

# Plague and Music in the Renaissance

Remi Chiu



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Plague, a devastating and recurring affliction throughout the Renaissance, had a major impact on European life. Not only was pestilence a biological problem, but it 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 medical, spiritual, and civic perspectives, this book uncovers the place of music – whether regarded as an indispensable medicine or a moral poison that exacerbated outbreaks – in the management of the disease. This original musicological approach further reveals how composers responded, in their works, to the discourses and practices surrounding one of the greatest medical crises in the premodern age. Addressing topics such as music as therapy, public rituals and performance, and music in religion, the volume also provides detailed musical analysis throughout to illustrate how pestilence affected societal attitudes toward music.

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## Introduction

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.

Paolo Bisciola<sup>1</sup>

Plague, after a near seven-century absence from Europe, returned with an astonishing ferocity in the autumn of 1347. It blew in from the Orient along the trade routes linking East and West, making landfall in several Italian port cities. Within three years, the plague spread across Europe, including Scandinavia and Russia, and reached parts as remote as Greenland. According to contemporary reports, swellings as large as an apple appeared near the groins and armpits of victims – sure signs of impending death. Mortality records for the period are difficult to come by, but historians estimate that in many places, plague claimed between one-third and one-half the population, and in a few regions, the death toll was as high as 60 percent. Few could have guessed in 1347 that the near-apocalyptic explosion of plague merely announced the start of a pandemic, the second on record, that would reign over the continent for the next three and a half centuries (the first occurred around the Mediterranean and in Europe, ca. 541–750). Large and infamous outbreaks, such as the disaster in Milan between 1576 and 1578 or the Great Plague of London in 1665, were connected by smaller outbreaks that, when tallied together, reveal that multiple parts of Europe contended with the disease virtually every year until 1700.<sup>2</sup> In the latter half of the fourteenth century, any given locale was struck around once per decade. Then, mysteriously, cycles of recurrence lengthened to roughly once per century, until finally, save a few sporadic outbreaks, the disease seemed to vanish from the continent.<sup>3</sup>

A third pandemic began in the last years of the nineteenth century and lasted until the middle of the twentieth century, this time afflicting mostly China and India. It was at the start of this pandemic in 1894 that two rival

<sup>1</sup> Paolo Bisciola, *Relazione verissima del progresso della peste di Milano* (1577), 3v–4r.

<sup>2</sup> Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 2:375–449.

<sup>3</sup> Cohn, “Epidemiology of the Black Death,” 74–75.

biologists – the Franco-Swiss Alexandre Yersin, representing the school of Pasteur, and the Japanese Shibasaburo Kitasato, student of Robert Koch – independently discovered the bacillus responsible for plague, initially named *Bacterium pestis*, but renamed *Yersinia pestis* in 1954 in the Frenchman’s honor. Its vector was discovered in Karachi in 1898 by Paul-Louis Simond. Fleas, infected by the blood of diseased black rats, are responsible for transmitting plague to humans; the plague organism creates a mechanical blockage in the esophagus of the flea, forcing it to regurgitate blood into its hosts as it attempts to feed. 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 septicemic, a form caused by an infection of the bloodstream, which generally results in death within twenty-four hours of the first symptoms.

The majority opinion holds that *Yersinia pestis* was the same bacterial agent responsible for the earlier pandemics. Historical descriptions of swellings on the body correspond to the characteristic symptoms of the bubonic plague. Some period medical reports also described difficulty with breathing and blood in the lungs, pointing to the pneumonic form. Genomic testing carried out by microbiologists since the 1990s on the dental pulp of plague corpses have also pointed consistently to the same pathogen.<sup>4</sup> Still, some dissenting voices – chief among them Samuel Cohn Jr.’s – contest that some epidemiological characteristics of *Yersinia pestis*, such as the life cycle of fleas or the speed of transmission, simply do not match up with historical records.<sup>5</sup> This has necessitated a second look at other possible strains of the bacterium and vectors of transmission (different kinds of rodents, different kinds of fleas). Such complications are redoubled by the loose usage of the word “pestilence” on the part of premodern writers as a catch-all term for a wide variety of epidemic catastrophes that may have included anthrax, smallpox, measles, typhus, or some Ebola-like virus.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of whatever retrospective diagnosis we may make today, *Yersinia pestis* was certainly not the disease experienced by premodern Europeans. As Andrew Cunningham writes evocatively,

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the methods and results of studies in forensic microbiology from the 1990s to 2012, see Bolton, “Looking for *Yersinia Pestis*.”

<sup>5</sup> See in particular Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*; “Historian and the Laboratory”; “Epidemiology of the Black Death.”

<sup>6</sup> Scott and Duncan, *Biology of Plagues*; Shrewsbury, *History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*; Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*, 62–63.

[A]t the moment Kitasato and Yersin decided to go into their respective laboratories carrying their blood and tissue specimens, they were working with ancient bubonic plague. But by the time they came out of their laboratories, they had given plague a new identity . . . The identities of pre-1894 plague and post-1894 plague have become incommensurable. We are simply unable to say whether they were the same, since the criteria of ‘sameness’ have changed.<sup>7</sup>

Matters of technological capabilities or clinical expertise aside, plague, broadly speaking, simply had no concrete ontological existence as a disease in the premodern world.<sup>8</sup> Under the inherited Galenic-Hippocratic model of health, doctors saw illness not generated by external trauma as a disturbance of the normal balance of an individual’s four humors – blood, phlegm, and yellow and black biles – that impeded the body’s vital functions. Where disease entities (rabies, plague, phthisis, and so on) were named, they were described and classified by causes and physiological signs – that is, by the usual conditions that preceded the disease and the usual symptoms that followed.<sup>9</sup> Disease itself, however, remained rooted in the hydraulics of individual bodies, not out there in the world as some invasive entity. In the case of plague, the symptoms, in addition to buboes and pulmonary distress, included fever, chills, vomiting, pustules, and carbuncles.<sup>10</sup> The natural cause was corrupt air, or miasma, possibly generated by improperly treated refuse, earthquakes, or meteorological and astrological events. Ultimately, like other epidemic diseases in the Christian world, plague was the providence of a wrathful God.

Some older narratives of plague paint a picture of paralyzing despair, colored by the authors’ own grim attitudes toward medieval life. Philip Ziegler’s popular history of the Black Death, for example, described a pre-1347 European population for whom

there was nothing except despairing fear, a total and disastrous lack of confidence in what the future might hold for them . . . The people were physically in no state to resist a sudden and severe epidemic and psychologically they were attuned to an expectation and supine acceptance of disaster. They lacked the will to fight; almost, one might think, they welcomed the termination of their troubles.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cunningham, “Transforming Plague,” 241–242.

<sup>8</sup> Temkin, “Scientific Approach to Disease,” 446.

<sup>9</sup> Siraisi, “Disease and Symptom as Problematic Concepts,” 217–222. It was the development of contagion theories and specific medical treatments in the sixteenth century, especially in confrontation with the “new” disease syphilis, that spurred an ontological view of disease; see Arrizabalaga, Henderson, and French, *Great Pox*, 258–277.

<sup>10</sup> Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*, 57–62.      <sup>11</sup> Ziegler, *Black Death*, 31–32.

And even had they the will to fight when plague struck, “it would have been miraculous if the medical profession had met the Black Death with anything much more useful than awestruck despair. Their efforts were as futile as their approach was fatalistic. Not only were they well aware that they could do little or nothing to help but they considered it self-evident that an uncharitable Deity had never intended that they should.”<sup>12</sup> Similar assumptions about the pessimism of the age colored some evaluations of fourteenth-century artistic endeavors in response to the disease. Millard Meiss, for example, assuming the same zeitgeist of “renunciation of life”<sup>13</sup> in his landmark survey of Florentine and Sieneese paintings in the wake of the Black Death, argued that the trauma of the mid-century outbreaks and the subsequent social collapse created a psychological milieu that put a halt to developments in naturalism, human expression, and realistic narrative and, instead, spurred a return to self-abnegation, religion, ritual, and the supernatural, presented in a more alienating, formalized, and hierarchical mode associated with the Dugento.

Newer research that takes a broader view of plague as a recurrent condition and that considers plague in premodern terms rather than as *Yersinia pestis*, against which Renaissance medicine provided no possible defense, has revised such pessimistic positions. These new narratives show resilience, rather than supine acceptance. They show the quick recovery of communities devastated by plague, aided by strong interpersonal bonds of their citizens.<sup>14</sup> They show physicians combining first-hand experience with inherited medical paradigms in their prescriptive treatises<sup>15</sup> and sanitation officials developing new strategies for public health – the building of hospitals, and the establishment of necrologies and civic sanitation procedures.<sup>16</sup> They contend that what Meiss interpreted as a reactionary return to the Dugento in art testified not to the pessimism of the age, but to a sudden flood of new patrons interested in familial- and self-memorialization that necessitated a streamlined production of simpler, regimented figures.<sup>17</sup> As Randolph Starn writes,

<sup>12</sup> Ziegler, *Black Death*, 53.   <sup>13</sup> Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena*, 74.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Bowsky, “Impact of the Black Death upon Sieneese Government”; Wray, *Communities and Crisis*.

<sup>15</sup> Chase, “Fevens, Poisons, and Apostemes,” 155, 160–163; Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*, 234–238.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Laughran, “Body, Public Health and Social Control”; Crawshaw, *Plague Hospitals*.

<sup>17</sup> Cohn, “Piété et commande d’œuvres d’art,” 567–570. More recent work on dating shows that some of the examples that Meiss cites for the post-plague aesthetic “turn” were actually executed before the Black Death; see Van Os, “Black Death and Sieneese Painting,” 240.

“[the] 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.”<sup>18</sup>

This book is about music and music-making as one of those resourceful strategies for surviving plague. It treats music as an urgent and active curative with material consequences for the health and well-being of those assailed by the horrible disease. It shows that the production of music was animated by the changing experiences and knowledge of pestilence, and that it reflected not a defeatist or reactionary psychology, but a practical resilience on the part of Renaissance Europeans. It makes no great claims about aesthetic breaks in music on account of trauma; rather, it focuses on how traditional beliefs about music became embroiled in the new discourses about plague and how established musical styles, techniques, and practices were marshaled up to combat the disease. While much research has been conducted on the political, economic, medical, and even literary and artistic consequences of plague, the connections between pestilence and music have been comparatively understudied. Most germane to the topic to date is Christopher Macklin’s oeuvre, including his 2008 dissertation, his 2010 article on *Stella celi extirpavit*, and his 2016 article on the composition of a Plague Mass.<sup>19</sup> A large part of Macklin’s focus is on medieval sacred monophony, particularly in English sources. In the dissertation, Macklin describes many types of works that reflect a preoccupation with plague, including flagellant songs from the fourteenth century, *laude*, and, more centrally, Masses such as the *Salus populi* Mass and the *Recordare* Mass. In the earlier article, a comparative source study, Macklin traces the early Franciscan history of *Stella celi*, a hymn invoking Mary’s help against the plague, and its reflection of late medieval beliefs about the disease. In the most recent article, Macklin traces the process by which liturgists assembled and disseminated the text and music of the *Recordare* Mass in the late Middle Ages.

One of the barriers to entry into the topic of music and plague is identifying a repertory of “pestilential” works – pieces inspired by a particular epidemic, that textually respond to the disease, or that were

<sup>18</sup> Starn, “Foreword,” x.

<sup>19</sup> Macklin, “Musica sanat corpus per animam”; “Plague, Performance”; “Stability and Change in the Composition of a ‘Plague Mass.’”

used in plague-tide rituals. The difficulties establishing the first criterion are considerable. As Macklin acknowledged, the biographical circumstances of composers and the provenance of compositions from the period in question are, more often than not, speculative at best. At the same time, record-keeping of epidemic outbreaks – particularly the smaller ones – was incomplete.<sup>20</sup> Connecting a work to a specific outbreak, consequently, becomes a matter of highly conjectural triangulation.

The next two criteria put us on slightly firmer ground. Texts that explicitly mention plague – particularly prayers that request intervention against the scourge – present little challenge to identification. Peripherally, however, there are antiphons and other devotional texts that honor particular intercessors who have known apotropaic powers against pestilence, such as St. Roch or St. Sebastian, but that do not explicitly reference the disease. There are also works that allude elliptically to plague in poetic tropes. Anne Walters Robertson, for example, suggests the possibility that Machaut's motet *Fons tocius superbie*, which presents the images of the "dragon," "scorpion," and "most evil beast" in the context of the deadly sins, might refer to the dread disease, depending on which part of the 1340s we date the work (Kurt Markstrom, on the other hand, reads the motet as an allegory of the Hundred Years War).<sup>21</sup> With such rich imprecisions attendant on textual interpretations, the boundaries of the category "pestilential music" become hazier still. As for music performed in the rites of plague, we must interpolate between surviving prescriptive manuals – which can provide a great deal of specificity for prescribed pieces of music (or the text thereof, at least), but remain silent on the ad hoc music that accrued to the rituals – and descriptive chronicles – which often tell us only that music was performed, not which music was performed.

The works studied in this book cover the range of "secure" to "speculative" membership in the category of "pestilential music" (a listing of polyphony associated with plague is provided in the appendix). Most explicitly mention plague and make reference to St. Sebastian, who, among plague protectors, is the best represented in Renaissance music. The works discussed are not meant to be an exhaustive coverage of all "pestilential music"; rather, they were chosen to illustrate aspects of the culture of plague. I have elected to focus on Catholic Europe during the

<sup>20</sup> Macklin, "Musica sanat corpus per animam," 35.

<sup>21</sup> Robertson, *Guillaume de Machaut and Reims*, 138; Markstrom, "Machaut and the Wild Beast," 19–26.

period 1400–1600 for multiple reasons. Practically, it allows me to stake new grounds outside of Macklin’s studies. With only a few exceptions (most notably, the discussion of Paracelsus in Chapter 2), I have chosen to limit my historical witnesses to those from Catholic traditions in order to present – as much as possible, and if only at the broadest levels – a coherent, operative theological understanding of illness throughout the book. The chronological choice, too, is meant to help maintain a consistent picture of pestilential “habitus.” During this period – half a century on from the first waves of outbreaks – there was a growing sense of experience and habituation for the professionals charged with plague management. We can, therefore, speak of general routines and patterns of response to plague for this period. While there were some debates on the merits of specific treatments (whether bloodletting is useful for plague, for example<sup>22</sup>), there was nevertheless a great deal of continuity in medical knowledge throughout Europe. Such conditions allow us to more easily interpret the musical evidence through contextual extrapolation.

The increasing sense of experience and routinization is evident in surviving medical plague treatises, a corpus of writing that began to crop up in the middle of the fourteenth century, authored usually, though not exclusively, by university-trained doctors and surgeons. Plague treatises were not entirely new at the time of the Black Death, but prior to 1348, they were few in number and usually circulated as a part of larger medical *compendia*.<sup>23</sup> Aided by the printing press, the number of these plague treatises increased 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.

Plague treatises varied greatly in length, from a few to a few hundred pages, and they varied greatly in emphasis as well. Some were highly philosophical and delved deeply into theology or astrology to explain the remote causes of plague, while others comprised straightforward lists of medical recipes.<sup>25</sup> The most typical and balanced of the treatises consisted of a discussion of causes and signs of the disease, including the progression

<sup>22</sup> Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 15–18. <sup>23</sup> Nockels Fabbri, “Continuity and Change,” 19.

<sup>24</sup> Slack, “Mirrors of Health,” 239. <sup>25</sup> Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 1.

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, guides to 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. Judging by the dedications and content of these treatises – some authors provided cheaper alternatives to expensive medications, for example<sup>26</sup> – there was a wide range of intended audiences for these works, from other medical practitioners to lay readers of varying socio-economic circumstances.

In his study of French plague treatises, which do not differ substantively from other European treatises, Colin Jones has identified three corporate groups whose voices can be discerned: “medical practitioners, with their concern for health; churchmen, with their preoccupation with morality and spiritual welfare; and the representatives of secular authority, with their concern with community welfare and the workings of authority.”<sup>27</sup> Each group developed specific strategies to preserve health in all three bodies: the biological, the spiritual, and the civic. Doctors, armed with venerable Galenic principles, offered their expertise on diagnosis, regimen, and medicine. Religious authorities, treating plague as divine punishment for baneful or pernicious behavior, 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. This is not to say that there was a strict division of labor or spheres of concerns among the three groups. Typically, a religiously trained author would not exclude natural remedies from his treatise, nor would a medical doctor reject penitence and prayers. And doctors who occupied offices such as “royal physician” or “civic health official” would be in a good position to safeguard both individual and public health.

Music, explicitly and implicitly, played a role in the healing of all three bodies under pestilential assault. Chapter 1 begins with a survey of the medical value of music that was readily described in many plague treatises, particularly in the sections on regimen. Many authors promoted music-making as a salubrious recreation, placing it on the pharmacy shelf alongside anti-pestilential foodstuffs and other medicines. The promotion of music was not universal, however. Authors of religiously skewed treatises

<sup>26</sup> Wray, “Boccaccio and the Doctors,” 305–306; Nockels Fabbri, “Continuity and Change,” 32–38.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, “Plague and Its Metaphors,” 106.

sometimes took an ascetic stance on music and cautioned against its use. The remainder of the chapter examines how this negative view of music in their purportedly “medical” writing is consistent with prohibitions against temporal recreations doled out in sermonic literature, and how some devotional music might be understood as a rapprochement in this conflict between the doctor and the churchman.

Where the first chapter deals with the practical aspects of musical therapy, the second chapter turns to the esoteric side of premodern medicine and its relationship to music. While the beneficial connections between music (as a metaphysical concept) and health in premodern occult thought have been well rehearsed by D.P. Walker and Gary Tomlinson, among others,<sup>28</sup> the malignant relationships between music and the propagation of disease have not yet been extensively explored. The first part of the chapter will wade into this new territory and examine the phenomenon of sympathetic resonance as an explanatory conceit for Renaissance theories of contagion – with regard to infectious diseases in general, and plague in particular. We will see that the ways in which doctors explained and rhetorically deployed the musical concept yielded different models for the transmission of disease in the Renaissance, from ones based on natural magic to those that looked forward to modern germ theory. In the second half of Chapter 2, the focus turns to a different, but related, aspect of sympathy as “amity” or “friendship.” As the metaphysical harmony undergirding the universe broke down in times of pestilence, so too did the harmony between friends, kin, and compatriots. We will look at the anxieties surrounding this social breakdown and the role that music may play in restoring the body politic.

Chapter 3 investigates how the restoration of the body politic led to another conflict of interest between spiritual and medical-civic authorities. One of the most common practices in Christian communities during outbreaks was to hold public penitential processions. These crisis rituals aimed most obviously to placate a wrathful God, but many of its constituent elements – such as the use of relics, the planned routes, and the music performed – also articulated the communal identity of the participants and aimed to restore the broken social ties described in the previous chapter. These popular rituals, however, often came under the disapprobation of civic magistrates who, fearing contagion, sought to limit congregations of

<sup>28</sup> Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*; Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*; Voss, “Natural Magic of Marsilio Ficino”; Gouk, “Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits”; Copenhaver, “Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic”; for a study of the musical philosophy in Ficino’s commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, see Prins, *Echoes of an Invisible World*.

people. We will look at the ingenious solution to this problem by Carlo Borromeo, who, during an outbreak in Milan, encouraged citizens to sing from their doors and windows in order to collectively perform the public rituals while quarantined inside their own homes.

Chapter 4 is a study of the cult of St. Sebastian. Taking together recent research in art history with an examination of the liturgy and devotional songs that celebrate the saint, the chapter explores the circuitous way by which Sebastian, who neither contracted nor cured anyone of plague in his lifetime, became one of the most revered protectors against pestilence. One understudied facet of the saint's persona is his military history and patronage of soldiers, which, though eclipsed by his thaumaturgic powers against disease beginning in the fourteenth century, nevertheless interacted with his anti-pestilential function. The reconstitution of this cultic layer of the saint, in turn, reveals the contemporary etiological beliefs about plague embedded in the semiotics of its representation.

The object of study in the fifth and final chapter is Paolo Caracciolo's *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci*, published by Scotto in 1582. Amid settings of Petrarchan poetry and other amorous texts in the collection are a series of four works, headed by the spiritual madrigal *Santo Guerrier*, that make reference to a major outbreak in Milan between the years 1576 and 1578. These songs bring up important questions about the value of patronage of pestilential arts and monuments, as well as the medical value of commemoration – the act of remembering tragedy that may have vital repercussions on health.

Throughout the book, close readings of individual “pestilential” works ground the contextual discussions. These readings aim to show how broader concerns in the medical, religious, and civic discourses about plague find their way into the texts and the structures of the music and, more importantly, how this music that responds to the intricacies of pestilential thought and practices can be useful – as medicine, as spiritual correctives, as ritual tools – in the combat against plague.

# 1 | Medicine for the Body and the Soul

In his sixteenth-century plague treatise, the physician Niccolò 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 (such as those of beautiful and respectable women), to wear lovely and colorful silken garments, and to look at silver vessels and to wear rings and gems, especially those with properties that resist plague and poison.<sup>1</sup>

To our modern eyes, Niccolò'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 therapy" – which today are not medical commonplaces in any event – this passage of Niccolò's plague tract seems to be no more than well-intentioned encouragement to "stay positive" or to "relax." We may further be tempted to dismiss Niccolò'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 encyclopedia that so delighted Foucault and "shattered the familiar landmarks of [his] thought" seems particularly apposite.<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> Massa, *Liber de febre pestilentiali*, 39r. Translations of plague treatises are my own, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *Order of Things*, xv.

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.”<sup>3</sup> “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.”<sup>4</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*, to understand the propinquity of music, pills, stories, bloodletting, and well-appointed gardens in anti-pestilential prescriptions, as well as the connection between fear, imagination, and disease, we need to recover the very site of their propinquity – to retrace the anatomical map of the premodern body and the psychosomatic bond that held together its faculties.

### **Imaginatio facit casum**

Music’s place in the pestilential pharmacopoeia rested on the tight bond between the premodern processes of perception and cognition, and the material body. 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 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*

<sup>3</sup> Borges, “Analytical Language of John Wilkins,” 141.    <sup>4</sup> Foucault, *Order of Things*, xv.

<sup>5</sup> For a cogent and succinct description of these and other inner sensitive faculties, see Harvey, *Inward Wits*, 43–47, and Pico della Mirandola, *On the Imagination*.

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.”<sup>6</sup>

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 own body through this *vis imaginativa*. Another power, the *vis extimativa*, extracts intentions and forms judgments upon the materials in the *imaginatio* based on either 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 are not mere “mental states” nor do they merely create “mental illness” in our modern-day sense of the term. In the pre-Cartesian world, there was a psychosomatic two-way traffic by which the mind could affect physical health and vice versa.<sup>7</sup> In the *Isagoge*, Johannitius thus describes the relationship between the accidents of the soul and bodily health:

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.<sup>8</sup>

The passions disturb the balance of humors and circulate inner vital heat, and such movements of heat within the body can have powerful consequences. Cautioning against the negative affections (especially fear) in his 1504 plague tract, Gaspar Torrella 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

<sup>6</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *On the Imagination*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Montaigne describes this phenomenon as a “close stitching of mind to body, each communicating its fortunes to the other”; Montaigne, “On the Power of the Imagination,” 181.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 43.

natural human state, for it freezes the entire body, dims the spirit, blunts ingenuity, impedes reason, obscures judgment, and dulls the memory.<sup>9</sup>

In short, negative affects can make one sick and stupid.

In premodern medicine, these powerful accidents were classified under the category *res non naturales* (things that are external to, but nevertheless affect the body) in distinction to *res naturales* (all the things that constitute the human body, such as the humors, the elements, and the organs) and *res contra naturam* (diseases and their causes). The non-naturals were generally six in number and included (1) air, (2) food and drink, (3) motion and rest, (4) sleep and waking, (5) repletion and evacuation, and (6) the passions. In theory, one could preserve or restore health by manipulating the nonnaturals; a carefully controlled regimen of food, drink, exercise, and passions can help stave off or even reverse illness. Niccolò Massa's caution against imagination and fear was, 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 [her] womb."<sup>10</sup> So that there is no doubt regarding the power of the imagination, Jacme invokes the authority of the Bible:

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.<sup>11</sup>

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, postmortem, her heart was dissected and was found to contain three little stones, each carved with the Nativity scene: baby Jesus, Mary at the

<sup>9</sup> Torrella, *Qui cupit a peste non solum preservari*, B2v.

<sup>10</sup> Jacme d'Agramont, "Regiment de preservacio," 84.

<sup>11</sup> Jacme d'Agramont, "Regiment de preservacio," 84.

manger, and Joseph with a white dove.<sup>12</sup> Her habitual and concentrated meditation had etched 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.”<sup>13</sup> All things considered, the *imaginatio* is a potent sensory faculty. Not only can it “wander” over forms that are absent from immediate sensation, but it can also conjure formal hybrids “such as cannot be brought to light by nature,” according to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.<sup>14</sup> 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 at hand, was thought to be enough to bring on buboes.<sup>15</sup>

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. Niccolò 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup> When plague broke out in Pistoia in 1348, civic authorities sought to control the soundscape of the city precisely for that reason. On May 2, a city ordinance was issued banning, among other things, town criers and drummers from summoning any citizen of Pistoia to a funeral or corpse visitation, under penalty of ten denari.<sup>18</sup> 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

<sup>12</sup> 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; Société des Bollandistes, “Vita beatae Margaritae virginis,” 27–28; Frugoni, “Female Mystics, Visions, and Iconography,” 139.

<sup>13</sup> Houël, *Traité de la peste*, 17r. <sup>14</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *On the Imagination*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, “Regimen bonum ad praeservandum de pestilencia,” 72.

<sup>16</sup> Massa, *Liber de febre pestilentiali*, 39r. One could theorize 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.

<sup>17</sup> Jacme d’Agramont, “Regiment de preservacio,” 84–85.

<sup>18</sup> Chiappelli, “Gli ordinamenti sanitari,” 11–12; translation adapted from Horrox, *Black Death*, 197–198; see also Macklin, “Musica sanat corpus per animam,” 30–34.

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 honored by their heirs at their burial in any way they please.<sup>19</sup>

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 June 4, 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.”<sup>20</sup>

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, storytelling, beautiful objects, and joyous music. Such prescriptions appear in the earliest of 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 of songs and minstrelsy and other pleasurable tales without tiring yourselves out, and all the delightful things that bring anyone comfort.<sup>21</sup>

Similar prescriptions can be found throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries across Europe. One German writer champions the use of stories

<sup>19</sup> Chiappelli, “Gli ordinamenti sanitari,” 11–12; translation adapted from Horrox, *Black Death*, 197–198; emphasis mine. Such funerary restrictions were common throughout the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and similar civic ordinances multiplied in the late sixteenth century.

<sup>20</sup> Chiappelli, “Gli ordinamenti sanitari,” 20; translation adapted from Horrox, *Black Death*, 201.

<sup>21</sup> Tommaso del Garbo, *Consiglio contro la pistolenza*, 40–41; translation adapted from Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 175.

and music, writing that they, along with “good hope and imagination” are “often more useful than a doctor and his instruments.”<sup>22</sup> 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, jewelery, and all sorts of other ornaments of gold, silver, and precious gems be worn, so that the soul may be uplifted by such cheerfulness.<sup>23</sup>

The French doctor Nicolas de Nancel personally recommends that

[B]efore 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.<sup>24</sup>

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

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, au 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 . . .<sup>25</sup>

Writing in 1565, Borgarucci calls for “music (*suoni*), games, and comedies,”<sup>26</sup> and Giovanni Battista da Napoli likewise urges the use of games, music, song (*suoni e canti*), and stories to pass the time.<sup>27</sup> Numerous prescriptions of music, beautiful clothing, and gems with occult powers can be found into the seventeenth century.

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous, “Helmstedter Kodex 783 (1405),” 89.

<sup>23</sup> Salius, *De praeservatione a pestilentia*, n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Nicolas de Nancel, *Discours tres ample de la peste*, 2:137.

<sup>25</sup> Nicolas de Nancel, *Discours tres ample de la peste*, 2:156.

<sup>26</sup> Borgarucci, *Trattato di peste*, 100.

<sup>27</sup> Giovanni Battista da Napoli, *Breve et utile trattato*, 11v.

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 other nonnaturals such as food, drink, exercise, and rest. 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.

Third, recommendations for music often accompany suggestions of adorning a home with beautiful furnishings and decorations, and it 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. The authors thereby impart a sense of domesticity and seem to advocate music-making in private, rather than public, contexts. 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."<sup>28</sup> 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.

The doctors' general consensus on the value of music in times of plague, however, did not go unchallenged. In an etiological paradigm where spiritual and physical health were intimately linked, religious authorities claimed at least equal, if not higher, stakes in the battle against disease.

<sup>28</sup> Houël, *Traité de la peste*, 17r.

While clergymen found little to fault in the medical opinions on air, diet, surgery, or drugs, they were more ambivalent about the treatment of the passions – particularly with music and other “frivolous” delights. To expose the roots of the disagreement on musical healing, it might be helpful to consider the clinical case of the artist Hugo van der Goes and the ways in which music came under religious purview.

### **The Case of Hugo van der Goes (1440–1482)**

According to the chronicles of Gaspar Ofhuys, a member of the Red Cloister near Brussels, brother Hugo suffered an episode of mental illness around 1480.<sup>29</sup> One evening, as Hugo was traveling home from Cologne, he began to complain to his companions that he was a lost soul destined for eternal damnation and became intent on suicide. When they reached Brussels, a prior was summoned to treat the tormented artist. Encouraged by the biblical story of David and Saul, the prior prescribed music to his ward:<sup>30</sup>

[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.<sup>31</sup>

Although, by Ofhuys’s account, this course of treatment had little effect, it appears that Hugo, having likely completed some paintings after this episode, was not wholly incapacitated by his madness. Ofhuys 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.”

<sup>29</sup> McCloy, “Ofhuys Chronicle,” 84.

<sup>30</sup> 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 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.

<sup>31</sup> McCloy, “Ofhuys Chronicle,” 20.

This phrenitis, he suspects, was caused by the painter's consumption of melancholy-inducing foods and strong wine, which further troubled the passions of his soul. Moreover, Ofhuys writes that we can also speak of his illness as divine and didactic providence: 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.

Hugo's case reveals a fluid interchange of terms and ideas between what is putatively religious and moral, and what is natural and medical. Prior Thomas treats the biblical story of David and Saul as a medical episode and draws from it a therapeutic precedent. The solutions he prescribes – melodies and recreative spectacles – are in turn also found in the doctor's medicine chest. On his part, 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 providence. The conflation of these two terms lies precisely at the heart of the premodern etiology 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.<sup>32</sup> In the encounter between this pagan naturalism and Christianity, ancient medicine was subsumed by the Christian church under God's work.<sup>33</sup> 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."<sup>34</sup> 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 had placed on earth for our benefit, was a viable response to disease.<sup>35</sup>

In this paradigm, Saul's divinely imposed affliction and subsequent cure by music read like a prototypical script in etiology 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 explication, for example, centers not on the moral or ecclesiastical aspects

<sup>32</sup> Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, 198.

<sup>33</sup> Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, 191.

<sup>34</sup> Gouk, "Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits," 61.

<sup>35</sup> Wear, "Religious Beliefs and Medicine," 147–149.

of the story,<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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 (the same diagnosis that Ofhuys applied to Hugo). Likewise, theologian Tommaso Cajetan asserted that Saul’s unclean spirit was really a melancholia that troubled him with sensory delusions.<sup>38</sup> 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 this bifurcated model of disease. It is revealing that, in his *Complexus effectum musices* – a fifteenth-century compendium of twenty uses and effects of music – 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.<sup>39</sup> This is a particularly marked choice given that Tinctoris’s authority for music’s healing powers, Isidore of Seville,<sup>40</sup> interprets the biblical episode medically in the *De medicina* section of *Etymologiae*, as an example of music’s power to allay frenzy.<sup>41</sup> As Jones writes, Saul’s evil spirits are “preternatural, but if they are to have any influence on humanity it must be through actions

<sup>36</sup> The *Glossa ordinaria* interprets this passage as an allegory of Christ and the Church curing the sin of pride.

<sup>37</sup> Jones, “Music Therapy in the Later Middle Ages,” 123–128; Hoffmann-Axthelm, “*David musicus*,” 327–331.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, “Music Therapy in the Later Middle Ages,” 124.

<sup>39</sup> Tinctoris, “*Complexus effectuum musices*,” 56.

<sup>40</sup> 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. (Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 95.)

<sup>41</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 115.

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.<sup>42</sup>

Plague, like other diseases, fell within this bifocal etiology. The commingling of the religious and the natural in 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 was the primary cause of the affliction. Johannes de Saxonia provides one of the most succinct accounts of pestilential teleology in his fifteenth-century treatise:

God is the most remote cause of epidemic, the heavens are the more remote, the air is remote, the humor is near, putrid air is nearer, and the putrid vapor 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 vapors of the heart and illness.<sup>43</sup>

Because God sat atop the etiological chain, it was to Him that doctors ultimately had to defer. Such spiritual deference is frequently woven into medical discussions or, at the very least, bookends otherwise secular medical treatises. Nicholo de Burgo’s treatise opens with the caveat that “only Jesus Christ can heal” and that any healing is done with his help,<sup>44</sup> and Antoine Royet concludes his with an exhortation to prayers and confessions, along with a French translation of Psalm 91.<sup>45</sup>

All of this is not to say, of course, that the intermediate and proximate causes of plague should be ignored in favor of divine intervention. In his survey of religious literature on the plague, Franco 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.”<sup>46</sup> There were numerous religious reasons that justified the use of temporal medicines. For one, to completely ignore available medical advice in favor of divine intervention is to spurn the magnanimity of God and to commit the sin of self-destruction. Additionally, as Ambroise Paré writes in his *Traicté de la peste*, medicine gives us the opportunity to glorify the Lord:

<sup>42</sup> Jones, “Music Therapy in the Later Middle Ages,” 124.

<sup>43</sup> Johannes de Saxonia, “Compendium de Epydemia,” 22.

<sup>44</sup> Nicolo de Burgo, “Consilium illatum contra pestilentiam,” 355.

<sup>45</sup> Royet, *Excellent traicte de la peste*, 208–215. <sup>46</sup> Mormando, “Introduction,” 23.

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 . . .<sup>47</sup>

It was also thought that God grants medicine to man so that it might serve as a model for the therapy of the soul. 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.<sup>48</sup> 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 meaningful, in understanding the parallels between natural and spiritual medicine, that priests were called "physicians of the soul."

In the broadest terms, medieval and Renaissance Christians wove their inherited Hippocratic-Galenic medicine into a generally coherent model of disease and etiology 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 humors, priests and doctors labored 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 deep-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 afflictions 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 premodern etiology.

<sup>47</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 9.    <sup>48</sup> Mormando, "Introduction," 23.

## Temperate and Intemperate Mirth

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 distinguished between two types of joy: a healthy, temperate, permissible kind and an excessive, harmful kind. In his plague treatise, Johann von Glogau spells out the medical consequences of the respective types:

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.<sup>49</sup>

In the same vein, Gaspar Torrella explains that “joy is to be used, but not excessively, because such excess induces fainting spells and sudden death.”<sup>50</sup> By extension, an excessive use of music can become unhealthy: as Nicolaus of Udine explicitly advises, attain joy “by means of cantilenas and other favorite melodies, but temper their use, for excesses are noxious, destroying the spirit and natural heat.”<sup>51</sup> With a different rationale, one Neapolitan writer encourages the use of music and stories (*giochi soni et canti*), but warns against too much happiness, for excessive laughter causes the inhalation of a great deal of corrupted air.<sup>52</sup> An excess of joy (and music), it turns out, is as detrimental as fear and sadness.

The prescription for moderation naturally invited moralizing from high-minded authorities who emphasized the idea of plague as an arm of divine punishment. From the religious perspective, they argue that music and other entertainments such as comedies, theater, and spectacles represent excesses and gateways to serious vices that are themselves the causes of plague. In the Jesuit Antonio Possevino’s 1577 tract *Cause et rimedii della peste, et d’altre infermtà* – which, despite its title, is nothing more than religious exhortation with very little medical content – the author provides five categories of plague-inducing offenses: (1) pride, arrogance, ambition,

<sup>49</sup> von Glogau, “Causae et signa pestilentiae,” 73.

<sup>50</sup> Torrella, *Qui cupit a peste non solum preservari*, B2v. <sup>51</sup> von Udine, “Pestregimen,” 365.

<sup>52</sup> da Napoli, *Opera et trattato . . . contra peste*, 6r.

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 form of concupiscence.<sup>53</sup>

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 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. The mistrust of music even became religious policy during the Milanese plague of 1576–1578. 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.<sup>54</sup>

If these temporal means for attaining *gaudium* could so easily lead to sin, then true happiness 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.”<sup>55</sup> 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 death would be diminished and wrath, worry, and sadness, greatly avoided.”<sup>56</sup> These writers graft together the religious aspect of plague writing with the medical. But at the joint of these two discourses lies a practical conundrum: should the imagination be turned away from illness and death altogether or focused on the preparation for the life hereafter? For Savonarola, the choice is clear:

<sup>53</sup> Possevino, *Cause et rimedii della peste*, 29; The identification of Antonio Possevino as the author of this treatise was made in Martin, *Plague?*, 89n1.

<sup>54</sup> Borromeo, *Pratica per i curati*, 22r. As a shrewd fund-raiser, 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”; Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, B2r.

<sup>55</sup> Anonymous, “Regimen bonum in epidemia,” 82.

<sup>56</sup> Anonymous, “Regimen preservativum a pestilenci,” 61.

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.<sup>57</sup>

The Dominican friar turns the doctor's advice on its head. Where some writers might caution against the mere mention of plague, the hard-liner Savonarola condemns any optimism. Equally revealing is Giovanni Pietro Giussano's report that, during the Milanese plague of the 1570s, Borromeo publicly 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."<sup>58</sup>

It is precisely on account of the roaming yardstick of what is permissible joy and what is excessive joy (and what is pernicious and salutary fear) that the place of music and other entertainments in the pestilential regimen was not entirely secure. In this regard, we can sometimes even discern contradictory impulses within the writing of a single author. If Savonarola and Borromeo were swift and explicit in their condemnation of earthly distractions, Giovan Filippo Ingrassia, the head *medico* of Palermo when plague struck in 1575, was more ambiguous and ambivalent. In his *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, Ingrassia initially proposes salubrious merriment, but, caught up in his subsequent attack on secular music, concludes with a caution for sobriety.

Ingrassia first advises his readers to put aside their worries and to preserve their imaginations by being happy, dressing beautifully, wearing jewels, putting on gallantries, abiding in brightly lit places decorated with a variety of paintings, and by avoiding fearful thoughts of death.<sup>59</sup> Unlike other doctors, however, Ingrassia makes a fine distinction between the different temporal comforts and writes:

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

<sup>57</sup> Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del bene morire*, 12r; cited in Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 122–3n96.

<sup>58</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 431–432.

<sup>59</sup> Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 441.

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 other sacraments (amongst whom are very close friends, relatives, or neighbors), 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?<sup>60</sup>

Here, Ingrassia separates solitary pleasures such as inspecting pictures and wearing elegant clothing from social entertainments such as music and storytelling. He ends up inveighing against levity; solemnity and spiritual vigilance are imperative when sudden death is quotidian. Ingrassia then caps off his tirade with a warning from Horace: “Tunc tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet” (Your property is in danger, when your neighbor’s wall burns). So much for not worrying! A little further on in the treatise, however, Ingrassia returns to music and reaches a rapprochement of sorts. He writes, “Our music should be the organs of the church. And its music, the daily music of the religious, should be our songs [*canzoni*], leaving behind all sadness over deceased friends and relatives.”<sup>61</sup> In the end, Ingrassia concedes a little room for sacred music to temper the passions.

## Two Settings of *O beate Sebastiane*

Within this milieu of mistrust toward music, is it possible to accommodate the competing demands of doctors and clergymen? Accepting Ingrassia’s concession to sacred music as a starting point, we turn now to a case study of two anti-pestilential motets by Johannes Martini and Gaspar van Weerbeke – *O beate Sebastiane* – with an eye toward the ways in which they balance both perspectives to provide salutary joy. The genre of the motet itself, situated between the austerity of the Mass and the frivolity of secular song,<sup>62</sup> carried

<sup>60</sup> Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 441.   <sup>61</sup> Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 442.

<sup>62</sup> Tinctoris places the motet between the cantilena and the Mass in terms of complexity and subject matter. The motet is a work of moderate length to which words of any kind (though usually sacred) can be set. By contrast, the cantilena is a small work, usually on an amatory subject, while the Mass is a large composition setting the Ordinary. Tinctoris, *Dictionary of Musical Terms*, 12–13, 40–43. For the rhetorical context for Tinctoris’s definition, see Cumming, *Motet in the Age of Du Fay*, 42–44.

both spiritual and temporal expectations.<sup>63</sup> Tapping into this bivalence of the genre, Martini's and Gaspar's works juxtapose *topoi* that offer temporal and spiritual comforts. In this mode of reconciliation, we can discern a resonance across different types of cultural outputs inspired by plague that likewise bring together the earthly and the heavenly.

First, a little background on the works and a justification for considering these motets together as a pair. The two works set the same prayer to St. Sebastian, one of the premier plague saints of the period (see Chapter 4 for the history of Sebastian's cult). The 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.<sup>64</sup> 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."<sup>65</sup>

#### **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.
--	--

In addition to the use of the same text, there are a number of significant musical similarities between the two works. John Brawley has suggested 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

<sup>63</sup> Motets were known to have been performed in non-strictly liturgical or even nonreligious settings; the pope routinely had motets performed, for example, during his dinner; Cummings, "Toward an Interpretation of the Sixteenth-Century Motet," 45.

<sup>64</sup> The closest analogue I have found comes from Mignot, *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.

<sup>65</sup> Pavanello, *Gaspar van Weerbeke Collected Works, Part 4: Motets*, lvi.

**Example 1.1** Martini and Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, tenors compared.

The image displays six systems of musical notation, each comparing the tenor parts of two settings: Martini's (top staff) and Gaspar's (bottom staff). Both parts are written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 8/8. The lyrics are written below the notes.

- System 1:** Martini: *O beate Sebastiane*; Gaspar: *Superius*
- System 2:** Martini: *miles beatissime*; Gaspar: (no lyrics)
- System 3:** Martini: *cuius precibus*; Gaspar: (no lyrics)
- System 4:** Martini: *tota patria*; Gaspar: (no lyrics)
- System 5:** Martini: *Lombardie*; Gaspar: (no lyrics)
- System 6:** Martini: *fu*it *liberata*; Gaspar: (no lyrics)

plainsong, rather than specifics of a more ornamental nature.”<sup>66</sup> The two tenors are indeed similar in their melodic fundamentals; the openings and the melodic boundaries of each phrase match in almost every instance (see Example 1.1). The most marked difference comes in the “*liberata*” segment,

<sup>66</sup> Brawley, “Magnificats, Hymns, Motets,” 69–70.

**Example 1.1 (cont.)**

Martini  
8  
a pestifera peste

Gaspar

Martini  
8  
Libera nos

Gaspar

Martini  
8  
ab ipsa et a maligno

Gaspar

Martini  
8  
ut digni efficiamur

Gaspar

Martini  
8  
promissionibus

Gaspar

Martini  
8  
Christi.

Gaspar

where Gaspar's melody is far more elaborate, and the cadential pitches are a third apart. The final pitches of the tenor phrases yield a similar polyphonic cadential pattern across both motets (see Table 1.1).

A number of additional shared musical features, however, cannot be accounted for simply by the use of common tenor melody and suggest direct modeling between the two works. In both motets, meter changes

**Table 1.1** Meter, texture, and cadential structures of Martini’s and Gaspar’s *O beate Sebastiane* compared

Martini				Gaspar				
Meter	Cadence pitch	Cadential voices	m.	Text	Meter	Cadence pitch	Cadential voices	m.
○	A Homorhythmic	SA	4	O beate Sebastiane	♢	Homorhythmic	–	–
⊙	G	ST	27	Miles beatissime		G	STB	30
	D	AB	32	cujus precibus		D	TB	37
	D	ST	36			D	SA	42
	A	TB	42	tota patria		A	ST	49
	A	SA	46			A	AB	51
	G	ATB	52	Lombardie		G	STB	56
	G	ST	54					
⊙	G	SA	56	Fuit	3-color	G	TB	66
	G	TB	58					
	Bb	STB	62	liberata	♢	Bb	STB	71
⊙	–	–	–	a pestifera		Bb	STB	80
	G	STB	73	peste.		G	STB	87
♢	G	AB	83	Libera nos		G	STB	113
	A	ST	90					
	Bb	AB	95					
	G	ST	98					
⊙	G	SA	102	ab ipsa		G	STB	120
♢	D	AB	112	et a maligno		A	ST	132
	G	STB	126	ut digni efficiamur		G	STB	140
	Homorhythmic			promissionibus	3-color	Homorhythmic		
φ	G	STB	143	Christi	♢	G	STB	164

occur at “fuit liberata” and “promissionibus Christi.” The one instance where the final notes of Martini’s and Gaspar’s tenors do not agree (at “fuit liberata,” where Martini’s tenor ends on G and Gaspar’s on B $\flat$ ), Martini nevertheless cadences on B $\flat$ , as Gaspar does. Texturally, the openings and endings (“Sebastiane” and “promissionibus”) are set to a succession of block chords in both motets (Example 1.2). 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 – or an intervallic combination between multiple voices that is repeated<sup>67</sup> – similar to that of Gaspar’s superius and altus at mm. 36–39 (Example 1.3). (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 shaped 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 nearly identical counterpoint (Example 1.4). (3) 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 1.5). (4) Lastly, the chordal structures for “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 1.6).

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 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; see Chapter 4). The second is biographical: both composers held posts in Milan. Gaspar spent the bulk of his career with the Sforzas over two tenures (1471–1480, 1489–1495), and Martini had a brief stay in 1474.<sup>68</sup> The third is stylistic. Both motets feature extended chordal-declamatory passages that bookend the works. Joshua 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.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> The term “module,” thus used, was first introduced by Jessie Ann Owens (“Milan Partbooks,” 284; *Composers at Work*, 251), and subsequently developed by Peter Schubert “Hidden Forms,” 483–556.

