

On the Latin Introduction to Caxaro's Cantilena

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Introduction

On the 22nd of September 1966, Fr Michael Fsadni and Dr Godfrey Wettinger discovered¹ a cantilena of twenty lines in Medieval Maltese, divided into three stanzas of six, four and ten verses respectively, the whole of which was preceded by five lines of Latin by way of an introduction.²

The importance of such a discovery of written Maltese – and that in the literary genre of lyric – cannot be underestimated both for the study of the developing language itself and for the status of an emerging nation. The nation's laurels and gratitude bestowed upon these two researchers were truly merited considering that they were the first who identified the cantilena for what it really was, and for publishing an in-depth study of it in the context of its historic background, having first thoroughly researched it in strict accordance to academic disciplines.

In 1968, Fsadni and Wettinger first published their findings through a joint publication in English entitled, *Peter Caxaro's Cantilena, a poem in Medieval Maltese*.³ Ten years later (1977), Wettinger delivered a paper at the Libyan Arab Cultural Institute, Valletta (later published in the *Journal of Maltese Studies*, No. 12, 1978) entitled, *Looking back on 'the Cantilena*

¹ M. Montebello (2015) 7-14, claims that Fr Michael Fsadni was the actual discoverer. The theme, 'Michael Fsadni, the discoverer, and Godfrey Wettinger, his close colleague' (p. 59) runs throughout his book.

² Lines 7-10 are contested; see G. Brincat (1986); A. Cassola (1986).

³ M. Fsadni and G. Wettinger (1968) *Peter Caxaro's Cantilena, a poem in medieval Maltese*.

of *Peter Caxaro*,⁴ in which he reviewed the first publication, and made amendments to the reading of just two words, one in the cantilena and one in the introduction (see below). Five years later (1983), both researchers again issued another publication, this time round in Maltese, *L-Għanja ta' Pietru Caxaru, poeżija bil-Malti Medjevali*,⁵ being in the main a translation of the original 1968 publication, but taking into account further research done since the 1968 publication, and concentrating entirely on the subject matter of the cantilena and its historical context.

In addition, ever since its first publication, numerous scholars have come forward presenting their own contributions to further the cantilena's analysis in every possible manifestation of detail imaginable, such that, up to date, no less than one hundred and ten publications, whether papers or articles, have been published regarding all, or some part of, the cantilena.⁶

Notwithstanding, very little has been said, or, at least, that I am aware of, regarding the introduction in Latin, except for what Fsadni and Wettinger themselves had written.⁷ And even these same discoverers and first commentators of the cantilena paid small attention to the finer details of the introduction, probably because they were more interested in the poem itself, concentrating more on a deeper study of their true discovery rather than to an introduction in the usual Latin. But in all fairness, even though they gave their whole attention to the poem, it must also be said that they did not completely ignore it, for from it they sought, in part, to highlight the as yet unknown achievements of Pietro Caxaro, leading them to search in greater detail who this man actually was, although, alas, he still remains a rather mysterious fellow.

⁴ G. Wettinger (1978) Looking back on 'the Cantilena of Peter Caxaro'. In *Journal of Maltese studies*, 12 (1978) 88-105.

⁵ M. Fsadni and G. Wettinger (1983) *L-għanja ta' Pietru Caxaro, poeżija bil-Malti medjevali*.

⁶ For a full bibliography, see M. Montebello (2015) 117-126.

⁷ When this paper was nearing completion, I came across Montebello's publication (2015) in which the prologue is treated on pp. 31-34.

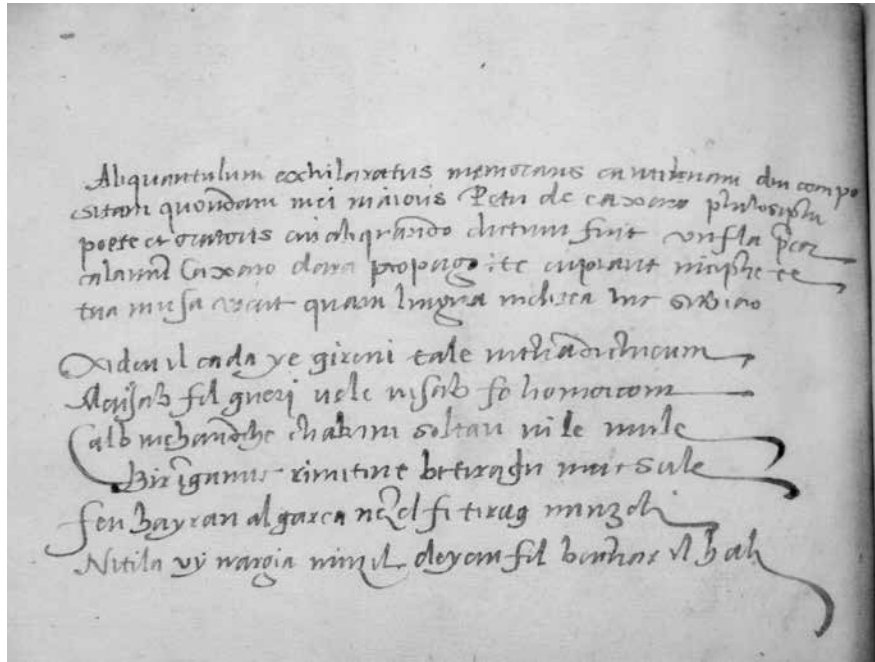
And yet, even while completely devoting their whole energy to the study and interpretation of the cantilena and its historical content, the Latin introduction, especially that relative clause *quam lingua melitea hic subicio* could never have been very far away from Fsadni's and Wettinger's minds, haunting them (I imagine) every now and then in regard to the original language of the cantilena; for even though they had, as they perceived, that they had soundly rebutted through the documentation and proofs brought forward, that the cantilena in Maltese is Pietro's and not Brandano's, still, it is evident, on reading both of their works, that an obsessive concern was always lingering somewhere at the back of their mind, lest the cantilena in Maltese could have been the other way round, Brandano's, and not Pietro's.⁸ Such a hypothesis would have meant moving the existence of the cantilena in Maltese by about 70-80 years nearer to our own age; not a terrible loss, considering that in the present state of our knowledge, it would still be a 'first'; but, of course, this fact would have denied it the more august lustre of venerability that comes naturally with greater antiquity.

NAV R175/1

The cantilena together with its introduction (Fig. 1) is written in Brandano Caxaro's own hand,⁹ and was found on the verso of the last folio but two of the last quire that made up the first volume of his notarial acts. This first volume (NAV R175/1) contains Brandano's acts celebrated between the 4th of December 1533 and the 26th of May 1536. It must also be said that the first three folios of this R175/1 are missing; the last eight folios of the last quire, forming an integral part of the volume, are unnumbered and completely blank, except for the Cantilena, as said above, and on the verso of the very last folio of this same quire, there is a pen drawing of a floral vase design bearing the legend TELLUS PLENA, drawn on a scroll at the top, and beside it, in a much smaller font, the letter M, upon which vertical lines, as if to cross it out, appear to have been drawn. The

⁸ Objections to whole or in part Brincat (1986) and Cassola. (1986).

