

“The Early Sestina Evidence in Support of Mary Douglas’
Theory of Text as Ring Composition: Findings.”

HUH Special Seminar - Kevin J M Keane



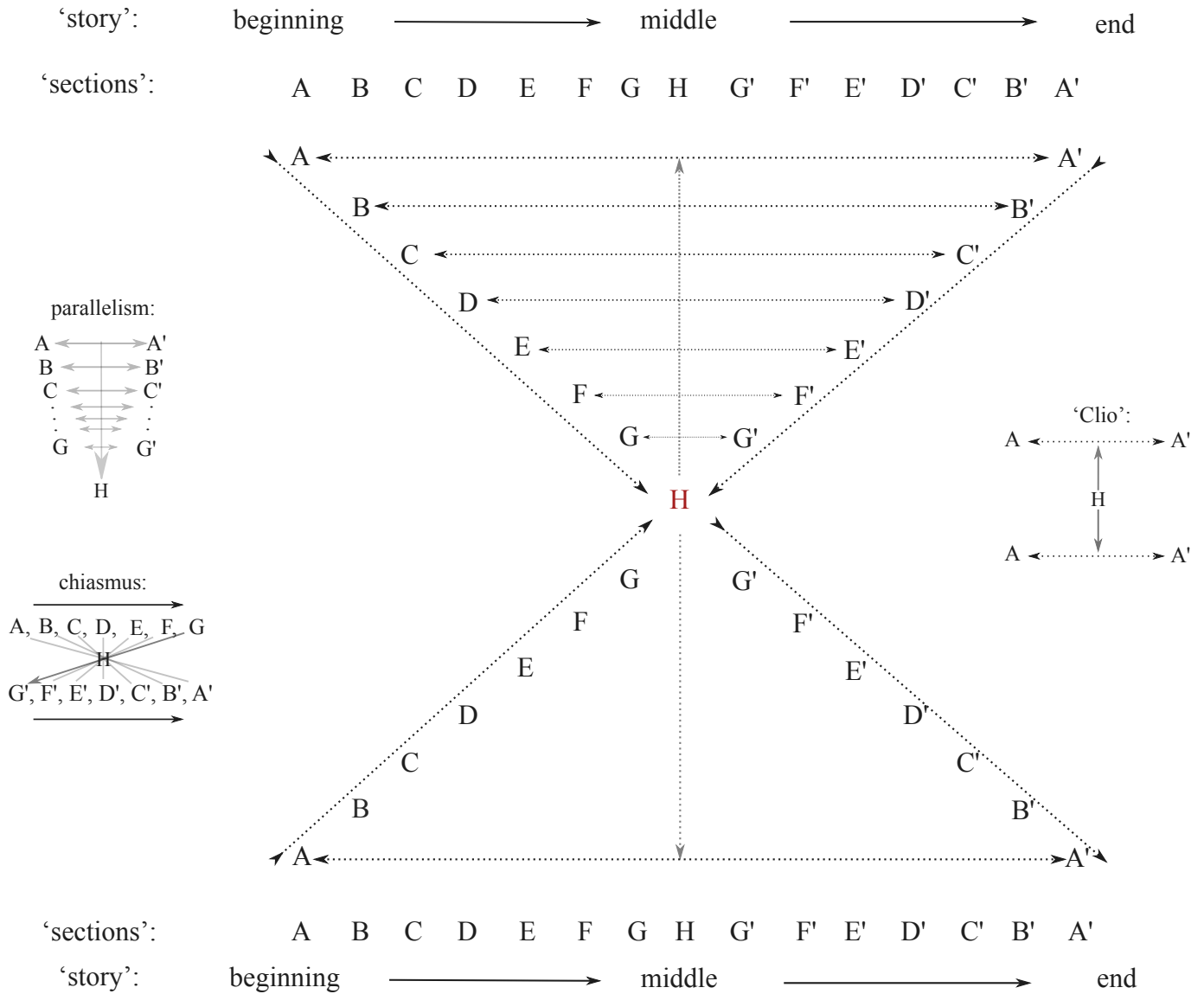
Mary Douglas

source: Getty images

'canso' file: 1.1 Mary Douglas image.jpg

Ring composition conventions

parallelism & chiasmus

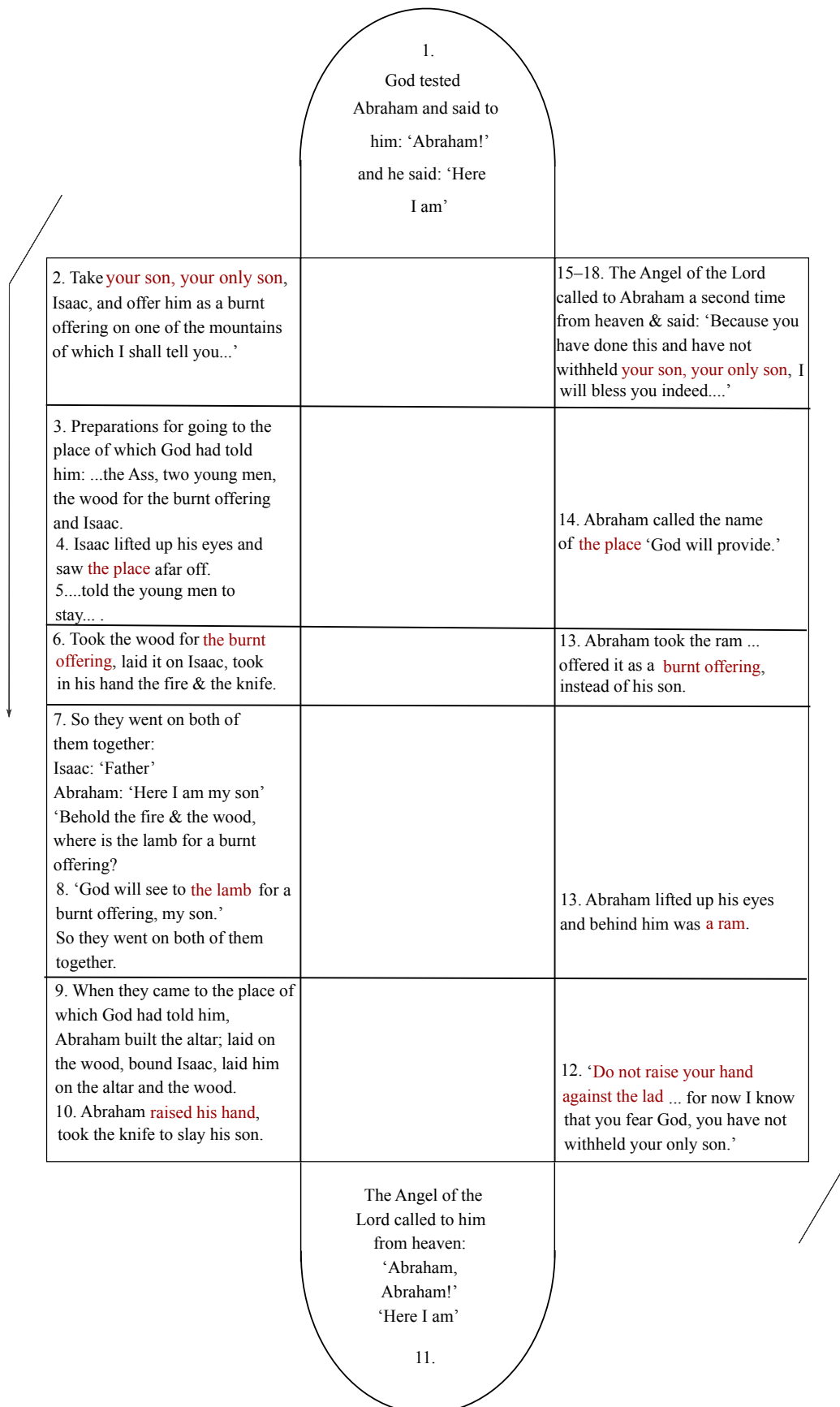


source: Douglas, Mary 2007. *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (35 - 38). New Haven, Yale University Press.

‘canso’ file: 1.3 Mary Douglas and ring composition.svg

Ring composition illustration

The binding of Isaac, Gen. 22:1–18.



source: Douglas, Mary. Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition. Yale University Press, 2007. Figure 4, p. 20.

Sestina
by
Elizabeth Bishop

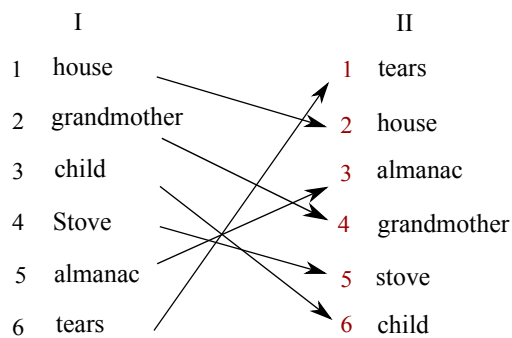
	<i>strophe</i>	<i>end-words</i>
September rain falls on the house. In the failing light, the old grandmother sits in the kitchen with the child beside the Little Marvel Stove, reading the jokes from the almanac, laughing and talking to hide her tears.	I	house grandmother child Stove, almanac tears
She thinks that her equinoctial tears and the rain that beats on the roof of the house were both foretold by the almanac, but only known to a grandmother. The iron kettle sings on the stove. She cuts some bread and says to the child,	II	tears house almanac grandmother stove child
<i>It's time for tea now</i> ; but the child is watching the teakettle's small hard tears dance like mad on the hot black stove, the way the rain must dance on the house. Tidying up, the old grandmother hangs up the clever almanac	III	child tears stove house grandmother almanac
on its string. Birdlike, the almanac hovers half open above the child, hovers above the old grandmother and her teacup full of dark brown tears. She shivers and says she thinks the house feels chilly, and puts more wood on the stove.	IV	almanac child grandmother tears house stove
<i>It was to be</i> , says the Marvel Stove. <i>I know what I know</i> , says the almanac. With crayons the child draws a rigid house and a winding pathway. Then the child puts in a man with buttons like tears and shows it proudly to the grandmother.	V	Stove almanac house child tears grandmother
But secretly, while the grandmother busies herself about the stove, the little moons fall down like tears from between the pages of the almanac into the flower bed the child has carefully placed in the front of the house.	VI	grandmother stove tears almanac child house
<i>Time to plant tears</i> , says the almanac, The grandmother sings to the marvellous stove and the child draws another inscrutable house.	<i>envoi</i>	tears almanac grandmother stove child house

Development of sestina end-word order: *retrogradatio cruciata*

from strophe I : ‘without to within’ process : 6, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3

to strophe II : ‘top-down’ arrangement : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

6, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3 → 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6



6 → 1

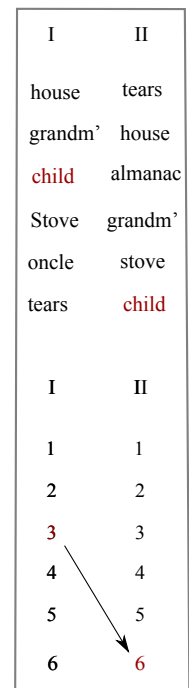
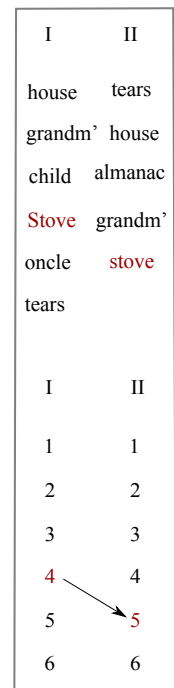
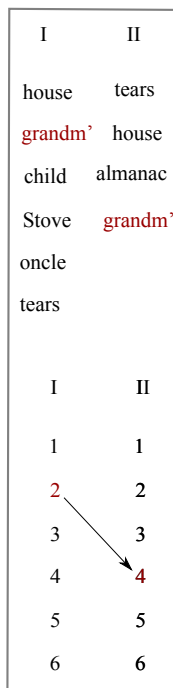
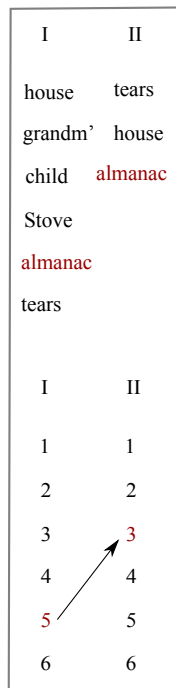
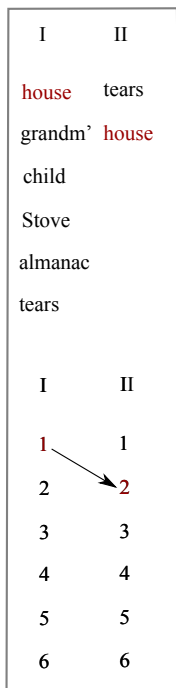
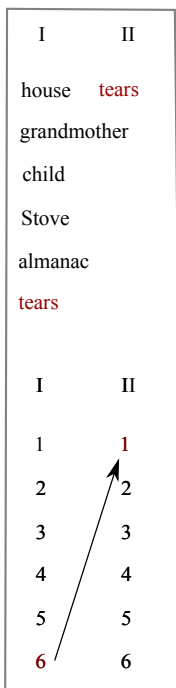
1 → 2

5 → 3

2 → 4

4 → 5

3 → 6



Arnaut Daniel's 'Lo ferm voler'

diplomatic transcription of MS 'C,'f. 202v

MS 'C,' f. 202v, (excerpt)



