

Music for the Times of Pestilence, 1420-1600

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Musical Examples	vii
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	ix
Introduction	1
Plague and the Function of Music	5
Literature Review	12
Chapter Outline	17
Chapter 1. Medicine for the Body and the Soul	21
Imaginatio facit casum	23
Two Settings of O beate Sebastiane	37
Cantus jocosos	51
The Curious Case of Hugo van der Goes	56
The Divine and Natural Plague	61
Defining gaudium	64
Plague and the Carnavalesque	71
Chapter 2. The Passio of St. Sebastian	83
Miles Christi sub Chlamyde	85
Sana quod est saucium... Rege quod est devium	95
The Lombard Plague Saint	107
Holy and Notable Stories	112
Chapter 3. Music and the Bodies Natural, Politic, and Celestial	115
Dufay – O sancte Sebastiane	117
Musical Healing and Speculative Thought	125
A Participatory Consciousness and the Doctrine of Signatures	129
From the Body Natural to the Body Politic	134

Pestilence and the Body Politic.....	140
Copinus – Fiat pax in virtute tua.....	147
Petrucci’s Stella celi extirpavit.....	157
Chapter 4. Motets and the Anti-pestilential Procession.....	175
The Pestilential Procession.....	176
Body Politic on Display	181
The Sounds of Pestilential Processions.....	184
Motets in Procession	190
O beate Sebastiane	198
Miasma and Contagion.....	204
Mouton – Sancte Sebastiane	213
Chapter 5. Madrigals, Mithradates, and the San Carlo Plague of Milan	229
Paolo Caracciolo’s Santo Guerrier	236
Il primo libro de Madrigali: A Songbook for the Plague?	246
Theriac and Mithridatium.....	250
Mithradatic Katharsis	256
Conclusion	267
Appendix 1.....	273
Appendix 2.....	279
Appendix 3.....	283
List of Works Discussed and Their Sources	291
Medical Treatises and Plague Chronicles Cited	296
Bibliography	299

Abstract

Plague, a recurring affliction throughout pre-modern Europe, affected multiple facets of life; not only was it a biological problem, pestilence was also read as a symptom of spiritual degeneracy, and it caused widespread social disorder. Assembling a picture of the complex and sometimes contradictory responses to plague from the medical, spiritual, and civic perspectives, I examine the role of music in the culture of plague. Through the course of the dissertation, I analyze polyphonic songs that invoke St. Sebastian, the premier plague saint of the age, to illustrate the ways in which plague discourses may have shaped musical composition and, conversely, the contributions of the musical works to practical strategies against the disease.

Les épidémies de peste qui sévirent dans l'Europe pré-moderne affectèrent cette dernière de multiples façons. Non seulement la peste posait-elle un grave problème biologique, mais elle était également perçue comme un symptôme de dégénérescence spirituelle et fut la cause de désordres sociaux généralisés. Dans cette thèse, je brosse un tableau des réactions complexes et souvent contradictoires qu'elle provoqua dans les milieux médical et spirituel ainsi que dans la vie citoyenne. Je me penche également sur le rôle de la musique au sein de la culture qui se développa autour de cette maladie. J'analyse des chansons polyphoniques invoquant Saint-Sébastien, le protecteur de la peste le plus important de l'époque, afin d'illustrer comment les discours portant sur la peste purent influencer la composition de ces œuvres, et je mets en lumière les façons dont ces chansons contribuèrent à leur tour aux stratégies élaborées pour combattre la maladie.

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List of Musical Examples

Example 1.1 - Martini and Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Tenors Compared	40
Example 1.2 - Martini and Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Openings Compared	42
Example 1.3 - Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 31-34; Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 36-39	45
Example 1.4 - Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 49-54; Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 51-56	45
Example 1.5 - Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 56-59; Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 56-59, mm. 64-66	46
Example 1.6 - Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 116-126; Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 133-140	46
Example 1.7 – Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 127-140; Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 141-148	47
Example 1.8 - Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 27-36; Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 32-43	50
Example 1.9a - Martini, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 47-63	53
Example 1.9b - Gaspar, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> , mm. 51-68	53
Example 2.1- Deiss, <i>Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus</i> , mm. 29-59	91
Example 2.2 - Deiss, <i>Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus</i> , mm. 95-112	92
Example 2.3 - Deiss, <i>Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus</i> , mm. 63-92	94
Example 2.4a - Deiss, <i>Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus</i> , mm. 1-20	96
Example 2.4b - Maistre Jhan, <i>Sebastiane decus perenne</i> , soggetto from <i>prima pars</i>	97
Example 2.4c - Maistre Jhan, <i>Sebastiane decus perenne</i> , soggetto from <i>secunda pars</i>	98

Example 2.4d - <i>Veni sancte spiritus</i> , sequence from Whit Sunday, versicles 7 and 8	98
Example 3.1 - Dufay, <i>O Sancte Sebastiane</i> , Schematic of First <i>Talea</i>	124
Example 3.2 - Dufay, <i>O Sancte Sebastiane</i> , “Mottos” in triplum	124
Example 3.3 - <i>Laetatus sum</i> , v. <i>Fiat pax in virtute tua</i>	150
Example 3.4 - <i>Beatus es et bene tibi</i>	150
Example 3.5 - Schema of <i>Fiat pax in virtute tua</i> , showing cantus firmus, imitation, motivic and modular repetition, and extend passages in parallel 3rds and 10ths	153
Example 3.6 - Schema of <i>Stella celi</i> , showing cantus firmus, imitation, motivic and modular repetition	169
Example 4.1 - Gaffurius, <i>Virgo Dei digna</i> mm. 1-24	195
Example 4.2a - Gaffurius, <i>Virgo dei digna</i> mm. 52-64	196
Example 4.2b - Excerpt from Litany of the Saints (<i>Liber usualis</i>)	197
Example 4.3 - Gaffurius, <i>Virgo Dei digna</i> , Internal “Refrains,” A. mm. 10-14; B. mm. 22-25; C. mm. 49-51	197
Example 4.4a – Gaffurius, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> mm. 1-24	200
Example 4.4b - Gaffurius, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i> mm. 53-73	201
Example 4.5- Mouton, <i>Sancte Sebastiane</i> , mm. 1-25	217
Example 4.6 - Mouton, <i>Sancte Sebastiane</i> , mm. 24-54	219
Example 4.7 - Mouton, <i>Sancte Sebastiane</i> , mm. 69-108	221
Example 4.8 - Mouton, <i>Sancte Sebastiane</i> , mm. 154-171	223
Example 4.9 - Mouton, <i>Sancte Sebastiane</i> , mm. 109-155	225
Example 5.1 - Caracciolo, <i>Santo Guerrier</i> , mm. 10-21	237
Example 5.2 - Caracciolo, <i>Santo Guerrier</i> , mm. 33-48	238
Example 5.3 - Caracciolo, <i>Santo Guerrier</i> , mm. 49-63	241

Example 5.4 - Caracciolo, <i>Santo Guerrier</i> , mm. 69-81	242
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List of Tables

Table 1.1 – Metre Changes, Textural Changes, and Cadential Structures of Martini’s and Gaspar’s <i>O beate Sebastiane</i>	43
Table 2.1 - Cadential Structure of <i>Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus</i>	90
Table 2.2 - Cadential Structure of Willaert’s <i>Armorum fortissime</i>	102
Table 5.1 - Inventory of <i>Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci</i>	248

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 - Andrea Mantegna, <i>St. Sebastian</i>	74
Figure 1.2 – Andrea Mantegna, <i>St. Sebastian</i> , detail: “NIL NISI DIVINUM STABILE EST CAETERA FUMUS”	74
Figure 1.3 – Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, <i>Casio Madonna Altarpiece, The Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist, St. Sebastian, and Two Donors.</i>	75
Figure 2.1 - Josse Lieferinxe, <i>Saint Sebastian Destroying the Idols</i>	106
Figure 3.1 - Jacobello del Fiore, Center panel of <i>Triptych of the Madonna della Misericordia</i>	162
Figure 3.2 - Benedetto Bonfigli, <i>Banner of San Francesco al Prato</i>	163
Figure 3.3 - Sinibaldo Ibi, <i>Banner of S. Francisco at Montone</i>	164
Figure 5.1 - Tempio civico di San Sebastiano a Milano	235

Introduction

Plague was a fact of life in pre-modern Europe. After a near seven-century absence from the continent, it returned with vengeance in 1347 (the first year of the so-called Black Death) and visited multiple parts of Europe virtually every year until 1700.¹ Its broad sweep across the centuries is well matched by its indiscriminate reach, afflicting entire populations regardless of age, sex, or social standing. Medical historians have attempted to determine the pathology of plague by a variety of means—examining plague chronicles, necrologies, and conducting biological tests on recovered corpses, for example. The majority opinion holds that what was termed “pestilence” was likely the rat-based bubonic plague, *Yersinia pestis*, whose bacillus was discovered by Alexandre Yersin during a late nineteenth-century outbreak in Hong Kong (the Third Pandemic). In humans, the infection could take three forms: bubonic, the predominant and characteristic form that causes swellings (or buboes) in the armpits, neck, and groin; pneumonic, a far more lethal form that arises from bubonic infections and is also contagious through pulmonary discharges; and septicaemic, a form caused by an infection of the bloodstream, which generally results in death within twenty-four hours of the first symptoms. There are a number of niggling problems, however, with the mapping of modern epidemiology onto the pre-modern. First, some scholars doubt that pre-modern

¹ Jean Noël Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, 2 vols., Civilisations et sociétés 35-56 (Paris: Mouton, 1975), Appendices.

plague was bubonic; Samuel Cohn Jr., for example, suggests that some aetiological characteristics such as the season of virulence, the life cycle of fleas, etc. simply do not match up with historical records.² Second, it is doubtful whether all epidemic outbreaks between 1347 and 1700 were caused by *Yersinia pestis*. Such complications are redoubled by the loose usage of the word “pestilence” on the part of medieval and Renaissance Europeans as a catch-all term for a wide variety of epidemiological catastrophes that may have included anthrax, smallpox, measles, typhus, or some ebola-like virus.³

What is interesting for cultural historians is perhaps not so much the imprecision of the term “pestilence” from the pathological perspective, but rather the wide swath of metaphorical connotations attendant on the concept; “the fact that the very word for plague, *peste*, came to be attributed to any extreme form of pestilence, epidemiological disaster, noxious prodigy or human catastrophe signals the power the term packed... This highlights the real losses to historical understanding if we reduce the cultural category of *peste* or ‘plague’ to the biological entity *Yersinia pestis* that has been the focus of the work of medical and demographic historians,” writes Colin Jones.⁴ The pioneering work

² Samuel Kline Cohn, Jr., *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002); “The Black Death: End of a Paradigm,” *The American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 703-38.

³ J.F.D. Shrewsbury, *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Graham Twigg, *The Black Death: A Biological Reappraisal* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984); Susan Scott and Christopher J. Duncan, *Biology of Plagues: Evidence from Historical Populations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

⁴ Colin Jones, “Plague and Its Metaphors in Early Modern France,” *Representations* 53 (1996): 98.

of Susan Sontag in the 1970s and '80s has drawn attention to the ways in which diseases are described in everyday, figurative language and the relationship between such language and perceptions of aetiology, patient-hood, and treatment.⁵ “Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual,” Sontag writes, “tends to be awash in significance.” Moreover, “the subjects of deepest dread... are identified with the disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Then in the name of the disease... that horror is imposed on other things. The disease becomes adjectival. Something is said to be disease-like, meaning that it is disgusting or ugly.”⁶

Plague, as one of these important diseases with murky causality and for which treatment was ineffectual, inevitably became a potent metaphor:

Epidemic diseases were a common figure for social disorder. From pestilence (bubonic plague) came “pestilent,” whose figurative meaning, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “injurious to religion, morals, or public peace—1513”; and “pestilential,” meaning “morally baneful or pernicious—1531.” Feelings about evil are projected onto a disease. And the disease (so enriched with meanings) is projected onto the world.”⁷

These metaphorical meanings, thus projected onto the world, were in turn deeply embedded in the aetiology and symptomatology of the disease itself; moral degeneration was the cause of plague, sent as divine retribution to cleanse the earth of wicked men, and social disorder inevitably spread like a second disease alongside each outbreak of pestilence. Pestilence therefore extended from the biological body to the church and

⁵ Sontag’s essay “Illness as Metaphor” first appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 24, nos. 21 and 22 (January 26, 1978); vol. 25, no. 1 (February 9, 1978); and vol. 25, no. 2 (February 23, 1978). Edition cited in dissertation: Susan Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor,” in *Illness as Metaphor and Aids and its Metaphors* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

⁶ Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor,” 58.

⁷ Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor,” 58.

civic bodies, and all three required treatment. In his survey on plague treatises, Jones identifies three corporate groups committed to the fight against pestilence: “medical practitioners, with their concern for health; churchmen, with their preoccupation with morality and spiritual welfare; and the representatives of secular authority, or magistrates, with their concern with community welfare and the workings of authority.”⁸ Each group developed specific (but overlapping and sometimes conflicting) strategies to preserve health in all three bodies. Doctors, armed with venerable Galenic principles, readily offered their expertise on diagnosis, regimen, and medicine. Religious authorities, treating plague as divine punishment for “baneful” or “pernicious” behaviour, urged moral improvement and conducted devotional rituals. And magistrates implemented embargoes, quarantines, and codes of surveillance not only to deter contagion, but also to ensure public order.

Music, explicitly and implicitly, played a role in the healing of all three bodies under pestilential assault. Following Jones’s topology of plague response, this dissertation investigates the place of music, both positive and negative, in pre-modern pestilential thought from the medical, religious, and civic perspectives. With recourse to Renaissance treatises on plague, along with histories of medicine, art, poetics, and religion, I attempt to illuminate the presence of music in the discourses about pestilence, traversing the boundaries between the “literal” (or “clinical”) and the “metaphorical.” Within this historical picture of plague, I situate eleven motets and one spiritual madrigal on the theme of pestilence—all but one petition St. Sebastian, the premier plague saint of the Renaissance, for divine intervention. Through close, structural readings of the works,

⁸ Jones, “Plague and Its Metaphors,” 106.

I analyze the ways in which specific musical characteristics might determine their use in times of pestilence and reflect prevailing ideas about the disease.

The chronological scope of this study is roughly 1420-1600, the earlier terminus coinciding with the oldest motet studied—Dufay’s isorhythmic *O sancte Sebastiane*—and the latter with Caracciolo’s 1582 spiritual madrigal *Santo Guerrier*. The polyphony studied, therefore, represents the entire spectrum of Renaissance musical style and techniques, from isorhythm, to the imitative textures of the Josquin and post-Josquin generations, to late-century madrigalistic writing. The works studied are continental and (with St. Sebastian as the central thematic material) rooted in Catholicism. Certainly, the range of dates should not imply any great monumental changes in pestilential thought at the *termini*; aside from a sense of habituation and a growing sense of confidence, there was a great deal of continuity in medical knowledge and plague response across the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Nor, broadly speaking, were there greatly divergent attitudes toward plague across the entire continental Europe and England. Defoe’s 1722 *A Journal of the Plague Year*, an imaginative account of the 1665 plague of London, paints the same scenes described in sixteenth-century French and Italian plague treatises and chronicles.

Plague and the Function of Music

To recover a part of the pre-modern pestilential *habitus*, I rely on a variety of plague texts written between the end of the fourteenth century and 1600, nearly none of which have previously been studied from a musicological perspective. Medical treatises on plague, primarily from France and Italy, represent the bulk of these sources (see

Medical Treatises and Plague Chronicles Cited, p. 289). The majority of the plague treatises cited in this dissertation comes from one of three sources:⁹ 1) The digitized facsimiles collection from the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*; 2) The holdings of the Wellcome Library, London; 3) The collection of nearly 200 plague manuscripts and incunabula gathered in a series on plague treatises in *Sudhoffs Archiv*.¹⁰ These plague tracts, usually written by university-trained doctors and surgeons, began to crop up in the middle of the fourteenth century; Jacme d'Agramont's 1348 *Regiment de Preservació a Epidimia* is considered the first. Plague treatises were not entirely new, but prior to 1348, they were few in number and often circulated as a part of larger medical compendia.¹¹ Aided by the printing press, the number of these plague treatises mushroomed dramatically in the two centuries following the Black Death. Based on data compiled by Paul Slack, for example, there would have been enough plague treatises at the turn of the fifteenth century in England (with a population of 3.3 million) to distribute one to every 130 people.¹² At the beginning of their production, the majority of treatises were written in Latin, many of which were also translated into the vernacular; the number of vernacular treatises increased in the sixteenth century. They varied greatly in length, from a few to a few hundred pages. Judging by the dedications and content of these

⁹ All translations of plague treatises are my own, except when stated otherwise.

¹⁰ Karl Sudhoff, ed, "Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren nach der Epidemie des 'schwarzen todes' 1348," in *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*, Volumes 4-17, 1910-1925.

¹¹ Christiane Nockels Fabbri, "Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2006), 19.

¹² Paul Slack, "Mirrors of Health and Treasures of Poor Men: The Uses of the Vernacular Medical Literature of Tudor England," in *Health, Medicine, and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 239.

treatises, there was a wide range of intended audiences for these works, from other medical practitioners to the lay reader.¹³

As a whole, the repertory of plague treatises remained relatively stable across the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The core of these tracts typically consisted of a discussion of causes and signs of the disease, including the progression of symptoms in the patient; regimen and prevention, which often occupied the bulk of the treatise; and treatment, which included recipes for medicines and, sometimes, surgery. Some treatises included dedications and prefaces to the readers, and some took on a devotional focus, commingling medical advice with prayers and sermons that exhorted readers to mend their ways. But the bedrock of these treatises was the inherited Hippocratic-Galenic system of humoral medicine; Galen's *Book on Fevers*, Hippocrates's *Epidemics*, and Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* were most commonly quoted.¹⁴ With the majority of them emphasizing regimen and prevention, the genre of the plague tract "inscribed itself most clearly in the tradition of medieval health handbooks, the *regimina sanitatis*."¹⁵

It is in these plague treatises (and particularly in the sections on regimen) that music is discussed most explicitly in relation to plague; many authors prescribed music-making as a salubrious recreation, placing it on the pharmacy shelf alongside anti-pestilential foodstuffs and other medicines. But beyond the explicit references to music, plague treatises, coupled with other forms of plague writing, can offer us glimpses into the culture of plague in which music played an indirect, but important (and even

¹³ Nockels Fabbri, "Continuity and Change," 32-8.

¹⁴ Nockels Fabbri, "Continuity and Change," 42.

¹⁵ Nockels Fabbri, "Continuity and Change," 39.

negative) role in the combat against disease. Authors of religiously skewed medical tracts, for example, sometimes took an ascetic stance on music and cautioned against its use. This negative view of music in “medical” writing is consistent with prohibitions against temporal recreations doled out in sermonic literature. Authors of plague treatises also increasingly addressed civic conditions during pestilential outbreaks in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ Their writings open a window on practices in which music would have been implicated; their protocols for quarantine and curfew, for example, would have curtailed devotional processions, a vital component of which was singing. The doctor’s prescription in this case can be compared with the chronicler’s description of public devotions and governmental reactions against them. Taken together, plague treatises, chronicles, and other pestilential documents represent a hitherto unexamined source of information on how music was used in the context of disease management and, more generally, how people thought about music—what it could do, how it worked, and its proper place in medicine, religion, and society.

It is my contention that the pre-modern model of medicine and plague treatment had an impact on the composition of music—not merely that there were songs composed on the theme of plague, but that their very texts and musical structures were informed by the understanding of the disease. It is also my contention that these works were meant to do something for their performers and their listeners, and that a full-bodied, hermeneutic study of the music should take into account the relationships between thematic content, musical structure, and the attendant performative effects. That music should have a performative *function* would have been a commonplace for Renaissance Europeans;

¹⁶ Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Tinctoris's treatise *Complexus effectuum musices* (1477-8), for example, is an encouragement to a young Princess that recommends music not on aesthetic merits, but on account of its twenty wonderful uses and effects (which include healing the sick). One reason for this privileging of music's effect had to do with the ontology of music itself. Rob Wegman writes, "Although [pre-moderns] would have agreed that texts can be scrutinized for meanings (as their traditions of biblical exegesis confirm), they would not immediately have thought of music as signifying in this way. This is mainly because music was perceived in essence not as an object, but as physical *motion* in air, produced by action upon objects. Since motion always has a cause and an effect, the question was not what music means (as if it were a sign), but rather what it *does*, what its effects are."¹⁷

The necessity of understanding the performative aspects of musical works is all the more apparent when we consider that the works studied in this dissertation most obviously function as prayers. Although texts (including prayers) "can be scrutinized for meanings,"¹⁸ they were also experienced asemantically. An anecdote from one of St. Bernardino's sermons is instructive. A priest is dismayed when a rather stingy farmer admits that he does not know the Paternoster. The priest tells the man:

"Look here! I will teach you that Paternoster in a year's time without any trouble at all; but during the year I want you to *lend* three bushels of corn to all the persons I shall send to you. Then, when you have done so, if I shall have taught you the Paternoster by the end of the year, I will take nothing from you; only the corn shall belong to the poor people to whom you have lent it." The farmer agreed to this, and after he had gone away, the priest went to a poor man and said: "Go to so-and-so from me, and ask him to give you three bushels of corn; and tell

¹⁷ Rob C. Wegman, "For Whom the Bell Tolls: Reading and Hearing Busnoys's *Anthoni usque limina*," in *Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Dolores Pesce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 123.

¹⁸ Wegman, "For Whom the Bell Tolls," 123.

him your name is *Pater noster*. Again the priest sent another poor man, who was to say that his name was *Qui es in coelis*; and so he sent a number of others, until all the clauses of the Lord's Prayer were exhausted.¹⁹

By the year's end, the farmer, thinking that the priest had failed to hold up his end of the bargain, demanded to be repaid. The priest asks him whether he knows the names of his debtors, and the farmer confidently says that he does and proceeds to name all the men to whom he had given his corn. When the farmer was finished, the priest tells him, "that is the Paternoster that you have been saying in telling me the names of your debtors." Thus, the farmer gave up his corn, but learned the Paternoster.

This charming anecdote is, of course, merely an entertaining exemplum.

Nevertheless, it aptly reveals some lay people's experience of religious texts and is indicative of a *habitus* that emphasizes participation over intellection. As Paul Saenger points out, the kind of mental act required to perform verbal prayers was the desire to serve God and a modicum of attentiveness. To that end, "it was not necessary to have full comprehension of all or each portion of the text as it was recited."²⁰ In a similar vein, Virginia Reinburg explains that the laity's participation in the Mass had less to do with the understanding of Eucharistic doctrine or scriptural teachings (which would have been in an incomprehensible Latin anyway) and more to do with "assuming a proper role in the drama of the mass."²¹ In his early fifteenth-century manual on the Mass, *Comment on se*

¹⁹ A. G. Ferrers Howell and Julia Mary Cartwright Ady, *S. Bernardino of Siena* (London: Methuen, 1913), 286-7.

²⁰ Paul Saenger, "Books of Hours and Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages," in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 149.

²¹ Virginia Reinburg, "Liturgy and the Laity in Late Medieval and Reformation France," *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 23, no. 3 (1992): 531.

doit devotement oir la messe, Jean Gerson explains what the congregation must do when the Gospel is said: “you must listen quietly to his sweet word, which comes truly from mouth and heart. And men should rise and remove their hats when they hear it.”²² However, Gerson does not provide access to the Gospel in his manual; rather, he “compares the deportment expected of the congregant to that of an attendant at royal court: court attendants prepare for the lord’s entrance, they greet him, they behave with respect and propriety. Just as the priest does his part by reading God’s word aloud, so the lay congregation does its part not by understanding that word, but by observing proper demeanor toward its Lord and his acts.”²³ For lay congregants, “the mere hearing of [Latin] seemed to have conferred an almost sacramental benefit, in spite of its not being understood.”²⁴

To be sure, the structures of a prayer or a ritual are vitally important, since they must be complete, correct, and meaningful at a semantic level—not any jumble of words and actions would do. Yet, once this precondition of completeness is met, the meaning of the structures becomes important insofar as what they are meant to do. If a congregation is able to participate in a drama of a Mass without understanding the parts of the actors, and if a farmer can nevertheless receive the spiritual benefits of a prayer without understanding its words, then the significance of the “texts” must include their

²² Reinburg, “Liturgy and the Laity,” 531.

²³ Reinburg, “Liturgy and the Laity,” 531.

²⁴ Louise M. Bishop, *Words, Stones, and Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England*, Medieval Studies (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 73.

performative effects. Songs petitioning for the end of plague *do* something;²⁵ as prayers, they can confer divinely granted benefits to singers, listeners (who may or may not understand the pious messages), and even composers and their patrons.²⁶ But what else can they do? In this dissertation, I analyze the structure and semantic contents of such music, and, reading them alongside primary sources on plague, I reveal some of their less obvious functions and explain the mechanisms that allow them to perform their work.

Literature Review

There is an incredible wealth of literature on the history of plague. I relied on a number of important works in the history of medicine to help contextualize my own study and to guide me in my own research of primary materials. These include Philip Ziegler's popular book on the Black Death;²⁷ Samuel Cohn Jr.'s 2010 *Cultures of Plague*;²⁸ a book by Anna Montgomery Campbell on plague treatises and their authors;²⁹ and a series of

²⁵ It may be useful to consider the point through the lens of L. Austin's speech act theory. The sum meaning of any given statement is made up of its constative (truth-claim) dimension and its performative effects. See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*,. The William James Lectures 1955 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975); Lawrence Kramer, "Tropes and Windows: An Outline of Musical Hermeneutics" in *Critical Musicology and the Responsibility of Response: Selected Essays* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Philip Ernst Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language, Music in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁶ For the implications of sung prayers, see Bonnie Blackburn, "For Whom Do the Singers Sing?," *Early Music* 25 (1997): 493-609.

²⁷ Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003).

²⁸ Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁹ Anna Montgomery Campbell, *The Black Death and Men of Learning* (New York: AMS Press, 1966).

articles on plague by Ann Carmichael.³⁰ While there are a number of comprehensive works on the theme of pestilence in literature and in the plastic arts, there are only a handful of studies on the relationship between music and plague in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In his 1977 article “Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio,” Howard Mayer Brown identifies references to music and musicians in the *Decameron* and describes the musical traditions that surround those references.³¹ Karol Berger has analysed the variant accidentals in the two sources of Dufay’s cantilena motet *O beate Sebastiane*.³² He found that Dufay likely revised his motet with a new set of accidentals that tended to sharpen the work. Berger associates these sharp signs with the iconography of St. Sebastian’s arrows. His analysis does not go into any details of text-music relationships or the musical-medical aspect of plague.

Christopher Macklin’s work, including his 2008 dissertation and his 2010 article “Plague, Performance and the Elusive History of the *Stella celi extirpavit*,” represents the most extensive study of the topic to date.³³ Macklin focuses on sacred monophony, particularly from English sources. His most significant contributions are his work on the

³⁰ Ann G. Carmichael, “Contagion Theory and Contagion Practice in Fifteenth-Century Milan,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 (1991): 213-56.; “The Last Past Plague: The Uses of Memory in Renaissance Epidemics,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 53 (1998): 132-160; “Universal and Particular: The Language of Plague, 1348-1500,” *Medical History Supplement* 27 (2008): 17-52.

³¹ Howard Mayer Brown, “Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio,” *Early Music* 5 (1977): 324-39.

³² Karol Berger, “The Martyrdom of St Sebastian: The Function of Accidental Inflections in Dufay’s ‘O beate Sebastiane’,” *Early Music* 17 (1989): 342-57.

³³ Christopher Macklin, “‘Musica sanat corpus per animam’: Towards an Understanding of the Use of Music in Response to Plague, 1350-1600” (PhD diss., University of York, 2008); and “Plague, Performance and the Elusive History of the *Stella celi extirpavit*,” *Early Music History* 29 (2010): 1-31.

Stella celi chant and the *Recordare Domine* Mass. Through comparative source studies, Macklin traces the early history of *Stella celi*, a hymn invoking Mary's help against the plague. With similar methods, Macklin examines the liturgical make-up of the *Recordare* plague Mass across a variety of sources. I adopt a more hermeneutic approach to my discussions of music, and I place a greater emphasis on the intellectual and cultural climate of plague in my readings of works.

Thematically, my project connects to the growing interest on the place of music in the history of pre-modern medicine. The medieval health treatise *Tacuinum sanitatis*, which advocates music as a means for maintaining or restoring health, has received attention from musicologists interested in musical iconography.³⁴ Recent works in the field of music and medicine includes two essay collections edited by Penelope Gouk (*Musical Healing in Cultural Contexts*) and Peregrine Horden (*Music as Medicine*), both from 2000.³⁵ Gouk's volume is ethnographic in focus, while Horden's is Euro-centric. The most pertinent essays from Horden's collection include Peter Murray Jones's paper on Hugo van der Goes, which analyzes the report of an attempt to soothe the artist's madness with music; Angela Voss's survey on natural medicine and Ficino; and two studies on melancholia and lovesickness by Penelope Gouk and Linda Phyllis Austern. While none of these studies unite medical-musical theory with actual musical works, they

³⁴ F. Alberto Gallo, *Music in the Castle: Troubadours, Books, and Orators in Italian Courts of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries*, translated by Anna Herklotz and Kathryn Krug (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 61, 68ff; Howard Mayer Brown, "Catalogus: A Corpus of Trecento Pictures with Musical Subject Matter, Part II/1, Instalment 4," *Imago Musicae* 5 (1988): 194-5.

³⁵ Penelope Gouk, ed., *Musical Healing in Cultural Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Peregrine Horden, ed., *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy Since Antiquity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

nevertheless provide a clear picture of the place of music and medicine in the pre-modern cosmology.

A 2005 dissertation by Susan Agrawal treats the topic of medicine and music extensively, and the present thesis mirrors hers in some respects. Her work is distinguished in its attempt to link musical-medical discourse to a specific genre of music—early-seventeenth-century English ayres—and a set of specific works. Agrawal approaches these ayres in three ways. First, she looks at the Classical aesthetics of the ayre, through which English composers recreated the image of Apollo, strumming healing music on his lyre. “Doing so,” Agrawal argues, “led these composers not only to create a type of music that mimicked the style and forces of ancient music, but also to imitate the desired [healing] effects of such music.”³⁶ Second, Agrawal studies the allusions to medicine, passions, or human anatomy in the texts of the ayres. Finally, she examines the musical structures of ayres and shows how they might mirror the humoral complexions of the audience, and how the performance of these musical structures might thereby alter the physical, mental, and spiritual states of the singers and their listeners. In one instance, Agrawal’s analytical focus moves between the thematics and the performative effects of an ayre. She argues that the lover’s plea to his mistress to be mirthful in Pilkington’s *Aye Mee, She Frownes* is accompanied by music’s movement from melancholia to mirth (from the use of c minor and frequent downward phrases at the beginning to the later use of a triple meter and rhythmic patterns to mimic the healthy

³⁶ Susan Rachel Agrawal, “‘Tune Thy Temper to These Sounds’: Music and Medicine in the English Ayre” (Ph.D. Diss., Northwestern University, 2005), 413.

heartbeat). The intended addressee—the mistress—and other listeners would thereby be moved, too, from melancholy to mirth.

On account of the diversity of styles in the music that I investigate, the range of my analytical parameters will be wide, and my methods will necessarily be *ad hoc*. Direct intellectual debt to analysts will be clear in each case, but the following scholars' works deserve a mention here for shaping my fundamental approach to musical analysis. For discussion of mode, I am particularly inspired by Susan McClary, Bernhard Meier, and Martha Feldman.³⁷ For cadences I refer to Michele Fromson, Meier, and Karol Berger.³⁸ For texture and contrapuntal structures I draw on Jessie Ann Owens, Julie Cumming, and Peter Schubert.³⁹ For use of pre-existent material I rely on Edgar Sparks

³⁷ Susan McClary, *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Bernhard Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According to the Sources*, trans. Ellen Beebe (New York: Broude Brothers, 1988); Martha Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

³⁸ Michele Fromson, "Cadential Structure in the Mid-Sixteenth Century: The Analysis Approaches of Bernhard Meier and Karol Berger Compared," *Theory and Practice* 16(1991): 179-213; Karol Berger, *Musica Ficta: Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony*.

³⁹ Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450–1600* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); see Julie Cumming, "Composing Imitative Counterpoint around a Cantus Firmus: Two Motets by Heinrich Isaac," *Journal of Musicology* 28 (2011): 231-288; "From Two-Part Framework to Movable Module," in a Festschrift for Richard Crocker, ed. Judith Peraino (forthcoming); "From Variety to Repetition: The Birth of Imitative Polyphony," in *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 6, ed. Bruno Bouckaert, Eugeen Schreurs, and Ivan Asselman (Peer, Belgium: Alamire, 2008); Peter Schubert, "Hidden Forms in Palestrina's *First Book of Four-Voice Motets*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 3 (2007).

and Cumming.⁴⁰ And for modelling between works, I follow the methodologies set out by Fromson.⁴¹

Chapter Outline

The opening chapter explores music's place in the medical and spiritual discourses on pestilence. This chapter delves into the inherited Hippocratic-Galenic paradigm of cognition, perception, and bodily health in order to understand why doctors so often cautioned against negative emotions in times of pestilence and conversely prescribed music along with games, stories, and pleasant conversation as antidotes. But the prescription for music was not unequivocal. The encounter between Christianity and ancient medicine created an aetiological paradigm that placed the divine above the natural causes of disease. Spiritually minded doctors and religious authorities, concerned most of all with the ultimate cause of plague (i.e. God), discouraged the use of music in favour of more ascetic solutions. These competing medical and religious discourses inform a reading of two late-fifteenth-century motet settings of *O beate Sebastiane* by Johannes Martini and Gaspar van Weerbeke. The mixture of joy and piety in the two settings, I argue, offers a rapprochement between the prescriptions for the body and the soul.

The second chapter is devoted to the life of St. Sebastian and the development of his cult. In this chapter, I take stock of the texts of the works discussed throughout the

⁴⁰ Edgar H. Sparks, *Cantus firmus in Mass and Motet, 1420-1520* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); Julie Cumming, "Concord out of Discord: Occasional Motets of the Early Quattrocento" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1987).

⁴¹ Michele Fromson, "A Conjunction of Rhetoric and Music: Structural Modelling in the Italian Counter-Reformation Motet," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 117 (1992): 208-46.

dissertation, with a particular focus on three thematic areas: Sebastian's work as a Roman soldier, the intersection between faith and healing, and Sebastian's particular association with Lombardy. These themes, read along with the history of Sebastian's cult and the contemporary discourses on plague, further reveal the functional role of devotional music in the defence against pestilence. Two motets—Michael Deiss's *Sebastianus vir Christianissimus* and Willaert's *Armorum fortissime ductor*—are discussed in relation to some of these themes.

In the third and fourth chapters, issues of civic health are introduced. Having discussed the applicability of music as a practical remedy in Chapter 1, I turn my focus first to the role of music in speculative medicine and occult thought. The principle of harmony—a concept of balance and proportion of dissimilar things—animated the entire universe. At the lowest levels, harmony was made manifest in sound; at the highest, it governed the elements of the universe, including the orbit of planets, the rotation of the seasons, or the combination of basic elements into various substances. The human body, with its diverse organs and humours, functioned by the principle of harmony as well, and in Renaissance political theory, the human body was often mapped onto the body politic, and terms describing biological harmony, health, disease (including pestilence), and treatment were concomitantly applied to the state. In times of plague, harmony faltered at every level, from the inauspicious alignments of planets, the upturning of nature, the breakdown of civility, to, ultimately, the imbalance of bodily humours. Using three motets as my touchstones—Dufay's *O sancte Sebastiane*, Alexander Copinus's *Fiat pax in virtute tua*, and an anonymous setting of *Stella celi extirpavit* from Petrucci's *Motetti A*—I propose an epistemological paradigm wherein concordant polyphony served as a

corrective to the universal imbalance, originating first from human bodies, moving through to communal singing bodies, and finally, having reached the ears of saints, appeasing the heavens as well.

This discussion in Chapter 3 paves the ground for an investigation of music's practical role in civic healing in Chapter 4. Here, I examine three motets that allude in some way to the litany: Gaffurius's *Virgo dei digna* and *O beate Sebastiane*, and Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane*. I situate these three works in the context of the plague procession, a common solution when the disease struck. I begin with a survey of processional practices in times of crises, with a particular focus on the ways in which they encourage much needed community-building and foster a sense of civic identity. However, processions, while highly recommended by church authorities, exacerbated anxieties about contagion on the part of doctors and health magistrates, who condemned large congregations of people in churches and other public spaces. I conclude the chapter with a look at the ways in which music could again navigate between competing pestilential prescriptions.

In the fifth and final chapter, I return once again to the doctor's prescriptions. The object of study here is Paolo Caracciolo's 1582 collection, *Il Primo libro de madrigali*, which contains settings of Petrarchan poetry and other amorous texts, among which we find a spiritual madrigal devoted to St. Sebastian. The *prima parte* of this madrigal, *Santo Guerrier la cui terrena spoglia*, is a solemn prayer that refers to actual events that took place during the 1576-78 plague in Milan. Where the *prima parte* is solemn and almost motet-like, the *seconda parte* ratchets up the drama and heart-wrenching affects with poignant madrigalisms. A conundrum arises when we consider

the work in relation to the medical advice regarding emotions and music-making prevalent in Renaissance plague treatises. On one hand, doctors advise against negative affects such as fear and sadness, for such emotions dispose the body to pestilence; on the other, they prescribe the use of music and songs to alleviate gloom and bolster health. What is the status, then, of “sad” music within this medical paradigm? Looking to the oft-prescribed panaceas Mithradatium and theriac, which function on the basis of “homeopathy,” I argue that negative emotions elicited by music can inure listeners to real emotions of the same kind. This idea of emotional fortification through exposure is consistent with the new understanding of Aristotelian *katharsis* emerging in literary circles in the *Cinquecento*.

This dissertation provides a glimpse of Renaissance musical life and presents a cross-section of pre-modern plague culture. By tracing the thread of music through the fabric of pestilential discourse and practice, we can begin to understand aspects of a disease that shaped the development of European culture in fundamental ways. By the same process, we can conversely come to understand aspects of music and musical works that notations on a page cannot possibly express. We can regain an appreciation of the power of music and some of its wondrous and potent effects that we no longer experience or expect. We can also recover the sense of urgency that attended these works, to value them anew not only as aesthetic objects, but also as traces of the struggle against a devastating disease.

Chapter 1

Medicine for the Body and the Soul

In his sixteenth-century plague treatise, Niccolo Massa provides the following sanitary guidelines:

Many people, from fear and imagination alone, have fallen to pestilential fever; therefore, it is necessary to be joyful...One should stay in a beautiful place, such as a bright home adorned with tapestries and other trappings, with scents and fumigations, according to one's station and means. Or take a walk in a well-appointed garden, since the soul is restored by this. Furthermore, the soul gladdens in meeting dear friends and in talking of joyful and funny things. It is especially advantageous to listen to songs [cantilenas] and lovely instrumental music, and to play now and then, and to sing with a quiet voice, to read books and pleasant stories, to listen to stories that provoke moderate laughter, to look at pictures that please the eyes...to wear lovely and colourful silken garments, and to look at silver vessels and to wear rings and gems, especially those with properties that resist plague and poison.¹

To our modern eyes, Niccolo's advice may not be legible as a medical prescription.

Aside from a few notes that may resonate with us as "aroma therapy" or "music

¹ Multi ex solo timore, et imaginatione, inciderunt in febrem pestilentialem, igitur gaudere oportet...Maneat in locis amaenis ut si in domo sit lucida, ornataapedibus, et aliis ornamentis, secundum hominum dignitates, et facultates cum iam dicitis odore[n]tis et suffumigiis vel deambulet per viridarium am[o]enum aut alium locum quoniam in istis recreatur et reficitur animus. Praeterea exhilarat animus si cum amicis charissimis congregiamur, et cum ipsis de rebus inducentibus gaudium et promouentibus risum colloquamur. Plurimum etiam conducit audire cantilenas, et instrumenta musicae delectabilia, eaque interdum pulsare, cantareque voce tamen submissa, legere libros, et historias delectabiles, audire histriones, qui risum moderatum prouocent, inspicere picturas quae oculos delectant, ut sunt matronae venustae et honest[a]e, induere vestimenta serica, et alia coloribus visui gratissimis intacta, et inspicere vasa argentea ac annulis et gemmis manus ornare presertim cum illis in quibus est proprietas resistendi aeri pestilentiali, et venenis... Niccolo Massa, *Liber de febre pestilentiali, ac de pestichiis* (Venice, 1540), 39r-v.

therapy”—which today are not medical commonplaces in any event—this passage of Niccolo’s plague tract seems to be no more than well intentioned encouragement to “stay positive” or to “relax.” Moreover, we may be tempted to dismiss Niccolo’s caution against fear and imagination as a case of squeamishness. Certainly, his prescriptions elsewhere of what to eat and drink, and his recipe for a plague pill register with us as more serious advice—diets and drugs, after all, are the more recognizable touchstones of modern medicine.

On this point, Borges’s story about a Chinese encyclopaedia, which so delighted Foucault and “shattered the familiar landmarks of [his] thought,” seems particularly apposite.² Borges writes of *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, which divides the animal kingdom into such inconceivable categories as “those that belong to the Emperor,” “those that are embalmed,” “those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush,” “those that have just broken the water pitcher,” and “those that, from a long way off, look like flies.”³ “In the wonderment of this taxonomy,” Foucault writes, “the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking that... [But] what is impossible is not the propinquity of the things listed, but the very site on which their propinquity would be possible.”⁴ *Mutatis*

² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge Classics (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), xv.

³ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins,” in *Borges, a Reader: A Selection from the Writings of Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Alastair Reid (New York: Dutton, 1981), 141.

⁴ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xv-xvi.

mutandis, to understand the propinquity of music, pills, stories, bloodletting, and well-appointed gardens in anti-pestilential prescriptions, as well as the propinquity of fear, imagination, and disease, we need to recover the very site of their propinquity—to retrace the anatomical map of the pre-modern body and the psycho-somatic bond that held together its faculties.

Imaginatio facit casum

To understand music's place in the pestilential pharmacopoeia, we must first understand the pre-modern process of perception-cognition and its impact on health. The key here is the imagination, or the *imaginatio*, an internal sense faculty that is seated either in the front ventricle of the brain (according to Galen and Avicenna) or the heart (Aristotle). Broadly speaking, the *imaginatio* functions as a gateway between sense and intellect. When a sensible object is perceived by one or more of the external senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—a simulacrum of its accidental properties is taken into the inner senses.⁵ This simulacrum would first enter the *sensus communis* (the common sense), which perceives and collates the incoming sensations. (We owe our ability to perceive a well-cooked piece of steak by sight, taste, smell, and touch, for example, to the *sensus communis*.) The *sensus communis*, however, cannot retain these sensations for long; otherwise, we would constantly perceive an object that is no longer there. Instead, the sensible forms are passed onto the *imaginatio*, a kind of memory that

⁵ For a cogent and succinct description of these and other inner sensitive faculties, see E. Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: A Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Warburg Institute Surveys 6 (London: Warburg Institute, 1975), 43-47; and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *On the Imagination*, trans. Harr Caplan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930).

stores the sensations. If the *sensus communis* is like water—receptive of impressions, but ephemeral—then the *imaginatio* is like stone, more recalcitrant, allowing for more permanence. The *imaginatio* can pass sensations back into the *sensus communis* so that they can be perceived even when nothing is directly sensed. It is on account of this persistence of sensations that the *imaginatio* is often described as “vain” or “wandering.”⁶

The *imaginatio* also serves as a seat for higher cognitive processes. One of these, the *vis imaginativa*, can combine and recombine the materials in the *imaginatio* to produce new forms, such as a two-headed man or a mountain made of gold. A healthy individual could imagine buboes on his or her body through this *vis imaginativa*. Another power, the *vis extimativa*, extracts intentions and forms judgements upon the materials in the *imaginatio* based either on instinct or previous experience, giving rise to passions (variously termed “affections of the soul,” or “accidents of the soul”); a dog fears the form of a stick, for example, or a patient the sound of a funeral bell on account of this process. Although we can roughly think of passions as “emotions,” these products of the imagination were not mere “mental states” nor did they merely create “mental illness” in our modern-day sense of the term. In the pre-Cartesian world, there was a psycho-somatic two-way traffic by which the mind could affect physical health and vice versa.⁷ In the *Isagoge*, Johannitius thus describes the relationship between the accidents of the soul and bodily health:

⁶ Pico, *De imaginatione*, 29.

⁷ Michel de Montaigne describes this phenomenon as a “close stitching of mind to body, each communicating its fortunes to the other.” Michel de Montaigne, “On the Power of the Imagination,” in *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, trans. and ed. Michael Andrew Screech (London: Allen Lane, 1991), p. 118. See also Peregrine Horden, ed., *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy Since Antiquity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 26.

Sundry affections of the mind produce an effect within the body, such as those which bring the natural heat from the interior of the body to the outer parts of the surface of the skin. Sometimes this happens suddenly, as with anger; sometimes gently and slowly, as with delight and joy. Some affections, again, withdraw the natural heat and conceal it either suddenly, as with fear and terror, or again gradually, as distress. And again some affections disturb the natural energy both internal and external, as, for instance, grief.⁸

The passions disturb the balance of humours and push around inner vital heat. Such movements of heat within the body can have powerful consequences. Cautioning against the negative affections (especially fear) in his 1504 plague tract, Gaspar Torella enumerates their negative effects:

Rage shall not come into the regimen of health. Fury, sadness, fretting, worry, and fear are also to be avoided, for in a state of fear, heat and the vital spirit move inward rapidly, and it corrupts, chills, dries up, emaciates, and diminishes the natural human state, for it freezes the entire body, dims the spirit, blunts ingenuity, impedes reason, obscures judgement, and dulls the memory.⁹

In pre-modern medicine, these powerful accidents were classified under the category *res non naturales*, and this, in distinction to *res naturales* (all the things that constitute the human body, such as the humours, the elements, and the organs) and *res contra naturam* (diseases and their causes). *Res non naturales* are things that are external to, but nevertheless affect the body. The non-naturals are generally six in number and include (1) air, (2) food and drink, (3) motion and rest, (4) sleep and waking, (5) repletion

⁸ Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 43.

⁹ Sed nihilom[inus] ira no[n] intrabit regimen sanitatis Cauendu[m] est etia[m] a furore: tristitia: cogitatione: sollicitudine: timore: na[m] in timore calor et spiritus cito mouent ad intra: et naturam ho[mi]nis corumpit: in frigidat eni[m] et exicat et [a]pparat ad maciem et extenuat: quia totu[m] corpus co[n]stringit et spiritu[m] ob tenebrat: et ingenu[m] hebetat: et ratione[m] impedit. Iudiciu[m] obscurat; memoria[m] obtundit. Gaspar Torella, *Qui cupit a peste non solum preservari sed et curari hoc legat consilium* (Rome: Besicken, 1504), Bii^v.

and evacuation, and (6) the passions. In theory, one could preserve or restore health by manipulating the non-naturals; a carefully controlled regimen of food, drink, exercise, and passions can help stave off or even reverse illness. Niccolo Massa's caution against imagination and fear is, in this respect, no mere squeamishness.

Occasionally, the matter of the body may adapt itself directly to the forms apprehended in the *imaginatio*. These perceived forms travel into the blood and imprint themselves onto the body, resulting in some potent somatic changes. In one of the earliest plague tracts to be issued after the Black Death, Jacme d'Agramont warns against a wayward imagination by recalling the common knowledge that the influence of a mother's *imaginatio* is so great, "it will change the form and figure of the infant in the mother's womb."¹⁰ So that there is no doubt regarding the power of the imagination, Jacme invokes biblical authority:

To prove the great efficacy and the great power of imagination over our body and our lives one can quote in proof...the Holy Scripture where we read in Genesis chap. 30 that the sheep and goats that Jacob kept, by imagination and by looking at the boughs which were of divers colors put before them by Jacob when they conceived, gave birth to lambs and kids of divers colors and speckled white and black.¹¹

The effects of the *imaginatio* can be downright miraculous. The medieval mystic Margaret of Città-di-Castello (1287-1320), despite being blind, imagined and spoke of the holy family so fervently throughout her life that, post mortem, her heart was dissected and was found to contain three little stones carved with the Nativity scene: baby Jesus,

¹⁰ Jacme d'Agramont, "Regiment de Preservacio a Epidimia o Pestilencia e Mortaldats," trans. M.L. Duran-Reynals, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 23 (1949): 84.

¹¹ Jacme d'Agramont, "Regiment," 84.

Mary at the manger, and Joseph with a white dove.¹² Her habitual and concentrated meditation had drawn the images of her *imaginatio* onto her very flesh. Biblical and hagiographical accounts aside, the power of the *imaginatio* is evident enough through everyday experiences; “Imagine someone eating a sour fruit,” Nicolas Houël writes in his plague tract, “and your teeth will ache and go numb.”¹³

All things considered, the *imaginatio* is a potent sensory faculty. Not only can it “wander” over forms that are absent from immediate sensation, it can also conjure formal hybrids “such as cannot be brought to light by nature,” according to Pico.¹⁴ Considering also the psychosomatic effects that the *imaginatio* may generate, we can begin to appreciate why the mere imagining of plague, regardless of whether calamity is actually

¹² According to her *vita*, the dissection was made because the brothers keeping her body remembered that Margaret had often spoken of carrying a precious treasure in her heart: Aliquot post dies nonnulli ex fratribus, memoria repetentes B. Margaritam, dum in humanis ageret, cum suis domesticis saepius repetere solitam esse, pretiosum thesaurum in corde gestare; capti desiderio cor inspiciendi, et quadam poenitentia ducti quod prius non inspexissent, humata repetunt exta: et cor inter sepulta viscera quaeritantes, intestinum, a quo cor ipsum dependet, incidunt; tresque statim lapides, quasi sculpti globi, mepisorum magnitudine, mirabiliter erumpunt: in quibus imagunculae quaedam, Christi nativitatem cum beata Virgine ac praesepe, nec non S. Josephum cum alba Columba representantes, inspiciebantur. “Vita beatae Margaritae virginis de civitate Castelli” c.8, ed. A. Poncele, *Analecta Bollandiana* 19 (1900): 27-8; Sheila Barker, “The Gendered Imagination and Plague Art in Early Modern Italy” (paper presented at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Venice, April 2010); see also Chiara Frugoni, “Female Mystics, Visions, and Iconography,” in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, trans. Margery J. Scheider [*Mistiche e devote nell’Italia tardomedievale*, 1992] (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 139.

¹³ [L]a forte apprehension comme dict le bon Auiceine souuent amaine et induict l’accident, co[m]me on voit par quotidiane experience, mesmes pour exemple contemplez un personnage manger fruitz aigres et acerbes le contemplant, vous aurez les dentz aches et stupides. Nicolas Houël, *Traité de la peste... Avec les vertus et facultez de l’electuaire de l’oeuf* (Paris: Sevestre, 1573), 17r.

¹⁴ Pico, *De imaginatione*, 31.

at hand, was thought to be enough to bring on buboes.¹⁵ The care of the *imaginatio* and the passions was therefore crucial during times of plague. To that end, the senses—gateways to the internal sensitive faculties and ultimately to the body—had to be safeguarded. Niccolo Massa warns against “lingering in dark and fetid places, gazing upon sick and dead bodies and other monstrous things, looking at dreadful pictures,” for they weaken and dispose the viewers to illness.¹⁶ Similarly, Jacme d’Agramont advises that during such calamitous times, “no chimes and bells should toll in case of death because the sick are subject to evil imaginings when they hear the death bells.”¹⁷ When plague broke out in Pistoia in 1348, civic authorities sought to control the soundscape of the city precisely for that reason, revealing the depth of belief in the capacity of sound to negatively affect the sick. On 2 May, a city ordinance was issued banning, among other things, town-criers and drummers from summoning any citizen of Pistoia to a funeral or

¹⁵ Fugiat etiam botrus, fructus crudos, balneum, iram, melancoliam, et ymaginacionem de pestilencia, quia sola ymaginacio aliquando facit apostema. Anonymous, *Regimen bonum ad praeservandum de pestilencia* (ca. 1400), in Karl Sudhoff, ed., “Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren nach der Epidemie des ‘schwarzen todes’ 1348,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 11 (1919), 72. *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* hereafter abbreviated as *SA* (Sudhoffs Archiv).

¹⁶ [F]ugiendae etiam sunt causae, tristitiam infere[n]tes, ut est mora in locis obscuris, et faetidibus, ac inspectiones corporum languentium, et mortuorum, et rerum monstruosarum et pictur[a]e horrend[a]e ac etiam lectionum tristitia[n]tium, neq[ue] bonu[s] est interesse narrationibus miseris et lamentationibus, et similibus, quoniam mirum in modum tristem reddunt audientem, et omnes uirtutes exterminant, unde redditur corpus paratum ad malas aegritudines, immo ut in primo redditur corpus paratum ad malas aegritudines, immo ut in primo tractatu dictum est. Massa, *Ragionamento ... sopra le infermità*, 39r. One could speculate that, aside from isolating contagion in the direct sense, *lazarettos* (plague hospitals) kept sick bodies and corpses from public view, preventing a further contamination of the imagination.

¹⁷ Jacme d’Agramont, “Regiment,” 84-85.

corpse visitation, under penalty of ten denari.¹⁸ Furthermore, items ten and twelve of the ordinance state:

10. In order that the sound of bells does not attack or arouse fear amongst the sick, the keepers of the campanile of the cathedral church of Pistoia shall not allow any of the bells to be rung during funerals, and no one else shall dare or presume to ring any of the bells on such occasions, under the penalty of ten denari... When a parishioner is buried in his parish church, or a member of a fraternity without the fraternity church, the church bells may be rung, but only on one occasion and not excessively; same penalty...

12. No one shall dare or presume to raise a lament or cry for anyone who has died outside Pistoia, or summon a gathering of people other than the kinsfolk and spouse of the deceased, or have bells rung, or use criers or any other means to invite people throughout the city to such a gathering, under the penalty of twenty-five denari...

However it is to be understood that none of this applies to the burial of knights, doctors of law, judges, and doctors of physic, whose bodies can be honoured by their heirs at their burial in any way they please.¹⁹

¹⁸ IX. – Item providerunt et ordinaverunt, quod nullus preco bapnitor aut naccharinus dieti communis Pistorii audeat vel presumat publice vel occulte bapnire aut invitare aliquos cives Pistorii, ut vadant ad funera vel ad mortuum; nec aliqua persona eidem bapnitori tubatori preconii aut naccarino conmictere predicta, sub pena librarum decem denariorum auferenda cuilibet tali preconii tubatori bapnitori aut naccharino invitanti aut bapnienti, quam etiam illi cuius parte bapnum seu invitatio facta fuerit, vice qualibet. A. Chiappelli, ed., “Gli ordinamenti sanitari del Comune di Pistoia contro la pestilenza del 1348,” *Archivio Storico Italiano*, series 4, volume 20 (1887), 11; translation adapted from Rosemary Horrox, trans. and ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 197. See also Christopher Macklin, “Musica sanat corpus per animam’: Towards an Understanding of the Use of Music in Response to Plague, 1350-1600” (PhD diss., University of York, 2008), 30-34.