⁹ Such a statement has never been in doubt. See Fsadni & Wettinger (1983) 11, 13.



right downturn of this same scroll contains the letters A 'LI 'S, an upper interpunct separating the three (Fig. 2). Although this floral vase design was noted by Fsadni and Wettinger in the 1968 publication,¹⁰ yet it was omitted in the 1983 Maltese version; nay, more, its existence even denied: *L-oħrajn ma fihom xejn* (p. 12). Why they resorted to this deliberate denial – such an emphatic statement militates against a *lapsus*, for a physical search on the existing volume is still possible, eliciting its existence – I have to acknowledge that I do not know. In making such a statement, they were probably referring to writing, discounting pen-drawings.

¹⁰ M. Fsadni and G. Wettinger (1968) 8: 'At the end there are eight unnumbered folios without any notarial entries, forming an integral part of the last quire. On the back of the last one there is a rough pen-drawing of a vase with flowers and the words "Tellus plena". The cantilena is on the back of the sixth folio. The other unnumbered folios are blank.'



Of philosophers, poets and orators

It so happens that pen-drawings with or without a legend accompanying them are occasionally found in not a few of Brandano's notarial registers. The legend is generally derived from some famous author, whom Brandano had read in his student days, or from his current reading, and which he then inserted within his drawing for some reason known only to himself. Whether he was making a statement, a protest, or simply rejoicing in the remembrance of some memorable word, phrase or sentence derived from his readings, cannot be known, and can only to be surmised: it could have been a recourse to alleviate his spirit in any of the myriad of problems which affected his personal life; at other times it could have been a religious protest against the higher hierarchy of his Church, or for some other reason which the long years separating us and him might now obscure.

TELLUS PLENA is certainly derived from Lucius Annaeus Seneca's tragedy *Hercules Oetaeus*, line 1701; the fact that he wrote the initials A. LI. S. on the right hand side of the legend, surely standing for A(nnaeus) L(i)<U>(cius) S(eneca), is sufficient evidence for us to realise that he was quoting from this renowned Roman author and public figure.

We can almost hear Hercules' earnest imprecations to Jove, his father, imploring him immortality for the beneficial deeds he had done on earth for the sake of Mankind:

Si pace **tellus plena**, si nullae gemunt
 Vrbes, nec aras impius quisquam inquinat;
 Si scelera desunt, spiritum admitte hunc precor
 In astra. (Sen., *Herc. Oet.*, vv. 1701-4)

If Peace fills all the earth; if no cities lament,
 and no man stains with sin his altar-fires;
 if crimes are ceased, admit this soul, I pray thee,
 to the stars. (Trans. F.J. Miller, 1917)

Who was Seneca? A Roman author of the first century AD, widely read in the Christian world, whom even St Jerome thought that he ought to be numbered among the Celestial Host; whose *opera* Erasmus of

Rotterdam,¹¹ a favourite author of Brandano, had just recently published with scholia, and as any reference book would inform: a philosopher, a poet and an orator par excellence.

What Brandano meant by 'the earth is full of', apart from what Seneca had in mind, I do not know. Maybe 'flowers' (a flower vase has been drawn), or 'trees' (a tree seems to rise at the very top), or 'music' (is that a rough sketch of a harp just above the bottom?); or maybe even 'philosophers, poets and orators', Seneca's two-word legend and Pietro Caxaro's cantilena being the subject of the two end folios of Brandano's first notarial volume, and, as we shall see further on, of Boethius, who is quoted immediately after these two, within the introduction to Brandano's second notarial volume. Brandano may have kept the secret of this pen-drawing to himself, but he has surely revealed the common titles normally attributed to Seneca and Boethius through the medium of the pen-drawing with its legend, and to Pietro Caxaro in the introduction to the cantilena, all following closely upon each other; namely, that he considered all three meriting the titles of 'philosopher, poet and orator'. But while the *opera* of Seneca and Boethius are extant and accessible to all, Pietro's are, unfortunately, unknown, except for his cantilena, and his scholarship and achievements have to be accepted only on Brandano's own word.

For in regard to his oratory, Fsadni and Wettinger direct us to a Municipal council debate of 2nd August 1479 where the opinion of Pietro was accepted unanimously. Unfortunately, we have no indication whatsoever of his speech, but simply of his bare opinion which was accepted by all thirty two councillors present.¹² But it must also be said that his opinion in the same council meeting regarding financial assistance to an Austin friar to study abroad did not garner a simple majority, some of the

¹¹ L. Annei Senecae, *Opera...* per Des. Erasmus Roterod. Adiuncta sunt eiusdem scholia nonnulla, Basileae in officina Frobeniana. Anno MDXXIX.

¹² Fsadni and Wettinger (1983) 56: *Egregrius notarius Petrus Caxaru laudat quod dicta provisio non acetetur ex quo contra capitula regni*. The records of the council meeting are on pp.56-58.

councillors being even openly hostile.¹³ In regard to his meriting the title of philosopher, we have nothing except from what can be inferred from his cantilena.¹⁴

Which brought about which, or better still, which came first, the cantilena, the pen-drawing, or the Boethius' quote, is difficult to answer; but all are interrelated to the titles attributed to all three authors: to Seneca and Boethius by the world at large, to Pietro Caxaro solely by Brandano, quoting an unknown source – all *philosophi, poete et oratores*.

From what has been said up to now, and will be further shown below, it also results that Brandano, although keen to quote, was also prone to *lapsa*, probably because he quoted from memory. The initials for Seneca (LI for LU), the crossed M (was he thinking of Marcus as a nomen for Seneca, or was he on the point of attributing the quote to Marcus Cicero, and then reconsidered?) are cases in point.

Grammar of the Prologue

At this stage, a transcription of the introduction is needed. The following is derived from the 1983 publication, page 47, being the final format that Fsadni and Wettinger gave it, but here rendered in line numbers according to NAV R175/1:

Aliquantulum exhilaratus memorans cantilenam diu compo	1
sitam quondam mei maioris Petri de Caxaro philosphi	2
poete et oratoris cui aliquando dictum fuit confla precor	3
calamum Caxaro clara propago : te cupiant ninphe te	4
tua musa curavit quam lingua melitea hic subicio.	5

¹³ Fsadni and Wettinger (1983) 56: *quo vero ad dictum fratrem Antonium quod habeat aliquid ex pecunia universitatis, videlicet per patru unci {per anni quattu} dum quod studiat et non aliter*. Others had other opinions: Not. Nicolaus Caxaru...*quo vero ad fratrem Antonium che haya dui unci dum modu che haya altri tanti ex reditibus sancti Agustinii; alias che non haya nenti*. Nob. Angelus Vaccaru...*quo ad fratrem Antonium ki non haya nenti*.

¹⁴ See Montebello (2015) *The humanist philosophy in Peter Caxaro's cantilena*, 43-73, but esp. 50-51.

It is to be noted that in the 1968 publication, page 36, the same transcription was given, with the only exception being that *curavit* (line 5) was omitted, and substituted by four dots, giving notice to the reader that the exact word was so dubious that it offered problems for its transcription.

Regarding this omission, Wettinger noted in a footnote (p. 102, fn. 28) of his *Looking back*, published in the Journal of Maltese Studies (1978), that he was sticking to his original 1968 reading of the Latin introduction with the exception that the only omission they had then made, was now being filled in with '*curait*', standing for '*curavit*, he took care of'. Subsequently, the 1983 transcription incorporated this word too (in its expanded form, but without any convention symbols denoting expanded abbreviations, namely, *cura(v)it*), the authors asserting that its transcription had been finally resolved.