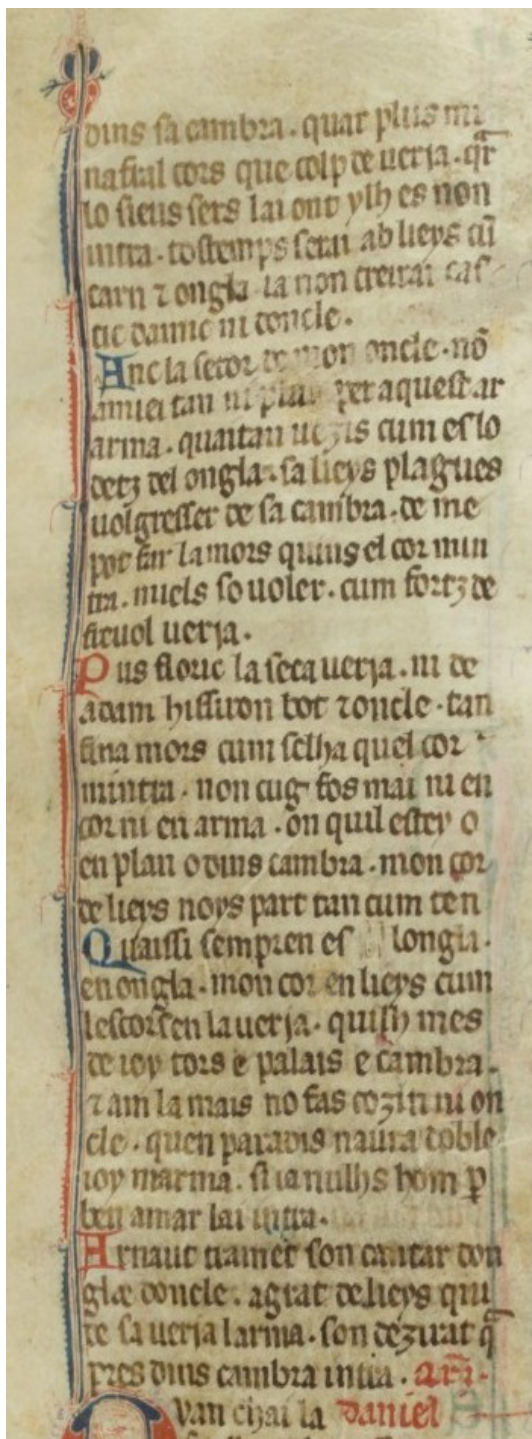
strophe end-words

<p>Lo ferm voler quel cor m'<u>intra</u>. nom pot ges becx escoyssendre ni <u>ongla</u>. de lauzengier si tot de mal dir <u>sarma</u>. e pus nol aus batre ab ram ni ab <u>uerga</u>. sauals afrau lai on non aura <u>oncle</u>. iauzirai ioy din[s] uergier o dins <u>ca'bra</u>.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>intra</p> <p>ongla</p> <p>arma</p> <p>uerga</p> <p>oncle</p> <p>ca'bra</p>
<p>Quan mi soue de la <u>cambra</u>. on amon dan sai quom del mo[n] noy <u>intra</u>. ans me son tug pus q[ue] nebot ni <u>oncle</u>. non ai me[m]bre nom fremisca ni <u>ongla</u>. aissi cum fai lefans denant la <u>uer</u> <u>ga</u>. quar paor ai nol sia trop d[e] Del cors li fos, non de [<u>larma</u>. <u>larma</u>. quem consentis a celat</p>	<p>II</p> <p>cambra</p> <p>intra</p> <p>oncle</p> <p>ongla</p> <p>uerga</p> <p>[arma</p> <p>III</p> <p>arma</p>

source: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: fonds français 856,
 'C,' ff. 202v & 203r; Narbonne region, France, 14th century.
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8419246t/f472.image.r=856Daniel>;
 (retrieved 13th June, 2016).

Arnaut Daniel's 'Lo ferm voler' diplomatic transcription (cntd.) – MS 'C', f. 203r

MS 'C,' f. 203r, (excerpt)

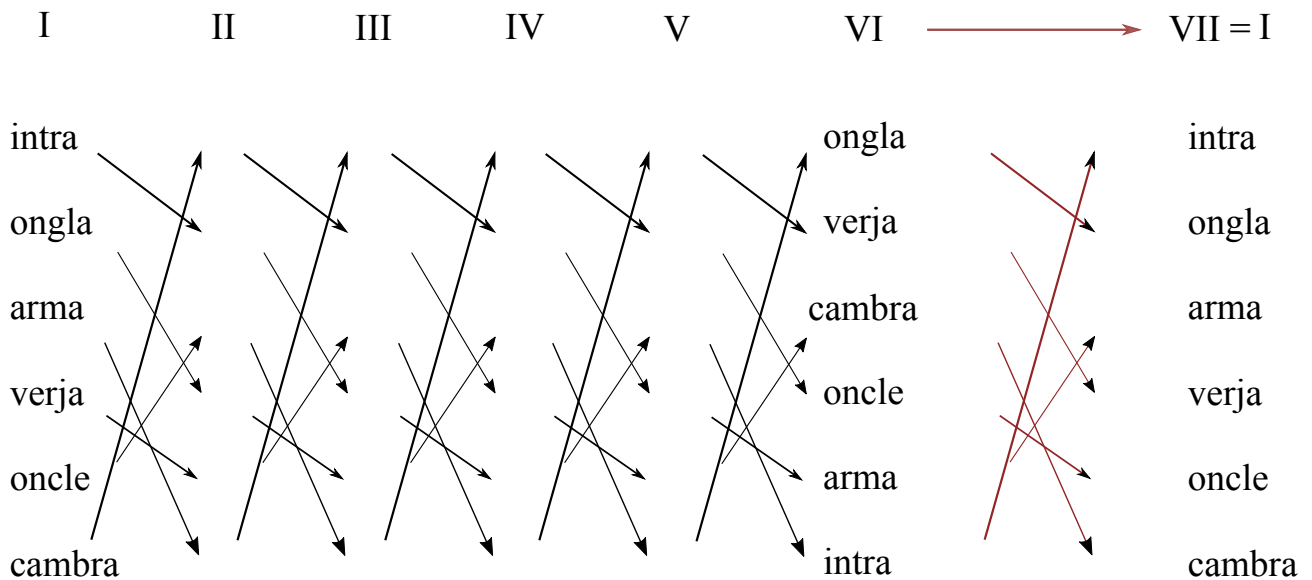
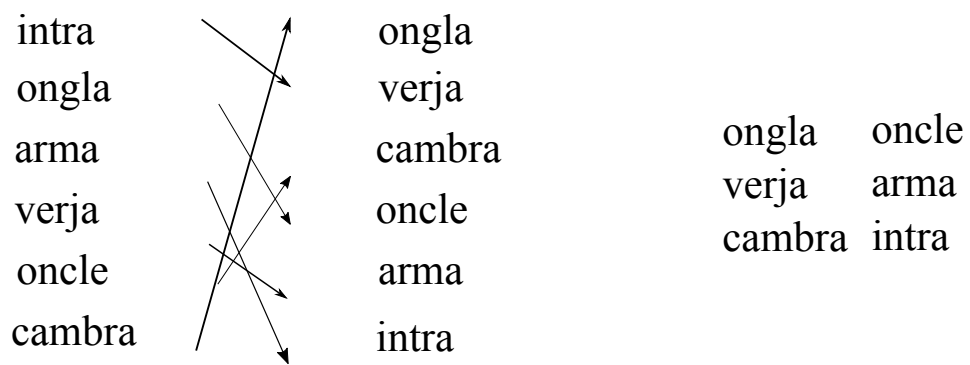


strophe end-words

dins sa <u>cambra</u> . quar plus mi		cambra
nafral cors que colp de <u>uerja</u> . q[uar]e		uerja
lo sieus sers lai ont ylh es non		
<u>intra</u> . tostemp[er]s serai ab lieys cu[m]		intra
carn [e]t <u>ongla</u> . ia non creirai cas—		ongla
tic damic ni <u>doncle</u> .		oncle
<u>Anc</u> la seror de mon <u>oncle</u> . no[n]	IV	oncle
amiei tan ni plus, per aquestar		
<u>arma</u> . quantan uezis cum es lo		arma
detz del <u>ongla</u> . sa lieys plagues		ongla
uolgresser de sa <u>cambra</u> . de me		cambra
pot far la mors quins el cor min		in-
<u>tra</u> . miels so uoler cum fortz de		tra
freuol <u>uerja</u> .		uerja
<u>Pus</u> florice la seca <u>uerja</u> . ni de	V	uerja
adam hissiron bot [e]t <u>oncle</u> . tan		oncle
fina mors cum selha quel cor [*]		
mintra. non cug fos mai ni en		intra
cor ni en <u>arma</u> . on quil estey o		arma
en plan o dins <u>cambra</u> . mon cor		cambra
de lieys noys part tan cum ten		[ongla
<u>Quaissi</u> sempren es [<u>longla</u> .	VI	
en <u>ongla</u> . mon cor en lieys cum		ongla
lescorsen la <u>uerja</u> . quilh mes		uerja
de ioy tors e palais e <u>cambra</u> .		cambra
[e]t am la mais no fas cozin ni <u>on</u>		on-
<u>cle</u> . quen paradis naura doble		cle
ioy marma. si ia nulhs hom p[er]		arma
ben amar lai <u>intra</u> .		intra
<u>Arnaut</u> tramet son cantar <u>don</u>	<i>envoi</i>	on-
<u>glae doncle</u> . agrat de lieys qui		glae / oncle
de sa <u>uerja larma</u> . son dezirat q[ua]		uerja / arma
pres dins <u>cambra intra</u> .		cambra / intra

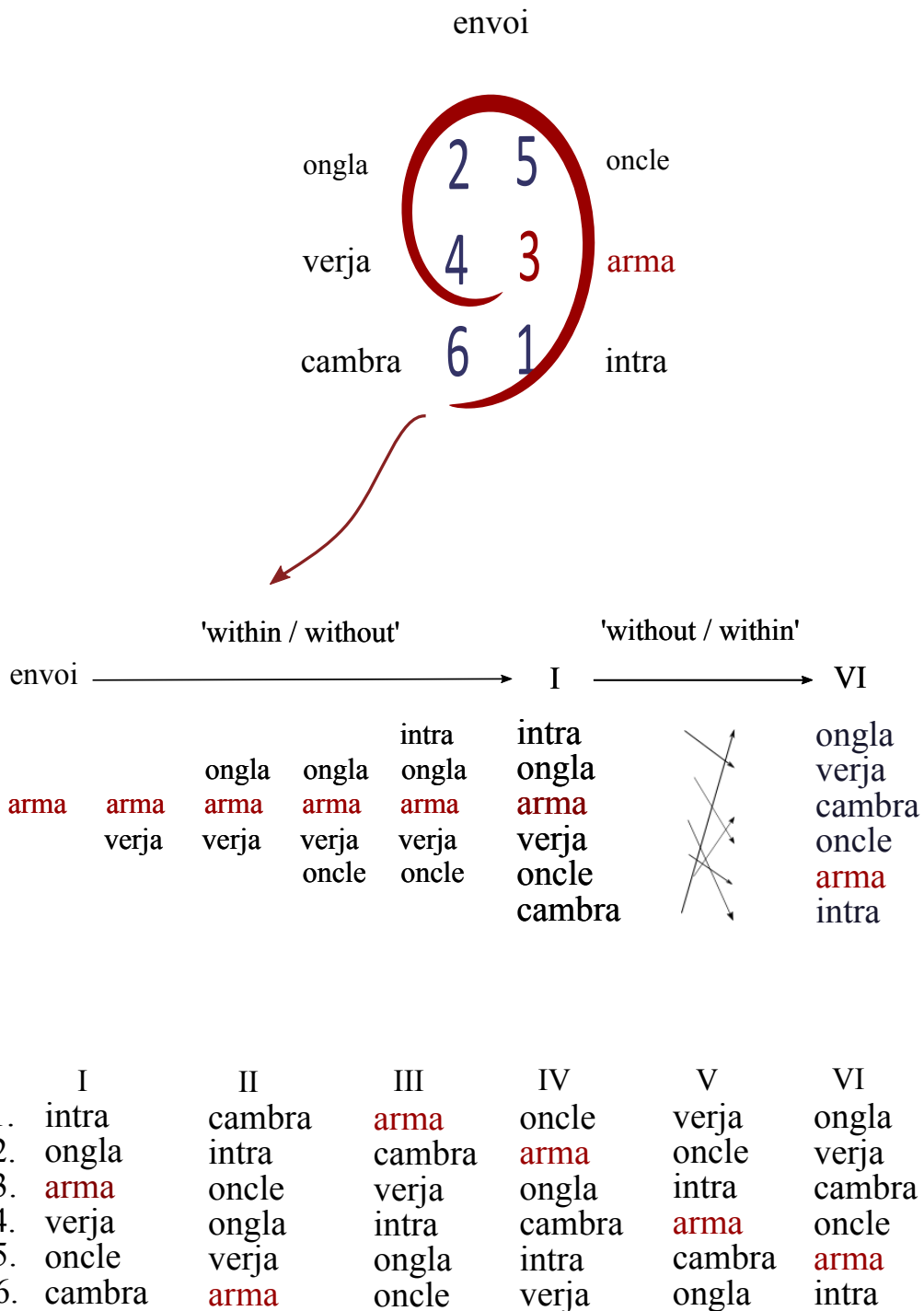
‘Lo ferm voler’ strophes / envoi relationship

I VI ? envoi



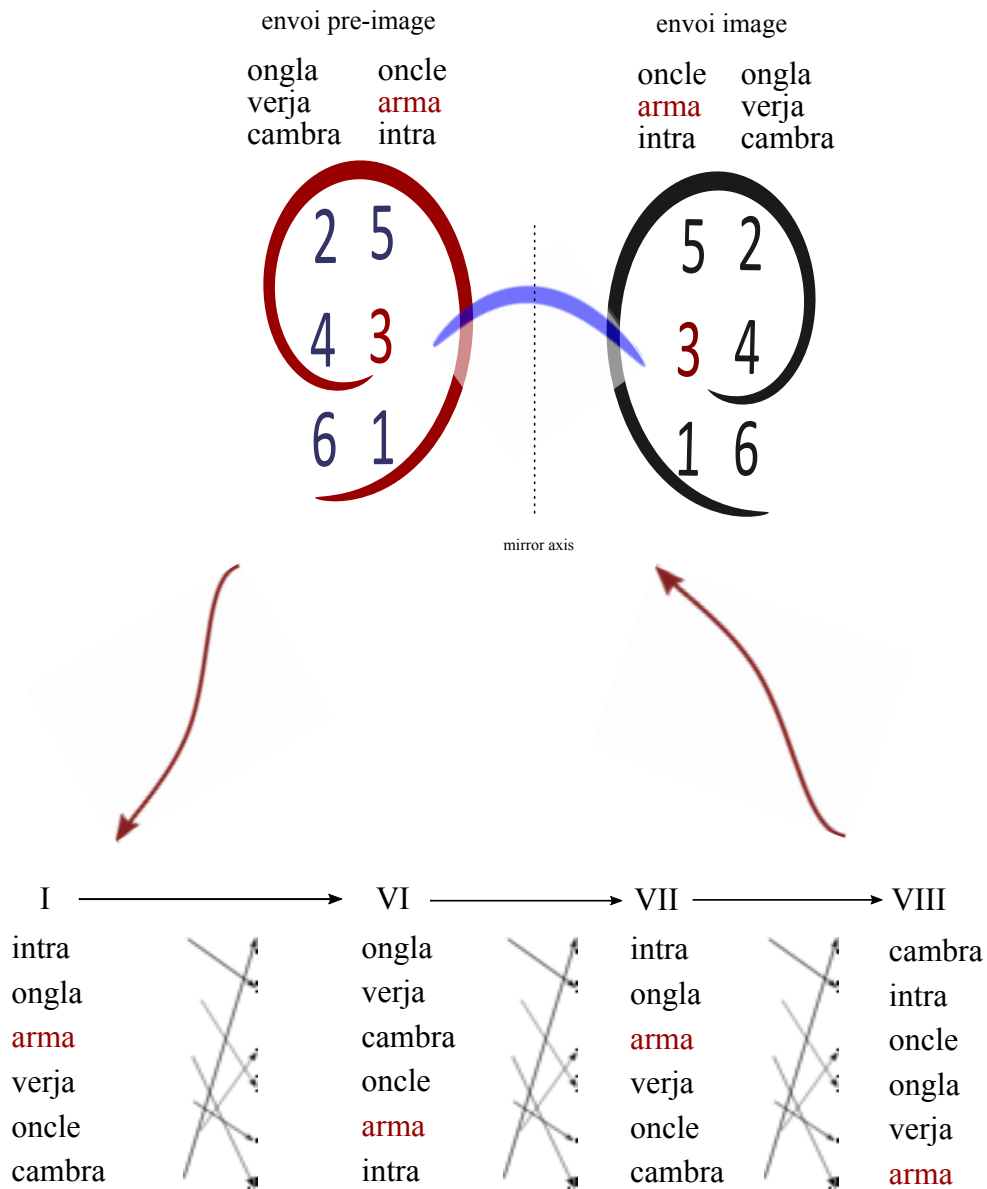
'Lo ferm voler'

