

# The Popular *herculana* in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Text and Music

YIFAT FELLNER SIMPSON

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON<sup>1</sup>

I first encountered the *herculana* song type when researching sixteenth-century *stampe popolari*<sup>2</sup>; a substantial body of popular Italian poetry with accompanying iconography printed in thin unbound booklets.<sup>3</sup> A large part of this extant corpus actually originated in Venice and was produced there at a time when the city was the acknowledged centre of European print culture. Throughout the early modern period *stampe* were sold locally in bookshops or hawked outdoors by a range of vendors, including vagrants begging for alms and showmen performing in the street. A significant number of sixteenth-century *stampe* title pages contain phrases such as *sun quel aiere de Sant'Herculano*, or *in aere de Sier Herculano*, suggesting that the *herculana* texts contained in the booklets were intended to be sung to a popular melody bearing the same (or similar) name 'Sant Herculano' (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

BRAVATA ALLA BV.  
LESCHA, SVN QVEL AIE  
re de Sant'Herculano cosa piaceto  
le, e con altre sette stanze ch' in  
quell' non erano, e no-  
uamente ristampate.

1071-c.6



El ciel faro tremar  
sol con un squ  
ardo



Figure 1

By studying these texts in detail I was able to piece together a number of clues indicating possible early modern performance practices surrounding the *herculana* (Roger Chartier terms such clues 'indicators of orality'<sup>5</sup>). Consequently, it became increasingly clear that studying the *stampe* – an unpretentious yet significant mode of cultural communication that almost certainly involved music, drama, dance, and song – solely in terms of their linguistic merit would mean ignoring evidence that suggested that textual content represented only one aspect of the role they played in the oral performance tradition of the time. Yet the main challenge for musicologists investigating early modern popular material of this kind from the Italian Peninsula is the fact that, unlike their English counterparts (the printed broadside ballads of the period) Italian booklets never comprised musical notation. This conundrum goes some way towards explaining why scholarly

input with regards the *herculana* over the last two centuries has come solely from the work of Italian scholars of literature, philology and folklore, and why as yet no musicological study has focused in any way on this popular song type.

To date, studies in Venetian music of the early modern period have tended to focus either on the impressive sacred and civic output associated with the Basilica di San Marco and the city's major confraternities, or on the equally-celebrated secular madrigal culture produced for and consumed by the urban elite. Such focus on music linked exclusively with the city's artistic elite, however, seems to be a historiographical misrepresentation of the total musical life of Cinquecento Venice. The existence of clues in sources that musicologists have previously overlooked in favour of the grander cultural products of early modern Venice hints at a vanished popular performance tradition every bit as vibrant as its erudite counterpart. The *herculana* song type, which crystallised throughout the Cinquecento into a typically Venetian cultural signifier (for locals and non-Venetians alike), constitutes a worthy 'case-study' material on the way to recreating a segment of a hitherto less familiar Venetian cultural past.

### *Herculana* texts: printed representations of popular entertainment

In the early twentieth century the Italian scholar Leandro Biadene published an article entitled 'L'Ercolana' in which he examined a number of sixteenth-century *herculana* poems by poets from Vicenza (written in rustic Pavano dialect),<sup>6</sup> all of whom were members of the local *Accademia Olimpica* (founded in 1556). Although in his article Biadene speculated that the actual term *herculana* originated from the name of the patron saint of the *Accademia*, Sant'Ercole, I found wide range of variations on the name in use in printed material – such as *ercolana*, *arcolana*, *reculian*, *Santo Herculano*, *Sant'Erculano*, *St'Harcula* etc.– some of which predates the establishment of the Vicentine *accademia*. Perhaps unaware of their existence, Biadene seems to have overlooked entirely the various poems and musical compositions bearing the name *herculana* that appeared in print prior to 1555,<sup>7</sup> concluding that *herculana* poems were written over a span of a century, between 1558 and 1656. Yet there are extant textual examples in *stampe popolari* from as early as 1548,<sup>8</sup> and one of the music examples of *herculane* I located – a lute arrangement by Domenico Bianchini (Figure 2) – dates from even earlier (1546; see below for further details and a transcription of this piece). The existence of printed instrumental pieces based on popular melodies (intended for erudite consumption and published not only in the Italian peninsula but also beyond) suggests a prior period of popularity for the *herculana* song within an established oral tradition, particularly given the time it took for song lyrics to gain popular currency before they were considered worthy (by composers as well as publishers) of appropriation into the written textual and musical traditions.