Here I dare enter where angels most fear to tread. For Wettinger, especially, was a master in palaeography as his *Acta Juratorum*¹⁵ and his innumerable transcriptions attest. For although the word does indeed read '*curait*', yet this word is non-existent in Latin, nor does it exist in any inflection of the verb *curo*. One would have expected that if it was an abbreviation, Brandano would have marked it out as being so as all abbreviations are normally indicated. On the other hand, Wettinger should have informed that it had been expanded, and a suitable convention used to show its expansion, such as *cura(v)it*. Where so much effort had been made to read and explain every single letter of the cantilena as written, I would have expected that the same meticulousness would have applied to the introduction. But as has been remarked above, it seems that the authors were more interested in the cantilena than its introduction, which was given minor importance by them, except to draw as much information from it as possible in regard to Pietro Caxaro. To further sustain this impression, let me say that, also in his *Looking back*, Wettinger gave notice that he was amending just one word in the cantilena, namely *hedaun* for the 1968 *hedann* (line 20). This amendment he made in the course of the main part of the paper; the amendment to the introduction

¹⁵ G.Wettinger ed., *Acta Juratorum et Consilii Civitatis et Insulae Maltae*, Palermo, 1993.

was made in a footnote, as if as an afterthought.¹⁶ Unfortunately, such an expansion of '*curait*' is incorrect since, as will be shown below, the word would not then fit the metre of the elegiac couplet to which it belongs.

Fsadni and Wettinger had proved beyond doubt that both the introduction and the cantilena were written in Brandano Caxaro's own inimitable hand.¹⁷ Neither can there be any doubt that the composer of the introduction was not Brandano himself, speaking in the first person, except for the elegiac couplet quoted within the introduction, as he himself points out.

The Latin of the introduction is Medieval. Because it is so brief, there are few tell-tale signs to attest this statement, but still three exist: *poete* (line 3) for the classical *poetae*; *ninphe* (line 4) for *nymphae*; and the verb *dictum fuit* (line 3) for *dictum est*.

Almost without exception, notaries in Malta of the first half of the sixteenth century, Brandano included (and even more in the century before), used this form of Latin as can be attested by their acts, which are mainly in Latin. The use of Neo-Latin in the Malta context (since its introduction varied by country and region on the European mainland) only started with new faces appearing among the rank of notaries soon after the Great Siege, though practising notaries still continued in their old usage until their retirement or demise. Thenceforth, Neo-Latin stood its ground, especially in its spelling, becoming more consonant to classical Latin, but not as regards to the formation of the passive verb in the perfect tense, especially, which continued unabated with the use of the auxiliary verb *fui*.

Fsadni and Wettinger are to be commended for leaving unaltered, and with undertaking no attempt whatsoever of amending to a classical style

¹⁶ G. Wettinger (1978) 102: "Finally I would also like to make one emendation to our original reading of the words of the poem and that is the word *hedann* (line 20) which I now think should read *hedaun*, otherwise I stick to the whole of our original reading.28 Footnote 28, to which reference is made on the same page, has the following: '*Curait*', the only word in the Latin introduction to Caxaro's poem, which we failed to explain, really stands for '*Curavit*, he took care of.'"

¹⁷ See especially an image comparing Brandano Caxaro's handwriting with that of his scribe, Fsadni and Wettinger (1983) 13.

such a system of writing Latin (as some Maltese scholars have tended to do recently in dealing with 16th century texts) if only so that the reader would automatically connect to the period of time to which the Latin pertains.

Brandano's Latin introduction suffers in one major defect: it lacks a main finite verb. It consequently proved a dilemma to Fsadni and Wettinger to give a literal translation of it. But instead of taking a conjectural judgement based on grammar and continuous sense, but with minimal intervention, as is wont in such occasions, they went to the extreme recourse of taking liberties with its syntax. Thus, they made *subicio* the main verb of the whole introduction, ignoring the fact that *subicio* was already the verb governing a relative clause introduced by *quam*; *quam* was quietly dropped, and substituted by an understood *eam*. Their translation, as it appeared in the 1968 publication, p. 38, is here reproduced verbatim:

Somewhat enlivened in recalling a song composed long ago by my late ancestor, Peter de Caxaro, philosopher, poet and orator, of whom it was once said: 'Manufacture a pen for Caxaro, I entreat you, o noble progeny: let the nymphs seek thee; let thy Muse... [invite, call, inspire] thee', I write it down here in the Maltese Language.

The lacuna after 'Muse' is understandable, since at this time, as said above, a Latin word from the original had not yet been transcribed; three verbs in square brackets were added so as to complete a conjectural rendering of the sense, the subjunctive mood already prepared to take in the most appropriate verb. In the 1983 publication, a completely different rendering was given – but about this, later.

The meticulousness assiduously shown by Fsadni's and Wettinger's analysis of the cantilena seems to here retreat through their decision to make *subicio* the subject of the sentence. If only they had opted to make the participle *exhilaratus* the main finite verb by adding a *fui* to it, there would have been no need to meddle with the rest of the period, thus

affecting minimal interference with the original, while retaining the sense of the whole.¹⁸

And probably, Brandano meant *exhilaratus* to be the main verb, *fui* being omitted as ‘understood’, as was quite normal with the verb ‘to be’. The addition of *fui* would only have entailed a *fui* within round brackets (*fui*) to denote that it is ‘understood’, or if it were thought to have been inadvertently left out, then it would have been accompanied with angled brackets <*fui*>. To be on the safe side, a note explaining the addition would have been welcome. I do not know why Fsadni and Wettinger failed to follow such a universal system of amendment, undertaking changes in the text without explaining them; after all, the apparatus criticus had been invented since antiquity to explain amendments to ambiguous or corrupt texts such as in this instance. Brandano was not infallible; even Virgil suffered through copyists’ errors, such that it has been claimed that some of his existing texts are partly a construction by modern editors (who themselves in turn, it must be said, are not infallible).¹⁹

But making *exhilaratus fui* the main verb, an objection may be raised regarding the present active participle *memorans*, because in Latin the present participle, when used predicatively, ‘regularly expresses incomplete action contemporaneous with that of the finite verb of its clause’,²⁰ resulting in a translation in which the action and its cause occurred at exactly the same time. Obviously, this is not logically possible, because the ‘*memorans*’ surely had to precede the resultant action of ‘*exhilaratus fui*’. But since Latin lacks the equivalent of the English active past participle, it became a convention among Roman authors, especially among the historians, to use the present participle ‘to express long-continued or conative action not completely contemporaneous, but prior to that of the main verb’.²¹ The classic example to this type

¹⁸ M. Montebello (2015) 32, attempting to make intelligible the introduction by removing the subordinate clauses, still ended up with an incomplete sentence: *Kemxejn imferraħ mit-tifkira tal-kantilena...li bl’ilsien Malti hawn taħt inġib*.

¹⁹ E. Courtney (1981) 13-29.

²⁰ E.C. Woodcock (1996) 81.

²¹ Id. Ibid.

of use of the present participle is *roganti mihi...respondit* (literally, ‘to me asking...he replied’). Of course, the question must have been asked prior to the answer. But translating into English a present participle as ‘having asked’ would be equally unacceptable, even though it came ‘to be loosely used in the sense of a past participle active, much as in English’. Hence, in translation the convention arose that when the sense of the present participle so dictated, the English translation is rendered by a preposition followed by a noun derived from the verbal participle. The example given above would then be rendered, ‘to my question...he replied’. Consequently, the objection to *exhilaratus fui* does not hold.