envoi to strophe I link : ring composition construction, part 1



'Lo ferm voler'

strophe VI to envoi link : ring composition construction, part 2



'Lo ferm voler' 8-strophe ring model

VIII ≈ II
cambra

envoi pre-image
ongla oncle
verja **arma**
cambra intra

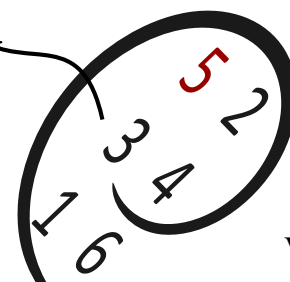
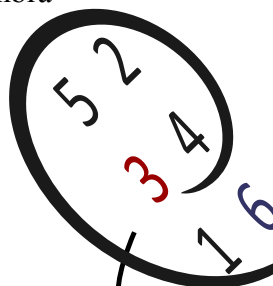
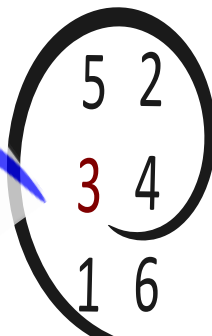
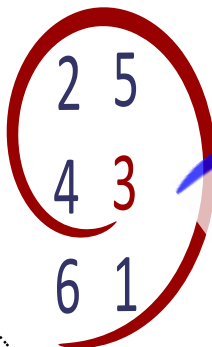
intra
oncle
ongla
verja
arma

envoi image
oncle onгла
arma verja
intra cambra

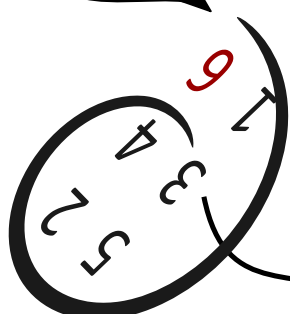
VII ≈ I
intra
ongla
arma
verja
oncle
cambra

envoi image
oncle onгла
arma verja
intra cambra

I
intra
ongla
arma
verja
oncle
cambra

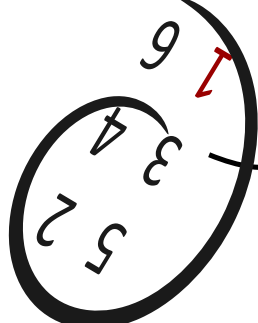


II
cambra
intra
oncle
ongla
verja
arma

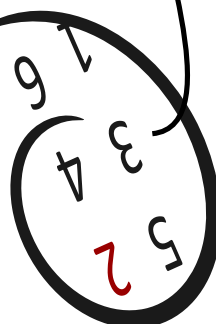


VI
ongla
verja
cambra
oncle
arma
intra

III
arma
cambra
verja
intra
ongla
oncle



IV
oncle
arma
ongla
cambra
intra
verja

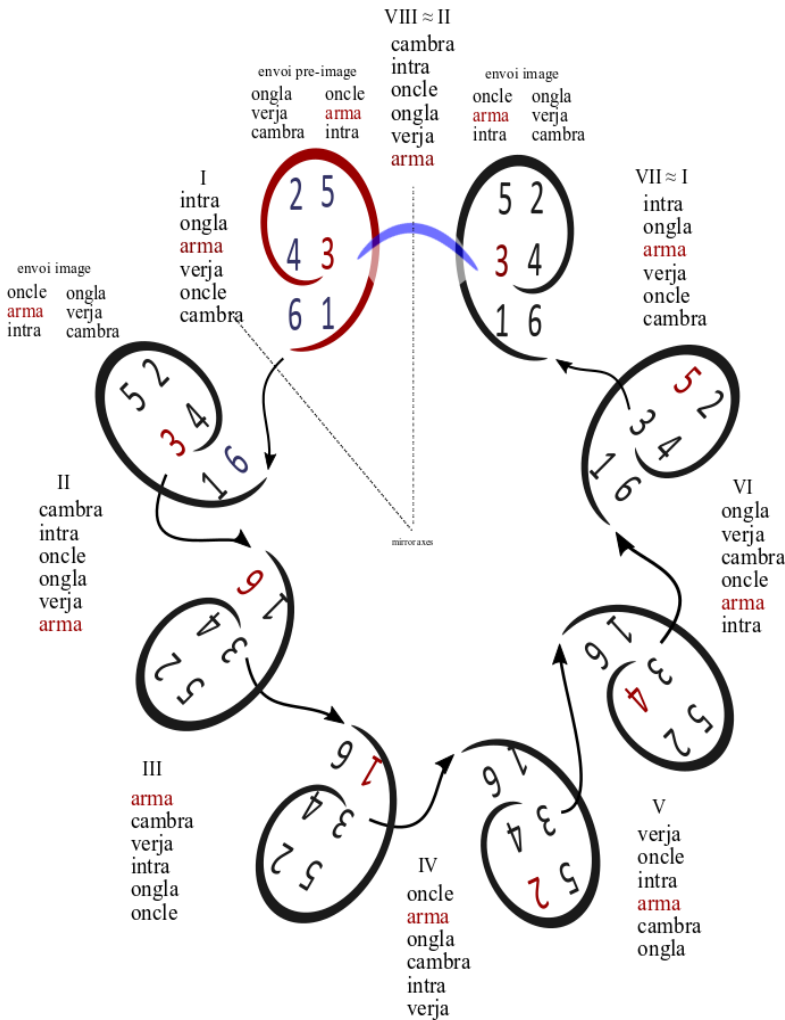


V
verja
oncle
intra
arma
cambra
ongla

mirror axes

'Lo ferm voler'

8-strophe ring model & MS 'C'



MS 'C'

I
intra
ongla
arma
uerja
oncle
ca'bra

II
cambra
intra
oncle
ongla
uerja
arma

III
arma
cambra
uerja
intra
ongla
oncle

IV
oncle
arma
ongla
cambra
intra
uerja

V
uerja
oncle
intra
arma
cambra
ongla

VI
ongla
uerja
cambra
oncle
arma
intra

envoi

onglae, oncle
uerja, arma
cambra, intra

MS 'C,' f. 202v, (excerpt)



source: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France:
fonds français 856, 'C,' ff. 202v & 203r; Narbonne
region, France, 14th century.

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv/1b8419246t/f472.image.r=856Daniel>
(retrieved 13th June, 2016)

‘Lo ferm voler’ 8-strophe ring model strophes / envoi relationship diagrams

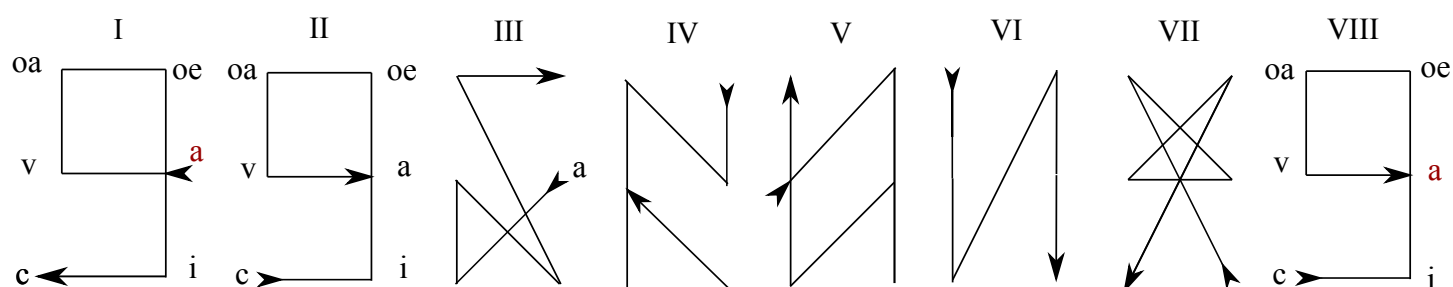
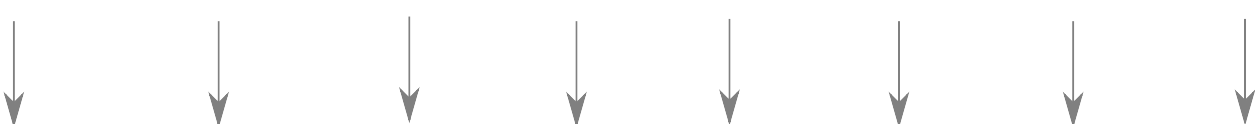
‘Lo ferm voler’ strophes I – VIII:

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
intra	cambra	arma	oncle	verja	ongla	intra	cambra
ongla	intra	cambra	arma	oncle	verja	ongla	intra
arma	oncle	verja	ongla	intra	cambra	arma	oncle
verja	ongla	intra	cambra	arma	oncle	verja	ongla
oncle	verja	ongla	intra	cambra	arma	oncle	verja
cambra	arma	oncle	verja	ongla	intra	cambra	arma



envoi :

ongla	oncle	oa	oe	oa	oe	oa	oe	oa	oe	ongla	oncle
verja	arma	v	a	v	a	v	a	v	a	verja	arma
cambra	intra	c	i	c	i	c	i	c	i	cambra	intra

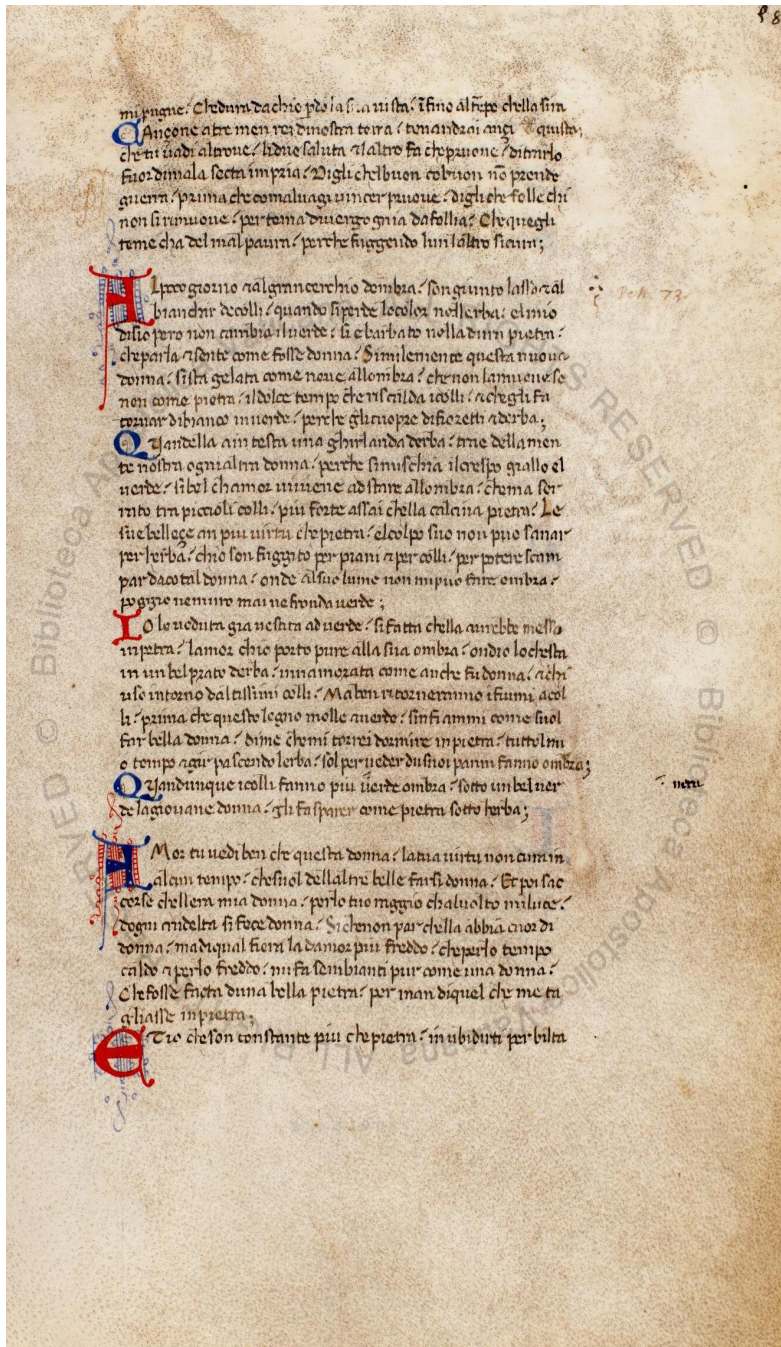


‘Six Tuscan Poets’
by
Giorgio Vasari (1511 - 1574)



source: wikimedia.org
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giorgio_Vasari_-_Six_Tuscan_Poets_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg ; (retrieved 4:35 p.m., 25th November, 2018).

Dante Alighieri's 'Al poco giorno' transcription



source: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chigi Vat. Lat. 176, f.38r; North Italy, 1359 - 63. https://digi.vatlib.it/pub/digit/MSS_Chig.L.V.176/iiif/Chig.L.V.176_0089_fa_0038r.jp2/full/1610,0/native.jpg ; (retrieved 12th December, 2018).