¹⁹ X.- Item providerunt et ordinaverunt, ad hoc ut sonus campanarum non invadat infirmis, nec contra eos timor insurgat, quod companarii seu custodes stantes super campanile maioris ecclesie caethedralis civitatis Pistorii non permittant pulsari aliquam campanam occasione funeris mortuorum existentem super dicto campanile, nec aliqua alia persona audeat vel presumat pulsare de ipsis campanis nec aliquam earum dicta occasione, pena librarum decem denariorum... Ad ecclesias quoque parrochiales dictorum defunctorum, et fratrum, si apud ecclesias ipsorum fratrum sepelliri contigerit, possint campane ipsius ecclesie parocchialis et ecclesie fratrum pulsari, dum tamen pulsetur solum una vice tantum et modicum, sub pena predicta auferenda modo predicto...

XII. – Item providerunt et ordinaverunt, quod nulla persona audeat vel presumat elevare aut elevari facere aliquem piantum vel clamorem de aliqua persona, vel occasione alicuius persone, que decessit extra civitatem et districtum vel comitatum Pisotrii, nec dicta occasione aliquam personam adunari in aliquo loco, exceptis tamen consanguineis et consortibus talis persone defunte, nec dicta occasione aliquam campanam pulsari vel pulsari facere, vel bapniri per civitatem Pistorii per precones, vel aliter dicta occasione invitatem aliquam fieri sub pena

It is possible that this initial prohibition did not gain much traction, since the authorities soon felt the need to increase the fine and totalize the ban; on 4 June, this revision was issued: “At the burial of anyone no bell is to be rung at all... under the penalty of twenty-five denari from the heirs or next of kin of the deceased.”²⁰

If horrific sounds on the pestilential soundscape can have a negative effect on the imagination and the body, then joyous and harmonious music can conversely function as an anodyne. To counteract the effects of fear with joy (*gaudium*), or at least to distract the mind from vile imaginings, authors of plague tracts prescribe, time and again, socialization, games, story-telling, beautiful objects, and joyous music. Such prescriptions appear in the earliest of medical plague treatises. Responding to the Black Death, the Florentine Tommaso del Garbo writes:

Do not occupy your mind with death, passion, or anything likely to sadden or grieve you, but give your thoughts over to delightful and pleasing things. Associate with happy and carefree people and avoid all melancholy. Spend your time in your house, but not with too many people, and at your leisure in gardens with fragrant plants, vines, and willows, when they are flowering... And make use

librarum vigintiquinque denariorum auferenda, tam elevanti piantum vel clamorem et campanam pulsanti, et preconii bapnienti vel persone invitanti, quam eunti ad ipsam adunationem vel facienti invitare, et campanam pulsari facienti, et cuilibet et qualibet vice.

Hoc tamen intellecto in quolibet scriptorum ordinamentorum loquentium de defuntis et honorandis sepulturis mortuorum, quod predicta non vendicent sibi locum in sepulturis corporum alicuius militis de corredo, legum doctoris, iudicis et medici fixici, quorum corpora ex dignitatibus eorundem liceat ipsorum heredibus in eorum expulturis honorare ut placet. A. Chiappelli, “Gli ordinamenti sanitari,” 11-12; translation adapted Horrox, *Black Death*, 197-8. Such funerary restrictions were common throughout the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and similar civic ordinances multiplied in the late sixteenth century. See Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁰ Imprimis providerunt et ordinaverunt sapientes predicti, quod pro sepultura alicuius defunte persone pulsari non possit nec debeat aliqua campana modo aliquo...sub pena librarum vigintiquinque denariorum auferenda heredibus talis persone defunte... A. Chiappelli, “Gli ordinamenti sanitari,” 20; translation from Horrox, *Black Death*, 201.

of songs and minstrelsy and other pleasurable tales without tiring yourselves out, and all the delightful things that bring anyone comfort.²¹

Writing in 1382, Nicolo de Burgo similarly advises, “Try in every way to be glad and joyous using games, dances, instrumental music, and singing (*sono instrumentorum musicalium et canentium in voce*); and keep company with joyful people...wear elegant and beautiful clothes, and smell aromatic fragrances.”²² Cardo of Milan prescribes “comforting conversation, sweet and upbeat songs (*cantus jocosos et suaves*), and excellent laughter,”²³ and Johannis de Noctho calls for “cantilenas, stories, and melodies.”²⁴

²¹ “Ora è da vedere del modo del prendere letizia e piacer in questo tal tempo di pistolenza e nell'animo e nella mente tua. E sappi che una delle più perfette cose in questo caso è con ordine prendere allegrezza, nella quale si osservi questo ordine, cioè prima non pensare della morte , ovvero passione d'alcuno, ovvero di cosa t'abi a contristare, ovvero a dolere, ma i pensieri sieno sopra cose dilettevoli e piacevoli. L' usanze sieno con persone liete e gioconde, e fugasi ogni maninconia , e l'usanza sia co non molta gente nella casa ove tu ai a stare e abitare; e in giardini a tempo loro ove sieno erbe odorifere, e come sono vite e salci, quando le vite fioriscono e simile cose... E usare canzone e giullerie e altre novelle piacevole senza fatica di corpo, e tutte cose dilettevoli che confortino altrui.” Tommaso del Garbo et al., *Contra alla pest* (Fiorenz: Appresso i Giunti, 1576), 40-1; translation adapted from Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 175.

²² Sed conetur unusquisque pro posse laetari et gaudere omni modo gaudii mediocris ex ludis et tripudiis sono instrumentorum musicalium et canentium in voce remissa omni alio modo solatii ex his, in quibus solaciantis animus delectetur, adhaerendo sociis iucundis gaudentibus sanis, et mundis vestibus pulcherrimis et odorificatis inductis, et maxime eius, quorum delectabilis est familiaritas, quorum tamen non sunt nimia multitudo et elligendi sunt pro posse tales in quibus continua spes et fiducia habetur. Nicolo de Burgo, *Consilium illatum contra Pestilentiam* (1382), SA 5 (1912), 356.

²³ Relinquatur ira, tristitia et furor, invidia et sollicitudo, quia ista incendunt sanguinem, sicut ira, furor, incensio inducit morbum, tristitia et vigilia [?], sollicitudo naturam deducunt et ad[d]eo debilitant, quod morbum inducunt. Eligatur gaudium temperatum, habitudo cum dilectis audiendo sermones solaciosos et cantus jocosos et suaves eccellente consonatione. Cardone de Mediolano, *Regimen in pestilentia* (1378), SA 6 (1913), 322.

²⁴ Sexto dico quod ab accidentibus animae, quibus se custodiat ut sunt timor, ira, tristitia, nimia sollicitudo, cogitationes et semilia. Ex iuxta posse procuret gaudere, laetari audire cantilenas, ysotiras et melodias. Johannes de Noctho, *Consilium de peste* (Bologna, 1398), SA 5 (1912), 390.

Similar prescriptions can be found throughout the Renaissance. In the fifteenth century, one writer champions the use of stories and music, writing that they, along with “good hope and imagination” are “often more useful than a doctor and his instruments.”²⁵ Johannes Hartmann likewise prescribes cantilenas and games,²⁶ and Blasius Barcelonensis advises his readers to delight in melodies and other pleasures, except coitus (at least not too much of it, and not too strenuously).²⁷ Writing near the end of the century, Petrus de Tussignano prescribes melodies, cantilenas, and lovely stories,²⁸ and Antonio Guainerio suggests listening to cantilenas and instrumental music and reading through story books and fables.²⁹

Prescriptions for music were also numerous throughout the sixteenth century. For example, Johann Widmann advises his readers to cling to the hope of salvation and to obtain joy in all possible ways, but above all, through harmonious music (*musicis*

²⁵ Historias eciam delectabiles et musicalia instrumenta non refutent, et postremo pre omnibus, et in primis sit quilibet fortis spei et bone ymaginationis. Hec enim sepius plus faciunt quam medicus cum suis instrumentis secundum Galienum in pronosticis... Anonymous plague tract in Helmstedter Kodex 783 (1405), *SA* 11 (1919), 89.

²⁶ De accidentibus animae. Ab moni ira, timore et sollicitudine precauendum... sed letare atque gaudere... cantilenis... aut in ludo scaccarum... [Ellipses from Sudhoff]. Johannes Hartmann, *Praevisivum Regimen contra pestem* (1450-1500), *SA* 16 (1924-1925), 53.

²⁷ Fugiant iram, tristitiam, anxietates, delectentur in melodijs et ceteris oblectamentis preter multo coytu, quo si sit assuetus, coeat uentre non uacuo nec multum pleno, nec laboret nec sudet nec fortiter hanelet cum coyt. Blasius Brascionensis, Ms. XV. 150, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Florence, *SA* 17 (1925), 109.

²⁸ [S]ed gaudere, letari cum melodiis, catilenis, historiis delectabilibus. Petrus de Tussignano, *Tractatus de peste* (1470), 9v.

²⁹ Cantilenas amenas [?] instrumenta musicalia que periepe audiat libros historierum vel fabularum delectantium nonunqu[em] [per]legat. Antonio Guainerio, *De peste; de venenis* (Venice: Reynaldus de Novimagio, 1487?), n.p.

delectatis armoniis).³⁰ Gaspar Torrella, in 1504, warns especially against thinking of the plague and recommends the use of “dance [with] a variety of music (*tripudiis sonis variis*) that delight the soul.”³¹ With more elaboration, Johannes Salius advises,

Play the harp, lute, flutes and other instruments [*Cythara testudo fistulae aliaque instrumenta musica pulsant*]. Let songs be sung [*cantilena*], fables be recited, joyful stories be read, and the songs [*carmina*] of the lighthearted muse be played. Finally, let the space where you spend your time be clean and well-decorated. Let beautiful clothes, rings, belts, jewellery, and all sorts of other ornaments of gold, silver, and precious gems be worn, so that the soul may be uplifted by such cheerfulness.³²

Jean-Marie Mignot advises his readers to follow Alexander the Great’s regimen and delight in songs and precious objects.³³ In his 1551 treatise, Benoît Textor recommends music (*instrumens de musique...chansons licites et convenables*), along with more physical recreations such as archery, wrestling, tennis, *boules*, bowling, backgammon,

³⁰ Adherendum ergo erit spei bone de salute ac leticie et gaudio [patis?] ex omni modo et presertim cum musicis. Alia quippe naturaliter musicis delectatis armoniis: ut ?bus in politicis d hecita fiant hortor: ut deum non offendam. Johann Widmann, *Tractatus de pestilentia* (Tübingen, 1501), n.p.

³¹ Insuper letitia est utendu[m] ac tripudiis sonis variis in quibus anima delectet: et super o[mn]ia cauendu[m] est a cogitatione pestis. Torella, *Qui cupit*, Bii^v.

³² Cythara testudo fistulae aliaq[ue] instrume[n]ta musica pulsant. Ca[n]tilenae sonore ca[n]tentur. Recitent fabellae. Historiae iucu[n]dae lega[n]tur. Carmina leuiusculis misis ludantur. Locus deniq[ue] quo degis fit mu[n]dus. Tapetis, cortiniisq[ue] amaene[m] exornatus, pulchra uestime[n]ta induantur. Annuli, balthei, fibulae, monilia et reliqua id genus orname[n]ta ex auro arge[n]to gemmisq[ue] praeciosis porte[n]tur, ut animus quadam alacritatis uoluptate afficiatur. Johannes Salius, *De praeservatione a pestilentia et ipsius cura opusculum* (Vienna, 1510), n.p.

³³ [P]ulcras, formosas, delicatasque facies homo sepe intueatur, iuxta phylosophi sententiam in libro de regimine sanitatis ad Alexandrum Magnum, qui sane non incivilis, et ingenii particeps, misis, et ingenio vacet, cantilenas s[a]epe audiat, vestes l[a]eticiam inferentes et gemmas et praeciosis cum lapidibus annulos portet et id genus, trahit enim sua quemque voluptas... Jean-Marie Mignot, *Mignotydea de peste & humanum alterantibus corpus* (Milan: Gotardus Ponticus, 1535), 96v.

hunting and fishing.³⁴ Another Frenchman, Nicolas de Nancel, personally recommends that

before and immediately following meals, stay quiet and calm; some time after, take small walks, and refresh the spirit by some chaste activity. And in my opinion, I prefer music [*la musique*] to all else, if someone knows how to play the lute [*toucher du luth*] or some other instrument, just as I do. For it's not a good idea immediately after drinking and eating to sing with force; for that much force incites the rheums, especially for those who are not accustomed to it.³⁵

Later, on the accidents of the soul, Nicolas writes:

It will be good to read the holy Bible or holy and notable stories; tell some fun tales without villainy; play games sometimes, such as *aux eschecqs, à l'ourche, aux dammes, tarots, reinette, triquetrac, au cent, au flux, an poinct* and other such games, which are well known through the jokester Frenchman Rabelais, the father and author of Pantagruelism. But play without choler, and with pleasure; not for high stakes or for greed... Also sing sweetly and melodiously some sweet spiritual song [*chanson spirituelle*], not crass words or songs of villainy that some drunk singers and musicians might belch or vomit up. Or play musical instruments, like I said before, for music greatly refreshes the spirit...³⁶

³⁴ [I] est utile de se recreer par jeux honnestes, licites, et plaisans, selon lestat dun chacun, comme à larbalestre, à larc, à luitte, à la paulme, à la boule, aux quills, aux tables, & par les semblables. Item par la chasses, et la pesche, par instrumens de musique, par chansons licites et convenables, par confabulations et lectures agreables et non laborieuses. Benoît Textor, *De la maniere de preserver de la peste* (Lyon: Tournes et Gazeau, 1551), 55.

³⁵ Et comme l'exercice a lieu devant le repas; ainsi tost après le past convient demourer coy et stable: ou quelque peu de temps en après, faire quelques petites proumenades, et recreer l'esprit à quelque honeste esbattement. Et quant à moy, je prefere la musique à tous autres, si quelqu'un sçait toucher du luth, ou jouer de quelque autre instrument musical: et je le pratique ainsi. Car il n'est point bon tost après avoir beu et mangé, de chanter avec force; pourautant que telle violence esmeut les rheumes; principalement à ceux qui n'y sont accoustumés. Nicolas de Nancel, *Discours tres ample de la peste, divisé en trois livres; adressant à messieurs de Tours* (Paris: Denys du Val, 1581), livre second, 137.

³⁶ Sera donc bon de lire la saincte Bible; ou belles saintes, et notables histoires; faire quelque co[n]tes facetieux, sans detraction ou vilenie, jouer quelquefois aux eschecqs, à l'ourche, aux dammes, tarots, reinette, triquetrac, au cent, au flux, au poinct, et semblables jeux, lesquels mieux sçavoir specializer le momus Gaulois Rabelais, pere et autheur du Pantagruelisme. Mais jouer sans cholere, et par plaisir; non pour gros jeu, ou pour avarice...ou plustost chanter doucement et melodieusement quelque douce chanson spirituelle, non des vilenies et mots de guelles, que vomissent ou rottent ne sçay quels chantres et musiciens enyurés: ou jouer d'instruments musicaux, comme j'ay predict: Car la musique recree grandement l'esprit... Nicolas de Nancel, *Discours tres ample*, livre second, 156.

Writing in 1565, Borgarucci calls for “music (*suoni*), games, and comedies,”³⁷ and Giovanni Battista da Napoli likewise urges the use of games, music, song (*suoni e canti*), and stories to pass the time.³⁸ The prescriptions of music, beautiful clothing, and gems with occult powers can be found as late as 1599.³⁹

A number of generalizations can be made about the medical prescription of music in these plague tracts. First, where music is mentioned, it is almost always within a discussion of the imagination and the accidents of the soul, sitting alongside things such as food, drink, exercise, and rest in the medical paradigm. Nicolas de Nancel’s description of music as a post-meal activity falls under his discussion of exercise and is therefore idiosyncratic in that respect. Second, although explicit references to music do not appear in every plague treatise, an overwhelming number of plague tracts do refer to the accidents of the soul. Therefore, even where music is not specifically mentioned, there is presumably still a place for it in the anti-pestilential regimen.

³⁷ ... e quelle sieno allegre, e si diletino di suoni, canti, giuochi, comedie, e altri cosi fatti trattenimenti, che sogliono in modo contentar gli animi de gli ammalati, che punto non sentono dolore alcuno. Prospero Borgarucci, *Trattato di peste* (Venice: Marco di Maria Salernitano, 1565), 100.

³⁸ ...ogn'un doverà studiare di stare allegro lassando tutti i fastidii e negocii, e con giochi suoni e canti, e leggere de I storie, de piaceri e altre cose simili passare il tempo. Giovanni Battista da Napoli, *Breve et utile trattato: e necessario à ciascuno per conservarsi sano nel tempo della peste* (Venice: Marziale Avanzi, 1575), 11v.

³⁹ [D]i tristitia: per non infiammar il sangue da timori: imperoche li timorosi sono molta pronti alla Epidemia: però si deve star honestamente aliegri, vestirisi di più nobili panni che s’hanno: trattenendosi con soni, canti, giochi, che non siano di fatica: portar ancho in mano anelli di oro con pietre preciose, come saffiri, smeraldi, rubini, ò altre gioie, che rendono alegri nelle quali sono molte virtù occulte, tenendo chi può la sua casa fornita di tutte le cose necessarie acciò non si stia occupatio ogni giorno e praticar doue si vende. Christoforo Sale, *Trattato di epidemia* (Treviso: Deuchino, 1599), 6v.

Third, recommendations for music often accompany suggestions of adorning a home with beautiful furnishings and decorations. The authors thereby impart a sense of domesticity and seem to advocate music-making in private, rather than public, contexts. Coherent with this view, music is very often mentioned in the same breath as games, jokes, stories, and keeping company with a small coterie of close friends and loved ones. Nicolas Houël comes closest to this point when he writes that “keeping to yourself and being solitary is not good, but neither is being in a large crowd; find happy people and honest recreation, occasionally sing, play flutes, viols, and other musical instruments.”⁴⁰ A large part of the emphasis, therefore, falls on the idea of light-hearted and private sociability; the writers are not prescribing solitary contemplation, but rather active and intimate engagement. Lastly, the writers used a variety of terms for music and music-making. While some such as “cantus,” “melodia,” “carmina,” and “harmonia” are very general and could refer to a variety of musics, others like “canzone,” “cantilena,” “toucher du luth,” and the references to “tripudium” imply lower genres of secular, amatory, and dance music. These genres, again, suggest social and even physical participation. Once more, Nicolas de Nancel’s specification of “chanson spirituelle” is idiosyncratic in this regard, as is the direct juxtaposition of high-minded activities (reading the Bible) with low-brow amusements (Gargantua’s games). This instance aside, the beneficial joy conferred by music was, from the medical perspective, meant very much to be a worldly one.

⁴⁰ Pareilleme[n]t foy tenir seul et solitaire n’est pas bon, aussi n’est il estre en multitude et gra[n]de co[m]pagnie, mais fault chercher gens ioyeux et honeste plains de recreation, a ouyr quelquefois cha[n]tres, fleustes violes, et aultres instrumens de musique... Houël, *Traité de la peste*, 17r.

Two Settings of O beate Sebastiane

Two motets by Johannes Martini and Gaspar van Weerbeke provide a fitting case study of music's power to provide a salutary joy. The two works set the same prayer text to St. Sebastian:

Prima pars

O beate Sebastiane, miles beatissime cuius precibus tota patria Lombardie fuit liberata a pestifera peste.

O blessed Sebastian, the most holy soldier, by whose prayers the entire land of Lombardy was liberated from the pestiferous plague.

Secunda pars

Libera nos ab ipsa et a maligno ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Free us from that and from evil so that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

The exact source of the text is unknown; it is, however, remarkably similar to a number of prayers contained in plague tracts and is likely a commonly circulated prayer.⁴¹

Agnese Pavanello has identified a gradual for a mass of St. Sebastian from which this text may have been derived: "O Sebastiane, Christi martir egregio, cuius meritis tota Lombardia fuit liberata a mortifera peste, libera nos ab ipsa et a maligno hoste."⁴² There are a number of factors that, taken together, suggest a Milanese origin for the motets. The first is textual: the prayer specifically mentions Lombardy (although it must also be noted

⁴¹ The closest analogue I have found comes from Jean-Marie Mignot's *Mignotydea de peste*, 97r: O Beate martir sancte Sebastiane miles beatissime, tuis meritis et precibus tota provincia seu patria Lombardie fuit liberata a peste mortifera. Libera nos ab ipsa peste et a maligno spiritu et hoste. Ora pro nobis Sancte Sebastiane miles beatissime, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

⁴² Agnese Pavanello, ed., *Gaspar van Weerbeke Collected Works, Part 4: Motets* (Middleton, WI: American Institute of Musicology, 2010), lvi.

that, rather than being a clue to the provenance of the works, this geographic marker may be a reference to Sebastian's *vita* and cultic history). The second, biographical: both composers held posts in Milan. Gaspar spent the bulk of his career with the Sforzas over two tenures (1471-80, 1489-95), and Martini had a brief stay in 1474.⁴³ The third is stylistic. Both motets feature extended chordal-declamatory passages that bookend the works. Rifkin has found that, during the Josquin period, only Milanese works or works by composers associated with Milan feature successions of block-chords at either the very beginning or near the beginning of major sections.⁴⁴

In addition to the use of the same text, there are a number of musical similarities between the two works. In his dissertation on Martini, John Brawley suggests the use of a common chant melody in the two tenors. "It is in fact," Brawley writes, "the tenor lines which are primarily responsible for the similarities [of the two motets], and within the tenor lines the likenesses involve the structurally important tones, those most likely to be derived from a plainsong, rather than specifics of a more ornamental nature."⁴⁵ The two tenors are indeed similar in their melodic fundamentals; the openings, the cadential formulas, as well as the melodic boundaries of each phrase match in almost every instance (see Example 1.1). The most marked difference comes in the "liberata" segment, where Gaspar's melody is far more elaborate, and the cadential pitches are a third apart. Another notable difference occurs at the beginning of the works (Example

⁴³ Paul Merkley and Lora Merkley, *Music and Patronage in the Sforza Court*, Studi sulla storia della musica in Lombardia 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), esp. Chapter 3.

⁴⁴ Joshua Rifkin, "Munich, Milan, and a Marian Motet: Dating Josquin's *Ave Maria...virgo serena*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56 (2003): 260 nn. 50-1.

⁴⁵ John Gray Brawley Jr., "The Magnificats, Hymns, Motets and Secular Compositions of Johannes Martini" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1968), 69-70.

1.2). In the Gaspar motet, the opening block chords conflate the first eight notes, with the superius sounding the first four notes and the tenor the next four simultaneously. In Martini's work, these notes are sung consecutively by the tenor. A common chant source would also account for other significant similarities between the works, mentioned, but not specifically identified by Brawley. The final pitches of the tenor melodic phrases determine the polyphonic cadential pitches in both works, resulting in a remarkably similar cadential pattern (see Table 1.1).

Example 1.1 - Martini and Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane* Tenors Compared

Martini

Gaspar

O beate Sebastiane

Superius

Detailed description: This system shows the first two staves of the musical score. The top staff is for Martini and the bottom staff is for Gaspar. Both are in a tenor clef (C4) and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics 'O beate Sebastiane' are written between the staves. A bracket labeled 'Superius' is placed under the first few notes of Gaspar's line.

Martini

Gaspar

miles beatissime

Detailed description: This system shows the next two staves. The lyrics 'miles beatissime' are written between the staves. The notation continues with a similar melodic line for both tenors.

Martini

Gaspar

cuius precibus

Detailed description: This system shows the next two staves. The lyrics 'cuius precibus' are written between the staves. The notation continues with a similar melodic line for both tenors.

Martini

Gaspar

tota patria

Detailed description: This system shows the next two staves. The lyrics 'tota patria' are written between the staves. The notation continues with a similar melodic line for both tenors.

Martini

Gaspar

Lombardie

Detailed description: This system shows the next two staves. The lyrics 'Lombardie' are written between the staves. The notation continues with a similar melodic line for both tenors.


Martini

Gaspar

fuit libera


Detailed description: This system shows the final two staves. The lyrics 'fuit libera' are written between the staves. The notation continues with a similar melodic line for both tenors.

Martini




a pestifera peste

Gaspar




Martini




Libera nos

Gaspar




Martini




ab ipsa et a maligno

Gaspar




Martini



ut digni efficiamur

Gaspar



Martini




promissionibus

Gaspar




Martini



Christi.

Gaspar



Example 1.2 - Martini and Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane* Openings Compared

Martini

O be - a - - - te, O be - - - a - te

O be - a - - - te, O be - - - a - te

O be - a - - - te, O be - - - a - te

Gaspar

O be - a - te Se - ba - sti a - ne

O be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a - - - - ne

O be - a - te Se - ba - - - sti - - - a - - - ne

O be - a - te Se - ba - - - sti - a - - - ne

Table 1.1 – Metre Changes, Textural Changes, and Cadential Structures of Martini’s and Gaspar’s *O beate Sebastiane*

Martini				Gaspar			
Metre	Text	Pitch	vv. m.	Metre	Text	Pitch	vv. m.
O	O beate	A	SA 4	♩	O beate	Homorhythmic	
	O beate Sebastiane,	Homorhythmic			Sebastiane, Miles	G	STB 30
	Miles beatissime	G	ST 27		beatissime		
	cujus precibus	D	AB 32		cujus precibus	D	TB 37
	tota patria	D	ST 36		tota patria	D	SA 42
	Lombardie	A	TB 42		Lombardie	A	ST 49
	fuit	A	SA 46		fuit	A	AB 51
C	liberata	G	ATB 52	3-color	liberata	G	STB 56
	a pestifera peste	G	ST 54		a pestifera	G	TB 66
	Libera nos	G	SA 56		peste	Bb	STB 71
♩	ab ipsa	G	TB 58	♩	Libera nos	Bb	STB 80
	et a maligno	Bb	STB 62		et a maligno	Bb	STB 87
	ut digni efficiamur	G	STB 73		ut digni efficiamur	G	STB 113
	promissionibus	G	AB 83		promissionibus	G	STB 120
♩	Christi	A	ST 90		Christi	A	ST 132
		Bb	AB 95			G	STB 140
		G	ST 98			Homorhythmic	
		G	SA 10			G	STB 164
		D	AB 11				
		G	STB 12				
		Homorhythmic					
♩		G	STB 14				

But given that the motets set a non-liturgical text that is unlikely to be associated with a chant melody, the similarity between the tenors may be the result of modelling between the composers, rather than the use of a common cantus firmus. A number of

shared features between the two settings bear out this hypothesis. In both, metre changes occur at “fuit liberata” and “promissionibus Christi.” The one instance where the final notes of Martini’s and Gaspar’s tenor do not agree (at “fuit liberata,” where Martini’s tenor ends on G and Gaspar’s on Bb), Martini nevertheless cadences on Bb, as Gaspar does. There are also a number of textural similarities, especially at the beginning or end of important sections. As mentioned, “Sebastiane” and “promissionibus” are set to a succession of block chords in both motets. “Libera nos,” which opens the *secundae partes*, is treated to four overlapping duos in both works. More significantly, a number of contrapuntal structures are very similar (and in some cases identical) in both pieces: (1) the superius and tenor combination in Martini at mm. 31-34 creates a contrapuntal module similar to that of Gaspar’s superius and altus at mm. 36-39 (Example 1.3).⁴⁶ (2) An even more extended example occurs at mm. 49-54 in Martini and mm. 51-56 in Gaspar. In this instance, the module occurs between the same voices, superius and tenor. The two composers moulded the melodic profile of the superius voice from the tenor melody in very similar ways and combined two instances of the soggetto at the same time interval to create almost identical modules (Example 1.4). (3) Martini’s tenor-bassus duo that sets the word “fuit,” mm. 57-58, appears, broken up, as the start and end of Gaspar’s extended tenor-bassus duo setting the same word between mm. 57-65 (Example 1.5). (4) All of the parts setting “ut digni efficiamur” are remarkably similar. Especially notable is the insertion of rests that break up the two parts of the text phrase—all voices in Martini, top three voices in Gaspar (Example 1.6). (5) Lastly, the chordal structures for

⁴⁶ On the concept of contrapuntal modules, see Peter N. Schubert, “Hidden Forms in Palestrina’s First Book of Four-Voice Motets,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60 (2007): 483-556; and Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450–1600* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

“promissionibus” share a close affinity (mm. 127-138, mm. 141-147). The homorhythmic sections begin and end with identical chords, with the same voicing; in between, the same succession of sonorities occurs with different voicings (Example 1.7).

Example 1.3 - Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 31-34; Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 36-39

Martini
31

S. cu - ius pre - - - -
T. cu - ius pre - - - -

Gaspar
36

S. cu - - - - ius pre -
A. cu - ius pre - ci -

Example 1.4 - Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 49-54; Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 51-56

Martini
49

S. Lom - bar - - - di - - - e fu
T. Lom - - - bar - - - di - e

Gaspar
51

S. Lom - - - bar - - - di - e
T. Lom - bar - - - di - e

Example 1.5 - Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 56-59; Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 56-59, mm. 64-66

Martini 57

T. fu - it

B. fu - it li -

Gaspar 57 64

T. e fu - it

B. - e fu - it

Example 1.6 - Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 116-126; Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 133-140

Martini 116

S. gno ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

A. ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

T. ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

B. ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur,

Gaspar 133

S. ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

A. gno ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

T. ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

B. ut di - gni ef - fi - ci - a - - mur

Example 1.7 – Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 127-140; Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 141-148

Martini
127

S. pro - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

A. pro - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

T. pro - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

B. pro - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

Gaspar
141

S. pro - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

A. pro - - - - - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

T. pro - - - - - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

B. pro - - - - - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -

Joshua Rifkin suggests two events in 1491 that could have occasioned a meeting of the two composers and spurred the composition of these works. There were two nuptials between members of the Este and Sforza families in that year (Martini would have been working for the Estes around this time): the wedding of Ludovico il Moro to Beatrice d'Este, which took place in Pavia on 17 January with a celebration at Milan on 2 January, and the wedding of the Alfonso I d'Este and Anna Maria Sforza, which took place on 23 January. Significantly, both of these weddings fell close to St. Sebastian's January 20 feast day.⁴⁷ It is also possible that these motets were a direct response to pestilence. Between 1481 and 1487, the plague struck various parts of Lombardy, and

⁴⁷ Rifkin, "Munich, Milan, and a Marian Motet," 311-12 n155.

Milan itself was particularly hard-hit between the years 1483-85.⁴⁸ If the two motets were indeed composed in the mid 1480s, they would have spoken to the ongoing or recent calamity.

Certainly, too, plague must have been at the forefront of Ludovico's attention as a result of his administrative work in the construction of a plague hospital during the late '80s and '90s. An idea for a Milanese lazaretto had been conceived during the rule of Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1466-76), but the plans were shelved due to complaints of the locals from the town of Crescenzago, the original site for the lazaretto located approximately seven kilometres from the city.⁴⁹ The latest bout of plague in the '80s helped to revive those plans, and the cornerstone of the Milanese lazaretto was finally laid in 1488. The San Gregorio lazaretto—a 288-room compound surround by a moat—was built at the Porta Orientale (currently the Porta Venezia). The building opened in 1512, but was not fully operational until the Milanese plague of 1524.⁵⁰ Traditionally, the rulers of Milan were intimately involved in matters of state health,⁵¹ and we know through extant letters that Lazzaro Cairati, the notary who first drew up plans for the lazaretto, was in contact with the Duke during the construction of the hospital, asking him

⁴⁸ Jean Noël Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, *Civilisations et sociétés* 35-36 (Paris: Mouton, 1975), 396.

⁴⁹ Joseph Patrick Byrne, *Daily Life During the Black Death* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 144.

⁵⁰ Byrne, *Daily Life*, 145. See also Ann G. Carmichael, "The Last Past Plague: The Uses of Memory in Renaissance Epidemics," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 53 (1998): 151-52.

⁵¹ Ann G. Carmichael, "Contagion Theory and Contagion Practice in Fifteenth-Century Milan," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 (1991): 213-56.

for design instructions.⁵² While we may never know the exact circumstances behind the composition of these motets, we can nevertheless imagine this cluster of concerns and events with which they may resonate.

In addition to the difficulty surrounding their provenance, it is also difficult to determine the direction of modelling, though there are signs that it is Martini, the older composer, who is adapting from Gaspar. On the whole, Martini's motet displays a more progressive, more Josquinian style.⁵³ Evident from the tenor alone, Martini's motet is far less florid and melismatic. This tendency toward concision translates to all the other voices as well, resulting in more sharply defined *soggetti*. There are also more frequent, more pervasive, and stricter instances of imitation in Martini's work, and the periods of entry also tend to be more regular. A comparison of the respective settings of the phrases "cujus precibus" and "ut digni efficamur" reveals the general stylistic difference between the two motets. Both composers set the text "cujus precibus" to two successive duos: A-B and S-T for Martini, T-B and S-A for Gaspar (Example 1.8).

⁵² Natasha Awais-Dean, "Healing in Open Isolation: The Lazzaretto of Milan and the Plagues of 1576 and 1630" (MA thesis, Royal College of Art, 2007).

⁵³ Murray Steib, Introduction to *Johannes Martini and Johannes Brebis: Sacred Music*, Recent Researches in the Music of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance 39 (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2008), xiv. Steib sees the influence of Josquin in Martini's use of paired duets, his tendency towards syllabic setting, and his employment of a large variety of textures.

Example 1.8 - Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 27-36; Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 32-43

Martini

S. me cu - ius pre - - - ci - bus

A. me cu - ius pre - - - ci - bus

T. me cu - ius pre - - - ci - bus

B. cu - ius pre - - - ci - bus,

Gaspar

S. cu - - - ius pre - ci - - - - bus

A. me cu - ius pre - ci - - - bus to - -

T. cu - ius pre - ci - bus to - -

B. me cu - ius pre-ci - bus to - ta

In Martini’s setting, the lower duo is inverted and repeated almost exactly. Gaspar’s duos, aside from being far more melismatic, are not built on consistent imitation. And again for “ut digni efficiamur,” Gaspar’s setting lacks the imitative order of Martini’s setting (Example 1.6).

On account of these different stylistic tendencies, we can perhaps imagine Martini modelling on and updating Gaspar’s motet. But while Martini’s setting appears on the whole to be the more modern of the two, it does contain a few isolated touches of archaism. The motet begins with an *introitus*-like passage, highly melismatic with reduced texture, common in Machaut- and Dufay-generation motets. The opening *tempus perfectum* also recalls earlier motets, which often open with triple mensuration and move into duple time. However, by setting the time interval of imitation of the

introitus to two breves, Martini attenuates the triple-metre feel of the passage. The remainder of the section in *tempus perfectum* consists of block chords held with fermatas, which again erases the sense of triple time. Other archaic gestures include an under-third cadence at m. 54, and a passage of fauxbourdon writing from mm. 107 to 112.

Fauxbourdon, in addition to representing archaism in a metonymic way (i.e. as an archaic technique that signifies archaism more broadly), also represents “res trista”—such as pain, weakness, poverty, humility, misery, sorrow, anguish, etc.⁵⁴ Timothy McKinney reasons that the unstable 6-3 sonorities impart a sense of weakness and instability. In Martini’s motet, the topical fauxbourdon is certainly apt for setting the words “et a maligno.” As with the opening *tempus perfectum*, Martini again takes an archaic trait and defamiliarizes and resituates the element within a prevailingly modern framework.

Cantus jocosos

At the heart of these two motets, I would suggest, lies great healing potential. The switch from duple into triple metre at the phrase “fuit liberata” (see Examples 1.9a and 1.9b) and the extended melismas on the two following phrases, “a pestifera peste” and “libera nos,” sonically paint the idea of liberation and abandonment. In Martini’s setting, the superius sings the word “peste” (mm. 68-73) on an ecstatic melisma that rises, with semiminim and fusa turns, through a twelfth, the entire range of its tessitura. “Ab ipsa”

⁵⁴ Bernhard Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According to the Sources*, trans. Ellen Beebe (New York: Broude Brothers, 1988), 246-47; Timothy McKinney, *Adrian Willaert and the Theory of Interval Affect: The Musica nova madrigals and the novel theories of Zarlino and Vicentino* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 20-21; Ellen S. Beebe “Text and Mode as Generators of Musical Structure in Clemens non Papa’s ‘Accesserunt ad Jesum’,” in *Music and Language*, Studies in the History of Music 1 (New York: Broude Brothers, 1983), 91; Patrick Macey, “Josquin and Musical Rhetoric,” in *The Josquin Companion*, ed. Richard Sherr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 490, 507-13.

similarly goes into a lilting triple time in the Martini setting. Bernhard Meier writes of such isolated triple-metre passages:

Episodic adoption of triple meter as a rhythmic peculiarity instead of the duple meter (♩ or C) used formerly can also act to express words. Passages in triple meter have an almost dancelike effect in comparison to the rest of the work. Consequently, they serve to express “joy” in general, but also depict events that are characteristically associated with dance: for example, to portray the term “wedding,” but also “idolatry” (think, for example, of the dance around the Golden Calf, also often represented in painting).⁵⁵

This sense of joy is particularly palpable in Martini’s setting on account of the markedly increased musical activity beginning with the imitative entries on “Lombardie” (m. 47, just before the change to triple-time)—each previous point of imitation had begun ponderously, with staid semibreves—and the instantly memorable tune that sets “fuit liberata.”

⁵⁵ Meier, *Modes*, 241.

Example 1.9a - Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 47-63

47 S. Lom - bar - di - e
A. Lom - bar - di - e
T. Lom - bar - di - e
B. Lom - bar - di - e

54 S. fu - it
A. fu - it
T. fu - it
B. fu - it

59 S. li - be - ra - ta a
A. li - be - ra - ta a
T. li - be - ra - ta
B. li - be - ra - ta a

Example 1.9b - Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 51-68

51 S. Lom - bar - di - e
A. Lom - bar - di - e
T. Lom - bar - di - e
B. Lom - bar - di - e

58 S.
A.
T. it
B. it fu -

63 S. fu - it li -
A. fu - it li - be - ra - ta
T. fu - it
B. it li - be - ra -

At the thematic level, the allusion to dance celebrates Sebastian's miraculous work in Lombardy. But more than this, I would suggest, Martini's and Gaspar's topical reference is here not merely a *description* of joy, but also a *prescription* for the supplicant singers and their listeners. Recall that doctors emphasized, time and again, the idea of sociability in their plague tracts, whether in playing games, telling stories, or sharing a laugh and a song. And although they are not always precise when it comes to pinpointing genres of music, they nevertheless give the impression that lower, secular, and social music was more suitable to the task. Thinking in these terms, one could argue that within the stylistic limits of the motet— itself a nebulous genre situated between the cantilena and the Mass, capable of incorporating a variety of topics —Martini and Gaspar are here invoking the lower stratum of dance music.⁵⁶ Considering, too, that both of these works were published by Petrucci and disseminated through the marketplace, we can imagine the kinds of social performance situations prescribed by doctors that might attend the works' salubrious gestures of joy.⁵⁷ Such a topical evocation of dance within

⁵⁶ Tinctoris, in his 1476 music dictionary, defines the length and subject matter of the motet against that of the Mass and the *cantilena*; while a *cantilena* is a small piece that often sets amorous texts, and the Mass is a large composition that sets the Ordinary movements, the motet is a work of moderate length to which words of any kind (though often sacred) may be set. Johannes Tinctoris, *Dictionary of Musical Terms (Terminorum Musicae Diffinitorium)*, trans. Carl Parrish (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 43. In 1510, Paolo Cortese similarly places the motet between the Mass and the secular song, noting additionally the *ad libitum* nature of their function and performance context, as well as their stylistic flexibility: "Then, those songs are called precentorial, which, although mixed with propitiatory singing, can be seen to be supernumerary (*ascriptoria*) and ingrafted (*astititia*), since for them there is free option of choice; and for this reason it happens, they say, that those modes all of one kind (*uniusmodi modi*), on which the propitiatory songs unremittingly insist, are not preserved [by motets]." Nino Pirrotta, "Music and Cultural Tendencies in Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 19 (1966): 154. See also Julie Cumming, *The Motet in the Age of Du Fay* (New York and Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999), pp. 41-5.

⁵⁷ Julie Cumming's article "From Chapel Choirbook to Print Partbook and Back Again" is particularly insightful on this point. Cumming suggests that Petrucci's motet anthologies

the motet may be more felicitous than functional dance music itself. Dancing, which falls under the heading of “motion and rest” or “exercise” in the *res non naturales*, was potentially dangerous, if immoderate, in pestilential times.⁵⁸ Jacme d’Agramont writes, for example, that “one must avoid violent exercise because such exercise causes much foul and poisonous air to be drawn to the heart.”⁵⁹ Another writer warns his readers, on account of pestilential air, to “avoid baths, coitus, exercise, and, simply put, everything that enervates the body, dilates the pores, and causes one to huff and puff.”⁶⁰ While a very small number of doctors do recommend the use of dance, such activity, under the logic of this anti-pestilential regimen, leaves the dancer at risk. The dance topic in these motets is aimed primarily at the *imaginatio*, obviating the dangers of inhaling or absorbing the corruptive miasma through the lungs or open pores. In short, these motets confer the joys of dancing and dance music without direct bodily risks, acting as an anodyne for the *imaginatio* and a dose of “cantus jocosos” for the accidents of the soul.

But what of these austere chords that bookend the two motets and cordon off this eruption of joy? If, on the one hand, the generically fluid motet can either accommodate lower elements or be performed in secular settings, then so too can it incorporate aspects

“divorced the motet from its sacred context and secularized a sacred repertoire.” Julie Cumming, “From Chapel Choirbook to Print Partbook and Back Again,” in *Cappelle musicali fra corte, Stato e Chiesa nell’Italia del Rinascimento: Atti del convegno internazionale Camaiore, 21-23 ottobre 2005*, ed. Andrea Chegai, Franco Piperno, and Gabriella Biagi Ravenni (Florence: Olschki, 2007), 373-403.

⁵⁸ Alessandro Arcangeli, “Dance and Health: The Renaissance Physicians’ View,” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 18, no. 1 (2000): 3-30.

⁵⁹ Jacme d’Agramont, “Regiment,” 80.

⁶⁰ Vitentur eciam plus soliter balnea, coytus, motus et breviter omnia, quae corpus rarificant, poros aperiunt et multum anhelitum attrahi et respirari faciunt. Anonymous, *Remedium contra pestilentiam*, Cod. 1328 Leipzig Universitätsbibliothek (1371), SA 7 (1914), 59.

of the Mass and other sacred rituals. Bonnie Blackburn has termed the opening and closing homorhythmic style of writing the “devotional style.” When found in Masses, these devotional chords most often set the vocative “Jesu Christe” or the word “Amen,” and in motets, they are often used for invocations, as they are here.⁶¹ The topical reference may also be Eucharistic, given that chordal passages in motets—particularly in the Milanese repertoire—sometimes accompanied the Elevation during the Mass; “promissionibus Christi” may certainly hint at that sense. To account for this topical juxtaposition between the high and the low, the dance against the prayer, we need to turn our attention to the pre-modern aetiology of disease and the religious perspective on music’s place in the times of pestilence.

The Curious Case of Hugo van der Goes

An incident of musical healing involving the Flemish artist Hugo van der Goes aptly illustrates the interplay between religion and pre-modern medicine. It is often difficult to navigate the border between Renaissance theory and praxis, but luckily, we know from the chronicle of Gaspar Ofhuys (1456-1523) that, encouraged by the case of David and Saul, a prior actually used music and other recreational spectacles to treat Hugo’s madness.⁶² According to Ofhuys, Hugo suffered an episode of mental illness

⁶¹ Bonnie J. Blackburn, "The Dispute About Harmony c. 1500 and the Creation of a New Style," in *Théorie et analyse musicales 1450-1650/Music Theory and Analysis: Proceedings of the International Conference Louvain-la-Neuve, 23-25 September 1999*, ed. Anne-Emmanuelle Ceulemans and Bonnie J. Blackburn (Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d’histoire de l’art et d’archéologie, Collège Érasme, 2001), 1-37.

⁶² This episode is recounted in 1 Samuel 16 (Douay-Rheims): “But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And the servants of Saul said to him: Behold now an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our Lord give orders, and thy servants

around 1480.⁶³ One evening, as he and his brothers from the Red Cloister were travelling home from Cologne, Hugo began to claim that he was a lost soul destined for eternal damnation, and he became intent on suicide. When they reached Brussels, a prior was summoned.

[Prior Thomas], after confirming everything with his own eyes and ears, suspected that he was vexed by the same disease by which King Saul was tormented. Thereupon, recalling how Saul had found relief when David plucked his harp, he gave permission not only that a melody be played without restraint in the presence of brother Hugo, but also that other recreative spectacles be performed; in these ways he tried to dispel the delusions.⁶⁴

This course of treatment ostensibly had no effect. Nevertheless, it appears that Hugo, having likely completed some paintings after this episode, was not wholly incapacitated by his illness. The artist died shortly after, in 1482. The chronicler goes on to explain that we could understand Hugo's illness in two ways: "First, we may say that it was a natural sickness and some species of phrenitis."⁶⁵ This phrenitis, Ofhuys suspects, was

who are before thee will seek out a man skilful in playing on the harp, that when the evil spirit from the Lord is upon thee, he may play with his hand, and thou mayest bear it more easily. And Saul said to his servants: Provide me then some man that can play well, and bring him to me... So whensoever the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, David took his harp, and played with his hand, and Saul was refreshed, and was better, for the evil spirit departed from him."

⁶³ William A. McCloy, "Ofhuys Chronicle and Hugo van der Goes" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1958).

⁶⁴ "Qui tamen auxilio opitulante Bruxellam pervenerunt, et sine mora pater prior Thomas illuc demandatur, ille cuncta videns et audiens, suspicabatur eum eodem morbo vexari, quo rex Saul agitabatur. Unde recordans quomodo Saul levius habebat David cytharam percutiente, permisit ibidem coram fratre Hugone melodiam fieri non modicam sed et alia spectacula recreativa, quibus intendebat mentales fantasias repellere." McCloy, "Ofhuys Chronicle," 11.

⁶⁵ Primo dicendo, quod fuerit naturalis et quedam species frenesis. Sunt enim secundum, naturales huius infirmitatis plures speties que generantur aliquando ex cibis melancolicis aliquando ex potatione fortis vini exuerentis humores et incinerantis aliquando, ex anime passionibus scilicet sollicitudine, tristitia, nimio studio et timore. McCloy, "Ofhuys Chronicle," 12.

caused by the painter's consumption of melancholy-inducing foods and strong wine, which further troubled the passions of his soul. Citing 2 Peter 3, Ofhuys writes that we can also speak of his illness as divine providence: the Lord "deals patiently for our sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to penance."⁶⁶ The chronicler reasons that, because Hugo is so exalted for his artistic gifts, God, not wishing him to perish, compassionately sent him the illness as a lesson in humility for everyone to learn.

Ofhuys's chronicle reveals a fluid interchange of terms and ideas between what is putatively religious and moral and what is natural and medical. First, Prior Thomas reads the biblical story of David and Saul as a medical case and a therapeutic precedent. Furthermore, Ofhuys diagnoses Hugo's illness in two separate, but not mutually exclusive ways: first, in terms of regimen and humoral theory and second, in terms of divine punishment. The conflation of these two terms lies precisely at the heart of the pre-modern aetiology of disease. The Hippocratic-Galenic system inherited by Renaissance doctors was built on a naturalist and pagan framework that, in its original form, took little account of the existence of divine illnesses.⁶⁷ In the encounter between this pagan naturalism and Christianity, there was a potential conflict "between the natural explanation of disease and the concept of disease as imposed by God" and between "the

⁶⁶ Secundo de hac infirmitate possumus loqui, tenendo sibi evenisse, ex piissima dei providentia, qui ut dicitur 2 Petri 3, patienter agit propter nos, nolens aliquos perire, sed omnes ad penitentiam reverti. Frater enim iste conversus propter specialem suam artem in nostra religionione satis fuit exaltatus famosior effectus quam si in seculo remansisset, et quia homo erat ut ceteri ex honoribus sibi exhibitis visitationibus et salutationibus diversis forte cor suum elevatum est, quare dominus nolens eum perire, misericorditer ei immisit hanc humiliativam infirmitatem, qua re vera humiliatus est valde...propter nostram instructionem. McCloy, "Ofhuys Chronicle," 12.

⁶⁷ Owsei Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 198.

physician's role as an autonomous healer and his function as a mere agent of God, the true healer."⁶⁸ Without recounting the many nuances of the medicine-religion debate, it is generally safe to say that Hippocratic naturalism, which was itself empty of divine character, was subsumed by the Christian church under God's work.⁶⁹ By the Renaissance, the majority opinion held that God was the ultimate cause of diseases. As Penelope Gouk explains, "even the most progressive medical writers believed that new forms of plague and other virulent diseases recently visited on European society were divine retribution for sin."⁷⁰ But although God could bring about such punishments directly through supernatural means, the usual assumption was that He worked through nature, inciting remote events such as the conjunction of celestial bodies and more proximate phenomena such as weather or natural disasters. And if God worked through such natural means, then medical intervention, using the medicine that God, in his mercy, had placed on earth for our benefit, remained a viable response to disease.⁷¹

In this paradigm, Saul's divinely imposed affliction and subsequent cure reads as a prototypical script in aetiology and medical treatment. It is not surprising, therefore, that exegetes of this biblical episode often conflate its spiritual and medical aspects. Nicholas of Lyra's exegesis, for example, centers not on the moral or ecclesiastical

⁶⁸ Temkin, *Hippocrates*, 197.

⁶⁹ Temkin, *Hippocrates*, 191.

⁷⁰ Penelope Gouk, "Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits in Early Modern Thought," in *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy Since Antiquity*, ed. Peregrine Horden (Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 180.

⁷¹ Andrew Wear, "Religious Beliefs and Medicine in Early Modern England," in *The Task of Healing: Medicine, Religion and Gender in England and the Netherlands*, ed. H. Marland and M. Pelling (Rotterdam: Erasmus, 1996), 145-69.

aspects of the story,⁷² but rather on whether the power of music can actually dispel demons. Because demonic influence works upon the brain and human perception, music, Nicholas argues, working upon those same faculties, can counteract its effects.⁷³ In some hard-line Renaissance naturalist interpretations, Saul’s “unclean spirit” was interpreted through the lens of humoral theory. A mid-fifteenth century Bible owned by Borso d’Este, for example, depicted Saul, lying in bed, suffering from melancholy (imbalance in black bile). Theologian Tommaso Cajetan asserted that Saul’s unclean spirit was really a melancholia that troubled him with sensory delusions.⁷⁴

This account of disease explains how Saul’s (and Hugo’s) illness could be both divine and natural and how, under these terms, music can enter the pre-modern model of aetiology. It is significant that, in his *Complexus effectum musices*, Tinctoris files the biblical story of David and Saul not under the fourteenth use of music—music to heal the sick—but rather under music’s ninth effect—its power to banish evil.⁷⁵ This is a particularly marked choice given that Tinctoris’s authority for music’s healing powers,

⁷² The *Glossa Ordinaria* interprets this passage as an allegory of Christ and the Church curing the sin of pride.

⁷³ Peter Murray Jones, “Music Therapy in the Later Middle Ages: The Case of Hugo van der Goes,” in *Music as Medicine*, 123-28. See also Dagmar Hoffmann-Axthelm, “*David musicus*, or: On the Consoling Power of String Music,” in *Essays on Renaissance Music in Honour of David Fallows: Bon jour, bon mois et bonne estrenne*,” ed. Fabrice Fitch and Jacobijn Kiel (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 327-331.

⁷⁴ Jones, “Music Therapy,” 124.

⁷⁵ Tinctoris, “Complexus effectuum musices,” in *On the Dignity and the Effects of Music: Two Fifteenth-Century Treatises*, ed. John Donald Cullington and Reinhard Strohm. Institute of Advanced Musical Studies: Study Texts (London: University of London, 1996), 56.

Isidore of Seville,⁷⁶ interprets the Biblical episode medically in the *De medicina* section of *Etymologiae*, as an example of music's power to allay frenzy.⁷⁷ As Jones writes, Saul's evil spirits are "preternatural, but if they are to have any influence on humanity it must be through actions which are subject to the laws of nature"; it follows that even diseases imposed by God can be treated through natural (and even musical) means.⁷⁸

The Divine and Natural Plague

The plague, like other diseases, fell within this bifocal aetiology. The commingling of the religious and the natural in pre-modern medical discourse is evident in all varieties of prescriptive plague writing throughout the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. It was openly acknowledged in many plague treatises that God, working through natural means, was the primary cause of the affliction. Johannes de Saxonia provides one of the most explicit accounts of pestilential teleology in his fifteenth-century treatise:

⁷⁶ The entire *Complexus* owes much to the Isidore's *Etymologiae*; many of the uses of music Tinctoris enumerates—inducing rapture, easing toil, spurring men's spirits to battle—come directly from the *De musica* section of Isidore's work: "So it is that without music, no other discipline can be perfected, for nothing is without music. Indeed, it is said that the universe itself is composed from a certain harmony of sounds, and that the very heavens turn to the modulations of harmony. Music rouses emotions, and it calls the senses to a different state. In battle, too, the sounding of the trumpet inflames the fighters, and the more ardent its blast, the braver grows the spirit for the contest. Since song urges even rowers on, music also soothes the spirit so that it can endure toil, and the modulation of the voice eases exhaustion from individual labours. Music also calms excited spirits, just as one reads about David, who rescued Saul from the unclean spirit by the art of modulation, even serpents, birds, and dolphins. But further, however we speak, or however we are moved by the internal pulsing of our veins—these things are demonstrably linked, through their musical rhythms, to the power of harmony."

⁷⁷ Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. and ed. Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115.

⁷⁸ Jones, "Music Therapy," 124.