Translations of the prologue

It must also be said that, contrary to what Fsadni and Wettinger had done in their 1968 publication, nowhere did they, in their 1983 Maltese version, translate the introduction as a whole, and although they did translate the quote on Pietro twice (on page 16 and again on page 20) and also two chosen phrases in the course of the narrative – denoting their translations by enclosing them in single quotation marks – the rest, including the *quam lingua melitea hic subicio*, were never translated as such, but commented and referred to in the running narrative. The following table might help to explain in more detail the mode of translation and commentary adopted in 1983.

Line MS	The Introduction	1983 Pg.	Translation In Maltese	Comment & referral in running narrative
1 2	Aliquantulum exhilaratus memorans cantilenam diu compo sitam	16 20	 ...‘miktuba żmien twil ilu’	¶siebu kien biss fi kliem qaribu li kienu neħħewlu d-dwejjaq u mlewħ xi ftit bil-ferħ
2 3	quondam mei maioris Petri de Caxaro philosphi poete et oratoris	16 26	 ‘filosofu, poeta u oratur’	...kien kitibha qaribu Pietru Caxaru żmien twil qabel.

Line MS	The Introduction	1983 Pg.	Translation In Maltese	Comment & referral in running narrative
3 4 5	cui aliquando dictum fuit confla precor calamum Caxaro clara propago: te cupiant ninphe te tua musa curavit	16 & 20	‘Hejji l-pinna lil Caxaro, nitolbok, ja nisel magħruf; halli jixtiquk in-Ninfi, ħadet ħsiebek il-Muża tiegħek.’	
5	quam lingua melitea hic subicio.	16		...iżda sejjer iġibha bil-Malti kif inkitbet.

The reason why the Authors failed to translate, I suppose, lies in the fact that the whole introduction lacked a main verb and so was impossible to translate without amending the original, something which the Authors were loath to do; also, because of the concern that the relative clause *quam lingua melitea hic subicio* might give rise to question whether the cantilena was originally written in Maltese or some other language (see below).

Abbreviations

Similarly to all his contemporaries, Notary Brandano's deeds are replete with abbreviated words as any cursory glance at his acts would immediately elicit.

The convention for abbreviating words were fairly common and standard among various notaries within a specific time-frame, but some did make use of idiosyncratic conventions. To compound the problem in transcription, a notary would at one time opt to abbreviate a word, at another to render it in full, at other times to abbreviate one way, at another some other way. Brandano was no exception.

As regards abbreviations, there are a few in the cantilena in Maltese; in the Latin introduction there are but two. Both are fairly common and frequently used by notaries: *calamū* (line 4) for *calamum* where the macron over a vowel denoted a subsequent *n* or *m*, and *pcor* (line 3) for

precor where an elongated circumflex above the *p* stood for *pri* – or *pre* – (in Neo-Latin also for *prae*-).²²

The elegiac couplet

In their transcription, 1968, p. 38, and 1983, p. 47, Fsadni and Wettinger wrote the quote which was once told of Pietro Caxaro in continuous prose, even inserting a colon, similarly to the original, between *propago* and *te* (line 4); they did likewise in its English translation (1968, pp. 16 and 38) and in its Maltese translation (1983, pp. 16 and 20).

Nowhere do they state that it is an elegiac couplet, let alone did they attempt a scan of its metre. The reason, I believe, is twofold: firstly, because the second syllable of *confla* (second person singular imperative active) is, according to prosody, long, and hence it would not fit the first distich of the hexameter; secondly, because they chose to interpret *curait* for *cura(v)it*, a word which does not fit the last pentameter foot, thus making the couplet defective. Apart from these two words, there are no problems regarding the rest of the words to form an elegiac couplet. But let the transcription and translation be written first:

Fsadni and Wettinger, 1983, p. 47:

Confla precor calamum Caxaro clara propago: te cupiant ninphe te
tua musa curavit

Fsadni and Wettinger, 1968, p. 38:

Manufacture a pen for Caxaro, I entreat you, o noble progeny: let the
nymphs seek thee; let thy Muse . . . [invite, call, inspire] thee.

Fsadni and Wettinger, 1983, pp. 16 and 20:

Hejji l-pinna lil Caxaru, nitolbok, ja nisel magħruf; ħalli jixtiquk in-
Ninfi, ħadet ħsiebek il-Muza tiegħek.

²² In actual fact, palaeographers do not consider both examples here given as true abbreviations and ought to be silently transcribed without any indicating convention symbol.

Let me now propose the following transcription and translation, and then set down my comments in full.

Confla precor calamum Caxaro clara propago;
Te cupiant ninphe, te tua musa curet.

curet] emendavi; *curait* Brandano; *cura(v)it* Fsadni et Wettinger.

Scansion

cōn-flā prē- | cōr cā-lā- | mūm || Cāx- | ā-rō | clā-rā prō- | pā-gō;
tē cū-pī- | ānt nīn- | phē, || tē tū-ā | mū-sā cū- | rēt.

My translation

Blow a reed-pipe for Caxaro, divine offspring, I entreat;
For you may the Nymphs long, for you may thy Muse care.

Confla or Infla?

Caxaro wrote *confla*, and so did Wettinger transcribe. Paleographically, there is no doubt about the initial *co* – of *confla* as written here since this ligature was often, but not exclusively, used by Brandano.²³ But in writing *confla*, was Caxaro quoting his source correctly, or did he mean *infla*?

The base of both verbs is *flo*: to blow, used to describe the action of blowing or breathing into wind instruments, such as *inflexo Bercynthia tibia cornu Flabit* (Ov. *F.* 4.181); *tibia flatur* (Ov. *F.* 4.341). *Flo* is also used to describe the motion of the wind: *Etesiae contra fluvium flantes* (Lucr. 6. 717). In particular, *flo* is also used to denote the minting of coinage through the action of bellows in raising the temperature of the forge for melting and fusing metals, the result being *flata signataque pecunia*, (Gell. 2.10.3).

Conflo is a compound of *flo* with the preposition *con* – attached to the base verb. It implies to blow together, to blow up; to kindle a fire; to stir up, especially in regard to passions or war. Also to melt or fuse metals in the manufacture of statues, vases, etc., the most notable example being *falces conflantur in ensem* (Verg. *G.* 1. 508). But it is important to add

²³ The *co* – of *compositam* (line 1-2) illustrates Brandano's versatility of writing.

that in its lengthy treatment of *conflo*, the Lewis and Short never supplies even one example for its use as playing on a wind instrument as implied in context in Caxaro's elegiac couplet. Faced with such a difficulty, Fsadni and Wettinger, I suppose, must have abandoned the idea of literally translating *confla...calamum* as an act of playing a wind instrument, and opted for the metonym 'manufacture a pen', since *calamus*, apart from its actual meaning for a cane or a reed, was also used to denote any object made of reeds, such as a reed-pipe or a reed-pen. But such a translation is surely an incongruous assertion for the 15th century when the elegiac couplet was composed.