Figure 2

Though inconclusive, Biadene's findings helped to establish a basic awareness of *herculana* texts among modern historians. He observed that the poems he studied generally ran to many stanzas and subsequently attempted to summarise schematically what he perceived to be the standard rhyme scheme and syllabic count for a *herculana* stanza:

A11 b7 A11 b7 c5 c5 d5 d5 e5 e5 F11

However, Biadene's representation of the poetic structure of a *herculana* is actually misleading since, in effect, the stanzas refuse to comply with a rigid schema. A quest for syllabic consistency and an adherence to rigid metric patterns is counterproductive when comparing and contrasting poetic metre in such popular texts. Where a musical formula led to a poetic formula, variations in metre and stress were an inevitable bi-product of the pre-existing musical framework around which new texts had to be fitted contemporarily, a process that relied more on pragmatism than precision. Moreover, what characterises the *herculana* is an abundance of truncated lines resulting from the dialectal poetry (e.g. 'b' is often a truncated heptasyllabic line, 'F' a truncated dodecasyllabic line, etc.).

An examination of the metrical pattern of the opening stanza of the *herculana* poem that comprises the popular booklet *Canzone sopra i Zaratani, overo Montainbanco, Di novo composta, e stampata* (Verona: Francesco dalle Donne, 1594)<sup>9</sup> confirms that the song-text does not always conform to the proportions put forward by Biadene. In the opening stanza, for example, while the first line is hendecasyllabic, the second is not a straight-forward *settenario*



but rather – given the use of the dialectal 'dir' instead of the Italian 'dire' – a truncated *settenario*. Lines 3 and 4 echo this syllabic relationship, and though lines 5 and 7 adhere to Biadene's pentasyllabic couplets (*quinario doppio*), line 6 is actually made up of a *settenario tronco* and an *ottonario tronco* (taking into consideration the various elisions in the answering phrase). The stanza has two closing lines (instead of one): a truncated dodecasyllabic line followed by a hendecasyllabic line. To complicate matters further, all the remaining twenty stanzas of this *herculana* possess only a single closing line, emphasizing the presence of the double lines in the first stanza, and reinforcing the irregular and adaptable nature of the song-text:

Quanti per viver molto si travaglia  
come vi voglio dir,  
regna hoggidì nel mondo una canaglia  
ch'io nol posso soffrir  
d'esti poltroni,      matti babioni,  
che per non lavorar vanno ogni dì a cantar  
versi e sonetti      con più secreti,  
montando in banco per non voler stentar  
poca fatica la gliè gran sanità.

Using the typical printed layout of the form in the Cinquecento as a guide, it is apparent that rather than an eleven-line framework, a *herculana* stanza actually displays a characteristic tripartite structure. The first section comprises two phrases in effect, where the second and fourth lines complete the lines that precede them, providing concluding words to the same sentence. The middle section is made up of six short (usually pentasyllabic) lines grouped into three pairs on the page. The sudden rhythmic shift into much shorter, regular units at this point accelerates the pace of the text and gives this section a more energetic, driven feel as a result. In the third section there is a return to the metre of the opening, with a final line that echoes the beginning of the stanza, usually without the second-line completion (as in the example below), making the closing statement more emphatic<sup>10</sup>:

Section 1 Menami al magazen che son ferio, 1st phrase  
menami al magazen,  
dame de quella botta la da drio,      2nd phrase  
e dame el bocal pien,

Section 2 dame del bianco per mal de fiancho,  
dame del nero      per star sincero,  
del moscatello      per el cervello,

Section 3 spazate presto che me sento a morir.