God and the heavens, *per se*, are not the causes of epidemic God is the most remote cause of epidemic, the heavens are the more remote, the air is remote, the humour is near, putrid air is nearer, and the putrid vapour infused in the heart is the nearest. . . . This is clear, for the cause is more remote when there are more intermediate causes between the agent and the effect, and the cause is closer when there are fewer intermediate causes. And between God and epidemic, there are many other intermediate causes, and there is nothing between putrid vapours of the heart and illness.⁷⁹

Because God sat atop the teleological chain, it was to Him that doctors ultimately had to defer. Nicholo de Burgo begins his otherwise wholly secular tract with the caveat that “only Jesus Christ can heal” and that any healing is done with his help.⁸⁰

That is not to say, however, that the intermediate and proximate causes of plague should be ignored in favour of divine intervention. In his survey of religious literature on the plague, Mormando finds that, while some religious writers and preachers do prioritize spiritual answers over medicine, none of them counsel their audiences to simply disregard medical advice; “both forms of response, the spiritual sources say outright or imply, are to be attended to.”⁸¹ To completely ignore available medical advice in favour of the help of God is to spurn the magnanimity of God and to commit the sin of self-destruction.⁸²

⁷⁹ Deus et celum per se non sunt causa epydimie. . . . Deus est causa epydimie remotissima, remocior celum, aer remotus, humor propinquus, aer putridus propinquior, vapor putridus in corde infusus propinquissima. . . . Patet quia quanto inter agens et effectum sunt plures cause medie, tanto causa est remotior et quanto pauciores cause medie tanto propinquior. Sed inter deum et epydimiam sunt multe alie cause medie et inter vaporem putridum cordis et epydimiam nichil mediatur. Johannes de Saxonia, *Compendium de Epydemia* (1424), SA 16 (1924-1925), 22.

⁸⁰ Nicolo de Burgo, *Consilium illatum contra Pestilentiam* (1382), SA 5, 355.

⁸¹ Franco Mormando, “Introduction: Response to the Plague in Early Modern Italy: What the Primary Sources, Printed and Painted, Reveal,” in *Hope and Healing: Painting in Italy in a Time of Plague 1500-1800*, ed. Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Pamela M. Jones, Franco Mormando and Thomas W. Worcester (Worcester, MA: Clark University; College of the Holy Cross; Worcester Art Museum, 2005), 23.

⁸² Wear, “Religious Beliefs and Medicine,” 154.

Additionally, as Ambroise Paré writes in his *Traicté de la peste*, medicine gives us the opportunity to glorify the Lord:

My advice to the surgeon is to not neglect the remedies approved by ancient and modern medicine. For as much as this malady is sent by the will of God, so it is by his divine will that the means and help are gifted to us by Him to use as instruments of his glory, looking for remedies for our illnesses, even in his creatures, in which he gave certain properties and virtues for the relief of the unfortunate. And He wishes us to use secondary and natural causes as instruments of his blessing. Otherwise, we could be ungrateful and spurn his beneficence. For it is written that the Lord gave the knowledge of the art of medicine to men in order to be glorified in its magnificence...⁸³

It was also thought that God grants medicine to man so that it might serve as a model for the therapy of the soul.⁸⁴ The Franciscan preachers Bernardino de Busti and Panigarola, for example, both point out in their sermons on the plague that spiritual remedies have counterparts in the temporal ones; physical separation from infected places, for example, reminds us of the necessity of fleeing from sin.⁸⁵ Such a parallel between spiritual and natural medicine is sometimes evident in discussions of regimen. The doctor's advice for moderation in things such as food, drink, passions, sex, and sleep had moral equivalents in the preacher's caution against excesses such as gluttony, wrath, lust, and sloth. In such a scheme, humoral balance went hand-in-hand with spiritual cleanliness. It is rather

⁸³ [J]e conseille au Chirurgié ne vouloir aussi negliger les remedes approuvez par les medecins ancie[n]s et modernes: car combien que par la volonté de Dieu telle maladie soit enuoyee aux hommes, si est-ce que par sa sainte volonté les moyens et secours nous sont donnez pareillement de luy, pour en user comme d'instruments à sa gloire, cherchant remedes en noz maux, mesmes en ses creatures, ausquelles il a donné certaines propriétés et vertus pour le soulagement des pources malades. Et veut que nous vsions des causes secondes et naturelles, comme d'instruments de sa benediction: Autrement nous serions bien ingrats, et mespriserions sa beneficence. Car il est escrit, que le Seigneur a donné la science aux hommes de l'art de medecine, pour estre glorifié en ses merueilles... Ambroise Paré, *Traicté de la peste, verolle et rougeolle* (Paris: Wechel, 1568), 9.

⁸⁴ Temkin, *Hippocrates*, 140.

⁸⁵ Mormando, "Introduction: Response to the Plague," 23.

meaningful, in understanding the parallels between natural and spiritual medicine, that priests were called “physicians of the soul.”⁸⁶

In the broadest terms, medieval and Renaissance Christians wove their inherited Hippocratic-Galenic medicine into a generally coherent model of disease and aetiology that sees the natural world subsumed under divine providence. It can be said that, whether addressing the ultimate cause of plague by placating God or whether attending to the proximate causes such as the environment or the patient’s humours, priests and doctors laboured ultimately toward the same goal. Yet this theoretical model of health belies the uneasy rift between the spirit and the flesh in Christian theology. This deeply rooted divide becomes particularly apparent in the details of some pestilential therapies: what is good for the body may not necessarily be good for the soul, and measures against natural causes may exacerbate spiritual ones (and vice versa). Music—with its sensuous and fleshly qualities called into question long ago by the likes of St. Augustine—and its relationship to the passions was one of the subjects that problematized the coherent surface of pre-modern aetiology.

Defining gaudium

Although most authors of plague treatises would have agreed that *timor* and *tristitia* were to be avoided, they did not all prescribe *gaudium* unequivocally. Some writers of plague tracts distinguished between two types of joy: a healthy, temperate, permissible kind and an excessive, harmful kind. Johann von Glogau spells out the medical consequences of the respective types:

⁸⁶ Wear, “Religious Beliefs and Medicine,” 147-48.

It is said that joy, which is used against pestilence, is of two kinds, namely the permitted (*permissivum*) and the harmful (*perniciosum*). The former type of joy does not spread the plague, but greatly impedes it, for, by such joy, man is delighted and increases his vital spirits, and it should be both suitable and moderate. But harmful joy is that which is suddenly caused in man and infects and corrupts the vital spirits and occurs especially in women, who, sometimes on account of one strange thing or another, magnify so much in their vital spirits, that they lose such spirits and their life. Furthermore, fear harms and greatly weakens men, and sadness also consumes men.⁸⁷

Gaspar Torella explains that “joy is to be used, but not excessively, because such excess induces fainting spells and sudden death.”⁸⁸ With a different rationale, one writer warns against too much happiness, for excessive laughter causes the inhalation of a great deal of corrupted air.⁸⁹ An excess of joy, it turns out, is as detrimental as fear and sadness. By extension, an excessive use of music becomes unhealthy. As Nicolaus of Udine advises, attain joy “by means of cantilenas and other favourite melodies, but temper their use, for excesses are noxious, destroying the spirit and natural heat.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Tunc dicit de gaudio, quod confert ad pestilenciam, dicendum quod gaudium est duplex, scilicet permissivum et perniciosum. Primum gaudium non disponit, sed magis inpedit pestilenciam, quia homo per tale gaudium delectatur et dilatatur spiritus vitales, et convenienter et moderate debet esse. Sed gaudium perniciosum est, quod subito causatur in hominibus et inficit et corrumpit spiritus vitales et maxime habet fieri in mulieribus, quae aliquando propter aliquod novum vel propter aliquid quodcunque dilatant in tantum spiritus vitales, quod postea deficiunt spiritus vitales et vita. Timor autem multum nocet hominibus et maxime debilitat hominem, et etiam tristitia consumit hominem, ut patet. Johann von Glogau, *Causae et signa pestilentiae et summa remedia contra ipsam* (ca. 1400), SA 9 (1916), 73.

⁸⁸ Quare utendum est gaudio sed no[n] excessiuo: na[m] talis inducit sincopim et mortem repentina[m]. Torella, *Qui cupit*, Bii^v.

⁸⁹ Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 268.

⁹⁰ Sequitur de ultima re non naturali, scilicet de accidentibus animae, et dico, quod fortis ira, tristitia, melancholia, timor fortis, superfluae cogitationes sunt vitandae pro posse, utatur ille, qui in talibus bene vult regi, gaudio moderate, quia superfluum dicitur a medicis gaudium perniciosum et vitam securam ducat, audiendo cantilenas et alias melodias sibi delectabiles; temperate tamen istis utatur, quia superflua sunt nociva, spiritus et calorem naturalem dissolvendo. Nicolaus von Udine, *Pestregimen* (Vienna: 1390), SA 6 (1913), 365.

Music's place in the anti-pestilential regimen straddled this very distinction between the permissible and the excessive. The prescription for moderation naturally invited moralizing from high-minded authorities who emphasized the idea of plague as an arm of divine punishment. Adopting a religious perspective, they argue that music and other entertainments such as comedies, theatre, and spectacles represent excesses and gateways to serious vices that are themselves the causes of plague. In the most extreme rhetoric, the threat of music to a healthy regimen is not its immoderate use, but rather, its use *tout court*. In the 1557 Florentine tract *Cause et rimedii della peste, et d'altre infermtà*, recently attributed to the Jesuit Antonio Possevino,⁹¹ the author provides five categories of plague-inducing offences: (1) pride, arrogance, ambition, vanity, and blasphemy; (2) heresy; (3) theft, rapine, usury; (4) luxury and carnality; (5) music as well as other oft-prescribed delights:

The fifth cause of plague is that which is the cause of carnality and lust, that is immodest madrigals and canzones, lascivious dance, indecent familiar conversation, the extravagance of clothing, lewd literature...[and] the use of nude images in which under the pretext of artistic expression, the world is easily roused to every sordid from of concupiscence.⁹²

For Possevino, these entertainments lead to the luxury and the carnality that invite pestilential punishment. This suspicion against music and other entertainments circulated not only within plague treatises. According to the Golden Legend, a plague struck Rome

⁹¹ Mormando, "Introduction: Response to the Plague," 37 n77.

⁹² La quinta cagione è quella, la quale è insieme cogione delle carnalità, & lussurie, cio è i dishonesti ragioname[n]ti i Madrigali, et Canzoni infami, le danze lasciue, il conuersare insieme con indecente familiarità, la delicatezza de' vestimenti, la lettura de libri impudichi...et l'uso delle imagini nude, nelle quali sotto pretesto dello scuoprire l'arte, si incita facilmente il mondo ad ogni sporca concupiscenza... [Antonio Possevino], *Cause et rimedii della peste, et d'altre infermita* (Florence: Giunti, 1577), 29.

in the sixth century because, after a period of clean living over Lent and Easter, the Romans broke their fast with unrestrained feasting, games, and carnival celebrations.⁹³

The mistrust of music even became religious policy during the Milanese plague of 1576-78. Carlo Borromeo instructed his priests to preach against immorality throughout the city, especially to the men guarding the city gates. Vices to be avoided included sloth, dishonesty, theft, blasphemy, games, dancing, and singing.⁹⁴

If these temporal means for attaining *gaudium* could so easily lead to sin, then the solution must be found with God. One plague-tract writer, who is otherwise mostly interested in the natural aspects of plague, repeats the oft-encountered advice to avoid the “negative” accidents of the soul, but provides a spiritual prescription. He writes, “Ire, sadness, worry should be avoided, and be joyful, honest, and in delightful company. One is always gladdened by making peace with God, for then, one will not fear death.”⁹⁵

Another writer advises, “Joy and happiness should be used to comfort the spirits.

Similarly, through peace, good hope, meditation, and the worship of God, the fear of

⁹³ Jacobus de Voragine, “The Greater and Lesser Litanies,” in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:285-89.

⁹⁴ Carlo Borromeo, *Pratica per i curati, et altri sacerdoti intorno alla cura dell’infermi e sospetti di peste* (Milan: Paucifico Pontio, 1576), 22r. Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 231. As a shrewd fundraiser, Borromeo used music nevertheless for other practical means; he dressed up the poor children of Milan and taught the youngest among them to sing and play musical instruments so that they could collect charity and “bestow the greatest consolation to all.” Paolo Bisciola, *Relazione verissima del progresso della peste di Milano* (Ancona: Alessandro Benacci, 1577), B2^r.

⁹⁵ De Accidentibus animae. Caveantur omnino ab ira, tristitia et turbatione et a nimia sollicitudine, quantum fuerit possibile, et sit gaudium et solacium delectabile et honestum. Nam faciens pacem cum deo semper gaudebit, nam mortem non timebit. Anonymous, *Regimen bonum in epidemia*, Ms. III. Q.4 Breslau (ca. 1400), SA 5 (1912), 82.

death would be diminished and wrath, worry, and sadness, greatly avoided.”⁹⁶ These writers graft together the religious aspect of plague writing with the medical. But at the joint of these two discourses lies a curious conundrum: should the imagination be turned away from illness and death altogether or focused on the preparation for the life hereafter?

This complication between the medical and religious streams of thought is evident in Giovan Filippo Ingrassia’s *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, in which the author initially proposes salubrious merriment, but, caught up in his subsequent attack on music, concludes with a caution for sobriety. Ingrassia, the head *medico* of Palermo when plague struck in 1575, first advises his readers to put aside their worries and to preserve their imaginations by being happy, dressing beautifully, wearing jewels, abiding in brightly lit places decorated with a variety of paintings, and by avoiding fearful thoughts of death.⁹⁷ Unlike other doctors, however, Ingrassia distinguishes between different temporal comforts. He goes on to write:

But we do not wish to follow what some say we should do in such times: attending banquets, enjoying pleasurable pastimes with friends, games, witty conceits, laughter, comedy, songs, music (*canzone, musiche*), and other such nonsense. As we continually witness, in this divine battle, many dying in the space of a few days, others from one moment to the next without confession or

⁹⁶ Frequentetur gaudium et leticia, ut cor et spiritus confortentur. Item pax, bona spes, contemplacio et cultus dei, ut mors minus timeatur, et ira, sollicitudo, et tristicia magis euitentur. Anonymous, *Regimen preseruatiuum a pestilenci ex purificatione aeris*, Cod. Quart. Nr. 222 Biblioteca Amploniana (ca. 1350), SA 11 (1919), 61.

⁹⁷ Horsù è bene dunque ognuno star allegro, in luogo almeno lucido, di varie pitture ornato, fuor di ogni timore, e di malinconiche imaginationi, andar vestito di varii, belli, et allegri vestiti, et come si dice, far del galante, con gioie alle dita, et cose di oro, et pietre pretiose in su la persona sua: lasciando ogni visito, et pensier di morti. Giovan Filippo Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, *Filosofia e scienza nell’età moderna 3 Testi inediti o rari* 19 (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), 441.

other sacraments (amongst whom are very close friends, relatives, or neighbours), carried off to be buried away from the churches in the countryside, having their possessions burned, and the whole world going to ruin; despite this, worse than irrational beasts, they expect to have as good a time as possible and a leisure-filled life...Who could be so fatuous and thoughtless, with no fear for his own life, witnessing daily so many who, despite diligence and extreme caution, are nevertheless being carried off by the contagion and unexpectedly dying? And finally, what blind mole could, in such a situation, be happy and carefree, mindlessly living like Sardanapalus?⁹⁸

Here, Ingrassia distinguishes between solitary pleasures such as inspecting pictures and wearing elegant clothing from social entertainments such as music and story-telling. He inveighs against levity; solemnity and spiritual vigilance are imperative when sudden death is quotidian. Ingrassia then caps off his tirade with a warning from Horace: “Your property is in danger, when your neighbour’s wall burns.” So much for not worrying. Neither suggesting a rapprochement between the medical and the religious perspectives on regimen, nor even pleading for sensible moderation, Ingrassia ends up plainly arguing against his initial advice, taxing the imaginations of his readers and patients.

⁹⁸ *Nota.* Ma non per questo vogliamo osservarsi quel che alcuni dicono, di star in questo tempo in banchetti, et solazzi con amici, in giuochi, facetie, riso, comedie, favole, canzone, musiche, et simili sciocchezze. Tal che vedendo continuamente in questa divina battaglia morirne molti in ispatio di pochissimi giorni, altri in un momento (de’ quali vene sono molti stretti amici, o parenti, o vicini) senza confessione, et altri sacramenti, portati poi a sotterrasi fuor delle Chiese alla campagna, bruciarsi le loro robe, et andar tutto il mondo in ruina: non dimeno peggio che bestie, et animali irrationali attendano a darsi ogni buon tempo, et solazzevol vita... Ma chi fusse quel crudo, et di pietra fatto dispietato cuore, che vedendo fra il patre, e ‘l figlio, o la madre, e la figlia esser morta ogni carità, o almeno esser perso ogni effetto di carità, di non potersi dar aiuto l’uno all’altro, stesse a ridere, et sollazzarsi? Chi sarà quel tanto fatuo, et fuor di senno, il quale non habbia timore della propria vita, veggendosi ogni giorno molti con tutta la sua diligentia, et estrema custodia, non dimeno essere stati presi dal contagio, et impensatamente morire? Finalmente qual insensata, et cieca talpa portà in simil caso star allegra fuor d’ogni pensiero, e spensieratamente far sua vita di un Sardanapalo? Massimamente come dice quel gran poeta Horatio “tunc tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.” Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 441. Note that Cohn misinterprets this passage in *Cultures of Plague* (p. 267), overlooking the crucial conjunction “Ma non.”

If Ingrassia's stance on the care of the passions and the imagination is circuitous and ultimately contradictory, prescriptions by other religious authorities are far more direct. Savonarola's message from the previous century, for example, leaves no room for uncertainty:

The devil, when he realizes that you want to think about death, goes about provoking others to distract you from these thoughts; he sets it in the mind of your wife and your relatives as well as the doctor that they should tell you that you will soon recover and that you should not worry and that you should not think that this [illness] means that you will die.⁹⁹

Here, the doctor's advice is turned on its head. Where some writers might caution against the mere mention of plague, the hard-liner Savonarola condemns optimistic distractions. Equally revealing is Giovanni Pietro Giussano's report that, during the Milanese plague of the 1570s, Borromeo publically denounced a finely dressed woman for her levity and sartorial ostentation, saying, "Wretched woman! thus to trifle with your eternal salvation, when you know not that this day may not be your last in the world!" The next morning, the woman died suddenly, and all who had witnessed Borromeo's earlier rebuke felt, in Giussano's words, a "salutary fear."¹⁰⁰ It is precisely on account of this roaming yardstick of what is permissible, moral joy and what is excessive joy (and what is

⁹⁹ Il diavolo quando saveve che tu vuoi pensare alla morte va excitando altri per levarti da questo pensiero: & mette in fantasia alla moglie tuo & alli tuoi parenti cosi al medico che ti dichino che tu guarirai presto & che tu non ti dia pensiero & che tu non creda per questo avere ad morire. Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del bene morire* (Florence: Bartolomeo de' Libri, 1496), 12r. Cited in Sheila Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint: Saint Sebastian's Imagery and Cult Before the Counter-Reformation," in *Hope and Healing*, 122-23 n96.

¹⁰⁰ Giovanni Pietro Giussano, *The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan: From the Italian of John Peter Giussano; With Preface by Henry Edward Cardinal Manning [Vita di S. Carlo Borromeo (Rome, 1610)]* (London and New York: Burns and Oates, 1884), 431-32.

pernicious and salutary fear) that the place of temporal luxuries and entertainments in the pestilential regimen was never entirely secure.

Plague and the Carnavalesque

Several scholars have explored this uneasy juxtaposition between spiritual and temporal remedies in relation to other forms of artistic production. Sheila Barker distinguishes between the “horrific *memento mori*” type of St. Sebastian images and the therapeutically beautiful type.¹⁰¹ The former is exemplified by Andrea Mantegna’s Saint Sebastian (ca. 1506), where the grimacing saint, pierced by a multitude of arrows, stands atop an inscription reminding the viewer that “nothing except the divine is stable; all else is smoke” (*nil nisi divinum stabile est caetera fumus*; Figures 1.1 and 1.2). In contrast, elaborately gilded depictions of St. Sebastian where his form is tranquil and wounds minimized (Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio’s 1500 Casio altarpiece, Figure 1.3) offer salubrious sensual pleasures, not unlike being surrounded by precious clothing, metals, and gems.¹⁰² Such sensual pleasures can go too far, however. For Renaissance artists, the sensuous and nude image of St. Sebastian often served as a platform for “one-upmanship” of artistic excellence. Vasari tells an anecdote of how Fra Bartolomeo responded to the frequent taunt that he was unable to depict nudes by painting an

¹⁰¹ Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 90. Louise Marshall explains that such images of a physically suffering Sebastian were in the minority and began to crop up only in the Quattrocento. She believes that such images “show certain artists manipulating their greater degree of anatomical fluency to achieve wrenching images of physical torment. . . . Such an insistence on pain actually experienced stresses the common humanity of the suffering figure, seeking thereby to make the once-distant realm of the holy accessible to contemporary worshippers.” Louise Marshall, “‘Waiting on the Will of the Lord’: The Imagery of the Plague” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 107.

¹⁰² Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 90.

extremely attractive, borderline erotic image of St. Sebastian, earning praise from other artists. While the picture was on display in San Marco in Florence, “the friars found out by the confessional that women had sinned in looking at it, because of the comely and lascivious realism with which Fra Bartolomeo had endowed it,” whereupon the painting was removed to the chapter house, where it can only be seen by men.¹⁰³ Other Renaissance Sebastian images were likewise so beautiful that they eventually ran afoul of the Council of Trent (recall Possevino’s complaint about nudes).¹⁰⁴

In a similar vein, Glending Olson argues that some plague literature closely reflects the belief in medical recreation. The conceit of the *Decameron*, for example, parallels medical recommendation to flee infected areas and to delight in story-telling (and, I would add, music-making).¹⁰⁵ As such, Boccaccio’s scenario is not “merely escapist but therapeutic”—and therapeutic not only thematically, for the *brigata*, but therapeutic for readers as well.¹⁰⁶ Olson does not find the competing spiritual and medical demands on Boccaccio’s story-tellers particularly problematic. “[The] *brigata*,” Olson writes, “chose first to live ‘onestamente’ in orderly cheerfulness... and

¹⁰³ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 347.

¹⁰⁴ Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 115-17.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of instances of music-making in the *Decameron* (both in the frame tale and the framed stories), the different genres performed, the manners of performance, and the class implications of musical performance, see Howard Mayer Brown, “Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio,” *Early Music* 5 (1977): 324-39.

¹⁰⁶ Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 182-96. Shona Kelly Wray argues that Boccaccio is merely describing the medically salubrious activities of the *brigata* and is not personally condoning flight on the grounds that social solidarity is of the utmost importance in times of plague; see “Boccaccio and the Doctors: Medicine and Compassion in the Face of the Plague,” *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004): 301-22.

subsequently chose storytelling as one means of such living...The company maintains decorum, refuses to overindulge itself even in a time of license, and uses storytelling properly, for pleasure and profit and their resulting benefits to mind and body. The very act of intelligent listening (and, by extension, reading) becomes part of the shared values of propriety, harmony, and amity.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 203.

Figure 1.1 - Andrea Mantegna, *St. Sebastian*

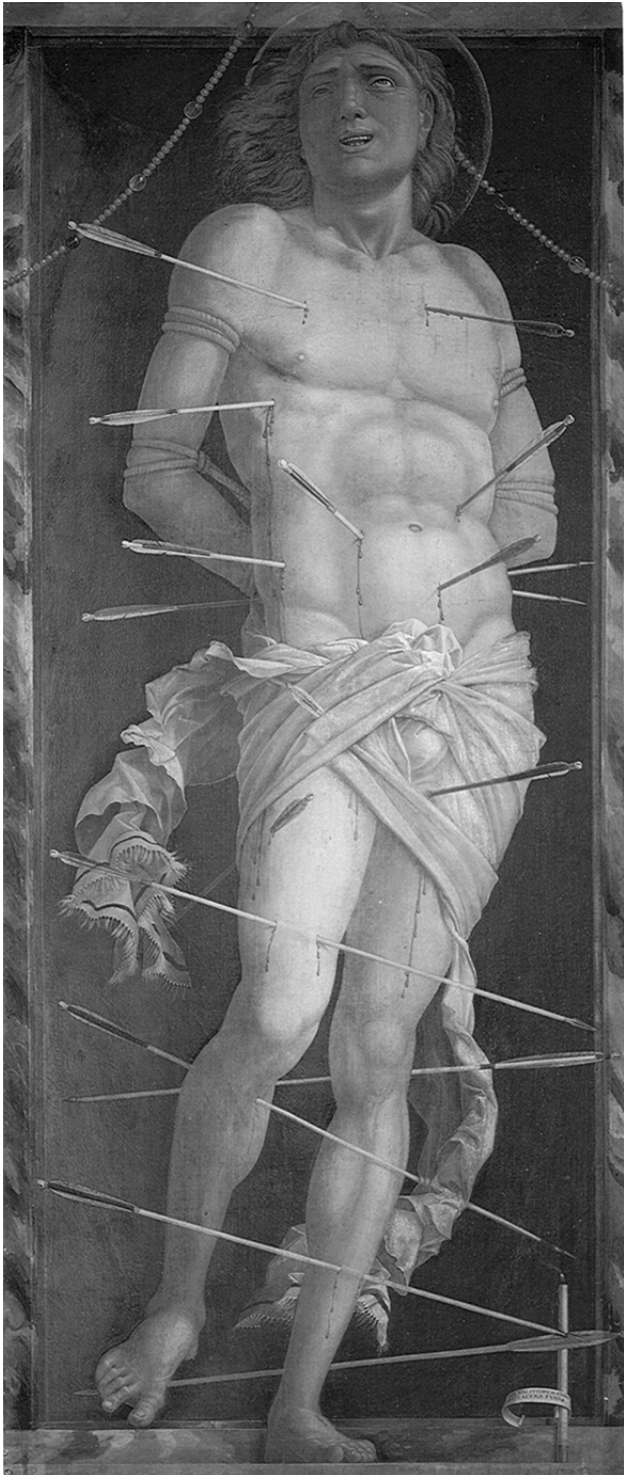


Figure 1.2 – Andrea Mantegna, *St. Sebastian*, detail: “NIL NISI DIVINUM STABILE EST CAETERA FUMUS”



Figure 1.3 – Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, *Casio Madonna* Altarpiece, *The Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist, St. Sebastian, and Two Donors*.



But what of the stories they tell, the mordant ecclesiastical satires, the raunchy fabliaux, and the scatological farces that, on more than one occasion, leave the *brigata* breathless and aroused?¹⁰⁸ And what of Boccaccio's apologies for these lurid tales and lewd language? In the epilogue, he insists that he is merely a dispassionate reporter of the tales told at the gathering, using common expressions of the marketplace. Furthermore, he insists, "It is perfectly clear that these stories were told [not] in a church, of whose affairs one must speak with a chaste mind and a pure tongue...nor in any place where churchmen...were present."¹⁰⁹ And finally, Boccaccio warns, "The lady who is forever saying her prayers, or baking pies and cakes for her father and confessor, may leave my stories alone," and "If it should cause [the readers] to laugh too much, they can easily find a remedy by turning to the Lament of Jeremiah, the Passion of Our Lord, and the Plaint of the Magdalen."¹¹⁰ Reading between the lines of his apology, we may suspect that his stories reach so low that they may do more harm than good.

Within this rift between the high and the low, the permissible and the excessive, the official and the unsanctioned, Bakhtin finds a spirit of the carnivalesque. He writes of Boccaccio's conceit:

The plague in his conception...grants the right to use other words, to have another approach to life and to the world... Life has been lifted out of its routine, the web of conventions has been torn; all the official hierarchic limits have been swept

¹⁰⁸ At the conclusion of the seventh story on the second day, for example, the ladies "heaved many a sigh over the fair lady's several adventures: but who knows what their motives may have been? Perhaps some of them were sighing, not so much because they felt sorry for Alatiel, but because they longed to be married no less often than she was." Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 148.

¹⁰⁹ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 799.

¹¹⁰ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 800, 802.

away... Even the most respectable man may now wear his “breeches for headgear.”¹¹¹

During this loosening or suspension of normal time, occasioned by plague, Boccaccio trots out the lower bodily stratum—images of the material body and its gross and festive acts—to create a laughter that is at once creative, healing, and regenerative, but is also antithetical to the intolerant seriousness of the church ideology.¹¹²

Colin Jones describes a similar function of plague time, from the religious perspective, writ large on the level of life itself:

In an odd way, plague is like carnival—another disruptive, subversive event that slips the bounds of conventional time and space, and another target for Catholic moralizing... Indeed anyone who can seek out fun in these conditions is seen as extraordinarily contemptible.¹¹³

Similarly, René Girard speaks of moral inversion in the times of plague: “The plague will turn the honest man into a thief, the virtuous man into a lecher, the prostitute into a saint.”¹¹⁴ Girard’s observation is substantiated by plague chroniclers, who were especially vehement either in praising the heightened virtue of a city, or in denouncing marked moral decay. Alessandro Canobbio, for example, was particularly impressed by the Veronese citizens; when plague struck in the 1570s, concubines of the city “left one

¹¹¹ Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky [*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable*, 1965] (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 272-3.

¹¹² Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 67-74. Bakhtin points out the currency of Hippocratic thought concerning therapeutic laughter at Montpellier, where Rabelais studied and taught. Laurent Joubert, a contemporary physician at the school, published two treatises on the causes and wondrous effects of laughter.

¹¹³ Colin Jones, “Plague and Its Metaphors in Early Modern France,” *Representations* 53 (1996): 109.

¹¹⁴ René Girard, *“To Double Business Bound”*: *Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 136-7.

another and returned to their legitimate partners, other sinners changed their ways, and many enemies voluntarily made peace.”¹¹⁵ The situation in Milan was quite the opposite during the same outbreak, according to Olivero Panizzone Sacco, who complained of sex, games, dancing, excessive feasting, adultery, and other sins throughout the city, behind closed doors and even in the city’s lazaretto, when the citizens should have been fasting and making devotions.¹¹⁶

An account of San Gregorio by its warden, Fra Paolo Bellintano of Saló, confirms Sacco’s claims. He describes an incident at the lazaretto thus:

One night the inmates were staging a dance, in order to cheer themselves, keeping the event secret even though I forbid all such activities. The day before, brother Andrea had recounted to me that he had seen among the cart of dead bodies a very old woman, and knowing about these festivities, he planned to instill a bit of terror among the dancers. He went that night to the pit in the middle of the lazaretto where they threw corpses, and searching among them diligently, finally found her again. Hoisting her on his shoulders, her stomach stretched taut forcing air in her gut out through a great belch from her mouth. Who wouldn't be frightened of such a thing? Not our Andrea. He said in our language [Brescian dialect], “Quiet old girl, we're going to a dance.” And he went into the room, knocked on the door, and announced, not as friars do with “God bless,” but in local [Milanese] dialect, “Let us in, we've come to party!” When they opened the door, he hurled the body into the middle of the room saying, “Let her dance, too.” Then he added, “Is it really possible you will stay here debauching, offending

¹¹⁵ Alessandro Canobbio, *Il successo della peste occorsa in Padoua l'anno MDLXXVI* (Venice: Paolo Megietti, 1557), 2v-3r. For this and other examples of moral praise or condemnation by chroniclers, see Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 112-18.

¹¹⁶ [E] quel, che più mi spauenta, è che veggo, e sento, che niuno si ritira da vitii, ne si fa emendatione alcuna di vita, homai lasciando i peccati, anzi parmi che si aumentano più, perche oue sono i miei cittadini fuori in molti luoghi in cambio di stare in orationi, digiuni, elemosine, e diuotioni, si come si deue fare in queste calamità, e per suoi decreti statui Tiberio Pap con queste parole, “Si venerit fames, inaequalitas aeris, pestilentiae, ut statim ieiuniis, elemosinis, et obsecrationibus Domini misericordia deprecetur.” Si stà sopra l’amore, in allegrie illecite, in guochi, crapule, e balli, facendo più peccati nelle case, e S. Gregorio alle capanne, e in diuersi altri luoghi si commettono molti adulterii, stupri, incesti, e altri simili, e più nefandi peccati, che per modestia taccio, e quanti homicidii diuersamente, quanti furti e sacrilegii, et altre inhonestà, et si credono, che DIO sia cieco? Olivero Panizzone Sacco, *Pianto della città di Milano per la pestilenza dell'anno 1567 e 1577* (Alessandria: Hercole Quiciano, 1577), 5r.

God, when your deaths are so close at hand?" And he told them other such things and then left. The dance ended.¹¹⁷

This grotesque tale of a ball of the infected illustrates many of the parallels between the carnival and the plague: the laughter and the festive impulse of the inmates; the spectacularly disgusting lower bodily stratum of the corpse as fodder for shock and comedy; and the Christian moralizing of a killjoy friar. For the patients at San Gregorio, staging such a joyous and social event "in order to cheer themselves" is exactly what the doctor would have ordered. But this earthly laughter is wholly offensive to the Christian ideology, with its nagging emphasis on death and the afterlife. In life and in art, plague serves as a site where the earthly and the spiritual meet, at times placing incommensurate demands on both the lower and the upper bodily strata.

Just as these competing demands from the doctor and the priest leave their marks on pestilential artworks such as the St. Sebastian images (salubrious beauty vs. frightful *memento mori*) and the *Decameron* (raunchy stories vs. pious decorum), they likewise mould the very contours of Martini's and Gaspar's motets. The pious homorhythmic openings of the two works resist, but eventually break down into a laughter that is earthly, bodily, and carnivalesque. Dancelike triple-metre writing, uplifting tunefulness, and exuberant melismas in the middles of the motets evoke a joy squarely at odds with the sobriety demanded by the preacher. Dance, as we have witnessed in the Milanese lazaretto, has a very real potential to upset ecclesiastical order. Because dance "called the body into play" and "sent couples into each other's embraces," Kate van Orden writes, it

¹¹⁷ Federico Odorici, "I due Bellintani da Salò ed il dialogo della peste di Fra Paolo," in *Raccolta di cronisti e documenti storici lombardi inediti*, 2 vols. (Milan: Francesco Colombo, 1847), 2, 253-312. Quoted in Carmichael, "Last Past Plague," 153.

represented “a central locus of the ambivalence toward music’s power to induce immoral conduct,” and its accompanying music “came under ready reprobation.”¹¹⁸ Recall Meier’s description of celebratory, triple-metre music; his reference to both “wedding” and “idolatry” points to the bivalence of dance, from the legitimate (a community celebrating a marital bond) to the subversive (heretical revelry). This bifocal view of the dance topic resonates with Renaissance suspicion of dance. In a tract attributed to Carlo Borromeo in which he condemns dance and comedies, the cardinal distinguishes between two types of dancing referenced in the Bible. The first is inspired by the Holy Spirit and comes from “a movement of grace,” exemplified by David’s dance in the presence of God.¹ The second is based solely on pleasure—witness the lascivious dancing daughters of Sion depicted in Isaiah 3:16—and is utterly offensive to the Lord.¹¹⁹

But for all of Martini’s and Gaspar’s evocations of dance, joy, and laughter, theirs are sacred and prayerful songs, not lascivious madrigals or *canti carnascialeschi*. Here, the laughter tends toward the lower stratum, but never becomes wildly immodest.

Although the eruption of dancing in these motets gesture toward “degradation” in the Bakhtinian sense—a “coming down to earth” and an emphasis on the material body—this degradation is not intent on rapturous blasphemy, but rather on bodily health. After all, dance, as “one of the clearest medieval sites at which music and body come

¹¹⁸ Kate van Orden, “An Erotic Metaphysics of Healing in Early Modern France,” *Musical Quarterly* 82 (1998): 684.

¹¹⁹ Carlo Borromeo, *Traité contre les danses et les comedies. Composé par S. Charles Borromée* (Paris: G. Soly, 1664), 6. This division of dance into the spiritual and the lascivious had its roots in the early Christian church. See William Hardy McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75ff.

together,”¹²⁰ is a place where universal harmony meets human harmony, where the ideal order of the cosmos can take hold of and regulate our physical *materia*.

At the end of the motets, homorhythmic declarations of “promissionibus” cordon off the festivities and re-establish the solemn tone. These devotional-elevation chords complete the works’ textural symmetry, enveloping the works with high-minded devotion—a final turn, then, to the Passion of Christ, lest we laugh too much. Through the course of the works, we move between degradation and elevation, between our physical dancing bodies and Christ’s metaphysical Eucharistic body. The works offer, in essence, both the *chanson spirituelle* and Gargantua’s entertainment prescribed by Nicolas de Nancel. Such a juxtaposition of topics betokens the motets’ (and the Motet’s) capacity for achieving a rapprochement between spiritual and temporal medicines. The messy juxtapositions of the medical and spiritual prescriptions are still very much present and heard, but Martini and Gaspar have combined their respective prescriptions for a double dose of medicine that treats the body and the soul.

¹²⁰ Bruce Holsinger, *Music, Body and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 20.

Chapter 2

The *Passio* of St. Sebastian

“Cum sagittis plenus quasi hericius staret” (Shot through with arrows, he stood like a hedgehog)—thus pseudo-Ambrose describes Sebastian’s suffering in his fifth-century *Passio* of the martyr.¹ Sebastian was punished with a scourge of arrows when the Roman Emperor Diocletian discovered that the saint, working as a Praetorian Guard, had been secretly converting pagans and confirming the faith of imprisoned Christians. Left for dead in the middle of a field, Sebastian was brought under the care of St. Irene and subsequently recovered from his wounds. He suffered his martyrdom when he later ambushed and publically admonished the Emperor, who, enraged, ordered Sebastian to be bludgeoned and his body tossed into Rome’s famous sewer, the *cloaca maxima*. In a posthumous miracle, Sebastian appeared to Lucia in a dream to tell her the location of his body. Lucia recovered his body and buried it in the catacombs next to the remains of the apostles Peter and Paul.

¹ This fifth-century *Passio* served as a reference for Jacobus de Voragine’s 1260 *Legenda aurea*, which also makes use of the hedgehog image: “Tunc Dyocletianus jussit eum in medium campum ligari et a militibus sagittari, qui ita eum sagittis impleverunt, ut quasi hericius videretur.” Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Johann Georg Theodor Graesse (Osnabrück: Zeller, 1965), 112. According to Sabine Baring-Gould, “The original Acts are not in our possession. What is regarded as the Acts appears to be a panegyric, falsely attributed to S. Ambrose, on S. Sebastian’s Day. The incidents are no doubt taken from the original Acts, but the long sermons and theological instructions put into the mouths of S. Sebastian and Tranquillinus, are certainly oratorical composition of the author who passes for S. Ambrose.” *The Lives of the Saints: January*, 3rd ed. (London: John Hodges, 1877), 300.

It is perhaps not surprising, when faced with the two episodes of suffering (shot by arrows or bludgeoned and dumped in a sewer), that artists more often than not opted to depict Sebastian's less unseemly passion by arrows; their typical output features a youth, stripped to the waist and tied to a tree, with arrows protruding from his body precisely like quills on a hedgehog.² In some ways, the popularity of such images of Sebastian "as a hedgehog" overshadows other important aspects of his hagiographic narrative. For one, Sebastian was not martyred by the arrows. But because Christian martyrs were commonly depicted to show the saint undergoing fatal torture, viewers could reasonably be misled into thinking that he had died of his arrow wounds.³ Second, stripped of his military garb, there is no obvious indication that Sebastian was himself a soldier, a part of

² There are a few depictions of bludgeoning as a part of cycles by Lieferinxe, Veronese, and Michael van Coxcyen. Irving L. Zupnick, "Saint Sebastian in Art" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1958), 187-9.

³ Lester K. Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; American Academy in Rome, 2007), 29. Sheila Barker speculates that Sebastian's iconographic association with arrows arose along with the dissemination of Sebastian's relics to other parts of Italy and the Frankish kingdom, which created an interest in the Saint's Roman itinerary among pilgrims. A church erected in the tenth century along this itinerary at Palatine hill where Sebastian was shot with arrows was furnished with images that depicted, for the first time, Sebastian's passion. The five scenes included in the fresco cycle were the archers' initial attempt to kill Sebastian, his recovery, the disposal of his corpse after his real death, the transportation of his corpse to the catacombs, and his burial. Barker reasons that, because his bludgeoning was not depicted, the frescos gave the impression that Sebastian died from arrow wounds. This omission, in turn, spurred popular depictions of Sebastian pierced with arrows, as if that were the final moment of his death. Sheila Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint: Saint Sebastian's Imagery and Cult Before the Counter-Reformation," in *Hope and Healing: Painting in Italy in a Time of Plague 1500-1800*, ed. Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Pamela M. Jones, Franco Mormando and Thomas W. Worcester (Worcester, MA: Clark University; College of the Holy Cross; Worcester Art Museum, 2005), 94-5. There was also a hagiographic tradition that Sebastian suffered two deaths. In a late-fifteenth-century depiction by Matteo di Giovanni, the saint, pierced with arrows, is seen with two crowns of martyrdom, one in his hand and the other being placed on his head by angels. Saint Antoninus of Florence writes that "through two deaths, Sebastian has two aureoles of martyrs." *Summa Theologica Moralis* III, tit. 30, cap. 8 (Verona, 1527), cited in Edwin Hall and Horst Uhr, "Aureola super Auream: Crowns and Related Symbols of Special Distinction for Saints in Late Gothic and Renaissance Iconography," *The Art Bulletin* 67 (1985): 573n29.

the machinery that persecuted Christians, occupying the same role as the men who are now attempting to kill him. And although the arrow served as a long-standing symbol for plague and divine punishment, Sebastian was never actually associated with the plague during his lifetime—he was neither afflicted himself, nor did he heal anyone of the disease.

In devotional songs to Sebastian, the saint's suffering by arrows tends to be downplayed in the texts in favour of other aspects of his life. Taken together, the corpus of musical works studied in this dissertation provides a panoramic view of the saint's life and reveals the hagiographic themes that are important to his cult. The songs appear to have three particular thematic foci: Sebastian's occupation as a soldier, his success as an evangelist *cum* miracle-healer, and his patronage of Lombardy. These themes, read along with the history of Sebastian's cult and the contemporary discourses on plague, can further reveal the functional role of devotional music in the defence against pestilence.

Miles Christi sub Chlamyde

Sebastian was born in the third century in Narbonne, Gaul, to wealthy parents and raised in Lombardy. As an adult, he served as a soldier under the rule of Diocletian and Maximilian. Sebastian excelled in his military role and gained the special favours of the emperors, who appointed him to their personal following as a Praetorian Guard. But the saint found a higher calling; he surreptitiously used his position to visit imprisoned Christians in order to confirm their faith. Among those whom he visited were the twins Marcellianus and Marcus, Christians awaiting execution. On one occasion, the twins' parents, Tranquillinus and Martia, visited and wept openly in an attempt to persuade the

brothers to renounce their heretical faith. As the twins were succumbing to their parents' plaint, Sebastian stepped in, imploring them to be constant with words of reproach, threats, and promise. At the end of his impassioned speech, Sebastian was bathed in a divine light as a child surrounded by seven angels appeared to those present. At the sight of such a miracle, not only did the twins remain steadfast in their faith, but their parents were converted as well.⁴

Damian Fleming points to a number of contradictions in the militaristic aspect of Sebastian's life: he is both a Roman official, culpable for the persecution of Christians, and a Christian himself; he urges others toward martyrdom while personally avoiding it; and he spends his life enjoying the favour of the Emperor while consorting with Christians.⁵ Ironically, Sebastian's two identities are reconciled under his occupation as a soldier—his literal career as a soldier of Rome parallels his true calling as a metaphorical spiritual soldier of Christ. Sebastian himself brings together the tenor and vehicle of the soldier-for-Christ metaphor in his address to the brothers Marcellianus and Marcus, "O, you bravest soldiers of Christ, do not give up the eternal crown on account of these sad pleas."⁶

⁴ Hagiographic account from Johannes Bollandus, ed., *Acta sanctorum...I Ianuarii tomus II* (Antwerp: Ioannes Meursius, 1643).

⁵ Damian Fleming, "A Demilitarized Saint: Aelfric's *Life of Saint Sebastian*," *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 127 (2009): 20.

⁶ Huic spectaculo, vt supra diximus, intererat S. Sebastianus vir per omnia Christianissimus, quem occultabat militaris habitus, & chlamydis obumbrabat aspectus. At vbi vidit athletas Dei immenso certaminis pondere fatigari, in medio eorum se obiiciens, dixit: O fortissimi milites Christi, o instructissimi diuini praelij bellatores, per nimiam virtutem animi fortiter peruenistis ad palmam, & nunc per misera blandimenta coronam deponitis sempiternam? Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 266.

In the language of the *Passio*, Sebastian's double life finds a specific expression in the recurring image of the *chlamys*, or military cloak. Pseudo-Ambrose, for example, thus describes Sebastian's secret work: "Therefore he was daily doing zealous work for Christ, but he was acting so that this was secret from the sacrilegious kings, not frightened out of fear of suffering, nor bound by the love of his inheritance, but for this reason alone was he acting as the soldier of Christ hidden under the cloak [*sub chlamyde*] of earthly power, so that he might comfort the minds of Christians."⁷ Later, explaining his actions, Sebastian tells the Roman Prefect Chromatius, "I wished to hide *sub chlamyde*, so that I may guide the minds of those faltering, and make constant those wavering, lest they yielded to the pains of suffering those whom faith had made warriors."⁸ Sebastian comforts the twins *indutus chlamyde* and is discovered by the Emperor's men *sub chlamyde*.⁹ Sebastian's military cloak enables him to perform God's work and symbolically joins together his two identities as an outward soldier of Rome and an inward soldier of Christ.

Many musical works invoke Sebastian specifically as a military saint and refer to his military dress: Martini and Gaspar's *O beate Sebastiane (miles beatissime)*; Dufay's *O sancte Sebastiane* and Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane (militis portans insignia)*;

⁷ Christo igitur quotidie sedulum exhibebat officium, sed agebat quatenus hoc sacrilegis regibus esset occultum, non passionis timore perterritus, nec patrimonii sui amore constrictus, sed ad hoc tantum sub chlamyde terreni imperii Christi militem agebat absconditum, ut Christianorum animos...confortaret. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 263. Translation from Fleming, "Demilitarized Saint," 14.

⁸ Ad hoc tantum sub chlamyde latere volui, vt nutantium animos instruerem, & dubitantes constantes efficerem, ne passionum doloribus cederent, quos fides fecerat bellatores. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 274.

⁹ His ita gestis B. Sebastianus ab insidiantibus conuentus est: & quia, vt diximus, videbatur sub chlamyde latere, cum miles esset dignissimus Christi, suggestit de eo Prefectus Diocletiano Imperatori. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 278.

Willaert's *Armorum fortissime ductor Sebastiane* ("Armorum," which opens the motet, is set emphatically to homorhythmic devotional chords); Gaffurius's *O beate Sebastiane (vere Christi miles)*; and Caracciolo's *Santo Guerrier*. In Michael Deiss's motet *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus* (from the third book of Gardane's *Novi atque catholici thesauri musicus*, 1568/4), the military *chlamys* even serves as the central image. For this work, Deiss follows the ABCB form of a responsory; he combines two popular antiphons from the feast of St. Sebastian, setting one in each *pars* and repeating a section of the first antiphon at the end of the motet.

Prima pars (CAO4844)

Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus, quem occultabat militaris habitus, et chlamidis sue obumbrabat aspectus.

Sebastian, the most Christian man, whom the military habit concealed, and the appearance of his cloak hid.

Secunda pars (CAO2653)

Erat enim in sermone verax et in iudicio iustus.

He was indeed truthful in speech and fair in judgment.

[Et clamidis sue obumbrabat aspectus.]

[and the appearance of his cloak hid.]¹⁰

The juxtaposition of these two antiphons speaks directly to the nature of Sebastian's double life; false appearance stands side by side with inner truth, his Roman dress with Christian thought.

The central symbol for the idea is once again the *chlamys*; the repetition of "Et clamidis sue..." at the end of the motet even recalls the manner in which the epithet recurs throughout Sebastian's *Passio*. For the textual repetition, Deiss repeats the music

¹⁰ I would like to thank Lars Lih for his help with this translation.

verbatim, save an instance of signed accidental differences (C-sharp and C, mm. 37 and 103; Example 2.1 and 2.2). Although Christopher Ruth, in his work on Michael Deiss, does not directly refer to this musical repetition, it does present a number of aesthetic issues that may have led him to conclude that “[w]hether due to the intended mode of the work, or simply Deiss’s inexperience, *Sebastianus* fails on several levels, and Deiss appears to have been struggling with this motet. Modally and melodically, this piece could be argued as Deiss’s least successful in the [*Novi thesauri*].”¹¹ Certainly, the manner in which Deiss appends the “et clamidis” passages is somewhat artless, with the preceding homorhythmic passages coming to an abrupt and near-total standstill (Examples 2.1 and 2.2)—especially in the *secunda pars* (m. 100). Ruth also finds the modal handling of the work problematic; the signed B-flat and, more crucially, a final on A (obligated by the musical repetition) together suggest a transposed Phrygian, yet most of the prominent cadences fall on D and the others on A (Table 2.1).

¹¹ Christopher Thomas Ruth, “The Motets of Michael Deiss: In a New and Critical Edition” (MA thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2007), 126.

Table 2.1 - Cadential Structure of *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus*

<i>Prima pars</i>	Cadence m.	Pitch
Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus,	19	D
quem occultabat	27	D
militaris habitus, et chlamidis sue	37	D
	46	A
obumbrabat aspectus.	58	D
	63	A
<i>Secunda pars</i>		
Erat enim in sermone verax	72	D
	79	D
	90	A
	92	D
et in iudicio iustus.	99	A
Et clamidis sue	103	D
	112	A
obumbrabat aspectus.	124	D
	129	A

We can perhaps rescue *Sebastianus* from the charge of aesthetic failure if we consider the expressive effects and thematic significance of the repeated “clamidis” passage. Deiss certainly takes no pains to conceal the direct repetition by initiating that segment of music amid reduced texture with clear, imitative duos that cascade downwards (Example 2.1). And the distinctive leap of a minor sixth followed by a long-short-long rhythmic pattern that sets the words “et clamidis” is heard again and again in all voices, with some variations, making the repetition of music unmistakable to the ear. All set to the same long-short-long motive, the words “milita(ris),” “habitus,” (mm. 30-33) and “chlamidis”—the tools of disguise—are united through rhythmic repetition at the prosodic level. Moreover, Deiss raises a series of Cs in the superius with a signed sharp (mm. 32, 37, 40), creating a rather striking sound in the context of the surrounding B-flats as well as the E-flats in m. 38; the instance at m. 32 is particularly marked by the

juxtaposition of an “A major” and a “B-flat major” sonority. The result is another sonic and conceptual link between the “chlamys” and the “militaris habitus.”

Example 2.1- Deiss, *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus*, mm. 29-59

29

S. bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta - ris ha - bi - tus et cla - mi - dis su - e et

A. ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta - ris ha - bi - tus et cla - mi - dis

T. bat mi - li - ta - ris ha - bi - tus et

B. bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta - ris ha - bi - tus et

36

S. cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su -

A. su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su -

T. cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su -

B. cla - mi - dis - su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e

43

S. - e et cla - mi - dis su - e o - bum - bra - bat a - spec -

A. - e et cla - mi - dis su - e o - bum - bra - bat a - spec -

T. e et cla - mi - dis su - e o - bum - bra - bat a - spec -

B. et cla - mi - dis su - e o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

opening point of imitation and repeated cadences on those pitches in the *prima pars*—which is itself punctuated by a clear arrival on A—Deiss begins the next section of the music with imitative entries on G and D (and all but one entry of the *soggetto* occurs on one of those pitches), as if to transpose the work into a G-Dorian area (Example 2.3). The passage setting “erat enim in sermone verax” provides one of the most striking rhetorical moments of the entire motet; between mm. 79 and 81, the superius reaches for the opening notes of the *soggetto*, drawn out in breves and transposed to the highest notes of its ambitus, as if to confirm with confidence the truth of Sebastian’s words. If the return of the “clamidis” passage shrouds the ending of the work in modal uncertainty, then it is rather thematically felicitous; once more, the saint is concealed in disguise.

Example 2.3 - Deiss, *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus*, mm. 63-92

63
 S. tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec tus E - rat e - nim
 A. tus E - rat e - nim in ser -
 T. tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus E -
 B. tus o - bum bra - bat a - spec tus

71
 S. in ser mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser -
 A. mo - ne ve - rax E - rat e - nim e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne
 T. rat - e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser mo - ne
 B. rat - e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser mo - ne

78
 S. mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax ve -
 A. ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax E - rat
 T. ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat
 B. rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax E - rat e - nim in

85
 S. rax e - rat e - nim in ser mo - ne ve - rax ve - rax
 A. e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax et in iu -
 T. e - nim in ser mo - ne ve - rax in ser mo - ne ve - rax in ser - mo - ne ve - rax et in iu -
 B. ser mo - ne E - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax

Sana quod est saucium... Rege quod est devium

Deiss does not appear to have incorporated the liturgical melodies of the two antiphons in his setting. The opening *soggetto* of his motet, however, does bear a striking resemblance to the opening *superius* melody of another Sebastian motet—*Sebastiane decus perenne celi*, composed by Maistre Jhan; the *soggetto* appears briefly again in the *secunda pars* of Jhan's motet. The motet petitions St. Sebastian generally for help against pestilence, and specifically for his protection of the Estes and their city:

Prima pars

Sebastiane decus perenne celi, audi vota
precesque supplicantium, nec audi modo
sed benignus illa exaudi quam potes
deorum rectore atque hominum tibi
annuente.

Sebastian, eternal ornament of heaven,
hear the vows and prayers of those
supplicating—and not only hear, but, as a
kind man, heed them as you can, because
the king of gods and men is granting them
to you.

Secunda pars

Surgentem reprime et repelle pestem,
ne vis serpat et opprimat caducos mortales
satis est suo perire fato omnes. Violenta
mors facescat tuis auspiciis tuoque ductu.

Check and repel the growing pestilence,
lest in its power it creeps and crushes
stricken mortals. It is enough that so many
have perished to their fate. Let the violent
death depart, according to your auspices
and your command.

Tertia pars

Mox estense genus tuere et urbem quam
alphonso moderatur et gubernat justa et
legitima manu atque habenis, ut tuas tibi
sospites canamus laudes. At tibi deferamus
uni vitam, comoda, opes, lares, salutem.

Also protect the house of Este and the city
that Alfonso rules and governs with a just
and legitimate hand and with the reins (of
government), so that we, unscathed, may
sing praises to you. And to you alone we
entrust our life, safety, property, homes,
and health.¹²

Given the lack of other evidence of modelling, we might reasonably suspect the use of a common *cantus prius factus* for such prominent melodies in the two works. An appealing candidate comes from versicles 7 and 8 of the sequence for Whit Sunday, *Veni*

¹² I would like to thank Lars Lih for his help with this translation.

sancte spiritus (compare examples 2.4a-d);¹³ the pitches of the sequence rather appropriately set the words “sana quod est saucium” and “rege quod est devium” (“heal whatever is sick” and “guide whatever is astray”).

Example 2.4a - Deiss, *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus*, mm. 1-20

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each, labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are Latin: "Sebastianus vir Christianissimus".

System 1 (mm. 1-6):

- S: Rests in all measures.
- A: Rests in measures 1-4, then "Se -" in measure 5.
- T: "Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri" (with "Se -" above the staff in measure 5).
- B: Rests in measures 1-4, then "Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri-sti - a - nis -" (with "Se -" above the staff in measure 5).