But even if, for argument's sake, *conflo* is extended to literally translate as blowing into a wind instrument, there arises a further complication. For *con* – implies 'togetherness', that is, to blow together into a single reed pipe (since *calamum* is singular) – quite difficult, I suppose, if not impossible, to achieve. Also, *confla* is imperative active second person singular, thus addressed to a single object or person – in the sense of the couplet, to the 'illustrious offspring'; but *propago* is also singular. It might be argued that *propago* is a collective noun standing for all the Nine Muses. But this objection can be overcome since, if *propago* is used collectively, why is *Musa* (singular) used in the pentameter with a third person verb, also in the singular? If the author wanted to make us understand Muses, surely he could have employed a plural verb as he had used with the *ninph(a)e*. Whence it results that the author of the couplet meant one Muse, the Muse of lyric, through whose inspiration Pietro sang his cantilenas. Hence, the incongruity of the *con* – in *confla*.

On the other hand, *infla* is also a compound of *flo*: to blow into or upon anything, especially of wind instruments. Numerous examples from Classical authors abound in its association with the playing of wind instruments. It also stands for 'to swell' or 'puff up', especially of the cheeks, an action associated with playing wind instruments. (It has other meanings by extension, such as to describe a haughty person puffed up with himself, or to describe a high-blown speech).

But the greatest argument in favour of *infla* is Virgil. Who could ever write a Latin verse and not be familiar with its poetry? Horace, Seneca, Ovid, Terence, but above all, the immortal Virgil, were the mainstays of a pupil's education in those centuries, nay, even prior, and

Cur non, Mopse, boni quoniam convenimus ambo 1
Tu calamos inflare levis, ego dicere versus,
hic corylis mixtas inter consedimus ulmos?

If that is the verb that Virgil used with *calamos*, why should we look further? But just in case, not everyone is yet convinced – did not Lucretius, another of the giants of Roman literature, also use the same verb?

Agrestis docuere **cavas inflare cicutas.** (Lucr. 5. 1383-4)

As to why the usually long final *-a* of a second person singular imperative of the first conjugation was used in this couplet as short, I have no answer except to say that the medieval pronunciation of some vowels and diphthongs had been so changed that very little attention was

given to their actual length. Consider *ninphe* which classically would have been written *nymphae*. Moreover, the classical exact length of syllables to fit their melody could even be confused by the long medieval centuries of writing poetry by accent rather than by syllable length. 'Accent,' wrote P. Thoresby Jones, 'rather than either ictus or the presence of a preceding short syllable, was primarily the determining cause of shortening a vowel... in the verse of Plautus 'accent plays a far more important part than ictus in the determination of quantity.'²⁴ In fact, *confla*, or in its lieu, *infla*, if stressed based, would make the *-a* seem short and perfectly fit the hexameter. In the context of the 15th century, such an elegiac couplet, showing the occasional accent induced syllables superimposed upon the usual classic norms can be tolerated.

The question now begs: on the above evidence, should *confla* be amended to *infla*? I would say No. *Confla* he wrote; *infla* he meant; respecting Brandano's choice of word, let *confla* stand.

Curavit or Curet?

As noted above, this is the word that Fsadni and Wettinger had found difficulty in transliterating, both, I suppose, because of the rare (and indeed, obscure) ligature of the initial *cu-*, which Brandano is here rendering in an almost similar manner to his usual rendering of an initial *u* – or *v*–, and because the resultant word ('*curait*' or '*urait*') does not exist in Latin. If indeed we are dealing with an elegiac couplet, '*urait*' (verb *uro*: to burn, inflame, consume with passion) can be straight away discarded because the preceding word (*Musa*) ends in a vowel and thus prosody demands that the next syllable starts with a consonant, otherwise elision of the final *-a* of *musa* would occur, which would complicate matters even further. Left with only one sole option, there is thus a necessity for finding an alternative form of the verb in which the idea inherent in *curait* (verb *curo*) is retained, as also its sense associated with the rest of the quote in regard to morphology, syntax and metre, again with minimal

²⁴ T. Macchi Plauti Menaechmi, ed. P. Thoresby Jones, Oxford 1950, 37.

On the other hand, *curait* with its long second syllable, its diphthong – *ai* – easily substituted for –*e*– of the present subjunctive, also long by position, together with the rhythmic and harmonious balancing of the two distiches of the pentameter, makes it a perfect substitute, with least minimal intervention, fulfilling all the requirements demanded of an amendment. Moreover, the chiasmic arrangement that results from the substitution of *curavit* for *curet* would delight any Classic's heart:

The translations

It is also true that Malta had no autochthonous tradition of muses, those mediums of divine inspirations, or of nymphs, those lithe shades of glades and springs, ever bent on singing and dancing, as the Greeks and the Romans had. But authors throughout the centuries, from Homer and Hesiod down to Virgil and Ovid, and even down to our own times, have adopted them as the genesis of their compositions, and the companions

of their songs. And although the Latin words in the couplet can be validated by synonymy, yet to substitute their primary meaning renders the couplet a barbarism.

And although *nisel maghruf* may, on deep reflection, convey the meaning of *clara propago*, yet ‘noble progeny’ does not, as it belongs to another era. The Muses are daughters of Zeus, god of the sky; hence, not only brilliant, celebrated, renowned, illustrious or glorious, all synonyms for the adjective *clarus* (Lewis & Short) but even more: divine, as Hesiod recalled their progeny. Theogony 53-62.

τὰς ἐν Πιερίῃ Κρονίδη τέκε πατρὶ μιγείσῃα
 Μνημοσύνη, γουνοῖσιν Ἐλευθῆρος μεδέουσα,
 λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων.
 ἑννέα γάρ οἱ νυκτὸς ἐμίσγετο μητίετα Ζεὺς
 νόσφιν ἀπ’ ἀθανάτων ἱερὸν λέχος εἰσαναγαίνων·
 ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ ἐνιαυτὸς ἦν, περὶ δ’ ἔτραπον ὥραι
 μηνῶν φθινόντων, περὶ δ’ ἥματα πόλλ’ ἐτελέσθη,
 ἣ δ’ ἔτεκ’ ἑννέα κούρας ὁμόφρονας, ἧσιν ἀοιδὴ
 μέμβλεται ἐν στήθεσσι, ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἐχούσας,
 τυτθὸν ἀπ’ ἀκροτάτης κορυφῆς νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου.

Them in Pieria did Mnemosyne, who reigns over the hills of Eleuther,
 bear of union with the father, the son of Cronos, a forgetting of ills and
 a rest from sorrow. For nine nights did wise Zeus lie with her, entering
 her holy bed remote from the immortals. And when a year was passed
 and the seasons came round as the months waned, and many days were
 accomplished, she bore nine daughters, all of one mind, whose hearts
 are set upon song, and whose spirit is free from care, a little way from the
 top-most peak of snowy Olympus. (Trans. H. G. Evelyn-White LCL 1914)

And who was this Muse, this *clara propago* (divine offspring), to whom
 the unknown author of this elegiac couplet first asks to play a reed-pipe
 for Caxaro, and then implores to take under her care? Her name is not
 explicitly mentioned; neither does Brandano tell. But he does suggest to
 us the name of the Muse by his use of the verb *exhilario* (to gladden,

to cheer, to make merry or joyous, to rejoice, to delight).²⁵ But is not *exhilario* the Latin equivalent and exact synonym of the Greek *τέρπειν*, from which verb the Ancient Greeks named the Muse of Lyric, enhancing even more the name by the addition of *εὖ* (well) to form Euterpe? And did not the ancient Greeks assign the flute (*aulos*) to Euterpe, as the identifying mark of her patronage, and is it not in this role that Euterpe is asked to accompany Caxaro as he sang his lyrics, just as Virgil's Menalcas had requested Mopsus to do? Why look further?