<sup>68</sup> Merkley and Merkley, *Music and Patronage in the Sforza Court*, especially Chapter 3.

<sup>69</sup> Rifkin, “Munich, Milan, and a Marian Motet,” 260nn.50–1.

Example 1.2 Martini and Gaspar, block chords.

Martini

1

S. O be - a - - - te, O be - - - a - te

A. O be - a - - - - - te, O be - - - a - te

T. O be - a - - - - - - - - - te, O be - - - a - te

B. O be - a - - - - - - - - - te, O be - - - a - te

Gaspar

1

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

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

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

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

Example 1.2 (cont.)

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

**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. - - - - - ius pre -  
A. - - - - - cu - ius pre - - - ci -

Detailed description: This block contains two musical systems. The first system is for Martini, measures 31-34, featuring Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.) parts. The lyrics are 'cu - ius pre -'. The second system is for Gaspar, measures 36-39, featuring Soprano (S.) and Alto (A.) parts. The lyrics are '- - - - - ius pre -' for the Soprano and '- - - - - cu - ius pre - - - ci -' for the Alto.

**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

Detailed description: This block contains two musical systems. The first system is for Martini, measures 49-54, featuring Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.) parts. The lyrics are 'Lom - - - bar - - - di - - - e fu' for the Soprano and 'Lom - - - bar - - - di - e' for the Tenor. The second system is for Gaspar, measures 51-56, featuring Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.) parts. The lyrics are 'Lom - - - bar - - - di - e' for the Soprano and 'Lom - bar - - - di - e' for the Tenor.

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 January 17, was celebrated in Milan on January 22, and the wedding of the Alfonso I d'Este and Anna Maria Sforza took place on January 23. While the subject of the motets had little connection to the nuptials, the works could have been written to celebrate St. Sebastian's January 20 feast day, which fell between the two weddings.<sup>70</sup> It is also

<sup>70</sup> Rifkin, "Munich, Milan, and a Marian Motet," 311–2n155.

Example 1.5 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 1.6 Martini and Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, “Promissionibus” chord reductions compared.

The image displays two musical staves comparing chord reductions for the 'Promissionibus' section of 'O beate Sebastiane'. The top staff is labeled 'Martini 127' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Gaspar 141'. Both staves show a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'pro - mis - si - o - ni - bus Chri -'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The Martini version (top) features a more complex piano accompaniment with many chords, while the Gaspar version (bottom) features a simpler piano accompaniment with fewer chords. Arrows indicate the correspondence between the two versions: solid arrows point from the Gaspar version to the Martini version, and dashed arrows point from the Martini version to the Gaspar version. The Gaspar version shows a significant reduction in the number of chords compared to the Martini version, particularly in the middle section.

possible that these motets were a direct response to pestilence. Between 1481 and 1487, plague struck various parts of Lombardy, and Milan itself was particularly hard-hit between the years 1483–1485.<sup>71</sup> 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 1480s and 1490s. An idea for a lazaretto, located roughly 7 kilometers (5 miles) outside Milan in the town of Crescenzago, had been conceived during the rule of Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1466–1476), but the plans were shelved due to complaints of the town's locals.<sup>72</sup> The latest bout of plague in the 1480s helped to revive those plans, with the lazaretto now relocated closer to Milan, at the Porta Orientale (currently the Porta Venezia). The cornerstone of the hospital, named San Gregorio, was finally laid in 1488. The 288-room, moat-separated compound opened in 1512, but was not fully operational until the Milanese plague of 1524.<sup>73</sup> Traditionally, the rulers of Milan were intimately involved in matters of state health,<sup>74</sup> and we know through extant letters that Lazzaro Cairati, the notary who first drew up plans for San Gregorio, was in contact with the duke during the construction of the hospital, asking him for design instructions. While we may never know the exact circumstances behind the composition of these motets, we can nevertheless imagine this cluster of events and concerns with which they may resonate.

### **Cantus jocosos**

At the heart of these two motets, I would suggest, lies great healing potential. The exuberant melismas in both settings that accompany the idea of liberation (“fuit liberata a pestifera peste” and “libera nos ab ipsa”) sonically paint the idea of abandonment (see Examples 1.7a and b). In Martini's setting, the superius even 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. The mood of celebration may be proleptic for the supplicants involved, but feeling of joyousness

<sup>71</sup> Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 2:396.    <sup>72</sup> Byrne, *Daily Life during the Black Death*, 144.

<sup>73</sup> Byrne, *Daily Life during the Black Death*, 145. See also Carmichael, “Last Past Plague,” 151–152.

<sup>74</sup> Carmichael, “Contagion Theory and Contagion Practice,” 215–221.

Example 1.7a Martini, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 47–106

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

A. Lom - bar - - - - di - - e

T. Lom - - bar - - di - -

B. Lom - - bar - di - e,

54

S. - e fu - - it

A. fu - - it li - be -

T. e fu - - it

B. fu - - - it li -

60

S. li - be - ra - ta a pes - ti - fe -

A. - ra - - ta a pes - ti - fe - - -

T. li - be - ra - ta a pes - ti -

B. - be - ra - - - ta a pe - sti - fe - - -

conveyed in these passages undoubtedly leads the imagination to better times. Moreover, the switch from duple into triple meter at the phrase “*fruit liberata*” further contributes to the joy of the passage (and “*ab ipsa*” similarly goes into a lilting triple time in the Martini setting). Bernhard Meier writes of such isolated triple-meter passages:

Episodic adoption of triple meter as a rhythmic peculiarity instead of the duple meter . . . 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

## Example 1.7a (cont.)

67

S. - ra pe

A. -ra pe

T. - fe - ra pe

B. - ra pe

73

S. ste.

A. -ste. Li - be - ra nos,

T. -ste.

B. -ste. Li - be - ra

81

S. Li - be - ra

A. Li - be - ra nos,

T. Li - be - ra nos,

B. nos,

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).<sup>75</sup>

At the thematic level, the allusion to dance celebrates Sebastian’s miraculous work in Lombardy. But more than this, 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,

<sup>75</sup> Meier, *Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony*, 241.

## Example 1.7a (cont.)

88

S. nos,  
li - - - - be - - - - ra

A. li - - - - be - - - - ra  
li - be - - - - ra

T. li - be - - - - ra nos,  
li - be - - - - ra nos

B. li - be - - - - ra nos,  
li - be - - - - ra nos

95

S. li - be - - - - ra nos ab i - - - -

A. nos ab i - - - - psa,

T. nos ab i - - - -

B. ab i - - - - psa,

101

S. - - - - psa, ab i - - - - psa

A. - - - - psa, ab i - - - - psa

T. - - - - psa et

B. ab i - - - - psa et

time and again, the idea of sociability in their plague tracts, whether in playing games, telling stories, or sharing a laugh and a song. 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, Martini and Gaspar are here invoking the lower stratum of dance music, leading listeners to imagine gatherings of close friends or the joyous public celebrations that often

Example 1.7b Gaspar, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 51–120

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

A. a Lom - bar - - - di - e

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

B. a Lom - bar - - di - e fu -

59

S. fu - it

A. fu - it

T. it fu - it

B. it fu - it

67

S. fu - it li - - be - ra - ta a pe - sti -

A. li - be - ra - ta li - be - ra - ta a pe - sti - fe -

T. li - be - ra - ta a pe -

B. li - be - ra - ta a pe - stil -

accompany the end of plague. Considering, too, that both of these works were published by Petrucci and disseminated through the marketplace, we can also imagine the actual kinds of social performance situations prescribed by doctors that might attend the works' salubrious gestures of joy.

It is also possible that the very use of triple mensuration itself could have had positive effects on the body. The connection between musical time and the passions had been recognized since antiquity and receives occasional mention in Renaissance music treatises. Zarlino, for example, urges

## Example 1.7b (cont.)

75

S. fe - ra pe - sti - fe - ra pe -

A. ra pe - sti - fe - ra pe -

T. sti - fe - ra pe -

B. fe - ra pe -

83

S. ste. Li - be -

A. ste. Li - be -

T. ste.

B. ste.

91

S. -ra nos

A. -ra nos

T. Li - be - ra

B. Li - be - ra

composers in book IV of his *Istitutioni harmoniche* to choose rhythms that suit the subjects of their texts, using slow and lingering movements for tearful matters, and setting cheerful topics with “powerful and fast movements, namely, with note values that convey swiftness of movement, such as the minim and the semiminim.”<sup>76</sup> In his 1618 *Musicae compendium*,

<sup>76</sup> Zarlino, *On the Modes*, 1:96.

## Example 1.7b (cont.)

99

S. *li - be - ra*

A. *li - be - ra*

T. *nos*

B. *nos*

107

S. *nos*

A. *nos* *nos* *nos*

T. *li - be - ra* *nos*

B. *li - be - ra* *nos ab ip -*

115

S. *ab ip -* *sa*

A. *ab ip - -* *sa et a*

T. *ab* *ip -* *sa*

B. *sa*

which draws on Zarlino's *Istitutioni harmoniche*, René Descartes reiterates this connection between swift musical movement and joy. Descartes then extends the association of cheerfulness to triple meters as well, reasoning that those meters create more movement for the listener to attend to:

As regards the various emotions which music can arouse by employing various meters, I will say that in general a slower pace arouses in us quieter feelings such as languor, sadness, fear, pride, etc. A faster pace arouses faster emotions, such as

joy, etc. On the same basis one can state that duple meter, 4/4 and all meters divisible by two, are of slower types than triple meters, or those which consist of three parts. The reason for this is that the latter occupy the senses more, since there are more things to be noticed in them. For the latter contain three units, the former only two.<sup>77</sup>

Where Zarlino frames his discussion around the composerly problem of text–music relationships – matching the correct rhythmic movements with the correct subject matter – Descartes focuses squarely on listener response. Quicker rhythms and triple-meter music are appropriate not only for depicting happiness but also for directly *arousing* joy in audiences.

Similarly explicit connections between musical meter and psychosomatic responses were also made by doctors. In the 1586 *Treatise of Melancholy*, for example, Timothy Bright explains that sounds, next to visual stimuli, most affect sufferers of melancholy. Such melancholic ears, therefore, would greatly benefit from cheerful music,

of which kinde for the most part is such as carrieth an odde [i.e. triple] measure, and easie to be discerned, except the melancholicke have skill in musicke, and require a deeper harmonie. The contrarilie, which is solemne, and still: as dumps [instrumental *déplorations*], and fancies, and sette musicke, are hurtfull in this case, and serve rather for a disordered rage, and intemperate mirth<sup>78</sup>

For Bright, music in triple meter can incite happiness and act as a direct remedy for illness. Moreover, simple and “easy” music can have the same benefits for general audiences; musical experts, however, would require something more complex. Returning to the Sebastian motets, one may reason that the increased movement in the melismas and triple-meter text-painting at once describe and deliver a dose of joy, stirring the imagination to better humor (in multiple senses of the word).

But what of the austere chords that bookend the two motets? Bonnie Blackburn has termed such 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.<sup>79</sup> 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. By Descartes’s and Bright’s accounts, the triple-time passages and the

<sup>77</sup> Descartes, *Musicae compendium*, 15. <sup>78</sup> Bright, *Treatise of Melancholy*, 240.

<sup>79</sup> Blackburn, “Dispute about Harmony C. 1500,” 13–20.

devotional chords in these motets would generate contrary passions in the listener, one arousing mirth, the other a sadness that dampens “intemperate mirth.” On a symbolic level, the juxtaposition of these musical topics – the dance and the prayer, the earthly and the spiritual – and their effects on the passions perfectly represent the competing demands of medicine and spirituality on the premodern patient.

## Plague and the Carnavalesque

Several scholars have explored this uneasy juxtaposition between spiritual and temporal remedies in relation to other forms of pestilential art. Sheila Barker distinguishes between the “horrific *memento mori*” type of St. Sebastian images and the therapeutically beautiful type.<sup>80</sup> The former is exemplified by Andrea Mantegna’s Saint Sebastian (ca. 1506, Ca’ d’Oro, Venice), 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*). The contour of one arrow, piercing him above his right knee, is even gruesomely visible under his skin. By contrast, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio’s 1500 Casio Madonna altarpiece (Louvre, Paris) shows Sebastian without any arrows and merely speckled with a few droplets of blood. Standing in a verdant countryside, his downcast gaze falls serenely on the Christ child. This and other similar depictions of St. Sebastian where his form is tranquil and his wounds are minimized offer salubrious sensual pleasures, not unlike being surrounded by precious clothing, metals, and gems.<sup>81</sup>

Such pleasures can go too far, however. For Renaissance artists, the sensuous nude image of St. Sebastian often served as a platform for “one-upmanship” of artistic excellence. Vasari relates an anecdote of how Fra Bartolomeo responded to the frequent taunt that he was unable to depict nudes by painting an extremely attractive, borderline erotic image of St. Sebastian (in a near-transparent loincloth falling off his hips), earning

<sup>80</sup> 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”; Marshall, “Waiting on the Will of the Lord,” 107.

<sup>81</sup> Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 90.

praise from other artists. While the picture was on display in San Marco in Florence, the friars discovered via the confessional that women had sinned in looking at it, on account of its comely and lascivious realism, whereupon the painting was removed to the chapter house.<sup>82</sup> Other Renaissance Sebastian images were likewise so beautiful that they inspired moral apprehension in the climate of the Council of Trent. Caught up in the spirit of reform, Giovanni Andrea Gilio writes in his 1564 *Dialogo . . . degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori* that the suffering of saints should be rendered truthfully, regardless of its gruesomeness. St. Lawrence, for example, should be shown on the grill charred and deformed, while Sebastian ought to be depicted with so many arrows that he looks like a porcupine – as in Mantegna's image.<sup>83</sup> It was feared that beautiful nude images of Sebastian, much like bawdy music, had the potential to inspire improper lust (recall Possevino's five causes of plague).

In a similar vein, Glending Olson argues that some plague literature closely reflects contemporary views on the health benefits of recreation. For example, the conceit of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1353) – ten young, well-to-do Florentines escape the plague-ridden city at the start of the outbreak of 1348 to various spots in the country to tell stories and play music – parallels medical recommendation to flee infected areas and to engage in social entertainments.<sup>84</sup> As such, Boccaccio's scenario is not “merely escapist but therapeutic” – and therapeutic not only thematically, for the *brigata*, but also for readers who enjoy the stories.<sup>85</sup> Olson does not find the competing spiritual and medical demands on Boccaccio's storytellers particularly problematic; after all, the *brigata* chooses to live “onestamente,” maintains decorum, avoids overindulgence, and uses storytelling properly, for pleasure and healthful profit. “The very act of intelligent listening (and, by extension, reading),” Olson writes, “becomes part of the shared values of propriety, harmony, and amity.”<sup>86</sup>

But what of the stories they tell, the mordant ecclesiastical satires, the raunchy fabliaux, and the scatological farces that, on more than one

<sup>82</sup> Freedberg, *Power of Images*, 347. <sup>83</sup> Brown, *Genius of Rome*, 277.

<sup>84</sup> 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 Brown, “Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio,” 324–339.

<sup>85</sup> Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 182–196. 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; “Boccaccio and the Doctors,” 331.

<sup>86</sup> Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 203.

occasion, leave the *brigata* breathless and aroused?<sup>87</sup> 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."<sup>88</sup> 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."<sup>89</sup> 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 away . . . Even the most respectable man may now wear his 'breeches for headgear.'"<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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

<sup>87</sup> 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," Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 148.

<sup>88</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 799. <sup>89</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 800, 802.

<sup>90</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 272–273.

<sup>91</sup> 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.

moralizing . . . Indeed anyone who can seek out fun in these conditions is seen as extraordinarily contemptible.”<sup>92</sup>

From the records of plague chroniclers, who either praised the heightened virtue of a city or denounced its marked moral decay, we can see that the spirit of carnivalesque inversion seemed to have infected the moral lives of citizens as well. Alessandro Canobbio, for example, was particularly impressed by the Veronese; when plague struck in the 1570s, concubines of the city “left one another and returned to their legitimate partners, other sinners changed their ways, and many enemies voluntarily made peace.”<sup>93</sup> 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 committed throughout the city, behind closed doors and even in the city’s lazaretto.<sup>94</sup> An account of San Gregorio by its warden, Fra Paolo Bellintano of Saló, confirms Sacco’s claims. He describes an incident at the plague hospital 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 God, when your deaths are so close at hand?” And he told them other such things and then left. The dance ended.<sup>95</sup>

This grotesque tale of a ball of the infected illustrates many of the characteristics of the Bahktinian carnival: 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

<sup>92</sup> Jones, “Plague and Its Metaphors,” 109.

<sup>93</sup> Canobbio, *Il successo della peste*, 2v–3r. See also Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 112–118.

<sup>94</sup> Sacco, *Pianto della città di Milano*, 5r.

<sup>95</sup> Odorici, “I due Bellintani da Salo,” 2:253–312; quoted in Carmichael, “Last Past Plague,” 153.

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 versus frightful *memento mori*) and the *Decameron* (raunchy stories versus pious decorum), they likewise shape 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-meter writing, uplifting tunefulness, and exuberant melismas in the middles of the motets convey 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. Recall Meier’s description of celebratory, triple-meter 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 itself. 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. 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.<sup>96</sup>

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 points to 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. At the end of the motets, homorhythmic declarations of “promissionibus” cordon off the festivities and re-establish a sense of solemnity. These devotional-

<sup>96</sup> Borromeo, *Traité contre les danses*, 6. This division of dance into the spiritual and the lascivious had its roots in the early Christian church; see McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time*, 75–78.

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.

## 2 | Sympathetic Resonance, Sympathetic Contagion

Premodern doctors, as we saw in period plague treatises, generally accepted music's role in curing sickness and maintaining individual health. Music, alongside other luxuries like beautiful clothing or recreations such as games and storytelling, was a regular component of the anti-pestilential regimen, meant to temper the passions of the soul. But what set music apart from these other activities was its centrality to the theories of occult medicine, wherein music, as a metaphysical principle or else as a manifestation of some hidden universal force (usually in terms of the phenomenon of sympathetic resonance), frequently served as an analogy for the arcane processes of the universe that influenced human health. The relationship of music – both as a concept and as “sensible” works – to the occult theories of healing and plague will be the primary focus of this chapter.

Laying aside our modern day pejorative connotations, the term “occult” had two separate but interrelated meanings in the premodern period.<sup>1</sup> The first referred to insensibility. Occult properties, as opposed to manifest ones, were those that were occluded from the external senses. While we may be able to directly perceive the effects of magnetism or astral influences, for instance, those qualities themselves were insensible and, hence, occult. The second meaning of the term was “unintelligible.” Occult phenomena were ones that escaped rational explanation based on the standard model of the universe that posited four basic elements (fire, air, earth, and water) from which matter, such as the four humors, was derived. Magnetism was an occult force because the attraction of iron to lodestone cannot be explained by the elemental makeup of either substance. Rather, their mutual attraction was based on their “specific virtues” or “substantial forms,” that is, the essential nature of the objects rather than their individual, constituent properties. While the first sense of occult divided nature more or less objectively – a property is either perceivable or it is not – the determination of intelligibility was more equivocal. As Ron Millen points out, for example, some premodern doctors ascribed scammony's power to

<sup>1</sup> Millen, “Manifestation of Occult Qualities,” 186–187.

purge bile to the substance's manifest qualities of heat and dryness, while others considered its purgative function to be occult.<sup>2</sup>

Plague likewise troubled the boundary between the manifest and the occult. In the Galenic model of health, disease was essentially a breakdown in the temperament or balance of humors that impeded the body's natural processes and, as such, could be described ultimately in elemental terms. Concomitantly, diagnosis and treatment focused on the individual temperaments, manipulating the intake of food, medicines, and environment – all of which contained elemental qualities – or using surgery to correct directly any imbalances. In the plague treatises surveyed in Chapter 1, we saw precisely such approaches to the treatment of pestilence based on the Galenic humoral paradigm. But the Galenic model of disease was ill-equipped to explain some striking aspects of plague, such as the intensity and rapidity of its devastation that outstripped the usual humoral explanations, and, more importantly, its evident contagiousness, whether by direct contact or at a distance.<sup>3</sup> What's more, because Galenic medicine was practical and focused on individual temperaments – the disorder of which constituted illness – it did not take much stock of the problem of contagion (how the humoral imbalance was triggered played only a minor role in its treatment), nor did it even provide an explicit and coherent theory for its action in general.<sup>4</sup> How could an individual's personal humoral imbalance be communicated to another?

Some doctors suspected that, because of its virulence, plague was an occult disease – that it affected the substantial form of the human body, destroying it in its entirety rather than an isolated constituent humor, and that its corruption traveled from body to body in some occult way without the direct transmission of manifest qualities or matter. One ready-made model for explaining plague's transmission was the ancient doctrine of sympathy<sup>5</sup> – the idea of “fellow feeling” or affinity that linked together disparate objects – which will be the thematic thread of this chapter. We will first examine its application to medicine and plague by Renaissance doctors and natural philosophers, with particular attention on the use of the phenomenon of resonance (or sympathetic vibration) in their writings. Ancient musicians had long observed that one string on an instrument would vibrate without being touched when another string

<sup>2</sup> Millen, “Manifestation of Occult Qualities,” 186.

<sup>3</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 22–23.

<sup>4</sup> Nutton, “Seeds of Disease,” 15–16. For Galen's ideas on “seeds” of disease, which remained ad hoc and outside his general system of medicine, see “Seeds of Disease,” 1–8.

<sup>5</sup> Arrizabalaga, Henderson, and French, *Great Pox*, 236–237.

nearby, tuned to the same pitch, is plucked. This mysterious action was taken as an instantiation of sympathy, and the first half of the chapter will explore this phenomenon's relationship to other occult phenomena, as well as its utility as an explanatory conceit for different theories of contagion that include sidereal-human and human-to-human infection. The second half of the chapter will focus on a different, but related aspect of sympathy that pertained to the various interpersonal bonds within a society – kinship, friendship, citizenship, etc. – that broke down on account of the dread of contagion. With an eye toward the following chapter that deals with the public and private rituals against pestilence, the current chapter will conclude with a metaphysical exploration of music as an ontological principle and its relationship to social structures.

### **Sympathy in the Natural World**

The notion of “sympathy” in the Renaissance episteme had long Stoic and Neo-Platonic roots, predicated on the idea of a world soul that imparts life and order to the material world and that, consequently, generates a state of interconnectedness among all things that participate in it.<sup>6</sup> “Sympathia” – and its related terms in Latin, such as “similitudo,” “amicitia,” “consonantia,” “compassio,” or “harmonia”<sup>7</sup> – referred to the connective bond that drew together seemingly disparate things that shared some occult likeness and affinity. Sympathy served as the explanatory principle behind otherwise inexplicable natural phenomena such as magnetism or sympathetic resonance; the attraction of iron to the lodestone or the spontaneous sounding of a taut string when another string is played nearby were illustrative to the premodern mind of the same invisible force of sympathy operating throughout the universe. But sympathy, Foucault explained, would have commingled and reduced everything into a homogeneous mass if not for its opposite force, antipathy, which served an isolating function and prevented complete assimilation into sameness.<sup>8</sup> Illustrative of occult antipathy, for example, was the fabular antagonism between sheep and wolves, who were said to be such great enemies in life that, in death, when tambourines made from their respective hides were struck near each other, the instrument made from the sheep would remain silent

<sup>6</sup> Schliesser, “Introduction: On Sympathy,” 3–4.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, *Order of Things*, 20; Moyer, “Sympathy in the Renaissance,” 73–74.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, *Order of Things*, 26–27.

on account of their discordant natures.<sup>9</sup> The things of the universe were suspended in a tension of sympathy and antipathy to one another: oil and lime, for example, share an affinity and mix well, but both are inimical to water.

It was on the basis of sympathy and antipathy, according to Pliny, that the art of medicine sprang,<sup>10</sup> a claim, as we shall see, that was substantiated by the later work of physicians such as Marsilio Ficino, Ambroise Paré, Jean Fernel, and Paracelsus. Broadly speaking, plants, animals, and minerals sympathetic to the human nature could be harvested and used to promote health. The trick for doctors was to discover the webs of sympathy cast over the world through “signatures” – the ciphers that revealed similitude and affinity. There was 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 was believed to be beneficial to the brain precisely because of its brain-like appearance.<sup>11</sup> The willow, with its supple branches, would relieve rheumatic joints.<sup>12</sup> Such forces of sympathy were free-wheeling and traversed vast distances,<sup>13</sup> and the bonds of attraction operated not only across the surface of the world but also between celestial and terrestrial bodies. It was not only proximal plants, herbs, and minerals that could affect human health; sidereal forces too, operating by the same principles of sympathy and antipathy, could have vast influences on earthly systems and phenomena, from individual humoral dispositions to natural catastrophes.

Among the most influential natural philosophers and magi in the Renaissance who sought to harness the occult powers of nature to benefit human health was Marsilio Ficino, whose *De vita libri tres*, completed in 1489, gave wide-ranging instructions on the use of plants, minerals, talismanic gems, astrological forces, and music to prolong life. Ficino was one of the earliest scholars in the field of natural philosophy to reintroduce the term and concept of sympathy to Renaissance readers through his Latin translations of Plotinus.<sup>14</sup> Ficino’s own thoughts owed much to the Neo-Platonic philosopher and to a great extent relied on the notion of sympathy, although Ficino himself rarely used the term explicitly.<sup>15</sup> Ficino’s theories on the occult connection between astrology, music, and health in the third book of *De vita, De vita coelitus comparanda* have been well

<sup>9</sup> Paré, “Le livre des animaux,” 761.   <sup>10</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, bk. 24, ch. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Order of Things*, 31.   <sup>12</sup> Bennett, “Doctrine of Signatures,” 247.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *Order of Things*, 26.   <sup>14</sup> Moyer, “Sympathy in the Renaissance,” 71.

<sup>15</sup> Moyer, “Sympathy in the Renaissance,” 75.

rehearsed by D.P. Walker and Gary Tomlinson, among others.<sup>16</sup> Briefly, Ficino was interested in the ways by which mortals can draw to themselves the spiritual and health benefits of celestial bodies, using objects that concentrate the powers of a particular planet with which they share an affinity. To lay claim to the influence of the sun, for example, the reader was advised to consume or breathe in the aroma of “heliotropic” things like honey, incense, cinnamon, hens, and swans. Moreover, keeping company with golden- or curly-haired people would likewise attract solar benefits, as would carrying a stone extracted from the stomach of an old rooster, which concentrated the sun’s powers. Images and figures, too, can channel celestial powers when inscribed in felicitous materials.<sup>17</sup>

Music, which Ficino described as a kind of aerial image or figure in motion, shared the same (and even greater) utility as other medicaments, scents, and charms.<sup>18</sup> In the second book of *De vita*, Ficino wrote,

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?<sup>19</sup>

Here, Ficino privileged music on account of its medium. Belonging to the air, it shares the same substance as the human spirit – a mixture of air and rarefied blood generated by the heat of the heart – that linked together the soul and the body. That music could capture planetary powers rested, in Walker’s analysis of Ficino, on two interconnected principles.<sup>20</sup> The first, deriving from Plato and Pythagoreans, assumed that both the universe and man shared the same harmonic proportions at different levels (*musica mundana* and *musica humana*, in Boethian terms), allowing for sympathetic bonds between them, and that sounded music (*musica instrumentalis*) could partake in the same proportions. The second was that music, as a kind of motion, was able to imitate affections, words, and gestures, and thereby influence the emotions and moral attitudes of performers and listeners. Thus, music that imitated the moral character of a particular celestial body – jovial (Jupiter), venereous (Venus), or martial (Mars) for example – can impart that same character.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*; Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*; Voss, “Natural Magic of Marsilio Ficino”; Gouk, “Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits”; Copenhaver, “Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic.”

<sup>17</sup> Ficino, *Book of Life*, 141–158. <sup>18</sup> Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, 119–121.

<sup>19</sup> Ficino, *Book of Life*, 66. <sup>20</sup> Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 14–16.

Ficino further instructed that, in order to invite the celestial influences through music, the musician must determine the particular time to best receive the planetary influxes and understand the occult qualities of a particular star or planet by observing the speech, songs, and behavior of other people under its governance. Attuning himself to these planetary qualities and imitating them in his song – solar music, for example, is simple, earnest, and graceful – the musician will be “united” with the planet. To illustrate the phenomenon, Ficino relied on the conceit of sympathetic resonance:

when you cry out, singing and making sounds in the style of one of these [planets], they will seem to answer you right back, either like Echo, or like the chords vibrating on your lyre. When one is vibrated, another is tuned accordingly. As Plotinus and Iamblichus say, it naturally touches you from the heavens, whether it is resounding back at you on your lyre, or in the vibration, or in the Echo from an opposite wall.<sup>21</sup>

By attuning himself to the ethos of the stars and establishing a bond of terrestrial-sidereal sympathy through music – tuning in to the right frequency, so to speak – the musician could channel celestial gifts into himself.

## Plague in the Stars

Ficino also knew well, however, that for all the benign virtue that one might wish to acquire, the planets also held great destructive powers. In his treatise on plague, *Consiglio contro la pestilentia* (1478–1479), composed about a decade before the completion of *De vita*, Ficino noted that the conjunction of Mars and Saturn along with a lunar eclipse gave rise to and sustained the contemporaneous outbreak in Florence, which was taking 150 lives every day.<sup>22</sup> Here, Ficino was rehearsing the long-held and commonplace belief that astrological forces were a major factor in epidemic outbreaks. From the earliest plague writings to emerge from the Black Death, the appearance of comets, eclipses, and the conjunction of planets (Saturn and Jupiter, or Saturn and Mars, in particular) were acknowledged to be particularly hazardous. The reason for their influence, however, was not always clear to doctors. In theory, because Jupiter and Saturn have contrary qualities and should nullify each other’s malice,

<sup>21</sup> Ficino, *Book of Life*, 163.    <sup>22</sup> Ficino, *Consilio contro la pestilenzia*, 56.

explained Jacme d'Agramont, they must arouse pestilence by some other unnamed, occult property, just as a magnet attracts iron through occult action.<sup>23</sup>

While some Renaissance doctors doubted or downplayed astrological influences in the etiology of plague – experience taught them that epidemics often occurred without any planetary alignments necessary for the putrefaction of air<sup>24</sup> – most at least paid lip service to the idea. For example, Ambroise Paré, merely in passing, attributed pestilential miasma to the eruption of corrupted air, drawn out from the bowels of the earth by the hidden force of the sun and the stars. A few doctors, on the other hand, doubled down on the importance of the stars as a precipitating cause of pestilence and established new theories to explain celestial connections to the disease. In his dialogue *De abditis rerum causis* (*On the Hidden Causes of Things*), French court physician Jean Fernel (ca. 1497–1558) tackled the shortcomings of inherited Galenic ideas in the face of pestilence. He suspected that, because plague could create such a variety of symptoms, wreaked such a great deal of damage on the body, and did so with such speed, the disease did not merely create an imbalance of humors.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, people already sick with defective humor – already suffering, for example, from continuous, tertian, and quartan fevers – did not necessarily succumb to plague, while otherwise healthy people were sometimes stricken. The nature of pestilence, too, was up for debate. Fernel argued that plague could not be corrupt air, as generally thought, since miasma would damage all life forms equally; that humans fell ill but cattle were spared meant that plague was specifically inimical to us.<sup>26</sup>

Taken together, these observations demonstrated to Fernel that pestilence acted on the “substantial form” of the human body – that is to say, the disease attacked the total substance of the body, rather than its constituent elements or humors. Fernel illustrated this action with the analogy of the magnet; the magnet acts specifically on iron not because of some individual manifest quality – not because it was hot, wet, or dry, for instance – but because of some hidden quality inherent in the complete substance of the magnet.<sup>27</sup> In this way, Fernel argued, the action of plague was like that of poisons, whose operations were long acknowledged to harm the total

<sup>23</sup> Jacme d'Agramont, “Regiment de preservacio,” 56.

<sup>24</sup> Nutton, “Seeds of Disease,” 27; Arrizabalaga, “History of Disease,” 47.

<sup>25</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 25, 633–635.

<sup>26</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 569–571.

<sup>27</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 45, 679–681.

substance of the body by occult antipathy, regardless of the victim's humoral disposition.<sup>28</sup>

To be so violently noxious, Fernel further explained, the powers of the diseases of the total substance such as pestilence must be astrologically derived:

[Brutus:] Then from where do you suppose [plague] does emanate, please?

[Eudoxus:] Clearly from heaven. But not from the firmament nor from the primary movement [of the fixed stars], which is always like itself, not from the Sun's oblique orbit, but from a specific combination of the stars. By its movement the Sun produces and defines the seasons of the year evenly . . . But [consider] that not all summers are equally hot or dry . . . this cannot now be attributed to the Sun's motion, but to a diverse combination of stars . . . As one combination of [the stars] brings showers, another sunshine, another southerly weather, another northerly or some other weather, we must surely agree that one occurs that introduces pestilence into the air . . . Thus the cause of a pure pestilence in the simple sense is a celestial configuration bringing power to bear, a configuration that cannot be detected by change of weathers or by any overt quality, but only by the outcome.<sup>29</sup>

The pestilential impurities that spread through the air do not emanate from the course of a single given star – which would yield predictable climate patterns – but from a more volatile conjunction of stars that would account for irregular weather events. The particular conjunction of planets could therefore account for the appearance of plague without noticeable meteorological changes and for the outbreaks that occurred during the “wrong” times and seasons of the year.<sup>30</sup> While Fernel validated some of the other causes of plague that have traditionally been advanced, including exhalations from the earth (which he called “endemic” causes) or violent changes in weather (“epidemic” causes), he relegated them to secondary importance. Very often, he wrote, these causes combined with astrological ones to produce particularly malignant outbreaks; in these instances, pestilence was no longer “pure” or “simple.” The possibility of such admixture of causes allowed Fernel to explain how a single outbreak may be more deadly in some regions – hot and humid maritime places with south winds, for example – than others. But, Fernel was careful to note, only the combination of stars can be said to be the efficient cause; the other causes are merely “preliminary” or exacerbating ones: “Of these causes, one is genuinely the

<sup>28</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 573.

<sup>30</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel's On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 565–569.

efficient cause of pestilence, and two are preliminary causes . . . pestilence mixed with epidemic or endemic constitutions is worse than pure pestilence on its own. Consequently, oppressive exhalations from the earth or below do not introduce pestilence on their own, but do contribute much preparation and stimulation towards it.”<sup>31</sup>

Fernel was not alone in emphasizing the role of the stars in the generation of pestilence. In his plague treatise, written in the 1530s, Paracelsus attributed plague to what Walter Pagel calls “a psychophysical interaction between man and the stars.”<sup>32</sup> His idiosyncratic explanation of astrological infection – firmly rooted in the epistemological system of sympathies and antipathies that informed his other medical writings<sup>33</sup> – yoked together Christian morality, the imagination, and echoes of Ficinian magic. The premise behind Paracelsus’s theory of astrological infection was the conception of the cosmos as a kind of imagination; “the whole of heaven,” he theorized, “is nothing other than *imaginatio* influencing man, producing plagues, colds, and other diseases.”<sup>34</sup> This astral force also existed in man – “a sun within man,” as Paracelsus described. In this Paracelsian model of the cosmos, the power of the imagination was akin to that of a magnet and drew into a person the qualities of an object from the external world. The person operating this imaginative force could also exert his imagination outward onto another body, causing potentially grievous harm. A pregnant woman, for example, could impress her imagination on her fetus, causing birthmarks or deformities.<sup>35</sup>

For Paracelsus, the receiving and projecting processes of the imaginative power both in the stars and in mortals allowed a two-way traffic between humans and the heavens. Just as the stars could influence us, we could also alter the stars with our imaginations. In the case of plague, infection begins with a sinful imagination, where passions such as lust and wrath create a kind of immaterial body that gets drawn up, as if magnetically, into the corresponding planet (jealousy rose up to Saturn, for example, and deceit to Mars). These pathological passions would then infect the planet and ricochet back to earth as plague, striking mortals like thunderbolts in our ears, armpits, and groins without manifest humoral cause.<sup>36</sup> Working through the same channels of sympathy upon which Ficino built his theory

<sup>31</sup> Forrester and Henry, *Jean Fernel’s On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 575.

<sup>32</sup> Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 179. <sup>33</sup> Webster, *Paracelsus*, 142. <sup>34</sup> Schott, ““Invisible Diseases,”” 314.

<sup>35</sup> Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 122; Schott, ““Invisible Diseases,”” 314–315.

<sup>36</sup> Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 179–180.

of astrological music, Paracelsus dissolved the boundaries between inner, psychological life and outer, material world, and between the terrestrial and the celestial. In this theory of astral communion, we see the antagonistic reversal of Ficino's relationship with the stars. By giving in to the malignant aspects of planetary ethos, disease is generated. Christian morality meets occult medicine: human wickedness escalates and incites pestilential punishment from the stars.

### **Stella celi extirpavit**

While the emerging theoretical explanations of astral diseases may seem rather arcane, the general idea itself that stars could cause pestilence – or, at the very least, that the stars could be an omen for upcoming disasters – had long been accepted outside medical circles. We can see the diffusion of this belief in wide-ranging literary and artistic examples. In the *Decameron*, for instance, Boccaccio writes that “some say that [the plague] descended upon the human race through the influence of the heavenly bodies, others that it was a punishment signifying God's righteous anger at our iniquitous way of life.”<sup>37</sup> In Raphael's *Pestbild, Madonna di Foligno* (Pinacoteca Vaticana), a comet appears over the city of Foligno, which may have been threatened by plague around the time of the painting's commission in 1511.<sup>38</sup> As late as the seventeenth century, Defoe described the appearance of a comet several months in advance of an outbreak. The old women about town (and “the phlegmatic hypochondriac part of the other sex”) fretted about the dangers portended by the fiery stars. Despite his skepticism, Defoe confessed, “[I] had so much of the common notion of such things in my head, that I was apt to look upon them as the forerunners and warnings of God's judgements.” Whatever his thoughts or the thoughts of philosophers may have been, he continued, “these things had a more than ordinary influence upon the minds of the common people, and they had almost universal melancholy apprehensions of some dreadful calamity and judgement coming upon the city; and this principally from the sight of this comet, and the little alarm that was given in December by two people dying at St Giles's.”<sup>39</sup> One might dismiss the belief in celestial influences as superstition, but one simply cannot deny the outsized anxiety that astral omens provoked.

<sup>37</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 5.   <sup>38</sup> Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence*, 96–97.

<sup>39</sup> Defoe, *Journal of the Plague Year*, 18–19.

Such an anxiety over planetary influences may have accounted for the widespread popularity of the Marian hymn *Stella celi extirpavit* in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, wherein the destructive concourse of stars formed the central conceit. Herself described as a star (of heaven and of the sea) – an image carried through by the invocations of “stella” at the start of every strophe – Mary is asked to rein in other errant stars whose wars incite plague on earth. The hymn addresses Boccaccio’s dual concerns over both the operation of heavenly bodies and human iniquities; in the prayer, the astrological etiology of disease sits alongside a theological one, which attributes pestilential death to original sin.

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.

Christopher Macklin has traced the earliest appearances of the hymn to the first decades of the fifteenth century across a large range of sources, from Books of Hours to music manuscripts,<sup>40</sup> appearing in both Latin and English translation, with and without music, in plainsong and in polyphonic settings. Because *Stella celi* survived from the start in such a diversity of genres and arrangements, Macklin suspects that it had already been in circulation for some time before the fifteenth century, either through lost exempla or through oral transmission, and supposes a Franciscan origin for the hymn.

*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

<sup>40</sup> Macklin, “Plague, Performance,” 27–31. In addition to Macklin’s list, there is a five-voice setting by Clemens non Papa.

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.<sup>41</sup>

An expression of Mary's autonomy is discernible in the enormously popular Madonna della Misericordia icon. In these images, of which Benedetto Bonfigli's banner is a prime example (see Figure 4.7), the Virgin stands erect with supplicants huddled beneath her cloak, sheltering the faithful from pestilential arrows cast down by a punitive Christ. The scale of the central Madonna, who Crawford describes as an erect "lighthouse amid the storm,"<sup>42</sup> dwarfs the angry deities and 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 out at the viewer. Among the supplicants gathered around her 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.<sup>43</sup> All of the supplicants face Mary and direct their prayers to her, paying no heed to Jesus above. The prayers appear to be fruitful, as Raphael strikes at Death, at whose feet rest a heap of bodies. With Mary's protection secured, Christ's wrath becomes largely impotent.

Similarly, in the *Stella celi*, the bold assertion "te filius nihil negans honorat" 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. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the hymn was censured by English Reformists, who felt that it bordered on idolatry. In the preface to the 1537 primer printed by Robert Redman, he warned that "[W]e are only redeemed by Christ's blood, and not by our Lady, either any Saint or angel in heaven." "That our Lady hath extirped [sic] the mortal pestilence which our first father hath planted," he continued,

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.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Marshall, "Manipulating the Sacred," 510.

<sup>42</sup> Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art*, 138.

<sup>43</sup> Bury, "Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century *Gonfaloni*," 67.

<sup>44</sup> Hoskins, *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis*, 169–170; Macklin, "Musica sanat corpus per animam," 174.

Although the Madonna della misericordia and the *Stella celi* tropes differ in specifics – one spreads her aegis against plague-bearing arrows, the other holds back the warring stars – the two Marys are imagined to have the power to thwart the punitive intents of God.

The confluence of recurring plague crises and the reassurance of Mary's (over)abundant power undoubtedly accounted for the hymn's popularity among composers. There are at least sixteen extant polyphonic settings of the hymn from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. An anonymous setting collected in Petrucci's 1502 *Motetti A* is interesting for its musical illustration of the warring stars in the text. Notably, this four-voice motet sets only the first two stanzas of the *Stella celi*, a textual choice that manages to both avoid the explicit reference to the autonomy of Mary, and to request Marian mercy to the exclusion of Christ. The cantus carries a chant incipit, and the tenor makes use of a long-note cantus firmus that has not yet been identified.<sup>45</sup> The cantus firmus is deployed in even breves (and one long) throughout most of the motet, gaining an active rhythmic profile only at the drive to the final cadence (Example 2.1). We can discern two principles of musical organization in this motet. 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)).

More often, however, motivic repetitions in the free voices are integrated with the cantus firmus armature, forming repeated contrapuntal combinations (or modules) that build up large swathes of the work. In this second type of musical organization, 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. 30–32. Each appearance coincides with the same melodic figure in the cantus firmus, forming direct intervallic repetition.

In other instances, the modular repetitions with the cantus firmus are even more intricate. 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). This increases

<sup>45</sup> The 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 Drake, "First Printed Books of Motets," 220–221; Bent, "New and Little-Known Fragments," 145–147.

the combinatorial possibilities for modules. For example, a cadential motive first heard in the superius in mm. 17–19 appears no less than six times in three different transpositions and creates two different intervallic combinations with the two cantus firmus voices (labeled A and B in Example 2.1). Module A occurs with the superius and tenor in mm. 17–19; and in a slightly modified form between the superius and tenor/bassus in mm. 26–28; finally, between the bassus and the tenor, transposed and inverted, in mm. 28–30. Module B first occurs between the altus and the bassus in mm. 17–20, then between the superius and the bassus in mm. 21–24 (compounded by an octave); and finally between the altus and tenor in mm. 24–26. Later in the motet, a module between the altus and the tenor in mm. 34–36 is repeated in those voices ten measures later, transposed and inverted at the octave. 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 imagine these modular formations around the cantus firmus as musical metaphors for Mary reining in the warring celestial bodies. The tenor (and, at times, the bassus), like the guiding star, draws all the other voices into its path. These armatures can exert forces on the free voices with powerful consequences: the overlapping modules A and B in mm. 17–19 illustrate the effect of their courses. In a brief but striking moment in m. 18, the two upper voices, each guided by a different cantus firmus voice, collide together in pungent parallel seconds appropriate to the words *mortis pestem* (marked with asterisks in Example 2.1). In addition to representing composerly text-painting, this dissonant collision may also point to improvisational performance practice. In his treatise on counterpoint, Tinctoris explains that, unlike composed music where all voices must be in consonance with each other, the free voices in improvised counterpoint (singing *super librum*) are subject to consonance only with the cantus firmus, and not to each other.<sup>46</sup> In this instance, the free voices, each locked inexorably into the orbit of a different cantus firmus, come together in a pungent dissonance that not only illustrates in sound the effects of celestial disorder but also captures an artifact of performance, in which the “sympathetic” pull between the stable voices and their respective free voices create an

<sup>46</sup> Tinctoris, *Art of Counterpoint*, 102–105.

Example 2.1 Schema of *Stella celi*, showing cantus firmus, imitation, motivic, and modular repetition.

S. Stel - la ce - li ex - tir - pa - vit que lac - ta -

A. que lac - ta -

T. ex - tir - pa - vit que lac - ta -

9

S. que lac - ta - vit

A. vit Do - mi - num lac - ta - vit Do - mi - num

T. vit Do - mi - num mor - tis

B. que lac - ta - vit Do - mi - num

17

S. Do - mi - num pes - tem quam plan - ta - vit

A. mor - tis pes - tem quam plan - ta - vit pri - mus

T. pes - tem quam plan - ta - vit pri -

B. mor - tis pes - tem quam plan - ta -

25

S. pri - mus par - rens pri - mus pa - rens

A. pa - rens ho - mi - num

T. mus pa - rens ho - mi -

B. vit pri - mus pa - rens ho - mi - num

Example 2.1 (cont.)

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 nor - tis

70

T.

embodied metaphor for directing errant stars. Whether Mary heeds the prayer or not, in the music, at least, the momentary dissonance is quickly resolved and consonance ultimately prevails.

## The Music of Contagion

Over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the concept of sympathy and antipathy that accounted for astrological-musical healing on one hand, and for astrological infection on the other, also served as the underlying explanatory principle for human-to-human contagion. In inherited Galenic thought, pestilence, which was caused by corrupted air, was not always counted among contagious diseases – “contagious,” that is, from the Latin root “to touch together.”<sup>47</sup> In the strictly miasmatic model of the disease, 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, doctors very quickly observed that plague was, in fact, contagious. Examining mortality patterns, a writer from Prague concluded that 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.<sup>48</sup> Some doctors deduced that the contagion could be transmitted by touch and breath. A Pisan chronicler wrote, “when [the crew of two Genoese galleys] reached the fish market someone began to talk with them 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.”<sup>49</sup>

Certainly, there were dissenting voices that spoke more staunchly from the Galenic perspective. Niccolò Massa, for example, emphasized the miasmatic explanation of pestilence and encouraged his readers to move about the town so as to not be cooped up with bad air. According to the doctor, they should also be weary of physicians who lie and claim from

<sup>47</sup> Chase, “Fevers, Poisons, and Apostemes,” 155.