System 2 (mm. 7-12):

- S: "bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri-sti - a - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti -" (with "Se -" above the staff in measure 12).
- A: "sti - a - nis - si - mus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus" (with "Se -" above the staff in measure 12).
- T: "nus vir Chri-sti - a - nis - si - mus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Se -" (with "Se -" above the staff in measure 12).
- B: "- si-mus vir Chri-sti - a - nis - si - mus Se-bas - ti - a - nus vir" (with "Se -" above the staff in measure 12).

¹³ *Liber usualis* (1961), p. 880-1.

13

S. a - nus vir Chris - sti - a - - nis - si -

A. Se - bas - ti - a - - nus vir Chri -

T. bas - ti - a - - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si -

B. Chri - sti - a - - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti - a -

17

S. mus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - - si - mus

A. sti - a - nis - si - mus Chri - sti - a - ni - si - mus quem o -

T. mus Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem

B. nus vir Chri - sti - a - - nis - si - mus quem

Example 2.4b - Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane decus perenne*, soggetto from *prima pars*

S. Se - ba - sti - a - ne de - cus pe - ren - ne ce - li

B.

Example 2.4c - Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane decus perenne*, soggetto from *secunda pars*

S. et op - pri - mat ca - du - cos mor - - -

B.

S. - - - - - ta - les.

B.

Example 2.4d - *Veni sancte spiritus*, sequence from Whit Sunday, versicles 7 and 8

7. La-va quod est sor - di-dum, Ri-ga quod est a - ri-dum, Sa-na quod est sau-ci-um.

8. Fle-cte quod est ri - gi-dum, Fo-ve quod est fri - gi-dum, Re-ge quod est de - vi-um.

Through the musical allusion to the sequence, Deiss juxtaposes a petition for bodily health against the textual theme of Sebastian’s Christian proselytizing. The sequence fragment itself can be understood in the same light; the healing of corporeal “saucium” (sickness) parallels the correction of moral or spiritual “devium.”

Such an interrelationship between health and proper belief plays an important thematic role in Sebastian’s hagiography and even inflects general beliefs about pestilence and its semantic use as a metaphor. According to the Pseudo-Ambrose *Passio*, it proved ultimately impossible for the saint to hide his proselytizing *sub chlamyde*; evangelism and secrecy are difficult to reconcile. From the moment Sebastian preached

to the imprisoned twins, his circle of influence quickly expanded, and he was able to covert many pagans to Christianity. Most of the instances of conversion singled out in his *Passio* were accompanied by acts of miraculous healing. A mute woman named Zoë, at whose house Marcus and Marcellianus were imprisoned, saw the appearance of the seven angels after Sebastian's impassioned speech to the twins. At once, she understood the saint's words and fell to her knees. Sebastian looked upon her and, realizing that her heart had been converted, said to her, "If I am the true servant of Christ, and if all the things I have said and that this woman heard and believed were true, may the Lord my Jesus Christ, who opened the mouth of his Prophet Zachariah, return her voice and uncover her mouth." At this, Zoë regained her speech and blessed the Lord. Witnessing all of this, her husband, Nicostratus, was also converted. Everyone present—the twins, their parents, Zoë, and Nicostratus—was baptized by Polycarp. As soon as he received his baptism, the twins' father, Tranquillinus, was cured of the gout in his hands and feet.

As news of Tranquillinus's good fortune spread, Chromatius, the prefect of Rome who was himself quite ill, summoned him to seek the source of his remedy. Holding himself as proof of the greatness of God, Tranquillinus discredited the pagan gods before Chromatius and, in a lengthy debate, opened the prefect's mind to Christianity. Chromatius then bade Tranquillinus to bring him the man who had converted him: if that man could promise him health, then he would become Christian.¹⁴ Sebastian later arrived with Polycarp and told Chromatius that, unless he accepted God in his heart and

¹⁴ Tunc Praefectus dimisit eum dicens: Adduc ad me qui te Christianum fecit, ut si mihi promiserit sanitatem, possim et ego fieri Christianus. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 272.

destroyed all of the pagan idols in his home, his health would not be restored.¹⁵ Sebastian demanded power over the images in the prefect's home, and when this was granted, proceeded to destroy over two hundred of them.¹⁶ Despite this iconoclasm, Chromatius was still not healed. When pressed by Sebastian, Chromatius revealed that there was one final object in his home that he loved more than others: an astrolabe that had been passed down to him by his father.¹⁷ Having convinced Chromatius that such pagan arts and objects were false, vain, and inimical to God, Polycarp and Sebastian destroyed the remaining astrological instrument. At once, an angel appeared to Chromatius, and he was healed. On account of this miracle, Chromatius and four thousand members of his household converted to Christianity and received baptism.

Willaert's motet *Armorum fortissime* (1520s) cites this incident of iconoclasm as well as Sebastian's work in confirming the faith of Christian martyrs:

¹⁵ S. Sebastianus dixit: . . . multos deos, et multas deas coluisti. Nisi ergo hos a corde tuo exluseris, et imaginem eorum confregeris, et cognoveris unum et verum Deum, vitam et salutem invenire non poteris. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 273.

¹⁶ S. Sebastianus dixit: Da nobis potestatem ut omnia idola, quae in domo tua invenerimus, lapidea confringamus, lignea incendamus, aurea et argentea, vel aerea conflamus, et pretia eorum egentibus dividamus. . . . Et post orationem amplius quam ducenta idolorum signa confringentes, coeperunt gratias agere Deo suo. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 273.

¹⁷ S. Polycarpus Presbyter dixit: Illic signa Leonis & Capricorni & Sagittarij, & Scorpionis, & Tauri sunt; illic in ariete Luna, in Cancro hora, in Ioue stella, in Mercurio tropica, in Venere Mars, et in omnibus istis monstruosis daemionibus ars Deo inimica cognoscitur. Ista Christiani ita recusant, vt non solum ipsi non habeant, non colant, non credant, non teneant; verum etiam nec amicos illos habeant, qui huiusmodi nugis suum occupant pectus? Omnia enim ista falsa deceptionisque ministra sunt: similitudo in eis veritatis est, non ipsa veritas. Dicit ei Chromatius: Quid? quod nonnumquam futura praenuntiant? S. Sebastianus dixit: Ista omnia vanissima esse & falsissima, Christo reuelante cognouimus. Bollandus, *Acta sanctorum*, 274.

Prima pars

Armorum fortissime ductor Sebastiane,
quis te dignis laudibus efferat? Cum sola
fide armatus pulcherrimum et Romano
principe triumphum egeris, nam Diocletiani
potentiam et minas aspernatus fractos
tormentorum acerbitate martyrum animos
confirmabas, et Jovis Apollinisque
simulacra dejiciens daemones non deos
esse palam docebas.

O mightiest commander of arms, Sebastian,
who shall offer you the praise you deserve?
Gloriously armed with faith alone, you
took away triumph from the Roman leader,
having rejected the power and threats of
Diocletian, you strengthened the souls of
martyrs broken by the harshness of torture,
and casting down the idols of Jove and of
Apollo plainly showed that they are
demons, not gods.

Secunda pars

Te igitur, Martyr egregie, supplices
oramus, ut qui mortalem hanc vitam degens
morbos animorum curabas in coelo nunc
regnans mentes nostras et corpora tuearis.¹⁸

Therefore, in supplication we pray to you,
distinguished martyr: you, who cured the
sickness of souls when leading this mortal
life and who now reign in heaven, preserve
our minds and bodies.

The militaristic epithet that opens the motet, “armorum fortissime ductor” (mightiest commander of arms) strikes a parallel with “fide armatus” (armed with faith; line 3), again bringing together Sebastian’s double identity as an earthly and a spiritual soldier.

The entire *prima pars* of Willaert’s motet reads as a series of *exempla* for Christians seeking bodily healing through spiritual means. Musically, the rhetorical shift between the didacticism of the *prima pars* and the petition of the *secunda* coincides with some tonal differences between the two *partes*. In the *prima pars*, cadences fall on a variety of pitches (the one foray to D in the entire work accompanies the rhetorical question), while the *secunda pars*, with a few evaded cadences aside, rarely strays from the C final.

¹⁸ The source of Willaert’s text is unknown. I would like to thank Lars Lih for his help with this translation.

Table 2.2 - Cadential Structure of Willaert's *Armorum fortissime*

<i>Prima pars</i>	Cadence m.	Pitch
Armorum fortissime ductor Sebastiane,	12	C
quis te dignis laudibus efferat?	23	D
Cum sola fide armatus	29	G
	32	G
pulcherrimum et Romano principe triumphum egeris,	40	C
nam Diocletiani potentiam et minas aspernatus	50	A
fractos tormentorum acerbitate martyrum animos	63	G
confirmabas,	72	G
et Jovis Apollinisque simulacra dejiciens	85	C
daemones non deos esse palam docebas.	88	C
	92	F
	97	C
<i>Secunda pars</i>		
Te igitur, Martyr egregie, supplices oramus,	112	F
ut qui mortalem hanc vitam degens	116	G
	120	C
	124	C
morbos animorum curabas in coelo nunc regnans	135	C
	139	C
mentes nostras et corpora tuearis.	146	C
	156	C

The references in the motet to Sebastian's evangelical work likely resonated with contemporary religious discourses on plague, its causes, and its treatments. False belief and heresy were thought to be the leading sins that invited pestilential punishment. In his plague treatise, for example, Antonio Possevino warns against false prophets whose deceitful words, like plague, spread like a contagion.¹⁹ The ownership of prohibited

¹⁹ La seconda cagione e l'heresia: et cosi giesu signor nostro manifestando i segni della venuta dell'Antichristo, poi che hebbe detto, che uerrebbono nel mondo falsi Profeti soggiunse, che in diversi paesi enterebbe la peste, si che dove e il contagio dell'heresia, marauiglia non e, se va serpendo questo contagio corrispondendo la diuina giustitia con l'esteriore gastigo de'corpi

books and contact with heretics were likewise dangerous. Concomitant with such pestilential rhetoric was the persecution of outsiders and minority groups; Jews, for example, were blamed for earlier outbreaks, and many of their communities were destroyed.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, by the middle of the sixteenth century, Protestantism became a lightning-rod for invectives against false beliefs in times of plague. A 1564 outbreak in Lyon, for example, spurred Emond Auger to write, “Whoever does not want to believe that apostasy from the Catholic faith does not result in punishment can easily see it now with his own eyes,...for God moved His hand and delivered such justice to His rebels that few remain here now, and for every dead Catholic more than ten of the [Protestants] died.”²¹ An epidemic in England in 1570 was thought to have accompanied Queen Elizabeth’s excommunication, and an episode among the Protestant population in Graz in 1575 (“the doctors and other serious men consider it a mystery that this disease struck almost only the Lutherans, when neither in the city nor among their neighbors did it appear notable”) was thought by one Jesuit writer to be a singular visit by God.²²

all'interne colpe dell'anime, et marauiglia dico non e, se colui il quale, o tiene libri prohibiti, o conuersa con heretici, e spesso inuolto ne i loro danni. Ceh per cio, et a Lot fu dato auvertimento da gli Angioli, clie uscisse di mezzo gl'huomini scelerati, et s. Guivanni Evangelista arditamente fuggi da i bagni dove era stato Cherinto Heretico, per dubbio di non restare infetto da quel luogo, che toccato l'haueua. [Antonio Possevino], *Cause et rimedii della peste, et d'altre infermita* (Florence: Giunti, 1577), 24.

²⁰ See for example Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), ch. 5; Jean Noël Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, *Civilisations et sociétés* 35-36 (Paris: Mouton, 1975), 57-71; Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 147-67.

²¹ A. Lynn Martin, *Plague?: Jesuit Accounts of Epidemic Disease in the Sixteenth Century*, *Sixteenth Century Studies* 18 (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1996), 95.

²² Martin, *Plague?*, 45.

Indeed, the disease of pestilence was commonly used as a metaphor for apostasy across Renaissance Europe. The titles of some anti-heresy treatises can give us a sense of this rhetoric: *Apologia pro veritate Catholicae et apostolicae: fidei ac doctrinae adversus impia ac valde pestifera Martin Lutheri dogmata* (*Defence of the Catholic and Apostolic Truth: Against the Impious and Greatly Pestiferous Dogma of Martin Luther*; 1521); *Adversus pestiferos foedissimosque Catharorum errores ac haereses sermones* (*Sermons Against the Pestiferous and Loathsome Errors and Heresies of the Cathars*; 1530); *Rimedio a la pestilente dottrina de frate Bernardino Ochino* (*Remedy for the Pestilent Doctrines of Bernardino Ochino*; 1544); *Antidots et regimes contre la peste d'heresie et erreurs contraires à la foy catholique* (*Antidotes and Regimens Against the Plague of Heresy and Errors Contrary to the Catholic Faith*; 1558). And Leopold Dick and John Calvin even directed the metaphor against other Reformers: *Adversus impios anabaptistarum errores, longe omnium pestilentissimos* (1530); and in English: *A Short Instruction for to Arme All Good Christian People Agaynst the Pestiferous Errours of the Common Secte of Anabaptistes* (1549). Plague made a fitting metaphor for heresy because both were noxious and both were perceived to be extremely contagious (Possevino's turn of phrase "il contagio dell'heresia" is revealing).

In the context of a Sebastian motet, the thematic relationship between faith and healing was not a mere hagiographic trope; references to the saint's evangelical work set a didactic and practical example of how to avoid pestilential punishment. The *exempla* presented in Willaert's *Armorum fortissime*, especially Sebastian's destruction of pagan idols, inculcate the importance of right belief in healing. Josse Lieferinxe's painting of Sebastian and Chromatius (ca. 1497) depicting that same incident makes explicit this link

between spiritual and bodily health (Figure 2.1). As Sebastian and Polycarp tear down pagan images in the foreground, an angel descends upon the ailing prefect, accompanied by his son, in benediction. The saint peers back over his shoulder as if to ascertain the miraculous (and almost mechanical) effects of his iconoclasm on his patient's health. A number of composers, in addition to Willaert, also refer to the episodes of conversion and miraculous healing in their Sebastian motets. As mentioned before, Deiss emphasizes the (Christian) truth in Sebastian's words as he hid *sub chlamyde*. In *O sancte Sebastiane*, Dufay names specifically the conversion and healing of Nicostratus and Zoë. Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane* commends the martyr for comforting the wavering hearts of Christians. By Sebastian's example, these motets remind listeners that spiritual sickness and physical illness (and by extension, moral and bodily health) are two sides of the same coin—proper belief is fundamental to well-being, *tout court*.

Figure 2.1 - Josse Lieferinxe, *Saint Sebastian Destroying the Idols*²³



²³ Image reproduced with permission by the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The Lombard Plague Saint

A number of composers invoke Sebastian specifically against the plague: Martini, Gaspar, Dufay, Copinus, Maistre Jhan, Gaffurius (*O beate Sebastiane*), Mouton, and Caracciolo (the others petition him more generally for health or salvation). Among these, Martini, Gaspar, and Dufay invoke Sebastian specifically as a Lombard saint: Martini and Gaspar associate him with the liberation of plague in Lombardy, and Dufay names him as a citizen of Milan. On the basis of his *Passio*, it is not immediately obvious how Sebastian came to be associated with pestilence; he “merely” cured illnesses of the garden variety and, unlike his fellow plague saint Roch, who contracted and was cured of the disease, Sebastian never suffered from the plague in his lifetime. Nor is it obvious why, as a soldier who worked and was martyred in Rome, he had a special affinity to the Lombard region. Geographically, the early cult of the martyr was limited to Roman territories, and Pope Gregory the Great even designated Sebastian the third patron saint of that city.²⁴ Sebastian’s eventual emergence as a plague saint and his close association with Lombardy were much later developments that resulted from the confluence of two different factors, one being an accident of ecclesiastical politics, the other, the Christian semiotics of sin and punishment.

The first historical association of St. Sebastian with the plague—Martini and Gaspar refer to this event in their motets—resulted from the seventh-century translation of his relics to Lombardy during a severe outbreak of plague in Rome and much of Italy in the summer of 680 CE. This translation led to a miraculous cessation of plague in Pavia. As Paulus Diaconus recounts in his *Historia longobardorum*:

²⁴ Louise Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994): 489; Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 91.

There was a lunar eclipse during the eighth indiction (680 CE), and around the same time, there was also a solar eclipse (around the 10th hour, 2 May). Soon after, plague struck between July and September. So many died that parents with children, brothers with sisters, were placed two-by-two in biers and led through Rome to their graves. Pavia was also depopulated by the same plague. With the entire population having fled to the hills and other places, thickets grew in the forum and streets of the city. Then many people saw that a good and a bad angel were roaming through the city at night, and by the command of the good angel, the bad one, who was seen to carry a spear in his hand, would strike a home with it. As many times as he struck, that many occupants died in the following days. Then it was revealed to a certain man that the plague would not subside until an altar to the martyr Saint Sebastian was erected in the Basilica of St. Peter in Vincoli. It was done, and the relic of St. Sebastian was brought from Rome; as soon as the altar was built in said basilica, the plague subsided.²⁵

A number of details in this narrative suggest that Sebastian did not have specific anti-pestilential powers prior to this event. First, the Pavians had to be prompted to turn to Sebastian.²⁶ Furthermore, Sheila Barker points out, it would have been anachronistic at this point for the cult of a Christian saint to have “attained functional specificity.”²⁷

²⁵ *Acta Sanctorum V. Extant vero, si non in ejus gestis, ast alibi, eaque illustra, vestigia pii hujus moris. Nam Paulus Diaconus de gestis Longobardorum lib. 6, cap. 5. His temporibus per Indict. Viii, luna eclipsin passa est. Solis quoque eclipsis eodem paene tempore, hora diei quasi decima, V non. Maias effecta est: moxque subsecuta est gravissima pestis tribus mensibus, hoc est, Julio, Augusto, et Septembrio: tantaque fuit multitudo morientium, ut etiam parentes cum filiis, atque fratres cum sororibus, bini per feretra positi, apud urbem Romam ad sepulchra deducerentur. Pari etiam modo haec pestilentia Ticinum quoque depopulata est; ita ut cunctis civibus per juga montium, seu per diversa loca, fugientibus, in foro et per plateas civitatis herbae et fruteta nascerentur. Tumque visibilter multis apparuit, quia bonus et malus angelus noctu per civitatem pergerent, et ex jussu boni Angeli, malys angelus, qui videbatur venabulum manu fere, quotiens de vanbula ostium cujuscumque domus percussisset, tot de eadem domo die sequenti homines interirent. Tunc per revelationem cuidam dictum est, quod pestis ipsa prius non quiesceret, quam in basilica B. Petri quae ad vincula dicitur, S. Sebastiani Martyris altarium poneretur. Factumque est, et delatis ab urbe Roma B. Sebastiani Martyris reliquiis, mox ut in jam dicta basilica altarium constitutum est, pestis ipsa quievit. Bollandus, Acta sanctorum, 259-60.*

²⁶ Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred,” 489.

²⁷ Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 92.

Rather, Sebastian was likely to have been invoked for his special martyr status. Miraculous revelations aside, the Pavians likely owed their acquisition of Sebastian's relic to a newly established alliance between the Pope Agatho and the Lombards; the transfer of the relics of a Roman saint, like a marriage between aristocratic households, symbolically reinforced the political bond. Sebastian was an especially felicitous choice, "since he had territorial associations with both Lombardy, where he spent his youth, and Rome, where he died."²⁸ In the same year, an altar was dedicated to Sebastian in Rome's own church of St. Peter in Vincoli, creating what Barker calls a "cultic doppelganger" in the city.²⁹ This symbolic parallel as well as the common suffering and eventual recovery of the two cities must have further reinforced the political alliance.

It was likely through Jacobus de Voragine's later retelling of the 680 miracle that Sebastian was decisively linked to pestilence and came to be invoked as a plague saint.³⁰ After adumbrating the various episodes of Sebastian's life in his 1260 Golden Legend, Jacobus appends Paulus Diaconus's story of the cessation of the plague in Pavia owing to Sebastian's intervention. Jacobus had apparently discovered this miracle while compiling another work, his *History of the Lombards*. In the Golden Legend, Jacobus explains that he undertook the Lombard history because it was unfamiliar to most people; it was likely, therefore, that the Pavian miracle had been forgotten in the intervening centuries.³¹ The

²⁸ Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 92.

²⁹ Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 92.

³⁰ Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 97.

³¹ In his entry on "Saint Pelagius the Pope, with Many Other Histories and Gestes of the Lombards," Jacobus writes, "In the time of this Pelagius came the Lombards into Italy, and because many know not this history I have ordained it to be set here like as it is set in the history

wide-spread dissemination of the *Legenda aurea* restored the Lombard story to popular consciousness and must certainly have prepared the way for the installation of Sebastian as a plague saint once the disease revisited Europe after a seven-century absence.

Moreover, on account of this seventh-century miracle where Sebastian showed special favour to the Pavians, the saint came to be considered Lombardy's own.

The association between Sebastian and the plague is further cemented by the saint's suffering by arrows, weapons that carried potent Classical and Judeo-Christian connotations. In the opening lines of the *Iliad*, for example, Apollo, the god of pestilence, scattered plague-tipped arrows from his silver bow to punish the sins of Agamemnon: "He cut them down in droves and the corpse fires burned on, night and day, no end in sight. Nine days the arrows of the god swept through the army."³² The semiotics of the pestilential arrow re-emerges in a Christian context during the plague of 590 CE. Pope Gregory, describing the scourge, writes that "one could see with one's physical eyes the arrows pouring out of the sky striking down individuals."³³

Concomitantly, the arrow appears in the Bible as a symbol of divine wrath and of "sudden, divinely-inflicted misfortune, disease, and death."³⁴ Psalm 7:13 cautions, for

of the Lombards which Paul, the historiographer of Lombards, hath compiled and expounded in divers chronicles." See also Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 97n30.

³² Homer, *The Iliad* I. 10-68, cited in Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity*, 30.

³³ Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4.3.7.7 in vol 3:218-31, cited in Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity*, 30.

³⁴ Pamela Berger also points out the numerous martial images in the account of the Apocalypse in Revelation. "Mice, Arrows, and Tumors: Medieval Plague Iconography North of the Alps," in *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*, ed. Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 78 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 45.

example, that “if one does not repent, God will sharpen his sword; he has bent and strung his bow; he has prepared his deadly weapon, making his arrows fiery shafts.” Job, recognizing his misfortunes, laments, “The arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.”³⁵

A late-medieval altar panel now housed in Hanover reveals the confluence of the Classical and Christian semiotics of the arrow. The panel shows Jesus striking down plague victims with arrows that pierce their groins, armpits, and necks—precisely the spots where buboes would have erupted.³⁶ And many images of Sebastian show arrows piercing the inside of his thighs, paralleling representations of St. Roch that often feature buboes at the same spot on his body.³⁷ It is no great leap to see just how the connotations of the plague arrow converge in Sebastian, enabling a salutary reading of the saint’s passion: as a martyr who survives the arrows by the grace of God—or brought back to life after the first of his two martyrdoms—Sebastian intercepts divine punishment on behalf of humanity and, as Louise Marshall describes, acts as a lightning-rod that draws away the plague-arrows and grounds them in his own flesh.³⁸ Moreover, Sebastian’s initial survival shows the extent of God’s mercy and power in relieving humanity’s suffering. The concluding prayer of Copinus’s *Fiat pax in virtute tua* captures precisely the symbolic import of Sebastian’s scourge by arrows: “And just as you plucked up your

³⁵ Job 6:4; Marshall cites, in addition, Deut 32:19-24, 41-2; Job 16:11-13; Ps 64:7-9; and Is. 30:26; Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred,” 493n24.

³⁶ Berger, “Mice, Arrows, and Tumors,” 45.

³⁷ Zupnick, “St. Sebastian in Art,” 219-20.

³⁸ Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred,” 495-6.

most invincible martyr from his destruction by arrows, so, by that power, protect us from the arrows of plague and from death.”³⁹

The confluence of the symbolism of arrows along with the seventh-century miracle installed Sebastian as a plague saint and garnered him universal veneration. At the same time, the Pavian miracle secured his role as a special protector of Lombardy. Sebastian helps not only individuals suffering from plague, but, evident from the Pavian miracle, entire populations as well. As I will argue in later chapters, the association of Sebastian with a particular place and with a communal miracle was useful for the task of community-building in times of pestilence (see Chapters 3 and 4). The invocation of Sebastian in Gaffurius’s litany motets *Virgo dei digna* and *O beate Sebastiane* along with other patrons of Milan, for example, can shore up the common civic identity that unites the listeners and focus the collective imagination toward the well-being of the entire city, which is often in peril when panic drives citizens to selfish ends. We can also imagine his invocation by other “Milanese” composers such as Martini, Gaspar, and Caracciolo to serve a similar function.

Holy and Notable Stories

In times of pestilence, doctors often prescribed various forms of recreation to divert the mind from gloomy thoughts, thereby improving the humoural disposition of their patients (see Chapter 1). From the frequency of its prescription, story-telling was

³⁹ Et sicut invictissimum martirem tuum Sebastianum a sagittarum interitu eruisti, ita nos sua ope a sagitta epidimiae et a morbo tuearis. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the work.

one of the most suitable activities. Nicolas de Nancel's advice is typical: "It will be good to read the holy Bible or holy and notable stories; tell some fun tales without villainy."⁴⁰ With their allusions to episodes of Sebastian's life—familiar, no doubt, to Renaissance audiences through the *Legenda aurea*—devotional songs to the saint can also function as "holy and notable stories." In addition to the humoural benefits of story-telling, these devotional songs also offer salutary lessons promoting Christian piety and proper belief. Such spiritual didacticism would certainly have been amenable to the likes of Antonio Possevino, who looked upon temporal amusements with distrust. In his plague treatise, the Jesuit insisted on the importance of turning one's ears to sermons in the regimen against plague, citing this passage of Job 36: "If they shall hear and observe, they shall furnish their days in good, and their years in glory. But if they shall not hear, they shall pass by the sword and shall be consumed by sorrow."⁴¹ By hearing and observing the illustrious deeds of St. Sebastian, pre-modern listeners learned to preserve themselves from God's pestilential arrows.

⁴⁰ Sera donc bon de lire la sainte Bible; ou belles saintes et notables histoires; faire quelque co[n]tes facetieux, sans detraction ou vilenie. Nicolas de Nancel, *Discours tres ample de la peste, divisé en trois livres; adressant à messieurs de Tours* (Paris: Denys du Val, 1581), livre second, 137.

⁴¹ Possevino, *Cause et rimedii della peste*, 24.

Chapter 3

Music and the Bodies Natural, Politic, and Celestial

When plague strikes, the entire universe falls into a great discord. From above, an infelicitous alignment of planets mutates and corrupts the air on earth. Below, the ground quakes and releases noxious vapours into the growing miasma. Foul beasts—rats, lizards, snakes, frogs, and even dragons—arise, as if autochthonously, in extraordinary and terrifying numbers. Living things behave against their natures: animals abandon their habitats and their young, and trees bear poisonous fruits. This disharmony in nature can even be heard as an audible cacophony. Andreas Gallus, in his 1564 *Fascis de peste*, thus describes some portents of plague:

Usually, the plague is presaged by terrible noises, like the din of arms and the sound of the trumpet heard in the sky during the Cimbrian War... [When] the air surrounding us becomes corrupted, certain animals—not only birds, but also land animals—indicate with their querulous voices the foul vapours. For, at such time, certain voices like those of the querulous complaints of humans are heard. Some birds that usually fly during the day take flight at night, contrary to custom, wailing and clamouring. The croak of the ravens and other birds is heard more than usual where the air is corrupt. And because they live in the air and are of the air, they naturally and immediately sense the mutation of the air in themselves, and on account of this mutation, they almost always cry out in the same manner that the rooster divides the hours of the day and night by his song. Frogs are more vocal than usual...and geese clamour madly and incessantly... The howling of the foxes, dogs, and wolves are likewise heard more than usual and without reason,

corrupting the affects of the soul. And whenever or wherever these voices are heard, the plague indeed occurs, almost always without fail.¹

Behind Gallus's description stands a pre-modern cosmology that saw the structures of sound as a part of the animating force of the universe. The terms "music" or "harmony" were broadly understood as a combination of separate, discrete, and sometimes opposite entities.² Such notions of a harmony of diversity were expressed in the pre-modern period through two related principles—*discordia concors* or *concordia discors* (ordered disorder) and *e pluribus unum* (from many, one)—that, taken together, point to a universal condition where opposites are reconciled into a whole, so that a stable unity arises out of unstable and even incompatible opposites.³ Such a concept of harmony pervades the entire universe and represents a principle that binds together all types of structures in a hierarchic way. At the broadest level, a universal harmony

¹ Pestem presagire solent strepitus mira[n]di, qui in aere audiuntur. Quemadmodu[m] Cimbricis bellis armoru[m] crepitus, et tube sonitus è celo auditus est... Cum similia in aere agantur, quibus ambiens nos aer coinquinari impellitur, eius nidorulentiam animalia quedam tum volatilia, tum pedestria eorum querulis vocibus nobis indicant, nam tunc quedam voces ceu humanae quaerulae noct[ur]ae audiuntur, nonnullae etiam aues, quae in die volare consueuerant, nocte citra morem conquerentes volant, et conclamant, coruorum cantus, sive crocitus in locis, in quibus pollutus est aer plus solito, auditur, et aliarum similiter volucrum, cum de aere viuant, in aliquo casu, de quo aer tangitur [,] motum aliquando naturaliter sentiunt, et quia aerea sunt aeris mutationem protinus in se sentiunt, et secundum eandem voces suas saepissime promunt. Quemadmodum gallus eius cantu diei et noctis horas distinguit... Et anseres co[n]tinuo clangore intempstui... [V]ulpium, insuper canu[m], luporumq[ue] absq[ue] lata causa ululatus sepiissime plus solito parimodo audiuntur, omnis enim animalis cuiuscunq[ue] vox alicuius anim[a]e tristem vel laetum, vel iracundum affectum putrefacit, cu[m]q[ue] eae voces ubicunq[ue] audiuntur, quin pestis suboriatur, rarissime fallunt. Multi nempe testantur cum has voces praeter morem audiuerint, protinus pestem subortam fuisse. Andreas Gallus. *Fascis de peste peripenumonia pestilentiali* (Brescia: Jo. Baptistae Bozolae, 1566), 32v-33v.

² Robert Isgro, "Sixteenth-Century Conception of Harmony," *College Music Symposium* 19 (1979): 9.

³ S.K. Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1974), 147.

(*musica universalis* or *musica mundana*, in Boethian terms⁴) holds together all the discrete elements of the universe, be it the orbit of planets, the rotation of the seasons, or the combination of basic elements into various substances. At the lower levels, audible music (*musica instrumentalis*) partakes of and expresses the same universal proportions through the reconciliation of disparate tones and rhythms into euphony. With the structures of the universe vibrating sympathetically with each other, discord at the broadest register ripples through to the lowest. The croaking of the frogs and the howling of the wolves are not merely empirical evidence of local miasma, but a resonance of a fundamentally troubled universe.

Dufay – O sancte Sebastiane

It is within this pre-modern epistemology that we can situate music on the theme of pestilence, such as Dufay's *O sancte Sebastiane*, to uncover the physical and metaphysical implications of music in times of plague. Dufay's *O Sancte Sebastiane* (Bol Q15, no. 211; Ox, no. 51) is an intricate pan-isorhythmic motet for four voices. A variety of dates have been proposed for its composition. In 1958, Besseler ascribes a date of 1429 to the motet, when Dufay would have been working in the Papal Choir; this date coincides with a major pestilential outbreak in Rome, during which the Pope fled the

⁴ Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. Calvin M. Bower and ed. Claude V. Palisca [*De institutione musica*] (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 9-10. There is a large and venerable body of literature on Boethius's (and ultimately Plato's and Pythagoras's) three musics. In addition to Isgro and Heninger, cited above, see also: Manfred Bukofzer, "Speculative Thinking in Mediaeval Music," *Speculum* 17 (1942): 165-80; James Haar, "Music mundana: Variations on a Pythagorean Theme" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1961); John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500-1700* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1961).

city.⁵ Later, in his 1966 Dufay edition, Bessler does not mention any Roman connection, but dates it between 1420 and 1426 instead, when Dufay would have been under the employment of the Malatestas, whose family activities were centered on Rimini. Charles Hamm, on stylistic evidence, places the work slightly later, in the 1426-1431 range. David Fallows dates the work “firmly in the years before 1427,” probably 1421 or 1422, again, when Dufay was at the service of the Malatestas. It is certain that two other works by Dufay—*Vasilissa ergo gaude* (1420) and the chanson *Resvelliés vous* (1423)—were composed for Malatesta celebrations that took place in Rimini (the former for the marriage of Cleofe and Theodore Palaiologos II; the latter for the marriage of Carlo Malatesta da Pesaro and Vittoria di Lorenzo Colonna).⁶ It is perhaps suggestive that Bessler finds melodic correspondences between *O sancte Sebastiane* and *Resvelliés vous*.⁷ If *O sancte Sebastiane* was indeed composed for the Malatestas and intended for use in Rimini, then 1424 would make a possible date of composition; Alejandro Planchart has discovered a document showing that Dufay left for Greece late that year, and plague struck Rimini soon after in 1425.⁸

⁵ Heinrich Bessler, “Dufay in Rom,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 15 (1958): 4-5.

⁶ David Fallows, *Dufay* (London: J.M. Dent, 1982), 21-23.

⁷ These melodic correspondences can also be interpreted not as specific modelling, but as a part of the cut-circle style taxonomized by Julie Cumming. The corresponding melismas at phrase ends in the two works are typical of florid cut-circle works. See *The Motet in the Age of Du Fay* (New York and Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999), 113-115, 119-124.

⁸ Margaret Bent, “Petrarch, Padua, the Malatestas, Du Fay, and *Vergene bella*,” in *Essays on Renaissance Music in Honour of David Fallows: Bon jour, bon mois et bonne estrenne*, ed. Fabrice Fitch and Jacobijn Kiel, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music* 11 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), 93-4; Jean Noël Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, *Civilisations et sociétés* 35-36 (Paris: Mouton, 1975), 395.

Stylistically, *O sancte Sebastiane* is consistent with Dufay's motet output of the 1420s. The work opens with an *introitus* canon at the unison between the triplum and the motetus that lies outside the isorhythmic scheme. All four voices are isorhythmic throughout the main body of the motet, which can be divided into two sections. In the first section, the *color* is divided over three statements of the *talea*. In the second, the top three voices are given another three statements of a new *talea*, with a new *color*. The tenor reuses its *talea* and *color* from the first section, here in diminution to drive the motet to a close.⁹ A final cadence lies outside the isorhythmic scheme. For the *introitus* and the first section of the work, Dufay distributes (unequally) a popular sequence to St. Sebastian among the *triplum* and the *motetus* (he adopts the same procedure for his motets *Rite majorem*, *Apostolo glorioso*, and *O gemma, lux et speculum*).¹⁰ The two upper voices sing the same opening couplet of the sequence in the *introitus* canon. This sequence appeals to St. Sebastian for help specifically against the plague, citing episodes of his *vita* that deal with miraculous healing (see Chapter 2). The contratenor sets a widely disseminated rhymed antiphon, found in many Books of Hours, in the first section of the motet.¹¹ The tenor carries the incipit "Gloria et honore" in Ox, which Bent suggests is erroneous; no plainchant melody has yet been identified as the *cantus*

⁹ See also Jon Michael Allsen, "Style and Intertextuality in the Isorhythmic Motet, 1400-1440" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1992), 116-117, 471-73.

¹⁰ Guido Maria Dreves, *Analecta hymnica Medii Aevi* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1961), 33:167.

¹¹ Dreves, *Analecta hymnica*, 33:167. See also Anthonie Vérard, ed., *Hore beate virginis Marie ad usum Sarum* (Paris, ca. 1505), 103r ff.

firmus.¹² All voices in the second section of the motet set the word “Amen,” giving the work a florid and jubilant ending.

Introitus (Canon at unison)

Triplum and Motetus

O sancte Sebastiane,
Semper, vespere et mane,
Horis cunctis et momentis,
Dum adhuc sum sanae mentis,

(O Saint Sebastian,
always, night and day,
at all hours and moments,
while I am still sound of mind,)

Section 1

Triplum

Talea 1

Me protege et conserva
Et a me, martyr, enerva
Infirmi-tatem noxiam
Vocatam epidemiam.
Tu de peste hujusmodi
Me defende et custodi
Et omnes amicos meos,
Qui nos confitemur reos

(protect and conserve me
and relieve me, martyr,
from the noxious illness
called the plague.
Defend and protect me
and all of my loved ones
from this pestilence,
we who confess ourselves
sinners)

Motetus

O martyr Sebastiane,
Tu semper nobiscum mane
Atque per tua merita
Nos, qui sumus in hac vita

(O martyr Sebastian,
always be with us and, by
your power, preserve us,
who are in this life)

Contra

O quam mira refulsit gratia
Sebastianus, martyr inclitus,

(O how Sebastian, the famous
martyr shines with wondrous
grace,)

Tenor

Gloria
et
honore.

(Glory
and
honour.)

¹² Margaret Bent, *Bologna Q15: The Making and Remaking of a Musical Manuscript: Introductory Study and Facsimile Edition*, 2 vols. (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 2008) 1, 213.

Talea 2

Deo et sanctae Mariae
Et tibi, o martyr pie.
Tu Mediolanus civis
Hance pestilentiam, si vis,
Potes facere cessare
Et ad deum impetrare,
Quia a multis est scitum,
Quod de hoc habes
meritum.

(To God and blessed Mary
and to you, pious Martyr.
You, citizen of Milan,
if you wished, can cease
this pestilence through
God's grace, for as it is
known to many that you
have the power to do so.)

Talea 3

Zoe mutam tu sanasti
Et sanatam restaurasti
Nicostrato ejus viro,
Hoc faciens modo miro.
In agone consolabas
Martyres et promittebas
Eis sempiternam vitam
Et martyribus debitam.

(You healed the mute Zoe
and restored health to
Nicostratus, her husband,
doing so in a miraculous
way. You consoled
martyrs in agony and you
promised them the eternal
life that they deserve.)

Custodi, sana et rege
Et a peste nos protege
Praesentans nos trinitati
Et virgini sanctae matri.

(and heal and protect us
from plague. Commend us
to the Trinity and the holy
Virgin.)

Et sic vitam finiamus,
quod mercedem habeamus
Et martyrum consortium
Et deum videre pium.

(And thus, may we end our
life: that we have the
reward to behold God and
the company of martyrs.)

Qui militis portans insignia,
Sed de fratrum palma
sollicitus

(wearing the emblem of a
soldier. But he, urged on by
the palm of his brothers,)

Confortavit corda palentia
Verbo sibi collato caelitus.

(strengthened frightened
hearts with the heavenly word
conferred to him.)

Section 2

All voices

Taleae 4-6

Amen

Julie Cumming has invoked the notion of *discordia concors* to explain the aesthetic aims behind some of the “difficulty” of the isorhythmic motet.¹³ While any euphonious piece of music can be said to exemplify *discordia concors*, the isorhythmic motet exaggerates the condition. With its polytextuality, possible inclusion of pre-existing materials among newly composed elements, and stratification of voices, the genre brims with multiplicity. All of these “polyphonic” elements are reconciled in the most intricate of ways (with devices like hockets, changes in mensuration, and repeating rhythmic and melodic patterns), creating a heightened, sensible experience of *discordia concors*. With four texted voices, multiple sections and mensuration changes, the *discordia concors* in *O sancte Sebastiane* is most palpable. Mitigating against the perceived musical confusion that results from the work’s “polyphony,” Dufay lays down audible markers that articulate the form of the work; if, at any given moment, the surface texture seems almost impenetrable, a regimented and easily audible succession of elements nevertheless confers a sense of rational design. First, each of the three sections is delineated by texture and the number of texts. Canonic, two-voiced writing of the *introitus* clearly sets it apart. Within the isorhythmic body of the motet, the switch from the polytextuality of the first section into an extended melisma of “Amen” (coinciding with a quickening of the tenor) articulates the main bi-partite structure.¹⁴

Second, each occurrence of the *talea* begins with relatively long note values in all voices that, in some cases, are also cadential arrival points, marking off the end of one

¹³ Julie Cumming, “Concord out of Discord: Occasional Motets of the Early Quattrocento” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1987), especially chapters 1, 2, and 3; “The Aesthetics of the Medieval Motet and Cantilena,” *Historical Performance* 7 (1994): 71-83.

¹⁴ Fallows points out that this procedure is unusual for Dufay, but “very much in the style of Ciconia.” C.f. Ciconia’s *Doctorum principem* and *Ut te per omnes celitus*. Fallows, *Dufay*, 28.

section and the beginning of the next. And although the upper voices do not have repeating *colores*, the *triplum* opens each of the first three isorhythmic sections with a similar descending melodic figure that is, in turn, drawn from the opening notes of the *introitus*. Easily heard at the top of the register, this motto-like motive delineates the isorhythm (see Examples 3.1 and 3.2).

Example 3.1 - Dufay, *O Sancte Sebastiane*, Schematic of First Talea

First talea

"motto"

Triplum

Contra

Tenor

Contra

Tenor

Sustained tenor

Mensuration change

Triplum

Motetus

Contra

Tenor

Detailed description: This musical score illustrates the first talea of 'O Sancte Sebastiane' by Guillaume Dufay. It features four vocal parts: Triplum, Contra, and Tenor, with a Motetus part appearing later. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the initial 'motto' section, where the Triplum part has a melodic line with a 'motto' bracket above it. The vocal parts (Contra and Tenor) have a rhythmic pattern of dotted notes. A 'Sustained tenor' section is indicated by a bracket under the Tenor part. The second system shows a 'Mensuration change' where the Triplum and Motetus parts change their rhythmic values, indicated by a 2/4 time signature and a mensural sign. The vocal parts continue with their rhythmic pattern.

Example 3.2 - Dufay, *O Sancte Sebastiane*, "Mottos" in triplum

Introitus (opening)

Talea 1

Talea 2

Talea 3

Detailed description: This musical score shows the 'Mottos' in the triplum part of 'O Sancte Sebastiane'. It consists of four separate melodic lines. The first line is labeled 'Introitus (opening)' and shows a simple melodic phrase. The second line is labeled 'Talea 1' and shows a similar melodic phrase. The third line is labeled 'Talea 2' and shows a more complex melodic phrase. The fourth line is labeled 'Talea 3' and shows another complex melodic phrase. Each line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat.

Finally, Dufay crafts *taleae* that have a great deal of contrast in rhythmic activity. Sustained notes in the middle of the contra's and the tenor's parts lead to increased activity at the ends of the *taleae* with hockets (Example 3.1). Coinciding with this shift, the upper voices enter into minor prolation, with short rhythmic values. As a whole, the entire texture builds up in activity and density at the ends of the *taleae* and drives towards the clarity and stability of the opening of the next. These characteristics of the music make easily audible the formal concord that rules over the work's dissimilar elements. In such a way, *discordia concors*, the fundamental condition of the musical universe, is made sensible at the lowest stratum of *musica instrumentalis*.

Musical Healing and Speculative Thought

Between the harmony of music and the harmony of the universe—between Dufay's motet and the workings of the heavens—stands the human body, whose own harmony (*musica humana*) is under attack in pestilential times. In the Hippocratic-Galenic tradition of medicine, where health depends, as a matter of principle, on the balance of the body's four humours, the notion of harmony represents a life-and-death concern. One method for regulating this harmonic disorder, it was thought, was through music. In the pre-modern period, such an influence of music on the human body was discussed in two distinct but connected ways. First, as Penelope Gouk describes, “the activity of listening to or performing music may be conceived of as a remedy for particular diseases, as a general aid to convalescence.”¹⁵ The plague treatises surveyed in

¹⁵ Penelope Gouk, “Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits in Early Modern Thought,” in *Music as Medicine*, ed. Peregrine Horden (Aldershot and Brookfield: Ashgate, 2000), 173.

Chapter 1 reveal the way in which music was put to use, along with stories, games, and other luxuries, to maintain the balance of humours in the body. Second, musical medicine was also in relation to the model for occult phenomena as a principle linking together humans and the cosmos.¹⁶

The fourteenth chapter of Tinctoris's *Complexus*, which recommends the use of music to heal the sick, illustrates these twinned practical and speculative threads of medical-musical discourse. Tinctoris writes,

Hence, in his *Etymologiae* (Book IV) Isidore relates that the physician Asclepiades restored a madman to his former health by the art of melody; this is why the same very distinguished writer says that the physician will need to know about music. That seems likely enough from the remarks of Avicenna and Galen. The former says: "You should know, though, that the essence of music is found in the pulse." The latter says: "As soon as I knew the essence of musical proportions, the gateway to my understanding of the pulse was flung open."¹⁷

Tinctoris begins with Gouk's first category of music-medical discourse, citing the use of practical music in medical therapy. As we have seen in the case of Hugo van der Goes, the idea of restoring a madman to health with music was no mere ancient anecdote. On

¹⁶ Gouk, "Music, Melancholy," 173. These two strands of musical thought had an ancient pedigree, leading back to Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. Christopher Callahan traces the threads of these two musical discourses through the Middle Ages in Boethian and Cassodorian writings and sees their gradual convergence in the ninth and tenth centuries in Arabic medical writing. A full integration of the two strands of thought, Callahan argues, comes in the fifteenth century. Christopher Callahan, "Music in Medieval Medical Practice: Speculations and Certainties," *College Music Symposium* 40 (2000): 151-64.

¹⁷ John Donald Cullington and Reinhard Strohm, eds., *On the Dignity and the Effects of Music: Two Fifteenth-Century Treatises*, Institute of Advanced Musical Studies: Study Texts (London: University of London, 1996), 58.

account of its medical utility, Tinctoris suggests, musical knowledge is paramount for the physician.

Tinctoris then reorients his discussion toward the idea of the musical pulse with citations from Galen's *Synopsis librorum de pulsibus* and Avicenna's *Cantica*, two of the main medical sources on the topic in this period.¹⁸ Tinctoris compares music to the pulse, a commonplace comparison found in many other Renaissance musical treatises and medical tracts.¹⁹ The basis for this musical pulse theory was the long-held understanding that there was a resemblance between rhythm and interval in their numerical ratios.²⁰ Avicenna explains it simply: just as there are relations between high and low musical pitches, and just as there are relations in the time intervals between the sounding of one note and then another, so it is with the pulse.²¹ The intervallic ratio between musical pitches is like the ratio, in qualitative terms, between strength or weakness of the bodily pulse. The temporal ratio between the sounding of notes is likened to the temporal ratio between the systole and the diastole. Most medieval and renaissance commentators agreed on this dual expression of musical ratios in the pulse; disagreements only occurred when discussing whether, in the temporal case, the diastole should be measured against the diastole or the systole. In practice, the physician could calculate the rhythm of the

¹⁸ Nancy G. Siraisi, "The Music of Pulse in the Writings of Italian Academic Physicians (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)," *Speculum* 50 (1975) : 695-96.

¹⁹ Jane Hatter has identified five others from the 15th and 16th centuries; these are: Anselmi's *De musica* (1434), Ramis's *Musica practica* (1482), Gaffurius's *Practica musice* (1496), Lanfranco's *Scintille di music* (1533), and Zarlino's *Le institutione harmoniche* (1558); "Col tempo: Musical Time, Aging and Sexuality in 16th-century Venetian Paintings," *Early Music* 39 (2011): 3.

²⁰ M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 244.

²¹ Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "The Harmonious Pulse," *The Classical Quarterly* 43 (1993): 475-6.

patient's pulse and compared this data against numerous pulse-music treatises, such as Galen's, which distinguish among twenty-seven separate varieties of human pulse, some of which were described in musical-poetic terms. Trochaic beats, for example, were suitable for infants, while the iambotrochaic metre was proper for the aged.²² Irregularities in the pulse indicated not only somatic illness, but also a potentially distempered passion, since "just as one's physical state affects feeling, so also the pulses of the heart are increased by disturbed states of mind."²³

Behind the use of music to treat madness and the idea of a musical pulse are assumptions about the fundamental essence of music and its role in the cosmos. How could external music regulate the internal music of the body? And what was the nature of the association between the pulse and music? Was musical ratio merely a convenient trope describing an invisible function of the body or a simple heuristic for diagnosing disease? Throughout her article on the musical pulse, Nancy Siraisi employs a variety of relational terms to describe the link between music and pulse: "pulse was musical," "pulsebeats corresponded to...musical proportions," "[musical] proportions occurred in the duration of pulsebeats," "association of pulse with universal and human harmony," "music knowledge could...provide useful parallels and comparisons for the understanding of pulse," to cite a few.²⁴ These terms run the gamut from the identical (pulse was

²² Madeleine Pelter Cosman, "Machaut's Medical Musical World," in *Machaut's World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Madeleine Pelter Cosman and Bruce Chandler, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 314 (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1978), 27.

²³ Boethius, *Fundamentals of music*, 7. Siraisi, "Music of Pulse," 700, 703.

²⁴ Siraisi, "Music of Pulse," 693, 697.

musical) to the analogical (*corresponded to, parallels*). Gary Tomlinson, describing universal harmony, warns:

Historians like Palisca (in *Humanism*) and John Hollander (in the *Untuning of the Sky*) who depict a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century “trivialization” of ideas of cosmic harmony into fiction or “decorative metaphor and mere turns of wit” do not fully appreciate the staying power of this discourse. Their histories cannot account for the dispersion of the general idea of cosmic harmony across the conceptual and practical landscape... Faced with such persistence and pervasiveness, we should heed Haar’s admonition “to be cautious about labelling as metaphor only what was for so long believed in so earnestly.”²⁵

But earnest belief, staying power, and breadth of dispersion, in themselves, cannot disclose to us the exact nature of the relationship between music and pulse or the sense in which something external to the body (music) might inhere within the body (pulse). If the relationship was neither strictly metaphorical nor strictly literal, then what was it?

A Participatory Consciousness and the Doctrine of Signatures

The discourse of the musical pulse depended on a pre-modern, pre-Cartesian conception of a human subject that was far more porous and permeable than our own. Pre-modern Europeans interacted with the phenomenal world in a different way, with an extra-sensory awareness of a link between the self and nature, between the interior and the exterior. Owen Barfield terms this interaction between humans and the world “original participation.” The essence of this original participation is that “there stands behind the phenomena, *and on the other side of them from me*, a represented which is of

²⁵ Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 98.

the same nature as me. Whether it is called ‘man,’ or by the names of many gods and demons, or God the Father, or the spirit world, it is of the same nature as the perceiving self.”²⁶ The pre-modern subject, Barfield continues, “is placed in the center of beings and a ray of relation passes from every other being into him. And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man.”²⁷ This consciousness created a microcosm within the macrocosm; the Renaissance subject was not isolated by the boundaries of the body, but was instead mortised into the world outside. Each part of the subject was united to some other part of the universe, whether grand (macrocosmic) or small (microcosmic), by invisible threads, creating an experiential effect like that of an embryo.²⁸

For Barfield, Galenic humoral theory and the doctrine of signatures exemplify this pre-modern participation. The four elements—earth, water, air, and fire—were assumed to function not only in the exterior world, but also in the interior as the four humours—melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine, and choleric. Similar links between natural objects such as plants, herbs, stones, and metal and the human disposition were all taken for granted.²⁹ Through this, the doctrine of signatures, Renaissance physicians

²⁶ Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965; Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 42.

²⁷ Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning, and Other Essays* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 16.

²⁸ Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 78.

²⁹ Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, 18.

sought the medical uses of natural objects.³⁰ Because the pre-modern universe was, as Foucault writes, “folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man,” the ideas of sympathy and antipathy, similarity and dissimilarity held the key to knowledge.³¹ The trick was to discover “signatures”—the blazons, characters, and ciphers covering the face of the earth that tell us where similitude is to be found. There is a sympathy between aconite and human eyes, for example, because its seeds—the signature—are tiny globes with white, skin-like coverings that resemble eyelids covering an eye. The walnut is beneficial to the brain precisely because it is brain-like in appearance.³² The willow, with its supple branches, would relieve rheumatic joints.³³

Signatures, those legible signs of resemblance, related one thing to another, and that thing then to another still, and so forth. But these signatures did not overlap exactly; there was a small degree of displacement that obscured the similitude and necessitated its discovery. Foucault conceives of this universe as an endless spiral in which signs and similitudes wrapped around one another, extending from the macrocosmic down to the

³⁰ The doctrine of signatures can be found across many cultures in various forms. It has often been dismissed as “primitive superstition” by anthropologists. Bradley Bennett reassesses this contemporary bias and argues that, while the doctrine is not particularly important in the discovery of new medicines, it was useful in the dissemination of medical knowledge in pre-literate societies as a sort of mnemonic aid. Bradley Bennett, “Doctrine of Signatures: An Explanation of Medicinal Plant Discovery or Dissemination of Knowledge?,” *Economic Botany* 61 (2007): 246-55.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge Classics (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 17.

³² Foucault, *Order of Things*, 27.

³³ Bennett, “Doctrine of Signatures,” 247.

microcosmic. Meaning-making—and world-making—involved navigating the web of signatures in search of signs and resemblances:

Let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to make the signs speak and to discover their meaning, hermeneutics; let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to distinguish the location of the signs, to define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology: the sixteenth century superimposed hermeneutics and semiology in the form of similitude. To search for a meaning is to bring to light a resemblance.³⁴

Knowledge of the world was simultaneously metaphorical—in the sense that meaning was found in the relational term between one thing and another—and literal—in the sense that this relation was not artificial or poetic, but natural; the similitude between the microcosm and the macrocosm was not just a figure of speech, but a physical fact. If we ever find pre-modern Europeans “quaint,” Barfield writes, this quaintness arises precisely from the combination of these “two ways of approaching phenomena; ways which we are accustomed to regard as quite distinct from one another.”³⁵

The numbers and ratios of the universe found a correspondence in the body, which in turn had a correspondence to the numbers and ratios of music. The theory of the musical pulse, therefore, was neither merely metaphorical nor strictly literal, but both. Music, in terms of numerical ratios, compared with, paralleled, occurred in, *was* the pulse. It is this inherence of music within the body that allows music, like walnuts and willow trees, to influence the health of the body. In *De vita*, Ficino writes:

³⁴ Foucault, *Order of Things*, 29.

³⁵ Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 73.

If you have taken the flavors from things no longer living, the odors from dry aromatics, things with no life left in them, and you thought these were very useful to life, why should you hesitate to take the odors from plants with their roots still growing on them, still living, things that have wonderfully accumulated powers for life? Furthermore, if the vapors exhaled from vegetable life are terrific for your life, how useful would you say songs are? How useful those in the air to the airy spirit, those that are harmonious to the harmonious spirit, songs that are warm and lively to the lively spirit, and how useful are songs full of feeling and conceived in reason to the sensitive and rational spirit?...For just as things most temperate in their quality, together with aromatic things, at first temper the humors among themselves, and then temper the natural spirit with itself, so also odors of this kind temper the vital spirit, and their harmonies, in turn, temper the animal spirit. Thus when you put your faith in the lyre and its sounds, the tones that are tempered in your voice likewise temper your inner spirit.³⁶

Elsewhere, this process by which the body was influenced by an external music was often described as strings that vibrate sympathetically.³⁷ All that is needed is to discover the signature, the telltale blazon in music that could trigger the desired effect in a listener, and to tune the strings to produce sympathetic vibrations. Zarlino writes, “This is evident when someone who is disturbed by some passion which comes from sadness or from the rising of the blood, like anger, hears a harmony of contrary proportion containing some pleasure; for then the anger in him ceases and deteriorates and immediately a gentle passion is generated.”³⁸ Such sympathetic vibrations are possible because music inheres within the material body and creates a vital connection to the music without.