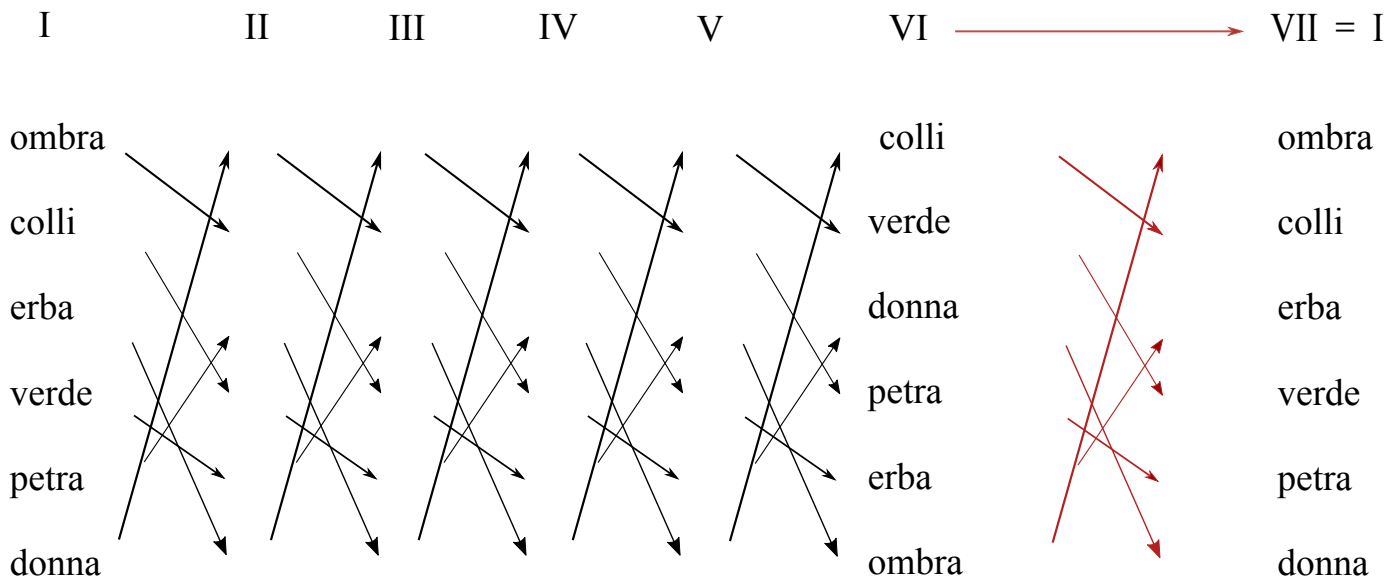
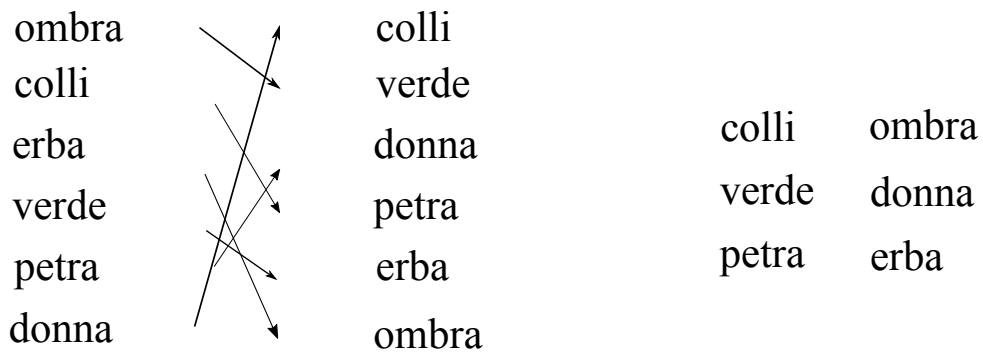
strophe end-words

<p>Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d'ombra son giunto, lasso !, ed al bianchir de' <u>colli</u>, quando si perde lo color ne l'<u>erba</u> ; e '1 mio disio però non cangia il <u>verde</u>, si è barbato ne la dura <u>petra</u> che parla e sente come fosse <u>donna</u>.</p>	I	ombra colli erba verde petra donna
<p>Similmente questa nova <u>donna</u> si sta gelata come neve a l'<u>ombra</u> ; che non la move, se non come <u>petra</u>, il dolce tempo che riscalda i <u>colli</u> e che li fa tornar di bianco in <u>verde</u> perchè li copre di fioretti e d'<u>erba</u>.</p>	II	donna ombra petra colli verde erba
<p>Quand' ella ha in testa una ghirlanda d'<u>erba</u>, trae de la mente nostra ogn' altra <u>donna</u> ; perchè si mischia il crespo giallo e '1 <u>verde</u> si bel, ch' Amor li viene a stare a l'<u>ombra</u>, che m' ha serrato intra piccioli <u>colli</u> più forte assai che la calcina <u>petra</u>.</p>	III	erba donna verde ombra colli petra
<p>La sua bellezza ha più virtù che <u>petra</u>, e '1 colpo suo non può sanar per <u>erba</u> ; ch'io son fuggito per piani e per <u>colli</u>, per potere scampar da cotal <u>donna</u> ; e dal suo lume non mi può far <u>ombra</u> poggio nè muro mai nè fronda <u>verde</u>.</p>	IV	petra erba colli donna ombra verde
<p>Io l'ho veduta già, vestita a <u>verde</u> si fatta, ch'ella avrebbe messo in <u>petra</u> l'amor ch' io porto pur a la sua <u>ombra</u> ; ond' io l'ho chesta in un bei prato d'<u>erba</u> innamorata, com'anco fu <u>donna</u>, e chiuso intorno d'altissimi <u>colli</u>.</p>	V	verde petra ombra erba donna colli
<p>Ma ben ritorneranno i fiumi a' <u>colli</u> prima che questo legno molle e <u>verde</u> s'infiammi, come suol far bella <u>donna</u>, di me ; che mi torrei dormire in <u>petra</u> tutto il mio tempo e gir pascendo l'<u>erba</u>, sol per veder do' suoi panni fanno <u>ombra</u>.</p>	VI	colli verde donna petra erba ombra
<p>Quandunque i <u>colli</u> fanno più nera <u>ombra</u>, sotto un bel <u>verde</u> la giovane <u>donna</u> la fa sparar, com' uom <u>petra</u> sott'<u>erba</u>.</p>	envoi	colli / ombra verde / donna petra / erba

source : CI, Rime, ed. Barbi ; digital dante <http://digitaldante.columbia.edu> ; (retrieved 4th June, 2017)

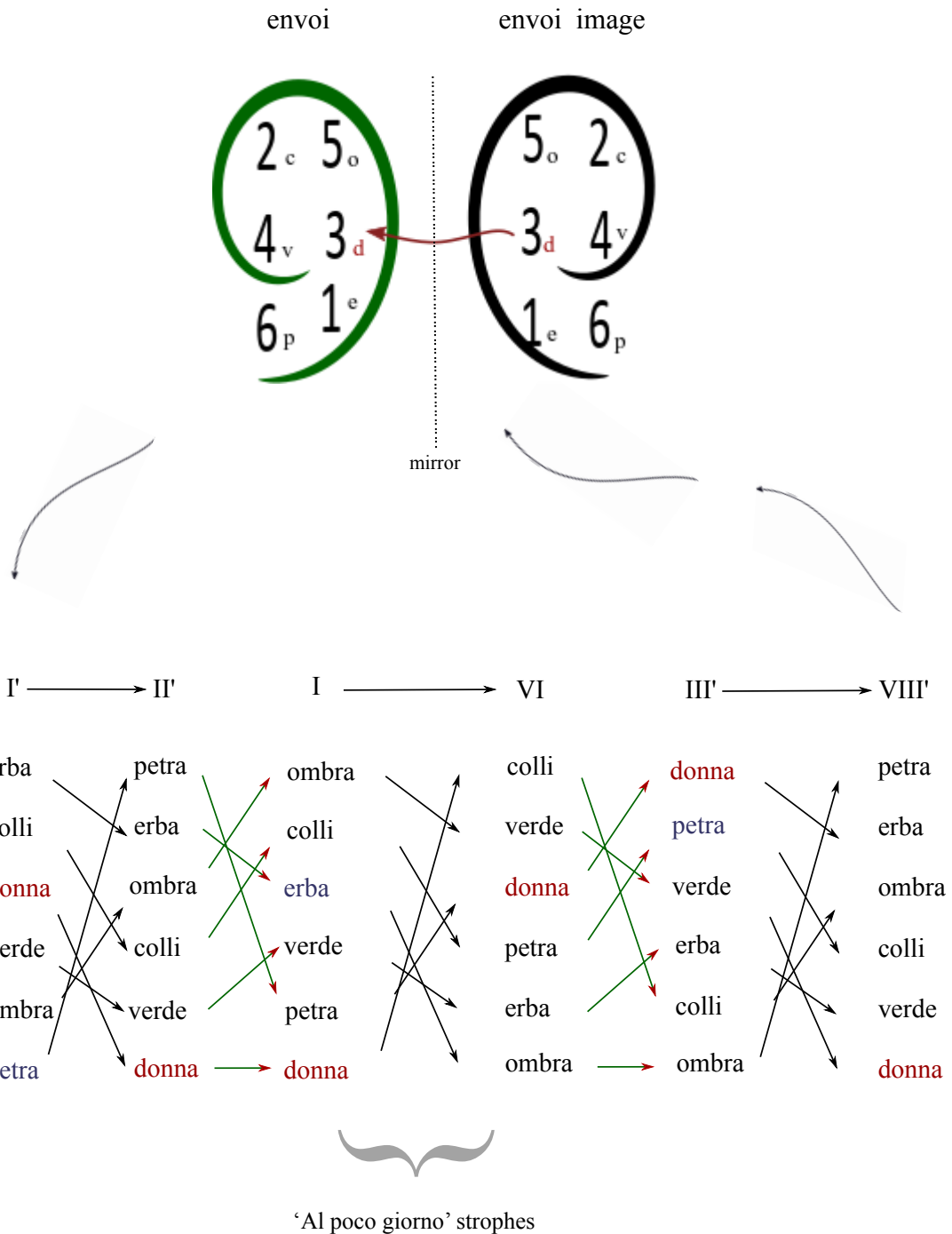
‘Al poco giorno’ strophes / envoi relationship

I → VI — ? — → envoi



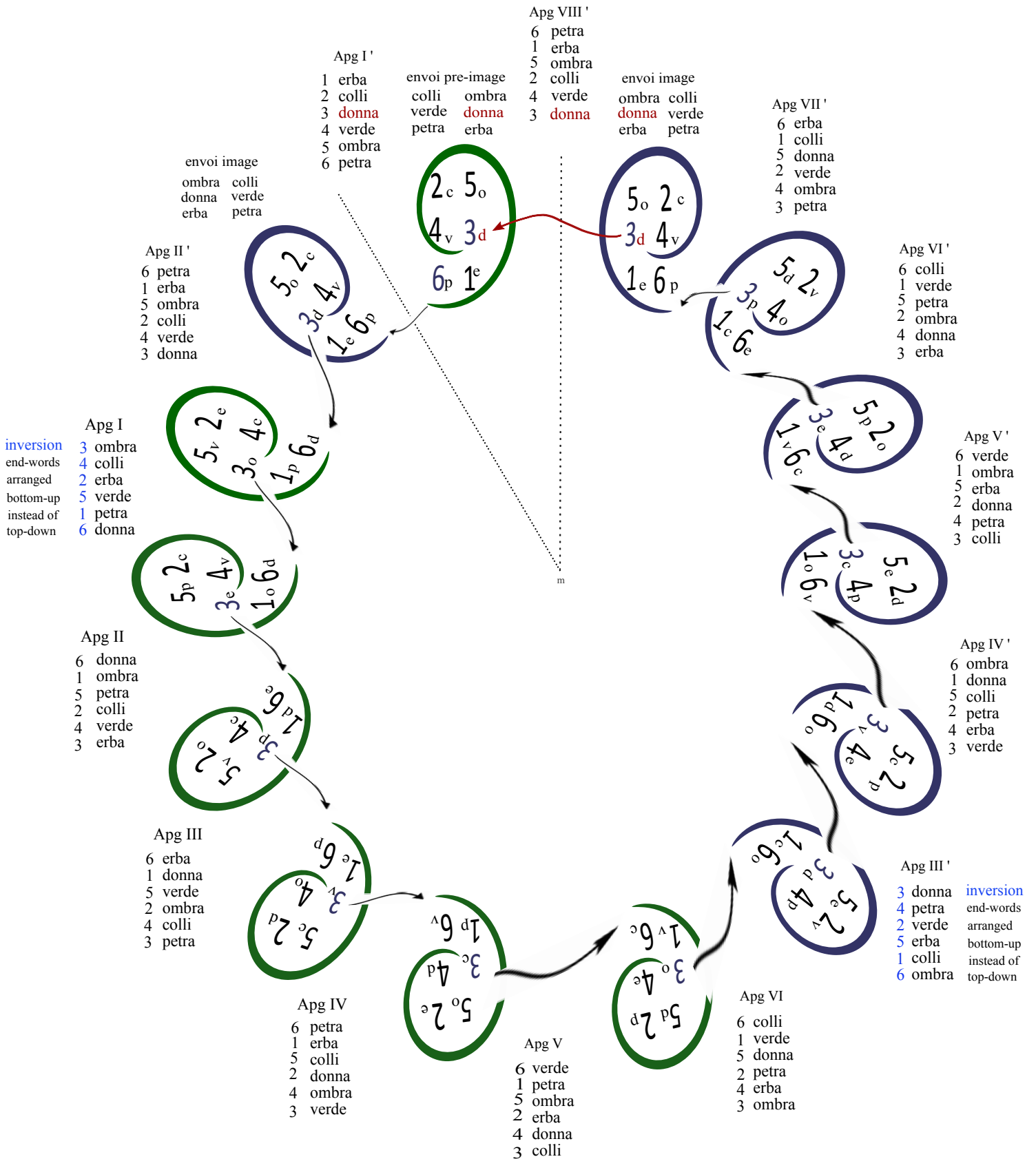
'Al poco giorno'

envoi to strophe I link & strophe VI to envoi link:
ring composition construction