<sup>48</sup> Henricum [de Bremis or de Ribbenicz], “Causae, signa et remedia,” 85.

<sup>49</sup> Sardo, *Cronaca di Pisa*, 96; cited in Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*, 112.

personal experience (instead of deferring to ancient teachings) that mingling with the sick can spread pestilential contagion.<sup>50</sup> But such objections were in the minority and were largely academic in any event. In their writings, doctors broadly accepted multiple causes of infection, and miasma and contagion were not mutually exclusive – one could as easily become ill by inhaling noxious air as by contact with the sick. More importantly, corrupt air was sometimes treated as a sort of contaminating agent passed from person to person, or object to person. The noxious breath and exhalations of plague victims were recognized to be extremely dangerous to those around them. Miasma could also linger and be transported – and then infect – if caught up in corpses, clothes, bedding, and other objects. This transported pestilential air could further putrefy the surrounding atmosphere. One doctor wrote, “You may ask, ‘how is the disease contagious?’ It is because poisonous fumes emanate from bodies, corrupting the air and the humors.”<sup>51</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that for whatever debates there may have been, programs of sanitation accommodated both positions. Both the contagionist and the miasmatisist would go about eliminating pestilence by improving the quality of ambient air and by discouraging the transport of suspect goods. Likewise, the frequent recommendation of flight as the only fail-safe remedy against infection would prevent infection both from miasma and from human-to-human contact. Indeed, 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*).” For those without the means to escape, the standard advice was to avoid crowded areas; one doctor wrote, for example, that “the market and the church, in which people convene, are to be avoided.”<sup>52</sup> Certain high-risk demographics were sometimes identified. Paré, for example, warned his readers to avoid physicians, apothecaries, surgeons, and gravediggers. Using an olfactory analogy that drew together the ideas of contagion and miasma, he wrote, “Coming out of a pestilent place, they may carry with them pestilential air, just as someone who leaves the perfumer’s shop carries with them the perfume vapors.”<sup>53</sup> Sometimes, it is difficult to discern whether a doctor is warning against bad odors or bad morals.

<sup>50</sup> Massa, *Ragionamento . . . sopra le infermità*, 5r, 18v–19r; cited in Laughran, “Body, Public Health and Social Control,” 125–126.

<sup>51</sup> Anonymous, “Pest-Regimen, Cod. 556 Berner Stadtbibliothek,” 62.

<sup>52</sup> Heinrich of Amorbach, “Pestkonsilium,” 243. <sup>53</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 50.

In 1565, for example, Saladino Ferro advised against mingling with the plebs (*persone publiche*), especially those who live squalidly, such as gravediggers, cobblers, blacksmiths, tinkers, sailors, prostitutes, and their Johns.<sup>54</sup>

Besides unsavory people, objects, especially porous ones, were also potential plague carriers. Consequently, furniture, clothing, and other personal effects belonging to the deceased were carefully washed, fumigated, or burned, and the traffic of these items was often banned outright. Item two of the 1348 Pistoian statute on plague states 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 Pistoia by the official who discovered it.”<sup>55</sup> Failure to halt such trade can be disastrous. The theft and sale of personal items of a man who had died of plague near Milan was thought to have sparked an outbreak in 1576 that took over 20,000 lives in that city.<sup>56</sup>

For Renaissance doctors, this observable phenomenon of pestilential contagion was theoretically undergirded by the doctrine of sympathy. The susceptibility to infection and the pathway of disease transmission depended, first and foremost, on the degree of sympathy and similitude between two subjects. According to Paré, contagion is more readily spread, in the first instance, within the same species: “It must be noted that the putridity that rises from the carcasses or bodies of men is more pernicious to men than that from other animals, and that which rises from oxen, to oxen, from horses, to horses, from pigs, to pigs, and from sheep, to sheep, by a certain sympathy and concordance between them.”<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, within the same species, kinship and similarity of complexion (i.e., the humoral makeup of an individual) are conducive to sympathetic infection: “likewise, then, if a family member (or person of a similar temperament) is taken by the plague, it is usually communicated to everyone.”<sup>58</sup>

In his *Consiglio*, Ficino likened this same condition of sympathetic susceptibility to musical resonance. In a chapter devoted to the health of doctors attending plague victims, he warned his fellow physicians that

<sup>54</sup> Ferro, *Trattato della peste, et sua preservatione, et cura*, 15v.

<sup>55</sup> Chiappelli, “Gli ordinamenti sanitari,” 8–9; translation adapted from Horrox, *Black Death*, 195.

<sup>56</sup> Besta, *Vera narratione*, 10r. <sup>57</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 17.

<sup>58</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 17.

contagion spreads more readily among individuals who are similar in humoral constitution or astrological disposition:

You who would attend to the sick must know that the more closely you are related to them by blood or the more you resemble them in complexion or constellation, the greater will be the risk of infection, because qualities move easily between subjects that are similar one to another, as from fire to air, air to water, water to earth, and as when two *cithare* or two strings are tuned to the same pitch, the movement and sound of the one finds response in the other.<sup>59</sup>

Plague passes more readily between those who are similar in complexion, in the same way that sound elicits resonance between strings tuned to the same pitch. Drawing together Ficino's examples from *De vita* and his plague *consilio*, we can see that the fundamental principle of universal sympathy – exemplified by the phenomenon of sympathetic resonance – enabled both the salubrious operations of astrological music and the conditions that facilitated contagion.

Ficino was not alone in using the phenomenon of sympathetic vibration to describe aspects of the contagion process. Girolamo Fracastoro (1478–1553) – sometimes viewed as the forefather of germ theory for granting ontological existence to diseases and introducing the idea of pathogenic seeds (*seminaria*)<sup>60</sup> – employed the same image, but for a very different purpose. Fracastoro marshaled it to explain an atomistic theory of contagion that relied, in turn, on a new conception of similitude and universal sympathy. He laid out his new theory of contagion in *De contagione*, written in 1538 and published in 1546 together with *De sympathia et antipathia*, a prefatory treatise meant to explain the philosophical underpinnings of his new medical paradigm.<sup>61</sup> As Fracastoro explained in the dedication of *De contagione*, he was unsatisfied with ancient authority in the matters of contagion, arguing that neither Galen nor Hippocrates, having contented themselves by reducing the causes of contagion to occult properties, truly “explained the general nature of contagions; by what principles they infect; how they are generated; why some of them leave *fomes*, and some propagate themselves even from a distance [etc.].”<sup>62</sup> In his

<sup>59</sup> Ficino, *Consilio contro la pestilenzia*, 106; translation adapted from Katinis, “Humanist Confronts the Plague,” 75. See Katinis for explanation of transfers of qualities between elements.

<sup>60</sup> For the reception history of Fracastoro's contagion theory, see Nutton, “Reception of Fracastoro's Theory of Contagion,” 196–198; Howard-Jones, “Fracastoro and Henle,” 61–63; Santer, *Confronting Contagion*, 313–315.

<sup>61</sup> Pantin, “Fracastoro's *De Contagione*,” 5. <sup>62</sup> Wright, “Introduction,” Bd.

own work, Fracastoro resisted the concept of the occult and explained the processes of contagion in relation to the forces of sympathy and antipathy that, while insensible, were for him nevertheless rationally intelligible.

In the prefatory *De sympathia*, Fracastoro reconceived sympathy as the condition whereby bodies “strive to be connected and almost stuck to one another, so much so that there is no force capable of separating and dividing the external parts with which they touch each other; so much so that there is no void space between them.”<sup>63</sup> Fracastoro denied the existence of vacuums and conceptually brought everything into contact with each other. There was no occult action at a distance, strictly speaking, under this principle, only action via some kind of touch. Fracastoro’s explanation of sympathetic resonance in *De sympathia* in terms of aerial contact between strings – according to Clifford Truesdell, historically the first “correct” explanation of the phenomenon<sup>64</sup> – illustrated this mechanistic outlook:

One unison promotes another, since when two strings are equally taut, they are fitted to make and receive like undulations of the air. Those that are diversely taut are not in case to be moved by the same circulations, but one circulation hinders another. The beat of the string, the motion, is composed of two motions, by one of which the string is driven forward, that is, toward the circulations of the air; by the other, backward, the string thus restoring itself to its proper location. Therefore, if one moved string is to be moved by another, in the second there must be such a proportion that the undulations and circulations of the air which impel and make the forward motion do not hinder the backward motion of the string. Such a proportion is had only by those strings that have a like tension.<sup>65</sup>

Action at a distance in this instance occurs by means of mediating physical causes. Strings must be tuned in unison as a precondition so that one can receive undulations in the air from another, and that, both vibrating, they create circulations of air that reinforce rather than impede each other’s back-and-forth movement.<sup>66</sup>

To explain the more complex phenomena of distant attraction such as magnetism, Fracastoro, recalling Lucretian atomism, surmised that both agents had to emit “spiritual species,” rarefied, film-like matter emanating from objects that carry the same qualities, powers, and modes of sympathy

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Maurette, “De rerum textura,” 325.    <sup>64</sup> Truesdell, *Rational Mechanics*, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Fracastoro, *De sympathia et antipathia rerum*, 104–107; translation from Truesdell, *Rational Mechanics*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> See also Palisca, *Music and Ideas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 158.

and antipathy as their sources.<sup>67</sup> In the case of magnets, the effluvia of rarefied substances would make contact and commingle to create a new “whole,” and the lodestone and iron, being parts of the new whole, would be moved to reunite.<sup>68</sup> Once again, Fracastoro saw hitherto occult attractions as instances of physical and material contact: “similitude,” he wrote, “must be taken to be a spiritual species that touches.”<sup>69</sup>

This reconception of sympathy as contact paved the way for Fracastoro’s theory of contagion, of which he posited three types. The first and simplest type is direct contact, where pathogenic seeds are passed immediately from one body to another. The second means of contagion, seen particularly in cases of phthisis and plague, is via “fomites” – porous and warm materials like wool, rags, and wood that can preserve seeds of disease without themselves being affected by them. The third type of infection occurs from a distance. Fracastoro again used as his touchstones phthisis and pestiferous fevers, which can infect those who live with sufferers, but are seemingly not in actual contact with them. Fracastoro explained that little seeds of disease travel through the air and penetrate their next hosts. From there, these seeds either propagate themselves and infect the entirety of the victim’s humors, or they are drawn deep into the heart through the breath or via blood vessels.<sup>70</sup> Once infected, the new hosts would generate and propagate more seeds. Fracastoro very carefully pointed out that “the contagion which affects a distant object works by means of the same common principle and by the same method as do other contagions” – namely, direct physical touch.<sup>71</sup> The only substantive difference between the three classes of contagions boiled down to the strength and viscosity of the pathogenic seeds. The seeds of type two contagions have to be sufficiently strong to resist alteration once they have left the host and sufficiently viscous to remain on the fomites. Contagions of the third type have to be more powerful still to travel greater distances and subtler in nature in order to penetrate the recipient.

The respective approaches to the problem of contagion taken by Ficino and Fracastoro point up an important difference in the theoretical standing of sympathy as an explanatory concept for little-understood phenomena, a difference that consequently determined the explanatory powers yielded by occult phenomena such as sympathetic resonance. For Ficino, the principle of sympathy was what Seth Lobis would call a “verbal dodge,”<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Leijenhorst, *Mechanisation of Aristotelianism*, 64.

<sup>68</sup> Pantin, “Fracastoro’s *De Contagione*,” 7–8. <sup>69</sup> Maurette, “*De rerum textura*,” 326.

<sup>70</sup> Fracastoro, *De contagione*, 35. <sup>71</sup> Fracastoro, *De contagione*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> Lobis, *Virtue of Sympathy*, 23.

or Anne Moyer, “a placeholder, something of a way station on the road to an explanation.”<sup>73</sup> As a principle that remained occult, sympathy could do no more explanatory work for Ficino – or, for that matter, for Paré, Fernel, and Paracelsus – than describe occult actions by analogy of observable effects in a kind of tautological regress and deferral; susceptibility to a contagion from someone with a similar disposition is like one string vibrating after another, is like iron being drawn to magnet, and so on. Moreover, the phenomenon of sympathetic vibrations was useful for Ficino insofar as it illustrated the ease of disease transmission between people of similar complexions; the crux of the analogy was in the similarity of tuning – of *musica instrumentalis* in the *chitare* and *musica humana* in plague victims – as the predisposing condition for resonance and contagion. In fact, Ficino did not need to take the analogy any further, since, in describing the actual *materia* and mechanics of contagion, Ficino hewed closely to the established miasmatic-contagionist model. For him, pestilence was “a poisonous vapor created in the air inimical to the vital spirit; inimical not through its elemental quality, but because of its specific property.”<sup>74</sup> And as for actually preventing contagion, Ficino’s focus was on avoiding windborne, aerial corruption:

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 make sure that the wind is not blowing from him towards you.* [emphasis mine]<sup>75</sup>

Fracastoro, by contrast, was dissatisfied with descriptive analogy and delved into the causation of mysterious phenomena, including those under the heading of “action at a distance.” He split the difference between the two meanings of the term “occult”; although actual sympathetic processes ultimately remained invisible to Fracastoro, he believed that they were nevertheless intelligible and sought to explain them to his readers.<sup>76</sup> For Fracastoro, sympathy operated on the basis of physical touch, and this second-order mechanistic principle informed natural phenomena without observable causes. In this philosophical framework, where sympathy was no longer a placeholder for an epistemological vacuum, but an intelligible, mechanical principle, instances of sympathetic action were linked not by their similar effects but by their unitary cause.

<sup>73</sup> Moyer, “Sympathy in the Renaissance,” 88.      <sup>74</sup> Ficino, *Consilio contro la pestilenzia*, 55.

<sup>75</sup> Ficino, *Consilio contro la pestilenzia*, 108.      <sup>76</sup> Moyer, “Sympathy in the Renaissance,” 88.

The resonance between two similarly tuned strings, the movement of iron to lodestone, or contagion between people were alike insofar as they were the result of different kinds of material contact between substances – between moving air and strings in the first instance, between subtle material species in the case of magnets, and between seeds of disease and their victims. Fracastoro’s innovation rested in this reconception of sympathy and contagion that yielded (serendipitously) prescient ideas approaching an ontology of disease, where germ-like entities with different properties could generate different ailments.

Ultimately, however, there was far more in common between Fracastoro’s and Ficino’s practical approach to plague than there were differences. Fracastoro did not offer any new therapies that one could not find in Ficino’s *Consiglia* or other contemporary plague treatises. Fracastoro recommended flight and the usual purification of the air, for example, as prophylactic measures. And while he pointed out, in the abstract, that noxious seeds must be stamped by the application of heat and cold, what that meant for those already infected was the manipulation of the elemental and humoral qualities of the body in the usual ways: through the nonnaturals, drugs, purgation, and bloodletting.<sup>77</sup> From a broader perspective, what unified Fracastoro and doctors like Ficino was the common goal to make the seemingly capricious phenomenon of contagion more predictable. Finally, that both doctors employed the example of resonance to illustrate very different ideas of contagion shows that, far from being static, ancient tropes about music and its powerful effects were recontextualized and reconceived along with Neo-Platonic or atomistic principles – and with whatever empirical observations were available – to fill a theoretical lacuna in the Galenic model of health.

### ***Amicitia* and the Body Politic**

One final connection between pestilence and *sympathia* has to do with one of the term’s cognates, *amicitia* (amity, kinship, or friendship), which hints at the moral, emotive, and interpersonal aspect of sympathy that has become its most prevalent meaning today. For some Renaissance philosophers, the occult affinity between natural things – animals, plants, and

<sup>77</sup> Fracastoro, *De contagione*, 239–249.

minerals – and love among people were manifestations of the same universal phenomenon. Ficino, for example, described love in terms of the effect of lodestone on iron and amber on chaff.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, in Erasmus’s pedagogical colloquy “Amicitia” (published 1531),<sup>79</sup> we can see an overlap in the fields of natural history and ethics based on the common principle of sympathy.<sup>80</sup> The colloquy begins with an exploration of affinities and antipathies in nature: dolphins are great lovers of men, but mortal enemies of crocodiles; iron both “kisses” and flies away from a lodestone; south winds are pestiferous and north winds are beneficial; the stars have certain sympathies and antipathies that respectively benefit and harm mankind. The catalog of natural amities and enmities leads to the question at the heart of the colloquy: why should members of the same species be well inclined toward certain members, but despise others? Erasmus’s answer: just as there are natural affinities and antipathies in the world, so there are likewise among individuals with different dispositions. The consequent moral lesson is that the happy man avoids those whose characters he finds odious (such as liars and pranksters) and associates with those to whom he is drawn by natural sympathy. Erasmus thus brought together examples from nature to illustrate the nature of a good life based on the laws of *amicitia*.

In times of plague, these natural laws were disrupted. As Paré wrote, pestilential air “overturns, dissipates, alters, breaks, and corrupts natural harmony and temperament of all animals.”<sup>81</sup> And as natural harmony was overturned, *amicitia* among kin and friends also failed on multiple levels. In nature, Paré observed that birds would abandon their nests, eggs, and hatchlings without manifest cause.<sup>82</sup> The bonds of human families likewise suffered. In his plague treatise, Paré described an incident from the 1565 outbreak in France:

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 neighbors 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.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, 127.

<sup>79</sup> Erasmus, *Colloquies*, 39–40:1033–1055.

<sup>80</sup> Lobis, “Erasmus and the Natural History of Friendship,” 24.

<sup>81</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 25. <sup>82</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 21–22.

<sup>83</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 254.

Such stories were infinite in number, Paré claimed, and they exemplified the unnatural breakdown of human relationships precipitated by pestilence. By Paré's report, even in cases less extreme than Madame Baston's infanticide-suicide, plague-stricken parents often could not give care to their children, who were seen suffocating and eaten by insects; the mother, hoping to help, got up just to fall dead among her child and husband. Instances of delirium and general helplessness aside, the sick were frequently ignored by vassals, subjects, or servants, who turned their backs and dared not come near. Likewise, "the father abandons the child, and the child, the father; the husband, the wife, and the wife, the husband; the brother, the sister, and the sister, the brother; and even those you thought were your closest and most trusted friends abandon you on account of the horror and the danger of the plague."<sup>84</sup>

Such loss of *amicitia* occurred not only among private domestic relationships, but pertained to the entire state. In times of pestilence, general anarchy and lawlessness, disease-like, festered and invaded every home so that citizens were embattled by disease from within and by villainy from without. Paré described such chaos as "another plague" that swept over the community:

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.<sup>85</sup>

Paré may well have blamed the flight of magistrates for rampant crime during outbreaks, but at outset of the same treatise, he himself ranked "cito, longe, tarde" as the most useful advice he could possibly give.<sup>86</sup> The fear for individual health – whether concerning contagion or miasma over a region – greatly undermined social relations and practices.

By the time Paré was writing his treatise, furnished as it were with recent episodes from Lyons, the loss of *amicitia* was already a well-established theme in a wide variety of plague literature, and some of his language was

<sup>84</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 251.    <sup>85</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 249.

<sup>86</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 28.

clearly modeled on earlier texts. Paul the Deacon, discussing the 566 plague that hit Liguria, lamented 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. Such language reappeared in the plague literature describing the first medieval outbreaks. Gabriella Zanella discovered no fewer than nine medieval chroniclers who described similar states of disorder. Among them is Pietro Azario, who bore “firsthand” 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 neighbor from neighbor.”<sup>87</sup> Such a scene captured the literary imagination of Boccaccio, in whose account we may recognize Paré’s later description:

[S]paring 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 refused to nurse and assist their own children, as though they did not belong to them.

Hence, the countless numbers of people who fell ill, both male and female, were entirely dependent upon either the charity of friends (who were few and far between) or the greed of servants, who remained in short supply.<sup>88</sup>

Trespassing against kin, country, guests, and masters, the Florentines in Boccaccio’s account would surely have found good company in Dante’s deepest circle of hell, reserved for the sinners who betrayed their social allegiances.<sup>89</sup> In the intertextual traffic between chronicles, medical treatises, and literature, the theme of social breakdown became a *topos* in pestilential thought, and the term “plague” itself became metaphorized into a figure for social disorder. As Susan Sontag noted, “from pestilence (bubonic plague) came ‘pestilent,’ whose figurative meaning, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is ‘injurious to religion, morals, or public peace – 1513.’”<sup>90</sup>

The metaphorization of plague into social disorder operated in the context of the broader metaphor, common since the Middle Ages, of the “body politic” or “mystical body,” terms used interchangeably to denote

<sup>87</sup> Azario, *Liber gestorum in Lombardia*, 4:1; cited in Zanella, “Italia, Francia, e Germania,” 65.

<sup>88</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 8–9. <sup>89</sup> Wray, “Boccaccio and the Doctors,” 312.

<sup>90</sup> Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, 58.

the comparison of the organization of human societies to human anatomy.<sup>91</sup> Under this analogy, the ruler of a state was variously anatomized, for 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),<sup>92</sup> thus justifying political structure with recourse to biology. The sixteenth-century jurist Claude de Seyssel presented another facet of the metaphor, wherein political processes over the *longue durée* were described as natural and ineluctable anatomical processes:

these corps mystiques, which resemble human material bodies, composed of four contrary elements and humors, endure as long as the humors 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 return to its original state . . . All of this happens to the corps mystiques of the human society.<sup>93</sup>

To describe more violent social disorder, however, writers turned to pestilential metaphors. Thomas Starkey (1495–1538), for example, compared the chaos wreaked by rebellious estates to the indiscriminate destruction of plague:

[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 . . . [M]e semyth hyt may wel be lykkynnyd to a pestylence; for lyke as a pestylens, where so euer hyt reynth, lyghtly, and for the most parte, destroth a grete nombur of the pepul wythout regard of any person had, or degre, so doth thys dyscord and debate in a commynalty, where so euer hyt reynyth, schortly destroyth al gud ordur and cyuylte, and vturly takyth away al helth from thys polytyke body and tranquyllyte.<sup>94</sup>

In the projection of the human body onto the state, biological illnesses held explanatory power for abstract social ills. In the case of Paré's second,

<sup>91</sup> For a history of the concept, see Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*.

<sup>92</sup> Archambault, "The Analogy of 'the Body' in Renaissance Political Literature," 40; Soll, "Healing the Body Politics," 1278.

<sup>93</sup> Original French cited in Archambault, "The Analogy of 'the Body' in Renaissance Political Literature," 44.

<sup>94</sup> Starkey, *Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset*, 66–67.

social plague, the idea was doubly determined. The relationship between individual suffering bodies and social upheaval was not only directly causal – from the fear of contagion came the loss of charity – but also analogical – the breakdown of individual bodily humors mirrored the breakdown of the body politic.

### **Fiat pax in virtute tua**

A number of musical works responded to the plague of social dissolution, some of which will be discussed in the next chapter on pestilential rituals. Among the more explicit works in addressing communal welfare is Alexander Copinus's *Fiat pax in virtute tua* (MILD 3). Frank D'Accone suggested that the motet was written in Florence for a St. Sebastian confraternity that held services 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.<sup>95</sup> It is impossible to say whether the work was composed for general devotional and prophylactic use, or whether it was spurred on specifically by one of the many pestilential outbreaks (1493–1494, 1497, 1505, and 1509) that struck Florence during this period.<sup>96</sup> In the *prima pars*, Copinus sets a prayer to St. Sebastian, seeking his intercession. In the *secunda pars*, the penitent addresses God directly and references Sebastian's escape from his first passion by arrows as a precedence of the Lord's power and mercy, with the image of the arrow serving as the analogy between the martyr's suffering and the scourge of plague.<sup>97</sup>

#### **Prima pars**

Fiat pax in virtute tua et intercessione tua, O beate Sebastiane.	Let there be peace in thy strength and thy 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 hands.
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 well-disposed to His people on earth who daily cry out to you, just as you entreat for us.

<sup>95</sup> D'Accone, *Music in Renaissance Florence*, 66–67.

<sup>96</sup> Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 2:394–397.

<sup>97</sup> See Chapter 4 for the symbolism of the arrow in relation to the cult of Sebastian.

**Secunda pars**

<p>Domine Deus omnipotens, terribilis et fortis, justus et misericors rector humani generis et auctor, qui nos a morte roseo salvasti sanguine tuo, exaudi orationes nostras.</p> <p>Nec nos tempore malo [afflige], sed fac nobiscum secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum.</p> <p>Et sicut invictissimum martirem tuum Sebastianum a sagittarum interitu eruisti, ita nos sua ope a sagitta epidimiae et a morbo tuearis.</p>	<p>Omnipotent Lord, God, terrible and powerful, just and merciful, creator and ruler of humankind, who saved us from death by your crimson blood, hear our prayers.</p> <p>Do not afflict us with bad times, but do to us according to your great compassion.</p> <p>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.</p>
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The opening turn of phrase, “Fiat pax in virtute tua,” cites Psalm 121:7, “Fiat pax in virtute tua et abundantia in turribus tui” (Let there be peace in thy strength and abundance in thy towers). In the biblical text, the Psalmist rejoices when he is summoned to join the pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem. Arriving, he thrice pleads for peace for the city, described as the house of the Lord (vv. 1 and 9) and seat of the Davidic monarchy (v. 5). Peace in Jerusalem, the Psalmist exhorts, would bring prosperity to her inhabitants.

**Canticum graduum**

Lætatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi:  
In domum Domini ibimus.

2 Stantes erant pedes nostri in atriis tuis,  
Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem, quæ ædificatur ut civitas,  
cujus participatio ejus in idipsum.

4 Illuc enim ascenderunt tribus, tribus  
Domini: testimonium Israel, ad confi-  
tendum nomini Domini.

5 Quia illic sederunt sedes in iudicio, sedes  
super domum David.

6 Rogate quae ad pacem sunt Jerusalem, et  
abundantia diligentiibus te.

**Song of Ascents**

I rejoiced at the things that were said to me:  
We shall go into the house of the Lord.

2 Our feet were standing in thy courts, O  
Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem, which is built as a city, which  
is compact together.

4 For thither did the tribes go up, the  
tribes of the Lord: the testimony  
of Israel, to praise the name of the Lord.

5 Because their seats have sat in judgment,  
seats upon the house of David.

6 Pray ye for the things that are for the  
peace of Jerusalem: and abundance for  
them that love thee.

7 Fiat pax in virtute tua, et abundantia in turribus tuis.	7 Let peace be in thy strength: and abundance in thy towers.
8 Propter fratres meos et proximos meos, loquebar pacem de te.	8 For the sake of my brethren, and of my neighbors, I spoke peace of thee.
9 Propter domum Domini Dei nostri, quaesivi bona tibi.	9 Because of the house of the Lord our God, I have sought good things for thee.

Copinus's motet recontextualizes the Psalmist's appeal for civic peace; here, peace is achieved not by Jerusalem's strength, but by St. Sebastian's intercession. Where one would expect a prayer to Sebastian for the health of the biological body, there is instead a plea for the health of the body politic, something outside the saint's usual purview. The words and melody of the supplication "Fiat pax" become the backbone of the entire motet as a repeating five-note cantus firmus (Example 2.2). With a conception similar to Josquin's *Miserere mei* or his *Missa l'homme armé super voces musicales*, the five-note motive, set in longs, begins on C and subsequently starts a note lower each time, with the fifth and final iteration in the *prima pars* beginning and ending on F. Throughout, rests equal to the length of the motive break up each statement of the cantus firmus. In the *secunda pars*, both the melodic profile and the direction of the cantus firmus movement are inverted, with the tenor climbing from F up to C. This unusual stepwise wandering of the cantus firmus – itself meandering in steps – may symbolically hint at the origins of "Fiat pax" in one of the fifteen Psalms titled *Canticum graduum* or Song of Ascents (Vulgate 119–133) that were variously interpreted as songs sung by the Levites on the fifteen steps of the temple during religious festivals, or in a mystical fashion, as songs of spiritual ascent.<sup>98</sup> The ascent of Sebastian's name in longs (mm. 11–16) may also be a part of that symbolism of steps.

Aside from the tenor, the original version of the cantus firmus motive appears prominently between mm. 30 and 35; there, it is treated in imitation between the altus and bassus, and in sequencing that mirrors the gradual descent of the tenor cantus firmus. The figure returns in the same voice at the start of the *secunda pars*, where the first three notes in the altus, setting the invocation "Domine," is answered by the complete motive in

<sup>98</sup> Crow, *Songs of Ascents*, 3–27.

Example 2.2 Copinus, *Fiat pax in virtute tua*, cantus firmus scheme.

*Prima pars*

The musical score is presented in five systems, each with a Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.) part. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. The lyrics are: "Fi - at pax in vir - O be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a - ne Fi - at pax et au - di - at a - pe - ri - at o - cu - los su - os in - cli - net au - res su - as et au - di - at a - pe - ri - at o -".

System 1 (Measures 1-5): S. part has lyrics "Fi - at pax in vir -" and a triplet of eighth notes. T. part has a triplet of eighth notes. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are indicated above the S. staff.

System 2 (Measures 6-10): S. part has lyrics "O be - a -". T. part has lyrics "Fi - at pax". Measure numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are indicated above the S. staff.

System 3 (Measures 11-20): S. part has lyrics "te Se - ba - sti - a - ne". T. part has lyrics "Fi - at pax". Measure numbers 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 are indicated above the S. staff.

System 4 (Measures 21-28): T. part has lyrics "Fi - at pax". Measure numbers 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28 are indicated above the T. staff.

System 5 (Measures 29-36): A. part has lyrics "et au - di - at a - pe - ri - at o - cu - los su - os". T. part has lyrics "pax". B. part has lyrics "in - cli - net au - res su - as et au - di - at a - pe - ri - at o -". Measure numbers 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 are indicated above the A. staff.

the bassus, carrying the epitaph “omnipotens.” Across the motet, the cantus firmus melody creates a semantic link between the repeated plea of “Fiat pax,” the request “May He bend his ears and listen, open his eyes and see,” and an invocation to the omnipotent Lord. It is therefore the

## Example 2.2 (cont.)

34

A. et vi - de - at

T. Fi - at pax

B. - cu - los su - os et vi - de - at

41

T. 5

*Secunda pars*

51

A. Do - mi - ne

T. Fi -

B. Do - mi - ne de - us om - ni - po - tens

58

T. - at pax 5

66

T. Fi - at pax 5

76

T. Fi - at pax 5

86

T. Fi - at pax 5

96

T. Fi - at pax

social plague that takes precedence as the penitent petitions first and foremost for peace – may the omnipotent Lord turn his attention to the incessant pleas of “Fiat pax.” Disregarding the appeal to Sebastian’s passion, the motet could well be an antiwar, rather than an anti-

pestilence, song. It is not until plague is explicitly mentioned in the last line of the motet that the double sense of pestilence as a medical and social condition finally comes into focus: may there be peace in both the biological and the political bodies.

### Dufay's *O sancte Sebastiane*

Copinus's *Fiat pax in virtute tua* emphasizes the social plague and projects an exceptionally strong sense of civic concern through its textual lineage to a Psalm praising Jerusalem and its musical treatment of the plea "Fiat pax." With very different means, Dufay achieves a similar sense of the communal in his isorhythmic motet *O sancte Sebastiane* (BoC Q15, no. 211; OxfBC 213 no. 51). A great variety of dates have been proposed for the motet's composition. Heinrich Bessler, in a 1958 article, ascribed a date of 1429 to the motet, when Dufay would have been working in the Papal Choir. This date would have coincided with a major pestilential outbreak in Rome, during which the pope fled the city.<sup>99</sup> Later, in his 1966 Dufay edition, Bessler did not mention any Roman connection, but dated it between 1420 and 1426 instead, when Dufay would have been under the employment of the Malatestas of Rimini. Charles Hamm, on stylistic evidence, placed the work in a slightly later range of 1426–1431.<sup>100</sup> David Fallows, in turn, dated 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).<sup>101</sup> It is perhaps suggestive that Bessler found melodic correspondences between *O sancte Sebastiane* and *Resvelliés vous*.<sup>102</sup> If *O sancte Sebastiane* was indeed composed for the Malatestas and intended for use in Rimini, then 1424 would make

<sup>99</sup> Bessler, "Dufay in Rom," 4–5.

<sup>100</sup> Hamm, *Chronology of the Works of Guillaume Dufay*, 56.      <sup>101</sup> Fallows, *Dufay*, 21–23.

<sup>102</sup> These melodic correspondences can also be interpreted not as specific modeling, 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 Cumming, *Motet in the Age of Du Fay*, 113–115, 119–124.

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.<sup>103</sup>

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. A final cadence lies outside the isorhythmic scheme. For the *introitus* and the first section of the work, Dufay distributed (unequally) a popular sequence to St. Sebastian among the *triplum* and the *motetus* (he adopted the same procedure for his motets *Rite majorem*, *Apostolo glorioso*, and *O gemma, lux et speculum*).<sup>104</sup> 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 4). The contratenor sets a widely disseminated rhymed antiphon, found in many Books of Hours, in the first section of the motet. The tenor carries the incipit "Gloria et honore" in OxfBC 213, which Bent suggested is erroneous, and no plainchant melody has yet been identified as the *cantus firmus*.<sup>105</sup> An "Amen" in all voices gives 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,)

<sup>103</sup> Bent, "Petrarch, Padua, the Malatestas, Du Fay," 93–94; Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 2:395.

<sup>104</sup> Dreves, *Analecta hymnica*, 33:167. <sup>105</sup> Bent, *Bologna Q15*.

Section 1 Triplum	Motetus	Contra	Tenor
<p><i>Talea 1</i>  Me protege et conserva  Et a me, martyr, enerva  Infirmittatem 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 . . . )</p>	<p>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 . . .)</p>	<p>O quam mira refulsit gratia  Sebastianus, martyr inclitus, (O  how Sebastian, the famous  martyr shines with wondrous  grace,)</p>	<p>Gloria et honore.  (Glory and honor.)</p>
<p><i>Talea 2</i>  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.)</p>	<p>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.)</p>	<p>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,)</p>	
<p><i>Talea 3</i>  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.)</p>	<p>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.)</p>	<p>Confortavit corda palentia  Verbo sibi collato caelitus.  (comforted frightened hearts  with the heavenly word con-  ferred to him.)</p>	
<p><b>Section 2</b>  <b>All voices</b>  <i>Taleae 4-6</i>  Amen</p>			

The rhetorical progression of the sequence text displays a widening scope in the petitioner's intentions. The speaker begins in the first person – while I am still sound of mind, conserve and protect me from pestilence. Very quickly, the concern grows to include friends and family – defend and protect me and all of my loved ones. In the second *talea*, Sebastian's Milanese citizenship (rather than, say, his occupation as a soldier) is invoked, as if to remind him of his responsibility to earthly communities. Finally, the latter part of sequence (set entirely in the *motetus*, and thus performed simultaneously with the earlier sections of the same text) adopts the plural voice – preserve us, heal and protect us, and may we receive the reward of heaven; the voice of the community joins that of the singular penitent in prayer. In the context of performance, the interplay of "I" and "we" weaves together individual singers into a singing ensemble.

The communal outlook of the motet is reinforced further still by its generic connotations. By the late fourteenth century, the isorhythmic motet, often employed for glorifying a state or celebrating public occasions, had acquired a public and political function.<sup>106</sup> Examples abound. Much of Johannes Ciconia's isorhythmic output, for example, was dedicated to important public figures and made reference to Padua or Venice.<sup>107</sup> 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. In the instances where he honored a particular saint with an isorhythmic motet, there was a special connection between the saint and the city for which the motet was written.<sup>108</sup> Many of Dufay's own isorhythmic works also had occasional functions; of the thirteen isorhythmic motets in his output, David Fallows surmised that all but two (*O sancte Sebastiane* and *O gemma, lux*) can be connected to specific occasions, people and places, and so, "to study them is to study Dufay's public voice."<sup>109</sup> While the intended occasion for which *O sancte Sebastiane* was composed has not yet been identified, we may nevertheless reasonably imagine its use in a public ceremony, such as a plague procession or some other crisis ceremony.

It was not only the occasional function of the genre but also the meta-physical principles that undergirded music in general, and the isorhythmic motet in particular, that linked the genre to the ideas of community or statehood. Julie Cumming has described the aesthetic "difficulty" of the isorhythmic genre – its complex rhythms, mixtures of preexistent and

<sup>106</sup> Fallows, *Dufay*, 103.

<sup>107</sup> Fischer, Bent, and Hallmark, "Introduction," xii–xiii. For other motets dedicated to Venetian Doges in the early Quattrocento, see Cumming, "Music for the Doge," 324–364.

<sup>108</sup> Bent, *Dunstable*, 7–8; Noble, "John Dunstable," 185. <sup>109</sup> Fallows, *Dufay*, 28, 103.

newly composed materials, intricate interactions of melodies, and polytextuality – as a musical manifestation of the classical concept of *discordia concors*,<sup>110</sup> a universal condition that described the reconciliation of diverse parts into a whole, so that a stable unity arises out of unstable and even incompatible opposites.<sup>111</sup> Rooted in Pythagorean-Platonic thought, *discordia concors* in the cosmos, among its subsystems and constituent bodies, represented the aggregate effects of sympathies and antipathies.<sup>112</sup> The human body, with its diverse organs and elementally opposite humors, or the body politic, with its diverse estates, intellects, and desires, exemplified the condition.

Music, likewise, embodied and made palpable the effects of difference bound into unity. While, admittedly, any musical work can be said to represent *discordia concors*, the isorhythmic motet exaggerated multiplicity and heightened the condition.<sup>113</sup> To varying degrees, composers of isorhythmic motets made manifest the rational design governing the seemingly disordered polyphony. In the case of *O beate Sebastiane*, for example, Dufay deployed various audible markers that articulated the form of the work. In the isorhythmic body of the motet, 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 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 2.3 and 2.4). Finally, Dufay crafted *taleae* that contain 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 2.3). 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 toward 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.

The reconciliation of diversity in the harmonious condition of *discordia concors* aligned music with the other structures of the universe. Theon of Smyrna (fl. 100 CE) succinctly summed up such an analogy:

<sup>110</sup> Cumming, "Aesthetics of the Medieval Motet and Cantilena," 71–83.

<sup>111</sup> Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, 147.

<sup>112</sup> Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, 50.

<sup>113</sup> Cumming, "Aesthetics of the Medieval Motet and Cantilena," 72.

**Example 2.3** Dufay, *O Sancte Sebastiane*, Schematic of first *talea*.

First *talea*

"motto"

Triplum

Contra

Tenor

Contra

Tenor

Sustained tenor

Mensuration change

Triplum

Motetus

Contra

Tenor

**Example 2.4** Dufay, *O Sancte Sebastiane*, "Mottos" in the triplum.

*Introitus* (opening)

Talea 1

Talea 2

Talea 3

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 coordinate 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 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.<sup>114</sup>

For Theon, music was an organizing principle that could reconcile difference and discord, with medicine or good governance being manifest instances of such a principle. And *musica instrumentalis*, too, participated in this force of reconciliation; as Theon explained, there is consonance between two sounds “when one sound produced by one of the strings of an instrument causes the other strings to resonate through the effect of a certain affinity, a sort of sympathy.”<sup>115</sup> Tapping into the channels of universal sympathy, discord – in sound, in the body, in the state – can be tuned into concord. The connections between music and these other systems, as Gary Tomlinson writes, “were not mere tropes of imagined relationships where none existed in reality . . . but that instead discovered in their creation truths about the structure itself of the world.”<sup>116</sup> The relationship between music, the spirit, the body, the family, and the state (or, at that, the relationship between sympathetic vibrations and contagion) was not only metaphorical, in the sense that meaning was found in the relational term between one thing and another, but also literal, in the sense that this relation was not rhetorical or poetic, but natural. It was by this natural correspondence that operators were able to heal the body or channel celestial gifts with music – that, to borrow Theon’s terms, music was an efficacious and useful science.

From this metaphysical standpoint, the composer, manipulating different melodies and rhythms through the rules of dissonance and consonance, performed the same work as the governor ruling over the state, or the doctor rebalancing the humors through the rules of sympathy and antipathy. At the physical, manifest level, the euphonious musical work stood against the cacophonous discord of the universe in times of pestilence, as described by Andreas Gallus in his 1564 *Fascis de peste*:

Terrifying crashes heard in the air – like the din of battle at the Cimbrian War and the sound of the trumpet in the sky – usually presage the plague . . . When the air

<sup>114</sup> Theon of Smyrna, *Exposition des connaissances mathématiques*, 19.

<sup>115</sup> Theon of Smyrna, *Exposition des connaissances mathématiques*, 85.

<sup>116</sup> Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, 50.

surrounding us becomes corrupted, certain animals – not only birds, but also land animals – indicate by their querulous voices the foul vapors. For, at such time, certain voices, as if it were those of nocturnal complaints of humans, are heard. And some birds, which are accustomed to flying during the day, take flight at night, contrary to custom, wailing and clamoring. The song or the croak of the ravens and of other birds is heard more than usual where the air is polluted . . . Frogs are more vocal than usual . . . The howling of the foxes, dogs, and wolves are likewise heard more than usual and without reason . . . And whenever or wherever these voices are heard, the plague in fact occurs, almost without fail. Many truly testify that when these voices were heard in such unusual circumstances, immediately the plague formed.<sup>117</sup>

If music partook of the *discordia concors* emblematic of a well-regulated universe, then the manifest din of noise in Gallus's description betokened the disruption of its laws and *harmonia* in the advent of plague. The stakes were high, indeed, for music at all levels in times of pestilence. Earlier, we studied music's role in fortifying the spirit and the body against plague. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to the last two of Theon's term and investigate the ways in which music can practically restore *amicitia* among families and citizens amid a pestilential crisis.

<sup>117</sup> Andreas Gallus, *Fascis de peste*, 32v–33v.

### 3 | Devotions on the Street and in the Home

Unlike other medieval ailments such as leprosy, plague did not mark individuals, but rather besieged entire populations. This particular attribute of plague had important ethical implications. If disease, as it was thought, was ultimately divine punishment for sin, then it followed that plague impugned not only the virtue of an individual but also the collective morality of a community. Corrective action, therefore, must be carried out communally. One of the most common responses to this problem of collective sin throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance was the anti-pestilential procession. As a species of what Catherine Bell calls a “ritual of affliction,” such public processions aimed, in the first instance, to rectify the relationship between the participants and their punitive God in order to bring an end to the communal scourge.<sup>1</sup> Beyond placating the divine, the programming of the processions – from the route, the physical configuration of the participants, the choice of relics, to the music performed – also encouraged civic cooperation, making it a doubly useful tool at a time when social order was overturned. But processions also posed a challenge to public health. While a heavenly intervention, any doctor would admit, would have been preferable to any temporal attempts at a remedy, these public devotions, falling short of securing their ultimate goal, would also exacerbate the problem of contagion (see Chapter 2). Naturally, doctors and civic magistrates were often circumspect with regard to the net benefits of walking around a city en masse.

The plague treatise of the Palermitan *protomedico* Giovanni Filippo Ingrassia provides a case in point. In his 1576 *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, written amid an outbreak, Ingrassia cautions his readers against congregating in 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.”<sup>2</sup> For the same reason, Ingrassia advises that town squares and churches should be avoided. In his treatment of the procession elsewhere in the treatise, however, he is more ambivalent. Ingrassia recognizes that, while the procession is a “divine remedy” that can

be “supported by many reasons and examples,” it can nevertheless pose difficulties for disease containment.<sup>3</sup> Despite his misgivings, the religious-minded doctor ultimately supports processions and tries to downplay the threat of contagion with an appeal to faith:

Those who are not in favor [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 . . . 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?<sup>4</sup>

If there is little reassurance in Ingrassia’s rhetorical question, his final words on the dangers of processions are less helpful still. The doctor points out that very few people actually catch the plague on procession days – and those who do are probably not worthy of God’s grace in any case! Ingrassia then diverts the entire discussion to the display of the sacraments in the procession and questions whether such use of the host is respectful. Stumped, he turns the entire problem into a doctrinal quibble, washes his hands of the matter, and claims, “I align myself with the opinion of those wiser than me, especially in matters of Holy Scripture.”<sup>5</sup>

Ingrassia’s equivocation between religious interests and public safety reveals the difficult position that public health officials like himself were often put into. On occasion, governments had to make the unpopular call to forbid general processions, either directly or indirectly through the imposition of quarantines and curfews. In the early sixteenth century, for example, Giovanni Cambi complained bitterly in his chronicle of Florence of the city’s 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 of God and of the saints.”<sup>6</sup> During one bout of plague, the government of Brescia allowed the Corpus Christi procession to go on only after difficult deliberation.<sup>7</sup> When plague attacked Venice in 1576, processions went ahead despite the health board’s misgivings about contagion.<sup>8</sup> The situation was similar in Milan, where health officials initially resisted Borromeo’s plans to hold city-wide processions, “lest the concourse of

<sup>3</sup> Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 349.    <sup>4</sup> Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 353.

<sup>5</sup> Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero*, 354.

<sup>6</sup> Cambi, *Istorie di Giovanni Cambi*, 22:237; original cited in Marshall, “Waiting on the Will of the Lord,” 33; translation from Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 363–364.

<sup>7</sup> Nutton, “Medieval Western Europe, 1000–1500,” 196.    <sup>8</sup> Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 225.

people should add fuel to the fire.”<sup>9</sup> There were matters of politics to consider, too. Richard 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.”<sup>10</sup>

The tension between religious duty and public health will be taken up later in the chapter, when we investigate the seminal role of music in bridging public and private devotions in instances where quarantine was imposed and processions were forced off the streets and into homes. First, however, we will survey the history and the anatomy of the plague procession, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which the musical program of these public devotions, along with other aspects of the ritual, coalesced around the civic identities of the participating communities. A picture emerges of a rich and mutable ritual that could bind together a suffering community in the difficult and changing conditions of plague.