³⁶ Marsilio Ficino. *The Book of Life [De vita tripilci]*, trans. Charles Boer (Irving, TX: Spring Publications, 1980), Bk. II ch. 15, p. 66.

³⁷ Gouk explains that the analogy most often used to explain this action was the sympathetic action between two stringed-instruments: the lyre for the ancients, and the lute in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Gouk, “Music, Melancholy,” 175.

³⁸ Zarlino, *Istitutioni harmoniche*, II: viii, 73. Translated and cited in Isgro, “Sixteenth-Century Conception of Harmony,” 21.

From the Body Natural to the Body Politic

In this pre-modern cosmological scheme where humans are placed amid a universal web of similitude and where analogy is fundamental to epistemology, the contours of the human body, its diseases, and its health were readily mapped onto other harmonious bodies. One enduring concept that emerged from this analogical way of thinking was that of the “body politic” or “mystical body,” terms used interchangeably to denote the comparison of the organization of human societies to the makeup of human bodies. Such comparisons had ancient roots. An incipient form of the analogy can be found in Plato’s *Republic*, wherein the philosopher divides the state into three parts in accordance to the tripartite powers of the soul (the rational, spirited, and appetitive). In a just state, Plato argues, appetite must be subordinated to reason, aided by spirit.³⁹ Aristotle, describing the individual’s need for community, law, and justice, appeals to the physical body: just as a hand or a foot, when separated from the body, can no longer be said to be a hand or a foot (except in an equivocal way, like a hand made of stone that has no function or power and so is a hand in name alone), anyone who lives apart from the *polis* must either be a beast or a god, for humans are by nature politic animals, not self-sufficing individuals, tasked with supporting the whole, as limbs do for the body.⁴⁰

³⁹ Paul Archambault, “The Analogy of the ‘Body’ in Renaissance Political Literature,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 20 (1967): 22-3.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), bk. 1, ch. 2, sec.1253a (p. 6). See also James R. Mensch, *Embodiments: From the Body to the Body Politic* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 118; Jonathan Hess, *Reconstituting the Body Politic: Enlightenment, Public Culture and the Invention of Aesthetic Autonomy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 84-88. Again, Hess cautions us against dismissing the epistemological

Ernst Kantorowicz has traced a different strain of this body-state analogy—the “mystical body” or *corpus mysticum*—which first arose in medieval Europe in relation to Christianity, but became intertwined with the secular body politic.⁴¹ Perhaps counter-intuitively to us, the term *corpus mysticum* was originally used by Carolingian theologians to refer to the consecrated host, whereas the idea of a corporate Church or a Christian society was termed the *corpus Christi*. In the middle of the twelfth century, the two designations exchanged their meanings; the consecrated host came to be called the *corpus verum* or *corpus Christi*, and the notion of *corpus mysticum* began to refer to the Church as an organized body of Christian society. The notion of the *corpus mysticum* was often invoked to exalt the papacy; the Pope, as Christ’s representative, functioned as the head of the church body.

The terminological slippage between *corpus Christi* and *corpus mysticum* occurred at the same time that ancient ideas concerning the anatomical structure of the state were revived. Increasingly, the two threads of the body analogy—the *corpus mysticum* from the world of Christian theology and the secular *corpus politicum* from

power of metaphors: “...the metaphor of the political body clearly functions as more than a mere metaphor. The description of the *polis* as a body does not simply transfer the description of the workings of the body onto an analysis of the structure of the *polis*. Unlike Aristotle’s other example here of a real living hand and a hand made of stone, the body and the *polis* are more than things ‘similarly termed.’ Aristotle does not simply call the *polis* a body. He sees the *polis* as naturally similar to a living body. More than just a figure of speech, the metaphor of the body politic claims to illuminate a natural similarity beyond language, an essential likeness between two entities that nature has created in similar ways...More than ornamental elucidation, the metaphor of the body politic occupies a position of metaphysical privilege in the discourse on the *polis*” (86-87).

⁴¹ The following history of the term *corpus mysticum* is culled from Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), ch. 5. See also his article “Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought,” *The American Historical Review* 56 (1951): 472-92.

classical philosophy—became commingled. On one hand, the *corpus mysticum* became inflated with secular and juristic contents. On the other, nascent territories and secular state institutions strove for their own exaltation and divine justification by appropriating the mystical term, painting themselves with “religious aureole,” and absorbing the “whiff of incense from another world.”⁴² Kantorowicz finds medieval jurists applying the idea of mystical bodies to a variety of social structures on the micro-macrocosmic scale, including the village, the city, the province, the realm, and even the universe. When Aristotle was securely Christianized toward the end of the Middle Ages, his political theories were easily reconciled with ecclesiastical thought and terminology. Godfrey of Fontaines, for example, combined the theological and the Aristotelian in the thirteenth century, writing that humans by nature are social animals and are therefore members of a mystical body.⁴³ The concomitant moral implications of the classical philosophy were brought to bear on the mystical body, and the notions of the body mystical and the body politic became largely interchangeable.

In Renaissance political writing, the body politic metaphor was a potent tool for jurists and political theorists who wished to articulate the functions of the constituent members of society—the prince, his magistrates, the estates, the people, etc.—and their relationships to each other. Far from being a static metaphor, the analogy was heavily manipulated to suit the agenda of the theorist. The ruler was variously anatomized, for

⁴² Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 210.

⁴³ ...quia cum quilibet sit pars communitatis sicut membrum corporis mystici, bonum quodcumque facit in altero secundum quod huius modi, cum sit bonum totius, etiam est bonum quodam modo partis facientis in quantum in bono uno communi intendunt omnes communicare. Godefroid de Fontaines, “Quaestiones ordinariae,” in *Les Philosophes Belges: Textes et Etudes*, ed. Odon Lottin (Louvain: Éditions de l'institut supérieur de philosophie, 1937), 89.

example, as the head (to rule and to be nourished by the other parts), the heart (as the source of all life and natural powers, and also as the organ that the body instinctively protects), or the eyes (to function as a nation's primary observer).⁴⁴ The anatomy was also deployed to illustrate more abstract concepts. The blood of the kingdom, for example, is political forethought, which feeds the princely head. The laws of the kingdom were the nerves holding together the members of the body politic; but just as the head is unable to change the network of nerves in the body natural, so the king may not change the laws of the kingdom.⁴⁵

Beyond the anatomizing of social structures, ideas of health and medicine that surrounded the body natural were likewise applied to the body politic. Machiavelli, for example, urges his prince to think like a doctor, who must understand past particulars in order to deal with present and future ills.⁴⁶ Around the same time, Erasmus evokes a variety of body politic metaphors in his *Institutio principis christiani*, first comparing the prince to the mind that controls the body.⁴⁷ Elsewhere in the treatise, the prince is described as a physician to the state; both the ruler and the medical man must be knowledgeable about those under their care, must be motivated solely by the welfare of

⁴⁴ Archambault, "Analogy of the 'Body'," 40; Jacob Soll, "Healing the Body Politic: French Royal Doctors, History, and the Birth of a Nation 1560-1634," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002): 1278.

⁴⁵ Archambault, "Analogy of the 'Body'," 35-36.

⁴⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince [Il Principe]*, trans. James B. Atkinson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 115. See also Nancy Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning*, Cultures of Knowledge in the Early Modern World (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 200-201. Soll, "Healing the Body Politic," 1263.

⁴⁷ Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince [Institutio principis Christiani]*, trans. Neil M. Cheshire and Michael J. Heath, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39.

their ward, and must be extremely diligent. Other writers apply medicinal and therapeutic terms to the body politic. In his 1446 *De ortu et auctoritate imperii romani*, for example, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (subsequently Pope Pius II) yokes together a passage from John 11:49-50 with body imagery; he writes that “it is expedient that one man die for the people, lest all the people die... For, as some parts of the body are cut off if they begin to wither and, as it were, to ‘lack spirit’, it is necessary that some men suffer for the Republic.”⁴⁸ Here, surgical practice is employed to justify policy.

While body politic metaphors varied widely in their specific vehicles, one underlying principle that unites them is harmony; disparate members of the bodies natural and politic must function in concord to maintain health. As the head is separate from and governs the body, so the prince sits apart from and rules his people. And if a constituent part of the bodies natural and politic can no longer perform its intended function, it must either be healed or excised to preserve the other parts. Nowhere is this concept of harmony more apparent than in humoural metaphors. Mapping biological processes onto the lives of states, Claude de Seyssel describes in 1515 *La Monarchie de France* the growth and decline of kingdoms over the *longue durée*:

Anything that has a beginning must have an end. And even these *corps mystiques*, which resemble human material bodies, composed of four contrary elements and humours, endure as long as the humours are in harmony among themselves. However, in the long run, one necessarily overwhelms the others, and by the dissolution of the aforementioned harmonious bond, the mass will

⁴⁸ John 11:49-50: “But one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that year, said to them: You know nothing. Neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” The sentiment in this biblical passage is applied to Jesus (He will die for the nation), rather than temporal governance. Aeneas Sylvius, *De ortu et auctoritate imperii Romani* (Basel, 1559), ch. 18; cited in Archambault, “Analogy of the ‘Body’,” 33.

return to its original state for, by the order of nature, once all of the elements and humours are assembled, they undergo increase, stability, and decline. When this decline occurs, there is a need to remedy nature and to help the weakest member and humour. But it happens that, when we bring help to one, we harm the other. All of this happens to the *corps mystiques* of the human society, for after they are assembled by a civil and political union, they will endure for a time, then—because they are composed of many intellects and discordant and incompatible wills—they begin to decline and finally dissolve to nothing.⁴⁹

The health of a state in its prime, with its discordant intellects and wills, depends on a harmonious balance, not unlike the balance of humours in a material body in its prime. Inevitably, one humour or one intellect will disturb this balance, and sickness will ensue. One illness then begets another, and the body declines and finally returns to naught. Around 1536, Thomas Starkey gives this disease of unruly intellects in the state a specific diagnosis. He writes that when the temporal powers battle against the spiritual, the commons against the nobles, and subjects against rulers, as though the head fights with the feet, or the feet with the hands, then concord is destroyed and a sickness falls on the state. This sickness, Starkey continues, can be likened to pestilence, for both civic discord and pestilence destroy a great number of people without regard for rank or degree, robbing entire bodies of all health and peace.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Translated from the original French cited in Archambault, “Analogy of the ‘Body’,” 44. An English translation of the entire work is available: Claude de Seyssel, *The Monarchy of France [La Monarchie de France]*, trans. H. Hexter (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 43-4.

⁵⁰ [T]hey partys of thys body agre not togyddur; the hed agreth not to the fete, nor fete to the handys; no one parte agreth to other; the temporalty grugyth agayn the spirituality, the commyns agayne the nobullys, and subyectys agayn they rularys; one hath enuy at a nother, one beryth malyce agayn another, one complaynyth of a nother. They partys of thys body be not knyht togyddur as hyt were wyth spiryt and lyfe, in concord and unyte, but dysseueryd asoundur, as they were in no case partys of one body... [M]e semyth hyt may wel be lykknnyd to a pestylence; for lyke as a pestylens, where so euer hyt reyntyth, lyghtly, and for the most parte, destroth a grete nombur of the pepul wythout regard of any person had, or degre, so doth thys

Pestilence and the Body Politic

Starkey's analogy maps pestilence of the body natural onto the civic discord of the body politic. What binds together the tenor and the vehicle of Starkey's metaphor is the common virulence of the two disorders and their indifference to rank and degree. Indeed, plague, unlike most other pre-modern afflictions, struck down entire populations, rather than individuals; men and women, the rich and the poor, the elderly and the young were equally vulnerable. One test, inherited from Hippocrates and Galen, of whether a malady is the "true plague" hinged on its perceived virulence across a vast region and population, regardless of parish, sex, age, and social class.⁵¹ And because plague struck so indiscriminately, widespread panic often accompanied the disease. This panic, when calcified, led to a loss of charity among citizens and, in extreme cases, to instances where those suspected of carrying or spreading the plague were scapegoated and lynched.⁵² Plague also weakened governments, allowing opportunistic rebels to instigate revolts.⁵³

discord and debate in a commynalty, where so euer hyt reynnyth, schortly destroyth al gud ordur and cyuylyte, and vtturly takyth away al helth from thys polytyke body and tranquyllyte. Thomas Starkey, "Dialogue Between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset, Lecturer in rhetoric at Oxford," in *England in the Reign of King Henry the Eighth: Life and Letters and a Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Lupset*, vol. 2, ed. J Meadows Cowper (London: N. Trubner, 1871-78; New York: Kraus Reprint, 1981), 82-3. Citations from the Kraus reprint.

⁵¹ Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162 ff.

⁵² See for example Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), ch. 5; Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 57-71; Ann G. Carmichael, "The Last Past Plague: The Uses of Memory in Renaissance Epidemics," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 53 (1998): 132-160; Séraphine Guerchberg, "The Controversy Over the Alleged Sowers of the Black Death in the Contemporary Tresatises on Plague," in *Change in Medieval Society: Europe North of the Alps, 1050-1550*, ed. Sylvia Thrupp (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964): 209-224; Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200-1425*;

Authors of plague tracts became increasingly sensitive to the social disorder that attended the disease. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Samuel Cohn Jr. finds, advice to princes and magistrates on issues of order and public health had become a common component of the literature.⁵⁴ Ambroise Paré's 1568 *Traicté de la peste* is revelatory. It begins with a letter to the royal physician M. Castellan in which Paré explains his motivation for writing:

Sir, there is nothing in this world more commendable between men than to help one another when necessity arises. For human society is so necessary to us that, without it, the essence of humanity, which separates us from other animals, would be completely lost—if each lives for himself, without sharing the graces and gifts that God had given us, then the human essence might as well have been made in vain... And so that this does not come to pass—if we wish to be mindful of that which has been most urged by God, apart from knowing Him, we will see clearly that He wishes nothing but the maintenance of human society by being serviceable [par la communication des commoditez] to each other. On my part, I shall not withhold my God-given surgical talents.⁵⁵

Italy, France, and Flanders (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 214-17; Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., "The Black Death and the Burning of the Jews," *Past and Present* 196 (2007): 3-36.

⁵³ In 1383, for example, three recently defeated artisan groups in Florence revolted and restored their illegal guilds after the powers-that-be fled the city on account of plague. This incident and the memory of the earlier 1378 Ciompi revolt spurred Florentines to hire guards as a standard part of the city's plague response. Ann G. Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor in Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 100.

⁵⁴ Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, ch. 8.

⁵⁵ Monsieur, il n'ya a rien en ce monde plus recommandable entre les hommes, que secourir l'un l'autre és necessitez, lesquelles leur adviennent ordinairement. Car la societé humaine nous est tellement necessaire, que sans icelle la forme d'homme, qui nous separe des autres animaux, seroit du tout perdüe, si bien qu'elle auroit esté faicte en vain, si chacun vivoit pour soy mesme, sans communiquer les graces et dons que Dieu luy auroit faicst: qui est une chose laquelle nous est tellement recommandee de Dieu, que nulle autre ne luy est plus agreable. Et qu'ainsi ne soit, si nous voulons prendre garde de pres à ce qu'il nous a plus recommandé apres sa cognoissance, nous verrons à l'oeil qu'il ne tend à autre fin qu'à l'entretienement de ceste societé humaine, par la communication des commoditez que nous devons recevoir les uns des autres. De ma part, i'ay

Paré, using Aristotelian terms, emphasizes here the importance of society to the essence of humanity and frames his own treatise as a service to the common good.

Paré later devotes an entire section of the treatise to the theme of *(in)commoditez*. After dispensing medical advice, he turns to the social chaos that accompanies plague and provides a “Discours des incommoditez que la peste apporte entre les hommes.”

Illustrating the theme with examples from the recent plague of 1565, Paré reports that

in Lyon, on rue Mercière, the wife of a surgeon named Amy Baston (who had died of the plague), having been infected by the same contagion, fell into a hallucination six days later. In a frenzy, she went to the window of her room, holding and tormenting her child in her arms. Seeing this, her neighbours admonished her to do no harm to the child. But instead of heeding their warning, she threw him to the ground, and immediately after, jumped off. Both mother and child died.⁵⁶

Such stories are infinite in number, Paré claims, and they exemplify the unnatural breakdown of human relationships (particularly familial relationships) precipitated by pestilence. By Paré’s report, even in cases less extreme than madam Baston’s infanticide-suicide, plague-stricken parents often could not give care to their children, who are seen suffocating and eaten by insects; the mother, hoping to help, gets up just to

telle persuasion, pour ne cacher le talent tel qu’il luy a pleu me donner en la Chirurgie. Ambroise Paré, *Traicté de la peste, verolle et rougeolle* (Paris: Wechel, 1568), ii r-v.

⁵⁶ Un autre cas non moins horrible est aduenü à Lyon rüe merciere ou la femme d’un Chirurgien nommé Amy Baston (qui estoit mort de peste) six iour apres estant esprise de la mesme contagion tomba enresuerie, puis en frenesie, et se mict à la fenestre de sa chambre tenant et tourmentant son enfant entre ses bras: ce que voyants ses voisins l’admonestoyent de ne luy faire mal: mais au lieu d’avoir esgard à leur advertissement, le ietta incontinent en terre, puis tost apres elle s’y precipita, ainsi la mere et l’enfant moururent. Il y a une inifité d’autres semblables exemples, lesquelles si ie voulois raconter, iamais la matiere ne me defaudroit. Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 254.

fall dead among her child and husband. Fathers, children, husbands, wives, brothers, and sisters abandon each other, and even the closest and most trusted friends are nowhere to be found. Outside the family, one is no longer recognized by vassals, subjects, or servants, who turn their backs and dare not come near.⁵⁷

Incommoditez, moreover, occur not only among private domestic relationships, but pertain to the entire state. In times of pestilence, general anarchy and lawlessness, disease-like, fester and invade every home, so that citizens are embattled by disease from within and by villainy from without. Paré paints this grim picture:

The richest people, the magistrates, and others who have governmental authority over public affairs are usually the first to flee and retire elsewhere, so that justice can no longer be administered for there is nobody to enforce it. Everything falls into confusion, which is the worst ill that can beset a republic when justice fails. And then villains usher in another plague, for they enter the home and, there, they pillage and plunder at their leisure, with impunity, and often cut the throats of the sick and the healthy alike, so that they will not be recognized or accused afterward.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Et qui plus est, n'a on pas veu esdictes loges, que le pere et la mere estants griefuement malades, et ne pouuants aider à leur enfant, l'ont veu suffoquer et manger aux mousches guespes, et la mere cuidant le secourir, se leuer, puis tomber morte entre l'enfant et le mary? Plus, on n'est recogneu des vassaux, subiects, ou seruiteurs qu'on ait, chacun tourne le doz, et personne n'y oseroit aller: mesmes le pere abandonne l'enfant: et l'enfant, le pere: le mary, la femme: et la femme, le mary: le frere, la soeur: et la soeur, le frere: voire ceux que vous pensez les plus intimes et feables amis, en ce temps vous abandonnent, pour l'horreur et danger de ceste maladie. Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 251.

⁵⁸ Outre-plus, les plus opulents, mesmes les magistrats et autres, qui ont quelque auctorité au gouuernement de la chose publique, s'absentent ordinairement des premiers, et se retirent ailleurs, de forte que la iustice n'est plus administree, n'y estant personne à qui on la puisse requerir: et lors tout s'en va à confusion, qui est un mal des plus grands qui sçauroyent aduenir à vne republique quand la iustice default: et adonc les meschants ameinent bien vne autre peste: car ils entrent és maisons, et y pillent et desrobent à leur aise impunement, et couppent le plus souuent la gorge aux malades, voire aux sains mesmes, afin de n'estre cognuez et accusez apres. Ambroise Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 249.

Again, social disorder is here described as a plague. But while Starkey invests plague and civic discord with an analogical affinity, Paré's configuration of the two notions takes on an additional causal relationship. That a medical disaster can create social upheaval is intuitive enough, but the reverse of that relationship is no less cogent; without embargoes, quarantines, and punitive laws on the reselling of goods stolen from victims, for example, plague would spread unchecked.

Although furnished with recent examples from Lyon, the essence of Paré's anxiety toward social discord in times of pestilence was nothing new.⁵⁹ Paul the Deacon, discussing the 566 plague that hit Liguria, described the exodus of citizens, who left their homes to dogs, the flight of children, who left behind the bodies of their parents unburied, and the neglect of parents, who abandoned their own febrile children.⁶⁰ This theme of abandonment became something of a trope in plague literature and chronicles right from the time of the first medieval outbreaks. Boccaccio thus describes the social breakdown in Florence, for example:

Sparing no thought for anyone but themselves, large numbers of men and women abandoned their city, their homes, their relatives, their estates and their belonging, and headed for the countryside...[T]his scourge had implanted so great a terror in the hearts of men and women that brothers abandoned brothers, uncles their nephews, sisters their brothers, and in many cases wives deserted their husband. But even worse, and almost incredible, was the fact that fathers and mothers

⁵⁹ Shona Kelly Wray, "Boccaccio and the Doctors: Medicine and Compassion in the Face of the Plague," *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004): 301-22.

⁶⁰ Nam, ut vulgi rumor habebat, fugientes cladem vitare, relinquebantur domus desertae habitatoribus, solis catulis domum servantibus... Fugiebant filii, cadavera insepulta parentum relinquentes, parentes obliti pietatis viscera natos relinquebant aestuantes. Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, bk.2, ch. 4; Latin taken from Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio medievale e nuovi studi sul Decameron*, 5th ed. (Florence: Sansoni, 1981), 384-85.

refused to nurse and assist their own children, as though they did not belong to them.”⁶¹

Gabriella Zanella lists no fewer than nine chroniclers who described a similar state of disorder. Among them is Pietro Azario who, writing around the same time as Boccaccio, bears “first-hand” witness to the inhumanity of citizens: “I saw father turn away from his son and son from father, brother from brother, friend from friend, and neighbour from neighbour.”⁶² The medical and social plagues were indeed closely intertwined. As a result, the balance of harmony—the maintenance of *discordia concors*—was crucial for both the bodies natural and politic in the face of epidemic.

Returning to the idea of harmony, we can complete the web of analogy between music, the body, and the state. The concatenation of these terms can best be summarized by Theon of Smyrna (fl. 100 CE), whose definition of music exemplifies the pre-modern view of musical ontology:

The Pythagoreans, whose thoughts Plato often adopts, also define music as a perfect union of contrary things: one out of many and concord out of discord. For music does not co-ordinate rhythm and melody alone; it puts order in the entire universe. Its goal is to unite and coordinate. God is also the orderer of discordant things, and his greatest work is to reconcile, by the laws of music and medicine, things that are inimical to each other. It is also by music that the harmony of things and the government of the universe are maintained; for just as there is harmony in the world, there is good legislation in the state and temperance in the

⁶¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 8-9.

⁶² ...vidi patrem de filio et filium e contra de partre, fratrem de frate, amicum de amico, vicinumque de vicino penitus non curare. Pietra Azario, *Liber gestorum in Lombardia*, ed. Francesco Cognasso, *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*. Nuova edizione 16/4 (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1939), 1. Cited in Gabrielle Zanella, “Italia, Francia, e Germania: Una storiografia a confronto,” in *La peste nera: Dati di una realtà ed elementi di una interpretazione; atti del XXX Convegno storico internazionale, Todi, 10-13 ottobre 1993* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 1994).

family. It has the power, in fact, to impose order and unity in multiplicity. The efficacy and usage of this science, says Plato, can be seen in four things that pertain to humanity: the spirit, the body, the family, and the State. Indeed, these four things need to be well ordered and well constituted.⁶³

If spirit, body, family, and state are to be well ordered, then there are high stakes for music in times of plague, when individual bodies succumb to disease on a massive scale, families fall apart, and civic disorder spreads like a second plague. Emanating from the singer's voices, at the level of *musica instrumentalis*, a motet such as *O sancte Sebastiane* sounds immediately in sympathy with the *musica humana* of the singers, regulating first and foremost their health. In the case of Dufay's work, the text of the *introitus* and the opening of the *triplum* concomitantly focus on individual, bodily welfare—*me protege et conserva, a me enerva infirmitatem* etc. The prayer then broadens to include a larger private community: *me defende et custodi et omnes amicos meos* (defend and protect me and all of my loved ones). Beyond the body natural, we can imagine Dufay's motet as a prayer for, in Theon's words, temperance in the family.

The musical idiom that sets the prayer projects the harmony further still. By the late fourteenth century, the isorhythmic motet, often employed for glorifying a state or celebrating public occasions, had acquired a public and political connotation.⁶⁴ Examples abound. Much of Johannes Ciconia's isorhythmic output was dedicated to important

⁶³ Theon of Smyrna, *Exposition des connaissances mathématiques utiles pour la lecture de platon*, trans. J. Dupuis, Paris, 1892 (Bruxelles: Culture et civilisation, 1966), 19.

⁶⁴ For a study of occasional motets around this period, see Cumming, "Concord out of Discord," especially 171-374. See also Fallows, *Dufay*, 103.

public figures and made reference to Padua or Venice.⁶⁵ John Dunstable's motets, too, have been linked to special occasions, such as the signing of a treaty, a royal marriage, and a mass celebrated for heads of state; and in the instances where he honours a particular saint with an isorhythmic motet, there is a special connection between the saint and the city for which the motet was written.⁶⁶ Many of Dufay's own isorhythmic works have occasional functions; "of thirteen isorhythmic motets," Fallows writes, "all but two can be connected with specific occasions, people and places," and so, "to study them is to study Dufay's public voice."⁶⁷ This notion of public-ness that attends the isorhythmic genre draws together the bodies natural and politic. Moreover, by setting popular, widely disseminated devotional texts—which is unusual for the isorhythmic genre—Dufay is, in a sense, "applying" the prayers to the entire state (perhaps Rimini) or Christian body. The *infirmi-tatem noxiam vocatam epidemiam* that infects individual bodies is recognized as a communal problem.

Copinus – Fiat pax in virtute tua

The dual focus of the bodily plague and Paré's second, social plague is likewise evident in Alexander Copinus's *Fiat pax in virtute tua*, preserved in MILD 3. Frank

⁶⁵Margaret Bent, introduction to *The Works of Johannes Ciconia*, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 24 (Monaco:L'oiseau-lyre, 1985), xii-xiii. For other motets dedicated to Venetian Doges in the early quattrocento, see Julie Cumming, "Music for the Doge in Early Renaissance Venice," *Speculum* 67 (1992): 324-64.

⁶⁶ Margaret Bent, *Dunstable*, Oxford Studies of Composers 7 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 7-8. Jeremy Noble, "John Dunstable (d. 1453): A Line of Approach and a Point of Departure," *Musical Times* 95 (1954): 185.

⁶⁷ Fallows, *Dufay*, 103.

D'Accone suggests that the motet was written in Florence for a St. Sebastian confraternity that held services in a chapel dedicated to the saint at the convent of Santissima Annunziata, where Copinus held a post as an organist, singer, and music teacher, on-and-off, between the years 1489 and 1517.⁶⁸ It is impossible to say whether the work was composed for general devotional use, or whether it was spurred on by one of the pestilential outbreaks that struck Florence during this period.⁶⁹ In *Fiat pax*, Copinus sets a prayer to Sebastian, the source of which is unknown. The opening turn of phrase, “Fiat pax in virtute tua,” recalls Psalm 121:7, “Fiat pax in virtute tua et abundantia in turribus tui” (Let there be peace in your strength and abundance in your tower).

Prima pars

Fiat pax in virtute tua et intercessione tua, O beate Sebastiane.	Let there be peace in your strength and your intercession, O blessed Sebastian.
--	--

Deus nostri misereatur et non despiciat opera manuum suarum.	May our Lord take pity and not disdain the work of his hand.
---	---

Inclinet aures suas et audiat, aperiat oculos suos et videat tribulationem nostram, et propitius fiat terrae populi sui clamantis ad te cotidie, ut ipsum pro nobis deprecetur.	May He bend his ears and listen, open his eyes and see our tribulations, and be kind to the people on earth who cry out to you every day, just as you entreat for us.
--	--

Secunda pars

Domine Deus omnipotens, terribilis et fortis, justus et misericors rector humani	Omnipotent Lord, God, terrible and powerful, just and merciful, creator and
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⁶⁸ Frank D'Accone, *Music in Renaissance Florence: Studies and Documents* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006): 66-67.

⁶⁹ There is evidence that plague struck in 1493-1494, 1497, 1505, and 1509. See Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 394-97.

generis et auctor, qui nos a morte
roseo salvasti sanguine tuo, exaudi
orationes nostras.

ruler of humankind, who saved us from
death by your crimson blood, hear our
prayers.

Nec nos tempore malo [afflige], sed fac
nobiscum secundum multitudinem
miserationum tuarum.

Do not afflict us with bad times, but do to
us according to your great compassion.

Et sicut invictissimum martirem tuum
Sebastianum a sagittarum interitu eruisti,
ita nos sua ope a sagitta epedimiae et a
morbo tuearis.

And just as you plucked up your most
invincible martyr from his destruction by
arrows, so, by that power, protect us from
the arrows of plague and from death.

It is striking that the motet opens with a request to St. Sebastian for peace; plague itself is not mentioned until the end of the work. There is an immediate conflation, therefore, of the medical plague in the saint's purview and the social unrest attendant upon the epidemic, for which peace is sought.

The desire for peace is further emphasized by the motet's cantus firmus.

Taking the opening words "Fiat pax," Copinus sets the plea to a repeating five-note motive, in longs, that is sounded ten times by the tenor over the course of the work (see Example 3.5). Given the brevity and banality of the melodic material, it is impossible to determine whether it is a borrowed or constructed motive. On the basis of textual correspondence, the melodic fragment Copinus employs—if the cantus firmus is chant-derived—could come from the melisma over *pax* and *abundantia* in the gradual for the fourth Sunday of Lent, which sets parts of Psalm 121 (Example 3.3). The incipit for the chant *Beatus es et bene tibi erit egregie martyr Sebastiane* (CAO1623), for use on the feast of Pope Fabian and Sebastian, celebrated 20 January, also carries the same melodic profile (Example 3.4).

Example 3.3 - *Laetatus sum, v. Fiat pax in virtute tua*⁷⁰

Fi - at pax in vir - tu - te tu - a:
 et a - bun - dan - ti - a in tur - ri - bus tu - is

Example 3.4 - *Beatus es et bene tibi*⁷¹

Be - a - tus es et be - ne ti - bi e - rit

With a conception similar to Josquin's *Miserere mei* or his *Missa l'homme armé super voces musicales*, the five-note cantus firmus begins on C and subsequently starts a note lower each time, with the final iteration in the *prima pars* beginning and ending on F. In the *secunda pars*, both the melodic profile and the direction of the cantus firmus movement are inverted (this time, climbing from F up to C). Five *longa* rests break up each statement of the cantus firmus. The motive is heard in other voices as well. The superius announces the five-note motive at the very beginning of the motet. The cantus firmus motive also appears prominently between mm. 60 and 70; here, it is treated to imitation and sequencing that mirrors the gradual descent of the tenor cantus firmus in the first pars of the motet. At various points, the superius, altus, and bassus behave like a

⁷⁰ *Liber usualis* (1961), 560-61.

⁷¹ Renato-Joanne Hesbert, *Corpus antiphonalium officii* (Rome: Herder, 1963-1979), 4:75. Melody from Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek Slotsholmen, Gl. Kgl. S. 3449, 80 XIV(DK-Kk 3449 80 XIV), 192v.

cantus firmus, filling in with longae (sometimes the five-note motive, sometimes not) while the tenor rests (mm. 18-30, 100-109).

The organization of the free voices around the cantus firmus material in Copinus's work is backward-looking and follows a pattern that Edgar Sparks associates with Dufay's masses in which the musical organization occurs on "two separate planes."⁷² On one plane, when the long-note cantus firmus is present, whether in the tenor or another voice, the free voices enter into non-imitative counterpoint. Frequently, however, Copinus deploys protracted passages of parallel motion in the free voices. Passages of parallel thirds occur between the altus and bassus (mm. 28-30, 51-54, 154-57)—the tenor is invariably in a higher range at these moments—and even more frequently, Copinus adopts what Gaffurius calls "the most famous progression of notes" (*celeberrimus ... processus notularum*) and deploys parallel tenths in the outermost voices (mm. 14-16, 33-37, 70-74, 134-138, 182-183).⁷³

In the second plane of organization, when the cantus firmus is absent, imitation and repetition take over. In the imitative sections, there is a tendency for the imitated material to be concealed. Between mm. 81 and 91, for example, it is the second halves

⁷² Edgar H. Sparks, *Cantus firmus in Mass and Motet, 1420-1520* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 133. Sparks writes of such a technique, "the organization is on two planes: the statement of the c.f....provides one, and, when it is absent, imitation between the free voices provides a substitute."

⁷³ Franchinus Gaffurius, *Practica musice*, trans. Clement A. Miller (American Institute of Musicology, 1968), 144-5. These parallel-tenth passages are remarkably similar to the textbook examples of the procedure in the writings of Monachus, Gaffurius, and Ornithoparcus. See Peter Schubert, *Modal Counterpoint, Renaissance Style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 193-4. For a discussion of composing around the *cantus firmus* using parallel tenths, see Julie Cumming, "Composing Imitative Counterpoint around a Cantus Firmus: Two Motets by Heinrich Isaac," *Journal of Musicology* 28 (2011): 231-88. For a study of parallel-tenth writing in the context of two-part frameworks, see Julie Cumming, "From Two-Part Framework to Movable Module," in a Festschrift for Richard Crocker, ed. Judith Peraino (Forthcoming).

of phrases that enter into imitation, and between 94 and 97, imitation is found in the middle of melodic lines. The imitated melodic fragments often first emerge from the middle of a phrase, without being offset by cadences or rests, and without corresponding units of text to form concise *soggetti* (i.e. without what Sparks calls “text-linked” imitation).⁷⁴ By these criteria, Copinus’s treatment of imitation looks back to the middle of the fifteenth century.⁷⁵ Copinus does depart from this older style, however, in some important ways. First, all the non-cantus-firmus voices participate in the imitation. Second, there is often a large amount of repetition of a single motive. Between mm. 46 and 49, for example, the imitated subject appears periodically eight times. Third, the imitation tends to be strict and extended, as is the case with the altus and the bassus between mm. 60 and 70. Together with the superius, sequencing along with the other voices, a three-voice module appears thrice in these measures. Rather striking as well is the organization between mm. 145-150; while the superius and tenor rest, the altus and bassus emerge from repeated, non-imitative modules and enter into strict two-voice imitation at the octave, based on the repetition of a descending five-note figure reminiscent of previously heard motives (mm. 45-49, 122-130). The imitation and repetition are here unmistakable. Together these traits, instead of concealing, mark the imitation.

⁷⁴ Sparks, *Cantus Firmus*, 345.

⁷⁵ Julie Cumming, “From Variety to Repetition: The Birth of Imitative Polyphony,” in *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 6, ed. Bruno Bouckaert, Eugeen Schreurs, and Ivan Asselman (Peer, Belgium: Alamire, 2008), 25-27. Compare with Cumming’s analysis of Pullois’s *Flos de spina*.

Example 3.5 - Schema of *Fiat pax in virtute tua*, showing cantus firmus, imitation, motivic and modular repetition, and extend passages in parallel 3rds and 10ths

The musical score is divided into five systems, each with four staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass). The lyrics are written below the vocal staves.

System 1 (Measures 1-22): Soprano: Fi - at pax si-o - ne tu - O be - a - te. Tenor: Fi - at pax Fi -. Bass: si-o - ne tu - . Annotations: '7' above the first measure, 'parallel 10th' between Tenor and Bass staves.

System 2 (Measures 23-32): Soprano: Se - ba - sti - a -. Alto: (melodic line). Tenor: (melodic line). Bass: (melodic line). Annotation: 'parallel 3rd' between Tenor and Bass staves.

System 3 (Measures 33-42): Soprano: De - us nos - tri et. Alto: (melodic line). Tenor: (melodic line). Bass: De - us nos - tir. Annotations: 'parallel 10th' between Tenor and Bass staves.

System 4 (Measures 43-49): Soprano: o - pe - ra ma - nu - um su -. Alto: non de - spi - ci - at o - pe - ra ma - nu - um su -. Bass: de - spi - ci - at o - pe -. Annotations: Dashed arrows indicating imitative relationships between parts.

System 5 (Measures 50-54): Soprano: - a - rum. Alto: a - rum. Tenor: (melodic line). Bass: - ra ma - nu - um su - a - rum. Annotation: 'parallel 3rd' between Tenor and Bass staves.

60

S.
A. a - pe - ri - at o - cu - los su - os et vi - de - at
T.
B. et au - di - at a - pe - ri - at o - cu - los su - os et

70

S. tri - bu - la - ti - o - nem nos - tram
A. at et pro - pi - ti - us fi -
T.
B. parallel 10th parallel 10th
vi - de - at tri - bu - la - ti - o - nem

81

S. po - pu - li su - i cla - man - tis ad te co - ti - di -
A. - at ter - re po - pu - lu su - i cla - man - tis ad te co - ti - di -
T.
B.

91

S. e ut ipsum pro no - bis de - pre - ce - ris.
A. e
T.
B. ut ip - pro no - bis de - pre - ce - ris

100

S. rec - tor hu - ma - nis ge - ne -
A. Do - mi - ne
T.
B. om - ni - po - tens tus et mi -

122

S. ris et auc - tor qui nos a mor - te ro - se - o sal - va - sti san - gui - ne

A. qui nos a mor - te ro - se - o sal - vas - ti sa - gui -

B. se - ri - cors qui nos a mor - te ro - se - o sal - va - sti sa - gui -

130

S. tu - o ex - au - di o - ra - ti - o - nes nos -

A. ne tu - o ex - au - di

T. ne tu - o ex - au - di

B. ne tu - o ex - au - di o - ra - ti - o - nes nos - tras

parallel 10th

139

S. stras

A. o - ra - ti o - nes nos - tras nec nos

T. o - ra - ti o - nes nos - tras nec nos

B. o - ra - ti o - nes nos - tras nec nos

tem - po - re ma - la sed

146

S. ma lo sed fac no - bis

A. ma lo sed fac no - bis

T. ma lo sed fac no - bis

B. fac no - bis cum

151

A. mi - se - ra - ti - o - num tu - a - rum et

T. at pax

159

S. in - vic - tis - si - mum mar - ti - rem

A. si - cut in - vic - tis - si - num mar - ti - rem

T.

B. et si - cut

164

S. tu - um

A. Se - ba - sti - a - num

B. in - vic - tis - si - mum mar - ti - rem Se - ba -

170

T. e - ru -

B. in -

180

S. ru - is - ti - ta - nos o - pe

A. is - ti su - a

B. te - ri - tu e - ru - is - ti - ta - nos su - a o - pe

191

T. in -

The differences between the two planes of organization, as well as the internal organization within each plane accentuate the condition of *discordia concors*. In the non-

cantus-firmus sections, there is a sense that imitative passages emerge subtly and unpredictably from the middles and ends of phrases, but subsequently gain concision and clarity. The cantus-firmus sections, with the frequent arrangement of the free voices in parallel motion, provide oases of easily audible musical organization. Although achieved by means of a wholly different technique from Dufay's isorhythm, the sensible manifestation of *discordia concors* that alternates hidden organization with audible clarity is essentially the same. And as in Dufay's work, the palpable sense of ordered disorder accompanies an insistent plea for social and physical health.

Petrucchi's Stella celi extirpavit

As often as St. Sebastian, Mary was invoked in times of pestilential crisis. One musical trace of her popularity as a plague protectress is the anti-pestilential hymn *Stella celi extirpavit*. Christopher Macklin has documented the early appearances of the *Stella celi* hymn in a large range of sources, including Books of Hours and music manuscripts.⁷⁶ The earliest extant written records of the hymn that Macklin finds date from the first half of the fifteenth century; the hymn appears without music in both Latin and English translation, as a rubric in a mystery play, in plainsong (with dissimilar melodies), and in polyphonic settings. Because the hymn survives from the start in such a diversity of genres and arrangements, Macklin suspects that it had already been in circulation for

⁷⁶ Christopher Macklin, "Plague, Performance and the Elusive History of the *Stella celi extirpavit*," *Early Music History* 29 (2010): 27-31. There is also a five-voice setting by Clemens non Papa (Brussels, Conservatoire Royal, Bibliothèque, Koninklijk Conservatorium, Bibliotheek) not listed by Macklin.

some time either through lost exempla or through oral transmission. The prayer even appears in a plague tract, the 1534 *Mignotydea de peste* by Jean-Marie Mignot.⁷⁷

Stella celi extirpavit, que lactavit Dominum mortis pestem quam plantavit primus parens hominum.	Star of heaven, who suckled the Lord, extirpated the plague of death, which the first parent of man had planted.
---	---

Ipsa stella nunc dignetur sidera compescere quorum bella plebem scindunt dire mortis ulcere.	May that star now deign to rein in the stars whose wars tear apart the people with the loathsome scar of death.
---	--

O gloriosa stella maris, a peste succurre nobis. Audi nos, nam te filius nihil negans honorat. Salva nos, Jesu Christe, pro quibus virgo mater te orat.	O glorious star of the sea, rescue us from plague. Hear us, for your son honors you, denying you nothing. Save us, Jesus Christ, for whom your Virgin Mother prays to you.
--	---

Described as a star of heaven, Mary is asked in this hymn to rein in other errant stars (*sidera compescere*), whose wars incite plague on earth. If Dufay's and Copinus's motet address the physical and social dimensions of plague, then *Stella celi extirpavit* displays a far more universal outlook. The plea for Mary to restrain wayward stars was very much informed by the contemporary model of pestilential aetiology.⁷⁸ Authors of plague treatises often distinguished between two different, but interconnected, levels of pestilential corruption: the local and the universal.⁷⁹ The former level of plague is the

⁷⁷ Jean-Marie Mignot, *Mignotydea de peste & humanum alterantibus corpus* (Milan: Gotardus Ponticus, 1535), 96v.

⁷⁸ See discussion of aetiology in Chapter 1. See also Macklin, "Plague, Performance," 20.

⁷⁹ See for example Jacme d'Agramont, "Regiment de Preservacio a Epidimia o Pestilencia e Mortaldats," trans. M.L. Duran-Reynals, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 23 (1949): 64-71. Jacme distinguishes between universal plague, plague particular to a city, plague particular to a

most immediate and includes causes such as poor civic maintenance (overflowing irrigation and deficient waste management, for example), poor geographical and topographical situation of a locality, and the harvest of corrupted foodstuff. The latter, universal level of plague pertains to the punitive actions of God that result—by means of the conjunction of the planets, ill winds, earthquakes, and putrefaction of water—in plague. The *Stella celi* hymn draws a broad, universal arc, addressing the most remote and universal causes of disease: sin (not only recent transgressions, but original sin) and inauspicious planetary alignments.⁸⁰

Stella celi can be heard as a part of the change in Marian devotion in the late-medieval period, in which, as Marshall describes, “earlier emphasis on the Virgin's spiritual motherhood of the faithful and her bounteous mercy towards sinners is replaced by glorification of the Virgin as an effective agent in her own right. Secure in the knowledge that God can deny her nothing, she has no need to consult him, but acts as a supreme and autonomous power, even to the extent of actively opposing God's prior judgment.”⁸¹ The bold assertion *te filius nihil negans honorat* in the *Stella celi* prayer reconfigures the conventional celestial hierarchy and invests the Virgin with a large measure of independent power to wield against her punitive Son. The attention to Jesus in the final lines of the prayer seems an afterthought, an obligatory nod to orthodoxy. Even with this final turn to Jesus, however, the hymn was censured by English

street. See also Ann G. Carmichael, “Universal and Particular: The Language of Plague, 1348-1500,” *Medical History Supplement* 27 (2008): 18-32.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Johannes de Saxonia's explanation of pestilential causes:

⁸¹ Louise Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994): 510.

Reformists, who felt that it leaned toward idolatry. In the preface to the 1537 primer (i.e. book of hours) printed by Robert Redman, he writes of *Stella celi*,

[W]e are only redeemed by Christ's blood, and not by our Lady, either any Saint or angel in heaven... [T]hat our Lady hath extirped [sic] the mortal pestilence which our first father hath planted, with divers other things applied to the praise of Saints and their merits, which have proceeded of to [sic] immoderate affection of some men towards Saints, and therefore ought not to be admitted into any part of our belief, because they seem to derogate the due honour of God not a little and the faith that we should have in him.⁸²

With this emphasis on the Virgin's independence, the *Stella celi* hymn has much in common with the enormously popular Madonna della Misericordia icon in the visual arts. In the traditional images, such as Jacobello del Fiore's Triptych of the Madonna della Misericordia (Figure 3.1), Mary wraps her open mantle around the devout. This gestural symbolism, Marshall writes, is inherited from the legal and ritual act of covering someone with a cloak as a sign of protection and adoption.⁸³ After the epidemics of the fourteenth century, a number of artists adapted the Misericordia image to meet the crisis of plague by including the figure of Christ or God hurling down pestilential arrows that

⁸² Edgar Hoskins, *Horae beatae mariae virginis or Sarum and York Roman Primers with Kindred Books and Primers of the Reformed Roman Use* (New York and London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 169-170. See also Christopher Macklin, "'Musica sanat corpus per animam': Towards an Understanding of the Use of Music in Response to Plague, 1350-1600" (PhD diss., University of York, 2008), 174. The preface goes on to say that the Litany is commendable because it strikes a proper balance between praying to the Saints and to God: "for in all places where anything is referred to the person of God it saith on this wise, 'Have mercy on us,' and if it touche our Lady or any other Saint it is always 'Pray for us,' whereby we may learn that to have mercy on us or to save us, lieth only in the power of God, but to help us with prayer may lie in the power of our Lady and other blessed Saints whom God listeth to accept."

⁸³ Louise Marshall, "'Waiting on the Will of the Lord': The Imagery of the Plague" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 209.

break upon Mary's shield-like cloak (Figures 3.2 and 3.3).⁸⁴ The scale of the central Madonna, who dwarfs the angry deities, reflects the faith invested in her to circumvent the divine purpose. She, neither worried nor beseeching, looks not to the heavens in supplication, but serenely at her wards. Much like the Stella celi, the Madonna della Misericordia thwarts the punitive intents of God and reduces divine retribution to complete impotence.

⁸⁴ Raymond Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), 138. For a list of Renaissance representations of the plague Madonna, see Marshall, "'Waiting on the Will,'" 267-272.

Figure 3.1 - Jacobello del Fiore, Center panel of *Triptych of the Madonna della Misericordia*



Figure 3.2 - Benedetto Bonfigli, *Banner of San Francesco al Prato*



Figure 3.3 - Sinibaldo Ibi, Banner of S. Francisco at Montone



In a number of these pestilential *Misericordia* images—for example, a series of *gonfaloni* (banners) by Benedetto Bonfigli (San Francesco del Prato, Perugia, 1464; Parrocchiale, Civitella Benazzone; Parrocchiale, Corciano, 1472) and Sinibaldo Ibi's Banner of S. Francisco at Montone (1482)—the scene of supplication plays out over an image of a city. At the top of Bonfigli's San Francesco del Prato banner (Figure 3.2), apparently painted while plague raged in Perugia,⁸⁵ Christ casts down arrows, flanked on his right by an angel drawing his sword, marked IUSTITIA, and on his left by an angel sheathing his weapon, marked MISERICORDIA. The Virgin stands erect with supplicants huddled beneath her cloak, sheltering the faithful from pestilential arrows. Among this group of supplicants are Saint Sebastian and the principal saints of the city: the bishop saints Ercolano and Constanzo, Lorenzo, Louis of Toulouse, Francis, Bernardino, and Peter Martyr.⁸⁶ All of the supplicants face Mary and direct their prayers to her, paying no heed to Jesus above. At the bottom of the picture is Perugia, marked by its emblematic griffins. The city walls are inscribed with the year of the outbreak, 1464. The prayers appear to be fruitful, as Raphael strikes at Death, at whose feet rest a heap of bodies. Citizens strike the expected tableaux: inside the walls, white-clad penitents kneel in the streets to publically demonstrate their piety; outside, a mother strolls along with her infants in panniers mounted on a donkey, fleeing the afflicted city; and a sentry stands at the gate on the right, warning off two men.

⁸⁵ Michael Bury, "The Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-century *gonfaloni* of Perugia," *Renaissance Studies* 12 (1998): 69. See also Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 396.

⁸⁶ Bury, "Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-century *gonfaloni*," 67.

Bonfigli's other banners for the parochial churches Civitella Benazzone and Corciano, both near Perugia, are of a similar design. The former features a number of saintly supplicants and provides a view of the town with a white-robed confraternity processing outside the walls. As in the 1464 banner, an angel battles plague personified. The latter also features saintly supplicants under Mary's mantle atop an image of the town. Similarly, Sinibaldo Ibi's Madonna stands atop an outline of a city and spreads her robes to protect a kneeling populace (Figure 3.3). A banderole over the centre of the city marks the year as 1482. Various saints in supplication, including St. Sebastian, surround her. At the top of the image, Christ, flanked by town angels, casts down pestilential arrows. Intended to be carried through the city during plague processions, the images on Bonfigli's and Ibi's banners replicate the very human scenes that surround them.⁸⁷ The citizens see themselves within the painted cities and pray that they too may be safe under Mary's embrace. For added insurance, they appeal to local saints as well, thereby directing divine intervention specifically to their own communities.

These Misericordia images tie together the universal and the local. At the top are the divine figures that represent the most remote and ultimate cause of plague. Clustered in the centre are members of the church triumphant along with images of men and women, some perhaps intended to be portraits, many, faceless. At the foot of the image are specific communities—confraternities, sacred societies, and families—belonging to a particular locale, marked with a particular date. The central figure of Mary, which

⁸⁷ The San Francesco del Prato banner was believed to be effective in securing the end of plague, and a cult quickly grew around the image. Bury, "Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-century *gonfaloni*," 72.

Crawfurd describes as an erect “lighthouse amid the storm,”⁸⁸ draws a vertical line that unites the universals and the particulars. The Madonna della misericordia and the Stella celi tropes may differ in specifics—one spreads her aegis against plague-bearing arrows, the other keeps hold of the planets—but the two Marys share the same purpose of subverting the Lord’s direct will, saving local supplicants from universal plague. And just as Misericordia images join individuals, families, penitential groups, and entire cities to the celestial happenings, musical settings of the *Stella celi* hymn likewise telescope outward from the microcosm to the macro; from the singer’s mouth to the ears of the celestial Mediatrix, *musicae instrumentalis*, *humana*, and *universalis* align in this hymn for a common salubrious goal.

One last motet will suffice in illustrating the principle of *discordia concors* made sensible. Collected in Petrucci’s 1502 *Motetti A* is an anonymous four-voice motet that sets the first two stanzas of the *Stella celi*. With this textual choice, the composer avoids, on the one hand, the explicit reference to the autonomy of Mary; on the other, he nevertheless emphasizes Marian mercy to the exclusion of Christ. The motet carries a chant incipit and makes use of a long-note cantus firmus that has not yet been identified.⁸⁹ The cantus firmus is deployed in the tenor in even breves (and one long)

⁸⁸ Crawfurd, “Plague and Pestilence,” 138.

⁸⁹The identification of that tenor melody is difficult because the *Stella celi* hymn had no official liturgical place in the principal rites and therefore was never furnished with a single “universal” melody. See George Warren James Drake, “The First Printed Book of Motets: Petrucci’s *Motetti A*, Numero Trentatre A (Venice, 1502) and *Motetti De passione, De cruce, De sacramento, De Beata Virgine et huiusmodi B* (Venice, 1503): A Critical Study and Complete Edition” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972), 220-21; Margaret Bent, “New and Little-Known Fragments of English Medieval Polyphony,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21 (1968): 145-147.

throughout most of the motet, gaining an active rhythmic profile only at the drive to the final cadence.

We can discern two levels of musical organization in this motet (Example 3.6). At one level, motivic repetition and imitation across the voices provide one facet of the work's cohesion. This is most apparent at the beginning of the motet, where wide-spanning melodic imitation in the free voices dominates the texture (superius (mm. 1-6) and the altus (mm. 7-12); the bassus (mm. 11-15) and superius (mm. 13-17)). The melodic repetition in these instances does not occur over repeated material in the tenor (in this sense, it is independent of the cantus firmus). More often, however, motivic repetitions in the free voices are integrated with the cantus firmus armature, forming modular combinations that build up large swathes of the work. In such cases, there is an additional, vertical level of organization that attends the melodic repetitions. A motive first heard in mm. 13-15 in the altus, for example, reappears in mm. 30 to 32. Each appearance coincides with the same melodic figure in the cantus firmus, forming a direct modular repetition.

Example 3.6 - Schema of *Stella celi*, showing cantus firmus, imitation, motivic and modular repetition

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with four vocal parts: Superius (S.), Altus (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.).

- System 1 (Measures 1-8):** The Superius part begins with the cantus firmus: "Stel - la ce - li ex - tir - pa - vit". A bracket above measures 3-8 indicates a 7-measure phrase. The Altus and Tenor parts enter with "que lac - ta -" and "ex - tir - pa - vit que lac - ta -" respectively.
- System 2 (Measures 9-16):** The Superius part continues with "que lac - ta - vit". The Altus part has "vit Do - mi - num" and "lac - ta - vit Do - mi - num". The Tenor part has "vit" and "Do - mi - num mor - tis". The Bass part has "que lac - ta - vit Do - mi - num".
- System 3 (Measures 17-24):** The Superius part has "Do - mi - num" and "pes - tem quam plan - ta - vit". The Altus part has "mor - tis pes - tem quam plan - ta - vit pri - mus". The Tenor part has "pes - tem quam plan - ta - vit pri -". The Bass part has "mor - tis pes - tem quam plan - ta -".
- System 4 (Measures 25-32):** The Superius part has "pri - mus par - rens" and "pri - mus pa - rens". The Altus part has "pa - rens ho - mi - num" and "pa - rens". The Tenor part has "mus pa - rens" and "ho - mi -". The Bass part has "vit pri - mus pa - rens ho - mi - num".

Key features include:

- Cantus firmus:** A melodic line in the Superius part that is imitated by other parts.
- Motivic repetition:** Short melodic phrases are repeated across different parts and systems.
- Modular repetition:** Larger sections of music are repeated, often with variations in the vocal parts.