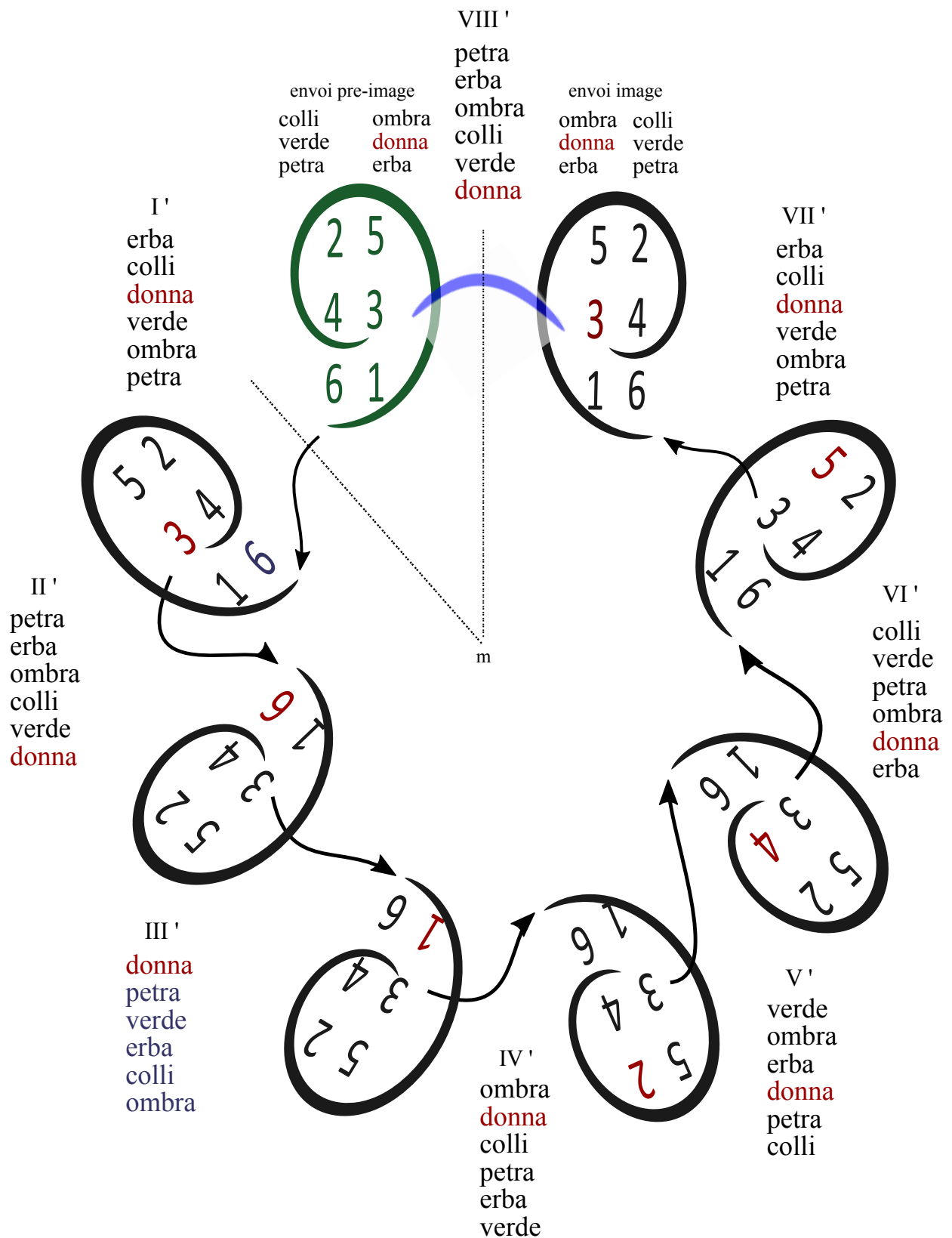


'Al poco giorno'

14-strophe ring model



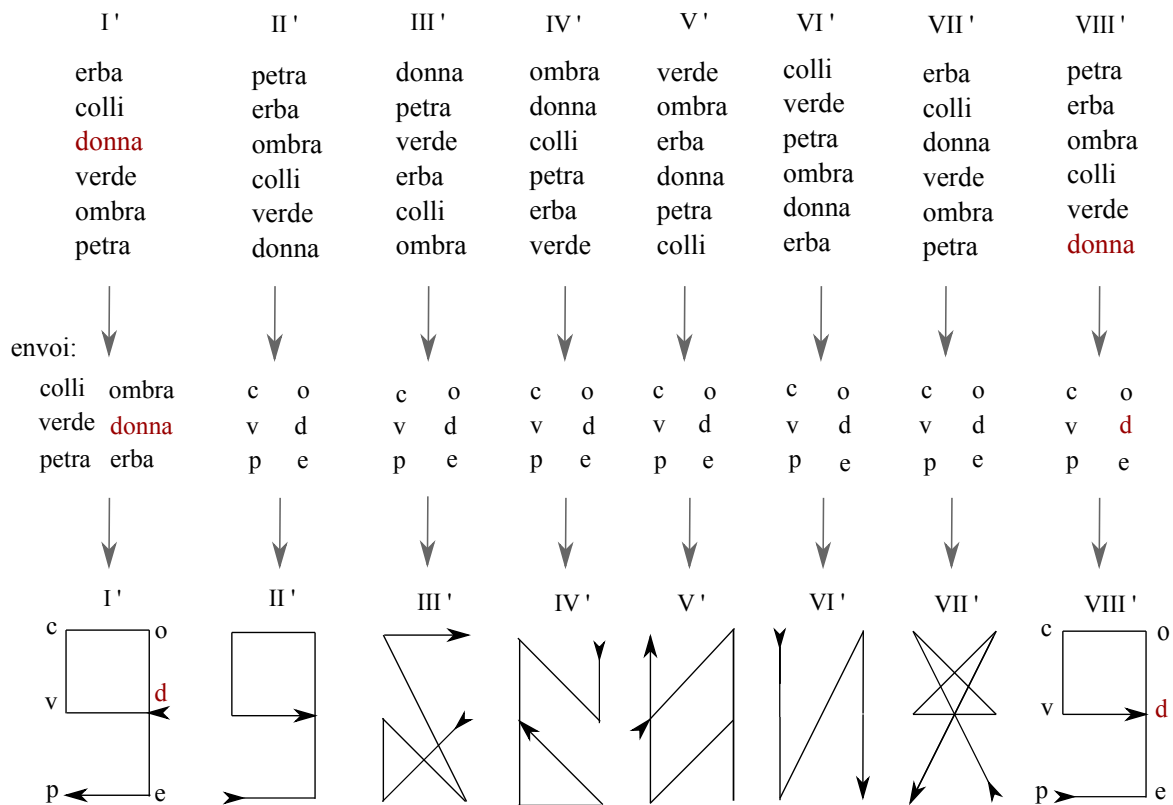
'Al poco giorno' 8-strophe ring model



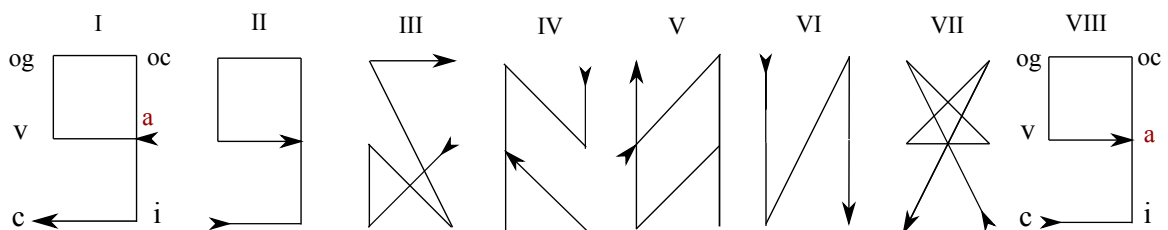
‘Al poco giorno’ & ‘Lo ferm voler’

identical 8-ring strophes / envoi relationships

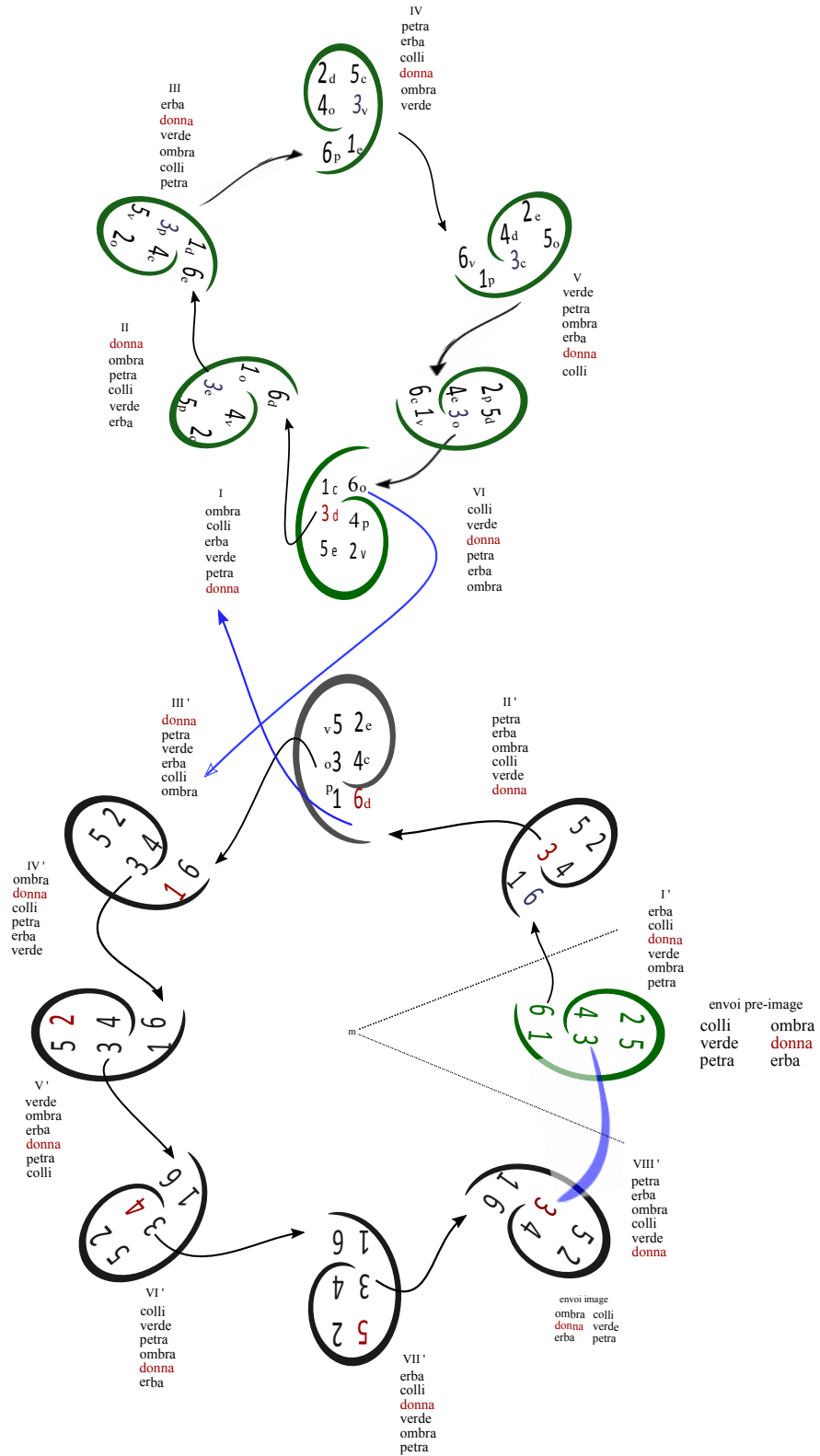
‘Al poco giorno’ strophes I' - VIII' :



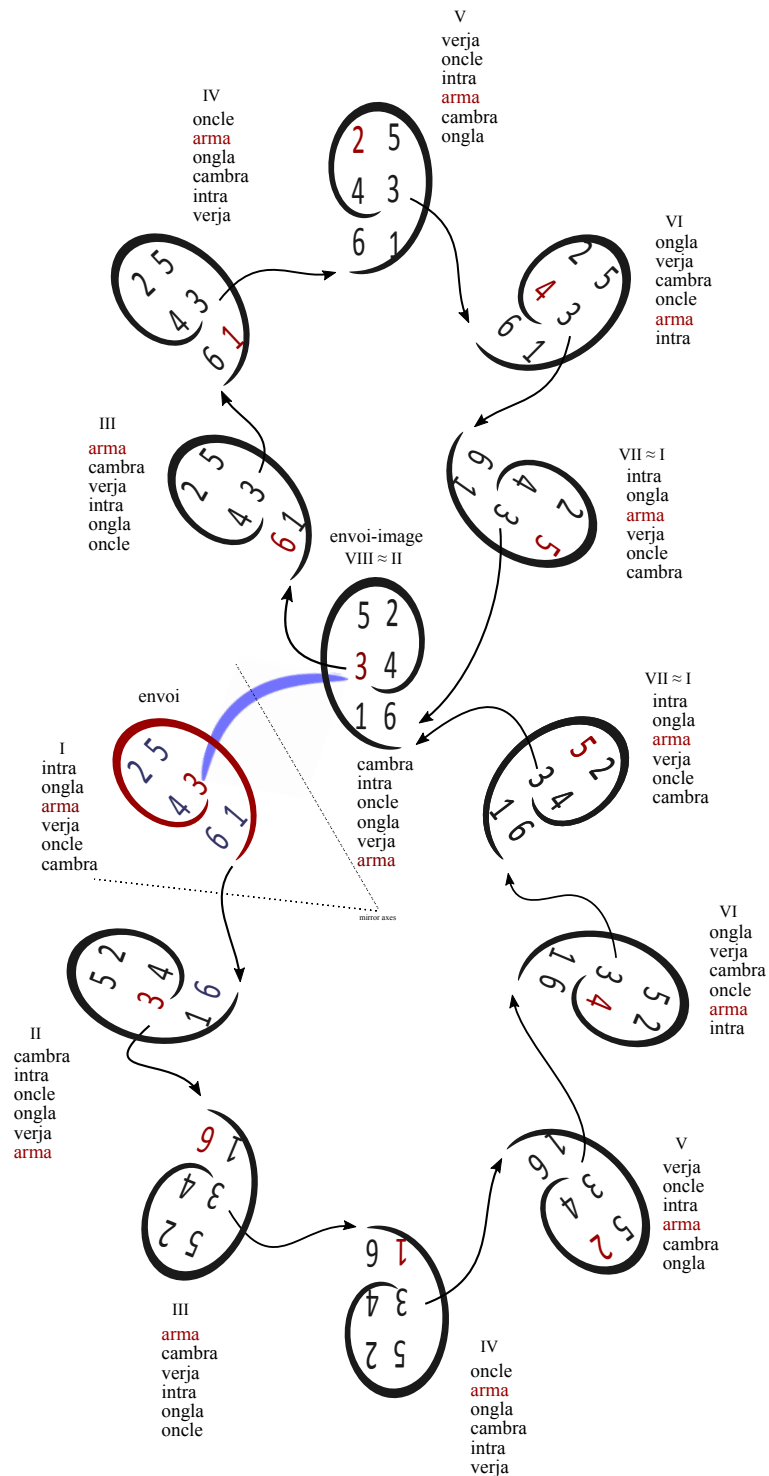
‘Lo ferm voler’ strophes I – VIII:



'Al poco giorno' 6- & 8-strophe two-ring model shared envoi with inversion 'latch' link

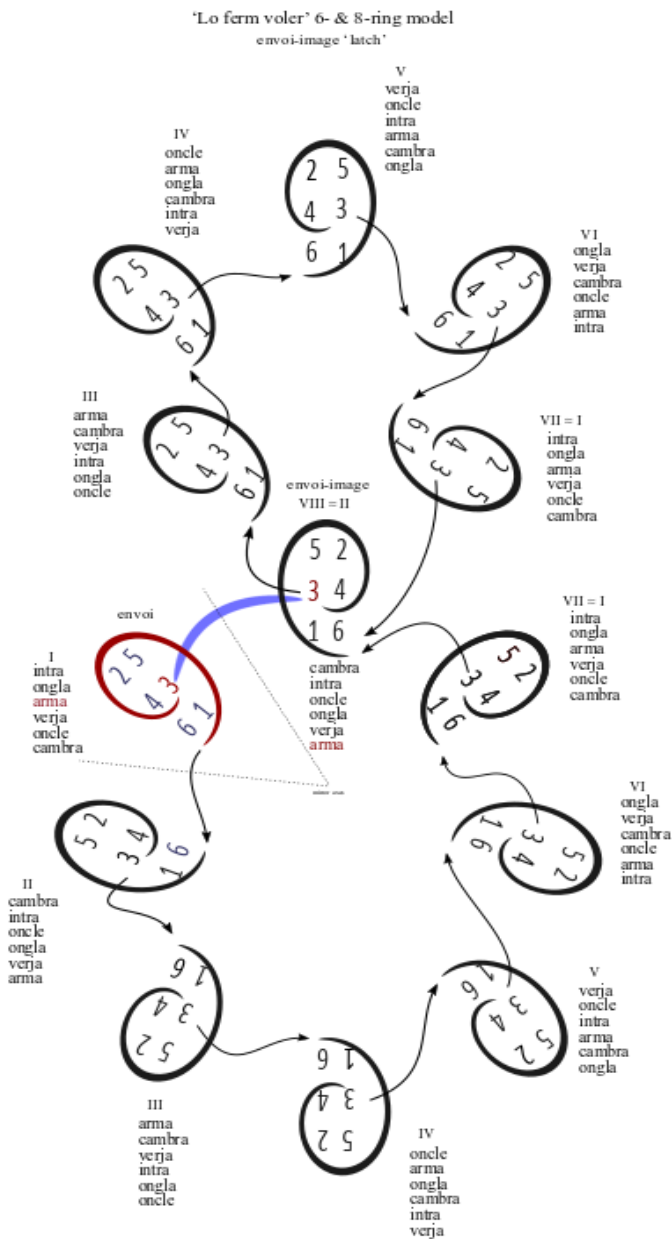


'Lo ferm voler' 6- & 8-strophe two-ring model shared envoi with envoi-image 'latch' link



'Lo ferm voler'

link between 6- & 8-strophe two-ring envoi-image 'latch' model & MS 'C'



MS 'C'

I
intra
ongla
arma
uerja
oncle
ca'bra

II
cambra
intra
oncle
ongla
uerja
arma

III
arma
cambra
uerja
intra
ongla
oncle

IV
oncle
arma
ongla
cambra
intra
uerja

V
uerja
oncle
intra
arma
cambra
ongla

VI
ongla
uerja
cambra
oncle
arma
intra

envoi

onglae, oncle
uerja, arma
cambra, intra

MS 'C,' f. 202v, (excerpt)



source: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France:
fonds français 856, 'C,' ff. 202v & 203r; Narbonne
region, France, 14th century.

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8419246t/f472.image.r=856Daniel>;
(retrieved 13th June, 2016)

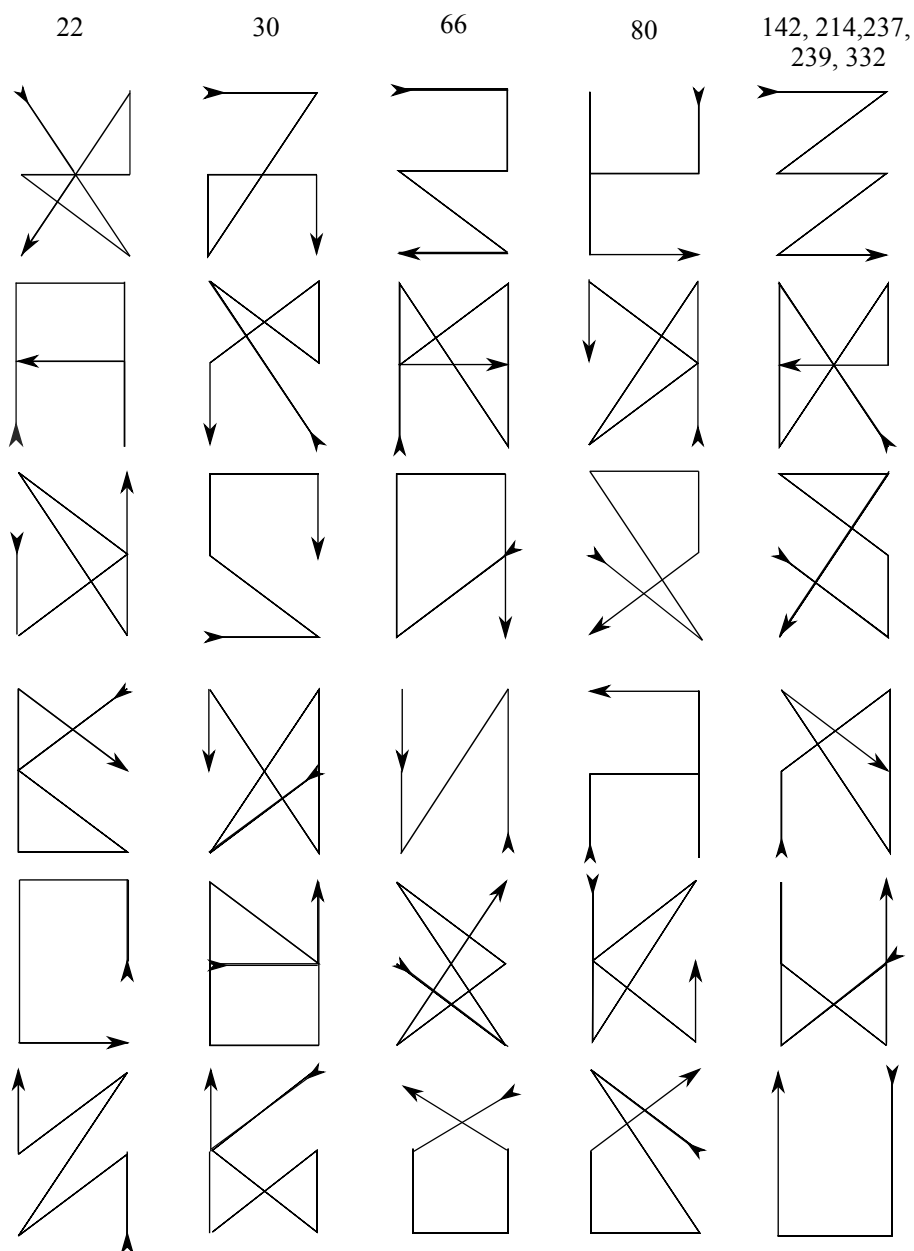
Francesco Petrarca's *Canzoniere* Sestinas
 Nos. 22, 30, 66, 80, & 142, 214, 237, 239, 332



source: Madrid, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, VITR/22/1, 26; Italy, 1401-1500?
<http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000023186&page=26> ; (retrieved 17th June, 2017).

Petrarchan Sestinas

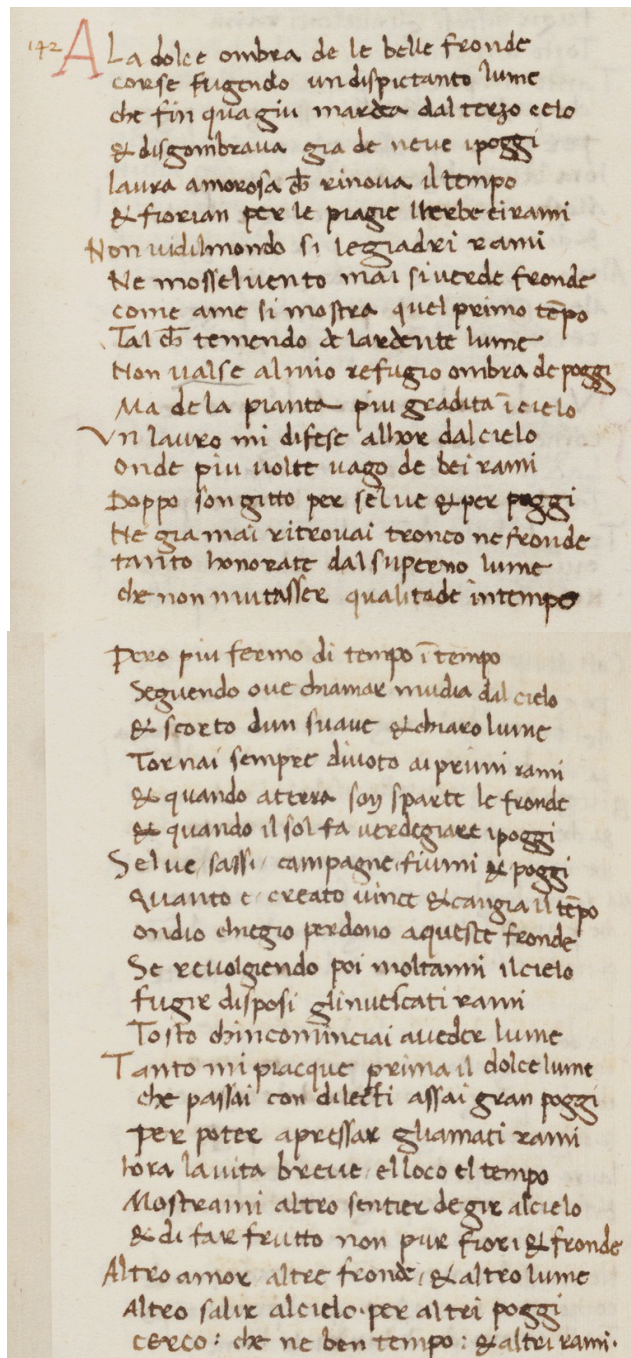
strophes / envoi relationship diagrams



source: Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*, ed. Stroppa, Sabrina 2011.

Francesco Petrarca's 'A la dolce ombra', No. 142 diplomatic transcription

strophe end-words

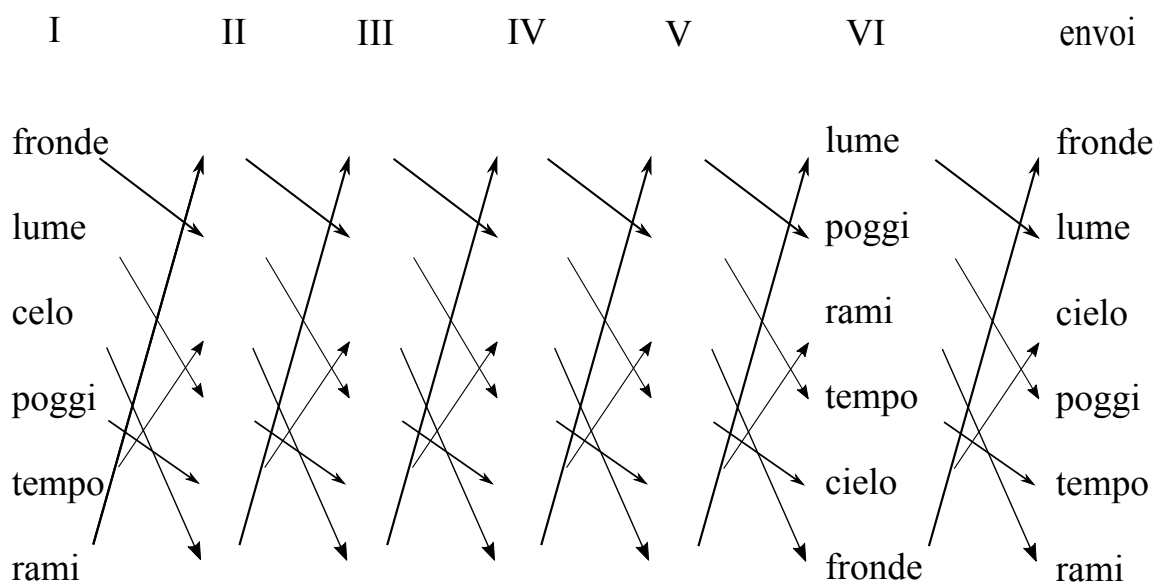
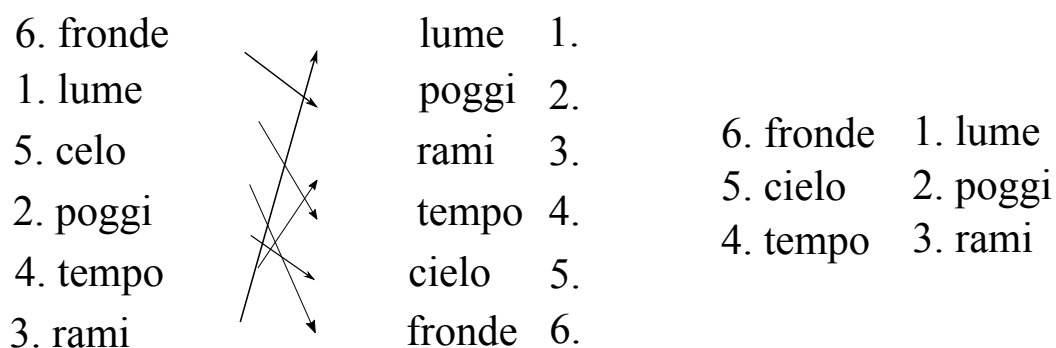
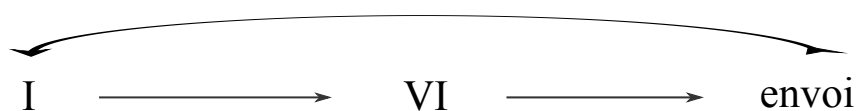