### **Proto-Procession**

Gregory I’s plague procession of 590, the first recorded instance of such ritual of affliction 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, for which they were sent a punitive plague that caused swellings in the groin.<sup>11</sup> The Tiber overflowed its banks, demolishing a number of houses and washing snakes and a great dragon onto shore, whereupon the monstrous 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 Romans unanimously elected Gregory to be their reluctant bishop. In this capacity, Gregory preached a number of sermons, organized a procession, had litanies recited, and urged his fellow citizens to pray for mercy. With these devotions completed, Gregory attempted to leave the city, but a divine miracle led the

<sup>9</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 391.   <sup>10</sup> Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 348.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobus, *Golden Legend*, 1993, 1:171–174; see also Mollaret and Brossollet, “La procession de saint Grégoire,” 13–22.

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, the new pope 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 invoked biblical accounts of penance and divine forgiveness to persuade Roman citizens to perform a sevenfold (septiform) litany, so-called because seven classes of people were to gather at various churches throughout Rome, praying and lamenting, and then to process toward the Basilica S. Maria Maggiore. Religious women set off from Santi Marcellino e Pietro; children from Santi Giovanni e Paolo; married women from San Clemente; abbots and monks from San Vitale (*olim* Santi Gervasio e Protasio); unmarried women from Sant'Eufemia; other clergy from Santi Cosma e Domiano; and laymen from San Stefano.

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 – the so-called *Salus populi Romani* – purportedly made by St. Luke himself, which miraculously 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.

Gregory’s septiform procession left an enduring mark on the spiritual history and the ritual lives of premodern Christians. Not only was it described in the popular *Legenda aurea*, it was also the subject of numerous plague images.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, judging from a wide variety of documents that include letters, chronicles, and medical treatises, it was Gregory’s procession during the first pandemic that often inspired medieval and Renaissance Europeans to turn to the procession as a response in the second pandemic. For example, in his letter dated October 24, 1348, the

<sup>12</sup> Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art*, 91–94; Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence*, 81–85.

bishop of Winchester William Edendon specifically invokes Patristic precedence to encourage his clergy to hold processions throughout the diocese:

Every Friday you should go solemnly in procession through the marketplace at Winchester, singing these psalms [i.e. the Penitential Psalms and the Psalms of Ascent] and the great litany instituted by the fathers of the church for use against the pestilence and performing other exercises of devotion, together with the clergy and people of the city, whom we wish to be summoned to attend. They are to accompany the procession with bowed heads and bare feet, fasting, with a pious heart and lamenting their sins (all idle chatter entirely set aside), and as they go they are to say devoutly, as many times as possible, the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. They are to remain in earnest prayer until the end of the mass which we wish you to celebrate in your church at the end of each procession, trusting that if they persevere in their devotions with faith, rectitude and firm trust in the omnipotence and mercy of the Saviour they will soon receive a remedy and timely help from heaven.<sup>13</sup>

As an extra incentive for the devotion, the bishop granted a forty-day indulgence to those who took part in the procession and the Mass. Centuries on, the doctor Antonio Possevino, inspired by Gregory's use of the Madonna icon, prescribes the same curative in his plague treatise, claiming that public processions with saintly relics can both placate God's ire and purify corrupt air.<sup>14</sup>

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 rally support for a similar ritual in Milan.<sup>15</sup> Borromeo organized a series of three processions in October 1576, along with fasting and almsgiving. The processions were to begin at the city's cathedral, with the first terminating at the Basilica of Sant' Ambrogio, the second at San Lorenzo, and the third at the Santa Maria presso San Celso. With the added incentive of a plenary indulgence, the processions attracted an enormous number of participants, including whatever noblemen and civic officials were left in the city, ordinary citizens, and at least a thousand flagellants in tow. The cardinal was highly charismatic and moved the masses by his personal display of piety. He wore a noose around his neck and walked barefoot to evoke the image of a condemned criminal. During the first procession, Borromeo cut

<sup>13</sup> Horrox, *Black Death*, 116–117.    <sup>14</sup> Possevino, *Cause et rimedii della peste*, 63–65.

<sup>15</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 390–398.

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 and cried out “Miserere! Miserere!” The third and final procession was to be the most solemn. Borromeo bid the parochial clergy to bring out their most precious relics in order to move the masses to devotion and to appeal to the saints. He himself carried the prized Milanese relic from the cathedral, the Holy Nail, attached to a cross. At the close of this procession, Borromeo returned to the cathedral and began a forty-hour devotion, with an hourly meditation on a mystery of the Passion.

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.”<sup>16</sup> And like Gregory’s septiform litany, Borromeo’s procession became an indelible part of his hagiography, and it inspired cultic images and devotional songs in the latter part of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.<sup>17</sup>

## Body Politic on Display

Gregory’s septiform procession, like many subsequent plague processions, was widely inclusive and 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 discovered that “repeated statements . . . that ‘the whole city’ was involved in the procession [were] not mere exaggeration.”<sup>18</sup> 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.”<sup>19</sup> 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 onlookers; if citizens did not wish to participate, they were to shut themselves indoors and close all the windows and doors. Such

<sup>16</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 396.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, “San Carlo Borromeo and Plague Imagery,” 65–96; Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art*, 171–158; Getz, “Canonising San Carlo,” 145–148.

<sup>18</sup> Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 358. <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 353.

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 voyeurism, only participation. 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 must go the same way at the same pace. Processions thus give the impression that everyone shares the goals of the community.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, a crisis procession brought together every member of a city (or at the very least, it gave the impression of uniting every member of a city) 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 drew together individual bodies and desires into the communal from a bird's-eye view, they nevertheless differentiated 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 and laypersons 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 caused divine scourges, Trexler argues, clear gender and sexual segregation represented a part of the solution (recall, also, the bishop of Winchester's plea for solemnity and to cast idle silliness aside).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the population was often divided according to age or membership in confraternities. Edward Muir finds that Venetian processions, both propitiatory and celebratory, put into practice the republic ideology of *La Serenissima*, based on clear and stable hierarchies. In these

<sup>20</sup> Flanigan, "Moving Subject," 39.

<sup>21</sup> Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 358–359. For a comparison of the physical arrangement of participants between Venetian and Florentine processions, see Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, 203.

processions, “position was everything”<sup>22</sup>: the Doge walked in the center 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 clergy and the general population following them in turn.<sup>24</sup> The laity itself was separated into parishes and marched under separate parish banners. This arrangement, Borromeo reasoned, would also mitigate against contagion across neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup>

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.”<sup>26</sup> The crisis procession thus put the body politic 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 the procession maintained difference among the whole, just as the metaphorical organs of the body politic necessarily remained separate in order to carry out different functions of the state. When anarchy reigned in times of pestilence – when, according to Ambroise Paré, magistrates flee and leave ordinary citizens to all manners of villainy<sup>27</sup> – the procession, aside from currying favors with the divine, provided the appearance of social order and integrity.

## The Sounds of Pestilential Processions

The corporate orientation of the plague procession pertained not only to the spatial or kinetic aspects of the ritual but to the sonic as well. 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

<sup>22</sup> Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, 190.

<sup>23</sup> Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, 203. <sup>24</sup> Besta, *Vera narratione*, 15v–16r.

<sup>25</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 391.

<sup>26</sup> Sacks, “Celebrating Authority in Bristol,” 192.

<sup>27</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 249. See also Chapter 2.

the ritual, making it difficult to generalize about the character of processional music as a single coherent phenomenon. On the evidence of sacerdotal manuals, the core ritual framework of crisis processions, such as processions for rain or the cessation of plague, followed the form of the Major Litanies or Major Rogations. In Alberto da Castello's Venetian *Liber sacerdotalis* (1523), the pestilential procession begins with the antiphon "Exaudi nos Domine," to be sung at the point of departure as the participants gathered. The Litany of the Saints is then performed as the procession begins, led by acolytes carrying tapers and the cross, followed by junior clerics, then priests, and deacons and sub-deacons. At the terminus, the antiphons "Benedic anima mea dominum" and "Recordare Domine testamenti tui" are sung. Then follow a number of prayers, after which a *Missa contra pestem* is to be said, with concluding prayers to the Virgin, St. Sebastian, and St. Vincent the Confessor, a contemporary of St. Sebastian.<sup>28</sup> A later *Rituale romanum* prescribes the antiphon "Expurge Domine" to be sung at the point of departure.<sup>29</sup> As the procession begins, the Litany of the Saints is performed with additional invocations of "A peste, et fame, Libera nos Domine" and "Ut a pestilentiae flagello nos liberare digneris." The litany is followed by the recitation of Psalm 6, a Penitential Psalm. If the procession is too long, the manual states, then the participants should either repeat the litany or fill the time with the other Penitential Psalms (see below on Penitential Psalms). At arrival, a number of prayers renew the foregoing petitions.

Special pamphlets containing the prayers of plague processions were sometimes issued. Two such booklets were published in 1576, at the start of what would quickly become a near pan-Italian disaster. These pamphlets would have been eminently useful for public processions, but as we shall see later, they may also have been used for quasi-domestic worship. From the office of Pope Gregory came the *Litaniae et preces . . . pro auertenda a populo Christiano pestilentia*.<sup>30</sup> With only six folios and each page measuring approximately 16 cm by 10 cm, the pamphlet would have been easily carried and used in ambulation. The first item presented is the Litany of the Saints, followed by Psalm 43, a petition for relief from general affliction. A series of verses and responses follows, and a handful of shorter propitiatory prayers to God and Mary round out the petition.

<sup>28</sup> Castello, *Liber sacerdotalis*, 279v–282r. See also Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226.

<sup>29</sup> Catholic Church, *Rituale romanum*, 1623, 441.

<sup>30</sup> This pamphlet was also appended to the end of Antonio Possevino's 1577 *Cause et rimedii della peste*.

Another palm-sized booklet (21 folios, 13 cm by 7.5 cm), *Antiphonae, psalmi, preces, et orationes ad usum supplicationum tempore pestis*, was published in Milan by Carlo Borromeo. This manual lays out the liturgical items of the procession in far greater detail. It opens with seven antiphons and the seven Penitential Psalms to be performed “pro arbitratu.” Three additional Psalms (94, 87, and 90) and two biblical readings titled “Canticum Iona” and “Canticum Ezechiae” follow, with the instruction “dici etiam poterunt pro libito.” Psalm 94, rather strangely, is a song of thanksgiving in which the psalmist exhorts, “Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; and make a joyful noise to him with Psalms.” Psalms 87 and 90 are more appropriate in tone, the former lamenting God’s wrath and the latter, replete with pestilential symbolism, praising God’s protection of the psalmist against arrows and His trampling of the dragon underfoot.<sup>31</sup> The two *cantica* are taken from Jonah 2 and Isaiah 38 respectively. The first passage is Jonah’s prayer from the belly of the great fish, a wretched cry for help similar in tone to the Penitential Psalms. The second is the lament of King Ezechias, who recovered from sickness after devout prayers. The Canticum Ezechiae ends with the plea “Lord, save me, and we shall sing our psalms all of the days of our lives in the house of the Lord,” a thematic through-line with the foregoing items of the ritual. The Litany of the Saints follows, then a reprint of Psalm 50. Then comes a set of five short prayers, the first of which is merely a rubric instructing the supplicants to perform a prayer to the saint in whose church they find themselves (“de Sancto, in cuius Ecclesia supplicationes fiunt”). The rest are prayers for mercy and protection. Betraying the intended Milanese use of pamphlet, *Oratio* II and V respectively invoke Ambrose as “patrono nostro” and “Pontifice nostro.” At the end of the pamphlet, seven additional “ad libitum” prayers – all addressing the Lord, with the last one invoking the Virgin and St. Sebastian in addition – are provided.

From these prescriptive sources, we can discern a ritual structure of common prayers and musical items:

### The Litany

The iconic sound and the common musical thread of these public devotions was undoubtedly the litany, a term that functioned as a synecdoche for “procession” itself. Many variations of the litany proliferated throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance; Cardinal Baronius estimated that

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 4 for the significance of the arrow and dragon imageries.

there were around eighty forms in use in 1601.<sup>32</sup> 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, the Venetians, who favored Mary's protection against the plague, performed Marian litanies.<sup>33</sup> But it was not only in the processional or dynamic contexts (to borrow Robert Amiet's "dynamique"/"statique" distinction of litanies)<sup>34</sup> that litanies were heard in times of pestilence. Giussano reports that they 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."<sup>35</sup> The sound of the litany permeated the streets as well in instances of improvised devotion. According to Paolo Bisciola, 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." The whole city became filled with beautifully ornamented altars, such that "going through the streets was like walking through a church."<sup>36</sup> Borromeo also brought the destitute away from Milan and taught 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. Moving through the streets and sounding in churches and homes, sounds of the litany blanketed the entire city like a sort of spiritual fumigation against the plague.

The Litany of the Saints itself begins with a *Kyrie* and moves quickly into the main body of the prayer, a long roll call of divinities where each invocation, sung by cantors, is answered by the general processional body with the response "ora pro nobis" (or "orate pro nobis," if more than one invoked).<sup>37</sup> The series of names is followed by petitions to Christ, comprising a short list of ills from which votaries ask for liberation ("Ab omni peccato" – "libera nos Domine," for example) and a list of Christological events through which they receive liberation ("Per crucem

<sup>32</sup> Maude, "Litany," 80.

<sup>33</sup> Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226; Blazey, "Litany in Seventeenth-Century Italy," 24. On the significance of Marian litanies in the ritual life of Venice, especially in the seventeenth century, see Moore, "'Venezia favorita da Maria.'"

<sup>34</sup> Amiet, "Les litanies dans la liturgie lyonnaise," 31.

<sup>35</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 397.     <sup>36</sup> Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 3v.

<sup>37</sup> O'Regan, "Processions and Their Music," 66.

**Example 3.1** 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

et passionem tuam” – “libera nos Domine”). Next comes a series of specific requests (“Ut nobis parcas” – “Te rogamus audi nos”), and the litany is finished off with an *Agnus dei*.

On account of its predominantly call-and-response structure, the litany is a useful musical tool that establishes 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 the procession becomes indispensable to the success of the ritual. The very melodic profile of the litany encourages participation. The invocation forms an upward melodic arch that stops at (what we would call today) the “leading-tone,” necessitating a musical completion. The response begins where the invocation leaves off and returns to the “tonic” through a downward arc, preparing the votaries for another iteration of the call. Such a seamless movement between “antecedence” and “consequence” generates a momentum that perpetuates the chant. Moreover, with its narrow range and simple tunefulness, the litany is easily accessible and democratic through and through. As the penitents sing the litany on the march, they send out an audible pulse through the marching group and provide an ambulatory rhythm that unites the participants. Weaving back and forth, the litany acts as a sonic thread that holds together the constituent parts of the processional body.

The dynamism of call-and-response singing and its role in processions can be further 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 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 through towns across Germany, the Low Countries,

and even England.<sup>38</sup> These unsanctioned processional groups kept a strict and rather unusual hierarchy. Ecclesiastics were given no preeminence 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 fervor 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 eyewitness accounts, a given group, which could number anywhere from 200 to 1,000, 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,

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.*<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ziegler, *Black Death*, 65–85.    <sup>39</sup> Horrox, *Black Death*, 151.

<sup>40</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II*, 70–71.

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, simultaneously drew together the participants into a common ritual and drew them apart to make manifest the hierarchies of the processional body.

This simultaneous play of centrifugal and centripetal forces in the *Geisslerlieder* is also at work in the litany. In his theory on the nature of lists, Umberto Eco likens the litany to the catalogue of ships in Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>41</sup> Eco suggests that the bard might have cared more about the poetry of his list (the sound and prosody of the names) than telling us anything about the Greek hoard or the epic universe; the poetic catalogue foregrounds signifiers rather than the signified and values sonic effect over referential specificities. Eco argues that the litany may be aimed at a similar effect:

Moving on to the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin, we find a list of properties, attributes, and titles in regard to the Virgin. Many are borrowed from passages of Scripture, others are taken from tradition or popular devotion (in this regard we talk of *panegyric* enumeration). They must have been recited like a mantra, much like the Buddhists' *om mani padme hum*. It doesn't matter so much whether the *virgo* is *potens* or *clemens* . . . What matters is being seized by the dizzying sound of the list. Just as in the Litanies of the Saints, it is not so much which of the names are present or absent as it is their rhythmic enunciation for a sufficiently long period of time.<sup>42</sup>

From the experiential perspective of the participants, Eco may very well be correct. If the primary function of the litany is precisely to "seize" and direct bodies in motion, and to enjoin individual bodies into a corporate mass, then it matters little what names are invoked as long as a steady pulse and a call-and-response momentum are maintained. It may be that, marching among a throng through narrow, winding streets, one heard little more than the repetitive music of the chant.

If the particular names of the litany are inconsequential at the experiential level of the procession, they are nevertheless crucial in other ways. One cannot forget that the litany is, after all, a prayer and therefore subject to all the demands of religious doctrine and orthodoxy; at the very least, the

<sup>41</sup> Eco, *Infinity of Lists*, 117–118.    <sup>42</sup> Eco, *Infinity of Lists*, 118.

names ought to be drawn from the recognized canon of holy men and women. A casual survey of some Renaissance Litanies of the Saints reveals that it mattered very much to the compilers which intercessors were included. The user of one 1528 Sarum *Processionale* scratched out a name between the invocations of the Holy Innocents and St. Cornelius.<sup>43</sup> For whatever reason, that particular intercessor was deemed no longer suitable for invocation. The inclusion of minor figures in the roll call may reveal special geographical patronage or local veneration. The Litany of Saints from a 1476 Florentine *Rituale romanum*, for example, includes SS Zenobius and Reparata, both early patrons of the city who rarely appeared in litanies elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> In another Florentine *Rituale* from 1495, SS Miniatus (martyred along the Arno) and Zenobius are included, but Reparata no longer appears, perhaps reflecting her diminishing local importance (the Florentine cathedral, once the Santa Reparata, was rededicated to the Virgin).<sup>45</sup>

A comparison of the two 1576 processional pamphlets is instructive. The list of names in the Papal issue is short, with about fifty specific names in all. The Milanese litany is far longer, with nearly ninety. Many of the extra names in the Milanese litany (some fairly obscure), such as Nazarius, Celsus, Sisinnius, Martyrius, Calimerus, and Miroclus, bear local significance as saints who were either associated with the city during their lifetimes or whose relics were kept by the community. It may be that, because the pope's pamphlet describes Roman usage and is therefore intended to be serviceable for many liturgical centers, the list is meant to be a template, inviting local accretions and *ex tempore* supplements (and the same may hold true for other sacerdotal manuals). By the same token, the Milanese list is intended for local use and can therefore be more complete as written.

The invocations of local patrons call upon the preexistent relationships between votaries and intercessors, making a special claim for guardianship in times of civic disaster. Such a tailoring of the litany resonates with other aspects of the procession that focus the ritual toward a particular community.<sup>46</sup> The very route of the procession itself, for example, was necessarily unique for every city. The different itineraries, as we shall discuss later in further detail, meant that the penitents had the opportunity to pass by different shrines and churches, and honor different patrons and

<sup>43</sup> Catholic Church, *Processionale ad usum Sar[um]*, 34r.

<sup>44</sup> Catholic Church, *Rituale romanum*, 1476, 56v–60r.

<sup>45</sup> Catholic Church, *Rituale romanum*, 1495, Gvi–Hiii.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the variability of the litany in relation to civic use, see Kendrick, *Sounds of Milan*, 142–145.

intercessors who were important to the community. The relics displayed during a procession, too, had to be chosen with special care for their proven efficacy and special relationship to the participants.<sup>47</sup> The Romans used the *Salus populi Romani* in 590. The Venetians, who favored the protection of Mary and sang litanies to the Virgin, carried the *Madonna Nicopeia* (a Byzantine image brought to Venice in the Middle Ages). As noted earlier, during the Milanese outbreak of 1576, Borromeo brought out the Holy Nail. When another major outbreak hit the city in 1630, it was St. Carlo Borromeo's exhumed body that was carried in procession, a choice of relic meant to recall and honor the cardinal's successful stewardship of Milan in the earlier crisis. The holy totems chosen for processions, therefore, expressed a particular civic identity that drew on the shared cultural and spiritual history of a given people.

The names of a litany mattered in another important way. The litany is governed by a hierarchical organization that demands a certain degree of consideration for the historical vitae of the chosen saints, if for no other reason than categorization. In the Roman order, the invocations begin invariably with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, followed by a threefold petition to Mary. Then come the Archangels (Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are usually specifically named), prophets and church patriarchs (headed by St. John the Baptist), apostles and disciples, martyrs, popes and bishops and Church doctors, other male priests and saints, and, finally, female saints. In the Florentine litanies, Miniatus appears with the martyrs, Zenobius with the bishops, and Reparata near the end of the list. In the Milanese list, female saints are invoked after male martyrs and before male bishops. In the categories of martyrs and bishops, Milanese names come at the top of the list, before the more universal saints, giving local divinities the pride of place. The sense of physical organization among the participants of the procession – where power radiated outward from the Doge or the Cardinal – finds an analogue in the procession of names in the litany. Each divinity is categorized, ranked, and ordered according to their celestial influence (Mary and the Archangels first after the Trinity), earthly power (popes before bishops, bishops before other ecclesiasts), or local influence (Milanese first). Not only does it matter which names are included, it also matters where they appear.

We can identify, therefore, two functions for naming in the litany: one focused on the sounds and signifiers, the other on the signified (the saintly referents). The “dizzying” pantheon of names becomes a mantra to march

<sup>47</sup> Trexler, *Renaissance Florence*, 353.

by, with the signifiers experienced in the moment of the procession as pitches and rhythms that drive the processional body onward. At the same time, the list of names is assembled to include intercessors with specific bonds to the community – intercessors who have the most reasons to care, so to speak. The deliberately chosen cast of divinities is also hierarchically curated, conceptually mapping the saintly sequence onto the organization of the earthly processional body – if not in exact details, then in spirit. Although the functional levels of the litany appear at first glance to have very different focuses, they ultimately converge in the aim of bonding together a community in distress.

### **Penitential Psalms**

The musical program of the plague processions also included the singing of Psalms, often one of the seven Penitential Psalms. The explicit identification of Psalms 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142<sup>48</sup> as “Penitential” was first made by Cassiodorus in the sixth century, but such a grouping likely had Augustinian roots.<sup>49</sup> These psalms are united thematically by, naturally, the confession of and contrition for sin, as well as the topic of divine wrath. This set of psalms played a large role in medieval and renaissance popular devotion, evidenced by their routine appearance in Books of Hours. For many medieval interpreters, the psalmist’s physical pain and sense of dislocation described in this group of psalms represent the torments of an ultimately fruitful guilty conscience that motivates the votary to repent. In Augustine’s influential expositions, for example, “My wounds stink and are corrupt” (Psalm 37:5) refers to the stench of sin for which the only remedy is the fragrant ointment of hope. In the context of a pestilential procession, such readings of physical suffering as the result of moral trespasses would have underlined the divine etiology of disease and justified the very *raison d’être* of the ritual itself: public penance for sin in exchange for bodily cure.

A second characteristic that unifies the seven Penitential Psalms is their first-person perspective. *Ad litteram*, the psalmist’s sins and feelings of contrition are his own. The personal nature of these psalms seems an odd fit with the corporate nature of the plague procession. From this perspective, other psalms dealing with the nations or the state of Israel may seem

<sup>48</sup> These are the Vulgate numberings. The Penitential Psalms are 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 134 in King James.

<sup>49</sup> Nasuti, *Defining the Sacred Songs*, 33.

more appropriate. But as Michael Kuczynski has argued, the performance of psalms – and even psalms of the individual – was considered to be public, interpersonal speech acts meant to motivate social action. In the New Testament, St. Paul encourages the Ephesians to speak to each other in psalms: “Be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking amongst yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and psalming to God in your heart.” The psalms provide the Christian a model for both praying inwardly to God and for conversing outwardly with others.<sup>50</sup> In their foundational interpretations of the psalms, the Church Fathers frequently read the psalmist’s words not merely as an individual’s lament, but as corporate experience. In the exposition on Psalm 50, for example, Augustine writes, “David has taken on himself the person of all mankind, and has heeded the bonds of all men, has considered death’s offspring, has adverted to iniquity’s origins, and he says, ‘For behold, in iniquities I was conceived.’” David’s contemplation of personal iniquities here becomes a generalized statement of universal, original sin.<sup>51</sup> Sung during a pestilential procession, the Penitential Psalm lays the burden of sin on both the individual supplicant and the entire assembly; not everyone is a thief or murderer, but all share the responsibility for the outbreak. From a negative perspective, psalm-singing unites the participants in communal guilt. From a more positive perspective, St. Basil exhorts, “A psalm creates friendships, unites the separated and reconciles those at enmity. Who can still consider one to be a foe with whom one sings the same prayer to God?”<sup>52</sup>

### Polyphony and Other Musical Accretions

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. It was reported that in 1474, for example, Venetian confraternities sang the hymn *Altro re della gloria* as they processed against the plague.<sup>53</sup> 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

<sup>50</sup> Kuczynski, “Psalms and Social Action,” 192–193.

<sup>51</sup> Kuczynski, “Psalms and Social Action,” 200.

<sup>52</sup> Basil, *Homilia in psalmum*, 1.3; cited in Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, 64.

<sup>53</sup> Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, 9:487; Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226–227.

by Antonio Janue) as candidates for processional performance.<sup>54</sup> Litanies could have been performed in simple *falsobordonne*, and on some occasions, composed polyphonic settings of the litanies – likewise simple, homorhythmic, and declamatory (and which emerged near the end of the sixteenth century and cultivated through the next) – were used in crisis processions.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup>

There were moments of repose during the plague procession that called for other unspecified musical accretions. A *Rituale romanum* instructs that if the route of the procession were to pass by a church, then the participants should interrupt their litany and enter, singing one of the prescribed antiphons, including “Ego sum deus patrum vestrorum” or “Clementissime domine exaudi populum tuum.” The priest then recites a penitential prayer, after which, an antiphon is to be performed in honor of the patron saint of that place.<sup>57</sup> The instruction in Borromeo’s pamphlet to perform a prayer “de Sancto, in cuius Ecclesia supplicationes fiunt” points precisely at those performance contexts. If a prayer or an antiphon of such specificity is not readily at hand, Casterlo’s *Liber sacerdotalis* provides examples that would be suitable for different classes of patrons, such as antiphons for Apostolic patrons, for one and multiple martyrs, for pontiffs, or for virgin martyrs.<sup>58</sup>

While the recitation of prayers or chanting of antiphons would have been serviceable at these stations, it is quite possible that, if hired singers or institutional choirs were on hand,<sup>59</sup> polyphonic motets carrying the suitable votive texts could have been sung. Indeed, there is solid evidence for the use of motets in regular processions. In Seville where, according to Todd Borgerding, there is the most plentiful testimony describing such use of motets, a series of manuscript inventories for the cathedral included entries for now lost motet books explicitly appointed for use in processions.<sup>60</sup> One, a set of partbooks portable enough for processions that left the church, was an anthology that may have contained a litany and motets corresponding to the feasts for which processions were held.<sup>61</sup> The catalog also lists a “book of motets to St. Sebastian for the Sunday

<sup>54</sup> Brown, “On Gentile Bellini’s Processione in San Marco (1496),” 649–658.

<sup>55</sup> Roth, *Die mehrstimmigen lateinischen Litaneikompositionen*.

<sup>56</sup> Fenlon, *Ceremonial City*, 226. <sup>57</sup> Catholic Church, *Rituale romanum*, 1623, 391.

<sup>58</sup> Castello, *Liber sacerdotalis*, 271r–272v.

<sup>59</sup> Noel O’Regan has presented evidence that the Santissima Trinita confraternity in Rome hired seven singers for the plague procession of 1576; “Processions and Their Music,” 61.

<sup>60</sup> Borgerding, “Motet and Spanish Religiosity,” 69.

<sup>61</sup> Borgerding, “Motet and Spanish Religiosity,” 74.

processions.”<sup>62</sup> Borgerding speculates that these Sunday processions were dedicated to St. Sebastian shortly after his intercession in a 1563 plague of locusts. In his record of one of these processions held at the Cathedral during Lent, the master of ceremonies at the Cathedral Sebastian Vicente de Villegas describes the performance of *Beatus es bene tibi*, a Sebastian antiphon set twice by Francisco Guerrero (for four and five voices), “at the nave or station of the saint.”<sup>63</sup> At the procession’s terminus at the entrance to the choir, according to Villegas, a Marian motet was performed.<sup>64</sup>

From another part of the continent, Josquin’s *Pater noster / Ave Maria* gives us valuable insight into the ways in which the intended processional function for a work can influence textual and compositional decisions. In his testament, Josquin requested the performance of his motet “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” in Condé.<sup>65</sup> Notable in Josquin’s testament is the conjunction between the landscape of the city and the soundscape of the procession. As Herbert Kellman remarks, that ritual space fused together the Eucharistic and the Marian, and Josquin’s work conjoining the Lord’s prayer and the Ave Maria aurally reflected that very fusion.<sup>66</sup>

It is also notable that *Pater noster / Ave Maria* ends with a litany-like passage (Example 3.2). Syllabic declamations of “Sancta Maria,” “regina caeli,” “dulcis et pia,” and “O mater Dei” between mm. 166 and 178 recall the panegyric enumeration of the Marian litany described by Eco. To musically convey that enumerative quality, Josquin takes advantage of repetitions in the canonic *cantus firmi* to create short, alternating modules, each one performed by three of the six voices to provide a split-choir, call-and-response effect. The shifting combinations of voices from one module to the next lend a sense of spatial and timbral differentiation that one would expect to hear from a litany. Finally, the static melodic lines, the staid rhythms, and the syllabic and homorhythmic writing through to the end of the motet recall simple processional music. By adopting the sounds of the “ambulatory” liturgical items for his stationary motet, Josquin creates a sonic continuity across the different ritual elements of the procession.

<sup>62</sup> Borgerding, “Motet and Spanish Religiosity,” 70.

<sup>63</sup> During an outbreak of plague in 1647, a motet setting of the Sebastian antiphon *Beatus es* was sung in procession.

<sup>64</sup> Borgerding, “Motet and Spanish Religiosity,” 71.

<sup>65</sup> Kellman, “Josquin and the Courts,” 208–209. See also Freeman, “On the Origins of the *Pater noster/Ave Maria*.”

<sup>66</sup> Noble, “Workshop I. The Function of Josquin’s Motets,” 26–27.

Example 3.2 Josquin, *Pater noster / Ave Maria*, mm. 148–198.

S. in mu-li-e-ri-bus et be-ne-di-ctus

A1. in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be-ne-

A2. in mu - li - e - ri - bus in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be-ne-di - ctus

T1. Canon at the unison in mu - li - e - ri - bus et

T2. in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be - ne di - ctus

B. in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be - ne - di -

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S. et be-ne-di-ctus fru ctus ven - tris tu - i Je - sus.

A1. di-ctus et be ne - di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i Je -

A2. et be ne-di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i Je - sus.

T1. be - ne di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i Je -

T2. fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i Je - sus.

B. ctus, et be - ne - di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i - Je -

Example 3.2 (cont.)

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S. San - cta-Ma-ri - a San - cta Ma-ri - a dul - cis et pi - a

A1. sus. re - gi-na cae - li re - gi-na cae - li O ma-ter

A2. San - cta Ma-ri - a re-gi-na cae - li dul - cis et pi - a, O ma-ter

T1. sus. San - cta Ma-ri - a re-gi-na cae - li

T2. San - cta Ma-ri - a re-gi-na cae - li dul - cis et pi - a, O ma-ter

B. sus. San - cta Ma-ri - a re-gi-na cae - li

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S. dul - cis et pi - a o - ra pro no - bis pec-ca - to - ri - bus, o - ra pro

A1. De - i O ma-ter De - i o - ra pro

A2. De - i o - ra pro no - bis pec - ca-to - ri - bus

T1. dul - cis et pi - a, O ma-ter De - i o - ra pro

T2. De - i o - ra pro no - bis pec-ca - to - ri - bus

B. dul - cis et pi - a, O ma-ter De - i o - ra pro no - bis pec-ca - to - ri - bus, o - ra pro

## Example 3.2 (cont.)

183

S. no - bis pec - ca - to - ri - bus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a -

A1. no - bis pec - ca - to - ri - bus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a -

A2. ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus

T1. no - bis pec - ca - to - ri - bus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a -

T2. ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus,

B. no - bis pec - ca - to - ri - bus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a -

191

S. mus ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus.

A1. mus ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus.

A2. ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus.

T1. mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus.

T2. ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus.

B. mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus, ut cum e - le - ctis te vi - de - a - mus.

Taking Josquin's *Pater noster / Ave Maria* – its litany-like characteristics and its response to civic environment – as a starting point, we can speculatively identify motets that may have been serviceable specifically for pestilential processions. Two St. Sebastian motets by Franchinus Gaffurius, *Virgo Dei digna* and *O beate Sebastiane*, both from *MilD 1* (ca. 1484–1490), make plausible candidates. Both invoke St. Sebastian, while the latter explicitly seeks help against the disease. Severe Milanese outbreaks in 1484 and 1485 may have spurred their composition. *Virgo Dei digna* is a simple single-pars setting of a prayer modeled on the Litany of the Saints that invokes a very particular set of intercessors along with some of their epithets:

Virgo Dei digna, mater clemens et benigna, adesto nobis propitia.	Worthy Virgin of God, clement and kind mother, 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) and consequently retains the same hierarchical structure in its text. The threefold enumeration of Mary's attributes topping the invocations also recalls the structure of the litany. St. Sebastian, who is often 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. Although St. Ambrose, the famous bishop of Milan, is a staple in litanies, his appearance among such a select group of intercessors here points the motet toward a civic purpose.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of various civic processions in Milan (both penitential and celebratory), see Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience in Sixteenth-Century Milan*, especially Chapter 4. See also Kendrick, *Sounds of Milan*, especially Chapter 5 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.

*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 (Example 3.3). 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.” 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 for the final invocations to St. Ambrose and all the Saints (Example 3.4). In this instance, the response, carrying the chant tone, alternates with the invocations, per traditional liturgical practice.

The second Gaffurian motet, *O beate Sebastiane*, retains the enumerative quality of the litany, but both the textual and music references are less direct. The shape of this list is very different than that of *Virgo Dei digna* (and that of the Litany of the Saints, by extension). Martyrs mingle freely with ecclesiasts, and Mary comes last. What Gaffurius creates instead is a highly focused list that includes only intercessors with known powers against the plague and those with special ties to Milan. The motet gives Sebastian the pride of place, imploring him first for liberation from pestilence. 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 called 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, had local ties.

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.

Example 3.3 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. San - cta Ma - ri - a San - cte Mi - cha - el

A. San - cta Ma - ri - a San - cte Mi - cha - el

T. San - cta Ma - ri - a

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



Example 3.5a Gaffurius, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 1–24.

S.   
 Ve - re Chri - sti mi - les mar

A.   
 8

T.   
 8   
 O Be - a - te Se - ba - sti - a - ne Ve - re Chri - sti mi - les mar - tyr

B.   
 8

6   
 S.   
 - - - - - tyr in - - - - - cli -

A.   
 8

T.   
 8   
 in - - - - - cli - te

B.   
 8

11   
 S.   
 te li - be - ra - ta est to -

A.   
 8   
 ut tu - is pre - ci - bus a pe - ste li - be - ra - ta est to -

T.   
 8   
 ut tu - is pr - ci - bus a pe - - - - ste li - be - ra - ta est to -

B.   
 8   
 ut tu - is pr - ci - bus a pe - - - - ste li - be - ra - ta est to -

19   
 S.   
 ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - ces

A.   
 8   
 ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - - - - ces fun -

T.   
 8   
 ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - - - - ces

B.   
 8   
 ta I - ta - li - a sic pro no - bis fun - de pre - ces pre - ces

Example 3.5b Gaffurius, *O beate Sebastiane*, mm. 53–73.

S. - - - - -

A. - - - - -  
San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re de - fen - de nos

T. - - - - -

B. - - - - -  
San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re de - fen - de no a pe -

60

S. - - - - -  
San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re ad -

A. a pe - ste a pes - te ad - sis no - bis o mar -

T. - - - - -  
San - cte Chri - sto - pho - re ad - sis no -

B. - ste a pe - ste ad - sis no - bis o mar - tyr

68

S. - sis no - bis o mar - tyr san - cte. Pi - us cu - stos

A. - tyr san - cte Pi - us cu - stos et

T. - bis o mar - tyr san - cte Pi - us cu - stos

B. san - cte. Pi - us cu - stos et

by homorhythmic textures and metric regularity. Nevertheless, there are certain gestures that reference 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 3.5a and 3.5b): “Vere Christi miles” (mm. 1–5), “Ut tuis precibus a peste” (mm. 11–15), and the two invocations of “Sancte Christophore” (mm. 53–56). Moreover, sporadic appearances of declamatory passages on repeated notes (mm. 17–24, 47–52) recall the static melody of the litany tone.

It is impossible, of course, to ascertain on stylistic grounds alone whether these Gaffurian motets would have been sung in pestilential processions, 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."<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> St. Liberal, for example, the subject of the litany-motet *Hic est dies egregius*,<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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 of "medical" texts to the contemporary fear of the 1575–1577 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.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 68.

<sup>69</sup> These are: Nos. 14 (Apollonia), 20 (Marco), 23 (Liberale), 57 (Giustina), and 71 (Teonisto, Tabra, and Tabrata); Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 68.

<sup>70</sup> 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.

<sup>71</sup> Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 71.

<sup>72</sup> Bryant and Pozzobon, *Musica devozione città*, 72. In his review of Bryant's and Pozzobon's book, Jonathan Glixon points out that MS 29 contained music outside the liturgical

While a survey of the inventory of MilD 1 does not encourage the same conclusions for the manuscript as for the Treviso partbooks, Gaffurius's *Virgo dei digna* and *O beate Sebastiane* nevertheless contain the same textual characteristics as the pieces identified by Bryant and Pozzobon as confraternal-processional works, and even works inspired specifically by plague. Gaffurius's motets borrow from and elaborate on the Litany of Saints, so that, like Josquin's *Pater noster / Ave Maria*, they carry on that iconic sound of the procession. Moreover, even if they were performed by a smaller corps of singers, the allusions to the litany would have drawn together both the performers and the listeners. As Kendrick writes of polyphony that incorporates litanies, "Given the universal presence of the litany tone in the sonic memory of any early modern Catholic, these pieces allow for – one might almost say 'script in,' as in film – the participation of literally anyone present, no matter how musically illiterate otherwise, into the polyphonic performance."<sup>73</sup> The recognition of the litany in these motets invite listeners to tune in, so to speak, even during the static, stational moments during the procession. Finally, the spirit of "customization" that we see in litanies found full expression in these litany-motets; Gaffurius was able to assemble a very specific corps of intercessors that were significant to Milan and to the anti-pestilential purpose. Such qualities of these specific motets pertain to the genre in general. Taken together as a corpus, 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 program that resonates with its customs, its patrons, its relics, and even its urban architecture.

### From the Street to the Home

As a phenomenon, plague-tide processions 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

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; Glixon, "Review of *Musica Devozione Città*," 315.

<sup>73</sup> Kendrick, "Honore a Dio," 46.

disputed, given the possibility of contagion. 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? We can draw important lessons here from the Milanese plague of 1576. To those who could not attend mass in the midst of that outbreak, Carlo Borromeo instructed, “Go to church in spirit,” making viable the substitution of physical presence with an imaginative attendance.<sup>74</sup> 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 (see Chapter 1). By extension, with the aid of music, one could attend a procession “in spirit.” Borromeo, cognizant of the difficulties posed by quarantine, devised a program of spiritual exercises, including singing, that brought elements of the public procession into the home.

Borromeo’s instructions for these “virtual processions” were outlined in his *Constitutiones et decreta de cura pestilentiae*, a handbook for parish clergy and health workers. Chapter 21 of the *Constitutiones* is devoted to spiritual activities in public administrative spaces and closed-up homes. In it, clergymen are told to encourage citizens to first confess their sins and take communion before quarantine is imposed. Further, each household is to be provided with literature containing “parts of the Holy Bible, such as the story of Job, Tobias, the letter of Saint Jacob, and also a volume of saints’ lives . . . especially the life of Saint Sebastian, Saint Gregory the Great, St. Roch, Saint Macarius [et alia], all of which presented the lessons of plague and the examples of the holiest virtues.”<sup>75</sup> Additionally, the clergy is to prepare the heads of each household for the daily devotional practices devised for the extraordinary circumstances by teaching them a variety of prayers, litanies, and psalms, especially Psalms 6, 24, 31, 37, 50, 78, 101, and 129.

During the quarantine, church bells all over the parish – rung seven times a day, approximately every two hours – would call the households to prayer in the manner of the Angelus bell. After each devotional session has begun, the bell would be rung again every quarter hour, in the manner of Vespers, until the fourth bell signals an end to the hour of prayer. While the bell is sounded,

litanies or supplications will be sung or recited at the direction of the Bishop. This will be performed in such a way that one group sings from the windows or the doors of their homes, and then another group sings and responds in turn . . .

<sup>74</sup> Cited in Barker, “Gendered Imagination and Plague Art.”

<sup>75</sup> Borromeo, *Constitutiones et decreta*, 55.

So, in each and every neighborhood where this hourly prayer will be celebrated, one or more churchmen, or if such are not available, other pious men instructed in the use of the prayer, will be summoned to the window or door of their homes, and at whichever appointed hour that the signal will sound, shall properly regulate and direct the prayer, and they will stir up the zeal for this devotion every single hour.<sup>76</sup>

To facilitate these devotional activities, the clergy is to be supplied with books “that contain certain prayers, litanies, and oration, which will be made freely available, in order that he may go and distribute them to his own or other parishes.”<sup>77</sup> What are these books? From Giussano’s hagiography of Borromeo, we learn that this was liturgical literature that was especially printed for the occasion: “when [the bell] sounded, all the inhabitants attended at their windows, a priest or other person appointed began the prayers, and all the people on their knees made the responses, each having the book of prayers which the Cardinal had printed for the purpose.”<sup>78</sup> It is possible that the prayer book described here refers to the *Antiphonae, psalmi, preces, et orationes*. Whether that is the case or not, Borromeo’s program of devotion for the home, with the singing of the litany and Psalms, was clearly meant to mirror the processions on the street.

Borromeo’s directives to sing at doors and windows were evidently put into practice and impressed a number of chroniclers. In his *Relatione verissima*, Bisciola reports:

[W]hen 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.<sup>79</sup>

Giussano likewise remarks on the harmonious piety of Milan, even going so far as to describe the plague-stricken city as heaven on earth on account of the pious singing:

It was a sight to see, when all the inhabitants of this populous city, numbering little short of three hundred thousand souls, united to praise God at one and the same time, sending up together an harmonious voice of supplication for deliverance from their distress. Milan might at this time have been not unfitly compared to

<sup>76</sup> Borromeo, *Constitutiones et decreta*, 55–56.

<sup>77</sup> Borromeo, *Constitutiones et decreta*, 56.

<sup>78</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 419.

<sup>79</sup> Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 3v–4r.

a cloister of religious of both sexes serving God in the inclosure [sic] of their cells, an image of the heavenly Jerusalem filled with the praises of the angelic hosts.<sup>80</sup>

We can imagine the astonishment of Bisciola or Giussano, hearing the disembodied voices, emerging from isolated cells all around, aggregating and blanketing an entire parish in music. With their songs, carried through the air and penetrating doors and walls, the Milanese erased the boundaries between public and domestic devotion, and reconciled the demands of public safety and piety. The call and response of the litany, which so effectively stitched together the processional body, now sutured together the segregated households. The isolated neighbors, some of whom cannot even see each other, can nevertheless hear each other's presence and worship together as a community.

### Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane*

To a great extent, Borromeo's devotional program for quarantined parishes relied on singing as an aid for corporate worship or in a domestic setting. Could other forms of music provide a similar imaginative stimulus for privately recreating the public procession? Consider the following scenario: plague is discovered in the city, and, like Boccaccio's protagonists in the *Decameron*, those with the means 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 2), its accompanying verse (*Ora pro nobis beate martyr Sebastiane*),<sup>81</sup> and an anti-pestilential sequence that invokes Sebastian.

#### Prima pars

Sancte Sebastiane, ora pro nobis.  
O quam mira refulsit gratia  
Sebastianus, martyr inclitus,  
qui militis portans insignia.

Holy Sebastian, pray for us.  
O how he shines with wondrous grace,  
Sebastian, that famous martyr  
wearing the emblem of a soldier.

<sup>80</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 419–420.

<sup>81</sup> Vérard, *Hore Beate virginis Marie*, 103r.

Sed de fratrum palma sollicitus  
 confortavit corda psallentia,  
 verbo sibi collato coelitus.  
 Sancte Sebastiane, ora pro nobis.

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 Martin Picker describes as a motto resembling psalm tone 1 for its recurrent setting (Example 3.6).<sup>82</sup> The complete, unembellished version of the litany motto is first stated in the altus voice (mm. 4–15). The tune itself is made up of three smaller motives (labeled A1, A2, and B). A1 consists of the common melodic pattern 1–5-(b)6–1. 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. In this motto, Mouton captures the same sense of "antecedence" and "consequence" that we find in the litany proper. 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 3.6).

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

<sup>82</sup> Picker, *Motet Books of Andrea Antico*, 60–61.

Example 3.6 Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, with marked litany motto mm. 1–25.

S. *A1* San - - cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - - *A2'* ne, o -  
 A. *A1* San - - - - cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - - *A2* ne; \_\_\_\_\_  
 T. \_\_\_\_\_  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 S. *B'* ra pro - - - - no - - - - bis.  
 A. \_\_\_\_\_  
 T. *A1* - - - - cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - - *A2'* ne, o - - - - ra pro no - - - - bis.  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 S. \_\_\_\_\_  
 A. \_\_\_\_\_  
 T. *B'' (+5th)* - - - - ne, o - - - - ra pro no - - - - bis  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 S. \_\_\_\_\_  
 A. \_\_\_\_\_  
 T. \_\_\_\_\_  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_

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 semantic juxtaposition of the

Example 3.7 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. A1

31 bis. San -

S. Se - ba - sti - a nus, mar

A. a, Se - ba - sti - a - - - nus, mar A1\_

T. A2

B. San -

38 cte Se - ba - sti - a - - - ne,

S. 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

“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 3.7).