This tripartite description gives a more definitive structural account of the *herculana* stanza. Nevertheless, there are still many inconsistencies and irregularities to be observed. Noticeably, across the range of *herculana* song texts I examined it is the third section of the stanza that seems to offer the greatest structural variety. Variations occur here both between individual *herculana* texts, and between individual stanzas within the same poem. A

closing line can appear in print once, twice or even three times; there might be two closing lines to a stanza yet these will not be identical; or again, there can be three lines to a final section and these will either all be identical, or two will be distinct while one employs repeated material. For example, the *herculana* poem that makes up the booklet *Bravata alla bulescha, sun quel aiere de Sant'Herculano cosa piacevole, e con altre sette stanze ch'in quelle non erano, e novamente ristampate* (Venice: Matteo Pagano, 1556)<sup>11</sup> appears on the page with the final line of each stanza printed twice (Figure 3). This can seem like redundant textual repetition unless one accepts the notion of a musical rendition, as called for in the title-page: *sun quel aiere de 'Sant'Herculano'* [to the tune of 'Sant'Herculano'].<sup>12</sup>

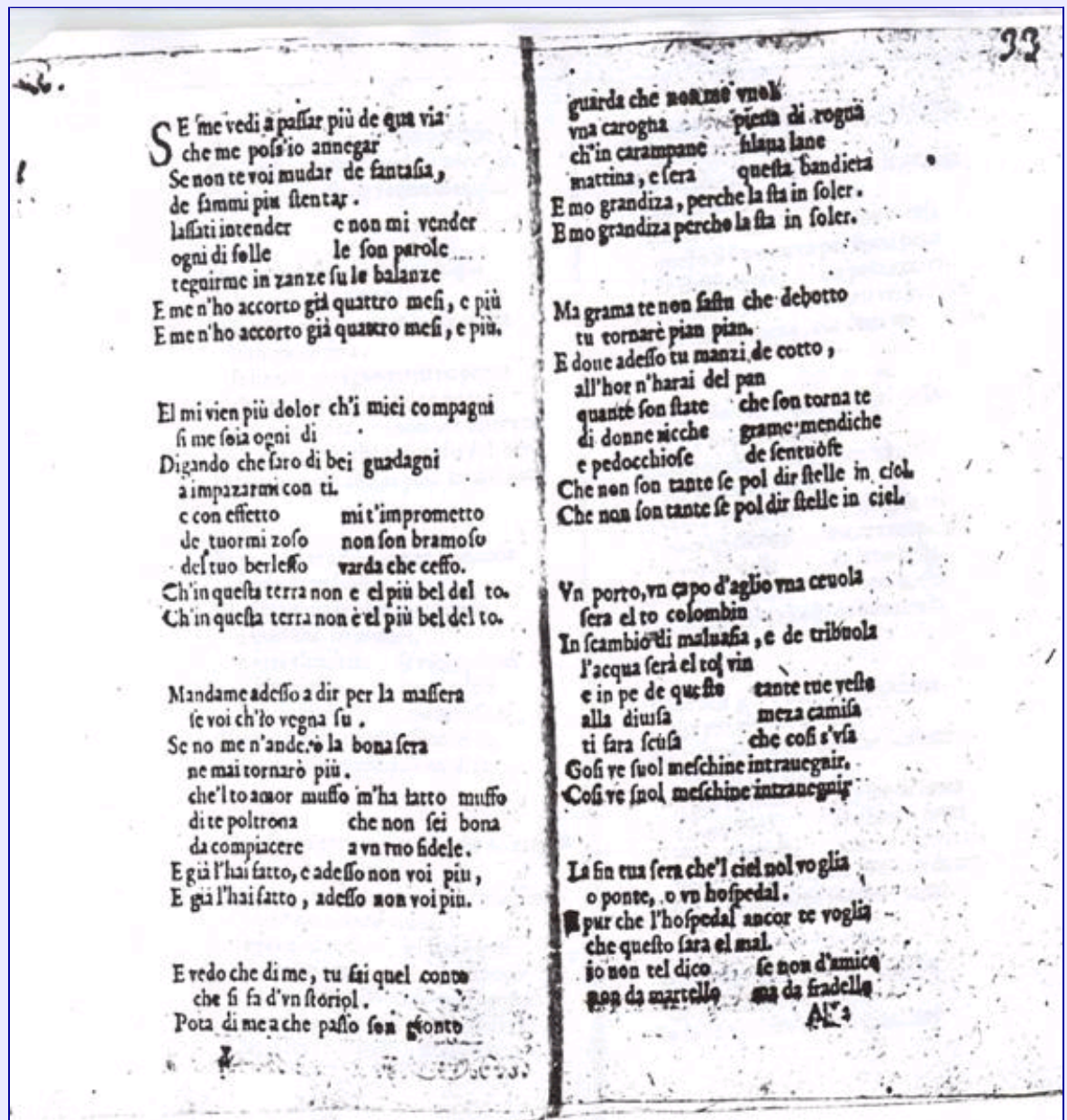


Figure 3

## Playing and singing the *herculana*

From the body of *stampe* that includes references to popular songs, and from various musical scores that actually contain popular contemporary pieces (or identifiable quotations), it is evident that neither the boundaries we perceive today between serious and popular culture nor the processes that brought this

repertoire into being were fixed in the Cinquecento. Easily memorised tunes were juxtaposed with various poetic texts, becoming part of the modular interplay between literary and musical components, and moving away (as is the case with folk-music in many cultures) from the notion of a static musical-textual paradigm. In this popular tradition the same tune could receive radically different interpretations with performers engaging in both textual and musical variation, the better to entertain. Representations of the most successful of these variations found their way into print, allowing consumers to reproduce a favourite textual-musical experience at their own convenience. Several contemporary editions of lute and keyboard compositions included pieces with titles that were similar or identical to text appearing in *stampe popolari*, whilst editions of vocal polyphony contained works in which composers appropriated popular textual as well as musical material. Assessing and assembling fragments of a vanished tradition (a kind of musico-poetic 'archaeology') helps us to understand more fully the mosaic of performance, production and consumption linked to popular songs such as the *herculana* in the context of the urban musical culture of sixteenth-century Venice.