32

S. ho - mi - num

A. ip - sa stel - la nunc dig - ne - tur

T. num ip - sa stel - la nunc dig - ne -

B. ip - sa stel - la

41

A. com - pes - ce - re

T. tur si - de - ra com pes - ce -

49

S. ple - bem

A. ple - bem scin - dunt

T. re qu - rum bel - la ple - bem

B. de - ra com - pes - ce - re quo rum bel - la ple - bem

58

S. scin - dunt di - re mor - tis

T. scin - dunt di - re mor - tis ul - ce - re

B. scin - dunt di - re mor - tis

70

T.

In other instances, the modular repetitions with the cantus firmus are more obscure. At various points, the bassus enters into chant-like passages of even breves, taking on the characteristics of a second cantus firmus (mm. 18-25, 33-35, 52-66) and increasing the combinatorial possibilities for creating modules. For example, a cadential motive first heard in the superius in mm. 17 to 19 appears no less than six times in three different transpositions and creates two different intervallic combinations with the cantus firmus voices (labelled A and B). Module A occurs with the superius and tenor in mm. 17 to 19; and in a slightly modified form between the superius and tenor/bassus in mm. 26 to 28; finally, between the bassus and the tenor, transposed and inverted, in mm. 28 to 30. Module B first occurs between the altus and the bassus in mm. 17 to 20, then between the superius and the bassus in mm. 21 to 24 (compounded by an octave); and finally between the altus and tenor in mm. 24 to 26. Later in the motet, a module between the altus and the tenor in mm. 34 to 36 is repeated in those voices ten measures later, transposed and inverted at the octave (the altus motive is first heard in the superius in mm. 32 to 34 and again in mm. 57 to 59, but does not form repeating modules). Finally, an extended module first appears between the *superius* and tenor/bassus between mm. 53 and 57, then the *superius* and the tenor from mm. 61 to 65, and in abbreviated form between the bassus and tenor between mm. 66 and 69.

We can perhaps relate these modular formations to the supplicants' desire for Mary to rein in the stars. The tenor, like the guiding star, draws all the other voices into its orbit: at times, the bassus falls into its path and behaves as a second cantus firmus, and the free voices repeat materials according to the two structural armatures. And like celestial bodies, these armatures can exert forces on the free voices with striking

consequences; the overlapping modules from mm. 17-19 illustrate powerfully the effect of their individual gravities. In m. 18, the two upper voices, each guided by a different cantus firmus voice, collide together in pungent parallel seconds (marked with asterisks in Example 3.6), appropriately painting the words *mortis pestem*. Although the cantus firmus voices operate within their own paths, without overt conflict, they nevertheless generate discord in the other voices that results in visceral dissonance. When the insidious influence of higher harmony becomes manifest, the result can be unpleasant at best, and at worst, deadly.

Each in its own way, Dufay's *O Sancte Sebastiane*, Copinus's *Fiat pax*, and the Petrucci setting of *Stella caeli* make the principle of *discordia concors* palpable through the play of organizational clarity and obscurity. In Dufay's isorhythmic motet, a chaotic foreground is given clarity by an intelligible pan-isorhythmic scheme. Copinus employs various methods of organization around a highly regimented cantus firmus to provide sudden flashes of clarity; parallel writing in the free voices predominates when the cantus firmus sounds, and imitative writing takes over when it rests. Petrucci's *Stella celi* illustrates the effects of internal musical logic, mirroring the occult laws that tie together (and bring illness upon) the universe. These works represent in miniature the workings of the bodies natural, politic, and celestial, where disparate elements ideally function in concord: humours and spirit must be in proportion; members of society must fulfill their roles and never overstep their stations; celestial movements must be agreeable.

What is important is that such musical representations of the various levels of *discordia concors*—and indeed, representations *tout court*—had immense power in pre-modern thought, a power that we can perhaps no longer readily perceive. The musical

microcosms that these works constitute relate to the universe not merely in an abstract or aseptic way; rather, they have vital connections with other structures and form a part of the great spiral imagined by Foucault that winds through all levels of the universe. For composers and singers besieged by plague, the motets carry salutary rewards made possible by the ontology of their very medium. By manipulating music at the tangible “instrumental” level, supplicants can not only right the disharmony of pestiferous bodies, but as I shall further argue in the next chapter, they can also heal the disorder of the body politic, and with the help of divine intercessors, of the entire plague-stricken universe.

Chapter 4

Motets and the Anti-pestilential Procession

In his 1576 treatise *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, Ingrassia writes of the problems concerning three common responses to plague, starting with one of the most popular anti-pestilential measures, the procession:

Three difficulties emerge concerning the three remedies necessary to stem the spread of the contagion. The first is a divine remedy which would involve the Holy Sacrament being carried in processions, [which] are supported by many reasons and examples... The second remedy concerns the confinement and isolation of people, a remedy that is extremely difficult and expensive if it is not applied only to women, children, prostitutes, and pimps. Such isolation would be of great benefit... The third remedy is to banish the infected from the city... and to burn their possessions.¹

Taken as a group, these common remedies—informed by spiritual zeal, civic policy, and contagion theory—span the entire range of pre-modern pestilential discourse. But together, these remedies also represent something of a contradiction; processions, on one hand, and quarantine and banishment, on the other, lie at opposite ends of the

¹ Ove si propongono tre difficoltà, intorno a tre rimedij, che si dovessero fare, per estinguere, o diminuire la ampliacion del contagio. Il primo è divino, che con processioni si conduca il Santissimo Sacramento...Il secondo rimedio è quanto allo incarcerare, et sequestrar della gente. Et si conchiude essere difficilissima cosa, et non senza grossissima spesa, se non sia per le sole femine, e fanciulli, puttane, et ruffiane, poiche farebbe qualche utile. Et si dichiara quando sarebbe di gran profitto tal sequestratione. Et quale è la vera cagion della ampliacion del contagio. Il terzo rimedio è, che si stringa la mano per li barreggiati, et infetti, che vadano fuor della Città...Declarandosi finalmente alcuni avvertimenti, quanto al bruciar delle robe. Giovan Filippo Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, *Filosofia e scienza nell'età moderna* 3 Testi inediti o rari 19 (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), 349.

congregation-isolation spectrum. Ostensibly, this complication is evident not only to our modern sensibilities, but to the pre-modern one as well. Plague chroniclers often reported the nervous hand-wringing on the part of sanitation authorities when confronted with the demand for such public devotions.

Music enters this complicated picture in a variety of ways, both direct and indirect. The practice of processions itself can be construed as a kind of music in the metaphysical sense; as participants from different estates, parishes, guilds, and so on congregate and march on the streets, they make visible the harmony of the body politic to which they belong (see previous chapter). Second, on a more tangible level, music-making was an indispensable component of the plague procession. The musical programme of these public devotions—the singing of litanies, hymns, laude, and even motets—was such that the works fostered a sense of solidarity, of concord in the body politic on the move; the call-and-response of the litany required corporate participation, and the choice of other musical accretions spoke to local customs that bound together the individual participants. Music-making thereby replicates and reinforces the goal of the procession: to demonstrate to God and to each other a united will to defeat a communal scourge. Before considering these aspects of processional music and, by extension, the role of music within the congregation-isolation debate, let us turn briefly to the history and the anatomy of the plague procession.

The Pestilential Procession

Gregory I's plague procession (590), the first recorded instance of such devotional acts within the Christian context, can be considered prototypical. As

recounted in the *Legenda aurea*, the Romans, having lived a continent life throughout Lent, threw off all restraints after Easter and delighted in feasts, games, and voluptuous living.² God sent a punitive plague upon them, causing swellings in the groin. The Tiber overflowed its banks, demolishing a number of houses and washing snakes and a great dragon onto shore. The serpentine corpses began to rot and created a pestilential miasma. Many people dropped dead suddenly, on the streets or at their tables. Among those who died at the outset was Pope Pelagius. Lacking spiritual leadership, the populace unanimously elected Gregory to be their reluctant bishop. In this capacity, he preached a number of sermons, organized a procession, had litanies recited, and urged the people to pray for mercy. With these devotions completed, Gregory attempted to leave the city, but a divine miracle led the Romans to discover his hiding spot in a cave. Gregory was brought back to Rome and consecrated as Pope.

Frustrated by the continuing ferocity of the plague and the futility of prayers and litanies, Pope Gregory preached a sermon in April of that year, summoning the entire populace to a special act of devotion. In this sermon, recorded by Gregory of Tours, the Pope invokes Biblical accounts of penance and divine forgiveness to persuade Roman citizens to perform a sevenfold (septiform) litany, so-called because seven classes of people—clergy, monks and religious men, religious women, children, laymen, widows and unmarried women, and married women, each group accompanied by priests from the seven ecclesiastical districts of the city—were to gather at various churches throughout

² Jacobus de Voragine, "Saint Gregory," in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:171-74. See also H. H. Mollaret and J. Brossollet, "La procession de saint Grégoire et la peste à Rome en l'an 590," *Médecine de France* 199 (1969): 13-22.

Rome, praying and lamenting, and then to process toward the Basilica S. Maria Maggiore.

Three days later, the people of Rome took to the streets, chanting litanies and singing *Miserere*. Death was among the ranks, however, as eighty penitents fell dead in the space of an hour. As he headed the trains of suffering Romans, Gregory carried an image of Mary, purportedly made by St. Luke himself. At once, the sacred image cleansed the surrounding air of infection as it moved through the city. The voices of angels were heard around the image singing the Marian antiphon *Regina coeli laetare alleluia / Quia quem meruisti portare alleluia / Resurrexit sicut dixit alleluia*, to which Gregory responded, “Ora pro nobis Deum rogamus, alleluia.” As Gregory approached the Aelian Bridge, the Archangel Michael appeared atop the castle of Crescentius and sheathed his bloody sword as a sign that God had been placated by the pious outpouring. And indeed, the *Legenda aurea* tells us, the plague promptly came to an end. With this procession, Gregory instituted the Major Litanies, celebrated on 25 April, coinciding with the feast of St. Mark.

Gregory’s septiform procession left an enduring mark on the spiritual awareness and the ritual lives of pre-modern Christians. Not only was it described in the popular *Legenda aurea*, it was also the subject of numerous plague images.³ Moreover, judging from a variety of documents (including letters, chronicles, and medical treatises), Gregory’s procession inspired medieval and Renaissance Europeans to turn to

³ Raymond Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), 91-94; Christine Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000), 81-5.

extraordinary processions—or “crisis processions,” as Richard Trexler names them⁴—as standard responses to pestilence. William Zouche, the Archbishop of York, writes to his official at York in 1348 to warn them of the imminent threat of plague, counselling, “Therefore we command, and order you to let it be known with all possible haste, that devout processions are to be held every Wednesday and Friday in our cathedral church, in other collegiate and conventual churches, and in every parish church in our city and dioceses.”⁵ Vincenzo Tranquilli’s *Pestilenze che sono state in Italia*, which catalogues outbreaks of plague in the country from 745 BC to 1575 AD, enumerates many instances where processions and public devotions successfully put an end to the divine scourge.⁶ The chronicler’s evidence is in sympathy with prescriptive sources; in his tract, Antonio Possevino prescribes the same curative, writing that public processions with saintly relics can both placate God’s ire and purify corrupt air.⁷

A well documented procession held at the end of the Renaissance shows that the Gregorian procession had not lost currency nearly a millennium later. When pestilence ravaged Milan between the years 1576 and 1578, Carlo Borromeo invoked the efficacy of St. Gregory’s procession to incite enthusiasm for a similar ritual in Milan. In imitation of Gregory, Borromeo organized processions over four days, along with fasting and

⁴ Richard Trexler, *Renaissance Florence: The Public Life of a Complex Society* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 331-64.

⁵ Rosemary Horrox, trans. and ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 111.

⁶ Vincenzo Tranquilli, *Pestilenze che sono state in Italia da anni MMCCXI...et i remedii e provisioni usatevi di tempo in tempo* (Perugia: Baldo Salviani, 1576).

⁷ [Antonio Possevino], *Cause et rimedii della peste, et d’altre infermita* (Florence: Giunti, 1577), 63-5.

almsgiving. With the added incentive of a plenary indulgence, the processions attracted an enormous number of participants, including noblemen and women, civic officials, ordinary citizens, children, and at least a thousand *disciplinati* (flagellants). The cardinal was incredibly charismatic and moved the masses by his personal display of piety.

Emulating Gregory, Borromeo carried with him during one of the processions a prized Milanese relic, the Holy Nail, attached to a cross. He wore a noose around his neck and walked barefoot to evoke the image of a condemned criminal. At one point, he cut his foot on an iron railing, but rather than tending to the wound, he walked on, letting his blood flow freely for all to see; witnesses to the wound were all moved to compassion.

The parallels between Borromeo's and Gregory's processions were not lost among chroniclers. Giovanni Pietro Giussano, one of Borromeo's biographers, observed that the Milanese processions even surpassed the septiform in efficacy: "though the concourse of people was great...the plague made no progress during these days, as might have been expected, and as happened in the time of Pope St. Gregory at Rome, when eighty persons died of the pestilence during the processions."⁸ And like Gregory's septiform litany, Borromeo's procession became an indelible part of his hagiography and inspired many cultic images in the latter part of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.⁹

⁸ Giovanni Pietro Giussano, *The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan: from the Italian of John Peter Giussano; With preface by Henry Edward Cardinal Manning [Vita di S. Carlo Borromeo (Rome, 1610)]* (London and New York: Burns and Oates, 1884), 396.

⁹ Pamela M. Jones, "San Carlo Borromeo and Plague Imagery in Milan and Rome," in *Hope and Healing: Painting in Italy in a Time of Plague 1500-1800*, ed. Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Pamela M. Jones, Franco Mormando and Thomas W. Worcester (Worcester, MA: Clark University; College of the Holy Cross; Worcester Art Museum, 2005), 65-96; Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence*, 171-75.

Body Politic on Display

Gregory's septiform procession, like subsequent plague processions, was thoroughly civic in outlook. The ritual brought together individuals of the entire city, of all estates, the young and the old, male and female, the rich and the poor. In his survey of civic chronicles, Trexler discovers that "repeated statements...that 'the whole city' was involved in the procession [were] not mere exaggeration."¹⁰ Numbers mattered. The power of prayer worked in aggregate terms, according to Savonarola's recommendation of public devotions: "Let us gather together for our *virtù* is small. United it has great force."¹¹ Even when total participation was not possible, it was essential to maintain the appearance of complete civic inclusiveness. Preachers and government officials occasionally forbade passive on-lookers; if citizens did not wish to participate, they were to shut themselves indoors and close all the windows and doors. Such attempts at totality not only pleased the divinities, but also concentrated all attention on the serious matter at hand, rather than the spectacle or the participants themselves; there was to be no outside voyeurism, only inside participation. And at the level of the participating individual, such totalizing immersion is felt kinetically through the very act of processing. As C. Clifford Flanigan writes of liturgical processions,

To be in a procession is to participate in a group activity that minimises individuality, since every member must be a part of the moving group and direct his or her own body in terms of the rhythms set by the group. Indeed, togetherness, or solidarity, is the most characteristic feature of processions, a feature that applies to the motion itself, the succession of participants in the procession, and even the route which the procession takes, since all participants

¹⁰ Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 358.

¹¹ Quoted in Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 353.

must go the same way at the same pace. Processions thus give the impression that everyone shares the goals of the community.¹²

In sum, a crisis procession brings together every member of a city (or at the very least, everyone in appearance) for one common purpose, supplanting individual wishes with those of the community. Furthermore, the very act of processing, whereby the participants channel individual bodily freedom to the group's movement, physically demonstrates the solidarity of thought and devotion.

But while processions may draw together individual bodies and desires into the communal from a bird's eye view, they nevertheless differentiate the participants in other respects to maintain a microcosmic image of the state with the finer details of social distinctions and hierarchies. To take Gregory's septiform procession as an example, different types of religious persons and the laity set off separately from the different districts of Rome. In other processions, as with Gregory's, men and women were rigidly separated; if laxness in maintaining sexual continence can cause divine scourges, Trexler argues, clear gender and sexual segregation represents a part of the solution.¹³ Moreover, the population was often divided according to age or membership in confraternities.¹⁴

Edward Muir finds that Venetian processions, both propitiatory and celebratory, put into

¹² C. Clifford Flanigan, "The Moving Subject: Medieval Liturgical Processions in Semiotic and Cultural Perspective" in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 39.

¹³ Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 203; Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 358-9.

¹⁴ Two major studies of confraternal musical activities in Italy are Jonathan Glixon's *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian Confraternities, 1260-1807* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Blake Wilson's *Music and Merchants: The Laudesi Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

practice the republic ideology of *La Serenissima*, based on clear and stable hierarchies. In these processions, “position was everything”:¹⁵ the Doge walked in the centre of the procession; before him, civil servants were ranked in an ascending order of prestige, and behind him, noble magistrates followed in descending order of status.¹⁶ The Doge was like a living relic whose power and magnificence emanated outward. The situation was similar in 1570s Milan. In his account of the Milanese plague, Jacopo Filippo Besta took pains to describe the groupings of participants in procession. The governor and the members of the Senate processed after Borromeo, the people and clergy following them in turn.¹⁷

As David Harris Sacks remarks, “Processions were especially well-suited to convey the structure of authority in a community. They represented in the simplest, most abstract, and yet most visible way the particular roles and connections among the various members of the civic government.”¹⁸ The crisis procession thus put the mystical body on display. Members of the community converged to make palpable the members—the metaphorical limbs and faculties—of a political organism. The spatial configuration of

¹⁵ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 190.

¹⁶ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 203.

¹⁷ [T]utta la Città insieme si fece anche uniuersali processione quattro giorni... e nell'istesso modo che andaua il Cardinale, ueniuanò gli ordinarii del Duomo, et il Clero con apparenti segni di mestitia e pianto, seguendo il Gouvernatore, Senato, et tutti li Magistrati, et popolo, con molta religione, lagrime, et singulti, e nell'uscir di detta Chiesa, fu con spauentoso e lagrimoso grido dimandato da ciascuno misericordia è per dono al Signore delli peccatilorò, U'erano anche alcuni Religiosi, che precedeuanò la processione... Jacopo Filippo Besta, *Vera narratione del successo della peste, che afflisce l'inclina città di Milano, l'anno 1576* (Milan: Gottardo, 1578), 15v-16r.

¹⁸ David Harris Sacks, “Celebrating Authority in Bristol, 1475-1640,” in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989).

the procession maintained difference among the whole, just as the organs of the body politic necessarily remained separate in order to carry out different functions of the state. Processions, therefore, put into performance the concept of harmony, where discord is organized into concord. When anarchy reigns in times of pestilence—when, according to Ambroise Paré, magistrates flee and leave ordinary citizens to all manners of villainy¹⁹—the procession, aside from currying favours with the divine, can reassure the participants of the solidarity and the order of the community.

The Sounds of Pestilential Processions

The sense of *discordia concors* of the plague procession pertains not only to the spatial, optic, or kinetic aspects of the ritual, but to the sonic as well. In various respects, the music of the processions functioned as a kind of suture that helped to maintain the integrity of the body politic on the march. Musical practices for plague processions had something of an *ad hoc* character, since such processions were often hastily put together and invited spontaneous devotional accretions. Moreover, local traditions heavily inflected the ritual, making it difficult to generalize about the character of processional music as a single coherent phenomenon. On the evidence of sacerdotal manuals (which can only provide the barest sense of what one could expect in a procession), the core ritual framework of crisis processions, such as processions for rain or the cessation of plague, followed the form of the Rogations. In his *Liber sacerdotalis* (1523), Alberto da Castello begins the pestilential procession with the antiphon “Exaudi nos Domine,” to be

¹⁹ Ambroise Paré, *Traicté de la peste, verolle et rougeolle* (Paris: Wechel, 1568), 249. See previous chapter.

sung at the point of departure, as the participants gathered. The Litany of the Saints is then performed as the procession begins, followed by Psalm 102 and the antiphon “Recordare Domine testamenti tui.” Then follow a number of prayers to be performed at the terminus.²⁰

Similarly, the 1576 pamphlet *Litaniae et preces...pro auertenda a populo Christiano pestilentia* issued by the office of Pope Gregory XIII begins with the Litany of the Saints, followed by Psalm 43.²¹ A series of verses and responses follows, and a handful of shorter prayers rounds out the procession. The *Rituale Romanum* specifies that for the *Processio tempore mortalitatis et pestis*, the form of the Major Litanies are to be followed. The antiphon “Expurge Domine” is sung at the point of departure, and as the procession begins, the litany is performed with the additional invocations “A peste, et fame, Libera nos Domine” and “Ut a pestilentiae flagello nos liberare digneris.” The litany is followed by the *Pater noster*, the recitation of Psalm 6, and a number of verses and responses. If the procession is too long, the manual states, then the participants should either repeat the litany or fill the time with penitential psalms. At arrival, a number of prayers renew the foregoing petitions.

The iconic sound and the common musical thread of these public devotions was undoubtedly the litany, a term synonymous with “procession” itself. Many variations of the litany proliferated throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance; Cardinal Baronius

²⁰ Cited in Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 226.

²¹ Catholic Church, *Litaniae et preces iussu S.D.N. Gregorij Papae XIII in omnibus ecclesijs dicendae ad implorandum diuinum auxilium pro auertenda à populo Christiano pestilentia & pro aliis instantibus eiusdem necessitatibus* (Macerata: Sebastianum Martellinum, 1576). 1576 was the start of a devastating plague outbreak in northern Italy; see Chapter 5.

estimated that there were around eighty forms in use in 1601.²² The oldest and most venerable, the Litany of the Saints, appears to be the predominant form prescribed. Descriptive sources confirm the picture; chroniclers often record that suffrages, prayers, or litanies to saints were heard. It is evident, however, that other forms of the litany were also used; on various occasions, Venice, which favoured Mary's protection against the plague, employed Marian litanies.²³ But it was not only in the processional or dynamic contexts (to borrow Robert Amiet's "dynamique"/"statique" distinction of litanies)²⁴ that litanies were heard in times of pestilence. Giussano reports that litanies were sung in all the churches of Borromeo's diocese before High Mass "so that the prayers of all his people might have been said to ascend to God 'without ceasing,' as in apostolic times."²⁵ The sound of the litany permeated streets and homes as well; according to another chronicler of the Borromeo plague, the Cardinal "having by chance seen a poor woman praying in the street to an image which she had attached to a wall, was so delighted by this devotion that he sent a number of his followers out into the streets to teach the people to sing the litanies."²⁶ Borromeo also brought the destitute away from Milan and taught

²² J. H. Maude, "Litany," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1971), 8:80.

²³ Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226; David Anthony Blazey, "The Litany in Seventeenth-Century Italy" (PhD diss., University of Durham, 1990), 24. On the significance of Marian litanies in the ritual life on Venice, especially in the seventeenth century, see James Moore "Venezia Favorita da Maria': Music for the Madonna Nicopeia and Santa Maria della Salute," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 37 (1984): 299-355.

²⁴ Robert Amiet, "Les litanies dans la liturgie lyonnaise," *Études grégoriennes* 27 (1999): 31.

²⁵ Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 397.

²⁶ Nel principio hauendo visto S. Sig. Illustriss. per caso una pouer do[n]na far oratione nella strada à vu' imagine, che lei stessa hauea a pesa al muro, glip paicque ta[n]to questa deuotione, che poi ma[n]do per li corsi delle porte varii Religiosi la sera, acciò sacessero ca[n]tare le Lettanie

the youngest of them to sing litanies so they may collect charity and bestow comfort to those who hear them when they returned to the city.²⁷ Moving through the streets and sounding in churches and homes, sounds of the litany blanketed the entire city as a sort of spiritual fumigation against the plague.

It can be argued that the litany, on account of its very structure, is an appropriate musical tool against the communal scourge. Whether in static or dynamic contexts, the extended invocation-petition form of the litany helps establish concord among the discord of the body politic. The complete meaning of the litany prayer emerges in performance only through the coordinated participation of a penitential community—the call has to be met by a response, so every member of procession becomes indispensable to the success of the ritual. Moreover, the dynamic litany sends an audible pulse through the marching group and provides an ambulatory rhythm that unites the participants. At the same time, the call-and-response nature of this processional music articulates the difference in rank between the leaders and the followers, the clergy and the laity; each was held apart, and each had a distinct role to play. Weaving back and forth, the litany acts as a sonic suture that holds together the entire processional body.

The relationship between call-and-response singing and the principle of *discordia concors* can be dramatically illustrated by the practices of the Medieval flagellants. Flagellant processions, which had their roots in thirteenth-century Italy, exploded as a phenomenon during and in the years immediately following the Black

al popolo... Paolo Bisciola, *Relatione verissima del progresso della peste di Milano* (Bologna: Carlo Malisardi and Sebastiano Balestra, 1630), 3v.

²⁷ Haueua insegnati alli piu giouani, di cantar le Lettanie in musica, onde quando venia alla Città per raccolte l'elemosine andauan cantando co[n] grandissima consolatione di tutti. Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 5v.

Death. At the height of the epidemic in 1348, groups large and small calling themselves the Brotherhood of the Flagellants or the Brethren of the Cross processed in towns across Germany, the Low Countries, and even England.²⁸ These unsanctioned processional groups kept a strict hierarchy, distinct from the norm. Ecclesiastics were given no pre-eminence and were barred from the upper governing strata of the movement. Masters of the flagellant groups were not drawn from the clergy, and the movement strove to maintain an independence from the Church.

The Master expected absolute obedience from his brethren, and as the flagellant fervour grew throughout Europe, he heretically claimed increasing powers over his flock, such as the right to grant absolution. In procession, the Master would physically exert his dominance over the penitents. According to eye-witness accounts, a given group, which could number anywhere from two hundred to a thousand, would process two, three, or four abreast in a long crocodile. Upon arrival at any given place, they would move to the church where they would chant a special litany, after which the flagellants would enter the market place or some other visible public site. There, they would strip to the waist and, at a signal from the Master, throw themselves to the ground, assuming postures that indicated the specific sins on their conscience—murderers and adulterers would lie prostrate, for example, while a perjurer would lie on one side, holding up three fingers. The Master moved among the group, thrashing the recumbent penitents who had sinned or otherwise transgressed the rules of the movements. Then, the German chronicler Henrici de Hervordia records,

²⁸ Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), ch. 5.

one of them would strike the first with a whip, saying, “May God grant you remission of all your sins. Arise.” And he would get up, and do the same to the second, and all the others in turn did the same. When they were all on their feet, and arranged two by two in procession, two of them in the middle of the column would begin singing a hymn in a high voice, with a sweet melody. *They sang one verse and then the others took it up and repeated it after them, and then the singers sang the second verse and so on until the end.*²⁹

Robert of Avesbury describes a similar scene in London:

*They beat one another on their bare, bleeding bodies, four singing in their own language and the rest making responses to these four, like a litany sung by Christians. And on three occasions during the procession they all together threw themselves to the ground, their hands outstretched in the sign of the cross. Continually singing, as has been mentioned, whoever was the last one in the line of those thus prostrate, [stood up] first, and took a step past the man in front, striking him with his whip as he lay at his feet. And so he went from one to the next until he had done it to the total number of those prostrate.*³⁰

The litany-like *Geisslerlieder* were entangled in the dynamics of corporal expurgation.

The call and response of the singing accompanied the call and response of the scourge as the flagellants submitted to the whip of the Master and, in turn, administered violence to their brethren. The musical sounds of the procession, coupled with the spatial configurations and the (sometimes violent) kinetic movements of the participants, helped to make manifest the social bonds and hierarchies among the participants and by extension, the bonds and hierarchies of the political body.

²⁹ Horrox, *Black Death*, 151.

³⁰ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 70-71.

Motets in Procession

Other music inevitably accrued to the liturgical skeleton provided by prescriptive sacerdotal manuals. Given its urban character and the involvement of the laity, it is not surprising that non-liturgical devotional music mingled freely with liturgical items.³¹ It was reported that in 1474, for example, Venetian confraternities sang the hymn *Altro re della gloria / Cazzé via sta moria / Per la vostra Passion / Habiene misericordia* as they processed against the plague.³² It was likely that during the ambulatory sections of the processions, only monophony and the simplest polyphony were sung. Howard Mayer Brown, supported by Venetian iconographic evidence, identifies hymn and lauda settings (such as those by Antonio Janue) as candidates for processional performance.³³ On some occasions, polyphonic settings of the litanies—likewise simple, homorhythmic, and declamatory—that emerged near the end of the sixteenth century and cultivated throughout the next were used in crisis processions.³⁴ It was observed, for example, that double-choir litanies were sung by the choir of San Marco during the plague crisis of 1575-1577 as dignitaries processed around the famous square.³⁵

³¹ David Hiley, “Liturgical Processions and Their Chants in Medieval Regensburg” (paper presented at MedRen Conference, Royal Holloway, July 2010).

³² Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia* (Venice: P. Naratovich, 1860), 9:487; Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226-27.

³³ Howard Mayer Brown, “On Gentile Bellini’s *Processione in San Marco* (1496),” in *Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1997*, ed. Daniel Hertz and Bonnie Wade (Basel: Bärenreiter, 1981), 649-58.

³⁴ Joachim Roth, *Die mehrstimmigen lateinischen Litaneikompositionen des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1959).

³⁵ Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226.

There were moments of repose during the plague procession that called for other unspecified musical accretions. The *Rituale romanum* instructs that if the route of the procession passes by a church, then the participants should interrupt their Litany or the Psalm and enter, performing antiphons or prayers to the patron saint of that place.³⁶ Given the thoroughly supernumerary nature of the motet and the wide range of musical style that it represented, the genre was eminently serviceable on such occasions. The simplest of motets could certainly have been performed along with hymns and laude during the procession, and more complex works sung at stations along the way; the prescription in the *Rituale romanum* to sing antiphons and prayers to patron saints of the city's churches leaves open the attractive possibility for motet performance during such moments. Herbert Kellman has presented evidence that Josquin requested in his testament the performance of his motet *Pater noster / Ave Maria* "during all general processions when station is made to place the body of the Lord on a table in the marketplace before the image of Our Lady on the wall of his house."³⁷ Notable in Josquin's testament is the conjunction between the landscape of the city and the soundscape of the procession. It happened that Josquin's house, which had an image of Mary before it, was situated in the middle of the marketplace, which was the focal point

³⁶ Si ad unam vel plures Ecclesias in via sit divertendum, ingressis ecclesiam, intermissisque Litaniis vel Psalmis, cantatur Antiphona cum Versu et Oratione Sancti Patroni illius Ecclesiae. Deinde egredientes, resumtis Litaniis vel Psalmis. Catholic Church, *Rituale romanum* (Lutetia Paris: Societas typographica, 1623), 391.

³⁷ Herbert Kellmann, "Josquin and the Courts of the Netherlands and France: The Evidence of the Sources," in *Josquin des Prez. Proceedings of the International Josquin Festival-Conference held at the Juilliard School at Lincoln Center in New York City, 21-25 June 1971* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 208-209.

of Condé's processions. As Kellman remarks, that ritual space fused together the Eucharistic and the Marian, and Josquin's work aurally reflected that very fusion.³⁸

Josquin's testament shows how music can resonate with the course of the procession and the images and architecture of a specific locale. Other aspects of the procession can also function in sympathy to focus the ritual toward a particular community. The relics displayed during a procession, for instance, had to be chosen with special care for their proven efficacy and their special relationship to the participants.³⁹ The Milanese brought out their Holy Nail. The Venetians, who favoured the protection of Mary and sang litanies to the Virgin, carried the *Madonna Nicopeia* (a Byzantine image brought to Venice in the Middle Ages) and concluded their procession with the antiphon *Salve Regina*.⁴⁰ The motet, with its countless variety of texts and prayers to any number of intercessors, represents a vast and varied repertoire of devotional material from which a community could craft a community-specific musical programme that resonates with its customs, its patrons, its relics, and even its urban architecture.

Two motets by Gaffurius, *Virgo dei digna* and *O beate Sebastiane*, both from MilD 1 (ca. 1484-90), can serve as test cases for the genre's functional role in pestilential processions. The first, *Virgo dei digna*, is a simple single-*pars* setting of a litany-style prayer that invokes a very particular set of intercessors along with some of their epithets:

Virgo Dei digna,
mater clemens et benigna,

Worthy Virgin of God,
clement and kind mother,

³⁸ See discussions to Jeremy Noble's "Workshop I. The Function of Josquin's Motet," *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 35 (1984): 26-27.

³⁹ Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 353.

⁴⁰ Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 227.

adesto nobis propitia.	give aid to us.
Sancta Maria, Sancte Michael, Sancte Johannes, orate pro nobis.	Holy Mary, St. Michael, St. John, pray for us.
Claviger aethereus, sancte Petre; caelestis ensifer, sancte Paule; piscator salutifer, sancte Andrea: intercedite pro nobis.	Heavenly key-keeper, St. Peter; celestial sword-bearer, St. Paul; salutary fisher, St. Andrew: intercede for us.
Sancte Sebastiane, ora pro nobis.	St. Sebastian, pray for us.
Sancte Ambrosi, ora pro nobis.	St. Ambrose, pray for us.
Omnes sancti et sanctae Dei, orate pro nobis, Orate pro nobis.	All of the saints of God, pray for us. Pray for us.

The order of invocation in this motet roughly follows that of the Litany of the Saints, obviously with omissions. St. Sebastian, who is normally named in the Litany along with St. Fabian (a martyr Pope who shares the same feast day) stands on his own in Gaffurius's setting. The inclusion of St. Ambrose, the famous bishop of Milan, is also significant for it marks the motet as a particularly Milanese work and orients it toward a civic purpose.⁴¹

Virgo dei digna thoroughly takes on the characteristics of processional music. Throughout, homorhythmic declamatory sections alternate with "antiphonal" sections that anticipate later polychoral settings of litanies. For the opening invocation to the virgin, Gaffurius demarcates each of the three opening lines with cadences between the superius and the tenor (mm. 4, 8, and 13) that rises from D, to F, and finally to G

⁴¹ For a discussion of various civic processions in Milan (both penitential and celebratory), see Christine Suzanne Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience in Sixteenth-Century Milan* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), especially Chapter 4. See also Robert Kendrick's *The Sounds of Milan, 1585-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially Chapter 5, "Rites and Rituals," for a study of the relationship between litanies, processions, and civic character in Milan, as well as evidence for the use of polyphony during processions.

(Example 4.1). With its simple homorhythm, this opening passage is reminiscent of a lauda setting. Next comes a series of invocations to Mary, Michael, and John, which Gaffurius sets in alternating duos in parallel thirds. The melody for these invocations comes directly from the Litany of Saints; the lower voices of each voice-pair incorporate the traditional chant, with the upper ones mirroring it at a third above. The full choir then declaims the response, “orate pro nobis.”

Example 4.1 - Gaffurius, *Virgo Dei digna* mm. 1-24

S. Vir - go De - i di - gna ma - ter cle - mens et

A. Vir - go De - i di - gna ma - ter cle - mens

T. Vir - go De - i di - gna ma - ter cle - mens et

B. Vir - go De - i di - gna ma - ter cle -

6

S. be - ni - gna ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

A. et be - ni - gna ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

T. be - ni - gna ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

B. be - ni - gna ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

13

S. mens et be - ni - gna ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

A. San - cta Ma - ri - a San - cte Mi - cha - el

T. San - cta Ma - ri - a San - cte Mi - cha - el

B. San - cta - Ma - ri - a

19

S. o - ra - te pro no - bis

A. o - ra - te pro no - bis

T. Sanc - te Jo - han - nes o - ra - te pro no - bis

B. Sanc - te Jo - han - nes o - ra - te pro no - bis

Gaffurius sets the subsequent invocations to Peter, Paul, Andrew, and Sebastian in homorhythm, with a varying degree of rhythmic strictness. Although he does not incorporate the Litany in this section of the motet, the small melodic range (the top three voices hover within the span of a fifth) and frequent repeated notes nevertheless evoke the Litany tone. The chant melody returns literally for the final invocations to St. Ambrose and all the Saints (Example 4.2a). In this instance, the response, carrying the chant tone, alternates with the invocations, per traditional liturgical practice (compare with Example 4.2b). Moreover, the use of repeated contrapuntal structures throughout this work evokes the idea of refrains (Example 4.3).

Example 4.2a - Gaffurius, *Virgo dei digna* mm. 52-64

S. San - cte Am - bro - si O - mnes san - cti et sanc - tae De -

A. San - cte Am - bro - si O - mnes san - cti et sanc - tae De -

T. O - ra pro no - bis

B. O - ra pro no - bis

58

S. i o - ra - te pro no - bis.

A. i o - ra - te pro no - bis.

T. o - ra - te pro no - bis o - ra - te pro no - bis.

B. o - ra - te pro no - bis o - ra - te pro no - bis.

Example 4.2b - Excerpt from Litany of the Saints (*Liber usualis*)

Sanc - ta Ma - ri - a, o - ra pro no - bis

Sanc - te Pe - tre, o - ra pro no - bis
Sanc - te Pa - u - le, o - ra pro no - bis

Sancti Fabiane et Sebastiane, ora - te pro no - bis

Sanc - te Am - bro - si, o - ra pro no - bis

Omnes Sancti et Sanctae Dei, Inter-cede pro no - bis

Example 4.3 - Gaffurius, *Virgo Dei digna*, Internal “Refrains,” A. mm. 10-14; B. mm. 22-25; C. mm. 49-51

A.

10

S. ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

A. gna ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

T. ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

B. ad - es - to no - bis pro - pi - ti - a

B.

22

S. o - ra - te pro no - bis

A. o - ra - te pro no - bis

T. o - ra - te pro no - bis

B. o - ra - te pro no - bis

C.

49

S. o - ra pro no - bis

A. ne o - ra pro no - bis

T. a - ne o - ra pro no - bis

B. Se - ba - sti - - a - ne

O beate Sebastiane

The second Gaffurian motet gives St. Sebastian the pride of place, imploring him first for liberation from pestilence (possibly in reference to the Milanese plague of 1483-1485). St. Christopher—one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and, according to the Golden Legend, the protector against sickness and sores—is likewise invoked against the disease. The Virgin, who also has plague in her divine portfolio, is invoked for good measure. And like Sebastian and Ambrose (also invoked here), St. Martin, who grew up in Pavia and who sought to minister in Milan, likewise had local ties.⁴²

O beate Sebastiane, vere Christi miles, martyr inclite, ut tuis precibus a peste liberata est tota Italia, sic pro nobis funde preces ad supernas poli sedes. In extremum nos perducatur et a malos nos defendat.

O blessed Sebastian, true soldier of Christ, famous martyr, just as by your prayers all of Italy was liberated from plague, so for us pour forth your prayers to those seated in heaven. May he guide and defend us from evil at the hour of death.

Ora pro nobis beate Martine, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Pray for us, blessed Martin, so that we are made worthy of the promises of Christ.

⁴² Jacobus de Voragine, “Saint Martin, Bishop,” in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, 2:292-300.

Sancte Christophore, defende nos a peste, adsis nobis, o martyr sancta.

Holy Christopher, defend us from the plague, be close to us, O holy martyr.

Pius custos et protector, Sancte Ambrosi, precibus assiduis nostrum placa Redemptorem, qui te fecit hic pastorem.

Pious guardian and protector, Saint Ambrose, with constant prayers placate our Redeemer, who appointed you our shepherd.

Dei Genitrix Virgo, intercede pro nostra omniumque salute. Tuum ora Filium salute fidelium.

Virgin mother of God, intercede for our salvation. Beseech your son for the salvation of the faithful.

Musically, this motet refers to the litany in less overt ways.⁴³ The extended melisma in the superius that opens the work, for example, immediately sets it apart from the humble simplicity of hymns or laude (Example 4.4a). A more frequent use of imitation, too, distances the motet from the homorhythmic-fauxbourdon textures of processional music. Moreover, rapid-fire mensuration changes that occur during the final petition to Mary (duple-triple-duple-quintuple-triple, mm. 101-20) makes the work more “difficult” than ordinary processional music. Nevertheless, there are certain gestures that evoke the sound of the traditional litany. The opening chant incipit that sets the invocation to Sebastian returns for subsequent invocations and petitions, providing a sense of formulaic repetition (Example 4.4a and 4.4b): “Vere Christi miles” (mm. 1-5), “Ut tuis precibus a peste” (mm. 11-15), and the two invocations of “Sancte Christophore” (mm. 53-56). Modular repetitions further tie together these passages (compare bracketed

⁴³ It is perhaps revealing that Nutter and Harper, in their Grove entry on Litany, do not list this work as a litany-motet, as Jennifer Bloxam does in her discussion of *Beata es, Maria* motets. See Michel Huglo et al., “Litany.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, accessed 20 July 2011 <<http://www.oxford.usiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16769>>; Mary Jennifer Bloxam, “‘La contenance italienne’: The Motets on *Beata es, Maria* by Compère, Obrecht, and Brumel,” *Early Music History: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Music* 11 (1992): 63.

passages in Examp^ls 4.4a and 4.4b. Moreover, sporadic appearances of declamatory passages on repeated notes (mm. 17-24, 47-52) recall the Litany tone.

Example 4.4a – Gaffurius, *O beate Sebastiane* mm. 1-24

S. Ve - re Chri - sti mi - les mar -

A.

T. O Be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a - ne Ve - re Chri - sti mi - les mar - tyr

B.

6

S. - - - - - tyr in - - - - - cli -

A.

T. in - - - - - cli - te

B.

11

S. te

A. ut tu - is pre - ci - bus a pe - ste li - be - ra - ta est to -

T. ut tu - is pre - ci - bus a pe - ste li - be - ra - ta est to -

B. li - be - ra - ta est to -

19

S. ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - ces

A. ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - ces fun -

T. ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - ces

B. ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - ces pre - ces

Example 4.4b - Gaffurius, *O beate Sebastiane* mm. 53-73

S.
 A.
 T.
 B.

San - cte Chri - sto pho - re de - fen - de nos
 San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re de - fen - de no a pe -
 60
 S.
 A.
 T.
 B.

San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re ad -
 a pe - ste a pes - te ad - sis no - bis o mar -
 San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re ad - sis no -
 - ste a pe - ste ad - sis no - bis o mar - tyr
 68
 S.
 A.
 T.
 B.

- sis no - bis o mar - tyr san - cte. Pi - us cu - - - stos
 - tyr san - cte Pi - us cu - - - stos et
 - bis o mar - tyr san - cte Pi - us cu - stos
 san - cte. Pi - us cu - - - stos et

It is impossible, of course, to ascertain on stylistic grounds alone whether these Gaffurian motets would have been sung in processions or at stations, but David Bryant and Michele Pozzobon's forensic work on TrevBC 29 (*terminum post quem* 1575) may help further contextualize the pieces. The Treviso partbooks are divided into two

sections, the first of which contains 132 motets that refer to the Proper of the Time and the Common of Saints, while the second contains 44 Marian motets. Conspicuous in the first group, the authors write, “is the considerable number of texts that are related, in certain aspects, to the typical formula of the Litany of Saints, particularly to the repetitious invocations of ‘Sancte X ora pro nobis,’ ‘intercede pro nobis,’ ‘audi nos,’ ‘exaudi nos,’ ‘miserere nobis,’ ‘libera nos Domine,’ ‘te rogamus, audi nos.’ and other such formulas.”⁴⁴ Moreover, some of the saints invoked in these litany-motets were clearly of local importance, so the pieces would have been serviceable for civic-religious functions.⁴⁵ St. Liberal, for example, the subject of the litany-motet *Hic est dies egregius*,⁴⁶ is interred in the crypt of the Treviso Cathedral, where the city’s *Battuti* and members of the St. Liberal School held annual devotions on his feast day.⁴⁷ Additionally, Bryant and Pozzobon count 11 motets from the first section that deal thematically with illness, doctors, maladies, medicine, and health. They attribute such a high concentration

⁴⁴ Spicca, in questo gruppo, un considerevole numero di testi che si riallacciano, per certi aspetti, alle tipiche formule delle litanie dei santi, in particolare alle reiterate invocazioni di “Sancte N. ora pro nobis”, “intercede pro nobis”, “audi nos”, “exaudi nos”, “miserere nobis”, “libera nos Domine”, “te rogamus, audi nos” e formule simili. I santi invocati con queste espressioni sono in parte di chiara importanza locale... e dunque ben si prestano, nell’ambito di questo repertorio costituito per l’uso cittadino, a essere caratterizzati come intercessori. David Bryant and Michele Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città: La Scuola di Santa Maria dei Battutti (e un suo manoscritto musicale) nella Treviso del Rinascimento*, Memorie/Monografie 4 (Treviso: Canova, 1995), 68.

⁴⁵ These are: Nos. 14 (Apollonia), 20 (Marco), 23 (Liberale), 57 (Giustina), and 71 (Teonisto, Tabra, and Tabrata). Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 68.

⁴⁶ The text of the motet explicitly refers to this local veneration: *Prima pars*: Hic est dies egregius sanctissimi Liberalis, de cuius festivitate gaudent in caelis omnes angelorum chori, cuiusque corpus venerantur in terris omnes tarvisini, qui non cessant quotidie clamare: Sancte Liberalis ora pro nobis, alleluia. *Secunda pars*: Hodie beatum Liberalem omnes cives angelici cum gaudio in caelum susceperunt, cuiusque corpus venerantur in terris omnes tarvisini, qui non cessant quotidie clamare: Sancte Liberalis ora pro nobis, alleluia. Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 125.

⁴⁷ Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 71.

of “medical” texts to the contemporary fear of the 1575-77 plague epidemic that had threatened, but had fortunately never entered, the city.

On account of this and other evidence, such as Scuola activities and archival records documenting the commissioning of some partbooks, Bryant and Pozzobon speculate that these manuscript partbooks were owned and used by the Scuola dei Battuti. The members of the Scuola often made processions, including those held for protection against fevers, plague, and general illness throughout 1575 and 1576, and the authors believe that the litany-motets are linked precisely to this devotional practice.⁴⁸ In his review of Bryant’s and Pozzobon’s book, Jonathan Glixon points out that MS 29 contained music outside the liturgical requirements of the Scuola dei Battuti. Glixon concludes from this that the manuscript was compiled not strictly for the Scuola, but for a company of singers who sang for religious institutions throughout Treviso, including the Scuola dei Battuti.⁴⁹ In either case, it is clear for Bryant, Pozzobon, and Glixon that some motets of the manuscript were connected to confraternal and civic devotional activities, and among these motets are litany-like works linked specifically to processional usage.

While a cursory survey of the inventory of MILD 1 does not encourage the same conclusions for the manuscript as a whole, Gaffurius’s *Virgo dei digna* and *O beate Sebastiane* nevertheless contain the same characteristics as the pieces identified by Bryant and Pozzobon as confraternal-processional works, and even works inspired by plague. The motets borrow from and elaborate on the Litany of Saints, so that, whether

⁴⁸ Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 72.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Glixon, Review of *Musica devozione città: La Scuola di Santa Maria dei Battuti (e un suo manoscritto musicale) nella Treviso del Rinascimento*, by David Bryant and Michele Pozzobon, *Early Music History* 16 (1997): 315.

performed in ambulation or at a station, the works carry on that iconic sound of the procession. On this point, it is notable that Josquin's *Pater Noster / Ave Maria*, intended to be performed at a station, ends with a litany-like passage where a series of invocations to the Virgin alternating with the response "ora pro nobis" is set to homorhythm and "split-choir" writing. Moreover, the list of saints invoked in the Gaffurius motets—Sebastian, Ambrose, and Martin—ties the works firmly to Milan, providing a musical programme that matches the thoroughly civic orientation of plague-tide processions, and fostering a sense of shared identity among the participants.

Miasma and Contagion

As a phenomenon, plague-tide processions brought private prayers into the public and gave recognition that the plague, aside from being a personal physical and spiritual problem, was also one that befell the entire community and that required communal action. Such a sense of social awareness and solidarity was undoubtedly commendable, but the wisdom of the actual processions was highly disputed. In inherited Galenic thought, pestilence was essentially miasma or air that has been corrupted for a variety of reasons: astrological conjunctions, earthquakes releasing foul vapours, and decaying bodies, to name a few. When inhaled or absorbed by the pores, this miasma traveled to the lungs, stopping the organ and overheating the heart, resulting in quick and sudden death. Strictly speaking, pestilence is not "contagious" under this Galenic, miasmatic model of disease—"contagious," that is, from the Latin root "to touch together." Contact with and proximity to plague victims had little to do with the transmission of the illness; plague would theoretically assail entire populations enveloped in the putrid air. Whether

individuals fell ill or were spared depended on their own humoral dispositions, buttressed or not by a healthy regimen.

Right from the fourteenth century, however, some doctors expressed dissatisfaction with the received Classical model of pestilence.⁵⁰ For one, they felt that, since the plague returned far more frequently now than ever (three devastating waves of the plague hit Europe in close succession in the 1340s, '60s, and '70s), few of the ancients had the same level of first-hand experience with the disease. Moreover, the ancients had dealt with far smaller and more localized outbreaks, and therefore could not have fully understood the illness or its cure.⁵¹ There were lingering questions about the causes of plagues as well. In many instances, for example, epidemics occurred without any pestiferous celestial alignments or the necessary weather conditions for the putrefaction of air.⁵² Nor did the idea of humoral disposition fully explain to the pre-modern doctors why plague could affect the young, the strong, and those of ostensibly healthy complexion.⁵³ On account of these and other deficiencies, authors of plague

⁵⁰ Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 161.

⁵¹ Melissa P. Chase, "Fevers, Poisons, and Apostemes: Authority and Experience in Montpellier Plague Treatises," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 441, no. 1, Science and Technology in Medieval Society (1985): 153-4.

⁵² Vivian Nutton, "The Seeds of Disease: An Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance," *Medical History* 27 (1983): 27.

⁵³ Chase, "Fevers, Poisons, and Apostemes," 162

treatises did not slavishly follow inherited theory, but rather, added their own experiences to Classical doctrine (*sicut nos vidimus ad experienciam*).⁵⁴

These empirically minded doctors very quickly deduced that plague was contagious. Observing mortality patterns, a writer from Prague concluded at the end of the fourteenth century that plague wanders among both humans and animals, and if one member of a household became infected, the rest would likely fall ill. Moreover, he explained, the stricken household would then infect five others, and from them, the plague would spread to the entire city.⁵⁵ Doctors at Montpellier contended that the noxious vapours that corrupted bodily humours were not merely putrid, but poisonous. Poison, in a sense, is far more insidious than putrid air because it harmed everyone, regardless of humoral disposition. Moreover, it was thought that poisonous fumes within the body could spread to the visual spirits and be transmitted through the eyes, basilisk-like, to someone within view.⁵⁶ Other doctors concluded that the contagion could be transmitted by touch and breath. A Pisan chronicler wrote, “when they [the crew of two Genoese galleys] reached the fish market someone began to talk with them

⁵⁴ Chase, “Fevers, Poisons, and Apostemes,” 155; Samuel K. Cohn Jr., *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 234-8; Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 9.

⁵⁵ Circa hoc est notandum quod pestilentia est morbus valde contagiosus et infectuosus et deambulans, quia ambulat de homine in hominem, de animalibus in animalia, quia in rei virtute unus pestilenticus in una domo posset inficere totam domum et illa domus potest inficere V domos in civitate una, illae quinque domus possunt inficere totam terram sive regionem, sicut nos vidimus ad experienciam. Henricum [de Bremis or de Ribbenicz], *Causae, signa et remedia contra pestilentiam edita per Magistrum Henricum* (Late 14th century), SA 7 (1913): 85.

⁵⁶ Chase, “Fevers, Poisons, and Apostemes,” 156; Pamela Berger, “Mice, Arrows, and Tumors: Medieval Plague Iconography North of the Alps,” in *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*, ed. Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 51.

and immediately he fell ill and died; others who talked with them also became ill as well as any who were touched by those who had died...and thus was sparked the great corruption that killed everyone.”⁵⁷ It was not only proximity to infected humans or animals that was dangerous; clothing, personal effects of the deceased, furniture and walls were also thought to carry contagion unless properly washed, fumigated, or burned.⁵⁸

Certainly, there were dissenting voices that spoke more staunchly from the Galenic perspective. Niccolo Massa, for example, emphasized the miasmatic explanation of pestilence and warned his readers not to be deceived by doctors who lie and claim from personal experience (instead of deferring to ancient teachings) that mingling with the sick can spread pestilential contagion.⁵⁹ But such objections were largely academic (and likely embroiled with personal or political motives). In reality, miasmatic and contagionist viewpoints were not mutually exclusive; both miasma and contagion were “derived from ill-defined processes of putrefaction within the air, and were usually recognizable through atmospheric pollution and stench.”⁶⁰ Corrupted air could linger and be “contagious” if it was caught up in and transported with clothes, bedding, and other objects. Miasmatists might also agree that the poisonous exhalations of plague victims

⁵⁷ Ranieri Sardo, *Cronaca di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo*, ed. Ottavio Banti, *Fonto per la Storia d’Italia* 99 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1963), 96; cited in Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*, 112.

⁵⁸ Nutton, *Seeds of Disease*, 25.

⁵⁹ Michelle Anne Laughran, “The Body, Public Health and Social Control in Sixteenth-Century Venice” (PhD diss., University of Connecticut, 1998), 126.

⁶⁰ Christiane Nockels Fabbri, “Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2006), 55.

could in turn putrefy the air around them; one doctor writes, for example, “You may ask, ‘how is the disease contagious?’ It is because poisonous fumes emanate from bodies, corrupting the air and the humours.”⁶¹ And both the contagionist and the miasmata might go about eliminating pestilence by improving the quality of ambient air.⁶²

Whatever theoretical debates there may have been, doctors generally took contagion into consideration when devising their programmes of prevention and regimen. While they may lament the absence of governing officers during times of plague, they nevertheless recommended flight as the only fail-safe remedy against infection. So prevalent was this advice that it was distilled into the oft-cited axiom “Cito, longe, tarde,” a shorthand for “flee quickly (*cito*), flee far (*longe*), and delay your return (*tarde*).” Even Paré himself, who complained so bitterly about the absence of friends and magistrates in pestilential times, stood behind the dictum: “Indeed, the best remedy that I and all the ancients could prescribe is to flee early, far from infected areas to a place with healthy air, and to return late, if possible.”⁶³ For those without the means to escape, the standard advice was to avoid crowded areas: one doctor writes, “The market and the church, in which people convene, are to be avoided.”⁶⁴ Similarly, another advises, “Indeed, in the time of pestilence, one should not stay in church or in the company of people, for it is

⁶¹Item quereres, quare est morbus contagiosus? dico quia a talibus corporibus effumant fumi venenosi corrumpentes aerem et humores. Anonymous Pest-Regimen, Cod. 556 Berner Stadtbibliothek (1450-1500), SA 16 (1924-1925), 62.

⁶² Laughran, “Body, Public Health and Social Control,” 130

⁶³ *Citò, longè, tardè*. Or veritablement le plus souuerain remede que ie puisse enseigner avec tous les anciens, est s’enfuir tost et loing du lieu infect, et se retirer en air sain, et retourner bien tard, si on le peut faire. Paré, Traicté de la peste, 28.