## Example 3.7 (cont.)

50

S. in si gni - a, Sed

A. si gni - a, Sed

T. pro no - - - bis.

B. B' (+5th)

The litany motto next appears in all four voices to wrap up the *prima pars* (Example 3.8). 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-bassus 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 3.9); he treats it here strictly, as long-note cantus firmus scaffolding.

The appearance of the motto throughout the motet both as cantus-firmus-like scaffolding and in imitative paraphrase infuses the entire work 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

Example 3.8 Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 69–108.

ce - li - tus. San - cte, A1  
 li - tus. A1 San cte Se - ba - sti - a - A2  
 A1 San - cte Se - ba - sti - ne, Se -

76 A2  
 Se - ba - sti - a - ne,  
 - ne A2 o -  
 - a - ne A2 Se - ba - sti - a - ne  
 ba - sti - a - ne, San - cte Se - ba - sti - a -

83 B  
 - ra pro no - bis, B o - ra pro no -  
 o - ra B' (+5th) ra  
 ne, o - ra pro no - bis, B' (+5th) pro no - bis,

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.

## Example 3.8 (cont.)

90

S. *X*

A. pro no - bis, o - ra pro no -

T. bis, o - ra pro - no-bis, *Z*

B. o - ra pro no - bis, o - ra pro

o - ra pro no -

97

S.

A. bis, *X*

T. no - bis,

B. - bis, o - ra, o - ra, o - ra pro no -

103

S. *X*

A. o - ra pro no - bis.

T. o - ra *Y* *Z* pro no - bis.

B. bis, o - ra pro no - bis.

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.

Example 3.9 Mouton, *Sancte Sebastiane*, mm. 154–171.

S. *bēs;* 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 S. - 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 S. 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 participants collect themselves for the start of the *secunda pars*, returning to a syllabic homorhythm (Example 3.10). 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 epidemiam.” The crowd breaks apart again, this time in a proleptic joy (Example 3.9). As the *bassus* intones the litany motto a final time, the

Example 3.10 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 -

117

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

ne, mar - tyr De - i glo - ri - o - se,

125

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,

upper voices sing of heaven's glory – the rising melisma in the *altus* on “gaudia” precisely captures the mood (mm. 167–169; Example 3.9). 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.”

Gaffurius's *Virgo dei digna*, *O beate Sebastiane*, and Mouton's *Sancte Sebastiane* are very different works, but they all invoke the sound and textual formula of the litany in some way. Of the three works, *Virgo dei*

## Example 3.10 (cont.)

133

S. et a De - o im - pe - tra - re Tol - le per tu -

A. et a De - o im - pe - tra re Tol - le per tu -

T. Nos qui su - mus in hac vi - ta.

B. Nos qui su - mus in hac vi - ta.

142

S. - a me - ri - ta No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca - tam e -

A. - a me - ri - ta No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca - tam e - pi - di - mi -

T. No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca - tam

B. No - xi - am in - fir - mi - ta - tem vo - ca - tam

150

S. - pi - di - mi - am. De hoc ha - bes; Da

A. am. De hoc ha - bes me - ri - tum; Da no -

T. e - pi - di - mi - am. Me - ri - tum;

B. — e - pi - di - mi - am. San -

*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. 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*, most lauda-like of the three, performed on the move, perhaps, and *Sancte*

Example 3.11 Olivetus, *O quam mira refulsit*, mm. 48–64.

S.  
tus con-for-ta - - - - - vit

A.  
tus con - for - ta - - - - - vit

T.  
tis con - for - ta - vit con - for - ta - - vit

B.  
tus con - for - ta - - vit con - for - ta - - vit

53

S.  
cor - da tre - men - ti - a cor - da tre - men - ti - a

A.  
cor - da tre - men - ti - a cor - da tre - men - ti - a ver -

T.  
cor - da tre - men - ti - a cor - da tre - men - ti -

B.  
cor - da tre - men - ti - a cor - da tre - men - ti - a

59

S.  
ver - bo si - bi col - la - - to ver - bo\_\_\_\_\_ col -

A.  
- bo si - bi col - la - - to ce - li - tus col - la -

T.  
- a ver - bo si - bi col - la - to ce - li - tus\_\_\_\_\_

B.  
ver - bo si - bi col - la - to ce - li - tus col -

*Sebastiane* at a station as a musical votive offering. 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 requires amity among the performers and reinforces the very interpersonal bonds assailed by fear. The singers must cooperate and, literally and metaphorically, cannot “turn their backs” on their musical partners.

The text of Mouton’s motet aptly reinforces this point. Various sources for the prayer describe Sebastian comforting frightened hearts – “paventia” (frightened) or “pallentia” (pale).<sup>83</sup> Olivetus’s setting of the same text in TrevBC 8 reads “tremetia” (trembling), set ironically in an assured homo-rhythm amid melismatic passages, as if to portray the effect of a comforted heart (Example 3.11). Mouton, however, settles on “confortavit corda psallentia” (he comforted hearts singing psalms) and thereby substitutes fear with music. Alluding to yet another liturgical element of the procession, Mouton brings to mind the plague-tide ritual. Recalling also Paul’s encouragement to speak in psalms to each other and Basil’s recommendation that psalms create friendships, the textual substitution reinforces the message of unity among Christians. In times of pestilence, music was eminently useful for buttressing the spirit and the body, fostering amity on the streets and in the home, and empowering premodern Europeans to together face the terrors of disease.

<sup>83</sup> Dreves, *Analecta hymnica*, 33:167.

Gallery visitors today may know from casual inspection that St. Sebastian was an athletic youth who met an unfortunate end by some primitive firing squad. And depending on his level of undress, they may also guess that he was a soldier at some point in his life. What they may not know, without reading the museums' labels, is his saintly function against pestilence. Despite his status as one of the most important intercessors against the plague in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, Sebastian's connection with the disease is rather opaque – and not only artistically speaking, but historically as well. What we know of Sebastian was established by a foundational Latin *Passio* written sometime between 432 and 440.<sup>1</sup> In it, the hagiographer – once thought to be St. Ambrose – tells us that Sebastian was born in the third century in Narbonne, Gaul, and raised in Lombardy. As an adult, Sebastian enjoyed the favor of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian and served as the leader of the praetorian guard. But the saint found a higher calling and surreptitiously used his office to proselytize. The hagiographer first describes Sebastian's visitation of Marcus and Marcellianus, twin brothers who had been imprisoned for their Christian beliefs. At the prison, Sebastian found the brothers' faith wavering on account of the tears and blandishments offered by their elderly parents and wives. Sebastian stepped forward and, with impressive prolixity, confirmed the twins' faith. Moved by Sebastian's impassioned speech, Zoë, the mute wife of Nicostratus in whose house the twins had been held, fell to the saint's feet and begged for forgiveness. Granting this, Sebastian prayed to God to have her voice restored, and she was healed.

The restoration of Zoë's voice set off a ripple of conversions and other miraculous acts of healing throughout Rome. Those present with Marcus and Marcellianus were all baptized, and upon conversion, Tranquillinus, the twins' father, was immediately cured of his chronic gout. Learning of Tranquillinus's newfound health, the Roman prefect Chromatius demanded to be cured of his disease. When this was achieved under the auspices of Sebastian, Chromatius and over a thousand of his household

<sup>1</sup> Bollandus, *Acta Sanctorum*, January 2:257–297.

also converted to Christianity. Such remarkable evangelical activities were eventually noticed, and Diocletian ordered Sebastian to be taken to the middle of a field and executed by arrows. Shot through and – to use the simile from the *Passio* – looking “like a hedgehog,” the saint was left for dead. Discovering that he was, in fact, still alive, a band of Christians brought him to St. Irene, who nursed him back to health. Sebastian suffered his actual martyrdom when he later ambushed and publicly admonished the emperor, who, enraged, ordered Sebastian to be bludgeoned and his body tossed into the sewer. In a posthumous miracle, Sebastian appeared to Saint Lucina and indicated to her the location of his body. The saint’s earthly remains were collected and buried, per his wishes, with the apostles.

Those were the facts of Sebastian’s life and death according to his fifth-century hagiographer. Significantly, Sebastian was never associated with pestilence in his lifetime, having neither treated anyone with the disease nor contracted it himself. And the afflictions that Sebastian encountered bore little etiological or symptomatological resemblance to pestilence, precluding the simple transference of an episode in the *Passio* into a general tutelary function. How, then, did Sebastian become universally venerated as a protector against plague?

That will be the primary question for the present chapter, a question that will draw together a sample of evidence from church history, theology, art, liturgy, and music that highlight the changing nature of Sebastian’s cult. This evidence is not meant to be exhaustive, nor does it – nor can it – account for nuanced regional differences. Rather, it provides a broad view of the saint that spans over 1,000 years. To anticipate future arguments, Sebastian became firmly installed as a universal protector against plague only in the aftermath of the fourteenth-century Black Death. In the first millennium of his cultic development, he served first as a patron of Rome, then as a patron of soldiers. When he was adopted as a universal plague saint, the earlier functions were eclipsed. Nevertheless, as the evidence will show, there were moments of interaction between the different functional layers that informed Sebastian’s cult in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. This chapter will proceed non-chronologically. We will begin with Sebastian’s early cult and outline the ecclesiastical and political coincidences that occurred during the first pandemic (541–750), and how they prepared his rapid ascension as a universal plague saint at the start of the second pandemic (1347–1771). Then we will return to the intervening years and investigate Sebastian’s function as a warrior-saint and how his association with the military reinforced his career as a plague saint. Finally, we will integrate the different cultic layers and assemble a full-figured

profile of Sebastian to illuminate his functional significance to premodern Christians.

## The Plague Saint

Sebastian's cult emerged at the San Sebastiano ad Catacumbas, the basilica on the Via Appia that housed his tomb as well as the relics of Peter and Paul. Beginning in the middle of the fourth century, a Mass was held there to mark his January 20 feast day,<sup>2</sup> and by that century's end, the basilica had become a popular pilgrimage site, frequently listed in medieval guidebooks as a "must see."<sup>3</sup> This early veneration was likely motivated by his physical proximity to the apostles, who were arguably more important personages in the Church. Sebastian's identification with Rome would be further cemented when Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) appointed him the third patron of Rome, after Peter and Paul. Up until this point in his cult, there is no evidence that Sebastian had gained any particular power against pestilence. When Pope Gregory himself mobilized the city against an outbreak in 590, he did not invoke Sebastian or any other saint, urging the citizens instead to channel their contrition to Christ the Judge alone.<sup>4</sup>

The circumstances by which Sebastian acquired plague in his saintly portfolio were tied both to his special connection to Rome and to the medieval relic economy. Relics, like gold and other luxuries, were valuable commodities that were sold, bought, gifted, and looted. And like other luxuries, relics were also used as tools for diplomacy. Rome, with its suburban catacombs filled with martyrs, had a practically inexhaustible abundance of relics; other places, such as the Frankish kingdom, were comparatively impoverished. This imbalance in distribution allowed the pope to establish papal presence in other regions and to foster allegiance to Rome through the translation of Roman relics, and Sebastian, with his strong territorial association, represented a particularly important token of Roman presence. Since gifted relics were not "alienated," as they would be if bought or sold, they remained the donor's and ensured loyalty from the recipient through the ties established by the distribution, in the same way that an aristocratic marriage between houses cemented their political bonds.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, "Waiting on the Will of the Lord," 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ressouni-Demigneux, "La personnalité de saint Sébastien," 46.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, "Waiting on the Will of the Lord," 57. <sup>5</sup> Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 208–210.

The benefits for recipients were manifold. In addition to strengthening whatever alliance they had with Rome, the beneficiaries also gained the saint's divine protection and the use of the thaumaturgic powers that accrued to the objects – miraculous powers that worked primarily in physical proximity to the saint's remains.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, recipients of relics potentially saw a financial boost that an influx of pilgrims and alms-giving worshipers would provide. When Saint-Médard in Soissons received Sebastian's relics from Rome in 826, for example, pilgrims flocked there to the neglect of other local churches (and much to the consternation of the churchmen from other dioceses).<sup>7</sup> And when some of those relics were subsequently redistributed from Soissons to Fleury-sur-Loire, a special wooden structure had to be erected outside the cloister to accommodate the crowds of visitors.<sup>8</sup>

It is in this context of medieval relic translation that we find the earliest historical association of St. Sebastian with the plague, which occurred during a pan-Italian outbreak in 680. The account was recorded roughly a century after the event in Paul the Deacon's *Historia langobardorum*:

There was a lunar eclipse during the eighth indiction [680], 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 a good and a bad angel 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.<sup>9</sup>

We can make a number of historical observations to contextualize this miracle. First, that the Pavians had to be miraculously prompted to turn to Sebastian indicates that he had no previously acknowledged status as a universal plague protector.<sup>10</sup> Second, and related to the first point, the faithful tended to implore local saints for aid in times of crisis in the early

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 86–105.      <sup>7</sup> Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 187.

<sup>8</sup> Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 187.      <sup>9</sup> Bollandus, *Acta Sanctorum*, January 2:259–260.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall, "Manipulating the Sacred," 489; Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 92.

medieval period. During a 546 outbreak in Reims, for example, the citizens prayed at the tomb of St. Remi, their former bishop, and processed around the city's perimeter with his body.<sup>11</sup> This preference for local saints is undoubtedly tied to the availability of physical relics; it was only in the late Middle Ages that, motivated by Marian and Eucharistic worship, images and icons came to acquire the same *praesentia* of the holy as corporeal relics, allowing for the spread of universal saints.<sup>12</sup>

Putting together these two observations, one could reasonably argue that the acquisition of Sebastian's "foreign" relics by the Pavians was therefore unlikely to have been motivated by any functional specificity of the saint. Rather, we can posit a political justification for the translation. In 680, Pope Agathon brokered peace between the Lombards and the Byzantine Empire after over a century of strife between the parties and, as a consequence, consolidated a friendship between the papacy and Pavia. Moreover, the man responsible for securing the relics from the Roman pontiff, the Pavian bishop Damiano, had recently helped the pope condemn Monothelitism in the East. Such favorable political conditions encouraged the translation of Sebastian's relics from Rome to the Lombard capital in order to cement the friendship.<sup>13</sup> In that regard, Sebastian was an especially felicitous choice since, having grown up in Lombardy and having suffered his martyrdom in Rome, he had territorial associations with both the donor and the recipient. In the same year, an altar was dedicated to Sebastian in Rome's own church of St. Peter in Vincoli, creating what Sheila Barker calls a "cultic doppelgänger" in the papal city.<sup>14</sup> This symbolic parallel as well as the common suffering and eventual recovery of the two cities must have further reinforced the alliance. Quite apart from any special protective powers, Sebastian's earliest involvement with plague would appear to be coincidental to the politics of relic translation.

Despite the incidental nature of the association between Sebastian and plague, the 680 episode would nevertheless become seminal in Sebastian's ascension as a plague saint when the disease first returned in 1347. In the intervening centuries, the miraculous account appeared to have faded from collective memory, not to resurface until nearly six centuries later, when it was rediscovered and popularized by Jacobus de Voragine. For his entry on Sebastian in the *Legenda aurea*, Jacobus condenses the fifth-century *Passio* and appends two posthumous miracles, one of which is Paul the Deacon's

<sup>11</sup> Marshall, "Waiting on the Will of the Lord," 58–59.    <sup>12</sup> Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 175.

<sup>13</sup> Bartolozzi Casti and Mazzilli Savini, "Il culto parallelo," 393.

<sup>14</sup> Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 92.

account of the seventh-century plague. Jacobus had apparently discovered this miracle while recompiling Paul's *Historia langobardorum*, which he inserted into the *Legenda* under the entry on Saint Pelagius, because "many do not know this history of [the Lombard] people."<sup>15</sup>

Given new life by Jacobus, the miracle would inspire at least two separate invocations of Sebastian for help against pestilence in 1348. The first account reveals the confluence of hagiography and, again, the availability of relics in this new cultic development. During the outbreak, the Parisian bishop Foulques de Chanac granted a forty-day indulgence to those who visited St. Sebastian's altar at the Saint-Victor abbey, where the saint's relics, obtained from Saint-Médard, were kept. In the notice of indulgence, the bishop justifies his choice precisely on the basis of Jacobus's story in the *Legenda aurea*. Here, the accessibility of Sebastian's relics and the precedence of his intervention come together to promulgate the saint's anti-pestilential association.<sup>16</sup> During the same outbreak in Avignon, a priest named Filippo di Neri dell'Antella contracted the plague at the French papal court. Recalling the Pavian miracle that he had read some time ago, he asked to be taken to a church so he could say a Mass to St. Sebastian. When this was done, he miraculously recovered. Dell'Antella's experience was recorded in a letter by a monk named Benigno, who admitted that he had not known of the original miracle. He found and transcribed the source legend from the *Legenda aurea* for his unknown addressee, who was presumably also ignorant of the Pavian intercession,<sup>17</sup> substantiating Jacobus's claim that the Lombard history was not broadly known.

There was now a rapid and widespread uptake of Sebastian's newly acknowledged power, spurred and necessitated by the frequent reappearance of the plague. Amid the outbreak in 1348, Clement VI (1342–1352) issued a votive Mass *pro evitanda mortalitate* (also known as the *Recordare* Mass on account of its introit, *Recordare domine testamenti*) with a 260-day indulgence attached. The communion chant, *Multitudo languentium*, is also used in the Matins for Sebastian's feast day, perhaps signaling an acknowledgment of Sebastian's intercessory powers.<sup>18</sup> Another prophylactic ritual, described in a Toulon manuscript dating from the third quarter

<sup>15</sup> Jacobus, *Golden Legend*, 1993, 2:367.

<sup>16</sup> Ressouni-Demigneux, "La personnalité de saint Sébastien," 567–569.

<sup>17</sup> Ressouni-Demigneux, "La personnalité de saint Sébastien," 567; Barker, "Making of a Plague Saint," 99–100.

<sup>18</sup> *Multitudo languentium et qui vexabantur a spiritibus immundis veniebant ad eum quia virtus de illo exibat et sanabat omnes.* (A multitude of the tired who were troubled by unclean spirits came to him for his power flowed and healed all.) Macklin, "Musica sanat corpus per animam," 71–75.

of the fourteenth century, required the performance of the second Mass of Christmas three days in a row. Importantly, it was noted that “the chaplain who says it must make commemoration of Saint Sebastian and Saint Anastasia,” a saint against poisons.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere in France and the Low Countries, it was reported by Gilles Li Muisis in his 1350 chronicle that during the outbreak, throngs of pilgrims of every occupation, class, and sex descended on Saint-Médard and Saint Peter’s monastery in Hainaut, which likewise housed Sebastian’s relics; the influx of visitors to these places stopped, however, as soon as the outbreak ceased.<sup>20</sup> Back in Italy, dell’Antella became a staunch champion for the saint. Having been saved by his earlier devotion, he expressed his gratitude by increasing the saint’s prominence in Florence, where he became bishop. When Tuscany was afflicted by plague in 1353, dell’Antella donated Sebastian’s arrow to the Duomo, and when the region was struck again in 1362, he consecrated one of the cathedral’s altars to the saint and commissioned a new altarpiece.<sup>21</sup> This altarpiece was replaced, when Florence was hit yet again in 1374, by Giovanni del Biondo’s *Saint Sebastian Triptych* (Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence).

This sample of evidence suggests that, before the century’s end, the saint’s anti-pestilential powers had begun to take a firm hold on both sides of the Alps. Moreover, the source legend that inspired this late medieval devotion to the saint now remained in the collective memory as well. First, the enduring popularity of the *Legenda aurea* guaranteed the continuing dissemination of the Pavian account. In William Caxton’s English edition of the *Legenda*, a short prayer that cements Sebastian’s function against plague was appended to the end of his profile, ensuring that the connection between the saint’s miracle in Pavia and his tutelary virtue was widely established: “Then let us pray to this holy martyr saint Sebastian, that he pray unto our Lord that we may be delivered from all pestilence and sudden death, and so depart advisedly hence that we may come to everlasting joy and glory in heaven.”<sup>22</sup>

The legend was further propagated through liturgy, devotional music, and art. In her study of Parisian confraternal masses of the early fifteenth century, Sarah Long uncovered a gradual verse that cites Sebastian’s intervention in Lombardy: “O Sebastian, Christ’s illustrious martyr, by whose merits all of Lombardy was freed from the deadly plague, free us from the

<sup>19</sup> Paden, “An Occitan Prayer against the Plague,” 677.

<sup>20</sup> Ressouni-Demigneux, “La personnalité de saint Sébastien,” 569.

<sup>21</sup> Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 100; Marshall, “Reading the Body of a Plague Saint,” 245.

<sup>22</sup> Jacobus, *Golden Legend*, 1483, 119r.

very thing and from the malicious enemy.”<sup>23</sup> Martini’s and Gaspar’s late fifteenth-century motets *O beate Sebastiane* (see Chapter 1) set a very similar text that credits him with the liberation of Lombardy. For these composers working in Milan, the citation of Sebastian’s intervention in Pavia inevitably highlighted the saint’s connection to the region both as its proven protector and as its native son. The seventh-century miracle was also represented in one of the eight panels in the Sebastian cycle painted by Jose Lieferinx for Notre-Dame-des-Accoules in Marseilles (1497). In *Saint Sebastian Interceding for the Plague Stricken* (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore), we see the great mortality described by Paul the Deacon. In the foreground, a body is being deposited into a mass grave already filled to the top when one of the gravediggers suddenly drops the corpse and falls backward in pain, a red bubo having appeared on his neck. Further back, a series of bodies awaits burial, including an approaching wagon full of corpses leaving the city gate. In the upper left corner, we see the good angel issuing a command to the bad angel over yet another corpse. An arrow-pierced Sebastian kneels above them in supplication before Christ. Here, the saint is imagined as an active intercessor against pestilence.

### The Arrows of Plague

The saint’s newfound status as a plague protector was further cemented by the semiotics of the arrow, the instrument of his suffering. The rapid proliferation of images that depict Sebastian’s passion by arrows in the fifteenth century was undoubtedly related to his rise as a pestilential protector. In both the Classical and Judeo-Christian textual traditions, arrows symbolized pestilence. In the opening lines of the *Iliad*, for example, Apollo, the god responsible both for sending and stopping 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.”<sup>24</sup> The semiotics of the pestilential arrow re-emerged in a Christian context during the plague of 590. 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.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Long, “Plague, Popular Devotions, and the French Realm.”

<sup>24</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, 1:10–68, cited in Little, “Life and Afterlife,” 30.

<sup>25</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4.3.7.7 in vol 3:218–231, cited in Little, “Life and Afterlife,” 30.

Pestilential arrows do not fall spontaneously, of course. If Apollo was responsible for sending the pestiferous missiles in the Classical age, it was God who played the vengeful archer in the Christian world. The divine wrath behind pestilential scourges was likewise represented by the arrow, overdetermining its application as a symbol for plague. Psalm 7:13 cautions, for 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.” A late medieval altarpiece now housed in Hannover shows the convergence of divine retribution and pestilential pathology via the arrow. The panel depicts Jesus striking down plague victims with arrows that pierce their groins, armpits, and necks – precisely the spots where buboes would have erupted.<sup>26</sup>

It had been argued by some historians that late medieval and Renaissance artists envisioned Sebastian as a Christianized Apollo, given both his arrow attribute and the popular athletic representation of the saint.<sup>27</sup> This Sebastian-as-Apollo thesis has been contested. Citing the work of Peter Brown, Louise Marshall explains that the pagan relationship between mortality and divinity cannot be fully mapped onto the Christian attitude. In the antiquities, the dead, however much they may be venerated as heroes, were held apart from the gods, for whom the taint of human death was odious. Christian martyrs, on the other hand, were especially intimate with God and could intercede on behalf of mortals in a way that was impossible for heroes.<sup>28</sup> The relationship between the living, the dead, and the divine was therefore structurally different in Classical and Christian thought, and precludes a direct correlation between pagan gods and saints. Yet, an episode in Rabelais’s *Gargantua* reveals that the confusion of Sebastian for Apollo may have been a long-standing one. Lord Grandgousier upbraids several foreign pilgrims who make such a mistake:

“Indeed,” said Grandgousier. “But what went you to do at Saint Sebastian?”

“We went,” said Wearyway, “to offer up our prayers for protection against the plague.”

“Oh,” said Grandgousier, “you poor people. Do you believe that the plague comes from Saint Sebastian?”

“Most certainly,” replied Wearyway. “Our preachers say so.”

<sup>26</sup> Berger, “Mice, Arrows and Tumors,” 45. <sup>27</sup> Siegrist, “Sebastian – Apollo,” 301–317.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 1–22; Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred,” 494.

“Really?” said Grandgousier. “Those false prophets proclaim such falsehoods? But they’re blaspheming against God’s true and holy saints, comparing them to devils who can only do us harm – just as Homer writes that the Greeks were given the plague by Apollo, or the way poets in general concoct a mad jumble of Joves and wicked gods! There was a hypocrite preaching at Cinais, not long ago, claiming that good Saint Anthony shot fire into men’s legs, or that Saint Eutropius swelled them up with dropsy, or that Saint Gildas was responsible for madmen, or Saint Genou brought us the gout . . . Indeed, it astonishes me that your king allows such scandalous creatures to preach in his kingdom, because they are more deserving of punishment than magicians or other hoaxers – who probably did bring the plague with them. Plague only kills the body, but these fakers infect the soul.”<sup>29</sup>

Grandgousier’s invective reveals another discontinuity between the Classical gods and Christian saints. Unlike Apollo, who had divine powers over retribution and issued pestilential arrows from his own bow, Sebastian has no direct control over the arrows of plague. As a Christian saint, he can merely petition on behalf of supplicants for God to stay his hand.

According to Marshall, a more plausible and theologically sound hypothesis on how the connotations of the plague arrow converge in Sebastian depends on a salutary reading of the saint’s passion and its similarity to the Christological narrative of torture, death, and resurrection. The failed execution of Sebastian by arrows was often (mis)interpreted in the Middle Ages and Renaissance as his actual death, from which he was miraculously resurrected. In an image of the saint by Matteo di Giovanni, for example, Sebastian receives two crowns of martyrdom – one in his hand, the other on his head – for each of his two deaths (Figure 4.1). Reflecting and reinforcing such a belief in his Christ-like resurrection, popular depictions of the saint’s execution found many parallels with the iconographies of Christ’s Flagellation and Crucifixion; both are shown naked, fixed to a column or tree, surrounded by Roman soldiers.<sup>30</sup> In some instances, the two passions are even conflated. In one Medieval Psalter (Figure 4.2), a soldier pierces Sebastian’s side with a spear (an episode not present in the saint’s hagiography proper), recalling Longinus at Golgotha.<sup>31</sup> And in a fifteenth-century triptych by Hans Memling depicting what should be the Christological narrative of Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, the left-most panel – the “Crucifixion” panel – shows an arrow-studded Sebastian instead

<sup>29</sup> Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 103.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall points out that the iconographic parallels between Sebastian and Christ “accumulate far beyond that for any other saint”; “Waiting on the Will of the Lord,” 66–73.

<sup>31</sup> Marshall, “Waiting on the Will of the Lord,” 73.



Figure 4.1 Matteo di Giovanni, *St. Sebastian*, 1480–1495. Tempera on wood panel, 126.4 × 59.7 cm. The National Gallery, London.

(Figure 4.3). “In direct analogy with Christ’s redemptive death,” Marshall argues, “Sebastian’s martyrdom by the arrows of the plague becomes a vicarious sacrifice offered up to God.”<sup>32</sup> His survival, by the same analogy,

<sup>32</sup> Marshall, “Manipulating the Sacred,” 495.

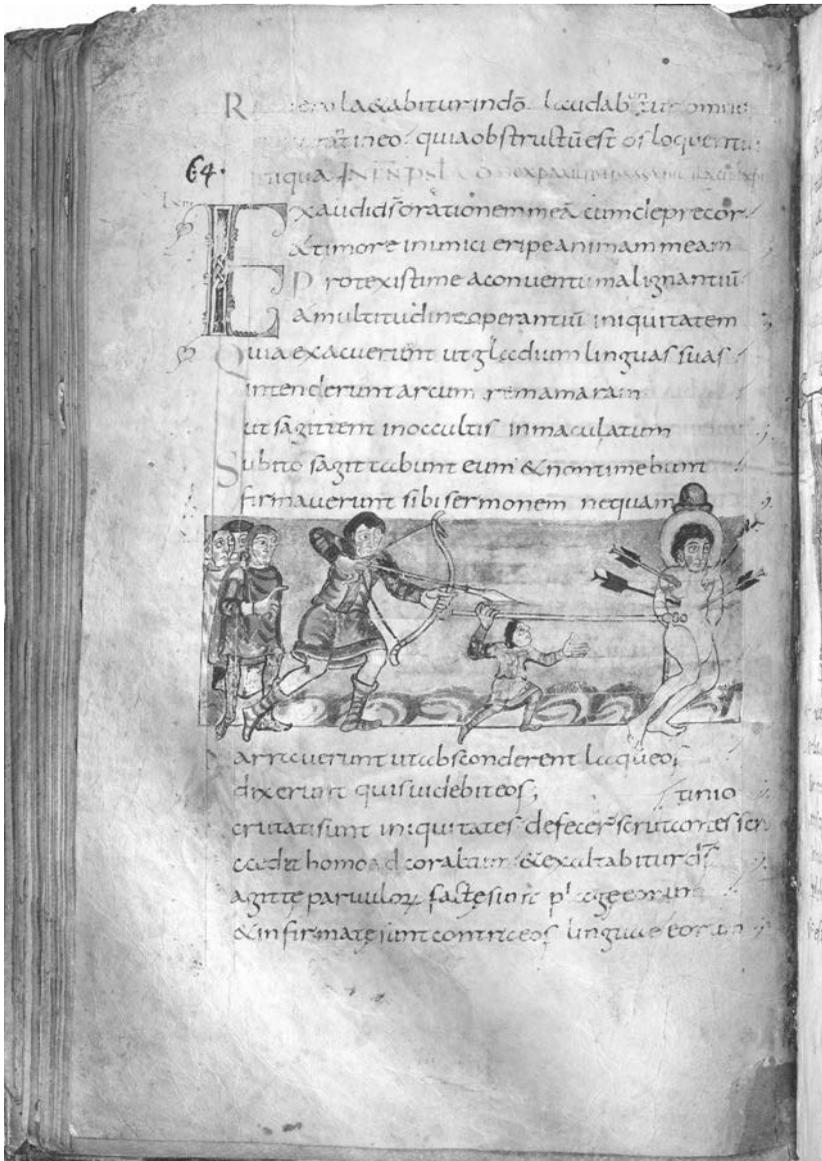


Figure 4.2 Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. bibl. fol. 23, f. 74v.

demonstrates the success of his propitiatory gesture and the extent of God's mercy in relieving his – and humanity's – suffering.

Texts of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century musical works that explicitly mention Sebastian's arrows are comparatively uncommon, which may be surprising given the visual artists' increased preference for depicting the saint's passion by arrows. Even the long triplum text of Dufay's isorhythmic

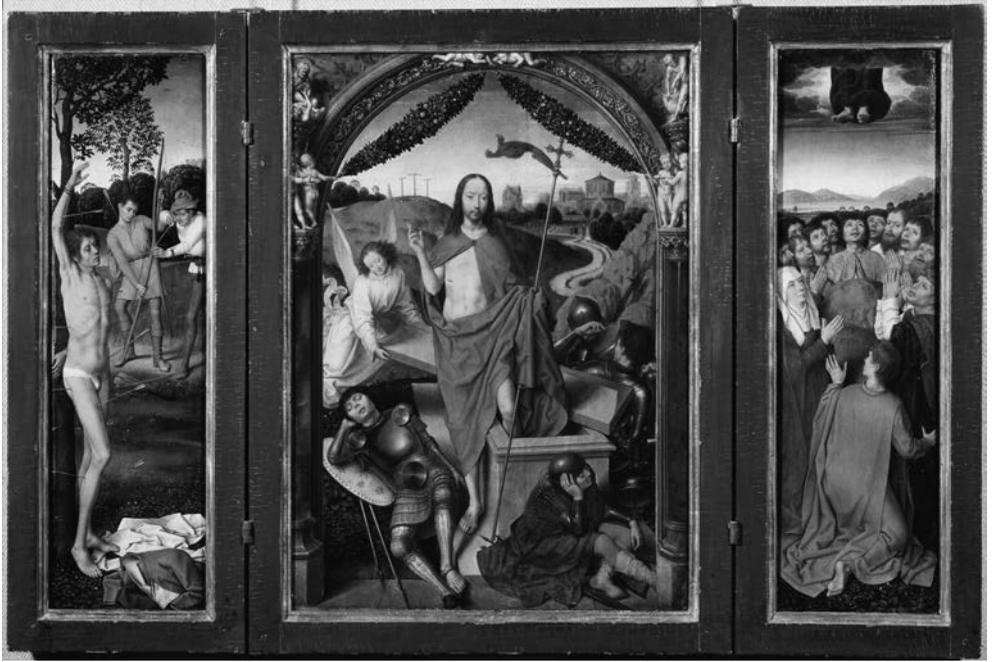


Figure 4.3 Hans Memling, *Triptych of the Resurrection*, ca. 1490. Oil on wood panel, 62 × 45 cm (central panel), 62 × 19 cm (each wing). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

motet *O sancte Sebastiane* (see Chapter 2) – which narrates Sebastian’s Milanese citizenship, his encounters with the twins, Zoe, and Nicostratus – fails to describe (either of) Sebastian’s martyrdoms. It may be that, because liturgical tradition for the Saint that developed before his becoming a plague intercessor, there was already a large stock of texts that did not focus on the arrow. In one instance described by Karol Berger, Sebastian’s arrows resided not in the text, but more opaquely in musical symbolism. In his reading of Dufay’s cantilena motet *O beate Sebastiane*, Berger compared variants of the work in Bologna Q15 and ModB and found consistent differences in notated accidentals.<sup>33</sup> ModB appeared to have been a revision – possibly carried out by the composer himself – of Bologna Q15 with the addition of six sharps and the removal of two flats that transformed nine *fa*-steps into *mi*-steps. The *mi*-step was understood as “hard” and was notated by the square *b*, the forerunner to our natural sign. In ModB, the sign used to indicate *mi* was the “diesis,” which looks like a backward modern-day natural sign, originally introduced by Marchetto da Padova in the early fourteenth century to indicate the sharper leading notes of his tuning system, but was used in

<sup>33</sup> Berger, “Martyrdom of St Sebastian.”

the Renaissance interchangeably with the square b. The revisions of accidentals, then, conjure up the ideas of “hardness” and “sharpness” that Sebastian’s suffering by arrows connotes. Berger reinforces this interpretation by reference to Dufay’s rondeau *Navré je sui*, where the first half of the refrain, “I am rent by a penetrating dart which has pierced my heart through and through,” is set with hard *mi*-step Es throughout; the revelation in the second half of the refrain that the dart was in fact a lady’s “soft glance” is accompanied by the soft *fa*-step Eb.

There are a few musical works that shore up Marshall’s hypothesis regarding the convergence of pestilential arrows and Christological suffering in the figure of St. Sebastian. A pair of spiritual madrigals, *Santo Guerrier* and *Con qual chaive* by Paolo Caracciolo (1582), which juxtaposes Sebastian’s and Christ’s passions, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Another is Alexander Copinus’s motet *Fiat pax in virtute tua*, preserved in *MilD 3* (see Chapter 2). What concerns us here is textual rhetoric of the *secunda pars*.

#### **Prima pars**

Fiat pax in virtute tua et intercessione tua, O beate Sebastiane.	Let there be peace in thy strength and thy 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 hands.
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 well-disposed to His people on earth who daily cry out to you, just as you entreat for us.

#### **Secunda pars**

Domine Deus omnipotens, terribilis et fortis, justus et misericors rector humani generis et auctor, qui nos a morte roseo salvasti sanguine tuo, exaudi orationes nostras.	Omnipotent Lord, God, terrible and powerful, just and merciful, creator and 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 epidemiae 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.

Christ’s passion and the shedding of his redemptive blood are invoked by the penitents as signs of God’s mercy. Such divine compassion was also

extended to Sebastian, whom God had “plucked up” from destruction by arrows; now, the supplicants pray to likewise be spared from the arrows of plague. Here, we have confirmation of Marshall’s idea that Sebastian functioned as a Christ-like redemptive sacrifice for believers; just as Christ saved us from death by his “crimson blood,” so too does Sebastian save us from the plague by drawing those pestiferous arrows into his own flesh.

## The Military Saint

There was another, seldom considered, aspect of Sebastian’s cult that may have resonated with his anti-pestilential function. Before Sebastian was universally accepted as a protector against plague, he performed his duty as a military saint, a function that was tied to his career in the Praetorian Guard. Along with figures such as Ss. Martin of Tours, George, and Maurice – all of whom served in the Roman army – Sebastian formed a part of the cult of warrior-saints that cohered in the eleventh century. In this martial capacity, Sebastian and his cohort served two distinct purposes: intercessory, as a protector of warriors, and didactic, as a model for proper knightly conduct.<sup>34</sup> One of the earliest expressions of Sebastian’s affiliation with soldiers can be found in litany-like chants collectively known as *Laudes regiae*, so-called because they seek aid for the “the *potentes* who upheld the fabric of a unitary Christian society.”<sup>35</sup> *Laudes regiae*, which began as subsections of the Litany of the Saints, gained independent lives as a liturgical form in the ninth century and were cultivated throughout England and the continent. The *laudes* frequently begin with the tricolon “Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat” (Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ commands), an address to the triumphant Christ that at once establishes the tone and intention of the prayer. Then follows a series of acclamations to the earthly *potentes* in hierarchical order, variously with the king or the pope at the head of the list, followed by others such as members of the royal family, the clergy, and the army. After each acclamation, a set of affiliated saints, subject to local variations, was invoked by soloists for particular aid, to which the choir responds “Tu illum adiuva” (help him). For the pope, for the example, the apostles were invoked; for the queen, female virgins; and confessors for the clergy. For the health and victory of soldiers, dukes, and

<sup>34</sup> MacGregor, “Negotiating Knightly Piety,” 320.

<sup>35</sup> Cowdrey, “Anglo-Norman *Laudes regiae*,” 44.

**Example 4.1a** Excerpt from the Fécamp *Laudes regiae*, Rouen Bibliothèque municipale MS 489 (A.254); Salisbury Cathedral Library MS 89 (late eleventh, early twelfth century).<sup>36</sup>

Guil-l-el-mo Nor-man-no-rum du-ci, sa-lus et pax con-ti - nu-a Ex-au-di Chris-te.

Chorus

Sanc - te Mau - ri - ci Tu il - lum ad - iu - va.  
 Sanc - te Se - bas - ti - a - ne Tu il - lum ad - iu - va.  
 Sanc - te Ad - ri - a - ne. Tu il - lum ad - iu - va.

**Example 4.1b** Excerpt from *Laudes regiae*, Worcester Cathedral Lib. MS F.160 (thirteenth century).<sup>37</sup>

Om-ni-bus prin-ci-pi-bus et cunc-to ex-er-ci-tu-i an - glo - rum sa-lus et vic-to - ri - a

Chorus

Sal - va - tor mun - di Tu il - los ad - iu - va.  
 Sanc - te Mau - ri - ci Tu il - los ad - iu - va.  
 Sanc - te Ge - or - ge Tu il - los ad - iu - va.  
 Sancte Se - bas - tia - ne Tu il - los ad - iu - va.

other military leaders, warrior-saints such as Maurice, Martin, George, and Sebastian were frequently called upon (Examples 4.1a and b).

Considering the close, hierarchical integration of earthly and saintly dignitaries, Ernst Kantorowicz argues that the *Laudes* present a powerful symmetry between terrestrial and celestial power structures that established in the political-ecclesiastical sphere “a likeness of the City of God.”<sup>38</sup> The invocation of the warrior-saints, then, not only grants favors for earthly armies but also justifies the fighters’ role in the social hierarchy. A similar set of warrior-saints was also invoked in a Medieval *ordo ad armandum*, composed in Cambrai ca. 1093, to similar effects.<sup>39</sup> The Cambrai *ordo* is an early example of a “dubbing ceremony,” which arms a warrior as a defender of a particular ecclesiastical institution. In the Cambrai ceremony, the bishop blesses the knight and his accoutrements – banner, lance, sword, shield – with prayers and holy water. Near the end of

<sup>36</sup> Cowdrey, “Anglo-Norman *Laudes regiae*,” 68.

<sup>37</sup> Excerpted from a transcription by Manfred F. Bukofzer in Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, 217–219.

<sup>38</sup> Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, 61–62. <sup>39</sup> MacGregor, “Negotiating Knightly Piety,” 322.

the ritual, the bishop prays to God, through the auspices of the holy soldier-martyrs Maurice, Sebastian, and George, for victory against enemies and for protection over the one rendering his service. This particular ceremony from Cambrai is the first known example that applies the rituals of benediction hitherto intended for kings and princes to the warrior, and it signals the beginnings of the corporation of knights.<sup>40</sup> Like the *Laudes regiae*, the Cambrai *ordo* provides social legitimacy to the military, this time through its liturgical lineage to other social powers and through petitions to established saintly examples. In addition, in both cases, St. Sebastian and his cohort of warrior-saints were clearly thought to have special intercessory powers for soldiers on account of their occupational affinities.

Medieval sermons reveal the second, didactic aspect of Sebastian's function as a warrior-saint. Medieval soldiers ostensibly had a reputation for bad behavior. In a twelfth-century sermon "ad milites," Alain de Lille denounces the soldiers of his time for thieving, pillaging, and unchecked violence toward fellow Christians rather than the real enemies of the Church. Nowadays, Alain complains, soldiers are mercenary, performing not "militia," but "rapina," and used the appearance of a soldier to adopt the cruelty of robbers. Alain urges his soldiers instead to emulate warrior-saints such as Sebastian:

Soldiers have an example for their own lives, the blessed martyr Sebastian, himself a soldier, who did earthly military service under the Emperor Diocletian, but did not shrink from spiritual agony. He rendered to Caesar what was Caesar's, and to God what belonged to God . . . The outward appearance of knighthood is the symbol of an inner knighthood, without which the outward is empty and vain . . . Let the soldier be girded outwardly to keep the uneasy peace of the world, and also inwardly, with the sword of the word of God, to preserve the peace of his own heart.<sup>41</sup>

Alain distinguishes between the outer, temporal work of a soldier and his interior, spiritual constitution. The warrior-saints, having united their inner spiritual righteousness with their duties as soldiers, are worthy examples to live by. Alain was not alone in upholding the virtues of warrior-saints. In the sixth book of his monumental *Historia ecclesiastica*, English monk and historian Orderic Vitalis describes how, around the year 1066, a chapel clerk to Hugh of Chester by the name of Gerold would convert the men of court away from their "worldly wantonness" by

<sup>40</sup> Flori, "Chevalerie et liturgie," 277.    <sup>41</sup> Alain de Lille, "To Soldiers," 149–150.

compiling for them battle tales of holy knights. Gerold also told them “vivid stories of the conflicts of Demetrius and George, of Theodore and Sebastian, of Theban legion and Maurice its leader, and of Eustace, supreme commander of the army and his companions, who won the crown of martyrdom in heaven.”<sup>42</sup>

Such glorification of Sebastian’s military life – and of warrior-saints in general – however, is historically not without problem. In Sebastian’s time, there emerged some strong prohibitions against Christian participation in the Roman army, likely motivated by the increase in Christian enlistment under the rules of Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla (193–217), who enacted policies to attract recruits.<sup>43</sup> The early third-century *Apostolic Tradition*, once attributed to Hippolytus, explicitly forbids Christians from becoming soldiers (among other professions such as magicians, sculptors of idols, pimps, and prostitutes).<sup>44</sup> The document itself provides little rationale for the prohibition, but where other early theologians explained their disapproval of the profession, two general areas of concern were evident. First, Christian soldiers of late antiquity came up against a set of problems that can be grouped under the rubric of idolatry. Soldiers were expected to swear an oath (the *sacramentum*) to the emperor, to honor cultic and numinous objects such as the laurel wreath and the military standard, to participate in pagan ceremonies (burning incense to idols or making sacrifices), and to carry out problematic duties that enable heathenism (such as guarding Roman temples).<sup>45</sup> It is largely on account of idolatry that Tertullian, in his early third-century treatises *De corona* and *De idolotaria*, roundly rejects the military occupation for Christians. Unlike Alain de Lille, who reconciles Sebastian’s inner and outer lives, Tertullian insists that a Christian could never serve both God and Caesar. Moreover, when a soldier converts to Christianity, Tertullian believes that he should immediately give up his occupation, or else he would have to resort to all manner of subterfuge that is unacceptable even for civilians.<sup>46</sup> “Every soldier,” Tertullian sums up, “was ungirded by the Lord when He disarmed Peter. With us no dress is allowed which belongs to a forbidden action.”<sup>47</sup>

The second problem with Christian participation in the army was blood guilt. Tertullian additionally condemns military activity because Christians

<sup>42</sup> Ordericus Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 217.   <sup>43</sup> Gero, “*Miles gloriosus*,” 294.

<sup>44</sup> Helgeland, “Christians and the Roman Army,” 294.

<sup>45</sup> Harnack, *Militia Christi*, 65; Gero, “*Miles Gloriosus*,” 294; Helgeland, “Christians and the Roman Army,” 151–152.