<p>A la dolce ombra de le belle <u>fronde</u> corse fugendo un dispietato <u>lume</u> che fin qua giu mardea dal terzo <u>celo</u> e disgombraua gia de neue i <u>poggi</u> laura amorosa che rinoua il <u>tempo</u> e fiorian per le piagie l' herbe e i <u>rami</u></p>	I	fronde lume celo poggi tempo rami
<p>Non uidil mondo si legiadri <u>rami</u> Ne mosse [(i)] uento mai si uerde <u>fronde</u> come ame si mastra quel primo <u>tempo</u> Tal che temendo de lardente <u>lume</u> Non ualse al mio refugio ombra de <u>poggi</u> Ma de la pianta piu gradita in <u>cielo</u></p>	II	rami fronde tempo lume poggi cielo
<p>Un lauro mi difese all' hor dal <u>cielo</u> onde piu uolte uago de bei <u>rami</u> Dappo son gitto per selue e per <u>poggi</u> [] e gia mai ritrouai tronco ne <u>fronde</u> tanto honorate dal superno <u>lume</u> che non mutasser qualitate in <u>tempo</u></p>	III	cielo rami poggi fronde lume tempo
<p>Pero piu fermo di tempo in <u>tempo</u> seguendo oue chiamar mudia dal <u>cielo</u> e scorto dun suauo e chiaro <u>lume</u> Tornai sempre diuoto ai primi <u>rami</u> e quando aterra sa[] sparte le <u>fronde</u> e quando il sol fa uerdegiare i <u>poggi</u></p>	IV	tempo cielo lume rami fronde poggi
<p>Selue [salri] campagne fiumi e <u>poggi</u> quanto [e] creato uince e cangia il <u>tempo</u> ond'io chiegio perdono a queste <u>fronde</u> Se reuolgiendo poi moltanni il <u>cielo</u> fugir di sposi gl' inuescati <u>rami</u> Tosto [ch'] in cominciai [a] ueder <u>lume</u></p>	V	poggi tempo fronde cielo rami lume
<p>Tanto mi piacque prima il dolce <u>lume</u> che parlai con dilecti assai gran <u>poggi</u> per poter apressar gli amati <u>rami</u> hora lauita breue el loco el <u>tempo</u> mostrami altro sentier degir il <u>cielo</u> [] di fare fr[]tto non pur fiori e <u>fronde</u></p>	VI	lume poggi rami tempo cielo fronde
<p>Altro amor altre <u>fronde</u> e altro <u>lume</u> altro salir <u>al cielo</u> per altri <u>poggi</u> cerco : che ne ben <u>tempo</u> : e altri <u>rami</u> .</p>	<i>envoi</i>	fronde lume cielo poggi tempo rami

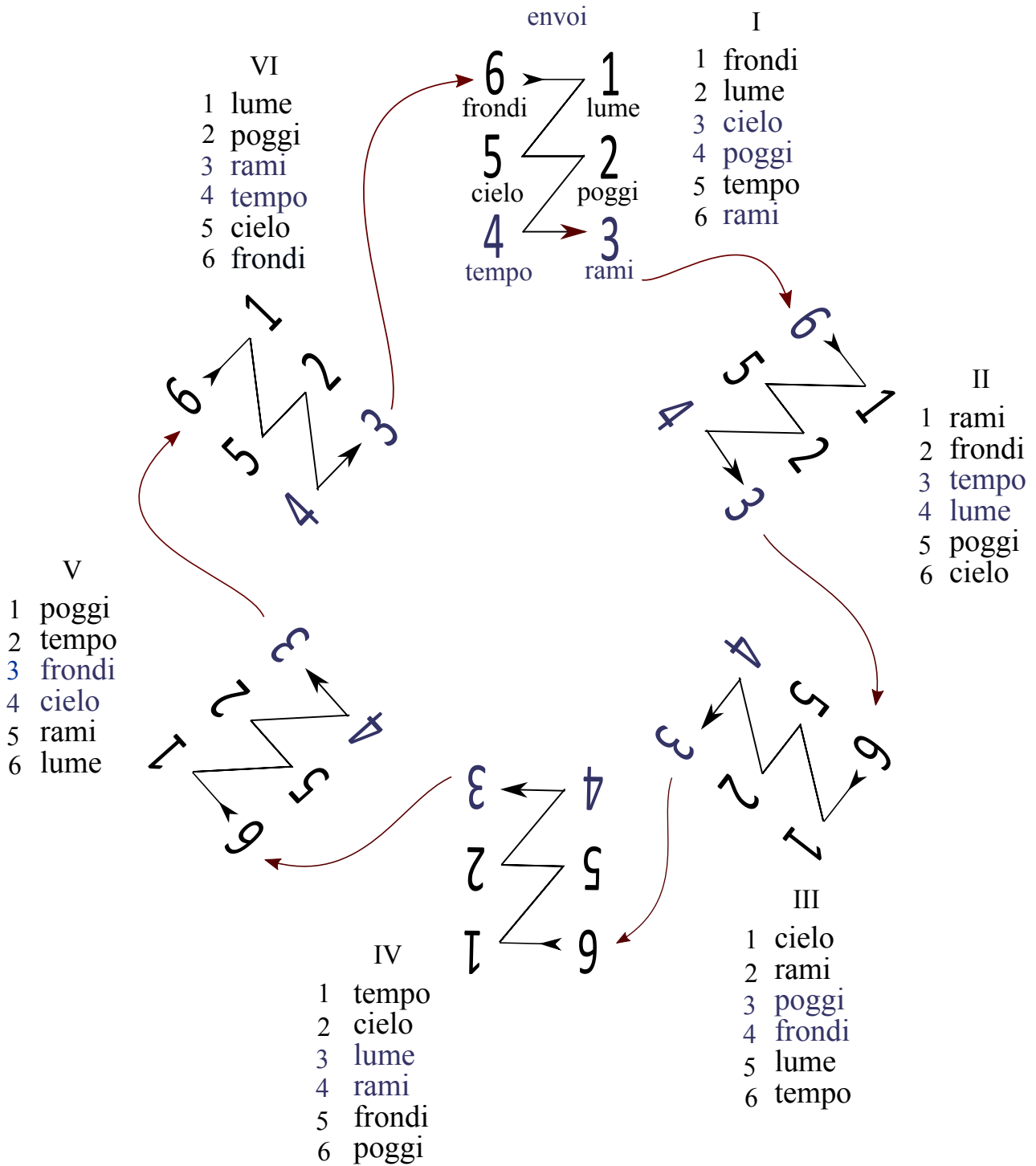
source: New Haven, Yale University, Library; Beinecke MS 706, 72r & 72v. Italy, 15th century. Beinecke MS 706, 72r & 72v. Italy, 15th century; <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3433877>; (retrieved 2/6/17).

cf. IV.i "Però più fermo *ognor* di tempo in tempo" (*Canzoniere*, ed. Stroppa 2011).

‘142. A la dolce ombra’
strophes / envoi relationship



‘142. A la dolce ombra de le belle frondi’
6-strophe ring model

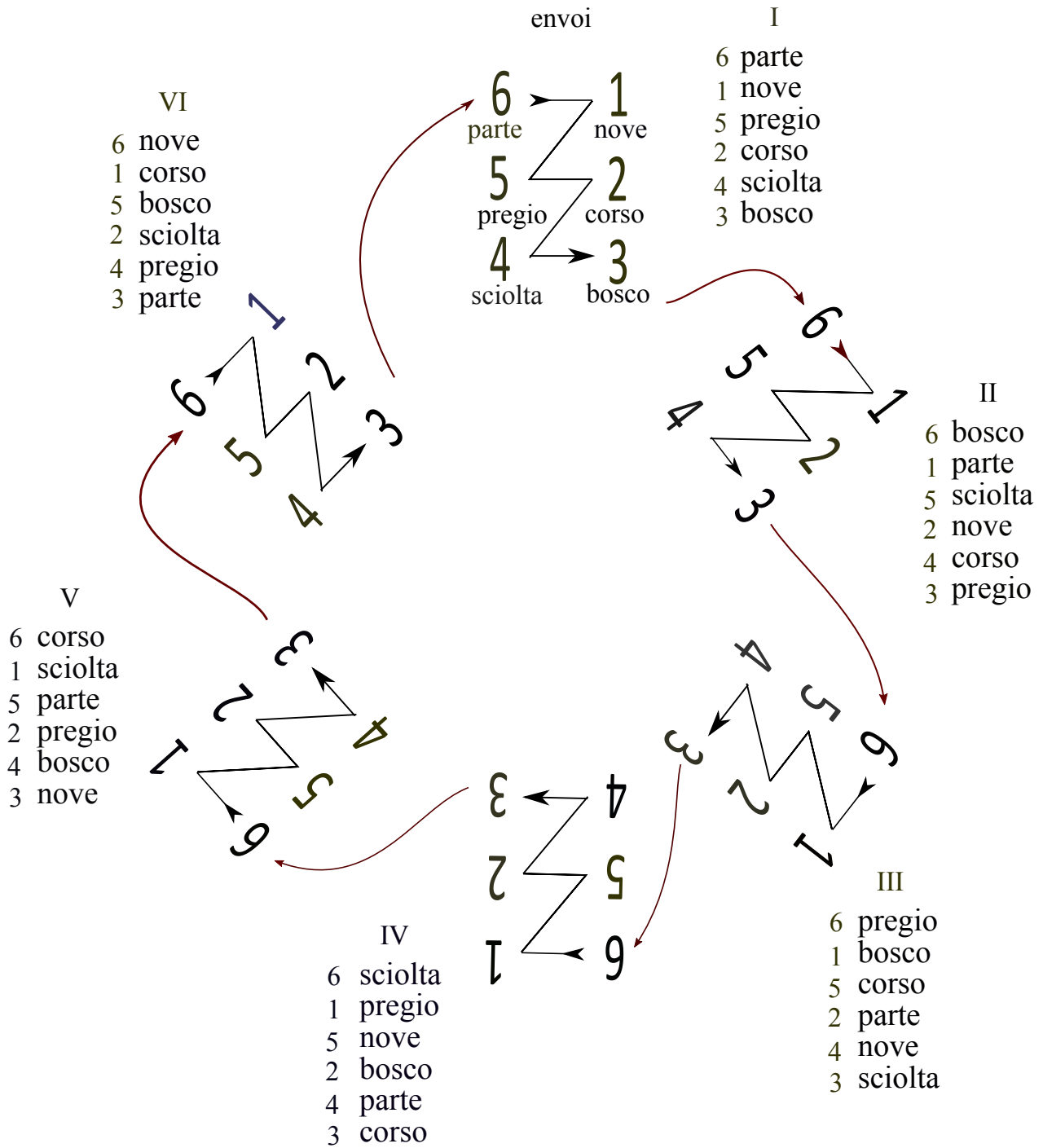


source: Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*, ed. Stroppa, Sabrina 2011; p. 269.

'canso' file: 4.5.1 'A la dolce ombra,' as 6-strophe ring model.svg

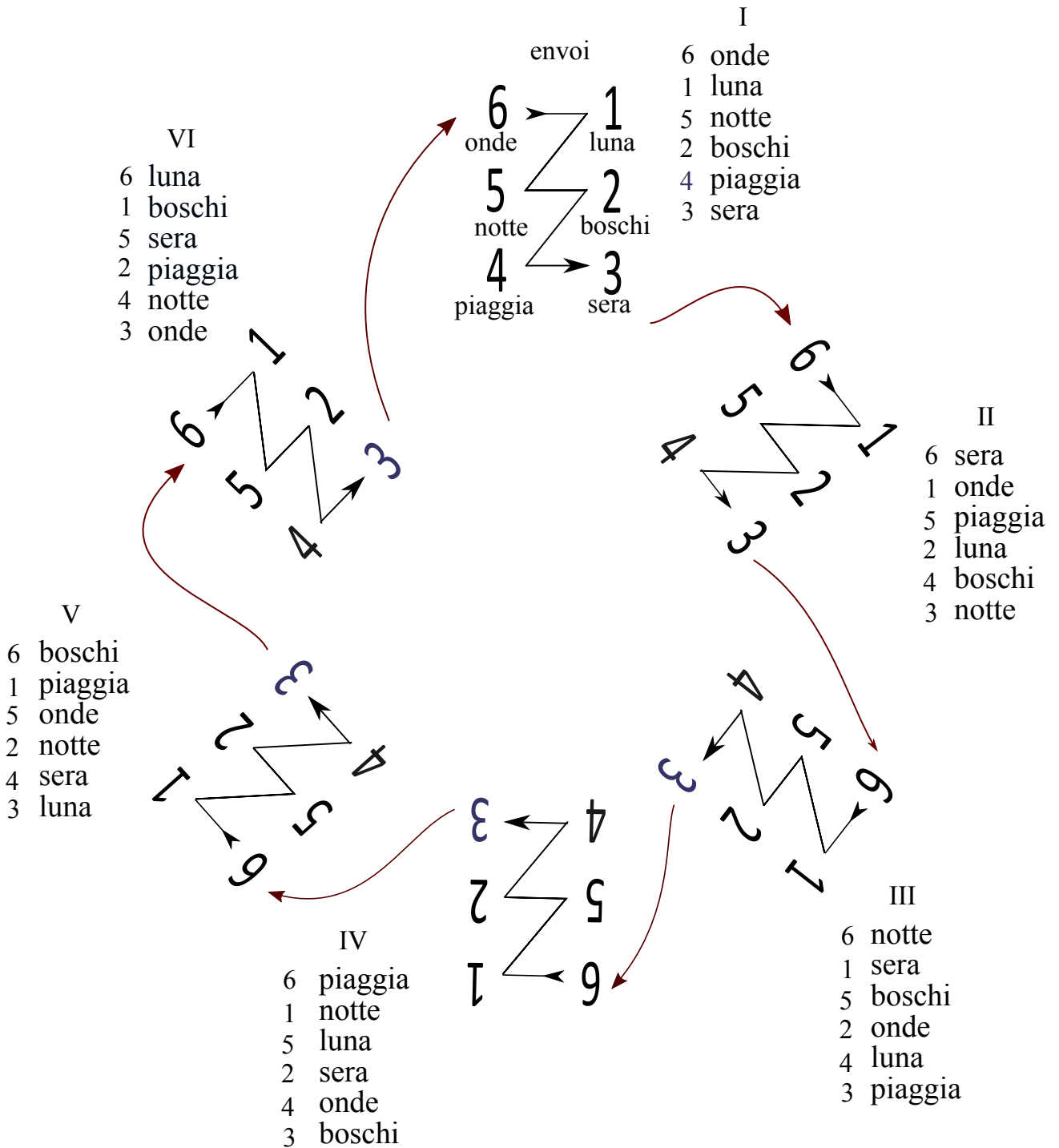
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‘214. Anzi tre dí creata era alma in parte’
6-strophe ring model



source: Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*, ed. Stroppa, Sabrina 2011; p. 357.