To be desired by the nymphs, those deities of woods and glens (*nemorum deae*) and those that inhabited fresh water springs and brooks (*Naidēs*) who spent their time in dance and song and free love (*turba licens...improbae...lascivae, montivagos...Panēs petunt*, as Seneca called them, *Phaedra*, 780-4), was the highest honour to be bestowed on a poet – a chorus at his beck and call, in a countryside setting, to accompany him in rhythm and dance, whenever his Muse inspired. They might have been minor goddess, but they did sometimes accompany the gods, such as Diana the Hunter, or wine-loving Bacchus. Hence the wish that Caxaro might be desired by the nymphs, so that in company with these deities he, god-like, might aspire to immortality.

But let me recall Hesiod to enlarge on the good wishes that once upon a time were heaped upon Pietro Caxaro, and why his cantilena was, is, and will be for ever so sweet.

Hes. *Theogony*, 96-103.

ὅ δ' ὄλβιος, ὃν τινα Μοῦσαι
 φίλωνται· γλυκερὴ οἱ ἀπο στόματος ῥέει αὐδή.
 Εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ
 ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
 Μουσάων θεράπων κλέεα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
 ὑμνήσῃ μάκαράς τε θεούς, οἳ Ὀλύμπῳ ἔχουσιν,
 αἰψ' ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
 μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.

²⁵ Cf. Lewis & Short.

Happy is he whom the Muses love: sweet flows speech from his mouth. For although a man has sorrow and grief in his newly-troubled soul and lives in dread because his heart is distressed, yet, when a singer, the servant of the muses, chants the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus, at once he forgets his heaviness and remembers not his sorrows at all; but the gifts of the goddesses soon turn him away from these. (Trans. H. G. Evelyn-White LCL 1914)

But was not this the aim of Caxaro's cantilena, to redress his disappointment in life, and to overcome his sorrow through song?

Quam lingua melitea hic subicio

In context, this relative clause is most ambiguous. Fsadni and Wettinger went to great pains, again and again through their publications to prove that what Brandano had transcribed, was the original cantilena in Maltese written by Pietro, certainly not a translation by Brandano. They brought forward arguments, such as, that a cantilena loses 'most of its force in translation, and it is hardly likely that the pleasure Brandano tells us he took in recalling it to his mind would have survived the task of translating it into Maltese' (1968:13). Not a very strong argument, indeed, since poetry in translation was, and is, still read and enjoyed, although admittedly, every translation misses to some extent the joy of the original. The Authors also base their arguments for a transcription and not a translation on the fact the Brandano, in writing Maltese place-names in his deeds, never used the letter 'c' for the sound of 'h' except in only two instances out of some two thousand Maltese place-names (1968:16). But Brandano was never consistent; for consider *huakit*, *vackit* and *ucakit* for *waqgħet* within the space of a few lines on the same folio. They argue that the real explanation of Brandano's words, since all his works are in Latin, is 'to serve notice on the reader that the cantilena was in Maltese, without intending any reflection on the original state of the poem' (1968:16).

In the 1983 publication, Fsadni and Wettinger argue that this relative clause implied that Brandano was reproducing the cantilena as it had

been written – *izda sejjer igibha bil-Malti kif inkitbet*. But this is not what the Latin clause literally says. They also add that if the cantilena had been written in Latin or in some other language, Brandano would have transcribed it as such, since all the literati of those days knew better how to read these languages rather than Maltese (1983:16). But who has ever denied that spark of adventure in Man to sail round that next headland, or climb the next mountain to explore the beyond.

Pages 27-32 of Fsadni and Wettinger's 1983 publication treats on the importance of having the local population understand what had been written in deeds since, by custom, they had been written in a language other than their own. References from various curial and notarial deeds are supplied to show that such a verbal translation did occasionally occur, especially in ratifications of deeds. On page 31, Fsadni and Wettinger mention one occasion (among many others) in which such a ratification occurred in a deed of Brandano.

Notary Brandano Caxaro NAV R175/5, 10.i.1540, fol. 204:

Die x eiusdem Thomas Haius presens **lecto supradicto instrumento in lingua melitea** | de verbo ad verbum juxta eius seriem continentum et tenorem et pro ut supra factum | ratificavit laudavit et confirmavit supra dictum contractum et omnia in eo contenta (...the above mentioned deed having been read in the Maltese language...)

The interpretation of the relative clause depends on the verb *subicio*. The *Lewis and Short* supplies a very large list of synonyms as expressed by ancient authors: to throw, lay, bring under, submit, subject, subordinate; to place under, affix; to place after, annex, append; to bring forward, propose; to adduce, to bring to mind, to prompt, to suggest; but also to substitute, as Cicero (*Orat.* 27.92), in explaining the term *hypallage*, or metonymy, had used that verb to denote a substitution of one word for another: *in quibus pro verbo proprio subicitur aliud quod idem significet sumptum ex re aliqua consequenti*. For an example he supplies: 'Rugged Africa was shaken by a dreadful tumult', where 'Africa' stands for its inhabitants. Used with *lingua melitea*, and in an extended form, would have meant that the cantilena was Brandano's translation, since *lingua melitea* is an ablative of instrument, used without a preposition, standing

for, 'which I am here substituting by means of the Maltese tongue, or in Maltese, *'li qed hawn taħt nissostitwixxi bl-ilsien malti'*. This could only be possible if Brandano had been familiar with the rhetorical devices that Cicero was explaining. Another example of the use of *subicio*, which certainly would have been known to Don Brandano, would be *Gen. 1.28: Benedixitque illis Deus, et ait: crescite, et multiplicamini, et replete terram, et subicite eam, et dominamini piscibus maris etc.* Here, *subicio* stands for 'to subdue, to make subject'. If this was the meaning meant, the clause would then read, 'which (cantilena) I here subdue (make subject) by means of the Maltese language', again implying a translation.

Notwithstanding, whatever argument is brought forward, unless new documentation arises, the ambiguity would surely remain, since the 'general' way of using *subicio* was, as Fsadni and Wettinger steadfastly maintained, to affix or to append; hence, 'which I here append by means of the Maltese tongue'. Nevertheless, still ambiguous.

But there may be two other arguments in favour of transcription, whether through actual copying from a manuscript at hand, or from bringing to remembrance.