⁶⁴ [S]imiliter forum et ecclesia, in quibus populosus fit conventus sunt vitanda. Heinrichus of Amorbach, Pestkonsilium, M.ch.q.160 Würzburger Universitätsbibliothek (ca. 1450), SA 8 (1914), 243.

possible that you may be infected by some among them who are themselves infected.”⁶⁵

In his *Consilio*, Ficino provides even more sophisticated and nuanced guidelines to avoid contagion:

Avoid conversations, especially when on an empty stomach; and when you do converse, stay at least two *braccia* (6 feet) away from your companion, and be in an open space; and when he is suspected or confirmed of infection, stay further away still, at least six *braccia*. And that the wind is not blowing from him towards you.⁶⁶

Occasionally, a moralistic and elitist rhetoric inflected such prescriptions. In 1565, for example, Salustio Viscanti warned against mingling with the plebs (*persone publiche*), especially those who live squalidly, such as gravediggers, cobblers, blacksmiths, tinkers, sailors, prostitutes, and their johns.⁶⁷

It is also evident that many practical health policies were drafted with contagionist ideas in mind. Item two of the 1348 Pistoian statute states, for example, that “no one, whether from Pistoia or its territories, shall dare or presume to bring or fetch to Pistoia...any old linen or woollen cloths for male or female clothing or for bedspreads under the penalty of 200 denari; and the cloth [is] to be burnt in the public piazza of

⁶⁵ Et ideo est fugiendum ab istis infectis; ymmo tempore pestilencie non debet stare neque in ecclesia neque alibi in cummula gencium, quia, potest esse, quod aliquis eorum est infectus ex quo alterius possetis infici. Anonymous, *Pest-Regimen*, Cod. 556 Berner Stadtbibliothek, 62.

⁶⁶ ...che tu fugga le conversazioni, maxime a digiuno; et qunado conversi, stia discosto dal compagno due braccia almeno, et a luogo aperto; et quando è di suspecto, stia eziam più di lungi, almeno sei bracci, et alla scoperto. Et fa ch’el vento non venga da lui inverso te. Marsilio Ficino, *Consilio contro la pestilenza* (1480), ed. Enrico Musacchio (Bologna: Cappelli, 1983), 108.

⁶⁷ Fuggirassi ancora la conuersatione elle persone publiche, et di quegli, che squalidame[n]te viuono, come sono i Beccari, gli Tauernari gli Hosti, gli Calzolari, gli Fabri, gli Caldareij, gli Nauiganti, et gli Barcarolie, gli Hospitaleri, et quei che conuersano nel bordello, et tutti gli altri huomini de simil farina. Salustio Viscanti, *Trattato della peste, et sua preseruatione, et cura, scritto da Saladino Ferr et tradotto da Salustio Viscanti Veletrano* (Foligno: Vincentio Cantagallo for Agostino Colaldi, 1565), 15v.

Pistoia by the official who discovered it.”⁶⁸ Visitors from infected areas were barred from entering uninfected cities, and infected municipalities were put under lock-down, often to the consternation of the inhabitants.⁶⁹ *Lazaretti* were built to segregate the healthy from the sick, and in extreme cases, entire households were boarded up and the inhabitants “quarantined” therein when one of its members was suspected of plague.⁷⁰

Given such concerns over the contagion, it was not surprising that doctors and governments often frowned on processions; if the catchphrase *Cito, longe, tarde* represented one end of the response to plague, then processions—large gatherings of citizens, including the unsavoury *persone publiche*—represented its polar opposite. Civic authorities were often caught between their medical conscience and the demands of spiritual authorities and citizens for such public demonstrations of faith. In the early sixteenth century, Giovanni Cambi complained bitterly of the Florentine ban on processions during the plague: “This seemed a great abomination, for in tempestuous times one customarily turns to God, but we have made ourselves suspicious of the feasts

⁶⁸ II. Item providerunt et ordinaverunt sapientes predicti, quod nulla persona tam civis au districtualis et comitatus civitatis Pistorij quam forensis audeat vel presumat quoquo modo conducere, reducere, vel conduci aut reduci facere, ad civitatem Pistorii, vel eius districtum, vel comitatum, aliquos pannos veteres tam lineos quam laneos, ad usum hominis vel mulieris aut ad lectum deputatos, pena librarum ducentarum denariorum pro quolibet contra faciente, et qualibet vice. Et nichilominus ipsi panni debeant comburi facere in platea communis Pistorij per officialem, qui de predictis cognoverit. A. Chiappelli, ed., “Gli ordinamenti sanitari del Comune di Pistoia contro la pestilenza del 1348,” *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. 4, vol. 20 (1887), 8-9; translation adapted from Horrox, *Black Death*, 195.

⁶⁹ Olivero Panizzone Sacco, an Alessandrian merchant, was trapped in Milan when the city was put under lock-down during the 1567-1577 outbreak. He penned the complaint *Pianto della città di Milano per la pestilenza dell’anno 1567 e 1577* (Alessandria: Hercole Quiciano, 1577).

⁷⁰ Ann G. Carmichael, “Theory and Contagion Practice in Fifteenth-Century Milan,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 (1991): 236.

of God and of the saints.”⁷¹ When plague attacked Venice in 1576, processions went ahead despite the health board’s misgivings about contagion.⁷² The situation was similar in Milan, where health officials initially resisted Borromeo’s plans to hold city-wide processions, “lest the concourse of people should add fuel to the fire.”⁷³ There were matters of politics to consider, too. Trexler reports that Florentine politicians and chroniclers were reluctant to defer to spiritual authorities; “it was unseemly for virile males to admit impotence and consult virginal clerks, and opened them to the charge that they had spent their time arranging processions instead of practical actions to meet the crisis.”⁷⁴

It was difficult to reconcile the need for segregation and containment with the popular desire to hold public processions. This difficulty is particularly evident in Ingrassia’s *Informatione*. In Book Three of the treatise, he cautions against contagion and warns against congregating with others in large crowds, since “it is among such large groups that the contagion has prevailed up until now and continues to prevail, given that their bodies are filthy and their clothes dirty and full of mess and filth.”⁷⁵ For the same

⁷¹ Pare queste una abominazione grande, che per i tempi tenpestosi si suole ricorere Addio, e noi abbiamo arechatoci a sospetto le feste di Dio, e de’ Santi, e col nostro senno umano riparare. Giovanni Cambi, *Istorie di Giovanni Cambi, cittadino fiorentino* (1523), ed. Ildefonso di San Luigi, *Delizie degli eruditi toscani* 20-23 (Florence, 1785-1786); original Italian cited in Louise Jane Marshall, ““Waiting on the Will of the Lord’: The Imagery of the Plague” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 33; translation from Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 363-4.

⁷² Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 225.

⁷³ Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 391.

⁷⁴ Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 348.

⁷⁵ A cotal rettification di aria si riduce il fuggir la conversatione di molta plebe, nella quale più è regnato fin qui, et regna ancora tal contagio, essendo i loro corpi immondi, et le lor vestimenta sporche, et piene di bruttezze, et sozzure. La onde facil cosa sarebbe, coloro portando l’infettione

reasons, town squares and churches should be avoided.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the religious-minded doctor throws his support behind processions and downplays the fear of contagion elsewhere in his tract. He writes,

Those who are not in favour [of processions] think that it will avoid a great unruly multitude of people in the midst of this highly dangerous contagion. But I am of the opinion that we should not abandon the idea for that reason; [i.e.] since if there is a fear of massive crowds, then we shouldn't have processions at all. But who could think, as a faithful Christian, that if the people go to worship the Holy Sacrament with devotion, weeping and praying for grace, that they would succumb to plague?⁷⁷

Ingrassia sums up, rather unhelpfully, that few people actually catch the plague on procession days—and those who do are probably not worthy of God's grace in any case.⁷⁸ Here, realizing the impossibility of reconciling his contagionist outlook with his support of processions, Ingrassia passes the entire problem of contagion into the hands of God. He then diverts the discussion to the display of the sacraments in the procession and suspects that such use of the host may be disrespectful. Stumped, he turns the problem into a doctrinal quibble, washes his hands of the entire matter, and claims, “I

in quelle sporche vestimenta, infettar molti, co i quali in moltitudine di gente havessero vicinità. Missimamente, che in tal moltitudine, et confusione suol regnare gran caldo (tanto per la strettur de' corpi, quanto per lo respirare, et anhelare dell'un con l'altro) et indi provenire l'infettione dell'aria intermeza, et infettarsi molti insieme. Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 420.

⁷⁶ Fuggir moltitudine in piazza et in Chiesa. Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 420.

⁷⁷ Et questi per evitare la gran confusione, et moltitudine di gente in questo contagio molto pericolosa. Ma io son di oppinione, che non percio si debba lasciare. Peroche se timor della moltitudine v'è per la medesima ragione non doveranno far processioni né anco sarebbe stato lodevole l'haver uscito Santa Christina, et altra volta il Santissimo Crucifisso della Madre Chiesa. Ma chi dubitasse, essendo fedel Christiano, che andando il popolo con divotione appresso il Santissimo Sacramento, lagrimando, et pregando gratia, che volesse darli peste? Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 353.

⁷⁸ Percioche in quei giorni gli appestati furon pochi, et quegli perche forse furono indegni di tal gratia. Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 350.

align myself with the opinion of those wiser than me, especially in matters of Holy Scripture.”⁷⁹

Mouton – Sancte Sebastiane

What could the devout do, then, if they wished to participate in processions, but for reasons of illness and quarantine, or for fear of contagion, could not? A piece of advice from Carlo Borromeo seems pertinent here; to those who could not attend mass in the midst of plague, he said, “Go to church in spirit,” making viable the substitution of physical presence with an imaginative attendance.⁸⁰ For such a task, music was the perfect imaginative aid. Gaspar’s and Martini’s *O beate Sebastiane*, with their austere Elevation chords, can help listeners transport their minds and spirits to church. By extension, with the aid of music, one could attend a procession in spirit. Borromeo, cognizant that the women and children of Milan were under curfew, bade them nevertheless to stay by their windows so they could hear the music of public devotions and sing in their own homes so that their spirits may be consoled.⁸¹ Bisciola was so struck by such music-making during the epidemic that he remarked in his chronicle:

⁷⁹ Pure in questo mi rimetto al parere de i savij più di me, specialmente de i Sacri Theologi. Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 354.

⁸⁰ Cited in Sheila Barker, “The Gendered Imagination and Plague Art in Early Modern Italy” (paper presented at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Venice, April 2010).

⁸¹ S’accomodorno gli altari delle strade, nel tempo della quarantena tame[n]te che se gli potesse dir messa senza dano di pioggia, o di ve[n]to per commodia del popolo che stava riserato. Le feste il dopò pranso si cantava dalle fenestre dal popolo il vespero, & in molti luoghi vi si facevano buone Musiche... Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 4r. See also Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 419; Besta, *Vera narratione*, 29r.

But when the plague began to grow, this practice [of singing the litanies in public] was interrupted, so as not to allow the congregations to provide it more fuel. The orations did not stop, however, because each person stood in his house at the window or door and made them from there... Just think, in walking around Milan, one heard nothing but song, veneration of God, and supplication to the saints, such that one almost wished for these tribulations to last longer.⁸²

Evidently, when one could not sing on the streets, one could still send forth their songs from their homes, heaping their private orations upon the public prayers.

Imagine the following scenario: plague is discovered in the city, and like Boccaccio's protagonists, the wealthy decide to flee to their country homes. Following the doctor's advice, they bring along medicines, games, storybooks, and precious ornaments to adorn their estates. Mindful also of the preacher's admonitions, they decide to blend devotion with recreation and bring with them a book of motets—Antico's 1521 *Motetti libro quarto*, perhaps. In it, they find Mouton's highly topical work *Sancte Sebastiane*, which sets a composite text of a rhymed antiphon (also used by Dufay in his isorhythmic motet *O sancte Sebastiane*; see Chapter 3),⁸³ its accompanying verse (*Ora pro nobis beate martyr Sebastiane*),⁸⁴ and an anti-pestilential sequence that invokes Sebastian.

⁸² [M]a si rilasciò quando la peste cominciò a crescere per non darli con la congregatione delle persone maggior fomento, non si lasciò però l'oratione perche ciascun stando nella sua casa alla fenestra, ò porta la faceva... Pensi V. R. che non s'udiva altro andando per Milano, se non cantare, lodar Dio, e chiamar l'aiuto de' santi, il che quasi faceva desiderare, che durassero queste tribolationsi. Paolo Bisciola, *Relatione verissima del progresso della peste di Milano* (Bologna: Carlo Malisardi and Sebastiano Balestra, 1630), 3v-4r.

⁸³ Guido Maria Dreves, *Analecta hymnica Medii Aevi* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1961), 33:167.

⁸⁴ Anthonie Vêrard, ed., *Hore beate virginis Marie ad usum Sarum* (Paris, 1505), 103r ff.

Prima pars

Sancte Sebastiane, ora pro nobis.
O quam mira refulsit gratia
Sebastianus, martyr inclitus,
qui militis portans insignia.
Sed de fratrum palma sollicitus
confortavit corda psallentia,
verbo sibi collato coelitus.
Sancte Sebastiane, ora pro nobis.

Holy Sebastian, pray for us. O how
Sebastian, the famous martyr wearing the
emblem of a soldier, shines with wondrous
grace. But, urged on by the palm of his
brothers, he comforted hearts singing
Psalms, with the heavenly word conferred
on him. Holy Sebastian, pray for us.

Secunda pars

O beate Sebastiane,
martyr Dei gloriose,
nos protege et conserva.
Semper nobiscum et mane,
et a Deo impetrare,
nos qui sumus in hac vita.
Tolle per tua merita
noxiam infirmitatem
vocatam epidimiam.
De hoc habes meritum.
Da nobis auxilium
et vitam nostram demonstra,
ut fit in caelis gaudia. Amen.

O blessed Sebastian,
glorious martyr of God,
protect and conserve us.
Always be with us
who are in this life
and beseech God.
Through your power,
take away this deadly infirmity
called the plague.
For this, you have merit.
Give us aid
and show us our life
as it will be in the joy of heaven. Amen.

Like the Gaffurius motets, Mouton's work alludes to the litany. The most conspicuous feature of *Sancte Sebastiane* is the transformation of the verse into a Litany formula ("Sancte Sebastiane, ora pro nobis") and the use of what Picker describes as a motto resembling psalm tone 1 for its recurrent setting.⁸⁵ The complete, unembellished version of the litany motto is first stated in the altus voice (mm. 4-15). The motto itself is made up of three smaller motives (labelled below as A1, A2, and B). A1 consists of the

⁸⁵ Martin Picker, ed., *The Motet Books of Andrea Antico*, Monuments of Renaissance Music 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 60-61. For a brief discussion of Mouton's method of motivic treatment, see Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1959), 281-282.

common melodic pattern 1-5-6(flat)-1. A2 is psalm-tone-like (but does not correspond to extant psalm or lesson tones), ending with a sort of medial cadence on the fifth degree of the motto. B begins on the third degree of the motto and cadences on the starting pitch. Here, at the beginning of the motet, the superius, entering first, carries the same tune with a highly embellished A2 and B sections. It forms an imitative duo with the altus, which is repeated in the tenor and bassus in mm. 10-24, with a varied B section in the tenor (Example 4.5).

Example 4.5- Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 1-25

11

18

Mouton then sets the next phrase of text, “O quam mira refulsit gratia, Sebastianus martyr,” in an imitative duo in the two upper voices. Below it, the bassus

and tenor themselves begin an imitative duo of the litany motto (A1 and A2 in bassus, A1 in tenor). In this iteration, Mouton stretches out the rhythmic values of the A2 motive, turning the two lower voices into long-note cantus firmus scaffolding for the upper ones. As the tenor continues with the A2 motive, the bassus temporarily abandons its cantus firmus function and forms a note-against-note duo with the altus (mm. 40-44). With this, there is a clever juxtaposition of the words “inclitus” and “sancte Sebastiane,” the description and the person it describes. When the bassus rejoins the tenor in imitation (the upper voices have another duo for the words “qui militis portans insignia”), the B motive appears transposed up a fifth (Example 4.6).

Example 4.6 - Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 24-54

S. O quam mi - ra re - ful sit gra - ti -

A. O quam mi - ra re - ful - sit gra - ti -

T. bis

B. bis. A1

37 Se - ba - sti - a nus, mar

A. a, Se - ba - sti - a - - - nus, mar A1 -

T. A2 San -

B. cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - ne,

38 tyr, Qui mi - li -

A. tyr in cli - A2 - - - tus, Qui

T. - cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - ne

B. San - cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - ne,

45 tis por - - - tans

A. mi - li - tis por - B tans in -

T. o - ra pro no - - - bis

B. o - - - ra

50

S. in - - - si - - - gni - a, Sed

A. - si - - - gni - a, Sed

T.

B. — pro - no - - - bis.

B' (+5th)

The litany motto next appears in all four voices to wrap up the *prima pars* (Example 4.7). A series of periodic entries of the motto begins in m. 69. In this extended coda, Mouton intersperses new melodic material between the motto's constituent motives. Mouton treats motive B, in particular, with a great deal of melodic embellishment. In this section, the composer combines free contrapuntal writing with strict motivic and modular repetition. The tenor-bass duo between mm. 83 and 98 is repeated in the two upper voices from mm. 87 to 92. The entire superius melody from mm. 93 to 98 is repeated in the altus (mm. 98-103) and again in the superius (103-108). Part of the contrapuntal complex that proceeds with the first instance of that theme in the altus (mm. 93-95), tenor (mm. 96-98), and bassus (mm.96-98) reappears during its third iteration, this time dispersed between the tenor (mm.103-108) and bassus (mm. 106-108). Mouton uses the litany motto only once in the *secunda pars*, at the end of the motet (Example 4.8). Once again, he treats it here strictly, as long-note cantus firmus scaffolding.

Example 4.7 - Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 69-108

S.
 A.
 T.
 B.
 San - cte Se - ba - sti - a - ne, Se -

76
 A.
 T.
 B.
 ba - sti - a - ne, San - cte Se - ba - sti - a -

83
 A.
 T.
 B.
 ne, o - ra pro no - bis,

90

S. X

A. X

T. Z

B. X

97

S. X

A. X

T. X

B. X

103

S. X

A. X

T. X

B. X

Example 4.8 - Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 154-171

S. bes; Da no - bis, Et vi -
 A. tum; Da no - bis au - xi - li - um,
 T. ri - tum; A1 Da no - bis au A2 xi -
 B. San - - - - - cte Se - ba - sti - a -
 160 - - - - - tam no - stram de - mon - stra, Ut
 A. Et vi - tam no - stram de - mon - stra, Ut fit in ce -
 T. - li - um, Et vi - tam no - stram de - mon - stra, Ut
 B. - - - - - ne, o - - - - - ra pro
 166 fit in ce - lis gau - di - a. A - men.
 A. - lis gau - di - - - - - a. A - men.
 T. fit ce - lis gau - di - a A - men.
 B. no - - - - - bis. A - - - - - men.

The appearance of the motto throughout the work both as cantus-firmus-like scaffolding and in imitative paraphrase infuses the entire motet with the spirit of a litany. Along with other musical gestures, Mouton's motet can serve as an imaginative aid that transports singers and listeners into the fray of a plague-tide procession. At the beginning

of the motet, imitative duos of the litany motto (mm. 1-15, mm. 10-24) might evoke the start of a procession, where groups of citizens snake through different quarters of the city, singing their petitions; the groupings of the higher and lower voices might even suggest a segregation of sexes. As the participants converge, the sonic texture begins to thicken, and we hear the two groups singing different prayers: the upper voices call out Sebastian's epithets, while the lower voices repeat their litanies (mm. 24-53). Assembled, they begin to coordinate their prayers in the manner of a litany. One choir begins "Sed de fratrum palma sollicitus," and the other answers, "confortavit corda psallentia"; the conclusion of the thought, "Verbo sibi collato celitus," likewise passes between different groups (mm. 54-70). Here the groups sing with a declamatory homorhythm, setting them off on a march. A spontaneous outpouring of emotion overtakes the group as the homorhythm breaks down into impassioned pleas to St. Sebastian (m. 69 ff.). The passage begins with periodic entries of the litany motto, with the A1 motives in diminution to convey a sense of increasing urgency. Repeated cries of "ora pro nobis" that wrap up the *prima pars* intensify the desperation.

The participants collect themselves for the start of the *secunda pars*, returning to a syllabic homorhythm (Example 4.9). With unified voices, they call out to St. Sebastian. We then hear again the call-and-response division of choirs, with the prayer distributed over successive duos (mm. 133-144). The entire processional body comes together once more to name their common affliction: "Noxiam infirmitatem vocatem epidimiam." The crowd breaks apart again, this time in a proleptic joy (Example 4.8). As the *bassus* intones the litany motto a final time, the upper voices sing of heaven's glory—the rising melisma in the *altus* on "gaudia" precisely captures the mood (mm. 167-169; Example

4.8). Heard in such a programmatic manner, singers and listeners, safe from contagion, can both enjoy the salubrious benefits of recreation and participate in a plague procession “in spirit.”

Example 4.9 - Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 109-155

S. O be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a -

A. O be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a -

T. O be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a -

B. O be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a -

S. - ne mar - tyr De - i glo - ri - o - se,

A. - ne mar - tyr De - i glo - ri - o - se,

T. - ne mar - tyr De - i glo - ri - o - se,

B. ne, mar - tyr De - i glo - ri - o - se, Nos

S. Nos pro - te - ge et con - ser - va. Sem - per no - bis - cum et ma - ne,

A. Nos pro - te - ge et con - ser - va. Sem - per no - bis - cum et ma - ne,

T. pro - te - ge et con - ser - va. Sem - per no - bis - cum et man - ne,

B. Nos pro - te - ge et con - ser - va. Sem - per no - bis - cum et ma - ne,

133

S. et a De - o im - pe - tra - re Tol -

A. et a De - o im - pe - tra re Tol -

T. Nos qui su - mus in hac vi -

B. Nos qui su - mus in hac vi -

141

S. le per tu - a me - ri - ta No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca - tam e -

A. le per tu - a me - ri - ta No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca - tam e -

T. - ta. No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca -

B. - ta. No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca -

149

S. - pi - di - mi - am. De hoc ha - bes; Da

A. - pi - di - mi - am. De hoc ha - bes me - ri - tum; Da no

T. tam e - pi - di - mi - am. Me - ri - tum;

B. tam e - pi - di - mi - am. San -

Gaffurius's *Virgo dei digna*, *O beate Sebastiane*, and Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane*

all invoke the sound of the litany in some way. Of the three works, *Virgo dei digna*—with citations of the litany tune, incipient double-choir divisions that anticipate the structure of later polyphonic litanies, and simple homorhythmic writing—evokes the

processional soundscape most literally. Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane*, at the other end of the spectrum, has the most attenuated reference to the litany; it invokes St. Sebastian alone, and the litany-like refrain is defamiliarized from its traditional ritual context. Once again, the versatility of the genre allows the motet to be eminently useful in pestilential times. All three motets could easily have a place in a pestilential procession—*Virgo dei digna* performed on the move, perhaps, and *Sancte Sebastiane* at a station as a musical votive offering. And if Mouton's motet lacks the overt civic ties of the other two works (the invocations of local saints), it nevertheless imparts an image of the corporate that is demonstrated in a procession. At the same time, all three works could have been performed behind closed doors, away from the infectious crowds. There, these motets would have served as sanitary and pious recreation—something of which both the doctor and the preacher would approve. And although the sense of civic solidarity evoked by these works may be imaginary, the actual praxis of music-making, of singing a motet, nevertheless reinforces the very interpersonal bonds assailed by plague; literally and metaphorically, the singers cannot “turn their backs” on their musical partners.

As we've seen before, anti-pestilential strategies were multiple, complex, and at times, conflicted. The benefits of recreation were lauded in some quarters, denounced in others. Likewise with processions. Whether viewed as a medical anodyne, a sinful distraction, or a ritual tool to draw together a community, music played a role both directly and indirectly in such debates and represented a vital thread in the fabric of pestilential thought. The text of Mouton's motet aptly reinforces this point. Various sources for the prayer describe Sebastian comforting frightened hearts—“confortavit

corda trementia” (trembling), “paventia,” (frightened), or “pallentia” (pale).⁸⁶ Mouton, however, settles on “corda psallentia” (singing psalms) and thereby substitutes fear with music. In times of pestilence, music (such as motets to St. Sebastian) can indeed assuage fears, buttress the spirit and the imagination, and empower pre-modern Europeans to face the terrors of disease.

⁸⁶ Dreves, *Analecta hymnica*, 33: 167; Vérard, *Horae beate virginis Marie*, 103r.

Chapter 5

Madrigals, Mithradates, and the San Carlo Plague of Milan

Unlike monuments of pestilential literature, art, and architecture—with their representational specificities, helpful paper-trails, or accompanying placards naming the occasion of memorialization—it is often very difficult to situate a given musical work within a specific outbreak of plague. However, in the case of one madrigal—Paolo Caracciolo’s *Santo Guerrier* from his 1582 collection *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci*—we can pinpoint precisely the disaster that spurred its composition.¹ The story of the madrigal begins with the Milanese plague of 1576-1578. According to surviving chronicles, plague entered the city sometime in late July or early August of 1576 and reigned until the city was declared “liberated” on 20 January 1578, St. Sebastian’s feast day. By the tally of the official Milanese health board, the epidemic claimed the lives of 17,329 citizens over those eighteen months (about 14% of Milan’s 120,000 inhabitants²); an additional 8,000 lives were lost elsewhere in the diocese.³

It was assumed by contemporaries that Trent, infected in 1575, was the ground zero of this epidemic. From Trent, the disease purportedly progressed to Venice and

¹ Paolo Caracciolo, *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice: Scotto, 1582).

² Figure based on Stefano D’Amico’s estimate of the city’s population in 1574; “Crisis and Transformation: Economic Organization and Social Structures in Milan, 1570-1610,” *Social History* 25 (2000): 4. Venice fared far worse than Milan, losing 50,000 of its inhabitants.

³ Giacomo Filippo Besta, *Vera Narratione del successo della peste che afflisse l’inclita citta di Milano, l’anno 1576* (Milan: Paolo Gottardo & Pacifico Pontii, 1578), 10r.

Mantua in 1576. How the plague actually entered Milan is unclear. There were rumours and speculations, of course: a woman from Marignano, herself infected by visiting noblemen from Mantua, had carried it to the city; a Mantuan had died just outside of Milan, having been refused entry, and his infected personal effects were stolen and sold within the city; villainous *untori* (ointment spreaders) had concocted pestilential pastes (*unguenti artificiali*) and smeared the poison on doors and walls all over the city.⁴ Despite the threat of plague in the surrounding regions, Milanese nobles held games and tournaments in midsummer 1576 to celebrate prince Don Juan of Austria's visit. Some chroniclers reported that it was an infected member of the prince's entourage who carried plague into Milan.⁵ The festivities themselves were a target for Cardinal Carlo Borromeo's condemnation; he was sure that the impious revelry had opened the gates for God's pestilential retribution.⁶

True to form, the rich fled at the first signs of plague, and most of the city's nobility had left by the end of August (Don Juan of Austria, naturally, was the first to flee). More distressing for the Milanese, "the evils produced by this state of things were increased" when the Governor, the Marquis of Ayamonte, abandoned his city and took

⁴ Paolo Bisciola, *Relatione verissima del progresso della peste di Milano* (Bologna: Carlo Malisardi and Sebastiano Balestra, 1630), 1v-2r.

⁵ Giambattista Casale, "Il diario di Giambattista Casale (1554-1598)," in *Memorie storiche della diocesi di Milano* 12, ed. Giordano Monzio Compagnoni (Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 1965): 290-91; Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 1v.

⁶ Giovanni Pietro Giussano, *The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan: from the Italian of John Peter Giussano; With preface by Henry Edward Cardinal Manning [Vita di S. Carlo Borromeo]* (Rome, 1610) (London and New York: Burns and Oates, 1884), 367.

refuge in nearby Vigevano.⁷ Conditions worsened throughout the fall on both the medical and the civic fronts. Trade and commerce faltered, and it became difficult for the government to provision the city with goods from uninfected regions. The *lazaretto* was filled to capacity, and more temporary straw huts were needed than could be built.⁸ Increasingly draconian measures were enacted—such as the purging of infected homes, closure of non-essential shops, and a general quarantine—all of which further exacerbated the city’s financial troubles.⁹ Industries shut down, so the lower classes were left unemployed and destitute, and their already lamentable situation worsened.

Carlo Borromeo marshalled the clergy and took over where the city’s sanitation officials failed. Chroniclers (and hagiographers, naturally) were eager to praise Borromeo’s administrative actions, both temporal and spiritual: the cardinal organized the cleaning of homes and streets, and ordered the culling of dogs and cats; he conducted charitable relief work, spending his own wealth and borrowing money when his personal funds ran low; he organized processions and other public devotions; and, dismissing concerns over infection, he made visitations across the diocese and even ministered to the sick himself.¹⁰ With such acts of selflessness, Borromeo became a beacon to the

⁷ Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 2r; Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 369, 384-5.

⁸ Besta, *Vera Narratione*, 22 r-v.

⁹ Besta, *Vera Narratione*, 25v-29r.

¹⁰ Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 5v-6r.

beleaguered Milanese—this particular outbreak was nicknamed the plague of San Carlo on account of his inspirational work.¹¹

Civic authorities, in turn, looked upon Borromeo's measures with great suspicion. Relations between the cardinal and the Spanish authorities governing Milan had already been antagonistic in the period leading up to the outbreak (and would continue to be afterward). The Spanish resented Borromeo's constant demands for greater ecclesiastical jurisdiction; in a letter to Philip II, Luis Zuniga y Requesens, governor of Milan from 1572-1573, even described Borromeo as "the most dangerous rebel Your Majesty has ever had."¹² Borromeo's actions during the plague represented another salvo that strained the already fraught relationship. From the point of view of Borromeo's hagiographer Giovanni Pietro Giussano, the devil, full of malice, "moved the envy of the officers of the crown," who proclaimed that the cardinal had overstepped his bounds and infringed on royal authority.¹³

It is from this antipathy between the State and the Church that one of the lasting landmarks to come out of the Milanese crisis was conceived. Apprehensive of the growing popularity and political power of Borromeo, the Marquis of Ayamonte decided in September 1576 to re-assert the appearance of his authority.¹⁴ The Governor made a

¹¹ Ann G. Carmichael, "The Last Past Plague: The Uses of Memory in Renaissance Epidemics," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 53 (1998): 141.

¹² For a brief summary of Borromeo's troubled relationship with the Milanese government, see Kevin Mark Stevens, "Printers, Publishers and Booksellers in Counter-Reformation Milan: A Documentary Study" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1992), 193-4.

¹³ Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 449.

¹⁴ The following history of San Sebastiano is culled from Aurora Scotti Tosini and Debora Antonini, "San Sebastiano a Milano," in *La chiesa a pianta centrale: Tempio civico del*

personal donation in the name of the city toward the construction of a new church to St. Sebastian, hoping that such a pious act would both improve public opinion and bring an end to the disaster. For the project, the Milanese senators chose to rebuild and enlarge the existing church of St. Sebastian along the Ticinese gate, allocating for the task 4000 *scudi* to be spent over ten years. The senate also commissioned a new silver casket for the saint's relics, made an annual endowment of 300 lire to maintain the altar, sponsored a daily mass and an annual solemn mass said by a permanent chaplain, established a confraternity dedicated to the Holy Sacrament (in which the Marquis's family would play a prominent role), and instituted annual processions on 15 October.

The building of this new church was, at first, a wholly civic initiative. It is unclear to what extent Borromeo may have been intentionally sidelined at the earliest stages of planning. We know that, consistent with his zeal to extend ecclesiastical control, Borromeo immediately imposed himself onto the planning process, asserting to the government that the renovations of churches in Milan were subject to the approval of religious authorities, per recently established rules that governed the jurisdictional balance between Church and State. In matters of fund-raising, design, and administration, the construction of this new church quickly became a joint civic-ecclesiastical effort. The first stone of the new San Sebastiano, designed by Pellegrino Pellegrini de Tibaldi (Borromeo's favoured architect), was laid toward the end of the plague crisis on 7 September 1577. The circular structure reminded contemporaries of the Pantheon, reinforcing the idea of Milan as a second Rome (Sebastian's relics housed within were also translated from Rome). The construction proceeded slowly, with the

Rinascimento, ed. Bruno Adorni (Milan: Electa, 2002), 208-23. I wish to thank Michel Mallet for his help in translation and the arduous effort he put into deciphering architectural terminology.

eventual involvement of multiple architects and with some re-designs, and the church was not completed until the middle of the seventeenth century. After the *unificazione nazionale* in the nineteenth century, San Sebastiano was recognized as “the civic temple of Milan” (*il tempio civico di Milano*) and remains so to this day.

Figure 5.1 - Tempio civico di San Sebastiano a Milano¹⁵



¹⁵ Photo by Giovanni Dall'Orto.

Paolo Caracciolo's Santo Guerrier

The dedication of Milan's new temple is, in turn, commemorated in Caracciolo's madrigal *Santo Guerrier* (see Appendix 3 for score). Motet-like, the *prima parte* reads like a personal prayer to St. Sebastian in which the supplicant rededicates himself to the saint and offers him a new reliquary in exchange for liberation from plague.

Prima parte

Santo Guerrier la cui terrena spoglia
Da gli strali pati si duro scempio.
Hoggi il principio di quel voto adempio
Che pria ti fecie non fia mai ch'io scioglia
prieghi offrirti e diggiuni.
Le tue reliquie festa e un novo tempio;
Tu da Dio impetra che da me quest'empio
velen molesto in sempiterno toglia.

Holy warrior who, with your earthly body,
suffered such harsh mutilation from the
arrows. Today I will begin to carry out that
rite that I did for you before; may I never
relent in offering you prayers and fasts.
This vessel that collects your relics is a new
temple; implore God that he shall rid me
forever of this cruel and harmful poison.¹⁶

Unsurprisingly, Caracciolo seizes on the affective potential of the second line, “da gli strali pati si duro scempio,” for his setting (Example 5.1). Twice in this passage (mm. 14-19), Caracciolo brings together E-flats and As, and he fills the surrounding measures with suspensions that overlap one another toward the end of the phrase—the grating dissonance depicting the relentless arrows piercing Sebastian's flesh.

¹⁶ I wish to thank Daniel Donnelly for his help with this translation.

Example 5.1 - Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 10-21

The musical score consists of five vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Quintus (Q), and Bass (B). The lyrics are as follows:

Measures 10-16:
 S: Da gli stra - li pa - - ti
 A: spo - glia Da gli stra - li pa - ti Da gli stra - li pa - ti
 T: glia Da gli stra - li pa - ti
 Q: spo - glia Da gli stra - li pa - ti Da - gli stral - li pa - ti si
 B: glia Da gli stra - li pa - ti

Measures 17-21:
 S: si du - ro scem - pio Hogg -i'l prin - ci - pio di quel vo -to'a dem - pio
 A: si du - ro scem - pio Hogg -i'l prin - ci - pio di quel vo -to'a -dem -
 T: si du - ro scem - pio Hogg -i'l prin - ci - pio di quel vo -to'a dem -pio che
 Q: du - ro scem - - pio Hogg - il prin - ci - pio di quel vo -to'a -dem -pio
 B: si du - ro scem - - pio Hoggi il prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to a -dem - pio

Additional markings include fingerings (e.g., 7-6, 2-1, 3, 7-6, 4-3, 2-3, 9-2, 10-3), dynamics (Dim. 5th), and an 'Aug 4th' marking in the Quintus part.

To mark the rhetorical change from invocation to vow—the supplicant draws attention to the present moment of dedication (Hoggi, line 3; Ex. 5.1, m. 20)—Caracciolo raises the B-flat in the *quintus* to B-natural (m. 20), a jarring (albeit very brief) shift away from the *diapente* proper to the G-Dorian mode. This shift into the *durus* hexachord (with no flats) is all the more striking given Caracciolo’s use of the *molle* hexachord (with two flats) in the preceding measures, punctuated by a clear, emphatic B-flat arrival immediately preceding (m. 19). “Empio velen molesto” provides another occasion for

text painting (Example 5.2). Caracciolo once again deploys a series of suspensions that, with their pangs of dissonance, portray the pain and cruelty of plague and recall Sebastian's suffering by arrows.

Example 5.2 - Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 33-48

33

S. pio TudaDio'im pe - tra TudaDio'im pe - tra chedamequestem - pi o ve - len ve len mol - e - sto
7 - 6 4 - 3 3 7 - 6 6

A. pio Tu daDio'im pe trache da me quest'em pi - o ve - len ve - len mo les -
2 - 1 3 4 - 3 6

T. pio quest'em pi - o ve - len mo - le -

Q. Tu da Dio im - pe - tra, im pe - tra che da me quest'em - pi - o mo - le - sto

B. pio TudaDio'im - pe - tra che da me quest' em - pi - o ve - len mo - le -

40

S. in sem pi - ter - noto - glia Co - si di sseMI - LANd'hu - mil - tà pie - no

A. -to insem pi - ter - no to - glia Co - si di - sseMI - LANd'hu - mil tà pi - e - no MI -

T. sto'in sem pi - ter - no to - glia Co - si di - sseMI - LAN d'hu mil ta pie - no MI - LAN di

Q. insem pi - ter - noto - glia Co - si di - sseMI - LANd'hu - mil tà pie - no di

B. sto in sem - pi - ter - noto - glia d'hu - mil tà pie - no

The *seconda parte* of the madrigal begins with another rhetorical shift. “Cosi disse MILAN” (so said MILAN) creates a *mise en scène* that immediately removes the foregoing prayers from the tongues of the singers and places them on the lips of the personified city; instead of offering a votive themselves (or perhaps, in addition to doing so), the singers are relating a story. The combined devices of monologue in the *prima parte* and narrative in the *seconda* together create a vivid drama that unfolds over the course of the madrigal.

Seconda parte

Cosi disse MILAN d’humiltà pieno
MILAN di tanta gloria, si ripente caduto.
Ahi lasso alla miseria in seno.

So said MILAN, full of humility,
MILAN, so glorious, repents, fallen.
Alas the misery in his breast.

Hor che se dè sperar dal Rè superno
se non che volto al popol suo dolente
questa peste crudel cacci all’inferno.

Now he would lose hope in the celestial King
if He were not to turn to His sorrowful people
and chase this cruel plague to hell.

As before, Caracciolo articulates this rhetorical shift with a striking change in tonal areas and a brief reduction in texture. From a “D major” sonority at the end of the *prima parte*, he moves us into an “A major” sonority (unusual starting pitches for the G-Dorian mode), with the tenor leaping up a major seventh to a C-sharp. The basso is silent, so the entire texture sounds higher and lighter.

The suffering of the personified Milan parallels the harsh torment of Sebastian in the *prima parte*, inviting a typological comparison in which one of the most famous patrons of the city is mapped onto the city itself.¹⁷ As Sebastian was saved from the

¹⁷ Julie Cumming describes the closely related phenomenon of figural exegesis in late medieval motets, see her dissertation, “Concord out of Discord: Occasional Motets of the Early Quattrocento” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1987), chs. 6 and 7. See also Hans

arrows, Milan hopes now to be plucked from the arrows of plague and restored to glory. Overt madrigalisms paint the figure of Milan (Example 5.3). Melismatic flourishes on “gloria” are set off against the rhythmically more ponderous “ripente,” depicting the contrast between the glorious and the humbled city. Downward octave leaps appropriately paint “caduto” (mm. 53-55; the basso leaps down a fifth), representing the fall of an impassioned and plague-ridden body. The most intensely chromatic writing in the entire madrigal accompanies “ahi lasso alla miseria in seno” and heightens the pathos of the sentiment. The minor second descents in the quinto and basso that set “lasso,” with a long-short rhythm, appropriately convey the quality of a moan (mm. 55 and 56).¹⁸

Heinrich Eggebrecht, “Machauts Motette Nr. 9,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 19-20 (1962-3): 281-93, continued in 25 (1968): 173-95.

¹⁸ Raymond Monelle describes this type of descending second as a musical icon originating from the music of the late sixteenth century; *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 67-8.

Example 5.3 - Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 49-63

49

S. MI - LAN di tan-ta glo - ria si ri-pen - te ca -
 A. LAN di tan-ta glo - ri - a di tan-ta glo - ria si ri - pente ca-du -
 T. tan-ta glo - ria si ri - pen - te di tan-ta glo - ria si ri - pen - te
 Q. tan-ta glo - ria MI-LAN di tan-ta glo - ria si ri - pen-te ca -
 B. MI - LAN di tan-ta glo - ria di tan-ta glo - ri-a si ri - pen - te

54

S. - du - to ahi las - so ahi las - so'al - la mi - se - ria in se -
 A. to ahi las - so las - so al - la mi - se - ria in se -
 T. ca - du - to ahi la - sso alla mi-se - ria in se -
 Q. - du - to ahi las - so al - la mi - se - ria in se -
 B. cadu - to ahi las - so al - la mi - se - ria in se -

60

S. no Hor che se dè-spe-rar Hor che se de-spe-rar dal Rè su-per - no
 A. no Hor che se dè-spe-rar dal Rè su - per - no Hor che se de-spe-ra dal Rè su -
 T. no Hor che se dè-spe-rar Hor che se dè-spe-rar dal Rè dal Rè su -
 Q. -no Hor che se dè-spe-rar Hor che se de-spe-rar dal
 B. no Hor che se dè-spe-rar Hor che se de-spe-rar dal Rè su - per -

A reduction in texture (mm. 60-62) and imitative entries mark the final rhetorical change.

The singers now leave the fate of Milan in the hands of God; may He intervene, lest the

people lose faith. The final line of the text also receives appropriate madrigalistic treatment: the descent into hell is furnished in the soprano by a descent of an eleventh, and snapping fusae and semi-fusae mimic yelps heard in the chase (Example 5.4). The augmented fourth formed between the alto and soprano (E-flat against A, m. 71), and the dissonant intervals outlined by various descending melodic figures (F-B in alto, m. 72; B-flat-F-sharp in tenor, m. 72) perhaps illustrate what one might expect to hear in hell. The entire passage between mm. 69 and the first half of 75 is repeated almost verbatim, with the tenor and quinto voices swapped. The energetic flourishes that depict the harrowing flight into hell also drive us to the final cadence.

Example 5.4 - Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 69-81

69

S
len - te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no

A
te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca -

T
te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca -

Q
len - te ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca -

B
te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - na ca - cci all'in - fer - no

74

S. ca - cci all'in - fer - no Que - sta pes - te cru-del ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca

A. cci all'in - fer-no ca - cci all'in-fer - no Quest - a pes - te cru - del ca - cci all'in-fer - no

T. cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca

Q. cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci

B. ca - cci all'in - fer - no que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca

79

S. cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in fer - - - no

A. ca - cci all'in-fer - - - no

T. cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - - - no

Q. all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - - - no

B. cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - - - no

Employing a large variety of techniques, Caracciolo responds to both the rhetorical and semantic aspects of his text. All told, the madrigal exemplifies every category of expressive word-music relation devised by Leeman Perkins.¹⁹ Perkins's first category is "rhetorical expression," by which he means the "emphasis on significant words of the text by the manner of their presentation, which can be considered separately

¹⁹ Leeman L. Perkins, "Towards a Theory of Text-Music Relations in the Music of the Renaissance," in *Binchois Studies*, ed. Andrew Kirkman and Dennis Slavin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 313-329.

from either their intrinsic meaning alone or their possible affective resonances.”²⁰

Musical techniques that create rhetorical emphasis include interruptions to the rhythmic pace; change in mensuration; or modification in voicing, register (as in mm. 44), and contrapuntal texture (m. 60). To Perkins’s list of musical rhetorical techniques Timothy McKinney adds markedness in “harmonic quality” (mm. 20 and 44).²¹ Perkins’s second category of expression is “mimesis,” which he divides into two subtypes. “Sonorous mimesis” refers to iconic imitation of real sounds (the blaring of trumpets and horns, or the songs of birds, for example); the semi-tonal descents mimicking sighs (mm. 55-56) fall under this category, as do the “shouts” at the end of the madrigal.

The other type of mimesis is “conceptual or cognitive mimesis,” prevalent in Italian madrigals of sixteenth century, where the primary intention is illustrative and pictorial—the use of accelerated rhythms to depict textual descriptions of movement, for example. Cognitive mimesis is, in other words, a kind of cross-domain metaphor, where a phenomenon that appeals to a non-aural sense is given aural representation. Milan falling by octaves (mm. 53-55) and the final descent into hell exemplify cognitive mimesis; the movement from a “higher” note to a “lower” note is mapped onto a fall from a higher space to a lower one.²² The final expressive category, one that Perkins

²⁰ Perkins, “Towards a Theory,” 323.

²¹ Timothy McKinney, *Adrian Willaert and the Theory of Interval Affect: The Musica nova madrigals and the novel theories of Zarlino and Vicentino* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 14-19.

²² The depiction of pitches as “high” and “low” was in place in the West by the beginning of the tenth century. There is a large literature on the phenomenology and metaphor of high/low pitch space from a variety of fields, from the philosophy of aesthetics to psychology. In *Conceptualizing Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63-95, Lawrence Zbikowski focuses on two instances of text painting by Palestrina and Giaches de Wert to show how

admits is the most difficult and ambiguous, is the “affective” category. In this class of expression, concepts such as harshness and bitterness, for example, are marked by accidentals, slow pacing, and dissonances. The pain of Sebastian’s suffering and the cruelty of plague are felt as an attenuated discomfort through Caracciolo’s dissonant writing in mm. 14-19 and at the end of the *prima parte*. The principal goal of these affective gestures is to elicit an emotional reaction in the listener, hence Perkins’s rubric for this category: “affective *consequence*.”²³

Applying Perkins’s categories to Caracciolo’s setting, we can make a case that there is a change in expressive gestures across the two *partes* of the music that accompanies the rhetorical change in the text. The affective reactions to the text in the *prima parte* (Sebastian’s suffering and the pain of plague) give way to mimetic ones in the *seconda parte*—Milan falling, the sigh of “lasso,” and the flight to hell accompanied by energetic shouts. Such mimetic gestures all contribute to a narrative strategy aimed at evoking a vivid picture, where abstract concepts are anthropomorphized, described, and made “sensible”: Milan is personified, given a corporeal form that crumples with a groan, and plague is likewise given a physical shape, perhaps not unlike that of the winged skeleton in Bonfigli’s 1464 plague banner, chased into hell at the point of Raphael’s spear

structures from different domains may blend together. For other approaches rooted mostly in the humanities, see for example Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chs. 2, 3; Arnie Cox, “The Metaphoric Logic of Musical Motion and Space” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1999); Peter Kivy, *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation*, Princeton Essays on the Arts 15 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²³ Dean Mace labels this type of word-music relationship “symbolic” (i.e. there is no *direct* relation between the meaning of the words and music—this is the type of word painting scorned by Galilei). Mace distinguishes these symbolic relationships from “naturalistic” ones, prevalent in monody, where the physical qualities of the word are imitated. See Mace’s “Tasso, *La Gerusalemme liberata* and Monteverdi,” in *Studies in the History of Music 1, Music and Language* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1983), 118-56.

(see Chapter 3, Figure 3.1). The musical responses at these junctures reinforce the physicality of the scene by creating the gravity that pulls Milan's body downward, and lending a sense of abandonment, speed, and energy to the concluding flight. As the text turns from prayer (personal and affective) to narration (dramatic and visual), Caracciolo responds musically in kind; not only do we hear the anguish of Milan, we also "see" his piteous fall and a horrific portrait of plague.

Il primo libro de Madrigali: A Songbook for the Plague?

Given the pre-modern ideas of perception and cognition, where sensations, imaginary forms, affects, and bodily health are intimately linked, it is questionable whether works that provoke strong emotions—such as *Santo Guerrier*—might constitute a benefit or a danger in pestilential times. Consider again the typical pestilential regimen prescribed by doctors. On one hand, they advise against melancholy, despondence, worry, fear, sadness, and rage, as well as activities that might inspire such emotions, such as looking at sick bodies and monstrous pictures, and listening to sorrowful tales;²⁴ on the other, they prescribe the use of instrumental music and songs to insulate the

²⁴ See Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Niccolo Massa's advice is typical: Et ideo quantum fieri potest studendum uttae omnes procul sint, ut est pussilanimitas, sollicitudo, timor, cura, tristitia, ira, cogitationes, imaginatio[n]es, ac opinioniones tristes, studia laboriosa, verecundia, et similia. [F]ugiendae etiam sunt causae, tristitiam infere[n]tes, ut est mora in locis obscuris, et faetidibus, ac inspectiones corporum languentium, et mortuorum, et rerum mo[n]struosarum et picturae horrendae ac etiam lectionum trista[n]tium, nequem bonu[s] est interesse narrationibus miseris et lamentationibus, et similibus, quoniam mirum in modum tristem reddunt audientem, et omnes uirtutes exterminant, unde redditur corpus paratum ad malas aegritudines, immo ut in primo redditur corpus paratum ad malas aegritudines, immo ut in primo tractatu dictum est. Niccolo Massa, *Ragionamento...sopra le infermità che vengono dall'aere pestilentielle del presente anno MDLV* (Venice: Ziletti, 1556), 39r.

imagination.²⁵ What is the place, then, of music that evokes negative emotions in this system of thought? Consider, too, that Caracciolo published his collection in 1582, a mere four years after Milan was liberated from plague; *Santo Guerrier* could certainly have provoked real and vivid memories of that horrible catastrophe and revived all the attendant suffering and fear.

And the painful affects do not end with *Santo Guerrier*. Caracciolo's collection contains a total of sixteen works (see Table 5.1). Three of them are laudatory and can be considered uplifting: 1, *O Dei felici*, praises the mature wisdom of the young Carlo Emanuel, Duke of Savoy and Prince of Piedmont (1562-1630), to whom the entire collection is dedicated; 2, *Famoso Heroe, dai celesti numi*, describes Ercole Branciforte as a gift from the heavens; and 11, *Canta Urania*, is dedicated to the Milanese senator Don Antonio Londonio. Aside from *Santo Guerrier*, there is one other spiritual madrigal; 8, *Con qual chiave*, describes the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation. Although slightly less overtly affective than *Santo Guerrier*, this second spiritual madrigal nevertheless makes reference to the Lord's torment and the spilling of his blood. The remaining eleven are settings of amatory texts, including three verses by Petrarch. One finds in these madrigals subjects of the usual type—courtly love, love unrequited, and love lost. One also finds the usual heart-wrenching tropes, notably: the lover as an ever-weeping statue (5, *Marmo fui che percosso*); the tormented life of the lover after the death of his beloved (4, *Poi che quella*); ardent and intense love as a cruel poison, “l'empio veleno” (9, *Ov'era la pietà*; recalling “l'empio veleno” described in *Santo*

²⁵ Plurimum etiam conducit audire cantilenas, et instrumenta musicae delectabilia, eaque interdum pulsare, cantareque voce tamen submissa, legere libros, et historias delectabiles, audire histriones, qui risum moderatum prouocent. Massa, *Ragionamento...sopra le infermità*, 39r-v.

Guerrier); and the contemplation of death as release from a loveless life (15, *Non ha tanti animali*). Thus, lovesickness, desperate melancholy, and even thoughts of suicide—all things that dispose an individual to illness—find a place in Caracciolo’s collection.²⁶

Table 5.1 - Inventory of *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci*

	Incipit	Poet	Subject
1	<i>O dei felici principi</i> (Al Duca di Savoia)		Laudatory
2	<i>Famoso heroe</i> (A Don Hercole Branciforte)		Laudatory
3	<i>Se'l dolce sguardo di costei m'ancide</i>	Petrarch (<i>Canzo. 183</i>)	Amatory
4	<i>Poi che quella ch'amor</i>		Amatory
5	<i>Marmo fui che percosso gettai faville</i>	Girolamo Casone	Amatory
6	<i>Pasco gli occhi</i>		Amatory
7	<i>Santo Guerrier</i>		Spiritual
8	<i>Con qual chiave</i>		Spiritual
9	<i>Ov'era la pietà</i>		Amatory
10	<i>L'aura serena</i>	Petrarch (<i>Canzo.196</i>)	Amatory
11	<i>Canta Urania dal ciel</i> (Al Signor Don Antonio Londonio)		Laudatory
12	<i>Un'ape esser vorrei</i>	Torquato Tasso	Amatory
13	<i>Anco che gran dolore</i>		Amatory
14	<i>Amore, per qual cagione</i>		Amatory
15	<i>Non ha tanti animali</i>	Petrarch (<i>Canzo.237</i>)	Amatory
16	<i>Io cantarò, Tirsi dicea</i>		Amatory

What can we make of this assemblage of madrigals as a whole? To what extent might its contents be beneficial or detrimental to health? Should this collection of

²⁶ There is a sizeable literature on the relationship between music, lovesickness, and melancholy. Some works include: Linda Phyllis Austern, “Musical Treatments for Lovesickness: The Early Modern Heritage,” in *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy Since Antiquity*, ed. Peregrine Horden, 213-245 (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000); “‘No Pill’s Gonna Cure My Ill’: Gender, Erotic Melancholy and Traditions of Musical Healing in the Modern West,” in *Musical Healing in Cultural Contexts*, ed. Penelope Gouk, 113-136 (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000); Penelope Gouk, “Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits in Early Modern Thought,” in *Music as Medicine*, 173-194; Susan Rachel Agrawal, “‘Tune thy Temper to these Sounds’: Music and Medicine in the English Ayre” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2005); Doris Silbert, “Melancholy and Music in the Renaissance,” *Notes* 4 (1947): 413-24.

madrigals be used in times of plague, or put away in favour of more light-hearted fare? A comparison here to the recreational activities of Boccaccio's storytellers might be apposite. The Florentines follow closely the doctors' advice to flee infected areas and to delight in joyous entertainments with collegial company.²⁷ And aside from story-telling, the *brigata* of Florentines also sang. Boccaccio records the texts of eleven songs in all, one from each of the ten evenings and one incorporated into Pampinea's story told on the tenth day (the seventh tale). The lyrics are invariably in *ballata* form: a *ripresa* of one to four lines, followed by two *piedi* of two or three lines each and a *volta* that repeats the structure of the *ripresa* (AbbaA).²⁸ As each storyteller sang at the end of the day, the rest of the *brigata* either danced or joined in on the refrains.

All but one of Boccaccio's *ballate* are on the subject of love. Some, like Pampinea's song on the second day, are light-hearted; she opts to sing "not of love's sighs and agony / But only of its jocundness."²⁹ A few others, such as Panfilo's song on the eighth day or Neifile's on the ninth, mix the bliss of love with sentiments of yearning. The rest are far grimmer. Lauretta's song on the third day begins, "None has need for lamentation / More than have I / Who, alas, all sick for love / In vain do sigh." She goes on to sing of her lover's death and complains of the loveless marriage in which she is now trapped—would that she had died, Lauretta sings. Filostrato, on the fourth day,

²⁷ Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 182-96. See also Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

²⁸ Howard Mayer Brown, "Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio," *Early Music* 5 (1977): 326-8. Brown also speculates on the types of melodies that would have accompanied these texts, suggesting that the storytellers would have sung simple, lauda-like melodies.