I found relevant musical evidence of the *herculana* in three extant sources: two lute pieces, identified as *herculane* in their titles, and one three-part vocal composition (a type of *villotta* known as a *veneziana*) set to a *herculana* verse. The first of the lute pieces is by Domenico Bianchini, and is found in his 1546 Venetian anthology *Intabolatura de lauto di Bianchini ditto Rossetto di recercari, motetti, madrigali, canzon francese, napolitane, et balli, libro primo*, first published by Antonio Gardano.<sup>13</sup> The volume includes a dedication from Bianchini (nicknamed *Rossetto*) to the German merchants of the *Fondaco dei tedeschi*, with whom he appears to have had significant dealings.<sup>14</sup> Having studied a range of texts and music associated with the *herculana* in some depth, my conjecture is that the melodic line in Bianchini's lute arrangement (see Figure 4 for transcription of lute tablature) is the very same dance tune hinted at on the various frontispieces listed above, and possibly the one which enjoyed wide-spread currency within the local oral tradition of the time.

# Erculano Santo

Domenico Bianchini, 1546

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Erculano Santo' by Domenico Bianchini, 1546. The score is written for two lutes, with each system consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs) labeled 'Lute'. The music is in a 3/4 time signature. The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers [5], [10], [15], [20], [25], [30], [35], [40], [45], and [50] marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks such as slurs and accents. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final chord.

Figure 4

The second instrumental *herculana* is a piece for two lutes by Hans Jacob



Wecker, from his 1552 anthology *Lautenbuch vonn mancherley schönen und lieblichen Stucken mitt zwey Lauten zusammen zu schlagen*, published in Basel by Ludwig Lück.<sup>15</sup> Around 1550 Wecker traveled to Italy and it seems that he was either in direct contact with Bianchini whilst there (perhaps via German-speaking merchants based in Venice), or simply had the opportunity to see (and/or purchase) Bianchini's 1546 edition sometime during his sojourn. After returning to Switzerland, Wecker published his collection of Italian lute duets in 1552. Born similarly out of the contemporary publishing frenzy surrounding popular lute anthologies, Wecker's encounter with Bianchini's score then took the *herculana* on a geographical voyage far beyond the borders of La Serenissima, a journey that resulted in the publication of the only surviving printed musical version of the song outside Italy and the introduction of what was essentially a parochial Italian cultural product to a wider European audience. Unfortunately, only the Tenor (lower) part of the duet for Descant and Tenor lutes (entitled *Santo Herculano: Padovana*) has survived, thus depriving us of possibly the more revealing part of the score.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, I found that the metre, overall structure, phrasal division, and harmonic layout of the surviving Tenor correspond precisely to Bianchini's piece, an outcome which led me to believe that the missing Descant must have contained melodic material similar to that found in the Bianchini.