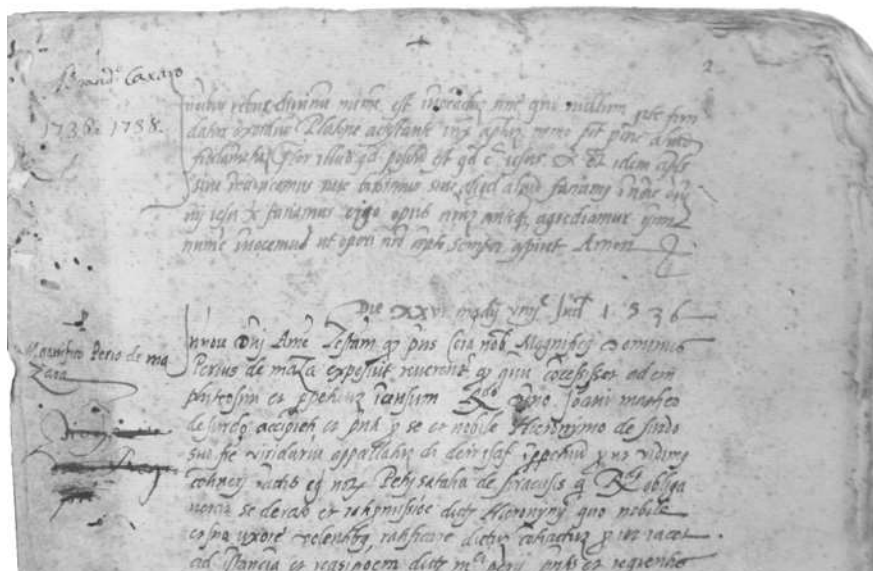
Firstly, we have evidence to show that Brandano seemed to have felt inclined to quote famous authors, usually at the beginning of his volumes or quires, generally, but not always, on the first folio starting the indiction year. Sometimes these 'quotes' were stand-alone, or weaved within the customary invocation to God, thus forming an integral part of it. Sometimes, they took a more elaborate form, such as a pen-drawing enhanced with a phrase, a sentence, or some quote which might have caught his fancy. In the introduction to the cantilena itself, Brandano quotes an elegiac couplet dedicated to Petro Caxaro; at other times, he quotes from Seneca, Erasmus, and others.

Secondly, the meaning of the participle *memorans* in the introduction to the cantilena. *Memoro* stands for: to bring to remembrance, to remind of, to mention, to recount, to relate, to speak about or of, to say, to tell. The basic meaning is one of speaking about something (*memorare significat nunc dicere, nunc memoriae mandare* (Paul. ex Fest. P. 124 Mull.). Rather than coming across a copy of the cantilena in some manuscript, I would say that the cantilena was brought to remembrance in some kind of dialogue with other persons, and Brandano, realising its beauty and

uniqueness, must have thought it worthwhile to be inserted in the last folios of a quire inadvertently left blank.

Brandano's inclination to quote can also be seen on the following page in the same volume, where there can still be seen a pen-drawing with a phrase of Seneca (see above). Moreover, the first quire, which also happens to be the immediate following quire containing the cantilena, by which the second volume of Brandano starts, has an invocation written at its very top (Fig. 3) which contains three quotations from authors whom Caxaro does not specifically name, although a string-search quickly reveals their authorship: two are from the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, and one from Boethius, *de Consolatione Philosophiae*, reproduced here in different theme fonts to indicate the quote and their actual sources. It is to be noted that the quote might not always be exactly similar to the source because Brandano had to construct it grammatically and syntactically in agreement to the structure of his composition. It is also to be noticed, that, similarly to the introduction to the cantilena, this invocation has no punctuation marks at all.

Brandano Caxaro R175/2, f. 2:



In omnibus rebus divinum numen est invocandum sine quo nullum rite fun-| datur exordium Platone attestante iuxta apostolum nemo potest ponere aliud | fundamentum praeter illud quod positum est quod est Iesus Christus et idem apostolus | sive manducamus sive bibimus sive aliquid aliud faciamus in nomine Dei | nostri Iesu Christi faciamus ergo opus novum antequam agrediamur ipsum |⁵ numen invocemus ut operi nostro Iesus Christus semper aspiet Amen.

Die xxvi Madij viiije Indicionis 1536

/pro Magnifico Perio de Mazara\

In nomine Domini Amen. Testamur quod presens coram...

There exists no hint that Brandano knew Greek; the fact that he writes *Platone attestante* does not prove that he had read Plato in the original. But the string of words as quoted definitely refer to Boethius as the following reference clearly attests, *Platone attestante* even confirming Boethius as the source.

Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, 3, prosa 9.

³²Sed cum, ut in *Timaeo* Platoni,²⁶ inquit, nostro placet, in minimis quoque rebus divinum praesidium debeat implorari, quid nunc faciendum censes ut illius summi boni sedem repperire mereamur? **33**Invocandum, inquam, rerum omnium patrem, quo praetermisso nullum rite fundatur exordium.

Boethius is here referring to Plato, *Timaeus*, 27c:

Τίμαιος. Ἀλλ' ὡς Σώκρατες, τοῦτό γε δὴ πάντες ὅσοι καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ σωφροσύνης μετέχουσιν, ἐπὶ παντὸς ὁρμῇ καὶ σμικροῦ καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος θεὸν αἰεὶ που καλοῦσιν· ἡμᾶς δὲ τοὺς περὶ τοῦ παντὸς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι πημέλλοντας, ἥ γέγονεν ἢ καὶ ἀγενές ἐστίν, εἰ μὴ παντάπασι παραλλάττομεν, ἀνάγκη θεοῦς τε καὶ θεᾶς ἐπικαλουμένους εὐχεσθαι πάντα κατὰ νοῦν ἐκείνοις μὲν μάλιστα, ἐπομένως δὲ ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν. καὶ τὰ μὲν περὶ θεῶν ταύτη παρακεκλήσθω·

²⁶ Plato, *Timaeus*, 27C. In Boethius time, this dialogue on cosmology and creation was known through Latin translation.

τὸ δ' ἡμέτερον παρακλητέον, ἡ ῥαστ' ἂν ὑμεῖς μὲν μάθοιτε,
ἐγὼ δὲ ἡ διανοοῦμαι μάλιστ' ἂν περὶ τῶν προκειμένων
ἐνδειξαίμην.

'*juxta apostolum*' refers to St Paul, 1Cor. 3.11:

Fundamentum enim alius **nemo potest ponere praeter id quod positum est qui est Christus Iesus.**

'*idem apostolus*' refers to 1Cor. 10.31:

Sive ergo manducatis, sive bibitis vel aliud quid facitis omnia in gloriam Dei facite.

Brandano interprets the Cantilena?

The question arises: how far did the cantilena affect the writing of this invocation, considering that both the cantilena and the first two quotes concern foundations (*fundamenta*), or beginnings (*exordia*), the second quotation even more expressly so. Let me quote 1Cor. 3.10-15 in full:

¹⁰Secundum gratiam Dei data est mihi, ut sapiens architectus fundamentum posui; alias autem superaedificat. unusquisque autem videat quomodo superaedificet. ¹¹fundamentum enim aliud nemo potest ponere praeter id quod positum est, qui est Christus Iesus. ¹²si quis autem superaedificat supra fundamentum hoc, aurum, argentum, lapides pretiosos, ligna, faenum, stipulam, ¹³uniuscuiusque opus manifestum erit; dies enim Domini declarabit, quia in igne revelabitur, et uniuscuiusque opus quale sit, ignis probabit. ¹⁴si cuius opus manserit quod superaedificavit, mercedem accipiet. ¹⁵si cuius opus arserit, detrimentum patietur; ipse autem salvus erit, sic tamen quasi per ignem.