<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, *De corona*, 18:140–141.   <sup>47</sup> Tertullian, *De idololatria*, 63.

ought not to shed blood by the sword or commit acts of violence such as imprisonment, torture, and capital punishment.<sup>48</sup> Even in the post-Constantine reality where the Church necessarily became involved in the army and the state, religious authorities regarded military activity with lingering ambivalence. Siricius and his papal council ruled in 386 that if any Christian wore the *cingulum* (sword-belt) of secular service, he would be barred from the clergy. Likewise, a council in Toledo declared in 400 that even if a Christian were to be admitted into the clergy after having worn the *chlamys* (a military cloak) or *cingulum*, he cannot rise to the diaconate. And in 374, Basil of Caesarea forbade soldiers who had blood on their hands from communion for three years.<sup>49</sup>

In the context of such anxieties about Christian participation in the military, Sebastian's career as a soldier – and as a high-ranking praetorian guard, at that – required some apology. Sebastian is not alone in this regard. Martin of Tours, a fellow warrior-saint who became a bishop in the fourth century after renouncing military life, likewise required hagiographic sanitizing for his secular occupation, which was evidently cause for approbation even in his lifetime. Sulpicius Severus, the compiler of *Vita Martini*, recounts an episode where Brice, a monk and eventual successor to Martin as the bishop of Tours, upbraided the saint, claiming that he himself was far holier since he had grown up in a monastery from a young age, while Martin was morally tainted by his military service.<sup>50</sup> Sulpicius Severus was ostensibly sensitive to Brice's censure, since he took a number of opportunities to "spin" Martin's military service.<sup>51</sup> For one, the hagiographer insists that Martin had always been saintly toward fellow soldiers even before baptism. Moreover, internal chronological inconsistencies in the *Vita* show that Sulpicius may have attempted to reduce the number of years Martin spent as a soldier post-baptism to two, culminating in a dramatic desertion, rather than twenty-two, as another reading of the chronology suggests, which would make the end of his career less an act of renunciation than a retirement. Babut and Fontaine suggest that Sulpicius shortened Martin's military career for apologetic reasons, reducing both the period of contamination by the occupation and the extent of his post-baptismal subterfuge.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service*, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service*, 99–109.

<sup>50</sup> Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service*, 112. <sup>51</sup> Wynn, *Augustine on War*, 113.

<sup>52</sup> For an account of the chronological problem, see Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, 111–133; and Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service*, 111–113; see also Babut, *Saint Martin de Tours*; Sulpicius Severus, *Vie de Saint Martin*. Babut and Fontaine's suggestion that Martin had really spent over twenty years in the army is contested by Stancliffe.

We can see similar apologetic strategies at work in Sebastian's fifth-century *Passio*. First, the circumstances and chronology of Sebastian's conversion remain unclear throughout. The topic comes up only once, in a conversation between Sebastian and the Roman prefect Chromatius, where the saint says expediently, "as you know, I work as the head of the praetorian guard, but it is the military work of man that, once upon a time [*olim*], I either decided not to know, or was not willing to know." Second, from the opening lines, Sebastian's hagiographer downplays the saint's military record:

Sebastianus vir Christianissimus  
Mediolanensium partibus eruditus,  
cuius vero Narbonensis, Diocletiano &  
Maximiano Imperatoribus ita carus  
erat, vt principatum ei primæ cohortis  
traderent, et suo eum conspectui  
iuberent semper astare. Erat enim vir  
totius prudentiæ, in sermone verax, in  
iudicio iustus, in consilio providus, in  
commisso fidelis, in interuentu stre-  
nuus, in bonitate conspicuus, in  
vniuersa morum honestate præclarus.  
Hunc milites ac si patrem veneraban-  
tur: hunc vniuersi, qui præerant palatio,  
carissimo venerabantur affectu. Erat  
enim verus Dei cultor, & necesse erat vt,  
quem Dei perfuderat gratia, ab omni-  
bus amaretur.

Sebastian, the most Christian man, from  
Narbonne and educated in Milan, was  
so dear to the Emperors Diocletian and  
Maximian that they made him the head  
of the praetorian guard and always  
commanded him to be in their pre-  
sence. He was indeed a man of com-  
plete wisdom, truthful in words, just in  
judgment, thoughtful in council, loyal  
in his undertaking, vigorous, known for  
his goodness, and universally famous  
for honesty in character. The soldiers  
adored him as a father, and everyone at  
the palace loved him with dearest  
affection. He was indeed a true worshi-  
per of God, and it is inevitable that,  
whom the grace of God bathes, would  
be loved by all.

While we learn right away that Sebastian was very dear to Diocletian and Maximian and was constantly by their side, we are not told explicitly how the saint was able to ingratiate himself to the emperors or any history of military activity that might have promoted him to the prestigious office. The hagiographer then describes the virtues of Sebastian – wisdom, benevolence, honesty, etc. – and implies that it is on account of his personal goodness (rather than martial glory) that he was like a beloved father to his peers. To conclude the introduction, the author tells us that Sebastian was a true worshiper of God and, bathed in His grace, was inevitably loved by all. In short order, then, the author of the *Passio* sidesteps any questionable aspects of Sebastian's military career and, instead, attributes his favor among his peers as a result of both his personal virtues and a divinely bestowed grace.

Sebastian's hagiographer goes on to justify Sebastian's continuing participation in the Roman army and introduces one of the seminal literary symbols of the *Passio*, the military *chlamys*:

Christo igitur quotidie sedulum exhibebat officium, sed agebat quatenus hoc sacrilegis Regibus esset occultum, non passionis timore perterritus, nec patri- monij sui amore constrictus, sed ad hoc tantum sub chlamyde terreni imperij Christi militem agebat absconditum, vt Christianorum animos, quos inter tormenta videbat deficere, confortaret, et Deo redderet animas quas diabolus conabatur auferre.

Therefore, he daily fulfilled his duty to Christ attentively, but did so only to the extent that his observance remained hidden from the sacrilegious emperors, not because he was frightened by fear of suffering or bound by his love for inheritance; but [it is] for this reason alone that under the cloak of terrestrial power, [Sebastian's Christian duty] would drive the hidden soldier of Christ: that he may comfort the souls of Christians that he saw were weakening under torment, and to God he may deliver the souls that the devil was attempting to steal away.

If we have come to know the arrow as the artistic attribute of Sebastian, then the *Passio* offers his military dress as a competing image. Throughout the text, the hagiographer references Sebastian's military clothing – and the *chlamys* in particular – as the means by which he was able to carry out his Christian duty. Sebastian visits and speaks to Christians variously “dressed in a chlamys” (*indutus chlamyde*), “under a chlamys” (*sub chlamyde*), concealed by “the appearance of a chlamys” (*chlamydis obumbrabat aspectus*), and “hiding under the appearance of a soldier” (*sub specie militiae*). Sebastian himself reiterates to Chromatius, “I wished to hide under the *chlamys* so that I might instruct wavering spirits.” Pace Tertullian, the *Passio* suggests that the clothing of a forbidden occupation is acceptable insofar as it is worn in the service of God. The *chlamys* plays on the same bifurcation of outer and inner life that Alain de Lille would later describe in his sermon and ties together Sebastian's double life; he appears as a stalwart soldier for the emperors and acts as a righteous soldier of God. Damian Flemming argues that the hagiographer seems “comfortable with the fact that Sebastian hides his religion throughout his life, and is even willing to draw attention to the fact through verbal repetition [of the word *chlamys*].”<sup>53</sup> I would suggest, alternatively, that the Latin author is in fact trying to allay discomfort by the insistent repetition, given the anxiety toward Christian participation in the military during Sebastian's lifetime and around the time that the *Passio* was composed. The sartorial attribute is used to show that Sebastian was not merely hiding his Christianity from hostile eyes, but that he was, more importantly, doing God's work.

<sup>53</sup> Fleming, “Demilitarized Saint,” 15.

Even as Sebastian's tutelary function shifted in the late fourteenth century from the military to the anti-pestilential, there were constant reminders of his military career. One persistent thread is the liturgy, developed in the earlier part of the Middle Ages, which picked up on the image of the *chlamys* from the *Passio*, to the near complete exclusion of his now famous arrow attribute. Among the most complete early offices of St. Sebastian,<sup>54</sup> three antiphons over the course of the day reference the military cloak: (1) *Ad hoc tantum sub chlamyde* (for this reason alone that under the *chlamys*, [Sebastian's Christian duty] would drive the hidden soldier of Christ to deliver to God the souls that the devil was attempting to steal away); (2) *Sebastianus dei cultor* (Sebastian, worshiper of god, hidden under the *chlamys*, eagerly desired to comfort the souls of the saints, promising hope and eternal glory to come); (3) *Sebastianus vir christianissimus* (Sebastian is the most Christian man whom his military dress hid and the appearance of his *chlamys* concealed). By comparison the only early antiphon that mentions his passion by arrows is *Iratus imperator jussit*: "The irate emperor commanded the holy man to be killed by arrows because he worshiped Christ, the true God."

The sartorial symbol remains important in later, post-1348 prayers as well. In several fifteenth-century sequences, for example, the saint's dress and its symbolic values are preserved. In the first example, the author of the sequence yokes together each of Sebastian's double-life into close juxtaposition – he achieved fame as a soldier, but was saintly from infancy; he wore the military *chlamys*, but only to conduct spiritual work; and he served Caesar gloriously, but really belonged in Christ's army:

3a. Militis honoribus Rutilat et moribus Sacris ab infantia	3a. He glows with military honor and with holy character from childhood
3b. Sub terrena chlamyde Mentes, quae sunt pavidae, Roborat constantia.	3b. Under the terrestrial <i>chlamys</i> He strengthens frightened minds with courage.
4a. Sanctitatis radio Fulsit hic in stadio, Caesaris in curia Militiae gloria.	4a. With a pious ray He shined in the stadium, in the curia of Caesar, with the glory of a soldier.
4b. Sed tuus erat, Christe. Miles in armis iste Ferens testimonia Probitatis omnia . . .	4b. But Christ, he was yours. A soldier in your army, bearing all the testimony, of righteousness . . . <sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> I-Rv C.5, A-GU-29, E-Tc 44.2, and Dk-Kk 3449 80 XIV, for example.

<sup>55</sup> From the sequence "Nobile preconium"; Dreves, *Analecta hymnica*, 9:245.

Example 4.2 Willaert, *Armorum fortissime ductor Sebastiane*, mm.1–9.

S. Ar - mo - rum for - tis - si - me du - ctor Se -  
 A. Ar - mo - rum for - tis - si - me du - ctor Se -  
 T. Ar - mo - rum for - tis - si - me du - ctor Se - ba - sti -  
 B. Ar - mo - rum for - tis - si - me du - ctor Se - ba - sti - a -

In another sequence, sartorial imagery culminates in Sebastian’s passion by arrows. With syntactical symmetry, the poet distinguishes between heavenly and earthly robes (*stola*) as metonymic stand-ins for his celestial and military lives respectively.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2a. <i>Sedule hic ministravit,<br/>Sub chlamyde animavit<br/>Vacillantes martyres.</i>                | Attentively he ministered,<br>under the <i>chlamys</i> , he roused<br>uncertain martyrs,   |
| 2b. <i>Ne paternos canos cernant,<br/>Ut maternas mammas spernant,<br/>Blandientes conjuges . . .</i> | Lest they give into their father’s old age<br>and so that they spurn their mother’s breasts<br>and entreating wives . . .          |
| 5a. <i>Stolam quaerit supernorum,<br/>Aulam linquit imperatorum,<br/>Balistis subigitur;</i>          | He seeks a robe of the heavenly,<br>leaves the court of the emperor,<br>and is subjected to the archers.                           |
| 5b. <i>Stolam pellit terrenorum,<br/>Instar pellis hericiorum<br/>Sagittis transfigitur . . .</i>     | He throws off his terrestrial robe,<br>and, in the likeness of the pelt of a hedgehog,<br>is pierced by arrows . . . <sup>56</sup> |

Rooted in this liturgical tradition, many examples of Renaissance motets invoke Sebastian explicitly with military epithets and refer to his military dress: Martini and Gaspar’s *O beate Sebastiane* (“miles beatissime”); Dufay’s *O sancte Sebastiane*, Olivetto’s *O quam mira*, and Mouton’s *Sancte Sebastiane* (“militis portans insignia”); and Willaert’s *Armorum fortissime ductor Sebastiane*, where the opening appellation syntactically emphasizes “Armorum,” which is musically highlighted with emphatic homorhythmic chords (Example 4.2).

Just as early liturgy left a persistent trace of Sebastian’s military status, early medieval depictions of the saint established a model of militaristic

<sup>56</sup> From the sequence “Athleta Sebastianus”; Dreves, *Analecta hymnica*, 9:246.

representation. Although the overwhelming majority of fifteenth-century images of Sebastian present him as a young, athletic nude, early images of the saint most often presented him as a clothed, mature soldier. The earliest extant example of a Sebastian image is the fifth-century fresco in San Callisto, also on the Appian, just steps away from Sebastian's catacomb. There, Sebastian appears as a mature man in a robe and stands in the company of Polycamus and Quirinus. Subsequent iconic representations derived from the exemplar (such as the seventh-century mosaic in San Pietro in Vincoli or the thirteenth-century fresco on the apse of San Giorgio in Velabro) show him dressed in military gear, variously holding a weapon, or a palm or crown of martyrdom.<sup>57</sup> Some depictions from the fifteenth century – such as the Stefano Folchetti panel at San Ginesio, a banner by Girolamo di Giovanni, and the *Madonna della Rondine* by Crivelli – carry on the tradition and even depict Sebastian as a medieval knight, armed with a sword.<sup>58</sup> Narrative cycles of Sebastian, though comparatively scarce, were another visual reminder of the saint's military career.<sup>59</sup> Some cycles from the Trecento and after the Black Death, such as Lieferinx's Marseilles cycle and Veronese's cycle for the Venetian Chiesa di San Sebastiano, show the saint in military uniform. In Veronese's depiction of Sebastian's capture (Figure 4.4), the saint has been stripped of his earthly clothing and his armor lies as an empty husk at his feet in the foreground. In a scene resonating with the above sequence, the soon-to-be martyr gazes and points upward with his forefinger; having discarded his terrestrial uniform, he is ready for his heavenly robes.

### The Healing Soldier

As the visual, textual, and liturgical-musical evidence attest, Sebastian's military career was an important facet of the saint's early cult. His early hagiographer's apologetic stance in the fifth century gave way to a glorification of the saint's military participation by the eleventh, when

<sup>57</sup> Marshall, "Waiting on the Will of the Lord," 57; Ressouni-Demigneux, *Saint-Sébastien*, 11–12.

<sup>58</sup> Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints*, 996–998.

<sup>59</sup> The earliest extant of these, from the San Sebastiano al Palatino and dating from the late tenth or early eleventh century, may be incomplete and depicts only five scenes that include Sebastian's passion by arrows and the subsequent episodes of his life. In all five images, Sebastian appears as a bearded and nude man, and unsurprisingly given the scenes' place in the vita narrative, without any reference to his military life Marshall, "Waiting on the Will of the Lord," 70–77.



**Figure 4.4** Veronese, (Paolo Caliari) Detail of *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*, 1565. Oil on canvas, 355 × 540 cm. Chiesa di San Sebastiano, Venice. Bridgeman Images.

Sebastian and other warrior-saints were recruited both to safeguard medieval knights and to stand as models of soldierly morality. But even as his military function began to shift toward – and become eclipsed by – his association with pestilence, traces of his earlier identity remained. In this cultic palimpsest, we can detect occasional interactions between the two functional layers. In one early ritualistic example, we see Sebastian’s two tutelary functions operating in parallel. According to a report from 1330, Sebastian’s feast day was celebrated at San Pietro in Vincoli in Pavia, the site of the 680 miracle, with the distribution of bread rolls called *avicule* (little birds) to be consumed by humans and animals alike as a prophylaxis against pestilence, and of little iron arrows crafted by parish goldsmiths to be worn for protection against arrow wounds.<sup>60</sup> It appears that the arrow talisman operated in this ritual iconically, in service of Sebastian’s military function, rather than symbolically as pestilential punishment; the connotations of the arrow had not yet crystallized around Sebastian’s function as a plague protector.

We can also see the convergence of the saint’s dual-function in the fifteenth-century confraternity of St. Sebastian at Notre Dame in Paris, which admitted artillery makers and bourgeois archers (apprentices and journeymen were excluded).<sup>61</sup> The constituent membership obviously

<sup>60</sup> Webb, *Patrons and Defenders*, 201; Barker, “Making of a Plague Saint,” 97.

<sup>61</sup> Long, “Chanted Mass,” 186.

shows a professional identification with Sebastian the soldier. Nevertheless, the confraternity's devotional focus appeared to have fallen on the anti-pestilential rather than the military aspect of Sebastian's cult. Their missal – Bibliothèque Arsenal, MS 204 – contained six masses: two to St. Sebastian; one each for Ss. Roch, Anthony, and Geneviève; and a *Missa pro mortalitate subitanea evitanda*. Besides Sebastian, there were no other warrior-saints represented. The Mass to Roch and the Mass to avoid sudden death had obvious anti-pestilential applications. In the second Mass to Sebastian,<sup>62</sup> many of the items – including the gradual verse about the Lombard plague cited earlier – implore Sebastian explicitly for help against plague. Some of the items, such as the Offertory, also invoke Sebastian as a soldier:

Illustrious martyr, glory of the soldiery, athlete of faith, born in the sight of God in order that he might avert for us God's anger. Martyr who piously poured out judgments so that the epidemic may not be harmful, in this fatherland and in others which request your help, hear [your] praises. And with pious prayer may rewards be given. Quick, soldier, help us. Alleluia.<sup>63</sup>

With such prayers, the guild of archers must have felt a special kinship with Sebastian through their shared occupations; the urgent plea of the Offertory, "Quick, soldier, help us," would have been issued to the saint as comrades in arms on the pestilential battlefield.

In visual depictions, Sebastian's two tutelary functions cohere in a variety of ways. If the semiotics of pestilence had not firmly accrued to the arrow around 1330, there can be little doubt regarding its symbolic meaning in Cristoforo Caselli's 1499 *St. Matthew and St. Sebastian*, which combines both plague and military imagery. In this image, Sebastian wears an elegant cloak over his tunic and holds a sword in his right hand. A single arrow pierces his upper left thigh, at a spot where plague buboes commonly erupt (Figure 4.5). The placement of the wound and the slight out-turn of the left leg is reminiscent of St. Roch iconography, where the saint presents his groin bubo to the viewer. Arrow and military imagery likewise come together in Benozzo Gozzoli's Sebastian fresco in Sant'Agostino at San Gimignano, painted in 1464 in response to an outbreak that year (Figure 4.6). The top of the image shows God and his angels hurling down javelins past Christ, displaying his wounds, and Mary, baring her breasts, both kneeling in

<sup>62</sup> The first Mass in the missal is compiled largely from the diocesan Common of Saints and Paschal feasts.

<sup>63</sup> Long, "Plague, Popular Devotions, and the French Realm."



Figure 4.5 Cistoforo Caselli, *St. Matthew and St. Sebastian*, ca.1499. Tempera on wood panel, 99.7 × 47.6 cm. Detroit Institute of Arts, USA. City of Detroit Purchase, Bridgeman Images.

supplication. Below is a fully dressed, impassive, and oversized Sebastian standing on a pedestal, engraved with the words “Sancte Sebastiane intercede pro devoto populo tuo.” Angels hold open Sebastian’s outer cloak to shield the mortal supplicants crowded around the saint. God’s



Figure 4.6 Benozzo Gozzoli, *St. Sebastian*, 1464. Fresco. Sant' Agostino, San Gimignano.

retribution is completely thwarted as the javelins break and ricochet off Sebastian's outstretched mantle.

Gozzoli's unusual depiction of Sebastian is adapted from Madonna della Misericordia image type. In the traditional Misericordia images, which emerged in the thirteenth century, Mary wraps her open mantle around the devout. 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 break upon Mary's cloak. Benedetto Bonfigli's Misericordia banner (a print of which is reproduced here in Figure 4.7), executed in Perugia in the same year as Gozzoli's fresco, reverses the roles of Mary and Sebastian – it is she who shelters her followers with her mantle, while the saint, himself pierced by arrows, kneels in prayer.<sup>64</sup>

The gestural significance behind the Misericordia images and Gozzoli's Sebastian is inherited from the ritual act of covering someone with a cloak as a sign of protection, stretching back to pre-Christian judicial proceedings, and marriage and child-adoption ceremonies.<sup>65</sup> The cloak – worn by those in positions of command, including gods, kings, and emperors – denoted power and “lordliness,” and its use as a shelter projected the wearer's authority, and physically and morally aligned the protector and the protected. The gestural idea, William Levin writes, “was nothing if not logical”; the personal shield used by “ancient warriors for protection in battle was here simply transformed into the raised garment of the protector-lord under which one took refuge when seeking the aid of his ‘miraculous’ power.”<sup>66</sup> Transplanted from the Madonna to St. Sebastian, the raised cloak is particularly resonant with the saint's military history. Sebastian's *chlamys* is transformed from a personal disguise into a shield against pestiferous missiles, and his stewardship of timorous Roman Christians during his lifetime is extended to include the entire community of believers after his martyrdom.

Some of the interactions between Sebastian's two tutelary functions also hinge on Sebastian's moral character as a soldier – the didactic dimension of his military cult. In the highly idiosyncratic Thouzon altarpiece (1410–1415; Figure 4.8) attributed to Jacques Yverni,<sup>67</sup> St. Sebastian is

<sup>64</sup> Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art*, 42–44; Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence*, 80.

<sup>65</sup> Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 468–471; Hubbard, “*Sub Pallio*,” 10–47.

<sup>66</sup> Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 469.

<sup>67</sup> Kane, “Nouvelles observations,” 244–249.



Figure 4.7 Dittorini(?) after Benedetto Bonfigli, *Madonna Misericordia*, 1464. Lithograph. Wellcome Library no. 21419i.

shown on the right panel in his soldier's uniform, belted with a *cingulum* and carrying a sword in his left hand. He is draped in a cloak festooned with arrows, though it is unclear whether the projectiles have penetrated the saint's flesh or whether his garment, as with the case of Benozzo



Figure 4.8 Jacques Yverni(?), *Thouzon Altarpiece*, 1410–1415. Tempera on wood panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Gozzoli's fresco, has shielded him from harm.<sup>68</sup> Reminiscent of the iconography of St. George, and resonant with the left-hand scene of St. Andrew chasing demons out of Nicaea, the retable's Sebastian has captured a winged reptilian demon underfoot and pinned him down with a lance for good measure.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Karim Ressouni-Demigneux argues that the Thouzon image was an unsuccessful experiment because it failed to show the penetration of arrows into his flesh, which both blunts the emotional impact of the scene and fails to convey the idea that Sebastian's body has the power to resist plague; *Saint-Sébastien*, 51.

<sup>69</sup> The image is also redolent of the iconograph of the archangel Michael, who famously appeared to Pope Gregory to signal the end of the plague in 590 (see Chapter 3).

The association of George with Sebastian was not unusual; as warrior-saints, they were often invoked together in *Laudes regiae* and paired in visual depictions, such as the German altar piece (1475–1480), once attributed to Friedrich Herlin, that shows both saints in elegant black armor. What is unusual with the Thouzon retable – though not at all incongruent – is the conflation of the two saints’ narratives in a single figure. George was a Roman tribune credited with slaying a pestiferous dragon in Lybia that had been terrorizing the citizens of Silena with its poisonous breath, requiring daily sacrifices of livestock and, eventually, humans to keep it at bay. The idea that dragons and their serpentine kin were plague-carriers prevailed throughout the premodern world. Like George, St. Gildas was said to have slain a dragon that was killing Romans with its pestiferous breath. Later, presaging the 590 plague in Rome, the Tiber purportedly overflowed and washed serpents and a large dragon onto shore, which brought with them a pestilential miasma. When the outbreak of 1348 riled up anti-Semitic fervor across many parts of Europe, the Jews near Geneva were accused of concocting pestilential poisons made from serpents, lizards, and frogs.<sup>70</sup> There was even an astrological connection between the dragon and the plague; during the same fourteenth-century outbreak, doctors in Paris suspected that it was the conjunction of Mars, and the lion and the dragon constellations that were partially responsible for the scourge.<sup>71</sup> St. George’s defeat of the dragon, then, carried a very obvious anti-pestilential meaning and, in the Thouzon altarpiece, resonated with Sebastian’s own protective powers.

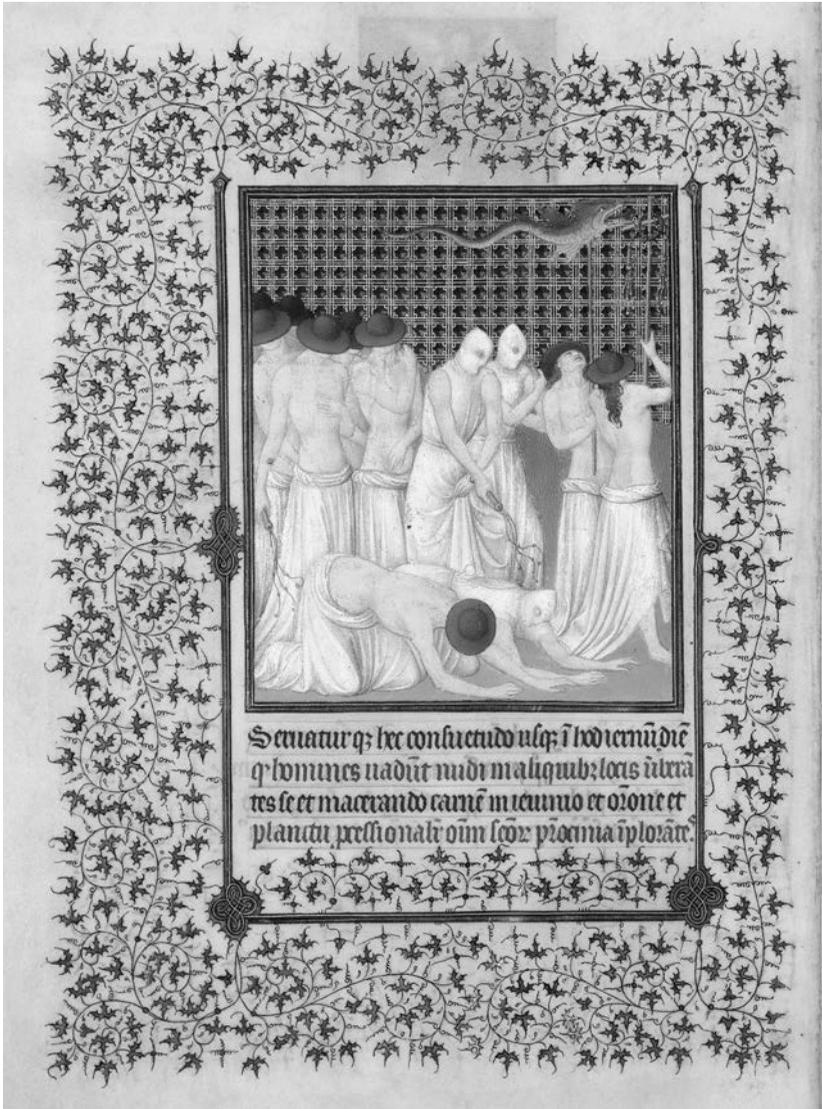
The association of dragons and serpents with pestilence also operated on a spiritual level, with those hellish creatures having long signified evil. As Anne Walters Robertson has uncovered in her study of the *Caput Masses* and motets, the equation of the dragon/serpent with sin is evident in everything from the Bible (Genesis 3; Psalm 91; Revelation 12–13, 20:2), to exorcism rites, to the visual arts.<sup>72</sup> By extension, the crushing of dragons, whether by Christ, the Virgin, or the Saints – or indeed by any warrior clad in the armor of God – represents the vanquishing of Satan. The conquest of the dragon-demon in the Thouzon altarpiece is therefore symbolically overdetermined; not only does Sebastian-George stanch the physical source of pestilential poison, he also defeats sin, one of the primary causes of pestilential punishment.

We can see this superimposition of the “dragon as plague” and the “dragon as sin” tropes in Duc de Berry’s early fifteenth-century *Belles*

<sup>70</sup> Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague*, 154–155.

<sup>71</sup> Campbell, *Black Death and Men of Learning*, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Robertson, “Savior, the Woman, and the Head of the Dragon,” 546–564.



**Figure 4.9** Paul Herman and Jean de Limbourg, *The Belles Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry*, 74 v, 1405–8/9. Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum, 23.8 × 17 cm. The Cloisters Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York ([www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)).

*Heures*. An illumination that accompanies the litany – a ritual reputedly instituted by Gregory the Great in response to the 590 plague – represents a procession in which a flagellant carries a banner of a dragon behind the processional cross (Figure 4.9). The meaning, Christine Boeckl argues, is explained in Jacobus’s entry on “Lesser Litanies” in the *Legenda aurea*: “in

the time of grace, after Christ's birth, Satan became powerless."<sup>73</sup> Here, sin and plague are both tamed in the face of the redemptive Christ. A similar play of symbolism is evident in medical writings on plague as well. In his plague treatise *Remèdes souverains contra la peste*, for example, the French Jesuit Étienne Binet employs the same trope to address the cross-signification of the disease and its moral cause:

The dragon that breathes the plague and harms humankind is the sin hidden within our hearts. During the plague, let us force ourselves to receive communion well and often, and let us place the divine morsel in our hearts, for it is all powerful in crushing the plague and preserving our hearts from that cursed vapor that endangers our lives.<sup>74</sup>

Besides holy communion, according to Binet, another solution is to "offer daily devotion to the very holy Mother of God, who, with her heel, crushes the dragon's head."<sup>75</sup>

As a soldier who donned military and spiritual armor, Sebastian was suitably armed for battling the dragon of sin and, by extension, the dragon of plague. The specific virtues of Sebastian as a warrior-saint served as a generalized model for Christian behavior at large, and his military and anti-pestilential functions converge at the highest level of disease teleology: if God is the ultimate cause of physical diseases, then it is in the victory over sin that physical disease is defeated. Sebastian's Willaert's motet *Armorum fortissime ductor* (1520s), for example, inculcates this precise message:

**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  
fractus tormentorum acerbitate  
martyrum animos confirmabas, et  
Jovis Apollinisque simulacra deji-  
ciens daemones non deos esse  
palam docebas.

O mightiest commander of arms,

Sebastian, who shall offer you the  
deserved praise? When armed with faith  
alone, you achieved the most glorious  
victory over the Roman leader: for,  
having scorned the power and threats of  
Diocletian, you were strengthening the  
souls of martyrs broken by the harshness  
of torture, and casting down the idols of  
Jove and of Apollo, you were plainly  
demonstrating that they are demons,  
not gods.

<sup>73</sup> Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence*, 83.

<sup>74</sup> Binet, *Remèdes souverains contre la peste*, 83–84.

<sup>75</sup> Binet, *Remèdes souverains contre la peste*, 89.

Example 4.3 Willaert, *Armorum fortissime ductor Sebastiane*, mm. 22–32.

S. fe - rat? Cum so - la, cum

A. fe - rat? Cum so - la,

T. Cum so - la fi - de cum so - la fi - -

B. Cum so - la fi - - de - - cum

27

S. sol - la fi - de, cum so - la fi - de ar - ma - tus pul -

A. cum so - la fi - - de ar - ma - - - tus

T. - de ar - ma - - - tus, ar - ma - tus pul -

B. so - la fi - de ar - ma - tus pul -

**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.

To you, therefore, distinguished martyr, we  
 supplicants pray: may you, who cured the  
 sickness of souls when leading this mortal  
 life, watch over our minds and bodies as you  
 now reign in heaven.

The militaristic epithet that opens the motet, “*Armorum fortissime ductor*,” strikes an immediate parallel with “*Cum sola fide armatus*,” a phrase that is given rhetorical emphasis through repetition (with “*sola*” appropriately solmized in many instances; Example 4.3). The opening of the motet thus conveys Alain de Lille’s description of the ideal soldier who reconciles his outward occupation with inward righteousness.

The remainder of the *prima pars* enumerates the deeds of St. Sebastian, naming his encouragement of the twins and his destruction of pagan idols. What the text leaves implicit, however, is the relationship between the rejection of heretical belief and physical well-being. According to Sebastian’s *Passio*, the act of iconoclasm occurred at the home of Chromatius, the prefect of Rome, who had been suffering from a painful illness. When Chromatius learned of Sebastian’s healing abilities, he summoned the saint and the priest Polycarp, promising that if Sebastian could restore his health, he would

convert to Christianity. In response, Sebastian laid down the condition that, unless Chromatius accepted God in his heart and destroyed all of the pagan objects in his home, his health would not improve. The prefect consented, but his son Tiburtius cautioned that if Sebastian's claims were false, he would fire up two ovens and roast him and his companion alive. Undaunted, Sebastian proceeded to destroy over 200 idols. Despite this iconoclasm, Chromatius was still not healed. Sebastian pressed Chromatius to reveal 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. Once more, Sebastian convinced the prefect that such pagan arts and objects were inimical to God and was allowed to destroy the remaining object. Immediately, an angel appeared to Chromatius, and the prefect was healed. Fulfilling more than his end of the bargain, Chromatius and 4,000 members of his household were subsequently baptized.

This episode from Sebastian's *Passio* demonstrates the physical benefits of proper belief: by rejecting deviant objects and thoughts, one can be saved from illness. The prayer to the saint in the *secunda pars* of Willaert's motet to watch over both the supplicants' minds and bodies reinforces the twinned nature of spiritual and somatic health. In Renaissance writings on plague, the problem of improper belief was an ongoing concern. As we saw in Chapter 1, Antonio Possevino lists the sins of blasphemy and heresy as respectively the first and second causes of plague in his plague treatise. In a telling turn of phrase, he warns against false prophets for they bring along with them both the "contagion of heresy" and the physical plague.<sup>76</sup> Concomitantly, Possevino sees plague as a kind of purification of entire peoples that occur "whenever governments had to be changed in the world or when the Catholic religion had to separate itself from people who had rendered themselves unworthy of her, either because of their sins or their embracing of false doctrines and heresies."<sup>77</sup>

Given such rhetoric, it is unsurprising that 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

<sup>76</sup> Possevino, *Cause et rimedii della peste*, 24.

<sup>77</sup> Possevino, *Cause et rimedii della peste*, 12–13; Mormando, "Pestilence, Apostasy and Heresy," 260–261.

[Protestants] died.”<sup>78</sup> An epidemic in England in 1570 was thought to have accompanied Queen Elizabeth’s excommunication, and an outbreak contained 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 targeted visit by God.<sup>79</sup>

It is in the context of this perceived causal relationship between spiritual deviance and pestilential punishment that plague came to be used as a metaphor for apostasy across Renaissance Europe and that the concomitant tropes of “antidotes” and other therapies came to signify the defense against heresy. The titles of some anti-heresy treatises can give us a sense of these medical metaphors: “Defence of the Catholic and Apostolic Truth: Against the Impious and Greatly Pestiferous Dogma of Martin Luther” (1521); “Sermons Against the Pestiferous and Loathsome Errors and Heresies of the Cathars” (1530); “Remedy for the Pestilent Doctrines of Bernardino Ochino” (1544); “Antidotes and Regimens Against the Plague of Heresy and Errors Contrary to the Catholic Faith” (1558). And Leopold Dick and John Calvin even combined pestilential and military metaphors to attack other Reformers: “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 are deadly, and both can afflict entire populations. From the etiological perspective, the spiritual and the physical disease cannot be disentangled. In the context of the cultic devotion to Sebastian, the thematic relationship between faith and healing sets a didactic example of how to avoid pestilential punishment.

Two other Sebastian motets – one by the little-known Austrian composer Michael Deiss (fl. 1564–1568) and the other by Maistre Jhan – establish the same connection of spiritual and physical health through musical borrowing. Michael Deiss’s *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus* (from book three of Gardane’s *Novi thesauri musicus*, 1568/4) stitches together two antiphons from Sebastian’s feast, setting one in each *pars* and then repeating a section of the first for an overall ABCB responsory form. He does not, however, use the known melodies of either antiphon in his setting. The selection of text felicitously brings together some of the important apologetic threads in the Latin *Passio*: the reconciliation of Sebastian’s double lives in the image of the military cloak and the declaration of his inner Christian virtues.

<sup>78</sup> Martin, *Plague?*, 95.      <sup>79</sup> Martin, *Plague?*, 45.

**Prima pars**

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 *chlamys* hid . . .

**Secunda pars**

Erat enim in sermone verax et in iudicio iustus. Et clamidis sue ombumbrabat aspectus.

. . . was indeed truthful in speech and fair in judgment. And the appearance of his *chlamys* hid [him].

Maistre Jhan's motet setting of *Sebastiane, decus perenne* (of which only the superius and bassus survive; see Appendix for score) implores Sebastian for protection over Ferrara and its Este rulers. Between Jhan's tenure in Ferrara from around 1512 onward to Alfonso's death in 1534, there was one notable outbreak in 1528 that claimed 20,000 Ferrarese lives;<sup>80</sup> it is possible the motet was written in reaction to that event.

**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 glory of heaven, hear the vows and prayers of those supplicating – and not only hear, but, benevolent one, heed them as you can, the King of gods and men having smiled upon you.

**Secunda pars**

Surgentem reprime et repelle pestem, ne vis serpat et opprimat caducos mortales.

Check and repel the growing pestilence, so that its power may not grow and crush stricken mortals. It is enough that all men pass away to their own fate. May the violent death be under your auspices and your command.

Satis est suo perire fato omnes. Violenta mors facescat tuis auspiciis tuoque ductu.

**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, commoda, opes, lares, salutem.

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, interests, wealth, homes, and health.

The two motets open with a similar rising motive. In Deiss's *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus*, the soggetto appears in all voices for the initial point of imitation. In Maistre Jhan's *Sebastiane, decus perenne*, the melody returns in

<sup>80</sup> Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, 2:403.

the superius throughout the work, appearing six times in total, either in full or in variation (Examples 4.4a–4.4f). Given the similarity of the two themes, and given their prominence in both motets, we might reasonably suspect the use of a common *cantus prius factus*. An appealing candidate is the famous sequence for Pentecost, *Veni sancte spiritus*, an invitation to the Holy Spirit to bestow his spiritual gifts. This venerable chant dates from the thirteenth century and is one of the few that survived the Council of Trent’s sequence-cull. The quoted melody comes from the seventh and eighth versicles, and it sets the words “sana quod est saucium” and “rege quod est devium” – “heal whatever is sick” and “guide whatever is astray” (Example 4.4g). The reason for its introduction to the two motets is immediately apparent; as in the case of Willaert’s motet, Sebastian is sought to watch over the bodies and minds of the faithful. As a model soldier, Sebastian was the ideal protector against a bodily disease caused by deviant thoughts.

In the case of Maistre Jhan, the symbolism of the borrowed tune may have been aimed at a more specific target. The plague year of 1528 also saw the marriage between Alfonso’s eldest son, Ercole II, and Renée of France, the daughter of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, who arrived in Ferrara amid the outbreak.<sup>81</sup> The strong Protestant leanings of the new Duchess and her retinue were well known. Renée would later harbor the likes of Clément Marot and Jean Calvin in the 1530s at the Ferrarese court. Her sympathies with the reformers evidently became too much to bear for Ercole, who expelled all of Renée’s protégés in 1536.<sup>82</sup> Around this time, the Duke even enlisted the help of Maistre Jhan in indoctrinating (or perhaps merely annoying) his wife. The composer produced for the Duke a contrafact of his five-voice *Te Deum* bearing the scathing anti-Luther text *Te Lutherum damnamus*, which contains such bilious lines as “The whole world detests you, you father of lies,” and “You sit at the right hand of Lucifer in eternal punishment.” Edward Lowinsky even imagines a sensational occasion where Ercole ambushes Renée, perhaps expecting to hear *Te Deum*, with a performance of Jhan’s contrafact.<sup>83</sup> We can only speculate whether *Sebastiane, decus perenne* foreshadowed the composer’s eventual involvement in the re-conversion of the Duchess; if the motet was

<sup>81</sup> Rodocanachi reports that, in anticipation of the princess’s arrival, the Duke ordered the closed shops, markets, and university to be reopened, and all the citizens to be cheerful; *Une protectrice de la réforme*, 52.

<sup>82</sup> Lowinsky, “Music in the Culture of the Renaissance,” 522–523; Nugent, “Music against Heresy,” 738–739.

<sup>83</sup> Lowinsky, “Music in the Culture of the Renaissance,” 523.

Example 4.4a Deiss, *Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus*, mm. 1–20.

S.   
 A.   
 T.   
 B.

Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus

7   
 S.   
 A.   
 T.   
 B.

bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti - a - nis - si - mus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus

13   
 S.   
 A.   
 T.   
 B.

a - nus vir Chris - sti - a - nis - si - mus Se - bas - ti - a - nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus

17   
 S.   
 A.   
 T.   
 B.

mus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus sti - a - nis - si - mus Chri - sti - a - ni - si - mus quem nus vir Chri - sti - a - nis - si - mus quem o - ccul - ta - bat quem

Example 4.4b Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane, decus perenne*, mm. 1–9.

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

B. Se - ba - sti - a - ne

Example 4.4c Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane, decus perenne*, mm. 28–43.

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

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

Example 4.4d Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane, decus perenne*, mm. 64–70.

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

B. et op - pri - mat ca - du - cos mor - ta - les

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

B. et op - pri - mat ca - du - cos mor - ta - les

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

B. et op - pri - mat ca - du - cos mor - ta - les

**Example 4.4e** Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane, decus perenne*, mm. 112–119.

S. <sup>112</sup> et gu-ber - - - - - nat

B. gu-ber - - - - - nat jus - ta et le - gi - ti - ma ma

**Example 4.4f** Maistre Jhan, *Sebastiane, decus perenne*, mm. 132–138.

S. <sup>132</sup> - - des At ti - bi de - fe - ra - mus u - ni vi - tam vi -

B. lau - des un - i

**Example 4.4g** Sequence, *Veni sancte spiritus*, versicles 7 and 8 (*Liber usualis*).

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.

indeed composed around 1528, then Maistre Jhan may have issued the plea “sana quod est saucium; rege quod est devium” to protect the Este household from the arrival of the plague of heresy, one seemingly presaged by physical calamity.

## Conclusion

The path to Sebastian’s eventual ascension to the role of a universal plague saint was circuitous, dependent on the politics of relic translation, a divine revelation during a sixth-century outbreak, an incidental account of that long-forgotten miracle centuries later, and the felicitous semiotic resonance between his passion and the plague. Sebastian’s association with the disease appears all the more accidental in comparison to that of

St. Roch, another universally recognized plague protector.<sup>84</sup> Born in Montpellier (date indeterminate),<sup>85</sup> Roch was on a pilgrimage to Rome when he came by several towns suffering from epidemic outbreaks. He entered each town and miraculously cured their citizens. One day in Piacenza, Roch himself was afflicted with buboes and cast out of town by the citizens fearful of contagion. Suffering alone in the country, he prayed for comfort, and miraculously, a refreshing spring erupted to provide him with water, and a hound visited him daily bearing food. After more prayers for deliverance, an angel appeared and relieved him of his affliction.

Having already acquired thaumaturgic power against pestilence in his lifetime and having himself beaten the odds, Roch's identification with pestilence was straightforward, and the initial spread of his cult across Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century "unambiguously and exclusively originated from the plague outbreaks of those times."<sup>86</sup> Not so with Sebastian, whose original tutelary functions first as a patron of Rome, then as a military saint, shifted over the course of a thousand years and finally gave way to his status as a plague saint. Still, those earlier functions are discernible in his cult in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance – through the liturgy or his affiliation with archer guilds, for example – and inform his healing powers as someone who defeats sin and, consequently, physical illness. With Sebastian, we have an extremely rich and multilayered cultic history that provides important insight into the economics of spirituality and the hermeneutics of plague in the premodern period.

<sup>84</sup> According to Pierre Bolle, St. Roch was likely not a historical figure, but a "doublet hagiographique" of Racho d'Autun, a seventh-century bishop. This conflation is evident in the similarities of name, the linguistic shift between Racho's protection against "tempeste" and Rocco's power against "peste," and the etiological connection between the meteorological event (tempeste) and pestilence; "Saint Roch, une question de méthodologie," 9–10; "Saint Roch de Montpellier," 563–569. See also Marshall, "New Plague Saint."

<sup>85</sup> The birth and death dates of 1295 and 1327 were given by *Vita sancti Rochi*, a hagiography from 1478; none of the earliest extant vitae, all dating from the fifteenth century onward, provides a concrete chronology of Roch's life. This date poses a problem for the pestilential narrative, since it predates the start of the second pandemic in Europe. See Bolle, "Saint Roch de Montpellier," 529–530, 550–551.

<sup>86</sup> Dormeier, "Saints as Protectors against Plague," 172.

## 5 | Madrigals, Mithridates, and the 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 spiritual madrigal – Paolo Caracciolo’s *Santo Guerrier* from his 1582 collection *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci*, published by Scotto – we can pinpoint precisely the disaster that spurred its composition. A devotional song to St. Sebastian, *Santo Guerrier* (No. 8) lies at the center of the sixteen-work, modally grouped collection and commemorates a Milanese outbreak from the previous decade. While *Santo Guerrier* is the work most explicitly linked to plague in the collection, its language and thematic concerns spill over to the three madrigals that follow to create a series of anti-pestilential songs within the *Primo libro*: madrigal nine, *Con qual chiave*, is another spiritual madrigal with a Christological text that could textually and musically function as a *seconda parte* to *Santo Guerrier*; number ten is a setting of one of Petrarch’s Laura poems from the *Canzoniere* that invokes fresh (and pestilence-free) breezes right from its opening lines; and the next madrigal is a laudatory work in which Caracciolo dedicates salubrious songs he had learned from the muse Urania to his patron Don Antonio Londonio, a government official who oversaw Milan during the outbreak that was the subject of *Santo Guerrier*. Taken together as a group, these four madrigals allow us to consider the nature and value of commemoration of disasters in the Renaissance. What is being remembered? Why should plague be remembered? And what is at stake, spiritually and medically, in the act of remembering?