‘237. Non ha tanti animali il mar fra l’onde’
6-strophe ring model

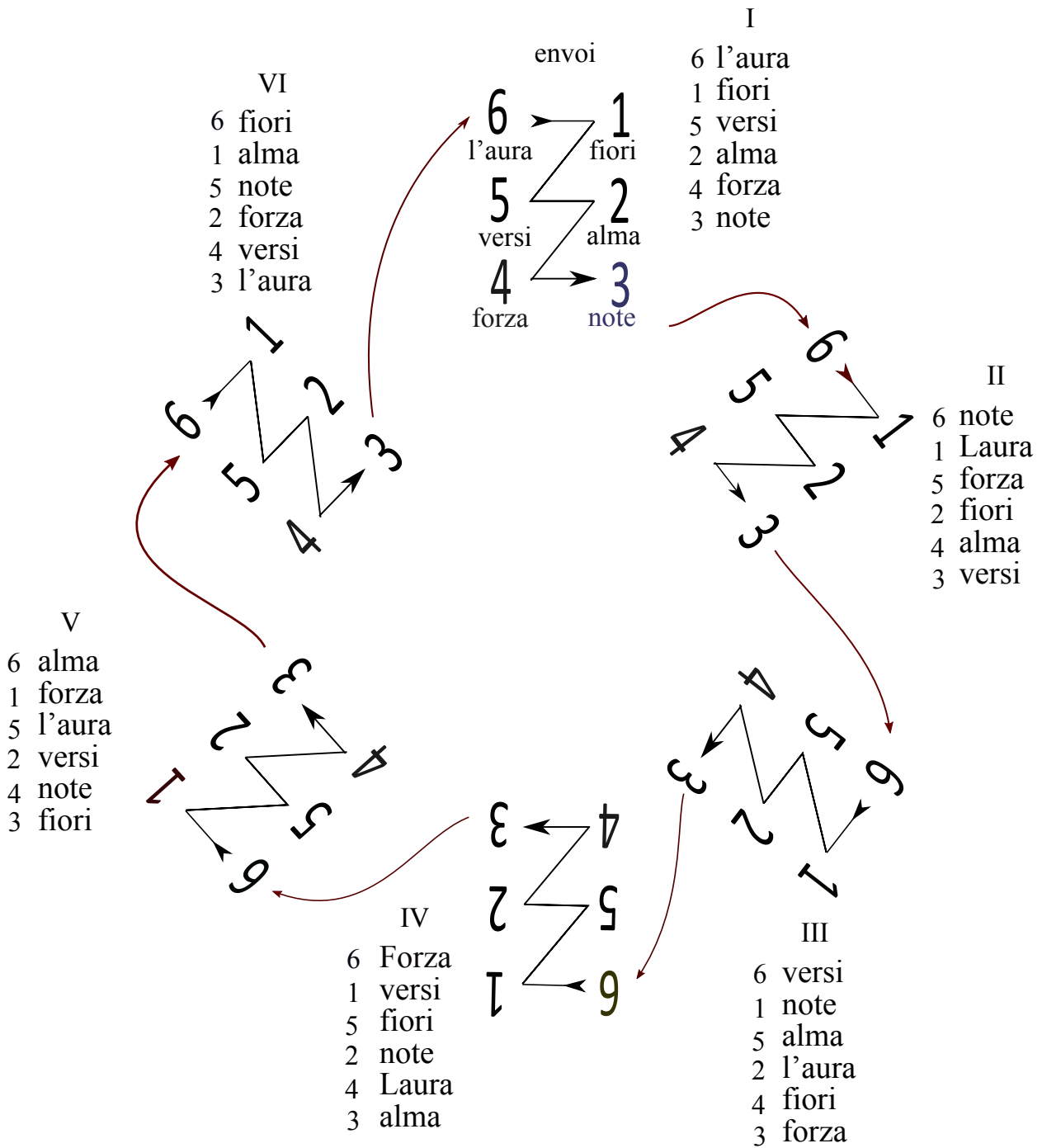


source: Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*, ed. Stroppa, Sabrina 2011; p. 384.

‘canso’ file: 4.5.3 ‘Non ha tanti animali’, as 6-strophe ring.svg

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'239. Là ver l'aurora, che sí dolce l'aura'
6-stophe ring model



source: Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*, ed. Stroppa, Sabrina 2011; p. 389.

'canso' file: 4.5.4 'Là ver l'aurora,' as ring composition.svg

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retrogradatio cruciata
as ring composition

'retro. c.' sequence :

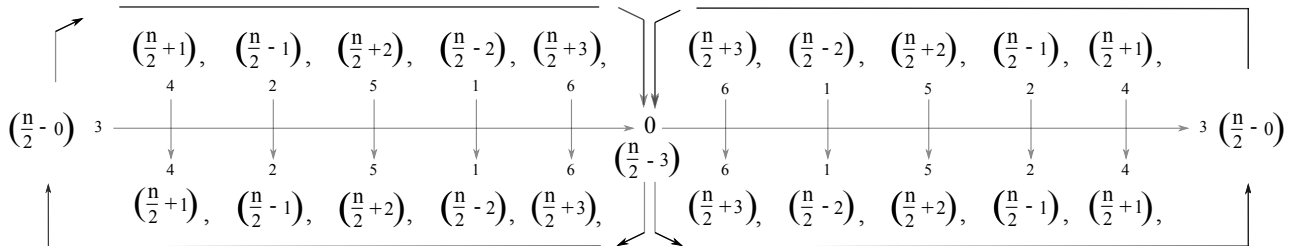
$$\begin{array}{cccccc}
 6, & 1, & 5, & 2, & 4, & 3 \\
 \downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow \\
 \left(\frac{n}{2}+3\right) & + & \left(\frac{n}{2}-2\right) & + & \left(\frac{n}{2}+2\right) & + & \left(\frac{n}{2}-1\right) & + & \left(\frac{n}{2}+1\right) & + & \left(\frac{n}{2}-0\right)
 \end{array}$$

letting 'n'= 6, and adding terms :

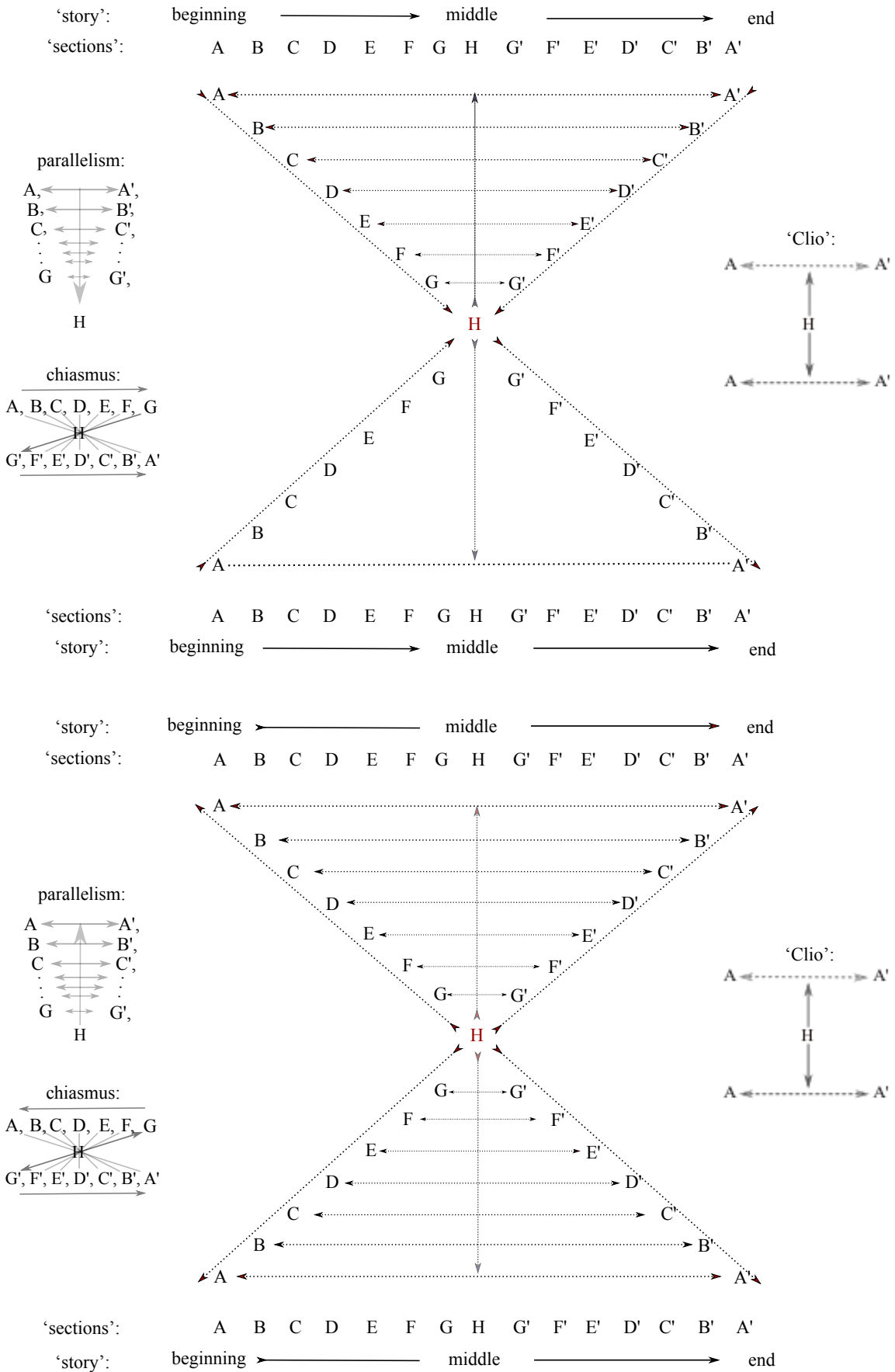
$$\Rightarrow f(n) = \binom{n}{2}(n+1); \quad f(6) = \binom{6}{2}(6+1) = 21$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \Rightarrow \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \binom{n}{2}(n+1) &= \binom{0}{2}(0+1) + \binom{1}{2}(1+1) + \binom{2}{2}(2+1) + \binom{3}{2}(3+1) + \\
 &\quad 0 \quad + \quad 1 \quad + \quad 3 \quad + \quad 6 \quad + \\
 &\quad \binom{4}{2}(4+1) + \binom{5}{2}(5+1) + \binom{6}{2}(6+1) + \dots \\
 &\quad 10 \quad + \quad 15 \quad + \quad 21 \quad +
 \end{aligned}$$

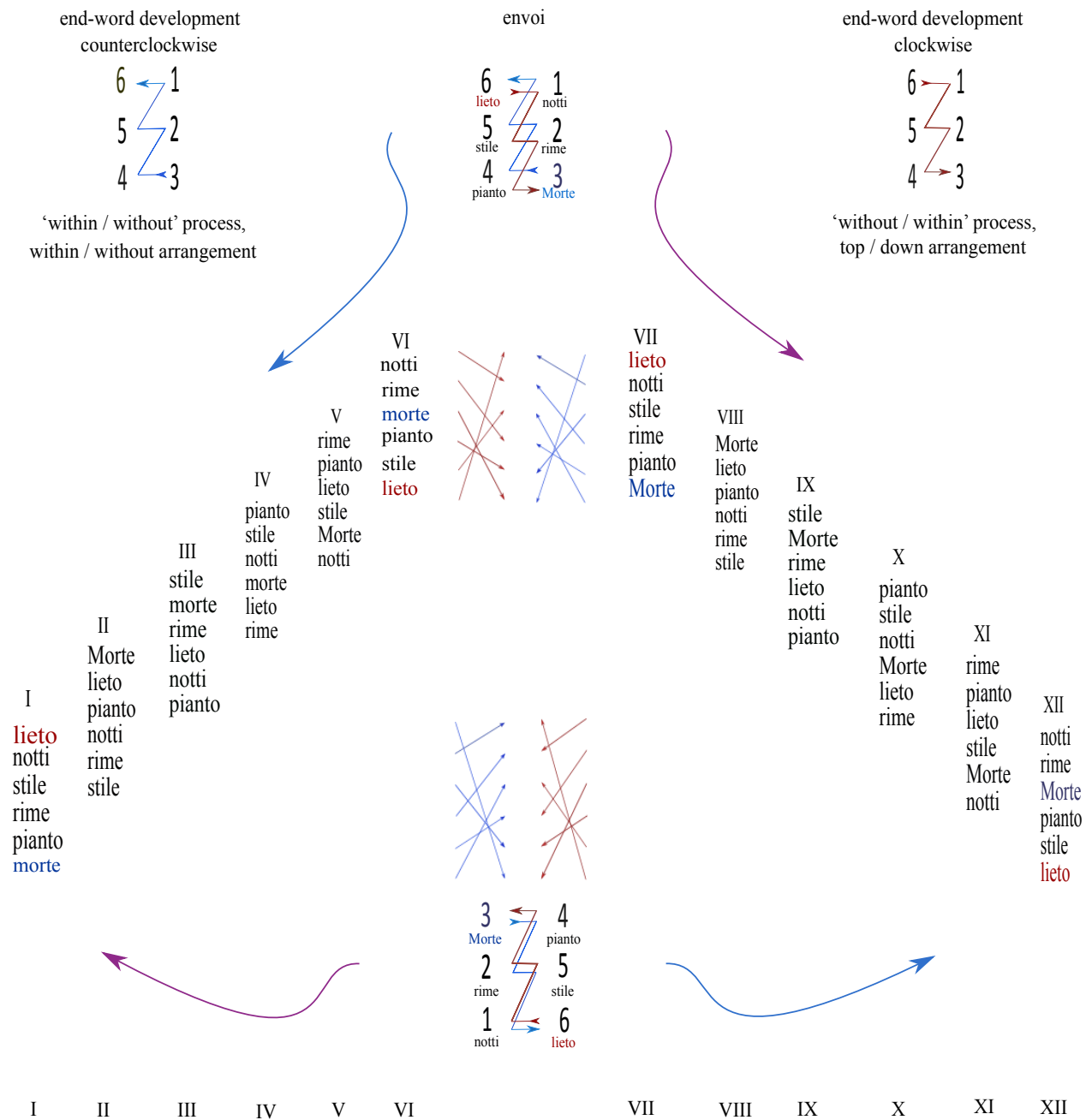
Illustration:



'centered writing' as ring composition



'332. Mia benigna fortuna e 'l viver lieto' double sestina as 'centered writing'



source: Petrarca, Francesco. Canzoniere, ed. Stroppa, Sabrina 2011.