According to the grace of God that is given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation: and another *buildeth thereupon*. But let every man take heed how he *buildeth thereupon*. For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid: which is Christ Jesus. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be

manifest. For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath *built thereupon*, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

Invocations were perfectly normal for a new notarial volume. The burden undertaken by a notary in registering the wishes of the contracting parties under oath was immense, and honesty, above all, based upon rectitude, was a necessary requirement. But was this invocation with its quote also a gentle chastisement directed at Pietro, attributing the collapse of his building, metaphorically speaking, for not casting it upon righteous foundations? Had Pietro initiated some initiative (*exordium*) which was not based on the sound foundation of righteousness? For even though many years had now passed since Pietro's demise, Brandano must have known stories about his ancestors, with which, of course, we are not familiar. Fsadni and Wettinger suggest that it was a love affair that fell through, first because of alleged spiritual consanguinity, later, for an unknown reason.²⁷ Was Brandano, in this invocation, interpreting the cantilena for us? Was he reacting to the misfortune that befell Pietro and, being now himself made wiser, is making sure that the same misfortune would not also happen to him? Can this invocation of Brandano be used to throw more light on the cantilena, especially, if we consider *fundamentum* standing for *exordium*, and in the interpretation of verse 3, *calb mehandihe chakim sultan ui le mule (qalb m'ghandha hakem, sultan u la mula)*, considering that St Paul stresses that the only foundation of everything that Man does, has to be Jesus Christ (righteousness) – Boethius has *divinum praesidium* – upon which everything ought to be 'built thereupon' (*superaedificare*)?²⁸ Could it be, considering what has been said above, that Brandano explained the meaning of the cantilena under the pretext of an invocation to God?

²⁷ Fsadni and Wettinger (1983) 25.

²⁸ Such a religious interpretation contrasts sharply with Montebello's 'profane theme and nature of Caxaro's composition' (2015) 66.

But what makes this invocation even stranger is that such insertions were normally placed at the very beginning of the indiction year (1st September), even if such a date did not coincide with the beginning of a volume. Examples exist which show how Brandano used to write such introductions to his deeds at the very beginning of the new indiction year, and during this period, it is manifest that Brandano was not writing any prayers to the Almighty imploring divine inspiration, but was inserting the names of the magistrates who happened to occupy the foremost positions of Notabile's Municipal Council for the current year. The date '26 May' was of not especial importance in the normal calendar then in use, and even if the argument is brought forward that the first volume covering the years 1535-36 may have unexpectedly become too large to handle, still, the argument does not hold, since the volume is comparatively small, consisting of only six quires.

Possible date of transcription

If there really exists a direct relationship between the invocation mentioned above and the cantilena, then, apart from gaining a better interpretation of the cantilena, we can even speculate on the date when Brandano wrote it among his deeds. For the invocation, unusually, precedes, as has been described above, a deed dated 26 May 1536, initiating Brandano's second volume. The last deed of the first volume, also has the same date.

The probable reason for starting a new quire is to be found on an examination of the hands that wrote the deeds in volumes R175/I and R175/2. For the deeds immediately preceding the cantilena are written in Brandano's unmistakeable handwriting, while the second volume exhibits a different hand. What probably happened was that Brandano must have hired a scribe in his office who must have thought fit to start his own quires separate from his master's. In the process, this new secretary left blank the remaining folios of the last quire used by Brandano.

Usually the empty end folios would have been shorn off an inch from the folding to allow the quire to be bound, or else crossed diagonally to

indicate a blank,²⁹ since notaries, to prevent fraudulent entries, were not allowed to leave empty spaces or folios between one deed and another.³⁰ Fortuitously, this was not done, and the cantilena found its place between these two deeds, both bearing the same date of 26th May 1536, but the latter deed was preceded by the invocation which may have been written contemporaneously and possibly influenced by the cantilena.

Because it has also to be noted that the space allotted to the preliminaries of a notarial volume in the first quire of the present second volume is rather limited. Usually, the first page of a notarial volume is a rather elaborate piece of composition, generally written in a beautiful hand, as other volumes of Brandano can attest. In this second volume, the writing is quite ordinary, and seems to have been written in a confined space not specifically intended for this purpose. In fact, following the invocation, there was not even more space for the notary to subscribe his name, and which consequently had to be written in the margin. In order to avoid blanks, notarial deeds were usually preceded with the final words of the previous deed – the place where the deed was done and the names of the witnesses. In fact, it seems that the first quire of what is now the second volume was not intended to be an opening quire of a new volume, but a continuation of the first, the scribe knowingly or inadvertently starting upon a new quire meant as continuation of the previous quire leaving only a small space at the top to enter the final ending of the previous deed. But this was not done since the previous deed had been completed in full in the previous quire. In the process, several folios in this quire were left blank, as also a small space intended for the ending of the previous deed. The invocation was then squeezed within this small space.

²⁹ Usually, the folio would have *omissis* written across it. In NAV R175/ 2, a verso and a recto (ff. 37v and 38) were inadvertently skipped; both were diagonally crossed and the words *non vicio sed errore* written in each quarter segment.

³⁰ Capitula Tabellionum et de eorum salario et de sollemnitate contractuum, instrumentorum et testamentorum, Palermo 23.xi.1440, In Fiorini, *DSMH*, 1/3, 242: §7. *De spatium non dimictendum: Nemo in registro pro registrandis publicis actibus spatium dimictat sed continue scribat die in diem prout negotia occurrerit si suspicionem falsitatis evitare cupit graviore tamen animadversione eos affici volumus quam ut sufficiat eis suspicionis infamia.*

Thus, I suppose, that the cantilena, the Seneca diagram and the introduction of the second volume were insertions introduced contemporaneously to fulfil, firstly, the requirements of a new volume, and secondly, to leisurely fill in some of the folios left blank. The mistake was probably discovered on, or very soon after, the 26 May 1536, and hence a tentative date for the transcription of the cantilena can be assigned to, or very close to, this date.

Suggested editing for the prologue

All these things having now been said, let me set down the proem to the cantilena in my amended version:

Aliquantulum exhilaratus <fui>¹ memorans cantilenam diu
compositam quondam mei maioris Petri de Caxaro philosophi poete
et oratoris cui aliquando dictum fuit:

Confla precor calamum Caxaro clara propago;
Te cupiant ninphe, te tua musa curet²
quam lingua melitea hic subicio.

¹ fui] supplevi.

² curet] emendavi; curait B. Caxaro; curavit Fsadni and Wettinger.

English translation:

I was made a little cheerful, in bringing to remembrance the song –
composed a long time ago – of my late ancestor, Pietro de Caxaro,
philosopher, poet and orator, for whom it was once said,

Blow a reed-pipe for Caxaro, divine offspring, I entreat;
For you may the Nymphs long, for you may thy Muse care,
which (song) I here set down by means of the Maltese tongue.

Maltese translation:

Fraħt kemxejn niftakar il-kantilena li żmien twil ilu kiteb l-antenat
tiegħi Pietru Caxaro, filosofu, poeta u oratur, li għalih intqal,

Onfoħ qasba għal Caxaro, nitolbok, ja nisel divin;
 Jalla jixtieq in-ninfi, jalla tieħu ħsiebek il-muża tiegħek,
 liema (kantilena) qed ingib hawn taħt bl-ilsien malti.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I must say that Pietro and Brandano are fatefully connected not only by consanguinity, but also through their relation to this cantilena – Pietro, unless more documentation regarding his life comes to light, destined to remain an almost mysterious person, known superficially through what Fsadni and Wettinger had researched about him; but Brandano, with his voluminous notarial deeds and the records of the Church,³¹ still awaits to be discovered. It is my surmise that we shall then be meeting a very remarkable man indeed.

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³¹ A possible list of source indicators for a bibliography of Brandano Caxaro can be found in V. Borg, MS II, pp. 260-2.

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