The story of *Santo Guerrier* 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 January 20, 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 percent of Milan’s 120,000

Table 5.1 Inventory of *Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci*

	Incipit	Poet (if known)	Subject	Cleffing C-A-T-5-B	Signature	Final
1	<i>O dei felici principi</i> (Al Duca di Savoia)		Laudatory	G2-C1-C3-C3-F3	–	G
2	<i>Famoso heroe</i> (A Don Hercole Branciforte)		Laudatory	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	–	D
3	Se'l dolce sguardo di costei m'ancide	Petrarch (Canzo. 183)	Amatory	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	–	A
4	<i>Poi che quella</i> <i>ch'amor</i>		Amatory	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	–	A
5	<i>Marmo fui che per-</i> <i>cosso gettai faville</i>	Girolamo Casone	Amatory	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	–	A
6 <sup>1</sup>	<i>Pasco gli occhi</i>		Amatory/ Laudatory	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	–	A
7 <sup>2</sup>	<i>Felice pulce</i>		Amatory	G2-C1-C4-C3-F3	–	A
8	<i>Santo Guerrier</i>		Spiritual	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	Bb	G
9	<i>Con qual chiave</i>		Spiritual	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	Bb	G
10	<i>L'aura serena</i>	Petrarch (Canzo.196)	Amatory	C1-C3-C4-C4-F4	Bb	G
11	<i>Canta Urania dal</i> <i>ciel</i> (Al Signor Don Antonio Londonio)		Laudatory	G2-C2-C3-G2-F3	–	A

<sup>1</sup> No. 6: Caracciolo does not include a dedication at the head of *Pasco gli occhi*, but on account of its text, it was likely a tribute to Isabella, the wife of Antonio Londonio (dedicatee of no. 11), who was a celebrated singer: *Pasco gli occhi e l'orecchie / Mentre miro et ascolto / Di voi bella serena il canto il volto / L'un senso invidia l'altro / Ma concordi poi sono / che co'l lum'e co'l suono / rimango acceso e morto / d'un cantar dolce e d'un guardar accorto* (I feed my eyes and ears, while I watch your face and listen to your singing, O beautiful siren. One sense envies the other, but then they concord that with the light and the sound, I remain awake and dead because of the sweet singing and the watchful glance). See also Torelli, "Il madrigale nella Casale dei Gonzago: Nuove fonti, testimonianze inedite e un unicum Milanese," 177–8n103.

<sup>2</sup> No. 7: *Felice pulce* is presented in the part books as the *seconda parte* of *Pasco gli occhi*, but on account of the change in poetic structure and conceit, cleffing, and time signature (from ♢ to ◊), it is certainly a separate work: *Felice pulce, che si lieta sorte / havesti in vita e in morte / Tu pria dal bianco petto / suggesti il dolce sangue et satio / poi fra bianchi avorii / delle man ristetto finisti i giorni tuoi. / Così al ciel piaccia e a ogni fatal mia stella / che vivo e morto un di resti tra quella* (O merry flea, that had such a happy destiny in life and death. First you sucked the sweet blood from that white breast and, once sated, you ended up your days dwelling in the white ivory of her hands. So pleased be Heaven and all of my inescapable stars that one day, alive and dead, I can dwell in her). It is rather ironic, given what we now know about plague's vector, that a madrigal about a happy flea should precede an anti-pestilential work.

Table 5.1 (cont.)

	Incipit	Poet (if known)	Subject	Cleffing	Signature	Final
				C-A-T-5-B		
12	<i>Un'ape esser vorrei</i>	Torquato Tasso	Amatory	G2-C2-C3-G2-F3	–	A
13	<i>Anco che gran dolore</i>		Amatory	G2-C2-C3-G2-F3	–	A
14	<i>Amore, per qual cagione</i>		Amatory	G2-C2-C3-G2-F3	–	A
15	<i>Non ha tanti animali</i>	Petrarch ( <i>Canzo.237</i> )	Amatory	G2-C2-C3-G2-C4	–	G
16	<i>Io cantarò, Tirsi dicea</i>		Amatory	C1-C3-C4-G2-F4	–	D

inhabitants<sup>3</sup>); an additional 8,000 lives were lost elsewhere in the diocese.<sup>4</sup> It was assumed by contemporaries that Trent, infected in 1575, was the Italian ground zero of this epidemic, which some believed originated as far afield as Hungary. From Trent, the disease purportedly progressed first to Venice (where over 40,000 would lose their lives) and Mantua in early 1576. How the plague actually entered Milan is unclear. There were rumors and speculations, of course: a woman from Marignano, herself infected by visiting noblemen from Mantua, had carried it to the city; an infected Mantuan had died just outside of Milan, having been refused entry, and his personal effects were stolen and sold within the city walls; villainous “ointment spreaders” (*untori*) had concocted pestilential pastes (*unguenti artificiali*) and smeared the poison on doors and walls all over the city.<sup>5</sup>

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 report that it was an infected member of the prince’s entourage who carried plague into Milan.<sup>6</sup> The festivities themselves were a target for Cardinal Carlo Borromeo’s condemnation; he was certain that the impious revelry had opened the gates for God’s pestilential retribution.<sup>7</sup> True to form, the rich fled at the first signs of plague, and most of the city’s nobility had left by the end

<sup>3</sup> Figure based on Stefano D’Amico’s estimate of the city’s population in 1574 in “Crisis and Transformation,” 4; Robert Kendrick puts the figure slightly lower at 80,000 to 100,000 citizens inside Milan’s walls in *Sounds of Milan*, 411n25.

<sup>4</sup> Besta, *Vera narratione*, 10r. <sup>5</sup> Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 1v–2r.

<sup>6</sup> Casale, “Il diario di Giambattista Casale (1554–1598),” 290–291; Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 1v.

<sup>7</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 367.

of August (Don Juan of Austria, naturally, was among 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 refuge in nearby Vigevano, despite having proclaimed a severe prohibition against the nobles leaving the city shortly before his own departure.<sup>8</sup>

Conditions deteriorated 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. As a result, the specter of famine loomed constantly in the near distance. The city’s *lazaretto* quickly filled to capacity, and more temporary straw huts were needed than could be built; eventually, “the entire city became a sort of hospital.”<sup>9</sup> Increasingly draconian measures were enacted – such as the purging of infected homes, closure of nonessential shops, and a general quarantine – all of which further exacerbated the city’s financial troubles. Industries shut down, so the lower classes were left unemployed and destitute, and their already lamentable situation worsened.<sup>10</sup>

Carlo Borromeo, who was in Lodi when plague was first discovered in Milan, rushed back to his city even as the nobles were abandoning it. The cardinal marshaled 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, selling his possessions, 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 personally ministered to the sick.<sup>11</sup> With such outpourings of magnanimity, Borromeo became a beacon to the beleaguered Milanese – this particular outbreak was even nicknamed the Plague of San Carlo or the Borromeo Plague on account of his inspirational work.<sup>12</sup>

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

<sup>8</sup> Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 2r; Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 369, 384–385.

<sup>9</sup> Orsenigo, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 247. <sup>10</sup> Besta, *Vera narratione*, 25v–29r.

<sup>11</sup> Bisciola, *Relatione verissima*, 5v–6r. <sup>12</sup> Carmichael, “Last Past Plague,” 141.

jurisdiction that included the right to convene legal tribunals with the purview to try the laity, the right to maintain armed forces, and the right of asylum and exemption from lay punishment.<sup>13</sup> The Spanish governors, fearing that Borromeo was in essence trying to establish a government within a government, systematically opposed the cardinal. The relationship between the churchman and the civic authorities was sufficiently antagonistic that Luis Zuniga y Requesens, governor of Milan from 1572 to 1573, described Borromeo in a letter to Philip II as “the most dangerous rebel Your Majesty has ever had.”<sup>14</sup> The cardinal’s relief efforts during the plague represented another salvo that strained the already difficult 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.<sup>15</sup>

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 reassert his authority in a highly visible way.<sup>16</sup> The governor made a 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 curry favors both public and divine. 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 4,000 *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 October 15.

The building of this new church was, at first, a 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 quickly inserted himself into the planning process, asserting to the government that the renovations of

<sup>13</sup> Orsenigo, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 139–140.

<sup>14</sup> For a brief summary of Borromeo’s troubled relationship with the Milanese government, see Stevens, “Printers, Publishers and Booksellers in Counter-Reformation Milan,” 193–194.

<sup>15</sup> Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 449.

<sup>16</sup> The following history of San Sebastiano comes from Scotti and Antonini, “San Sebastiano a Milano,” 208–223.

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 favored architect), was laid on September 7, 1577. On account of the limited space available as well as the modest funds devoted to the project, a central plan was selected despite Borromeo's preference for cruciform layouts.<sup>17</sup> 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). Construction proceeded slowly, with the eventual involvement of multiple architects and various re-designs – including changes to the dome's lantern and the deepening of the main chapel, which violated the original circular plan – and the church was not completed until the middle of the seventeenth century. After the nineteenth-century *unificazione nazionale*, San Sebastiano was recognized as “the civic temple of Milan” (*il tempio civico di Milano*) and remains so to this day (Figure 5.1).

## Santo Guerrier

The dedication of Milan's new temple is, in turn, commemorated in Caracciolo's madrigal *Santo Guerrier* (see appendix for scores from the *Primo libro*). 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 and temple in exchange for liberation from plague.

### Prima parte

Santo Guerrier la cui terrena spoglia	Holy warrior whose earthly body
Da gli strali pati sì duro scempio,	suffered such harsh torment by arrows,
Hoggi il principio di quel voto adempio	today I shall keep that vow that I once
Che pria ti feci e non fia mai ch'io scioglia	made to you and may it never be that
prieghi offeriti e diggiuni. Vaso	I break the prayers and the fasts
ch'accoglia	I have offered. Celebrate your reliquary
Le tue reliquie festa e un novo tempio	and a new temple Ask God to rid me of
Tu da Dio impetra che da me quest'empio	this wicked and bothersome poison
velen molesto in sempiterno toglia.	forever. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Voelker, “Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones*,” 51.

<sup>18</sup> Translations of texts from the collection by Francesco Caruso.



Figure 5.1 San Sebastiano, Milan

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 *Ebs* and *As*, and he fills the surrounding measures with suspensions that overlap one another toward the end of the phrase – the grating dissonance evoking the relentless arrows piercing Sebastian’s flesh.

Example 5.1 Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 10–21.

The image displays a musical score for five vocal parts: Contralto (C), Alto (A), Tenore (T), Quinto (Q), and Basso (B). The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 17. The lyrics are in Italian and describe the suffering of the Holy Family.

**System 1 (Measures 10-21):**

- C:** 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

**System 2 (Measures 17-21):**

- C:** 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

The score includes various musical notations such as accidentals, dynamics (Dim.), and performance instructions (Aug 4th). Fingerings and breath marks are also indicated for the vocal lines.

To mark the rhetorical change from invocation to vow – the supplicant draws attention to the present moment of dedication (“Hoggi,” line 3; Example 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” – representing plague, which was medically understood as a kind of aerial poison – provides another occasion for text painting (Example 5.2). Caracciolo once again deploys a series of suspensions that, with their pangs of

Example 5.2 Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 33–43.

C. pio Tu da Dio'im-pe - tra Tu da Dio'im-pe - tra che da me quest'em-pi - o ve - len

A. pio Tu da Dio'im-pe-tra che da me quest'em-pi - o ve - len ve - len

T. pio quest'em - pi - o ve -

Q. Tu da Dio im - pe - tra, im pe - tra che da me quest'em - pi -

B. pio Tu da Dio'im-pe - tra che da me quest' em - - pi - o

C. ve - len mol e - sto in sem - pi - ter - - no to - glia

A. mo - les - - to in sem - pi - ter - - no to - - glia

T. len mo - le - sto'in sem - pi - ter - - no to - - glia

Q. o mo - le - sto in sem - pi - ter - - no to - glia

B. ve - len mo - le - sto in sem - pi - ter - - no to - glia

dissonance, portray the pain and cruelty of plague and recall Sebastian's suffering by arrows.

The *seconda parte* of the madrigal begins with another rhetorical shift – “Cosi disse MILAN” (so said MILAN). The listener suddenly finds the foregoing vows on the lips of a personified city, a reminder that the original tribute to St. Sebastian was a corporate one, executed for public welfare.

### Seconda parte

Così 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, fallen so quickly from such glory,  
alas!, into misery.

Example 5.3 Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 44–63.

Augmented triad

C. Co - - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - tà pie - no "mi

A. Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - tà pi - e - no MI -

T. Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - ta pie - no "mi la" MI - LAN di

Q. Co - si di - sse MI - LAN d'hu - mil - tà pie - - no di

B. d'hu - mil - tà pie - - no

49

C. "mi la" MI - LAN di tan - ta glo - ria si ri - pen

A. la" LAN di tan - ta glo - ri - a di tan - ta glo - ria si ri -

T. tan - ta glo - ria - si ri - pen - - - te di tan - ta glo - ria si ri -

Q. tan - ta glo - ria MI - LAN di tan - ta glo - ria - si ri - pen te

B. "mi la" MI - LAN di tan - ta glo - ria di tan - ta glo - ri - a si ri -

Hor che se dè sperar dal Rè superno  
 se non che volto al popol suo dolente  
 Questa peste crudel cacci all'inferno [?]

What else should he hope from his  
 Supreme King other than that He, turning  
 to His grieving people, drives that 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# (Example 5.3). The basso is silent, so the entire texture sounds altogether higher and lighter.

Figure 5.3 (cont.)

53

C. te ca - du - to ahi las - so ahi las - so'al - la mi - se -

A. pente ca - du - to ahi las - so las - so al - la mi - se - ria

T. pen - te ca - du - to ahi la - - sso alla mi - se -

Q. ca - - du - to ahi las - so al - la mi - se - ria

B. pen - te cadu - to ahi las - so al - la mi - se - ria

59

C. - ria in se - no Hor che se dè-spe - rar Hor che se de-spe - rar dal Rè su-per - no

A. in se - no Hor che se dè-spe-rar dal Rè su - per - no Hor che se de-spe-ra dal Rè su -

T. ria in se - no Hor che se dè-spe - rar Hor che se dè-spe - rar dal Rè dal Rè su -

Q. in se - no Hor che se dè-spe-rar Hor che se de-spe-rar dal

B. in se - no Hor che se dè-spe - rar Hor che se de-spe - rar dal Rè su - per -

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.<sup>19</sup> As Sebastian was saved from the arrows, Milan hopes now to be plucked from the arrows of plague and restored to glory. Overt madrigalisms paint the figure of Milan. His humility is underscored by a striking augmented triad on “-mil-” of “d’humilta” (m. 46; Example 5.3). Melismatic flourishes on “gloria” depict the contrast between the glorious and the humbled city

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 4 for Sebastian’s connection to Milan. Julie Cumming describes the closely related phenomenon of figural exegesis in late medieval motets; see “Concord out of Discord,” chs. 6 and 7. See also Eggebrecht, “Machauts Motette Nr. 9,” 281–293, continued in 25 (1968): 173–195.

(mm. 49–53; Example 5.3). Here, Caracciolo also engages in solmization symbolism to distinguish the happy city from the wretched; the name of the city in “Milan di tanta gloria” receives the “correct” mi-la settings on perfect fourth leaps (A-D and E-A), while the foregoing “Milan d’humilta” is improperly set.<sup>20</sup> Next, 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. Some of the most intensely chromatic writing in the entire madrigal follows to accompany “ahi lasso alla miseria in seno,” heightening 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).<sup>21</sup>

A reduction in texture (mm. 60–62; Example 5.3) 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 (mm. 72–73) and the tenor (mm. 70–74) by precipitous descents of an eleventh, and snapping fusae and semi-fusae lend energy to the chase (Example 5.4). The augmented fourth – that *diabolus in musica* – 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 exchanging their material. The energetic flourishes that depict the harrowing flight into hell also propel us to the final cadence.

The types of madrigalisms deployed across the two *partes* mirror the changing rhetorical modes of the text. Sebastian’s suffering and the pain of plague in the *prima parte* receive affective responses. In the *seconda parte*, mimetic responses are introduced – Milan falling, the sigh of “lasso,” and the flight to hell, for example. Such mimetic gestures all contribute to a narrative strategy aimed at embodiment, where abstract concepts are anthropomorphized, described, and made “sensible.” Milan is personified and given a corporeal form that falls and groans. And plague is likewise given a physical shape, calling to mind the visual trope of the winged skeleton – as seen in Bonfigli’s 1464 plague banner (Figure 4.7) or

<sup>20</sup> I wish to thank Tim Carter for this observation.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Monelle describes this type of descending second as a musical icon originating from the music of the late sixteenth century; *Sense of Music*, 67–68.

Example 5.4 Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, mm. 69–81.

len - te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca-cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no

te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca-cci all'in-fer - no ca -

te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca-cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in fer - no ca -

len - te ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca -

te que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca-cci all'in-fer - na ca - cci all'in-fer - no

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ca - cci all'in - fer - no Que - sta pes - te cru-del ca-cci all'in-fer - no ca -

cci all'in - fer-no ca - cci all'in-fer - no Quest - a pes - te cru - del ca-cci all'in-fer - no

cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca -

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

ca-cci all'in - fer - - no que - sta pe - ste cru - del ca-cci all'in-fer - no ca-

79

cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in fer - - - no

cacci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - - - no

cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca-cci all'in - fer - - - no

all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in-fer - - - no

cci all'in-fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - - - - no

Lieferinxe's panel "Saint Sebastian Interceding for the Plague Stricken," for example – chased into hell by a benevolent angel. 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.

## Con qual chiave

The prayer against pestilence continues in the very next madrigal in the collection, *Con qual chiave* (No. 9), which shifts the focus away from the specific Milanese outbreak. In this work, the supplicants turn their attention from Sebastian's torments to Christ's passion, drawing a parallel between Jesus's scourge and the scourge of pestilence. The singers wonder how the supreme Father could be so hard-hearted against the suffering of His Son before praying for plague to run its course.

### Prima parte

Con qual chiave e con qual fero aspro  
e duro

Era serrato il cielo che non s'aperse  
Quando con tante pene e sì diverse  
Quelle sacrate membra aperte furo,  
Quando l'immacolato agnello e puro  
tante crudel percosse oime sofferse a duro  
sasso avinto e tutto asperse di sangue  
il terren l'empio stuol'è impuro.

With what key and what cruel and tough  
steel

was Heaven locked so that it did not open  
When after so many and horrible torments  
those holy limbs were torn,  
When the pure and immaculate Lamb  
suffered, alas, so many cruel blows,  
fastened against the hard rock and with  
his blood  
sprinkled the land and the impious and  
impure crowd?

### Seconda parte

Ov'era la pietà, sommo fattore  
del cielo e della terra,  
all'hor che'l figlio vedeste a sangue  
e d'aspre piaghe pieno.

Oimé che troppo ardente e intenso amore  
fu cagion di lasciar l'empio veleno  
sfogar per trarci noi d'ogni periglio.

Where was mercy, O Supreme Maker  
of heaven and earth,  
when you saw your son covered in blood  
and cruel wounds?

Alas, too ardent and intense love,  
Let the wicked poison  
run its course to deliver us from any  
danger.

Textual and musical resonances between *Santo Guerrier* and *Con qual chiave* leave little doubt that the two madrigals were intended to be a musical diptych. The use of the phrase "wicked poison" (*l'empio veleno*)

Example 5.5 Caracciolo, *Santo Guerrier*, and *Con qual chiave*, head-motives compared.

C. San - to Guer-rier la cui ter - re-naspo-glia

A. La cui ter-re-na spo - glia San-to Guer-rier la cui ter-re-na spo - glia

T. San - toGuer-rierla cui ter-re-naspog-lia san-toGuer - rier la cui ter

Q. San-toGuer-rier La cui ter-re-naspo-glia la cui ter - re-na spo-glia san - toGuer-

B. La cui ter-re-naspo - glia san - toGuer - rier

C. Con qual chia - v'e conqual fe ro'a - spro du - ro con

A. Con - quatchia - v'e conqual fe - ro con

T. Conqual chia - v'e conqual fe-ro'a spr'e du 4 - 3 ro a - spr'e du-ro Con 7-6 qualchiavecon

Q. Con - quatchia - v'e con qual

B. Con qual chia - v'e conqual fe - ro a - spro'e du - ro con qual fe-

to denote plague marks the thematic continuation. The two works share the same cleffing,  $B\flat$  signature, and G-final, and they are even unified by a common head-motive (Example 5.5). The cluster of suspensions and tritones near the opening of *Con qual chiave* depicting a heaven indifferent to suffering mirrors the same techniques of expressing pain in the previous madrigal (Example 5.5). And as in *Santo Guerrier*, Caracciolo saves his most chromatic writing for the wretched groans of “Alas!” with the basso shifting downward with falling minor thirds in mm. 36 and 37 (Example 5.6).

The juxtaposition of Christ’s suffering against Sebastian’s would likely have resonated with contemporary cultic beliefs. Part of Sebastian’s healing

Example 5.6 Caracciolo, *Con qual chiave*, mm. 31–38.

C. - ro oi - - me sof - fer - - se

A. pu - ro tan - te cru-del per - cos - se'oi-me oi - me sof fer - - se a du-

T. pu - ro tan - te cru-del per - cos se'oi - me a

Q. - e pu-ro tan - te cru-del per-cos - se oi - me oi-me sof - fer - se a

B. tan - te cru-del per - cos - - se'oi - me oi - me sof - fer - se

powers rested on the similarities between his own Passion by arrows and Christ's death and resurrection. Just as Christ redeemed humankind with his suffering, so did Sebastian accept the pestiferous arrows on behalf of all believers (see Chapter 4). The invocation of Christ's passion in *Con qual chiave* not only reinforces the salvific legitimacy of St. Sebastian assumed in *Santo Guerrier*, it also inflects the supplicants' attitude toward the purpose of disease. In the earlier madrigal, the singers pray to be rid of plague forever; in the second work, however, they ask not for immediate deliverance, but for the pestilential poison to complete its course. According to the analogy on offer, if Christ's suffering and death were ultimately necessary to open heaven's doors to the faithful, and if His blood had to be shed to cleanse the "impious and impure crowd," then so too must plague – as a punishment for sin – fester to fulfill a divine redemptive purpose. In painting, Christians traditionally used scenes of the Passion "as a mirror of their own personal suffering and as a vehicle for the expression of their own private grief."<sup>22</sup> *Con qual chiave* likewise encourages listeners to project their own pain onto a grander canvas and to consider plague against a sacrificial narrative. Listeners are reminded of the role of divine providence behind catastrophes and given a spiritual justification for pestilence. Suffering is made purposeful.

In their own ways, the two madrigals draw attention to the economics of spirituality. Singers renew their vows to St. Sebastian with every performance of *Santo Guerrier*. And as the plight of Milan opens up to a Christological argument for suffering, listeners are reminded of the

<sup>22</sup> Mormando, "Introduction," 10.

extraordinary price of redemption. One can even imagine the newly founded confraternity at San Sebastiano singing these works to the patron saint of the church to signal their own involvement in the pious project. The works may have resonated in a similar way with another honoree of Caracciolo's collection, Don Antonio Londonio, who was the president of the Milanese ministry of finance during the plague and would almost certainly have been involved in the commissioning of the new church.

## Canta Urania

In the madrigal dedicated to Londonio (No. 11, *Canta Urania*), the act of patronage and its relationship to public health are the central thematic concerns. In the *prima parte*, Caracciolo describes the salubrious songs of Urania, the muse of astrology, who has favored Londonio and sings to him her songs that calm the air and winds. Urania, on account of her association with astrology, naturally had an association with astrological diseases.<sup>23</sup> In the *seconda parte*, the composer fashions himself as the messenger between the muse and the patron. Caracciolo speaks of his intense study of Urania's music and, in the *envoi*, offers up his collected celestial music to Londonio. Like Ficino's musical *magus*, Londonio, via Caracciolo, becomes a sort of neo-Platonic conduit that draws the heavenly gifts to earth (see Chapter 2). If planetary discord was the cause of pestilential miasma, then channeling planetary harmony was surely a viable solution.

### Prima parte

Canta Urania dal ciel la vostra stella con sì soavi accenti Che la terra addolcisce l'aria e i venti.	From Heaven Urania sings your destiny with such sweet accents that the earth soothes the air and the winds.
---	---

### Seconda parte

Io che'l celeste canto divoto ascolto e da lei sola imparo, udendo lei più volte, queste not'hò raccolte per farm'al mondo chiaro.	I, who listen devoutly to the celestial song, and learn from her [Urania] only, hearing her many times, have collected these notes so to become famous in the world.
--	--

<sup>23</sup> In his famous medical poem *Syphilis, sive morbi gallici* (1530), Girolamo Fracastoro invokes the muse thus: "Urania, you who know the causes of things, who know the stars and the varied effects of the sky, and the realms of the air . . . tell me, Goddess, what causes brought this unusual plague to birth after so many centuries." Fracastoro, *Fracastoro's Syphilis*, 38–41.

Example 5.7a Caracciolo, *Canta Urania*, mm. 9–11.

The musical score consists of five staves labeled C, Q, A, T, and B. Staff C (Cantante) has a rest followed by a melodic phrase: *la con si soa - vi ac - cen - ti*. Staff Q (Quinto) has a melodic line: *la con si soa - vi ac - cen - ti Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce*. Staff A (Alto) has a rest followed by a melodic phrase: *la Con si soa - vi ac - cen - ti Che la terr'*. Staff T (Tenore) has a rest followed by a melodic phrase: *- la Che la terr' ad - dol*. Staff B (Basso) has a melodic line: *Con si soa - vi ac - cen - ti soa - vi ac - cen - ti Che*. A box highlights the phrase *con si soa - vi ac - cen - ti* in both C and B.

E hor a voi, che'l vanto cantando  
 havete tra i miglior, l'envio,  
 dolce ò presidio mio.

And now, to you, O my sweet patron,  
 who have the merit of singing among the best,  
 I send these notes.

Caracciolo sets this highly self-reflexive text with a number of musical gestures that draw particular attention to the art of the composer and the singers (some of the best, according to Caracciolo). Gentle melodic turns on the words “soavi accenti” at once imitate the sweetness of Urania’s music and reveal the sweetness of the singers’ voices (Example 5.7a). Undulating melismas on “l’aria e i venti” likewise paint the image and demonstrate the singers’ mastery over “l’aria” – mastery over their song as well as the ambient air, cleansed by their music (Example 5.8). And in the *envoi*, flourishes on “cantando” provide one final display of their skills (Example 5.9). Some of the motivic material used to imitate Urania’s accents returns to accompany “Io che’l celeste canto” at the beginning of the *seconda parte* (Example 5.7b), and with this melodic recall, Caracciolo proves that, yes, he has indeed devoutly studied Urania’s accents and captured the celestial song.

Nested within the Ficinian trope of planetary music is Caracciolo’s reminder to his dedicatee of the importance of patronage, not only for the artist’s career – he wants to be world-famous, after all – but also for maintaining communal welfare. Whether through the founding of a new church or the cultivation of devotional or even occult music, the patron can open up a channel between the earthly and the beneficent celestial communities (and celestial bodies). In such an economic model of spirituality, a patron of the arts is no less important than a patron saint. Taken together,

Example 5.7b Caracciolo, *Canta Urania*, mm. 17–21.

C. Io che'lce leste can - to di vo - t'as - col - te e da

Q. Io che'lce leste can - to di - vo - to as - col to'edaleiso -

A. Io che'lce - le - ste can - to ascol - to e da leiso

T. Ioche'lce leste can - toce le - ste can - to di vo - to'as - col - to e

B. Io che'lce leste can - to di - vo - t'as - col - to

a part of the commemorative work that these pestilential madrigals do, then, is to ensure mindfulness toward the spiritual duties expected of the votary, the patron, as well as the divinities.

### L'aura serena

But what of the non-transcendental, temporal aspect of commemoration – the remembrance not of spiritual debt or the Lord's promise of future salvation, but of the earthly horrors and losses of recent tragedy? Given that Scotto published Caracciolo's collection in 1582, a mere four years after Milan was liberated from plague, *Santo Guerrier* would surely have revived vivid memories of that catastrophe and all its attendant suffering and fear. Given the premodern ideas of perception and cognition, where sensations, imaginary forms, affects, and bodily health are intimately linked, it is questionable whether the provocation of such powerful emotions is medically advisable in pestilential times. Consider once again Niccolò Massa's prescription. On one hand, he prescribes looking at beautiful images that delight the eyes – such as those of beautiful and respectable women (*picturas quae oculos delectant, ut sunt matronae venustae et honeste*) – as well as the use of instrumental music and songs to insulate the imagination.<sup>24</sup> On the other, he advises against activities that might stir up melancholy, despondence, worry, fear, and sadness, such as listening to

<sup>24</sup> Massa, *Liber de febre pestilentiali*, 39r.

Example 5.8 Caracciolo, *Canta Urania*, mm. 12–16.

C. Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ria e'i ven - ti'e l'a - ri'e'i

Q. l'a - ria e'i ven - - - - ti Che la terr'

A. ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce

T. ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti Che la terr'

B. la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce

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C. ven - ti'e l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti'e l'a - ria e'i ven - ti.

Q. ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti.

A. l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti l'a - ria e'i ven - ti.

T. ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti.

B. l'a ri'e'i ven - ti'e l'a - ri'e'i ven - - - - ti.

sorrowful tales. Or consider Bartolomeo Montagnana's regimen: one should attend to stories, songs, and instrumental music, but one should also avoid gloomy affects like melancholy as well as reading horrific stories that depict martyrs, deaths, and other similar things.<sup>25</sup> By these accounts, *Santo Guerrier* and *Con qual chiave* would seem to be medically questionable.

<sup>25</sup> Montagnana, *Consilia montagnane*, 23r.

Example 5.9 Caracciolo, *Canta Urania*, mm. 31–35.

C. - to Can - tan - -

Q. do can- tan - do ha - ve - - - te can-tan - do

A. do ha - ve - - - - te can- tan - do

T. tan - do can - tan - - - - do ha - ve - te che'l van -

B. Can - tan - - - - do can- tan - - -

33

C. do can- tan - - do ha - ve - te tra'i mi- glior l'en - vio dol - ce ò

Q. dol - ce ò

A. - ha - ve - te can-tan- do ha - ve - te tra'i mi- glior l'en - vio dol - ce'ò Pre-

T. - to can- tan - do ha - ve - te tra'i mi- glior l'en- vi - - o dol - ce'ò Pre-

B. - do ha - ve - te - - ha - ve - te tra'i mi- glior l'en- vio - dol- ce'ò

Perhaps Caracciolo's mindfulness to the dangers of the negative imagination may explain some of his compositional choices for the madrigal *L'aura serena* (No. 10) and its placement in the collection among the pestilential songs. The Petrarchan text (No. 196 of the *Canzoniere*) is part of a group of "L'aura" sonnets (Nos. 194, 197, 198) that begins with a play on the name of Petrarch's beloved Laura. The opening image of the poem – a calm breeze blowing through verdant leaves – is appropriately painted

with gentle melismas. After two taxing spiritual madrigals so focused on the ill effects of aerial poison, such an opening with fresh breezes would have been an immediate balm for the imagination. Here in the poem, the *aura serena* does double duty. It gently strikes the poet's brow to remind him of young love, and it also sweeps away Laura's veil of golden hair to reveal her hidden face. The bittersweet wounds that Love dealt him would intensify over time; in the concluding sestet, the prevailing image of Laura's hair, alternately loose and bound, parallels the tendrils of passion that increasingly grip the poet's heart. The conceit of the sonnet is conveyed in the poetic structure itself, wherein a single thought binds together the two quatrains and the first half of the sestet, pushing back the *volta* to the final three lines of the poem.

L'aura serena che fra verdi fronde mormorando a ferir nel volto viemme fammi risovenir quand' Amor diemme le prime piaghe sì dolci profonde,	The calm breeze that, through the green leaves, comes murmuring and strikes against my brow makes me remember when Love gave to me for the first time his wounds so sweet and deep,
e 'l bel viso veder ch' altri m'asconde, che sdegno o gelosia celato tiemme, et le chiome, or avvolte in perle e 'n gemme, allora sciolte et sopra or terso bionde,	and lets me see the lovely face she hides which jealousy or anger keeps from me, and her hair, gathered now in pearls and gems and flowing then more blonde than polished gold,
le quali ella spargea sì dolcemente et raccogliea con sì leggiadri modi che ripensando ancor trema la mente.	which she was wont to loosen with such sweetness and gather up again so charmingly – that thinking of it makes my mind still tremble.
Torsele il tempo poi in più saldi nodi et strinse 'l cor d'un laccio sì possente che Morte sola fia ch' indi lo snodi.	Then in still tighter knots, time wound her hair and bound my heart with cord that is so strong that only Death can free it from such ties.

Caracciolo, however, cuts away the bindings and sets only the opening octave to music. What is left is a portrait of a beautiful woman – one of Massa's *pictura matronae venustae* – adorned at times with pearls and gems, and at times with her hair flowing freely. Here and there, “perle” and “gemme” receive brief, sparkling melodic embellishments. The opening music that describes the wind murmuring through the leaves (mm. 1–9) returns virtually unchanged (with the tenor and quinto swapped) for the final line, “allora sciolte et sopra or terso bionde” (m. 34–42; Examples 5.10a and b). By repeating the same music, Caracciolo establishes a closed form that patches over the break he forced onto Petrarch's poetry. He returns us to the fresh air; no need to contemplate the mind-rattling

Example 5.10a Caracciolo, *L'aura serena*, mm. 1–9.

C. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - - de che fra ver - di fron -

A. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - - di fron - - - de che fra ver - - - di fron -

T. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di

Q. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - de che fra ver - di

B.

5

C. - - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di che fra ver - di fron - de Mor - mo ran do a

A. - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - de che fra ver - di fron - de

T. fron - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - de Mor - mo ran - do a fe -

Q. fronde l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - - di fron - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver di fron - de Mor

B. L'au - ra se re na che fra ver di fron - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - de

image of Laura tossing her hair (does she mean to be so seductive?) or the overbearing passion that will only relinquish its grip in death. The return to the breezes also cordons off the remembrance of love's wound (painted with suspensions on "risovenir" in mm. 13–16), which, though deep (the basso falls to its lowest note for "profonde"), is nevertheless tinged with sweetness (a soft  $E_b$  is introduced in this passage, most notably for the basso's "dolce" but also for "amor," "piaghe," and "viso"; Example 5.11). Amor's arrows here appear nowhere near as corruptive as the arrows of pestilence. Caracciolo does not strive for intensity of feeling in this *pictura matronae*, only delightful beauty that offers a respite for the imagination.

Example 5.10b Caracciolo, *L'aura serena*, mm. 34–42.

C. All ho - ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter so bion - - de e sou ra'or ter - so bion -

A. All ho rasciol-t'e sou ra'or ter - so bion - - - de e sou ra'or ter - - - so bion-

T. le in per - le e'n gem-me All' ho-ra sciol-t'esou-ra'or ter - so bion - de or ter - so

Q. bion - d'e sou - ra'or ter-son bion - de All' ho-ra sciol-t'e sou ra'or ter - so

B. ter - so bion - - de

38

C. - - de All ho-ra sciol t'e sou ra'or ter - - so bion - - de.

A. - de e sou ra'or ter so bion - - - de e sou - ra'or ter - so bion - de.

T. bion de All' ho - ra sciol-t'e sou ra'or ter - so bion de All ho-rasciol-t'e sou ra or ter so bion - de.

Q. bion - de All' ho-ra sciol-t'esou - ra'or ter - so bion - - de.

B. All' ho rasciol t'esou ra'or ter - so bion - de All' ho-ra sciol t'e sou ra'or ter - sobion - de.

The overriding, takeaway image of this madrigal is the refreshing breeze – in the trees and in Laura’s hair – that the signers had been praying for.

Even so, a pall of melancholy inevitably falls over *L'aura serena* if one considers that Petrarch’s Laura famously died in Avignon during the plague year of 1348, very possibly of that same disease. Readers of the *Canzoniere* found confirmation of this tragedy in Canzone 323 (*Standomi un giorno*), wherein Petrarch describes six separate visions of destruction that represented Laura’s death. At least one sixteenth-century commentator, Lodovico Castelvetro, connected the second vision – a fine boat wrecked by a sudden storm from the East – to the onslaught of the Black Death “narrated by Boccaccio,” which blew in from the orient along the

Example 5.11 Caracciolo, *L'aura serena*, mm. 13–22.

C. -me Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan -  
 A. nel vol - to viem - me Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a - mor diem -  
 T. Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a - mor diem - me  
 Q. - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a - mor diem - - me Fa - - mi ri - so - ve -  
 B. me Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a - mor diem - me le

17  
 C. d'a mordie - me le pri me pia - ghe si dol - ci e pro - fon - de E'l bel vi - so ve - der  
 A. me le pri me pia - ghe si dol - c'et pro - fon - de E'l bel vi - so ve der ch'al -  
 T. le pri me pia - ghe si dol - ci si dol - c'et pro - fon - de E'l bel vi - so ve - der ch'al  
 Q. nir quan - d'a - mor diem - me le pri me pia ghe si dol - c'et pro - fon - de E'l bel vi - so E'l bel vi -  
 B. pri - me pia - ghe si dol - - - c'et pro - fon - - - de E'l bel vi - so ve der ch'al

Silk Road and made first landfall in the ports of Sicily.<sup>26</sup> Within a larger referential context, then, the very invocation of Laura may undo some of the salutary effects of the beautiful portrait.

If *L'aura serena* represents an admixture of anodyne and poison for the imagination, other love songs of the Caracciolo's *Primo libro* provide less attenuated doses of melancholy. One finds in the amatory madrigals themes 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

<sup>26</sup> Castelvetro, *Le rime del Petrarca*, 85.

lover after the death of his beloved (4, *Poi che quella*); 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 the madrigal collection.

Looking at the *Primo libro* as a whole – with its preponderance of negative affects – one might rightly ask to what extent its contents are beneficial or detrimental to health. Should such a collection be used in times of plague, or put away in favor of more lighthearted 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.<sup>27</sup> Aside from telling stories, the *brigata* 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 lyrics are invariably in *ballata* form: a *ripresa* of one to four lines, followed by two *pedi* of two or three lines each and a *volta* that repeats the structure of the *ripresa* (AbbaA).<sup>28</sup> As each storyteller sang at the end of the day, the rest of the *brigata* danced and 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 lighthearted; she opts to sing "not of love's sighs and agony / But only of its jocundness."<sup>29</sup> 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. On her turn to sing, Lauretta warns that none of her songs, which she composed herself, are appropriate "for so merry a gathering as this."<sup>30</sup> After receiving reassurances that she should nevertheless sing her *ballata*, Lauretta begins, "None has need for lamentation / More than have I / Who, alas, all sick for love / In vain do sigh." She goes on to tell of her lover's death and complains of the loveless marriage in which she is now trapped – would that she had died, Lauretta laments. Filostrato, on the fourth day, 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 lovesick and inconsolable girl who withered "like snow in the rays of the sun" with extreme melancholy.<sup>31</sup> We find, therefore, some of the same subjects and

<sup>27</sup> Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 182–196. See also Chapter 1.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, "Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio," 326–328. <sup>29</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 187–188.

<sup>30</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 281. <sup>31</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 738.

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 is unlikely that they would have thoughtlessly exposed themselves to noxious music.

Could the *brigata's* songs and Caracciolo's madrigals, which elicit memories and affects that doctors warned against, be medically permissible? Might there be an alternative paradigm of affects that might grant benefit to negative emotions in their own rights? It may be instructive here to compare the possible benefits of such music to the actions of two oft-prescribed medicines for the plague: the panaceas Mithridatium and theriac.

### **Mithridatium and Theriac**

Mithridatium and theriac were two of the most prized medicines in the Renaissance pharmacopeia. Compounds of many and variable substances, they were thought to be antidotes to almost all poisons. From the time of the Black Death, these panaceas were frequently prescribed both prophylactically and therapeutically for 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 purged . . . 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.<sup>32</sup>

Two hundred years on, Niccolò Massa describes their use and praises their virtues in his plague treatise, but with a caveat for children and those already sick:

It is beneficial to take daily one fraction of an ounce of theriac, more or less according to necessity . . . 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 its quality is found to be

<sup>32</sup> Jacme d'Agramont, "Regiment de preservacio," 80–81.

less than optimal, you can substitute in its place Mithridatium in the same quantity, following the same guidelines.<sup>33</sup>

Doctors throughout the Renaissance generally remained convinced of the potency of these two substances. Physicians, such as the Brescian Vincenzo Calzaveglia, who questioned their efficacy for plague in the 1570s, remained in the minority.<sup>34</sup> It was not until the eighteenth century that the compounds began to disappear from pharmaceutical manuals; they persisted nevertheless into the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

The fabled histories of these two substances reveal the source of their powers and the rationale for their potency. Mithridatium, the more ancient of the two, was attributed to the bellicose King Mithradates VI (or Mithridates, in Latin), ruler of Pontus between 120 and 63 BCE. Known for his erudition and military might, and infamous for his cruelty toward the Romans, Mithradates secured his place in the annals of medical history as a pioneering experimental toxicologist. His interest in the field was inextricably linked to the political climate of the time, when poison went hand in hand with dynastic succession. When Mithradates was still a child, his own father was poisoned by unknown assassins at a royal banquet, and legitimate concerns for his own safety drove him to pursue an avid study of toxins and medicinal simples. The king cultivated a garden of poisonous plants and, according to Galen, tested the efficacies of various substances on prisoners condemned to die, correlating the types of antidotes with the types of poisons against which they were effective.<sup>36</sup> In addition to his experimentation on prisoners, Mithradates himself practiced a regimen of ingesting small amounts of arsenic each day to develop a tolerance against its deleterious effects.<sup>37</sup> And according to Pliny, to build immunity to other poisons, he would first take an antidote and then ingest the correlating poison “in order that sheer custom might render it harmless.”<sup>38</sup>

Armed with this empirical knowledge, Mithradates combined both alexipharmic substances and traces of toxins into one single electuary, later named Mithridatium in his honor.<sup>39</sup> Every morning, the king would begin his day by taking a small amount of this compound with cold water. Unfortunately, his regimen was all too effective. By Galen’s account,

<sup>33</sup> Massa, *Liber de febre pestilentiali*, 40v–41r. <sup>34</sup> Cohn, *Cultures of Plague*, 161–162.

<sup>35</sup> Catellani and Console, “Rise and Fall of Mithridatium and Theriac,” 8–9; Chast, “La thériaque a l’époque moderne,” 506–508.

<sup>36</sup> Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 34. <sup>37</sup> Mayor, *Poison King*, 71–72.

<sup>38</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, bk. 25, ch. 3.

<sup>39</sup> On the Galenic tradition of polypharmaceutical compounds, see Stein, “La thériaque chez Galien,” 203–204.

Mithradates, vanquished by Pompey in his war against the Romans, attempted to take his own life by poison in order to spare himself the humiliation of a public execution. He gathered his daughters who, out of filial love, wished to follow him to death, and the three drank from a toxic vial. The lethal poison did quick work on the two girls, but had little effect on the king himself. Ironically, his daily ingestion of Mithridatium had made him invulnerable and deprived him of a peaceful death. As a last resort, Mithradates summoned his friend Bistokos and ordered him to slit his throat, to “accomplish with the sword the work of the poison.”<sup>40</sup>

Among the other spoils of war for the Romans was the king’s bookcase, full of writings on the medicinal properties of plants. Pompey ordered his freedman Lenaeus to translate the treatises (likely written in Greek<sup>41</sup>) into Latin, and Mithradates’s knowledge of poisons and their antidotes thereby passed on to the physicians of Rome. The recipe for Mithridatium survived in the foundational texts by Galen, written two centuries later. In addition to “Mithradates’s own,”<sup>42</sup> which contains forty-one ingredients, Galen provided 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 this key addition of viper’s flesh that a new and improved class of antidotes was developed: the theriac, whose name derives from “therion,” Greek for a “wild or venomous animal.” Galen offers a variety of anecdotal evidence 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 death; the leper recovered completely.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

Although both Mithridatium and theriac were originally developed specifically as antidotes to poison (theriac was thought to be especially

<sup>40</sup> Galen, *De theriaca ad Pisonem*, quoted in Totelin, “Mithradates’ Antidote,” 6.

<sup>41</sup> Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 36.

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum*, 673–677.

<sup>44</sup> Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 52–53; Boudon, “La thériaque selon Galien,” 49–50.

useful against snake bites), 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 doses, acquired a prophylactic function. Galen reports that Marcus Aurelius consumed theriac daily,<sup>45</sup> and authors of plague treatises, like Jacme and Massa, often prescribe its quotidian use. One would presumably need an emperor's fortune to afford daily doses; 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 attenuated), cooked until the flesh comes off the bones and then ground into a powder; fifty-five herbs, including cinnamon and various peppers, prepared according to their individual properties; opium (an ingredient that might encourage quotidian use); 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 the compound is then 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.<sup>46</sup>

Mithridatium and theriac are pertinent to the discussion of "sad" music on account of the medical principles of Mithridatism or *hormesis* – the phenomena where low doses of toxins are thought to create inuring effects against higher doses – that partially account for their efficacy. Mithridatium and theriac contained toxic ingredients that generated salutary effects. The former compound included skins and the blood of Pontic ducks, both thought to be noxious. Through daily ingestion of these and other ingredients, Mithradates came to be immune to an otherwise fatal dose of poison, just as he had become habituated against arsenic through constant, limited exposure. In theriac, the viper's flesh was likewise thought to be toxic. 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, being diluted in wine, had the unintended consequence of curing their afflictions. Attenuated in the process of manufacture and ageing, the normally

<sup>45</sup> Galen, *De theriaca ad Pisonem*, 3r.    <sup>46</sup> Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*, 48–50.

noxious content of theriac acquires salubrious properties. The value of such hormesis is made explicit by Ambroise Paré. In his *Traicté de la peste*, the royal surgeon advises Renaissance doctors who treat plague patients to apply small doses of arsenic or other poisons to the chest, in order for that vital organ to be gradually inured against poisonous assault.<sup>47</sup>

If exposure to toxins in diffuse amounts can be beneficial, then painful affects, too, may be useful when attenuated and delivered through musical recreation. A case for precisely this sort of emotional Mithridatism was being made by sixteenth-century Italian literary theorists, who were just then rediscovering Aristotle's *Poetics* and the concept of tragic *katharsis*.

### Mithridatic 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 across Italy.<sup>48</sup> 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."<sup>49</sup> Beginning in the middle of the century, full-scale expositions of the work also began to appear; the first among them was produced by Francesco Robortelli in 1548. The next year, Bernardo 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 speculation<sup>50</sup>) 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."<sup>51</sup>

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. 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

<sup>47</sup> Paré, *Traicté de la peste*, 58.

<sup>48</sup> Srivastava, *Aristotle's Doctrine of Tragic Katharsis*, 68–97; Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 286.

<sup>49</sup> Spingarn, *History of Literary Criticism*, 138. <sup>50</sup> Hathaway, *Age of Criticism*, 205.

<sup>51</sup> Fracastoro, *Opera omnia*, 1:321; cited in Spingarn, *History of Literary Criticism*, 138.