²⁹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 187-8.

sings as a spurned lover yearning for death (Come Death, then, end my life / With all its cruel strife; / Strike down my misery! / I shall the better be). And the ballata from Pampinea's story takes the point of view of a love-sick and inconsolable girl who withered "like snow in the rays of the sun" with extreme melancholy.³⁰

We find, therefore, some of the same subjects and tropes in the songs of Boccaccio's storytellers as in Caracciolo's madrigals. Given the amount of care that the *brigata* took in their daily regimen (they also played games, ate well, took gentle exercise, and made sure to be well rested), it's unlikely that they would have thoughtlessly exposed themselves to noxious music. But the question still remains: how can the *brigata*'s songs and Caracciolo's madrigals, which relate piteous themes and elicit the affects that doctors warned against, be medically permissible? It might be instructive here to compare the possible benefits of such music to the actions of two important medicines prescribed for the plague: the panacea theriac and Mithridatium.

Theriac and Mithridatium

One of the wonder drugs in the Renaissance pharmacopeia was theriac (or treacle, in English sources). A compound of many and variable substances, theriac was thought to be an antidote to almost all poisons. From the time of the Black Death, this panacea was prescribed as a prophylaxis against pestilence. Jacme d'Agramont writes, for example, "One should take three times a week in the morning one drachm or 3 diners (the weight of 3 coins) of fine theriac. It is said to be very beneficial, especially if the body is

³⁰ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 738.

purged.”³¹ A related substance, Mithridatium, is likewise recommended: “There is also a very marvelous confection, when made correctly and faithfully, which is called Metridatum [*sic*], and has such power according to some of the most renowned authors of medicine, that one who uses of it every morning in the quantity of a broad bean, no poison or venom can hurt him.”³² Doctors throughout the Renaissance remained convinced of the potency of these two substances; Niccolo Massa, writing two hundred years later, describes their use and praises their virtues:

It is beneficial to take daily one fraction of an ounce of theriac, more or less according to whatever necessity that arises at the time... Theriac is the most excellent medicine above all others if used moderately, since aside from preventing pestilential illness, it strengthens all the principal organs, and in this way, many other illnesses can be warded off. However, theriac can harm the young and the febrile. If theriac is not available, either because this compound is so rarely made, or because the quality of the mixture is found to be less than optimal, you can substitute in its place Mithridatium in the same quantity, following the same guidelines.³³

The fabled histories of these two substances reveal the source of their powers and the rationale for their potency. Mithridatium, the older of the two substances, was attributed to ancient King Mithradates (or Mithridates) VI of Pontus (reigned 120-63 BCE), who had a passion for investigating the powers of medicinal simples (i.e. herbs

³¹ Jacme d'Agramont, “Regiment de Preservacio a Epidimia o Pestilencia e Mortaldats,” trans. M.L. Duran-Reynals, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 23 (1949): 80.

³² Jacme, “Regiment,” 81.

³³ ...Assumptio quotidiana unius scrupuli theriacae plus minus, secundum temporis et aliorum emergentem necessitate[m]... theriaca est medicina praestantior c[a]eteris si moderate ipsa utatur, quonia[m] praeterquam quod praeservat a lue pestilentiali, omnia membra principalia roborat, ita ut et multas alia aegritudines euitare possint. Nocet tamen theriaca pueries et febricitantibus. Quod si theriaca non adsit, quoniam haec compositio vel raro fit, vel si facta reperiat, non optima est, poteris loco ipsius dare mitridatum in eadem quantitate et ordine. Massa, *Ragionamento...sopra le infermità*, 40v-41r.

and plants with medical properties). According to Galen, he tested the efficacies of various substances on prisoners condemned to die, correlating the types of simples with the types of poisons against which they were effective.³⁴ In addition to his experimentation on prisoners, Mithradates himself practiced a daily regimen of first taking an antidote and then ingesting the correlating poison “in order that sheer custom might render it harmless.”³⁵ Mithradates also compounded all of the effective simples into one single super-antidote, later named Mithridatium after its inventor.³⁶ His daily habituation to poison was (unfortunately) rather successful; in Galen’s account,

Mithradates himself, the great warrior, having taken...[a] much-mixed antidote, the one that is named by his name, indeed it is called Mithridatium, because of the resistance of his body acquired by the antidote, could not die after having taken poison. Indeed in the war against the Romans, having been vanquished by Pompey and being in the last extremities, he decided to die by a venom. Having drunk the poison and taken a lot of it, he did not die, whilst his daughters, who wanted, by filial love, to follow him in death, died quickly after drinking the same poison. Then as Mithradates was slow to die, the poison being ineffective because he was used to drinking antidotes, he called Bistokos, one of his friends and ordered him to cut his throat and to accomplish with the sword the work of the poison. By this means, he forced himself to die violently.³⁷

³⁴ Gilbert Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium: A Study in Therapeutics* (London: The Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1966), 34.

³⁵ Mithridates, maximus sua aetate regum quem debellavit Pompeius, omnium ante se genitorum diligentissimus vitae fuisse argumentis praeterquam fama intellegitur. uni ei excogitatum cotidie venenum bibere praesumptis remediis ut consuetudine ipsa innoxium fieret. Pliny, *Natural History*, Book XXV, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

³⁶ Pliny writes that one of the simples is itself called Mithridatium. In Renaissance medical treatises, it is the polypharma compound that is called Mithridatium. On the Galenic tradition of polypharmaceutical compounds, see Michael Stein, “La thériaque chez Galien: Sa préparation et son usage thérapeutique,” in *Galen on Pharmacology: Philosophy, History and Medicine; Proceedings of the Vth International Galen Colloquium, Lille, 16-18 March 1995*, ed. Armelle Debru (New York: Brill, 1997), 203-4.

³⁷ Galen, *De theriaca, ad Pisonem*, quoted in Laurence M. V. Totelin, “Mithradates’ Antidote: A Pharmacological Ghost,” *Early Science and Medicine* 9 (2004): 6.

Among the other spoils of war for the Romans was Mithradates's bookcase, full of treatises detailing medicinal properties of plants. Pompey ordered his freedman Lenaeus to translate the treatises (likely written in Greek)³⁸ into Latin, and Mithradates's knowledge of poisons and their antidotes thereby passed on to the physicians of Rome.

The recipe for Mithridatium survives in the foundational texts by Galen, written two centuries later. In addition to "Mithradates's own,"³⁹ which contains forty-one ingredients, Galen provides other variations and improvements on the recipe that had been developed by physicians in the intervening years. One such variant was concocted by Andromachus, physician to Nero, who added viper's flesh to the original recipe. The resultant compound, which he called Galene (tranquility), contained a total of sixty-four ingredients. It was with the key addition of viper's flesh that a new and improved class of antidotes was developed: theriac, whose name, according to the medieval Galenic commentator Ibn Djldjul, derives from *tyrya* (venomous animal) and *qâ* (a lethal plant).⁴⁰ Galen offers a variety of anecdotes to support the medical potency of this added ingredient. It was said, for example, that a viper once fell into a pot of wine, and upon its discovery, the harvesters who owned the wine refused to drink it. Instead, they gave it to a sufferer of elephantiasis (leprosy), intending in good conscience to give him a merciful

³⁸ Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 36.

³⁹ As Lenaeus's translation has not survived, it is uncertain whether this is indeed the authentic recipe. See Totelin, "Mithradates' Antidote," 6-10; Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 36-40.

⁴⁰ Louise M. Bishop. *Words, Stones, and Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 3-4.

death; the leper recovered completely.⁴¹ In another instance, a resentful slave girl to a leper master discovered a chance to kill him when she finds a viper drowned in his wine. Upon feeding him this presumably poisoned wine, her master was restored to health.⁴²

Although both Mithridatium and theriac were originally developed as antidotes to poison (theriac was thought to be especially useful against snake bites⁴³), it was quickly concluded that their potency and quality were such that they could ameliorate almost any ailment. Galen claims, for example, that theriac, in addition to annulling poisons and venoms, is useful against foul air, pestilence, chronic headache, dullness of hearing, dimness of sight, blackouts, giddiness, epilepsy, shortness of breath, indigestion, nausea, liver stones, sleeplessness, stresses of the mind, and many other maladies. Moreover, these panaceas, in small dosages, acquired a prophylactic function; Galen reports that Marcus Aurelius consumed theriac daily,⁴⁴ and authors of plague treatises, like Jacme and Massa, often prescribe its quotidian use. And one would presumably need an emperor's fortune to afford daily doses, as theriac was a particularly expensive substance, requiring many exotic ingredients and a finicky process of preparation. For example, Galene theriac requires, among other things, squills (a perennial flower), to be dried and roasted, with the soft parts extracted; vipers caught in the spring (when their venom is most

⁴¹ Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus Libri XI*, trans. Theodorico Gerardo Gaundano (Lyon: G. Gazellum, 1547), 673-677.

⁴² See also Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 52-3; Véronique Boudon, "La thériaque selon Galien: Poison salulaire ou remède empoisonné?," in *Le corps à l'épreuve: Poisons, remèdes et chirurgie; aspects des prtiques médicales dans L'antiquité et au Moyen Age*, ed. Franck Collard and Evelyne Samama (Langres: D. Guénoit, 2002), 49-50.

⁴³ Michael Stein, "La thériaque chez Galien," 204-5.

⁴⁴ Galen, *De theriac ad pisonem*, trans. Ioanne Guinterio Andernaco (Paris: Simonem Colinaeum, 1531), 3r.

attenuated), cooked until the flesh comes off the bones and then ground into a macerated powder; fifty-five herbs, including cinnamon and various peppers, prepared according to their individual properties; opium; turpentine resin; and copper, along with other organic and mineral ingredients. All of this is then heated and stirred for at least forty days, and then the compound is aged for up to thirty years (twelve years is ideal; it is strongest at five to seven years and is good at that age to counteract snake bites). At fifty years, it will have lost its effectiveness.⁴⁵

Two salient qualities of theriac and Mithridatium are pertinent to our discussion of “sad” music and to music-making in pestilential times. First, the two compounds can be consumed as daily prophylaxis, just as recreation was recommended as a part of the preventative regimen. Second, the lore surrounding the substances reveals a belief in an inter-related process of habituation and “homeopathic” action that follows the principle *similia similibus curantur*.⁴⁶ The regimen by which Mithradates came to be resistant to a large dose of poison—through ingestion of poisons and their corresponding antidotes—reveals a process by which habitual cycles of harming-and-healing can build up protective immunity. Theriac, with its key ingredient of viper’s flesh, “was supposed to induce immunity according to the principle that like cures like, by gradually introducing into the body small amounts of poison.”⁴⁷ It is telling that in the cases reported by Galen on the potency of viper’s flesh, the venom was meant to kill the drinkers, but instead,

⁴⁵ Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 48-50.

⁴⁶ See Christiane Nockels Fabbri, “Treating Medieval Plague: The Wonderful Virtues of Theriac,” *Early Science and Medicine* 12 (2007), 247-283; Boudon, “La thériaque selon Galien,” 53-6; Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79.

⁴⁷ Nockels Fabbri, “Treating Medieval Plague,” 252.

being diluted in wine, had the unintended consequence of curing their affliction.

Attenuated in the process of manufacture and ageing, the normally noxious content of theriac acquires salutary properties. We can perhaps tie together the ideas of habituation and homeopathy with the actions and effects of “sad” music. If exposure to poisons and venoms in diffuse amounts can be beneficial, then painful affects, too, may be useful when attenuated and delivered through musical recreation. Indeed, this idea of emotional fortification through exposure to artistic representation was becoming prevalent in the latter half of the sixteenth century among Italian literary theorists, who were just then rediscovering Aristotle’s *Poetics* and his concept of tragic *katharsis*.

Mithradatic Katharsis

Aristotle’s *Poetics* received scant attention in antiquity and the Middle Ages, but with the appearance of a Latin translation by Georgio Valla in 1498 and a second, more popular one by Alessandro Pazzi in 1536, interest in the work exploded in Italy.⁴⁸

Aristotle’s poetic teachings gave rise to tragedies written in the early part of the sixteenth century that were really “little more than mere attempts at putting the Aristotelian theory of tragedy into practice.”⁴⁹ Beginning in the middle of the century, full-scale expositions

⁴⁸ For summaries of the “renaissance” of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, see Krishna Gopal Srivastava, *Aristotle’s Doctrine of Tragic Katharsis: A Critical Study* (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1982), 68-97; Veselin Kostić, “Aristotle’s Catharsis in Renaissance Poetics,” *Ziva Antika* 10 (1960): 61-74; Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986): 286ff.

⁴⁹ Joel Elias Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 138.

of the work also began to appear; first among them is by Robortelli in 1548.⁵⁰ The next year, Segni published an Italian translation of *Poetics*. By this time, the philosopher's poetic theories had been so rapidly and thoroughly absorbed into Italian literary criticism (Baxter Hathaway describes the newfound Aristotelian poetics as a "panzer division" prowling at will through the rich hinterlands of literary speculation⁵¹) that Fracastoro was able to declare in the 1550s that "Aristotle has received no less fame from the survival of his *Poetics* than from his philosophical remains."⁵²

One of the enduring debates emerging from *Poetics* centers on the meaning of and the process entailed by the term *katharsis*, since this concept forms a major part of what Aristotle claims is the purpose of tragic poetry and what rescues the genre from Plato's condemnation.⁵³ Despite the importance of the concept, Aristotle offers only one reference to *katharsis* with respect to tragedy in the *Poetics*: "Tragedy is a representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech [i.e. having rhythm and melody], with each of its elements used separately in the various parts of the play; represented by people acting and not by narration; accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions."⁵⁴ Aristotle also brings up the concept of *katharsis* in *Politics* 8, where he endeavours to show the ethical and emotional worth of

⁵⁰ Robortelli's commentary from 1548 is considered the first.

⁵¹ Baxter Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 205.

⁵² Girolamo Fracastoro, *Opera omnia*; cited in Spingarn, *History of Literary Criticism*, 138.

⁵³ Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 184-5.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, I 49b25-29, trans. Richard Janko (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 7.

music in relation to the education of youth. Here, the concept likewise remains vague. Aristotle promises to explain *katharsis* more fully in his treatment of poetry, although what has become of that commentary remains a mystery.⁵⁵

To compound the problem of Aristotle's brevity, the term *katharsis*, beyond its mundane meaning of the physical cleansing of objects, carried a variety of separable, but intersecting, connotations. Stephen Halliwell delineates some broad categories of signification.⁵⁶ The first is medical; *katharsis* refers to the procedures and materials of purging used by doctors and also the physical processes of discharge and secretion in a physical and physiological sense. Notably, though, the pre-modern sense of purging or purgation does not necessarily entail a complete evacuation of an unwanted substance. Instead, purging involves the removal of excess matter in order to restore a desirable equilibrium.⁵⁷ The second category is ritual and religious *katharsis*, whereby, in the negative extreme, an individual is purified of dire sins, such as blood-guilt. In a more positive vein, ritual *katharsis* can prepare an individual for a ceremony or for initiation into a religion. This sort of lustrative *katharsis* relates to Aristotle's tragic *katharsis* insofar as they both imply a mutual influence between the material and the spiritual, the seen and the unseen.

Another category of *katharsis* is Pythagorean and musical. Aristotle himself makes use of this strain of thought in *Politics* 8. The philosopher explains that, in

⁵⁵ Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 190n32.

⁵⁶ Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 185ff. See also Hathaway, *Age of Criticism*, 208-9.

⁵⁷ Frank L. Lucas, *Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics* (London: Hogarth, 1957), 37.

extreme cases, music can relieve those in an ecstatic (and pathological) frenzy, to calm and restore them as if they had undergone a medical treatment and *katharsis*.⁵⁸ “The same sort of effect,” he goes on to write, “will also be produced on those who are specially subject to feelings of fear and pity, or to feelings of any kind.” And if such emotions exist so strongly in some, they must exist in us all, and thus, we can all benefit by the feeling of relief through musical *katharsis*.⁵⁹ The emotional work of music has ethical implications as well. Because music is a mimetic art that provides images of the world, the experience of pain and delight aroused by music can prime us to feel the same emotions toward corresponding things in reality. Music trains us, in other words, to direct our emotions toward the right objects and in the right way, to align our feelings properly with “moral qualities in the world.”⁶⁰

All of these connotations of *katharsis*—humoural psychology, religious lustration, and Pythagorean ethos—have played a role in the interpretations of Aristotle’s *Poetics* since the sixteenth century. Given, on one hand, the importance of the concept and, on the other, Aristotle’s vagueness, it is little wonder that centuries’ worth of contentious scholarship on the topic has ossified into what John Morley has called “one of the disgraces of the human intelligence, a grotesque monument of sterility.”⁶¹ (And to think,

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII, vi, trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), 348-52.

⁵⁹ See Andrew Ford, “Catharsis: The Power of Music in Aristotle’s *Politics*,” in *Music and the Muses: The Culture of ‘Mousikē’ in the Classical Athenian City*, ed. Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, 309-36 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁰ Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 196.

⁶¹ John Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopaedists* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1834), 223. See also Frank L. Lucas, *Tragedy*, 35.

Morley was writing in the early part of the nineteenth century!) One stream of interpretation amidst this quagmire that emerged at the start of the commentary tradition clustered around what Baxter Hathaway has tellingly labelled the “Mithradatic principle.”⁶² At the heart of this type of interpretation is the application of the concept of habituation to the doctrine of *katharsis*—Aristotle’s idea of “accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions” here being key. *Katharsis* thus construed refers to a process of being exposed to tragic emotions in the theatre in order to become fortified against them in real life, just as Mithradates’s daily exposure to poisons and antidotes eventually immunized him from an otherwise lethal dose of poison. The essence of *katharsis* in this instance is not a complete elimination or “purgation” of pity and fear, but rather a habituation toward such emotions by means of the same emotions.

Hathaway and Kostić identify Robortelli as the father of the Mithradatic principle.⁶³ Beginning with Aristotle’s *Politics*, Robortelli explains that music gives access to emotional experiences that have the same force as real-life experiences and thus allows one to become accustomed to various feelings as well as those conditions that elicit such feelings. In like manner, “when men are present at tragedies and hear and perceive characters saying and doing those things that happen to themselves in reality, they become accustomed to grieving, fearing, and pitying; for which reason it happens that when something befalls them as a result of their human condition, they grieve and

⁶² Hathaway, *Age of Criticism*, 216

⁶³ Hathaway, *Age of Criticism*, 216; Kostić, “Aristotle’s Catharsis,” 62. Hathaway also points out that Plutarch had proposed something of the sort in his *Moralia*, saying that “poison taken in small doses guards us against poison and that poetry has this utility” (238). Halliwell suggests that similar Mithradatic ideas had been forwarded by Timocles, a comic poet contemporary with Aristotle, and Marcus Aurelius (*Meditations* 11.6); Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 352.

fear less. Furthermore, it is obvious that whoever has never felt grief for some calamity grieves more violently if some misfortune later occurs contrary to his hopes.”⁶⁴ In other words, the experience of tragic emotions through drama reduces our susceptibility to violent emotions when faced with actual catastrophes.

Subsequent Renaissance commentators developed the Mithradatic principle with even greater rhetorical flair. Notable among them is Antonio Sebastiano Minturno, who touches directly upon the medical connotations of *katharsis*. In his *De poeta libri sex* (1559), Minturno points first to Pythagorean, musical *katharsis* and compares it to medical *katharsis*:

Plato and Aristotle both approve of music which might never purify the soul unless it stir[s] emotions in it. Men excited by the threat of madness used modes, rhythms, and sacred songs to forestall it. They were accustomed to use these for the mind’s purgation...Certainly in order to drive away a sickness resembling poison, the force arousing emotions in the body is moved by a medicine of a violent and injurious nature. Shouldn’t the mind be moved to cleanse sicknesses?⁶⁵

Bringing this analogy to bear on tragic *katharsis*, Minturno writes,

⁶⁴ Dum enim homines intersunt recitationibus; audiuntque et cernunt personas loquentes et agentes ea, qua multum accedunt ad veritatem ipsam; affuescunt dolere, timere; commiserari; quo fit, ut cum aliquid ipsis humanitus acciderit, minus doleant, et timeant, necesse est enim prorsus, ut qui nunquam indoluerit ob aliquam calamitatem, vehementius postea doleat, si quid aduersi praeter spem acciderit. Francesco Robortello, *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica* (Florence: Torrentini, 1548), 53.

⁶⁵ An Platoni, ne dum Aristoteli musica probatur, que nisi motus in animo cieret, numqua[m] sane eum purgaret. Nam afflatus furoris qui essent coocitati, cum modis, ac numeris, canticisq[ue] sacris, qui ad animi expiatione[m] adhiberi solebant, uterentur, his quidem ita expiabantur, ac si aliqua potione purgarentur, Homerica poesis, quod vim mentis et ad miserandum et ad timendum permoveat, improba[n]da est? Scilicet ad depellendam aegrotationem, que veneni instar habet, vis ciens in corpora motiones medicina vehementis noxiaeq[ue] naturae excitatur; ad morborum expiationem animus commoveri non debet? At qui satis corporibus, si tantum abest, ut opus sit eiusmodi medicamento, ut hoc illis plurimum noceat, quid est ut animis bene affectis atque fedatis perturbatione prodesse possit? Antonio Sebastiano Minturno, *De poeta* (Venice: Franciscum Rampazetum, 1559), I:64; translation from James W. Biehl, “Antonio Sebastiano Minturno’s *De poeta*: A Translation” (PhD diss., Southern Illinois University, 1975), 113.

Doesn't exposure to violent emotions make their enduring easier?... [I]t can hardly be that we increase the emotions by dramatic stimulation. But if anything happens that violently upsets us, we can bear it more calmly. For it happens that one who is frequently moved by the sad lot of Oedipus, Orestes, Ajax, Hecuba, Niobe, or Jocasta, is prepared if anything disagreeable should happen to him. Forethought softens the arrival of evils which you have seen coming long before. This is why the laws of the Cretans and of Lycurgus instructed youth about hunting, running hunger, thirst, cold, and heat. The Greek states built public gymnasiums for the exercise of the young, so that their bodies would be better suited to enduring trials.⁶⁶

For Minturno, exposure and habituation can dull the sting of painful emotions. Instead of creating a surplus of dangerous passions, tragedy builds up emotional calluses against future tragedies in the same manner that exercise builds up muscles of the body in preparation for physical hardship.

One final example suffices in illustrating Mithradatic *katharsis*. In *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta* (1570), Lodovico Castelvetro follows Robortelli and Minturno in claiming a function of "emotional fortification" for tragic pity and fear. Castelvetro furnishes the concept with a series of evocative (if somewhat strange) analogies:

A certain quantity of undiluted wine is stronger than a like quantity of the same wine that has been diluted with a great deal of water and thus exceeds the other wine in quantity; but the treatment it has undergone has made it watery and has robbed it of all its former strength. Again, a father will love his children more and

⁶⁶ [C]onsuetudo perturbationum, perpressionem earum non efficiet faciliorem?...Itaque tantum abset ut ea consuetudine permotiones animi augeamus, ut si quid accidat, quod vehementius perturbet, id levius ferre possimus. Fit enim ut qui non semel Oedipodis, Oreste, Aiakis, Hecube, Niobes, Iocastae gravi fortuna fuerit concitatus, ei si quid incommodi evenierit, hoc improvisum non sit. At praemeditatio futurorum malrum lenit eorum adventu[m], quae venientia longe ante videris. Am Cretum leges itemq[ue] Lycurgi venando, currendo, esuriendo, sitiendo, algendo, aestuando, inventutem instruebant. Ac publica apud Grecorum civitates ad innenum exercitationem Gymnasia posita erant, ut ad laborum perpressionem corpora efficerentur aptiora. Minturno, *De poeta*, I:64-5; translation from Biehl, "Antonio Sebastiano Minturno's *De poeta*," 115.

be more solicitous of their welfare if he has only a few, say one or two or three, than if he has a great many, say a hundred or a thousand or even more.⁶⁷

Therefore, Castelvetro surmises, the impact of pity and fear will be stronger and more distressing if concentrated on a few piteous and terrible events than if diffused over many. By extension, poetic representation provides us with multiple targets for our feelings and thereby dilutes the strength of our affects. All of this is clear, Castelvetro continues, if we consider real-life tragedies such as pestilence: “Of this phenomenon we receive palpable proof from our experience in times of plague, when we are moved to pity and fear by the first three or four victims but later remain unmoved when the dead are counted in the hundreds and the thousands.”⁶⁸

In the context of Mithradatic interpretations of *katharsis*, we can make a case for *Santo Guerrier* as an emotional exercise that could inure listeners against the reality of plague-ridden corpses “counted in the hundreds and the thousands.” The madrigal saturates the imagination with piteous images of the tortured saint, the personified fallen

⁶⁷ ...come il vino puro di certa quantita non essendouidentro mescolato gocciolo d’acqua ha piu vigore et spirito che non ha altrettanto vino d’altrettanta bonta, nel quale sia mescolata molta acqua, et percio soperchi l’altro in quantita. Percioche per la’nfusione della copia dell’acqua di viene acquidoso et perde ogni vigore et spirito, che hauea prima. Et si come l’amore è molo maggiore et piu feruente de padri verso i figliuoli, et n’hanno piu cura quando n’hanno pochi cio è tre o due o vno che se n’hanno assai come cento o mille, o piu, cosi la compassione et lo spauento degli huomini riuolgendosi intorno a pochi casi compassioneuoli, et spaunteuoli sono piu vigorosi in loro, et piu gli commouono che non fanno quando si spargono in piu auenimenti degni di misericordia et di paura. Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata, et sposta* (Vienna: Gaspar Stainhofer, 1570), 65r; translation from Andrew Bongiorno, *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry: An Abridged Translation of Lodovico Castelvetro’s Poetica d’Aristotele Vulgarizzata et Sposta* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1984), 56.

⁶⁸ Il che piu sensibilmente conosciamo per pruoua nella mortalita pestilentiosa nel principio della quale quando cominciano a morire tre o quattro persone ci sentiamo commouere da misericordia et da spauento, ma poi che ne veggiamo morire le centinaia et le migliaia cessa in noi il commouime della misericordia et dello spauento. Castelvetro, *Poetica d’Aristotele*, 65v; translation from Bongiorno, *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry*, 56.

city (the change in fortune of a character, incidentally, is a key component of Aristotelian tragedy),⁶⁹ and the harrowing figure of plague. Moreover, by referring to the newly dedicated church of St. Sebastian, the work dredges up fresh memories of the recent plague that struck Milan as well as other parts of Italy, evoking violent emotions that may well have been rooted in real memories. Attenuated by harmony, these strong memories and emotions elicited by the madrigal help listeners build up resistance toward excessive pity and fear, which can have noxious effects on health.

The evocation of yearning and melancholy in the other madrigals of Caracciolo's collection may also have a similar role to play in building up emotional fortitude and preparing the body for pestilential assault. In his famous *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton writes that "many men are melancholy by hearing Musick, but it is a pleasing melancholy that it causeth; and therefore to such as are discontent, in woe, fear, sorrow or dejected, it is a most present remedy; it expels care, alters their grieved minds, and easeth in an instant."⁷⁰ The wretched love verses in Caracciolo's collection, made sweet by music, can ease emotions of the same kind. And although Mithradatic interpretations of Aristotle postdate the *Decameron* by roughly two centuries, the constituent ideas about homeopathy and Pythagorean ethos were securely in place during the Middle Ages. Perhaps, then, we can imagine Caracciolo's *Primo libro* as a songbook for the plague, containing sixteenth-century versions of the kinds of songs sung by the *brigata*. And as

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, I 52a, trans. Richard Janko, 14-5.

⁷⁰ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, trans. and ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1938), Part 2 Section 2 Memb. 6 Subs. 4, p. 481.

the storytellers also observed religious feasts, the inclusion of two spiritual madrigals would be useful for those who wished to include piety in their recreation.

This is not to say, of course, that emotional homeopathy is without danger. Tragic emotions have long been known to overflow their bounds and strike down theatre-goers. According to Aeschylus's biographer, the apparition of the Furies in his tragedy *Eumenides* was so realistic and frightful that it caused children in the audience to swoon and pregnant women to spontaneously miscarry.⁷¹ Not only the emotional vividness of the tragedy, but also its subject matter had to be carefully considered. In the late fifth century BCE, Phrynichus infamously produced his play *Sack of Miletus* in Athens, shortly after the destruction of the title colony.⁷² Athenians had backed and encouraged the rebels of Miletus, but withdrew their support when the situation became increasingly difficult. The Persian overlords exacted their revenge on Miletus in the bloodiest of ways, and Athenians could not help but feel responsible and feared Persian reprisal. With memories of the incident still fresh in their minds, Phrynichus's Athenian audience became overwhelmed with pity and fear, and "burst into tears"; for this, the playwright was tried and fined a thousand drachmas in 493 for "for reminding [the Athenians] of a calamity that was their very own," and his play was banned.⁷³

Tragic emotions, like homeopathic medicines, had to be carefully ministered, especially to those who were already susceptible—recall Massa's warning that theriac

⁷¹ William M. Calder, III, "Vita Aeschyli 9: Miscarriages in the Theatre of Dionysos," *The Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 554-5.

⁷² Jennifer Wise, "Tragedy as 'An Augury of a Happy Life'," *Arethusa* 41 (2008): 392.

⁷³ Herodotus, *The History*, 6.21, trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 416-7.

could harm the young and those who are febrile. In his treatise on theriac and Mithridatium, Nicolas Houël offers this analogy: “The strength [of theriac] is greater than the strength of children and, therefore, easily dissolves and weakens their bodies and extinguishes their natural heat, just as too great a quantity of oil snuffs out the flame of a lantern.”⁷⁴ *Ut poesis musica*. Burton, while advocating melancholic music to sooth melancholy for some, advises against its use by the love-struck man “who capers in conceit all day long, and thinks of nothing else but how to make Jigs, Sonnets, Madrigals, in commendation of his Mistress”; for the inamorato, “Musick is most pernicious, as a spur to a free horse will make him run himself blind.”⁷⁵

Music can be a dangerous medicine indeed. In too strong a dose, works such as Caracciolo’s *Santo Guerrier*—replete with vivid affects and striking so close to home, in a manner of speaking—could weaken already ill-disposed listeners to disease and, like too much oil to a flame, extinguish their lives. But, extrapolating from some of the poetic theories emerging around the same time, such music could also fortify other listeners against disease in a way similar to the actions of the wonder drugs theriac and Mithridatium. Careful musical recreation, then, was a viable way to temper the imagination, delighting it with joy and inuring it with attenuated sadness and fear.

⁷⁴ Quant aux enfans, du tout il leur deffe[n]d l’usage de la Theriaque: pour-ce que, comme il dit, sa grandeur et vertu est plus grande que la vertu des enfans, et pour-ce facilement elle dissout et affoiblit leur corps, et estainct leur chaleur naturelle, tout ainsi co[m]me une trop grande quantité d’huile estaint la falmme d’une lanterne. Nicolas Houël, *Traité de la theriaque et mithridat, contenant plusieurs questions generales et particulieres* (Paris: Jean de Bordeaux, 1573), 8r.

⁷⁵ Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 2 Section 2 Memb. 6 Subs. 4, p. 481.

Conclusion

Plague took countless millions of lives across the centuries, sometimes depopulating entire human settlements. The horror of its quick lethality (Boccaccio writes that victims of plague “ate breakfast in the morning with their relatives, companions, and friends and then in the evening dined with their ancestors in the other world”¹) was undoubtedly compounded by its unpredictability. As Colin Jones writes, “Arbitrary, appearing and disappearing suddenly, cyclically and at whim, mocking human agency, threatening to make the first into the last, the disease often seemed an embodiment of Fortuna...”² We may never fully appreciate the psychological toll of pestilence, but it must surely have weighed on the minds of every European, from the patients, to the lucky survivors, and to the even luckier few who were not touched by the disease. Certainly, memories of plague can become divorced from the clinical facts, and terror is very often magnified in the imagination. For instance, although the Milanese necrologies recorded only a thousand or so casualties during the 1523 plague, the

¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

² Colin Jones, “Plague and its Metaphors in Early Modern France,” *Representations* 53 (1996), 98.

chronicler Gasparo Bugati estimated 100,000 deaths (nearly the entire population of Milan); in his description, grass had even started to reclaim the deserted city.³

But if plague embodied the figure of Fortuna, there was no indication that pre-modern men and women resigned themselves stoically to its capricious whims. As Randolph Starn writes,

On the graphs of historical demographers and economic historians, which extend over generations and even centuries, recurrent epidemics are likely to appear less the exception than the rule, all the more so when “lesser plagues” are identified in the company of the greater ones or in the intervals between them: sickness rather than health thus becomes the “normal” human condition. This chronic presence of disease suggests that we should not think of medieval and early modern societies as caught in the grip of plague-year panics or as waiting passively to be delivered by modern medicine. The newer accounts [of plague history] speak of “experienced populations,” of well-organized institutional responses, of resourceful strategies for survival.⁴

Such resourceful strategies were developed right from the start: the Sienese government banned gambling in 1348, in hopes that improved morality would find divine reward; in the same year, the civic authorities of Pistoia imposed travel bans and embargos on goods to limit contagion; flagellants took to the streets, zealously expiating their sins one lash at a time; and doctors, invoking venerable Galenic principles, prescribed healthy regimens, composed recipes for medicines and offered guidelines for surgery. And with each subsequent attack, Europeans developed more and increasingly sophisticated measures to combat the disease. Innovative policies in public health, informed by medical knowledge, were taken; the first quarantine was imposed in Ragusa as early as 1377, and the first

³ Samuel Kline Cohn Jr., *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21.

⁴ Randolph Starn, foreword to *Histories of a Plague Year: The Social and the Imaginary in Baroque Florence*, by Giulia Calvi, trans. Dario Biocca and Bryant T. Ragan, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), x.

lazarettos sprang up in northern Italy over the course of the fifteenth century.⁵ Better medicines were offered. The number of medical plague tracts mushroomed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the genre endured well into the eighteenth.⁶

The “resourceful strategies” against pestilence also included artistic monuments—buildings, stories, paintings, sculptures, and music—that arose from embattered imaginations and bore testament to both the disease and the will to overcome it. For, like quarantines and plague hospitals, such works of art were meant to be practical tools in the struggle against plague. Hence the title of this dissertation, “Music *for* the Times of Pestilence.” The musical works studied over the course of this dissertation were expected to do something *for* those who performed and listened to them. As I discussed in the opening chapter, doctors were explicit about music’s benefits. Because pre-modern minds and bodies were inextricably linked, sickness in one caused sickness in the other. The mere imagining of plague, it was believed, could bring on the disease in the body. Recreations such as stories, games, and joyful music distracted the mind from insidious imaginings and counteracted the harmful effects of fear. These were indeed “recreations” in a sense that may no longer resonate with us—something that creates again, that renews, that nourishes and restores.⁷ It is eminently logical, therefore, that music should

⁵ Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), 43; Claudine Herzlich and Janine Pierret, *Illness and Self in Society*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 13ff.

⁶ See Christiane Nockels Fabbri, “Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2006).

⁷ Cf. O.E.D.’s etymology of the word, which cites Lydgate’s *Minor Poems*, “Wyn ys a likour off grete recreacioun”; and Richard Surflet’s *Maison Rustique* (Charles Estienne and Jean Liebault, trans.), “The tree must haue some recreation giuen it in winter, after his great trauell in bringing forth of his fruite.”

have been discussed alongside salutary foods and drinks in plague treatises and taken its place beside theriac, Mithridatium, and other medicines on the pharmacy shelf. In a similar sense that we may take antibiotics *for* an illness, pre-moderns took music *for* the plague.

In less explicit ways, too, music was composed for pestilence. Spurred by the fear of contagion, citizens lost their sense of charity and abandoned their families, friends, and neighbours to the ravages of disease and the havoc of lawlessness. Such instances of abandonment were cemented by historical imaginations into a literary trope, and the word “pestilent” itself became a metaphorical stand-in for “injurious to public peace.”⁸ As I described in Chapter 4, music, as an important component of the anti-pestilential procession, can counteract this social upheaval. In the context of such a ritual, motets can reinforce a civic identity by invoking patrons that are particular to a locale or speaking to a shared suffering. Moreover, litanies, *Geisslerlieder*, and motets that partook of a similar call-and-response structure can help co-ordinate the movement of the participants, articulate their spatial arrangements, and suture together all the members of the body politic. Correlatively, in a private setting, songs similarly encouraged social interaction and fostered amity among family and friends—witness the merriment of Boccaccio’s story-tellers.

Animating these practical applications of music in healing the biological and civic bodies is a theoretical framework (described in Chapter 3) that saw music, as a principle, within all bodies in the universe. Whether within the biological body (with its various humours and organs), the political body (with its various corporate groupings), or the

⁸ Susan Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor,” in *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 58.

whole of the celestial body, disparate and even discordant elements should ideally function in a harmonious concord. In times of plague, such harmony faltered at every level: the planets misalign, the earth quakes, and beasts howl and turn the invisible disharmony into an audible cacophony. If pestilence, dealt ultimately by God, precipitated a top-down universal discord, then we can imagine concordant motets, under the same principle, as a bottom-up corrective to undo the universal imbalance, originating first from and healing human bodies, moving through to communal bodies, and finally, having reached the ears of saints, to appease the heavens as well.

Prescriptions for music, however, were not universal. I began the first chapter with a reference to Borges's story about a Chinese encyclopaedia, based on a wholly foreign epistemology, that divided the animal kingdom into incomprehensible categories such as "those that belong to the Emperor," "those that are embalmed," and "those that have just broken the water pitcher." If there ever were a Renaissance encyclopaedia of anti-pestilential objects and strategies, it might contain the following categories, among others: "times of the day to sleep," "things to put in an aromatic potpourri," "unsavoury people to avoid," "spots on the body to cut and bleed," "animals to cull," and "things that make you happy," the category to which music and other recreations belong. But if there were conversely a Renaissance encyclopaedia of pestilential causes, music, too, would be found therein under the heading "things that lead to impiousness and sin," perhaps next to "ointments and poisons," "inauspicious planetary configurations," and "things that corrupt the air."

General anxieties about music and its powerful corruptive influences on the part of religious authorities—anxieties that developed without relation to plague *per se*—

extended into discourses about pestilential treatments (see Chapter 1). Churchmen point to music as a cause of rather than a solution for plague. And uncertainties about music cannot be simply relegated to a conflict of interest between the preacher and the doctor. Musical works that evoke negative emotions—as in the case of Paolo Caracciolo’s madrigal, which vividly recalls a recent outbreak (Chapter 5)—can trouble the imagination and dispose to listeners to illness. At the same time, extrapolating from contemporary interpretations of Aristotelean poetics, such “provocations” through representations of frightful and piteous situations can also habituate the mind to distress, just as poisonous medicines can habituate the body to actual poison. By being exposed to “sad” music, the listener develops emotional “calluses” so that, when faced with real-life crises, the imagination would be less likely to become overwhelmed.

Such uncertainties surrounding music’s role as an anti-pestilential medicine give us a sense that, then, as now, disease management was not a straight-forward project. Voices from various quarters at various times emphasized different aspects of aetiology and advocated different and even contradictory practices. Music-making, as an anti-pestilential strategy, was inevitably caught in the negotiations between these voices and resisted simple heuristic application. In the face of such ambivalence, there may be only one firm conclusion about the place of music in times of pestilence: whether it ultimately helped or harmed, whether it was encouraged or forbidden, music was expected to have potent effects on listeners, to do something for those who made use of it. For performers and listeners today, such performative force behind “pestilential music” is likely no longer perceptible. For pre-modern Europeans, however, this music carried far greater urgency; they composed, performed, and listened to these works *for* their very lives.

Appendix 1

Michael Deiss, *Sebastianus vir Christianissimus*¹

In the following transcriptions, the breve is given the value of a whole note. Ligatures are indicated with square braces. Text underlay generally follows the original source. Original accidents are reproduced; no other instances of *ficta* have been supplied.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6, and the second system contains measures 7 through 12. Each system has four staves: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The music is in a single melodic line with a basso continuo line. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The text is: "Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus".

¹ Transcribed from *Novi atque catholici thesauri musicus*, (Venice: Gardane, 1568/4).

13

S. a - nus vir Chris - sti - a - nis - si - mus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus

A. Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Chri - sti - a - ni - si - mus

T. bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus quem o - ccul - ta -

B. Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus

20

S. quem o - ccul - ta - bat o - ccul - ta - bat quem

A. quem o - ccul - ta - bat o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat o -

T. - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta -

B. quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta -

26

S. o - ccul - ta - bat o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta -

A. ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta -

T. bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta -

B. bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem o - ccul - ta - bat mi - li - ta -

32

S. ris ha - bi - tus et cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e

A. ris ha - bi - tus et cla - mi - dis su - e et

T. ris ha - bi - tus et cla - mi - dis su - e et

B. ris ha - bi - tus et cla - mi - dis - su - e

38

S. et cla - mi dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi - dis su - e o -

A. cla - mi dis su - e et cla mi - dis su - e et cla - mi dis su - e o -

T. cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi dis su - e et cla - mi dis su - e

B. et cla - mi - dis su - e et cla - mi dis su - e o -

47

S. - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus a -

A. - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra -

T. o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum

B. - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum

54

S. spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra -

A. bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra -

T. bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum -

B. bra - bat o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

60

S. bat o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

A. - bat o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

T. bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

B. o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum bra - bat a - spec - tus

67 *Secunda pars*

S. E - rat e - nim in ser mo - ne ve -
 A. E - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax E -
 T. E - rat - e - nim - in ser - mo - ne
 B. E - rat

74
 S. - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e -
 A. rat e - - nim e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e -
 T. ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - - ne ve - rax e -
 B. e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax E - rat e - nim in ser -

80
 S. rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax ve - rax e -
 A. nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax E - rat e - nim in
 T. rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim
 B. mo - ne ve - rax E - rat e - nim in ser - mo -

86
 S. rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax ve - rax
 A. ser - mo - ne ve - rax e - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax et in iu -
 T. in ser - mo - ne ve - rax in ser - mo - ne ve - rax in ser - mo - ne ve - rax et in iu -
 B. -ne E - rat e - nim in ser - mo - ne ve - rax

93

S. et in iu-di-ci-o et in iu-di-ci-o et in iu-di-ci-o iu-

A. di-ci-o et in iu-di-ci-o iu-stus et in iu-di-ci-o iu-

T. di-ci-o iu-stus et in iu-di-ci-o et in iu-di-ci-o

B. et in iu-di-ci-o iu-stus et in iu-di-ci-o iu-

99

S. - stus et cla-mi-dis su-e et cla-mi-dis su-e et cla-

A. - stus et cla-mi-dis su-e et cla-mi-dis

T. ius-stus et cla-mi-dis su-e et cla-mi-

B. - stus et cla-mi-dis su-e et cla-mi

105

S. - mi-dis su e et cla-mi-dis su - e et cla-mi-dis

A. su - e et cla-mi-dis su - e et cla-mi-dis

T. dis su - e et cla-mi-dis su - e et cla-mi-dis su -

B. dis su - e et cla-mi-dis

111

S. su - e o - bum-bra - bat a - spec - tus o -

A. su - e o - bum-bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum-

T. - e o - bum-bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum-

B. su - e o - bum-bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum-

117

S. - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a -

A. bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat

T. bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra -

B. bra - bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat o - bum - bra - bat as -

123

S. - spec - - tus o - bum - bra - bat o - bum - bra -

A. a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat o - bum - bra - bat a -

T. bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a -

B. - spec - tus o - bum - bra -

128

S. bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - - tus

A. - spec - - tus

T. - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

B. bat a - spec - tus o - bum - bra - bat a - spec - tus

Appendix 2

Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane decus perene celi* (Superius and Bassus)¹

The image displays a musical score for two voices: Superius (S) and Bassus (B). The score is written in a mensural style with a common time signature (C). The lyrics are Latin and are placed below the corresponding vocal lines. The score is divided into five systems, each starting with a measure number (7, 14, 20, 28) in the Superius part. The lyrics are: "Se - ba - sti - a - ne de - cus pe - re - ne ce -", "- li", "au - di vo - ta au - di vo - ta", "- li au - di vo - - ta pre - ces - que sup - pli -", "pre - ces - que sup - pli can - ti - um nec au - di mo - do", "can - ti - - um sup - pli - can - ti - um nec au - do mo - do", "sed be - nig - nus i - lla ex - au - di quam", "sed be - nig - nus i - lla sed be - nig - nus i - lla ex - au - di quam".

S. Se - ba - sti - a - ne de - cus pe - re - ne ce -

B.

7

S. - li

B. Se - ba - sti - a - ne de - cus pe - re - ne ce - - - -

14

S. au - di vo - ta au - di vo - ta

B. - li au - di vo - - ta pre - ces - que sup - pli -

20

S. pre - ces - que sup - pli can - ti - um nec au - di mo - do

B. can - ti - - um sup - pli - can - ti - um nec au - do mo - do

28

S. sed be - nig - nus i - lla ex - au - di quam

B. sed be - nig - nus i - lla sed be - nig - nus i - lla ex - au - di quam

¹ Transcribed from London, Royal college of Music, MS 2037 (LonRC 2037).

36

S. po - tes de - o - rum rec - to - re at - que ho - mi - num

B. po - tes de - o - rum rec - to - re at - que ho - mi - num

44

S. ti - bi a - nnu en - - - - - te.

B. ti - bi a - nnu en - - - - - te

52 *Secunda pars*

S. Sur - gen - tem re - pri - me et re - pe - lle pe -

B. Sur - gen - tem re - pri - me et re - pe - lle pe - - - -

60

S. stem ne vis ser - pat et o - ppri - mat ca - du -

B. stem ne vis ser - - pat et o - ppri - mat ca - du - cos

67

S. cos mor - ta - les

B. et o - ppri - mat ca - du - cos mor - ta - - - les

73

S. sa - tis est su -

B. sa - tis est su - o pe - ri - re om - - - nes

79

S. o pe - ri - re fa - to om - - - - nes vi - o - len -

B. fa - to om - nes vi - o - len -

86

S. - ta mors fa - ce - scat tu - is au - spi - ci - is tu -

B. ta mors fa - ce - - scat tu - is au - spi - ci -

93

S. is au - spi - ci - is tu - o - que duc - - - tu

B. is tu - o - que duc - - - - - tu

99 *Tertia pars*

S. Mox e - sten - se ge - nus tu - e - re et ur - bem

B. Mox e - sten - se ge - nus tu - e - re et ur - bem quam

108

S. quam Al - phon - sus mo - de - ra - tur et gu - ber - -

B. Al - phon - sus mo - de - ra - tur et gu - ber - - - - nat

116

S. - - - nat At - que ha - be - nis ut tu - as

B. jus - ta et le - gi - ti - ma ma - nu At - que ha - be - nis

124

S. ti - bi so - spi - tes ca - na - mus lau - - -


B. ut - tu - as ti - bi so - spi - tes ca - na - mus lau - des


133

S. des At ti - bi de - fe - ra - mus u - ni vi - tam vi - tam

B. un - i vi - tam

140

S.  co - mo - da o - - pes la - res sa - lu - - tem

B.  co - mo-da o - pes la - res sa - lu - tem

Detailed description: This is a musical score for two voices, Soprano (S.) and Bass (B.), starting at measure 140. The Soprano part is written on a treble clef staff and features a melodic line with various note values including quarter, eighth, and half notes, along with rests. The Bass part is written on a bass clef staff and provides a harmonic accompaniment with a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes, some with slurs. The lyrics are in Latin: 'co - mo - da o - - pes la - res sa - lu - - tem' for the Soprano and 'co - mo-da o - pes la - res sa - lu - tem' for the Bass. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Appendix 3

Paolo Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*¹

C.
 San - to Guer-rier la cui ter -

A.
 La cui ter - re-na spo - glia San - to Guer-rier la cui ter

T.
 San - to Guer-rier la cui ter - re-na spo - glia san - to Guer -

Q.
 San-to Guer-rier La cui ter-re-na spo - glia la cui ter - re - na spo-glia

B.
 La cui ter-re-na spo - glia san - to Guer -

7
 C.
 re - na spo - glia Da gli stra - li pa -

A.
 re-na spo - glia la cui ter-re - na spo - glia Da gli stra - li

T.
 rier la cui ter - re - na spo - glia ter-re - na spo - glia

Q.
 san - to Guer-rier la cui ter-re-na spo - glia Da gli stra - li

B.
 rier la cui ter - re - na spo - - glia

¹ Transcribed from *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice: Scotto, 1582).

13

C. - ti si du - ro

A. pa - ti Da gli stra - li pa - ti si du - ro scem -

T. Da gli stra - li pa - ti si du - ro

Q. pa - ti Da - gli stral - li pa - ti si du - ro scem -

B. Da gli stra - li pa - ti si du - ro scem -

19

C. scem - pio Hogg - i'l prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to 'a dem - pio Che pri - a ti fe - ci non fi - a maich'io

A. pio Hogg - i'l prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to 'a dem - pio che priati fe - cion

T. scem - pio Hogg - i'l prin ci - pio di quel vo - to 'a dem - pio che pri - a ti fe ci e non fia

Q. - pio Hogg - i'l prin ci - pio di quel vo - to 'a dem pio che priati fe ci e non fia mai e

B. - pio Hoggi il prin ci - pio di quel vo - to a - dem - pio che priati fe - ci e non

24

C. scio - - glia prie - ghi'off - rir - ti'e di - ggiu - ni

A. fia mai ch'io scio - gli' prie - ghi off-rir - ti'e di - ggiu - ni va - so ch'a - cco - -

T. mai ch'io scio - glia prie - ghi'off-rir - ti'e di - ggiu - ni va - so ch'a - cco - -

Q. non fa mai ch'io scio - gli' prie - ghi'off-rir - ti'e di - ggiu - ni va - so ch'a - cco - -

B. fia mai ch'io scio - glia va - so ch'a - cco - glia

30

C. Le tue re-li-que tue re li que festa'e un no-vo tem pio Tu da Dio'im-pe - tra Tu da Dio'im-pe - tra

A. glia Le tue re-li-que fe - sta'e un no - vo tem - pio Tu da Dio'im-pe-tra che

T. glia Le tue re li-que re-li-que fes-ta'e un novo tem - pio

Q. - glia Le tue re-li-que fes - ta Tu da Dio im - pe - tra, *im pe-*

B. Le tu-e re-li-que e'un no - vo tem - pio Tu da Dio'im-pe - tra

35

C. che da me quest'em-pi - o ve - len ve - len mol - e - sto in sem-pi -

A. da me quest'em pi - o ve - len ve - len mo - les - - - to in sem-pi -

T. quest'em - pi - o ve - len mo - le - sto'in sem-pi -

Q. tra che da me quest'em - pi - o mo - le - sto in sem-pi -

B. che da me quest' em - pi - o ve - len mo - le - sto in sem-

41 *Secunda parte*

C. ter - - no to - glia Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - tà

A. ter - no to - glia Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - tà

T. ter - no to - glia Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu-mil-ta

Q. - ter - - no to - glia Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - tà

B. pi - ter - no to - glia d'hu - mil - tà

47 49

C. pie - no MI - LAN di tan-ta glo - ria

A. pi - e - no MI - LAN di tan-ta glo - ri - a di tan-ta glo -

T. pie - no MI - LAN di tan-ta glo - ria-si ri - pen - - te di

Q. pie - no di tan-ta glo - ria MI-LAN di tan-ta glo -

B. pie - no MI - LAN di tan-ta glo - ria di

52 54

C. si ri-pen - te ca - du - to ahi las - so ahi las - so'al

A. - ria si ri - pente ca-du - to ahi las - so las-so al - la mi -

T. tan - ta glo - ria si ri - pen - te ca - du - to ahi la - sso

Q. - ria-si ri - pen te ca - du - to ahi las - so al - la

B. tan - ta glo - ri - a si ri - pen - te cadu - to ahi las - so al - la

58 60

C. la mi - se - ria in se - no Hor che se de-spe - rar Hor che se de-spe - rar dal Rè su-per -

A. se - ria in se - no Hor che se de-spe-rar dal Rè su - per - no Hor

T. alla mi-se - ria in se - no Hor che se de-spe - rar *Hor che se de-spe*

Q. mi - se - ria in se - no Hor che se de-spe-rar

B. mi - se - ria in se - no Hor che se de-spe - rar Hor che se de-spe

63

C. no se non che vol - to non che vol-to al po - pol

A. che se de-spe-ra dal Rè su - per - no se non che vol - to se non che vol - to al po - pol suo

T. rar dal Rè dal Rè su - per - no se non che vol - to se non che vol-to'al po - pol suo

Q. Hor che se de-spe-rar dal Rè su-per-no Se non che vol - to al po - pol

B. rar dal Rè su - per - no Se non che vol - to se non che vol - to po - pol su -

68

C. suo do - len - te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca -

A. do - len - - te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - no

T. do - len - te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca -

Q. suo do - len - te ca -

B. - o do - len - te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca - cci all'in - fer - na ca -

73

C. cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no Que - sta pes - te cru - del

A. ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no Quest - a pes - te cru -

T. cci all'in fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no

Q. cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no que - sta pe - ste cru - del

B. cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no que - sta pe - ste cru -

List of Works Discussed and Their Sources

Composer and Work	Known Sources & Select Modern Transcriptions
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Chapter 2

Michael Deiss,
*Sebastianus, vir
Christianissimus*

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Maistre Jhan,
Sebastiane decus perenne celi

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Appendix 2

-
- Adrian Willaert,
Armorum fortissime ductor
- (Incomplete) Modena, Duomo, Biblioteca e Archivio Capitolare, MS Mus. IX (ModD 9)
- Treviso, Biblioteca Capitolare del Duomo, 8 (TrevBC 8)
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Chapter 3

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- Guillaume Dufay,
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O martyr Sebastiane /
O quam mira refulsit gratia /
Gloria et honore*
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Franchinus Gaffurius, <i>Virgo dei digna</i>	Milan, Archivio della veneranda fabbrica del Duomo, Sezione Musicale, MS 2269, Librone 1 (MILD 1)
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Franchinus Gaffurius, <i>O beate Sebastiane</i>	Milan, Archivio della veneranda fabbrica del Duomo, Sezione Musicale, MS 2269, Librone 1 (MILD 1)
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Chapter 5

Paolo Caracciolo,
Santo Guerrier

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1582)

Appendix 3

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The bulk of these primary documents comes from one of three sources: 1) The digitized facsimiles collection of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*; 2) The Wellcome Library, London; 3) The collection of nearly 200 plague manuscripts and incunabula gathered in a series on plague treatises in *Sudhoffs Archiv* (Sudhoff, Karl, ed. "Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren nach der Epidemie des 'schwarzen todes' 1348." In *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*. Volumes 4-17, 1910-1925), abbreviated as *SA* below.

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