-centric context of the passage clear. The text as a whole is therefore closely bound to its source material rather than "complete in itself like a motet,"[33] as Ambros wrote.

This piece, which is ninety-five *breves* long, is divided into three sections by rests in every voice, and each musical break corresponds with a significant rhetorical and poetic break in the text. The first section contains the first two poetic lines, the second section contains the third and fourth, and the third contains lines five through eight.

This piece is modally ambiguous. The *cantus* line is clearly Phrygian, and there are cadences on many pitches, mostly E, D, A, and G. There are many passages where the piece seems to shift to an A-based mode, and there are more cadences on A than any other pitch, especially at the beginning of the piece. There is only one proper cadence on E, which would be expected in the Phrygian mode: late in the piece, in m. 93, between *cantus* and *bassus*. Phrygian seems to be the strongest modal assignation, but there is modal commixture or shift from an A-based tonality to clear Phrygian mode over the course of the piece.

The texture of this setting is both typical and atypical of Willaert's style. On the one hand,

great care is taken to observe text accentuation by setting important syllables to long note values. As was noted above, this is very typical of Willaert's style, and he was famous during his life for his text setting abilities. On the other hand, this is not a good example of his typical continuously woven polyphony. Quite the opposite: the piece is largely homophonic, syllabically set, with a cadence at the end of almost every poetic line. Ambros wrote of the piece that "Willaert's music, in which the declamatory principle is more than usually prominent, makes [the text's meaning] felt. Nominally a motet, the composition is almost a tragic monologue."[34] The polyphony is free, but the impression given is that of a single voice because of the pervasive syllabic homophony.

There are a few exceptions to this general style, and each seems to mark a moment of rhetorical emphasis. There are moments of greater melodic and textural complexity in the form of melismas in several voices, and those passages occur on important words: "sinebat" ("allow," supplicating); and "inimico" ("hostile"). There are also several passages in which the text is repeated, but the music is not. These also occur at emotionally resonant moments: "accipite hanc animam" ("receive my spirit"); and "et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago" ("and now my Shade will pass, illustrious, beneath the earth").[35]

The third section of the piece is substantially longer than the first two, because the last two poetic lines are repeated, with identical music, at the end of the piece (mm. 64–77 is the same as mm. 80–93). The repeated text is the crux of Dido's tragedy: "o fortunate, too fortunate—if only the ships of Troy had never touched our coasts." The event of Aeneas's shipwreck on the shores of Carthage brought her great joy and also

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[32] Mandelbaum, *The Aeneid*, 103.

[33] Skei, "Dulces exuviae," 89.

[34] Ibid.

[35] The cadential music on the word "imago" ("Shade") is repeated, but the overall musical gesture is a new one for that text phrase.

devastating sadness. Having weighed them, she concludes that it is not better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, but just the opposite: she wishes that she had never known Aeneas. The direct musical and textual repetition emphasizes the devastation that Dido feels.

Humanistic Case Study #3:
Willaert's three-voice Dulces exuviae

Willaert's three-voice setting of the "Dulces exuviae" text is the least documented of his Virgil settings. For many years, it was not attributed to Willaert at all (instead labeled as "anonymous"), and later it was often confused with Willaert's four-voice setting of the same text. For example, until recently the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music (diamm.ac.uk) cross-listed the two settings as if they were a single composition. The three-voice setting is in fact an independent work, but was attributed to Willaert in just one of its three sources.

The function and context of the three-voice *Dulces exuviae* is probably similar to that of the four-voice setting (to pay tribute to a noble patron interested in Virgil), but the provenance of the sources is again not helpful in the effort to establish the context. The sources span roughly the same period (twenty-two years as opposed to twenty-one), and there is more geographic diversity, with sources from northern Germany, Switzerland, and northern Italy. There does not appear to be any extant correspondence related to this setting, and none of the sources carries a helpful dedication. Barring the discovery of new letters, the exact context of this piece, like that of the four-voice setting, will remain a mystery.

The three-voice *Dulces exuviae* is much more modest in scale than the four-voice setting. It is sixty-four *breves* long (about two thirds the

length of the four-voice setting), and it only sets the traditional first four lines of Dido's speech, rather than the expanded eight. Although the piece begins with strict imitation at the octave, it quickly moves to the same syllabic and homophonic texture as the four-voice setting. The three-voice setting has even more frequent and clear musical breaks, created with rests and fermatas. These breaks occur not only at the end of every poetic line but also at most punctuation marks, heightening the "monologue" effect of the four-voice setting. The piece is in the Hypolydian mode, and every cadence is on either F or C.

Willaert singled out two passages in the text for special treatment. First, the word "vixit" ("lived") is very clearly set apart, beginning after a rest and ending with a fermata. It is the shortest phrase in the work and is harmonically static. The second special textual moment comes at the end, when the words "ibit imago" ("Shade will pass") are repeated many times, with an extensive melisma in the top voice. Not only is it the longest melisma by far in the work, it is also the only instance of text repetition in the entire piece.

Except for those two passages, the piece proceeds mostly syllabically and homophonically, with little harmonic variety and frequent rests and fermatas. It is distinctly simpler than the other two pieces discussed in this study. Because of this simplicity, and because two of the three sources in which it appears were pedagogical collections (the Tschudi Liederbuch[36] and Tricinia[37]), it is possible that it was composed as a teaching exercise. However, it is just as likely that because of its simplicity, it was deemed an appropriate pedagogical piece, even if Willaert never intended that use.

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[36] Donald Glenn Loach, "Aegidus Tschudi's Songbook (St. Gall MS 463): A Humanistic Document from the Circle of Heinrich Glarean" (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 1969), 2.

[37] Thomas L. Noblitt, ed., *Tricinia: tum veterum recentiorum in arte musica symphonistarum: Latina, Germanica, Brabantica et Gallica* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989), VIII.

Zooming Back Out: Case Study Significance

The circumstances and details of these three *Aeneid* settings by Willaert indicate some of the ways that humanism was ingrained in the cultural life of Italy in the mid-sixteenth century—at least the cultural life of those who were wealthy and literate. Such intense interest focused on artistic works from the distant past, perceived to be crucial to understanding and enriching the current culture, and participating in a community of scholarship—a tradition that we continue today as scholars of early music. Humanist thinkers of the sixteenth century had a harder time of it than we do, though—Willaert is comparatively recent for us, seeing as Virgil was ~1600 years in the past for him, but he is only ~450 years in the past for us.

Parsing the context of sixteenth-century musical settings of Virgil, like those of Willaert, allows us to get a sense for Renaissance music culture in two crucial ways. First, we get a glimpse of the complex of interconnected motives that would lead a composer to write such a work. Second, we begin to understand the ways that musicians of the time engaged with the broader humanist endeavor, even without having extensive information about ancient Greek or Roman music to draw upon.

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