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.”<sup>52</sup> Aristotle also invokes the concept of *katharsis* in *Politics* 8, where he endeavors to show the ethical and emotional worth of 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. 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. One of them 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 physiological sense. The second category of meaning is ritual and religious. In the negative sense, an individual is purified of dire sins, such as bloodguilt. 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 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*. “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.”<sup>53</sup> 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*. 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.”<sup>54</sup> All of these connotations of

<sup>52</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, I 49b25–29, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII, vi, pp. 348–352. See also Ford, “Catharsis.”

<sup>54</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 196.

*katharsis* – physiological, religious, and ethical – 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 had ossified into what John Morley called “one of the disgraces of the human intelligence, a grotesque monument of sterility.”<sup>55</sup> (And to think, Morley made his pronouncement in the nineteenth century.)

One stream of interpretation that emerged at the start of the commentary tradition clustered around what Baxter Hathaway has tellingly labeled the “Mithradatic principle.”<sup>56</sup> *Katharsis*, in this vein of thought, refers to a process of being exposed to tragic emotions in the theater in order to become fortified against them in real life, in the same manner that Mithradates became immune to poison through gradual exposure. The essence of *katharsis* in this instance is not a complete elimination or “purgation” of pity and fear, but rather a fortification against those emotions through habituation. Hathaway identifies Robortelli as the father of Mithradatic *katharsis*. In his exposition, Robortelli begins with Aristotle’s *Politics* and draws together musical *katharsis* and poetic *katharsis*. He 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 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.<sup>57</sup>

In short, the experience of emotions either through music or through drama reduces our susceptibility to those same emotions in real life.

Subsequent Renaissance commentators developed the Mithradatic principle with even greater rhetorical flair. Notable among them is Antonio

<sup>55</sup> Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopedists*, 1:340.

<sup>56</sup> Hathaway, *Age of Criticism*, 216. 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.” Halliwell suggests that similar Mithradatic ideas had been forwarded by Timocles, a comic poet contemporary with Aristotle; *Aristotle’s Poetics*.

<sup>57</sup> Robortello, *Aristotelis De arte poetica explicationes*, 53.

Sebastiano Minturno, who touches directly upon the medical connotations of katharsis. In his *De poeta libri sex* (1559), Minturno, like Robortelli, points first to musical katharsis to show that even apparently beneficial agents may perturb or deal violence upon the body:

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 . . . Should Homeric poetry then be blamed because it moves the power of the mind to pity and fear? 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?<sup>58</sup>

Extending this observation to tragic *katharsis*, Minturno writes,

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.<sup>59</sup>

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 bizarre) 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

<sup>58</sup> Minturno, *De poeta*, I:64; translation from Biehl, "Antonio Sebastiano Minturno's *De Poeta*," 113.

<sup>59</sup> Minturno, *De poeta*, I:64–65; translation from Biehl, "Antonio Sebastiano Minturno's *De Poeta*," 114.

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 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.<sup>60</sup>

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.”<sup>61</sup>

In the context of Mithradatic *katharsis*, we can make a case for *Santo Guerrier*, *Con qual chiave*, and even *L'aura serena* as emotional exercises that could inure listeners against the reality of plague. The madrigals saturate the imagination with frightful sounds and images, as well as terrible memories of the recent past (or the distant past, in the case of Laura's death). Attenuated by harmony, these strong memories and affects help listeners build up resistance toward excessive pity and fear, both potentially noxious affects. The evocation of yearning and melancholy in the other madrigals of Caracciolo's collection may 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.”<sup>62</sup> The wretched love verses in Caracciolo's collection, made sweet by music, can ease emotions of the same kind.

This is not to say, of course, that emotional Mithridatism is without danger – dosage is a very real problem. Tragic emotions have long been known to overflow their bounds and strike down theatergoers. 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

<sup>60</sup> Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele, vulgarizzata et sposta per Lodovico Castelvetro*, 65r; Bongiorno, *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry*, 56.

<sup>61</sup> Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele, vulgarizzata et sposta per Lodovico Castelvetro*, 65v; Bongiorno, *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry*, 56.

<sup>62</sup> Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 2, Section 2, Memb. 6, Subs. 4, 481.

audience to swoon and pregnant women to spontaneously miscarry.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup>

Tragic emotions, like toxic medicines, had to be carefully ministered, especially to those who were already susceptible – recall Massa's warning that theriac could harm the young and the febrile. In his treatise on Mithridatium and theriac, 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."<sup>66</sup> *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 such an *inamorato* already consumed by song, "Musick is most pernicious, as a spur to a free horse will make him run himself blind."<sup>67</sup> One must strike a careful balance, then, in the process of musical Mithridatism. With the proper amount, "sad music" could temper the imagination, inuring it with attenuated sadness and fear; too strong a dose, and ill-disposed listeners may succumb to disease.

The commemoration of plague was a complex undertaking, tangled in the intricate dynamics of disease management. *Santo Guerrier* and *Con qual chaive* undoubtedly moved the mind to devotion, reminding listeners to repay their spiritual debts. From the medical point of view, the same gestures that promoted spiritual urgency potentially represented both

<sup>63</sup> Calder, "Vita Aeschlyli 9," 554–555.    <sup>64</sup> Wise, "Tragedy as 'An Augury of a Happy Life,'" 392.

<sup>65</sup> Herodotus, *History*, 6.21, pp. 416–417.    <sup>66</sup> Houël, *Traité de la thériaque et mithridat*, 8r.

<sup>67</sup> Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 2, Section 2, Memb. 6, Subs. 4, 481.

a poison and an antidote. Whether it was ultimately useful or dangerous, the works reveal to us the ramifications of music and musical memorials. At a time when disease was simultaneously a spiritual and physical problem – and when the mind and the body were inextricably linked – the engagement of piety, memory, and affect carried vital consequences.

## Epilogue

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”) 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.”<sup>1</sup>

How does one measure the psychological impact of this capricious disease? In 1976, medical geographer Harold D. Foster proposed a disaster magnitude scale that would quantify the stress impact of particular catastrophic events upon a community. Foster applied a formula that considered the death toll, the infrastructure damage, and the individual losses (e.g., of relations, of habitual way of life) attendant on a particular disaster and determined that, among his sample of events, the Black Death (scoring 10.9 on the scale) was the second most stressful, only slightly less devastating than World War II (11.1) and slightly worse than the Great War (10.5).<sup>2</sup>

If Foster’s positivist point system for stress seems quixotic, consider Kathryn Rudy’s 2010 study of Renaissance books of hours and the material signs of their use.<sup>3</sup> Wielding a densitometer, a device that measures the darkness of a surface, Rudy compared the dirtiness of pages of various Renaissance books of hours to determine which were the most frequently handled – and therefore, which prayers were the most used – by their readers. In one Dutch book, MS 74 G35, held at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, the grimmest opening in the entire book (89 v–90 r) was dedicated to St. Sebastian. On the left side is a grisaille miniature of the saint – unusually balding and bearded, conveying a Christ-like

<sup>1</sup> Jones, “Plague and Its Metaphors,” 98.    <sup>2</sup> Foster, “Assessing Disaster Magnitude,” 246.

<sup>3</sup> Rudy, “Dirty Books.”

countenance – tied to a post and shot through with arrows. On the right side of the opening is the antiphon “Egredie martir Sebastiane”:

Distinguished martyr Sebastian, master and propagator of the holiest teachings, behold your name written in the book of celestial lives. Therefore, intercede for us all. By the honoring of your memory to our Lord Jesus Christ, may he deign always to liberate us from plague and from epidemic death. Pray for us, blessed Sebastian, so we are made worthy of the promises of Christ.

These pages were handled over and over again by the book’s user (or even multiple users across generations), praying for liberation from pestilence, clear evidence that the plague – above all else requiring divine remedy – weighed heavily on the mind. Moreover, two other significant spikes on the densitometer were registered at Psalm 6 and at the Litany of the Saints. A prayer to Sebastian, the litany, and one of the Penitential Psalms – did this votary have the plague procession in mind while rehearsing those liturgical items?

Across the Alps in Treviso, a set of partbooks (TrevBC 29) compiled roughly a century later contained a very similar prayer to St. Sebastian, set to music for five voices by Nicolas Gombert:

**Prima pars**

Egredie martir Sebastiane, princeps  
et propagator sanctissimorum  
praeceptorum, ecce nomen tuum in libro  
vitae caelestis ascriptum est, et  
memoriale tuum non derelinquetur in  
aeternum.

Distinguished martyr, Sebastian, master  
and propagator of the holiest teachings,  
behold thy name written in the book of  
heavenly life, and your memory will never  
be forgotten.

**Secunda pars**

Socius enim factus es supernarum  
regionum quae in caelis spiritum tuum  
susceperunt et memoriale tuum non  
derelinquetur in aeternum.

You were made, therefore, a member  
of the celestial regions, which has  
received your spirit into heaven,  
and your memory will never be  
forgotten.

These Italian partbooks (described in Chapter 3) contained a variety of works related to medical well-being, some with litany formulas, likely used in processions such as the ones held for protection against plague in 1575 and 1576. Two manuscripts, whose provenance spans a continent and a century, offer us a glimpse into the anxieties surrounding plague.

A Dutch book of hours reveals a votary especially concerned with pestilence, the accumulated dirt on its margins testifying to both her piety and fear. An Italian assemblage of motets with litany formulas along with those on themes of health reveal a community's close brush with catastrophe. These manuscripts show us that habits and practices like praying, processing, and singing formed specifically in response to disease.

If we take stock of the different creative activities described in preceding chapters, we see that little of it conveyed the sense of plague's inevitable triumph assumed by earlier historians of the disease. Doctors, far from being stuck in an unchanging Galenic mode of thought, attempted to reconcile inherited knowledge with observable experiences, leading to new models of contagious disease. Carlo Borromeo devised an innovative program of public devotion that kept the Milanese isolated and safe. Artists, writers, and liturgists took part in creating and promoting a divine savior to deliver them from pestilence. And musicians and composers, too, created works meant to halt the progress of plague, whether in the context of public ritual or domestic entertainment.

To be sure, feelings toward music's role in combating disease were not unequivocal. Anxieties about music and its morally corruptive influences – anxieties that were already in the air well before plague reached Italian shores in 1348 – extended into discourses about pestilential treatments. I began the first chapter with a reference to Borges's story about a Chinese encyclopedia, 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 encyclopedia of anti-pestilential objects and strategies, it might contain the following categories: “times of the day to sleep,” “things to put in an aromatic potpourri,” “spots on the body to cut and bleed,” and “music that makes you happy.” But if there were conversely a Renaissance encyclopedia of pestilential causes, music, too, would be found therein under the heading “things that lead to impiety and sin,” perhaps next to “inauspicious planetary configurations” and “things that corrupt the air.”

The study of “pestilential music” affords a cross-section look at the discourses and practices surrounding plague, and the uncertainties surrounding music's role as an anti-pestilential medicine is indicative of the larger complexities of disease management in the Renaissance – of the struggles between spiritual and corporeal health, or between individual and public welfare. By tracing the thread of music through the fabric of pestilential culture, 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 potent effects on the body and the spirit that we no longer expect or experience. We can re-situate “pestilential music” within the rituals of crisis carried out in venerable cities across Europe. We can also recover the sense of urgency that must have attended these works – the same urgency that darkened the pages of the book of hours – to value them anew not only as aesthetic objects but also as artifacts of an active and productive struggle against a devastating disease.

# APPENDIX I Complete Scores

## Sebastiane decus perenne (Maistre Jhan)

### Sebastiane, decus peren[n]e celi

Maistre Jhan

S. Se - ba - sti - a - ne de - cus pe - re - n[n]e ce -

B.

7

S. - li

B. Se - ba - sti - a - ne de - cus pe - re - n[n]e 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

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 an - nu - en - - - - - te.

B.  ti - bi an - nu - en - te ti - bi - a - nnu - en - - - - te

*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 op - pri - mat ca - du -

B.  stem ne vis ser - - - pat et op - pri - mat ca - du - cos

67

S.  cos mor - ta - les

B.  et op - pri - 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

*Tertia pars*

S. Mox es - ten - se ge - nus tu - e - re et ur - bem

B. Mox es - ten - 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

# Santo guerrier (Paolo Caracciolo)

## Santo Guerrier

Paolo Caracciolo

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 spog - lia 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

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 - il prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to - a - dem - pio Che pri - a ti fe - ci - non fi - amaich'io

A. pio Hogg i' l prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to - a - dem - pio che pri a ti fe - cienon

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 - il prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to - a - dem - pio che pri a ti fe - ci e non fia mai e

B. - pio Hogg i' l prin - ci - pio di quel vo - to - a - dem - pio che pri a ti 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- quie tue re li quie 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- quie fe - sta'e un no - vo tem - pio Tu da Dio'im-pe-tra che

T. glia Le tue re li- quie re-li- quie fes-ta'e un novo tem - pio

Q. - glia Le tue re-li- quie fes - ta Tu da Dio im - pe - tra, im pe -

B. Le tu - e re-li- quie 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 -

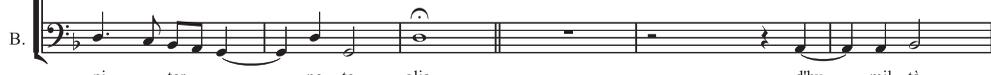
41 *Secunda parte*

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 dè-spe - rar Hor che se de-spe - rar dal Rè su-per -*

A. *se - ria in se - no Hor che se dè-spe-rar dal Rè su - per - no Hor*

T. *alla mi-se - ria in se - no Hor che se dè-spe - rar Hor che se dè-spe*

Q. *mi - se - ria in se - no Hor che se dè-spe-rar*

B. *mi - se - ria in se - no Hor che se dè-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 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 -

78

C. ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in fer - - no

A. del ca - cci all'in - fer - no cacci all'in fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no

T. ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no

Q. ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no

B. del ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - no ca - cci all'in - fer - - - no

## Con qual chiave (Paolo Caracciolo)

## Con qual chiave

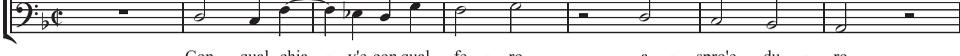
Paolo Caracciolo

C.  Con qual chia - v'e con qual fe - ro'a - - spro du - ro

A.  Con qual chia - v'e con qual fe - ro

T.  Con qual chia - v'e con qual fe-ro'a spr'e du - ro a - spr'e du-ro Con

Q.  Con qual chia -

B.  Con qual chia - v'e con qual fe - ro a - spro'e du - ro

8  
C.  con qual fe-ro'a - spr'e du - - - ro E - ra ser - ra-to'il cie - lo

A.  con qual fe - ro a - spr'e du - ro e - ra ser-ra-to'il

T.  qual ch'v'e con qual fe - ro a - spr'e du ro E - ra ser-ra-to'il

Q.  v'e con qual fe - ro a - spro e du - ro E - ra ser - ra-ti'il ciel

B.  con qual fe - ro'a - spr'e du - - - ro E - ra ser - ra-to'il ciel

13

C. E-ra ser ra-to'il ciel che non s'a per - - se Quan - do con tan - te

A. ciel che non s'a- pre - - se che non s'a - per - se Quan - do con tan - - te

T. cie-lo che non s'a - per - se Quan - do con tan - te pe - ne

Q. E-ra ser ra-to'il ciel che non s'a - per - se Quan - do con tan - te pe - n'e si di -

B. E-ra ser ra-to'il ciel che non s'a - per - se Quan - do con tan -

18

C. pe - - - - - n'e si di - ver - - - - - se

A. con tan - te pe - - - - - n'e si di - ver - - se Quel - le sa-cra-te

T. con tan - - - te pe - n'e si di - ver - - - se Quel-le sa-cra-te

Q. ver - se e si di - ver - - - - se

B. te pe - - ne e si di - ver - - - - se

23

C. *Quel le sa-cra-te mem - br'a - per-te fu - ro a - per - te fu - ro Quan - do l'im -*

A. *mem - br'a - per - te fu - ro a-per - te fu - - ro*

T. *mem - bra *Quel - le sa-cra-te* mem - bra a - per - te fu - ro Quan - do l'im -*

Q. *Quel - le sa-cra-te mem - bra a - per-te a - per-te fu-ro/a per - te fu - - ro Quan*

B. *Quel-le sa-cra-te mem - bra a - per - te fu - ro*

28

C. *ma - cu - la - to ag-nel - lo'e pu - - - ro oi -*

A. *Quan - do l'im ma - cu-la - to ag-nel-lo'e pu - ro tan - te cru-del per - cos - se'oi*

T. *ma - cu - la - to ag-nel - lo e pu - ro tan - te cru-del per - cos se'oi - me*

Q. *- do l'im - ma - cu - la - to ag-nel - lo e pu-ro tan - te cru-del per-cos -*

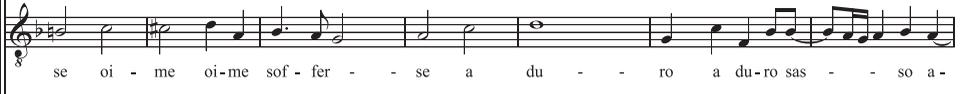
B. *tan - te cru-del per - cos - - se'oi - me*

35

C.  - me sof - fer - - - se

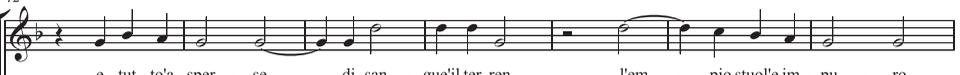
A.  me oi - me sof - fer - - - se a du - - - ro sas - so'a - vin -

T.  a du - ro sas - - - so a du - ro sas

Q.  se oi - me oi-me sof - fer - - - se a du - - - ro a du-ro sas - - - so a -

B.  oi - me sof - fer - se a du - ro sas - so'a -

42

C.  e tut - to'a - sper - se di san - gue'il ter ren l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - ro

A.  -to e tut-to'a-sper - se di san - gue il ter - ren l'em - pio

T.  - so'a vin - to'e tut - to'a - sper-se di san gue il ter-ren l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu -

Q.  - vin - - - to di san - gue'il ter -ren l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - ro

B.  vin - to'e tut - to'a-sper - se di san - gue'il ter - ren l'em - pio stuol'e im -

49

C. *l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - ro l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - ro.*

A. *stuol'e im - pu - ro l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - - - ro.*

T. *ro l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - ro l'em-pio stuol'e im - pur - - ro.*

Q. *l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - ro l'em - pio stuol l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - - ro.*

B. *pu - - - ro l'em - pio stuol'e im - pu - - - - ro.*

56

C. *so-mo fat-to - re del cie - lo'e del - la ter -*

A. *O - v'e - ra la pie - ta som - mo fat-to - re som - mo fat-to - re*

T. *O - v'e-ra la pie - - - ta som - mo fat-to - re del cie - - lo*

Q. *O - v'e - ra la pie - ta som - mo fat-to - re del cie - lo'e del - la ter - ra*

B. *O - - v'e - ra la pie - ta som - mo fat-to - re som - mo fat-to - re del*

62

C.  - ra del ciel lo'e de - la ter - - ra all' hor che'l fi - glio All' hor che'l fi - glio ve - des - te'a san - gu'e

A.  del ciel - o'e del - la ter - ra all' hor che'l fi - gli ve - de - ste'a ve - de - ste'a san - gu'e

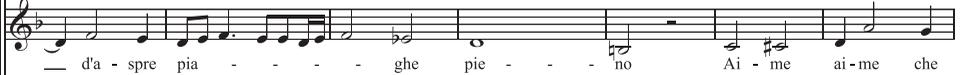
T.  del cie - lo'e del - la ter - ra all' hor che'l fi - - glio ve - de - ste'a

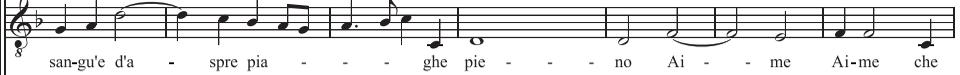
Q.  e del - la ter - ra all' hor che'l fi - - glio e d'a -

B.  cie - lo'e del - la ter - - ra all' hor che'l fi - - glio ve - de - ste'a san -

66

C.  d'a - spre pia - - - ghe pie - - - no Ai - me che

A.  - d'a - spre pia - - - - ghe pie - - - no Ai - me ai - me che

T.  san - gu'e d'a - spre pia - - - ghe pie - - - no Ai - - me Ai - me che

Q.  - spre pia - ghe e d'a - spre pia - ghe pie - no Ai - - me Ai - me che

B.  - gu'e d'a - spre pia - ghe pie - - - - no Ai - me

73

C. trop po'ar - den - te Ai - - me che trop - po ar - den - - t'e in -

A. trop - po ar - den - te Ai - me che trop - po ar - den - t'e

T. trop po'ar - den - te Ai - me che trop - po ar - den - t'e

Q. trop po'ar den - - - te ar - den - te'in

B. Ai - me che trop po'ar - den - te

79

C. ten-so'a-mo - - r'e in-ten-so'a-mo - re fu ca-gion di la-sciar l'em - - pio ve - le -

A. in - ten - so'a - mo - re a - mo - re fu ca-gion di la - sciar fu ca-gion di las-ciar l'em - - pio ve -

T. in - ten - so'a - mo e'in - ten - so'a - mo - re fu ca-gion di la - sciar fu ca-gion di las-ciar

Q. ten-so'a-mo - re fu ca-gion di la - sciar fu ca-gion di la-sciar di la sciar l'em-pio ve -

B. e'in - ten - so'a - mo - re fu ca-gion di la - sciar di la - sciar l'em - pio ve - le -

84

C. *no sfo-gar per trar - ci no - i d'o-gni pe - rig - lio do'g-ni pe - ri -*

A. *len sfo-gar per trar - ci no - - i sfo-gar per trar-ci no - i d'o-gni pe - ri - glio*

T. *sfo-gar per trar - ci no - i per trar - ci no - - - i d'o-gni pe - ri -*

Q. *le - - no sfo-gar per trar - ci no - i d'o-gni pe - ri - glio d'o-gni pe - ri -*

B. *- - no sfo-gar per trar-ci no - i d'o-gni pe - ri - glio*

88

C. *glio d'o-gni pe - ri - glio sfo-gar per trar - ci no - - i*

A. *d'o-gni pe - ri - - glio sfo-gar per trar-ci no - - i sfo-gar per trar-ci no - -*

T. *glio d'o-gni pe - ri - - - glio sfo-gar per trar - ci no - -*

Q. *glio d'o-gni pe - ri - glio sfo-gar per trar - ci no - - i per trar-ci no - -*

B. *d'og-ni pe - ri - - - glio sfo-gar per trar-ci no - -*

91

C. *d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - glio.*

A. *i d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - - glio.*

T. *i d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - glio.*

Q. *- i d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - - - glio.*

B. *i d'o - gni pe - ri - glio d'o - gni pe - ri - glio.*

## L'aura serena (Paolo Caracciolo)

## L'aura serena

Paolo Caracciolo

C. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver-di fron - - de che fra ver-di fron -

A. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - - - de che fra ver - - - di fron -

T. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di

Q. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - de che fra ver - di

B.

5  
C. - - - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - - - di

A. - - de l'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - - - di fron - de

T. fron - de l'au - - ra se - re - na che fra

Q. fron - de l'au - ra se - re - na ce fra ver - - - - - di fron - de l'au - ra se -

B. L'au - ra se - re - na che fra ver - di fron - de l'au - ra se -

8

C.  che fra ver - di fron - de Mor-mo ran-do a fe - rir Mor - mo-ran-do a fe-rir nel vol

A.  che fra ver - di fron - - de Mor-mo-ran - do a fe - rir nel vol to

T.  ver - di fron - de Mor-mo-ran-do a fe - rir nel vol-to viem - me Mor-mo-ran-do'a fe-rir nel

Q.  re-na che fra ver-di fron - - de Mor - mo-ran-do'a fe - rir nel vol-to viem - - - me

B.  re-na che fra ver - di fron - - de Mor-mo-ran-do'a fe-rir nel

12

C.  to vi - em - - me Fam - mi ri -

A.  - viem - me nel vol - to viem - me Fam - mi ri - so - ve -

T.  vol - to viem - me Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a-mor diem - me

Q.  Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a-mor diem - - me Fa -

B.  vol - to viem - me Fam - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a-mor

16

C. - so - ve - nir quan - d'a - mor die - - me le pri - me pia - ghe si dol - ci e

A. nir quan - d'a - mor diem - me le pri - me pia - ghe si dol - c'et pro - - fon -

T. le pri - me pia - ghe si dol - - ci si dol -

Q. - mi ri - so - ve - nir quan - d'a - mor diem - me le pri - me pia - ghe si dol -

B. diem - me le pri - me pia - ghe si dol - - - - c'et pro -

20

C. pro - fon - - - de E'l bel vi - so ve - der ch'al - tri m'a -

A. - de E'l bel vi - so ve - der ch'al - - tri m'a - scon -

T. c'et pro - fon - - de E'l bel vi - so ve - der ch'al - tri m'a - scon - de

Q. - c'et pro - fon - - de E'l bel vi - so E'l bel vi - so ve - der ch'al - tri m'a -

B. fon - - - - de E'l bel vi - so ve - der ch'al - tri m'a - scon -

24

C.  scon - de che sde-gn'o ge - lo-sia ce - la - to tiem - me Et la chio - me hor auol -

A.  - - de che sde-gn'o ge - lo-sia ce la - to tiem - me Et le chiom'

T.  che sde-gn'o ge - lo - sia *che sde-gn'o ge-lo - sia* ce - la - to tiem - me

Q.  scon - de che sde-gn'o ge - lo - si - a o ge - lo-sia ce - - la-to tiem -

B.  de che sde-gn'o ge - lo-sia ce - la - to tiem - me Et le chiom'hor a - uol -

28

C.  'in per-le e'n gem - me Et la chio - me hor auol - t'in per-le e'n gem - me All ho-ra

A.  hor a-uol-t'i per - le e'n gem - me Et le chio - m'hor a - uol - t'in per-le e'n gem -

T.  Et la chiom'hor a - uol - t'in per-le e'n gem-me *per - le e'n gem-me* Et le chio - m'hor a-

Q.  - me Et le chio' hor a-uol - t'i per - le in per-le'n gem - me All'

B.  -t'in per-le e'n gem - - me Et le chiom' hor a - uol - t'in per - le in per-le'n gem -

32

C. sciol - t'e sou-ra'or ter-so bion - - - de All ho - ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter-so bion -

A. *me* All ho-ra sciol-te All ho ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter - so bion - -

T. uol - t'in per-le e'n gem - me in per - le in per - le e'n gem-me All' ho-ra

Q. ho - ra sciol-t'e sou -ra'or ter - so sou-ra'or ter - so bion - d'e sou - ra'or ter-son bion - de

B. *me* All'ho-ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter - so bion - - de

36

C. - de e sou - ra'or ter - so bion - - - - - de

A. - de e sou - ra'or ter - - - - - so bion - - de *e*

T. sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter - - so bion - de or ter - so bion-de All' ho - ra

Q. All' ho - ra sciol - t'e sou-ra'or ter - so bion - de

B. All' ho - ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or

39

C. All ho - ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter - - so bion - - de.

A. sou-ra'or ter so bion - - - - de e sou - ra'or ter-so bion - - de.

T. sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter - so bion-de All ho - rasciol-t'e sou ra or ter-so bion - de.

Q. All' ho - ra sciol-t'e sou - ra'or ter - so bion - - de.

B. ter - so bion - de All' ho - ra sciol-t'e sou-ra'or ter - so bion - de.

## Canta Urania (Paolo Caracciolo)

## Canta Urania

Paolo Caracciolo

C.   
 Can - ta U - ra -

Q.   
 Can - ta U-ra - nia dal ciel la vo - stra stel - la Can

A.   
 Can - ta U-ra - nia dal ciel la vo-stra

T.   
 Can - ta U - ra - nia can - ta U-ra - - nia

B.   
 Can - ta U ran - nia dal ciel la vos - tra

6   
 C.   
 nia dal ciel la vo - stra stel - la con si soa - vi ac -

Q.   
 - ta U - ra - nia dal ciel la vo - stra stel - la con si soa-vi ac-cen - ti

A.   
 stel - - la la vo - stra stel - la Con si soa-vi ac

T.   
 dal ciel la vo - stra stel - - - la

B.   
 stel - la Con si soa - vi ac - cen - ti soa - vi ac -

11

C. cen - ti Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ria e' i ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i

Q. Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ria e' i ven - - - ti Che la terr'

A. - cen - ti Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce

T. 8 Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti Che la terr'

B. cen - ti Che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce che la terr' ad - dol - ci - sce

14

C. ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti e l'a - - - ria e' i ven - ti.

Q. ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti.

A. l'a - ri'e'i ven - - ti l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti l'a - ria e' i ven - ti.

T. 8 ad - dol - ci - sce l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti l'a - ri'e'i ven - ti.

B. l'a ri'e'i ven - ti e l'a - ri'e'i ven - - - - - ti.

17

C.  Io che'l ce-le-ste can - - to di - vo - t'as - col -

Q.  Io che'l ce-le-ste can - to di - vo - to as -

A.  Io che'l ce - le - ste can - - to as-col -

T.  Io che'l ce-le-ste can - to ce-le - ste can - to di-vo - to'as - col -

B.  Io che'l ce-le-ste can - to di - vo - t'as - col -

21

C.  te e da lei - so-la im - pa - ro so - la im - pa - ro U -

Q.  col - to'e da lei so - la e da lei so - l'im - pa - ro U-den-do

A.  to e da lei so - la so-la im - pa - ro da lei so-la im - pa - - ro U -

T.  to e da lei so-la im - pa - ro so - l'im - pa - ro U - den -

B.  to e da lei so - la'im - pa - ro U -

25

C. den-do lei piu vol - te que - ste not' hò rac-col - te per farm' al mon - do chia - ro e hor a

Q. lei piu vol - te que - ste not' hò rac-col - te per farm' al mon - do chia - ro e hor a

A. - den-do lei piu vol-te que - ste not' hò rac-col - te per farm' al mon - do chia - ro

T. - do lei piu vol - te que - ste not' hò rac-col - te per farm' al mon-do chia - ro e hor a

B. den-do lei piu vol - te per farm' al mon - do chia - ro

29

C. voi che'l van - to e hor a voi che'l van - to Can - tan -

Q. voi che'l van - to Can tan - do can tan - do ha-ve - te can tan - do

A. e hor a voi che'l van to can tan - do ha-ve - te can tan - do

T. voi che'l van - to che'l van - to Can-tan - do can tan - do ha-ve-te che'l van

B. e hor a voi che'l van - to Can - tan - do can tan -

33

C.  do can- tan - - do ha - ve - te tra' i mi - glior l'en - vio dol - ce ò Pre - si - dio mi -

Q.  dol - ce ò Pre - si - dio

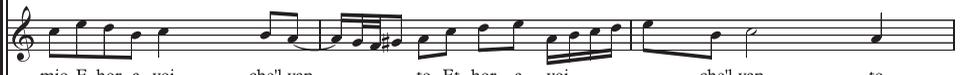
A.  - ha - ve - te can- tan- do ha - ve - te tra' i mi - glior l'en - vio dol - ce' o Pre - si - dio mi -

T.  - to can- tan - do ha - ve - te tra' i mi - glior l'en - vi - - o dol - ce' o Pre - si - dio mi -

B.  - do ha - ve - te - - ha - ve - te tra' i mi - glior l'en - vio - dol - ce' o Pre - si - dio

37

C.  - o et hor a voi - - - - - che' l van - to Can- tan - do can- tan -

Q.  mio E hor a voi che' l van - to Et hor a voi - - - - - che' l van - to

A.  - o Et hor a voi che' l van - to can- tan- do ha -

T.  o Et hor a voi - - - - - che' l van - to che' l van - to Can- tan - do can -

B.  mio Et hor a voi che' l van - to can -

40

C. -do ha - ve - - te can - tan - do

Q. can - tan - - do Can tan - - do ha - ve - te tra

A. ve - - te can - tan - do ha - ve - te can - tan - do ha - ve - te tra'i

T. tan - - do ha - ve - te *che'l van - to can - tan - do ha - ve - te* tra'i mi - glior l'en -

B. tan - do can - tan - - do ha - ve - te ha - ve - te tra'i

43

C. dol - ce'o Pre - si - dio mio dol - ce - - o Pre - si - dio mi - o.

Q. i mi - glior l'en - voi dol - ce'o Pre - si - dio mio dol - ce'o Pre - si - dio mi - o.

A. mig - lior l'en - vio Pre - si - dio mio dol - ce - - o Pre - si - dio mi - o.

T. vi - o dol - ce'o Pre - si - dio mi - o dol - ce'o Pre - si - dio mi - o.

B. mi - glior l'en - vio dol - ce'o Pre - si - dio mi - o.

## APPENDIX II Select “Pestilential” Motets and Madrigals, ca. 1400–1600

Works listed below are arranged by textual themes. Title, composer, number of voices, and sources (manuscript, then print, in chronological order) are given. This list was compiled using information from: Jennifer Thomas’s Motet Online Database (<http://legacy.arts.ufl.edu/motet/>); University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s *Census-Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music 1400–1550* (American Institute of Musicology, 1979); RISM; and Emil Vogel, *Bibliografia della musica italiana vocale profana pubblicata dal 1500 al 1700* (Pomezia: Staderini, 1977).

### Motets to St. Sebastian

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Armorum fortissime ductor</i> Source(s): ModD 9 (1520–1530; incomplete); TrevBC 8 (1556–1569); <i>Musica quatuor vocum . . . liber primus</i> (Venice: Scotto, 1539). Remarks: See Chapter 4.	Adrian Willaert	4
<i>Beatus es et bene</i> Source(s): TrevBC 8 (1556–1569)	Anon.	5
<i>Beatus es et bene</i> Source(s): <i>Motteta Francisci Guerrerri</i> (Venice: Gardano 1570); <i>Motecta Francisci Guerrerri</i> (Venice: Jacobum Vincentium, 1597) Remarks: See Chapter 3.	Francisco Guerrero	4
<i>Beatus es et bene</i> Source(s): <i>Sacrarum cantionum quae vulgo moteta</i> (Seville: Martin Montesdoca, 1555); <i>Motteta Francisci Guerrerri in hispalensi ecclesia musicorum praefecti . . . liber secundus</i> (Venice: Jacobum Vincentium, 1589); <i>Motecta</i> (Venice: Iacobum Vincentium, 1597) Remarks: See Chapter 3.	Francisco Guerrero	5
<i>Beatus es et bene</i> Source(s): <i>Sacrarum varii stylii cantionum . . . Liber I</i> (Venice: Gardano, 1578)	Fernando de las Infantas	4
<i>Egregie martyr Sebastiane</i> Source(s): TrevBC 29 (1570–1575; destroyed); <i>Motetti del fiore: Secundus liber cum quinque vocibus</i> (Lyons: Moderne, 1532) Remarks: See Epilogue.	Nicolas Gombert	5

(cont.)

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Fiat pax in virtute tua</i> Source(s): MilD 3 (ca. 1500) Remarks: See Chapter 2.	Alexander Copinus	4
<i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Source(s): BolC Q15 (completed 1440); Modena, Italy, Biblioteca Estense, alpha. X.1.11 (Lat. 471; olim VI.H.15) (ca. 1440–1450) Remarks: Cantilena type. See Chapter 4 and Berger, Karol. "The Martyrdom of St Sebastian: The Function of Accidental Inflections in Dufay's 'O Beate Sebastiane.'" <i>Early Music</i> 17, no. 3 (1989): 342–357.	Guillaume Dufay	3
<i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Source(s): MilD 1 (ca. 1484–1490) Remarks: See Chapter 3.	Franchinus Gaffurius	4
<i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Source(s): BarcBC 454 (late 15 c–early 16 c); <i>Motetti libro quarto</i> (Venice: Petrucci, 1505) Remarks: See Chapter 1.	Gaspar van Weerbeke	4
<i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Source(s): TrevBC 8 (1556–1569); <i>Il Primo libro di motetti a quattro voci</i> (Venice: Gardano, 1549)	Francesco Lupino	4
<i>O beate Sebastiane</i> Source(s): BarcBC 454 (late 15 c–early 16 c; incomplete, attributed to Jo. Mouton); <i>Motetti libro quarto</i> (Venice: Petrucci, 1505) Remarks: See Chapter 1.	Johannes Martini	4
<i>O quam mira</i> Source(s): TrevBC 8 (1556–1569) Remarks: See Chapter 3.	Nicholaus Olivetus	4
<i>O sancte Sebastiane magna est fides tua</i> Source(s): VerBC 760 (ca. 1520–1530)	Anon.	4
<i>O sancte Sebastiane/Gloria et honore</i> Source(s): BolC Q15 (completed 1440); OxfBC 213 (ca. 1420–1436) Remarks: Isorhythmic. See Chapter 2.	Guillaume Dufay	4
<i>Sancte Sebastiane</i> Source(s): VatS 63 (ca. 1480–1507); <i>Motetti libro quarto</i> (Venice: Antico, 1521) Remarks: See Chapter 3.	Jean Mouton	4
<i>Sebastiane decus perenne celi</i> Source(s): LonRC 2037 (1527–1534; Incomplete, S/B) Remarks: See Chapter 4.	Maistre Jhan	4

(cont.)

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Sebastianus, vir Christianissimus</i> Source(s): <i>Novi atque catholici thesauri musicus</i> (Venice: Gardano, 1568) Remarks: See Chapter 4.	Michael Deiss	4

## Motets to St. Roch

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Ave Roche sanctissime</i> Source(s): VienNB Mus 15941 (1521–1531; Incomplete, A/T/B)	Anon.	4
<i>O beate Christi confessor [Roche]</i> Source(s): <i>Musica quinque vocum motteta materna lingua vocata</i> (Venice: Scotto, 1543) Remarks: I would like to thank Laurie Stras for alerting me to this motet, whose text she identified as a Gradual Responsory for St. Roch.	Anon.	5
<i>O beate confessor Roche</i> Source(s): BergBC 1209 (ca. 1545)	Gasparo Alberti (dubious)	4
<i>O Roche beatissime</i> Source(s): PadBC D27 (ca. 1541–1550); TrevBC 4 (1559–1569; destroyed); <i>Symphonia quatuor modulata vocibus</i> (Venice: Scotto, 1543)	Maistre Jhan	4
<i>Salve Roche pater (Introitus)</i> <i>O beate Roche confessor (Alleluia)</i> <i>Rochi patris ob honorem (Sequence)</i> <i>Nunc te roche pater (Communion)</i> Source(s): DresSL 1/D 506 (Annaberg Choirbook) (ca. 1530) Remarks: Substitute motets.	Anon.	4

## Motets to the Virgin and Other Saints

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Antoni pastor inclite</i> Source(s): RomeV 35–40 (1530–1531) Remarks: There were a number of important Anthonys venerated in the Renaissance. It is Anthony the Great (late third–early fourth centuries) who was associated with ergotism ( <i>ignis sacer</i> or St. Anthony’s fire) and plague. In this motet, the supplicants request relief from <i>ignis calorem</i> and general <i>morbos</i> . See also Wegman, Rob. “For Whom the Bell Tolls: Reading and Hearing Busnoys’s <i>Anthoni Usque Limina</i> .” In <i>Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance</i> , edited by Dolores Pesce, 122–141. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.	Philippe Verdelot	6

(cont.)

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Arianus populus pestifer</i> Source(s): Cas AC D(F) (1521–1545) Remarks: This is a setting of an antiphon for Lauds in five parts for a rhymed office of St. Evasius, who ministered in Casale in the third century after the Arians drove him out of Asti, where he was bishop. The remainder of the parts are (2) <i>Ecce furunt Ariani</i> (3) <i>Instinctu Satanae conantur Arii Sancti</i> (4) <i>Rex Luitprandus metu concutitur</i> (5) <i>Superatur dux nefandu</i> (see <i>Analecta hymnica</i> 24, p. 214). Pestilence here is a metaphor for heresy.	Francesco Cellavenia	4
<i>Joseph sancte</i> Source(s): ChiN M91/1 (Newberry Partbooks) (1525–1529); CasAC M(D) (1538–1545) Remarks: In this motet, Joseph is called upon to turn away pestilence. According to H. Colin Slim, the cult of St. Joseph as a healer spread throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages. The cult was particularly well established in Florence; see Slim, H. Colin. <i>A Gift of Madrigals and Motets</i> . 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972. 1: 74–76. Slim suggests the other Marian motets in the Newberry Partbooks, although they do not explicitly address plague, may have also served an anti-pestilential function.	Anon (Philippe Verdelot?)	4
<i>O beate Antoni</i> Source(s): <i>Motetti a sei voci d'Innocentio Alberti . . . Libro secondo</i> (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1594) Remarks: Singers petition St. Anthony for liberation from epidemic illnesses and all other bodily and spiritual infirmities. I would like to thank Laurie Stras for alerting me to this motet.	Innocenzio Alberti	6
<i>Stella celi</i> Source(s): <i>Motetti A</i> (Venice: Petrucci, 1502) Remarks: See Chapter 2. For comprehensive listing of <i>Stella celi</i> settings (both monophonic and polyphonic, continental and English), see: Macklin, Christopher. "Plague, Performance and the Elusive History of the <i>Stella Celi</i> Extirpavit." <i>Early Music History</i> 29 (2010): 1–31.	Anon.	4
<i>Stella celi</i> Source(s): BrusC 27088 (before 1549)	Clemens non Papa	5
<i>Stella celi</i> Source(s): TrentC 88 (ca. 1460–1465)	Guillaume le Rouge	4
<i>Virgo dei digna</i> Source(s): MilD 1 (ca. 1484–1490) Remarks: See Chapter 3.	Franchinus Gaffuirus	4

Motet settings of *Recordare Domine*

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Recordare Domine</i> Source(s): PadBC A17 (1522); ChiN M91 (1527–1529); RomeV 35–40 (1530–1531); RomeM 23–4 (ca. 1532–1534); VatG XII.4 (1536); PiacD (5) (Mid-16th c.); PadBC D27 (ca. 1541–1550); <i>Motetti del fiore: Secundus liber cum quinque vocibus</i> (Lyons: Moderne, 1532); <i>Mottetorum . . . liber quartus</i> (Paris: Attaignant, 1534); <i>Electiones diversorum motetorum</i> (Venice: Gardane, 1549). Remarks: In Attaignant’s 1534 print, this motet carries the rubric “contra pestem.” The source of the text is I Chronicles 21:15, in which a merciful God stays the hand of an avenging angel set to punish Jerusalem. The prayer is used in anti-pestilential processions (see Chapter 3) and as an introit for an anti-pestilential mass; see Macklin, Christopher. “Stability and Change in the Composition of a ‘Plague Mass’ in the Wake of the Black Death.” <i>Plainsong and Medieval Music</i> 25, no. 2 (2016): 167–189. See also Slim, H. Colin. <i>A Gift of Madrigals and Motets</i> . 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972. 1: 74–76.	Philippe Verdelot	5
<i>Videns Dominus civitatem</i> Source(s): FlorL 666 (Medici codex) (1518); VerBC 760 (ca. 1520–1530); CasAC D(F) (1521–1545); <i>Motetti novi libro tertio</i> (Venice: Antico, 1520) Remarks: This prayer is a variant of <i>Recordare Domine</i> , on which account Lowinsky argues that its function is likely the same. See Lowinsky, Edward E. ed. <i>The Medici Codex of 1518: A Choirbook of Motets Dedicated to Lorenzo de’ Medici, Duke of Urbino</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.	Jean de La Fage	4

## Madrigals concerning the 1576–1578 Plague of Milan

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Sancto Guerrier</i> <i>Canta Urania</i> <i>Con qual chiave</i> Source(s): <i>Il primo libro de Madrigali a cinque voci</i> (Venice: Scotto, 1582) Remarks: See Chapter 5.	Paolo Caracciolo	5
<i>Ecco il Santo Pastore</i> <i>Lacero tien’ San Carlo il nudo piede</i> Source(s): <i>Madrigali a cinque voci in laude di S. Carlo</i> (Venice: Bartholomeo Magni, 1616) Remarks: <i>Ecco il Santo Pastore</i> and <i>Lacero tien’ San Carlo</i> are nos. 12 and 13 of a set of 18 madrigals celebrating the life of Carlo Borromeo, published a few years after his canonization in 1610. These two madrigals describe Borromeo’s participation in the pestilential processions during the 1576–1578 outbreak in Milan (described in Chapter 5). For more on the madrigal collection, see Getz, Christine. “Canonising San Carlo: Sermonising, the Sounding Word, and Image Construction in the Music for Carlo Borromeo.” <i>Early Music History</i> 34 (2015): 133–189.	Giovanni Battista Porta	5

## Madrigals on the death of Laura

Title	Composer	vv.
<i>Standomi un giorno</i>	Orlando di Lassus	5
Source(s): <i>Secondo libro delle muse . . . con una canzone del Petrarca</i> (Rome: Baré, 1557)		
Remarks: This is a setting of Petrarch's Canzone 323, wherein he describes six separate visions of destruction that represented Laura's death. The second vision – a boat destroyed by a storm from the East – was interpreted by 16th-century readers as Laura succumbing to the plague (she had died in Avignon during the plague year of 1348). See Chapter 5.		
<i>Standomi un giorno</i>	Rampollini, Matteo	4
Source(s): <i>Il Primo Libro de la musica . . . Canzoni del divin poeta M. Francesco Petrarca</i> (Lyons: Moderne, 1560)		
<i>Standomi un giorno</i>	del Mel, Rinaldo	6
Source(s): <i>Madrigali a sei voci, Libro II</i> (Antwerp: Giovanni Bellerio, 1588); <i>Di Rinaldo Del Mel . . . il Secondo Libro de Madrigali a sei voci novamente composti</i> (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1593); <i>Il Terzo Libro delli Madrigali a sei voci</i> (Venice: Gardano, 1595)		
<i>Standomi un giorno</i>	De Castro, Jean	3
Source(s): <i>Second livre de Chansons Madrigalz et Motetz a trois partis</i> (Paris: Roy et Ballard, 1580); <i>Chansons, Madrigaux et Motetz a trois parties par M. Iean de Castro</i> (Antwerp: Pierre Phalese, 1582)		

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