Finally, Giulio Bonagiunta's *E vorave saver, Colonna mia* (identified on the title page not as a *herculana* but as a song composed 'in the Venetian style') was first published in Venice by Girolamo Scotto in an anthology of three-part *villotte* entitled *Il primo libro de canzon napolitane a tre voci, con due alla venetiana di Giulio Bonagiunta da San Genesi, et d'altri auttori, di novo poste in luce* (1565). As well as pieces by Bonagiunta, the edition contains material by several other musicians, most of whom were living in Venice or Padua at the time. Bonagiunta, however, was the driving force behind the collating and editing of the material,<sup>17</sup> and it was he who dedicated the original publication to the patrician Gabrielle Ottobono, a man whose patronage he had secured, and in whose salon *villotte* were likely to have been performed on a regular basis.<sup>18</sup> When Scotto republished the anthology in 1567 he removed the last item from the previous edition, which (according to Jane Bernstein<sup>19</sup>) possibly enabled him to trim down the new version from five gatherings to four, thereby reducing production costs significantly. Given that the reprint did not have a patron, such economy was perhaps a necessary evil. *E vorave saver, Colonna mia* (previously the penultimate item) became the final song in this abridged edition, either by default or perhaps because Scotto and Bonagiunta believed it provided a more engaging finale. Whatever the reason, the change in sequence gave the piece a key position in the index, and doubtless helped to raise its profile.

Though the title page specifies that the collection includes two songs *alla veneziana* by Bonagiunta, the part-books themselves identify pieces by composer rather than by compositional style or genre title. As a result, it is not immediately apparent which of the pieces are *veneziane* and which are *napolitane*.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the two *veneziane* in the collection are grouped together, with *Daspuo ch'al mio dolor no ghe ceroto* directly preceding *E vorave saver, Colonna mia*. Specific reference to *veneziane* and *napolitane* in the title page places these two song-styles firmly in the limelight and invites the consumer to

note the distinction between them. While *villanesche alla napoletane* reworked folkloric material that was polyphonic in origin, veneziane were three-part compositions based in the main on popular monody,<sup>21</sup> and set to texts that, as one might expect, included traces of Venetian rather than Neapolitan dialect.

Unlike Bianchini and Wecker's lute pieces, *E vorave saver, Colonna mia* follows a more erudite compositional model that moves beyond the originally dance song template. Bonagiunta neglected to identify *E vorave saver, Colonna mia* as a *herculana* both in the title page and later on in the index, even though the text clearly comprises six *herculana* stanzas; by withholding this metadata he may have sought to mask the rustic origins of the piece to some extent in the hope of appealing to a more elevated artistic palette. However, Bonagiunta's three-part composition is still indebted to the popular *herculana* in many ways: in the composition's second section the composer acknowledges his musical source by moving towards a more energetic rhythmic mode, with the steady downbeat and regular, balanced melodic phrases (absent in the opening and closing sections) that match the poetic couplets of a standard *herculana* stanza's middle section. In addition, though he avoids parallel motion between outer voices elsewhere in the piece, in the first bar of the second section Bonagiunta allows the Canto and Basso to move in parallel. Such deliberate 'lapses' into relatively unsophisticated writing at this particular point in the composition help to confirm that the *herculana*'s second section may have acted as an independent *nio a ballo* in the oral culture of the time.<sup>22</sup>

It is an inescapable fact that relevant hard evidence for the musical influence of the *herculana* song-text survives only in a few extant compositions. These, however, still bear crucial witness to the cultural appropriation of an urban performance phenomenon. Their existence, coupled with the variety and frequency of contemporary textual references to the actual singing of the *herculana* and the amount of otherwise redundant textual repetition in the layout of printed stampe lyrics, allows us to infer that in the Cinquecento (mainly in Venice and its terraferma) there was an established notion of the *herculana* as a lively song type that enjoyed extensive instrumental and vocal currency within the context of the region's popular and semi-popular performance traditions.

During the sixteenth century the *herculana* song type embarked on an intriguing journey that saw it appropriated from rustic monody in the popular dance tradition, rendered into the performance repertoire published in authored *stampe popolari*, and eventually transformed into salon polyphony and printed instrumental scores. Accordingly, the label *herculana* (and its variations), while perhaps at first denoting one specific tune and text in the local oral tradition, over time began to represent an expanding body of cultural products. It no longer simply referred to a complete song or a fixed set of lyrics, but rather suggested an array of musical and textual combinations that shared (on one level or another) characteristic sectional structure, recurring poetic and musical metric patterns, stock melodic and rhythmic gestures, cadential formulas, and (most probably) stylistic conventions in terms of performance practice.

1 This article introducing the *herculana* song type is based on material taken from my PhD thesis in Historical Musicology, entitled: *Unmasking the Revels: Medium and Message in the Popular Music Culture of Sixteenth-Century Venice*, Royal Holloway University of London (2004). Please refer to the complete thesis for an in-depth exploration of the musical, textual, iconographic and socio-cultural significance of the early modern *herculana* song type. [Back](#)

2 Other terms are also used elsewhere to describe the same source material: *opuscoli* (leaflets, booklets, pamphlets), *opuscoletti* (a diminutive form of *opuscoli*), *fogli volanti* (leaflets/pamphlets), *libretti* (booklets), *letteratura a un soldo* (penny literature) etc. [Back](#)

3 At the time of writing, it is undoubtedly the fact that catalogues listing the Italian *stampe popolari* held in various libraries around the world are not coordinated in any single database. This naturally impedes a more in-depth academic investigation of these rich and varied historical sources. [Back](#)

4 This stampa was published in Venice in 1556 by Matteo Pagano. A copy of it exists in the British Library: 11071.c.65(7). *Herculana* texts appearing in *stampe popolari* were commodities of the print industry that served the socio-economic needs of manufacturing and purchasing interests in Venice (and beyond). Their thematic content could either function as self-contained reading material, or as lyric sheets awaiting the application of familiar melodies for completion. [Back](#)

5 See Roger Chartier, 'Orality Lost: Text and Voice in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, *Across Boundaries: the Book in Culture and Commerce*, eds. B. Bell, P. Bennet and J. Bevan, 1–28. (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2000), pp.19–20. [Back](#)

6 See Leandro Biadene, 'L'Ercolana', in *Dai tempi antichi ai tempi moderni da Dante al Leopardi. Raccolta di scritti critici, di ricerche storiche, filologiche e letterarie* (Milan, 1904), pp.447–55.

Most of Biadene's findings are based on the publication *Delle rime di Magagnò, Menon e Begotto in lingua rustica padovana*. This anthology was published (and reprinted) in Venice in four volumes between 1558 and 1583 and represents the collaborative work of five contemporary poets writing mainly in the Paduan dialect – Magagnò (the nickname of Giovanni Battista Maganza), Begotto (the pseudonym of the poet Bartolomeo Rustichelli), Menon (the alias of the poet and priest Agostino Rava), Chiavellin, and Rovigio Bon Magon (the pseudonym of Giuseppe Gagliardo). Biadene suggests that if not the text-type's progenitor, Rava was certainly an early champion of the *herculana*. It seems more likely, however, that the poet merely adopted (and adapted) a popular poetic formula that significantly predated the material in the Vicentine anthology. Eleven of the 340 poems in the anthology are *herculane*. Unlike their counterparts published within *stampe popolari*, none of the Vicentine

*herculane* contain material that suggest the likelihood of musical performance. It seems that once published, the significance of these poems lay more in the sophistication of their content and their cachet as desirable cultural products rather than in their importance as blueprints for entertainment; similarly, outside the orbit of the *Accademia* they were probably appropriated as reading material not as song texts. [Back](#)

7 While this shortcoming may throw the validity of Biadene's theory on the origin of the name into question (see previous footnote), it does not rule out a close relationship between the popular poetic and musical form and the activities of the *Accademia Olimpica* of Vicenza. [Back](#)

8 For a comprehensive table made up of a chronological list of thirty six *stampe popolari* containing *herculana* texts, see Fellner Simpson, *Unmasking the Revels*, Appendix B. The list helps delineate the precise historical period in which the *herculana* enjoyed popularity. It also contains other bibliographical data relating to original publishers, places of publication and current library locations, as well as original spellings and page layouts of frontispiece titles for the benefit of future scholarship in this area. [Back](#)

9 A copy of this *stampa* exists in the British Library: 11426.b.69. For the full *herculana* text, see Fellner Simpson, *Unmasking the Revels*, Appendix C. [Back](#)

10 This is the first verse of a *herculana* poem appearing in the Venetian popular booklet *Mascharate alla Bulescha de un Bravazzo chiamato figao elqual vol tor la vita a una sua Diva. Con la Canzon de santo herculano laqual dice. Mename al Magazen che son ferio. Composta e stampata novamente. Cosa piacevole e da ridere* (Venice, 1553). A copy of this *stampa* exists in the British Library: 1071.c.65(17). [Back](#)

11 A copy of this *stampa* exists in the British Library: 1071.c.65(7). [Back](#)

12 Other examples of musical specification with regards the *herculana* appear on frontispieces of the following *stampe*:

- *Una nova canzone in lingua rustica, su l'aere di S. Herculano; Col lamento de gli Mercadanti. Con alquante Canzoni Napolitane; Nuovamente poste in luce* (Venice: In Frezzaria al segno della Regina [D. dei Franceschi, ca. 1580]). A copy of this *stampa* exists in Budapest's Nationalbibliothek Széchényi: Ant.7065(12).
- *Canzon in tenor de Sier Herculano Qual narra la vita delle povere puttane, & quanto siano sottoposte ad infiniti mali, e come vivono, & vanno declinando a poco a poco, e come morono alla fine sopra il letame. Con una Canzone alla Napolitana qual narra la forza d'Amore* (Macerata: Sebastiano Martellini, 1593). A copy of this *stampa* exists in Rome's Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale 'Vittorio Emanuele II': 69.7.C.37/3.
- *La comedia piacevole de Saltafosso. Con alcune Stantie in Canzon de Sier Herculano sopra una vecchia* (two different editions survived: the first one was printed in Venice in 1549 by Agostino Bindoni; the second



was also issued in Venice, this time by Giovanni Battista Bonfadino, in 1609). A copy of the Bindoni edition exists in Florence's Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale: Palatino D.4.6.23.20 and of the Bonfadino edition in Rome's Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Capponi.V.682(94). [Back](#)

13 The anthology contains arrangements of vocal music (a motet, a *napolitana*, chansons and madrigals), eight dances (amongst which is the *herculana*) and six *ricercares* (Facsimile edition: Institutio pro Arte Testudinis, 1977. series A, vol. 4). In 1546 Antonio Gardano published an extraordinary number of lute anthologies in Venice. Girolamo Scotto similarly cashed in on the lute-anthology frenzy, publishing several lute books in 1548. Commenting in some detail on the pieces in Bianchini's anthology, Arthur Ness – 'Sources of Lute Music', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 24, pp.41–2 – nevertheless refers only to the dances *Cara cosa*, *Meza notte*, *El burato*, *Lodesana*, and *Torza*, overlooking *Le Forze d'Ercule* and *Santo Herculano*. [Back](#)

14 According to Arthur Ness ('Domenico Bianchini: Some Recent Findings', *Le luth et sa musique* 2 (1980): 100) Bianchini (born in Udine c1510, died in Venice ca.1576) was not only a master mosaicist and a gifted amateur lutenist but also a government official (a broker) affiliated to the *Fondaco dei tedeschi* (the German guesthouse and mercantile centre in Venice), though Ness he neglects to provide concrete evidence to support this hypothesis. Ness reveals also that Bianchini moved in the same professional circles as the actor and playwright Andrea Calmo and the composer and playwright Girolamo Parabosco. He states that Calmo singled Bianchini out in his writings as an outstanding and 'modern' local musician, while Parabosco was similarly familiar with Bianchini's work, even recording his favourable impressions after hearing Bianchini play in a musical soirée in 1544, when the latter performed as part of a ten-piece ensemble. According to Vittorio Rossi (*Le lettere di M. Andrea Calmo* (Turin: Loescher, 1888), p.433) both Calmo and Parabosco utilised the *herculana* in their own theatrical outputs. This suggests that the song was popular not only generally in Venice at this juncture, but also perhaps specifically among this group of cognoscenti. [Back](#)

15 The remaining items in Wecker's dance anthology are: Pass'emezo comun / Il suo saltarello / Padovana comun / Pas'emezo antiquo / Gentil Madonna: padovana / Santo Herculano: padovana / La Traditora: saltarello / Pass'emezo / Il suo saltarello / Pass'emezo / Il suo saltarello / La Gamba / Le Forze de Ercule / Der Bentzenawer dantz / Der Schwartz Knab dantz / Dantz / Jupff auff / Paduana / Les Buffons / Ach Jupiter / Was würt es doch des wunders noch Senfl. [Back](#)

16 The missing volume (listed in Howard Mayer Brown, *Instrumental Music Published Before 1600: a Bibliography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965) was entitled *Lautenbuch vonn mancherley schönen und lieblichen stucken mit zweyen Lauten zusammen zu schlagen, Italienische lieder, Pass'emezi, Saltarelli, Paduane. Weiter Frantzösische, Teütsche, mit sampt mancherley dántzen, durch Hans Jacob Wecker von Basel auff's aller fleissigest*

17 Giulio Bonagiunta from San Ginesio near Macerata was active in Venice during the 1560s not only as a singer at the Basilica, but also as a composer and music editor; see Andrea Marcialis, 'Bonagiunta, Giulio', in *The New Grove*, ed. Sadie, vol. 3, p.847. [Back](#)

18 Members of the Ottobono family are mentioned in a few dedications of minor literary and musical publications of the time. Gabrielle Ottobono's father is noted in passing by Bonagiunta in the dedication to his 1565 anthology, suggesting that he, like his son, was a patron of the arts; the renowned Venetian actor and musician Manoli Blessi (Antonio Molino) dedicated his 1570 *Barzeletta de quattro compagni strathiotti de Albania, zuradi di andar per il mondo alla ventura* to the patrician Giovanni Francesco Ottobono; and in 1585, Giulio Cesare Barbetta dedicated his lute anthology (*Intavolatura di liuto ... dove si contiene padoane, arie, baletti, pass'e mezi, saltarelli per ballar à la Italiana, e altre cose dilettevoli secondo l'uso di questi tempi*) to the Venetian Gironimo Otto – possibly another member of the Ottobono family. [Back](#)

19 See Jane Bernstein, *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press (1539–1572)* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.678, 726. [Back](#)

20 For a musicological study of the genre of *villanesca alla napoletana*, see Donna Cardamone, *The Canzone Villanesca alla Napolitana and Related Forms, 1537–1570* (UMI Research Press, 1981). [Back](#)

21 See Nino Pirrotta, *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages and the Baroque* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p.194. [Back](#)

22 According to Francesco Luisi ('*Il Tentolora: ballo dei 'tempi passai'*. Vecchie e nuove fonti', in *Musicologia Humana: Studies in Honor of Warren and Ursula Kirkendale*, ed., 75–113 (Florence: Olschki, 1994), p.76) entire refrains appropriated from traditional popular songs could take on a completely autonomous existence as lively accompaniment for dance. Known in this guise as *nio a ballo* (or *strofetta a ballo*), they were often identified by a key phrase or fragment taken from their original text. They were subsequently quoted many times (either partially or in their entirety) in the villotte and *frottole* of the early Cinquecento. Despite the fact that the *herculana's* poetic structure does not include a free-standing refrain as such, it appears that its lively middle section have taken on that function. [Back](#)